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**Jewish Citizenship in Algeria:**

**Historical Overview**

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in Literature and Anglo Saxon Civilization

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## ***Dedications***

*I dedicate this humble work to my dear parents.*

*To my brothers; Abdelfateh, Abdelhak and Amine*

*To my sisters; Houria, Zoubida, Leila, Soumia1, Soumia 2 and Safia*

*To my lovely nephew Mohamed*

*To my friends*

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## **Abstract**

The presence of the Jews in Algeria can be traced back to the first centuries of the Common Era. After the French occupation of the country in 1830, Jews gradually adopted French culture and were granted French citizenship by the Crémieux Decree. To this vein, the present work is concerned with the history of the Jews in Algeria from the old period to colonial period. Also, this research work centers on the experience of Algerian Jews and their evolving identity as citizens. In colonial period, the Jews gained their citizenship which allowed them to establish their community in Algeria. Therefore, in 1870, the Crémieux decree transformed the Jews of Algeria from colonial subjects into French citizens. Algerian Jews had not agitated aggressively for citizenship in the period leading up to the decree. In the ensuing years, however, Algerian Jews assimilated to their new status at the order of their elite and in response to efforts to obtain their rights. Thus, the purpose of this work is to discover the history of the Jews in Algeria and to present the Jews acquisition of citizenship during French colonial period until independence.

## **List of Acronyms**

FLN: Algerian National Liberation Front

JDC: American Joint Distribution Committee

OAS: Secret Army Organization

WWI: World War One

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There were Jews in Algeria from the pre-Roman period to the early 1960 s. Algeria was settled by the Berber tribes whereas some converted to Judaism. During the Arab conquest of Algeria in the seventh century, Berbers and Jews fought together led by the queen Kahina. Algeria generally remained under Islamic control, until 1830, when the French began their conquest of the region. The French attack was in response to Hussein Dey's demands that the French government pay wheat debts to two Jewish merchants, Bacri and Busnach. These two merchants were responsible for fly-whisk event which was the first reason to colonize Algeria by France. The Jews welcomed French rule and often helped the French administration. Thus, the Jews founded their community in three major cities; Algiers, Oran and Constantine. Hence, the rate of Jewish population increased during this period. The majority of Jewish people came to Algeria as craftsmen, painters, peddlers, merchants, shoemakers, tailors. They spoke Hebrew, Arabic and Judeo-Arabic.

Furthermore, French government granted the Jews French citizenship in 1870 under the Crémieux Decree. The Crémieux Decree was formally abrogated by the Vichy government in 1940, but reinstated in 1943. In addition, the Evian agreement helped the Jews to guarantee religious freedom rights and so on.

On the light of these facts, the choice of this historical work aims to discover the presence of the Jews in Algeria. It presents also the Jews acquisition of citizenship during the French rule until independence. Thus, these two objectives are determined in this research work through exploring a historical overview of Jews in Algeria during French colonial period till independence.

For this research, the main research question that led to this work is: how did the Jews obtain their citizenship in Algeria?

In order to find answers to the problematic question presented above, the following derivative questions are put forward as follows:

- ✓ How was the status of the Jews in the Algerian economy?
- ✓ How could the Jews found their communities in Algeria?

✓ What is about the Crémieux Decree?

Working on the preceding research questions, the following hypotheses are provided:

The history of Jews in Algeria during French colonial period represents an image of the existence of the Jews in Algeria and shows how these minority people found their community in this country.

It also shows how the Algerian Jews gained their status as French citizens. These two factors emerge to introduce the impact of Anti-Semitism in Algeria during this colonial period.

Moreover, materials used in this study, have been gathered in two ways. Firstly, my focus is on the available references including dissertations, books and electronic sources that give a broad range of primary sources that guide this research. Then, its secondary focus is to provide some figures, maps, and tables in order to support the research work.

In fact, the dissertation includes three chapters; the first one is an introductory chapter which presents an historical background of the Jews in Algeria. This introductory presentation employed as guide in discovering of the presence of the Jews in different periods of history.

The second chapter includes the origins of the Jews in Algeria in certain periods, population, Jewish community organization and Jewish family (dress, language, and education).

In addition, the third chapter presents the Jewish rights and identity through the French rule and Vichy government. This chapter also involves the examination of Crémieux Decree which granted the Jews their citizenship. It presents the content of Decree, the Jews' point of views of to the Decree, Jewish rights and Anti-Semitism manifestation in Algeria.

## **1.1 Introduction**

The presence of Jews in Algeria extended from the pre-Roman period to the early 1960s when Algeria became independent. In the first time, Jews built their community in Eastern part of Algeria, especially in Kabyle region. Tlemcen was the second region where the Jews settled. They built their community in Algiers, Bougie, Oran and other regions in Algeria. Although, they faced a violent relations with the indigenous and the former Jews but they were able to prove their position.

This chapter includes a historical overview of the Jews; in order to know how the Jews organized their community in Algeria. Then, the chapter provides roles of the Jews in Algerian politics and economics. It sheds the light on the presence of the Jews in different historical period such as early history and colonialism.

## **1.2 First Coming of Jews**

Before the Roman took over the coasts of Northern Africa, descendants of Jews who had left Palestine after the destruction of the first and second temples of Jerusalem had settled among the Berber tribes of the central Maghreb, whereas some of whom converted to Judaism over several centuries. These Jews lived in the Eastern part of Algeria, especially in Kabyle lands and they spoke Berber language<sup>1</sup> (Yad Vashem.org, 2017).

In the seventh century, the Arabs conducted their first successful invasion near Biskra and later in Aures mountains. They confronted sporadic resistance from some Berber tribes, where El Kahina, the queen of the Judeo-Berber tribe, won brilliant victories (*Report on the Foreign Scene, 1962*). With the killing of El Kahina by the Arabs invaders, in 693, came the collapse of Berber Independence. Most of Judeo-Berbers adopted Islam, others escaped to the west and south (Peters, 1997).

In the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, some Jewish merchants residing in Algeria and had regular contacts with other countries, particularly with Catalonia, and these ties served to keep open channels of communication with the more developed Jewish communities. Jews of Languedoc and even Marseille lived in Bougie (Bejaïa), the

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<sup>1</sup> Retrieved from [www.yadvashem.org](http://www.yadvashem.org)

Algerian harbor town, from 1248. Tlemcen, gate to the Mediterranean and a final station on the Sudanese gold route, known as the “Jewish Road”, had a small Jewish community, which was sustained by the rich Jewish merchants of Barcelona, Valencia, Tortosa and Majorca. Most of these merchants were actually natives of the Maghreb and particularly favored by the kings of Aragon, who relied on them as essential to their prosperity. Their relatives had remained in the Maghreb, settling at Algiers, Cherchel, Tenès, Mostaganem and Tlemcen. At that time there was a continuous emigration of Muslims from the Christian kingdoms of Spain to Africa and they were assisted by the Jews in Spain. The Jewish merchants of the central Maghreb had many trade activities, including slave trade which was so important in that time. However, they traded mainly in Sudanese gold (*Report on the Foreign Scene, 1962*).

The Christian kings of Spain appointed many Jews as their ambassadors to the Muslims court. For this reason, Abraham, Samual Bengalil and Bondavin made their first visiting to Tlemcen in 1286. Moreover, many Spanish refugees chose Algeria as their haven. They emigrated in continuous groups from Catalonia and Balearic Islands. Their relations with the local Jews, who had at first received them brotherly but later, became tense. Their numbers gave rise to fear of competition in their professions. Differences in ritual, language, customs and above all social conceptions, caused conflicts between the two communities. The Sephardi<sup>2</sup> Jews asserted themselves by their intellectual superiority, financial means, and skills. The older community resisted the arrival of the new comers to dominate communal life. However there were refugee leaders who were able to relieve the conflicts between the two groups. The learning and dedication of the new immigrants renewed the moral and religious life of Algerian Jewry. Their talent in organizational activities strengthened the Jewish institutions of Algeria. (*Report on the Foreign Scene, 1962*)

Ephraim Ankawa reestablished the community of Tlemcen; the prominent Talmudic authorities R. Isaac Sheshet Perfet, R.Simeon Zemah, and later’s descendant were mainly responsible for Algiers becoming a religious and intellectual center. The

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<sup>2</sup> Sephardi: Jews of Spain and Portugal or their descendants (Waite, 2007: 943).

communities of Oran, Mostaganem, Miliana, Médéa, Tenès, Bougie, and Constantine, although dependant of Algiers, also became centers of Jewish learning under the leadership of the rabbis Amran Merovas Ephrati, Samuel Halawa, the brothers Najar, and others. Very few of the Spanish exiles of 1492 came to Algeria. The only city that attracted them was Tlemcen, which they reached by way of Oran. It has been said by some historians, however, that the loss of Granada, Spain, in 1492 by the Muslims had grave effects for the Jews in Algeria, whereas Muslims were expressed their resentment against Jews (Davison, 2012).

The powerful communities of Tlemcen and, in particular, Tuat (region in Adrar) were destroyed some years later as a result of such agitation. Just after these events, the Spanish occupation of Oran (1509–1708) and Bougie (1509–55), resulted in Jewish property being disappeared and the Jews themselves sold as slaves. Finally, however, some influential families such as Jacob Cansino, Jacob Aaron, and Sasportas convinced the Spaniards in Oran that their Arab policy would best be served by accepting a Jewish community in Oran. In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, Jews from Leghorn, Italy, settled in Algeria, especially Algiers. Among the first who arrived were the Lousada, Alvarenga, Zacuto, Molco, and Dela Rosa families; among the later ones were the Soliman, Busnach, Bouchara, Bacri, Lealtad, and Delmar families. They played an important role in ransoming Christian captives for European governments, and their commercial activities enriched the country (Campbell et al, 2011).

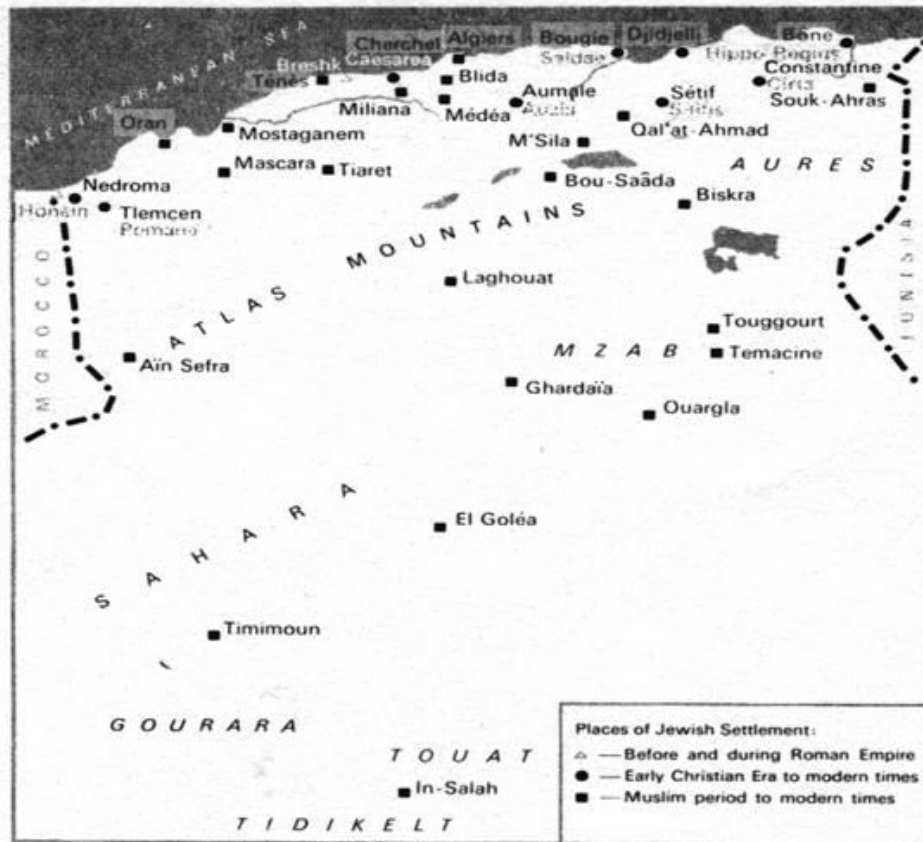


Figure 1.2 Places of Jewish Settlement in Algeria in Early era to modern times (Slyomovics; Stein, 2012: 750).

### 1.2.1 Organization of the Communities

The organization of the communities, which was established in the 14th century, was in effect until 1830. At the head of each community was a Sheikh al-Yahud, or Zaken ha-Yehudim, called also Muqaddam, who was appointed by the Muslim authorities. His powers were discretionary, tempered only by protests of the rabbis. A prison and the police were at his action for punishing and carrying out the sentences of the Beit Din (rabbinical court). He also named the officers (Gedolei Ha-Kahal, Ziknei Hakahal) who were charged with the collection and administration of

charity funds, and the management of the synagogue<sup>3</sup> and charitable institutions. The rabbinical courts were composed of three judges chosen and paid by the community. Only civil disputes were brought to them; they had no jurisdiction in criminal matters. Although the rabbinical courts were available to Algerian Jews, they tended more and more to turn to Muslim civil courts (*Report on the Foreign Scene, 1962*).

Sometimes the synagogues of the same town even had different religious rituals. Thus, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century the community of Algiers was convulsed by disputes over liturgy (*Report on the Foreign Scene, 1962*).

Jewish-Muslim relations were, on the whole, good. It was only occasionally that outbursts of fanaticism gave rise to local persecutions. In certain towns it was accepted that at such times the mosques, although forbidden to infidels, should serve as a refuge to the Jews. The religious Muslim leaders sometimes helped them; for example, the Marabout (Muslim holy man) of Blida, stopped a pogrom and forced the plunderers to return their booty (Davison, 2012).

Generally, from the 16<sup>th</sup> century the situation of the Southern Jews was better than that of their coreligionists in the centers under Turkish domination. The Turks were the ruling class who had come to exploit the country, and they treated the natives, both Muslims and Jews, roughly. Most Jews, living in separate quarters, were at their mercy. They increased the restrictions imposed on Jews in Islamic countries more through greed than fanaticism. On the other hand, the sovereign days, chosen by the Janissaries, and the Beys, governors of provinces, humored the upper-class Jews, from among whom they chose their counselors, physicians, financiers, and diplomats. The Muslim rulers charged these diplomats with the difficult assignment of maintaining relations with European Powers, a task that was complicated by the pirate raids on European ships, condoned by the Algerian rulers. It was usually the wealthy and influential Jews originally from Leghorn who received these assignments. Their high positions could not, however, protect them against the violence of the Janissaries who resented the favours the Jews received from the Bey. The assassination in 1805 of the

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<sup>3</sup> Synagogue : Jewish House of Worship (Waite, 2007: 1012)

Bey's chief aide, the powerful Naphtali Busnach, was followed by the only massacre of Jews to take place in Algiers (Davison, 2012).

The French government had accumulated enormous debts to the Bacri and Busnach families, relatives and partners, who had been delivering grain to France for them since the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. These unpaid debts were the cause of diplomatic incidents that resulted in the French conquest of Algiers in 1830. The French conquest opened a new era for the 30,000 Jews of Algeria. In the beginning the communities were allowed to continue their self-government, and the rabbis continued to administer justice. Rabbinical justice was deprecated and jurisdiction of the Jews passed to the French tribunals. The Muqaddam, who had previously headed each Jewish community, was replaced by a deputy mayor. These reforms did not give rise to any protests on the part of the Jewish population, as they retained their previous legal status. However, the changes caused some to leave: many European Jews returned to Leghorn, and the middle class, small tradesmen, and craftsmen emigrated to Morocco and Tunisia. On the other hand, Moroccan and Tunisian Jews, attracted by new conditions, immigrated into Algeria. There was also a movement of Jews from the south toward the centers and the port towns (Vance, 2011).

### **1.2.2 The Economic-Political Role of the Jewish Community**

Before the French conquest of Algeria in 1830, a considerable part of its import-export trade was concentrated in the hands of the great Jewish merchants of Algiers (Campbell et al, 2012).

The principal articles of export were Algerian wheat, barley, and wool, but there were other items too: ivory, gold, silver, wax, coral, ostrich feathers, horses, cattle, hides, camel's hair, wine, and brandy. The Jews had agents and business correspondents in all the major ports of the Mediterranean, but their trade was particularly intensive with Livorno and Marseilles. From Europe were imported cotton goods, and silk, ironware, drugs, spices, coffee, paper, and a variety of other goods. Jews were permitted freely to buy Christian slaves who had been captured on these piratical projects. These captives were brought either for use as domestics. The Jews, of whom there are about five thousand in Algiers city, have the free exercise of their



religion rituals, they are governed by their own laws in civil cases, administrated by a chief of their own community, who is appointed by the Dey, as Algerian subjects they may circulate freely, establish themselves where they satisfy, and exercise any lawful calling throughout Algeria, and they cannot be reduced to slavery (Talbit, 2011).

North African Jewry traces its origins to two sources: one uncontested documented migration was the flight of Spanish and Portuguese Jews to North Africa in the 14th and 15th centuries. However, there were large communities of Jews throughout North Africa when the Iberian refugees arrived. In 1516, Algiers became the center of Ottoman power in the Maghreb. According to the historian Jamil Abu-Nasr, the modern situation of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia was importantly shaped by the varying impact of the Ottoman Empire. The situation of the Algerian Jews was adversely affected by Turkish rule. There was a group of Jews in Algeria who enjoyed a privileged position. These were the Jews from Livorno, Italy, who settled in the coastal cities of Algeria from the end of the 17th century and throughout the 18th century. They acquired a crucial role in the economic and political life of the regency of Algeria. The citizens of European countries, and countries under the protection of European consuls, they did not have the same restrictions as the indigenous Jews; such families, Bacri and Busnach, were the most important of the Algiers Jewish mercantile families at the end of the 18th century (Talbit, 2011).

These two families were the source in a series of events which led to the French occupation of Algeria. Through a very complicated set of political-commercial deceptions which involved playing the French off against the Dey of Algiers, the Bacri and Busnach families were responsible for the fly-whisk incident, whereas France agreed to buy wheat from Algeria through these two Jewish merchants in the late 18th century. When Algerian officials pressed the two merchants to pay their debt for the wheat, they claimed that the French government had bought the wheat on credit; thus, they would be unable to pay the Algerian government until the French officials paid off their debt to the two men. The French Consul, Pierre Deval then told the Algerian government that France had never agreed to any arrangement with the merchants and that the French government had already paid for the wheat. Thus, the Consul was in collusion with the two merchants, this is the first reason to conquest Algeria. The

second reason was; one of the leaders of the Algerian government struck the French consul, Deval, with his fly-whisk. This so-called insult to the honour of France (Weaver, 2012).

The Jews aided the invading French army: they served as interpreters and guides; many were killed in combat action. Toward the end of the seventeenth century and throughout the eighteenth, a number of Jews from Livorno (Italy), whose Jewish community was of comparatively recent oriental origin, immigrated to Algeria and settled in the coastal cities. These were the Gorneyim, called so after their place of origin Livorno or Leghorn. In the course of the century, the Livornese Jews acquired an ever-increasing importance in the economic and political life of the regency of Algeria. They fell generally, by the regime of the capitulations, under the authority of the European consuls. They enjoyed complete freedom of movement, and were, therefore, known as free Jews. Intelligent and ambitious as they were, the high commerce of Algeria, and an important part of its diplomatic dealings; soon fell into their hands. At the end of the 18th century, the two most prominent families of Gorneyim at Algiers were the Bacris and Busnach. The latter family was established in Algiers in 1723 by Nephtali Busnach and in 1724 by Abraham Busnach. It was Abraham's son Nephtali, who was destined to rise to the principal of power attainable by a Jew in a Muslim state. Nephtali Busnach owed his fortune to services which he rendered to Mustapha Ben Ousnadji, who was Bey of Titeri from 1775 to 1795. Fearing the anger of the Dey of Algiers, Mustapha had been forced to seek refuge in a shetler where none of his friends, dared see him. Only Busnach brought him encouragement, provisions, finally obtained his pardon, and then loaned him a large sum of money. Mustapha, who later became Bey of Constantine, showed his gratitude by making Busnach his chief man of affairs. Busnach soon became a powerful figure in the Algerian government (Talbit, 2011).

The Bacri family appeared in Algiers around 1770, when Michel Cohen Bacri established himself here. In 1782, his sons, Joseph, Jacob, Solomon, and Mardochee formed a business association (Talbit, 2011). A fifth brother, Abraham, remained outside the association, but they often engaged in common business projects. Around 1797, Nephtali Busnach entered the society, when they became known as Bacri

Brothers and Busnach. When Joseph Bacri's son, David, married Busnach's sister, the association between the two families was cemented by a close personal relationship (McDougall, 2017).

The power of the combination reached its height when Busnach became the Mokadem or head of the Jewish community on February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1800 (McDougall, 2017).

Abraham Bouchara, the former head of the community, had lost his post because of a personal scandal, and Busnach may have had a hand in his shame. The activity and intelligence of Bacri and Busnach led them into the service of the Deys. Informed by their correspondents on European politics and commerce, learning through peddlers the news from the interior even before the Turkish officials, provided with an excellent secret service through merchants who were members of their league, they could often give valuable information to the deys on the activities and exactions of their subordinates (Talbit, 2011).

Although, they became indispensable to the regime, and held great power over weak deys as Hassan and his successor, Busnach, in particular, acquired dominance over the deys through his great ability, intelligence, and profound knowledge of business and politics. He was able to dispose of high officials, preferring to have his friends and his creatures in office. Busnach aided in the designation of beys, was in constant touch with them and fixed the amounts of their tributes. His old friend, Mustapha, was made Minister of Finance so that Busnach could control the public treasury, and the climax was reached when he succeeded in having Mustapha elected Dey (Talbit, 2011).

Bacri Brothers and Busnach was primarily a business enterprise, and the extent of its trade was truly remarkable. The American consul in Algiers, O'Brien, reported that about 170 vessels sailed annually to Europe with wheat, barley, wool, leathers and oil worth over 2,500,000\$. The whole trade of the 170 sail of goods is in the power of the Bacris and Busnachs of Algiers; they have the contract or permit from the Dey. Bacri Brothers and Busnach acquired a leading position in the import-export trade. Their trading activities extended from New York to Salonica and beyond, with agents in every major city of the Mediterranean basin (McDougall, 2017).

In addition to their commercial activities in the export-import trade, Bacri and Busnach played an important role as large scale shipowners. They controlled a fleet of cargo vessels which sailed on the Mediterranean and Atlantic. The Bacris bought many vessels that Algerian and French pirates captured from the allies during the Napoleonic wars. Moreover, the Bacris were active in the purchase of the cargoes which the captured ships had carried whereas huge profits were accumulated from these sources. The largest single group of Jews engaged in a variety of traditional handicrafts. These were dressmakers, plumbers, coppersmiths, jewelers, watchmakers, glaziers, goldsmiths, silversmiths, lace makers, embroiderers, turners, shoemakers, and so on. Some of these occupations, particularly those of tailor, lace maker, embroiderer, and precious metal worker were Jewish specialties (Talbit, 2011).

After its re-establishment in 1792, the Jewish community in the coastal city of Oran became quite active commercially. Its import-export trade with Spain and Gibraltar was quite extensive. It is interesting to note also that at this time a few Jews were living illegal in the Spanish port of Almeria .The number of the Jewish population of Oran were engaged as small merchants, artisans, and peddlers. The Jewish community of Constantine was the only great community in the interior, and a few of its Jews did carry on a profitable export trade. But the majority of Constantine Jewry showed an occupational distribution similar to that of their coreligionists elsewhere in Algeria (Talbit, 2011).

One of the most impressive aspects of the varied activities of Busnach and Bacri was their skills and influence in diplomacy. Busnach was in direct with all the European representatives in Algiers, and it was customary for them to approach the Dey through him. In the name of the Dey, he received the consuls of the minor powers when they presented their usual gifts. As diplomatic intermediary, Busnach prevented an imminent war between England and Algiers in 1800. In the following year, he negotiated the peace between Algeria and the French republic (Gottreich and Schroeter, 2011).

The diplomatic and commercial aspects of the activities of Bacri and Busnach were closely linked in the minds of the consuls, and this was so in fact. The consuls of the different nations relied upon them as their bankers and brokers, and drew on their

respective governments through them. The Bacri had a thriving business in loaning money to consuls who were interested in redeeming slaves. In addition, they loaned sums to the consuls to be used for the purchase of presents for the Dey. Moreover, Bacris played a major role as intermediaries between Algeria and the United States in a period of strained relations between the new nation and the North African Powers. Their influence was particularly helpful to the United States during negotiations for new treaties (Gottreich and Schroeter, 2011).

Thus, the famous incident of flywhisk, led the French ultimatum of June 15, 1827, which was presented with the support of a marine detachment. France demanded an apology for the insult, and punishment of the pirates, the right to arm her establishment in Algeria, and a declaration that the French government had completely liquidated the Bacri-Busnach affair and that she would enjoy a most favored treatment in Algerian commerce. In the following day, a blockade of the Algerian coast commenced by French warships. The road was open for the ultimate expedition to Algiers and its conquest in 1830 (McDougall, 2017).

### **1.3 Jews under French Rule**

The arrival of French troops, in July 1830, was welcomed by the persecuted Jews of Algiers, who hoped to obtain the status of equal rights enjoyed by the Jews of France. French colonialism lasted from 1830 to 1962. Whereas, the duration of colonialism, the presence of French settlers, the involvement of French Jewry, and the impact of the changes in the country, its people, and its Jews shaped Jewish community history during this period (Slyomovics and Stein, 2012).

The Municipal Council of Algiers, established six months after the resignation of the Dey, included two representatives of the Jewish community. In the first time Jews were allowed to participate in an Algerian public body. Other French measures also accorded more equal status. But Jews as well as other European settlers decided to seek full integration with the French nation. In 1836, the post of "Chief of the Jewish Nation" was eliminated (Shapiro, 1950).

On November 9, 1845, a law was signed by King Louis Philippe which organized Jewish communities in Algeria. The "Ordonance portant sur l'organisation du cult Israélite en Algérie" as it was called was modeled in part of Napoleon's decree

1808 that created a network of Jewish consistories in Algeria. Consistories were official, state supervised communal organization generally staffed by wealthy and assimilated Jewish notables whose responsibility was to present police and regenerated the Jewish communities of their environment. The 1845 decree called for a new central consistory in Algiers that supervised two provincial consistories in Oran and Constantine (Schreier, 2010). In the same year, after a long mission of two French Jews, Jacques Isaac Alters and Josef Cohen, consistories, were created in Algiers, Oran, and Constantine. Chief Rabbis, brought from France, were appointed and paid by the government, and presided over all other religious functionaries. One of the tasks of these chief rabbis was to promote the liberation of their followers, although they were not yet French citizens (Freidman, 1988).

In addition, consistories were created to administer Jewish affairs, with all members, secularist as well as rabbis, named by the French Government. Jewish leaders in Algiers, persuaded that France was the paragon of excellence in all fields, were pleased to follow the French model. In the beginning, it was mainly the more advanced Jews in cities and larger towns who sent their children to French schools and persuaded to include French standards in all aspects of personal and business life. Soon the majority was following suit. Meanwhile, the movement to secure French citizenship was spreading. One factor was the confusion and judicial complications which often emerged when French civil tribunals in Algeria considered cases involving Jews. Because they were not French citizens, Jews were not covered by French family law. When judges tried to apply the laws of the Talmud, with which they were unfamiliar, there were often unfortunate results (*Report on the Foreign Scene, 1962*). Under the French each municipal council and chamber of commerce had one or two Jewish members. In 1858 a Jewish general counselor was elected for each province (Freidman, 1988).

In 1947 the local communities and consistories in Algeria united in the Federation of Jewish Communities in order to improve and develop all Jewish social and religious activities in the area. The activity of the Federation progressed gradually, and in 1949 it had fifty-six affiliated communities distributed as follows: Nineteen (19) in the department of Algiers, twenty (20) in the department of Oran, and seventeen

(17) in the department of Constantine. The Federation was presided over by Albert Smadja, and counted among its leaders the most representative personalities of all three departments (Shapiro, 1950).

It should be to shed the light on the Crémieux Decree (see the details of the decree in third chapter) whereas all Algerian Jews were forced to become French citizens. This was the first instance in the Muslim world in which the Jew's legal status changed so radically. The naturalization of some 35,000 Jews resulted in a wave of antisemitism. Jews were attacked in Tlemcen in 1881, in Algiers in 1882 and 1897, and 1898, in Oran and Sétif in 1883, and in Mostaganem in 1897, where the violence reached its peak. Till 1900 there were in all towns and villages' cases of robbery and killing, and numerous cases of synagogues being sacked and the Holy Scrolls desecrated and used as banners by the rioters. An antisemitic party came to power: Edward Drumont was elected the representative of Algiers and Max Regis became its mayor. In Constantine, by decision of the deputy mayor Emile Morinaud, Jewish patients were not admitted to hospitals. The illegality of such steps, together with the fact that the Muslims failed to support the movement, brought about the defeat of the antisemitic party in 1902 it was eliminated (Katz, 2015).

The conflict had already become clear in August 1956 when the FLN (the Algerian National Liberation Front, an organization dedicated to achieving Algerian independence) orderd the Algerians of Jewish origin who have not yet overcome their troubled consciences, or have not decided which side they will choose for Algerian nationality. Jewish fears increased when on February 18, 1958, two delegates of the Jewish Agency were kidnapped and assassinated by the FLN. In December 1960 the Great Synagogue of Algiers was desecrated and the Jewish cemetery in Oran was defiled. The son of William Levy, a Jewish socialist leader was killed by the FLN and subsequently Levy also was assassinated by the OAS (Organisation Armée Secrète; a counter terror organization opposed to an independent Algeria). In May 1956 the Mossad, the Israeli secret service, which had begun to work in North Africa and created networks of Algerian Jews from Constantine, attacked the Muslims of Constantine in response to continuous attacks against Jews. About 20 Muslims were

killed as a warning to Algerian Muslims not to involve the Jews in their struggle with the French (Katz, 2015).

Until 1961 the majority of Algerian Jews had hoped that partition or a system of double nationality in order to avoid the conflict. As the struggle developed, however, they increasingly feared that popular reaction would be directed against them not only as Europeans but as Jews and Zionists<sup>4</sup>. Consequently, although the community never adopted an official anti-independence position, in March 1961 a delegation from the Comité Juif Algérien d'Etudes Sociales urged that the negotiations then in prospect should obtain official recognition of the French nature of the Algerian Jewish community (Katz, 2015).

### **1.3.1 Zionism**

There was substantial Zionist feeling in Algeria, but it was of somewhat different character than that of other areas of North Africa like Morocco, Tunisia and so on. Zionist aspirations were tempered somewhat by the strong attachment of the Algerian Jews to France (Shapiro, 1950).

Zionism attracted the Algerian Jews from the start. In August 1897, when the first Zionist Congress met, only one person represented Jews from the Muslim countries, Edward Attali from Constantine. In 1920, a Zionist association called L'Union Sioniste Algérienne was founded in Algiers and led by Lucien Smadja. Its activities were confined to helping the Jewish National Fund emissaries come to Algeria in order to collect money. This Zionist association continued its activities until the World War II. During the Vichy era (the researcher will talk about Vichy era in 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter) Zionist activity came to stop, to be revived after the war. Generally, Zionism was not overly successful in Algeria, probably because Algerian Jews acquired the

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<sup>4</sup> Zionists or Zionism: it is the political movement created to promote the establishment of a Jewish state. It is based on the idea that Jews wherever they live, constitute a single people (Berkovitz, 2006).



French citizenship in 1870 and certainly became assimilated into French society (Simon; Laskier and Reguer, 2002).

#### **1.4 Conclusion**

In fact, the history of the presence of the Jews in Algeria dates from first century until independence. Algeria was settled by the Berber tribes of central Maghreb. Some converted to Judaism over several centuries.

In 1830, two Jewish merchants Bacri and Busnach played the role in the French invasion of Algeria. Then, Jews came as merchants, craftsmen from different countries like Spain and Italy. Jews created their status in French government which helped them to create the local communities and consistories in Algeria unified in the Federation of Jewish. Hence, this chapter includes a historical background of the coming of the Jews to Algeria in order to give an idea about the formation of Jewish groups from the early period to French colonialisation. It may be deduced how the Jews formed their community and how the Jewish population increased in Algeria, in the second chapter.

## **2.1. Introduction**

The Jews of Algeria are a very diverse cultural group, due to Algeria's turbulent history. They experienced the several cultures and languages under diverse rulers, beginning with the Berbers, and followed by the Romans, the Arabs, the Turks and finally, the French. They established their communities in Algeria. Thus, the rate of Jewish population increased in Algeria.

This chapter provides the number of Jewish population in different Algerian cities, through citing necessary period of Jewish presence. Then, it shed the light on the organization of Jewish community in Algeria. Also, it points out to the Jewish family through proving their traditional dress, language, marriage and so forth.

## **2.2. Jewish Population**

The Jews of Algeria were assimilated to the European population as a result of the Crémieux Decree of 1870 (see the content of the Decree in chapter three), which conferred French nationality on them en masse, except a few thousand in the southern region, then not yet French. Their origins were diverse: some were descended from Jews who came from Palestine centuries before the Christian era, others from Berbers converted to Judaism after the Roman era, and still others from Jews who came from Spain in the exoduses of 1391 and 1492. In the main, the Jewish population was concentrated in the coastal areas and their immediate hinterland (*Chouraqui, 1954*).

The events in Algeria after 1954 and the climate of insecurity which they produced often resulted in the disintegration of the small Jewish communities of the interior, whose inhabitants left for the large cities or for France. Some small communities in the southern part of the Constantine region of East Algeria, such as that of M'Sila, completely disappeared as a consequence of repeated terrorist attacks in the spring of 1956, which resulted in the murder of several Jews. A Muslim boycott of Jews, particularly in various small localities and in Constantine in 1956-57, which had followed serious incidents between Jews and Muslims in May 1956, practically disappeared later (*Bush, 2016*).

One of its causes certainly had been a desire to suppress competition by all means, even assassination. This could explain a series of attacks in the summer of 1957 on Jewish merchants in a Muslim-Jewish business district of Bone. After the situation improved, not only did Jews cease to leave, but also a number of Jews returned from France. This was due in large part to the increased security in the major centers, to Algeria's economic growth, and to the difficulties of adaptation in metropolitan France, and especially of finding housing and jobs. Nevertheless, the normal evolution of the country, and in particular the rapid increase of the Muslim population 400.000 births each year posed the economic and social problem of providing for 300.000 children of school age and 60.000 to 80.000 new workers annually-tended to push the Jews back into their traditional occupations of small businessmen, artisans, and minor administrative employees. This tendency was reinforced by governmental measures designed to secure the social advancement of the Muslim population in accordance with its numerical importance (Bush, 2016).

The principal Jewish communities were Algiers with 30.000 Jews, Oran, with 30.000 and Constantine with 25.000. In the Algiers area Blida had 2.000, in the Oran area, Tlemcen had 5.000, Sidi-Bel-Abbes 3.000, and Mostaganem 2.000, in the Constantine area, Bone had 4.000 and Setif 1.500, and in the Sahara, Bechar had 2.000 and Chardaia 1.000. Other communities dispersed through the country had Jewish populations ranging from 50 to 1.000, and accounted for some 60.000 in all (Lazarus, 1958).

So, Jewish population growth in Algeria was significant after the conquest of the country by the French. In 1830, French troops invaded Algeria and over the next thirty years established their power over the territory, turning it into a colony of settlement. In this year, there were only between 30.000 and 35.000 Jews whereas in 1881 the Jewish population increased to 35. In 1931, however the Jewish population reached 110.127. In 1956, the number climbed to 132.10 as the following table demonstrates:

<b>Town or City</b>	<b>Population</b>
Algiers	35.000
Oran	35.000
Constantine	25.000
Ghardaïa (M'zab Saharan region)	6.000
Anaba (Bône)	5.000
Sétif	5.000
Skikda (Philipville)	4.000
Sidi-Bel-Abbès	4.000
Tlemcen	4.000
Mostaganem	2.000
Blida	1.400
Ain Temouchent	1.200
Mascara	800
Saida	800
Chlef (Orléanville)	600
Souk Ahras	500
Rélizen	450
Frigo	400
La Gnette	350
Afarville	240
Toughourt	150
Ouargla	120
<b>Total</b>	<b>132.10</b>

**Table 2.1. The Jewish Population of Algeria in 1956 (Laskier, 1994: 311)**

At the outbreak of World War II, about 400,000 Jews lived in French North Africa, only about 3% of the region's population. Most North African Jews had moved from small towns into colonial cities such as Algiers, Oran, Tlemcen, Sidi-Bel-Abbès, and Constantine in Algeria, where they constituted a significant percentage of the non-Muslim population (Laskier, 1994).

The Jewish population of the Algerian Sahara constituted a weak percentage of the overall population of Algerian Jewry, estimated at 30.000 in 1881, just over 57.000 in 1901 and 74.000 in 1921. Nevertheless, significantly, though Jews were a minority in these Saharan localities, there was unceasing Jewish presence in the M'zab Valley from six centuries. Thus the Saharan Jews moved from one place to another when patron-client relations changed and religious tolerance decreased, such that Saharan Jews were not fixed to any Saharan space, in Ghardaïa specifically, as in the M'zab

Valley more generally the Jewish presence was unusually long lived and continuous (Lorcin and Shepard, 2016).

On the eve of Algerian independence nearly 140,000 Jews lived in Algeria. After being granted independence in 1962, the Algerian government harassed the Jewish community and deprived Jews of their economic rights. As a result, almost 130,000 Algerian Jews immigrated to France (Laskier, 1994).

### **2.3 Jewish Consistories of Algeria**

Each Jewish community in Algeria was managed by a consistory elected and organized in conformity with the provisions of the law of 1905; under this law the consistories were specifically religious bodies, whose function was the organization of public worship. In principle, they had no role as representatives of the community, and no social function except to help the poor within the narrow limits of their budgets. They set up and organized the synagogues, named the rabbis, provided for religious instruction, and administered the Jewish cemeteries which existed in each Algerian Jewish community. Although their very limited role and the fundamental state subsidies which they received in certain cities, and which paid part of the salaries of the rabbis, almost all the consistories faced great difficulties in meeting their expenses. Hence, with rare exceptions, the rabbis received miserable salaries which undermined their authority and discouraged the youth from devoting themselves to the rabbinical calling. Thus the Rabbinical School of Algiers and the Talmud Torahs of Oran and Constantine inducted their students from the lowest economic levels of the population (Lazarus, 1958).

In order to make their work more effective, the Jewish consistories of Algeria had organized themselves, in April 1947, into a *Federation des Communautés Juives d'Algérie*. This central organization, which united sixty of the principal Algerian Jewish communities, was the first in the thousands of years of their history. The Federation held its annual meeting in Algiers on April 28, 1954. It resolved to bring Algerian Judaism into closer association with the great currents of world Judaism. The Federation also set itself the goal of establishing a rabbinical school for Algeria,

something which has not yet been possible because of lack of funds. The lack of such a school illustrated the harsh spiritual crisis which was affecting a Jewish community whose juridical emancipation had preceded its social emancipation. The result was a marked dejudaization and a strong trend towards assimilation (Laskier, 1994).

In addition, the conference of the Federation elected Benjamin Heler as president for the year 1954-55, Armand Attali as secretary general, Joseph Charbit as treasurer, and Paul Barkatz, Gaston Saffar, and Joseph Bensadoun as vice presidents. This council was chosen from the elected representatives of the consistories of the three Algerian departments. One of the principal decisions of the Federation was to support the extension of the work of the American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) in Algeria, in order to strengthen the weak life of the communities, to fight against the indifference of the Algerian Jewish middle class to Jewish questions, to remedy the absence of a network of social agencies, and thus to resist the trend toward assimilation noticeable in the growing number of mixed marriages. To correct of its own weakness, the Federation had on several occasions repeated this appeal to the JDC to extend its activities to Algeria, emphasizing the great poverty of a large part of the Algerian Jewish masses. In September 1953, the JDC announced that discussions were under way between JDC officials and leaders of the Jewish community of Algeria for the broadening of JDC activity to meet the specific needs of thousands of poverty-suffering Jews in Algeria (*American Jewish Year Book*, 1955).

The JDC contributed 1.000.000 Francs (\$28.570) for the immediate relief of needy victims of the earthquake in Orleanville (Chlef) in September 1954. JDC relief programs in Algeria had been previously limited to the cities of Algiers, Constantine, and Bone. Assistance of one kind or another was being provided to some 1.355 Algerian Jews annually. The *Assemble Generale du Comite Juif Algerien d'Action Sociale* met in Algiers on November 14, 1953. This committee had founded in 1940 by Professor Henri Aboulker to deal with the situation created by the Vichy racial decrees. It was reconstituted in April 1948 to assume a general defense of the interests of the Algerian Jewish community and to carry on cultural activities. At the time of writing (July 1954), it had 622 members in all parts of Algeria; 237 were in Algiers.

During the period under review the committee had been active in organizing radio programs dealing with Judaism, which had been a definite success, and had reached a large audience (*American Jewish Year Book*, 1955).

The committee had also organized lectures, addressed by speakers from France, including Armand Lunel, Emmanuel Eydoux, and Jules Isaac. Isaac, a famous historian whose book *Jesus et Israel* had wide repercussions in France, spoke on Judeo-Christian relations; his talks in January 1954 reached a very large public and strengthened inter-communal relations. The committee also published an interesting year book of North African Jewry in September 1953 (*American Jewish Year Book*, 1955).

The Commission *Culturelle Juive d'Algerie*, set up in December 1952 on the initiative of the North African Bureau of the World Jewish Congress, also organized lectures which were very successful. The Jewish communities of Algeria were represented in the *Consistoire Central des Israelites de France et d'Algérie*, whose head offices were in Paris. On December 5, 1953, elections took place for the ten Algerian members of the Consistoire Central; four from Algiers, three from Oran, and three from Constantine. These elections were a part of the constant and strong efforts of the leaders of the Algerian Jewish community to strengthen their ties with the Jews of the world. For the same purpose, Algerian Jewry was represented by a delegation at the third meeting general assembly of the World Jewish Congress in Geneva, from August 4 to August 11, 1953. Algerian Jewry was also represented by fourteen delegates at the World Congress of Sephardic Jews in Jerusalem, and sent representatives to Paris for the Court of French Jewry and for the sessions of the Alliance Israelite Universelle in June 1954 (*American Jewish Year Book*, 1955).

#### **2.4 Jewish Community in Oran, Algiers and Constantine**

At the time of the French entrance to Oran in 1831 the great majority of the city population was Jewish. According to a statistics conducted by the French there were about 2.800 Jews in Oran, well ahead of the local Christians and Muslims who together amounted to about 1.000 inhabitants. Under the French rule that lasted until

the Algerian independence in 1962, Oran turned into a modern port and the adjacent strategic town of Mers el-Kebir became a major maritime base (Ghiuzeli, 1996).

The Jewish community was governed by a Grand Rabbin and a president. A Beth Din (Jewish religious court) was established by the French in 1836; it functioned for five years under the presidency of Rabbi Messaoud Darmon before it was canceled by the French authorities. Messaoud Darmon became Grand Rabin of Oran in 1844 and kept this title until his death in 1866. The religious tradition of Oran is expressed in its own *mahzor*<sup>1</sup> (book of prayers): *Mahzor Wahran* (Ghiuzeli, 1996).

After 1860 the number of Jews in Oran increased with the arrival of new Jewish settlers, mainly refugees from Tetuan in Morocco who fled from the Spanish-Moroccan war of 1859-1860. By the mid 19th century there were about 5.000 Jews in Oran. The community was administrated by a *consistoire* that had a president and some ten members elected from the local notables. The religious functions were performed by a Grand Rabbin. A report from 1850 mentions another sixteen rabbis, three *dayanim*<sup>2</sup>, and three *shochtim* (ritual butchers). During the mid 19th century there were seventeen synagogues in Oran; of them only one belonged to the community while the others were private foundations run by the descendants of the original founder who decided who could represent them. The community was administrated by a number of committees charged with collecting money for the maintenance of the Talmud -Torah and assistance for the needy members of the community. A separate Gemiluth Hassadim organization was responsible of the funerals and assisted the family members during the mourning period. One of the committees was headed by a rabbi and was in charge of the local education. There were about twelve traditional schools that were attended by about 550 students. The first French school was opened in 1849 and by the mid 19th century attracted around 100 students. The beginnings of the

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<sup>1</sup> Machzor : Hebrew noun, plural mahzorim ; a Jewish prayer book designed for use on festivals and holy days (dictionary .com retrieved from www.dictionary.com)

<sup>2</sup> Dayamin: Hebrew noun plural of dayan; a person knowledgeable in Talmudic law whose advice on religious questions is often by Rabbis (dictionary .com retrieved from www.dictionary.com)



Jewish press in Oran are the result of the efforts of Elie Karsenty who started the publication of the weekly *La Jeunesse Israélite* in French and Hebrew followed by Magid Misharim, a Judeo-Arabic weekly. Moise Setrouk was the director of *La Voix d'Israël*, the monthly official bulletin of the *Association Culturelle Israelite du département d'Oran*<sup>3</sup>(*JudaicAlgeria*, 2015).

A major change in the legal status of the Jews of Oran, and indeed of the other Jewish communities of Algeria, resulted from the implementation of the law of October 24, 1870, generally known as the Crémieux Decree. The Crémieux Decree granted full French citizenship to all Jewish inhabitants of Algeria. Then, French citizenship gave all male Jews the right to participate in the local municipal elections. Given the high percentage of Jews in the general population of Oran and its region, the newly acquired French citizenship transformed the Jews into an important electoral force. Their electoral effect was even stronger as they generally voted homogeneously at the instructions of their leaders, such as Simon Kanoui, president of the Consistory of Oran for many years who declared publicly on a number of occasions that nobody would be elected mayor of Oran without his support (Ghiuzeli, 1996).

During the second half of the 19th century the Jewish population of Oran consisted of a number of distinct groups. The majority were descendants of the initial settlers who came from Mostaganem, Mascara, Nedroma, and Tlemcem. Together with the group made up of later immigrants from Algiers, the villages of the Rif region and the towns of Oudja, Sedbou and the oases of Figuig, they were known as the "Jews of Oran". They distinguished themselves from the group of immigrants from Tetuan and especially from other Jews who arrived in Oran from France and other countries of Europe. The construction of the Great Synagogue started in 1880 at the initiative of Simon Kanoui, but its inauguration took place only in 1918. Also known as Temple Israelite, it was located on the former Boulevard Joffre, currently Boulevard Maata Mohamed El Habib (Ghiuzeli, 1996).

The occupational structure of the Jewish population of Oran changed gradually at the end of the 19th century. If by 1900 the majority of Jews were still traditional

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<sup>3</sup> Retrieved from [www.judaicalgeria.com](http://www.judaicalgeria.com) traduit par Jacque Karoubi, 2015

artisans; tailors, goldsmiths, shoemakers, bakers, cabinet makers and so on. There were also some women who worked outside home as dressmakers, domestic workers, and typists. It is worth mentioning that the first vineyards in the neighborhood of Oran were planted and owned by Jews. Jews were prominent among the shopkeepers of the city and distributed with a large variety of merchandise. In 1942, the Jewish community of Oran sheltered a group of 150 Jews from Libya that had been expelled by the Italian Fascist authorities (Ghiuzeli, 1996) (Gottreich and Schroeter, 2011).

In the early 1950's, Oran had a majority of European population, was spared for some time from the violence. The city's Jewish community of almost thirty thousand people continued its regular life, but in February 1956 rioters attacked Jewish property. The following years were marked by a gradual deterioration of the security situation; it worsened considerably at the end of 1960 when the Jewish cemetery of Oran was desecrated. The early 1960's brought about a sharp decrease in the number of Jewish inhabitants of Oran (*JudaicAlgeria*, 2015).

In the other hand, Constantine was one of the most important Jewish communities in Muslim countries. Local scholars in the 15<sup>th</sup> century included Maimun Najar, Joseph B. Minir, called Ḥasid, whose tomb is venerated by Jews and Muslims to the present day, Joseph B. David, Isaac Kagig (also Kaçiç and Casès) and Samuel Atrani, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the poet Joseph Zimron and Moses Allouche, then in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Masud Zerbib (author). In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the community built its quarter. In 1818 the Turks from Algiers attacked Constantine; they stole, massacred, and kidnapped 17 young Jewish girls whom they brought to their commander. The girls were subsequently released. There were then 5.000 Jews in Constantine. After its capture by the French in 1837, many Jews left the city, and two years later the community numbered only 3.436. By 1934 the community grew to 12.000. In that same year on August, the Muslim population provoked by the propaganda of the French anti-Semites, attacked them. Twenty-five were killed and dozens wounded. When the Jewish resistance was organized, the massacres stopped but French forces had not interfered, despite the appeals of Muslim leaders (Corcos, 2008)

Traditional Jewish education prevailed in Constantine for hundreds of years. In 1849 the Consistory of Constantine was instituted coordinating Jewish community life. The *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, which strove to combine French modernity with Jewish tradition, started operating educational institutions in Constantine in 1902. The influence of French culture led to a gradual decline in the use of the local Judeo-Arabic dialect in favor of French. An intensive effort to preserve traditional Jewish culture and the Judeo-Arabic language was conducted by Rabbi Joseph Renassia (1879–1962), who wrote and translated over a hundred volumes in Judeo-Arabic. When Algeria gained its independence, there was a massive exodus of the Jewish community, which then numbered 15,000 and 20,000 mostly to France and Israel (Becker, 2008) (Attal, 2008).

In Algiers, The small Jewish community in the late middle ages was enlarged after 1248 by Jews from the Languedoc and about 1287 by Jews from Majorca. Before 1325 the port was visited regularly by Catalans and Genoese, as well as by Jewish ship owners and merchants. From the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Turks ruled in Algiers. In order to develop trade, they encouraged the creation of a rich class. They employed Jews as advisers and physicians; Jews were also responsible for the coining of money and the accounts of the treasury. The mass of the people, Moors and Jews, suffered periodically from the whims of the Janissaries and the hardness of the militia. In 1706 an outbreak of the plague and a terrible famine reduced many Jewish families to indigence. In the period of the Bey ruled, the Jews persecuted and the Bey ordered the destruction of synagogues because of the false accusations. Then, the Jews commemorated the failure of the Spanish who attacked Algiers in 1541 and 1775 which were celebrated every year by the whole community. From the 17<sup>th</sup> century onward, former Portuguese Marranos and many Dutch, Moroccan, and Leghorn Jewish families went to settle there. Skilled in business, many owning their own ships, they gained control of Algerian commerce and extended the system of letters of exchange, and that of concessions and agencies in Europe and the East. These new immigrants intermarried with the older families of the town and settled on the Street of the Livornese. These "Juifs Francs" or "Christian Jews" (because they wore European clothes), were employed by all European countries to ransom Christian prisoners.

Many were able diplomats who negotiated or signed various peace and trade treaties. Among these diplomats in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century were Jacob de Paz, Isaac Sasportas, David Torres, Judah Cohen and Soliman Jaquete. Their families became the aristocracy of the community and were active in promoting its welfare (Corcos, 2008).

Internal conflict in the Jewish community appeared only when the Kabbalists R. Joshua Sidun, R. Joseph Abulker, R. Aaron Moatti, and above all R. Abraham Tubiana introduced new rituals in their synagogues in accordance with the theories of R. Isaac Luria. Members of other synagogues considered this defiled and accused the innovators of promoting a dispute. The intense religious life of the community was stimulated later in the 16<sup>th</sup> century by prominent scholars such as R. Abraham Tawa, R. Moses Meshash, R. Abraham Gavison, R. Solomon Duran II and his follower R. Judah Khallas , R. Solomon Şeror and his grandson Raphael-Jedidiah Şerorn, the philosopher R. Masud Guenoun, the poet R. Nehorai Azubib and R. Judah Ayash , one of the most venerated rabbis of Algiers. Their works, however, were neglected by the new generations, which turned toward other forms of culture (Corcos, 2008).

In 1870 Algerian Jews became French citizens; subsequently antisemitism spread throughout the country manifesting itself in serious pogroms, particularly in Algiers (1884–87 and 1897–98). After World War I a Zionist conference, the first in Algeria, was organized at Algiers. Although the Jewish élite was always active in the defense of Judaism, they were loyal French citizens. The Algiers community was deeply affected by the nationalist struggle for independence. Much of the communal structure ceased to exist. The Great Synagogue in the ancient quarter damaged in the Christmas Eve riots of 1960 was only temporarily restored. The Maimonides rabbinical college was closed (Corcos, 2008).

## 2.5 Jewish Popular Religious Customs

Algerian Jews had their popular religious customs for example; they celebrated “Purim of Oran” on the sixth month of *Av*<sup>4</sup> to mark the day in 1838 that the Jews of Oran escaped a massacre. On the sixth of *Av* every synagogue in Oran recited a Hebrew hymn entitled “Mi Kamokha” composed in 1838 by Rabbi Messaoud Darmon. In Ghardaïa, especially the M’zab, the Jews would gather to recite *Piyyutim* and *Bakkashot* (hymn and supplications). Other important Jewish landmarks included the graves of Rabbi Isaac Draï in Sétif and Rabbi Sidi Fredj Halimi in Constantine and the tombs of Rabbi Yeoshua El Kaim and Rabbi Sion Sion in Media. (Simon; Laskier; Reguer, 2002)

The most venerated *zaddik*<sup>5</sup> is Rabbi Efraim Nkaou (Rab) of 14<sup>th</sup> Century Tlemcen. Nkaou was a Spanish who was a physician, came to Tlemcen in 1393, where he saved the life of the sultan’s daughter. As a reward, the sovereign allowed the Jews of Tlemcen who had been living outside the town to reside in the city. After Nkaou’s death in 1442, his grave became the tomb of the Rab and each year on the holiday, the Jews came to pilgrimage. (Simon; Laskier; Reguer, 2002)

## 2.6 Jewish Family

### 2.6.1 Traditional Dress

According to the Jewish Encyclopedia, a Jewish woman wears on her head a “*takrita*” (handkerchief). She is dressed a “*bedenor*” (gown with a bodice trimmed with lace) and a striped vest with long sleeves coming to the waist (see figure 2.1). The “*mosse*” (gridle) is of silk as the following figure shows (Birnbaym, 2004).

A Jewish man wears a “*tarbush*” or oblong turban with silken tassel, a “*sadriyyah*” or vest with large sleeves and “*sarwal*” or pantaloons fastened by

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<sup>4</sup> *Av* is a Hebrew summer month of 30 days. *Av* usually occurs in July–August on the Gregorian calendar (Encyclopedia, 2016).

<sup>5</sup> *zaddik* is a righteous and saintly person by Jewish religious standards (Encyclopedia, 2016).

“*hizam*” or girdle, his body covered by a mantle, a “*burnus*”, and a large silk handkerchief with the tassels on his feet (see figure 2.2) (Birnbauhn, 2004).



Figure 2.1. Jewish Women



Figure 2.2. Jewish Men in Algeria 1851

(Birnbauhn, 2004: 365).

## 2.6.2 Language

Before the arrival of French and the Spanish in the Maghreb, Jews spoke Arabic, Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic dialect where Arabic dominated. Traveling tradesman and businessman often learned one or two other languages, even though they knew that their co-religionists abroad spoke Hebrew. Because of their history and heritage, the Jews had commercial bonds with east and west alike. Since the Muslims did not have the same network of religious and cultural international relations, it was Hebrew and not Arabic that had become the international language during the time when the Arabs dominated world trade. Nearly all Jews who lived in the urban centers, they spoke French, if not those who lived in the smaller cities and villages more or less well, according to their level of education. Educated Jews also spoke other European languages learnt at school such as: English, Italian, Spanish and German (Carlen, 2010).

In Algeria especially, it is necessary to note the use of a *pied-noir* speech or *Pataouète* which borrows French, Spanish, Arabic, Italian, Maltese and Judeo-Arabic. The *pied-noir* speech was whose nature is French, borrows from foreign vocabularies

to illustrate predilection certain domains of life: food, sea and fishing, festivals, insults, swear words of any kind, countryside and hunting. It mixes of foreign languages. Here are some common words of *pied-noir* expressions: *bessif*; by the force, *kif kif*; same thing, *bled*; godforsaken place, *maboul*; loony (Carlen, 2010).

According to Diego De Haëdo, a Spanish Christian enslaved in the Regency of Algiers between 1578 and 1581, described the Jewish linguistic practice in the Regency: in schools, Jewish children learned to read and write in Hebrew, sometimes in Arabic, and they also wrote Hebrew in Arabic script. Before the French occupation in Algeria, most Algeria Jews spoke dialectal Arabic. Many Jews had two names, one Hebrew used in the Jewish community and at home, whilst second Arabic, used when the Jews interacted with Muslims. In rural area, Jews were sometimes totally assimilated and spoke the language of their neighbours exclusively. Those who were literate wrote Arabic in Hebrew script as a way to reflect ethnic or religious identity in the use of orthography (Benrabah, 2013).

### **2.6.3 Education**

Jewish boys traditionally studied in elementary schools (*kuttāb*), where teaching focused on Hebrew and religious instruction, while a very selective group continued their religious education in a *yeshiva* or *midrash* (religious schools). In the nineteenth century, modern schools began to be introduced across the Middle East and North Africa. More organized religious instruction was provided in modern *yeshivot* (plural of *yeshiva*), which began to be established in the mid-nineteenth century. Jewish religious education, however, ceased to be the only educational option for Jews, as modern and secular studies were introduced by Christian missionary, foreign, European Jewish and Ottoman state schools. Most influential was the French Jewish educational network, the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, which from the second half of the nineteenth century spread in the Ottoman Empire, Iran, and North Africa. Initially the opening of schools was met with some resistance by the local Jewish communities but it became a popular institution in the years that followed. The language of instruction was French but it also taught Hebrew and depending on time and place, offered courses in Arabic, Turkish, Spanish, and English. By the late nineteenth

century, classes in math, history, geography, physics, biology, and chemistry were being offered as well (Meri, 2016).

More radically, the Alliance also offered education to girls, a move that was met with much resistance from conservative Jewish figures. The system in general raised the socioeconomic position of each Jewish community and enabled Jews to obtain jobs in the modern sectors of the economy. In certain provinces of the Ottoman Empire, Muslims attended these schools because of the high level of education that was offered and befriended Jewish students and teachers (Meri, 2016).

In Algeria, the presence of the Alliance was weak, because as French citizens, Jews attended French state schools. Within the Ottoman Empire, the reforms included the establishment of a network of an imperial, modern education system and thus governmental schools known as *Rushdiyya* (primary), *Idādiyya* (preparatory to higher education), and *Sultāniyya* (*lycée*) opened their gates to Jewish students. Modern schooling helped Jews to integrate more effectively in international trading and commercial networks, operating from the major cities and commercial axis of the Mediterranean and beyond. (Bashkin and Schroeter , 2016).

#### **2.6.4 Marriage**

The traditional marriage system, which existed until about the 1960s, was characterized by the dowry and a strong endogamy rule. These two principles underwent major changes with the Westernization of Algerian Jews and their socioeconomic advancement. As endogamy was not only ethno-religious but also socioeconomic, wealthy Jews married into wealthy families, and matrimonial selection among the poor was confined to the lowest social categories. In the working-class environment, the dowry was not required when families had no means to provide it or when parents were eager to expedite their children's marriage, under fear of intermarriage. Also, because of potential brides were being educated and entering the labour market, dowries proved to be unnecessary. Similar to other released minorities, Algerian Jewish women, once integrated into French society, tended to postpone marriage until after education and embarking on an occupation. The demographic result of the social emancipation of Algerian Jews was thus a significant decline



in fertility rates; another was the increasing rate of intermarriage with Christians (but intermarriage with Muslims remained rare among Algerian Jews) (Khanam, 2005).

## **2.7 Conclusion**

Thus, the largest Jewish communities in Algeria were established in the major cities of the Mediterranean coast (Oran, Algiers, Bejaïa, Annaba, Mostaganem), as well as in cities of Tlemcen and Constantine. There were also Jews in the Sahara; Biskra, Djelfa, and in the Mزاب, in Ghardaïa. Less than one hundred Jews are left in Algeria today, after their emigration en masse in the early 1960s. Most live in Algiers and in Oran.

Indeed, the number of Jews in Algeria grew from the start of the French conquest of Algeria in 1830 to the imposition the Decree of 1870 which granted Algerian Jews their citizenship. It may be said this Decree helped the Algerian Jews to obtain their rights and identity, this what it defines in the third chapter.

### **3.1 Introduction**

The Jews of Algeria fought to prove themselves as French citizens in the face of competition and Anti-Semitism. The Crémieux Decree played an important role in obtaining of the Jews citizenship. Thus, some politician and historian Jews argued that the decree opened future prospects to the Jews in Algeria, but others affirmed that the decree was a kind of anti-Semitism. When the Vichy government ruled France between 1940 and 1942, it abrogated the decree in 1940.

This chapter includes the laws and rights that helped the Jews to gain their citizenship. It is based on the famous decree called Crémieux Decree was established in 1870 by a French lawyer Crémieux. After, the chapter shed light on the politicians and historian's point of views about the decree. Then, it refers to the impact of the Vichy government towards the Crémieux Decree. It tends to introduce the different ways and forms which helped the Jews to gain their rights and identity in Algerian society (during the colonial period till independence).

### **3.2 Crémieux Decree in 1870:**

#### **3.2.1 Who is Crémieux**

Isaac Adolphe Crémieux (1796–1880) was a French lawyer and statesman. He was born in Nimes. He was among the first Jewish pupils to be permitted to enter to the Lycée Impérial in Paris. Crémieux had a reputation as a defender of Jewish rights. In 1828 he became a member of the College of Notables of the Marseilles Consistory. In 1830 he settled in Paris, where he became a member of the Central Consistory. He became vice president of the Central Consistory in 1834 (Renauld, 2002).

In 1842, Crémieux entered the Chamber of Deputies and became one of the main leaders of the opposition. On behalf of the Central Consistory he helped to draft the law of May 25, 1844, which was to regulate the life of French Jewry until 1848 and after 1905. Crémieux became president of the Central Consistory in 1843 but had to retire in 1845. He took an important part in the 1848 revolution and until June 1848 was minister of justice in the provisional government. As such he was instrumental in

promoting, among other things, the abolition of the death penalty for political crimes and of slavery in the colonies. Although he had supported the election of Louis Napoleon to the presidency of the republic, Crémieux opposed the latter's coup d'état. On December 1851, he was consequently arrested and remained for some time in prison. He returned to parliament in 1869 as one of the members for Paris. Again a leader of the opposition, he became minister of justice. During his enforced retirement from public affairs, Crémieux concentrated on Jewish affairs. In 1864, he was elected a president of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, and lent all the weight of his authority and political experience to many of the steps taken by the Alliance to help oppressed Jewish minorities. From 1866, Crémieux was active on behalf of Moroccan, Romanian, and Russian Jewry. After his return to the government, Crémieux did not forget the problems encountered by Algerian Jewry. At that time French policy aimed at the complete assimilation of the Algerians, a process in which the Jews were also included. As a minister of justice, he signed the decree afterward known as the Décret Crémieux or Crémieux Decree (1870) by which the Jews of Algeria received French citizenship (Renauld, 2002).

In the 1870, he defeated the elections and became deputy for Algiers in 1872. He was elected a life senator by the National Assembly in 1875. Although he was an old man, he continued to take an active part in the work of the Alliance as president. His interest in the Jewish communities of North Africa and the Orient was unflagging. With his strong Jewish sense, Crémieux was the archetype of the extreme assimilated Jew who proved that it was possible to combine a sense of Jewish pride with deep involvement in the affairs of his country (Mimouni; Schlanger, 2006).

### **3.2.2 The Decree Content**

On October 24, 1870, The French government issued a decree to recognize the Jews of Algeria as French citizens. The Crémieux decree opened a wedge at the core of indigenous people in Algeria separating the Arabs from the Jews. The Cremieux Decree conferred French citizenship on all Jews in the three Departements of Algeria north of the Sahara (Algiers, Oran and Constantine) (*Report in the Foreign Scene*, 1962). In 1848, Adolphe Crémieux the Minister of Justice declared that the republic

desires the assimilation of Algeria with France. In 1870, Crémieux also happened to be Jewish, presented nine Decrees lying out political, legal and administrative reforms for Algeria. But just one which is the seventh is known as Decree Crémieux (Straton, 2008).

Hence, the Decree issued by French Minister of Justice Adolphe Cremieux, a leader of the Alliance Israelite Universelle. It was signed as Decree n° 136 of 1870 by Adolphe Crémieux as Minister of Justice, Léon Gambetta as Minister of the Interior, Alexandre Glais-Bizoin and Martin Fourichon as a naval and colonial minister (see figure 3.3). The decree was a memorable landmark in the progress of Algerian Jews toward full emancipation. After their collective naturalization, they became even more fervent patriots of France, taking an active part in Algeria's French-language commercial, intellectual, charitable and cultural endeavours, and also serving in the French Army (*Report in the Foreign Scene*, 1962).

The decree allowed for native Jews to automatically become French citizens while Muslim Arabs and Berbers were excluded and remained under the second-class indigenou. At the time of the decree, the Jews of Algeria were chiefly skilled craftsmen jewelers, silversmiths, tailors, shoemakers, blacksmiths, and metal workers. A sizable number were active in commerce. With radical improvement in status and opportunities came a drifting away from the Jewish tradition which, to some members of the community, seemed inextricably linked with the misery of Algerian ghettos<sup>1</sup> (*Report in the Foreign Scene*, 1962)

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<sup>1</sup> Ghettos: Pl of ghetto / 'get.əʊ /is an area of a city where Jews were made to live (Retrieved on August, 20, 2017 from: [www.dictionary .com](http://www.dictionary.com)).

B. n° 8.

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RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE.

N° 136. — DÉCRET qui déclare citoyens français les Israélites indigènes de l'Algérie.

Du 24 Octobre 1870.

LE GOUVERNEMENT DE LA DÉFENSE NATIONALE

DÉCRÈTE :

Les israélites indigènes des départements de l'Algérie sont déclarés citoyens français; en conséquence, leur statut réel et leur statut personnel seront, à compter de la promulgation du présent décret, réglés par la loi française, tous droits acquis jusqu'à ce jour restant inviolables.

Toute disposition législative, tout sénatus-consulte, décret, règlement ou ordonnance contraires, sont abolis.

Fait à Tours, le 24 Octobre 1870.

Signé AD. CRÉMIEUX, L. GAMBETTA, AL. GLAIS-BIZOIN, L. FOURICHON.

Figure 3.3: Decree n°136 of October 24, 1870 declaring the Jews Natives to Algeria to be French Citizens (Abitbol, 2003).

Translated for Marxist.org, 2015 by Mitch Abidor

The Government of National Defense

Decrees:

The Israelites native to the departments of Algeria are declared French citizens; consequently, their real status and their personal status shall be, dating from the promulgation of the present decree, regulated by French law, with all rights acquired until this day inviolable.

All contrary legislative dispositions, senatus-consults, decrees, rulings, or ordinances are abolished.

At Tours, October 24, 1870

Signed: Ad. Crémieux, L. Gambetta, Al. Glais-Bisoïn, L. Fourichin

### **3.2.3 The Point of Views of the Jews to the Decree**

According to Derrida (Jewish French philosopher), the Crémieux Decree opened a wedge at the core of the indigenous people in Algeria separating the Arabs from the Jews. It must be noted that the government which passed the Crémieux Decree of October 1870 granting citizenship to the indigenous Jews was essentially racist vis-à-vis the Arabs and Berbers. Whereas, the Decree of June 1870 allowed Europeans and Jews to select the *conseils généraux*, the Decree of 28 December 1870 denied suffrage for the Arabs and Berbers on the basis that it violated the principal of public law by granting the right of suffrage and candidature upon person who were not French. Under the senatus-consult of 1865, the Arabs and Berbers followed to the French laws but never obtained the rights of political citizenship. In contrast, the Jews of Algeria, the Arabs and Berbers had to concede their religion and culture. One of the ideological intentions of the Crémieux Decree was to fracture the native community to better rule over the later. Although it granted citizenship to the Jews the Crémieux Decree never attenuate the racism at the heart of the French colonizer. As a result, Derrida showed that although the Jews were granted French citizenship by Crémieux Decree, the Jews couldn't properly identify with alien cultural models (Haddour, 2000).

While, Abitbol; an Israeli Jewish historian; said in his thesis, the Crémieux decree played a crucial role in “dejudaization” of the Jews of Algeria; other factors are taken into consideration that inflect this supposition in significantly different directions. Whereas, Jewish Tunisian historian named Jacque Taïeb argues that the Crémieux decree be seen as accelerator or catalyst for a relative decomposition of Jewish identity in Algeria, instead of the primary cause of disassociation. He shows that the Decree claims for a crucial place in the fluctuation of the turn of the century French anti-Semitism (Stovall and Abeelee, 2003).

### **3.2.4 Vichy Rule and the Crémieux Decree**

#### **3.2.4.1 The Creation of Vichy Government**

After France declared war on Germany, it spent nine months engaged in a “drôle guerre” without actively fighting until the German invasion of France on May 10, 1940. Paul Reynaud, a conservative, became the Prime Minister on March 19, 1940, believing that the French Republic could resist the invasion. Reynaud appointed World War one (WWI) hero Marshal Philippe Pétain as vice-president of the Council of Ministers in an attempt to support national morale. Pétain was a living symbol of France’s military success. His role at the Battle of Verdun had not been forgotten, during which time the French people had fought together to protect their beloved nation. Verdun embodied the national unity that had disappeared from France after the Great War. Unlike Reynaud, Pétain believed the war to be lost in May 1940. His focus was not on trying to win the war but rather to obtain an acceptable peace for his nation. Pétain believed that the French people would be abandoned if the government left metropolitan France. In his opinion, the French government had to focus on French interests, not international ones. Furthermore, Pétain feared the harsh nature of the German invasion, remembering the events of WWI, and believed an armistice could provide some measure of protection for the French people from the German army. He did not see an armistice as something that would harm France or reduce France’s power as a nation. Reynaud stepped down as head of the government in Bordeaux the evening of June 16, 1940 and proposed Pétain as his successor. This new government, the last of the Third Republic was formed constitutionally with the sole purpose of asking what the German peace proposal would be. For Pétain, an armistice did not constitute a defeat; rather, continuing a war France was certain to lose and that the people did not want to fight would only cause more despair for the nation. Moreover, this decision was not cowardly, but rather a wise tactical decision that would allow for France to be preserved as a nation. While some ministers were opposed to admitting defeat, Pétain went forward with the armistice and signed it on June 22, 1940. The agreement divided France into two zones: the Germans controlled the northern zone, including the entire Atlantic coast of France while Vichy controlled the southern zone,

roughly two-fifths of France. The armistice went into effect three days after it was signed. Thus, Pétain believed the armistice was in the best interests of the French nation. He did not want to spill the blood of his people to prolong the dreams of a few men. He affirmed that Frenchmen would still govern France and that the nation would arise anew after the war (Rukmani, 2012) (Paxton, 1972).

### **3.2.4.2 Impact of Vichy Government towards Crémieux Decree**

From 1940 to 1942, while the Vichy regime was the nominal government of France as a whole, Germany militarily occupied northern France. Vichy Regime is the common name of the French State headed by Marshal Philippe Pétain during World War II. It represents the unoccupied "Free Zone" (in the southern part of metropolitan France and French North Africa) (Paxton, 1972).

During its two-year reign, Vichy passed laws in conjunction with the German authorities. Some laws were linked to the armistice of June 22, 1940, which granted the Germans the right to arrest and deport any person, Jewish or otherwise, who had broken German law and sought asylum in France. Vichy published anti-Semitic propaganda that had the effect of separating Jews from the rest of French society and isolated them before they were arrested and deported (Bhatia, 2012).

On 7 October 1940, a law named for Vichy's interior minister Marcel Peyrouton abolished the Crémieux Decree and stripped the Algeria's Jews from their citizenship (McDougall, 2017). Soon, Jews were dismissed from the Algerian civil service and the public school system, and were subjected to numerous other oppressive measures. Nevertheless, many important Moslem leaders turned a deaf ear to anti-Jewish propagandists sent by the Nazis and the Vichy government to enlist their support. Algeria's Jews played a gallant role in the Free French resistance movement, and were active in the 1942 uprising that neutralized Algiers during Allied landings. After the Allied occupation, Algerian Jews took for granted that the Vichy-imposed anti-Jewish measures were void; but it was not until March 1943 that General Henri Giraud, appointed by the Allies as Chief of State in French Africa, officially abrogated Vichy laws and decrees. To the bitter disappointment of the Jewish community,



however, he reaffirmed Vichy's revocation of the Cremieux Decree. This new annulment of the French citizenship of Algerian Jews elicited strong protests throughout the world particularly from the Free French, who termed it "a fascist act contrary to the laws of the French Republic." In October 1943, following direct intervention by President Roosevelt, all measures based on racial and religious discrimination in Algeria were declared null and void. The rights of French citizenship were restored, and the Cremieux Decree was finally reinstated (*Report on the Foreign Scene*, 1962).

### **3.3 Jewish Rights and Identity**

The 1870 Crémieux decree occupies the center of every study and history of Algerian Jewry. As a watershed, it is crucial to understand the ways in which Algerian Jews and other colonial groups responded to the changes imposed by the mass naturalization. For Algerian Jews, the Crémieux decree represented the first step in a series of transformations, which would lead in a new, double identity as both others and Frenchmen (Roberts, 2011).

The story of obtaining the Algerian Jews' rights and identity started since an ancient period. Whereas, under Islam, Jews were isolated into their status of protected minority, *dhimmi* (non-Islamic citizens in Islamic status), but still remained an integral part of North African society, especially within the realm of commerce and in their connections with North African rulers. Two well-known examples include the Bacri and Busnach families, Jewish merchants whose ties with France ultimately led to the French occupation of Algiers in 1830. Algerian Jews celebrated the arrival of the French, who they believed to be their saviors from oppression under Islam. After welcoming the French to Algiers in 1830, the Algerian Jews' status began to change. By 1842, French courts had jurisdiction over Algerian Jewish affairs, which decreased the autonomy of the Jewish community (Birnbaum, 2003).

In addition, according to a France Senate Decree of July 14, 1865 for example; The Hebrew and Muslims natives of Algiers are Frenchmen. They are governed by their personal status, and are allowed to serve in the land and sea forces, as well as

most public service jobs in Algeria. They can acquire the rights of French citizens by applying for citizenship after they have reached the age of twenty (20) (Mendelsohn, 2003).

In France, consistories acted as an intermediate representative governing body between the state and different religious groups. In 1862, the French consistory system formally absorbed the local consistories of Algeria, dealing a fatal blow to the older style of Jewish dominance in Algeria. At that time, there were 23.061 Jews in Algeria: 9.180 in the department of Algiers, 9.414 in Oran, and 6.470 in Constantine. The story of French Jews in the Revolution and their rapid assimilation served as the rationale for the idea of naturalizing Algerian Jews. The Sénatus-Consulte of July 14, 1865 was the first major step in incorporating Algerian Jews in the French citizenry, allowing Jews to become citizens on an individual basis. According to the Jewish Central Consistory of France's 1871 publication on the naturalization of Algerian Jews, the jurisdiction of French courts over Algerian Jews led to extreme "disorganization." Whereas, French judicial officials ignored the principles of Jewish personal status, and due to their lack of knowledge of Talmudic law, they failed to properly separate Jewish affairs. The Consistory confirmed that the only solution to this problem was to naturalize the Jews *en masse* and remove all confusion regarding their personal status. As the Jewish Central Consistory, located in Paris, took an interest in their situation, Algerian Jews also took action. At the end of December 1869, the Constantine Jewish consistory submitted a petition to the Central Consistory demanding collective naturalization for the Jews of Algeria. In March 1870, members of the Oran Jewish consistory participated in a meeting with the Prefect (Ouali) of Oran on the issue of collective naturalization. On this occasion, the Prefect asked the consistory leadership two questions: would Algerian Jews react favorably to naturalization and should the French administration give the Jews a year in which to decide if they would like to refuse such naturalization and make a declaration to this effect? To the former, the consistory leadership unanimously agreed that Jews would welcome naturalization. On the second issue, they were divided on whether Jews should be given such an option. Members of the Oran consistory wrote to the National Defense Government in

September 1870 to offer their support and express their thanks for the work of the government on behalf of Algerian Jews and their rights (Roberts, 2011).

In response to lobbying from the Algerian and Parisian consistories, French politicians took up the issue of naturalizing Algerian Jews. In March 1870, Émile Ollivier, then Minister of Justice, presented a law draft to the Conseil d'État (State Council). The law in question collectively naturalized the Jews of Algeria. Olivier passed on responsibility for the law to Adolph Crémieux (Roberts, 2011).

As it is mentioned earlier, Crémieux prepared a Constitution for Algeria. On October 24, 1870 he submitted nine decrees to the Government council, which ratified them. These decrees established a civil regime ending the era of military control of Algeria, enforced trial by jury, and naturalized Algerian Jews *en masse*, giving them the status of French citizens (Roberts, 2011).

According to Elizabeth Friedman's colonialism and after; Algerian Jews did not necessarily embrace their new status. In fact, some went so far as to resist the requirement of French civil law by refusing civil marriage. Eventually, however, Algerian Jews accepted their new citizenship and accepted it, even if grudgingly, at the exhortation of their leaders and elites, who had petitioned for such naturalization and held great sway over their community (Birnbaum, 2003).

In December 1871, the Jewish consistory of Oran noted "very satisfactory" participation in the elections of municipal and general councils. According to their statistics, in the department of Oran, 1.440 Jews were inscribed on electoral lists, and 1.179 had actually voted in the past municipal and general council elections, resulting in the election of 22 Jews to these councils. This massive entrée onto the political scene led to increased competition in elections and greater competition between groups of citizens, especially following the 1889 naturalization of the non-French European immigrants to the colony (Schreier, 2010).

By 1891, Algerian Jews were rapidly adapting to their new identity and status as citizens. In celebration of his installation as Chief Rabbi, Rabbi Moses Weil gave a sermon. Over the next seventy years, Algerian Jews entered politics, joined municipal

governments, and actively defended their rights as citizens and their patriotism (Roberts, 2011).

### **3.4 The Evian Agreement**

The Évian Agreement comprises a treaty which was signed on 18 March 1962 in Évian-les-Bains, France by France and the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic, the government-in-exile of FLN (Algerian National Liberation Front) which sought Algeria's independence from France. The Évian Accords consisted of 93 pages of detailed agreements and arrangements. In essence these covered cease-fire arrangements, prisoner releases, the recognition of full sovereignty and right to self-determination of Algeria, in addition to guarantees of protection, non-discrimination and property rights for all Algerian citizens. A section dealing with military issues provided for the withdrawal of French forces over a period of two years<sup>2</sup> (Britannica.com).

French President Charles de Gaulle wanted to maintain French interests in the area, including industrial and commercial primacy and control over Saharan oil reserves. In addition, the European French community (the *colon* population), the Europeans and indigenous Sephardi Jews in Algeria were guaranteed religious freedom and property rights as well as French citizenship with the option to choose between French and Algerian citizenship after three years (Britannica.com).

The page 93 of Evian Agreement March 1962 provides for the withdrawal of French troops within three years, but assures continued French military presence through long term leases of a number of bases and installations. Independent Algeria is to be associated with France and will remain part of the franc zone, and France will furnish substantial financial aid, as well as technical and cultural assistance. France and Algeria are to share equally in gas and oil production, and in the exploitation of minerals in the Sahara Desert. Guaranteed rights for resident Europeans are a key feature. The Evian agreement stipulates that the position of the Jews of Algeria will be no different from that of Christian Europeans. Both groups will exercise all Algerian

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<sup>2</sup> Retrieved from [www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com)

citizenship rights for three years. Then, three alternatives will be open to each French citizen resident in Algeria and hence to each Jew:

1. He will be able to adopt Algerian nationality through the simple administrative formality of entering his name on the Algerian electoral rolls without losing the right to regain French citizenship if he leaves Algeria and moves to France to take advantage of the Law of Welcome for Repatriates. As an Algerian of former French nationality, he will be assured special political and linguistic safeguards.
- 2, He will be free to remain in Algeria without relinquishing his French citizenship, thus becoming, in effect, a privileged foreigner. A Franco-Algerian Convention guaranteeing the religious, cultural and linguistic rights of the French community will also protect the property of French citizens, permit their participation in public affairs and preserve their personal status with regard to marriage, inheritance and the like.
3. He will be able to emigrate without hindrance, during the three-year transitional period or thereafter (*Report on the Foreign Scene, 1962*).

In addition to these assurances and guarantees, the Algerians commitment to subscribe "without reservation" to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to maintain equal political rights for all citizens, regardless of origin, race or religion, and to ensure full freedom to all faiths. The agreement is generally regarded as an equitable one, its assurances of essential rights adequate under normal circumstances. But normalcy has not yet been achieved in Algeria, and all indications point to an indefinite period of political and spiritual disorder. Therefore, much will depend on the character of the government which arises from the present power struggle, and its desire to observe the provisions of the Evian Agreement in good faith (*Report on the Foreign Scene, 1962*).

### **3.5 The Manifestation of Anti-Semitism in Algeria**

Anti-Semitism is a special term used in Algeria to distinguish between Jews and Semitic Arabs were derived primarily from the European settler population in and around towns and cities in the north such as Algiers, Oran and Constantine. After

1830, anti-Jewish organizations, newspapers appeared during election campaign, in part the product of competition among settler political parties for Jewish votes ( more than 10 percent of the total vote in some towns and cities) (Levy, 2005).

Anti-Semitic organizations arose at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century. After the Dreyfus affair started in 1894, anti-Jewish mobilization increased in Algeria. The anti-Jewish league sponsored petitions; Jewish merchants were boycotted, street demonstration, attacks on Jewish shops and neighborhoods. Moreover, a dispute involving a party of French cyclists from Oran led to violence and pillage at Mostaganem, and the sacking of the synagogue. Similar incidents occurred in several other places. The French police were tolerant in dealing with the disputes, and the courts imposed only minor sentences. Anti-Jewish candidates scored notable successes at the polls. One of the active anti-Semites, Max Regis, was elected governor of Algiers in 1898. Among six deputies from Algeria elected to the French Parliament that year, four were anti-Semites (*Report on the Foreign Scene, 1962*) (Levy, 2005).

Moreover, Emil Morinaurd, mayor of Constantine in 1890s, fired Jews from all local civil service positions, ordered hospitals to refuse them treatment, and even threatened to exclude them from public schools. Anti-Semitic mayors in Oran and Algiers quickly followed suit. And in these two cities, Anti-Jewish persecution extended beyond legal measures. European colonists planned and executed deadly pogroms in Oran in 1897 and in Algiers in 1898 (Arkin, 2014).

Anti-Semitism in twentieth century shifted directly to the domain of the political Right in both France and Algeria. In Algeria, however, it retained its popular appeal. In the 1920s and 1930s, electoral platforms in Oran, Algiers and Constantine called for exclusion of Jews from public service, setting of Jewish property and abrogation of Crémieux Decree. In 1934 in Constantine, Muslims demonstrators killed several Jews. This new annulment of the French citizenship of Algerian Jews by the abrogation of Crémieux Decree elicited strong protests throughout the world particularly from the Free French, who termed it as fascist act contrary to the laws of the French Republic. The approval of Algerian anti-juifs by right-wing organizations in metropolitan France suffered in the Vichy government abrogation of the Crémieux

Decree. However, the rights of French citizenship were restored, and the Crémieux Decree was finally reinstated in 1943 (Levy, 2005).

The Jews couldn't live peacefully when two events forced them decisively into the French camp: the first was the burning of the Great synagogue in Algiers in December 1960. Arabs continued the rampage ripping memorial plaques from the walls, and torching books and Torah scrolls. The second was the murder in June 1961, while he was out shopping in the market, of the famous Jewish musician, Sheikh Raymond Leyris, a symbol of a shared Arab-Jewish culture and father-in-law of the singer Enrico Macias<sup>3</sup> (the blogs by Lyn Julius, 2012).

Then, after independence the majority of Jews in Algeria left for France, Israel and North America (Levy, 2005).

### **3.6 Conclusion**

What can be concluded in this last chapter is that the Crémieux created the decree in order to give the light to the Jews to get their rights of citizenship. It summarizes the Jewish rights and identity in Algeria between 1870 and 1962. It also indicates to the impact of the anti-Semitism and how it raised its manifestation in Algeria.

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<sup>3</sup> Retrieved from: <http://blogs.timesofisrael.com>

As it is known, the Jewish settlement in Algeria can be traced back to the first centuries. Probably nearly 2600 years ago in 586 BC. Thus, the presence of Jews in Algeria extends from the pre-Roman period to the early 1960s, when Algeria became independent. French colonialism lasted from 1830 to 1962. Under the French each municipal council and chamber of commerce had one or two Jewish members. In 1858, a Jewish general counselor was elected for each province. Thus, Jewish population growth in Algeria was significant after the conquest of the country by the French. In 1830, French troops invaded Algeria and over the next thirty years established their power over the territory, turning it into a colony of settlement. In this year, there were only between 30.000 and 35.000 Jews whereas in 1881 the Jewish population increased to 35.563.

In October 24, 1870, by the Crémieux Decree all Algerian Jews became French citizens. In 1947, the Communities Federation was established for the purpose of defending Algerian Jewry and protecting its religious institutions.

So, this dissertation helps the readers in exploring the presence of the Jews in Algeria in certain period and the status of the Jews during colonial period. Thus, the dissertation based on the existence of the Jews and the Jewish citizenship in Algeria.

What attracted me to this research is the presence of Jewish tomb in almost state in Algeria, and I asked in this note to know the reason behind the presence the Jews in Algeria and when the rate of Jewish population was high.

Trough this study, the presence of Jews in Algeria was even greater in Algiers, Constantine and Oran. As these states were considered capitals of the center region, east and west at the period of French colonialism. Thus, the Jews were be able to establish their communities and political structure due to their population density and with the help of the Decree which guaranteed their rights as French citizens. Where they could learn and build their own schools.



Through this research could be conclude two important issues; the first one is the existence of the Jews in Algeria in colonial period was not a coincidence. Whereas, the France was the responsible of coming the Jews in Algeria by the fabricated event (fly-whisk event) and it was granted their citizenship in the colonial period. The second one is the integration of the Jews with Algerian traditions in term of dress and even the language.

Moreover, this research paper points out to the manifestation of the Anti-Semitism but it did not expand to this issue. Therefore, the researcher proposes to the students who are coming to establish their graduate dissertation to expand to this subject.

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