

Handout

Gallery Walk: Jewish Life before the War

What might these images suggest about diversity in socio-economic status among the Jews of North Africa?



Interior of a Jewish home in the Mellah, 1915. Credit: Center of the Judeo-Moroccan Culture.



Paul Queste, Panoramic view of entrance to the Mellah, 1916. Credit: Multimedia Library of Architecture and Heritage via [Wikipedia Commons](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Entrance_to_the_Mellah_in_Fez.jpg).

What do you notice about some of the different roles Jews played in society?



Israelite Traders, 1929. Credit: Center of the Judeo-Moroccan Culture.



A troop of native minstrels, 1914. Credit: Center of the Judeo-Moroccan Culture.

What do you notice about the roles Jews played in the society of pre-war Algeria?



Josef Roger Cheraki Prepares Medicines in His Pharmacy's Laboratory with the Help of Female Assistants, ca. 1942. Credit: [United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Denise Layani.](#)



Joseph Roger Cheraki Poses in the Uniform of an Algerian "Sous Lieutenant." Algiers, Algeria, 1935. Credit: [United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Denise Layani.](#)

What questions do these photos raise about Jewish education in pre-war North Africa?



Libyan Jewish Classroom in Benghazi Synagogue, ca. 1930-1940.
Credit: [Wikipedia Commons](#).



Young Jewish Classes, Fez, 1915. Credit: Center of the Judeo-Moroccan Culture.

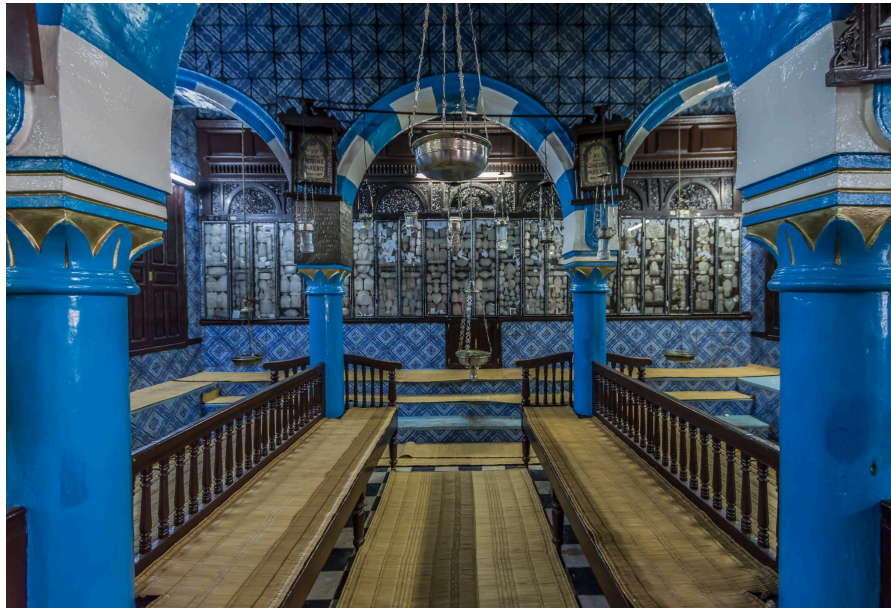


A Group of Tunisian School Girls, ca. 1930-1935. Credit: [United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Nadia Cohen Franco](#).

What questions do these images raise about what Jewish worship looked like in pre-war North Africa?



*Jews from Libya Sitting in a Sukkah*¹, n.d. Credit: [Jimena Experience](#).



El Ghriba Synagogue in Djerba, Tunisia, 2016.² Credit: [Wikimedia Commons](#).

¹ A sukkah is a temporary hut built for use during the Jewish holiday of Sukkot.

² Although the current building was reconstructed in the late 19th century, this site is believed to date back to 586 BCE or 70 CE.

What questions do these images raise about the types of clothes Jewish people chose to wear when posing for formal photographs?



The Wedding of Terese and Nachum Cohen. Tunis, Tunisia, 1920. Credit: [United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Nadia Cohen Franco.](#)



Margalith (Anna Claude) Ghozlan's Parents and Grandparents Are Pictured in Front of Their House. Anna's Father Built This House before He Married. Constantine, Algeria, 1933. Credit: [United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Margalith Ghozlan Gafni.](#)

What questions do these images raise about the types of clothes Jewish people chose to wear when posing for formal photographs?



Jewish Couple in Tunisia, ca. 1890-1923. Credit: Frank and Frances Carpenter Collection, [Library of Congress](#).



Jews of Tunis, ca. 1940. Credit: [Wikipedia Commons](#).



Vivian Varda and her sister, Yvonne n.d., Libya. Credit: [Jimena Experience](#).

What questions do these images raise about the types of clothes Jewish people chose to wear when posing for formal photographs?



Portrait of the Beretvas Family in Their Home in Tunis, 1938.
Credit: [United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Ori Schwartz Beerl](#).



Terese Cohen, a Tunisian Jewish Women, Poses with Her Two Children, Nadia and Marcel, 1929. Credit: [United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Nadia Cohen Franco](#).

How does this excerpt from an interview with Sidney Chriqui shed light on pre-war Jewish life in terms of language and culture?

"I have to go back a little bit and tell you how the Jews were living in the mellah [Jewish quarter], in Rabat. Without outstretching your arms . . . you could touch both sides of the streets. The streets were extremely narrow, and – and everybody knows everybody else. Once a year, they would paint the houses around Pesach. And they would also put the paint on the street... And all the streets were either in blue or or in white. And it was very colorful . . .

I have to explain to you that a family of nine with a father not being employed was not a picnic. It was very difficult for my mother. And at that time, in order to make ends meet, they had to sell her jewelry. And she had plenty of it. And I was about four or five years old when I was registered in a French school . . .

We all loved the French language. And Hebrew came as a second one, because Hebrew was not the Hebrew that is spoken today. It was the Hebrew from the Bible that we recited in school, in books, and when we moved later on to Jewish schools. Most of us loved the French language and loved their way of living, and we immediately separated ourselves from the Arabs.

I speak Arabic fluently. And ever since the French came in, we insisted on speaking French in the house, because we could converse in French. We were coming from the French schools. But Arabic was the way we addressed our relatives, the oldest persons in the family, my aunts, my uncles, my mother in particular, her motherSo we grew up in this ambience, I would say, where we had French songs—Tina Rossi, Rina Ketty, Maurice Chevalier. And all these songs in the middle of Arab music all around us. So we grew up loving both languages, particularly the songs, because the Arab songs at the time—and even now—are very beautiful."³

³ Chriqui, Sidney. Interview 54367. Interview by Jacqueline Gmach, June 01, 2015. *Visual History Archive*, USC Shoah Foundation, accessed March 15, 2023.

How does this excerpt from an interview with Jaqueline Gmach shed light on pre-war Jewish life in terms of relationships inside and outside of the Jewish world?

"My father was a very well-known dentist, very established as a VIP in the community. He was born in Tunisia. He met my mother - oh, in fact he saw my mother in Tunis, ask her the next day to marry him. She agreed. And she was visiting from Algeria. And they got married three months later.

. . . we had a beautiful life. I do recall having excellent relationship with my friends, the Arabs, kids. And I know that even today I define myself as an Arab Jew... I didn't erase this past and this tradition from my almost a day-to-day living. I do believe that I am an Arab Jew.

As Jews from our country, we were really what we like to define a family . . . a family was extended family . . . At Shabbos⁴ [the Jewish Sabbath starting at sunset on Friday and ending Saturday evening], for example, we were having Shabbos meals always all together, 40, 50 people. And everybody is screaming, telling a story, and everybody being very happy."⁵

⁴ Jewish Sabbath from Friday evening to Saturday night.

⁵ Gmach, Jaqueline. Interview 52915. *Visual History Archive*, USC Shoah Foundation, February 18, 2014.