

## **Moroccan Jewish Emigration in the Age of Independence Movement: A Reappraisal<sup>1</sup>**

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From 1948 onwards, the Jews of the Arab world left the countries of their ancestors not to return. The bulk of these migrations, around six hundred thousand persons, settled in the newly created Jewish State of Israel, in ancient Palestine. Most of them were Moroccan Jews, as Moroccan Jewry was the biggest of the Arab world. Although motivations may seem obvious, the crash of two emerging and powerful opposite nationalisms, Arab and Jewish, several studies have already pointed out that the situation was much more complex.<sup>2</sup> The aim of this article is to avoid easy conclusions and to come as close as possible to the position of Jewish populations, in view of the Arab world's personal attitudes towards Zionism, the creation of the State of Israel, the emergence of Arab nationalism, and the independence claims of Arab countries. That is, it tries to understand how local Jewish populations were positioned, particularly in Morocco, in relation to the important political changes that were taking place in the North of Africa and the Middle East in the mid-XX<sup>th</sup> century: on one hand, the creation of the State of Israel and, on the other hand, the independence of the Maghreb countries. These ten years, in which nothing was written, determined the future of most of the Maghreb countries and their diverse populations.

For this research, I consulted the archival documents from the Anglo-Jewish Association relating to North Africa, the Middle East and the Arabian Peninsula. These documents are part of the Parkes Collection at the Archives of the Library of the University of Southampton in the United Kingdom. The

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2. André Chouraqui, *Between East and West: A History of the Jews of North Africa* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1968); Haim Zafrani, *Los judíos del occidente musulmán: Al-Andalus y el Magreb, Colección El Magreb*, vol. 13 (Madrid: Mapfre, 1994); Eloy Martín Corrales, "Conflictividad entre judíos y musulmanes en el protectorado español en Marruecos durante la Segunda República (1931-1936)," en *Los judíos en Ceuta, el Norte de África y el Estrecho de Gibraltar* (Ceuta: Instituto de Estudios Ceutíes, 2014), 81-124; Mohammed Kenbib, "Moroccan Jews and the Vichy regime, 1940-42," *The Journal of North African Studies* 19 (4) (2014): 540-53.

Anglo-Jewish Association, the American Jewish Committee and the Alliance Israélite Universelle, in addition to the World Jewish Congress, led the support by European and American Jewish organisations of the Jews of North Africa after World War II, the creation of the State of Israel, and the independence of the Maghreb countries. A comparative approach regarding the situation and responses of other North African Jewish communities helps to understand the particular situation of Moroccan Jews and Moroccan Jewish responses.

Jewish communities in North Africa, such as the Moroccan or Libyan communities were ancient and preceded the Arab conquest. However, their language and culture, like those of the non-Jewish populations, were strongly influenced by Arabisation. There was what Haim Zafrani defined as a symbiosis, a cultural syncretism in the Muslim West.<sup>3</sup> They were joined by part of the Spanish-Portuguese Diaspora from the fourteenth and fifteenth century onwards. The newcomers soon prospered in the coastal cities, one of the points of economic and cultural support of the penetration of European colonialism in North Africa three centuries later.

Historians have idealised relations between Jews and Muslims when comparatively observed with the Jewish situation in medieval Christian Europe.<sup>4</sup> We must remember, however, that Jews were not in a situation of equality, but neither were they completely segregated or totally marginalised. The interiorisation, not only legal but also conceptual and symbolic, as evidenced by popular traditions, folklore, proverbs, etc., contrasted with their effective protection by the Muslim rulers as well as their integration into the socioeconomic structure, both in the Ottoman Empire and Morocco. Jews acted as economic intermediaries among tribes in rural areas, as craftsmen in trades despised by Muslims, as translators and economic agents, politicians and diplomats of the sultans at the highest level. Also, negative Muslim popular beliefs about Jews were found alongside beliefs that attributed positive values to them, for example their medical knowledge or the magical powers of their saints, from which Muslims also benefited.<sup>5</sup>

European colonisation had an important impact on all areas of life and politics in North Africa, including not only the sphere of relations between

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3. Zafrani, *Los judíos del occidente musulmán: Al-Andalus y el Magreb*, 408.

4. Mark R Cohen, "The 'Golden Age' of Jewish-Muslim Relations: Myth and Reality," in *A History of Jewish-Muslim Relations: From the Origins to the Present Day*, ed. Abdelwahab Meddeb and Benjamin Stora (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 28-38.

5. Robert Attal, "Croyances et préjugés: image du juifs dans l'expression arabe populaire du Maghreb," in *Les Relations entre juifs et musulmans en Afrique du Nord XIXè-XXè siècles: Actes du colloque international de l'Institut d'Histoire des pays d'Outre-Mer* (Paris: Éditions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1980), 56-61.

Jews and Muslims but also the realm of ideas, ideologies and notions of identity. Conflicts between Muslims and Jews were not extraordinary, though not the rule, since the advent of European colonialism in the Arab world, partly due to the identification of Jews with the interests of the colonisers. The effective colonial occupation or establishment of protectorates aggravated this situation. In April 1912, for example, anti-colonial and anti-Jewish riots that left more than fifty victims broke out in Fez, Morocco.<sup>6</sup>

In Palestine, the conflicting British promises to Jews and Muslims introduced a new and, ultimately, decisive, element of tension. Violence in 1929 in Palestine for the control of the Wailing Wall did not, however, exacerbate the mood in the Arab world more than the colonial occupation.<sup>7</sup> The openly pro-Jewish policy developed by the governments of the newly established Spanish Second Republic in 1931 also contributed to the increase in tensions between Jews and Muslims in northern Morocco.<sup>8</sup>

In the thirties, a new element and a new turning point in relations between Muslims and Jews in North Africa can be observed. Anti-Semitism, which French colonisation had exported to its North African colonies, was exacerbated in the 1930s by the German propaganda machine. Nazi propaganda agents joined the anti-Semitic settlers throughout the Maghreb. In the case of Morocco, the activity of Nazi party members and the activities of Italian fascists among Muslims have been documented since at least 1934, as they soon became known to the colonial authorities. Through anti-Semitism, certain Muslim sectors found a way to channel the unrest that spread across the Muslim world following the conflict between Arabs and Jews in Palestine under the British Mandate. The Spanish Falangist press, after the 1936 military uprising, added more fuel to the fire of tensions between Muslims and Jews in the Spanish protectorate in Morocco. Several conflicts between Muslims and Jews erupted in certain northern cities like Tangier and Larache.<sup>9</sup>

Nazi Germany was able to instrumentalise the new Arab revolt of 1936-39 in Palestine, again to inflame anti-Semitism among the Muslim

6. Eric Fottorino, *Le Marcheur de Fès* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 2013).

7. Martín Corrales, "Conflictividad entre judíos y musulmanes en el protectorado español en Marruecos durante la Segunda República (1931-1936)," 91-2, 94-7.

8. *Ibid.*, 99, 104, 108-109. However, it would be a mistake to think that the treatment in favour of the Jews of Morocco was a republican novelty as, in the Spanish case, it was part of the *philosephardic* ideological constructions and policies developed and led by the liberal right since the late nineteenth century, and also adopted by broad conservative sectors.

9. Otto Katz, *The Nazi Conspiracy in Spain* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1937), 175-91; Chouraqui, *Between East and West: A History of the Jews of North Africa*, 189; Martín Corrales, "Conflictividad entre judíos y musulmanes en el protectorado español en Marruecos durante la Segunda República (1931-1936)," 113, 120.

population, and particularly among nationalists. Italian Racial Laws in Libya in 1938 served to reinforce and essentialise identity boundaries between Muslims and Jews.<sup>10</sup> It was not uncommon for fights between members of both communities to acquire a distinctly political character, going beyond the reasons that originated them. Very young Muslims were often involved in these fights. There was also less spontaneous and more organised violence against Jews in the Arab world, such as the pogroms of Nazi inspiration in Algeria in the 1930s.

However, acceptance of Nazi anti-Semitism among Arab nationalist elites was varied, and many Muslim intellectuals were wary of Nazism, favouring cooperation between them and the Jews to try to stop the spread of Nazi ideology among North African Muslims.<sup>11</sup> This attitude contributed to the fact that part of the Jewish elites initially supported the emerging Arab nationalism in the region.<sup>12</sup> In Morocco, the nationalists were convinced that the French were interested in sowing discord in relations between Jews and Muslims and therefore tried to attract Jews to the emerging Moroccan nationalism.<sup>13</sup>

Labour camps were established during World War II in areas under German or Italian control. Several hundred Jews died in them from weakness, hunger or disease.<sup>14</sup> Following the collapse of the pro-Nazi government of Rashid Ali in Iraq in mid-1941, a violent pogrom, known as *Farhud*, erupted in Baghdad. As a result of the pogrom, about 180 Jews were killed and 240 wounded, 586 Jewish-owned businesses were looted, and 99 homes were destroyed. In Algeria, the same racial laws as in Vichy France were applied from 1941; according to some Algerian Jewish leaders, in certain cases more forcefully than in France. French settlers and officials welcomed these measures and saw anti-Semitism as one of the most attractive aspects of the Petain regime. However, in Algeria Jews organised resistance movements, and Muslim leaders refused to cooperate with the French in the destruction of

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10. Maurice M. Roumani, *The Jews of Libya: Coexistence, Persecution, Resettlement* (Brighton and Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 2009), 22-24.

11. Kenbib, "Moroccan Jews and the Vichy regime, 1940-42."

12. Aomar Boum, "Partners against Anti-Semitism: Muslims and Jews respond to Nazism in French North African," *The Journal of North African Studies* 19, n.º 4 (2014): 554-70.

13. Marvine Howe, *Morocco: The Islamist Awakening and Other Challenges* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), x; Jamaâ Baïda, "The Emigration of Moroccan Jews," in *Jewish culture and society in North Africa*, ed. Emily Benichou Gottreich and Daniel J. Schroeter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 322-3, 326.

14. David A. Harris, *In the Trenches: Selected Speeches and Writings of an American Jewish Activist, 1979-1999* (Jersey City: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 2000).

the Jews. Muslim and Jewish collaboration and organised resistance helped to prevent more serious situations.<sup>15</sup>

In Morocco, the Sultan firmly rejected the application of the anti-Semitic decrees of Vichy during World War II, and the schools of the Alliance Israélite Universelle could further develop their educational activities, or at least so thought the leaders of the European Jewish organisations.<sup>16</sup> However, more recent studies doubt the capacity for intervention of the Sultan of Morocco under French control.<sup>17</sup> After the war, an anti-Jewish revolt that caused more than a hundred dead in Tripoli broke out in Libya, already under British and French administration. That same year, the newly founded Arab League launched a boycott against Jewish businesses in Palestine to prevent the import of Jewish products.<sup>18</sup>

When the Jewish International Conference met in London in 1946 to address the problem of survivors and displaced persons in post-World War II Europe, one of the central topics at the conference was Palestine. Several delegates expressed concern about the 1939 White Paper, which determined the immediate future of the British Mandate of Palestine until it became effective independence. The text discarded the idea of dividing the Mandate into two states and preferred a single independent Palestine governed jointly by Arabs and Jews, with the former keeping their demographic majority, breaking, according to the delegates, the promises emanating from the Balfour Declaration. Jules Braunschvig, however, wanted to draw attention to two other issues from his experience and knowledge of North Africa, particularly Morocco, where he had his family business. On the one hand, there was the need to avoid some form of Zionist propaganda, such as the use of the white and blue flag, which could lead to serious difficulties between Arabs and Jews in Muslim countries. On the other hand, however, he indicated the good relationship and brotherhood that had always existed, that still existed and that he hoped would continue to exist between Muslims and Jews. He moreover added that, so he had heard, it was the same in Palestine.<sup>19</sup>

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15. London Conference of Jewish Organizations: "Jewish Communities of Latin America and North Africa," Friday morning, March 1st 1946 (University of Southampton Archives, Records from the Anglo-Jewish Association—from now on: UoSA, AJA-, MS137/AJ37/6/6/14, folder 4/5).

16. The Alliance Israélite Universelle: A Declaration, Paris 11/11/1945 (UoSA, AJA, MS137/AJ37/6/6/14, folder 5/5).

17. George Bensoussan, *Juifs en pays arabes: le grand déracinement 1850-1975* (Paris: Tallandier, 2012).

18. Christopher C. Joyner, "The transnational boycott as economic coercion in international law: policy, place, and practice," *Vanderbilt Journal of International Law* 17, n.º 2 (1984): 206-86.

19. London Conference of Jewish Organizations: "Session on Palestine," Chairman: Judge Leon Caen, Tuesday Evening, 26.2.46 (UoSA, AJA, MS137/AJ 37/6/6/14, folder 3/5).

Jewish communities in Morocco, a country that had also been affected by the application of racial anti-Jewish laws, were also invited to the 1946 London Conference. Ichoua Sylvain Allouche, a professor at the Institut des Hautes Études of Rabat was the Moroccan representative. First, Allouche said that he felt obliged to clarify that Morocco had been the least affected of all the countries where racial laws were imposed. Moroccan Jews sympathised with their ‘unfortunate brothers’ and were sure that the only solution to the ‘Jewish problem’ was the creation of a Jewish state in their ‘ancestral land.’ Those were the reasons why most of the Jews of Morocco, according to him, sympathised with Zionism. Thus, the Zionist motivation was not responding to the perception of their circumstances but to the perception of the misfortune of other Jews for which the only solution was the creation of a Jewish state. Regarding Morocco, Allouche’s postwar concerns were of another order, especially regarding young Jews.

Part of the Jewish-Moroccan population, mainly in urban areas, had benefited from a process of rapid Westernisation in its relationship with the European colonisers and thanks to the educational work of organisations like the Alliance Israélite Universelle.<sup>20</sup> Better educated than their parents and grandparents, they did not know Morocco before the protectorate but knew that there were countries where Jews enjoyed full legal equality. The lack of a modern penal code in Morocco meant that Moroccan subjects, especially Jews, were subject to the arbitrariness of judicial officers. They were victims of corrupt officials in their attempt to escape serious accusations, often false or exaggerated. Moreover, as in theory they were equal subjects of the Sultan, young Jews did not understand why they were excluded from access to the judiciary and other positions of authority, reserved exclusively for Muslims. Nor did they know where to turn in case they wanted to denounce any injustice committed against them. The government knew this and had already made some small but insufficient improvements. On the other hand, they did not have easier access to posts in the administration of the French protectorate either.<sup>21</sup>

Nevertheless, this was not the reality of the majority of the Jewish-Moroccan population, as opposed to the highly qualified young people trained in Western schools. According to Allouche, the children of most of

20. Doris Bensimon-Donath, *Evolution du Judaïsme marocain sous le Protectorat français 1912-1956* (Paris: Mouton, 1969).

21. Report by Monsieur Allouche, Professor at the Senior Studies Institute, Rabat, formerly Inspector of Jewish Institutions, 1946 (UoSA, AJA, MS137/AJ37/6/6/14, folder 5/5); London Conference of Jewish Organizations: “Jewish Communities of Latin America and North Africa,” Friday morning, March 1st 1946 (UoSA, AJA, MS137/AJ 37/6/6/14, folder 4/5).

the Jewish families could not access adequate education because the Alliance Israélite Universelle's efforts were limited. The housing problem was another cause of deep discontent among the Jews of Morocco, crowded together in unsanitary *mellahs*. The creation of a Jewish state could solve both the professional concerns of well qualified young Moroccan Jews and the wishes of the poorest families to provide a better future for their children. However, continued Allouche, Moroccan Jews were aware, despite pressure due to their precarious situation, that priority should be given to those from countries where they 'have never stopped suffering.' It should be given to those who wish to leave 'those countries so little hospitable' that evoke in them 'terrible memories.' He concluded that, despite the fact that it was not possible to deny that the Jews of Morocco had not suffered persecutions as terrible as those suffered by European Jews, the current situation of most of the Jews in Morocco was so bad, or even worse, than the situation of Jews from refugee camps in Europe. Poverty, malnutrition, lack of decent housing, inability to acquire education, etc., were factors that characterised, according to Allouche, the living conditions of the poor in Morocco. The Jews were also deprived of the minimum freedoms that everyone enjoyed in democratic societies.<sup>22</sup>

A very different version of the situation that the Jews of Morocco were facing in the postwar period can be found in the report to the Anglo-Jewish Association by Haim Manuel Cansino, one of the patriarchs of the powerful Sephardic community in the United Kingdom. Born in Manchester, he lived with his family for many years between Morocco and Gibraltar; he knew Spanish and some Arabic. In his report, he highlighted the good relations between Jews and Muslims in Morocco and the United Kingdom, because, he said, his hometown, Manchester, had both Muslim and Jewish immigrants who had migrated to the city to work in the textile industry. He moreover added that 'perhaps it is relevant,' noting that 'the Moor is not an Arab and does not like being called that.' Cansino gave a positive description of the situation of the Jews in Morocco and highlighted the absence of anti-Semitism since the late nineteenth century and the improvement of their education and living conditions with the creation of the French protectorate. He also noted the lack of support for Zionism in both French Morocco and Spanish Morocco.<sup>23</sup>

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22. Report by Monsieur Allouche, Professor at the Senior Studies Institute, Rabat, formerly Inspector of Jewish Institutions, 1946 (UoSA, AJA, MS137/AJ 37/6/6/14, folder 5/5); London Conference of Jewish Organizations: "Jewish Communities of Latin America and North Africa," Friday morning, March 1st 1946 (UoSA, AJA, MS137/AJ37/6/6/14, folder 4/5); see also, Ben-Layashi (2014).

23. Report on Conditions in Morocco by Haim Manuel Cansino, n.d. (UoSA, AJA, MS137/AJ95/64).

Perhaps because the situation of Jewish communities in the Maghreb was not hopeless, despite the increasing tensions between Muslims and Jews, the bulk of Jewish migration to Palestine before 1948 continued to proceed mainly from Eastern and Central Europe.<sup>24</sup> The largest wave of immigration occurred after the rise of Nazism in Germany between 1932 and 1939, when more than 200,000 Jews, mainly from Central Europe, reached Palestine. There were also more than 100,000 Jews who managed to reach Palestine legally or illegally from 1939, and, above all, at the end of World War II. Around 480,000 Jews reached Palestine in this period, 90% of them European. The Zionist movement had little success in North Africa until then. This limited success was, as André Chouraqui mentions, partly due to the fact that the Zionist leaders were almost exclusively European. These leaders had not made the effort to understand the peculiarities of Judaism in the Maghreb, a messianic religious Judaism deeply rooted in Jewish traditions.<sup>25</sup>

Nonetheless, from 1948, the Jews of North Africa and the Middle East continued to migrate and exceeded the migration of European Jews to Palestine. From among the approximately 800,000 Jews in the Arab world in 1947-48,<sup>26</sup> more than 600,000 Jews immigrated to Israel between 1948 and 1969, most of them from Morocco. Resolution 181 of the United Nations of 1947 on the partition of Palestine, the creation of Israel, the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and the refugee crisis it caused, with some 750,000 Palestinians displaced in neighbouring countries, had a profound impact on relations between Muslims and Jews in the Arab regions.

Immediately after the approval of the partition plan for Palestine in 1947, anti-Jewish riots broke out in the British protectorate of Aden, leaving 82 dead and the destruction of many Jewish properties.<sup>27</sup> The growing hostility in Yemen led the Israeli government to organise the evacuation of 50,000 Jews from that country to Israel between 1949 and 1950.<sup>28</sup> In Egypt, measures were taken to restrict the participation of foreigners and stateless persons in the economic and professional fields. The difficulties that the Egyptian Jews experienced to register their nationality had made them stateless, and they

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24. Reeva S. Simon, Michael M. Laskier, and Sara Reguer, *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

25. Chouraqui, *Between East and West: A History of the Jews of North Africa*; Zafrani, *Los judíos del occidente musulmán: Al-Andalus y el Magreb*; Reuben Ahroni, *The Jews of the British Crown Colony of Aden* (Leiden; New York ; Koln: Brill, 1994), 184.

26. Zafrani, *Los judíos del occidente musulmán: Al-Andalus y el Magreb*, 408.

27. Ahroni, *The Jews of the British Crown Colony of Aden*, 210-1.

28. Norman A Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2003), 156-7.

were the main victims of these measures.<sup>29</sup> There was a Jewish population of about 75,000 people, but with the emergence of the state of Israel and the first Arab-Israeli war, nearly half of Egypt's Jews emigrated between 1948 and 1950 because of the discrimination, attacks and violence they suffered.<sup>30</sup> About 33,000 Jews emigrated from Libya before the country's independence became a reality in early 1952.<sup>31</sup> There were also anti-Jewish riots in other Islamic countries as far from the centre of the conflict as Morocco and Pakistan.<sup>32</sup> In Morocco, following the creation of the State of Israel a revolt broke out against the Jews in Oujda and Djerada, in the northeast of the country, with dozens of Jews dead and wounded. The Moroccan nationality of the Jews was not, however, denied, like in Egypt. This confirmed the traditional links of the Jews with the Sultan and Morocco, stated by the Dahir of 22 May 1918, and twenty-seven years later by the Dahir of 7 May 1945. This Dahir did, however, deprive Jewish communities of their long autonomy by limiting their functions to the religious sphere and beneficence. The Dahir also subjected them to supervision and inspection by the authorities of the Protectorate.<sup>33</sup>

As countries of the Maghreb and the Middle East were moving towards independence, favoured by the new international climate created by the Cold War, the Jewish populations were even more uneasy about their future in the Arab countries. Western Jewish organisations, which were trying to help the Jews of North Africa during those difficult moments, did not always agree on the diagnosis and the way forward. For the World Jewish Congress, the future of the Jews in the Maghreb after independence was very uncertain and even dangerous, and it was best to negotiate their emigration with the Muslim nationalists. Nevertheless, the American Jewish Committee, the

29. Report on Egypt, May-November 1948 (UoSA, AJA, MS137/AJ 95/28, folder 4: Egypt 1955-1959).

30. Joel Beinin, *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry: Culture, Politics, and the Formation of a Modern Diaspora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

31. Excerpt from first draft of Report of American Jewish Committee delegation to North Africa on the Situation of Jews in Libya, October-November 1954 (UoSA, AJA, MS137/AJ37/6/4/28-29).

32. See, e.g., the Copy of Letter to Mr. J. G. Foster, M. P., from Mr. Hector Moneil, Minister of State, 21st December, 1948 (UoSA, AJA, MS137/AJ37/6/4/40); in relation to British Libya see the correspondence between the Anglo-Jewish Association and the Alliance Israélite Universelle, e.g. the Copy of Letter from Ben Segal to Mr. Nowshowitch, January 1st, 1949 (UoSA, AJA, MS137/AJ37/6/4/40); see also the Confidential Report of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Anglo-Jewish Association, "Text of memorandum submitted to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs," 2 January 1951 (UoSA, AJA, MS137/AJ37/6/4/28-29); see also Stillman (2003).

33. Report on the Jewish Communities of French North Africa by Maurice Carr (UOSA, AJA MS 137 AJ 95/64); see also, Daniel J. Schroeter and Joseph Chetrit, "Emancipation and its discontents: Jews at the formative period of colonial rule in Morocco," *Jewish Social Studies* 13 (1) (2006): 170-206, and Michel Abitbol, *Histoire du Maroc* (Paris: Perrin, 2014).

Anglo-Jewish Association and the Alliance Israélite Universelle were in favour of obtaining the support of the Western world and the former colonial powers in order to obtain commitments from the new Arab leaders regarding the situation of religious minorities within their countries.<sup>34</sup> This strategy included the participation of René Cassin, closely linked to the Alliance Israélite Universelle, in the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations, which was adopted in the same year as the creation of the State of Israel, as well as support for interfaith associationism.<sup>35</sup>

Tensions increased between the World Jewish Congress – which during those years continued its pro-Zionist activity –, and the Anglo-Jewish Association, the Alliance Israélite Universelle, and the American Jewish Committee, organisations with a more moderate and conciliatory approach in relation to both North Africa and the State of Israel. Solomon Gaon, a Sephardic Jew from Eastern Europe and Haham (Chief Rabbi) of the Sephardic Congregations of the British Commonwealth, wrote a critical report on the activities of the World Jewish Congress. As a good representative of the Anglo-Jewish establishment from which the Anglo-Jewish Association emerged, Gaon lamented the pressure exerted by the World Jewish Congress on the community of Gibraltar. The World Jewish Congress had called on the leaders of the Jewish community of Gibraltar for an explicit condemnation of the British position on Israel, very counterproductive in Gaon's view. As regards the Jews of Morocco, Gaon stated that the main problem of the communities there was their backwardness and fragmentation, with numerous independent synagogues owned by private families, often with schools attached to them, as well as the lack of a community representative body. Although there was a Jewish committee in all cities and towns, synagogues operated quite autonomously from each other. He regretted that the financial assistance they received from the Jews of France, the United Kingdom, and the United States were not of use, according to him, against the organisational chaos and fragmentation of leadership that characterised the communities across that country. He claimed that France favoured this situation of fragmentation to control the Jews better. The situation of poverty in which most of the country's Jews were living was improving thanks to the education of the young Moroccan Jews. Education, not emigration to Israel, was the solution for the Jews of Morocco. Gaon also considered that, since they were Sephardic communities, only other Sephardim could exert

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34. Copy of the Letter from the American Jewish Committee to the Anglo-Jewish Association, September 29, 1955 (UoSA, AJA, MS137/AJ37/6/4/31).

35. Jewish-Christian-Muslim Friendship Society, s/f (UoSA, AJA, MS137/AJ95/99).

influence upon them, because they could ‘understand them better.’ He did not mention the recent tensions and violent attacks, such as Oujda. He also failed to explain the sources on which he based his report, although it is likely that it was information provided by the Jewish community of Gibraltar, closely linked to Morocco.<sup>36</sup>

Along the same lines as the report by Gaon, the Anglo-Jewish Association received another report in those years from the Jewish journalist of Ashkenazi origin but who grew up in London and specialised in Palestine, Maurice Carr (pseudonym Morris Kreitman). Like Gaon, Carr was more concerned about the extreme poverty and poor living conditions of the Jews of Morocco than Muslim violence in connection with the creation of the State of Israel. This detail is important in the case of Carr because he was the journalist who covered the news of the events of Oujda and Djerada for the *Jewish Chronicle*.<sup>37</sup> In the same vein as that pointed out by Allouche a few years earlier, Carr remarked that, despite the theoretically formal equality of the Jews of Morocco, in practice they continued to be excluded from occupying positions in both the Shereefian administration and the French protectorate. This was a very different situation from that of the Jews of Tunisia and especially Algeria, where they had been French citizens since 1870,<sup>38</sup> citizenship only being briefly revoked by the Vichy government between 1940 and 1941.<sup>39</sup>

Cansino, with direct knowledge of the Moroccan-Jewish situation of those years, thanks to his professional relationships and family ties, also issued a report for the Anglo-Jewish Association on around the same date. Cansino recognised that, because of the creation of the State of Israel, there was some apprehension among Jews about their future in Morocco and that certainly large-scale Zionist demonstrations would have a negative effect on the community. However, on the other hand, he recalled that there had been a Zionist organisation in Casablanca for many years and there had not been any problems. Also, he pointed out that Moroccan nationalism had not acted as decisively as elsewhere in the Arab world, and Morocco was one of the countries that had shown less interest in the Arab League. Regarding the living conditions of Jews in the *mellahs*, he indicated that he disagreed

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36. The Jews of Gibraltar and Morocco, Strictly Confidential, January 1949 (UoSA, AJA, MS137/AJ37/6/2/6).

37. Maurice Carr, ‘The Pogroms of Oujda and Djerada,’ *The Jewish Chronicle*, 30 July 1948.

38. The Jews of Southern Algeria, which was occupied later and had a different process of colonisation, were excluded from this benefit Sarah Abrevaya Stein, “Dividing south from north: French colonialism, Jews, and the Algerian Sahara,” *The Journal of North African Studies* 17 (5) (2012): 773-92.

39. Report on the Jewish Communities of French North Africa by Maurice Carr (UoSA, AJA, MS137/AJ95/64).

with Gaon and Allouche. Cansino noted that their inhabitants were slowly abandoning those neighbourhoods, where Jews had lived in Morocco since the end of the nineteenth century, moving to European neighbourhoods, and that although there were still many Jews in the *mellahs*, the tendency was for them to leave.<sup>40</sup>

In 1952, when the question of the independence of Morocco and Tunisia was debated by the United Nations General Assembly, the Institute of Jewish Affairs of the World Jewish Congress presented a report on the past and present situation of the Jews of French Morocco and Tunisia. In this primarily economic and demographic report, the World Jewish Congress repeatedly insisted on the precariousness of the Jews of Morocco. The report also stated that, on the one hand, contact with European settlers had favoured the emergence of a wealthy Jewish merchant class but, on the other hand, colonialism had meant the ruin of the artisans, many of them Jews. According to this report, in the mid-twentieth century most of the Jews of Morocco lived in extreme poverty, with thousands of children without access to minimally adequate education, despite the efforts of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, receiving only very basic religious schooling. However, it indicated that the political situation was stable, and there was no indication of any risk of violence against the Jews after the 1948 events of Oujda.<sup>41</sup> In 1953, the World Jewish Congress was more concerned about increasing their influence in Morocco than about potential threats against Jews in the country, confirming the continued calm in this North African country in this regard.<sup>42</sup>

However, only two years later, a new report by the representative of the World Jewish Congress in North Africa warned that the unstable situation in Morocco was serious and unpredictable.<sup>43</sup> The overthrow and exile of the Sultan of Morocco by the French had provoked a strong popular nationalist agitation which included protests, riots, and terrorist acts, spreading an active opposition to the French protectorate throughout the country. The intervention of the Zionist organisations in this context increased the sense of insecurity among Jews and was instrumental in their migration from Morocco to Israel of those years. Some 35,000 Moroccan Jews made aliyah between 1954 and 1955. The Istiqlal, the main Moroccan nationalist party, denounced

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40. Morocco Report by Haim Manuel Cansino, 1949 (UoSA, AJA MS 137 AJ 37/6/4/30).

41. The Jews of French Morocco and Tunisia, Institute of Jewish Affairs, World Jewish Congress, 1952 (UoSA, AJA, MS 239/72/5).

42. Lettre d'I. Schwartzbert aux Membres Parisiens de l'Exécutif Européen du Congrès Juif Mondial, 1953 (UoSA, AJA, MS 239/72/4).

43. Rapport confidentiel du Voyage au Maroc de M. Lazarus, 24 au 30 mai 1954 (UoSA, AJA, MS 239/72/5).

Jewish emigration to Israel while maintaining that all Moroccans, regardless of race or religion, would be full citizens in an independent Morocco. They would enjoy freedom of movement within the country and would be free to leave Morocco. In an interview with the *Jewish Observer* in October 1955, Abderrahim Bouabid, leader of the Istiqlal, declared that it had no objection to the Jews of Morocco keeping family, cultural and spiritual ties with Israel.<sup>44</sup> These statements certainly contributed, as Baïda observes, to a majority of Moroccan Jews still aspiring to reconcile their Moroccan identity with the supranational ties that bound them to the Jewish Diaspora and Israel. The link between Arab nationalism and part of the Jewish elites in Morocco resisted, unlike what was happening in Nasser's Egypt.<sup>45</sup>

Among the most prominent members of the Moroccan Jewish elites trying to reconcile their Jewish identity with Moroccan nationalism was Joseph Ohana (1914-95), a wealthy businessman and political activist from Casablanca. In 1955, Ohana founded the Moroccan National Movement, which consisted of a small group of Jews connected to the Istiqlal. The objective of the Moroccan National Movement was to mobilise Jewish support for the Moroccan nationalist cause and show the loyalty of the Jews of Morocco to the Sultan Sidi Mohammed Ben Youssef. Ohana considered himself first Moroccan and then Jew, and throughout his life supported the Palestinian cause in Israel.<sup>46</sup> Not only did Moroccan nationalist Jews such as Ohana see their future in Morocco, but most Moroccan Jews in those years also seemed to be in favour of trying to solve their daily individual and collective problems in this country.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, the main Jewish youth organisation in Morocco at the time was not Zionist and brought together some eight to nine thousand young Jews, while Morocco's Zionist youth organisations amounted to less than four hundred people.<sup>48</sup>

In Egypt, the situation worsened with the Suez Crisis. Nasser declared a state of emergency in 1954, arresting numerous people accused of being a threat to public order and security, mostly Jews, and began a campaign to deprive

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44. Baïda, "The Emigration of Moroccan Jews," 326-29.

45. *Ibid.*, 330.

46. Mohammed Hatimi, "Ohana, Joseph (Jo)," *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World Online* (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

47. See, for example, correspondence between the Communal Council of Tetuan and the Anglo-Jewish Association of 1955 (UoSA, AJA, MS 137/AJ 95/75: Spanish Morocco).

48. Rapport confidentiel du Voyage au Maroc de M. Lazarus, 24 au 30 mai 1954 (UoSA, AJA, MS 239/72/5).

them of their livelihoods and expel them from the country.<sup>49</sup> Meanwhile, in Morocco, the President of the Jewish Community of Casablanca, David Benazeraf, sent a letter to the Moroccan Prime Minister saying that the Jews of Morocco disapproved of the attack on Egypt, especially the actions of the British and French, while calling upon Moroccan radio to distinguish between Israelis and Jews. However, the Jewish community in Casablanca censured him.<sup>50</sup> After Moroccan independence in 1956, the Moroccan government banned the emigration of Jews. Still, 30,000 Moroccan Jews immigrated clandestinely to Israel between 1956 and 1961. However, in those same years, many Jews became part of the government in Morocco, and the relations of the Jewish community and the government at the highest level remained cordial.<sup>51</sup>

In Tunisia, under the leadership of Habib Bourguiba, the transition was not violent, and he promised the Tunisian Jews (then about 3% of the population) protection and equal rights despite the opposition of certain Muslim religious sectors.<sup>52</sup> Notwithstanding this, the community had problems to accept those changes that limited their traditional autonomy, although they applied to all religious groups. For example, in 1959, when the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee requested permission from Bourguiba's government to distribute aid among the needy of the Jewish community, as they had been doing until then, the aid had to be distributed without 'distinction of race or creed.' Nevertheless, thanks to Andre Barouch, the former housing minister, that order was dismissed. However, the new statute issued by the government to the Jewish communities of Tunisia restricted their activities to the religious sphere and beneficence, preventing the continuation of the activities of a cultural and educational character, and the charitable activities beyond the religious sphere. In a speech addressed to the Jews about the new regulations, the Minister of Justice warned them that the government was not going to allow them to live in an exclusively Jewish closed circle. The government also appointed new leaders of the Jewish communities in Tunisia who, in general, were quite unknown within the communities themselves. Such rules were in

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49. Memorandum: "The situation of the Jews in Egypt at the Beginning of 1957," New York, 7 January 1957 (UoSA, AJA, MS 137/AJ 95/28, folder 2: Egypt 1955-1959); Summary of reports on the Situation of Jews in Egypt, November-December 1956 (UoSA, AJA, MS 137/AJ 95/28, folder 3: Egypt 1955-1959).

50. "Communal leader's resignation?," *The Jewish Chronicle*, December 15, 1956.

51. Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times*, 172-3.

52. Mohsen Hamli, "The 1948 Controversy over the Accession of Jews to the Caïdal Corps in Tunisia," *The Journal of North African Studies* 11 (4) (2006): 435-45.

principle aimed at both the Jewish and the Muslim associations.<sup>53</sup> The 1959 Constitution provided for the free exercise of different religions given that they did not undermine public order, for example through the establishment of political parties based on religion.

Libya pursued a very different path. In that same year, 1959, following the Egyptian example, it ordered the dissolution of the Communal Council of the Jewish Community of the Province of Tripolitania and appointed Sayed Amar Sadi Atya as commissioner to administer the community and all its properties, books, files, etc.<sup>54</sup> The community of the protectorate of Aden also began to worry because of the British plans to grant more autonomy to the colony, having the precedent of the violent anti-Jewish revolt of 1947. The president of the Anglo-Jewish Association, Robert Nunes Carvalho, met a representative of the British government in London in September 1961 to express concern for the safety of the Jews of Aden. The government representative assured him that there was nothing to worry about and that the British government had already instructed the governor of Aden to make sure everything was fine, but that they had to be very careful to avoid raising suspicions or causing discomfort to the Muslim population.<sup>55</sup>

Algeria's independence in 1962 led to the emigration of approximately 140,000 Jews from that country who, having French citizenship, chose to emigrate to France and, to a lesser extent, to Israel.<sup>56</sup> Only about 10,000 Jews remained in Algeria. Meanwhile, in Morocco, after the tragedy of the sinking of the *Egoz* in 1961, due to illegal emigration caused by the prohibition by the newly proclaimed Mohamed V of mass Jewish departure from the country, and the subsequent relaxation of this policy, some 80,000 Jews more emigrated to Israel between 1961 and 1964. Today, the Jews of Moroccan origin in Israel amount to about a quarter of a million people in a country of about eight million.<sup>57</sup> It is also necessary to add the Jews who on those same dates emigrated from Morocco to France, England, the United States, Canada

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53. Report by Mr. Abraham Karlikow of the Paris Office of the American Jewish Committee on Tunisia, 18 February 1959 (UoSA, AJA, MS 137/AJ 95/78: Tunisia).

54. Copy of Decree No. 27 of 1958 concerning the Appointment of a Government Commissioner for the Administration of the Jewish Community in the Province of Tripolitania (UoSA, AJA, MS 137/AJ 95/53-67).

55. Statutory Instruments, 1962 No. 2177, Aden: Note of a Meeting held in Lancaster House at 10.30 a.m. on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1961 (UoSA, AJA, MS 137/AJ 95/4: General Aden File, 1956-1964).

56. Sung Choi has written on the complexities of Algerian Jews' national consciousness during the Algerian War as adherents to imperial France as well as their attachment to their Algerian heritage (Sung Choi, "Complex Compatriots: Jews in Post-Vichy French Algeria," *The Journal of North African Studies* 17 (5) (2012): 863-80).

57. <https://bit.ly/2M3EmYF> (accessed 11/03/2016).

and, to a lesser extent, Spain. From among the approximately 250,000 Jews in Morocco in 1948, in 1960 there were only about 150,000 and, by the end of 1967, only 40,000. Today, fewer than 4,000 Jews live in Morocco.<sup>58</sup>

In conclusion, the Anglo-Jewish Association, the American Jewish Committee and the Alliance Israélite Universelle were not Zionist organisations. When they met for the first time after World War II, in 1946, they did try to help the survivors of Nazi policies and the Holocaust. At that first meeting, Jewish representatives of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya were invited as victims of the pro-Nazi government of Petain, Mussolini's Italy, and the Nazi occupation. Despite the tension which had arisen between Jews and Muslims in North Africa due to the impact of Western colonialism and the situation in Palestine, no one predicted that an exodus was about to begin that would remove most of these ancient Jewish communities from the Arab world.

The creation of the State of Israel changed that in many ways, but still does not explain everything. The governments in each Arab country responded differently, as did the diverse Muslim societies, as well as the various local nationalisms and the different Jewish populations. Furthermore, the State of Israel did not always act the same. Thus, although it facilitated the massive influx of Jews from Yemen and tried to force the emigration of Jews from the rural areas of Morocco with a certain degree of success, it also put daily quotas on the entry of Egyptian Jews. The paradox is that Egyptian Jews were one of the major Jewish communities affected by the tension between the Arab world and Israel and the dynamics of the Egyptian exclusive nationalism. Even the Western Jewish organisations that tried to assess the situation and intervene in the Moroccan context provided information, which was sometimes contradictory, on the conditions of the Jews of Morocco, on their political affiliation, and on their wishes regarding their future, and did not always agree on the best solution for them.

The emigration of the Jews from the Maghreb, while it is true that it was mostly to Israel, therefore responded to very different motivations. There was a minority that actively supported Zionism. However, economic difficulties, the expectation of a better future, to escape discrimination, the active role of Israel, the rise of Arab nationalism, and the rising tensions between Muslims and Jews, all seem, to a greater or lesser extent, to lie behind the motivations of Moroccan Jews to leave the country of their ancestors. There was perhaps another motivation, as suggested by Chouraqui and Zafrani, although none

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58. Baida, "The Emigration of Moroccan Jews."

of the Anglo-Jewish Association informants analysed here mentions it, maybe because their sources were never the Jewish popular sectors. This reason would be the persistence of a messianic thought, deeply rooted in the traditional Judeo-Arabic world, of ideas of 'return' to Eretz Israel.<sup>59</sup>

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59. Chouraqui, *Between East and West: A History of the Jews of North Africa*; Zafrani, *Los judíos del occidente musulmán: Al-Andalus y el Magreb*.

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#### ملخص: هجرة اليهود المغاربة في زمن حركات التحرر والاستقلال: تقييم جديد

تكشف هذه المقالة عن موقف يهود المغرب في مواجهة اثنين من التحولات السياسية الأكثر إثارة في حياة يهود شمال إفريقيا كما حدثت في بداية النصف الثاني من القرن العشرين، ويتعلق الأمر بإنشاء دولة إسرائيل واستقلال الدول العربية. سوف أتناول هذه المسألة من منظور مقارنة فيما يخص حالة اليهود في بلدان المغرب وبقية دول الشرق الأوسط، انطلاقاً مما هو وارد في الوثائق الصادرة وقتئذ عن الممثلين لاثنتين من المنظمات اليهودية الغربية الرئيسية، وهما الجمعية الأنجلو-يهودية واللجنة اليهودية الأمريكية. ويظهر النهج المقارن كيف أن السياقات المحلية ولدت مجموعة متنوعة من الحالات و من ردود الفعل من قبل السكان اليهود المحليين التي تمكن من فهم خصوصيات الحالة المغربية بشكل أفضل.

الكلمات المفتاحية: يهود المغرب، إسرائيل، حركات الاستقلال العربية، الجمعيات اليهودية الغربية، الصهيونية.

#### Résumé: Une réévaluation de l'émigration juive marocaine à l'ère des indépendances

Cet article met en évidence la position des Juifs du Maroc face aux changements politiques qui ont bouleversé la communauté juive d'Afrique du Nord: la création de l'État d'Israël et l'indépendance des pays arabes. J'aborde cette question dans une perspective comparative portant sur la situation des Juifs dans d'autres pays du Maghreb et du Moyen-Orient à partir de la documentation générée par les membres, les délégués et les informateurs de deux des principales organisations juives occidentales du moment: l'*Anglo-Jewish Association* et l'*American Jewish Committee*. L'approche comparative montre comment les contextes locaux génèrent une variété de situations et une variété de réponses des populations juives locales et qui nous aident à mieux comprendre les particularités du cas marocain.

**Mots clés:** Juifs du Maroc, Israël, indépendances arabes, associations juives occidentales, sionisme.

**Abstract: Moroccan Jewish Emigration in the Age of Independence Movement: A Reappraisal**

This article uncovers the position of the Jews of Morocco in the face of the two most dramatic political changes for North African Jewry that took place at the beginning of the second half of the twentieth century: the creation of the State of Israel and the independence of the Arab countries. I approach this issue from a comparative perspective regarding the situation of Jews in other Maghreb and Middle East countries as described in the documentation generated by the members, delegates and informants of two of the main Western Jewish organisations of the moment: the *Anglo-Jewish Association* and the *American Jewish Committee*. The comparative approach shows how local contexts generated a variety of situations and a variety of responses from local Jewish populations that help us to understand the specificities of the Moroccan case better.

**Keywords:** Moroccan Jews, Israel, independence of Arab states, Western Jewish Associations, Zionism.

**Resumen: Emigración judía marroquí en la era del movimiento de la independencia: una reevaluación**

Este artículo revela la posición de los judíos de Marruecos frente a los dos cambios políticos más dramáticos para la comunidad judía del norte de África que tuvieron lugar al comienzo de la segunda mitad del siglo XX: la creación del Estado de Israel y la independencia de los países árabes. Me acerco a este tema desde una perspectiva comparativa con respecto a la situación de los judíos en otros países del Magreb y del Próximo Oriente a partir de la documentación generada por los miembros, delegados e informantes de dos de las principales organizaciones judías occidentales del momento: la *Anglo-Jewish Association* y el *American Jewish Committee*. El enfoque comparativo muestra cómo los contextos locales generan una variedad de situaciones y una variedad de respuestas de las poblaciones judías locales que nos ayudan a comprender mejor las particularidades del caso marroquí.

**Palabras Claves:** Judíos de Marruecos, Israel, independencias árabes, asociaciones judías occidentales, sionismo.