

1. Description

1.1 Name(s) of society, language, and language family: Tumzabt, Ghardaia, Mzab, Mzabi (1). Tumzabt is a language of Algeria, and it is classified as Afro-Asiatic, Berber, Northern, Zenati, and Mzab-Wargla (1). According to ethnologue.com, there are only minor dialect variations. Language family is related to Tagargrent, Temacine Tamazight, and Taznatit (1). Language map shows Tumzabt language family in Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and Western Sahara (1).

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): **mzb** (1).

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): Region – Mzab region south of Algiers; 7 oases, Ghardaia is principal one (1).

1.4 Brief history: “Strong cultural vitality. Tumzabt villages are interspersed among Arabic-speaking villages” (1). “Algeria was populated around 900 B.C. by Berbers, a group from North Africa that was influenced by Carthaginians, Romans, and Byzantines. The Romans urbanized Algeria and maintained a military presence there in the second century. Algeria was ruled next by Vandals, a Germanic tribe, who were in turn conquered by Byzantine Arabs, who brought the Islamic faith to the region. Beginning in the early sixteenth century, Algeria was part of the Ottoman Empire for 300 years, and became a distinct province between Tunisia and Morocco. European nations, and eventually the United States, were required to pay tribute to these countries of North Africa, which ruled the shipping lanes of the Mediterranean until the French invaded Algeria in 1830” (2).

“The pressure to Arabize was resisted by Berber population groups, such as the Kabyles, the Chaouia, the Tuareg, and the **Mzabt**. The Berbers, who constitute about one-fifth of the Algerian population, had resisted foreign influences since ancient times. They fought against the Phoenicians, the Romans, the Ottoman Turks, and the French after their 1830 occupation of Algeria. In the fighting between 1954 and 1962 against France, Berber men from the Kabylie region participated in larger numbers than their share of the population warranted. Since independence, the Berbers have maintained a strong ethnic consciousness and a determination to preserve their distinctive cultural identity and language” (2).

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors: They now practice the Muslim religion of Islam (1). Their writing systems consist of Arabic script, Latin script, and most likely something similar to their original written language which is called “Tifinagh” (Berber) script (1). Some Mzab people adopted other religious beliefs due to outside influence and have converted to Judaism, or Christianity – they no longer live in the valley of the Mzab (5, pg 36). Spread of hygiene and preventative medicine due to trading/contact with outsiders which increases life expectancy for the people of Mzab (6, pg 206).

1.6 Ecology (natural environment): The cities in the Mzab valley are located on slopes and higher ground of the Mzab river, river-bed. The river does not flow very often, rising only once every twelve or thirteen years. Rainfall and showers are not entirely rare, but there are years where there is no precipitation. Two heavy showers a year are regarded as a blessing (5, pg 34). “Since the soil of the Oued Mzab had to be created, because there was practically none to begin with, it was clear from the start that the only salvation of the Mozabite communities lay in trade (5, pg 40).

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density: The total population size is estimated to be around 70,000; based on data from 1995 (1). In 1954, the population was reported to be 30,000 (5, pg 34).

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): Mentions planting/harvesting of agricultural goods, but no mention of which specific crops are planted and harvested by the Mzab (6, pg 241). Potatoes?? (6, pg 248).

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: Livestock; doesn't mention which type (5, pg 40). “Stock breeding” – but no mention of specific animals (6, pg 241).

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?: No mention of weaponry, but they must have had something because they were constantly fending off invaders and outsiders who were trying to colonize them (7).

2.4 Food storage: Wells are dug to gain access to water, which can be found at depths of 8 and 55 meters (5, pg 34).

2.5 Sexual division of production: Men provide for the families because most capital and goods are acquired through trade, only men can trade; women are not allowed to leave the city (5, pg 40).

2.6 Land tenure:

2.7 Ceramics:

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

2.9 Food taboos: Brief mention of food taboos during a wedding ceremony anecdote within article. “The bread of the seventh day must not exceed one small measure of corn...after the bride has entered the house of the bridegroom, it is forbidden to send her food, be it dates or corn, or any other victuals...” (5, pg 39).

2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f): 12 to 13 years old (5).

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f): I would hypothesize it to be around age sixteen based on the age that Mzab girls are getting married (5).

4.3 Completed family size (m and f):

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f): Males between the ages of 14 and 16 are brought home from trading in order to marry, and then returns north to continue trading (5, pg 40). Female brides reported as early as 12 and 13 years old (5, pg 41). “Girls marry young, between puberty and 20 years” (6, pg 203).

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce: Marriages frequently end, and men will have many marriages over the course of their lives. Must be divorced before marrying another wife (5, pg 40). “Polygamy is too costly to be frequent and in 1948 there were less than 40,000 cases of men having more than one wife at a time; a succession of wives is, however, frequent” (6, pg 203).

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously: None, must be divorced before remarrying (5, pg 40). “Polygamy is too costly to be frequent and in 1948 there were less than 40,000 cases of men having more than one wife at a time; a succession of wives is, however, frequent” (6, pg 203).

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: Article alludes to some form of bride price (5, pg 40).

4.9 Inheritance patterns: Women keep their father’s surname when they get married, but they go live with their husband’s family and their children belong to her husband’s line (5, pg 42).

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: When boys are young, they are taken with their fathers to learn the trading practices of the Mzab. When they are thirteen to sixteen, they are brought back to the city to marry a woman within the city. Once the boy is married, he returns to trading in order to make money for his family, and only returns when he has made enough capital to support his children and wife (5, pg 40). Girls who are young brides (ages 12 to 13) are set up with city-fathers whose duty it is to supervise the conduct of the women and to see that they observe the laws strictly and that the children are brought up in the correct way (5, pg 40). Young children are reared in precise and strict ways (5, pg 42).

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy): “The prevalence of sib or lineage exogamy is not reported” (4, p. 395). Mozabite women are not allowed to leave the Mzab (5, pg 41). Mozabite men are allowed to marry women of other races and creeds, including Christians and Jews (5, pg 42).

4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these “other fathers” recognized?

4.14 What is the belief of the mother’s role in procreation exactly? (e.g., “receptacle in which fetus grows”)

- 4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?
- 4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape
- 4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin)
- 4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms? I would assume no, because women are not allowed to leave the community, nor sing or dance in public (5, pg 41).
- 4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring
- 4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children? Women live with their mother-in-laws who are in charge of the household while the men are away, so I would assume that if a child's mother dies, then the grandmother will take over responsibility for raising her son's children while he is away trading/earning money (5).
- 4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females
- 4.22 Evidence for couvades
- 4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older)
- 4.24 Kin avoidance and respect? If a women's husband is travelling/trading, her mother-in-law has full authority in the household while her husband is away; she exercises all authority (5, pg 42).
- 4.24 Joking relationships?
- 4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations: Patrilineal decent (5, pg 42).
- 4.26 Incest avoidance rules
- 4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony? It seems as though there is a formal marriage ceremony, and there are prescribed actions that the bride and groom, as well as their families, must go through in order to follow the Koran and the laws within the cities in Mzab (5, pg 39).
- 4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?: Women retain their father's name after marriage, but go live with her husband's family (5, pg 42).
- 4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?) Men are encouraged to marry within the community, but women HAVE to marry within the community because they are not legally allowed to leave the city (5, pg 40). Men are allowed to marry outside of the community, even allowed to marry other races and creeds (5, pg 42).
- 4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?
- 4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

Warfare/homicide

- 4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare: There is no number listed for male/female deaths due to warfare, but I imagine that the Mzab had a pretty high rate of warfare deaths because they were often being attacked by outsiders who were trying to colonize them. They continuously resisted, and constantly fought to keep their autonomy in the Mzab valley – which they still have to this day (7).
- 4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death: Leading families within the five cities in Mzab were sometimes known to get into bloody battles with one another in the past (5, pg 38).
- 4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing:
- 4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations):
- 4.18 Cannibalism?

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

- 5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size: The Mzab all live together in one valley, forming a close five-city network within the valley. In 1954, the total population of the valley cities was reported to be 30,000. The five cities are built close

together on slopes and higher ground of the river bed, so it is fairly easy to see one or two of the other cities from each location. The cities were all founded in 11 A.D. and the capital city is Ghardaya which contains about half of the total population. With the exception of Ghardaya, which allows for the admittance of foreigners within the precincts of the city, no one that is not Mzab is allowed within the walls of the cities. All of the cities remain completely homogenous; completely untouched by alien habitations (5, p 34).

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality): Men go off to trade throughout the year; women stay within the city with the children and elders (5).

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): “The “social structure of the Mzab city has been compared with the Roman *urbs* or Greek *polis* in their early stages. Another comparison can be made with Italian city-states of the Renaissance” (5, pg 38). Mentions magistrates, sheriffs, and elders executing decisions of the law and punishing those who break them (5, pg 38). The mosque is the ultimate government of the city; “the authority of the clergy is supreme” (5, pg 39). “In a conflict of opinion it is always the clergy who have the last word, for they have at their disposal two powerful weapons – excommunication against the individual, and, against the community, the sit-down strike: in grave cases the clerks lock themselves up in their mosque; there are no prayers, no funerals can be held, no benedictions, purifications, circumcisions, marriages, no teaching – in fact, the whole life of the community comes to a standstill” (5, pg 39).

5.4 Post marital residence:

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense): With the exception of Ghardaya (which allows for foreigners within the precincts of the city), people who are not Mzab are NOT allowed within the cities’ walls. The population is untouched by alien habitations, it is completely homogenous (5, pg 34). Regardless of which city you are a resident of, if you are visiting a city that is not your own in the Mzab valley, you are subject to the laws and punishments of that city if you happen to break the law there (5, pg 38). The Mzab are defined as “self-improvers... a distinct group with its own identity,” which allows for them to fight so fiercely for their territory. The Mzab are extremely territorial and have managed to resist colonialism for several hundreds of years from some pretty powerful nations such as the French (7, pg 61-68).

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex): Ethnologue.com refers to women as being “virtually monolingual,” so it seems that women may not have much interaction outside of their native village community, unlike the men who may be exposed to other languages due to trading practices (1). Women are considered “guardians of the hearth” because the men are always away trading, and without them having to stay in the Mzab, and not be allowed to leave, no one would be in the city taking care of the everyday going ons of life (5, pg 41).

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

5.8 Village and house organization: The houses built within the Mzab valley are built of limestone found within the Sahara, but the Mzab also have “summer houses” built a short distance from each city, which are also made of limestone and are shrouded among date-palms and fruit trees (5, pg 34). Every village/town is inhabited by people standing in some kind of blood-relationship with one another as members of the same tribe, clan, or family (5, pg 38). Village is built in a concentric shape (8).

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens’ houses):

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc:

5.12 Trade: “Strong cultural vitality. Tumzabt villages are interspersed among Arabic-speaking villages.” They are also described as being “traders” (1). “the only salvation of the Mozabite communities lay in trade” (5, pg 40). “From the earliest times of their settlement in the valley, the Mozabites went to the north trading in slaves, hides, wool, and livestock from the Sahara, and in produce, commodities, and imported groceries from the coast and the ports” (5, pg 40). Currently dominate the trade in textiles and groceries in Algeria and Tunisia (5, pg 40). Mzab men described as “shrewd businessmen” (5, pg 40). Imports: metal manufactures, sugar, electrical apparatus, motorcars, machinery, wood and product, coffee. Exports: wine, iron core, citrus fruits, vegetables, cork, vegetable oils, potatoes, esparto grass (6, pg 248).

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies? Mention of chieftain, or territorial ruler, but then also mentions that the Mzab each has a form of local, self-government; it is not clear exactly the social/political hierarchies (5, pg 38).

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6.0 Time allocation to RCR:

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): The Mزاب practice a “fierce and exclusive form of Islamic puritanism,” which is practiced within an urban, rather than tribal, frame of society (5, pg 34). The Mزاب believe within the fundamentalist Islamic religion, that *all* people are and should be considered equals based on the teachings and ideals found within the Koran (5, pg 35). Clergy within the Islamic religion are deemed the most religiously and politically powerful; “the mosque is...the government of the city” (5, pg 39). Nothing of importance can take place without the clergy’s consent (5, pg 39).

6.2 Stimulants: Stimulants, and intoxicants are considered sinful and are shunned by the society because people believe they should live soberly (5, pg 35).

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal): Mزاب women are forbidden to cry over the body of a dead person; Arab weeping-women are hired to do that (5, pg 42).

6.4 Other rituals: Ceremony/party/celebration of the lamb. Large celebration in the Mزاب community that involves costumes, singing, dancing and lots of food based on myths and stories involving lambs (9).

6.5 Myths (Creation):

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games): Music and dancing is forbidden, it is considered unmodest and sinful (5, pg 35). “She [Mزاب women] may not dance, nor sing at a feast, although singing at work is allowed if the text is approved” (5, pg 42).

6.7 Sex differences in RCR: “Their [women’s] principle function is to teach. The dogma that all Muslims are equal includes women, who have therefore to be taught to understand the Koran and to understand their prayers, for prayers merely recited to not go to heaven. They have also to be taught something of the laws and the history of their city and sect. Women do not go to mosque, so the *laveuses* lead their prayers and occasionally preach to them” (5, pg 41-42).

6.8 Missionary effect:

6.9 RCR revival:

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs: Reference to them burying the dead (5, pg 43).

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

6.12 Is there teknonymy?

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.): They currently practice the Muslim religion of Islam (1). The Mزاب practice a “fierce and exclusive form of Islamic puritanism,” which is practiced within an urban, rather than tribal, frame of society (5, pg 34). The Mزاب believe within the fundamentalist Islamic religion, that *all* people are and should be considered equals based on the teachings and ideals found within the Koran (5, pg 35). The Mزاب believe that NO sin can be forgiven and that punishment by the law has only a secular effect, and no spiritual redeeming effect (5, pg 35). It is believed that a man’s conduct in the current world is indicative of how his life will be in the next world (5, p 35).

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint:

7.2 Piercings:

7.3 Haircut:

7.4 Scarification:

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.):

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

7.7 Sex differences in adornment: “Every detail in the conduct of a woman is regulated: her dress, her ornaments, her hair style, her use of cosmetics (which is allowed in certain ways, forbidden in others), and her deportment in the street (provided she is allowed to leave the house). She must not show her hand to a man when paying in a shop; it must be covered by a corner of her garment” (5, pg 42).

7.8 Missionary effect:

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system:

8.2 Sororate, levirate:

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.):

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

<http://anth.alexanderstreet.com/view/1647045>

The above link is a video on the “Berber” of Algeria. It is a video about a young girl who is about to get married. It is a general video for the language family; it doesn’t mention anything about any particular subgroup within the Berber Afro-Asiatic language grouping (3).

Mention of circumcision, but doesn’t specify which sex (5, pg 39).

Own black African slaves (6, pg 203).

Infant death rate is reported at 91 per 1,000 reported in the 1950s (6, pg 205).

Numbered references: (There is a lot more information on the Mzab, but you have to be fluent in French because the texts are extremely long and hard to translate)

1. www.ethnologue.com
2. www.everyculture.com
3. <http://anth.alexanderstreet.com/>
4. “Ethnography Atlas.” *Ethnology*. Vol. 1, No. 3 (Jul., 1962), pp. 387-403. University of Pittsburgh. Print.
5. Alport, E. A. “The Mzab.” *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*. Vol. 84:1,2. (Jan – Dec. 1954), pp. 34-44.
6. Barbour, Nevill. “A Survey of North West Africa: The Maghrib.” Second Edition. Oxford University Press. (1962). Print.
7. Joffe, George. “North Africa: Nation, State, and Region.” *Chapter Four: Opposing aspects of colonial rule in this century to 1930: the unusual case of the Beni Mzab*. Routledge Press. (1993). Print.
8. Lewis, David. “The Growth of Cities.” Wiley-Interscience: New York. (1971). Print.
9. Giacobetti, P.A. “La fete du mouton du Mzab.” *Anthropos*. Bd. 25, H. 3./4. (May – Aug 1930), pp. 729-730. Print.