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# Profile

## Introduction

Morocco's coastal location and its proximity to the European continent have been fundamental factors in shaping the course of its history. Over time, the region has experienced numerous and repeated influxes of diverse cultures and groups, from migrating tribes and refugees to invading or occupying forces and foreign merchants. After centuries of often tumultuous dynastic or imperial rule and colonial occupation, Morocco is a growing and developing country governed by a constitutional monarchy. Economic initiatives and governmental reforms continue to modernize the nation and raise its standard of living, although the country still suffers from substantial rates of poverty and unemployment. Despite increasing socio-economic change, the country retains the strong cultural traditions of its Arab and indigenous Imazighen populations, who predominately practice Islam.



© Holly Hayes  
City of Tangier

## Geography

### *Area*

Located on the northwestern coast of Africa, Morocco lies directly south of Spain across the Strait of Gibraltar, where the Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea converge. The expansive coastline forming the country's western and northern borders runs alongside these two bodies of water, making Morocco the only African country with direct access to both the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. Although mainland Spain lies 13 km (8 mi) north across the sea, Morocco shares land boundaries with the European country alongside two small Spanish-controlled properties on the northern Moroccan coast: Ceuta and Melilla. (Morocco disputes the Spanish claims to these two regions, which are nonetheless administered by Spain.) To the east, Morocco shares an extensive land boundary with Algeria, its largest neighbor. On its southern edge, it borders Western Sahara, the site of continued territorial disputes between Morocco and the Polisario Front. With a total land area of 446,300 sq km (277,318 sq mi), Morocco is slightly larger than the state of California.<sup>1</sup>

### *Topography*

Morocco's terrain consists of coastal plains and lowlands rising to extensive high-elevation mountain ranges interspersed with plateaus and valleys. In the southern and eastern areas of the country, the central mountains descend into plains as the topography transforms to desert.

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<sup>1</sup> Central Intelligence Agency. CIA World Factbook. "Morocco." 10 June 2008.  
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mo.html>

Morocco's Atlantic coast, where the majority of the country's population resides, largely consists of fertile plains and plateaus that extend eastward toward the mountainous interior. Rising dramatically from the northern coast, the Rif Mountains run roughly parallel to the Mediterranean as they span from the northern coastal city of Tangier to the Moulouya River basin in the east.



© Ard Hesselink  
A village in the Atlas Mountains

In the central region of the country, three ranges of the Atlas Mountains (Middle, High, and Anti-Atlas) run parallel to each other on a slanted, southwest-to-northeast axis. Located in the High Atlas Mountains is Mt. Toubkal, the tallest peak in North Africa at 4,165 m (13,665 ft). In southern and eastern Morocco, the Atlas Mountains gradually slope downward to meet the arid and semi-arid plateaus and plains that form the northwestern border of the Sahara desert. Sebkha Tah, which at 55 m (180 ft) below sea level is Morocco's lowest point, can be found in the far south.<sup>2</sup>

### *Rivers*

The waterways and recurrent runoff spawned by Morocco's high mountain ranges have provided the country with the most elaborate system of rivers in North Africa. Running northward from the Middle Atlas Mountains and then eastward into the Atlantic, the Sebou river carries the highest volume of water in the country as it follows its 450 km (280 mi) course. Together with its tributaries, the Sebou is responsible for nearly 50% of the nation's surface supply of water.



© John Mather  
The River Ziz

The Moulouya River also originates in the Middle Atlas Mountains, and it flows 515 km (320 mi) northeast to its mouth on the Mediterranean. Though a variety of small streams also flow toward the Mediterranean, the Moulouya is the only substantial river in Morocco to empty into that body of water. At 555 km (345 mi) in length, the Oum er-Rbia is Morocco's longest river, and it serves as an important resource for irrigation and hydroelectric power over its course from the Middle Atlas Mountains to the Atlantic. Several small but important rivers flow in a southerly direction from the High Atlas Mountains toward the Sahara; these include the Ziz, the Rheris, the Guir, the Drâa, and the Dadès. Although most of Morocco's rivers are largely unnavigable, they are heavily utilized for irrigation and hydroelectric power production.<sup>3</sup>

### *Climate*

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<sup>2</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Morocco: Land: Relief." 2008.  
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/392604/Morocco>

<sup>3</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Morocco: Land: Drainage." 2008.  
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/392604/Morocco>

Morocco's climate is largely influenced by two forces: the Atlantic oceanic winds that blow from the west and the arid conditions of the Sahara Desert to the southeast. The Rif and Atlas Mountains in the northern and central regions of the country act as a barrier between these two climatic pressures. A subtropical, Mediterranean climate, characterized by mild, rainy winters and hot, arid summers, dominates the western and northern regions of the country. In the south and east, the rain shadow effect created by the mountainous interior limits precipitation and produces the hot, semi-arid conditions characteristic of the pre-Sahara. Precipitation in the Atlantic coastal region is moderate. The area's rainy season typically runs from October to April or May, with the northwest receiving the highest level of precipitation. Inland, rain and snowfall occur at higher elevations in the Rif and Atlas mountains, which are often snow-capped during the winter months.<sup>4,5</sup>



© Greta Lorenzetto  
Berber men in the Sahara

On the Atlantic coast, average temperatures range between 18° to 28° C (64° to 82° F) in the summer and 8° to 17° C (46° to 63° F) in the winter. Occasionally, in the summer, winds blown in over the mountains from the Sahara can push the temperature as high as 41° C (105° F), but, generally, the prevailing Atlantic winds bring a cooling breeze to the region. The Moroccan interior experiences greater temperature swings, with regional averages ranging from 10° to 27° C (50° to 80° F) and daily highs of over 35° C (95° F) commonly occurring throughout the summer. In the winter, the interior and southern and eastern regions can be very cold, with temperatures decreasing to well below freezing.<sup>6,7</sup>

## Major Cities

### *Casablanca (Dar el-Beïda)*

Located on the upper Atlantic coast of western Morocco, Casablanca is the country's most populous city, as well as its economic, industrial, shipping, and service center. The city is home to one of the world's largest artificial ports, which directs most of the country's foreign trade.<sup>8</sup> The *medina*, or historic center of the metropolis, is located inland from the harbor and is surrounded by the modern city, which was initially constructed by the French during their occupation. Outside the modern commercial and

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<sup>4</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Country Profile: Morocco*. "Geography." May 2006. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Morocco.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Morocco: Land: Climate." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/392604/Morocco>

<sup>6</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Country Profile: Morocco*. "Geography: Climate." May 2006. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Morocco.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Morocco: Land: Climate." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/392604/Morocco>

<sup>8</sup> National Geographic Atlas of the World, Eight Edition. "Casablanca, Morocco." 2004. [http://www3.nationalgeographic.com/places/cities/city\\_casablanca.html](http://www3.nationalgeographic.com/places/cities/city_casablanca.html)

residential areas lie expanses of impoverished shantytowns, or *bidonvilles*, where large populations of poor residents reside in poorly constructed shelters.

The Portuguese built a modern incarnation of the city in the 16th century at the former site of the medieval town of Anfa, which they had previously annihilated in 1468. Naming it Casa Branca, or “White House,” the Portuguese later abandoned the town after it was largely destroyed by an earthquake in 1755. The Alaouite Dynasty subsequently rebuilt the city, and it soon



© Milamber's portfolio / Flickr.com  
City of Casablanca

experienced another influx of European traders and settlers. Spaniards who moved to the city gave it the name of Casablanca. After the French acquired protectorate status over Morocco, they developed the city as a major port and commercial center, thereby initiating its rapid expansion in the 20th century.

Today, Casablanca is a large-scale, modern metropolis (home to more than three million people)<sup>9</sup> and a bustling center of industry, trade, and commerce. Over 50% of the country’s industrial activity and financial transactions take place within the city. Major local products include textiles, canned food, and electronics, and the local coastal waters support a significant regional fishing industry. Although the tourist sector is not as strong as in other areas of the country (which generally possess a more local and less modern character), the massive Hassan II mosque, the city’s most prominent landmark, draws crowds of visitors.<sup>10</sup>

### *Rabat*

Located north of Casablanca on the upper western coast, Rabat is the capital city of Morocco. With a population of over 1.6 million people, it is the country’s second largest metropolis. The imperial town was established on the mouth of the Bou Regreg River in the 12th century by the burgeoning Almohad Dynasty, which used it as a base for its military excursions into Spain (the name Rabat derives from *ribat*, the Arabic term for a fortified monastery).



© Omer Simkha  
City of Rabat

Subsequent rulers constructed the city’s fortified wall and initiated the building of an immense mosque, which was never completed. Today, the Tower of Hassan, the mosque’s immense unfinished minaret, is the city’s most renowned landmark. In the 17th century, the city grew rich as it provided refuge to hordes of infamous Barbary pirates. Later, during French rule, Rabat served as the government’s administrative headquarters, and it maintained this role after Morocco regained its independence.

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<sup>9</sup> All population statistics in this section are from the City Population website. City Population. “Morocco.” 31 August 2007. [http://www3.nationalgeographic.com/places/cities/city\\_casablanca.html](http://www3.nationalgeographic.com/places/cities/city_casablanca.html)

<sup>10</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Casablanca.” 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/97722/Casablanca>

Rabat no longer functions as a significant port town because of the heavy silt deposits in the local river, but it has developed a significant textile and handicraft industry. Foreign embassies, international organizations, and government offices are common throughout the city.<sup>11</sup>

### *Fès*

As the religious center of Morocco, the medieval city of Fès is rich in culture, history, and spiritual character. The city, with a population nearing 1 million, is located in the northern inland region of the country, on the Fès River near its intersection with the river Sebou. It was founded in the late 8th century C.E. by Idris I, a descendent of the Prophet Muhammad, and was further developed by his son, Idris II, who established the city as an imperial capital. Fès soon became home to large numbers of Arab refugees from Andalusia and Tunisia, who added character to an area already marked by Islamic and Berber influences. After the Almoravids consolidated the city in the 11th century, Fès experienced a highpoint in the 14th century as the imperial capital and intellectual center of the Merinid Dynasty.



Located within the city's central historic medina is the famous Qarawiyyin mosque, the oldest in North Africa, and its corresponding university. Founded in the 9th century, this is one of the world's oldest continuously functioning universities. Its presence in the city ensured Fès' role as a major scholarly center of North Africa and the greater Muslim world, particularly during the medieval period. Other city districts include New Fès, the area built by the Merinids, the Mellah, the former Jewish district, and the French-constructed *nouvelle ville*, the modern area of the city. Today, the city is known for its production and trade of traditional handicrafts, including the iconic Fès hat. Tourism and regional agriculture are also significant economic activities in the area.<sup>12, 13</sup>

### *Marrakech*

Marrakech is located in central Morocco on the Haouz Plain north of the High Atlas Mountains. The city was founded in the 11th century by the Almoravids and was an imperial capital and military base intermittently throughout its history. Today, Marrakech is home to over 823,000 people. It's medina is known as the "red city" (from the red clay used for much of the city's



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<sup>11</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Rabat." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/487861/Rabat#>

<sup>12</sup> ChooseMorocco.com. "History of Fez." No date. <http://www.choosemorocco.com/en/about-morocco/history-of-fes.php>

<sup>13</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Fès." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/205391/Fes>

construction) and it contains a large and bustling marketplace, the Djemaa el-Fna square. As in many other Moroccan cities, the modern district located beyond the medina is French-built.

Marrakech is one of Morocco's most popular tourist destinations, and due to its southern location and proximity to the Berber-populated Atlas Mountains, it has maintained a marked Berber influence. In addition to tourism, Marrakech operates as a commercial hub for the southern regions of the country and the nearby Sahara.<sup>14, 15</sup>

## Tangier

Due to its strategic location on the bay of the Strait of Gibraltar in northern Morocco, Tangier has historically been a focal point of commerce and territorial contention. Phoenician traders established a port there in the 1st millennium B.C.E., and in the following centuries the region came under the rule of the Carthaginians, Romans, Vandals, Byzantines, and Visigoths. The Arabs occupied the city after their conquest of the region in the 7th century C.E., but the Almoravids later reclaimed the city for the Berbers by seizing it from Muslim Spain. Beginning in the 15th century, the Portuguese, Spanish, and English controlled Tangier for periods of varied duration. Although Morocco reclaimed the territory in the 17th century, numerous Western powers (including the U.S.) seized or negotiated administrative and commercial rights to the area during the period of the French protectorate and the two World Wars. After the country's independence in 1956, Tangier returned to Moroccan control.



Today, Tangier continues to function as a commercial and shipping hub, and it has also evolved into a significant tourist destination and site of industry. Although Tangier had gained a reputation as a decaying port town marred by espionage and criminal activity, government initiatives put forth in the last decade have led to increased economic and structural development in the area. Approximately 670,000 people live in Tangier.<sup>16, 17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> ChooseMorocco.com. "History of Marrakesh, Morocco." No date.

<http://www.choosemorocco.com/en/about-morocco/history-of-marrakesh.php>

<sup>15</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Marrakech." 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/366128/Marrakech#>

<sup>16</sup> Travel+Leisure. Alleman, Richard. "Morocco's St. Tropez." August 2006.

<http://www.travelandleisure.com/articles/moroccos-st-tropez>

<sup>17</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Tangier." 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/582513/Tangier>

## History

### *Early History*

Archeological evidence demonstrates the existence of agricultural settlements dating back several thousand years along the coastal regions of Morocco. In the late 2nd millennium B.C.E., the Imazighen people, commonly known as the Berbers, first migrated into the region; their point of origination is not conclusively known. In the coming centuries, Morocco's strategic location along the Mediterranean ensured the influx of external peoples.



Courtesy of Wikipedia  
Berber Family Crossing a Ford

Notably, the Phoenicians, who later founded the city of Carthage in present day Tunisia, established several trading centers on Moroccan shores in the 1st millennium B.C.E. As Carthage grew to become a regional power, numerous large but unorganized Berber kingdoms also developed.<sup>18</sup>

In 146 B.C.E., Rome conquered Carthage, and in the following century, Rome expanded its empire to include the economically significant areas of the Moroccan region, which was then designated as the Mauretania Tingitana province. In gaining relative control over the area, Rome eschewed military force for the formation of coalitions with the Berber tribes. In the first centuries of the 1st millennium C.E., Christianity and Judaism grew prevalent in Morocco's Roman-populated areas. Later, as Roman control over the area waned, Morocco's accessible coastal areas were invaded and ruled by successive powers, including the Vandals, the Byzantines, and the Visigoths. In the 7th century C.E., Arabs invaded and conquered the region, and over the coming years they established Islam as the dominant religion.<sup>19</sup>

### *Arab and Berber Dynasties*

At this time, Morocco became a province of the expansive Umayyad Dynasty, a Muslim empire based in Damascus but spread throughout Northern Africa and Spain. (Shortly after the conquest, some Berbers joined the Arabs in their invasion of Spain in 711 C.E.) In the following centuries, sustained Berber revolt against Arab rule eventually resulted in a series of powerful Berber dynasties, including the Almoravids, whose empire in the 11th century C.E. encompassed much of the Maghreb region of northwestern Africa, as well as Muslim Spain. Subsequent Berber dynasties, whose domains varied in scope, included the Almohads (1130–1269 C.E.) and the Merinids (1248–1465 C.E.). In the 17th century, the Alaouites (Arabs who claimed to be descendents of the Prophet

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<sup>18</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Country Profile: Morocco*. "Historical Background: Pre-History and Early History." May 2006. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Morocco.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress *Country Profile: Morocco*. "Historical Background: Pre-History and Early History." May 2006. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Morocco.pdf>

Muhammad) seized power, and their reign has continued to this day, despite intermittent periods of weakened rule.<sup>20</sup>

### *The Rise of European Powers in Morocco*

After a period of relative isolation from Europe, Morocco drew increased attention from European countries in the 19th century. France's invasion of Algeria ultimately led to a few skirmishes between Morocco and the European power, and subsequent territorial disputes with Spain further embroiled Morocco in military confrontation. The latter of these events resulted in territorial and monetary concessions made to the Spanish. In the early 20th century, European designs for Morocco ultimately resulted in France gaining protectorate status over most of the country, with Spain acquiring control of certain northern and southern areas, including the Spanish Sahara. Morocco nominally retained its independence but was, nonetheless, occupied and effectively controlled by French and Spanish forces. Internal faction and an inferior military prevented Morocco from repelling the colonial powers, although Berber tribes in the Rif Mountains sustained an active armed resistance for several years.<sup>21, 22</sup>



Courtesy of Wikipedia  
French artillery in Rabat, 1911

### *Moroccan Independence and Spanish Sahara*

Morocco's independence movement grew out of nationalist aspirations expressed in the 1920s and 1930s. Formed in 1934, the Moroccan Action Committee called for moderate reforms but was, nonetheless, suppressed by the French occupation. In the 1940s, during World War II, the Independence Party reasserted the nationalists' demands for autonomy. Among the party's supporters was Sultan Muhammad V, an Alaouite Dynasty member who was later exiled by the French in 1953. After two years of violent civil unrest, the French allowed Muhammad V to return, and he subsequently negotiated Morocco's full independence. In 1956, France and Spain signed respective agreements formally recognizing Morocco's status as a sovereign nation.<sup>23</sup>



Courtesy of Wikimedia  
Mohammed V

In the 1970s, the status of the Spanish Sahara region became an international issue. Although Spain relinquished its control over the area to Morocco and Mauritania in 1976,

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<sup>20</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "North Africa: From the Arab Conquest to 1830." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/418538/North-Africa#>

<sup>21</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Country Profile: Morocco*. "Historical Background: Pre-History and Early History." May 2006. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Morocco.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Morocco: History." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/392604/Morocco#>

<sup>23</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Country Profile: Morocco*. "Historical Background: Pre-History and Early History." May 2006. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Morocco.pdf>

a UN referendum backed by the International Court of Justice advocated regional autonomy for the indigenous Saharan population, as represented by the Polisario Front. Aided by Algeria, the Polisario Front formed the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) and soon engaged in sustained battles with Moroccan and Mauritanian forces. After military casualties compelled Mauritania to relinquish control of its portion of the area to the Polisario, Morocco seized the entire region and constructed a massive sand berm around 75% of the territory. Despite the establishment of a UN-administered cease-fire between the two factions in 1991, negotiations between Morocco (which continues to administer most of the region) and the Polisario Front have since been limited and unproductive.<sup>24</sup>

### *Morocco and Western Sahara: 21st Century*

Of late, the territorial dispute between Morocco and the Polisario Front manifested in a series of discussions held in 2007 and 2008. Morocco has proposed that Western Sahara become an autonomous region of the Moroccan state, whereas the Polisario has called for a referendum to be held, with the option for indigenous Sahrawis to vote for their independence. The most recent meeting held in March 2008 demonstrated little progress and concluded without resolution. Each side has garnered some support from various members of the international community.<sup>25</sup> The United States continues to support the negotiation process and is an advocate of the Moroccan plan for Western Sahara's relative autonomy.<sup>26, 27</sup>

### **Economy**

Morocco has been in the process of restructuring and developing its economy in order to combat substantial rates of poverty and unemployment in the country. The nation's lack of economic diversification, primarily its overdependence on the agricultural sector and its reliance upon foreign energy, have hindered its economic growth. However, foreign aid and investment along with domestic reforms aimed at modernizing the economic sector have produced moderate success in recent years.



© The Poss / Flickr.com  
Port of Tangiers

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<sup>24</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Country Profile: Morocco*. "Historical Background: Pre-History and Early History." May 2006. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Morocco.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> CIA World Factbook. "Western Sahara." 10 June 2008. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/wi.html>

<sup>26</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Morocco." October 2007. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5431.htm>

<sup>27</sup> ReuterAlertnet.com. "U.N.-backed Western Sahara Talks End with no Progress." 19 March 2008. <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/N18251207.htm>

## *Industry, Mining, and Manufacturing*

In 2006, the industrial sector, including manufacturing, mining, and construction, accounted for 28% of Morocco's GDP. For the year 2007, some estimates place that number as high as 37.9%.<sup>28, 29</sup> Historically, Morocco has been a major miner and producer of phosphates. It has the world's largest reserves of the mineral, and, thus, it is consistently one of the world's top exporters of phosphate rock and phosphoric acids used to make fertilizers. In recent years, Morocco has endeavored to develop a modern textiles and clothing industry, which has created jobs and contributed to the country's export revenues, but it has suffered from competition with Asian countries. Electronics and automobile assembly, food processing, and the production of handicrafts (including leather goods) are also major components of the country's industrial and manufacturing sector.<sup>30, 31</sup>

## *Agriculture*

The Moroccan economy has historically relied heavily on the agricultural sector, particularly for jobs. Agriculture employs roughly 40% of the nation's workforce.<sup>32</sup> This sector's susceptibility to climatological disaster makes it, and the economy as a whole, particularly vulnerable to fluctuation. Droughts in recent years have seriously affected the country's overall economic growth, resulting in a meager 2.1% growth rate in the GDP for 2007.<sup>33</sup>



© Ard Hesselink  
Fishing boats in Agadir

Notably, shortfalls in crop yields for that year forced Morocco to increase its imports of grains in order to supplement its domestic supply.<sup>34</sup> Typically, the country produces two-thirds of the total grain supply required to meet its domestic demands.<sup>35</sup> In general, the country's major crops, many of which are produced for export, include barley, wheat,

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<sup>28</sup> The World Bank. World Development Indicators Database. "Data Profile: Morocco." April 2008. <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/DATASTATISTICS/0,,contentMDK:20535285~menuPK:1192694~pagePK:64133150~piPK:64133175~theSitePK:239419,00.html>

<sup>29</sup> Central Intelligence Agency. CIA World Factbook. "Morocco." 10 June 2008. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mo.html>

<sup>30</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress *Country Profile: Morocco*. "Historical Background: Pre-History and Early History." May 2006. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Morocco.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Morocco: Economy." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/392604/Morocco#>

<sup>32</sup> Central Intelligence Agency. CIA World Factbook. "Morocco." 10 June 2008. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mo.html>

<sup>33</sup> Central Intelligence Agency. CIA World Factbook. "Morocco." 10 June 2008. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mo.html>

<sup>34</sup> Reuters: Africa. Karam, Souhail. "Morocco Trims 2008 Growth Forecast to 6.2%." 3 June 2008. <http://africa.reuters.com/business/news/usnBAN351041.html>

<sup>35</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Morocco: Economy." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/392604/Morocco#>

rice, sugar beets, tomatoes, potatoes, citrus fruits, olives, and additional vegetables. Livestock also accounts for a significant portion of the country's agricultural sector.<sup>36, 37</sup>

With its access to the rich Atlantic waters, Morocco has abundant fishing resources. However, its infrastructure in this realm is somewhat underdeveloped, and, thus, it has an agreement with the European Union allowing EU fishermen access to Moroccan waters in exchange for monetary payments.<sup>38</sup> For its part, Morocco's fishing industry is significant; the country is the world's leading exporter of sardines and is a major source of canned seafood.<sup>39</sup>

### *Banking*

Founded in 1959, Bank al-Maghrib is the central bank of Morocco. Bank al-Maghrib issues currency, manages foreign exchange reserves, and maintains inflation. In addition, this central bank regulates the country's entire banking system<sup>40</sup> said to be one of the largest in North Africa; but is controlled by three leading banks: Attijariwafa Bank, Groupe Banques Populaires, and Banque Marocaine du Commerce Extérieur. The remaining 30% of the banking system consists of sector-specific public banks, such as the Crédit Agricole de Maroc (for the agricultural needs), and local branches of three major French banks.<sup>41</sup> In addition to large growth in the banking sector, the investment climate has benefited from the government's wish to encourage foreign investment.<sup>42</sup>

### *Tourism*

In recent years, the tourism sector has been an important source of economic growth and development for Morocco. It is the country's largest source of foreign exchange, which is a significant factor in decreasing Morocco's trade deficit (foreign exchange remittances from diasporic Moroccans are also significant for this purpose). Government aid directed toward promoting the sector's growth and improving its infrastructure has been



© Jon Addison  
A souk in Marrakesh at night

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<sup>36</sup> Central Intelligence Agency. CIA World Factbook. "Morocco." 10 June 2008.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mo.html>

<sup>37</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Country Profile: Morocco*. "Historical Background: Pre-History and Early History." May 2006. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Morocco.pdf>

<sup>38</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Country Profile: Morocco*. "Historical Background: Pre-History and Early History." May 2006. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Morocco.pdf>

<sup>39</sup> Brazzil Magazine. Isaura, Daniel. "Morocco Becomes Brazil's Main Sardine Supplier." 1 April 2006. <http://www.brazzilmag.com/content/view/5971/53/>

<sup>40</sup> Middle East North Africa Financial Network. Economy Watch. "Bank al-Maghrib." No date.

<http://www.economywatch.com/banks/central-banks/bank-al-maghrib.html>

<sup>41</sup> MENAFM.com "S&P: Morocco's Bank Stronger But Face New Risks." 18 February 2008.

[http://www.menafn.com/qn\\_news\\_story\\_s.asp?storyid=1093185988](http://www.menafn.com/qn_news_story_s.asp?storyid=1093185988)

<sup>42</sup> U.S. Department of State. Investment Climate Statements 2006. "Morocco." 2006.

<http://www.state.gov/e/eeb/ifd/2006/62366.htm>

a major part of the country's successful and ongoing efforts to attract and support increased numbers of tourists. Morocco's coastal resorts, historic cities (such as Fès), and proximity to Europe account for its rising popularity as a tourist destination.<sup>43</sup>

### *Trade*

Morocco typically records an annual trade deficit, but economic development and increased foreign exchange has reduced the margin in recent years.<sup>44</sup> Most of the country's major trading partners are members of the EU. In 2007, its top export partners (in order of importance) were Spain, France, the United Kingdom, and Italy; and its leading import partners were France, Spain, Saudi Arabia, and China. Morocco's major exports include textiles and apparel, agricultural produce, phosphates, fish, and electrical components. Principal imports consist of crude oil and other energy resources, textile fabrics, plastics, industrial equipment, and food products.<sup>45</sup>

Significantly, in 2004, Morocco signed a bilateral free-trade agreement with the U.S. and it recently came into effect in 2006. As a result, U.S.-Moroccan trade has experienced a significant boost. In 2007, trade between the two countries reached USD 2.3 billion, a substantial increase from that of prior years.<sup>46</sup>

### *Energy*

Due to its lack of significant domestic sources of petroleum and natural gas, Morocco is the leading energy importer in Northern Africa.<sup>47</sup> Its proven reserves (as of 2006) of 1.07 million barrels of oil (bbl) and 60 billion cubic feet of natural gas are well below those of its largest neighbor, Algeria.<sup>48</sup> In terms of production, the country's output of 3,746 bbl per day lags far behind its daily consumption of 176,000 bbl.<sup>49</sup> Morocco continues to explore for additional resources, notably in offshore areas, but results have generally been limited. The nation also has to import coal, which is used to fuel its two primary



© Giles Antonio Radford  
Power plant

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<sup>43</sup> Jamestown Foundation. *Global Terrorism Analysis*, Vol. 5, No. 11. Chebatoris, Michael. "AQIM's Threat to Morocco's Tourism Sector." 7 June 2007.

<http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2373452>

<sup>44</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Morocco: Economy." 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/392604/Morocco#>

<sup>45</sup> Central Intelligence Agency. CIA World Factbook. "Morocco." 10 June 2008.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mo.html>

<sup>46</sup> Afrik.com. Panapress. "Morocco and U.S. Free Trade Deal Rakes in US \$2.3 Billion." 19 June 2008.

<http://en.afrik.com/article13884.html>

<sup>47</sup> International Energy Agency. "Beyond the OECD: Morocco." 2008.

[http://www.iea.org/Textbase/country/n\\_country.asp?COUNTRY\\_CODE=MA#bottom](http://www.iea.org/Textbase/country/n_country.asp?COUNTRY_CODE=MA#bottom)

<sup>48</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Country Profile: Morocco*. "Historical Background: Pre-History and Early History." May 2006. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Morocco.pdf>

<sup>49</sup> Central Intelligence Agency. CIA World Factbook. "Morocco." 10 June 2008.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mo.html>

electricity production plants.<sup>50</sup> The tension surrounding Morocco's annexation of Western Sahara is exacerbated by the region's actual and potential energy resources, for which Morocco has already controversially extended exploratory contracts to private companies.<sup>51</sup>

## Media

The government of Morocco owns or partially owns numerous media outlets, including Radio-Télévision Marocaine, 2M, *Al-Anbaa* (a daily newspaper), and *Le Matin* (another daily paper). The remaining media outlets are privately owned. Satellite television and foreign papers can also be found throughout the country.<sup>52</sup> Despite the legal declaration for freedom of the press, all media is still subject to the same press codes. These include defamation, libel, or discussion of three taboo subjects: the monarchy, Islam, and Western Sahara. Journalists who speak or write of these topics may face jail time or penalties for themselves and their publishers.<sup>53</sup>



© Darren Barefoot  
Newspapers on sale in Essaouira

## Ethnic Groups and Languages

The vast majority (99%) of the Moroccan population is categorized as Arab-Berber.<sup>54</sup> Berbers<sup>55</sup> (also known as Imazighen) are indigenous tribes whose ancestors settled in the region in the late 2nd millennium B.C.E. Despite the encompassing category, the Imazighen population cannot be described as a homogenous group. There are several subgroups of Imazighen who, historically, have utilized unique languages and occupied distinct regions of Northern Africa and, more specifically, distinct regions of Morocco.<sup>56</sup> After the Arab invasion in the 7th century C.E., most Imazighen converted to Islam, and in the following centuries, Arab and Imazighen peoples intermarried. Recent analyses of Berber-speaking and Arabic-



© Hugh Bell  
Woman smiling

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<sup>50</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Country Profile: Morocco*. "Historical Background: Pre-History and Early History." May 2006. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Morocco.pdf>

<sup>51</sup> Energy Information Administration, U.S. Department of Energy. "Arab Maghreb Union: Morocco." April 2006. [http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Arab\\_Maghreb\\_Union/Morocco.html](http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Arab_Maghreb_Union/Morocco.html)

<sup>52</sup> BBC News. "Country Profile: Morocco." 4 April 2008. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/country\\_profiles/791867.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/country_profiles/791867.stm)

<sup>53</sup> U.S. Department of State. Country Reports on Human Rights Practices-2007. "Morocco." 11 March 2008. <http://www.state.gov/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100602.htm>

<sup>54</sup> Central Intelligence Agency. CIA World Factbook. "Morocco." 10 June 2008. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mo.html>

<sup>55</sup> The term "Berber" derives from *barbara*, the Roman word for barbarian; Imazighen means "free men" and is the term the tribes prefer.

<sup>56</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Berber." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/61465/Berber#>

speaking populations demonstrated few genetic differences between the two groups.<sup>57</sup> However, anywhere from 40–60% of the total Moroccan population identifies or is described as Imazighen, a categorization seemingly based largely on linguistic and cultural differences.<sup>58, 59, 60</sup>

Modern Standard Arabic is the national language of Morocco. It is used for all official government communication and is the predominant language taught in schools. Only in recent years have Berber languages been allowed to be taught in the public education system.<sup>61</sup> However, Moroccan Arabic, a colloquial version of the standard form of the language, is more commonly spoken and is used by approximately two-thirds of the country's population.<sup>62</sup> Three Berber languages, which are collectively known as *Tamazight*, are common in respective areas of Morocco: *Tashelhit* is spoken in the southwestern region, in the Anti-Atlas and western High Atlas Mountains and Sous valley; *Central Atlas Tamazight* is prevalent in the Middle Atlas and High Atlas Mountains; and *Tarafit* is spoken in the Rif Mountains of the north.<sup>63</sup> Many Berbers who speak a form of *Tamazight* as their first language also speak Arabic, and many Moroccans who speak Arabic as their first language are nonetheless of Berber heritage. Also, due to France's extended colonial presence in the region, French is a common second or third language, particularly within intellectual and commercial circles. Spanish is also relatively prevalent.

In general, Morocco's Arabic-speaking population resides along the Atlantic coast and the nearby plains, particularly in urban areas. The country's Berber-speaking populations predominately live in the remote mountainous regions of the northern and central interior and the southern and eastern deserts and plateaus. Marrakech is one of the few major cities where Arabic is not the dominant language. This division along linguistic and geographic lines follows the general pattern of Moroccan history. Invading or established foreign peoples typically occupied the accessible and economically viable



© The Poss / Flickr.com  
Moroccan girls

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<sup>57</sup> *European Journal of Human Genetics*, Vol. 8. Bosch, Elena; and others. "Genetic Structure of North-West Africa Revealed by STR Analysis [p.362]." 2000.

<http://www.upf.edu/cexs/recerca/bioevo/2000BioEvo/BE2000-Bosch-STRs-EJHG.pdf>

<sup>58</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Developing World*, Vol. 2. Leonard, Thomas M., ed. "Maghrib Peoples [p. 975]." 2006. New York: Routledge.

<sup>59</sup> BBC News, International Version. Dixon, Martha. "Moroccans Learn to Write Berber." 19 December 2005. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4502772.stm>

<sup>60</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Morocco: Ethnic Groups." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/392604/Morocco#>

<sup>61</sup> BBC News, International Version. Dixon, Martha. "Moroccans Learn to Write Berber." 19 December 2005. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4502772.stm>

<sup>62</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Morocco: Languages." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/392604/Morocco#>

<sup>63</sup> Ethnologue.com. "Ethnologue: Languages of the World, Languages of Morocco." 2005. [http://www.ethnologue.com/show\\_country.asp?name=MA](http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=MA)

coastal regions; whereas indigenous Berber tribes maintained their settlements in the remote areas of the interior.

Moreover, throughout its history, Morocco has experienced influxes of additional ethnic groups. A multitude of Muslim refugees who fled the Christian reconquest of Spain migrated to Morocco and subsequently assimilated into the population. Sub-Saharan Africans brought to Morocco through the commercial slave trade also have descendents in the country. Finally, Morocco had, for a time, a substantial Jewish population, although many Jews departed for the Middle East after the formation of the Israeli state in 1948.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Morocco: Ethnic Groups." 2008.  
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/392604/Morocco#>

# Religion

## Overview of Major Religions

Morocco's population is 99% Muslim; the remaining 1% largely consists of small numbers of Jewish and Christian peoples.<sup>65</sup> The vast majority of the country's Muslim population practices the Sunni form of Islam, which is the largest sect of the Islamic faith.<sup>66</sup> For its adherents, Islam serves as the primary guide for every aspect of life. Accordingly, its importance in determining the social values and legal code of Moroccan society cannot be understated.

### *Islam: Basic Beliefs and History*

Adherents of Islam believe that the religion has existed eternally, but has been revealed over time by a series of prophets—including Abraham, Moses, and Jesus—culminating with the Prophet Muhammad (570–632 C.E.). For Muslims, Muhammad's message is the final and definitive revelation of the faith. The literal meaning of the Arabic term, *islam*, is “to submit” or “to surrender.” A Muslim, therefore, is one who submits to the will of Allah, or God, the sole creator of the universe. Allah's message is recited in the Qur'an, the sacred scriptures of Islam, which were revealed by Muhammad and subsequently recorded and compiled in written form. The essence of this message is found in the *shahada*, the Islamic creed and the first of the faith's “Five Pillars,” or fundamental duties: “There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the prophet of Allah.” Islam's remaining obligatory deeds include the performance of daily ritual prayers, the payment of a tax to support the Muslim community (particularly the poor and needy), fasting during the holy month of Ramadan, and undertaking a pilgrimage to the Islamic holy city of Mecca.<sup>67, 68</sup>



© Jon Addison  
The Hassan III Mosque in Casablanca

The rapid growth of Islam began in Arabia in the 7th century C.E. Inspired by a series of visions, or revelations, Muhammad, a reputable merchant from the city of Mecca, dedicated the rest of his life to promulgating the Islamic faith. Muhammad's monotheistic message contradicted the prevailing polytheism of the time, and he and his followers soon encountered considerable resistance and persecution in Mecca. However, Muhammad gained converts in the oasis town of Yathrib (now known as Medina), where he established the first Islamic community. This community fully integrated the Islamic

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<sup>65</sup> Central Intelligence Agency. CIA World Factbook. “Morocco.” 19 June 2008.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mo.html>

<sup>66</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State. “Background Note: Morocco.” October 2007.

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5431.htm>

<sup>67</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Islam.” 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/295507/Islam>

<sup>68</sup> BBC. “Religion and Ethics: Islam.” 9 March 2006.

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/history/muhammad\\_1.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/history/muhammad_1.shtml)

belief system into the social network and provided a model for subsequent Islamic societies. (The Muslims' migration from Mecca to Medina is known as the *hijrah*, and it marks the beginning of the Muslim calendar.) In the following years, Muhammad's Muslim following grew in size and strength. After a series of military battles, he and his fellow Muslims later returned to Mecca and conquered the city for Islam. By the time of his death in 632 C.E., Muhammad had united much of Arabia under Islam. In the following centuries, the Muslim empire expanded, through conquest and conversion, to include the greater Middle East, North Africa, South Asia, and parts of Europe. Made shortly before his death, Muhammad's pilgrimage from Medina to Mecca, known as the *hajj*, provided the basis for the Islamic tradition of undertaking a similar journey to the Islamic holy city.<sup>69, 70, 71</sup>

### *The Sunni and Shi'a Divide*

At the time of his death, Muhammad had neither chosen a successor nor instituted a policy concerning a potential selection process for the role. The resulting uncertainty (manifested in the decades following his death) has had serious and extensive historical ramifications. Differing opinions regarding the determination and legitimacy of rule of successive Islamic leaders resulted in the division of the Islamic community into two camps, the Sunni and the Shi'a. The Sunni believed that the successor, known as the *caliph*, should be elected by Muslim community leaders. On the other hand, the Shi'a felt that only Muhammad's descendants held rightful claims to the caliphate. In effect, Sunnis placed greater value on maintaining communal consensus, whereas the Shi'a wished to sustain the role of a central spiritual leader, or *imam*, who they believed possessed special insight. This debate largely concerned the ascension of Ali, Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, to the caliphate. The Shi'a considered Ali and his heirs to be the rightful successors to Muhammad, and after Ali's assassination, internal battles for the caliphate solidified the division between the two sects. Today, the two factions essentially follow the same fundamental Islamic beliefs, but with differences in practice and emphasis.<sup>72</sup> In Morocco, nearly all Muslims belong to the Sunni sect, and, more specifically, to the Maliki school of Islamic law within the larger Sunni division.<sup>73</sup>



© Alexandre Baron  
Evening prayer

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<sup>69</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Islam." 2008.  
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/295507/Islam>

<sup>70</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Muhammad." 2008.  
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/396226/Muhammad>

<sup>71</sup> CQ Press. *Encyclopedia of Politics and Religion*, ed. Robert Wuthnow. Voll, John O. "Islam." 1998.  
[http://www.cqpress.com/context/articles/epr\\_islam.html](http://www.cqpress.com/context/articles/epr_islam.html)

<sup>72</sup> Islamfortoday.com. Hussein Abdulwaheed Amin. "The Origins of the Sunni/Shia Split in Islam." 2001.  
<http://www.islamfortoday.com/shia.htm>

<sup>73</sup> CQ Press. *Encyclopedia of Politics and Religion*, ed. Robert Wuthnow. Voll, John O. "Islam." 1998.  
[http://www.cqpress.com/context/articles/epr\\_islam.html](http://www.cqpress.com/context/articles/epr_islam.html)

## *Moroccan Islam and Sufism*

There are two significant interrelated components of Moroccan Islam that developed, in part, from the cultural amalgamation of the Islamic Arab and Berber peoples. The first is the concept of the *marabout*, or Muslim holy man. As prominent and highly revered religious figures, *marabouts* are thought to possess considerable spiritual grace and power, known as *baraka*. For Moroccan Muslims, *baraka* is a transferable force that originates with Allah and can be passed on to others, most notably to the *marabout's* first born son. *Marabouts* are more common in Morocco's rural areas, where they often maintain leadership roles in the local community.<sup>74</sup>

Sufism, a form of mystical Islam, also has a strong historical tradition within Morocco. The basic objective of Sufi practitioners is to obtain a direct and personal experience of the divine through a variety of mystical and often ascetic paths. Historically, many Sufi mystics have acquired the status of *marabout* due to their possession of considerable *baraka*.<sup>75, 76</sup>

## *The Practice of Christianity and Judaism in Islamic Society*

Islam, Christianity, and Judaism are all considered “Abrahamic” religions due to the mutual significance of Abraham's covenant with God (as outlined in the Hebrew bible) in each of their sacred histories.<sup>77</sup> In terms of practice, Judaism is the oldest of the three faiths, which all share the belief in a single and all-powerful God. (The concept of the Christian Trinity complicates this notion, but the faith is still generally considered monotheistic.) They also maintain similar cosmological beliefs, including the notions of an afterlife, a final judgment, and the existence of angels and demons.<sup>78</sup>



Christianity arose from Judaism, and, in general, the two faiths share the foundational elements of the Hebrew bible, known in Christian terms as the Old Testament. However, Christians developed a unique set of practices and beliefs based on the teachings of Jesus and his twelve disciples, which are represented by the New Testament. As a result, the two belief systems differ in numerous ways, two of which are of primary importance. First, Christians believe that Jesus was the human incarnation of God, whereas Jews believe that Jesus was neither the son of God nor a prophet (Muslims consider Jesus to be

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<sup>74</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. “The Moroccan Within: Islam” [pp. 48–50]. 2003. London: Kuperard.

<sup>75</sup> *The Berbers*. Brett, Michael, and Elizabeth Fentress. “Pastoral Berbers [p. 226].” Oxford, England: Blackwell Publishers.

<sup>76</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Sufism.” 2008.  
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/571823/Sufism>

<sup>77</sup> ReligionFacts.com “Comparison of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity.” 2008.  
[http://www.religionfacts.com/islam/comparison\\_charts/islam\\_judaism\\_christianity.htm](http://www.religionfacts.com/islam/comparison_charts/islam_judaism_christianity.htm)

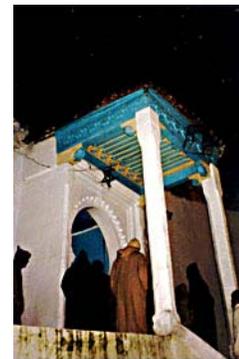
<sup>78</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. “The Moroccan Within: Islam [p. 44].” 2003. London: Kuperard.

the second-to-last Prophet before Muhammad). Second, Judaism is described as a covenant, or agreement, between God and, specifically, the Jewish people. Christians believe that this agreement was replaced with “a new covenant,” brought about through the coming of Jesus.<sup>79</sup>

During the initial growth of Islam and its subsequent spread via the expansion of the Muslim empire, Christian and Jewish communities held the status of *Ahl al-Kitab*, or “People of the Book.” This designation stemmed from their belief in the sacred scriptures, which were also recognized, to a certain extent, by Muslims. As a result, Jews and Christians were generally able to maintain their religious freedom within the larger Islamic community, although they were, at times, required to pay a special tax to do so. In any case, practitioners of Islam accepted Jews and Christians as fellow monotheists with, in some respects, a mutual history.<sup>80</sup>

### Role of Religion in Government

Islam is the official state religion of Morocco. The king, described in the nation’s constitution as the “Commander of the faithful and the Supreme Representative of the Muslim Community,” is expected to ensure that all citizens respect the Islamic faith. Nonetheless, the constitution also guarantees religious freedom for those practicing other belief systems, and this is particularly relevant to the country’s small Jewish and Christian populations. However, the government maintains rigid restrictions on the distribution of non-Muslim religious publications and any other forms of proselytizing. In other words, it is illegal to try to convert a Muslim to a different religion. There are recorded cases in which American citizens have been arrested and deported for provoking religious debates about Christianity and Islam. Similarly, a Muslim’s renunciation of Islam can lead to severe social consequences (although it is not illegal for him or her to willingly do so).<sup>81</sup>



© Ahron de Leeuw  
Men gathering in front of a mosque

Islamic law, as defined in the Qur’an, plays a significant role in Morocco’s legal code, particularly as it applies to personal and familial issues such as marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance. For Muslim citizens, legal matters such as these are ruled on by Muslim religious judges, or *qadis*, in special courts founded in Islamic law, known as the *Shari’a*. Following a similar pattern, cases concerning the personal status of Morocco’s Jewish citizens are administered in a court system overseen by Rabbinical judges.<sup>82, 83</sup> All

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<sup>79</sup> ReligionFacts.com “Comparison of Christianity and Judaism.” 2008.

[http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/charts/christianity\\_judaism.htm](http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/charts/christianity_judaism.htm)

<sup>80</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Islam.” 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/295507/Islam>

<sup>81</sup> Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. “International Religious Freedom Report 2007: Morocco.” 14 September 2007. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2007/90217.htm>

<sup>82</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Morocco: Government and Society: Justice.” 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/392604/Morocco>

other legal matters fall under the authority of the secular civil courts, whose legal code is based on French and Spanish civil law.<sup>84</sup>

The Moroccan government provides funding and tax benefits to Muslim, Christian, and Jewish organizations. It also offers financial support to sustain the teaching of Islam and Judaism in public schools. In recent years, the government's Ministry of Islamic Affairs and Endowments has supervised mosques and Qur'anic schools in order to prevent the incorporation of politically-charged or unconventional doctrine into religious and educational lectures.<sup>85</sup>

### **Influence of Religion on Daily Life**

The obligatory duties of the Islamic faith shape the daily lives of Moroccan Muslims. Most notably, Muslims are obliged to perform a series of daily prayers, known as *salat*, the "Second Pillar" of Islam. These prayers are performed at five established times of the day: before dawn, just after noon, late afternoon, just after sunset, and before retiring in the evening. (In Morocco, prayer times are typically posted in the local newspaper.<sup>86</sup>) Generally, these prayers are performed at a mosque, although they may be carried out alone, if necessary. Friday is the Islamic holy day and the primary day of worship.<sup>87</sup>



© Alexandre Baron  
Family procession celebrating a circumcision

Before each prayer, Muslims wash their face, head, hands, and feet; this ritual of ablution is known as *wudhu*. *Wudhu* is not solely intended for purposes of physical cleanliness (though this is extremely important). It also mentally and spiritually prepares the participant to perform a holy action in a pure and concentrated state. Once *wudhu* has been performed, there are to be no acts of uncleanness until after the prayers are completed.<sup>88</sup>

### **Influence of Religion on Gender**

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<sup>83</sup> Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. "International Religious Freedom Report 2007: Morocco." 14 September 2007. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2007/90217.htm>

<sup>84</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. "Country Profile: Morocco." May 2006. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Morocco.pdf>

<sup>85</sup> Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. "International Religious Freedom Report 2007: Morocco." 14 September 2007. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2007/90217.htm>

<sup>86</sup> Kwintessential: Cross Cultural Solutions. "Morocco: Language, Culture and Doing Business." <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/morocco-country-profile.html>

<sup>87</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Islam." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/295507/Islam>

<sup>88</sup> Islam.com. "Wudhu: Ablution for Prayer." c.2000. <http://www.islam.com/salat/wudhu.htm>

The prevailing influence of Islam has a profound and distinguishing effect upon the respective roles of men and women in Moroccan society. In general, Islamic law and tradition provide men with more rights and higher social status than women. However, recent reforms in Moroccan law have made substantial gains in addressing gender inequality. In 2004, the Moroccan government, led by King Mohammad VI, instituted a new Moroccan family code, or *Moudawana*. The new code offers numerous legal protections for women, including an increased minimum age for marriage (raised from 15 to 18), greater personal freedom within marriage, the legal right to initiate divorce, and greater restrictions on the practice of polygamy. Such reforms have made Morocco one of the leading innovators in women's rights in the Muslim world.<sup>89</sup>



© See Wah Cheng  
Muslim women

## Religious Events

### *Ramadan*

The observance of Ramadan, a month-long event commemorating the initial revelation of the Qur'an, is an essential component of the Islamic faith. It is during this period that observing Muslims fulfill the "Third Pillar" of Islam, the undertaking of a fast, known as *sawm*. This practice is intended to purify the body and soul while demonstrating one's devotion to Allah. Throughout the month, Muslims abstain from eating, smoking, drinking, or having sex during daylight hours. Within the Muslim community, young children, elders, soldiers on duty, the infirm, and hard laborers are not expected to participate in the fast. Non-Muslims, including visitors and tourists, are also not required to fast, but it is forbidden for them to eat, drink, smoke, or chew gum while in public.<sup>90</sup>

At sunset each evening, the fast ends with family and friends celebrating together with a meal (*iftar*), and this celebration usually extends until late in the evening. In general, the pace of everyday life slows considerably during the holy month. Muslims generally work shorter hours and often suffer the effects of fasting (such as fatigue). Accordingly, businesses and shops maintain limited, irregular hours.<sup>91, 92</sup>



© christopher sly / Flickr.com  
Moroccans eating after fasting for Ramadan

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<sup>89</sup> Christian Science Monitor. Rachidi, Ilhem. "After Struggle, New Equality for Moroccan Women." 24 October 2003. <http://www.csmonitor.com/2003/1024/p09s01-wome.html>

<sup>90</sup> ReligionFacts.com. "Ramadan." 10 January 2005. <http://www.religionfacts.com/islam/holidays/ramadan.htm>

<sup>91</sup> *Morocco*, 8th Ed. "Directory: Holidays [455]." 2007. Footscray, Victoria; Lonely Planet Publications.

<sup>92</sup> Kwantessential: Cross Cultural Solutions. "Morocco: Language, Culture and Doing Business." No date. <http://www.kwantessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/morocco-country-profile.html>

## *Moussems*

More common in rural areas than in urban centers, *moussems* are local ceremonies or festivals held in honor of deceased *marabouts*. Moroccans (and even tourists) make pilgrimages to the tombs of these holy men, and the gathered crowds celebrate with a variety of festivities, including dancing, music, and feasts. The size of each ceremony depends upon the renown of the *marabout*; festivals held for famous *marabouts* may draw considerable numbers.<sup>93</sup>

## **Religious Holidays**

Officially, there are two Islamic celebrations specifically cited in the Qur'an: Eid al-Fitr, a festival held on the last night of Ramadan, and Eid al-Adha, a *feast marking* the end of the pilgrimage, or *hajj*, to Mecca. These celebrations are recognized by all Muslims. For orthodox Muslims, any additional celebrations are considered extraneous and imperfect as they do not correlate with the precise revelations of Muhammad.<sup>94</sup> Nonetheless, there are several Muslim holidays observed in Morocco. Significantly, as the Islamic calendar is based on the lunar cycle (as opposed to the solar cycle used in the West), the dates of these holidays change from year to year.<sup>95</sup>



© David Young  
Young men celebrating Ramadan with music

### *Eid al-Fitr or Eid as-Sagheer*

The end of Ramadan is celebrated with a feast and extended festival called Eid al-Fitr, *which lasts three days and signifies the return to normal habits*. At this time, Muslims share traditional meals and gifts with family and friends.<sup>96</sup>

### *Eid al-Adha or Eid al-Kabeer*

The Islamic festival Eid al-Adha *occurs* in the twelfth month of the Islamic lunar year, the suggested period for Muslims to observe the “Fifth Pillar” of Islam, the *hajj*, by undertaking a holy pilgrimage to Mecca. Marking the end of the pilgrimage, *Eid al-Adha*, or the Feast of the Sacrifice, commemorates Abraham’s offer to sacrifice his son in

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<sup>93</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. “Time to Relax: Moroccan Holidays [p. 238].” 2003. London: Kuperard.

<sup>94</sup> BBC. “Religion and Ethics: Islam: Muslim Holy Days.” 4 March 2006.  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/holydays/holydays.shtml>

<sup>95</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. “Time to Relax: Moroccan Holidays [p. 235].” 2003. London: Kuperard.

<sup>96</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Id al-Fitr.” 2008.  
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/281653/Id-al-Fitr#>

obedience to Allah. During this time, Muslims sacrifice animals, primarily lambs and sheep, whose meat they eat and share with their families and the poor.<sup>97, 98</sup>

### *Al-Hijra or Muharram*

Al-Hijra is the Islamic New Year and, accordingly, it occurs on the first day of Muharram, the first month of the Islamic lunar calendar. This holiday lacks the deep religious significance of the *Eid al-Fitr* and *Eid al-Adha* festivals, but it serves as a day for Muslims to quietly commemorate Muhammad's migration from Mecca to Medina.<sup>99</sup>



© David Young  
Celebrating Ramadan with Henna tattoos

### *Mouloud an-Nabi*

Celebrated in the third month of the Islamic calendar, this minor, two-day festival commemorates the birth of the Prophet Muhammad.

### *Ashora*

This Shi'a holiday observes the assassination of Hussein ibn Ali, Muhammad's grandson and the son of Ali, whose death was an important factor in the division of the Islamic community into Sunni and Shi'a factions. In essence, it is a day of mourning; however, children receive presents on this day.<sup>100</sup>

## **Buildings of Worship**

### *Mosques*

Muslim sites of worship are known as mosques; in general, there are two types. The first type is the *masjid jami*, or "collective mosque," which is also known as the "great mosque" or "Friday mosque." As the latter name implies, the *masjid jami* is where large-scale communal prayers are held on the Islamic holy day of the week. These mosques are usually expansive and quite ornate in design, and they are often operated by the state. The



© jmaximo / Flickr.com  
The Koutoubia Mosque in Marrekech

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<sup>97</sup> ReligionFacts.com "Eid Al-Adha: Festival of the Sacrifice." 2 February 2005.

<http://www.religionfacts.com/islam/holidays/adha.htm>

<sup>98</sup> *Morocco*, 8th Ed. "Directory: Holidays [456]." 2007. Footscray, Victoria; Lonely Planet Publications.

<sup>99</sup> ReligionFacts.com. "Al-Hijra: Islamic New Year." 7 February 2005.

<http://www.religionfacts.com/islam/holidays/hijra.htm>

<sup>100</sup> *Morocco*, 8th Ed. "Directory: Holidays [455]." 2007. Footscray, Victoria; Lonely Planet Publications.

second type of mosque, simply known as the *masjid*, is smaller and generally serves as the local mosque. *Masjids* are typically privately administered.<sup>101, 102</sup>

Mosques generally consist of an open interior, enclosed by a roof, with a *mihrab* and *minbar* inside the central prayer area; often, a minaret is attached to the exterior. A *mihrab* is a niche in the wall of the mosque that faces the direction of Mecca, known as *gibla* (Islamic prayer is always directed toward the holy city). This is where the *imam*, or prayer leader, stands during services. According to tradition, the space in front of the *mihrab* must have a roof, and the *gibla* wall can have no doors.<sup>103</sup> The *minbar* is an elevated seat located to the right of the *mihrab* that acts as a pulpit for the Islamic priest, or *khatib*. The floor of the general prayer area is covered with mats or carpets, where Muslims gather to pray. Minarets are towers from which the *muezzin*, or “crier,” calls other Muslims to the five daily sessions of prayer. The number of minarets may vary, but generally ranges from one to six.<sup>104</sup> Mosques also often contain designated areas for Muslims to perform their ritual ablution before prayer.<sup>105</sup>

Mosques are often richly adorned with abstract designs, but there are no figural or representational images, including statues or ritual objects, allowed on site. Such images are generally considered idolatrous. In addition to prayer services, mosques also often act as sites of Islamic education, particularly at the elementary level. Unlike Christian churches, weddings and birth-related ceremonies are not held at mosques.<sup>106</sup> In Morocco, mosques are generally used primarily by men, but women are allowed to worship in segregated areas.

### *Murabitin*

*Murabitin* are small, dome-shaped temples built to enshrine the bodies of deceased *marabouts*, whose remains are believed to retain and emit *baraka*. These structures are generally surrounded by a small courtyard, and they are commonly found in rural areas of Morocco. Many Moroccans undertake pilgrimages to these holy sites in order to earn religious blessings and participate in local festivals.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Lexicorient.com. LookLex Encyclopedia. Kjeilen, Tore. “Mosque.” 2008.

<http://lexicorient.com/e.o/mosque.htm>

<sup>102</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Mosque.” 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/393679/mosque#>

<sup>103</sup> Lexicorient.com. LookLex Encyclopedia. Kjeilen, Tore. “Mosque.” 2008.

<http://lexicorient.com/e.o/mosque.htm>

<sup>104</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica. “Minaret.” 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/383472/minaret>

<sup>105</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Mosque.” 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/393679/mosque#>

<sup>106</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Mosque.” 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/393679/mosque#>

<sup>107</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. “The Moroccan Within: Islam [p. 49].” 2003. London: Kuperard.

### Behavior in Places of Worship

In Morocco, non-Muslims are generally not allowed to enter mosques. One exception is the Hassan II mosque in Casablanca, which offers guided tours to non-Muslims at certain, established hours.<sup>108</sup> It is important to visit the mosque at the appropriate time and with the expressed permission of mosque officials.



© Nick Leonard  
Moroccans cleansing themselves before prayer

#### Exchange 1: May I enter the mosque?

Soldier:	May I enter the mosque?	wash yemken leeya nidKhul lijaame'?
Local:	Yes.	aah

As a general rule, when preparing to go out in public, one should dress conservatively, and this is particularly applicable when visiting a mosque. Men should wear pants and long-sleeved shirts. Women should also wear long-sleeved shirts with pants or long skirts. In both cases, arms and legs should be covered, and clothing should not be tight or revealing. Finally, and of utmost importance, shoes must be removed before entering a mosque.

#### Exchange 2: Must I take off my shoes?

Soldier:	Must I take off my shoes inside the mosque?	wash KhaSni nHayed SubaaTi fejaame'?
Local:	Yes.	aah

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<sup>108</sup> Morocco Travel (A Division of Nile Travel). "General Information on Morocco: Religion." 4 June 2008. <http://www.nile.co.za/society2141.htm>

Islamic tradition requires women to cover their heads (preferably with a scarf) before entering a mosque; men are not required to do so.

**Exchange 3:** Do I need to cover my head?

Soldier:	Do I need to cover my head?	wash KhaSni nghaTi RaaSi?
Local:	No.	laa

It is not acceptable to enter the mosque when others are conducting prayers. Once inside, the basic rules of etiquette for attending most religious or sacred institutions apply: speak softly and respectfully, do not touch sacred items, and do not disturb those at prayer. Finally, women are not allowed in the mosque during their menstrual period; their presence during this time is considered impure.

# Traditions

## Gender Roles and Interactions

Islamic tradition provides the foundation for Morocco's social customs, particularly as they concern the differing roles of males and females and their general interaction. Moroccan culture is patriarchal; men generally possess higher social status and increased rights than women. Within this structure, males are subject to more opportunities and fewer restrictions than women.



© Greg Robbins  
Veiled woman

From a young age, males are raised to function as an authority and a representative of the family in the public world, whereas females learn the fundamental duties of the domestic realm, such as cooking, cleaning, and childrearing. This association of men with the public sphere, and women with the private sphere, is fundamental and pervasive in Moroccan society. In recent years, liberalizing reforms and increased modernization have provided women with greater freedom (particularly in urban areas), but the division remains prevalent in conservative regions and households. As a result, it is generally inappropriate for women to venture into public without a male companion; if a woman goes out alone, she may be subject to harassment and ridicule in the male-dominated streets.

The effects of this restriction are evident in a variety of arenas, including education, where significantly higher percentages of boys receive more advanced education than girls. (Nationwide, the literacy rate for women is 39%, compared to 64% for men; in rural areas, only 10% of women are literate.<sup>109</sup>) Mosques, as public sites, are generally limited to male Muslims, although there may be certain times and spaces afforded to female Muslims. Other public spaces, such as cafés, are also dominated by males. Spaces reserved for women include women's public bathhouses and, generally, the flat rooftops of the home, where women perform domestic duties, but also find solitude. On Friday afternoons, while Muslim men are at the mosque, cemeteries also serve as meeting grounds for women. In Berber-populated rural regions, restrictions confining women to the home may be less stringent; although this it is not always the case.

Through segregation of the sexes, male and female interactions are strictly controlled. This is in large part due to the importance of female virginity in Moroccan culture, and more generally, in Islamic culture. A female's virginity is equated with her value as a potential wife; thus, pre-marital sex for girls can lead to severe social consequences. Historically, there have been cases of honor killings in Morocco in which male family members have murdered female relatives who have lost their virginity before marriage or committed a similar act of inappropriate behavior.<sup>110</sup> The woman's death is intended to

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<sup>109</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Morocco." October 2007. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5431.htm>

<sup>110</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. "Working Towards the Elimination of Crimes Against Women Committed in the Name of Honour." 2 July 2002.

restore a sense of honor to the family after suffering the shame associated with her behavior. In Morocco, these cases certainly represent the extreme, but they are indicative of the immense value placed on feminine chastity. Conversely, pre-marital sex for males is relatively common.<sup>111</sup> In any case, the two sexes do not socially meet and mingle, as is common in Western societies. In addition, public displays of physical affection are highly inappropriate.

Foreign female visitors are generally not expected to segregate themselves or confine themselves to private areas, but they will nonetheless garner attention and possibly harassment if they venture into public alone. When confronted by such harassment a woman may find it best to ignore it and continue toward her destination.<sup>112</sup>

## Employment and Economy

Traditionally, Morocco's agricultural sector has accounted for a considerable portion of the country's economic activity and employment. According to recent estimates, roughly 40% of the country's workforce is in agriculture, performing such traditional tasks as farming, raising livestock, and fishing.<sup>113</sup> In recent years, the country's industrial sector (including manufacturing, mining, and construction) has increased its contribution to the country's economic output, although it continues to employ only 15% of the nation's workforce.<sup>114</sup> Typical employment activities in this sector include working in textile and food processing plants, assembling electrical components, producing handicrafts, and mining and processing phosphates. The remaining 45% of the workforce is employed in the country's services sector, which includes trade, finance, tourism, and professional services, such as in the fields of medicine, law, and education.<sup>115</sup> Throughout Morocco, there are also large numbers of informal workers, such as street vendors and domestic servants, as well as a



© Christine Vautrey  
Men at work

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[http://www.unhchr.ch/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/AllSymbols/985168F508EE799FC1256C52002AE5A9/\\$File/N0246790.pdf](http://www.unhchr.ch/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/AllSymbols/985168F508EE799FC1256C52002AE5A9/$File/N0246790.pdf)

<sup>111</sup> Everyculture.com. Johnston, Amanda Jill. "Culture of the Kingdom of Morocco: Gender Roles and Statuses." 2007. <http://www.everyculture.com/Ma-Ni/The-United-Kingdom-of-Morocco.html>

<sup>112</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. "The Moroccan Within [pp. 41–74]." 2003. London: Kuperard.

<sup>113</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. "Country Profile: Morocco." May 2006. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Morocco.pdf>

<sup>114</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. "Country Profile: Morocco." May 2006. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Morocco.pdf>

<sup>115</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. "Country Profile: Morocco." May 2006. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Morocco.pdf>

considerable population of the unemployed.<sup>116</sup> With 15% of the population below the poverty line, beggars are also common.<sup>117</sup>

## Social Values and Customs

### *Honor and Shame*

The preservation of an individual's honor and dignity, as well as that of his family, is one of the most important traditional values in Morocco. Moroccans take great care in maintaining a positive social standing and reputation, since much of their self-worth depends upon the perceptions of others. Shame, or *hshuma*, occurs when a person's inappropriate behavior is recognized by the community. Such behavior may include disobedience to Islamic law, deviation from social norms, or some act of failure or delinquency. When a person is shamed, he may be ostracized from both the community and his family, which, for Moroccans, is a devastating consequence. The person's family, through association, may suffer shame as well.<sup>118</sup>



© christopher sly / Flickr.com  
Friendly staff at a fast food restaurant

To minimize the risk of potentially shaming a Moroccan, visitors should avoid criticizing or embarrassing others in public. When in public, Moroccans themselves will often check or alter their behavior and statements in order to garner esteem or save face, while their actions or feelings in the private sphere may be quite different. For this reason, it may be advisable to confirm in private any comments or commitments made in public.<sup>119</sup>

### *Right Hand vs. Left Hand*

As in most Arab countries, there is an important distinction between the right and left hands in Morocco. The right hand is to be used for all public interaction, including shaking hands, eating, drinking, making a payment, presenting a gift, and other such actions. Historically, the left hand is associated with private activities, particularly with conducting personal hygiene in the bathroom. Therefore, it is highly inappropriate to use the left hand for eating, passing things to others, or performing most other public, interactive



© Julie Kertesz  
Two men greeting each other

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<sup>116</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Morocco: Economy." 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/392604/Morocco>

<sup>117</sup> CIA World Factbook. "Morocco." 19 June 2008. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mo.html#top>

<sup>118</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. "The Moroccan Within: Hshuma [pp. 58–59]." 2003. London: Kuperard.

<sup>119</sup> Kwintessential: Cross Cultural Solutions. "Morocco: Language, Culture and Doing Business." No date. <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/morocco-country-profile.html>

motions. Even for those who are left-handed, it is extremely important to observe this custom.<sup>120</sup>

### *Greetings*

When meeting people of the same gender in public, it is customary to greet each person individually by shaking hands and then touching one’s heart (with the right hand) to demonstrate warmth and sincerity.

#### **Exchange 4:** Good afternoon.

<b>Soldier:</b>	Good afternoon.	msa lKheyR
<b>Local:</b>	Good afternoon.	msa lKheyR

Moroccan handshakes are generally lighter than the traditional firm handshake of Americans, but they may last for a longer duration. In general, handshaking is not done between persons of the opposite sex, especially if they are unacquainted. In an instance in which a Moroccan woman first extends her hand, it is acceptable to follow her lead. However, a small bow is more common for the unacquainted.<sup>121</sup>

#### **Exchange 5:** How are you?

<b>Soldier:</b>	How are you?	keedaayeR?
<b>Local:</b>	Fine, very well.	beKheyR lHamdulaah

Veiled women in particular will generally avoid physical contact, although there are exceptions. In any case, it is important to maintain a certain distance from persons of the opposite sex in public; affectionate displays are considered quite inappropriate.

Acquainted members of the same sex generally greet each other with hugs and one or more series of kisses on each cheek (left cheek first). This is normal and not to be

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<sup>120</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. “The Moroccan Within: Public and Private [pp. 69–70].” 2003. London: Kuperard.

<sup>121</sup> Travel Etiquette. “Etiquette in Morocco.” 2008. <http://www.traveletiquette.co.uk/EtiquetteMorocco.html>

understood as anything more than a sign of friendship. Well-acquainted members of the opposite sex may shake hands and exchange kisses, but hugs between male and female are typically reserved for family members.<sup>122</sup>

**Exchange 6:** Good evening!

<b>Soldier:</b>	Good evening!	msa IKheyR
<b>Local:</b>	Good evening!	msa IKheyR

*Punctuality*

In Morocco, punctuality does not carry the same social significance as it does in Western cultures. In general, it is not expected, and, therefore, there is little concern expressed toward tardiness, whether it relates to the actions of oneself or others. Visitors should be patient, as trains and buses frequently run behind schedule and meetings or events may begin late.<sup>123</sup>

**Hospitality and Gift-Giving**

Moroccans are generally known as kind and generous hosts, and it is common for them to hold social engagements in their home. Such occasions are typically structured around a large meal, with the hosts taking pride in satisfying the needs of his guests. When invited to a Moroccan home, it is necessary, if applicable, to confirm that your spouse is included in the invitation.



© stopmango/home / Flickr.com  
Tea and sugar

Conservative Moroccans do not frequently entertain men and women together (they may be separated in different rooms); thus, it may be inappropriate to bring someone of the opposite sex. At times, exceptions are made for foreign women, but it is best to first inquire.<sup>124</sup> Also, it is important to dress appropriately for the occasion. As a guest, wearing the proper, conservative attire demonstrates one’s respect for the host and his household.<sup>125</sup>

Upon entering the host’s home, it is necessary to remove your shoes. (Along the same lines, it is considered extremely rude to show the soles of your shoes or the bottoms of

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<sup>122</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. “Communicating in Morocco [pp. 107–108].” 2003. London: Kuperard.

<sup>123</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. “A Cultural Compendium: Punctuality [p. 259].” 2003. London: Kuperard.

<sup>124</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. “Where the Guest is King [p. 124].” 2003. London: Kuperard.

<sup>125</sup> Travel Etiquette. “Etiquette in Morocco.” 2008. <http://www.traveletiquette.co.uk/EtiquetteMorocco.html>

your feet, especially when sitting.)<sup>126</sup> When greeting persons of the same sex, handshakes are customary.

**Exchange 7: Hello!**

<b>Soldier:</b>	Hi, Mr. Mohammed	see muHamed, esalaamu 'aleykum
<b>Local:</b>	Hello!	wa'aleykum salaam
<b>Soldier:</b>	Are you doing well?	labaas 'leek?
<b>Local:</b>	Yes.	lHamdul-laah

Though not mandatory, it is generally acceptable for a guest to bring a small gift, such as fruit, pastries, nuts, or flowers.<sup>127</sup> Always present gifts with the right hand.

**Exchange 8: This gift is for you.**

<b>Soldier:</b>	This gift is for you.	bgheyt ne'Teek haad lkaaDu
<b>Local:</b>	I cannot accept this.	bizaaf 'leeya haad lkaaDu, maaymkinsh naaKhdu min 'andek

In most cases, alcohol is not an appropriate gift, because Islamic law prohibits Muslims from consuming it. It is suitable, however, to offer small, token gifts to the children of the household. In any case, Moroccans generally do not expect to receive presents from their guests. When they do receive them, they typically wait to open the gift until the giver is no longer present.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Asiarooms.com. "Morocco: Dos and Don'ts." 2008. <http://www.asiarooms.com/travel-guide/morocco/useful-information/index.html>

<sup>127</sup> Kwintessential: Cross Cultural Solutions. "Morocco: Language, Culture and Doing Business." No date. <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/morocco-country-profile.html>

<sup>128</sup> Zikit. "Moroccan Business Etiquette: General Guidelines." No date. <http://www.zikit.org/default.asp?PageID=257>

## Dining Etiquette

In the Moroccan home, meals are typically served at round, knee-high tables, with the guest usually seated next to the host. Before the food is served, each person washes their hands over a basin that is passed around the table. The host or an attendant provides a towel that is used to dry one's hands. (This method of hand washing is performed again, at the end of the meal.) Napkins are also distributed, but they are not to be used for wiping the hands during the meal; rather, they serve to protect the lap from crumbs or spills. Before eating, it is important to wait until a blessing is given or for the host to begin his meal.



Meals are served in a large communal bowl, generally without utensils. To eat, use a piece of bread or the thumb and two fingers to scoop up food from the general bowl. It is imperative to use only the right hand when gathering food and eating, even if left handed. The left hand is considered unclean as it is associated with bathroom activities. Be aware that it is also considered rude to take food from the other side of the serving bowl; each person should eat only the food that is directly in front of them in the bowl. Guests generally receive the choicest portions of the meal from the host, who will move such portions to the appropriate spot in the bowl. It is appropriate to state one's satisfaction with the meal.<sup>129</sup>

**Exchange 9:** The food tastes so good.

<b>Soldier:</b>	The food tastes so good.	tbaaRak laah 'leykum, Imaakla mu'tabaRa
<b>Local:</b>	Thank you.	bi-SeHa

Moroccan meals are often sustained affairs consisting of many courses. Thus, the host may frequently offer more food, which everyone will be encouraged, though not absolutely required, to eat. For this reason, it is important to pace oneself. In general, such an abundance of food is considered a display of hospitality. If one would like to



<sup>129</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. "Where the Guest is King: Dining, Moroccan Style [pp. 124–126]." 2003. London: Kuperard.

know more about the variety of food, simply ask the host.<sup>130</sup>

**Exchange 10:** What is the name of this dish?

<b>Soldier:</b>	What is the name of this dish?	shnu smeeyet haadi Imaakla?
<b>Local:</b>	This is couscous	haadal-lkesksoo

As with the main courses, it is not uncommon for water to be served in a communal glass. However, upon request, the host may provide soft drinks with individual glasses.<sup>131</sup> At the end of the meal, it is important to reiterate one’s pleasure and satisfaction with the quality and amount of food (in this respect, belching is acceptable). Of course, it is also appropriate to thank the host for his generous hospitality.<sup>132</sup>

**Exchange 11:** I really appreciate your hospitality.

<b>Soldier:</b>	I really appreciate your hospitality.	tbaRk laah 'leykum, tihaleetu feeya
<b>Local:</b>	It is nothing.	beSeHa wRaaha maadeRna waalu

### Cuisine and Eating Patterns

Similar to its history, Morocco’s cuisine has been shaped by a variety of cultural influences, including Arab, Berber, Spanish, French, and Jewish traditions. Accordingly, it is renowned for its broad range of flavors and overall high quality. Fresh breads, meats, particularly lamb and



© gatos.rojos / Flickr.com  
Traditional couscous dish

<sup>130</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. “Where the Guest is King: Dining, Moroccan Style.” [pp. 124–126].” 2003. London: Kuperard.

<sup>131</sup> Zikit. “Moroccan Business Etiquette: General Guidelines.” No date. <http://www.zikit.org/default.asp?PageID=257>

<sup>132</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. “Where the Guest is King: Dining, Moroccan Style.” [pp. 124–126].” 2003. London: Kuperard.

chicken, vegetables, and grain dishes are all staples. Fruits, notably dates and figs, and nuts are also important ingredients. Many Moroccan dishes carry flavors of saffron (or a similar substitute), cumin, ginger, paprika, or cinnamon. As for herbs, parsley, cilantro, and mint are widely used. Pork and alcohol are prohibited by Islamic law, and are generally absent from traditional Moroccan cuisine.

Moroccans partake of three meals per day. Breakfast typically consists of bread with olive oil or butter and a cup of coffee or mint tea, the classic Moroccan beverage, and a favorite at any time of the day. Doughnuts or various styles of pancakes are also common, and French-style pastries can be found in many urban shops and cafés.

Lunch is typically the largest and most important meal of the day (except during the holy month of Ramadan). Moroccans generally allow two to four hours for the meal and a subsequent siesta. During this time businesses and schools close and relatives and friends convene for the meal. Typical lunches include a salad course followed by any one of several varieties of *tajine* dishes, such as lemon-olive chicken, lamb with prunes, and meatballs and tomato sauce. Couscous, a form of pasta made from granulated semolina, is also regularly featured at lunch, though it is a common dinner dish as well. It is often served with a meat or vegetable topping, and due to its prevalence and popularity, it is frequently cited as the national dish.

Due to the heaviness of the midday meal, Moroccans generally eat a light supper. A typical dinner consists of *harira*, a thick soup generally made with tomatoes, onions, saffron, cilantro, and a type of meat (often lamb). Leftovers from lunch also frequently contribute to the evening meal. Fruits and cakes are common for desserts. For drinks, water (bottled and tap), soft drinks, coffee, and mint tea are the most common.<sup>133</sup>



© Emmanuel Vaïsse  
Chicken pastilla

There are a few additional Moroccan dishes of particular importance. The first is *pastilla*, a famous Moroccan specialty.

**Exchange 12:** This food is very good.

<b>Soldier:</b>	This food is very good.	haadi-lmaakla zweyna
<b>Local:</b>	It's pastilla	haadi lbesTeyla

<sup>133</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. "Food and Drink [pp. 133–146]." 2003. London: Kuperard.

*Pastilla* consists of multiple layers of thin pastry filled with pigeon or chicken and cooked with caramelized onions, eggs, and almonds. Topped with cinnamon and sugar, the dish is reminiscent of pie and often served on special occasions. Finally, *mechoui* is another famed Moroccan dish which consists of a stuffed, whole-roasted lamb or calf.<sup>134</sup>

**Exchange 13:** What ingredients are used?

<b>Soldier:</b>	What ingredients are used to make Pastilla?	shnaheeya ImakadeeR dyaal IbisTeyla?
<b>Local:</b>	Eggs, almonds, chicken, cinnamon, sugar.	IbeyD, loz, Ijaaj, IkaRfa, sukaR

**Dress Codes**

Although Moroccan culture increasingly demonstrates modern, Western elements, most of the country generally retains traditional and conservative manners of dress, which are strongly tied to Islamic custom. In Morocco, public appearance is a significant indication of a person’s status and values, as well as those of his family. Therefore, visitors to Morocco should be especially attentive to their appearance at all times, as it reflects not only upon them but upon their family and culture.<sup>135</sup>



© Charles Roffey  
Traditional garb in Essaouira

**Exchange 14:** How should I dress?

<b>Soldier:</b>	How should I dress?	shnu KhaSni Ibes?
<b>Local:</b>	Wear loose fitting clothes which cover your body.	Ibes shee Hwaayej lee yghaTeewuk kulek wmaa ykunoosh mzayReen 'leyk

For both genders, the traditional form of Moroccan clothing is the *jellaba*, a long, loose-fitting robe with a pointed hood and a buttoned or zippered front. Significantly, *jellabas*

<sup>134</sup> *Morocco*, 8th ed. “Food and Drink [pp. 68–75].” 2007. Footscray, Victoria: Lonely Planet Publications.  
<sup>135</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. “The Moroccan You Know: Divisions in Moroccan Society: What You See [pp. 81–82].” 2003. London: Kuperard.

have long sleeves and a lower hem that extends to the ankles. These garments range in fabric, quality, and decoration; tailored *jellabas* with elaborate needlework are indicative of greater expense.<sup>136</sup> *Kaftans*, hoodless robes that are similar to but often more elegant than *jellabas*, are also common, particularly at weddings and other social events.<sup>137</sup> There are also other forms of coverall garments that follow a similar, conservative pattern.

In terms of footwear, *bilgha*, or Moroccan slippers, are common for both men and women due to their ease in slipping off when entering the home or mosque.

Headgear is common throughout Morocco. For men, turbans are popular in rural areas, particularly with Berbers. Other varieties of headgear may indicate a man's social status. Knit stocking caps are worn predominantly by the poor, whereas crocheted skullcaps and the fez often have religious connotations, with the latter signifying a greater measure of wealth and respectability. According to Islamic tradition, most Moroccan women keep their heads covered in public, usually with a *hejab*, or headscarf, or the hood of their *jellaba*.<sup>138</sup>



© peregrinari / Flickr.com  
Men dressed in casual attire

Of course, such manner of dress varies by region and individual, and in certain areas, it is not uncommon to see deviations from the norm. In particular, young Moroccans and residents of urban areas may wear elements of modern Western clothing. Also, in rural areas, Berber women may often be seen without scarves or veils.<sup>139</sup>

Regardless, it is highly recommended that visitors respect the country's broader cultural norms when selecting their attire. Many elements of casual dress typical to tourists and foreign visitors can be offensive to Moroccans, and may elicit scorn or harassment. In most areas of the country, a person's legs and shoulders are considered private, and both men and women should make every effort to clothe these parts at all times. As a general rule, men should cover everything from their elbows to below their knees and women should cover everything from their wrists to their ankles.<sup>140</sup> Accordingly, men should wear long-sleeve shirts and pants; women should also wear long-sleeve shirts and pants, or long, loose-fitting dresses with long sleeves. Revealing clothing, such as shorts and swimsuits, should be worn only at the beach or a swimming pool.<sup>141</sup> Both sexes should

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<sup>136</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. "The Moroccan You Know: Divisions in Moroccan Society: What You See [pp. 81–82]." 2003. London: Kuperard.

<sup>137</sup> The Travel Source. "Morocco: Dress." 2007.

<http://www.thetravelsource.net/TravelInfoPages/culture.html>

<sup>138</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. "The Moroccan You Know: Divisions in Moroccan Society: What You See." [pp. 81–85]." 2003. London: Kuperard.

<sup>139</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. "The Moroccan You Know: Divisions in Moroccan Society: What You See." [pp. 81–85]." 2003. London: Kuperard.

<sup>140</sup> Morocco.com. "Essentials: Morocco Traveling Information." 2008. <http://www.morocco.com/essentials/>

<sup>141</sup> iExplore.com. "Morocco Culture." 2008. [http://www.iexplore.com/world\\_travel/Morocco/Culture](http://www.iexplore.com/world_travel/Morocco/Culture)

also avoid wearing vests, t-shirts, sandals, and any form of tight-fitting clothing in public.<sup>142</sup>

**Exchange 15:** Is this acceptable to wear?

<b>Soldier:</b>	Is this acceptable to wear?	wash haadi IHwaayej munaasiba?
<b>Local:</b>	Yes.	aah

## Social Events

### *Weddings*

Moroccan weddings are generally large and festive celebrations that involve a variety of customary steps and last for a period of several days. In recent years, depending upon the region and the socio-economic background of the family, many traditional Moroccan customs have, in part, been replaced, altered, or minimized to reflect contemporary culture. However, as an essential stage in the life and growth of Muslim families, the wedding ceremony remains one of the most important rites in Moroccan culture.

Initially, the families of the prospective bride and groom arrange the marriage with the exchange of a dowry, which the couple uses to furnish their new household. In the past, families arranged marriages for their children, but today it is increasingly common for young people to choose their own partner, with the approval of the parents. In the period leading up to the wedding, the bride receives gifts from relatives and guests.

Traditionally, before the wedding, the bride's female attendants (consisting of elder married relatives and friends) give her a purifying milk bath and paint her hands and feet with elaborate designs known as *henna*. Today, in some areas of the country, many brides forego this tradition, but they will often employ a person to paint small henna designs on the hands of the wedding guests. The bride's attendants also help her apply makeup and jewelry and dress her in an intricately designed wedding *kaftan*. It is during this time that the experienced attendants will discuss the details of marriage with the younger bride.



© matteo\_dudek / Flickr.com  
Henna tatoo

According to tradition, the wedding itself is separated into two receptions, one for men and women. Today, in certain areas, there is increased exchange and interaction between

<sup>142</sup> Morocco.com. "Essentials: Morocco Traveling Information." 2008. <http://www.morocco.com/essentials/>

the two parties. In any case, food, traditional music, and dancing are common elements of the festivities. Of course, as with weddings in the West, it is customary to convey good wishes to the bride and groom and their families.

**Exchange 16:** Congratulations on your wedding!

<b>Soldier:</b>	Congratulations on your wedding!	mebrook 'leekum l'eRaasiya
<b>Local:</b>	We are honored you could attend.	meRHbaa beek, nhaaR kbeeR haada

**Exchange 17:** I wish you both happiness.

<b>Soldier:</b>	I wish you both happiness.	mebRook 'leekum laah ykamil belKheyR
<b>Local:</b>	We are honored.	laah ybaRek feek

During the reception, the groom eventually seeks out his bride, who is carried out on a table and presented to him and the party. In the past, the bride and groom were then carried to a nearby bridal chamber, where it was customary for them to consummate their marriage.

Afterwards, the bridal sheets were to be presented to the party as evidence of the bride's virginity. Today, it is more common for the couple to go to an offsite location after the festivities, and the presentation of the sheets is no longer universally customary. In the days following the wedding ceremony, the couple continues to celebrate with family and friends. Finally, Moroccan tradition suggests that the new bride should circle her new home three times before entering it as her own.<sup>143, 144</sup>



© Liemotiv  
Couples getting henna tattoos

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<sup>143</sup> Morocco.com. "Wedding Customs in Morocco." 2008.  
<http://www.morocco.com/culture/weddings-customs/>

### *Name-Giving Parties*

Seven days after the birth of a child, the family officially names the newborn and holds a celebratory feast to mark the occasion. It is customary to give small gifts to the baby and mother at this time.<sup>145</sup>

### *Circumcision*

Circumcision is an Islamic custom for young boys, who typically undergo the process at age three or four. On the day of the event, the family celebrates with a large meal with relatives and friends, and the boy receives presents from the guests.<sup>146</sup>

### *Funerals and Memoriam*

Islamic custom shapes the Moroccan traditions associated with death and burial. Prior to death, if death is anticipated, a Muslim will be visited by his family and friends, who will comfort him and offer him religious support through the recitation of Qur'anic verses. Islamic tradition suggests that, ideally, a Muslim's final words should declare his devoted faith: "I bear witness that there is no god but Allah."



© Leamington Malloof  
Berber cemetery

According to Arab and Muslim tradition, burial should take place within 24 hours; therefore, preparations commence shortly after death. (All preparations are performed in the home.) Initially, those present at the time of death close the eyes of the deceased and place a clean sheet over the entire body. Before the funeral procession, family members wash and shroud the body in a white sheet.

After the body has been properly prepared, it is carried to the burial site by male relatives and friends, who recite Qur'anic verse as they march. When the body is placed in the grave (usually without a coffin), it is laid on its right side, with the head directed south, in order to ensure that the deceased faces Mecca. Unlike many Western cultures, tombstones, ornate markers, and flowers are not part of Muslim custom.<sup>147, 148</sup> During this time, relatives, friends, and community members visit the home of the bereaved family to

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<sup>144</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. "Where the Guest is King: Large Gatherings [pp. 130–131]." 2003. London: Kuperard.

<sup>145</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. "Where the Guest is King: Large Gatherings [p. 131]." 2003. London: Kuperard.

<sup>146</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. "Where the Guest is King: Large Gatherings [p. 131]." 2003. London: Kuperard.

<sup>147</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. "A Cultural Compendium: Funerals [p. 247–248]." 2003. London: Kuperard.

<sup>148</sup> About.com. *The Everything Understanding Islam Book*. Dodge, Christine Huda. "Islamic Funeral Rites." 2003. <http://islam.about.com/cs/elderly/a/funerals.htm?p=1>

offer food and their condolences. Together, they hold a dinner, or *l-âsha*, and read from the Qur'an.

**Exchange 18:** I would like to give my condolences.

<b>Soldier:</b>	I would like to give my condolences to you and your family.	laah y'aDem laajaR
<b>Local:</b>	Thank you.	maamsha m'aak baas

If the bereaved is a woman who has lost her husband, she will wear white, the color of mourning, for the next 40 days.<sup>149</sup> After 40 days or on the anniversary of the death, the family may hold an additional memorial meal known as a *sadaqa*. This event is held, in large part, for charitable purposes as an effort to feed disadvantaged persons in the community.<sup>150</sup>

#### *National Holidays*

Moroccans observe public holidays according to the Western calendar; therefore, the annual dates of these celebrations remain the same. As in the West, Morocco celebrates New Year's Day (1 January) as well as a Labor Day (1 May).



© Brian Pirie  
Food is prepared before a wedding

**Exchange 19:** Will you be celebrating New Year's Eve?

<b>Soldier:</b>	Will you be celebrating New Year's Eve?	wash ghaadi teHtaafel bRaasel'aam?
<b>Local:</b>	Yes!	aah

<sup>149</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. "A Cultural Compendium: Funerals [p. 247–248]." 2003. London: Kuperard.

<sup>150</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. "Where the Guest is King: Large Gatherings [p. 131]." 2003. London: Kuperard.

Many additional holidays commemorate significant events in the country's history. Held on 30 July, Feast of the Throne, or Throne Day, celebrates the accession of King Mohammad VI to the Moroccan throne in 1999. A patriotic holiday, the Anniversary of the Green March, held on 6 November, commemorates the large-scale march of Moroccans into the Western Sahara region after Spain relinquished control over the territory in 1975. Morocco's Independence Day (18 November) celebrates the nation's return to sovereignty in 1956 after years of French colonial control. Independence Manifesto (11 January) commemorates the country's previous declaration of independence from France in 1944. Other public holidays include the Allegiance of Oued Eddahab (14 August), the Anniversary of the King's and People's Revolution (20 August), and Young People's Day (21 August), which recognizes the King's birthday. For all public holidays, the nation's banks, post offices, and many of its shops close in observance. These celebrations vary in importance to the Moroccan people, but generally are less significant than Islamic holidays and events.<sup>151</sup>

### *Festivals and Celebrations*

Many of Morocco's major celebrations are *moussems*, festivals held in honor of deceased *marabouts*. Some of the largest of these include the Mousseem of Ben Aïssa, held in April in Meknès, and the Mousseem of Sidi Bousselham, held in July in Moulay Bousselham. Medieval pageantry, circus-like performances, and dancing are some of the many activities seen at these large-scale events. Other festivals, of a more secular nature, include the Festival of World Sacred Music, held in Fès in June, the Rose Festival, held each May in El Kelaâ M'Gouna, and the Date Festival, held each October in Erfoud.<sup>152</sup>



© Alexandre Baron  
Festival of World Sacred Music in Fès

### **Dos and Don'ts**

- Do take your shoes off before entering a home.
- Do bring gifts for the host and hostess when invited to their home.
- Do eat with your right hand as the left is used for sanitary needs.
- Do leave some food on your plate after eating to signal you have had enough.
- Do dress conservatively and avoid tight or revealing clothes.
- Do shake hands with persons of the same gender.

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<sup>151</sup> *Morocco*, 8th ed. "Directory: Holidays [p. 454]." 2007. Footscray, Victoria: Lonely Planet Publications.

<sup>152</sup> *Morocco*, 8th ed. "Directory: Holidays [p. 454]." 2007. Footscray, Victoria: Lonely Planet Publications.

- Don't enter a mosque without permission.
- Don't photograph strangers without their permission.
- Don't give the "thumbs up" gesture or gesture with your left hand.
- Don't add salt to food; it is an insult to your host.
- Don't give liquor, pork, items with logos, or figures of dogs or owls as gifts.
- Don't use vulgar language within earshot of Moroccans. Many understand such slang and find it offensive.
- Don't show the soles of your feet or shoes when sitting.

# Urban Life

## Urbanization

Nearly three fifths of the Moroccan population now live in urban areas. This percentage is projected to rise as the growth rate for the urban population remains high (averaging 2.7% from 2000 to 2005), and the rural population continues to decrease (averaging -0.2% for the same period).<sup>153</sup> The ongoing migration of rural residents to urban areas has resulted in significant housing and utilities shortages. For many years, the construction of informal housing significantly outpaced the development of standard residential infrastructure. Thus, as of 2003, roughly one third of urban residents lived in “sub-standard” housing units.<sup>154</sup> A significant percentage of these units are located in massive slums, known as *bidonvilles* (“tin can cities”),<sup>155</sup> which surround the major urban centers of Morocco. These severely impoverished areas consist of poorly constructed homes with limited access to basic services. In 2004, the Moroccan government initiated a “Cities without Slums” program designed to combat the housing crisis. Still in progress, the program’s objective is to provide adequate and affordable housing for up to 212,000 households by 2010.<sup>156</sup>



© peregrinari / Flickr.com  
Houses in Chefchaouen

## Terrorism and Crime in Urban Areas

There is a recent history of terrorist attacks directed against American and foreign interests in Morocco’s urban centers. In May 2003, a series of coordinated suicide bombings targeting restaurants, hotels, and Jewish community sites in Casablanca killed 45 people and injured over 100.<sup>157</sup> In March and April of 2007, terrorists carried out a similar series of attacks on several targets in Casablanca, including the U.S. Consulate General and the



© baklavabaklava / Flickr.com  
Moroccan ambulance

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<sup>153</sup> UN Data. “Country Profile: Morocco.” 22 May 2008.

<http://data.un.org/CountryProfile.aspx?crName=Morocco>

<sup>154</sup> World Bank.org. “Morocco National Slum Upgrading Program.” 2006.

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTPOVERTY/EXTPSIA/0,,contentMDK:21041560~pagePK:210058~piPK:210062~theSitePK:490130,00.html>

<sup>155</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Morocco: Urban Settlement.” 2008

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/392604/Morocco>

<sup>156</sup> World Bank.org. “Morocco National Slum Upgrading Program.” 2006.

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTPOVERTY/EXTPSIA/0,,contentMDK:21041560~pagePK:210058~piPK:210062~theSitePK:490130,00.html>

<sup>157</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. “Country Profile: Morocco.” May 2006.

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Morocco.pdf>

American Language Center.<sup>158</sup> After the 2003 bombings, Morocco passed strict anti-terrorism legislation and initiated a rigorous campaign to pursue terrorist organizations. Since 2003, the government has made 5,200 terrorism-related arrests, resulting in 1000 convictions.<sup>159</sup>

Despite enhanced security measures and law enforcement, Morocco's urban areas nonetheless remain susceptible to potential attacks. This is particularly true as the impoverished slums of Moroccan cities continue to function as recruitment centers for terrorist organizations. (Several of the terrorists involved in the deadly bombing of commuter trains in Madrid in March 2004 were from urban slums in Morocco.)<sup>160</sup> Visitors to Moroccan cities should be cautious and, ideally, inconspicuous, as foreign interests and citizens remain the major targets of terrorist attacks.<sup>161</sup>

As in most cities in the world, everyday crime is a problem in Morocco's metropolitan areas, but it is generally of the petty rather than violent sort. Common criminal activities include pick-pocketing, bag-snatching, and mugging, as well as belligerent pan-handling and harassment of women. These crimes occur in both secluded and crowded areas, and may, at times, involve weapons such as knives. Areas frequented by travelers, such as marketplaces, beaches, buses, and train stations, are especially attractive to petty thieves. In general, visitors should maintain a close watch and tight grip on their belongings. Traveling in pairs or groups is recommended (particularly for women), and of course, visitors should avoid carrying large sums of cash or recognizable valuables. Persons using ATM machines are especially vulnerable to thieves in urban areas. Thefts or criminal activity should be reported to the local police and the U.S. General Consulate; in Morocco, the emergency telephone number for the police is 190.<sup>162</sup>

## Health Issues

Morocco's urban areas have medical facilities that provide suitable healthcare, with hospitals in Rabat and Casablanca offering the country's most advanced services. The quality of treatment varies among urban facilities, but in general it is significantly better (and more



© Mark Kirchner  
Rabat skyline

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<sup>158</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Morocco." October 2007. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5431.htm>

<sup>159</sup> Magharebia. Benmehdi, Hassan. "Moroccans Mark 5th Anniversary of Casablanca Attacks." 19 May 2008. [http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en\\_GB/features/awi/features/2008/05/19/feature-01](http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/features/2008/05/19/feature-01)

<sup>160</sup> New York Times. Elliott, Andrea. "Where Boys Grow Up to be Jihadis." 25 November 2007. [http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/25/magazine/25tetouan-t.html?\\_r=1&pagewanted=all](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/25/magazine/25tetouan-t.html?_r=1&pagewanted=all)

<sup>161</sup> Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Morocco: Medical Facilities and Health Information." 14 December 2007. [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_975.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_975.html)

<sup>162</sup> Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Morocco: Medical Facilities and Health Information." 14 December 2007. [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_975.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_975.html)

comprehensive) than the medical services offered in rural regions, where treatment may be entirely unavailable.<sup>163</sup>

**Exchange 20:** Is there a hospital nearby?

<b>Soldier:</b>	Is there a hospital nearby?	wash kaayen shee SbeeTaaR KReeb min hna?
<b>Local:</b>	Yes, in the center of town.	aah, fiSonTer dyaal lemdeena
<b>Soldier:</b>	Do you know what is wrong?	wash 'Rafti shnoo waake'?
<b>Local:</b>	No.	Laa

In emergencies, ambulance services are generally available in large cities. In less urgent situations, visitors requiring medical attention should consult their local embassy for a referral list of physicians in the area. There are specialists as well as foreign and Western-trained doctors in urban areas. However, specialized, advanced, and emergency treatment may be limited or inadequate, and serious conditions may require one to leave the country to receive the proper care.<sup>164</sup> In any case, one should not always expect to find physicians with advanced English-speaking skills; in these instances, it is necessary to ask for written documentation concerning the condition, preferably in French if unavailable in English.<sup>165</sup> For foreigners, including those who are insured, cash is often the expected form of payment at Moroccan hospitals and clinics, and it is generally due at the time services are rendered.<sup>166</sup>

In urban areas, most prescription medications and over-the-counter drugs are readily available. However, the Moroccan pharmaceutical industry does not maintain strict regulations, and visitors should be certain that they



© Tim Rogers  
Small pharmacy

<sup>163</sup> Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Morocco: Medical Facilities and Health Information." 14 December 2007. [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_975.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_975.html)

<sup>164</sup> MDtravelhealth.com. "Morocco." c.2007. <http://www.mdtravelhealth.com/destinations/africa/morocco.html>

<sup>165</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. "Settling In: Health, Healthcare, and Pharmacies [pp. 176–181]." 2003. London: Kuperard.

<sup>166</sup> MDtravelhealth.com. "Morocco." c.2007. <http://www.mdtravelhealth.com/destinations/africa/morocco.html>

obtain the proper medication, in terms of both content and quality.<sup>167</sup>

The most common health issue for visitors to Morocco is traveler's diarrhea. Thus, one should exercise caution when selecting food and drink. Snacks and beverages sold by street vendors are often responsible for stomach illnesses, particularly when the food items have not been freshly and thoroughly cooked. Unpasteurized milk (and its products) and unwashed, unpeeled, or uncooked fruits and vegetables may also be suspect. Although tap water in Moroccan cities is chlorinated and generally potable,<sup>168</sup> it is recommended that visitors avoid drinking it or using ice cubes of similar or unknown origin. As an alternative, bottled water is widely available in Morocco's urban areas. In case of illness, antibiotics and antidiarrheal medicines are useful in combating symptoms.<sup>169</sup>

Hepatitis A infections are also relatively frequent in Morocco, and visitors should follow the same food and water precautions mentioned above in order to help prevent against infection.<sup>170</sup> (There is also a hepatitis A vaccine available.) Insect bites may cause a variety of infections, including leishmaniasis<sup>171</sup> and typhus, although these may be more common in rural than urban areas. Insect repellent should be used when conditions call for it.<sup>172</sup> Visitors should also avoid swimming off the coast of Casablanca, as the waters there are polluted.<sup>173</sup> Of course, a variety of other infections and illnesses can be contracted in Morocco, and in general visitors should maintain good hygiene and sound judgment in order to help prevent against them.

### Work Problems in Urban Areas

Unemployment has been a serious and ongoing problem in Morocco, particularly within the country's metropolitan areas. Although the national unemployment rate has recently fallen as low as 9.6%, the rate in urban areas remains high (15.4%), even after substantial improvement (this rate was 22% in 1999).<sup>174</sup> Some demographic groups have been particularly affected by the lack of jobs. For urban youth, unemployment rates



© Jeffrey Cuvilier  
Tile laborers

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<sup>167</sup> *Morocco Handbook 2002*. McGuinness, Justin. "Essentials: Health [p. 73–74]." 2002. Bath, England: Footprint Handbooks Ltd.

<sup>168</sup> *Morocco*, 8th ed. "Health [p. 495]." 2007. Footscray, Victoria: Lonely Planet Publications.

<sup>169</sup> MDtravelhealth.com. "Morocco." c.2007.

<http://www.mdtravelhealth.com/destinations/africa/morocco.html>

<sup>170</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. "Settling In: Health, Healthcare, and Pharmacies [pp. 176–181]." 2003. London: Kuperard.

<sup>171</sup> Any of various ulcerative skin diseases transmitted to humans and animals by bloodsucking sandflies.

<sup>172</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australian Government. "Travel Advice: Morocco." 24 April 2008. <http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/advice/Morocco>

<sup>173</sup> MDtravelhealth.com. "Morocco." c.2007.

<http://www.mdtravelhealth.com/destinations/africa/morocco.html>

<sup>174</sup> Magharebia. Touahri, Sarah. "Unemployment in Morocco falls to 9.6%." 27 June 2008.

[http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en\\_GB/features/awi/features/2008/06/27/feature-03](http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/features/2008/06/27/feature-03)

have reached 33% in recent years,<sup>175</sup> and even highly educated individuals have had considerable trouble finding employment in Morocco. In the case of the latter, it is not uncommon for university graduates to work as laborers rather than in their trained professions.<sup>176</sup>

**Exchange 21:** Who in your family has a job?

<b>Soldier:</b>	Are you the only person in your family who has a job?	wash nta lwaaHeed lee Khedaam fel'aa-eela dyaalek?
<b>Local:</b>	No.	laa

In any case, the most recent unemployment numbers represent significant progress. The government has attributed the success to several factors, including investment in certain economic sectors (such as tourism) and increased training opportunities for workers.<sup>177</sup>

**Education and Schools in Cities**

In Morocco, the educational system in urban centers is markedly more effective and inclusive than in rural areas. However, as a whole, the Moroccan educational system suffers significant problems in terms of quality of education, retention rates, and gender gaps. As of 2005, the nation’s adult literacy rate was only 52.3%, with a significantly higher percentage of literate men (65.7%) than literate women (39.6%).<sup>178</sup> (Overall, school enrollment and attendance rates are consistently higher for males than for females.) In general, the majority of children enroll in and attend primary school, but only roughly half enroll in secondary school, with many of them failing to attend or matriculate from



© Kelly Crull  
A classroom in Casablanca

<sup>175</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State. “Background Note: Morocco.” October 2007. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5431.htm>

<sup>176</sup> Magharebia. Touahri, Sarah. “Unemployment in Morocco falls to 9.6%.” 27 June 2008. [http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en\\_GB/features/awi/features/2008/06/27/feature-03](http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/features/2008/06/27/feature-03)

<sup>177</sup> Magharebia. Touahri, Sarah. “Unemployment in Morocco falls to 9.6%.” 27 June 2008. [http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en\\_GB/features/awi/features/2008/06/27/feature-03](http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/features/2008/06/27/feature-03)

<sup>178</sup> United Nations Development Programme. Human Development Report 2007/2008. “Morocco 2007/2008 Report.” 2007. [http://hdrstats.undp.org/countries/data\\_sheets/cty\\_ds\\_MAR.html](http://hdrstats.undp.org/countries/data_sheets/cty_ds_MAR.html)

this educational level.<sup>179</sup> More specifically, roughly one in six schoolchildren withdraws before the 5th grade, and only 10% of students reach the 11th grade.<sup>180</sup>

**Exchange 22:** Do your children go to school?

<b>Soldier:</b>	Do your children go to school?	wash wlaadek taymshyoo lmedRaaSa?
<b>Local:</b>	Yes.	aah

Accordingly, levels of enrollment at the country’s institutions of higher education are low, and on average students spend eight years completing four-year programs.<sup>181</sup> These shortfalls occur despite the Moroccan government’s heavy investment in education, which, in recent years, has amounted to roughly 27% of the country’s total budget.<sup>182</sup> (Much of this funding is directed toward infrastructure as the country’s population continues to grow.)<sup>183</sup> In recent years, organizations such as the World Bank have made efforts to help support and reform the country’s education system, with emphasis placed on improving educational quality, access, and student retention.<sup>184</sup>

Officially, the Moroccan government requires children to complete a nine-year education cycle, which is free in public institutions. Enrollment and retention rates in these institutions are significantly higher in urban areas.<sup>185</sup> Courses are taught in Arabic, with French taught as a second language, although Spanish may be used in certain areas of the country, and English may be taught in some private schools. In terms of primary education, there are two different educational tracks: a modern track, largely based on the French education system, and an “original” track, which emphasizes Arabic and Islamic

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<sup>179</sup> UNICEF. “At a Glance: Morocco: Statistics.” 2008.

[http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/morocco\\_statistics.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/morocco_statistics.html)

<sup>180</sup> The World Bank. “Country Brief: Morocco.” April 2008.

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/MENAEXT/MOROCCOEXTN/0,,menuPK:294549~pagePK:141132~piPK:141107~theSitePK:294540,00.html>

<sup>181</sup> The World Bank. “Country Brief: Morocco.” April 2008.

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/MENAEXT/MOROCCOEXTN/0,,menuPK:294549~pagePK:141132~piPK:141107~theSitePK:294540,00.html>

<sup>182</sup> United Nations Development Programme. Human Development Report 2007/2008. “Morocco 2007/2008 Report.” 2007. [http://hdrstats.undp.org/countries/data\\_sheets/cty\\_ds\\_MAR.html](http://hdrstats.undp.org/countries/data_sheets/cty_ds_MAR.html)

<sup>183</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Morocco: Government and Society: Education.” 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/392604/Morocco>

<sup>184</sup> The World Bank. “Country Brief: Morocco.” April 2008.

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/MENAEXT/MOROCCOEXTN/0,,menuPK:294549~pagePK:141132~piPK:141107~theSitePK:294540,00.html>

<sup>185</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Morocco: Government and Society: Education.” 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/392604/Morocco>

culture, thought, and law. The modern track maintains significantly higher rates of enrollment than the original track.

There are three tracks at the secondary level: a general track emphasizing the sciences and humanities; a technical track focusing on engineering, economics, and agriculture; and a vocational track offering certification in professional fields.<sup>186</sup> Primarily located in urban areas, the country's universities and related institutions (such as polytechnics) offer higher education for certain graduates of secondary schools. The most famous of these institutions include the Muhammad V University and the Hassan II Agriculture and Veterinary Institute, both of which are located in Rabat.<sup>187</sup> Also well-known are Karaouine University in Fès, which has been a major center of Islamic studies for many centuries, and Al-Akhawayn University, which is a private, English-language university located in Ifrane.<sup>188</sup>

### Daily Life and Pastimes of Urban Dwellers

Due to the importance of family life in Morocco, the home remains the center of social interaction for most Moroccans. However, as in any major city, there are a variety of public social venues for the urban population. For men, cafés are popular sites for drinking coffee or tea, socializing, and watching televised football (soccer). Cinemas are also popular, although they too are visited primarily by men. For shopping, boutiques and marketplaces attract large crowds. As most urban areas are located near the coast, the beach remains a favorite venue for family trips and recreation.<sup>189</sup> Soccer is the most popular recreational sport in the country, although golf and tennis have become more common in recent years.<sup>190</sup>



© Omer Simkha  
Kids playing soccer

Public bathhouses, or *hammams*, are significant features of everyday Moroccan life. Moroccan homes often do not have private bathtubs and showers, thus many Moroccans visit the local bathhouse for hygienic, as well as social, purposes. Bathhouses are segregated by gender, either universally or by space or schedule. The washing process follows a traditional regimen, which involves sweating (as in a sauna) and the scrubbing away of the top layer of skin. For women in particular, these public baths are relaxing social venues and, traditionally one of the only places where they can convene in public without their male counterparts.

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<sup>186</sup> World Education Services. *World Education News and Reviews*, Vol. 19, No. 2. Clark, Nick. "Education in Morocco." April 2006. [http://www.wes.org/ewenr/06apr/practical\\_morocco.htm](http://www.wes.org/ewenr/06apr/practical_morocco.htm)

<sup>187</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Morocco: Government and Society: Education." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/392604/Morocco>

<sup>188</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Morocco." October 2007. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5431.htm>

<sup>189</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Morocco: Cultural Life, Daily Life and Social Customs." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/392604/Morocco>

<sup>190</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. "Time to Relax: Leisure Time in Morocco [pp. 223–232]." 2003. London: Kuperard.

Otherwise generally limited to activities that can be performed in the home, Moroccan women also involve themselves with traditional crafts, such as sewing and knitting. However, participating in an evening stroll, or promenade, is a popular communal activity that is open to both genders. Although contingent upon the weather, these strolls generally take place along modern boulevards, and they draw large numbers of community members.<sup>191</sup>

## Restaurants

In Morocco, dining out does not carry the same social significance as it does in Western cultures. In general, most Moroccans prefer to eat at home, where they maintain a tight-knit, familial atmosphere. For some, particularly the middle-class, dining at a restaurant may seem inferior and unreasonable in comparison.<sup>192</sup> As a result, Moroccan restaurants generally cater to tourists, expatriates, and wealthy Moroccans living in urban areas. Cafés are popular with Moroccan men, but they generally function more as social centers than as places to eat complete meals.



© Mayu :P / Flickr.com  
A meal in a formal restaurant

In any case, there is some variety to Moroccan eating establishments. Cafés generally offer sandwiches and brochettes (known in the West as kabobs) as well as an array of typical beverages.

**Exchange 23:** I would like coffee.

<b>Soldier:</b>	I would like coffee or tea.	bgheet -aataay wla kahwa
<b>Local:</b>	Sure.	'la Raas wel'eyn

<sup>191</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. “Time to Relax: Leisure Time in Morocco [pp. 223–232].” 2003. London: Kuperard.

<sup>192</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. “Where the Guest is King: When You Entertain [p. 129].” 2003. London: Kuperard.

French-style cafés, which serve pastries and other snacks, are also relatively common in urban areas.

**Exchange 24:** Do you have a dessert?

<b>Soldier:</b>	Do you have a dessert?	wash 'andkum shee deesityR
<b>Local:</b>	Yes, we have crepes.	aah, 'andna lbeghReyR

For inexpensive food, there are also fast-food style restaurants, eateries, and food stalls.

Upscale restaurants are limited to metropolitan areas and specialize in a variety of international flavors. French or French-influenced cuisine is quite common, although there are, of course, restaurants that serve traditional Moroccan dishes, such as *pastilla* or *mechoui*.



© herr\_S / Flickr.com  
Fast food restaurant in Marrekech

**Exchange 25:** What type of meat is this?

<b>Soldier:</b>	What type of meat is this?	shnoo haad lHam
<b>Local:</b>	Lamb.	lghanmi

At mid-range or expensive restaurants, a service charge may be included in the total bill.<sup>193</sup> If not, it is appropriate to tip roughly 10% at these restaurants and, perhaps, a couple dirham (the unit of currency in Morocco) when dining at cafés.<sup>194</sup>

## Currency

The Moroccan unit of currency is the dirham (MAD or Dh). It is denominated into notes of Dh10, 20, 50, 100, and 200; and coins of Dh1, 5, and 10. There are 100 centimes to one dirham, with centime coins denominated into 1 (which is rare in circulation), 5, 10, 20, 50.<sup>195</sup> It is



© David Loong  
Moroccan currency

<sup>193</sup> *Morocco*, 8th ed. “Directory: Food [p. 454].” 2007. Footscray, Victoria: Lonely Planet Publications.

<sup>194</sup> *Morocco*, 8th ed. “Directory: Money [p. 459].” 2007. Footscray, Victoria: Lonely Planet Publications.

<sup>195</sup> *Morocco Handbook 2002*. McGuinness, Justin. “Essentials: Money [p. 30].” 2002. Bath, England: Footprint Handbooks Ltd.

illegal to export dirhams, thus they can generally only be acquired in Morocco. Visitors should exchange currency at banks and official changing stations, which both offer current rates and do not charge commission fees for conversion. ATMs can also be found at banks in urban areas.

It is illegal to exchange money on the street, and individuals who offer to do so are generally street hustlers. Visitors will receive a receipt for the currency they exchange, and before leaving the country, they must present this receipt in order to convert their remaining dirhams back into their national currency. In addition, Visa and Mastercard are widely accepted in urban areas.<sup>196</sup>

**Exchange 26:** Do you accept US currency?

<b>Soldier:</b>	Do you accept US currency?	wash mumkin nKhaleS bee dolaaR?
<b>Local:</b>	No we only accept dirhams	laa, tankebloo gheyRd-deRhem

Many Moroccans continue to count currency in *francs* and *riyals*, which are foreign currencies that either have a history of use in the country or a cultural association with Morocco. These units are used only in speech, not in official currency. Thus, in Moroccan usage, one *franc* is generally equivalent to one centime, and one *riyal* is generally equal to five centimes,<sup>197</sup> although *riyals* may vary in value according to region.<sup>198</sup> This practice can be confusing, and visitors should be alert to the counting system used in the immediate transaction.

**Marketplaces and Hotels**

**Souks**

A characteristic feature of Moroccan cities and villages is the marketplace, or *souk*, also known as a bazaar. Typically consisting of numerous commercial stalls, these local trading centers offer a variety of goods at variable prices. Common items for sale include rugs, leatherwork,



© Szagi / Flickr.com  
A market in Marrekech

<sup>196</sup> Embassy Home Page. “Moroccan Money and Moroccan Banks.” 2007. [http://morocco.embassyhomepage.com/moroccan\\_money\\_euro\\_currency\\_converter\\_moroccan\\_banks\\_visa\\_credit\\_card\\_money\\_transfer\\_to\\_morocco\\_traveller\\_cheques\\_thomascook.htm](http://morocco.embassyhomepage.com/moroccan_money_euro_currency_converter_moroccan_banks_visa_credit_card_money_transfer_to_morocco_traveller_cheques_thomascook.htm)

<sup>197</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. “Settling In: Shopping and Bargaining [pp. 167–172].” 2003. London: Kuperard.

<sup>198</sup> *Morocco Handbook 2002*. McGuinness, Justin. “Essentials: Money [p. 30].” 2002. Bath, England: Footprint Handbooks Ltd.

Moroccan slippers, spices, and additional varieties of handicrafts and foodstuffs. In general, *souks* are open daily in urban areas, whereas those in smaller villages may be held once a week. In particular, Marrakech and Fès are known for their large and bustling marketplaces.<sup>199</sup>

**Exchange 27:** Is the bazaar nearby?

<b>Soldier:</b>	Is the bazaar nearby?	wash leblaSa dyaal lbazaaR kaReba min hna?
<b>Local:</b>	Yes, over there on the right.	aah, lheyh 'al leyman?

In Morocco, shopping is generally an interactive and often prolonged process involving much haggling and negotiation. Certain items and services with fixed or posted rates are not open to bargaining, but at *souks* haggling is customary and expected. It is important to visit a number of different stalls to compare prices and qualities of goods and to familiarize oneself with the market and its practices.

**Exchange 28:** May I examine this close up?

<b>Soldier:</b>	May I examine this close up?	wash yemkin leeya nkalib haadi?
<b>Local:</b>	Sure.	aah

A vendor's initial asking price will almost certainly be high, and customers should respond with counteroffers starting at one third the initial price. Depending upon the item, negotiations can be lengthy affairs and may take place over several cups of mint tea.<sup>200</sup> One should not demonstrate too much enthusiasm for a particular item; vendors will view excessive interest as an opportunity to maintain a higher asking price.



© virgivi / Flickr.com  
A market in Meknes

<sup>199</sup> Travel Lady Magazine. Permenter, Paris and John Bigley. "Shopping Morocco's Souks." c.2008. <http://www.travellady.com/articles/article-shoppingmorocco.html>

<sup>200</sup> Pilot Destination Guides. Fab, Debbie. "Marrakech Bazaar, Morocco." No date. [http://www.pilotguides.com/destination\\_guide/middle\\_east\\_and\\_north\\_africa/morocco/marrakesh\\_market.php](http://www.pilotguides.com/destination_guide/middle_east_and_north_africa/morocco/marrakesh_market.php)

**Exchange 29:** Do you have any more of these?

<b>Soldier:</b>	Do you have any more of these?	wash 'andek shee weHdeen bHal haadu?
<b>Local:</b>	No.	laa

Negotiations are generally conducted in French or Arabic, although vendors in tourist areas may speak some English. After a price has been agreed upon, it is inappropriate for the customer to withdraw his offer, although demonstrating a willingness to forego purchase may be helpful during the negotiation process itself. Finally, it is best to shop without a guide, as they often receive a commission that will be accounted for in the vendor's selling price.<sup>201</sup>

**Hotels**

Morocco has a variety of hotels that range in price, quality, and level of amenities. Inexpensive hotels or hostels may have shared bathrooms or no hot shower services at all, whereas mid-range and upper-level hotels feature modern hotel rooms with full amenities. Depending upon the site, visitors may want to first inspect a room before renting one. Rates are typically fixed, but hotels may offer unadvertised discounts, in which case it is best to ask.<sup>202</sup>



© Milamber's portfolio / Flickr.com  
Ibis Hotel, Casablanca, Morocco

**Exchange 30:** Is there lodging nearby?

<b>Soldier:</b>	Is there lodging nearby?	wash kaayen shee ooTeyl kReeb min hna?
<b>Local:</b>	Yes.	aah

**Urban Traffic and Transportation**

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<sup>201</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. "Settling In: Shopping and Bargaining [pp. 167–172]." 2003. London: Kuperard.

<sup>202</sup> *Morocco*, 8th ed. "Directory: Accommodations [pp. 438–440]." 2007. Footscray, Victoria: Lonely Planet Publications.

In terms of ground transportation, Morocco’s urban areas are serviced by trains, buses, and several varieties of taxi. The country’s major urban centers—Marrakech, Casablanca, Fès, Rabat, and Tangier—are connected via a modern freeway system, which includes tollways. Urban roads are generally in good condition, although traffic signals may be inoperative or difficult to view, and street signs may be entirely absent.<sup>203</sup> Traffic congestion is typical. Overall, Moroccan driving habits are notoriously poor, and the country has a high rate of traffic accidents. It is important to demonstrate considerable caution when driving in Morocco.<sup>204</sup>



© Markku Artola  
City traffic in Casablanca

### *Rental Cars*

Cars are available to rent, but they can be expensive, particularly after accounting for fuel. Although Morocco’s minimum driving age is 18, the majority of rental companies demand that drivers be 21 or older.<sup>205</sup>

#### **Exchange 31:** Where can I rent a car?

<b>Soldier:</b>	Where can I rent a car?	mneyn yemken nikRee shee Tonobeyl?
<b>Local:</b>	Downtown.	limdeena

As many urban areas lack road signs, it is important to carry a city map and, if necessary, ask for directions.

#### **Exchange 32:** Which road leads to the airport?

<b>Soldier:</b>	Which road leads to the airport?	shnaahiya TReK lee kaad-dee lmaTaaR?
<b>Local:</b>	The road heading east.	TReK lee ghada leshaRK

<sup>203</sup> Hans Rossell Travel Photography. Travel Guide Morocco. “Morocco Car Rental: Driving a Car.” c.2005. <http://www.hansrossel.com/travel-information/morocco/rent-a-car-morocco.htm>

<sup>204</sup> Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Dept. of State. “Morocco, Traffic Safety and Road Conditions.” 14 December 2007. [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_975.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_975.html)

<sup>205</sup> *Morocco*, 8th ed. “Transport: Getting Around [p. 484].” 2007. Footscray, Victoria: Lonely Planet Publications.

In general, it is not safe practice to drive at night in Morocco. Many streets lack sufficient lighting, therefore it is difficult for drivers to see the many pedestrians and cyclists that also use the roadways. Also, not all vehicles use their lights at night (it is legal for slow-moving vehicles to drive without them),<sup>206</sup> whereas many others continuously use their bright lights in an effort to combat the darkness.<sup>207</sup> Combined, these factors create hazardous driving conditions.

### Taxis

There are two types of taxi in Morocco. Grand taxis, or *taxiat kebira*, are shared taxis that run on established, long-distance routes, either within the greater metropolitan and suburban area or between cities. Passengers pay for one of six spaces in the taxi, which only departs when full, although empty spaces can be purchased (if one desires extra room) and private trips can be negotiated. Fares are generally fixed, however. Although more expensive than buses, grand taxis offer quicker service between cities. They can be found at designated locations in urban areas.<sup>208</sup>



© Omer Simkha

### Exchange 33: Where can I get a cab?

<b>Soldier:</b>	Where can I get a cab?	feen yemken leeya nshid shee Taaksi ?
<b>Local:</b>	Over there.	lheyh

Beware that grand taxi drivers have a reputation for aggressive and erratic driving. Also, such taxis are not commonly equipped with seat belts.

### Petit Taxi

These smaller taxis carry a maximum of three passengers and offer per-request service within city limits. It is common, although not mandatory, for passengers to share these taxis as well, with the benefit of receiving lower fares. Most petit taxis have meters; if not, fares should be negotiated, often with much haggling, before the trip.<sup>209</sup>

<sup>206</sup> *Morocco*, 8th ed. “Transport: Getting Around [p. 486].” 2007. Footscray, Victoria: Lonely Planet Publications.

<sup>207</sup> Hans Rossell Travel Photography. Travel Guide Morocco. “Morocco Car Rental: Driving a Car.” c.2005. <http://www.hansrossel.com/travel-information/morocco/rent-a-car-morocco.htm>

<sup>208</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. “Time to Relax: Transportation in Morocco [pp. 211–212].” 2003. London: Kuperard.

<sup>209</sup> *Morocco*, 8th ed. “Transport: Getting Around [p. 488].” 2007. Footscray, Victoria: Lonely Planet Publications.

**Exchange 34:** Can you take me there?

<b>Soldier:</b>	Can you take me there?	wash yemkin lek tedeni lheyh?
<b>Local:</b>	Yes, I can.	aah, mumkin

*Trains*

Morocco's passenger trains essentially run in two general directions: east–west from the northeast border town of Oujda through Fès, Meknes, Rabat, and ultimately to Casablanca; and north–south from Tangier to Sidi Kacem, and separately from Casablanca to Marrakech. These lines intersect, and thus offer connecting service; there are also additional existing and planned routes as well.<sup>210</sup>



© Omer Simkha  
Commuter train in Casablanca

There are different classes of travel (as in airplanes), but service is generally comfortable, safe, punctual, and relatively inexpensive. The majority of train stations are found in the French-built districts of their respective cities.<sup>211</sup>

**Exchange 35:** Is there a train station nearby?

<b>Soldier:</b>	Is there a train station nearby?	wash kaayen shee maHeTa dyaal Traan KReba min hna?
<b>Local:</b>	No.	laa

*Buses*

City buses run on established routes and relatively consistent schedules. They are generally inexpensive, but they can be quite crowded, particularly during rush hours.<sup>212</sup> Beware of pickpockets in such situations.

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<sup>210</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. "Time to Relax: Transportation in Morocco [p. 208]." 2003. London: Kuperard.

<sup>211</sup> *Morocco*, 8th ed. "Transport: Getting Around [p. 488]." 2007. Footscray, Victoria: Lonely Planet Publications.

<sup>212</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. "Time to Relax: Transportation in Morocco [p. 210]." 2003. London: Kuperard.

**Exchange 36:** Will the bus be here soon?

<b>Soldier:</b>	Will the bus be here soon?	wash daaba ghaadi yjit-Tobes?
<b>Local:</b>	Yes.	aah

Extensive, countrywide bus service is offered by a variety of companies, whose buses range in quality and age, from dilapidated to modern. Buses run on set routes and on an ostensibly fixed, but often loose, schedule. They can be crowded, and in general their operators have a reputation for poor and erratic driving. Stations can be confusing and somewhat disorderly. Depending upon the locale and size of station, ticket-sellers (often men wearing blue coats) can be found in booths or outside, in the crowd or next to buses.<sup>213</sup>

**Dealing with Street Vendors and Beggars**

Due in part to the country’s high rates of unemployment and poverty, beggars and informal guides are prevalent throughout Morocco. Foreign visitors are conspicuous targets for solicitation and should expect to be repeatedly approached.



© Darren Barefoot  
Panhandler

When interacting with beggars, it is best to follow Moroccan cultural norms, which are founded in Islamic beliefs. One of the “Five Pillars” of Islam is *zakat*, the donation of alms to the poor, and this practice is common in Morocco. Muslims believe that such acts of generosity will bring *baraka*, or blessings, to those who perform them. Typically a gift of a few dirhams is more than sufficient (many Moroccans may give coins valued at less than a dirham), but not mandatory. Moroccans themselves give to some, but not to all. Visitors who do not wish to give may simply say “*Allah yasahel*,” or “may God improve your situation.”

**Exchange 37:** Give me money.

<b>Local:</b>	Give me money.	'Teyni lefloos
<b>Soldier:</b>	I don’t have any.	maa'indeesh

<sup>213</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. “Time to Relax: Transportation in Morocco [pp. 208–210].” 2003. London: Kuperard.

It is inappropriate to completely ignore beggars or to treat them rudely; likewise, it is inappropriate for a beggar to incessantly harass someone. In case of the latter, it is best to ignore the beggar and walk away.<sup>214</sup> In any instance, it is advisable to maintain a relatively impersonal tone (which is typical in Morocco), as overly friendly behavior may draw unwanted and persistent attention. Finally, it is important to differentiate between actual beggars and street hustlers. Hustlers will more commonly approach you, rather than waiting for you to pass, and they will often speak French or English, rather than Arabic. Boys and young men often comprise this group.<sup>215</sup>

Guides, both informal and actual, are widespread in Morocco and they can be either helpful or a nuisance. When new to the area, hiring a guide with local expertise may be useful. In this case, official guides can be found through tourist offices and hotel services. Much more common though, are unofficial guides, known as *faux guides*, and touts, solicitors who earn commissions for guiding tourists to certain local shops.<sup>216</sup> Unofficial guides can be hired at cheaper rates (in the form of tips), but the quality of service may vary. In any case, payments should only be made to guides after their services have been rendered. If you do not wish to use a guide, simply refuse his services in a polite but firm and confident manner. Solicitors may often be quite persistent, but it is important not to treat them rudely.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> TripAdvisor.com. "Morocco Tipping and Etiquette." 2008. <http://www.tripadvisor.com/Travel-g293730-s606/Morocco:Tipping.And.Etiquette.html>

<sup>215</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. "A Cultural Compendium [p. 241]." 2003. London: Kuperard.

<sup>216</sup> *Morocco*, 8th ed. "Directory: Dangers and Annoyances [pp. 450–451]." 2007. Footscray, Victoria: Lonely Planet Publications.

<sup>217</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. "A Cultural Compendium [pp. 250–252]." 2003. London: Kuperard.

# Rural Life

## Introduction

Although Islam acts as a common bond for the vast majority of the Moroccan population, there is a stark, historically based division between urban and rural areas. Historically, rural Morocco has been the traditional home of indigenous Berber tribes, also known collectively as Imazighen, or, singularly, as Amazigh. (Berber peoples are located throughout Northern Africa; there are numerous distinct tribes within the larger Berber designation and within Morocco itself.) Despite the longstanding and prevailing influence of Arab culture in Morocco, the Berbers have generally retained their distinct languages and a sense of native identity and tradition. It is important to reiterate that it is these linguistic and cultural differences that distinguish Berbers from the Arab population, as the genetic differences between the two groups are negligible<sup>218</sup> and 99% of the country's total population is categorized ethnically as Arab-Berber.<sup>219</sup>



© jim snapper / Flickr.com  
Berber men

The relative cultural autonomy of the Berber tribes is largely due to settlement patterns determined by geography. The Berber-dominated regions of the northern highlands, central mountains, and southern and eastern plateaus and deserts have, historically, proven less accessible and less hospitable to invading or occupying foreign peoples. In the past, the division between the Arab-dominated Atlantic coastal plains and the Berber-dominated interior was understood, respectively, in terms of *bilad al-makhzan*, or “government land,” and *bilad al-siba*, or “land of abandonment” or “land of dissidence.”<sup>220</sup>

Today, the effects of this division can be seen not only in terms of language and certain cultural traditions, but in socioeconomic disparity. In general, visitors to rural regions, particularly those populated by Berbers, will observe a notable lack of modern infrastructure, services, and government assistance in comparison to the urban areas of the Atlantic coastal plains and plateaus. However, as the vast majority of Berbers are Muslims, rural residents generally share the same religiously determined values and practices as those living in urban centers. In some respects, rural Moroccans may often be more conservative and traditional than city dwellers, who have experienced greater exposure to modern foreign culture, particularly that of Europe. Visitors to Morocco's

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<sup>218</sup> *European Journal of Human Genetics*, Vol. 8. Bosch, Elena; and others. “Genetic Structure of North-West Africa Revealed by STR Analysis [p.362].” 2000.

<http://www.upf.edu/cexs/recerca/bioevo/2000BioEvo/BE2000-Bosch-STRs-EJHG.pdf>

<sup>219</sup> Central Intelligence Agency. CIA World Factbook. “Morocco.” 10 June 2008.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mo.html>

<sup>220</sup> *Tribe and Society in Rural Morocco*. Hart, David M. “Tribalism: The Backbone of the Moroccan Nation [p. 9].” 2000. London: Frank Cass Publishers.

rural regions should therefore take into consideration the region's general lack of amenities and its traditional values of both Arab and Berber influence.

### Tribal Distribution and Settlements

There are numerous groups and subgroups of Imazighen dispersed throughout the rural areas of Morocco. In broad terms, there are three major tribes, each grouped by region and language. The Berber tribes located in the Rif Mountains of northeastern Morocco are known as Irifiyen (singular Arifi). The Berbers of central and southeast-central Morocco fall under the general term Imazighen (which originally applied only to these smaller



© Jeffrey Cuvillier  
Terraced fields in the Atlas Mountains

subgroups), and in southwestern Morocco, the Ishilhayen subgroup (singular Ashilhav) consists of the Shluh or Swasa (singular Susi or Soussi) Berber peoples.<sup>221</sup> Respectively, these three groups roughly correspond to the three primary forms of the *Tamazight* language spoken in Morocco: *Tarafit*, *Central Atlas Tamazight*, and *Tashelhit*.<sup>222</sup>

Types of Berber settlements vary according to region. In the northern uplands and central mountains, Berber peoples traditionally live in small villages situated on hillsides or hilltops. In these regions, the surrounding land is often terraced to create agricultural tracts, and homes and structures are typically made of adobe, stone, or earth.<sup>223</sup> In the Rif Mountains, it was common for individual, single-level houses to be spread out at some distance from each other, although multistoried, tight-grouped complexes are now prevalent. In the central mountains and southeast, primarily in the Anti-Atlas range and surrounding deserts, villages are often known as *ksour*, or “castles,” due to their fortified design. (These structures are known as *igharman* in *Tamazight*.) *Ksour* generally consist of an enclosed complex of attached, multistoried houses, each of which traditionally served as a home to several families from the same tribe. Collective granaries were also a common feature, although this may be less prevalent in some areas today.<sup>224</sup> In the desert regions of the southeast and southwest, Berber tribes live in settlements in oases, which are generally man-made.<sup>225</sup> In the southwest, houses may resemble *ksour*, but they often exhibit features common to the housing structures of the northern mountains as well.<sup>226</sup> In

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<sup>221</sup> Everyculture.com. “Berbers of Morocco.” Hart, David M. 2007. <http://www.everyculture.com/Africa-Middle-East/Berbers-of-Morocco.html>

<sup>222</sup> Ethnologue.com. “Ethnologue: Languages of the World, Languages of Morocco.” 2005. [http://www.ethnologue.com/show\\_country.asp?name=MA](http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=MA)

<sup>223</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Morocco: Settlement Patterns: Traditional Regions.” 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/392604/Morocco#>

<sup>224</sup> Everyculture.com. “Berbers of Morocco: Settlements.” Hart, David M. c.2007. <http://www.everyculture.com/Africa-Middle-East/Berbers-of-Morocco-Settlements.html>

<sup>225</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Morocco: Settlement Patterns: Traditional Regions.” 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/392604/Morocco#>

<sup>226</sup> Everyculture.com. “Berbers of Morocco: Settlements.” Hart, David M. c.2007. <http://www.everyculture.com/Africa-Middle-East/Berbers-of-Morocco-Settlements.html>

less remote rural areas that have been exposed to greater Arab influence, larger villages may consist of a traditional *medina*, or historic center.

### Land Distribution and Ownership

In Morocco, privately owned agricultural land is generally handed down through the male lineage of the family. When bequeathed, it is either divided almost exclusively among male offspring or maintained as a single tract (known as indivision). In Berber communities, the land adjacent to the local settlement is generally reserved for agriculture and the outlying territory is used for grazing. The latter acreage is often owned and shared by the community.<sup>227</sup> Most individually owned tracts are of small size and may or may not be irrigable. In recent years, roughly 75% of rural agricultural households in Morocco possessed less than 2 ha (approx. 5 a) , of land, and nearly 33% of rural households were landless or owned only very small tracts.<sup>228</sup>



**Exchange 39:** Do you own this land?

<b>Soldier:</b>	Do you own this land?	wash haad l-aRD dyaalek?
<b>Local:</b>	Yes.	aah

The generally small size of parcels and the widespread lack of formal documentation of ownership have seriously hampered investment potential in rural areas. For example, without a title, farmers are generally unable to borrow money to invest in and improve upon their land.<sup>229</sup>

### Rural Economy and Livelihood

Traditionally, the primary livelihood of Berber peoples consists of small-scale subsistence farming and animal husbandry.

<sup>227</sup> Everyculture.com. “Berbers of Morocco: Economy.” Hart, David M. c.2007.

<http://www.everyculture.com/Africa-Middle-East/Berbers-of-Morocco-Economy.html>

<sup>228</sup> *North Africa in Transition: State, Society and Economic Transformation in the 1990s*. Layache, Azzadine. “Economic Reform and Elusive Political Change in Morocco [p. 46].” Zoubir, Yahia H., Ed. 1999. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.

<sup>229</sup> International Fund for Agricultural Development. Rural Poverty Portal. “Rural Poverty in the Kingdom of Morocco.” 7 March 2007. <http://www.ruralpovertyportal.org/english/regions/africa/mar/index.htm>

**Exchange 38:** Where do you work, sir?

<b>Soldier:</b>	Where do you work, sir?	feyn tatKhdem, aaseedi?
<b>Local:</b>	I am a farmer, sir.	filaaH aa seedi

Wheat, barley, and other cereals are the most common crops, although figs, olives, almonds, walnuts, and a variety of vegetables are also typical.<sup>230</sup> Cannabis (used to make hashish) is also a significant cash crop, particularly in the Rif Mountains. In the country’s pre-Saharan and Saharan areas, dates are a major product, as are traditional staples such as alfalfa, maize, wheat, and barley.<sup>231</sup> In many areas, plowing is still often done with cows and a donkey or mule. The seasonal migration of livestock (mostly sheep) from higher to lower elevations, is still common in certain areas. As they move livestock from place to place, shepherds live in small tents constructed from goat hair. Other small-scale livestock holdings include cows, goats, and chickens.<sup>232</sup> Rural regions in the coastal plains maintain larger agricultural and livestock operations, as they generally benefit from richer soil and increased access to irrigation and other resources. Fruits, vegetables, and cereals are major crops.



© kali.ma / flickr.com  
Farmland in the Atlas mountains

As a whole, the Moroccan agricultural industry is consistently vulnerable to drought, as evidenced most recently in 2007, when a major drought led to significantly decreased agricultural yields.<sup>233</sup> Such instability has prevented the sector’s growth, affecting both the overall economy, as well as the daily lives of subsistence farmers.<sup>234</sup> Furthermore, in recent years, overgrazing in certain areas (particularly in the mountains) has led to deforestation, increased erosion, and loss of farmland. Erosion has, in turn, also negatively affected the country’s water supply as the increased sedimentation of reservoirs has decreased their overall capacity.<sup>235</sup> Accordingly, despite the higher

<sup>230</sup> Everyculture.com. “Berbers of Morocco: Economy.” Hart, David M. c.2007.

<http://www.everyculture.com/Africa-Middle-East/Berbers-of-Morocco-Economy.html>

<sup>231</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Morocco: Settlement Patterns: Traditional Regions.” 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/392604/Morocco#>

<sup>232</sup> Everyculture.com. “Berbers of Morocco: Economy.” Hart, David M. c.2007.

<http://www.everyculture.com/Africa-Middle-East/Berbers-of-Morocco-Economy.html>

<sup>233</sup> Central Intelligence Agency. CIA World Factbook. “Morocco.” 19 June 2008.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mo.html>

<sup>234</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Morocco: Economy.” 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/392604/Morocco#>

<sup>235</sup> African Development Bank. “Kingdom of Morocco: Country Strategy Paper 2003–2005 [pp.3–4]” October 2003.

[http://www.afdb.org/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/ADB\\_ADMIN\\_PG/DOCUMENTS/OPERATIONSINFORMATION/MOROCCO\\_CSP\\_2003-2005.PDF](http://www.afdb.org/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/ADB_ADMIN_PG/DOCUMENTS/OPERATIONSINFORMATION/MOROCCO_CSP_2003-2005.PDF)

population of urban areas, the majority of the country's poor are found in rural areas where agriculture is particularly unproductive or difficult to sustain.<sup>236</sup> The central mountains and eastern and southern steppes and deserts are among these areas, and their often unfruitful, impoverished conditions have fueled the country's rural to urban migration, as well as the mass labor migration of Moroccans to Europe.

As in the medinas of urban areas, the trading of foodstuffs, handicrafts, and other goods in rural areas occurs at marketplaces, or *souqs*. Although their frequency depends upon the region, rural markets are generally held at least once per week. A variety of goods, including modern, foreign products, may be purchased at these events. Significantly, one Berber tribe, the Aith Waryaghar of the Rif Mountains, holds a very unique market reserved for women.<sup>237</sup>

## Transportation Issues

### *Driving in Rural Areas*

In many rural areas Morocco's road system is underdeveloped and in poor condition. There are modern freeways connecting the major urban centers and two-lane primary roads that run through rural areas to other cities. However, the secondary routes and unsealed roads of remote regions are unreliable and often narrow and dangerous. (It is relatively common for drivers to be required to pull onto the shoulder of the road in order to let oncoming traffic pass.)<sup>238</sup> This is particularly true in the Rif and Atlas Mountains, where narrow roads follow steep and windy paths through rugged terrain.



© Darren Barefoot  
Mule-drawn cart

In any area, Moroccan roads are often used by pedestrians, motorbikes, animal-drawn vehicles, and bicyclists, all of which may act as unforeseen obstacles, particularly at night on unlit roads (which is common). Rural roads are also subject to flash flooding, which can carry away vehicles and seriously disable roadways.<sup>239</sup> Heavy snowfall may close roads in mountainous areas, and desert winds carrying dust may reduce visibility or cause significant damage to vehicles. Furthermore, in desert areas, paved roads may end suddenly, changing into dirt or gravel, and loose rocks are commonly responsible for

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<sup>236</sup> International Fund for Agricultural Development. Rural Poverty Portal. "Rural Poverty in the Kingdom of Morocco." 7 March 2007. <http://www.ruralpovertyportal.org/english/regions/africa/mar/index.htm>

<sup>237</sup> Everyculture.com. "Berbers of Morocco: Economy." Hart, David M. c.2007.

<http://www.everyculture.com/Africa-Middle-East/Berbers-of-Morocco-Economy.html>

<sup>238</sup> *Morocco*, 8th ed. "Transport: Getting Around [pp. 486–487]." 2007. Footscray, Victoria: Lonely Planet Publications.

<sup>239</sup> Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Morocco: Traffic Safety and Road Conditions." 14 December 2007. [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_975.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_975.html)

shattered windshields.<sup>240</sup> In any instance, it is best to maintain a safe and prudent speed, as any number of hazards may arise.

Policemen routinely pull over vehicles for inspection and may take a driver’s license if the fee is not paid at that moment.<sup>241</sup> In addition, police checkpoints in city entrances and certain rural areas are relatively common. Visitors should be prepared to present their passport and driver’s license.<sup>242</sup>

**Exchange 40:** Please get out of the car.

<b>Soldier:</b>	Please get out of the car.	KhRuj mint Tonobeel laah yKhaleek
<b>Local:</b>	OK.	waaKha

Services centers, such as gas stations and mechanics, are often limited and located far apart in some rural areas. Visitors should plan accordingly.



© Alexandre Baron  
A gas station in Morocco

**Exchange 41:** Is there a gas station nearby?

<b>Soldier:</b>	Is there a gas station nearby?	kaayen shee STaSyon dyaal leySaanS KaReeba min hinaa?
<b>Local:</b>	Yes.	aah

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<sup>240</sup> *Morocco*, 8th ed. “Transport: Getting Around [pp. 486–487].” 2007. Footscray, Victoria: Lonely Planet Publications.

<sup>241</sup> Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State. “Morocco: Traffic Safety and Road Conditions.” 14 December 2007. [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_975.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_975.html)

<sup>242</sup> *Morocco*, 8th ed. “Transport: Getting Around [pp. 486–487].” 2007. Footscray, Victoria: Lonely Planet Publications.

**Exchange 42:** Is there an auto mechanic nearby?

<b>Soldier:</b>	Is there a good auto mechanic nearby?	kaayen shee meekaanisyaan KReeb min hna?
<b>Local:</b>	Yes.	aah

*Buses, Trains, and Taxis*

Morocco’s extensive bus system runs routes throughout the country, offering an inexpensive, but not necessarily safe or comfortable, form of travel into rural areas. The country’s major bus lines (CTM and Supratours) generally maintain fleets of modern buses, but smaller companies may use older, less comfortable models.<sup>243</sup> In any case, buses may be overcrowded, and in general their operators are known to demonstrate poor driving habits.<sup>244</sup> Visitors should also be aware that schedules are often loosely followed (depending upon the company) and stations can be somewhat raucous.<sup>245</sup>

Morocco’s train system is generally safe, comfortable, punctual, and relatively affordable. However, service is mostly limited to the Atlantic coastal plains and northern Morocco. There is a route that runs through the eastern part of the country (parallel to the nearby Algerian border), but in general the Atlas Mountains and southern and eastern steppes and deserts are not presently serviced by train.

Grand taxi service is also generally available for travel between rural villages. As in urban centers, these taxis offer shared rides to set destinations. In mountainous regions, taxi vehicles may consist of a van or a land rover.<sup>246</sup>

*Trucks and 4WD Vehicles*

Pick-up trucks or similar four-wheel-drive vehicles are commonly used by Moroccans travelling in rural areas not served by typical methods of public transportation. These vehicles are particularly common in areas with rough, unsealed roads, such as in the Atlas Mountains. Passengers generally sit in the back of the truck and riding conditions can be

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<sup>243</sup> *Morocco*, 8th ed. “Transport: Getting Around [pp. 481–484].” 2007. Footscray, Victoria: Lonely Planet Publications.

<sup>244</sup> Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State. “Morocco: Traffic Safety and Road Conditions.” 14 December 2007. [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_975.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_975.html)

<sup>245</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. “Time to Relax: Transportation in Morocco [pp. 208–210].” 2003. London: Kuperard.

<sup>246</sup> *Morocco Handbook 2002*. McGuinness, Justin. “Essentials: Getting Around [p. 54].” 2002. Bath, England: Footprint Handbooks Ltd.

rough. Frequency and availability is generally irregular, although service is common on market days.<sup>247</sup>

## Health Issues

Depending upon the region, access to medical facilities and healthcare may be limited or nonexistent in rural areas of Morocco. (As of 2002, only 65% of rural residents had access to healthcare.)<sup>248</sup> There may be local clinics staffed with a nurse or doctor, but the level of service may be very basic. The extreme conditions of many of Morocco's rural regions and the reduced availability of treated water and sanitation services in such areas pose additional health risks. (As of 2004, only 56% of the rural population had access to improved drinking water, and only 52% used adequate sanitation facilities.)<sup>249</sup> Preventative measures are, therefore, extremely important in maintaining one's health.

Visitors to remote areas should carry with them any necessary prescription medicine, as well as a small first aid kit with antibiotics, anti-diarrheal medicine, oral rehydration salts, bandages, and a variety of other appropriate items. Iodine tablets and water purification devices are also recommended, and in high altitude and desert regions, the use of sun block is imperative.<sup>250</sup> Insect-borne diseases, such as leishmaniasis (spread through sand flies), typhus, and malaria, are potential risks in Morocco, and insect repellent should be used accordingly. Visitors should also avoid swimming in fresh water, as schistosomiasis, a parasitic infection, may occur.<sup>251</sup> Additional diseases found in Morocco include tuberculosis, hepatitis, HIV, typhoid fever, and rabies.<sup>252</sup>



© travelinknu / Flickr.com  
Traditional medicine man

Altitude sickness may affect those who are not acclimated to the higher elevations common to the Atlas Mountains. Basic symptoms include headache, breathlessness, lethargy, and confusion. Affected visitors should rest at regular intervals to allow their body to acclimate or, if conditions persist or worsen, they should descend to lower altitudes. Dehydration and heat stroke are major health risks, particularly in desert areas; visitors should drink plenty of (purified) water and wear sun protection.<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> *Morocco*, 8th ed. "Transport: Getting Around [p. 488]." 2007. Footscray, Victoria: Lonely Planet Publications.

<sup>248</sup> Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, World Health Organization. "Country Profile: Morocco." 2005. <http://www.emro.who.int/emrinfo/index.asp?Ctry=mor>

<sup>249</sup> UNICEF. "At a Glance: Morocco: Statistics." 2008. [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/morocco\\_statistics.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/morocco_statistics.html)

<sup>250</sup> *Morocco*, 8th ed. "Health [pp. 490–495]." 2007. Footscray, Victoria: Lonely Planet Publications.

<sup>251</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australian Government. "Travel Advice: Morocco." 24 April 2008. <http://www.smarttraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/advice/Morocco>

<sup>252</sup> *Morocco*, 8th ed. "Health [pp. 490–495]." 2007. Footscray, Victoria: Lonely Planet Publications.

<sup>253</sup> *Morocco*, 8th ed. "Health [pp. 490–495]." 2007. Footscray, Victoria: Lonely Planet Publications.

As in urban areas, traveler’s diarrhea is a common ailment, and visitors should take appropriate precautionary measures to prevent sickness. These measures include drinking only bottled, boiled, or purified water; avoiding ice cubes; thoroughly washing one’s hands before eating; avoiding undercooked food, and food sold by street vendors; washing and peeling fruits and vegetables; and avoiding unpasteurized milk and its products.<sup>254</sup>

In case of injury, it may be necessary to ask locals for assistance or for information concerning the availability and location of local medical facilities.

**Exchange 43:** My arm is broken, can you help me?

<b>Soldier:</b>	My arm is broken, can you help me?	yedi mhaRsa, yemken lek t'aaweni?
<b>Local:</b>	Yes, I can help you.	aah, yemken leeya n'aawnek

**Exchange 44:** Is there a medical clinic nearby?

<b>Soldier:</b>	Is there a medical clinic nearby?	wash kaayen shee SbeeTaaR kReeb min hna?
<b>Local:</b>	Yes, over there.	aah, lheyh

In less urgent situations, one can ask locals for information concerning clinics in the greater area. In such cases, visitors may want to travel to a nearby village or, preferably, a city in order to seek advanced care.

**Exchange 45:** Is Dr. Alaoui in, sir?

<b>Soldier:</b>	Is Dr. Alaoui in, sir?	wash kaayen Tbeeb l'alawi aseedi?
<b>Local:</b>	No.	laa

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<sup>254</sup> MDtravelhealth.com. “Morocco.” c.2007.  
<http://www.mdtravelhealth.com/destinations/africa/morocco.html>

In Morocco, it is common for hospitals and clinics to require visitors to pay cash for medical services, either at the time they are rendered or before admission. This is particularly true in rural areas, where visitors may be expected to pay for basic medical supplies, such as bandages.<sup>255</sup> In remote areas, clinics may utilize non-traditional forms of treatment, such as herbal medicine.<sup>256</sup>

### Rural Schools

Educational quality and availability is often quite limited in rural areas, and attendance, retention, and matriculation rates for rural students remain very low, particularly for girls. For example, only three out of every four rural girls enroll in primary school,<sup>257</sup> and for rural women aged 15 years or older, the literacy rate has been estimated as low as 10%.<sup>258</sup> (Other estimates place that number between 17% and 25%).<sup>259</sup> Rural poverty, lack of infrastructure (for both educational facilities and resources, as well as modes and routes of transportation), and traditional attitudes concerning education and gender roles are significant factors contributing to the general deficiency of the school system in rural Morocco. As a result, nearly 70% of rural residents are illiterate.<sup>260</sup>



© Andrew Larsen  
A small classroom

#### Exchange 46: Is there a school nearby?

<b>Soldier:</b>	Is there a school nearby?	wash kayen shee medRaaSa KReeba min hna?
<b>Local:</b>	Yes.	aah

In recent years, efforts have been made by the Moroccan government and a variety of organizations to increase student enrollment in rural schools and raise the literacy rate for

<sup>255</sup> *Morocco*, 8th ed. "Health [pp. 490–495]." 2007. Footscray, Victoria: Lonely Planet Publications.

<sup>256</sup> *Morocco Handbook 2002*. McGuinness, Justin. "Essentials: Health [p. 73]." 2002. Bath, England: Footprint Handbooks Ltd.

<sup>257</sup> The World Bank. "Country Brief: Morocco." April 2008.

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/MENAEXT/MOROCCOEXTN/0,,menuPK:294549~pagePK:141132~piPK:141107~theSitePK:294540,00.html>

<sup>258</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Morocco." October 2007. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5431.htm>

<sup>259</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. "Country Profile: Morocco." May 2006. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Morocco.pdf>

<sup>260</sup> International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. "Working for Women, Worldwide: The U.S. Commitment: Bringing Literacy to Moroccan Women." No date. <http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/women/moroccan.htm>

Moroccan women.<sup>261</sup> These efforts have included the establishment of various rural literacy centers, which have drawn high percentages of female participants.<sup>262</sup> Another significant development in the Moroccan educational system, particularly as it applies to Berber peoples, was the official incorporation of Berber languages into the public school curriculum in 2003. Although the government previously limited most instruction to Arabic or French, its recognition of Berber languages has been generally well received, with the implication that Berber youth may be more enthusiastic and successful in school when allowed to use their native tongue.<sup>263</sup>

Outside the public school system, traditional Qur'anic schools are often the only source of education for many rural Moroccan youth.<sup>264</sup> These schools generally teach Arabic and Islamic verse, thought, and law; typical school subjects may be entirely absent from the curriculum. Traditionally, these schools have been more readily accepted by remote, rural communities, who may view state-run operations with suspicion.<sup>265</sup>

## Gender Roles

As in urban areas, the gender roles of Morocco's rural residents are predominately based on patriarchal, Islamic tradition, with men generally possessing greater freedom and status than women. Thus, the general social segregation of men and women, including the association of women with the private, domestic sphere, is common in rural areas. In Berber communities, women traditionally perform the cooking, housework, and some agricultural and animal husbandry activities, such as harvesting crops and milking animals. Men generally work in agriculture or with livestock, and they are responsible for animal grazing and, rarely, hunting. In the past, market activities were reserved for men, but it is now common for women to be in charge of certain market duties as well. Children of either gender may be involved in goat herding, and girls often look after their younger siblings. Boys typically receive more freedom to attend school, whereas girls are frequently required to stay home and work.<sup>266</sup>



© Karl O'Brien  
Shepherd girl

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<sup>261</sup> U.S. Agency for International Development. Women in Development. "Country Snapshot: Morocco and Education." 9 June 2008. [http://www.usaid.gov/our\\_work/cross-cutting\\_programs/wid/snapshot/me/morocco/morocco\\_ed.html](http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/wid/snapshot/me/morocco/morocco_ed.html)

<sup>262</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. "Country Profile: Morocco." May 2006. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Morocco.pdf>

<sup>263</sup> BBC News, International Version. Dixon, Martha. "Moroccans Learn to Write Berber." 19 December 2005. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4502772.stm>

<sup>264</sup> Near East Foundation. Dev, Jina K. "Morocco Country Report: Annual Report 2007." 2007. <http://www.neareast.org/main/annualreport/2007/mr.html>

<sup>265</sup> Journey Beyond Travel. Morris, Carole, "Moroccan Koranic Schools." 5 June 2007. [http://www.journeybeyondtravel.com/travel/morocco-features/index\\_files/koranic-schools.html](http://www.journeybeyondtravel.com/travel/morocco-features/index_files/koranic-schools.html)

<sup>266</sup> Everyculture.com. "Berbers of Morocco: Economy." Hart, David M. 2007. <http://www.everyculture.com/Africa-Middle-East/Berbers-of-Morocco-Economy.html>

In cases where the male head of household migrates for employment purposes (which is quite common), women take on further responsibilities and authority in the home. In any case, women are heavily involved in the daily operations of the household, performing both domestic and outside labor duties.

### Who is in Charge?

Prior to the mid twentieth century, the social organization of the Berbers was based primarily on patrilineage and the extended family (generally ranging from four to six generations). Traditionally, the broader social schema was composed of the following units (listed in order of increasing size): patrilineage, local community, tribal section, and general tribe. However, since Moroccan independence and the onset of widespread labor emigration, Berber societies have increasingly emphasized the importance of the core (nuclear) family. Today, rural communes are the basic unit of local sociopolitical organization, and elected officials from the commune form a council that meets on a weekly basis (usually at the market).<sup>267</sup> Rural villages also generally have a *muqaddam*, or village leader, who is elected by the village council.<sup>268</sup>



### Exchange 47: Can you take me to your leader?

<b>Soldier:</b>	Can you take me to your leader?	wash yemken lek tideeni l'and lkaayed dyaalkum?
<b>Local:</b>	Yes.	aah

### Exchange 48: Respected leader, we need your help.

<b>Soldier:</b>	Respected leader, we need your help / advice / opinion.	see lkaayed, laah yKhaleek, bgheenak t'aawina / bgheenak tenSeHnaa / bgheena nistaashRok
<b>Local:</b>	Yes.	waaKha

<sup>267</sup> Everyculture.com. "Berbers of Morocco: Sociopolitical Organization." Hart, David M. 2007. <http://www.everyculture.com/Africa-Middle-East/Berbers-of-Morocco-Sociopolitical-Organization.html>

<sup>268</sup> *Ethnology*, Vol. 41, No. 2. Venema, Bernhard and A. Mguild. "The Vitality of Local Political Institutions in the Middle Atlas, Morocco [pp. 103–117]." 22 March 2002. Pittsburgh: The University of Pittsburgh.

Thus, regionalism has become more of a significant social and administrative determinant than tribal ethnicity. However, the latter distinction is still maintained culturally, particularly through language. Due to poverty and lack of resources, rural communes and their councils often lack the financial means to actualize local policy.<sup>269</sup> Various levels of state-run government exist beyond and above the rural commune and its local leaders.<sup>270</sup>

### Checkpoints

In an effort to grapple with regional security issues as well as the country’s high level of traffic accidents, the police have implemented a relatively extensive system of checkpoints and roadblocks throughout the country. Checkpoints are commonly located near the entrances of cities and towns, and roadblocks may be found in certain areas in and around Western Sahara, near the Algerian border (which has long been closed), and in cannabis-producing regions, such as in the Rif Mountains.<sup>271</sup>



**Exchange 49:** Where is the nearest checkpoint?

<b>Soldier:</b>	Where is the nearest checkpoint?	feen kaayen kRab baRaaj min hna?
<b>Local:</b>	It’s two kilometers	b'eed bjooj keeloomitRaat

Many times, the basic purpose of such stoppages is to authenticate driving licenses and inspect the vehicle condition. Visitors should be prepared to present their passport, international driver’s license, and perhaps the vehicle’s documentation.<sup>272</sup>

<sup>269</sup> *Tribe and Society in Rural Morocco*. Hart, David M. “Tribalism: The Backbone of the Moroccan Nation [pp. 21–22].” 2000. London: Frank Cass Publishers.

<sup>270</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Morocco: Local Government.” 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/392604/Morocco#>

<sup>271</sup> *Morocco*, 8th ed. “Transport: Getting Around [pp. 486–487].” 2007. Footscray, Victoria: Lonely Planet Publications.

<sup>272</sup> Overseas Security Advisory Council, Bureau of Diplomatic Security, U.S. Department of State. “Morocco 2008 Crime and Safety Report.” 4 March 2008.

<https://www.osac.gov/Reports/report.cfm?contentID=79985&print>

**Exchange 50:** Is this all the ID you have?

<b>Soldier:</b>	Is this all the ID you have?	wash haadi heeya biTakat ta'Reef lwaHeeda lee 'andek?
<b>Local:</b>	Yes.	aah

**Exchange 51:** Show us the car registration.

<b>Soldier:</b>	Show us the car registration.	waReena lewaRak dyaal Tonobeel
<b>Local:</b>	OK.	waaKha

In general, heightened security measures have been put in place throughout the country because of the terrorist bombings and kidnappings that have occurred in Morocco and in neighboring countries in recent years. As a result, there are increased numbers of official security personnel, either in uniform or undercover, in public areas.<sup>273</sup>

### Landmines

The UN estimates that roughly 100,000 sq. km (38,610 sq. mi) of Western Sahara contains landmines and explosive remnants of war, such as unexploded ordinance.<sup>274</sup> In particular, the area surrounding the massive central berm, or fortified wall, running through Western Sahara is populated with large numbers of landmines. There are multiple berms in Western Sahara. The primary berm, which is 2,400 km (1,491 mi) long, divides Western Sahara into two sections; the western and northern portion is controlled by Morocco, and the eastern and southern portion is controlled by the Polisario Front.<sup>275</sup> This heavily mined stretch of land is thought to be the world's longest continuous minefield.<sup>276</sup>



© David Holt  
Minefield viewed from a bus window

<sup>273</sup> Magharebia. Benmehdi, Hassan. "Morocco increases security, passes legislation arming private security guards." 15 January 2008.

[http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/print/en\\_GB/features/awi/features/2008/01/15/feature-02](http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/print/en_GB/features/awi/features/2008/01/15/feature-02)

<sup>274</sup> United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara. "Mines and UXOs." 2007.

<http://www.minurso.unlb.org/mines.html>

<sup>275</sup> Landmine Monitor. "LM Report 2007: Morocco." 6 November 2007.

<http://www.icbl.org/lm/2007/morocco.html>

<sup>276</sup> Landmine Action. "Survey and Clearance: Western Sahara." 2008.

<http://www.landmineaction.org/activities/activity.asp?PLID=1021>

Landmine-related fatalities and injuries involving both soldiers and civilians are relatively frequent throughout Western Sahara.<sup>277</sup>

**Exchange 51:** Is this area mined?

<b>Soldier:</b>	Is this area mined?	wash haad lminTaKa feehal alghaam?
<b>Local:</b>	Yes.	aah

Morocco is not a signatory member of the Mine Ban Treaty of 1997 (also known as the Ottawa Convention), a major international pact that bans the production, stockpiling, and use of landmines.<sup>278</sup> The Moroccan state has advocated the treaty, but it cites the territorial conflict over Western Sahara as the major impediment preventing its official cooperation with the agreement. In recent years, however, Morocco has made increased efforts to remove mines in certain areas.<sup>279</sup>

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<sup>277</sup> Landmine Monitor. "LM Report 2007: Morocco." 6 November 2007.

<http://www.icbl.org/lm/2007/morocco.html>

<sup>278</sup> The United Nations Office at Geneva. "Disarmament: Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production, and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Landmines and their Destruction." No date. [http://www.unog.ch/80256EE600585943/\(httpPages\)/CA826818C8330D2BC1257180004B1B2E?OpenDocument](http://www.unog.ch/80256EE600585943/(httpPages)/CA826818C8330D2BC1257180004B1B2E?OpenDocument)

<sup>279</sup> Landmine Monitor. "LM Report 2007: Morocco." 6 November 2007.

<http://www.icbl.org/lm/2007/morocco.html>

# Family Life

## Introduction

Life in Morocco revolves around the family, which acts as the primary social and financial support network for the average Moroccan. Accordingly, familial welfare, relations, and propagation are of utmost importance; work and external relationships generally remain secondary. Integral to the function and situation of families within the broader social context is a strong notion of family honor, which each individual member is expected to uphold. In Morocco, a person’s actions and demeanor are almost always perceived as a reflection of his or her family, and thus family members are inextricably linked in reputation and shared responsibility. This concept of honor, and the corresponding familial bond, is valued over everything else, and its significance is far-reaching in terms of social values and customs.<sup>280</sup>



© luciano\_46 / Flickr.com  
A mother and her son

Due to its overarching importance, the family is often a topic of conversation and interest in everyday social settings.

### Exchange 52: How is your family?

<b>Soldier:</b>	How is your family?	shuKhbaaR maaleyn daaR?
<b>Local:</b>	They are doing fine, thank you.	biKheyR lHamdu laah

Visitors should not interpret questions about their family as intrusive, but as a typical and appropriate topic used by Moroccans to acquaint themselves with newcomers and demonstrate their interest in a person.<sup>281</sup>

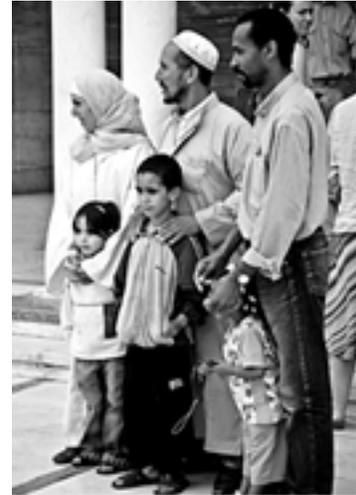
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<sup>280</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. “The Moroccan Within: Hshuma [pp. 58–59].” 2003. London: Kuperard.

<sup>281</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. “The Moroccan Within: Family Values [p. 54].” 2003. London: Kuperard.

## Typical Household

In Morocco, households traditionally consist of nuclear and extended families. Family composition is determined through male lineage, with male descendents remaining within the family household and female descendents joining the households of their husbands. In this system, unmarried children and married sons and their wives and children live with the two elder parents.<sup>282</sup> Thus, it is common for three generations to live in the same household, which, for the youngest children, may consist of a combination of grandparents, parents, aunts and uncles, cousins, and siblings.



© Daniel Gasienica

**Exchange 53:** Does your family live here?

<b>Soldier:</b>	Does your family live here?	wash l'aa-eela dyaalek tatskun hna?
<b>Local:</b>	Yes.	aah

Of course, the structure of households varies according to region and class; affluent families in modernized, urban areas may maintain smaller, independent households, whereas in poorer, rural areas it may be more common for larger extended families to live together in one home.

**Exchange 54:** How many people live here?

<b>Soldier:</b>	How many people live in this house?	shHaal min waHid ti'eesh fhaad daar?
<b>Local:</b>	Ten.	'ashRa

<sup>282</sup> *Morocco*. Delgado, Kevin. "Life in the Crossroads [p. 64]." 2006. Detroit: Thomson Gale.

Relatives, including the elderly, are generally incorporated into the household when necessary; retirement homes are not a common feature of Islamic societies.<sup>283</sup>

**Exchange 55:** Is this your entire family?

<b>Soldier:</b>	Is this your entire family?	wash l'aa-eela dyaal kulha heya haadi?
<b>Local:</b>	Yes.	aah

**Family Roles and Responsibilities**

The roles and responsibilities of family members vary according to the family’s socioeconomic background, lifestyle, and location. The status and individual duties of members of upper-class, urban families will no doubt be different than those of the rural poor. As in many societies, gender and age are the primary determinants in outlining the family hierarchy. Males generally have more authority and freedom than females, and the young are expected to respect and defer to their elders (this applies throughout the entire familial chain).<sup>284</sup>



© Daniel Gasienica  
Father and son

Traditionally, men are the authoritative figure of households (certainly in public and according to public perception) and they are generally in charge of the family’s financial decisions. However, women may also provide input in financial matters, particularly in poor, rural areas, where women tend to play a greater role in the daily subsistence of the family. In any case, women are generally more involved in the decision-making process concerning a variety of family matters than what is acknowledged publicly.<sup>285</sup>

In general, it is more common for men to work in the public sphere than women, and this can largely be attributed to the patriarchal customs of Islamic culture and the corresponding gender gap in education. In 2006, the labor force participation rate of men (80.3 %) was much higher than that of women (26.8 %).<sup>286</sup> This does not mean that

<sup>283</sup> MSN Encarta. “Customs of Morocco.” c.2007.

[http://encarta.msn.com/sidebar\\_631522232/customs\\_of\\_morocco.html](http://encarta.msn.com/sidebar_631522232/customs_of_morocco.html)

<sup>284</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. “The Moroccan Within: Family Values [p. 56].” 2003. London: Kuperard.

<sup>285</sup> International Fund for Agricultural Development. “Morocco: Women’s Role in Household Decisions.” 19 January 2007. [http://www.ifad.org/gender/learning/role/decision/m\\_1\\_3.htm](http://www.ifad.org/gender/learning/role/decision/m_1_3.htm)

<sup>286</sup> UN Data. “Country Profile: Morocco.” 22 May 2008. <http://data.un.org/CountryProfile.aspx?crName=Morocco>

women work less than men; much of the work performed by women occurs in the home and is, thus, unaccounted for in official economic data. However, female professionals and workers are not uncommon in urban areas.<sup>287</sup>

While men are generally tasked with earning an income, adult married women are in charge of managing the daily operation and taking care of the household. This includes assigning duties to subordinate family members. Women typically maintain autonomy in these matters, except, perhaps, when men are personally affected by such decisions.<sup>288</sup> In rural areas, women are also involved in certain non-domestic activities related to the family’s agricultural, livestock, and commercial practices.<sup>289</sup>



© Rebecca Weeks  
Sister and brother

Elderly family members often maintain an active role in the home, and they are well-respected and cared for when in need. Girls learn domestic duties at a relatively young age and are responsible for the care of younger siblings.

**Exchange 56:** Do you have any brothers?

<b>Soldier:</b>	Do you have any brothers?	wash 'andek shee Khoot?
<b>Local:</b>	Yes.	aah

Boys have greater freedom than girls; depending on the family’s finances, they may or may not be required to do domestic chores, although they may be asked to run errands.<sup>290</sup> Boys are also allowed to go to school, whereas for girls this may not always be an option. Of course, in poor families, both boys and girls work a variety of tasks, such as goat herding, in order to contribute to the family’s livelihood.<sup>291</sup>

<sup>287</sup> Everyculture.com. Johnston, Amanda Jill. “Culture of the Kingdom of Morocco: Gender Roles and Statuses.” c.2007. <http://www.everyculture.com/Ma-Ni/The-United-Kingdom-of-Morocco.html>

<sup>288</sup> International Fund for Agricultural Development. “Morocco: Women’s Role in Household Decisions.” 19 January 2007. [http://www.ifad.org/gender/learning/role/decision/m\\_1\\_3.htm](http://www.ifad.org/gender/learning/role/decision/m_1_3.htm)

<sup>289</sup> Everyculture.com. Hart, David M. “Berbers of Morocco: Economy.” 2007. <http://www.everyculture.com/Africa-Middle-East/Berbers-of-Morocco-Economy.html>

<sup>290</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. “The Moroccan Within: Family Values [pp. 56–57].” 2003. London: Kuperard.

<sup>291</sup> Everyculture.com. Hart, David M. “Berbers of Morocco: Economy.” 2007. <http://www.everyculture.com/Africa-Middle-East/Berbers-of-Morocco-Economy.html>

## Male-Female Interactions Within the Home

Within the home, the segregation of genders is often less rigid than in social settings, and interactions are generally more casual and relaxed. (This is, of course, when visitors are not present.)<sup>292</sup> Traditionally, women are deferential and subordinate to men, although elderly women will certainly expect respect from young boys. Mother and son relationships are thought to be especially important,<sup>293</sup> and in general, boys are more highly valued than girls.<sup>294</sup> Girls are also traditionally guarded by male family members in order to preserve their chastity and honor, and thus, their value as potential wives.



© dberm / Flickr.com  
Inside a family's home

In recent years, a new Moroccan *Moudawana*, or family law, has substantially increased the rights of women within the home. For example, the law stipulates that both the husband and the wife are to share responsibility and control over the household, whereas in the past, the husband was considered the sole authority in the home. With equal rights in the relationship, women are no longer required to universally obey their husbands. Furthermore, whereas younger women were previously placed under the guardianship of male family members, women 18 years of age and older are now considered legally independent.<sup>295</sup> The implementation of these rights may vary according to the home; traditional households in particular may not strictly and readily abide by them.

## Marriage, Divorce, and Birth

### *Marriage*

In Morocco, marriage is an essential stage in life and a highly significant form of social bonding between families. It is, in large part, a socioeconomic contract, as opposed to a romantic union based solely in love. Traditionally, Moroccan (and Islamic) marriages are arranged and negotiated between the two participating families, although today this is less common as it concerns young, modern couples living in Morocco's urban areas. In the latter case, such couples may meet in social settings before seeking the approval of their families and subsequently negotiating the marriage. However, in rural areas, the Western practice of dating, involving unmonitored and unarranged courtship, is not at all common, particularly as each



© Alexandre Baron  
Moroccan couple

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<sup>292</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. "The Moroccan Within: Public and Private [p. 69]." 2003. London: Kuperard.

<sup>293</sup> MSN Encarta. "Customs of Morocco." c.2007.

[http://encarta.msn.com/sidebar\\_631522232/customs\\_of\\_morocco.html](http://encarta.msn.com/sidebar_631522232/customs_of_morocco.html)

<sup>294</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. "The Moroccan Within: Family Values [pp. 56–57]." 2003. London: Kuperard.

<sup>295</sup> Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco. "Promotion of Women's Rights." 2008.

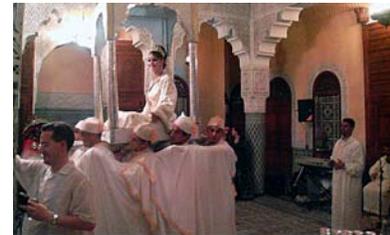
[http://dcusa.themoroccanembassy.com/moroccan\\_embassy\\_human\\_rights\\_promotion.asp](http://dcusa.themoroccanembassy.com/moroccan_embassy_human_rights_promotion.asp)

gender remains generally segregated in public. In fact, it is still common for rural brides and grooms to meet for the first time on their wedding day.<sup>296</sup> In any case, the fundamental purposes of the marriage are to create a functional, honorable household and to propagate the family.

**Exchange 57:** Is this your wife?

<b>Soldier:</b>	Is this your wife?	wash haadi mRaatak?
<b>Local:</b>	Yes.	aah

Traditionally, the two families negotiate the marriage with an exchange of funds. The groom pays a bride-price to the bride’s family, and in return he receives the bride and a dowry; the latter will be used to support the couple’s household. In Islamic societies, the bride is expected to be a virgin. As Islam is traditionally passed on through the male line, Muslim men are allowed to marry non-Muslim women (although this is uncommon), but Muslim women are not allowed to marry non-Muslim men.<sup>297</sup> After marriage, the woman traditionally moves into the home of the husband, who often lives with his parents and extended family. In urban areas, newlywed couples may establish their own independent household.



© Markku Artola  
Moroccan wedding ceremony

Marriage is considered an absolute norm. At a certain age, unmarried men, and particularly, women, may suffer social stigmatization for their lack of a spouse and children. For an unmarried woman, it may be assumed that she is no longer a virgin; thus, in traditional households, she is no longer suitable for marriage.<sup>298</sup>

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<sup>296</sup> Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco. “Cultural Affairs: Lifestyle.” 2008.

[http://dcusa.themoroccanembassy.com/moroccan\\_embassy\\_cultural.aspx](http://dcusa.themoroccanembassy.com/moroccan_embassy_cultural.aspx)

<sup>297</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. “The Moroccan Within: Islam [p. 48].” 2003. London: Kuperard.

<sup>298</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. “The Moroccan Within: Family Values [p. 57].” 2003. London: Kuperard.

**Exchange 58:** Are you married?

<b>Soldier:</b>	Are you married?	wash nta mjoowij?
<b>Local:</b>	Local : No.	laa

Morocco's most recent family code has brought about a number of policy changes concerning marriage. Foremost, it requires that all males and females be at least 18 years of age in order to marry. (Prior to 2003, the minimum age for females was 15.) However, parents can receive authorization from a judge in order for their child to be married while under the age of the 18.<sup>299</sup> The code also stipulates that property acquired during the marriage is to be shared between the husband and wife. Finally, polygamy is now considerably more difficult to practice legally. Women now have the right to officially stipulate that their potential husbands maintain a single marriage, and if there is no official stipulation, they have a right to a divorce if their husband wishes to marry a second wife. Under the family code, before taking on a second wife, a man must be authorized to do so by a judge, who must be assured that the wives will not suffer unequal treatment.<sup>300</sup>

*Divorce*

The 2003 *Moudawana* has also made drastic changes to Moroccan divorce law. Women now have the right to initiate divorce. In the past, this prerogative was limited to men. (Valid reasons for divorce include, but are not limited to, physical abuse, failure to provide financial support, and unwarranted absence.) Men were previously allowed to divorce their wives without their consent, and they could do so simply through the unofficial process of verbal repudiation. Today, both parties must give their consent and the process must be administrated through the court system. The revised family code also ensures that the court system oversees the payment of alimony; under certain circumstances, it offers increased custodial rights to women, who previously lost custody of their children if they remarried or moved away. Children aged 15 years and older may choose their guardian in the event their parents divorce.<sup>301</sup>



© Greg Robbins  
Mother and child

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<sup>299</sup> Magharebia. Touahri, Sarah. "More Marriage, Less Divorce Attributed to New Moroccan Family Code." 15 February 2008.

[http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en\\_GB/features/awi/features/2008/02/15/feature-01](http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/features/2008/02/15/feature-01)

<sup>300</sup> Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco. "Promotion of Women's Rights." 2008.

[http://dcusa.themoroccanembassy.com/moroccan\\_embassy\\_human\\_rights\\_promotion.aspx](http://dcusa.themoroccanembassy.com/moroccan_embassy_human_rights_promotion.aspx)

<sup>301</sup> Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco. "Promotion of Women's Rights." 2008.

[http://dcusa.themoroccanembassy.com/moroccan\\_embassy\\_human\\_rights\\_promotion.aspx](http://dcusa.themoroccanembassy.com/moroccan_embassy_human_rights_promotion.aspx)

The family code also ensures that, throughout the divorce process, there is increased opportunity for reconciliation. (In recent years, Morocco has experienced increased numbers of marriages and slightly lower divorce rates, which have been accredited to the new family laws.)<sup>302</sup>

Socially, there is often a sense of shame in experiencing a divorce. This is particularly true for women, who may have difficulty remarrying; if they are uneducated and without a career, they may also lack financial support.<sup>303</sup>

### *Birth*

In rural Morocco, it is still quite common (and often necessary) for babies to be born at home, although in urban areas, many mothers give birth in hospitals or clinics.<sup>304</sup> Overall, general access to maternal healthcare, either during the prenatal period or the birthing process itself, is far from universal. In recent years, 61% of births occurred in institutional facilities and 63% were attended by a person trained in childbirth or healthcare, such as a doctor, nurse, or midwife.<sup>305</sup> The percentage of pregnant women who were treated with prenatal care was slightly higher, at 68%.<sup>306</sup> In 2006, the country's fertility rate, the average number of children produced per woman, was 2.4.<sup>307</sup>



© poline / Flickr.com  
Children playing in Chefchaouen

### **Exchange 59:** Are these your children?

<b>Soldier:</b>	Are these your children?	wash haadoo wlaadek?
<b>Local:</b>	Yes.	aah

<sup>302</sup> Magharebia. Touahri, Sarah. "More Marriage, Less Divorce Attributed to New Moroccan Family Code." 15 February 2008.

[http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en\\_GB/features/awi/features/2008/02/15/feature-01](http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/features/2008/02/15/feature-01)

<sup>303</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. "The Moroccan Within: Family Values [p. 58]." 2003. London: Kuperard.

<sup>304</sup> Everyculture.com. Johnston, Amanda Jill. "Culture of the Kingdom of Morocco: Gender Roles and Statuses." c.2007. <http://www.everyculture.com/Ma-Ni/The-United-Kingdom-of-Morocco.html>

<sup>305</sup> UNICEF. "At a Glance: Morocco: Statistics." 2008. [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/morocco\\_statistics.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/morocco_statistics.html)

<sup>306</sup> UNICEF. "At a Glance: Morocco: Statistics." 2008. [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/morocco\\_statistics.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/morocco_statistics.html)

<sup>307</sup> UNICEF. "At a Glance: Morocco: Statistics." 2008. [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/morocco\\_statistics.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/morocco_statistics.html)

As in most cultures, the birth of a child in Morocco is a momentous occasion marked with celebration and ritual. Festivities vary by region, but gatherings of family and friends, who offer gifts to the mother and child, are common.<sup>308</sup> As Islamic culture is patriarchal and Moroccan families are patrilineal, boys are especially celebrated.

### Naming Conventions

Moroccan family names pass down from the father, and personal names (what Americans know as first names) are chosen by the parents. When written, the family name appears first, followed by the personal name. Women do not take the family name of the man they marry; they always remain in the family of their father. The children, who take their father's name, belong to the family of the husband. It is relatively common to address Moroccans, particularly men, by either their family or personal name, especially as their personal name may be quite common.



© Alexandre Baron  
Father with kids in Sale

*Lalla* is the most common title for a woman. In an official sense, it may refer to royalty, similar to the term Lady. It may be used either as a prefix to the family or personal name, or, like the English term, ma'am, as a generic term of address for an elderly woman or a woman with whom one is unacquainted. Similar to sir or mister, *Sidi* is the general title for men. Like *Lalla*, it may be used out of respect or to address a man with whom one is unacquainted. The term *Moulay*, is often used to refer to deceased sultans and saints, and some living holy men. (However, the phrase *Moulay Mohammad* is strictly reserved for the Prophet Mohammad.) The titles of *Hajja* and *Hajj* are used for women and men, respectively, who have undertaken the pilgrimage to Mecca.<sup>309</sup>

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<sup>308</sup> Arabic News. "Birth Celebrations in Morocco: A Rich Blend of Traditional Heritage." 16 May 2003. <http://www.arabicnews.com/ansub/Daily/Day/030516/2003051619.html>

<sup>309</sup> *Culture Shock: Morocco*. Hargraves, Orin. "The Moroccan You Know: Names, Titles, and Identities [pp. 76–78]." 2003. London: Kuperard.