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The Year of Morocco:

An Introduction

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Marking the 35th anniversary of Kennesaw State University’s award-winning Annual Country Study Program, the 2018-19 academic year focused on Morocco and consisted of 22 distinct educational events, with over 1,700 people in attendance. It also featured an interdisciplinary team-taught Year of Morocco (YoM) course that included a study abroad experience to Morocco (March 28-April 7, 2019), an academic conference on “Gender, Identity, and Youth Empowerment in Morocco” (March 15-16, 2019), and this dedicated special issue of the *Journal of Global Initiatives*. Most events were organized through six different College Spotlights titled: The Taste of Morocco; Experiencing Moroccan Visual Arts; Multiple Literacies in Morocco; Conflict Management, Peacebuilding, and Development Challenges in Morocco, Moroccan Cultural Festival; and Moroccan Solar Tree. There were also five YoM Learning Modules developed for use in 12 different classes across three colleges, and directly involving 375 students. As in the past, a semester-long senior-level graphic design class developed the Year of Morocco logo.

The breadth and depth of these programs provided a strong basis for understanding Morocco in its historical and contemporary contexts. Participating faculty integrated these programs within existing coursework thus allowing for further investigation and analysis. For example, one faculty member worked with KSU students to offer curricular modules focused on Morocco at local area schools. A graduate art student assisted in creating an interactive Arts of Morocco timeline game which was delivered at Renaissance Elementary in Fulton County. In addition, undergraduate art students learned traditional Moroccan designs and *zellij* clay-making processes which they taught to 30 middle school students at Pine Mountain Middle School in Cobb County.

The Morocco Solar Tree project involved students enrolled (Fall 2018) in the courses Solar Power (EE4405), and Electrical and Mechanical Engineering Senior Project (EE4800, ME4201, ME4202) courses. These students formed multidisciplinary teams and competed to design a Year of Morocco Solar Tree. Students from the winning team built and installed the tree on the Marietta campus (Spring 2019). The solar tree is a permanent mechanical structure mimicking a real tree with small solar modules attached to its branches to harvest solar energy. Electrical energy produced by the tree now illuminates a KSU logo at night, showcasing KSU’s commitment to sustainability and highlighting Morocco’s major efforts at developing alternative energy sources. Indeed, Morocco’s Noor-Ouarzazate Solar Power Complex will be the world’s largest solar plant (580MW) when completed in 2020.
Students in these classes and many others developed a nuanced appreciation of Morocco and its diversity, strengths, and challenges. This appreciation was demonstrated in course projects, research papers, conference presentations, and Model Arab League and Model African Union simulations. For example, two presentations on literacy in Morocco were delivered by KSU students at the Year of Morocco Conference in March 2019, with one team also presenting their research at the National Conference on Undergraduate Research conference in April 2019. As a faculty advisor commented, “these students’ future career goals and trajectories of scholarship have been significantly impacted through their involvement.” The Multiple Literacies project provided the Bagwell College of Education Literacy Center with new acquisitions of children’s books and scholarly books related to Morocco, Islam, and literacy in the MENA region. Through the Morocco Library Project lecture, KSU faculty, staff, and students along with the Fulton County Public Library at Ocee were inspired to donate more than 12 boxes of English language children’s books to the Children’s Medina Library in Fez, Morocco. In addition to the donated books from the Ocee Library, advanced French students wrote and illustrated their own children’s books about Moroccan culture which also were donated to the Children’s Medina Library in Fez.

As one of the major culminating events, the YoM Conference brought in a leading expert on women and youth in Morocco who delivered what one attendee described as an “incredibly powerful” keynote address. There were just over 90 KSU faculty and students at the conference as well as 30 off-campus guests. The conference was also attended by seven visiting scholars from Hassan II University Casablanca (H2UC), and featured an ecstatically well-received concert by Innov Gnawa, a Grammy-nominated music group originally from Morocco and currently based in New York City. The concert was co-sponsored with the Center for African and African Diaspora Studies and was attended by over 230 people, many from the local Moroccan-American community. Gnawan ritual trance music has its roots with enslaved soldiers brought to Morocco from sub-Saharan West Africa, their trauma of displacement, worship of ancestral spirits, tradition of praise songs, and sufī mysticism (el Hamel, 2008, pp. 247-256). A highly regarded five-star Atlanta restaurant, Imperial Fez, catered the conference and helped promote the concert. Formal and informal evaluation feedback from the YoM conference showed that the conference was a resounding success, especially for junior scholars from outside KSU for the networking that occurred. Collaborative partners that helped promote the conference and attract the participation of scholars by posting announcements in their newsletters, websites, and listservs included the Friends of Morocco, Fulbright, and the American Institute for Maghreb Studies.

As in previous years, the YoM resulted in new courses and curriculum, research projects, education abroad programs, grant writing, publications, and global partnerships. These initiatives directly contributed to student learning, academic scholarship, and community engagement. As one of the faculty members in the YoM learning community reflected, “to grasp the full complexity of the Year of Morocco one must appreciate that in actuality it takes at least three years to propose, develop, manage, and execute, to say nothing of the follow up, the consequences, and the efforts put toward sustainability and future growth.” The “Year of” program
is a strategic investment made by the university and its faculty that provides long-lasting and diverse learning experience for our students. It involves broad outreach and engaged collaborations with important community partners. In this regard, the program benefitted through its established international partnership with H2UC.

KSU’s partnership with H2UC began in January 2005, when KSU President Dr. Betty Siegel (1981-2006) visited Morocco to meet H2UC President Dr. Rahma Bourquia. The partnership was codified with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding by both institutions in 2007. More than 100 KSU faculty, students, administrators, and staff have visited Morocco and about 30 faculty, students, and administrators from Hassan II have been hosted by KSU. Past KSU collaborative projects in Morocco have included the following:

- The creation of a master’s degree program in American studies at Hassan II University and involvement in the establishment of the Morocco American Studies Association.
- A compilation of oral histories, production of a documentary video, and creation of the Ben M’sik Community Museum (BMCM) in Casablanca.
- A 2011 grant awarded by the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs and the American Association of Museums to fund the creation of an online exhibit titled “Identities: Understanding Islam in a Cross Cultural Context” (www.marb.kennesaw.edu/identities). This intercultural exchange and collaborative partnership continues, currently developing additional exhibits on “Morocco in World War II” and “Morocco, the United States and the Slave Trade.”
- Participation in Morocco’s Annual International University Theater Festival in Casablanca (FITUC) including an award-winning production of an adaptation of Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick* performed by KSU’s students both at KSU and H2UC.
- Work with low-income Artisan groups in Morocco who are designing new art products that preserve indigenous arts and crafts traditions. In Marrakesh, this project included work with Anarouz, a social enterprise cooperative engaging more than 2,000 local artisans and their families and communities.
- Funding of a KSU Strategic Internationalization Grant to interview and conduct research on women leaders in Morocco.

These projects provided a strong basis for the designation of the 2018-2019 academic year as the “Year of Morocco” at KSU and led to H2UC being named the 2019 KSU Distinguished International Community Partner.

In addition to the seven H2UC faculty who visited KSU for the YoM conference, 23 KSU students and seven faculty visited the Ben M’sik campus in Casablanca as part of the team-taught spring-break study abroad experience. The study abroad program visited four cities: Marrakech, Casablanca, Fez, and Tangier. This itinerary helped participants experience Morocco’s cultural diversity. Highlights of the experience included planting trees with the High Atlas
Foundation, visiting the Amal Women’s cooperative, donating books to the Medina Children’s Library, visiting the Tangier American Legation Museum (TALIM), and interacting with Hassan II faculty and students. While abroad, our students and faculty were interviewed by and appeared on Morocco National Television.

These projects all helped to advance campus internationalization and a more nuanced and scholarly understanding of Morocco—especially as it relates to important issues that impact both Morocco and the United States. As Clifford Geertz, who has written extensively about Morocco, argues in *The Interpretation of Cultures* understanding cultures necessarily involves the craft of interpretation, a constantly changing, relational process. The following introductory essay on Morocco was developed to help undergraduate students appreciate Morocco’s rich cultural heritage and complex place in a global society.

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**Introductory Essay on Morocco**

Amazigh, Arab, Sub-Saharan African, and European identities are among the many influences on Moroccan identity. A geographic and cultural crossroads, it is a country continuously negotiating its place in today’s changing world. It is both a constitutional monarchy and an Islamic state that protects the rights of other religious communities to exist and to practice. Its history is one of extensive diplomatic relations with the enduring influence of the monarchy being one of its most salient characteristics.

A sustained history of intercultural and commercial interactions in what is now Morocco has taken place among diverse civilizations such as Amazigh, Phoenician, Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Arab, Andalusian, Egyptian, and Ottoman. Morocco has also had long-lasting and substantial trade with sub-Saharan African empires such as the Ghana, Mali, Songhai, and Sosso. From 1912 to 1956, it was a colony of France and Spain, with Tangier as an International Zone administered by several European powers.

The Amazigh (meaning freeborn in Tamazight) or Berbers (connoting uncivilized non-speakers of Greek/Latin), are the indigenous early inhabitants of Morocco. At present, approximately 40-45% of Moroccans speak one of three Amazigh languages: Tamazight, Tashlheit, or Tarifit (Maddy-Weitzman, 2011, p. 1). According to Phillip Naylor (2009), the Amazigh have “evinced an ability to adapt to and to absorb other cultures. Their transcultural receptivity has distinguished their culture” (p. 4). On the other hand, they have been a major force of resistance against foreign invaders, and the Romans, Arabs, French, and Spanish all lauded the Amazigh’s desire for freedom and independence (Maddy-Weitzman, 2011, pp. 177-178). Retaining their culture and language amidst relentless pressure to change has been a constant struggle.

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1 I will use Amazigh rather than Berber throughout this essay except when quoting other works.
The Spread of Arabic and Islam across the Maghreb

Islamic states have generally controlled Moroccan territory since the Arab invasions of the 7th century. Arab influence has been significant, with Arabic and Islam permeating North African societies. Arabic became the language of learning, diplomacy, and trade throughout the region, which came to be known as al-Maghrib or “west.” The relationship between trade and Islam was especially close (Brett, 1999, p. 62). Notably, as Dunn (1986) observed, “one of the strengths of an expanding Islam was its successful adaptability to local patterns of culture” (p. xix). Its focus on ensuring successful business relationships contributed to its emphasis on cultural adaptability.

It was the Umayyad caliphate (661-750), which was based in Damascus, that initially conquered North Africa and the Iberian Peninsula (al-Andalus). The Umayyads did not force Jews and Christians (dhimmi, or “peoples of the book”) to convert but required them to pay a tax (jizya) that Muslims did not have to pay. In the Maghreb, as Bennison (2014) highlights, the Islamic conquest itself was a long drawn-out process that involved ongoing interactions between two tribal peoples, the Arab invaders and the indigenous Maghribis, the latter of whom came to be lumped together in Arabic writing as the Berbers although they did not see themselves as a single ethnos. Indigenous tribes fought the newcomers, allied with them and rebelled against them. Such high levels of conflict slowed the pace of conquest but also generated intimacy through recruitment and the capture of Berber prisoners, male and female, who entered Arab Muslim ranks in a way that sedentary peasant populations, many of whom were Christian and thus inscribed in the new order as tax-paying ahl al-dhimmi, did not. (p. 139)

Across the Maghreb, the Amazigh’s desire to preserve their autonomy and select their own leaders contributed to ever-changing alliances, for example, between Sunni Umayyads, Khariji, Ibad, Sufi, Sunni Abbasids, Fatimids, and Umayyad Andalusian Islamic groups. As Bennison (2016) notes, the Khariji message “that the caliph should be selected for his qualities as a Muslim and a leader rather than because of ancestry was appealing to Berber troops who resented their inferior status to the Arabs” (p. 12). It was the Umayyad rulers’ excessive demands for extraordinary taxes and slave tributes from Amazigh Muslim converts that was the primary reason for the “Great Berber Revolt” or “Kharijite Revolt” of 739-743, the first successful secession from the Umayyad caliphate. Having broken away, the more moderate forms of Sufri Kharijites and Ibad Kharijites in their Amazigh interior strongholds of the Atlas Mountains did not continue to pursue warfare against Muslims of other sects and maintained a tolerant attitude toward both Christian and Jewish communities (Bennison, 2016, p. 232).

Writes Brett (1999), “The overthrow of the Umayyads by the Abbasids in 750, however, was not a victory for the doctrine of Kharijism . . . but a triumph of the call for a member of Muhammad’s family” (p. 59). After the overthrow of the Umayyads by the Abbasids (750-1258), who were based in Baghdad, North Africa
became a decentralized network of largely independent Islamic states. The Abbasids emphasized their religious authority but did not exercise as much direct political authority over these states. One such state, the Idrisids (789-920) of Morocco promoted widespread commercial and cultural exchange, especially with Umayyad al-Andalus, a region which had long been an important trading center. The establishment of the Moroccan monarchy (one of the oldest in the world) dates to Idriss, a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad (Sater, 2010, p. 3).

Idriss I and Abd al-Rahman I had fled Abbasid rule to Morocco and al-Andalus respectively, claiming sharifian status (descent from the Prophet) and establishing new states. Abd al-Rahman I was the son of an Amazigh mother as was Idris’s son Idriss II. Being the proclaimed royal offspring of Arab rulers and conquered peoples aided in establishing local legitimacy. As Menocal (2002) points out, “Umayyad princes descended from the caliphs of Arabia and Syria were also visibly their mothers’ sons” (p. 67). The practice of intermarriage with conquered peoples was also evidenced during the reign of Ali ibn Yusuf, an Amazigh ruler of Almoravid Andalusia descent whose mother was a Christian (Rosser-Owen, 2014, p. 169). Generally, racial and ethnic distinctions were less emphasized under Arab patrilineal ideas as compared to those of Europe (Bennison, 2016, p. 180). Genealogy and kinship have been critical concerns for establishing the authority of Muslim leaders in the Arab world. As Rosser-Owen (2014) notes, “Berber regimes . . . deliberately constructed Arab genealogies to legitimize their rule in the Islamic West” (p. 155).

After being overthrown, the Umayyads fled their capital of Damascus to settle in al-Andalus. They brought with them invaluable knowledge and attracted a retinue of experts that helped the region connect with a wide array of trading centers and led to a period of great economic prosperity where Muslims, Christians, and Jews lived together in relative peace known in Spanish as the convivencia.

Describing how the Great Mosque of Cordoba was modeled after the Great Mosque of Damascus, Menocal (2002) considers its orientation south instead of east to face Mecca, as though it was located in Damascus, as “a conscious continuation of what had been destroyed in Syria,” and a symbolic expression of “the Umayyad’s care not to destroy a multiethnic and religiously pluralistic state” (pp. 58-59). Ironically, there had first been a Roman temple on the Cordoba site; the temple was converted into a church by invading Visigoths in 572, and the church was demolished and completely rebuilt into the Great Mosque in 784, and then converted into a Catholic church in 1236 leading up to the Reconquista.

The spiritual ideas of Islam were appealing to North Africans but were also used for political purposes as throughout the empire. North African Amazigh groups proved themselves adept at making scholarly arguments of jurisprudence based on Islamic law to assert their rights, a practice that resulted in a rich Islamic competition of ideas as well as a struggle for supremacy.

The Amazigh Imperial Age: The Almoravids and Almohads

Throughout the 10th century, Umayyad Andalusian ideas and practices diffused across the Maghreb, especially in Morocco (Naylor, 2009, p. 76). The success of Umayyad Andalusia gave rise to the Amazigh Almoravids (1053-1147)
and Almohads (1147-1269), “two of the most powerful states in the history of Western civilization’s Middle Ages” (Naylor, 2009, p. 7). These two Amazigh Muslim empires united North Africa with al-Andalus, Tamazight becoming the language of the palace in the Almohad period and being used for explaining the Qur’an and hadiths (Maddy-Weitzman, 2011, p. 168). As Bennison (2016) stresses, while frequently “lumped together under the rubric ‘Berber,’ the Almoravids and Almohads drew their support from opposed and linguistically distinct groups of tribes in North Africa”; and at the same time, both dynasties represented “the maturing of an Islamic society in the Maghrib” (pp. 4-5).

The Almoravids and Almohads left an impressive array of architecture across their empires. This included creating symbols of power through monumental architecture and relocating, rebuilding, and repurposing as a means for legitimizing their authority (Rosser-Owen, 2014, p. 152). Contrary to historiography that has tended to vilify Amazigh African tribes for destroying a more “civilized” Europe or simply mimicking their art and architecture, the extensive and intensive cultural exchange between al-Andalus and North Africa went in both directions (Carillo, 2014, p. 68).

The Almoravids, a confederation of Sanhaja Amazigh tribes, first consolidated their power and wealth by controlling the Saharan trade and in military excursions against the Soninke kingdom of Ghana (Naylor, 2009, pp. 89-90). The Almoravid rulers recognized the Abbasids as the spiritual leaders of Islam, but they looked to Umayyad civilization and the Maliki school of jurisprudence for political and cultural exemplars. They made Marrakech their capital in 1070, developed the water supply, and created a unique layout where the ruler’s residence was not placed adjacent to the great Mosque as had been the Umayyad tradition in Damascus and Cordoba, an indication that their empire represented something new and perhaps more egalitarian. The still-standing Qubbat al-Ba‘diyyin is an exceptional example of the ingenious and original style of the Almoravid period (Bennison, 2016, p. 294).

In asserting their power and expanding their rule, the rival Almoravids and Almohads each claimed to be more religiously faithful than the other, but each also went to great effort to deliberately evoke symbols of their predecessor’s accomplishments (Bennison, 2014, p. 143). For example, the Almoravids remodeled the mihrāb of the Qarawiyyyn mosque in Fez after the one in Cordoba, and both the Almoravids and the Almohads transported numerous columns over 800 kilometers from the famous Madinat al-Zahra ruins in Cordoba to Marrakesh (Rosser-Owen, 2014, p. 157, 174). The Almohads were extremely ambitious builders, expanding cities, installing new hydraulic water systems, irrigating orchard plantations, establishing hospitals, and building imperial fortresses, gateways, and mosques with distinctively large square minarets. They destroyed and rebuilt many Almoravid mosques claiming that they were incorrectly oriented towards Mecca, further asserting their righteousness and power (Rosser-Owen, 2014, p. 182). Still, many of their designs also evoked Cordoba’s influences. For Amira Bennison (2016), the Almohad period demonstrated a true artistic cultural synthesis, as Andalusi and Maghrebi craftsmen worked together on projects on both sides of the straits, setting a tone for the art and architecture of both regions for
centuries to come (pp. 320, 328). The imperial cities of the Almoravid and Almohad dynasties were impressive, and many of the Almohad structures are still in use today.

Both empires used religion as a mechanism for extending their control and asserting the ruler’s religious authority, a process that elicited a strong grassroots response in the form of Sufism. Sufi practice emphasized ritual retreat, fasting, and meditation to commune with God. It was “Maliki juridical cliques whose receipt of state patronage and exercise of religious power . . . often seemed self-serving rather than righteous” that led to the increased appeal of Sufi mysticism and asceticism, including the Sufi notion of the divinely inspired guide or charismatic holy man (Bennison, 2016, pp. 238-39). The Almohads were fervent critics of the Almoravids and are noteworthy for their ideological zealotry for instance in recognizing their messianic leader Ibn Tumart as the mahdī, or the one sent to restore true Islam. Bennison (2014) writes, “The Almohads viewed their message not simply as revived and restored Islam, but as pure Abrahamic monotheism (tawhid) which all Muslims, Christians and Jews should accept” (p. 148). Thus, in violation of the dhimma, they prohibited Jews and Christians from practicing their religion (Gottreich & Schroeter, 2011, p. 13). Ironically, the rising power and attraction of Sufi charismatic leaders may have contributed to Ibn Tumart’s assertion of infallibility as mahdī, as well as to the Almohad emphasis on a source-based approach to law rather than the commentary-based Maliki approach (Bennison,
This Islamic competition of ideas encompassed different notions of religious practice, legal schools, and leadership styles.

One of the leading philosophical protagonists within these debates was Ibn Rushd al-Hafid (1126-1198), also known as Averroes, who served as a judge and court physician. The “quintessential Almohad intellectual,” he wrote extensively about many subjects including philosophy, theology, medicine, astronomy, physics, law, and linguistics. His philosophical works include commentaries on Aristotle that were very influential among Jewish and Christian scholars including his contemporary, Moses ben Maimon, also known as Musa ibn Maymum or Maimonides (1138-1204), who lived and worked in Morocco before migrating to Egypt (Bennison, 2016, pp. 261-62).

The Amazigh were not simple rebel nomads, but intellectual rulers of a vast empire. As Bennison (2014) describes the change, “by the end of the Almohad rule, the idea of normative urban-based Islamic rule had become generalized throughout the Maghreb and the sectarian tribal landscape of preceding centuries had changed dramatically and permanently” (p. 154). Conflict increased as urban-based centers attempted to expand their power and control. Unfortunately, increased military conflict between Castilian Christians and the Almoravid and Almohad Islamic empires in Iberia/Andalusia saw the rise of a crusade-based and jihad-based political paradigm (Bennison, 2016, p. 19). More and more, “politicized Islam and Christianity narrowed perspectives and produced ‘misreceptions’ and misperceptions of others” (Naylor, 2009, p. 106). Thus, religious intolerance increasingly became a weapon for empire building among competing Christian and Islamic states.

After the Almohads were defeated and pushed out of al-Andalus, they faced rising competition in the Maghreb, and were eventually defeated and succeeded by the Marinids (1269-1465). Unlike their predecessors, the Marinids were not a sharifian dynasty that claimed ancestry from the Prophet (Naylor, 2009, p. 98). They were, however, actively involved in the gold trade with Sub-Saharan Africa, and provided support to the last remaining Islamic kingdom in Andalusia, the Nasrids of Granada. Granada did not surrender until 1492, ending nearly 800 years of Islamic rule in al-Andalus. The Marinids re-established the Maliki school in their capital of Fez and were known for building large madrasas, including one that featured an extraordinary mechanical water-clock (Blair & Bloom, 1994, p. 122). Thus, carrying on Fez’s tradition as a seat of learning—the oldest existing and continually operating educational institution in the world being the University of al-Qarawiyin, founded in 859 AD by a Muslim woman, Fatima al-Fihri.

A Cosmopolitan Era

It was during the period of Marinid rule that two very influential North African luminaries left their mark: Ibn Battuta and Ibn Khaldun. Born into a family of legal scholars in Tangier during the Marinid dynasty, Ibn Battuta (1304-1368) is the greatest traveler of premodern times. Far exceeding Marco Polo, he traveled approximately 73,000 miles and visited more than 40 different lands, including Spain, China, Kazakhstan, Tanzania, and Mali. His narrative story of this grand
tour, or **rihla**, reports on a wide variety of political events, human geography, and social and economic conditions in great detail (Dunn, 1986, pp. 1-5).

Ibn Battuta studied in the Maliki school of jurisprudence and was also influenced and interested in Sufism, which recognizes the possibility of achieving a direct personal communion with God. Sufi saints, known as **marabouts** in the Maghreb, attracted many followers. Today, their tombs dot the rural and urban landscape of the Maghreb and are major pilgrimage sites (Zillinger, 2014, p. 41). In many ways, his traveling career represented a grand world tour of the lodges and tombs of famous Sufi mystics and saints (Dunn, 1986, pp. 22-24).

The scholarly class of the Islamic world was an extraordinarily mobile group, connecting Islamic centers of study and worship with its distant outposts (Dunn, 1986, p. 24). Ibn Battuta, who spent eight years in India serving as a judge in the Sultanate of Delhi, exemplified this practice. According to Ross Dunn (1986),

> [m]embers of this cultural elite who were living and traveling in the further regions consistently maintained close ties with the great cities of the central Islamic lands, thereby creating not merely a scattering of literate and skilled Muslims across the hemisphere, but an integrated, growing, self-replenishing network of cultural communication . . . Islam tended to encourage a higher degree of social mobility and freer movement of individuals from one city and region to another than was the case in the other civilizations of that time. Islamic culture put great stress on egalitarian behavior in social relations based on the ideal of a community of believers (the **umma**) having a common allegiance to one God and his Sacred Law. To be sure, a great gulf separated the rich and powerful from the poor and weak, as was the case in all civilized societies until very recent times. But Islam mightily resisted the institutionalizing of ascribed statuses, ethnic exclusivities, or purely territorial loyalties. (p. 10)

Originally from the area of Tunisia, Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), author of the Kitab al-‘Ibar, a history of Amazigh North Africa under Islamic rule, put forth in the **Muqaddima** (introduction) an influential theory of political world history. According to Bennison (2016), Ibn Khaldun argued in this work that “government preserved humankind from savagery,” but civilization “fostered an effete, decadent and morally questionable lifestyle in comparison with the simple, virtuous and hardy ways of the tribes” (pp. 6-7). In some ways, this theory asserted the necessity for ruling groups to be replenished by incorporating new or previously disenfranchised groups into society. Ibn Khaldun, considering the specific case of the Almoravids and Almohads, believed that tribal differences were surmounted “by a charismatic leader with a particular religious message,” as was certainly the case of Ibn Tumart (Bennison, 2016, p. 7).

**European Imperialism and Colonial Rule**

As Islamic rule ended in the Iberian Peninsula, Portugal and Spain embarked on an Age of Discovery that entailed establishing control of the high seas. Sanctioned by Papal Bulls (decrees) such as the **Dum diversas** of 1452, the Catholic
Church encouraged an aggressive approach that would “vanquish and subdue all Saracens (Muslims) and pagans and other enemies of Christ, to reduce their persons to perpetual slavery, and to convert to Christianity” (Ghazanfar, 2016, p. 43). As Lambert (2005) explains, “When Spain expelled Muslims from Iberia, that Christian power confiscated their property, denied the Barbary powers favorable trading terms, raided their territory, and enslaved their people” (p. 109). The 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas fixed a boundary between the competing Portuguese and Spanish empires that, in part, allowed Spain and Portugal to fight together against the Ottomans and Arabs in the Mediterranean and Arabian Seas in order to monopolize the Atlantic and Indian Ocean trade routes to Asia and Africa. Figuring prominently in this effort, the Strait of Gibraltar was always a disorderly and highly contested space (Pennell, 2001, p. 55).

The Portuguese exploited the intense rivalry between Morocco’s closely related Zanata Marinids and Zanata Wattasids (1465-1554) to seize control of Ceuta, the entrance to the Mediterranean, in 1415. In 1437, an expedition commanded by Prince Henry of Portugal was surrounded by Moroccan forces at Tangier and allowed to return to their ships only upon the promise to surrender Ceuta. Prince Henry’s younger brother Dom Ferdinand was held hostage and died in prison in Fez, since the promise to surrender Ceuta was never fulfilled (Boxer, 1975, p. 26). The Portuguese later took al-Qasr al-Saghir, Tangier, and Arzila but were expelled from Agadir in 1541 by Morocco’s Sa’adi (1549-1654) sharifian dynasty. The Sa’adi forced the Portuguese to abandon the cities of Safi and Azenmour, thereby reopening the Atlantic coasts to Moroccan commerce (Naylor, 2009, p. 124). The Wattasids, allied with the Ottomans, briefly occupied Fez, but were also defeated by the Sa’adi. Ottoman incursions in Morocco led the Sa’adi to pursue a strategic alliance with Spain. At the same time, the Sa’adi extended their control over the Saharan trade routes. They also continued the emphasis of incorporating water features within their urban architecture, adding many public fountains (Blair & Bloom, 1994a, p. 260).

The Battle of the Three Kings (1578) resulted in the death of the childless King Sebastian of Portugal, his ally the deposed Moroccan sultan, al-Mutawakkil, and the Sa’adi Sultan Abd al-Malik. The Sa’adi victory resulted in Abd al-Malik’s brother Ahmad al-Mansur becoming the next ruler of Morocco. The rule of Sultan al-Mansur “protected Morocco from the predations and ambitions of Spain and the Ottoman Empire” (Naylor, 2009, p. 26). He created the makhzan, a term connoting the central organization of government administration. Contrary to the colonial and post-colonial discourse of decline often used to characterize non-Western responses to the onslaught of European imperialism, Moroccan responses demonstrated a resiliency distinguished by cautious strategic thinking and selective appropriation of new ideas and technologies, with the Sultans often taking the lead in initiating modernizing reforms (Miller, 2013, p. 29). At the same time, European alliances grew in the face of such ambitions. For example, in 1662, the cities of Tangier and Mumbai became dowry gifts from Katherine of Braganza in her marriage to Charles II providing a critical link between the Portuguese and British empires.

The Sa’adi and Alawi (1654-present) sharifian dynasties implemented numerous reforms and generally managed to protect Morocco from incursions by
the Ottomans, Portuguese, and Spanish. One of the most famous Alawi Sultans, Mawlay Isma‘il, whose mother was from sub-Saharan Africa, raised a large professional army known as the “Black Guard” with an elite cavalry unit, constructed a corsair fleet to assert Moroccan power in the Atlantic and Mediterranean, moved the capital to Meknes, and made an offer of marriage to Louis XIV’s daughter (Bennison, 2002, pp. 27-28; Blair & Bloom, 1994a, p. 260). During his reign, the Alawi pushed back Portuguese and Spanish positions on the African continent (El Jadida, Sebta, Melilla, Peñón de Alhucemas) (Sater, 2010, p. 4).

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<td>Saadi</td>
<td>1549-1659</td>
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<td>Dila'i interlude</td>
<td>1659-1663</td>
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<td>Alawi</td>
<td>1666-present</td>
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The death of Sultan Isma‘il was followed by prolonged civil war (his son was deposed five times during his 30-year reign) which led to other endemic problems that greatly weakened the state and resulted in the navy being disbanded. Isma‘il’s grandson, Muhammed III (reigned 1757-1790), however, was a great reformer who sent numerous emissaries to learn from the Ottoman court in Istanbul. Believing that peaceful commerce with Europe was wiser than continuous warfare, he implemented new duties on overseas trade and rebuilt the port of Essaouira on the Atlantic coast to promote trade (Miller, 2013, pp. 8-10).

Muhammed III was the first head of state to recognize the United States as an independent nation. Morocco was also the first nation in the world to recognize the new U.S. Constitution of 1787 and to address George Washington as the first elected president. It can therefore be said that Morocco has the oldest, unbroken, perpetual treaty of friendship and peace with the United States (Tise, 2005). This relationship was brought about, in part, due to the activities of the Barbary corsairs (Lambert, 2005, pp. 50-59).
In the Mediterranean, Barbary corsairs, the majority of whom were European exiles from the Iberian Peninsula, operated primarily out of Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli as regencies of the Ottoman Empire. Historically, European corsairs were also active throughout the Mediterranean and attacked North African shipping interests. Both groups engaged in seizing cargo and enslaving and ransoming captives. In Morocco, the port of Salé (Rabat) also had active groups of corsairs. In the early 17th century, 70 to 80 European ships were being captured annually (Weiss, 2011, pp. 7-11). As shipping raids increased, European powers began paying tribute to North African rulers, negotiating individual treaties with the Sultan of Morocco and Ottoman regencies, in order to ensure safe passage. Similarly, what came to be known as privateers, not unlike corsairs, became an institutionalized form of piracy licensed by governments to disrupt as well as carry out military and commercial activities. European states recognized the corsairs as privateers and even financed some Barbary corsair expeditions. The American colonies relied heavily on privateers during the War of Independence, with 2,500 mercenary ships deployed against British shipping (Silverstein, 2005, pp. 184-187). Military competition over trade routes at sea was at its height in the period.

Ratified by the U.S. Congress in 1787, the Treaty with Morocco established free trade without tribute between the two nations. It was hoped that this treaty would be a model that the United States could take to the other Barbary powers (Lambert, 2005, p. 59). But this was not to be. Between 1785 and 1796, Algerian corsairs captured thirteen American ships and held more than 100 Americans ransom. The United States eventually agreed to pay $600,000 in ransom for the captives and in tribute, to buy peace. The new nation soon negotiated other treaties, bringing the total cost to $1.25 million or 20% of the U.S. federal government’s annual budget (Lambert, 2005, p. 93). This eventually led to the Tripolitan War (1801-1805), as the United States decided to fight rather than continue paying tribute (Silverstein, 2005, p. 181). Significantly, it also contributed to deeper questioning of slavery in America, for in 1800 there were 750,000 Africans and people of African descent enslaved in America, compared to a few hundred Americans enslaved in North Africa (Lambert, 2005, pp. 120-121).

Muhammed III’s extensive reforms challenged the status and privileges of the elite religious classes, who eventually enlisted the Sultan’s son, Yazid, to lead their opposition. Following Yazid’s short rule, Muhammed III’s second son, Sulayman, continued reversing his father’s policies, attempting to close the doors on trade and interaction with Europe (Miller, 2013, p. 11). A distinguishing characteristic of hereditary monarchies is generational with a distinct and unpredictable rhythm of change. How and which issues each ruler addresses is based on their unique experiences, skills, and interests. They do not always follow their predecessor’s footsteps, but they often learn lessons from their missteps.

Sulayman’s successor, his nephew Abd al-Rahman (reigned 1822-1859), suffered significant military defeats and was forced to recognize that Morocco had fallen far behind Europe in terms of its military capability as well as in industrial technology and manufacturing. Abd al-Rahman’s son, Muhammad IV (reigned 1859 to 1873), who commanded the Moroccan army defeated by the French at the Battle of Isly in August 1844, launched a series of military reforms establishing the
first European-styled regiment, building a munitions factory and setting up a military training school in Fez; however, tribal resistance to foreign intrusions remained the most effective line of defense (Sater, 2010, p. 13). Unfortunately, following raids by Anjera tribesmen on a Spanish garrison at Ceuta, Spain, declared war. The Spanish-Moroccan War (1859-1860) included naval bombardment of Tangier, Asilah, and Tetouan and resulted in widespread devastation. The British, concerned about Spanish occupation, brokered a treaty that imposed a crippling indemnity payment on Morocco and that was paid from custom tariffs collected by Spanish authorities stationed in the ports (Miller, 2013, pp. 24-25).

From the time of the French conquest of Algeria in 1830 until the establishment of the protectorate in 1912, Morocco was constantly under threat by European powers looking to establish a greater colonial presence. The severe and conclusive military defeats to France in Algeria in 1830 and 1844 and to the Spanish in Morocco in 1860 made clear the immense disparity in the military might of the Maghreb and its European neighbors pressuring the Alawi monarchy to accept preferential commercial treaties and eventually colonial rule. The first such treaty was with Britain in 1856, which the Sultan knew was keen to press any advantage in its rivalry with the French. One of the most problematic terms of the treaty provided the extension of legal protection to any foreigner involved in a dispute who could choose to have the case heard in a consular rather than a Moroccan court. The status of protégé, or protected person, grew quickly to include Moroccan citizens employed by foreign enterprises (Miller, 2013, p. 23). Most of the Moroccan protégés were successful merchants and entrepreneurs who operated within legal frameworks, but others operated illegally in exploitive and banned activities. Miller (2013) reports that notably, “while Jews figured disproportionately among the protégés, they were no means the majority. Most Jews who benefitted from the practice were bankers and wealthy merchants, while the mass of Jews—poor artisans, shopkeepers and laborers—were not affected at all” (pp. 43-44).

The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 shortened the distance from Europe to India via the Mediterranean, further heightening tensions and rivalries throughout the region. The British went to war with Egyptian nationalists in 1882 to establish outright control of the canal and surrounding territory (Anderson, 2013, p. 55). The intense competition for world power led to the 1884 Berlin Conference and the “Scramble for Africa” during which the continent was divided into spheres of influence among the European powers. Miller (2013) further elucidates: “when British-French rivalry ceased due to Germany’s increased colonial ambitions under Wilhelm II (1888-1918), Morocco’s independence was far less secure, opening the way for French colonial ambitions in North-West Africa” (p. 15). The Entente Cordiale of 1904 between Britain and France gave Britain a free hand in Egypt, and France the right to “preserve order” and “provide assistance” in Morocco (Miller, 2013, p. 72).

Hassan I (reigned 1873-1894) continued Muhammed IV’s emphasis on military and administrative reforms, further organizing and modernizing a professional corps of ministerial and managerial roles. This included sending students abroad for training and building a cadre of professionals who could deal effectively with Europeans. Most famously, he organized regular annual tours of
the countryside to project his authority, during which he was accompanied by as many as 15,000 soldiers, court officials, traders, and staff. The impressive show of force and commercial benefits of these local diplomatic expeditions were aimed at reducing conflict within the empire (Miller, 2013, pp. 34-37). However, growing inequalities due to expanded contact with Europe and the inflationary pressure of foreign capital exacerbated rising tensions and competition within the empire (Miller, 2013, p. 53). As Miller (2013) highlights, “Morocco was [gradually] transformed into another subaltern state feeding European expansion by offering raw materials, cheap labor, and unprotected markets” (p. 27). Moreover, Europe’s “civilizing mission” sanctioned intervention on behalf of subjugated peoples everywhere and drove increased militancy in Morocco as elsewhere (Miller, 2013, p. 55). Morocco’s annual trade deficit reached 14 million francs annually by 1902, and a French loan of 62.5 million francs in 1904 was a clear sign of the Moroccan state’s financial crisis (Miller, 2013, pp. 61-63).

The Acts of Algeciras of 1906, brought on by European imperial ambitions and brokered unsuccessfully by Theodore Roosevelt, was signed by Sultan Moulay Abd al-Aziz (reigned 1894-1908) (Naylor, 2009, p. 162). It stipulated greater foreign economic presence and administrative authority in Morocco, especially in the port cities, and led to the overthrow of the sultan in 1908. In an unprecedented move, the bay’a (oath of allegiance) issued by the ulama (religious scholars) imposed terms on the new sultan, Moulay Abd al-Hafid, requiring him to abrogate the Algeciras Act, restore Morocco’s territorial integrity, and expel French troops from Casablanca and Ouja (Miller, 2013, p. 77; Naylor, 2009, p. 16). This proved an impossible task and only served to increase French pressure. On March 30, 1912, Abd al-Hafid signed the Treaty of Fez, making Morocco a French protectorate. The Fez Riots took place in the capital two weeks later. The Jewish quarter was leveled before order was restored, when French artillery shelled the centers of resistance in the city and forced insurrectionaries to surrender. In the end, 66 Europeans, 42 Jews, and some 600 Moroccans were killed, and Sultan Abd al-Hafid abdicated his throne (Gershovich, 2000, p. 57). French colonial rule in Morocco would last for the next 44 years.

Generally, French colonial practice in Morocco, especially under Resident-General Hubert Lyautey’s administration, aimed “to work with, not against, native socio-political elites and respect pre-colonial customs and traditions. . . . [Preserving the Sultanate] put the traditional sources of power and its administration at the disposal of the French. This [however] had the potential to seriously delegitimize the monarchy in the eyes of the [burgeoning] nationalist movement” (Sater, 2010, p. 5). The Resident-General signed all royal edicts in the name of the sharifian government (Laskier & Bashan, 2003, p. 473). In reality, there existed two systems: the sultan managing a simplified and stripped down, mainly religious, cultural affairs division; and the French governing a large technocratic state bureaucracy (Miller, 2013, p. 91). As exemplified in the 1930 “Berber Dahir (decree),” the French also pursued a divide-and-rule strategy that aimed at splitting traditional ties between Arab and Amazigh communities (Maddy-Weitzman, 2011, p. 166). In general, colonialism emphasized the physical segregation of ethnic, social, and cultural groups (King, 1976, p. 7). Special schools for Amazigh taught entirely in
French were established, and all legal matters occurring in Amazigh territory were placed under French jurisdiction rather than in *shari’a* courts (Naylor, 2009, pp. 19-20). Relatedly, language policy in schools has been a crucial on-going issue in the formation of national identity ever since this time.

The Spanish also acquired colonial rule over portions of northern Morocco in 1912, and it was here that some of the strongest resistance occurred with the establishment of the independent Rifian Republic in 1921. The Rif region had been a site of resistance for centuries, as highlighted by a 1799 treaty between Morocco and Spain that acknowledged the inability of the sultan to prevent local people from attacking the Spanish and therefore excluded the region from the treaty (Pennell, 2001, p. 58). Fighting lasted until 1926, when French forces entered the conflict. It took more than 150,000 colonial soldiers to defeat the 40,000 Rifian troops. Moreover, “the French unleashed a barrage of modern weaponry perfected during World War I with terrifying effect – aerial bombardment, poison gas and armored tanks and cars” (Miller, 2013, pp. 104-110). Ironically, during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), Francisco Franco used northern Morocco as a staging area and hired nearly 80,000 Moroccan mercenaries (Miller, 2013, p. 137). The Rif has been the site of uprisings and protests ever since. In 1959, Crown Prince Hassan commanded the newly formed Forces Armées Royales to try to crush a Rifian revolt that had begun in 1957.

Large numbers of French settlers began arriving in Morocco following World War I. They worked not only in construction but also in managerial and professional roles. Some became large landowners. They built the new port of Casablanca, a railroad system, major dams, a massive electric grid, and developed mining concessions (Miller, 2013, pp. 111-113). By the 1940s, the population of European settlers in Morocco reached 400,000 (Laskier & Bashan, 2003, p. 474). Ironically, colonial rule, imposed from outside, necessitated increased consultation and power sharing within Morocco. It opened up spaces for previous non-state actors to voice concerns and called for a deep questioning of Moroccan society and values.

**The Jewish Experience in Morocco**

The Jewish community in Morocco is one of the oldest in the world dating as far back as the destruction of the first temple in 586 BCE, or perhaps even the time of Phoenician traders (7th century BCE) or the time of King Solomon (10th Century BCE). By the time of the Roman Empire, they were a well-established community, later known as the *toshavim*, or “original residents.” In addition to these ancient Jewish communities, large numbers of Sephardic Jews, known as *megorashim*, the expelled, arrived in Morocco from the Iberian Peninsula along with Muslim exiles escaping persecution during the 15th century. These two groups did not always get along well together (Kenbib, 2011, p. 27).

These Moroccan Jewish communities spoke Judeo-Arabic and Amazigh languages depending on which region of the country they lived. As dhimmi, they had a protected status that provided them with some rights (freedom of worship, property ownership) and a degree of administrative autonomy. Most lived in segregated walled city quarters with locked gates called *mellahs* and all were required to wear black clothing and a hairstyle different from Muslims. Their main
sources of livelihood were food production and farming (including making wine, forbidden by Islam), spice trading, butchering, tailoring, leatherwork, jewelry makers, blacksmithing, and woodworking. Most were poor or low income. The largest communities lived in Fez, Marrakesh, and Essaouira (Laskier & Bashan, 2003, pp. 476-480). Muslim-Jewish relations varied considerably by place and time depending on local circumstances and exigencies (Kenbib, 2011, p. 26).

The Jewish trading community had extensive ties throughout the Mediterranean and Islamic world extending all the way to India (Bennison, 2016, pp. 203-204). They thrived as partners with Arab traders (Nabhan, 2014, pp. 130-132). Because of these important commercial relations, many were incorporated into the makhzan as key advisors and occasionally sent on diplomatic missions to Europe. In the 19th century, affluent Moroccan Jewish traders became influential royal merchants who leased government monopolies and port customs on key agricultural and manufacturing sectors (Wrytzen, 2015, pp. 180-182). Enmity against Jews increased during the 19th century and throughout the colonial period as they were increasingly seen as a privileged and protected class (Laskier & Bashan, 2003, p. 486).

In 1860, French colonial administrators in Algeria allowed French language and culture schools for Jews operated by the Alliance Israelite Universelle (AIU). As Wyrtzen (2015) relates, “the AIU encouraged the ‘moral progress’ and ‘emancipation’ of Jews living in the Islamic world” (p. 183). The first such school in Morocco opened in 1862 in Tetouan and expanded to most other cities over the next two decades. These schools were open to girls and provided vocational training. In 1863, in part in response to British aristocrat Sir Moses Haim Montefiore’s visit, Sultan Muhammed IV issued a royal dahir (decree) ensuring equal justice under the law for all Jews. In 1870, the entire Jewish population of Algeria was given legal status as citizens of France (Miller, 2013, pp. 45-46). According to Laskier and Bashan (2003), “the Jewish press chronicled the deterioration of Jewish-Muslim relations since the 1860s that was partly the result of the growing French and British interest in Moroccan domestic affairs – and the increasing intervention of European Jews on behalf of Moroccan Jewish communities” (p. 485). This included philanthropic assistance to impoverished Jewish communities in overcrowded mellahs (Kenbib, 2011, p. 27).

Rising nationalism and anti-Semitism in Europe prompted the Zionist movement of the late 1890s. Its idea spread to the colonies in the Middle East and North Africa gaining momentum after the 1917 Balfour Declaration (that promised to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine) and the divisions created by further partitioning of the region following World War I (see Fromkin, 1989). With the rise of Nazi-Germany, more than 300,000 Jews emigrated from Europe to Palestine between 1922 and 1936. During World War II, Mohammed V refused to sign the pro-Nazi Vichy regime’s plans to collect and deport Morocco’s quarter million Jews to the killing factories of Europe (Miller, 2013, p. 142). He is also purported to have responded to a Nazi commander demanding a list of Moroccan Jews that “We have no Jews in Morocco! Only Moroccan citizens” (Raoul Wallenberg Foundation, 2009).
The question of Jewish statehood remained unresolved until after World War II when Israel declared independence in 1948, launching a regional war and the defeat of Arab forces (Cleveland & Bunton, 2009, pp. 239-271). The rise and formation of the Jewish state coincided with the imposition and maintenance of colonial rule throughout the region. The impact for Morocco with its large Jewish community was highly disruptive. By 1948, the Jewish population in Morocco had risen to approximately 275,000 with the largest presence in Casablanca. Wrytzen (2015) reports, “while formally preserving the status of Moroccan Jews as subjects of the sultan, French administrators increasingly took direct control over them” (p. 179).

Amidst the complex circumstances of Zionism and looming Moroccan independence following World War II, a massive emigration ensued and deeply rooted Jewish communities vanished from the country (Kenbib, 2011, pp. 28-29). Laskier and Bashan (2003) estimate that between 1949-1956 90,000 Jews emigrated from Morocco to Israel under a semi-legal apparatus called Cadima, about 18,000 thousand Jews were smuggled out illegally following Moroccan independence between 1956-1961, and about 80,000 left legally between 1961-1964 by chartered planes and ships under Operation Yakhin (pp. 499-502). By 1970, 230,000 Moroccan Jews had settled in Israel (Laskier & Bashan, 2003, p. 502).

André Levy (2015), sums up the developments that led to the migration of Jews from Morocco thusly:

Modern historical processes, whose roots were in Europe, arrived in Morocco and created an irreversible disruption (in the daily life of the community) . . . first and foremost, from the Jews’ point of view, was the changes in the dhimmi status, even though it wasn’t abolished de jure, it ceased to be relevant de facto. This change was accompanied by a demographic process in which initially Jews moved around within Morocco; they left their villages and moved to the larger cities, situated mainly on the coast, with the intention to join the colonial project manifesting itself as inclusive and cosmopolitan. The Muslim majority saw this desire to join the colonial project as a betrayal of Moroccan nationalism . . . [as] Moroccan nationalism began shaping its collective identity as Arab and Muslim. Most of the Jews saw this move as an act of rejection. Zionist activity also contributed to the Jew’s disengagement from Morocco and to an even greater undermining of their sense of belonging, as Zionist activists encouraged Jews to emigrate. Israel’s chronic involvement in bloody conflicts with the Arab world also had its share of the effect on this outcome. (p. 178)

Today, there are under 3,000 Jews living in Morocco, mostly in Casablanca (Eickelman, 2018).

**Independence Movement and the Monarchy**

Following World War II, the call for Moroccan independence (in concert with calls for decolonization around the world) increased significantly. In 1944, the
Istiqlal (independence) Party, led by Allal al-Fasi, called for an independent Morocco under the sultan and that the sultan should negotiate independence on Morocco’s behalf. Sultan Mohammed V gave an important speech in Tangier in 1947 affirming the inalienable rights of the Moroccan people to self-rule and in 1952 wrote a letter to the French president calling for the end of the protectorate that was decisively rejected. Meanwhile, widespread strikes and demonstrations resulted in violence and many deaths. Writes Wyrtzen (2015), “Between 1953-1956, the Resistance [various urban guerrilla organizations] engaged in 4,250 violent attacks in Morocco’s cities, primarily Casablanca, targeting infrastructure” (p. 277). France, desiring to maintain control over Morocco and faced with a national movement inextricably linked to the monarch, orchestrated with the help of the Grand Caid of Marrakech, Thami al-Glaoui, a petition that called for the deposition of the sultan. Demonstrating the effectiveness of the divide and rule strategy, the petition was signed by many other Amazigh leaders, who either feared urban nationalists or like Abd al-Hayy Kettani opposed Alawi rule (Sater, 2010, pp. 21-23). Sultan Mohammed V was deposed and exiled first to Corsica and then to Madagascar in 1953. Exile served to heighten Mohammed V’s standing and strengthen the nationalist cause. France faced with other colonial conflicts in Tunisia and Algeria and increased riots and violence in Morocco, allowed his return to Morocco in 1955. Morocco gained its independence in 1956 and established a constitutional monarchy. The challenges facing the country at independence were significant. For example, 90% of the population was illiterate and only 15% of school-aged children were in school at the time of independence (Miller, 2013, pp. 153-154).

King Mohammed V adeptly managed a complex array of factions vying for influence in Morocco, both internally and externally. With keen attention to specific interests, he translated traditional symbolic legitimacy and his stature as Commander of the Faithful (Amir al-Mu’minin) and defender of Moroccan nationalism into modern political alliances and popular support amidst often competing regional, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural differences. He worked with Amazigh leaders to create a post-independence alliance, suppressed Amazigh insurgents, integrated the Royal Armed Forces, reformed Sufi orders, controlled the most important ministries, and encouraged a multi-party system (Maddy-Weitzman, 2011, p. 166; Naylor, 2009, p. 229). He died unexpectedly in 1961 with his son Hassan II succeeding him.

Hassan II also navigated a complex and contested political landscape, including the rise of political Islam and an increasingly urbanized population. Most immediate, he had to build institutional capacity, and hence engaged in a process of decolonization that involved the nationalization of French-owned agricultural lands, Moroccanization of industry, and Arabization of education (Sater, 2010, pp. 39-40).

Over the course of five constitutions (1962, 1970, 1972, 1992, and 1996), Hassan II gradually succeeded by associating politics with the traditional Islamic idea of shura consultation (Sater, 2010, p. 30). However, his early years were extremely difficult, as he provoked the inconclusive War of the Sands with Algeria (1963-64), dissolved parliament in 1965, instituted a state of emergency that lasted
five years, saw the kidnapping and murder of opposition leader Mehdi Ben Barka in Paris, and survived two assassination attempts on his own life in 1971 and 1972 (Naylor, 2009, p. 229). The first attempt occurred on Hassan II’s 42nd birthday party at his beachside palace and resulted in the death of 100 guests and 125 wounded as well as 150 rebels killed and 900 held in custody. The second attempt involved an attack on a Royal Air Maroc flight by Moroccan fighter jets. The king’s bullet-riddled passenger jet miraculously landed safely. Both attempts were orchestrated by members of the Moroccan military (Miller, 2013, pp. 176-77).

His survival, perceived by some as baraka (divine blessing or fortune), coupled with the politically savvy Green March of 1975, when 350,000 Moroccans armed only with the Koran entered the Western Sahara, secured popular nationalist support for the King (Sater, 2010, pp. 125-126). In the Tripartite Agreement of 1975, Spain gave Morocco and Mauritania administrative control over Western Sahara. In 1976, the indigenous Saharawi people, led by the Polisario Front, declared itself the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic (SADR). Mauritania withdrew from the agreement in 1979. Morocco withdrew from the Organization of African Unity when the OAU recognized the SADR in 1984. The 16-year insurgency ended with a UN-brokered truce in 1991 and the promise of a referendum on independence which has yet to take place (BBC, 2018).

Numerous strikes and bread riots occurred in the 1980s throughout Morocco, in part due to International Monetary Fund and World Bank imposed austerities, removal of subsidies, and debt restructuring. Structural adjustment programs mandated the privatization of government–controlled monopolies that were bought by wealthy Moroccan elites with foreign partners. This neoliberal approach aimed to improve efficiencies, curtail corruption, and reduce mismanagement issues, but it also led to a shrinking of the public sector and increased unemployment (Miller, 2013, pp. 185-186, 208-209).
Politics of Reform:
Human Rights, Amazigh Rights, and Women’s Rights

Human rights, Amazigh rights, and Women’s rights have been at the center of reforms since the 1990s. Organizational campaigns for change began as early as 1984, when Christine Daure, wife of imprisoned dissident Abraham Serfaty, founded the Association for the Defense of Human Rights in Morocco. In 1988, this was followed by the founding of two additional organizations, the Moroccan Organization of Human Rights and the Moroccan Association of Human Rights (Miller, 2013, p. 201). In 1990, Gilles Perrault published an exposé titled Our Friend the King about corruption and human rights abuses in Morocco. These efforts forced a reevaluation by the King that led to significant reforms.

Naylor (2009) states that, “after the ‘leaden years’ of the 1980s, which featured severe repression and infamous detention, King Hassan permitted a deliberate ‘liberalization’ through reforms and amnesties during the 1990s” (p. 233). This included closure of the infamous Tazmamart prison and government creation of the Advisory Council for Human Rights in 1990 and the Ministry of Human Rights in 1994. In May of 1994, seven members of the Telelli (Freedom) Cultural Association were arrested for unfurling banners promoting Amazigh language rights. Their harsh treatment provoked an avalanche of protest. In response, King Hassan II during his 1994 Throne Day speech broadcast on television recognized Amazigh language and culture as an authentic component of Moroccan identity. In 1995, he issued a royal decree calling for the teaching of Tamazight in public schools (Miller, 2013, p. 196). However, it took nine more years before Tamazight was actually taught, in fall 2003, to first grade pupils in 300 schools (Maddy-Weitzman, 2011, p. 171).

The new constitution of 1992 explicitly confirmed adherence to “human rights as they are universally recognized” and led to parliamentary elections the following year that were touted as the freest since independence (Sater, 2010, p. 61). The 1996 constitution created a bicameral parliament with the lower house directly elected, and where, during the following year, an Islamist party was allowed to put forth candidates for the first time. As Miller () stresses, “more important, however, was the unwritten understanding that the King would name a prime minister from the party having an electoral majority” (p. 205).

Following Hassan II’s death in 1999 (he ruled for 38 years), his son, Mohammed VI, ascended to the throne and almost immediately accelerated political reforms with an emphasis on social welfare (Sater, 2010, p. 74). Within months, Mohammed VI fired the notorious Minister of the Interior Driss Basri and made a high-profile symbolic visit to the northern Rif Region where Amazigh protests and rebellions had been regular historical occurrences.

The issuance in 2000 of a Berber Manifesto, the 2001 royal dahir establishing the Royal Institute for Amazigh Culture, and Mohamed Chafik’s appointment as its leader were groundbreaking developments in Moroccan history and demonstrated the King’s commitment to ending Amazigh marginalization (Maddy-Weitzman, 2011, p. 166). These steps were backed up by generous budgetary allocations for the institute.
As the “Berber Manifesto” made evidently clear, there was a long history of neglect and abuse to address. The hard work of educational and cultural change laid ahead. One of the unmet major demands of the Manifesto, was the recognition of Tamazight as an official language in the Moroccan constitution. No doubt, addressing the issue of Amazigh rights was part of a larger movement advocating for human rights and broader participation in public life. In this regard, the government sponsored 2004-2005 Equity and Reconciliation Commission which collected testimonies from people who survived torture while imprisoned during Hassan II’s reign. While those responsible were immune from prosecution, it was an unprecedented acknowledgement of wrong-doing. Said Miller (2013), “Overall, nearly ten thousand victims of the ‘years of lead’ received indemnities totaling more than $200 million” (p. 223). The process also showed that the majority of victims were Amazigh (Maddy-Weitzman, 2011, p. 155). In this effort and others, the Moroccan press also played a vibrant role providing an informative platform for public debate (Miller, 2013, p. 219).

**Women’s Movement and the February 20th Movement**

Women’s lives in Morocco are shaped by numerous factors including social class, geography, ethnicity, religion, and education. For example, women’s experience varies greatly depending on whether they live in cosmopolitan urban centers like Casablanca, Rabat, and Tangiers or whether they live in traditional rural settings. Still, in general, “compared to men, women in Morocco are less represented in decision-making processes and in areas such as education, health, and employment” (Gender Profile Morocco, n.d., p. 3). The 2015 World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Index (2015) ranked Morocco 139 out of 145 countries in overall gender equity, with ranks of 140 and 123 in economic opportunity and educational attainment. The illiteracy rate for women in 2012 was 47.6% and much higher in rural areas (Gender Profile Morocco, n.d., p. 6).

In the face of such changes, however, “the women’s movement not only advanced the cause of women; [but] it also had the electric effect of opening . . . new forms of debate associated with a more inclusive political culture” (Miller, 2013, p. 194). As Salime (2012) underscores, “for two decades the movement had launched a sustained mobilization to challenge women’s secondary status in family law” (p. 103). In 1992, a campaign collecting one million signatures called for reform of the 1957 *mudawwana*, or family law. This led to a 1993 reform of the law that permitted women to sign an employment contract and obtain a passport on their own without male consent (Sater, 2010, p. 68-71). In 2004, the *mudawwana* was renamed the Family Code and additional changes stipulated that women have the right to marry without consent of a male guardian as well as the right to divorce (Gender Profile Morocco, n.d., p. 4). Recognized for its relatively progressive position on women’s rights within the Islamic world, the Family Code reforms have provided women with greater rights; however, awareness and implementation of the reforms have been limited by the lack of training of judges as well as social and religious conservatism, particularly in rural areas of the country (Eisenberg, 2011, p. 693). The law has been an insufficient mechanism when it comes to changing people’s attitudes and behaviors as local customs often conflict with the law. In
addition, ambiguities within the law can be interpreted as reinforcing patriarchal perspectives and gendered division of labor. Most significantly, despite the 2011 constitutional reaffirmation of Morocco’s commitment to human rights as they are universally recognized, the sharia-based Family Code remains above international law (Elliott, 2014, pp. 16-25).

Secular women’s movements in Morocco have tended to focus on working within the system for political and legal changes to expand and improve women’s rights and representation, whereas Islamist movements have tended to focus on social change at the grassroots level although at times opposing more feminist positions (Salime, 2012, pp. 107-109). No doubt, while legal codes that recognize women’s rights are important guideposts, absent widespread social attitudes that support and affirm women’s full participation in public life, systematic discrimination, and pervading attitudes prevent the implementation of greater equality. Therefore, Skalli (2011, p. 340) has emphasized that efforts to promote women’s rights should not be siloed in ways that look only at women or that are sponsored solely by women’s organizations, rather they must engage with an intersectionality of movements and issues. Nonetheless, it was women’s organizations that took the lead disseminating the code in darija (spoken Moroccan Arabic) and Amazigh dialects (Miller, 2013, p. 228). Since the February 20th movement (Morocco’s version of the Arab Spring), Salime (2012) asserts that “feminism has not only penetrated the social imaginary of a new generation of activists, but has also informed their practices” (p. 101). She sees “women and men working together as partners in the struggle for social and economic justice” (Salime, 2012, p. 105). Such joint efforts are especially prevalent in emerging forms of civic engagement through social media-based activism but are also increasingly prevalent in face-to-face interactions.

The February 20th movement represented broad societal concerns that seek greater political representation, economic reform, and government accountability. As Zerhouni (2017) described, “the movement asked for a democratic constitution, the independence of the judiciary and the media as well as the separation of wealth and power” (p. 6). Growing unemployment, poverty, and inequity fueled dissatisfaction. Despite successive parliamentary elections since 1993, there is significant discontent with political parties and elected officials (Sater, 2010, p. 85). Furthermore, these officials were largely regarded as ineffective in a system that invested so much power with the king. Young people were especially active in the movement as they are keen to see substantive change; however, they do not tend to participate in elections at very high percentages. In 2002, the voting age was lowered from 20 to 18 years old. One of the few political parties with an active youth section, the Justice and Development Party (Islamist Party) won a majority of seats in the 2011 parliamentary elections obliging the King to select a prime minister from the party (Zerhouni, 2017, pp. 9-10). The king was also applauded for his quick response to the movement by putting forth a new constitution (approved on July 1, 2011 by 98.5% of voters, with nearly 10 million votes cast, representing close to 75% of the eligible electorate). The new constitution included changes that enhanced legislative powers, increased the judiciary’s independence, and limited the King’s ability to intervene in day-to-day politics (Miller, 2013, p.
Since 2011, within the lower house of the Moroccan parliament, a minimum of 60 seats out of 395 are reserved for women.

**Society and the Economy**

With a population of 35 million people, Morocco is rich with natural resources such as fish, phosphates, and fertile agricultural lands, but it struggles with rural poverty, urban unemployment, and illiteracy (Sater, 2010, p. 87-88). Primarily an agricultural economy, it also benefits from tourism and remittances. It has invested heavily in renewable energy. As entrepreneurship has grown and Morocco works to diversify its economy, there has also been increased attention given to fighting corruption (Sater, 2010, p. 104). Its annual gross domestic product is approximately $110 billion with a 4% growth rate and $8,600 per capita annual income. Unemployment is at 10%, the inflation rate is 1.6%, and 53% of the population is under 30 years of age.

While Morocco has a trade deficit with Europe, it has benefitted by securing European Union (EU) capital and through market integration with Europe (70% of all its exports go to the EU). The EU has also linked foreign aid to human rights and democracy promotion, and Morocco is the primary recipient of EU aid in North Africa (Sater, 2010, p. 133). Mohammed VI’s doctoral thesis focused on the European Economic Commission and the Maghreb.

EU relations are also important in regard to issues of migration. Nearly 3 million Moroccans live in Europe (Miller, 2013, p. 232). Illegal Moroccan immigration results in tens of thousands of annual expulsions. In October 2005, thousands of Sub-Saharan migrants attempted to breach barbed wire fences at Melilla resulting in 13 deaths and hundreds wounded (Naylor, 2009, p. 236). For those interested in learning more about the personal circumstances of these migrants, Laila Lalami’s 2005 novel *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* is insightful and engaging.

King Mohammed VI has been a force for social change in Morocco supporting the efforts to improve and expand human rights, Amazigh rights, and women’s rights. Perhaps most important has been the king’s efforts at alleviating poverty and extending social welfare as was evident in the National Initiative for Human Development which received a $3.3 billion budget in 2007 and inaugurated 7,000 projects (Sater, 2010, p. 83). Still, as the February 20th movement demonstrated, people are concerned about the economic effects of globalization, the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few elites, and the increased securitization of the state in the wake of high-profile terrorist attacks.

**U.S. Relations and the War on Terror**

Morocco’s cooperative and close relationship with the United States dates back to Mohammed III’s acknowledgement of the U.S. Declaration of Independence in 1777 and the 1787 trade agreement. It found continued relevance when Theodore Roosevelt participated in the Algeciras Conference of 1906 (Potter, 1922, pp. 577-583). Its importance was underscored again in the 1943 Casablanca Conference held in the Anfa hotel where Allied commanders met to coordinate the on-going war effort and discuss peace plans, including discussions related to decolonization.
and Morocco’s independence (Miller, 2013, p. 144). Morocco also firmly allied with the United States during the Cold War. In the 1950s and 1960s, the U.S. had several air bases, radar and communications installations, and a naval station in Morocco (Wyrten, 2015, p. 292).

None of these examples are as straightforward as they appear. They all involved complex strategic calculations. More recently, as Miller (2013) has highlighted, “the U.S. steadily supplied arms to Morocco for its [Western] Saharan war, and in return, Morocco became a consistent supporter of U.S.-Middle East policies” (p. 209). Morocco also remained a staunch U.S. ally following invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan. Mohammed VI has cooperated with America’s “war on terror” and often faced criticism at home (Miller, 2013, pp. 224-225). However, high-profile terrorist attacks at or near home have informed this decision. Such attacks include a 1994 attack in Marrakesh that led to the closing of the Algerian border, a 2003 attack in Casablanca in which 45 people were killed (33 victims and 12 suicide bombers), and the lethal Madrid bombings in 2004 that killed 191 people and injured 1,800 followed by the conviction of Moroccan and Tunisian nationals for carrying out the attack. Moroccans have been unequivocal in their rejection of such extremism. This may be best characterized by the Marrakesh Declaration of 2016 that defends the rights and liberties of religious minorities in predominantly Muslim communities and rejects “the use of violence and armed struggle as a means for settling conflict and imposing one’s point of view.”

**This Volume**

Tracing Morocco’s diverse influences, powerful empires, cosmopolitan achievements, colonial resistance, and modern nation building efforts, the above essay provides a basis for further examination and understanding of these topics. Morocco is an active participant in today’s global society, facing challenges that are confronting every country and community, and that demand thoughtful and innovative responses. The essays in this volume provide a more in-depth analysis of Morocco, its history, cultural diversity, and changing contexts.

This issue, then, begins with an article titled “Between the Line and the Circle: Ibn Khaldun’s View of History and Change” by Allen Fromherz that contextualizes the 14th century scholar’s views on historiography in ways that remain relevant today. It is followed by “The Ebbs and Flows of U.S.-Moroccan Relations in the Context of the Anfa Conference” by Karim Bejjit that meticulously reviews the conversations held between President Roosevelt and Sultan Mohamed V during WWII that helped set the stage for Moroccan Independence. The next two articles turn to the world of art. In “Moroccan Artistic Presence at the Centre Pompidou Collections,” Tunisian scholar, Sirine Abdelhedi shares a fascinating analysis on the “decolonization of the gaze” and how best to represent Morocco on the world stage. This piece is complemented by Samir El Azhar’s composition focused on “The Changing Roles of Female Visual Artists in Morocco” with its particular attention on how these artists have overcome prejudices, corrected misconceptions, and transgressed taboos. Next, two very different and powerful articles further question issues of changing identities in Morocco. The first, titled “’Your Opportunity to Hear Your Voice’: Akaliyat Magazine and the Creation of Queer
Community in Morocco" by Benjamin Ale-Ebrahim, looks specifically at an online journal’s attempt to build a greater sense of community as well as emerging coalitions across communities. The second article, “A Study of the Vernacular Literacy Practices of a Newly Literate Moroccan Woman: An Ethnographic Perspective” by Reddad Erguig examines the central role of the family in literacy acquisition. Continuing with the theme of language acquisition, Taoufik Jaafari considers the contentious landscape of language education policy in Morocco and its implications for the future. Delving deeper into educational and cultural policy, Brahim El Guabli describes “Moroccan Society’s Educational and Cultural Losses during The Years of Lead.” While difficult to quantify, an analysis of influential journals such as Lamalif as well as official reports such as those issued by the Equity and Reconciliation Commission shed light on this important topic. Maintaining a focus on national politics in “Moroccan Islamists Debate the Causes of Violent Extremism,” author Jack Kalpakian outlines the theological challenges posed by certain Wahhabi and Salafist views that reject mainstream Moroccan Islam and the implications for the government as it works to combat terrorism. Further examining the inner workings of Moroccan government, Zakaria Fatih, uses the prism of inclusive and extractive institutions to consider the makhzen’s effectiveness in terms of national development. While in “Empowering Rural Participation and Partnerships in Morocco’s Sustainable Development,” Yossef Ben-Meir analyzes the implementation of specific government policies. His assessment is based on a long career of working closely with rural communities. The final article in this volume by Touria Khannous considers Morocco through the influence of film and the transnational, with special attention to the complex role of women in society. Given the breadth and depth of subjects addressed in this volume, readers will no doubt come away with a strong understanding of Moroccan society and its important place in the world today.

References


Between the Circle and the Line:

Ibn Khaldun’s View of History and Change

Allen James Fromherz

Historians from many different eras and contexts have viewed history and historical change as either linear or circular in nature. Giambattista Vico (d. 1744 CE), the Italian philosopher and historian, organized history in a cyclical way as different nations and peoples rise and fall. At the same time, according to Vico (2000), humanity was destined towards equity. Sima Qian of China (d. 86 BCE) viewed the past as a series of circular attempts to restore the Mandate of Heaven and consolidate central power, attempts that were then followed by breakdowns into feudal states (Qian, 1995). For Qian, history seemed to favor evildoers as much as followers of Confucian principles; historians therefore had a moral duty to bring justice to the past. Leopold von Ranke (d. 1886) was the originator of modern, primary source-based historical science in Europe. He promoted a largely linear, narrative view of the past. Change occurred at a granular level. Events and peoples of the past should be described for their own sake, not as a tool for understanding or reifying a larger philosophical, moralistic, or deistic destiny (von Ranke, 2010).

More recently, the French historian Fernand Braudel (d. 1985) combined both linear and the broader cyclical approaches. For Braudel, history occurred on different levels. There was the past of the long term, which tended towards patterns determined by geography, and the short term, which was more linear and event dependent (Braudel, 1996). Today, historians are sharply divided between progressivists and Marxists who see humanity on a line towards some destiny that will embrace a global vision, and relativists and determinists who view the modern and the postmodern system as a particular cultural artefact of the West, doomed to collapse and be replaced, in the optimistic view, by a cosmopolitan vision. For pessimists, however, the replacement of the West will be far more traumatic (Appiah 2019; Fukuyama, 2006, 2018; Pinker, 2019).

The circle and the line have never been farther apart, it would seem, than they are today. Historians attempt, in vain, to tackle the challenges of reconciling rapid

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global change with the puzzling rise of identity-centered politics. It seems as if feelings of loyalty to the “tribe,” which were supposed to have disappeared with the rise of global institutions and mores, have not died, but only increased in an age of rapid global “progress.” This paradox, in fact, is not new. At its heart, it is a result of two ways of looking at human history, the circular and the linear.

Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406 CE), the great North African historian and philosopher, seemed to be a partisan of the circle. Within the Muqaddimah, or his “Introduction” to history, written to describe the “meaning of events,” there seemed to be ample evidence that Ibn Khaldun saw the past in ways that would resonate with Qian, Vico, and some elements of Braudel. Ibn Khaldun engaged in more theory, more interpretation of history than any other known, pre-modern work of history written in Arabic. This has made him a modern hero of Arab nationalism, recognized in school names and street signs from Qatar to Casablanca. Much of Ibn Khaldun’s thought appears, at first, to fit a circular pattern based on a moralistic view of inevitable human failing. Looking more deeply at Ibn Khaldun’s writing, however, the picture becomes much more complex. There appear to be many exceptions to the circular rule. Ibn Khaldun’s understanding of history and change is, in fact, much more complex than a simple circular pattern of humanity doomed to a cycle of rise and fall. Ibn Khaldun also saw a line of history through religious prophecy and the importance of granular, exceptional events that could stand up to the rigors of von Ranke. Rather than seeing the linear and the circular patterns of the past in conflict or as cancelling one another out, Ibn Khaldun described a combined system, a spiral.

**The Circle**

According to Ibn Khaldun’s circular vision of the past, dynasties and states have a maximum life span of about 100 years, or five generations, roughly the same as individual human bodies (Ibn Khaldun, 2002). They start vigorous and young, founded on tribal solidarity, or asabiyya, of the first generation, which originates in the mountains or deserts, far from the enervating, and for Ibn Khaldun’s day, sickening and plague-ridden influences of the city. Each subsequent generation of rulers, however, becomes more and more dependent on urban structures of power, raising taxes, becoming more and more distant and detached from the original vigor of the founders and the people at large who flock to some new dynasty and new, vigorous ruler who can call upon the protection and loyalty of a different, rural tribal group. This seems to trap history into a perpetual cycle of doomed states. As Ibn Khaldun stated, although government is necessary for civilization, it is also the root of its own destruction. He cited multiple examples of dynasties that fit this pattern and that fill the chronicles of his much larger history, the Kitab al-Ibar. Indeed, both North African history and Islamic history, and even world history more generally, up until the 14th century, could fit this pattern, one that can be attributed to many large, agrarian-based economies and societies before the rise of modernity (Hodgson, 1974). Just in the far west of North Africa, known today as Morocco, for instance, there were the Idrisids, who ruled independently for around a century. They were initially supported by the Berber tribes around Fez. They fell to the Fatimids who rose in the region of Algeria with the support of the Kutama Berbers.
The Fatimids even took over Egypt. Next were the Almoravids who emerged among the Lamtuna, the Berber tribes of the Sahara. They created a great empire stretching across trans-Saharan trade routes, sending their valuable currency throughout the Mediterranean basin (Bennison, 2016). After the desert came the mountains as the Masmuda Berbers of the majestic, High Atlas valleys streamed into Marrakech in 1147, purifying the mosque of the Almoravids and declaring the beginning of a new era. Their movement began with the preaching of the Mahdi Ibn Tumart and was made a great success with the military genius of ‘Abd al-Mu’min who was the first ruler in history to conquer and control North Africa, including the Atlas Mountains, which served as a fortress for the empire. Over time, however, the solidarity of the original mountain Berbers, like that of the Saharan Berbers before them, began to diminish. Military defeats such as at Navas de Tolosa or Al-‘Iqab in 1212 and Christian incursions, including the adoption of a Castilian mercenary guard by the Caliph in Marrakech, seemed to confirm the end was near. After about a century of effective rule the Almohads also met their fate. Their empire broke apart, replaced in Morocco by a new, vigorous dynasty, the Marinids, founded by Zanata Berbers who came from the plains around the oasis of Figuig. It was the Marinid ruler Abu ‘Inan who employed Ibn Khaldun. In Granada, the Nasrids, famous for building the Alhambra, arose. Muhammad V, one of the more powerful Nasrid princes, also used the services of Ibn Khaldun. A remnant of the Almohads remained, in much changed form, as the Hafsid dynasty in Tunis; Ibn Khaldun worked there as well. Each of these broken and fragmented sections of the once great and unified Almohad Empire fell into war and rivalry with one another. While they tried to reassert the unity of the past, their divisions provided opportunities for Castilian and, later, Portuguese incursions. Nonetheless, Ibn Khaldun held out the hope for a restoration of the glories of the past, for a retaking of the lands lost in Muslim Spain, al-Andalus, which was the homeland of his ancestors, the Banu Khaldun.

As I argue in *Ibn Khaldun, Life and Times*, he had many reasons for his pessimistic view of the past and for his strange mixture of revulsion and attraction towards urban life (Fromherz, 2016). In the light of the dizzying, damning, and distressing rise and fall of dynasties and the failure of a unified response to Christian incursions, Ibn Khaldun was one of the first Muslim chroniclers to note the rise of the Renaissance and Christian power in the Mediterranean. This pushed Ibn Khaldun against the idea of divine providence driving the events of his times. Rather, it seemed, humanity must be at fault. Human structures and especially large-scale urban life and government, with all of their luxuries and cosmopolitan compromises of identity, while the source of civilization, were also the source of plague. Ibn Khaldun (2002) wrote, “City air causes sickness as it is mixed with putrid vapors and a great quantity of odors” (p. 810). Air is that which gives vivacity to the spirit, and the air of civilization, of cities, ultimately weakens the body and the body politic. Thus, even as humanity builds culture, arts, and cities, it also builds the foundation of its destruction in the form of corruption, luxury, and sickness. The seeds of decline are planted with the founding ambition of every urban civilization. This plague had a profound impact on Ibn Khaldun and helped inspire him to think differently. As he stated, “it is as if the entire creation had changed and the whole world been altered … a world brought into existence anew. Therefore, there is a
need at this time that someone should systematically set down the situation of the world” (Ibn Khaldun, 2015, p. 30). He tells us the plague, which wiped out what was before and cycled humanity back to a new beginning, was the reason why he decided to write the *Mugaddimah*. The cycle of history was not simply a theory for Ibn Khaldun, it was personal.

Ibn Khaldun lost his parents and most of his family to the pestilence. He was left alone at an early age, under the tutelage of his brother. The death of his father, a profound influence on the young Ibn Khaldun, especially due to his spiritual and Sufi tendencies, seemed to haunt him the rest of his life. Ibn Khaldun seemed unable to give up the ghost of his father. He described as an addiction his exercising power and politics in his various roles as minister, judge, and high functionary in Fes, Granada, Tunis and, finally, Cairo. He even met the great conqueror Tamerlane and explained to him the reasons for his success.

Here is the explanation [for your rise]. Power does not exist without tribal solidarity (‘asabiyya). Power is at its greatest extent among mainly tribal peoples, those whose lives are mostly governed by tribal solidarity. Men of science are agreed on the fact that the two nations most tribal on earth are the Turks and the Arabs. You know of the great power of the Arabs after they were united by the religion of their prophet [Muhammad]. As far as the Turks, their [successful] rivalry against the Kings of Persia is sufficient witness to their power...No King on earth, neither Chosroes, nor Caesar, nor Alexander nor Nebuchadnezzar had at their disposal a sense of tribal solidarity such as theirs.... (Ibn Khaldun, 1951, pp. 366-367)

His constant travelling and his diminishing hope of restoring the North Africa and Islamic governance to its former glories weighed on him. At various points in his life, he yearned for the purity of the countryside and the simplicity of the ascetic, Sufi *tariqa*. He retreated to the remote fortress of Ibn Salama in Algeria to write his *Mugaddimah* and attempted to give up on political ambitions and become a simple Sufi, but to no avail. The city, which he blamed for so much of what went wrong in history, always drew him back.

**The Line**

There was both the line and the circle in the writings of Ibn Khaldun. Although his life was full of disappointments and his search for the meaning of history often only led to more paradoxes than answers, Ibn Khaldun was not simply a pessimist. He saw the possibility of a linear past. In particular he cited instances for the intervention of God in human affairs. Prophecy and prophets, in Ibn Khaldun’s view, created a way out of the circular inevitabilities. When a dynasty is founded by a prophet, according to Ibn Khaldun, it can last far longer. Also, there were some states, such as the Hafids, that seemed to last, even without the invigoration of new tribal solidarity or prophecy. In this case, a type of dynastic inertia took over.

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2 A *tariqa* is a Sufi “path” or “order” usually with a Sufi Sheikh in charge who has authority over his pupils.
Generally, however, these dynasties, as was the case with the Hafsids, were limited to constrained geographic boundaries and did not expand outside a defined sphere of influence for long periods of time. Also, while he denounced the purely chronological approach to the past employed by some of his predecessors, the linear progression of one event after another, the traditional narrative history that was the mainstay of history both before and after him, still characterized the vast majority of his writing. The *Muqaddimah*, although a large work, stands out as the exception, the Introduction to a far larger ambition which was to write a Universal History of the world as he knew it. In this respect, Ibn Khaldun could be compared to another universal, world historian who wrote on the other end of the Islamic world in Ilkhanate Iran, Rashid al-Din Hamadani (d. 1318 CE). While he occasionally mentioned his historical theories within the body of his history, Ibn Khaldun, like Rashid al-Din before him, seemed as much caught up in his devotion to the line of events as the “meaning” or lessons he sought behind them.

**Spiral Towards the Future**

Although he noted the importance of the new technology of gunpowder, and he realized the rising power of Italian city-states, and he even sailed on a ship with a representative of Ottoman sultan Bayezid, little did Ibn Khaldun realize a new era was about to dawn soon after his death in 1406 CE. The Ottomans took Constantinople in 1453 and launched a great, diffuse, and cosmopolitan empire that would last for centuries, successfully fusing diverse geographic zones and putting down the revolts of tribal solidarity that would have been the seeds of new dynasties and rulers in the past. In Morocco, the cyclical history of Ibn Khaldun came to an abrupt end with the rise and fall of the Saadians who were eventually replaced by the Alaouite Dynasty. The Alaouites used gunpowder technology and elite military corps of soldiers, often from south of the Sahara, to break the ruler’s previous dependency on tribal solidarity. Founded in 1631, the Alaouites are still reigning today as one the longest living dynastic monarchies on earth. Throughout the rest of North Africa and the Middle East, the Ottomans would create a much larger “gunpowder empire” that lasted far longer than Ibn Khaldun’s cyclical theories would have predicted. This did not stop later Ottoman officials from studying Ibn Khaldun’s work in their search for ways to revitalize the empire (Lewis, 1962).

Was Ibn Khaldun disproven by these dramatic future events? Was he wrong to think that dynasties would inevitably fall based on their lack of solidarity? Perhaps, in some ways, he was. At the same time, and as discussed above, Ibn Khaldun did not view history in a purely linear or circular fashion. He left ample space for change and for the intervention of unknown forces. Also, the gunpowder empires did last, many of them well into the 20th century. They were replaced by global, capitalist cosmopolitanism, which negates the tribal solidarity of the past. However, identity politics has once again emerged onto the scene. Ibn Khaldun is today, in some ways suddenly, as valid and relevant as ever. Perhaps what seemed like a line or a circle was actually a spiral. A spiral allows for change in a way that a circle, as a closed system does not. It is also not a simple line with completely different and unrelated events happening one after the other. As the world becomes more interconnected and as technology advances, inherent risks are emerging, often in the shape of
peoples trying to assert their identities. It is increasingly possible that there will be a singular new event, something that changes the world entirely, that seems to wipe the slate clean, as the Great Plague did for Ibn Khaldun in the 14th century. At that moment, Ibn Khaldun’s understanding of history and the destiny of humanity will be more relevant than it has ever been.

References
U. S. - Moroccan Relations

in the Context of the Anfa Conference

Karim Bejjit

Abstract
This essay seeks to shed new light on the intricate course of U.S.-Moroccan relations following the landing of American troops on the Atlantic coasts of Morocco. The Anfa Conference and Sultan Mohamed V’s dinner meeting with President Roosevelt marked an important stage in the process of Moroccan struggle for independence. Roosevelt’s personal interest in the Moroccan situation may have accentuated the inconsistencies in U.S. foreign policy in the 1940s regarding the French colonial empire and confronted its fundamental idealism with the exigencies of pragmatic politics. The vicissitudes of the war and America’s deep commitment to its French ally as well as its efforts to contain the spreading influence of communism across North Africa compelled the American administration to generally adopt an ambivalent position vis-à-vis Moroccan nationalist movement in its fierce pursuit for independence.

Keywords: U.S.-Moroccan relations, Anfa Conference, FDR, Sultan Mohamed ben Youssef, Istiqlal Party; Tangier Speech

Introduction
Accounts of Moroccan-American relations have often emphasized the fortuitous origins of these relations especially in an era marked by limited diplomatic contact with the burgeoning United States and even by acts of hostility toward it from the so-called Barbary States (Roberts & Roberts, 2008). What is more intriguing is the remarkable longevity of these relations despite the lack of extensive commercial and political interests between the two nations that could justify such enduring mutual esteem. Historical annals bear witness to a steady and peaceful course of relations devoid of any dramatic incidents. For over a century, and aside from the peace treaties of 1786 and 1836, U.S. consuls established in Tangier had little to report to their home authorities. The Perdicaris affair of 1904 was a peculiar diplomatic oddity that gained momentary attention in the American press mostly as a campaign slogan (Davis, 1941, p. 517; Hall, 1971, p. 341).

Nevertheless, the enduring value of U.S.-Moroccan relations today is largely the fruit of this benign legacy. It has become an established custom for government officials of both countries to indulge in a graceful narrative of how Morocco was
the first country to recognize the independence of the nascent republic and how Sultan Mawlay Suleiman made a generous gift of a house in the old medina of Tangier to Consul John Mullowny in 1822. Although it has ceased to have an official character, the house is the seat of the American Legation and is still cherished as the oldest American public property outside the U.S. In recent decades, Morocco has been viewed in U.S. media and in the official circles as a strategic ally in the MENA region and a reliable partner in the global war on terrorism. Besides close security cooperation, Morocco has concluded important military and trade agreements with the United States and benefited from various aid programs.

Within the Moroccan context, historians have expounded on the decisive intervention of the United States during World War II and its consequent impact on the colonial regimes in North Africa. The landing of American troops on the Moroccan coasts as part of Operation Torch in November 1942 inaugurated a new phase in modern Moroccan history and helped raise political consciousness among the Moroccan elite (Baida, 2014). U.S.-Moroccan relations, in particular, gained momentum following the historic meeting between President Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) and Sultan Mohamed Ben Youssef during the Anfa Conference held in January 1943. No record has provided more vivid a description of the long and friendly conversation between the two leaders than the account offered by FDR’s own son, Elliot in his memoir titled As He Saw it (1946). Elliot Roosevelt (1946), who served as the president’s military attaché, noted that the dinner meeting was attended by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill who, seated on the left side of the president, “grew more and more disgruntled” as the conversation between FDR and the sultan dwelt on the “wealth of natural resources” in the country (p. 110). The Sultan made no secret of his wish to engage American support in promoting “modern educational and health standards” (Roosevelt, 1946, p. 110) in Morocco and shaping the future development plans of the country. On the political plane, the sultan, it is stated, was particularly elated by FDR’s remark that “the postwar scene and the pre-war scene would, of course, differ sharply, especially as they related to the colonial question” (Roosevelt, 1946, p. 111).

Elliot’s account makes frequent reference to Churchill’s sense of malaise as he listened to the cordial exchange between the sultan and the president. Evidently, Roosevelt’s critical views of European colonial empires were both vexing and alarming. In the following years, the substance of Roosevelt’s conversation with the sultan became the object of ongoing speculation (Sangmuah 1992; Stenner, 2014). In their correspondence, U.S. officials often denied the claim that FDR promised to support Moroccan ambitions for independence. This essay looks at the broader context of U.S.-Moroccan relations in the years that followed the Anfa Conference and focuses on the impact of that single dinner meeting on the political evolution of Morocco toward independence. While they did not amount to a formal declaration, the progressive views voiced by FDR over the meeting emboldened the sultan and nationalist leaders to embrace a militant agenda and oppose French colonial policies. For the Moroccan nationalists who took to heart the liberal principles professed in the Atlantic charter and the four freedoms announced in FDR’s speech in 1941, the old status quo guaranteed by the Protectorate Treaty of 1912 was inadmissible. France, after all, was in no measure to honor the terms of the treaty.
Politically divided, it depended on the Allies for help to liberate its own occupied territories. A year after the Anfa meeting, Moroccan nationalist leaders would present a manifesto calling for independence under the sultan. This triggered a new phase of conflict with the French colonial authorities and plunged the country into a vicious cycle of violence and repression.

**Roosevelt and the Sultan**

The specific nature of FDR’s pledges to the sultan has stirred a continuing controversy among historians. Given that no official record of the dinner meeting exists other than the personal accounts of some of those who were present notably FDR’s son, Elliot, and the Crown Prince Hassan, the exchange between the sultan and the president became a subject of interpretation and contestation. The gist of this controversy centered on the political significance of the meeting and its powerful impact on the nationalist agenda in Morocco in the following years. Several historians have emphasized the relentless efforts of the sultan and nationalist leaders to enlist American official support for independence and to engage the figure of FDR in their propaganda war against the French (Rivlin, 1982). A recent historian has even argued that Moroccan nationalists invented a “Roosevelt’s myth” “to legitimize their claims in the eyes of Western diplomats and politicians” (Stenner, 2014, p. 526). The problem with this American-centered narrative is that it constructs a rigid and quite reductive view of Moroccan anti-colonial struggle, which was a multi-faceted and a dynamic process. More importantly, it makes light of Roosevelt’s political convictions vis-a-vis French colonial regime in North Africa. FDR’s attitude not only was the outcome of personal sympathy with an ambitious young sultan, but also rested on a firm belief in the right of subject peoples to govern themselves and take advantage of their own natural resources.

There is a substantial amount of archival information that is now available involving FDR’s subsequent correspondence with the sultan testifying to his keen interest in the future status of Morocco. What transpires from these letters is that FDR’s sympathetic views were not fully shared by the members of his own government for whom the ongoing war-time conditions and the necessity of safeguarding the interests of such a strategic ally as France formed a more urgent priority. However, it is important to keep in mind that for the sultan and the nationalists, FDR and the United States represented a positive force of change that opened a new frontier for political action against a protecting nation, which seemed to have betrayed its promises and lost its credibility.

FDR’s letters to the sultan and his exchanged memos with Secretary of State Cordell Hull and other officials relating to the Moroccan situation are now accessible online from the State Department.1 There are numerous records available at the National Archives website on the Anfa Conference. The Morocco file consists

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1 “Franklin D. Roosevelt Administration (1933–1945).” Retrieved from https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/roosevelt-fd
of 44 pages of digitized official correspondence organized in a chronological order.\textsuperscript{2} The American Legation library in Tangier also holds a file that contains several records relating to FDR’s visit to Morocco including a four-page typed report on the events of January 22, 1943, drawn from the notes of Harry Hopkins, FDR’s close advisor. There is also an excerpt from a log kept during the president’s trip to Casablanca providing significant details on the visit.

It can be gleaned from these documents that contact between FDR and the sultan began in November 1942 after the landing of U.S. troops on the Atlantic coast of Morocco. The purport of this early correspondence bears upon the immediate war affairs and the long tradition of friendship and respect that united Morocco and U.S.\textsuperscript{3} Other documents offer substantial information on the dinner meeting on January 22. The sultan, it is stated, arrived at the villa Dar Essaada at 7:40 p.m. accompanied by the Crown Prince, the Grand Vizier, and Chief of Protocol. They “were magnificently attired in white silk robes and came bearing several presents – a gold-mounted dagger for the President in a beautiful inlaid teakwood case, and two golden bracelets and a high golden tiara for Mrs. Roosevelt” (Hopkins, 1943, p. 531). The presents were duly acknowledged by Mrs. Roosevelt in a subsequent letter to the sultan. The documents say very little about the exchange between the sultan and FDR save that the sultan and his delegation departed at 10:10 p.m. and were followed by Prime Minister Churchill, General Nogues, the Resident General, and General Patton. De Gaulle was not invited to the dinner but was received by FDR alone shortly afterwards.

The following day, still motivated by the encouraging words of the president, the sultan dispatched his Grand Vizier and Chief of Protocol to meet Hopkins. The minutes of the secret meeting recorded by Brigadier General Wilbur reveal that the sultan was curious to know American plans for the future of Morocco and particularly Roosevelt’s position regarding a tentative proposal of an eventual U.S. takeover of the French and Spanish protectorate mandates. Hopkins’s response was diplomatic and evasive.\textsuperscript{4} His reserved reaction would set a pattern of U.S. political conduct in subsequent years. A number of American historians (Sangmuah, 1992, p. 132; Stenner, 2014, p. 526) have characterized the persistent attempts of the Sultan and the nationalists to elicit from U.S. consuls clear statements as well as concrete action in support of the Moroccan cause as acts of nuisance and manipulation resulting in a great deal of embarrassment for the U.S. administration. In contrast, the sultan’s overtures show the great confidence he placed in

\textsuperscript{2}“Morocco: Diplomatic Correspondence, 1933-1945, FDR-FDRPSF.” Retrieved from https://catalog.archives.gov/id/16618683

\textsuperscript{3}The sultan’s letter in Arabic (dated 12 Dhul-Qa`dah 1361/ November 21, 1942) is a response to both a letter and telegram sent by FDR. The French and English translations of the Arabic version carry an earlier date, which is obviously a mistake. There is also copy of FDR’s letter to the sultan carrying no date or signature. The heading at the top indicates that the version was intended for the press and bears a later date (1942, November 23). Judging from its contents, the letter may be the original one sent to the sultan acknowledged in his response.

\textsuperscript{4}Wilbur Notes. (1943). Retrieved from https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1941-43/d382
Roosevelt’s power to redefine the rules of the game and to enforce a new process of political change. Above all, they reflect his loss of faith in the ability of the Franco-Spanish protectorate systems to serve the interests of the Moroccans.

Not discouraged by Hopkins’ circumspect attitude, and wishing to take advantage of the opportune political conjuncture, the sultan instructed Thami El Glaoui, then still a close and trusted advisor, to open channels of communication with the British and American Consuls with the aim of probing their views regarding the proposition, of establishing a “joint protection” with France over Morocco. To get around French control of the foreign policy decision-making imposed by the terms of the treaty, the sultan also solicited the “appointment of diplomatic representatives who would have direct access to him” (Hull, 1943, p. 738). The instructions of the Department of State to the U.S. consul in Casablanca echoed the same views expressed by their British counterparts namely that “it would be both impracticable and impolitic to support any such policies or ambitions as ascribed to the Sultan” (Hull, 1943, p. 739).

Secretary of State Cordell Hull was the principal architect of the policy of non-interference in French domestic affairs in Morocco. When he reported on his meeting with the sultan in Oujda on June 24, 1943, Robert D. Murphy, Roosevelt’s special representative in North Africa, was aware of the policy line adopted by the State Department. He observed, “I have been careful to avoid several suggestions emanating from Rabat for a ‘confidential’ discussion with the Sultan, as I feel that this is a matter in which the Department would desire the greatest prudence exercised” (Murphy, 1943, p. 743). On the other hand, Hull was concerned about the repressive measures taken by the French colonial authorities against North African populations. He accordingly directed U.S. consuls to report on the conduct of French administration and signify to French officials that Americans “have a natural interest in the native situation in French North Africa, [...] and that this interest may be expected to increase in the future” (Stettinius, 1943, p. 746).

The reserved response of U.S. diplomatic agents did not dissuade the sultan or the nationalists from continuing their campaign. On the morning of January 11, 1944, two nationalist leaders, Mohamed Lyazidi and Idriss Mhamedi (who later became Minister of Interior in the first cabinet of independent Morocco), paid a visit to the American consulate in Rabat and were received by the vice consul, Donald A. Dumont. The purpose of their visit was to submit a copy of the Independence Manifesto and, interestingly enough, a letter intended for President Roosevelt. The vice consul, who had no clear instructions as how to deal with such a situation, could only point out “the impropriety of transmitting communications from political groups in a foreign country to the President of the United States” (Dumont, 1944, para 4).

The letter, of which a copy is preserved at the Tangier American Legation library, reveals the nationalists’ high hopes in the American administration and especially the president. Addressing President Roosevelt, the signatories stated that, Knowing your high sense of justice and your great love of liberty, we are convinced that our movement will find benevolent sympathy not only near Your Excellency, but also with your government and the great American
democracy ... You did us the signal honor of coming to our country and you encouraged U.S. thereby to continue the struggle by the side of the Allies, for our freedom, the Liberation of France and the Triumph of the humanitarian principles for which the Allies are making so many sacrifices. (Abdeljalil, Belafrej, Zeghari, Bahim & Chami, 1944, para 2).

Of particular interest here is the report of U.S. Consul General Frederick Mayer to the State Department dated January 12, 1944. Mayer expressed strong disinclination to encourage the nationalists’ activities and even pressed for a firm statement from his government to this effect:

If Department wants to nip in bud this movement before it could reach serious proportions, I respectfully suggest desirability of official pronouncement to the effect that American Government cannot look with favor upon political movements in areas associated in war effort which might hamper progress of war. (Mayer, 1944, p. 532)

U.S. records show that this particular letter with its edgy tone caught Roosevelt’s attention, and he desired to see the State Department’s response before it was dispatched. Despite the escalation of events and the arrest of nationalist members by French authorities reported by Mayer in the following weeks, the State Department’s letter, dated January 31 and approved by FDR, expressed mild concern. It called for restraint and advised, “the Sultan and the nationalist groups to avoid challenging the authority of the French and thereby undermining the security of the zone at this time” (Hull, 1944, p. 537). Mayer’s pleas for a clear U.S. policy regarding the surging political activities of the nationalists warranted a discreet hint that the State Department took into account “what appears to be a sympathetic interest in the native problem of Morocco in the highest quarters” (Murray, 1944, p. 537).

FDR gave further evidence of his political sentiment when he decided to send his autographed photograph to Pasha Glaoui later in January. Secretary Hull signified that given the explosive political situation in Morocco, “it might be advisable to defer this presentation until such time as the agitation has calmed down” (Hull, 1944, P.36). FDR replied in a later memo that he did not see how his photograph could “change the future of history,” and prophesied that “in regard to Morocco something new is bound to happen in the next ten years, I do not think that a population, which is ninety per cent Moors, should be run permanently by France” (Roosevelt, 1944, p. 35).

**Post-War American Policies vis-a-vis the Moroccan Question**

What was the sultan’s role in this whole process? How much support was he willing to give to the nationalist movement in particular in the light of the many constraints imposed on him by the terms of the Protectorate treaty and the repressive policies of the General Residency? Until then, the margin of maneuver available to him was limited and discrete action seemed an advisable strategy to avert open French reprisal. The nationalists’ move in January 1944, however, could not have
been undertaken without the tacit approval of the Sultan. The published memoirs of some of these nationalists underline the fact that nationalist activities were planned in concert with the sultan and his close circle (Al-Wazzānī, 1986, pp. 97-102; Qādirī, 1997; pp. 174-175). Al-Wazzānī notes in his memoir that on January 13, 1944 following the presentation of the Independence manifesto, the sultan summoned the Pashas and requested their opinions on the nationalists’ demands. All but the Pasha of Fes supported the call for independence (Al-Wazzānī, 1982, p. 97).

The death of FDR in April 1945 and the victory of the Allies in the war gave a real boost to the French colonial authorities to crack down on the burgeoning independence movement and its representative entity—the Istiqlal Party. While the Truman administration did not display any interest in supporting Moroccan nationalists and undermining French interests, U.S. consuls were not blind to the fast deteriorating situation in North Africa and the rising wave of nationalism across the region. In the broad geo-political context of the post-war and the settling of the Cold War era, Morocco’s strategic importance diminished significantly. The Department of State records related to Morocco in the post-war years focus on U.S. efforts to restore the international status of Tangier and end Spanish control over the city. Thus, in August 1945, delegations from France, Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States held several meetings in Paris and agreed to a new and provisional regime for Tangier that guaranteed the international character of the city and the rights of powers signatories of the 1923 statute. Given American political ascendancy at the international scene, France and Britain invited the United States to take part in the administration of the city. In his response to the French ambassador in Washington, the acting secretary of state stipulated that American participation in the administration of Tangier shall not cause any modification or prejudice to the rights and privileges acquired by the United States and enjoyed by its nationals and ressortissants prior to the introduction of Tangier Statute in 1923. Over the next years, the refusal of the U.S. administration to recognize the specific terms of the French Protectorate treaty relating to U.S. extra-territorial privileges ensured by the old treaties of 1786 and 1836 with Morocco proved to be a point of contention (Azzou, 2005, pp. 110-111). It triggered a long legal dispute with France that reached the International Court of Justice in 1950. The case was eventually ruled in favor of the French government in August 1952.

The sultan, on his part, saw in the restitution of the international status of Tangier an opportunity to assert his sovereignty and bring international attention to the political crisis in Morocco. In an era marked by anti-colonial struggle and the

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5 Acheson D. (1945, September 22). The Acting Secretary of State to the French Ambassador (Bonnet). Retrieved from https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945v08/d644
surge of nationalist movements, political groups and organizations across North Africa succeeded in establishing contact and securing support from the newly created Arab League in Cairo and from its first Secretary General Abderahman Azzam Basha. The declared attachment of Morocco’s political elite to their Arab and Islamic roots undermined France’s influence and the policies it endeavored to pursue in Morocco. The sultan’s visit to Tangier in April 1947 was inscribed within this new post-war dynamic. Though long envisaged, it came at a propitious time and added new momentum to the active agenda of the nationalists.

The details of this visit were recorded by the historian Abdellah Al-Jirārī, who served in several capacities in the Royal Court in the 1940s, and the nationalist leader Allal Al-Fāsī. In his memoir of Sultan Mohamed V, Al-Jirārī notes that the Tangier journey, which lasted from Wednesday, April 9 to Sunday April, 13, was a historic event that further demonstrated the unanimous support and loyalty enjoyed by the sultan in the Spanish and international zone of his kingdom. Arriving in Tangier by train from Rabat after a ceremonious stopover in Asila, the sultan was driven to the palace of the Mendoub amid large crowds of cheering bystanders raising colorful banners. In the evening, the municipality organized a show of fireworks in celebration of the event. The following day, Thursday April 10, he received in his Palace at Mendoubiya, representatives of foreign powers, as well as dignitaries from the Muslim and Jewish communities. The first of these diplomatic officials was the American Consul General in Tangier, Paul H. Alling who had just been nominated U.S. ambassador to Syria. The Sultan then received the representatives of Great Britain, Spain, and France, successively, and made the following statement:

In this informal meeting, and in the presence of representatives of the friendly countries, we are pleased to extend our sincere thanks to you for the affection you have shown us and to the Moroccan people on this historic occasion, this is not surprising, since the bonds of affection we have had since ancient times were built by our noble ancestors. …You are well acquainted that Morocco participated in the last war and contributed its sons and all its means until the final victory was achieved, and since nations are now demanding rights that suit the present time, it is only right for the Moroccan people to obtain their legitimate rights and to achieve what we hope for and what the Moroccan people yearns to like all other nations. (Al-Jirārī & Jawharī, 2006, p. 131).

After this reception, the sultan delivered a long and powerful speech to the public that went down in the annals of history as the speech that launched the sultan’s formal public engagement to reverse the status quo. The speech laid emphasis on the Islamic identity of the Moroccan nation and its strong ties with the Arab countries through their newly established entity the Arab League. It also called attention to the strong bonds that had united the royal family with the Moroccan people and made repeated references to the necessity for the Moroccan people to attain their legitimate rights. More significantly, the speech made no ceremonious reference to the work of the French colonial authorities, and the omission was
interpreted as the sultan’s new disposition to resist the imposed policies of the residency. George Joffé argues that the Tangier speech not only revealed the sultan’s endorsement of the nationalist agenda, but also paved the way for the urban-based Istiqlal party to spread its influence in the rural parts of the country where it lacked grassroots base (Joffé, 1985, pp. 289-290).

The escalating events that followed in the ensuing years and the French hardline policy to curb the sultan’s ascendant influence and popularity among the Moroccan population and its political elite only served to radicalize his position vis-à-vis the French colonial establishment. Beside infusing local domestic public enthusiasm and confirming his sovereignty over the northern region of the country, which had been under Spanish control since 1912, the sultan’s visit to Tangier enabled him to reach out to the international community through its diplomatic agents represented in Tangier and to receive extensive media coverage both in local and foreign newspapers. If during the Anfa conference the sultan emerged as a head of State struggling to secure American recognition and support for his country’s cause, the Tangier visit acclaimed him as a popular and legitimate sovereign who inspired hope and confidence among his people in the future. On Friday, the sultan headed to the great mosque of Tangier and delivered the Khutba (sermon) to the excited worshippers. While his sermon did not contain any clear political messages apart from exhortations to hold to the teachings of Islam, it endorsed his image as a devout and religious leader.

The outcome of this extraordinary royal visit to Tangier for the colonial authorities in Rabat and the Parisian official circles was extremely disappointing. By appointing Resident General Eric Labonne in early 1946, French government had aimed to appease the tense political situation in Morocco and introduce new reforms commensurate with rising demands of nationalist movements across North Africa. However, Labonne’s agricultural and educational reform policies as well as political reconciliation failed to contain the demands of the nationalists for a political process culminating in Moroccan independence. The apparently lenient policy and bill of reforms of Labonne did not appeal to the French colonists either. The tragic incident of the ben M’sik massacre of April 7, 1947 on the eve of the sultan’s visit to Tangier, reported in international newspapers including the New York Times, had raised tensions further. Labonne was succeeded by General Alphonse Juin, a military figure of a less tractable nature whose term would see the further deterioration of relations with the sultan and the nationalists.

How did the American authorities react to these changes in Morocco? Contemporary U.S. diplomatic correspondence reveals that the situation in the country was being watched carefully. The situation of North Africa was far from reassuring and the policies adopted in Paris and implemented by the colonial authorities in Tunis, Algiers, and Rabat did not seem to meet the rising demands of North African peoples whose agitations for better political and social conditions were now strongly supported by the Arab League. A new agency, the Bureau du Moghreb Arabe, was established in Cairo, which brought together the major political parties in the three countries. In July 1947 by instructions from the nationalist movement and the approval of the sultan, Mahdi Bennouna travelled to
New York and established an office to lobby for the Moroccan cause among the members of United Nations (Perkins, 1976, p. 66). The fruit of his efforts and of his office will begin to show only in the early 1950s when the Moroccan case was debated in the UN General Assembly sessions.

Meanwhile in light of the activities of French communists in France and Morocco American officials in Morocco began to sound the alarm, and frequently advised the Department of State in Washington that although the nationalists had expressed allegiance to the United States, they may in desperate measures resort to Soviet political support in the United Nations or even clandestinely to bring the desired change in their country. What used to be an exclusively French colonial affair had now become a delicate issue for American government. The currents of Cold War politics, it seems, had swept over this part of the world too. The American government was unwilling to allow Soviet influence to penetrate this strategic area.

On June 10, 1947, only two months after the sultan’s visit to Tangier, Secretary of State George Marshall wrote to the U.S. embassy in Paris outlining his view of the North African situation. He noted that to avert the risk of the Indo-China scenario, the solution lies in “leading North Africans [being] approached with some plan guaranteeing evolution toward self-government while concurrently safeguarding economic development of country and legitimate French interests in area by integration into French Union” (Marshall, 1948, p. 686). He urged the ambassador to summon U.S. agents in North Africa to confer on the situation there and propose a course of action. The conference indeed took place a week later in the American embassy in Paris and was attended by representatives of U.S. missions in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, and France. The report of their findings presented by Ambassador Jefferson Caffery was detailed and contained a road map to resolve the crisis that was fast developing in North Africa. After outlining U.S. principles and orientations in taking this initiative, the participants including Paul H. Alling the Consul-General of Tangier who chaired the meeting, proposed that the French government be approached and urged to introduce “long-range plans to guide both North African Protectorates (Morocco and Tunisia) toward dominion status” (Caffery, 1947, p. 693). Such a plan, they pointed out, should have a definite time-frame and should involve concrete actions to establish “without delay a solid basis of mutual trust” (Caffery, 1947, p. 693). These actions include “freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, rapid amplification of the school program, administrative reforms, initiation to democratic ways through municipal elections, etc.” (Caffery, 1947, p. 693).

In retrospect, these proposed reforms received little heeding from the French authorities who preferred to pursue a stick policy in their North African colonies. The American government on its part continued to ignore the nationalists’ appeals for support, and often used its political influence to offset the criticism and condemnation of France in the United Nations. The raging Indochina war and French grim prospects there compelled the U.S. government to support French economically, militarily, and politically. The establishment of U.S. air bases in Morocco in 1951 without prior consultation or consent of the sultan were part of the broad framework of their collaboration. However, starting from 1953 after the French had deposed Sultan Mohamed Ben Youssef, the U.S. government was itself
under pressure from Arab and Asian countries to take a firm position against France in the United Nations general Assembly. In the end, France had to reverse its colonial policy and acquiesce to the demands of the nationalist movement by reinstating the sultan and bringing to end the long protectorate phase.

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Analyzing the Moroccan Artistic Presence at the Centre Pompidou Collections

Sirine Abdelhedi

Abstract
This article highlights the cultural, economic, historical, and political criteria that influence the current international policy of the Pompidou Center, particularly a new interest in non-Western art in Arabic-speaking countries. It focuses on works produced by Moroccan artists that are part of the collections of the National Museum of Modern Art - Centre Pompidou in Paris. It includes a brief introduction to some key milestones in Moroccan art history that help contextualize the research project.

The Context of the Project: Milestones in Moroccan Art History
At the dawn of the 20th century, the destiny of Morocco, like most African countries, could not escape Western colonization. The signature of the Treaty of Fez on March 30, 1912 allowed the establishment of a Franco-Spanish protectorate. The Spanish dominated the Rif region in the north of Morocco, while the French exerted their power in the central/southern parts of the country. Two institutions dedicated to artistic education were created under the colonization system and which belong today to Moroccan authorities. The Ecole des Beaux-Arts of Casablanca opened in 1950 and the Ecole des Beaux-Arts of Tetouan created in 1945.

However, as art historian Toni Maraini (2014) has noted, there is a popular pictorial tradition that did not come to Morocco "in the trunks of colonialism." Morocco has long been and continues to be at the crossroads of different civilizations and cultures. Miniatures, illuminations, arabesques, Amazigh signs, Roman antiquities, and Islamic architecture have inspired generations of autodidactic artists who employ techniques that belong to these aesthetic registers. I mention a few: Mohamed Ben Ali Rbati (1861-1939), Mohamed Ben Allal (1924-1995), Ahmed Ben Driss El Yacoubi (1928-1985), Hassan El Glaoui (1923-2018), Chaïbia Talal (1929-2004), and Fatima Hassan Farrouj (1945-2011). Their productions were wrongly so-called “naïve” during the protectorate. But “naïve” according to whom and in what context? They all started exhibiting from the 1950s in Morocco and abroad.

The years immediately before and following independence (1956) were decisive for the future of contemporary art in Morocco. A new generation of artists benefitted from scholarships to continue their artistic training abroad while others chose to stay in Morocco. When talking about the birth of abstraction in painting in
Morocco, the names of Ahmed Cherkaoui (1934-1967) and Jilali Gharbaoui (1930-1971) are always among the first directly mentioned. Cherkaoui draws on his heritage to create contemporary work. He uses visual elements (usually inspired from the Amazigh alphabet or tattoos) and enlarges them so that the shape occupies the entire space of the canvas. As for Gharbaoui, he chose to express himself through the pictorial gesture. The imbalance in his private life has influenced him as his work is characterized by violent and rapid gestures.

In 1962, upon his return to Morocco, Farid Belkahia (1934-2014) took over the direction of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts of Casablanca. Joined by artists-teachers Mohamed Melehi (1936-) and Mohamed Chebaa (1935-2013) and historians Toni Maraini (1941-) and Bert Flint (1931-), they established an artistic education that takes into account the different aspects of Moroccan culture for the creation of contemporary works. Like many other artists, they have thought about the future of Moroccan art by refuting the ideas that reduced it to naïve art during colonial and post-colonial periods. Their collaboration is at the origin of the artistic movement known as the “School of Casablanca.” Maraini says (2014), “More than a style, ‘modernity,’ thus understood, was a spirit and an attitude. Far from being established like an academy of styles, modern art became the space of questioning and unveiling” (p. 73). They encouraged their students to create outside the academic space and go to meet the public. To challenge the folklorization of Moroccan art defended in neo-colonial salons, they created an open-air exhibition in Jamaa el Fna square (1969) which undoubtedly represents an historical moment in Moroccan history of art.

During that period, quality art and culture journals were born. *Maghreb Art* (1965-1969) was published by the School of Casablanca, *Souffles* (1966-1973) initiated by poets Abdellatif Lâabi and Mustapha Nissaboury, and then *Integral* (1971-1977). In 1971, Pauline de Mazières founded l’Atelier, the first contemporary art gallery in Morocco. She was joined by Sylvia Benhassan and for 20 years (until 1991), the gallery was considered as a reference point not only nationally but for the broader Arab world. In the late 1970s, Mohamed Melehi and Mohamed Benaissa, both originating from Asilah and elected to the city council, initiated the Cultural Moussem of Asilah. This festival of art and culture is organized every year between July and August. Through its programming, the organizers aim to ensure the social and economic development of the city through culture and arts.

Many companies and patrons supported the artists not only by collecting but also by supporting and creating places to spread the visual arts. This is the case of The Office Chérifien des Phosphates, the Foundation Omnium nord-africain (ONA) and its two art villas based in Casablanca and Rabat: the Attijari Wafabank and its art space Actua; and the real-estate group Alliances owned by Mohamed Alami Lazrak and its eponymous foundation which manages the Museum of Contemporary African Art Al Maaden just to name a few.

In 1993, the artist-teacher Faouzi Laatiris (1958-) set up the “Volume and Installation” workshop at National Institute of Fine Arts of Tetouan. He contributed to the training of the most remarkable artists of a generation – the “Tetouan generation” which included Batoul S'Himi (1974-), Younes Rahmoun (1975-), Safaa Erruas (1976-), Mohssin Harraki (1981-), Mustapha Akrim (1981-), etc.
A lot of artists and curators have also created venues for the dissemination of contemporary art and culture. This is the case of Yto Barrada (1971-), who took over the Cinémathèque de Tanger and saved it from collapse; Hassan Darsi (1961-) founded the research center The Source of the Lion (1995) in Casablanca; Mohamed Mourabit (1968-) initiated Al Maqam, an artist's residence located in the Amazigh village Tahannaout not far from Marrakech; Abdallah Karroum founded in 2002 L'appartement 22, an artist's residence in Rabat; Younes Rahmoun cofounded in 2013 with Berénice Saliou Trankat, a space of residence and creation in the medina of Tetouan.

In 2002, Hicham Daoudi founded the Compagnie Marocaine des Œuvres et Objets d’Art, an auction house based in Casablanca and renamed in 2008 as the Art Holding Morocco. Its area of specialization extends to cultural management. Thus, Daoudi created in 2009 Diptyk, an art magazine published in Casablanca and directed by Myriam Sebti and in 2016 the Comptoir des Mines, a contemporary art gallery in the heart of Marrakech. In 2004, Vanessa Branson initiated the cultural event Art Marrakech, which was named The Marrakech Biennale in 2012. Due to lack of funding, its sixth and last event took place in 2016.

At the initiative of His Majesty Mohamed VI, the National Foundation of Museums was created in 2011, and chaired by the artist Mehdi Qotbi (1951-) to manage the 14 national museums of the kingdom including the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Mohamed VI, which was inaugurated in 2014 in Rabat. In February 2018, 1:54, the contemporary African art fair founded in 2013 by Touria El Glaoui, took place for the first time in Marrakech at the Mamounia. These are a few of the important milestones that set the stage for a discussion of Moroccan artwork as represented through the Centre Pompidou collections that is the focus of this article. A non-exhaustive list of Moroccan artists can be found in the appendix to this article.

The Research Project

Aware of the Euro-American focus of the collections that they manage, the curators in modern and contemporary art museums have been interested in non-Western artists since the late 1980s. The French National Museum of Modern Art (Musée National d’Art Moderne), created in 1947 in Paris, was born from the merger of the collections of the Museum of Living Artists (Musée des Artistes Vivants) and the Museum of Contemporary Foreign Schools of the Jeu de Paume (Musée des Écoles Étrangères Contemporaines du Jeu de Paume). It is, since 1977, established at the Centre Pompidou and considered as the first institution dedicated to promoting contemporary art in France (Quemin, 2007, p. 527).

The Centre Pompidou is a multidisciplinary cultural institution initiated by the French President Georges Pompidou and opened on January 31, 1977. The building was designed by Renzo Piano and Richard Rogers. The Center houses different cultural structures including the National Museum of Modern Art, which gathered together the third most important collection of modern and contemporary art in the world. More than 120,000 works of art are classified within seven departments: photography, graphic art, fine arts, architecture, design, cinema, and new media.
The first director of the museum, Pontus Hulten, made the international exhibition a contribution to the art world (Dufrêne, 2007, p. 509). Early exhibitions marked the beginnings of the museum within the Pompidou Center by tracing the links between Paris and the art capitals of the avant-gardes: Paris-New York (1977), Paris-Berlin (1978), and Paris-Moscow (1979). With shows like Magiciens de la terre (1989), “What About China? (2003), or Africa Remix (2005), the institution attests to an interest in the art worlds of the former colonies, as seen through the prism of multiculturalism and diplomatic agreements.

In this regard Catherine Grenier, the former deputy director of the museum, initiated in 2009 the scientific program titled “research and globalization.” The first result of this program consisted of a new display of the permanent collection entitled Plural Modernities: 1905-1970 (Modernités Plurielles: 1905-1970). She announced,

This manifest exhibition, the fruit of research conducted by a large team of curators and young university researchers, is a first proposal for the renewal of the conventional discourse on modern art. It breaks with long years of consensus around a unified narrative, linear and progressive, proposed with slight national variants by all Western museums. This consensus, now in crisis, needs to be updated and re-established on a new basis. (Grenier, 2013, p. 15)

This semi-permanent exhibition—which aims to decolonize art history—is the guiding thread of my study.

In addition to the linearity of the discourse, which is focused on Western and North American art scenes, different observations brought me to think about the topic and to focus on Moroccan artists who are represented in the collection of the museum. First, an increased interest in non-Western artists is accompanied by participation in group exhibitions and acquisitions of their works. Second, the Friends of the Centre Pompidou is a nonprofit organization that aims to enrich the collection of the museum by supporting new acquisitions. An International Circle of patrons was created in 2013 and is organized according to geopolitical areas. It includes a Middle Eastern group (2013) and an African section (2019). Third, on the other side of the Mediterranean, particularly in Morocco, we notice a vibrant, emerging art world as well as the establishment of new institutions that aim to spread contemporary art, such as the Marrakech Biennale (2004-2016), the National Foundation of Museums (2011), the Museum of Contemporary African Art Al Maaden (2016), and 1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair (2018), etc. And finally, a partnership agreement recently signed between the Centre Pompidou and the Moroccan National Foundation of Museums.

**Methodology**

The main subject of this research project is to determine if the Moroccan artistic presence in the collections of the Centre Pompidou signifies a decolonization of the gaze and of the conventional discourse of art history. As a first step, I identified the role that Morocco plays in the museum’s collection through an inventory derived from the online catalog of the collection. In addition to asking, what were the criteria
set up by the museum staff to complete the collection, especially in a difficult economic context affected by budgetary restrictions, I also studied the dissemination vectors set up by the institution to share its collections with the audience. I then situated the corpus on a timeline and correlated it with historical events and with the development of the art market over the last two decades. This work allows me to analyze how the interest in Moroccan artists is generated and changes. The below inventory compiled in 2018 as part of this study includes the identification of the artists and their works, the acquisition methods, and whether it is a purchase, a donation, or a deposit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artists</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Created</th>
<th>Technique</th>
<th>Acquired</th>
<th>Acquisition Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mehdi Qotbi</td>
<td>Small symphony</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Lithography</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Purchase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majida Khattari</td>
<td>Fashion show/performance</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Video</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Purchase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dreams of young girls</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Video installation</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Purchase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yto Barrada</td>
<td>The magician</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Video</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Purchase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Untitled (From the series The Strait, notes on a useless country)</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Chromogenic print stuck on aluminum</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Donation from the Caisse des dépôts et consignations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Untitled (From the series The Strait, notes on a useless country)</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Chromogenic print stuck on aluminum</td>
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<td>Donation from the Caisse des dépôts et consignations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Untitled (From the series The Strait, notes on a useless country)</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Chromogenic print stuck on aluminum</td>
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<td>Donation from the Caisse des dépôts et consignations</td>
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<td>Untitled (From the series The Strait, notes on a useless country)</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Chromogenic print stuck on aluminum</td>
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<td>Donation from the Caisse des dépôts et consignations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Donor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Untitled (From the series The Strait, notes on a useless country)</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Chromogenic print stuck on aluminum</td>
<td>Donation from the Caisse des dépôts et consignations</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hill of the Charf - Tangier (Tomb of Ante)</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Chromogenic print</td>
<td>Donation from the Caisse des dépôts et consignations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipal Stadium - Tangier From the series Gran Royal Turismo</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Chromogenic print</td>
<td>Donation from the Caisse des dépôts et consignations</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ba-Youssef and the yellow tomatoes</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Chromogenic print</td>
<td>Donation from the Friends of the Centre Pompidou Project for contemporary art 2011</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School table of the greenhouse, educational farm, Tangier</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Chromogenic print</td>
<td>Donation from the Friends of the Centre Pompidou Project for contemporary art 2011</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Untitled, Subtitle: painted educational boards found in Natural History Museum,</td>
<td>2013 - 2015</td>
<td>Chromogenic print</td>
<td>Donation from the Friends of the Centre Pompidou International Circle - Middle East Group 2018</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artist/Title</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Medium/Description</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Source/Note</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sirine Abdelhedi</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>never opened, Assilah, Morocco</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Najia Mehadji</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Pomegranate flower</em></td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Sanguine on paper</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Purchase</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Pomegranate flower</em></td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Sanguine on paper</td>
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<td>Purchase</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Pomegranate flower</em></td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Sanguine on paper</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Donation from the artist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Pomegranate flower</em></td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Sanguine on paper</td>
<td></td>
<td>Donation from the artist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Icarus</em></td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Painting, paper pasted on canvas</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Donation from the association Camille</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Volute n°2</em></td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Gouache on paper</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Donation from the artist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohamme d Melehli</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Pulsation</em></td>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Acrylic on canvas</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Donation from Loft Art Gallery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hassan Darsi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>The model project</em></td>
<td>2002-2003</td>
<td>A model and several documentary elements</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Donation from Art Holding Morocco</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahmed Cherkaoui</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>The coronation</em></td>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Oil and pigments on canvas</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Deposit from the Centre National des Arts Plastiques Purchased in 1964</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farid Belkahia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Tribute to Gaston Bachelard</em></td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Dye on skin</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Purchase</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hicham Berrada</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Report of universal laws #3</em></td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Video</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Donation from the Friends of the Centre Pompidou Perspective for contemporary art 2013</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Presage 11-10-2013-7h36</em></td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Video</td>
<td></td>
<td>Donation from the Friends of the Centre Pompidou Perspective for</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artist</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>Year 2</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Achraf Touloub</td>
<td><em>Protocolar garden</em></td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Installation</td>
<td>2016 Donation from the Friends of the Centre Pompidou International Circle - Middle East Group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Seated thoughts</em></td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Ink and gouache on paper</td>
<td>2016 Donation from Plan B Gallery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Younes Rahmoun</td>
<td><em>Manzil Jana (Paradise House)</em></td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Installation</td>
<td>2016 Donation from the Friends of the Centre Pompidou International Circle - Middle East Group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Manzil-Markib-Mawja (House-Boat-Wave)</em></td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Mixed installation structure and video projection on the ground</td>
<td>2018 Donation from the Friends of the Centre Pompidou International Circle - Middle East Group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohssin Harraki</td>
<td><em>Anwar al-nujūm (Stars Light)</em></td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Multimedia installation 4 projectors, 4 multimedia players, 4 digital video</td>
<td>2018 Donation from the Friends of the Centre Pompidou International Circle - Middle East Group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Purchase / Deposit | Donation from the Friends of the Centre Pompidou | Donation from individuals / corporate |

*Figure 1.* Table of the works produced by Moroccan artists and belonging to the National Museum of Modern Art – Pompidou Center Collections.

Data collection was followed by an interview survey with the involved stakeholders: artists, curators, gallerists, etc. I thus identified three groups of works
based on the museum’s criteria:\footnote{In the online catalog of the collection, each work of art has its own descriptive form. I identified the museum’s selection criteria through the comparison of the keywords associated to each work mentioned in its descriptive form on the one hand and the study of the artists’ body of works on the other. The comparison and analysis of these information allows me to identify the three main groups mentioned above. The online collection is available through this link: \url{https://collection.centrepompidou.fr/#/artworks}}: “Abstraction as an artistic language” (Farid Belkahia, Mohamed Melehi, Hicham Berrada, Achraf Touloub, Mehdi Qotbi, Najia Mehadjji, and Ahmed Cherkaoui); “Islam as a source of inspiration” (Majida Khattari, Mohssin Harraki, and Younes Rahmoun); and “Rethinking the environment” (Yto Barrada and Hassan Darsi). In the following pages, I explore the paths of three artists, one from each category, Farid Belkahia, Younes Rahmoun, and Yto Barrada.

**The Abstraction as an Artistic Language:**

**Select Works of Farid Belkahia**

Born in 1934 in Marrakech, Farid Belkahia has produced a contemporary work closely linked to Moroccan heritage and local craft. At the dawn of the independence of Morocco, he travelled, like many artists of his generation, to study abroad at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris (France), at the National Theater in Prague (Hungary), and at the Brera Academy of Fine Arts in Milan (Italy). In 1962, he returned to Morocco to take charge of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts of Casablanca. He held this position until 1974. Belkahia and the artist-teachers, including Mohamed Melehi and Mohamed Chebaa, abandoned the established conventions and teaching methods spread during the French protectorate in favor of research and practices that take into account the different facets of Moroccan culture. Their collaboration was at the origin of the artistic movement known as the “School of Casablanca.”

From the 1960s, Belkahia’s personal approach is a continuation of the reflection initiated with the Casablanca group. He explored local heritage to identify different elements such as forms, signs, symbols, and substances that will be the raw material of his visual language. The painter abandoned canvas, easel, and chemical paints in favor of local materials such as animal skin, copper, henna, saffron, etc. The skin became his favorite material for nearly 40 years. Each work is a sensory composition imagined like a puzzle. In order to create a dialogue between the form and purpose of the artwork, Belkahia has visually translated several themes such as the Melhoun (Amazigh poetry), Lalla Mira (an Amazigh queen celebrated by the Gnawa music), the Trance, Jerusalem, the Hand, and also paid tribute to intellectual personalities such as Ibn Battoûta, Antoni Tapiés, René Char, and Gaston Bachelard, among others.
The work, *Tribute to Gaston Bachelard* (1984), was purchased by the National Museum of Modern Art in 2013. As part of this study I met with the curator Michel Gauthier, to learn more about the acquisition process. He recalled, “I knew his work a bit and when we started working on the hanging of the permanent collection *Plural Modernities*, I wanted to meet him. It seemed to me that, apart from *Plural Modernities*, it was a pity that there is no works created by Belkahia in the collection” (M. Gauthier, personal communication, June 2016). The idea of acquiring his work was set up in 2011 when Gauthier went to Marrakech to meet the artist and see the available pieces. He reflected:

Finally, we focused on this work, because Belkahia, moreover, thought it was a tribute to Gaston Bachelard so there was a kind of logic that this work that evokes a French thinker belongs to France. (...) And it seemed
to me extremely interesting by its colors, the fact that it is composed by several elements and that there are signs and arrows on the clouds. The piece is truly representative of the artistic work of Belkahia. ” (M. Gauthier, personal communication, June 2016)

Farid Belkahia passed away in Marrakech in 2014. His reflection on the collective memory and his non-traditional analysis of tradition allowed him to bequeath to humanity a work of universal significance confirmed by the words of Toni Maraini (2014), “In fact, the work of Farid Belkahia—who is one of the leading artists of contemporary Moroccan painting—is there to remind us that creation rises outside or beyond the limits of time, that modernity is multiple and that art is imbued with immemorial symbols” (p. 148).

Islam as a Source of Inspiration: Select Works of Younes Rahmoun

Graduated in 1998 from the National Institute of Fine Arts of Tetouan in Morocco, Younes Rahmoun, born in 1975 in Tetouan where he lives and works, combines artistic practice with a spiritual one. According to Roxana Azimi, “Raised within the Muslim religion, which he rarely sees as a weight or a hindrance, this true believer searches through all the key spiritualties in order to understand the world” (Azimi & Saliou, 2012, p. 2). His work is shown in France from 1999 following his participation in the exhibition: The disoriented object, organized at the Museum of Decorative Arts in Paris (France) under the direction of Jean-Louis Froment and Regards Nomades, which took place in Museum of Fine Arts in Dole (France).

About Rahmoun’s approach, Frédéric Bouglé (1999) says,

Sawdust, paper, rope, stone, sand, jute fabric, studs, gravel, the materials used by Younes Rahmoun in his installations decline and are repeated like the strident rhaïtas of a jajouka melody. Poor materials but rich in meaning and memory. They secretly reveal magical rituals under the obvious evidence of everyday life. They show the life of the souk, of the medina and of the lonely villages of his native country. (p. 25)

A multidisciplinary artist, Rahmoun explores various media: installation, video, animation, photography, performance, and drawing. His minimalistic work invites a meditation and reflection on the unfolding of life. He translates his everyday experience through simple elements. In his language, universality is perceived through simple geometric shapes, flowers, and natural elements such as small stones. In his work there is a strong presence of architecture and a spiritual reading of spaces of habitation from an individual and collective perspective. Hence, he creates a connection between the external world and the introspective experience in order to communicate a universal message.
Figure 3. Younes Rahmoun, *Manzil-Janna (Paradise-House)*, (2015), 30x30x225 cm (x7), resin. © Younès Rahmoun, Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Imane Farès, Paris*

The installation *Manzil Janna* (2015), whose title is translated from Arabic to English by Manzil as “house and Janna = paradise,” entered in 2016 the Centre Pompidou’s collections thanks to a donation from the International Circle—Middle East group of the Friends of the Centre Pompidou. Composed of seven small white
houses, whose shape is inspired by birdhouses, each is more than two meters high on thin stilts and represents a minimalist intimate space and a high refuge of the soul. The choice to repeat the structure seven times is not trivial. The number seven carries an important significance in Islam on the one hand and the repetition accentuates the meditative action on the other hand. The white color is used to enhance purity. Each house is painted inside in multicolored uniqueness. According to the artist, the spectrum of colors represents the infinity of possibilities, interpretations, etc. Perhaps, the installation invites his audience to an elevation of the soul beyond the seventh heaven, to paradise.

**Rethinking the Environment: Select Works of Yto Barrada**

The Franco-Moroccan artist Yto Barrada was born in Paris in 1971 and graduated from the Sorbonne in History and Political Science and the International Center of Photography in New York. Since the beginning of the 2000s, she has been conducting a reflection on post-colonial history and the challenges of globalization through a critical look at the Moroccan context. She was working between Tangier and New York before settling in the American city. In 2003, she co-founded the Cinémathèque de Tanger, to which she gave her studio which will serve as artistic residency. Primarily a photographer, Barrada also produces films, installations and sculptures.

In 2006, a set of seven photographic images were donated to the Centre Pompidou museum from the Caisse des dépôts et consignations, consisting of five photographic clichés from the series *The strait, notes on a useless country* and two from the *Grand Royal Turismo* series. Through a photographic survey, Barrada paints a portrait of Tangier. The city is located on the Strait of Gibraltar and it represents a strategic point between Africa and Europe. Barrada confronts different elements that reflect the demographic transformation of Tangier. She documents the local environment and reveals a fragile ecosystem threatened by the increasing urbanization. The emptiness, the abandoned nature or the human presence brings fiction to her visual narratives.

Photography allows Barrada to represent the tragic reality of the world from an artistic point of view and to invite the viewer not only to contemplation but also to reflection (B. Utudjian, personal communication, May 2018). Through her iconographic exploration, she emphasizes the colonization effects in the postcolonial era. In an interview with Sina Najafi, the artist declares: “Morocco is a place where history has been confiscated and replaced by propaganda and repression. The ‘sharing of Africa’ is still a reality; sixty years after independence, we still cannot impose our ideas” (Najafi, 2013, p. 147).

By her documentary approach, Barrada draws up an inventory of the city and tries as much to alert the observer to the fragility of the inhabitants in Tangier and to their environment as she does to raise broader awareness, in the absence of a political strategy that faces the dangers of globalization, of the effects on environmental and cultural ecosystems designed to meet the needs of the dominant West.
Results of the Study

The inventory of the collection shows that the Arab artistic representation within the collection of the National Museum of Modern Art – Centre Pompidou does not exceed 0.5%. The selected artists are mostly from the Moroccan diaspora. For most, they have studied in Western art schools, they are represented by Western galleries, and they are exhibiting abroad.

Once the works produced by Moroccan artists are identified, we notice that the Centre Pompidou curators are focusing more on the new generation, as if the art history in the kingdom of Morocco is being written right now. The majority of the works do not reflect the traditional art of the country.

The thirty-one pieces acquired are as follows: twenty-three donations, seven purchases, and one deposit of the National Center of Contemporary Art. These data show the important role patrons are playing in the contemporary art ecosystem in France, a country traditionally focused on public funding which is increasingly reduced. In addition to the quality of the artists’ work, it seems that the networks and the actors behind many artists play an important role for their recognition and the establishment of their professional careers.

The study of the dissemination vectors set up by the museum to enlarge public knowledge about the richness of the art history shows that: artists from Morocco and the Arab region are not well represented through the temporary exhibitions, the permanent hanging of the collection, the Massive Open Online Course, the mobile app, and the catalogs edited by the institution. It also reveals a confusion in the use of concepts; for example, the historiographies of art combine sometimes Moroccan creation with that of the Middle East and with that of Africa. It should be noted that Morocco is a country of the Arab world but not of the Middle East geographical space. In this regard, there is a lot more work that should be done to clarify the use of different political concepts that impact cultural context.

Regarding the partnership between the National Foundation of Museums and the Centre Pompidou, it involves exchanging expertise “hopefully in both directions.” A turnkey exhibition of works from the Pompidou Collection was organized at the Mohamed VI museum in Rabat during the summer of 2018. Its curator Christian Briend said,

At the end of the proposed itinerary, the visitor may regret not finding artists from other geographical areas than those represented here, starting with the Maghreb countries. (...) It is enough to say how the exhibition

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2 This result is obtained following the inventory study I conducted in May 2018. The number of works available in the online catalog at the time of the study was 106,947. At first, I tried to identify the artists (79) who represent the Arab scene and their works (365), and then to focus on those who represent the Moroccan artistic scene. The figures obtained indicate that the works produced by artists belonging to the countries of the Arab world represent only 0.3% of the totality of the collection. However, I estimate 0.5% because the entire collection is not available online. The number will evolve according to the site's feed with further digitization of new acquisitions. The scanning process is long and is subject to certain restrictions.
“The Mediterranean and Modern Art” remains dependent on a heritage, that of a collection conveying a European vision of the history of art, that the institution is working today to question by a policy of exhibitions ever more attentive to "plural modernities." (Briend, 2018, p. 21)

It seems that the economic crisis has modified power relations and accelerated the transition to another world relatively not affected by the economic catastrophe. The emergence of new cities as center of the world (Hong Kong, Singapore, Dubai, etc.), the evolution of the art market Christie’s (2006) and Bonhams (2007) in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Sotheby’s (2007) in Doha, Qatar, local art fairs like Art Dubai (2007), the newly rich art collectors, and the establishment of new cultural institutions all serve to improve the visibility and presence of non-Western artists within the global art scene. That's why the reduction of the public budget in France (and elsewhere) encourages art institutions to diversify their economic sources and to look for diverse private support. In this way, the interest seems to be not only intellectual but especially economic.

On the other side of the Mediterranean Sea, the civil society and the Moroccan government are involved in the promotion and the development of the artistic scene. However, many actions, frameworks, and responsibilities still need to be defined. Moroccans who are engaged in the artistic domain need to establish a long term efficient work strategy that reviews art education at all levels, establishes art disciplines as a research field in higher education, organizes art institutions, works hand in hand with local partners, refrains from buying turnkey exhibitions from abroad which are very expensive, and instead encourages local Moroccan curators and artists to create more local exhibits, and to think about new teaching methods and dissemination tools adapted to the local context in order to reach a wider audience. Such changes are needed if Moroccan artists are to reach their full potential and deserved recognition. Unfortunately, according to artist Younes Rahmoun, it is largely still the case that “By exhibiting abroad, we are better recognized and more valued at home. It's sad but it's like that” (Gabsi, 2015, p. 545).

Call to Action

Recent progress of museum research based on issues such as acquisition, dissemination, and display are the result of bilateral actions among artistic networks and collaborators on the one hand and the evolution of cultural policies in Morocco as well as in the majority of Arab countries on the other. However, the options taken in Morocco must no longer consider art based solely on Western references, rather it must develop local sponsorship and greater institutional support. In the absence of a cultural management strategy accompanied by a structured education, the Western model and its actors seem to remain, today, the dominant world reference in the art field. While Morocco’s recent efforts to define and develop its modern art practices are a step in the right direction, there is greater need for institutional direction from within Morocco (as well as the Middle East and North Africa region) to determine how best to represent itself on the world stage.
References


* The author is sincerely grateful to the Foundation Farid Belkahia (Marrakech) for permission to use Figure 2, to Younes Rahmoun and Galerie Imane Farès (Paris) for permission to use Figure 3.
APPENDIX: A non-exhaustive list of Moroccan artists

ABOUZID SOUALI, Mariam
AFIFI, Saïd
AGUEZNAY, Amina
AGUEZNAY, Malika
AKRIM, Mustapha
ALAOUI, Leila
ALAOUI, Rita
ALAOUI, Yasmina
ANDALIBE, Zainab
AREJDAL, Mohamed
ATBANE, Younes
AZEROUAL, Mustapha
BAALA, Mo
BABA-ALI, Younes
BAKHTI, Mohamed
BALBZIOUI, Yassine
BARRADA, Yto
BATTAL, Rim
BELKAHIA, Farid
BELLAMINE, Fouad
BELMAACHI, Ghany
BEN ALLAL, Mohamed
BENOUD, Abdelmalek
BENBOUCHTA, Amina
BEN CHEFFAJ, Saad
BENITAH, Carolle
BEN LAHCEN, Morran
BENOHOUD, Hicham
BENZAQUEN, Deborah
BERHISS, Abdelmalek
BERRADA, Hicham
BINEBINE, Mahi
BOUCHCHICHI, M’barek
BOUKIA, Hassan
CHAIR, Mohamed Said
CHARRAT, Mounat
CHEBAA, Mohamed
CHERKAOUI, Ahmed
CHERKAOUI, Larbi
DAIFALLAH, Noureddine
DARSI, Hassan
DOUKKANE, Abderrahmane
DRISSI, Mohamed
DRISSI, Moulay Ahmed
ECHAKHCH, Latifa
ECHAIR, Hassan
EL BAZ, Mohamed
EL GHRIB, Khalil
EL GLAOU, Hassan
EL GOTAI, Amine
ENNADARE, Touhami
ERRUAS, Saffa
ESSAYDI, Lalla
FAKHIR, Ymane
FARIJI, Mohamed
FETTAKA, Simohammed
GHARBAOUI, Jilali
HAJJAJ, Hassan
HAMIDI, Mohamed
HARRAKI, Mohssin
HASSAN FARROUJ, Fatima
HASSANI, Saad
HATIMI, Yasmine
HRIECH, Chourouk
JOUAL, Soukaina
KABBAJ, Houda
KABBAJ, Ikram
KACIMI, Mohamed
KHALILI, Bouchra
KHATTARI, Majida
KOURKOUNI, Adil
LAATIRIS, Faouzi
LABIED, Miloud
LAHLOU, Mehdi-Georges
LAKHDAR, Boujemaa
LEKLETI, Mohamed
MAAZOUZ, Fouad
MAIMOUN, Ali
MARFOUK, Walid
MAZIRH, Safaa
MAZMOUZ, Fatima
MEHADJI, Najia
MELEHI, Mohamed
MEGARA, Meki
MEZIAN, Meriem
MILOUDI, Houssein
MOURABITI, Mohamed
NABILI, Mohamed
NAJI, Lamia
NEJMI, Malik
NEMMAOUL, Khalil
OUAZZANI, Abdelkrim
OUCHRA, Youssef
OUHADDOU, Sara
QOTBI, Mehdi
RABI’, Abdelkebir
RACHDI, Mohamed
RAHMOUN, Younes
RAHOULE, Abderrahmane
RBATI, Mohamed Ben Ali
SAHLI, Ghizlane
SALADI, Abbas
SHIMI, Batoul
SLAOUI, Hassan
TABAL, Mohamed
TALLAL, Chaibia
TALLAL, Hossein
TIBARI, Kantour
TILSAGHANI, Nour Eddine
WAKRIM, Zakaria
YACOUBI, Ahmed
YAMOU YORIYAS
ZEMMOURI, Fatiha
ZIYAT, Yasmina
The Changing Roles of Female Visual Artists in Morocco

Samir El Azhar

Abstract
Female artists are actively participating in the development and growth of visual arts in Morocco. This article seeks to highlight their important contribution in the Moroccan visual arts. It deals with the access of women to the field of visual art, delineates successive categories for understanding the types of work female artists have engaged in since the independence of the country in 1956, and the challenges that these artists have been facing. It focuses on the artistic experiences of specific artists, believed to be, representative of some historical era or artistic trend. Moreover, it tries to put these artists into a cultural and historical framework to contextualize their artistic production.

Keywords: Female artists, gender equality, visual arts, contemporary art.

Today, the number of female artists in the Moroccan art scene is increasing. They are actively participating in the development and growth of visual arts in Morocco. From different cultural backgrounds, intellectual levels, and social strata, they have campaigned through pictorial expression for environmental causes and for the emancipation of women overcoming a long repressed and ignored freedom of speech. This article seeks to highlight the important contribution of female artists in Moroccan visual arts. In this respect, it deals with the access of women to the visual art, the successive groups of female artists since the independence of the country in 1956, and the challenges that these artists have been facing. However, this article neither claims to provide a comprehensive anthological study of female artists in Morocco nor does it aim at outlining an aesthetic or art history. Rather, it discusses the artistic experiences of some artists, whom I believe to be representatives of some historical era or artistic trend. Moreover, it tries to put these artists into a cultural and historical framework to contextualize their artistic production.

Creative Yearning in the Harem

In the Arab Muslim worlds, women were historically associated with the privacy of the harem.1 More for cultural than religious considerations, women were

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1 The separate part of a Muslim household reserved for wives, daughters, sisters and female servants, etc.
compelled to spend their lives secluded within the protective walls of the harem. Regardless of their family positions (wives, daughters, mothers, or servants), they had to perform household duties that often seemed like drudgery. However, despite their Sisyphean housework, they managed to transcend their restricted lives by indulging in more refined artistic productions. They took refuge in some artistic activities that allowed them (figuratively) to go beyond the walls of the harem and enjoy freedom. Habiba, in Fatima Mernissi’s autobiographical book *Women’s Dreams*, expresses this yearning for freedom in 1940s:

Aunt Habiba was certain that each of us had in herself a kind of magic, hidden in her most intimate dreams. “When you're imprisoned, without defense, behind the walls, stuck in a harem, she said, you dream of escape.” … Liberation begins when the images are a dance in your head and you start to translate them into words. The words don't cost anything!” She kept telling us that we all had this inner power. (Mernissi, 1997, pp. 147-148)

![Figure 1. Samir El Azhar's photograph of Lalla Essaydi: “Harem #14,” used by permission from the Museum Mohamed VI of Modern and Contemporary Art.](image)

When they finished their tedious work, they indulged in some activities that were believed to be far more positive in nature and often more agreeable to do because they were - according to those women who have written about these experiences - a source of revelation and creation. In a mystical way, they focused their creation
on embroidery patterns, henna\textsuperscript{2} shapes, silk decorations on caftans\textsuperscript{3} and sherbils,\textsuperscript{4} and carpet (rug) designs. These creative works enabled them to escape the rigid social code that imprisoned them within confined walls. They created their own symbols and motifs that transcended their limited space. In \emph{Women’s Dreams}, Fatima Mernissi (1997) highlights this point:

That day Aunt Habiba was trying to embroider a green bird with wings of gold. This kind of bird, aggressively spreading its wings, was not part of classical designs. … Of course, birds existed in traditional embroidery designs, but they were tiny, and often completely paralyzed, stuck between giant plants and large bushy flowers. Because of Lalla Mani, Aunt Habiba always embroidered classical patterns when she was in the yard, and kept for herself her bird with wings deployed, in the privacy of her chamber. (pp. 193-194)

In the first half of the 20th century Morocco witnessed important social changes that shaped its future. One major leap towards the future was allowing girls to pursue secondary and university education. Young girls were formerly allowed to go to primary school but had to leave school as soon as they got their elementary certificate. In the 1930s, leaders of the Nationalist Movement,\textsuperscript{5} who were religious scholars in the University of Al Quaraouiyine,\textsuperscript{6} allowed their daughters to leave the harem for high school. This brought about dress changes that allowed young girls to walk easily in the street. About this change, Fatima Mernissi (1997) wrote,

My mother also wanted to replace the traditional haik of women by the djellaba, the male mantle, which many women of nationalists had adopted. The haik was made of seven meters of heavy white cotton in which her body was enveloped. … When the nationalists started to send their daughters to school, they also

\textsuperscript{2} Henna is a plant that has been used since antiquity to dye skin, hair, and fingernails, as well as fabrics including silk, wool, and leather.

\textsuperscript{3} Caftan is a loose female garment that can be made of wool, cashmere, silk, or cotton, and may be worn with a sash. The word is ultimately from old Turkish "kap ton," meaning "covering garment."

\textsuperscript{4} Sherbils are female shoes of Andalusian origin that are embroidered with silk and gold threads to fit the rest of women garments.

\textsuperscript{5} The Istiqlal (Independence) Party, which provided most of the leadership for the nationalist movement, released in 1944 a manifesto demanding full independence, national reunification, and a democratic constitution. King Muhammad V (1927–1961) had approved the manifesto before its submission to the French authorities, who answered that no basic change in the protectorate status was being considered. The Nationalist Movement continued its political and military struggle until Morocco gained its independence in 1956.

\textsuperscript{6} University Al Quaraouiyine is the oldest university in the world. It was founded by Fatima Al-Fihria in 859. It became one of the leading spiritual and educational centers of the historic Muslim world. It was incorporated into Morocco's modern state university system in 1963.
allowed them to wear a djellaba, much lighter and convenient than the haik in order to do four times a day the journey from home to school. The girls therefore wore djellabas of men and, soon, their mothers imitated them. (pp. 153-154)

Another step of equal importance was late King Mohamed V’s decision to allow girls to study at Al Quaraouiyine University in 1948. This opened the doors of modernity to Moroccan women and paved the way for an era that called for gender equality. King Mohamed V made another symbolic act to show Moroccans his firm support of the education of women. He sent his daughter Lalla Aicha, wearing modern Western clothes, to deliver an important political speech in Tangier in 1947. In *Shahrazad is not Moroccan*, Fatima Mernissi, the Moroccan sociologist, argues that the decades of the 30s, 40s, and 50s in the 20th century brought about enormous achievements that changed completely the ideological and economic structure of society, particularly regarding outer places, especially important places: the school (as a place of knowledge) and the labor market (as an economic location) (Mernissi, 2010, pp. 72-73).

These first steps towards modernization initiated a process of struggling for equality in social, economic, judicial, and political domains. Women played a crucial role in building a modern society based on the ideal of equality of opportunities between the genders. According to scholar Moulim El Aroussi, Moroccan women made major contributions in building a free and modern Morocco (El Aroussi, 2017, p. 185). Thus, women have become active members of modern Moroccan society. Their presence in both the public and private sectors is striking. They do widely varied jobs: teachers; university professors; deans and presidents of universities; doctors; engineers; CEOs of companies; bus, taxi, and tram drivers; policewomen; judges and lawyers; and members of parliament and government, to name only a few. It is not surprising then to see the strong presence of women in the artistic world as a logical outcome of their struggle to win their place in the public sphere which was, until the mid-1900s, the domain of men.

From Utilitarian Production to Artistic Culture

Throughout Morocco’s history, Moroccan women have preserved a rich, tangible cultural heritage. They have woven carpets (rugs), embroidered silk and cotton fabric, decorated pottery and leather products, manufactured jewelry, embellished the skin with tattoos and henna designs, and designed and embellished clothes. For women who had mastered these skills and techniques, the transition from the creation of utilitarian material culture to producing artwork was relatively easy and smooth. Instead of working on objects for everyday use, they created works for artistic contemplation. From mere women performing ephemeral utilitarian activities, they became artists who produced inspirational works of art.

Some Moroccan women artists have turned traditional symbols, colors, and forms into aesthetic productions that reveal the depth of human experiences. In this respect, Rita El Khayat (2011) argues that “a[n artist learns and masters an art and, for this, he or she is creative. He or she is close to the craftsman because he or she makes material objects, but unlike the latter, most of his or her work is to create
works that constitute new sources of emotion and reflection” (p. 17). In this sense, women, as artists, started to produce art (in the fullest sense of the word) when they created artworks intended for aesthetic enjoyment in and of themselves. According to Moulim El Aroussi, the transition of painting from a traditional craft industry to modern artistic production has relied on objects produced by both women and men. Woodwork, plaster, mosaics, and metal were traditionally made by men while quite a number of products and handicrafts were produced by women. For example, in fabric, leather, embroidery, and sewing, women played a significant role that in many cases exceeded that of men (El Aroussi, 2017, p. 184).

Out of this social, political, and cultural context the first women artists emerged. In the 1960s, women rarely engaged in artistic pursuits. Not well acquainted with art culture, only a handful of women used visual art to express themselves professionally. According to Farid Zahi (2007), a Moroccan art critic, these pioneers were either wives of painters (Fatima Hassan), mothers of painters (Chabia, the mother of the painter Talal or Radia, the mother of the painter Miloud), or daughters of painters (Fatima El Ouardiri). Other pioneers were in one way or another in contact with European culture and were encouraged by Europeans to use the brush, paint, and the table easel, which was a quite new experience for women used to producing utilitarian crafts in the domestic sphere. A prominent figure of this period is Meriem Meziane.

Meriem Meziane was born in 1930 in Mellilia, a city in the north of Morocco that is still colonized by Spain. She attended the elementary school in Larache, a small Atlantic town in the north of Morocco. With her father, an officer in the Spanish army, she migrated to Spain. She held her first exhibition in 1953 in Malaga. She then entered the school of fine arts of San Fernando in Madrid. In 1959, she received a degree that allowed her to teach visual art. She organized numerous exhibitions in Morocco, Tunisia, Spain, France, the United States, and Canada. She passed away in Casablanca on March 29, 2009.

Although Meriem Meziane spent a long period of her life in Spain, she never forgot her native country, which was omnipresent in her paintings. She borrowed her subjects, colors, and forms from her home in the Rif Mountains. She was inspired by the beauty of the landscape, and the generosity of the people and their ancestral traditions. She painted Moroccans, especially Moroccan women, performing social, ritual, and festive activities. Mohamed Adib Slaoui believes that her realistic paintings were concerned with Amazigh (Berber), Saharan, Fassi, and Tetouani women with their costumes, jewelry, and social traditions, which granted her works a special ethnographic and cultural vision (Adib Slaoui, 2012, p. 54).

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8 Morocco was colonized by two colonial powers: Spain in the north and south of the country and France in central Morocco. In 1956, Morocco gained independence from France and Spain but two cities in the north, Ceuta and Mellilia, are still under Spanish rule.
Another pioneer is Chems Eddoha Ataa Allah who was the first Moroccan female artist to graduate from a Moroccan School “des Beaux Arts” in Tetouan in 1960. In the same year, she organized her first exhibition. Following the Agadir earthquake in February 1960, which destroyed the whole city killing 15,000 and injuring more than 25,000, she generously offered to donate the profits from sales of her paintings to the victims of this earthquake. Since then, she has devoted her art to helping some associations such as those of cancer and brain surgery who need financial support (Ezzakari, 2016).

Chems Eddoha paints Moroccan faces and portraits with a special interest in Moroccan women, Moroccan weddings, women working in the countryside and their hard everyday life, etc. She has organized exhibitions in Morocco and abroad. About her artistic beginnings, she stated,

… at the beginning of independence women were not allowed to practice any artistic activity. Art was believed to be dishonorable and disrespectful to traditions. … Many believed that women had to stay at home and raise children. But I joined the field of art, thanks to my mother, Malika El Merini, an open-minded woman who believed in change and had revolutionary ideas … After Morocco got its independence in 1956… there were many education opportunities for Moroccan women to fill in the gap left by the colonial administration. I was among the students who
Samir El Azhar benefited from this situation as I did a training of six months to get a job in education. Afterwards, I joined the Tetouan school of “des Beaux Arts” as the first Moroccan woman, in 1957. (Ezzakari, 2016)

Both Meriem Meziane and Chems Eddoha Ataa Allah belonged to the group of female artistic pioneers that included Fatima Hassan, Chaibia Talal, Malika Agueznay, and Latifa Tijani. Chronologically, the second generation of Moroccan female painters includes the following artists: Khadija Tanana, Noufissa Benjalloun, Benhila Regragua, Fouzia Guessouss, Nadia Boulaihal, and Najat Al Khatib, to name only a few. The third generation is comprised of the following names: Ikram Al Kabaj, Reem Al Laabi, Nawal Sakkat, Mahacine Al Ahrach, Maryam Al Alj, Asmae Alamy, Kenza Benjalloun, Mounat Charrat, and many others.

To discuss the artistic experiences of these female artists, I have thought it convenient to classify these generations into four distinct groups: naïve painters, secondary career artists, those who have received an academic artistic education, and those who have rebelled against formal scholastic artistic conventions.

Naïve art, a controversial term due to its negative connotations, has been described as simple, unaffected, and unsophisticated art made by artists who have had no formal training in an art school or academy. In addition to this, naïve works, according to Encyclopaedia Britannica, “are often extremely detailed, and there is a tendency toward the use of brilliant, saturated colours rather than more subtle mixtures and tones. There is also a characteristic absence of perspective, which
creates the illusion that figures are anchored in the space, with the result that figures in naïve paintings are often “floating” (Rimsa, 2008, p. 1). Among the naïve artists are Chaibia Talal, Fatima Hassan, Benhila Regraguia, Fatima Najm, Fatima Al Bakouri, and Kenza Al Mukdassni. To deal with the major characteristics of this trend, I have chosen Chaibia Talal as a representative of this group because, I believe, any discussion of naïve art in Morocco without a reference to Chaibia Talal would be shallow and superficial.

Chaibia Talal was unquestionably the most famous Moroccan painter of the 20th century. She is the only Moroccan painter whose works are listed on the stock exchange. Her paintings can sell for more than $100,000. Born in 1929 in a village near El Jadida, a coastal town on the Atlantic, Chaibia’s childhood was cut short by an early marriage when she was 13 years old. At the age of 15, the young woman was already a widow and mother of a child. To make a living, she worked as a housemaid in several French households. She experienced harsh living conditions to raise her child. When Fatima Mernissi interviewed her in 1985 and asked her how she earned her living before she discovered painting, Chaibia answered, “What do you want me to do? What can an illiterate woman like myself do? I cleaned, washed and swept houses. I did what I had to do earnestly. But I had a feeling that I had to go somewhere and put an end to all that” (Mernissi, 2010, p. 113). Her son, Al Houssine Talal, left Morocco for France where he studied visual art. He returned to Morocco and became a painter.

Two important events changed Chaibia’s life. According to her, in 1963, when she was 25 years old, she had a dream: someone offered her some paint, papers, and brushes and asked her to paint. Another event that was a turning point in her life was her encounter with Pierre Gaudibert, the French art curator and critic. Her son, Al Houssine Talal, invited Pierre Gaudibert, to have lunch at home to show him some of his paintings. Chaibia told the French critic that she also painted. When he saw her drawings and paintings, he was more interested in her works than in those of her son (Al Muntassir, 2016, pp. 58-59).

From 1966 until her death, Chaibia exhibited in Paris, Copenhagen, Ibiza, Rotterdam, New York, Tokyo, and many other capitals. In 2003, she was awarded a Gold Medal from the French Academic Society for Education and Encouragement. She died in Casablanca in 2004 at the age of 75 years.
Chaibia Talal was inspired by her childhood and her rural environment, creating daring, innocent, and childlike paintings. Her work is characterized by the use of colors in their original state. Her sincerity, boldness, and spontaneity earned her the appreciation and respect of the leader of the Cobra movement, Pierre Alechinsky, international critics, and even heads of states. To quote Lahsen Bougdal,

Chaibia Talal, this “paysante des arts” as nicknamed by the sociologist Fatima Mernissi, is probably the one that managed to give her letters of nobility to this raw art. Her spontaneity combined with her simplicity gratified us with compositions where the power of graphism and the harmony of the fresh colours forced the admiration of many specialists around the world. Brilliant and recognized, the painting of these three pioneers [Radia Bent Al Hussein, Fatima Hassan Al Farouj and Chaibia], established itself in a male environment where it was hard to exist. (Bougdal, 2016, p. 15)

The second group is that of secondary career artists. Unlike the first group whose members have not received any schooling, secondary career artists are

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9 The Cobra movement was a European avant-garde movement that believed in spontaneity and drew their inspiration in particular from children’s drawings and from primitive art forms.
cultivated women who have worked either as doctors, architects, civil servants, etc., but have left their jobs and become artists. This group comprises Aicha Ahardan, Aziza Jamal, Laila Cherkawi, Rajaa Al Atlashi, Noufissa Benjalloun, Nadia Khayali, Jamila Al Araychi, Asmae Alamy, Fatiha Tahiri, etc. These painters did not have any formal art education. Of different ages and horizons, they started painting and improved themselves throughout their careers by attending art training, workshops, and Biennales. According to Moulim El Aroussi, most female painters in the early post-colonial period did not attend any art schools. With the exception of Meriem Meziane and Malika Agueznay, there were no female painters with academic art education (El Aroussi, 2017, p. 186). As an example of this set, I have selected the experience of Rajae Al Atlashi.

Rajae Al Atlashi was born in 1965 in Casablanca. After university studies in French literature, she had created theatrical sets before she moved to painting. She was spotted at an exhibition titled "Screens of Contemporary Artists" organized by the collector and gallery owner Daniel Couturier, at Forney Library in Paris. She exhibited in Morocco, the United Arab Emirates, Netherlands and France.

The path undertaken by Rajae Al Atlashi in Moroccan visual art is remarkable. With literary education, she embarked on an artistic career. In her paintings, women are a recurring and iconic theme, in the guise of enigmatic and closed faces. The huge chunks of bright colors and the discontinuous and unpredictable movements alongside the traditional caftans overlays are reinterpreted with mastery; mystery of life, in this colorful bubbling of swirls, strips, circles, and stars (Benqassem, 2010, p. 38). She also uses Arabic calligraphy in her paintings.

The third group includes an array of artists that had a formal academic artistic education either in Morocco or abroad. This group includes Mahacine Al Ahrash, Ahlam Lemssefer, Laila Sherkaoui, Jamila Al Arayshi, Maryam Al Alj, Amina Benboushta, Malika Agueznay, Maryam Asharaibi, Asmae Alamy, Nawal Assakat, Nadia Khayali, Halima Hadoush, Aziza Jamal, Saadia Pirou, Maryam Belmkadem, Fouzia Guessouss, Fatima Al Alaoui, and many others. These artists paint according to the scientific rules and academic techniques they acquired at art schools. Malika Agueznay highlights the experiences of artists who have received academic artistic schooling.

Malika Agueznay was born in Marrakech. She had studied sociology before she entered the “Ecole des Beaux Arts” of Casablanca from which she graduated in
In 1978, she was invited to the International Festival of Assilah, where she learned the art of engraving, encountering printmakers and professors such as Mohamed Omar Khalil and Robert Blackburn. From there, she traveled to New York to study engraving in the workshop of Mohamed Omar Khalil and Robert Blackburn. She also attended the "Counterpoint" workshop in Paris conducted by the artists Hector Saunier and Juan Valladores (Chaouat, 2017, p. 2).

Malika Agueznay was a member of the “Casablanca Movement” (Chaouat, 2017, p. 3). She uses blue color in her paintings to evoke the blue of the sky, the blue of the sea, and the blue of the eyes of women. For her, colors are full of life and meaning. They take different forms and shapes and thus acquire different significance. Her paintings feature intricate interweaving and overlapping organic forms which she calls “algae,” meaning seaweed. “Her work is often abstract, sometimes representational, but always full of movement” (The Culture Mobile, 2010, p. 1). Throughout her career, she has developed an original aesthetic by exploring new techniques in painting as well as in engraving. By using two media, she seeks to express different facets of her sensitiveness. When asked about what kind of mission a female artist has, she answered,

Being a female artist is not a simple thing. ... art requires a deep investment of oneself, a large concentration. The mission is to convey, bequeath and share with others one’s knowledge, one’s experience. To this end, one has to be truthful, believing in what one does and leaves traces. (Chaouat, 2017, p. 3)

Female artists who rebel against artistic academic techniques define the fourth group. This group includes Ikram Al Kabbaj, Kenza Benjelloun, Reem Alaabi, Mounat Acharrat, Fatiha Tahiri, and many others. In the 1990s, another era began: a new king (Mohamed VI), a new family code (Al Mudawana), a new concept of power (more freedom of expression), new technologies (computer and internet), and new means of communication (social media). Like in other sectors of life, artists in general and female artists in particular responded to these changes and adopted new ways to express themselves. Hence, a new trend named “contemporary art” emerged.

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10 About her artistic experience, she states: “I attended the school of des Beaux Arts in Casablanca during the years 1966-70. It was the "Moroccan Bauhaus", where the birth of the "movement of Casablanca" took place: contemporary orientation of art directed towards observation, research and innovation. … The training of students was not only academic but oriented to the exploration, research, creativity, and the inspiration from our cultural heritage of a great diversity and wealth. This strengthened our action and our legitimacy in abstraction, geometric shapes, the notion of the essence of this contemporary art (very rich heritage such as arabesque forms, calligraphy, colour, material, carpets, embroidery, ceilings of the South painted with plant colours, brass, skin, tattoos etc...). All this is a great source of inspiration and continuity in the search for our identity in universal art.” Interview with Malika Agueznay in Visages du Maroc, http://visagedumaroc.org/visage/malika-agueznay/. (Accessed October 24, 2017). Translation the author.
Diverse and eclectic, contemporary art is a rebellion against the academic techniques of the third group. It is an art that requires “a dynamic combination of materials, methods, concepts, and subjects that challenge traditional boundaries and defy easy definition” (Silka, 2016, p. 6). It is much more socially conscious than any previous era in art has been and is increasingly global and diverse in its themes. “In its most basic sense, the term contemporary art refers to art—namely, painting, sculpture, photography, installation, performance, and video art—produced today. Though seemingly simple, the details surrounding this definition are often a bit fuzzy, as different individuals' interpretations of ‘today’ may widely and wildly vary” (Kelly Richman-Abdou, 2019, p. 2). When asked to define contemporary art, Professor Terry Smith, author of What Is Contemporary Art? (2009), answered: “it is a bit like trying to describe time: we all know what it is, and that we are in it, but we find it hard to say what it is” (Jackson, 2019, p.7). Visitors to contemporary art institutions, he added,

would notice that there are fewer paintings and sculptures than in the “modern” rooms. Instead, there are many texts, videos, photo series, installations, performances, and objects that don’t look like art at all. Yet these are only the tip of the iceberg. Most contemporary art is being made outside of museums, in public spaces, for temporary exhibitions such as biennials, or is being shown online. (Jackson, 2019, p. 7)

Contemporary art marks a break with modern art. It is a rebellion against the spatial frontiers. While modern art is related to indoor spaces, contemporary art is related to outdoor spaces. In essence, modern artists create their works in their work-places and display them in galleries and museums. Many contemporary artists, however, create their artistic works in factories, streets and markets and exhibit them in open public spaces (El Aroussi, 2017, p. 207).

In Morocco, a new group of contemporary male and female artists emerged between 1990 and 2013. They were brought together by their sharp criticism of political and social institutions. For instance, Hassan Eddarssi devoted his energy to drawing people and the authorities’ attentions to taking care of one of the Kingdom’s ancient zoos. Fouzi Laatiriss was interested in the social and intellectual environment from an anthropological standpoint. With the rise of conservatism and the risk of suppressing individual freedoms, Kenza Benjelloun devoted all her works to advocating for greater freedoms (El Azhar, 2016, p. 5).
Kenza Benjelloun is indeed a good example to illustrate this contemporary tendency that abolishes spatial as well as artistic frontiers. Born in 1966 in Casablanca, Kenza Benjelloun graduated from the Ecole des Beaux Arts of Casablanca in 1992 and from the Ecole des Beaux Arts of Aix-en-Provence, France, in 1995. She organized her first exhibition in 2000, the year she was awarded the second prize of Pensar con las manos organized by the Cervantes Institute of Casablanca. Since then, she has organized several exhibitions in Morocco, France, Spain, Italy, and the United States.

After the Arab Spring, the growth of fundamentalism and the expansion of radicalism, Kenza Benjelloun has devoted her art to advocating human rights in general and particularly to freedom of expression and women’s rights which seemed to be threatened with the rise to power of conservative movements and parties. She therefore criticizes polygamy, sexual harassment, sexual abuse, teenage marriage, and any forms of social injustice to which women are still subjected.
In her last exhibition, *Le Cadi de la Moudouana*, Kenza Benjelloun tackled these social issues in a satirical way. The title of this exhibition was highly symbolic. She has used the Arabic word “Cadi” as a pun. The word “Caddy” in French means a trolley of a supermarket and in Arabic the word “cadi” means a judge. Because the issue motivating the work is teenage marriage, she criticizes the new family code (Al Mudawana) that gives the judge the right to accept such a marriage. He is considered the only authority empowered to permit or deny this marriage. When he consents to such a marriage, the “cadi,” judge, according to her, becomes a “caddy,” a trolley that delivers fresh meat as it is seen in her artistic work.

*Le Cadi de la Moudouana* is a multidimensional and innovative event that includes digital creations, installations, performances, and videos. This exhibition reveals an artist who, faithful to her artistic conviction, deliberately opts for an art of protest. Her social criticism of the status of women in Moroccan society focuses on the female body. She represents how this female body is seen by men and also by laws, traditions, and social representations. She satirizes and ridicules the attitudes and social representations of this patriarchal society.

*Figure 8*. Samir El Azhar's photograph of Kenza Benjelloun: "Le Cadi de la Moudouana," 2015, used by permission from the Museum Mohamed VI of Modern and Contemporary Art.
**Challenges**

The status of women has evolved since the beginning of the 20th century. Social, legal, economic, and cultural changes have occurred, allowing women to play active roles in society. The 2011 Constitution explicitly calls for gender equality: “The man and the woman enjoy, in equality, the rights and freedoms of civil, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental character, enounced in this Title and in the other provisions of the Constitution. … The State works for the realization of parity between men and women” (Morocco’s Constitution of 2011, 2011, p. 8). The implementation of this gender equality is, however, very slow, especially in the artistic world.

Female artists struggle to become artists, to work as artists, to exhibit their work, and to assert themselves in the art scene. They face many challenges that hinder their creativity or even compel some to leave art. With an experience of more than 50 years, Shems Adha Ataa Allah, the first Moroccan woman to graduate from a Moroccan School of des Beaux Arts in Tetouan in 1960, believes that she did not get the recognition she deserves. She blames the media, art galleries, and art critics who devote more attention and space to male than to female artists. She was obliged to stop her artistic career for some time because of family responsibilities. In this respect, she stated,

I have decided to go back to painting which I had left because of my family … [A]fter the death of my husband and the social stability of my three sons, I began to spend more time in my studio at home and take care of my garden … I don't care about fame as much as I care about satisfying a psychological desire to reconcile myself with my talent and my work that I learned more than 50 years ago in the School of “des Beaux Arts” in Tetouan. (Ezzakaki, 2016, p. 3)

Amina Ben Bouchta, another Moroccan female artist, believes that parity has not yet been achieved in the Moroccan art scene. When interviewed about the obstacles she faces, she answered,

… If you analyze how much people are ready to invest, you will find that they are ready to invest a great deal of money on male artists. Many wonderful talented women are completely forgotten from the art scene because the world market is really hard. … They face difficult choices of family life. To be an artist means a full time job so it is difficult to handle a family at the same time. I was personally unable to attend a lot of residencies and to get awards because I have a family that I have to take care of. … Moroccan female artists need to go out of Morocco in order to study, to see museums, and to attend residencies, which is not easy for the

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11 In the academic year 2016-2017, I conducted a seminar on “Art Galleries in Morocco” and I asked my B.A. students to interview some female artists about challenges. The subsequent quotes are part of this assignment.
young artists who very often do not have the means for that. (Amina Ben Bouchta interviewed by Mouna Bazzi on May 9, 2017)

Reem Battal, another Moroccan artist, shares her colleagues’ point of view and refers to other issues such as sexual harassment and daily sexism:

I do not think Moroccan female artists get equal credit as men in the art world but it is not something specific to the art world. It is a general thing that women suffer from and if you happen to be an artist and a woman, of course you are not heard the same way. Women have many barriers to overcome such as ordinary sexism and harassment. Moreover, there are three main obstacles that Moroccan female artists face in the field: social pressure, sexual harassment and daily sexism. (Reem Battal interviewed by Mouna Bazzi on May 18, 2017)

Although Amina Charrat shares the same ideas with our two aforementioned artists, she believes that she was lucky. Her father was a lawyer and was fond of painting. He encouraged her despite his worries about her future on the grounds that one cannot make a living from art. She believes,

Like in other fields, we have some challenges. We do not have a law that really protects us. Also in terms of prices, the price of a man’s work is higher than that of a woman. Same thing is true for exhibitions. Men dominate exhibitions more than women. I have also noticed that female artists are not free to express their thoughts and ideas because we are conservative and we exist in men’s society. …Discrimination exists but it is not shown. It is always hidden. People think that art world is men’s world that is why they invest their money in male artists more than in females. (Amina Charrat interviewed by Mouna Bazzi on May 12, 2017)

On the other hand, Kenza Benjelloun points out that artists, whether women or men, face the same challenges. When I asked her about the kinds of difficulties Moroccan female artists face and about their relationships with art galleries, she answered:

Personally, I have not had any problem in this regard. What bothers me sometimes is to display women just for the sake to encourage female creation as if creation were a matter of women or men. … I have never had any problems with galleries. If there is any problem, it is not because I’m a woman but because of my opinions in my current exhibitions (installations, video, performance...) that are a little too frontal. "Le Cadi de la Moudouana" is an eloquent example. No Gallery has agreed to display it with the exception of the Museum of Mohamed VI at the exhibition Moroccan Female Artists of Modernity curated by Reem Laabi.
Galleries try to sell. They do not care about sex or gender. (Kenza Benjelloun interviewed by Samir El Azhar on November 5, 2017)

The Museum Mohamed VI of Modern and Contemporary Art (MMVI) hosted, from November 23, 2016 to March 8, 2017, the exhibition *Moroccan Female Artists of Modernity, 2016-1960*. To pay tribute to Moroccan female artists, the MMVI displayed more than 100 works of 26 women artists. This event, unprecedented in the MMVI, raised issues of integration and the contribution of Moroccan women artists in the history of art by offering a space for reflection on this plastic creation. To quote Reem Laabi, curator of this exhibition,

It is an exhibition that explores a specific attitude in the history of art, in this case, a distinct modernity of Moroccan women artists. In fact, they are modern because they have a view of the plural Morocco and the world. It is a voluntary choice and finally a way to look, to feel and to act …. (Laabi, 2016, p. 8)

I have found it necessary to quote at some length these artists to objectively report their struggle to overcome prejudices, correct misconceptions, and transgress taboos. Thanks to their sacrifice and perseverance, they have succeeded in asserting themselves in the art scene and have thus contributed in the richness and diversity of visual arts in Morocco. Soumaya Naamane (2016), the Moroccan sociologist and writer, believes that Moroccan female artists,

have released the female imagination and freed feminine body, portrayed with a chaste sensuality. Wise transgressors, they have overcome taboos, celebrating love, romance, sensuality, eroticism, sometimes with poetry, tenderness, sweetness and passion, sometimes with anger and severity. All the women's work is a giant fresco, which captures the history and evolution of our culture. (p. 27)

This article provides a glimpse of the contribution of female artists in Moroccan visual arts over the last 60 years. Talented, motivated, and dedicated, they have devoted their time and energy to representing, from their perspective, Moroccan social and cultural realities through their paintings. To avoid any exclusive interpretation, it is important to note that Moroccan artistic production is characterized by its diversity in techniques, trends, and contents. The Moroccan art scene includes, regardless of their gender, artists of different political convictions, plastic genres, and artistic movements, which has made Moroccan artistic experience rich and varied. Art is a human experience that transcends the limiting considerations of gender and frontiers.
References


“Your Chance to Make Your Voice Heard”: Akaliyat Magazine and the Creation of a Queer Community in Morocco

Benjamin Ale-Ebrahim

Abstract
Publicly claiming an LGBTQ identity in Morocco can place a young person under the threat of violence, both on the part of the state, which criminalizes homosexuality under Article 489 of the Penal Code, and from actors within Moroccan society who wish to uphold a heteronormative conception of Moroccan national identity. The internet, with its potential for anonymous communication, serves as a relatively free and safe space for young queer Moroccans to explore their sexuality and gender identity. Akaliyat Magazine, an internet-based publication founded in 2015, serves as one of the only Arabic-language media outlets in Morocco that focuses on providing a space for queer youth to “express themselves” and to hear each other’s stories. In this paper, I develop a brief history of Akaliyat Magazine, drawing on content from the five issues published to date as well as a 2018 interview I conducted with the magazine’s editor and founder. Drawing on the work of Mikhail Bakhtin and Richard Bauman to investigate the question of genre and its orientation to specific communities and ideologies, I argue that Akaliyat Magazine uses specific forms of address and genres of writing that work to create a community of queer youth in Morocco.

Introduction
In this paper, I investigate Akaliyat magazine, an internet-based publication founded in 2015 that is one of the only Arabic-language media outlets in Morocco that provides a space for queer youth to express themselves and to hear each other’s stories. I develop a brief history of Akaliyat magazine, drawing on content from the five issues published to date as well as a 2018 interview I conducted with the magazine’s editor and founder. I argue that Akaliyat magazine uses specific forms of address and genres of writing that work to create a community of queer youth in Morocco. I draw on the work of Mikhail Bakhtin (1994), Karin Barber (1997), and Richard Bauman (2004) to investigate the question of genre and its orientation to specific communities and ideologies. I also discuss what types of discourse Akaliyat employs to address its audience: are they addressed as Moroccan national subjects? As religious or irreligious individuals? As minorities living in a hostile environment? As oppressed people in need of liberation? I argue that Akaliyat
invites its readers to think of themselves as a community of listeners to each other’s stories, a community held together by public intimacy and affective ties of belonging (Kunreuther, 2010). By providing a space that affirms queer sexualities and gender identities, encourages debate about controversial topics such as politics and religion, and - most importantly - invites its readers to listen to each other’s stories, Akaliyat serves a critical role in the creation of queer community in Morocco.

**Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**

In his discussion of the many different types of discourse present in the novel, Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin provides a useful analytic for understanding how people use language in conversation with others. He presents his readers with the concept of “double-voiced discourse,” defined as language that is “directed both toward the referential object of the speech, as in ordinary discourse, and toward another’s discourse, toward someone else’s speech” (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 105, italics in original). Double-voiced discourse exists in anticipation of its reception by an audience; it is spoken with the understanding that it will be heard by others. This consciousness of the presence of an audience determines which words a speaker will choose to use and how they will choose to present them, or, to use Bakhtin’s (1994) words, “the individual manner in which a person structures his own speech is determined to a significant degree by his peculiar awareness of another’s words, and by his means for reacting to them” (p. 108). Double-voiced discourse speaks to its immediate audience—to the task at hand—at the same time as it imagines and anticipates a future response—a moment of audience talk-back. Although Bakhtin was primarily concerned with analyzing discourse in the analog genre of the novel, I find that this concept is particularly well-suited to understanding how communication happens in online platforms that support feedback and dialogue, such as the digitally published magazine that I discuss below.

Building off the work of Bakhtin and his concept of double-voiced discourse, Richard Bauman (2004) describes a number of different ethnographic examples from around the world of “how speakers may align their words to the words of others” (p. 128), from Irish poets to Fijian spirit mediums to Akan chiefs. He argues that genres come into being when the “mode[s] of regimenting the circulation of discourse” become standardized and formalized (Bauman, 2004, p. 158); that is, when the speaker first imagines a specific and defined audience and then associates a particular way of speaking as the appropriate way to address that audience. One must address the appropriate audience using the appropriate linguistic conventions in order to be understood as a particular kind of speaker, such as a lyrical poet, a novelist, a radio announcer, or, in this case, a member of the queer community in Morocco.

Karin Barber (1997) takes a slightly different analytical emphasis in her discussion of audiences in Africa. Rather than focusing on the choices that a speaker makes in addressing an imagined and standardized audience, as Bakhtin and Bauman do, she focuses on the productive nature of speaking in the creation of audiences, arguing that:
Performances do not just play to ready-made congregations of spectators which are out there awaiting address; they convene those congregations and by their mode of address assign them a certain position from which to receive the address. Thus performances, in the act of addressing audiences, constitute those audiences as a particular form of collectivity. (Barber, 1997, pp. 353-354)

In other words, collectively listening to others speak teaches us how to think of ourselves as an audience. We learn to understand ourselves as a collectivity on the basis of our use of shared linguistic conventions and our collective status as the intended audience of a genre. Genres and audiences are co-constitutive of each other, taking shape in tandem as specific ways of speaking and listening in relationships formalize over time.

Another way to think about this process is through the analytic of voice and voicing, as Laura Kunreuther (2010) discusses in her study of youth-focused radio programs in neoliberalizing Nepal. She argues that these programs encourage their listeners to use a “direct voice” (p. 335) in speaking about their feelings and intimate relationships when they call in to these radio shows; that is, they encourage young people in Nepal to use a voice which expresses agency over one’s feelings and which indexes a modern, urban, neoliberal self (Kunreuther, 2010, pp. 335-336). Through continued exposure to the radio programs, and from feedback given by the show’s host and from other listeners, young people in Nepal begin to adopt the linguistic features of this direct voice, coming to understand themselves and their identities in a new way: as neoliberal subjects responsible for the cultivation of marketable skills and their own individual economic success (Kunreuther, 2010, p. 343).

We can see, then, that the way in which we choose to speak in public affects how we think of ourselves as individuals and as communities. Our imagination of an audience that we hope to engage with through the use of standardized genres does more than orient our speech to an appropriate group of listeners, it actually works to bring this audience into being, shaping the members of this audience into a collectivity that starts to think of itself as sharing collective feelings, desires, and identities. Through continued exposure to certain genres and ways of speaking, we learn how to think about ourselves in new ways and begin to develop affective ties with others who are the fellow addressees of these genres. It is this complex, co-constitutive matrix of genre, audience, and voice that I wish to investigate in this paper, focusing on how Akaliyat magazine uses specific linguistic and rhetorical features to teach its audience, spread throughout the country of Morocco and beyond, and how they think of themselves as a cohesive queer community.

Queer Activism in Morocco and in the Broader Arab Context: Legal Regimes and the Role of Social Media

In order to understand how Akaliyat works to create queer community in Morocco, we must first understand some of the social and legal background surrounding LGBTQ activism in the country. According to Article 489 of the
Moroccan Penal Code, “‘unlawful or unnatural acts with an individual of the same sex’” are criminalized with the potential for punishment of up to “six months to three years in prison and a fine of 120 to 1,200 dirhams ($13-130)” (Fanack, 2018). In recent years, a number of incidents where individuals have been arrested in accordance with Article 489 have prompted public debate in Morocco, including an incident in 2004 where over 43 people in the northern city of Tetouan were arrested and charged with “‘engaging in homosexual activity’” (Fanack, 2018). This incident sparked the creation of Kif-Kif, an organization founded in 2005 by Moroccan LGBTQ activists with the goal of advocating on behalf of queer people living in Morocco. Kif-Kif was prevented from legally registering itself as a nonprofit organization in Morocco and is currently based in nearby Spain (Fanack, 2018). In April 2010, with funding from the European Union, Kif-Kif launched the first LGBTQ-focused magazine in Morocco with the publication of Mithly (Arabic for “homosexual” or, literally, “like me”) (IRBC, 2013). Over 200 print copies of the magazine were distributed in Morocco in 2010 and an online version was also published (Pfeiffer & Abdennebi, 2010). Mithly is currently out of print, however, and appears to have been inactive for some years now. According to Kif-Kif’s website, the organization has shifted its focus and now works primarily to serve the needs of LGBTQ immigrants and asylum seekers in Madrid (Kif-Kif, 2018).

Although the U.S. Department of State Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2012 contends that Article 489 is “‘infrequently enforced’” (IRBC, 2013), queer people continue to be arrested in Morocco, especially in cases where their sexuality is made public on social media. For example, in 2014 a 69-year-old British man and his Moroccan partner were arrested by Moroccan police for violating Article 489. The police used “images on both the men’s phones as evidence” for their arrest (Fanack, 2018). This case attracted attention from the British media and Members of Parliament and the British man was allowed to “return to the UK pending an appeal” while the Moroccan man involved in this case remained in prison (Fanack, 2018). Later, in 2016, after footage of a brutal homophobic attack in the city of Beni Mellal went viral on social media in Morocco, the victims of this attack were arrested and imprisoned before being released 26 days later. Two of the four attackers were sentenced to between “four and six months in prison” while the other two were released (Fanack, 2018). Also in 2016, after being filmed kissing each other on a Marrakech rooftop, two Moroccan teenage girls were arrested under Article 489 and were later acquitted following an international social media campaign using the hashtag #FreeTheGirls (تقنية لعناث in Moroccan Arabic) (Lutkin, 2016; Morgan, 2016). According to Kif-Kif, “more than 5,000 homosexuals, mostly men, have been tried by the courts for violating Article 489” since Moroccan independence in 1956 while statistics from the Moroccan Ministry of Justice indicate that “there were 81 trials involving charges of homosexuality in 2011” alone (IRBC, 2013).

Although social media platforms are used to incite the arrest of LGBTQ people in Morocco, they also serve an important role for LGBTQ activists based in the country. In addition to Kif-Kif and its now defunct magazine, a number of other queer-focused organizations have emerged to argue for the decriminalization of homosexuality in Morocco and to speak out on behalf of LGBTQ Moroccans on
digital media platforms. For example, the Aswat Collective (2018a) (*aswat* being the Arabic term for “voices”) describes itself as an organization founded in order to lead “the fight against discrimination based on sexuality and gender” (“*la lutte contre la discrimination fondée sur la sexualité et le genre*”). Aswat operates Facebook and Twitter accounts as well as publishing its own “queer, libertarian magazine” online (Aswat, 2018). MALI (*Mouvement Alternatif pour les Libertés Individuelles*) is another organization based in Morocco that describes itself as a “universalist, feminist, secular movement of civil disobedience and in defense of sexual and reproductive rights” (“*un mouvement de désobéissance civile, universaliste, féministe, laïque et de défense des droits sexuels et reproductifs*”) that advocates on behalf of women and LGBTQ people living in Morocco (MALI, 2017). In May 2018, on the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia both of these organizations used their Facebook pages to publish information in support of queer Moroccans and against Article 489 (Figures 1, 2).

**Figure 1.** Image from Aswat Collective’s (2018) Facebook page depicting two young Moroccans holding up handwritten signs saying, “I am not an abomination (*shaadh*) or a faggot (*luti*) / dyke (*sehaaqia*), I am a homosexual (*mithly*).”
Of course, Morocco is not the only Arab-majority country where queer activists are working to create change. With the exception of Jordan and Iraq, homosexuality remains criminalized in most Arab countries, with legal institutions either explicitly banning consensual same-sex activity (as in Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia) or using broader morality laws that are consistently interpreted to prohibit same-sex sexualities (as in Lebanon, Egypt, and Bahrain) (Ghoshal, 2018). While there are queer activist movements in most Arab countries, movements in Jordan, Tunisia, and Lebanon have been among the most successful in campaigning for change. For example, over 10 years ago in Jordan, Khaled Abdel-Hadi worked to found My.Kali, one of the Arab world’s first LGBT-focused magazines that is still in publication to this day (Ghoshal, 2018). In addition, in Tunisia, former President Beji Caid Essebsi recently tasked a government commission, the Individual Freedoms and Equality Committee, with drafting new recommendations on how to improve the human rights situation in the country, and among the recommendations submitted by the commission was the legalization of homosexuality (Fitzsimons,
Tunisian queer organization Mawjoudin has sponsored the region’s first queer film festival for the past two years in 2018 and 2019 (Schnall, 2019) while Association Shams, another queer activist group based in the Tunisian capital, launched the Arab world’s first LGBTQ-focused radio station in 2017 (Ghanemi, 2017). More recently, Shams’ chairman Mounir Baatour announced a long-shot bid for Tunisia’s presidency in the 2019 election, campaigning on a platform of legalizing homosexuality and promoting more expansive individual and civil rights (Knipp, 2019).

Despite progress being made in places like Jordan and Tunisia, Lebanon, and more specifically the city of Beirut, remains the Arab world’s queer capital, at least in terms of its high concentration of queer-friendly social spaces and well-established activist organizations. Two of the region’s oldest and most well-known queer organizations were founded in the Lebanese capital: Helem, founded in 2004, is a public-facing NGO that was the region’s first “above-ground” LGBT organization, and Meem, founded in 2007, is a smaller, underground group that broke away from Helem to focus more on queer women’s issues and the trans community (Moussawi, 2015). A number of gay-friendly bars, cafés, and beaches exist in Beirut that, according to anthropologist Sofian Merabet (2014), do not exactly allow for the formation of a cohesive “gay community”—since many Lebanese queer people deny such a thing exists—but rather allow for the existence of a “homosexual sphere,” “a realm that consists primarily of gendered as well as sexual symbols in relation to which queer space is perpetually produced” (p. 112). Helem and Meem, along with Beirut’s gay bars, cafés, and mediated spaces like the dating app GayRomeo (Gagné, 2012) make up the “homosexual sphere” in which queer Lebanese individuals shape their identities and form social connections with each other. Beirut’s comparatively robust queer social infrastructure serves as a useful comparative lens through which we can better understand Akaliyat in Morocco.

**Genre, Audience, and Voice in Akaliyat Magazine**

With this social, political, and regional context in mind, let us turn our attention to Akaliyat. Founded in 2015 by a single activist with the goal of “releasing a free electronic magazine concerned with the affairs of sexual and religious minorities [aqaliyat jinsiya wa diniya] in Morocco, North Africa, and the Middle East,” Akaliyat is an LGBTQ-focused organization based in Morocco that began as a magazine (majalla), became a “collective” (majmu’a) and now describes itself as an “association” (jam’ia) (Akaliyat, 2018).¹ Akaliyat maintains a Facebook page and a YouTube channel as well its own website (www.akaliyatmag.org) where it publishes Akaliyat magazine in free downloadable PDF format.² It is clear from our discussion above that Akaliyat is not alone in advocating for the rights of queer

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¹ For the rest of this paper, I distinguish between Akaliyat magazine (in italics) and Akaliyat the organization (unitalicized).

² Due to financial constraints, Akaliyat’s website, where they publish Akaliyat magazine, is only intermittently active. At the time of publication, Akaliyat’s website is inactive.
Moroccans nor is it unique in using the internet and social media to do so; what makes it stand out is its emphasis on inviting its readers to think of themselves as a community of people held together by certain narratives, framing both LGBTQ people and non-Muslims (here meaning primarily ex-Muslim atheists and converts to Christianity) as fellow marginalized “minorities” (aqaliyat in Arabic, the basis for the organization’s name) within Moroccan society.

According to Akaliyat’s founder and editor-in-chief, whom I had the chance to interview in Rabat in 2018, the organization envisions its audience as Moroccan society as a whole, not just LGBTQ-identified individuals or non-Muslims. The magazine is open to submissions from anyone living in Morocco or abroad who can write well in Modern Standard Arabic or Moroccan Arabic (darija), with the goal of framing itself as a locally-facing organization. Akaliyat prefers not to use French or other European languages in its materials in order to remain focused on its local Moroccan public. It sees its mission as advocating for freedom of expression and individual freedom for all Moroccans, not just queer people, seeking to create a space where all of those without a voice or visibility in mainstream Moroccan society can speak and share their stories. In other words, it is not just an LGBTQ organization but an organization which sees LGBTQ rights as one aspect of the broader right to freedom of expression. For example, one of the organization’s first activist campaigns was organized in opposition not to Article 489 but to Article 222 of the Moroccan Penal Code, which criminalizes the public consumption of food and drink during the holy month of Ramadan, when Muslims are expected to fast during daylight hours. Akaliyat works together with other feminist, secularist, and LGBTQ activist organizations based in Morocco, North Africa, and the broader Arab world to achieve its goals. Akaliyat aspires to be a public, officially recognized NGO, having unsuccessfully attempted to register themselves as an official organization with Moroccan authorities in 2016 (Ghoshal, 2018). Akaliyat occupies a similar position in relation to the Moroccan state as Helem in Lebanon, existing as a public-facing, rights-focused organization that is “ambiguously accepted without any official recognition” (Moussawi, 2015 p. 601).

When I asked Akaliyat’s editor about why the organization publishes content exclusively online, he told me that publishing physical copies of the magazine would put its readers in danger because the public sphere is not a safe space for LGBTQ Moroccans to be open about their identities. Until they can achieve legal protection as an officially recognized organization, Akaliyat prefers to restrict the bulk of their activity to the digital media sphere, where there is relatively more freedom of expression. Digital media platforms like Akaliyat, although they present the possibility of being “outed” to undesirable audiences like the state or homophobic members of one’s community, are the only viable tool that many queer Moroccans can use to talk with each other, to read affirming information about queer sexualities and gender identities, and to realize that there are other queer Moroccans who are facing many of the same challenges they face in their daily lives. Unlike GayRomeo in Beirut (Gagné, 2012), however, Akaliyat magazine is not a platform in which users primarily attempt to arrange in-person encounters – the focus is much more on attempting to build networks of community across the
country of Morocco and its diaspora, developing a sense of queer consciousness that is specific to the local social context.

Akaliyat is an organization that does far more than just publish a magazine. Akaliyat’s editor told me that he receives dozens of emails every week from LGBTQ Moroccans around the country asking him to help them find safe places to stay after being abused or kicked out of their homes because of their sexuality or gender expression. He told me that if a queer person experiences violence, especially in rural areas of the country, it is not safe for them to go to the police and they must rely on friends or activist networks like Akaliyat to receive support. There is a severe lack of resources that Akaliyat has at its disposal to help its readers if they find themselves in a dire situation, with the editor devoting a significant amount of his own personal time, energy, and money at his own risk to help those in need who contact him. Although the magazine was originally intended to be published monthly, these significant personal and financial constraints have resulted in the magazine publishing only five issues in its run time to date: Issue 1 in January 2015, Issue 2 in February 2015, Issue 3 in April 2015, Issue 4 in August 2015, and Issue 5 in February 2018. The magazine itself is read by people from across the country of Morocco and abroad. While the editor could not give me statistics on precisely where the magazine’s readers were located, he did tell me that the first issue of the magazine was downloaded over 15,000 times, the second issue was downloaded over 18,000 times, and the organization’s website receives over 10,000 visitors per day as of July 2018.

What types of discourse does Akaliyat magazine use in addressing its readers? Within each issue of the magazine, there are a number of different types of articles and genres of writing, including: interviews with prominent activists of Moroccan descent who serve as “guest of the issue” (daif al-`adad) and who appear on the cover, such as a feminist activist affiliated with MALI and an evangelical Moroccan Christian pastor based in Europe (Figure 3); conversations (hiwar khas) with anonymous queer and trans Moroccans who do not wish to share their name or a photo of themselves; news about LGBTQ issues and religious minorities around the world, with a focus on Arabic-speaking countries, framed as “our news” (akhbarna); articles on subjects like the possibility of same-sex marriage in Morocco and how to observe Ramadan as a gay Muslim written by Akaliyat’s editor as well as guest contributors; a question-and-answer section devoted to addressing common questions from readers and social media followers like “Are gay men always feminine?” and “Are lesbians just women who have had bad experiences with men and do they hate men?”; poetry and romantic short stories about same-sex relationships; a section written in Moroccan Arabic (darija), discussing different relevant political or social issues; recommendations on quality queer films available for free on the internet; a section entitled “what happened?” (matha hasala?) where readers describe difficult moments from their past and how they overcame them; and an open space called “my life” (hayati) where contributors are given space to write a short autobiography.

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3 The three year gap in publication is due to the organization’s financial constraints.
Figure 3. “Guests of the issue” (duyuf al-`adad) from Akaliyat Issue 1 (left), a feminist lawyer and activist affiliated with MALI, and Issue 5 (right), a Moroccan Christian pastor based in Europe.
In all of these different sub-genres within the magazine, *Akaliyat* models for its readers how to talk about queer identities from a specifically Moroccan perspective. For example, in Issue 1, in the interview with the MALI-affiliated feminist activist “guest of the issue,” the editor of the magazine asks her the following question:

Q: Whenever we talk about minorities and their rights in Morocco, we come up against a great deal of ignorance (*jahl kabir*) about the subject and confusion in understanding. Our “Arab” society specifically singles out sexual and religious minorities (*aqaliyat jinsiya wa diniya*) [for persecution]. What is your comment on this proposal, if I am correct in saying so?

A: I use the word “minorities” with caution because there are no statistics that we can use to determine the majority or the minority, and freedom of expression does not exist in Morocco that would allow each person to express their religious beliefs or sexual orientation in order for us to have access to these numbers. I also use the term “our Arab society” with caution because we do not live in an Arab society but rather a mix between many different cultures and the use of this term (“Arab”) shows persecution that is not the persecution that sexual and religious “minorities” suffer from but rather the cultural persecution and marginalization that the Amazigh have suffered for example. (*Akaliyat*, 2015, my translation)

In other words, she argues that sexual and religious minorities are marginalized communities like the Amazigh (Berber) population of Morocco, the indigenous people of North Africa to whom most Moroccans can trace some degree of ancestry and who were recently given official recognition of their language and cultural rights after a long history of persecution and struggle (Fanack, 2017; Hoffman & Miller, 2010). Like the Amazigh, she argues, so-called “sexual and religious minorities” may in fact make up the majority of the Moroccan population—there are simply no statistics out there that prove that LGBTQ people or supporters of secularism are not the majority because no Moroccan has the right to freely express their religious beliefs or their sexuality in public, Muslim or non-Muslim, straight or queer. This is a strategic mode of coalition building, encouraging LGBTQ people to think of themselves as allied to other marginalized groups who in fact make up the majority of Morocco’s population; although they may feel small and alone, there are feminists, secularists, Amazigh activists, and other groups fighting for greater freedom of expression who would be natural allies of the Moroccan LGBTQ community. Queer people, ex-Muslims, and secularists may be minorities if they seem themselves as individual communities, but taken together, they form the majority. Speaking with this sort of voice (Kunreuther, 2010), from the perspective of a minority community allied to other minorities, allows queer Moroccans to think
of themselves not as uniquely marginalized and alone but as integral members of their local communities and a diverse national public.

In another example, from the “conversation” (hiwar khas) section of Issue 3, Akaliyat speaks with a gay Moroccan police officer in his thirties who goes by the pseudonym “Rachid” (Figure 4). After describing how he realized he was gay around the age of 15, his decision to join the police force in order to evade financial hardship, and the personal conflicts he faces in being responsible for enforcing a legal system that criminalizes his sexuality, he concludes his discussion by saying:

I wish all homosexuals (mithliyin) a happy and normal life, just like anyone else, and I also hope that there will come a day when society will change its opinion of homosexuality. I think this will happen through the work of your magazine and the rest of the free media outlets that are trying to improve the situation of homosexuals in our Arab nations (dakhil awtanina al-’arabiya). I also hope that your magazine continues to exist because it shines a light on an anxious class of people that, if the magazine didn’t exist, would face increasing and deepening oppression. (Akaliyat, 2015b, my translation)
Figure 4. Conversation (hiwar khas) with gay Moroccan police officer “Rachid” from Akaliyat Issue 3.

We can see in this conversation an example of how Akaliyat invites its readers to understand their sexuality as well as how they should understand their relationship to the magazine. One “discovers” that they are a homosexual at a young age, as evidenced by the editor’s question to Rachid, “when did you discover that you were a homosexual?” at the beginning of the conversation (mata iktashfa annaka mithly an-jins?). One’s sexual orientation is understood to be an internal state that is an integral aspect of one’s individual identity that begins to manifest itself in childhood and adolescence, an idea which is reflective of the magazine’s reliance upon understandings of gender and sexuality based in the physiological and psychological sciences rather than on traditional Moroccan-Islamic notions of gender and sexuality that presume a socially-imbricated heterosexual subject. This question is a good example of double-voiced discourse (Bakhtin, 1994), with Akaliyat employing terms drawn from medical and psychological traditions in order to teach both Rachid and its readers how they should understand their sexuality and its implications for their identity.

Furthermore, it is assumed that telling others about one’s sexuality is something that one should do after “accepting” (taqabala) and becoming “convinced” (iqtana’a) of one’s “being” (kawn) a homosexual, with the editor asking Rachid, “You are convinced of being [a homosexual] and you’ve accepted your sexual
orientation - hasn’t that convinced you to tell your family and friends about your homosexuality?” (kawnak iqtana’ta wa taqabalta mayulak al-jinsy, alam yushaja’ka hatha ‘an i’lan mithliyatak al-jinsiya li-usratak wa asdiqa’ik?). Rachid responds to this question by saying that he has only confided in his identity with one or two other gay friends because they are the only people he can trust with this potentially career-destroying information, with the implication being that he feels safe confiding in them because they could also face serious ramifications if their sexuality was made public to the wrong audience. Readers of this exchange will implicitly understand that knowledge of their homosexuality is deeply powerful and it should be revealed only to those whom they can trust completely – probably only to other queer Moroccans who also have a lot to lose and therefore understand the heavy weight of this information. While voicing one’s homosexuality is an essential aspect of coming to terms with one’s identity as a queer person, one must be very careful in deciding with whom they share this information.

Also in this exchange, Rachid (and, through his voice, Akaliyat) invites readers to be affectively invested in the success of the magazine as one of the few “free media outlets” fighting on behalf of LGBTQ people in the Arab world. Akaliyat wants its readers to be aware of the precarious financial and legal status that the magazine finds itself in and that it seeks their support. If it can show that it serves as a platform dedicated to “shining a light” upon the untold stories of oppressed people living in Morocco and the broader Arab-majority region, it can stake out a claim for itself and its mission, hopefully encouraging other queer people in its audience to share their stories as well, thereby increasing the magazine’s audience and prolonging its viability. This stance is also reflected on the magazine’s website, where a button on the sidebar announces that Akaliyat provides “your chance to make your voice heard by over 10,000 visitors a day … click here to share” (forsatak li-isma’ sawtak li-azid min 10000 za’ir yawmian … inqar hona lil-mosharika) (Figure 5).
In the third substantive textual example that I would like to address in this paper, *Akaliyat* includes a conversation with a young gay Moroccan man from the coastal city of Agadir who was blackmailed by one of his neighbors threatening to make his homosexuality public. This conversation was published in the section entitled “what happened?” (*matha hasala?*) in Issue 4 (Figure 6). The young man describes how photos showing him “in very intimate states with his ex-boyfriend ‘R’” were sent to a neighbor after he lost his cell phone one day. Three days after he lost his phone, a neighbor contacted him and told him that he had “something to return to him”: “personal photos” of himself. After agreeing to meet, the neighbor then told him “you’re really handsome” and that he would “publish the photos on the internet” if the young man did not do what he asked. Scared, the young man asked what the neighbor wanted from him and the neighbor responded by saying that he wanted him to have sex with him. Despite protesting and suggesting “other solutions,” including payment of “a sum of money,” the neighbor refused to delete the photos unless the man had sex with him. Feeling as if he had no other choice, the young man reluctantly agreed. After this incident, in which he was raped violently, he describes feeling scared, hopeless, and unable to speak. A few days later, the neighbor contacts him again and demands the same thing. Again, feeling trapped, the young man is forced to agree to sex for a second time. After being blackmailed and violently raped twice in one week, the young man reports attempting suicide three times. *Akaliyat’s* editor then asks:
Q: How were you able to escape from this state of mind?

A: After my suicide attempts, I told my friends about what happened and they helped me a lot in getting out of this state of mind. One of my friends advised me to move to a different city, and with his help I moved to that city where I still live today. (Akaliyat, 2015c, my translation)

Figure 6. Conversation with young gay man from Agadir who was blackmailed by a neighbor. From “What happened?” subsection of Akaliyat Issue 4.

In this exchange, we see Akaliyat teaching its readers how to process incidents of violence that could occur to them if their sexuality is made public against their wishes. Although one could feel desperate and alone after experiencing something as horrible as what this young man went through, Akaliyat tells its readers that it is important to reach out to friends one can trust and tell them what happened – it is critical to voice these experiences, to put them in words. Developing and relying on this network of close friends is an important strategy that queer Moroccans must use to prevent them from feeling depressed, hopeless, and suicidal. Because the state and legal institutions do not support victims of rape or sexual violence in Morocco, especially if they are queer, relying on help from friends and activist networks becomes crucial.
networks like Akaliyat is vital to one’s survival as well as one’s physical and emotional wellbeing. The conversation ends on a distinctly empowering note, with the young man speaking directly to “decision makers in Morocco,” asking them, “How long will the state keep attacking homosexuals in one form or another?” “We just want to live peacefully in this country,” he says, and “we deserve protection from the state … I want to say to that neighbor [who raped me] that today I discovered that the sickness that must be cured as soon as possible is not me [as a homosexual] but you [as a rapist]” (Akaliyat 2015c, p. 23).

Conclusion

As we can see through these examples, Akaliyat magazine invites its readers to imagine themselves as a diverse community of “minorities” held together by shared political aspirations as well as affective connections. Addressing both LGBTQ people and ex-Muslims living in Morocco, Akaliyat focuses on “shedding light” upon some of the most controversial and taboo topics in Moroccan society—homosexuality and the decision not to practice Islam—that remain criminalized in the Moroccan Penal Code. Akaliyat argues that these practices are not abnormal social ills, as the Moroccan state and much of the public sees them, but rather they should be accepted and legalized in Morocco under the rubric of expanding individual freedom and freedom of expression. Although Akaliyat as an organization has distinctly secularist political leanings, it takes a neutral stance with regards to its individual readers’ relationships to Islam by publishing stories that feature the voices of both queer and trans Muslims as well as ex-Muslims of all sexual orientations and gender identities.

The many different types of interview that Akaliyat publishes function as “double-voiced discourse” (Bakhtin, 1994), allowing the magazine’s readers to hear the stories of individuals who have overcome challenges in their own personal lives regarding their sexuality, gender identity, and religious beliefs at the same as giving them discursive tools for thinking about how they can address similar challenges that they may be facing in their own lives. In the absence of an official state-sponsored regime of support for “sexual and religious minorities,” these somewhat informal and network-based practices, such as building coalitions with secular-leaning institutions and relying on trusted friends for support in difficult times, represent best practices for survival in an oppressive socio-political environment. The genre of the interview in its various forms (the “guest of the issue” [daif al-’adad], “conversation” [hiwar khass], and “what happened?” [matha hasala?]) is the most important and powerful “mode of regimenting the circulation of discourse” (Bauman, 2004) that Akaliyat employs in helping its readers develop practical strategies for dealing with their sexuality, gender identity, and religious affiliation in their own lives.

In addition, by describing its readers as “sexual and religious minorities,” Akaliyat works to create a collectivity of queer people in Morocco by “assign[ing] them a certain position from which to receive [the magazine’s] address” (Barber, 1997). This framing allows LGBTQ individuals to think of themselves alongside ex-Muslims, secularists, feminists, Amazigh activists, and others who support
individual freedoms and freedom of expression as co-minorities who, when taken together, actually make up the majority of Morocco’s population. Whether or not this is true, this framing allows queer people to imagine themselves in solidarity with others and helps them think of themselves not as marginalized and hopeless individuals but rather as empowered members of a wide-ranging community. Akaliyat attempts to create a cohesive “gay community” out of the more loosely organized “homosexual sphere” that exists in Morocco (Merabet, 2014), of which Akaliyat forms one part along with groups like Aswat and MALI. Akaliyat encourages queer Moroccans to think of themselves as a community of individuals who must rely on each other for support, an interdependent network of speakers and listeners, and a minority population deserving of political rights and freedom of expression within a legal framework.

Finally, by encouraging its readers to voice their sexuality and gender identity in a public space like the magazine (Kunreuther, 2010), or at least with a trusted group of close friends, Akaliyat encourages its readers to think about their identities from a specifically queer-affirming and localized Moroccan perspective. Using the language of sexuality and gender identity borrowed from secular physiological and psychological sciences, the magazine tells its readers that sexuality is an internal and natural aspect of one’s identity that is “discovered” in one’s youth. Coming out, or “telling one’s friends and family about one’s homosexuality,” is considered an important part of one’s journey toward “acceptance” of “being” a homosexual, mirroring the predominant narrative within Western queer communities surrounding “being out” (Duggan, 2002). Akaliyat also highly encourages its readers to share their voice by contributing an article or interview to the magazine as a way to support one of the only “free media outlets” advocating for the rights of LGBTQ people in the Arab world. It frames itself as part of a vanguard of queer organizations and media outlets, such as My.Kali in Jordan, Shams and Mawjoudin in Tunisia, and Helem and Meem in Lebanon, that are working toward greater acceptance of LGBTQ issues in Arab-majority societies across the Middle East and North Africa region.

Akaliyat magazine works to create queer community in Morocco by invoking a coalition of minorities framed as interdependent co-listeners to each other’s voices. The magazine models a supportive and affirming approach to queer identities in the absence of support from the state, Moroccan medical or legal institutions, Islamic religious organizations, and many families and communities throughout the country and in the Moroccan diaspora. By sharing intimate stories about their own journeys to self-acceptance as queer people, about how they overcame difficult challenges in their lives, and about how LGBTQ people can work together alongside other “minority” communities to achieve a political system that respects individual freedoms and freedom of expression, Akaliyat magazine and its readers serve a critical role in the emergence of queer community in Morocco.

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The Vernacular Literacy Practices of a Newly Literate Moroccan Woman: An Ethnographic Study

Reddad Erguig

Abstract

This paper offers a discussion of the literacy practices of a newly literate Moroccan woman. I draw on the social practice theory of literacy and I use ethnographic methods to explore the participant’s life history and offer an account of her family-related literacy practices within the framework of gender studies. In-depth interviews, informal discussion, participant observation, visual ethnography, and documentary photography were employed to collect data over one year. Literacy events were used as the basic unit of analysis and patterns were identified through coding and theme analysis. The findings indicate that the family is a strong impetus for the participant’s literacy acquisition and a major context where she uses the literacy skills she has developed in an adult literacy class. Literacy for this participant is an empowering tool because she has become able to carry out many of the outdoor tasks that were formerly exclusive to men. However, literacy has extended rather than reversed Imane’s home-based roles within her family. These results corroborate the findings of previous research on the embedded nature of literacy practice and illustrate the numerous ways in which the vernacular literacy practices of a participant from Morocco is embedded in a strong gender-based division of labor.

Keywords: literacy practices, emergent literacy, adult literacy, gender, ethnography

Introduction

This article offers insights into the literacy practices of a newly literate Moroccan woman. It reports the findings of a year-long ethnographic study of the literacy practices of a woman adult literacy student. Strong emphasis is laid on the opportunities and challenges she faces in relation to the literacy activities she engages in within the family domain. More specifically, the aim is to (i) examine this newly literate woman’s beliefs about and attitudes toward literacy, (ii) document and analyze her literacy practices as they take place in specific real-life contexts, and (iii) investigate how her literacy practices are part of her personal
and/or social life as a daughter, mother, and wife (this is the status of a large segment of participant in adult literacy programs in Morocco). Emphasis is laid on the degree to which the literacy skills she has developed in the adult literacy class either empower or disempower her. This study therefore addresses the following questions: how does this newly literate woman utilize her newly acquired literacy skills in the family context? In what ways is her literacy practices embedded in socio-cultural structures and in different contexts, and how is this literacy practices shaped by gender relations in her family context? What strategies does she employ to deal with the literacy problems she encounters and to learn new literacy skills?

The present study is informed by the social practice theory of literacy and presents a case study from the Moroccan context of the embedded nature of the literacy practices of an adult literacy student. As Purcell-Gates (2007) notes, “[i]t is now generally recognized that literacy is multiple and woven within the sociocultural lives of communities, but what is not yet fully understood is how it is multiple – how this multiplicity plays out across and within differing sociocultural contexts” (p. 2). Second, previous studies on adult literacy in Morocco (see review below) focused on the results of surveys and quantified achievements, but they did not fully explore the ways students use literacy in everyday life; conversely, the present article aims to cover the gap in this literature through bringing in an ethnographic perspective. Indeed, an ethnographic study of the everyday life literacy practices of an adult literacy student that stresses her own beliefs, perspectives, and voice is likely to yield results that can inform adult literacy policy, research, and instruction in Morocco.

This article is organized along the following lines. In section one, details about the context of the study are presented. The second and third sections offer an account of the theoretical framework adopted as well as the methods utilized to address the objectives of the study. After laying out the findings in section four, a discussion ensues aiming to analyze them in the light of the findings of previous research. The paper concludes with several implications.

**Context**

Since Morocco gained Independence in 1956, literacy has been a fundamental component of national policy. Successive governments have adopted different policies and various measures to eradicate illiteracy. These ranged from generalizing access to schooling among school-age children, including the encouragement of the schooling of girls in rural areas, to the organization of large-scale literacy programs targeting adults who either had never joined school or who had dropped out (Agnaou, 2002). The civil society has played a crucial role in these “illiteracy-eradication programs.” The International Literacy Year in 1990, however, marked a turning point in the national policy in matters related to adult literacy dissemination. The focus shifted from simply encouraging enrollment and increasing the number of the participants in adult literacy programs across different social groups, to place more emphasis on the quality of learning within these programs. Consequently, the priority of the department of adult literacy consisted in considering adult literacy students’ specificities and using pedagogy suitable for adults’ literacy needs (Direction de la Lutte, 2003).
Education and Training, which was adopted in 2000 and which outlines the national policy in education, made education and adult literacy a national priority. As the charter stipulates, education is the social duty of the State and literacy training is a prerequisite for socioeconomic development (Charte nationale de l’éducation, 2001; Direction de la Lutte, 2003; Secrétariat d’Etat chargé, 2006). However, statistics relative to the literacy situation in Morocco do not align with the government’s claims and goals. In point of fact, in spite of the enormous literacy efforts invested since 1956, statistics show that illiteracy and school drop-out rates are still high especially among women and girls (see table 1).

Table 1
Breakdown of literacy, school enrollment and drop-out rates in Morocco in 2006 by sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literacy rates</td>
<td>70.2%</td>
<td>47.3%</td>
<td>58.7%</td>
<td>(Haut-Commissariat au Plan, 2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(people aged 10 and up)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School enrollment rates</td>
<td>90.8%</td>
<td>86.4%</td>
<td>85.4%</td>
<td>(World Bank Report, 2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2006)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School dropout rates</td>
<td>7.72%</td>
<td>10.33</td>
<td>8.90%</td>
<td>(Haut-Commissariat au Plan, 2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(children aged 6 and up)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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In addition to being a priority in the national policy of the Kingdom of Morocco, literacy has also been the object of research in academia. A seminal literacy research project was conducted by Wagner and his colleagues between 1980 and 1986. The objective of their Moroccan Literacy Project was to study the impact of socio-cultural factors such as language, family background, preschool experience, and socioeconomic status on literacy acquisition and retention among Arabic- and Amazigh-speaking children (Wagner, 1993; Wagner, Messik, & Spratt, 1986; Ezzaki, Spratt, & Wagner, 1987). In similar terms, Afkir (2001) investigated the ways Moroccan children’s socioeconomic background shapes their socialization into a literate environment. However, one area that remains to be researched is the literacy experience and practices of Moroccan adults.

The research on adult basic education in Morocco is of two types. The first is concerned with the Moroccan government’s efforts to fight illiteracy, the obstacles that face literacy provision, and the various strategies to fight illiteracy (Essaknaoui, 1998; Maddi, 1999; Qabaj, 1998). The second type of research is based in fieldwork and is concerned with the adult students’ demographic characteristics, the reasons why they did not attend school, their motivations to enroll in literacy programs, and the literacy difficulties they face (Secrétariat d’Etat chargé, 2006). Other studies within this line of research offer an assessment of the adult students’ literacy achievements, the correspondence between the participants’ needs, and the program objectives as well as the portrayal of women in adult literacy textbooks (Aganou, 2002; Agnaou & Boukous, 2001; Ibaaquil, 2001).
These studies, however, have methodological limitations: they either rely on self-reported data collected through quantitative data collection instruments and analyzed through statistical measures (Secrétariat d’Etat chargé, 2006), or they measure the participants’ literacy achievements using school-based tests (Agaou, 2002; Iboukous & Agnaou, 2001). Literacy programs in Morocco, however, have not been studied ethnographically in terms of the participants’ actual literacy uses. The present article, which is part of a larger study, aims to fill this gap in the literature and thus contribute to scholarship on the social nature of literacy.

**Theoretical Framework**

The present ethnographic study of the literacy practices of a newly literate Moroccan woman is couched within research tradition commonly known as the New Literacy Studies (NLS) and is informed by the social practice theory of literacy, which posits that literacy is a social practice embedded in social relationships and institutions, historically situated and informally learnt. As Baynham (2004) argues, emphasis is placed on,

the social meaning of literacy: that is, the roles these abilities [reading and writing] play in social life; the varieties of reading and writing available for choice; the contexts of their performance; and the manner in which they are interpreted and tested, not by experts, but by ordinary people in ordinary activities. (p. 285)

The springboards for the present study include four seminal studies that highlight the social nature of literacy (Barton & Hamilton, 1998, p. 160; Heath, 1983, p. 196; Scribner & Cole, 1981; Street, 1984). These researchers have examined the “‘vernacular’ or non-dominant literacy practices . . . that are overlooked and ignored by the constructions of literacy elaborated by and within dominant institutions” (Barton, Hamilton, & Ivanič, 2000, p. 3). They are concerned with the ways “literacies are positioned in relation to the social institutions and power relations which sustain them” (Prinsloo & Breire, 1996, p.15).

Within the NLS scholarship, a significant body of research has been concerned with emergent literacy and has focused on exploring the outcomes of adult education in different communities. Within this line of research, simplistic claims of governments and development agencies that literacy alone leads to socioeconomic development and to women’s empowerment are questioned. Papen (2005), for example, notes that the Namibian and South African participants in the adult literacy programs she researched ignore the everyday life literacy skills they are taught in the adult literacy classes and express instead a need for a school-based curriculum because they were formerly excluded from formal education. Prinsloo and Breire (1996), by contrast, argue that South-African participants in adult literacy programs make limited use of the literacy skills they learn because they are exposed to school-based literacy practices which are unrelated to the everyday life literacy demands. Again by contrast, Betts’s (2003) concludes that, based on ethnographic study in El Salvador, participants’ low-attendance of literacy classes does not indicate their lack of motivation to acquire literacy but rather the existence of
literacy mediators who offer literacy help to the community and make literacy acquisition unnecessary. Even more interestingly, Ahearn’s ethnographic work in Nepal reveals that adult literacy acquisition has negative repercussions; that is, newly literate women engage in love-letter writing and decide to elope with their lovers, but they become powerless and cut off in cases where the marriage fails. Finally, Erguig (2017) examines the ideological nature of the national adult literacy program in Morocco, and stresses the crucial role of a strong political will in the status the mosque-based literacy program currently enjoys as the predominant “literacy sponsor.” He argues that the mosque is no longer an “ideology-free” site for the delivery of the adult literacy of reading, writing, and math to the predominantly women participants, but it has rather become a site where a moderate view of Islam is promoted and where “balanced” ideological beliefs and values are inculcated as part of a larger state policy that seeks to preserve the “spiritual security” of the nation. The present study contributes to this literature by presenting an ethnographic case study from the Moroccan context that foregrounds the multiple ways in which a newly literate woman’s literacy practices is “located in the broader patterning of social activities” (Barton & Hamilton, 1998, p. 160). In addition, this study is framed by gender theories, namely scholarship, which is concerned with the connection between adult literacy and gender equality (Molyneux, 1987; Stromquist, 1987). Molyneux (1987) made a distinction in gender interests in terms of whether they are (i) practical and lead to women’s access to and use of literacy to serve practical functions or whether they are (ii) strategic and enable women to claim their place in the world and to participate in the social-cultural, economic, and political activities on an equal footing with their male counterparts (p. 260). Robinson-Pant’s (2005) research in Nepal is another case study concerned with the processes involved in Nepalese women’s literacy acquisition and the literacy practices in which they engage. She views the link between women’s literacy, gender, and development as a dynamic process and demonstrates that literacy planners often introduce theoretical approaches to the design and implementation of literacy programs which take little account of the local teaching situations and the local participants’ beliefs about adult education. As Robinson-Pant (2000) contends, the “relationship between objectives and outcomes of a programme, between teaching methods and learning outcomes, should therefore not be seen as a simple equation to be balanced” (p. 159).

**Method**

**Design and Context**

The present study is ethnographic in nature: a multi-method approach, consisting of interviews, informal discussion, participant observation, photographs, and artifact collection, was used. These methods were deployed to gain an emic perspective and to capture the entirety of the participant’s literacy experience in order to ultimately provide a detailed, in-depth description of her everyday life literacy practices within the family domain. The approach is holistic and interpretive, and it aims to highlight the participant’s lived experience and give space for her voice.
The participant in this ethnographic study, Imane, a pseudonym, is aged 47 and lives in a popular and relatively old neighborhood of a growing urban center, Temara, which is about 7.5 miles south of Rabat, the capital city of Morocco. She is married to a military serviceman who makes around 2,500 dirhams ($280) a month, which means they are a low-income family. She is mother to three daughters: Sanaa, Nawal, and Noura aged 11, 8, and 2, respectively. Sanaa is in 5th grade and Nawal is in 2nd grade.

Imane lives in an old apartment in the same neighborhood as that of her parents’. Her nuclear family is characterized by a clear gender-based division of labor: the husband is the breadwinner and Imane is in charge of domestic chores, including the literacy-related ones. She does the housework, attends to the needs of the daughters, prepares food, and also does the shopping. Her father runs a small local business for making women’s traditional clothing, and her mother is a housewife who also works as an occasional cook. Her two brothers, 40 and 35, work as teachers of English in state-sponsored schools, and her 16-year-old sister is a high school student. She spends part of her day time in her parents’ apartment, helping her mother with the housework. To earn some money to cover her personal needs, she occasionally helps make cakes for her mother’s clients.

Along the lines of purposeful sampling (see Patton, 1990, p. 169), I selected Imane because she represents an “information-rich case . . . for study in-depth.” Although the insights the present case study offers can by no means be generalized to all newly literate women, Imane is a woman Moroccan adult literacy student who, unlike her brothers, who continued their education until they got jobs as teachers, willingly dropped out of a nearby school when she was in 4th grade against her father’s will (Imane’s father, personal communication, November 10, 2017). By her father’s account, he did not put much pressure on her to return to school (see subsection “Ruling Passions” below for a discussion of the reasons why she returned to attend an adult literacy class). In this respect, it is important to cite the national survey conducted by the Ministry of Education to explore adult basic education students’ characteristics and their motivations to enroll in adult literacy classes; the results showed that 16.4% of the adult literacy students in Morocco left school when they were either 4th or 5th graders (Secrétariat d’Etat chargé, 2006, p. 22).

Second, Imane is like thousands of women adult literacy students who attend literacy classes in addition to their family responsibilities. Interestingly, she is indeed highly motivated to improve her literacy skills as attested by her non-stop literacy learning pursuits. She attended an evening state-sponsored literacy class offered in a near-by public school in 1994 over a period of two years to learn how to read and write in Arabic, but she had to quit upon suspension of the program. When she got married in 1996, she moved to a small town where no literacy class was available. In 2004, she came back to live in Temara when her eldest daughter had reached 11 years old and was able to attend a literacy class for another year. However, she had to leave it again for family reasons. She said, “I was often disturbed because I used to take my elder daughter with me to the literacy class. When I gave birth to my second daughter, I had to leave the literacy program in order to attend to her needs” (Imane, personal communication, September 5, 2017).
Third, I have been a long-term friend of Imane’s family and regularly visited them for over 20 years; her two brothers have been long-time friends and colleagues. Such a background has indeed led to the development of a brother-sister type relationship between us. My position as a friend of the family enabled me to gain genuine access to her reading and writing practices. This social relationship with Imane was also vital in the sense that the researcher as a man could not have conducted this ethnographic study with her given the gender components in the analysis of study. However, thanks to these social ties and to the close personal relationship to her, I managed to have easy access to her day-to-day reading and writing practices. In short, despite the existence of a potential researcher bias and the fact that much of the evidence comes from the participant’s self-reported experiences, both of which should be acknowledged as a possible limitation of the study, Imane’s confidence that her collaboration is for research purposes to promote the cause of millions of Moroccan women who are eager to learn literacy resulted in an anxiety-free atmosphere wherein she willingly shared her stories about her literacy acquisition journey.

The Ethnographic Research Process

This ethnographic study aims to provide a detailed, in-depth description of a woman’s everyday life literacy practice based on field work that spans over one year. Its guiding principle was an exploration of a Moroccan woman adult literacy student’s literacy beliefs, attitudes, and practices in their entirety, with a particular emphasis on the intersection of these factors. This research experience was characterized by the author’s participant observation of aspects of the life of this woman made possible by the relationship he had developed with the participant’s family and her husband. The variety of ethnographic research methods discussed below was used to represent the participant’s perspectives and to highlight “the centrality of literacy in the patterning of contemporary everyday activities and how people act within a textually mediated social world” [emphasis in original] (Barton & Hamilton, 1998, p. 196; see also Barton, Ivanič, Appleby, Hodge, & Tusting, 2007).

In-depth interviews were conducted to collect demographic data about Imane and to explore her literacy history and former schooling experience. I also continually interviewed her (in Moroccan Arabic) to uncover the ways in which the observed and reported literacy events fit into her personal and/or social life (the interview transcripts in this article are translations from Moroccan Arabic). The interviews centered on her daily literacy practices with a special focus on the functions in which she put reading and writing to use, her roles and attitudes in the literacy events in which she engaged, and the literacy difficulties she faced. Informal conversation with her family members also helped collect additional background information about her.

I also observed Imane in real-life settings (i.e., the contexts where she interacts with written text) as she engaged in some literacy events using visual ethnography, and photographs were taken while she was involved in literacy events. I additionally asked her to report the day-to-day occasions when reading and writing were part of
her social interactions. Finally, I used documentary photography, photographing the literacy artifacts in her apartment in order to provide a vivid picture of the ecology of writing in her home. Throughout this process, I used field notes to record my observations and comments.

**Data Collection and Analysis Process**

The grounded theory approach, “a qualitative research method that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 23), was used to generate themes. I continuously interviewed Imane and analyzed data to inform the following process of data collection; data were coded and themes were generated and enriched until theoretical saturation was achieved. In this process, which took place from August 2017 through July 2018, the three ethical considerations of the participant’s informed consent, right to privacy and protection from harm were observed and explicitly shared with the participant in the study.

The basic units of analysis are “literacy events” which refer to “the occasions in which written language is integral to the nature of participants’ interactions and their interpretive processes and strategies” (Heath, 1983, p. 196). Emphasis in the analysis focused on the following five elements: (i) Imane, the participant, (ii) the activities performed by participants (i.e., Imane and the people involved in the literacy events in which she engaged), (iii) the settings in which the interaction takes place, (iv) the domains within which literacy events take place (i.e., the areas within which her reading and writing activities can be categorized), and (v) the resources, or the material artifacts and non-material values involved in the interaction. Literacy events were the springboard for the study of the literacy practices, which Street (2003) describes as “the broader cultural conception of particular ways of thinking about and doing reading and writing in cultural contexts” (p. 82).

I analyzed the ethnographic data to generate categories and identify the prominent literacy domains. The themes that emerged from the data were then identified, combined, and further analyzed with reference to the research questions raised initially. I placed Imane’s literacy practices within a gender framework, and I explored the implications of her status as a newly literate woman for her roles within a gender-based family structure.

**Findings**

In the present article, I examine the participant’s literacy practices within the family domain and analyze the ways she uses literacy in connection with the following categories: her children’s schoolwork and their health needs, shopping, having home appliances repaired, cooking, withdrawing money from the post office, checking documents, and reading mail. Before I provide a discussion of Imane’s day-to-day literacy practices, a review of her motives to return to an adult literacy class after having dropped out of school when she was in primary school is in order.
“Ruling Passions”

In my different interviews and informal discussions with Imane, religion, her children, and the daily literacy demands were her “ruling passions.” She often turned the conversation round to these topics as major reasons behind her decision to attend an adult literacy class after having dropped out of school when she was in primary school. She said, “To be frank, I attended the literacy class primarily to be able to read the Quran and for my daughters’ sake” (Imane, personal communication, September 9, 2017).

Therefore, religion is a major impetus for her decision to attend a literacy class and to recall the literacy skills she had lost after she had left school. Although the Quran and other religious information are nowadays accessible to the illiterate via audiovisual media (CDs, TV channels, and social media), Imane insisted that she wanted to be able to read the Quran as a book and to understand the teachings of Islam. She said, “I can now read short Sourates easily” (Imane, personal communication, August 8, 2017). Nonetheless, her biggest dream is to manage to read the Quran in its entirety: “I want to be able to read Al Baqara Sourate, especially the Al Kursi verses, which are posted on the wall in my sitting room in my flat” (Imane, personal communication, September 1, 2017). The second motive behind her enrollment in an adult literacy class consists of her intention to develop the literacy skill she needs to be able to help her daughters with their schoolwork. Like many parents who may be unsatisfied about the quality of education offered in some state-sponsored schools and who may be unable to hire a private tutor, Imane is intent on offering her daughters the literacy support they need to achieve school success.

Children's Schoolwork

The participant’s major family-related literacy use consists of helping her 2nd and 5th grade children with their schoolwork (see image 1). As a matter of fact, 22% of the adult literacy students surveyed in 2006 stated they joined a literacy program to better educate their children (Secrétariat d’État chargé, 2006, p. 17). Indeed, in the different interviews I had with her, she consistently affirmed that she helps her daughters learn the letters of the alphabet, read the Quran, and memorize and recite excerpts from it. In spite of being a newly literate woman equipped with only basic literacy skills, she manages to provide useful literacy help to her children because they are primary school pupils who do not yet necessitate that she should have advanced literacy skills. Thus, literacy was an enabling tool to help meet a family need. Such literacy help is part of the domestic chores she performs in a family structure characterized by a strong gender-based division of labor: “I help my daughters mainly with the Quran and math. I am also the first to read their transcripts; my husband doesn’t often read the children’s school grades because when he does, he keeps scolding them” (Imane, personal communication, September 6, 2017). In this family task, however, she at times receives help from her siblings:
My sister and brothers occasionally help my children with their schoolwork. My husband can read and write, but he doesn’t help the kids with their school tasks. He comes back from work and then he lies down . . . he watches TV and sport, that’s all . . . He has a busy schedule; he leaves home early in the morning and comes back late in the afternoon. (Imane, personal communication, May 15, 2018)

Second, Imane helps her daughters with mathematics:

Imane happily related how she was very delighted when she once managed to understand and explain to her eldest daughter the difference between the mathematical symbols of less than (<) and greater than (>). She managed to distinguish one from the other using her prior knowledge of numbers 4 and 7. She said that for her the symbol (<) looks like a “4” and (>) looks like a “7.” (Imane, field-note, February 27, 2009)

This vignette illustrates that, in addition to literacy, Imane’s numeracy practices are also embedded in her gender-based roles. Drawing on the skills she has learned at school and which she managed to remember in the literacy class, she handles the family-related numeracy tasks and helps her daughters with their math exercises.

Image 1. The participant is at home helping her daughter with a school task.

A third kind of literacy event associated with Imane’s use of literacy to help her children with their schoolwork is her practice of reading an easy reader which she performed at the request of her eldest daughter. She reported, “Yesterday, Sanaa [her eldest daughter] asked me ‘Please, mum, read this story! I want you to improve your literacy skills and to be like my classmate’s mum, who helps her daughter with schoolwork’” (Imane, personal communication, September 6, 2017). In this literacy event, Imane is invited by her daughter to read the easy reader in the aim of improving her own reading skills, and this in turn will enable her to better help her children with their school-based literacy tasks.
The literacy help that Imane offers her children is a common literacy practice in the Moroccan family in which the wife is literate. There is a remarkably strong interest in children’s schooling even among the most low-income families. Some families even take bank loans or sell real estate and other property to ensure an adequate and modern education for their children. The concern for the children’s education is also manifest in the literacy help parents offer their children and/or the evening classes’ fees they pay for them.

In terms of the social theory of literacy, Imane’s literacy uses are consistent with previous research which shows that literacy practices are purposeful and that they “are already embedded in an ideology and cannot be isolated or treated as ‘neutral’ or merely technical” (see Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Street, 1984). From a gender perspective, these examples align with the findings of previous research on the gendering of literacy: they support the view that literacy tasks within the household are seen as the woman’s task and that women tend to help their children with schoolwork and to respond to the family literacy demands more often than men (Rockhill, 1993, p. 160; see also Barton & Hamilton, 1998). The examples also show that while literacy enables her to engage in some activities formerly customarily carried out by males, it also entails more family responsibilities for her.

Children’s Health Needs

Imane also engages in literacy practices when attending to her children’s health needs. She reported, “My husband doesn’t interfere with anything. It is I who have to attend to the needs of my daughters when they are ill” (Imane, personal communication, December 23, 2017). Drawing on her knowledge that every medical box bears an expiration date, she reads labels on medical boxes to check the expiration date of the medicine she wants to give her daughters:

My daughter was sick a couple of days ago; she had fever. I wanted to give her fever syrup, and I asked my eldest daughter to re-check the expiration date. I learned that the medicine had expired, so I bought her another bottle of the syrup at the pharmacy. (Imane, personal communication, August 1, 2017)

Imane also read directions and signposts when she was taking her sick daughter to the doctor’s office:

My mother and I took my daughter to the pediatrician because she was ill. We found ourselves in front of a building where there were many doctors’ offices. I was glad when I managed to recognize all by myself the name of the “pediatrician” I was looking for. (Imane, personal communication, September 17, 2008)

These examples illustrate Imane’s gender roles enactment. As a mother administering a medicine to her daughter or taking her to the pediatrician, literacy and numeracy enabled her to accomplish her tasks and be autonomous. From a
gender perspective, also, these instances lend support to the claim that, through her literacy skills, Imane managed to fulfill her domestic obligations. From an empowerment perspective, however, literacy did not lead to a radical change in household gender roles, nor did it entitle her to perform tasks formerly performed by males only.

**Shopping**

Within the family domain, the participant also writes shopping lists at home before going shopping at “lahri,” a nearby non-self-service wholesale shop where she buys groceries and dairy:

**Interviewer:** Who does the shopping at home?

It’s me of course. You see, brother [being a long-time friend of her brothers’ entitled me to the status of an almost family member], I have to attend to all the domestic chores.

**Interviewer:** Do you use a shopping list?

I don’t use a shopping list for produce and meats. But as I buy everything else [grocery and dairy] at “lahri,” I have to use a shopping list. Without a shopping list, I would buy some items and forget others. I sometimes ask my daughter to check the shopping receipt for me.

(Imane, personal communication, September 2, 2017)

**Getting Home Appliances Repaired**

Imane’s literacy practice as embedded in her gender-based family structure is also evident in her completion of another family task: getting the home appliances repaired. For example, “when her fridge broke down, she was looking for a person to repair it for her. She went to his shop and read a note posted on the door saying that he does not work on Sunday so that people would not knock on his house door and disturb him” (Imane, field-note, September 17, 2017). This vignette illustrates the way Imane uses literacy to perform a family duty related to her current status as a newly literate wife. This is an opportunity for her to engage in social activities beyond the borders of her home and to practice her literacy skills; however, it also shows that literacy is used to serve the traditional gender-based family role and not necessarily to challenge the domination of the male in the life of the family.

Imane views the act of taking the fridge to have it repaired as a family duty assigned to her because she because she does not work outside the home. However, although she does not now aspire to be a working woman, she believes her husband would help with the housework if she had a job. As she reported, “My husband doesn’t help me with the domestic chores . . . . If I were a working woman, he would help me with the housework and would take the fridge to have it repaired” (Imane, personal communication, December 23, 2017).

**At the Post Office: Mail and Documents**

Imane’s literacy activity at the post office further exemplifies the embedded nature of literacy. She often goes to the post office to cash a check for her husband or withdraw money from his account. Such a family task usually begins as a literacy
practice in which she draws on her own literacy skills, but it turns into a mediated literacy practice when she turns to a man who assists people with form filling usually for a three to 10 dirhams fee ($0.25 to $1.15). She needs his help especially with the fields to be completed in French thanks to his knowledge of French; she also solicits his expertise in handling the post office paperwork. She said, “If I were literate, I would rely on myself and not ask for . . . [this man’s] help” (Imane, personal communication, February 30, 2017). Such a literacy event reveals overlap of two languages (Arabic and French) and two alphabets (Roman and Arabic), and highlights the idea that part of being literate in Morocco is to be able to use both languages and writing systems fluidly. More importantly, although it is primarily a family duty in which she serves a function traditionally assigned to a woman, the post office vignette indicates that Imane unintentionally interacts across gender boundaries and language/literacy resources. Because of her status as a newly literate woman and because she is not literate in French, she enters a realm formerly a male domain and interacts with a man she does not know to obtain information and solicit his literacy help.

In addition, Imane engages in reading the mail she finds in the mail-box in both her apartment and her parents’ apartment. She related to me how she had read a letter from her sister’s school about the school final examination. She said, “Yesterday, I found a letter in my parents’ mail-box and I read the name of the person to whom it was destined. I read the address too and I knew it was destined to my sister” (Imane, personal communication, September 9, 2017). Imane also related having read the cover to a letter mailed to her brother which stated:

I met Imane in her parents’ flat this morning. She happily related how she had been so delighted a few days before when she managed to decode the letters of the Roman alphabet and to read what was written on the cover of a letter (bank statement), which was destined to her younger brother. Although this was a rudimentary skill, it was for her a moment of victory and self-fulfillment. (Imane, field-note, February 27, 2018)

This literacy practice illustrates how Imane’s literacy practices are centered on her nuclear and/or extended family. Reading the cover of the mail and passing it over to the right person illustrates how literacy fits into her management of the domestic chores as a wife (within her apartment) and as a daughter and sister (within her parents’ apartment).

Finally, Imane occasionally reads documents she comes across while she is doing the housework. She related how, out of curiosity, she once read her husband’s salary statement, which she came across when she was doing the laundry:

I was about to wash my husband’s pants at home this morning when I came across a document in his pocket. It was a salary statement, and the total was in Moroccan dirhams. I knew how to read it, but I didn’t know how to convert the sum into riial (cents). I asked a neighbor’s help on how to convert it. After all, I knew how much my husband earned, but I wanted
to know for sure how much he made. (Imane, personal communication, February 30, 2018)

This literacy activity features overlap of two monetary systems that exist together in Morocco (dirham and rial). As is the case in several other literacy events, Imane is autonomous at the beginning and draws on her literacy skills and reads the document by herself, but this turns into a mediated literacy practice when she asks for her neighbor’s help. This literacy event reflects a gender-based division of labor because such a reading act was embedded within the task of her housework duties, namely the laundry. This gendered literacy practice also reflects Imane’s exclusion from detailed knowledge of her husband’s salary based on gender; because he is the breadwinner in the family where a strong labor division is predominant, he is the type of husband who does not want his wife to know details about his salary.

A second type of document Imane read at home is her marriage contract, which she came across while doing the housework:

I didn’t know what the document was about at first. It was thrown among some papers. But after reading a few lines, I recognized it as my marriage contract. I knew it when I read my parents’ and grandparent’s names on it. (Imane, personal communication, September 6, 2008)

Unlike many other occasions in which Imane faces literacy difficulties and seeks help from her daughter or neighbors, in this literacy event she manages to understand the content of the document relying on her own knowledge and literacy skills. This vignette further highlights the fact that, through literacy and her reading of the marriage contract, Imane manages to reduce her exclusion from the documentary circumstances of her marriage. This is an additional example of a literacy activity which is embedded within a domestic chore and which is strongly related to her gender-based family tasks and to her status as a housewife.

**Discussion**

In line with the assumptions of the social theory of literacy, Imane’s literacy practices demonstrate the multiple ways in which her literacy practices are embedded in gender roles and as such “are patterned by social institutions and power relationships” (Barton & Hamilton, 1998, p. 160; see also Hamilton, 1998; Barton & Hamilton, 2000). The literacy help she provides to her children with their school assignments, and her reading of shopping lists and directions highlight the centrality of literacy in her management of the household affairs. They demonstrate the ways her literacy practices are gendered and the ways they fit into her world as a wife and mother who uses literacy to maintain her traditional roles and carry out family responsibilities. These literacy practices are an assertion of her position as a person who has acquired enough skills to be autonomous when meeting the daily literacy demands and also a translation of her desire to achieve more autonomy regarding these literacy tasks. In fact, Imane constantly evaluates her social position in terms of self-worth, and she feels a positive change in her social status because she successfully meets her family literacy demands.
These findings are consistent with the results of previous research within NLS on the embedded nature of literacy. They support Rockhill’s (1993) findings that Hispanic women in Los Angeles “conducted most of the literacy work of the household, and that associated with the purchase of goods, interface with public services and their children’s schooling” (p. 139). They equally corroborate the view that the literacy tasks within the family are assigned to the mother and that “part of being a good mother is to be a literate mother” (Barton & Hamilton, 1998, pp. 172-3). Smythe (2006) similarly concludes in a study of American women’s domestic literacy work that “women’s domestic literacy work had become invisible as ‘real work’ in the home” (p. 294). Furthermore, the results obtained align with Kulick and Stroud’s (1993) contention that newly literate people “far from being passively transformed by literacy, instead actively and creatively apply literate skills to suit their own purposes and needs” (p. 31). However, it is noteworthy to know that these findings deviate from Rockhill’s (1991) observation regarding the violent conflicts women in her study experienced as their husbands opposed the shifting power dynamics resulting from the former’s decision to improve their literacy skills. Imane’s husband seems to welcome her new status and appreciate her new skills, probably because they at least extend the duties she performs for the family.

A second characteristic of Imane’s literacy practices is that they are historically situated and they reflect changes within her family roles. As a newly literate wife and mother, she still conducts domestic chores, but these roles have been extended to include literacy-based tasks beyond the borders of the family. At the post office, for instance, Imane is an example of the traditional Moroccan housewife who, besides the domestic chores of doing the housework and cooking food for the family, now engages in outdoor literacy-based activities. This supports my central claim in the present article that, far from empowering her to claim her place in the world and play leading roles in the family life, literacy places new family demands on her.

Multimodality is a third characteristic of Imane’s literacy practice. At the post office, Imane engages in a multimodal literacy practice in which two languages (Arabic and French) and two orthographic systems (the Roman and Arabic alphabets) are used. This event also draws attention to the idea of multiliteracies, the recognition that the skills and competencies required to be “literate” in contemporary culture are no longer limited to the traditional tasks of reading and writing but are extended to knowledge of how to complete forms and handle paperwork. Other literacy practices such as the reading and/or writing of shopping lists and medical labels also involve overlap of different semiotic systems: literacy and numeracy. A fourth characteristic of some of Imane’s literacy practices is that they are mediated (for the concept of literacy mediation see Baynham, 1993; Wagner, Messik, & Spratt, 1986). At the post office, she initially draws on her own literacy skills, but she later seeks a literacy mediator’s help with form filling.

Finally, to handle the everyday literacy problems and/or learn new literacy skills, Imane uses informal strategies. At the post office, she turned to the man who fills forms for people for literacy help. This example underscores the situated nature
of learning and illustrates the strategic use of “informal responses to dominant practices” in cases of difficulties (Barton & Hamilton, 2005, p. 21).

In short, from a gender perspective and within the broader social and cultural context of Morocco, the results of the present study demonstrate that literacy can be both enabling and constraining. On the one hand, literacy is enabling for Imane since it allows her to position herself as an autonomous person who can handle the outdoor everyday life family-related literacy tasks by herself. She can now check her own shopping receipt and also help her children with their schoolwork. Her gender roles also advance as she now engages in literacy-based family tasks beyond the borders of her home, including the management of the family money, which were formerly assumed by males. However, literacy does not play a liberating role in the life of Imane, who, despite her status as a newly literate woman, does not perform tasks which were formerly exclusive to males such as using her literacy to engage in income-generating activities. Thus, literacy has indeed extended rather than reversed Imane’s home-based roles within her family.

Indeed, literacy does not enable the participant to challenge the male domination of the family life or to perform tasks which are similar to her husband’s. Rather, literacy places new demands on the participant. Because she can now meet many of the everyday life literacy demands, she is expected to carry out additional family duties. Literacy therefore helps her serve her practical rather than strategic needs (Molyneux, 1987; Robinson-Pant, 2005). In short, and in line with Scribner and Cole’s (1981) argument about the use of the Vai script to serve the Vai people’s practical or pragmatic needs, the ways Imane engages with the written word shows that literacy serves as a practical response to social changes and family demands rather than a revolutionary act against the gender-based division of labor within her family.

The findings of the present study have several implications. In terms of policy, the day-to-day family-based literacy practices discussed above should be considered when implementing and evaluating adult literacy programs in Morocco. Since Imane uses literacy to respond to her children’s school-based literacy demands, adult literacy classes designed for middle-aged women should be focused, among other things, on their family-based literacy needs. These classes can be useful even if they adopt a school-like curriculum, in which case they will provide literacy instruction that may not be closely linked to the participants’ daily literacy needs but will still help them satisfy their children’s school literacy needs. Further, when designing and implementing literacy classes, the needs and constraints of participants who have to leave out their literacy classes must be taken into account.

The results obtained also have implications for adult literacy evaluation and research. While the previous studies in Morocco reviewed above (Agnaou, 2002; Boukous & Agnaou, 2001) claim that literacy classes have limited outcomes, the results of the present study suggest that they may have overstated the case, since the participant under study, for instance, manages to handle the everyday life literacy demands. Methodologically, these results also show the value of an ethnographic approach to the study of everyday life literacy practice. Instead of measuring literacy outcomes, such an approach enabled me to provide an account of a newly literate woman’s literacy practices which differs from the findings of large-scale
quantitative studies which rely on pre-designed tools and take little account of the socio-cultural context in which literacy is acquired and practiced. Further ethnographic research needs to be conducted on newly literate Moroccan women’s literacy practices across domains of literacy use and age groups and from different regions and linguistic backgrounds because studies of this nature can deepen our theoretical understanding of literacy as social practice, enrich our knowledge of their literacy use, and have implications for the design and implementation of literacy classes.

**Conclusion**

This article has offered an examination of the literacy practices of a newly literate Moroccan woman and demonstrated the complex ways in which literacy is dynamic, purposeful, and embedded within her gender-based family roles. For Imane, literacy is an enabling tool that allows her to perform additional literacy-related tasks for her family. Her identity as a wife and mother is evident in the literacy practices which she engages in, and such practices fit within her traditional roles in the family. Her gendered literacy practice thus aligns with findings of a body of literature within NSL, which shows how newly literate people appropriate literacy and adapt it to meet their own needs, hence the emphasis on human activity and agency (Ahearn, 2004; Kulick & Stroud, 1993). However, literacy does not empower the participant in the sense that it does not allow her to play roles that were previously the exclusive privilege of males such as establishing her own business, or engaging in income-generating activities, or shouldering responsibilities within the community, nor does it lead to a significant change in her family roles or relationships.

The variety of Imane’s family-related literacy practices reflects how the family is both an impetus for her literacy acquisition plans and a major locus for her literacy practice. The ways she draws on her recently acquired/recalled literacy skills show that her family needs are a strong factor for her decision to enroll in the literacy program and a major site and source of support for her literacy practice. The family domain is indeed a significant domain in which she continues to practice and “scaffold” her literacy skills and also informally learn more literacy skills (Bruner, 1985). However, her family is at times a handicap for her literacy learning pursuits as her domestic obligations are a reason why she had to drop out of the literacy class (see Tighe, Barnes, Connor, Steadman, & Steadman, 2013).

**References**


Language Debates and the Changing Context of Educational Policy in Morocco

Taoufik Jaafari

Abstract
Language is a critical basis of local identity and a vital tool for global communication. In multilingual Morocco, the issue of language instruction has been highly politicized, a factor that has contributed to poor educational practice. This article aims at providing a brief description of Morocco’s linguistic landscape together with the language policies first established in Morocco by the French colonizer. It goes on to further assess the evolution of language education policy and makes recommendations for strengthening Morocco’s multilingualism.

Keywords: Language debate, Morocco, Amazigh, Arabic, French

Introduction
Morocco, a strategically located North African country, is situated beside the Mediterranean Sea and Atlantic Ocean at the geographical intersection between Europe and the rest of Africa. This rather unique geographical location has given the country its genuine multilingual character and diverse population of European, African, Arab, and Amazighen (Singular Amazigh, plural Imazighen, a word which means “free people” and is preferred over the term Berber) who have cohabited with one another for many centuries. Morocco has always prided itself on the stability of its society, where multilingualism, multiculturalism, and multi-ethnicity have been instrumental to national and cultural identity. However, this linguistic situation which has been characterized by its richness, diversity, and complexity hides various ideological and sociopolitical conflicts. In fact, this linguistic pluralism has been a source of contention that has contributed to failing educational policies implemented ever since the political independence of the country.

There are six languages which shape the linguistic landscape in Morocco: Classical Arabic with its two varieties Modern Standard Arabic and the local Darija (Moroccan Arabic); and Imazighen languages with its variants – Tamazight, Tashelhit (Tashelhiyt, Tashelhait, Shilha) and Tarifit; and finally French, English, and Spanish.

Under French Colonization
During the French colonization of Morocco (1912-1956), France imposed French as the official language of education and administration and tried to
marginalize the two already existing languages, (Moroccan) Arabic and Amazigh varieties, which were peacefully existing side by side. In fact, among the policies that the French colonizer usually relied on to spread their hegemony and to disseminate the French language was through building modern schools. Gordon (1962) quotes a well-known French saying which claims that “when the Portuguese colonized, they built churches; when the British colonized, they built trading stations; when the French colonized, they built schools” (p. 7). That is why French was enforced in all walks of life (especially the economic and the political domains) and it even replaced the Arabic language whose status was relegated to that of a secondary language to be used only in the traditional educational system. Furthermore, the French colonizer adopted a discriminatory "divide and rule" policy through the 1930 Berber Decree to make a clear-cut segregation between the Arabs and the Berbers. This enabled them to set up a different type of school called the Franco-Berber Schools especially in the middle Atlas Mountains where they started teaching French as a first language and Tamazight as a second language to the exclusion of Arabic. Among the most famous schools they built in the middle Atlas is Tarik Ibnou Zayyad high school in the town of Azrou. El Aissati (2005) wrote:

During the protectorate period, an event of paramount importance in the modern history of Morocco, which was to be exploited by the nationalist movement of this country, is the elaboration of a decree in 1930. This decree, signed by the then king of Morocco, Mohamed V, stipulated that the areas with Berber as the dominant language -mostly rural areas- were entitled to carry on their tribal law system (droit coutumier), which had been die practice among the Berber tribes for centuries. What the French did was simply formalize these practices by law. This decree was seen by the pan-Arab nationalists as the ultimate attempt by France to separate Berbers from Arabs. (p. 61)

Surprisingly, this French policy backfired on the French colonizer because instead of the intended segregation and the desired destruction of national unity, the Arabs and the Imazighen woke up to this danger and consolidated their unification by emphasizing their common faith of “Sunni Islam” (Etheredge, 2010, p. 147) in addition to a “unified cultural identity” (Crawford, 2005, p. 172). The French aimed at “civilizing” the Imazighen through “civilizing missions” (Zouhir, 2013, p. 274) under which the Imazighen found themselves “in the cross-hairs of these recurrent European anxieties” (Silverstein, 2010, p. 14). Aitsiselmi and Marley (2008) summarize these missions on the ground that “the French belief in the mission civilisatrice ‘civilizing mission’ of their language led to a desire to create an elite who would think and act like them, whilst keeping the mass of the population illiterate” (p. 193).

In addition to these schools, the French established special schools that were devoted to the European community and to certain rich families which sided with the colonizer who promised to protect their wealth and their estates and who were made to believe that everything European in language, tradition, literature, or even people, is superior to the local one viewed as ancient, archaic, and backward. The
French did not open schools for the middle- and lower-class Moroccans, thus reinforcing and exaggerating class divides within society.

As a reaction to the newly-imposed colonial presence and introduction of French schools, the educated patriotic nationalists took the lead and founded the free schools. These schools were private and free from colonial government control rather than free of tuition. Their mission was to combat the spread of French and to retain Arabic’s cultural, national, and sacred status and identity. These schools, many of which are affiliated to the government nowadays, were mainly sponsored by militant founding fathers whose main concern was to defend the Arabic language and Islam. These schools were also used by the nationalists to inculcate in the youth a national spirit and to disseminate the ideological, religious, and cultural values integral to “Moroccan identity.” Also, through these schools, the nationalists tried to reveal the colonizer's hidden agendas and to awaken Moroccans to the fact that their identity and culture were being threatened. Moreover, the nationalists managed to raise Francophobia and succeeded in making people aware that the French presence and settlement in Morocco was not to achieve Marechal Lyautey's "mission civilisatrice" but rather to exploit the natural resources and to strengthen their hegemony over North Africa after colonizing Algeria in 1830 and Tunisia in 1881.

**Arabic**

Classical Arabic is the sacred language which derives its power and authority from God. In addition, Classical Arabic is highly esteemed although it is not spoken anywhere in all the 23 Arab countries. Classical Arabic together with Hebrew and Latin, are referred to by Anderson (1983) as classical truth languages. Classical Arabic, empowered by the existence of a great literary heritage, has a special status in Morocco and as a high variety in a diglossic situation, according to Ferguson (1959), cannot devolve into an everyday vernacular. Its usage is mainly restricted to high functions like religious sermons, literature, and academic writings. Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) as a simplified variety derived from Classical Arabic was designed to serve mostly in administrations and in the media in addition to its being the first language that pupils learn in their first year of primary education. Talking about this diglossic situation, Ferguson (1959) says,

*DIGLOSSIA is a relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language (which may include a standard or regional standards), there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature, either of an earlier period or in another speech community, which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversation.* (p. 325)
Traditionally, both Classical Arabic and MSA are considered to be the languages of prestige in Morocco. However, nowadays, it seems that French and English are considered high prestige languages in Morocco.

**Mother Tongues and Language Attitudes**

Unlike Classical Arabic and Modern Standard Arabic, Moroccan Arabic or Darija is the native language and the mother tongue of the majority of the populace. It is the non-standardized spoken form of Arabic. According to the latest census in 2014 from the High Commission for planning, more than 89.42% of Moroccans communicate in Moroccan Arabic. Moroccan Arabic dialect or Darija is gaining ground and is being used nowadays in the media and in everyday business transactions. Previous research, however, (Boukous, 1995; Bullock, 2014; Ferguson, 1959) has shown that Moroccans hold negative attitudes towards their mother tongues (Darija and Tamazight) because of the low status that these languages have in the linguistic market. In recent research on a subset of the Moroccan population, Et-tahiri (2019) investigated the attitudes of Moroccan university students towards the various varieties which shape the linguistic market, and the 520 respondents who participated in this research also confirmed this claim. The study was carried out in Casablanca (Morocco) and the respondents included a sample of university students from two faculties (Ben Msik Faculty of Art and Ben Msik Faculty of Science); both faculties belong to the Hassan II university. On a five-point Likert scale (Not at all important (1)-Very important (5)), the following table shows the low share that Tamazight and Darija (6.4% and 19.9%) occupy compared to French (33.1%), Standard Arabic (46.1%), and English (74.5%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language (Arabic and Darija)</th>
<th>Not at all important</th>
<th>Not important</th>
<th>Somewhat important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Very important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tamazight</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic (Fusha)</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
<td>64.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
<td>34.7%</td>
<td>33.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darija</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
<td>74.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Et-tahiri (2019, p. 70).*

Et-tahiri’s (2019) findings support previous research on language stratification in Morocco. Chakrani (2010), for example, uses a Language Attitudes Questionnaire to research how language attitudes affect linguistic stratification and practices among Moroccan youth. The study examined H (High) codes (Standard Arabic and French) and an L (Low) code (Moroccan Arabic) using different focus group participants. This analysis of covert attitudes shows that these languages are
not uniformly distributed along the poles of status and identity but rather are competing for both (Chakrani, 2010, p. ii).

When describing a similar linguistic situation in Egypt, Haeri (2003) noticed during her stay in Egypt that the Egyptians speak a language they do not respect and respect a language they do not speak referring, of course, to Classical Arabic (pp. x-xi). Here, Haeri (2003)’s observation can be cautiously generalized to most if not to all the other Arab countries where the modern dialects are regarded as “deviant” varieties of Classical or Standard Arabic (Alajmi, 2014; Alghamdi & Petraki, 2018), or, as Bentahila and Stevens (1985) put it, “corrupt languages” (p. 34).

Tamazight

Imazighen are the indigenous population of Morocco. According to El Kirat (2008) they are “the oldest known inhabitants of Morocco and their language is the most ancient language in the Maghreb” (p. 126). Although there are many hypotheses about the origin of the Amazigh language, its origin has not been clearly traced because of the lack or the absence of a written literature. The Imazighen speak three main dialects: Tamazight is spoken in the Middle Atlas Mountains; Tarifit in the Rif Mountains; and Tashelhit in the Anti-Atlas Souss Mountains. These three dialects are generally mutually incomprehensible and differ noticeably especially in their lexicon and their phonetic inventory.

Scholars, government officials, and associations and NGOs do not agree on the exact number of Imazighen in Morocco; for example, Boukous (1995) and Zouhir (2008) estimate the number of native Tamazight speakers in Morocco to range from 40% to 45% of the population. In this respect, Brett and Fentress (1997) in their book The Berbers state that it is difficult to estimate the numbers of Imazighen in North Africa because they say that it all depends on who is counting and who is counted (p. 5). El Kirat (2008) explains that “it is hard to give any exact estimation of the number and percentage of the Imazighen in Morocco, especially in the urban centers, for no census has ever taken this variable into consideration” (p. 127).

Ever since the independence of Morocco and after officializing Arabic in the constitution, Imazighen felt marginalized and they started a campaign to gain recognition of their culture and of their language. In fact, the Amazigh activists crowned their nearly five-decade struggle by having their language proclaimed as an official language next to Arabic in the 2011 amended constitution. Prior to the constitutionalization of their language, they managed through the Royal Institute for the Amazigh Culture (generally abbreviated in French as IRCAM, Institut Royal de la Culture Amazighe), established in 2001, to introduce the teaching of Tamazight in the primary school education. There was a problem as to which script to use in standardizing it but it was eventually agreed on using Tifinagh (an abjad script used to write the Tamazight languages). In September 2003, teaching started in 300 schools in view of gradually generalizing it to all primary schools in Morocco by 2010. Currently, Amazigh activists are asking the government and the parliament to enact further laws for the implementation of their language.
French

Although French has no legal status in Morocco and is considered one among many other foreign languages, it remains the most dominant language on the Moroccan linguistic landscape as it is used extensively in many vital sectors such as the administration, education, business, and the media, even in post-independent Morocco. Up to now, most of the administrative paperwork be it in the public or the private sector, is still written in French. No doubt, its presence in the public space reflects the economic and political power that it used to enjoy during the protectorate period. The only government domain where French is not used is the judicial system.

The maintenance of the French status in Morocco was prepared long ago during the protectorate when the French colonizer thought of creating Moroccan elites who would take over after them. These elites, some of whom were from the poor indigenous population, were made to believe that the French culture and language are the symbols of modernity and the vehicle of science as opposed to Arabic that was portrayed as only serving religious and traditional purposes. Many elites were bilingual in both French and Arabic and had high hopes of ushering in post-independent Morocco. El Kirat (2008) claims that French “plays an important role in the socio-economic and educational fields because it is highly valued (generally associated with the upper class, i.e. the rich and educated people). Until now, it is the most prestigious language, for it represents the language of the opening on the modern world” (p. 124).

English

The first prolonged contact with the English language in Morocco was in the Second World War when American military bases settled in Tangiers and Kenitra. It was taught simply to facilitate the translation from French into English and from English into French. After the independence of Morocco, English was taught together with Spanish and German as optional foreign languages in high schools. Despite the great dominance of French, the English language has managed to impose itself especially with the socio-economic challenges brought by globalization in the last two decades.

According to El Kirat (2008), “unlike French and Spanish, which are a symbol of political and cultural dependence, English has no colonial connotations [in Morocco]. Negative attitude towards French increases the positive attitude towards and popularity of English” (p. 125). In the field of education, currently, English is taught starting from the last year of the middle school in public education system until graduation from high school. Although students are introduced to English in secondary schools, some educators have recommended English be introduced in primary schools. It is assumed that the early introduction of English in primary schools will help students learn English at an early age and consequently, they are likely to be even more competitive when they embark on the labor market.

Spanish

The Spanish language is spoken by less than 6% of Moroccans, mostly in the northern regions and certain regions in the south. The presence of the Spanish
language. Many factors have helped in maintaining the presence of Spanish such as the geographic proximity and the Spanish colonization of the north of Morocco. After the political independence of Morocco, Spanish was taught as a second language in the northern part of the Morocco and as an "optional" foreign language in the rest of the country. The language lost its official status as the administrative and educational language in the North and has been replaced by French (El Kirat, 2008). However, recently, “more and more Moroccans choose to continue their studies in Spain because of its proximity to Morocco and also because of the cost of living” (p. 124).

The Language Debate and the Educational Language Policies

Morocco has experienced many language policies starting from the eve of independence. To establish a linguistic and cultural unification, and to distance itself from the colonial past, Morocco's first national educational project, decided to opt for Arabization and to adopt the Arabic language as an official language of instruction. Grandguillaume (1983) states that “... [Its] ultimate goal was to advance the Arabic language as the official and national language” (p. 153). There were many problems with this improvised policy because of the lack of a clear vision. For example, there was a significant shortage of teachers and administrative staff and the state had to recruit teachers from many Arab countries especially from the Middle East to make up for this deficiency. This shortage was mainly due to the fact that all the Moroccan administrators and teachers were educated in French only. In addition, Morocco as a newly politically independent country was still economically, socially and culturally dependent on France.

In addition, the policy of Arabization has kept gaining ground and by the year 1980, the Arabization of the primary and the secondary education was complete. However, the university level has never been Arabized for three main reasons which, according to Ennaji (2005) are as follows: (1) the language of references or textbooks in the university is either French or English; (2) the lack of teachers and professionals who master the Arabic language; and (3) the inevitable need of French in the socio-economic environment (p. 106). There has also been a long-standing bias against Arabic as a language of higher learning in the West where many Morocco professors were trained.

The varying levels of prestige, economic value, and language roles within the same nation lead to “tension” especially between Arabic speakers and Tamazight speakers. This tension reflects the prioritization of the Standard/Classical Arabic as a national language over Tamazight and Moroccan Arabic as “low” languages with no religious or economic sway. In this context, Ait Dada (2011) argues that Moroccan Arabic is seen as a “corrupt and incorrect form of Arabic, which is associated with poverty and downgrade and therefore considered to be inferior to Classical Arabic for it is neither codified nor standardized” (p. 19).

According to Ibn El-Farouk (2002), Morocco is experiencing a linguistic crisis which is not visible but persists and worsens despite the measures taken by the state. The language debates which have been going on for many years in the
hope of achieving a balanced linguistic market and a clear language policy have reduced the linguistic varieties in question to merely weapons of struggles among politicians. In fact, such “politicization and ideologization of languages made it next to impossible to craft a coherent policy” (Chahhou, 2014, p. 138). The damages of the shifting language policies which have been implemented for the last four decades did not yield any benefits for people in general and for the pupils and students in particular. Rather, they have resulted in a “chaotic” unhealthy educational system (Cheddadi, 2011, pp. 56-57) and may lead to a kind of sociolinguistic inter-ethnical conflicts (Ait Dada, 2011, p.19).

For example, after decreeing Tamazight as an official language in the constitution, the linguistic situation has been even more “complicated” as “unexpected” issues (pertinent to the educational landscape) have cropped up, including the lack of trained teachers and supervisors and the precariousness of the teaching conditions, among other things (El Kirat, 2008). The empowered Amazigh activists vehemently asked the two chambers of parliament to pass the laws which would help in implementing their language(s) in all walks of life. However, as noted previously, the main obstacle to this process concerned which of the three Amazigh varieties (Tashelhit, Tarifit, or Tmazight) to implement.

Scholars such as Fihri (2013) and Al-Wadghiri (2000) believe that the failure of the educational system is due to the policy choices that have been motivated by political considerations rather than the real needs of the majority of Moroccans. Nowadays, many voices of political leaders, academicians and intellectuals are defending Arabic against the campaigns of colloquialism, francophonization and Amazighation (Laroui, 2014). They claim that despite the negative stereotypes that have been established against the failure of Arabic, it is still the most qualified language in the country to respond to the urgent needs of education, identity, modernity and science. Fihri (2013) asserts that among the factors that should be considered while upgrading the level of Arabic and opting for the Arabization policy is the increasingly growing number of its speakers all across the world in addition to its dramatic digital presence on the internet. The number of internauts (users of the internet) using Arabic has moved from 2.5 million to more than 70 million between the years 2001 and 2011.

Darija and Education

Another controversial issue which is the subject of heated debate is Darija. Activists such as Nourddine Ayyouch, in a televised program in 2014, and scholars like Loutfi (2017) and Slaoui (2014) have persuasively advocated the use of the Moroccan Arabic or colloquial Arabic as a language of instruction. They argue that since more than 89% of Moroccans communicate using Moroccan Arabic and since it is the main mother tongue, why shouldn't it be promoted, implemented, and included in educational reform plans? They also defended their claim by referring to the UNESCO's (2008) recommendations, which suggest that children who begin their schooling with their mother tongue continue to perform better than children who have to acquire another language when they enter school (Ball, 2010). In addition, UNESCO considers the use of mother tongue in teaching to be a human right and claims that the teaching in the mother tongue helps in reducing the number
of school dropouts (Bender & Dutcher et al., 2005). In September 2018, there was a big social outcry when the ministry of education agreed to release some primary school Arabic textbooks which included, for the first time in the history of schooling, some Moroccan images with some colloquial words. In the following photo from one textbook (designed for primary school students of the second level), the three Darija words underneath the Moroccan pancakes and cookies exemplify this:

![Figure 1. The inclusion of words from Moroccan Arabic (My Guide to the Arabic Language textbook, p. 9).](image)

Many Moroccan parents criticized and condemned the inclusion of colloquial words in school textbooks designed for primary schools. They regard colloquial or Moroccan Arabic as a corrupted and incorrect variety of Arabic which is loaded with many loan words and borrowings from Spanish and French and a lot of grammatical and syntactic structures from Tamazight. This is why they could not hear of it being used neither as a subject nor as a language of instruction. Instantly, the government, through the head of the government and the minister of education, strongly reacted to this blunder. They claimed that this issue is closed for good and nobody can violate the clauses of the constitution, which decreed and officialized MSA not Colloquial Darija. Kasraoui (2018) states that “El Othmani [the Head of the government] thanked citizens for their strong stance against the use of Darija in education” adding that “their stance supported the position of the government” (parag. 4). Conversely, the Ministry of National Education defended the inclusion of Darija words as progress towards cultural relevance in the curriculum as cultural products specific to the region with no equivalents in MSA.

Decreeing Tamazight in the constitution and becoming a second official language equal to Arabic shifted the linguistic debate in Morocco because shortly after the Amazigh activists wanted to have their language incorporated in all domains of life such as the court, the administration, road signs, and public spaces in general. They asked to have their language leveled up to junior and high schools after launching it in primary education in 2003. The Amazigh activists (Assid, 2019; Errihani, 2006) even asked to have their language implemented as a language of instruction for all school subjects. For many Amazigh activists and intellectuals, the officialization of the Amazigh language was not enough as,
in many cases, the underlying goal of several language policies is simply symbolic: the goal of recognising a minority language or instituting it as a national language could be sometimes seen as nothing more than a symbolic act often seen as politically necessary. (Errihani, 2006, p. 145)

Whether politically motivated or not, the teaching of Tamazight in primary school education was hampered with different constraints including: the lack of qualified teachers, the difficulty of making the pupils get acquainted with the new script Tifinagh, the unavailability of textbooks, the teaching of a standard variety which was not comprehensible to speakers of the main varieties of Tamazight, and last but not least, the negative attitudes that most non Amazigh pupils and their families have towards the teaching of Tamazight.

An Amazigh is likely be motivated to learn a language which might be useful in his personal, social, and professional life; however, it is not surprising to see non-Amazigh speakers questioning why Tamazight should be imposed on them. In one of my seminars, I asked a student who is Amazigh but does not speak Tamazight about whether he is looking forward to learning Tamazight. Surprisingly, he said, “Why should I learn a language which would only help me one day if ever I traveled to see one of my remaining relatives in my parents’ village in the Souss region? I would rather learn a foreign useful language instead” (personal interview that took place in February, 2018).

In addition, research (Errihani, 2006; Soulaimani, 2015) has shown that the pupils who were subjected to this new experience, learning Tamazight, did not in any way learn Tamazight but rather they spent all of the three-hour-a-week sessions getting acquainted with a third somehow hard script, Tifinagh, which was added to the Arabic and Latin scripts at an early stage in their schooling. Also, the Tamazight teachers themselves were not familiar with the Tifinagh script in which they had only a three-week period training during 2003.

**French and Education**

The main debate which has been around for so many years concerns the strong linguistic presence of French in all the educational policies. All the policies have reinforced French either as a subject or as a language of instruction in public schools depending on the politicians who championed the policy. Currently, Moroccan pupils get introduced to French in their second year of public schooling and continue learning it until they graduate from high school. This means that students learn French as a subject for 11 years before they join the university. The paradox here is that after all this period of teaching, a considerable number of students, according to the 2009 report released by the *Conseil Supérieur de l’Éducation, de la Formation et de la Recherche* (2009), finish their high school with a very low level in French which does not even enable them to communicate let alone to pursue their higher studies in sciences, economics, and medicine at public institutions where all the teaching is carried out in French (p. 31).

There are many issues to highlight here concerning this big failure. First, there must be a serious problem with the teaching methodologies when after exposing
students to a language for 11 school years for a minimum of at least four hours a week, students are still unable to communicate even at a basic level. Second, Moroccan pupils, students, and people in general have changed their attitudes towards French from that strong language of power and prestige to an inferior language which is losing ground in most of the ex-colonies and even in France itself (See Table 1). Also, the French government, in the person of the French prime minister himself acknowledged for the first time ever that English is the language of the future. On the 23rd of February, 2018, Edouard Philippe said, “Bien maîtriser l’anglais, c’est mieux maîtriser son avenir : chaque étudiant, à la fin de son lycée et au plus tard en fin de licence, aura passé un test de type TOEIC, Cambridge, IELTS, financé par l’État” (Fjarraud, 2018, parag. 2). This means in English that “Mastering English well is better for securing and controlling your future. Every student at the end of their high school or at the latest at the end of their bachelor’s degree will have reached a high score in one of the English international tests like IELTS, TOEFL, or TOEIC, funded by the state.”

In another address to the students in a press conference in EDHEC Business school, Edouard Philippe said, “that English is the lingua Franca. That’s how it is. You have to speak English if you want to act and move in globalisation” (cited in Kasraoui, 2018). This clearly shows that French is losing ground in France itself and is no longer a language of academic research, modernity, and openness to the world. Likewise, French is no longer regarded as the language of the future in Morocco and even the Moroccan Francophile elites have woken up to this fact and started sending their children to English or American schools which are booming in Morocco.

**English and Education**

The above discussion leads us to another point which has been very controversial in language debate recently and which concerns the status of English in the Moroccan educational policies. English is considered to be the second foreign language in Morocco and as I mentioned earlier, it has been taught as a school subject for many years in high schools. The popularity of English at the high school level,

leads to a wider spread at the university level: largest number of registered students [reside] in the departments of English throughout the country. In the early 1970s, there were only two departments of English in Morocco (Rabat and Fez). There are more than 17 departments of English throughout Morocco. (El Kirat, 2008, p. 125)

In some English departments the enrollments of first-year students outnumber all the other departments despite the first shortlisting and subsequent placement interviews that are administered. It is worth mentioning here that the students we receive at the Ben Msik Faculty of Letters, Casablanca English department are exposed to English for a maximum period of four years, but what is striking is that during the interviews, we find that these students are more proficient in English
than in French, which they had studied for 11 years. Twenty or 30 years ago, this was not the case. We used to receive only literary or humanities students; however, for the last 15 years the number of science students has grown significantly higher.

Currently, in the department where I teach (Ben Msik Faculty of Letters, Casablanca), 68% of our students are science students. Of course, this has made us question this issue and ask about the reasons which push the students to choose to learn English instead of pursuing science. The main reasons why most of those students prefer not to join the sciences schools are first because of their weak level in French, which is the language of instruction and second because they claim to have been impressed by the teaching of English in high schools and thus prefer to study further at university. According to Buckner (2011),

> English is becoming a new means for socio-economic competition in Morocco, by appealing to upper and lower class alike. Upper class view English as a way to maintain their privilege as Morocco opens itself to the global economy. In contrast, many lower-class Moroccans, who are weak in French, see English as a means to access public sector teaching positions, a traditional channel of mobility, or to sidestep the power of French entirely and engage directly with the global economy on their own terms as low-paid labour in Morocco’s tourist industry and informal economy. (p. 21)

Although English has been developing in Morocco over the last two decades, Morocco remains to be an exception to other countries because of its heavy multilingualism heritage of its past. Arabic, Amazigh, French, and Spanish have been strongly implanted in the country’s way of communicating, thus creating major challenges in language policy and instruction. As noted earlier, because English does not have a colonial legacy in the country, it is seen, especially among younger students, as the language of modernity and future market-led opportunities. While Moroccans feel very strongly about their national identity, they do not perceive of English as a threat to it at all. Moroccan students who are strongly motivated to learn English view it as a popular language, promising opportunities and social mobility for all classes. El Kirat (2008) sums up the current status of English in Morocco by emphasizing that,

> Moroccans, in general, have a positive attitude towards English. The Moroccan government policy is extremely influential in encouraging the spread of English. Moroccan policy makers realized that international communication between Morocco and the rest of the world could not be achieved via French alone. English is the key to communication. Its status is not connected to political considerations or to ties with Great Britain or the USA. It is not viewed as a sign of colonialism or attachment to another nation as it is the case with French. (p. 126)

The issues which I have covered throughout this article in relation to the language debate(s) confirm that the chronology of the educational policies which
have been successively implemented ever since political independence have been tremendously unsuccessful (El Kaidi, 2018). Their failure is clearly manifested in the low quality of the learning output which lags behind the desired outcomes. This failing language policy and instruction has somehow contributed to a real linguistic conflict between the two official languages that make up the national identity and the first foreign but dominant language French.

Further evidence of this can be seen in the improved National Charter for Education and Training (NCET) which came into being in the year 2000 and appeared very promising to many educationalists that saw it as an improvement on the past deficiencies of the previous reforms. However, nine years later, all the hopes were dashed when many signs of its failure came out, resulting in a subsequent emergency education reform plan for which a huge budget was devoted but to no avail. In 2015, the NCET was substituted with the 2015-2030 Strategic Vision (SV) of reform, a reform which was grounded on the recommendations of the Supreme Council for Education and Training.

For the sake of this paper, I will examine only the clauses that deal with the teaching of languages as subjects and the choice of the language(s) of instruction. It stipulates that children will be exposed to Arabic and French in the two years of preschooling (the third or fourth year) with a particular emphasis on oral communication. In the primary school, the two official languages Arabic and Tamazight are compulsory throughout the level. French is also taught as a subject in all the levels. At the fourth year of the primary school, English will be introduced and taught as the second foreign language. Concerning the middle school and the high school, the same languages will be maintained with a special focus on both French and English (being taught only as foreign languages and not as a language of instruction for other subjects). At the high school level, in addition to the aforementioned languages in the three previous levels, another third optional foreign language will be introduced and this language will be Spanish. In this strategic vision, it is clearly mentioned that Arabic is the only language of instruction throughout the three cycles of schooling. The SV aims at achieving three fundamentals. The first is to achieve equity and to insure equal chances in the learning of languages. The second is to standardize the presence of the two national and official languages with their constitutional and social status. The third fundamental is to establish a progressive and balanced multilingualism.

Now after nearly three years since this strategic vision has been implemented, there are still many constraints which obstruct the incorporation of all its clauses. Last month, the language of teaching scientific disciplines came to the surface again as some members of the parliament started questioning the fact that Arabic will not serve this function appropriately since it is not a scientific language according to them. What is surprising is that the traditional political parties belonging to the majority do not themselves agree on this. Some political parties suggest either to go back to French or to use English instead. What is certain is that the fervent defenders of the Francophonie will struggle again to impose French because they are finding it harder to take a backseat and watch English become the first foreign language in
Morocco and the lingua franca of the world, in addition to seeing Arabic gain more ground and strength in Morocco.

**Recommendations**

This last section is intended to highlight the implications that can be drawn from the various issues the paper has raised. The implications range over theoretical, methodological, and socio-political areas.

The diachronic aspect is crucial for the understanding of the current linguistic situation in Morocco. This means that any linguistic description remains incomplete in the absence of a deep, coherent, and reliable understanding of the historical issues that have given rise to the current linguistic situation in Morocco and its interplay with the future of education. This diachronic outlook is likely to help researchers gain understanding of the language policy during the French protectorate and its impact on the current situation that the French language enjoys in present-day Morocco.

Multidisciplinarity is another prerequisite for examining the current linguistic situation and the future of education in Morocco. Multidisciplinarity guarantees a reliable, fair, and non-discriminatory perspective on the investigated issue. In this very context, it seems that the incorporation of sociolinguistics, the sociology of education, and the socio-historical awareness seem to be inescapable to the study of multilingualism in Morocco.

For policy makers, crafting a coherent policy should be free from any politicization or ideologization of the issue. Ideological attitudes eclipse the right to linguistic diversity and legitimizes the suppression of certain languages deemed to be corrupted or inaccurate (e.g., Darija). Language policies should provide an even playing field for the different national languages in Morocco. Moroccan Arabic or Darija and Tamazight are the native languages and the mother tongues of the majority of the populace.

The attitude of policy makers and intellectuals should be directed towards the potential that these languages hold for the improvement of the quality of education especially at the elementary levels. Research findings clearly show that learners benefit from using their native language in education in early grade years. Concerning the officialization of Tamazight, as El Kirat (2008) correctly argues “the state would be compelled to promote its usage and to accept it as a legitimate language for all social activities, including the formal settings” (p. 125).

Research should be directed towards exploring the systematic properties of Moroccan Arabic. These properties can help place Darija on solid academic footings compared to well-studied languages such as Classical Arabic and French. In addition, mass media should work towards valuing the status and role of Moroccan Arabic, especially towards helping Moroccans reconsider the negative attitudes held towards their mother tongues.

Situated within its socio-political and socio-historical context, it seems that the officialization of the Amazigh language is far from achieving its desired result as a “real” socio-political outlet. Therefore, decreeing Tamazight in the constitution and becoming a second official language should be coupled with the political will to
provide the necessary support to this long-repressed national language on concrete footings (e.g., revising textbooks, training teachers, etc.).

Finally, the status and role of English in the Moroccan educational policies should also be revitalized in light of its current national and international socioeconomic role, compared to French. English should be introduced as a medium of instruction at least for the teaching of science.

Recent educational reforms in Morocco (NCET, the Emergency Plan, and SV) have embraced the principles of linguistic openness, calling for the establishment of a progressive and balanced multilingualism. However, more concrete and realistic steps should be taken by the government policy makers towards ensuring that national and international languages are enjoying the same socioeconomic privileges and support as French.

Conclusion

El Kirat (2008) argues that “strong sentimental attachments to a language are not always accompanied by language use, nor by a desire to actively promote it. But only people and communities can keep a language alive” (p. 128). I would like to conclude by questioning whether the multilingual situation in Morocco has ever been taken as the starting point for educational policy makers. There are many pragmatic recommendations and solutions which have been suggested in academic symposia, conferences, and research studies in this regard, but unfortunately, these proceedings and publications have been mostly ignored, stored, and shelved in libraries. Hopefully, this article will find more attentive and receptive audiences interested in supporting Morocco’s multilingualism.

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Moroccan Society’s Educational and Cultural Losses during the Years of Lead (1956-1999)

Brahim El Guabli

Abstract

In this article, I argue that political repression during the Moroccan Years of Lead (1956-1999) engendered myriad losses in the fields of education and culture. However, the scholarly focus on the embodied effects of state violence on former prisoners and forcibly disappeared individuals has overlooked the intangible damages both education and culture sustained during this period. In investigating the imbrication of political conservatism, educational reform and censorship, the article opens a more critical space for the conceptualization of the broader implications of the Years of Lead for education and culture. Drawing on several primary sources in Arabic and French, including documents of the Moroccan Student Union (UNEM), Lamalif issues, and ERC’s final report, I examine how educational and cultural loss was constitutive of the experience of Years of Lead. Combining close readings with historical analysis, this article is an invitation to broaden the scope of scholarly investigation of the multilayered ramifications of statal political violence on socio-economic and cultural fields in Morocco.

Keywords: Years of Lead, culture, education, loss, potential, retraditionalization, authoritarianism, Lamalif, Souffles/Anfas

We don’t know yet the extent to which repression impacted the production and creativity of academics, music, theater, cinema, visual arts, literature, [and] the press, both written and audiovisual (Fakihani, 2005, p.163).

The Moroccan “Years of Lead” (1956-1999), also known as sanawāt al-jamr wal-raṣāṣaṣ, al-sanawāt al-sawdā’, les années de plomb, les années de la braise, and les années noires were decades of multilayered losses due to state violence. Describing the decades between Morocco’s independence in 1956 and the passing of King Hassan II in 1999, the Years of Lead were half a century of systematic violence against dissidents in the midst of the power struggle that pitted the monarchy against its opposition (Hay’at al-inşāf, 2006a, pp. 51-53). Although much work has focused on the embodied violence victims experienced during this period (Hay’at al-inşāf, 2006a, pp. 51-117), less tangible losses the state inflicted on
Moroccan society during the Years of Lead have yet to be examined in theoretical terms. For example, there was loss of socioeconomic and cultural potential due to the isolation imposed on the regions that housed former detention centers (Hay’at al-inṣāf, 2006b, pp. 37-38). Additionally, not only did the Years of Lead leave their scars on their direct victims, but they also exacerbated the fear of institutions and undermined the democratic, economic, and artistic prospects of Moroccan society (Hay’at al-inṣāf, 2006c, pp. 68-72; Fakihani, 2005, p. 163). Since preventing a people from achieving their full potential in any field is a form of loss, this article aims to reveal the processes that led to the intangible and difficult-to-quantify losses that authoritarianism inflicted on Moroccans through the examination of the impact the Years of Lead had on education and culture.

I argue that education and culture were areas in which the Years of Lead had a significant, albeit understudied, damage. In this regard, Rachid Benmokhtar, a former minister of education, has declared that “[t]he opposition between the monarchy on the one hand and the political parties on the other hand made Morocco lose forty years of development.” (Akalay, 2017, para. 10). According to Belmokhtar, “[i]nstead of taking care of development, much time was spent on power struggles.” (Akalay, 2017, para. 10). The striking absence of academic studies that ground their analysis of the present state of Moroccan education and culture in the repressive Years of Lead requires that I craft this analysis based on written sources. Consequently, I draw on original documents of Union Nationale des Etudiants du Maroc (National Union of Moroccan Students, UNEM) collected by Claude Palazzoli in his book Le Maroc politique (1974), some issues of the monthly journal Lamalif, and the Equity and Reconciliation Commission’s (ERC) final report to theorize how political retraditionalization, cultural attrition, and educational losses are interconnected during the Moroccan Years of Lead. In investigating loss in education and culture as a fundamental aspect of this violent period in Moroccan history, this article paves the path toward a broader scholarly engagement with the intangible effects of authoritarianism. The article also provides a retrospective understanding of the chronic ills that continue to haunt Moroccan educational and cultural fields today.

**Retraditionalization of Education during the Years of Lead**

Education and culture were ideal candidates for political repression during the formative years following Morocco’s post-independence in 1956. Clifford Geertz (1973) has defined culture as a “system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life” (p. 89). In Morocco’s post-independence context in which both the monarchy and the nationalist movement were negotiating the configuration of power, both contenders understood that monopolizing educational and cultural outlets was key to establish control over society and the political system that would define the new nation-state. In fact, even before Morocco’s independence, Moroccan nationalist leaders made access to a modern education a crucial stepping-stone toward liberation (El Ayadi, 2009, p. 199; Monjib, 2013, p. 7). In the post-colonial period, however, education and culture were one of the terrains in which the conflict between the monarchy and its
opposition played out. This very fact turned education into a battlefield in which were fought out political disagreements over the future of Morocco. Culture and education were cornerstones of the monarchy’s strategy to retraditionalize the political system by reviving pre-colonial mechanisms of authority despite the opposition of the progressives who advocated the establishment of a democratic state. However, the victory of retraditionalization by the enthronement of Hassan II in 1961 dealt, as an academic would later write, a strong blow to the “modernist flow in Moroccan culture,” which “was subjected to a real operation of political abortion whose harbingers appeared in the aftermath of March 23 [1965] [education-related] events in Casablanca” (al-Naḥḥāl, 2013, para. 5). Noureddine Afaya, the philosopher who made this statement, has thus attributed Morocco’s failed modernity to repression in the fields of culture and education.

The strive to quell dissidence in 1960s and 1970s shaped the Moroccan state’s attitude vis-à-vis education. In a much-referred-to interview with Jean Daniel, the director of the French newspaper Le Nouvel Observateur, King Hassan II was reported to have connected education to dissidence. In Hassan II’s opinion, educated Moroccan youth either turned to Marxism or joined the ranks of the opposition (El Kaidi, 2018, para. 7). This royal skepticism vis-à-vis education was translated into an active endeavor “to convince the ruling class that the massification of education represented a mortal threat to the socio-economic equilibrium and the worldview on which the regime is [sic] founded” (Monjib, 2013, p. 7). Also, this desire to halt universal education in the 1960s coincided with the firing of Abdallah Ibrahim’s government, which undertook fundamental socio-economic reforms in all fields and strove to preserve the autonomy of the prime minister’s office (Daoud, 2019, pp. 159-160; Kably, 2011, pp. 660-661). UNEM, which was created to represent all Moroccan students in 1956, blamed the recantation of the “generalization, unification, Arabization, and Moroccanization of cadres” on the royal decision to sack Ibrahim’s government to prevent modernization (Palazzoli, 1974, pp. 422-423). Even the ERC has recorded a historian’s assessment of the Years of Lead as “a transitional period during which the educational system [witnessed] the assassination of critical thinking and the replacement of the younger generations’ learning of love of the homeland and its territory […] with a superficial education that relied on an artificial history” (Hay’at al-insāf, 2006c, p. 72). The assumption underlying this statement is that critical thinking bred dissidence and “real” history infused people with a spirit of resistance, both of which were not encouraged during this period.

A progressive school was antithetical to the monarchy’s retraditionalizing project. Morocco’s independence created a clash of visions of the nascent nation-state between a traditionalist camp that rallied behind the monarchy and a more progressive camp that wanted to establish a democratic polity (Kably, 2011, p. 658, 661). While the monarchy was surrounded by former French Protectorate administrators, caïds, rural notables, and officers, the progressive camp brought together different factions on the left of Ḥizb al-Istiqlāl (Independence Party) as well as members of the newly formed Armée de libération nationale (National Liberation Army). The two principles that cemented this camp together was the
establishment of a constitutional monarchy in which the king reigned without ruling and continuing the struggle for the complete liberation of all Moroccan territories (Hay’at al-insâf, 2006b, p. 51; Kably, 2011, pp. 655-656). Retraditionalization resulted in royal absolutism, which ended 44 years of colonial modernity by 1960. Reflecting on retraditionalization, Laroui (2005) underlined the fact that instead of the anticipated modernity, the monarchy “erased [the colonial reforms] one after the other” (Laroui, 2005, p. 23). Concepts, such as *bay’a* (allegiance) were reinvented and constitutionalized to further legitimize the royal power (Hammoudi, 1997, p. 13). Moreover, political retraditionalization was accompanied by a return of annual religious festivals to entrench the “dynastic, territorial and cultural” continuity of the Alawite monarchy despite the Salafis’ protests (Valensi, 1990, p. 280). Not only that, conservative values as well as mosque education were promoted in the media and state institutions (Kably, 2011, p. 665). In both school and politics, the triumph of retraditionalization terminated “an experience in which a Moroccan humanism could have been born” (Daoud, 2019, p. 174). Therefore, conservative politics deprived Morocco of the myriad possibilities that could have emerged from “a synthesis between Moroccan traditional, religious culture and modernity” (Daoud, 2019, p. 174).

The revival of religious education undergirded political and societal retraditionalization during the Years of Lead (Kably, 2011, p. 665). Mohammed Chafik, a pedagogical inspector and former director of the prestigious College Royal, where princes and princesses still receive their education, was recruited in the context of May 1968 events in France to prepare “a more technical report on the pedagogical value of Quranic education that was dispensed in the mosques” (Aït Mous & Ksikes, 2014, p. 46). Chafik recommended dismantling the religious education system because, in his very unreserved words, “education in the *msids* [mosques] is one of the main causes of our civilization lag” (Aït Mous & Ksikes, 2014, p. 46). Against Chafik’s conclusion, the king instructed his minister of education to generalize this education; a decision that Chafik would later explain by the fact that *msid* education has historically furnished the Moroccan state with its best servants because, always in his controversial phrasing, it teaches a “culture of submission” (Aït Mous & Ksikes, 2014, p. 47). Chafik’s highly disputable statement about Islamic education shows how deep the cleavage was between the conservative monarchy and the modernist current in society. Speaking to the consequences of this system, Khadija Merouazi, a human rights activist, declared that the state’s education strategy “contributed to the creation of the […] submissive Moroccan citizen” (Hay’at al-insâf, 2005, para. 13). Princeton-trained sociologist Mohamed Guessous also accused the state of using schools to “create generations of hyenas” (Guessous, 2016, n.p.). The distrust of education by the authorities was reflected in Guessous’s (2016) assertion that “considered school a threat and education a tool for the training of agitators” who become “opponents of the dominating economic, social and political regime” (para. 3). Guessous’s analysis of the demonization of education was twofold: first, he showed that the dominant discourse attempted to delegitimize the importance of the modern school; second, in using the *dabu’* or hyena metaphor to describe the new generations of Moroccan students, Guessous referred to the fact that school curricula did not teach critical
thinking skills. Paradoxically, as Monjib (2013) has revealed, in the midst of the generalization of religious education, the royal palace requested the assistance of the French embassy to order French first grade curricula for the crown prince (p. 10). This means that retraditionalization in education was not designed for all Moroccan children.

**Colonial Precursors: A Protracted Legacy**

The Moroccan state had a model to follow in its revival of religious education in parallel to a modern school. Acting as France’s first resident general in Morocco between 1912 and 1925, Lyautey bequeathed Moroccans a dual educational system. This system included pre-Protectorate, religious schools as well as the modern school system that was established in 1912. While the former was accessible to all children through mosques and Sufi orders, the latter was only available to the lucky few Moroccans who joined the *écoles des fils de notables*. This colonial educational system was governed by multiple discriminatory and intelligence-based considerations, which all aimed to educate some Moroccans just enough to serve the state without endangering the indigenous way of life (Knibiehler, 1994, p. 490).

In accordance with Lyautey’s vision to spare Moroccans colonial modernity, he instituted a policy that continued to prevent Moroccan students from attending French universities until 1930 (Vermeren, 2011, p. 56). Colonial education was also hierarchized and organized according to class (poor/notables), location (rural/urban), professions (agricultural and industrial schools), religion (Jewish/Muslim), and languages (Berber/Arabic) (Chafiqi & Alagui, 2011, pp. 29-30). By the end of its 44 years of direct rule in Morocco, France’s most impactful achievement was the establishment of an elitist system that served a very small number of Moroccans (al-Jābiṛī, 1972, p. 18). This same system has been reinvented to be the key to the future and a passport to education in engineering, medical, and business schools abroad in contemporary North Africa (Vermeren, 2005, para. 5).

This Lyauteyan model was there for the Moroccan government to guide the reforms it undertook in education in the heated political climate of the 1960s. In response to students’ increasing political commitment, education was reformed to stave off the revolution of the educated generations. Controlling foreign languages became central to the state’s strive to prevent political commitment among students. For example, Moroccan students in the 1960s acquired solid linguistic skills, allowing them to read Marx, Engles, Gramsci, Lenin, and Mao Zedong, when they joined the university. This fact turned French into a revolutionary tool that the ruling class attempted to withdraw from ordinary Moroccans. Vermeren (2011) has written that Hassan II “limit[ed] students’ access to primary school, then secondary school, [then] he start[ed] the Arabization, cancel[led] the teaching of ‘subversive’ topics (European history, philosophy, sociology), and then put[s] an end to educational cooperation [with France]” (p. 57). In this context, depoliticizing the youth was Arabization’s main function in the 1960s and 1970s. Although the king, at least in in his public statements, was in favor of bilingualism (El Ayadi, 2009, p. 201), he did not hesitate to Arabize education when the class interests of his opponents converged with his conservative politics (El Ayadi, 2009, p. 196).
Therefore, there is reason to think, however, that Arabization, albeit a demand of Moroccan nationalists, was used to prevent future generations of Moroccan students from accessing revolutionary ideas.

**Student Protests and Security-Driven Reforms in Education**

UNEM, the national student union, opposed the conservative monarchy and became the incubator of the Moroccan student-led revolutionary thought. Although Moroccan students played an active role in the construction of Moroccan nationalism during the colonial period, their activism after independence was mistrusted by the monarchy. A depoliticized organization when it was established in 1956 to represent all Moroccan students, UNEM’s first four years were uneventful (Palazzoli, 1974, pp. 400-401). However, the student union took a radical turn in the aftermath of the split within the Independence Party in 1959 and the sacking of Ibrahim’s government in 1960 (Palazzoli, 1974, pp. 400-401). Its 1963 Azrou Manifest called for “the abolition of the regime [as] condition sine qua non to extricat[ing] the country from the open or latent crisis with which it has not ceased to wrestle since independence” (Palazzoli, 1974, p. 419). In the face of the all-out political repression of political parties and student activism at the peak of the Years of Lead, UNEM stressed that its historical responsibility required that Moroccan students work toward “overthrowing the current regime and seiz[ing] of power by popular, revolutionary, democratic and legitimate organizations that represent the people” (Palazzoli, 1974, p. 421). These radical positions of the body representing Moroccan students, high school students included, induced security-driven reforms that aimed to reduce the number of students admitted into the educational system.

These security-driven, rather than pedagogically-oriented, reforms triggered the explosion of post-independence frustrations in Casablanca on March 23, 1965. Minister of Education Youssef Belabès had proposed a bill in February 1965 to institute an age cap on students’ access to high school (Brouksy, 2005, para. 2). By proposing to prevent students who were aged 16 or more from passing final middle school exams, the minister intended to decrease the number of students in increasingly politicized high schools (Daure-Serfaty, 1993, p. 29). Moreover, these proposed measures were disadvantageous to working class families at a moment when the lucrative jobs left behind by former French employees as well as thousands of qualified Moroccan Jews would be available for educated Moroccans (Miskīn, 2019, para. 3). As a result of the announcement of this reform, Morocco witnessed the first post-independence urban rebellion on March 23, 1965. Instigated by UNEM, which became the de facto “spearhead of the opposition” (Kably, 2011, p. 665), thousands of students protested peacefully in Casablanca on March 22. These student protests ended in a bloodbath on March 23 (Brouksy, 2005, paras. 7 & 8). When parents and the unemployed joined the protests, the army intervened, turning the peaceful protests into a carnage; leaving 500 to 1,000 dead according to social memory (al-Sanūsī, 2009; Laffort, 2009, p. 43).

Up until the establishment of the ERC, this rebellion was relegated to oblivion. However, ERC’s final report unsilenced the history of this educational revolt and established some important facts about it. In addition to refuting the official version
of the events, which “put the [death] toll at seven dead,” ERC confirmed the death of 50 protesters (Hay’at al-inṣâf, 2006a, p. 91). ERC’s report has also specified that “a large number of the 31 victims died of gunshot wounds in the skull and rib cage,” including three children under the age of 10 (Hay’at al-inṣâf, 2006a, p. 75). Not only did the ERC officialize the existence of higher numbers of dead, but its investigative work brought more journalistic and scholarly attention to this foundational urban uprising.

Security concerns also impacted humanistic disciplines, specifically sociology and philosophy during the Years of Lead. For instance, the Institut de sociologie, which played a crucial role in the effort to decolonize social sciences, practice sociology as an “activist-oriented” discipline, rather than a “sociology on demand,” and subsequently train generations of Moroccan sociologists, was closed in 1970 (El Idrissi, 2017, p. 193). May 1968, the rise of the Moroccan Marxist-Leninist Movement (MMLM), and the state’s wariness of contact between researchers and populations created an adverse climate to sociological work. Evoking the events of this period, Zakya Daoud (2007) has observed that,

The authority suspected the institute of training evil spirits [italics in the original]. Morocco has no need (for) these birds of bad omen that sociologists are. Once the institute was shut down, sociology was replaced by theology, and [the country] plunged into tradition and social archaisms were encouraged. (p. 141)

Abdelkébir Khatibi, the then director of the institute, downplayed Daoud’s observations. In his response to Daoud’s assertions, Khatibi refuted the institute’s political role and foregrounded its academic mission and the diligence of its students (Khatibi, 2008, p. 35). While expressing his consternation at the government’s decision to shutter the institute, Khatibi attributed it to the prevalence of resistance to critical and analytical inquiry among politicians (Khatibi, 2008, p. 35).

Philosophy did not fare any better. The Arabization of the discipline put an end to 40 years of francophone philosophical practice in Morocco. When philosophy was Arabized in 1971, Tahar Ben Jelloun, a then unknown philosophy teacher in high school in Casablanca, left Morocco to live in France. Years later, Ben Jelloun would say that the “Ministry of Interior decide[d] to Arabize philosophy in order to prevent Moroccans from learning how to think, to doubt, and to reflect. So, we [would] Arabize and teach Islamic thought [instead]” (Sorel-Sutter, 2015, p. 160). Indeed, in tandem with the Arabization of philosophy and the onslaught on sociology, Islamic studies were introduced in order to Islamize the Marxist youth (El Ayadi, 2004, p. 114). El Ayadi (2004) has argued that by the time Islamic Studies became a department during the academic year 1979-1980, philosophy, which they replaced, became “the victim of the state’s new religious doctrine” (p. 118). Consequently, Islamization and Arabization of academic disciplines were entrenched even as the Moroccan monarchy consolidated its authoritarian grip on the country.
Intellectual work was also denigrated in these disadvantageous circumstances for education and culture. Intellectuals, especially the ones endowed with “advanced theoretical training,” in the humanities were met with disregard and suspicion (Monjib, 2013, p. 7). Analyzing Hassan II’s attitudes toward intellectuals, including himself, Abdallah Laroui (2005), Morocco’s prominent historian and philosopher, has written that “[f]or a long time, Hassan II ignored me as he ignored tens of other intellectuals who prefer to write in Arabic” before adding that,

Hassan II did not like those of his subjects who lived abroad for a very long time or pretended to have original ideas. […] [Hassan II] was only at ease among technicians, who are content with finding solutions to the problems that he brought to their attention (engineers, jurists, physicians, littérateurs, etc.). He also got along very well with the traditional “ulamā” who were also, in their own way, technicians of speech and psychological manipulation. (p. ix)

Adil Hajji, a Moroccan intellectual, has explained Hassan II’s attitude toward intellectuals by his traditional training (Dalle, 2011, p. 625). Accordingly, Hassan II understood the intellectual as a learned person who “knew the texts, the scriptural sources, the Quran, history, and language.” (Dalle, 2011, p. 625). Thus, the critical intellectual had no place in this traditional understanding of intellectual work (Dalle, 2011, p. 625). This royal disregard of highly educated citizens was true across the board, even vis-à-vis educated Moroccan Jewish Communists (Benbaruk, 1990, p. 51). Hassan II’s preference for technicians and technocrats was probably due to the wrong assumption that their work is not premised on the existence of freedom compared to their humanistic counterparts. Whereas authoritarianism can cohabit with technical modernity, as is the case in places like China today, freedom and free thought are more challenging to accommodate. Therefore, this disregard for intellectuals was merely a reflection of an official view of educated people and education’s place in society.

However, instead of placing all agency with King Hassan II, it is important to underline that Moroccan political parties also facilitated the constraints imposed on education. For instance, immediately after March 23, 1965, Mohammed Benhima, the new Minister of Education, charted a detailed reform program. This reform plan included pursuing the generalization of primary education, introducing a selection process in high school to orient students to specialties that better suited their abilities, instituting bilingualism as a policy, continuing educational cooperation with France, and improving the quality of education (Adam, 1966, pp. 223-224). However, the Independence party accused the minister’s plan of “undermin[ing] the foundations of [the nation’s] personality as well as the unity of the country by destroying the mother tongue; [and] its cultural unity, which is based on the national language, the language of the Quran” (Adam, 1966, pp. 224-225). King Hassan II snatched the initiative from the Independence party and, according to former minister Mahjoubi Aherdan,
ordered the institution of the five obligatory prayers in all universities and schools, [and] the addition of a course of religious education, which will be taken into consideration to sanction a student’s success regardless of their grades or language of education. (Aourid, 2019, para. 1)

As El Ayadi rightly has noted, the convergence between “religious reformism of the Istiqlāl party” and the “monarchy’s religious fundamentalism” accelerated the implementation of the “Arabization-Islamization of education” (El Ayadi, 2004, p. 117). Therefore, political parties cannot be entirely absolved of their share of responsibility for the lost potential of the Moroccan education system.

Today’s discussions of the pathetic state of Moroccan education lack the historical depth. A better contextualization of education and culture within the politics of the Years of Lead could explain how repression thwarted the establishment of a progressive and egalitarian school system. It is true that international bodies’ reports rank Morocco very low in terms of the quality of education (for instance, UNESCO), but these reports do not ground these rankings in historical contexts to illuminate the political origins of the failure. A systematic study of the impact of the establishment of an authoritarian regime on the country’s move toward educational modernity could elucidate the various ways in which the rupture it instituted in both politics and society forestalled the potential of Moroccan education. Moroccan’s rush toward private schools and foreign-language-based education today does not emanate from society’s natural evolution but is rather a consequence of the country’s failure to reverse the nefarious effects authoritarianism-dictated policies had on education. It’s both state and society that are paying the price for the sabotage of any progressive educational reform since independence. The social and human cost of Morocco’s lagging behind in education is now threatening to the state because of “civic disengagement, social delinquency and political deviance” (Berrada & El Aoufi, 2007, p. 4). Confirming these scholarly conclusions, none other than the official Haut Commissariat au Plan (2007) has warned that “it is highly probable that any development strategy is doomed to fail” if Moroccan human capital is not rehabilitated (p. 66); a belated realization that, for sure, emerged from the exigencies of neoliberalism and economic globalization, but which fails to contextualize the attrition in Morocco’s educational system in the legacy of the Years of Lead.

### Cultural Attrition during the Years of Lead:

**Banned Cultural Journals**

Cultural production, writ large, sustained multiple losses during the Years of Lead. Sociologist Abdellatif Ezzine (n.d.) has rightly suggested that it is critical to investigate “censorship and the different restrictions that targeted thought and culture in their critical dimension” during the multidecade Years of Lead (para. 1). Ezzine (n.d.) even suggested that culture lived its own Years of Lead. Following on Ezzine’s proposition, I foreground the significance of cultural losses the Moroccan cultural scene registered due to state violence. A combination of censorship and weakening of the legal guarantees for publishers silenced cultural outlets that
challenged the state or provided a critical approach to Moroccan affairs (Hay’at al-inṣāf, 2006, p. 38). Over the years, many important newspapers, such as al-Muharrir, and cultural journals Lamalif (1966-1988), Aqlām (1964-1982), al-Thaqāfa al-jadīda (1974-1984), al-Zaman al-maghribī (1980-1984), al-Jusūr (1981-1984), and al-Badīl (1981-1984) were banned or pushed to bankruptcy through frequent seizures (al-Sāwrī & al-Qaṣṭālī, 2014, pp. 72-76; Anoual, 1984, p. 4), thus depriving Moroccan society of their valuable contributions to public debates. The mere absence of these publications from the public arena and the suppression of the voices for which they served as a platform was a consequential loss that scholarship has yet to account for.

Souffles/Anfas (1966-1973) is the cultural and political journal whose loss has been studied the most (Fondation Laâbi, 2016; Harrison & Villa-Ignacio, 2015; Sefrioui, 2013,). Souffles/Anfas was MMLM’s cultural outlet and the publication that set the tone for the radicalization of the Moroccan youth after March 23, 1965. The termination of Souffles/Anfas’s publication in 1972 dealt a huge blow to Moroccan leftist thought. Indeed, Souffles/Anfas played a crucial role in creating a new language and disseminating a leftist consciousness among both francophone and Arabic-speaking readers. However, the tendency of francophone scholars to present it as the main driver of intellectual transformation in Morocco is a risky project. It has had the reverse effect of overshadowing the foundational work of other cultural magazines during the same period. For instance, while Souffles/Anfas adopted a rejectionist attitude vis-à-vis political parties, which was in line with MMLM’s accusation of legal political parties of reformism (al-Shawi, 2015, p. 112), other publications, such as Lamalif and Aqlām, treaded more tactically to survive. Unlike Souffles/Anfas’s short-lived experience, these journals managed to sustain their existence for decades, neither compromising their editorial convictions nor betraying their critical positions, thus making a long-term impact on both society and politics. Yet the long-term impact Arabic and francophone Moroccan journals had on culture and politics still demands a comprehensive study.

In terms of numbers, Arabic journals suffered the most from the Years of Lead. Because of their larger readership, Arabic cultural outlets also played a crucial role in creating a critical cultural scene in Morocco. Not only did Arabic journals contribute to the emergence of a Moroccan school of thought, but they also put this local thought in dialogue with other intellectual traditions from both the East and the West. For instance, journal Bayt al-Ḥikma translated articles by Michel Foucault, François Ewald, Jacques Derrida, Claude Lévy-Strauss, and Julia Kristeva, among others (1985, issue 1, April 1). Al-Jusur’s articles also included translations of Aleksei Tikhonov’s work on Soviet planning and Jacques Attali’s work Sovietism (1981, issue 2, June 1). Nonetheless, authoritarian Morocco could not cohabit with the analyses Moroccan and foreign intellectuals disseminated through these cultural platforms. As a result, the journals al-Thaqāfa al-jadīda, al-Zaman al-Maghribī, al-Jusūr, and al-Badīl were banned at once in 1984 (Anoual, 1984, p. 4). Commenting on the administrative decision to close these cultural journals, Annual (1984), the daily newspaper, interpreted this act as an “abortion of innovative activities” in the cultural field (p. 4). Anoual also saw in banning these journals an act of silencing that aimed to isolate serious intellectual work from
Morocco’s “Arab and global environment” (*Anoual*, 1984, p. 4). In *Anoual*’s analysis, the ban of the four journals “reflected repression’s sensitivity toward the progressive cultural action” and signaled that this decision was bad news for the rest of the cultural institutions that they might be targeted as well (*Anoual*, 1984, p. 4). The shuttering of several media outlets at the same time was meant to shock and terrorize cultural actors that the state had limitless power over their existence.

The early cultural outlets of Amazigh cultural expressions were also repressed. Neither Amazigh activists nor their cultural production were spared the generalized experience of loss during the Years of Lead. Upon Morocco’s independence, Arab nationalism’s irredentism combined with the Jacobin state model erased Amazigh identity from the public sphere. The persistence of the legacy of the so-called *Berber Dahir*, which was supposedly passed by the French Protectorate in 1930 to divide Arabs and Berbers in Morocco through French-Berber schools and the application of customary law to Berber areas, contributed to the negative attitude toward Amazigh cultural expression. Even worse than the *Berber Dahir* was the fact that the leaders of the coups d’états against Hassan II in 1971 and 1972 were Amazigh. However, the cultural field was the area in which repression of Amazigh rights was most manifested in the 1980s. For example, Ali Sidqi Azayku, an Amazigh activist, historian, and littérateur, was accused of posing a threat to the safety of the state because of an article he published in the first issue of journal *Amazigh: revue marocaine d’histoire et de civilisation* in 1981. Entitled “*Fī sabīl mafhūm ḥaqīqī lithqāfatina al-ṭaniyya*” [toward a real conceptualization of our national culture], the article was a revisionist attempt to question the connections between language, Islam, and national culture in Morocco. In driving a wedge between Islam and Arabic, Azaykou refuted the argument whereby Arabic as the language of Quran was used to eliminate Amazigh. Azaykou showed that the Quran did not invent a new Arabic with the advent of Islam in order to demonstrate that claiming Amazigh culture and being Muslim were not mutually exclusive (Azaykou, 1981, p. 41). Azaykou’s article constituted a frontal attack against the advocates of Arabization, who falsely linked the primacy of Arabic to Islam and preached incessantly the need to replace foreign languages with Arabic in order to promote a national culture while acting in an entirely contrary manner in their own lives. (Maddy-Weitzman, 2011, p. 99)

However, the price was a year in jail for Azaykou and the prohibition of the journal. With the ban of *Amazigh: revue marocaine d’histoire et de civilisation*, “Amazigh cultural movement was deprived of any activity” until the early 1990s (Rollinde, 1999, para. 11).

The end of *Lamalif*’s journey in 1988 was probably the most significant loss of a cultural platform during the Years of Lead. *Lamalif* (لا), which means NO in Arabic, was one of the most important journalistic experiences in Moroccan
history. Started by Jacqueline David (Zakya Daoud) and Mohammed Loghlam in 1966, *Lamalif: Revue Mensuelle, Culturelle, Economique et Sociale* initiated a different kind of journalism in Morocco. Combining coverage of culture, economy, society, and in-depth analyses of specific issues in a monthly journal, *Lamalif* targeted readers from across the social and political spectrum (*Lamalif*, 1966, p. 5). The conspicuous NO gracing its third page could not be more explicit in terms of the journal’s position vis-à-vis the Moroccan state throughout the period of its publication. Established in the tumultuous context of the state of exception (1965-1970) and the brutal attack on opposition political parties, *Lamalif* incarnated the mission of the “fragmented” Moroccan left without being a political party (Rollinde, 2002, p. 149). However, *Lamalif*’s editors’ success at striking a balance between their role as journalists/intellectuals and critics of the socio-political and cultural conditions in Morocco granted the journal longevity and allowed it to reach 200 issues that shed critical light on a host of issues of interest to Moroccan society. *Lamalif* rehabilitated intellectual reflection through a journalistic practice that has both the “critical gaze and the necessary autonomy to analyze, comprehend, and react to society in which [the journalist] lives.” (Rollinde, 2002, p. 150). By 1988, Lamalif was “a reference for a whole democratic current,” thus posing a threat to the state (Rollinde, 2002, p. 151). Just as *Lamalif* reached the pinnacle of its success by the publication of its 200th issue, Daoud and Loghlam shut down the magazine in a last activist act against authoritarianism. Rather than accepting a humiliating compromise with the authorities to publish articles by the powerful Minister of Interior and confining *Lamalif*’s distribution to university campuses (Daoud, 2007, p. 323), Daoud and Loghlam terminated the existence of their journal. The disappearance of *Lamalif* from Moroccan newsstands in 1988 was synonymous with the end of a most elegant and subversive way of saying NO to power. It also meant the loss of the longest existing and one of the most successful cultural journals in Moroccan history.

Even today, it is difficult to compare *Lamalif* to other journals. The balance between political independence, intellectual integrity, and critical engagement with societal questions was *Lamalif*’s mission statement from the start. In its first editorial entitled “Ce que nous voulons,” (this is what we want) *Lamalif* announced its identity and explained the three axes that defined its mission. In displaying ﱪ on its covers, *Lamalif* (1966) rejected the prevalent feelings of negativity in Moroccan society and presented itself as “an optimistic journal [...] driven by hope, confidence, and certainty” (p. 5). Representing a project of hope in the morose Years of Lead required *Lamalif* to be a “journal that is resolutely open, open to all, to all professions, all intellectual tendencies, from all sides” (*Lamalif*, 1966, p. 5). *Lamalif* presented itself as part of most Moroccan people’s shared vision to “create a new state of mind, lift taboos and walk steadfastly toward the future” (*Lamalif*, 1966, p. 5). In delineating its cultural, economic, and social nature, *Lamalif* used a

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I had incorporated some ideas from this section into the proposal of the *Lamalif* anthology I am co-editing with Professor Ali Alalou. Although my work on *Lamalif* predated my partnership with Professor Alalou on the anthology, I would like to acknowledge the discussions I have had with him about the journal in the last two years.
very subversive definition of culture as “contestation, questioning, so renovation, because it is the profound expression of a people, its problems, aspirations, and its own reality” (Lamalif, 1966, p. 6). Finally, Lamalif’s self-chosen mission to provide analyses and studies of socio-economic and cultural questions did not prevent it from interest in literature and art, which it served immensely over 22 years of its existence.

The special dossiers, which Lamalif promised to publish on a monthly basis, were the location in which its 200 issues made a breakthrough in Moroccan thought and social debates. Opening up new breaches in the walls of social and political taboos, Lamalif published issues entitled “Yesterday and today’s crazies” (issue 81, 1976), “The war on cannabis” (issue 4, 1966), “ELECTIONS, TOMORROW?” (issue 10, 1967), “Che Guevara” (issue 16, 1967), and “Is there a Jewish question in Morocco” (issue 21, 1968), among others. The cover of its penultimate issue was dedicated to the “Language debate” in Morocco (issue 199, 1988). From women’s rights to religiosity in the French banlieues and Morocco’s multilayered belonging to the Maghreb, Africa, the Middle East, and the Mediterranean, Lamalif brought significant depth to the journalistic practice in Morocco. The combination of information, analysis, and reflection on the deeper implications of the topics discussed in its pages made Lamalif a true forum for cutting-edge analyses about and theorization of a different Morocco. The premature termination of Lamalif’s publication in 1988 has since deprived generations of Moroccans of the benefits of these theorizations.

Lamalif’s survival under repression should not, however, be interpreted as a sign of democracy. In fact, Lamalif survived for 20 because its editors succeeded at navigating Morocco’s uncertain political situation. Loghlam and Daoud’s knowledge of when their work would be tolerated and when it would invite a backlash allowed them to practice their profession carefully. For instance, Lamalif did not cover MMLM members’ trials nor those of the soldiers involved in the coups d’états in 1970s. Additionally, unlike Souffles/Anfas’ support of independence in Western Sahara, Lamalif’s positions vis-à-vis this issue was closer to the authorities’. This aptitude to be critical and also careful when criticism is a risky endeavor helped Lamalif to stay a critical voice in an authoritarian climate for two decades. Nevertheless, a financially successful and intellectually autonomous journal could not be tolerated by the authorities. It only took one sentence about the Moroccan state officials’ habit of making people wait in its 200th volume for the journal to come under fire. This would ultimately lead to the termination of its existence.

In 1994, six years after the publication of Lamalif was stopped, Zakya Daoud provided an insightful reflection on the journal’s experience. Daoud remembered an independent, successful, and conscientious journal that should not have disappeared from the Moroccan cultural landscape. According to Daoud (1994),

all our collaborators in the beginning were part-time workers and volunteers. However, they slowly became permanent in their jobs and received remuneration. Our commercial means had also been developed.
By 1988, Lamalif was 90 pages-long and used full color (quadrichromie), especially in its covers which were reserved for Moroccan paintings, in an [an effort that reflected] a nationalist aesthetic will. Also, our independence has always been preserved, and Lamalif had never any money issue, which was very rare [in the press sector]. It would have continued to exist indefinitely by its own means. (p. 162)

However, what Daoud did not say was that this very success was the reason Lamalif had to cease existing. Since the journal was not struggling enough financially, the authorities must have known that a compromise with the editors was impossible. Daoud (2007) would later reveal that the Minister of Interior complained of the “enormous” nature Lamalif’s sales, which reached 12,000 copies a month (p. 322). This number might sound insignificant in 2019, but it was quite momentous for a mostly illiterate society in 1988. Even Souffles/Anfas did not reach such numbers in its heyday in 1960s. For the Minister of Interior, these high sales indicated that Lamalif was not just read by the francophone elites, but also by ordinary Moroccans. To prevent Lamalif’s critical voice from seeping even deeper into society, the minister offered the publishers the possibility to sell it on university campuses only (Daoud, 2007, p. 322), a solution Loghlam and Daoud rejected, and, instead, closed the journal out of their own volition. The pressure to put an end to Lamalif’s publication in 1988 cannot but evoke the continuity of the same mistrust of education and culture that reigned over Morocco since independence.

The ERC and the Immaterial Losses in Education and Culture During the Years of Lead

Upon the recommendation of the Conseil consultatif des droits de l’Homme, King Mohammed VI put in place Morocco’s ERC on January 7, 2004 (Hay’at al-inṣāf, 2006, p. 16). Its founding decree tasked the ERC with “nonjudicial” prerogatives that “include[d] the inquiry, the investigation, the assessment, the arbitration, and the recommendation” about the past arbitrary detention and forced disappearance (USIP, 2009, Article 6). The same decree limited ERC’s mandate to finding the truth about past violations of human rights without determining individual responsibility for them (USIP, 2009, Article 6). Specifying ERC’s temporal prerogatives, Article 8 of the decree stated that the ERC was created “to deal with the violations committed during the period from the independence to the date of the royal approval creating the Independent Commission of Arbitration in charge of compensation of the victims of forced disappearance and arbitrary detention” (USIP, 2009, Article 8). This period roughly covered Morocco’s independence in 1956 through the passing of King Hassan II in 1999. Compared to other transitional justice experiences, ERC had one of the longest temporal periods in the world (Groupe de travail, 2009, p. 8).

The royal decree establishing the ERC also engaged in a crucial terminological exercise. The decree defined what was meant by “Gross human rights abuses,” “Forced disappearance,” “Arbitrary detention,” and “victim” (USIP, 2009, Article 5). Closely connected to these definitions and based on the signification given to
them, reparation, which is the corollary result of a claimant’s established victimhood, is also defined by the decree as,

all measures taken for the victims because of the material and moral damage sustained by them or by their legal successors as a result of forced disappearance or arbitrary detention, as well as the general and collective measures. The reparation of damage may take different shapes and be put into practice through various measures such as compensation, readjustment, reintegration, rehabilitation, the preservation of memory and guarantees against the repetition of the violations. In case the victim died or her fate could not be determined, the reparation of the damage will be affected in favor of his/her heirs or legal successors. (USIP, 2009, Article 5)

It’s all too clear from the stipulations of the decree that ERC’s investigations and reparation work were tailored to focus on the tangible damage arbitrary detention and forcible disappearance inflicted on individual victims. Indeed, ERC’s priority was to resolve individual suffering and addressing the needs of the direct and indirect victims of the Years of Lead. After all, it was thanks to the mobilization of these victims and their families that the state was forced to undertake the ERC process. Moreover, the violence done to the educational system and cultural production platforms lacked the brutal tangibility of political disappearance and its consequences, which explains it not being a priority. Despite the constraints of its mandate, ERC was able to chart a path for a future examination of losses in education and culture.

ERC was able to transcend the limitations of its founding decree’s focus on individual victims. Not only did ERC succeed at assessing how state violence sabotaged Moroccan society’s potential beyond the direct victims, but it also elucidated “[t]he relationship between violations and socio-economic issues,” which it made recommendations to redress (Hay’at al-inṣāf, 2006c, p. 66). ERC’s final report contains an important analysis of the impact of “violations on the fields of education and culture” (Hay’at al-inṣāf, 2006c, p. 71). In a summary of the discussions during a workshop dedicated to “educational and cultural reforms” organized on March 8, 2005, the panelists’ comments included in this section shed light on the imbrication of state violence and attrition in education and culture. According to the participants, violations in the field of education and culture “stifled creativity” and led to the “beginning of the end of the individual and the citizen” (Hay’at al-inṣāf, 2006c, p. 71). The panelists also argued that the violations in the “cultural field impacted creativity, including poetry, the novel, [and] music” (Hay’at al-inṣāf, 2006c, p. 71). Because associations working in the fields of education and culture were targeted, the country’s creative potential was repressed (Hay’at al-inṣāf, 2006c, p. 71). Always according to ERC’s final report, the reforms undertaken in education “were insufficient, and the educational system remained as it was in the past.” (Hay’at al-inṣāf, 2006c, p. 71). This assessment paints a bleak picture of a society in which 48% of the population was illiterate (Hay’at al-inṣāf,
and which missed its rendezvous with the open horizons of modernity in 1960s (Hay’at al-inṣāf, 2006c, p. 71).

Delving into the contradictions of the educational system, ERC emphasized the unevenness between languages in Morocco. Arabic and Amazigh languages were disadvantaged by French’s predominance in business, administration, and higher education (Hay’at al-inṣāf, 2006c, p. 71). This confirmed the suspicion that Arabization in the 1960s sought to limit working classes’ access to foreign languages to protect the interests of the elites. Amazigh language was specifically presented as having been sacrificed by both the state and media. The identity-related ramifications of this sacrifice of Amazigh language was a symbolic rejection of the marginalized Morocco (Hay’at al-inṣāf, 2006c, p. 71), the one inhabited by the Amazigh speakers. In addition to a lack of linguistic justice, the report asserted that Morocco’s linguistic policy was designed to serve the goals of the regime, which produced “generations that mastered no language” (Hay’at al-inṣāf, 2006c, p. 71). ERC’s claims about languages during the Years of Lead open up a capacious space for inquiry into educational and cultural loss that future ethnographic work could quantify.

The ERC made multiple recommendations to redress the effects of political violence on Morocco. In order to reconcile the Moroccan state with its people and prevent the repetition of the same violations in the future, ERC’s recommendations focused on creating strong legal and institutional safeguards for human rights. For instance, under the heading “constitutional protection of human rights,” Hay’at al-inṣāf wal-muṣālaḥa (2006c) called for the constitutionalization of human rights and equality between genders as well as strengthening the “constitutional monitoring” of executive laws (Hay’at al-inṣāf, 2006c, p. 84). These changes targeted the transformation of the legal, security, and human rights culture in the country through governance-focused reforms in these areas (Hay’at al-inṣāf, 2006c, pp. 84-91). However, there is a mismatch between ERC’s diagnosis of the educational and cultural losses during the Years of Lead, and its proposed rehabilitation measures, which focused merely on a general protection of human rights. Except for recommendations about the recognition of Amazigh language and culture, the organization of the national archives and the revision of history curricula (Hay’at al-inṣāf, 2006c, pp. 92-93), ERC seems to be more invested in a forward-looking education and sensitization about human rights. Nonetheless, ERC placed education and culture at the heart of the areas in which the Moroccan state needed to reckon with the violence of the Years of Lead.

**Conclusion**

Throughout this article I have demonstrated that education and culture suffered from state violence during the Years of Lead. Locating the beginning of educational and cultural attrition in the early years of independence, I have revealed how much of the power struggle between the monarchy and the opposition played out to the detriment of education policies. Moreover, I have shown that the skepticism that governed the state’s attitudes vis-à-vis education also translated in the form of disdain and disregard for intellectuals and intellectual work. The ban of cultural journals deprived Moroccans of open spaces for critical engagement with new
ideas. Reflecting the linguistic and cultural diversity that was lost with the shutting of journals, I listed some of the main Arabic, Amazigh, and francophone journals that were closed by administrative decisions. The sheer number of these journals proves that Moroccan thought and societal development were impacted by these decisions.

Articulating educational and cultural loss can be elusive and at times difficult to quantify. Evidence, however, can be found in the most unlikely places. The official report “50 years of Human Development in Morocco” has concluded that the failure of the Moroccan school has “revealed itself in its inability to transmit values of citizenship, openness and progress, freedom of thought and learning of critical thought” (Mouline & Lazrak, 2005, p. 15). The results are there for us to understand the impact of authoritarianism on education and intellectual production.

Finally, this examination of the impact of the Years of Lead on education and culture is only a step toward a more critical investigation of cultural and educational losses that society incurred during the five decades of mistrust between state and society in Morocco.

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Moroccan Islamists Debate
the Causes of Violent Extremism

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Abstract
Using Moroccan sources associated with the Islamist movement, this paper outlines the theological and political challenges facing Morocco in terms of violent extremism, especially those posed by certain Wahhabi and Salafist views that reject mainstream Moroccan Islam. It outlines the state’s response to terrorism and evaluates its causes as offered by several Islamist Moroccan intellectuals.

Keywords: violent extremism, Salafism, Wahhabism, Islamism, Morocco, political reform

Introduction
Many Moroccans believed their country to be immune to terrorist attacks after September 11, 2001. This belief was associated with a narrative of exceptionalism that held the Kingdom of Morocco to be exempt from extremism because of its traditionalist approach to Islam, and the relationship between the state, the monarchy, and Islam, as well as the prevalence of Sufi, or Islamic mystical, practice among vast segments of the population. However, it was precisely in this context that the attacks of May 16, 2003, took place in Casablanca. The country’s exceptional, ideational context guaranteed these small attacks an impact and influence far beyond their actual casualty figures, which were about 44 people, including about 14 attackers. For the following four years, the state played a cat-and-mouse game against the local Al Qaeda affiliates. By April 2007 with the dismantling of some of the most active terrorist cells that participated in the May 16, 2003, attacks, that conflict was resolved clearly in favor of the state, but certain problems remained (Benchemsi, 2007, pp. 21-27). First, small unaffiliated groups and individuals continued to pose a threat. This threat was clearly displayed in the April 28, 2011 Argana cafe attack in Marrakesh that killed 17 people and injured 25 more people. Second, some Moroccans, particularly those from overseas and from Northern Morocco continued to join Al Qaeda and Da’esh, (the “Islamic state” organization), because of alienation and feelings of marginalization, and due to the ideological appeal of the extremists. For these reasons, the views that prompted the attacks continued to find currency among a minority of Moroccan people. The December 2018 murder by local Da’esh sympathizers of Louisa Vesterager Jespersen and Maren Ueland, two young Scandinavian tourists and hikers, caused the debates among Moroccan people at all levels surrounding...
terrorism, religion, external influence, and the relationship with the Western world to be reignited. The attackers posted videos of their attacks and the state was able to arrest them and much of their support network. This was not surprising given that there are frequent arrests of terror suspects and a nearly continuous pace of cells being disrupted and neutralized. A recent example was the arrest of three Daesh sympathizers in Fez. The Director of the Central Bureau of Judicial Investigation, Mr. Abdelhak El Khiyame, claimed that his agency apprehended 2,963 suspects and dismantled 341 cells between 2002 and 2016 (Igrouane, 2016).

Like any other country facing the problem of violent extremism, the Moroccan state has been trying to address the root causes of the attacks. For example, it created a development program that tried to address some of the socioeconomic grievances of the poorest citizens and engaged in a well-structured security campaign against the terrorist movements, without returning to the excesses of human rights violations of the past. The conventional policy of political reform, economic inclusion, and law enforcement worked quite well. In some ways, it helped create the political condition of relative deprivation, a situation where political instability increases despite overall economic improvements because some people are doing better than others. In this context, the Arab Spring arrived in Morocco in the form of the February 20th movement of 2011. The state's response to that movement included additional democratization and the election of an Islamist Democrat as the Government President – a position analogous to Prime Minister, since Morocco is a monarchy. The government’s efforts are discussed here to provide some context for the reader; there are more extensive assessments of these efforts by the author and others elsewhere.

This paper focuses on a neglected aspect of the Moroccan struggle against extremism – religious debates surrounding terrorism. While religious reforms, such as the creation of women religious guides, requiring college level education for Imams and reforming the structure of religious education, have been an integral part of the Moroccan program against violent extremism, earlier attempts focused on security did not address theological questions that fed violence against Moroccan people, other Muslims, and non-Muslims alike when approached from a Takfiri (declaring other Muslims as apostates and anathemizing them as well as legitimating violence against them) perspective. The threat of violence coexists with the rejection of the State’s approach to Islam, which were the rejection of the religious legitimacy of the state to gain currency, the door to more violence and even civil war will open. This is the theological challenge that needs to be addressed before Morocco can transition to a society where democracy and rule of law are actualized within a Muslim and conservative social context. Therefore, this paper addresses the origin, extent, and scope of Salafi and Wahhabi thought in a Moroccan context with particular emphasis on its most extreme views such as those held by the violent wings of Takfiri Salafis. It also addresses the State’s responses to Salafis and Wahhabism in both historical and current settings. Nevertheless, the first and primary focus of this paper is the conversation that took place among self-avowed Moroccan Islamists concerning the origins of violent extremism. There is a vast gap in the literature concerning this issue, and this paper intends to bring some of these debates into the attention of the larger world.
Preliminary Considerations

This paper deals with the political challenge posed by non-governmental, particularly Wahhabi and Salafi theological positions, and focuses on the political and security implications of these challenges for the population and government of Morocco (in that order), but it does not take a position concerning the accuracy or “correctness” of any particular set of theological positions. Questions like “is Wahhabism a correct interpretation of Islam?” are outside the scope of this paper. There are many overlapping varieties of Wahhabism and Salafism movements, and most of these do not preach or practice violence. The author simply invites readers to place themselves in the shoes of a Salafi or Wahhabi Moroccan, who often is a small independent businessperson struggling to earn a living. After 2003, Moroccan Salafis and Wahhabs found themselves under the State’s suspicion and under a certain level of social isolation as well. The vast majority of them do not support or condone violent extremism, but they nevertheless found themselves feared by many in the rest of the population, including, in some cases, their own relatives.

To complicate matters, the contributions of Salafi and Wahhabi communities to the Moroccan economy are significant. As stated earlier, these men and women are often active in small business, employing themselves and others, providing services and products, and engaging in new investments using their own savings. People living in Morocco would attest that the economic contribution of Salafi communities is vital, and that any program that aims to deal with their violent subset must avoid damaging the majority of its members and followers who do not condone violence. This paper looks at these beliefs only in terms of their security and political implications. Other people’s rights are impacted only by the actions of some members of these communities, not by the beliefs, however exclusionary they may be, of the majorities within them. Nevertheless, given that terrorists have used these beliefs to justify their attacks, discussing them is legitimate within the rubric of political studies, because they are also political beliefs, provided that the action/belief distinction is kept in mind. Terrorists like Al-Mailoudi have openly stated that their beliefs motivated their attacks (Al-Mailoudi, Fezazi, Al-Shadali, & Hadous, 2003, pp. 47-48).

Definitions

For the purposes of this paper, terrorism, also referred to as violent extremism, is political violence committed by non-state movements or persons against civilians with the aim of using the resulting fear to insure political and/or social change. The term was used by anarchist and Marxist terrorists, including those who are self-avowed, without shame or odium in the past. One Marxist theorist and practitioner of terrorism took issue with the negativity attached to the term:

The accusation of “violence” or “terrorism” no longer has the negative meaning it used to have. It has acquired new clothing; a new color. It does not divide, it does not discredit; on the contrary, it represents a center of attraction. Today, to be “violent” or a “terrorist” is a quality that ennobles any honorable person, because it is an act worthy of a revolutionary
engaged in armed struggle against the shameful military dictatorship and its atrocities. (Marighella, 1969)

While Marxists like Marighella subscribed to the writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Mao, the violent segment of the Salafist movement has less clearly defined textual boundaries. Like Marxists however, they also tend to write prolifically about their reasons for carrying out the things they do. They often use theological arguments to justify their actions. So, Moroccan scholars, including Islamist and Salafi scholars, have attempted to distinguish between the various forms of Salafi and Wahhabi discourse. Implicitly, this paper uses a typology created by the late Moroccan Member of Parliament and religious scholar, Shaykh’ Abd al-Barri Al-Zamzami. There are certain advantages to using a typology derived from Moroccan political life, because it is sensitive to the local context. Due to his interest in Islamic mores governing sexuality, Al-Zamzami was controversial in his lifetime and attracted both ridicule and praise from Moroccan social liberals and Salafis alike. Nevertheless, his typology, while clearly designed to uphold his own version of Salafism, can be very useful in navigating Moroccan perspectives of their Salafi and Wahhabi communities. He participated in the intellectual life of the country, making presentations in parliament and at scholarly conferences, so his eccentricity should not disqualify him from inclusion in this analysis.

Al-Zamzami blames the Gulf States for the spread of types of Salafism that he finds negative in Morocco. However, matters are more complex, as this paper shows in subsequent sections. He clearly exonerates Moroccan forms of Salafism, such as his own and those of ‘Allal Al-Fasi, who campaigned for an independent Morocco and helped found the current political system, where liberalism influences what is essentially an Islamic kingdom (Howe, 2005). For Salafis and other Islamists, controversy over what constitutes both “true” Salafism and the “correct” application of the thoughts of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab is unavoidable. The table below summarizes and gives a formal structure to Al-Zamzami’s thoughts on problematic forms Salafism in Morocco. It will be addressed in more detail in the section on theological challenges.

In the view of this author, a social scientist cannot take a stance on these questions since these questions are outside the scope of social sciences and properly belong to Islamic Theology. Nevertheless, it is possible to look at violence, which is a form of political actions, so the focus here is on actions rather than on beliefs. Beliefs, as claimed by the terrorists themselves, only become a topic of study here when they are acted upon. Consequently, the object of study here is the Jihadi Salafism with its complete focus on violence, terrorism, and war upon all non-believers, including other Muslims and its security implications.
Table 1
Al-Zamzami’s Typology of “Incorrect” Forms of Salafism in Morocco

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Doctrine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arabian Gulf-style Wahhabi Salafism</td>
<td>NGO-level institutionalization, “Quranic houses,” and private and public financial support from the GCC states.</td>
<td>Represents an extension of Gulf approaches to Wahhabism in a Moroccan context. Differs from traditional and historic Moroccan approaches to Wahhabism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popular Salafism</td>
<td>An emphasis on appearances and the superficial characteristics of the movement, for example being bearded and insisting on the headscarf.</td>
<td>No textual references. It relies on adherence to satellite TV preachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jihadi Salafism</td>
<td>A complete focus on violence, terrorism and war upon all non-believers, including other Muslims.</td>
<td>The ideas of Osama bin Laden and those who inspired him, including Abu al-Alaa Al-Mawdudi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolationist Takfiri Salafism</td>
<td>Rejection of the rest of society as pagan and self-isolating, restricting social and personal relations to the “saved” community only.</td>
<td>Strict focus on Wahhabi foundational texts such as those written by Ibn Qaim Al-Jouyaza.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Yet Al-Zamzami has to be placed in a global context. “Salafi” and “Wahhabi” are terms that have been confused and conflated. There is ideological overlap between the two movements, and they are often confused, precisely because their extremist wings tend to overlap and function as one. As with the rest of the world, Moroccan Salafis represent a broader movement than the specific Wahhabi movement which originated in what is now known as Saudi Arabia in the 18th century. A Salafi is a Muslim who adheres to the path of the pious predecessors (al-Salaf al-Salih), in contrast to those who adhere to al-Khalaf al-Falih (the productive successors). The term has seen multiple uses over the generations, with people as diverse as Melcom Khan of Iran, and Mohmmed Abduh and Abu al-‘Alaa al-Mawdudi of Pakistan being labeled Salafis. In the Moroccan context, the ideology of Al-Fasi has been described as Salafi-inspired, because it postulated that Morocco must be a Muslim rather than a secular state. The term is consequently fluid and needs proper contextualization both in terms of time and place. Al-Zamzami is essentially saying that there are correct versions of Salafism and Wahhabism and these tended to be the earlier forms in Morocco; consequently, his typology allows us to see some of the diversity in the Moroccan Salafi and Wahhabi movements. As
for Wahhabism, it is a simpler term, because it refers to its founder, Mohammed Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab an 18th century religious reformer and political activist aligned with the dynasty that came to rule Saudi Arabia. Like many other Salafis, he followed the Hanbali tradition of jurisprudence. It is his work, particularly his reading of Ibn Tammiya, and that of his students that forms the textual basis of what became Wahhabism. Wahhabism relies on asserting that the precedent of Ibn Tammiya and Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab is pious, and consequently, it is a Salafi movement. There are non-Wahhabi Salafists, and the two terms are not interchangeable, despite considerable overlap (Bin Ali & Bin Sudiman, 2016).

Normative Considerations

Given the topic, there is also no escape from normative considerations, and this paper is no exception. This analysis stands with violent extremism’s civilian victims first. It also stands with people who face ostracism for their religious views despite not advocating or practicing violence. To that end, this paper uses a combination of history, participant observation, and perspectives of Moroccan leaders as a basis for outlining the theological challenge in a Moroccan context. To do so, it outlines the overall Moroccan counter-extremism effort, details the history of Moroccan Salafi and Wahhabi movements in the country, and summarizes the overall Moroccan policy response in the religious field, particularly the theological response of the State. Since these items are ultimately reflected in government policies, the overall approach is influenced by elements of policy evaluation methods. In this case, the ultimate measure of success is a decline in the performance of terrorist outfits within the country. Finally, this paper takes what terrorists say about their motives seriously. Like their Marxist and Anarchist forerunners, Al Qaeda, Da’esh and their supporters have been vocal both in print and in public statements about their motives. Taking them seriously, understanding their points of reference, and responding to them must be part and parcel of any policy designed to reduce violence.

Attempts at Social and Economic Reforms

Economic improvement is a vital action for governments to take in response to violent extremism. Poverty creates an environment that, directly or indirectly, enables violent extremism to grow. On the eve of the May 16, 2003 attacks, the Moroccan economy languished far behind that of Southern Europe and unemployment was rife. The tourism sector did not have its current dynamism and access to and from the country was very expensive. The largest sector in terms of employment was and remains agriculture and most people still resided in the countryside when the attacks took place. While Morocco still lags behind Southern and Eastern Europe, the per capita gross national product on a purchasing power parity basis (per capita GDP/PPP) rose from 3985 USD in 2002 to 7841 USD in 2015 (World Bank, 2011).

These improvements owed a lot to monetary stability, wherein the Moroccan dirham is tied to a basket of currencies dominated by the Euro, while trading in a controlled market. Other factors that assisted economic growth have been government encouragement of manufacturing, especially of automobiles and
aircraft parts for export. The call center industry, specializing in providing services in French and Spanish, was an early success. The economy now suffers from a paradox of a labor shortage combined with unemployment, which is a better dilemma than unemployment alone. The problem is increasingly refusal of urban youth to participate in the workforce due to perceptions of low wages when compared to the same professions in Europe, and a simpler problem – the lack of qualified individuals. Despite the obvious and clear improvement of the overall economy, Morocco still needs a rather generous welfare and development policy because poverty remains dire and widespread. Poverty complicates the government’s counter-extremism efforts. The government’s National Initiative for Human Development (INDH in its French abbreviation), whose first phase ran over a five-year period until 2010, appeared after the attacks. The initiative was partially motivated by a desire to reduce the appeal of violent extremism, which in Morocco takes a religio-political form, but it was also a studied response to a rather dire situation. The program's first phase cost about 1.2 billion U.S. Dollars over its five-year life. However, the Initiative struggled especially in its attempts to impact rural livelihoods:

At the launch of the operation (2005), Morocco suffered from high levels of poverty (14.2%, with a further 23% ‘economically vulnerable’), strikingly poor income inequality, and low human development indicators. Over half of adults were illiterate, compared to an average of 10% for lower middle-income countries. Poverty was equally pronounced in both rural and urban areas, albeit with different characteristics. Although half of public expenditures were allocated to the social sectors, access and quality were limited, particularly for rural people because of the centrally driven approach, with low levels of participation, weak coordination amongst line ministries, and inadequate targeting. (World Bank, 2013)

The growing pains of the program marked the first phase. The country had to confront a wide variety of social issues head on with few resources. The second phase saw the construction of new highways, high speed rail, and solar and wind power plants. The program is now in its third phase, as new facilities are being opened by the King under its own title and structure (Nafaa, 2017), and was referred to as a priority by the current Minister of Finance (Le360Live, 2017). Assessing the program’s impact is outside the scope of this paper. The INDH program began after the May 16, 2003, attacks.

**Political Reforms**

The early reaction to the May 16th attacks, initially included the continuation of the alternation policy with the elected parliament and State, wherein the monarch shared power with an elected prime minister elected by the majority coalition in parliament. By 2007, a conservative, Istiqlal Party-led, government chose a set of policies that many Moroccans found restrictive. By that same year, Al Qaeda’s sound defeat in Morocco had become apparent, and the more conservative political
forces with Moroccan society and government felt that the threat had waned. Istiqlal is a conservative, nationalist party that led the country to independence; its ideology reflects the thinking of Al-Fassi and emphasizes the Islamic nature of Morocco. Historically, it endorsed the Arabization of Morocco and the abandonment of Tamazight. Therefore, the pace of political reforms that began under the alternation governments in the late 1990s slowed and in some cases reversed. “Alteration” was a power-sharing agreement between Hasan II and the Socialist opposition. The post of prime minister alternated between a monarchist prime minister and the socialist opposition. The real or perceived decline in freedoms during 2007-2011 set the stage for the Arab Spring in Morocco. The Moroccan Arab Spring took the form of a non-violent youth protest movement named after the day it was launched on February 20, 2011. The movement was supported by the youth wings of nearly all mainstream Moroccan political parties. It had the support of well-known and well-connected businesspeople like Karim Tazi and the late Miloud Chaabi (Mekouar, 2016).

In response to the February 20th Movement, the king offered reform. These measures included a referendum on a new constitution, more powers shifted to the parliament, and the replacement of the Prime Minister's office with a newly elected government president, a title borrowed from Spanish practice, akin to the term “Minister-President” used in Germany and Belgium. The ensuing elections saw the emergence of the Islamist-democratic Justice and Development Party (PJD) as the leading partner in the government coalition. The party performed well in office and secured re-election, but the parliamentary dynamics prevented the re-election of its leader 'Abdel-Ilah Benkirane as government president. While there has been noted progress towards democracy in Morocco, the present situation falls short of the reform vision outlined by the king on March 9, 2011 (Mohammed VI, 2011). In part, the shortcomings were due to the fear expressed by the political parties and the political class over issues related to Moroccan identity, including religion. The political debates on Moroccan religious identity necessarily included the Islamist Party of Justice and Development, which won the two following elections.

**Religious Reforms**

While the political, economic, and policy reforms can be said to reduce the risks of violence, the root cause of terrorism in Morocco lies in issues connected with certain extremist interpretations of religion first and foremost. It has been argued by Sa’id Al-Kahal, a leftist secular Moroccan thinker, that there is no economic or political reason for the violence. By pointing to the attackers’ own statements, Al-Kahal argues that the attackers’ reasons are primarily eschatological. He highlights a statement made in court to a judge by Mohamed Damir, a suspect connected to the May 16th attacks who viewed his actions as ones that would find favor on the final day by God:

> I would like to surround you with the knowledge that I committed the actions of which I am accused; I committed them and did them upon the knowledge of the book of God and the *sunnah* of his prophet … I am happy … because I [am] being tried for
commanding the good and prohibiting that which is forbidden.
(Al-Kahal, 2008, p. 271)

Damir clearly articulated the challenge to the state posed by his particular strand of the Salafi movement, and to its credit, the government has been trying to institute reforms to address the ideological challenge it faces. To start, it began reasserting its monopoly on the religious sphere. After the April 2007 attacks, the state shut down “Qu’ranic Houses” controlled by Mohammed ‘Abd al-Rahman Al-Maghraoui. Al-Maghraoui is known for enjoining the marriage of nine-year old girls in a well-known fatwa he had issued online (Hemimat, 2009, pp. 103-111). Today, the state requires aspiring imams to possess a bachelor's degree with at least the equivalent of a “B” average, have knowledge of foreign languages, and undergo additional instruction on special topics such as Social Psychology. The Ministry of Islamic Affairs also reformed the curriculum on clerical seminaries and female religious counselors. Theses counselors, or Murshidat in the Arabic plural, were the first such step ever undertaken in the Islamic world (Ministry of Religious Foundations and Islamic Affairs, 2006).

The Theological Challenge

As Al-Zamzami (2006) argued, there are Moroccan versions of Salafism, which include elements of Wahhabism in their approach to the religion. While the state is Maliki (based on the Sunni school established by Imam Malik Ibn Anas, who emphasized the precedents set in Medina by the Prophet of Islam and the people of the city or as he called it “the work of the people of Medina”) in jurisprudence, Asha’ari (following the ideas of Asha’ari who emphasized the need for context and discussion while arguing that some things need to be accepted on faith) in doctrine, and Sufi (mystical and directly relational to God through mystical practice) in foundation, it has had a long history of interaction with the Wahhabi movement from its inception onwards (Ministry of Religious Foundations and Islamic Affairs, 2017). It is important to note that the Muslim world does not view its own divisions in the same manner of denominational differences within Buddhist and Christian traditions. Informal and less structured influence has been ongoing since the 18th century, when Wahhabism emerged. Wahhabism's influence in Morocco is so significant that a book, Wahhabism: the Founder, the Thought and the Movement (Belkabir, 2004) written by some of the country’s leading luminaries, was prepared in its defense in an attempt to de-link it from the attacks that took place only six weeks prior. The manuscript went to the printer the following year and is a valuable insight on how Wahhabism is understood by the country’s intellectual elite. The book attempts to defend Wahhabism as a well-meaning, if largely unsuccessful, reform movement. It contains a speech by the Sultan Slimane (1766-1822, reigning from 1792 until his death) attacking certain folk practices such as festivals and shrine visits. One article underscores the connection between Sultan Mohamed Ibn Abdullah, Moulay Slimane’s grandfather, who was a contemporary and a supporter of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab. Professor Abdelhadi
Boutaleb (deceased in 2009), a senior Moroccan scholar and a diplomat, recognizes the historical roots of the Moroccan Wahhabi movement in the book:

Sultan Mohamed ibn Abdullah led an important reform movement. He focused his attention on the science of hadith, which is the source of the Salafi movement since the time of Ahmed ibn Hanbal and Ibn Tamiya. He introduced Morocco to the foundations of Imam Ahmed [sic Ibn Hanbal] and the foundations of Ibn Hanifa, which were not known in Morocco … He was a true Salafi, who described himself as Maliki in jurisprudential orientation and Hanbali in belief. He forbade the reading of books based on kalam [sic “dialogue” meaning philosophical debate] along Ash’arite lines, and enjoined stopping at beliefs taking from the apparent meaning of the book and the Sunnah without interpretation in the Salafi way. (Boutaleb, 2004, p.142)

Boutaleb is recalling a very different Salafism and a very different Wahhabism that existed in Morocco’s past. Not only that, the peaceful life exemplified by Boutaleb and other academic admirers of Wahhabism stands in sharp contrast to the lifestyles enjoined and pursued by the terrorists. Having served as the Moroccan ambassador to the United States, Boutaleb’s political and personal philosophy was clearly realistic and pragmatic. Like other authors in the book, he appears to think that Wahhabism can be a progressive force. The authors go as far as to invoke the late Mohamed ‘Abed Al-Jabri, a professor of philosophy and Islamic thought at Mohammed V University and a quasi-secular thinker (deceased 2010) criticized for his free thought by Salafis (Al-Hababi, 2004, p. 160).

The pragmatic and rationalistic ideas of Boutaleb concerning Wahhabism are not shared by Takfiri Salafists (see table on page 4) who would condemn him for consorting and interacting with pagans (the Americans) during his stint as ambassador in the United States. The Wahhabi movement has been characterized by excess and over-politicization, according to a leading Salafi figure, Farid Al-Ansari (2007). An often misunderstood and underestimated theologian, Al-Ansari was a social activist in the Unification and Reform Movement (Tawhid wa Islah). This was the social movement underpinning the Moroccan Party of Justice and Development. One of his works directly relates to politics and his concerns about the Islamist movement in Morocco (Al-Ansari, 2007). Al-Ansari clearly states that the Moroccan Islamist movement in general has been too harsh against Maliki Islam, Moroccan Sufism, and the use of non-Hanbali (Hanbalism is the Sunni school established by Ahmed Ibn Hanbal, emphasizing the literal application of the Qu’ran, within which Wahhabism arose) references to the point of anathematization or takfir. Al-Ansari (2007) calls out the Islamist movement for creating six “idols,” to include, “the idolization of the Hanbali denomination in the Salafi movement.” Concerning this final idol, Al-Ansari hones an internal critique of his own movement. First, Al-Ansari argues that the attacks on Maliki Islam, under a new generation of Salafi and Wahhabi scholars in Morocco have alienated both the state and many other Moroccans. Second, he argues that their insistence on ideological purity has harmed their community by fomenting internal divisions. Third, he
argues that the movement’s attacks on Sufism have earned it the hostility of Sufi orders in Morocco and their suspicion. Fourth, he argued the movement emphasized external appearances of piety instead of a values framework. Fifth, he argued that the form actually advocated by the Salafi and Wahhabi movement is basically what is practiced in the Gulf States (which he does not mention by name), and that it is a form alien to the needs and historical heritage of Morocco (Al-Ansari, 2007, pp. 141-175). In short, Al-Ansari forcefully argues that the Moroccan Wahhabi and Salafist movement is founded on a rejection, a nearly complete one, of Moroccan traditional approaches to religion. The rejection includes earlier versions of Salafism that were brought by Sultan Mohamed Ibn Abdullah, his grandson Sultan Slimane, independence leader ‘Allal Al-Fasi, as well as followers of the current movement in Morocco. Since the Moroccan constitution and tradition establish the monarch as the commander of the faithful in Morocco, and Islam as the official religion, the theological and political challenge posed by the more extreme and violent Wahhabi and Salafist Islamist movements is serious, because it leaves no room for compromise.

This challenge is based on specific readings and interpretations of religious texts. As these can be classified, they are the closest item that can exist to a “cause” for violent extremism in a Moroccan context. Such causes were outlined by Abu Zaid Al-Maqari al-Idrissi (2010), a PJD member of parliament, a linguist, and a researcher in Islamic thought. In essence, he complements and elaborates upon the criticisms raised by Al-Ansari. He outlines five broad levels of causation for terrorism: these are cultural, psychological, mental, militant, and political. In terms of what he calls a cultural set of causes, he also identifies five important factors that lead people to become extremists. The first one is simply not having the tools to understand what the Qu’ran means. The second one is the detachment of written word from its context, including the Qu’ranic verses related to war. The third factor involves the mixing of missionary work with governance, failing to understand the difference between the two stages. Fourth, the confusion of what God appears to promise non-believers with what believers ought to do to them. The fifth factor involves mixing “right and wrong” in terms of interacting with other cultures, movements, and sects. Like Al-Kahal, Al-Zamzami and implicitly Al-Ansari, Al-Maqari al-Idrissi places the cause of violent extremism first and foremost in ideology. On the psychological level, he identifies a psychology of oppression and despair that invites retaliation against the other; he points out that the traditional distinctions between individuals and their nation-states has broken down in people’s minds. At the mental level, he puts blame on media in general for making Islam appear more militant and violent than other religions, which has two effects: it feeds Islamophobia and simultaneously encourages violence. At the militant level, he argues that many people believe that military might is the proof that can show the correctness of the Islamic message and therefore warring against other populations is warranted. Finally, at the political level, he argues that there are grievances, such as Palestine, held by Muslims that feed extremism (Al-Maqari al-Idrissi, 2010, pp. 62-72).
The Role of Education and Dialogue

While security and law enforcement measures are important, they cannot stop terrorism without the help of society/government in addressing the underlying threats that extreme Salafi Jihadi interpretations of Islam pose to the Moroccan state and its citizens. As stated earlier, it is important to avoid the pitfall of putting the Salafi movement in Morocco into a single category. The clear majority of Salafis and Wahhabis do not practice or preach violence. A royal declaration, or *dahir*, was issued in 2016 calling for reforming the religious education system in Morocco to emphasize the values of peaceful co-existence, moderation, and tolerance with other cultures, civilizations, and religions. The declaration set off a debate on how to reform religious education, as well as debates between those advocating “Islamic” education against those advocating “comparative religious studies.” Nevertheless, the king’s declaration was responding to the need to reduce the threats posed by the violent Jihadi minority branches of the Salafi movement (Al-Kafi, 2016, pp. 3-6). The strategy used the educational system to recruit members and spread counter-narratives (Benhamza, 2016, pp. 7-16).

Educational changes may help reduce the threat in the future, but they can do little to persuade convinced terrorists that they should give up their planned violence. Therefore, the government also pursued arrests which led to interactions that inevitably took place between the accused terrorists and the various officials in the Moroccan legal system. Subsequent dialogue in the courts resulted in requests for royal pardons, implying that the convicted terrorist accepts the legitimacy of the Moroccan state. This was the case with several Salafi clerics who had given sermons to the attackers but expressed reservations and retractions in prison. A more formal process took place where the head of the official Moroccan ‘Ulema Association, Ahmed ‘Abadi, met with a group of 12 convicted terrorists that were guided by the May 16th leader, Khalid Hadad. The dialogue included such topics as the Maliki school of jurisprudence, the Command of the Faithful (the Moroccan king’s religious role), and issues related to dealing with non-Muslims. Based on recent reports, it appears that some of these prisoners are changing their minds out of conviction and not convenience (Abu al-Ma’ali, 2017).

Conclusion

Overall, the complex and multifaceted Moroccan response to the challenge posed by the terrorists and their ideology has been effective. It may be useful to ask what other countries can do for Morocco, but there is little that outsiders can do. Nevertheless, there are things that are actionable for foreign states and actors in terms of reducing the level of threat both within Morocco and outside it. These actions may not be politically popular or economically cheap, but they are doable. These include enhanced levels of aid and investment in Morocco as well as a more cautious approach to Salafi movements than the one exhibited by the West in the Middle East and Syria. Aside from not creating violence in places like Libya and Syria, providing help to countries like Morocco also means accepting that these states are a product of a very different political and religious history. Other areas of cooperation would include security sector reform and educational improvement.
Ultimately, however, the theological challenge represented by the extremist segments of the Salafi movement can be met only by the ideological resources of the local states and governments in question and the religious establishments they support. The good news concerning the challenge posed by violent extremists is that the Islamist movement itself is taking them seriously and is taking apart their arguments. No less a Salafi thinker than the late Farid Al-Ansari has criticized the tendency to exclude, demonize, and condemn other people, and the whole mainstream of Islamist community is engaged in a debate concerning their origins and what to do about violent extremism, and that is a far cry from the denial that met the attacks on both May 16, 2003, and on 9/11.

References


Morocco’s Makhzen and the Challenge of National Development

Zakaria Fatih

Abstract
This article explores the question of national development in Morocco considering the institution of the makhzen. It asserts that to adequately assess Morocco’s national development as a post-colonial country, it is necessary to rely on an economic model based in politics rather than in theories exclusively informed by classical and neoclassical economics. Among the key economists called upon to investigate the validity of politics in discussions of national development and income inequality are the following: Simon Kuznets, Thomas Piketty, W. A. Lewis, and the duo Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, all of whom continue a long tradition of economic sociology that had been established by George Simmel, Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, and Thorstein Veblen. Acemoglu and Robinson offer an especially useful theoretical model to discuss Morocco in light of its pervasive political institution: the makhzen. Overall, the paper demonstrates that inadequate national institutions, such as the makhzen in the case of Morocco, adversely impact national development and increase the level of income inequality.

Introduction
Taking Morocco as a case study, I argue in this paper that national development depends on the nature of national institutions. The more democratic and inclusive national institutions are, the more likely the climate those institutions generate will spur economic growth and reduce income inequality and social disparities. Approaching national development from the vantage point of politics and history is not an unprecedented undertaking; German historicists and American institutionalists did just that when they advocated for an economics open to “other disciplines, such as law, political science and arts” (Sandelin, Trautwein, & Wundrak, 2014, p. 68). Added to those early historicists and institutionalists a new wave of economists, including but not limited to Acemoglu and Robinson (2013) and Piketty (2014) have argued for a politically-informed analysis to the question of economics and national development, considering this move an urgent undertaking in light of the looming threats of “arbitrary and unsustainable inequalities” that capitalism may “automatically generate” in the 21st century (Piketty, 2014, p. 1).
An analytical approach to the question of national development in Morocco, taking into account the state of national institutions and the role of politics in decision-making, has the potential to better assess Morocco’s national development than a purely economic model that depends, according to Smith (2010), on the magic of the “the invisible hand” to fix the irregularities of the market economy and curb the rate of income inequality and social disparities. The pervasive nature of the institution of the makhzen proves that, far from being a question of economics alone, national development in Morocco is also a question of politics and political institutions. By relying on Acemoglu and Robinson (2013) and Piketty (2014), I will show why non-politically informed economic models of national development are inadequate for post-colonial economies such as Morocco’s. Specifically, I will consider the “institution” of the makhzen in Morocco in light of Acemoglu and Robinson’s (2013) model that focuses on the creative power of inclusive institutions.

**Literature Review**

Thus, the literature review deliberately prioritizes a political economy inspired by the findings of social scientists and, moreover, lists a contemporary sample of noteworthy representatives of this brand of economics as well as their inevitable precursors. The allusion here is to George Simmel (2011), Émile Durkheim (2014), Max Weber (2019), Thorstein Veblen (Lerner, 1964), and Karl Polanyi (2001) who, in an attempt to refute the self-regulating nature of classical economics, espoused an economics open to findings from the social sciences, mainly from the fields of sociology, law, and politics. The affiliation to economics tasks the social scientist with the ethical responsibility to “inform democratic debate and focus attention on the right questions” as well as, argues Piketty (2014), “redefine the terms of debate, unmask certain preconceived or fraudulent notions, and subject all positions to constant critical scrutiny” (p. 3). The role of social scientific research appears in the case of Simmel (2011), as Lemert noted in the foreword in how he “tells the story of the greed of history’s dominant classes” (p. xi). According to Lemert, Simmel (2011) understood the capitalist system’s new power, money, and its impending influence on human relations, which entails not only the rise of a new nexus between freedom and money but also the birth of new forms of social bondage. Of interest here is how the social order, in the presence or absence of good institutions, has informed economic life throughout history, an assertion that Simmel (2011) illustrates with various examples from Roman law through modern times. Sociological input in economics is also palpable when Durkheim (2014) draws attention to the social origins of the division of labor that until his time had been viewed as an exclusively economic matter, if not even a phenomenon of the natural order: “There is no need to demonstrate the serious nature of this practical problem: whatever assessment we make of the division of labor, we all sense that it is, and increasingly so, one of the fundamentals of the social order” (p. 35). The affinities that the social order has with economics inform Weber’s (2019) distinction between “social rank” and “social class,” between the economic standing of individuals in traditional societies, in which the standing depends on social privilege, and their economic status in modern societies, which is not as much determined by social
rank or privilege; the conditions of possibility for good economics are antithetical to social rank:

Every society based on social rank is ordered conventionally, through the regulation of life conduct; this therefore creates irrational conditions for consumption. This obstructs the free formation of markets, through monopolistic appropriation, and by obstructing the free disposition of individuals’ capacities to engage in gainful activity on their own account. (Weber, 2019, p. 457)

Weber’s (2019) attitude reflects the risks to individual freedom he observed in societies of social rank as compromising social mobility and the dynamics of the market economy through monopolies based on privilege and the persistence of the natural order of things.

The inextricable nexus of economics and social sciences had as functionality for Simmel (2011), Durkheim (2014), Weber (2019) as well as for Veblen (Lerner, 1964) and Polanyi (2001) a corrective action to the fateful question of economics. Veblen (Lerner, 1964), for example, targets the classical economics’ view of the division of labor as a phenomenon of the natural order and accuses Smith (2010) of a “teleological bias” (p. 245). In the same vein, sociologist Fred Block not only underscores Polanyi’s (2001) predisposition to what may be called regulatory economics, he also believes in its capacity to avert the catastrophes, such as the great wars, brought about by classical economics:

Although he wrote *The Great Transformation* during World War II, Polanyi remained optimistic about the future; he thought the cycle of international conflict could be broken. The key step was to overturn the belief that social life should be subordinated to the market mechanism. Once free of this “obsolete market mentality,” the path would be open to subordinate both national economies and the global economy to democratic politics. Polanyi saw Roosevelt’s New Deal as a model of these future possibilities. (Polanyi, 2001, p. xxxv)

In the second decade of the 21st century, from where I draw the two main sources for this study, the nexus of economics and social sciences has gained even more ground even as it became gradually more focused on questions of poverty, income inequality, and national development respectively in Banerjee and Duflo (2011), Acemoglu and Robinson (2012), and Piketty (2014).

The ubiquity of the makhzen, as a political force in Morocco, calls for politically informed theories of national development, such as the ones propounded by Acemoglu and Robinson (2012) on the one hand and Banerjee and Duflo (2011) as well as Piketty (2014) on the other hand. The hypotheses of these economists in so far as they highlight the nexus of political institutions to national development is especially relevant for examining non-democratic economies where the struggle against income inequality, and access to education, employment opportunities, and
social justice logically call for greater political participation and voice in national development policy debates. A meaningful discussion of the Moroccan political economy ought to take seriously the specter of the makhzen due to its far-reaching powers. In the words of political scholar Boukhars that Hissouf (2016) quotes in his article, “Benkirane [former Moroccan prime minister] frequently lashes out at the subterfuge of what he calls the ‘ghosts’ and ‘crocodiles’ of the invisible but powerful ‘Makhzenian’ force” (p. 50). Moreno Almeida (2013) also tries to expose the subterfuge, or the hideout, that veils the makhzen’s direct intervention in social, economic, and cultural affairs: “In other words, through this method [withdrawing funding for social and cultural events], the Makhzen is not directly accused of controlling freedom of speech or censorship” (p. 322). In the relative absence of focused research on the role of the makhzen in national development, I rely mostly on the work of Mohamed Daadaoui (2011, 2012), as well as Fatima Harrak (2018) and Abdallah Laroui (1999). These scholars recognize the makhzen as both an economic and a political force. As an institution, it is a hierarchical composite of religious entities and administrative agents endowed with political power. Daadaoui (2011) defines the makhzen as “an administrative apparatus” with “particular social and cultural symbols,” and “practices and rituals that have always buttressed functions of the state” (p. 47). He lists the three main groups that formed the makhzen until the 19th century. The first group, in charge of internal and external policy, includes “the king,” “the wazirs (viziers or ministers),” and “the hajibs (major domo);” the second “the chancellery” composed of “katibs (secretaries)” in charge of communicating “state policies and measures” taken by the first group; the third “treasurers and intendants” tasked with fiscal issues (Daadaoui, 2011). Daadaoui (2011) writes, “the establishment of modern political institutions neither changed nor transformed makhzenite authority. The current modern state in Morocco features western style institutions of government and precolonial power traditions” (pp. 59-60). Daadaoui (2011) makes it clear that the traditional structure of the makhzen still runs the country:

Makhzen has maintained its traditional structures necessary for its legitimation. At the same time, it has reformed its institutions into a modern administration within a façade constitutional monarchy. ... Politically, makhzen is the only constant force, while all other political forces are transient and ephemeral. (p. 67)

In essence, Daadaoui (2011) suggests that institutions implemented during or after colonialism, such as the king, political parties, the parliament, which is now bicameral, the office of the prime minister, the judicial system, the appointed bureaucracy as well as property rights, cooperations, and organizations are all makhzenite in nature, i.e. they operate following the triad of functions mentioned above that governed Morocco prior to colonialism. In light of the ubiquity of the makhzen as a political and an economic force, it makes sense to apply an approach that takes into account the role of politics in national development.


Discussion

Thomas Piketty (2014), one of the most prominent economists alive today, has critiqued Simon Kuznets’ (1955) highly influential and long unquestioned theory that postulated industrialization leads first to greater income inequality only for the inequality to later subside sharply at a second stage, supposedly once the fundamentals of industrialization have been grasped. When the second stage of industrialization kicks in, those who were disadvantaged will start to harvest the fruits of their labor and become legitimate contributors to national development and economic growth. Kuznets seemed to have embraced an overly optimistic theory that traded the Marxist “apocalyptic prediction” of a permanent “inegalitarian spiral” for a political economy that believes in the aphorism: “Growth is a rising tide that lifts all boats” (Piketty, 2014, p. 14). Piketty (2014) rebukes Kuznets’ predictions that “should theoretically reproduce itself everywhere, including underdeveloped countries then mired in postcolonial poverty” (p. 18). That poverty, still ever-present decades after the wave of the liberation movements, discredits Kuznets’ prognostic. His so much hoped for reproduction has never taken place in the post-colonial world, Morocco included, nor has Kuznets’ hypothesis ever fully materialized in the United States of America. Ben Nasr, et al. (2019) reproaches Kuznets’ inverted U-curve for its unsubstantiated “empirical evidence” that prevents assessing “a long temporal change in income inequality,” and for its inability to “explicitly” date “the stages” (p. 828). In the case of most developing countries, “the less privileged” and the poor, the authors argue, have no credit value and capital remains beyond their reach, preventing their potential in economic investments and active involvement in wealth production leading to a permanent gap in social and economic equality and greater instability (Ben Nasr et al., 2019, p. 828).

The irreconcilability of non-politically informed economic theories with the realities of post-colonial economies indicates that national development relies more heavily on strong and credible political institutions than previously thought. The high rate of inequality and social injustice in post-colonial industrialized economies is not due to being unindustrialized, or not industrialized enough, but for not being democratic enough. There are additional reasons that further discredit Kuznets’ economic arguments in the developing world. Decolonization coincided with the moment when industries began to depend less and less on human labor and soon moved after that moment to automation and robotic industrialization.

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1 First published in France in 2013.
2 In Piketty’s (2014) view, what led to the sharp decrease in inequality in the United States points more to the 1929 global depression and to the two world wars, catastrophic events that disrupted income returns on capital and wealth, and not to the “‘advanced phase’ of industrial development” (p. 18).
3 As of 2018, Kuznets’ specter still looms larger than life; he continues to be an influential figure in studies on income inequality, such as Ben Nasr et al. (2019). They open their article with the following sentence: “A study conducted by Kuznets (1955) is continuously referenced by most of the research evaluating the possible relationship between economic growth and income inequality and/vice versa” (Ben Nasr et al., 2019, p. 827).
Industrialization of agriculture, for example, has displaced vast segments of rural populations without governments making adequate investment in or provision of quality education needed to train people for jobs in a modern industrialized economy. This failure leads some observers to believe that withholding quality education represents a calculated political decision to stem the potential of the working class as a subversive popular force to political absolutism. The issue of global inequality and underdevelopment does not stem from the growth rate of industrialization, or the performance of any other sector of the economy, be it tourism, agriculture, fisheries, or mining that have witnessed unprecedented growth in Morocco thanks to modernization, foreign direct investments, and reforms. Rather, the real problem of national development lies in the nature of the political institutions that regulate and profit from those sectors and the impact of the political decision-making process on availability and access to education, training, and job opportunities.

As both Acemoglu and Robinson (2012) argue, “Traditionally economics has ignored politics, but understanding politics is crucial for explaining world inequality. As the economists Abba Lerner noted in the 1970s, ‘[e]conomics has gained the title Queen of the Social Sciences by choosing solved political problems as its domain’” (p. 68). The inclusion of politics in economics is gaining momentum, as we have already seen with Piketty (2014), who rails against economics’ “childish passion for mathematics” and its refusal, in the name of “scientificity,” to collaborate with social sciences, especially with politics, history, and sociology: “we must obviously take a pragmatic approach and avail ourselves of the methods of historians, sociologists, and political scientists as well as economists” (p. 42). In Acemoglu and Robinson (2012), the interest in politics indicates the desire to see a politically-informed economics, whereas, in Piketty (2014), the point in placing economic data at the disposition of policy makers, historians, and politicians nurtures the hope to see a socially-informed and culturally-conscious economics.

Between Acemoglu and Robinson (2012) on the one hand, and Piketty (2014) on the other, but both proponents of politically-inspired economics, the agreement on the necessity of the integration of politics in economics is offset by the disagreement about the share allocated to culture, history, sociology, and other social sciences in national development. If Piketty calls for full collaboration with the social sciences, Acemoglu and Robinson (2012) restrict the collaboration to the

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5 Piketty’s (2014) dream job, he writes, “was to teach at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales,” because the school gives the best example of an institution of higher education in which historians, such as Lucien Febvre and Fernand Braudel, rub shoulders with an anthropologist, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and a sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, among others. Besides enabling cross-disciplinary interaction, this intellectual environment enables its residents to constantly check each other’s work and hypotheses (p. 41).
institutional side of politics, rejecting geography and culture as well as “ignorance” for being unreliable criteria in discussions of world inequality (pp. 45-69). For Acemoglu and Robinson (2012), the deciding factor in the failure of poor nations fighting underdevelopment and the continued economic success of prosperous nations reside in politics, mainly in political institutions.

While the belated credit to politics does not vindicate Marxist ideology in its call to erect a proletarian-based system on the ashes of bourgeois capitalism, the growing interest in politics in theories about income inequality and economic growth re-centers the issue of national development by awarding to politics a large margin in the discussion. For Acemoglu and Robinson (2012) a nation’s prosperity and progress depend on inclusive institutions; the more inclusive institutions are the more prosperous a nation is and, by contrast, the more extractive or non-inclusive those institutions are, the less prosperity a nation generates. The symmetry of political and economic institutions becomes the sole criterion in determining the cause of affluence and, conversely, in the case of asymmetrical institutions the reason for a nation’s poverty.

Acemoglu’s own successful story in the West as a Turkish-Armenian immigrant in England first and then a prominent academic in one of the most prestigious institutions of higher education in the United States, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, best illustrates how inclusive political and economic systems can lift people out of poverty. This is what inclusive political and economic systems do; by embracing all members in society, they transform the individual into an ethical force in the service of knowledge and beneficial production, creating prosperity and wellbeing.

The Makhzen and National Development

No one contests the impressive strides Morocco has made in the economic sector nor does anyone disagree that those valuable gains have disproportionately enriched and increased the economic and political power of the makhzen. This Machiavellian power structure balances state violence or hard power with privilege or soft power by relying on patrimonial practices rooted in the ancient cultures and traditions of Morocco. Some of those practices were institutionalized within the makhzen during the reign of Ahmad al-Mansour, AKA al-Mansour al-Dahbi of the Saadi Dynasty, who “initiated the elaboration of a centralized system of governance for Morocco, which came to be known as the Makhzen” (Harrak, 2018, p. 283). For Daadaoui (2011), the birth of the makhzen happened in stages; it designated first the “whole government,” which included the army and the administration” when Morocco seceded from the Abbasid dynasty in Baghdad in the 12th century and, second, in the 16th century when it referred to an institution in charge of collecting and transferring taxes to the treasury: “Thus, throughout its development, makhzen has shifted from its literal meaning as the government’s treasury to a sociopolitical interpretation as a ‘reservoir of power’” (p. 42).6

6 Unlike Harrak (2018) and Daadaoui (2011), Laroui (1999) attaches the birth of the “new makhzen,” which the Europeans noticed ahead of the protectorate, to the reign of Moroccan
The universal reach of the makhzen is both a blessing and a curse. Morocco owes its stability to the power the makhzen wields in politics, in public affairs, in foreign policy, in diplomacy, in trade and economic matters as well as in the social and the cultural life of the citizen. The state is practically everywhere, a pervasive presence that also leads to political atrophy and institutional stagnation. As an imaginary and eternal state symbol, the makhzen also secures national cohesiveness, but the cohesion comes at the expense of cultural emancipation and social mobility. The makhzen, which has so far spared the country the turmoil observed in its regional neighborhood, can best be described using one of Weber’s (2019) types of legitimate domination. Under the three “pure types of authority,” Weber (2019) conditions the legitimacy of “traditional authority” to “the sanctity of age-old rules and powers. The masters are designated according to traditional rules and are obeyed because of their traditional status (Eigenwürde)” (p. 226). “Obedience” in such a system, adds Weber (2019), is paid to “the person who occupies a position of authority by tradition or who has been chosen for it by the traditional master” (p. 227). In Morocco today, the citizen, as a subject of the monarch, owes obedience not only to the governor, one of the king’s administrative appointees, but also to caids, sheikhs, and moqaddems who, by comparison to the position of governor, find their origin not in French colonialism but in the makhzenite power hierarchy.

The political structure of the makhzen in the aftermath of colonialism blends positions of power that French colonialism institutionalized, such as “civil officials of the modern state” (Daadaoui, 2012, p. 56) and traditional administrative positions and practices that the Moroccan state revived, such as “the office of grievances,” or “majlis (court),” as well as the “bay’a,” or allegiance, an annual ceremony that “reinforces the linkage between the king and his subjects” (Daadaoui, 2012, pp. 60-61). Daadaoui (2012) argues that the makhzen commands a composite of powerful political structures that, to borrow an old adage, is nothing more than old wine in new bottles:

The institutional reorganization of makhzen after independence was an attempt to renew local institutions and local community traditions under the aegis of a new modern state. In fact, the state structure appears modern, but its nucleus is comprised of renewed traditional modes of government. Institutional mechanisms for political manipulation are facilitated by the existence of a primordial system that sets the monarch above the political system. (Daadaoui, 2011, p.67)

Daadaoui implies that the survival of the makhzen depends on outdated political practices that are antagonistic to democratic governance. His arguments explain in part the impossible cohabitation of the old institutions of the makhzen and the modern institutions of a democratic state.

Sultan Mohammed III who is credited with modernizing it decades after the death of his grandfather, Sultan Ismail (p. 90).
The ubiquity of the makhzen’s power and influence is reason to call for a strategy of national development that factors the impact of national institutions in economic and social indicators and, not as it is usually the case, especially in NGOs’ reports, of national development as isolated findings about a particular social criterion or economic scale. In other words, inasmuch as it is necessary to look at the makhzen as the political body in charge of the success or failure of the national economy and social policy, it is equally indispensable to assess national development, especially in the post-colonial world, on the basis of the transparency, representativeness, and accountability of such national institutions. Furthermore, the means of production, in this case, are not detached from the political structure or, to use Fanon’s (2004) words about the colonial world: “[i]n the colonies the economic infrastructure is also a superstructure” (p. 5). The makhzen has the dual function of collecting taxes and doing politics; it is as much involved in economic production as it is in the stipulation of a political economy that serves the interests of the class(es) it represents.

The makhzen and its extractive institutions have a direct impact on regional development and social disparities, which could be accounted for by the use of the “dual economy” paradigm, or Lewis’ (1954) model. Lewis (1954) ties underdevelopment to structural variations between the modern sector of the economy, which Lewis calls “the capitalist sector,” and the traditional sector of the economy, which he calls “the sector of subsistence” (p. 6). The contrast leads to an economy moving at two speeds and evolving inadequately to be able to resolve social disparities and bring about sustained human flow from the sector of subsistence toward the capitalist sector. Even though Lewis’ (1954) model was formulated decades ago, it offers a description of the social and economic discrepancies observed in Morocco. Although there has been a modest movement from the sector of subsistence to the capitalist sector in Morocco, the deplorable state of public education and the scarcity of capital allocated to poor individuals and small businesses willing to embrace the spirit of the new economy are major obstacles to real improvement. The makhzen may also perceive a gathering threat to its interest in the expansion of the capitalist sector for reasons Lewis (1954) lists below:

The fact that the wage level in the capitalist sector depends upon earnings in the subsistence sector is sometimes of immense political importance, since its effect is that capitalists have a direct interest in holding down the productivity of the subsistence workers. Thus, the owners of plantations have no interest in seeing knowledge of new techniques or new seeds conveyed to the peasants, and if they are influential in the government, they will not be found using their influence to expand the facilities for agricultural extension. (p. 6)

Take the example of public education in today’s Morocco, an area with the potential to spur successful migration from “the sector of subsistence” to “the capitalist sector.” Public schools at all levels have been marred in a myriad of problems
concerning the quality of instruction to the degree that a rising number of Moroccan families prefer to send their children to private schools. In 2017, the percentage of children in private schools stood at 14%, or 1 million students, still a low percentage because only the wealthy could afford to pay tuition, transportation, and school supplies. Moreover, the state continues to welcome the move from public to private schools because the relocation relieves some of the financial burden on its treasury by dumping on private institutions some of the costs of building new schools, hiring new personnel, and making available other logistics. The catastrophic results of lowering the standards of public education explain the persistence of structural disequilibria and the rising rate of inequality, since the majority of those able to afford private education for their children are the very same people already in the capitalist sector, those who understand the value of offering their children an adequate education and can already afford to do so. The Legatum Prosperity Index (2018) on education shows Morocco with a ranking at 117 among 149 countries, 134 on social capital, and 130 on personal freedom. The fact that 14% of Moroccan students are able to attend private schools means that only a tiny fraction can dream of social upward mobility and that education is one of the strongest cards in the hands of the makhzen, as an extractive institution, to control the flow from the subsistence sector to the capitalist sector.

The binary oppositions between “extractive and inclusive economic institutions” on the one hand and “extractive and inclusive political institutions” on the other hand hold the most plausible explanation to what is taking place in Morocco. Acemoglu and Robinson (2012) define “inclusive political institutions” as “sufficiently centralized and pluralistic” and “extractive political institutions” as a power monopoly “in the hands of a narrow elite” (p. 81). They maintain that “economic inclusive institutions” establish the foundations for an equal distribution of wealth and resources. In addition, they emphasize that “inclusive political institutions” lead to “inclusive economic institutions” in that the state becomes the “enforcer of law and order” to protect “public services and regulate economic activity” (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012, p. 80). It intervenes to fight fraud and illegal and dubious economic dealings so as to guarantee, among other things, an equal playing field for everyone. By contrast, “extractive political institutions” usher in “extractive economic institutions.” In such cases, political institutions are designed in a way to serve the interest of the powerful. While one could argue in favor of “inclusive economic institutions” in Morocco, the inclusion does not touch

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7 In a press conference, the spokesman for the Moroccan government blames the current educational system for creating a “jobless generation.” He stated that school dropouts stand at 270,000 a year. See the following link from Morocco World News, accessed on May 7, 2019: [https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2019/05/272521/official-morocco-education-system-produces-jobless-generation/](https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2019/05/272521/official-morocco-education-system-produces-jobless-generation/)


9 See previous note on the percentage of students attending private institutions.
all the geographic regions nor are economic opportunities available to all the citizens.

Many media pundits have described Morocco as a country that runs on two speeds. The launching of Morocco’s high-speed train created a polemic concerning the social and economic disparities between the haves and the have nots, or Morocco moving at two speeds (Rboub, 2017). The unbearable economic and social disparities between the haves and the have-nots are occasionally met with state violence to stem the tide of popular revolt, as in the recent Hirak movement in the Rif for which its leader, Nasser Zefzafi, is now serving a 20-year prison sentence. According to *The New York Times*, the court charged him and his acolytes with “undermining public order and threatening national unity” (Reuters, 2018). Zefzafi’s case illustrates the unsustainability of the coexistence of “extractive economic institutions” that the makhzen symbolizes and its spurious “inclusive political institutions.” The daily eight-month long protests he organized had social grievances and economic discontent as their dominant themes; although he denounced state surveillance, he never complained of the inability to organize protests and hold rallies. In fact, he offered the state the alibi to arrest him when he interrupted the Friday religious sermon, which was his biggest mistake. In a sense, Zefzafi did take advantage of the availability of “inclusive political institutions” to rally public support in the Rif and the rest of Morocco, but that effort failed to contest the “extractive economic institutions.”

Zefzafi’s example shows that spurious “inclusive political institutions” can coexist with “extractive economic institutions.” The coexistence becomes possible when “extractive economic institutions” give the impression of “inclusive economic institutions,” or alternatively, when “extractive political institutions” pass for “inclusive political institutions.” However, the limitations of spurious inclusive institutions, whether economic or political, appear when the system is in crisis mode, i.e., when individuals or social groups challenge those institutions, either through a momentum of economic grievances or by protesting their social condition. In the name of “undermining public order and threatening national unity,” which is a common allegation in Morocco to muzzle dissidents, as in Zefzafi’s case, the makhzen intervenes in the process of “creative destruction” that the protesters may have unleashed. Acemoglu and Robinson (2012) rightly point out that, “[f]ear of creative destruction is often at the root of the opposition to inclusive economic and political institutions” (p. 84). The Hirak movement exposed the paradox of the Moroccan state as promoter of democracy and the rule of law, i.e., as a state that appears to embrace and live by “political inclusive institutions” while also holding on to the extractive institutions of the makhzen.

The fear of “creative destruction” in the case of Morocco presents itself in terms of a class struggle. If the power of the makhzen is threatened, it is not only the

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10 Acemoglu and Robinson (2012) explain Joseph Schumpeter’s “creative destruction” as the replacement of “the old with the new. New sectors attract resources away from old ones. New firms take business away from established ones. New technologies make existing skills and machines obsolete” (p. 84).
economic interests of a social group that are at risk; it is the privilege of the class that this social group represents that will be at stake. There is no justice, let alone compassion, in dealing with dissidence when the stakes are understood in absolute terms of winners and losers, of haves and have-nots. In such cases, the fear may be worse than the reality. At the same time, the fear of “creative destruction” has not prevented the state from promoting progressive political policies and selling an image of the country as politically stable and culturally tolerant; it will continue to do so as long as it earns dividends from running a simulacrum of a system of inclusive institutions. Lacking substantive change, the problem will grow.

Conclusion

To conclude, the present article relies on select theories of political economy, mainly those of Piketty (2014) and Acemoglu and Robinson (2013) to show that national development and income inequality depend on national institutions. The more inclusive institutions are, the more democratic and prosperous a nation is. If Morocco’s ultimate dream has been since independence in 1956 to make it to the club of democratic and prosperous nations, and if that dream has been elusive thus far, the answer to the failure of democracy along with the states’ structural programs to shore up chronic poverty, unemployment, and income inequality lies in politics. While the economic growth rate of industrialization per anum has enabled the country to be more competitive on a global scale, its political institutions are impeding any progress towards the country’s espoused economic and political aspirations. The secret to successful national development is not to succumb to the irrational fears of privileged elites but to invest in the dreams of hard-working everyday citizens, to provide the necessary educational support and legal protections that allow the citizenry to fully participate in both the economic and political life of the country.

References


Empowering Rural Participation

and Partnerships in Morocco’s

Sustainable Development

Yossef Ben-Meir

Abstract
This essay explores the vast potential for participatory and sustainable human development in Morocco. Though Morocco is a country with many diverse resources, it remains burdened by severe levels of poverty and illiteracy, and now growing social discord. There have recently been increased public calls for participatory development programs designed and implemented by and for local people. The essay identifies six existing Moroccan Frameworks intended to initiate decentralized human development programs, and critically examines their efficacy. Ultimately, the purpose of the article is to suggest a new model to implement these Frameworks with maximum impact. The six Frameworks deal with municipal development plans, a sub-national funding agency, decentralization, environmental protection and agriculture, women’s rights, and youth engagement. Each of these Frameworks present positive ideals which are not fully being capitalized on currently because they lack sufficient resources and momentum individually. By integrating the six Frameworks to function in tandem, Morocco could achieve its goal of initiating widespread decentralized, sustainable development programs that truly impact local communities in positive ways.

Introduction
This article provides an overview and analysis of Morocco’s national policy initiatives as related to critical issues of local development. In recent years, while Morocco has put in place the right frameworks for mobilizing rural communities to advance the nation’s sustainable development goals, it falls woefully short when it comes to implementation. What is sorely needed is an action plan for implementation that provides community training and evaluation processes for assessing progress. As someone who has been engaged in rural development in Morocco for the past 26 years, this policy analysis assesses Morocco’s sustainable development goals highlighting the different frameworks that exist, an analysis of how these frameworks can work together and complement each other, and
recommendations for how to engage and empower local communities to successfully interact with and implement them.

Since 2000, the author leads a Moroccan-U.S. civil organization that assists local communities in their identification and management of priority development projects—in the sectors of agriculture, education, health, and women’s and youth empowerment—and achieved initiatives located in the 12 regions of Morocco. The community-driven data gathering, assessments, consensus-building, and overall project experiences engaging with most ministries and administrative tiers have afforded the author realistic local and national contextual perspectives, which is drawn from in this essay, in combination with literature on these subjects.

The utilization in the essay of the terms participatory development, sustainable development, and human development is deliberate, as it is also in their embedding in Moroccan national policies. Participatory development refers to community beneficiaries of development being in control of all phases of the project cycle, from design to evaluation. The process of local people planning projects together and sharing information itself creates positive outcomes; however, the participatory approach or “method” (King Mohammed VI, 2008) as commonly referenced in Moroccan codifying documents) seeks the fulfillment of the participants initiatives and the measurable change they create (Green & Haines, 2002, p. 14), such as in regards to employment, clean water, and girls’ participation in education.

Sustainable development focuses on the characteristics that enable project outcomes to endure, which evaluations over the decades since World War II and from all parts of the world show people’s participation to be most causal. After all, sustainable project designs incorporate the full range of factors that bear on matters of development, such as cultural, economic, environmental, financial, historic, political, and technical dimensions. Indeed, the more inclusive and participatory during the project development experience, the more the opportunity is given that the full range of factors or points of view will be injected into the project design and decision-making processes. This operational definition, which can also be found in Moroccan formative programs, such as the National Initiative for Human Development discussed below (Kingdom of Morocco, 2016), suggests that the concept of sustainable development has evolved to become more multifaceted since its coining in a United Nations report in 1987, when it heavily (or even exclusively (Holdgate, 1996) emphasized natural resource management as its determining factor.

Finally, human development, also based on pragmatic principles made functional and evaluative by the United Nations (HDRO Outreach, 2019), refers to

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1 A 1990 study of 52 USAID projects across different sectors showed a positive correlation between participation of beneficiaries and project success—almost as strong as between availability of funding and success (see Bhatnagar & Williams, 1992, p. 10). The World Bank’s evaluation of 121 rural water projects around the world showed that one of the strongest correlations with success was local participation and capabilities—and that it was more significant than technical solutions and capital expended (see Uphoff, Esman, & Krishna, 1998, p. 36). An analysis of five case studies of development projects in Thailand suggests that people’s participation is the most critical determinant in attaining sustainability (see Gonzalez, 1988, p. 42).
the conditional opportunities to create the change we seek in our lives. Its focus is
on strengthening personal and group-related capacities (such as in participatory
decision-making, project management, and supporting organizational growth) in
order that effected communities analyze social and natural conditions and design
and create projects that enhance their livelihoods, education, health, and
empowerment. Morocco’s goal is to utilize participatory approaches to achieve
projects that are sustainable and that measurably enhance the standard of living,
knowledge, longevity, and engagement in society.

Morocco is a nation of immense promise in terms of its human development
potential (The World Bank, 2019). The country's naturally bountiful landscape, if
combined with dynamic social development frameworks, could transform Morocco
into a bottom-up haven of community-managed projects and facilitate change in
Africa and the Islamic World. On the other hand, should Morocco not sufficiently
achieve publicly acceptable levels of development, which is currently the case
particularly in rural areas and with marginalized groups, other nations in the region
may feel deterred from committing itself as Morocco has done to charters of
decentralization, women’s freedoms, and participatory community action, for
example. In other words, Morocco’s successful local people’s development
movements are for the profound benefit of its own sustainable future, and due to its
geographic and historic position it is also for the sake of serving as a guiding model
well beyond its borders.

An Action Plan to Implement Morocco’s
Frameworks for Sustainable Development

The following six national policy and programmatic frameworks form the
pillars of people’s development in Morocco. The questions this article addresses
are: how can the six frameworks better fulfill their individual purposes? And, how
can the frameworks work or relate with each other to create sustainable and
participatory human development that is managed by the local community
beneficiaries, with the support of decentralized administrations and partnerships?

These frameworks, which are established national policies and laws that cover
the entire country, aim to initiate human development that is participatory,
decentralized, and sustainable. People-driven initiatives that the frameworks could
enable are, for example, programs through which women define and achieve what
they want within communities, while learning laws that advance and protect their
status in the family and society. The frameworks could help youth overcome the
risks of an exceedingly difficult life, such as their condition of being more likely to
be unemployed the more they are educated (USAID, 2018a). The Moroccan
development approach also provides a basis for innovative (and organic) agriculture
to grow while aiding rural civil associations to plan and create new projects that
meet local needs.

It is not the insufficiency of the principles and guidelines of these frameworks
that accounts for the hardships that afflict the Moroccan people, especially those in
rural areas. There is generally inadequate coordination among ministries to achieve
the synergies of these national initiatives, and a lack of popular understanding and
the needed skills in order to translate them into reality. Central to fulfilling this development model is the transfer of knowledge focused on how to organize community meetings where people together determine the projects they seriously need and build the multi-sectoral and multi-tiered partnerships to achieve implementation.

The six government-constructed Moroccan frameworks that set out to guide community and national growth are:

1) The Municipal Charter, amended in 2010, requires the creation of multi-year community development plans that are formed by people’s participation (Secretary General of the Government, 2019);

2) The National Initiative for Human Development, which was launched in 2005 to provide access to sub nationally-managed funding for multidimensional development projects in rural and urban communities (INDH, 2019);

3) The Decentralization Roadmap, first unveiled in 2008, and the Charter ratified in 2018, synthesize three pathways to empower regions, provinces, and municipalities in development and self-determination: delegation, de-concentration, and devolution (Ministry of Interior, 2019);

4) The Green Morocco Plan, written in 2008, recognizes that essential financial grants and technical contributions are needed along the entire agricultural value-chain—from nurseries to processing—to overcome the systemic poverty that afflicts most rural households (Maroc Vert, 2019);

5) Morocco’s Family Code, or Moudawana based on the Maliki School of Sunni Islam, was reformed in 2004 to promote equality and joint responsibility between men and women (United Nations, 2004); and

6) Youth leadership programs created by the ministries of National Education and Vocational Training; Higher Education and Scientific Research; among others, to increase youth employment and involve young people in decision-making in civil society and the public sphere (The World Bank Group, 2019).

There are other important and forward-thinking national developmental approaches. Stated briefly, these additional frameworks include: a) Morocco’s commitment to the Maghreb Union bloc and African unity, with regionalism representing a transitional phase to global competitiveness (Soludo, 2003, p. 273) and a strategy to deal with regional challenges, such as pollution and illegal immigration (Duina, 2006, p. 20); b) the formalization of laws and reforms in 2002 and 2018, respectively, to promote the growth of civil organizations and cooperatives; c) renewable energy actions (which, however, should be realigned to be more household-driven) (Hanger-Kopp, Komendatova, & Zejli, 2016); d) culture
preservation while incorporating human development benefits, such as the example of Moroccan Muslim-Jewish collaboration for building organic fruit tree nurseries for family farmers and schools (Ben-Meir, 2018); and e) a multidimensional trade strategy that attempts to balance global free trade with protections from hegemonic powers enabled by integrated regional markets and rewarding domestic markets (Delener, 1999, p. 1). Nonetheless, the six frameworks listed above lay out exemplary guidelines and potential community empowerment basis, according to this author, that are critically needed for these and other national programs and policies to be implemented productively, inclusively, and equitably.

Sadly, essential human development outcomes are not being realized in Morocco as hoped and needed. I have found after observation and engagement with Moroccan development from positions in civil society, government, and academia that there is an abysmal pace of rural sustainable development. There are few examples in which government agencies and officials have successfully applied participatory development methods, even though these methods are codified in national charters and policies. This is largely not the fault of the personnel and officials, but the result of their lack of training to facilitate inclusive community planning.

The participatory approach has developed and expanded to comprise hundreds of “families” or methods of carrying out group dialogue on community needs and data-gathering to identify and meet project development goals (Kumar, 2002, p. 16). To enable an inclusive planning process to take place the approach applies visual—and therefore generally accessible—diagramming and planning centered around projects addressing high-priority goals (Lyons, Smuts, & Stephens, 1999, p. 10). Typical methods of analysis include mapping, where local communities analyze household wellbeing, risks, and community assets and gaps. Using visually-based methodology, community members improve their ability to determine and evaluate solutions to problems, create and present action plans, link available funds with priorities, manage projects, and advocate successful local initiatives for greater scale.

There is a severe lack of development progress in rural areas, where 75% of all impoverished Moroccan people reside; they experience close to five times the national poverty rate (Noury, 2007). The social discontent from chronic poverty has boiled over into disruption and localized demonstrations, mostly in the north. Considering the overall ineffectiveness of Moroccan development programs—no matter how progressive their founding visions—there is reason to be seriously concerned that growing civic dissatisfaction will continue to outpace the rate of fulfillment.

The urban-rural stratification remains alarming and is growing in Morocco (The World Bank and the Morocco High Commission for Planning, 2017), even as both groups generally experience economic hardship. Rural communities have great agricultural and human development possibilities in regards to the range of potential organic and endemic food product, niche artisanal crafts, and available markets; yet in recent years, there has been a 15% rise in households that consider themselves poor (The World Bank and the Morocco High Commission for Planning, 2017).
They lack basic essential human development projects such as water for irrigation and clean drinking water; rural women’s and children’s education; completing the agricultural value-chain, from tree and plant nurseries to processing and commercialization of product; and people’s empowerment to implement their own initiatives.

The problem is that Morocco’s programs for national growth and development through people’s participation are not being orchestrated in tandem. As will be explained, and as recently acknowledged by the Moroccan government (Purgeon, 2018), integrating these programs would enable their mutual reinforcement to promote accelerated growth and success of development initiatives. In response to the public calls by King Mohammed VI that the nation reconsider its development model, this essay takes the position and explains with case evidence that it is the implementation process of the nation’s development model that requires the major reevaluation and overhaul, not the guiding principles or vision of the model itself (Koundouno, 2018).

This article recommends a new action plan to advance Morocco’s sustainable development—emphasizing disadvantaged people and regions and resting on participatory democratic methods and decentralization. The challenge that Morocco faces, however, to achieve its vision is seriously daunting, especially when we consider that even as there is supporting evidence of the efficacy of participation on a small scale, there is insufficient evidence around the globe of its effectiveness as a strategy for broad-based and long-term social change (Cleaver, 2001, p. 36). Thus, the successful unfolding of Morocco’s bold development approach, guided by its frameworks, bears existential consequences for itself, its position on the larger African and Middle Eastern stage, and potential transfer to other nations of the world by exemplifying a decentralized participatory development course.

To Morocco’s lasting credit, key laws, policies, and programs already exist—for instance, the Moroccan Constitution itself—to promote development projects that reflect locally shared priorities and have democratic decision-making and governing arrangements. The lack of rural development is predominantly due to the poor implementation of the existing frameworks, the continued pervasive poverty, and widespread gender biases—not lack of opportunities. Morocco has declared positions on sustainable development that could result in successful, scaled community movements, engaging and improving life within the society, but only if applied correctly.

As will be discussed in section six, the outstanding potential of Morocco’s agricultural economy—with strategic local community investments in implementing farm-to-fork initiatives—is that it can become the financial engine to create projects in education, health, new businesses, and capacity-building in management and technical areas, to implement the change that local communities and their associations determine. The organization and process necessary to achieve sustainable, revenue-generating enterprises is supported by Moroccan laws, and prototypes of community initiatives have proven successful. Fortunately, social conditions and economic opportunities—coupled with a sense of necessity, if not urgency, to fulfill—are such that a significantly more accomplished Moroccan model could potentially be at hand in the not-too-distant future.
Morocco’s Municipal Charter

The first framework, Morocco’s Municipal Charter, requires locally elected representatives to create one-, three-, and five-year development plans derived from people’s participation in the determination of local projects. This could be a major chance for sustainable development to take hold as people’s participation and financing are the key factors of project sustainability (Chambers, 1993, pp. 11-13). However, in Morocco there is a constant challenge: elected members to municipal councils, who are given the responsibility to carry out the community plans, are typically not trained in facilitating participatory project methods. Representatives (and other community members) would highly benefit from applied learning workshops organized by government, civil society, universities, and socially responsible businesses to effectively fulfill the development-related articles of the Municipal Charter.

Catalyzing widespread and inclusive development projects means first implementing experiential training programs for university students, schoolteachers, technicians, civil society members, elected officials, and local people, for example, to be active agents of participatory development. Through hands-on training, the aforementioned municipal development plans can reflect the actual will of the people in regard to the projects and future they most want. The participatory community planning approach has been applied with success in a wide variety of situations. The projects cited below all successfully emerged from group assessments of their own needs. In rural areas, improvements have taken place in farming systems (Chambers 1993, p. 957), food production (Ruddell, 2002, p. 186), natural resource management (Campbell, 2001, p. 382), cooperatives (Sargent, 1986, p. 109), land use (Forester, 1989, p. 103), pest control management (Uphoff, Esman, & Krishna, 1998, p. 70), sanitation (Vernooy, Qui, & Xu, 2003, p. 99), and protected area management (Warford, 1989, p. 19). Similarly, in the field of business and public services, improvements have been noted in business management and production, infrastructural projects, poverty alleviation and economic development, technological developments including software, architectural planning, community control of policing and schools, the creation and delivery of services, and waste management (Ben-Meir, 2009, pp. 235-237).

With regard to health care, improvements are visible in terms of access and empowerment for the disabled (Jason, Suarez-Balcazar, Keys, Taylor, & Davis, 2004, p. 4), disease control (health education) (De Koning & Martin, 1996, pp. 1-2), sexual and reproductive health (Kumar, 2002, p. 49), public health, and nutrition (Hampshire, Hills, & Iqbal, 2005, p. 340). In pedagogy, this methodology has been shown to assist formal and informal education (Jason et al., 2004, p. 4), experiential learning and communication (Campbell, 2001, p. 382), adult education (Kumar, 2002, p. 29) and—on college campuses—in increasing student involvement in academic decisions (Wengert, 1976, p. 27) university-community partnerships (Van der Eb et al., 2004, pp. 224-225), gender and youth development (Pancer & Krasnor, 2002, p. 62), and in overcoming racial prejudice and other forms of discrimination (Wengert, 1976, p. 27). Participatory planning methodology improves disaster management, including crisis situations such as war and drought
(Kumar, 2002, p. 49), as well as their amelioration and peace-building (Rodríguez, 2000, pp. 147-148), management of displaced people (Brand, 2001, p. 962), emergency relief in a conflict situation (Symes & Jasser, 2000, p. 149), and the work of welfare organizations (Thomas-Slayter, 1995, p. 9). Finally, it is cited as a crucial factor in improved organizational development (Kumar, 2002, p. 29); building civil society (Symes & Jasser, 2000, p. 149); human resources management (Taylor, 2001, p. 122); project and program evaluations (Campbell, 2001, p. 382); management practices (Cornwall & Pratt, 2003, p. 4); and policy development, reform, and advocacy (Kumar, 2002, p. 29).

Much of Morocco’s development success depends upon dispersing skills to create and assist inclusive community planning meetings as well as implementing the projects that become designed by the people, who are the project beneficiaries and managers. The Municipal Charter—directing the administrative tier closest to the people—establishes an avenue for the success of participatory development. People-driven projects instituted in the Municipal Charter, are necessary for sustainable development and actualization of the other frameworks that compose the Moroccan model. Without local representatives understanding how to implement people’s participation in development and without the local people aware of this vital right, plans are typically drafted in a top-down manner with impossible or unrealistic levels of uniformity. It has come to the point that the statutory requirement to create community plans through genuine participatory processes now often appears merely rhetorically. In my experiences over recent years, on multiple occasions governors have voiced concerns upon their reflection of the quality of the plans they receive; municipal council members discuss their desire to fulfill the participatory planning requirement while being without the information and material capacities to do so; and municipalities resorting to outside expertise to conduct the needed local assessments are able to access a limited number of people due to time and trust level constraints—discouraging the continued momentum that is needed to achieve project implementation and sustainability. Skills-building workshops in facilitating local consensus as well as gender- and youth-based dialogue to understand the different needs among the different demographic groups are absolutely critical if these dimensions of the Municipal Charter are to be effectively delivered.

I have met municipal council members in the Beni Mellal, Marrakech, Mohammedia, and Taroudant provinces who cite their Charter’s statutes and state they are without instruction on how to procedurally accomplish development plans generated from the people. It would be helpful if actual participatory planning methods were included at the annex in the published Charter that all council members receive at the approximately 1,500 municipalities. Considering the lack of guidelines on how municipalities might proceed, it is not a surprise that I have also met governors of provinces who faced the impossible likelihood of receiving identical development plans from more than a dozen municipal councils. The plans contained the exact projects defined by hundreds of villages at the same precise level of priority, having been copied from one another. Effectively training council members and others in real community settings can be the primary remedy against
this awful loss of opportunity and result in plans for projects that accurately reflect the people’s ideas.

The National Initiative for Human Development

The second framework, Morocco’s National Initiative for Human Development (NIHD), is a national fund for infrastructure projects, capacity-building, social and cultural revitalization, and job-generating activities on the sub-national level. Its budget through 2023 was approved in September 2018 at $1.9 billion (North Africa Post, 2018).

In theory, the NIHD should primarily help to actualize development projects designed under the Municipal Charter. Indeed, the NIHD and the Municipal Charter can only be successful if they work in tandem. The NIHD is meant to help fund the participatory development plans embodied in the Charter and finance the projects that local people expressed they most need during participatory planning processes (such as during the fulfillment of the Communal Charter requiring such actions) and want to implement, helping to ensure their sustainability. If this were the case, and if the NIHD’s budget were doubled through 2023, then it is my assertion—based on budgetary analyses and project evaluations at municipal levels—that Morocco could potentially fulfill its development model and vision through local community-driven development movements that incorporate multisectoral partnerships at all administrative tiers, rather than remaining ranked 123 among nations on the Human Development Index following an enormity of expenditure, intentions, and effort (United Nations Development Programme, 2018).

If the Municipal Charter does not result in projects properly defined over the course of community-wide meetings (inclusive to the general public (Mikkelsen, 2005, p. 72), disadvantaged groups (Kapoor, 2002, p. 104), professionals (Swantz, 1982, pp. 114-115), and the vulnerable (Kumar, 2002, p. 51), which is unfortunately often the case due to inadequate participatory training and finance, then it can be expected that the NIHD will not have adequate local projects to fund and that the aggregate of results fall short of national goals, as is already happening.

There are many other practical NIHD reforms to increase its development impact. First, the provincial administrations of NIHD should accept development proposals all year round. As of now, the shifting periods during the year when they receive proposals mean that opportunities open and close, and most local associations and cooperatives remain unaware.

Second, the NIHD should be maximally flexible to fund the range of projects communities determine most important to them (whether in health, education, construction, etc.). The NIHD’s criteria regarding project types they consider supporting also often changes, such as their across the board prohibition in recent years of local community construction projects, while rural community priorities have remained consistent, such as building of preschools, drinking water towers and irrigation canals, and work centers for local cooperatives and associations.

Third, the NIHD should double the amount of the funding ceiling for local projects to $60,000 to enable construction of irrigation systems, agricultural processing facilities, and other vital infrastructure, as well as reduce the requirement
that recipients contribute toward the financial amount requested to 10% from the current 30%. The requirement to co-invest is understandable because it seeks to encourage buy-in and a deeper level of commitment by the beneficiaries. However, the 30% level has become a prohibitive barrier for many people to access the program, as was expressed by community representatives in the Oujda, Beni Mellal, Marrakech, and other regions. In-kind giving on the part of community applicants, such as labor and land, should be acceptable by the NIHD in place of the financial contribution. Furthermore, there also appears to be a many month lag between when beneficiaries manage to pay their financial contribution and when NIHD finally disburses the total grant. In Morocco, it is customary for financial transactions related to goods and services to be immediate upon delivery, just as people’s needs are immediate. The NIHD ought not be an exception to this norm.

Finally, and most critically, the NIHD should co-create project proposals among its staff with the prospective local beneficiaries. Rural areas’ illiteracy rate is nearly double that in urban places at over 40%, and rural women’s illiteracy is close to double that of men (Hemidach, 2015). Drafting the required project proposals and documents is impossible for people and communities who could most utilize NIHD. Credit Agricole, Morocco’s leading bank that finances professionals in agriculture and the agri-food sector, and USAID in northern Iraq are starting to gain experiences in co-creating project proposals with community representatives and beneficiaries, lessons from which might be helpful if NIHD adopted this approach. Incorporating these measures and aligning the NIHD and the Municipal Charter regarding participatory planning and development could create a sharp rise in the implementation of new local development projects that are consistent with the necessities of sustainability.

Moroccan Decentralization

The “roadmap” of Moroccan decentralization—derived from a series of public statements of the King of Morocco since 2008—aims to utilize ongoing national level engagement (devolution) along with sub-national partnerships (de-concentration), to help implement community projects (delegation). In other words, the Moroccan pathway aims to rally national resources and partnerships for local development. In principle, this is good for sustainability. However, appropriate and lasting construction of decentralized systems must happen in tandem with the implementation of community planning, projects, and partnership-building between the public, private, and civil sectors (Friedmann & Klauss et. al., 1984, pp. 189-194). These relationships and joint development actions are what decentralized systems are actually made of, and this requires sustained community initiatives on a widespread basis. Therefore, without the Municipal Charter and the NIHD working together, adequate decentralized arrangements of public administrations will neither be effectively formed nor adequately enduring.

2 Yossef Ben-Meir, based on meetings with community representatives in the regions of Oujda, Marrakech, Beni Mellal, and others during 2018-19.
3 Ali Benmokhtar (Credit Agricole, Marrakech) and Timothy Lavelle (USAID, Washington, DC), based on meetings with Yossef Ben-Meir in 2018.
Morocco’s decentralization has been referred to as “regionalization,” meaning that its emphasis is on the devolution of power to its 12 regions (Pignon & Braconnier, 2017). Nevertheless, regional public administrative centers in Morocco remain too distant from the dispersed communities of their jurisdictions. This causes considerable delays of basic authorizations needed to carry development initiatives forward. Even provincialization, which is the breakdown of regions into their provinces, resembles an unnecessary limitation on reasonable actions for sustainable change and growth.

In Morocco overall, decentralization has not significantly taken hold, which only further suppresses new local development. The national level still generally decides the parameters, terms, cases, and situations for sub-regional actions, as I have observed generally across all ministries that engage in sustainable human development as part of their mission. For example, local education directors defer decisions about opening beds in a middle school dormitory, During the fall of 2018, the King of Morocco tasked the government to submit a draft Decentralization Charter, which has now been developed and would ideally bind national and regional government agencies to specific functions for the administration of human services (ElJechtimi, 2018). The human development course of the nation depends upon clear articulation and implementation among the relationships between public, civil, and private institutions.

Without hardly a mention of the municipal level, the Decentralization Charter will likely fall short of enabling the system of sub-national management of development to fulfill its promise for Moroccan local communities. The elements of the Municipal Charter, particularly the community creation of participatory development plans, should clearly be referenced in the Decentralization Charter, as well as the central elements of the Decentralization Roadmap being de-concentration (intersectoral subnational partnerships) and delegation (community management). Devolution (ongoing national level engagement) is already well codified in the Decentralization Charter, whose function appears to be that of establishing parameters for the national and regional levels to interface, without establishing the necessary roles of the provinces and municipalities with the nation’s decentralization system.

Decentralization advances autonomy of societies to determine their own development path (Parfitt, 2004, pp. 538-539). Brazilian economist Theotonio Dos Santos stated that for developing nations to no longer be dependent on foreign trade and be able to build a locally controlled economy, they must restructure internally and direct their development efforts and resources toward the interior, which decentralization can help to do (Dos Santos, 1978, pp. 57-80). For Dos Santos (1978), internal conditions determine the potential effects of the international situation (pp. 57-80). Therefore, he suggests that underdeveloped economies develop their own productive autonomy. Decentralization by its very nature promotes the growth of alternative centers in what were previously areas of the periphery. A certain amount of autonomy from political, administration, and economic national centers and from global dynamics is thus created (Rolly, 2001, p. 55). Decentralization then becomes a potential means of conflict resolution by
providing autonomy to sub-regions, which can have a stabilizing effect (Hulbe, 1980, p. 56).

Here again, informational workshop sessions on decentralized organization and its bottom-up formation are necessary with national, regional, and local leaders. Conducting workshops that help demonstrate overlapping parallels between localized control over social affairs and Islamic religious concepts would also be helpful and is sorely needed today. For some national leaders, particularly Islamists, this could heighten decentralization’s appeal by placing it in this cultural-traditional context, where it can be naturally integrated. For example, some writers on Islamic political philosophy describe the notions of *shura*, *ummah*, *baya*, and *tawhidi* as involving dimensions of local governance, social justice, leadership, and personal empowerment (Said, Abu-Nimer, & Sharify-Funk, 2006, pp. 159-162). By developing understanding as to how Islamic precepts relate to characteristics of participatory decentralization, supportive coalitions can be expanded by having more shared frames of references for furthering sustainable development. By further developing this understanding as to how specifically Islamic ideas exist in participatory and decentralized pathways, development advocates are able to expand the community of the people and groups with whom there may be regularly dialogue and partnership, with more closely aligned and relatable frames of references.

There are concerns that the process of decentralization in pursuing development may lead to destabilizing political outcomes (Rolly, 2001, p. 56). With regards to Morocco, the emphasis on participatory approaches by local communities to create these projects centers around their livelihoods and meeting their immediate human needs. Having directly or indirectly helped bring about local meetings and projects in all its 12 regions, I have observed no basis for concerns that stem beyond these developmental factors involving the unrealized plethora of socioeconomic and environmental opportunities of the people. Communities are focused on meeting their needs; creating and furthering their associations and cooperatives toward their goals; and somehow addressing what can seem stifling difficulties for progress. There has certainly been ample opportunity to redress the needless poverty, and there still is if only Moroccan leadership were to fulfill the model of decentralized participatory development to which it is committed.

However, human service ministries’ consistent deference to Rabat remains as fixed as ever. Reflecting upon dozens of meetings regarding community development projects in an array of sectors since 2008 when the Decentralization Roadmap was launched, my experience begs the question: What compels regional directors of public agencies that oversee the different human service deliveries over vast areas to still refer to central administrations for their approval of modest-sized initiatives and partnership agreements? Is it that they actually do not understand their full authority or that it has not been specifically enough defined, or is it that the pattern of centralized behavior is so deeply entrenched that regional managers are not as of yet comfortable or confident to execute the power that they have? Even as these possible explanations are ultimately conjecture within an ongoing decentralization process, it may be a combination of these and other factors that keep decentralization an intention rather than a reality.
Understandably, executing decentralization, particularly at an accelerated pace, can be a delicate balance. The local level is stratified socio-economically, environmentally, and in regards to gender just as it is on the societal level and globally (Brohman et al., 1996, p. 235). Advancing decentralization quickly can be fraught with unhelpful consequences, such as entrenching further the locally affluent and political classes (Heller, 2000, p. 139). However, genuine implementation of frameworks one and two could create the initial participatory and sustainability conditions that would enable Morocco to eventually opt for an emerging form of decentralized development management to the municipal level. In order for this to unfold, local communities and their associations require greater guidance, support and practice in managing projects (that incorporate multi-sectoral partnerships) through their different phases, and to also directly experience their development benefits.

**Moroccan Agriculture and Rural Development**

The fourth framework, which is constituted by Morocco’s agricultural development programs to promote product cultivation, processing, and commercializing, are not making a sufficient difference for the majority of farming families who cultivate five hectares or less of land and who experience intractable poverty (Maroc Vert, 2019). The social unrest in northern Morocco is a direct reflection of the ongoing rural poverty and a fallout in the application of the country’s agricultural, human development, and participatory frameworks. Rural poverty—despite immense local and national potential—is the “Achilles’ heel” of Morocco’s stability and, ultimately, national prosperity.

Local people are left deeply frustrated with the anemic progress made over the past three decades in implementing rural development projects they prioritize—a period that has seen rural poverty increase most dramatically in the 1990s (Levy, 2005) and is currently three times higher than urban poverty (Ghanem, 2015). I would suggest that the rural poverty conditions in Morocco are increasingly impossible to justify. Even with viable projects aplenty, donors and financiers complain of a lack of viable business and development proposals. But how could that be when, for example, farming communities know exactly the irrigation infrastructure that is needed to uplift all village households? Local people consistently prioritize this, yet even when the local beneficiaries would gladly contribute their labor in-kind, there has been no construction. Irrigation infrastructure projects are prohibitively expensive, especially in mountain areas, and hardly any other project will more greatly improve agricultural production, food security, and income.

Rural development conditions are very problematic; there are the near complete losses of local fruit tree varieties of fig, apple, pear, grape, clementine, carob, date, and others that are endemic to the northern region, and other varieties elsewhere in Morocco. These local crop varieties are encouraged in Morocco’s “Green” plan for agriculture. The crops offer a genetic resource for small farmers that enhances food security in the face of water scarcity and climate change. However, agrobiodiversity remains seriously undermined because of a few high-yielding varieties that cause
genetic erosion; in addition, there is the backing of government programs that currently deem agriculture for export of greater national importance (Ouarghidi, 2018).

This is occurring in Morocco at a time when billions of trees and plants are needed (Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Rural Development and Waters and Forests, 2013). Farming families are also compelled by the market and population to transition away from growing the traditional staples of barley and corn. According to the Ministry of Agriculture, these staples are grown on 70% of agricultural land, yet account for only 10-15% of agricultural revenue (King Mohammed VI, 2008). Government tree nurseries have been closing over the years when they should be at maximum production capacities based on the enormous public demand for trees. One simple policy shift would make a profound difference for tens of thousands of farming families—fig and potentially walnut trees (depending on water availability) should be allowed to be planted at high elevations on public domain lands, just as carob is allowed on public domain lands in lower lying ones.

One of the intolerable consequences of rural poverty is the horrendous drop in participation in education of rural girls, particularly between primary to secondary schools, which is three times higher than urban girls and 15% higher than rural boys (Benyakhlef, 2017). In addition to gender role expectations, such as domestic work, marrying early, and fear of ostracization, other contributing factors of lower female participation are insufficient dormitories, affordable transportation, and adequate decentralized education (Auletto, 2017). Many rural families must choose between sending their daughters to fetch drinking water miles away or sending them to school. Available safe drinking water improves girls’ education outcomes more than boys (Khandkur, Lavy, & Filmer, 1994).

Agricultural programs understandably put pressure on the entire upstream value chain, from nurseries to markets, of raw and processed product. Enormous value is lost by Moroccan family farmers due to tree and seed dependency, irrigation inefficiency limiting the size of arable lands, ineffectual or nonexistent cooperatives, and by selling their raw product through traditional local market channels. These conditions characterize the experience of the vast majority of farming families, who are without the production capacity, partnerships, and means to add value and reach a consistent standard and quality of product necessary to enter more rewarding markets. These stifling barriers ensure that up to five times the average household income is lost as compared to if a viable cultivation, production, and management system were in place, based on my conservative calculation. Thus, rural people’s potential savings, income, and revenue for reinvestment—their basis for growth—only serve to improve livelihoods elsewhere while they themselves reap no benefit.

Agricultural finance programs have to make choices as to where they can catalyze the greatest possible developmental difference with their limited resources. In this regard, project priority solutions are widely shared and are in irrigation: water canals, basins, towers, pipes, pumps, infrastructure—all of which can conserve water by 50% or more and create the opportunity to expand agricultural cultivation. Meeting the equally-widespread need for clean drinking water could be
appropriately incorporated into the technical scheme. Only approximately 60% of rural Moroccans have access to clean drinking water. Though this has increased from 14% in 1995, access to house connections and good water sources has improved only slightly (Benargane, 2017). Clean drinking water projects remain a top priority expressed by rural communities. Too often, there seems to be a disconnect, as in this case, between the national human development figures that show marked improvements, and the reality of rural communities that have been left behind.

The obvious counter-response to the recommendation regarding irrigation is that there are already government programs to subsidize some of these activities for farmers (pressure drip systems, for example). However, those programs need to be brought to the farmers where they are, and the needed partnerships and local institutional growth are aided by facilitating farmers’ strategic planning, outreach, and experiential learning. Programs should fund nurseries on public land lent to community associations to reduce risk and cost to farmers, similar to what the Moroccan High Commission of Waters and Forests, public schools, universities, and others have done with the High Atlas Foundation (HAF), the U.S.-Moroccan nonprofit organization I founded and help lead that works to strengthen cooperative capacity-building in management and technical areas, organic, food safety, and other certifications, and revolving lines of credit in order for cooperatives to acquire certified product for its processing and sale. The results of these combined actions, as HAF has observed in rural cases in Morocco, will be a surge in cultivation and market-ready product, along with improved local organization, reinvestment in human development, and decentralized partnerships that conduct decision-making considerate of such multiple factors. The HAF model can be adopted and adapted by other community-based organizations.

For example, the Moroccan Jewish community is also participating in the national agricultural development effort by providing land in-kind to cooperatives and associations (with HAF guidance and support) in order for rural communities to build their needed tree nurseries, and most recently in the Province of Ourzazate with government funding to help build the irrigation infrastructure and assist inter-cultural collaboration. The 300 or so agricultural extension centers and the 54 training schools in Morocco under the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Rural Development, Water and Forest should be fitted for endemic and organic fruit tree and medicinal plant nurseries. In this way, these locations will be natural extension technical skills transference sites for the surrounding areas, essential in order for Moroccan communities to generate the one billion agro-forestry trees the nation requires (Ben-Meir, 2015). Their students and staff should be the future trainers who are themselves trained experientially in facilitating participatory planning and development projects with local communities.

But how do we get there? Again, the first framework of the Municipal Charter, forming community development plans driven by the intended beneficiaries, women and men of all ages, is key for sustainable agricultural project identification and implementation. Facilitation of project development is helpful and needed; in this regard, establishing centers of participatory planning to assist with dialogue,
meeting space, and coordination will be vital. Provincial governors and other local leaders who understand the important contribution such centers can make should exercise greater authority to assign underutilized public or civil building infrastructure for this participatory development purpose.

**Moudawana and Women’s Empowerment**

The fifth framework, Moudawana—Morocco’s family code—represents a major opportunity for equality and prosperity for women. Like the deficiencies in positive outcomes from the other frameworks relative to opportunity, the ground-level application of Moudawana’s articles—which are of a rights-based approach to sustainable development—have not broadly translated into positive change for the vast majority of rural women. In an action-research study conducted by the High Atlas Foundation, 94% of 194 participating women in the rural Al Haouz province said that they had never heard of Moudawana. The purpose of the study was to assist the High Atlas Foundation in the delivery of workshops that involve 1) recognizing and exercising rights, 2) growing capacities for participatory cooperative development, and 3) building the knowledge and facilitative skills of citizens in empowerment processes.

The lead researcher, Gal Kramarski (2018), stated in her yet unpublished results, “All groups mentioned illiteracy as a core obstacle that holds them back from knowing their rights” (p. 15). The distances between communities and their closest middle and high schools create practical (infrastructural) and cultural barriers for participation in education by rural girls. Without cell phone coverage and independence, one person expressed the sentiment: “No one cares about us, we are neglected here; how could we know our rights?” Kramarski (2018) observed, “Many women indicated that they are dependent on their relatives; their lack of financial and social freedom prevents their access to rights” (pp. 17-18).

The observations from the forementioned study, and the ongoing empowerment program it launched, point to a multidimensional course to advance the status and opportunities of Moroccan women. First, 10 urban women from universities in Marrakesh who were part of the above study, and all of whom had awareness about Moudawana as an issue of political and civil struggle recognize the opportunity to strengthen the capacities of both rural and university women in Morocco by facilitating women’s workshops that teach integrated self-discovery, Moudawana rights, and cooperative development programs. Such exchanges have many reciprocal advantages.

Second, in order to expand empowerment experiences and development, it would be helpful to have the theoretical and methodological perspectives of Western and Islamic feminisms analyzed together for similarities and differences. Their integration could create enhanced approaches and outcomes toward greater participation, potentially benefiting both societies (or civilizations).

Third, self-discovery, human rights-based, and confidence-building strategies can then also achieve greater financial independence for women through cooperatives, further human development, management and technical capacities, and social networks. Just as participatory planning needs to result in measurable improvements in people’s lives to be successful, so too should the women’s
empowerment processes result in more sustainable development. For example, Gal Kamarski’s (2018a) published report indicates that the initial self-discovery workshops, utilizing participatory democratic procedures, helped women to identify economic solutions for development. A group of 35 Moroccan women in the Marrakesh region addressed illiteracy by hiring a female university student and starting a literacy program in their village, and 65% of participants have joined parent associations and are actively involved in efforts to improve local schools for their children’s benefit.

Finally, education alone is not enough to increase women’s employment, as evidenced by the fact that in Morocco, women already comprise 47% of the population holding a tertiary degree of some kind, and yet the vast majority remain marginalized from the workforce (“Ratio of female to male tertiary enrollment,” World Bank World Development Indicators Database, 2010). Education programs must be combined with empowerment workshops to give women the confidence they need to overcome patriarchal notions preventing them from entering the workforce. Women, as community leaders, also must be involved in identifying and implementing development projects. Only with women’s close involvement will such projects truly be successful at the local community level and beyond.

Youth, Activism, and Development

The sixth framework—the advancement of youth enterprises and their civil and political participation in decision-making—is full of opportunities and challenges in Morocco. There are many avenues to engage youth in community-based volunteerism and internship experiences for human development. It comes down to investment, leadership, and implementation management. University-based action research and service learning, youth centers, and schools show every day how they can be the catalysts for people’s projects and social change, while forging students’ best possible futures through formative skill-building. However, lack of funding makes it hard to maintain these programs, which actually form the basis to redress the 40% urban youth unemployment and extenuate innovative social development (Reddy, 2017). In the long term, these programs, which are not very expensive, pay for themselves, especially when considering the hope and sense of purpose these experiences give young people and the development results that youth subsequently create in their communities.

Capacity-building programs for groups of young people—such as in education and youth center settings, with urban students assisting local communities, and children protection centers—should couple two streams of mutually reinforcing actions. First, the application of participatory methods among the youth training participants, so that they themselves analyze and strategize to achieve their self-defined needs. Simultaneously, they learn the participatory approach. Second, as they learn planning methods from their own use of them, the students apply the techniques with neighboring communities to affect change beyond their own schools, centers, or neighborhoods. In this way, student and community projects are identified and implemented as skills in participatory planning and project management are built among the youth participants. Learning-by-doing is cost
effective, but it requires management and integrated programs involving participant reflection, writing, collaborative learning, and critical thinking.

**Conclusion—Morocco: Setting the Table for Sustainable Prosperity**

The Moroccan frameworks for development enumerate what is needed to catalyze sustainable development of marginalized areas and groups, and a few instructive cases have proven capable of bringing ideas to full implementation with replicable and enduring results. These successful cases underscore the importance of participatory approaches for defining and implementing sustainable initiatives. They encourage decentralization in order to enable local communities and civil and public agencies to make decisions and allocate resources for people’s projects. The frameworks target rural communities, women, and youth in recognition of their disadvantaged situations, and their role as key drivers of transformational change.

Taken together, these frameworks provide the needed comprehensive pathways for the people of Morocco to achieve the future they want, providing a course and means to help reach their human development goals. The Municipal Charter could provide the plans for project development and sustainability that the National Initiative for Human Development could then get behind and help accomplish. Decentralized arrangements are subsequently built and enhanced through community project implementation that involves multi-sectoral partnership.

Moroccan agriculture and agroforestry, with its income-generating and environmental-enhancing potential can and should be the engine for self-reliant financing of the people’s projects, especially in rural areas that need it the most. Agriculture projects also become identified and determined through the process of implementing the mandates of the Municipal Charter potentially providing jobs for university trained project facilitators. The Moudawana embodies a rights-based approach and recognizes the centrality of sustainable development as a product of human rights. Thus, it not only secures and protects the just and rightful status of women and girls but also enables a vital pathway toward independence in regard to economic decision-making and empowerment. For youth, increased programs to promote experiential learning, the creation of capacity-building community projects, and the building of employable skills improve both urban and rural livelihoods.

To highlight and reiterate, implementation priorities must include:

1. Provide community development training/workshops;
2. Create Centers for Participatory Rural Project training, planning, and implementation;
3. Empower greater decentralized local control in identifying and implementing development projects;
4. Provide more irrigation infrastructure;
5. Provide greater support for agroforestry, especially for indigenous plants that strengthen biodiversity;
6. Involve and empower women to take active roles in development project planning and implementation; and
7. Involve and empower youth especially through schools and self-study experiential learning programs to take active roles in development project planning and implementation.

Sustainable development depends on people’s participation. The first steps to improving community development in Morocco have been taken and rest within the existing frameworks themselves. Communities now need to learn and apply these frameworks in their daily lives by gathering, assessing, implementing, and doing. I have found that all that is needed is to give men and women of all ages the chance to come together through community workshops. If successful, implementing these frameworks will ultimately deliver projects that they and their families have hoped for too long. Thus, empowered rural communities will transform Morocco into a model for sustainable development.

References


Panoptic Vision: Disjuncture, Transgressions, and Imagination in Laila Marrakchi’s Film

Rock the Casbah

Touria Khannous

Abstract
This article focuses on Laila Marrakchi’s film Rock the Casbah (2013), which reflects the exchange between global and local cultural and sociopolitical ideologies of a new Morocco. The film highlights the contradictions of globalization as it occurs through disjuncture. Arjun Appadurai’s theory of the world in motion and “a world of flows” provides a relevant framework for this analysis. The article uses Appadurai’s notion of “disjuncture” as a theoretical framework to discuss the dynamics and interrelationships involved in the protagonist’s movement between Western mediascapes as a filmstar and her Moroccan family’s local context. Appadurai’s conceptualization of globalization is crucial for understanding the inherent disjuncture between the homogeneity of media representations and the local heterogeneity of Morocco. One aspect of the film represents the reality of a changing, glocalized Morocco. Another engages with Western media tropes in order to reveal the false representations of reality that are often depicted in Western films. The film’s panoptic vision reveals the power structures present in both the local and global contexts, inspiring the viewer to imagine new identities and to be more aware of glocal possibilities.

Moroccan women filmmakers such as Laila Marrakchi construct a particular model of Moroccan cinema emerging from a global perspective. Such a perspective is enhanced by their connection to Europe and the United States, their multinational production, as well as by the significant attention their films have drawn at international festivals. Most contemporary Moroccan women filmmakers enjoy international funding and have international connections, as this is the only way they can produce their films. What they also share is professional

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1 In his essay “The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema,” Andrew Higson (2000) examines if Benedict Anderson’s theory of the nation is relevant for investigating national cinemas. Higson argues that an understanding of national cinema needs to take into account more transnational aspects of cinematic production, since the communities imagined by cinematic techniques tend to be transnational.
marginalization and a common project of solidifying a woman’s gaze and claiming subjectivity, as they struggle against the sexist ideologies that control their filmic productions both at home and abroad. Despite the relative circulation of their films, Moroccan women filmmakers remain marginalized because of the hegemony of Hollywood constructions of spectatorship and distributions of film, which is true for practically all filmmakers outside Hollywood. The circulation of their films in the digital age has been mainly aided by different media and platforms such as Amazon and Netflix (Caillé, 2016, p. 72). The category “Moroccan women’s cinema,” however, is very broad and does not communicate important factors such as generational issues and other differences in contexts and locations. For example, Valérie Orlando has noted the difference between Moroccan filmmakers living at home and those in the diaspora. She argues that, “Young audiences have emphatically supported international MRE [Marocain résident à l’étranger] productions because they associate them with what they think is most important: connection, not only to their own country, but to the outside world” (Orlando, 2011, p. 39).

This article focuses on Marrakchi’s film Rock the Casbah (2013), which highlights the changes in Moroccan society and culture that have happened since the 1990s shaped by the sociocultural, economic, and political forces of globalization. Being part of the diaspora, Marrakchi enjoys a unique vantage point as a commentator from both inside and outside Morocco. My use of the term “diasporic” in describing Marrakchi is framed by cultural theorist Stuart Hall who defines diasporic cultural producers as those who adopt in their work a “diaspora aesthetic” and “diaspora identities” “which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew through transformation and difference” (Hall, 1995/2006, p. 438). In this sense, the term diaspora refers not necessarily to Marrakchi’s physical movement from a place, but also to the unconventional ways in which she represents the reality of a new Morocco which is often perceived by conservatives as “unconventional.”

Marrakchi also fits the framework of cinéma-monde, a concept that has been used to describe emerging transnational francophone cinema from former French colonies. Florence Martin has argued that the “translocal” and global funding of cinéma-monde constitutes “a de-orbiting from” France, “since we are no longer dealing with postcolonial films … with France as the main pull, but rather with a reconfiguration of transnational teams for a local/translocal/transnational collaboration of people, and movements of ideas and languages that are de-centered,”

With regards to Moroccan women’s cinematic production, I would like to suggest that we can read their films drawing on certain feminists of color’s frameworks pertaining to class, race, and ethnicity. This intersectional approach will allow us to consider racial, gendered, and cultural hegemony in film criticism. Despite these filmmakers’ relative wide circulation, only few scholars study their films, with the exception of Francophone scholars such as Valerie Orlando, Suzanne Gauch, and Florence Martin, among others, who only work on non-Hollywood films. My views echo those of bell hooks who notes that film theory has erased the cultural productions of women of color when she points out that “Feminist theory rooted in an historical psychoanalytic framework that privileges sexual difference actively suppresses recognition of race” (hooks, 1992/2003, p. 214).
de-orbited, free” (Martin, 2016, p. 473). Thus, it would be safe to label Marrakchi as a cinéma-monde cinéaste whose film Rock the Casbah draws in global and local parameters. It uses the international languages of cinéma-monde, which permeate films from former French colonies, including Morocco, all while decentering hegemonic languages and narratives. Brian Edwards has argued that since the 1980s, Moroccan cinema has adopted American models against the French model because the American model has proven to be freer and far from domination (Edwards, 2007, p. 292). Marrakchi appropriates the tools of American cinematic styles not only to free herself from French domination but also to counteract Hollywood’s misrepresentations and false images. Rock the Casbah begins with the tunes of the 1940s Hollywood musical “On the Road to Morocco,” thus squarely setting the referential mood of the film. While, at first glance, it contains many familiar elements of Hollywood movies, including an upbeat Hollywood-style narrative, a closer reading readily reveals serious elements of critique. The film mixes melodrama, which is marked by sensational themes and suspense, with humor. It also employs a fantastical ghost played by Omar Sharif who offers commentary on the actions of his family in the style of a Greek Chorus. The use of Arabic, French, and English in the film has significant implications. The relationship between the use of French and the influence France held in Morocco is called into question. Moroccan characters are not only bilingual, but also understand English. Their use of French is a consequence of French colonialism, but their understanding of English is more related to polycentric multiculturalism and a decentering of France. The film then can be interpreted as being informed by Ella Shohat and Robert Stam’s (1994) theory of polycentric multiculturalism which “is about dispersing power” (p. 48), thus de-centering authority and foregrounding multilingual and global spaces.

Marrakshi’s film is reminiscent of other films about globalization such as Alejandro Inárritu’s diasporic Babel (2007), which displays an array of languages but no dominant language, thus contributing to lack of communication across borders. Both Rock the Casbah and Babel highlight global connections combined with disconnection and exclusion.

The Plot and Sub-plots

Well-financed, Rock the Casbah is polished, demonstrating impressive and rich color designs. The setting is the beautiful estate of Sophia’s father Moulay Al Hassan, a well-off businessman in Tangier who benefited from economic globalization. Yet, the beautiful façade hides a world of violence, incest, and severe punishments. The film interweaves two different narrative strands that take place in two different parts of the world (the United States and Morocco) in a way that highlights global connectivity. The film consists of a main plot and two sub-plots. The main plot centers on Sophia’s immigration from Morocco to the United States to become a Hollywood movie star, at the price of being typecast as a terrorist. Sophia is a diasporic migrant who, as an actress, only plays roles involving violence and immobility. Her privileges in Morocco, however, are a result of her father’s
wealth, which has made it possible for her to immigrate to the United States and initiate a career in Hollywood.

The first sub-plot revolves around the dead father who has a large presence on the screen, often commenting on his funeral and interacting with Sophia’s son, Johnson, who he has not met prior to his death. Moulay Al Hassan introduces himself to the audience as a businessman who has just passed away. His death prompts the gathering of his family members to honor the three-day mourning period. The audience hears Moulay Al Hassan observe, “The old man on the table, the body, is me. I died yesterday of a heart attack … There was no announcer to prepare me for it. … But fortunately, as our saying goes: The dead rule the living.”

Hearing the dead patriarch talk about what he is seeing, the filmmaker is making him omnipresent and a charismatic presence through his commanding gaze. His wife is worried that he will reappear and reproach her for mismanaging the funeral. His daughter Kenza refuses a cigarette for fear he is watching. In Foucault’s (1977/2012) words, the father is a “panopticon,” a symbol of the disciplinary power of surveillance (p. 196). The dead father is an observer who can oversee everything and everyone; each person is seen by him but they, themselves, are limited in what they see. What the film reveals from outlining the history of Moulay Al Hassan’s surveillance and punishment is a shift from a bodily spectacle, where the dead body is seen by all family members, to the dead man as all-seeing and all-knowing, even after his death. Moulay El Hassan’s “gaze is alert everywhere,” which renders his family “a segmented, immobile, frozen space” (Foucault, 1977/2012, p. 195). Through the lens of the panopticon, different layers of narratives unfold in the film.

In the second sub-plot, the film’s rich estate makes clear the gap between Morocco’s poor subalterns and the global elite who have benefited from flows in globalized neoliberalism. To further dramatize such divisions, the film tells the story of Zakaria, the son of the family servant, who falls in love with Leila, the daughter of Moulay Al Hassan, who embodies the wealth and privilege that Zakaria has been denied. The details of their love story provide the context of the spectacles and dramas that later unfold in the film. Their love relationship ends in tragedy as Leila commits suicide when banished to London by her father and forced to have an abortion. The tragic side of the relationship between the two lovers is tied in the film to the new relationship that almost developed between Zakaria and Sophia. At the end, the film provides a vision of a new world beyond the gap between wealth and poverty when Zakaria learns that he is Moulay Al Hassan’s biological son and thus set to inherit half of his father’s fortune. Thus, we see at the funeral how the camera now captures a different image of the dual worlds, as Zakaria and his mother pose for a family picture with the rest of Moulay Al Hassan’s family members. Although far from perfect, world order is also restored in another happy ending when Sophia reconciles with her American husband.

Rock the Casbah echoes Marrakchi’s earlier film Marock (2005), which also focuses on the vast gap between the world of wealth and privilege and the world below. It portrays an unconventional relationship between a Jewish boy and a Muslim girl. Both films, through stunning scenes and diverse perspectives, make manifest the complex movement of global capital, products, peoples, and ideas.
Critical responses to Marrakchi’s films

Critics of Marrakchi have focused mainly on the global aspect of her films, as well as the impact of globalization on gender roles, without taking into account her subtle critiques of globalization. Brian Edwards discusses the cultural choices in her film *Marock* (2005). For Edwards, the circulation of American cultural products in Marrakchi’s film *Marock* promotes a Hollywood-like product that becomes the dominant narrative. Edwards describes *Marock* as a Hollywood teen romance that “exhibits the circulation of an American look, which is doubled by the film’s interest … in American commodities” (Edwards, 2016, p. 165). However, such reading overlooks the complexities that characterize the process of globalization. American culture has permeated Morocco via Western media, but its consumption, as Stuart Hall (1997) notes, is “a process of profound unevenness” (p. 33), which can generate a sort of defensive assertion of local cultural identities. The consumption of American cultural products is not necessarily to be equated with the Americanization of local culture. In this regard, Edwards questions “the ways in which American cultural products circulate through the world and what the meaning of their transnational circulation portends for U.S. hegemony (both political and cultural)” (Edwards, 2016, p. 22).

My reading of *Rock the Casbah* draws from cultural studies more than film studies, particularly critical globalization theory. Through this lens, the film highlights the contradictions of globalization as it occurs through disjuncture. Arjun Appadurai’s (1996) theory of the world in motion and “a world of flows” (p. 4) provides a relevant framework for my analysis. Appadurai argues that globalization involves five *scapes* or *disjuncture* that occur in global contexts which are usually more manifest in the developing world than in the West. These are *ethnoscapes*, by which he refers to the mobility of people; *mediascapes*, by which he refers to the global flows of images produced by a variety of media such as film and television; *technoscapes*, by which he means the dissemination of technology across borders; *financescapes*, which refer to the global flows of finance, and *ideoscapes* by which he means the global flow of ideologies such as freedom and human rights (Appadurai, 1996, p. 35). The relation between these scapes is marked by disjuncture, separation, and dislocation rather than unity. I will use Appadurai’s notion of “disjuncture” as a theoretical framework to discuss the dynamics and interrelationships involved in Sophia’s movement between Western mediascapes as a filmstar and her Moroccan family’s local context. Appadurai’s conceptualization of globalization is crucial for understanding the inherent disjuncture between the homogeneity of media and the local heterogeneity of Morocco.

The “Glocal” in *Rock the Casbah*

The term “glocal,” which is related to Appadurai’s notion of disjuncture, represents the tension between the local and the global in Marrakchi’s film, thus providing a new space for a new identity that is neither limited by local values nor by the stereotypes perpetuated by Western media. The term glocal was first used by sociologist Ronald Robertson when he stated during a 1997 conference that glocalization "means the simultaneity—the co-presence—of both universalizing
and particularizing tendencies” (“Glocalization,” n.d.). An Encyclopedia Britannica entry further explains glocalization as constituting “a challenge to simplistic conceptions of globalization processes as linear expansions of territorial scales. Glocalization indicates that the growing importance of continental and global levels is occurring together with the increasing salience of local and regional levels” (“Glocalization,” n.d.).

Marrakchi is eager to depict images that are constructed from a local point of view despite her global connections to France and the United States (she is married to an American film director and she resides in France). In one interview, she is quick to affirm her strong connection to Morocco when the interviewer remarks that some Moroccans view her as an outsider: “I feel I’m deeply Moroccan and anchored in my roots. I also feel very Parisian. For a long time I worried about this, thinking, ‘I’m a crossbreed. …. What’s annoying is that some Westerners expect me to be an Arab filmmaker and to focus on what is miserable, to have the same approach as the media’s … I’ve tried to show something else, from the inside” (Koral, online interview). Hers is an identity in motion that breaks borders because of her on-going in-depth contact with Morocco despite her diasporic status. Marrakchi’s reference to the Eurocentric and imperialist perspective of Western media and its misrepresentations of Arabs shows that she is aware of the politics of post-colonialism, a view certainly also evident in her protagonist’s career as an actress in Hollywood playing terrorists. While she critiques media representations that are biased and Eurocentric, she particularly challenges the racism and sexism that are present in Hollywood. One could also say that Sophia is Marrakchi’s alter ego. The film highlights their connections through their participation in Hollywood filmmaking and their marriages to American filmmakers.

**Disjuncture between Global Media and Local Meanings**

*Rock the Casbah* reflects the exchange between the global and the local cultural and sociopolitical ideologies of a new Morocco. One aspect of Marrakchi’s film represents the reality of a changing, glocalized Morocco. Relatedly, another engages with Western media tropes in order to reveal to Moroccans the false representations of reality that are often depicted in Western films. Sophia’s participation in Western media places her at the dis/juncture of the global and the local, between the United States and her Moroccan family. The film highlights the ruptures that she experiences as she navigates authoritarian structures both within Hollywood and Morocco. The positive aspects of Hollywood’s global and international aspirations foster imagined communities, and this is initially an attractive position for women like Sophia who are in pursuit of freedom and self-fulfillment. However, type casted, the only roles she is given to play in American films are those of terrorists. She might have opted to act in some other roles if they were available, but she was assigned only stereotypical depictions. Her American lifestyle and her insistence to a travel agent at the beginning of the film that she is a Hollywood film star make it clear that she is proud of being a successful actress. Yet, American ethnic and cultural stereotyping in her roles is obvious: all Arabs are potential terrorists whose religion and values place them in opposition to American beliefs. In the aftermath of 9/11, Western media has perpetuated images of Muslim
men as terrorists and oppressors of women (Abu-Lughod, 2006, p. 7). In creating a female terrorist heroine, Marrakchi mocks a Hollywood that has continuously exaggerated a hegemonic masculinity, and a subordinate, submissive femininity. The film critiques Hollywood’s stance with respect to typecasting Arabs in roles full of racist clichés, as either villains or caricatures.3

By exposing the stereotypes of Western filmmaking, Marrakchi’s film deconstructs the industry’s ideological messages and false representations. Sophia’s Moroccan family is in shock as they watch one of the scenes in which she is strapped to a suicide bomb and about to pull the trigger, shouting “Allahu Akbar.” This particular scene also shocked Moroccan audiences, who watched Rock the Casbah following the Casablanca and Marrakech bombings that occurred in 2003 and 2011. The film criticizes the way American media associates Islam with terrorism and portrays Muslims as suicide bombers, and how such misrepresentations affect the feelings of Moroccan audiences and generates their strong reactions. Marrakchi regards Hollywood’s representations as a disjunction between what is represented on the screen on the one hand and the reality in the local Muslim context on the other hand. Reminiscent of Canada’s hit television series Little Mosque on the Prairie, and through the technique of film within a film, Marrakchi shows how global media images of Muslims are recreated and influence the very local context where Sophia’s family is situated, as her Moroccan family now view Sophia with suspicion and ridicule. She is subjected to mockery when her sister Miriam whispers to her mom that Sophia “never does anything like normal people.” Sophia’s experience with her family exemplifies the cultural disjunction that occurs when global actors (pun intended) attempt to relocate themselves in local contexts.

Anxious Border Crossings as Acts of Transgression

Sophia’s mere return to Morocco provokes fear and anxiety. She is not enjoying free circulation even though she is “cosmopolitan.” She has to come to terms with two ideologies, in Appadurai’s framework, that represent two axes of power. The first ideoscape represents Western media (also a mediascape) which assumes a homogenous stereotype of Muslim women as terrorists. The second ideoscape is Moroccan patriarchy, which assumes that good women are submissive. Here, Marrakchi uses her international film to deal with internal issues that Moroccans do not want to discuss in public. Control of Moroccan women occurs not only overtly through controlling fathers but also covertly through mechanisms of normalization whereby women come to internalize power in abiding by norms.

3 Jack Shaheen is the most outspoken critic of Hollywood’s stereotypes of Arabs. He states that, “the time is long overdue for Hollywood to end its undeclared war on Arabs, and to cease misrepresenting and maligning them” (Shaheen, 2012, p. 34). Tania Kamal Al Din’s 1999 documentary Hollywood Harems also examines Hollywood movies since the 1900s that have perpetuated stereotypes about Arabs. She looks particularly at the image of the oversexualized and exotic Arab female beauty who is rescued from the harem by a white male hero, thus adding to the corpus of race and gendered images that constitute fantasies about the orient and contribute to the homogenization of Arabs. This study is pertinent in light of continued racial profiling of Middle Easterners in the aftermath of 9/11.
and understanding themselves by way of these norms. Power is inscribed in women’s bodies through their very actions and commitments to norms that render them, in the words of Foucault, “legible and docile” (Foucault, 1977/2012, pp. 187-188). According to Foucault (1977/2012), disciplinary power in the modern era is not public but rather “exercised through its invisibility” (pp. 187-188).

Entering Morocco, Sophia experiences that the border is a site of policing that exercises control of women. The border is a gendered site where women are not viewed as independent agents but only on the basis of their relationship to a man who is either a father, a brother, or a husband. Their act of crossing without a man is deemed a transgression (Macklin, 2009, p. 276). The disjuncture resulting from Sophia’s movement results in a display of power by the border agent, who ignores her greeting, flirtatiously asks her to remove her glasses, and reprimands her for not carrying her Moroccan national identity card: “Even though you have a U.S. passport, you are still Moroccan.” The agent also ridicules her son’s name “Johnson,” and makes a snide remark that her son cannot be Moroccan because his father is American. The agent’s comments on her perceived cultural transgressions are interrupted by a stranger who asks him to “spare her,” because her father is the boss of a famous company. Such scenes demonstrate what Moroccan feminist Fatima Mernissi (1987) means when she states that in Moroccan culture some men have the right to police women in public space (p. 82).

The viewer also senses such anxiety in the scenes in which Sophia interacts with her family. Brian Edwards argues that globalization triggers local anxieties (Edwards, 2007, p. 296). Globalization is often perceived as a threat when it comes to identity and uniqueness. This explains the schizophrenic and anxious consciousness represented in the film, where some Moroccans still want to claim “a pure culture.” In one scene, Sophia’s grandmother reproaches her for not teaching her son Arabic and decries that “marrying a foreigner produces little bastards.” The disjuncture between the local and the global is evident here since the grandmother is open to American cultural products when she eats a hamburger from McDonald’s, but objects to Sophia’s marriage to an American. The circulation of American cultural products is at variance, as Appadurai would affirm, with the rejection of others (ethnoscapes). The film presents the viewer with a mixed marriage between Sophia and her American husband Johnson but, despite the tone of hope that the film sets for acceptance, conservative ideologies put a strain on their relationship. Sophia’s uncle instructs her son to eat couscous with his hands the Moroccan way and accuses Sophia of being ashamed of her Arabic roots, alleging that she did not bring her American husband for fear “he would be scared off by her Arab family.” Her sisters Miriam and Kenza also chastise her for trying too hard to assimilate to U.S. culture. Sophia bonds with Zakaria to escape her family’s dramas, not yet realizing that he is her half-brother. Marrakchi forces the viewer to think about such disjuncture and their implications for a new Morocco. Hence the film demonstrates tensions between local traditions and the global manifestation of different cultural norms and meanings. Disjunctures become most acute when people’s values are met with a counternarrative.
Glocal Disjuncture

The film portrays contradictory images of gendered and social values in contemporary Morocco. It also highlights the image of the “modern” woman as a global subject represented by Sophia who feels at home in the United States and speaks only English to her son. Initially, American culture presented a viable alternative to a local culture which Sophia views as too exclusive in its adherence to authenticity and purity. The United States offers her opportunities for freedom and self-realization that do not exist yet in her Moroccan family. The United States is also portrayed as a model of cultural hybridity and progressive notions with respect to immigration and citizenship, as the film coincides with the presidency of Barack Obama. Sophia’s sister Miriam is represented as a modern woman, who flirts openly with her doctor and expresses her sexual desire in a free, nonchalant way. Miriam’s attitude shows a disjuncture between the images perpetuated by Western media and the local realities of Moroccan women. There is also a disjuncture between the manner in which Moroccan women like Sophia and her sisters are conducting themselves in Moroccan society and the local norms regarding gender relationships. In this regard, when confronted by her sister Kenza about her entanglement with the doctor even though she is a married woman, Miriam acts as if there is nothing wrong with her behavior. Such attitude is in conflict with local norms regarding male-female relationships and interactions. Miriam might have been exposed to the idea of open relationships from Hollywood movies, which can be accessed easily in Morocco through local cable networks.

The film also shows the disjuncture between global and local values as manifested in the changes of aesthetic values. Miriam’s plastic surgery to augment her breasts shows the interplay of both patriarchy and consumer capitalism in the construction of the “modern” woman in Morocco. Global forces have influenced women in their new interest in body images and sexuality. Through Miriam’s obsession with finding the perfect body, Marrakchi suggests that Moroccan men’s preferences and global market forces dictate what Moroccan women should look like, forcing them into conformity and self-inflicted violence. While Miriam defines herself through her body, her older sister Kenza has constructed her identity in terms of her job as a schoolteacher and a stable marriage. In one scene, she is portrayed performing the Muslim prayer. As shown in the film, the different experiences of Sophia and her sisters indicate that globalization in Morocco has created heterogeneous and contradictory situations for women.

The film contrasts the roles of women in the global north with their roles in the local context. Gaining insight into the role of women in her family results in Sophia’s own self-perception of positive change for herself in the United States, and a feeling of superiority with regards to women in Morocco. She scolds Kenza for marrying her cousin and becoming a schoolteacher just to please her father. She also mocks Miriam’s plastic surgeries, challenging her to be a critical thinker instead of following latest fashions and trends: “If they all wore the veil, would you?” When her mother advises her against getting a divorce, Sophie exclaims, “So I accept everything like you? Like all the women here?” The film seems to be critical of the way Sophia has internalized Western media’s biased portrayals of...
Moroccan women ignoring their lived diversity. Such patronizing attitude clearly originates from Western media’s stereotypes and objectification of Moroccan women as lacking agency. Lila Abu-Lughod has written about the disjuncture between Muslim women’s experiences and public attitudes in her book *Do Muslim Women Need Saving* (2013). She points out how “popular rhetoric is put to political use” (Abu-Lughod, 2013, p. 8) in the United States, where mediascapes serve also as the ideoscapes of the state, which continues to target Muslims through its discriminatory policies.

In fact, Western media’s rigid representations of Moroccan women have misconstrued Moroccan women’s reality. The film shows that much has changed in Moroccan culture since the 1990s. Morocco now has a new generation of Moroccan women with new ideas and more freedom. On the day of their father’s funeral, the sisters do not seem to be constrained by traditional expectations of female behavior. They put scarves around their necks instead of wearing white veils as dictated by Moroccan custom. Amidst Koranic chants by the *Ta’lba*, Miriam complains about the scars from her plastic surgery that have not healed, while Kenza lights a cigarette, expressing relief that her father who policed her is now dead. The sisters also drink American beer a few days after the funeral. The surveillance in Foucault’s use of panopticon is repressive and reactionary, as if people who are watched are being punished by being watched. The deceased father in the film acts as a mischievous and positive force that actually brings the family together in the end. While in Foucault’s conceptualization of the panopticon being watched is repressive, in the film it is liberating.

The attitude of the daughters towards their deceased father in the film borders on being disrespectful. This is acted out by Sophia through monologues with the corpse. Instead of crying over his death, she reads him her sister’s suicide note. From Sophia’s perspective, he is to blame for the incestuous relationship Leila unknowingly had with her brother Zakaria, and for her eventual suicide. As the men taking care of the body prepare to put the corpse in the refrigerator to keep it cool, Sophia remarks, “Like a side of lamb. It’s what he deserves.” Sophia’s uncle questions her sense of respect and wonders whether “she left it in America.” To Sophia, her father’s double standards and hypocrisy invite such disrespect. While manifesting local Moroccan values outwardly through his clothes, Moulay Al Hassan demonstrated global values through his French speech, a sexual relationship with his maid, and his access to Western pornographic magazines. His children are unaware of the disjuncture between his reality and what he projected to the outside world. In this way, the film is critical of both local Moroccan values and Western media.

**Global Imaginations**

Appadurai has argued that while globalization is characterized by disjuncture “one positive force that encourages an emancipatory politics of globalization is the role of the imagination in social life” (Appadurai, 2001, p. 6). The imagination is the power through which “collective patterns of dissent emerge,” since it “works across national lines to produce locality as a spatial fact and as a sensibility … without either the predatory mobility of unregulated capital or the
predatory stability of many states” (Appadurai, 2001, p. 6). It is such “patterns of dissent” that Marrakchi might have meant during a YouTube interview when she refers to the power of Moroccan women’s transgressions in *Rock the Casbah*. In the interview, Marrakchi discusses the intersection between global and local customs and pressures in her film. She notes that *Rock the Casbah* offers an insider’s perspective on the sociopolitical reality of Moroccan society and the position of its women. Women’s transgressions during the three days of mourning following the death of the patriarchal father uncover hidden taboos and the hypocrisy of a schizophrenic society. Their transgressions also herald an interior revolution that is symbolic of another Arab spring in the making. The film does hint at the Arab revolutions as the title resonates with Robin Wright’s book *Rock the Casbah* (2011), where the author discusses the positive dynamics of change that are taking place in the Arab world in the aftermath of the Arab Spring due to social media and the power it has on people’s imaginations. Suzanne Gauch has astutely noted that the monumental ousting of Tunisian leader Azedine Ben Ali in 2011 triggered “a newly excited, mobile curiosity” (Gauch, 2016, p. 1). What clearly emerges from Marrakchi’s film is how Moroccan women are key agents able to navigate the complexities of the current glocal condition and imagine a better future.

In conclusion, the film highlights its characters’ interaction with global forces through Western media, where they undergo a disjuncture between their local context and global norms, between their lived reality and their imagined experiences. Marrakchi uses her film to critique global media, as she tries to counter the ideoscapes and mediascapes represented by the power structures of American media. In this sense, she has used globalization to critique hegemonic narratives which contribute to unease at the local level. The disjuncture stemming from globalization have forced characters to reimagine their local identities. The film suggests that an imagined glocalization has given women new identities, critically aware of both global and local forces and problems. *Rock the Casbah* is critical of how women have been marginalized in Morocco through legal and verbal violence, as evident in the scenes that hint at unequal inheritance laws. It thus challenges Moroccans to take into consideration women’s rights in reimagining the nation.

The film also departs from the rhetoric of Western anti-imperialism and from the anti-Americanism that was prevalent in earlier films of the 1980s such as Farida Benlyazid’s *Door to the Sky* (1988). While the film, at times, idealizes what is American, it also shows that Sophia has lost all sense of self, being remade in an “American” image, as she strives to be something she is not. While Sophia’s mobility has endowed her with an analytical eye in Morocco that might have allowed her to effect some change, in the United States, her assigned Hollywood role as a terrorist is indicative of her liminality and marginality. By not making a more explicit statement against racism in the United States, the film highlights the powerlessness of racialized immigrants.

Sophia is unable to emancipate herself because she is forced to choose between two competing ideologies. She either has to be a self-hating stereotype in
America or a “modern” woman in a schizophrenic Morocco. The film suggests that the transnational is not truly possible because racialized people are unable to change the West, thus demonstrating that becoming “modern” is not enough for women to escape patriarchy. Sophia was ready to leave her husband and entertain a romance with Zakaria until she found out he is her half-brother. When her husband returns from the United States at the end, she assumes her passive role as mother and wife. The film’s panoptic vision reveals the power structures present in both the local and global contexts, inspiring the viewer to imagine new identities and to be more aware of glocal possibilities.

References


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