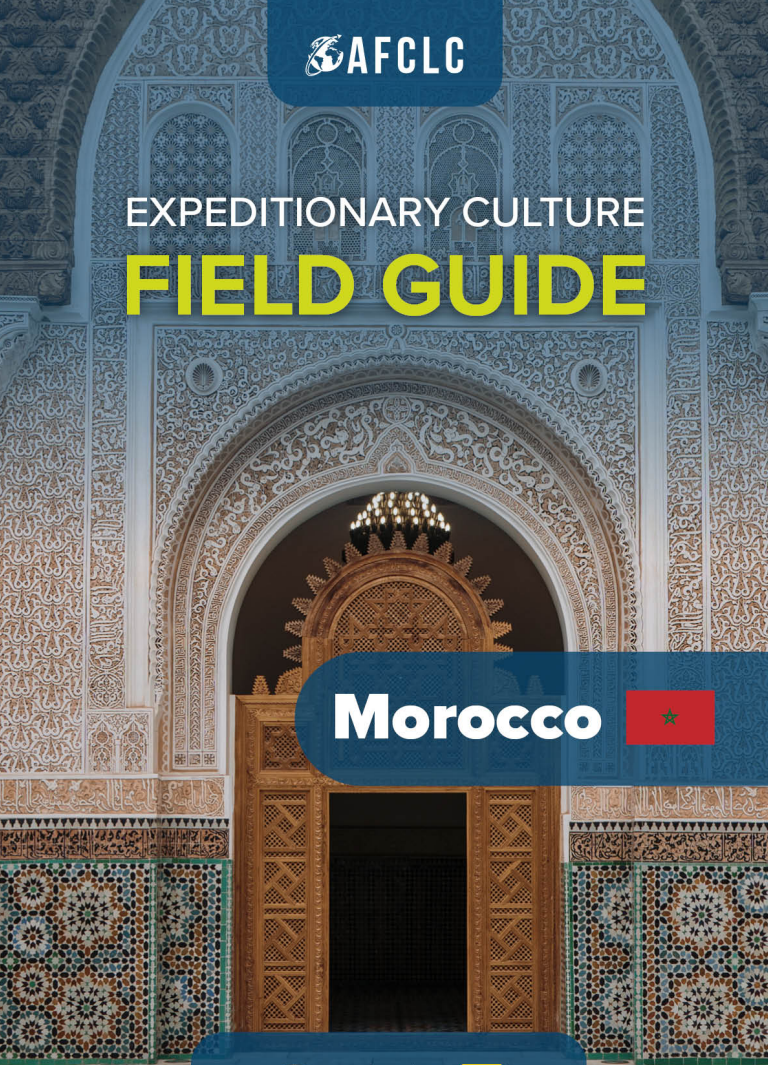
AFCLC

EXPEDITIONARY CULTURE
FIELD GUIDE



Morocco

U.S. AIR FORCE

About this Guide

This guide is designed to prepare you to deploy to culturally complex environments and achieve mission objectives. The fundamental information contained within will help you understand the cultural dimension of your assigned location and gain skills necessary for success.

The guide consists of two parts:

Part 1 introduces "Culture General," the foundational knowledge you need to operate effectively in any global environment.

Part 2 presents "Culture Specific" Morocco, focusing on unique cultural features of Moroccan society and is designed to complement other pre-deployment training. It applies culture-general concepts to help increase your knowledge of your assigned deployment location.

NOTE: This guide does not contain data for Western Sahara as much of the international community does not recognize Western Sahara as territory of Morocco.

For further information, visit the Air Force Culture and Language Center (AFCLC) website at www.airuniversity.af.edu/AFCLC/ or contact AFCLC's Region Team at AFCLC.Region@us.af.mil.

PART 1 – CULTURE GENERAL

What is Culture?

Fundamental to all aspects of human existence, culture shapes the way humans view life and functions as a tool we use to adapt to our social and physical environments. A culture is the sum of all of the beliefs, values, behaviors, and symbols that have meaning for a society. All human beings have culture, and individuals within a culture share a general set of beliefs and values.

Members of a culture also usually assign the same meanings to the symbols in that culture. A symbol is when one thing – an image, word, object, idea, or story – represents another thing. For example, the American flag is a physical and visual symbol of a core American value – freedom. At the same time, the story of George Washington admitting to having chopped down a cherry tree is also symbolic, representing the importance Americans place on personal honesty and leadership integrity.

Force Multiplier

The military services have learned through experience the importance of understanding other cultures. Unlike the 20th-century bipolar world order that dominated US strategy for nearly half a century, today the US military is operating in what we classify as asymmetric or irregular conflict zones where the notion of cross-cultural interactions is on the leading edge of our engagement strategies.

We have come to view the people themselves, rather than the political system or physical environment, as the decisive feature in conflict areas. Our primary objective hinges on influencing constructive change through peaceful means where possible. We achieve this endeavor by encouraging local nationals to focus on developing stable political, social, and economic institutions that reflect their cultural beliefs and traditions.

Therefore, understanding the basic concepts of culture serves as a force multiplier. Achieving an awareness and respect of a society's values and beliefs enables deploying forces to build relationships with people from other cultures, positively influence their actions, and ultimately achieve mission success.

Cultural Domains

Culture is not just represented by the beliefs we carry internally, but also by our behaviors and by the systems members of a culture create to organize their lives. These systems, such as political or educational institutions, help us to live in a manner that is appropriate to our culture and encourages us to perpetuate that culture into the future.

We can organize these behaviors and systems into categories – what the Air Force refers to as "cultural domains" – in order to better understand the primary values and characteristics of a society. A cross-culturally competent military member can use these domains – which include kinship, language and communication, and social and political systems among others (see chart on next page) – as tools for understanding and adapting to any culture. For example, by understanding the ways different cultures define family or kinship, a deployed military member can more effectively interact with members of that culture.

Social Behaviors Across Cultures

While humankind shares basic behaviors, various groups enact or even group those behaviors differently across cultural boundaries. For example, all societies obtain food for survival, although agrarian societies generally produce their own food for limited consumption using very basic techniques.

Conversely, industrialized nations have more sophisticated market economies, producing foodstuffs for universal consumption. Likewise, all cultures value history and tradition, although they represent these concepts through a

variety of unique forms of symbolism. While the dominant world religions share the belief in one God, their worship practices vary with their traditional historical development. Similarly, in many kin-based cultures where familial bonds are foundational to social identity, it is customary for family or friends to serve as godparents, while for other societies this practice is nearly non-existent.

Worldview

One of our basic human behaviors is the tendency to classify others as similar or different according to our cultural standard.

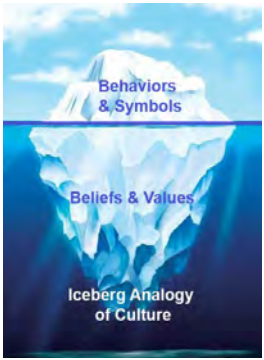
As depicted in the chart below, we can apply the 12 cultural domains to help us compare similarities and differences across cultures. We evaluate others' behavior to determine if they are "people like me" or "people not like me." Consequently, we assume that individuals falling into the "like me" category share our perspectives and values.

This collective perspective forms our worldview– how we see the world and understand our place in it. Your worldview functions as a lens through which you see and understand the world. It helps you to interpret your experiences and the values and behaviors of other people that you encounter. Consider your worldview as a way of framing behavior, providing an accountability standard for our actions and a logical explanation of why we individually or collectively act in a certain manner.

Cultural Belief System

An important component of a worldview is our belief system. A community's belief system sets its universal standards of what is good and bad, defines right and wrong behavior, and assigns a value of meaningful or meaningless. Our beliefs form the fundamental values we hold to be true – regardless of whether there is physical evidence to support these ideas. Beliefs are a central facet of human culture. They are shared views about world order and how the universe was physically and socially constructed.

While all people have beliefs, their specific components tend to vary depending upon respective world views. What people classify as good or bad, right or wrong depends on our deeply-held beliefs we started developing early in life that have help shape our characters. Likewise, these values are ingrained in our personalities and shape our behavior patterns and our self-identities. Because cultural beliefs are intensely held, they are difficult, though not impossible, to change.



Core Beliefs

Core beliefs shape and influence certain behaviors and also serve to rationalize those behaviors. Therefore, knowledge of individual or group beliefs can be useful in comprehending or making sense of their activities. We will use the iceberg model for classifying culture to illustrate two levels of meaning, as depicted. Beliefs and values, portrayed by the deeper and

greater level of the submerged iceberg, are seldom visible, but are indicated / hinted at / referenced by our behaviors and symbols (top level). It is important to recognize, though, that the parts of culture that are not visible (under the waterline) are informing and shaping what is being made visible (above the waterline).

In many cases, different worldviews may present behaviors that are contrary to our own beliefs, particularly in many regions where US forces deploy. Your ability to suspend judgment in order to understand another perspective is essential to establishing relationships with your host-nation counterparts. The ability to withhold your opinion and strive to understand a culture from a member of that culture's perspective is known as cultural relativism. It often involves taking an alternate perspective when interpreting others' behaviors and is critical to your ability to achieve mission success.

As you travel throughout the African Continent, you will encounter cultural patterns of meaning that are common among most African countries. What follows is a general description of 12 cultural domains which are used to frame those commonalities.

CULTURAL DOMAINS

1. History and Myth

History and myth are related concepts. History is a record of the past that is based on verifiable facts and events. Myth can act as a type of historical record, although it is usually a story which members of a culture use to explain community origins or important events that are not verifiable or which occurred prior to written language.

Africa has a history that spans the entire existence of humankind. In ancient times prior to the emergence of written languages, history and wisdom were preserved across generations and ethnic boundaries

through oral folk legends or myths. Most early human evolution began as hunting and gathering cultures in East and South Africa, with countries such as Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, and South Africa renowned for their early human sites. In the last several millennia, the development of agriculture and pastoralism (animal herding) replaced hunting and gathering lifestyles.

Ancient civilizations evolved in all corners of Africa, inspired in part by peoples from the Middle East bringing trade, beliefs, customs, language, and on occasion, colonization. Far from being isolated empires, the African civilizations were intimately connected by commerce and marriage throughout various regions of the continent, and when confronted by outsiders, managed to adapt to their influences. Eventually, Arab traders introduced Islam to Africa and also instituted the Trans-Saharan African slave trade that lasted from the 7th to 19th Centuries.

The “golden age” of European exploration, which lasted from the 18th to mid-20th century, prompted the wholesale exploitation of Africans resources – first human assets through slavery, followed by natural resources such as minerals, precious gems and metals, and wildlife, thereby diminishing most of what was traditional and African.

The introduction of the European Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade altered the slave trade through both the sheer number of Africans enslaved and through the cementing of a racist ideology of Black inferiority to legitimize the institution of slavery. Slavery decimated the African continent for over 400 years through the forced relocation of an estimated 25 to 30 million Africans worldwide. This figure does not include those Africans who died aboard ships or during capture. While abolition of the slave trade dissolved the institution of slavery, it did not end the European presence on the African continent nor did it drastically alter their attitudes towards Africans.

Starting in the mid-19th century, European colonialism served to redefine African ethnic relations on a large scale; however, as African societies began to resist colonial rule and seek their independence, widespread ethnic conflict and genocide occurred. Sustained westernization and globalization continue to shape the continent through poverty, disease, and social reform. A history still to be recorded, Africa's future identity faces many challenges in critical areas such as environmental change, ethnic strife, women's health and security, and education.

2. Political and Social Relations

Political relations are the ways in which members of a community organize leadership, power, and authority. Social relations are all of the ways in which individuals are linked to others in their community. Traditional African political organizations in the form of bands, tribes, and chiefdoms have existed for several millennia and continue to influence contemporary African governments. Uncommon in modern society, bands are limited to hunting and gathering economies, such as the !Kung of the southern African Kalahari Desert and foragers of central African forests.

Tribes are still represented today across the African political landscape, although the use of the word "tribe" is sometimes misinterpreted due to its western notion of "primitiveness" and oftentimes substituted with the term "ethnic group." Lacking centralized authority, tribes are organized around segmented descent groups or in some cases age groups.

Everyday governance is discharged through councils of respected elders and sanctioned through ritual and other means. East African pastoralist groups such as the Maasai, along with some West African tribes and the Berbers in North Africa, represent this type of organization.

Chiefdoms or kingdoms are ruled by kings or queens from a royal clan and generally incorporate millions of subjects. Kingdoms such as the Zulu or Swazi in southern Africa developed through conquest, while others like Ghana's Ashante developed through an association of related traditional states. However, colonialism eventually diluted the power and reach of these empires, whose leaders were often retained as indirect rulers or figureheads.

Today, all three of these political organizations still exist, although in the confines of modern African nation-states created by colonial powers who had little regard or understanding of African cultures. This juxtaposition of modernity with tradition has caused severe conflict throughout the continent.

Challenged to construct their respective "national" identities, regional leaders attempt to do so by diluting the traditionally cohesive power of ancestry. These national ruling elites, who derive their power from wealth and commerce rather than tribal affiliation, feel threatened by loyalty to these traditional organizations, labeling their rule as "tribalism."

This "class versus descent" scrimmage for power has resulted in conflicts across the continent and a dramatic divergence of interests. As a means to overcome these and other issues on the continent, a 55-nation federation, the African Union (AU), was formed in 2002. AU's charter is to promote "greater unity and solidarity between African countries and peoples" by building partnerships in all segments of "civil society."

3. Religion and Spirituality

Religion is a cultural belief system that provides meaning to members of a community. Religious and spiritual beliefs help preserve the social order by defining proper behavior. They also create social unity by defining shared identity, offer individuals

peace of mind, and explain the causes of events in a society. Prior to the arrival of Islam and Christianity, the African continent consisted of orally transmitted indigenous religious practices. As in many societies, African indigenous beliefs influenced diet, subsistence patterns, family structures, marriage practices, and healing and burial processes. In essence, Africans constructed their worldview through their indigenous religions.

Today, the African continent is primarily either Muslim or Christian. Other faiths such as Judaism and Hinduism exist as pockets in different regions of the continent, primarily in urban areas. The historical trajectories of Islamic and Christian expansion in Africa offer intriguing commonalities in how Africans across the continent initially reacted to the introduction of each of those religions. For example, it is common throughout the continent to find a blending of many elements of indigenous religious practices with local Islam and Christianity.

Consequently, many African native religions share similarities with religions such as Christianity, Islam, and Judaism in their understanding of God as the creator and ruler of all life, although He is considered untouchable by humans.

However, unlike Christianity and Islam, many African indigenous religions believe that God is not directly involved in people's lives. To them there is a spirit world populated with former good and bad human beings. The good spirits intercede with God on behalf of their living families to whom they then relay God's will through dreams and acquired possessions. The bad spirits work to bring misfortune through sickness, death, or natural disasters to those who behave inappropriately.

Many indigenous African religions revere "nature" spirits living in the sky, water, and forests. These impersonal spirits help protect people from harm and provide them with life's essential ingredients such as water, sun, and wildlife. This belief system is commonly referred to as animism.

Just as spirits mediate relations between God and humans, religious specialists act as mediators between spirits and humans to provide protection from harm.

4. Family and Kinship

The domain of family and kinship refers to groups of people related through blood ties, marriage, or through strong emotional bonds that influence them to treat each other like family members (often called "fictive kin"). The traditional African family with respect to marriage, family structure, and descent is a much different arrangement than is found in most American families. Likewise, there are several components of the traditional African family that are common to all African cultures.

First, perhaps the most difficult feature to reconcile to Americans is that of polygyny – the practice of a husband having more than one wife. A benefit of this arrangement is that it promotes societal alliances through marriage, procreation, and family wealth through female labor.

Second, due to polygyny, the family in most African cultures has historically consisted of an expanded set of kin or relatives that extends well beyond the American notion of a nuclear family. This arrangement created a family environment where children considered all siblings as "brothers and sisters" and all of the wives/mothers as "mother."

Third, the extended African family traces descent through either the male or female side of the family, a practice which differs considerably from the American family. Patrilineal descent

(through the male side of the family) is the more common approach and usually features polygyny. The matrilineal (through the female bloodline) marriage pattern is more uncommon and almost always features monogamy – it is rare to encounter a wife having more than one husband.

Lastly, it is common for two or more blood lines (lineages) to share a common ancestor and collectively form a clan, which is the largest social unit. Clans do not have formal leaders or organizational structures. Membership is transferred from father to child and cuts across ethnic and social boundaries.

The dramatic social changes in Africa during and after colonialism in the last 4 decades have obviously affected the traditional family, and variations on these 3 features can be found across the continent.

5. Sex and Gender

Sex refers to the biological/reproductive differences between males and females, while gender is a more flexible concept that refers to a culture's categorizing of masculine and feminine behaviors, symbols, and social roles. Gender roles in Africa follow no single model nor is there a generalized concept of sex and common standard of sexual behavior.

Prehistorically, gender role differentiation in Africa's hunting and gathering cultures was based on a division of labor featuring different, yet complementary, sets of responsibilities for males and females, adults and children. Females gathered over half the caloric needs from natural vegetation, while also reproducing and raising offspring. Males were primarily hunters but also assisted with gathering.

These gender patterns continued as agricultural practices advanced. Females shared in farming while continuing to provide for the family's subsistence, and males produced the cash crops. Pastoralists

like the Maasai of Kenya traditionally have featured males involved in cattle-raising and females in food production.

The 19th-century European colonial period introduced a cash economy into Africa, with female labor used to produce the cash crops. By inserting male authority over females, colonial administrators disrupted the distinct yet complementary male/female relationship that had been traditionally African.

More recently, western influence across the continent has dramatically altered the traditional gender roles. Educational and professional opportunities for females, along with increased family migrations to urban areas, have radically altered traditional male and female gender roles.

Likewise, the number of singles parents and even child- or other relative-led families has increased with the predominance of HIV/AIDS-related deaths and warfare, further altering traditional gender responsibilities. Additionally, ethnic conflicts involving abuse of women are prevalent in many unstable countries, and while the rubric of traditional African gender generally remains, the forces of change are gradually ripping it away.

6. Language and Communication

Language is a system for sharing information symbolically, whereby words are used to represent ideas. Communication is defined as the cultural practice of sharing meaning in interaction, both verbally and non-verbally. America is predominantly a monolingual society, where traditionally, fluency in a second language has been considered a luxury rather than a necessity. Conversely, national survival for many societies in Africa required them throughout their existence to adopt multilingual practices, if for no other reason than to preserve their native heritage.

You may find it challenging to comprehend the scope of Africa's linguistic diversity. There are over 2,000 African languages (many spoken-only) from 6 major language families, and perhaps 100 of these languages are used to communicate among the more dominant ethnic groups such as Berber, Swahili, Yoruba, and others.

Official languages of African nation-states are few, yet the linguistic diversity expressed across the continent (Nigeria has 250 languages) has prompted an awareness of the value of Africa's linguistic traditions. While most areas of the continent speak the adopted language of their colonial past – such as French and Portuguese in West Africa, French and Arabic in Morocco, and English in Kenya and South Africa – the majority of people also speak one or more traditional "indigenous" languages of their and other ethnic groups. As African independence spread throughout the continent, ethnic groups continued to depend on their indigenous identifiers, such as language, to celebrate their "release" from colonial rule and to preserve a sense of indigenous identity.

While communication styles tend to vary by ethnic or social groups, Africans generally are friendly and outgoing people although they tend to communicate with reserve to avoid confrontation. As in most kin-based societies, Africans believe that saving face or protecting one's honor and dignity are of utmost importance; therefore, they avoid public criticism and controversial topics at all costs – even to the extent of withholding their honest opinion or modifying the truth.

Africans admire and even expect extended greetings and small talk, and to attempt to rush or avoid social graces is considered disrespectful. Similarly, Africans avoid direct eye contact when communicating with new acquaintances and people of status, particularly elders. They also are fond of non-verbal gestures, and it is common throughout African societies for members of the same gender to hold hands or touch while conversing.

7. Learning and Knowledge

All cultures require that the older generation transmit important information to the younger generation. This information can be strictly factual (for example, how to fulfill subsistence and health requirements) and culturally traditional (the beliefs, behaviors, and symbols that have meaning to the community). This knowledge transfer may occur through structured, formalized systems such as schools or through informal learning by watching adults or peers.

The contemporary African educational system hardly resembles the traditional pre-colonial structure, whereby community elders were primarily responsible for preparing youth for adulthood. Their instruction included fundamentals of ethnic ritual and ceremony, along with customary protocol for their distinctive gender roles. A rite-of-passage commemorating their successful journey from childhood to adulthood served as a form of graduation.

European colonialism brought a more structured, formal educational system that catered to a small group of African elite who demonstrated potential to administer expanding colonial territories. Following independence, many African nations adopted the European system because they believed it would prepare them to be more competitive in intra-continental and global marketplaces, thereby enhancing their quality of life.

However, progress in developing and maintaining reliable educational institutions has been slow for a variety of reasons. Since most Africans live in rural environments, they continue to rely heavily on child labor for family survival, resulting in decreased school enrollments or early withdrawals. Likewise, widespread HIV/AIDS epidemics, ethnic conflict, teacher and resource deficits, and inaccessibility to remote rural areas also hamper progress. According to 2023 statistics, about 100 million African children and youth were out of school, of which 35 million were of primary school age.

8. Time and Space

In every society, people occupy space and time in ways that are not directly linked to physical survival. In low-context western cultures, people tend to be preoccupied with strict time management, devoting less effort to relationship-building. Conversely, most African cultures are traditionally high-context societies, whereby people center their activities on socializing and establishing close associations, having little regard for the passage-of-time.

Only after establishing trust and honor will your typical African counterpart agreeably proceed with business. In his worldview, time is a precious commodity used to establish relationships and form alliances. Any attempt to accelerate the tempo at the expense of social pleasantries will likely result in deadlock.

To an African, close physical proximity between individuals encourages cooperative trust, and for centuries they have viewed human linkage as a core element to survival. This closeness is best represented in a traditional African village where strong kinship connections are evidenced by a display of close interpersonal relations among family members.

While conventional African concepts of time and space remain intact, throughout the continent western influence and globalization have stepped up the pace of African living, mostly in urban areas. Consequently, rural-to-urban migrations have reshaped traditional social and subsistence patterns.

9. Aesthetics and Recreation

Every culture has its own forms of creative expression that are guided by aesthetic principles of imagination, beauty, skill and style. Prior to 19th-century European colonization of Africa, recreation served a vital subsistence role, whereby adolescents and adults alike participated in intellectually stimulating leisurely

activities that concurrently served to develop essential hunting and pastoral skills.

Games of chance and skill were important to early childhood development, providing social outlets within and outside their community. Featuring wrestling, jumping and running; traditional African sport was steeped in religious ritual.

Along with colonialism came the introduction to Africa of western sports such as soccer, cricket, rugby and track and field. This emphasis on western sport continued to thrive with African independence and globalization, as seen in sporting events such as the Olympics and the World Cup.

Leaders such as Nelson Mandela skillfully employed sport to promote a unified South African nation. Importing the predominantly “white” game of rugby, Mandela used it to fuse a racially divided country following his election in 1992. This event is the theme of the motion picture “Invictus,” exemplifying how sport can serve to create national identities and overcome ethnic division. His efforts have inspired many other African nations to follow suit.

Likewise, East African countries such as Kenya and Ethiopia have produced the world’s dominant male and female distance runners, and South Africa, Cameroon and Nigeria emerged as strong contenders in the 2010 World Cup. African nations are now competing in leagues such as the International Basketball Association (FIBA) World Championships, and there is also a growing number of African basketball players on US college campuses and in the National Basketball Association (NBA).

10. Sustenance and Health

Societies have different methods of transforming natural resources into food. These methods can shape residence patterns, family structures and economics. Theories of disease and healing practices exist in all cultures and serve as adaptive responses to disease and illness.

Despite having only 18% of the global population, Africa is a victim of many of the world's debilitating health disorders. According to the World Health Organization, 65% of the global HIV/AIDS cases and 95% of malarial diseases occur in Africa.

These and other medical conditions are attributed primarily to viral infection and widespread poverty caused by extreme climatic conditions and civil unrest, coupled with inadequate preventative measures. While extensive drought generates widespread famine, civil disturbances generate millions of displaced persons. Likewise, with only 65% of the Sub-Saharan African population having access to basic drinking water, water-born bacterial diseases such as cholera and schistosomiasis are common.

Many people in Africa lack access to western medicine, and as a result depend on traditional health practices to combat disease. In addition, some traditional beliefs run counter to western medical practice and perhaps discourage individuals from utilizing those services even when they are available. This problem is further intensified by lack of federal regulatory healthcare management.

While modern healthcare procedures are more common in urban areas, many rural people rely on traditional practitioners who use

a variety of plants and herbs to treat patients. Similarly, many families have their own secret remedies. While in some cases traditional medicine proves effective with fewer side effects than modern drugs, traditional practices do not adequately treat many of the more serious conditions.

On a positive note, western influence has stimulated some progress in combating Africa's health crisis. More resources are devoted to achieving basic human security by assessing disease symptoms early and with scientific accuracy.

11. Economics and Resources

This domain refers to beliefs regarding appropriate ways for a society to produce, distribute, and consume goods and services. Traditionally having an agrarian-based economy, Africa today remains predominantly agricultural, featuring less industrialization than most other parts of the world. Post-colonial adversities such as civil war, disease, poverty, and unstable dictatorships posed unusual hardship on several young African nations; however, Africa currently stands at the cross-roads of economic development with many nations becoming some of fastest growing regions in the world.

Colonialism institutionalized the exploitation of Africa's mineral resources, resulting in today's oil industry dominating the economic market in several coastal regions. A surge in global oil prices; a growing African middle class; and reduction in civil wars, foreign aid, and inflation collectively promise a more positive outlook for the future.

Countries such as Botswana, Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, and South Africa are economically the wealthiest on the continent, with regions such as East Africa showing signs of economic stability. Despite the economic upswing, much of sub-Saharan

Africa's future economic prosperity is held hostage by devastating diseases such as AIDS, particularly in areas of southern Africa, and the growing effects of climate change and man-made environmental degradation throughout the subcontinent.

12. Technology and Material

Societies use technology to transform their physical world, and culture heavily influences the development and use of technology. Africa lags far behind most of the world in manufacturing capacity and output. Even the more economically-developed nations such as South Africa are competitively weak when compared to non-African industrialized nations. During the 1970s and 1980s, Africa experienced some growth in raw exports although this increase did little to boost long-term manufacturing capacity.

Today, Africa is experiencing an actual decline in manufacturing capacity due primarily to a lull in the global economy, along with other indigenous issues such as environmental stress, poor physical and organizational infrastructure, and a shortage of skilled personnel. Likewise, African manufacturing capacity is no match against global powers such as China and significant Southeast Asian markets.

International aid from both governmental and non-governmental organizations has helped African nations establish preliminary economic footholds. For example, many of them have dedicated industrial developmental zones to attract foreign investment and increase export-related manufacturing capacity, although Africa is far removed from having a significant role in the global marketplace in the foreseeable future.

Now that we have introduced general concepts that characterize African society at large, we will now focus on specific features of Moroccan society.

PART 2 – CULTURE SPECIFIC

1. HISTORY AND MYTH

With a history spanning several thousand years, Morocco's strategic position along Africa's northwestern coast has rendered it prey to numerous invasions and ruling empires.

The Amazigh "Berbers"

Dating as far back as 3000 BC, records identify a society known as the Amazigh, which is believed to have originated along North Africa's Mediterranean coast. Consisting primarily of farmers and upper-class merchants, the Amazigh became known as "Berbers," from the Latin word *barbari*, which was used to describe non-Latin and later non-Arabic speaking people of the region.

Early Contact

The Berbers are believed to have lived in relative anonymity prior to the Phoenicians invading northern Africa in the 12th-century BC, where they established trading posts and colonies along the northern coast. Soon thereafter, the Carthaginians overran the area, expanding the colonies as part of the Carthaginian Empire.

In the 2nd-century BC, a pattern of external rule was established, with the Carthaginians and the African Mediterranean coast succumbing to Roman dominance for nearly 600 years. Although ruled by outside forces, the Berbers continued to inhabit the northern coastal regions peacefully until the Arabs invaded in 682 AD.

For centuries to follow, Arabs and Berbers fought a bitter civil war over land ownership and ethnic identity. It was not until after WWII that their common desire for independence unified Berbers and Arabs against colonial rule for a time, although ethnic strife between the two sects reemerged after independence. These conflicts led many Berbers to seek refuge in the Atlas and Rif Mountains, as well as along regions in or near the Sahara Desert.

Rif Berbers

The "Rif Berbers" traditionally occupied Morocco's Rif Mountains along the Mediterranean coast. Known as superior warriors, they initially contained French and Spanish occupation during the 6-year (1920-26) "Rif War" that annihilated nearly 16,000 soldiers. It was Berber tenacity and strategic location that eventually gave them a short-lived victory. With an elevation of 8,000 feet, the Rif Mountains are still home to one of the largest indigenous Berber tribes in the country (see *Political & Social Relations*).

Introduction of Islam

With the Arab invasion came the spread of their Islamic faith to the Berbers. In most instances, Arabs controlled the major cities, although due to a lack of numbers they were unable to control the entire region, thus leaving much of the countryside and mountains to the Berbers.

In 788 AD the first Muslim empire of Middle East origin, the Idris Dynasty, was established and is credited with spreading Islam throughout Morocco. Due to increased exposure and integration, over time, most Berbers accepted the Muslim faith (see *Religion & Spirituality*), although

they would attempt for centuries to reclaim lost land and retain their identity.

In the 10th century, many displaced Berbers joined forces. Divided between the Saharan oases and the mountains, two main ruling groups, the **Almoravids** and the **Almohads,** emerged. By the mid-12th century, the two dynasties yielded to the Marinids and then the Saadians. The Saadians, a 16th century Cherifian Dynasty, were noted for trying to reduce Berber influence and move toward Quranic law.

The Alaouites, who are decedents of the son of Fatima, the Prophet Mohammed's daughter, were the last dynasty claiming lineage from the Prophet Mohammad. Ascending the throne in 1672, Sultan Moulay Ismael brutally dominated the country until 1727.

Recognition of the United States

Ascending the throne in 1757, Sultan Mohammed bin Abdallah became one of the first world leaders to recognize American independence. His support led to US President George Washington proposing a friendship treaty between the two countries that still exists today.

Colonialism

During an era of 19th century European colonization of the African Continent, Spain initially established a settlement in Morocco's far south. Thereafter, other occupying nations further divided Morocco into zones of influence, with ensuing battles creating turmoil throughout the country.

Eventually, the French established a stronghold in Morocco, first by gaining control of Fes, a northern city and former national capital, followed by the Moroccan Sultan signing the Treaty of Fes in 1912. Thereafter, Morocco was ruled as a French protectorate for nearly half a century. During this time, French colonizers attempted to repress the Berber population by initiating a "Berber Policy," designed to create a rift between

Arabs and Berbers, thus leading to even greater Berber isolation.

Independence

With an emerging desire to regain its national unity, in 1944, Morocco issued a Manifesto of Independence to French authorities requesting independence. Following nationalist uprisings against the protectorate, independence was formally recognized in 1956, leading to a constitutional monarchy under King Mohammed V that remains a hallmark of Moroccan national identity along with their Islamic faith.

Current Leadership

Moulay Hassan ascended to the throne in 1961, following the death of King Mohammed V. King Hassan II was as an authoritarian leader who governed with an iron fist until his death in 1999.

Hassan II's son, King Muhammed VI took the throne upon Hassan's death and has maintained royal authority and conservative values (see *Political & Social Relations*).

Disputed Western Sahara

Of concern since the mid-1970s is Morocco's claim to what was once the Spanish Sahara – the modern territory of Western Sahara which the Spanish controlled during the colonial period. Saharans, as they are known today, initiated a nationalist movement in 1973 to gain independence from Spain, with Morocco annexing the territory and Spain, to avoid a confrontation, ended its claim. Upon Spain's departure in 1976, the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic sought to gain independence from Morocco using its military arm, the Polisario Front, to stage a military campaign.

Through UN involvement in 1990, a cease fire ended 15 years of territorial fighting, with Western Saharan residents given the opportunity to accept or reject Morocco's annexation. The process ended in deadlock regarding who should be allowed to vote.

In 2001, the UN once again interceded, offering a solution for autonomy, which the Polisario rejected because its policy is to accept nothing short of independence, a position to which Morocco does not agree. The dispute continues today with numerous attempts at a resolution.

The Black Guard

From 1672 to 1727, Sultan Moulay Ismael led the last dynasty (Alaouite) claiming to be a direct descendant of the Muslim Prophet Muhammad (see *Religion & Spirituality*).

Known as a powerful yet oppressive leader, the Sultan established "The Black Guard," a legion of black slave-soldiers brought to Morocco from sub-Saharan Africa and granted special treatment for their loyalty. Desiring to increase their numbers, the Sultan forced women to marry guard members, and at age 16 their male offspring became guardsmen. With numbers peaking at 150,000, these black warriors formed the bulk of Ismael's Army, who fought against European-controlled fortresses spread throughout his empire. Of note, they crushed the English in the city of Tangier, capturing their fortress in 1688.

Beyond the battlefield, the Black Guard served as the Sultan's fierce bodyguards, with 80 soldiers on alert around the clock. Despite their loyalty to Ismael, he was known to brutally punish them with little provocation.

2. POLITICAL AND SOCIAL RELATIONS

Geography

Located in the region known as the Maghreb, Morocco is situated in the upper northwest portion of the African continent. Bordered by the Atlantic to the west and the Mediterranean Sea to the north, Morocco sits only miles from the Strait of Gibraltar and the southern tip of Spain.

About the size of California, Morocco covers 172,413 sq mi, and with the inclusion of Western Sahara (see *History & Myth*), which Morocco still claims, it spans an additional 102,703 sq mi.

The towering Atlas Mountains separate the country from Algeria and Mauritania to the east, with the disputed Western Saharan territory to the south. Home to the Amazigh "Berbers," the Atlas Mountains have served as a refuge and way of life for many Berber tribes through the centuries, where isolation has preserved their tribal traditions and arduous farm life. The highest point, the Toubkal Mountain, extends over 13,000 ft and is the highest peak in North Africa. Situated to the southeast, the Sahara desert is home to a few nomadic people capable of existing in an extremely harsh climate.

The Flag

The bold red Moroccan flag was established during the 17th-century Alaouite Dynasty, with a five-pointed green symbol, known as Solomon's seal, added during French occupation in 1912 to help differentiate it from neighboring flags. Red denotes royal descent from the Prophet Muhammad, while green is the color of Islam.

Prominent Features

- Population: 37.39 million with 26% under age of 15
- Full name: The Kingdom of Morocco
- Major cities:
  - o Casablanca (3.89 million)
  - o Rabat (1.96 million) – capital city
  - o Fes (1.29 million)
  - o Tangier (1.31 million)
  - o Marrakesh (1.05 million)

Government

The Kingdom of Morocco is governed by a constitutional monarchy with the King having sovereign authority as both the nation's spiritual and political authority. Historically, no one was allowed to publicly question the king's decisions, and to do so could bring grave consequences. Still today, it is constitutionally forbidden to criticize the King, an offense that is punishable by a fine and jail time.

Political Power

Morocco is divided into 12 administrative regions delineated by provinces. Each region is administered by a governor (Walis) appointed by the King. Councils within each region are responsible for regulatory oversight, with each province having a centrally appointed governor and an elected assembly.

Political Parties

Although the King has ultimate authority, political parties have existed since establishment of the 19th-century French protectorate (see *History & Myth*) and had a significant role in gaining national independence. Political groups require the King's approval to exist, with those opposed to the monarchy prohibited. The popular parties receive voting authority based on the number of government seats they occupy.

Predominant political parties include the Istiqlal Party (formed during Morocco's struggle for independence), the Socialist and Popular Force Union (influential during the Hassan II era and popularly support by organized labor and youth groups), and the Party of Justice and Development (a moderate Islamic group).

Security Issues

Morocco is politically stable for the most part, although strict governmental control has led to some human rights violations.

Religious Tensions: Since its 1956 independence, Morocco has progressed towards a more moderate Islamic society, although a minority group of fundamentalist Muslims has strived to preserve traditional Islamic customs. Consequently, tensions exist between liberalist and conservative factions.

Terrorism: Affiliated with al-Qaeda, the Group Islamic Combatant Moroccan (GICM) poses a substantial threat to Moroccan security. Associated with conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, along with the 2004 commuter train bombings in Spain, GICM seeks to convert Morocco into a stronger Islamic state.

Similarly, another militant group, the Salafiya Jihadiya, was responsible for the 2003 terrorist attack in Casablanca that killed 45. The government has blamed the 2011 terrorist attack in Marrakesh, which killed 14 people, on al-Qaeda.

Disputed Western Sahara: (see *History & Myth*).

Drug Market: The Moroccan Rif Mountains harbor one of the world's largest cannabis production areas. Similarly, nearly 20% of global hashish production originates from this region for distribution primarily to Europe.

US – Morocco Relations

One of the most pro-western governments of all Arab states, Morocco shares a firm alliance with the US and has demonstrated support for US objectives in both the Persian Gulf and Israel, and for US economic reform proposals. Consequently, the US has contributed more than $2 billion ($189 million in 2023) in foreign assistance to Morocco.

The Royal Moroccan Air Force

With Morocco's independence from France in 1956 came the formation of a small air arm that in 1964 was established as the Royal Moroccan Air Force (RMAF) and a separate service. French-built aircraft dominated the inventory initially, with US aircraft introduced in 1966. In March 2019, the US State Department cleared Morocco to buy 25 new F-16 fighter jets and receive upgrades to 23 of its older models. Then, in June 2020, Morocco signed a contract with American company Boeing for 24 AH-64 Apache helicopters.

The RMAF consists of 7 fighter squadrons supported by a transport and refueling fleet of C-130H and Boeing 737s based at Kenitra Air Base in the North. In addition, Rabat-Sale Airport located in Morocco's capital city is home to a variety of helicopters.

Partnership

The US and Moroccan Air Forces enjoy a beneficial partnership. US aircraft maintenance teams and SAF/IA regularly visit and interact with Moroccan counterparts, while the Utah Air National Guard is involved in joint ventures such as the Marrakech Air Show.

Royal Moroccan Air Force Rank Insignia


General


Corps General


Division General


Brigadier General


Brigadier


Colonel


Lieutenant Colonel


Commandant


Captain


Lieutenant


Sub Lieutenant


Chief Warrant Officer


Warrant Officer


Sergeant Major


Chief Sergeant


Sergeant


Master Corporal


Corporal


Private First Class

Ethnicity

With a population of roughly 37.4 million, Morocco includes two main ethnic groups, with the largest single group the Berbers (Amazigh), followed by Arabs. Most of the population today is hybrid Berber-Arab who are predominantly of Berber descent but speaks Arabic as their primary language, while French is also widely spoken (see *Language & Communication*). Collectively, these groups comprise 99% of the population. While only a small number of people can claim pure Berber or Arab decent, about 75% of the population is thought to have Berber ancestry. Similarly, despite a long history of intermarriage, the term "Arab-Berber" is not used, as each group maintains its distinctive ethnic identity.

The **Haratine**, a black ethnic group thought to be an indigenous population of the southern oasis, along with a small number of Christians and Jews, comprise the other 1% of the population.

Berbers

Berbers account for a majority of North Africa's population, with between 30 and 45 million of them living in the Maghreb region. They are commonly referred to as Imazighen, or the singular Amazigh, which means "free men."

Moroccan Berbers are categorized into three main groups, further sub-divided into numerous tribes. For example, in the Rif Mountains alone there are 19 tribes. The three primary tribes are distinguished by region, with the Riffians occupying the northern-most Rif Mountains area, the Chleuhs the Atlas Mountains in the central region, and the Soussi the southwest.

Their geographic isolation, along with marginalization as lower-class citizens (particularly those who speak only their native Berber language – see *Language & Communication*), has stifled modernization, with many Berbers farming by hand and most

living way below the poverty level. Only recently, has there been an effort to reduce this stigma by recognizing and preserving Berber history and traditions, as well as rectify centuries of discrimination. Governmental intervention has met with protest from traditional Muslims who view this action as anti-Islamic and even treasonous.

Social Relations

As in most other collective societies having strong ties among group members, Moroccans fundamentally value family honor, hospitality, and self-control.

Honor and Face

Honor and dignity are crucial to Moroccans, and a person's behavior reflects not only on the individual, but on the family at large (see *Family & Kinship*). Group loyalty typically guides individual behavior and determines a Moroccan's identity, status, and prospects for success in life.

Therefore, the manner in which members of their society view each other is inherent in the Moroccan concept of "Face." To a Moroccan, saving public face is vital and will influence how he responds in a social situation. Normally, they tend to be non-confrontational and offer what they believe to be the expected response, even if it distorts the truth, rather than say something that might embarrass or bring shame to themselves or another person.

Hashuma

The concept of Hashuma, meaning shame, is a tool traditionally used to maintain self-control. The term "Hashuma 'alik" means, "you ought to be ashamed" or "shame on you" and is often used as a verbal reprimand. Moroccans are mindful of Hashuma and its impact on human interactions.

Visiting

Generally hospitable and accustomed to extended social pleasantries, Moroccans consider visiting fundamental to maintaining social harmony within the family unit and the community at large. Consequently, they have a relaxed view of time compared to Westerners (see *Time & Space*) and value relationship-building.

Similarly, in Muslim cultures opposite sexes normally do not socialize (see *Sex & Gender*). Therefore, when invited to a Moroccan's home, it is best not to assume female guests are welcome. You should approach your host in advance to determine proper protocol.

Upon arrival, it is proper to remove your shoes at the door as a sign of respect. Since shoe bottoms are unclean, Muslims traditionally consider it insulting to display them, although like using the left hand (see *Language & Communication*) this tradition has decreased in importance due to years of contact with Westerners.

Likewise, it is often appropriate to present your host with an inexpensive gift and pay respects to the elderly. Age is a key factor in social behavior, and the elderly are treated with utmost reverence (see *Language & Communication*). It is customary for the host to serve food, a generosity you should graciously accept as it would be considered rude to decline (see *Sustenance & Health*).

Criticism and Humiliation

The concept of constructive criticism is not viewed positively in Moroccan culture. It is therefore best to avoid giving public criticism – if you need to approach an issue critically, it is best to do so privately. Individual criticism in the presence of a person's peers could result in a loss of face – one of the gravest insults to a Moroccan.

3. RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY

Islam is Morocco's official religion, comprising nearly 99% of the population. Likewise, the King is "The Commander of the Faithful" and is charged with ensuring respect for Islam. Although the Constitution provides for religious freedom, Moroccan citizens, to include governmental officials, can be punished for expressing views counter to Islam.

Similarly, conversion to another religion is illegal, along with distributing non-Muslim religious material or attempting to proselytize a Moroccan citizen – with the exception of foreign missionaries who are allowed to conduct their activities discreetly. In addition, the government forbids radical Muslim activities.

Islamic Faith

The Arab Invasion

Morocco's original inhabitants, the Berbers, were traditionally pagan, as illustrated by their rock carvings that depict nature worship. While subsequent invasions brought a variety of religious influences, Berbers for the most part perpetuated their pagan tradition until the influx of Islam in the 7th century (see *History & Myth*).

With Arab invasion and influence, the Muslim faith became the foundation for Moroccan religious practices. As the invading forces consumed the Maghreb and Moroccan territory, those inhabitants who refused to convert were penalized with higher taxes and evicted from governmental positions.

Origins of Islam

Islam dates to the 6th century when God's final Prophet, Muhammad, was born in Mecca in the current country of Saudi Arabia. Muslims believe that while Muhammad was meditating in the desert, the Archangel Gabriel visited him over a 23-year period, revealing the Qur'an, or the "Holy Book," to guide their everyday life. The Qur'an represents a core belief that helps shape Muslims' lifelong values.

Meaning of Islam

Islam means "submission to the will of God" and acceptance of His wisdom. It is more than a religion to its adherents – it is a way of life. The term Muslim refers to "a person who submits to God." Islamic doctrine can be summed up in its simple confession of faith, known as the Shahada "There is no god but God, and Muhammad is His Messenger."

An Arabic Qur'an should not be handled by a non-Muslim unless a Muslim gives it as a gift.

Muslim Sects

Islam is divided into two divisions: Sunni and Shi'a. Moroccan Muslims are predominantly Sunni and distinguished by their belief that the leader (*Caliph*) of the Muslim community (*Ummah*) should be elected. Conversely, the Shi'a believes the Muslim leader should be a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad.

Five Pillars of Islam

There are five basic principles of Islam that all Muslims accept and follow.

- **Profession of Faith (*Shahada*):** "There is no god but God and Muhammad is His Messenger."

- **Prayer (*Salat*):** Pray five times a day facing toward the Ka'aba in Mecca. The Ka'aba is considered the center of the Muslim world and a unifying focal point for Islamic worship.

- **Charity (*Zakat*):** Involves an obligatory tithe or donation of alms to the poor.

- **Fasting (*Sawm*):** Involves abstaining from food, drink, and sexual relations from sunrise to sunset during the holy month of Ramadan (30 days).

- **Pilgrimage to Mecca (The *Hajj*):** Annual pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia, which every adult Muslim who is physically and financially capable, is expected to perform at least once in his or her lifetime.

Basics of Islam

Mosque: Islamic house of worship.

Holy cities: The Grand Mosque in Mecca is the site of the Hajj or pilgrimage. Medina, Saudi Arabia is revered as the burial site of Muhammad. Muslims also consider Jerusalem, the site of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, holy because they believe Muhammad made his nighttime ride to heaven from there.

Inshallah: Arabic saying, which means all things occur according to God's Will, particularly future events.

Day of Worship: Friday is the holy day of worship for Muslims.

Cleanliness: Muslims wash their hands, elbows, face, ears, feet, and wet their hair to cleanse the body prior to prayer.

Monotheistic Religion

Islam is a Monotheistic religion, which means its adherents worship one God, who is all-powerful, and nothing shares divinity with Him. He controls all events - past, present, and future. Both Muslim and Christian Arabs often use "God" and its Arabic translation "Allah" interchangeably.

Shared Perspectives

Many Islamic tenets parallel the other two major world religions, Judaism and Christianity. In fact, Muslims consider Christians and Jews "people of the Book," referring to biblical scriptures, who share their monotheistic belief in one God.

Abraham: All three faiths trace their lineage back to Abraham,

known as *Ibrahim* in Islam. However, Christians and Jews trace their line back to Abraham, his wife Sarah, and their son Isaac; while Muslims trace their lineage back to Abraham and his Egyptian concubine, Hagar, and their son Ismail.

Scriptures: Much of the content of the Qur'an is similar to teachings and stories found in the Christian Bible's Old and New Testaments, and Muslims view Islam as a completion of previous revelations to Jewish and Christian prophets. However, Muslims believe Jews and Christians distorted God's Word over time and that Muhammad received the final revelation of God.

Jesus: The three religions differ significantly over the role of Jesus. While Christians consider Him the divine Messiah who fulfills the Jewish Scriptures, Jews are still waiting for the Messiah to come. Muslims recognize Jesus as having been a prophet, but do not acknowledge the Christian view of His being the son of God. They do not believe in the Christian doctrine of the Trinity and regard both Jesus and Muhammad (along with the other prophets) as mortal men.

View of Death: Similar to Christians (with some variations), Muslims believe in angels, the devil, and the afterlife. Muslims believe that the time of death, like birth, is determined by Allah. Thus, old age, illness, or accidents are not considered the real causes of death. While people grieve the loss of family members or friends, they do not view death itself as a negative event, as Muslims believe that a person who lived a good life will transcend into Heaven.

Fatalism

Inherent to the Muslim faith is the notion of fatalism: belief that life is destined to unfold in a particular way without intervention. Fatalists accept their destiny, assuming they have little control over world events. Therefore, when suffering misfortune, fatalists tend to attribute the cause to Allah and claim no personal responsibility. Fatalism thrives primarily in rural areas, with Western influence dispelling its prominence in cities.

Concept of Jihad

The concept of Jihad, or inner striving, is a fundamental element within Islam. Traditionally, it is the principled and moral pursuit of God's Will to lead a virtuous life. It should not be confused with the publicized violence often associated with Jihad. Most Muslims are strongly opposed to terrorism, considering it contrary to Islamic beliefs.

How to Behave During Ramadan

- During Ramadan, it is respectful to avoid eating, drinking, smoking, and chewing gum in public or in the presence of Muslims during fasting hours.
  - Likewise, you should avoid offering them food, beverages, or tobacco products.
- Work may be delayed during Ramadan, and you can expect shorter work hours and decreased output.

Ramadan

Ramadan is a month-long time for inner reflection, self-control, and God. During this time, Muslims who are physically able are required to fast from dawn to sunset. Many Muslims believe that denying their hunger enables them to learn self-control, appreciate the difficulties of the poor, and gain spiritual renewal. By fasting, one learns to appreciate the good in life. It is common for Muslims to break their fast at sunset with a light meal of dates followed by prayer and then dinner.

Ramadan is observed during the ninth month of the Islamic calendar (see *Time & Space*), and includes three Islamic holy days.

- **Lailat ul-Qadr:** Known as "The Night of Power," it commemorates Muhammad receiving the Qur'an's first verses.

- **Eid-al-Adha:** Known as the "Festival of Sacrifice," it commemorates Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son, Ishmael (Isaac in the Christian faith), as proof of his loyalty to God. It is celebrated the same day the Hajj ends.

- **Eid-al-Fitr:** It is a 3-day "Festival of Fast-Breaking" celebrated at Ramadan's end.

Indigenous Practices

While the Berbers adopted the Muslim faith, they also sustained many of their indigenous worship practices, such as their belief in ***Baraka*** and ***Murabitin***. ***Baraka*** refers to a spiritual power that bestows blessings or good fortune – similar to the concept of karma in Buddhism. A ***Murabitin*** is a holy man who is believed to possess Baraka and is comparable to a saint in the Catholic Church. Berbers are known to visit Murabitin burial sites with the prospects of receiving Baraka. They similarly acknowledge the existence of Djinns (Genies) who are either good or evil.

Berbers also are loyal to tribal chiefs who often take precedence over Islamic doctrine. For centuries, family traditions anchored in the predominant role of tribal leadership have preserved community integrity.

The Murabitin

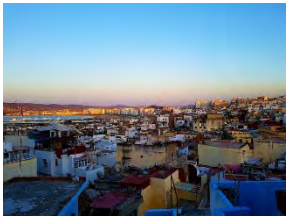
Murabitin refers to a holy man or religious leader in the Berber community. Upon his death, his congregation builds a small dome-shaped temple as his burial site that they believe will impart spiritual power (Baraka). Individuals seeking blessings, such as a woman desiring to become pregnant, typically journey to these sites.

Other Religions

There are small populations of about 25,000 Roman Catholics and Protestants, and 3,500 Jews residing in Casablanca, Marrakech, and Rabat. These denominations tend to coexist peacefully with their Muslim neighbors.

4. FAMILY AND KINSHIP

Reverence for family is at the center of Morocco's value system, with the family being the most important institution in Morocco. An informal welfare system that ensures all its members are sustained, the Moroccan extended family generally is comprised of two or more nuclear families to include parents and offspring plus their families and close friends. When necessary, an individual has a moral responsibility to financially provide for the extended family.



Housing

Middle-class housing in Morocco varies from traditional to modern, with significant variation depending on urban or rural locations. While most urban homes have electricity and running water, utilities are scarce in rural areas. The wealthy have access to villas, although most urban Moroccans reside in apartments. Of these households, roughly 25% are rented with 75% owner-occupied.

A common feature among most urban dwellings is the disparity between exterior and interior conditions. While the outside may appear in disrepair, the inside is well maintained, with a semi-formal living environment suitable to entertaining guests. Visitors often stay in Riads, which are elaborately renovated villas with a central courtyard.

Most rural inhabitants reside in mountainous areas, usually occupying wood or stone huts situated along ridges and cliffs.

Male Authority

Authority in Morocco resides with male elders, with identity and inheritance normally occurring through the male bloodline

(patrilineal). Similarly, the elderly are revered and respected and often exert influence and authority on the rest of the family.

Motherhood Reverence

Motherhood is revered, with women extolled for child-bearing, especially sons. Traditionally, there exists a special bond between a mother and her son, particularly the first born, and although less prevalent in larger cities, a son will usually live close to his parents.

Children

In Moroccan society, children are generally pampered from birth, with both parents highly affectionate to their offspring even after they are grown. Traditionally, boys are allowed more independence than girls, who are taught early in their youth to help with household chores (see *Sex & Gender*). As young men mature, they are expected to contribute both financially and socially to the family by attaining a respectable position in society.

Dating

In rural areas arranged marriages remain customary, although Western-style courtship is popular among many urban youth. Similarly, city life affords them greater opportunity to meet and become intimately acquainted. Despite this modern approach, it remains customary for the groom to request the bride-to-be's hand in marriage from her family.

Marriage

As in most Muslim cultures, marriage in rural Morocco continues to follow traditional customs, where it serves more as a social contract to ensure the continuation of family heritage rather than

a union based on love and romance. It represents the alliance of two families, and individual choice of spouse is limited.

Social Change

Over the last half century, many young adults have migrated to cities where they have become wage earners in crowded living conditions (see *Economics & Resources*). This geographic relocation has caused a decline in the extended family network in favor of smaller family units that are more sustainable in urban living conditions.

Similarly, urbanization and education have stimulated a rise in monogamous marriage patterns, particularly among youth and the elite who view professional achievement as a status symbol, rather than family size. There also is an urban trend towards choosing marriage partners based on love and affections rather than parental intervention (see p.2 of *Sex & Gender*). While in rural areas, couples usually are married by their early 20s, whereas in larger cities education and professional occupation tend to precede marriage.

Polygyny

Historically, various Muslim cultures practiced polygyny (a practice of a man having more than one wife), whereby a man may have up to four wives, with Islamic law requiring him to equally provide for them all. Once a common practice, polygyny is less popular primarily due to financial constraints and female opposition to it.

The Muslim practice of polygyny dates back to the early days of Islam when it was common for a man to marry the wife of a fallen comrade to ensure that she and her children were

provided for in an era when women had no occupations to support themselves or their children.

As part of the Mudawana code for women's reform (see *Sex & Gender*), recent laws require the husband to gain his current wife's permission to take another wife, as well as prove to the courts that he can provide equally for both.

Additionally, while Islamic law dictates that Muslim women must marry Muslim men, in Morocco, it is acceptable for a Muslim man to marry a non-Muslim.

Bride Price

Unlike a dowry, in which the woman would bring material value to the marriage, a bride price is compensation from the prospective groom to the bride's family. He is expected to donate money, property, or service, which many cultures consider a payment for loss of her labor. In return, the bride's family offers assurance that their daughter's virginity is intact.

Actual payment of a bride price depends on her social class. Women from wealthy families usually receive some type of payment, with lower-class families receiving little or nothing.

Marriage Ceremony

Typically elaborate, weddings usually occur in the summer, with festivities extending up to 7 days. Prior to the ceremony, the bride's female friends and relatives gather to celebrate and conduct the traditional "Furnishing Party," which involves arranging the bride's new home.

Similarly, a beautification ritual involves bathing the bride in milk to purify her skin. It is also customary to decoratively paint her hands and feet with ***henna*** dye (pictured) made from an indigenous plant. For centuries, this elaborate body art has been used to dispel evil spirits, bring good luck, and increase fertility.

Following many days of celebrations, the marriage ceremony commences, whereby the bride is, wearing a long hoodless robe

known as a ***Kaftan*** (see *Aesthetics & Recreation*), is delivered to the groom on an elaborately decorated table.

Divorce

Although not common in Muslim societies, divorce does occur. The husband usually initiates marriage dissolution rather than the wife. For her, divorce carries a social stigma that overshadows her potential to remarry and even provide for herself. Also, she is accountable for reimbursing the bride price, while the husband usually retains most of the property and the children.

Passage Rites

Ceremonies recognizing life's transitions are significant events in Morocco.

Birth: When a woman reaches the seventh month of her pregnancy, family and friends usually gather to celebrate her condition, often painting her with henna dye (as during her marriage celebration). A male child will be circumcised either soon after birth or when older.

Death: It is customary in Muslim societies to bury the deceased within 24 hours. Washed and rubbed with perfume and spices and then wrapped in white cloth, the body is taken to a mosque for a funeral prayer and then to the cemetery, where it is buried facing the Ka'aba in Mecca (see *Religion & Spirituality*).

The Muslim funeral prayer is a significant ritual, which if not performed, results in a curse for the entire community. Likewise, condolences generally are offered for 3 or more days following a death. Some Muslims believe there is an additional obligation to commemorate the death at the seventh, 20th and 40th day and also one year following the person's death, although this ritual is not officially an Islamic tradition.

5. SEX AND GENDER

Gender Roles

In general, men continue to dominate Moroccan society, both at home and professionally. Young and old alike are afforded far greater freedom and opportunity than their female counterparts.

While distinct gender roles are common among Muslim communities, globalization has influenced the Moroccan monarchy to seek balance between Muslim tradition and social modernization. While many have embraced social change, conservatives consider it a threat to traditional male dominance (see *Family & Kinship*).

Men

Thrust into societal change that many see as a threat to their traditional dominance, some Moroccan men have challenged social change while others have embraced it. Consequently, the government seeks to balance the expectations of the two groups by striking a compromise between competing interests.

Traditional Women

Traditionally, female activities have been restricted to household duties that limit their public exposure because of the belief that the family's social position hinges on the public behavior of its female members and their roles as mothers and wives. While women often lead sheltered lives gender division is less pronounced in urban areas than it is in the countryside. This is due in part to financial survival requiring both members of the household to work.

Female Segregation

In many Muslim cultures, the sexes are separated at puberty, with males and females sustaining separate social relations both publicly and at home. In the more traditional Moroccan homes

(primarily rural areas), gender segregation remains a common practice, with women only appearing in public to perform their normal household duties. In urban areas, women often appear publicly alongside their male counterparts and will frequently work in the public sector, particular in tourist areas.

Elderly Women

Elderly women are highly influential within the extended family, often with her age determining her status within the home. For example, older women tend to leverage much more decision-making authority, particularly in prearranging marriages.

Similarly, older women are responsible for supervising younger women, and in some homes, girls as young as age four are expected to assist with household chores to include caring for younger siblings.

Urban Women

In urban areas, western influence has stimulated more educational and professional opportunities for women, with many pursuing careers as doctors, lawyers and professors, although most work in lower to mid-level positions. Consequently, since professional women also retain responsibility for the home and children, they often experience difficulty balancing their duties.

Similarly, many urban educated women choose not to cover their heads with a scarf, as is common in many Muslim societies.

Emerging Women's Rights

As part of its social reform program, in 2004, the Moroccan government revised a 1956 "Mudawana" Law to address women's rights. The amendment granted a variety of women's privileges, ranging from the age a woman can marry to her ability to file for divorce without discrimination (see *Family & Kinship).* Originally designated the "Family" edict, the law also granted

appointment of 50 women as state clergy – an unprecedented action in the global Muslim community. Called "Mourchidats," these female spiritual leaders share duties with their male counterparts, although they are not allowed to lead Friday prayers. Consequently, this legislation further served to agitate an already disgruntled conservative Muslim community, generating numerous demonstrations.

Gender Inequality

Despite advancement in women's rights, discrimination still exists in Moroccan society, with underage marriages and the employment of adolescent females as domestic workers and in the sex trafficking trade being major social concerns. In Morocco, 1.4% of children under 17 are engaged in employment activities. Similarly, in 2024, the World Economic Forum reported that less than 9% of girls were married by age 18.

Homosexuality in Morocco

Morocco criminalizes same-sex sexual activity. At this time, the US State Department does not have a Status of Forces Agreement in place for Morocco. Service members will be subject to local laws with regards to this topic.

"Mudawana" Revision (Women's Reform)

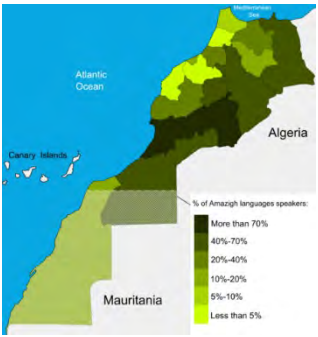
- Removed derogatory terminology from textbooks.
- Assigned joint spousal responsibility of children.
- Girls granted right to receive an education.
- Established 18 as minimum marital age.
- Expanded a woman's right to file for divorce.

6. LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

Linguistic Diversity

Arabic is one of Morocco's official languages, although its local Arabic dialect, **Darija**, (formed from a combination of Berber, French, Spanish, and Portuguese) is a notable variance to the classical Arabic of the Qur'an (see *Religion & Spirituality*). Since a majority of the population is comprised of an Arab-Berber mix (see *Political and Social Relations*), most Moroccans speak Arabic or both Arabic and **Berber**.

With its near 300 distinctive dialects, the Berber language is the second official language of Morocco and is spoken by about 10-17 million Moroccans, who predominantly occupy the country's mountainous regions (see *History & Myth*). There are three primary Berber dialects, with **Dhamazighth** spoken in the Rif Mountain region, **Tamazight** in the Atlas Mountains, and **Tachelhyt** in the South.



Considered the language of the educated, **French** is spoken by about 50% of the population and widely used in business and commerce and among a growing middle class. **Spanish** is prevalent to the North along the Strait of Gibraltar, which separates Morocco from Spain, with **English** spoken as a foreign language of choice among educated youth.

Eloquent Speech

To a Muslim how you say something is as important as what you say. While Americans may frown upon "flowery language," Moroccans consider it a sign of education and refinement. They are fond of poetry, allusion, and clever expressions and frown upon direct, simple speech, viewing it as fool's talk.

Left Hand

In Muslim cultures the left hand is considered unsanitary (used for hygienic purposes); therefore, it is proper to use your right hand for social functions (Of note, this tradition has decreased in importance due to years of contact with Westerners). An exception is using both hands during a greeting to show sincerity.

Greetings

Moroccans value greetings and neglecting or rushing the process is considered disrespectful. When greeting a host national, you will be expected to engage in small talk with them, which includes inquiries about each other's well-being and that of family.

Similarly, salutations communicate warmth, and Moroccans commonly shake hands lightly when greeting a stranger, placing the left hand over the heart afterwards to express sincerity. With close friends and family members, they also hug and kiss each other's

cheeks. Customary Islamic verbal greetings include "As salaam Alaikum" (Peace be upon you) and “Inshallah" (God Willing).

Greeting Etiquette: Moroccans use titles and last names when greeting strangers or when conducting professional relations. Once a close relationship is established, it is common to address colleagues using language that is more informal to include addressing each other on a first-name basis. As a guest in Morocco, it is appropriate for you to wait for your host to initiate informal conversation. Similarly, in Muslim countries it is considered impolite to point a finger at someone or to wear sunglasses while engaged in conversation.

Giving Appropriate Gifts

- When invited to a Moroccan’s home, it is appropriate to bring an inexpensive gift such as sweets, pastries, fruit, or flowers to the host.
- Presenting a modest and easily affordable gift allows your host to return the favor in kind as a means of saving face (see *Political & Social Relations*).
- Similarly, an expensive gift may be viewed negatively.
  - For example, it may be seen as an attempt to gain influence or may embarrass the recipient who would be unable to match in kind.
- It is best to avoid giving alcohol, particularly to conservative Muslims whose religious practices forbid its consumption.
- It is best to present the gift with both hands or only the right one, as the left hand is considered unsanitary.

Approaching Women

Muslim men normally do not initiate handshakes with women. If a Muslim man introduces you to females, you can assume he is not a conservative, although it is advisable to be cautious and

avoid physical contact as a courtesy unless the woman first offers her hand. The preferred response would be to simply place your right hand over your heart, bow slightly, and lower your gaze when entering and departing. Similarly, female Airmen should approach their male counterparts with discretion.

Acknowledging Status

A greeting of respect for the elderly (see *Family & Kinship*), someone of authority, or a woman is shown by standing when they enter or depart the room.

Social Gatherings

It is proper protocol to shake hands with everyone present (except members of the opposite sex) when entering a social engagement by first approaching the closest person to the right and continuing through the room. Similarly, when departing, it is proper to exchange farewells with each person individually.

Bargaining

Bargaining (haggling) is a common practice in most Muslim societies, where there typically are no fixed prices. In Moroccan street markets (known as *soogs* – pronounced "sook"), vendors inflate costs to invite haggling for a cheaper price – it is a customary social engagement and a form of sport rather than a way of taking advantage of a customer. Haggling is an expected practice, and in actuality, not haggling could be perceived as disrespectful.

Taking Photographs: Moroccans generally value their privacy and expect outsiders to respect that privilege. It is therefore wise to ask permission to photograph local citizens.

Language Training Resources

Please view the Air Force Culture and Language Center website at www.airuniversity.af.edu/AFCLC/ and click on "Resources" for access to language training and other resources.

Useful Translations

ENGLISH	DARIJA	FRENCH
Hi	La bes (informal)	Bonjour
(Response)	Bekheer	
Hello	As Salaam Alaikum	Bonjour
(Response)	Wa Alaikum Salaam	
Good Morning	Sabah el Khair	
Good Evening	Masa el Khair	
Goodbye	Ma Salaama	Au revoir
Please	Afak (m) / Afik (f)	S'il vous plait
Thank You	Shukran	Merci
You're Welcome	La shukran, la wejb	Je vous en prie
Yes	Na'am / eeyeh	Oui
No	La	Non
No, Thank You	La Shukran	
Excuse me	Smeh leeya	Excusez-moi
How are you?	Keef halek?	Comment allez-vous
Fine, thank you	Bekheer, lhamdoo llaah	Tres bien, merci
What's your name?	Asmeetek?	Comment vous appelez-vous?
My name is…	Esmee	Je m'appelle
Do you speak English?	Wash kat'ref negleezeeya?	Parle-vous anglais?
Does anyone speak English?	Wash kayn shee hedd henna lee kay'ref negleezeya	Il y a quelqu'un ici qui parle anglais?
How do you say… in Arabic/French?	Keefash katgoolоo… bel'arabeeya?	Comment dit-on… en francais?
What does this mean?	Ash kat/anee hadhee?	Qu'est-ce que ca veut dire?
I understand	Fhemt	Je comprends
I don't understand	Mafhemtsh	Je ne comprends pas

7. LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE

Literacy: Age 15 and over who can read and write:

- Total population: 77%
- Male: 86%
- Female: 69% (2022 estimate)

Moroccan Education System

While traditionally children acquired an education either through Qur'anic (Islamic) or French school systems (see *History & Myth*), today Morocco provides a contemporary 9-year public education program consisting of 6 years of compulsory primary schooling (K1-K6), followed by 3 years of primary-secondary instruction (K7-K9).

Morocco's curriculum is anchored in Islamic doctrine and Arabic language studies, with French introduced in grade 3 – also the primary language offered in most private schools. English is also taught starting in grade 4.

Secondary Education

Students who successfully complete their primary education can choose to continue their traditional learning, with 3 additional years (K10-12) of high school courses (humanities, social and natural sciences, economics, business and mathematics) or attend vocational school. While enrollment in upper secondary education has increased, it remains below 78% of eligible students.

For the academically inclined students, completion of secondary education awards

them eligibility for college scholarships or study abroad. Of note, acceptance into Morocco's public university system is highly competitive, requiring high scores on a comprehensive entrance examination.

Intervention

Allocating about 6% of its annual GDP to education, the Moroccan government has endeavored to balance regional disparities in education quality and accessibility by establishing adult learning centers throughout the country. Starting in 1963 school attendance became compulsory for ages 7 to 13, although only the wealthy urban middle-class typically attend school, while many of the poorer rural children remain at home to help support the family (see *Sex & Gender*). Of note, female attendance in rural areas tends to steadily decline after the first 5 years of schooling.

Attempts to improve rural attendance have had marginal success because of the necessity to employ child laborers. Consequently, this imbalance has led to a dismal national literacy rate, with about 563,700 children, adolescents, and youth failing to attend school.

External non-governmental organizations and the US have targeted enhanced educational opportunities for girls, with the US funding dormitory construction in rural towns to help promote attendance. Similarly, other organizations have provided upgraded school facilities and free meals to encourage parents to enroll their children. Despite some progress, female attendance remains lower than that of males.

8. TIME AND SPACE

Concept of Time and Space

Moroccans have a relaxed view of time compared to Westerners and are more concerned with human interactions than with time management. Consequently, it is not uncommon for a Moroccan host national to fall behind schedule. Similarly, they can be infinitely patient and tolerant.

Personal Space

Friends and colleagues, particularly of the same sex, are considerably more affectionate with one another and have closer spatial relations than you may be accustomed to in America. It is normal for people of the same sex to touch while conversing, sit closely at meetings, or kiss each other on the cheeks when greeting (see *Language & Communication*). These gestures signal friendship and to back away would likely cause offense. They value friendship, and close friends have great influence on situational outcomes, more so than in American culture.

Similarly, Moroccans use proximity to convey sentiment. In social and professional settings, they place individuals close to them who share friendships and bonds, with this nearness signaling alliance more so than in US culture. Therefore, understanding the root meaning of their tendency towards public display of affection is a critical part of effective interactions. To a Moroccan this public display signals alliance.

Don't Forget Prayer Time: Muslims take time during the day for prayer, so it is important that you plan your business appointments accordingly. Similarly, most companies close on Fridays between 11:15am and 3pm to observe the Muslim day-of-worship. It is also best to avoid scheduling meetings during the holy month of Ramadan (see *Religion & Spirituality*).

Work Week

As in Western cultures, the Moroccan workweek is Monday through Friday, with many Moroccan businesses closing daily at noon and reopening at 2:30 or 3:00pm.

Conducting Business

As in social settings, it is a cultural imperative in Morocco to develop a personal relationship prior to conducting business, and any attempt to by-pass or rush this process could hamper success. Reaching consensus or agreement generally takes longer than Americans are accustomed to, and it may require several meetings to accomplish what you would generally handle via a routine phone call. Consequently, patience is necessary to building effective cross-cultural relations.

The Islamic Calendar

The Islamic calendar is used to determine the proper day to celebrate religious holidays and festivals. It is a lunar calendar and contains 12 months, although it is 11 days shorter than the Western calendar. As a result, from one year to the next, Islamic holidays fall 11 days earlier on the Western calendar than the previous year.

Negotiations

- In Morocco, it is a cultural imperative to develop a personal relationship prior to conducting business.
- Moroccans prefer to negotiate issues in person, as the time invested demonstrates sincerity and commitment.
- Written contracts are rare – to a Moroccan, his word is his honor (see *Political & Social Relations:* "Saving Face").
- It is best not to expect immediate decisions, as reaching agreement usually requires follow-on discussions and negotiating for mutual benefits.
    - Your counterpart will need to acquire consensus on a final decision – he speaks for his community at large, and any commitment he makes must first receive group acceptance.
- Avoid making demands. Moroccans like to feel "empowered" and gain concurrence for their suggestions – if a Moroccan thinks it is his idea, he will most likely agree.
- Agreement terms should involve mutual interests and serve to promote a stronger relationship.
- Disagreements should be handled in a calm, diplomatic manner and should never involve raised voices and anger.
- It is helpful to find ways to compromise, even if it results in delays.
- It is good to remember that Moroccans are extremely patient and tend to consider time on their side.
- If the negotiation involves cost for an item, you may have to bargain, so it is advisable to initially name a lower price than you are willing to pay (see *Language & Communication*).

9. AESTHETICS AND RECREATION

Attire

Moroccans are a proud people who believe it is important to be dignified in one's behavior and appearance. To them the way one dresses makes a statement about that person's attitude and self worth. Morocco is a conservative society where dress is modest for both its citizens and their foreign guests.

Traditional Dress

Rural Moroccans primarily wear traditional clothing that covers the entire body, with Western-style clothing popular in urban areas. The **djelleba (**pronounced "ja-laa-bah") is a customary ankle-length outer robe made from cotton or wool with long sleeves and a hood. While it is made in a variety of styles and colors, citizens of higher status typically wear those that are handmade from quality fabric.

Resembling a tunic with short sleeves, the **gandora** has heavy embroidery along the neckline and sleeves, with a pocket on and a slit on either side.

Balgha, are cone-shaped heelless slippers made of leather worn both indoors and outside.

Men: While Western attire is popular, during religious holidays and other special occasions, men usually wear djellebas.

Similarly, various ethnic groups wear distinctive

turbans, with Berber men wearing white ones while Arabs prefer orange. In addition, a **kufi** or brimless cap, (often associated with Black Africans), is also popular throughout the country.

Women: Modernization has influenced women's clothing, especially for those in urban areas who work outside the home. In contemporary urban society, they generally wear Western-style fashions that are traditionally uncommon in many other Muslim cultures.

Conversely, more traditional styles remain common among the more fundamentalist Muslims; who wear long skirts, headscarves, and djellabas. Considered the original Moroccan dress, a **kaftan** or robe-like garment with wide sleeves, is also common among women and can be worn either as casual or formal wear.

Architecture

Historic trade routes and ports linking the country to Europe provided a cultural infusion seen in Morocco's architectural landscape, particularly its mosques and Islamic madrassas (colleges).

The Medina

Typical in most Moroccan cities is an area called the medina, which is the oldest section of an Arab city. Walled with Arabic-style arches, this area historically offered protection from roaming bandits and other wayward travelers.

The Arts

Traditional folklore includes recorded legends about Moroccan life to include ancient accounts of djinns, known in English as genies. One fable tells about a beautiful seductive woman, “Aisha Quandisha,” who having the legs of a goat appears to men in their dreams, leaving them impotent for life. The mere mention of her name is known to cause children to tremble.

Similarly, music and dance are poplar media for depicting tribal customs during festive occasions, with many performances coinciding with seasonal transitions.

Traditional craftsmen continue to produce designs much the same as centuries past. For example, a Moroccan rug (kilim) usually takes about 9 months to produce. Crafted from high-quality wool or silk, these rugs display colors and designs associated with a particular Moroccan region.

Recreation

Horsemanship:

Morocco’s traditional pastime centered on horsemanship, and even today, this popular medieval event showcases men in flowing robes racing across the desert as symbolic ancient warriors.

Soccer: With the introduction of European sports during the 19th-century colonial era, soccer (referred to as football in Africa) has emerged as the more popular contemporary sport. The first African soccer star and the first to bear the nickname "Black Pearl," **Larbi Ben Barek** established the sport's popularity during the mid-20th century. Recognizing Ben Barek as one of the best soccer players ever, soccer legend Edison "Edson" Arantes do Nascimento of Brazil (popularly known by his nickname "Pelé") offered Ben Barek one of his famous number 10 jerseys as a keepsake. Today, the Moroccan national team is recognized throughout North Africa as the best team in the continent.

Running: After soccer, running attracts popular attention. A national hero, **Hicham el Guerrouj**, known as "King of the Mile," was a 2004 Olympic gold medalist in the 1500 and 5000-meter races and a World Champion in the 1500. Similarly, **Nawal El Moutawakel**, a 400-meter hurdler, was the first woman from an Arab or Islamic country to win an Olympic gold medal, which she earned during the 1984 Summer Olympics.

National Holidays

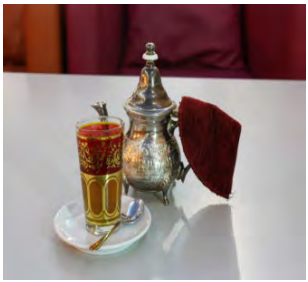
January 1 - New Year
January 11 - Independence Manifesto
July 30 - Throne Day
August 14 - Commemoration of Oued Eddahab
August 21 - Youth Day (King Mohammed VI Birthday)
August 20 - Revolution of the King and the People
November 6 - Commemoration of the Green March
November 18 - Independence Day

10. SUSTENANCE AND HEALTH

Dining Customs

Mealtime is a social and festive tradition throughout the Muslim world. It is a time where family members congregate to enjoy fellowship and one another. Consequently, mealtime usually lasts much longer than in America.

Moroccans consume their main meal at noon, followed by coffee and a snack around 5pm or 6pm and a late evening meal.



Muslims do not eat pork nor consume alcohol as these are forbidden (*haram*), although alcohol and wine are frequently available in urban areas.

Diet

Breakfast usually consists of bread served with olive oil or butter and coffee or mint tea – a sweet and extremely popular national drink that that is served in a small glass. The main meal traditionally consists of an assortment of lamb, beef, chicken, and fish with a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables. Similarly, soup is a popular dish in Morocco, along with **couscous** and **harira**. Couscous is granulated wheat topped with meat and vegetables, while harira is a combination of meat, onions, walnuts, and spices.

Other popular foods include **kefta** (ground beef or lamb seasoned and cooked over charcoal), **tajine** (pictured at right) - a meat stew with vegetables, and **mechoui** (roasted lamb). Seafood is popular along the coast. Popular desserts are cake, fruit, and marzipan (a sweet almond paste).

Restricted Food & Dietary Customs

- Religious dietary and fasting customs influence the Moroccan diet.
- Muslim beliefs forbid eating pork.
- While most Muslims do not consume alcohol, it is available in Morocco's urban areas.
  - o Morocco is actually a leading wine producer whose wines is popular in France, America, and within modern Moroccan households.
- During the holy month of Ramadan Muslims fast from sunrise to sundown.

Dining Etiquette

When invited to dine in a Moroccan home, you can expect to be seated next to your host (place of honor) typically at a low, round table. It is customary not to sit or eat ahead of your host.

Prior to the meal it is proper to wash your hands from a basin brought to the table by a family member. You are expected to extend your hands over the basin while water is poured over them. It is customary for the eldest person to eat first.

In many rural areas, food traditionally is eaten by hand from a communal serving dish, although done so with decorum. It is customary to use the right hand as the left hand is considered unclean (see *Language & Communication*). Likewise, water is commonly shared from a communal glass, although it is appropriate to ask for your own glass. In urban areas, people commonly eat with utensils just as in Western cultures.

During meals, participation in conversation is considered polite, and an opportune time to enhance relations with your host national counterpart. However, you should avoid attempting to

discuss business at mealtime, which should be addressed afterwards or in a more formal setting.

Healthcare System

Healthcare is more readily available in urban areas than rural, with most health facilities plagued by poor management and inadequate capacity (physician density is 0.74 per 1,000 population and hospital bed density is 1.1 beds per 1,000 inhabitants). Rural health centers generally provide minimal services and equipment, with few if any female doctors or nurses. Consequently, most women elect not to seek medical assistance. Some remote areas are limited to mobile medical teams for outpatient care.

While private hospitals tend to have better service than the public health facilities, they typically are only available to wealthier patients.

Infectious Diseases: Because of poor sanitation and an insufficient potable water supply, particularly in rural areas, infectious and parasitic diseases exist. These include hepatitis A and B and occasional outbreaks of cholera. It is best to avoid drinking tap water, especially in rural areas, and use caution when eating salads and raw vegetables, which are susceptible to contamination due to improper washing.

HIV/AIDS: The HIV/AIDS prevalence rate is low compared to most countries, with less than 0.1% of Moroccans age 15 and older HIV positive (US averages a 0.4% HIV prevalence rate).

Tuberculosis (TB): Prevalence of TB in Morocco compared to the US is significantly higher with an annual rate of 92 per 100,000, compared to a US rate of 3 per 100,000.

11. ECONOMICS AND RESOURCES

Economic Overview

After Morocco gained independence in 1956, the government controlled most major industries until a 1993 shift toward privatization brought an open market and private investment, with France becoming the lead foreign investment partner. Despite this transformation, Morocco has struggled with a sluggish economy for more than 3 decades. With an average annual economic growth of only about 3%, combined with widespread illiteracy and limited access to social services, excessive unemployment and extreme poverty are predominant throughout the country (roughly 17% of the population is considered poor or at risk of poverty).

Consequently, many young adults have migrated from rural to urban areas to seek employment, where high cost-of-living and crowded conditions only enhance poor living standards (see *Family & Kinship*). As of 2023, nearly 65% of Moroccans lived urban areas, nearly 9% of those lived in slums, informal settlements, or substandard housing. Similarly, these substandard conditions encouraged Moroccan migrants to seek foreign employment. In 2023, Morocco received the equivalent of $11.8 billion from its citizens working abroad, ranking it second among countries in North Africa and the Middle East.

Economic Components

The country's gross domestic product (GDP) centers on three main sectors: services (54%), industry (25%) (see *Technology & Material*), and agriculture (11%) (2023 estimates).

Tourism: Tourism is Morocco's predominant services component and its second-largest foreign exchange earner after the phosphate industry. With majestic mountains and beaches attracting thousands of visitors, Morocco's tourist industry attracted 14.5 million visitors in 2023, a 33% increase compared to 2022. Tourism accounts for 7% of Morocco's GDP. A complementary feature to Morocco's tourism is its prominent wine-making industry, established by the French in the imperial city of Meknes during the colonial era.

Foreign Trade: Morocco's strategic position near major trade routes and European markets has provided commercial advantages. With trade accounting for 96% of Morocco's GDP in 2023, external investment is helping to stimulate the economy as shareholders take advantage of low labor costs. Similarly, a Free Trade Agreement with the US has further expanded Morocco's international reach.

Natural Resources: Holding 75% of the global phosphate reserves, Morocco leads in phosphate exports – primarily to Spain, the US, and Mexico – and is also a top olive oil exporter. Claiming to have the largest fishing industry on the continent, Morocco has the most abundant sardine export market in the world. Likewise, it supplies much of both Europe's and Japan's seafood demands.

Crafts: Moroccan industry also includes handcrafted wood, leather, and woven products (mainly rugs) that are in demand around the world. The craft industry employs 20% of Morocco's workforce and accounts for 7% of Moroccan GDP.

Agriculture: Employing nearly 30% of the workforce, Morocco has a stable agricultural economy that benefits from low labor costs and a favorable climate. Collectively, processed fruits, vegetables, spices, and nuts account for a 10% of Morocco's exports.

Illicit Drugs: Morocco is the world's leading hashish producer and exporter and is the transit point for South American cocaine shipped to Europe (see *Political & Social Relations*).

Geography: (see *Political & Social Relations*).

Climate

Morocco has a temperate, subtropical climate that allows for an extended growing season, although climate variations exist across the country. The western and northern coastal areas provide moderate temperatures, with inland weather much warmer. While rain is almost nonexistent in the southern Sahara Desert region, precipitation is heaviest in the northwest and lightest in the east.

Currency

Morocco's currency is the *Dirham* (MAD), which has an average exchange rate of 10.13 MAD to 1 USD as of 2023. The MAD is divided further into 100 centimes.

When traveling to Morocco, national currencies should be exchanged at an official exchange bureau identified by a golden sign, as exchanging money in the street is illegal. While there is no exchange fee, visitors exchanging money are issued a receipt, which they must keep in order to change Moroccan currency back into their national currency upon departure. Similarly, MAD can also be withdrawn from banks using check or credit card and from an ATM in larger towns.

12. TECHNOLOGY AND MATERIAL

Technology

Morocco's technological development is anchored in a partnership between education and industry, with a committee for scientific research and development providing oversight. Despite some progress, government bureaucracy continues to hamper its technological advancement.

Technology in Education

The Education Ministry seeks to improve learning in science, technology, engineering and mathematics from primary through university level. Much of this effort centers on early intervention by using improved technology to deliver English language skills to children (see *Learning & Knowledge*).

Manufacturing

Manufacturing accounts for about 14% of the country's GDP, with both private and public sectors involved in industrial development – primarily phosphate mining, car, and truck assembly, and tire manufacturing. Other industries include petroleum refining, chemical fertilizers, and asphalt production (many lack technological advancement to maximize productivity).

Telecommunications

Deregulation of the telecommunication sector expanded the information technology market. Growth in mobile, landline, and Internet services has expanded coverage to nearly 88% of the country. Mobile phone penetration reached 137 subscriptions per 100 inhabitants in 2021 and over 91% of the population utilized the Internet in 2023. Broadcast media consists of two government-owned national television stations that provide international coverage. Multiple radio stations provide access to the BBC world service.

Transportation

Aviation: Morocco's international airports include the Mohammed V International Airport in Casablanca and the Menara International Airport near Marrakech. Rabat, Agadir, Fes, and Tangier also offer domestic airline service.

Roadways: Paved roads connect major cities to many of the country's remote areas, improving quality of life for many rural inhabitants. Public buses and taxis are available in cities; while in rural areas, people walk, ride bikes, and motorcycles, and often use mules to transport goods.

Rail: Having the continent's second most developed rail system next to South Africa's, Morocco's train system is efficient and provides interconnectivity among the larger cities, the international airport at Marrakech, and main tourist attractions.

Energy

As late as the mid-1990s, many rural communities still lacked access to the nation's electric grid, with many homes relying on car batteries to provide some although insufficient power. In 2002, the Moroccan government partnered with private industry to provide solar energy to more than 100,000 rural households, thereby placing Morocco at the global forefront for providing residential solar power, not to mention improved quality of life and reduced urban migration. By 2017, 100% of Morocco had electricity access. In 2024, Morocco generated 26% of the country's electricity through renewable energy.

Environmental Issues

Despite technological advancements, Morocco faces a number of environmental issues to include drought, soil erosion, overgrazing, pollution, and deforestation, with land productivity declining in some areas by as much as 50%.

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