

Spring 5-3-2018

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## Recommended Citation

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Arab Nationalism in a Francophone Country: The French Language and Moroccan Identity

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Professor Ramos

HIST 493: Senior Seminar

December 16, 2017

Honor Code: "I have neither given or received nor have I tolerated others' use of unauthorized aid."  
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## The Arabic-French Language Debate in Morocco

In July 2011, angered youth and unemployed graduates gathered in downtown Rabat, Morocco rioting. Men and women representing a variety of ages came together outside the town's city hall demanding for a substantial amount of stable and highly paid jobs. They protested not only for their own "economic marginalization but also that the failure of educational experiences to give them the possibility of pursuing a 'decent life.'"<sup>1</sup> Protesters organized staged sit-ins confronted the country's security forces, and participated in heavily represented acts of self-immolation across the nation. Rioters were driven by the inadequacies of the developed post-independent Moroccan public education system. Approximately sixty-years after its creation, international donors, the state, and school participants concede that the public-schools are in trouble. According to the World Bank, despite relative progress in access to education, increasing gender parity, and raising literacy rates, the Moroccan public educational system still has "a long way to go on quality."<sup>2</sup>

The problems witnessed in Morocco's public educational structure lies in the implemented nationalist educational Arabization policy. The structure converts public school curriculum into classical Arabic language learning with the objective of developing a homogenous, literate Arabophone society. The post-colonial Moroccan school became an essential place that developed an idea of Moroccan nationalism centered on Arab-Muslim terms and dependent on the use of the Arabic language. Under this language model, the Arabic language replaces the French language as the language of instruction in school systems while uniting a multilingual population versed in spoken *daraija* Moroccan Arabic and the indigenous

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<sup>1</sup> Chris Boutieri, *Learning in Morocco: Language Politics and the Abandoned Educational Dream* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), 1-2.

<sup>2</sup> "Maintaining Momentum on Educational Reform in Morocco." September 11, 2013.

<http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2013/09/11/maintaining-momentum-on-education-reform-in-morocco>

Berber population. However, critics argue that the application of Arabization in schools is inadequate in relation to the country's social labor market demands. Moroccan students are academically trained in the Arabic language during secondary schools, but many must shift to the French language for higher education in order to manage a predominately francophone and Anglophone job market where competency in the French language is a requirement. Given the linguistic split between the languages and students' late exposure into the French language instruction, the job market deems them as "multilingual illiterates"; hence, unemployable. This language policy has brought Moroccan graduates into a political tension between previous generations who fought for their national traditions through cultural decolonization from the French by the presence of the classic Arabic language. Arabization promoted a single, unifying national language at the expense of the other spoken registers in Morocco; in other words, at the expense of Moroccans, this language policy implementation has limited the prospects of educated Moroccans and alienated them from their state.<sup>3</sup>

The political debate between the Arabic and French language reflects the national struggles faced by Morocco. In October 2007 at the regional offices of Gharb-Chrarda-Béni Hssen, the local inspector for the French language-course, Ahmed Zirari, joined the regional inspector-coordinator to discuss curriculum design and administrative arrangements with approximately forty other secondary school teachers. Inspector Zirari welcomes the crowd, then launches in a plea about the crux of public education dilemmas in Morocco:

“...The French language in the Moroccan context is the key to professional and social success. What will our students do after the Baccalaureate [the state-sanctioned national exam, equivalent of high school diploma]? As Moroccan

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<sup>3</sup> Martin Ross, "Education in North Africa," in *The Hammamet Conferences 2014: The Leadership Challenge* (UK: British Council, 2014), 38.

citizens, we cannot ignore this reality. The word is a luxury, so I ask you to give everyone their part of the word.”<sup>4</sup>

Inspector Zirari’s speech well positions the politics of language as central to the instability of the educational system. He illuminates the linguistic discrepancies that prevent Moroccan student success at an academic and professional advancement with students’ aspirations for empowerment and creativity. The inspector openly claimed that instruction in the French language would promote academic and professional success for students in a fully Arabized public school system. The policy of Arabization was a project of socio-cultural divides driven by the replacement of the French language with the Arabic language in education, administrative, and economic domains in Morocco. This policy was implemented in the mid-twentieth century as a response to the French colonial experience and the rise of regional nationalism as part of the wave of mid-century Arab nationalism and global decolonization. The alliance of the emerging nationalist party al-Istiqlal (The Independence) with King Mohammad V planted the seeds of Arabization during the French Protectorate society from 1912-1956, preparing the implementation of this policy in the aftermath of Morocco’s independence. Reacting against the Protectorate’s judicial, pedagogical, and social separation between the Arab and indigenous Berber population with the divisive francophone education for the elites, the independence alliance emphasized an Arab-Muslim narrative as the foundation of Moroccan nationalism.<sup>5</sup> However, the presence of the French language in Morocco’s modern society is well positioned to challenge the Arab-Muslim Moroccan identity.

The French language has played an essential role in the building of Morocco’s nation-state after the country gained independence from the French state. The historic French

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<sup>4</sup> Boutieri, *Learning in Morocco*, 9.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Wien, “Preface: Relocating Arab Nationalism,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 43, no. 2 (2011): 203-204.

protectorate signaled the changing role of France from its colonial patron serving as Morocco's main economic and commercial partner, investor, and donor. As Monica Heller argues, the continuing importance of the French has modified the meaning of the French language and Morocco's other languages as linguistic resources. Thus, it is more than being a feature of group identity; language increasingly functions as a measurable work skill. The evolving relationship between the central role played by language in shaping national identity and the presence of political institutions has been the subject of ideological debates that have undermined the policy of Arabization since its implementation.<sup>6</sup> Heller, in other words, helps us understand the tension between Arabization and the Moroccan national identity post-French imperialism.

The history of French imperialism and the French protectorate society are significant for consideration because it would explain why the Arabization policy exists in Morocco's current pedagogical traditions. It is imperative to revisit the historical emergence of the French language in Morocco in order to holistically understand the multilingual complicities present in the country. The examination of the French language within education is significant in relation to the ideas of neoliberals and imperials. Revisiting the historical act of French colonization in Morocco under a French protectorate society from 1914-1956 would bring a historical dimension to the comprehension of present day educational conflicts in Morocco.

To do this, this paper examines the French protectorate treaty that influenced Morocco's nationalistic identity through the introduction of the French language in Morocco's pedagogical traditions. Thus, French colonization in Morocco influenced a French-Moroccan identity with the introduction of the French language in Moroccan educational traditions, setting up the

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<sup>6</sup> Monica Heller, "Globalization, the New Economy, and the Commodification of Language and Identity," *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 7, no. 4 (2003): 473-492.

contradictions and tensions between the Arab-Muslim and post-French colonial Moroccan identity.

### Historiography

Before analyzing the influence of the French language in relation to Moroccan identity, it is necessary to know something about the social and political contexts within which French colonization shaped North-African and Moroccan identity were expressed and received in historical scholarship. Since the heavily present French language and European traditions in North African countries-Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco scholars have been interested in the influence of French imperialism on the modern nation-making of these North African countries. However, it is important to note that much of the scholarship fails to connect the presence of the French language and the Arabization public educational policy to the historic French protectorate society, resulted from French imperialism during the era. There is much written on the present day problems faced in Morocco, but not much discussed on the influence of French imperialism on Morocco's current state. This paper contributes to the literature by highlighting the history of French imperialism in Morocco to better explain how the French language shapes Moroccan nationalistic ideals in educational pedagogical traditions. My contribution belongs to the larger literature written and discussed on the effects of French rule on modern day North African nation building and identity, which, unfortunately centers on Algeria. We can, however, use much of what we know about French imperialism in Northern Africa in order to place Morocco's experience in proper context.

Frederick Cooper *Citizenship between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945-1960* articulates the relationship between French imperialism and French colonial African identity and nationalism. He argues that French citizenship rights in French African

colonies today should be granted because of the French imperial history in the colonies of North and Western Africa. Cooper examines the question of French African nationalism in a political perspective; that is to say, connecting state building with French citizenship. The text contributes to the historical interpretation on the subject by answering the following question: what does it mean to be a Francophone or French African colony? He focuses on the idea of Africans gaining French citizenship in order for them to be perceived as equals to the greater French population in France. Cooper writes, "...[citizenship] is about politics as the art of individuals and organizations getting people to do things they did not think they wanted to do, about how the entry of different people into political debate changed the frameworks in which politics took place."<sup>7</sup>

In other words, Cooper's work builds on the history of French imperialism in Africa in order to focus on the history of the French citizenship debate in French colonies overseas. The work brings to light an issue of citizenship that resulted from French colonialism in North and Western Africa. Cooper articulates as essential the significance of the citizenship debate between France and its French African colonies, foreshadowing what would happen in Morocco. The idea of African colonies receiving identical French citizenship rights as the French population in France equates to equality and inclusion between the "colonizer" and its "colonized." These overseas colonies the French colonized during WWII would gain a sense of inclusion and national identity with their French imperial through the shared French citizenship and French political rights acquired by the French population in France. In short, French colonial rule shaped African identity through the French colonial influence on government, politics, civil codes, and

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<sup>7</sup> Fredrick Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945-1960* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014), ix.

aspired citizenship, which is imperative to gain in order to be characterized with a French identity.

Meanwhile, Edmund Burke analyzes the reshaping of Moroccan identity from French imperialism through religion in his work *The Ethnographic State: France and the Invention of Moroccan Islam*. Morocco is recognized by their nationalist construction of Islam, “Moroccan Islam.” The subject of Burke’s work tells the history of the invention of the modern Moroccan monarchy under the French protectorate society. French ethnography is important for consideration because it provides an interesting portal into the social and cultural atmosphere of the Moroccan population. According to the author, his research examines French ethnographic and political supremacy through a bifocal, interdisciplinary perspective. The historian’s objective is to clarify poorly understood aspects of the history of the emergence of French rule in Morocco while raising a series of questions about history and theory. The research draws attention to the discourse of Moroccan Islam and the persistence of the Moroccan governmental monarchy. By addressing these questions, the text justifies the importance of the historical contexts (international, financial, and political) within which key developments in French imperial rule in Morocco occurred, in shaping French research and development of modern identity building in Morocco through religion. *The Ethnographic State* commences with a deeper history of French ethnography in the lands of Islam and imperial Algeria and concludes by applying some of the implications of the text’s larger argument to the contemporary era.<sup>8</sup>

Ultimately Burke argues that, “Moroccan Islam was constructed under the auspices of French colonial scholars in the early twentieth century.”<sup>9</sup> That is to say Moroccan Islam was created as a result of the influence of French colonization in Morocco while the country was

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<sup>8</sup> Edmund Burke, *The Ethnographic State: France and the Invention of Moroccan Islam* (California: University of California Press, 2014), 5.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

under a French protectorate society. The creation of its unique branch of the Islamic religion allowed the transformation of a pre-colonial Moroccan political monarchy into a modern state. The key distinction is between “Moroccan Islam” and “Islam in Morocco.” Moroccan Islam represents the unbroken history of Moroccan kingship extending from the seventeenth-century arrival of Islam in the northwest region of Africa. Some authorities credit Morocco’s Islam with the preservation of the country from the contamination of Islamic radicalism.<sup>10</sup> As Morocco became French, the meaning and functions of the discourse written on Moroccan Islam underwent significant modifications. A measure of the success of the discourse on Moroccan Islam is that it continues to inform the post-colonial Moroccan state. Burke contributes uniquely to the historical scholarship of French imperialism in Morocco because there has been an absence of the examination the role Moroccan Islam played in the modernization of the country. The author stresses how the persistence of a tradition does not happen by itself. It requires a significant amount of work, since it occurs against historical change.

Burke’s methodology brings a differing analysis of the development of the French colonial archive on Morocco and of the political struggle among French scholars for the control of research on Morocco during the period 1890-1925, asserting the necessity for historical development. He seeks to bring the discussion of colonial representations and empires to a new level of historical engagement by inserting the Moroccan case into different political contexts: French and Moroccan domestic politics, the politics of research, economic interests, and the micro-politics of the local population. The parallels between French colonial rule in Morocco and the creation of Moroccan Islam are closely tied to contemporary Moroccan identity to the extent that it becomes important for study. Moroccan Islam was an assertion of the central

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<sup>10</sup> Cited in Edmund Burke: Mohammed Daadaoui, *Moroccan Monarchy and the Islamist Challenge: Maintaining Makhzan Power* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

authority of French imperial rule resulting in the reduction of the common realities in Morocco. Through a rewriting of history, it renamed the French protectorate treaty as the bridge between “the Morocco that was” (pre-colonial Morocco) and modernity.<sup>11</sup>

Lastly, Moroccan linguist Moha Ennaji in *Multilingualism, cultural identity, and education in Morocco* analyzes the relationship between French imperialism and Moroccan nationalism through a close analysis of the multilingualism in modern Morocco. Ennaji connects the impact of globalization caused by French colonization in Morocco to the emergence of the French language; as a result, reshaping Moroccan identity toward a multilingual, multicultural nation. Ennaji provides a socio-linguistic approach when addressing the question of Moroccan identity in relation to imperial colonization by focusing on the social factors such as language, culture, social behaviors, and different ethnic groups in Morocco. In the preface to his work, he articulates his objective, “...I attempt to show how colonial and postcolonial political forces have endeavoured to reconstruct the national identity of Morocco, on the basis of cultural representations and ideological constructions related to nationalist and ethnolinguistic trends.”<sup>12</sup> He is interested in exploring the current cultural and political debates in the country through an extensive study of the four prominent languages present in Morocco: French, Classical Arabic, Moroccan Arabic, and Berber indigenous languages. The book assesses the role played by linguistic and cultural factors in the development and evolution of Moroccan society. According to the author, a consideration of multilingualism requires a detailed knowledge of the cultural environment in which the multilingual individual evolves. Ennaji directs his attention toward the language debate present in Moroccan educational systems through an emphasis on language planning policies.

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<sup>11</sup> Cited in Edmund Burke: Moumen Douiri, *À qui appartient le Maroc?* (Paris: Harmattan, 1992).

<sup>12</sup> Moha Ennaji, *Multilingualism, Cultural Identity, and Education in Morocco* (New York: Springer, 2005), *Preface*.

*Multilingualism, Cultural Identity, and Education in Morocco* is undertaken in the approach of language studies in society primarily by authors Bourdieu, Fairclough and Fishman, who are used to investigate the relationship between multilingualism, multiculturalism, cultural identity, and education in Morocco. The work is also based on direct observations, an analysis of the literature, and data collection through tape recordings, questionnaires, interviews, and observations of multilingual speakers in Morocco. The author often cites his own impressions and makes observations based on his experiences as an individual living in the multicultural and multilingual Morocco. Through an interdisciplinary approach, the text addresses the question of identity as a historical and sociological construct derived from the changing sociopolitical and economic environment. These social factors would determine language use, language choice, language shift and maintenance, and attitudes.<sup>13</sup> While his major contribution is to the field of language, the book's chapter one provides a brief historical background of the European invasion in Morocco. The two-page summary that is included is only tailored to fit the language debate in the country's public schools. In other words, it is not a history of French colonization in France. Instead, it is a brief history of Morocco's Arabization policy in educational systems. It seems that the author chooses the certain historical information to better explain his linguistic analysis, while avoiding an acknowledgment of the totality of the history of French imperialism in Morocco. Therefore, to better explain the language debate in the country and its changing nationalism, an overview of French imperials in Morocco and its Protectorate society are necessary for examination.

#### French colonization in North Africa

It all began around the early 1810s when France systematically undertook the work of creating a great colonial state in North and West Africa. Beginning of the 1830s, France entered

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 5-7.

Alger, the capital city of Algeria. While it took the French colonials seventeen years until they could subdue the patriotic and able Algerian ruler Abd-el-Kader, the imperial had finally colonized the bays of Alger and Oran in Algeria. In 1847, the city of Constantine was taken and the lands of its bays were later annexed to Alger the following year. However, twenty more years of warfare, 1850-1870, the French were necessary in order for the indigenous populations the Berbers and the Kybeles present in the mountainous regions surrendered to the French. Ten years of French military occupation followed, allowing the French to place Algeria under a civil government. In 1881, boundary disputes allowed an opportunity for France's interference in Tunisia, who was then under Turkey's control. Through diplomatic negotiations, Tunisia signed the treaty of Kasr-es-Said in 1883, placing the country completely under French control and protection, to overhaul Tunisian finance and to restore order. Since 1898, the ruler of Tunisia, Sidi Mohammed en Nasr, permitted the French to direct the entire administration of the Tunisian state.<sup>14</sup>

Around 1880, France adopted a definitive policy of colonial expansion and consolidation in Northern and Western Africa. Commencing from the small French settlements on the Senegal and Gabon rivers, the Ivory Coast and Dahomey, a colonial French empire had evolved. It extended over a large district reaching from the Congo on the north and south of the Mediterranean, and from the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan on the east to the Atlantic Ocean on the west. Definite boundaries of these possessions as well as the recognition of France's claims were secured through skillful and conciliatory diplomacy in the Franco-British treaties of 1882, 1889-91, and 1898-99, and the Franco-German treaties of 1894, and 1896-97.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Cited in Richard M. Brace: Nicola A. Ziadeh, *Origins of Nationalism in Tunisia* (Beirut: American University of Beirut Publications, 1962), 17-18.

<sup>15</sup> Richard M. Brace, *Morocco Algeria Tunisia* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1915), 35-38.

However, this was not sufficient to insure complete success of the French Colonial Empire and permanent establishment of good order and security in northern Africa. Three things remained to be accomplished by France: the complementation of a definite understanding with Great Britain as to the administration of affairs in Northern Africa, the development of a system of alliances that would give France a position of security in European cities, and the placing of Morocco under French protection. Accordingly, Monsieur Delcassé, who had successfully conducted French colonial politics, turned his attention to the field of continental diplomacy.<sup>16</sup>

### Why Morocco?

Colonization of Morocco was essential to the growth of the French empire in Northern and Western Africa. The country Morocco attracted the French for many reasons and motives. France needed Morocco in order to maintain its pride and prestige among the greatest powers in the world. Morocco or Al Maghreb-The Key of the West- is for reason of its fertility, its natural resources, and its geographical location made it the most desirable of the northern African countries. Strategically, the country is placed as a guard to the west gate of the essential Mediterranean trade highway. It is part of a large land mass, serving Algeria and Tunisia as a link between France and French West Africa with a connection between the Atlantic Ocean and the remaining North African territories. Thus, its military bases and its supply of manpower make it an essential in the North Atlantic defense establishment.<sup>17</sup> Economically, Morocco's geographical location to Algeria, the Sahara, and Senegal, France possessed unrivaled advantages for trade. France's trade was profitable for many Frenchmen and Morocco's resources were capable of profitable development. At that time of French colonization, the production of phosphates and manganese had reached one fourth of the world supply. Without

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<sup>16</sup> Norman Dwight Harris, "European Intervention in Morocco," *The Yale Law Review* 19, no. 7 (1910): 551.

<sup>17</sup> Harriett Mitchell, "The Development of Nationalism in French Morocco," *Phylon* 16, no. 4 (1955): 432.

the conquest of Morocco, France could not solidify its extensive domains or even control the trade routes and commerce of northern Africa and the Sahara from English conquest. Without it, there is a minimal chance of France to cope with the continuous border difficulties and desert robberies which would hamper the trade of the entire North African region.<sup>18</sup>

Politically, France indirectly controlled the governmental actions by implementing national, political policies for Morocco. Historian Norman Dwight Harris argued in favor for European intervention in Morocco from the colonials' perspective in 1910, before Morocco signed the treaty allowing French protection in 1912. Harris articulated the political motives for France to colonize Morocco. He briefly describes the political structure of the country as follows: There were three royal or Shereefian families, but the right of political succession was restricted to only one royal family-the Fileli Shereefs of Tafilet. No regular custom of succession was present just that the new sultan must have been a relative of the old sultan. Usually the old sovereign designated some member of his family, whom he considered the most qualified; however, the office was elective and no succession was legal without the consent and vote of the family council. The other two branches of royal families-the Idris Shereefs of Zaraham and the Wazan Shereefs-had a vote. Even though they could not rule, no one could ascend the throne without their votes of approval. These two royal families' social and political positions become one of great importance. They were more respected by the Moroccan population than the Sultans in power themselves. In 1910, the Idris and Wazan Shereefs were in protection of France. The Idressi Shereefs of Wazan were particularly friendly with the French; they could not be interfered with by the reigning family in power because of French protection. As a result, the Sultan became unable to enforce his will against the Shereefian families. The government of Morocco was absolute in theory. There was an absence of fundamental laws or constitution to

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<sup>18</sup> Harris, "European Intervention in Morocco," 552.

hold the sovereign in order. The French profited from Morocco's unorganized political structure by influencing political order through their strong relationship with the Sherefeen family.<sup>19</sup>

It was clear that France had thoroughly studied the problems in Morocco for many years preceding their colonization. The imperial had enacted a net-worth of influences within Morocco so powerful that neither the Sultan nor any other exterior power could have shaken off France's hold upon the country.

#### Treaty of Fez: French-Morocco Protectorate Treaty of 1912

On the eve of World War I on March 30, 1912, France obtained a protectorate in France. Similarly to Algeria and Tunisia, Morocco faced internal financial problems and political weakness, which was reflected in violence and lawlessness, exposed the country to the prospects of European empire builders. The interests of European businessmen grew throughout the nineteenth century; they desired to protect their investments and open new possibilities in the country strongly motivated them in the first decade of the twentieth century. As Europe moved toward more aggressive diplomacy, the far west of Morocco with an Atlantic and Mediterranean coastline became important as a source of wealth and for strategic purposes. Within Morocco, the chain of events that lead to the protectorate treaty began in 1894 when Sultan Moulay Hassan died, leaving a fourteen year old son, Moulay Abd al-Aziz, as his successor. By 1901, Abd al-Aziz who possessed many necessary characteristics of a good ruler-intelligence, sympathy for his subjects-but who lacked strong will, began his personal rule as Sultan of Morocco. His first political attack proved disastrous. He undertook a financial reform that involved abolishing two old abusive taxes before he adequately prepared a new tax based upon income from land and

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 551-552.

livestock. Thus, state revenues substantially dropped, resulting in the economic cycle of deficits, loans, and guarantees, which ended with public finance resting in foreign hands such as France.<sup>20</sup>

The Treaty of Fez, signed in 1912 by the French ambassador and the Moroccan Sultan, put Morocco under French sovereign protection; that is to say, a French protectorate society. The protectorate treaty allowed the legislative power reservation to France with the control of foreign policy, military defense, and jurisdiction in all matters affecting people who are not Moroccan subjects. The treaty recognized the intention of the French to initiate certain reforms in Morocco and it was for the purpose of ensuring “step by step, the evolution of the Moroccan people and the establishment of a modern and democratic state.”<sup>21</sup> It became clear that French protection influenced Morocco’s society.

According to the French-Moroccan treaty of 1912, the preface of the text introduces the initiatives and the rights of the French within the Moroccan state. It indicates, “The French republic government and the government of its [Moroccan] sharifian majesty, anxious to establish in Morocco a regular regime founded on the internal order and the general security that will allow the introduction of reforms and will assure the economic development of the country, are agreed to the following provisions....”<sup>22</sup> Article one of the treaty continues to lay out the overall objectives of French intervention. It indicates, “The French republic government and its [Moroccan] majesty the Sultan agree to institute in Morocco a new regime composed of

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<sup>20</sup> Brace, *Morocco Tunisia Algeria*, 38.

<sup>21</sup> Mitchell, “The Development of Nationalism in French Morocco,” 428.

<sup>22</sup> “Treaty Between France and Morocco, 30 March 1912, For the Organization of the French Protectorate in the Cherifian Empire” in *Documents Diplomatiques Français (1871-1914)*, third series, Vol. 2., compiled by Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, 278-279. Paris Imprimerie Nationale, 1931.

<https://hdl.handle.net/2027/iau.31858045728494?urlappend=%3Bseq=13>.

Translated in English from the original French text: « Le Gouvernement de la République française et le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté chérifienne, soucieux d’établir au Maroc un régime régulier fondé sur l’ordre intérieur et la sécurité générale qui permettra l’introduction des réformes et assurera le développement économique du pays, sont convenus des dispositions suivants : ... »

administrative, judicial, educational, economic, financial, and military reforms that the French government will judge useful to introduce upon the Moroccan territory.... This regime will keep the religious situation,....the exercise of the Islamic religion and its [Moroccan] religious institutions...”<sup>23</sup> Thus, article one of the treaty allowed the French to influence Moroccan nation-building by intervening in its administrative, agricultural, economic, political, and educational structure, an examination of France’s role in Morocco follows.

### French Colonial Influence in Morocco

At the time when France initiated work of political and economic organization much remained to be done such as restoration of the disordered administration, establishment of the bases for economic development, installation of medical and educational services, and reform of the agricultural system. The actions of the French proved that their occupation was not just effected for the sole profit of the colonizer but also had some due consideration for the Moroccan colonized people and state.

One of the first steps in establishing the protectorate was creating a scheme of economic development, including a program for public works. The problem of the ports, the economic key to the country, naturally demanded primary attention. To avoid the waste of efforts and resources, the principle of “one major port, several secondary ports” was adopted. The primary port was chosen to be located in Casablanca. The project in Casablanca had a sum of forty-four million francs appropriated by the French to include a pier 1,900 meters long, which granted protection against the heavy seas that belonged to the western coast of Morocco, and a second

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

Translated in English from the original French text: « Le Gouvernement de la République française et Sa Majesté le Sultan sont d’accord pour instituer au Maroc un nouveau régime comportant les réformes administratives, judiciaires, scolaires, économiques, financières et militaires que le Gouvernement français jugera utile d’introduire sur le territoire marocain... Ce régime sauvegardera la situation religieuse, le respect et le prestige traditionnel du Sultan, l’exercice de la religion musulmane et des institutions religieuses.... »

pier measured at 1,550 meters long across the first pier. As a result, Casablanca was able to accommodate approximately traffic of 1,500,000 metric tons. Besides the development of Casablanca, the program of public works included the improvement of local ports in Kenitra, Rabat, and Fedalah in the north, and in Mazagan, Safi, and Mogador in the south of Morocco. In the same way, the highway program of 1913 included a road system that added up to a sum of 2,500 kilometers. At the beginning of World War I, only fifty kilometers of medaled roads had been constructed; with the influence of the French, about 1,600 kilometers were open to traffic. Road building served the double purpose of economic development as most of the construction was carried on with native Moroccan labor, resulted in an increase of employment opportunities. A system of commercial railroads was agreed for construction between the two largest French companies. The gage was a standard 1.44 meters with a total length of 870 kilometers connecting all the large cities in Morocco such as Fez, Meknes, Rabat, Casablanca, and Marrakesh. The promptness of commerce to profit for the facilities offered is proof of how the French protectorate society influenced the Moroccan state.<sup>24</sup>

Similar to Algeria and Tunisia, Morocco is a country of agriculture and stock raising. The Atlantic littoral, where the humid oceanic climate prevails, offers lands of vast productivity. France intended to improve primitive agricultural methods through education and supervision, while guarding against abrupt changes to the traditional ancient ways. Slowly, the native Moroccan adopted modern methods and equipment. A number of European colonists in Morocco settled throughout the agricultural districts representing examples of modern agricultural methods. Agricultural machinery included motor tractors became employed by the natives. To afford more direct assistance to the local Moroccan, the protectorate established an organization called Sociétés Indigènes de Prévoyance” to buy selected seeds to advance the local cultivator.

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<sup>24</sup> Alfred de Tarde, “The Work of France in Morocco,” *Geographical Review* 8 (1919): 10-13.

Before the colonization of the French, all the wheat grown was of the hard type unsuitable for making flour; thus, the soft type was introduced. In respect to other cereal grains, vegetables, and fruit trees the Sociétés de Prévoyance replaced the existing kinds with better varieties yielding a larger economic return. Similar methods were employed for the regeneration of the animal species and for better practices in stock raising. Morocco is rich in cattle, mules, horses, and sheep. Before the French protectorate society, there was no care given to the live stock; there was an absence of shelter for them against inclement weather. The French stock breeding service strived against these past bad conditions. It offered bounties for breeding, built wells in pastoral regions to combat problems of water supply, and provided veterinary inspectors who visited the markets giving advice on the care of the live stock. Experimental farms in Fez completed the work of agricultural education. Progressive matters increased with irrigation facilities, increased labor supply, and affordable transportation systems.<sup>25</sup>

France continued to play a role in the Moroccan society through medical assistance and public health. The colonial power viewed medical aid as a humanitarian duty and physical improvement of the Moroccan people as an effective means of promoting French interests. The question of labor tended to associate itself to the question of hygiene, especially infant hygiene. Establishments were constructed into modern hospitals, such as the Hôpital Mauchamps at Marrakesh and the Hôpital Cocard at Fez. The primary service created by the French was the “mobile medical unit,” a method of traveling medical dispensary consisting of a physician, two attendants, and four guides with mules. This unit traveled in Morocco’s mountainous areas to visit infected medically infected villages and markets. It distributed quinine, a medicine to treat malaria, and gave medical consultations, dressings, and vaccinations to the villages. It became the symbol of French work in Morocco. The work was strongly supported by the protectorate,

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 18.

which later introduced the automobile and the ambulance into these medical units. In addition, these organizations added the provisions for the health of European colonizers in the form of dispensaries and consulting services and hospitals that connected with the other army hospitals. Specific care had been devoted to the organization of special measures against syphilis, malaria, infections of the eye, and gastroenterology infections among children. To control the spread of syphilis, five large clinics were established and the most modern methods had been applied with a success rate that brought great praise among the native Moroccan population.<sup>26</sup>

### French influence on Moroccan education

Before the French protectorate reformed Moroccan education, education in Morocco was purely religious. In primary schools it was necessary for students to memorize the religious book, the Qur'an, by heart. Even high education university teachings were entirely based on Islamic theology. Sciences and astronomy had no place because all studies focused on the interpretation of the sacred religious Qur'an text.<sup>27</sup> As the 1912 treaty of Fez indicated, France respected the religious teachings; the French colonizers aimed to just add to the current religious educational traditions in Morocco.<sup>28</sup> The French entered Morocco with an idea of educating a Moroccan élite to speak and think like the French, and to believe in the universality and superiority of the French culture and language, which they imposed as "the only language of civilization and advancement."<sup>29</sup> The French policy was to encourage the Moroccans to forget their own culture and adopt the French one. The French colonists taught Moroccan students that they were French, although they were denied French citizenship, and did not have the same rights as French citizens. This objective is summarized by Gordon, "...when the French colonize, they build

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 22-23.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Cited in Abdelali Bentahila: R.Y. Bourhis, "Language policies and language attitudes: 'le monde de la francophonie,'" (1982): 14.

schools.”<sup>30</sup> The imposition of a French education system was in fact a means of conquering Morocco.

For primary school education there were Franco-Arabic bilingual schools where the native youth learned the French language and some other vocational subjects. The secondary education established by the protectorate included the Mohammedan colleges at Fez and Rabat trained Moroccans for positions in administration. The course of instruction, given in Arabic by professors who were French, taught Arabic grammar and literature, the history and geography of Morocco and France, mathematics, and the typical scientific subjects. The French created the well-known organization named the *École Supérieure de Langue Arabe et de Dialectes Berbères* at Rabat (the superior school of the Arabic language and of indigenous Berber dialects) became a center of linguistic studies and training school for European and Moroccan native administrators.<sup>31</sup>

The new French system of education which was introduced along the traditional Moroccan educational system was based on the existed educational system in France. Three kinds of schools were established at the beginning of the French Protectorate society. First there were the European schools, reserved specifically for the French population in Morocco, whose course syllabi were identical to those used in France. Only the Moroccan children who belonged to the elite upper class society were admitted to these schools. Second there were the Franco-Islamic schools, which were composed of several different types according to the social class of the students' parents. Third the *écoles rurales* (rural schools) were reserved for country children who lived in the rural region in Morocco. The education in all these schools was officially named bilingual, but in fact the French language became the main language of instruction. Children

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<sup>30</sup> David C. Gordon, *North Africa's French legacy 1954-1962* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1962), 7.

<sup>31</sup> H. Perceval Dodge, "The Development of Morocco," *The Journal of Race Development* 5, no. 2 (1914): 127-128.

were taught for twenty hours a week in French, and had to learn about French history and culture, instead of that of their own country Morocco. The teaching methods in these schools constructed by the French colonizers differed considerably from those of the traditional Moroccan schools. In the French educational system, emphasis was out on clarity of expression and logical analysis of texts; on the other hand, the traditional Moroccan system was heavily based on memorization.<sup>32</sup>

Once Moroccan independence from French protection had been achieved in 1956, one would expect there to be a strong reaction against the use of French in Morocco. For instance, Moroccans might have wished to completely eliminate the educational system created by French colonizers altogether and return to the traditional educational system which was defined to be truly Moroccan. In fact, however, this did not happen. The influence of the French language and culture in the Moroccan education system had remained strongly present long after independence. With the proclamation of independence in 1956, Morocco chose the Arabic language as the official national language, and Islam as the religion of the state. Morocco implemented a French-Arabic bilingual system of education in which the French language was heavily present in university curriculum. However, during the 1970s, the government decided to Arabize the sciences in primary and secondary levels of education. The Arabization policy which was adopted in Moroccan public primary and secondary education since independence is noted as a re-affirmation of an Arabian national identity that had been obscured for years by the French protectorate imperial rule. Morocco chose to Arabize mainly education and administration sectors, but at the same time emphasis was put on the need to establish a bilingual system of education during an indefinite period of transition. This meant for the continuation of the French

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<sup>32</sup> Abdelali Bentahila, *Language Attitudes Among Arabic-French Bilinguals in Morocco* (England: Multilingual Matters Ltd, 1983), 7.

language with the inclusion of enough Arabic language and culture to help maintain Moroccan authenticity and cultural identity.<sup>33</sup>

Thus, the historical background given highlights the fact that the language situation in modern Morocco is characterized by multilingualism and multiculturalism since many languages serve different purposes. For that reason, bilingualism of French-Arabic is commonly present in Morocco.

#### Re-visiting the Language Debate and Moroccan identity

In conclusion, the Arabic-French language debate is explained through the lens of French colonial history in Morocco. French intervention in Morocco's education system through the introduction of the French language has influenced Moroccan identity to be characterized as Francophone or French.

Since independence, Morocco has been split between modernity and conservatism. The French language pointed to modernity while the Arabic language pointed to religion and tradition. In the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, Morocco was still under the strong influence of French culture. In post French independent years, the Moroccan ruling elite adopted French-Arabic bilingualism as a political option in their efforts to modernize the country.<sup>34</sup> Today, tensions exist between French-Western values and Arabic-Islamic beliefs. The modern language debate in Morocco highlights the ideological tensions which themselves represent the greater struggle for power at various levels. The influences of French colonization in Morocco are still present within the larger conflict between the values and the beliefs of two different cultures, Muslim and Western-French.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Ennaji, *Multilingualism, Cultural Identity, and Education in Morocco*, 15.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

The French language is widely used in education, science and technology, and it is a means of social promotion and upward social mobility. It is difficult not to acknowledge the presence of bilingualism between the French and Arabic language. The influence of the French language is also significant in many areas outside the education system. Although Arabic is the only national official language of modern day Morocco, it is common for the French language to be used alongside the Arabic language in road signs, names of shops, and so on. Printed materials in places such as banks, airports, travel agencies, and post offices are usually written in Arabic and French. Documents and contracts in banks or building societies tend to be written only in French. Medical prescriptions, police reports of road accidents, and menus in hotels and restaurants all tend to be written exclusively in French.<sup>36</sup> French also plays an important role in the administrative and economic sectors. This reflects the still strong economic links with France, where France is known as the most important of Morocco's trade partners. Fluency in French is still required for many administrative jobs.<sup>37</sup> Above all, French is essential in the domains of science, technology, and medicine. The French language importance reflects in the strength of the French co-operation scheme, which involves the withdrawal of a large number of French engineers, doctors, and specialists.<sup>38</sup> It can be seen that the French language and its culture were not dismissed from Morocco once independence had been achieved. In fact, French language still seems to play a large role in the present day Moroccan everyday life.

Contemporary Morocco is characterized by a relative balance between modernity and tradition. The concept of modernity is linked with the transfer of European ideas and tradition, in which science and progress were adopted as the bases of a rational and civilized world.

Modernity became contrasted with tradition. In the Moroccan context, the Arabic language is

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<sup>36</sup> Bentahila, *Language Attitudes Among Arabic-French Bilinguals*, 15.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

linked to assertions of Arab-Islamic identity, while the French language is a symbol of modernity and Western lifestyle. As sociologist Elbiad writes, “Moroccan respondents labeled Arabic as ‘archaic,’ ‘romantic,’ and ‘difficult,’ and described French as ‘modern,’ ‘educated,’ ‘technical,’ and ‘useful.’”<sup>39</sup> During the first decade following Moroccan independence, the attitudes of Moroccan youth toward the Arabic language were indifferent. Although they seemed to appreciate Arabic as the language of Islam and of Arabic scholarship, they tended to prefer French, which they considered the language of modernity. The fact that the youth had a limited knowledge of the Arab-Islamic culture created their Westernization. This placed them in the center of the French-Western and Arabic-Islamic debate.<sup>40</sup> The post-independent Moroccan government had adopted a dual policy, advocating Standard Arabic-French bilingualism in education and administration in the name of modernization and progress, while at the same time implementing the Arabization language policy as a marker of cultural identity and national unity. However, this bilingual and bicultural system of education provoked feelings of antagonism expressed by the adoption of two different cultures Islamic and Western, and two languages Arabic and French, with each language striving to dominate the educational system.<sup>41</sup>

To reduce the continued reliance on the language of the French colonizer, the Moroccan state implemented the Arabic language Arabization policy which set up to replace the French language with the Standard Arabic language in the education sector. The government hired teachers from the Middle East to teach mainly human and social sciences in the Standard language. Countless official speeches viewed that French was used for purely instrumental

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<sup>39</sup> Cited in Moha Ennaji: M.Elbiad, *A Sociolinguistic Study of the Arabization Process and its Conditioning Factors in Morocco*, Ph.D. dissertation (State University of New York: Buffalo, NY), 1985.

<sup>40</sup> Ennaji, *Multilingualism, Cultural Identity, and Education in Morocco*, 35.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

purposes, and Arabic was the symbol of national identity and Arab-Muslim identity.<sup>42</sup> The language debate in Morocco implies a larger debate on politics, religion, culture and identity. Bilingualism entails that Standard Arabic is the language of the past, religion and tradition, and the French is the language of progress and modernity. The fact that French is used in education, technology, business, and administration implies that French is the language of social success.<sup>43</sup>

In the end, languages are an important aspect to identity building. Bilingualism between the French and Arabic languages has challenged the ideas of language identity. In Morocco's context, the loss of the Arabic language identity resulted from adopting the colonizer's French language in vital sectors of life such as education. Loss of the Arabic language identity involved the diffusion of the French identity by adopting the French language in school systems and European culture through the adoption of new cultural habits and ethnic practices. The multiple language identities in Morocco entails that Moroccans seem to have many social and cultural identities which in a way merge together. For this reason, the influence of the French language introduced by French colonization in educational structures has developed joint identities of French-Moroccan. This sort of combined identity reveals, as sociologist Hall states, "far from being grounded in a mere 'recovery' of the past...identities are the different ways we are positioned by and position ourselves within the narratives of the past."<sup>44</sup> In support of Hall, identity is a historical construct; it can change and it does not have an essence. To be Moroccan does not mean to be Arab, Muslim, or French; it is constantly changing in relation to the historical events that happen in Moroccan society. During the case of French rule in Morocco, being French and Moroccan seemed to be intertwined that the French colonial state appears to be

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<sup>42</sup> Boutieri, *Learning in Morocco*, 45.

<sup>43</sup> Ennaji, *Multilingualism, Cultural Identity, and Education in Morocco*, 41.

<sup>44</sup> Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in *Identity: Community, Culture, and Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), 223.

responsible for shaping a particular kind of Moroccan identity. Hence, being identified as French-Moroccan is as legitimate as being identified as Moroccan Arab-Muslim; otherwise, the Moroccan government would never have implemented an Arabic language policy in public schools to re-affirm an Arab-Moroccan identity, and protests over language would not happen.

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