

C3. French in Morocco, 1912-1956

Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, France and Britain competed to extend their control over Africa. Morocco managed to hold out until 1912, when a 'French Protectorate' was established by the Treaty of Fez. Despite Moroccan rebellions in the years leading up to and following the official French takeover, France ruled Morocco until 1956.

Under French rule, the Moroccan monarchy continued, but the sultan did not really have any independent authority. France brought some development: building roads and schools, modernizing the economy and political system. However, imperialism is designed to benefit the conquering country, so Frenchmen profited more than Moroccans.

One example is the introduction of French as the main language of education and administration. While Moroccans, up till today, benefit from fluency in a language widely spoken in Europe and Africa, the focus on French made it very hard for Moroccans to get an education. (In fact, the French educational system in Morocco was organized so as to "keep Moroccans in their place.") As late as the 1930s, 94% of Moroccan women and 90% of Moroccan men were illiterate. As French was the official language of government, Moroccans were also excluded from most administrative positions. There was, therefore, almost no native middle class.

Moroccan troops fought alongside the French in World War I and World War II. However, increasing nationalist agitation, ever louder demands for independence, and frequent armed revolts led France to agree to Morocco's independence in 1956.

Assignment: Imagine you are living in Morocco during the French Protectorate. Write 2 diary entries, each at least one double-spaced page long. Choose names for your characters that are authentic. Also, include at least 5 facts or factual details drawn from the history/ geography of the area. (Be sure to look up additional information in addition to the information found in this reading.) Underline the pieces of information you include in each of your diary entries.

-- In one diary entry, you are a Berber living in northern Morocco in 1915. Describe why your people are fighting the Zaian War. Who do you consider to be the leader of Morocco and why? What successes have you had in the war up to this point in time?

--In another diary entry, it is 1920, and you are a Frenchman in Morocco working under Hubert Lyautey. What are the goals of your boss? What plans does he – and France – have for Morocco? Why do you think these measures will benefit Morocco as well as the French?