

The Kingdom of Morocco

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The Kingdom of Morocco, 'Al-Maghrib Al-Aqsa' in Arabic meaning 'the farthest west', is the most north westerly part of Africa. It is also the country on the continent which is the nearest to Europe, just 17 miles (27 kilometres) across the Strait of Gibraltar. Due to its geographical position and history Morocco has had very close ties with Europe for many centuries. In fact it was the centre of the Islamic kingdoms which ruled much of North Africa and Spain.

PEOPLE

The original inhabitants of Morocco are the Berbers and they are still found mainly in the mountains and Saharan areas. They may be divided into three main groups: the Masmouda, the Sanhaja and the Zenata. Over the years there have been various migrations of people into Morocco, including those from countries to the south and Muslim Andalusians from Spain. There are about 80,000 foreign residents, most of whom are French and Spanish. The majority of the population, totalling about 28.5 million, live in rural areas especially in the Oued Sebou valley and the Atlantic lowland plains.

Arabic is the official language and is mainly spoken in the cities and in the lowland areas. There are several other languages including three Berber dialects which are spoken in the mountainous regions and in the Souss. French is common, especially in Government and commerce. Some Spanish is spoken in the north and English in the tourist areas.

99% of the population are Muslim. Islam is the official State religion and most Moroccans belong to the Malekite creed. The King has the title of 'Amir Al Muminin' ('Commander of the Faithful'). There is also a Jewish community but the majority of Europeans are Catholics.

LAND

Two of Morocco's borders are along a coast line with the Atlantic Ocean, to the west, and the Mediterranean Sea, to the north. The northern coast is lined by the Rif Mountains with their highest point being the Tidiguin Peak at 8,060 feet (2,457m). The interior of the country is made up of the Atlas Mountains. These mountains are really three ranges which run almost parallel to the Atlantic, from the south west to the north east. They are, from north to south, the Low (Moyen) Atlas, the High (Haut) Atlas and the Anti Atlas.

The High Atlas are snowcapped in winter and reach an average height of more than 13,000 feet (4,000 m). They include North Africa's highest peak, the Jebel Toubkal, south of Marrakesh, at 13,665 feet (4,167 m). This range runs virtually through the centre of Morocco from the Atlantic coast near Agadir northeastward to Algeria, where it becomes the Saharan Atlas. The rolling plateaus lead south and east into the Sahara Desert of southern Morocco. All Morocco's rivers begin in the Atlas Mountains. Most of those which flow south, such as the Draa, are seasonal and dry up in the summer, as do many of the lakes.

In general the rainfall lessens and the temperature rises from the north to the south of the country. The northern lowlands, as might be expected, have a Mediterranean climate of warm summers and mild winters. There is a contrast in annual rainfall and general precipitation, including snow, from more than 40 inches (1,000 mm) in the Atlas Mountains to 4 inches (100 mm) in the Sahara. The climate is also influenced by two other factors: the



hot dry summer winds from the Sahara, in the south, and the offshore Canary Current.

HISTORY

Present day Morocco has been occupied for many centuries. Stone tools and cave paintings have been found dating back to the Bronze Age and earlier. Between 475 and 450 B.C. part of Morocco was ruled by the Carthaginians, who named it 'Barbary' because of the Berber peoples found there.

The Romans overcame the Carthaginians in 25 B.C. and northern Morocco was united under their ally Berber prince Juba II. By 42 A.D. Morocco, as far south as Rabat, had become the Roman province of 'Mauretania

Tingitana'. The rest of the country was still controlled by the Berbers. The Roman occupation lasted for nearly five hundred years until the decline of the Empire with the arrival of the Vandals in 492. At this time the Mediterranean 'Barbary' coast of Morocco was controlled by the Byzantine Empire and pirates.

THE ARAB CONQUEST

The next major invasion took place in 680 when the Arabs, led by Okba Ibn Nafi, entered northern Morocco. Their forces swept from the east, along the Mediterranean coast of North Africa. The movement continued and, in a second wave, conquered the 'Magreb Al-Aqsa' ('the West') between 705 and 711.



The Arab conquerors ruled Magreb from Ifriqia, present day Tunisia, and the first Governor was Mus Ibn Nisair. The Berber people were fierce fighters and retained much of their autonomy though many took Islam as their religion. When the Arabs crossed the Strait of Gibraltar, in 723, and occupied Spain and Portugal the core of their army was made up of Berber troops. The armies reached the plain of Toulouse and the Rhone valley only to be beaten by the Franks at Poitiers in 732. In 759 they finally withdrew to south of the Pyrenees.

During the end of the seventh century and well into the eighth the Arabs established themselves in Morocco. Islam was accepted by most of the local population. The Berbers followed the Kharijite sect and continued to resist the Arabs and refused to pay taxes to the Caliph. The Kharijites spread from the eastern province of Mashreq, to Sijilmasa in 757 and survived until 976.

THE MOROCCAN DYNASTIES AND KINGDOMS

THE IDRISIDS (789-922) The first Muslim State was founded by Idris Ibn Abdallah when he formed an alliance with Awarba Berbers. Idris I was from Arabia and established his kingdom in northern Morocco. His son Idris II founded the city of Fès in 808 and the University of al-Quarawiyn, Tunisia, in 859.

The Fatimids (922-1055) The Idrisid kingdom eventually fell to the Fatimids in 922. These new rulers were an Egyptian Shi'a group which had ruled Tunisia since 909. They attempted to control the Magreb but failed due to conflicts with local Berbers and the Umayyad caliphate of Cordova, Spain. Their rule was finally ended by the Bedouin Arab groups of Beni Hilal.

THE ALMORAVIDS (1055-1147) The Berber Almoravid kingdom was the first dynasty as such and they invaded from Western Sahara. Their leader, Youssef Ben Tachfine, founded

the city of Marrakesh (1062) and captured Fès (1069). The Almoravids united Morocco under a single Government and had imposed their authority on Muslim Spain by 1091. A legacy which they left Morocco was the Maliki school of Islamic law, which remains until today. The Almoravids declined as a result of the 'reconquista' ('war of reconquest') by the Christian Kingdoms in Spain and the rise of the Almohads. *(See the next issue for more about the Almoravids)*

THE ALMOHADS (1148-1268) were another Berber dynasty and they conquered the Almoravids in 1148. Abd al-Moumen began to build his army by recruiting Masmouda Berbers from the Anti Atlas mountains and they spread into the eastern Magreb and Spain. Al-Moumen was eventually succeeded by Yacoub al-Mansour. During the 11th and 12th centuries many of the nomadic Arabs settled in the towns and cities of Morocco's lowland plains. This was due mainly to the continual battles which were fought for control of both Morocco and Tunisia. The Berbers taxed the nomads in return for their armed protection. In 1212 the Almohads were expelled from Spain but they continued to rule Morocco.

THE MERINIDS (1269-1465) As the Almohad dynasty waned the Merinids came into power. They were a Berber group from the edge of the Sahara led by Beni Merin. They entered the lowlands and captured Fès (1248) and Marrakesh (1259). The Merinids had just a small base on which to build their kingdom. Because of this, together with the continual fighting between the Berber and Arab groups, they declined. It was during this time that the Spanish and Portuguese began to gain further ground with their 'war of reconquest'. They took the Moroccan coastal cities of Agadir, Ceuta (1415), and Tangier (1471). Pirates from Morocco and the other Barbary States

along the Mediterranean coast continued to antagonise the European nations by attacking their ships. A 'Jihad' (Islamic holy war) was declared by various Sufi groups in order to unite the people against the invaders. This culminated in the Battle of Alcazarquivir (1578), in which Sebastian, the Portuguese King, was killed.

THE SAADIS (1549-1654) The Sultan Ahmed al-Mansour (1578-1603) gained great wealth by ransoming prisoners who had been taken at the battle of Alcazarquivir. He built a powerful army with which he subdued the local people and stopped the advance of the Turks. Al-Mansour brought some stability to the area and considerable trade. In 1591 the Songhai Empire, of the south attacked. Al-Mansour's army beat them back to the 'Sudan' (Niger and Mali). There he took Timbuktu and captured the Songhai's great wealth of gold, slaves and the monopoly on the salt trade. The Saadians were too weak to hold on to Timbuktu. As a result of internal disputes and the capture of Mediterranean ports by the Spanish, the kingdom began to slowly collapse after al-Mansour's death in 1603.

THE ALAWITES (1666-) The Alawite dynasty took over from the Saadis and rules until the present day. They came to power as a result of a popular Islamic movement among Saharan Berbers. Their first leader, Moulay Rachid, took control of northern Morocco and made Fès his capital after taking it in 1666 and Marrakesh in 1669. Rachid was succeeded by Moulay Ismail (1672-1727) who pacified the rest of Morocco, including the remaining

Berbers, and took the cities of Tangier (after the British had left), Mehdia and Larache from the Spanish. He also successfully fought the Turks in Algeria and made Meknès his capital. Ismail built the kingdom upon a large 'abid' army which was not from the Moroccan society. After his death the army fell away and there were a succession of Sultans who no longer had the military power to control the whole country.

Morocco was the first nation, in 1787, to recognise the United States of America as a new independent state. Sultan Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdallah wrote to George Washington to let him know that American ships would not be hindered by the Moroccan navy. This was the foundation of a 'Treaty of Peace and Friendship' between the United States and Morocco which is still in effect. It is the longest standing unbroken treaty that America has had with any nation.

The decorated gates of the palace in Meknès



The European interest in North Africa increased in the 19th century and after the French conquered Algeria, in 1830, they looked towards Morocco. The Moroccan population was divided and could not resist the colonial encroachments. Sultan Moulay Hassan (1873-1894) attempted to rebuild the army and keep foreign powers out, but went bankrupt in the process. A little later Spain claimed parts of the country - the enclaves of Ceuta (Sebta), Melilla, and Ifni and, in 1884, made Rio de Oro (part of Western Sahara) a protectorate.

By the turn of the century competition between European powers for control of North Africa had caused several crises. They gradually reached various agreements concerning Morocco with little respect for the people or the incumbent Sultan, Moulay Abdelaziz (1894-1907). One key treaty was the 'Algeiras Act', of 1906, in which thirteen nations forced Abdelaziz to accept French and Spanish rule in Morocco. Abdelaziz's brother and successor, Moulay Abdelhafiz, attempted to rebel in 1907 but eventually also had to accept the 'Act'.

In 1921 a Berber revolt against the colonial powers, led by Emir Abd al-Karim al-Khattab, began in the Spanish held territories. A 'Republic of the Confederated Tribes of the Rif' was declared and the inland tribes were also encouraged to rebel. Gradually the conflict spread through the whole of Morocco and French troops continued to fight the rebellion, which was only subdued in 1926 when the Emir surrendered. This meant that French control extended over most of the country and settlers began to take the best agricultural land. The Berbers in the Atlas Mountains managed to resist until 1934.

INDEPENDENCE

In the 1930s nationalism began to grow within the country. The main reason for this was the discontent among people who had moved into

the towns after having lost their land to settlers. Much of the nationalist thought was put forward by groups of intellectuals such as those who followed the Salafiyya doctrine. The Salafiyya had been active since the 1920s and they called for various reforms within the country but did not insist on out-right independence.

The discontent came to a head after a terrible harvest in 1937 resulting in the emergence of the 'Al-Hizb Al-Watani' (the National Party). They arranged demonstrations throughout the country which were put down by the Government. As a result one of the Party's leaders, Allal al-Fassi, was exiled in Gabon for nine years. During the Second World War, when Morocco pledged loyalty to the Vichy Government, nationalism fermented below the surface. Once the Allies liberated Morocco, in November, 1942, things began to move again.

In 1943 Ahmad Balafrej returned from exile and reformed the National Party as the 'Istiqlal' or Independence Party. When al-Fassi returned in 1946 he became its leader. The party began to call for independence and a constitutional monarchy under Sultan Muhammad ibn Yusuf (Muhammad V) with whom they had established close ties. The situation became delicate after the Sultan refused to sign various decrees put forward by the French. He was a symbol of independence, especially after being exiled to Madagascar in 1953.

On the 2nd. March, 1956, Morocco gained independence and the Sultan was enthroned as King Muhammad V. Agreements were made with Spain which gave Morocco partial control over the Spanish areas, such as Tangier, Ceuta and Melilla. With the support of the Independence Party King Muhammad gradually began to restore order and establish his power base. After rebuilding the Forces Armées

THE COUNTRY

Size compared to UK: 1.823 times bigger. 172,272 sq. mls. (446,300 sq. kms.)	Land Use	sq. miles	%
Human Development Index: 0.533 (13th. out of 52 in Africa ['96])	Agriculture	113,700	66.00%
	Forest	20,072	11.65%
	Other	38,500	22.35%

THE PEOPLE

Total Population	1979 18,947,550	1994 26,488,000	Distribution of Working Population	
Urbanisation	1964	1994	1965	1994
Urban	4,070,963 (31%)	12,714,240 (48%)	Agriculture	4,112,277 (61%) 7,200,000 (45%)
Rural	8,893,887 (69%)	13,773,760 (52%)	Industry	1,011,216 (15%) 4,000,000 (25%)
			Services	1,617,945 (24%) 4,800,000 (30%)

RELIGIONS

Religious adherence	1980	2000 (estimate)
Catholics	77,000 (0.0%)	40,000 (0.0%)
Anglicans	1,200 (0.0%)	1,000 (0.0%)
Total Christians	102,300 (1.0%)	132,000 (0.0%)
Muslims	20,256,700 (99%)	35,748,000 (100%)
Jews	15,000 (0.0%)	5,000 (0.0%)
Other Faiths	3,200 (0.0%)	6,000 (0.0%)
No Religion	6,800 (0.0%)	13,000 (0.0%)

HEALTH

The % of people living in 'absolute poverty':
Urban - 28% Rural - 45%
Whole country - 37%

Church Facilities ('94)

Hospitals	1
Dispensaries	10
Social Centres	2
Other Welfare	9

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Catholics: Number	1979 74,000	1994 25,000
as % of population	0.39%	0.09%
Dioceses	2	2
Bishops	3	3
Diocesan priests	29	15
Religious priests	83	49
Catholics per priest	661	391
People per priest	169,175	413,875
Lay missionaries	-	6
Deacons	-	8
Brothers	18	16
Sisters	460	301
Catechists	40	59
Major Seminarians	-	1

State Facilities ('93)

Hospital beds	31,015	785
Doctors	4,946	4,710
Nurses	22,207	1,026

Access to:	Rural	Urban
'85-'95: Health services	50%	100%
'90-'95: Safe drinking water	94%	18%
'90-'95: Sanitation	18%	69%

Immunisation programme:

1 year olds	1981	1990-'94
Tuberculosis	-	93.0%
DTP	44.0%	79.0%
Polio	45.0%	81.0%

Mortality Rates

Infant Mortality	1960	1994
	160	56 per 1,000.
Under-Five Mortality	265	56 per 1,000.
Life Expectancy	46.7	65 years

THE ECONOMY

Trade	Imports	Exports	GNP ('92)	\$27,345,000,000 (\$1,150.00 per capita)
Food	17%	25%	GDP ('94)	\$30,803,000,000
Fuels	14%	14%	External Debt	\$22,512,000,000 (\$849.00 per capita)
Basic Commodities	9%	29%		
Machinery/transport	29%	6%		

EDUCATION

	State (most recent estimate)			Church ('94)	
	Schools	Students	Teachers	Schools	Students
Kindergartens	-	-	-	24	4,506
Primary schools	3,752	2,182,348	80,833	28	8,988
Secondary schools	1,937	1,418,745	69,183	21	3,572
Tertiary	29	-	6,320	-	-
Adult Literacy: of total population	1,764,937 - 2.0% (1970)			6,748,083 - 4.0% (1995)	

Facts and figures - We are grateful, and wish to thank, the 'Catholic Missionary Education Centre' (CAMEC) for supplying the statistical information contained in the boxes above. If you would like to know more about CAMEC, please write to: CAMEC, Holcombe House, The Ridgeway, London NW7 4HY.



Royales (FAR) he disbanded the Army of Liberation. This was accomplished with French military assistance and French officers took senior post in the new FAR. The situation did not change as regards French settlers and this caused disquiet even among members of the Independence Party. This in turn led to the formation of the National Union of Popular Forces (Union Nationale de Force Populaires) (NUPF), in September, 1959, led by Mehdi Ben Barka, Abdallah Ibrahim and Mahjib Ben Siddick. The NUPF did not have a great deal of support but it reflected the growing opposition to the King. There were attacks against the party and police raids which forced Ben Barka into exile. In May, 1960, the Government was dismissed and the Palace began to support the Popular Movement (Mouvement Populaire), a conservative rural party, to counter-act the influence of the NUPF.

King Hassan II succeeded his father, Muhammad V, to the throne on 26th. February, 1961. A new constitution was adopted in 1962 which created a constitutional monarchy and a legislature with a single assembly. There followed a campaign against the NUPF and Ben Barka was forced into a second exile after the party was accused of being involved in a plot against the monarchy in June, 1963. Urban discontent was influenced by the neighbouring Algerian revolution. In an attempt to dampen this fervour, and under the guise of recreating the 'Greater Morocco', on the 16th. October of that year, the Moroccan Army invaded part of Algeria as far as Tindouf. When protests began in Casablanca, March, 1965, over high prices and unemployment, they were severely put down by the army with an estimated 400 deaths. In his absence Ben Barka, the leader of the NUPF, was condemned to death for his part in the plot and for voicing his opposition to the invasion of Algeria. He was eventually assassinated in France in

October, 1965. The NUPF split and Ben Barka's followers were banned. The other NUPF faction, headed by Abderrahim Bouabid, was renamed the Socialist Union and took a place in Parliament.

In an attempt to improve the political situation a new constitution was adopted in a 1972 referendum. The size of the Chamber of Representatives was increased and was given more legislative power. Two thirds of the members would be elected by direct universal suffrage and one third by the electoral college, with each member serving a six-year terms. The Independence Party and NUPF formed a united opposition front - the 'Al-Kutla Al-Wataniya' - and boycotted the elections.

The King's political frailty was a factor in turning members of the armed forces against him and there were several coup attempts in the early 1970s. Also, in March, 1973, Libyan-backed guerrillas fought in the mountains without gaining ground. A radical wing of the NUPF was banned and some of its members arrested, and even executed after the fighting in the mountains. The wing became the Union Socialiste des Force Populaires (USFP) in 1974. The King attempted to increase his popularity by doing several things. These included industrial and agricultural reforms and commencing diplomatic moves to control Western Sahara.

WESTERN SAHARA

It is said by many that Morocco had designs on the former 'Spanish Sahara' from before independence in 1956. The Moroccan Government wished to create a 'Greater Morocco' which, it is claimed, took in as far south as most of present-day Mauritania. Morocco and Mauritania both pressed their claim on the 'Spanish Sahara' up until the mid-1970s and disagreed with Spain's plan to give the territory independence. In 1973 this led to

formation of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el Hamra and Rio de Oro (Polisario) and the start of a long armed struggle.

The United Nations General Assembly asked the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to look into the dispute. In October, 1975, the ICJ ruled that neither Morocco or Mauritania should have sovereignty over the newly named 'Western Sahara'. The Moroccan response was the 'Green March', the mobilisation of 350,000 unarmed civilians who walked into the territory on 6th. November. The Moroccan army soon followed and the gradual annexation of Western Sahara began. *(See the next issue for more on the Western Sahara).*

THE 1980s

In 1980-81 there was a severe drought and subsequent food shortages forced the Government to increase food imports. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) helped with emergency loans but these carried the conditions of eliminating food and housing subsidies thus bringing more hardships on the population. The prolonged drought and the costly war in Western Sahara was beginning to damage the Moroccan economy.

International observers questioned the results of the municipal elections on 10th. June, 1983. The opposition parties denounced the electoral fraud, and accused King Hassan of flaunting the will of the people. The following year there were Parliamentary elections. 306 seats were filled by direct election and 100 by the electoral college. In 1986 King Hassan celebrated the 25th anniversary of his rule and he still remained firmly in control. The improved relations between Algeria and

Morocco, in 1988, brought about the construction of a gas pipeline across the Strait of Gibraltar to Cordova joining the two countries to Europe.

THE 1990s

In 1991 Morocco was part of the American-led alliance against Iraq in the Gulf War. This was not fully appreciated within the country and large demonstrations against the war reflected the growing influence of 'Islamic Fundamentalists'. Morocco had long been an American ally and the USA has considered the country as a buttress against the Islamic influences coming from the east. It has shown its support both politically and financially on several occasions. Morocco also holds a strategic position at the entrance

Riding with the Atlas Mountains in the background - which can be snowcapped for six to nine months of the year



to the Mediterranean Sea at the Strait of Gibraltar. By necessity the country is a precious friend to Western countries and offers port facilities to French warships and the US Sixth Fleet.

King Hassan dismissed the Cabinet and replaced the entire executive branch in August, 1992. A Government referendum, on 4th. September approved a new constitution designed to extend Parliament's powers although the King still chose the Prime Minister. The opposition parties rejected the new electoral legislation, and called for a boycott of the referendum which, despite this, had a large turn-out.

The communal elections were still held on 16th. October and were marred by violence following the murder of Mohammed Laâbali of the Party of Progress and Socialism (PPS). From the 75% turn-out the governing Rassemblement National des Indépendants (RNI) gained 21% of the seats. These councillors play an important role as they select the one-third of Parliamentary seats which are not directly elected.

Because of the electoral changes the coalition of opposition parties - 'Koutla' - asked for the Parliamentary elections to be delayed. When they did take place on 25th. June, 1993, opposition parties won 99 of the 222 seats but they refused to participate in the second round which was held in September. In an effort to bring the 'Koutla' parties into mainstream politics, King Hassan offered them nineteen minor ministerial post in the new Government of 1994. The coalition declined and the Government was finally named in January, 1995, and things continued virtually as before.

It would appear that the King's changed approach to the 'Koutla' probably had something to do with EU threats on finances in 1992.

There was, and still is, much concern about Morocco's human rights record. It is believed that King Hassan wishes full integration with the EU, including the 'converging financing' which has been given to less-developed members of the Union.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Morocco does not have a glowing human rights record. After thirty years of what is virtually a one party state - despite being a 'Constitutional Monarchy' - there is very little tolerance of opposition and leanings to the left. Many human rights organisations, both Moroccan and International, have recorded the abuses especially in connection with Morocco's occupation of Western Sahara and the treatment of both Moroccans and Sahrawis (people from Western Sahara).

There were some improvements in the mid-1990s and the King has regularly granted pardons to political prisoners. He has also recently proposed that the unelected Members of Parliament could be transformed into an upper house. Dialogue between the Government and international human rights organisations, such as Amnesty International, has expanded. Some people in self-imposed exile have taken advantage of a Government amnesty and returned home. There has also been an attempt to reduce corruption in the judicial system.

The Moroccan security system is made up of several police and paramilitary organisations whose activities are coordinated by the Ministry of Interior and Information. The majority of accusations of human rights abuses are levelled at the Ministry which oversees almost every aspect of life that may be problematic to the State and directs the Security Forces accordingly.

The Moroccan legal system has two distinct parts: the secular and the Islamic. The secular system is partly based on the French legal

practice and the judges are trained in this tradition. Islamic court cases are decided on the Koran and Shari'a law. The judges are clerics who are not trained in civil law, but recently appointees have had a formal education in Islamic law. The fairness of some of the secular trials may be questioned due to various factors involved. Cash payments (bribes) to judges are given routinely in minor criminal cases. Cases often depend upon a confession and sources say that these are sometimes obtained under duress.

The phenomenon of the 'disappearance' of Sahrawis and Moroccans who oppose the Government's views has been known in both Morocco and Western Sahara for many years. Some of the military personnel who were involved in attempts to overthrow the Government in 1971 and 1972 'disappeared'. There are secret detention centres where these prisoners are held incommunicado for up to fifteen years. Some are released each year but many are never heard of again.

In theory there is freedom of worship in Morocco, but in practice only Islam, Christianity, and Judaism are tolerated. Following Islamic law it is forbidden for a Muslim to convert to any other religion. Also any attempt to convert Muslims is punishable by imprisonment. For this reason missionaries restrict their work to

Off to hoe the fields near Tournée d'Agouim

ministering to the non-Muslim population. Islam is Morocco's official religion but despite this it does not leave the Muslim community completely free to worship and gather as they wish. The Government monitors Friday mosque sermons and what is taught in Koranic schools. Sometimes the Security Forces close mosques after the Friday services to limit unauthorised political activity. 'Islamic Fundamentalist' groups are tolerated but usually restrict themselves to educational and charitable work.

THE ECONOMY

For many years the Moroccan economy has been highly dependent on three fields: tourism, agriculture and mining. There are also two 'invisible trades', the transfer of money from Moroccans working abroad and the smuggling



of hashish, the illicit drug - estimates have valued the latter trade at about US\$2 billion a year. By the late 1970s Morocco had borrowed so much money that it was one of the most indebted countries in the developing world. A structural adjustment programme began in 1983 and has resulted in diversification in the Moroccan economy and privatisation.

Much of Morocco's foreign trade is with European Union (EU) countries, with which it has had preferred status since 1976 and has attempted to join on at least two occasions. More than 58% of its exports go to the EU and over 51% of imports are from there. It is estimated that more than a million and a half Moroccans work abroad. The wages earned by them, and money from tourism, are an important source of foreign exchange. In 1993 Tourism brought in US\$1.23 billion from 2.9 million visitors. The early 1990s were not as good as hoped due to the European recession and the Gulf War.

1993 and 1994 saw some improvements in the economy as the IMF recommendations of cut-backs and privatisation were gradually put into practice. Still the economy is vulnerable to climatic changes, such as the droughts in the early 1980s and 1990s. Morocco's image has changed in the eyes of the business world. One reason for this is the Casablanca Stock Exchange which is widely regarded as second in Africa only to that of Johannesburg. This has been reflected in both the USA and UK stock markets.

About 75% of the world's known phosphate reserves are to be found in Morocco. Within its borders are half the world's known reserves of 18,000 million metric tonnes. Together with Western Sahara, especially the reserves at Bou Kra, it makes Morocco the world's largest exporter of phosphate and the third largest producer - after the USA and former

Soviet Union. In the first half of 1994 exports realised US\$485 million. Phosphate rock, phosphoric acid, and fertilizer are the main sources of export earnings. At Bou Kra the phosphate is transported to the coast, near Laâyoune, on a conveyor belt. Deposits of copper, rock salt, petroleum, iron ore, coal, lead, manganese, and zinc are also found in the country.

Most of the manufacturing side of the country's economy is to be found around Casablanca, Safi and Rabat. Here phosphates and foods are also processed. Morocco is almost totally dependent on imported petroleum but there is a small oil field at Sidi Ghalem and there are oil-shale deposits in the Atlas Mountains which have not been exploited.

Agriculture forms a major part of the country's economy and occupies about half of the work force. Produce for both domestic consumption and export are mainly grown along the Atlantic coastal plain. The country is self-sufficient in most food products, but still imports wheat and sugar. In the early 1990s food imports made up about 12% of the trade deficit. Agricultural produce - mainly fruits and tomatoes - now account for a quarter of total exports with the largest share of this going to the EU under a 1990 quota agreement. There are also rich fishing grounds offshore in the Atlantic. These are frequented by many foreign boats and Morocco exports fish to the EU. Recently a fishing accord and an association agreement between the EU and Morocco have been signed and it is hoped that a free trade zone will be established by the year 2010.

THE CHURCH

Christianity arrived in Morocco during Roman times. In the third century, 298, Saints Marcellus and Cassian, the centurion and court recorder respectively, were martyred in Tangiers for declaring that they were

Christians. When the Arabs invaded in the seventh century almost all traces of Christianity were wiped out except for a small presence which was kept going by Christians who were brought as slaves and by chaplains to the European military and merchants.

When St. Francis of Assisi founded his order he sent missionaries to Morocco and he also spent some time there, around 1214, before falling ill. Five of the Franciscans were martyred on the 16th. January, 1220. The dedication of these friars so impressed St. Anthony of Padua that he joined the Franciscans and he spent some time in Ceuta before having to return to Europe because of ill health.

The Church continued to develop and the diocese of Marrakesh was founded in 1234, but was later suppressed as a 'residential see' in 1566. The Franciscan Missions in Fès and Marrakesh were run from the Province of St. Diego in Andalucia, Spain, in 1641 and the superior was given the faculties of Prefect Apostolic. In a decree of 10th. August, 1859, the Prefecture was handed over to the College of St. Giacomo of Compostella, and later to the College of Chiplona. The 14th. April, 1908, saw the Mission become a Vicariate and in 1923 the Vicariate of Rabat (French Morocco) was taken from it. The two Arch-dioceses of Rabat and Tangiers reflect the two

different cultural presences in the country - the Spanish and the French.

Because of the religious and political situation the role of the Church is very much as a 'presence', but it is quite involved in education and Islam-Christian dialogue. King Hassan recognised the competence of the Church in a document published on 19th. December, 1994, and recognised its right to freedom of worship. Pope John Paul II visited Morocco on 19th. August, 1985, at the invitation of King Hassan in his capacity as the President of the Islamic Committee of Jerusalem. The flying visit took place when the Pope was returning from the Eucharistic Congress in Nairobi and he spent about seven hours in Morocco. During his visit to Casablanca the Pope addressed a gathering of 80,000 young Moroccans.

Child labour is often used in the Moroccan carpet and textile industries

