

English Abstract

The Development of Alliance Israelite Education in Marrakesh and its Influence on Community Life

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Most of Marrakesh Jews met modernity for the first time in December 1900, when the Alliance Israelite schools opened in the city. These modern establishments sought to integrate Jewish youth in French culture, and help them to advance themselves. However, modern education took a long time to establish. For three decades, it had to struggle against stubborn opposition from traditional education institutions and conservative parents alike. However, when the community's attitude became favorable, a lack of classrooms limited the availability of modern education. This problem was solved only during the final days of the Protectorate, with the building of new schools.

The expansion of modern education, beginning in the 1930s, helped to spread Western values and culture. In time, parts of Jewish society adopted, in various degrees, a French-European lifestyle.

The last two decades of French rule (1934–1956) brought about many changes for Marrakesh's Jewry, both in public and private spheres. Marrakesh's daughters were freed from the restrictions posed by the old world. Modern education improved their self-esteem and supplied them with professional training, making them more independent than ever before. Women's internalization of Western values also affected the Jewish family, by postponing the age of marriage and lowering childbirth.

These changes in the public sphere led to a struggle for the shape of society, between proponents of modernity and western culture and conservative circles, which ended with the victory of modern circles.

While adopting Western culture was accompanied by some decline in religiosity, it did not lead to widespread secularization. The community retained its traditional way of life, as proven by the election of Rabbis to political leadership roles, the closure of shops on the Sabbath (even those outside the Mellah, the Jewish quarter), and the continuation of traditional Jewish religious education for boys, in addition to modern schooling.

Although Alliance Israélite's education and the adoption of French-European culture led to intensive changes in Jewish society, these did not supplant tradition but created a unique syncretism of old patterns and new.