

Elevating Dialect to National Language: A Case Study of Morocco's Institut Royal de la Culture  
Amazighe

By Alexa Williams

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Supervisors: Professors Szabolcs Pogonyi and András Kovacs

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## **Abstract:**

Morocco's February 20<sup>th</sup> Movement and the subsequent constitutional reform marked an obvious shift in the national imaginary. However this inclusive national consciousness has been growing since the 2001 establishment of Institut Royal de la Culture Amazighe. Its policies of language standardization reveal a similar project to nation-building language rationalization and its rhetoric. Far from the accusations of reducing Amazigh culture to "static folklore," it has instead installed a lingua franca by which educated Imazighen can communicate their own issues and wishes. This program works in a similar vein to the Arabization policies that a nationalized Tamazight rebels against, if limited to Morocco—perhaps intentionally so. IRCAM's literature exhibits nation-building tendencies: a national consciousness that aligns with larger Arab-Muslim consciousness. Ultimately however, in achieving their goal of constitutionally recognized linguistic equality, IRCAM ended their run as an autonomous institute and the future of their projects are unclear.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

On February 20<sup>th</sup> 2011 Morocco's manifestation of the Arab Spring began. Demonstrations and marches were coordinated across the country's cities. Protestors demanded a new constitution, for the King to relinquish some powers, education reform, as well as economic opportunity, and an end to corruption. The movement, motivated by similar activities in other North African countries, continued into 2012 with regularly scheduled demonstrations and protests.

In a proactive move—likely prompted by the successful overthrow of rulers in neighboring countries—King Mohammed VI responded to the protests in a televised speech in March of 2012. The monarch promised constitutional reform, announcing the organization of a commission of appointed officials to oversee the writing of the new constitution. The announcement came with the release of several political dissidents and Saharawi nationalists from prison. The Moroccan public was optimistic and eager for pronouncement of the reforms and the July referendum to pass the amended constitution.

However the proposed reforms were met with great disappointment from the demonstrators as well as the country's educated elite. The King's power remained without parliamentary balance. Only small adjustments were made to the organization of the state, including the necessity that he appoints a prime minister only from parliament's majority party.<sup>1</sup> Minimal powers were then transferred from the king to this position.<sup>2</sup> Several groups boycotted

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<sup>1</sup> Article 47 of Moroccan Constitution

<sup>2</sup> Article 59 decrees that only “upon consulting” the Prime Minister, the Speaker of both houses of parliament and the President of the Constitutional Court, can the monarch declare a state of emergency and dissolve the parliament. There is then precautions in article 98 of a timeline of two months in which new elections must be held. These articles disallowed the state of

the referendum; nevertheless it received the required votes to be passed into law.<sup>3</sup> The focus of this research, however, is not the failure to appease the calls for a more democratic environment in Morocco. Instead, attention will be paid to a seemingly negligible constitutional reform added during this period: the recognition of the “Amazigh language” to that of official status within the Kingdom.

Article V of this newly passed constitution, promises to promote the national language of Arabic while—for the first time— acknowledging “the Amazigh language as a shared heritage belonging to all Moroccans” and declaring it an “official language of the state.” Many have claimed this amendment, as one of the reasons the constitution was accepted, as this point had been made strongly and forcefully by Amazigh activist groups throughout the country for decades.<sup>4</sup> However, the lobby for Amazigh recognition was not one of the more vocal groups during the protests.

While many protestors and academics contest that this amendment was little more than a political ploy to gain support for the constitutional reforms, others such as Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, suggest that “the events of the ‘Arab Spring’ have contained an important Amazigh dimension.”<sup>5</sup> And while there has been little attention paid to the Amazigh elements of the February 20<sup>th</sup> Movement, the cause has seen greater attention and state support as a result.

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emergency that was abused in the past to commit a number of human rights abuses, during the “Years of Lead.”

<sup>3</sup> Marina Ottoway “The New Moroccan Constitution: Real Change of More of the Same?” Carnegie Endowment. June 20, 2011.

<sup>4</sup>Paul Silverstein, “Weighing Morocco’s Constitution,” *Middle East Research and Information Project* (2001).

<sup>5</sup> Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, “Arabization and its Discontents: The Rise of the Amazigh Movement in North Africa,” *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa* Vol. 3 (2012): 109.

This amendment marks a sharp reversal of official/national attitudes to Amazigh tradition and language, which has previously been stigmatized or banned.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, it marks a great step towards the recognition of Morocco's indigenous population and those who identify with its traditions and language. Subsequent this Article V of the 2011 constitution, Institut Royale de la Culture Amazighe (IRCAM) has become a national institution.

IRCAM is an academic institution brought into fruition by royal *dahir* (decree)<sup>7</sup> in 2001, tasked with conducting linguistic research on Morocco's three Amazigh dialects, providing recommendations for educational and legal reform, as well as language standardization and the development of curricula by which to teach Amazigh languages and culture. Its birth was also viewed as a large leap towards recognition for Morocco's *Imazighen*.<sup>8</sup> IRCAM's rhetorical goal was the insurance of the linguistic equality of Tamazight (the Amazigh language) to that of Arabic and the destigmatization of the Amazigh identity.

In truth, this seemingly minor adjustment, represents a much larger political project with consequences for both the national imaginary and IRCAM. Firstly, I argue that the 2011 Constitution represents an important theoretical shift in the Moroccan national consciousness that had be growing since the 2001 creation of IRCAM, thus proving the mutable nature of the national imaginary. I then present a case study of IRCAM's diagnosis of the Amazigh cause as well as its rhetoric and goals. Lastly I form a preliminary investigation of the possible and definitive consequences of IRCAM's seeming success in the acquisition of constitutional linguistic and cultural recognition.

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<sup>6</sup>Marvine Howe, *Morocco: The Islamic Awakening and Other Challenges* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 88.

<sup>7</sup> Elsewhere translated as "royal edict."

<sup>8</sup> The plural of *Amazigh*: referring to a group of individuals identifying as Amazigh.

Paul Silverstein and David Crawford call the very creation of Institut Royal de la Culture Amazighe a change a “shift in the national imaginary.” Although not scholars of nationalism, their claim has a base in nationalism literature, which I will expound here. Additionally, the most recent official recognition granted to the “Amazigh language” strengthens this claim.

Ernest Renan, in his famous speech “‘Qu’est-ce qu’une Nation?’ [What is a Nation?]” declares the nation is essentially a “daily plebiscite.” Renan declares that language, religion, material interest, race, and geography are all insufficient factors to determine, or create, a nation. Instead the nation is dependent on both a “rich legacy of memories” and “present-day consent.” Renan further states that both of his requirements for nationhood, may in themselves compel collective forgetting or even “historical error,” by which to create a unified memory, clean of possible past abuses or disunity.<sup>9</sup>

Moreover Moroccan nationalism can be viewed through Anthony Smith’s ethno-symbolic understanding of nationalism. That is nationalism that has that has gained power through “myths, memories, traditions, and symbols of ethnic heritage” and their rediscove[ry] and reinterpret[ation] by modern nationalist intelligentsia”<sup>10</sup>: in this case, the monarchy. Smith continues, that in this way, the nation may become “more inclusive as its members cope with new challenges.”<sup>11</sup>

Michael Billig echoes this sentiment on his writings on nationalism, stressing the construction of nation and nationness. The mutable nature of national consciousness expresses

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<sup>9</sup> This idea of historical error for the sake of national history is echoed in Eric Hobsbawm’s theory of “Invented Traditions.”

<sup>10</sup> Anthony Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, 9.

<sup>11</sup> Anthony Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 9.



that these “invented permanencies,” that define a nation, are not permanent at all.<sup>12</sup> This model of nationhood, allows for redefinition or rethinking of the nation, particularly in its expansion in terms of inclusion— as is the case for Morocco’s newfound acknowledgement of *Amazigh* identity, regardless of historical discord or mistreatment.

The *Imazighen*, have indeed been on the receiving end of denigration and oppression by the state and the, so-called, dominant ethnies, Arab-Muslims<sup>13</sup>. Stephen May describes the trend of oppression of minority groups in a nation-state as the result of “an overemphasis on *political* nationalism and its institutional embodiment in the modern nation-state and to the associated valorization of civic over ethnic ties.”<sup>14</sup> In this way, non-institutional groups are “ethnic” and therefore illegitimate. Whereas dominant ethnic groups are legitimated by institutions and therefore seen as “civic”. Michael Billig explains the phenomena similarly as the “projection” of nationalism onto “others” and the “naturalization” of one’s own nationalism.<sup>15</sup> Walker Connor, calls this same process “Staatsvolk.”<sup>16</sup> Ultimately, “ethnic” claims are seen as illegitimate, but can be legitimated and lose their “ethnic” status through institutionalization.<sup>17</sup> This line of thinking, although May sees it as flawed, is evident in many claims of minority groups to become legitimized by inclusion into the political system and institutions. This is clear in IRCAM’s literature as well. As they claim the “officialization of Amazigh within the Moroccan

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<sup>12</sup> Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism*. London: (Sage Publications, 1995), 29.

<sup>13</sup> Here I am borrowing Anthony Smith’s term.

<sup>14</sup> Stephen May, *Language and Minority Rights: Ethnicity, Nationalism and the Politics of Language*. (New York: Routledge, 2012), 56.

<sup>15</sup> Billig, “Banal Nationalism,” 19.

<sup>16</sup> Connor “Beyond Reason: The Nature of the Ethnonational Bond.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* vol. 16, 1993: 374-389.

<sup>17</sup> May, *Language and Minority Rights*, 56-7.

Constitution [as] undeniably the ultimate lever of the revitalization process.”<sup>18</sup> The 2011 Constitutional reforms begins the royal institute, and the larger Amazigh cause, road to institutionalization.

Institutionalization, or the transition to “civic,” marks the inclusion of minority groups into the political process and into decision-making. However, in the case of Article V, the minority group in question, is not simply allowed recognition but is given full status as a shared culture for all of Morocco, effectively expanding the dominant ethnies itself. There is a great amount of evidence to support this claim and the mixed ethnic background of nearly all Moroccans, including the royal family. However the truth of this claim is not required for this redefining of nation and ethnicity to be carried out. If we return to Ernest Renan’s work, he specifically addresses the necessity of “historical error.” The expansion of national consciousness and the ethnicity of the majority is capable without in depth historical and genealogical research.

Morocco’s new constitution works to provide the benefits of minority rights— acknowledgement and promise to preserve and allow a culture and language— without the so-called “politics of difference.” Instead the constitution opts for language of unity and importance for all Moroccans. While the constitution touts multiculturalist rhetoric for the protection of other minorities, such as sub-Saharan, and Hassani-Arabic speakers, language address Amazigh claims is limited to shared culture and tradition. This may raise its own questions of “mis-recognition, described by Charles Taylor,<sup>19</sup> particularly for Moroccan citizens who clearly

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<sup>18</sup> Ahmed Boukous. *Revitalizing the Amazigh Language: Stakes, Challenges, and Strategies*. (Rabat: Publication de l’Institut Royal de la Culture Amazighe , 2012), 137.

<sup>19</sup> Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism and “The Politics of Recognition”* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

identify with pastoral groups whom Amazigh tradition over national identity. This however is not the focus of this research. Colin H. Williams contends that as states become more multi-ethnic or receive claims from minority groups within their borders “national congruence will have to be redefined”<sup>20</sup> this can come in the form of relative autonomy, multicultural education, or an expansion of the national imaginary, such as in the case of Morocco’s Amazigh.

Article V of the Morocco’s new constitution would be purely symbolic if it did not include some policy changes. IRCAM, who was one of the spearheads of the campaign for national recognition, has been made a national institute: a shift from its previous status as a royal institute. It is now under the direction of the Minister of Higher Education, the High Council of Education (Conseil Supérieur de l’Enseignement), and the National Council of Languages and the Moroccan Culture (Conseil National des Langues et de la Culture Marocaine).

The most heralded and publicized aspect of Article V is declaration of “the Amazigh language” as an official national language. Although this declaration comes with its own problematic aspects, that will be discussed later, this recognition of a new national language is interesting in its subverts of Benedict Anderson’s and Ernest Gellner’s models of language standardization as it relates to nation-building.<sup>21</sup> In this opposite vein, a new national language is being created by a relatively stable and longstanding state. Of course the nation-building process experienced by Morocco, was highly different from those nations examined by both Anderson and Gellner, given its colonial history and relatively late nation-building project, which be explored at greater length later.

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<sup>20</sup> Colin H. Williams, *Called Unto Liberty: On Language and Nationalism*. (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1994), 12.

<sup>21</sup> See Anderson *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Chapters 2 & 5; Gellner *Nations and Nationalism* Chapter 3, specifically his writings on the emergence of “high culture.”

IRCAM's projects and success in gaining Constitutional linguistic equality mark an important shift in Moroccan national consciousness at the state level. Following this acknowledgement, it is necessary to dive into the goals and rhetoric of the royal cultural institute to understand its projects and role in this Amazigh cause. The case of IRCAM presents an illustration of practical measures taken in such a theoretical and symbolic shift in national consciousness and stateacknowledged ethnies. Similarly, it shows a calculated language plan organized so as to expand the national consciousness. The following is an in-depth look at IRCAM's rhetoric, language goals, and the consequences of this recent "success."

## Chapter 2: Morocco's Amazigh

In the seventh century Arab invaders arrived in North Africa and converted the indigenous peoples to Islam. These indigenous groups—known collectively as *Berber*<sup>22</sup>—now go by regionally distinguished group names in Mali, Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Tunisia, and to a lesser extent in other North African states.<sup>23</sup> Their mother tongues are dialects of an Afro-Asiatic language branch.<sup>24</sup> Previous to this invasion, the North African indigenous had met invasion by Romans, Phoenicians, Byzantines, and Vandals. Different to this invasion was that many Arabs stayed and intermarried with the Berber population—specifically in Morocco. Though small in number, they brought profound social change with the introduction of Islam. After the withdrawal of the invading armies, Amazigh dynasties took over the Maghreb but retained Islamic faith and traditions. It is often cited that while Arabs brought Islam to Morocco, it was the “Berbers” who protected the faith.

Amazigh dynasties ruled Morocco and neighboring territory—stretching at times to Spain—for many centuries. They established the Morocco's largest city, Marrakech, and created still working irrigation systems. In 1631 Alaouite dynasty took power under Moulay Ali Cherif. This family was of Arab origin, and claimed lineage from the Prophet Muhammed. It is surrounding the Alaouite dynasty, that continues to rule today, that the idea of a Muslim-Arab Morocco national consciousness took shape. The monarchy's importance to the national

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<sup>22</sup> This term, while seen by some as pejorative, Paul Silverstein and others contend that this English translation carries no prejudice and can be used as a collective term.

<sup>23</sup> Maddy-Weitzman, “Arabization and its Discontents: The Rise of the Amazigh Movement in North Africa,” 109-135.

<sup>24</sup> Maddy-Weitzman, “Arabization and its Discontents: The Rise of the Amazigh Movement in North Africa,” 110.

consciousness grew over the revolutionary, and post-colonial periods— as well as the Moroccan national identity as of a Muslim-Arab nation.

Nevertheless, David M. Hart, in his short but widely read discussion of Amazigh-Arab ethnicity in Morocco, “Scratch a Moroccan, find a Berber” argues that this Amazigh history and national quality provides Morocco— and the larger Maghreb— with a unique and proud national quality.<sup>25</sup> The ethnicities and histories are inseparable. This Arabo-Islamic identifier arose for several reasons: both to create unity with other post-colonial Arab nations, and to distinguish themselves from their former colonizers.

## Arabization

As Michael Billig explains, “the creation of a national hegemony often involves the hegemony of a language.”<sup>26</sup> But it is important to distinguish postcolonial language rationalization. Linguist David Laitin’s work emphasizes that language rationalization in post-colonial state is more complicated than language standardization as described by Benedict Anderson<sup>27</sup> and Ernest Gellner.<sup>28</sup>

Laitin posits that Africa’s former colonies inherited deeply entrenched bureaucratic systems in the language of the colonizer.<sup>29</sup> Nationalizing movements often undertook the reestablishment of an “authentic” national language to replace the colonial language often at the

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<sup>25</sup>David M. Hart, “Scratch a Moroccan, find a Berber” *Journal of North African Studies* Vol. 4 (1999): 23-26.

<sup>26</sup>Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, 29.

<sup>27</sup> See Anderson *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Chapters 2 & 5.

<sup>28</sup> See Gellner *Nations and Nationalism* Chapter 3, specifically his writings on the emergence of “high culture.”

<sup>29</sup> David Laitin, *Language Repertoires and State Construction in Africa*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

expense of smaller language groups.<sup>30</sup> In the case of Morocco's Imazighen, their language and dialects were abandoned and discouraged for the sake of national unity and colonial liberation. Projects of Arabization—the standardization and promulgation of a Modern Standard Arabic<sup>31</sup>—were employed in Morocco, as well as other post-colonial states.<sup>32</sup> These dialects, however, were by no means the main opponent of the Arabization program. The Arabization process was put in place in North Africa to replace the colonial French.<sup>33</sup>

MohaEnnaji adds that Arabization, in creating a standard and global dialect of Arabic, connected these formerly colonized nations creating a co-beneficial economic market between states in the Arab world, so as to end dependence on former Western colonizers.<sup>34</sup> This however is merely one of the goals of Arabization and not the reality.

In order to create this lingua franca between Arab countries, Arabic was standardized through a language planning process similar to the process IRCAM undertook and is continuing today. This standard Arabic was implemented, in varying degrees, in different states.<sup>35</sup> Ennaji, a Moroccan linguist, acknowledges that Arabization in Morocco was not complete in replacing

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<sup>30</sup>Laitin, *Language Repertoires and State Construction in Africa*, 54.

<sup>31</sup> Often abbreviated as MSA or *fus'ha*, this is standardized dialect of Arabic, used for writing or pan-Arab programs such as Al-Jazeera. It is not a spoken mother-tongue and only learned through formal education.

<sup>32</sup>MohaEnnaji, "The Arab World (Maghreb and the Near East)" in *A Handbook of Language and Ethnic Identity* ed. Joshua A. Fishman (New York: Oxford University, 1999), 386.

<sup>33</sup>Maddy-Weitzman, "Arabization and its Discontents: The Rise of the Amazigh Movement in North Africa," 116.

<sup>34</sup>Ennaji, "The Arab World (Maghreb and the Near East)" in *A Handbook of Language and Ethnic Identity*, 389.

<sup>35</sup> Law 91 105 enacted in Algeria in January of 1991 prohibits foreign languages (mainly focused on French) in parliament, court, administration, and education, providing fines for offenders. The *Istiqlal* (Independence) Party proposed similar measures in Morocco, but were not successful.

French as a prominent language of business and education.<sup>36</sup> However, this process did succeed in delegating Tamazight to a group of minority dialects, and excluded it from education and the public sphere. The move effectively assigned Amazigh dialects to an inferior status, becoming collateral damage to a program that was relatively unsuccessful in its initial goal of eradicating colonial languages.

Laitin also presents data on other African states that propagate strong national unity through language and other sources to discourage tribal, linguistic, or regional fragmentation. Acknowledging the necessity of unity through a national language, Laitin favors multilingualism for the preservation of national languages from globalization, as well as minority language from nationalizing vernaculars.<sup>37</sup> His argument employs game theory to explain the benefits of individual and institutional multilingualism.<sup>38</sup> IRCAM's goals for Tamazight standardization and linguistic equality fall in line with Laitin's prescriptions for language preservation.

However, as mentioned before, the Arabization process prioritized national and regional unity over linguistic expression or diversity. Additionally, this linguistic decision is often conflated with both religious and ethnic markers. The resulting Arabo-Islamic national consciousness was enforced by the ethnic background of the royal family and its "patriline leading back to the Prophet Muhammed."<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>MohaEnnaji. "Sociolinguistics in Morocco" *International Journal of Sociology of Language*. Vol. 87 (1991).

<sup>37</sup> David Laitin, "The Game Theory of Language Regimes." *International Political Science Review* vol. 14 (1993): 235.

<sup>38</sup>Laitin, "The Game Theory of Language Regimes," 227-239.

<sup>39</sup> Paul Silverstein & David Crawford, "Amazigh Activism and the Moroccan State," *Middle East Report* no. 233 (2004): 44.



## Moroccan Nationalism and the Monarchy

Returning to Anthony Smith's ethno-symbolic rejection of both primordial and modernist essentialist understandings of nationalism, we find a fitting description of post-colonial nation-building. Morocco: disallowed, through exploitation and oppression, to development in the modernist model, the citizens formed a national consciousness on *both* their shared historical roots and the modern rejection of colonialism. This nation revived the power of an ancient and powerful monarchy that has been displaced by colonial powers. Smith labels this "ethnic persistence" as "imperial-dynastic."<sup>40</sup>

Nationalist movements in North Africa shared the "central pillars" of "Arabic language, Islam, and territorial nationalism, rejecting a century of [European] colonialism."<sup>41</sup> In the rejection of the French Colonial power, Moroccans saw their monarchy, specifically King Mohammed V, as a proud national figure for his successful role in their decolonization.<sup>42</sup> "Moroccan national discourse," specifically after the colonial era, "has tended to emphasize links to the high culture of Arab-Islamic civilization:" a romantization of the monarchy's roots.<sup>43</sup> This celebration of the royal family's lineage and religious authority has led to the "conflation of the Arabic language, Islamic legitimacy and Arab ethnicity [becoming] an enduring feature of Moroccan consciousness."

This national mythmaking—surrounding the Arab-Muslim model expounded by the monarchy—intentionally forgets the mixed-ethnicity of Morocco's population, as well as the

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<sup>40</sup> Anthony Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 136.

<sup>41</sup> Maddy-Weitzman, "Arabization and its Discontents: The Rise of the Amazigh Movement in North Africa," 111.

<sup>42</sup> Marvine Howe, *Morocco: The Islamist Awakening and Other Challenges*. Oxford: University Press, 2005, 24.

<sup>43</sup> Silverstein & Crawford, "Amazigh Activism and the Moroccan State," 44.

King's own mixed heritage, as the custom of marrying the King to a wife of Amazigh origin continues to this day.<sup>44</sup> This model also ignores the minority of Moroccans who actively identify with and practice Amazigh culture and language. Not only are the Amazigh dialects repressed and delegated only to the private sphere, but until very recently there were restrictions of first names of Amazigh origin— so called “non-Arab” given name.

Certain levels of appropriation by the Moroccan public, however, were tolerated and encouraged. For tourists' benefit, the state sponsored folk-festivals celebrating Amazigh tradition, song, and dance.

This Arabo-Islamic identity has become the dominant *ethnie* described earlier, despite this *ethnie* not existing in reality, or at least not within the purity it expounds— the first of the national “historical error” Renan explains.

## The Religious Argument for Arabization

There exists a secondary—although, in my opinion—overemphasized reasoning behind Arabization. This is of course the important religious role that Arabic is tasked with. Indeed Islam is unique in its emphasis in linguistic purity. However this view severely under-analyzes the broad linguistic scope of Muslims and Muslim countries. Similarly, this view underestimates the practice and influence of Islam on Amazigh citizens and communities.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, this

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<sup>44</sup> Howe, *Morocco: The Islamist Awakening and Other Challenges*, 179.

<sup>45</sup> Paul Silverstein, “The Cultivation of ‘Culture’ in Moroccan Amazigh Movements.” *Review of Middle East Studies* vol. 43 (2009): 173-174.

argument for Arabization is important to note, as it is often cited by Islamic fundamentalists advocating high-Islamic culture in Morocco over more inclusive policies of recognition.<sup>46</sup>

Additionally, this line of argumentation introduces the cultural element to Arab superiority in Moroccan national rhetoric. Celebration of the King's lineage, and prescription to the Arab language also presupposes a strong affiliation with the Pan- Arab culture. Anthony Smith, in his discussion of the "myth of ethnic election" claims that within the domain of "Islamic Allegiances," there can be observed a pride in "language, culture and achievements and a sense of election and collective destiny that continue to exert a powerful influence on Middle Eastern politics to this day."<sup>47</sup>

## Amazigh Reality

Approximately forty percent of Moroccan's citizens count an Amazigh dialect as their mother-tongue.<sup>48</sup> This group however is disproportionally affected by abject poverty, illiteracy, and access to potable water and electricity.<sup>49</sup> Many rural and local non-governmental organizations repeat the rhetoric of indigenous rights and environmental protection in their projects. While it is true that there exist isolated poor Amazigh villages, this approach is severely underestimating the socioeconomic and sociodemographic variation in Morocco's Amazigh population.

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<sup>46</sup>Ennaji, "The Arab World (Maghreb and the Near East)" in *A Handbook of Langue and Ethnic Identity*, 393.

<sup>47</sup> Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 133-134.

<sup>48</sup> Silverstein & David Crawford, . "Amazigh Activism and the Moroccan State," Middle East Report No. 233 (2004): 44-47; Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, "Arabization and its Discontents: The Rise of the Amazigh Movement in North Africa." *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa* vol. 3 (2012): 109-135; other sources claim as small as 25 percent and as high as 45 percent.

<sup>49</sup>Silverstein, "The Cultivation of 'Culture' in the Moroccan Amazigh Movement," 171.

The Amazigh villages in the Rif Mountains, remain relative isolated but in a very different socioeconomic environment than the poor villages to there south. These mountainous towns benefit greatly from the cultivation and trafficking of hash on its journey to the European market.<sup>50</sup> Even more Imazighen have participated in mass internal migration to urban centers for work or education.

IRCAM's current rector puts it quite plainly with his assertion: "the question of the origin of the Amazigh people in northern region of Africa is the subject of a controversy inspired more by ideological stances than scientific analysis."<sup>51</sup> For the purpose of this study, it is helpful to classify Morocco's *Amazigh* as David Laitin's term "language community:" whereas the ethnicity as a grouping mechanism is replaced by mother tongue.<sup>52</sup> This is specifically necessary following the claims of MohaEnnaji, among others, that "it is impossible to distinguish a Berber from an Arab on the basis of race."<sup>53</sup> IRCAM researcher MeryamDemnati, interviewed by Marvine Howe, expressed: "There is no physical Berber type; we can be blonde with white skin from the Rif; brown-haired with olive skin from the Souss, or black from Marrakech..."<sup>54</sup>

Laitin particularly emphasizes "mother tongue" as the determinant so as to not exclude multilingual communities and individuals. This classification is specifically necessary in the case of Morocco's Amazigh population due to the group's ethnic heterogeneity (caused by intermarriage with both Arab Moroccans and Sub-Saharan Moroccans) as well as Morocco's Amazigh communities' multilingual capabilities. Similarly, Bruce Maddy-Weitzman explains

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<sup>50</sup> Howe, *Morocco: The Islamist Awakening and Other Challenges*, 31.

<sup>51</sup> Boukous, *Revitalizing the Amazigh Language: Stakes, Challenges, and Strategies*, 246.

<sup>52</sup> David Laitin "What is a Language Community?" *American Journal of Political Science* Vol. 14 (1993): 142.

<sup>53</sup> Ennaji, "The Arab World (Maghreb and the Near East)" in *A Handbook of Language and Ethnic Identity*, 383.

<sup>54</sup> Howe, *Morocco: The Islamist Awakening and Other Challenges*, 182.

that “language has been a central— perhaps *the* central—factor in the development of modern ethno-national identities and their accompanying nationalist movements” in North Africa.<sup>55</sup> This classification aligns with their specific linguistic rights demands of *Amazigh* activists.

David Crawford stresses the importance of recognizing the variance of status and claims made by Amazigh communities and individuals.<sup>56</sup> This movement cannot be narrowed to rhetoric for indigenous rights.

## Amazigh Claims

As illustrated above, Amazigh claims are not limited to recognition, land rights, or social welfare. The demands being acknowledged by the state currently, and disseminated by IRCAM are explicitly call for “official recognition of linguistic and cultural rights” to challenge the “hegemonic narrative of history propagated by ruling elites who advocate the full Arabization of society and the reduction of Berber culture to folklore status.”<sup>57</sup> Largely, the movement calls for an end to the stigma of the practice of Amazigh traditional and language.

Amazigh linguistic identity seemed to have been abandoned in favor of “Arab Nationalism,” a similarly linguistically charged groupism. In many ways, the resurgence of Amazigh consciousness can be seen as a response to Arab nationalism. However, this Amazigh consciousness seems to be more focused regionally, or nationally; perhaps intentionally

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<sup>55</sup>Maddy-Weitzman, “Arabization and its Discontents: The Rise of the Amazigh Movement in North Africa,” 110.

<sup>56</sup> Crawford, “Royal Interesting in Local Culture: Amazigh Identity and the Moroccan State” in *Nationalism and Minorities in Islamic Societies*, 164-189.

<sup>57</sup>Maddy-Weitzman, “Arabization and its Discontents: The Rise of the Amazigh Movement in North Africa, 109.

### Chapter 3: Institut Royal de la Culture Amazighe

The birth of the *Institut Royal de la Culture Amazighe* was seen as a great step forward in the recognition of both the existence of Amazigh culture and language, as well as an acknowledgement of its value to Morocco at large. Additionally, it was a step towards real policy change made after years of unfulfilled promises by the state.

The first mention of Amazigh recognition by the Moroccan state, came in a 1994 speech made by King Hassan II, during the “Years of Lead”<sup>58</sup>: “since there is not one of us who cannot be sure that there is in his dynasty, blood or body a small or large amount of cells which came from an origin which speaks one of Morocco’s dialects [of Tamazight].”<sup>59</sup> The largely symbolic acknowledgement was accompanied by a vague promise to introduce Tamazight in primary schools. These promises were left unmet at King Hassan’s death in 1999.

Following Hassan II’s son’s ascension to the throne, there became renewed interest in Amazigh activism recognized by the state. “A lengthy” Berber Manifesto, authored by Mohammed Chafik was published in 2001.<sup>60</sup> In response, the newly crowned King Mohammed VI announced the 2001 “IRCAM dahir[decree]” creating the *Institut Royal de la Culture Amazighe*. The institute was provided with a generous budget—cited as \$100 million dollars in

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<sup>58</sup> This term refers to the years of King Hassan II’s rule, marked with vast human rights abuses and “forced disappearances.” For more on this, see Susan Slyomovics *The Performance of Human Rights in Morocco*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005.

<sup>59</sup> An English transcript of the speech can be found at Moroccan RTM TV, August 20, BBC Monitoring, Summary of World Broadcasts, Part 4, The Middle East, August 23, 1994: 19-20.

<sup>60</sup> Maddy-Weitzman, “Arabization and its Discontents: The Rise of the Amazigh Movement in North Africa,” 124.

2004.<sup>61</sup> This “huge” budget was provided by the Group Omnium North Africa<sup>62</sup>, a Moroccan industrial and media conglomerate controlled the royal family.<sup>63</sup> Mohammed VI appointed several well-respected and vocal Amazigh scholars to senior members. He nominated the Manifesto’s author, Mohammed Chafik, to the position of Rector.<sup>64</sup> According to its own literature IRCAM was tasked with creating “the conditions for the revitalization of the Amazigh culture in order to fill the many gaps in the language and culture that badly need[ed] upgrading after centuries of marginalization and underdevelopment.”<sup>65</sup>

Its duty was to “contribute to the preservation and promotion of the Amazigh language and culture, particularly in the fields of education, information and public life in general.”<sup>66</sup> The goal of the project was not only linguistic and cultural preservation, but also its celebration and inclusion in the national consciousness, thereby eliminating social and economic disparity.

Following the linguistic element to Amazigh subjugation, IRCAM’s ultimate goal was linguistic equality and ensured language preservation, in the form of a constitutionally recognized written Tamazight standard, alongside the official national language of Arabic. Boukous writes: “The officialization of [Tamazight] within the Moroccan Constitution is undeniably the ultimate lever of the revitalization process.” For this goal to come to fruition, there must have first been a project of standardization transforming Morocco’s three oral, regional dialects into a standardized language.

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<sup>61</sup> Silverstein & Crawford, “Amazigh Activism and the Moroccan State,” 45.

<sup>62</sup> Upon its dissolution in 2010, the ONA Group was succeeded by Société Nationale d’Investissement.

<sup>63</sup> Silverstein & Crawford, “Amazigh Activism and the Moroccan State,” 44-45.

<sup>64</sup> Howe, *Morocco: The Islamist Awakening and Other Challenges*, 180.

<sup>65</sup> Boukous, *Revitalizing the Amazigh Language: Stakes, Challenges, and Strategies*, 32.

<sup>66</sup> Boukous, *Revitalizing the Amazigh Language: Stakes, Challenges, and Strategies*, 32.

This was the main project of IRCAM in its early years. This specific focus is illustrated by its library's holdings dedicated almost exclusively to self-produced literature on language standardization and language education, or literature that proved helpful in their project planning.

## **Tamazight as a Lingua Franca**

IRCAM's language planning project was also explained through the rhetoric of creating a lingua franca for Morocco's Amazigh community. Miloud Taïfi, a paper presented at IRCAM's, argues that a standard Tamazight is needed to facilitate communication and debate between Amazigh speakers of different dialects. He argues that "berberophones" from different dialects, while acknowledging that their languages are symbolically the same speak to each other in French, Arabic, or English so as to communicate clearly.

He advocates a written standard as a means for inter-Amazigh communication through an insider language, thereby creating a linguistic platform to advocate for other rights and privileges.<sup>67</sup> Interestingly, this line of argumentation mirrors the initial goals of Arabization policies introduced in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Hereby the Amazigh Movement can be viewed as a linguistic defined ethnic revival in response to a previously linguistically defined ethnic revival.

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<sup>67</sup>Miloud Taïfi, "Si les beberoophones ne s'entendent pas oralement, qu'ils s'écrivent! Pour une écriture grammaticale du berbère à usage didactique" (paper presented at Standardisation de l'amizigheséminaire organisé par le Centre l'Aménagement Linguistique de Institut Royal de la Culture Amazighe, Rabat, Morocco, December 8-9, 2004).



## Language Planning

IRCAM's defines Tamazight language planning as "a process of normalizing the language at the level of its status and its corpus in view of standardization."<sup>68</sup> Corpus planning is tasked with ameliorating the "lexical poverty" and "dialectic variation," in the creation of a written standard. John Edwards also calls this process "elaboration," which means "keeping the language viable in a changing world," recognizing the necessities "including lexical modernization and expansion."<sup>69</sup> While the IRCAM's Tamazight is a modified form of Morocco's most widely spoken dialect (Tashelhit),<sup>70</sup> Ahmed Chaabihi explained the necessity to create a Tamazight derived word for "door" as the Arabic *baab* had been adopted by speakers of all dialects.

In terms of status planning, Boukous describes two avenues by which a language can gain status: *de jure* and *de facto*. A language can gain *de jure* status "via legislation, ideally the constitution."<sup>71</sup> In this way, IRCAM's standardized Tamazight gained *de jure* status with the acceptance of the 2011 Constitution. Alternately, a language can gain *de facto* status "by the natural exercise of linguistic exchanges in society by speakers who utilize the language in written or oral uses with or without formal functions."<sup>72</sup> It is through these measures that *darija* has gained status as a national vernacular, if not acknowledged as such in any legislation.

To cultivate this *de facto* status, IRCAM has taken to producing and translating works in Tfinagh Tamazight. They have supported the Amazigh TV Channel and further media.

<sup>68</sup> Boukous, *Revitalizing the Amazigh Language: Stakes, Challenges, and Strategies*, 124.

<sup>69</sup> John Edwards, *Language and Identity: An Introduction* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 227.

<sup>70</sup> Several IRCAM members have spoken out against this "hegemony" and cite this as a reason why the Tamazight standard has been rejected in by Riffians and Middle Atlas Amazigh.

<sup>71</sup> Boukous, *Revitalizing the Amazigh Language: Stakes, Challenges, and Strategies*, 130.

<sup>72</sup> Boukous, *Revitalizing the Amazigh Language: Stakes, Challenges, and Strategies*, 130.

Additionally, IRCAM's second largest project for language preservation has concerned with language education, mandatory at the primary school level. The program began in 2003 and has spread to more than 300 schools in 2005.<sup>73</sup> The programs have been spreading in regions with high concentrations of Moroccans with an Amazigh mother-tongue. IRCAM has produced teaching materials and provided training courses for teachers. The program, however, has been met with internal criticism from IRCAM researcher Meryam Demnati. In an interview, cited in Marvine Howe's Demnati admits discouragement "there had been no time or means to train Amazigh teachers properly or to produce a single teaching manual before the school year began."<sup>74</sup> IRCAM's language teaching has been criticized by others for its disorganization and the lack of available information provided by IRCAM seems to reflect this.

Moreover, there has been controversy over the institute's decision to use the adjusted ancient Tfinagh alphabet to render the written language. Viewed as a compromise between competing camps— Arabic script to reflect Morocco's Arabic roots and Latin script to adhere to international projects for language standardization— neo-Tfinagh has been an obstacle to language education and contributes to Imazighen apathy to learning the new standard.<sup>75</sup> Additionally the choice of this script has been accused of isolated Moroccan Imazighen from the larger Pan-Berber Movement.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Howe, *Morocco: The Islamist Awakening and Other Challenges*, 363.

<sup>74</sup> Howe, *Morocco: The Islamist Awakening and Other Challenges*, 363.

<sup>75</sup> Abdelai Bentahila & Eirlys Davies, "Convergence and Divergence: Two Cases of Language Shift in Morocco" in *Maintenance and Loss of Minority Languages: Studies in Bilingualism* ed. Willem Fase et al. (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1992): 200.

<sup>76</sup> Silverstein, "The Cultivation of 'Culture' in the Moroccan Amazigh Movement," 171.

## Diagnosis of Morocco's Language Ecology

IRCAM posits that a written standard will provide Tamazight a greater advantaging in competing in Morocco's language ecology. Boukous describes the incredibly multilingual Moroccan language market:

“Indeed, besides the national languages— Arabic and Amazigh together with their respective dialects—there is the co-existence of foreign languages, namely French and, marginally Spanish and English. These languages differ roughly in terms of their status, functions and uses. The *de facto* multilingualism that characterizes this situation has diverse effects in such important domains as education, training, administration, culture and economy. Consequently the major challenge for the future Maghreb lies in the rational, functional and fair management of linguistic pluralism.”

Boukous characterizes the language market as “a form of unstable diglossia,” in which the different social/ economic/familial roles of the languages “are not absolute.”<sup>77</sup> This is most evident in education, in a system that changes the language of instruction twice, or possibly three times over the course of a student's tenor. This instability bodes well for an up-in-coming nationalized language.

Boukous, and IRCAM, do not argue for the replacement of Arabic— neither the official national language, Modern Standard Arabic, nor Colloquial Moroccan Arabic (*darija*)— Instead he sees linguistic survival in multilingualism, specifically *constitutionally recognized* national multilingualism.

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<sup>77</sup> Boukous, *Revitalizing the Amazigh Language: Stakes, Challenges, and Strategies*, 26.

## Criticism

It is necessary to understand IRCAM as distinctly separate from individual Amazigh activists or smaller activist NGO's in Morocco, not only in their official status but in their approach and understanding of the Amazigh in Morocco. IRCAM's detractors come from several camps: Arab nationalists (often supported by Islamists), academics supporting the Amazigh cause, and Amazigh rights non-governmental organization.

As can be expected Arab nationalists view IRCAM as creating disunity in the national consciousness and corrupting Morocco's Arab history.<sup>78</sup> Internal dissent arises amidst the choice of a script, preference to specific dialect. This was evidenced directly in an interview conducted for this research with Jilial Saib, a founding member of IRCAM who left in 2007. He was specifically upset with the "hegemony" of Tashelhit in the standardized script and also in Amazigh TV and radio. But these types of critiques are almost inevitable, as Edwards writes these linguistic choices cannot benefit all speakers equally and "language planning, "is usually concerned with application in highly controversial settings."<sup>79</sup>

The most interesting detractors however are those from small Amazigh activist groups. The royal institute constantly receives criticism for its rebuff of the reality of "material inequality faced by rural Berbers."<sup>80</sup> While IRCAM's literature often mentions the economic disparity of the Amazigh population, it is often used only to explain migration to urban centers to explain further endangerment of the language. Paul Silverstein's research on smaller Amazigh activists

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<sup>78</sup> Ennaji, "The Arab World (Maghreb and the Near East)" in *A Handbook of Language and Ethnic Identity*, 386.

<sup>79</sup> Edwards, *Language and Identity: An Introduction*, 227.

<sup>80</sup> Silverstein, "The Cultivation of 'Culture' in the Moroccan Amazigh Movement," 171.

groups reveals the goals with more practical value: access to potable water and electricity and protection from private investors.

Paul Silverstein argues that these activists as engaging in a form of “self-primitivism” that runs against their modernist assumptions” of collective rights. They look to “nostalgic projections of authentic and bounded Berber culture,” idolizing isolated communities to establish their authenticity. However their demands do not call for a return to ancient laws and “pre-Islamic tribal past.”<sup>81</sup> Instead they focus on collective rights and human rights.

While IRCAM’s rhetoric does acknowledge the languages “indigenous character provides it with historical legitimacy,”<sup>82</sup> its prescribed language preservation plan is entirely modern. IRCAM takes a more liberal approach to language rights. IRCAM’s literature sees language standardization and promulgation as a means to social equality, and an end to the stigmatization of Amazigh tradition and language. IRCAM’s rhetoric sees linguistic equality as the enabling of Tamazight “to become a modern, written language, and to begin redressing the marginalization of the Berbers through corrective educational, social, and economic policies”<sup>83</sup> In this way language standardization and propagation will create linguistic equality that translate into socioeconomic equality

## **“The Amazigh Language”**

The language of Article V specifically grants national language status to “the Amazigh language.” This necessarily is in reference to IRCAM’s standardized Tamazight, but the question

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<sup>81</sup> Silverstein, “The Cultivation of ‘Culture’ in the Moroccan Amazigh Movement,” 174.

<sup>82</sup> Boukous, *Revitalizing the Amazigh Language: Stakes, Challenges, and Strategies*, 131.

<sup>83</sup> Maddy-Weitzman, “Arabization and its Discontents: The Rise of the Amazigh Movement in North Africa,” 114.

of the ability to speak of an “Amazigh language” has been debated and researched hotly by both IRCAM researchers and its detractors.

David Crawford’s fieldwork acknowledges the lack of mutual intelligibility between Morocco’s three Amazigh dialects. He explains that a native Tashelhit speaker will likely not understand Middle Atlas Tamazight or Riffian, and vice versa. He does however acknowledge that the ability to understand multiple regional dialects relates to the amount of traveling a subject has done in his life.<sup>84</sup> Crawford does relent that while the regional dialects may not be mutually intelligible, they have a great deal more linguistically in common with each other than with French or Arabic.<sup>85</sup>

It would of course be ignorant to ignore the Amazigh dialects similarities for a lack of mutual intelligibility. And while IRCAM’s literature does not mention John Edward literature on the topic, he has written on the topic of the symbolic and communicative nature of language communities that debates the validity of mutual intelligibility in defining a language community. His research will be discussed at length in the following chapter.

At an IRCAM sponsored conference, KarimBensoukas claims that despite the “phonological” differences of Morocco’s Amazigh dialects, there is indeed a great deal of linguistic research evidencing incredibly convergence on several other levels.<sup>86</sup> Additionally, Boukous stresses the similarities, writing that dialectologists’ in depth studies on the language

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<sup>84</sup> Crawford, “Royal Interesting in Local Culture: Amazigh Identity and the Moroccan State” in *Nationalism and Minorities in Islamic Societies*, 170.

<sup>85</sup> Crawford, “Royal Interesting in Local Culture: Amazigh Identity and the Moroccan State” in *Nationalism and Minorities in Islamic Societies*, 170.

<sup>86</sup> KarimBensoukas, “On the Unity of the Morphology of Moroccan Amazigh: Aspects of the imperfective form of the verb” (paper presented at Standardisation de l’amizigheséminaireorganisé par le Centre l’AménagementLinguistique de Institut Royal de la Culture Amazighe, Rabat, Morocco, December 8-9, 2004).

group, its phonetic, morphosyntactic and lexical similarities” are rare. However the necessity to create a unified vernacular is necessary to the standardizing process.<sup>87</sup> The consequences of this will be discussed in the following chapter.

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<sup>87</sup> Boukous, *Revitalizing the Amazigh Language: Stakes, Challenges, and Strategies*, 133.

## Chapter 4: IRCAM's Nation-Building

On IRCAM's goal of preservation, as measured by transgenerational linguistic survival, Boukous writes: "The process of language revitalization operates primarily at the micro level, that of the individual, family and community."<sup>88</sup> This is the main argument in Joshua Fishman's *Reversing Language Shift: Theoretical and Empirical Foundations of Assistance to Threatened Languages*.<sup>89</sup> Fishman is rather pessimistic about the survival of endangered languages and produces a series of analysis of failed preservation projects undertaken by the state and other actors. His findings indicate a much stronger predictor of language stability with emphasis on the micro level.<sup>89</sup>

After acknowledging the validity of Joshua Fishman's argument of "reverse-language shift," IRCAM continues to insist on formal education to ensure the survival of Tamazight. We can view this as the only avenue of an institute like IRCAM, in its inability to control the home lives of Tamazight speakers. However I argue that the lack of any mention of encouragement for Tamazight speakers to use the language in the home is actually pointing to a larger national goal.

Kymlicka describes recommendations such as these in his made by minority group elites aimed at the goal of preservation as "internal restrictions."<sup>90</sup> These recommendations— even demands— are not uncommon in situations where ethnic or linguistic endangerment/death are nearing. Instead IRCAM's preservation techniques include media saturation and print capitalism as well as formal education on the Amazigh culture and the standardized script.

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<sup>88</sup> Boukous, *Revitalizing the Amazigh Language: Stakes, Challenges, and Strategies*, 139.

<sup>89</sup> Joshua A. Fishman *Reversing Language Shift: Theoretical and Empirical Foundations of Assistance to Threatened Languages*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1991.

<sup>90</sup> Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Human Rights*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).



First, I would like to focus on the formal education aspect of this plan. If we accept Emile Durkheim's assertion that formal education is a necessity for creating an assimilated and cohesive national identity,<sup>91</sup> it is often the claim that formal education can also work in the opposite vein, to revitalize and legitimize minority identity. At least this is how it is often put into practice. But the case of IRCAM may be slightly different in creating a *cohesive minority identity*. Formal education on the Amazigh culture and language at the state level would form a much more unified identity than the unique home and familial experience.

Secondly, upon investigating the plan of preservation through media and print, we are again met with the "print capitalism"/"high culture" model of nationalism explained by Anderson and Gellner. IRCAM's project is indeed following a similar pattern as prescribed by the two scholars of nationalism, if at a later stage in the nation-building process. Here, IRCAM creates of a national vernacular in a well-established nation-state. This project can be labeled as a secondary, nationalizing project: tasked with creating a secondary high culture that does not exclude or supersede the previous. Instead this cultural identity fits neatly into the current national consciousness, having been carefully crafted by a single royal institute.

A 2010 post on IRCAM's website by its Ahmed Boukous praises the success of the institute in "above all, the emergence of a sense of pride in belonging to a Morocco newly reconciled with an Amazigh identity." I argue that far from creating what detractors of state-sponsored celebrations of Amazigh art and culture call a reduction to "static folklore," IRCAM's Amazigh identity building project is not static, nor reductionist, however it is carefully organized by a single royal agency in the capital.

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<sup>91</sup> Emile Durkhem, *Education and Sociology*. New York: Free Press, 1956.

## Elevation to a National “Language”

Returning to IRCAM’s stated goal, to create the “conditions for the revitalization of the Amazigh culture in order to fill the many gaps in the language and culture that badly need upgrading after centuries of marginalization and underdevelopment.”<sup>92</sup> It is clear that the “many gaps” refer to the self-described “lexical poverty” of Tamazight which was to be amended through corpus planning. Secondly, we can focus on the idea of linguistic “underdevelopment.”

According to Einar Haugen, the dichotomy between “dialect” and “language” exist within a situation that is almost infinitely complex.” Instead the edges of these terms are “extremely ragged and uncertain.” Haugen describes a language as having “validity beyond its local speech community,”<sup>93</sup> or existing as “a common denominator in interaction among the various dialect speakers.” Whereas a dialect is a as-of-yet “undeveloped” or “underdeveloped” language as it “has not been employed in all the functions that a language can perform in a society larger than that of a local tribe or peasant village.”<sup>94</sup> Following Eigen’s definitions IRCAM’s language-planning project has taken the three Amazigh dialects, consolidated them and elevated the product to a nationally recognized language.

But perhaps, more interestingly, Haugen’s argues that this move towards language standardization and “development” has a distinctly nationalist character.<sup>95</sup> That is forces of nationalism demand the necessity of creation of a “language:” a means of communication to connect local communities to a larger identifier, to shared media. “The idea of a dialect had little use before nation-states started establishing official ways of speaking and writing” writes

<sup>92</sup> Boukous, *Revitalizing the Amazigh Language: Stakes, Challenges, and Strategies*, 32.

<sup>93</sup> Einar Haugen, “Dialect, Language, Nation.” *American Anthropologist* Vol. 68 (1966): 26.

<sup>94</sup> Haugen, “Dialect, Language, Nation,” 928.

<sup>95</sup> Haugen, “Dialect, Language, Nation,” 929.

Billig.<sup>96</sup> In the case of Morocco, and other former colonies, it was the work of the colonizers to implement their own language as the lingua franca, which was then replaced with standardized Arabic promoted across the region. IRCAM's own literature stresses the importance of a IRCAM's Tamazight as a lingua franca between Morocco's Imazighen.

According to Haugen's assessment, IRCAM's language standardization goals is much like the language rationalization undertaken in the initial stages of nation-building. This standard is then propagated through formal education, media, and Amazigh TV (Tamazight language channel). This plan reflects Anderson's "print capitalism" model of nationalism.

If IRCAM's standardized language seems contrived, we shall remind ourselves of the national myths of the unified language of the Former Yugoslavia and the Czechoslovakian language. Linguist, John Edward provides his own theories of linguistic space. Edward's differentiates between the symbolic and communicative space of linguistic communities.<sup>97</sup> The communicative space is that in which all dialects in the community are mutually intelligible, if not necessarily politically aligned—the example being Serbian, Croatian, and Bosnian. In another work, Edwards cites a common Scandinavian tongue as another example.<sup>98</sup> The symbolic space, is less concerned with the mutual intelligibility of dialects that are symbolically, or culturally linked. Languages have historically been created and separate to determine political boundaries. This theory can relate both to constructed languages that were later disassembled, or to mutually intelligible separate languages.

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<sup>96</sup>Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, 32.

<sup>97</sup> John Edwards *Language, Society and Identity*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell. 1985

<sup>98</sup> John Edwards, *Language and Identity: An Introduction*, 160.

Michel Billig echoes this sentiment arguing “One cannot distinguish, for example, a language and dialect on the basis of mutual intelligibility,”<sup>99</sup> He argues that national myth is often inclusive of language myth.

The distinction is made in terms of power relations or levels of standardization. Therefore, more so than the process of recognition of a Tamazight spoken dialect, IRCAM’s project elevates three regional dialects to the level of national language. Importantly, however it is not the only national language.

As defined by Stephen May, a national language requires “legitimation by the state” and “institutionalization in civil society.”<sup>100</sup> Under this definition, IRCAM’s standardized Tamazight is in the early stages of the process to becoming a national language. IRCAM’S primary school integration project works toward the goal of multilingual citizens, whom could institute a civil society with Tamazight. Additionally, part of IRCAM’s language project is the creation of signage in Tamazight. Until now, this is limited mostly to Rabat and the road on which IRCAM sits. This is visible in signs with three translations of the business, store, or hospital: French, Arabic, Tamazight.

In acknowledging Morocco’s extreme rates of illiteracy, the propagation of the Tamazight language education could go one of two ways. Close attention should be paid to these regions in the upcoming years. While IRCAM does not address the general poverty and lack of education for isolated Amazigh communities, it does provide the region with a lingua franca. Morocco’s illiteracy rate is hard to pin down, but it has been estimated between 30-50

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<sup>99</sup> John Edwards, *Language and Identity: An Introduction*, 160.

<sup>100</sup> Stephen May, *Language and Minority Rights: Ethnicity, Nationalism & the Politics of Language*, 159.

percent.<sup>101</sup> The rate is higher among rural populations, which are host statistically larger Amazigh citizens. This could signify a disinterest in standardized Tamazight language, or alternately a focus on Tamazight over other “foreign” languages. The success of these education programs have the possibility to mobilize a pan-Amazigh movement, necessarily limited to Morocco. The institutionalization of a formally taught standardized text will not directly help alleviate social and economic inequality but if it finds interest, it has the ability to provide great benefits. Arabic as a lingua franca allowed trade, cooperation, and propagated cultural affiliation in the region just decades before.

Bruce Maddy-Weitzman argues that through “state-centralization and Arabization policies” spurred the “emergence of modern Amazigh movement, which aims to renegotiate the terms of the Berbers’ accommodating with the nation-state, Islam and modernity.”<sup>102</sup> It is importantly within this modern frame that IRCAM situates itself. But not all activist, as explicated above, use the modernist argument nor do they see themselves as having to accommodate the state. Maddy-Weitzman’s assertion may prove IRCAM’s immense success in controlling the debate on Amazigh rights in Morocco. It works toward a democratic, liberal understanding of their project. Following the general trend of the Arab Spring movement: that is the recognition of minorities through democratization.

## IRCAM’s Myth of Ethnic Election

Nationalism studies scholar, Ernest Gellner, conducted his own fieldwork in the Middle Atlas Mountains, investigating tribal structure of Amazigh communities. He predicted the dissolution

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<sup>101</sup> Howe, *Morocco: The Islamist Awakening and Other Challenges*, 202.

<sup>102</sup> Maddy-Weitzman, “Arabization and its Discontents: The Rise of the Amazigh Movement in North Africa,” 114.

of “Berberness,” traditional and linguistic practice, with modernization and suppression by the nation-state.<sup>103</sup> However, tradition and language have endured to the current day, with increased politicization. IRCAM’s literature, and its very existence emphasize this fact. They have dedicated research to determine the reasons for this resilience, suggesting bilingualism and isolated communities.

IRCAM’s often overtly praises the survival of Amazigh dialects despite nationalizing linguistic policies and globalization. Citing the death of Old-Egyptian, Ancient Greek and Latin, Boukous writes: “If the languages of great civilizations like these ceased to live, how can one explain the fact that less fortunate languages like [Tamazight] have been able to survive?” This sentiment echoes a Smithian understanding of ethnic election. Amazigh are marked “chosen people” not through domination but through “unlikely” ethnic survival.

“The privilege of election is accorded only to those who are sanctified, whose life-style is an expression of sacred values,” writes Smith.<sup>104</sup> There exists a sense of survival through the preservation of moral and traditional values and practices, a feature strongly associated with rhetoric of indigenous rights.<sup>105</sup> While avoiding claims for indigenous rights that can be seen in IRCAM’s detractors, IRCAM’s rhetoric for their legitimacy rests strongly on their indigenous status.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Arabs and Berbers: From Tribe to Nation in North Africa* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1972), 19.

<sup>104</sup> Anthony Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 130.

<sup>105</sup> See Courtney Jung, *The Moral Force of Indigenous Rights: Critical Liberalism and the Zapatistas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

<sup>106</sup> Boukous, *Revitalizing the Amazigh Language: Stakes, Challenges, and Strategies*, 40.

## State-Calculated State Minority Identity

One may glean that this linguistic survival is only possible because of the great degree of multilingualism in Morocco. IRCAM is not protecting a language that competes with Arabic, but merely coexists, in varying levels of diglossia— that is the use of different languages in different social situations.

There exists an additional argument, supported by several scholars on the Amazigh Movement, that the effort to acknowledged and promote Amazigh identity as a feature of national identity works to unite the Amazigh cause with the state against Islamist politics.<sup>107</sup> Nationalists sought to bring Amazigh activists into the fray, to moderate their political stature.

This thesis does not seek to argue that it is solely by the maneuvering of Amazigh activists, that IRCAM was able to create a space in the national consciousness. Instead this was a calculated maneuver by the ruling elites, or the king himself.

John Edwards, a linguist, self reflexively writes on the power play in language planning:

“The purely linguistic aspects of planning are less broadly important than the social ones: in this sense language planner essentially engage in technical activities *after* important decisions have been taken by others; these decisions are often politically motivate and may owe little or nothing to the linguistic history, or, indeed to cultural equity. Matters of

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<sup>107</sup> Paul Silverstein & David Crawford, “Amazigh Activism and the Moroccan State,” Middle East Report No. 233 (2004): 44-47; Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, *The Berber Identity Movement and the Challenge to North African States*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011; Marvine Howe, *Morocco: The Islamist Awakening and Other Challenges*. Oxford: University Press, 2005, 179.

codification and elaboration certainly requires a great deal of skill, but language planners should not delude themselves into thinking they are the prime actors.”

Edwards comments speak not only to IRCAM’s own agency but the motives of the individual language planners or the rector of the moment. Jilali’s comments against IRCAM’s new rector, Boukous, represent the political element that can never be removed from what appears to only be a language revitalization project.

While IRCAM’s eventual project seems a carefully crafted move to be included in the national imaginary, their “ultimate” success in gaining constitutional language equality would realize the true power of the state over IRCAM.



## Chapter 5: Outcomes of Standardization

In finally gaining their “ultimate” success in constitutional recognition, has IRCAM succeeded in their mission? Is there still a need for such an independent institute? According to the state, the answer is no.

Upon its initial creation, IRCAM had full legal and financial independence, meaning it could distribute the budget as they pleased but its recommendations to the state were not legally binding.<sup>108</sup> Upon recognition of “the Amazigh language” as an official national tongue, IRCAM became a national institution. In the words of Jilali Saib, the recognition “downgraded” IRCAM. The institute will now be under the control of the Minister of Higher Education, the High Council of Education (Conseil Supérieur de l’Enseignement), and the National Council of Languages and the Moroccan Culture (Conseil National des Langues et de la Culture Marocaine).

Given the non-transparency of the Moroccan cabinet members, the High Council of Education National Council of Languages and the Moroccan Culture, their members, their budget, and their goals are not shared with the public. Jilali contends that these groups “are working out reorganization plans for the institute” and will not share them with IRCAM’s board members. Jilali fears that Amazigh classes will be changed to a mere elective instead of a general requirement.

Additionally, IRCAM will no longer receive its generous budget from the royal palace but instead from the Ministry of Higher Education, which is a considerate downsizing of funds. Jilali explains it will “cease to be a special institute under the eegis of the King himself.”

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<sup>108</sup> Crawford, “Royal Interesting in Local Culture: Amazigh Identity and the Moroccan State” in *Nationalism and Minorities in Islamic Societies*, 164-189.

According to IRCAM's website, as a royal institute, the rector works in direct contact with the monarch, producing detailed reports of the activities of the institute and administers the administrative and financial aspects of the institute. He is, under approval of the board, tasked with the management of the budget. Under this new "national" status the rector will have none of these privileges and will have to compete for funding from the Mohammed VI Academy of the Arabic Language, the Institute of Arabization, and the Institute for Hassani Studies—all of which are all competing for linguistic research funds and political attention.

With this aforementioned institutionalization, IRCAM loses a great deal of autonomy and its exorbitant budget. It seems IRCAM fell prey to its own success.

In the following passage, IRCAM's rector acknowledges both the precarious status of IRCAM following constitutional recognition, while expressing its importance to the entirety of Moroccans:

"The teaching of this language is gradually extended to the whole country and is expected to cover different levels of the educational system, unless there is a change in perspective that could only be detrimental to the entire country."<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Boukous, *Revitalizing the Amazigh Language: Stakes, Challenges, and Strategies*, 59.

## Conclusion:

The constitutional reform of 2011 marked an obvious shift in the national imaginary. However this narrative of inclusion and plurality had been evident in Institut Royal de la Culture Amazighe literature previous to this linguistic recognition. Morocco's national consciousness has proved expandable, in response to activism and academic study, but more so to political will of the elites.

Indeed it has been modeled after the Arabization processes undertaken in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the same region—they very process it rebels against. However it manages to negotiate the Amazigh and Arab identity to not threaten the Arab-Muslim national consciousness but coexisted with it. Alternately it provides the Amazigh population with a great many tools by which to act as a more cohesive nation within Morocco.

However this creates no real solution to the unequal poverty and illiteracy rates amongst its Amazigh population, and this was not their goal. But most successful to this project is IRCAM's creation of a lingua franca between regional dialects. Given Imazighen interest in the language, this could aid in fruitful pan-regional Moroccan Berber discussion.

IRCAM's language planning projects have shown to exhibit nation-building capabilities and have created a space in the Moroccan national consciousness for Morocco's Amazigh. Nevertheless, IRCAM's literature stress the "ultimate lever" of success in gaining constitutional recognition and cementing their cause in writing. As acknowledged by Boukous, IRCAM's fate has always been at the mercy of political will and will continue to be as it is absorbed into the national bureaucracy. Further research on how its goals fare in competition with other national linguistic institutes can.

As stated previously, Stephen May's definition of "national language" requires not only legislative recognition but institutionalization in civil society. It requires both *de facto* and *de jure* status. With the status of IRCAM in question, one wonders if Tamazight can reach this civil institutionalization. However, as Edwards points out that while language planning is a "species of engineering and, as such, is commissioned implemented by those in power, it ultimately "also requires acceptance from those whose linguistic habits are to be affected."'<sup>110</sup> And so it remains up to Moroccan citizens, Amazigh and Arab alike to cause a linguistic change independent of the status of Institut Royal de la Culture Amazighe. If the language is recognized and accepted as a lingua franca, it could have great unifying power in the pursuit of further rights.

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<sup>110</sup> Edwards, *Language and Identity: An Introduction*, 228.

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