
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

THE ELLIOTT SCHOOL
OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

THE INSTITUTE FOR MIDDLE EAST STUDIES

IMES CAPSTONE PAPER SERIES

ANCIENT MODERNITY AND *AMIZIGHITÉ*:
REIMAGINING THE MOROCCAN NATIONAL IDENTITY

GRAHAM HOUGH-CORNWELL
ANDREA SMITH

MAY 2010

THE INSTITUTE FOR MIDDLE EAST STUDIES
THE ELLIOTT SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

COPYRIGHT OF THE AUTHORS, 2010

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEFINITIONS OF ACRONYMS	i
INTRODUCTION	1
A Note on Semantics	3
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	4
METHODOLOGY	8
Mapping the Amazigh Actor Network	10
Rabat Actors	11
Local Actors	12
Global Actors	13
Multi-Scale Actors	13
IDENTITY POLITICS	14
Indigenous and Linguistic Rights	
Imaginative Geographies	
REIMAGINING MOROCCAN NATIONAL IDENTITY	20
A Cow with the Skin of a Donkey?	21
A Plastic Language Laboratory?	25
Making the Movement	30
CONCLUSION	33
REFERENCES	37

FIGURES

FIGURE 1: Conceptual Map of Amazigh Activism	10
FIGURE 2: Temporal Imaginings of Tamazight Script Choice	24
FIGURE 3: <i>Institut Royal de la Culture Amazighe</i> (IRCAM), March 15, 2010	27

DEFINITIONS OF ACRONYMS

AMREC	<i>Association Marocaine de la Recherche et des Échanges Culturels</i>
ANT	Actor Network Theory
AZETTA	<i>Réseau Amazigh pour la Citoyenneté</i>
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council of the United Nations
IPACC	Indigenous People of Africa Coordinating Committee
IRCAM	<i>Institut Royal de la Culture Amazighe Marocaine</i>
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees

INTRODUCTION

The popular movement of the indigenous people of Morocco, the Amazigh, constantly straddles the line between the specific and the general. That is, it must at once appeal to individual understandings of what it means to be Amazigh for millions of Moroccan Amazigh in villages, towns, and cities across the country. At the same time, it must emphasize commonality between these specificities and it must extend a shared sense of identity to a national scale. For Homi Bhabha, “the very place of identification, caught in the tension of demand and desire, is a space of splitting” (1986: 117). The Moroccan Amazigh movement is caught in this split space, negotiating between the timeless and the modern, the specific and the broad, the placed and the ubiquitous.

In order to understand Amazigh identity in Morocco, we chose to interview those who claim to speak on behalf of the Amazigh: the activists. Our research objective was to understand how Amazigh activists define Amazigh identity and how this definition influences identity “on-the-ground.” Beyond that, we sought to explore who the main actors were, and what their methods they used, and how they interacted. Approaching Amazigh identity through the lens of activism provided not only an accessible but also a unique window into a robust network of multi-scaled actors that exposed various layers of understanding of what it means to be Amazigh and what it means to be a cultural activist. It sheds light on the often-observed boundaries of ethno-politics and identity-based movements at large.

In a series of interviews in Rabat and Marrakech, Morocco, Amazigh activists articulated their notions of identity through the narratives they presented on the history, goals, and priorities of the Amazigh movement as well as through their perceptions of and relations with other actors participating in the Amazigh question in Morocco. In the analysis of our interviews, we

highlighted views surrounding the choice of script and perceptions of IRCAM as particularly illustrative of new patterns of spatial and temporal imaginings prevalent in the activist narratives about the movement and about national identity writ large. On the basis of these spatial and temporal analyses, we argue that the discourse on Amazigh activism is shaped around the discourse of Morocco as an Amazigh – not Arab – land and around an expansion of Moroccan identity to include ideas of multiculturalism.

The following paper is divided into five sections. In the first section we situate our project and the broader Amazigh movement within a rich history influenced by colonial legacy and postcolonial perspectives. Next, we provide an overview of our methodology, which was informed by multiple disciplines and included interviews, qualitative data analysis, and coding. This section also provides a conceptual map of Amazigh activism and through a scalar analysis, details the activities and relationships of its numerous interlocutors. Section three, “Identity Politics,” explores the Amazigh movement’s unique position amidst postcolonialism, human rights discourse and imaginative geographies and presents a review of the relevant literatures that we utilize in our analytic framework. In the fourth section, we delve into our respondents’ reimaginings of the Moroccan nation and identity through a temporal analysis of Tamazight script choice and spatial analysis of their perceptions of the *Institut Royal de la Culture Amazighe* (IRCAM) and a discussion of how those imaginings combine to form the Amazigh movement and ultimately contribute to unified understandings of the Morocco and *Amazighité*. Lastly, we draw conclusions that extend our findings to broader regional and international questions of identity-formation and imaginative geographies.

A Note on Semantics

“The Berbers” refers to a people who are known to have occupied North Africa for more than 5000 years. The majority of Berbers live in Morocco (50%) and Algeria (30%). The remaining 20% is divided among Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, the Touareg populations of Mali and Niger, and the Canary Islands (Errihani 2007). However, definitive population demographics are not agreed upon.

The name, *Berber*, by which this group of people is commonly known is generally disliked by Berber activists because of its Ancient Greek origins and the negative¹ connotations associated with it (Errihani 2007 and pers. comm. 2010). Thus, *Amazigh* (plural: *Imazighen*), which means *free* and *noble* in Tamazight, is the more politically accepted term used by the majority of activists and scholars to refer to the indigenous people of North Africa (Errihani 2007). Similarly, the word *Tamazight* is widely used to refer to the Berber language, which in Morocco includes the three regionally spoken varieties of *Tarifit*, *Tamazight*, and *Tachelhit*. Our respondents also used the term *Tamazgha* to describe the general region of Berber-speaking peoples stretching from the Touareg in Mali and Niger in the south to the Siwa Oasis in Egypt and the Moroccan Rif Mountains in the north.

While other scholars argue that the term *Berber* carries no negative connotation (Ennaji 2005) or use the term to ease Western audiences’ understanding (Errihani 2007), we feel using the lexicon of our interlocutors is essential to the description and understanding of their imaginings of *Amazigh* identity. Therefore, we use the terms *Amazigh* (plural: *Imazighen*) when

¹ The etymology of the word Berber is not agreed upon, many sources believe the term *Berber* is a variation of the Latin word *Barbarian*. Others, link the name to the ancient Greek term "βάρβαρος / βάρβαροι," which was originally a derogatory term for all non-Greek speakers. The nonsense syllables "bar-bar" have no meaning in Greek; the term implied that all languages other than Greek were a collection of nonsense syllables. The term has been translated as "stutterers," "stammerers," or "babblers" and has included, a connotation of being non-civilized or "barbaric" that later became primary in cognate terms like "barbarian" (Chafik 2005: 15-16, Random House Dictionary 2010).

speaking about the people, identity, culture, and associated movement; *Tamazight* when speaking about language; and *Tamazgha* when speaking about the collective imagining of the greater *Amazigh* people and culture. We will use the term Berber, however, when directly quoting other authors.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Mohammed Chafik's historical treatise, *A Brief Survey of Thirty-Three Centuries of Amazigh History*, originally written in Arabic but translated by the IRCAM into English in 2005, traces Amazigh inhabitants in the North Africa back 9,000 years and suggests that the Islamization and Arabization of North Africa occurred only gradually and through great struggle and effort. Chafik, a leading Amazigh activist and scholar, suggests that the Arab invasions, beginning in the seventh century, merely initiated these processes. The arrival of greater numbers of Arabic-speaking tribes from Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula from the end of the 10th century helped spread the Arabic language into large portions of the coastal plains and pre-desert plateaus, yet Morocco remained and continues to remain only partially Arabized, with large swaths of the country (particularly in the Rif and Atlas Mountain ranges) speaking predominantly Amazigh languages (Chafik, 2004).

Today, Morocco's Amazigh population makes up roughly half of the country. Hard numbers of Imazighen vary widely, ranging from as high as 60% to as low as 30% of the Moroccan population (Hamama, 2010). Regional divisions further complicate the demographic picture; Morocco's Amazigh population is comprised of three major regions – the northern Tarifit in the Rif Mountains, the central Tamazight mainly in the Middle Atlas range, and the southern Tashelhit, located in the High Atlas and Anti-Atlas ranges and the nearby plains. With the rise of Amazigh activist movements over the past several decades, “cultural associations”

from the three regions have increased their communication and coordination.

This rough sketch of Moroccan linguistic and cultural geography held through the late 19th century and the beginnings of French colonial rule, typically manifesting itself as the concept of “two Moroccos”: the urban and coastal, largely Arabic-speaking *bled el makhzan* (or lands under the rule of the Moroccan sultan) and the rural, mainly Berber-speaking *bled es siba* (or lands of dissidence) of the mountain regions (Gellner and Micaud 1973). French ethnographic studies during the colonial period also display this dichotomy, and many attribute the post-independence schism between Morocco’s Arab and Amazigh populations to French divide-and-rule tactics that sought to create different systems of administration and law in predominantly “Berber regions” (Brown, 1973: 204-6; Pennell, 2000: 115-6). Other historians have since revisited French ethnography and began to critique the “two Moroccos” portrayal as an overly determined reading not indicative of the significant interactions between Arab and Amazigh populations (Burke, 1973: 198-99).

Many of the questions regarding Amazigh, Arab, and national identity arise out of the anti- and postcolonial processes of forming the nation state, postcolonial theoretical approaches not only inform the ways we frame our research and analyze our sources but also frame the ways our informants sought to answer questions of nationality, ethnicity, and indigenous relevant to the Moroccan Amazigh issue. As the Amazigh narrative often incorporates a double colonialism, whereby Berber Morocco was “colonized” by Arabs in the seventh century and then the Arabized Morocco was conquered by the French from 1912 to 1956, post-colonial ideas about colonized cultures and resistance demonstrate how Amazigh activists shape their sense of identity alongside and in competition with dominant narratives of Arab, Islamic, and royal Morocco.

Frantz Fanon's work on the rigid polarization of colonizer and colonized speaks to the question of Amazigh national identity in Morocco (1967). He highlights the "split personality" of the colonized man where he fails to recognize himself in the image the colonizer projects of him. This image over-determines his difference (Fanon focuses on Black skin) rendering his self-image unrecognizable and alienating it from others' image of him. Though Fanon's work stemmed from his time in Algeria, it can still be applied to the Moroccan Amazigh movement, and particularly his condemnation of colonized man's use of the colonized language as reaffirming the split personality. Furthermore he also expressed a disdain for dialects because they sealed the speaker in a narrow world. The tension between two worlds – the indigenous and that of the colonizer – is constantly negotiated and performed by Amazigh activists, who may speak a regional dialect of Tamazight but are forced to use French with colleagues. More generally, the movement is still frayed over the experience of French colonialism: members argue that Imazighen strongly resisted the French occupation, yet they do not see a clear place for themselves within the dominant postcolonial Arabist discourse of the nation (Maddy-Weitzman 2007).

Other critiques of nationalist responses to colonialism are also worth consideration. Homi Bhabha's notion of "dissemiNation" argued that national identities by nature always obscure "traces and patches" of the nation's heterogeneous population (1994: 199-203). This links both to Fanon and to Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's work on the language of the colonizer, and, specifically, his emphasis on the written language. Thiong'o observed that colonized children always have a foreign tongue as their "language of conceptualization" and that there was no connection between children's "written world" and the spoken world of home and the environment (1994: 442-3). He draws on Fanon directly when he calls this part of the "colonial alienation" and then

continues to argue that colonial children defined the world and their place in it in terms of this colonial language. Obviously, contemporary efforts to teach Tamazight in public schools seek to remedy the impacts of colonial rule, but the continued use of French and the difficulties of actualizing a national program of Tamazight instruction point to the lingering remnants of that alienation. These theoretical approaches are valuable for considering how colonial and hegemonic power incongruity produce narratives of national identity and culture that obscure many of the ambiguities and ambivalences that exist in colonial and post-colonial societies. Simply put, anti- and postcolonial movements in Morocco worked not to liberate or simplify but to complicate the place of Amazigh culture and people in the Moroccan national narrative. A key part of this process involved the creation of “cultural associations” across the country and their development in terms of popularity and cohesion at local, regional, national, and international levels.

Though Amazigh activism and cultural associations originated in the 1960s with the founding of the Moroccan Association for Culture and Exchange (AMREC), the movement truly gained traction in the late 1980s. For many, the 1989 publication of Chafik’s book was a watershed; his assertion that Imazighen were distinct from Arabs was new to the public discourse on “Berbers,” and it began a period of greater political activity for Amazigh groups in Morocco, Algeria, and Diaspora communities in North America and Europe as well (Chafik, 2004). Two years later, in 1991, six major national associations gathered in Agadir and drafted the “Agadir Charter,” which called for an institute to protect and promote the Tamazight language and the recognition of Tamazight as an official tongue (UNHCR 2000). Momentum gathered over the next decade, and, as part of the new monarchy’s efforts towards moderate liberalization, in 2001 King Mohammed VI announced the creation of IRCAM to maintain and develop Amazigh

culture and language. Its primary task would be the standardization of the Tamazight languages – combining the three regional dialects into a standard, national Amazigh language – and the implementation of Tamazight instruction in every school in Morocco (Silverstein and Crawford, 2004: 44-47).

The progress on this front has been predictably slow. Teacher shortages, inadequate funding for textbooks and classroom materials, and a lack of cooperation from the Ministry of Education continue to be major obstacles and, as a result, in only 25% of Moroccan schools currently teach Tamazight. The Amazigh movement, however, continues to develop a stronger following and more complex leadership structures. Diffuse sets of village associations in virtually every region of the country are linked to larger regional and national associations who keep full-time staff and are able to procure funding that, in turn, helps develop village level programming and development. At the present, leadership for the movement seems to be entering a new phase, with something of a break between the “incrementalist” old guard who brought *Amazighité* into the public sphere two decades ago and a younger group of activists more interested in direct political engagement.

METHODOLOGY

In choosing the topic of Amazigh identity, we were keenly aware of the vastness of the subject as well as the multitude of actors present in Morocco, France, the United States, and other locations throughout the globe. Acknowledging limitations in time and resources, we narrowed our research subject to Amazigh activists in order to understand how they imagine Amazigh identity and its place in the Moroccan state.

A multi-sited analysis allowed us to capture as many angles as possible from which Amazigh identity and activism can be approached. In March 2010, we conducted 15 interviews

at multiple sites of Amazigh activism in Morocco, including: *Institute Royale de la Culture Amazighe Marocaine* (IRCAM); Tamaynut Cultural Association; *Association Marocaine de la Recherche et des Échanges Culturels* (AMREC); Amazigh World; and *Réseau Amazigh pour la Citoyenneté* (AZETTA). In our series of unstructured and semi-structured interviews, we targeted senior organizers and founding members in order to best ascertain the organizations' methods, priorities, goals, and their relationships with other groups as well as sufficiently narrow our field of inquiry. In addition to interviews conducted in Morocco, our research also draws upon substantial email correspondence and phone interviews with American Amazigh activists and relevant members of the international academy from December 2009 through April of 2010.

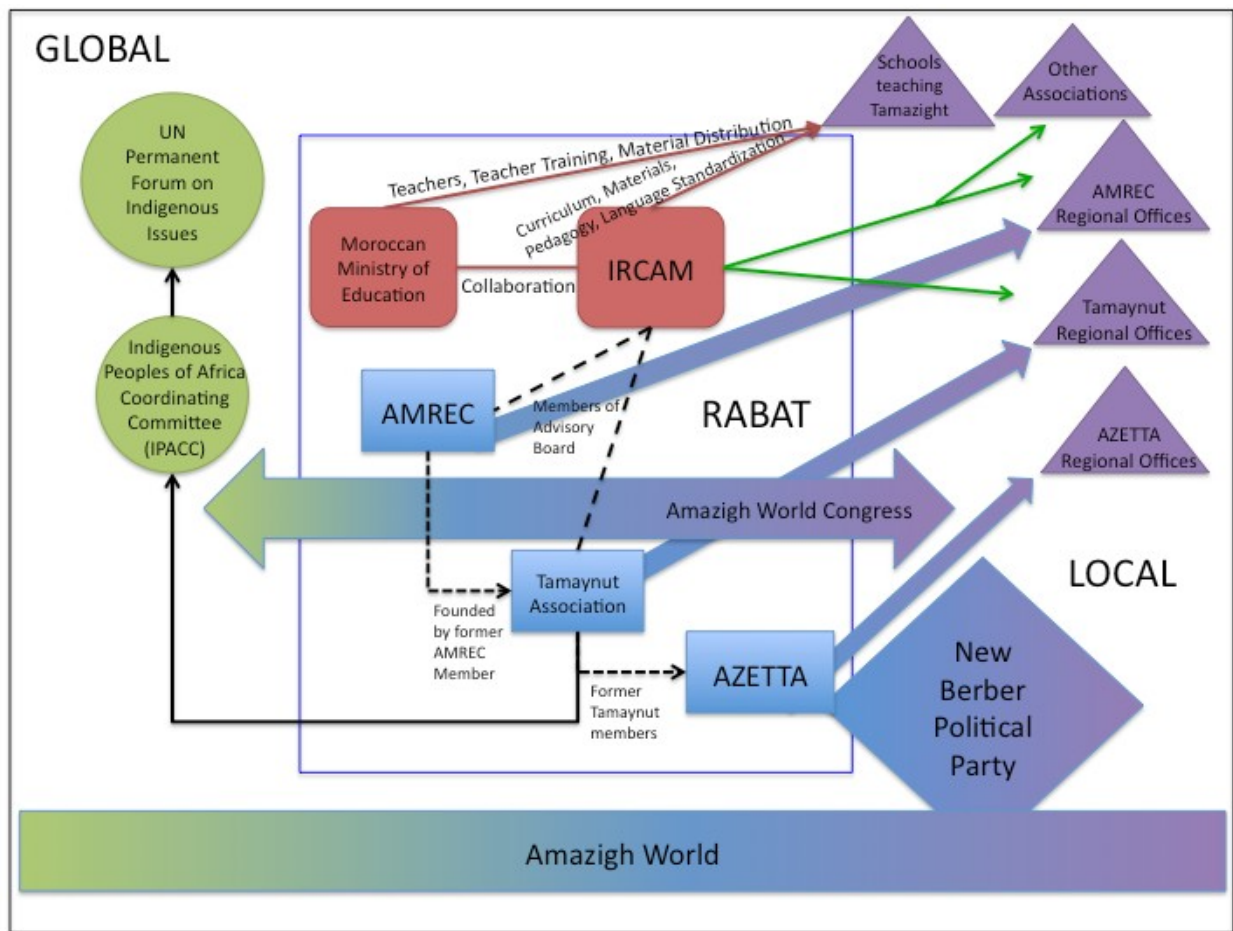
Given the multilingual nature of Morocco, interviews were conducted in a mixture of Arabic, French, and English and all translation and interpretation is our own. During interviews in English, we both took notes and posed questions following prepared interview guides. In interviews in French, one of us acted as the note taker while the other posed questions and translated the answers for the other. A few respondents spoke at length in French. In those instances, the person with higher French fluency simultaneously translated to English while the other took detailed notes.

Our research methodology utilized qualitative data analysis and was informed by ethnographic and feminist perspectives. We analyzed the data collected from our informants in Morocco as well as phone and email correspondence with international specialists from various disciplines. Our process of analysis included an exhaustive review of field notes and other correspondence; systematic coding of that data; development of conceptual threads; and finally, linking of those grounded concepts with substantial and formal theory.

As mentioned previously, the international Amazigh movement involves a plethora of

actors, the study of which was well beyond the scope of this undertaking. Moreover, within the boundaries of Morocco alone there exist thousands of organizations, associations, and institutions involved in Amazigh cultural, social, and political activism, which collaborate on a number of levels and form a complex network (Silverstein and Crawford 2004). In our analysis of this network, we created the following conceptual map to illustrate the various levels of action and relationships between actors.

Figure 1: Conceptual Map of Amazigh Activism



Mapping Amazigh Activism

Figure 1 presents a scalar analysis of the Amazigh actors that we came into contact with during our research. The conceptual map shows three scales: Global, Local, and Rabat. The Rabat scale, located in the center of the map, is situated in between the Local and the Global

scales. As the capital, Rabat is an important hub for policy and activism in general and serves as an interface between the global and local scales. There are also a few multi-scale actors whose activities transcend all three scales. A brief description of the actor network, their relationships and activities by scale follows.

Rabat Actors

Centrally located on the Atlantic coast, Rabat is a site of great strategic, economic, and administrative importance. As the capital of Morocco, the city is naturally politically significant and is home to international embassies and businesses as well as the headquarters of most Moroccan associations. While in Rabat, we met with three national associations at their headquarters: AMREC; Tamaynut Association; and AZETTA.

Founded in the 1960s, AMREC is commonly referred to as the pioneer of Amazigh activism and as such the majority of other Amazigh associations have some connection to AMREC. Initially, AMREC adopted the task of amassing Amazigh culture – its music, literature, crafts, films, and dance – thereby preserving it for future generations. Today, AMREC is a venerated cultural association who prides itself on working with all groups to promote and preserve Amazigh identity and culture.

Tamaynut Association was founded by a former AMREC member in 1978. Of the groups we interviewed, Tamaynut had the most connection to the indigenous rights movement at the global scale. Tamaynut is an indigenous civil society network that works to promote the use of Tamazight and the recognition of Amazigh culture. Its founder is the elected representative to the Indigenous People of Africa Coordinating Committee (IPACC) and in this capacity he participates in the UN's Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Additionally, Tamaynut has received accreditation for indigenous issues from the Economic and Social Council of the United

Nations (ECOSOC) and engaged in a study on customary law of indigenous peoples in cooperation with the International Labor Office (IPACC 2007).

Former Tamaynut members founded the newest of the associations we met with, AZETTA. AZETTA situates itself in the discourse of international human rights citing seven international charters and declarations (i.e. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Africa Convention of Human and Peoples' Rights, the Mexico Convention, the Barcelona Convention, etc.) as the basis of its platform. In its Rabat headquarters, AZETTA focuses primarily on lobbying for the acknowledgement of cultural, linguistic, economic, social, environmental, and political rights of Moroccan people framed in largely democratic, secular, and liberal values.

IRCAM is the dominant government actor in the Amazigh movement. Founded in October 2001 by royal decree, IRCAM's mission is to provide the king with "advice about the measures that are likely to preserve and promote the Amazigh culture in all its expressions" (Chaahibi, 2001: Article 2). In addition, IRCAM is tasked with contributing to the implementation of universal Tamazight education, including language standardization, pedagogy and curriculum development. The Institute is located in *Hay Riad*, an area of Rabat home to the majority of the Royal Institutes, Ministries, and Departments. IRCAM collaborates with the Moroccan Ministry of Education on the distribution of materials, pedagogy, and teacher training. On the local scale, IRCAM provides public schools with Tamazight language materials and also numerous associations with funding for cultural programming.

Local Actors

We use the term 'Local' to refer to all actors in Morocco outside of Rabat ranging from small village level associations to large regional associations, such as those in Casablanca. Although we did not interview local groups for this project, we would be remiss if we did not

include the robust network of local actors participating in Amazigh activism in our map of the Amazigh activism network. All of the associations we met with as well as others have numerous (10-50 each) regional and local offices and associations operating throughout Morocco. In general, the activities of the local networks focus on the promotion of literacy, traditional crafts, and cottage industries, especially for women in rural areas.

Public schools teaching Tamazight are another key actor at the Local scale. Schools represent one of the main spaces affected by the official recognition of the Amazigh culture and interact directly with IRCAM and the Ministry of Education in the implementation of universal Amazigh education. However, as stated previously this large project is not without tribulations. As of March 2010, only 25% of the targeted 100% of schools was receiving Tamazight instruction (pers. comm. 15 March 2010).

Global Actors

As mentioned previously, the Amazigh movement mobilizes global notions of human rights and specifically identifies with international actors involved in the indigenous rights movement, such as the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the IPACC. While there are also strong global connections between Moroccan Amazigh actors and Amazigh actors in the United States, France, Canada and other locations, those networks were beyond the scope of this project and therefore are not included in the conceptual map.

Multi-Scale Actors

In our research we also encountered ‘multi-scale’ actors or actors whose activities transcend multiple scales. The Amazigh World Congress is a gathering of Amazigh actors from Morocco, Algeria, the Canary Islands, Mali, Niger, and other locations that has been taking place annually since 1996. During their meeting, the Congress discusses issues pertaining to: language

and culture; socio-economics; internationalization and funding; history; and organization (Larbi 2010). AMREC and Tamaynut have been among the participants of the Amazigh World Congress since its inception.

Amazigh World represents another multi-scale actor and was one of our key respondents. Primarily an online community, Amazigh World is a group of actors living and working in North Africa and North America who publish news articles, reports, and opinion pieces pertaining to the Amazigh movement on the website: www.amazighworld.org. While in Morocco, we met with Amazigh World members in Marrakech.

Finally, members of AZETTA and Amazigh World spoke to us about the possible formation of a new Amazigh political party. Still in its planning stages, this party is a collaborative effort amongst several actors and therefore is considered multi-scale.

IDENTITY POLITICS

Before discussing our analysis of Amazigh activism and the question of national identity, we need to briefly review the rich literature that overlaps with our research and also explain some of our terminology. We see Amazigh activism as situated at a unique crossroads of postcolonialism, indigenous rights movements, and human rights discourse. It emerges from colonial and postcolonial discourses about inclusion and exclusion in nationalist narratives, and it does so in part by appealing to liberal notions of indigenous rights, human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. In doing so, it imagines the nation spatially and temporally in ways that sometimes overlap but often diverge from dominant, state-influenced nationalist narratives. The following two sections discuss theoretical notions relating to indigenous and linguistic rights discourse and imaginative geographies that provides the framework for our analysis of Amazigh activism.

Indigenous and Linguistic Rights

Since 1945, there has been a noticeable shift in emphasis of the universal protection of individual rights and freedoms evidenced by the adoption of the language of human rights by innumerable indigenous, cultural, ethnic, civil, and minority movements globally. However, despite international recognition and acceptance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which guarantees the fundamental rights of all human beings, in practical fact indigenous peoples' human rights remain without specifically designated safeguards (University of Minnesota Human Rights Center 2003). As an indigenous people of Morocco, Imazighen and Amazigh activists associate strongly with both indigenous and linguistic rights movements. Most of the activists we interviewed utilized the basic language of human rights in their framing of the Amazigh movement and some referenced their connection to indigenous rights frameworks that emphasize collective, traditional, and linguistic rights claims. Additionally, at least one association, Tamaynut, also has direct connections with international human rights structures, such as the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and IPACC.

The United Nations Special Rapporteur to the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are:

...those which having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of societies now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop, and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems (Martinez-Cobo 1987).

Although the 'transmission of ethnic identity' amongst indigenous or minority peoples can occur in a number of ways, the last third of the twentieth century – often referred to as a time of “ethnic revival”—has witnessed a renewed stress on language in various mobilizations of ethnicity and

ethno-politics throughout the world (Fishman 1999, Safran 2005). Moreover, Joshua Fishman notes in the *Handbook of Language and Ethnic Identity* that “although language has rarely been equated with the totality of ethnicity, it has, in certain historical, regional, and disciplinary contexts been accorded priority within that totality (1999: 4).” In this general climate, language rights, as both moral and legal categories, are receiving increasing practical and theoretical consideration in broader ethnic and indigenous rights movements (Rubio-Marin, 2004: 53). On a practical level, there have been a growing number of political conflicts and challenges throughout the world that are centered on linguistic diversity. A few examples of such linguistic conflicts include: Catalonia and the Basque Country in Spain, Quebec in Canada, and Flanders in Belgium. While the outcomes of these conflicts have varied, in most of the cases a trend seems to be developing amongst Western countries towards granting increased language rights to such regional linguistic groups (Patten and Kymlicka, 2003: 4). On a theoretical level, the increasing politicization of language and language policy has had many implications on political theory. As Alan Patten and Will Kymlicka (2003: 5) point out “debates over regional language are never just debates over language.” Rather, for the minority language group, recognition of its language is often seen as a symbol of recognition of its nationhood, an integral step toward acceptance of a multination state, a partnership of two or more nations within a single state (Patten and Kymlicka, 2003: 5). This innate connection between language and nationalism makes minority and indigenous language rights a priority for both minority and majority groups, which has contributed to the proliferation of a burgeoning international discourse surrounding the subject that provides a language for various levels of actors to articulate their activism for linguistic and cultural rights.

In keeping with the development of this discourse, Tamazight language is often

considered *the* symbol of Amazigh culture, values, and traditions and as such it occupies a central role in defining Amazigh identity (Errihani 2007, Gellner 1969, Maddy-Weitzman 2007, Montagne 1973). For this reason, the Amazigh Movement views language recognition and linguistic rights as a fundamental step towards greater social, economic, and political recognition. Demands for recognition and inclusion of Tamazight have figured prominently in all of the Movement's official documents, including the Agadir Charter (1991) and the Berber Manifesto (2000). As articulated by Khalid Ouassou, Vice-president of the Amazigh Network for Citizenship (RAC): "We wish there to be an effective equality between the languages and the cultures. This is needed allow the possibility of a great part of the Moroccan population to enjoy its rights (Cournoyer 2006)."

In light the developments of the Amazigh movement within Morocco as well as the momentum indigenous, minority, and linguistic rights gathered internationally, the turn of the twenty-first century marked a new era of Morocco Policy. During this time, the Moroccan state embarked on a series of reforms, amendments, and development projects aimed at redressing systematic inequalities and ushering the state into the 'modern' era. These projects included: the creation of a human rights agency to guarantee basic rights and privileges of Moroccan citizens, a reconciliation committee to investigate human rights violations committed by the previous regime, changing the family code to reflect new rights for women; launching the National initiative for Human Development, higher education reform. Amidst this period of historic reform, in 2001, King Mohammad VI recognized, by royal *dahir*, the Amazigh language and culture as essential components of Moroccan history and identity. The implementation of universal Amazigh language instruction in the Moroccan school system was planned and envisioned as the first and most practical result of the King's declaration.

This policy marks the first time in the history of North Africa and the Middle East that an indigenous minority language was recognized and is being taught in schools. While this clearly has broad implications for the region, the word “minority” could prove problematic in this context as there is no way of establishing whether or not the Amazigh people are indeed a numerical minority (Errihani, 2007: 17). However, it is certain that the Imazighen are a minority in terms of political and economic power, which has consequently led Amazigh elites to unite and mobilize in the name of their collective rights.

Following the official recognition of the Amazigh language and culture the importance Tamazight language, including the projects of standardization, instruction, and promotion, continued to grow despite the many challenges facing implementation. Amidst these struggles, Tamazight, largely an oral language, also faced another difficult hurdle: the choice of an appropriate script. Throughout 2002-3, a debate raged over which script to use: Latin, Arabic, or “a modified version of Tifinagh (an ancient script still used by Touaregs in the Sahara/Sahel regions, but which otherwise fell into complete disuse hundreds of years ago)” (Maddy-Weitzman, 2006: 79).

Before the decision was made, the field was split in primarily two camps: Latin and Arabic. For reasons of practicality and sustainability, the majority of Amazigh groups within Morocco believed in adopting the ‘universal’ (i.e. Latin) script. On the other hand, Moroccan Islamists campaigned in favor of Arabic script. Despite generally agreeing with the recognition of Amazigh culture, Islamists perceived the script debate as part of Western-Francophone civilization’s greater efforts to undermine the dominance of Islam and promote secularization (Maddy-Weitzman 2006). Outside of these two opinions, a relatively small number of Amazigh groups, AMREC in particular, advocated for Tifinagh on the basis of identity building. To

resolve the debate, the King declared in 2003 that Tifinagh would be the official Tamazight script. Although Tifinagh was the official recommendation of IRCAM and researchers claimed that it would be no more difficult for children to learn than other alphabets, the decision is largely viewed by activists and others as a political compromise between the proponents of Latin and Arabic. However, for some Amazigh activists the decision was viewed less as a compromise and more as a typical expression of state power and interference in their movement's progress.

Imaginative Geographies

The debates and contestations within the Amazigh activist movement over language, identity, and political activity emerge out of postcolonial and neoliberal contexts and consequently produce images of Amazigh and Moroccan identity that are sometimes contradictory. We draw from scholarship on “imaginative geographies” to describe the process of identity making and its final – but never finished – product. Edward Said (1978), drawing off Lévi-Strauss, observed that despite the human mind's innumerable distractions, it always seems to possess a “science of the concrete” that constructs fixed boundaries between categories and delineates markers of difference. This occurs in space, too: Gregory refers to this imaginative work as “the recognition and understanding of symbolic territories” (1995: 447). Mapping the world into local, national, or regional divisions and subdivisions, then, always involves that process of turning an individual or a group's perceptions of space into something that appears concrete. This process of “imaginative geographies” also legitimizes a particular way of speaking that places the subject of an imaginative geography – in our case, *Amazighité*, Morocco, and “the nation” more broadly – “schematically on a theatrical stage” (Said, 1978: 33-34).

In other words, imaginative geographies are performed through repetition, and in these

repetitions they become rigid and capable of dictating future imaginings. They begin to form categories and delineate difference cleanly and perfectly, and they do so with the authority of accepted wisdom and common sense. We approach the question of Amazigh and Moroccan national identity with this in mind. We attempt to elucidate some of the ways different iterations of *Amazighité* both parallel and contradict each other, and we analyze how these notions coalesce to form the framework of Amazigh activism.

REIMAGINING THE MOROCCAN NATION

Our main goal was to understand how Amazigh identity is defined and how those definitions shape identity on the ground. We interviewed Moroccan Amazigh activists in order to understand their imagining of Amazigh identity through the narratives they presented on the history, goals, and priorities of the Amazigh movement as well as through their perceptions of and relations with other actors participating in the Amazigh question in Morocco.

Our series of encounters with Amazigh activists revealed multiple layers of understanding of what it means to be Amazigh and what it means to be a cultural activist. In the analysis of our interviews, several reoccurring themes emerged in our respondents' narratives. From these we highlighted the choice of scrip and perceptions of IRCAM, and within these categories of analysis, both similarities and differences in opinion naturally emerged. On the surface, these different views have practical and strategic significance for the parties involved. However, beyond that, we argue that they also elucidate new patterns of spatial and temporal imaginings prevalent in the activist narratives about the movement and about national identity writ large.

We recognize that any category or pattern can prove restrictive and problematic, and that there will certainly be exceptions to our analysis. However, by limiting our study to leaders of

main Amazigh associations and to scholars working at IRCAM we endeavor to present a specific assemblage of Amazigh voices within the movement. Moreover, because our informants represent prominent nodes of Amazigh activism, their individual and collective imaginings give particular salience to our conclusions. Built upon these spatial and temporal imaginings, we argue that Amazigh activism is shaped around the discourse of Morocco as an Amazigh – not Arab – land and around an expansion of Moroccan identity to include ideas of multiculturalism. In the next two sections, we articulate this argument through a temporal analysis of Tamazight script choice and a spatial analysis of perceptions of IRCAM. The third section, entitled “Making a Movement,” brings together the previous two analyses to illustrate the divergent and corresponding layers of the Amazigh movement and the ways in which they come together around the central images of Morocco as an Amazigh land and Moroccan multicultural identity.

A Cow with the Skin of a Donkey?

In addition to its symbolic and strategic importance, language, specifically its written form, has been literally the most visible battleground of the Amazigh movement. One of our respondents, described as “the epitome of an Amazigh activist” (pers. comm. 1 March 2010), shared with us the story of being arrested and imprisoned early in his career for displaying a sign in both Tamazight and Arabic outside his office. Now a prominent and respected leader in the movement, he lawfully displays his bilingual sign and has seen many developments with regard to language since his arrest in 1982. The most influential among them came in July 2001 when King Mohammad VI officially recognized the Amazigh language and culture; called for its universal inclusion into the Moroccan education system; and created IRCAM as the steward of this new linguistic project. As previously stated, this landmark development then sparked a heated debate over the appropriate script choice for Tamazight.

The battle over script was significant on three levels. First, as one of the most visible markers of Amazigh identity, the choice of script was of great symbolic, cultural, and historical importance. Secondly, the choice script was also integral to the project of language instruction and standardization and therefore it was of practical import. Finally, due to the multilingual reality of Morocco (Errihani 2007) and the powerful role that language has played historically throughout the colonization, government, and education of the country, the debate and ultimate decision was also decidedly political in importance.

Despite the fact that the official decision to use Tifinagh script took place in 2003, during our fieldwork, all of our informants spoke about their positions on the choice of alphabet – Tifinagh or Latin – for the “new” Tamazight language to be taught in schools across Morocco. Although the political, cultural, and practical implications of the decision have been widely discussed in popular and academic literature (Maddy-Weitzman 2006, Errihani 2007), we observed that the debate on script has new analytic power for illustrating the cleavages and competing visions of Amazigh and Moroccan identity within the movement. Moreover, the activists’ justifications of script choice illustrate different temporal imaginings of the Amazigh movement and *Amazighité*.

While discussing the debate over script and specifically the use of Latin, an IRCAM researcher asked us, if we had “ever seen a cow with the skin of a donkey?” While his question induced laughter, his point was clear: “Tifinagh is the skin of Tamazight.” For him and other respondents we interviewed from Tamaynut, AMREC, and IRCAM, the Tifinagh script represented a deep connection to Amazigh historical identity. In their view, the Tifinagh script, composed of 30 symbol-like letters and most commonly used by the Touareg people in Mali and Niger, presents the Tamazight language as uniquely and recognizably Amazigh. Further

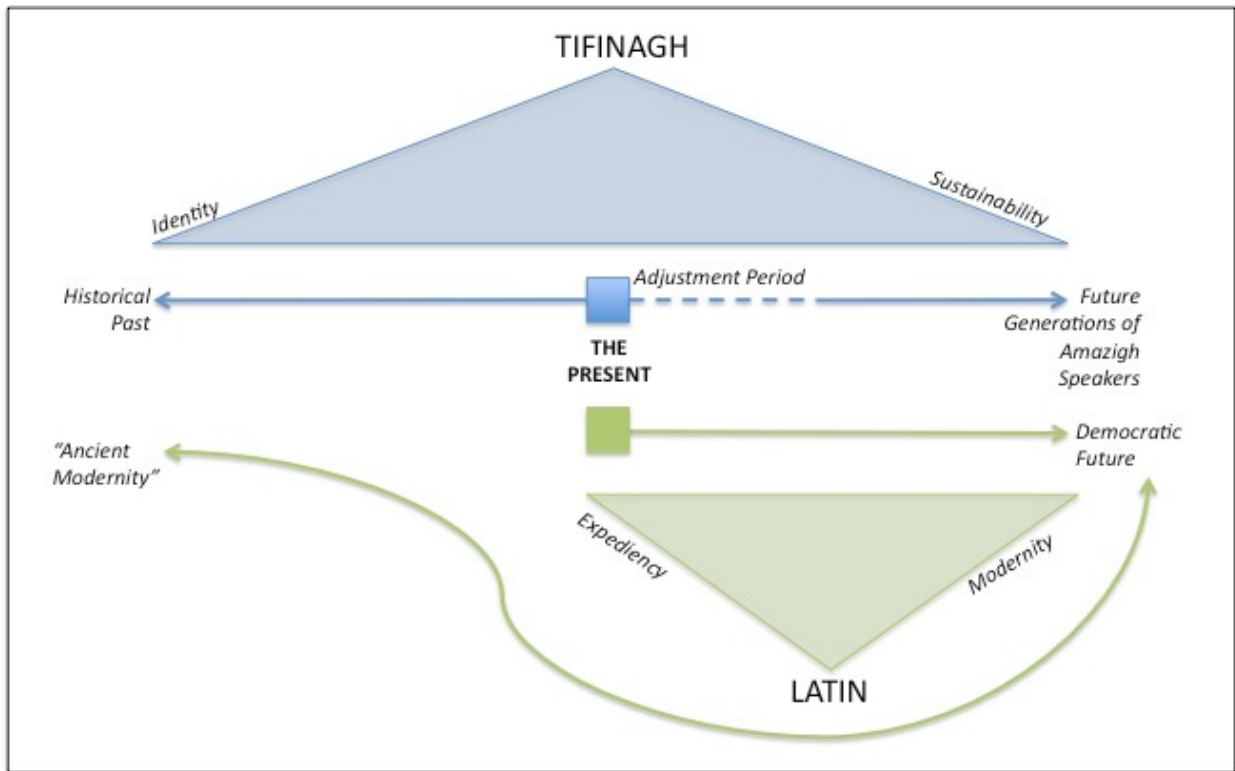
underscoring the importance of a script that is distinctively Amazigh, another activist described Tifinagh as “our own legs to stand on, a creative choice and the historical choice.”

Tifinagh was also described as integral to the sustainability of the Tamazight language, particularly among the researchers we interviewed at IRCAM’s Center for Linguistic Management. All of the proponents of Tifinagh recognized and accepted the period of adjustment required for Tamazight to take hold in schools and minds throughout Morocco; however, they emphasized its importance for the long-term survival of the language. Underlying this claim of sustainability was a feeling that the choice of Tifinagh script will benefit future generations of Tamazight speakers.

Activists who preferred Latin also acknowledged Tifinagh’s innate connection to Amazigh identity as well as its symbolic and artistic importance. In general, they respected the decision that was made and could read and write in Tifinagh themselves; however, they also clearly articulated their preference for Latin. As an activist from Amazigh World said of Tifinagh, “I like [it]. It’s ours, but we believe in Latin.” For him, a member of a predominately online activist community, the Latin alphabet facilitated communication within the movement and thus was the only way for Tamazight to become a “competitive” global language. Another activist from AZETTA, with cell phone in hand, spoke about Latin as a choice for the present in contrast to the future-oriented choice of Tifinagh. For these actors, using the Latin alphabet was the expedient choice and contributed to the positive momentum of the movement. In addition, contrasting Tifinagh’s connection to the process of standardization and IRCAM, the Latin script deinstitutionalizes Tamazight and places it in the hands of people to use on their cell phones and the internet.

Both AZETTA and Amazigh World, as organizations, focused largely on the promotion

of liberal values of democracy, secularity and tolerance. Thus the Latin script’s connections to technology and notions of the “modern” were also linked to the activists’ vision for a democratic future. Interestingly, in speaking about these notions both groups saw these values as directly connected to traditional Amazigh law and identity. Referencing traditional property laws and rights for Amazigh women, an official from AZETTA spoke about a sense of “ancient modernity” inherent to *Amazighité*. He discussed the deep roots of democracy and women’s



rights in Amazigh culture, and he traced these roots from ancient Amazigh tribal institutions to present-day village councils.

Figure 2 illustrates the temporal imaginings of Latin and Tifinagh scripts. As articulated above, the proponents of the two scripts furnished various justifications that parallel their differing priorities for the movement. The Tifinaghists highlighted a deep connection with

historical identity that, after an adjustment period in the present, will eventually contribute to the long-term sustainability of the Tamazight language. This direct link from the historical past to the distant future presents an unbroken temporal imagining that parallels these actors' "incremental" approach to the movement in general. On the other hand, the Latinists emphasized practicality and expediency in the present that will bring about the modern and democratic future they imagine for Morocco. This imagining presents a decidedly different timeline than the Tifinaghists that is focused both on the immediacy of the present and goals for the future. However, the Latinists also imagined their democratic future as linked to traditionally progressive *Amazighité*, which connects the future to the past on their timeline.

Despite contrasting views on script choice and timelines, the temporal imaginings of the Latinists and Tifinaghists are subtly more common than divergent. In their narratives surrounding script choice and the movement in general both the Latinists and Tifinaghists utilized a connection to the historical past and Amazigh identity to increase the legitimacy of their claims. Additionally, despite the Latinists emphasis on immediacy and the present, both groups imagine their script choices contributing to goals—the Tamazight fluency of future generations and a democratic Morocco—in the very distant future.

A Plastic Language Laboratory?

Since its inception in 2003, the *Institut Royal de la Culture Amazighe* (IRCAM) has served as the intermediary between Amazigh activist movements and the government. Many activists and association heads are linked to IRCAM and its activities through official and unofficial channels. They regularly attend events and serve on panels, and some of the more senior activists are also official consultants to the institute. It remains, however, a government organization, first and foremost. Its funding comes from the government. Its headquarters sit

alongside a host of other government ministries and institutes on Avenue Allal al-Fassi, which, in an ironic twist, is named after Morocco's famous Arab nationalist leader of the *Istiqlal* party and independence movements. During our visit to IRCAM, we noticed a well-manicured garden and courtyard on the building's backside, complete with a full amphitheater decorated with murals by Amazigh artists. When we asked if we could view the gardens, IRCAM officials told us visitors were not allowed. When they finally gave us a tour it was only with the accompaniment of the Head of Security, and we were strictly forbidden from taking pictures of the garden or the artwork. We were told that it was a government building and photos were not allowed for security reasons.

This experience demonstrated that, despite occasional criticisms of government bureaucracy from IRCAM researchers, the state very literally controls and demarcates the space of the institute. More importantly, different activists saw its very location as spatially indicative of its role in the promotion of *Amazighité*. Organizations focused on cultural activities – the "incrementalist" organizations like AMREC and Tamaynut – see IRCAM as providing a crucial physical and discursive space for the movement. One Tamaynut official spoke at length about the powerful process of "assimilation" – meaning Arabization and Islamization – that had engulfed Moroccan national identity, particularly since independence from France in 1956. Regarding the hegemony of assimilation, he argued, "It is there in the state, it is there in the heads, it is there in the programs." For him, IRCAM was the movement's foothold in official state space that had long excluded notions of Amazigh identity. The creation of a formal, official structure likewise completed one of the movement's central goals as laid out in the Agadir Charter of 1991: the official recognition of Morocco's Amazigh heritage. Spatially, IRCAM's location and physical structure – a sleek, geometric rendering of the quintessentially Amazigh

fibula pendant (see Figure 3) – alongside other government ministries in that particular neighborhood of the capital, Rabat, verifies the movement’s permanent seat at the table.

Figure 3: *Institut Royal de la Culture Amazighe (IRCAM)*, March 15, 2010



The “incrementalists” also point to the positive gains made through IRCAM’s work and expertise. First, they have published extensively in the Tifinagh alphabet and in transliterated Tamazight. These publications include collections of poetry and stories, pedagogical materials, novels, children’s books, and dictionaries. Second, the institute serves not just as a foothold inside the state’s political and discursive space, but also as a space that actually fosters a greater sense of *Amazighité* among the general public – Arab, Amazigh, and European. There is a library open to the public containing over 20,000 volumes – including the personal collection of the late Cadi Kaddour, a leading Amazigh linguist – and helps publish the Institute Review, to date the only regular periodical in Tifinagh. IRCAM also hosts regular events, including concerts of Amazigh music such as the *ahouache* of the Atlas Mountains, and prominently displays the work of Amazigh artists.

The director of research at IRCAM echoed the language of cultural activists in forwarding a new multi-lingual and multi-cultural identity for the Moroccan people. She repeated the words of the king from his address calling for IRCAM’s creation when he said, “the Amazigh issue belongs to all Moroccans” (pers. comm., 15 March 2010), and discussed the ways

IRCAM was a public space for all Moroccans. For her, bilingualism is “a right of the Moroccan people; our identity is compound” (pers. comm. 15 March 2010).

“Incrementalists” thus understand IRCAM spatially in this compound context. When asked about the difficulties of implementing and sustaining the Tamazight teaching program, a leading activist from AMREC highlighted problems of textbook distribution and pedagogical training for teachers. He pointed directly to the Ministry of Education and said, “IRCAM does its work, but the Ministry does not” (pers. comm. 16 March 2010). This was a common theme amongst our informants on all sides of the issue, but the point of dividing IRCAM out of the blame for implementation issues is suggestive. It separates IRCAM into its own discursive and political space within the official space of the state; it performs a “double movement” of placing it inside the government’s sphere of influence but also outside of its normalizing, assimilating processes.

If for some the creation of IRCAM was evidence of Amazigh heritage belonging to all Moroccans and of a way for Imazighen to gain a space of agency within the state, others found this “double movement” more difficult to perform. In the same way IRCAM’s physical geography symbolizes the progress the “incrementalist” camp feels the institute embodies, so too does its space and place reveal a great deal about how the other side feels. The group of activists – including those from AZETTA and Amazigh World – that consider themselves more focused on issues of democracy and secularity reject the notion that IRCAM represents progress. For them, its location on Avenue Allal al-Fassi is, at worst, an indicator of the challenges of overturning the dominant nationalist narratives and, at best, some kind of cruel cosmic joke (indeed, two informants broke into laughter when we mentioned this detail of location). In their view, IRCAM’s actual primary objective – the standardization of Tamazight language for

dissemination and teaching in all Moroccan schools – neutralized elements of substantial, systemic political change that a large part of the Amazigh movement sought to achieve. According to one informant, it was merely a “plastic language laboratory”; another informant, a leading official at AZETTA saw it as a government institution with no political vision. Almost corroborating these views, an IRCAM researcher spoke about his own position within the movement, “We’re just researchers. We are not the government. We have one foot in research, one foot in society” (pers. comm. 15 March 2010).

This statement fed directly into criticisms of IRCAM from politically oriented activist groups. In their opinion, IRCAM officials were just researchers and had been effectively depoliticized through their institutionalization. While discussing government injustices like land confiscation and absence of fair Arabic-Tamazight translations in the legal system, the AZETTA official said matter-of-factly, “They are there by *dahir*. They stay calm, but they see injustice and they do nothing.” *Dahir* refers to a royal decree – one American activist represented it as a “personal gesture of the king” – and has complex significance that requires some historical context. In 1930, the French colonial regime pressured the then-Sultan to issue the “*Dahir Berbère*,” which effectively divided the country in two. The cities and predominantly Arab areas were to be governed by Islamic law, while the mainly mountainous “Berber” regions were placed under “customary”, theoretically Berber law. Protests quickly erupted among both Arabs and Imazighen and it became a unifying flashpoint for the nationalist movement. Though regarded as a product of French colonial divide-and-rule policies (policies practiced in Algeria as well), it also represented the moment when *Amazighité* was subsumed by the overwhelmingly Arab nationalist movement. In this context, IRCAM’s creation via “personal gesture,” for politically focused activists, is indicative of their own lack of agency. They see themselves as

unable – or at least not permitted – to dictate the debate and the discourse over Moroccan *Amazighité* on their own terms.

“Incrementalist” activist groups and more politically oriented groups divided sharply on the IRCAM question. “Incrementalists” were able to imagine the institute as an unique, authentic, and official Amazigh space within the larger context of a Moroccan state dominated by the discourse of “national identity” as Arab and Islamic. They saw the slippages between official recognition and support of Amazigh identity from the monarchy and the actual implementation of real, meaningful reform “on-the-ground” as results of the dominance of Arabization within the narrative of the nation. To do this, they had to envision a spatial fragmentation and a “double movement” whereby IRCAM could lie within the official space of state power but outside of its homogenizing discourse of Morocco of assimilation. On the other side, Amazigh activists who focused on political reforms saw IRCAM as a form of state instrumentalization. They sought their own political reforms, but not of the kind granted by the monarchy.

Making the Movement

Thus far we have mapped the Amazigh activist movement temporally and spatially and, in so doing, described the narratives of national identity it seeks to tell. The activist groups we interviewed elaborated specific policies on a range of issues related to Moroccan Amazigh identity, two of which we have analyzed in the previous two sections. However, representatives from all these associations emphasized a particular widescreen view of the movement itself – its foundation and its reason for being. These approaches are largely informed by particular assumptions about what the Amazigh question really is and how it should be framed and addressed. For the “incrementalists,” Moroccan *Amazighité* was both a cultural and a national

issue. For the politically oriented groups, they envisioned the Amazigh question as something bigger and more radical. Very often, these reflect their opinions on the choice of an official Tamazight script and the creation of IRCAM and effectively parallel the dividing line between two groups. However, at crucial moments this line blurs and a common narrative of Morocco as a truly Amazigh land emerges from both sides.

Groups like AMREC and Tamaynut generally viewed the progress of the Amazigh movement in incremental terms. With respect to their choice in script, they supported Tifinagh as an ancient but authentic choice for a distant future. It performed what Maddy-Weitzman calls “Berber memory work” in that it connected diverse and sometimes distant groups to common historical roots, and it also guaranteed that Tamazight would be taught and written in its “own skin” and therefore sustainably develop into a competitive national language. Each step in the process represented incremental progress. Even the creation of IRCAM can be seen in temporal terms as the beginning of a new era of official recognition. For “incrementalist” groups, the central issue is really a question of culture. Before the initial forays into human rights and collective rights in the 1980s, AMREC worked for nearly fifteen years to promote Amazigh music, particularly the popular group Osman. A leading official at AMREC talked about how the political climate of the 1970s made it particularly hard to pose real questions about the “disappearance of our language and culture,” but that popular music and expositions of Amazigh carpets and jewelry were a means to communicate their message (pers. comm. 17 March 2010). It was and remains important to be uncontroversial in both message and language, and speaking about Morocco’s Amazigh cultural heritage in terms of music, art, and language provided the possibility for incremental growth and progress.

These same groups also talked about *Amazighité* as a discourse “to unify all Moroccans.”

The nation itself was Amazigh: “Everything built in that territory, all the people are Amazigh – they are Moroccan” (pers. comm. 17 March 2010). Their emphasis on specific elements of culture – through festivals and expositions of music and arts – and their insistence that all of Morocco is Amazigh effectively transposes the local or regional onto the scale of the national. It argues that the aspects of national culture that are distinctively Moroccan derive from its Amazigh roots. Because the state has long dominated official definitions of national identity, to achieve their goals “incrementalists” sought to carve out an official, national space within the discourse on identity. In other words, according to respondents at AMREC and Tamaynut, it was impossible to combat the hegemonic Moroccan Arab nationalism in the state without playing an active role in it too. In this way, their spatial fragmentation of the state – imagining IRCAM as a distinct space of *Amazighité* uninfluenced or uncorrupted by dominant forms of Arab nationalism in the government – mirrors their temporal incrementalization. They both portray a belief in the system, a desire to participate in that system, and as various scholars have noted, an unwillingness to take any actions that might upset the monarchy and threaten the movement’s incremental progress.

On the contrary, Latinists and anti-IRCAM groups believe the current system is inherently flawed and that their interests cannot be adequately met within it. They envision the state space of IRCAM as co-opted space. IRCAM’s impotence in enacting meaningful reforms and realizing the goals of national Tamazight instruction are still seen as a product of hegemonic Arabization and Islamization efforts (an Amazigh World activist suggested that Moroccans commonly conflate being Muslim with being Arab), but they do not absolve IRCAM itself of blame. An activist at Association Imel called it simply “a new political policy of the regime” and emphasized a publication called “The Amazigh Option,” which was written by seven activists

and scholars who had left IRCAM because they were dissatisfied with the constraints placed on it by the government (pers. comm. 19 March 2010). These activists all emphasized democracy and secularity as the movement's true goals: it was a national question, but it went beyond culture and refused to be pigeonholed into a small scale. It required not just a single Amazigh space, but rather an overhaul of all official institutions to establish a new sense of multiculturalism in Morocco.

This same "framing" of the Amazigh question is reflected in their temporal narrative, too; much like the "incrementalists", their spatial and temporal imaginings of the nation map onto each other. Groups focused on political reform, like their incrementalist counterparts, also used historical roots in arguing that democracy was an ancient element of Amazigh society that had been neglected by the Arab monarchy and destroyed by French colonial rule. One activist called it "direct democracy" where "every single village is a state within a state" (pers. comm. 19 March 2010). In other words, they proposed a radical solution, but not in the fanatical, extreme connotations of the word. As opposed to the linear progress envisioned by "incrementalists," radicals envisioned exponential changes on a grand scale.

While these two groups generally align in this way, at several junctures the lines between them are obscured. They both refuse to explicitly identify the problem as an ethnic one, even as they referred the "Amazigh blood" of the Moroccan people, and focused on the nature of the land as Amazigh. Both groups also drew heavily on history by projecting the country's deep Amazigh roots into the future they imagined. One could argue, too, that these imagined futures are not necessarily different, but rather exist on different geographic and historical scales.

CONCLUSION

We have illustrated the variations and complexities within Amazigh activism in Morocco.

Over the past four decades, the Amazigh activism in Morocco has grown and evolved enormously, with numerous national associations serving to bring together smaller village- and town-level associations from across the entire country. These national associations are very much the movement's leaders, and they are staffed and run by intellectuals, teachers, businessmen, and lawyers. Yet as we demonstrated, while there are variations and complexities within the movement's leadership there are ongoing disagreements and debates, while some groups focus primarily on the promotion of Amazigh culture, and while others demand political reforms and promote secularity and democratization as essential elements of Amazigh society. Yet, despite these differences, the two sides share much common ground. Their positions on various political developments – the choice of the Tifinagh alphabet and the creation of the *Institut Royal de la Culture Amazighe* – may reflect Amazigh activism's internal debates, but these positions also belie shared assumptions and shared spatial and temporal imaginings of *Amazighité* and Moroccan national identity.

Each informant we interviewed began our conversation with the same premise: to fully understand the Amazigh, we needed to go back to the 7th century Arab invasion of North Africa and beyond. Each interviewee would then tell us how the Imazighen were the indigenous inhabitants of North Africa, retelling in a condensed version the “thirty-three centuries of Amazigh history” from Chafik's landmark work. This narrative was rehearsed in every interview as respondents sought to emphasize the importance of an ancient, primordial sense of *Amazighité* on the movement today. This played out in the goals they articulated for the movement. For politically minded activists, the push for democratization and secularity were historicized as essential characteristics of Amazigh society. A leading activist with AZETTA described citizenship, participation, tolerance, and *laïcité* as part of “an ancient Amazigh culture that is also

modern” (pers. comm. 16 March 2010). For culturalists, the focus on language became a way to both work towards long-term sustainability for Amazigh culture and society and to negotiate within a system that allowed little space for activist involvement. Most importantly though, it became a way to reify national borders by articulating an explicitly *Moroccan Amazighité*, focusing on only the three Moroccan dialects in the standardization process and working in the framework of an institute whose mission was the promotion of this specifically national Amazigh identity.

If activist groups shared a sense of Moroccan historical identity as necessarily Amazigh, so too did they collectively imagine Morocco and North Africa as quintessentially Amazigh spaces. Informants regularly spoke of “Tamazgha,” a sort of greater Amazigh land stretching from Touareg lands in Niger to the Siwa oasis in Egypt to the Kabylie region of Algeria and, of course, to Morocco. Most significantly, the notion of “Tamazgha” caused activists and scholars to dispute the classification of Morocco and North Africa as part of the Arab Middle East. When we introduced ourselves and provided business cards stating our field as “Middle East Studies,” informant responses ranged from disappointment to confusion to consternation. To them, their inclusion in our academic field was indicative of the powerful processes of Arabization and Islamization – processes they sought to complicate if not overturn completely.

One of the original founders of AMREC, the original Amazigh activist association, dissected the different names for Morocco in various languages. He explicitly rejected the term “al-Maghreb”; he described it as a form of reverse-Orientalism, situating Morocco only in relation to the Arab *Mashreq*. He preferred “*Maroc*,” and further explained its lineage by drawing connections between “Moors” and “Mor” (“which means land”), Mauritania (“the vast land”), “Marrakesh” (still the Portuguese name for the country, a product of naming countries

after their capital city). This imaginative geography spells out quite literally the intimate connection between Amazigh identity and space, mapped onto the land of North Africa and manifested in the notion of “Tamazgha.”

Perhaps most importantly, these new-old imaginings of North Africa as separate and distinct from the Arab Middle East illuminate slippages within the dominant imaginative geographies of the region. “The Middle East” is not delineated geographically, but in cultural terms – primarily language and religion. This effectively constructs inflexible boundaries around both “Middle Eastern” identity and the many national identities inside these regional parameters. The power to draw boundaries always entails the power to include and exclude, but more imaginative, regional boundaries – like “the Middle East” – have a similar effect. It is important to remember that these nationalist narratives maintain their discursive power and authority. One need only consider the example brought to our attention by an AZETTA activist of an Amazigh man unable to obtain a competent translator in order to defend himself in Moroccan court. A more recent example of local state authorities refusing Imazighen the right to give their children Tamazight names also suggests the multitude of ways in which the borders of Moroccan national identity can exclude the Amazigh (Human Rights Watch, 2009).

A representative from Amazigh World told us, “Moroccan people are 100% Berber, but it isn’t easy to say who is aware and who isn’t” (pers. comm. 19 March 2010). Other activists expressed similar feelings about popular consciousness of Moroccan Amazigh identity. For them, this narrative had been overrun not just by forces of “assimilation” within Morocco but also by the international community at large who imagined Morocco and North Africa only as part of a broader “Middle East” delineated primarily through a common culture and language.

The situation of the Moroccan Imazighen prompts larger questions about the way we

imaginatively divide the globe into particular, fixed spaces and what criteria we use for doing so. It reminds us that these are not neutral processes: they claim the power to delineate difference from without and commonality from within. In the case of the “Middle East,” this commonality within is the Arabic language and an adherence to Islam. By no means would we suggest that Morocco is patently *not* Arab nor would we argue it is superficially or artificially Islamic – far from it. Rather, these are obviously integral elements of Moroccan national identity, to say nothing of the various regional and local identities that includes. Instead, it is simply to suggest a more critical approach to the broad brushstrokes of imaginative geographies. When we characterize large geographic spaces by specific markers of culture and identity, we construct boundaries around these identities that are often fixed and impermeable.

REFERENCES

- Bensadoun, M. (2007). The (Re)fashioning of Moroccan National Identity. In *The Maghrib in the New Century*. Maddy-Weitzman and Zisenwine, eds. Pp 13-35. Gainesville: University of Florida Press.
- Bhabha, H. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge.
- (1994). Remembering Fanon: Self, Psyche and the Colonial Condition. In *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory: A Reader*. Williams and Christman, eds. Pp 112-123. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Brown, K. (1973) The Impact of the Dahir Berbère in Salé. In *Arabs and Berbers*. Gellner and Micaud, eds. Pp. 201-215. Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company.
- Burke, E. (1973). The image of the Moroccan state in French ethnological literature: a new look at the origin of Lyautey's Berber policy. In *Arabs and Berbers*. Gellner and Micaud, eds. Pp. 175-200. Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company.
- Chafik, M. (2004). *A Brief Survey of Thirty-Three Centuries of Amazigh History*. Rabat: Publications de l'Institut Royal de la Culture Amazighe.
- Ennaji, M. (2005). *Multilingualism, Cultural Identity, and Education in Morocco*. Berlin: Springer.
- Fanon, F. (1967). *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press.
- Fishman, J. (1999). *Handbook of Language & Ethnic Identity*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Errihani, M. (2007). Language Policy in Morocco: Implications of Recognizing and Teaching Berber. Dissertation, University of Illinois at Chicago.
- Gellner, E. (1969). *Saints of the Atlas*. London: Wedenfeld and Nicolson.
- Gellner, E. and Micaud, C. (1973). *Arabs and Berbers: From Tribe to Nation in North Africa*. Lexington Books.
- Kymlicka, W. and Patten, A. (2004) eds. *Language Rights and Political Theory*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Maddy-Weitzman, B. (2006) Ethno-politics and Globalisation in North Africa: The Berber Cultural Movement. *The Journal of North African Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 1.
- (2007) Berber/Amazigh Memory Work. In *The Maghrib in the New Century*. Maddy-Weitzman and Zisenwine, eds. Pp 50-72. Gainesville: University of Florida Press.
- Martinez-Cobo, J.R. (1987). "Study of the Problem of Discrimination against Indigenous Populations." New York: United Nations, E/CN.4/Sub.2/1986/7/4.
- Montagne, R. (1973). *The Berbers: Their Social and Political Organizations*. London: Frank Cass.
- Pennell, C. (2000). *Morocco Since 1830: A History*. New York: NYU Press.
- Safran, W. and Leponce, J.A. (2005). eds. *Language, Ethnic Identity and the State*. New York: Routledge.
- Said, E. (1978). *Orientalism*. New York: Random House.
- Silverstein, P. (2009). "The Cultivation of "Culture" in the Moroccan Amazigh Movement." *Review of Middle East Studies*.
- Silverstein, P. and Crawford, D. (2004). "Amazigh Activism and the Moroccan State." *Middle East Report*, 233, 44-48.
- Rubio-Marin, R. (2004). Language Rights: Exploring Competing Rationales. In *Language Rights and Political Theory*. Kymlicka and Patten, eds. Pp. 52-79. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Thiong'O, N. (1994). The Language of African Literature. In *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory: A Reader*. Williams and Christman, eds. Pp 435-455. New York: Columbia University Press.

Web References

- Berber. (n.d.). *Random House Dictionary*. Retrieved April 24, 2010. Website: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/Berber>
- Chaabihi, A. (2001). trans. Royal Dahir 1-01-299. Retrieved April 26, 2010. Website: <http://www.ircam.ma/fr/index.php?soc=textes&rd=18>.
- Cournoyer, M. (2006). An Active Partner in Morocco: The Amazigh movement of Morocco

advocates for the recognition of its rights. Retrieved April 19, 2010. Website:
<http://stages.alternatives.ca.edu/article563.html?lang=fr>

Human Rights Watch (2009). Morocco: Lift Restrictions on Amazigh (Berber) Names. Retrieved December 7, 2009. Website: <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2009/09/03/morocco-lift-restrictions-amazigh-berber-names>.

IPACC (2007). "North Africa." Retrieved April 21, 2010. Website:
http://www.ipacc.org.za/eng/regional_northafrica.asp.

Larbi, H. "The Amazigh World Congress." Retrieved April 21, 2010. Website:
<http://www.ece.umd.edu/~sellami/DEC95/congress.html>.

Hamama, Anouar. (2010). Amazigh rights issue pits Moroccan Berbers against Islamists. Retrieved April 20, 2010. Website:
http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/features/2010/02/26/feature-01

University of Minnesota Human Rights Center (2003). "Study Guide: The Rights of Indigenous People." Retrieved April 19, 2010. Website:
<http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/edumat/studyguides/indigenous.html - rapp>

UNHCR (2000). "Morocco: Brief history of the Berbers including their origins and geographic location." Website:
http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/topic_463af2212_469f279a2_3df4be668_0.html.