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Principal 2002 Prince Claus Award
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Award

PRINCE CLAUS FUND

Prince Claus Awards

Since 1997, the Prince Claus Awards have been presented to people and organizations to recognize and encourage their exceptional achievements in the field of culture and development in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean. The Fund does not only honour artists, intellectuals, and cultural organizations for the high quality of their work. It also looks in particular at the positive changes they bring to their society and culture. The Principal Award is given every December during a festive ceremony at the Royal Palace in Amsterdam.

The Principal 2002 Prince Claus Award was awarded to Mohammed Chafik (b. 17 September 1926) on 11 December for both his academic oeuvre and his tenacious struggle for the emancipation of the Berber people. Chafik's academic endeavours culminated in his bilingual dictionary of Amazigh. This three-volume work in Amazigh and Arabic was published in 1990 (vol. I), 1996 (vol. II), and 2000 (vol. III). It compiled vocabulary collected from Morocco to Libya, from Algeria to Chad, and opened it up not only to Arabic speakers, but also to the Berbers, who found in this book a recognition of the richness of their language. This publication by the Royal Academy of Morocco is the first step towards achieving complete equality for the country's original language. Besides this *Dictionnaire Arabe-Berbère*, Professor

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Chafik has also produced work on the thirty-three centuries of Berber culture and has written several educational books.

As if this were not reason enough to present him with the award, there is also his tenacious battle for the emancipation of an original, but marginalized people of Morocco – the Berbers – from the Rif to the Atlas. Especially the Berbers found themselves compelled by poor living standards to migrate to foreign lands, including the Netherlands. This award is therefore also an acknowledgement of the Moroccan minority in the Netherlands. Professor Chafik's career has always been marked by his sense of solidarity with marginalized Berber culture. He has been an inspirational teacher, a school inspector, Secretary of State, and a tutor to the children of the royal family. He is currently Rector of the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture, which was founded in 2001.

A clear line thus runs through his life, that of the insertion of Berber culture into the national and international life of his country. The written culmination of this work is the impressive *Manifeste Berbère* (2000). The title suggests a political pamphlet. However, the piece is much more than a list of po-

litical demands. It is an attempt to make transparent the history of Morocco, before and after the arrival of the French, before and after independence. He does this by replacing the silenced presence of the Berber-speaking population with its active presence as an often unhappy, but always present historical player.

The life of Mohammed Chafik, which has passed from the French colonial period, through independence, and into modern Morocco, makes him an experienced and irrefutable advocate for the liberation of Berber culture. His conclusions are aimed at a better future for Morocco: the need for a national debate on the position of the Berbers, a constitutional recognition of the language as a national language, a policy for deprived regions, an active insertion of the language in education and government, the erasure of prejudice from the accounts of the nation's history, opening up the media to the language of the people, and the right for parents to register their children under their Berber names, to name but a few.

His academic research and his work as an emancipator of Berber culture make Mohammed Chafik an obvious choice for the

distinction of the Prince Claus Fund's highest award. Yet we might also add one more thing that distinguishes him: it is what we might call his cultural vision, which is that of an Islamic humanist. From the Qur'an he borrows the statement that the diversity of languages is a gift from God and quotes an old saying: 'Learn languages! The more languages you know, the more men you're worth.' The idea of turning Arabic into the only language of Morocco leads to impoverishment. The wealth and vitality of a culture is intrinsically bound with the extent to which it is able to absorb difference. Professor Chafik has thus developed a vision of cultural development as a process that contrasts sharply with thinking within a closed identity.

The Prince Claus Fund recognizes in Mohammed Chafik an ambassador for culture and development. By presenting him the award, the Prince Claus Fund is also endorsing a vision of the meaning of language and languages in the modern world: language is a mother tongue – which embodies the wealth of one's own cultural identity – a contribution to the future in which languages may be regarded as cultural treasure troves for global development, and the collective property of humanity.

Laudation address by Andriaan van der Staa, Chair of the 2002 Prince Claus Awards Committee, in honour of Mohammed Chafik, recipient of the Principal 2002 Prince Claus Award.