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Language policy and planning of Amazigh languages in Morocco: a study of the language ideology of the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture (IRCAM)

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Language Policy and Planning of Amazigh Languages in Morocco

A Study of the Language Ideology of the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture (IRCAM)

This thesis examines how Amazigh (Berber) languages are planned in Morocco—the largest Amazigh-speaking country by population—and investigates the considerations underlying these measures through the ideologies of the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture (IRCAM).

It traces the historical development of the Amazigh cultural movement from its Kabylian origins in the colonial period to its Moroccan expression, showing how language planning—through the creation of the Neo-Tifinagh script and neologisms—became central to Amazigh nationalism. It highlights Mohamed Chafik, IRCAM's founding rector, whose ideology redefined Amazighness as part of a unified Moroccan national identity rather than as a distinct ethnic identity. Through an analysis of IRCAM's early initiatives—the adoption of the Neo-Tifinagh-IRCAM script and the *Tifawin a Tamazight* textbooks—the study shows how the pursuit of a homogeneous standard Moroccan Amazigh contradicts the linguistic practices of the three main varieties in Morocco: Tarifiyt, Central Moroccan Amazigh, and Tashelhiyt.

It further examines how IRCAM rector Ahmed Boukous's ideology of "revitalization" and "attrition" serves to legitimize the planning of a homogeneous standard Moroccan Amazigh, and how IRCAM's selective application of the "polynomic approach" functions as a mediation between language ideology and linguistic practice. The thesis concludes by situating IRCAM's language planning within Kathryn A. Woolard's discussion of sociolinguistic naturalism, proposing that IRCAM's ideology constitutes a politically driven post-naturalist "project of authenticity" that prioritizes a standardized Amazigh shaped by the state's agenda over both actually spoken varieties and a pan-Amazigh language.

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