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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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3. FOUNDING IDEOLOGIES OF IRCAM AND ITS ACTIVITIES IN THE FORMATIVE YEARS

This chapter will address the following issues: First, I will analyze the founding documents of IRCAM to understand the institute's foundational ideology. Second, I will provide a biography of IRCAM's first rector, Mohamed Chafik, and examine his ideology, focusing on both historical and linguistic aspects. Next, I will discuss IRCAM's activities during its formative years, including the formation of the *Conseil d'Administration* and the research centers, along with an introduction to its core members. Finally, I will introduce the transition from the rectorate of Mohamed Chafik to that of Ahmed Boukous, along with IRCAM's internal controversies.

3.1. The Guiding Ideology of IRCAM

The establishment of IRCAM is based on three key documents: the Royal Speech of July 30, 2001 (Throne Day Speech); Royal Decree No. 1-01-299 (IRCAM Dahir); and the Royal Speech of October 17, 2001 (Ajdir Speech) delivered at the ceremony of affixing the Cherifian Seal to the IRCAM Dahir.²⁵² Many of the contents within these documents are ideologically driven and can be regarded as guiding principles for the establishment and future activities of IRCAM.

The Throne Day Speech marks the first occasion when the establishment of “un institut royal de la culture Amazigh” was explicitly promised by the authorities. This promise was made within a context where the authorities express support for “un édifice démocratique,” “une administration déconcentrée,” and “l'éclosion des particularismes culturels.” However, these expressions of democracy and diversity do not contradict the “unité de notre Peuple”. On the contrary, this diversity is carefully framed within a national identity characterized by “homogeneity, unity, and originality,” with diverse tributaries, namely “Amazigh, Arab, Sub-Saharan African, and Andalusian”, all contributing to the whole. The homogeneity is anchored in the Islamic faith, under which the united Moroccan nation, with its enduring monarchical regime, “ne connaissant ni majorité, ni minorité.” Thus, while the Amazigh language and culture are emphatically recognized in the speech by the authorities, they should

²⁵² The text of the three documents can be found in the annex of Nacheff, L. (2016). pp. 334-338.

be seen only as a contribution to the diversity of the homogeneous Moroccan people. There is no place for a concept of Imazighen as a people.

Thus, in terms of language, the speech reaffirms that “Arabic, as the mother language and the one that conveyed the word of God—Glorified be His Name—in the Holy Quran,” holds a special status in the country. It is only on this basis that the speech references the late Hassan II’s promise to “envision the introduction of teaching dialects in the curriculum,” and specifies the “process of integration of Amazigh in the educational system.” However, the question of what exactly is meant by “Amazigh” and its relationship to the “dialects” is left unanswered. This is a question that IRCAM cannot avoid addressing, as it is responsible for preparing and monitoring the process of integrating Amazigh into the education system.

It is less ambiguous when “Amazigh” is understood as a culture rather than as a language, as the speech clearly states that IRCAM should aim to “strengthen the pillars on which our ancestral identity rests, while keeping in mind the need to give new impetus to our Amazigh culture, which constitutes a national wealth, in order to provide it with the means to preserve, develop, and flourish.” However, these expressions only add to the ambiguity on the linguistic side. Since the Amazigh language is undoubtedly the most important part of Amazigh culture, what does it mean for the language to be “preserved, developed, and to flourish”? Therefore, it can be concluded that the speech does not address concrete language planning issues and leaves considerable room for interpretation. However, it emphatically underscores that this planning, along with IRCAM’s broader activities, must ultimately contribute to a single, unequivocal, supreme aim: consolidating national unity.

Similar ideologies are reaffirmed in the Ajdir Speech, where IRCAM’s aim is reiterated as “en œuvrant à la sauvegarde de notre culture amazighe, en consolidant son statut dans les domaines culturel, médiatique et éducationnel, en tant que richesse nationale et motif de fierté pour l’ensemble des Marocains.” On this basis, the Ajdir Speech makes a clearer statement of the authorities’ concerns and the fundamental aim for establishing IRCAM: “l’Amazighité, qui plonge ses racines au plus profond de l’Histoire du peuple marocain, appartient à tous les Marocains sans exclusive et qu’elle ne peut être mise au service de desseins politiques de quelque nature que ce soit.” Thus, according to the authorities’ design, IRCAM, along with its language planning function, should work toward the unity of the nation by dissolving, rather than consolidating, the very idea of Imazighen as a people, in order to prevent an

ethno-identity-based politicization.

Based on these ideologies, the IRCAM Dahir was issued, reiterating that Amazigh is merely a tributary to “our national identity” and that Amazigh culture is a “a national treasure and a source of pride for all Moroccans.” A new point made in the Dahir is the more concrete demands for language planning, as reflected in Article 7: “Convaincu que la codification de la graphie de l’amazigh facilitera son enseignement, son apprentissage et sa diffusion, garantira l’égalité des chances de tous les enfants de notre pays dans l’accès au savoir et consolidera l’unité nationale ...” This indicates that the language planning for the Amazigh language, particularly the acquisition planning in which IRCAM is involved, should aim to influence all Moroccan children equally, desirably without any further ethnic or regional differentiation, in order to fulfill the objective of consolidating national unity.

The Dahir then specified the functions of IRCAM, with the content related to language planning remaining flexible, as shown in Article 3.4:

“Étudier la graphie de nature à faciliter l’enseignement de l’amazigh par: La production des outils didactiques nécessaires à cette fin et l’élaboration de lexiques généraux et de dictionnaires spécialisés; L’élaboration des plans d’actions pédagogiques dans l’enseignement général et dans la partie des programmes relative aux affaires locales et à la vie régionale, le tout en cohérence avec la politique générale de l’État en matière d’éducation nationale.” (Studying the orthography in a way that facilitates the teaching of Amazigh by: Producing the necessary teaching tools for this purpose and developing general lexicons and specialized dictionaries; Developing educational action plans in general education and in the section of the curriculum related to local affairs and regional life, all in alignment with the state’s general policy on national education.)

This ideology prioritizes the national unity of Morocco, centered around the monarchy, as supreme and inviolable. Although Amazigh culture is emphatically recognized, it is regarded only as a cultural contribution to the diversity within the framework of national unity. Both Arabic and Amazigh speakers are united by their Islamic faith and loyalty to the regime that acknowledges “neither majority nor minority” in an ethno-political sense. The language, consistently termed *l’amazigh*, is

treated with an ambiguity that conceals and downplays its regional variations. Clear traces of these ideologies can be found in the works of Mohamed Chafik, the most important founder of IRCAM and its first rector.

3.2. The Life and Ideologies of Mohamed Chafik

3.2.1. A Biography

Mohamed Chafik was born on September 17, 1926, in Aït Sadden, east of Fès, a region where Central Moroccan Amazigh is spoken. He belonged to an influential local family, though not particularly economically privileged. His grandfather was one of the tribal leaders, and his uncle was a renowned warrior who fought both other tribes and the French authorities.²⁵³ Mohamed Chafik was the only child among seven boys and eight girls in his family to complete secondary education. His schooling began at a local Quranic school, where his teacher did not speak Amazigh. In 1934, at the age of 8, Mohamed Chafik enrolled in a local school where French was the sole language of instruction. Three years later, due to his outstanding performance, he was awarded a scholarship to attend the *Collège d'Azrou*.²⁵⁴

As previously mentioned, *Collège d'Azrou*, located in a rural Amazigh-speaking region and meant to be far away from nationalist influence, was originally intended to cultivate Franco-Amazigh civil and military elites who would “penser français, réagir français.”²⁵⁵ However, it ultimately became a “hotbed of Moroccan nationalists.” Chafik was one of these nationalists who detested the colonialists and their discrimination against Moroccans.²⁵⁶ As a result, although he excelled as a student in Azrou, he refused to enroll in the french-speaking *Lycée Poeymirau* in Meknes as arranged by the French administration, choosing instead to go to Rabat and attend the Arabic-Islamic-oriented *Lycée Moulay Youssef*.²⁵⁷

Chafik became involved in nationalist activities in Rabat immediately upon his arrival, recalling: “I handed over a national flag that I had carefully hidden when I

²⁵³ Bouyaakoubi, L. (2009). pp. 21-25.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 24-27.

²⁵⁵ Bennhlal, M. (2005). p. 28.

²⁵⁶ Bouyaakoubi, L. (2009). p. 31.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 30-31.

arrived from Azrou to the nationalist demonstrators who needed it!”²⁵⁸ His active participation in nationalist demonstrations even led to his temporary exclusion from school.²⁵⁹ In 1946, Chafik was appointed as a teacher in Midelt, and by 1953, he was teaching at the *Lycée de Jeunes Filles* in Fès where he continued his nationalist activities. He joined the nationalist party Istiqlal, formally founded in 1943 and dominated by urban elites. He also joined efforts by former students of the *Collège d’Azrou*, advocating for the return of Sultan Mohamed V after his deposition and exile in 1953, an act described by the press as “the Berbers take a stand.”²⁶⁰

After the return of the Sultan and the independence of Morocco in 1956, Chafik withdrew his support from the *Istiqlal* Party. He explained this decision by noting that the party’s primary objective, as indicated by its name, was to achieve Morocco’s independence. Once this goal was accomplished, Chafik believed that the party had failed to develop a program for Morocco’s future, leaving it with no reason to continue.²⁶¹ This might not be entirely accurate, as the Proclamation of Independence of Morocco in January 1944 shows that the nationalist leaders of the Istiqlal Party had already proposed a rough outline for the country’s future: “a consultative political system, similar to the governments in Arab Islamic countries in the East.”²⁶²

Its strong Arab nationalist tendency was not in line with Mohamed Chafik’s belief, as he always saw a place for the Amazigh language and culture in Morocco and consistently emphasized the importance of diversity as a language teacher.²⁶³ However, unlike Mahjoubi Aherdane, Chafik did not immediately become politically active in the first decade of Morocco’s independence, a period when the Amazigh issue was largely absent from the political scene. Instead, Chafik became prominent as an educator, and by 1963, he had been promoted to the position of chief inspector at the Ministry of National Education.²⁶⁴

For most of the 1960s and 1970s, when the Amazigh issue gained prominence through activist efforts in Algeria and France, leading to the establishment of the

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.* p. 34.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 34-35.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.* p. 35.

²⁶² <https://mjp.univ-perp.fr/constit/ma1944.htm> (accessed May 24, 2024)

²⁶³ Bouyaakoubi, L. (2009). pp. 39-42.

²⁶⁴ <https://alacademia.org.ma/membre/%d9%85%d8%ad%d9%85%d8%af-%d8%b4%d9%81%d9%8a%d9%82-2/> (accessed May 30, 2024)

Académie Berbère and Amazigh cultural associations in Morocco, Mohamed Chafik was largely absent from these movements. He himself recalled that he began to “defend Amazigh identity” only as late as 1978.²⁶⁵ In the meantime, he continued to become prominent as an intellectual and educator and entered the inner circle of King Hassan II.

This started in 1968 when Chafik was summoned to join the Royal Cabinet as an inspector of national education, tasked with advising the King, who was deeply concerned about the May 1968 events in France. Chafik described the situation, noting “(que) la France était alors embrasée et que ces jeunes qui se rebellaient contre De Gaulle étaient une source d’inquiétude, même à Rabat.”²⁶⁶ Against this background, Chafik was tasked with preparing “a more technical report on the pedagogical value of Quranic education that was dispensed in the mosques”²⁶⁷ He recalled that his report, submitted to the King, concluded emphatically: “l’enseignement dans les m’sids (mosquées) est l’une des causes principales de notre retard civilisationnel.”²⁶⁸ However, contrary to Chafik’s advice, the King instructed the Minister of National Education to generalize this type of education, leading to the creation of Quranic schools that year “in every corner of the neighborhood.”²⁶⁹

This did not hinder Mohamed Chafik’s promotion; on the contrary, he continued to rise within the government. In 1970, he was promoted to Deputy Secretary of State of the Ministry of National Education, and two years later, he became Secretary of State to the Prime Minister.²⁷⁰ This could be interpreted, at least in part, as an effort by the regime to maintain a liberal and modernist voice. Additionally, Lahoucine Bouyaakoubi offered another interpretation, suggesting that the regime systematically placed key positions in the hands of Amazigh elites, particularly former students of the *Collège d’Azrou*, to distance them from the potential politicization of the Amazigh

²⁶⁵ Interview, M. Chafik: les dégâts de l’élite sont énormes. July 15, 2015.

<https://www.economia.ma/content/m-chafik-les-d%C3%A9g%C3%A2ts-de-l%C3%A9lite-sont-enormes> (accessed May 30, 2024)

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁷ El Guabli, B. (2019). Moroccan society’s educational and cultural losses during the years of lead (1956-1999). *Journal of global initiatives: Policy, pedagogy, perspective*, 14(2), 10, 143-161.

²⁶⁸ Interview, M. Chafik: les dégâts de l’élite sont énormes.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁰ <https://alacademia.org.ma/membre/%d9%85%d8%ad%d9%85%d8%af-%d8%b4%d9%81%d9%8a%d9%82-2/> (accessed May 30, 2024)

issue. The gradual inclusion of Mohamed Chafik into the inner circle can be seen in this context, especially since he had just published his first articles on Morocco's forgotten heritage before being invited to join the Royal Cabinet.²⁷¹

In 1977, Mohamed Chafik was commissioned with a more important position as the Director of the *Collège Royal*, where the princes and princesses of Morocco received their education. This role meant that the then-Crown Prince, later King Mohammed VI, who completed his baccalaureate in June 1981, spent his entire high school education under the direction of Mohamed Chafik.²⁷² This appointment can be seen as a sign of the significant trust Hassan II placed in Chafik and the close relationship that developed between Chafik and Mohammed VI. It was as an intellectual and high-ranking educational official within the inner circle of the monarchy that Mohamed Chafik began to play his role in the Amazigh cultural movement.

This involvement began with an incident after the 1977 elections during a session of the Government Council. When Mahjoubi Aherdane, then the Minister of Posts, Telegraph, and Telecommunications, spoke in French, Istiqlalian Minister Mouhamed Diouri interrupted him, insisting that he speak in the national language (meaning Arabic). In response, Aherdane chose to speak in Amazigh. Following a heated exchange between the two, the session was adjourned.²⁷³ Considering the significant development of the Amazigh cultural movement over the past decade and the risk of its politicization, the King, informed of the incident, requested a report on the Amazigh question from Mohamed Chafik. The report presented the Amazigh question in its cultural dimension and suggested the creation of an institute for Amazigh studies and a chair at the *Faculté des Lettres*, with objectives that included establishing a dictionary and planning the Amazigh language for educational purposes.²⁷⁴ Following this report, the Moroccan parliament voted in 1979 to create an institute for Amazigh studies, but this initiative never came to fruition.²⁷⁵

²⁷¹ Bouyaakoubi, L. (2009). p. 49.

²⁷² <https://www.maroc.ma/en/content/biography-hm-king-mohammed-vi> (accessed August 29, 2024)

²⁷³ Bouyaakoubi, L. (2009). pp. 54-55.

²⁷⁴ Lehtinen, T. (2003). *Nation à la marge de l'Etat: La construction identitaire du Mouvement Culturel Amazigh dans l'espace national marocain et au-delà des frontières étatiques* (Doctoral dissertation, Paris, EHESS). pp. 178, 308.

²⁷⁵ Bouyaakoubi, L. (2009). p. 55.

This can be seen as a clear indication that an IRCAM-like institute had long been considered an option by the monarchy as a response to the undesirable development of the Amazigh cultural movement. However, as previously mentioned, the actual response by Hassan II in the 1980s was one of repression. Mohamed Chafik likely miscalculated the authorities' attitude and the unfolding of events. In 1980, following the *Printemps berbère* in Algeria, he directly engaged in the Amazigh cultural movement for the first time by participating in the session of *l'Université d'Été d'Agadir*, encouraging the publication of the journal *Amazigh*, and even co-founding a new Amazigh cultural association with Ali Sidqi Azaykou.²⁷⁶ However, just two years later, when repression began—with Azaykou imprisoned and the new association banned—Chafik, though not personally persecuted due to his position within the monarchy's inner circle, chose to resign as the director of the *Collège Royal*.²⁷⁷

The rest of the 1980s saw Mohamed Chafik largely absent from the political scene as he dedicated himself to his writings, which will be discussed in the following section. It wasn't until the 1990s, with a shift towards a more liberal political atmosphere, that Chafik reemerged as a public figure for the Amazigh cause. Still a member of the *Collège Royal* and part of the monarchy's inner circle, he maintained a close relationship with the Amazigh cultural movement. In 1990, the association AMREC held a meeting in homage to Mohamed Chafik, and a year later, Chafik publicly expressed his support, as a member of the *Collège Royal*, for the *Charte d'Agadir*.²⁷⁸ This way, from the 1990s onward, Mohamed Chafik became an important liaison between the authorities and the Amazigh cultural movement.

From the authorities' viewpoint, the "Plan A" in response to the potential politicization of the Amazigh issue during the 1980s had been repression. However, when this approach became untenable a decade later, "Plan B," represented by Mohamed Chafik and long kept in reserve, began to play a more significant role. It was in this capacity that Chafik drafted the Amazigh Manifesto in March 2000, warning the authorities that "the question, now, is on the verge of moving from being an economic and cultural one to being a political question." To prevent this politicization, Chafik's method, proposed in the late 1970s to create an institute for

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.* p. 182.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 56-59.; Interview, M. Chafik: Les dégâts de l'élite sont énormes.

²⁷⁸ Bouyaakoubi, L. (2009). pp. 189-192.

Amazigh studies, was finally realized in the form of IRCAM. With this context in mind, it is important to closely examine the ideologies of Mohamed Chafik through his writings to understand how the guiding ideology of IRCAM evolved.

3.2.2. Historical Ideology

The historical ideology of Mohamed Chafik is explained in his work, *Thirty-Three Centuries of Amazigh History* (1989), written in Arabic.²⁷⁹ This work generally aligns with the historical ideology of the Amazigh cultural movement by narrating a history aimed at creating a subversive memory through the process of re-Amazighization, while also retaining Chafik's own distinct and significant insights. Re-Amazighization, as Brahim El Guabli explains, emphasizes that the Imazighen were never extinct and are not merely being revived now. Instead, it asserts that the confluence of colonization, Arabization, and Islamization has led to the gradual erasure of Tamazight and its culture over time, not only in Morocco but also across Tamazgha—the broader Amazigh homeland, which activists argue stretches from Northwest Egypt to the Canary Islands.²⁸⁰

Ali Sidqi Azaykou, the influential activist who co-founded the short-lived Amazigh cultural association with Mohamed Chafik in 1980, was a pioneer in theorizing this historical ideology. According to Azaykou's historiographical project, historians should be aware of the present de-Amazighized situation and strive to rewrite the current historical narrative. He argued that “the history that we read, teach, and are influenced by was written by foreign hands and with a mentality that is different from ours, and for goals that are different from or even in total opposition to the aspirations and goals that we entertain.”²⁸¹

In terms of methodology, Azaykou suggested that history need not be based solely on written evidence. Instead, he valued the use of sources and methodologies

²⁷⁹ Chafik, M. (1989). *al-thalāth wa al-thalāthīn qarnan min tārīkh al-Amāzīghīyīn*. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/Taoufiqtahistory/mode/2up>. (accessed August 29, 2024)

²⁸⁰ El Guabli, B. (2023b). *Moroccan other-archives: History and citizenship after state violence*. Fordham University Press. p. 34.

²⁸¹ Azaykou, A. S. (2001). *tārīkh al-maghrīb aw al-ta'wīlāt al-mumkina*. Rabat: Markaz Tāriq Ibn Zīyyād. pp. 16-17. Quoted in El Guabli, B. (2023b). p. 45.

that would require the “intersection and collaboration of the scholar of religion, the litterateur, the historian, the geographer, and the specialist in popular culture, among others.”²⁸² On this basis, he advocated for historians to consult what Brahim El Guabli terms the “other-archive,” namely “the land itself,” to demonstrate how North African and Moroccan history have been deeply shaped by Amazigh toponymies and onomastics. Through this approach, Azaykou sought to construct a continuity of Amazigh histories that predate the arrival of Arabs and Islam and extend to the present day.²⁸³

Mohamed Chafik’s *Thirty-Three Centuries of Amazigh History* was written to a large extent within the framework of Azaykou’s historiographical project. At the very beginning of the book, Chafik emphasizes that historians and those who recorded the events of ancient times, even if well-acquainted with the concept of “objectivity,” can never be entirely free from national, ethnic, or religious feelings.²⁸⁴ Chafik agrees with Azaykou that the only histories currently available are de-Amazighized. He suggests that this is because in the Imazighen’s stance towards their past, “there is a kind of nobility and chivalry, as if their state of mind is saying: Let that past be what it was, it does not concern us.”²⁸⁵ Consequently, echoing Azaykou’s argument, Chafik points out that “from the era of the first pharaohs and ending with the era of the French ‘pacification,’ the accounts of the history of Imazighen have always been written by their opponents (*khuṣūm*).”²⁸⁶

Faced with this situation, Chafik decided to write this re-Amazighized history from an Amazigh nationalist perspective. This approach is evident in his definition of Amazigh, where he states: “‘Amazigh’ is a name imbued with the meaning of nobility, chivalry, and honor... This may be the result of self-pride on the part of the Imazighen, because people usually take their lineages as a symbol of pride and invincibility, which is what we believe.”²⁸⁷ The expression “what we believe” clearly shows that in this history, the “feelings” of the Imazighen, rather than those of their opponents in the past, finally count.

²⁸² El Guabli, B. (2023b). p. 46.

²⁸³ *Ibid.* pp. 46-47.

²⁸⁴ Chafik, M. (1989). p. 5.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.* p. 6.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 8-9.

Also aligning with the concept of re-Amazighization, Chafik attempts to demonstrate that the Imazighen have a continuous history that predates Islamization, Arabization, and colonization across Tamazgha. This is why he claims thirty-three centuries of Amazigh history. To make this narrative possible, or to reason through such an extensive history with limited written evidence, Chafik resorts to the other-archive, or “the land itself.” In doing so, he moves away from genealogical explanations of the Amazigh people’s origins, such as the theories of descent from tribes in Yemen or from Noah.²⁸⁸ Instead, Chafik agrees with Azaykou’s argument that the land of Tamazgha itself, and the language spoken on this land, is “one of the best documents” preserving history.²⁸⁹ Given the scientific fact that, as pointed out by Maarten Kossmann, by the time of the Romans, almost everyone in North Africa spoke Amazigh or a related language,²⁹⁰ this “land and language-documented” history becomes Amazigh history by default.

It is in this vein that Chafik traces Amazigh history back 3,300 years to ancient Egypt, referencing Herodotus to state that “it appears that the first major Berber tribe came into contact with the ancient Egyptians during a war (1227 BCE). It was called *libū* and it was a settlement in the territory of present-day Libya.”²⁹¹ He also refers to a drawing found in the tomb of Pharaoh Seti I, describing it as depicting “Berber tribal leaders as drawn by an Egyptian artist around 1300 BCE”.²⁹²

The narrative of Chafik then transitions 1,000 years later to the Numidian kingdom, highlighting figures such as the kings Massinissa, Bocchus I, Jugurtha, and Juba I, who are all revered as symbols of identity by Azaykou and other Amazigh activists.²⁹³ Jugurtha, in particular, is an important case for claiming an Amazigh history through onomastics. The name *Jugurtha* is analyzed as *y-uger-ten*, meaning “he surpasses them,” with the verb still well-attested in multiple Amazigh varieties

²⁸⁸ El Guabli, B. (2023b). p. 46.; Ibn ’Abd al-Hakam, & Torrey, C. C. (1968). *The history of the conquest of Egypt, North Africa and Spain, known as the futuh Misr of ibn ’Abd al-Hakam*. Yale University Press. p. 8.

²⁸⁹ El Guabli, B. (2023b). pp. 46-47.

²⁹⁰ <https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/news/2017/11/the-unstoppable-advance-of-berber> (accessed August 29, 2024)

²⁹¹ Chafik, M. (1989). p. 9.

²⁹² *Ibid.* p. 13.

²⁹³ Chafik, M. (1989). pp. 32-44.; For Numidian kings as symbols of identity, see Andam, L. (2017). Quelques motifs de l’identité amazighe dans la poésie de Sidqi Azaykou. *Revue des études amazighes*, (1), 115-135. p. 122.

today.²⁹⁴ A similar case is *Massinissa*, which Chafik suggests in another article derives from the typical Amazigh onomastics *Mmis-n-Izza*, meaning “Son-of-Izza.”²⁹⁵ In this same article, *Le substrat berbère de la culture maghrébine*, Chafik also shows multiple cases of Amazigh toponyms, such as “Azrou, Ifrane, Imouzzar, Agadir, Tawnat, Tawrirt, signifient respectivement rocher, cavernes, cascades, falaises, montée, et colline” demonstrating the existence of an Amazigh history embedded in the land.²⁹⁶

While the history presented by Chafik, along with the historiographical project of Azaykou, is designed to counter the traditional narrative written by foreigners or opponents, once historical writing as a whole has been safely placed within the framework of re-Amazighization, he does not hesitate to quote from sources authored by these very opponents. This is exemplified by, for example, his quoting of Saint Augustine, who stated that “the Berbers were constantly allying themselves with every colonizer due to a desire to get rid of the resident colonizer,” and Titus Livius’ narration, “It is the sword of the Numidians that made Cannae a victory”²⁹⁷ Chafik’s references also include *Les Berbers: Étude sur la Conquête de l’Afrique par les Arabes, d’après les Textes Arabes Imprimés* (1881) by Henri Fournel, a French engineer rather than a trained historian, who argued that the Arabs had victimized the Berbers, whom he considered the true “autochthonous race,” and attempted to illustrate in his work the “historical hostility” between the two peoples.²⁹⁸

This by no means indicates that Chafik’s work shares Fournel’s ideology. On the contrary, Chafik’s most important historical initiative, which also differs from that of Azaykou, lies in his effort to reconcile the argument of indigeneity, or the historical hostility between the Imazighen and Arabs. It would be safe to assume that Chafik understood why Azaykou crossed the authorities’ red line and was eventually jailed. What the authorities could not tolerate was an article by Azaykou in the short-lived journal *Amazigh*, titled *Fī sabīl mafhūm ḥaqīqī li-thaqāfati-nā al-waṭaniyya*”

²⁹⁴ Camps, G., & Chaker, S. (2004). Jugurtha. *Encyclopédie berbère*, (26), 3975-3979.

²⁹⁵ Chafik, M. (1984). Le substrat berbère de la culture maghrébine. *Französische heute*, (15), 184-196.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁷ Chafik, M. (1989). pp. 25, 48.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 129.; Rouighi, R. (2019). *Inventing the Berbers: History and ideology in the Maghrib*. University of Pennsylvania Press. pp. 156-157.

(“Toward a Real Conceptualization of Our National Culture”). In this article, Azaykou launched a frontal attack against Arabization by challenging the argument that Arabic, as the language of the Quran, takes precedence over the Amazigh language.²⁹⁹ Azaykou refuted the overlap between Arabic language, Islam, and national culture in Morocco by driving a wedge between the prevalent association of Arabness with Islam and arguing that discussions about Arabization were only meant to sideline Amazigh language while the Moroccan elites appropriated French for themselves.³⁰⁰

Contrary to Azaykou, Chafik’s writings do not focus on refuting the overlap between Arabic, Islam, and national culture in Morocco. His strategy is to challenge the exclusiveness of the relationship between Arabic and Islam claimed by Arabization, while avoiding the dismantling of this overlap. Instead, he seeks to incorporate Amazighness into it. This might be the reason why Chafik deemed it important in the Amazigh Manifesto, which he drafted, to include multiple Islamic quotations to demonstrate the religious legitimacy for advocating for Amazigh causes. For example, he cites the Quran: “And among His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the variations in your languages and your colors: verily in that are Signs for those who know,” the Prophet: “An Arab has no merit over a non-Arab, save as concerns piety,” and Imam Ali: “Learn languages! Each language represents a human being!”³⁰¹ This suggests that Chafik’s strategy might involve extending the overlap of Arabic-Islam-Morocco by integrating Amazigh alongside Arabic, a strategy also visible in his historical writings.

In *Thirty-Three Centuries of Amazigh History*, Chafik establishes two explicit principles for evaluating North African history:

“The first principle: Anyone who ruled North Africa, in whole or in part, for a period of time during the Islamic era, and was not a Muslim, can only be considered an intruding colonizer... The second principle: Any Islamic state can only be an Islamic state (*kullu dawlatin islāmiyya, lā yumkinu an takūna illā dawlatan islāmiyya*). It should not seek its legitimacy in a racial or ethnic affiliation, but rather it must seek it in piety

²⁹⁹ El Guabli, B. (2023b). p. 42.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.* See also Maddy-Weitzman, B. (2011). p. 99.

³⁰¹ From “The Fourth Request” of the Berber (Amazigh) Manifesto.

and sincerity of belief...”³⁰²

By referencing Islam, Chafik sidesteps the claim that the Imazighen are indigenous to the region while the Arabs are invaders. More importantly, according to the second principle, Morocco should be considered an Islamic kingdom rather than an Arab country—nor an Amazigh country. This approach seems to differ from Azaykou’s re-Amazighization plan, which views Islamization alongside colonization and Arabization as forces that have gradually erased Tamazight and its culture over time.

To further support his argument, Chafik attempts to blur the boundaries between Arabs and Imazighen, who he says are both shaped by the same land, or the “social soil” (*al-turba al-ijtimā’iyya*). He states, “As for language, it cannot be the only measure, because the Arabized Amazigh, unless he is transferred from his first social soil, retains, without realizing it, the characteristics that were inherent in his personality; and because the Arab of origin who has been immersed for generations in the depths of Amazigh society is inevitably assimilated without realizing it, in the material and moral components of his being. Add to all this that the gap between the Arab and Amazigh natures is not vast.”³⁰³ Hence, by this logic, the people in the land of Morocco are either Arabized Imazighen or Amazighized Arabs, Thus they can be seen as a homogeneous people, shaped—sometimes unconsciously—by the same social soil.

This presents an interesting nationalist ideology that differs from both Herderian cultural/romantic nationalism and the Anglo-Franco style of political nationalism. Chafik does not prioritize language as the primary marker of a nation, in contrast to cultural nationalism, which emphasizes that only through language can a people exist. However, he retains a core aspect of it by viewing national identity as predetermined, even unconsciously. The key difference lies in the suggestion that this identity is not determined by one’s first language, but rather by one’s first social soil. In this context, language and culture alone are unreliable indicators of identity, as Imazighen can be Arabized, and Arabs can be Amazighized. The only stable criterion becomes the enduring social soil itself and whether or not people remain rooted in it.

This stable social soil can be understood as the Maghreb, or more specifically, Morocco, which, over a long historical period, has been organized as a continuous

³⁰² Chafik, M. (1989). pp. 48-49.

³⁰³ *Ibid.* p. 49-50.

Islamic monarchical regime on a relatively stable territory. Chafik clearly states that what the Amazigh language contributes is “the infrastructure of the Moroccan Islamic personality.”³⁰⁴ In this sense, Chafik’s ideology may align with the political nationalism of Morocco, reflected in its national motto “*Allāh, Al-Waṭan, Al-Malik*”³⁰⁵ (Allah, the Country, the King), as seen in France and England, where stable, unified states are prerequisites for national identity. However, the key difference is that Chafik’s political nationalism is not a “daily plebiscite,” but rather a predetermined identity, even without people being conscious of it. Thus, it may be fitting to define Chafik’s ideology as a form of romanticized political nationalism, in which a political entity plays a decisive role in providing a stable social soil, allowing different languages and cultures to contribute to its meaning. In this framework, Amazigh and Arabic speakers are not defined by their respective irreconcilable cultural nationalisms, but rather by their shared homogeneity, rooted in the common social soil they share.

The historical ideology of Mohamed Chafik, along with the nationalist thinking within it, can be seen as an important theoretical preparation for King Mohamed VI’s recognition of the Amazigh language and culture in his Throne Day Speech in 2001. This recognition led to the creation of IRCAM, where the King also stressed that his kingdom does have “ni majorité, ni minorité.” What is hoped to change, in view of Mohamed Chafik, is not a Maghreb “re-Amazighisé,” but rather “un Maghreb d’abord maghrébin,”³⁰⁶ into which Amazighness must be incorporated as one of the tributaries to an Islamic state safeguarded by the monarchy, which cannot be anything otherwise—especially as clearly stated in *Thirty-Three Centuries of Amazigh History*, it “should not seek its legitimacy in a racial or ethnic affiliation.” It was under this series of ideologies that IRCAM was founded.

3.2.3. Language Ideology

The Amazigh language is of the utmost importance in Mohamed Chafik’s ideology, as summarized in his own words: “the Amazigh language is one of the most important

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.* p. 61.

³⁰⁵ https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Morocco_2011?lang=ar (accessed August 30, 2024), The 2011 Moroccan constitution Article 4.

³⁰⁶ Chafik, M. (2000). *Pour un Maghreb d’abord maghrébin*. Centre Tarik Ibn Ziyad.

civilizational and cultural factors that has shaped the Moroccan spirit, the natural environment in which it grew, and Moroccan thought in many of its aspects.”³⁰⁷ Therefore, if the Amazigh language is to be incorporated into national education, it should not be seen as a right or duty for any majority or minority, but for all Moroccans who share this cultural heritage to learn. In fact, Chafik’s vision is even broader, as he envisions “every Moroccan, every Arab, and every Muslim who wishes to learn about an aspect of knowledge that represents an important part of the heritage of Islamic peoples will enter the field of learning Amazigh.”³⁰⁸

But the question remains: what is this Amazigh? Though “the Amazigh language” has sufficient scientific evidence demonstrating its internal unity, it exists only in the form of its multiple, often mutually unintelligible varieties scattered across North Africa. Chafik’s suggestion is clear: people should research and learn Amazigh, as he did in his Arabic-Amazigh Dictionary, focusing on “what the Danish researcher Karl-G. Prasse called ‘the original Berber (*le protoberbère*),’ which André Basset noted, based on the information available to him, has not changed much over the last eight centuries.”³⁰⁹ In Chafik’s view, “the reality is that the Amazigh language (in its unity) is still alive.”³¹⁰ The language is “preserving its own entity,” but the problem lies in the fact that this entity “is not fully revealed with all its elements” because too much attention has been given to the dialects. Instead, people should be “heading towards seeking unifying factors, not seeking dividing factors between them as a number of French ‘researchers’ were doing.”³¹¹

Chafik believes that if Amazigh is studied without an exclusive focus on its dialects, then “the Amazigh language in its current state, that is, as a living language that people communicate with, spontaneously and naturally, is capable of recovery (*qābila li-l-inti’āsh*), growth, and prosperity,” especially through the process of “lexical creation,” which the “flexible derivation system” of Amazigh is particularly well-suited for.³¹² This shows that for Chafik, though Amazigh is vividly alive in the form of its dialects, on its path to prosperity, it is still necessary for the language to

³⁰⁷ Chafik, M. (1989). p. 61.

³⁰⁸ Chafik, M. (1990). *al-mu’jam al-‘arabī al-amazīghī* (The Arabic-Amazigh Dictionary). (Vol. 1). The Academy of the Kingdom of Morocco. p. 11.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.* p. 8.

³¹⁰ Chafik, M. (1989). p. 63.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*

³¹² *Ibid.*

first “recover” from its current “dialectal” situation.

Chafik is particularly hostile to the term dialect when referring to Amazigh. This stems, in part, from the Arabization process, during which Amazigh was dismissed as “just a dialect of Arabic.” Additionally, Hassan II’s reference to Amazigh as three “national dialects” was viewed by activists as diminishing the language’s status. Consequently, Chafik felt it was crucial, especially in his works written in Arabic, to emphasize that Amazigh is “a language in its own right, not a ‘dialect’ branching off from another language. It has its own dialects branching off from it.”³¹³ He also cautions readers at the very outset of his Amazigh textbook, *Forty-four lessons in the Amazigh language* (1991), stating, “If you believe that Amazigh is ‘just a dialect’ and that mastering its grammatical, morphological, and lexical information will only take you a few hours, then I advise you to leave this book and learn a language that you revere and value, such as English or German.”³¹⁴

For Chafik, Amazigh is a real independent language by its own rights. This means that emphasizing and researching Amazigh varieties as though they were independent languages is contrary to his ideology. This explains why he discourages, sometimes to the extent of strongly criticizing it, research that focuses on specific Amazigh varieties. He criticizes that “French lexicographers were limiting their fields of research to local or tribal dialects, exploring the characteristics of each dialect, and were eager to highlight the differences at the expense of the groups in order to establish proof that the tribes are culturally distinct, and that some of them are enemies to others as long as they differ in pronunciation, timbre, or tone.”³¹⁵

Importantly, this criticism demonstrates that Chafik is aware and cautious of the group-defining function of language, as he believes that the linguistic variety within Amazigh carries the potential for social division. This can be seen as the fundamental reason why, in the three founding documents of IRCAM, which aim to consolidate Moroccan national unity, Amazigh is consistently represented as a single language, *l’Amazigh*, without reference to its varieties.

Meanwhile, Chafik seems to be aware of the group-relating function of language and appears to have a one nation–one language ideology in mind, as his Amazigh

³¹³ Chafik, M. (1989). p. 61.

³¹⁴ Chafik, M. (1991). *arba ‘a wa-arba ‘ūn darsan fī al-lughā al-Amazīghiyya*. Rabat: Toub Press. p. 5.

³¹⁵ Chafik, M. (1990). p. 7.

textbook reveals aspects of his vision of *l'Amazigh*. The language taught in *Forty-four Lessons in the Amazigh Language* is more familiar to speakers of Central Moroccan Amazigh, as is Chafik himself. For instance, the preverbal marker for negative imperatives is introduced as *ad-ur*, rather than, for example, the Tarifiyt *wir/wir*, and the imperfective form is introduced with the particle *ar*, which may be unfamiliar to speakers of other varieties that use *da*, *la*, or no particle, as in Tarifiyt.³¹⁶ However, in multiple occasions in the book, Chafik also shows features from other varieties but avoids naming them. For example, for the numeral “one,” Chafik introduces *yan*, *yun*, *idj*, *idjen* for masculine and *yat*, *yut*, *isht*, *ishten* for feminine, explaining that the four pairs of usages are “all synonymous,” without specifying that *yan-yat* is from Tashelhiyt, *yun-yut* from Central Moroccan Amazigh, and *idjen-isht* from Tarifiyt.³¹⁷ Another example is the question word “how,” where Chafik gives three synonyms *mamk*, *mamsh*, *mimsh*, each from Tashelhiyt, Tarifiyt, and Central Moroccan Amazigh but also does not name them.³¹⁸

Thus, Chafik attempts to present a single homogeneous Amazigh language incorporating features from the three main Moroccan Amazigh varieties. These features are not presented as coming from different varieties, but rather as “synonyms” belonging to one unified language. This means that the case, for example, of using the Tarifiyt *idjen* instead of *yan* before a Tashelhiyt noun is considered legitimate in Chafik’s book, even though it would seem strange to all Amazigh speakers. Therefore, it can be concluded that the primary aim of Chafik’s book might not be to describe Amazigh as used in practice, but rather to serve an ideological purpose. His goal is to convey the perception that Amazigh is a homogeneous language, with the various features of the three Moroccan Amazigh varieties presented as mere synonyms within this language. These differences are downplayed as not significant enough to define three distinct languages or, consequently, three distinct peoples. Instead, those who speak the mutually unintelligible Amazigh varieties are portrayed as one people, unified by speaking “one single language.”

These ideologies reflected in Chafik’s works can be seen as simultaneously addressing two problems in Hassan II’s characterization of Amazigh as “three national

³¹⁶ Chafik, M. (1991). pp. 301, 228.; For the usage of Tarifiyt, see Mourigh, K., & Kossmann, M. (2019). pp. 123, 113.

³¹⁷ Chafik, M. (1991). p. 37.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 177.

dialects” of Morocco. Chafik aims to demonstrate that, first, Amazigh has the status of language, not dialect, and second, it is a single language, not three distinct ones. Another aspect of Chafik’s ideology is his focus solely on the main Amazigh varieties in Morocco, so his description of Amazigh does not encompass, for example, Kabyle and Tuareg.

Based on these fundamental ideologies, Chafik tries to diagnose why the single Amazigh language in Morocco is presented in the form of dialects. He attributes this partly to its contact with Arabic, stating that “Amazigh dialects vary in experience and contact with the Arabic language, and this has resulted in their disparity in adopting Arabic words and in their killing of the original Amazigh words.”³¹⁹ Chafik’s suggestion reflects his view of language contact not as a natural linguistic phenomenon but as an undesirable one that leads to the killing of Amazigh words and further widens the gaps between its dialects. Consequently, Chafik believes that finding and showcasing the real roots preserved in different Amazigh dialects is an important way to bring about the “recovery” of the Amazigh language.

This ideology is reflected in Chafik’s Amazigh textbook, where, for example, the “synonyms” for the concept of “some” and “a few” are listed as *kra*, *shra*, *sha*, *its*, whereas the Arabic loan attested in Tarifiyt as *rebeaḍ* is not included.³²⁰ It is also explicit in Chafik’s Arabic-Amazigh dictionary, which he views as “a process of ridding the eloquent Amazigh tongue—that is, what is technically called ‘*la koine*’ Amazigh—from the ‘barbaric’ dialects, a process in which reliance on the original was preferred over embracing the derivative, and in which the intrusive was replaced by the original, deduced from the interior.”³²¹ Thus, strong standardization and purism ideologies can be observed at play in Chafik’s language ideology.

However, it is worth noting that Chafik did not actively translate these ideologies into a systematic language planning process. He views his dictionary as a preparatory step toward language planning and standardization but avoids concretely describing what exactly this “Amazigh koine” entails, other than suggesting that researching Proto-Berber (in his conception) is helpful for bringing it forth. The most concrete suggestion he offers is to use Amazigh neologisms to replace the “intrusive” loans.

³¹⁹ Chafik, M. (1990). p. 9.

³²⁰ Chafik, M. (1991). p. 37.; For Tarifiyt, see Mourigh, K., & Kossmann, M. (2019). pp. 100.

³²¹ Chafik, M. (1990). p. 10.

Even here, Chafik emphasizes that his dictionary is not aimed at purifying Amazigh from Arabic loans. Their absence is not because he considers them “illegitimate,” but rather because “there is no benefit for the learner to teach him what he already knew,” much like “saying to a French speaker, for example, that a car is called a *tomobile*, a driver is called a *chauffeur*, and an engine is called a *motor*.”³²² As for the dialectal problem, although Mohamed Chafik removed labels indicating the different origins of varieties of these “authentic” Amazigh words, he cannot be considered to be technically planning an Amazigh vocabulary with his dictionary.

Therefore, although Chafik’s ideology and the founding ideologies of IRCAM derived from it are clear, crucial principles such as “Amazigh is one language, not dialects” which “belongs to all Moroccans” are distant from the language practice. What is observed are only Amazigh varieties that are not mutually intelligible and do not function as language tools for all Moroccans, a situation that can only be changed through corpus planning and acquisition planning. While language practices may be overlooked in ideological discussions, they could not be ignored once IRCAM started to undertake the concrete task of planning and preparing the teaching of *l’Amazigh*.

3.3. The Formative Years of IRCAM

The declaration establishing IRCAM was generally well-received by the Amazigh movement. Essafi Moumen Ali, a lawyer, writer, and member of AMREC, expressed a representative view, stating that the creation of IRCAM was the result of a long struggle by the Amazigh movement and a favorable response from a just king.³²³ There were also favorable voices not directly focused on the creation of IRCAM itself, but on its founding documents, which were seen as an important step toward achieving the ultimate goal of constitutional recognition of Amazighness—a status that had never been legally protected before. This was the perspective of Ahmed Adghirni, a lawyer and early advocate for an Amazigh political party in Morocco, remembered as one of the most uncompromising activists for Amazigh identity, which he believed had been “colonized by Arab-Islamic culture and society.”³²⁴ Similarly, Hassan

³²² *Ibid.* pp. 10-11.

³²³ Bouyaakoubi, L. (2009). pp. 144-145.

³²⁴ *Ibid.* p. 145.; <https://www.congres-mondial-amazigh.org/2020/10/20/d%C3%A9c%C3%A8s-de-ahmed-adghirni/> (accessed August 30, 2024)

Idbelkassem, the aforementioned founder of *Tamaynut* who was once imprisoned for displaying a Tifinagh sign, shared this view.³²⁵

However, the ideologies reflected in the founding documents of IRCAM, which aimed at absorbing Amazighness into a homogenous Moroccan identity, did not go unnoticed. For instance, Mohamed Ziani, vice-president of the Confederation of Amazigh Cultural Associations of the Rif, believed that the authorities were merely trying to co-opt social movements. He argued that the true objective behind the creation of IRCAM was to assimilate the Amazigh movement and neutralize its activism to avoid a politicized scenario like that of Algeria.³²⁶ Lahoucine Bouyaakoubi describes similar voices belonging to “some radical tendencies of the movement, vigilant towards everything that comes from the Moroccan authorities.”³²⁷ However, after reviewing IRCAM’s founding documents, it appears that, at least on this issue, Mohamed Ziani was reasonable in making his judgment.

While activists might not all view IRCAM positively, most believed that Mohamed Chafik, despite being from the inner circle of the authorities, was capable and trustworthy in leading the Amazigh movement forward. People like Ahmed Adghirni recognized his scientific expertise, and Mohamed Ziani viewed him as sincere in his commitment to Amazigh causes.³²⁸ Chafik thus became an acceptable candidate for both the authorities and the activists to serve as the first rector of IRCAM. On January 14, 2002, King Mohamed VI formally appointed Mohamed Chafik as the rector of IRCAM, with Chafik accepting the position on two conditions: that his tenure would be provisional for one year, and that he would not receive payment.³²⁹ Chafik did not expect to solve all the problems facing Amazigh during his tenure, as he viewed them as highly complex.³³⁰ His primary concern was to make IRCAM function effectively, which required him to participate in selecting the members of the *Conseil d’Administration* and organizing the institute’s structure. And he needed to act swiftly to realize his core aim: making the teaching of Amazigh a *fait accompli* in Morocco. As he later expressed his concern, “N’importe quel directeur, secrétaire ou

³²⁵ Bouyaakoubi, L. (2009). p. 145.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*

³²⁷ *Ibid.*

³²⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 146-147.

³²⁹ *Ibid.* p. 146.

³³⁰ *Ibid.* p. 147.

inspecteur, ayant un vague sentiment panarabiste, peut retarder l'arrivée des manuels, la programmation d'un cours voire sa mise en chantier."³³¹

3.3.1. Conseil d'Administration

The selection of the *Conseil d'Administration* (CA) of IRCAM was under close scrutiny by the authorities. The process was overseen by a royal commission working alongside Mohamed Chafik, composed of some of the king's most trusted figures.³³² These included Hassan Aourid, spokesman of the Royal Palace and a classmate of King Mohammed VI at the *Collège Royal*, born to an Amazigh family in Errachidia;³³³ Mohammed Mezian Belfkih, a close advisor to both Hassan II and Mohammed VI, who held various key government positions such as Minister of Agriculture and Minister of Public Works, Vocational Training, and Executive Training since the 1970s;³³⁴ Abdelwahab Benmansour, the royal historian who became *Chef du Cabinet Royal* as early as 1961, the first year of Hassan II's reign;³³⁵ and Mohamed Rochdi Chraïbi, *Chef du Cabinet Royal*, who had served as Mohammed VI's private secretary when he was crown prince.³³⁶

According to the IRCAM Dahir, the CA is composed of the rector and a maximum of 40 members. These must include five representatives from the Ministries of the Interior, Higher Education, National Education, Culture, and Communication; one university president representing the universities and one director of an academy representing the regional education and training academies, appointed by the King on the recommendation of the respective ministers.³³⁷ Mohamed Chafik was under

³³¹ Interview, M. Chafik: les dégâts de l'élite sont énormes.

³³² The information regarding the royal commission is quoted from Bouyaakoubi, L. (2009). p. 146. However, it is worth noting that the name of the director of the *Cabinet Royal* at the time, Mohamed Rochdi Chraïbi, appears to have been mistakenly listed as "Mounir Chraïbi" in the book. See also IRCAM. (2003). *Bulletin d'information (Inghmisen n usinag)*, 1. p. 5.

³³³ <https://www.mjtnews.com/2019/12/22/hassan-aourid-a-senior-civil-servant-and-man-of-letters/> (accessed September 18, 2024)

³³⁴ <https://web.archive.org/web/20101015062232/http://www.lematin.ma/Actualite/Express/Article.asp?id=132923> (accessed September 18, 2024)

³³⁵ [Abdelwahab BENMANSOUR – alademia](https://www.alademia.org/195702/politique/ombre-et-lumi-re-sur-les-minences-grises/) (accessed September 18, 2024)

³³⁶ <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/195702/politique/ombre-et-lumi-re-sur-les-minences-grises/> (accessed September 18, 2024)

³³⁷ IRCAM Dahir, Article 5, <https://www.ircam.ma/fr/textes-fondateurs/texte-du->

considerable pressure since there was an expectation that the CA members would come from prominent activists of the Amazigh movement. Meanwhile, even political parties that remained hostile to the Amazigh cause were lobbying to be represented at the Institute.³³⁸ Ultimately, Chafik succeeded in living up to the movement's expectations by securing a majority of CA members who were well-known activists of the Amazigh cause, including most members of the committee that had worked with him on preparing the Amazigh Manifesto two years earlier.³³⁹ The list is as follows:³⁴⁰

Government Background:

- Mohamed Abderrahim - *Ministère de la Communication, Rabat*
- Ali Amahan - *Ministère de la Culture*
- Said Belcadi - *Directeur au Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur, de la Formation des Cadres et de la Recherche Scientifique, Rabat*
- Salah Ben Yamna - *Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, Rabat*
- Mohieddine Amzazi - *Ministère de l'Intérieur, Rabat*
- M'hamed Sallou - *Chef de Service au Ministère de la Culture*

Academic Background:

- Mohamed Chafik - *Membre de l'Académie du Royaume*
- Mohamed Ajajaa - *Professeur de l'enseignement secondaire, Meknes*
- Abdellatif Bencherifa - *Président de l'Université Moulay Ismail, Meknes*
- El Houssayn El Moujahid - *Professeur de l'enseignement supérieur, Rabat*
- Ahmed Boukous - *Professeur de l'enseignement supérieur, Rabat*
- Mohamed Chami - *Professeur de l'enseignement supérieur, Oujda*
- Hassan Benhakeia - *Professeur de l'enseignement supérieur, Oujda*
- Hlima Ghazi - *Professeur de l'enseignement supérieur, Rabat*
- Abdeslam Khalafi - *Professeur à l'Université Alakhawyne, Ifrane*
- Abdelkader Mahmoudi - *Professeur de l'enseignement supérieur, Meknes*
- Ali Sidqi Azaykou - *Professeur de l'enseignement supérieur, Rabat*

[dahir](#) (accessed September 18, 2024)

³³⁸ Bouyaakoubi, L. (2009). pp. 147-148.

³³⁹ *Ibid.* p. 148.

³⁴⁰ IRCAM. (2003). *Bulletin d'information (Inghmisen n usinag)*, 1. p. 4.

- Meryam Demnati - *Professeur de l'enseignement secondaire, Marrakech*
- Ahmed Aassid - *Professeur de l'enseignement secondaire, Temara*
- Lahcen Oulhaj - *Professeur de l'enseignement supérieur, Rabat*
- Mohamed Boudhan - *Inspecteur de l'enseignement secondaire, Nador*
- Ali Khadaoui - *Inspecteur de l'enseignement secondaire, Kénitra*
- Mimoun Ighraz - *Inspecteur de l'enseignement technique, retraité, Meknes*
- Jilali Saib - *Professeur de l'enseignement supérieur, Rabat*
- Slimane Chegdali - *Académie de Settat*

Professional Background:

- Brahim Akhiat - *Commerçant, Rabat*
- Ali Bougrine - *Ingénieur des mines, Rabat-Casablanca*
- Mohamed Behri - *Journaliste, Rabat*
- Amina Ibnou-Cheikh - *Journaliste, Rabat*
- Ilias El Omani - *Homme d'affaires, Rabat*
- Moumen Ali Essafi - *Avocat, Casablanca*
- Hassan Idbelkassam - *Avocat, Rabat*
- Leila Meziane - *Médecin, Casablanca*
- Abdelmalek Houssayn Oussaden - *Chirurgien, Fes*

The royal commission's decision to reduce the list from the allowed 40 personalities to the final 34 further reflected the nature of IRCAM as an enterprise closely controlled by the authorities. Among the activists proposed by Mohamed Chafik but ultimately excluded was Ahmed Adghirni, likely due to his vision of creating an Amazigh political party in Morocco, a vision he later realized with the founding of the *Parti Démocrate Amazigh Marocain* (PDAM) in 2005, which was dissolved by the government three years later.³⁴¹ The exclusion from the CA led Adghirni to declare, "le but de l'IRCAM est d'assimiler le mouvement amazighe et le danger c'est de makhzéniser l'action culturelle amazighe, chose encore jamais faite auparavant."³⁴² This sentiment was echoed within the *Tamaynut* association,

³⁴¹ Bouyaakoubi, L. (2009). pp. 149-150.; <https://www.afrik.com/dissolution-du-parti-democrate-amazigh-marocain-la-communaute-berbere-condamne> (accessed September 18, 2024)

³⁴² Bouyaakoubi, L. (2009). p. 150.

particularly after its founder and president, Hassan Idbelkassem, was included in the final CA list. In July 2002, following the announcement of the CA members, a faction broke away from a Tamaynut congress and went on to create a new organization, the *Réseau Amazigh pour la Citoyenneté* (Azetta). This dissident group criticized *Tamaynut* for neglecting broader human rights issues in Morocco, a country they argued still needed to be “democratized,” as well as for its cooperation with IRCAM.³⁴³

These developments demonstrate that, although the first CA of IRCAM included prominent Amazigh activists—a move that may have appeased the movement—the outcome was a division within the Amazigh movement. This was particularly striking given that, just two years prior, the movement had been remarkably united and on the brink of politicization. The movement was now split into a moderate camp represented by IRCAM, cooperating with the authorities, and a radical camp whose influence became limited. This filtering process became continuous, leading activists to choose between cooperation or departure. For instance, on October 16, 2005, seven members of the first CA signed a resignation letter, criticizing the “absence de volonté politique du gouvernement de promouvoir tamazight” and stating that “les pouvoirs politiques n’avaient pas changé d’attitude sur le fond de la question amazighe en tant que langue, culture, identité et mémoire.”³⁴⁴ This criticism highlights the ideological divergence between a Moroccan nationalism that absorbs Amazigh identity, as represented by IRCAM, and the Amazigh nationalism, which strongly asserts a distinct identity.

On June 27, 2002, Mohammed VI formally appointed the first CA of IRCAM. In a brief speech, the King reiterated in a more concise and explicit manner the fundamental ideologies of IRCAM, emphasizing that the Amazigh language and culture are a “richesse nationale et motif de fierté pour l’ensemble des Marocains” and that “l’Amazighité, qui plonge ses racines au plus profond de l’Histoire du peuple marocain, appartient à tous les Marocains sans exclusive et qu’elle ne peut être mise au service de desseins politiques de quelque nature que ce soit.” The king also clearly

³⁴³ Pouessel, S. (2006). Du village au «village-global»: Émergence et construction d’une revendication autochtone berbère au Maroc. *Autrepart*, (2), 119-134. p. 129.

³⁴⁴ <https://tawiza.eu5.org/Tawiza103/communiquFR.htm> (accessed September 18, 2024). The letter was signed by Mohamed Ajajaa, Abdelmalek Houssayn Oussaden, Hassan Benhakeia, Mohamed Boudhan, Ali Bougrine, Mimoun Ighraz, and Ali Khadaoui.

asked the CA members, distinguished by their “sincere patriotism,” to ensure that IRCAM is based on “a sustained interest in our entire cultural heritage” and that the promotion of Amazigh culture would remain “in perfect harmony with the foundations of our ancestral Moroccan identity, united around its sacred and enduring values.”³⁴⁵ These ideologies thus became a clear directive for the CA of IRCAM, guiding its concrete works.

3.3.2. Administrative and Academic Structures

Simultaneously to the selection of the CA, work on organizing the administrative and academic structures of IRCAM was underway. From November 2001 to the end of March 2002, Mohamed Chafik, as Rector, along with a commission composed of Fatima Boukhris, Ahmed Boukous, El Houssayn El Moujahid, and Jilali Saib, collaborated to define IRCAM’s departments and determine their leadership.³⁴⁶ Except for Boukhris from the *Faculté des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines de Rabat*, who was not a member of the CA, all others were from *l’enseignement supérieur* in Rabat and members of the CA. It is worth noting that among the four, Ahmed Boukous and El Houssayn El Moujahid were specialists in Tashelhiyt, while Fatima Boukhris and Jilali Saib specialized in Central Moroccan Amazigh, with no Tarifiyt specialist involved in this phase. Following this, from April to July 2002, future center directors and department heads joined the preparatory commission to finalize the structure and membership of IRCAM, which began operations shortly afterward.³⁴⁷

IRCAM initially had two administrative departments: the *Département des Ressources Humaines, des Affaires Générales et Juridiques* and the *Département du Budget et du Matériel*.³⁴⁸ Later, two additional departments were added: the *Département de la Communication*, aimed at strengthening the Institute’s presence in media and public spaces, broadening its influence, and enhancing its image and impact; and the *Département d’Audit Interne et Contrôle de Gestion*.³⁴⁹ For study and

³⁴⁵ IRCAM. (2003). *Bulletin d’information (Inghmish n usinag)*, 1. p. 3.

³⁴⁶ Bouyaakoubi, L. (2009). p. 150.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁸ IRCAM. (2003). *Bulletin d’information (Inghmish n usinag)*, 1. p. 15.

³⁴⁹ <https://www.ircam.ma/fr/departement-de-la-communication> (accessed September 18, 2024); <https://www.ircam.ma/fr/organigramme-ircam> (accessed September 18, 2024)

research units, IRCAM was designed with seven centers: the *Centre de l'Aménagement Linguistique* (CAL), the *Centre de la Recherche Didactique et des Programmes Pédagogiques* (CRDPP), the *Centre des Etudes Artistiques, des Expressions Littéraires et de la Production Audiovisuelle* (CEALPA), the *Centre des Etudes Anthropologiques et Sociologiques* (CEAS), the *Centre des Etudes Historiques et Environnementales* (CEHE), the *Centre de la Traduction, de la Documentation et de l'Édition* (initially including “*et de la Communication*”), and the *Centre des Etudes Informatiques, des Systèmes d'Information et de Communication* (CEISIC).³⁵⁰

3.3.2.1. CAL

The *Centre de l'Aménagement Linguistique* (CAL), the language planning agency of IRCAM, is tasked with the ultimate goal of standardizing “*la langue amazighe*” for its integration into the education system, the media, and public life in general. CAL’s main focus is on grammar and lexicon. It is composed of two study and research units: the Grammar unit and the Lexicon unit. Its concrete objectives include the codification of spelling, the creation of an Amazigh dictionary, the development of terminology for modern specialized vocabulary, and the collection of traditional vocabulary from the field. These efforts result in dictionaries, sectoral lexicons, grammars, and conjugation manuals, all aimed at contributing to “*la diffusion et [...] l’implantation de la langue standard.*”³⁵¹ The last expression from IRCAM’s official introduction, placing the diffusion of the standard language before its implantation, is interesting, as it suggests that the ideology and certain traits of the standard language might be disseminated prior to the full establishment of the language in practice.

Ahmed Boukous was appointed as the first director of CAL, with its initial team of researchers including Meftaha Ameer, Aïcha Bouhjar, Fatima Boukhris, Abdellah Boumalk, Mohamed Elmedlaoui and El Mehdi Iazzi.³⁵² Ahmed Boukous was born on October 15, 1946, in Lakhsas, Tiznit province, a Tashelhiyt-speaking area. He

³⁵⁰ IRCAM. (2003). *Bulletin d'information (Inghmisen n usinag)*, 1. pp. 11-15.

³⁵¹ <https://www.ircam.ma/fr/centre-de-amenagement-linguistique> (accessed September 18, 2024)

³⁵² IRCAM. (2003). *Bulletin d'information (Inghmisen n usinag)*, 1. p. 11.

pursued higher studies in literature, history, and pedagogy in Rabat (1964-1967) before teaching French in secondary education in Rabat for three years. He then continued his studies in Paris, obtaining the *Doctorat de 3^e Cycle* in social sciences (1974) at the *École Pratique des Hautes Études*. Boukous subsequently worked as a professor at the *Faculté des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines de Rabat* until joining IRCAM in 2002. During this time, he earned a *Doctorat d'État* in linguistics at the *Université de Paris-VIII* in 1987, focusing on the phonotactics and prosodic domains of Tashelhiyt from Agadir, and taught Amazigh at the *Institut Supérieur d'Archéologie et du Patrimoine* in Rabat from 1986 to 1994.³⁵³

For the other researchers, Meftaha Ameer, who would later become the director of CAL, was a professor at *l'Université Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah de Fès*, where she taught French language and literature before joining IRCAM.³⁵⁴ A native Tashelhiyt speaker, she studied Middle Atlas (Ayt Mguild) phonology to obtain her doctorate in Aix-en-Provence under supervision of Salem Chaker in 1985. Her involvement in Amazigh studies continued, notably with an article published in 1990, where she discussed the classification of Amazigh dialects. In this article, Ameer argues that neither ethnic, historical, nor racial considerations, nor grammatical and phonetic variations, should be the primary criteria for classifying Amazigh dialects. Instead, she proposes that: “Une classification satisfaisante devrait, alors, recourir à un canevas de paramètres hiérarchisés où l’intercompréhension (dans laquelle le lexique joue un rôle prépondérant) viendrait en premier.”³⁵⁵ This conclusion suggests that if different Amazigh varieties share a significant enough vocabulary to ensure mutual understanding, despite grammatical and phonetic variations, these varieties might be classified as a linguistic entity, a theory that would become central to CAL’s language planning.

Aïcha Bouhjar, a Tarifiyt speaker from Belgium, taught at the Department of French Language and Literature at the *Faculté des lettres et des sciences humaines de*

³⁵³ Boukous, A. (1987). *Phonotactique et domaines prosodiques en berbère (parler tachelhit d'Agadir, Maroc)* (Doctoral dissertation, Paris 8).; The CV summary of Ahmed Boukous can be found in IRCAM. (2004). *Bulletin d'information (Inghmisen usinag)*, 2. p. 17.

³⁵⁴ <https://fesfestival.com/2019/en/conferencier/meftaha-ameur/> (accessed September 20, 2024)

³⁵⁵ Ameer, M. (1990). A propos de la classification des dialectes berbères. *Etudes et documents berbères* (2), 15-27. pp. 25-26.

Kénitra since 1994 before joining IRCAM in 2002. That same year, she defended a *Thèse d'Etat* in French sociolinguistics at *l'Université Mohammed V-Agdal* on bilingualism among Moroccan migrants in Brussels. Bouhjar served as the director of CAL from 2007 to 2015 and later became head of the *Département de la Communication*.³⁵⁶ Fatima Boukhris taught in the Department of French Language at the *Faculté des Lettres de Rabat*, specializing in generative syntax of Central Moroccan Amazigh. Also interested in sociolinguistics and pedagogy, she raised questions in a 2004 article, where she conducted a survey on the low efficiency of French language education and explored the reasons why the major in modern literature and the French department, in general, no longer attract students. Boukhris advocated for more investigation into language teaching issues before any educational reform, particularly regarding “l’enseignement d’une langue telle que le français dont le statut est ambigu.”³⁵⁷

Abdellah Boumalk was a linguist educated at INALCO in Paris, specializing in Tashelhiyt.³⁵⁸ He served as a lecturer-researcher in French linguistics at the *Faculté des Lettres d'Oujda*.³⁵⁹ His works, *Vocabulaire usuel du tachelhit* (co-authored) and *Manuel de conjugaison du tachelhit*, are used for teaching Tashelhiyt at INALCO.³⁶⁰ Mohamed Elmedlaoui was a linguist educated at *l'Université de Paris-VIII (Doctorat de 3^e Cycle)* and *l'Université Mohammed V-Agdal (Doctorat d'État)*, specializing in Amazigh, Arabic, and Hebrew. He served as Vice-Dean of the *Faculté des Lettres d'Oujda* (1995-1999) before joining IRCAM, where he directed the study and research unit of Lexicon in CAL.³⁶¹ In Amazigh studies, he is familiar with all three

³⁵⁶ <https://www.ircam.ma/sites/default/files/2022-01/bouhjar.pdf> (accessed September 20, 2024)

³⁵⁷ Boukhris, F. (2004). Pour une implication de l'étudiant dans la conception des programmes. *Revue langues et littératures*, 18, 37-51.

³⁵⁸ Boumalk, A. (1996). *Morphogénèse et dynamique lexicale en berbère: Tachelhit du Sud-Ouest marocain* (Doctoral dissertation, Paris, INALCO).

³⁵⁹ Boumalk, A. (2004). *Manuel de conjugaison du tachelhit: Langue berbère du Maroc*. L'Harmattan. About the Author.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*; Bounfour, A., & Boumalk, A. (2001). *Vocabulaire usuel du tachelhit: Tachelhit-français*. Centre Tarik ibn Ziad.; Brochure Licence 2024-2025 Berbère, Département Afrique et Océan Indien, INALCO. Available at: https://www.inalco.fr/sites/default/files/2024-06/Brochure%20licence%202024-2025_BERBERE.pdf (accessed September 20, 2024)

³⁶¹ Mohamed Elmedlaoui, CV summary. Available at: <https://static.blog4ever.com/2006/04/162080/Elmedlaoui-CV-Publications--2-.pdf>

main varieties in Morocco with a specialization in Tashelhiyt phonology.³⁶² He left IRCAM in 2006—details of which will be discussed later—and joined *l'Institut Universitaire de la Recherche Scientifique, Rabat*, directing research on *Géopolitique, Identité et Migration* until his retirement in 2017.³⁶³ El Mehdi Iazzi was an assistant professor of linguistics at *l'Université Ibn Zohr à Agadir* from 1988, granted tenure in 1991 after defending his Doctorate thesis (*doctorat de 3^e cycle*) on the Amazigh variety of Aït Attab, situated at the junction of the areas of Tashelhiyt and Central Moroccan Amazigh, under the supervision of Ahmed Boukous.³⁶⁴

It can thus be observed that most of the founding members of CAL had experience teaching French in Morocco. In terms of Amazigh studies, their expertise was primarily focused on Tashelhiyt: three members (Boukous, Elmedlaoui, and Boumalk) come from a pure Tashelhiyt background, while two (Ameur and Iazzi) have backgrounds in both Tashelhiyt and Central Moroccan Amazigh. Boukhris has a Central Moroccan Amazigh background, while Bouhjar is the only native Tarifiyt speaker.

3.3.2.2. Other Research Centers

Besides CAL, the *Centre de la Recherche Didactique et des Programmes Pédagogiques* (CRDPP) was established to conduct research in didactics and develop educational programs for the integration of Amazigh into the educational system. This involved creating specific curricula for Amazigh, providing training programs and activities, and supervising and evaluating trainers in Amazigh language and culture. Its most urgent mission following the establishment of IRCAM was to produce school textbooks and other teaching materials for Amazigh education, in cooperation with other centers, particularly CAL, which was responsible for standardizing the language

(accessed September 20, 2024)

³⁶² Elmedlaoui, M. (1985). *Le parler berbère chleuh d'Imdlawn (Maroc): Segments et syllabation* (Doctoral dissertation, Paris 8).

³⁶³ Mohamed Elmedlaoui, CV summary.

³⁶⁴ Iazzi, E. M. (1991). *Morphologie du verbe en Tamazight (Parler des Aït Attab, Haut-Atlas Central): Approche prosodique* (Doctoral dissertation, Université Mohammed V.); An introduction to El Mehdi Iazzi is available at: <https://www.fmsb.fr/en/researchers/el-mehdi-iazzi> (accessed September 20, 2024)

for integration into the educational system.³⁶⁵

Boudris Belaïd was appointed as the director of CRDPP. He was the author of the first lexicon of didactics and pedagogy of Amazigh, *Tamawalt usegmi*. Published in 1993, the lexicon was prefaced by Mohamed Chafik and referenced the dictionary and textbook by Chafik published shortly before.³⁶⁶ Belaïd's work relied heavily on neologisms from Kabylia. The preface and introduction of the book were written in Central Moroccan Amazigh using Latin letters, where Belaïd employed many neologisms from *Amawal* (the dictionary of new Amazigh terms by Mouloud Mammeri) that are not familiar to the book's audience, such as *tamezla* for difference, *agnu* for problem, and *agbur* for content.³⁶⁷ Notably, although written in Latin letters, the lexicon incorporated a table of Neo-Tifinagh based on the version of *Académie Berbère*, but omitted consonants that are only relevant to Kabyle, such as those for /č/ and /tʰ/.³⁶⁸

The *Centre des Etudes Artistiques, des Expressions Littéraires et de la Production Audiovisuelle* (CEALPA) aimed to contribute to the development and influence of the Amazigh language and culture through the publication of literary and artistic works, as well as the collection and preservation of Amazigh cultural, literary, and artistic heritage via audiovisual documents. It was directed by M'hamed Sallou, a member of the CA and head of department at the *Ministère de la Culture* before joining IRCAM.³⁶⁹ Besides, the *Centre des Études Anthropologiques et Sociologiques* (CEAS), directed by Ouazzi Elhoussine, was tasked with carrying out anthropological and sociological analyses of social phenomena and conducting studies on intercultural issues.³⁷⁰ The *Centre des Études Historiques et Environnementales* (CEHE), headed by Mohammed Hammam, was established to direct studies and investigations, particularly focusing on “*des périodes peu connues de l'histoire du Maroc, notamment les époques protohistorique et préislamique.*”³⁷¹

³⁶⁵ IRCAM. (2003). *Bulletin d'information (Inghmisen n usinag)*, 1. p. 12.

³⁶⁶ Belaïd, B. (1993). *Tamawalt usegmi: Vocabulaire de l'éducation, français-tamazight*. Najah El Jadida.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 11-12.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.* p. 4.

³⁶⁹ IRCAM. (2003). *Bulletin d'information (Inghmisen n usinag)*, 1. p. 13.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*

As for the *Centre de la Traduction, de la Documentation et de l'Édition* and the *Centre des Études Informatiques, des Systèmes d'Information et de Communication* (CEISIC), headed by Jilali Saib and Lahbib Zenkour, respectively, their functions were reflected in their names.³⁷²

The centers were designed to conduct activities in line with the fundamental ideologies of IRCAM. Thus, for example, CEHE was established to conduct research on “Moroccan history,” rather than Amazigh history. Accordingly, the center’s first publication was a book on Amazigh terms “in the history and civilization of Morocco.”³⁷³ Similarly, for CEAELPA, when the director M’hamed Sallou was asked by a journalist, “Can we speak of an ‘Amazigh cinema’ in Morocco?” he answered that he preferred the term *cinéma amazighophone* because “there is only one Moroccan cinema, whether in Amazigh, Arabic, or Darija.”³⁷⁴ These examples show that the fundamental ideology of IRCAM, which holds that Amazighness belongs to all Moroccans without exception was effectively guiding the activities of its research centers. The language planning of CAL, as will be discussed, was expected to follow the same approach.

3.3.3. Ahmed Boukous as the New Rector and the Challenges he Faced

With the formation of the CA and the structure of IRCAM completed, Mohamed Chafik’s tenure as rector was nearing its end. His last and critically important task was to secure the immediate implementation of Amazigh teaching in Moroccan schools, a process he estimated could easily be delayed or even canceled by “n’importe quel directeur, secrétaire ou inspecteur, ayant un vague sentiment panarabiste,” as quoted earlier. There were indeed different strands within the *Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale* (MEN) regarding support for Amazigh education.³⁷⁵ One group favored this education, citing the *livre blanc* published by the ministry in 2002, which aimed

³⁷² *Ibid.* pp. 14-15.

³⁷³ Hammam, M. (2004). *Amazigh terms in the history and civilization of Morocco: Part one* (in Arabic). IRCAM.

³⁷⁴ Interview, “C’est très rare que des films amazighophones bénéficient de subventions.” Al Bayane, March 1, 2020. <https://albayane.press.ma/%ef%bb%bfcest-tres-rare-que-des-films-amazighophones-beneficient-de-subventions.html> (accessed September 25, 2024)

³⁷⁵ Abouzaid, M. (2011). p. 156.

to explain all ministerial notes, including the curriculum for the Amazigh language (*manhaj al-lugha al-amazighiya*) intended for the first cycle of education.³⁷⁶ Conversely, another group of people at the Ministry referenced the *Charte nationale d'éducation et de formation* from 1999, which, while expressing “openness to Amazigh,” viewed “the use of the Amazigh language or any local dialect” merely as a means to “facilitate the learning of the official language.”³⁷⁷

Against this background, IRCAM swiftly secured a convention with the Ministry on June 26, 2003, which was favorable to IRCAM’s vision. The two partners announced the broad strategic lines centered around three principles: 1. The teaching of Amazigh is integrated into the basic cycle, beginning in the first year of primary education; 2. A generalization envisaged for all levels of education (vertical generalization), progressively extending from one level to total coverage of the three school levels; 3. A definitive generalization across the entire territory (horizontal generalization) by 2010.³⁷⁸ IRCAM would be responsible for the production and expertise of teaching tools, but not be involved in operations within the schools. Other tasks, such as teacher training and the monitoring and evaluation of Amazigh teaching, would be conducted jointly by IRCAM and the Ministry.³⁷⁹ Immediately after the convention, the pilot program introducing Amazigh as a compulsory subject for first-year students started, covering 345 primary schools selected by the ministry in predominantly Amazigh-speaking areas.³⁸⁰

The dominant role of MEN in Amazigh education, or in the acquisition planning of the Amazigh language, instead of IRCAM, can be understood as a strategy by the authorities to ensure that the founding ideologies of IRCAM are safely implemented throughout Amazigh education. With the fundamental ideologies of IRCAM articulated and secured, the institute’s structure established and functioning, and the teaching of Amazigh in Morocco having become a *fait accompli*, Mohamed Chafik concluded his tenure as the first rector of IRCAM. It can be considered that, Chafik had little interest in participating in the concrete language planning efforts of IRCAM.

³⁷⁶ Abrous, N. (2017). pp. 156-157.

³⁷⁷ Charte nationale d'éducation et de formation (1999). available at: <https://www.mcinet.gov.ma/sites/default/files/documentation%20iscae%20rabat%202018.pdf> (accessed September 25, 2024)

³⁷⁸ Abrous, N. (2017). pp. 152-153.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.* p. 157.

³⁸⁰ Abouzaid, M. (2011). pp. 154-155.

He recalled in an interview that “sincèrement, pour ce qui est de l’enseignement de la langue amazighe, l’IRCAM a les coudées suffisamment franches. En revanche, il bute sur des blocages de toutes sortes.”³⁸¹ He left these opportunities and challenges to his successor, Ahmed Boukous, the director of CAL, and even attempted to avoid appearing to impose personal preferences on the corpus planning of the Amazigh language in Morocco. This was particularly evident during a CA meeting on January 30-31, 2003, where the issue of the script was discussed, which was the same meeting where Mohamed Chafik formally announced his departure.³⁸²

The transition of the rectorate from Mohamed Chafik to Ahmed Boukous was not smooth, and the challenges for the latter were immense. The “regional issue” arose first. Although the founding documents of IRCAM avoided any mention of regional differences in Amazigh varieties in Morocco, this issue was considered from the very start when forming IRCAM’s structure. When listing the members of the CA, Mohamed Chafik and the royal commission attempted to ensure “fair representation” of the three regions: the Rif in the north, the Middle Atlas in the center, and the Souss in the south.³⁸³ Furthermore, CA member Mohamed Boudhan, *Inspecteur de l’enseignement secondaire* from the Riffian city of Nador, suggested the principle of “*représentativité régionale*,” arguing that the three key positions of IRCAM—the rector, the secretary general, and the director of CAL—should reflect regional balance.³⁸⁴ However, with Ahmed Boukous becoming the new rector, not only was the lack of Riffian representation in these key positions left unaddressed, but the team became further “Souss-centric”, as both Ahmed Boukous and Secretary General El Houssayn El Moujahid were from the Souss region.³⁸⁵

Feeling a lack of representation at various levels within IRCAM, seven Riffian members of the CA signed a petition protesting the marginalization of the Rif region.³⁸⁶ The issue received a response during the second ordinary session of the CA

³⁸¹ Interview, M. Chafik: Les dégâts de l’élite sont énormes.

³⁸² Bouyaakoubi, L. (2009). p. 163.

³⁸³ *Ibid.* p. 149.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.* p. 164.; See also Elmedlaoui, M. (2004a). *Ma part de vérité sur l’IRCAM (En hommage à M. Chafik), 2ième Partie*. OrBinah. Available at: <https://orbinah.blog4ever.com/ma-part-de-verite-sur-l-ircam-en-hommage-a-m-chafik-2ieme-partie> (accessed September 29, 2024)

³⁸⁵ Bouyaakoubi, L. (2009). p. 164.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.* p. 165. The signatories were Hassan Benhakeia, Mohamed Boudhan,

for the 2004 financial year. According to M'hamed Sallou, a CA member, director of CEAELPA, and one of the petition's signatories, the session promised that IRCAM "va lancer un vaste chantier, pendant les deux ans à venir, pour la réalisation de la monographie du Rif, une région qui a longtemps souffert d'un manque d'intérêt d'où l'importance de cette monographie qui concernera tous les secteurs du Rif."³⁸⁷

As the new rector, Ahmed Boukous promptly addressed the regional representation issue early in his tenure by publishing a statistical table that claimed to show the percentage of staff affiliations by region, categorized as North, Center, and South. According to CAL member Mohamed Elmedlaoui, this table was distributed to representatives of the national press on December 31, 2003. The table's conclusion stated, "Les données du tableau ci-dessus montrent que la région du Nord est sous-représentée, en dépit des efforts déployés par le Rectorat pour réaliser l'équilibre." The imbalance was explained as being due to the fact that "la plupart des chercheurs de la région du Nord, qui avaient été fortement sollicités par le Rectorat en 2002 mais qui ont décliné son offre." The proposed solution was that "un effort doit être fait pour recruter d'autres chercheurs de la région."³⁸⁸

Notably, although IRCAM did not shy away from addressing the regional representation issue, it approached the matter according to its own ideology and principles, as reflected in how it presented the three main Amazigh varieties in Morocco. These varieties were not referred to by their common linguistic names—Tarifiyt, Tamazight, and Tashelhiyt—names that parallel other varieties like Kabyle and Tuareg. Instead, IRCAM labeled them by their geographical regions as North, Center, and South, which only make sense within the borders of Morocco. As seen in expressions like "des chercheurs de la région du Nord," IRCAM may have recognized the need to acknowledge regional differences, which were not mentioned in the founding documents, but it downplayed the linguistic distinctions. Ideologically, IRCAM preferred to view researchers as coming from the northern, central, or southern parts of Morocco, rather than acknowledging that they were speaking or

Mohamed Chami, Ilias El Omani, Abdeslam Khalafi, Leila Meziane, and M'hamed Sallou.

³⁸⁷ L'IRCAM amorce un nouveau virage. 26 juillet 2004, *Aujourd'hui Le Maroc*. <https://aujourd'hui.ma/actualite/lircam-amorce-un-nouveau-virage-16408> (accessed September 29, 2024)

³⁸⁸ Elmedlaoui, M. (2004a).

working on different Amazigh varieties.

The regional issue can be seen as part of a broader politicization tendency at IRCAM during the early rectorate of Ahmed Boukous. As recalled by Elmedlaoui, in Boukous's first press meeting on March 31, 2004, he described IRCAM as “an institution where the scientific and the non-scientific intersect” (*mu'assasa yataqāta' fihā mā huwa 'ilmī wa mā huwa ghayr 'ilmī*).³⁸⁹ According to Elmedlaoui, this non-scientific aspect was “embodied through the conclusion of several dozen cooperation agreements with a dense network of hundreds of associations, and through the allocation of a significant budget for this, in order to repel the accusation of so-called ‘academicism.’”³⁹⁰

While Elmedlaoui might have expected IRCAM to be a “purely scientific” institution, the institute, as discussed earlier, was inherently political, designed to prevent the politicization of the Amazigh cultural movement. Therefore, it might not be surprising that IRCAM saw it necessary to collaborate with and exert influence over Amazigh associations, in the same way as its CA incorporated many influential activists. It is understandable why Elmedlaoui viewed IRCAM as becoming, in his words, an institution for “political appeasement (*mu'assasa li-l-istirḡā' as-siyāsī*).”³⁹¹ However, at the same time, this “political appeasement” appears to have never been satisfying enough for the Moroccan Amazigh movement as a whole. In this complex and confusing political landscape, both Elmedlaoui, who accused IRCAM of political involvement, and the seven CA members, as mentioned, who criticized its lack of political progress, resigned from IRCAM during the early rectorate of Ahmed Boukous in 2004-2005.

According to the communiqué issued by the resigned CA members, both of IRCAM's major efforts in its founding years—the adoption of Neo-Tifinagh for writing standard Amazigh (see Chapter Four) and the implementation of Amazigh language education—were criticized. Regarding the writing system, the communiqué

³⁸⁹ Interview with Mohamed Elmedlaoui by Abdul Aziz Jahbali, Al-Alam newspaper, June 7, 2010. *mas'ala al-Amazighiya ba'da thamaniyya sanawat min 'umur ma'ahid al-IRCAM, wa fi ufuq tajdeed majlisihi al-idari* (“The Amazigh issue after eight years of the life of the IRCAM Institute: On the horizon of renewing its Board of Directors”), available at: <https://orbinah.blog4ever.com/en-arabe-1-l-institut-ircam-maroc-apres-huit-ans> (accessed September 30, 2024)

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*

states: “The obstacle to the expansion of Tifinagh outside of IRCAM accentuates the isolation of the first written productions in Amazigh, thus putting a brake on scientific research on the standardization of the language, a basic condition for a successful transition to writing.”³⁹² Though it is incorrect to associate IRCAM with “the first written productions” in Amazigh, which has a long writing tradition as will be discussed, and it is doubtful whether the adoption and promotion of Neo-Tifinagh truly pose such a threat to the standardization project, this statement remains notable. It reflects that, for the resigned CA members, IRCAM’s ability to fulfill its fundamental duty of standardizing Amazigh was severely questioned.

A similar lack of confidence is also found in the educational aspect, where the communiqué critics: “Regarding teacher training, the enforcement of the mandatory status of Amazigh in schools, and other logistical matters, these are now left to the discretion of regional academies and delegations, which feel bound only by the spirit of the charter. For instance, Amazigh is not taught anywhere in the third year, despite being officially announced by the Ministry of National Education (MEN). Worse, the introduction of Tamazight in middle and high schools, which was planned under a MEN-IRCAM agreement in 2003 for the 2005-2006 school year, has been postponed indefinitely. As for universities, Amazigh remains absent.”³⁹³

The issues related to teacher training were particularly acute, as separately attested by Elmedlaoui: “Since 2003, in a highly urgent plan referred to as ‘training sessions’ in cities and rural areas, reliance has been placed on no more than 14 staff members from the linguistic and pedagogical preparation centers at the institute. These individuals are repeatedly and unexpectedly forced to suspend their scheduled research programs, for which the centers are held accountable, in order to travel to remote areas and conduct training sessions lasting an average of three days here and there. They work with a group of teachers who are not consistently listed, nor homogeneous in their mastery of any variant of Amazigh or in their educational experience. For instance, as I personally witnessed, a trainer from IRCAM might find themselves facing individuals who are about to retire the following year, or others who question why they were selected for training since they do not speak any form of

³⁹² Communiqué des sept démissionnaires du C.A. de l’IRCAM. Available at: <https://tawiza.eu5.org/Tawiza103/communiqueFR.htm> (accessed March 1, 2025).

³⁹³ *Ibid.*

Amazigh.”³⁹⁴

Besides the technical issues related to the writing system and education, the more fundamental discrepancy between the resigned CA members and IRCAM lies in the ideological aspect. While IRCAM’s guiding ideology seeks to depoliticize the Amazigh issue and de-ethnicize Amazigh speakers by incorporating them into a homogeneous Moroccan national identity, the communiqué from the resigned CA members expresses a different perspective: “The reign of Amazighophobia is taking revenge on the hope sparked by the gathering in Ajdir, which momentarily nurtured the dream of the Imazighen (men and women) to finally reclaim their identity rights and dignity on their own land.”³⁹⁵ The thesis will not examine further the internal politics of IRCAM. However, based on the above discussions, one consequence of the early events during Ahmed Boukous’s tenure might be understood: with the departure of dissidents for various reasons, IRCAM’s founding ideologies, along with those of the new rector, were able to take firm hold within the institute.

³⁹⁴ Interview with Mohamed Elmedlaoui by Abdul Aziz Jahbali, *Al-Alam* newspaper, June 7, 2010.

³⁹⁵ Communiqué des sept démissionnaires du C.A. de l’IRCAM.