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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SUMMARY

This thesis examines how Amazigh (Berber) languages are being planned in Morocco, the largest Amazigh speaking country by population in the world, and seeks to understand the considerations behind these planning measures by studying the ideologies of the agency for planning Amazigh languages in Moroccan, the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture (IRCAM).

The study begins with a review of the history of the Amazigh cultural movement, describing its Kabylian origins against the backdrop of colonization, and the context in which it developed in response to postcolonial Arabization policies in Algeria, with key promotion by the Paris-based Académie Berbère. It highlights the importance of language planning efforts, including the creation of the Neo-Tifinagh script and neologisms, to Amazigh nationalism. It then moves on to introduce how the Moroccan Amazigh cultural movement was consequently inspired, with major developments in the 1970s, followed by suppression from Moroccan authorities, which only began to ease in the 1990s. It examines how the creation of IRCAM in 2001 resulted from negotiations between the Amazigh cultural movement, whose central demand was the constitutional recognition of the Amazigh language in Morocco, and the Moroccan authorities, who were concerned about the politicization of the movement.

The thesis focuses on the importance of Mohamed Chafik, the founding rector of IRCAM—a scholar and educator from the inner circle of King Hassan II, who was revered by the movement as an Amazigh activist. It closely examines the historical and linguistic ideologies of Chafik, analyzing how Amazigh nationalism was, in his thought, absorbed into broader Moroccan nationalism. It shows how his ideology—redefining Amazighness as a component of a unified Moroccan national identity rooted in Islamic faith and monarchical allegiance, rather than as a distinct ethnic identity—was reflected in the founding documents of IRCAM, namely 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).

For safeguarding the homogeneous Moroccan nationalism—prescribed by the 2001 Throne Day Speech as "recognizing neither majority nor minority"—IRCAM pursued an inviolable aim in its language planning efforts: working toward a homogeneous standard Moroccan Amazigh. This approach, however, stood in contradiction to the language practices of the three main Amazigh varieties existing

in Morocco: Tarifiyt, Central Moroccan Amazigh, and Tashelhiyt. After reviewing the events of IRCAM's formative years—including the establishment of its Conseil d'Administration, administrative and academic structures, and its transition to the rectorship of Ahmed Boukous—the thesis focuses on how the institute attempts to mediate the discrepancy between the language ideology of a homogeneous Moroccan Amazigh and the linguistic practices of the three main Amazigh varieties through its language planning efforts.

These efforts began with two main initiatives: first, the adoption and adaptation of Neo-Tifinagh IRCAM—a script that is graphically distinctive and phonemically unified—for writing exclusively the standard Moroccan Amazigh; and second, the development of the *Tifawin a Tamazight* ("Hello Tamazight") schoolbook series for teaching Amazigh in Morocco. The textbooks teach the three main Amazigh varieties but avoid explicitly naming them, instead ideologically framing them into a unified Moroccan Amazigh.

After describing the two initial planning efforts, the thesis focuses on the ideology and discourse of Ahmed Boukous centering the concept of the "revitalization" of Amazigh, and examines how the creation of a standardized Moroccan Amazigh is justified within the ideological framework of IRCAM. By setting a homogeneous standardized Moroccan Amazigh as the goal of the "revitalization" process—mandated by the institute's political nature but not grounded in any language practice—Boukous seeks to articulate the "death" of the Amazigh language in a particular way, specifically, a "death" supported by two diagnoses: the "dialectalization" and "attrition" of the Amazigh language.

The concept of dialectalization functions to define the three main Amazigh varieties in Morocco as dialects with a lower status than languages, viewing them as pre-revitalized, dying forms, unworthy of standardization in comparison to the homogeneous Moroccan Amazigh. Language attrition is another concept used to explain the death of the Amazigh language. It is featured in Boukous's discourses as a combination of two types of attrition: one in broader sense described as a process whereby languages in conflict with stronger ones are "weakened" and "devitalized", which is supported and predicted by the attrition in the narrower sense, referring to the attrition of the language's corpus as a mainly individual phenomenon. Based on the ideology of attrition of the Amazigh language, the language as a whole is described as facing a deterioration of structures similar to what occurs on the individual level,

and hence needs to be addressed as an essential part of corpus planning within the framework of the revitalization of the Amazigh language. This leads to one of the most significant phenomena of language planning by IRCAM—the exclusion of the vast majority of Arabic loanwords from standard Moroccan Amazigh.

With a standard Moroccan Amazigh significantly distant from language practice, the thesis moves on to examine how language ideology and practice are mediated in the ideology and discourse of IRCAM, through the key concept of the polynomic approach. After examining the original meaning of the polynomic ideology in the Corsican context, the thesis explores how IRCAM has adopted a polynomic approach in the planning of Amazigh, analyzing its function as subordinate to the standard language ideology—fundamentally different from its role in the Corsican context. The selective application of the polynomic principle is investigated mainly through the morphological planning of the imperfective aspect, which represents one of the most irregular morphological categories in Amazigh.

The thesis finds that, while a polynomic approach is occasionally applied, the prioritization of the vowel *a* in stem derivation, the omission of the negative imperfective form, and the obligatory prefixed particle—all in contradiction with the language practice of Tarifiyt—are implemented in an imposing manner. The phenomenon is interpreted by the thesis as a failed mediation of the polynomic approach between language ideology and practice, resulting from the unavoidable politically driven language ideology for standardizing a homogeneous Moroccan Amazigh.

As the conclusion, the thesis situates IRCAM's language planning efforts within Kathryn A. Woolard's concept of sociolinguistic naturalism, proposing that IRCAM's ideology represents a politically driven "project of authenticity." This post-naturalist approach prioritizes a standardized Amazigh language as a planning aim shaped by the Moroccan state's agenda, over both the actually spoken varieties and a pan-Amazigh language. Through this conclusion, the thesis contributes to understanding how politically motivated language planning can shape notions of linguistic authenticity in multilingual contexts.