

The Material Resurgence of Tamazight in the Moroccan Public Sphere: Possibilities and Limits

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Abstract:

This article probes the significance of Morocco's urban space gradually welcoming/embracing Tamazight, a critical step in a potential reconfiguration of the larger North Africa that would account for the region's indigeneity and multilingualism. It further seeks to examine the extent to which the linguistic shifts taking place in Morocco's public sphere, resulting from the 2011 amended constitution, could in the long term generate an epistemic shift in Moroccan consciousness and imaginary. In terms of methodology, this study relies on quantitative and qualitative data accumulated inside and outside of Morocco, specifically photos taken in summer 2022 as well questionnaires completed by Moroccan nationals of Amazigh origin in the same year. The findings in this data are illuminating and shed some light on how the Moroccan Amazigh (especially the educated class) view the Amazigh cultural movement underway and the corresponding debate over language in Morocco. Although limited, this data—while showcasing some of the accomplishments of the Amazigh cultural movement—provides a window into the kinds of challenges facing this movement in Morocco and by extension in the Maghreb and North Africa.

Keywords: Tamazight, Amazigh, Tifinagh, Public space, Morocco.

Introduction

While the events of the “Amazigh Spring” of 1980 played a critical role in mobilizing Imazighen around their shared culture and heritage, the “Arab Spring” of 2011—and what unfolded thereafter—brought the Amazigh cultural movement into sharp focus, culminating in Tamazight achieving an overdue official status in Morocco and subsequently in Algeria. This unprecedented accomplishment, realized after decades of continuous activism and struggle, would slowly but surely impact the Moroccan public sphere. While visiting Morocco in the summer of 2022, it was hard not to notice the increased public visibility of Tamazight in various cities, especially the capital city Rabat. One could see the Tifinagh script in full public display in various sites: schools, universities, government and non-government buildings, billboards, and even on tourist buses in Tangier. I must note, however, that the presence of Tifinagh in the various Moroccan cities I visited, although quite visible, is not dominant; Arabic and French still seemed to prevail in the Moroccan public sphere. Nonetheless, this material, spatial resurgence of Tamazight is indeed a significant aspect of Morocco's move to reconcile with and acknowledge its indigenous Amazigh

population and heritage. It is consonant with the 2011 amended constitution that acknowledged—albeit belatedly—the country’s multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, and multi-cultural constituents.¹

The marginalization of the Amazigh component of Morocco—and the Maghreb/North Africa more broadly—goes back to colonial and particularly postcolonial times. During the French occupation of Morocco beginning in 1912, the French language assumed supremacy at the expense of both Arabic and Amazigh languages (Ennaji 2014, 95). With Morocco’s attainment of political independence in 1956, the emerging Moroccan state and political elite rallied around the narrative of the country’s “Arab nationalist and Islamic identity,” which resulted in a systematic devaluation of Amazigh culture and languages (Maddy-Weitzman 2015, 2499). In fact, the first Moroccan constitution of 1962 declared Morocco an Arab-Muslim country with one official language, Arabic (Ennaji 2014, 101).² Amazighness was thus relegated to “folkloric” representations, deployed mostly for enhancing the tourism sector of the economy (Maddy-Weitzman 2015, 2499). The “National Festival of Popular Arts”—launched in 1959 through orders by King Mohammed V—paid special attention to “traditional Berber [Amazigh] folk dances and music, highlighting regional diversity in costume, instrumentation, and oral tradition” (Boum 2012, 22). The folklorization of Amazighness contrasts with its removal from the official linguistic map of the country. It would take decades of sustained activism by Amazigh organizations and figures before Amazighness/Tamazight would be recognized as a key constituent of Morocco and ultimately robustly assert itself in the kingdom’s urban space and design post-2011. There is no doubt that the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture (IRCAM), created through a royal decree in 2001, played a central role in catapulting Tamazight/Tifinagh into public prominence.³ IRCAM now exercises influence even beyond the Moroccan frontiers owing in large part to its efforts in rehabilitating and improving Tifinagh,⁴ a compelling vehicle for transmitting Amazighness to the public.

Invoking Claudot-Hawad’s work, El Guabli argues that Tifinagh, being “performed as an iconic marker of Tamazight in Morocco,” has indeed “fulfilled a strategic function in the public space as a tool for Morocco’s re-Amazighization” (El Guabli 2020, 145). The prefix (re-) in the

¹ The Preamble to the amended constitution states: “The Moroccan kingdom ... adheres to preserving its national unity and sovereignty and conserving the components of its national identity, one that is unified through the fusion of all its constitutive elements—Arab, Islamic, Amazigh, and Saharan-Hassani—and enriched by its African, Andalusian, Hebraic and Mediterranean streams [*rawāfid*].” (My translation). For the original Arabic text see, Moroccan’s Paliament Website at:

<https://www.parlement.ma/ar/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%B1-0>

² In a similar vein, Maddy-Weitzman states that “the new [postcolonial] states’ programmes for state and national consolidation viewed Berber identity as, at best, a folkloric remnant useful for the tourist industry, and otherwise designated for assimilation into the newly established national frameworks, with the help of state policies that put a premium on the Arabization of public life” (2015, 2499).

³ Brahim El Guabli affirms that “IRCAM has made Amazigh language and culture a tangible reality in Moroccan people’s visual and linguistic landscape. Tifinagh script’s ubiquity in the public space is only one of IRCAM’s remarkable achievements to reconnect broader Morocco with its repressed Amazigh identity” (2020, 145).

⁴ Nick Dines notes that “... like the Amazigh movement, IRCAM also has transnational reach: other countries such as Tunisia and Libya have turned to Rabat for guidance in introducing Tamazight language tuition and a new alphabet” (2021, 741).

previous word is extremely significant, for it implies a return to (and reconciliation with) Amazighness, an inherent component of Morocco's and the entire region's ethnic and socio-cultural fabric. This characterization of Morocco's public space going back to its Amazigh roots (i.e. becoming re-Amazighized) is in line with a key concept/neologism circulating and gaining currency in the work and discourses of Amazigh activists and scholars: *Tamazgha*. Drawing on the writings of Ouzzin Aherdan, 'Allāl al-Fāsī, and Lotfi Sayahi, El Guabli—among others—affirms Tamazgha “as the larger North Africa,” adding that this aspirational territory of/for Imazighen “encompasses the Canary Islands, parts of sub-Saharan Africa, and the entire Maghreb or North Africa, where Tamazight, the indigenous language, was or is still spoken” (El Guabli 2022, 1093). Tifinagh (as a tool that projects Amazighness in the public arena) and Tamazgha (as a key signifier for an imagined homeland of all Imazighen) enter into a symbiotic, co-dependent relationship with the goal of normalizing and giving momentum to the re-Amazighization of Morocco and the broader North African region.⁵ Building on El Guabli's arguments that Tifinagh's visibility in the public sphere constitutes a tangible manifestation of what he calls “subversive memory” (El Guabli 2020, 159) and that its script generates “visual dissonance” in the urban space (El Guabli 2020, 144-145), I posit that the physical make-up of Tifinagh, brandished most conspicuously in the Moroccan street, performs the acts of *unsettling* and *confounding* the presumed reader at the affective, psychic level. This claim operates under the supposition that this presumed reader—based on the limited data I examine below—generally lacks literacy in Tifinagh. I will engage further with El Guabli's propositions, focusing on what function the Tifinagh script serves in the public space.

This essay then probes the significance of Morocco's urban space gradually welcoming/embracing Tamazight, a critical step in a potential reconfiguration of the larger North Africa that would account for the region's indigeneity and multilingualism. It further seeks to examine the extent to which the linguistic shifts taking place in Morocco's public sphere, resulting from the 2011 amended constitution, could in the long term generate an epistemic shift in Moroccan consciousness and imaginary. In terms of methodology, this study will rely on quantitative and qualitative data accumulated inside and outside of Morocco, specifically photos taken in the summer of 2022, as well as questionnaires completed by Moroccan nationals of Amazigh origin in the same year. Section one of this essay offers an analysis of, and a reflection on, several photos taken in various Moroccan cities showing the inclusion of Tifinagh or lack thereof. Section two, however, discusses the findings of 27 completed questionnaires by Moroccan nationals of Amazigh background vis-à-vis Tamazight and the Amazigh cultural movement currently underway. The discussion of this section's data sheds further light on my reflections on the photos in section one, rendering some of my tentative conclusions regarding Tifinagh in the public space more salient. While the essay departs from the premise that Tamazight has gained significant grounds in Morocco, substantial challenges—both internal and external—remain in the

⁵ For more information on the visual dimensions of Tamazgha, see the following website: <http://www.amazighworld.org/countries/index.php>.

way of a full and meaningful integration of the language of Imazighen in the Moroccan kingdom and in the North African region in general.

1. The Ascendance of Tifinagh in the Moroccan Public Sphere: Analysis of Photos

In the summer of 2022, I was in Morocco for several weeks, and I had the chance to visit a number of cities, including Rabat, Kenitra, Tangier, Tetouan, Martil, Ksar El Kebir, Larache, Nador, and Al-Hoceima. Smartphone in hand, I took many photos of various items in the public space that displayed Tifinagh—ranging from billboards to placards and posters on various buildings and edifices. Thus, my level of analysis in this *linguistic landscape* field research was a wide range of cities of varying size and political economic importance. I was struck by the increased urban visibility of Tamazight, especially in Rabat. Looking back to the time when I lived and worked in Morocco before immigrating to the United States in 2007, the country’s urban space had looked very different to me; I cannot recall encountering the Tifinagh script in any conspicuous way—or at all—in the public space of my hometown of Ksar El Kebir or the nearby cities in northern Morocco, including Larache, Asilah, Tangier, and Tetouan. Arabic and French dominated public life, and in the northern cities of Tangier and Tetouan, one could encounter Spanish as well. Even on my summer visits to Morocco in the few years after immigrating to the United States, I did not notice any significant linguistic changes in the country.

Although the public display of Tifinagh tends to be haphazard overall, rather than systematic, schools (public and private) showed the most consistency in including this script on their façades, alongside Arabic and French. This is significant, for it contributes to normalizing Tifinagh and the Amazigh constituent among the country’s youth and student body regardless of ethnic origin. Also, this substantial segment of the population represents the country’s future, one in which Amazighness is projected to play an augmented role and assume a larger presence in public life. It was noteworthy that a few schools I walked by in the aforementioned cities only displayed Arabic and Tamazight and excluded French—even in Rabat. I can only surmise, based on limited data nonetheless, that the ascendance of Tamazight is diminishing the public presence of the former colonizer’s language. The fact that the imposing Parliament building in downtown Rabat similarly replaces French with Arabic and Tamazight might give some credence to this impression. The symbolism of this point could be extremely significant, given that Parliament, together with the Royal Palace, makes key decisions impacting the general direction of the country—politically, culturally, socially, economically, and so forth. Yet, the major train station nearby (i.e., “Rabat Ville”) only shows Arabic and French on its façade. Interestingly, all train stations that I observed—in Rabat, Kenitra, Tangier, and Ksar El Kebir—did not display Tamazight on their respective buildings; one would only see Arabic and French signage. Another area where Tifinagh has yet to make major strides concerns traffic signage, both within city limits and on highways and national roads. This corroborates my judgment that the incorporation of Tifinagh remains generally haphazard, at least at this point. This situation might change in the medium- or long-term.

Other places I observed exhibiting Tifinagh included headquarters of associations (e.g., the Rabat-based Moroccan Association for Human Rights, Moroccan Association for Youth Education, the Congregation of Traditional Crafts, and the Cooperative of Textiles as well as The Tetouan Asmir Association) and political parties, including the “Islamist” PJD (Justice and Development Party) that led the Moroccan government for two successive terms until 2021. That a major segment of Morocco’s “Islamists” (i.e., the PJD) seems accepting of Amazighness, or at least the Tifinagh script, in their official discourses speaks volumes to the changing cultural and linguistic landscape of the country. This is especially notable given that the forces of Islamism tend to be somewhat antagonistic to, or weary of, the increased presence of Tamazight in public life—which they largely interpret as a threat to the sacredness of Arabic (Maddy-Weitzman 2012, 135; 2015, 2510). The Tifinagh script was also curiously on full display in the Spanish Cultural Center building and on some tourist buses in Tangier. While this amplified presence of Tifinagh in the public space throughout Morocco is undoubtedly a positive point that shows how Tamazight is reclaiming its proper place in the country’s linguistic map, it remains questionable how many Moroccans, including those of Amazigh background, are actually able to read Tifinagh. Anecdotal evidence, as well as questionnaires I discuss below, indicates that the segment of Moroccan society that can read and write Tamazight is perhaps extremely small. However, this group is foreseen to grow in the coming years and decades thanks to the state’s policy of expanding the instruction of Tifinagh/Tamazight in public schools throughout the country.

With Tifinagh’s presumed incomprehensibility to the average Moroccan citizen in mind, how do we go about elucidating its function/purpose in the public space? Here I’d like to engage further El Guabli’s propositions. Drawing on the work of Andrés di Masso, El Guabli posits that the presence of Tifinagh in public signage in Morocco secures “locational citizenship” for Moroccan Imazighen (2020, 157). He writes that “[b]etween its marginalization in the first Constitution in 1962 and the repression of its expression in the public space, Amazigh identity was de facto placed out of locational citizenship from Morocco’s independence until the creation of IRCAM in 2001” before adding that “Amazigh’s resurgence on the facades of official buildings, in tramway stations..., and higher education institutions is an indication that Amazigh cultural and linguistic citizenship is now located and has full potential access to the public arena” (2020, 157). This is indeed a significant accomplishment, symbolic as it might be. Regardless of whether Moroccan Imazighen can or cannot decipher the meaning of IRCAM’s standardized-Tifinagh in the public sphere, they are guaranteed official and non-official spatial recognition through the script that adorns government and non-government buildings. This script might seem to (some/many of) them like a stranger or an outsider, but its presence arguably contributes to moving them from the margin and placing them at the center of civic life—at least symbolically. Here, I’d like to draw on the work of scholars in the fields of Linguistic Landscape (LL) and Applied Linguistics/Sociolinguistics to enrich this discussion about the politics of language as anchored in a spatialized social milieu. In their investigation of LL in Italy—in the context of the increased presence of immigrants and their respective languages—Barni and Bagna contested the dominant view as expressed by LL foundational figures Landry and Bourhis that “the linguistic landscape

may be the most visible marker of the linguistic vitality of the various ethnolinguistic groups living within a particular administrative or territorial enclave” (Barni and Bagna 2015, 10). They deem this assertion “inadequate” and argue that their field research in Italy did confirm their “hypothesis that there is no direct relationship between the visibility of a language in an area and its vitality” (Barni and Bagna 2015, 10).

This argument is relevant to the case of Tifinagh in Morocco’s urban space. Taking Rabat as an example—owing to the fact that “[i]nstitutional references to *Amazighité* are more conspicuous [there] than in any other Moroccan city” (Dines 2021, 741)—one is unlikely to encounter the use of Tamazight/Tifinagh in the streets or in the city’s administrative and economic institutions. Given this mismatch between signage and usage or visibility and vitality, Barni and Bagna refer to Ben-Rafael who elucidates LL in light of “power relations between dominant and subordinate groups” (Barni and Bagna 2015, 10). Although official signage in Rabat/Morocco places Tamazight/Tifinagh second in the hierarchy, behind Arabic but ahead of French, this does not (yet) translate to the reality on the ground, one that recalls Ben-Rafael’s notion of power relations between linguistic systems and their respective speakers. One interesting observation I had while discerning Tifinagh in the Moroccan cities I visited was that the Amazigh script would consistently feature either alongside both Arabic and French or alongside just Arabic. While I came across public signage showing Arabic or French on its own, I never observed Tamazight/Tifinagh independently featured. I must admit that this observation is based on limited data, but it does raise some important questions regarding how one is to interpret the spatial visibility of Tamazight. Is Tamazight at this point visually and spatially reliant on Arabic and French to be *really* seen and assume meaning/meaningfulness? Does Tamazight lack spatial autonomy? What is more beneficial to Tamazight, to feature independently or alongside Arabic and/or French? These are critical questions to ponder, and any answers one might attempt to offer would have to be tentative since the Moroccan linguistic landscape is currently in flux.

Keeping in mind the contentious relationship between a language’s public *visibility* on the one hand and its *vitality* on the other, the picture becomes more complicated when we put Rabat aside and proceed to consider Nador and Al-Hoceima, two cities in northeastern Morocco with significant Amazigh populations. I was struck and perhaps surprised by the “light” public presence of Tifinagh/Tamazight in the two cities. Arabic and French by far dominated their urban space, but Tifinagh was not totally absent; it appeared, for instance, on the façades of Nador International Airport and the newly-built *Masrah al-Hoceima* (Al-Hoceima Theater). Nevertheless, it remains curious why the public presence of the Tifinagh script remains timid in Nador and Al-Hoceima compared to Rabat or even Tangier. Visiting these two places for the first time in the summer of 2022, I had the chance to speak with several residents who showed pride in being Amazigh and were fluent in the *Tarifit* variety of Tamazight. They all valued the historical event of making Tamazight a second official language in the 2011 amended constitution. However, those whom I asked explicitly if they could read Tifinagh answered in the negative, including individuals who were (well-) educated. This is such a fascinating contrast between Tamazight-speaking fluency and Tifinagh illiteracy. Viewed from one angle, the inability to read or decipher Tifinagh seems in

line with its timid spatial presence. However, when approached from the LL paradigm—where a geographic area’s linguistic landscape informs the importance or vitality of a certain language—the issue becomes quite reversed. Observing public life in Nador and Al-Hoceima, I had no doubt regarding the vitality of Tamazight in people’s everyday life. In almost all the places I visited, I could infer that Tamazight was the medium being used despite my inability to speak any of its varieties. It was obvious from the context that people in Nador and Al-Hoceima were speaking *Tarifit*. Hence, the linguistic landscape of the two cities—viewed through the lens of linguistic signage in public spaces—obscures or rather does not reflect Tamazight’s vitality.

The case of Nador and Al-Hoceima highlights the importance of orality and people’s very own “voices”⁶ when investigating the vitality and functionality of Tamazight—at least at this historical juncture. This state of affairs is likely to change, for Tamazight literacy is projected to grow in light of efforts by the Moroccan state to expand the instruction of Tamazight in public schools as mentioned earlier. With that said, the presumed inability of the majority of Imazighen to read/decipher Tifinagh should be approached through the lens of the complicated history and debate regarding the assignation of a script for Tamazight. Before IRCAM decided to adopt Tifinagh as the official script for Tamazight in 2003, there was a heated debate among Amazigh activists and intellectuals on what script would best serve the Amazigh cause: Arabic, Latin, or Tifinagh (El Guabli 2020, 145). Thus, it is not unexpected that native speakers of the different varieties of Tamazight might lack Tifinagh literacy given its relatively recent adoption by the Moroccan state through IRCAM. Additionally, anecdotal evidence, as well as questionnaires I discuss below, suggests that a significant portion of Amazigh people, particularly the older generation, lacks literacy skills in any of the languages used in Morocco—Arabic, French, and Tamazight. Nevertheless, the general inscrutability of Tifinagh to walkers-by, Amazigh or otherwise, somewhat complicates El Guabli’s notion of “locational citizenship” and raises new conceptual questions about the significance of Tamazight’s presence in the public sphere.

2. How Moroccan Imazighen View the Ascendance of Tamazight: Analysis of Questionnaires

The analysis in this section is based on quantitative data (i.e. questionnaires) collected in August 2022. I distributed the questionnaires to Moroccan nationals of Amazigh origin via e-mail. I was assisted in this process by two of my contacts inside Morocco.⁷ We were able to collect a total of 27 completed questionnaires. I decided to write the questionnaire in Arabic rather than in French or English because I thought this would be the most accessible to my targeted audience—even though some Amazigh activists/militants might object to this choice. I gave deep thought to this conundrum, anticipating some resistance or objection to my decision to pen the questionnaire

⁶ Ben Said asserts that LL research “ought to include voices from the people as an essential part of the interpretation of the linguistic landscape” (Gorker 2013, 203). Barni and Bagna stress a similar point and state that the “inhabitants of an area ..., initially perceived as almost absent or as viewers rather than authors of LL, have taken an increasingly active role in the analysis of the LL” (2015, 11).

⁷ These two contacts are friends of mine, Mohammed Loutfi (of Amazigh origin) and Youssef El Harrak.

about the Amazigh cultural and linguistic movement in Arabic. Of the 27 respondents, 24 identified as male, 2 as female, and 1 did not provide an answer. In terms of age, some respondents were in their twenties, while others were in their thirties, forties, fifties, and sixties; there was, thus, a variety of age groups represented. The respondents hailed from cities and towns across Morocco, namely Fes, Meknes, Boulmane, Tahla, Tetouan, Agadir, Kenitra, Marrakech, Errachidia, Rabat, Azilale, Azrou, Al-Hoceima, Guerssif, Taroudant, Arbaoua, and Ben Tayyib. The questionnaire consisted of fourteen questions I devised, ones that asked the respondents to answer or comment on queries/points related to their stance on Amazigh identity and Arab identity, their ability to speak and write Tamazight, their opinion about the appropriate script for Tamazight, what the concept Tamazgha meant to them, how they viewed the officialization of Tamazight in the 2011 amended constitution, and what they thought should be done more to advance the Amazigh cultural movement.

3. Findings

While the questionnaire consisted of fourteen questions, in my discussion of the findings, I will focus on those questions with the most relevance to the subject of language. Below I present the selected questions (in their English translation) and proceed to provide some commentary.

- *Question #4: What do you think of the officialization of Tamazight in the 2011 amended constitution?*

The majority of respondents (17 out of 27) provided positive remarks about this historic event and overall considered it a step in the right direction for the Amazigh cultural movement. However, there was a significant number of skeptics of various sorts (10 out of 27). The latter group gave answers such as: “[Tamazight] is not observed in reality,” “It’s no use studying [Tamazight]; “It is not a language of the sciences,” “I don’t think it is in synch with the age and its demands,” “[Mere] ink on paper,” “Nominal only,” “The officialization of Tamazight is an attempt to bury the Amazigh identity,” “[Tamazight] will not be useful in anything,” “[Tamazight] is incapable of keeping up with scientific and technical education,” and “Ink on paper [as] French is the language that rules the country.” I must admit that I found some of these answers surprising, if not a little shocking. While it is expected that some Amazigh activists/militants would be skeptical of the Moroccan state’s real intentions behind granting Tamazight official status and might deem this move as too little too late, I did not expect to see degrading comments about Tamazight from individuals who identify as Amazigh. I must stress, however, that I only have a small sample of data on which to base my analysis, and that more data needs to be collected to show how widespread these sentiments are among Imazighen.

- *Question #5: What do you think of the increased presence of the Amazigh script and Amazigh writing in public places in Morocco?*

While the majority of respondents (20 out of 27) generally welcomed the reassertion of Tamazight and the Tifinagh script in the public space, a small (but not insignificant) group (7 out of 27) expressed reservations and even cynicism, with remarks such as “It is beautiful but meaningless, since the majority of Amazigh speak it but don’t write it,” “This is useless; even the Amazigh don’t know Amazigh writing,” “I have no idea as I haven’t noticed its appearance before,” “Meaningless,” “The majority of it has a racist, chauvinistic tendency,” “Useless but harmless,” and “Only for decoration.” Again, it is expected to encounter some of the reservations above given that Tamazight, to this day, is yet to be incorporated, in meaningful ways, in the various facets of Moroccans’ lives. The fact that the Tifinagh script sits majestically on schools’ and universities’ placards and façades does not mean that Tamazight is included in the curricula of every Moroccan school and university.

- *Question #6: Do/Can you read the Amazigh script (i.e., Tifinagh)? If the answer is no, please explain why.*

The majority of respondents (18 out of 27) answered No, and a significant minority (9 out of 27) answered Yes. This is quite telling and gives credence to some of the reservations expressed above regarding answers to Question #5. I should note that almost all respondents are presumed to be (well) educated; the majority of them are teachers, school inspectors, university students, and employees in the public sector. Some of the justifications provided for the inability to read Tifinagh included the following: “My relationship to Tamazight is primarily oral inside the family,” “I didn’t learn it in school,” “I didn’t show any interest in [learning Tifinagh]; maybe in the future,” “No use learning it; it is not a language of the sciences,” “I don’t care that much about it,” “I’m not interested,” “I haven’t tried before,” “I think it will not be useful to me in anything,” “Tamazight is an oral identity and a daily practice; it doesn’t need to be written,” “I was introduced to some of these letters, but I wasn’t able to learn them all since that would not be useful to me personally,” “Unimportant,” and “There is no incentive to learn it.” These answers, as well as others above, highlight two recurring themes/sentiments: (a) orality as an anchor of Amazighness, and (b) the lack of economic/professional incentives when it comes to learning Tamazight/Tifinagh.

- *Question #7: Do/Can members of your family read this script? If the answer is “no,” please explain why.*

A majority of respondents (17 out of 27) explicitly answered “No,” while a small group (6 out of 27) explicitly answered “Yes.” This is more or less in line with the findings above regarding answers to Question #6. The comments of the “No” majority echo similar sentiments as above.

- *Question #8: Do you agree with Tifinagh being the script for writing Tamazight?*

While 21 respondents agreed, 6 disagreed. In the questionnaire, I did not include a follow-up question requesting an explanation. It is indeed noteworthy that over 20 % of the respondents are not in agreement with the adoption of Tifinagh as the script for Tamazight. This recalls the heated debate in 2003 among Amazigh activists and intellectuals over the appropriate script for Tamazight referenced above. It seems that, even with the passage of 20 years from its adoption by IRCAM, the Tifinagh script could still be a source of polarization among Imazighen. Answers to the next question corroborate this internal challenge to the Amazigh cultural movement.

- *Question #9: Do you prefer that Tamazight be written in the Arabic script in lieu of Tifinagh? Why? Why not?*

While 19 respondents disagreed, 8 agreed. Those who disagreed provided reasons such as the following: “So that it would not be subsumed in another language,” “It would die if it wasn’t written in its original language,” “In order to preserve the origin,” “In order to preserve the identity,” “Because the letters and sounds of Tamazight differ from those of Arabic,” “In order to preserve the value of Tamazight,” “In order to preserve the particularities of Tamazight,” and “Because the Arabic script is an intruder on my culture.” Regarding the 8 respondents who agreed, some of the arguments they presented include: “So that I could understand it more,” “[Tifinagh] is difficult to teach,” “To make learning it easier for everyone,” “To make it spread fast,” and “The Tifinagh script disappeared a long time ago, and this [Tifinagh] script we see is newly created and lacks any aesthetics.” It seems to me that the 8 respondents advocating for the adoption of the Arabic script in writing Tamazight are motivated more by practicality; they see the Arabic script as an “ally” rather than a foe or a rival. These views should push the Moroccan state, through its Ministry of Education, to enhance the pedagogies of teaching Tamazight/Tifinagh. The private sector can also play a pivotal role in propagating the instruction of Tifinagh.

- *Question #10: Do you prefer that Tamazight be written in the Latin script in lieu of Tifinagh? Why? Why not?*

While 21 respondents disagreed, 5 agreed, and 1 said “maybe.” The reasons provided by the first group more or less echo those mentioned above (re. Question #9). Still, there were a few novel ones, such as “The Latin script is related to colonialism” and, curiously, “The Latin script is on a path to extinction.” It is noteworthy that the objection to adopting the Latin script is slightly stronger than that to the Arabic one. Regarding those who agreed, they put forth such arguments as “Because it has more currency,” “In order for Tamazight to gain internationalization,” and “To facilitate communication.” Again, these views place more weight on Tamazight’s accessibility and practicality. I believe this is a major hurdle at this juncture, but it could turn into an opportunity to energize Amazigh intellectuals, scholars, and pedagogues and push them to channel their mind power in order to come up with creative and innovative solutions to alleviate this hurdle.

- *Question #12: What does the word Tamazgha mean to you?*

Several respondents (15) indicated that, to them, Tamazgha meant the (original) land of the Amazigh people. However, 7 respondents said “I don’t know;” 2 said “Nothing;” 1 wrote “No;” 1 answered “The Amazigh woman”; and 1 wrote “Language.” It is striking that 25% (or more, as the next question reveals) of the respondents did not know what “Tamazgha” meant.

- *Question #13: Have you heard of this word [i.e., Tamazgha] before? In what context?*

The findings here are quite revealing. While 14 respondents said “Yes,” 13 others said “No.” It comes as a big surprise, at least to me, that almost 50 % of the respondents in this data sample stated that they had never heard of the word “Tamazgha.” I must note again that these individuals are generally well-educated. The findings here and above reveal that the neologism “Tamazgha”—one that signifies an imagined homeland of the Amazigh peoples stretching “from the Siwa oasis in southwest Egypt to the Canary Islands in the Atlantic Ocean” (El Guabli 2020, 152)—is yet to penetrate the average Amazigh individual, let alone all inhabitants of Morocco and North Africa. One thing becomes crystal clear: the leaders of the Amazigh cultural movement still have a lot to do to normalize the notion of Tamazgha among Imazighen. Moreover, it would require them to push for a long-term epistemic shift in the Moroccan (and North African) imaginary, wherein Amazigh indigeneity becomes a focal lens through which the country and region is viewed and understood.

Overall, the findings in these 27 questionnaires are illuminating—they shed some light on how the Moroccan Amazigh (especially the educated class) view the Amazigh cultural movement currently underway and the corresponding debate over language in Morocco. Although limited, this data—while showcasing some of the accomplishments of the Amazigh cultural movement—provides a window into the kinds of challenges facing this movement in Morocco and, by extension, the Maghreb and North Africa.

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