



المركز العربي للأبحاث ودراسة السياسات
ARAB CENTER FOR RESEARCH & POLICY STUDIES

STUDY

The Language Debate and the Constitution Amendment in Morocco

Dr, Fouad Bouali | February 21, 2012

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"A language is not a means of communication, it is a way of being"

Jacques Berque

Introduction:

In the Arab world, and especially in the Kingdom of Morocco, the language question has become an inseparable part of the social and political debate. It has become apparent that some political and social voices and media outlets are beginning to stir a debate regarding identity and the necessity to revise its components, as well as the relationship between identity and human development and the geo-strategic space of belonging; furthermore, these voices call for the redefinition and delimitation of the civilizational belonging of the nation. With the emergence of the recent political dynamic being led by the young vanguard in the Arab world, the time became opportune for the language debate to emerge into the open, becoming a source of disagreement between the ethnic and racial components that make up Moroccan society.

The speech by the Moroccan King on March 9, 2011 opened the debate regarding the requirements of the awaited change and its limits and horizons in the era of the Arab Revolution. Furthermore, the speech also opened the door to debates on the nature of identity, especially as it declared the inclusion of Amazigh identity as a principle component of the diverse fabric of Moroccan society. The King's address also affirmed **"the constitutional enshrinement of the pluralist character of the unified Moroccan identity, which is rich due to the wealth of its sources, and in their heart, Amazighism, as a credit for all Moroccans without exception."**¹ That is despite the fact that the demands advanced by the Moroccan youth movement (in the footsteps of its counterparts in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Yemen, and Syria), which was the main catalyst of the awaited amendment, did not include identity issues in statements and public calls. The bulk of the movement's rhetoric was focused on political matters, the regulation of the relationship between the three branches of government, and greater popular participation. Regardless, the chance had come for many (elitist) voices to impose their agenda on the public debate, exploiting the moment to list the imposition of Amazigh identity as part of popular demands –coloring the protest movements with ethnic and racial tones. As a result, observers noticed the increase in seminars, initiatives, and public and secret gatherings that are wagering on their ability

¹ Mohammad VI, "The March 9, 2011 speech", *al-Alam Newspaper*, April 19, 2011.

to turn the “expected” change in the direction of the constitutional acknowledgment of new languages, and their imposition as official languages of the state. This was finally achieved in the constitutional draft which was approved on July 1, 2011.

How can we interpret the course of the language debate from the ideological phase to the constitutional phase? How do we read the authorities’ handling of the language question? Was the approval of the new constitution sufficient to put a cap on identity issues? What is the fate of multiculturalism after the delimitation of various identities? And what are the expected threats to the cohesion of the Moroccan social fabric?

A. Language in the authority’s discourse in Morocco

Linguists and sociologists agree that language is more than a mere tool for communication and the transmission of information; it is an ability that permits creativity and the transmission and production of knowledge, as well as painting the frontier between the natural/social reality and the linguistic subject on the one hand, and, on the other, a system of signs and symbols expressing thought and a system of values and concepts that constitute Man’s vision of his self and existence. Leibniz said: **“language is a mirror of the mind.”**² Max Muller-Lores said: “there are no thoughts without words.”³ This means that language is a mirror for the intellectual achievements of its speakers, we even find some who went as far as linking the national spirit to the formation of sounds and words, as with Fichte: **“those speaking a single language form a single, complete, entity that nature has strung with mighty links – albeit invisible.”**⁴ **In a clear and more precise iteration, language is the image that displays the nation’s thought and its perception of the world and of existence, making it the oldest manifestation of identity. “We could say: nations are –primarily- distinguished from each other due to their language, the life of nations is built –before anything else- on their languages.”**⁵

Based on this premise, the modern state has built defenses for its languages, since they represent the locus of unity, identity, political belonging, and collective commonality among the ethnic and regional sections of society. Language is in many instances a symbol of political independence and an expression of civilizational power and political and ideological hegemony, with variations in the measures and behaviors of different

² Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm, *Unvorgreifliche Gedanken, betreffend die Ausübung and verbesserung der deutschensprache. Zwei Aufsätze.* (Stuttgart: Uwe Perksen., 1983), p. 5.

³ Max Muller-Loris, “Language and society”, translated by Tammam Hassan, (Cairo: al-Bab al-Halabi publishing, no date), p. 116.

⁴ Ibrahim Anis, *Language between Nationalism and Internationalism*, (Cairo: Dar al-Ma’arif, 1970), p. 7.

⁵ Sati’ al-Husari, *Selected Essays on Arab Nationalism*, (Beirut: Center for Arab Unity Studies, 1985), p. 29.

major powers. Louis-Jean Calvet says: "American imperialism is capable of spreading its language by imposing its political and economic hegemony; France, conversely, spreads its language and culture as a means to impose its economic and political hegemony. Here, language is in the driving seat, while politics and the economy follow, and are an outcome rather than a tool."⁶ Armed with knowledge and economic power, the *Francophonie* was capable of granting France control over the fate of many countries in the Arab and African world, through the use of the literary and journalistic "machine", literary salons and prizes, as well as educational scholarships and academic partnerships. This fact was noted by Moroccan novelist Tahar Ben Jelloun, who raised the matter in a critical tone: "perhaps it is better that we see things in a cynical manner, and to assert that this tale (the *Francophonie*) is nothing more than a political tool, or game, guaranteeing France its economic interests, which are not to be underestimated given the important sphere of influence."⁷ This model proves the linkages between political actions and the linguistic choices of major countries. Language is the symbol of sovereignty and economic might, as well as national unity between the different components of the people. The question remains: how did the authority in Morocco deal with its national language?

Prior to the latest amendment, the Moroccan constitution affirms in its preamble that "the Moroccan Kingdom is an Islamic state with full sovereignty, its official language is Arabic and it is part of the great Arab Maghreb."⁸ The term (official language) usually refers to the language indicated in the constitution, regulated by laws within a state, a province, a principality, or an organization of any kind; imposed in all official matters of the state by the state administration, institutions, and public agencies. The official language is also used by the private institutions that deal with the public directly or indirectly. Making a language official entails a number of repercussions, including: the state's commitment to use the language in all levels of state affairs, the publication of the official journal in the official language, its use in constitutional institutions, and the acknowledgment of official documents written only in the official language. i.e. the exclusive employment of the official language in the public sphere, and not the private one.

However, Moroccan reality has been witnessing, since political independence, an unjust pluralism in the media, the bureaucracy, and public institutions due to the near-

⁶ Louis-Jean Calvet, *Language Wars and Linguistic Policies*, translated by Hasan Hamza, first edition, (Beirut: the Arab Organization for Translation, 2008), pp. 262-270.

⁷ Tahar Ben Jelloun, "Interview with the French *Le Monde Newspaper*", February 8, 1997.

⁸ The General Secretariat of the Government, "The Moroccan Constitution", (Rabat: the official press, 1996), p. 2. Also see: Malika al-Srukh, *constitutional law*, (Casablanca, Morocco: New Najah Publishing, 1998), p. 187.

dominant control of the French language as the main language of communication. In explaining the authority's dealing with the Arabic language, Gilbert Grandguillaume writes: "the Arabic language is considered as a sacred language. It preserves the Islamic values that are the pillar of the throne. This language can slowly absorb modernity, but since there is no urgent political need for this adaptation, the French language is available to perform this task in a very satisfactory manner. Since the monarchy benefits from this diversity, it has no interest in the Arabic language becoming a unifying national language as long as it is, itself (i.e. the monarchy), the symbol of national unity."⁹ The author explains the matter from a sociological class based perspective, opining that the "group controlling the state apparatus" is "francophonized" in its majority, which makes fluency in French an indispensable condition for aristocratic distinction, and for ascension to the ranks of the elite that the aristocracy employs in order to strengthen its rule."

The state's engagement with the linguistic question was generally characterized by obscurity and the lack of clarity, nay the insistence on the status-quo of "francophonization". In the first national educational project on the eve of independence, Arabization was decided, as well as the necessity to adopt the Arabic language as an official language of instruction. Double standards, however, appeared with the first practical step, when the Royal Commission for the Reform of Education decided in its 1958 meeting to teach sciences in the French language, which created a duality within the Moroccan student between two separate epistemological spaces. "Teaching sciences (in French) starting with the first years of elementary education while leaving some materials to be taught in Arabic such as Islamic education, ethics, grammar, and literature, leads the student to form a context of reference through which he sees each language separately: a language of science, and a language of literature. A language that permits the acquisition of human scientific knowledge, opening up to the outside world; and another language that only permits us to deal with literature, poetry, tales, and myths."¹⁰ This imbalance continued to reign in all successive reform projects led by the government, as well as the schemes of the Royal Commissions that were formulated in order to reform education – most of which were

⁹ Gilbert Grandguillaume, *Language and the Systems of Rule in the Arab Maghreb*, translation by Mohammad Salim, (Meknes: al-Farabi publishing, 1995), p. 66.

¹⁰ Al-Hasan Madi, *The Educational Policy in Morocco and the Wagers of the Future*, (the publications of the Educational Sciences Journal, 1999), pp. 48-49.

based upon the World Bank reports diagnosing the educational situation in Morocco and its links to the social and economic spheres.¹¹

As a result, Moroccan education was characterized by a near-complete dominance of the French language, as it became the language of instruction for experimental and natural sciences in college curricula, while these sciences are taught in Arabic in secondary education. This leads to a confusion in terms of educational attainment, and to the dominance of a francophone elite over the centers of academic, cultural, and political decision. Al-Mahdi al-Manjara exclaimed: "I refuse that anyone says that this a pedagogic question, and that we have problems, and that Arabization is difficult and that it is difficult to use to the Arabic language in the instruction of chemistry and biology. These arguments are baseless because experiences all over the world have proven that, without relying on the national language and without teaching sciences in the mother tongue, there will be no real progress. I could offer you examples from Korea, Taiwan, Japan, Malaysia, China and others. There is pressure from the outside, and fear of a specific elite that has its stature and positions and whose entire life is built on the foreign language; colonialism was clear... colonialism has departed leaving behind individuals who were assigned to continue the work... I think that there is no time left to discuss this topic, because it is not a technical one. We must all agree that this is a political question."¹²

Thus the language scene in Morocco was characterized by injustice and obscurity, reflecting the dealing of the authority with the national language, as evidenced in the following realistic examples:

1- The lack of legal and legislative protection for the official language

Most countries in the world rely on their legislation and laws to protect their official languages. In the French experiment, and following the affirmation of French as an official language in the 1992 constitution, the state approved the "Toubon Law" in 1994 mandating the use of French in all fields.¹³ In Morocco, the authority deals with the calls to exclude the Arabic language with negligence and indifference, and even tolerance.

¹¹ For more details see: Khaled al-Samadi, "Aspects of the influence of the *Francophonie* on the Moroccan educational system", *al-Bayan Journal*, the Islamic Forum, Kuwait, issue 33 (November 1995, p. 177).

¹² Al-Mahdi al-Manjara, "The questions of education in Morocco", interview with the *Alam al-Tarbiya Journal*, issue 2 and 3 (1996). The journal had devoted a special issue to the question of Arabization in Morocco under the theme "the Arabization of instruction in wait for a decision", issue 4 (autumn 1996).

¹³ Law number 94-665/August 4, 1994 dealing with the French language, the law was associated with them Minister of Culture Jacques Toubon.

This is why many voices are heard in Morocco expressing an opinion similar to the following: “in the case of Morocco today, and perhaps this applies to an entire historic phase, total Arabization of academic, technical, and vocational instruction carries the threat of excluding millions of young people from the spheres of the economy, administration, and communication where they are expected to fulfill their ambitions and to contribute, with their capacities, in raising the competitive level of their country as a whole.”¹⁴ In fact, the scene is witnessing fanciful statements by some politicians and journalists portraying Arabic as a language of colonization¹⁵, or as a non-national language that is completely unrelated to the reality of Moroccans¹⁶, or as a non-democratic language.¹⁷ At any rate, the Arabic language became the target of declared campaigns in the media, academic and in political spheres.

2- The failure to adopt legal and legislative measures to officialize the Arabic language

For a long period, the draft for the “law for the Arabization of the administration and public life” (proposed by the Independent Bloc for Unity and Equality to the Justice and Legislation and Human Rights Commission in the Moroccan Parliament) has remained a mere proposal that is excluded at every legislative cycle.¹⁸ Ministerial decrees mandating the use of the Arabic language for communications within ministries, administrative departments and in public state institutions are constantly ignored. Arabization ought to have expanded with the Royal decree issued on January 26, 1965 unifying the court and making Arabic the only language for proceedings, hearings, and rulings –which would help expand Arabization into other spheres of public life. However, despite the many decrees issued by successive Moroccan prime ministers forcing public

¹⁴ Mohammad Bardouzi, *The Modernization of Education in Morocco*, (Modernization Publications, 2000), p. 22.

¹⁵ See: Abd al-Ali al-Wadghiri, “Is the Arabic language a language of colonialism?”, *The Moroccan Internet Writers’ Magazine*, June 26, 2011. <http://www.ueimarocains.com/>. The article came as a commentary on the statements of al-Mahjoubi Aharadan on the new constitution in the Moroccan *al-Masa’ newspaper*, Monday June 20, 2011, p. 6.

¹⁶ Abd al-Karim al-Amrani, “We wish that it becomes a national language”, *al-Sabah Newspaper*, issue 3177, Monday June 28, 2010.

¹⁷ Ahmad ‘Aseed, “Does democracy threaten the future of the Arabic language?”, *the Amazigh World Newspaper*, issue 125, p. 6.

¹⁸ The law project is composed of 12 chapters, decreeing that the Arabic language should be adopted by the administrations, public councils, public institutions, privileged companies, private companies, as well as the various organizations and committees and individuals. The draft law affirms the mandatory character of composing in Arabic all the documents, memos, communications, and other exchanged materials between institutions, collective councils, public and quasi-public institutions, privileged companies, as well as signs and banners. See: *al-Sabah Newspaper*, October 25, 2010.

administrations and institutions and local groups to adopt Arabic alone in internal communications and in dealing with citizens, change could not be achieved. This reveals the existence of “powerful” groups that refuse to allow the practical application of the language of the constitution; this situation was expressed by an editorial in the *al-Alam* newspaper: “here in Morocco, there are some who defend irregularity by supporting the language of the foreigner over the official language that was enshrined by the constitution, with the use of baseless arguments.”¹⁹ Despite the fact that the Arabization law aims at reforming the language situation that contravenes the constitution and national values, given the practical dominance of the French language in public life, fierce protestations came from the ranks of many that belong to Amazigh cultural circles, who perceived the matter as affecting the situation of the Amazigh language and not French; one of those spoke of the law as belonging to the trash can²⁰, while others organized popular campaigns for its prevention.²¹

3- The failure to establish institutions specializing in the Arabic language

Given the increasing number of linguistic institutions in the Arab world, and the lack of coordination among them; and given the lack of a national academic reference point dealing with Arabic and its questions and coordinating between academics and figures engaged in linguistic, educational, and dictionary planning; the National Charter for Education and Formation promised the creation of the Mohammad VI Academy for Arabic Language beginning in 2000-2001. The Academy was described as “a national institution charged with the continuous development of the Arabic linguistic structure on the levels of construction, production, and dictionaries; as well as encouraging the movement of production and translation in order to absorb the benefits of scientific, technological, and cultural advancement in a clear Arabic language. The tasks also include the encouragement of writing and publication and the export of quality national production, and the formation of an elite group of specialists who are fluent in the different fields of language in Arabic and several other languages, and who would

¹⁹ See: *al-Alam newspaper* editorial, Friday March 3, 2006.

²⁰ Ahmad ‘Aseed, “The Arabization of public life is a proposal that belongs to the trash can”, *al-Hiwar al-Mutamaddin*, issue 3155 (October 15, 2010).

<http://www.ahewar.org/debat/show.art.asp?aid=232076>

²¹ See: “The petition of the Amazigh and democratic forces in Agadir against the law for the Arabization of the administration and public life”.

<http://www.amazighworld.org/arabic/index.php>

provide the senior and mid-level educational cadres."²² Dr. Abd al-Qadir al-Fasi al-Fahri, former director of the Arabization Institute, specified the imbalances that the Academy will seek to address²³:

- a- Imbalances in the language of instruction and the instruction of language.
- b- Imbalances in the state of the Arabic language in public life.
- c- Imbalances within institutions.

Al-Fahri added: "the creation of a quality institution in the form of an academy under the direct sponsorship of his Majesty the King, endowed with a symbolic stature and financial and administrative independence could put a limit to these imbalances in a gradual and cumulative form."²⁴ At a time when "the Royal Institute for Amazigh Culture" has made large strides in standardizing an "imagined" language and produced dictionaries and publications in that language, using a government budget of billions of dollars, the authority neglects the creation of the Academy and the enactment of the legislative text mandating it. This means that the matter goes beyond the justifications of government officials who compete in offering excuses for the failure to take the necessary measures: the matter is related to a declared and latent desire to marginalize the Arabic language and hamper its scholarly and academic presence.

All these traits are reminiscent of the saying of Dr. Abd al-Salam al-Masdi: "language is too important to be left in the hands of the politicians. The reason for that is that men of politics make collective time at the image of their individual time; while men of thought carve their individual time in the shape of the collective time."²⁵ The interference of the politician in linguistic affairs is considered as a necessary condition for the building of a unified model of identity and for the formulation of a strategy for socialization and education along the same values. These policies are adopted to prevent factional fragmentation that could lead to the undermining of the collectivity, as well as to regulate individual behavior in a manner guaranteeing the cohesion of society's components. This is manifested in the interventions of Western politicians in the building of the linguistic system, reflecting a belief in the equivalency between the

²² See: the Special Committee for Education and Formation, *The National Charter for Education and Formation*, Chapter 113, p. 39.

²³ See: Abd al-Qadir al-Fasi al-Fahri, *Language and the Environment*, (Casablanca: al-Zaman Publications, the new Najah publishing, 2003), p. 86.

²⁴ Ibid, p. 88, and see: Fouad Bouali, "The Mohammad VI Arabic language academy in the waiting room", *al-Tajdeed newspaper*, April 14, 2010.

²⁵ Abd al-Salam al-Masdi, *Arabs and Linguistic Suicide*, first edition (Benghazi: the Unified New Book House, 2011), p. 7.

linguistic and the political. However, the scene changes starkly in the Arab case, and especially with regard to Morocco, with the reign of improvisation and a lack of awareness of the essential function of language in the building of social cohesion for the future generations of the homeland. The political mindset, which constantly seeks expedient short-term solutions, trumps the need to address the civilizational requirements of the nation.²⁶ This was clearly manifested in the constitutional formulation of the Moroccan linguistic identity.

B. The linguistic scene and the dimensions of the debate

The Moroccan linguistic scene, as it crystallized during the decades of independence and under the supervision of various governments, can be portrayed through the following examples:

- a- A social-linguistic situation that is diverse to the point of incoherence, with the classical Arabic language existing next to Amazigh languages, local dialects, and foreign languages –especially French, Spanish, and English.
- b- An existing paradox between the state of the Arabic language as an official language of the country and the reality of its daily practice in schools, in society as a whole and in the administrative departments.
- c- The inclusion of Amazigh in the amended constitution, with its situation remaining unclear in the educational establishment, leading to the shrinking of its presence in Moroccan schools; in addition to other hurdles such as ethnic fanaticism etc.
- d- The broad usage of the French language, especially in economic, administrative, and media affairs, with a limited opening to other foreign languages.

These images are further complicated by multi-tiered confusions “in the relationships between Arabic and Amazigh... and the contradiction between the language of daily life and the official language used in schools, universities and the administration; and the

²⁶ The same situation can be observed in most developing countries: in the “linguistic management in the world”, Jacques Leclerc speaks of the relationship between the political and the linguistic in South Africa, portraying the attitude of political officials toward the linguistic question as one of complete negligence and nonchalance toward the whites and the blacks. No officials in South Africa are attempting to reconsider the increasing dominance of English, in fact, the linguistic question comes at the bottom of the list of concerns for South African politicians.

. <http://www.tlfq.ulaval.ca/axl/index.html>

divergence of the language of the elite and the language of the public"²⁷. The natural result of this situation is linguistic chaos that generally characterizes the scenery, and the failure to determine the functional spheres for each of the national and foreign languages. Thus, the reality of the Arabic language must be read taking into consideration that Arabic is an official language of the state and part of a triangular relationship that played a decisive role in the formulation of the March 9 speech and its repercussions: the relationship with the *francophonie*, the relationship with Amazigh, and the relationship with the colloquial language.

1. The first dimension – between Arabic and the francophonie

The term "*francophonie*" was first used by French geographer Onesime Reclus in his book "France, Algeria, and the Colonies"²⁸, as part of the literature of colonial geography, aiming at determining the territories in which the French language was used. Ever since the term was coined, a number of dynamics emerged coalescing to raise the stature of French as a language of culture, a civilization of enlightenment, and as a tool of communication with the world of freedom and equality. Senghor went as far as stating that "*francophonie* shines from a thousand fires like a meteor lighting the night of Africa."²⁹ However, in the context of civilizational struggle, the *francophonie* did not limit itself to culture and the communication of knowledge, instead, it became a tool of economic and political hegemony; as was expressed by former French President Francois Mitterrand who said: "the *francophonie* is not merely the French language... if we do not reach the conviction that belonging to the francophone world - politically, economically, and culturally - is not an added value, then we would have failed in the task that we set out to accomplish years ago."³⁰ This admission proves that the depiction of the *francophonie* by French and Africans as a tool of civilizational enlightenment, or even as war booty as claimed by Katib Yasin, or a valuable cultural gain as argued by others, has no proof in reality. In fact, the *francophonie* could be

²⁷ Abd al-Salam al-Shadadi, "The situation of languages in Morocco and their horizons", (the seminar of language learning and instruction in the systems of education and formation: diagnostic and futuristic approaches, the Higher Council for Education, Rabat, October 20-21, 2009.

²⁸ Onésime Reclus, *France, Algérie et colonies*, (Paris : Hachette 1886)

²⁹ Bensalim Hamish, "The francophonie and the tragedy of our French literature", Knowledge for Everyone series, no. 23, (1998), p. 38.

³⁰ Francois Mitterrand, *Le Monde*, February 9, 1989.

better described as a tool for economic and political colonization by the means of language and culture.

In the Moroccan case, attention should be given to the role of the French Resident-General Lyautey and his notorious memorandum that was issued in 1921 regarding the language of instruction in Morocco. General Lyautey's decree reflected an effort to force the population to switch from the use of Amazigh to French. General Lyautey stated: "We should not be teaching Arabic to the population that has always refrained from learning it. Arabic is one of the factors of the spread of Islam, since the teaching of Arabic takes place through the Koran, while our interest consists in developing the Berbers outside of the Islamic sphere."³¹ Since that date, the French language has consistently sought, as the language of power, hegemony, and Empire, to limit the role of Arabic in the public fields in Morocco. Robinson says: "Empire has made language hierarchical with the language of imperial power at the top, and that of the ruled and the colonized and the humiliated at the bottom."³² Dr. Abd al-Ali al-Wadghiri noticed that francophone infiltration has exceeded education to other fields as part of a well-laid plan to dominate Morocco. The scheme extends from the French school and its educational cadre, to the Christian church, to the management of local affairs, and, intelligence officers, all the way to the army officers, the institutes of academic research, and the media. The objective was to weaken Morocco and to place its personality, civilization, and identity in doubt; and to exploit the factors of cultural diversity, in terms of languages and customs, in order to strike a blow at the country's unity and cohesion.³³ Mohammad al-Fasi says: "since the Protectorate authority took over the reins of power in our country, everything that was done in Morocco, without exception, was on the French model, in the French language, and with French methods."³⁴

This influence was not limited to the educational or administrative spheres; in fact, it has spread to the very process of the making of the intellectual and literary elite, which is closely linked to the francophone system through ideology and values. A quick examination of Moroccan literary production in the French language, and the manner in which they shape the Moroccan self, proves that the matter is not merely one of a method of communication and a tongue of expression as much as it is about the

³¹ Abd al-Ali al-Wadghiri, *The Francophonie and the French Linguistic and Educational Policy in Morocco*, (Rabat: the Book of Knowledge, the new series, 1993), p. 86.

³² Douglas Robinson, *Translational Empire*, translated by Thaeer Ali Deeb, (Damascus: al-Farqad Publishing, 2009), p. 187.

³³ Bensalim Hamish, "The francophonie and the tragedy of our French literature", *Op. Cit.* p. 79.

³⁴ Mohammad al-Fasi, "Arabization and the means to achieve it", *al-Asala Journal*, no. 17-18 (November-December, 1973), pp. 76-77.

presentation of an alternative value system; a very noticeable element is the preponderance of autobiographies within these writings, with all that implies in terms of the problematic relationship with the “other” and the arduous process of self-awareness.³⁵ These writings have consistently presented the Moroccan self in an exotic and folkloric manner, insisting to turn local culture into a box of artifacts and to depict Moroccan society as if almost belonging to another planet –which is in response to market demand and the expectations of the Western reader. Typical examples of this form of writing include the works of Fouad Laroui³⁶, Abdallah al-Tayi³⁷, and Tahar Ben Jelloun.³⁸ These manifestations prompt us to ask the following question: “was it a mere coincidence that the literary and intellectual works that receive attention and sponsorship, to the point of attaining local and international prizes, all resemble in one respect, which is to attack our values and degrade our beliefs?”³⁹

Those observing francophone activities – especially in Morocco - would find themselves faced with a hysterical cultural, political, and economic offensive that aims at affirming the intellectual, cultural, and civilizational affiliation with France. By examining the offerings of the Francophone University Agency, we would find an insistence on distributing activities between fields that are academic, cultural, and athletic⁴⁰ - such as the great fanfare devoted to the commemoration of the international day of the Francophonie. These attitudes confirm that the project surpasses the defense of a language to the presentation of an alternative host of civilizational values, whose important manifestations include the continuum against national languages and cultures.

³⁵ Bensalim Hamish, “The francophonie and the tragedy of our French literature”, *Op. Cit.* p. 79.

³⁶ Laroui insists on presenting the self from the angles of corruption and decadence; he employs his humorous sarcastic style in his novel “A Year at the French” to tell the story of the child Mehdi who was fated to discover the lifestyle of the French, who live in luxury and eat exotic foods and speak freely, and who give him an amount of attention that he could not understand –after he received a scholarship to study at Lyautey High School in Casablanca. See:

Fouad Laroui, *Une Année chez les Français*, (Paris: Julliard, 2010)

³⁷ Al-Tayi’ was twice awarded the prestigious French Renaudot Prize. Al-Tayi’ published five books in French, most of which are based on his life and experience as an Arab homosexual; the author did not declare his sexual preferences until he sent a telegram to his mother that was published in Moroccan newspapers.

³⁸ See for example: Tahar Ben Jelloun, *The Fateful Night*, translated by Mohammad al-Sharaki, reviewed by Mohammad Bennis, first edition (Casablanca: Tubqal Publishing, 1987), p. 27.

³⁹ Hasan al-Amrani, “Our contemporary culture between the existing and possible”, *al-Mishkat magazine*, no. 14, (May 1991), p. 12.

⁴⁰ The author identified over 170 activities in the time period between 2007-2010, for additional information, see the official website of the Francophone University Agency, which displays the Agency’s projects:

http://www.auf.org/international/appels-offre/var_recherche=maroc

2. The second dimension – Arabic between the classical and the colloquial forms:

This dimension is apparent in the calls that are now being heard in some circles to substitute classical Arabic with the Moroccan colloquial dialect. The proponents of colloquial Moroccan have launched an escalating campaign in the media, communications, and entertainment; some headlines have appeared in recent years addressing the Moroccan public in his colloquial tongue. Several radio stations have also emerged across the country broadcasting, fully or partially, in the colloquial dialect, benefitting from the degree of openness witnessed by the audiovisual media sector, especially with the formation of the “Higher Commission for Audiovisual Communications” in August 31, 2002. That was part of the process of the liberalization of the audiovisual sector, with the Commission providing licenses to several local stations that broadcast in colloquial Arabic or mix of Arabic with French or Amazigh.

In reality, this call in favor of the use of the colloquial dialect dates back in history⁴¹; however, this call has taken an acute character in Morocco in recent decades, with intense efforts to include the colloquial in education and public life as a purely “Moroccan language” as opposed to the Levantine model.⁴² This call reached its apex during the symposium on “Language and Languages” which was organized by the Zaqura Educational Institute between June 6-8, 2010, in the Tabfi College, Casablanca. In the symposium, a series of Arab and foreign researchers spoke in defense of the Moroccan language (the colloquial) and the role of the language of daily communication in intellectual production, fighting illiteracy, and spreading education; as well as the necessity to produce a modern Arabic language where the written classical Arabic is married to the Arabic dialect spoken by Moroccans.⁴³ The proponents of the colloquial use several arguments, including:

⁴¹ European Orientalism has been interested in Arabic colloquials for a long period, with several books written on the topic by Orientalists, most notably: “The rules of Levantine and Maghreben colloquial” by Kossmann De Provençal (1858); “Beirut’s colloquial language” by Emanuel Matson (1911), “The book of Baghdad’s colloquial accent” by Louis Massignon, published in Egypt in 1912; “The language and rules of the Marrakech colloquial” by Ben Smile (1918); “The colloquial of Damascus” published in 1924; “The Arabic of Marrakech” by Louis Merceillet, published in Paris in 1925; “The brief of Egypt’s Arabic” which was co-written by the British Powell and Fillot, Professor of Eastern languages at the University of Cambridge, which was published in 1926. See: Nafusa Zakariya Saeed, *The History of the Call for the Colloquial and its Effect in Egypt*, (al-Daw’a al-Islamiyya for publishing and distribution, 2006).

⁴² Mostafa al-Khalfi, “The colloquial and the Arabic: a relationship of functional complementarity, or a decisive struggle?”, *al-Tajdeed newspaper*, June 21, 2010.

⁴³ See: Zaqura Educational Institute, proceedings of the international conference “Language, Languages”, Casablanca, June 11-12, 2010, (Casablanca: Dalton Press, 2010).

- a. The defense of the Moroccan identity against the Levantine identity, which constitutes a threat to the national belonging. The “Moroccan language” is claimed to have enough linguistic specificity to be separate from Levantine Arabic. Thus, we are witnessing an escalating trend of entertainment films and series being dubbed in colloquial Arabic, as a response to the wave of dubbing various foreign programs in Levantine or Egyptian.
- b. Making information more accessible to the average citizen with the aim of ending illiteracy that still afflicts a large number of Moroccans. As long as daily communication is only taking place in colloquial, information and knowledge can only be transmitted in the Moroccan language.
- c. The staunch defense of the colloquial is part of the call for the introduction of alternative values into Moroccan identity. Whatever weakens the civilizational and doctoral belonging of the Moroccan people becomes a target for those calling for the use of colloquial. For example, the religious values that have founded the Moroccan fabric since times immemorial, and which finds its manifestations in the trinity of the doctrine and the religious school and the behavior, is seen as an expression of underdevelopment that must be rejected by the proponents of the colloquial. The same applies to the essential political and social values that Moroccans have adopted for centuries.

In fact, these calls are but another manifestation of the francophonie, as evidenced by the voices carrying the call and the pens writing in its defense. It is clear that “the problem of the Moroccans is not with the Arabic or the Amazigh languages, but with a foreign language that has been imposed on our country through force and coercion.”⁴⁴ A long time ago, Taha Hussein exclaimed: “I never believed, and I could never believe, that the colloquial language has enough characteristics and specificities to make it fit to be called “language”; I have, and will always, perceive it as a dialect among others, which has been corrupted in many of its forms and usages.”⁴⁵

3. The third dimension – between the Arabic and the Amazigh languages:

⁴⁴ Abd al-Ilah Belkziz, “When the Moroccan colloquial becomes a nom-de-guerre for the foreign language”, the Socialist Union newspaper, June 23, 2010.

⁴⁵ Taha Hussein, *The Future of Culture in Egypt*, first edition/2011, (Cairo: the House of National Books and Manuscripts, 2011), p. 236.

Scholars do not disagree over the fact that Amazigh is an essential component of national identity in North Africa. However, the course adopted by the Amazigh cultural movement since its inception, has been built on the logic of conflict with Arabism and Arabic and anyone who defends them. As a result, the Amazigh cultural movement entered into protracted conflicts with the different ideological sections in Moroccan society –political, religious, or intellectual. Each time the question of Arabic and Arabization is posed, those belonging to the Amazigh current are expected to attack the Arabic language and treat its defenders as traitors, going as far as to exclude them from Moroccan identity. Not a single current in Moroccan politics and society was spared this ardent criticism, which vacillated between accusations of treason, conspiracy against the rights of the Amazighs, or hurling accusations of reactionary thought and chauvinism and other ready labels. In this discourse, the national movement that led the struggle for independence is a Salafist, nationalist, Arabist movement that is hostile to the Amazigh cause. The left becomes an entity that conspires against the Amazigh project due to the left's closeness with the nationalist thought, which links the liberation of the Moroccan people to the liberation of the Arab peoples in Palestine and Iraq. The Islamist movement is depicted as a movement that exploits religion for political and sacred reasons in service of the Arabic language. The political regime is an Arabist non-democratic regime that is combating the manifestations of Amazigh identity. Given all these open fronts, the Amazigh movement was characterized by an aggressive logic that rejects the other regardless of his ideological leanings and belongings, which will become apparent in the foundational discourse of the Amazigh political literature. The 2000 Amazigh Statement summed up the major demands of the Amazigh movement since its inception:

- a. The necessity to declare Amazigh as an official language in the country.
- b. The adoption of a program to develop poor Amazigh regions.
- c. Rewriting and "correcting" the history of Morocco in educational curricula.
- d. The creation of Amazigh television and the permitting of Amazigh names.

The state began to deal positively with these demands since the speech of the Moroccan King in Agadir in October 17, 2001, which resulted in the creation of the Royal Institute for Amazigh Culture. Similarly, the state began to launch Amazigh-speaking radio and television outlets, giving more attention in human development to Amazigh areas, up to the declaration of Amazigh as an official language of the state etc. This behavior goes along the founding logic of the Moroccan political system, which is

based on containing the blocs of the opposition: beginning with the Left (with the alternation cabinet, which was headed by the Democratic Bloc), passing with the Islamists (with the licensing of the Justice and Development Party), and the legal activists (with the closing of the legal files and the integration of many legal activists in the state institutions, such as: the Commission for Justice and Reconciliation, and the Consultative Council for Human Rights that became the National Council for Human Rights, and is headed by a former prisoner), and including the Amazigh current.

As a general rule, most of the components of the Amazigh movement, with their varying ideological backgrounds, agree on several major principles⁴⁶:

1- Declaring Amazigh as a national and official language in the constitution: which means the rejection of Arabic as the sole official language in the Moroccan constitution.

2- Making Amazigh customs into a source for national legislation: which would lead to the undermining of social and cultural commonalities between the components of Moroccan society. It has become common in Amazigh literature to seek symbols that contradict the joint reality of Moroccan society; this includes the revival of the names of the Gods and myths that the people of Morocco knew before Islam, and even struggling for these symbols as an Amazigh right, and making tribal customs into a source of law; as well as revising geography to seek an alternative belonging to the Arabic and Islamic Moroccan identity, such as belonging to the nation of Tamazgha.

3- Separating religion from the state: in Amazigh writings, secularism was not a symbol for an ideological belief, but a symbol of the rejection of Arabic, which was always linked to the religious identity of the Moroccans. Thus, Amazigh discourse is adamant about the separation of politics and rule from religion, claiming that it goes along with a modernist democratic project that the Amazigh movement attempts to build and is struggling to establish.⁴⁷ Ideological fanaticism pushes some to portray secularism as part of the intellectual and social legacy of Amazigh tribes, by picking and choosing certain social customs. For example, an Amazigh author says: "Amazigh secularism is not imported from Europe as some might think; in fact, it is an Amazigh tradition because

⁴⁶ Mostafa Antara, "The Amazigh movement and the identity question in Morocco", *al-Hiwar al-Mutamaddin*, no. 1128, March 5, 2005.

⁴⁷ See: Angir Boubakr, "The Amazigh movement and secularism", *al-Hiwar al-Mutamaddin*, no. 1484, March 9, 2006.

historically the Amazigh people have been secular, we find –until today- in the Amazigh social system a separation between the attributions of the tribal scholar and those of the Sheikh “Angar.” The task of the former is to look after the mosque, and to remain neutral and not interfere in tribal politics; his –recent- presence in tribal meetings is limited to his function as a note-taker. The *Faqih* (scholar) often belongs to a different tribe. The Angar, on the other hand, is in charge of managing water resources, the fields, and for enforcing the customs on the part of individuals.”⁴⁸

4- Granting some Amazigh regions in Morocco self-rule according to a new regional division that respects local specificities. While some Amazigh activists reject this principle on the basis that it would partition Amazigh struggle⁴⁹, the majority of the movement’s components view self-rule as a political plan to protect Amazigh identity and language throughout the nation of “Tamazgha.”

5- Affirming the supremacy of international treaties over national law, with the entry into effect of these treaties not being conditioned upon state approval, and permitting the citizen the ability to invoke these treaties in Moroccan tribunals. The legal logic of the movement is based on a full importation of identity models that speak in the logic of minorities; the Amazigh movement promotes itself as a defender of a repressed native people in Morocco, based on notions of human rights, native peoples’ rights, and cultural and linguistic rights.⁵⁰

These founding principles of the Amazigh discourse, in addition to the increasing trend of seeking foreign support from the outside (such as some Amazigh commissions signed agreements with the Kurds, some Israeli organizations, and established relations with the European Union⁵¹), have caused the movement to “slip from its national contractual character into an internationalized context where foreign parties intervene under various slogans, including human rights, secularism, the rights of native peoples, self-

⁴⁸ Mohammad Khay, “Amazighism: Historical legitimacy, secularism, and religion”, *al-Hiwar al-Mutamaddin*, no 2139, December 14, 2007.

⁴⁹ Mubarak Belkasim, “No to self-rule for the Rif region, no to the Rif language”, *Thawiza newspaper*, no. 144, 2011.

⁵⁰ See: the conference “The Linguistic and Cultural Rights in Morocco”, organized by the Royal Institute for Amazigh Culture and the Consultative Council of Human Rights on June 8-9, 2010. The conference’s aim was to affirm linguistic and cultural rights in Morocco. The Electronic Newsletter of the National Council for Human Rights, issue 15 (June, 2010).

⁵¹ See: Fouad Bouali, “The Amazighs between Israel and the United Nations”, *al-Quds al-Arabi newspaper*, October 6, 2010.

rule; as well as mythical imageries and micro-identities that make a separation between what is a “Moroccan commonality” and what is an “Amazigh specificity.”⁵²

C. The missing link in the language debate and the constitutional developments

Before the heralding of constitutional reforms, the language debate had taken an oppositional, divisive, character; various parties coalesced to undermine the Arabism of Morocco and its Arab identity, sometimes in the name of Moroccan specificity and others in the name of cultural rights. At the same time, voices of intellectuals, political leaderships, and academics began to rise in defense of Arabic in the face of campaigns of colloquialism, francophonization, and Amazighation. The reaction proved the existence of a strong current in defense of the Arabic language, despite its organizational deficiencies, especially among the ranks of Moroccan academics and political elites, which reflected the increasing concern of the threat of these campaigns against the Arabic language. The debate escalated, especially with successive symposiums and conferences devoted to the celebration of the Arabic language⁵³. However, the Arab Spring has changed the course of events: let us see how civic and political figures have shaped their positions regarding linguistic pluralism in Morocco.

1- Linguistic pluralism between the constitutional option and the “national language” option:

Among the direct repercussions of the Arab spring was the appearance of protest movements in Morocco that the regime attempted to contain in the March 9 speech, promising an upcoming constitutional amendment, and focusing on the “red lines” or the “seven principles” that represent a national consensus among all Moroccans, and which provided the terms of reference for the debate between the political parties. The first of the royal promises was “the constitutional enshrinement of the diverse character

⁵² Saeed Bennis, “Managing the Amazigh question in Morocco: the initiatives, positions, and interactions”, July 20, 2009. <http://hespress.com/opinions/14494.html>

⁵³ In the year 2010, the author was capable of counting over twenty academic and scholarly events centered on the present reality of the Arabic language and the role that it should be given in the educational system and the public administration. The organizing committees ranged between the civil society (such as the Moroccan Association for the Protection of the Arabic Language, Amadeus, etc...), public institutions (the Urban Society, the Academy of the Moroccan Kingdom, the Council of the Moroccan Expatriate Community...), as well as academic and scholarly institutions (universities, the Moroccan Center for Contemporary Research and Studies...).

of the unified Moroccan identity, which is enriched through the diversity of its sources, and at their heart Amazighism, which is a credit for all Moroccans without exception.”⁵⁴ This statement began the departing point for the debate regarding what is meant by the “diverse identity” of Moroccans, and the role of Amazighism in this regard, and why the matter was specifically mentioned in the king’s speech. If we take into account that the latent factor behind the flaring of the youth protest movements was political and social, then the speech’s focus on the cultural questions poses several inquiries on the reason behind the inclusion of these statements: was it a mere acknowledgment of diversity, or an attempt to redirect the social demands into an identity debate? As a result, many political organizations hastened to express the wishes of the political regime and to defend the inclusion of Amazighism in the new constitution. The crystallization of the positions of various political and social actors regarding the project of the new constitution has led to the escalation of the public debate to levels that have proven the inability of the politicians to offer real answers to the questions of identity and diversity –as was evidenced in its “electoral” dealing with the matter. The positions of the major parties regarding the inclusion of Amazighism in the constitution can be divided into two camps: those supporting the constitutional option, and the camp calling for the Amazigh language as a national language.

a- The constitutional option: this stance emerges from the realistic need to edify the Amazigh language as an official language in the constitution next to Arabic. That would provide it with the necessary legal guarantees to succeed in the fields of education, the media, justice, local and regional affairs, and all vital sectors. Thus, the “progress and socialism” party (formerly the Communist Party) called in a memo to the committee charged with amending the constitution, to the codification of Arabic and Amazigh as two official languages, “with the state working to find the transitional formula required to crystallize the official character of the Amazigh language, and to guarantee cultural diversity in its regional manifestations, and to seek to enrich and develop this legacy”⁵⁵. The party also organized multiple meetings with the cadres of the Amazigh cultural movement, asserting that the acknowledgement of the diversity of the sources of the Moroccan identity is tantamount to a re-creation of the national local identity. The party noted the necessity of avoiding using concepts and terms that would

⁵⁴ The speech of Mohammad VI, March 9, 2011, *al-Alam newspaper*, April 19, 2011.

⁵⁵ The Progress and Socialism party, “preliminary memorandum regarding the reforms relating to the political and electoral sectors), *Bayan al-yawm newspaper*, May 29, 2011.

imply the exclusion of one of the national ethnic components, such as the term “the Arab Maghreb”, which excludes the Amazighs.

The memorandums of other parties (the Free National Assembly Party, the Popular Movement, Authenticity and Modernity) included little that was not expected, all focusing on the necessity of limiting Morocco’s geographic and civilizational belonging to the “Great Maghreb”, stressing the pluralism of the cultural components of Moroccan identity, and demanding that Arabic and Amazigh be made into the official languages of the Moroccan Kingdom.⁵⁶

The parties defending constitutional inclusion attempted to identify, primarily, with the positions of the political regime, and also with the positions expressed by a number of organizations working under the banner of “the Amazigh Cultural Movement”. The Movement has wagered on the inclusion of the Amazigh language in the constitution, which was the coronation of its demands, beginning with the Agadir Charter in 1991, the documents of the Amazigh movement issued between 1996 and 2004, and the letter of the administrative council of the Royal Institute for Amazigh Culture to King Mohammad VI in April, 2006. The movement summed up the justifications for the constitutional option in a number of arguments, most importantly⁵⁷:

The historical argument: the Amazigh language is the native language of the people of Morocco and the oldest language on Moroccan land.

The social argument: Amazigh is a tool of communication for a large percentage of the Moroccan population, with many daily events conducted in Amazigh throughout Morocco’s regions, urban and rural. Furthermore, the language is a means of artistic and literary creation.

The political-authoritarian argument: since the royal speech in Agadir and the foundation of the Royal Institute for Amazigh Culture, the state adopted the project of “uplifting Amazighism as a national responsibility of all Moroccans”.

The legal argument: including the positions of the Moroccan legal organizations calling for constitutional inclusion, such as The Moroccan Association for Human Rights; in addition to the content of international treaties and charters and conventions asserting the right of peoples to protect their languages and cultures; the UN recommendations emanating from UN

⁵⁶ See: the memorandums of the various political organizations in the website: Constitutional Morocco, http://www.amdc-ma.net/ar/news.php?action=list&cat_id=43

⁵⁷ See: Ahmad ‘Aseed, “The legitimacy of enshrining the Amazigh language in the democratic constitution”, *Hespress*, June 8, 2011.

committees and the International Federation for Human Rights such as: the International Declaration of Human Rights 1948, the International Convention on Civic and Political Rights 1966, the International Convention and Economic and Social and Cultural Rights 1966.⁵⁸

The demands of the Amazigh movements were not limited to that of constitutional inclusion; through its struggle, the movement has crystallized many demands aiming at changing the legal and civilizational identity of Morocco, through a constitution that acknowledges a new identity model; which means that language was but a gateway to changing the structure of Moroccan society in its Arabic-Islamic identity.

b- The “national language” option: among the political elite, the position was proposed by the following parties: the Independence Party, the Socialist Union, the Liberal Party, and the Justice and Development Party. The Independence Party took a centrist position supporting the constitutional texts, which describes the Amazigh language as a national language, without having it compete with Arabic as the official language of the state. The party’s memorandum said:

“We see that the constitutional enshrinement of the diverse character of Moroccan identity with its varied sources, and at their heart, Amazighism: as a culture, expression, and a language for all Moroccans the same as Arabic is a national language for all. This effort requires supplying all the required legal guarantees and protections in the constitutional text, in a manner guaranteeing this diverse character and allowing the Amazigh language to occupy its fitting stature in our homeland -in solidarity, complementarity, and harmony with the Arabic language in the face of the foreign language tide in our administrative and public life.”⁵⁹

The position of the Islamist party –Justice and Development- did not differ much from the posture stated above: the necessity of the new constitution focusing on the diversity of Moroccan identity, stating in the constitution that Morocco is part of the Arab and Islamic nation, reinforcing the position of the Arabic language as an official language in public life, education, administration, and the economy, and the

⁵⁸ See: Engir Boubakr, “the Amazigh movement and democratic transition: preliminary remarks”, *Assif*, [http://www.assif.info/news/read/2133./](http://www.assif.info/news/read/2133/)

⁵⁹ The Independence Party, A Memorandum on the Constitutional Reforms, Constitutional Morocco. <http://www.amdc-ma.net/ar/news.php?action=view&id=59>

constitution including a text making the Amazigh language into a national language.⁶⁰ Similarly, we find the left-leaning Socialist Union of popular forces focusing on “the codification of Morocco’s respect for its cultural diversity, and asserting the linguistic and civilizational expression of this diversity as components of the open-minded Moroccan identity, and affirming that these expressions are endowed with all the internationally recognized rights in this regard –within the context of national unity, which requires the codification of the linguistic situation of Morocco in the constitution, and assigning the Arabic and Amazigh languages as two national languages.”⁶¹

2- The arguments against decreeing the Amazigh language in the constitution:

The arguments of the opponents of the constitutionalization of the Amazigh language do not differ from those of the proponents, in terms of acknowledging the multiplicity of the components of social identity in Morocco, and the possibility of including the Amazigh language or dialects in the constitution without granting them an official status. This camp receives support from many researchers and academics in the fields of languages, linguistics, and intellectual production, and who perceived the decreeing of a second official language as a threat to the cohesion of the homeland and the people. Dr. al-Fasi al-Fahri writes: “Morocco is largely Arabic, with a common Arab political and cultural identity that is shared among the different Arab countries; even if Morocco’s specificities were Amazigh, since (civilizational) accumulation takes place through Arabism in its broad, practical, civilizational, cultural, and political meaning.”⁶² Acknowledging the linguistic diversity of identity does not contradict with the rejection of the decreeing of the Amazigh language in the constitution: “it is the right of the Amazigh person to be attached to his mother tongue, and no rational person could protest that, and nobody contested this right in previous eras during which Moroccans lived in harmonious brotherhood. All that we call for is that the right of the Amazigh language to life and development and evolution should not contradict with the preservation of the stature of the Arabic language, as their language of religion and

⁶⁰ The Memorandum of the Justice and Development Party, Constitutional Morocco, <http://www.amdc-ma.net/ar/index.php?action=idx&start=20&page=2>

⁶¹ The Memorandum of the Socialist Union Party, Constitutional Morocco, <http://www.amdc-ma.net/ar/index.php?action=idx&start=20&page=2>

⁶² Abd al-Qadir al-Fasi al-Fahri, “The coming language revolution in Morocco”, *Hespress*, November 27, 2011. <http://hespress.com/opinions/30918.html>

unity.⁶³ As a result, the discourse of the cultural Amazigh language was always viewed as a discourse directed against the Arabic language and the Islamic identity of Morocco, thus, the reaction to the Amazigh movement was based on several pillars:

The historical pillar: proclaiming that Berbers, or at least part of them, are of Arab origins. Abd al-Aziz Bin Abdullah criticized the opinion of Ibn Khaldoun which contests that Arabs Himyaris had settled Morocco, by saying: "it cannot be dismissed that the Tababi'a and their subjects may have migrated into Morocco at successive stages, individually or in small groups, whose passage drew little attention"⁶⁴. Official historical accounts place the origins of the Berbers to the Arabian Peninsula, and their language to the Semitic family. Shams al-Deen al-Dhahabi wrote: "the Berbers and Barbar are of the sons of Qithar Bin Isma'il; and it is said that the home of the Berbers was Palestine, and their king was Jalut (Goliath); and when he was killed by the prophet David, the Berbers fled to Morocco, and spread all the way to the Extreme Souss; their lands extended over more than one thousand *Farsakh*"⁶⁵. Ibn Kulkhan said: "the origin of these people is in the Himyar (people) of Saba' (Sheba), they are a people of horses and camels and goats, and they inhabit the southern deserts and move from water to water, just like the Arabs, and their homes are made of hair and fur"⁶⁶. The argument defending the Arabism of the Amazigh who settled in Morocco relies on this historical narrative.

The linguistic pillar: many linguists – based on historical chronicles, archival documents, and comparative studies – argue that Arabic was native to Morocco prior to the Islamic conquests and the migration of the Arab Hilali tribes into the Maghreb; "in the African North, there has been another historical consensus over Arabic by those using colloquial Arabic dialects and those using Amazigh dialects. This consensus was passed to generations since the first century, and perhaps before, since non-peninsular Arab tribes were present before the migration of the *Hilali* tribes...this consensus could only be forsaken for something that is better, and I do not see on the horizon a better option; in fact, (the consensus over the use of Arabic) is the best legacy that we have inherited from our predecessors."⁶⁷ Furthermore, the linguist cannot ignore the existing

⁶³ Abd al-Ali al-Wadghiri, *Language, Religion, and Identity*, (Casablanca: the New Najah Press, 2000), p. 144.

⁶⁴ Abd al-Aziz Bin Abdullah, *The Pillars of Moroccan Civilization*, fourth edition (Rabat: the New Ma'arif Press, 2002), tome 1, p. 54.

⁶⁵ Shams al-Deen al-Dhahabi, *The Biographies of the Notable Nobles*, verification supervised by Sheikh Sha'eeb al-'Arna'ut, al-Risala Foundation, 11th ed., 1417 Hijri-1996, Tome 18, p.429

⁶⁶ Shams al-Deen Ahmad Bin Muhammad Bin Khalkan, *The Deaths of the Notables*, verified by Dr. Ihsan Abbas, Sadir Publishing, Tome 7, p.128

⁶⁷ Ahmad al-'Alwi, "the authenticity of Arabic in Morocco: "the colloquial" did not come to Morocco with the Arab Levantine conquest!", *Al-Quds al-Arabi* newspaper, March 23, 2011

similarities between Arabic and Amazigh. Al-Mukhtar al-Susi wrote: "objective research has confirmed that the Berbers are Semitics and brothers of the Arabs, which is evidenced –in addition to the historical manifestations- by the similarities in customs and the closeness of the two languages: that of the Arabs and that of the Berber. Both are languages of the "Dhad", with the Arabic "Dhad" letter being present in the language of the Berber; moreover, phonetic pronunciation is similar... in addition to the presence of thousands of Arabic terms in the Shalha language, most of which were judged to have been known by the Berber before the Berber and the Arabs fell into contact with Islam"⁶⁸. It is known that the Amazigh language includes many Arabic terms relating to the various aspects of life. Al-Mukhtar al-Susi classified the influences of Arabic over the Shalhi language by dividing the list of common terms into three categories⁶⁹:

The first category: introduced through religion and religious law, or through Arab urbanism, such as the names of household tools, clothing, and production tools.

The second category: includes the terms that were used by the Amazigh prior to the Islamic conquest, such as death, life, blood, wind, father, mother, sound, land, and sea.

The third category: a vocabulary that is situated between the first two categories and whose origin cannot be determined, such as swamp, drinking, dawn, and other terms that do not clearly originate from Arabic urbanism nor from the Islamic religion, with no evidence pointing that they belong to the old Arabic.

In addition to the similarities in vocabulary between the two languages, similarities also exist in the grammatical and conjugational structure. Both languages use derivatives in their grammatical construction, with a large number of words that could be derived from a single root.

The doctrinal pillar: which focuses on the connection of Arabic to the sacred religious text, which allowed it to spread quickly in Moroccan lands and to become the language of cultural production; which distanced it from the notions of Arab belonging, "it was no longer a language that is specific to Arabs or to Qureish, it has surpassed this specificity to become the language of the Koran and Islam and a legacy for the Islamic peoples entering into this world religion –despite their differing tongues and colors"⁷⁰. As a result, the Koranic script became a global script, many languages passed from being oral dialects to being written with the Arabic alphabet, such as the family of Iranian

⁶⁸ Rida Allah Abd al-Wafi al-Mukhtar al-Susi, "Lectures by the scholar al-Mukhtar al-Susi in doctrine and history", al-Tajdeed, July 17, 2005.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Abd al-Ali al-Wadghiri, Language, Religion, and Identity, Op. Cit, p. 75.

languages including: Persian, Kurdish, Baluchi and the family of Turkic languages such as Uzbek, Turkmen, and Kazakh⁷¹.

The ideological-national pillar: which consists in the francophonie carrying the mantle of the defense of Amazighism. The francophonie has attempted to encourage Amazigh identity and the Amazigh language since the memorandum of French Resident-General, General Lyautey, ordering the development of the Berbers outside the circle of Islam, and to move directly from the Berber language to French⁷². Since that date, Berber Studies departments have been founded in French colleges and universities⁷³; and this existential relationship has led to many representatives of the Amazigh movement being linked to foreign agencies. Many examples exist including:

- The “World Amazigh Congress” asking the deputies of the European Parliament to intervene to force Morocco to comply with the principles of human rights and the treaties linking it to the European Union.
- A number of activists of the Amazigh movement asking the United States to intervene to defend Amazighism, in order to oppose “Arab extremism” that threatens the world⁷⁴.
- The growing relations between some activists and Israel during the last decades; including mutual visits and the foundation of an association for Amazigh-Jewish friendship in order to “strengthen the historic links between the Amazigh and the Israeli Jews who inhabited the Amazigh regions in Morocco and who immigrated to Israel”, as the association claims. Thus, we should not be surprised when one of the main proponents of normalization (with Israel), Ahmad al-Dagharni, exclaims: “the ongoing conflict in Palestine does not interest us for it is exclusively a matter of the Palestinians and the Israelis, and we could not be further from it.”⁷⁵

⁷¹ Mohammad al-‘Uza`i, *The Tongue of the Civilization of the Koran*, first edition, (Rabat: al-Ikhtilaf Publishing, 2010), p. 131.

⁷² Abd al-Ali al-Wadghiri, *The Francophonie and the French Linguistic and Educational Policy in Morocco*, *Op. Cit.*, p. 86.

⁷³ Mohammad al-‘Uza`i, *Linguistic Diversity and its Repercussions on the Social Fabric*, first edition, (Casablanca: the New Najah Press, 2002), p. 125.

⁷⁴ Mohammad Misbah, “Wikileaks: Moroccan Amazigh activists demanding America’s support to confront the Arabs!”, *al-Tajdeed newspaper*, September 7, 2011. For the original document see: <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2007/12/07RABAT1857.html>

⁷⁵ Fouad Bouali, “The Amazigh between Israel and the United Nations”, *al-Masa’ newspaper*, October 2, 2010, and Fouad Bouali, “The Amazighs of Washington”, *al-Tajdeed newspaper*, September 13, 2011.

Based on these arguments, we believe that the decree recognizing the Amazigh language as an official language in the constitution is an unacceptable proposition, which threatens the existence of Morocco, as will be made clear in the response below, to the above arguments, as formulated by the literature of the Amazigh movement.

First: the question of linguistic right: those defending the principle of decreeing Amazighism believe that the linguistic right is an acknowledgement of the cultural and political rights of the Amazigh. In reality, the right to cultural expression does not require a constitutional acknowledgement; and it could be practiced through the different state institutions. If collective linguistic rights, whether those relating to ethnic groups –and these are natural and inalienable rights, such as the right to use to ethnic language in other fields such as education- and those of national communities were temporal rights that are decreed by society, such as the right to assign a certain language as an official language, then each citizen has the right to linguistic security. Security in this sense is not related to the freedom of choosing the language of communication and creativity, but in respecting the general space of linguistic communication. It would be unrealistic to pretend that the child who is not educated in his native tongue is handicapped and doomed to scholarly failure. A clear counter-example would be the case of the Hebrew language in Israel; for in the middle of this linguistic plethora that is produced by intense immigration, we find multiple mother tongues including: Arabic, Russian, European languages etc... -while Hebrew remains the language of education in schooling. Thus, we believe that security comes before rights, and a right becomes mandatory once we believe in it, and it is not binding when imposed on the other. Cultural expression is not in need of a constitutional text, but rather of institutional measures.

Second – the question of the unity of identity: the decreeing of the Amazigh language does not aim at achieving linguistic pluralism, but rather at fragmenting the one Moroccan identity. The manifestations of identity fragmentation are clear in a number of expressive scenes such as: raising the Amazigh flags in social protests, which threatens national sovereignty; contesting the name of the state and changing it from Morocco to ancient appellations –that lack documentary evidence- such as “Tamazgha”, while leafing through the myths of history for symbols to be used by contemporary movements; slogans calling for self-rule and self-determination for Amazigh-majority regions and localities. All the aforementioned elements are manifestations of the coming threat to the unity of the national self –and proving that the path of fragmentation has begun; the decreeing of a new language or languages is but the beginning of the end. While nobody disagrees over the reality of Morocco’s identity

diversity (Andalusian/Arab/Amazigh/African), the official declaration of the decreeing of a new official language is the heralding of Morocco's post-unity era.

Third – the question of social justice: many of those affiliated with the Amazigh current adopt a sociological interpretation that aims at depicting the Amazighs as a socially-oppressed sector; and this was manifested in numerous statements issued by Amazigh organizations regarding matters relating to regions that are historically viewed as Amazigh. However, the question that should be asked in this context is: is the injustice suffered by the Amazighs in Morocco today a result of their Amazighism, or of their class identity? In the historical and political context, we notice that many of the men of authority who had exerted repression over different Moroccan regions were Amazigh in language and identity; another indication that the social justice argument is unrealistic and inaccurate.

Fourth – the question of the "global model": those defending the decreeing of the Amazigh language refer to the constitutions of democratic states decreeing more than one official language, and which offer excellent examples of the management of cultural and linguistic diversity through fair and just policies. In reality, drawing from international experiences cannot be submitted to selectivity; by surveying the international scene, four different legal theses concerning linguistic legislation can be inferred:

- **The thesis of linguistic centralization:** consisting in imposing a single constitutional language, such as in France. The process began with the legislation decreed by Francois I in 1539 imposing the French language in all the courts of the state, all the way to Jacques Chirac's refusal to sign the European treaty acknowledging local languages in 1999 –the French state continues to make language a prime and sole component of national identity and a symbol of unity.⁷⁶
- **The thesis of regional independence:** in this model there is one official language, while local languages are adopted as official in the regions of their predominance. The state exists in countries that witnessed long civil wars and reached a historical resolution to manage the struggle for power with the adoption of the expanded self-rule system. An essential note: regional divisions

⁷⁶ The first chapter of the Toubon Law stated: "the language of the Republic, according to the constitution, is the French language, which is the essential pillar of the sovereignty and legacy of France, and it is the language of instruction, work, exchanges, and public affairs", Law no. 94-665/August 4, 1994.

http://www.langue-francaise.org/Loi_toubon.php

match the distribution of the linguistic groups living in the territory of the state; and the Spanish case is the most notable model of this arrangement.

- **The thesis of equivalency between the language and the land:** in which the management of linguistic pluralism between different languages relies on the principle of “the domain”. It is a model of decentralized linguistic pluralism relying on the decreeing of a number of languages in each part of the state. This model is predominant in countries adopting more than one official language, or adopting local languages as official languages. These states are also known for their federal character, where the population, from the ethnic and linguistic perspective, features an equivalency between the geographic domain and the linguistic domain. Two notable examples would be the Swiss and Belgian experiences.
- **The thesis of the individual right (Canada):** the state submits to the linguistic demands of the individual; thus the public institution must interact with the individual in his native language, whether French or English.

While examining the global examples of constitutional language legislation, we notice that the majority, whether those adopting linguistic singularity or diversity, place a host of legal and institutional regulations that facilitate the management of the language question according to three principles:

- The guaranteeing of national unity and the preservation of the social fabric of the components of the one people.
- The acknowledgement of linguistic and cultural diversity as a natural outcome of ethnic conflicts, tribal agreements, or historical regional arrangements.
- The achievement of social and cultural development by seeking the linguistic policy that allows the people to enter into the era of the Educated Society.

These safeguards explain the decreeing of diversity in the constitutional text, but it remains true that excessive diversity usually leads to the domination of the language of the colonizer rather than reviving and developing national languages. A clear example would be South Africa, where English became the official language *par excellence*. That was the conclusion of the first report of the work group of the language project

LANGTAG, founded in 1995 to manage the language situation in the country; the report noted the question of linguistic incoherence and the hegemony of English.⁷⁷

Fifth – the question of functional distribution: the opponents of constitutional legislation argue that languages should be submitted to a functional specialization, wherein the functions of each national language are determined. In the collective mindset of Moroccans, a distinction has set between the “*Langue Savante*”, which is to be used in official, academic, and administrative communication; and between the day to day languages that are used on the popular level and within the local environment. Thus, the Moroccan tends to reject –consciously or subconsciously- serious media communication in colloquial or in local dialects. This may have been the reason for the failure of most magazines and media outlets that insisted on addressing the Moroccan consumer in colloquial, such as the “Nishan” magazine, which was managed by Rida Bin Shamsi –one of the most prominent defenders of colloquialization-, and which ceased publication.

Sixth – the question of linguistic eligibility: one of the main arguments employed by those rejecting constitutional legislation pertains to the level of eligibility of the Amazigh language. Academic debate has not been decided regarding the legitimacy of speaking of a single Amazigh language. Many studies defend the thesis that this language is but a virtual language, which was produced in the laboratory of the Royal Institute for Amazigh Culture, through the assumption of similarity between the three tribal languages: the Rifi language, the Shalhi language, and the Soussi language.⁷⁸ Furthermore, even in the existence of such a standardized language, its development into a language of education, administration, and production requires a long period. Thus, it would be mistaken to believe that the language problem has been resolved after ten years of the work of the Royal Institute for Amazigh Culture, whose staff is quick to enumerate its foundational achievements.

The language debate: where to?

In light of the examination of the two camps and the assessment of the language debate and identity controversies, it must be acknowledged that the debate has taken the character of a sectarian and antagonistic one, rather than that of a scholarly debate. This could be for a number of reasons, some relating to the shortcomings of those defending the Arabic language, who have found themselves, unexpectedly, in the heat of the confrontation, in the absence of a strategy or a collective future vision, and

⁷⁷ LANGTAG, Towards a National Language Plan for South Africa, *Final report of the Language Plan Task Group presented to the Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology*, 8 août 1996.

⁷⁸ Mohammad al-‘Uza`i, Linguistic Diversity and its Repercussions on the Social Fabric, *Op. Cit.*, p. 85.

in the absence of a veritable center of resistance and the scattering of the efforts of Arabic defenders, added to that the carelessness of some researchers, the absence of a strong organizational frame, and a noticeable weakness in activism. Other reasons for this undesirable situation relate to the choices of the state, which supports the current of Westernization and the control of the francophone elite over the centers of decision; in addition to the introduction of European states and international organizations as participants in this debate, not to mention the infiltration of the Amazigh movement by the Zionist lobby. A number of general remarks could be made regarding this controversy.

First – all the memorandums of the political parties insist on the inclusion in the constitution of articles relating to the diverse identity of Morocco. Based on the Royal speech, and as an attempt to translate its objectives, all the memorandums attempted to focus on the plurality of the components of identity in Moroccan society, with variations in the style and the formulation.

Second – by examining the positions of the parties supporting the constitutional decreeing of the Amazigh language, one finds different ideological arguments justifying the decreeing of Amazigh as an official language next to Arabic. The communist Progress and Socialism Party founded its theoretical argument upon the principles of Scientific Socialism. “For scientific socialism combats narrow chauvinism, which is the ideological weapon of the bourgeoisie, as well as combating, within the one homeland or the one state, all forms of control exerted by dynastic, religious, or one regional group over another.”⁷⁹ However, this theoretical formulation does not preclude the political exploitation of the Amazigh question in the face of the conservative current, represented in parties with Islamist leanings and traditionalist parties.

As for the Popular Movement Party, which hails from rural origins, has not changed its position since that expressed at party’s inception in 1958, in opposition to the then more powerful urban-based Independence Party. However, the Popular Movement’s media return in the last few years reflect the wager of the party and the authority on the containment of the protests of the Amazigh elite within the cadre of the political game; given that the party has practiced power within cabinets, and managed several provinces and provincial councils, to the point where it became an administrative party par excellence. Thus, the party’s assessment of the Amazigh question did not differ from the positions of the ruling authorities.

⁷⁹ Mohammad Dharif, “The Amazigh question in the early literature of the Progress and Socialism Party”, *al-Masa’ newspaper*, June 30, 2011.

Third – it was expected that the parties aligning themselves with the second position, that of declaring Amazigh as a national language rather than an official one, were the parties with the most influence on the political and popular level. The Independence Party, that led the battle of independence and liberation, has remained loyal to the ideological premises of the movement that were formulated by the founding leader 'Allal al-Fasi, and which were founded on Arabism and Islamic identity.⁸⁰ As for the Socialist Union, it did not change its positions that stress the Arab identity of the Moroccan society. In the same regard, the Islamist "Justice and Development" Party has remained loyal to its perception of Arabic as a language of religion and unity and identity.

Fourth – the debate over the question of legitimacy should be a prelude to the declaration of Amazigh as a national language rather than an official one. The historical, geographic, socio-cultural, political, and legal arguments employed in favor of Amazighism do not justify the request for making Amazigh an official language, as much as they prove the fact that Amazigh is a national language. Constitutional texts in democratic states pointing to their national languages are often associated with attempts to defend these languages, develop them, and preserve them as the locus of identity. On the other hand, the argument of officialization requires other justifications, such as the eligibility of the language in terms of vocabulary and grammar, its presence in schools, its ability to produce knowledge, and its relative usage in the public space.⁸¹

Fifth – the March 9 Royal speech has directed the debate over the constitutional amendments to the question of Amazigh identity. And since this debate was already open, acute, and antagonistic, that resulted in a neglect of the other demands relating to the amendment, especially those relating to the powers of the king, the attributes of institutions, and the amount of popular participation in decision making.

D. The constitutional treatment of the language question

And finally, after months of identity and linguistic debates, and media and intellectual wars that have overshadowed the legal discussions, the new constitution came declaring the officialization of the Amazigh language in parallel to Arabic. Given the

⁸⁰ See: Fouad Bouali, "The intellectual project of 'Allal al-Fasi: critical thought and the gateways to reform", *Horizons of Traditions and Culture*, no. 68, January 31, 2010.

⁸¹ See: Mostafa al-Khalfi, "Is the best scenario for the management of the question of the Amazigh language in the constitution that of codifying it as a national language, or as an official language?", (Conference: Amazighism: the options and the challenges, the Moroccan Center for Contemporary Studies and Research, May 25, 2011).

course of the debate and the path that it took from the beginning, as well as the composition of the commission tasked with the constitutional amendment⁸², and the choices of the state in recent years, the result was not unexpected, but rather a natural result of a predictable path. The officialization of the Amazigh language can be seen as a bias in favor of specific voices within the educated elite, and which has wagered, and is wagering, on the revision of the components of national identity, ranging from the language, the religion, the belonging, and the civilization. The constitution proposed by the king, and whose passage required a referendum, became the symbol for this option. The new constitution states:

“Arabic remains the official language of the state, with the state laboring to protect it, develop it, and increase its usage. The Amazigh language is also considered as an official language of the state, since it represents a common credit for all Moroccans without exception. A law is to be formulated to determine the stages of the officialization of the Amazigh language and the manner of its inclusion in the field of education and the spheres and public life, so that the Amazigh language could, in the future, perform its task as an official language.”⁸³

By examining the text, the following remarks could be offered:

1- The codification of the identity question: in the 1996 Moroccan constitution, the following formulation could be found: “the Moroccan Kingdom is an Islamic state with full sovereignty, its official language is Arabic, and it is part of the Greater Arab Maghreb.”⁸⁴ By comparing the old and the amended texts, one notices that the authors insisted on detailing the questions of identity, as was apparent in the two following examples:

- the discussion of the language question as part of the text of the constitution rather than its preamble, as was the case with the 1996 constitution, it is known that the field of constitutional law includes a detailed debate on the legal value of the preamble as opposed to the text itself. Various opinions range between acknowledging the constitutional preamble as being of a higher value than the constitutional text, and considering the preamble to

⁸² Press reports mentioned that one of the Amazigh activists who sought Washington’s help against the Arabs, per the aforementioned Wikileaks document, is Lhasan Oulhaj, one of the members of the commission amending the constitution. See: *al-Masa’ newspaper*, issue 30416.

⁸³ The New Moroccan Constitution, 2011.

⁸⁴ The Moroccan Constitution, 1996, p. 2.

- have no legal power –with many opinions taking a middle ground between those two extremes. Most constitutions include in the preamble the basic principles for society, and the philosophy that determines the political and social demarche of the state. In parallel to the debate on the constitutional amendment, a fierce controversy emerged regarding the legal power of the preamble, even though the mainstream opinion is that the introduction of the constitution has a legal value equaling the other texts of the constitution, since the preamble is considered as an inseparable part of the constitution.⁸⁵ In order to resolve this legal debate, the Moroccan legislator elected to cite the question of identity in the constitutional articles, without neglecting to mention the general principles in the preamble –which was concluded with a telling phrase that was meant to prevent any legal debate: “this preamble constitutes an inseparable part of the constitution.”
- Defining the question of identity by determining the components of Morocco’s identity: religiously, ethnically, racially, and in terms of culture and civilization. “the Moroccan Kingdom is an Islamic state, which is committed to its national and territorial unity, and to the preservation of the solidarity between the components of its national identity, which are unified through the melting of all of its components, Arab-Islamic, Amazigh, and Hassani Sahrawism; and which is rich due to its African, Andalusian, Hebrew, and Mediterranean sources.” Thus the Moroccan constitution acknowledges and codifies, for the first time, the multiplicity of the elements of Moroccan identity in a manner combining geographic, ethnic, and historic dimensions – and invoking all the parties that contributed to the shaping of this identity.

⁸⁵ A constitutional researcher classifies the legal opinions thus:

The first opinion: grants the constitutional preamble a legal value higher than that of the constitution. The basis for this opinion is that the preamble codifies values that are part of the popular consciousness and that must be respected.

The second opinion: argues that the constitutional preamble has a constitutional value equaling that of the texts included in the constitution, since the preamble is an inseparable part of the constitution.

The third opinion: grants the principles cited in the preamble a legal value inferior to that of the actual constitutional texts, in other terms, the preamble is seen as equaling a regular law.

The fourth opinion: takes away all legal value from the constitutional preamble, admitting only its moral value.

The fifth opinion: argues for a distinction between two forms of rulings included in constitutional preambles: practical prescriptions and methodological rules.

Amer Abd Zeid, “Readings in the concept of the constitution”, al-Hiwar al-Mutamaddin, June 18, 2008.

<http://www.ahewar.org/debat/show.art.asp?t=0&aid=137894>

- 2- A consociational constitution:** the Moroccan politician has proven that his role in dealing with questions of identity is shaped by the logic of social and political balances. At the time when the constitutional text was expected to be the result of a scientific, academic, and social dialogue, where all participate in search of areas of agreement and to offer a scientific credibility to the functional management of languages, it was noticeable that the debate remained limited to its political dimension, and in the production of an ideologically-driven literature. Since Moroccans are well aware of the politicians in their country, and of their “true” functions, reliance on politicians to “grant” Moroccans a constitutional text enumerating the elements of Moroccan identity has proved to be ill-founded, so long as the politicians’ choices are not logical. As a result, the text was disjointed and lengthy, attempting to satisfy all parties so that each party could see itself in it. Those defending Arabic found that the Arabic language would remain “the official language of the state, which the state works to protect and develop”. Those defending the constitutionalization of the Amazigh language found that “the Amazigh language is also an official language of the state, as a common credit for all Moroccan without exception”. Moreover, the text of the preamble enumerated the seven identities and attempted to satisfy everybody, including Jews and Andalusians, when it acknowledged the Hebrew and Andalusian dimension in the identity of Moroccans.
- 3- Linking the constitutionalization of the Amazigh language to the regulatory laws:** the constitutional text linked the full officialization of Amazigh to the passing of a regulatory law, which implies a revision of its linguistic eligibility and the manner to take appropriate measures –with the increasing difficulties of its application in education and schooling. Since the legislative power is the one legally permitted to issue such laws, it is expected that political and ideological coalitions will control the turning of the constitutionalization into practical measures.
- 4- The creation of the National Council for Languages:** the new constitution decrees the formation of a committee called “the National Council for Moroccan Languages and Culture”, determining its main function – before the issuance of the regulatory law determining its attributions- in the: “protection and development of the Arabic and Amazigh languages and the various Moroccan

cultural expressions, whether in the field of heritage or of authentic creativity.”⁸⁶ This is not the first time when such an organization was proposed to regulate the language market, especially after the heated debate regarding the functions of national languages and the role of each in the path of development and knowledge. Prior to the emergence of the debate between those opposing and defending the constitutionalization of Amazigh, the Moroccan intellectual scene was filled with academic and media debates regarding dialects and their role in academic and educational formation –to the point where some intellectuals and journalists began to speak of a “Moroccan” language that is a mixture of Arabic and surrounding languages. Moreover, the language reality in Morocco is a testament to the suffering of the Arabic language due to the increasing control of the languages of power and economic and political hegemony. Given this reality, there was a need for the formation of a higher linguistic authority that oversees the functional distribution of languages in Morocco and answers to purely linguistic problematics –following the failure of the Higher Council for Education to produce a strategic vision for the linguistic future of Moroccans in its conference on “the Instruction and Learning of Languages.”⁸⁷ The aim of these efforts is to regulate the linguistic chaos and the identity conflicts, through the opening of a true, serious, and scientific dialogue in order to coordinate between language groups and to secure equity among them –which would be capable of sparing Moroccans discord and conflicts, which would not benefit the Moroccan citizen vacillating between the domination of foreign languages and the discourse on identity languages. What is even more promising is the awareness of the

⁸⁶ Global experiences show that the formation of national and higher councils for the regulation of language is usually not aimed at dialects, but at national languages that are the product of the nation’s ethnic and political formation. In the Swedish experience, for example, the state delegates the “Higher Council for Languages” with pursuing “the development of the Swedish language and immigrant languages and the languages of minorities, and guaranteeing linguistic planning and working in partnership with Scandinavian countries on common linguistic issues”. The South African constitution decrees the formation of “Pan South African Language Board”, whose main task was determined as: “the creation of the conditions to develop the equitable use and benefit from all national languages”. India, on the other hand, created the Department of Official Language in June 1975, which works under the supervision of the Ministry of Interior, and which was tasked with overseeing the state and usages of the official languages of the country. See: Fouad Bouali, “A national council for languages or for the constitutionalization of dialects?”, *Hespress* <http://hespress.com/writers/34091.html>

⁸⁷ The Conference on the Instruction of Languages and their Learning in Systems of Education and Formation”, October 20-21, 2009. The conference was organized by the Higher Council for Learning and came as a result of the Council’s 2008 report that concluded “the absence of a clear national linguistic language policy, despite the fact that the constitution suggests a diverse language scene that is determined by the links of positive interaction between languages”. The conference was able to energize the Moroccan linguistic scene and to turn the attention to the extent of linguistic problems in the country.

state of the necessity of intervention by including academics and specialized institutions.

- 5- The commitment to protect the Arabic language:** the constitutional text notes that the duty of the state is to preserve and develop the Arabic language, and to expand its usage, which confirms the role of the authority in uplifting Arabic as a major component of national identity. That, in itself, is an answer to a question that is frequently asked: is it necessary to protect Arabic? Such a question would be unfair, since history testifies to the state neglecting its role in the development of the Arabic language when it was the only official language in the country; therefore, such support would be necessary at an era when other languages and dialects have been officially acknowledged. Examples are many in that regard: the laws of Arabization remain in the drawers of bureaucracies and institutions, the project of the Arabic Language Academy was never started, and the declared war against the Arabic script in the street is at its height.
- 6- The recognition of dialects:** this was manifested in the dialects being cited as cultural components that are to be “preserved” by the state, making among the top state priorities “the preservation of Hassanism, as an inseparable part of the unified Moroccan cultural identity, and the protection of dialects and cultural expressions used in Morocco”. Among the priorities of the aforementioned Council of Languages is the protection of “the different forms of Moroccan cultural expression”, which causes some confusion as to the real purpose for its creation. Would that be an answer to the recent debate with the proponents of “colloquialization”? (Especially during the conference of the Zakura Institute on “Language and Languages”, and which witnessed official government attendance). Or is it an implicit acknowledgement of the Moroccan linguistic specificity?

Conclusion: Dangers awaiting Morocco after the enactment of the new constitution

The ongoing debate on the constitutional amendment has opened the way to discussing the real identity belonging of the Moroccan people. Morocco now finds itself with two official languages, several protected dialects, and identities with multiple sources. Was that the goal?

The constitution, upon which the concept of the state is founded, is a bridge that connects the human subject to the collective self. In most cases, the constitution decrees the national language of the people, which becomes an essential element in determining its identity; and a constitution could also adopt the concept of language plurality, but with a strict enumeration of the elements of this plurality. The constitutional text does not need much interpretation to glean that the Moroccan politician's objective was to find a form of balance between all linguistic/identity entities. Amazigh demands do not stop at the question of language; Wikileaks documents published in Moroccan newspapers have shown that many of the leaders of the Amazigh movement seek the help of Washington against "Arab extremism". In the same vein, those defending colloquialism and dialects do not merely aim at instituting a "Moroccan language" in the face of the Levantine language, but to offer an alternative value system that revises the social and religious consensus of Moroccan society and re-regulates the concepts of identity and belonging. While the ruling authority has chosen to align itself with this current, a reading of the global reality confirms the falsehood of this choice. The matter is not one of decreeing a new language, or ensuring equitability for another; the matter goes deeper into a re-shaping of Morocco's personality and identity and the nature of the relations that link its various components. Political fragmentation begins on the level of language, following by identity, before turning geographic and political. It is sufficient to look at the multiplicity of Amazigh flags, promising the state of Tamazgha and threatening national sovereignty, as well as the slogans that were raised in all protest events, to glean the amount of fragmentation that has already begun. Throughout its existence, the Moroccan people have agreed to several matters of consensus: religiously, socially, linguistically, and even politically. These points of consensus were the result of historical and civilizational accumulations which, if forfeited through laws and bureaucratic decisions, would force Morocco to face a state of fragmentation that endangers the future of the people before that of the state. Furthermore, the constitutional amendments did not put an end to the language/identity debate, opening instead new fronts relating to the nature of language, its origins, and its script.

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