Secularism in the Moroccan Amazigh Discourse

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ABSTRACT   *This article examines why the Moroccan Berber/Amazigh activists are using secularism as their battle cry, and why they believe that is the right vehicle to bring about modernisation, social justice and democratisation. It analyses the degree to which secularism is an ideology, a philosophy, and a way of life in and of itself for Amazigh activists and, alternatively, the extent to which it has been instrumentalised for political and ideological goals on behalf of Berber identity (Amazighité). Secularism in the Amazigh discourse, and Moroccan intellectual life in general, appears to sway on a pendulum, of sorts, between utopia, wishful thinking, and good intentions, on the one hand, and practical considerations and limitations, on the other.*

In recent years, the Berber culture movement in Morocco (*Mouvement Culturel Amazigh*; MCA) has made secularism one of the central issues on its socio-political agenda. Hassan Aourid (1999), formerly an important movement personage, ex-Royal Palace spokesman and currently governor of Meknès, predicted in 1999 that 'the [movement's] timid demand for secularism will at the end of the day come to light'. Ahmed Boukous, one of the leaders of the moderate current in the movement and presently the Director of the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture (IRCAM), clearly and directly linked the demand for secularism with the issue of the Berber language and Berber identity:

> . . . the contribution of the Amazigh associations concerning secularism is a remarkable contribution. They brought the [Arab] language back to its communicative role by removing its aura of holiness. (. . .) There is no such a thing: a 'holy language' or the 'the prime language'. (. . .) Now several political and civil associations [Berbers and non-Berbers] have preferred and adopted the idea that language is an identity characteristic. This *secular tendency* [my emphasis] is deeply rooted in at least the academic tradition and we can not disregard this fact.[1]

Note that Boukous clearly connects the subjects of language and secularism. As far as he is concerned, a secular way of thinking is needed in order to consider the Arab language as a medium of communication and not as a divine phenomenon.

This study examines the Amazigh movement's adherence to secularism from two angles: (1) the degree to which secularism is an ideological goal, in and of itself; and (2) its

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instrumental aspects, i.e. why the Berber movement considers secularism as a way to achieve its social and political goals: social equality, civil society, democratisation, and recognition of the Berber language, culture and history as essential components of Moroccan identity. It seeks to clarify the motivations and justifications of Berber activists in tendering their demand for secularism, against the background of Morocco's cultural and political history. In doing so, it will analyse the similarities and differences among the movement's moderate and radical currents regarding both the doctrine of secularism and their methods of promoting and advancing their visions for Morocco's state and society.

Before doing so, one should note that promoting secularism does not by itself mean ceasing to believe in God. However, while never invalidating the legitimacy of religious belief, all advocates of secularism insist on the separation of religion and state, meaning non-interference of religion in politics.[2] Secularism is in general identified with western culture, being deeply rooted in the Reformation and Enlightenment periods: 'the process of secular thinking took place in the form of a dialogue between philosophy and religion, a dialogue which constituted one of the most important factors of the Western philosophical tradition' (Vattino, 1988). The industrial revolution and the modernisation of western societies provided further impetus in implementing the idea of secularism and making it a societal reality. The clear expression of this long process is the French law on the separation of church and state, known as *la loi de 1905 sur la laïcité*, which proclaimed for the first time in western political history an absolute separation of religion and the state, and conceived of the latter as a secular entity.[3]

However, Christianity did not disappear from Europe. Though removed from the public sphere, religion survived within the culture, habits, manners and ways of living of society. In other words: religion was removed from the European public sphere, but the public culture retained religious remnants which continue to influence the behaviour of the public, even as they define themselves as secular beings. According to Wolfhart Pannenberg, 'whatever the significance of secularism is, some will always claim that in this century public culture became less religious. This is not the direct result, as many might claim, of the separation of the religion and the state (. . .) but the result of *other factors* [my emphasis]' (Pannenberg, 1996). If this is in fact the case, then what are these 'other [i.e. cultural] factors' which brought secularism into western societies? Moreover, if official decisions are not the sole factor for the secularisation of western societies, can we then conclude that Moroccan society will perhaps also evolve in this direction, regardless of whether or not appropriate legislation is enacted? Does Moroccan society in general, and the Berber population in particular, possess a 'cultural potential' to transform Morocco into a secular society?

The Historical-Political Context of the Secular Discourse in Morocco

To be sure, unlike in Europe, the development of a long-term, deep-rooted process of secular thinking never took place in Morocco. Nonetheless, it would be inaccurate to regard the secular slogans of the contemporary Berber movement as merely the beginning of such a process. The modern history of Morocco provides a number of identifiable sprouts of secularist thinking. For example, the 1925 book by the Egyptian writer `Ali `Abd Al-Raziq, *'Al-Islam wa 'Usul al-Hukm'*, which 'became the cornerstone of the secular discourse' in the region (quoted in Nazik Saba, 2002, p. 10), was enthusiastically received amongst the Moroccan intellectuals of the budding nationalist movement.

Sorbonne-educated Mohamed Hassan al-Ouazzani was a great admirer of `Abd al-Raziq, and his own political thinking, inspired by the ideas of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, opposing the meddling of the `ulama* in politics, and favouring the separation of church and state, reflected this affinity (El-Mansour, 1996).

As the protectorate era drew to a close, the spirit of the time brought new ideologies to the public sphere. Winds of socialism blew in from neighbouring Algeria during the course of the war for independence (1954–62), influencing some of the supporters of the Moroccan nationalist *Istiqlal* party. Indeed, the first years of Morocco's independence (1956–9) were characterised by an ideological dispute between Mehdi Ben Barka and `Alal al-Fassi resulting in the party's split and the creation of the rival, the Union Nationale des Forces Populaires (UNFP) by Ben Barka and Abderrahim Bouabid, Morocco's first party with revolutionary–socialist–secular ideas (Vermeren, 2002). The UNFP soon succeeded in attracting educated youth, including the young (Jewish) syndicalist Abraham Sarfati, the head of the phosphate mine syndicate and a member of the Jeunesses communistes marocaines (Moroccan Communist Youths) movement since 1944 (Vermeren, 2002). To be sure, socialism as a movement and a doctrine quickly failed in Morocco. Nonetheless, the UNFP 'was the cradle of the Moroccan left wing and a factory of all the avant-garde ideas and demands for democratization (...), [and] out of which was born the Marxist–Leninist Moroccan movement and a generation of students with a high political consciousness' (Vermeren, 2002, p. 52).

Left-wing student political consciousness would reach its apogee in 1965–70, with an alliance between the UENM (Moroccan National Student Union) and the UNFP, and the emergence of the Leninist-communist student union, *Ila Amam*, which in 1970 became the Mouvement marxiste–léniniste marocain (MMLM) (Vermeren, 2002).

However, Pierre Vermeren's analysis of this period fails to mention the concurrent establishment, in 1967, of the Association marocaine de la recherche et de l'échange culturel (AMREC) by a small group of Berber students, for the purpose of legitimising and promoting the language and culture of Morocco's Berber population, and in particular to teach writing and reading to the Berber grocery shopkeepers who had immigrated from rural villages to urban areas. AMREC's foundation at this specific moment was not by chance. Rather, it marked the contribution of the Berber intellectual elite to the ongoing process of nation-building. Its adoption of elements of the newly popular left-wing ideology such as its opposition to the cultural monopole of the *fassi* (from the city of Fez) urban elitist *Istiqlal* party, and its demand to solve the problems of the Moroccan society by recognising its authentic popular and countryside identity, was a way to indirectly join the political opposition.[4] One may in fact draw a straight line between AMREC and today's MCA, which includes such AMREC founders as Ahmed Boukous, Abdellah Bounfour, Brahim Akhiat, and Ali Azayku. Moreover, AMREC was an active participant in drafting the landmark Agadir Charter in 1991, which laid the basis for the contemporary Berber culture movement.[5]

Secularism and the Berber Movement's Moderate Current

The writings of Mohamed Chafik,[6] who can be categorised as the leading figure of the Berber movement's moderate current, confirms Boukous's statement that 'in the Berber discourse the attitude towards secularism is not clear or not well explained' (quoted in Aourid, 1999, p. 299). Chafik's approach, as an intellectual and ideologue of the

movement, is to try and alter everything without destroying anything. His letter to the leading figure of Morocco's Islamist movement, Sheikh `Abd al-Salam Yassine, contains the essence of his thinking. What makes it especially significant is the fact that Chafik's dialogue is with a religious partner, thus reflecting the wider societal discourse between those who practice the religion and those who declare themselves secular.

Chafik approaches the subject of religion and state without ever undermining normative Islam, seeking to find a middle way without attacking holy taboos of Islam but also without being apologetic. The strength, but also the weakness, of his argument is the fact that he explains his secularist views in Islamic terms.[7] Chafik opens his letter with the words: 'My brother in Islam, in citizenship and humanism ...' (Chafik, 2000a). Chafik is of the opinion that Islam can be compared to other supreme values like citizenship and humanism. This concept is in itself vanguardist, if not secularist, because it puts the religion of Islam, the tractate of celestial and absolute values, on the same level as the earthly and relative values like citizenship and humanism. One should not forget that Islam only recognises one single bond among humankind: the religious bond of Islam. Chafik's opening phrase, 'My brother in citizenship and humanism', paraphrases the Arabic idiom, 'my brother in Islam'; its secular flavour undoubtedly sounded provocative to the ears of Sheikh Yassine.

In the body of his letter, Chafik wonders why Yassine objects to democracy and science. After all, he claims, 'the word "democracy" is the Latin translation of the Arabic word *shura* [lit. "consultation"], one of the pillars of the Islamic state' (Chafik, 2000a). Chafik mentions some Qur'anic verses and *hadith*s (sayings of the Prophet) which prove that 'the religious sciences can not be put above the secular sciences, that Islam provides a wider interpretation of the word "science", this without limiting it only to the sciences of religion' (Chafik, 2000a). Chafik warns Yassine of the 'dictatorship of the *faqih*', because, 'one should not regard a man of religion as infallible for the simple reason that he is a man of religion (...), being a man of religion is not sufficient enough to be a leader'. To that end, Chafik puts forth warning examples from the history of Islam:

> Some religious men have misled the believers. They misused their faith and their innocence and lead them into wars of earthly interests in the name of divine principles (...), the political murders of the three *Khulafa' al-Rashidun*, [the immediate successors of the Prophet], the *fitna* [the first 'civil war' in Islam] which broke out after the death of the Prophet, and a series of political murders which accompanied the beginning of the rule of the *Umayyad* dynasty. All this was based on a cynical use of religion in politics. (Chafik, 2000a)

At the end of the letter, Chafik proposes to Yassine that he engage in politics, but only in a new, albeit undefined way. Being an intellectual and advocate of secularism, Chafik could have suggested that Yassine deal only with Islam's spiritual side and completely abandon politics or, alternatively, to engage in politics but only according to the rules and the logic of the Moroccan modern state. But instead, Chafik told Yassine: 'I do not agree with those who seek to limit your role in officiating prayers and burying the deads (...), I want you to deal with politics but you have to change your way' (Chafik, 2000a). However, he never spells out what he means, apart from insisting on non-violence. Throughout his letter, Chafik refers explicitly and implicitly to the separation of religion

and state, without mentioning even once the word 'secularism', or the phrase 'separation of religion and state'.

As is made clear in the letter, Chafik and Yassine have a common background: both were at one time inspectors for the Moroccan Ministry of Education, and were even close friends. Chafik reminds Yassine of their long nightly conversations during the summers of the 1960s. He acknowledges Yassine's integrity, his love for his country and his fierce will to fight social injustice. But Chafik warned Yassine against the use of violence in his fight against social injustice because 'this might lead the whole society into general anarchy [*fitna*]' (Chafik, 2000a). Someone from the radical Berber current might have addressed Yassine differently, e.g. declaring that a man of religion is under no circumstances allowed to address injustice apart from a consensus anchored by law; nor is he allowed to influence the process of decision-making in a modern state through his preaching, and that parliament, not the mosque, is the appropriate venue for political action. However, Chafik did not say all this, and in fact admitted that a man of religion may challenge a social injustice, albeit but only in a new non-violent way, begging the question of whether or not Chafik advocates a secular political order.

Chafik communicates with Yassine in absolute religious terms, and the Islam Chafik proposes is almost the same Islam that Yassine defends, so much so that one might wonder what the difference is between the two. The answer is this: Islam, as Chafik sees it, puts the text of the Qur'an in its historical context, enabling believers to derive the appropriate moral lessons. Chafik's opinion is that one should not literally accept the instructions of the Qur'an without considering contemporary existence. In his eyes, the instructions of the Qu'ran are not valid unless they have been filtered through common sense and the reality of present time. This imperative condition of common sense has its basis in the Qur'an itself, Chafik declares. His letter quotes a number of verses from the Qur'an, which he says reinforce the viewpoint that Qur'an must fit into existing reality and not the opposite. From reading between the lines in Chafik's letter, one can see clearly that he alludes to the universal meaning of secularism, that is, the separation of religion and state, but he does not dare to state his ideas explicitly, at least not to his old friend and current rival.

In other writings, in other places and in different contexts, Chafik expresses himself more freely:

> The definition of 'secularism' is wrapped in the Qur'anic text, '*la-Iqraha fi-al-ddin*' ('there is no coercion in the religion') . . . Only 'secularism' can free Islam from religious fanaticism. . . . This is actually an explicit statement that in normative Islam there is no religious coercion. We speak here of freedom of religion and freedom from religion. According to this verse, religion and religious faith are a personal matter. (Chafik, 2005a)

Nevertheless, one should not draw the conclusion that Chafik is apologetic and that he is merely extorting from the Qur'anic text a forced endorsement of secularism. Chafik proposes his own interpretation based on his common sense, education and Muslim faith. It is a textual and contextual analysis of the words of God where faith and a sense of *esprit critique* are intertwined. According to Chafik, Islam does not oppose any secular thoughts, but actually 'preaches secularism: . . . when the Qur'an tells us "the `ulama are the heirs of the Prophet", it dose not only mean men of religion but all men of knowledge (`ilm) in the

broader sense of the world, in its religious and secular sense' (Chafik, 2005b). If we add this statement to his remarks in his letter to Yassine, we might conclude that the successors of the Prophet do not have to be men of religion but men of knowledge, be it religious or secular knowledge. In other words, a secular leader is equal to a religious leader, this in contrast to Yassine's attachment of supreme authority to a man of religion (*faqih/*ʹalim/iman).

Here one must note that by leaving a place for religion in the public sphere, Chafik's 'secular' viewpoint differs from all accepted definitions of the term 'secularism'. The latter, while not rejecting religion, do not consider it as essential in social or political life. At the same time, one must remember that these definitions have been formulated according to western contexts, while Chafik tries to find a definition of secularism which would suit Morocco, a thoroughly Muslim country and state.

In the same interview with the Moroccan weekly *TelQuel*, Chafik links the subject of secularism with social identity. The Berbers have been done injustice, he says, not by Islam but in the name of Islam, 'because of the cynical connection that Arab nationalists made between Islam and the Arabic language, a connection that excluded the Berbers' (Chafik, 2005b). Chafik tries to untie this connection without insulting either Islam or the Arabic language, the official language of the state. Chafik's most important goal is to achieve: 'total Berber equality alongside the Arab language under the auspices of Islam' (Chafik, 2005b). To that end, he strongly attacks Arab nationalism:

> The Berber identity (*Amazighité*) has far too late become aware of its uniqueness; this is because of the racist aspect of pan-Arabism, (...) until the '50's of the 20th century, the starting point for the Arabs and Berbers alike was Islam. But the Arabic language has always been hiding behind religion. It seemed that the Arab nationalists always said to ethnic Muslim groups: 'Hey you there! You owe us your quality as Muslims.' (Chafik, 2005b)

Embodying the moderate Amazigh current, Chafik's aspires to provide the perplexed Berbers with a balance between religion and the demands of the modern world. For him, the key to modernity is the Berber identity, based on language and culture—*Amazighité*:

> The entrance into modernity depends on the answer to the question: who are we? (...) There is no entrance into modernism without justice and without equality between people, without resolving conflicts within our society, conflicts which are related to the question of our origin and our ego as individual and as a collective. (Chafik, 2005c)

Chafik's linkage of modernity and the creation of a genuine civil society with Amazigh identity is nothing less than revolutionary in the Moroccan context, where the Berber language and culture are identified with folklore in the best case, and in the worst case, with pre-modernity, illiteracy, backwardness, poverty and primitiveness.

Secularism and the Berber Movement's Radical Current

While the subject of secularism is not explicitly mentioned by the Berber movement's moderate current, the radical current addresses the subject clearly and sometimes even harshly, almost chauvinistically. Yet, there are common elements between the approaches

of the two currents towards secularism: (1) a general consensus on its necessity; (2) the absence of a clear definition of the term.

In order to give the idea of secularism a specific Berber character and adapt it to the Moroccan reality, the Berber activists propose the term '*izerf*', a corpus of Berber customary laws, as a recipe for secularism, Moroccan style. In Larbi Mezzine's words:

> According to *izerf* a clear difference exists between the political and the religious authority. The head of the tribe (*amghar*) is no more than a political authority. The authority of the man of religion (*faqih*), on the other hand, is subordinated to the political authority and is limited to an advisory role only. (Mezzine, 1998)

In the eyes of the movement's radical current, the clear separation between the political authority and the religious authority is proof that pre-colonial Berber society, particularly in the countryside, lived in a secular fashion. Achieving secularism, according to some members of the radical current is a simple task: 'by returning to *izerf* and by implementing it among the Berber tribes, as was the case in the past, not only before the arrival of the French, but before the arrival of Islam [to North Africa] in the 7th century' (Ouhssain, 2003). Here one can distinguish different viewpoints within the radical current itself: those who entirely reject Islam (hence the demand to return to the era before the seventh century), and those who stress the need to return to pre-colonial period, thus taking into account the fusion of Berber customary law with the *sharìa*.

To sum up, while the moderate current tries to find a way to secularism through a new interpretation and re-reading of the Qur'anic and other Islamic texts, the radical current plays the card of *izerf*. But one must ask: is existing Berber customary law established enough to be a starting point of a secular agenda? Can it be considered a legal alternative for the *sharìa*? Does *izerf* deviate considerably from the *sharìa*, or is it mostly similar and anchored in it? Could it be that, if and when *izerf* will be implemented in the Moroccan society, the Berber activists will find themselves at the end of the process implementing *sharìa* law under a new banner?

In addressing this question, one has to remember that no written texts of existing customary law have been preserved prior to the seventeenth century, because the memories of community elders have been serving as the main repository of *izerf* (Mezzine, 1998). Hence, those who seek to implement *izerf* from the pre-Islamic era are actually demanding the adoption of an oral tradition, or 'oral law'. Lacking concrete definition, the demand is thus weak and loose. On the other hand, there are those who demand to implement Berber customary law as it has been preserved in scripts in Tamazight with Arabic letters—known as *Alwah Jazula* (tablets of Jazula), from the Sous region. They include legal pleas, scriptural exegesis (*tafsir al-Qur'an*), questions and responses, *fatawas*, jurisprudence of the *maliki* doctrine (*fiqh al-maliki*), prophetic hagiography (*qisas al-anbiya'*), and sacred and profane poetry.[8] As noted by Jacques Berque, this wealth of material deals with the organising and monitoring of community life and defines the community's relations with other communities (Berque, 1955). Still, notwithstanding Berque's positive outlook, this corpus does not contain the basis for distinguishing Berber customary law from the *sharìa* and transforming it into potentially secular law. Hence, one must ask why the Berber activists claim that existing Berber customary law can secularise the Moroccan society. Is there in this 'law' anything of the sort that could be secular or interpreted as secular, or is this just an attempt to conjure up a secular tradition out of whole cloth?

An interview conducted by two Berber movement activists with Dr Saad Eddine El-Othmani, the leader of the Islamist Party of Justice and Development (PJD), clearly reflects the Berber discourse concerning secularism and the Berber customary law, as well as the Islamists' rejection of it. For example, the questioners asked El-Othmani: '*Izerf* is an corpus of laws external to the *sharìa*, as you know [!]—what do you think of the demand of the Berber Movement to implement *izerf* in the entire Moroccan society?' '*Urf*', El-Othmani replied (note his use of the Arabic term and not the Berber one), 'is one of the sources of the Islamic law'. 'My father, who did his academic research on *Alwah Jazula*', he continued, 'showed that the existing customary law is based on the laws of the Islamic *shari`a*, and in his research one can easily see the difference between the existing Berber customary law and secularism' (El-Othmani, 2004).

More recently, the Moroccan historian Mohamed El-Mansour dealt with the same question, i.e. what is the kind of the relationship between *Alwah Jazula*, *shari`a* and the *Maliki* doctrine. He asserts that

> . . . when we consider the way in which Islamic law was acclimatized within Maghrebi societies we cannot avoid noticing that the *shari`a* was formulated in a manner very similar to that of tribal customary law tables (*alwah*) found in every Berber village. (El-Mansour, 2004)

Looking for the social and cultural reasons which caused the *Malik* school of jurisprudence to take root in Morocco, El-Mansour asked: 'Should we see in this adaptation of *malikism* to the North African setting a process by which Islam underwent a process of Berberization?' (El-Mansour, 2004). Chafik had previously raised the same point, stating: 'We have the right to ask why the Moroccans adopted the *Maliki madhab* and made it into something which unites them and separates them from others' (Chafik, 2000c). (By 'others', Chafik is alluding to the Arabs of the Middle East.) El-Mansour's explanation was the following:

> Since among all disciplines, *fiqh* was the one which focused on scholarly activity, it became necessary to make it accessible to the learners. Therefore, the *`ulama* codified it in condensed manuals and expected student to memorize them, (. . .) this led to what Berque calls a 'hypertrophy of memory', as *hifz* or memorization dismisses any intellectual or critical effort on the part of student. (El-Mansour, 2004)

In other words, the Berber language was so rooted in Moroccan tribal society that the Berbers found it difficult to learn and internalise Arabic. Thus, it seems likely that the Berber *`ulama* preferred mnemonic possession, one of the pillars of the *Maliki* doctrine, as an easy way to cope with the new foreign language—Arabic. El-Mansour did not say explicitly that the Berbers had difficulties in understanding Arabic, especially the Arabic of the Qur'an, and that is why they preferred to learn and recite it by heart without grasping the meaning. But Dale Eickelmann, quoting David Hart and John Waterbury, had no problem in doing so: 'Because the grammar and the vocabulary of the Qur'an are not immediately accessible to the speakers of colloquial Arabic, and even less so to student from Berber-speaking regions, former students readily admitted that they did not comprehend what they were memorizing until fairly late in their studies' (Eickelman, 1992).

One may legitimately question the degree to which mnemonic possession designates and differentiates Islam in (Berber) North Africa from Islam in the (Arab) Middle East.

After all, Islamic education throughout the Muslim world begins with mnemonic possession in order to grasp the word of God, letter by letter and word by word, without even a slight modification. One must avoid a tendentiousness that grants the Berbers uniqueness in this regard. To be sure, Ibn Khaldun declared that that 'the role of oral learning was in Morocco more prominent than in the Islamic countries in the Middle East' (quoted in Eickelman, 1992, p. 106). However, notwithstanding all of Ibn Khaldun's greatness, this statement cannot be accepted uncritically. Proving the difference between the North African tradition of *hifz* and the Middle Eastern one requires a serious comparative study on the traditional education system in the two regions.

The claim that the Berbers had difficulty studying the Qur'an in Arabic suits one of the central theses in the Berber culture movement that the process of Arabisation in North Africa was relatively very slow and that until the nineteenth century only the Berber language was spoken in many areas of North Africa (Chafik, 2000c). The message which Chafik and others try to convey is that the Berber language (and hence, Berber identity) was not erased by the introduction of Islam in the seventh century, but was preserved until right before the modern era. This renders the task of reviving Berber identity easier, and helps explain the emergence of the Berber culture movement in Morocco, Algeria and the Diaspora, a phenomenon that poses important questions for North African regimes and societies as they enter the twenty-first century (Maddy-Weitzman, 2001).

Although radical Berber activists continuously demand the secularisation of the Moroccan society in general and of the Berber society in particular, they have thus far failed to tender a clear and detailed agenda for doing so. Up until now, the primary *leitmotiv* of their writings has been an emphasis on *izerf*, together with the claim that the religious institution (*faqih/imam*) and the political one (*amghar*) have always been separated according to the Berber customary law. Hence, the activists of PDA (Le Parti Démocrate Amazigh) insist, all that is needed to secularise the Moroccan state and society is a return to *izerf* (Lamlili, 2005).

The second often-repeated element, although only among extreme radical activists, is the idea of secularism according to the French version. The exchange on this point between the Islamist El-Othmani and his Berber activist interlocutors is instructive:

> 'The Moroccan particularity totally rejects secularism', declared El-Othmani, 'because the state itself is based on the religio-historico legitimacy; the King himself rejected this subject [separation of religion and state] in an official speech'.
> 'This is the wish of the regime, not of the society', his interviewers retorted.
> 'The society can neither agree to the separation of religion and state', El-Othmani replied.
> 'The Moroccan society is demanding to free religion from politics and limit it to only spiritual private life', protested the interviewers.
> 'You do not know anything', El-Othmani concluded, 'you don't know what the meaning of the term "secularism" is. I know that there are all sorts and versions of secularism, French secularism is the worst of all, and the Moroccan intellectuals tend to take it as an example; the problem of the Moroccan intellectuals is that they want to adopt the French example of secularism'. (El-Othmani, 2004)

El-Othmani's comments are not unfounded. The radical activist Moha Arehal Ouhssain, a columnist in *Le Monde Amazigh*, the organ of the Berber Culture Movement, tried to

provide answers to the questions being raised in every discussion about the idea of secularism, not only among movement activists but also among other civil society elements. In defining secularism, Ouhssain drew a direct line between: (a) the principles of the French revolution; (b) the Berber customary law, *izerf*; and (c) the French *loi de 1905 sur la laïcité*.[9] As one can understand from the headline of the article, Ouhssain believes that secularism, if legally recognised, is the best path towards democracy; he does not hide his view that 'the best example of secularism is the 1905 French law' (Ouhssain, 2004). Ouhssain did not bother to mention other examples of secularism, like the British or the American Tocquevillian one, according to which religion does not stand in the way of democracy and can cohabit with it. In other words, Ouhssain claims that in order to bring secularism into Moroccan society, the 1905 French law should be implemented along with *izerf*—*izerf*, which should be understood as a dynamic 'positive law', and not as the French believed, a set of frozen 'customary' practices (Ouhssain, 2004). The Amazigh activist goes even further when he claims:

> The religion, the mosques the mausoleums and the zawia-s have always been integral part of the Moroccan territory. However, among the tribes, religion was never a societal fact but simply a private affaire between mankind and their Creator. The *imam* of the mosque was always a foreigner; he did not belong to the tribe, and never participated in the tribal general council, *jama`a*, which gathered annually. He always functioned within a framework with opposite interests to the *jama`a*, known as the *'shart'*. In fact, the *imam* worked as a functionary of the tribe; in case of disagreement, the tribe would appoint another *imam* according to different conditions . . .; this fact proves to all those who want to understand that the Moroccan society was always a secular society. (Ouhssain, 2004)

Ouhssain's view is common among those who emphasise the importance of *izerf* in promoting secularism. However, concluding that religion had a minor role in Berber society because of the marginal place of the *imam* in it is problematic, to say the least. The *imam* most likely had a minor role in the decision-making process within the tribal council, as Ouhssain explained, but this does not prove that religion did not play a central role in social life, nor does it prove that *Amghar* (tribal leader)—the secular authority as the Berber activist like to say—did not have some religious authority over his tribe. Gellner explained very well how the local Berber leaderships took their legitimacy from their alleged *sherifian* origins, by claiming to be descended from the Prophet Mohamed along with supernatural power and more convincing religious background (Gellner, 1969). Although David Hart is often critical of Gellner, he too rejects the French colonial depiction of the Berber mountaineers as less 'Muslim' than Arab townsmen (Hart, 1976). Overall, the thesis promoted by the Berber radical activists, that the Berber society was/is a secular society, appears to be only weakly based at best. Berber activists disregard the fact that, throughout the history of Islam, *imams* have always played a secondary role in politics and in the process of the decision-making during wartime, as well as peace time. Moreover, in the modern time, an *imam* has always been a salaried functionary of the ministry of *awqaf and* religious affairs (a pious endowment, called *habus* in Morocco), and it has thus been always possible to replace him by another *imam*—not only among the Berber tribes but in the whole Muslim world. If the Berber activists want to prove that *izerf* is a 'secular customary

law' or a 'positive law', they will have to prove that the place of religion is marginal in the Berber society, and this as a the result of a conscious decision by the Berber society, and not as a result of any customs or 'customary law' that has automatically (if not instinctively) been handed down from generation to generation, without any a priori intention to limit the role of religion in political and social life.

Many articles have been published in Berber movement publications which deal with the question of secularism in both its aspects: *izerf* and the French *loi sur la laïcité*. In one of them, the Berber activist Saleh Ayt Assou describes the French secular law as a '*coup de grace* which gave back to the Emperor whatever belongs to the Emperor and to God whatever belongs to God' (Ayt Assou, 2005). The author explains that he sees secularism as 'a path that leads to [Berber] emancipation in the terms of the Enlightenment period, in order to share with the rest of the world the values of co-existence, peace and freedom' (Ayt Assou, 2005). He concludes with a statement that constitutes the unspoken reason why the Berber movement uses secularism as their battle cry: 'The demand for secularism in Morocco nowadays is a form of militancy for Berber identity [Amazighité]' (Ayt Assou, 2005).

Refashioning Collective Memory

For Chafik, it is very important that the Berber defines him/herself as a Muslim and as a Berber at one and the same time; that he/she knows the language of the Qur'an, in Arabic; and that one's Berber identity should not be at the expense of one's Muslim identity (Chafik, 2005a). At the same time, Chafik broadens the definition of Berber identity by rejecting its subjugation to the limits of Islam. He overcomes the psychological obstacle of the seventh century, when Islam was introduced into North Africa, by including the heroes of pre-Islamic North Africa—whether pagans, Jews or Christians—within the tractate of symbols that should constitute collective Berber identity. Chafik's historical heroes include Massinssa, Jugurtha, Spartacus, Juba, Kahina, and St. Augustine, but also Tarik Ibn Zyad, Yussef Bin Tashfin, Ibn Tumart, Moulay Ismail, Moulay Hasan I, Abdelkrim El-Khattabi and finally Mohamed V (Chafik, 2000c, p. 40). These are the founding fathers that Chafik introduces into the Moroccan pantheon, for the purpose of consolidating Moroccan (Arab Berber) identity at the beginning of the twenty-first century. By including the pre-Islamic period in the official and local history of North Africa, Chafik demonstrates his secular agenda. Chafik's all-embracing vision is supposed to enrich the local system of symbols and tie it to broader cultural systems, in Europe as well as in Asia and Africa. The inclusion of pre-Islamic times in local history is meant to broaden the process of identifications and deepen the sense of cultural identity of the inhabitants of the region. According to Chafik's concept, the North Africans, Arabs and Berbers alike, are supposed to consider the Phoenicians, Greece and Rome, Carthage, the ancient Berber kingdoms, Byzantine North Africa, and the Jewish communities and tribes as something which belong to them, 'something of ours', as a part of their own past and culture. They must not be viewed as something strange and unworthy of interest and inquiry, which is how they are presented to pupils in the educational system, from first grade to high school. The introduction of (local) historic pre-Islamic heroes like Kahina and St. Augustine into the popular/official pantheon, via schoolbooks and other means, and thus into society's collective memory, will provide the symbolic local system with a new dimension. In Chafik's vision, the Moroccan collective perspective and self-view

will thus be deep and wide enough to include a plethora of peoples, religions and historical periods.[10]

Chafik's all-embracing concept has influenced Berber intellectual discourse, where efforts have been made to examine similarities and differences between 'the Greek Polis and the Berber tribe (. . .); two Mediterranean societies with a common ethnographic infrastructure' (Demmami, 2003). Others have adopted St. Augustine as 'the first North African Berber in human history who expressed the idea of separation of religion and state' (Hsaine, 2005). But for now, the collective official discourse in Morocco remains Islamic-centred.

Tamazight, between Culture and Politics

The moderate current of the Berber movement is generally viewed as having a cultural agenda, whereas the radical current is deemed to have political aspirations. While Chafik aspires to a cultural emancipation of the Berbers, he never speaks in political terms but rather raises the issue of the religion as a culture. He doesn't look at the Arabic language and culture as rivals; and he doesn't wish to confront them politically: 'We [the Berbers] do not have any complex toward the Arabic language, because we contributed to its assimilation into our culture, and turned it into the language of our religion, Islam' (Chakik, 2000a, p. 41). 'Tamazight', declared Chafik without fearing to contradict himself as a secular intellectual, 'is an Islamic language which has been mixed with the Arabic language; Islam is part of the Moroccan identity, which is Arabic and Berber as well' (Chafik, 2005a, p. 40). One should not conclude from these words that the Berber movement—or even its moderate current—has a religious agenda. There is not one single religious Berber association in North Africa or in the Berber European Diaspora. One can, of course, find Berbers in Islamist parties and associations, but Berber activists as a civic collective have never been gathered around a religious platform. For Chafik and the whole moderate current, Islam is a part of the Moroccan Berbers' cultural identity, and one cannot seek to defend his/her cultural rights without tackling the subject of religion. On the other hand (Atarkin, 2004b), a columnist in *Le Monde Amazigh* whose recently completed dissertation examined the role of the Berber movement in the process of democratisation in Morocco articulates the political vision of the radical current without having recourse to the religion. In one of his articles, Atarkin asks:

> Can the Moroccan regime continue to cope with the Berber question without Berber political representatives? . . . The Berber Movement emerged in a political context of pluralism and multipartism, and there is no reason at all that the Movement will not be the consequence of the context in which it was born . . . Those who nowadays represent the Berber language (an allusion, apparently to IRCAM) are not being elected by the Berbers, they appoint themselves in order to speak in the name of the Berbers. (Atarkin, 2004a)

Distinguishing cultural from political agendas is admittedly tricky. After all, the call for 'defense of our linguistic identity' (`Assid, 2002a) is in itself a political demand; similarly, the insistence on rewriting both modern Moroccan history and the pre-Islamic history of North Africa (Chafik, 2000b) contains an undeniable political dimension. But since everything is political once it is brought to be debated in the public sphere, why is it forbidden

for the Berbers to deal with politics? If all the demands of the Berbers are legitimate why is there a fear of acknowledging their political dimension? Why are their cultural demands largely hidden under a cultural and linguistic facade?

To answer this question and to explain the relationship between the cultural and the political aspects of the Berber discourse, Mohamed Boudhan, a prominent Moroccan Berber intellectual, declared: 'In other countries, under different circumstances and when it is about different movements, the term "politics" has a neutral concept; when this concept has to do with the Berbers or the Berber language it receives the meaning of separatism, rebellion and resistance to the regime' (Boudhan, 2000). Still, one cannot help but notice a dividing line between the radical current, which speaks in a rather combative fashion, and the moderate current, which usually tries hard to remain within the political and religious consensus of society, and concomitantly aims to turn 'the Berber question' into an overall Moroccan question without 'disturbing' the tranquillity of the Kingdom. Hence, it should come as no surprise that Chafik speaks optimistically of 'the renewed *makhzan*, [which] is the only political actor, (. . .) willing to listen to [Berber activists who are asking for the recognition] of the Amazighité (Berber identity)' (Chafik, 2005a).

Translation of the Qur'an into Tamazight and the Secular Idea

In the mid-1990s, at the peak of the discussions about the linguistic and cultural rights of the Berbers, democracy and civil society, Johadi Lhoucine, one of the Berber activists, a high school teacher from Casablanca, from the moderate current of the movement, was working on the translation of the Qur'an into the Berber language. The translation was completed in 1999, but banned from publication until 2003. The sensitivity surrounding the question made it a hot topic for the Moroccan press, *Al-Jazeera* TV, and the European media. An article in *The Economist* stated,

> . . . by giving Berbers unbridled access to the revealed word of God, his translation risks undermining the authority of Morocco's religious establishment and its papal potentate, King Hassan, the Commander of the Faithful. Berber intellectuals predict that the Berber Koran will shake Islam as the vernacular translation of the Bible shook the medieval church. Some are already heralding Mr. Lhoucine as a Muslim Martin Luther, the progenitor of a protestant Islam.[11]

The Qur'an's translation, and its temporary publication ban, opened up old wounds. Moroccan Berber activists of various streams closed ranks on behalf of the legitimacy of translating the Qur'an into Tamazight. Their fulminations resurrected unpleasant memories and events in early Islamic history, especially those related to the status of conquered minorities, and Berber minorities in particular: e.g. the issue of *al-mawali* during the *Umayyad* period, and the tyranny of the *Umayyad* khalifas towards the newly converted non-Arabs to Islam (`Assid, 2002b). Theological questions were raised: is the language of the Qur'an sacred? Does the fact that the Qur'an was revealed in Arabic makes the Arabic language itself sacred? If so, what should be the status of Tamazight (`Assid, 2004)? The medieval theological issue of *'i´jaz'* was revived: is the message of God sacred because of its content or because of its form, i.e. the Arabic language (`Assid, 2004)? The unifying theme of the Berber activists' message was this: if the Qur'an had

already been translated to so many foreigner languages, why should it not be translated into Tamazight (`Assid, 2002b)?

In fact, the matter is more complex. The Qur'an has indeed been translated into more than 40 languages, but the vast majority is in languages geographically in areas dominated by Christianity. The number of translations into 'Oriental' (i.e. within the Muslim realm) languages are only four (Zwemmer, 1915). The explanation for this difference is religio-historic: Islam encouraged the translation of the Qur'an into foreign languages in areas which were under Christian (and Latin) dominance, while in areas not under Christian or Latin rule, Islam preferred to spread its message in its own language, Arabic. Borrowing and sharpening Samuel Zwemmer's explanation allows for a better understanding of the controversy surrounding the 'Berber Qur'an'.

Similar to the way in which Zwemmer, a researcher of religions, divided the world into 'East' and 'West', one can also divide roughly 'the East' itself into two areas: the areas largely Islamised and fully Arabised, namely, the Near East core countries of Egypt, Palestine, Syria and Iraq, and those which were Islamised but maintained their languages, such as Iran, Turkey and Pakistan. Where are the Berbers located in this division? Do they belong to those who accepted Islam and its 'sacred' language, Arabic, like the Arabs to their immediate east, or do they belong more to the Muslim, non-Arab communities further afield?

On the face of it, the Berbers should be included with the Middle Eastern peoples who simultaneously underwent Islamisation and thoroughgoing Arabisation. However, the Berber experience differed substantially from that in the Near East, requiring a different categorisation, of the hybrid variety. Although the Berbers were assimilated into Arabic culture and over time adopted the Arabic language as the region's *lingua franca*, this remained an adoption, and Arabic never metamorphosed into a 'native' language. The various forms of Tamazight continued to be the Berbers' mother tongue. Still, one should not deduce automatically from this that the only partial Arabisation of North Africa means that its Islamisation was only partial as well (an idea promoted by French colonialist historians).

To further clarify this point: the Berber language was not a written language; it was preserved orally as a peripheral language in the countryside far from the urban cultural centres. Even when some Berbers scholars emerged from the Berber-speaking area, they chose to create in Arabic and soon enough moved to the urban intellectual centres of Marrakech, Fez, Meknès and Quayrawan (and even Cairo, Mecca, Jerusalem, Damascus and Bagdad), in order to become part of the Arab Muslim intellectual world. Moroccan history offers cases of Berber scholars who felt inferior because of their Berber origin and made a big effort to achieve a kind of 'integration' into higher Moroccan culture by mastering Arabic and Islamic law, the seventeenth century Al-Youssi (Berque, 2001 [1958]), or the erudite Al-Mokhtar Soussi from the first half of the twentieth century.[12] However, although Berber scholars wrote and expressed themselves in Arabic, they did not lead their population through the same process. The Berber language survived not thanks to the Berber scholars but thanks to: (1) the popular culture which thrived alongside of the language and Islam; and (2) the weakness of the central power, *makhzan*, vis-à-vis the tribes.

Concerning the Qur'an's translation: its translation into Turkish and Persian is often cited by Berber activists as justification for a translation into Tamazight. This may well be legitimate. Nevertheless, the contexts significantly were different. In both Turkey

and Iran, the language of the state and the language of the cult is the same language, and the languages dominate both high and popular culture. Thus the translation of the Qur'an from Arabic into Turkish and Persian could not be conceived as an anomaly because society, politics and religion are conducted in them—and the promoters of the Qur'an had to accept and bend to this fact. This, of course, is hardly the case in North Africa, where the Berber language lacks a political entity and is not the language of the cult even among the Berber-speaking populations. Tamazight, one may bear in mind, did not survive thanks to a political will, or because it was the language of religion, high politics and economics in the urban centres. Rather, it survived as the mother tongue of a significant portion of the population, particularly in the countryside, and thus of popular rural culture, but not its entirety. Indeed, among a significant portion of the non-Berber Moroccan world, the Berbers are considered an obstacle, even a threat to urban civilisation which is identified with the orthodox Islam and high Arabic culture. Hence, the problematic of the Berber translation of the Qur'an, for it poses an implicit threat to the essence of the Moroccan official cultural and political identity.

There are additional differences as well. In Turkey the process of the translation of the Qur'an started long before the process of secularisation—and not the other way around, as in the case in Morocco. 'When the Qur'an was first translated into Turkish in 1830, it was based on the Farsi translation; the text was written in Ottoman Turkish, juxtaposed to the original text in Arabic' (Birge, 1938). Nonetheless, it was only when Attaturk adopted secularisation as official state policy that the project of translating the Qur'an prospered and not before. The closeness between secularism and the official political will is obviously lacking in the Moroccan case.

To demonstrate that the political will contributes decisively to the progression or the regression of the secular process, one may compare Iran and Turkey. In 1927 the Qur'an was first translated into Turkish with Latin characters, and in January 1932 the Qur'an was for the first time read in Turkish during the Friday prayers (Zwemmer, 1938). The dates at this point are significant; because this project became possible only after the abolishment of the caliphate and the implementation of the constitution in 1924, only then the translation project became the domain of different Turkish writers, notwithstanding the strong opposition of conservative circles (Zwemmer, 1938). In Iran, the project of the translating of the Qur'an into Persian did not cease, but in the absence of state-sponsored and oriented policy of secularisation, the Persian version of the Qur'an had almost no impact—even under the Shah. Whereas after the Shah, during the Islamic revolution, the Persian Qur'an played a phenomenal apostolic role.

If we compare the development of the process of the translation of the Qur'an in Turkey and in Iran with the Berber translation that took place in Morocco, it would not be wrong to assume that 'Berber Qur'an' is in fact the effort of one man, Johadi Lhousine, an effort that raises a numbers of questions. In what way does this translation reflect the 'secular mood' in Morocco? In what way can this act be seen as a catalyst for the process of secularisation in Morocco or at least within the Berber-speaking population? Is the Berber translation of the Qu'ran a result of the changes which are nowadays occurring in Morocco, or a pro-motion of a secularisation process that is supposed to occur in the future? What is today the role played by the Berber version of the Qur'an in Morocco? How widespread is the distribution of this version and how many people actually read it? How do the Berber readers conceive it: as a version that could be 'accepted' by God, or as a call that wouldn't be perceived by the divine ear? Most importantly, is the Berber copy being used in the

mosques—at least in the Berber areas—at all? We can add to these questions a whole series of questions like: what does the Berber feel today when he/she reads the Qur'an in the Berber language? Do some modifications occur in the way he/she perceives the Qur'an now that the reading is made in the modest and simple homey language? What is the psychological, emotional and intellectual impact of the Berber version on the Berber reader? Does the Berber understand the Qur'an in a different way now when he/she reads the Berber version, or does the meaning of the text remain the same and has only the form changed? What do the educators plan to do with this translation, will it receive the approval of the Ministry of Education, and will it be included in the educational programme? How do the Moroccan `ulama and regime react to this translation, and the other hand, how is it regarded by the rest of the population—the Arabic-speaking population?

Morocco will have to deal with questions of this sort in the future. Attaining answers to them requires far-reaching fieldwork. But posing these questions gives us a possibility to understand that the Berber translation of the Qur'an does not promise anything in advance, does not promise, a priori, neither a process of secularisation nor a process of renewed religiosity. Everything will depend on the religious and/or secular ways the Berber version of the Qur'an will be employed.

Remember, the translation of the Bible to the European vernaculars did not lead directly to the desacralisation of Latin and the emergence of the national, popular and secular 'imagined community'. A number of material, spiritual, and intellectual conditions had to be fulfilled, beginning with the Reformation and counter-Reformation, which, at the same time, owed much of its success to the development of print capitalism which combined new European technology skill, and a search for markets among the large, poor stratum of people who did not read Latin but were eager to read the Bible in their vernacular; for this reason they were prepared to study and standardise their vernacular and turn into a proper language.

Conclusion

One has to bear in mind that all what has been written here about secularism and the process of secularisation reflects the Berber intellectual discourse only, that is, the writings, elaborated ideas and dialogue among Berberist scholars, or between themselves and other intellectuals.

One is hard-pressed to find any link between this discourse and daily life in the remote Berber villages in Atlas Mountains. Even in the large urban areas, a secular discourse is not conducted on a wide scale, and certainly not on the 'popular' level. The discourse about secularism is primarily and exclusively being conducted in the daily liberal press, mostly and especially in the francophone independent press—particularly in magazines which emerged in the last decade and enjoy a considerable amount of freedom of expression.

In order for the ideas of the Berber elite (and other civil associations) to reach wider strata, the elite discourse has to ripen and become edible. In the popular wider strata, people are not yet able to digest ideas of this sort, nor are they able to follow the intellectual debate about secularism, which is being conducted only among the scholars, most of the time in academic French. Moreover, secularism as a form of regime and a societal

reality still lacks broad support even among intellectuals themselves, including those who are not identified as religious or as Islamists.[13]

On the other hand, there is a reality which cannot be denied: even if one assumes that the 'Berber question' dose not exist today in Morocco, it is a fact that Berbers who speak Tamazight do exist. Many of them, intellectuals as well as laymen, feel they have been victims of injustice for the sole reason of being Berbers. It is possible that the wider circles of the Berber population will choose to combat the accumulated injustice in other ways, and hence will find themselves side by side with Berber intellectuals heading for the same goal via different ideologies. But because the discrimination and injustice inflicted upon the Berber population also concerns the Arabic-speaking population, there is another possibility: that the paths of the laymen—of the Berber-speaking population and the Arabic-speaking one—will eventually cross, on the soil of a very difficult social reality. In that case, both populations will either join hands to correct the injustice or choose to settle the old scores. It is up to the intelligentsia of both Moroccan communities, Berber and Arabic speakers, to choose their preferred scenario.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. An article by Ahmed Boukous (*Libération*, 27 December 1996) quoted in Aourid (1999, p. 299).
2. Secularism (*laïcité*) can be defined in various fashions: 'the belief that religion and religious considerations should be deliberately omitted from temporal affaires' (Brown, 1993, p. 2753); 'a revolt against theological and metaphysical absolutes and universals; the same trend may be charted in the attitude toward social and political institutes' (*Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, 1935, p. 361); '[something] based solely on consideration of practical morality with a view to the physical, social and moral improvement of society. (. . .) It neither affirms nor denies the theistic premises of religion, and is thus a particular variety of utilitarianism' (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1954, p. 265); 'une conception et organisation de la société, fondée sur la séparation de l'Eglise et de l'Etat et qui exclut les églises de l'exercice de tout pouvoir politique ou administratif, et, en particulier, de l'organisation de l'enseignement' (*Grand dictionnaire encyclopédique Larousse*, 1984, p. 6087); '. . . n'est la négation de la religion que dans l'Etat, ce qui permet son affirmation en dehors de l'Etat et donc l'existence de la liberté religieuse' (Barbier, 2005, p. 136).
3. See the integral text of the 1905 law on the separation of church and state at: <http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/histoire/eglise-etat/sommaire.asp>.
4. For more debate about this issue see: <http://www.mondeberbere.com/mouvement/amrec.htm>.
5. <http://www.mondeberbere.com/societe/histocharte-fr.htm>.
6. For a brief biography of Mohamed Chafik, see: *Le jounal Hebdomadaire* 2(25) (July 2001).
7. It is not my intention to analyse the intellectual confrontation between the Berber movement and the Islamic movement. Nor is it my intention to put Chafik's letter in the chronological and conceptual context of this confrontation. Hence, I will not relate to both sides of the discussion. By contrast, Hassan Aourid (1999, pp. 384–401) analyses Chafik's missive to Yassine from a view that puts the stress on the confrontation between the Berber movement and the Islamic movement and the link between the Berber identity and the Islamic faith.
8. For more information about *Alwah Jazoula*, one can consult M. Al-Othmani's research, Microfilm No. 1340, DES (1970). Bibliothèque générale, Dar al-Hadith, Rabat, Marocco, cited in Mezzine (1998).

9. 'The [European] rationalistic and anti-religion movement in the second half of the 19th century, which adopted the principles of the French Revolution, turned secularism into a militant program in which France was the best example. (. . .), after a difficult struggle, the battle for secularism was won thanks to the legislation of 1905 French law on separation of Church and State' (Ouhssain, 2004, p. 12). 'La laïcité, un choix nécessaire pour la construction d'un Etat démocratique au Maroc ou la nécessité de constitutionnaliser le principe de la laïcité.'

10. For a broader discussion of Berber collective memory, see Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, 'Berber/Amazigh "Memory Work" ', in Maddy-Weitzman and Zisenwine (2007).

11. The article was published in *The Economist*, 'The Berbers Come Fighting Back', 11 February 1999. The author name was not revealed. It is worth mentioning that the same article was translated into French and published by the Moroccan (*Courrier international* No. 435, March 1999) under a provocative title: 'Le Coran berbère fait peur au pouvoir' ['The Berber Qur'an Scares the Regime'].

12. Mokhtar Soussi is not heralded by Berber activists as one of the precursors of modern Berber identity because 'he was convinced of the supremacy of Arabic language, the language of the Qur'an, the language of literature and Arabic culture'. A. Boukous, 'Mohammed Mokhtar Soussi, figure emblématique de la différence', *Naqd* 11 (Autumn 1998), p. 111.

13. 'Le Duel, islamistes vs. laïcs', *Telquel* 75 (April–May 2003). See also 'The Best of', *Telquel* (July 2005), pp. 60–74.

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