The Journal of North African Studies Vol. 11, No. 1, March 2006
Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Ethno-politics and Globalisation in North Africa: The Berber Culture Movement*

BRUCE MADDY-WEITZMAN

ABSTRACT *Contemporary processes of globalisation have stimulated and reinforced a specific Berber/Amazigh ethno-political identity. Overall, the Berberist discourse is profoundly sympathetic to Western liberal-humanist values, and strongly condemnatory of the predominant monocultural order based on Islam and Arabism. To be sure, globalisation's homogenising effects are seen as a threat to indigenous peoples' cultural identities, Berbers included. But, overall, modern Berber imagining is bound up with a secular, Western-modern vision of the future. Berber/Amazigh culturalists seek to accommodate larger outside forces while placing an explicit emphasis on the collective 'self', thus posing a challenge to the existing order in the Maghrib.*

From the beginning of its recorded history, Maghrib North Africa has never ceased to be buffeted by cross-currents emanating from the northern side of the Mediterranean, Egypt and the Near East, the Sahara region and further south. Interacting with local realities, these external influences have decisively shaped Maghribi politics and societies. The Berber-speaking peoples of antiquity, having already met the Phoenicians in Carthage, encountered the original 'globalisers' (Rome), which later morphed into Byzantium. This, in turn, was followed, most profoundly, by Islam. The initial incorporation of the Berber tribes into the Islamic domain was not pain free by any means. Nonetheless, over time Islam became a central part of their individual and collective identities, and Berber dynasties even expanded Islamic rule over wide swaths of territory in North Africa and Andalusia. Linguistically, Arabic gradually spread, not only through the dissemination and institutionalisation of Islam, but also thanks to the arrival of new waves of Arab tribes from the East in the tenth–twelfth centuries. By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Arabic had come to predominate in Tunisia and Algeria, while exclusively Berber-speaking tribes in Algeria retreated to the mountain areas, away from the Ottoman authorities in Algiers and Constantine. In Morocco, the majority of the population continued to live within Berber-speaking tribal frameworks. Christian

---

Bruce Maddy-Weitzman is a senior research fellow at the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, Tel Aviv University. He is the author of *The Crystallization of the Arab State System, 1945–1954* (1993), *Palestinian and Israeli Intellectuals in the Shadow of Oslo and Intifadat al-Aqsa* (2002) and articles on modern Middle Eastern and Maghribi history and politics; editor of *Middle East Contemporary Survey* 19–24 (1995–2000) and co-editor of volume 18 (1994); and also co-editor of *Religious Radicalism in the Greater Middle East* (1997) and *The Camp David Summit: What Went Wrong?* (2005).

ISSN 1362-9387 print/ISSN 1743-9345 online/06/010071-13 © 2006 Taylor & Francis
DOI: 10.1080/13629380500409917

Europe's presence was already being felt in the coastal areas during the fifteenth century. But it was only in the nineteenth century that Europe returned to the Maghrib in full triumph, inaugurating another wave of integration into the world economic system through the agency of 'imperialism'.

Beginning in the 1930s and 1940s, the specific 'Berber' component of Algerian Muslim society was put on the defensive, as the emerging nationalist movement proclaimed Islam and the Arabic language the exclusive components of Algerian identity, in opposition to the 100-year-old French colonial rule. France's promotion of the 'Kabylian Vulgate', which posited that Kabylian Berbers were really European in origin and only nominally attached to Islam, and therefore ripe to be 'returned' to the Christian–European fold, through France's 'civilising mission',[1] rendered any particularist assertion of Kabylian Berber identity extremely suspect in nationalist eyes. Algeria's Kabylian Berbers, who today constitute approximately 4 million people (two-thirds of all Algerian Berbers, who, in turn, constitute 20 per cent of the total Algerian population of 30 million), were progressively marginalised as a group during the armed struggle for independence (notwithstanding their initial leadership role), and then with greater force by the post-colonial state. Of Morocco's 30 million people, 40–45 per cent belong to one of the three main Berber-speaking communities, while prior to independence they still constituted a majority of all Moroccan Muslims. Notwithstanding their majority status at the time, their subordination to the emerging Moroccan 'Arab' nationalist polity was even more acute than that of their Kabylian Berber counterparts in Algeria, spurred, ironically, by France's efforts during the Protectorate to isolate them from the more urban Arabic-speaking elites.

As it was true in the past, so is it true in the present: contemporary and often contradictory processes of 'globalisation', both as a macro-phenomenon and as a political ideology, and the ensuing responses have had profound consequences. In Algeria and Morocco, the 'Berber/Amazigh dimension' of social and political life has been especially affected.[2] Given the marginalisation of Berber communities during earlier waves of 'globalisation', there is no small irony in the fact that the latest wave has helped stimulate and reinforced the elaboration and acceleration of a specific 'Berber/Amazigh' ethno-political identity, in the face of both hegemonic, albeit increasingly challenged state authorities and broad-based opposition Islamist movements. To be sure, the many-headed monster of 'globalisation' is often seen as having a pernicious levelling effect, wiping out local differences and distinctions in the name of 'progress' and bringing the world closer together. At the same time, the phenomenon of accelerated globalisation enabling or prompting greater assertion of sub-national identities is familiar from the EU experience. In the Amazigh case, globalisation has opened up new avenues by which to challenge the orthodox ethos of contemporary North African states. Most recently, the internet, the symbol, par excellence, of the contemporary global information revolution, has become an additional important tool in the construction of a 'landscape of group identity', i.e. the building of an 'imagined' Amazigh community worldwide. Internet sites, e.g. <www.mondeberbere.com> and <www.kabyle.com>, and e-mail list-serves, e.g. Amazigh-Net and soc.culture.berber, have proliferated in the last decade, making possible the dissemination of information and images, often in real time, as well as stimulating discussion and contacts between activists worldwide.[3]

The 'Berber/Amazigh culture movement' (*mouvement culturel Berbère/Amazigh*; MCB/MCA)[4] is an amorphous, multi-faceted phenomenon (with both 'pan-Berber' and state-specific aspects) with a clear core demand: the affirmation by state authorities—in North Africa, first and foremost, but also in the Berber diaspora in Western Europe and North America—of the existence of the Amazigh people as a collective, and of the Amazighity (Berberness) of the land of 'Tamazgha', defined as the area stretching from the Siwa Oasis in Egypt's Western Desert to the Canary Islands, and as far south as the Sahel. In practical terms, their core demand is for the recognition of Tamazight as an official language in the North African states, and for educational, social and economic policies to redress the multitude of injustices said to have been inflicted on the Berbers during the colonial and independence eras. In Algeria, the dimension of their efforts is overtly political, owing to the ongoing and long-running confrontation between Kabylia, the territorial and cultural core of resurgent Berberism, and the regime.[5] In Morocco, state–community relations have been less confrontational, and less overtly political, but have significantly evolved in that direction in recent years. In France and other European countries, the Berber culture movement provides crucial intellectual, moral and probably financial support for the struggles across the Mediterranean. At bottom, the Berber culture movement wants nothing less than to refashion the identity of North African states and fundamentally change the bases of their collective lives.

During the initial post-independence decades, the MCB/MCA's primary obstacle was the 'state' authorities (the *pouvoir* in Algeria; the *makhzen* in Moroccan parlance). More recently, resurgent Islamist movements have profoundly challenged the 'state,' which, 40–50 years after independence, now finds itself in a situation of acute crisis.[6] Given their radically opposing visions and expanded activities, the Berberists, broadly aligned with liberal forces advocating democratisation and the expansion of human rights, and the Islamists now constitute the two primary alternative poles of civil society in Algeria and Morocco: in essence, politics in the two most important Maghrib countries, in its fullest sense, has now become a three-cornered contest. Although they do not entirely fit Huntington's definition of 'torn' states,[7] Morocco and Algeria both possess some elements of them, since a significant portion of their elites are looking westward.[8] Now, the MCB/MCA phenomenon has introduced a new factor into the equation, as Berberists press both their particularist and national agendas. This study will explore the nature of the MCB/MCA's orientation towards Western culture/civilisation, as well as towards the dominant Arab-Islamic culture within the Maghrib states, and thus shed light on some of the larger issues shaping Maghrib states and societies.

The Amazigh and 'Universal' Civilisation

Overall, Berberist discourse is profoundly sympathetic to Western liberal-humanist values, specifically the promotion of human rights, democracy and freedom, within a pluralist, multicultural order, and strongly condemnatory of the predominant hegemonic, monocultural order based on Islam and Arabism. To be sure, some Berberist writers frame their views with an eye to avoiding the much discussed 'clash of civilisations' between the West and Islam. This is the approach adopted by the Moroccan Amazigh intellectual Mohammed Chafik, first head of the recently founded, officially sanctioned Royal Institute for Amazigh Culture (IRCAM). 'In my part of the world,' he declared,

> there is an urgent need to imbue culture with a humanism, modernism and universalism that rejects excess. This is because unitarianism and fundamentalism have

> demonstrated their destructive power throughout history to the extent that the threat of ethnic cleansing and religious conflict is still all too present.[9]

In Chafik's view, making Muslim culture 'more open to modern scientific knowledge and its positive aspects' can be done only gradually, through a 'fruitful dialogue' with the West, which, for its part, needs to 'get over its obsession with its dazzling material and organizational success'. Chafik's universalist vision was dedicated to 'achieving peace amongst different ethnic groups along with a real understanding between religious faiths', beginning with the Amazigh people, whose 'vibrant culture' could, like all cultures, contribute something unique to the totality of human experience. Seeking to deflect criticism from the Islamists while placing the Amazigh movement firmly within the humanist fold, Chafik emphasised that

> because it [the Amazigh movement] does not claim to be the depository of the sacred, it is not opposed to evolution. In its way, it is humanist because it remembers a distant past when it was well represented in the concert of Mediterranean cultures by figures such as Terence (Afer) [Carthage-born Roman playwright, c. 190–160 BC], Juba (Juba II) [Roman client king of Mauritenia, 25–23 BC], and Apuleius (Afulay) [second-century AD philosopher and rhetorician in Roman North Africa]. In short, Amazigh culture can enter and benefit from the worlds of politics, economics, society and justice without the risk of any real prejudice to religious faith.[10]

The 79-year-old Chafik (b. 1926) was the principal author of the 'Berber Manifesto', an extraordinary document signed by hundreds of Moroccan Berber intellectuals. The manifesto laid out an interpretation of Moroccan history radically at odds with the standard, official version, and a set of concrete demands for placing Morocco's Amazighity at the centre of the country's collective identity. It posited the Amazigh's traditional political cultural traditions of dialogue and consultation in opposition to the despotism imported from the early Islamic empires of the East, the Umayyads and Abassaids (but not from the Prophet Muhammad, the manifesto stressed, or his immediate successors, the four 'Rightly Guided' Caliphs, a period considered by believers as Islam's most perfect moment in time).

The document's unstinting praise of Amazigh political and cultural traditions is familiar to students of ethno-national projects. At the same time, the movement's own demands were not framed in terms of a return to an idealised 'golden age'. Rather, the manifesto's vision was modern, and forward-looking, one that would allow Morocco to 'enter the third millennium through its widest gate'. Accepting the Amazighity of Morocco went hand in hand with the modern requirements of citizenship, it declared. Responding to charges that its demands for recognition of Tamazight as an official language constituted 'separatism', the manifesto retorted that the cause of separatism and fragmentation of societies evidenced a

> lack of civilizational maturity ... We believe that diversity is an enrichment and that difference is a sharpener for the human designs ... [and that] 'uniformity' leads to the missing of opportunities for opening up (to the outside world and to other ideas), for development and refinement ... We believe in the advent of a *universal civilization* which is capable of integrating all the contributions of mankind.[11]

For comparison's sake, Chafik's 'universal civilisation' possesses almost spiritual qualities, unlike Kemal Attaturk's explicit conflation of 'civilisation' with the 'West'. The distinction is a common one made by Muslim intellectuals over the last century, who often spoke (and still speak) of the 'spiritual superiority' of the 'East' over the 'West'. Clearly, Chafik takes it a step further, in order to achieve a synthesis between 'East' and 'West'. Nonetheless, for most Amazigh intellectuals, the Berberist project has important commonalities with Attaturkism, in that it is explicitly both *laique* (secular) and *ethnique*, opposing the use of religion as the basis for law, in line with the trends of contemporary civilisation. In addition, they do not conceptualise Morocco in terms of the Muslim world only (*al-Maghrib al-aqsa)*. Rather their image of Morocco is one of a crossroads, geographically, culturally and ethnically.[12] Here the comparison to Turkey's Attaturk reaches its limits, for Attaturkism stressed the centrality of a homogeneous 'Turkish' nation and culture.

Human Rights, Group Rights and Democracy

Among the many phenomena associated with the latest wave of 'political-ideological' globalisation have been the spread of discourses of human rights and minority group rights, with concomitant limitations on the formerly inviolable sanctity of a state's 'internal affairs'. In general, these discourses emphasise the need to promote democracy and multiculturalism, and even the notion of 'international humanitarian intervention' to protect populations from the despotic acts of their own governments. The European Union, the most 'globalised' of all economic and political frameworks worldwide, has been a particular stimulus, institutionally and ideologically, for sub-national groups, for whom the evolving supra-national framework provides increased space for activity. This is true whether one is speaking of 'native' minorities, e.g. Bretons and Basques, or immigrants. United-Nations-affiliated institutions have provided complementary encouragement in recent years.

The first moves to institutionalise an international Berber movement were made at a film festival in Brittany in 1994, hardly a coincidence in light of the Bretons' own renewed assertiveness. Berberists often invoke Spain's 'Catalan' model of regional ethnic distinctiveness as a model. Separately and at times together, the MCB's myriad associations, sometimes operating under the rubric of the World Amazigh Congress (CMA), have made their case at various international forums, from the 2001 Durban conference against racism, to the UN Working Group on behalf of indigenous peoples, to the European Commission, to the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights, to UNESCO's (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's) committee on economic, social and cultural rights.[13] At times, they also work with Western NGOs, which are themselves part of the contemporary 'globalisation' phenomena, to that end.[14]

Many opposition Islamist movements have also adopted the discourse of democracy and human rights. However, unlike the Islamists, who place the ultimate source of their ideal society in the Qur'an, not Athens, the MCB's emphasis on democracy is not merely instrumental, but also strategic. The intellectuals who have formulated the main tenets of the MCB are secular. In Algeria, caught between their long-standing bête noire, the *pouvoir*, and the more recent threat, the Islamists, the Kabylian Berbers have been in the vanguard of those promoting a democratic alternative to the existing system, and this notwithstanding their deep-seated tendencies toward internecine binary divisions.[15] The newest political phenomenon in Kabylia is the grassroots Coordination Inter-wilayas ['districts'] des aarchs ['tribes'], *daïras* ['departments'] et communes (CIADC), which has articulated a modernist, democratic agenda as well, although its social basis is rooted in Kabylian villages and its conduct is heavily influenced by their political traditions, rendering their behaviour increasingly controversial.[16]

One of the most outspoken Kabylian activists in this regard has been the singer/poet/activist Ferhat Mehenni, who heads the recently formed Mouvement pour le Autonomie de la Kabylie. Unlike Morocco's Chafik, Mehenni has no interest in avoiding the Huntingtonian spectre of a clash of civilisations by reconciling Western and Islamic cultures, but rather comes down firmly in the Western-secular camp. As articulated in the movement's platform, the core values of *la Kabylie autonome* are:

1. Respect for human rights, without distinction according to sex, race, language or religion; consequently, the existing Family Code (whose framework is the *sharia*[17]) would be abrogated, polygamy forbidden and personal status matters governed by civil laws.
2. Guaranteed freedom of worship, religious matters being relegated to the private domain.
3. Democracy, being is a political system governed by elected institutions.[18]

Responding to charges that his movement is 'separatist', Mehenni emphasised to an interviewer that 'to build autonomy in Kabylia is also to build a modern, plural and democratic Algeria, where it will be good to live'. As in 'most of the regions of the EU,' he said, where 'regional flags cohabit harmoniously with the national and European flags ... a regional Kabyle flag will essentially occupy Kabylia's public space, next to the Algerian national emblem.'[19]

Contemporary processes of globalisation have stimulated and reinforced a specific Berber/Amazigh ethno-political identity. Overall, the Berberist discourse is profoundly sympathetic to Western liberal-humanist values, and strongly condemnatory of the predominant monocultural order based on Islam and Arabism. To be sure, globalisation's homogenising effects are seen as a threat to indigenous peoples' cultural identities, Berbers included. But modern Berber imagining is bound up with a secular, Western-modern vision of the future. Berber/Amazigh culturalists seek to accommodate larger outside forces while placing an explicit emphasis on the collective 'self', a departure from past patterns, thus posing a challenge to the existing order in the Maghrib. Similarly, the *Leqsar* (*El-Kseir*) platform of 11 June 2001, drawn up by the CIADC following the 'Black Spring' of protracted rioting and repression, was modernist and democratic in emphasis. Like Mehenni, it emphasised both particular Amazigh demands 'in all its components (identity, civilisation, linguistic, and cultural)', and the need for an Algerian state in which all executive functions, including the security forces, were controlled by democratically elected authorities. Economically, as well, the platform stressed the urgent specific development needs of Kabylia, as well as its rejection of 'the policies of underdevelopment, impoverishment and debasement [*clochardisation*] of the Algerian people'.[20]

9–11, and the Iraq War

Amazigh reactions to the September 11, 2001 destruction of New York's World Trade Center reflected their anathema to both radical Islam and repressive authoritarian regimes, and placed their movement firmly on the side of the West. The CMA's Secretary-General

Belcacem Lounes quickly dispatched a strong letter of sympathy and solidarity with the US to President George W. Bush, expressing confidence that the US would

> punish, in an exemplary fashion, the criminal organisers and financiers of such an unspeakable . . . terrorist . . . attack. It is necessary and urgent that all of humanity, all those attached to human and democratic values, join their efforts to eradicate terrorism and its supporters, whoever they are and wherever they are found.[21]

Not surprisingly, Berberists were especially concerned about the impact of September 11 on their own immediate environs. The veteran Kabylian head of the Front des Forces Socialistes (FFS), Hocine Ait Ahmed, elaborated at length on the new dangers. The attacks had given 'totalitarian regimes' and particularly the Algerian regime 'the occasion to reduce to a pure terrorist phenomenon a conflict which, in reality, opposes them to their own societies!' By presenting Algeria as being 'at the *avant-garde* of the fight against the new international plague', all of the just demands being made by Algerian society could be safely shunted aside and ignored by the West, while the regime would benefit from Western military aid. The essence of the Algerian crisis, Ait Ahmed said, 'could not be reduced to a 'modernity–obscurantism' confrontation. Such a discourse, which was being echoed worldwide, risked a drift 'toward a conflict of civilisations'. But the real heart of the problem, he said, was the 'immobility of a totalitarian power, incapable of being reformed'. 'Human rights and liberties', he emphasised, 'are not a luxury reserved only for the West.' Promoting a democratic transition in Algeria, under international supervision, was vital. Essentially, Ait Ahmed turned the Algerian authorities' argument on its head: international terrorism must be combated in Algeria, as elsewhere, but not the way the regime suggested. 'The internationalization of the fight against terrorism', he declared, 'should allow, in the same movement, the globalization of democracy, good governance and solidarity.' Only in this way could a durable wall be built to block the escalating dangers that threatened all of humanity.[22]

Said Saadi, who stood opposed to Ait Ahmed throughout the 1990s as head of the other Algerian Berber-based party, the Rassemblement pour la Culture et la Démocratie (RCD),[23] also shifted his view in favoru of greater European involvement in Algerian affairs, in order to promote democracy. 'Intervention is one thing; asserting solidarity with democratic forces ... is another ... Everything (regarding relations with France and the EU) has to be subjected to the respect for human rights.'[24]

The US-led war to overthrow Iraq's Baathist regime in the spring of 2003 won expressions of strong support from a number of Amazigh activists. For some time already, Berbers and Kurds had discovered one another as aspiring minorities within an unfriendly Arab nationalist milieu.[25] Thus, for Amazigh proponents, the overthrow of Iraqi Baath rule and the US's promotion of democracy and human rights in Iraq constituted a joyous occasion, and, hopefully, a harbinger of things to come. Frustration with the European countries' continued support of the Algerian state, in particular, also influenced their attitudes to the war. Ferhat Mehenni articulated this position without subtleties.

> The idea is to democratise all the states of the Middle East in order to eradicate the sources of terrorism and preempt a future 'clash of civilisations,' which, in time, should really converge toward mutual respect on the basis of democracy and

> liberty. It may be naive, but the Americans at least can be thanked for laying out their goal forthrightly, and surely it's worth a shot ... The role of the United States in this noble endeavor is key to the future of humanity. Better a world inspired and led by one great power than a multi-polar world where nuclear risks and destructive wars will proliferate. GOD BLESS AMERICA.[26]

Negative Aspects of Globalisation and Modernity

Globalisation and modernity are also conflated in less congenial ways in Berberist discourse. Occasionally, the struggle for Amazigh rights is presented as part of the worldwide struggles of indigenous peoples fighting for their cultural identities against the tyrannical, homogenising impulses of globalisation.[27] In this sense, globalisation is the latest manifestation of the repressive modern state. For Amazigh activists, France, the Maghrib's former colonial master, comes in for especially harsh criticism, not just for its continued support of repressive regimes, but, more profoundly, for transplanting its 'Jacobin' political system to Algeria and Morocco, thus leaving no room for Berber identity to develop.[28] According to Mehenni, genuine regional autonomy for Algeria would constitute the 'institutional decolonization of the structures of the State inherited from the time of France'.[29] Similarly, Berber activists struggling to inculcate their language and culture in France among the estimated 1.25–1.5 million Berberophones complain of the 'Jacobin' educational system that fails to legitimise hyphenated, multicultural identities.[30]

The very creation of a Berber diaspora has been another aspect of the globalisation phenomenon that is relevant to Amazigh identity: the accelerated movement of populations across national boundaries, as part of an increasingly integrated world economy. Emigration to the northern side of the Mediterranean Sea began from Algeria a century ago, spearheaded by the Kabylians. The pace accelerated after Algeria gained independence in 1962, but the Kabylians were no longer preponderant in numbers.[31] Overall, there are currently an estimated 2.5 million Algerians and Moroccans of Berber origin in Europe, more than half of them in France, and the rest mainly in The Netherlands, Belgium, Spain and Italy. Quite a good deal has been written about the 'Beur' community in France and the identity issues of North African immigrants in general, particularly the attractiveness of Islam to alienated young people on the margins of European life. No systematic work that I am aware of has yet been done on the ways that encounters in Berber emigrants' new homes with fellow Amazighphones from other regions and countries shape their identities and perhaps sharpen their Amazighity.

Emigration is often a profoundly traumatic, alienating experience, all the more so when it involves the separation of families. An analysis of the lyrics of Riffian Amazigh poets and songwriters displays elements of this trauma. Responding to a mother's call to her son to return home, the son replies, 'the separation from my homeland has penetrated my bones ... I am here in Germany, with whiskey and bars, I married a foreigner, and now we have children ... You can consider me lost, O mother.'[32] Other poems use the metaphor of the son longing for his absent emigrant father. Many express their profound alienation from a controlling, domineering society, whether Arab or European; hence the conflation between modernity and globalisation. The problems of women, intertwined with both modernity at home and the emigration of men to Europe, are an especially powerful theme.[33]

At the same time, the poets and folk singers of the Rif appear to be ambiguous regarding modernisation and globalisation, particularly when it comes to women. According to Amar Almasude, a US-based analyst of Rifian culture, the artists' discourse takes place between generations, 'the male father reactionary who represents the normative and traditional rules of the society, and the progressive male lover who rejects the imposed norms and aspires to a free society'. The latter 'challenge the old values of honor and propose love as a supreme source of honor'. This, says Almasude, constitutes the best way 'to defy the Arabo-Islamic discourse'.[34] Whether or not the 'old values' are uniquely Arabo-Islamic and not at all reflective of traditional Amazigh culture is not the issue.[35] What is important here is the fact that for Amazigh cultural 'producers' and analysts 'Arabo-Islam' is the domineering, oppressive 'Other', which has managed to benefit enough from 'modernity' to enhance its repression of the Amazigh.

The Battle Over the Proper Script for Tamazight

One small but telltale indication of the Amazigh movement's tilt away from 'Arabo-Islam' and towards Western-driven globalisation has been the little-noticed battle in Morocco during 2002–3 over which script should be used for the writing of Tamazight. The choices were Latin, Arabic or a modified version of Tifinagh (an ancient script still used by the Touaregs in the Sahara/Sahel regions, but which otherwise fell into complete disuse hundreds of years ago). The legal Islamist Parti de la justice et du développement (PJD), which has 42 seats in the 325-member Chamber of Deputies, campaigned hard for the adoption of Arabic script, particularly through the daily newspaper *Attajdid.* It even organised a declaration of allegedly Amazigh associations that endorsed the idea. In general, Moroccan Islamists ostensibly agreed with the need to recognise Amazigh culture as part of the Moroccan patrimony. However, they also viewed the struggle over the appropriate script as part of Francophone-Western civilisation's efforts to undermine the primacy of Islam and promote secularisation. Religious consciousness in the Maghrib, they noted, was expressed through the Arabic language. Indeed, they understood full well that the MCA's demands would place Tamazight on an equal footing with Arabic, and thus posed a direct challenge to their own preferred vision of a Moroccan society imbued with Islamic values and guided by sacred Arabic-language texts. Not surprisingly, mosque sermons in a number of cities and fatwas declared by Islamic clerics were devoted to attacking the Berber associations and the Amazigh agenda, calling the Latin script option the 'imperialist choice'. One preacher even remonstrated his congregants for speaking Tamazight in the mosque, saying that it caused 'confusion and anarchy' (*bilbala wa-fitna*) among the worshippers, particularly during the holy months of the year.[36]

In response, Moroccan Berberists, led by Chafik, have been keen to emphasise that the Arabic language is an inescapable part of Morocco's cultural heritage, is crucial to 'in-depth knowledge of religious matters' and is the 'strongest link with our Arab brothers in the Maghrib and the Middle East'. But this could not come at the expense of Tamazight and Amazigh culture. Some Moroccan Amazigh groups, particularly the venerable Association Marocaine de Recherche et d'Échange Culturel (AMREC), favoured the adoption of Tifinagh, on the grounds of its identity-building value.[37] Nonetheless, a large majority Amazigh groups believed that the 'universal' (i.e. Latin) script was the most practical way to promote Tamazight as a living language. The Islamists' 'sacralization of script', declared a communiqué issued by 14 different Amazigh associations, 'is nothing but a form of fetishism and animism which constitutes an insult to the principles of Islam'.[38] Tamazight, the Berber Manifesto noted, was the language of the palace in Almohad times, and used for explaining the Qur'an and hadiths for many centuries. Most importantly, declared the Manifesto, 'history has not ended', and the current need for Morocco, and for the Amazigh, was to interact creatively with other cultures and civilisations.[39] The problem, wrote one Amazigh writer, was that the Moroccan Islamists' insistence on the Arabic script was underpinned by rejection of and contempt for other peoples and languages, whether Western or Muslim.[40] One of the Manifesto's signatories declared that the advocates of Arabic transcription, both Islamists and 'pan-Arabists', 'want to maintain our language in the camp of the underdeveloped, stop our overture to the West and turn our language into a sub-dialect of Arabic'.[41] Another commentator attacked the PJD on broader issues, calling it 'anti-development' for rejecting a much debated, controversial programme to promote the status of women in order to alleviate poverty and illiteracy.[42] Their campaign against the Amazigh, declared the 14 Amazigh cultural associations' joint statement, was simply a diversion from their own inability to offer solutions to the real problems facing Morocco.[43]

Here then is the core of the Berberist response to the Islamists, notwithstanding the numerous differences between the Algerian and Moroccan contexts, and within the Berber communities themselves. For Berberists, the MCB/MCA's worldview is modern, open, progressive and democratic, in harmony with an increasingly interdependent, globalised world. The Islamists' programme, by contrast, is archaic, closed, regressive and authoritarian.

The debate in Morocco over the proper script for teaching Tamazight was ostensibly resolved during 2003 by the King's decision to make Tifinagh the official writing system for Tamazight. The move followed a recommendation to that effect by IRCAM, following considerable discussion on the relative merits of Tifinagh versus Latin script. According to one participant in the discussion, research showed that Tifinagh would be no more difficult for children learning Tamazight than any other script. The identity issue was also a factor in the decision, since younger people seemed especially keen on learning Tifinagh, and small children reportedly took special delight in the script. But, at bottom, it seems that the decisive factor in the decision was political, namely the pressure applied by the Moroccan authorities, who viewed Tifinagh as an appropriate compromise between the advocates of the Latin and Arabic scripts.[44] The decision was controversial, to say the least, among many Amazigh activists, focusing their attention again on the formidable obstacles posed by the Moroccan state authorities to their movement.

The script issue in Kabylia, by contrast, was solved long ago by the adaption of Latin script to the needs of Tamazight. The Kabylians' ongoing resistance to independent Algeria's Arabisation policies, at the expense of the Francophone community of which Kabylians are a leading part, has been another aspect of the language and culture wars the Berbers have found themselves in. Throughout the colonial period and beyond, French, writes one scholar, 'remained not only the language of administration and industrialization but also the instrument of economic and social advancement'. Hence, Algeria developed 'a kind of bicephalous economy based on two different standards, and resulted in incalculable social, cultural, and ideological contradictions'. Poorer Algerians of rural origin made up a high percentage of a post-independence generation educated exclusively in Arabic, whose opportunity for economic advancement was limited.[45] Such a situation reinforced the validity of Ernest Gellner's thirty-year-old declaration that 'in his heart, the

North African knows . . . that modernity speaks French'.[46] This certainly remains the case among Berberists, particularly in Kabylia. The passage of a law in 1996 compelling sole use of Arabic by Algerian governmental and civil institutions and in all commercial contracts drew strong protests in Kabylia, and among French speakers in general.[47] The statement by the venerated late Franco-Amazigh author Kateb Yacine summed up the language–identity question vis-à-vis state policies: 'Si je suis arab, pourquoi m'arabiser, et si je ne suis pas arabe, pourquoi m'arabiser?'[48]

Concluding Thoughts

As historians of the Maghrib have shown, Berbers have always straddled multiple worlds; they have been multi-lingual, multicultural, always part of the 'Other'; and always engaged in one form of 'accommodation' or another with stronger, more advanced civilisations—from Roman to Byzantine to Islamic to modern times.[49] At this point in history, Berber/Amazigh culturalists are trying to renegotiate the terms of this accommodation, with a much more explicit emphasis on the collective 'self', posing a significant challenge to the established, if ever more shaky political order in the Maghrib.

Pierre Bourdieu once characterised the Kayblians as 'une réalisation paradigmatique de la tradition méditerranéenne', having played a fundamental role in transmitting knowledge between the eastern and western ends of the Mediterranean.[50] One could take an even broader view: ethnically, culturally and genetically, the Berbers as a whole may approximate a 'Mediterranean' ideal type, in the sense of the Mediterranean being more of a 'crossroads' of civilisation than a 'source'.[51] Coincidentally, their historic collective weakness parallels the frailty of the Mediterranean ideal that has been floated in various European and Mediterranean intellectual circles during the last decade.[52] Perhaps in the future, the MCB/MCA's efforts to carve out a more explicit Amazigh-centred universe related to the civilisations on both shores of the Mediterranean will bear fruit, and even help breathe new life into the fragile yet compelling Mediterranean ideal. In the meantime, in an age of accelerated globalisation and intensified identity politics, the West-centred Berber culture movement appears to have found its voice. Regime policies, as well as the movement's own actions, will determine the degree of its success in the years ahead.

Notes

*The author wishes to thank Paul Silverstein, Meir Litvak and Mohammed Errihani for their constructive comments.

1. P.A. Silverstein, 'The Kabyle Myth: The Production of Ethnicity in Colonial Algeria', in B.K. Axel (ed.), *From the Margins: Historical Anthropology and Its Futures* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press 2002) pp.122–55.
2. The term 'Amazigh', meaning 'free men' is preferred over 'Berber' by increasing numbers of Berberphones/Tamazightphones, and especially by activists. I use the terms 'Amazigh' and 'Berber' interchangeably in this article.
3. D. Merolla, 'Digital Imagination and the "Landscapes of Group Identities": The Flourishing of Theatre, Video and "Amazigh Net" in the Maghrib and Berber Diaspora', *Journal of North African Studies* 7/4 (2002) pp.122–131.
4. 'MCB' is the older term, coming more from the Algerian context. 'MCA' is the term preferred in Morocco.
5. B. Maddy-Weitzman, 'The Berber Question in Algeria: Nationalism in the Making?', in O. Bengio and G. Ben-Dor (eds), *Minorities and the State in the Arab World* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner 1999)

pp.31–52; B. Maddy-Weitzman, ‘Contested Identities: Berbers, “Berberism,” and the State in North Africa’, *Journal of North African Studies* 6/3 (2001) pp.23–47.

6. The Algerian and Moroccan cases differ widely, obviously, but the fact that they are both facing acute challenges that stem from many common sources is also obvious. B. Stora, *Algérie Maroc: Histoires Parallèles, Destins Croisés* (Paris: Zellige 2002).
7. S. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster 1996).
8. Huntington (ibid.) defines a ‘torn country’ as having ‘a single predominant culture which places it in one civilization but its leaders want to shift it to another civilization’ (p.138). Three requirements must be met if a torn country is to successfully redefine its civilisational identity: ‘First, the political and economic elite of the country has to be generally supportive of and enthusiastic about this move. Second, the public has to be at least willing to acquiesce in the redefinition of identity. Third, the dominant elements in the host civilization, in most cases the West, have to be willing to embrace the convert’ (p.139).
9. M. Chafik, Remarks upon receipt of the Prince Claus Award, 13 December 2002, <http://www.mondeberbere.com/culture/chafik/indexc.htm>.
10. Ibid.
11. Berber Manifesto, 2000, <http://www.mondeberbere.com/societe/manifest.htm>.
12. A. Asid, Remarks at the colloquium ‘L’amazighité et ses enjeux politiques actuels’, Université Paris VIII à Saint Denis, 21 October 2002.
13. M. Ait Kaki, *De la question berbère au dilemme kabyle à l’aube du XXIème siècle* (Paris: L’Harmattan 2004) pp.279–94.
14. For example, in November 2001, the Friedrich Neuman Foundation, which is affiliated with Germany’s Liberal Party, together with the Tamanyut Association sponsored two days of study on autochthonous peoples’ rights, in Rabat. *Le Monde Amazigh* (16 November 2001; 30 November 2001).
15. P.A. Silverstein, ‘Martyrs and Patriots: Ethnic, National and Transnational Dimensions of Kabyle Politics’, *Journal of North African Studies* 8/1 (2003) pp.87–111.
16. International Crisis Group (ICG) (2003) ‘Algeria: Unrest and Impasse in Kabylia’, *Middle East/North Africa Report* 15 (2003), <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=1415&l=1>.
17. M. Lazreg, *The Eloquence of Silence: Algerian Women in Question* (New York and London: Routledge 1994) pp.150–7.
18. F. Mehenni, ‘The Autonomy of Kabyle in Questions’, 25 May 2002, <http://www.waac.info/amazigh/politics/algeria/autonomy/ferhat_autonomy_in_questions.html>.
19. Ibid.
20. Leqsar Platform, 2001, <http://www.waac.info/amazigh/politics/algeria/el-kseur-platform11-6-01eng.html>. For a critique of these demands, see ICG (note 16) pp.19–24.
21. B. Lounes, Letter to US President George Bush from Secretary-General of the World Amazigh Congress, 13 September 2001, <http://www.waac.info/amazigh/human_rights/CMA_condolences_to_USA_eng.html\gt.
22. H. Ait Ahmed, ‘Algeria’s Journey’, 2001, <http://www.waac.info/amazigh/politics/algeria/ait-ahmed_marseille19oct01eng.html>.
23. For details on the differences between Ait Ahmed and Saadi, see Maddy-Weitzman, ‘The Berber Question’ (note 5) pp.41–7; Silverstein (note 15) pp.95–8; ICG (note 16) pp.26–9.
24. Ait Ahmed (note 22).
25. For a detailed introduction of the Iraqi Kurdish community to Amazigh readers, including an interview with a Kurdish activist, see *Le Monde Amazigh* 40 (2003) pp.4–5.
26. R. Kaplan, ‘Democracy in Algeria: Singer-Activist Ferhat Mehenni’s Campaign for Liberal Self-government’, *Weekly Standard* 8/39 (2003).
27. Final Declaration of the Second World Amazigh Congress, 9 August 2000, <http://geo.ya.com/errif/contact/documents/manifeste.html>.
28. The critique of ‘Jacobinism’ focuses on its emphasis on the centralization and pre-eminence of the state, and the homogenization of society. The French state’s *laïque* character, on the other hand, is widely preferred by Berberists. Thanks to Paul Silverstein for clarifying this point to me.
29. Interview with Mehenni, *Racines-Izuran* 26 (2002).
30. ‘Les droits linguistiques et culturels des Berbères de France’, Rapport du Congres mondial amazigh au Comité pour les droits economiques sociaux et cultureles, Nations Unies, Conseil Economique et Social, 27th session, Geneva, 12–30 November 2001, pp.5–6.

31. S. Chaker, 'Preface', in Karina Direche-Slimani, *Histoire de l'émigration en France au Kabyle en XXe siècle* (Paris: L'Harmattan 1997) pp.1–3.
32. M. Loualid, 'Return O My Son', quoted in A. Almasude, 'Protest Music and Poetry in the Rif', *Race Gender & Class* 8/3 (2001) p.130.
33. Almasude (note 32).
34. Ibid. pp.128–9.
35. 'New' and 'young' do not necessarily mean liberal either. In an eye-opening account of challenges to prevailing conservative social norms in a Kabylian village, subtitled 'Dancing Toward La Mixité', Jane Goodman ('Berber Associations and Cultural Change in Algeria', *Middle East Report* 200 [1996] pp.16–19) refers to the existence of a 'reverse generation gap', in which some Kabylian teenage males differ with their older brothers regarding the proprieties and freedoms of young unmarried women, the younger group being more conservative in attitudes.
36. *Le Monde Amazigh* 29–30 (2002), 31, 32, 33, 34, 39 (2003) (the last mentioned contains the report of the imam's remonstration of his congregants for using Tamazight).
37. Interviews with AMREC members, Rabat, October 2003.
38. *Le Monde Amazigh* 29–30 (2002).
39. See note 11.
40. L. Walna'am, Al-Khitab al-Islamawi wal-Khat al-Ansab Likitabat al-Amazighiyya, *Le Monde Amazigh* 29 (2002) p.4.
41. M. Demnati, 'Royal Amazigh Institute: Worries for Imazighen', *Amazigh Voice* 10/3–4 (2002) p.14.
42. B. Anghir, 'Dawr Hizb al-'Adala wal-Tanmiyya fi Ta'til al-Tanmiyya wa Munahadat al-'Adala', *Le Monde Amazigh* 32 (2003) p.27. For background on the issue, see B. Maddy-Weitzman, 'Morocco', *Middle East Contemporary Survey* 24 (2000) pp.427–30.
43. *Le Monde Amazigh* 29–30 (2002).
44. H. Larbi, 'Which Script for Tamazight, Whose Choice Is It?', *Amazigh Voice* 12/2 (2003) pp.3–8. Also based on interviews with Amazigh scholars and activists, Rabat, October 2003.
45. H. Gafaïti, 'The Monotheism of the Other: Language and De/construction of National Identity in Post-colonial Algeria', in A.-E. Berger (ed.), *Algeria in Other's Languages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 2002) pp.31–2. In making this point, the author cites M. Willis, *Islamist Challenge in Algeria: A Political History* (New York: New York University Press 1997) pp.51–2.
46. E. Gellner, 'Introduction', in E. Gellner and C. Micaud (eds), *Arabs and Berbers: From Tribe to Nation in North Africa* (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath 1972) p.9.
47. M. Litvak, 'Algeria', *Middle East Contemporary Survey* 20 (1996) p.232.
48. 'La Question amazighe en Algérie', Rapport du Congres mondial amazigh au Comité pour les droits économiques sociaux et culturels, Nations Unies Conseil Économique et Social, 27th session, Geneva, 12–30 November 2001, p.5.
49. M. Brett and E. Fentress, *The Berbers* (Oxford: Blackwell 1996); M. Shatzmiller, *The Berbers and the Islamic State: The Marinid Experience in Pre-Protectorate Morocco* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener 2000).
50. Quoted in *Kabylie, L'autonome en Débat* (Paris: Seminaire D'Erancourt 2002) p.72.
51. P.A. Silverstein, 'France's *Mare Nostrum*: Colonial and Post-colonial Constructions of the French Mediterranean', *Journal of North African Studies* 7/4 (2002) pp.1–22.
52. P. Balta (ed.), *La Méditerranée réinventée: Réalités et espoirs de la coopération* (Paris: Éditions La Découverte/Fondation René Seydoux 1992); W. Freund (ed.), *L'emergence d'une nouvelle culture méditerranéenne* [The emergence of a new Mediterranean culture] (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, Europaischer Verlag der Wissenchaften, 2000).