



## The representation of the Amazigh in the Spanish press: between the exotic and the Arab-Islamic

La representación de lo amazige en la prensa española: entre lo exótico y lo arabo-islámico

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## Abstract

This study examines the thematic and terminological agenda of the Amazigh, or Berber, heritage with the aim of deciphering the rhetoric in the Spanish press and the recognition given to this culture. Specifically, 454 articles from eight newspapers collected between January 2018 and June 2019 were quantitatively and qualitatively analysed. The results show the preponderance of the term 'Berber' over 'Amazigh' or 'Imazighen', as well as the relevance of historical or international political topics when these terms are mentioned. Broadly speaking, it is concluded that perspectives on the Amazigh gravitate between invisibility, superficiality, exoticism, and conceptual dependence on the Arab-Islamic.

**Keywords:** Amazigh, Berber, Maghreb, identity, minorities representation

## Resumen

Este trabajo analiza la agenda temática y terminológica de lo amazige y lo bereber con el propósito de descifrar su reconocimiento y el discurso mantenido por la prensa española. En concreto, se estudian cuantitativa y cualitativamente 454 artículos recabados de ocho diarios entre enero de 2018 y junio de 2019. Los resultados demuestran la preponderancia del vocablo 'bereber' frente a 'amazigh' o 'imazighen', así como la relevancia de los temas históricos o de política internacional. A grandes rasgos, se concluye que lo amazige gravita entre la invisibilidad, la superficialidad, el exotismo, y la dependencia conceptual respecto a lo arabo-islámico.

**Keywords:** Amazigh, bereberes, Magreb, identidad, representación de las minorías

## Introduction

According to data from the National Statistics Institute (2022), Spain was home to 5,407,822 people of non-Spanish origin on January 1, 2021. Of these, around one million were North Africans, i.e., from the countries that make up the western area of North Africa (Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia), with Moroccans comprising the largest group with 869,661 people. The presence of the different Maghrebi cultures in Spain is therefore undeniable, even more so if we take into account the new generations that have already been born in the host country, the peculiarities of Ceuta and Melilla, the two autonomous Spanish cities in North Africa (Tilmatine, 2011a; Fernández García, 2020), and those who reach Spain in an irregular manner (Tilmatine, 2011b), where unaccompanied foreign minors are particularly prominent in the media (Gómez-Quintero et al., 2021).

In terms of Maghrebi cultures, the significant majority are Arab and Islamic. However, there is another historical ethnicity that should not be overlooked and which also has a

strong presence in Spain and Europe as a result of migratory movements and historical-political ties: the millenary Amazigh, or Berber, people, in other words, the Imazighen community, which today is especially linked through its language, Tamazight (Maddy-Weitzman, 2007; Soulaïmani, 2016). The momentum of the Arab Spring coupled with globalisation, internet and social media have fostered a Berber renaissance and a new "Amazighness" that seeks to reassert its unique heritage of traditions, symbols, myths, and images (Tilmatine & Desrues, 2017; Jay, 2016). Two sociopolitical events underpin this resurgence: the constitutional recognition of Amazigh as a co-official language in Morocco (2011) and Algeria (2016), and the demonstrations and identity claims of the Rif and Kabylia (Tilmatine & Desrues, 2017; González, 2020).

Establishing their demographic weight is a complex task, as there is no official data from countries where their numbers are highest. While Maddy-Weitzman (2012) puts the world Amazigh population at around 20 million people, Faris El Messaoudi estimates it as being close to 53 million, counting the different communities that make up this culture, such as the Riffians, the Tuareg, or the Kabyle (Soto, 2018). In addition to the international diaspora that has generated several societies in North America and Europe, these people are scattered from the Canary Islands to Egypt, and from the Mediterranean coast to the Sahel or the southern limits of the Sahara Desert.

It is true that Spain has had significant Amazigh associationism since the early years of the 21st century (Suárez Collado, 2014), but so far no study has been carried out to decode the Spanish perception of this minority. This work analyses the coverage and representation of the Amazigh as portrayed in the Spanish press, a pioneering approach in this field. This is a crucial issue because, according to Bañón Hernández (2002: 24), the media regulate the opening and closing of social debates; this makes it necessary to explore both what is said and what is not said, because in social reality, what is named 'exists', and what is not named apparently does not (Valero Garcés, 2004: 97).

At their core, these ideas adhere to agenda setting and framing, the two theories that support this research: while the former supports the media's ability to influence public opinion by giving prominence to certain issues (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), the latter describes the process of selecting a few elements of perceived reality and assembling narratives to promote interpretations (Entman, 2007). In other words, agenda setting establishes what we should think by selecting particular news items (Ardèvol-Abreu et al., 2020), while framing influences how we think by organising ideas about news content, providing context and suggesting what the topic is through the use of selection, emphasis and exclusion (Tankard, 2001).

Apart from agenda setting and framing, there is a third theory that underlies this work: the social representation theory. Developed by Moscovici in 1961, this paradigm is key to studies that delve deeper on social communication and discourse analysis: these works are characterised by a common interest in demystifying ideologies and power through the systematic and retroductive research of semiotic data (written, spoken or visual), where scholars try to make their own positions and interests explicit, while maintaining their respective scientific methodologies and remaining self-reflective of

their own research process (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). Among all the approaches involved in critical discourse studies (García Agüero, 2021; Londoño Zapata, 2012), our focus is on the discursive-historical one (Wodak, 1996; 2001; Reisigl & Wodak, 2001). This approach facilitates the systematic, explicit, and transparent (hence, reproducible) study of the historical (intertextual) dimension of discursive practices by exploring the ways in which discourses evolve over time (Ferreiro Gómez & Wodak, 2014). One of its crucial attributes is that it enables the association of critical theory with rigorous empirical research, although, in our case, its functionality for the discursive construction of national and transnational identities is even more interesting (Wodak et al., 2009).

At the analytical level, the discursive-historical approach relies on discursive strategies, which are understood as more or less accurate and intentional practices (including discursive practices) that are adopted to achieve a certain social, political, psychological or linguistic goal (Wodak, 2009). Among the different existing strategies (referential or nomination, predicational, argumentation, intensifying, mitigation, etc.), the best suited to our purpose is the referential or nomination one, given that it focuses on how “social actors are constructed and represented, for example, through the creation of in-groups and out-groups”. In other words, our interest in this work is to know how the main actors (the Amazigh) are represented, named, and defined, although we also focus on the attributions of identity (a strategy of argumentation).

In this sense, a classical socio-political and academic debate on Amazigh issues is the question of their denomination (Chaker, 1986; 2022; Tilmatine, 2021), which is also a relevant aspect of this work, but always from a media perspective, not linguistic. In the case of Spanish, the only option considered by the *Diccionario de la lengua española* of the Real Academia Española is ‘bereber’ (de Felipe, 2020), although ‘amazig’ also appears in the *Diccionario histórico de la lengua española (1960-1996)* with other terms such as ‘amaziga’, ‘amazigh’, ‘amazigue’, or ‘amaciga’. This study defends the use of the Spanish neologism ‘amazige’ proposed by Tilmatine (1998): as well as having a certain pathway, it would standardise the terminology in Spanish<sup>1</sup>. Paraphrasing Tilmatine, just as the concept ‘al-'arabiyya’ is not used in Spanish to refer to ‘árabe’, or in the same way it is said ‘alemán’ and not ‘Deutsch’ to designate the Germanic language, the term ‘amazige’ would encompass both ‘tamazigh’ (the language) and ‘amazigh’ (the noun or the adjective), from a phono-morphological adaptation to the rules of Spanish. It should not be forgotten that in the reports drawn up by the Spanish government in the framework of The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, particularly from the fourth and fifth onwards, Amazigh as a language and the word ‘amazige’ as a term to designate it are recognised themselves as a reality in Spain, especially because of the specificity of Melilla (Tilmatine, 2020).

When dealing with these ethnic issues, journalism plays a fundamental role in the development of cultures and, therefore, it is not enough for journalists to refer to other cultures, they should also be aware of how they represent this cultural diversity (Van Dijk, 2007). This is the essence of mediated intercultural communication (Gudykunst,

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<sup>1</sup> As it is written in English, the term ‘Amazigh’ has been chosen for the wording of this work. To know more about other equivalent words in other languages, it is recommended to visit Termcat: <https://www.termcat.cat/es/cercaterm/fitxa/MzI3NjYz>

1987), and it entails a risk: the greater the distance between an individual and the subject providing the information, the greater the cumulative prejudices that could alter their perception of reality for reasons of language, nationality, custom, culture, time, and so forth (Rodrigo Alsina, 1990).

The research questions that this article is trying to answer are the following: Is the Amazigh (and the Amazighness) a visible and noteworthy issue for the Spanish press? What denominations and themes predominate when Amazigh is addressed? Is Amazigh recognised as a present identity —and even linked to Spain because of the circumstances of Ceuta, Melilla, or immigration— or is it dependent on Arabness and Islam? To achieve this, as detailed below, a quantitative and qualitative approach has been designed, which successfully reduces many of the biases created using a single method. Such sequential mixed methods may begin with a quantitative technique to test a concept or theory and continue with a qualitative one involving detailed exploration with a few cases or individuals (Creswell, 2009).

## **North African collectives and the media in Spain**

Given the lack of studies exploring the media representation of the Amazigh, this literature review aims to retrieve the main findings of studies that have analysed the journalistic treatment of migrations and minorities in Spain, with a special focus on everything related to the Maghreb, the Arabic, and the Islamic. We must therefore turn to the Arab-Islamic to glimpse the journalistic rhetoric on the Amazigh, even though among the Imazighen communities in Spain there is a tendency to reject Islam as their primary mode of identification and they prefer to present themselves as populations closer to 'Western values' than Arabs (Suárez Collado, 2014: 9). In fact, Navarro (2008: 31) states that Individuals and groups tend to identify themselves more in terms of the cultures which they relate to (even in opposition) than in terms of the positive character of their own baseline culture.

Before reviewing the way in which the media deals with this issue, it is worth pointing out the historical reality, which was expressed by Martín Corrales (2004: 39) in the following way: Over the centuries, there has been a fierce struggle in the Spanish mind between Maurophobia/Islamophobia and Maurophilia/Islamophilia, which has, so far, resulted in a clear victory for the negative image of Muslims in general and Moroccans in particular (Alarbes, Arabs, Hagarenes, Saracens, Mohammedans, Berbers, Turks, Moors, Maghrebis, Islamists, etc.). If this has been the norm, it seems even more necessary to review how the media have influenced this situation.

The thematic agenda of Spanish journalism regarding North African affairs has historically revolved around immigration, diplomacy towards Morocco and the Western Sahara, border problems in Ceuta and Melilla, Islamism, terrorism, and Arab revolutions (Martín Corrales, 2004; Corpas Aguirre, 2010; López García, 2014). In this sense, the study *La imagen del mundo árabe y musulmán en la prensa española* (López et al., 2010)

condenses the most discussed media-rich topics into four groups: 1) the image of Morocco (immigration, diplomacy, the Western Sahara, Ceuta and Melilla); 2) the representation of difference or cultural clashes (the status of women, headscarves, the clash of civilisations); 3) the building of bridges between cultures (Alliance of Civilisations, Union for the Mediterranean, economic issues); and 4) terrorism as a subject *par excellence*.

Some authors feel that there is a mixture of over information and misinformation, because if some issues are often repeated (immigration, terrorism, women), there are others that barely feature at all in the coverage, including cultural aspects, political corruption, inequalities in society, and economic growth (Khader, 2016; Piquer Martí, 2015; Valenzuela, 2013). However, sometimes more human approaches and everyday topics such as coexistence, interculturality, culture, folklore and religion may also appear when reporting on the Maghreb, especially in the regional press (Fernández and Corral, 2016). Exceptions aside, the typical context ultimately leads to the proliferation of all those 'clichés and stereotypes' that Europe clings to about Arabs and Muslims as a consequence of fourteen centuries of shared history and permanent friction (Khader, 2016).

The prevailing image in public opinion and the social consciousness is that of a world characterised by hijabs, burqas, beards, turbans, polygamy, machismo, lust, clitoral circumcision, ignorance, backwardness, dirtiness, fanaticism, laziness, mosques, and prayer (Calvo-Barbero & Carrasco-Campos, 2020; Durán, 2019; Beck, 2012; Martín Corrales, 2004; Martín Muñoz, 2010; Taibi & El-Madkouri, 2006; Valenzuela, 2013). This atmosphere, which is more in line with fictional narratives than reality (Navarro, 2008), has *Homo (arabo)islamicus* as its central character: a being presented as threatening, retrograde and violent who needs therapeutic or punitive interventions; an entity living in a homogeneous, uniform, and analogous world; a reverberation arising from the combination of hostility and reductionism (Martín Muñoz, 2010; Martín Muñoz & Moure Peñín, 2006).

By and large, the prevailing representation in the Spanish press is close to Islamophobia (Durán, 2019; Cervi et al., 2021; Olmos Alcaraz & Politzer, 2020; Sahagún, 2018; Calvo-Barbero & Sánchez-García, 2018; Piquer Martí, 2015), understood as a form of religious intolerance or cultural racism —or a mixture of both— that reflects a hostile attitude towards Islam and Muslims based on the image of Islam as an enemy, as a threat to 'our' well-being and even to 'our survival' (Bravo López, 2011). Moreover, for historical and proximity reasons, Islamophobia in Spain borders on Maurophobia: hostility, alienation of or hatred towards the Moors, the peoples from North Africa or the Maghreb (González Alcantud, 2002). Because in Spain, being a Muslim means being a Moor (Martín Corrales, 2004) and, ultimately, this Maurophobia is a form of Arabophobia (Khader, 2016).

The challenge that must be addressed is that alarmist approaches in articles on immigration and the economy, culture or safety are particularly influential in shaping attitudes towards migrant groups and immigration in general (Eberl et al., 2018). And when audiences are repeatedly exposed to negative messages about migrant groups,

the cognitive effect based on stereotypes is reinforced. In the long run, this can have repercussions in the political and social spheres. Nor should we ignore what the media leaves out, which is why it is necessary to engage with this agenda that encompasses what Magallón-Rosa (2021) argues is disinformation and fact-checking on immigration. In his opinion, unfounded rumours about immigration serve to disseminate xenophobic discourse that often does not make it into traditional media sources, but which does end up affecting the perception that the press transmits about this issue.

In the field of immigration, the journalistic narrative reflects and contributes to the ways in which the debate on this phenomenon is processed and understood. The way in which the media frame the arguments plays a fundamental role in how political issues such as this are presented, and how the public responds to them (Fryberg et al., 2012). We cannot ignore the fact that newspapers generally have a political leaning, which can affect the selection of political information (Page, 1996), as well as the coverage of different issues and actors (Helbling & Tresch, 2011). Accordingly, the media has a powerful influence on political and social debates, as it serves not only as an indicator of patterns of information provision, but is itself a mediator, drawing political attention to certain social issues. Hence, the media is both descriptive and performative (Boswell, 2012).

Several authors believe that it is essential to promote a new journalistic paradigm that would allow the construction of a new understanding of migration based on inclusive, transformative, and alternative discourses, among other aspects (Arévalo Salinas et al., 2020: 161). In this sense, Ruiz-Aranguren and Cantalapiedra (2018) point out that Spanish journalists have no specific guidelines when it comes to reporting on migrant groups and that, beyond their ideological stances, they improvise when dealing with this issue. The reporters themselves, when interviewed, confirm that there are too many official sources, too much simplification or paternalistic and victimising treatment in the media, while at the same time they agree that there are shortcomings in the production process in terms of both the work (they feel there is a lack of specialisation, time, richness and variety of information sources) and approaches, as there is a scarcity of social context and content that highlights the positive aspects of immigration (Solves & Arcos-Urrutia, 2020).

Finally, two recent works on migrations, Spanish media and critical discourse analysis should be highlighted due to the proximity to our object of study: one explores the argumentative and nominative routines surrounding refugees (Bañón Hernández, 2021), and the other focuses on the case of the Aquarius ship rescue (Martínez Lirola, 2022). Notwithstanding, it is necessary to stress that the context we have just presented is always applicable to migrant collectives in general, and to the Arab-Islamic community in particular. Deciphering whether the press has generated a specific ecosystem for the Amazigh is one of the main purposes of this research, along with others that we set out below.

## Hypotheses and objectives

The conjecture guiding this research is that the Spanish press emphasises the dependence of the Amazigh on the Arab-Islamic in terms of thematic content or approach, while the coverage itself is dominated by a certain lack of knowledge or superficiality. Furthermore, it is expected that greater visibility will be found in local headlines or those located in geographical contexts that are closer to the Amazigh. In this sense, among all the newspapers selected for the analysis, *Ideal* and *El Faro de Melilla* should be the most attuned to Amazigh issues.

To confirm or refute these hypotheses, this study pursues the following objectives: to show the prominence and presence of the Amazigh in the Spanish press; to determine the preferential topics and use of terminology; to ascertain to what extent recognition and realism is accorded to the Amazigh as a contemporary community or ethnicity, equally present in Europe and North Africa; and to identify analogies and differences between the newspapers reviewed.

## Sources and method

To compile the study corpus, we retrieved all articles from *ABC*, *eldiario.es*, *El Faro de Melilla*, *El Mundo*, *El País*, *Ideal*, *La Razón*, and *La Vanguardia* containing the terms ‘Amazigh’, ‘Imazighen’ and ‘Berber\*’ from January 1, 2018, to June 30, 2019, included<sup>2</sup>. The choice of this eighteen-month timeframe is not circumstantial, because the aim is to examine a sufficiently broad period that does not coincide with one-off events of great media impact, but with a period of normality in terms of news coverage of the subject. Some of these events that could well have altered the corpus are, for example, Qatar 2022 (the World Cup in which Morocco shone) or the terrorist attacks of August 2017 in Barcelona and Cambrils, as the perpetrators had an obvious link to North Africa and some of them to Amazigh areas of Morocco (Teixidor, 2020).

The newspapers were selected on the basis of ideological criteria to reflect different editorial sensibilities (Martínez Lirola, 2022; López et al., 2010), as well as geographical criteria (national and local). We therefore chose to include right-wing national newspapers (*ABC* and *La Razón*), left-wing national newspapers (*eldiario.es* and *El País*), liberal national newspapers (*El Mundo*), in addition to local newspapers, such as *El Faro de Melilla*, the Grenadian *Ideal*, and, at another level, the conservative Catalan newspaper *La Vanguardia*, because this type of press focuses on issues that affect daily

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<sup>2</sup> The voice ‘amazige’ was excluded because it is hardly present in that timeframe. It only appears twice in *El Faro de Melilla*, twice again in *ABC* and once in *eldiario.es*. Apart from that, no posters, television programmes, advertisements, promotions, or weekend schedules were included. Articles that were not written by journalists or the newspaper’s editorial staff, such as tweets or comments written by readers, were also excluded.



life, news that national newspapers would not have space for<sup>3</sup>. In terms of cultures, and paraphrasing Knott et al. (2014), the local press has different news values (focusing on community relations and interdenominational activities) that lead to greater inclusivity. It is expected that connections with Amazigh issues are more evident in local newspapers for historical or current reasons, thus affinity and proximity have been key in selecting local newspapers.

The research technique used in this paper comprised two types of content analysis, quantitative and qualitative. On the one hand, quantitative content analysis makes it possible to describe and interpret reality through measurements (Sánchez Aranda, 2005). On the other hand, according to the precepts of critical discourse analysis, qualitative content analysis allows us to examine and reveal the representations of an object, in other words, it captures meaning and nuance, shows argument, purpose and connotation, distinguishes coverage, and makes it possible to maintain the nature of the texts and their discursive meaning, avoiding their reduction to numbers (Schreier, 2012; Zugasti, 2007; Román et al., 2011). Fusing these two research techniques also enables us to achieve methodological triangulation, optimising the validity of the results.

At the operational level, for the quantitative content analysis, we developed a codebook consisting of formal classifications (recording general characteristics such as date, newspaper, etc.) and content categories (recording more specific aspects of the field of study, such as topics, terminology, or recognition of the Amazigh, which do not necessarily correspond to other research). This data was statistically analysed using the *IBM SPSS Statistics 25* software package. In parallel, QSR NVivo was used to analyse the terminology used in the headlines of the articles that make up the corpus of the research, the findings of which are presented following the semantic affinity model of Arcila Calderón et al. (2020).

Finally, the qualitative analysis of the content was constructed using an open classification: it is based on a framework of provisional categories (the same as the topics found in the first quantitative analysis, in addition to others such as, for example, linguistic aspects or ethnicity) developed through a process of probing that evolved and which was refined according to its capacity to capture the hidden meaning of the texts (Ruiz Olabuénaga, 2012). To show the discursive nuances, the second part of the results presents a brief summary of examples of how the Amazigh are treated in the Spanish press, through the use of various text excerpts and headlines, and always respecting the original spelling for Amazigh terminology<sup>4</sup>. When it is said that only a summary is given, it is because this paper presents only the main points related to Amazigh ethnicity.

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<sup>3</sup> The reason for selecting these local newspapers is based on different criteria. Firstly, *La Vanguardia* is included because it is one of the most widely read newspapers in Spain according to the *Estudio General de Medios*, and Catalonia is also one of the Spanish regions with a significant Amazigh presence (Múrcia, 2021). Secondly, *El Faro de Melilla* is added because the city of Melilla is where most of the Amazigh population in Spain lives. Finally, *Ideal* is included because Granada is the Spanish peninsular city with the most historical links to the Amazigh.

<sup>4</sup> These results are shown in their original language, Spanish, although their translation can be checked in the footnotes.

## Results

This section offers the main findings of the different analyses. Firstly, we present some quantitative data that allow us to understand the magnitude of the Amazigh phenomenon. This is followed by an in-depth examination of lexical and terminological issues. Next, the topics in which the Amazigh is described. Finally, brief samples of the journalistic rhetoric are shared through qualitative extracts from the articles.

### Amazigh and 'Amazigh ethnicity' in the Spanish press

Over the eighteen months which this study encompasses, the eight newspapers analysed provided a total of 454 articles that met the inclusion criteria for the sample. However, if this data is broken down by newspaper, we find that approximately half of these units come from *La Vanguardia* (27.1%) and *eldiario.es* (20.5%). Thus, there is a considerable gap between these two newspapers and *El Faro de Melilla* (13%), *El País* (12.3%), and *ABC* (9.5%); in fact, the gap widens even further when compared with *El Mundo* (6.8%), *Ideal* (6.4%), and *La Razón* (4.4%).

One of the most pertinent questions for this research is whether the Amazigh *per se* is recognised as a contemporary identity, culture or ethnicity that has transcended North Africa to become part of Spain and Europe. In other words, the category 'Amazigh ethnicity' has been created to attest to whether journalistic articles admit the existence of an Amazigh community or diaspora as a current reality in itself. However, this scenario is only characteristic of 20% of cases, confirming that, most of the time, the press portrays the Amazigh as a historical, North African, foreign, or distant fact, rather than a culture or ethnic group with a recognisable presence in Spain.

However, when examining this circumstance among the eight newspapers, it emerges that *El Faro de Melilla* behaves in a radically different way from the rest, as this North African newspaper does indeed subscribe to the presence of the Amazigh identity in 64.4% of its articles. When compared with the mainland newspapers, the disparity is more than striking: *El Mundo* (25.8%), *La Vanguardia* (17.9%), *ABC* (16.3%), *El País* (12.5%), *Ideal* (10.3%), *La Razón* (10%), and *eldiario.es* (4.3%). There is no doubt, therefore, that the media acts as a barometer that registers the degree of intercultural contact. And it seems evident that these connections are more palpable between the autonomous city of Melilla and the Amazigh. This is never to recall what is past, alien or foreign, but to reinforce a present, common and internal reality, as it is confirmed by the study of the themes provided below.

## The Amazigh lexicon

Reviewing the terminology used in the Spanish press is another aspect that demonstrates the special relevance of the central core of this work. In this sense, the term 'Berber' predominates in practically two out of every three articles (67.8%). 'Amazigh' —which can be translated as free men— appears in 12.1% of cases, and 'Imazighen' in just 2.2% of them. The remaining percentage is distributed among the mixed formulas: 'Amazigh' and 'Berber' (17%), 'Imazighen' and 'Berber' (0.2%) and the three possibilities (0.7%). At first sight, it is striking that the preferred terminology for this ethnic group is not the most frequently used in Spanish newspapers. Hence, it seems necessary to recall that, with the required nuances, the word 'Berber' can be considered derogatory for Imazighen themselves, as it is etymologically linked to notions deriving from Roman times, such as 'barbarian' or 'foreigner' (Ennaji, 2019).

With the purpose of increasing the evidence regarding this media ecosystem, we studied the behaviour of each newspaper with respect to the lexical repertoire. Thus, *El Faro de Melilla* (67.8%) dominates the list of newspapers that most frequently repeat concepts other than 'Berber' in their articles; this means that only 32.2% of the sample units from this newspaper were written without the words 'Amazigh' or 'Imazighen' appearing. The other daily that uses both words relatively frequently is *La Vanguardia* (43.1%). Behind by some way are *eldiario.es* (29%) and *El País* (25%), while the rest of the newspapers present figures that are practically inconsequential: *ABC* (14%), *La Razón* (10%), *El Mundo* (9.7%) and *Ideal* (3.4%). All in all, it could be deduced that Melilla and Catalonia, the geographical areas with the strongest current links to the Amazigh, are the ones that demonstrate the most familiarity with the precise terminology. However, considering all the historical and present-day links that Amazigh culture shares with Andalusia, in general, and Granada, in particular, it is equally striking that *Ideal* is the newspaper that least reproduces these concepts. It cannot be confirmed, then, that the consequence of a closer proximity or greater contact with the Amazigh implies that a journalist has enhanced intercultural proficiency. In fact, it can be assumed that the cultural background would be almost always linked to Islam, not Amazigh, both for journalists and in the case of Granada.

The study of the vocabulary used in the headlines of the articles provides a deeper exploration and evidence for the establishment of the thematic agenda. In this sense, the examination carried out using *QSR NVivo* reveals the existence of 53 salient terms that are related to the object of study and meet these two requirements: these have been recorded on at least five occasions among the 454 texts and have four or more characters (in order to discard empty lexicon that does not contribute to meaning). Based on the model of Arcila Calderón et al. (2020), these concepts have been clustered into seven groups [fig. 1].

**Figure 1.** Semantic categories and most frequent terminology used in article headlines

Semantic block	Term	Number of times recorded
<b>Spanish geography</b> (121 total entries)	Canary Islands (Canarias)	48
	Melilla	34
	Spain (España)	15
	Spanish (Español)	11
	Alhambra	7
	Catalonian (Catalana)	6
<b>North African geography</b> (143 total entries)	Morocco (Marruecos)	40
	Moroccan (Marroquí)	18
	Algeria (Argelia)	15
	Africa (África)	10
	Algerians (Argelinos)	9
	North, Riffians (Norte, Rifeños)	8
	Maghreb, Marrakesh (Magreb, Marrakech)	7
	Rabat	6
	Algiers, Desert, Tangier (Argel, Desierto, Tánger)	5
<b>Amazigh</b> (46 total entries)	Amazigh	19
	Berber (Bereber)	19
	Berbers (Bereberes)	8
<b>Folklore, culture and history</b> (143 total entries)	Culture (Cultura)	15
	Heritage (Patrimonio)	13
	Origin (Origen)	11
	People, Cultural (Pueblo, Cultural)	10
	Celebration, History, Humanity, Language (Celebración, Historia, Humanidad, Lengua)	8
	UNESCO, Archaeologic (Unesco, Arqueológico)	7
	Historical, Museum, Tourism (Histórica, Museo, Turismo)	6
	Exhibition, Exhibition, Settlers, Settlement (Exposición, Muestra, Pobladores, Poblamiento)	5
<b>Politics</b> (40 total entries)	Protest (Protesta)	12
	(Juan Manuel) Moreno	7
	Repression (Represión)	6
	Leaders, (Juan José) Imbroda, Freedom (Líderes, [Juan José] Imbroda, Libertad)	5
<b>Arts and gastronomy</b> (32 total entries)	Music (Músicas)	10
	Couscous (Cuscús)	7
	Food, Jewellery, Books (Comida, Joyería, Libros)	5
<b>Religion</b> (12 total entries)	Muslim (Musulmán)	7
	Mosques (Mezquitas)	5

Source: own creation

In overall numbers, the five most repeated words are ‘Canary Islands’ (48), ‘Morocco’ (40), ‘Melilla’ (34), ‘Amazigh’ (19) and ‘Berber’ (19). It can therefore be intuited that geographical location is a key aspect both in terms of journalistic significance (to physically locate the reader) and spatial significance (to locate the subject or news topic dealt with in the article), where the relevance of Amazigh can be observed in some Spanish locations such as the ‘Canary Islands’ (for historical reasons), ‘Melilla’ (for cultural and identity reasons), and ‘Catalonian’ (for migratory and linguistic reasons), as well as north African areas such as ‘Morocco’, ‘Algeria’, the ‘Maghreb’, the ‘Rif’, and the ‘desert’ itself, together with cities such as ‘Marrakesh’, ‘Rabat’ and ‘Algiers’.

On the other hand, the sum of the records for the terms ‘Berber’ (19) and ‘Berbers’ (8) make this option more frequently used than ‘Amazigh’ (19), a fact that confirms the findings presented above. In this sense, it is significant that no references to the concept ‘Imazighen’ were found in the headlines of newspaper articles.

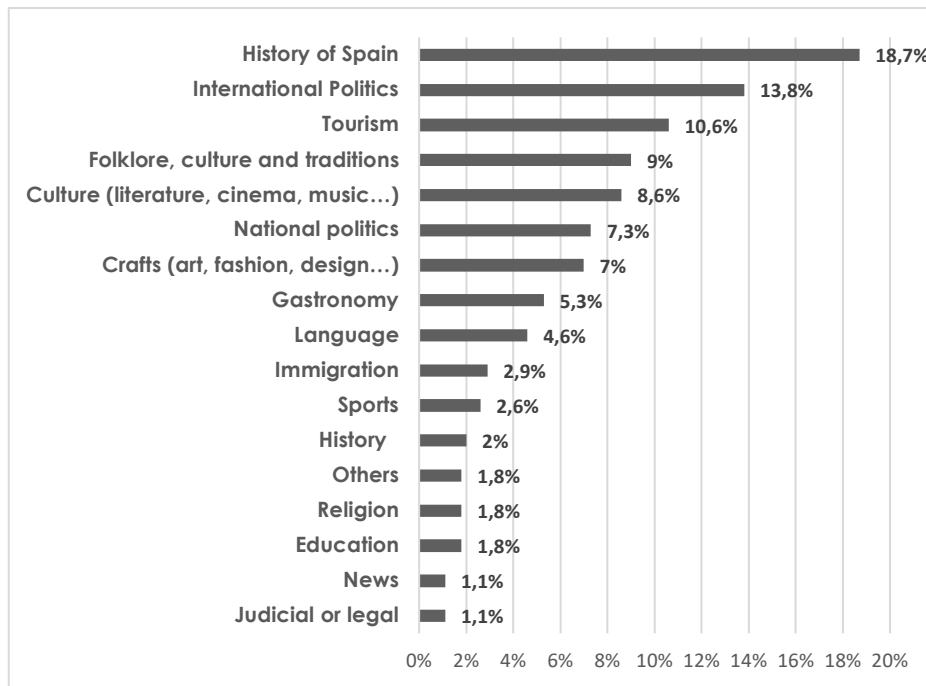
As for the rest of the terms, the limited presence of words related to politics (40 total entries) is striking in comparison with folklore, culture, and history (143 total entries), where 'culture' and 'cultural', 'heritage', 'origin', 'people', 'celebration', and 'language' stand out. The political terms are either linked to processes of change or revolutionary vocabulary ('protest', 'repression', 'leaders', 'freedom') or highlight two particular Spanish political figures, Juan Manuel 'Moreno' (President of the Junta de Andalucía) and Juan José 'Imbroda' (President of Melilla). Finally, while the religious lexicon only offers data for 'Muslim' and 'mosques', at the artistic and gastronomic level we see 'music', 'jewellery', 'books' and 'couscous'.

### **The Amazigh thematic agenda**

The analysis of the thematic coverage shows the issues in which the terms 'Amazigh', 'Imazighen', and 'Berber' are mentioned. In overall numbers [fig. 2], among the sixteen major topics documented, only three achieve over 10%: Spanish history (18.7%), international politics (13.8%), and tourism (10.6%); three areas that together account for 43.1% of the total number of mentions. This is followed by the two ways of understanding culture, namely folklore, tradition, and customs (9%), and the arts, like literature, film and music (8.6%). These are followed by national politics (7.3%), crafts, fashion, design, etc. (7%), gastronomy (5.3%) and language (4.6%). Finding the concepts 'Amazigh' or 'Berber' alongside issues related to immigration (2.9%), religion (1.8%) or education (1.8%) is therefore an anomaly.

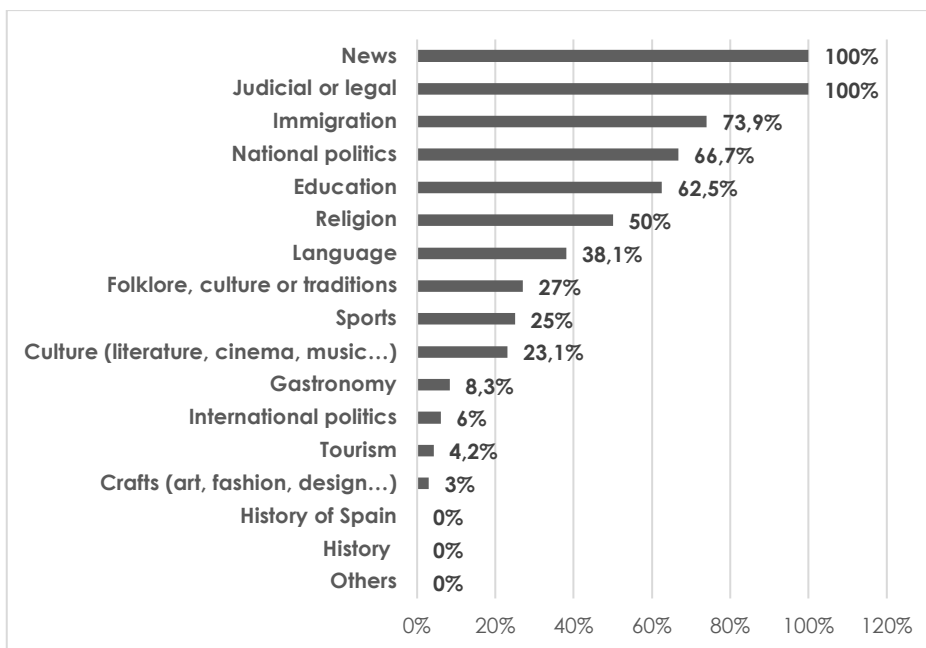
The taxonomy of the thematic agenda is eminently different when viewed from what was previously defined as 'Amazigh ethnicity'. When exploring what percentage of these articles perceive the Amazigh as a present, internal, or specific reality, it becomes clear that this scenario only arises when dealing with legal and judicial events or motives [fig. 3]. Thereafter, the remaining topics that cross the 50% barrier are immigration (73.9%), national politics (66.7%), education (62.5%), and religion (50%). Below these are language (38.1%), folklore (27%), sport (25%), literature, cinema, etc. (23.1%), gastronomy (8.3%), international politics (6%), tourism (4.2%), and crafts (3%). Therefore, only in articles dealing with historical issues (either from Spain or from the Maghreb) were no links between the Amazigh, everyday life, or shared experiences recorded.

**Figure 2. Main themes**



Source: own creation

**Figure 3. Articles recognising 'Amazigh ethnicity' according to theme (N=91)**



Source: own creation

Finally, a breakdown of the three most frequent themes for each newspaper [fig 4] reveals some specific features that allow a deeper understanding of the nature of our object of study. For example, it is noteworthy that national politics only appears once among the most repeated topics, and this is in *El Faro de Melilla* (32.2%), a fact that shows that the Amazigh is a day-to-day issue in the autonomous city. It is also striking

that content involving crafts, folklore, and gastronomy —themes that are not among the three most relevant from a global perspective— are the most prominent in *El País* (17.9%), *Ideal* (27.6%), and *La Razón* (25%). On the other hand, in *ABC* and *eldiario.es*, one out of every three articles concern the History of Spain (37.2% and 33.3%, respectively).

**Figure 4.** The three most frequent Amazigh themes in each newspaper

Newspaper	First theme	%	Second theme	%	Third theme	%	aggregate of the three themes (%)
<b>ABC</b>	History of Spain	37.2	International Politics	11.6	Crafts (art, fashion, design...) / Gastronomy	7	55.8 <sup>5</sup>
<b>El Faro de Melilla</b>	National politics	32.2	Folklore, culture, and traditions	20.3	Tourism	8.5	61
<b>El Mundo</b>	International politics	19.4	Tourism	19.4	Culture (literature, cinema, music...)	16.1	54.9
<b>El País</b>	Crafts (art, fashion, design...)	17.9	History of Spain	16.1	Tourism	16.1	50.1
<b>eldiario.es</b>	History of Spain	33.3	Culture (literature, cinema, music...)	12.9	Tourism	12.9	59.1
<b>Ideal</b>	Folklore, culture, and traditions	27.6	Tourism	27.6	History of Spain	20.7	75.9
<b>La Razón</b>	Gastronomy	25	History of Spain	20	Crafts / Culture / Folklore / International politics	10	55*
<b>La Vanguardia</b>	International politics	26	History of Spain	14.6	Culture (literature, cinema, music...)	9.8	50.4

Source: own creation

Furthermore, certain similarities can be seen in the thematic triads of *El Mundo* and *La Vanguardia*, although the former focuses more on tourism, and the latter on historical content. Finally, the frequency of these three priority topics in *Ideal* is unparalleled in any other newspaper, reaching 75.9%. This means that the newspaper from Granada, together with *El Faro de Melilla* (61%), are the newspapers with the least breadth of thematic coverage. Contrasting with this are *El País* (50.1%) and *La Vanguardia* (50.4%).

<sup>5</sup> In these cases, the third most frequent theme includes more than one subject, but the aggregate percentage counts it as if it were a single theme.

## Between recognition and tradition: A discursive sample of the Amazigh

To illustrate the media's treatment of the Amazigh, the following are excerpts from the articles used in the corpus of this research. Thus, for example, it is common to find texts that treat the Amazigh as being foreign or alien, residual, or North African, as can be seen in these two headings: "En Argelia es oficial: ¡Feliz año 2968!"<sup>6</sup> (Peregil, 2018) and "Los amazigh tunecinos emergen de las sombras en busca de reconocimiento"<sup>7</sup> (Román, 2019).

The remoteness of the Amazigh is remarkable because of the typical link with exotic, tourism-related, cultural, or historical motifs. Just reading a few headlines proves this reality: "El cuscús une más que la política"<sup>8</sup> (Zohra Bouaziz, 2018); "Rock tuareg: buscando a Jimi Hendrix en el desierto del Sáhara"<sup>9</sup> (Gil, 2019); "¿Qué reivindicaba Madonna con su escandaloso look?" (the subheading reads: "la diva del pop lucía un conjunto de abalorios bereberes que dieron mucho que hablar"; Zohra Bouaziz, 2018)<sup>10</sup>; "Canarias fue bereber"<sup>11</sup> (Paniagua, 2019); or "Essaouira, la ciudad blanca de los piratas que se convirtió en la joya de la costa marroquí"<sup>12</sup> (*eldiario.es*, 2019a). More illustrative is the case of a news item originating from agencies that led to practically identical headlines in three of the newspapers studied: *El Faro de Melilla*, *La Vanguardia*, and *eldiario.es*. This was the headline repeated in the three newspapers on June 11, 2019: "El Parlamento marroquí aprueba una ley histórica que oficializa la lengua bereber"<sup>13</sup>.

As shown in the presentation of the quantitative results, it has been much more complex to find samples that prove the scope of 'Amazigh ethnicity' as an internal reality in Spain and Europe. Despite this, all the newspapers have produced a few characteristic examples of this association. Thus, to corroborate both the media coverage of Amazigh issues and the meaning of what has been called 'Amazigh ethnicity', the following are case studies from each newspaper. The review begins with two reports from *El País* and *El Mundo*, both of which are revealing because they share personal stories. The first refers to Lahcene Sino Zemmouri, a boxer of Algerian origin who was portrayed in this way by the journalist: "De su cuello cuelgan cuatro collares: en uno hay un guante de boxeo de plata, en otro, una bandera palestina, también lleva el escudo de la selección de fútbol de Cabilia y el emblema del pueblo bereber. Su padre lo echó de casa con 17 años, por razones que prefiere no recordar. Explica que trabajando de pastelero sumó suficiente dinero para pagarse un billete de avión a Europa: el 14 de junio de 1989 aterrizaba en España"<sup>14</sup> (Segura, 2018).

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<sup>6</sup> In Algeria it is official: Happy New Year 2968!.

<sup>7</sup> Tunisian Amazigh emerge from the shadows in search of recognition.

<sup>8</sup> Couscous unites more than politics.

<sup>9</sup> Tuareg rock: searching for Jimi Hendrix in the Sahara desert.

<sup>10</sup> What was Madonna trying to say with her scandalous look? (the subheading reads: The pop diva wore a set of Berber beads that got people talking).

<sup>11</sup> The Canary Islands were Berber.

<sup>12</sup> Essaouira, the whitewashed town of pirates that became the jewel of the Moroccan coast.

<sup>13</sup> The Moroccan parliament passes a historic law making the Berber language official.

<sup>14</sup> Around his neck hang four necklaces: on one is a silver boxing glove, on another, a Palestinian flag, he also wears the crest of the Kabylia football team and the emblem of the Berber people. His father threw



This article in *El País* ties in with a story in *El Mundo* that recounts the adventures of a young man from Barcelona who received a scholarship to join a research project on deep learning and cybersecurity at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). This is how the report begins: "Jamal Toutouh nació con el derecho a proclamar que la vida es injusta. Su madre era una adolescente analfabeta de un pueblo amazigh (bereber) de las montañas de Marruecos cuando la casaron con su padre, ocho años mayor, que ya en los años 70 se marchó a Europa de inmigrante sin papeles a buscarse la vida"<sup>15</sup> (De Vega, 2018). As the reader becomes immersed in the vicissitudes of his family, the author states that Jamal "no hablaba árabe y apenas farfullaba el *tamazight*"<sup>16</sup>, the language of the Amazigh, when he arrived in Melilla at just over ten years of age.

It is this very language background that *ABC* touches on in "Animadversión a lo español: Cataluña fomenta las raíces de los alumnos extranjeros salvo las de los latinos"<sup>17</sup> (December 10, 2018). The text analyses the linguistic model of Catalonia and emphasises that "contempla acciones para promocionar hasta nueve lenguas (amazigh, árabe, bengalí, neerlandés, portugués, rumano, ruso, ucraniano y chino) y sus culturas asociadas"<sup>18</sup>, while criticising the lack of activities to promote "las raíces de los alumnos procedentes del centro y sur de América como Colombia, Bolivia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Perú, Ecuador o Argentina"<sup>19</sup>. Nevertheless, the coexistence of the Amazigh language with Arabic on the Iberian Peninsula is noted, a fact that corroborates the importance and contemporaneity of this culture.

Another piece that proves the symbiosis between the Amazigh, European and journalistic recognition is found in a report in *Ideal* entitled "Abriendo puertas, dando oportunidades"<sup>20</sup> (Armora, 2019). The article deals with an intercultural exchange meeting in Albuñol in which Senegalese, Moroccan, English, Romanian, and other groups took part. What is remarkable about this article is its photograph, which shows three young people dressed in traditional clothes, carrying instruments and a flag. In the words of the journalist, "la bandera amazigh o bereber, una enseña que nació en Canarias"<sup>21</sup>. Undoubtedly, the issue of migration is fundamental in the acknowledgement of Amazigh ethnicity and identity, something that has already been mentioned in the quantitative findings. There is a news item in *La Vanguardia* that not

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him out of the house when he was 17, for reasons he prefers not to remember. He explains that working as a pastry chef he earned enough money to pay for a plane ticket to Europe: on June 14, 1989, he landed in Spain.

<sup>15</sup> Jamal Toutouh was born with the right to proclaim that life is unfair. His mother was an illiterate teenager from an Amazigh (Berber) village in the mountains of Morocco when she was married to his father, eight years older, who had already left for Europe in the 1970s, as an undocumented immigrant, to make a living

<sup>16</sup> Did not speak Arabic and barely mumbled *Tamazight*.

<sup>17</sup> Animosity to Spanish: Catalonia encourages the roots of foreign pupils except Latinos.

<sup>18</sup> It is contemplating actions to highlight up to nine languages (Amazigh, Arabic, Bengali, Dutch, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Ukrainian, and Chinese) together with their associated cultures.

<sup>19</sup> The roots of pupils from Central and South America, such as Colombia, Bolivia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Peru, Ecuador, and Argentina.

<sup>20</sup> Opening doors, giving opportunities.

<sup>21</sup> The Amazigh or Berber flag, an ensign that originates from the Canary Islands.

only confirms this symbiosis but also adds a new element to the equation: emphasis on migrant ethnicity. It reads: “Todavía siguen en este insalubre recinto dos de los antiguos ocupantes, dos hombres marroquíes, que según cuenta uno de ellos, Brahim Ait, un bereber de 64 años, están negociando una salida con el Ayuntamiento”<sup>22</sup> (Bosch, 2018).

Alongside immigration, Melilla stands out as an issue in its own right. It is not surprising then to come across an opinion piece in *La Razón* (Haurie, 2019) defining Coalición por Melilla, a political grouping specific to the city, as a “partido bereber”<sup>23</sup>. Along the same lines is an article in *eldiario.es* (2019b) entitled “El PP denuncia a dos candidatas de CPM en Melilla por videos de ‘contenido xenófobo y racista’”<sup>24</sup>. The news reports the words of the former secretary general of the Popular Party (PP) in Melilla, Miguel Marín, when he lamented that “en Melilla haya personas que amenacen, coaccionen e insulten a cualquier español de origen bereber que decida apoyar libremente al Partido Popular”<sup>25</sup>. Not Moroccan, nor Maghrebi, nor Arab, nor North African; the politician chose to highlight Amazigh ethnicity in his testimony.

It is difficult to find a more perfect example for this paragraph than the interview with Dr Faris El Mesaoudi in *El Faro de Melilla* (Soto, 2019) on the occasion of the Yennayer or Amazigh New Year. To the question “¿bereber o amazigh?”<sup>26</sup>, the historian’s answer extols all the present relevance of this ethnic group: “Modernamente se utiliza la palabra ‘amazigh’ (‘hombres libres’), aunque antiguamente era más común usar ‘bereber’. Los romanos conocían a todo el que no estaba romanizado plenamente como bárbaros (término griego). Así derivó el nombre en bereber, que está en desuso en la actualidad, pero que en ningún caso es despectivo”<sup>27</sup>. On the other hand, El Mesaoudi also recalls that some “40.000 personas, es decir, la mitad de la población de Melilla es amazigh o su ascendencia lo es”<sup>28</sup>. Indeed, if we accept the researcher’s perspective, it clearly seems that the Amazigh culture is an inherent reality in Spain.

## Conclusion

This research has shown that the Amazigh —or Berber— is present in the Spanish press to a certain degree, according to the 454 articles documented from eight newspapers over the eighteen-month review period. In this sense, one of the first significant aspects to highlight is the apparent lack of journalistic knowledge in light of the terminology used in these pieces (‘Amazigh’, ‘Berber’, ‘Imazighen’) and the distancing with respect

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<sup>22</sup> Still remaining in this unhealthy compound are two of its long-time occupants, two Moroccan men, who, according to one, Brahim Ait, a 64-year-old Berber, are negotiating a way out with the City Council.

<sup>23</sup> Berber party.

<sup>24</sup> The PP reports two CPM candidates in Melilla for videos with ‘xenophobic and racist content’.

<sup>25</sup> In Melilla there are those who threaten, coerce and insult any Spaniard of Berber origin who decides to freely support the Popular Party.

<sup>26</sup> Berber or Amazigh?

<sup>27</sup> The word ‘Amazigh’ (‘free men’) is used nowadays, although in the past it was more common to use ‘Berber’. The Romans knew everyone who was not fully Romanised as barbarians (a Greek term). This is how the name Berber came about, which is no longer in use today, but which is in no way derogatory.

<sup>28</sup> 40,000 people, that is, half the population of Melilla is Amazigh or of Amazigh descent.

to the 'Amazigh ethnicity': when reviewing the quantitative results, the word 'Amazigh', the preferred word for this culture, is recorded in only 12.1% of cases and accompanied by the concept 'Berber' in 17% of these; meanwhile, 'Amazigh ethnicity', which emphasises everything related to this identity as something contemporary, familiar and even unique, was only recognised in 20% of the journalistic texts. The fact is that, in truth, the themes in which these terms are included are mainly related to Spanish history, international politics and tourism.

It should be remembered that the revival of the term Amazigh (and its derivatives) emerged from the activism and strengthening of the Berber Movement in the 1980s (Tilmatine, 1998). Therefore, this media misunderstanding cannot be explained after more than forty years of neighbourhood, coexistence, and shared identities. Especially now when Spain recognises the Amazigh language and the term 'amazige' in the reports generated in the light of The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. It is necessary to insist on the importance of questioning media routines regarding minority groups. That is why this study defends the use of the term 'amazige' and the belief that there will never be knowledge without recognition.

The qualitative reading of the articles revealed a certain invisibility and superficiality, which proves the second hypothesis: on the one hand, the coverage lacks human treatment and personal or community stories that familiarise the reader with the Amazigh identity; on the other, it barely offers any depth or reflection on the content in which the object of study is present. Essentially, what is being suggested here is a disconnection or lack of connections, in other words, with the exception of *El Faro de Melilla*, no other newspaper recognises the Amazigh in terms of the present, the shared, the internal and, indeed, the Spanish or *us*. In part, this reality supports the third hypothesis, although a greater Amazigh presence was expected in *Ideal*, the local newspaper of Granada, whether because of the historical heritage or present ties: indeed, Granada is home to the headquarters of the International Chair of Amazigh Culture.

In general terms, Amazigh is equal to exoticism (tourism, folklore, history, music, crafts, gastronomy, etc.), a circumstance that contrasts with the journalistic themes and portrayals that, as mentioned in the literature review, accompany Islam and the Arab world, i.e., fear, threat, violence, terrorism, migratory invasion, religion, or women. It could therefore be argued that, unlike the postulates that defend the existence of Islamophobia, Maurophobia and Arabophobia in the Spanish media, it would never be appropriate to speak of *Berberophobia*, as more phobias than phobias have been witnessed in this study. In any case, the documented situation is closer to the historical and colonial orientalism detailed by Said (1978) —insofar as it accentuates the exotic— and defined by Sardar (2009: 24) as a discourse that constructs the Orient as a passive, childish entity that can be loved and abused, that can be moulded and dominated, manipulated, and consumed.

However, if we fail to visibly recognise the Amazigh as a culture, an identity, an ethnic group, a community, a collective, or even a diaspora, everything becomes mere

reductionism (first hypothesis). Without uniqueness, the Amazigh will remain part of the melting pot of Arab, North African, Muslim, North African, Maghrebi, Islamic and Moorish. And this singularity is exactly what should be demanded for other groups such as the Tuareg (of Amazigh ethnicity) or the Bedouin (of Arab origin), for example.

In the future, the analysis should be extended to more terminology ('amazige'), to more local newspapers (in this work, national newspapers have been the main focus), to more militant media (that is, more sensitive to identity and minority issues, such as *Play Melilla* or other Canarian, Catalan or Basque media, for example), to virtual media (social media or non-generalist press), to the journalists themselves (to find out about their knowledge of the Amazigh, terminology, etc.), and to society as a whole through surveys or interviews. It could even be replicated in other countries where the Amazigh identity is significant, such as the Netherlands, Belgium, or France. If the Amazigh reality truly encompasses both North Africa and Europe, as much in the past as in the present, studies must transcend the fertile humanities (especially history, literature, and philology) to address the social sciences in general, and communication in particular, especially as far as academic production is concerned.

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