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DECOLONIAL KNOWLEDGE AND EPISTEMIC RESISTANCE IN MOROCCO

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ABSTRACT

This paper undertakes a critical examination of the ways in which decolonial thought interrogates and reconfigures the production of knowledge within the Global South. It foregrounds the persistence of colonial structures and their formative influence on intellectual traditions, academic institutions, and dominant epistemological paradigms, as articulated by decolonial theorists. Particular attention is directed toward epistemologies emanating from the Global North, which frequently marginalize or efface local and Indigenous knowledge systems, thereby perpetuating a hierarchical order that privileges Western modes of thought. The analysis further engages with alternative epistemic practices that contest the hegemony of Eurocentric frameworks, drawing upon case studies from South Asia, Africa, and Latin America. These interventions encompass radical revisions of history and philosophy, the articulation of Indigenous pedagogies, and the preservation of oral traditions. Collectively, they advance perspectives that de-stabilize claims to the universality of Western epistemologies and open conceptual space for plural and situated forms of knowledge. By situating these interventions within the broader discourse of decolonial scholarship, this article demonstrates how knowledge can be reclaimed as an instrument of intellectual and political transformation, as well as a mode of resistance against enduring colonial logics in regions designated as the Global South.

Keywords: Epistemic Resistance; Knowledge Production; Indigenous Knowledges; Epistemic Justice; Intellectual Decolonization.

INTRODUCTION

Anaïs Nin's account of Fes offers a portrayal in which the city's physical environment becomes inseparable from cultural judgment. Observing the intricate, constricted streets of the medina, the visitor from the so-called "center" interprets them as emblematic of the intellectual confinement attributed to the city's inhabitants. The urban form is thus transformed into a metaphorical device, where architectural and spatial features are read as signs of cultural mentality. This interpretive gesture illustrates how external observers often translate the materiality of place into narratives that reinforce

preconceived assumptions about the societies they encounter. This figurative remark implies that the architectural physical restrictions of the city reflect a larger intellectual or cultural restriction judged by the observer. One might see this representation as a statement of a specific perspective that associates mental freedom or openness with physical space. Often connected with the labyrinthine medinas of Fes, the little pathways might be seen as reflecting a certain insensitivity or traditionalism that opposes the flood of fresh ideas or viewpoints.

This view might also be attacked, though, for oversimplifying or for supporting preconceptions about non-Western civilizations. From this vantage point, one may argue that the travelers' observations capture a more general colonial attitude that frequently discounted or misinterpreted the complexity of non-Western civilizations. Rather than suggesting a lack of intellectual or cultural sophistication, the narrowness of the alleys may reflect a rich and complex past whereby the city's architecture is a response to social and natural necessities. Fes's meandering lanes are a living archive of the city's past, reflecting centuries of custom, resiliency, and community life rather than only a physical location.

This criticism aligns with the theories of postcolonial scholars such as Edward Said (1978), who, in Orientalism, argued that Western depictions of the East can reinforce a sense of cultural superiority. The travelers' story runs the danger of simplifying a rich and dynamic civilization to a basic and contemptuous cliché by connecting the architecture of the city with a supposed intellectual narrowness. On the other hand, appreciating the architectural, historical, and cultural relevance of Fes helps one to have a more complex knowledge of the city. With its maze-like streets, the medina depicts a distinct way of life that prioritizes common areas, close-knit communities, and a connection with the past. Rather than markers of narrow-mindedness, the alleys of Fes may be understood as routes through a living past still forming the identity of its residents. Thus, rather than seeing the little alleys as a metaphor for restricted thinking, one could value them as evidence of the city's complex, multifaceted experiences and past. This method questions the visitor's first interpretation and fosters a more sympathetic and educated interaction with Fes' culture.

This paper employs a qualitative, interpretive methodology rooted in decolonial studies and postcolonial critique. The research is organized as a critical-theoretical investigation that analyzes essential decolonial concepts—including epistemic resistance, epistemic disobedience, border thinking, and decolonial intersectionality—within the Moroccan context, while positioning Morocco within wider discussions originating from the Global South. Instead of approaching decoloniality as an abstract framework, the study examines

theory in direct engagement with historical, cultural, and contemporary social reality. The analysis utilizes a diverse array of sources, encompassing seminal decolonial and postcolonial theoretical works (e.g., Said, Fanon, Quijano, Mignolo, Santos) alongside contributions by Moroccan and Arab intellectuals (e.g., Khatibi, Abdurrahman, Laroui, Al-Jabri, El-Messiri). The article also engages with contextual public discourse and illustrative examples, such as narratives of visa refusal and prominent cases of racialization in European national contexts. These materials are not treated as empirical data within a positivist framework but rather as critical entry points for analyzing the enduring influence of colonial logics on contemporary power relations, mobility regimes, and knowledge hierarchies.

The analytical process consists of three interrelated phases. First, it entails a conceptual mapping of the primary decolonial notions mobilized in the article, including epistemic resistance and disobedience, borders, and pluralism/intersectionality. Second, these concepts are anchored in Moroccan debates concerning language hierarchy, curriculum reform, Amazigh marginalization, and broader dynamics of border externalization. Third, the study advances toward a synthesis oriented to praxis, identifying points where the literature becomes fragmented or overly abstract and emphasizing applied domains explicitly addressed in the article, particularly education, language policy, and cultural production.

The relevance of this research is underscored by recent political and diplomatic developments involving Morocco and several European countries, including Spain, France, Germany, and Italy. Following a series of incidents and disputes, the Moroccan Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation, and Moroccan Expatriates declared that "Morocco is not the same as it was yesterday." Tensions surrounding the Moroccan-occupied cities of Melilla and Ceuta, where migrants attempted to enter Spain, led Morocco to recall its ambassadors and suspend cooperation in areas such as security, diplomacy, and business. These developments challenge entrenched narratives of Global North superiority and reveal the persistence of unequal power relations between former colonial states and countries of the Global South. Such hierarchies are further manifested in the arbitrary refusal of visas by European states, often justified through opaque administrative reasoning.

Moroccan professionals, including physicians, engineers, teachers, artists, and businesspeople, have been disproportionately affected, with refusals frequently invoking "Motive number 10," officially defined as "*Les informations communiquées pour justifier l'objet et les conditions du séjour envisagé ne sont pas fiables*" (The information provided to justify the purpose and conditions of

the intended stay is not reliable). This rationale implicitly reinforces narratives of mistrust and epistemic inferiority directed at individuals from the Global South. The recurrence of such refusals exposes a troubling paradox in which individuals who have internalized Western representations of the Global South as backward or deficient are marginalized by the very systems they once regarded as models of progress. These dynamics highlight the enduring injustices, biases, and epistemic asymmetries that continue to structure global interactions.

In light of these concerns, the study is guided by the following research questions, which inform both its theoretical orientation and analytical trajectory: How do colonial and Eurocentric modes of representation transform physical spaces such as the medina of Fes into metaphors for intellectual or cultural judgment? In what ways do travel narratives and external observations reproduce epistemic hierarchies that position non-Western societies as intellectually or culturally constrained? How can alternative readings of urban space challenge colonial interpretations and reveal indigenous forms of knowledge, memory, and social organization? To what extent does the reinterpretation of architectural and spatial practices contribute to broader projects of epistemic resistance and decolonial knowledge production?

LOCALIZING THE DECOLONIAL TURN: EPISTEMIC STRUGGLES IN MOROCCAN THOUGHT

This paper provides a summary of decolonial studies together with their theoretical roots, the function of language, intersectionality, and pragmatic applications. Examining decolonization movements will be done as useful models of decolonization in action. Extensive effects of colonialism influence the social, economic, and cultural growth of many different countries all throughout the world. Racial and gender inequalities, as well as ongoing natural resource exploitation, point to the ongoing effects of colonialism. Frantz Fanon's (1963) work remains a cornerstone of decolonial thought, particularly his interventionist declaration that decolonization is a violent and radical rupture with colonial systems. His vision of liberation inspired numerous intellectual projects across the Global South. However, in the Moroccan context, Fanon's universalist claims have often been reconsidered and critiqued. Abdelkébir Khatibi, for example, argued for moving beyond confrontation with colonialism by developing what he termed double critique, a critical stance directed simultaneously at Western colonial legacies and at traditional Arab-Islamic frameworks (Khatibi, 1983).

This approach underscores the importance of epistemic pluralism and hybrid

forms of knowledge, resonating with Morocco's complex cultural and linguistic landscape. Building on this, Taha Abdurrahman (2006) articulated a vision of decolonization rooted in ethics and spirituality. He proposed reconciling Islamic traditions with modern rationality, thereby constructing a model of modernity anchored in local values. Abdurrahman's contribution lies in showing that decolonization is not merely a political or intellectual project but also a moral one that redefines the foundations of knowledge and practice. In contrast, Abdellah Laroui (1976) situated decolonization within a historical and rationalist framework, insisting on a sustained critique of inherited traditions without falling into essentialism or nostalgia. His emphasis on historicism provides Moroccan intellectuals with methodological tools to avoid reductive notions of authenticity and instead ground decolonial projects in critical historical analysis. Other Arab thinkers, including Hassan Hanafi (1991), Nasr Abu Zayd (2004), and Abdelwahab El-Messiri (2006), expanded the scope of decolonial debates by engaging questions of hermeneutics, political ideology, and epistemological bias. Although their work is often referenced only briefly in Moroccan scholarship, it provides valuable frameworks for deepening regional intellectual dialogues on decolonization. Collectively, these contributions show both the ambition and the limitations of existing scholarship. While there is an eagerness to engage with global and regional debates on decoloniality, the literature frequently suffers from structural weaknesses, fragmented presentation of theories, insufficient contextualization, and a lack of connection to praxis.

First, theoretical perspectives are often presented as isolated fragments, producing a descriptive accumulation of ideas rather than a synthesis that clarifies convergences and divergences. Discussions of Fanon, Khatibi, Abdurrahman, and Laroui are frequently juxtaposed without articulation of how their contributions intersect or challenge one another. Second, Moroccan intellectual debates often lack grounding in specific historical, cultural, and linguistic realities. This gap undermines the applicability of theoretical claims to Morocco's plural identities, colonial legacies, and contested linguistic hierarchies. Third, praxis is noticeably absent. The literature often privileges abstract theorization over explorations of how decolonial thought might reshape concrete domains such as education, language policy, and cultural production. Without this applied dimension, the transformative potential of decolonization remains underdeveloped.

Addressing these shortcomings requires synthesizing Moroccan and Arab intellectual contributions into a structured framework that highlights both their tensions and complementarities. Abdurrahman (2006), for instance,

advances the notion of *taṣīliyya* (authenticating), which calls for restoring Arab-Islamic intellectual and moral sovereignty. For him, decolonization does not simply reject Western paradigms but re-centers knowledge production on indigenous traditions capable of generating universal insights. In contrast, Mohammed Abed Al-Jabri (1982) stresses Arab rationality, arguing that colonialism deepened intellectual stagnation in the Arab world. His call for an "Arab modernity" reflects the tension between resisting uncritical imitation of Western models and engaging constructively with modern challenges. Khatibi (1983), meanwhile, insists on dismantling both colonial and indigenous authoritarian structures, particularly through deconstructing the coloniality of language. His critique of bilingualism foregrounds the enduring dominance of French in Morocco's education and administration systems, in contrast to the marginalized status of Arabic and Tamazight. Laroui (1973), by contrast, situates decolonization within broader socio-economic transformations, warning against culturalist reductions and emphasizing structural critique of capitalism and dependency.

Taken together, these frameworks illustrate the richness of Moroccan intellectual engagement with decoloniality while also exposing deep tensions between spiritual, rationalist, linguistic, and materialist approaches. Decolonization in Morocco thus emerges not as a single paradigm but as a multidimensional project requiring dialogue across ethics, rationality, culture, and economics. These debates also align with broader postcolonial critiques, particularly Said's (1978) analysis of Orientalism, which demonstrates how knowledge production historically served imperial domination. By reclaiming epistemic agency, Moroccan intellectuals not only respond to colonial legacies but also contribute original insights to the global project of decoloniality, offering alternatives that challenge both Western universality and local essentialisms. This synthesis points to the theme of border crossing, both literal and metaphorical. The rejection of Western epistemic dominance, the reclamation of indigenous languages, and the reconstruction of intellectual frameworks all represent forms of crossing and reconfiguring boundaries between colonizer and colonized, tradition and modernity, and local and universal.

Decolonization in Morocco cannot be understood solely as the dismantling of inherited structures of domination, such as colonial institutions, Eurocentric knowledge systems, or linguistic hierarchies that continue to privilege French and Western epistemologies over Arabic and Tamazight. While exposing and challenging these structures is essential, critique alone risks leaving an intellectual and social vacuum. Decolonization must therefore also be

a constructive process that reimagines new spaces of thought, identity, and social justice. In the realm of knowledge production, this is evident in Moroccan intellectual projects that seek to generate theory from within local ethical, linguistic, and cultural traditions, such as Taha Abdurrahman's effort to articulate an alternative moral epistemology or Abdelkébir Khatibi's double critique, which calls for a plural dialogue between Western and indigenous frameworks rather than their simple rejection. Reimagining identity is equally crucial, as colonialism enforced simplistic classifications that portrayed Moroccans as either primitive or valuable solely through conformity to European standards; the contemporary acknowledgment of Amazigh language and culture, for instance, signifies an effort to forge a plural national identity that recognizes historical diversity and agency. Lastly, decolonization must deal with social justice by dealing with material inequalities that are still there because of colonial power. These include things like unequal access to education and mobility, and the continued control of Moroccan bodies through strict visa rules. In this context, decolonization in Morocco involves not only dismantling colonial oppression but also proactively conceptualizing alternative futures rooted in epistemic justice, cultural diversity, and fair social relations.

EPISTEMIC DISOBEDIENCE

To speak through this Disobedient voice, *"I am German when we win, but I am an immigrant when we lose."* Mesut Özil's decision to retire from international football in 2018, after enduring racist attacks and feeling scapegoated for Germany's World Cup failure, can be seen as an act of decolonial disobedience. His statement underscores the racialized perception of his identity, where his German citizenship was questioned due to his Turkish heritage, and the same case can be applied to Afro-French players. This reflects the decolonial critique of how individuals of marginalized backgrounds are often positioned within a hierarchy that aligns their value with their proximity to a dominant, colonial identity. By choosing to walk away from the German national team, Özil resisted the colonial demand for assimilation and loyalty to a system that continually relegated him to the status of the "Other." His act was a form of disobedience against the racial expectations placed upon him, rejecting the symbolic violence of being forced to embody an identity that denied his full humanity and complex cultural background. This act of disobedience can be understood as a refusal to accept the dehumanizing effects of colonial power, a rejection of the colonial logic that seeks to erase or subordinate his multiple identities in favor of a singular, hegemonic one.

Decolonial Choice and Epistemic Disobedience, which questions the supremacy of Western epistemologies and offers a path ahead towards a global order more inviting to diverse groups of people, is a key component of decolonization. Mignolo (2009) defines epistemic disobedience as the rejection of the limits set by conventional knowledge frameworks, to promote "Unconventional, transformative approaches to knowledge generating" (p. 167). In this way, it questions the idea of knowledge that is objective on a worldwide scale since it recognizes that "Knowledge is dependent upon the specific context in which it is situated" (Mignolo, 2009, p. 169). This concept emphasizes the importance of local environments in the process of knowledge generation. It stresses the need for the development of new methods of knowing grounded in the particular context in which they are located. Epistemic disobedience is not only a criticism of the supremacy of Western knowledge systems but also a call to action for the creation of a space in which different epistemologies may thrive. Mignolo (2011) claims that "The decolonial option calls for the promotion of several epistemologies instead of the supremacy of Western frameworks" (p. 62). Emphasizing this is crucial. Epistemic disobedience aims to create space for marginalized points of view and experiences by deconstructing the power structures and prejudices embedded in the production of information and accomplishing these calls for a comprehensive examination of the assumptions driving dominant knowledge systems as well as a prioritization of under-represented voices (Mignolo, 2009).

Quijano and Mignolo's framework of modernity, colonialism, and decoloniality provides a fascinating perspective from which to explore the dynamic interaction between colonialism, modernity, and the continuous struggle for decoloniality. Quijano (2000) argues that "Modernity and coloniality are interdependent, creating enduring structures of subordination and inequality" (p. 548). The interdependence of modernity, which began in Europe in the 15th century, with colonial expansion, helps one to see how both shaped modernity. Mignolo (2007) claims "Modernity brought capitalist modes of production, driven by the pursuit of profit" (p. 45), stressing the need for scientific observation and reason. Accompanying these developments in knowledge was the growth of European colonial powers, whose actions justified the supremacy and dehumanization of people not of European ancestry (Mignolo, 2007, p. 52). So, by questioning the epistemological and social institutions already in place, the decolonial framework aims to handle the long-term consequences of colonial modernity. Mignolo (2013) claims that "Modernity calls for questioning current epistemological frameworks and building new knowledge systems founded on different epistemologies" (p. 80). This is a significant point to highlight. Centered on different points

of view, this paradigm offers a road towards a fairer and more just world (Quijano, 2000; Mignolo, 2007). Its major contribution to the debate on global inequality is also a strong theoretical basis for understanding world inequities.

BORDERS AND BEYOND: DECOLONIAL INTERSECTIONALITY IN THE RECONFIGURATION OF GEOGRAPHIES

The concept of decolonization has become one of the most contested and theoretically rich debates in the field of postcolonial studies. Scholars have approached it from diverse disciplinary perspectives, ranging from philosophy and literary studies to education, history, and anthropology. Despite this growing body of work, much of the scholarship risks falling into abstraction, repetition, or overgeneralization, often neglecting concrete local contexts. This article examines decolonization within the Moroccan intellectual and cultural context, situating it within the broader framework of border crossing. Borders, geographical, cultural, linguistic, and epistemic, function as spaces of negotiation where identities are reshaped, and knowledge is reconfigured. Accordingly, decolonization should not be understood solely as an abstract theoretical discourse but as a practice embedded in these intersecting spaces. The central argument is that decolonization in Morocco must be framed as a "bordered process", one that not only critiques colonial paradigms but also re-examines inherited cultural and intellectual traditions while advancing practical transformations in education, language, and epistemology.

Morocco has seen a notable movement towards decolonization in recent years, driven by academics and activists seeking to solve the long-lasting effects of colonialism and empire. The decolonial trend has evolved as a reaction to the rising interest in the pre-colonial history and cultural legacy of Morocco, as well as ongoing social and political inequalities that have helped sustain systematic inequalities. The awareness of the pervasive inequalities and injustices that still define Moroccan society, especially those maintained by the legacy of colonialism and imperialism, is fundamental to this movement. Among these long-standing problems are the marginalization of minority populations, the repression of indigenous cultures and customs, and continuous foreign power-based resource exploitation. Reclamation of Morocco's historical and cultural legacy by means of challenging dominant narratives imposed by colonial powers is a main goal of this movement. This has caused Morocco's pre-colonial history to be re-examined, including a review of the contributions made by indigenous people and the function of Islam in the evolution of Moroccan civilization (Graiouid, 2009).

Concurrently, the decolonial viewpoint attempts to solve the enduring

ramifications of colonialism in modern Morocco. This advocates for greater participation and inclusion of historically marginalized communities in the governance and development processes of the country and involves a critical study of the political and economic structures built during the colonial period. The emergence of fresh cultural expressions challenging accepted narratives and revitalizing indigenous traditions is a fundamental component of Morocco's decolonization process. This covers the reinvigoration of traditional artisanal practices and the development of fresh musical, literary, and visual art from Morocco's rich cultural legacy. Moreover, the decolonial paradigm has been strongly linked with a rising consciousness of environmental justice and the necessity to oppose the use of natural resources by outside organizations. This part of the movement demands increased recognition of the rights of indigenous communities and a critical assessment of extractive businesses that have traditionally caused environmental damage in Morocco.

Recognizing the ongoing impact of colonialism and imperialism on Moroccan society, the decolonial change in Morocco marks a fundamental change in the political and cultural scene of the nation. Notwithstanding the difficulties, such as the possibility of encouraging exclusive nationalism or ignoring the complexity of Moroccan culture, the decolonization process is a necessary first step towards rectifying historical injustices and fostering a more equitable and inclusive society. Decolonial literature produced in Morocco has been especially important as it provides a potent weapon for "Challenging and subverting dominant narratives and power structures". It helps Morocco to regain its cultural legacy, language, and identity (Graiouid, 2009). With early attempts going back to the early 20th century, when intellectuals like Allal al-Fassi started opposing the colonial narratives imposed by the French, Moroccan authors have long used decolonial literature to challenge dominant narratives. Writers such as Driss Chraibi carried on this legacy in the post-independence era by examining and challenging prevailing narratives, especially those that presented the French as civilizers rather than oppressors. Through their works, modern authors like Laila Lalami and Abdellatif Laâbi carry on this history by delving into issues of identity, displacement, and the enduring effects of colonialism.

Unlike previous studies of decolonizing processes, the multifarious character of decolonizing Morocco calls for a careful analysis of the continuous difficulties caused by colonial legacies as well as initiatives to support the cultural, linguistic, and social variety of the country. Decolonization in Morocco is a process that goes beyond the simple attainment of political freedom to involve the dismantling of the socio-cultural and economic systems built during colonial

control, therefore impacting modern society. The Moroccan educational system is among the most important domains where decolonization is actively sought. Eurocentric ideas dominated the educational system throughout the French colonial era, leading to a curriculum denigrating Moroccan history, language, and culture. As Sadiqi (2014) points out, "The colonial legacy in Moroccan education has perpetuated a Eurocentric bias, which continues to shape the minds of students" (p. 87). Reflecting a larger trend towards inclusiveness and diversity in education, recent attempts to change the educational system seek to embrace Moroccan history, language, and cultural narratives.

These changes mark a vital first in challenging the residual consequences of colonialism and promoting a more complete awareness of Morocco's rich legacy. Being both a symbol and an instrument of cultural identity, language is crucial in the decolonization process. Arabic, especially Moroccan Arabic (*Darija*), was assigned to informal and private domains while French was encouraged as the language of trade, education, and government throughout the colonial era. This language hierarchy captures a larger pattern of cultural marginalization, which still affects Moroccan culture. Ennaji (2005) states, "The dominance of French in postcolonial Morocco has maintained the colonial power dynamics, marginalizing Arabic and Tamazight speakers" (p. 102). Efforts at modern decolonization aim to improve Darija and Tamazight's standing by including them in the educational system and encouraging their use in public conversation and media.

Retaking Morocco's cultural identity and confronting the colonial legacy of linguistic imperialism depend on this language revitalization. Moreover, Morocco's decolonization process entails closely scrutinizing and contesting the social and economic systems that uphold inequality and marginalize particular groups, notably the Amazigh (Berber) population. The colonial era widened these gaps, which fuel the continuous fight of the Amazigh people for autonomy and legitimacy. As Bhabha (1994) contends, "The colonial enterprise has left a lasting impact on the social fabric of postcolonial societies, reinforcing power imbalances and marginalizing indigenous populations" (p. 72). Important elements of the larger decolonization movement, which aims to right past injustices and advance social equality, are efforts to support the Amazigh language, culture, and political representation.

Decolonization in Morocco is an all-encompassing attempt to create a more inclusive and varied society that honors and respects the cultural, linguistic, and religious traditions of every one of its people, not just a political process. This entails challenging colonial past discriminatory policies and attitudes, as well as promoting more understanding and communication among many

spheres of society. As Fanon (1963) notes, "Decolonization is not a mechanical process but a profound transformation of society, requiring a radical rethinking of social relations and cultural values" (p. 36). Decolonizing Morocco is an ongoing, difficult job requiring fighting the traces of colonialism and promoting a more inclusive and varied society. This calls for attempts to solve social and economic disparities, advance indigenous languages and cultures, and change the educational system. Although much progress has been made, much more has to be done to reach actual decolonization and social fairness in Morocco.

The knowledge gained from Morocco's experience might help guide more general debates on the decolonization of Arab academics, where similar possibilities and problems exist. Likewise, the effort of decolonizing Arab academics challenges the predominance of Western-centric viewpoints that have long shaped scholarly debate in the area. Colonialism's historical effects have excluded indigenous knowledge systems, therefore supporting a dependence on Western ideas and structures. Said (1978) emphasizes, "The dominance of Western knowledge systems in the postcolonial world has led to the marginalization of local epistemologies, perpetuating intellectual dependency" (p. 15). Decolonizing Arab academics calls for a critical study of these Western paradigms and supports a more inclusive approach, including local knowledge and epistemologies. The ongoing influence of Western academic institutions and frameworks, created during the colonial era and still influencing educational policies in the area, is a major obstacle in this process. "The colonial legacy in Arab academia is evident in the persistent preference for Western theories, often at the expense of local knowledge," says Ahmed (2017, p. 58).

Dealing with this problem means supporting indigenous languages as teaching languages and translating academic publications into Arabic, therefore lessening the dependency on Western academic models. Furthermore, academic courses' material has to be closely reviewed and changed to represent the several social, linguistic, and cultural realities of the area. As El-messiri (2006) contends, "The decolonization of Arab academia requires a fundamental rethinking of curricula, incorporating multiple perspectives and voices that have been historically marginalized" (p. 44). This strategy will not only extend the field of research but also help to create a more inclusive and fairer intellectual environment. Decolonizing Arab academics also entails questioning the power systems inside academic institutions, which Western institutions and academics have typically shaped. Alatas (2000) notes, "The dominance of Western academia in the global knowledge economy has led

to the marginalization of non-Western scholars, limiting the potential for intellectual autonomy in the Arab world" (p. 19).

A fairer and more representative academic scene depends on Arab researchers and institutions advocating for more autonomy and self-determination. Decolonizing Arab academics is, all things considered, essential for creating a more inclusive and fairer intellectual climate. It entails supporting more autonomy for Arab academics and institutions, thus contesting the dominance of Western institutions and frameworks, and supporting indigenous languages and knowledge. Through tackling these problems, the Arab scholarly community may help to create a more varied and representative worldwide knowledge economy. Like other academic disciplines, geography has long been entwined with colonialism, imperialism, and Eurocentrism. Often ignoring the viewpoints and experiences of underprivileged and oppressed groups, these influences have produced biased and inadequate knowledge about the world. "Geography, as a discipline, has been complicit in the production of colonial knowledge, which has served to legitimate and perpetuate colonial power structures" (Mignolo, 2007, p. 35).

Scholars have demanded the decolonization of geography by means of intersectional theories that consider the many experiences and identities of underprivileged groups. As Quijano (2000) defines decoloniality, it aims to question the Eurocentric and colonial viewpoints that have dominated academic fields like geography. According to Quijano, "Decoloniality involves the deconstruction of colonial knowledge systems and the recognition of the agency and knowledge of colonized peoples" (p. 533). This method calls for a critical review of colonial historical, political, and cultural effects as well as the participation of underprivileged voices in scholarly debate. Developed by Crenshaw, the idea of intersectionality shows that many kinds of oppression, including racism, sexism, and classism, shape people's experiences and identities and their interactions. "Intersecting and compounding different forms of discrimination create unique experiences of oppression… Intersectionality provides a framework for understanding how different forms of discrimination interact." (p.140).

Scholars may create a more complete knowledge of geographies that takes into account the many and linked experiences of underprivileged populations by combining intersectional analysis with decoloniality. Combining the ideas of decoloniality and intersectionality, the decolonial intersectional framework produces a potent analytical tool for geographies. This concept acknowledges that the power dynamics, historical settings, and personal connections of their makers affect geographies more than they are objective or neutral. It gives

the viewpoints and experiences of underprivileged and oppressed groups top priority, thereby subverting the prevailing narratives and power systems that have molded the discipline of geography. Scholars may transform our knowledge of geographies by using a decolonial intersectional framework, therefore providing a more inclusive and nuanced viewpoint that recognizes the richness and variety of human experience. This method not only questions the colonial heritage in geography but also offers a critical prism through which one may see modern problems of power, identity, and place.

CROSSING BORDERS OF PLURALISM THROUGH DECOLONIAL INTERSECTIONALITY

Scholars and activists have found considerable value in the concept of decolonial intersectionality as a framework for understanding how colonial power continues to shape contemporary social, political, and cultural relations through overlapping forms of domination. Originally articulated by Kimberlé Crenshaw, intersectionality highlights how marginalizations such as race, gender, and class are not experienced separately but operate simultaneously and relationally (Crenshaw, 2013). Decoloniality, meanwhile, interrogates the persistence of colonial power structures in the present, particularly in knowledge systems, institutions, and global hierarchies (Mignolo, 2011). When combined, decolonial intersectionality moves beyond symbolic diversity or multicultural inclusion to reveal how historical colonial logics remain embedded in everyday practices and social arrangements.

In Morocco, the practical relevance of decolonial intersectionality is evident in the experiences of Amazigh communities, whose marginalization cannot be reduced to ethnicity alone. Amazigh populations are often positioned at the intersection of linguistic exclusion, economic marginalization, rural underdevelopment, and limited political representation—conditions that are themselves legacies of colonial and postcolonial governance. For example, although Tamazight has been recognized as an official language, its implementation within education and public administration remains uneven. Amazigh students from rural regions frequently encounter structural disadvantages when navigating a school system historically organized around French and Arabic, revealing how language, geography, and class intersect to reproduce epistemic inequality. A decolonial intersectional approach makes visible how these exclusions are mutually reinforcing rather than incidental.

Language policy offers another concrete site where decolonial intersectionality operates in practice. The continued dominance of French in higher education, scientific research, and elite professional spaces intersects with

class stratification and urban privilege. Access to social mobility is often contingent upon mastery of a colonial language, which disproportionately benefits urban, middle- and upper-class populations while marginalizing Arabic- and Tamazight-speaking citizens. From a decolonial intersectional perspective, linguistic hierarchy is not merely a cultural issue but a mechanism through which colonial power, class inequality, and epistemic authority converge. Addressing language injustice, therefore, requires more than formal recognition; it demands structural transformation in how knowledge is produced, taught, and validated. Decolonial intersectionality also illuminates Morocco's position within global mobility regimes. Moroccan migrants and professionals seeking entry into Europe frequently encounter exclusion at the intersection of race, nationality, religion, and class.

The repeated use of vague administrative justifications—such as "Motive number 10" in visa refusals—demonstrates how epistemic distrust toward Global South subjects is racialized and institutionalized. These border practices disproportionately affect individuals whose identities combine Global South citizenship, non-European cultural affiliation, and limited economic capital, illustrating how colonial hierarchies are reproduced through contemporary border governance. Here, borders function not only as territorial limits but as epistemic filters that determine whose knowledge, intentions, and credibility are recognized. Cultural production and activism further demonstrate the applied dimension of decolonial intersectionality in Morocco. Amazigh movements, feminist organizations, and migrant advocacy groups increasingly articulate their struggles in intersectional terms, linking language rights, gender justice, economic inequality, and historical recognition.

Moroccan literature, music, and visual art similarly reflect intersectional concerns by narrating experiences of displacement, linguistic marginalization, gendered exclusion, and postcolonial memory simultaneously. These practices constitute forms of epistemic resistance, challenging dominant narratives and reclaiming spaces for alternative knowledge grounded in lived experience. Taken together, these examples show that decolonial intersectionality in Morocco is not merely a theoretical lens but a practical framework for analyzing and transforming social reality. By centering the voices of those positioned at multiple sites of marginalization, it exposes how colonial power continues to operate across education, language, borders, and cultural representation. At the same time, it opens pathways toward epistemic justice by linking knowledge production to struggles over social equity, cultural recognition, and political inclusion. Realizing this potential, however, requires sustained engagement with local contexts, institutional reform, and an ongoing commitment to

challenging entrenched power relations that continue to shape postcolonial Moroccan society (Santos, 2014).

BORDERS OF KNOWLEDGE: THE MOROCCAN DECOLONIAL TURN AND THE DECOLONIZATION OF ARAB ACADEMIA

A renewed interest has also emerged in Morocco's pre-colonial past, with a special focus on the contributions of indigenous peoples and the formative role of Islam in shaping Moroccan civilization (Graiouid, 2009). This revival reflects the nation's struggle to cope with the continuing effects of the colonial era. Decolonization in Morocco is not only a political concern but also a cultural and educational undertaking. A key dimension of this movement involves challenging the historical narratives imposed by colonial forces. Projects in this area include reclaiming Morocco's cultural heritage, recognizing the rights of indigenous communities, and rethinking the country's historical contributions. Central to these initiatives is the revitalization of traditional cultural expressions, such as painting, literature, clothing, music, and handicrafts, that draw upon Morocco's rich heritage. Education has played a particularly significant role in this process. For decades, Morocco's educational system was shaped by Eurocentric perspectives that continue to influence how students are taught and how knowledge is valued. As Sadiqi (2014) observes, "The legacy of colonialism in Moroccan education has perpetuated a Eurocentric bias, which continues to shape the minds of students" (p. 87).

Recent reforms, however, aim to integrate Moroccan history, culture, and languages into the curriculum, thereby confronting colonial legacies and fostering a more inclusive national identity. Language constitutes another crucial arena of Morocco's decolonial process. Under colonial rule, French was elevated to the status of language of administration, education, and commerce, while Arabic and Tamazight were marginalized. This hierarchy persists today, as Ennaji (2005) argues: "The dominance of French in postcolonial Morocco has maintained the colonial power dynamics, marginalizing Arabic and Tamazight speakers" (p. 102). Current efforts to promote *Darija* (Moroccan Arabic) and Tamazight in education form part of a broader strategy to reclaim cultural identity and resist linguistic imperialism. These initiatives also intersect with broader socio-economic inequalities, particularly those affecting Amazigh communities, as Bhabha (1994) notes, "The colonial enterprise has left a lasting impact on the social fabric of postcolonial societies, reinforcing power imbalances and marginalizing indigenous populations" (p. 72). The decolonial movement in Morocco thus places significant emphasis on advancing Amazigh culture, language, and political representation.

The challenge of decolonization also extends to academic institutions in Morocco and across the Arab world, where colonial legacies continue to shape intellectual life. The struggle for epistemic freedom, the right to produce and value local knowledge on one's own terms, remains ongoing, much like the broader fight for political and economic autonomy. Western knowledge systems remain deeply embedded within academic structures, influencing curricula, research methods, and notions of intellectual authority. As Edward Said (1978) argued, the global marginalization of indigenous epistemologies was not merely a byproduct of colonization but also a deliberate strategy to sustain intellectual dependency. The continued dominance of Western frameworks in Arab academia reflects this systematic imbalance and calls for more than superficial reforms. Genuine decolonization requires a comprehensive reconsideration of academic goals, curricula, and methods of validating knowledge. Thinkers such as Taha Abdurrahman, Mohammed Abed Al-Jabri, Abdelkébir Khatibi, and Abdelwahab El-Messiri provide critical insights into this endeavor.

Abdurrahman critiques the uncritical absorption of Western philosophy in the Arab world, often at the expense of local Islamic and Arab intellectual traditions. For him, decolonization entails restoring intellectual and moral sovereignty through *taṣīliyya* (authenticating), which emphasizes the production of knowledge rooted in local traditions while remaining critically engaged with global thought. His call for an epistemic rebirth positions Arab-Islamic intellectual legacies as dynamic sources of creativity rather than relics of the past. Similarly, Al-Jabri highlights the intellectual stagnation reinforced by colonial rule and underscores the need to reinterpret Arab rationality in ways that respond to contemporary challenges while remaining faithful to Arab-Islamic heritage. He advocates for an Arab modernity that is authentically grounded rather than a mere imitation of Western models.

This resonates with Abdurrahman's critique of the uncritical adoption of foreign paradigms, as both stress the importance of reclaiming indigenous knowledge systems. Khatibi adds another layer to this debate through his focus on language, identity, and culture. He argues that colonialism of the mind is as significant as political or economic domination. In his view, language is central to decolonizing knowledge, as the continued marginalization of Arabic and indigenous languages perpetuates colonial hierarchies in Arab academia. For Khatibi, the revival of Arab languages as vehicles of intellectual production is essential to establishing a truly decolonized intellectual space.

El-Messiri (2006) echoes these concerns, calling for a fundamental restructuring of education that reflects the moral frameworks, histories, and lived experiences

of local communities. His work emphasizes the inherently political nature of decolonization, underscoring the need to dismantle the power dynamics that privilege Western knowledge systems. True decolonization, therefore, requires moving beyond rejecting Western ideas wholesale; instead, it calls for fostering an intellectual environment where Arab and Islamic traditions can engage in respectful dialogue with other epistemologies on equal terms.

Together, the contributions of Abdurrahman, Al-Jabri, Khatibi, and El-Messiri provide a theoretical foundation for rethinking academic institutions in Morocco and the Arab world. By affirming the value of indigenous traditions while critically engaging with global thought, their work points toward the possibility of transforming academic spaces into sites of intellectual liberation rather than continued dependence.

CONCLUSION

Decolonization in Morocco, as in the broader Amazigh-Arab academic context, is a complex and multifaceted project that extends far beyond the attainment of political independence in the mid-twentieth century. It represents a sustained effort to dismantle the deeply embedded legacies of colonialism while also confronting the constraints of local authoritarian traditions. This process is not limited to politics; rather, it encompasses education, language, culture, social relations, and knowledge production. Decolonization, therefore, should be understood as a comprehensive and ongoing societal transformation, one that requires collective participation, constant engagement with diverse epistemologies, and sensitivity to the lived realities of underrepresented communities.

Within this framework, Moroccan intellectuals such as Abdelkébir Khatibi, Taha Abdurrahman, Mohammed Abed Al-Jabri, and Abdellah Laroui have each advanced distinct approaches to decoloniality, ethical, rationalist, linguistic, and historical that together illustrate the richness of Morocco's intellectual engagement. Their works highlight the need not only to resist colonial domination but also to rethink indigenous traditions, epistemologies, and cultural forms to build more equitable and inclusive futures. At the same time, scholarship on Moroccan decolonization often suffers from fragmentation, insufficient contextualization, and limited attention to praxis. Too often, theories are presented as abstract or disconnected from the everyday realities of Moroccan society. For decolonization to fulfill its transformative promise, it must engage directly with pressing issues such as education reform, language policy, and cultural production.

These domains remain critical spaces for addressing the material and epistemic borders that continue to shape Moroccan identities and social hierarchies. The concept of the border, whether geographic, linguistic, cultural, or epistemic, offers a particularly productive lens through which to view Morocco's decolonial turn. Borders represent sites of negotiation and contestation where colonial paradigms are dismantled, inherited traditions are interrogated, and new identities and knowledges emerge. By situating Moroccan decolonization as a "Bordered process," scholars can better understand it as a dynamic and open-ended project: one that avoids both reductive essentialism and wholesale rejection of the West, while instead fostering critical dialogue across traditions. In this sense, decolonization in Morocco is best conceived not as a finite achievement but as a long-term, evolving process of intellectual and social transformation. It is precisely in its plurality involving cultural revitalization, linguistic justice, epistemic sovereignty, and historical rethinking that Moroccan decolonization demonstrates its strength, situating local struggles within wider global debates on decoloniality.

Despite its contributions, this study is subject to several limitations. First, the analysis is mainly theoretical and interpretive, based on critical engagement with existing research and chosen examples rather than on new empirical fieldwork. Consequently, the discourse may inadequately reflect the diversity of lived experiences across various regions, social strata, and communities in Morocco. Second, while the study emphasizes Amazigh, linguistic, and epistemic marginalization, it does not provide an exhaustive examination of all intersecting factors, such as regional economic disparities or generational differences, which also shape decolonial processes. Third, the focus on Moroccan intellectual traditions and academic debates may limit the applicability of some conclusions to broader social contexts beyond educational and cultural institutions. Lastly, because decolonial struggles are always changing, especially when it comes to language policy and global mobility regimes, some of the changes talked about here are still happening and could change. Future research would benefit from integrating empirical methodologies, such as interviews or ethnographic studies, to further substantiate decolonial theory in quotidian practices and to enhance comprehension of the mechanisms of epistemic resistance at the local level.

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