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Charis Boutieri, *Learning in Morocco: Language Politics and the Abandoned Educational Dream*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2016. xix + 280 pp. Figures, notes, bibliography, and index. \$85.00 U.S. (cl). ISBN 978-0-2530-2051-2; \$32.00 U.S. (pb). ISBN 978-0-2530-2050-5.

Review by Amy Young Evrard, Gettysburg College.

Charis Boutieri's *Learning in Morocco* is a look at Moroccan discourses on language and education and their fraught relationship to economic development. Boutieri begins by affirming that schools in Morocco, as in much of the Middle East/North Africa region, are in crisis. Morocco's education system is ranked at the bottom for the region, which is ranked the lowest in the developing world. Only 23% of students who begin primary school will graduate from high school, and those who do graduate can be categorized as "multilingual illiterates" with poor employment prospects in an increasingly globalized neoliberal economy (pp. 3-4). Yet Boutieri provides a great deal of nuance in her analysis of this crisis, leaving the reader feeling both hopeful and hopeless about today's students and their future prospects.

One of her major arguments is that education, including language learning, extends well beyond the schoolroom. Morocco's various languages have multiple meanings beyond the political or economic instrumentalization that has informed language policy. Moreover, rather than being merely a site of socialization at the hands of the state, as education theory often purports, the schoolroom is an important site of resistance and contestation. Students work out their position towards the state, Islam, and a presumably multicultural Moroccan identity. The students' awareness of their location within these language discourses and agendas of the state gives them a sense of agency not dissimilar to the agency demonstrated by youth in the recent Arab Uprisings around the region. And yet the reader cannot help feeling that the future of Morocco's youth will be crushed by these discourses and, without vast changes to the educational and economic systems in Morocco, the situation will only worsen.

As resistance and response to French colonialism, nationalist regimes have instituted varying degrees of Arabization policies in public schools and at the university level. These have been unevenly carried out both in time and according to discipline. Arabization in secondary schools has been a focus of general state policy, but at the university level, the sciences are based in French and the humanities in Arabic. In fact, students are tracked toward sciences or humanities based on their language skills rather than test scores or other measures, and French language skills are given higher weight even within the context of Arabization in secondary schools. Furthermore, the Arabization policy is problematic for Moroccan students because it is based on a modernized version of Classical Arabic (*fusha*) rather than the dialect of Arabic spoken in Morocco (*darija*), presenting a double problem: most students are uncomfortable learning and communicating in *fusha* and are made to feel ashamed of that discomfort because *fusha* is the sacred language of Islam and therefore a fundamental part of their Muslim identity. Adding to the complexity is the fact that a significant portion of the population speaks a dialect of yet another language, broadly referred to as Tamazight (Berber), as their mother tongue.

Different languages therefore satisfy different objectives that are affective, educational, religious, and professional. Language skills are, furthermore, unevenly available according to class: upper-class students who attend French schools have French fluency and access to the best university spots in the sciences, almost ensuring a good job at home or abroad. Rural students who speak Tamazight at home and must learn Arabic and French at the local public school have an almost impossible upward climb to gain access to those same economic opportunities. Ultimately, the more degrees of separation that stand between a student and French fluency, the farther that student is removed from the best economic opportunities.

This is not an ethnography of a particular school, although Boutieri includes examples and conclusions based in her fieldwork at public high schools in two regions: Rabat-Salé-Zaïr-Zemmour and Gharb-Chrarda-Béni Hssen. The reader can get a sense of the Moroccan public school: the students cheating and bribing and talking on their mobile phones during class, the teachers not showing up to class and despairing of teaching anything to the majority of students. The reader can envision the packed classroom, the lack of supplies, the passionate conversations in the hallways and the teachers' lounge. However, the main thrust of the book is an anthropological analysis of the state and its discourses surrounding language and education, with an ethnographic foundation in the daily lives of several of the students Boutieri comes to know through the school and, to a lesser extent, instructors in the classroom.

The introduction and conclusion speak to Boutieri's larger desire to intervene in the anthropology of education and in our understanding of youth and development in Morocco and the region. The chapters in between take a deeper look at various ways that language policies are deployed in school and society and how individual Moroccans reproduce and disrupt these discourses at school and in their everyday lives. In chapters two and three Boutieri shows us the struggles of students and teachers to translate scientific terms from French into Arabic, an absurd project given that the university science curriculum will be taught in French--and even more given the ironic fact that "the scientific lingua franca is English, and the United States ranks higher than France in scientific and technical expertise" (p. 77). Yet the reader feels the pain of a post-colonial nation that wants its future generations to be able to be "modern" in Arabic rather than having to choose between modernity and Arab identity, especially given the historic role of Arab translators and philosophers in providing the foundation for contemporary Western scientific inquiry.

Chapter four is a somewhat confusing examination of the role of Islamic education in public schools and the coming together of language and morality. It is through Islamic education, perhaps more than any other arena, that the state makes a play to legitimize itself (through the monarch's double role as political and religious leader of Morocco). Yet Islamic education classes seem to be the playing field where students are most able and willing to challenge the authority of the state, given that Islam and Islamic political movements provide an increasingly legitimate space for such critique.

Chapter five is a wonderfully informative look at Berber language politics and how what might be championed as an example of Moroccan celebration of multiculturalism is also part of a worldwide strategy of controlling multicultural identities by isolating them. Although Tamazight may be a mother tongue and an important part of Moroccan identity, students see little future in it whether in providing opportunities for them, or turning them into "modern" global citizens. Instead, Berber language study becomes a kind of add-on for those interested in it and an annoyance for those who already speak it at home with their families. In this chapter, Boutieri includes a useful summary of the history of Berber identity and recent cultural and political movements.

Boutieri's argument about education taking place outside the classroom, where students have some space to guide their own learning, is most clearly articulated in chapter six. Following several students' lives online and through texting on mobile phones, Boutieri finds that students who have difficulty learning French in the classroom use it fluently as a "flirting" language, taking advantage of the more

lax standards of grammar and spelling allowed in online formats. Moreover, students code switch in interesting ways, using a complex combination of *darija* and French that key one another into ethnic identity, class status, and future prospects as a romantic partner. These online forums particularly provide young women the opportunity to be more “open” to unrelated males and experiment with ideals of romance and sexuality while remaining in the safety of anonymity and modesty. This chapter is so poignant, showing how young people have agency in their deployment and manipulation of language politics but also how, ultimately, this agency serves to reproduce discourses that privilege knowledge of French and debase knowledge of *darija* and Tamazight.

France is a specter throughout the book, first as the colonial power that set many of these processes in motion, and as the not-so-post-colonial power that continues to be Morocco’s main economic partner and donor. From its colonial school system to its participation in setting standards for schools in Morocco today, France has made it such that “[contemporary] students are almost as dependent on the French language as their colonial counterparts” (p. 49). Through French language and culture, France also serves as the standard of modernity for young Moroccans, even as they question whether Moroccans who are francophone or who live a perceived French lifestyle really are Moroccan.

Another specter is neoliberalism. Neoliberalism has become something of a shibboleth, in my opinion, derided by almost all anthropologists writing today without much of an attempt to show causality between a specific, well-defined aspect of neoliberalism and the effect anthropologists claim it to have on specific societies. Boutieri does better than most to define what she means by neoliberalism and to show how the mentality of privatization and competition causes further harm to students by making them and their families internalize academic failure as their own shortcoming rather than the state’s. They are in a sense fooled by a system that tells them education is the fast track to economic opportunity, limits their potential through language policy and lack of investment in education, and then shrinks the public sector and the well-paying jobs that provided a good standard of living for a previous generation of Moroccans from the middle and lower-middle classes. Neoliberalism is best represented, for many of the Moroccans Boutieri interviews, by the unemployed graduates (*diplomés chômeurs*) protesting in front of Parliament on a regular basis: those who have received hollow degrees from a mostly-free educational system with little hope for a job that will allow them to start a family and live in some degree of comfort and financial security. Boutieri also qualifies the role of neoliberalism, arguing that there are also historical trajectories of modernization and nationalism that interact with and sometimes contradict the goals of neoliberalism.

This book is aimed at anthropologists and other scholars of education and its role in development. It will be of interest to scholars of Morocco and the Middle East/North Africa region, particularly those interested in youth culture and in growing concerns in the region about the diminishing opportunities for young people in changing regional economies. *Learning in Morocco* joins a number of important recent works examining these issues in the region. Scholars of colonialism and post-colonialism, particularly in the Francophone world, will be interested to see how the legacy of colonialism continues to play out in education and economy in settings like Morocco. *Learning in Morocco* could be of use in a graduate classroom in anthropology, education, or Middle Eastern Studies as well. The book has certain hallmarks of a dissertation-turned-first-book (repetition, quick mentions of scholars and complex theoretical concepts without much explanation, and dense prose) that would make it inaccessible to undergraduates, however, unless they are specialists in these topics.

Boutieri begins the book with crisis and ends with the suggestion that the anthropology of education is also in something of a crisis because of its tendency to privilege the schoolroom as the most important and influential site of education. Theorizing education as something much bigger than the schoolroom, she hopes, will allow us “to push our imagination to envisage drastically otherwise the future shape of collective organization and redistributive justice in Morocco, as well as in the rest of the region” (p. 229). After getting to know the witty, intelligent, engaged, and hopeful students featured in Boutieri’s

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ethnography, the reader certainly hopes that this vision for the future will be realized in time to give them the future prospects they so desperately hope for.

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