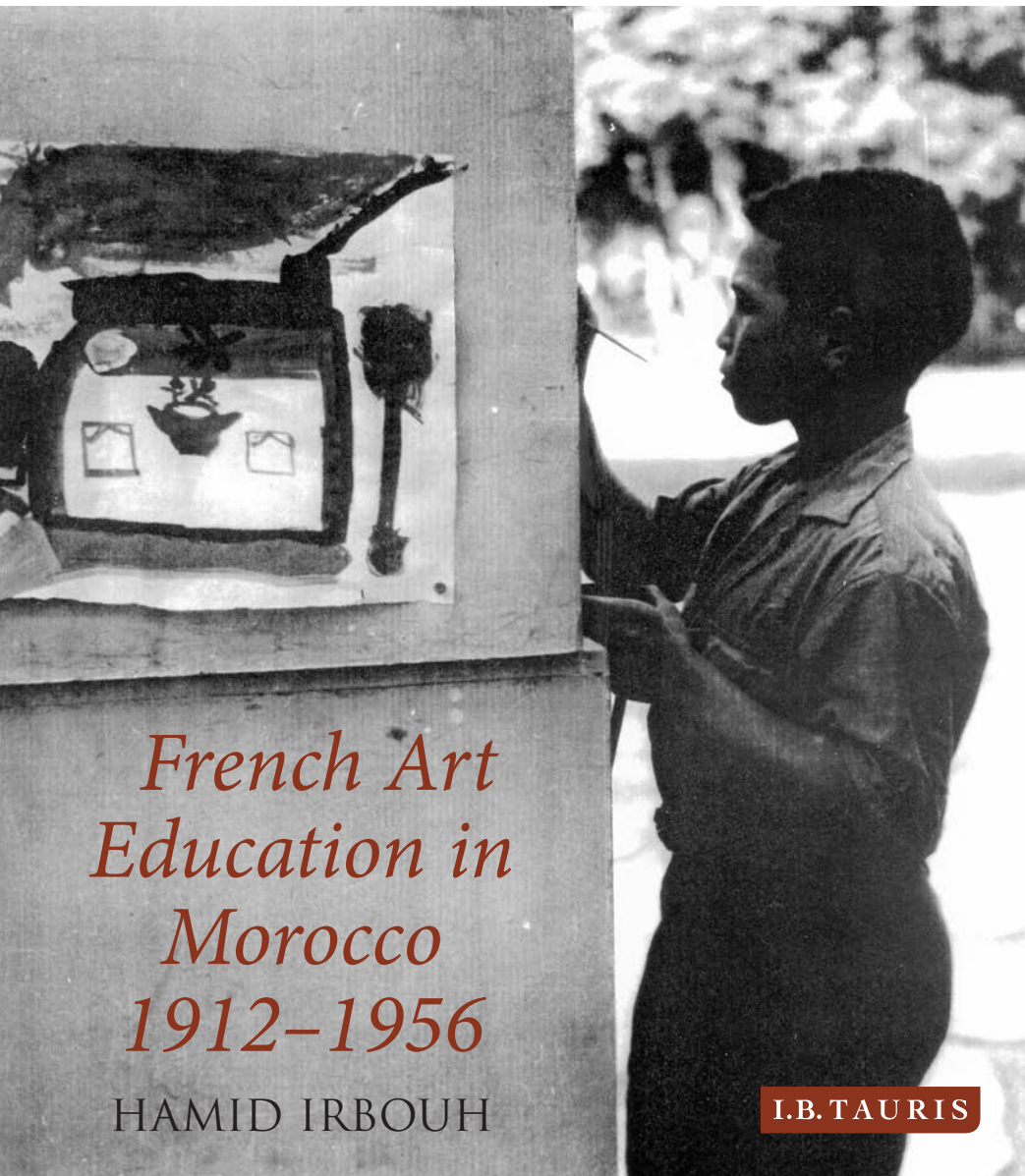


ART IN THE SERVICE OF COLONIALISM



*French Art
Education in
Morocco
1912–1956*

HAMID IRBOUH

I.B. TAURIS

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To my parents
El-Khammar Ben Mohamed Irbouh
Fatna Bent Abdelkader Boukhrissa
and to the memory of my great grandmother
Mouma Cheikh

Every relationship of 'hegemony' is necessarily a pedagogic relationship.
Antonio Gramsci, quoted in James Joll. *Gramsci*.
(Glasgow: William Collins Sons
and Co. Ltd., 1977), p. 101.

He was useful because he had been instructed.
Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*
(and *The Secret Sharer*),
(New York: Nal Penguin Inc. 1983), pp. 106-107.

Archive Centers and Libraries Mentioned in the Text

I Archive Centers

- ADN Ministere des Affaires Etrangères, Archives Diplomatiques, Nantes, France.
AN Archives Nationales, Paris, France.
CHEAM Centre des Hautes Etudes d'Administration Musulmane, Paris, France.
VA Villa des Arts, Casablanca, Morocco.
AEBA Archives de l'Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Casablanca, Morocco.
Personal Archives of Simone Gruner, Paris, France.
Personal Archives of Jacqueline Brodskis, Rabat, Morocco.

II Libraries

- Bibliothèque Administrative de l'Hotel de Ville, Paris, France.
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Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris, France.
La Source Bibliothèque, Rabat, Morocco.
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The Utica Public Library, Utica, New York, USA.

All translations are mine, and any errors of fact or interpretation are, of course, my sole responsibility.

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INTRODUCTION

This book argues that French art education in the Protectorate of Morocco (1912-1956) played a major role in supporting the colonial agenda in this North African country. The tendency to locate Moroccan art production within an explanatory frame of fine arts--understood in its narrowest sense--and with little or no reference to the larger political and economic conditions of its production, has led a number of contemporary Moroccan art historians and critics to offer only partial explanations of the country's art during this important and crucial period. In attempting to address the formation of Moroccan art production, my aim is to provide, instead, some wider parameters by focusing on art education in relation to the much larger economic and social processes of craft industries.

A major policy of French rule in Morocco consisted in segregating Moroccans in the *medinas* (walled cities) from the French and European communities in the *villes nouvelles* (French settlements the Protectorate Administration built parallel to the *medinas*). Unless otherwise noted the noun "Moroccans" refers throughout this text to the Muslim Arab and Berber population. To keep Moroccans sequestered from the French necessitated the strengthening of their traditional craft economy, involving the leather industry, carpet weaving, embroidery, pottery, metal and brass smithing, wood and stone sculpting, ceramics, and tile making. To this end, the Protectorate Administration restructured Moroccan craft workshops by shifting their control from the hands of guilds to those of French authorities. This reorganisation also was to lead to the formation, in vocational trade schools introduced by the French, of generations of Moroccan craftsmen, who adopted French recommendations as well as their modes of production. The French calculated that these educational

establishments would prepare them to develop their sector of the economy in the *medinas* and gain economic independence, thus keeping them separate from the French larger colonial plans for the development of the Protectorate. Once they had graduated, students introduced French techniques and work habits into the *medinas*' workshops where they worked.

However, to secure a lasting control of the workshops, the French had to assure continued admission in these schools. This necessitated the creation within the Service of Youth and Sports of a system of Open Workshops that recruited unschooled Moroccan children throughout the country and introduced them to drawing and painting as a hobby, assuming that they would eventually enrol in the schools.

The development of the *villes nouvelles* in Casablanca, Rabat, Marrakesh, Fez, Meknes and other cities, next to the *medinas*, called for a trained Moroccan labour force able to work in the new trades required by the new European forms of architecture and building construction. The Casablanca School of Fine Arts, created for this purpose, recruited Moroccan high school graduates and channelled them into applied art divisions where they specialised in professions such as carpentry, architectural drawing, and other European skills needed for developing the *villes nouvelles*.

As I will demonstrate, these schools performed an instrumental role in diffusing French colonial cultural hegemony throughout the colonial society. In addition, this domination was also maintained by field studies and administrative reports, written by French scholars and colonial administrators of both genders, who embraced the agenda of the French authorities while claiming to sympathise with the Moroccans. The scholars judged Moroccan crafts as being inferior to French art, thus legitimising their reorganisation. As I will show, there are chastening examples in which these schools and scholars selectively segregated the local population from both the French and Europeans. Their motive was not to educate Moroccans so that they could compete fairly with the French and Europeans, but to produce a subordinate work force that served the interest of the colonial state. However accomplished, whether directly or indirectly, such action smacked of "manifest destiny," and today would be labelled as racist. I conclude by examining the role played by postcolonial Moroccan artists in creating a counter art that has resisted the French art paradigm and the manners in which they contributed to cultural decolonisation.

As I discuss below, Moroccan scholarship about the formation of the visual culture in the country has, in my view, been quite simplistic because it restricted its focus to the field of the "fine arts," conceived in a narrow and also unproblematised manner, one that pays insufficient

attention to the historical development of that notion. This book proposes a more nuanced position. It examines various French administrators and individuals who managed craft and art schools and their curricula, and the ways in which each responded and embraced the colonial stance. In the pages that follow I provide a short historical background about the establishment of the Protectorate and point out the concepts with which the French achieved their control over Morocco. I follow this by a discussion of contemporary Moroccan scholarship on local art production. I then supply an analysis of the aims of French art education. The introduction concludes with an exploration of an outline of the book's chapters and its theoretical aspirations.

The Establishment of French Colonial Hegemony Over Morocco

Until the turn of the twentieth century Morocco remained the last North African territory not to fall under colonial rule. The European conquest of North Africa had begun with the French colonisation of Algeria in 1830. Tunisia became a French Protectorate in 1881. Beginning in the nineteenth century France, Spain, and Germany had all shown a keen interest in colonising Morocco because of its strategic position, rich resources, and potential trade. Moroccan resistance could be explained by its topography, which deterred invasion, and by its powerful tribes, which formed its army and proved to be a potent fighting force against foreign invaders. Its Sultans, on the other hand, had enough diplomatic skill to play off the European colonial powers against each other, even though they lacked a sound economic policy. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Sultans, however, failed to obtain steady sources of revenue and had to rely on French banks for loans in exchange for concessions, primarily consisting of commercial privileges and immunity from Moroccan laws for foreigners, or *protégés*.

Under the rule of Moulay `Abdel `Aziz (r. 1894-1908) the crisis increased. He failed to introduce the needed economic reforms and revitalise the *Makhzen* (the Moroccan government and administration). He relied, instead, on Europeans, particularly French banks and business firms, for advice. In 1906 the Algeciras conference, attended by the European colonial powers, pressured Morocco to open its internal markets for international trade. In 1904 France acknowledged Spain's interests in northern Morocco. Three years later, in 1907, a large number of tribes rebelled against the growing power of the European *protégés* and banks, as well as the heavy taxes imposed by the *Makhzen*. In

the same year, under the pretext of protecting French residents and their properties, General Hubert Lyautey (later to become the first Resident General of the Protectorate, 1912-1925) intervened with French troops from Algeria and occupied the cities of Oujda and Casablanca. Within a year, he had assisted Moulay Hafid in deposing his brother Moulay `Abdel `Aziz. Over the next four years, France concluded secret agreements with England and Germany in preparation for the occupation of Morocco. On March 30, 1912, Lyautey surrounded the capital city, Fez, and forced Moulay Hafid (r. 1908-1912) to sign the Treaty of Fez. In this way, France imposed its "Protectorate" over two-thirds of the country, with Spain controlling the remaining one third in the north and the Sahara in the south. Tangier became an international zone.

Lyautey established the beginnings of French hegemony over Morocco. He introduced a set of reforms, which a large group of French colonial administrators, who had already acquired the needed experience in Algeria and Tunisia, put in place. These included military men, scholars, bureaucrats, urbanists, educators, and financiers, among others. They created a base for an infrastructure aimed ultimately at infiltrating Moroccan society. They succeeded in initiating a passive revolution by following the Tunisian, not the Algerian, model of government and, as a result, transformed Morocco from a "Protectorate" into what the French historian, Charles-André Julien, has called a "nominal" colony.¹ The French controlled the military, police, and finances, the offices of trade, agriculture and the colonisation of new land; they also took charge of education, health, public works, Fine Arts, the protection of historical monuments, and urbanism (including urban planning), as well as municipal, postal, and civil control services. As for the Moroccans, they managed the *Habous* (pious foundations for religious charitable purposes), the *domaines* (administration controlling land and estates), religious education and institutions, and the local justice system. This reconfiguration allowed Lyautey to rule through consensus rather than through force and coercion while, at the same time, claiming to respect local customs and culture.² French plans faced strong resistance, though. Abdelkrim al-Khattabi rebelled in the Rif in the 1920s, and only the alliance between the Spanish and the French defeated him. Tribes in the Atlas regions, likewise, continued fighting before being finally "pacified" in 1934.

The Protectorate, nevertheless, well illustrates the Lyautean criterion of peaceful colonisation. The French colonial historian, André Colliez, in providing an explanation for this paradigm, argues that "France colonised [Morocco] not with a ruler and a square but through the help of [native] men and the local environment."³ The resulting composition of Moroccan society signalled the passage of power from the historical block of the *Makhzen* to the French administrations.⁴ The hegemonic theo-

retical model has been used by a number of North African and French scholars and applied to case studies in sociology, history, and political science.⁵ This book aims to develop this hypothesis in relation to the French art education in Morocco.

Yet, how did these mechanisms bring about this passive conquest based on the example of Tunisia, as opposed to the direct colonisation of Algeria? There the French had attempted to assimilate the local population by obliterating its traditional social structures and culture. What were the colonial strategies deployed by the French to mobilise and absorb the different aspects of Moroccan pre-colonial craft industries, as well as its male and female labour force, into the political ideology and hegemonic culture of France? To what extent did the French reforms of the guilds, craft, and Fine Art education impinge on Moroccans? How did these reforms mould them into productive colonial forces and, subsequently, produce a distinctively colonial visual culture? And to what degree were these developments and techniques influenced by those already in use in France and in other colonial empires? These are some of the questions the following chapters aim to answer.

Michael W. Doyle, a student of empires, has observed that imperial rule could be "formal" or "informal." Whereas the formal relied on direct colonisation, the informal could be achieved when a state controlled another state through political and economic collaboration and cultural dependence.⁶ The Protectorate of Morocco exemplifies the second case. Lyautey provided the French authorities with what Edward Said has called a "structure of attitude and reference."⁷ French soldiers, historians, orientalist scholars, archaeologists, ethnographers, real estate speculators, and profiteers, all chartered the country. Each group employed its own discourse, either accentuating definite facts or generating new ones. Most of them strove to fit the different aspects of Moroccan historical, social, economic, and cultural fields within the French vision. The resulting scholarship created a knowledge that became an authoritative form of reference on which the French authorities relied in order to manage Moroccan affairs.

The colonial experience Lyautey had acquired in Algeria prepared him well for the task. The adventure transformed him into what contemporary French historian, Daniel Rivet, has categorised as a colonial "alchemist," one who knew how to operate "a synthesis made of contraries."⁸ In his attempt to control the *Makhzen*, Lyautey created an opposition between the *bled al-Makhzen* (land recognising the authority of the state and the urban centres, which the French considered Arab), and the *bled al-Siba* (land of dissidence, the countryside, considered by the French as Berber). Lyautey hypothesised that the Berbers might remain free from the grip of Islam's tenets, become more open minded

than the Muslim Arabs and stay closer to the Europeans in race and in temperament. Berber tribes, therefore, needed to be shielded from Arab contamination. The only way to accomplish this was through the practice of what Julien has called a "cultural greenhouse."⁹ This attempt to draw the Berbers into French culture pressured the Sultans to collaborate and submit to the demands made by the French authorities from fear that the tribes would ally with the French against the *Makhzen*. As will become clear throughout this book, the opposition between the *bled al-Makhzen* and the *bled al-Siba* would be reflected in the French analysis of the crafts produced in the country.

The achievements of Lyautey in Morocco also transformed the cultural politics of the French Empire from within. He deemed that, for example, in the Protectorate the French colonial politics should no longer "create" new institutions as they did in Algeria, but "restore" older ones.¹⁰ Preserving the *medinas* and keeping Moroccans segregated from the French and Europeans, while allowing them to gain economic independence would, Lyautey calculated, prevent them from interfering in the plans the French had for their country. He, nevertheless, helped them to achieve moderate economic independence by strengthening their traditional economy, which generally consisted of craft manufacturing, so that it could meet the challenge of the modern market. He mobilised the craft industries through fragmentation, reduction, and the suppression of the powers of the *amin* (head of the guild) and the *muhtasib* (market inspector) who, until then, had monitored the guilds. Lyautey and the Residents after him deemed unproductive, or possibly dangerous, whatever they judged useless to their politics. Without doubt the reforms of craft industries sustained the guilds so that Moroccans could manage their local sector without reliance on the French authorities. Meanwhile, the French were busy transforming the Atlantic facade à l'américaine, particularly Casablanca, Rabat, and Fedala (now Mohammedia) and encouraging French capital to relocate from France to Morocco.

The following statistics from *L'Afrique Française*, the monthly journal and propaganda organ of the French authorities, illustrate how the French projected the image of the Protectorate as a rich "petite Amérique" and as a lucrative market.¹¹ From 1913 to 1915, Morocco exported to France 52,964,007 francs worth of wheat, barley, beans, chickpeas, corn, eggs, almonds, spices, wax, gum arabic, leather, and wool. It imported 218,002,995 worth of tea, sugar, candles, wine, dried and canned meat, fish, vegetables, shoes, cotton and silk fabrics, petroleum for industrial and domestic consumption, papers, books, soap, shopping bags, sheet metals, iron and wood for building construction and carpentry, hardware supplies, furniture, automobiles, trucks, and rails.¹² Ten years after the establishment of the Protectorate, export and import Morocco exchanged

with France grossed 237,466,425 and 777,675,725 respectively, or a total of 1,015,142,154 francs.¹³

During World War I, the Protectorate again proved to be a vital source of supplies. In addition to 23,380 soldiers it contributed to the French army at the European front,¹⁴ Morocco also provided food supplies consisting of wheat, barley, and corn. Local wool--particularly the *'aboudia* type which "equalled France's finest wool"--and animal skins equipped the French army with the necessary raw materials for clothing and shoes.¹⁵

Morocco's resources, however, were not limited to agriculture. France found in the Protectorate a plenitude of fish, of which 24.5 million kilograms were exported to France in 1936. Fish exploitation launched the construction of twenty-four factories and eight canning shops, mainly in the Atlantic ports, and employed 6,000 workers. The local assets also consisted of mines, including phosphate (exploited from 1921), iron, lead, zinc, manganese, and cobalt.¹⁶ The French helped the Moroccans develop their craft industries based on French reforms of the guilds in order to fully concentrate on harnessing agricultural and mine exploitation.

Reforms of guilds involved French politicians, scholars, administrators, industrialists, and, to a large extent, Moroccans. All of them enacted, consciously or unconsciously, an expanded definition of the nature of craft, its relation to art, and its social role. It should be noted that the French educators employed these concepts and drew pedagogical guidelines for vocational trade schools, the Open Workshops, and the Casablanca School of Fine Arts. It is my argument that, only by obtaining insights into these reforms and the ensuing colonial discourse they engendered, can we gain an acumen into how the French constructed their value judgements vis-à-vis Moroccan crafts in particular and Moroccan visual culture in general.

The *Makhzen* occasionally assisted French authorities in mustering traditional industries to their guidelines. French sociologist, Jacques Berques, has noted that historically the *Makhzen* relied on keeping a stable balance among rival forces in an "eternal movement of swing."¹⁷ The *Makhzen*, therefore, opposed some reforms deemed to violate its desire of preserving this social order. The extent to which French authorities dominated Moroccan society was partially contingent upon the degree to which the *Makhzen* checked their moves as well as upon the way they divided tasks and rewards between the Moroccans and the French. The disparity in power between the French and the Moroccans, hence, must be taken into account if we wish to accurately understand the making of colonial visual culture, including crafts--subjects which, as I will point out, have remained undiscussed by postcolonial Moroccan art his-

torians and theoreticians. Also the relationship between the French and the Moroccans needs clarification. Restricting that link to one between unequal parties, between the protector and the protected, does not tell the whole story. To locate the essence of the Protectorate, we need to define this rapport as a dynamic between two interlocutors, as a point of entry into studying the formation and meaning of particular visual cultural practices which, as we shall witness, postcolonial Moroccan artists either adopt or reject.

Contemporary Moroccan Scholarship on Moroccan Art Production

My interest lies not only within the Fine Arts but also craft productions and trainings. To state the case slightly differently, the art education which I will explore and, in certain instances, work to bring to the foreground, not only acknowledges but embraces crafts as a major form of Moroccan art production.

The growing corpus of contemporary literature by Moroccans on their art production denies the significance of the crafts as forms of cultural and aesthetic expressions. The literature, additionally, overlooks larger political and colonial conditions. For most scholars and commentators art production in Morocco in the past hundred years derived from the country's contact with Western artists. Abdelkebir Khatibi, a sociologist, novelist, and literary and art critic, for example, argues that the work of European artists including Eugène Delacroix, Henri Matisse, Paul Klee, and Nicolas de Staël, all of whom visited the country in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries had substantial impact on local art.¹⁸ Brahim Alaoui, art curator at the Paris *Institut du Monde Arabe*, agrees, claiming that European colonists introduced modern painting throughout the Arab world beginning with their expansion in the late nineteenth century. In Morocco such contact resulted in the emergence of an art that has followed a Western hierarchic model. Hence, Alaoui categorises Moroccan artists in two groups, figurative and abstract. By stressing this clarification, he does not take into account the specific historical, political, and cultural context in which modern Moroccan art formed.¹⁹

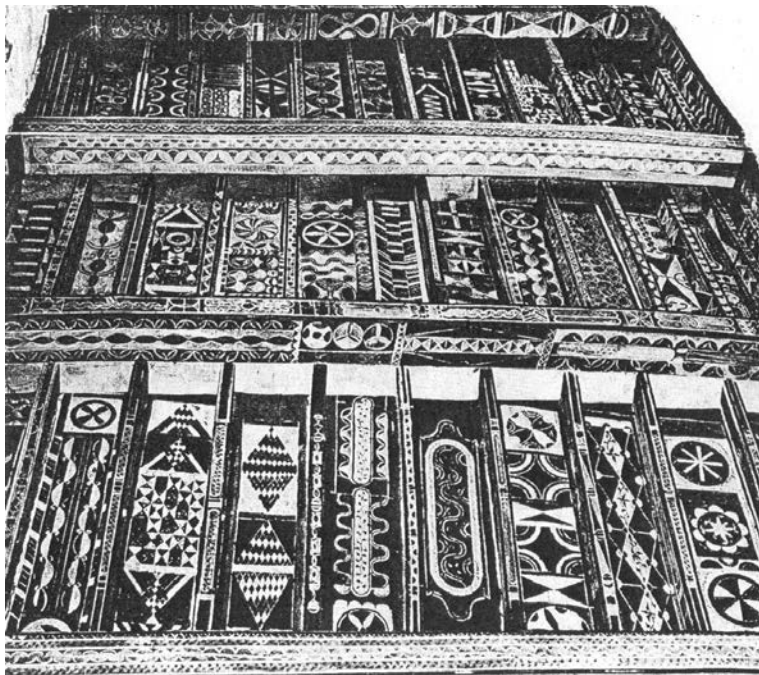
Although El Fathémy, artist and art critic, attributes the birth of modern Moroccan art to the establishment of the Protectorate, he main-

tains that its true beginning lies in the early 1950s, a period during which a number of local artists, including Ahmed Cherkaoui, Jilali Gharbaoui, and Mohamed Serguini began studying art as a profession and became aware of works by renowned European artists such as Piet Mondrian, Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky and others.²⁰ Toni Maraini, art historian and art critic, concurs with these propositions which emphasise the important contributions made by French and other European Orientalist artists. She grounds this evolution within a Hegelian reading of stylistic development, which privileges art above craft.²¹

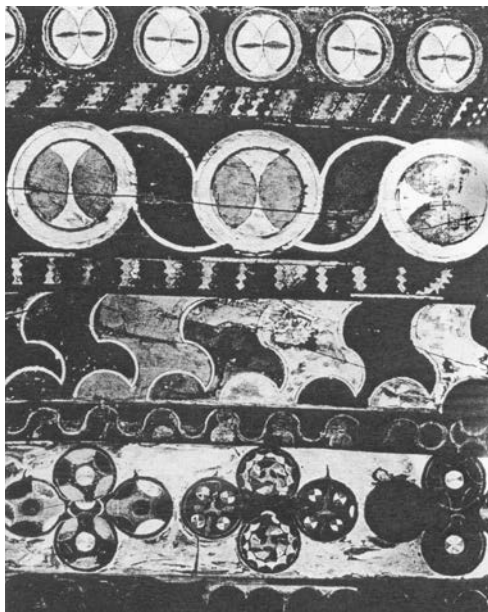
This literature focuses, surprisingly, on the elitist aspects of Moroccan art and, as a result, neglects the legacy of French colonial art educational institutions which introduced new artistic practices into the country. Instead, the various writers suggest alternative additional factors which frame the formation of a national visual tradition. Namely, they point to the appropriation by Moroccans, during the 1940s, of pictorial elements from the Turco-Islamic tradition of miniature painting and the growing interest in, and increase of, a mature mural painting tradition by young Moroccan artists around the same period.

Artists have developed similar arguments. In the early 1960s Farid Belkahia, Mohamed Melihi, Toni Maraini (Melih and Maraini were a married couple at the time), and Mohamed Chabaa returned to Morocco after completing their studies in studio art and art history in Europe and the United States. Belkahia headed the Casablanca School of Fine Arts and the latter three taught painting, art history, and interior design and decoration, respectively. They became known as the Casablanca group, and launched a set of discourses that revisited traditional Moroccan art. In drawing public attention to the richness of the local visual heritage, they also addressed the urgent need to protect it. In the mid 1960s, in collaboration with the Marrakesh *Centre Marocain pour la Recherche Esthétique et Philosophique* they published *Maghreb Art*, a bi-annual journal which showed a focused interest in architectural monuments, popular arts, and artefacts. They believed that these monuments and arts represented a definite "plastic [local] tradition" that could initiate the inception of an "authentic" modern Moroccan art, provided that they were wisely studied and exploited. Above all, Belkahia and his colleagues defined the role of the journal as "revalourising our artistic heritage and contributing to the emergence of a new national art," as well as offering a "response...to those [Moroccans] who condition the emergence of modern Moroccan art solely by assimilating the model of Western art."²²

Through illustrated articles, *Maghreb Art* (no longer published) aimed at charting the foundations on which the group could ground a revision of the history of Moroccan art. The journal dedicated the third issue, for example, to popular arts, namely, interior wooden paintings in mosques



I.1



I.2

and *zawiyas* (lodges of religious brotherhoods) in the Southern Sous region dating back to the seventeenth century (figs. I.1-4).

According to Melihi, the group became interested in the variety of decorative motifs, which went beyond the repetitiveness found in crafts and underscored, instead, the freedom of gesture and richness of surfaces that succeeded in combining graphic and painterly elements. The four colleagues judged these motifs as pictorially sophisticated as contemporary Western art.²³ During this same period, Belkahia began focusing on ways in which he hoped he could decolonise Moroccan art from Western impact. He declared that artists could investigate and employ local materials, including henna, saffron and leather, mediums all of which remained a "virgin terrain," instead of Western art supplies, including canvas and oil paints.²⁴

These attempts made by scholars and artists, however, have appeared insufficient to other Moroccans who believe that art production in the country lacked a "solid" identity. The art critic, Edmond Amran El Maleh, for example, observed in 1988 that because modern painting had been imported relatively late "in the trunks of the colonists" it was still "very young, fresh, stuck to the hands, and [consequently] could not be submitted to the test" of historical analysis.²⁵

Unlike El Maleh, Maraini maintains that painting existed in Morocco before the arrival of the French and Europeans. In an attempt to legitimise the existence of a competent local modern art, she asserts that Moroccans employed painting as a complete aesthetic system, comprising both conceptual rules and manual processes.²⁶ Arabesque designs, as a case in point, embodied "a complex" and "plastic elaboration of a synthetic conception involving time, space, and movement" and, similar to Western art, based its pictorial structure on the grid. She rejects the claims that grounded Moroccan art in "sudden leaps, sudden disruptions, and sudden births," arguing that to truly underpin its source, one needed to go back in time thousands of years, for its foundations lay in the cultural "roots which dive deep into the 'organic soil' of the nation and its history." Maraini rejects El Maleh's argument explaining that the French and Europeans imported a different technology of visual representation. In order to locate such "origins" she cites Rudolf Arnheim's remark that modern Western art resulted from a long historical evolution and multiform aesthetics. Maraini, in fact, imposes Arnheim's assertion on Moroccan art in an attempt to trace its formation to what she calls "a chain of psycho-cultural events" ranging from prehistoric archaeological markings and artefacts to the first local tattoo designs, weaving, and ceramics. By inference, instead of Western artistic supplies and tools (brushes, industrially manufactured paints, and canvases), Moroccans have employed a wide range of similar, but not compatible materials, namely, their own versions of brushes, local colours and pigments, and

varnishes with which they decorated plaster and wooden surfaces, mosaics, and fabrics. These supplies and supports constituted the basic components of a specific technology of a local visual representation. Taken as a whole, Maraini's essay invokes the specificity of Morocco's visual culture as residing, essentially, in the particularity of its sociological and cultural foundations.²⁷

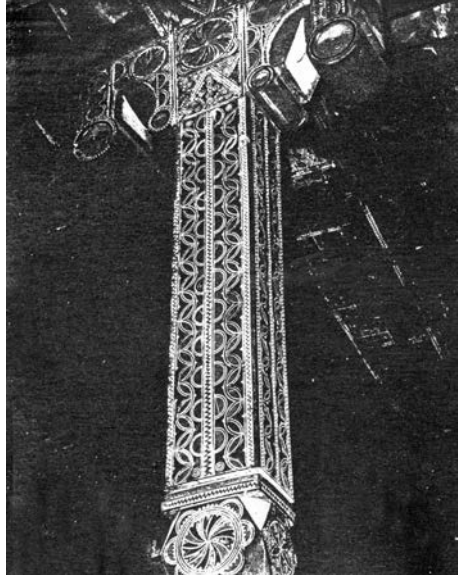
When she discusses the local representational arts, Maraini recalls that the country also produced a flourishing school known as the Moroccan-Andalusian miniature, the prototypes of which arrived from Turkey and the Middle East. This school depicted a variety of subjects ranging from scientific illustrations to sacred and profane images. Moroccan artists also excelled in popular image-making in public places, including coffee shops and public baths, a visual expression that derived from individual efforts.

Essentially "non-academic and non-learned" this latter art form, nevertheless, relied on certain know-how and produced a "sub" and "para" popular visual culture. Modern painting as a technology (i.e. industrially manufactured colours, canvas, stretchers, and easels), on the other hand, reached Morocco, beginning in the 1920s, as a result of the encounter between French artists and young Moroccans who practiced painting as a hobby. The first of such meetings, according to Maraini, occurred between the Orientalist painter, Edouard Brindeau, and Abdeslam Ben Larbi el Fassi when the former was painting in the famous Jamaa al-Fana in Marrakesh, a contact that would transform el Fassi into "the first modern Moroccan painter."²⁸

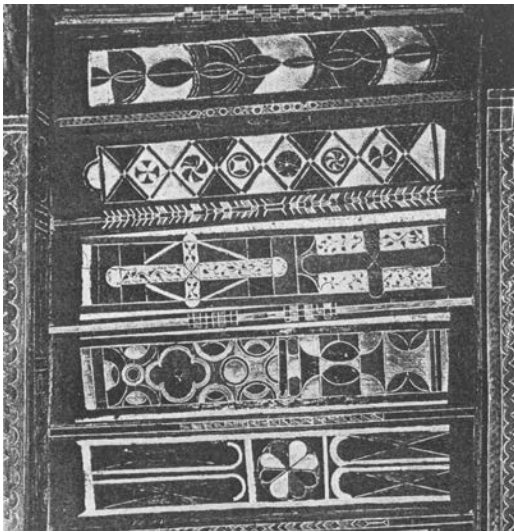
In spite of these different opinions Moroccan scholars acknowledge the vitality of embracing local crafts and materials as a legitimate inspiration. Yet with the exception of a single essay by Maraini, most of them have marginalised crafts in their writings. Maraini, an Italian, stands as the most portentous art critic in Morocco because, for the past thirty some years, she has attempted to construct a coherent analysis of Moroccan contemporary art. In this essay on crafts she surprisingly locates her subject not in Morocco, as one would have expected, but in Europe with casual references to Greece, China, India, and Latin America, in a period reaching from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. She states from the beginning that crafts remained always an ambiguous subject of study. This ambivalence stemmed from the fact that scholars regularly "wedged" them between art history, which for a long time refused to consider them as art, and anthropology and ethnography, which focused mainly on the study of popular culture. Throughout the article Maraini claims that art history, a discipline concerned with aesthetic shifts, attended mainly to the cultural accomplishments of social minority groups (a term she uses to define cultural elites) comprised of the merchant class, the bourgeoisie, the aristoc-

racy, and the priesthood. Nevertheless, archaeology became interested in examining all types of cultural production, including that of the masses. Our misunderstanding of these latter artistic expressions, according to Maraini, grew more cumbersome because crafts, as opposed to art produced by the elite, were, for the most part, made of fragile materials that easily deteriorated with the passage of time.²⁹

When discussing crafts, Maraini submits them to a male and female gender



I.3



I.4

classification and opposes the craftsman to the artist based on stylistic notions of differentiations. She defines the craftsman as a technician who practices his or her trade in "anonymity," and manufactures artefacts that respect old precepts and forms. Additionally, she views crafts as pre-industrial art forms and cultural expressions that were "uniform" and inscribed in

a routine technology.³⁰ As we shall see below and in Chapter One, Maraini's remarks, in addition to exploring crafts from an elitist approach reflect, wittingly or unwittingly, the opinions of French colonial scholars who investigated Moroccan traditional industries.