Enmeshed: The Colonial and Post-Colonial Anthropology of Moroccan Textiles and Dress

Claire Nicholas
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Abstract: This chapter traces the intellectual trajectory of the anthropology of Moroccan textiles and dress, focusing on the period from the early twentieth century to present day. The discussion focuses on the analytic and thematic circularity of tropes that characterize scholarly and quasi-scholarly treatments of the topic, as well as offering suggestions for ways to exit the loop. From the beginning, studies of Moroccan dress and textiles by anthropologists and scholars from related disciplines have been entangled in various ways with colonial projects and conceptual frameworks. Scholarship published in outlets such as Hespéris-Tamuda (as well as its predecessor journals) has contributed substantially to discourse on “traditional” Moroccan textiles and dress, especially during the colonial period. Post-independence anthropologists (and disciplinary neighbors such as art historians and museum practitioners) continue to grapple with the import of this work, which, despite its colonial origins, has more or less established the terms of the intellectual conversation around these topics. This chapter sketches the main tropes and orientations of colonial scholarship (mostly produced by Europeans), how the field and its debates developed in the post-colonial context, and proposes some directions for a post-post-colonial research program on Moroccan dress and textiles.

Keywords: Morocco, Clothing, Textiles, Colonial, Post-Colonial, Heritage, Anthropology.

Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose. With a few notable exceptions, this well-worn cliché aptly captures the tropes of scholarly and quasi-scholarly treatments of Moroccan textiles and dress, from the era immediately preceding the French Protectorate (1912-1956) to more or less present day. This analytical and thematic circularity, as well as some thoughts on how we might exit the loop, are the subject of this paper. From the very outset, studies of Moroccan dress and textiles by anthropologists and scholars from related disciplines have been entangled in various ways with colonial projects and conceptual frameworks. Indeed, scholarship published in outlets such as this one (as well as in Hespéris-Tamuda’s predecessor journals, Les Archives berbères and Hespéris) has contributed substantially to the study of Moroccan textiles and dress, especially during the colonial period. Post-independence anthropologists (and disciplinary neighbors such as art historians and museum practitioners) continue to grapple with the import of this work, which, despite its colonial origins, has more or less established the terms of the intellectual conversation around these topics. The discussion which follows sketches the main tropes and orientations of colonial scholarship (mostly produced by Europeans), how the field and its debates developed in the post-colonial context, and proposes some directions for a post-post-colonial research program on Moroccan dress and textiles.
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The first part of the discussion explores how the study of Moroccan textiles and clothing (mostly by Francophone scholars) reflected and reinforced colonial understandings of Moroccan identity categories, as well as the pre-colonial and early Protectorate economic and social order (including traditional gender roles and the division of labor). Colonial scholars were particularly interested in developing taxonomies of techniques and aesthetic qualities corresponding to distinctions based on geography, ethnicity, tribal identity, and religious confession. In equal measure, they emphasized the magico-religious aspects of textile-related practices (especially those associated with women), and sought to articulate the structure and role of male craft “guilds” (ḥanta) in the urban social and political fabric. The overarching goal of this body of work was to facilitate and anchor the colonial project of governance and its mission civilisatrice. The second section addresses how post-colonial anthropologists and adjacent scholars working in art historical or museum-based contexts have engaged with the legacy of colonial pre-occupations and its voluminous descriptive corpus. Some appear to extend or reinforce the colonial-era intellectual project (for somewhat different reasons). Others engage with that project and its continued relevance in contemporary Moroccan cultural production and heritage management as an object of study in itself. Finally, drawing on examples from recent ethnography, including my own scholarship on efforts to “rationalize” Moroccan weaving and embroidery, and emerging insights and analytical frameworks drawn from studies of material culture, dress, and craft (not limited to the Moroccan context), I seek to articulate opportunities for future research less bound by the well-worn paradigms established in colonial and post-colonial orientations towards dress and textiles.

The scope of my discussion is necessarily limited by certain constraints of length and linguistic access. Namely, my argument draws on primarily Francophone and Anglophone published scholarly and art-commercial literature from the early years of the twentieth century to present day. The choice to consider these texts (and not texts written in Arabic or other languages such as German and Spanish) is partly an artifact of the author’s own linguistic limitations. But it also reflects the sheer volume of work devoted to Moroccan textiles and dress by French or French-speaking European writers (resulting from colonial ambitions and occupation in the early 20th century)
and Francophone Moroccan writers (some trained in European and American university contexts) during the period under consideration, and the attention afforded Moroccan textiles and dress since the late 1960s by American anthropologists, museum-based researchers, and collector-scholars.

**Clothing makes the man (L’habit fait le moine): Fashioning Colonial Morocco**

In the years leading up to the establishment of the French and Spanish Protectorates, European scholars, political actors, and others effectively set the scene (and laid the groundwork) for the occupation to come. Clothing and textiles were of somewhat lesser importance in what Wyrtzen has referred to as legitimization and legibility strategies developing within a nascent protectorate, but their “scientific” description nevertheless served these broader objectives. Edmund Burke’s incisive analysis of the emergence of Moroccan studies as a highly contested academic field in the early 20th century charts the competing interests of scholars associated with the Ecole d’Alger (such as Edmond Doutté and his colleagues William Marçais and Auguste Mouléras) versus those of the upstart Mission Scientifique du Maroc (the brainchild of Alfred Le Chatelier, chair of sociologie et sociographie musulmane at the College de France, and led by Georges Salmon and later Edouard Michaux-Bellaire in Tangiers). The latter (MSM), whose efforts were published in the 33 volumes of *Les Archives marocaines* (1904-1936), ultimately won the day and dominated the production of a “scientific” inventory of Morocco in the years immediately preceding the Protectorate and the earliest years of the French administration. But with the establishment of the Comité Berbère in 1915 and the Institut des Hautes Études Marocaines in 1920 (and its umbrella publication *Hespéris*-fusing the *Archives berbères* (1915-1920) and *Bulletin de l’Institut des Hautes Études marocaines* (1920) –, the influence of the École d’Alger on the direction of scientific research in Morocco returned.

While there is not space to fully parse Burke’s who’s who of these early colonial academic and political “tribes” here, it should be noted that among the accounts generated by these scholars (historical and ethnographic), Moroccan dress and textiles feature primarily as secondary elements of “scientific” work meant to sketch the organization and logic of Moroccan social, cultural, economic and religious life. There are, however, several works (or portions of

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3. Ibid.
works) of great descriptive value. A few notable examples include Alexandre Joly’s description of industry in Tetouan (appearing across several volumes of *Archives marocaines* Tome IV, V, VII, VIII, XI, XV, XVII), which features detailed descriptions of technical processes specific to numerous textile-related crafts and trades such as leather tanning, shoe-making, and weaving (among others), alongside Arabic terminology accompanying these trades and technical processes, general information about the division of labor that organized these local industries, and drawings of artifacts and tools.

Mention of textiles and adornment appear throughout Edmond Doutté’s *Marrakech*, which, in its meandering account of travels throughout Morocco, considers practices such as tattooing and styles of adornment (including clothing) alongside discussions of soil composition and the history of saintly lineages of the region. Doutté regularly references Frazer’s *Golden Bough* to inform his analysis of the “function” of the tattoo as at once magico-religious, ornamental, medical, and social, and elsewhere harks back to Leon l’Africain’s medieval description of Morocco to legitimate his own characterizations of social and cultural sartorial norms. Doutté’s description of the draped ḥāik (as well as similar garments and related terminology such as the *ksā* and the ‘izār) is one of the earliest and most comprehensive treatments of Moroccan dress. He traces the genealogy of the garment to draped garments of antiquity around the Mediterranean basin, followed by detailed descriptions and photos of the manner of wrapping and draping the garment in several regions of Morocco. Both Doutté and Joly’s scholarship bear the stamp of the emerging colonial prejudices of their time: explicit connections to antiquity (identifying elements and influences of pre-Islamic Morocco), frequent assertions of the magico-religious facets of Moroccan social and cultural practices, comparative asides relating Moroccan craft practices to European craft traditions (both technical and organizational aspects), and attempts to associate particular dress practices with tribal groupings and ethnic identity (or conversely urban groupings and identities). But these publications also include a descriptive richness that one can disentangle to some extent from the conclusions drawn from those observations.

7. Ibid., 254-62
In the Protectorate era itself, dress and textiles emerged as deserving scholarly subjects in their own right, though much of the work built upon and reinforced the themes of the pre-Protectorate years. Besides the tropes themselves, it is possible to trace how the contours of certain trends in scholarship reflected the priorities and mandate of colonial governance, especially governance of a newly established vocational education system (under the Direction de l’Instruction Publique) and the handicrafts sector (intersecting with numerous administrative entities, including most notably the Service des Arts Indigènes). As Burke, Wyrtzen, and Nicholas underscore, individuals doing research and publishing in this context defy easy categorization as either scholar or administrator, disinterested academic versus passionate (and potentially commercially invested) amateur, etc. To some degree, this blurring remains in today’s publishing landscape with regard to Moroccan textiles and dress.

One of the more notable distinctions enacted and perpetuated throughout colonial scholarship on dress and textiles was that of an urban-rural divide in Moroccan society. This supposed division operated in terms of the thematic areas of focus, gender, and the emphasis (or lack thereof) on formal or aesthetic qualities of objects. Urban studies related to textiles tended to focus heavily on charting the complexity and order of the craft economy, with particular attention to guild organization and the production techniques, nomenclatures, and product classifications associated with individual guilds. Examples of this work include Louis Massignon’s seminal Enquête sur les corporations musulmanes d’artisans et de commerçants au Maroc, Lapanne-Joinville’s technical description and lexicon of weaving in Fez (focused on guilds, tools, and products fashioned by male weavers working on horizontal looms), Louis Brunot’s technical vocabularies for leather tanning and shoemaking in Rabat, and comparable works by Colin, Golvin, Guyot, Ricard, and


The exceptions to this norm include important work on urban embroidery traditions, conducted primarily (but not exclusively) by female scholars. Urban embroidery was, for the most part, practiced by women in the home (especially among elite and “cultured” households), which constrained the conditions of access for male researchers in the first place. But additionally, embroidery at this time was less clearly integrated in the craft economy, a further reason to classify it as a domestic art and thereby exclude it from the dominant focus on something closer to the “formal economy” (or “industrial arts”) of the time.\footnote{Hamid Irbouh, \textit{Art in the Service of Colonialism: French Art Education in Morocco, 1912-1956} (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2005); Claire Nicholas, “Keeping out of the Kitchen: Cooking and Power in a Moroccan Household,” in \textit{Food: Ethnographic Encounters}, ed. Leo Coleman, 83-96 (New York: Berg, 2011).} Ethnographic fieldwork by Jeanne Jouin, a graduate of the École des Langues Orientales in Paris (present-day INALCO), completed in the context of collecting missions for the Musée de l’Homme and as a student of the Institut d’Ethnologie, yielded several detailed studies of regional (urban) embroidery motifs, stitch types, and suspected origins,\footnote{Jeanne Jouin, \textit{Les thèmes décoratifs des broderies marocaines: Leur caractère et leurs origines.} Première Partie: Étude du décor I, \textit{Hespéris} 15 (1932): 11-30; Jeanne Jouin, \textit{Les thèmes décoratifs des broderies marocaines.} Deuxième Partie: Les Origines, \textit{Hespéris} 21 (1935): 149-61.} as well as studies of Jewish women’s dress (both urban and rural).\footnote{Jeanne Jouin, “Iconographie de la mariée citadine dans l’Islam nord-africaine,” \textit{Revue des Etudes Islamiques}, tome 5, Cahier IV, éd. Louis Massignon, 313-39 (Paris: Geuthner, 1931).} Christiane Brunot-David, daughter of Louis Brunot and graduate of the Institut des Hautes-Études Marocaines, wrote her mémoire on \textit{Rbaṭi} embroidery (under the direction of both Brunot and Henri Terrasse) while completing her \textit{stage d’initiation} as a school teacher in Morocco.\footnote{Christiane Brunot-David et Henri Terrasse, \textit{Les broderies de Rabat} (Rabat: Ecole du Livre, 1943).} Amélie-Marie Goichon, after then-groundbreaking ethnographic work on women of the Mzab (a
Berberophone region of Algeria), continued her early ethnographic program focusing on women of the middle class in Fez, including female embroiderers engaged in gold thread embroidery. In these works, she attends to both the social and domestic context for these practices, as well as the technical and material aspects of the work itself.

By way of contrast, much of the focus on rural textiles and dress tended toward associations between the formal or aesthetic qualities of objects (especially carpets) and tribal and/or ethnic identities. This work maintains the logic of technical lexicon and taxonomy development, but places less emphasis on labor and production in favor of discussions of symbolic meanings and visible expressions of ethnic or tribal (and to some extent religious) identity categories. As several contemporary scholars have noted, two figures loom large in the published work on rural textiles, especially carpets and garments: Prosper Ricard and Jean Besancenot. Ricard, the influential first director of the Service des Arts Indigènes, besides numerous studies published in Hespéris and the Bulletin Economique et Social du Maroc, is most known for his four volume Corpus des tapis marocains, published between 1923 and 1934. Though the Corpus aimed to document and classify carpet types in terms of motifs, color palettes, urban or tribal origin, etc., it would be a mistake to assume that it lacked a commercial objective. Indeed, returning to the earlier insistence on how dress and textile scholarship supported Protectorate governance, the Corpus was primarily intended as an instrument to structure and police a state-led effort to expand the internal and external markets for Moroccan carpets (as well as train new weavers to produce these carpets in the new system of vocational education). The commercial value of these carpets for international consumers in particular, lay in their ostensibly authentic symbolic connection to tribal or ethnic identity and their rural character (with the important exception of the Rabat carpet), a connection thought to be even more powerfully present given their feminine origin.

30. Wyrtzen, Making Morocco.
Jean Besancenot’s seminal *Costumes du Maroc*, based on ethnographic fieldwork during escorted journeys throughout the French Protectorate, occupies a similarly outsized place in documenting styles of dress in both urban and rural Morocco, the latter receiving privilege of place in his published and unpublished work. Here again, Besancenot concentrates his ethnographic and artistic efforts on cataloguing elements of adornment (clothing, accessories, hairstyles to a lesser degree) associated with each tribal and ethnic entity encountered on his tour. For these category distinctions, he relied heavily both on associates from the colonial administration and Moroccan hosts to furnish him with these details. Besancenot’s work is of immense value to scholars of dress and textiles, especially his unpublished photographs and fieldnotes, which present relatively unvarnished remarks on social transformation, generational differences, and fashion in flux.

Female scholars figure less prominently in ethnographic work on rural textiles and dress, likely due to gender norms constraining travel in some parts of the Protectorate. However, given that much of textile production in rural Morocco occurred in women’s domestic environments, the handful of active female scholars likely had more access to the scenes and spaces of production. One of these was Germaine Laoust-Chantreaux, wife of Henri Laoust (daughter-in-law of Emile Laoust) and schoolteacher and researcher among the Kabyle. She also conducted fieldwork in numerous Moroccan regions with an eye towards craft, textiles, and dress. Her publications include studies of the textiles of the Beni Mguild (Middle Atlas) and the Beni Bou-Illoul (Rif), along with an archive of her photos of dress taken sur le vif and of textile artifacts currently held at the Maison Mediterranéene des Sciences de l’Homme. Jeanne Jouin, mentioned earlier, also gathered information regarding the dress practices of numerous Jewish communities throughout rural Morocco. This work complements Ricard and Besancenot’s expansive survey-style works, offering more localized and in-depth treatments of particular ethnic or tribal groups and their textile and dress practices.

In broad strokes, the picture emerging from Protectorate-era scholarship on dress and textiles is one that operationalizes the category distinctions driving

33. Ibid.
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colonial policy formulation (and not only with respect to handicrafts and vocational schooling): divisions between urban and rural areas, Arab-Berber differences (and/or Islamic versus pre-Islamic vestiges in characterizations of iconography, artifacts of clothing and adornment), and the fit between tribal identity (or tribal fraction) and its visible expression in dress and textiles. Additionally, textiles and adornment associated with women in particular figure into discussions connecting magico-religious belief systems and rituals with cloth production.36

Textiles and Independent Morocco: Between Tradition & Modernity

The formal end of the Protectorate state in 1956 in some ways marked a new orientation towards Moroccan textiles and dress, while in other respects the colonial project of adding or “discovering” value (economic and symbolic) in traditional textiles continued unabated. Certainly, the emphasis on building a modern Arabo-Islamic nation, which included developing an industrial textile manufacturing sector, somewhat dampened the Moroccan interest in the study of handmade textiles and clothing in the immediate wake of Independence. The development of the garment industry, however, eventually led to what had been a completely neglected aspect of Protectorate-era and early-independence research: work on the textile industry and women’s roles within the factory context.37 The elimination of anthropology from Moroccan institutions of higher education (due in part to its association with reinforcing identity category distinctions that underpinned colonial governance) further marginalized ethnographic studies of traditional clothing and textiles, where discourse on “traditions” was dominated by colonial scholarly production.

It was not long, however, before the defining of Moroccan “traditions” was integrated into the project of nation-state building,38 a strategy deftly deployed by the monarchy.39 Furthermore, with the intensification of cultural tourism from the 1960s onwards, independent Moroccan scholars,

Ministry of Handicrafts, and Ministry of Culture officials returned to aspects of the colonial project in a limited way, with the publication of an updated and expanded 6 volume *Nouveau corpus des tapis marocains,* other work on Moroccan carpets, and “traditional arts” (including sections on costume and textiles). More recent Moroccan-based scholarship on dress and textiles approaches the topic with economic and craft policy in mind, such as Chikhaoui’s published dissertation on the development of artisanal policy (colonial and post-colonial). El Adnani’s dissertation on vocational craft training in Marrakech (including textiles), and Msaaf’s work on the prestigious *jellaba* cloth produced by the weavers of Bzou. Though some of this work emerges from field-based research, most of it is not ethnographic in the anthropological sense of the term.

Among the wave of American cultural anthropologists conducting fieldwork in Morocco of the 1960s and 70s, the study of Moroccan dress and textiles remained a mostly marginal area of emphasis. Thematic orientations and theorizing were concentrated elsewhere, especially on social relations, law, tribal structures, religion and religious institutions. In addition, this first generation broke ground in forms of ethnographic writing, and reflections

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43. Chikhaoui, *Politique publique et société.*
on the ethics of the ethnographic project. As in the sub-fields of social and cultural anthropology more broadly, studies of material culture had fallen out of favor by the heyday of the linguistic turn and the rise of symbolic/interpretivist anthropology. There are, however, some notable exceptions to this trend: Horace Miner’s examination of social and occupational mobility among Fassi weavers; Kenneth Brown’s *People of Salé*, which includes rich social historical descriptions of a failing craft economy; Brinkley Messick’s consideration of rural women’s weaving as a form of subordinate gendered discourse; and to some degree books by Daisy Dwyer and Susan Schaefer Davis on Moroccan gender relations, both of which include discussions of veiling and other adornment practices (though these are not the main focus of the work).

Where anthropological work on dress and textiles from the academy was somewhat lacking, others stepped in to fill the void. Specifically, European and North American researchers, including those working in academic and museum contexts (from disciplinary perspectives including anthropology but also art history), but also independent researchers straddling the commercial-art world-collector contexts, continued the work of making visible Moroccan cultural and ethnic identities, with a particular focus on “Berber” textiles. Much like in the colonial era, the act of mapping and documenting cultural heritage in the form of dress and textiles participated in what Marcus and Myers have referred to as the “traffic in culture:” in this case, the generation of commercial value in local and international markets for “Oriental carpets” and related objects. The constitution and exhibition of several private and public collections in European and North American contexts throughout the 1980s-2000s also led to numerous publications within both scholarly and art-commercial genres.

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52. Dwyer, *Images and Self-images*.


Of note among the European collector-scholars are studies that complement or extend the colonial work of Ricard and his team, such as the attribution of new “ethnonyms” to previously unknown or understudied “Berber” or “tribal” carpets and flatweaves, or other forms of adornment such as jewelry: Wilfried Stanzer, Gebhart Blazek, Kurt Rainer, Lucien Viola, Bert Flint, and Ivo Grammet. Many of these works feature collaborations with and contributions of the aforementioned Moroccan government officials based in the Ministry of Handicrafts and the Ministry of Culture. The North American analogues to this European cohort of collector-scholars similarly focused their efforts on Berber textiles, especially carpets and flatweaves. This included the Americans Russ Pickering, his daughter Brooke Pickering, and Ralph Yohe, who contributed to the Textile Museum’s important exhibition and related catalog, From the Far West: Carpets and Textiles of Morocco, under the direction of Patricia Fiske, and the survey-style volume, Moroccan Carpets. In addition to published work, all of these collector-scholars (many of whom have academic training in art history or archaeology) have and continue to participate widely in exhibitions featuring their own collections or those of public institutions, and in some cases have led cultural tours based on

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their status as textile experts, established commercial galleries, and founded cultural institutions showcasing their collections.

Alongside this body of work that somewhat uncomfortably attempts to straddle scholarly and commercial aims, the post-colonial era features important descriptions and analyses of Moroccan textiles and dress produced by museum-based scholars and practitioners (to complicate things further, at times these scholars contribute to collaborative publications with the aforementioned group of collector-scholars). These include both field-based and collections-based anthropological and art historical studies, including those by the European and North American curators Frieda Sorber65 of the Mode Museum Antwerp, Marie-France Vivier66 of the Musée des Arts d’Afrique et d’Océanie and later the Musée du Quai Branly, Louise Mackie67 of the Royal Ontario Museum, Lotus Stack68 of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Patricia Fiske69 of the Textile Museum, and the Moroccan (but Paris-based) Rachida Alaoui,70 graduate of the Sorbonne and previously affiliated with the Institut du Monde Arabe.

Finally, a handful of scholars and researchers located in European and other North African institutions have contributed work on Moroccan textiles and clothing, though this work lacks a unified research orientation. Some revisits and extends the legacy of Jouin, Brunot-David, and Ricard in documenting urban embroidery techniques and traditions. This includes Martha Guerard’s series on the collection of the Musée des Arts Africains et Océaniens (Paris) in the pages of this journal (1967, 1968, 1969, 1974, 1987-9), University of Cambridge-based scholar Caroline Stone’s study of North


69. Fiske, Pickering, and Yohe, eds., From The Far West.

African embroidery (including other regional traditions) and ethnologist Isabelle Denamur’s *Broderies marocaines*. The latter two authors write for “lay” audiences (or enthusiasts) but ground their discussions in academic scholarship and collections-based or archival research. Other scholars studying and writing in the vein of the anthropology of techniques (and their relationship to ritual or cultural meanings and practices) have brought this lens to bear on aspects of Moroccan textile production, including Danièle Jemma’s *Les tanneurs de Marrakech*, written in the context of a mémoire undertaken at the Centre de Recherche Anthropologiques, Préhistoriques et Ethnographiques (C.R.A.P.E) in Algiers and Claude Lefèbure’s articulation of connections between culture and technical terminology specific to vertical looms across Amazigh language groups.

Towards a Post-Post-Colonial Framework for Moroccan Textiles and Clothing

In this final section of the paper, I look to developments in the study of Moroccan dress and textiles in the 21st century for the contours of post-post-colonial research on dress and textiles. My use of “post-post-colonial” is meant to direct attention to a framework that critically unpacks the enduring residues of colonial policy and knowledge-making practices, but privileges the experiences of contemporary actors and their participation in various globalisms (some of which echo dimensions of colonial projects). Thematically, this work can be more or less distilled into three categories: Feminism and the veil; the Moroccan fashion industry; and Material culture and heritage regimes.

The first theme partly responds to the intensification of media attention on the “Muslimwoman” in the post-9/11 era, within which veiling practices (usually reduced to the misleadingly homogenous category of “the veil” or “the hijab”) have become supercharged and contested religious and political symbols. Several Moroccan anthropologists based in Morocco and in European or North American institutions have sought to contextualize the diversity

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of veiling practices among Moroccan women in relation to transnational feminist and Islamic piety movements, as well as the cultural and religious “othering” of diasporic communities anchored in part to the veil as a visible marker of difference. This work acknowledges the groundbreaking work of sociologist Fatema Mernissi, whose *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society* engaged with Islamic theological and ideological discourse on gender and veiling, but instead places the focus on Islam as practiced or on the ground, so to speak, among contemporary Moroccan women. Given that veiling practices in Morocco are at once in dialogue with transnational ways of dressing and profoundly local in terms of how they are interpreted and deployed (their differentiation from “traditional” veiling practices of the earlier to middle 20th century), this line of inquiry deserves more fine-grained attention to ordinary veiling, not only by actors who explicitly position themselves for or against the hijab as part of their religious and political habitus.

Emerging and rich work on the Moroccan fashion industry addresses the economic and cultural globalisms of the international textile and apparel industries. Since at least the 1990s, a fast-growing Moroccan industry infrastructure, including media and advertising channels, professional training programs, and materials and manufacturing resources, has sought to sell Moroccan style to increasingly broader segments of global consumer markets. Angela Jansen’s work in particular captures how Moroccan designers position themselves and their work differently vis-à-vis cultural traditions, local categories of belonging (regional, ethnic, national), and adjacent or


historic craft traditions. This promising area of study, like other non-Western fashion industries, has yet to receive adequate attention in both the fashion studies field, and within socio-cultural anthropology. To some degree, this reflects a double-marginalization, both in relation to assumptions in fashion studies that non-Western dress (glossed homogenously as “traditional”) remains relatively unchanged and somehow outside of the fashion system, and a broader scholarly prejudice against fashion and clothing as “frivolous” or “superficial” topics of study (there is a gendered dimension to this bias as well). Both assumptions are grievously incorrect.

Finally, a number of academics working across North American, European, and Moroccan institutions, from both anthropological and art historical perspectives, have produced nuanced studies of Moroccan dress and textiles as implicated in both national and international “heritage regimes.” The idea of “heritage regimes” draws attention to the centrality of objects, practices, and people designated as “heritage” (or related terms, such as “traditional,” taqlīdī, beldī) to national and international governance, identity projects, markets, and the heritage industry itself. Several American academics address these concerns with regard to the articulation and consolidation of minority identities in the Maghreb and diasporic communities in Europe, including Paul Silverstein’s study of Kabyle identity and political subjectivity in Paris, Cynthia Becker’s extensive research on gender and Amazigh textile arts in Morocco, and Ahmed Skounti’s brief treatment of the folklorisation of the tente nomade (and its limited continued use among the Imaizighen).

83. See also Nicholas, “Creative Differences, Creating Difference.”
A second cluster of scholarship dissects colonial and present-day national and international heritage-production, in the form of collecting practices and representations of Moroccan textiles and their makers in contexts such as museums, heritage sites, and communication media in Morocco and beyond. The approach taken in much of this work traces the contours of “heritage” as an essentially contested discursive and material category, or at least one that has mobilized careful tending and curation by technocrats, art world actors, and museum professionals in the colonial and post-colonial periods. With the exception of Denton, much of the writing in this vein analyzes cultural productions – the end products of heritage-making – rather than conducting ethnography of, for example, the everyday experiences and interactions of actors in the heritage field.

Research grounded in ethnographic fieldwork and interviews with artisans – weavers and embroiderers – by a number of female academics, both Moroccan and foreign, fills in the picture. Some of this work advocates for female artisans in particular, drawing attention to voices and stories typically neglected (or spoken for) in heritage industry facing discourse. Other ethnographic treatments of “traditional” textile production and commercialization emphasize the ambivalent status of craft labor in the eyes of most Moroccans (including artisans themselves), the relative dependency of the artisan on commercial intermediaries, technocrats, and other actors in the broader heritage field (including the state), a field which intersects a number of national and international socio-economic development initiatives and educational projects. Taken together, the picture that emerges


90. Denton, A Collection of Collectors.


is one of a kind of heritage double-speak, where artisans represent both the promise and the obstacles to heritage-based socio-economic development. In the meantime, craftspeople themselves “occupy” material and discursive heritage spaces with their own categories of belonging and political and social objectives. These are oriented not towards concepts and values associated with “Moroccan or universal cultural heritage,” but instead towards resolutely local histories and relationships more relevant to their everyday experiences of precarity.

**Fashion-Forward?**

By way of conclusion, I would like to suggest avenues for future research on Moroccan clothing and textiles, bringing attention to approaches and topics less represented in the above-described literature. This is not to diminish the value of this scholarship, but rather to suggest that the dominant focus in the field on “traditional” textiles and dress (however contested this category may be, and whether these traditions relate to culture or religion) would benefit from a broader scope. In particular, theoretical frameworks informed by recent anthropological and fashion studies work on materiality, embodiment, and ecological and phenomenological perspectives offer rich possibilities for grasping the ordinary, ubiquitous, and intimate place of cloth in human experience. Taken as a whole, these approaches foreground the lived experience of clothing and textiles (our nearest environment), one of the most visible aspects of our presentation of the self to others, relating to the body as a social skin (or “superskin,”) that shapes our everyday *habitus* and upon which some of our most deeply felt affective attachments take hold. From the production side, ecological and phenomenological perspectives inspired by theorists such as Tim Ingold and Maurice Merleau-Ponty shed light on the emergent qualities of making cloth, coincident with performances of gender, ethnic, and occupational identities. Myriem Naji’s

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93. Nicholas, “Rationalizing Cooperation.”
article on Sirwan weaving\textsuperscript{101} and Cynthia Becker’s exploration of the sensory qualities of Amazigh aesthetics\textsuperscript{102} are emblematic of this approach. My own work on Moroccan development projects aiming to “rationalize” artisanal craft practices\textsuperscript{103} also addresses the embodied nature of craft knowledge and enskilment, and I argue that rationalization relies in part on the cultivation of new material and verbal performances of heritage discourse and thus new relationships to craft labor and its products.

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\textsuperscript{103} Nicholas, “Keeping out of the Kitchen;” Nicholas, “Rationalizing Cooperation.”


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Enchevêtré: l’anthropologie coloniale et post-coloniale des textiles et des vêtements marocains

Résumé: Ce chapitre retrace la trajectoire intellectuelle de l’anthropologie des textiles et des vêtements marocains, en focalisant sur la période du début du XXe siècle à nos jours. La discussion se concentre sur la circularité analytique et thématique des tropes qui caractérisent les traitements savants et quasi-savants du sujet, ainsi que sur des suggestions pour sortir de la boucle. Depuis le début, les études sur les vêtements et les textiles marocains par des anthropologues et des universitaires de disciplines connexes se sont mêlées de diverses manières aux projets coloniaux et aux cadres conceptuels. Les bourses publiées dans des plateformes scientifiques tels que Hespéris-Tamuda (ainsi que d’autres revues précédent) ont largement contribué au discours sur les textiles et les vêtements marocains “traditionnels,” en particulier pendant la période coloniale. Les anthropologues post-indépendance (et les voisins disciplinaires tels que les historiens de l’art et les praticiens des musées) continuent de se débattre avec la portée de ce travail qui, malgré ses origines coloniales, a plus ou moins établi les termes de la conversation intellectuelle autour de ces sujets. Ce chapitre esquisse les principaux tropes et orientations de l’érudition coloniale (principalement produite par les Européens), comment le domaine et ses débats se sont développés dans le contexte postcolonial, et propose quelques orientations pour un programme de recherche post-postcolonial sur les vêtements et les textiles marocains.

Mots-clés: Maroc, habillement, textile, colonial, postcolonial, patrimoine, anthropologie.