

Rhapsodic Objects

Contact Zones

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Volume 7

Rhapsodic Objects

Art, Agency, and Materiality (1700–2000)

Editors

Yaëlle Biro, Noémie Étienne

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Yaëlle Biro and Noémie Étienne

Introduction

A fragment of red-dyed cloth knotted onto an iron nail; almond-shaped pieces of white glazed ceramic positioned into the socket of the eyes; a section of an iron fling-shot trigger embedded into a wooden sculptural form. These material fragments are all integral to the physical form given by a Kongo ritual practitioner, *nganga*, in collaboration with a Kongo master carver, to a *nkisi* or container of spiritual power, in the nineteenth century. The European origins of these three manufactured components (cloth, porcelain, and iron) are representative of art-making in a global world that had been connected through trade for centuries. Even the dye used to color red the cloth tied to an iron nail carries complex significance, as curator James Green will explain in the present volume. Collectively, the authors of this book focus on the layered significance of forms and materials that constitute art and material culture. Like the thread of a cloth, patterns, materials, and techniques can be unraveled, revealing along the way embedded histories and relationships. In our perspective, objects are simultaneously products and producers, results and processes, visions and stories. They are, in short, rhapsodic.

Art history as a discipline is evolving and encourages us today to study works of art in all their complexities and contradictions. How do we grasp material culture beyond a visual reading of a work's iconography or an anthropological study of its function in its original context? Is it possible to simultaneously consider its visual appearance together with its particular materiality and temporality? Moreover, how do these questions apply in the context of art history's expansion, as art historian Michael Yonan has emphasized, taking into account media such as textile or porcelain that were partly excluded from the Western concept of art.¹

A multipart conference organized in 2018 in Paris at the alternative space *La Colonie*, and Los Angeles during the Annual Meeting of the College Art Association by the editors of this volume is at the root of the present publication.² The intention, then and now, is to trace the movement and circulation of material culture while considering the singularity of the works themselves. While recognizing the key role of market forces in the dynamics of a work's circulation and reception, our approach focuses on the impact of such forces on an object's very production and the context at

¹ Michael Yonan, "Toward a Fusion of Art History and Material Culture," *West 86th: A Journal of Decorative Arts, Design History, and Material Culture* 18, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2011).

² *Circulating Crafts: Art, Agency, and the Making of Identities*. Part I at *La Colonie*, Paris (January 2018) and Part II, a two-session panel at the 106th Annual Meeting of the College Art Association, Los Angeles (February 2018). We thank Kader Attia for providing us with the space of *La Colonie* that allowed us to think in depth about the issues presented in this volume.

the root of its making. We hope to unpack the complex histories held within objects, from creation to consumption, as well as trace the central back-and-forth between demanders and suppliers to suggest a new mapping of the market for cultural goods in which the source countries could be positioned at the center, as active partners and not passive bystanders.

We propose to provide new scrutiny of what we call rhapsodic objects, going back to the Greek etymology of the word *rhaptein* (to stitch, sew, weave) and *oide* (song).³ Originally describing the recitation of epic poems, the term signals the assemblage of disparate stories that eventually compose a coherent and pleasing whole. Transposed from the orality and immateriality of epic poetry to the visibility and physicality of objects, the term keeps its power to speak about action and multiplicity. Indeed, if the word “rhapsodic” holds within itself the assemblage inherent to song making, “object” was born from the confrontation between diverse actors, materials, possibilities, and agendas in a complex world. *Ob-ject* stems from “thrown against,” and the violent action of its Latin roots focuses on our relationship to objects, a primordial distancing from the self. As such, objects are profoundly tied to the human experience: they are enhancers, allowing us to see and apprehend the world. They are also shaping our daily life and generating emotions and desires. In this volume, we aim to unpack the stitched histories held within objects to reveal issues of power, trade dynamics, and representation, while redefining objects from passive things into the realm of the agential.

As early as the 1980s, art historian Krzysztof Pomian underlined how works of art could be considered as “semiophores,” or “sign carrier.”⁴ Anthropologists Igor Kopytoff and Arjun Appadurai further demonstrated that things can gain (or lose) values during their “lives,” including becoming commodities.⁵ Anthropologist Nicholas Thomas developed the concept of “entanglement” in order to describe how objects can be caught in different systems or values that redefine them.⁶ In parallel, the study of the history of collection has grown since the 1980s, putting emphasis on the succession of buyers, owners, and modes of display of material culture. Lately, in the context of the discussions around the restitution of objects, the notion of provenance has taken on new significance. Provenance in art history allows drawing political and material histories of works of arts that extend widely beyond the sole context of their creation to investigate the many transmutations or mediations that surrounds their

³ Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London and New York: Methuen & Co, 1982), 13.

⁴ Krzysztof Pomian, “Pour une histoire des sémiophores: A propos des vases des Médicis,” *Le Genre Humain* 1, no. 14 (1986): 51–62.

⁵ Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

⁶ Nicholas Thomas, *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).

“social lives.” Heightened scrutiny of modes of collecting objects in the context of unbalanced power has encouraged academics and curators to explore and communicate more precisely the origins of art collections.

Yet, paradoxically, such approaches that emphasize the context of the objects’ reception hold the risk of ignoring the specificity of singular artifacts and the framework of their creation. Indeed, the artworks themselves and their makers’ intentions remain invisible, and one wonders if their materiality or their individual histories are making any difference at all in today’s appreciation. Objects embody multiple authorships, agendas, and agencies. As the authors in this book argue, those key notions not only impact the works (instead of being seen as passively impacted by external, economic, and political forces, actors, regimes, or military conquests), but are also integral to them. Works embody their own complex and multilayered histories and should be perceived as always in flux, reconfigured, and transformed. They are simultaneously fragments of a dismantled world and micro-worlds in themselves, carrying within their materiality and temporality the dynamics of their context of production and use as well as a rich potential of interpretation.⁷

The series of close readings assembled in this volume demonstrate that studying the specificity of each work unpacks broader agendas embedded within. It is by unfolding the works’ layered histories and the ways in which these narratives are encompassed within their physical and visual appearances that one can bring forward the political charges they encompass. Whether a single object or an ensemble, a genre of material or an artistic practice, the examples selected by the authors all demonstrate the complex nature of these rhapsodic works.

Interlaced Patterns

Historically, art history as an academic and museum-based discipline has put individual artists or schools of makers at the heart of its approach, going back to the roots of connoisseurship in the eighteenth century. But can we really trace the making of an artwork to a singular maker, culture, or even country? In her essay in this volume, which analyzes the production of carpets produced in Punjab between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries beyond a focus on authenticity and provenance, Dorothy Armstrong puts forward key questions tied to terminology and uses the expression “oriental carpet” as a concept that fluidly encompasses a political dimension. “Oriental” is a contested term for its vagueness and tendency to standardization, first famously

⁷ For such a demonstration, see Anne Lafont, *Une africaine au Louvre en 1800: La place du modèle* (Paris: Institut national d’histoire de l’art, 2019). For more on the notion of “fragments,” see Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, “Objects of Ethnography,” in *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 17–78 and 284–92.

analyzed by Edward Said and often commented upon ever since.⁸ Yet, according to Armstrong, this choice of word (although referring to an unspecified geography) is precisely appropriate to locate a product whose fabrication involves a multiplicity of actors and territories. As she argues: “The oriental carpet, in addition to its traded and manufactured reality, is a mobile concept within such an archipelago of interacting sites of exchange, a concept materializing colonial systems of power, value and taste.” In her opinion, a problematic and debated concept such as the “oriental carpet” can become a powerful tool to refuse a simplistic determination and show the complexity of the connections between a product and a territory.

Textiles are prototypical rhapsodic objects: literally stitched or woven, they convey their origins and the agendas of their creators. They reflect the expectations of the consumers and buyers, as much as they transform the interiors, peoples, and worlds in which they evolve.⁹ The production of printed cotton known in Europe as *indiennes* since the eighteenth century, studied in this book both by Aziza Gril-Mariotte and Chonja Lee, makes use of technical knowledge that originated in India. Yet as Gril-Mariotte demonstrates in her archival study of the 1766 registration pattern book of the French Oberkampf factory, it presents a mix of patterns from different regions, most of them flowers and geometric motifs. Only 16% of the total was actually listed as *indiennes* specifically. This proportion shows the diversity of expectations around one single production of textile, offering a great variety of options suited to multiple markets. In her essay, Lee focuses on *indiennes* produced in Switzerland and used as goods of trade, in addition to their use as clothing and for home decor, especially in the context of the trade of enslaved African peoples. Indeed, *indiennes* were in high demand from African elites, and patterns and colors were adjusted and adapted to suit the demanding African market, contributing to turning the highest profit in transactions that equated material goods with people.

To follow different kinds of textiles on the *longue durée*, from a woven carpet to printed cotton, allows us to unfold the multiple, transcultural, and transhistorical narratives connected to this particular medium. Because they are portable, light, and necessary to many cultures, textiles are paradigmatic for cross-cultural exchanges; they have circulated across continents since the Middle Ages, and continue to do so today, as the most important industries of textile production are still based in China and India. Furthermore, as the articles in the first part of this book demonstrate, such movements are sometimes embedded in the objects

⁸ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism. Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Penguin, 2001) [first edition 1978].

⁹ Amelia Peck and Amy Elizabeth Bogansky, *Interwoven Globe: The Worldwide Textile Trade, 1500–1800* (New York and New Haven: Metropolitan Museum of Art and Yale University Press, 2013); Giorgio Riello and Tirthankar Roy, *How India Clothed the World: The World of South Asian Textiles, 1500–1850* (Leiden: Brill, 2013); Sarah Fee, *Cloth that Changed the World: The Art and Fashion of Indian Chintz* (Ontario: Royal Ontario Museum, 2019).

themselves. Indeed, the expectations of African customers have transformed the choices of patterns or colors manufactured in Europe since the eighteenth century. By looking closely at such specific samples, art historians are capable of recovering untold stories, negotiations, and agendas that literary sources have not always recorded.

Works of art in general, and textiles as particularly telling examples, can be understood as *continuum* or *flux*. From the moment of their creation, cloths carry the power dynamics that generated them—and that will continue to reshape them during their material existence. Such objects also transform the world in which they stand, and generate new desire, economies, and cultural productions. However, this is not to say that scholarly attention to objects should become a new formalism or media theory, but rather that it should help to identify how power structures, commercial interests, and aesthetic preoccupations are sampled into a single object. Through such processes, close art-historical reading has the potential of bringing to the surface issues that would otherwise remain hidden from first sight.

Embedded Relationships

Circulation and the imitation of cultural products have historically been key factors in shaping the material world: artists, craftspeople, workshops, and factories sought to imitate and appropriate different techniques of making glass, porcelain, textiles, or lacquer objects. In eighteenth-century France, for instance, imitation of “oriental” lacquer led to the development of a “Made in France” varnish widely used by French cabinetmakers. Similarly, porcelain, a product originally exported from China and Japan, became a key material for European manufacturers producing wares that quickly came to be seen as typically “Dutch,” “French,” or “German.” The desire to imitate specific technology or products coming from elsewhere paradoxically shaped local European identities.

Focusing on the points of connection between the British textile factories and Central African consumers, James Green investigates their common language, which was a shared appeal for textiles, from the earliest encounters in the fifteenth century to its oft-cynical market-based ramifications into the twentieth century. Through examples produced in Manchester and used in the Republic of Congo, Green focuses on the profound interconnection and the joint impact of the suppliers and consumers in the making of textiles (a telling example being the name “Congo Red” given to a red dye particularly popular in fabrics sold to Central Africa). The author also underlines the unexpected changes in values and functions attributed to cloths once they were incorporated in Central African culture, complicating further the concept of a maker’s clearly defined identity. Indeed, looking closely at the global circulation of textiles blurs the lines between those who make and those thought to passively consume.

Both the creation and trajectories of rhapsodic objects are revealing of power relations. Since the nineteenth century, art historians have crafted a variety of terms in order to describe the ways eighteenth-century European artists and craftspeople have imitated the visual appearance of Asian material culture that circulated widely in Europe at the time, such as *chinoiserie* and *turquerie*.¹⁰ Centuries before the idea of cultural appropriation (a term that only entered the *Oxford English Dictionary* in 2017), the word *chinoiserie* reflected the reception of porcelain, lacquer, paintings, and engraving that were entering Europe at the time, imported through international trade companies such as the Dutch East India Company. Such objects are often presented as a fantasy, a purely decorative delirium aiming at entertaining the elite. Yet scholars such as Nebahat Avcioglù have powerfully demonstrated the political potential of such a stylistic *mélange* in the field of architecture.¹¹

As a response, the term *euroiserie* has recently been adopted to characterize the reverse movement: Chinese art objects incorporating European forms and techniques. Helen Glaister's close study of a Qing dynasty China enameled porcelain flask held at London's Victoria and Albert Museum suggests the same logic deployed by the Chinese elite as by the European elite. *Euroiserie* is visually used as a means to express their international ambitions of worldliness—namely, in this case, materialize China's connection to Europe—a continent of particular economic and political interest at that time for the Manchus. Therefore, eighteenth-century *euroiserie* are, as Glaister demonstrates, more than the creative reception of different styles indicating a “taste” for European modes of depiction: they benefit from and transmit a complex Sino-centric agenda aiming to suggest the importance of China and its ability to incorporate other traditions. Thus, *euroiserie* participates—tacitly and materially—in communicating and furthering both formal and political ambitions.

Since the 1980s, scholars have emphasized the difficulty of assigning a precise style, defined by a specific geographic and temporal framework, to an object. In this respect, the concept of hybridity became central to underlining the multiplicity of styles or materials converging into a single artifact.¹² However, hybridity has also been criticized for its tendency to suggest a natural process, echoing the world of botany, and for its implication of a hypothetical original “purity” that would exist by

¹⁰ And more recently, a similar term has emerged in connection to the African continent: *africanerie*. See Anne Lafont, *L'art et la race: L'Africain (tout) contre l'œil des Lumières* (Dijon: Les presses du réel, 2019), 253–316.

¹¹ Nebahat Avcioglù, *Turquerie and the Politics of Representation, 1737–1876* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2011).

¹² On the question of style see Susan E. Gagliardi and Yaëlle Biro, “Beyond Single Stories: Addressing Dynamism, Specificity, and Agency in Arts of Africa,” *African Arts, First Word* 52, no. 4 (Winter 2019): 1–6.

contrast.¹³ How can we try to understand the so-called hybridity of things without embracing it as a natural phenomenon?

In 2005, the archaeologist John Hutnyk already warned against a celebratory use of concepts such as hybridity: “Syncretism and Hybridity are academic conceptual tools providing an alibi for lack of attention to politics, in a project designed to manage the cultural consequences of colonization and globalization.”¹⁴ In fact, as the present collection of essays brings to light, hybridity can be perceived as the result of precise intercultural exchanges made for specific reasons and in particular contexts. Thus, “hybridity” itself has to be unpacked in order to reveal the political, social, and aesthetic forces embedded in an object. For instance, as Rémi Labrusse and Bernadette Nadia Saou-Dufrène suggest in their article about Bey’s Palace in Constantine, Algeria, built between mid-1820 and mid-1830 but which underwent several modifications that followed the region’s tumultuous history, hybridity can have simultaneous aesthetic and political effects, with a long-lasting impact. Through his selection of forms as well as materials, the Bey of Constantine (and thus, the palace itself) sent visual messages to the French imperial forces demonstrating his command of the new political situation. Therefore, what the authors call “poetics of hybridity” is as much “politics of hybridity,” embodying the positions of a ruler faced by colonial forces.

Crafted Identities

The concept of rhapsodic object also invites us to interrogate the agendas of the producers. Indeed, the makers of works from all origins and time periods should be considered as acting in full knowledge and understanding of the context that surrounds them. Nevertheless, the proper notion of an agenda, as a clear aim executed by fully aware actors, is to be challenged. Rather, it is essential to consider the often-experimental and organic modes of these productions, as well as the conflicts and dissonances potentially surrounding them. In an example from colonial-era Congo, the agendas of makers and collectors of Mangbetu arts often diverged, as explored in the 1990 exhibition *African Reflections* organized by Enid Schildkrout and Curtis Keim.¹⁵

¹³ About the notion itself, see, among others, Homi K. Bhabha, who interestingly discusses the notion of hybridity in the context of orality, literature, and performance rather than material culture: “Signs Taken for Wonders: Question of Ambivalence and Authority Under a Tree Outside Delhi, May 1817,” in *The Location of Culture* (London/New York: Routledge, 1985), 145–74. For a critical discussion of the notion, see for instance: Stephen W. Silliman, “A Requiem for Hybridity?” *Journal of Social Archaeology* 15, no. 3 (2015): 277–98.

¹⁴ John Hutnyk, “Hybridity,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28, no. 1 (January 2005): 92.

¹⁵ Enid Schildkrout and Curtis A. Keim, *African Reflections: Art from Northeastern Zaire* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990).

The curators investigated the immediate creative responses by Mangbetu artists to outside demands, and the subsequent appropriation by the Mangbetu royal court of the very objects favored by outsiders, which affirmed their agency in the context of growing political and economic pressure from European powers. The distinctive Mangbetu aesthetic developed in this context quickly came to be seen as “authentically” Mangbetu and filled ethnographic museums across Europe and America. There, they were reinterpreted as ethnographic specimens of a disappearing culture. The urge of craftspeople to produce artifacts understood as “traditional” and “authentic” is often connected to the desire to build a culture that is an actor of the world at large. Thus, many artifacts or techniques that came to be seen as local, authentic, and/or typical have to be situated in complex transnational narratives tied to a history of appropriation, imperialism, and the commercial phenomenon of supply and demand.

In this volume, Ashley Miller considers the work of Algerian ceramicist Boujemâa Lamali (ca. 1890–1971), whom, she argues, negotiated the expectations of the French Protectorate arts administration in Morocco (broadly asking for a form of “traditional authenticity” and cultural preservation of “local production”), and yet managed to develop new forms that spoke to modernity. Questioning the dichotomy between “traditional” and “modernity,” Miller demonstrates how Lamali’s body of work should be envisioned as binding “traditional” techniques with vocabularies and the formal agenda of modernist innovations. The artist’s understanding of the context in which he operated allowed him to turn preservation into transformational forces, which further had a lasting impact on the perception of Morocco’s crafts in the broader international cultural community.

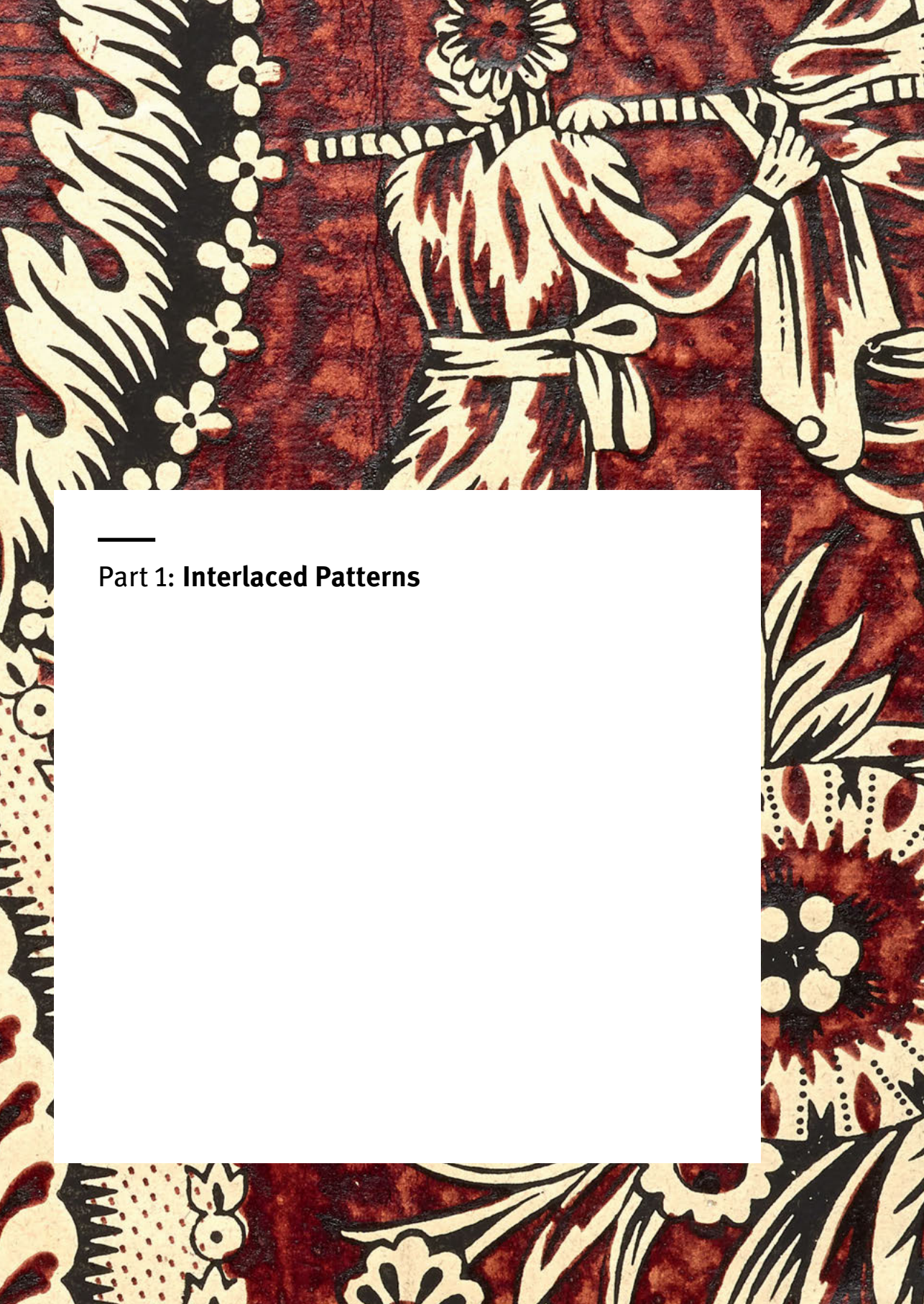
Victoria L. Rovine’s study of West African weaving techniques under colonial rule demonstrates the contentious relationship between the region’s strip-loom and technologies tentatively implemented by the colonial powers. The author carefully identifies the tensions between “the need to improve yet preserve” the knowledge of colonial subjects in “the theater of French colonial Empire.” Extensive documentation played a central role in the imperial endeavors, providing today’s researcher with rich archives. Through her investigation of these archives, Rovine establishes how the making of textiles was integrated into a larger propaganda discourse of crafts and technicity and how objects and techniques were instrumentalized for political purposes.

Thomas Grillot’s investigation of Lakota artist Wallace “Butch” Thunderhawk (b. 1946) and his carving of horse effigies offers an in-depth look into the process of knowledge production, the role of community in artistic practice, and the possibilities offered by finding contemporary relevance in earlier forms of visual expression. Finally, Gail Levine turned the topic of individual agency toward the very concept of identity in her study of artist Frida Kahlo (1907–1954). She demonstrates Kahlo’s negotiated identity, using her own art and the building of narratives, to define herself in the largest possible sense, from her embrace of a Jewish identity to her use of *Tehuana* clothing and in her painting practice.

When applied to material culture, the term “rhapsodic” allows objects to be perceived in all their complexity: active, cumulative, narrative, but also changeable and dynamic. Human-made products, they are also makers of humans. The examples presented in this volume of collected essays, individually and collectively, investigate the many layers woven within. They address issues central to the current practice of art history, such as tensions between authenticity and modernity, the political nature of visual language, terminology and categories, the production and dissemination of knowledge, the role of trade and commerce, and underline the objects and their makers’ complex agency. This book aims to put objects at the center of a narrative that complicates the opposition between their production and reception. It puts forward art history as a discipline capable of unfolding the many dimensions held within in the composite temporalities and materiality of objects.

Finally, how do we acknowledge the histories embedded in the materiality of an object without necessarily celebrating them? Art history and heritage studies are battlefields, and the utter violence of colonization, imperialism, and global trade has to be understood and underlined in our disciplines. Yet, in order to avoid misinterpretation and sometimes abusive readings, we believe that taking a closer, informed look at material culture can lead to stronger critical positions. As stated earlier, *rhapsodicity* is tied to actions and performances; the rhapsody is produced by the active assemblage of disparate narratives. It is both a process and a result per se. The notion of *rhapsodicity* allows a simultaneous view on actions, actors, and the thing itself as a source and an archive. It brings politics back to the surface, allowing a nuanced study of individual and collective creative responses sparked in the face of imbalances of power.





Part 1: Interlaced Patterns

Dorothy Armstrong

Wandering Designs

The Repossession of the “Oriental” Carpet and Its Imaginary

Production of so-called oriental carpets is carried out in the geographies currently described as Iran, the Middle East, North Africa, Central Asia, and South Asia. These geographies have been the subject of repeated colonization over many centuries. As a consequence carpets produced there offer a rich site for thinking about local, national, regional and imperial identities, and exchange during processes of colonization and decolonization. This essay focuses on one of these geographies of production, Punjab, and the response of its carpet industry to the rise and fall of the British imperial project from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries, and to the residual impact of the Mughal imperial project from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries.

The work of scholars on the constructed nature of interpretations of the colonized by the colonizer offers a platform for this essay.¹ It also draws on thinking which emphasizes the importance of analyzing material culture within a network of many sites of exchange, each with permeable boundaries, producing loops of change and resistance to change.² Building from these concepts, I argue here that the oriental carpet, in addition to its traded and manufactured reality, is a mobile concept within such an archipelago of interacting sites of exchange, a concept materializing colonial systems of power, value, and taste.

This approach differs fundamentally from much specialist and scholarly writing on oriental carpets which, since the nineteenth century, has focused and continues to focus on provenance and authenticity.³ This writing, until quite recently mostly North American and European, created a canon of oriental carpets. Underlying its methods and conclusions is the assumption that there is a stable and objective hierarchy of aesthetic and cultural value in carpets, which can be judged through their places and methods of location, their materials, and designs.

This monolithic approach contrasts markedly with the multivariant response to carpets in their indigenous countries of production. These are often strongly marked

1 For example, Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978); Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Walter D. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

2 For example, Glenn Adamson, Giorgio Riello and Sarah Teasley, eds., *Global Design History* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011); Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello, eds., *The Global Lives of Things: The Material Culture of Connections in the Early Modern World* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016).

3 Key figures include Wilhelm Bode (German, 1845–1929), William Morris, (British, 1834–1896), Alois Riegl (Austrian, 1858–1905), Arthur Upham Pope (American 1881–1969) and May Hamilton Beattie (Scottish 1908–1997).

by the perspective of the maker. So, for instance, in tribal or village communities, many of whose members are weavers working on carpets for their own use, intimate accounts are given of the quality of materials and workmanship, and physical and emotional history of weavings.⁴ Equally, within the commercial industry there is a high valuation of customer responsiveness, be it in weaving for local clients or the export market, and on the practice of revered master weavers.⁵ Meanwhile, museological assessments in countries of production express different national agendas to each other, and to those in countries of consumption in Europe and North America.⁶

The traditional European and North American reading is in essence connoisseurial, and has an important role in underpinning the vigorous market for old oriental carpets. This essay challenges the connoisseurial assumption of a set of enduring verities of oriental carpet quality, instead analyzing carpets as a manifestation of repeated conceptual and material reinvention across geographies and cultures, meeting local social, economic, and political needs. To ground this argument, the essay analyzes a range of carpets which are often marginalized because they do not meet these connoisseurial expectations, and consequently receive little or no scholarly attention.

The particular carpets investigated were made in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Punjab, and in Pakistan from independence and partition in 1947.⁷ These carpets sit in a contested relationship with the European and North American commitment to a stable and objective hierarchy of aesthetic and cultural value in carpets, with the idea of the traditional and unchanging at its heart.

In India under British rule, this commitment to the traditional in Indian crafts became part of colonial ideology. The essay contrasts carpets made under the direct influence of the imperial power and its commitment to tradition in, for example, jails, with those made in commercial environments, described by the British in colonial India as the 'private industry'. It goes on to explore how both the Punjabi private industry and the later Pakistani commercial industry challenged that idea of the traditional in carpets by transforming quickly in response to technological change, commercial ties to new markets, and the changing political and economic environment. By exploring locations of production, such as factories, prisons, and cities, rather than the court ateliers, tribal tents, and village workshops of European and North

⁴ Anna Badkhen, *The World is a Carpet: Four Seasons in an Afghan Village* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2013).

⁵ Hadi Maktabi, *The Persian Carpet: The Forgotten Years 1722–1882* (London: Hali Publications, 2019), 207–56.

⁶ See, for instance, the contrasting accounts and displays of carpets given by the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art, Istanbul, and the two museums of Iranian carpets in Tehran and Mashhad, Iran.

⁷ Carpets from Doris Leslie Blau, New York; Victoria and Albert Museum, London; Templeton Carpet Factory, Glasgow; PAK Persian Carpet Company, Lahore; Lahore Carpet Manufacturing Company, Lahore.

American imagination and preference, the essay uncovers some less-frequently told histories of the craft of carpet weaving.

For both Punjab and Pakistan, contemporaneous records of production and commercial organization and examples of reception are used as primary evidence, alongside carpet manufacturers' marketing materials.⁸ The close study of these contested carpets, and the interrogation of primary materials about their production and reception provides the platform to return these carpets to the narrative.

Therefore this text is not a connoisseurial account of the provenance and value, commercial or aesthetic, of these carpets. Indeed, the carpets it examines have been at times regarded by connoisseurs as low-value and low-quality commercial export products or copies.⁹ Nor is it an attempt to trace linear stylistic development, an approach to design which is arguably based on a Eurocentric ideology of progressive evolution which took hold from the mid-nineteenth century onward.¹⁰ Instead, it explores the loops of transformation and resistance involved in the modification of a traditional artifact, and of the system for evaluating it.

What Is an “Oriental” Carpet?

At the heart of this discussion are patterned pile carpets woven across Eurasia since at least 300 BCE.¹¹ Patterned pile carpets share structure with other woven textiles. Their unique characteristic is the introduction of knots, really loops, between the

⁸ London, Victoria and Albert Museum Archives, MA/2/1/1–3, “Mr. C. Purdon Clarke’s visit to and purchases in India”; *Indian Industrial Commission, Minutes of Evidence* (Calcutta, 1916–18), 5 vols.; C. Latimer, *Monograph on Carpet Making in the Punjab, 1905–6* (Lahore, 1907); B. H. Baden Powell, *Handbook of the Manufactures and Arts of the Punjab*, vol. 2 of *Handbook of the Economic Products of the Punjab* (Lahore: Punjab Printing Company, 1872); *Report on the Punjab Exhibition 1881–82: Selections from the Records of the Government of the Punjab and its Dependencies*, n.s., no. xxii (Lahore: Punjab Government Secretariat Press, 1883). *Threadlines Pakistan* (Karachi: Ministry of Industries, Government of Pakistan in concurrence with the United Nations Development Programme, 1977); *Pakistan Economic Survey* (Islamabad: Government of Pakistan Finance Division Economic Advisors Wing, 1977); *Pakistan Export Promotion Bureau Data* (Islamabad, 2006); *Handmade Carpet Manufacturing* (Karachi: State Bank of Pakistan, 2015); The Pakistani Carpet Manufacturing and Export Association, accessed June 19, 2021, <https://pcmea.org.pk>.

⁹ For nineteenth century views see George Birdwood, *Industrial Arts of India*, vol. 1 (London: Chapman and Hall, 1880); J. K. Mumford, *Oriental Carpets* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1903), 257–59. The leading international carpet periodical *Hali* does not cover modern Pakistani export production.

¹⁰ For example, Alois Riegl, *Problems of Style* (1893), trans. Evelyn Kane (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); Gottfried Semper, *Style in the Technical and Tectonic Arts* (1860), trans. Michael Robinson, ed. Harry Francis Mallgrave (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2004).

¹¹ The date of the oldest preserved carpet, the Pazyryk, found in the Altai Mountains, Siberia, production area unknown, possibly Persia. Now in the State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg.

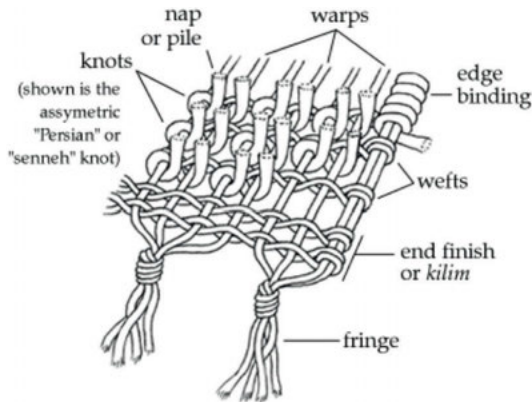


Fig. 1: Structure of knotted pile carpet.

horizontal weft threads. The decisions made by the weaver about the color of thousands of knots gradually build up the pattern in the carpet (**fig. 1**).

Usually described as oriental carpets, these heavy hand-woven textiles are anthropologically complex objects. Some were made within sophisticated societies such as imperial Persia, Anatolia, India, and China. Some have been and are still made in nomadic and village societies organized for tribal sustainability,

such as those of the Turkmen Federation, or in coercive factory systems like those of the Ottoman Empire or parts of modern South Asia. Carpets participate in diverse economic environments; they can be urban export goods, village cash crops, or an integral part of a sheep-based nomadic economy. Their functions are equally diverse. They play a role in political processes of diplomatic gifting and the performance of kingship, where they express status and power. The tribal or village family's collection of carpet objects, including floor and wall coverings, beds, doors, storage bags, and animal trappings are at one and the same time functional domestic items and the family's wealth and its currency for trade. Carpets are an expression of the aesthetic and the sensual, but are also an exercise in spirituality, evidenced by the strong association between oriental carpets and Islam.

In the Asian carpet-weaving belt, there is a history of exchange between different environments in which carpets are made. The court ateliers of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Islamic emperors who commanded the most expensive resources, the urban workshops of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Iran, Turkey, and India, which produced carpets in volume for a European and North American market—shared techniques, materials, and designs with nomadic and village weavers. From at least 300 BCE, oriental carpet weaving has been a circulating craft.

Creating a European and North American Hierarchy of “Oriental” Carpets: 1840–1900

From around 1840, there was a transformation in the intensity of the encounter between Europe and North America and oriental carpets, as a diverse set of European and North American scholarly, artistic, commercial, and popular agents became

strongly engaged with them. By the 1870s, this had reached the peak described by economic historians and carpet specialists as the oriental carpet boom.¹²

The oriental carpet boom had multiple causes. Throughout the nineteenth century, European and North American exploration and colonialism created encounters with societies producing these artifacts. Improving trade links and communications brought a greater number and variety of types of carpets to the European market.¹³ From the mid-nineteenth century onward, international exhibitions brought both contemporary commercial production and old carpets to a wider public,¹⁴ and newly developing museums across Europe and North America displayed exemplary versions.¹⁵ Collectors, dealers, and intermediaries provided carpets for these foundational collections, establishing European and North American connoisseurial standards in the process.¹⁶ Meanwhile, an increase in and wider distribution of disposable income throughout the nineteenth century enabled more people to decorate their houses with carpets.¹⁷ In the second half of the nineteenth century, magazines and periodicals advertised carpets and gave taste advice on how to choose and use them,¹⁸ while department stores made them easy to acquire.¹⁹

The boom saw an increase in the volume of oriental carpets traded in Europe and America, to a larger and more socially and educationally diverse group of consumers. The commercial opportunity led to a reorganization of oriental carpet weaving by entrepreneurs, producers and traders from both areas of indigenous production and Europe and North America, and to the establishment of a preferred European

12 Annette Ittig, "CARPETS xi. Qajar Period," *Encycloaedia Iranica*, IV/8, 877–883, last updated: December 15, 1990, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/carpets-xi>; Donald Quataert, *Ottoman Manufacturing in the Age of the Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 134–42.

13 Leonard Helfgott, *Ties that Bind: A Social History of the Iranian Carpet* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 194), 83–125.

14 For example, the Great Exhibition, London, 1851, the Exposition Universelle, 1878, Paris, "Old Oriental Carpets," 1891, Vienna.

15 These included the South Kensington Museum in London (1852/7), the Musée des Arts Decoratifs in Paris (1905), the Kunstgewerbemuseum in Berlin (1868), the HandelsMuseum (1887) and the K. K. Österreichische Museum für Kunst und Industrie (1863), both in Vienna, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (1870), and the Chicago Art Institute (1879).

16 Examples include Wilhelm Bode, Robert Murdoch Smith and Arthur Upham Pope, Goupil Brothers in Paris, Delekian Brothers in New York, Vincent Robinson in London.

17 Deborah Cohen, *Household Gods: The British and their Possessions*, (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2006), 12–13.

18 For example, Charles Eastlake, *Hints on Household Taste* (London: Longman Green and Co., 1869). For influential magazines see Cohen, *Household Gods* (ibid.), 65–76.

19 Michael B. Miller, *The Bon Marché: Bourgeois Culture and the Department Store 1869–1920* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Vicki Howard, *From Main Street to Mall* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

and North American commercial style.²⁰ It was also a period of reassessment of the quality, nature, and history of oriental carpets by European and North American collectors, connoisseurs, curators, and scholars.

The oriental carpet boom was a moment of discontinuity in carpet weaving, when change accelerated. As the industry mobilized to take the commercial opportunity, anxiety arose among European and North American commentators about the quality of carpets produced in and exported from Persia, Turkey, and India in response to the boom.²¹ This took the form of a moral and commercial panic, moral in the sense that the aesthetic and cultural qualities the oriental carpet represented to the West might be compromised by increased contemporary indigenous production, and commercial in the sense that the market for carpets might be reconfigured economically by the increased volume of carpets being made available:

At the time of which I am speaking, carpets had very seldom been exported from Persia, and consequently there was no rubbish manufactured; now it is quite different. If a very good carpet is wanted, an old one must be bought.²²

In this strongly-worded statement, C. J. Wills (1842–1912), a medical officer with the Indo-European Telegraph company in Persia between 1866 and 1881, reveals the confidence of the colonizer in evaluating the culture of “the other.” Putting the best oriental carpet production in the past was “a denial of coevalness,” a distancing mechanism which Johannes Fabian identifies as an indicator of a Western inability to engage with the material culture of non-Western groups on terms of equality.²³

Historical evidence does not support Wills’s assertion. Oriental carpets were traded across Eurasia from at least 300 BCE.²⁴ However, Wills’s assumption that indigenous producers and entrepreneurs could not be trusted to respond to new markets

20 For Persia, Annette Ittig, “The Kirmani Boom: A Study in Carpet Entrepreneurship,” *Oriental Carpet and Textile Studies*, vol. 1 (1985):111–23; for Turkey, Donald Quataert, *Ottoman Manufacturing in the Age of the Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 134–60. For India Tirthankar Roy, *Traditional Industry in the Economy of Colonial India* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 197–231.

21 This was widespread, but for example see, Alois Riegl, *The Relationship between Oriental Carpet Fabrication and Western Europe* (Vienna, 1891); Vincent Robinson, “Indian Carpets,” *Oriental Carpets*, ed. Caspar Purdon Clarke (London: South Kensington Museum, 1892); William Morris, *Hopes and Fears for Art: Five Lectures Delivered in Birmingham, London and Nottingham 1878–1881* (London: Ellis and White, 1882); and G. C. M. Birdwood, *Industrial Arts*, (1880).

22 C. J. Wills, *In the Land of the Lion and the Sun or Modern Persia, Being Experiences of Life in Persia during a Residence of Fifteen years in Various Parts of That Country from 1866 to 1881* (London, 1891), 149.

23 Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 31.

24 C. Parham, “How Altaic/Nomadic Is the Pazyryk Carpet?,” *Oriental Rug Review* 13/5 (June–July 1993): 34–39.

and technologies was fundamental to the European and North American narrative of oriental carpets. Leading commentators such as Alois Riegl (1858–1905) curator of textiles at the Handelsmuseum in Vienna, and Caspar Purdon Clarke (1846–1911), director of the South Kensington Museum in London, both expressed the view that the quality of contemporaneous production of oriental carpets in their countries of indigenous production could only be ensured if it were supervised by Europeans.²⁵

This moral and commercial panic resulted in the creation of a European and North American hierarchy of so-called better and worse carpets. The characteristics of “better” carpets were the use of preindustrial and local materials, technologies, methods, skills, and designs. Carpets made using any kind of industrialization, from mechanized spinning or weaving, through factory dye-synthesis, or those that used designs from outside their local area, were lower in the hierarchy. Contemporaneous carpets made for export were particularly suspect. European and North American opinion formers believed that these characteristics enabled them to discriminate between carpets that were “authentic” expressions of “traditional” cultures, and those that were not.

This hierarchy bears the marks of orientalism at work, of the colonizer defining the material culture of the colonized as a means of exercising control over it, just as the French Encyclopedists accompanying Napoleon defined Egypt, in Edward Said’s famous example.²⁶ Taking possession of the imaginary of these carpets through a constructed hierarchy of value also created a new source of cultural capital within the nineteenth-century capitalist West, a means to demonstrate superior knowledge, taste, and resources, and gain individual competitive edge.²⁷ The European and North American hierarchy of oriental carpets offered a tool of control that operated exogamously, across the West’s colonies and para-colonies, and endogamously, within its own geographies, society and culture.

The particular qualities valued by European and North American commentators suggest a desire to retreat from the trauma of industrialization and globalization, identified by Glenn Adamson as a driver of nineteenth-century craft revivalism.²⁸ They wished to freeze-frame the oriental carpet at a pre-industrial moment for their own psychological and political purposes, defining this as the “tradition” of “authentic” oriental carpets.

Indigenous producers in South, Central, and West Asia manifested a more flexible attitude to technological innovation, commercial opportunity, and design reinven-

²⁵ Caspar Purdon Clarke, “Oriental Carpets,” *Oriental Carpets: The Catalogue of the 1891 Exhibition at the Handels-Museum, Vienna*, ed. Caspar Purdon Clarke (London: South Kensington Museum, 1892); Riegl, *Oriental Carpet Fabrication*, 214.

²⁶ Said, *Orientalism*, 79–88.

²⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (London: Routledge, 2010), 1–55.

²⁸ Glenn Adamson, *The Invention of Craft* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 211–14.



Fig. 2: Hand-knotted sampler (*wagireh*), wool, Bijar, Persia, early twentieth century.

tion. Adoption of nineteenth-century technologies such as industrially produced dyes, new materials like cross-bred merino wool, and of semi-industrial factory methods, was part of the response in Turkey, Persia, and India to the opportunities offered by the oriental carpet boom. This adaptiveness was not unique to nineteenth-century circumstances, but was rooted in the history of transfer in weaving technology and materials across Eurasia, of which the spread of silk and the drawloom are examples.

Furthermore, there is evidence of long-standing heterodoxy toward design in these geographies. The best efforts of European and North American taxonomists to associate places and time periods with specific designs are frustrated by the fusions, borrowings, and *bricolage* of oriental carpet patterns (**fig. 2**).²⁹ The tribal weavers of the borders of modern Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran have a specific term for these

borrowings, *narche gashtai*, wandering designs.³⁰

Operating within this model of adaptation and exchange, producers from South, Central and West Asia took the emerging commercial opportunities of industrialization, globalizing markets, and the oriental carpet boom and at the same time energized their craft traditions. These developments did not align comfortably with the freeze-framed hierarchy of oriental carpets established by a West struggling to come to terms with modernity.

The result was an effort to transfer agency from the indigenous producers of oriental carpets to hegemonic tastemakers in Europe and North America, and to put control of the speed and nature of change, circulation, and reinvention into their

²⁹ The foundational practitioner of this was Bode, see, for example, Wilhelm Bode and Ernst Kuhnel, *Antique Rugs from the Near East*, trans. Charles Grant Ellis (Berlin: Klinkhardt and Biermann, 1958), 94.

³⁰ R. D. Parsons, *The Carpets of Afghanistan*, (Woodbridge: Antique Collectors Club, 1983), 212.

hands. This contest for agency in the production and design of oriental carpets is vividly demonstrated in the case of carpets from pre-independence Punjab and post-partition Pakistan.³¹

Creating Imperial Identities through Carpets in Punjab, 1540–1900

Punjab experienced two major imperial interventions from the sixteenth century, that of the Mughals (1526–1857) and that of the British (1849–1947), both of which were materialized in their carpets.³² Under the Mughal emperors Akbar (1542–1605), Jahangir (1569–1627), and Jahan (1592–1666) elite patterned pile carpets became part of the demonstration of imperial power, as they were in contemporaneous Safavid Persia.³³ Two distinctive local styles developed, one strongly influenced by Persian design traditions, and one by European botanical illustrations (fig. 3).³⁴ The design of their carpets exemplifies the Mughal imperial project to establish connections with



Fig. 3: Mughal carpet, Lahore, Punjab or Kashmir, ca. 1650, wool pile, cotton foundation.

³¹ At Indian independence in 1947, Punjab was partitioned between India and the new Muslim state of Pakistan. For a summary of carpet weaving in Punjab see Nasreen Askari and Rosemary Crill, *Colours of the Indus: Costume and Textiles of Pakistan* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum/Merrell Holberton Publishers, 1997), 95.

³² A short-lived indigenous Sikh Empire existed between 1799 and 1849.

³³ Kishwar Rizvi, *The Safavid Dynastic Shrine: Architecture, Religion and Power in Early Modern Iran* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011), 93; Daniel Walker, *Flowers Under Foot: Indian Carpets of the Mughal Era* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998), 3–15.

³⁴ R. Skelton, “A Decorative Motif in Mughal Art,” *Aspects of Indian Art: Papers Presented in a Symposium at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1970*, ed. Pratapaditya Pal (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 147–52.

both the culturally powerful Safavid Empire and the intellectual innovation coming from Europe. Lahore in Punjab was one of the earliest and most important centers of Mughal carpet making, and radical adaptation and identity making were built into it from that point on.³⁵ Court patronage lapsed under the later Mughal emperors, and the Sikh rulers who dominated Punjab in the early nineteenth century were less interested in carpet production.³⁶ Urban factories that had produced more accessible versions of Mughal court carpets declined, and there was little of the domestic and rural production found in Iran, Anatolia, and Central Asia.³⁷ In 1849, the British East India Company seized Punjab, and in 1857, in common with other EIC territories in the subcontinent, it came under direct British rule.

The British set out to revive the carpet making industry in Punjab, first for economic reasons, and then as part of the British project to define and preserve what they saw as “traditional” Indian culture.³⁸ Arindam Dutta has vividly evoked the dynamism of the colonial process by which Britain took possession of the material culture of India, reimagining and physically remaking it to dovetail with the British imperial agenda.³⁹ He describes a cultural system in India of British art schools, museums and exhibitions, publications, regimental workshops, and jails, all responding to the agenda set by the Department of Arts and Sciences in London, and embodied by the South Kensington Museum, now the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Carpets were an important part of this cultural system. The moral and commercial panic among European and American commentators about the impact of industrialization and a global market on “traditional” carpets was particularly marked in the discourse on Indian carpets.

Indian carpets sold today are wholly modern creations. The antique fabrics, many of which were admirable, are no longer to be had. . . . The industrial development of India under English rule dissipated the old methods so rapidly that within twenty-five years after the first public exhibition of these fabrics in London, in 1851, the carpet product had become entirely altered in character.⁴⁰

The solution to the “dissipation” described by American commentator J. K. Mumford in 1903 was for the new imperial power to “rescue” Indian carpets. Through their

³⁵ The lack of surviving examples makes it difficult to discuss the pre-Mughal period.

³⁶ Susan Stronge, “The Arts of the Court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh,” *The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms*, ed. Susan Stronge (London: Victoria and Albert Museum Publications, 1999), 74–91.

³⁷ Tirthankar Roy, *Traditional Industry in the Economy of Colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 199.

³⁸ C. Latimer, *Monograph on Carpet Making in the Punjab, 1905–6* (Lahore, 1907); B. H. Baden Powell, *Handbook of the Manufactures and Arts of the Punjab*, vol. 2 of *Handbook of the Economic Products of the Punjab* (Lahore: Punjab Printing Company, 1872).

³⁹ Arindam Dutta, *The Bureaucracy of Beauty: Design in the Age of Its Global Reproducibility*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 1–39.

⁴⁰ J. K. Mumford, *Oriental Carpets* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1903), 252.

art schools, regimental workshops, and most significantly in their jails, the British in India directly imposed their vision of what an oriental carpet should be, in terms of methods of production, materials, and ornament.

The work carried out by Indian inmates in British jails in India was intended to be primarily punitive, with a second objective that of defraying jail costs. Unusually, carpets were produced in jail workshops for the commercial export market fueled by the oriental carpet boom. Some jail carpets



Fig. 4: Carpet, wool, Lahore Central Jail, ca. 1880, Victoria and Albert Museum.

were direct copies of Mughal and Indo-Persian carpets collected by the indigenous Indian aristocracy.⁴¹ However, a carpet woven in Lahore jail around 1880 exemplifies a more complex process of borrowing and exchange (**fig. 4**). The ornamental plane of the carpet has a field structure of wreaths and cartouches containing blossoms, and a strong palette of red, black, and dark blue. Alongside its Indo-Persian *millefleurs* characteristics, it has a relationship to urban Persian carpet making of the nineteenth century. It contains no hint of the innovative, specifically Mughal botanical style showing whole plants, sometimes including their roots.

The British preference for Persian styles was part of a Persophilia that had intensified during the nineteenth century, as racial hierarchies developed in Europe within which Persians were perceived as second only to northern Europeans. The Persian Safavid dynasty (1501–1736), famed for its cultural and intellectual excellence, was seen as a particularly attractive model for nineteenth-century European empire builders.⁴² But Persophilia in India also had a local character. British colonialists preferred to identify themselves with Persia and its past glories, rather than the Mughal Empire, which even in decline offered resistance to the British. When Indian groups rose up against the British in 1857, in the events variously known as the Indian Mutiny, the Sepoy Rebellion, and the First Indian War of Independence, depending on the cultural and political affiliations of the commentator, the last Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah (1775–1862) was their symbolic leader.

⁴¹ Abigail McGowan, “Convict Carpets: Jails and the Revival of Historic Carpet Design in Colonial India,” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 72, no. 2 (May 2013): 391–416.

⁴² For the historiography of European and North American Persophilia see Yuka Kadoi and Ivan Szanto, eds., *The Shaping of Persian Art: Collections and Interpretations of the Art of Islamic Iran and Central Asia* (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 4–6.

The Lahore rug was displayed in the jail carpet category of the British-organized Punjab exhibition of 1881–82, where it was one of two jail carpets bought for the South Kensington Museum by Caspar Purdon Clarke.⁴³ One of these two carpets won first prize in the exhibition, and one is now misplaced.⁴⁴ The catalogue description is too generic for a confident identification of the illustrated carpet as the prizewinner, but the two carpets were considered the most worthy of purchase by Clarke. Both the purchases and the prize were signals to Punjabi producers that such Indo-Persian styles were the ornamental vocabulary of a British-authorized idea of the “traditional” Indian carpet. The exhibition catalogue describes the prizewinning carpet as copied from a Persian or Indo-Persian carpet in the “Maison de Louvre.” This carpet does not appear to be in the Louvre, so its source was probably from the contemporaneous Parisian department store, Les Grands Magasins du Louvre.⁴⁵ The carpet was doubly endowed with Persophilia, French and British. It also claimed the cachet of a source in “the capital of the nineteenth century,” Paris, the dominant cultural center in Europe.⁴⁶

Caspar Purdon Clarke bought the two jail carpets as part of a £5,000 shopping trip for Indian goods, with the aim of establishing a systematic teaching collection of Indian crafts to improve the design quality of British manufacturing.⁴⁷ They became part of a loan collection sent by the Department of Science and Arts to British industrial centers such as Birmingham, Manchester, and Glasgow, where machine-made versions of such carpets were produced (fig. 5). The prizewinning replica of an Indo-Persian carpet collected by Parisian taste-makers, made in colonial Lahore as part of the imposition of British cultural and political values, was reimagined and remade for the imperial parlor and the colonial lounge in the UK’s manufacturing cities, then sold across the UK and its settled territories.

Carpets like the two from Lahore jail helped unlock the potential of Indian crafts for British capitalism. They offer an example of an Indian “tradition” which had been mediated by Parisian collectors, reimagined by the British in Punjab, then re-exported globally. The multidirectional circulation of design and capital materialized in these two carpets was an expression of late nineteenth-century geopolitics and identity formation, built on previous centuries of similar negotiations between earlier empires in

⁴³ A. M. Dallas, *Report on the Punjab Exhibition 1881–82: Selections from the Records of the Government of the Punjab and its Dependencies*, n.s. no. xxii (Lahore: Punjab Government Secretariat Press, 1883), 59.

⁴⁴ London, Victoria and Albert Museum Archives, MA/2/1/1–3, “Mr. C. Purdon Clarke’s visit to and purchases in India,” inventory numbers 797 and 798.

⁴⁵ I am grateful to Gwenaëlle Fellingier of the Louvre, and Avalon Fotheringham of the V&A for their help with the research on this previously undocumented carpet.

⁴⁶ Walter Benjamin, “Paris – Capital City of the Nineteenth Century,” *Dissent Magazine* (September–October 1970); first published 1920.

⁴⁷ V&A Archives, MA/2/1/1–3.

the region, such as the Mughals and the Persian Safavid dynasty.

Jail carpets offer a record of British colonial power over the creativity and artistic traditions of Punjab, but also over Indian bodies. Jail carpets are part of the broader British organization of punishment and disciplined labor in South Asia, and have been read as a confrontational representation of the hegemony's coercion of both subaltern individuals and subaltern societies.⁴⁸ Michel Foucault offered a framing for such discussions in his identification of the role of jail systems in the formation of both personal identity and the body.⁴⁹ The Colonial and Indian Exhibition held in London in 1886, where Purdon Clarke's Indian purchases were displayed, offered a stark example of this. The five and a half million people who visited the exhibition saw jail weavers themselves displayed alongside their products.⁵⁰



Fig. 5: Machine-woven carpet, Templeton and Company, Glasgow, New Zealand wool and jute, ca. 1950. Author's photograph from "Templeton Presents Carpets of Distinction," Glasgow: Templeton and Co., 1952.

Repossessing "Oriental" Carpets in Punjab: The "Private" Industry, 1870–1947

Jail carpets have been a focus in the historiography of carpets made in nineteenth-century India, written both during and since that period. However, alongside them, a less-studied independent commercial carpet weaving industry developed in the later

⁴⁸ This important topic in South Asian postcolonial thought is explored in, for example, Satadru Sen, *Disciplined Natives: Race, Freedom and Confinement in Colonial India* (Delhi: Primus Books, 2012); David Arnold, "The Colonial Prison: Power, Knowledge and Penology," in *Subaltern Studies VIII: Essays in Honour of Ranajit Gupta* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), 148–84.

⁴⁹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin, 1991), 135–95.

⁵⁰ Saloni Mathur, "Living Ethnological Exhibits: The Case of 1886," *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 15 no. 4 (November 2000): 492–524.

decades of the century. This was described by the British as “the private industry.”⁵¹ The usage of the term “private” for the entire indigenous industry is an indicator of the degree of British identification with, and belief in their control of the Indian public space and the material culture that lay within it.

The center of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century independent carpet industry in Punjab was Amritsar.⁵² Amritsar was already a well-established trading center when the British East India Company annexed Punjab in 1849. Its connections with European and North American entrepreneurs, merchants, and dealers strengthened during the second half of the nineteenth century, giving its traders and producers insight into the tastes and requirements of European and North American consumers.⁵³

In parallel the shawl-weaving industry of neighboring Kashmir came under pressure from a number of factors. British and French industries in replicas, and the economic impact of the Franco-Prussian war and the struggles between Britain and Russia in Central Asia, had by the late nineteenth century caused a collapse in demand for these elite objects across Europe and Asia.⁵⁴ A severe famine in Kashmir in the 1880s led to the migration of shawl weavers to Punjab, in particular Amritsar, a traditional center for the trading of Kashmiri shawls.⁵⁵ Facing a decline in the shawl market, weavers joined the “private” carpet industry. This Kashmiri diaspora brought into Amritsar an infusion of world-class production disciplines, and spinning, weaving, dyeing, and design skills.

Meanwhile, Amritsar was not subject to the full strength of the British imperial carpet system as Lahore was. Both Amritsar and Lahore had a jail workshop, but Lahore was also the location of the main British-founded museum and art school in Punjab.⁵⁶ Carpets produced in Amritsar for the growing market for luxurious interiors in Europe and America were consequently less mediated by a British idea of what an oriental carpet should be.

However, the imposition of a British idea of an Indo-Persian carpet had consequences, albeit unintended, on the independent industry. Rather than encouraging Amritsar carpet makers toward British-authorized “traditions,” I suggest that it instead loosened the bonds of identity between independent Punjabi weavers and their own Mughal and pre-Mughal styles of carpets. Once that bond was broken, energy was

51 W. Coldstream, *Report on the Punjab Exhibition 1881–2*, 61.

52 Latimer, *Monograph* (1907), 5–7.

53 W. S. Caine, *Picturesque India* (London: George Routledge and Sons Ltd., 1891), 158–60. Mumford, *Oriental Carpets* (1903), 251–65.

54 Michelle Maskiell, “Shawls and Empires, 1500–2000”, *Journal of World History*, vol. 13. No. 1, (Spring 2002): 27–65.

55 Suhail Lone, “Famine in late nineteenth century Kashmir”, *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, vol. 77 (2016): 450–460

56 The Amritsar art school was founded in 1928 by the Sikh artist Gurdit Singh. The Lahore Mayo School of Art was founded by the British in 1875.



Fig. 6: Hand-knotted carpet, cotton, wool, silk, Amritsar, ca.1900.

released for a heterodox idea of what an oriental carpet might look like. Reimagined forms of carpets emerged in Amritsar as a consequence, which did not set out to express British ideological concerns, or to exemplify a static hierarchy of quality and tradition (fig. 6). The Amritsar carpet illustrated is very distinct from the Persian and Indo-Persian carpets promoted by the British, and from Mughal carpets. Its combination of large, simplified motifs and dense, long pile is a reversal of what is often found in accomplished West, Central, and South Asian carpets. There, small detailed motifs and short, fine pile permit high-definition, intricate designs. Thick pile and large motifs give a blurred design. This blurring is increased by the subduing of the palette. Instead of the complex combinations of shades of red, blue, and green associated in Europe and America with oriental carpets, the palette is narrow, muted and almost monochrome. What we perceive is a watery impression of an oriental carpet that does not insist on its centrality in the visual field, or compromise the overall Western interior scheme, in particular the need for furniture to sit on the carpets, and to break into the pattern.

In the face of a British institutional insistence on the traditional, the Amritsar industry introduced innovations in design, palette, and materials. However, the innovation which arguably had the most significance for the production of carpets in Punjab from 1880 onward was Amritsar's business model. Focused on producing carpets for the export market, and with a well-structured legal and financial system of contracts, the Amritsar industry drew together the capital and entrepreneurial skills of indigenous manufacturers, such as the Hutheesing family and Chamba Lal and Company, the skills and production disciplines of the self-managing community of Kashmiri shawl weavers, and North American intermediaries such as Lockwood de Forest (1850–1932), who gave access to the customers and capital of New York dealers and retailers including Louis Comfort Tiffany and W&J Sloane.⁵⁷ By the turn of the nineteenth century, Amritsar was a vigorous industrial city, with a modern infrastructure of railways and telegraphs, and a thriving carpet export industry.⁵⁸

The British establishment in India was interested in the “private” carpet industry as a sign of economic vitality in India, but disturbed by its divergence from the purity of tradition in crafts and carpets that the British had so energetically imagined and endorsed in Punjab and more broadly across British India.⁵⁹ The resistance mounted by contemporaneous European and North American commentators, connoisseurs, curators, and collectors to Amritsar carpets was, however, more intense. They dis-

57 For a case study of the carpet collaboration in Amritsar and Ahmadebad between Lockwood de Forest (1850–1932) and the Hutheesing family, see Roberta Mayer, *Lockwood de Forest: Furnishing the Gilded Age with a Passion for India* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2008). For the collaboration in Amritsar between Shaikh Gulam Hussun and W&J Sloane, see *The Story of Sloane's* (New York: W&J Sloane, 1950).

58 For a contemporaneous description of the difference between the cities of Lahore and Amritsar and rural India see Rudyard Kipling, *Kim* (London: Penguin, 1989), 74–89; first published 1901.

59 McGowan, “All that is rare,” 263–86; McGowan, “Convict Carpets,” 391–416.

missed Amritsar carpets as “purely commercial products” produced for export, which abandoned the traditional practices and techniques in which Western connoisseurs were invested.⁶⁰ There was particular criticism of the factory-like, and indeed, jail-like disciplines used in Amritsar. These commentators disregarded the evidence that Indian carpet making had taken place in factories rather than rural workshops and homes since the Mughal invasion,⁶¹ and that many of the production disciplines were adopted from traditional Kashmiri shawl making practices.⁶²

In the Western connoisseurial response to Amritsar carpets, there was a blurring of objections to methods of production, political and economic unease, and aesthetic anxiety, which continues to be characteristic of European and North American responses to oriental carpets. Despite this ideological ferment, the new aesthetic was commercially successful among consumers, particularly in America, where the ideological aspects of the taste authorized by the British possibly had less resonance. Meanwhile, time has done its work and Amritsar rugs are now valued as antiques of high aesthetic and sensual appeal, commanding high prices. The carpet in figure 6 was for sale in 2017 for \$150,000, at a time when an attractive late nineteenth- or early twentieth-century nomadic or village carpet could be bought for around \$3,000.⁶³

The Amritsar carpet industry offers an example of a colonial territory that repossessed its own tradition from the taste precepts of the colonizer, and reworked that tradition to take independent advantage of the commercial opportunity arising from globalizing markets. The attraction of its carpets as antiques in the modern international market for art and antiquities obscures the ideological difficulties they raised at the time of their production. The Amritsar story challenges both the orientalist and postcolonial assumption that something is being done to the East by the West, and linear and binary models of transfer and influence.

Carpets and the New Nation: Pakistan from 1947

When India gained its independence from Britain in 1947 and a separate Muslim state of Pakistan was established, Punjab was partitioned between the two new states. As a result, the production locations of the Lahore jail carpet and the Amritsar carpet were

⁶⁰ Mumford, *Oriental Carpets*, 251–59; George Birdwood, *Industrial Arts of India* (1880), (Calcutta: 1992), 285–300; Vincent Robinson, “Indian Carpets,” *Oriental Carpets: The Catalogue of the 1891 Exhibition at the Handels-Museum, Vienna*.

⁶¹ Roy, *Traditional Industry*, 199.

⁶² For a description of Dr. Leithner’s exhibit of the Kashmiri shawl-weaving process, see *Report on the Punjab Exhibition 1881*⁹², 31.

⁶³ See “Amritsar Rugs,” DorisLeslieBlau.com, accessed June 22, 2021, dorisleslieblau.com/amritsar-indian-rugs.



Fig. 7: Lahore and Amritsar after 1947 Partition of India and Pakistan.

separated by a national border and by religion. Despite being only thirty miles apart, from 1947 Muslim Lahore was in Pakistan, Sikh Amritsar in India (**fig. 7**).

Carpet making in Indian jails had ceased by 1930, in the face of international economic depression and increasing consumer ambivalence about the circumstances of production. The independent carpet weaving industry of Amritsar was still in operation in 1947, although smaller than at its peak in the 1920s. Most carpet weavers in Amritsar were Muslim, and moved at partition to Pakistan.⁶⁴ The Pakistani handmade carpet industry inherited the skills and production methods of the Amritsar industry, its outward focus on export markets, and its readiness to meet consumer appetites.⁶⁵ The Pakistani industry also adopted its readiness to transgress orthodox expectations of design, reinventing pattern structures, motifs, and palettes (**fig. 8**). Meanwhile, a major industry in copies and versions of well-known Eurasian carpet styles, and of particular famous carpets, developed in Pakistan (**fig. 9**).

As a consequence, Pakistani carpets have also inherited Amritsar's problematic relationship with the European and North American hierarchy of oriental carpets, which has globalized alongside the globalization of the market for art and antiquities.⁶⁶ Pakistan's reinventions and versions of oriental carpets have reactivated the

⁶⁴ Felicia Yacopino, *Threadlines Pakistan* (Karachi: Ministry of Industries, Government of Pakistan in concurrence with the United Nations development Programme, 1977).

⁶⁵ *Handmade Carpet Manufacturing* (Karachi: State Bank of Pakistan, 2015).

⁶⁶ The new museums of Islamic art in the Gulf States have taken advice on their collections from Western carpet specialists, for example.



Fig. 8: Carpet, wool, and cotton, Pakistan, 2017.



Fig. 9: Left: handmade “Bokhara” carpet, Pakistan, New Zealand wool, contemporary 1.8 × 1.2 m, Walmart Online Store, US. Right: similar carpet, John Lewis Online, UK.

anxieties about tradition, authenticity, and export wares at the core of the nineteenth-century rejection of change in oriental carpets, and the suspicion of copies which has been part of the debate on modernity from the mid-nineteenth century onward.⁶⁷ The carpets of postcolonial Pakistan are popular with consumers, but are as controversial with the now-global connoisseurial community as those of colonial Amritsar were in the late nineteenth century.⁶⁸ They demonstrate the level of anxiety that is still present when a geography of indigenous production reclaims its material culture from the ideology of the hegemony.

However, the carpet industry is fundamental to Pakistan's economy and identity. On their present-day websites, both the Lahore Carpet Company and the Multan Handmade Carpet Company claim that they were established in 1947, the year of Pakistani independence.⁶⁹ The PAK Carpet Company makes a subtly different claim, that it became the home for the émigré weavers of Amritsar.⁷⁰ These three modern carpet-making companies see their firms, weaving, and trade as part of the origin story of their nation. Meanwhile, handwoven pile carpets, while not the biggest industry in Pakistan, make an important contribution to Pakistani exports. More than 90% of production is exported, and Pakistan is one of the major exporters of oriental carpets in the world.⁷¹ A circulation of only thirty miles between Lahore and Amritsar established oriental carpets as agents in the creation of both the identity and the economy of the new Pakistani state.

Conclusion

I have argued that the visual plane, materials, and meaning of an oriental carpet have been contested since the beginning of the nineteenth century by interest groups inside and outside the geographies of indigenous production. In particular, I have described the degree to which the assessment of the quality of oriental carpets and their design has been defined by Europe and North America in this period, and has

⁶⁷ Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zorn, ed. Hannah Arendt (London: Pimlico, 1999), 211–45; first published 1936. For craft revivalists and copying see Adamson, *The Invention of Craft*, 141–64, 191–98.

⁶⁸ For example, the leading international periodical on oriental carpets, *Hali*, does not cover modern Pakistani export production.

⁶⁹ See Lahorecarpet.com, and Multan Oriental Hand Made Carpet Company Facebook page, accessed June 22, 2021, <https://facebook.com/MOHMC>.

⁷⁰ See Pakpersianrugs.co.uk/oriental-persian-rug-articles.

⁷¹ Trade Development Authority of Pakistan, "Carpet Industry" (2006), accessed June 22, 2021, tdap.gov.pk/tdap-statistics.php; *Pakistan Economic Survey* (Islamabad: Government of Pakistan Finance Division Economic Advisors Wing, 1977), 55.

been underpinned by changing European and North American tastes, sensibilities, and hegemonic ideologies.

However, the analysis here of the carpets of Punjab and Pakistan shows how these same international markets and geopolitics have offered an opportunity to carpet makers and traders in the countries of indigenous production to reinvent their own traditions of making and design, and to reclaim agency in the definition of what constitutes an oriental carpet. I have argued that the repossession and reinvention of oriental carpets in Punjab was a transfer of agency from hegemonic powers to local producers, and that this expression of agency was a transgression of power relations in the eyes of the colonizers. The consequence of this was that the carpets themselves were regarded as transgressive by the arbiters of taste in Europe and America, irrespective of their intrinsic design, materials, and cultural qualities. The carpets of Punjab and Pakistan illustrate how political, social, economic, and cultural power works to modify the material culture of those it dominates, and the agency of indigenous makers in resisting that power.

Aziza Gril-Mariotte

The Art of Printed Textiles

Selecting Motifs in the Eighteenth Century

In France, unlike in Switzerland, Holland, and England, printing on fabrics using engraved wood blocks, known as *indiennage*, only became a new branch of the textile industry after 1759, when the ban on *indiennes* was lifted. The import of *indiennes*, which were cotton fabrics ornamented by bright-colored motifs obtained through the use of mordant, a chemical compound that fixed the dye onto fabric fibers, had angered manufacturers of linen, wool, and silk-based fabrics. King Louis XIV, who was eager to protect the national textile industry and to curb imports, imposed a total ban in 1686, applying not only to imports (with the exception of those of the East India Company, destined to be reexported to the colonies), but also to manufacturing in printing workshops.

After 1759, the fabric printing industry began growing thanks to the manufacturers that adapted techniques to fix dyes onto cotton fabrics using mordants and printed numerous motifs from the Western language, borrowed from the manufactured arts.¹ During the second half of the eighteenth century, painted fabrics remained perceived as dependent on fabrics imported from the Indies. While in technical terms, European *indiennage* did draw on processes used in the Indies, in artistic terms manufacturers sought to appeal to a broad clientele by making pieces that were not limited to the imported models that had already been tailored to European tastes for the trading companies.² While there is no denying the importance of stylistic borrowings from imported pieces, the study of the motifs created in the early years of French *indiennage* highlights a range of other borrowings, from textiles, decorative arts (porcelain and marquetry furniture), as well as nature. The prints produced by French manufacturers from the 1760s to 1780s call for revisiting the eighteenth-century output of *indiennes*. By comparing these products with other contemporary items, the question of the origin of the motifs can be addressed in terms of influence, borrowings, and circulation. A history of the mobility of forms between printing centers as well as

1 Aziza Gril-Mariotte, "Aux sources de la création: Modèles, emprunts et circulation des formes occidentales dans les toiles peintes de Neuchâtel au XVIII^e siècle," in *Made in Neuchâtel: Deux siècles d'indiennes*, ed. Lisa Laurenti (Paris: Somogy éditions d'art, 2018), 86–97.

2 Agnès Geijer, "Some Evidence of Indo-European Cotton Trade in Pre-Mughal Times," *Journal of Indian Textile History*, no.1 (1955, reissued in 1996): 34–39. Katharine Brett, "An English Source of Indian Chintz Design," *Journal of Indian Textile History*, no.1 (1955, reissued in 1996): 40–3, "A French Source of Indian Chintz Design," *Journal of Indian Textile History*, no.2 (1956, reissued in 1996): 43–52. Veronica Murphy, "Europeans and the Textile Trade," in *Arts of India, 155–171*, ed. Johny Guy and Deborah Swallow (London: Victoria & Albert Museum/Mopin Publishing Pvt. Ltd., 1990), 153–72.

between different textiles—most notably silk—or manufactured arts, may emerge in the process.

In the eighteenth and throughout the nineteenth century, the term “painted textiles” was commonly used by manufacturers, traders, consumers, and notaries alike to refer to all cotton and linen-based fabrics that were printed with motifs. This was due to the manufacturers’ need for a generic term that alluded neither to a technique, like “printing,” or to a geographical origin, like “indienne.” The need to use a word other than “indienne” was also reflected in the ornamental vocabulary developed by designers when production was allowed in the kingdom in 1759. In France, as in Switzerland, Holland, and England, the manufactures and their workers (designers and engravers) used patterns that circulated in books and drew inspiration from other manufactured products. Designers in painted textile manufacturers had varied sources at their disposal, as the enthusiasm for decoration spurred the diffusion of numerous pattern books. Motifs never circulated in Europe and between different productions to such an extent, reflecting the wide array of decorative possibilities explored by ornamentalists.

A new artistic era dawned as the ban on *indiennes* ended, characterized by an effort to draw, at least in part, on new sources of inspiration, to appeal to other customers who were not accustomed to the foreign motifs of the genuine *indiennes*. In Marseille, where the franchise granted to the harbor gave it an exemption from the ban, which favored the opening of *indienne* factories, the few preserved samples dating back to the 1730s show that their ornamental language was still dependent on motifs from imported fabrics.³ Starting in 1759, factories proliferated throughout the kingdom—though some were rather short-lived. The manufactory founded in Jouyen-Josas by Christophe-Philippe Oberkampf, a craftsman of German descent, would go on to be the largest European one in the early nineteenth century. Yet, during the first decade of French *indiennage*, between the 1760s to the 1780s, its output was not distinguishable from that of most other factories. Many books from that manufactory have been preserved; they give a glimpse into the diversity and complexity of forms, revealing modes of circulation and the appropriation of some motifs. The collections at the Paris Musée des Arts Décoratifs (Museum of Decorative Arts) contain several albums that showcase the artistic trends of that time. Among them, there is an exceptional document: the 1766 factory register, which comprises 359 prints made on paper to check the engraving on the blocks and the quality of the design during the year, and is one of the few not to have been subsequently reworked.⁴ Manufacturers rou-

³ *Manuscrit du duc de Richelieu*, 1736, vol. 1, folios no. 28 and 29. Bnf, Cabinet des Estampes, cote LH 45.

⁴ Paris, musée des Arts Décoratifs, BAD en.12930, cote AA43 “livre de fabrique année 1766.” This research is dedicated to Jean-Paul Leclercq (1947–2019) a former curator at the Paris Museum of Decorative Arts, who pointed out this register to me and encouraged me to work on these prints.

tinely collected these paper prints in albums on a yearly basis: “One must carefully preserve books of drawings so that they may serve to observe the progress or degeneration of taste,” Christophe-Philippe Oberkampf said.⁵

These sketch designs were all printed on fabric, as evidenced by the details provided near each print, indicating the number of pieces and the width of the fabrics. However, no printed version has been found, with the exception of a chinoiserie drawing from a recovered quilt fragment.⁶ These prints illustrate the early days of *indiennage* in France and expand our knowledge of motifs that were ordinary, as they were printed with few colors and consumed to an extent that did not make it possible to preserve them.

The analysis of the 1766 factory book gives us a window into the creative processes involved in the annual production of a painted fabric manufactory in the early stage of this industry’s development in France. These paper prints present the variety of methods elaborated by designers and engravers to create a textile collection that paid heed to decorative fashions and made the most of the engraving process. The book showcases the different kinds of motifs printed over the course of a year for furniture or clothing. Categories of ornaments belonging to the textile or decorative arts emerge. Among these 359 prints, two bodies stand out: first, the designs based on sources openly identified by the manufacturers—motifs of Indian inspiration, silk textiles or motifs drawn from nature—and compositions that relied on the distinctive processes of woodblock engraving. The study of these two broad categories gives us an updated picture of the idea of creation in *indiennage*, a field in which innovation remained dependent on economic constraints. The manufacturers worked for a broad spectrum of customers, ranging from the court (for the furnishings of rooms in royal residences) to artisans (for clothes). As they disseminated motifs that were already widespread on other supports, they contributed to trends and fashions and ensured the success of their products.

⁵ Archives nationales du Monde du Travail (ANMT), 2003 059 1 (Fonds Oberkampf: anciennement 41AQ), “Actes de société, papiers personnels d’Oberkampf 1763–1811,” dossier no. 83: “Opinion d’Oberkampf, fondateur des Manufactures de Jouy et d’Essonnes sur leur prospérité et leur conservation.”

⁶ The print and quilt fragment in question, from the Paris Museum of Decorative Arts, were studied in Aziza Gril-Mariotte, *Les toiles de Jouy: histoire d’un art décoratif, 1760–1821* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2015), 140.

Creations in an Annual Collection in the Early Days of *Indiennage*

The book inventories all the creations made during the year 1766 at the Oberkampf manufactory of Jouy-en-Josas; each paper print comes with notes that provide indications on the width of fabrics and the number of colors to print. The paper prints give us a glimpse into the creative process, the sources of inspiration and the variations conceived by engravers under the helm of designer Louis Rordorf, who was hired in Zurich in 1764 to lead the creative workshop.⁷ The book features 359 designs that correspond to the production of a printing campaign spanning spring through fall.⁸ The analysis of the categories of motifs included shows that the designers relied on varied sources of inspiration. These documents confirm that patterns circulated first between contemporary manufactured productions, and that faraway influences came second. For instance, the imaginary China-inspired motifs known as chinoiseries, although they are prominently represented in early eighteenth-century textile collections, amount to only 1.4% of all prints for that year. The book reveals that as far as the reality of production in an indienne manufacture of the 1760s went, exotic motifs remained in the minority. This is due to the elitist consumption of indiennes imported from India and Persia, which sold for much higher prices than the fabrics printed in France, where printing techniques were not yet mastered well enough to achieve such bright and abundant colors as those featured on the large coverings ornamented with trees of life. The early French indienne fabrics were purchased by customers who did not have sufficient resources to procure the genuine articles, as imports were heavily taxed and retail prices were geared toward the wealthy. Only by the late 1770s were the largest French manufacturers able to print large motifs inspired by or borrowed from Indian designs, circulating luxury prints reserved for the consumers that enjoyed furnishing their rooms and wearing clothes with motifs inspired by foreign sources. These French imitations, although expensive, remained far more affordable than the imports.⁹

7 According to colorist Moll from the Coye manufactory, cited by Alain Dewerpe and Yves Gaulupeau, *La fabrique des prolétaires: Les ouvriers de la manufacture d'Oberkampf à Jouy-en-Josas, 1760–1815* (Paris: Presses de l'École Normale Supérieure, 1990), 42.

8 ANMT, 2003 059 7: "Considération d'Oberkampf sur le dessin et la mode" (1813).

9 In 1770, the upholsterer Jean-François Bimont gave an example of the variations of prices per ell, between 144 livres (pounds) for "the beautiful Persian" (a name that indicated an import), 4 to 6 livres for "the Indian, the beautiful" and between 3 livres and 55 florins for the "ordinary Indian": Jean-François Bimont, *Principes de l'art du tapissier, ouvrage utile aux gens de la profession et à ceux qui les emplient* (Paris, 1770), 100–01.

Type of Motif	Number	Proportion
Geometric patterns / small, stylized flowers	98	27.2%
Flowers	88	24.5%
Silk composition	81	22.6%
Indian patterns	57	16%
Stripes	29	8%
Chinoiserie	5	1.4%
Animals	1	0.3%
All 1766 prints	359	100%

This table presents generic types of motifs. Some could be categorized differently: for instance, here, small, stylized flowers are in the geometric pattern category, whereas flower stripes or foliage are considered floral motifs. Despite the somewhat arbitrary nature of this classification, it shows that in its early days, *indiennage* relied on the imitation or copy of fabrics imported from India or Persia only to a very limited extent. “Indian motifs” did exist but made up only 16% of the total output. Flower foliage motifs inspired by the East were a characteristic category of *indiennage*, but remained fairly seldom found at that point, likely because imports from India were more prized by consumers, but also because they were more difficult to imitate. This category also includes smaller motifs corresponding to the forms of *boteh*, flower patterns found in the Mughal prints of the Gujarat region copied by designers during that year.

These classifications of printed designs attest to the ability of *indienne* makers to embrace a variety of forms and to transpose them using a technique that permits a wide array of variations of woodblock printing.

When Fabrics Inspire Indienne Makers

“Silk pieces have been of great assistance and could also be useful in the future... The natural history of plants can give us admirable things.”¹⁰ As he cited these sources of inspiration, Oberkampf defined a widespread method for creating new motifs, which consisted of borrowing patterns from other domains. These included, for instance, floral motifs taken from pattern books: one print has a rose branch

¹⁰ ANMT, 2003 059 1, “Opinion d’Oberkampf, fondateur des Manufactures de Jouy et d’Essonnes sur leur prospérité et leur conservation.”



Fig.1: Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, BAD en.12930, cote AA43 “livre de fabrique année 1766,” gouache on paper printed on a wooden board, page 285.

whose identical form can be found in a book of flower patterns.¹¹ Other motifs were borrowed from textile products that relied on weaving techniques, such as silk items. Designers transposed the characteristic ornaments of Genoa velvet to make printed versions where stylized flower motifs were arranged in pomegranate shapes found in silk fabrics (**fig. 1**). In this case, the pattern that initially stemmed from a particular technique (weaving) and raw material (silk yarn) became a solid, flat pattern, but one whose debt to the original was evident. Was the printed version a cheaper imitation, as wallpapers later were, or did the designers take an existing pattern to create a new *indiennage* motif? We lack archives on the reception of the pomegranate prints

¹¹ *Nouveau livre de roses* d'après Mr Jacques, peintre du roi en la manufacture des Gobelins, gravées par P. F. Tardieu (Paris, chez J. F. Chéreau, vers 1771) pl. 3 and 5. Bibliothèque de l'INHA, collection J. Doucet, NUM FOL EST 527.



Fig. 2: Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, BAD en.12930, cote AA43 “livre de fabrique année 1766,” gouache on paper printed on a wooden board, from left to right: pages 49, 91, 265.

characteristic of Genoa velvet to know how consumers perceived this motif. However, the transposition of designs obtained through weaving into prints cannot be genuine imitations of silk pieces: their visual appearance and sensation to touch make them designs that evoke luxurious fabrics as opposed to “fake” silk pieces.

Replicas of silk items were a fairly prominent part of the decorative language of these designers in 1766. Items whose characteristics were obtained through weaving, particularly regarding the density of fabrics and velvet, were reproduced in solid form using woodblock printing, resulting in original creations whose origins the consumer was not always able to perceive. The designers transposed the characteristics of silk *druggets* (a fine fabric extensively used for men’s costumes, sometimes mixed with other cotton or wool fibers whose weaving produced small motifs) with *floret* motifs, small chiseled velvet parts, to propose new printed compositions whose designs were already extensively used in men’s clothing. The consumer could recognize formal analogies with these common, widespread silk items, but the prints were not credible imitations of genuine silk pieces (**fig. 2**). Some prints featured *floret* designs on a vermiculated background, whose motifs were borrowed from the friezed velvets with miniature ornaments that were in fashion in the 1750s. Once the composition was printed on fabric, the consumer would not perceive the transposition of effects obtained through weaving in these motifs (**fig. 3**).

On the other hand, when designer transposed forms borrowed from lace ribbons, which had been common in silk pieces since the 1730s, the heritage of silk appears to have been openly acknowledged (**fig. 4**). There are many examples displaying such motifs whose references were explicit for consumers. The same phenomenon was visible in the meanders that were widespread in the brocaded lampases of the Lyon silk factories (**fig. 5**). Designers also reproduced the winding layouts that accompanied branches in blossom or stripped patterns inspired by silk models. These compositions had become very common decorative formulas for a variety of fabrics. *Indi-*



Fig. 3: Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, BAD en.12930, cote AA43 “livre de fabrique année 1766,” gouache on paper printed on a wooden board, from left to right: pages 62, 266.



Fig. 4: Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, BAD en.12930, cote AA43 “livre de fabrique année 1766,” gouache on paper printed on a wooden board, from left to right: pages 161, 200.



Fig. 5: Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, BAD en.12930, cote AA43 “livre de fabrique année 1766,” gouache on paper printed on a wooden board, from left to right: pages 187, 264.

ennage thus contributed to the spread of fashions by reproducing ornaments that characterized textile art.

In the 1766 factory books, the designs that were reminiscent of silk items were just as prominent as vegetal motifs and geometric shapes. The silk patterns constituted an original corpus that shows how designers used forms found in weaving to devise a variety of designs with versatile compositions, even though as they were transposed in the process of woodblock printing the patterns that characterized brocades or velvet pieces became flat motifs. In other cases, the designers pointed to the influence of silk by reproducing spiral lace patterns and meandering effects, striving to lend a sense of thickness, of volume to their motifs. In brocaded silk fabrics, designers appear to have found an inexhaustible wellspring that reflects a process of explicit circulation and appropriation since this derivation was openly acknowledged, although they did not set out to produce genuine copies. Designers chose very common silk patterns; they hoped to appeal to consumers by printing familiar motifs. These prints were more affordable but also lighter, and could serve as fabrics for summer clothes, particularly men’s vests.

The same process applied to patterns drawn from nature. The effort on the naturalism of flowers also entailed a reference to the model, between, first, the miniaturization of flowers resulting in geometrical motifs with one or two colors, and second, bouquets or branches of flowers printed in several colors, producing a gradation and

lending volume to the motifs. This question of the transposition, the adaptation, and the reuse of motifs was inherent in textile production, as designers had to come up with new creations constantly.

Varying and Combining Motifs to Update Creations

Other creative processes used an implicit method that reflected the resources employed by manufacturers to churn out updated motifs by proposing variations and offshoots. The easiest solution to implement was to print the same design on different backgrounds or at different scales. Oberkampf described how to make the most of a successful design in this manner:

“When one has a good design, an advantageous resource is to do it in different genres; if we start from a white background we do it on a sandy background or on other decorated backgrounds or color backgrounds; if, conversely, we start from a color background, we do it on a white or sandy background. Another way that I have always found successful is when one has a popular design, to do it in smaller and bigger versions; the advantage of this is that one can use students that one trains for this purpose or those among the designers who do not have a highly creative mind.”¹²

Designers and engravers developed many other processes to introduce new designs based on the same decorative scheme or type of motif. A genuine semiology of textile is at work in the decorative typologies developed by designers, from the general layout of the design to the treatment of the background. The same layout could be adapted to fit very different motifs; a very common one was the diamond, obtained using varied shapes. This arrangement relied on the intertwining of lines: in the print on p. 40, the line is formed by a series of dots whose combination creates a diamond, in the middle of which a stylized floret is placed. This method was then applied to different dots and lines (**fig. 6**). Designers reproduced a process with slight variations, resulting in designs that looked similar without being identical. Their differences could then be accentuated using dye colors; plays with color are not always visible in the prints, but annotations give a sense of the final result. Some examples show how the same decoration—winding lines—and a diamond composition can result in two distinct designs: one has winding, picot-patterned stripes laid out in latticework form on a colored background; the other features a simple winding line crossed with another hatched line in a checked pattern obtained through color (**fig. 7**).

Decorative possibilities appeared virtually endless. This was an implicit practice as these processes were taught neither in design schools nor in manufactory workshops. They were the result of an economic necessity, which was to quickly produce

¹² ANMT (see note 5).

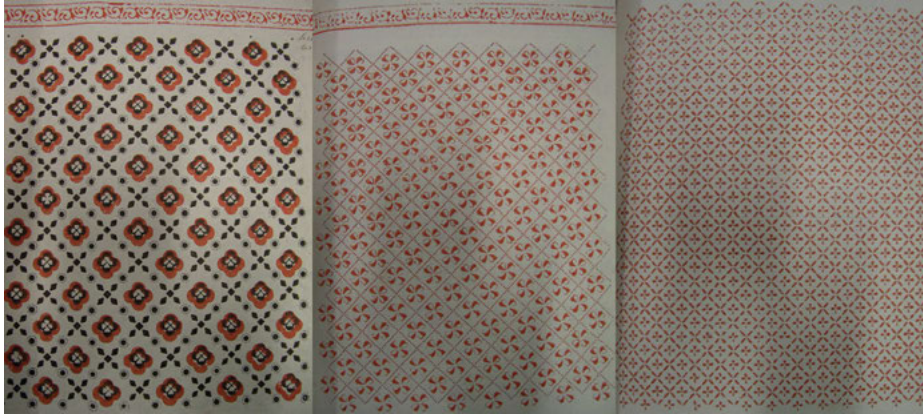


Fig. 6: Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, BAD en.12930, cote AA43 “livre de fabrique année 1766,” gouache on paper printed on a wooden board, from left to right: pages 40, 78, 138.

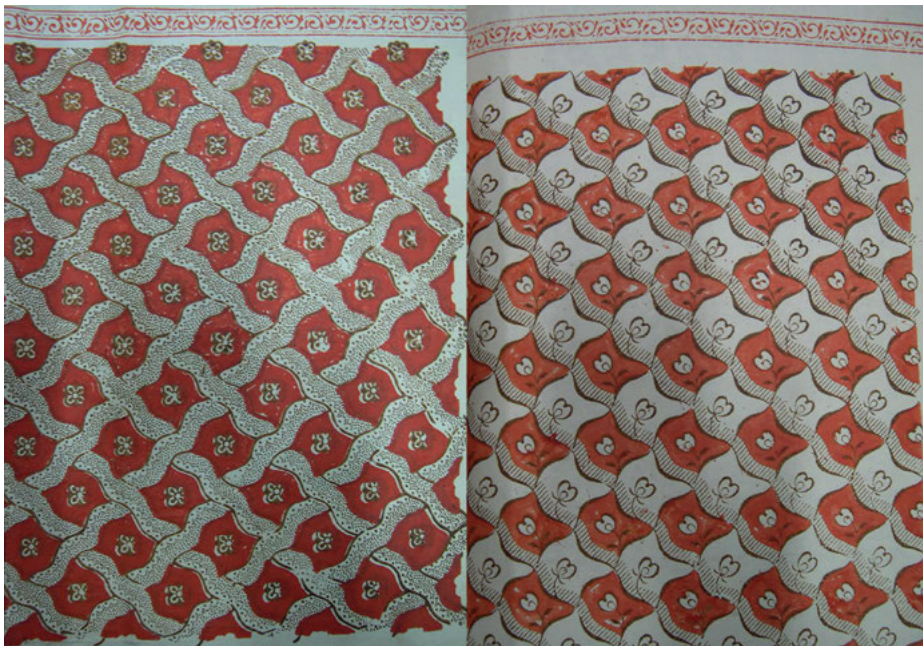


Fig. 7: Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, BAD en.12930, cote AA43 “livre de fabrique année 1766,” gouache on paper printed on a wooden board, from left to right: pages 6, 81.

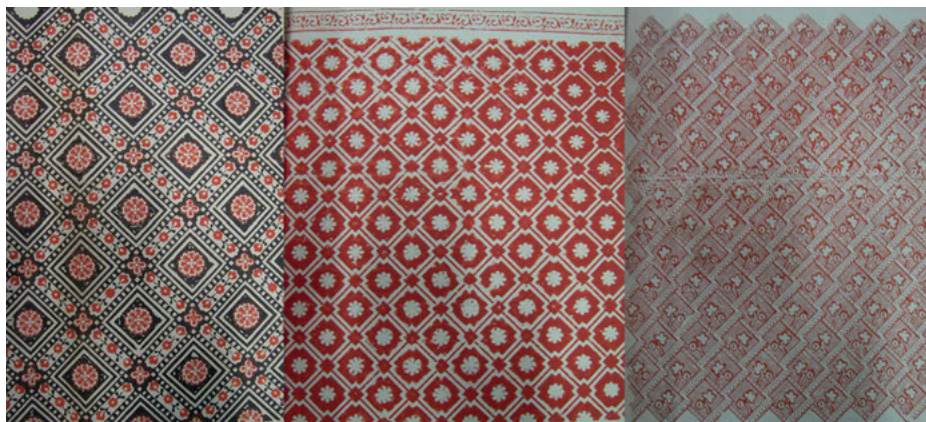


Fig. 8: Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, BAD en.12930, cote AA43 “livre de fabrique année 1766,” gouache on paper printed on a wooden board, from left to right: pages 15, 71, 89.

varied motifs that fit decorative fashions. For instance, the so-called Greek or Etruscan style that became popular when the cities of Herculaneum and Pompei were uncovered appeared in Versailles in the 1760s, it was only after it proliferated in the form of geometric motifs that makers of *indiennes* and wallpapers embraced these ornaments. *Indiennage*, like any industrial production, disseminated forms that were already widespread in the other manufacturing arts. In similar fashion, the diamond patterns used by Parisian cabinetmakers to decorate wood veneer, brass or porcelain furniture came to inspire engravers and designers in painted fabric manufactories. This circulation of decorative trends and the borrowings from the decorative arts, as with the Greek meander ornaments, reflected the need to fit dominant tastes in order to appeal to consumers. Painted textile manufactures were rarely places of artistic innovation, as their output was geared toward a broad clientele, not an elite one that craved innovation. Still, the acceleration of fashion forced manufacturers to be ever more creative and to come up with new motifs every year.

The book includes several compositions that are reminiscent of the marquetry ornaments that were often found on furniture in those days (**fig. 8**). One print even has a design that evokes a herringbone parquet floor with added leaf motifs. These herringbone patterns evoked decorative effects obtained through weaving, but in this example the influence of woodworking dominates. The circulation of decorations between productions that varied quite widely, as in the case of the textile and cabinetmaking industries, was probably due to the existence of common sources, of pattern books that circulated in workshops, and more broadly to the need to interpret fashionable forms.

Based on these prints, the actual practices of designers can be retraced. Their goal was to produce as many designs as possible using as few resources as possible. *Indiennage* remained an industrial production that depended on tastes. Manu-



Fig. 9: Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, BAD en.12930, cote AA43 “livre de fabrique année 1766,” gouache on paper printed on a wooden board, from left to right: pages 103, 230.

facturers appropriated patterns that had become widely fashionable to make sure their output was profitable. The designers churned out compositions by relying on reuse effects that suggested that the same block or the same motif could be combined with others. The prints on page 103 and page 230, for instance, partly share the same design; or rather, the design on page 103 was combined with foliage in blossom to produce a new composition (**fig. 9**). In this case, the two designs were partly printed on the same carved woodblocks; printing a new, completely different design while saving on carving another block was clearly beneficial to the manufacturer. In the context of industrial production, the two compositions were printed together; part of the print would simply undergo one more run on the block, provided the composition of the mordant that fixed the dye color was identical; if not, this had to happen later, after the block was washed.

Another process consisted in making two different designs using the same blocks by printing different colors (**fig. 10**). The first design (p. 92) was obtained by printing two boards in the same color; annotations indicated that it was printed in two monochrome versions, red or blue. The same design was printed (p. 96) in two colors, with the black outlines complemented by red *rentrures*—the secondary blocks used to color the motifs. Comparison of the two prints show that same blocks were used to print two different compositions: for the first (p. 92) the two blocks printed the same color, whereas the second (p. 96) displays black outlines and a red filling—annotations mention that printing was done in two colors. It is, however, uncertain whether



Fig. 10: Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, BAD en.12930, cote AA43 “livre de fabrique année 1766,” gouache on paper printed on a wooden board, from left to right: pages 92, 96.

the two versions were actually manufactured or if they remained trial runs, since prints were made to assess the quality of the engraving, but also the rendering of the design before moving on to the manufacturing process. Generally, print books feature indications as to the number of printed pieces and their date of fabrication, such as “March 4 $\frac{7}{8}$ pieces 21 April 6 $\frac{7}{8}$ pieces 24 May 1 $\frac{7}{8}$ piece.” Yet, next to the two prints on pages 92 and 96, there are no details on the quantities of manufactured ells, which suggests that none of the two versions were issued in 1766.

Another way to make the engraving process profitable was to print identical motifs on different backgrounds, and in some cases in several colors. Once printed, the fabrics looked like two different compositions even though the same blocks were used to manufacture them. These were widespread processes in the textile industry, and printing techniques facilitated their implementation. The preliminary gouache sketches made in the designers’ workshops of manufacturers often featured different backgrounds for the same composition, either to test the visual effect, or to print a design that would be sold to consumers on several types of backgrounds. This work on backgrounds could be entrusted to designers in training who reproduced trendy motifs: picot-patterned, vermiculated, with branches or florets. These gouache back-

grounds on paper were then cut and arranged around the main composition. The manufacturer could then choose which one to pass on to the engraver that would make the woodblock used to print the background. As the main and secondary motifs forming the background of the fabric were dissociated, the printer's work was made more complex: they would have to superimpose several blocks. However, these blocks could also be used for other combinations of motifs. Assembling blocks was delicate work, requiring close collaboration between engravers and printers. To Oberkampf, a successful manufacturing process relied on perfect coordination between engraver, colorist and printer. After drawing, "the most essential thing to know for anyone managing a manufactory" was engraving, and then came "the knowledge of colors."¹³

Between the sources of inspiration recognized by the manufacturers and the methods devised to offer many designs based on identical or similar motifs, the possibilities offered by printing techniques seemed endless. The modes of creation and their variations reflected the need to propose multiple new products every year. The prints made during 1766 can be read at several levels: the general layout of the design, the motifs themselves, and the treatment of the backgrounds. The options examined here reveal processes developed by designers and engravers in painted textile manufacturers for woodblock printing. Designers faced the same constraints everywhere, having to produce large numbers of designs that could be reused and reproduced with variations, and readily engraved. The creative logics that were expressed in this endeavor came from recommended methods, particularly relative to the play with the scales or the treatment of backgrounds, but in most cases they were direct expressions of the models used by designers to create original designs—not of a practice defined in manufacturers' workshops. The early French *indiennage* prints circulated among a bourgeois clientele that appreciated their fashionable, regularly updated motifs and the solidity of their fabrics. Depending on the motif, uses in furniture or clothing can be posited, but these hypotheses are sometimes called into question. It has happened, for instance, that a fragment of bedspread whose flower motifs could just as well have been used for a dress. Likewise, the ornaments borrowed from Genoa velvet items were likely used for bedroom furnishing at much lower prices than genuine velvet, but they too could also have been on clothes. Defining uses and consumers is bound to be a hypothetical exercise, as vestiges of these prints are extremely rare.

The designers' sources of inspiration mainly came from samples from silk manufacturers and other French, English, or Indian painted textiles, but also from books of engravings, marquetry forms, porcelain ornaments, etc. *Indiennage* reflected and depended upon the creativity of the decorative arts, giving us a glimpse of a history of a taste that was less celebrated than the manufactured objects delivered to Versailles, but a better reflection of people's everyday lives in the eighteenth century. The example of painted textile manufactures illustrates the rise of an industry that

13 ANMT, 2003 059 4, "Lettre d'Oberkampf à Samuel Widmer, October 2, 1786."

heralded the industrialization of the production of everyday objects in the nineteenth century, with two production systems coexisting side by side: on the one hand, luxury production characterized by unique models and limited editions, and on the other, industrial production disseminating decorative fashions, before eclecticism turned historical models into a decorative paradigm of sorts. Everyday objects, fashion, and interior decorating items experienced a tremendous boom, making practices that were previously the preserve of the elites accessible to a broad clientele. By the second half of the eighteenth century already, *indiennage* exemplified this expansion of the consumer base, offering colored fabrics featuring trendy motifs for moderate prices.

Chonja Lee

Chintzes as Printed Matter and Their Entanglement within the Transatlantic Slave Trade around 1800

The story of chintzes, woodblock printed, painted, stained, or glazed calico textiles, is one of global success and goes on until today in the form of highly demanded printed cotton textiles. Historians have emphasized the circulation of printed cottons between Asia, Europe, Africa, and the Atlantic space and their entanglement in complex transnational narratives, especially from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century.¹ Besides looking at the chintzes from an economic historical perspective it is also fruitful to think about these fabrics from a media historical perspective and combine colonial, art, and consumption history to understand the circulation of fabrics and their motifs. The market of printed cotton fabrics was highly segmented with different products for various countries, regions, consumer classes, and purposes. The technique of impression was key in this production; the printing procedure was relatively cheap, quick, and thus predestined for a wide spreading and fast cultural appropriation. Chintzes are, as this article intends to show with predominantly Swiss examples, related to printed matter, like books. This peculiar fabric stands in opposition to the paradigm of textility, and in its role as one of the main exchange commodities against enslaved humans it became a media of oppression.² Examining the textile material culture of slavery sheds light on European producers and African consumers alike.³

¹ See, for example, Sarah Fee, ed., *Cloth that Changed the World: The Art and Fashion of Indian chintz*, (Toronto/New Haven: Royal Ontario Museum, Yale University Press, 2019); Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014); Giorgio Riello, *Cotton: The Fabric that Made the Modern World* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Amelia Peck, ed., *Interwoven Globe: The Worldwide Textile Trade 1500–1800*, (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2013); Beverly Lemire, *Fashion's Favourite: The Cotton Trade and the Consumer in Britain, 1660–1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

² First thoughts in this direction have been presented in the conference *Produire du nouveau ? Arts – Techniques – Sciences en Europe (1400–1900)* in Geneva in 2017 and will be published in its conference proceedings.

³ On how local particularities of African consumer tastes shaped the textile trade, see Pedro Machado, *Ocean of Trade: South Asian Merchants, Africa and the Indian Ocean, c. 1750–1850* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 120–167; Kazuo Kobayashi, *Indian Cotton Textiles in West Africa: African Agency, Consumer Demand and the Making of the Global Economy, 1750–1850* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan/Springer Nature, 2019), 10; Carolyn Keyes, “West African Textiles. 1500–1800,” in *Textiles: Production, Trade and Demand*, ed. Maureen Fennell Mazzaoui (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 251–61.

A Textile as Printed Matter

Although theories of the textile have become popular in the last years, a textile, media, or image theory of chintzes is a lacuna. This has to do with the specificities of this kind of printed or painted fabric, which stands in opposition to the paradigm of textility social anthropologist Tim Ingold has described. The textile is for him the example for a processual making tangible in the final product: weaving, the slicing and binding of fibrous material, hence becomes the counterexample of hylomorphism.⁴ The chintz's production is precisely the latter, the imposition of form and imprint or painting of images on a pliant substance. Compared to other textile technologies like weaving, knitting, or embroidering, material and making disappears in chintzes behind a surface of patterns. It is not the textile medium that constitutes intrinsically the colors and designs of the chintz, therefore they are rather independent applications.⁵ The result is an ontological tension: chintzes are textiles, but their images nevertheless do not necessarily feature textile qualities.⁶ We can see this for example in the floral design of an apron, a rare surviving piece in Switzerland of Indian-produced chintz, probably from the Coromandel Coast, produced for the European market (**fig. 1**).⁷ Cotton fabrics were not only covered by mostly colorful patterns like the aforementioned case, but some chintzes also experienced a specific waxy finishing treatment: under the pressure of a polishing agate stone, threads and color pigments were pressed together with additives such as starch, fish glue, or wax until they formed a shiny surface. In the case of the so-called chimney sweep caraco jacket, this leather-looking skin is so smooth and darkly glossy that it is reminiscent of the aesthetics of lacquer work while the cotton's material qualities, like fluidity and semitransparency, disappear altogether—the textile becomes through the process of reinforced impression a carcass like shell.⁸ However, the eighteenth century was still one of learning, with technical flaws in European production, and Indian fabrics were especially unsurpassed in their shininess.⁹

⁴ See Tim Ingold, "The Textility of Making," *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 34, no. 1 (2010): 91–102, here 92.

⁵ Certainly, the patterns are transferred onto the fabric using sometimes sophisticated dyes, mordant, and resist-dye techniques, but they are nevertheless not constituted through the woven threads.

⁶ "Textile" designates generally a thing, a material, or a feature. See Lorenz Engell and Bernhard Siegert, "Editorial," *Zeitschrift für Medien- und Kulturforschung* (Schwerpunkt Medienanthropologie) 4, no. 1 (2013): 5–9, here 5.

⁷ See Claudia Ravazzolo, "An Apron's Tale: Innovative Colours and Fashionable Dress between India and the Swiss Cantons," in *Cotton in Context: Manufacturing, Marketing, and Consumption of Early Modern Textiles in the German-speaking World (1500–1900)*, ed. Kim Siebenhüner, John Jordan, and Gabi Schopf (Köln/Weimar/Wien: Böhlau, 2019), 171–94.

⁸ See Noémie Etienne and Chonja Lee, "Lüster, Lack und Liotard: Techniken und Texturen zwischen Asien und Europa," *Kunst + Architektur in der Schweiz*, no. 1 (2018): 4–11.

⁹ See Kim Siebenhüner, "Zwischen Imitation und Innovation: Die schweizerische Indienne-Industrie im 18. Jahrhundert," *WerkstattGeschichte 74: Produktive Imitationen* (Essen: Klartext, 2018): 7–27.



Fig. 1: Woman's apron worn in Basel, first half of the eighteenth century, unidentified artist(s), painted Indian cotton chintz, 113 × 159.5 cm. Basel Historical Museum, Basel, formerly in the possession of the Falkner-Geymüller family.

Denis Diderot's *Encyclopédie* (1765) defined the *toiles peintes* as "European made imitations¹⁰ of *indiennes*";¹¹ the focus in the early years of the European chintz production was indeed on the substitution and imitation of chintzes of Indian origin.¹²

¹⁰ The term of imitation should not be misunderstood in the sense of a twentieth-century mass production of cheap consumer ware imitating luxury products. See Maxine Berg, "New Commodities, Luxuries and Their Consumers in Eighteenth-century England," in *Consumers and Luxury: Consumer Culture in Europe 1650–1850*, ed. Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford (Manchester/New York: Manchester University Press, 1999), 63–85, here 81.

¹¹ Pierre Augustin de Boissier de Sauvages, *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, vol. 16 (Neuchâtel: Samuel Faulche & Cie, 1765), 374–379. The differentiation between *indiennes* and *toiles peintes*, was less common within Switzerland, where the terms were used as synonyms. See John Jordan and Gabi Schopf, "Fictive Descriptions? Words, Textiles, and Inventories in Early Modern Switzerland," in *Inventories of Textiles – Textiles in Inventories: Studies on Late Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture*, ed. Thomas Ertl and Barbara Karl (Göttingen: Vienna University Press, 2017), 219–38.

¹² See Siebenhüner, "Imitation und Innovation."

Imitation is applicable in various ways to printed cottons, be it the desire to master a foreign craft, the adaption of a motif from the world of fine arts or literature, or the emulation of a design by a competing manufactory. Besides these practices of imitation through the technique of impression on cloth, the makers of chintzes could imitate easily other textiles like embroidery, silk weaving, or *chiné à la branche* (European ikat) with their prints.¹³ The masquerade of the actual textile is a side effect of this mimetic imitation of other fabrics across country, factory, and textile genre borders. In this context, design can be understood in its narrow reading as a “dessin,” or drawing, rather than a product shape. This is because within the process of making, the patterns for chintzes would be drawn on paper first before being transferred to woodblock, copper printing plates, or cylinders, or sometimes painted directly onto the cotton. Printing on calico is very complex and involves direct dying as well as resist and mordant dying and bleaching.¹⁴ The manifold operations were mostly executed by specialists because they demanded an artisanal, chemical, and technical precision, involved secret knowledge, internationally traded raw materials as well as specific equipment and machines. Compared to knitting, stitching, or weaving, they could not be practiced in work at home.

From 1752 onward, European manufactories used copperplate transfers, and from 1783 roller printing, to accentuate the chintzes kinship with artistic media like engraving and printed matter in general. It not just shared technical procedures with the world of reproductive prints, but as a result also linked properties, like relatively cheap and quick production and thus large distribution. The applied designs predestined the media for a cultural appropriation through catering to the demands of the consumer. The strong emphasis on Asian savoir-faire-based craft could with the new technique of copperplate textile print embrace a genuine European art and aesthetic. Borrowing fine art motifs—be they mythological scenes or pictures after renowned artists—or illustrations from books and operettas became popular toward the end of the eighteenth century. An example is the furnishing fabric executed for the first time in 1795 by the Nantes-based Swiss manufacturers Petitpierre et Cie after *Paul et Virginie*, published by Bernardin de Saint-Pierre in 1788 and translated into opera in 1791 (fig. 2).¹⁵ It is a tragic story of innocent young love that is set in Mauritius and included some slavery critical undertones.¹⁶ Through the application of the pattern repeated on the fabric, the copperplate prints would become an ornament and unfold

¹³ See, for instance, Aziza Gril-Mariotte, *Les toiles de Jouy: Histoire d'un art décoratif, 1760–1821* (Rennes: PUR, 2015), 99–102.

¹⁴ See, for example, Fee, *Cloth that Changed the World*, 6–11.

¹⁵ See *Indiennes: Un tissu révolutionne le monde!*, *Château de Prangins, Musée national suisse*, ed. Helen Bieri Thomson et al. (Lausanne: La Bibliothèque des Arts, 2018), 145.

¹⁶ The fabric was printed the first time just one year after France had officially banned slavery on French territory; it nevertheless took until 1848 for a complete abolition.



Fig. 2: *Paul et Virginie*, Nantes, manufactory Petitpierre et Cie, ca. 1795, design Nr. D59, red copper plate print, quilted, 189.5 × 150.5 cm, Zurich, Swiss National Museum (Obj. No. LM 171599.2).

their impact on the interior as furnishing fabrics for chairs, beds, or walls—they were a lightproof, tactile, and undulating version of the fragile copperplate prints.

Impression and Oppression

This oscillation between fabric and image is characteristic for chintz. The imprints obscure the textile quality of the fabrics,¹⁷ or to formulate it even more drastically, they oppressed the material with design. Oppression becomes an intrinsic aesthetic property of chintzes in their daily use. The printed cottons “oppress” things, bodies, and space, when dressing them comprehensively in an immersive design and thus create an aesthetic unit. The chintzes challenge textility on both a material and aesthetic level. Further, the impression on fabric stands also in relation to political oppression, namely their historical use as exchange currency against humans in the transatlantic slave trade. Cloths are not only made by humans; along with media anthropological theory we can also say that the media of fabric “makes” the human, it unfolds humans’ societal functions—be it as dress, as a mean of communication, or be it the commodification of the human through enslavement.¹⁸ When fashion is traded against humans in the West African “cloth currency zones,”¹⁹ the two are wrongly made equivalent commodities in the eighteenth century. Recorded in detail, in fact, is the market value of cotton in exchange for an enslaved person.²⁰ Textiles were the major commodity good used in the slave trade, with cottons making up to 40 to 50% of all commodities traded to Africa.²¹

Despite the fact that Switzerland did not have colonies, Swiss personalities were involved in colonial projects and participated in the slave trade business either through credits or direct commerce.²² In a Zurich-made porcelain titled *Menschenhandel*

17 See Ingold, “Textility.”

18 See Engell and Siegert, “Editorial.”

19 See Richard L. Roberts, “Guinée Cloth: Linked Transformations in Production within France’s Empire in the Nineteenth Century,” *Cahiers d’études africaines* 32, no. 128 (1992): 597–627, here 598.

20 Henry-René d’Allemagne, *La Toile imprimée et les indiennes de traite*, vol. 2 (Paris: Gründ, 1942), 160.

21 See Colette Establet, *Répertoire des tissus indiens importés en France entre 1687 et 1769* (Aix-en-Provence: IREMAM, 2017), 33; Prasannan Parthasarathi and Giorgio Riello, “From India to the World: Cotton and Fashionability”, in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Consumption* (Oxford Handbooks in History), ed. Frank Trentmann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 153.

22 See Béatrice Veyrassat, “Les marches d’Europe et d’Outre-mer de l’indienne Suisse et neuchâtoise (XVIII^e siècle),” in *Made in Neuchâtel: Deux siècles d’indiennes*, Musée d’art et d’histoire Neuchâtel, ed. Lisa Laurenti (Paris: Somogy Editions d’Art, 2018), 64–73; Béatrice Veyrassat, *Histoire de la Suisse et des Suisses dans la Marché du Monde, XVII^e Siècles – première Guerre mondiale: Espace – Circulations – Echanges* (Neuchâtel: Alphil, 2018), 129–58, 187–208. Olivier Pavillon, *Des suisses au cœur de la traite négrière : De Marseille à l’Île de France, d’Amsterdam aux Guyanes, 1770–1840* (Lausanne:



Fig. 3: Signed “Z” (unidentified artist(s)), *Human Trafficking*, ca. 1775, porcelain manufactory Kilchberg-Schooren, painted porcelain, 19 cm, Zurich, Swiss National Museum (Obj. No. HA 74 11.3.1903).

(human trafficking), we see the harsh contrast of the inhuman selling of an enslaved person with its representation in fine porcelain, which served as a decoration, eventually on the dining table (**fig. 3**). The depicted scene is unique within porcelain figures of the time: a naked enslaved sub-Saharan African man is held in chains by the seller who barter him against a wrapped parcel that could well be chintzes, and money, which he receives from a man dressed in what could be Spanish attire of a bygone era.²³ Since the poet and painter Salomon Gessner, one of the leading Swiss publicists of libertine thinking, was artistic director of the Zurich Kilchberg-Schooren porcelain manufactory, it is likely that the porcelain was intended to make a critical statement about the inhuman treatment of slaves, a topic he also addressed in his version of the novel *Inkel und Yariko*.²⁴ As in the chintz design based on *Paul et Virginie*, we have here as well a case of intermedia transfer of an image between written source and object: in 1777, the journal *Hinkende Bott* from Appenzell in eastern Switzerland illustrated an article with the same scene of selling an enslaved person—the left-handed transaction between seller and buyer makes it very plausible that the journal referred to the Zurich porcelain or another, yet unknown, common pictorial source of both.²⁵

Both media fabric and porcelain were used as blank surfaces to print political news and commemorative events onto. And, both became, especially around the turn to the nineteenth century, discursive media of abolitionist messages. The famous Josiah Wedgwood antislavery porcelain medallion, produced from 1787 onward, and its sometimes in transfer technique executed faience versions,²⁶ have a textile sibling in the form of a reticule bag with their associated pamphlets, produced by the Female Society for Birmingham as part of their campaign for the abolition of slavery (**fig. 4**).²⁷

Éditions Antipodes, 2017); Thomas David, Bouda Etemad, and Janick Marina Schaufelbühl, *Schwarze Geschäfte: Die Beteiligung von Schweizern an Sklaverei und Sklavenhandel im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert* (Zurich: Limmat Verlag, 2005); Niklaus Stettler, Peter Haenger, and Robert Labhardt, *Baumwolle, Sklaven und Kredite: Die Basler Welthandelsfirma Christoph Burckhardt & Cie. in revolutionärer Zeit (1789–1815)* (Basel: Merian, 2004); Hans Fässler, *Reise in Schwarz-Weiss: Schweizer Ortstermine in Sachen Sklaverei* (Zurich: Rotpunktverlag, 2005).

²³ See Siegfried Ducret, *Die Zürcher Porzellanmanufaktur und ihre Erzeugnisse im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert*, vol. 2, (Zurich: Orell Füssli, 1959), 38.

²⁴ See Martin Mühlheim, „Keramik, Knollenfrüchte und Kinderbücher: Eine postkoloniale Spurensuche in Zürich,“ in *Postkoloniale Schweiz: Formen und Folgen eines Kolonialismus ohne Kolonien*, ed. Patricia Purtschert, Barbara Lüthi, and Francesca Falk (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2012), 157–74, here 157–63.

²⁵ See Bernhard C. Schär, “Slavery, Exoticism, and Swiss Exceptionalism around 1800,” in *Exotic Switzerland? Looking Outward in the Age of Enlightenment*, ed. Noémie Etienne, Claire Brizon, Chonja Lee, and Etienne Wismer (Berlin/Zurich: Diaphanes, 2020), 63–77, here 71.

²⁶ See, for example, the jug and bowl from the manufactory of Creil (ca. 1808–1818) in the Château des Ducs de Bretagne, Nantes History Museum (Inv. No. 2018.10.1–2).

²⁷ See “Reticule,” Textiles and Fashion Collection, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O69040/reticule-lines-samuel/>.



Fig 4: Unidentified artist(s) from the Female Society for Birmingham, etching by Samuel Lines, *Reticule*, ca. 1825, printed silk satin, lined with glazed cotton, 23.2 × 22 cm. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London (Obj. No. T.227-1966).

Hence, fabric and ceramics, aesthetic objects of everyday use, became relatives of printed matter with their borrowed imprinting of words and images. The historical connection between chintzes and the trade of enslaved people is still evident to contemporary artists like Martin Puryear (*1941), who used chintz in his recent work *Tabernacle* (2019). Or Renée Green (*1959), who, inspired by Nantes' dark history in chintz production and slave trading, printed in her work *Commemorative Toiles* (1992) images that reflect the harsh circumstances of enslaved people and episodes from the Haitian Revolution and thus follows the tradition of abolitionist chintzes like *La traite des Nègres* (ca. 1820). Despite the fact that printed cottons and the trade of humans are very much intertwined, the study of specific designs originating in Europe for the African market still needs to be undertaken. In the two following case studies the

author analyses chintz designs from Swiss factories for the West African slave trade and tries to show how West African consumer preferences and Eurocentric views of the other at the same time directed designers' creations.

“Flatter the Taste of the Blacks”

The Basel Historical Museum preserves a rare figurative design for the slave trade by the Basel chintz manufactory Christoph Burckhardt & Cie, who had a branch in Nantes especially for the transatlantic slave trade (**fig. 5**).²⁸ Burckhardt's print on paper shows on one side a floral, meandering galloon; on the other side there is a palanquin design with a leather hammock seat with foot stand and a ported person holding onto a horizontal bar. This depiction stems from an engraving found in the chapter on Congo of Olfert Dapper's monumental book on Africa, first published 1668.²⁹ A formal analysis leaves no doubt that Burckhardt's designer directly transferred Dapper's motif for his purposes (**fig. 6**). The overall composition as well as details like the Portuguese bowler hat³⁰ of the noble person, the umbrella, and especially the body postures make this clear. The inversion of the motif and the rougher style are due to its execution in woodblock print. When we almost double the size of the mirrored Dapper engraving and superimpose it on the print, we see clearly how the chintz designer followed the lines of the model meticulously. Dapper himself had reused an even older image for his compilation: an engraving by (an) unknown artist(s) published 1591 in Filippo Pigafetta's *Relatione del reame del Congo et delle circonvicine contrade*.³¹ European information on Africa would often consist of copied texts and images from

28 For the business ties between Christoph Burckhardt & Cie. and Favre Petitpierre et Cie see Stettler, Haenger, and Labhardt, *Baumwolle*, 136–51. The print is preserved within a lot of 377 undated drawings and prints from Burckhardt & Cie. at the Basel Historical Museum. Many of them are made in red and black, predominantly abstract and floral designs, and some of them might have been destined for the African market. However, the aforementioned is the only one with a figurative design clearly evocating an African scene among other similar compositions. I thank Margret Ribbert from the Basel Historical Museum for giving me access to their collection.

29 Olfert Dapper, *Umbständliche und Eigentliche Beschreibung von Africa ...* (Amsterdam: Jacob von Meurs, 1670 [1668]), 557.

30 See Ernst van den Boogaart, “De Brys’ Africa,” in *Inszenierte Welten: Die west-und ostindischen Reisen der Verleger de Bry, 1590–1630*, ed. Susanna Burghartz (Basel: Schwabe, 2004), 95–149, here 104.

31 See Filippo Pigafetta, *Relatione del reame del Congo et delle circonvicine contrade: Tratta dalla scritti & ragionamenti di Odoardo Lopez Portoghese per Filippo Pigafetta* (Rome: Appresso Bartolomeo Grassi, 1591). Johan Theodore and Johan Israël De Bry reused the material in their 1597 published first volume *India Orientalis*. See Van den Boogaart, “De Brys’ Africa.”



Fig. 5: Unidentified artist(s), print of a chintz design, attributed to Christoph Burckhardt & Cie., Basel, toward 1800, print, gouache and ink print on paper, 33.6 × 41.5 cm, Historical Museum Basel (Obj. No. 1930.734.48).

travel reports and other sources.³² The stretcher-bearers became emblematic of Kongo culture in Europe.³³ While the depicted way of transport seems genuinely regional, the picture expands the global network. The parasol, for instance, was originally an Asian commodity, while transport in a hammock links Africa to Brazil, where cotton versions would be imported from and used by a fortunate and noble elite.³⁴

³² See Beatrix Heintze and Adam Jones, “European Sources for Sub-Saharan Africa before 1900: Use and Abuse,” in *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 112, no. 2 (1987): 289–91.

³³ See Josiah Blackmore and James Green, “European Images of the Kongolese in Books,” in *Kongo: Power and Majesty*, ed. Alisa Lagamma (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2015), 118–29, here 125.

³⁴ See Roberto Zaugg, “Le crachoir chinois du roi: Marchandises globales, culture de cour et vodun dans les royaumes de Hueda et Dahomey (XVII^e–XIX^e siècle),” in *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 73 (2018), special issue *Microhistoire et histoire globale*, ed. Romain Bertrand and Guillaume Calafat (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 119–59, here 125, 129; see also Benjamin Schmidt,



Fig. 6: Olfert Dapper, *Umbständliche und Eigentliche Beschreibung von Africa, Und denen darzu gehörigen Königreichen und Landschaften, als Egypten, Barbarien, Libyen, Biledulgerid, ... : zusamt deren Verscheidenen Nahmen, Grentzen, Städten, Flüssen, ... und Regierung; Wobey Die Land-Carten, und Abrisse der Städte, Trachten, [et]c. in Kupfer ...*, Amsterdam: bey Jacob von Meurs auf der Käisers-Graff in der Stadt Meurs, 1670 [1668], p. 557. Zentralbibliothek Zürich (NR 31 | G).

Intriguingly, the chintz design tells the story of European textiles playing a significant role in the slave trade and within West African consumer culture. This example illustrates that chintz designs for the West African market were purposely made to please the final consumers with familiar scenes.³⁵ It somehow does not come as a surprise that the designers printing engravings for the European market would refer to printed travel literature compilations for image inspiration related to West Africa.

“Collecting Global Icons: The Case of the Exotic Parasol,” in *Collecting across Cultures: Material Exchanges in the Early Modern Atlantic World*, ed. Daniela Bleichmar and Peter C. Mancall (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 31–75.

³⁵ The assumption that this design was made for the African market was raised in the context of the chintz exhibition in the national museum Château de Prangins. See *Indiennes*, 78.

It is probable that other image sources could be detected.³⁶ Christoph Bourcard, the patron of the Nantes firm branch, himself described in a letter to his father how “furattes rouges,” fabrics with small designs and exotic motifs like elephants, “creeping negroes in loin cloths, decorated with heavy earrings,” and apes hanging on to some tropical trees would be much favored in France. We do not have any surviving fabric of the mentioned kind or an archival source of them being popular among French buyers, which is why it is more likely Bourcard referred to the demand of suppliers for slave expeditions around Nantes.³⁷

There is another outstanding source that widens our knowledge of designs for the West African market. A book by Favre Petitpierre et Cie compiles 162 prints on paper of designs for *indiennes de traite*, as the chintzes for the West African slave trade were called in France. It has been preserved since 1941 at the Château des Ducs de Bretagne, in the Nantes History Museum.³⁸ It has been dated to the period between 1815 and 1831, a time when the slave trade was already illegal in Nantes.³⁹ Swiss individuals were involved in the formation of the prints. The Petitpierre Frères Chintz-Factory was established in 1771 in Nantes by two ex-patriot brothers from Neuchâtel, Simon-Louis and Ferdinand Petitpierre, and they employed many artisans from their Swiss home. Their manufactory was extremely successful: by 1785, they produced 26,000 pieces of cloth, which equaled a quarter of the whole production of chintzes from Nantes.⁴⁰ Nantes was at the time the first port for slave trading in France before Bordeaux, Le Havre, and La Rochelle.⁴¹

When analyzing the pattern book it becomes clear that a large part of the motifs are similar to the ones for the European market and that they were probably recycled to be printed on *indiennes de traite*.⁴² We see decorative floral patterns, ribbons,

³⁶ Carolyn Keyes underlines that imported textiles reflected the tastes of the African merchants and consumers and how scarce detailed descriptions and material sources of actual textiles are. Keyes, “West African Textiles,” 254, 258.

³⁷ See Stettler, Haenger, and Labhardt, *Baumwolle*, 83. Apparently, only one larger figurative piece of chintz for trade against enslaved people has survived; it is from Petitpierre et Cie and shows a scene from Aesop’s fable of the lion and the goat. See *Indienens*, 169.

³⁸ I thank Krystel Gualdé for giving me access to their collection.

³⁹ See Krystel Gualdé, “Neuchâtel, Nantes et l’Afrique: Une production textile pour la traite atlantique,” in *Made in Neuchâtel*, 52–63, here 57.

⁴⁰ For their involvement in the transatlantic trade see, for example, Gilles Forster, “Les indiennes de traite: une contribution neuchâteloise à l’essor de l’économie atlantique,” in *Sa Majesté en Suisse: Neuchâtel et ses princes prussiens* (Neuchâtel: Editions Alphil, 2013), 252–61.

⁴¹ See Céline Cousquer, *Nantes: Une capitale française des indiennes au XVIII^e siècle* (Nantes: Coiffard Librairie, 2002), 151.

⁴² See d’Allemagne, *La Toile imprimée*; Monique Drosson, *Indiennes de traite à Nantes d’après un livre d’empreintes du XVIII^e siècle de la manufacture Favre-Petitpierre et Cie conservé au Musée du Château de Nantes* (Nantes: MeMo, 1993); Krystel Gualdé, “La traite et l’esclavage dans les collections publiques en Bretagne et à Nantes,” in *Lorient, la Bretagne et la traite: XVII^e–XIX^e siècles*, ed. Norbert

European flora and fauna, an illustration of La Fontaine's fables, little cupids, and other familiar figures. We also have rather generic pseudo-oriental iconographies, like landscape and architecture in the chinoiserie fashion, and emblematic foreign animals that could have been found in European decorative arts of the time. Besides these, there are at least five peculiar designs that show sub-Saharan African people: a palanquin procession; a dance under a palm tree; a flute player; a man with club; and a dragon fighter under a coconut tree.⁴³ They could also have been inspired by the abundant travel literature from European authorship that provided images and written records of West Africa.⁴⁴ The Favre Petitpierre et Cie designs featuring sub-Saharan African people do not seem to be recycled images for the French market, but given the unprecedented appearance of these kinds of designs within European chintz production, were probably specifically made for West Africa and are thus images of the other for the other. They differ from other "images of the Black"⁴⁵ that became fashionable in Europe during the age of Enlightenment. The *Paul et Virginie* fabric by the same factory as well as other examples show depictions of enslaved people of color were common on chintzes—and we even find a similar dance scene here. But besides this, the woodblock prints cannot be related directly to any iconography for the European market. Nevertheless, the chintzes do not seem to be direct imitations of a foreign image vocabulary but feature a specific Eurocentric gaze that constructs otherness in multiple ways.

Favre Petitpierre et Cie promoted their chintzes for West Africa in a circular of 1802, arguing that "they would flatter the taste of the blacks," however the precise ways in which they would do this and how the taste of the consumers could be characterized

Métairie, Oliver Pétré-Grenouilleau, and Brigitte Nicolas (Lorient: Musée de la Compagnie des Indes, 2006), 148–59; Aziza Gril-Mariotte, "Le vocabulaire décoratif des indiennes de traite," in *X, Z, Y: Eternal Tour 09*, ed. Donatella Bernardi and Noémie Etienne (Neuchâtel: Gilles Attinger, 2009), 73–80.

⁴³ This last figure could be a kind of African version of Saint Michael or Saint George. For Christian visual culture in the kingdom of Congo see Cécile Fromont, *The Art of Conversion: Christian Visual Culture in the Kingdom of Kongo* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014). The dragon and serpent were worshipped animals in Congolese belief. See Mr. C*** [i.e., Henri Abraham Châtelain?], *Atlas historique ou nouvelle introduction à l'histoire, à la chronologie & à la géographie ancienne et moderne*, vol. 6 (Amsterdam: Frères Châtelain, 1719), 66.

⁴⁴ The first image in the Favre Petitpierre et Cie book, a palanquin group, combines probably different illustrated and written records of a Congolese military march happening to the sound of a drum, we can find such motifs in small illustrative cartouches of Châtelain's atlas: the alternative way of transporting someone on a platform, the umbrella, the corral beads necklace worn tightly around the neck as well as the feathered head adornment of the royal soldier. See Mr. C*** [i.e., Henri Abraham Châtelain?], *Atlas historique*, interpages 66–67.

⁴⁵ See David Bindman and Henry Louis Gates, *The Image of the Black in Western Art*, 5 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010–14).

is unfortunately not specified.⁴⁶ It seems indeed probable—and not just an advertisement trick—that the European draftsmen adapted their inventions to the final West African consumers. Previous research has shown that the West African clientele was very demanding in terms of quality and color and that, at least with the elite, they fancied exotic European cloths as well as coral and glass beads.⁴⁷ The Favre Petitpierre et Cie book shows that a mixture of probably recycled European designs as well as designs referring to Christianity and specific West African iconography were sold.

The style of the assembled prints is very different from other designs by the same factory. As we have seen with the example of the *Paul et Virginie* design, Petitpierre et Cie printed for the European clientele in a sophisticated etching style, using the new copper plate technology, which underlined the kinship between printed cotton and printed matter, the world of novels and news, and the fine arts. Meanwhile, the ware for the slave trade, made by a consecutive branch of the same manufactory,⁴⁸ was rendered in a rather rough style that was based on the older woodblock carving technique. Probably different hands were involved in the execution of the preliminary drawings for the woodblocks since the quality varies across the lot. The figurative drawings featuring African people and fauna seem rough in their rendering and, when looking at the depicted bodies, poorly executed overall. This could of course have derived from the mentioned transfer of printed travel illustrations onto woodblock in the case of the Burckhardt print, some carelessness, or a way to economize the costs for these prints by delegating them to the apprentice or a less skillful artist. It could, on the other hand, also be an adaption to a consumer that is supposedly untrained with the exactitude of drawing, since the Congolese people, for instance, were said to not know the arts of drawing nor painting at all and would thus be impressed by even the worst sketches.⁴⁹ This would indicate that the European chintz designs constructed the other in their different physique, environment, and customs as well as assumed different perceptual aptitudes, or at least the idea could have been that the final consumer would not appreciate a more naturalistic execution anyway.

⁴⁶ Circular Favre-Petitpierre, 1. Ventose X (20.2.1803), SWA HS 255, B32, folder Pelloutier, Bourcard & Co., cit. in Stettler, Haenger, and Labhardt, *Baumwolle*, 138.

⁴⁷ See Estabiet, *Répertoire*, 40; Fromont, *The Art of Conversion*, 112, 132–38; Riello, *Cotton*, 138–39; Jody Benjamin, *The Texture of Change: Clothing, Commerce and History in Western Africa, 1700–1850*, PhD diss. (Harvard University, 2016); Kobayashi, *Indian Cotton Textiles*, 11–12. Elaborately decorated silks were on high demand in the noble circles of African rulers. Already O'Hier de Grandpré accentuated the wide range of European fabrics for loin cloths. Louis M. O'Hier de Grandpré, *Voyage à la côte occidentale d'Afrique, fait dans les années 1786 et 1787. Suivi d'un voyage fait au cap de Bonne-Espérance*, vol. 1 (Paris: Dentu, 1801), 71.

⁴⁸ For the changing names and split-ups of their original manufactory, see Gualdé, "Neuchâtel, Nantes," 54–55.

⁴⁹ See O'Hier de Grandpré, *Voyage*, 129.

Meaningful Ornaments and Colors

Written records by Europeans of the ongoing negotiation process between European producers and merchants, and African brokers as buyers of European fabrics in Western Africa underline the intricacy and unpredictability of a fast-changing market that was segmented in diverse areas with specific preferences.⁵⁰ By the end of the eighteenth century, printed Indian and English textiles were being adapted to consumer preferences, particularly along the Guinea Coast.⁵¹ The diversity of the textiles onboard the ships was large, ranging from European woolens, linens, Indian cotton, and silks to, finally, European cottons and silks.⁵² The scarce material and pictorial and archival sources indicate that the most widely bartered fabrics were checked or striped.⁵³ As neutral as these patterns may seem, they were not just a decorative design void of semantic and identity. They answered to consumer preferences established through locally produced textiles.⁵⁴ In eighteenth-century France the striped textiles were associated with foreign taste and the exotic, flexibly standing for Chinese, Turkish, or African styles.⁵⁵

The Favre Petitpierre Pattern book also features geometric designs. These motifs sometimes recycle parts of European designs. Nevertheless, some compositions seem specific to the West African market. It has been suggested, for example, that some ornaments of *indiennes de traite* (chintzes for the trade of enslaved people) potentially bear encoded religious meaning for the customer.⁵⁶ Diamond patterns, for instance, were popular and referred symbolically to the skin of worshipped pythons in large parts of West Africa.⁵⁷ The chain design that appears on clothing and other decorated

⁵⁰ See Coleen E. Kriger, "Guinea Cloth: Production and Consumption of Cotton Textiles in West Africa before and during the Atlantic Slave Trade," in *The Spinning World: A Global History of Cotton Textiles, 1200–1850*, ed. Riello, Giorgio (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2009), 105–26, here 111–13.

⁵¹ See Kriger, "Guinea Cloth," 123; Pedro Machado, "Cloths of a New Fashion: Networks of Exchange, African Consumerism and Cloth Zones of Contact in India and the Indian Ocean in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," in *How India Clothed the World: The World of South Asian Textiles, 1500–1850*, ed. Tirthankar Roy and Giorgio Riello (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 53–84; see also Keyes, "West African Textiles," 258.

⁵² See Kriger, "Guinea Cloth," 120; Establet, *Répertoire*.

⁵³ See Bertrand Guillet, *La Marie Séraphique: Navire négrier*, ed. Musée d'Histoire de Nantes (Nantes: Editions MeMo, 2009); Métairie, Pétré-Grenouilleau and Nicolas, *Lorient*; Establet, *Répertoire*.

⁵⁴ See Colleen E. Kriger, *Cloth in West African History* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006).

⁵⁵ I thank Mei Mei Rado for turning my attention to this perception of the stripe motif in fashion as an exotic and sometimes explicitly African pattern. See Mei Mei Rado, "From the Orient to English: Exoticism and Striped Textiles in Eighteenth-Century French Fashion," in *Dressing the Early Modern Network Conference*, Abegg-Stiftung, Riggisberg, September 27–28, 2018.

⁵⁶ See Cousquer, *Nantes*, 155–57.

⁵⁷ See Geoffrey Parrinder, *West African Religion: A Study of Beliefs and Practices of Akan, Ewe, Yoruba, Ibo, and Kindred Peoples* (London: Epworth Press, 1969 [1949]), 11, 50–59, 172–75; Suzanne Preston

items can also be seen as an abstraction of the symbol of the snake biting its own tail,⁵⁸ and we find such chains among the Favre Petitpierre et Cie designs. Within various cultures of West Africa, geometric abstract designs were either woven into or printed onto indigenous textiles and played a predominant role in the religious and political order. These abstract designs with stripes, diamonds, crosses, intertwined bands, concentric circles, spirals, triangles, crescents, and dots were infused with specific symbolism.⁵⁹ Their function would go beyond mere decoration; they would be part of a kind of ornamental communication. They could, for instance, be read as map, specific symbols, testimonies of their makers, or political events, and often serve as currency. It might turn out that further detailed comparison of *indiennes de traite* designs with West African motifs will show some of the former echoing the latter. Cloth played and plays a fundamental role as part of religious imagery and temples,⁶⁰ hence the scarce surviving chintz fabrics from the time before the first half of the nineteenth century could be enlarged by looking into West African sculpture from the time, which have sometimes been heavily adorned with textile shreds.⁶¹

In addition to the figurative or ornamental iconography, specific color preferences for red and black in the selling markets are stated in eighteenth-century travel literature, and this color scheme conforms with the one of the analyzed print designs.⁶² In West Africa, the colors red, white, black, and blue were favored and had a sacred meaning. Color semantics differ from culture to culture of course: in Dahomean symbolism red, blue, and white are the most sacred colors, while in some places black is added to this sacred palette, with which still today decorative art as well as temple walls are brightly decorated in human, animal, and geometric designs.⁶³ Art historian James Green has demonstrated how colors and designs of nineteenth-century Manchester made textiles for the Congolese market—most of them in red, white, and black—were embedded in local (sometimes) religious beliefs and catered to customer preferences (see Green's article in the present volume).

Blier, *Royal Arts of Africa: The Majesty of Form* (London: Calmann & King, 1998), 58–59, 74; Cousquer, *Nantes*, 114.

58 See Geoffrey Parrinder, *West African Religion*, 52.

59 See Suzanne Preston Blier, *Royal Arts of Africa*, 58–59, 74, 155, 193–96, 216, 231–33, 242–46; Fromont. *The Art of Conversion*, 153; Cousquer, *Nantes*, 153–55.

60 See Geoffrey Parrinder, *West African Religion*, 63–67.

61 See, for example, a Congolese Nkisi Nkondi from the Royal Museum for Central Africa Tervuren (Inv. No. EO.O.O.7943) or a Congolese Bakongo Nkisi from the Ethnological Museum Berlin (Inv. No. III C 330).

62 See Mr. C*** [i.e., Henri Abraham Châtelain?], *Atlas historique*, interpages 66–67.

63 See Geoffrey Parrinder, *West African Religion*, 52, 61, 83, 92–93, 118, 119. Indigo-dyed cloth was highly demanded in exchange for enslaved people. See on the royal connotation of blue and red: Suzanne Preston Blier, *Royal Arts of Africa*, 92, 109. See also Cousquer, *Nantes*, 155.

Longue Durée of Motifs and African style

One of the more mysterious prints in the Favre Petitpierre et Cie book are tantalizing eyes that gaze at us in a red and black staccato (**fig. 7**). We find eyes and spirals also within European designs, for instance as a border of a Genevan handkerchief design,⁶⁴ but with the specific colors and repetition the Favre Petitpierre et Cie eyes are unprecedented in European design and seem to be an aesthetic adaptation for Africa, maybe even referring to local beliefs or proverbs. In a travel report from 1678–79 on Guinea, slave trader Jean Barbot included, for instance, an etching of the divinity Jankomé

⁶⁴ Unidentified artist(s), design for chintz, eighteenth or nineteenth century, Carouge (?), Geneva, Musées d'art et d'histoire (Inv. No. AD 0877-071)



Fig. 7: Unidentified artist(s), *Dessins des indiennes de traite*, Favre Petitpierre & Cie, Nantes, ca. 1800–1825, book with gouache prints on paper, 33 × 42.4 cm, donated by Jean Mayet, Château des Ducs de Bretagne, Nantes History Museum (Obj. No. 941.8.9).

residing on a basket with the latter featuring a pattern of three waves enclosing two rows of abstract eyes.⁶⁵

Apparently, demand for certain textiles was very different from region to region and was subject to sudden changes, a fact that European sellers would lament.⁶⁶ Comparing the Favre Petitpierre et Cie designs with later prints for the West African market, however, one realizes the *longue durée* of certain motifs. We find the familiar spiral and eye design among machine-made “Dutch waxes” produced by the Scottish merchant Ebenezer Brown Fleming for the Gold Coast (present day Ghana) from the 1890s onward (fig. 8).⁶⁷ The “Dutch Waxes” are yet another block-printed textile with a complex intercultural history of appropriating and remixing Indonesian *batik*. Also, an undated wax print conserved at the Vlisco Museum is with its partition in individual squares particularly close to the Favre Petitpierre et Cie eyes design.⁶⁸ The iconography of the eyes and spiral design continues to the present day; in 2007, the textile brand Ghana Limited produced an adaptation that was evoked in part by the proverb: “I am left only with my eyes to watch you.”⁶⁹

Ornamental semantics of textiles as a means for social communication are challenged in the abovementioned examples, with the European makers supposedly not understanding what they were actually drawing and the West African consumers presumably not sharing the same image connotations as the makers of the designs. Today, it is still largely the case that textiles are made outside of the continent, often by Chinese factories like Phoenix Hitarget, the most widely recognized Chinese-manufactured African print brand. Also, Switzerland still caters for the African market, for instance with the St. Gallen-based textile producer Filafil, who specializes in selling Swiss-made printed cottons to African clients.

Questions of agency are multifold with the printed cottons playing a key role among the commodities to oppress and enslave people, with the West African trading partners choosing the prints through their market power, and with the ornaments themselves eventually hiding meaning. Printed cottons as an exchange good in the slave trade seems to stand between categories: between fabric and image, figuration

⁶⁵ See Jean Barbot, “Journal d’un voyage de traite en Guinée, à Cayenne et aux Antilles,” 1678–1679, in *Bulletin de l’Institut fondamental d’Afrique noire (Série B, Sciences humaines)*, ed. Gabriel Debien, Marcel Delafosse, and Guy Thilmans 40, (1978), 235–395, here 335.

⁶⁶ See Keyes, “West African Textiles,” 258.

⁶⁷ I thank Helen Elands for drawing my attention to this design. See Helen Elands, “Dutch Wax Classics: The Designs Introduced by Ebenezer Brown Flemming circa 1890–1912 and Their Legacy,” in *African-Print Fashion Now! A Story of Taste, Globalization, and Style*, ed. Suzanne Gott et al. (Los Angeles: Fowler Museum at UCLA, 2017), 52–61.

⁶⁸ See *African-Print*, 84.

⁶⁹ For the expression “Aka m’ani na mede mehwe wo,” see *African-Print*, 96. It would of course be interesting to find out if this proverb already existed at the time the Favre Petitpierre et Cie eyes were made.



Fig. 8: Brown Fleming Ltd., printed by HKM (Haarlemsche Katoen Maatschappij), *The Eye* (close up), reg. nr. 387613, 1901, ca. 150 × 90 cm, Wax print, United Kingdom, ABC Archives Hyde.

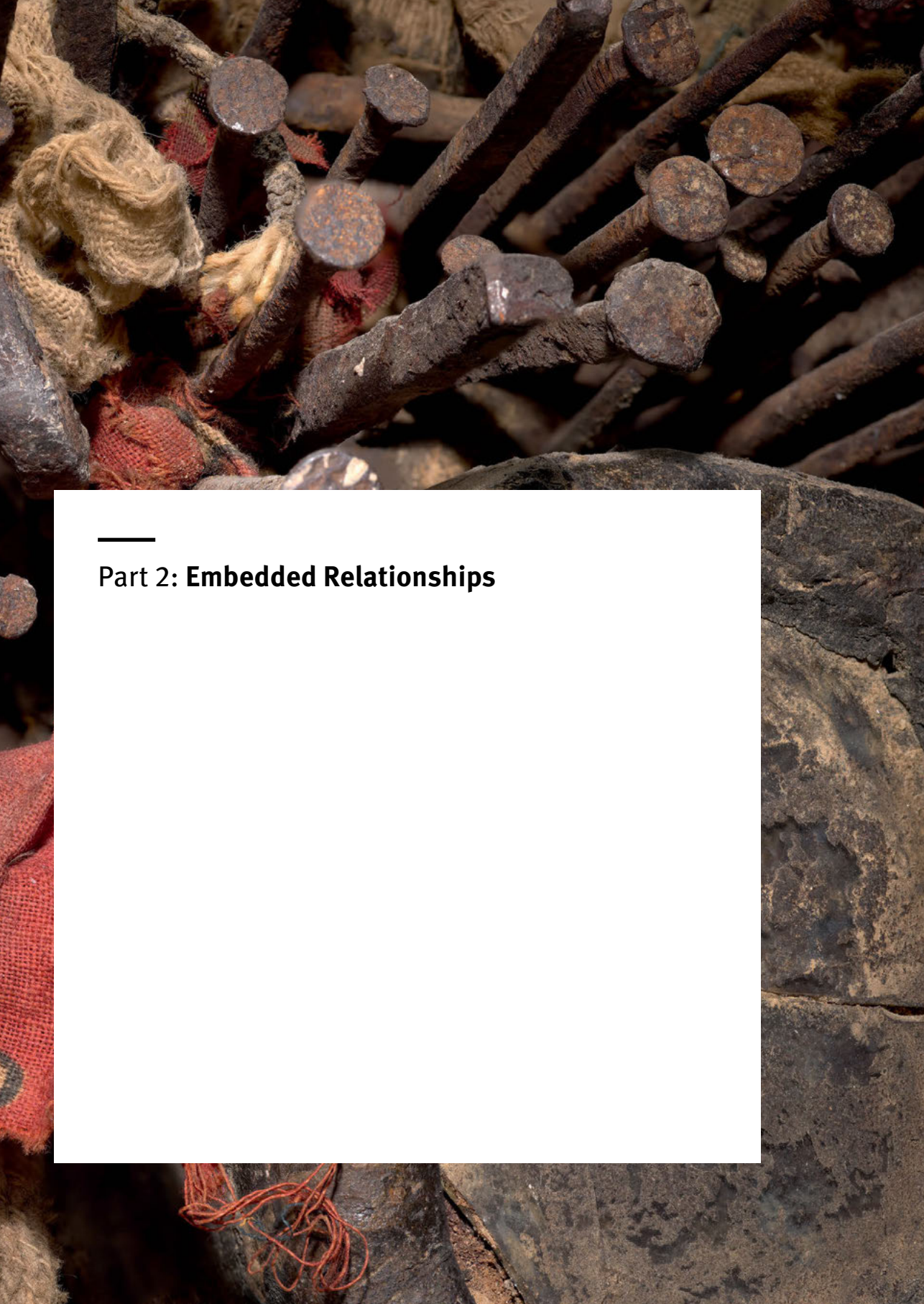
and abstraction, and different constructions of symbolic meaning. They are hybrid objects, testimonies of a Eurocentric view of West African cultures and embedded within previous intercultural exchanges of fabrics, such as with India and Indonesia. A close reading of archival sources can help to inscribe the agency of the West African consumers at the center of this story and analyze communication between consumer, buyer, seller, and maker in a wide-spanning contact and conflict zone. Besides that, an art-historical reading of the fabrics can help us understand their entanglement in global markets and politics as well as local cultures and image productions of Europe and Africa.

In the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the exotic, foreign, and new was fashionable, be it in Africa with European fabrics, be it in Europe with *turquerie* and chinoiserie fabrics and objects. Africa was (*nota bene*) present in European interiors: we find, for instance, objects like the so-called “pendule aux nègres”⁷⁰ with depictions of subjugated sub-Saharan African people. However, they are never executed in mimicry of African style, as it is the case, for instance, in chinoiserie decorative arts—*africaineries* are nonexistent.⁷¹ It seems that an artistic orientation toward Africa was only practiced for the African consumers themselves as exemplified above. The analyzed Swiss designs were mere formalist adaptations in iconography, style, and color, most probably without deep knowledge of the visual culture for which they were made. Unlike chinoiseries or *turqueries*, they were not appropriation for European consumers, but rather rooted in an economic market specialization of the global textile trade, motivated by the potential exploitation and enslavement of Africans bartered for these textiles. Inscribing this emulation of African arts and craft into the field of art history means formulating a counternarrative to the imagined discovery of African style in the world of fine arts by artists like Pablo Picasso around 1900—the birth of the so-called Primitivism that describes a European artistic style and practice. This problematic term captures the contemporary prejudices against African people and culture with its imprecision, disrespect, and political undertones. The aforementioned textiles preceded the modern artists’ interest in African style and imagery by one century and served as a means that allowed others to subjugate and exterminate individuals and their culture.

⁷⁰ The word “negro” is no longer used today due to its strong racist connotation. In the eighteenth century, at a time when the notion of “race” was being constructed and slavery was on the rise, it was commonly used to designate individuals from sub-Saharan Africa or their descendants.

⁷¹ See Anne Lafont, *L’art et la race—L’Africain (tout) contre l’œil des Lumières* (Paris and Dijon: Les presses du réel, 2019), 288–316.





Part 2: **Embedded Relationships**

James Green

Interpretations of Central African Taste in European Trade Cloth of the 1890s

For more than 500 years, foreign-manufactured cloth has been a major commodity imported into Central Africa. From the earliest moments of interaction, African consumers made clear their aesthetic preferences and foreign traders sought to provide cloth that appealed to local tastes. This essay will focus on a collection of around 100 samples of printed cotton fancy or roller prints produced by various textile manufacturers in Europe specifically for Central Africa and presented in 1894 at the Exposition Universelle in Lyon, France. These samples, conserved at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, reveal the formats in which the flimsy, low-quality cloth was sold: namely as handkerchiefs and as bolts of plain and printed cotton. In some cases, labels attached to the cloth indicate the prices that varieties were expected to achieve per yard in different Central African markets.¹ By tracking both the design process and subsequent use of printed cottons in the ceremonial regalia of a Kongo religious practitioner, or *nganga*, a complex power dynamic between manufacturer and consumer is revealed.

Beginning in the late fifteenth century, Portuguese traders (later Dutch, English, and French) who came to the Loango coast for enslaved men and women and ivory recognized African societies which, like their own, deeply valued and appreciated fine cloth. Satisfying the African consumer was essential for good business, and seventeenth-century accounts from Dutch merchants on the Loango coast provide detailed inventories of African preferences. A list prepared for the directors of the Dutch West India Company (Oud West Indische Compagnie) in 1642, for example, reveals how the most desirable fabrics were only those of the finest quality. Cottons from India, linens, silks, and wools in black, blues, and reds were valued, and there is a strong emphasis on qualities such as weight and color as well as technical sophistication.²

The appreciation and deep knowledge of cloth shown here indicates its importance in the central African economy prior to the arrival of Europeans. Long established traditions in the weaving of cloth from threads made from the inner membrane of the long pinnate leaves of the raffia palm are recorded in travel accounts, and some of the earliest works of African art to enter European collections from this region are exquisite raffia textiles.³ Foreign-manufactured cloth was readily incorporated into

1 The samples were acquired as a group by the Philadelphia Civic Museum, whose collection was donated to the Philadelphia Museum of Art and accession in 2004.

2 Louis Jadin, *Rivalités luso-néerlandaises au Soho, Congo, 1600–1675: Tentatives missionnaires des récollets flamands et tribulations des capucins italiens 1670–1675* (Rome: Academia Belgica, 1966), 228.

3 For an inventory of these early raffia creations from Central Africa see Ezio Bassani and M. D. McLeod, *African Art and Artefacts in European Collections: 1400–1800* (London: British Museum, 2000).

this existing system of value, and traded far inland via a network of marketplaces that connected the various peoples of the Congo Basin.⁴ Already by the 1580s, the Teke (Anzique) people of Congo Pool—a central marketplace inaccessible to Europeans until the late 1870s—were celebrated by their Kongo neighbors nearer to the coast for their elaborate dress that was said to make extensive use of imported goods including cloth. According to the 1591 account of Filippo Pigafetta and Duarte Lopes, European silks and velvets were popular items of dress among the slave trading gentry: “The nobles wear silk and other garments ... also velvet caps from Portugal.”⁵ At the same time, the account notes that the Teke were celebrated regionally for their own traditions in raffia cloth manufacture. The dress of the elite is described as combining the finest materials derived from local sources such as raffia and shell with imported velvets and silks.

By the mid-nineteenth century European and American advances in manufacturing technology allowed for the mass production of brightly colored and patterned cotton cloth. Two varieties of printed cottons were exported to Africa in great volume: wax prints (wax batiks) and non-wax prints (fancy or roller prints).⁶ In Central Africa, “Manchester cloth,” as this cheap imported trade cloth became generally known, steadily replaced the finer quality imported cloth of earlier centuries and also locally produced raffia cloth. This change in cloth preferences occurred first in settlements near the coast where trade cloth was cheapest and most readily available, while people living further inland are recorded as continuing to wear a combination of raffia and imported cloth through the 1890s.⁷ Printed cottons were desirable for many reasons including the light weight of the cloth, which could be easily laundered, and even though the quality was generally accepted to be low by African consumers, the

See also Alisa LaGamma with contributions by Christine Giuntini, “Out of the Kongo and into the *Kunstammer*,” in *Kongo: Power and Majesty*, ed. Alisa LaGamma, exh. cat. Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, 2015), 131–59.

⁴ Trade routes encompassed the entire Congo Basin and reached over 2,000 kilometers (1,200 miles) north, south, east, and west. The basins of the Kasai, Kwilu, and Kwango rivers in what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the Ogooué Basin in Gabon can also be considered as part the same vast network. See Colleen E. Kriger, *Pride of Men: Ironworking in 19th-Century West Central Africa* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1999), 44.

⁵ Filippo Pigafetta and Duarte Lopes, *Report of the Kingdom of Congo and of the Surrounding Countries Drawn Out of the Writings and Discourses of the Portuguese Duarte Lopez* (London: 1881), 29.

⁶ See Norm Schrag, *Mboma and the Lower Zaire: A Socioeconomic Study of a Kongo Trading Community, c. 1785–1885* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1993) for an extended analysis of the shift in cloth preferences by Kongo consumers.

⁷ Slave ships also continued to carry a large supply of lightweight cotton Indian textiles in the eighteenth century. See David Richardson, Suzanne Schwarz, and Anthony Tibbles, *Liverpool and Transatlantic Slavery* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), 244.

range of colors and styles allowed for greater personal expression.⁸ Wealthy individuals soon wore many layers of trade cloth as a sign of wealth and status as demonstrated by Teke fashions on the Congo Pool.

“Paying Some Attention to the Traditions of Other Races”

In the run-up to the Berlin Conference of 1885–6 when the continent of Africa was formally divided into colonies by competing European nations, Welsh-American explorer Henry Morton Stanley (1841–1904) gave a series of lectures based on his travel experiences in which he presented Central Africa as the world’s last great untapped markets for European-manufactured goods. Speaking at the Manchester Chamber of Commerce in 1884, he described an almost limitless potential market for cloth: “Supposing that all the inhabitants of the Congo basin were simply to have one Sunday dress each ... 320,000,000 yards of Manchester cloth [would be required], just for one Sunday dress!”⁹ Stanley underscored that he has left out questions regarding the aesthetics and desirability of Manchester cloth in his calculations: “I have said nothing about Rochdale savelist, or your own superior prints, your gorgeous handkerchiefs, with their variegated patterns, your checks and striped cloths, your ticking and twills ... your own imaginations will no doubt carry you to the limbo of immeasurable and incalculable millions.” The statement was met with the laughter and cheers from audience which echoes the broader economic necessity of finding new markets for British-manufactured goods at this time. Britain had an economy several times larger than the needs of its own people and depended to an increasing degree on international trade for economic growth.¹⁰

Manufacturers throughout Europe competed fiercely to gain control of the global market and international fairs, such as the Exposition de Lyon of 1894, were arenas of national competition where manufacturers could exhibit their latest “tickings and twills” in order to solicit orders. According to the Exposition guidebook, the potential of the trade of European products in Central Africa—now the French colonies

⁸ Justine M. Cordwell, *Appendix: The Use of Printed Batiks by Africans*, in *Fabrics of Culture: the Anthropology of Clothing and Adornment*, ed. Justine M. Cordwell and Ronald A. Schwarz (The Hague: Mouton, 1979), 495.

⁹ Henry M. Stanley, *Address [on the Congo and its Future] to the Manchester Chamber of Commerce* (Manchester: A. Ireland and Co. printers, Pall Mall, 1884), 12. In imagining Congo women wearing Sunday dresses, Stanley is in fact imagining the imposition of an entire colonial structure. Marie Claude Dupré, personal communication to author, January 25, 2018.

¹⁰ Giorgio Riello, *Cotton: The Fabric That Made the Modern World* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 267.

of Congo and Gabon—was enormous, with cotton fabrics of particular interest. The author hoped that: “French manufacturers could readily appreciate the appropriate types and prices, the width, the design, the color, the general quality [of the cloth], so as to replace their foreign competitors who are mostly English or German, and apply to serve their customers according to their often barbaric tastes.”¹¹ In other words, behind the racist terminology, are European nations competing to create cloth that would be most desirable to consumers around the world and to do so required an understanding of indigenous aesthetic taste. The samples under study, created by a number of manufacturers from different European countries, are the product of this fierce competition. Underpinning the desire to sell cloth was an explicit vision of expanding empire.¹² As the editor of the British trade journal *Textile Manufacturer* succinctly notes as early as 1878: “consistent with the extended views of a great empire . . . the modern Englishman pays some attention to the traditions of other races and to the history of the world.”¹³ In other words, by gaining knowledge about foreign cultures, manufacturers were in a better position to understand local fashions and tastes and so create merchandise that was so desirable as to transfer to Europe control of the market.¹⁴

Motifs and Preferences

How did European manufacturers gain a sense of the aesthetic preferences of Central African consumers? By 1885, trading settlements along the Loango coast, extending from Abriz in Angola as far north as Gabon, were busy, chaotic, and complex multi-ethnic places. Some 250 foreigners were permanently living in the region operating over 160 trading establishments, with Dutch, French, English, and Portuguese traders representing the major European nationalities.¹⁵ A regular steam line connected Banana, Boma, and Vivi with Liverpool, Antwerp, Hamburg, and Bordeaux, and the journey between these ports could be completed in 17 days.¹⁶ One of the most

11 Chambre de commerce et d'industrie (Lyon), *Exposition coloniale organisée par la chambre de commerce à l'Exposition universelle de Lyon en 1894*. M. Ulysse Pila, membre de la chambre, commissaire général (Lyon: A.-H. Storck, 1895), 220.

12 The acquisition of these samples by the Philadelphia Civic Museum indicates that around this time America was also considering entering this trade.

13 Editor's Note, “Oriental Style as applied to Fabrics,” *Textile Manufacturer* (1878).

14 By the late eighteenth century, the dominance of slave traders from Liverpool in Central Africa meant that cloth manufactured in England—especially from textile centers such as Manchester—increasingly made its way into the local marketplaces controlled by Kongo traders. British products accounting for 65–75% of all trade goods imported by 1900.

15 Norm Schrag, *Mboma and the Lower Zaire*, 73.

16 James Green, *Material Values of the Teke Peoples of West Central Africa (1880–1920)*, PhD diss. (University of East Anglia, 2017), <https://ueaeprints.uea.ac.uk/67911/>.



Fig. 1: Tusk with figurative relief. Kongo peoples; Vili group, Loango Coast, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Republic of the Congo, or Cabinda, Angola, ca.1880–1890. Ivory, H. 22 in. (55.88 cm). Yale University Art Gallery, Charles B. Benenson, B. A. 1933, Collection (2006.51.468).

compelling portraits of these trading settlements is found in the tradition of ivory tusks created by Vili Kongo carvers as souvenirs for visiting Europeans (**fig. 1**).¹⁷ In an example conserved at the Yale University Art Gallery scenes are depicted *in media res*: enslaved men are shackled at the neck by chains, while above a man dressed in European clothes holds an umbrella. In spite of the evident power imbalances indicated by this artist—which would only grow more pronounced as colonialism was formalized in the region—the sculptor reveals the close proximity of European and African traders in the marketplace and how the exchange of goods necessitated close working relationships. Information about what the African consumers desired was gathered through informal conversation and shared experience in the marketplace, but also in the form of photographs, ethnographic data, and the amassing of material culture all of which served as design inspiration.¹⁸

Many of the designs for printed cottons and wax prints produced in Europe for the African market appear to have been based specifically on those found in indigenously produced cloth. Cloth produced in Manchester for sale in Madagascar thus looks noticeably different from that produced for Senegal, for example, reflecting differences in local textile traditions. In order to replicate such designs accurately, some textile manufacturers are known to have acquired their own collections of textiles from African and other markets around the world.¹⁹ Public collections, such as new ethnographic museums in industrial cities like Liverpool, also provided textile designers with objects they could readily study firsthand.²⁰ In producing designs spe-

17 See the work of Nichole Bridges and Zoë Strother on this topic. Nichole N. Bridges, *Contact, Commentary, and Kongo Memory: Souvenir Ivories from Africa's Loango Coast, ca. 1840–1910*, PhD diss. (University of Wisconsin, Madison, 2011); Zoë S. Strother, “Depictions of Human Trafficking on Loango Ivories,” in *Humor and Violence: Seeing Europeans in Central African Art, 1850–1997* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017).

18 The family archives of the Lawson Family, for example, centered on the small port of Aneho (Little Popo) on the West African coast, contain correspondence dating from 1877 between R. C. Lawson and the Edwards Brothers firm that reveal the close relations between African traders and European manufacturers, and include specific lists of desired goods. Adam Jones and Peter Sebald, *An African Family Archive the Lawsons of Little Popo/Aneho (Togo), 1841–1938* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

19 One example is the collection of textiles from West Africa and Indonesia formed by the West Africa-based trader and later textile manufacturer Charles Beving Sr. (1858–1913), subsequently donated by his son to the British Museum. The collection provided samples on which his firm might model its productions for the African market. See British Museum website entry on Charles A Beving, accessed November 12, 2019, https://research.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/term_details.aspx?bioid=41572.

20 The *Annual Report* of the Liverpool Museums for 1910 notes that: “The usefulness of many of the objects in the African Section for trade purposes is evinced by the reproduction of designs on native cloths by a local firm, and the copying of designs by Manchester calico printers.” Quoted in Zachary Kingdon, *Ethnographic Collecting and African Agency in Early Colonial West Africa: A Study of Trans-Imperial Cultural Flows* (Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2018), 255.



Fig. 2: Printed kerchief with Central African weapons, French, 1875–1900. Printed plain-weave cotton, $47 \frac{3}{4} \times 30$ in. (121.3 $\times$ 76.2 cm). Philadelphia Museum of Art, Gift of the Philadelphia Commercial Museum (also known as the Philadelphia Civic Center Museum), Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2004, inv. no. 2004-111-8.

cifically for the Central African market, the abstract patterns displayed on several samples suggests manufacturers were aware of local traditions in raffia and specifically sought to replicate distinctive Kongo style geometric patterns.

European manufacturers also relied on information about taste that appeared in printed accounts of travel to the region. One sample includes a print of crisscrossed spears of the kind depicted as engravings in several European accounts of travel to Africa of this period, including as chapter headings in Stanley's own *Through the Dark Continent*, a bestseller of its time (**fig. 2**). Spears, knives, and other weapons were also immensely popular collector's items and vast collections were brought back to Europe as souvenirs and trophies. In this sample, Central African weapons from dif-

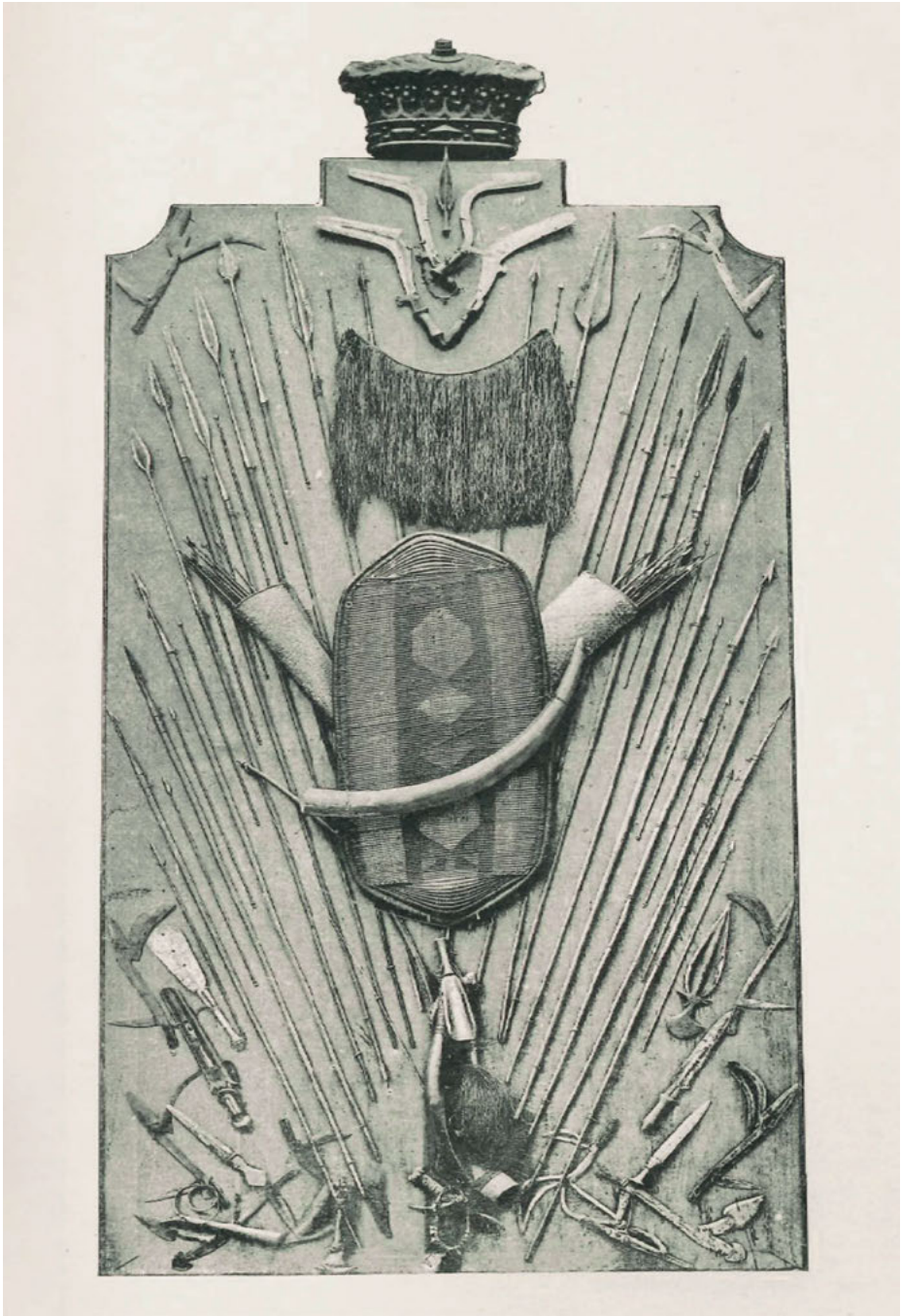


Fig. 3: Display of Central African arms (“Armes congolaises – collection du Duc d’Uzès”). From Jacques de Crussol d’Uzès, *Le Voyage de mon fils au Congo* (1894), 263.

ferent regions are presented crisscrossed in each of the four corners of the central medallion. The presentation of weapons in this way is reminiscent of wall displays of African arms in private houses and museums in Europe such as those collected by Jacques de Crussol d'Uzès (**fig. 3**). In a similar vein, European-manufactured goods with a known market value—like umbrellas, thimbles, scissors, cowrie shells, coral, or even different styles of European hats—were also printed onto cloth (**fig. 4**). One of the hats depicted is a pith helmet, popularized by explorers of the nineteenth century, and possibly derived from a manual on suitable clothing for the tropics produced at this time. The transformation of merchandise with a known trade value into a decorative pattern symbolic of value sought to increase the desirability of the cheaply made machine produced cloth.

Certain designs move beyond replicating what is of known value into the realms of humor and fantasy. Central Africa is presented as a pastoral ideal, where against a red background, white and black monkeys hold fruits, surrounded by palm trees and sitting in tall grass and flowers (**fig. 5**). Labels that advertised the manufacturing firm may also be thought of as part of the overall cloth design. In a sample sold by the Edwards Brothers of Liverpool, the label for the firm's "hippopotamus mark" shows a white European man bathing with a hippopotamus, his clothes neatly piled in the background, including shoes and bowler hat (**fig. 6**). The improbability of such a scene is intended as a joke that transcends cultural specificity to amuse everyone: the European trader who will transport it to the Loango coast, the market seller who will acquire it from him, and eventually the African consumer who will remove the label and make use of the cloth decorated with a geometric motif in red, white, and black.²¹ The same process is in play in the design of a Congo toile depicting African individuals shooting at each other while using only umbrellas for protection (**fig. 7**). The joke here—which combines depictions of goods known to have value such as guns and umbrellas with an act of violence—was intended to appeal to the tastes and humor of European and African traders alike; a surreal twist on life in a trading settlement on the Loango coast.²²

²¹ Ruth Nielson has studied a related phenomenon of the labels printed on cloth for the Indian market intended to appeal both to British and Indian consumers. See Ruth T. Nielsen and Justine M. Cordwell, "The History and Development of Wax-printed Textiles Intended for West Africa and Zaire," in *Fabrics of Culture: the Anthropology of Clothing and Adornment*, ed. Justine M. Cordwell and Ronald A. Schwarz (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1979), 467–98.

²² Indeed, in the souvenir ivories of the same period produced by Vili carvers for Europeans we see a similar process at play. For an extended engagement with this theme see Z. S. Strother, *Humor and Violence: Seeing Europeans in Central African Art*, 2017.



Fig. 4: Printed kerchief with European hats, France, 1875–1900. Printed plain-weave cotton, 7 ft. $\frac{1}{2}$ in. $\times$ 2 ft. 6 in. (214.6 $\times$ 76.2 cm). Philadelphia Museum of Art, Gift of the Philadelphia Commercial Museum (also known as the Philadelphia Civic Center Museum), Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2004, inv. no. 2004-111-6.

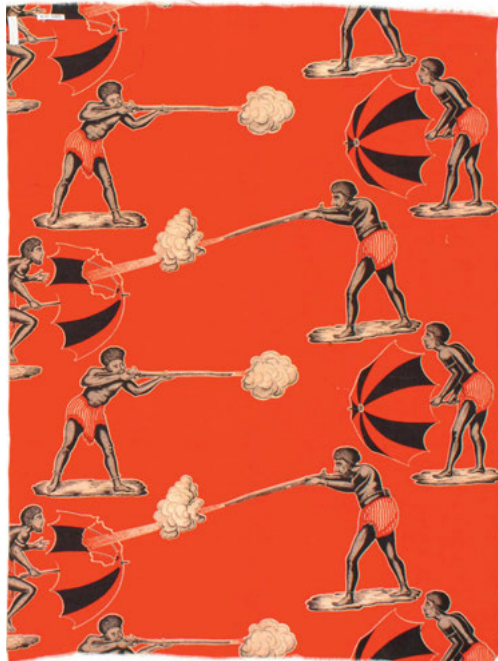


Fig. 5: Detail from printed kerchief with monkeys, French, 1875–1900. Printed plain-weave cotton, 69 $\frac{1}{2}$ $\times$ 27 in. (176.5 $\times$ 68.6 cm). Philadelphia Museum of Art, Gift of the Philadelphia Commercial Museum (also known as the Philadelphia Civic Center Museum), Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2004, inv. no. 2004-111-7a,b.

Fig. 6: Edwards Brothers label affixed to printed textile, Manchester, England, 1875–1900. Printed plain-weave cotton, 26 ft. × 20 ¾ in. (817.9 × 52.7 cm). Philadelphia Museum of Art, Gift of the Philadelphia Commercial Museum (also known as the Philadelphia Civic Center Museum), Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2004, inv. no. 2004-111-16.



Fig. 7: Printed textile with guns and umbrellas, French, for export to the French Congo, 1875–1900. Printed plain-weave cotton, 35 ¼ × 26 ¾ in. (89.5 × 67 cm). Philadelphia Museum of Art, Gift of the Philadelphia Commercial Museum (also known as the Philadelphia Civic Center Museum), Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2004, inv. no. 2004-111-9.



Red, White, and Black

In designing cloth for Central African consumers it is clear that color was a major consideration. Seventeenth-century European traders on the Loango coast recognized that red was desirable and references to red cloth appear regularly in Dutch trading reports of the seventeenth-century. Red cloth was worn alongside items of European dress by wealthy slave-trading chiefs as an indication of status.²³ One early nineteenth-century eyewitness account provided by British explorer James Hingston Tuckey (1776–1816) describes a chief who had grown wealthy in the slave trade as seated on a throne of red velvet, wearing a “crimson plush jacket with enormous gilt buttons, a lower garment . . . in red velvet . . . and a pair of Morocco half-boots,” and elsewhere he is described as having a “red cloak laced.”²⁴ The accounts of various European visitors to this region in the late nineteenth century emphasize the continued use of red cloth as a standard attribute of chiefly leadership throughout the region. Stanley, for example, describes the Teke chief Mankoneh (Nga Nkuma) of Congo Pool as having “a large crimson bolster” displayed in his court as a symbol of his leadership.²⁵ The recognition among European manufacturers that Central Africa was a market for cloth of a brilliant red is perhaps best encapsulated by the naming of a chemical dye first synthesized by chemist Paul Böttiger in 1883 in Germany as “Congo red.”²⁶ The analysis of a fragment of cloth knotted to a Power Figure (Nkisi N’kondi) conserved at the Yale University Art Gallery includes a fragment of red cloth dyed with paranitraniline red, one of the first synthetic dyes and a forerunner of “Congo red”, attached to an iron nail likely by a Kongo religious practitioner as part of a process of activation (fig. 8).²⁷

For the Kongo peoples, red is a color associated with vulnerable states of health, including pregnancy, old age, and sickness, and crucial moments of transition, such as from life to death, the color also expresses a woman’s beauty and sexual maturity at the completion of her initiation and so is associated with new life. As it relates to leadership, red stands for absolute power without any restrictions and thus expresses qualities of physical force and magical power, and is symbolic of sexual desire and

²³ Jadin, *Rivalités luso-néerlandaises*, 228.

²⁴ James Hingston Tuckey, *Narrative of an Expedition to Explore the River Zaire, Usually Called the Congo, in South Africa, in 1816* (London: Murray, 1818), 156, 186.

²⁵ This bolster was likely a copy of the *likuba* royal seat made of red cloth that was one of the major symbols of leadership for the Teke peoples of the Pool and plateau region. Stanley, 1885: I 296

²⁶ The dye Congo Red (C.I. 22120) was identified on Yale University Art Gallery inv. 2006.51.563 using Raman spectroscopy. For more information and the location from which the samples were taken, see Pablo Londero, Mary Wilcop, and Olav Bjørnerud, analytical report for Power Figure (Nkisi N’kondi), conservation files, Yale University Art Gallery.

²⁷ James Green, “Investigating the Cloth on a Kongo Power Figure,” *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin* (2019): 36



Fig. 8: Detail of printed plain-weave cotton dyed red with black and white tied to a nail hammered into Power Figure (*Nkisi N'kondi*), Democratic Republic of the Congo, Republic of the Congo, or Cabinda, Angola, 19th–early 20th century. Wood, iron, cloth, mirror, leopard tooth, fiber, and porcelain, 18 × 8 × 3 ½ in. (45.7 × 20.3 × 8.9 cm). Yale University Art Gallery, Charles B. Benenson, B.A. 1933, Collection, 2006.51.246.

war.²⁸ A local source of red pigment, known in Kikongo as *tukula*, is composed of ground heartwood fiber from one or more of the redwoods indigenous to Central Africa was an important item of trade.²⁹ The colors white and black also had longstanding indigenous significance. The brilliant white clay of Congo Pool and its vicinity known as *mpembe* was, like red *tukula*, a lucrative item of barter. Soft to the touch, with a

²⁸ Anita Jacobson-Widding, *Red–White–Black as a Mode of Thought: A Study of Triadic Classification by Colours in the Ritual Symbolism and Cognitive Thought of the Peoples of the Lower Congo* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1979), 143, 154–5, –5, 157–60, 179–80.

²⁹ A version made from crushed stone is also used. See the work of Ellen Howe on this topic.

little water the material forms a binder paste. Among the Teke Fumu in the early twentieth century, white clay was considered a major “substance” of the ancestral realm. When used to empower a sculpted wooden figure known as a *tege* figure, the material became “the bones of ancestors.”³⁰ Among Kongo people, *mpembe* likewise was extensively used on Yombe funerary monuments. Black is a color opposed to social order and associated with the evil doer—it is consequently recorded in power objects intended for revenge and preparing for killing, or those used to hunt down a guilty party.³¹ In a religious setting, red is often presented with white, a color associated with health and connected with hunting and the counteraction of evil. Red and white materials are thus found in Kongo power objects or *minkisi* intended for healing, to give good luck, or encourage success in trading or hunting.

With these myriad associations, the sight of red, white, and black in combination would have been profoundly impactful from a Kongo perspective.³² The religious specialist of the Kongo people, the *nganga*, is recorded as wearing a costume that displayed these three colors together both in the form of cloth and as body decoration. As part of an *nganga*’s costume, he might also have worn a mask decorated in these colors (fig. 9). Accessioned in Musée de l’Homme, Paris, by 1892 and previously the possession of an unidentified *nganga* in a Yombe Kongo community, the mask would have been worn during ceremonies of healing or judgment. It is likely the *nganga* would have acquired this mask undecorated from a professional sculptor, and thereafter made it his own through the addition of locally sourced pigments, including red redwood or stone *tukula*, white clay (*mpembe*), and black pigments such as charcoal. Additionally, a headband of imported industrially manufactured Manchester Cloth with a background of red and a floral design with geometric patterns in black and white was tacked around the forehead. A section of the same textile has been affixed to the chin with brass tacks and it closely resembles the type of printed cotton seen in the 1894 Exposition de Lyon samples.

By the time this mask was in use (the cloth suggesting not long before it was first inventoried in 1892), industrially manufactured cloth was a staple in the Central African marketplace. By deploying the cloth here as part of a dramatic costume where it would have been seen in motion and as part of a ceremony, the cloth is transformed. No longer a cheap imported commodity, it now signified the awesome religious authority of the *nganga* and his ability to negotiate with forces in the spiritual realm on behalf of a client. Colors appropriated by European textile weavers from a Central

30 Hottot, Robert, and Frank Willett. 1956. “Teke fetishes”. *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*. 86: 29

31 Jacobson-Widding, *Red—White—Black*, 182–3, 143, 336–7.

32 Anthropologist and art historian John Mack has compared it to “seeing all the traffic lights on at once,” Conversation with the author, April 4, 2018. See also Anita Jacobson-Widding, “The Red Corpse, or the Ambiguous Father,” *Ethnos* 44, nos. 3–4 (1980): 202–10



Fig. 9: Anthropomorphic mask, Kongo peoples, Yombe group, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Republic of the Congo, or Cabinda, Angola, 19th century, before 1892. Wood, pigment, skin, fabric, brass nails, and grass, 24 $\frac{7}{16}$ $\times$ 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ $\times$ 5 $\frac{9}{16}$ in. (62 $\times$ 26 $\times$ 14.2 cm). Musée du Quai Branly – Jacques Chirac, Paris, Donor Mr. Vincent, inv. no. 71.1892.62.4.



Fig. 10: Red, white, and black materials for sale in Brazzaville market, January 20, 2018.



Fig. 11: A bolt of red cloth manufactured in China, a gift for Makoko Auguste Nguempio (r. 2004–present), January 15, 2018.

African value system and sold back to African consumers have here gone through a process of re-sacralization. The presence of cheap, industrially produced, synthetically dyed cloth on this works of religious sculpture reveal a world on the cusp of great change and yet also demonstrate the resiliency of Kongo religious practices.

In Brazzaville, the Republic of the Congo, in 2018, red, white, and black foreign-manufactured cloth was still for sale in the market alongside raffia cloth and a variety of other locally sourced materials associated with the spiritual forces connected to these colors. Pieces of red and black industrially manufactured cloth, likely from China, are displayed in the market alongside cloth woven from raffia and the pelts of white cats and rabbits (**fig. 10**).

Today, Chinese manufacturers specifically create red cloth with labels intended to appeal to royal or chiefly authority. This bolt of cloth was one of the required gifts for Makoko Auguste Nguempio (r. 2004–present), ruler of the Teke people in Mbe (**fig. 11**). Various labels are attached to the cloth by the modern-day inheritors of trading firms such as the Edwards Brothers, and their “Hippopotamus Mark” including labels that read: “Super Deluxe Quality Royal 1–11” and “Royal Tex” along with the labels of the Chinese manufacturer. Interpreting Central African tastes by foreign manufacturing powers remains big business, while Kongo and Teke religious figures of authority continue to maintain their spiritual authority implicit in these colors.

Helen Glaister

The Picturesque in Peking

European Decoration at the Qing Court

This case study of the political agency of European style art objects at the eighteenth-century Chinese court begins with a small, finely enameled porcelain flask; a Chinese object that entered the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) in London in 1951 as part of the Basil Ionides Bequest of Chinese export porcelain (**figs. 1a, 1b**). Just like other articles in the bequest, the flask is decorated in European style—a common feature of Chinese porcelain manufactured to the specifications of wealthy Europeans as part of the lucrative private trade in goods from Asia¹—with idyllic scenes of young European women and children. The manner of their depiction, paying careful attention to light and shade through the folds of their clothing and flesh tones on their bare arms and neck, and attempts toward spatial recession all conform to established and recognizable European painting conventions. However, on further examination, all is not as it might seem: the rocks seen here more closely resemble those depicted in traditional Chinese brush painting and the principal figures are staged against a blank white canvas and sit precariously close to the pictorial space—the curvature of the flask accentuates the visual allusion, like the lens of an eyeglass or optical device. Furthermore, how are these scenes framed? The decorative border pattern is unfamiliar and difficult to decode: is it too made of porcelain or some other rare material? In the shape of the vessel, we are finally on firmer ground. Flasks of this form had been popular in China for centuries, and as such this was a well-established point of reference, denoting cultural continuity and allusions to the “antique” in Qing dynasty China (1644–1911) when this object was made. The shape of this vessel therefore suggests a Chinese recipient rather than a European one.

Since its first arrival at the museum, the reassessment of this object by later Chinese ceramic scholars has now placed it firmly in the field of eighteenth-century Chinese court arts, evidence of which will be provided over the following pages. Over that same period, the terms “européennerie” (first coined by collector and curator of

¹ Private trade lay outside the bulk trade in commodities conducted on behalf of the East India Companies. As such, designs tended to be personalized, more skilfully produced, and significantly more expensive. For more on the distinction between private and company trade, see Luisa E. Mengoni, “The Sino-European Trade in Ceramics: Bulk Export and Special Orders,” in *Passion for Porcelain: Masterpieces of Ceramics from the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum* (National Museum of China International Exchange, 2012). Anthony Farrington, *Trading Places: The East India Company and Asia 1600–1834* (London: British Library, 2002).



Fig. 1a, 1b: Flask, porcelain decorated with enamels, Qianlong period (1736–95), 10.2 × 8.9 cm, Basil Ionides Bequest, V&A: C.50-1951.



Chinese art, George N. Kates in 1952)² and later “euroiserie” (preferred by art historian Jonathan Hay from 1995 and used herein)³ have been employed by scholars in the field to refer to the court fashion in China for European design and the visual arts.⁴ Both terms suggest a Chinese response to European art and design in a similar manner or equivalence to that widely known in the West as “chinoiserie”, first discussed in English in 1883⁵ and the subject of numerous academic studies since Hugh Honour’s monograph of 1961.⁶ More recently, eighteenth-century specialist Stacey Sloboda provided a critical reassessment of chinoiserie that stressed the visual and semiotic significance of Chinese art objects as articles of commerce, which extended the reach of Chinese material and visual culture across social boundaries of class, gender, or political allegiances.⁷ The seemingly unstoppable outpouring of objects from China to Europe in the early modern period, in particular silk, lacquer, and porcelain, was unmatched in China, where European articles were in comparison small in number and scarcely seen beyond the port cities or the court.⁸

In this article, I will argue that the primary differences that separate the concepts of chinoiserie and euroiserie are temporal and spatial. While chinoiserie is most closely associated with the long eighteenth century, its impact was felt over the centuries that followed, during which time Chinese products and their designs have become ubiquitous, making a permanent impression on European material culture up to the present. In contrast, euroiserie is largely unknown beyond specialist academic circles and was largely restricted to a small ruling elite, making little impact beyond those confines. This article will question why euroiserie appealed to the

2 The American George N. Kates gained rare access to the palace buildings while living in a traditional Chinese house within the Old Imperial City in Beijing from 1933–40. See George N. Kates, “Prince Kung’s Palace and Its Adjoining Garden,” *Monumenta Serica* 5 (1940). George N. Kates, *The Years That Were Fat Peking 1933–1940* (Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1952).

3 Jonathan Hay, *Sensuous Surfaces: The Decorative Object in Early Modern China* (London: Reaktion, 2010).

4 Other scholars prefer the terms “occidentalism” and “europerie.” See Kristina Kleutghen, “Chinese Occidenterie: The Diversity of ‘Western’ Objects in Eighteenth-Century China,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 47, no. 2 (Winter 2014): 117–35. Ching-Ling Wang, “Chinoiserie in Reflection: European Objects and Their Impact on Chinese Art of the Late Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,” in *Wechselblicke: Zwischen China und Europa 1669–1907* (Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2017), 42–55.

5 The term first appeared in English in *Harper’s Magazine*, 1883. See David Beevers, ed., *Chinese Whispers: Chinoiserie in Britain, 1650–1930* (Brighton: Royal Pavilion & Museums, 2008), 13.

6 Hugh Honour, *Chinoiserie: The Vision of Cathay* (London: John Murray, 1961).

7 Stacey Sloboda, *Chinoiserie: Commerce and Critical Ornament in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, Studies in Design (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014).

8 While Beijing and Guangzhou (Canton) remained the principal sites for the manufacture and consumption of European style Chinese art objects throughout the eighteenth century, Kristina Kleutghen reminds us that localized examples of “occidenterie,” in this case Suzhou woodblock prints of the 1730s and 1740s, were produced for the prosperous residents of the Jiangnan region. Kleutghen, “Chinese Occidenterie,” 128–31.

ruling Manchu emperors, in particular Qianlong (r. 1736–95), who enthusiastically commissioned paintings, architecture, and decorative art objects in this and other “non-Chinese” styles? What can this tell us about Manchu notions of statecraft and how has this been understood in later periods?

This article will consider three key factors that gave rise to *euroiserie* at the Chinese court; transmission, consumption and circulation. The methods of artistic transfer, from Europe to China, will focus on the movement of objects, materials and skilled practitioners not only to the court in Beijing, but also to the manufacturing heartlands of Jingdezhen and Guangzhou (Canton), more commonly associated with mass-produced articles for domestic and export markets. The circulation of objects from the periphery of China to its symbolic center at the court in Beijing will highlight the multiple channels through which European visual and decorative arts were experienced and encountered in China, stimulating and facilitating the production of *euroiserie* objects for court consumption.

Transmission: Technological Exchange

The origins of eighteenth-century opaque enamel colors, as seen on the V&A flask and which the Chinese called *falangcai* or “foreign colors,” can be traced to the arrival of European glass and enamels on metal that were gifted to the Chinese court through diplomatic and papal missions throughout the seventeenth century.⁹ From around 1680, the Kangxi Emperor (r. 1662–1722) reestablished imperially sponsored porcelain production at the industrial kilns of Jingdezhen in southeast China, simultaneously creating specialist workshops in close proximity to the imperial living quarters in Beijing, where he could directly intervene in the production of objects for court consumption.¹⁰ A notorious technophile, Kangxi not only supported the production of traditional crafts such as jade working and cloisonné, but actively encouraged experimentation with new technologies and the reinvestigation of materials previously considered of minor status, such as glass, according to traditional Chinese value systems.

The production of glass in the Imperial Glass Workshop, established in 1696 under the German Jesuit, Kilian Stumpf (1655–1720), introduced European methods

⁹ Emily Byrne Curtis, *Glass Exchange between Europe and China, 1550–1800: Diplomatic, Mercantile and Technological Interactions*, Transculturalisms, 1400–1700 (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009). Eugenio Menegon, ‘Amicitia Palatina: The Jesuits and the Politics of Gift-Giving at the Qing Court’, ed. Magda Abbati and Federico Greselin, *Sinica Venetiana* 1 (2014), https://www.academia.edu/22901277/_Amicitia_Palatina_The_Jesuits_and_the_Politics_of_Gift-Giving_at_the_Qing_Court_2014_.

¹⁰ Emily Byrne Curtis, ‘European Contributions to the Chinese Glass of the Early Qing Period’, *Journal of Glass Studies* 35 (1993): 91–101.

of glassmaking hitherto unknown in China.¹¹ The manufacture of glass in China had been largely relegated to the realm of imitation; pale green glass had been substituted for precious jade since at least the Han dynasty (221 BC–AD 220), but the aesthetic potential of this material had never been fully explored. The range of colors, in particular ruby red glass, and decorative effects made possible through the use of materials sent directly from Europe and implemented by Jesuit practitioners schooled in glass-making techniques prior to their mission to China, presented to the Chinese a host of new material possibilities. As Father d'Entrecolles later recalled, "They are almost as curious in China about the glass and crystal that comes from Europe, as people in Europe are curious about porcelain from China."¹²

The role of European Jesuits in the production of court arts is now well-known, through the extensive literature they generated¹³ and more recently through increased access to the imperial archives in Beijing and Taipei.¹⁴ Since the 1980s, improved access to archival documents in the Manchu language, the ancestral language of the Qing rulers, has further enhanced understanding of this period, generating a significant body of secondary material.¹⁵ While a select number of Jesuits gained remarkably close access to the emperor and the inner court, it is clear that even these individuals were valued principally as conduits through which the Manchu rulers could learn about Western science, mathematics, and astrology, and for their practical

11 Emily Byrne Curtis et al., eds., *Pure Brightness Shines Everywhere: The Glass of China* (Aldershot, Hants, England ; Burlington, Vt: Ashgate, 2004).

12 The long and detailed letters of Francois Xavier d'Entrecolles (1664–1741), written in 1712 and 1722, provide key historical accounts of the porcelain industry in Jingdezhen. They have been translated from the French and published in full numerous times. See Robert Tichane, *Ching-Te-Chen: Views of a Porcelain City*, Rev. ed (Painted Post, N.Y: New York State Institute for Glaze Research, 1983).

13 The archives of ARSI (Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, Rome), APF (Archivo Propaganda Fide, Rome) and ASV (Archivo Segreto Vaticano, Vatican City) today provide an extensive resource for scholars in this field. On glass and enamels, see Emily Byrne Curtis, 'Notes on Qing Glassmaking: D'Incarville's "Catalogue Alphabetique"', *Journal of Glass Studies* 39 (1997): 69–81. Marco Musillo, 'Reconciling Two Careers: The Jesuit Memoir of Giuseppe Castiglione Lay Brother and Qing Imperial Painter', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 42, no. 1 (2008): 45–59.

14 The archives of the 內務府活計檔 (Imperial household records)、故宮博物院藏清宮陳設檔 (Imperial furnishing archive)、唐英督陶文檔 (Documents about Qing Dynasty Ceramics) are particularly relevant to the study of imperial enamels and have formed the basis of primary research from leading Taiwanese scholars, Liao Pao Show and Shih Ching Fei cited later in this article. For a comparative study of imperial archival research, see Jieh Hsiang et al., 'Discovering Relationships from Imperial Court Documents of Qing China', *International Journal of Humanities and Arts Computing* 6, no. 1–2 (16 February 2012): 22–41, <https://doi.org/10.3366/ijhac.2012.0036>.

15 See Evelyn S. Rawski, 'Presidential Address: Reenvisioning the Qing: The Significance of the Qing Period', *Journal of Asian Studies* 55, no. 4 (November 1996). Joanna Waley-Cohen, *The Sextants of Beijing: Global Currents in Chinese History*, 1st ed (New York: W. W. Norton & Co, 1999).

skills in the arts of European glassmaking, enameling, and painting.¹⁶ Scholars have noted the intensive training missionaries underwent prior to their arrival and upon the direct request of the emperor. In the arts of glassmaking, first Kilian Stumpf was schooled in Germany and later Gabriel-Leonard de Brossard (1703–1758) and Pierre d’Incarville (1706–1757) at Rouen, France, arriving in Beijing in 1740.¹⁷ The enamel master Jean-Baptiste Gravereau (1690–1762) worked for three years at court before his early return to France due to ill health; his replacement, Niccolò Tomacelli, had no such experience but on the command of the emperor swiftly became expert in that medium. Concurrently, materials for the manufacture of glass and enamel were brought over from Europe to supplement glass production until locally sourced materials were found. Local Chinese craftsmen trained in the European arts subsequently maintained self-reliant workshops that could operate independently of their Jesuit supervisors.¹⁸

The Kangxi emperor took an active interest in the development of these new technologies. As cultural historian Emily Byrne Curtis notes, “The Yangxin Palace was the place where the Kangxi emperor worked early in the morning and later in the evening. It was his custom to have brought there, every two days, the glass and enamel wares made by his order, he proudly compared his glassware with European examples.”¹⁹ The interaction between the state sponsored imperial ateliers in Beijing, in particular those specializing in cloisonné, enamels, and glass, was essential to the discovery and circulation of new technologies that would shape the artistic and decorative repertoire of eighteenth-century court arts.

The Qianlong emperor, who concerns us most directly here, closely followed the example of his grandfather and energetically supported the manufacture of objects noted for their originality, novelty, exoticism, and ingenuity—defined in Chinese as *qi* 奇.²⁰ On his command, the Jesuits in his service worked on the most prestigious architectural and pictorial projects, including conspicuously public commissions recording state events and military successes, notably the campaigns against the Zunghar in the Western regions that finally came to end in 1755. In this instance, the Qianlong emperor immortalized his victories in several ways, including commissioning the Jesuit painters to sketch a series of sixteen preliminary drawings from which Chinese court painters could produce finished works.²¹ In 1765, these same drawings

16 On the relationship between Jesuits at the courts of the Qing Emperors Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong, see Lauren Arnold, ‘Of the Mind and the Eye: Jesuit Artists in the Forbidden City in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries’, *Pacific Rim Report* 27 (2003): 2–9.

17 Curtis, ‘Notes on Qing Glassmaking’.

18 Curtis, ‘European Contributions to the Chinese Glass of the Early Qing Period’.

19 Curtis.

20 See *Sensuous Surfaces*, 25

21 The Jesuit painters Giuseppe Castiglione (1688–1766), Jean-Denis Attiret (1702–1768), Ignaz Sichelbarth (1708–1780), and a missionary of the Propaganda, the Italian Giovanni Damasceno Salutti

were sent to France, where Charles-Nicolas Cochin (1715–1790) supervised the production of copperplate engravings from which 200 prints were made and shipped back to Beijing in 1774, whereupon further prints were made and distributed throughout the empire. The woodblock print format has an ancient precedent in China, but the choice of European copperplate engravings for the dissemination of state achievements denoted the Chinese engagement with new technology and an internationally recognizable visual language.²² The circulation of European prints provided a valuable visual impetus to the decoration of Chinese art objects, not only for items tailored to European taste and designed for export, some of which also circulated in the domestic market,²³ but luxuries for court use such as the V&A flask, which will be returned to later in this article.

Materializing Europe: Imperial Patronage and Consumption

Perhaps the most remarkable physical manifestation of eighteenth-century euroiserie were the European Pavilions in the Garden of Perfect Clarity (Yuanmingyuan), designed for the Qianlong emperor under the direction of Giuseppe Castiglione (1688–1766), with the assistance of specialist Jesuit artist-craftsmen and their unnamed Chinese counterparts. Built between 1747 and 1770, the original appearance of the buildings is today glimpsed through a series of copper-plate prints commissioned by the emperor in 1783–86, the European print medium once more chosen to record the twenty views of the flamboyant buildings and gardens (**fig. 2**). No longer extant, since its notorious destruction by British and French troops in 1860, all that remains of the physical space are architectural remains and fragments, such as the glazed stoneware ornament in the V&A collection (**fig. 3**).²⁴ In the form of a shell, this object typifies the rococo preference for curvilinear decoration and natural forms and probably con-

(d. 1781) all worked on this project. Evelyn S. Rawski, 'Territories of the Qing', in *China: The Three Emperors* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2005), 154–76.

²² Conversely, the early missionary Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), who arrived in China around 1600, translated traditional European Christian images into more visually recognizable Chinese forms. See Arnold, "Of the Mind and the Eye: Jesuit Artists in the Forbidden City in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," 3.

²³ Recent research has demonstrated that recognizable images of the Thirteen Factories in Guangzhou circulated both in the export and domestic markets. See Kleutghen, "Chinese Occidenterie," 125–27.

²⁴ For a full discussion of the history of "Summer Palace" objects in the West, see Louise Tythacott, *Collecting and Displaying China's "Summer Palace" in the West: The Yuanmingyuan in Britain and France* (Routledge, 2017).

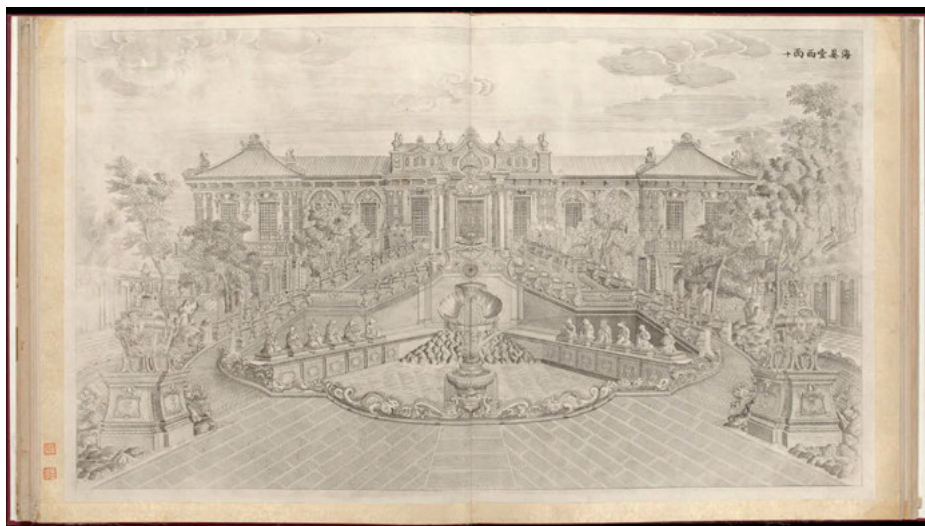


Fig. 2: West façade of the Pavilion of Calm Seas (Haiyan Tang Ximian), copperplate engraving on paper, designed by Yi, Lantai, 9 of 19, from original set of 20, 1783–86, made in Beijing. V&A: 29452:9 Acquired in 1883 from E. Parsons.



Fig. 3: Architectural fitting, stoneware with turquoise glaze, made in China, 1747–70. 34.5 × 38 × 23 cm. V&A: C.382-1912.

stituted part of the roof of one of the European-style palace buildings.²⁵ According to surviving textual records, the European Pavilions were bedecked with a concoction of European-style novelties—many gifted objects such as tapestries,²⁶ clocks, and automata²⁷ were stored here alongside items manufactured with the assistance of European technologies and expertise in the imperial workshops of Beijing and as tribute from the coastal port of Guangzhou (Canton), discussed below. The accumulation of these objects under a single Manchu roof offer insights into the self-image of the emperor,²⁸ who was actively engaged in the production and consumption of imperial artwork and in turn the construction of multiple imperial identities, bringing the nations of Europe within the Chinese orbit.

In addition to large architectural projects, Jesuit court artists designed and decorated some of the most private imperial spaces,²⁹ such as the Qianlong emperor's intimate Juanqinzhai ("Studio of Exhaustion from Diligent Service") in his private apartments of the Forbidden City,³⁰ as well as precious objects for the emperor's personal contemplation. Laura Hostetler, a historian specializing in colonial contacts between the Qing empire and non-Chinese people, argues that the political neutrality of the European Jesuits may have appealed to the Manchu ruling minority, whose relationship with the Han Chinese majority was complex.³¹ However, this view is countered by Qing historian, Joanna Waley-Cohen, who cites notable exceptions when Jesuits became actively engaged in diplomatic or commercial incidents, suggesting a degree of political and economic engagement at an individual level.³² There is little doubt that leading Jesuit painters such as Giuseppe Castiglione (1688–1766), known in China as Lang Shining, enjoyed a lasting relationship with the ruling elite over his 50 years in service. Despite the elevated status he enjoyed, Lauren Arnold, scholar of

²⁵ Purchased by C. H. Wylde in China in 1912. Wylde was the Keeper of Ceramics and the first member of V&A staff to visit East Asia.

²⁶ French tapestries, made by the Beauvais manufactory to the chinoiserie designs of François Boucher in the 1740s and presented to the Emperor in 1765, were still hanging in the palace buildings when British and French troops arrived in 1860. See Kristel Smentek, 'Chinoiseries for the Qing: A French Gift of Tapestries to the Qianlong Emperor', *Journal of Early Modern History* 20, no. 1 (2016): 87–109.

²⁷ Catherine Pagani, *Eastern Magnificence & European Ingenuity: Clocks of Late Imperial China* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001).

²⁸ For a recent reassessment of the imperial collection of the Qianlong Emperor, See Nicole T.C. Chiang, *Emperor Qianlong's Hidden Treasures: Reconsidering the Collection of the Qing Imperial Household* (S.l.: Hong Kong University Press, 2019).

²⁹ See Kristina Kleutghen, *Imperial Illusions: Crossing Pictorial Boundaries in the Qing Palaces*, Art History Publication Initiative (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2015).

³⁰ See Nancy Berliner, 'Juanqinzhai Revisited', *Orientations* 39, no. 5 (2008): 31–40.

³¹ Laura Hostetler, *Qing Colonial Enterprise: Ethnography and Cartography in Early Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

³² Waley-Cohen, *The Sextants of Beijing*, 96.

Chinese Jesuit studies, records the tensions which rapidly surfaced if Jesuit behavior strayed beyond that proscribed by their rulers.³³

By the reign of the Qianlong emperor (r. 1736–1795), technological advances and the exchange of knowledge between the imperial workshops had created a new palette of enamel colors that were used interchangeably on metal, porcelain, and glass. The most radical discovery was that of white, yellow, and pink which radically extended the spectrum of colors and artistic possibilities available to decorators working in this medium. The introduction of opaque white allowed shading and the gradation of color as never before, and was employed by artists trained in Western painting techniques to add depth and volume to decorative surfaces.³⁴ Concurrently, the opacity of the new enamels created dazzling colors that introduced texture to porcelain and metalwork more akin to brocade than the smooth, glassy surface of porcelain. Known as “flower on brocade” (*jin shang tian hua*),³⁵ an incised carving technique was used to apply detailed patterns into the enameled surface, utilizing European glass-cutting techniques and replicating patterns and motifs found in carved Chinese lacquer, further expanding and transmitting the decorative repertoire across diverse media.³⁶ The two effects were often used in tandem, producing surprising combinations of pictorial scenes observed through blazing borders of dense ornamentation.³⁷ The extent to which these colors were a Chinese or foreign invention continues to provoke debate among ceramic scholars and requires further research; the composition of yellow and white enamels remained close to preexisting Chinese cloisonné technology, which had been produced at court workshops in Beijing since the early fifteenth century.³⁸

33 Arnold cites two examples when Castiglione appealed directly to the Qianlong Emperor on behalf of his fellow Jesuits, begging for imperial intervention to prevent the persecution of missionaries in Fujian Province, South China. The first plea in 1736 was successful, but in 1746 the emperor proclaimed, “Hua-ba,” or “Paint – Get on with your painting!” Arnold, “Of the Mind and the Eye,” 7.

34 Chinese sources confirm the use of Western style techniques at the imperial kilns at Jindgezhen during the Qianlong reign. Zhu Yan recorded the observations of imperial kiln supervisor, Tang Ying (1682–1756), in his encyclopedic work “Tao Shuo” of 1774, later translated by British doctor Stephen Bushell while based in Beijing. See Zhu Yan and Stephen W. Bushell, trans., *Description of Chinese Pottery and Porcelain: Being a Translation of the T'ao Shuo* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1910).

35 See Pao Show Liao, ‘From Flower-on-Brocade to Yang t’sai’, *National Palace Museum Monthly* 280 (July 2006): 4–23.

36 According to the imperial household records, Tang Ying submitted sixty-two pieces of flower on brocade enameled vessels and 5,800 other porcelains from Jindgezhen on November 20, 1742 (7th Year of the Qianlong reign). Qianlong ordered the enamels to be sent to the Qianqing Palace for display, within the Forbidden City, the remainder to the Yuanmingyuan for storage. Liao, “From Flower-on-Brocade,” p. 14.

37 See Gourd-shaped vase with ribbon-shaped ears and designs of Europeans in enamels on yellow ground, Qianlong mark and period (1736–95), Palace Museum, Beijing.

38 The earliest Chinese cloisonné objects identified by reign mark date to the Xuande period (1426–1435) Craig Clunas and Jessica Harrison-Hall, eds., *Ming: 50 Years that Changed China* (London: British Museum), 82–86.

The manufacture and composition of pink enamels owes much to European enameling techniques, utilizing colloidal gold in a similar manner to ruby red glass, introduced by the Jesuits and discussed above.³⁹

European style painted decoration drew principally from the traditions of the French romantic and rococo, copied from enamel originals or prints and paintings which were by then available in China. The juxtaposition of European and Chinese decorative styles is common to these works, deliberately drawing together two disparate traditions to forge a new and innovative visual language. Furthermore, the transfer of artists, European and Chinese, between the arts of painting and calligraphy to the decorated object blurred traditional boundaries that separated notions of “art” and “art object”; the formal classification of arts and craft at court ordinarily placed the painter higher in status to the craftsman or artisan.⁴⁰ While many, although not all, painted works are clearly attributed to individual artists, enameled works on porcelain, glass and copper bear only the imperial reign mark. Art historian Richard Vinograd identifies such objects as “trans-portal,” that is, “portable and transportable objects whose materiality becomes a site of cultural encounter, and which bear pictorial portals that open up to scenes of cultural difference.”⁴¹ This “cultural difference” endowed objects such as the V&A flask with an exotic allure, drawing the viewer into an idealized European world in a similar manner to chinoiserie in Europe. The exclusivity of the object heightened the experience of the European encounter that was the preserve of the emperor and his closest courtiers; in contrast, chinoiserie decoration was widely visible in Europe by that time and familiar at all levels of society.

Pastoral scenes depicting young European women and children were particularly popular, recreating subjects well known in European visual culture but unfamiliar to Chinese eyes.⁴² The theme of a young woman with a caged bird, as seen on the V&A flask, can be widely found in contemporary European paintings and prints and was

³⁹ For more on glaze technology, see Nigel Wood, *Chinese Glazes* (London: A. & C. Black, 2007), 240–43. Rose Kerr, Nigel Wood, and Joseph Needham, *Chemistry and Chemical Technology. Part 12: Ceramic Technology*, Science and Civilisation in China, 5.12 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2004). For a recent discussion of enamels in the collection of the Musée Guimet, Paris, see Philippe Colomban, Yizheng Zhang, and Bing Zhao, ‘Non-Invasive Raman Analyses of Chinese Huafalang and Related Porcelain Wares. Searching for Evidence for Innovative Pigment Technologies’, *Ceramics International* 43, no. 15 (October 2017): 12079–88, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ceramint.2017.06.063>.

⁴⁰ While most specialist craftsmen employed in the imperial workshops remain outside the historical record, notable individuals engaged in the esteemed techniques of carving in bamboo and ivory, such as Shi Tianzhang, were accorded the highest rank. See Craig Clunas et al., eds., *Chinese Carving* (London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 1996), 49.

⁴¹ Richard Vinograd, “Hybrid Spaces of Encounter in the Qing Era,” in *Qing Encounters: Artistic Exchanges Between China and the West* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2015), 10–28.

⁴² For more on gender, “orientalizing” and representations of women in China, see Frank Dikötter, *Sex, Culture and Modernity in China: Medical Science and the Construction of Sexual Identities in the Early Republican Period* (London: Hurst, 1995).



Fig. 4: Vase, porcelain with enamel decoration, Qianlong mark and period (1736–95), 205 × 103 mm, PDF, A818, Sir Percival David Collection, British Museum.

frequently modelled in Continental porcelain in the middle years of the eighteenth century.⁴³ As the European viewer would know, the birdcage symbolized female virginity, which was intact if the bird remained within the cage, but lost if the bird had escaped, as in this example. On the reverse of the flask, a second figure also holds a bird in her hand and is accompanied by a small child who peers over her shoulder, indicating that she too has succumbed to an earlier sexual encounter. The designs were probably copied from contemporary European print sources, and while the tradition of keeping caged birds has an ancient precedent in China, considered a virtuous hobby for men and a distraction from vice, it is unlikely the symbolic significance expressed by these scenes was understood by the Chinese viewer.

Rare examples in the Sir Percival David Collection, now housed at the British Museum in London, illustrate the experimental use of enamel decoration on porcelain and glass. The decorative border in carmine pink against a lightly shaded green background on a small porcelain bottle is exceptionally unusual; the archaic pattern echoes designs first seen on ancient Chinese bronze or lacquer objects but in this case created in the latest “European” pink, placing the design firmly at the forefront of contemporary fashion (fig. 4). Dark pink enamel of a similar hue can be seen on early European porcelains from the 1720s in Italy⁴⁴ and was widely adopted by porcelain manufactories across Europe for decorative borders or as the sole colorant in a technique known as *camaïeu*.⁴⁵ The same striking monochromatic use of carmine pink can be observed on other rare items in the Palace Museum Collection, and similar decoration *en grisaille* in black and grey enamels was popularized in China from the 1720s, being perfectly suited to the transfer of designs from print to porcelain.

Landscape decoration on enameled porcelain or glass appears less frequently than figural subjects but does survive. A pair of wine cups in the Sir Percival David Collection recreate imagined Sino-European landscapes in miniature—each cup being less than five centimeters in height. (figs. 5, 6) The micro-scale of these objects further emphasizes the high material value of glass and enamels, showcasing the skills of the enamel painters and highlighting the intensely personal nature of these objects. Each piece could only be enjoyed at close quarters—the exclusivity of material, subject, and aesthetic experience characterizing objects reserved for elite and imperial consumption. Border decoration was a further means of extending the artistic repertoire, and here replicates scrolling and floral motifs derived from Venetian glassware, mentioned above. Another design, perhaps originating from the Italian

⁴³ See V&A examples of male and female figures, modeled by Johann Friedrich Luck (1727–1797), manufactured at the Frankenthal Porcelain Factory, ca. 1760, V&A: C.950-1919, C.989-1919.

⁴⁴ At Guiseppe Vezzi's factory in Venice (see BEP Franks cat. 450). Later at the Du Paquier factory, Vienna, Austria (ca. 1735–40, see BEP 1930,0714.1) and at Meissen, Germany (ca. 1735, see BEP Franks cat. 147). All examples from the British Museum collection.

⁴⁵ Camaïeu refers to the monochromatic use of a single color, tonally building up the image.



Figs. 5–6: Pair of glass wine cups, enamel decoration, Qianlong mark and period (1736–95), PDF. 850 and 851, 4.8 and 4.9 cm, Sir Percival David Collection, British Museum.

glasswork technique known as *millefiori*,⁴⁶ or alternatively by its French name *millefleur* or “thousand-flowers” traditionally associated with the naturalistic background decoration of Medieval and Renaissance tapestries, was first seen on porcelain during the Yongzheng period (r. 1723–35). The Chinese interpretation of the European floral theme boldly enveloped the porcelain body and was produced on the grandest scale during the Qianlong reign (r. 1736–95), when the large baluster vase at the Musée

⁴⁶ This technique utilizes colored glass to produce often densely arranged floral roundels which run through the body of the object.



Fig. 7: Vase, porcelain with enameled decoration simulating wood and textiles, Jiajing period (1796–1820), V&A: FE.12-1984.

Guimet was created.⁴⁷ The naturalistic depiction of morning glory, chrysanthemum, hibiscus, peony, daisy, lotus, and lily flowers against a lush green background engulf the entire surface, utilizing the full spectrum of enamel colors available to decorators at that time and demonstrating their exceptional skills and artistry.

A shared fascination with the material world resulted in a distinctive category of objects where optical illusion or *trompe l'oeil* transcended conventional limitations; porcelain imitating wood, glass simulating tortoiseshell, wood in the guise of rhinoceros horn and so on. Techniques first developed by Venetian glassmakers were once more influential in this trend toward optical trickery and novelty—the border on the V&A flask mimics the unusual stone conglomerate, known in the West as “pudding stone.”⁴⁸ The tradition of material versatility was not new in China, as noted earlier, and with the added stimulus of European technologies and visual culture, porcelain and glass became the ideal vehicles for *trompe l'oeil* decoration.

A porcelain vase in the V&A collection (**fig. 7**), produced in the Jiajing period (r. 1796–1820), exhibits the visual characteristics of contrasting materials, first wood—its grain and tonal color interspersed with colorful roundels, asymmetrically arranged in a style reminiscent of Japanese textiles or lacquer but decorated here with pastel polychrome enamels in the Chinese *mille-fleur* design. It is unclear at first sight whether these roundels offer a view through the wooden shell to the floral surface beneath, or whether our vision is foreshortened, placing the roundels in our immediate line of vision. Furthermore, the whole vessel appears to be wrapped around the shoulders with a knotted textile, simultaneously referencing the Chinese practice of tying textile wrappers around vases and jars on special occasions and for use as gifts; a similar design is also found on Japanese lacquer boxes popular in China.⁴⁹ The stylized folds of the cloth suggest volume, which at once is negated by the placement of gilded roundels on its flattened surface. This hybrid object demonstrates the ability of Chinese porcelain decorators to successfully amalgamate multicultural design sources, playfully toying with aspects of perspective, materiality and perception, successfully creating a new design aesthetic rooted in both Eastern and Western traditions. This engagement with non-Chinese artistic traditions, not only from Europe but from other regions of Asia such as Japan, visually asserts the supremacy of the Chinese empire and its ability to deploy “foreign” visual signifiers for its own purpose.

The material fascination and connection between art-making, as technological process and aesthetic act, has been explained by social anthropologist Alfred Gell, in the following terms:

⁴⁷ Porcelain vase, overglaze enameled decoration, Qianlong mark and period (1736–95), H:48cm, Grandidier Bequest, G3444, Musée Guimet, Paris.

⁴⁸ A tripod drum-shaped incense burner simulating pudding stone can also be found in the Palace Museum, GU152591.

⁴⁹ See Hay, *Sensuous Surfaces.*, 225–35.

The enchantment of technology is the power that technical processes have of casting a spell over us so that we see the real world in an enchanted form. Art, as a separate kind of technical activity, only carries further, through a kind of involution, the enchantment which is immanent in all kinds of technical activity.⁵⁰

This observation can be extended to the discovery and application of new materials in China, such as *falangcai* enamels and European-style glass, to their application in unfamiliar and surprising modes that subverted conventional ways of seeing. While *trompe l'oeil* painted decoration firmly grew from European roots, the concept of material imitation and illusion had an ancient precedent in China, which was further developed and taken to new artistic and technological heights during the eighteenth century.

Circulating Objects: From Periphery to Center

In addition to European objects received directly in Beijing, alternative networks of production, commerce and tribute drew objects from the periphery to the center of the Chinese cultural sphere. As the principal port of contact between European traders and Chinese manufacturers of porcelain, enamels and glass during the eighteenth century, the southern port city of Guangzhou (Canton) regularly sent items of tribute to the court in Beijing. Skilled practitioners were also sent periodically to serve the court in the production of specialist wares, such as enamels on copper, in which there was regional expertise.⁵¹ The triangular circulation of objects between Beijing, Guangzhou, and the porcelain city of Jingdezhen further promoted the exchange of European designs and innovative methods of manufacture across China, but were still primarily the preserve of the court, limiting their cultural and artistic influence beyond these locations.

A large mallow dish decorated with enamels on copper in the V&A, (**fig. 8**) bears a six-character imperial reign mark of the Qianlong emperor, indicating its production in Guangzhou rather than the Imperial Workshops in Beijing, where four-character reign marks were typical.⁵² The bold arrangement of the pictorial design within the petals of a pink flower is most unusual, suggesting this item was intended for display. The European landscape scene is most certainly copied from a print original,

⁵⁰ Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford University Press, 1998), 44.

⁵¹ Regional expertise in other crafts, such as the manufacture of lacquer or bamboo carving, drew craftsmen from other parts of China, such as the Jiangnan region.

⁵² Ching-Fei Shi, '日月光华: 清宫画珐琅 Radiant Luminance: The Painted Enamelware of the Qing Imperial Court' [施静菲著]. *Ri Yue Guang Hua: Qing Gong Hua Fa Lang*, 2012, <https://www.nlb.gov.sg/biblio/200659731>.



Fig. 8: Dish, painted enamels on copper, Guangzhou, Qianlong mark and period (1736–95), 36.8 cm, V&A: C.34-1924.

of which there was a steady supply in the commercial hub of Guangzhou.⁵³ This object and others like it suggest that traditional classifications in art historical discourse that separated decorative art objects for export from those manufactured for domestic and imperial consumption were in reality fluid and permeable. As the specialist production center for “Canton Enamels” as they became known in the Britain,⁵⁴ it should come as no surprise that objects were also manufactured for imperial consumption

⁵³ On trade in Guangzhou, see Paul Arthur Van Dyke, *Merchants of Canton and Macao: Politics and Strategies in Eighteenth-Century Chinese Trade* (Macao: Instituto Cultural do Governo da R.A.E. de Macau, n.d.). For more on European decoration on Chinese export porcelain, see Ronald W. Fuchs, ‘European Subjects on Chinese Porcelain’, *TOCS* 72 (2008): 35–41. Teresa Canepa, *European Scenes on Chinese Art* (London/Lisbon: Jorge Welsh Books, 2005).

⁵⁴ Margaret Jourdain and R. Soame Jenyns, ‘Painted Canton Enamels on Copper and Gold’, in *Chinese Art* (Oxford, 1980).

here,⁵⁵ utilizing Western print designs brought over by European traders in porcelain and other luxury items.⁵⁶

Visualizing the “Other” in Eighteenth-Century China

Why did euroiserie appear to be so popular during the Qianlong reign and what can this tell us about the Emperor’s self-image? A scroll in the Palace Museum offers visual and textual insights into Manchu attitudes toward foreign nations in the mid-eighteenth century and bears some similarities to European costume prints of a similar period.⁵⁷ Commissioned by the emperor in 1751, the four scrolls depict the nationalities and ethnicities of tribute nations, whose relationship to China is discussed below, including for the first time those from the “Western ocean” (*xi-yang*).⁵⁸ Couples from the Netherlands, Britain, Portugal, and Sweden are depicted in typical costume and differentiated by their social customs described in Chinese and Manchu, in a similar manner to other tribute nations. As Anna Jackson, V&A Keeper of the Asian Department notes, “the representation of the ‘other’ in these scrolls has a highly charged political meaning, as the whole known world succumbs to the Emperor’s controlling gaze.”⁵⁹ The depiction of various ethnicities within the Sinocentric world has a long precedent,⁶⁰ though the individuals here are characterized not as tribute bearers, but for their essentialized national identities. The representation of foreign nations in this manner shines a light on Manchu ideology during the second half of the eighteenth century. Pamela Crossley, scholar of modern Chinese and global history, identifies the formation of “universalist” ideology as the third and final stage in the development

55 Ching-Fei Shih, ‘Imperial “Guang Falang” of the Qianlong Period Manufactured by the Guangdong Maritime Customs’, 美術史研究集刊 36 (2013): 87–184.

56 David Sanctuary Howard and John Ayres, *China for the West: Chinese Porcelain and Other Decorative Arts for Export Illustrated from the Mottahedeh Collection* (London: Sotheby Parke Bernet, 1978).

57 Series of French and German costume prints circulated widely throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth century. See, Christoph Weigel after Caspar Luyken Christoph Weigel the Elder, *Neu-Eröffnete Welt-Galleria. ..., Nürnberg 1703.*, 1703, 1703, Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel <http://diglib.hab.de/drucke/wt-4f-93/start.htm>, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Welt-Galleria_T039.jpg.

58 “Huangqing Zhigongtu (Illustrated Tributaries of the Qing Empire),” Ding Guanpeng and others, handscroll, ink and color on paper, China, 1751–75. Palace Museum Collection.

59 Anna Jackson, “Visual Responses: Depicting Europeans in East Asia,” in Anna Jackson and Amin Jaffer, *Encounters: The Meeting of Asia and Europe 1500–1800* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 2004), 206

60 Hostetler, *Qing Colonial Enterprise*.

of Manchu ideology, denoting the acceptance of essentialist identities throughout the empire and an exclusive universal identity for the emperor.⁶¹

The representation of the “other” in these scrolls demonstrates fundamental differences between structures of power in China and in Europe; the tribute system mentioned above has no equivalent in Europe but an ancient history in China, combining aspects of diplomacy and trade relations in order to cement superior/inferior relationships between China and affiliated tribute nations. The presentation of objects showcasing the finest domestic crafts and local products to the imperial court were understood as a reflection of good governance and the stability of the Chinese empire.⁶² The failure of the British Embassy in 1793 lay in its refusal to accept a subservient relationship to China, enacted by Lord Macartney’s famous refusal to kowtow to the emperor. Chinese court records tell us that European manufactures were largely regarded as “curiosities” of little practical value, the Qianlong emperor famously stating, “We have never valued ingenious articles, nor do we have the slightest need of your country’s manufactures.”⁶³ Waley-Cohen suggests this curt dismissive may in fact disguise a genuine unease on behalf of the Chinese toward establishing official diplomatic and trade relations with the British. Until the First Opium War (1839–42), foreign trade between China and Europe was conducted on terms dictated by the Chinese state for the benefit of the state, as profits flowed directly to the imperial purse and was overwhelmingly concerned with exported Chinese products.

Euroiserie and Modernity: Chinese Identity in Post-Imperial China

The artistic legacy of Sino-European contact at the Qing court is clear to see in art objects from later periods. Pictorial decoration of an eighteenth-century euroiserie court style can be observed on a porcelain vase in the Sir Percival David Collection

⁶¹ The first two stages begin with state-building and identity demarcation in the formative period before the Manchus achieved dynastic power (1616–43), the second; conquest and occupation and the development of “transformationalist” ideology of identity (1644–1750). Pamela Kyle Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror: History and Identity in Qing Imperial Ideology* (Berkeley, Calif.: Univ. of California Press, 1999), 28. For more on Manchu identity, see Mark C. Elliott, *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2001).

⁶² David Chan-oong Kang, *East Asia Before the West: Five Centuries of Trade and Tribute* (Columbia University Press, 2010). Kang compares the largely successful hierarchical East Asian tribute system with its closest European counterpart, the “Westphalian” system, in doing so, providing an alternative model whereby non-European hegemonies can be understood.

⁶³ Chang Gu Cong Bian (Collected Historical Records) (Beiping, 1930–43). Cited in Waley-Cohen, *The Sextants of Beijing*, 92.

(fig. 9). While the porcelain body is indeed eighteenth century, it is now believed that the enameled decoration may have been added at a later date, perhaps during the early Republican Period (1912–49), raising questions regarding the agency of this object in the first decades of post-imperial rule. Art historian Shi Ching-Fei notes the remarkable discovery in 1925 of a group of over four hundred enameled porcelain and two hundred enameled metal vessels by the curatorial committee of the Forbidden City, indicating the size of the former imperial collection and value of this material by association.⁶⁴ Only a small number were decorated in “Western” style and it is unclear whether these objects ever served as models for porcelain decorators working by that time in Jingdezhen, the imperial workshops in Beijing having ceased production by the late Qianlong period (1789). Other European-inspired motifs and decorative techniques such as *mille-fleur* mentioned above or the monochromatic decoration *en grisaille*, also enjoyed a revival under the new Republic,⁶⁵ offering insights into the formation of new identities in post-imperial China.

Unlike the eighteenth-century examples discussed above, designs during the Republican Period were often based on traditional Chinese subject matter; the auspicious motif of the shepherd and his three sheep seen here, is native to China, a visual pun, “*san yang kai tai*,” meaning “the male force in the universe.” The realization of this theme in European-style may recall the High Qing, a period then widely regarded as the pinnacle of artistic dynastic production and still highly esteemed today. Beyond the field of the arts, the late eighteenth century was long regarded as the political, economic, and cultural highpoint from which China rapidly descended throughout the nineteenth century, culminating in the humiliating collapse of the Qing dynasty in 1911, compounded by the aggressive insurgences of Western powers. The relationship between China and Europe in the first decades of the twentieth century, when it is possible this object was decorated, cannot be fully explored here, but was entangled with notions of modernity and Chinese self-image. Although anti-Western sentiments remained strong, the association between Western art and modernity were undeniable and deeply rooted. It is perhaps for this reason that the Republicans sought to create their own brand of *euroiserie* decoration during these years, which asserted a positive reassessment of the traditional Chinese past in an internationally recognizable visual style.

⁶⁴ This group of objects passed in 1950 to the National Palace Museum in Taipei. Shi Ching-fei cites the publication of Qing Court inventories (*Cheshe dang* 陳設 檔 – dated 1835, 1875, and 1902), which confirm the storage of court enamels along with other precious objects in the Qianqing Palace during the late Qing period. Ching-Fei Shih, “A Record of the Establishment of a New Art Form: The Unique Collection of ‘Painted Enamels’ at the Qing Court,” *Collections and Concepts 7* (2003), Heidelberg University Library, 2005, <https://doi.org/10.11588/heidok.00005705>.

⁶⁵ Important developments in porcelain production were made during the Republican Period, despite political turmoil which significantly impacted porcelain production. Simon Kwan, *Chinese Porcelain of the Republic Period*, The Muwan Tang Collection Series (關善明 2008).



Fig. 9: Vase, porcelain decorated with enamels, body Qianlong period (1736–95), enamels possibly Republican period, ca.1912–23, H:31.4cm, PDF.881.

In May 2017, the Kulangsu Gallery of Foreign Artefacts from the Palace Museum Collection opened in the port city of Xiamen (Amoy), one of the Treaty Ports established following the First Opium War (1839–42). The museum showcases the imperial collection of “International Art,” much of European origin, displayed for the first time to the public. Here, French porcelain can be seen boxed in a similar manner to their Chinese counterparts in the Qing imperial treasury, indicating the high value this material commanded on arrival in China.⁶⁶ The creation of this museum, specially dedicated to “foreign artefacts,” has both an important cultural and political message. As China has regained its global influence in recent years, the potency of art and art objects as agents of cultural and political force has once more gained currency. The display of these European objects, once received as diplomatic gifts and perhaps housed in the Yuanmingyuan, reinforces the internationalist agenda of the Chinese state. Objects have been curated and arranged to be seen by a predominantly Chinese visiting public, shedding light on a little-known aspect of Chinese imperial collecting, simultaneously asserting the cultural supremacy of the recent Chinese past and possibilities for the Chinese present.

Conclusion

From the detailed study of Chinese art objects of porcelain, enamel, and glass, this article has shown how European pictorial art, representation, and surface decoration were blended by producers in China with recognizably Chinese decoration, shape, and form, giving way to a new aesthetic now known as “euroiserie.” In contrast to chinoiserie in Europe, which enjoyed wide and lasting popularity, this Chinese fashion occupied a rarified position at court at a particular moment in time, being favored by the Manchu emperors and their circle, in particular during the Qianlong reign in the latter half of the eighteenth century. The identification of euroiserie with the ruling Manchu house demonstrates the manner whereby art, architecture, and art objects carried political messages upon their surfaces and within their form; the prevalence of non-Chinese decoration, be that European, Japanese or frequently Tibetan in the arts of this period made visible the universalist ambitions of the Manchu emperors who were themselves not native to China. Chinese euroiserie was therefore just one aspect of the complex construction of the Manchu self-image, which situated all known nations within the Sinocentric sphere.

⁶⁶ According to the archives of the imperial workshops, cedar wood boxes were produced from the third year of the Qianlong reign to house enameled wares. Qianlong Zaobanchu archives, Box. No.76, p. 369, quoted from Shih, “A Record of the Establishment of a New Art Form,” 2.

Across the vast territories of China, objects were drawn from the periphery to the center; this included goods manufactured in the southern port of Guangzhou, the primary point of contact between European traders and state appointed Chinese officials. It is now known that objects decorated in *euroiserie* style were also manufactured for court consumption here, in close proximity to those destined for the export markets of Europe and the New World. Further research is required in this field, but it is likely that design sources passed between manufacturers, helping to explain the initial misidentification of the V&A flask. The triangular circulation of European designs and art objects between porcelain and enamel manufacturers and decorators in Jingdezhen, Guangzhou and Beijing further stimulated the production of objects in *euroiserie* style.

In post-imperial China, *euroiserie* once more gained agency during the Republican Period, simultaneously recalling a Chinese dynastic high point and asserting Chinese ambitions toward a modern, internationally engaged society. The recent display of “International Art” to the Chinese public advertises, for the first time, this aspect of Sino-European interaction, previously little known beyond specialist circles. These objects continue to express the political aspirations of the Chinese state, declaring its global presence and economic strength, in its ability to access and possess objects from across the globe.

Rémi Labrusse and Bernadette Nadia Saou-Dufrêne

Cultural Intersections and Identity in Algeria on the Eve of the French Invasion

The Case of the Bey Palace in Constantine

The palace of the Bey of Constantine was built between 1826 and the mid-1830s, just before the French colonial troops took over the Algerian city. In this paper, we propose to distinguish three periods in the cultural history of this remarkable architectural grouping of buildings and courtyard gardens: beylical until 1837; colonial from 1837 to 1962; national thereafter. Three different sets of political and aesthetic aims correspond to these periods. At the time of its construction, the monument was deliberately conceived as a building characterized by its cultural intersections, mixing together Maghrebi, Ottoman, and European materials, techniques, and stylistic traits. In direct opposition to this approach, the French military administration juxtaposed acts of destruction and salvaging, resulting in heavy visual discrepancies typical of colonial cultural contradictions. Nowadays, the will to restore a perceived “authentic Ottoman” state of the building, purged from its colonial appendices, leads to the paradoxical collision of a fixed authenticity and the reality of a fluid *mélange*. As we identify these three successive strata of intentions, we ask whether a self-conscious process of patrimonialization can preserve a poetics of hybridity, with the sense of life in forms and space it implies for the visitors of today.

At the end of the eighteenth century, the areas controlled by the Ottoman Empire in the Maghreb were organized into three regencies: Algeria, Tunisia, and Tripoli. The Algerian Regency, governed by a Dey, is itself made up of three beylics, the Eastern one (with its capital, Constantine), the central one, Titteri (with its capital Medea), and the Western one (with its capital Oran); added to this is the “domain of the Sultan” (Dar es-Soltane, around Algiers).

The Constantine Beylic is, like the Oran Beylic, a territory that owes its wealth to the export of wheat; since antiquity, when *Africa nova* was considered “the granary of Rome,” great quantities of it left the ports of Algiers, Cherchell, Dellys, Bejaïa, and Annaba. Although the story of this activity goes back a long way, it is for Europeans certainly “the image of the pirate-nest”¹ that prevails during Ottoman rule, from 1520 to 1830. However, the wheat trade is profitable enough to be seen by the trade companies and the French state as worthy of interest; in the eighteenth century, while trading revenue is in decline, “Algeria reveals itself to be capable of moving on from a mainly predatory activity (the resale of piracy booty) to another economic activity:

¹ Ismet Touati, *Le Commerce du blé entre l'Algérie et la France XVI^e–XIX^e* (Paris: Bouchène, 2018).

the export of its own production, beginning with wheat.”² The country’s increase in wealth materializes with the construction of numerous palaces in Algiers and with the embellishment of the town of Constantine led by Salah Bey and his successor Ahmed Bey. In spite of the decline in this revenue from the French Revolution on, a tendency that is to continue till the beginning of the nineteenth century, it is still the wheat trade that enables the rich landowner that was Ahmed Bey—according to the evidence of the Duke of Rovigo in 1832—to buy large quantities of marble and decorated earthenware tiles in Italy for the construction of his palace, through the Genovese wheat-merchant Schiafino. The French army, after failing a first time in 1836, finally seizes Constantine under the command of General Valée, the future general-governor of Algeria, on October 13, 1837. This defeat signals the end of a centuries-old world that was marked by an intensive commercial and cultural flow.

The last years of the Beylic, and those immediately after the fall of Constantine, are deeply marked by the charismatic figure of Ahmed Bey (1787–1850). Two Arabian authors of the time³ and two contemporary historians, Abdeljelil Temimi and Abdelkrim Badadja,⁴ make up our main sources of information on the career and personality of the Bey. According to Badadja, the grandfather of Hadj Ahmed Bey, Ahmed Bey El Kolli was a Turk who ruled over Constantine from 1756 to 1771. Ahmed Bey’s father, Mohamed Chérif, *khalifa* (lieutenant) of the Bey Hossein from 1792 to 1795, was a *koulougli* (of Turkish father and Algerian mother); as for his mother, Hadja Rokia, she descended from the powerful Bengana tribe. She had a determining role in the upbringing of her son, encouraging him toward the Ottoman administration in Istanbul known as the Sublime Porte. At eighteen, in 1805, he is named Caïd el Aouassi (Chief of the Haracta) by Abdallah Bey and is to have the same function under Naâmane Bey, then under Tchaker Bey. He makes the pilgrimage to Mecca, to which he owes his name of “Hadj,” and stays several months in Egypt. In 1818, thanks to the backup of Hussein, the Dey of Algiers, Ahmed rises to the rank of *khalifa* and takes the name of Ahmed Bey El Mamelouk. Having become of some importance in the Beylic, he begins to manage affairs in place of the Bey, which is not met with a kind eye. He has to leave Constantine and takes refuge in Algiers, where he resides between 1819 and 1826, taking advantage of the protection of Dey Hussein. During the earthquake in 1825 at Blida, Ahmed distinguishes himself by his courage and organizational sense for the emergency care. He gains, in this way, the esteem of Dey Hussein, who chooses

² Ibid., 9.

³ Hamdane Khodja, *Aperçu historique et statistique sur la régence d’Alger* (titled *Le Miroir* in Arabic), French trans. H. D. (Paris: de Goetschy, 1833); Salah Al Antri, arida Mounissa. *La perle agréable* (Constantine: Gueude, 1852), Fr. trans. in *Recueil des notices et mémoires de la Société archéologique de la province de Constantine* (Constantine, 1863).

⁴ Abdeljelil Temimi, “Le Beylik de Constantine et Hadj Ahmed Bey, 1830–1837,” *Revue d’histoire maghrébine*, vol 1 (1978); Abdelkrim Badadja, *La bataille de Constantine 1836–1837* (Paris: Edilivre, 2011).

him as Bey of Constantine in August 1826, succeeding to the fickle Bey Manamani. After the fall of Constantine, Ahmed Bey continues to lead the resistance against the French occupation. Forced to surrender in June 1848, he dies in captivity in Algiers on August 30, 1850, and is buried at the Sidi Abderrahmane *zaouïa* (religious establishment) in Algiers, leaving three widows and two daughters.

In the context of the struggle against the French conquest of Algeria, Hadj Ahmed Bey is a very significant personage, only comparable to that of Abd-el-Kader, with whom deep strategic, political, and personal differences had been fatal for unity and for the success of the Algerian resistance to the invader. Unlike Abd-el-Kader, eager for the creation of a modern State, the last Bey of Constantine based his policy on loyalty to the Sublime Porte. His letters to the Sultan are indeed a testimony to his attachment to the Ottoman system, for fulfilling his ambitions. On September 16, 1833, for example, he asks the Sultan to validate the title of *pasha* that the nobles wished to see him adopt, in the light of his behavior after the conquest of Algiers. It is at this time that he rejects the idea of accepting French occupation:

Struck by this unbelievable fact, I assembled a large number of fleeing soldiers, the ill-fated and the women and took them to Constantine—a long story. I gave them all sufficient provisions and the soldiers, their pay . . . And as soon as the scholars, noblemen, and sheikhs of the town learned what had happened to the Dey of Algiers, they renewed their oath of allegiance and endowed me with the title of Pasha, just as they described it in their presentation to the Sublime Porte. I could only but subscribe to it. I raised new troops and cavalymen that cost me all my inheritance, since, according to divine law and to maintain too the obedience and submission of the people, it was impossible for me to increase the tithe. The enemy, in its letters that it circulated, announced to the population that it had come to remove injustice; I cannot accept what it proposes to do.⁵

In November 1836, Ahmed Bey repels the first siege of Constantine by the soldiers of Maréchal Clauzel and, fortified by this spectacular victory, opposes Abd-el-Kader who, by finally signing the Treaty of Tafna with France in May 1837, enables the latter to turn against the Bey of Constantine and to overthrow him a few months later. With the defeat of the town in 1838, Ahmed, who had not accepted the French proposals and continued to fight, was still looking to the Sublime Porte for approval, as can be seen in a letter of January 16 to the Ministry of Defense in Istanbul, the follow-up to another shorter letter, sent in October 1837:

If you hope and intend to conserve the continuity of Islam, save this country from French hands, help your faithful servant, for you are our Protector before God. As the Sultan looks after his people, you must surely come to our succor as quickly as possible, otherwise the population will abandon us. Now, it would seem that our Lordship is neglecting his servant, which would mean that our Sultan, the great Lord, is in anger against me; for, if he were not, it would not be reasona-

⁵ Abdeljelil Temimi, "Trois lettres de Hadj Ahmed Bey de Constantine à la Sublime Porte," *Revue de l'Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée*, no. 3 (1967): 133–52.

ble to leave this province as prey for the French, without helping the Muslims; and since we have not received the slightest help, the French are sure to carry out their hopes. And if it comes to light that you had not helped the Muslim religion, you will undoubtedly be held responsible. We entreat you to forgive us our daring and impolite but truthful words, for our affront is justifiable ... Since you are the Minister of Defense on land and sea, we place all our hopes in you to find a remedy to our misfortune, for nothing will stop the French from occupying the whole country, and, subjected to their plundering, we shall be reduced to slavery.

The accounts after the French conquest⁶ have stressed the cruelty of the personage rather than his cosmopolitanism; these judgements—serving French propaganda, endlessly denouncing the despotism of the Turks and pretending to bring it to an end to justify the invasion⁷—accord also with the Orientalists and their Oriental-tyrant clichés; yet they are, to a great extent, disproved by the facts.⁸ Not only do the French authors—mainly Laurent-Charles Féraud—say nothing about the culture of the personage, but they make a point of stressing the expropriations he had to carry out to build his palace: they mask all the courage and humanity he showed in the difficult circumstances—notably at the fall of Algiers—that are qualities that Hamdan Khodja, on the contrary, puts forward.

The construction of the palace is intimately linked to the life of the Bey; wishing to leave the traditional dwelling of Dar el Bey, a place that was to him marred by too many depositions of beys, he chooses Dar Oum Noum—where the house he was born in used to be—to begin building a new palace in 1826. With the stress of events, it is to be built in two phases: the first sees the elevation of a building around the Courtyard of the Orange Grove, laid out on the site of a former Janissary arsenal. This first arrangement has the *diwan* (chief administration office) in the center. Then, after 1830, the palace is extended and includes the harem, the patio, and the Courtyard

6 See Wendelin Schlosser, *Reisen in Brasilien und Algier oder Lebensschicksale Wendelin Schlossers, zuletzt gewesen Bombaschia des Achmed Bey von Constantine* (Erfurt: Hennings u. Hopf in Komm, 1839); Jean-Pierre Bonnafont, *Réflexions sur l'Algérie, particulièrement sur la province de Constantine, sur l'origine de cette ville et les beys qui y ont régné depuis l'an de l'égire (sic) 1133 (1710) jusqu'en 1253 (1837)* (Paris: Ledoyen, 1846); Laurent-Charles Féraud, "Monographie du Palais du Bey à Constantine," in *Recueil des Notices et Mémoires de la Société archéologique de la Province de Constantine*, vol. 11 (1867): 2–96. See also Guy de Maupassant about Ahmed Bey and his palace: "it would need a volume to give an account of the ferocities, the corruption, all the infamy of the one who built it with the precious materials taken from the elegant houses of the town and its surrounding areas." *Lettres d'Afrique (Algérie, Tunisie)*, ed. Michèle Salinas ([orig. ed., *Le Gaulois*, 1881]; Paris: La Boîte à documents, 1997).

7 See what a person of letters, Hamdane Ben Othman Khodja (1773–1842), witness to the first years of the conquest, said about this in Khodja, *Aperçu historique et statistique sur la Régence d'Alger*.

8 Among the Arabian authors, only Salah El Antri—whose father sided with France and who was himself the first *khodja* of the Arab Bureau in Constantine—gives a negative portrait of Ahmed Bey; the book was edited by Captain Boissonet, head of the Arab Bureau in Constantine.

of the Palm Grove. The presence of courtyard gardens makes it a unique example in Algeria for an urban palace; perhaps it was inspired by the walled gardens of the elegant dwellings on the outskirts of Algiers (the so-called Algiers Fahs), or by the abode of Salah Bey. Apart from this particularity, the palace has much in common with the Ottoman palaces of the same era: an entrance hall (*sqifa*) leads indoors to the twenty-seven apartments arranged around a central space opening onto galleries. In this setting, two-hundred and forty-five elegant marble columns are the heralds of the palace. These columns are somewhat evocative of those at the Dar Aziza Palace in Algiers with their Solomonic or octagonal drums supporting the horseshoe arches. As to the glazed tiling from Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Tunisia, and Turkey, it is yet another feature in common with the Algerian Ottoman palaces and rivals them in sumptuousness.

At the beginning of 1837, the palace caught the attention of the new French occupier with its harmony and refinement: the army took it over at once to transform it into the officers' general headquarters and barracks and did not leave it until 1962. Even though the whole complex registered was belatedly listed as a protected building in 1934, it was nonetheless tremendously altered by this occupation. Napoleon III's visit to Constantine, in 1865, led to intensive transformations. On this occasion, and then over the following years, murals were sometimes destroyed, sometimes covered by new compositions of rather graceless floral medallions, and sometimes spoiled by additions—in particular with motifs of red, white, and blue garlands. Moreover, outside, many of its surrounding buildings were destroyed to create new streets or modify old ones, and in 1838 a *place d'armes* (military courtyard) was opened with the aim of monumentalizing a quarter that had formerly been an intrinsic part of a dense urban landscape. In short, the palace as it stands today is not the palace conceived by Ahmed Bey: the private apartments of his family, in particular, are no longer to be seen.

Following independence, between 1962 and 1969, the Algerian army took over from the French army, then transferred the whole property to the Constantine town council. Restored by the Ministry of Culture after 1982, the palace was listed as a historical monument and has been managed by the National Heritage since 2008. In 2010, the National Museum of Arts and Popular Traditions was housed there.

To these three periods—beylical, colonial, and national—three major tonalities can be affixed that, in each instance, confer their identity to the Ahmed Bey Palace: the deliberate stylistic *mélange* at the time of its construction, its heterogeneity, vacillating between destruction and conservation at the time of French occupation, and, finally, the quest for authenticity after independence.

Cultural Crossings: An Ongoing Identity during the Beylical Period

As much as can be judged today, the construction of the palace was steered so as to pursue diversity in order to reach something that was deliberately a mixing of European elements (especially due to imported faience earthenware as can be seen in the Algiers palaces) and Oriental elements (marquetry decoration, balustrades, wall paintings). In the Bey palace, these intersections become systematic in character: Hispano-Maghrebi, Ottoman-Turkish, and European influences are intertwined, as much in their materials and techniques as in their motifs, so as to leave their respective origins clearly visible while the interplay provokes an effect of wonderment at the resulting harmonious differences.

Some of the two hundred and forty-five marble columns⁹ have supposedly come—according to Laurent-Charles Féraud—from “several beautiful Algiers townhouses,”¹⁰ and been manufactured in Annaba or Tunis, from marble of Italian, Algerian, and Greek origin. Some are undoubtedly also of Italian make since the Genovese architect Schiaffino had the responsibility of importing the marble columns, with every possible care taken for their transport. These columns have capitals distributed in no apparent order, with plant motifs (e.g., leaves or grapes of Ottoman inspiration), simple truncated cones with a croissant relief, or capitals of Corinthian, Tuscan, or

⁹ Two hundred and sixty-six, according to Laurent-Charles Féraud in 1867 (Féraud, *Monographie du Palais du Bey*, 19).

¹⁰ Féraud, *Monographie du Palais du Bey*, 15.

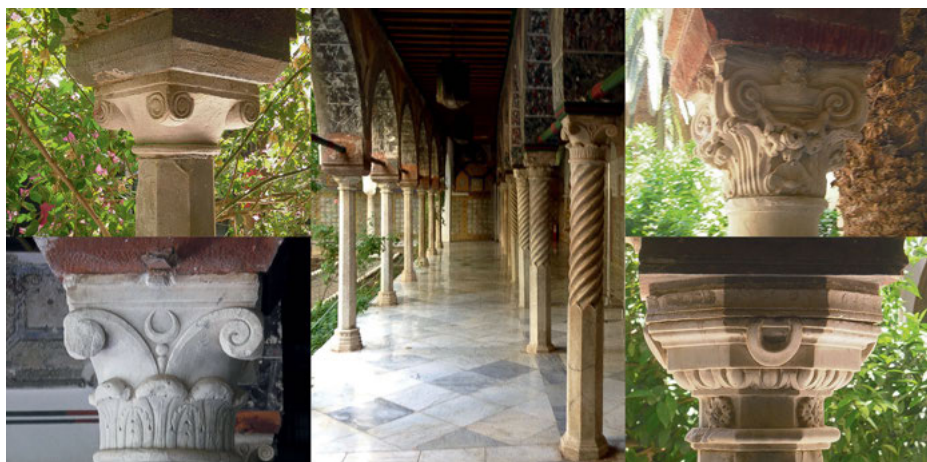


Fig. 1: Ahmed Bey Palace, Constantine (Algeria), 1830–1835. Examples of marble capitals.



Fig. 2: Wooden door with one leaf, Constantine woodwork, Ahmed Bey Palace, Constantine, 1830–1835.

Greco-Byzantine influence (**fig. 1**). The base of the columns are likewise sometimes simply nonexistent, sometimes decorated, or sometimes not at all, in varied heights and proportions;¹¹ and as for the doors, the woodwork is typically Maghrebi (**fig. 2**), while their marble frames adopt either Italian or Andalusian-Maghrebi forms.

One of the most spectacular aspects of the decoration is the ceramic tiling: over one-thousand six-hundred-square meters of faience tiles (*zelaidj*) covering the lower walls and creating *in situ* an encyclopedia of Mediterranean and European mural ceramics at the end of the eighteenth century and beginning of the nineteenth (**fig. 3**).

¹¹ Ibid., 19 (“The arches are generally ribbed and mounted on monolithic white marble columns, unequal in height and of great diversity in form. Some are svelte and elegant, others stocky and massive; different forms are to be seen: round, Solomonian, and octagonal.”)



Fig. 3: Ahmed Bey Palace, Constantine (Algeria), 1830–1835. Examples of panels of tiling in the Harem Courtyard gallery.

Large tiles with vegetal and floral decoration (scrollwork, ribbons, latticework, etc.) intermix with geometrical motifs (stars and interlocking circles, interlacing, arabesques, etc.) and figurative ornamental compositions (maritime motifs, birds, imaginary people); Dutch examples sit alongside Andalusian-Maghrebi and “Damascene” styles, in, then again, no apparent order.

If, on the whole, these tiles can be considered an element of Occidentalism, the woodwork (doors, balustrades, windows, cupboards), on the other hand, forms a clearly Ottoman-Maghrebi element. The doors punctuate the space with their decor of geometric or arabesque inspiration and their bright polychromatic colors (yellows, greens, and reds). The adornment of the windows differs slightly: on the outside, their wooden shutters have been dotted with a geometric design; inside, they are some-



Fig. 4: View of Cairo, Ahmed Bey Palace, Constantine (Algeria), wall painting from the west corridor of the ground floor of the courtyard of the Palm Grove, ca. 1830, and repainted in the 1860s.

times fitted with glass mirrors, the rule being that interior ornamentation remains the most elaborate. The balustrades, in harmony with the colors of the doors had their place between the columns: each element consisting of two levels of balusters in turned wood, separated in the middle by a grating. The effect of all this carpentry contributes to giving a strong local identity to the palace.

The wall paintings on the top half of the walls complete this overall effect with a great number of non-figurative designs as well as a cycle of narrative compositions retracing the travels of the Bey (**fig. 4**), composed between 1830 and 1835 by El Hadj Yousef, an Algiers painter trained in Egypt.¹² It is on these murals that the colonial interventions are the most extensive, often to the point of complete repainting—trompe-l'œil, floral medallions, etc.—making it difficult to appreciate fully their original effect. In addition to this, pre-Beylical figurative motifs—with their naïve narrative style in manuscript painting—have been revealed under the later overpainting

¹² His name is mentioned in 1877 by Laurent-Charles Féraud in the rewriting of his 1867 monograph of the palace: "Visite au palais de Constantine," *Le Tour du monde*, vol. XXXIII, no. 849 (Paris, 1877), 254.

during recent restoration work, in one of the outhouses of an old Constantine residence (annexed to the original palace at the time of its construction).

This interior decor, marrying thus the most diverse materials of far-flung geographical origin, is nevertheless strongly structured by the clarity of the spatial organization that balances out the ornate dissimilarity of the decoration. Practically devoid of any openings, the distinct inside-outside aspect and the relatively modest proportions of the interior intensify one's immediate apprehension of the dynamic articulation between the three courtyard gardens on the first floor communicating with the "Chamber of the Princess" and its open antechamber—the veritable hub of the three spaces with their surrounding arcades. This tripartite geometry itself generates movement; its simplicity corresponds, besides, to a no less distinct distribution of functions between the public spaces near the entrance and the private spaces at the rear, with the Harem Courtyard right at the back.

This alliance of clarity and diversity represents what could be characterized as an aesthetics of hybridity, first recognized by Laurent-Charles Féraud in 1867 for its visual efficacy, even if—through already deep-rooted colonial prejudice—he attributes it to a "freak of chance" rather than to an artistic and cultural intention in line with the origins, upbringing, and personal sensitivity of Ahmed Bey:

It is these multiple sources that have engendered the disparate look in the adornment of the palace ... But if all these details are not irreproachable as to taste and harmony, one cannot help seeing in them a character—a real fluke—that composes their veritable originality ... The capitals show an amalgam of the most disparate and incoherent styles ... The side walls are covered, up to eye-level, with multicolored faience tiles of all origins, forming—in their arrangement—intertwining floral patterns or very fine-looking mosaics. I am convinced that an antiquarian would find some very interesting samples of early hand-made glazed tiles in the palace and could do interesting research on the art of ceramics.¹³

Can one talk of Occidentalism with reference to this Beylical phase of the palace the way one talks of Orientalism with reference to European exotic pastiche in the spirit of John Nash's 1822 Royal Pavilion in Brighton, among many other examples at the turn of eighteenth and nineteenth century? In fact, during the same epoch, Occidentalism too is vaunted in Ottoman palatial architecture and apparently Ahmed Bey was an admirer of it: the Dolmabahçe Palace, for example, built in Istanbul by the architect of Armenian origin, Garabet Amira Balyan between 1842 and 1856, is a particularly spectacular late illustration of this, with its Italian neo-Baroque style. Be they "Occidentalists" or "Orientalists," these edifices of the first half of the nineteenth century have one thing in common: they transport the inhabitant or the visitor into another world—the other as aesthetic horizon. This otherness is not only based on a deliberate disparity with the cultural identity of the patron but on a fundamental distancing

¹³ Féraud, *Monographie du Palais du Bey*, 15, 18, 20.

as opposed to experienced reality. A parallel world, a picture-book world opens its doors, the phantasmagorical coherence of which sets out to melt reality into virtual.

Within the Ahmed Bey palace walls, on the other hand, the Ottoman-Maghrebi local identity is strongly highlighted, while at the same time combined with a conscious Occidentalist exoticism. In this way, the architecture is closely in tune with immediate reality, be it intimately personal, considering the sovereign's mixed cultural origins and his Mediterranean travels, or collective, in the context of the cosmopolitan culture of Algeria vested by the input of the Andalusians and Turks, living side by side in a town like Constantine against a backdrop of Kabylarian, Arab, and Jewish elements.

One cannot talk of eclecticism either, in the way Western Europe developed it, at the same period, by juxtaposing clearly identifiable historic styles—of antiquity, Byzantine, Mediaeval, Renaissance, Baroque, etc.—in one and the same monument or urban space. Eclecticism cannot, indeed, be separated from historicism: with a more or less scholarly recourse to bygone styles, it attempts to demonstrate the superposition of times and replaces the geographical otherness that is Orientalism (or, symmetrically, Occidentalism) with some temporal otherness. Now, the architectural and decorative poetics embraced by the Ahmed Bey Palace is firmly rooted in the present: just as—in the palace—the here prevails over the elsewhere, the present prevails over the past. That is to say, this present is a fundamentally political one: faced with the threat of the French, everything happens as if it were a question of continuing to assert the very forms of eighteenth and early nineteenth-century prosperous Algeria, to stage an Ottoman Maghreb, proud of its capacity to interweave the different cultures of the Mediterranean. In its ornamental profusion, both symbolic and decorative ambition seem to go hand in hand: political thought and the harmony of existential practice have to show mutual support.

This coherence is due mainly to the supervision of two artists, El Hadj El Djabri, master stoneworker, native of Constantine, and El Khettabi, of Kabylarian origin. Moreover, even if a certain number of elements are imports, they have been reworked, transformed, and set up *in situ* by teams of artisans, where the local savoir-faire is omnipresent and palpable, whatever the cultural origin of these creators to whom the edifice owes its paradoxical aesthetic unity or, say, its harmony. Personifying—in the strictest sense of the word—a Mediterranean multiculturalism, the diverse stylistic and material references have undergone a process of digestion rather than fusion, ensuring the dynamics of their presentation. This integration of foreign elements—be it a material, practical, or symbolic process of local appropriation—corresponds to what could be called boundary building;¹⁴ more than anything, it is in harmony with the notion of hybridity, the semantics of which is evolving at precisely the same

¹⁴ See *Exogenèses: Objets frontière dans l'art européen XVI^e siècle*, ed. Sabine du Crest (Paris: De Boccard, 2018).

time—in the 1820s—from an etymology that stresses the organic character of forms comparable to those of “mixed blood” living organisms.¹⁵ If this etymology holds true, artistic hybridity is in complete contradiction with exoticism and historicism: its compass is life in the present, the here and now, and not that of an imaginary elsewhere. In contrast to the phantasmatic coherence of world-images, it deliberately gives right of way to differences, borderline disorder even, and never ceases playing with unstable stabilities.

In the Ahmed Bey Palace, the historical circumstances—and perhaps the intensity of the personal wish of the patron—have been the successful factors in this charade. It is not just a question of a subjective early twenty-first century judgment: the aesthetic success of the venture is corroborated right from the start by the reactions of the French occupiers who seem to have been all the more fascinated that, precisely, this grace of a vivid composite building was no longer lived against the backdrop of the new colonial environment, and became inexorably exotic, as if the Algerian past were a *Paradise Lost*.

Colonial Heterogeneity: A Split Identity

At the time of the defeat of Algeria in the 1830s, the patrimonialization of the past was a heated debate in France: legislation for the protection of historical monuments was established in answer to the acute consciousness of the destruction inherent to the industrial revolution and the economic imperatives of capitalism. The rising cult of authenticity is evidence of an artistic and cultural melancholy counterbalancing the faith in techno-scientific “progress.” An obsession for the past, embedded as it is in the present, challenges the spontaneous preference to the latter.

At their arrival in Algeria, the French cannot therefore avoid the question of the conservation of local heritage. They have to choose immediately between destruction or patrimonialization; it is common knowledge that they chose—massively—destruction, in spite of a few timidly critical voices, such as that of the architect Amable Ravoisié, after his “scientific exploration” of Algeria between 1840 and 1842 (**fig. 5**):

Instructions given for a long time now by the superior orders demand the seizure of all the ancient ruins to claim ownership of them, as far as possible to new ends, or demolish them to use the materials to construct other buildings for the different public services. As this last choice was

¹⁵ “Hybrid” may come from the Latin *ibrida*, qualifying a mixed-blood being (originally the result of the cross-breeding of a boar and sow). If the adjective first appears in France in 1596, the verb “hybridize” as well as the nouns “hybridity” and “hybridization” appear around 1825 in French. For a critical approach of the use of the notion of hybridity in the context of social sciences, see in particular Stephen W. Silliman, “A Requiem for Hybridity? The Problem with Frankensteins, Purées, and Mules,” *Journal of Social Archaeology* 15, no. 3 (October 2015): 277–98.



Fig. 5: Amable Ravoisié, *Exploration scientifique de l'Algérie pendant les années 1840, 1841, 1842: Beaux-arts, architecture et sculpture*, vol. 1, *Constantine* (Paris: Didot, 1846), pl. 20, "Palace built by Achmed, the last Bey de Constantine."

unfortunately the one that was the most generally adopted, the scientific commission thought its first duty was to look to the ruins that the presence of our troops and the demands of the conquest threatened with imminent devastation.¹⁶

Then the researcher contents himself with carrying out an inventory *in extremis* "to evaluate the situation and the character of the barbaresque art, before these edifices, caught up in the general catastrophe, suffer the inevitable consequences of the revolution that is waging in this country, and which is deeply changing its mores and institutions."¹⁷

¹⁶ Amable Ravoisié, "Exploration scientifique de l'Algérie pendant les années 1840, 1841, 1842," *Beaux-arts, architecture et sculpture*, vol. 1 (Paris: Didot, 1846): III–IV.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, IV.

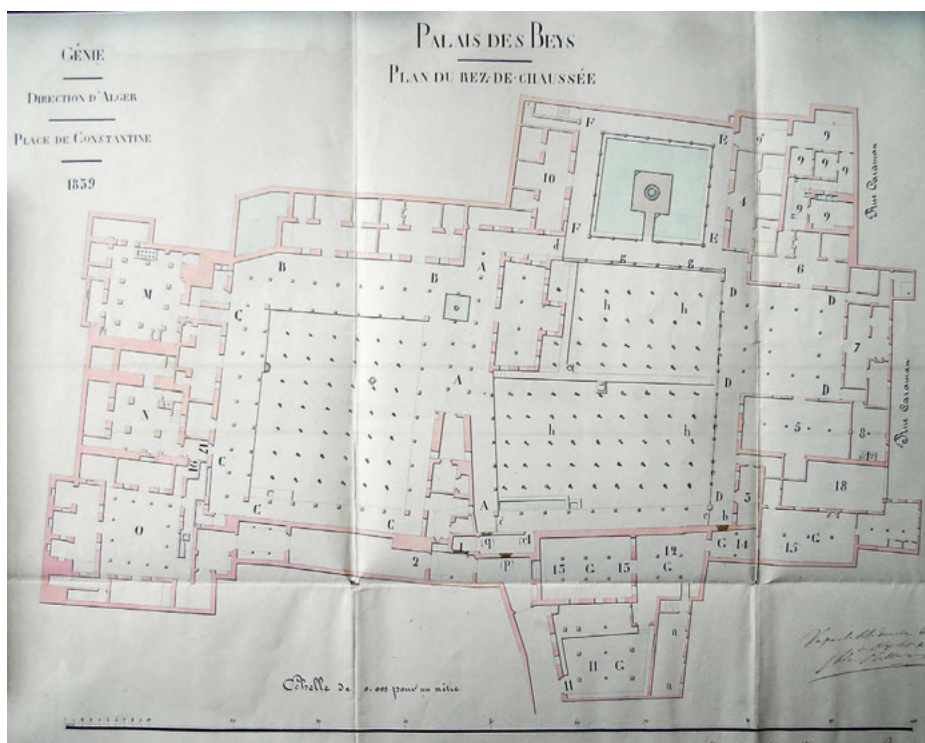


Fig. 6: [Military] Engineering Service, Head Office in Algiers, Place de Constantine, “Palace of the Beys. Ground Floor Plan,” 1839, ink and watercolor on paper, Château de Vincennes, Archives of the Historical Service of the Ministry of Defense.

In this context, the fate reserved for the Ahmed Bey Palace is an intermediary one: taken over by the army, its condition has seriously deteriorated, but is however, partly salvaged and even restored so that three types of area coexist: state rooms, administration offices, and lodgings, the former being more or less preserved while the latter two are greatly altered. Photographs at the time and present-day remains enable an estimation of the impression of the resulting heterogeneity, symptom of the Occidental identity crisis during colonial rule; its belated inscription on the register of historical monuments, in 1934, changes practically nothing.

Indications that the building was subject to particular respect are not lacking. Although it is practically contemporary, the patrimonial aura that it has rests both on its extraordinary aesthetic quality and on a desire to let a few monuments testify to a bygone age, in a time marked—for the French—by the hubris of the *tabula rasa*. That is why it is relatively spared of the demolitions and radical reconfigurations that Constantine suffers in the very early days after its defeat, from 1837 on. It is even routinely consolidated, especially after the damage caused by the 1856 earthquake. It is also

the object of technical inventories and descriptions that the French army is the first to carry out, since the building is inexistent at the time of the first travelers to Constantine, toward the end of the eighteenth century.¹⁸ From 1837 on, the Military Engineering Corps establishes the town street map, with the palace in the center; floor plans of the palace itself are drawn up in 1839 (fig. 6).

Then Ravoisié visits the town in April 1840 and writes about it in the first monograph of his *Exploration scientifique de l'Algérie*. In spite of his insistence on antique monuments, he devotes two plates—of twenty-four—to the “Palace built by Achmed, the last Bey of Constantine” (fig. 7), not without voicing aesthetic reservations that, in themselves, reveal the shortcomings of academic criteria at the time as to the composite character of the building:

This building, not lacking in a certain elegance, is however, from an artistic point of view, not the most remarkable, by a long chalk, of all those in Constantine; but, in size, it is certainly the biggest of all the dwelling houses ... It was built in such a hurry that every day something is done to consolidate it.¹⁹

It is Laurent-Charles Féraud, an Arabist, interpreter for the French African army, painter, and secretary of the “Société archéologique de la province de Constantine,”²⁰ who writes, in 1867, the first systematic analysis of the monument, in a monograph of about one hundred pages;²¹ it is partly re-edited in 1877, as a sort of “tourist” article, in the magazine *Le Tour du Monde*²² and thus contributes to spread the fame of the monument beyond the sole Algerian colonial class. This time, praise is much more effusive for “one of the most beautiful and interesting Arabian monuments that it is possible to come across in Algeria.”²³ Its exceptional quality, according to the author, justifies the appeal for an official patrimonialization, in spite of its quasi-contemporaneity:

This building, finished only yesterday, presents so many elements suitable for getting to know the floor plans and the details of Algerian architecture, as to deserve to become a listed historical monument.²⁴

This exceptional desire of listing a chronologically-recent historical monument (although rejected by force in the past due to colonial rupture) is, however, associated

¹⁸ See Ernest Mercier, *Histoire de Constantine* (Constantine: J. Marle and F. Biron, 1903), 245–47 esp. (“Détails du voyageur Peyssonnel ... complétés par ceux de Shaw”).

¹⁹ Ravoisié, *Exploration scientifique*, pl. 21, “Petite cour du Palais.”

²⁰ See Bernard Merlin, *Laurent-Charles Féraud, peintre et témoin de la conquête de l'Algérie* (Paris: Monelle Hayot, 2010).

²¹ *Ibid.*, n. 4.

²² *Ibid.*, n. 8.

²³ Féraud, *Monographie du Palais du Bey*, 2.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 95.

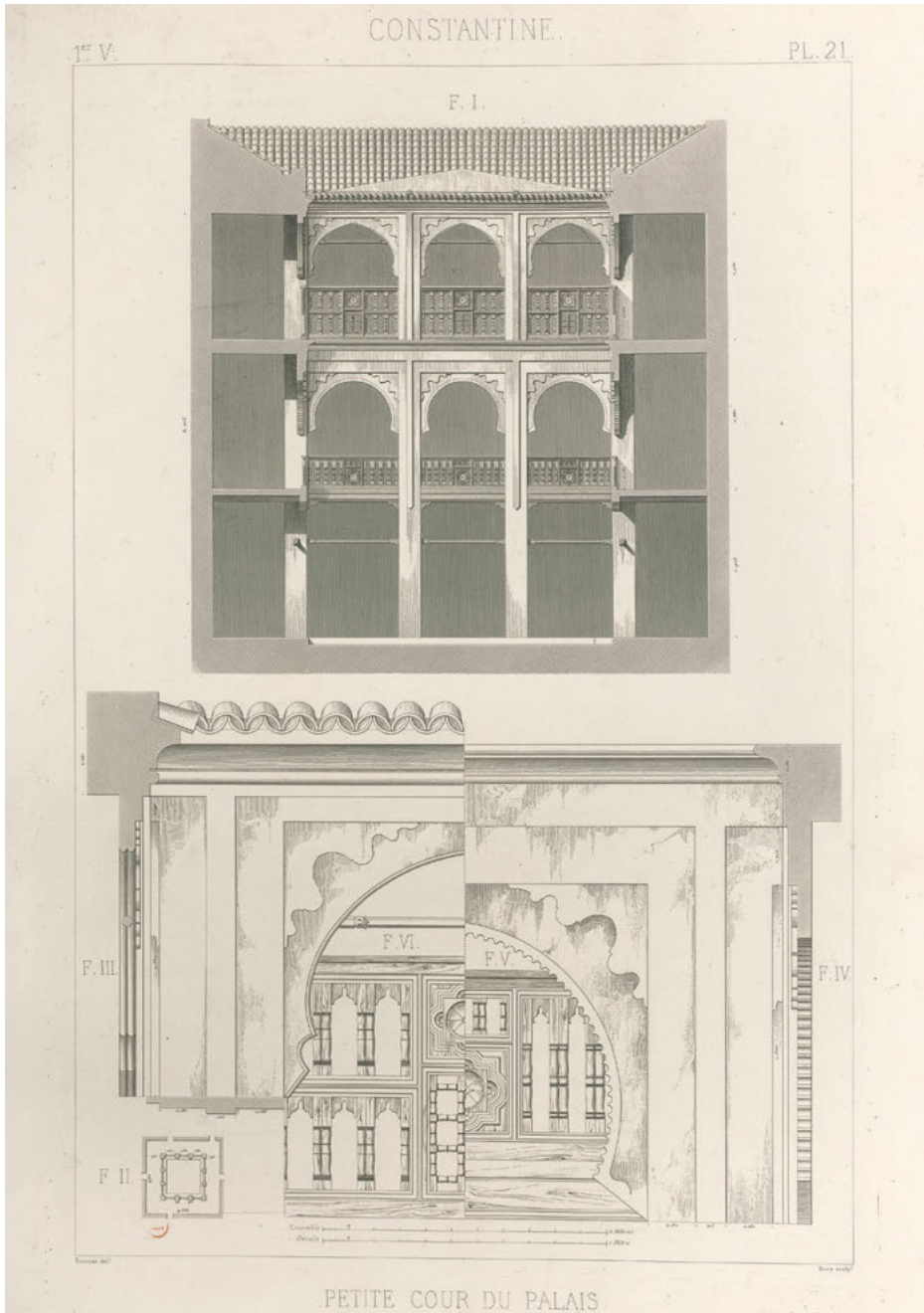


Fig. 7: Amable Ravoisié, *Exploration scientifique de l'Algérie pendant les années 1840, 1841, 1842: Beaux-arts, architecture et sculpture*, vol. 1, *Constantine* (Paris: Didot, 1846), pl. 21, "The Palace Small Courtyard."

with inverse procedures of destruction, or, at least, of violent appropriation, involving some forms of vandalism. The razing of a great number of the surrounding buildings also affects the adjoining houses of the palace, especially the house of the Bey's mother, while a new structure is added to the northwest wing. Doors and windows are opened in the outside and inside walls, the openings of the top gallery between the two courtyards, the Palm Grove and the Orange Grove courtyards, are paned in colored glass; the water-parterre of the Harem Courtyard is destroyed and the Orange Grove Courtyard completely changed—at the time of Napoleon III's visit in 1865—by the planting of two Lebanese cedars, the addition of fountains, plus a spiral staircase in one of the corners for access to the top gallery. Inside, wooden balustrades are removed and dividing walls are built to create more rooms, often enhanced with typically European moldings, as can be seen in the restoration report drawn up by a Polish team in 1984–85: "In the colonial period of the second half of the nineteenth century, these (original) interiors were divided into several smaller rooms, which has completely modified the original layout."²⁵

But it is mainly in the painted decoration that the interventions shock the most, visually, as if the new occupier wishes to affirm his superiority of technique, that is to say, painting, considered as one of the fine arts and therefore an Occidental prerogative. The overpainting abides by different registers, resulting in violently discordant effects: some, painted by two local painters in 1860,²⁶ bring out the original Ottoman motifs; some are painted over with, notably, a series of festoons of red, white, and blue garlands along the top of the painted panels; and finally, others are covered with floral-like compositions in medallions. There again, the restoration report of 1984–85 is articulate:

The painted decoration, dating from the period of the palace's construction has seriously deteriorated, having been restored in the second half of the nineteenth century and repainted several times since. The composition of the outside decor of the Orange Grove Courtyard on the first floor and the Belvedere has been completely transformed. In the other cases, the exterior paintings have partly revived the decoration of the Bey's time.²⁷

In total, three periods of intervention can be found, first in the 1830s, then between 1860 and 1865, and lastly during a new campaign, not so well dated, toward the end

²⁵ *Palais d'Ahmed Bey à Constantine: Expertise des peintures murales*, ed. Jacek Radolowicz, vol. 1 (type-written paper conserved in the town archives of Constantine).

²⁶ See Féraud, *Monographie du Palais du Bey*, 85: "In 1860, all these paintings were already considerably damaged because of damp. It would have been imprudent to entrust their restoration to European workers, who, inevitably, would have wanted to improve them and in so doing even rob them of their original distinctive character. We had therefore the presence of mind to entrust this task to two locals whose public renown told us they had contributed to the first enhancement of the palace: the aforesaid Barar and Si Ioussef."

²⁷ *Palais d'Ahmed Bey à Constantine*, n.p.



Fig. 8: “Trophy Room,” former Chamber of the Princess, daughter of the Bey, Palace Ahmed Bey, Constantine, state, ca. 1860–1870, ANOM, FR ANOM 8Fi444/41.

of the nineteenth century or the beginning of the twentieth century. Of these periods, it is the first one that seems to be the most fragmentary, as is probably the case in “the polychromes of the galleries on the ground floor and on the first floor that were 100% repainted.”²⁸ Added to the iconographic and chromatic differences between the layers of paint is the fact that from a technical point of view, “they are not at all homogenous as far as method is concerned,”²⁹ which increases the visual impression of discordance.

The new uses to which the spaces of the palace are allotted are not any less discordant and demonstrate the dysfunction in the colonial procedures of appropriation, wavering between a desire of authentic conservation and a desire to assert supremacy. Thus, a museum space, known as the “Trophy Room” (“Salle des Trophées,” **fig. 8**), is set up in the “Chamber of the Princess,” the bedroom of the Bey’s daughter and the hub of the whole palace, by General MacMahon, who became commander of the Constantine division in March 1852, after having participated in the victorious siege of 1837:

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.



Fig. 9: Drawing room in the apartments of the commander of the Division de Constantine, Ahmed Bey Palace, Constantine, ca. 1860–1870, ANOM, FR 8Fi444/36.

What is most intriguing about the room we are visiting, is, without a doubt, the collection of trophy weapons and flags adorning its walls. They are, in a way, authentic archives perpetuating the memory of feats of arms and expeditions carried out by our troops over all the regions of the province of Constantine. We owe the initiative of this happy and useful innovation to General MacMahon; it has been continued since, by his successors. Rifles, sabers, pistols, muskets, and clubs, in the most diverse forms, make up these trophies ... The Touggourt trophy contains, besides weapons, a curious collection of musical instruments.³⁰

If the photographs conserved are to be believed, the room is disfigured by inscriptions and objects that vacillate between trophy and ethnographic documents, annihilating somehow the decorative panels, transforming an intimate space into a rather chaotic exhibition-cum-commemoration room.

It is the same with the photographs of the places given over to the senior officers' lodgings in the garrison of Constantine: they show either interiors that are completely European (**fig. 9**), conceived like centripetal sanctuaries, cut off from their local envi-

³⁰ Féraud, *Monographie du Palais du Bey*, 50.



Fig. 10: Vestibule of the Chamber of the Princess, Ahmed Bey Palace, Constantine, state ca. 1860–1870, ANOM, FR ANOM 8Fi444/38.

ronment, or temporary arrangements where the furniture, emblematic of contemporary European bourgeoisie (armchairs, pedestal tables, etc.) sits in a decorative setting that has conserved its Ottoman-Maghrebi spirit, in spite of the modifications (**fig. 10**). Contrary to the boundary interiors of Ahmed Bey's time where imported foreign and indigenous elements contributed to what we could call a poetics of hybridity, these colonial interiors are made up of metropolitan identity elements transposed into a setting perceived as exotic by their owners. They are the demonstration of a divided mode of habitat, a melancholic experience of heterogeneity that is the direct echo of an identity crisis where confrontation with otherness is marked by a double bind, demanding of the new inhabitants both fascination and desire of occultation. The habitat here is inseparable from a feeling of exile, patrimonial admiration inseparable from a kind of aggressive resentment, so that the pre-colonial situation, while being deliberately disfigured, remains present, protected partly by the paradox of nostalgia.

Promoting National Authenticity

After independence of the country in 1962, and especially after the exit of the Algerian army that takes its leave in 1969, the definite objective is that of a real patrimonialization of the whole architectural conspectus that brings it back as an exceptionally successful emblem of Ottoman-Algerian culture—as close as possible to its original state, as it was on the eve of the French invasion. As such, the restoration program foresees the eradication of the French additions; it is this aim that prevails during the first restoration campaign, carried out by a Polish team from April 4, 1984, to September 27, 1985. This resolution remains unchanged during later refurbishments, taken over by Algerian experts from 2002 on, and in the most recent projects: the last one to date, under the authority of the Spanish agency EMR (Estudio Métodos de la Restauración) promising thus to pass from 44% “authentic Ottoman” wall paintings to 90%, after restoration.³¹

Logically, the patrimonialization of the monument goes hand in hand with its being inserted into a museum context that continues in the same anticolonial objective, by creating inside the palace, a museum of the “arts and expressions of traditional culture” before the French conquest, as is explicitly announced in the founding decree of the museum in 2010. The choice of the Ahmed Bey palace as the site for this national museum is justified by the fact that it “expresses better than any other place in the city a remembrance consisting of signs and images of resistance, from the rich and diversified period that was the Ottoman one, a real synthesis of multiple influences from the Mediterranean basin valorizing the Algerian genius through artistic expression such as architecture and artisanal and pictorial creation” (**fig. 11**); and one of the missions the museum itself has is “the implementation of a data base on the traditions, personalities and the history of the town and its region from the sixteenth century up to 1837.”³²

In doing this, it no longer means implementing hybridity in the present, but staging the as-faithful-as-possible image of a past hybridity, with the guarantee of historical authenticity ensured by a two-fold patrimonial and museum policy, centered round the Beylical period. As in any patrimonial process, this quest for authenticity fixes what was fluid and composite in nature, the original movement of forms. Interaction between the aesthetic complexity of the palace and the social and political life during Ahmed Bey’s tormented epoch gives way to the exhibition of a bygone state of forms and society, by the intermediary of forms that are restored and conserved as fixed markers of the past. This past is thus transformed into image, in other words

³¹ *Projet d'intervention sur les peintures murales. Palais Hadj Ahmed Bey, Constantine (Algérie)*, ed. Marcos Roca Ramón (Valencia: Moncada, 2013), n.p.

³² Executive decree no. 10-262 of the Dhou El Kaada 1431 (October 21, 2010), specifying the creation of the Musée National des Arts et Expressions Culturelles Traditionnelles de Constantine.



Fig. 11: Harem Courtyard.

idealized, by splitting it as far as possible from the traces of the colonial violence. Even if it no longer puts a poetics of hybridity into action, the restored palace and its museum have the role of designating it in a process of space transformation where the historical knowledge on the Ottoman period, cleared of subsequent aggression and obfuscation, overrides the actual experience, just as informative reading and distanced observation aim to take the place of immediate social customs.

In a little less than two centuries, the palace has adhered to three very different symbolic economies: Beylical Algeria, personifying a composite culture in the present where the diversity of its forms is in constant interaction; colonial Algeria, where a regime in crisis between past and present pits vernacular representations against European adjuncts, the latter violently imposing in its heterogeneity; and thirdly, Algerian nation, where a quest for authenticity means recovering the hybridity of its origins—but as a fixed image of an ideal past. This last aim reflects the contradiction inherent to any patrimonialization: it preserves the existence of a place only to deprive it of its functional, concrete allegiance to the present.

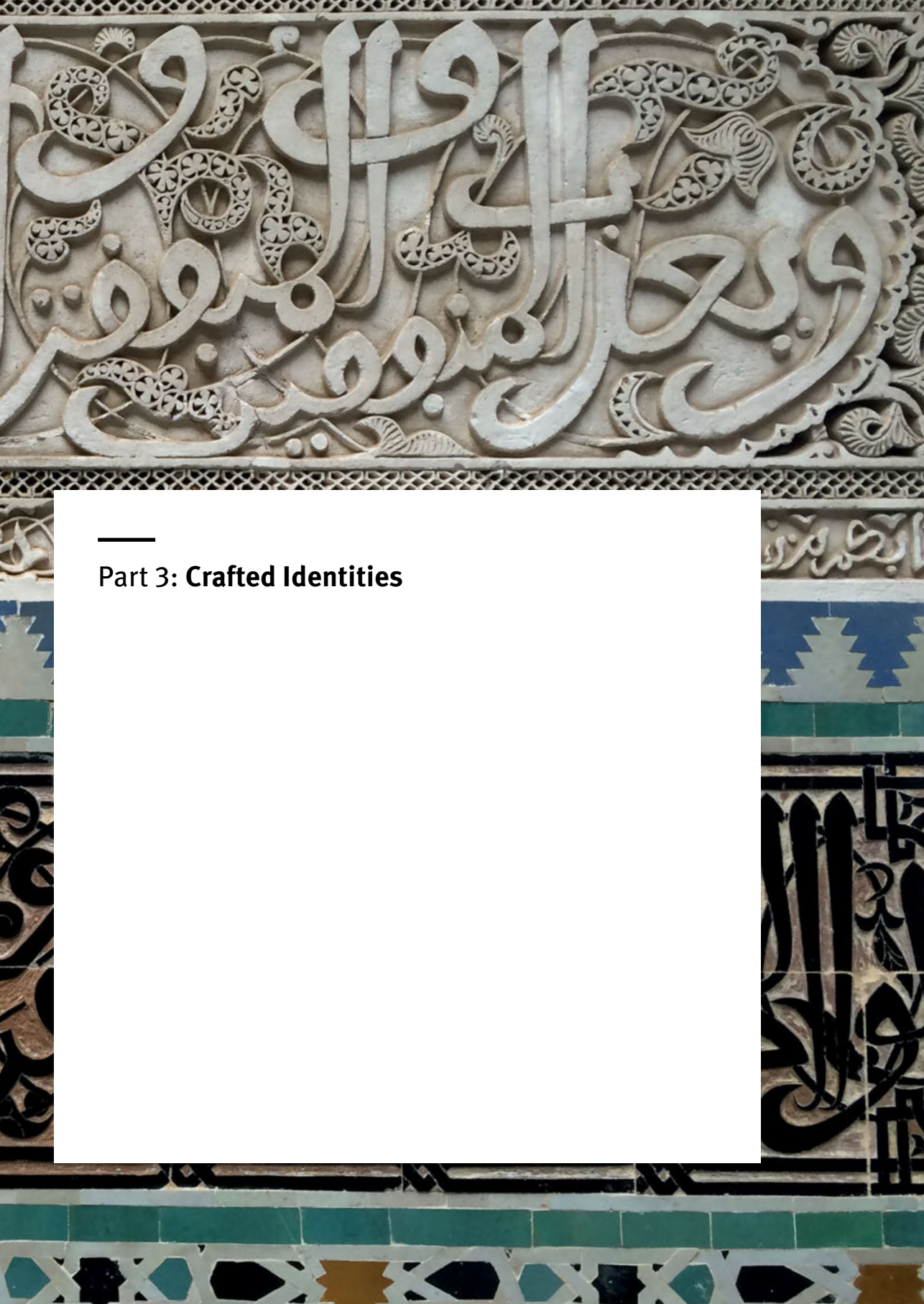
In the case of the Ahmed Bey Palace, however, the will to celebrate an “authentic Ottoman” past clashes with the essence of the building itself, its very structure being little adapted to a classical museumification. Naturally, with its courtyard gardens, covered galleries, and apartments, it appeals to the visitor more as a promenade than

a place of actual learning, with feelings related to gardens and private interior spaces, becoming just as important as thoughtful observation. Over and above the exhibiting itself, traditional cultural activities such as concerts, festivals, etc. regularly take place in these interlocked spaces, dynamized by the naturally performative scope of the place.

This *de facto* resistance of cultural hybridity also results from the fact that it is impossible to achieve a real purge of the building by unravelling the Ottoman content from its numerous and complex colonial trappings—even if the latter are henceforth clearly identified. Therefore, the real question is whether, in the context of a visit to the museum, the colonial stratum is interesting today for Algerian society. Even if, as historical testimony, it deserves not to be erased, it is, on the contrary, foreign to the subtle charm of the palace that evokes life, both in the gardens and in the whole setting: the colonnaded galleries that protect it from heat and rain, the inscriptions provoking food for thought, etc. On the whole, this architecture, conceived on a human scale, still continues to arouse the same feelings that were felt by the French, in particular writers and artists (the Vernets, Gautiers, Maupassants, and the like), visiting the place in the nineteenth century. Bearing this in mind, one can credit a conscious poetics of hybridity with managing to have a simultaneous aesthetic and political effect up to the present day, while triumphing at once over the great colonial damage and the threats of paralysis that are the risks of all purifying patrimonialization.

Translated from the French by Maureen O'Hare Wilson





Part 3: Crafted Identities

Ashley V. Miller

“What Is Colonial Art? And How Can It Be Modern?”

Design and Modernity in France and Morocco, 1925

In 1925, responding to a call for “modern” arts and products from the colonies, the French Protectorate of Morocco participated in the International Exposition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts in Paris. The Art Deco Exposition is best remembered for its promotion of a new French “*style moderne*” in architecture and applied and decorative arts.¹ The Exposition was pivotal to international conceptualizations of modern design in the first half of the twentieth century. Less well recollected is that the Exposition took place at the height of the French colonial empire’s global expansion following World War I. The colonial world permeated it. Raw materials extracted from colonized landscapes were ever present. Hardwoods from West Africa, Madagascar, French Guiana, and Asia displaced European pine and poplar in carpentry throughout the Exposition.² European artists and designers experimented with motifs and forms referencing recently excavated ancient Egyptian and classical artworks and found inspiration in the aesthetics of cultural works from East Asia, Central America, and West and North Africa with the heightened access to these regions made possible by colonial expansion. The impact of the colonial world was not simply in the source of visual inspiration and raw materials it provided. Rarely addressed in contemporary scholarship,³ the Art Deco Exposition also presented an important opportunity for artists, designers, and government agencies based in the French colonies to articulate their relationship to the transforming international arts landscape.

Taking the Moroccan Section at the 1925 Art Deco Exposition as a case study, I explore the interrelated histories of colonialism and modern design, examining how art makers and patrons based in colonial societies responded to the demands of the globalizing art market. At the same time, I demonstrate how the innovative works fostered by the economic and social conditions of colonialism influenced broader

1 Jared Goss, *French Art Deco* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2014); Bevis Hillier, *Art Deco of the 20s and 30s* (London: Studio Vista, 1968); Martin Battersby, *The Decorative Twenties* (New York: Collier Books, 1975).

2 Paul Léon, “Colonial Arts,” in *Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes, Paris 1925: Rapport général, Section artistique et technique*, vol. IV (Mobilier, Classes 7 et 8) (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1927), 54–55.

3 An exception is Roger Benjamin’s analysis of the North African and Colonial Pavilions at the Exposition in his book, *Orientalist Aesthetics: Art, Colonialism, and French North Africa, 1880–1930* (Berkeley: University of California, 2003), 213–19.

conceptions of artistic modernity even beyond the colonial sphere, as expressed in the context of the Exposition.

The Moroccan Section occupied a series of rooms in the North African Pavilion and was located in an area of the exposition dedicated to showcasing the arts of France's modern colonial empire (fig. 1). Crowded at the edge of the fairgrounds, these colonial displays—also including the pavilions of French West Africa and French Indochina, as well as the Pavilion of French Colonial Art, which exhibited furniture and decor designed by French artists specifically for use in the colonies—presented a surprising amalgamation of global arts and architectures that evoked the expanding geographical purview of “modern” design presented at the Art Deco Exposition. For Paul Léon, the Exposition's deputy commissioner and author of its *General Report*, despite the peripheral location of the colonial pavilions, the diverse arts and cultural products they exhibited spoke directly to the event's central objective of seeking out truly novel interventions in contemporary design. Observing the florescence of new and diverse arts in France and its colonies stemming from the “multiplying exchanges between the races” fostered by modern tourism, artistic residencies abroad, and “indigenous arts” revitalization programs, Léon asked the readers of the *Report* to consider newly urgent questions: “What is colonial art? And how can it be modern?”⁴

These questions also fueled ongoing debate within the French Protectorate of Morocco as to the possibility, and potential dangers, of innovation in Morocco's “indigenous” arts industries. The French Protectorate's approach to arts management in Morocco intersected with a larger political strategy initiated by Resident-General Hubert Lyautey (active 1912–25) to promote France's role as the legitimate “protector” of Morocco's traditional societal and cultural structures. His flagship programs, the Service of Fine Arts, Antiquities, and Historical Monuments (*Service des beaux-arts, antiquités, et monuments historiques* or SBA) and Service of Indigenous Arts (*Service des arts indigènes* or SAI), strove to revitalize Morocco's “indigenous” arts and architecture according to a carefully managed vision of cultural authenticity, locating the value of these arts specifically in their fidelity to shared knowledges and practices rooted in Morocco's distant past. For the members of the organizing committee of the Moroccan Section, all of whom were closely involved with the Protectorate's preservationist initiatives, the primary challenge inspired by the Exposition's call for strictly modern products was to promote a body of work that would be at once original while remaining “authentically” Moroccan.

In this chapter, I explore how the concept of “authenticity”—particularly as it pertains to “indigenous arts,” “crafts,” and other categories of artistic production typically associated with communities marginalized in colonial societies and art histories alike—has been wielded by various agents to express ideas about differential access to modernity. I propose that the challenge presented by the Moroccan Section, posed

⁴ Léon, *Colonial Arts*, 52.

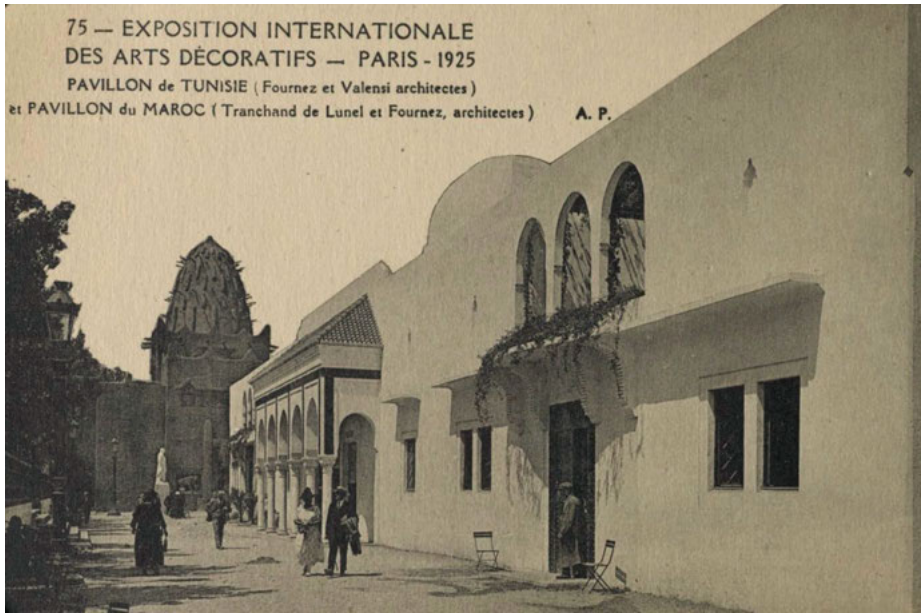


Fig. 1: Pavillon de l'Afrique du nord, Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs modernes, Paris, 1925. Postcard.

by its contributors and critics as rooted in the irreconcilable opposition between authenticity and innovation or indigeneity and modernism, was instead based in the more insidious problem of agency and the denial of that agency to specific colonial actors and art makers according to racialized conceptions of artistic production.

Existing studies of art and design in early twentieth-century Morocco have focused on the interventions of the SBA and SAI as tools of colonial “soft power” oriented toward the social and political disenfranchisement of the local Moroccan population.⁵ Central to this body of analysis are the “traditionalizing” discourses and practices⁶—often entailing claims regarding cultural authenticity—through which the

⁵ Hamid Irbouh, *Art in the Service of Colonialism: French Art Education in Morocco, 1912–1956* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2005), 16–19; Janet Abu-Lughod, *Rabat: Urban Apartheid in Morocco* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981); Gwendolyn Wright, “Tradition in the Service of Modernity: Architecture and Urbanism in French Colonial Policy, 1900–1930,” *The Journal of Modern History* 59, no. 2 (June 1987): 291–316 and *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Paul Rabinow, *French Modern: Norms and Forms of the Social Environment* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989).

⁶ Wyrzten, for example, argues that the protectorate’s prerogative to see Moroccan society, history, and culture as static “tradition” existed alongside the notion of the protectorate itself as a “developmentalist” or “modernizing” force: this representational paradox was mediated through “a strict classification of, and division that separated, the ‘traditional’ native and ‘modern’ European, a dis-

French Protectorate government consigned Morocco's artistic practices to a distant past while introducing modernizing reforms in other arenas, including urban design and architecture in the French *villes nouvelles*.⁷ What is rarely discussed, however, is how individual artists working in the French Protectorate of Morocco positioned themselves in relation to this colonial field of cultural production as a strategy for participating in the globalizing field of modern arts. To this end, I focus on the work of one particular artist who contributed to the Moroccan Section, the Algerian ceramicist Boujemâa Lamali (ca.1890–1971), and I examine how he actively mediated systems of value rooted in, on the one hand, the preservationist interests of the colonial arts administration in Morocco and, on the other, the demands of the transnational market for art and design.

Negotiating Moroccan Modernisms at the Art Deco Exposition

The organizing committee for the Moroccan Section consisted of prominent members of the first colonial administration in Morocco that had under the direction of Resident-General Lyautey developed an ambitious program of arts and heritage management throughout the decade preceding the Exposition.⁸ As recent studies have demonstrated, the activities of the French Protectorate's arts administration played

tion Chatterjee refers to more generally as the 'rule of colonial difference.'" Jonathan Wrytzen, *Making Morocco: Colonial Intervention and the Politics of Identity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), 23–24.

⁷ Physically and socially segregated from the historical *madinas* where the majority of Morocco's Muslim and remaining Jewish populations were required to live during the colonial era, the *villes nouvelles* constructed by the French administration beginning in the 1920s provided new living quarters and commercial edifices designed for use by European residents of Morocco. While the Protectorate attended to the restoration of the *madinas*' historical buildings, emphasizing in particular those with medieval origins, it sponsored an architectural program in the *villes nouvelles* intended to embody the new French-Moroccan political association through a so-called hybrid aesthetic of French modernist architecture and historical Moroccan craftsmanship. For scholars such as Janet Abu-Lughod, this deliberate aesthetic differentiation between "French" and "indigenous" spaces in Protectorate Morocco reflected a colonial ideology supporting a violent disparity of resources and opportunities along racial lines (Abu-Lughod, *Rabat*).

⁸ The architects of the pavilion were Maurice Tranchant de Lunel, the first director of the SBA, and Robert Fournez, who would later design the Moroccan pavilion for the 1931 International Colonial Exposition in Paris alongside the famous architect and urbanist Albert Laprade. Its commissioners were L. J. Nacivet, assistant-commissioner for the Morocco Pavilion at the 1922 National Colonial Exposition in Marseille and director of the Paris-based Office du Maroc, and Victor Berti, a close colleague of Lyautey and commissioner of the 1915 Franco-Moroccan Exposition in Casablanca.

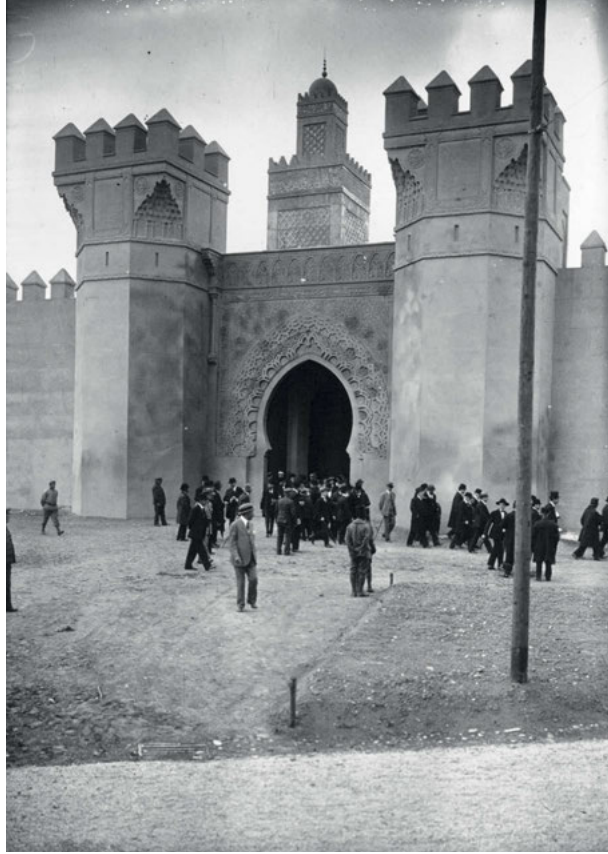


Fig. 2: Main Entrance to the Moroccan Palace, Exposition nationale coloniale, Marseille, 1922.

a critical role in supporting Lyautey’s strategy for colonial governance in Morocco.⁹ Contrasted with the assimilationist policies of the early French colonial government in Algeria (1830–1956), Lyautey’s model of indirect rule in Morocco—envisioned as a reciprocally beneficial “association” between Morocco’s monarchy and the French protectorate residence—required complex representational strategies by which agents of the French state affirmed their respect for Morocco’s “traditional” social structures and cultural practices through the strategic preservation and (re)invention of Morocco’s past.¹⁰ Alongside an extensive program of architectural preservation and restoration, public exhibitions of Morocco’s visual cultures domestically and

⁹ Irbouh, *Art in the Service of Colonialism*; Wright, “Tradition in the Service of Modernity;” Wright, *The Politics of Design*; Abu-Lughod, *Rabat*; Rabinow, *French Modern*.

¹⁰ Wyrzten, *Making Morocco*; Edmund Burke III, *The Ethnographic State: France and the Invention of Moroccan Islam* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2014) and *Prelude to Protectorate in Morocco: Precolonial Protest and Resistance, 1860–1912* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976).

abroad expressed the Protectorate administration's determination to restore Morocco to a medieval "golden age" in its cultural history.¹¹ To this end, exhibitions presented by the Protectorate's arts administrations prior to the Art Deco Exposition promoted Morocco's local arts through a system of value rooted in this archaizing vision of the country's artistic heritage. For example, while the 1917 Exhibition of Moroccan Arts in Paris encouraged comparison between Morocco's modern decorative arts and masterworks in the emerging discipline of Islamic art, the architects of the Moroccan Pavilion for the 1922 National Colonial Exposition in Marseilles reproduced fragments of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century structures in Morocco's built landscape to create an architectural pastiche evoking an image of Morocco as a living medieval kingdom (fig. 2).¹²

The Art Deco Exposition, however, required the French Protectorate administration to evaluate Morocco's modern artistic landscape according to different parameters. Organized by the French government to promote its country's leadership in contemporary international design, the Exposition's guidelines forbade contributors to exhibit historical works or reproductions. For the designers of the Moroccan Section, as one journalist put it, this meant "no Tour Hassan, no Koutoubia, no Djemaa [mosque] of Fez or Meknès, no ancient carpets, no copies of mosaic fountains ... All of that's the past and, this time, the past is forbidden."¹³ The central challenge for the designers of the Moroccan Section at the Exposition, then, was how to identify value in Morocco's contemporary arts without recourse to visual comparison with a historical corpus. How could they present artistic products from Morocco that would at once be entirely new—or modern—and yet still authentically Moroccan?

The challenge of expressing participation in an international modernity while inflecting this universal quality with one's distinctive national, regional, or cultural identity was shared across the Exposition in national and colonial pavilions alike. Despite the event's official guidelines, the solution proposed by many exhibitors was to draw strategically upon the past to articulate the trajectory of their modernizing efforts. For example, as Jared Goss notes, proponents of the *style moderne* that would characterize France's contribution to the Exposition argued that it "was distinct from manifestations of the movement in other countries by its embrace of its national past as the intellectual point of departure for creating something new."¹⁴ The novelty of the works exhibited in European pavilions most often consisted, on the one hand, in applying new technologies or industrial materials to familiar forms or, on the other,

11 Nadia Erzini, "Cultural Administration in French North Africa and the Growth of Islamic Art History," in *Discovering Islamic Art: Scholars, Collectors and Collections, 1850–1905*, ed. Stephen Vernoit (London: I. B. Tauris, 2000), 71–84.

12 Ashley V. Miller, "Tents, Palaces, and 'Imperial Souvenirs': Mobilizing Cultural Authority in the French Protectorate of Morocco," *Journal of the Middle East and Africa* 9, no. 1 (2018): 51–75.

13 "Le Maroc à l'Exposition des arts décoratifs," *France-Maroc*, no. 101 (April 1925): 79–80.

14 Goss, *French Art Deco*, 3.

in looking outward to foreign, and particularly non-European, visual cultures for a source of aesthetic "revitalization." Likewise, the designers of the Moroccan Section at the Exposition strove to present a vision that mediated past and present, universal and local, by looking to aesthetic qualities, materials, and techniques characteristic of Morocco's historical craft industries and pre-Protectorate-built landscape, while reinterpreting these elements to create furnishings and interior decoration amenable to the tastes and demands of the contemporary international consumer. As one journalist explained, the exhibit's commissioner, Victor Berti, and his colleagues thereby sought to evoke in the rooms of the Moroccan Section "a comfortable villa offering all of the contemporary conveniences, but executed with purely Moroccan materials and strictly according to Moroccan methods."¹⁵

The overarching design of the Moroccan Section attempted this conscious fusion of "Moroccan methods" and "contemporary conveniences" by referencing features of a historical Moroccan residence while reorganizing them according to current notions of the domestic ensemble. The spatial arrangement of the 1925 "villa" diverged greatly from that of the typical Moroccan *dar* (house), the latter characterized by a series of rectangular rooms opening onto a central atrium providing natural light and airflow, the function of each room changing according to need or season. In contrast, the rooms in the Moroccan Section and their furnishings were designed to reflect the specific function of each space: "The dining room, the office, the *hammam* of the villa must be precisely a dining room, office, and *hammam*, that is to say, must respond to our modern conception of the different rooms and their particular comforts."¹⁶ Similarly, the *General Report* announced that the concept of designing a furniture "ensemble" specific to the function of a particular space and integrated through a guiding aesthetic, rather than decorating a room with an assortment of unique furnishings and *objets d'art*, was one of the defining attributes of the new international modernist movement.¹⁷ This combination of vernacular domestic architecture with developing modernist conceptions of space and function extended to the arrangement of furnishings and decoration within each room. For example, while the Moroccan Section's "salon" incorporated common features of Moroccan interiors, including a carved cedar ceiling of horizontal planks (*berchla*), plain whitewashed upper walls with a decorated lower register, and tile flooring, it also bore attributes anathema to the historical architecture of Morocco's pre-Protectorate Muslim neighborhoods, such as large outward-facing windows and a monumental wood and brick fireplace supporting a massive picture frame (**fig. 3**). The designer of the "office/smoking-room," a Moroccan furniture maker known as Bel Hadj, rejected standard practices in Moroccan interior design altogether by covering the room's walls entirely in wood panel-

¹⁵ "Le Maroc à l'Exposition des arts décoratifs," 79.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 79–80.

¹⁷ *Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs modernes: Rapport général*, 9–10.



Fig. 3: “Salon” in the Moroccan Section, Exposition des arts décoratifs, Paris, 1925.

ing rather than designing a revetment organized into registers of different motifs and materials as typically encountered in the private residences, mosques, and *madrasas* restored by the French Protectorate’s arts administration (figs. 4, 5).

In addition to engaging with new conceptions of space and interior decoration promoted by the Art Deco Exposition, the Moroccan Section also drew upon the expertise of an existing community of artists and designers in the French Protectorate of Morocco whose careers reflected the transcultural mobility identified by Léon as one of the defining characteristics of the modern design environment. While previous exhibitions of Moroccan art organized by the French Protectorate featured a combination of historical artifacts and contemporary works produced under the close guidance of the SAI, the 1925 Exposition emphasized the relationship between this administration and an independently growing commercial industry for decorative arts and design in Morocco. Tranchant de Lunel and his fellow Moroccan Section committee members engaged local businesses and artists in Morocco, including the Etablissements Barbier of Casablanca, who furnished wrought iron electric chandeliers; Jacques Majorelle, the French painter and decorative artist, who designed the Section’s “salon” and “dining-room”; Bel Hadj, lead designer of the “office/smoking-room,” who traveled between Paris, Marseilles, and Morocco to manage teams



Fig. 4: "Office/Smoking-room" in the Moroccan Section at the Exposition des arts décoratifs, Paris, 1925.

of artisans to complete the woodwork for the exhibit;¹⁸ and Boujemâa Lamali, whose work we examine in the following section.

Subsequent to the Exposition, celebratory reviews of the Moroccan Section applauded its designers for achieving truly original works while critics decried a collection of objects that imitated rather than advanced Moroccan art. According to one review published in the Morocco-based periodical *France-Maroc* in April of 1925, the consistent combination of so-called modern and indigenous elements displayed throughout the Moroccan Section, present within each ensemble as much as in the craftsmanship of the smallest article of decoration, resulted in the impression of a "double originality."¹⁹ Four months later, however, another review appeared in which

¹⁸ "Le Maroc à l'Exposition des arts décoratifs," 80.

¹⁹ Ibid., 79–80. Benjamin notes that Henri Gourdon, the director-general of public instruction in Indochina, similarly praised the colonial exhibits at the 1925 Exposition, exclaiming: "They have the potential to be original, and they are by no means out of place in an exposition of *modern* decorative arts," Gourdon, "Les colonies et les protectorats à l'Exposition des arts décoratifs," *Le monde colonial illustré* 3, no. 24 (September 1925): 194; cited in Benjamin, *Orientalist Aesthetics*, 215.



Fig. 5: Interior of Al-Attarine Madrasa, Fez.

the author, an anonymous critic writing under the *nom de plume* of "El Aqça," argued that the exhibit was only an "elementary and naïve" cooptation of Moroccan art with dangerous implications for the country's already endangered indigenous arts.²⁰ How were two critics, both writing from the French Protectorate of Morocco, able to see such divergent qualities in these works?

While these critiques seemingly addressed the problematic role of innovation in a body of work defined by and valued for its fidelity to visible markers of cultural "authenticity," instead they were rooted in perceptions about the identities of the transcultural group of artists involved in designing the Moroccan Section. Specifically, they questioned how the artists fit, or did not, within stratified notions of creative agency that excluded so-called indigenous actors from participation in the modernizing trajectory to which the French colonial project aspired. In examining the work and career of one contributor to the Protectorate's exhibit at the Exposition, Boujemâa Lamali, however, we will see not only the mechanisms through which such concepts as "authenticity" and "indigeneity" were affixed to a fluctuating body of material things, but also how the instability of such connections—between the conceptual and the material—created a space in which different actors could forge identities that did not so easily map onto the racialized social structure within which the "colonial arts" were supposedly contained.

Boujemâa Lamali's "Revival" of Moroccan Ceramics

Boujemâa Lamali was a ceramicist originally from the High Kabylia region in northern Algeria whose own career was intimately connected with the French colonial system of art education and craft revitalization in North Africa.²¹ As a young man, Lamali studied at the École nationale des beaux-arts in Algiers. In 1914, the French resident general of Algeria, Charles Luteaud (active 1911–18), sent Lamali to France to work with

20 El Aqça, "Chronique Moghrebine," *France-Maroc*, no. 105 (August 1925): 1. The "Chronique Moghrebine" was an opinion piece included in every issue of *France-Maroc*, beginning in 1923 when publication of the journal moved from Paris to Casablanca; "El Aqça" was probably a pseudonym for the editorial staff based on the phrase "al-maghrib al-aksa," another name for Morocco meaning "the far West."

21 Although critical studies of Lamali have yet to be published, descriptions of his life and work are included in several surveys of pottery in North Africa. See, Jean-François Clément, "Quelques artisans d'art de la fin du XIX^{ième} siècle ou de la fin du XX^{ième} siècle," *Horizons Maghrébins: La droit à la mémoire* 30, no. 70 (2014), Special Volume: *La Céramique dans le Maghreb actuel: Artisan, artisans d'art et artiste (le cas de l'Algérie)*, ed. Jean-François Clément, 17–44, 30–44; André Boukobza, *La Poterie marocaine* (Boulogne-Billancourt: Publication Jean-Pierre Taillander, 1987), 151–54; and Philippe Alléau, "Boujemâa Lamali, le précurseur," in exh. cat. *Sèvres Saï: Le renouveau de la céramique en France et au Maroc autour des années 30*, ed. Florence Slitine et al., 84–111 (Sèvres: Manufacture nationale de Sèvres, 2007).

specialists at the Manufacture nationale de Sèvres, where he studied ceramic techniques alongside an international group of students.²² In 1919, after Lamali's further study in Spain, the director of the SAI, Joseph de la Nézière, advised Resident-General Lyautey to appoint Lamali as the regional indigenous arts inspector of Safi in southwestern Morocco. By 1920, Lamali had established his own pottery workshop in the region, training and employing thirty to forty students at a time.²³ Invited to participate in the Art Deco Exposition of 1925, Lamali submitted several decorative works, largely table lamps and vases, that exemplified his interest in combining Moroccan pottery forms with techniques derived from his study of global ceramic production.

Lamali worked under the auspices of a French Protectorate arts administration whose activities were simultaneously informed by Lyautey's preservationist philosophy and geared toward preparing the country's "indigenous" arts industries to meet the demands of the commercial market imagined for these arts. In 1918, just prior to Lamali's arrival in Safi, Lyautey had overseen the creation of the SAI to "centraliz[e] all questions concerning indigenous artistic production and especially for overseeing the manufacture and sale of its products."²⁴ The SAI understood the commercial market as both the reason for its existence and as a corrupting force from which indigenous arts must be shielded. Responding to this tension, the director of the SAI, Prosper Ricard (active 1920–35), dedicated himself to developing a system of arts inspection that would at once encourage commercial initiative within Morocco's arts and craft sectors while "protecting" artisans and consumers from the corrupting pressures of the market. As recent studies have demonstrated, the SAI's approach to balancing these requirements under Ricard's guidance resulted in a constant shifting of the parameters of "authenticity" against which contemporary artistic products were measured in order to accommodate the social and economic realities of the domestic and international commercial markets.²⁵

The actual process of renovating local art industries and centers of production involved a delicate orchestration: SAI arts inspectors like Lamali were tasked with

²² Alléau, "Boujemâa Lamali, le précurseur," 30–31.

²³ J. Goulven, "L'Histoire de la céramique à Safi," *France-Maroc*, no. 5 (1925): 83–84.

²⁴ "Le Service des arts indigènes," in *Historiques de la Direction générale de l'instruction publique, des beaux-arts et des antiquités (1912–1930)*, 145–61 (Rabat: Protectorat de la République française au Maroc, 1931), 17.

²⁵ Muriel Girard, "Invention de la tradition et authenticité sous le Protectorat au Maroc," *Socio-anthropologie* 19 (2006), <https://socio-anthropologie.revues.org/563>, consulted September 23, 2015; James E. Housefield, "Moroccan Ceramics and the Geography of Invented Traditions," *Geographical Review* 87, no. 3 (July 1997), 401–407: 403; James Mokhiber, "Le Protectorat dans la peau: Prosper Ricard and the 'native arts' in French colonial Morocco, 1899–1952," in Driss Maghraoui (ed.), *Revisiting the Colonial Past in Morocco* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013); Claire Nicholas, "Of Texts and Textiles...: Colonial Ethnography and Contemporary Moroccan Material Heritage," *Journal of North African Studies* 19, no. 3 (2014): 390–412.

encouraging certain trades without killing off others, introducing new techniques to allow for a larger scale of production without overwhelming the local population of artisans, and promoting particular forms, motifs, and products that they judged to be both culturally authentic and at the same time potentially attractive to European consumers. In some circumstances, inspectors attempted to meet these requirements through modifications to the larger structure of production, shifting the channels through which products entered the commercial market or artisans received raw materials, for example, while attempting to avoid changing the aesthetic character of the articles produced. In an autobiographical essay, Lamali explained the task assigned to him as arts inspector involved, paradoxically, “trying to improve manufacture without *touching* the current state [of production].”²⁶ In other instances, inspectors encouraged the production of specific motifs or formats that would be more attractive to a European customer. For example, shortly after the Art Deco Exposition, the Algerian-born artist Azouaou Mammeri (regional arts inspector of Marrakech from 1929–48) received instructions from Ricard to replace as much as possible the Fez-influenced floral motifs prevalent in the urban arts of Marrakech with geometric motifs inspired by the crafts of the Amazigh (Berber) communities in the south.²⁷ In every case, regional arts inspectors engaged in a continuous process of selection.

For Lamali, the task of selecting and transforming elements of Morocco’s visual and material cultures to adhere to the Protectorate administration’s directives proved a central feature of his creative experimentation. Lamali’s own account of this process reveals acrobatic feats of revisionist history supporting a narrative of Safi’s artistic heritage that suited his vision for the industry’s contemporary renovation. On arriving in Safi, Lamali embarked on an investigation of the history of its ceramic production, relying particularly on oral histories given by the relatives of artisans and the last two remaining *ma’alams* (master artisans) themselves.²⁸ Subsequently, he applied his own technical experience and broad knowledge of ceramic techniques to make improvements to the Safi industry. His first order of business was to recreate a blue

26 Boujemâa Lamali, “Les Poteries de Safi et leur rénovation (Extrait d’une conférence donnée à Rabat, le 23 janvier 1934),” *Nord-Sud* (1934), 13. Edmund Burke has described a similar paradox that pervaded Lyautey’s initial approach to Morocco’s political and social realms as a policy of introducing “modernity without change” (Burke, *The Ethnographic State*, 9).

27 Girard, “Invention de la tradition et authenticité.” Ricard’s interest in promoting the Amazigh arts of the Marrakech region was probably a symptom both of his particular interests as an ethnographer, as well as his recognition of the marketability of such arts. Likewise, in 1919 the Protectorate arts administrator Jean Gallotti explored the uncanny “modern-ness” of certain Moroccan arts and their likeliness to appeal to French artists and consumers, singling out the country’s Amazigh arts, which he admitted might even “adapt better to our contemporary fashions” than the more “refined” Islamic or urban arts of Morocco (Gallotti, “Les Arts indigènes au Maroc,” *Art et Décoration* (1919), 80).

28 See Goulven, “L’Histoire de la céramique à Safi,”; and Lamali, “Les Poteries de Safi et leur rénovation.”



Fig. 6: Studio of Boujemaâ Lamali (Safi, Morocco), cylindrical faience pot decorated with Middle Atlas carpet motifs, ca. 1931.

glaze made from local materials to replace the cheaper glaze that had been imported from England in the previous century; he also strove to replace with pottery shapes inspired by common domestic objects the “Hispano-Mauresque” forms that had inundated local workshops following a major commission by a visiting Spanish consul in the late nineteenth century. In justifying his artistic innovations, Lamali referred to the new forms’ and techniques’ deep connections to the region’s historical material cultures: “I did not invent forms, I simply took the forms of amphora used to store food, water, and oil in Safi. These forms had an incredible amount of character; some of them had Roman origins.”²⁹ After accomplishing his goals, however, Lamali was still unsatisfied and returned to his local informants from whom he discovered that the Safi industry had once been dominated by a succession of *ma’alams* from Fez, in the north of Morocco, living in southerly Safi during

the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; the works of ceramic produced during this time consisted not only of blue and white, but also polychrome specimens. Rather than reject these historical influences as external to Safi-bound traditions, Lamali instead used this new information to gain approval from the SAI to produce contemporary polychrome pottery in Safi. According to Lamali, the SAI’s immediate response to his request was, “as long as this manufacture had once been practiced in Safi, there was no reason not to take it up again.”³⁰ Emboldened by his later success as an exhibitor at the 1931 International Colonial Exposition in Paris, Lamali pushed his innovation even further, developing a special technique of under-glazing that, in his own words, “appl[ied] a Persian technique to the pottery of Safi”³¹ (**fig. 6**).

For the Art Deco Exposition, Lamali experimented with ways not only to combine different techniques derived from his study of European, Middle Eastern, Asian, and Moroccan pottery production, but also to create visual references across art forms that

²⁹ Lamali, “Les Poteries de Safi et leur rénovation,” 13.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

were the domain of separate craft guilds and art makers in Morocco. For example, in the Moroccan Section’s “salon” stood a large vase designed by Lamali that brought together motifs derived from Amazigh pottery, medieval revetments from Fez, and recent European decorative arts (**fig. 7**). Deviating from the radiating organization of designs commonly employed in Moroccan ceramics, the vase’s exterior decoration was divided into five separate registers, each presenting a motif repeating horizontally around the diameter of the vase. The curved lip of the vessel, as well as its base, was painted with simple black zig-zagged lines punctuated with small black and red dots, evoking the unglazed painted terra-cotta vessels produced for everyday use in northern Morocco’s rural Rif Mountains, while its neck bore a polychrome design of stylized lilies colored in washes of blue, gold, light pink, and green against a mottled red and white ground, bridging the organic inventions of Art Nouveau designers of the previous decades and the bold geometric abstraction of the new *style moderne* emerging at the 1925 Exposition. Framed within triangular borders of gold, the central register presented repeating black vegetal motifs against a terra-cotta-colored background, referencing the incised ceramic tile work integral to the interior design of elite medieval architecture in Morocco, such as the Attarine madrasa in Fez (**fig. 8**). Finally, the bottom half of the vase displayed Lamali’s interpretation of Middle Atlas carpet design with a series of interlocking diamonds painted in green, red, blue, black, and gold against a stark white ground where Lamali’s signature appeared. Lamali explained that he was interested in incorporating Amazigh textile motifs into his ceramics for his submission to the Exposition because of their visual affinity to current aesthetic tendencies he recognized in international design: “As the Exposition des arts décoratifs modernes of 1925 approached . . . I gave it some thought, and observing that décors with vibrant colors were taking pride of place, I thought of applying the decoration found in Zaïan carpets to pottery.”³²



Fig. 7: Vase designed by Boujemâa Lamali, displayed in Moroccan Section “Salon.”

32 Lamali, “Les Poteries de Safi et leur rénovation,” 13.



Fig. 8: Detail of Al-Attarine Madrasa revetment, Fez.

Lamali was awarded a silver medal at the Art Deco Exposition.³³ His success as an artist was continually validated with honors bestowed by industry authorities at the event and at subsequent expositions in Marseille (1922) and Paris (1931 and 1937). The broader commercial market of the 1920s and 1930s further evidenced his success. In 1925, one journalist remarked that the triumphs of Lamali's ceramics workshop at international exhibitions had inspired a number of important commissions from France and abroad, so that "pottery, just like grain, [had become] a major export product of Safi."³⁴ As James Housefield suggests, the SAI's support of Lamali's experimentation was directly connected to its commercial intentions for Safi's pottery industry, which they hoped would "[offer] an alternative aesthetic to balance the traditional ceramic aesthetic establishment in Fès."³⁵

That the French Protectorate's arts administration considered Lamali's idiosyncratic artistic inventions to be an important contribution to the revitalization

³³ Goulven, *Histoire de la céramique*, 84.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 83–4.

³⁵ Housefield, *Geography of Invented Traditions*, 403.

of Morocco’s indigenous arts industries may suggest that the dilemma purportedly faced by the organizers of the Moroccan Section at the Art Deco Exposition was, in fact, mere pretension. Indeed, as noted above, Lamali and the Section’s contributing artists were already embedded in a colonial arts landscape shaped by the dynamic relationship between the Protectorate’s preservationist interests and the modernizing conditions of the transnational commercial market. And yet, throughout the 1920s and into the following decade, official correspondence and literature published by members of the SAI and their critics revealed a pervasive anxiety over the potentially deleterious impact of the growing commercial market for Morocco’s colonial arts on the indigenous arts ecosystem. In a letter to Morocco’s director of public instruction in 1928, Jules Borély (director of the SBA from 1925 to 1935) even suggested that those arts nurtured by the SAI for nearly two decades should no longer be called “indigenous arts” because they had been so thoroughly appropriated by the demands of a foreign clientele.³⁶ To understand Lamali’s particular success amidst this contentious environment, we must return to the diverging reviews of the Moroccan Section published in *France-Maroc* in 1925.

Authenticity and Agency in the Colonial Arts

Where one critic discerned a level of “double originality” in the Moroccan Section’s exhibit for the Art Deco Exposition, another recoiled at its imitative depravity. Both reinforced colonialist notions of “indigenous art” as a distinctive category of cultural production circumscribed by its authentic relationship to inherited values unmarked by exogenous influence. For the first reviewer, the exhibit’s success lay in its careful maintenance of indigenous features within a modernist (non-indigenous) framework, thereby subscribing to what Roger Benjamin calls a theory of “associationist aesthetics” that projected the French Protectorate’s policy of cultural and political association—and the stratified social structure through which it was justified—onto evaluations of the works produced under its tutelage.³⁷ For this reviewer, then, the success of the Moroccan Section’s exhibit lay not in its correspondence to specific visual parameters of “authenticity”—for, as we have seen, these were constantly fluctuating—but rather in the racialized division of creative labor he imagined it to express. For El Aqça, however, the Moroccan Section evidenced the fragility of this carefully ordered hybridity. Leveraging his critique particularly at the work of Jacques Majorelle, a French artist who incorporated elements of the Marrakech region’s local

³⁶ Jules Borély to M. le Chef de l’Instruction publique (Jean Gotteland), “Rapport sur le peintre Mammeri,” May 2, 1928, F095, Archives du Maroc (ADM), Rabat.

³⁷ Benjamin, *Orientalist Aesthetics*, 215.

visual cultures into his own decorative arts practice and who was responsible for designing the Section's "salon" and "dining-room," El Aqça argued: "It is one thing, indeed, to be inspired by an art, and another thing to have adopted its production ... No art dies in becoming a source of inspiration for [other] artists. But there are artists who can kill a primitive art, in wanting to do it too much themselves."³⁸ Likewise, in Marrakech, SAI administrators complained that, in the face of Majorelle's own successful decorative arts business, "local traditional leather goods [had] been disappearing more and more because all of the manufacturers in the souks [had] begun to copy Majorelle's models."³⁹ Claims that a French artist had successfully captured the market for "indigenous" leatherwork in Marrakech only reinforced anxieties expressed by Borély and Al Aqça alike over the dangers a transcultural colonial arts environment, such as that represented by the Moroccan Section at the Exposition, posed for the integrity of Morocco's indigenous arts.

But how did Lamali escape such criticism? Neither French nor Moroccan, his identity as an art maker and the works he produced did not easily fit within the parameters of "associationist aesthetics"; nevertheless, he was continuously praised by the Protectorate administration for his innovative mediation of Moroccan craft traditions with aesthetic tendencies expressed in international modernist design.⁴⁰ I propose that his particular success lay in his ability to speak the French Protectorate's language, avidly positioning his own work and identity within the framework—and inconsistencies—of its preservationist lexicon. His ability to claim special access to Safi's "indigenous" arts, both as an internationally-schooled ceramics expert and as a North African himself, solidified his status within the SAI; at the same time, his long-term relationship with the French colonial administration facilitated his access to and mobility within the broader international arts community.

Modern design in the early twentieth century was fueled by networks of transcultural interaction, the large-scale extraction of material resources, and the implementation of new structures of human labor entailed in the project of European colonial-

³⁸ El Aqça, "Chronique Moghrebine," 1.

³⁹ Chef du Bureau économique de Marrakech (Martin) to Chef du Service du commerce et de l'industrie de Rabat, July 23, 1925, Archives du Maroc, Rabat (ADM). Likewise, upon taking the post of regional indigenous arts inspector of Marrakech, Azouaou Mammeri was weary of Majorelle's cooption of these arts and complained that Majorelle and fellow Marrakech shop owner René Benezec had "corrupted the taste of some 150 artisans who copied their models without understanding what they were doing," Mammeri, quoted in Felix Marcilhac, *La Vie et l'oeuvre de Jacques Majorelle (1886–1962)* (Courbevoie, Paris: ACR Edition, 1988), 92.

⁴⁰ This narrative concerning Lamali's work continues to be perpetuated in recent exhibitions in Morocco dedicated to Safi's colonial-era ceramics industries, such as: *Sèvres Safi: Le renouveau de la céramique en France et au Maroc autour des années 30*, Espace d'Art Actua, Casablanca (April 19 – June 15, 2007), and *Céramique de Safi: Entre histoire et gestes ancestraux*, Espace d'Art Actua, Casablanca (April 19 – September 28, 2018).

ism.⁴¹ Along with growing recognition of modernity’s expanding geographical and cultural space, as expressed in commentary surrounding the Art Deco Exposition, came competition and anxiety over who had the right to participate in its articulation. Colonial administrations like that of the French Protectorate of Morocco developed programs of arts education and commercial production that positioned their respective nations and colonies in leading roles within the globalizing design field and, at the same time, reinforced conceptions of social and racial hierarchy that justified the human exploitation necessary to this colonial-era economy.⁴² Within this context, malleable concepts such as “authenticity,” “indigeneity,” and “tradition” were powerful tools for expressing ordered hierarchy within an increasingly interconnected global arena. It is crucial to recognize, however, that this discourse of differentiated access to modernity did not in reality describe the experiences and identities of the diverse actors and art makers engaged in the production of modernist works.

In *Mapping Modernisms*, Elizabeth Harney and Ruth B. Phillips identify “indigeneity” not as an inherent quality, but as “a designation whose application during the colonial era relegated a set of globally dispersed modernisms to the margins of art history.”⁴³ They explain that one of the central aims of their volume is, therefore, to elucidate the important place of arts produced by colonized and indigenous artists within the global history of modernism “despite the constraints imposed by imperialist structures.”⁴⁴ I further contend that art historians committed to redefining modernism as a global and transcultural phenomenon must not only seek out evidence of resistance to imperial structures and ideologies, but also consider the creative possibilities available even *within* these systems. Boujemâa Lamali’s case indicates

41 Deborah Silverman has likewise explored the complex ways in which European imperial interests in Africa, and specifically King Leopold’s violent exploitation of labor and resources in Central Africa, infiltrated the material and aesthetic frameworks operative in the articulation of the Art Nouveau movement in Belgium at the end of the prior century. Notably, in contrast to the theories of “associationist aesthetics” developed in French colonial North Africa during the early twentieth century, which emphasized an ordered cross-cultural collaboration, according to Silverman the discourse surrounding Art Nouveau design in Belgium obscured its indebtedness to the visual, material, and human “resources” of the Congo Free State. Deborah L. Silverman, “Art Nouveau, Art of Darkness: African Lineages of Belgian Modernism, Part I,” *West 86th: A Journal of Decorative Arts, Design History, and Material Culture* 18, no. 1 (2011): 139–81.

42 French colonial administrations outside of North Africa also developed programs of “indigenous” arts pedagogy that took the French Protectorate’s policies as inspiration while reflecting differing racialized ideologies applied in different regions of the French colonial empire. For discussion of French colonial arts policy in West Africa, for example, see Amanda Gilvin, “Teaching African Artisanry, Seeing African Labor: Persistent Pedagogies in Twentieth-Century Niger,” *Critical Interventions* 8, no. 1 (2014): 74–95.

43 Elizabeth Harney and Ruth B. Phillips, “Inside Modernity: Indigeneity, Coloniality, Modernisms,” in *Mapping Modernisms: Art, Indigeneity, Colonialism*, ed. Elizabeth Harney and Ruth B. Phillips, 1–32 (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2018), 16.

44 *Ibid.*, 3

strategies by which diverse individuals expressed modern subjectivities within the restrictive social environment of the French Protectorate of Morocco. It is crucial to recall that he thrived as an artist within this context not only by navigating colonialist conceptions of “authenticity” and “indigeneity” pertaining to Morocco’s arts, but by actively participating in their construction. Stories like his are not often featured in histories of modern art precisely because of their association with mechanisms of colonial control; and yet, in failing to consider such stories, we risk overlooking a whole body of creative work that was indeed crucial to the articulation of modern art—such as the products of colonial indigenous arts schools and “crafts” more broadly—and, meanwhile, deny their makers agency. This essay thus suggests the importance for further research into the diverse material pathways, social relationships, and creative processes through which different kinds of modern art makers imagined themselves and their work in relation to the past and to the rapidly changing present, whether against or along the contours of the colonial arts landscape.

Victoria L. Rovine

Crafting Colonial Power

Weaving and Empire in France and French West Africa

Craft—its technologies, its quality, its makers, its markets—makes frequent appearances in the archives of modern French empire. The craft production of colonial subjects appears as the object of both rhapsodic praise and scornful denigration, and as the target of colonial administrators' interventions, some aiming to preserve long-standing practices, others to replace these practices entirely. Through an exploration of the archives of colonial rule in interwar French West Africa, this essay aims to investigate the colonial rhetoric of craft. By narrowing my focus further to a single medium, cotton textiles, I seek to draw out the specific factors that lent a West African weaving technology and its products heightened significance in the programs and policies of a European colonial regime. While French interests, opinions, and aims speak loudly from the archives of colonial rule in West Africa, the voices of the West Africans who were the subjects of this craft-focused discourse are faint at best. Yet reading between the lines of the French administration's commentaries and critiques, I conclude with a focus on the agency of West African textile producers and consumers, who were both the objects of and the obstacles to imperial plans for a colonial cotton economy.

Like its classificatory counterparts “art” and “artifact,” craft is a Western concept, applied to objects from other cultures for the purpose of absorbing them into collecting and display practices. Sidney Kasfir provides a rich discussion of the “problem of fitting African artisanal practice into the larger [Western] discursive framework of museums and universities and other places where people talk and write about art,” which she traces to the incommensurability of the “various analytical frameworks that underlie Western museum classifications” and the “ideas that are held by the original makers and owners of the objects.”¹ Failure to appreciate the ideas held by makers and owners, as I will describe in the case of cotton textiles in French West Africa, led to the failure of cultural and economic programs implemented by the colony's administrators.

As a category of material culture, craft is generally defined by the primacy of functionality and manufacture by hand: the hand-built ceramic vessel that holds water, the axe forged by a blacksmith used to fell a tree, the child's toy made of a repurposed tin can, the cloth woven on a foot- and/or hand-driven loom. This functionality also extended beyond the immediate and the practical, for this category could be harnessed to associations that might then be mobilized to new purposes. Craft historian

¹ Sidney Littlefield Kasfir, *African Art and the Colonial Encounter: Inventing a Global Commodity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 190–91.

Glenn Adamson succinctly described one such purpose: “Craft was a crucial prop in the theater of imperialism.”² In the effort to expand modern colonial empire, craft and its makers could be deployed as adjuncts to more explicitly coercive methods of imperial extension such as military, economic, and political strategies. Because craft was a concept in flux, redefined in the face of rapidly developing industries, it could be applied to a wide array of contexts to diverse—even contradictory—ends. Colonial officials extended conceptions of craft (in French, *artisanat*) from Europe to the colonies, where they hoped to make use of this category of material culture as an element of efforts to shape French public opinion, and in the case of cotton, to enhance their economic programs.³ Administrators soon found, however, that a great distance separated their conception from the actual implementation of craft-focused policies and programs, for their efforts met with limited success.

In his historiography of craft’s modern meanings, Adamson convincingly demonstrates that the concept was born out of the industrial revolution, between 1750 and 1850, emerging “as a coherent idea, a defined terrain, only as industry’s opposite number, or ‘other.’”⁴ Just as industry was imagined as “other” to the work of artisans, so too were France’s colonial subjects in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean constructed as Europe’s “other” in the imperial imaginary. European exoticization of Africans and their material culture certainly did not begin with the modern colonial era, but I will assert that craft or *artisanat* gained symbolic and economic significance as a tool of empire during the interwar period. These two manifestations of othering coincided in the craft production of the colonies. Indeed, modern conceptions of craft might almost seem to have been invented just in time to serve the interests of the colonial endeavor, institutionalizing a category that could be mobilized to document, classify, and appraise people and cultures.

Specialized artisans have for centuries produced essential elements of daily life in West African communities, working in metal, clay, leather, cotton and wool, basketry materials, and other media.⁵ Among the artisans whose roles had long been established in the region’s communities—the producers of metal implements and

2 Glenn Adamson, *The Invention of Craft* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), xvi.

3 One might find a circular network of meaning-making at the heart of Western conceptions of craft, for one of the key theorists of the Arts and Crafts movement, Mumbai-based curator George Birdsong, was himself strongly influenced by his appreciation for the “craft production and aesthetic values” of rural Indian communities (Adamson, *Invention of Craft*, 120).

4 Adamson, *Invention of Craft*, xiii.

5 The antiquity of artisanal specialization in much of West Africa is documented in the form of descriptions by fourteenth-century Arab chroniclers as well as in archaeological remains. Beyond the practical functions of their work—as tools, weapons, clothing, containers, etc.—artisans have for as long been imbued with spiritual power, as evidenced by archaeological documentation of separate artisans’ quarters at ancient sites (Anne Haour, *Outsiders and Strangers: An Archaeology of Liminality in West Africa*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 108–11.

jewelry, pottery, leather goods, and masonry—the weavers of textiles were deemed best suited to serve as imperial props. Textiles and their creators frequently appear in the archives of colonial rule in Afrique Occidentale Française (AOF, the federation of eight colonies of which the Soudan Français was the largest). These descriptions include a dramatic rendering of West African cosmology by famed ethnographer Marcel Griaule; an excerpt from a study of the colony's cotton production by senior colonial administrator Charles Monteil, whose work was much-cited by his contemporaries; and a close observation of the economy of weaving from an unpublished report by a low-level bureaucrat in the administration of the Soudan Français:

At sunrise on the appointed day the seventh ancestor Spirit spat out eighty threads of cotton; these he distributed between his upper teeth which acted as the teeth of a weaver's reed. In this way he made the uneven threads of a warp. He did the same with the lower teeth to make the even threads. By opening and closing his jaws the Spirit caused the threads of the warp to make the movements required in weaving ... As the threads crossed and uncrossed, the two tips of the Spirit's forked tongue pushed the thread of the weft to and fro ... and the web took shape from his mouth in the breath of the second revealed Word ... They [the words that the Spirit uttered] were the cloth, and the cloth was the Word.

—The Dogon sage Ogotemmêli, as recorded by French ethnographer Marcel Griaule⁶

The production and trade in this cloth existed in the eleventh century exactly as it does today, and unquestionably goes back even further, to a more distant era. This persistence in making a textile that is so apparently inconvenient, and in spite of knowledge of fabrics made by other means, is an example of the indigenous culture's resistance to innovations that would revolutionize their practices, while the use of this band to create clothing in diverse and complicated styles confirms the flexibility of the native in adapting his own means to the imitation of foreign forms.

—Charles Monteil, former colonial administrator and member of the Académie des Sciences coloniales⁷

The pace of weaving is pretty fast, many weavers can make nearly eighty picks [passes of the shuttle that holds the weft threads] every minute. They produce seven to eight meters of cloth per day, and their prices most often vary according to the width of the woven strips. If a cloth woven of four-centimeter-wide bands costs as much as 180–200 francs, they won't ask more than eighteen to twenty francs for a cloth made of thirty-centimeter-wide strips ... I should note in

⁶ Marcel Griaule, *Conversations with Ogotemmêli* (1956) originally published as *Dieu d'eau* (Paris: Les éditions du chêne, 1948), 27–28. Although its 1948 publication places this work beyond the interwar period that is my focus, Griaule's account of weaving in the ornate cosmology of the Dogon reflects a reputation largely developed before the World War II, following Griaule's initial leadership of a team of researchers in Mali in the 1930s, when his work was the subject of popular fascination as well as scholarly publications.

⁷ Charles Monteil, *Le Coton chez les Noirs: État actuel de nos connaissances sur l'Afrique Occidentale Française* (Paris: Librairie Émile Larose, 1927), 59.

passing that in general, natives would rather pay more for a handwoven textile than provide for their needs less expensively with trade cloth.

—Marcel Alibert⁸

The “apparently inconvenient” textiles whose continued use perplexed Monteil, whose origins were imagined in Dogon cosmology as the product of an ancestor spirit’s mouth spewing forth threads, and that are the work of agile hands creating cloth made of narrow strips that are highly valued in regional markets: these are all the descriptions of the characteristic textiles used in much of West Africa to this day, as illustrated by an early twenty-first century market near Mopti (**fig. 1**). The loom, which is referred to in the literature as a strip loom, a horizontal loom, and as a treadle loom, can be found across a wide swath of West Africa, and everywhere it is used exclusively

⁸ Marcel Alibert, “Rapport de tournée d’étude dans la vallée du Sénégal du 10 au 25 mai 1938,” Archives Nationales du Sénégal, 8.



Fig. 1: Women from a Fulani weaving family selling strip woven textiles, Guimbé, Mali, 2006.

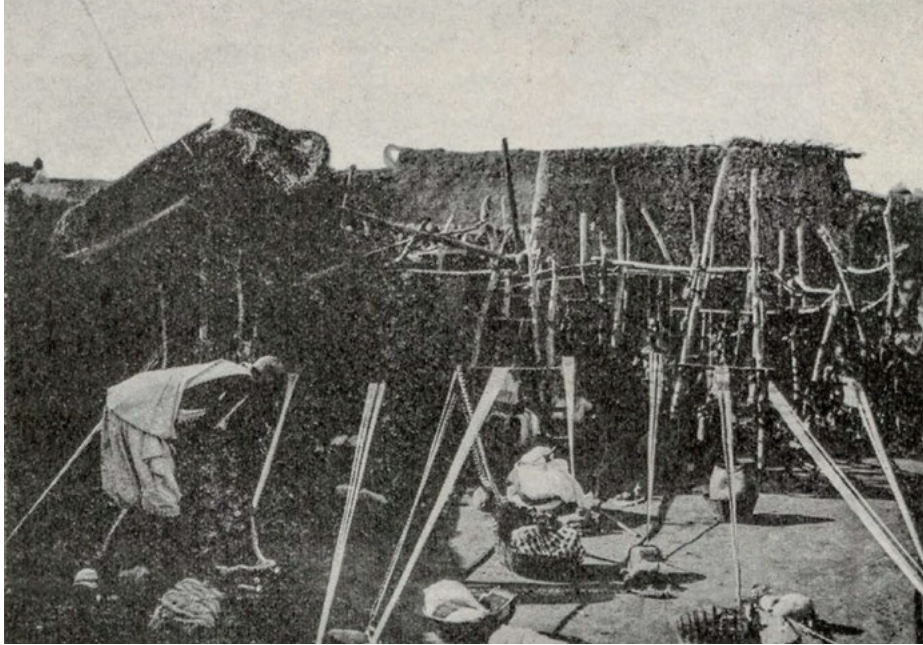


Fig. 2: Strip looms in Guinée Française and Soudan Français, Special issue of *Les Annales Coloniales*, “L’Artisanat en A.O.F.,” 34, no. 9 (1933): 7.

by male weavers.⁹ Its characteristic attributes include its horizontal orientation with the warp stretching out in front of the weaver; the heddles the weaver operates using his feet to open and close the shed (the space between the parted warp threads) while he passes the shuttle (holding the weft thread) back and forth; and most importantly, the width of the warp, which ranges from as narrow as a half an inch to as wide as twelve inches or more (**fig. 2**).¹⁰ The loom is portable—a weaver can roll up the warp and disassemble his loom at the end of the day—and the long strips of cotton cloth it produces may be sold in rolls or assembled by the weaver into finished cloths. To create a cloth with woven patterns, the weaver must calculate the composition of the finished cloth based on the assembly of the narrow strips he creates; the pattern emerges as the strips are joined together edge to edge.

⁹ Colleen E. Kriger, *Cloth in West African History* (New York: AltaMira Press, 2006), 70–72. Strip looms are used in much of West Africa, from Senegal to Niger, Mauritania to Ghana, in each region producing cloth in diverse styles.

¹⁰ John Picton, “Tradition, Technology, and Lurex: Some Comments on Textile History and Design in West Africa,” in *History, Design, and Craft in West African Strip-Woven Cloth*, ed. Roy Sieber (Washington DC: National Museum of African Art, 1992), 20.

This strip-ness provided an entry point for imperial programs; the ostensible impracticality of the narrow bands was frequently cited as evidence of the need for French intervention. The solution was simple, as prominent colonial administrator Robert Delavignette declared in 1935: “Let’s widen the traditional loom that weaves bands that are too narrow.”¹¹ This transformation was, he explained, the worthy aim of Jean Le Gall, the director of the *Maison des Artisans Soudanais*, an artisan training school in Bamako that exemplified the craft-centrism of interwar French power in West Africa. I will return to this institution and its staff.

Unlike military force or economic policies, artisans and their products did not themselves directly advance the work of empire. Instead, they were mobilized to serve the cause of imperial power through documentation, exemplified by the work of Griaule, Monteil, and others, by which artisans were integrated into a narrative that supported the administration’s complicated—and contradictory—interwar policies. The documentation of West African artisans in images, reports, popular press, and expositions produced by administrators, journalists, and academics shaped French perception of these cultures. These three excerpts reflect distinct approaches to this documentation-as-mobilization: craft as emblematic of the exotic cultures of the colonies (Griaule); craft as evidence of the inferiority of technologies in colonized cultures and, by implication, the positive potential for French influence (Monteil); and craft as an economic product in markets that posed challenges and opportunities for French interests (Alibert).

Rather than the widely read works by Monteil and Griaule, which represent prominent stories told through West African artisanal production, my focus is on the third of these excerpts, drawn from a 1938 administrative report that was modest in its aspirations and direct in its observations, unadorned with expertise or vivid language. Yet beneath its quotidian surface, the document’s descriptions of artisanal production reveal the tension between the official narrative—of tradition-bound West African artisans who retained illogical, inferior technologies that call out for French intervention—and direct descriptions of artisans, their products, and the outcomes of French interventions to “improve” these techniques. In 1938, Marcel Alibert was the newly appointed *Directeur Adjoint* of the *Maison des Artisans Soudanais*. He was far from an expert on West Africa; as he noted in the cover memo that accompanied the report, his two-week study tour of the region “was for me a first experience of Africa.”¹² He was tasked with documenting the state of artisanal production in towns along the course of the Senegal River in what is today western Senegal and eastern Mali. The report, now in Senegal’s National Archives, provides valuable insights and a (presumably unintentional) alternative to the narratives created by more prominent forms of documentation.

11 Robert Delavignette, *Soudan-Paris-Bourgogne* (Paris: Editions Bernard Grasset, 1935), 57–58.

12 Marcel Alibert, “Rapport de tournée d’étude dans la Vallée du Sénégal du 10 au 25 mai 1938” (Dakar: Archives Nationales du Sénégal), 1.

Inventing and Documenting: *Artisanat* in France and French West Africa

Before embarking on Alibert's study tour, I pause to consider the confluence of factors that contributed to the prominence of craft in the administrative programs of French West Africa. The adaptation of *artisanat* to imperial power seems to be at odds with its unassuming profile, associated with the manufacture of useful goods at small scale, using human-powered technologies passed down through informal, interpersonal networks. What was it about craft that made it so expedient as a messaging tool in the context of modern global imperialism, an enterprise driven by the quest for raw materials to fuel Europe's industrial manufacture?¹³ One explanation may lie in the disjuncture itself, in the distance between the human scale of the handmade, and the global, mechanized economies of empire. Adamson characterizes craft as a bridge between the intimacy of the handmade and the remoteness of the industrial: "Craft simultaneously gives shape to our desire for continuity and reminds us of the actual, tragic discontinuity of our experience."¹⁴ Larry Shiner also finds in craft a sense of disjuncture: "By the 1930s, with the widespread embrace of the machine ethos, the design profession began its steady rise in status, while studio craft production was increasingly viewed as stuck in nostalgia."¹⁵ Adamson and Shiner both identify evocation of the past as a key element of craft's modern incarnations; for Adamson that past is a longed-for sense of connection, while Shiner describes a shifting interwar culture in which craft is "stuck" in memories of the past. These alternate conceptions were evident in colonial settings as well, for the documentation of artisans veered between their representations as the endangered bearers of treasured cultural practices, and as the obsolete residue of the past.

Interwar France offered particularly fertile ground for craft-centered nostalgia in both its positive and negative valences. In her analysis of modernism, art, and nostalgia in 1920s and 30s France, Romy Golan challenges prevailing art-historical narratives that have imagined the period as a perpetuation of the nation's prewar culture of avant-gardism. Instead, she asserts that the interwar years were "a period of

¹³ As Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch notes, the end of the trade in enslaved African people (first abolished in the French empire 1815, abolished in 1848 with full emancipation of slaves) was quickly replaced by "the importation of numerous raw materials crucial to metropolitan industries" (Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, "Vendre: le Mythe Économique Colonial," in *Culture Coloniale: La France Conquise par son Empire, 1871–1931*, Pascal Blanchard and Sandrine Lemaire, eds. (Paris: Éditions Autrement, 2003), 165.

¹⁴ Adamson, *Invention of Craft*, 184.

¹⁵ Larry Shiner, "Blurred Boundaries?" Rethinking the Concept of Craft and its Relation to Art and Design," *Philosophy Compass* 7, no. 4 (2012), 237.

increasing political, economic, and cultural retrenchment.”¹⁶ Shanny Peer documents the same trend as a broad cultural mood in her analysis of French national identity represented through an event that might be said to embody the apotheosis of interwar French culture: the 1937 Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne. Significantly, this public extravaganza, the last in an era of national expositions, took as its theme the practical arts, its colonial pavilions featuring an array of craftspeople. As Peer describes, the event presented an insular France: “rural France, regionalism, and folklore figured prominently in efforts to rearticulate French national identity.”¹⁷

In this context, the notion of the artisan as vestige of a simpler, more culturally pure France gained currency: “For many French intellectuals, the peasant (and often the artisan as well) were not simply remnants of a disappearing economic order; instead, they personified the age old virtues of French civilization which needed to be reaffirmed in the face of the new industrial society epitomized in the United States.”¹⁸ Their association with an imagined past lent artisans and their products symbolic weight as exemplars of the bygone in a postwar, industrializing society. Indeed, as Steven Zdatny notes in his history of artisans in twentieth-century France, the very notion of *artisanat* as a category was born in the interwar period: “In the years following World War I France witnessed the arrival of a new political force: the artisanal movement. In 1919 the word *artisanat* had still to enter the French social lexicon, whereas by 1925 the movement had obtained for master craftsmen an official status and a set of fiscal and legal privileges to go with it.”¹⁹ This newly recognized and regulated class was the subject of both national pride and anxiety, vacillating “between a rhetorical confidence that, as the ‘soul of France,’ the *artisanat* would never die and the fear that industrialization was destroying it.”²⁰

While in interwar France artisans were recognized in order to rescue them from the growing dominance of mass-produced goods, French commentators and administrators could turn to the colonies to find a reservoir of unchanging artisanal production that might remind—or even inspire—the jaded, emphatically modern denizens of the metropole. Writer and imperial enthusiast Raoul Monmarson, author of several books on France’s empire in Africa, described in cinematic fashion both the disappearance of artisans in the West and their enduring, instinctive continuity in the colonies: “The twentieth century kneels before a tomb excavated by the machine . . . Thus,

¹⁶ Romy Golan, *Modernity and Nostalgia: Art and Politics in France Between the Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), X.

¹⁷ Shanny Peer, *France on Display: Peasant, Provincials, and Folklore in the 1937 Paris World’s Fair* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 3.

¹⁸ Peer, *France on Display*, 102.

¹⁹ Steven Zdatny, *The Politics of Survival: Artisans in Twentieth-Century France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 33.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 68.

we live fast ... in the insensate realm of the manufactured object.”²¹ Yet, elsewhere within the borders of Greater France, there were places still untouched by the cold metal of the machines: “One must leave Europe to rediscover the historical rhythm of life,” for in France’s colonies in Africa and Asia “the heavy and slow evolution seems at times to be frozen for eternity.”²² As Europe moved relentlessly forward into the future, French commentators and officials could cite the artisans of the colonies as exemplars of these cultures’ preservation of past practices, imagined as frozen in a timeless present.

So ennobled was this vision of the artisan as cultural guardian that French West Africa’s administrators occasionally imagined themselves as embodiments of these skilled makers, their product the empire itself. In 1913, Georges Hardy, director of the AOF’s education ministry, described the task of the colony’s government through the work of textiles: “We’re cutting a new pattern, in a manner of speaking; as yet we understand little of this rough fabric that has been entrusted to us, and our scissors, we must admit, hesitate in our hands.”²³ The image of hand—the key tool of the artisan—was also prominent in a 1936 paean to the efforts of French teachers and other functionaries in the colonial government: “The teachers of Soudan Français are proud of the work they have enthusiastically collaborated in. They are passing the torch on to their successors, proud to have held it with a sure hand and to have thereby been the modest artisans of Greater France.”²⁴ The sureness of the hand, the cutting and shaping by which French administrators transformed the colony: the language of artisanship enhanced the otherwise bureaucratic vocabulary of administration.

Yet, even as they were held up as the refuge of artisanal practices, craft producers in the colonies were subjected to the same anticipatory nostalgia as their counterparts in France. While in France the rise of factory production and automation were blamed for the near-extinction of the nation’s artisans, in the colonies the culprit was the importation of the very same industrial products whose high quality, stylishness, and novelty would surely lead African consumers to abandon their inferior local goods and artisans. An anonymous 1933 article concludes the same special issue of *Annales Coloniales* in which Monmarson extolled the *artisanat* of the colonies, but here the author blames the weak will of the colonial consumer for the disappearance of these crafts. After characterizing the crafts of the colonies as “rudimentary” and unchanged by the “slow flow of the golden sand from the hourglass of time,” the

21 Raoul Monmarson, “Artisanat...” *Les Annales Coloniales* 34, no. 2 (1933), 1.

22 Monmarson, *Artisanat*, 1–2.

23 Georges Hardy, “Notre Bulletin.” *Bulletin de l’enseignement de l’Afrique occidentale française* 1, no. 1 (1913), 1.

24 Frédéric Assomption and Gabriel Bernadou, “Exposé synthétique de l’Enseignement au Soudan Français,” in *Premier Congrès Soudanais de Technique et Colonisation Africaines*, vol II (Paris: Gouvernement Général de l’Afrique Occidentale Française, 1936), 43.

writer declares: “our arrival changed all this . . . European cotton fabrics, for example, stilled many looms in rural villages and forced the weaver back to his farm.”²⁵ The editorial concludes with a call for French influence to re-instill a work ethic in these societies, “which are inclined to follow the rule of the least possible effort.” Thus, the fault lies with the French, whose superior products were irresistible, and with the West Africans themselves, who surrendered their work ethic at the first opportunity to acquire these French goods.

In 1937, Charles Béart, Director of Senegal’s Department Education (and later director of the AOF’s premier school for colonial subjects, the École William Ponty), cited sculpture as well as textile arts to bemoan the decline and the vulnerability of artisanship: “Artisans working for ‘novelty’ make ‘anything that sells.’ For example, a scatological figurine that reflects a custom where it was made is imitated by the hundreds in distant regions by sculptors who first encountered the style through an administrator; the Peuhls [Fulani] embroider styles from Galeries Lafayette²⁶ for white women.”²⁷ Béart’s dismay is plain, as is his assignment of blame: West African artisans were responsible for the corruption of their own work. Béart does allow that the French themselves fueled this degradation of markets and products that had been ostensibly pure, yet his briefly sketched examples portray the French role as indirect: an administrator who unwittingly instigates a profusion of scatological figurines, and “white women” who were simply the recipients of this innovative embroidery, shaped by the skills of Fulani women and the French styles they reproduced. Wherever the blame was placed, Béart and other administrators portrayed the colony’s artisans as vulnerable, impressionable, and ill-prepared for the temptations and the challenges they faced as their cultures “entered” the modern world.

Béart’s commentary leads us back to Alibert’s 1938 report on his study tour of artisanal production, for this administrator was Alibert’s sole companion (or perhaps more likely, his sole French companion). In the report’s cover memo, Alibert thanked Béart for sharing his “perfect understanding of colonial customs.”²⁸ This “perfect understanding” reflects the wider context of interwar French conceptions of *artisanat* and artisans, and the application of these conceptions to colonial rule.

25 “L’industrie indigène en AOF,” *Les Annales Coloniales* 34, no. 2 (1933), 15.

26 Galeries Lafayette was, and still is, a major French department store.

27 Charles Béart, “Les Dispositions Esthétiques des Indigènes et l’Évolution de la Culture,” in *Congrès International de l’Évolution Culturelle des Peuples Coloniaux, Rapports et Compte Rendu* (Paris: Exposition Internationale de Paris, 1938), 111.

28 Alibert, *Rapport de tournée*, 2.

Colonial Logic: “Improving” African Crafts

The founding of the Maison des Artisans Soudanais in 1932²⁹ reflected the administration’s determination to “rescue” the colony’s artisanal professions from the destructive impact of imported goods (fig. 3).³⁰ The founding director of the Maison was Jean Le Gall, whose name we have encountered through prominent colonial official Robert Delavignette, who lauded his efforts to widen the strip loom. Alibert thanked Le Gall profusely in his report’s cover memo, pledging to “do my best to be at your side, a collaborator worthy of the name.”³¹ The width of the loom was just one among many of Le Gall’s many critiques and remedies.³² His appraisal of the colony’s artisans was

²⁹ Established in 1932, the Maison’s inauguration took place the following year.

³⁰ According to the first article of the statute by which the Maison des Artisans Soudanais was established, the institution’s aim was to be “preserving and restoring native artisanal professions” (“Arrêté du Lieutenant-Gouverneur réglementant l’organisation et le fonctionnement de la Maison des Artisans soudanais de Bamako.” *Journal Officiel du Soudan Français* 29, no. 680 [1934], 476).

³¹ Alibert, *Rapport de tournée*, 2.

³² The practicality of calls for a widened loom by Le Gall and others is not at issue here—the attention to the loom’s width as a “problem” is the key factor for the present analysis. Still, I offer a brief consideration of the implications a wider-warped loom would have in the context of AOF’s weaving culture.



Fig. 3: Le bâtiment de l’artisanat (Maison des Artisans Soudanais) Bamako, 1955. Henri Georges Leroux. Agence économique de la France d’outre-mer FR ANOM 30Fi12/82.

vividly evident in his 1932 article on the training of artisans, published in the journal *L'Éducation Africaine*. Le Gall painted a dire picture, enumerating the colonial artisans' many faults, which included a lack of pride in their work; inability to innovate ("like all primitives, they readily acquire simple, rote skills"); underdeveloped aesthetic sense ("this indigenous aesthetic sense, embryonic as it is"); lack of work ethic ("we constantly try to improve their taste for work well done"); and, finally, failure to develop the "moral dignity" of their French counterparts.³³ Of weavers, Le Gall declared that what appeared to be skill was in fact simply habit or reflex, as their work on the loom was driven by these artisans' (presumably innate) sense of rhythm.³⁴ Le Gall's pessimistic view had not changed half a decade later, when Alibert joined the staff of the Maison des Artisans. In 1937, now serving as the colony's Inspector of Manual and Artisanal Education, he asserted in a report to the governor-general that the colony's artisans had a facility for imitation that was comparable to that of French children, and that they generally lacked imagination.³⁵

Despite his declarations of his esteem for both Béart and Le Gall, Alibert's report offers very different view on AOF's artisans, more complementary than critical. On June 1, 1938, Alibert submitted his illustrated report, entitled "Rapport de Tournée d'étude dans la vallée du Sénégal du 10 au 25 mai 1938" (Report on Study Tour in the Senegal River Valley from March 10 to 25 1938), addressed to a trio of AOF administrators (the AOF's Inspector General of Education and Inspector of Artisanal Technique, and the Inspector of Education in the Soudan Français). This report exists in a single copy, contained in a string-bound folder stored on a shelf in Senegal's national archives. Of the document's twenty-seven pages, illustrated with photographs and detailed drawings, twenty are devoted to cotton preparation: spinning, weaving, and dyeing. The report concludes with just three pages on pottery, metalworking, and the weaving-related medium of sisal fiber, used to produce rope. The closely observed details of textile production are valuable for their insight into the tools and techniques employed by spinners, weavers, and dyers, as are the photographs and pencil drawings.

Alibert detailed the materials and techniques of textile production—spinning, weaving, and dyeing—illustrated with closely observed pencil sketches and photographs (**fig. 4**). He proved to be a keen observer of the entire weaving process, from cotton preparation, to the looms on which the finished fiber was worked, and the decoration of the finished cloth. He documented the tools and techniques employed by

The narrow loom facilitates portability, enabling the weaver to disassemble his loom to carry it to a new patron's home or a work site. The narrow warp also speeds the work of weavers, facilitating the economy of movement described in the excerpt from Alibert's report (cited earlier).

³³ Jean Le Gall, "Éducation de l'Artisanat Indigène," *L'Éducation Africaine* 80 (1932), 172, 173, 177.

³⁴ Le Gall, *Education*, 174.

³⁵ Jean Le Gall, "Rapport Le Gall—Enseignement Artisanal, 1937" (Dakar: Archives Nationales du Sénégal), Dossier 8 49, 4.

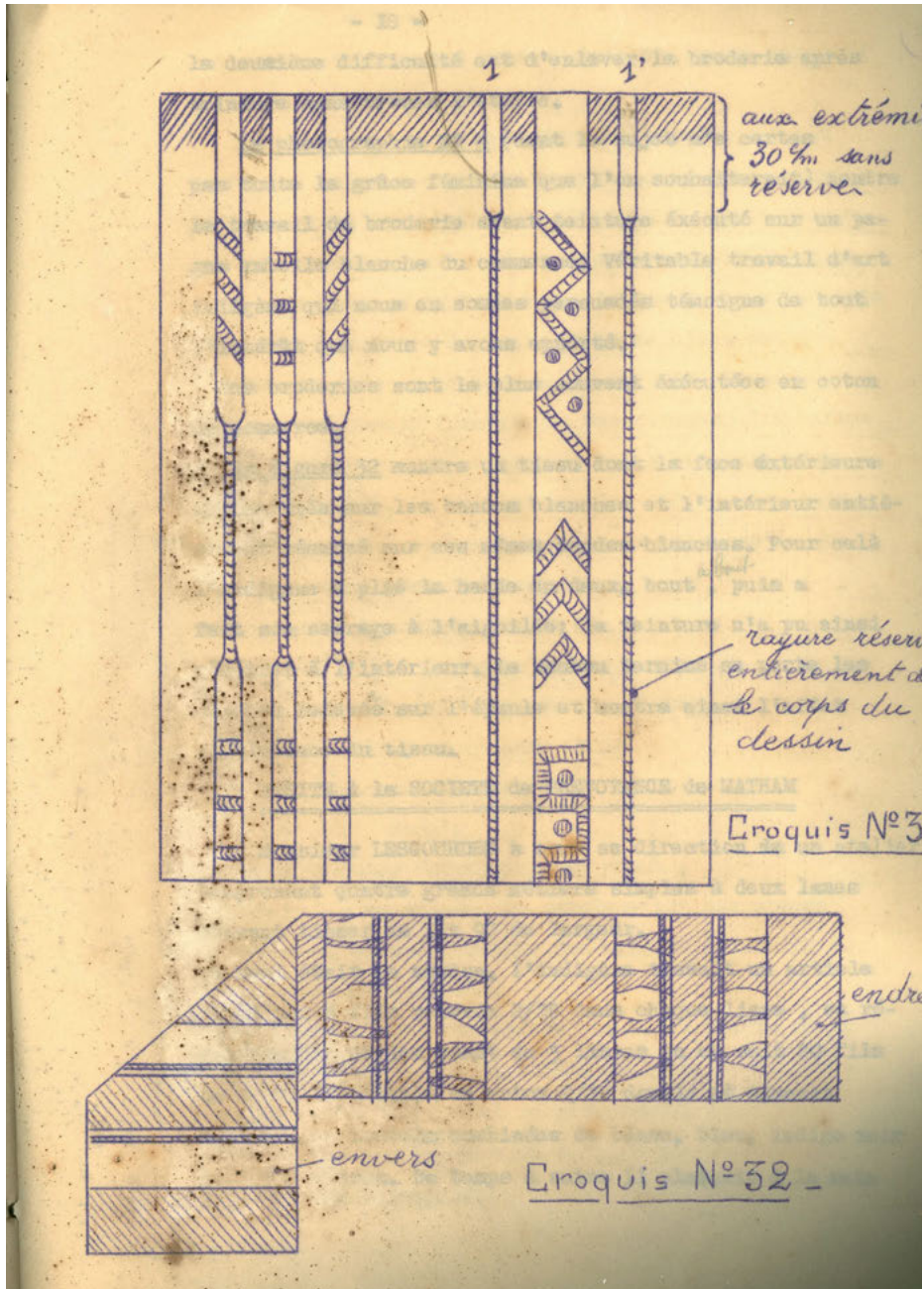


Fig. 4: Figure 32, Resist dyeing techniques. Marcel Alibert, "Rapport de tournée d'étude dans la vallée du Sénégal du 10 au 25 mai 1938," Archives Nationales du Sénégal, Document O 391 (31).



Fig. 5: Photograph 4, Dyed wrapper. Marcel Alibert, “Rapport de tournée d’étude dans la vallée du Sénégal du 10 au 25 mai 1938,” Archives Nationales du Sénégal, Document O 391 (31).

the men and women who worked with cotton, from spinning to weaving and dyeing. His descriptions are occasionally tinged with subtle inflection that recalls the reactions of Le Gall and other administrators who found little of merit in the work of West Africa’s artisans. As he introduces the strip loom, he notes that weavers were “satisfied with” or “had settled for” the narrow bands they wove. With a similar inflection, he admires the “simplicity” of the typical loom using language that subtly balances approbation with condescension: “on first sight, its [the loom’s] rusticity in combination with its simplicity evoke a smile of admiration.”³⁶

Throughout the report, however, Alibert expresses genuine respect—even enthusiasm—for the technologies and the textiles he describes. In his discussion of cotton spinning, usually the work of older women using a weighted spindle, Alibert noted

³⁶ Alibert, *Rapport de tournée*, 6.

the efficiency of the women's work, accomplished with "elegant" hands.³⁷ More dramatic was his favorable comparison of the skill required to work on a narrow, local loom with that required for the wider, European Jacquard loom that was the contemporary standard in Europe. The weaver using a strip loom, he notes, employs a continuous feat of memory ("*un effort de mémoire continu*") to sustain patterns across the width of the finished cloth, while no such skill is needed to weave cloth on mechanized looms that employ automated punch cards to produce intricate patterns.³⁸ Alibert described dyeing too in appreciative terms, detailing the complexities of intricate indigo resist techniques and the "shimmering" effects achieved by skilled dyers, whose use of stitched patterning realized even the most "fantastic" desires of their clientele.³⁹

The complications of colonial logic create jarring effects in some of the report's passages. At the conclusion of Alibert's detailed description of dyeing techniques, he refers the reader to an image: a photograph captioned "*pagne teint*" or dyed wrapper, which is glued to a page along with three photographs of textiles and textile technology (fig. 5). This is the report's sole representation of cloth in use, worn by a woman as a wrapper. Alibert notes that the elaborately worked stitch-resist cloth itself is admirable—a "veritable work of native art."⁴⁰ Yet, his description of the woman who wears the cloth subverts that positive assessment. The woman, who faces the camera squarely, is seated firmly with her hands on her knees, the wrapper held taut across the distance between her legs, shown to advantage as a broad block of pattern. Although the cloth is a work of art, Alibert notes, the woman "certainly doesn't have any of the feminine grace we would like."⁴¹ Although Alibert found it graceless, this pose was—and still is—a convention of self-presentation in many West African cultures that projects strength and dignity, while also showing off fine cloth.⁴²

Returning to the loom, Alibert recognized that the style produced by this ostensibly rustic, simple technology was highly desirable to consumers; as we have seen, imported French textiles had limited success in their competition with the products of local weavers during the early decades of the twentieth century.⁴³ Alibert seemed to

37 Alibert, *Rapport de tournée*, 4.

38 Alibert, *Rapport de tournée*, 10. The Jacquard loom, invented in 1801 and in wide use until the mid-twentieth century, used perforated cards through which passed rods attached to heddles.

39 Alibert, *Rapport de tournée*, 17.

40 As Alibert explained, the patterns are applied to these textiles through threads that are tightly stitched into undyed cloth to create patterns that appear after the cloth is dyed, and the threads removed to reveal the original color, now thrown into relief by the indigo blue of the dye.

41 Alibert, *Rapport de tournée*, 18.

42 See, for example Stephen F. Sprague, "Yoruba Photography: How the Yoruba See Themselves," *African Arts*, 12 no. 1 (1978): 52–59, on the significance of poses in Yoruba photography.

43 Richard L. Roberts, *Two Worlds of Cotton: Colonialism and the Regional Economy in the French Sudan, 1800–1946* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 192.

concur, or at least sympathize, with this preference, noting that “the locals (*indigènes*) all understand the work that goes into this weaving, and we cannot fail to cite the notable words of Bouna-Kane, the son of Abdou Salam-Kane, chief of the Damga District:⁴⁴ “The wider a band of cloth is, the less pretty it is.”⁴⁵ As Alibert noted later in his report, “the native prefers to pay more for a *pagne* woven by hand than to meet their needs at a lower price with an imported fabric.”⁴⁶

“Improvement” Projects and Unused Looms

Despite the preferences of local consumers, the French administration implemented policies to transform or replace this technology. The manifestations of these policies are documented in some of the report’s photographs. Along with photographs of a woman spinning, a weaver mounting the warp of his loom, and a weaver at work on a strip loom, Alibert included photographs of a large, industrial loom as well as other fiber-processing machines, all imported through French programs with the intention of encouraging local weavers in Bamako and in other regional centers to adopt them.⁴⁷ (figs. 6, 7) Alibert’s descriptions of these looms and other textile-related machines offered little reassurance to his colleagues who sought to transform the work of weavers in the Soudan Français, for he reported that most of these machines were sitting idle. Despite the neutral tone of his description, Alibert’s report paints a picture of the utter futility of French efforts. In one town along the Senegal River, of four large looms in a French-sponsored textile center, only one was operational, at which a weaver was making a fabric with white, blue, black, and yellow stripes: “We saw several cloths made by this native weaver; they serve as hangings in Monsieur l’Administrateur Larsonneur’s house.”⁴⁸ Thus, even when they do operate, the products of these looms hardly appear to inspire a strong local market.

The other French technological interventions, including spinning machines and fiber-twisting machines, fared no better. Alibert’s earlier descriptions of the minimal

⁴⁴ Abdou Salam-Kane was appointed to his district chieftaincy by the French administration, one of many non-local, French-educated figures chosen by the colonial government rather than selected through longstanding local customs. (Jean-Hervé Jezquel, “Collecting Customary Law: Educated Africans, Ethnographic Writings, and Colonial Justice in French West Africa,” in *Intermediaries, Interpreters, and Clerks: African Employees in the Making of Colonial Africa*, Benjamin Lawrance et al, eds. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 144.

⁴⁵ Alibert, *Rapport de tournée*, 6.

⁴⁶ Alibert, *Rapport de tournée*, 8.

⁴⁷ French administrators used existing social structures to encourage the adoption of imported looms in West Africa. Alibert viewed looms at several community support organizations, referred to as *sociétés de prévoyance*.

⁴⁸ Alibert, *Rapport de tournée*, 19.



Fig. 6: Photographs 5–8, Industrial fiber processing machines. Marcel Alibert, “Rapport de tournée d’étude dans la vallée du Sénégal du 10 au 25 mai 1938,” Archives Nationales du Sénégal, Document O 391 (31).

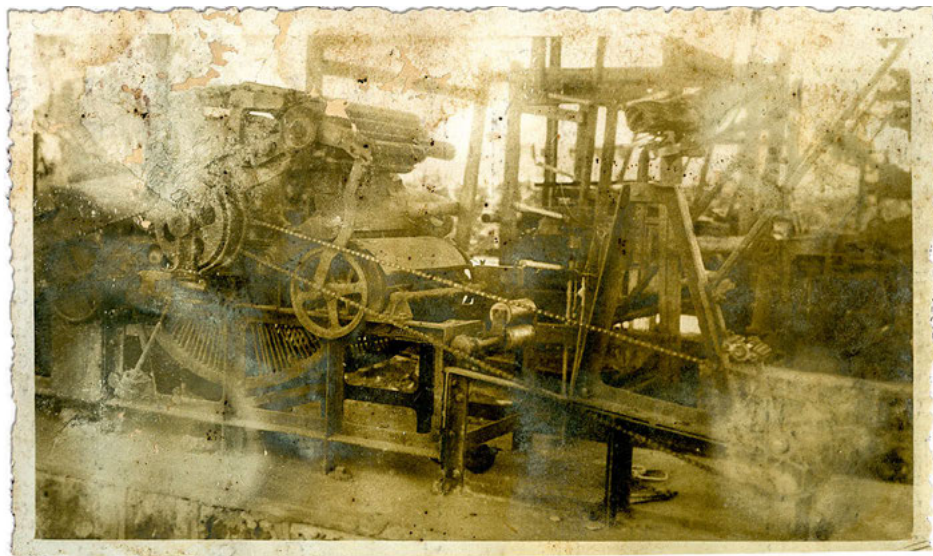


Fig. 7: Spinning machine [detail of figure 6]. Marcel Alibert, “Rapport de tournée d’étude dans la vallée du Sénégal du 10 au 25 mai 1938,” Archives Nationales du Sénégal, Document O 391 (31).

tools of the spinner and the elegant simplicity and efficiency of the strip loom implicitly evoke a sharp contrast with the hulking, now-silent machines (**fig. 8**). The distinction is stark: the strip loom is portable, readily assembled and operated by a single weaver; the imported machines are the product of foundries and engineers—specialists working with specialized materials, requiring a permanent home, a source of power, and a good deal of space.

Alibert’s report incorporates lists of broken machines and notes on the parts required for repairs: “Three [spinning] machines were set up in a large hanger, about one year ago. They have never worked. Certainly, the environment to which they are exposed, with humidity and sand, has caused them to deteriorate. Already several parts seem to have been lost, and several gears are broken.” To ensure his superiors would order the correct parts, Alibert provided lists, descriptions, and patent numbers. In a particularly dramatic yet certainly unintentional demonstration of the incongruity of French efforts to “update” the colony’s weaving technology, Alibert noted the contact information for one of the parts suppliers: “M.C. Leod & Co. Managing Agents, Britannia Engineering Co. Ltd. Titaghur INDIA.”⁴⁹ The strip loom and the longstanding practices used for cleaning, spinning, and dyeing cotton were all rooted in local materials, skills, and knowledge. As Alibert reveals, these French-sponsored weaving centers—which were presented as improvements on the local practices—required

⁴⁹ Alibert, *Rapport de tournée*, 19.



Fig. 8: Photograph 2, Native loom. Marcel Alibert, “Rapport de tournée d’étude dans la vallée du Sénégal du 10 au 25 mai 1938,” Archives Nationales du Sénégal, Document O 391 (31).

technologies made in India (then a British colony), sold through a British company, and supplied by French colonial administrators. Little wonder the machines sat idle.

In spite of the evidently desperate need for complicated repairs, the adverse environmental conditions, and the lack of an apparent local market for the wide textiles the imported looms produced, Alibert embraced the conviction that French-supplied technology was superior, and with time would prove its value. Immediately following the lists of broken machines and requests for parts, Alibert concluded: “Comparing photograph number 7 (an [imported] loom from a workshop) with number 2 (an indigenous loom), we can see all the advantages that Artisanal Education will bring to indigenous work, once this work has assimilated all of the instructions provided.”⁵⁰ Attesting to the conviction of French administrators, Alibert asserts that the failure of

⁵⁰ Alibert, *Rapport de tournée*, 21.

these projects was a failure of the region's inhabitants, who needed only to properly assimilate the instructions they had received.

Reaching this conclusion required a determined effort, for this newly appointed administrator veered from his positive assessment of West African artisans and his dismal report on the outcome of French interventions, to reach an endorsement of these same interventions. Alibert's documentation of cotton as a medium of artisanal production reflects much broader French administrative attention to the fiber, attention whose focus was economic and industrial rather than aesthetic or cultural. During the interwar period, cotton was heralded as the key to making the AOF a profit-generating venture for France.⁵¹ In 1921, Minister of Colonies Albert Saurrat declared that "All the hopes of our textile industry, whose supply of cotton is threatened, are now turned toward our colonies ... primarily in specific tropical and subtropical colonies."⁵² The colonies he referred to were in Southeast Asia (then known as Indochina) and in West Africa, with the French Soudan at the top of his list.⁵³ To realize these colonies' potential, the French administration implemented an ambitious set of cotton-focused plans and programs for the AOF, which included the massive irrigation project known as the Office du Niger, whose aims were never realized.⁵⁴ Indeed, through the lens of this economic imperative, Alibert's descriptions of the skill and artistry associated with the colony's cotton textile producers might have been received by the report's readers as reconnaissance on a key source of competition for French industry.

For all the dismissive assessments of their work by French observers, West African weavers posed stiff competition for the coveted cotton harvest, particularly during the interwar years. Roberts cites a letter from an acting lieutenant governor of the Soudan Français, explaining to his superior the challenges French interests faced in securing raw cotton for export to France; challenges that took the form of narrow strips: "bands of woven cotton flood the markets, where they get a high price of 25 francs/kilogram and then are sent to the Côte d'Ivoire and the Gold Coast. This remunerative price for worked cotton explains the widespread tendency by natives to retain the maximum amount of their cotton harvest, which can be ginned and spun by their women."⁵⁵ One imagines it must have been galling for French administrators to compete with West African weavers, whose work had been deemed primitive, whose technology would surely be replaced as soon as West Africans learned how to properly use looms provided through French programs (by way of India and the UK). In 1938, the year

⁵¹ Roberts, *Two Worlds of Cotton*, 118–19.

⁵² Albert Sarraut, *La Mise en Valeur des Colonies Françaises* (Paris: Payot et Cie, 1922), 168.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 169.

⁵⁴ The Office, established in 1932, was the brainchild of French engineer Emile Bélimé, who proposed a series of dams and flood zones to irrigate 1,850,000 hectares—approximately 7,000 square miles—for the production of cotton and rice.

⁵⁵ Roberts, *Two Worlds of Cotton*, 210.

of Alibert's study tour, the same tension between local demand and export markets continued to preoccupy French officials in the AOF, as they struggled to find ways to direct the region's cotton to their brokers.⁵⁶

Local Reactions: Counting the Strips

The competitive market for the AOF's cotton opens a window onto the responses of West African weavers and consumers to the administration's interventions into textile production. Amid all of the observations and commentaries about West African cotton textiles by French administrators, we have few direct insights into the responses of the people who were the subjects of this flood of documentation. What did the weavers, dyers, and consumers in West African communities think as French administrators installed massive textile-processing machines and set up institutions like the *Maison des Artisans Soudanais* to train young men in their use, despite centuries of sophisticated textile production using the narrow looms? Their shopping habits indicate a lack of enthusiasm for these "improvements," for locally woven fabrics continued to find ready markets; an indirect statement, but a statement nonetheless.

The historical record of interwar French West Africa contains vanishingly few direct expressions of West Africans' assessments of French efforts to transform narrow looms, and the relative desirability of strip-woven versus wide, industrially produced textiles. Bouna-Kane's declaration (transmitted via Alibert) that the work of local weavers is prettier than wide textiles is wonderfully explicit: a clear preference, plainly stated, and an indication of the challenge French administrators faced in their efforts to control the cotton crop.

A similar, if wordless, statement about West Africans' textile preferences is contained, very literally, within the seams of a single cloth. Collected in Saint Louis, Senegal, by Charles Beving, a British textile merchant, and donated to the British Museum in 1934, the cloth's extraordinary manufacture tacitly but forcefully declares local consumers' preference for strips over expanses of unseamed cloth (**fig. 9**). Alisa LaGamma and Christine Giuntini describe the cloth's construction: "The point of departure was an imported, commercially manufactured, fine cotton plain weave. It was torn into fifteen strips, each approximately 3 ¾ inches wide, which were then readied for dyeing."⁵⁷ Next, each strip was adorned with elaborate stitch-resist motifs, then each immersed in a bath of indigo dye. Finally, the stitches were removed and the now-dyed strips were sewn together, edge to edge, creating an amalgam of machine-

⁵⁶ Roberts, *Two Worlds of Cotton*, 260–62.

⁵⁷ Alisa LaGamma, and Christine Giuntini, *The Essential Art of African Textiles: Design Without End* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2008), 44.

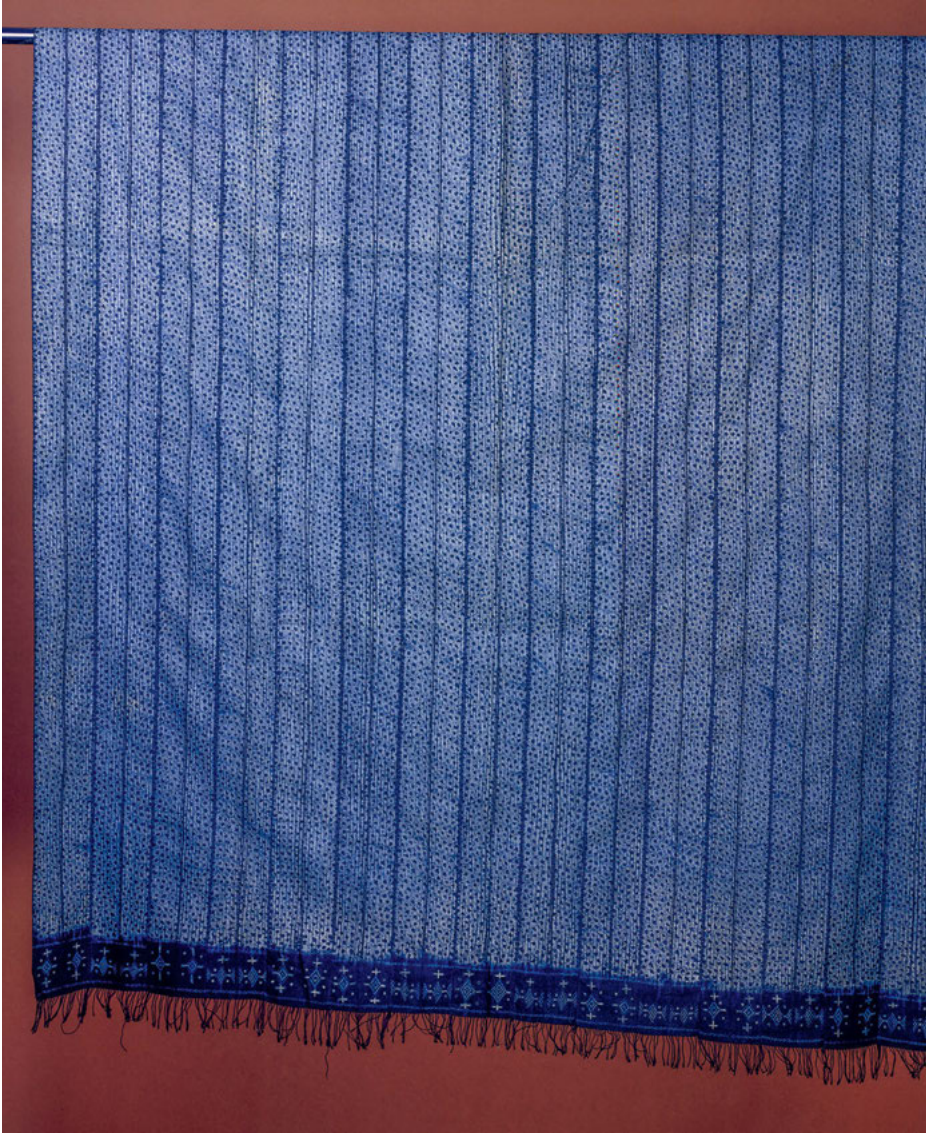


Fig. 9: Wrapper, Saint Louis, Senegal, second half 19th century, indigo-dyed, machine-woven cotton cut into fifteen strips, 243 × 145 cm. The British Museum, Af1934,0307.24.1.

made and handmade that defies easy classification. The amount of effort required to transform what started as a single expanse of white cotton cloth into a richly textured illusion of strip-weaving attests to these now-anonymous artisans' understanding of the status associated with a many-banded cloth.

Despite the long regional history of the strip loom,⁵⁸ a history we saw recognized by Charles Monteil himself, despite the technology's deep roots in local cosmology as exemplified by the Dogon mythology of the ancestor Spirit's mouth as loom, despite its practicality and the preferences of local consumers, French West Africa's weaving was transformed into a prop in the theater of French colonial empire. To enact this role, weaving had to be shaped through documentation, translating the *artisanat* of France's colonies into the language of nostalgia and nobility that characterized the craft discourse of the metropole. This language of a bygone past, of industrialization and "rationalization" as threat, of the need to improve yet preserve: all of these lent themselves seamlessly to the work of the French administration in AOF. To play its role in France's theater of empire, the strip loom was imagined through multiple temporalities. It was denigrated as evidence of West Africans' "primitive" state, frozen in a past that could be made modern only through France's benevolent guidance. The AOF's weavers were also imagined as emblems of continuity and purity, resolutely persevering into the present even as their brethren in France were subsumed by the progress of industrialization. Both past and present, disparaged and admired, a mirror of French intentions. Even documentation—direct observation—that gave the lie to this imagined world of *artisanat* was drawn into the main plot of the colonial drama: the strip loom was to be improved, replaced, made into evidence of the benevolent work of imperial expansion.

58 See also Rita Bolland, *Tellem Textiles: Archaeological Finds from Burial Caves in Mali's Bandiagara Cliffs*, (Amsterdam: Tropenmuseum, 1991); R. M. A. Bedaux and Rita Bolland, "Tellem, reconnaissance archéologique d'une culture de l'Ouest africain au Moyen-Age: les Textiles," *Journal des africanistes* 50, no. 2 (1980): 9–23.

Thomas Grillot

A World of Knowledge

Recreating Lakota Horse Effigies

I met Wallace “Butch” Thunder Hawk on a baseball diamond in Mandan, North Dakota, in 2017. His team’s jerseys were imprinted with a warrior on horse of his own design. At the Indian technical college where he teaches art, at a local fair where he sold drawings inspired by ledger art, in the pamphlets announcing funerals that a local undertaker serving Native American families liked to adorn with Indian designs, at the local historical society, I came across Butch and his art. Though a fixture of the rather informal local “tribal art” scene, he once told me: “People say I’m famous, but I’m not,” While he never reached the status of artists Oscar Howe or Arthur Amiotte, his role models, he is a recognized authority on Lakota art and culture, and representative of a category of locally respected Native artists that staff tribal colleges and have enjoyed some recognition at the national level. Butch’s productions have been exhibited in his home state of North Dakota, but also at Thomas Jefferson’s home in Virginia, at the Nelson-Atkins Museum in Kansas, and Harvard’s Peabody Museum.

Butch’s itinerary could be understood as the making of a local career in traditional Native American arts and crafts.¹ A full reconstitution of this itinerary, and of the specific and nonspecific travails of becoming a tribal artist, however, is outside of the scope of this article. Here, I want to focus on a specific piece that Butch started making in the 1990s: the horse memorial effigy. Such effigies were once carved out of cottonwood branches by Butch’s ancestors to honor the memory of a horse of theirs that was wounded or killed in battle. These sticks were exhibited during dances, and even ridden on.² Butch now makes these effigies for museums and horse owners, both Lakota and non-Lakota. His total output is not much more than twenty pieces. Yet his production gives a fascinating insight into the institutional and social framework

1 The phrase “arts and crafts” has been in use since the passing of the Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1935, to carve out (and defend) a specifically “Indian” domain in the art world. “Tribal art,” while clearly embedded in colonial history, is the term by which Butch’s work is most often referred to; it is “tribal art” that Butch teaches at United Tribes. His own reluctance to self-define other than as a Lakota should come out clearly from the next paragraphs, as should his working in a world traversed by such categories. For a discussion of tribal art, see in particular Janet Catherine Berlo and Ruth B. Phillips, *Native North American Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015 [1998]).

2 On horse effigies, see *Splendid Heritage: Masterpieces of Native American Art from the Masco Collection*, commentary by Arthur Amiotte, John C. Ewers, Richard A. Pohrt, and others (Santa Fe: Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian, 1995), esp. 110; Ian M. West, “Tributes to a Horse Nation: Plains Indian Horse Effigies,” *South Dakota History*, 9, no. 4 (1978), 291–302, “Plains Indian Horse Sticks,” *American Indian Art* 3, no. 2 (1978), 58–67; and E. M. Maurer, ed., *Visions of the People: A Pictorial History of Plains Indian Life* (Seattle: The University of Washington Press, 1992), 168.

that made it possible for him to give contemporary relevance to a practice that, for all intents and purposes, had died somewhere in the mid-twentieth century with the warriors who had once ridden horses on the battlefield. Hailing from Cannonball, the same community on the Standing Rock reservation where Butch was born, No Two Horn was one such warrior. This cousin of Sitting Bull's and veteran of the battle of Little Big Horn (1876) is an avowed inspiration for Butch, but not a master in the traditional sense. Butch, who was born in 1946 and is not a direct descendant of No Two Horn's, never studied under him—as No Two Horn died in 1942. This means that Butch's making of horse effigies is neither absolute recreation, nor clearly inherited practice. Nor can it be said to display only "traditional" knowledge acquired in the confines of family or community.

The point I want to make here is that it took, in fact, a world of knowledge for Butch to restart the practice of horse effigies, and this world of knowledge was really a world of relations. By this I don't simply mean that Butch could not have done it on his own or that the knowledge he drew on implied more than technical skill. The designation "tribal art" is, after all, already predicated on the idea that the tribal artist represents his community, and with it his "culture," "tribe," and "ancestors." By world, I mean a combination of social settings that cannot be restricted to home, reservation or tribe, and that made it possible for Butch to acquire, display, claim, enact knowledge, and eventually give it the shape of a "horse effigy." It is Butch's access to those social spaces throughout his life that his effigies bring to light. Not the lost world of a warrior culture, but the world, very much alive, in which "tribal art" has come to be recognized as a branch of "art" in general.

To approach the making of knowledge in the practice of "tribal art," I want to use conversations Butch and I have had on his career in 2017 and 2019 as well as various newspaper articles, press releases, publications, museum archives, and a more general understanding of social relations on and off Standing Rock, the Lakota/Dakota reservation where Butch is an enrolled member and where I've been conducting field research for the past ten years. On the one hand, this paper is a historical study, emphasizing the role of major developments in museology, legislation, and the art market. On the other hand, it is an attempt to approach, through reconstitution rather than direct observation, the collective and continued production of "tribal art" in the United States. My focus is not on techniques or discourse on art. Rather, I propose to identify social interactions that made "horse effigies" possible, and pinpoint the knowledge embedded in these interactions, by which I mean not simply information, nor the fact that knowledge was a condition of these interactions, but the very production of knowledge through them. Mine therefore is an attempt to approach indirectly the processes of knowledge production that were available to Butch throughout his training and career, as they are visible in his own declarations as well as the paper trail his work has produced.

When I first asked Butch to reminisce on his career, I was especially interested in the training he might have received from his own relatives. How, I wondered, were

art and the transmission of art and crafts-related knowledge shaped by family ties; how, in turn, did they shape these ties? This line of questioning elicited two different types of answers. Butch was clearly willing to explore with me the decisive role of some, but not all of his relatives: raised by his maternal grandparents and his parents, he especially emphasized the role of the former. But although they were themselves artists and craftspeople, he was too young when he lived with them to learn more from them than a certain way of life, an outlook on Lakota cultural practices or an attitude toward work and family. His maternal grandparents, however, had friends who were also bearers of traditional knowledge that ranged from songs and crafts to plants, horses, and history. Many practitioners who taught him much were friends, relatives, and neighbors of his ascendants. Butch, in other words, had inherited connections, and with them, an opportunity to learn. Exploring his own background, Butch was thus quick to pay homage to all the elders in the Cannonball district of the Standing Rock reservation whom he had met while growing up. His answers took the shape of a list of names, associated with specific skills that he learned from these neighbors. Less richly recounted than his connection with his grandparents, these relations appeared more specialized, centered on the acquisition of distinct bits of knowledge, the making of a certain item, the learning of a dying or tanning technique. It seemed as though Butch had neatly progressed from a general, social and moral indoctrination with his relatives to a more technical, almost professional training with these neighbors.

This only half true. Discussing his career with him, it becomes apparent that each stage of his trajectory saw the intertwining of different types of learning processes, but that the making of relationships was always a prime concern of his career—that, in other words, technical knowledge was always immersed in and second to social connections and social skills. Before drawing up a list of teachers, Butch emphasized long-term association with his home community of Cannonball, and the sheer multiplicity of individuals from which he learned how to make such and such object or element of traditional knowledge. This emphasis on connections need not immediately be understood as typically “Lakota,” although there is a large consensus, both in the literature and among reservation dwellers of all backgrounds, that Lakota people place special emphasis on at least family connections.³ It’d be more precise to explain Butch’s own emphasis on connections by his personal itinerary. As for many Standing Rockers born in the 1940s, Butch’s is an itinerary of migration. Although he spent a good part of his childhood on the reservation, he wasn’t born there and did not live there exclusively, but instead moved between Cannonball, the nearby cities of Mandan and Bismarck, and Los Angeles. Making his family’s connections and ties

³ A succinct but influential statement of this view is to be found in Ella Deloria, *Speaking of Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998 [1944]); see also Raymond J. DeMallie, *Teton Dakota Kinship and Social Organization*, PhD diss. (University of Chicago, 1971).

to the reservation into learning experiences involved going back and forth between several locales off of it and Cannonball, rather than merely drawing on an original experience there. In a very concrete sense for Butch, learning was thus first and foremost about maintaining connections to a place he first left early as a child and where he stopped living after he came of age. Being an “off reservation Indian” implied a specific relational “work.” Maintaining connection despite long distance and separation, however, was not new to Lakotas and Butch could draw on collective experience to remedy these problems.

Already on the reservation, the acquisition of “traditional” knowledge was closely connected for Butch to the practice of exchanging visits with other families, eating and singing with them—an essential social moment in the making and remaking of connections for all Standing Rockers. Visiting almost always involved some kind of direct indoctrination in doing things “the Indian way”: showing proper deference to elders and parents, displaying the appropriate table manners, singing the appropriate songs. It was also marked by a large degree of informality. Children were expected to learn by ear and sight rather than by asking questions or sitting waiting to be taught. Today, many aging citizens of Standing Rock bemoan the fact that they did not sufficiently “pay attention” during those interactions. Butch did, as he liked spending time with older people. Learning was for him about seizing the opportunity to be around these “old timers” and getting from them what they were willing to share—as well as, little by little, learning to ask questions and listening intently, with no other aid than his own senses. Although each elder he cited during our interviews had their specialty, the learning was never confined to “arts and crafts” (carving, beading, tanning, etc.) but marked by a more general emphasis on making connection with the land, animals, and ancestors, with the same attention to propriety that governed relationships between elders and children. Learning was very much a physical experience also: collecting pigments and wood in the hills or the bottom lands by the Missouri River, processing hides, singing, dancing. A total experience, learning was above all a social one—with society expended to nonhumans and the land.

What’s more, visiting often constituted a preparation for larger social functions, such as powwows. By the time Butch reached teenage, powwows, or social gatherings centered on the performance of Native American dances, were happening all over the US, both on and off reservations. Following his grandparents and parents, Butch was able early on to extend the sphere of his observations beyond the confines of family and community. His world encompassed an Indian network connecting practitioners of singing and dancing, encouraging the making of dancing outfits, regalia, and other pieces as a way to preserve techniques and a way of life, but also as a means to take part in the nascent powwow circuit or sell art to tourists. Far from limiting him to specialized, reservation-bound interactions, his connection to singers, dancers, and other practitioners of Lakota arts and crafts trained him to navigate between the distinct but connected social settings, on and off the reservation. Unsurprisingly, perhaps for one who now defines his work as “tribal art,” the most specific “tribal”

training Butch received in childhood was in the art of living in a Lakota and Indian world, in the midst of the US.

At first sight, the contrast couldn't seem starker between this type of diffuse, rather informal, very socialized learning and the one Butch became familiar with in public and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)-sponsored schools he attended until he graduated from high school in 1964. Classroom and classmates, textbooks and curricula: those were an entirely different learning environment. Yet getting a degree and teaching is precisely what made it possible for Butch to develop his art and his knowledge of his elders' techniques and processes. Although Butch got to know most of the elders he cites in his childhood, he makes clear that he visited them again, and more intently, in his twenties and thirties, when he himself was already teaching, in high school and at a technical college.

Both universes (academia and life with family and friends) were strongly connected. The first connection was sports. Throughout middle school, high school, and college, it was sports that drove attendance in school for Butch as for many of his contemporaries. The son of a semi-professional baseball player, Butch went a step further than the rest by going to college in North Dakota on a sports scholarship, majoring in physical education and coming back to the reservation to coach.

This, however, proved to be a mere stepping stone in getting a more formal artistic education: only a couple of years after graduating, he went back to school to attend the California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland, where he perfected his knowledge of graphic design. He was then hired at United Tribes Technical College (UTTC) in Bismarck, North Dakota. As an illustrator and a historian working for the American Indian Curriculum Development, a program started in 1972 to teach Native American cultures in the classrooms of North Dakota, Butch reopened his connections to Cannonball artists and craftspeople, participating in the creation of an archive of interviews with them that he's been using himself ever since. This position allowed him to slowly build his reputation and move on to a position of tribal art instructor, still his current job at the time I last interviewed him (in 2019). Classroom teaching and practice, in other words, have been crucial to turning his practice of Lakota crafts into more than a hobby. They have, in particular, strongly reinforced his omnivorous approach to art. A strong example would be his practice of traditionally female crafts such as beading, tanning, or parfleche making.⁴ First developed to address the need to teach both male and female students, these skills are now part of Butch's résumé and figure prominently on his business card. Classrooms, clearly, were more than a

⁴ Although one should not overemphasize the gendered specialization of crafts on the plains. On this, see Mary Jane Schneider, "Women's Work: An Examination of Women's roles in Plains Indian Arts and Crafts," in *The Hidden Half: Studies of Plains Indian Women*, ed. P. Albers and B. Medicine (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1983), 101–22.

setting to pass on information. Teaching started a second period of learning for Butch, a second socialization as a Lakota, this time as a Lakota teacher and artist.

The various forms of learning that Butch experienced in this academic setting were no less bound up in social interactions than they were in a non-academic milieu. Some differences with his learning experiences as a child and teenager are obvious. He used new tools, such as the tape recorder; money came more visibly into play, in cash or kind, as a reward or an incentive to elders for sharing their knowledge; and students were part of the transactions, physically or as an invisible presence, the ultimate objective of Butch's visiting with elders. Some knowledge made it to print in small booklets used mostly in Native American schools, which listed patterns, recipes, and processes;⁵ some never left archival repositories; some were immediately put to use by Butch and his students. These new ways of eliciting, producing, and storing knowledge tied in with older ways, however. They, in fact, increased the need for Butch to make use of the social skills he acquired in childhood: not all elders took kindly to the use of the tape recorder; not all made clear what they wanted as compensation. For himself and his students, or for the non-Indians interested in Lakota culture he chaperoned on the reservation, Butch had to draw on his sense of appropriateness and decorum, and appreciate what could make it to the record and what would remain oral knowledge. The teaching he imparted, like that he received, was itself not confined to technicalities, but steeped in a more general appreciation of how to do things properly, the Lakota way. Always, technical specifications were mixed with a more general description of the old "Indian way of life."

If there was change, it was not from a socialized, diffuse learning to a more focused, classroom-based one, but more toward learning about tradition from within Indian institutions. It is from within United Tribes that Butch developed his view of the way knowledge about arts and crafts had been transmitted in the past and should be transmitted in the future. Butch's emphasis on his own community as the source of his knowledge was strongly influenced by the context of the 1970s, during which he started working at United Tribes. At that time elders and "old timers" were increasingly defined as sources of fast disappearing knowledge. Teaching material based on their knowledge invariably gestured toward a lifestyle more intimately connected with "the land," inviting Native American readers to not to lose that connection.

Inevitably, these naturalized practices that had already been entangled in the workings of the market and the art world throughout his grandparents' lifetime. In our interviews as well as in declarations he made as early as the 1970s,⁶ Butch insisted that in the old days, everyone was a craftsperson, or that arts and crafts were part

⁵ For example: *Plains Indian Crafts, Tools, Weapons, and Handicrafts from Nature* (United Tribes of North Dakota Development Corporation, 1975), UTTC Archives.

⁶ See for example, "Butch Thunder Hawk," a one-page presentation in the AICDP records of UTTC Archives.



Fig. 1: Butch Thunder Hawk at the North Dakota State Museum, in front of one of No Two Horn's horse memorial effigies.

of life and not a distinct sphere of human activity. This view, no doubt strongly felt, tends to erase the fact that, since the 1900s, certain mediations had become important to the making of Lakota arts and crafts, shaping certain individuals' specialization. Opportunities had developed on and near reservations that fostered the preservation and the evolution of Lakota crafts. From fairs to collectors to Indian traders and railroads and small tribal enterprises, practitioners of old Lakota techniques could expect to complement their revenue by selling a variety of handmade objects and pieces of outfit. At the railroad station in Mandan, where Indian dancing was demonstrated, a small trade of Native articles existed throughout the first part of the twentieth century. Dakotas from the Cannonball area made articles (decorated canes, parfleches, beadwork in various forms, moccasins, hide clothing) specifically for the market—and made them repeatedly.⁷ While Native craftspeople continued to produce for their own and their family's consumption, especially for dancing and ceremonial

⁷ On tourism, museums, and Lakota art, see Marsha C. Bol, "Defining Lakota Tourist Art, 1880–1915," in *Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds*, Ruth Phillips and Christopher Steiner, eds. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 214–28; Deirdre Evans-Pritchard, "The Portal Case: Authenticity, Tourism, Traditions, and the Law," *Journal of American Folklore* 100 (1987): 287–96; Raymond J. DeMallie, Royal B. Hassrick, and Glenn E. Markoe, *Vestiges of a Proud Nation: The Ogden B. Read Northern Plains Indian Collection* (Burlington, VT; Hull Fleming Museum; 1986); on the involvement in the market of Butch's neighbors, see Richard Green, "Yanktonai Beadwork and Other Souvenir Items from Cannon Ball Community, North Dakota," *Whispering Wind* 33, no. 3 (2015): 10–12.

purposes, the market was now the destination for a large number of items. Many a specialization was encouraged by market demand. This was the case for Butch's grandparents, and for the man whose work inspired Butch to craft horse effigies: No Two Horn (**fig. 1**).⁸

These marketplace interactions also made it possible for Butch to learn more about his ancestors' craft in adulthood through an institution he became familiar with by teaching: the museum. The market did more than just encourage Lakota artists to produce, and produce more than, in all likelihood, they would have without it. It ultimately transferred Lakota art from reservations to museums, making it available for study. In the 1980s, Butch looked at three horse effigies by No Two Horn before starting making his own. One had first been owned by a priest, the other by a taxidermist, a third by a US senator, who had bought them between the 1910s and the 1940s.⁹ In North Dakota as elsewhere, many collectors behaved as small museum owners, devoting entire rooms of their houses or even separate buildings to their collection. But often this did not last: most ended up giving away or selling their collections to local and national museums. Butch's own first contact with the museum in Bismarck was as a teenager in grade school. He renewed this connection as a teacher once at United Tribes. Visits with students and conversations with curators at the Heritage Center became a standard practice for him, as he was granted access not just to the displays but also to the museum's reserve collections and files. Getting access as a teacher to old pieces whose makers had passed away turned out to be an entirely new way of getting and producing knowledge, one, again, that supposed combining various types of skills—social, technical, and, as well shall see, spiritual. It also required a new transformation from Butch, one that took him to a new status as artist-cum-expert—a status he does not claim but has been granted nonetheless by several institutions. This followed transformations of the art world which, by the 1980s, elevated many new Native objects to art status and made more common Native American artists and specialists' collaboration with museums.

Butch's recounting of his itinerary does not really illuminate this institutional part of his own story. It is, however, essential to the emergence of his project to recreate horse effigies after No Two Horn's example. While they had been collected and exhibited in several museums before the 1970s, horse effigies acquired status as works of art only (rather than mere curio or ethnographic material) in the second part of that decade. The institutional and intellectual configuration that made this pos-

⁸ On Joseph No Two Horns (1852–1942), see David Wooley and Joseph D. Horse Capture, "Joseph No Two Horns (He Nupa Wanica)," *American Indian Art Magazine* 18, no. 3 (Summer 1993): 32–43.

⁹ This information is taken from the Heritage Center's accession forms for its three horse effigies by No Two Horn. For a book chapter discussing the role of a local collector as an intermediary between Standing Rock and eastern institutions, see Barbara A. Hail, "Museums as Inspiration: Clara Endicott Sears and the Fruitlands Museums," in *Collecting Native America: 1870–1960*, Shepard Krech III and Barbara A. Hail, eds. (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1999), 232–58., esp. 184–86.

sible is worth detailing, especially the exhibition that first advertised a horse effigy as an example of Native American artistry. In 1976–77, *Sacred Circles: Two Thousand Years of North American Indian Art* showcased 670 Native pieces first in London and then in Kansas City, at the Nelson-Atkins Museum.¹⁰ As the exhibition's catalog made clear, the purpose was to demonstrate Native American art's universal value, indeed its equal dignity on the art world scene with other, more anciently celebrated examples of artistic ingenuity. The first page of the introduction explicitly singled out a particular piece for admiration, rhetorically asking its reader: "does not the unique Sioux wooden horse effigy (390), full of blood, thunder and springy abandon, bear comparison with the Kansu horse?" Reviewers agreed.¹¹ And while the maker was given as unknown, in the following decade, the piece, collected on Standing Rock and held by the South Dakota State Historical Society, started being attributed to No Two Horn, despite a vast discrepancy in style between this and other pieces of more ascertainable authorship. Although contested, this attribution increased interest in No Two Horn's work. Studies of his work and of horse effigies quickly followed on the footsteps of the London-Kansas City exhibitions,¹² and in 1985 the North Dakota Historical society's Heritage Center itself brought its effigies out of its reserve and into its permanent display. Between 1976 and 1985, No Two Horn had risen postmortem to artist status and become available for inspiration.

The same time period also saw the rise of consultation, a process that would prove decisive in Butch's later career. Native American activism and lobbying, museum efforts at making their collections relevant to contemporary audiences, and, eventually, national legislation all made the presence of Native American experts in museums more and more common throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Descendants of No Two Horn himself were involved in such processes. While the most well-known act of the US Congress regulating consultation was the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990,¹³ Native American presence in museums was

10 Ralph T. Coe, *The Responsive Eye: Ralph T. Coe and the Collecting of American Indian Art* (New York and New Haven: The Metropolitan Museum of Art and Yale University Press, 2003), 15–16.

11 See Ralph T. Coe, *Sacred Circles: Two Thousand Years of North American Indian Art* (Kansas City: Nelson Gallery of Art, 1976), 9 and 168; and the review of the book by Helen H. Schuster in *American Anthropologist*, New Series, vol. 80, no. 1 (March 1978): 193–96, esp. 194.

12 For example, Ian M. West, "Tributes to a Horse Nation: Plains Indian Horse Effigies," *South Dakota History* 9, no. 4 (1978): 291–302.

13 NAGPRA mandated the return of religious and funeral objects and human remains held in federal institutions to the peoples from whom they originated. Passed in 1990, it was only the most visible of a series of laws and regulations taken by the federal government that made consultation with recognized tribes mandatory in the fields of historic preservation, national parks, the environment, as well as general policy making. On NAGPRA and its effects, see C. Timothy McKeown, *In the Smaller Scope of Conscience: The Struggle for National Repatriation Legislation, 1986–1900* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2013); Tamara L. Bray and Thomas W. Killion, eds., *Reckoning with the Dead: The Larsen Bay Repatriation and the Smithsonian Institution* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution

hardly limited to repatriation. Beginning in the 1960s, many Native groups had sponsored projects aiming at reclaiming a lost or endangered heritage, most of the time defined as “cultural,” with traditional arts and crafts foremost among those. These efforts were often entangled in the national and infra-national politics of commemoration. In public celebrations of the American past (such as the nation’s bicentennial that saw the opening of “Sacred Circles”), acknowledging and symbolically repairing the damage colonization inflicted on Native people by making room for tribal representatives, dresses, and objects in museum exhibitions and functions became common. Active Native American participation in those ceremonies often took the form of “interpretation,” as opposed to silent presence: no longer relics of a primitive past, Native American actors, artists, and tribal representatives, were asked to testify, as descendants, to the intentions and emotions of their ancestors, their intervention being regarded as promoting a more genuine understanding of the past. In this context, public institutions emphasized the protection of Native skills and techniques as part of the national heritage, while tribal authorities promoted their revival as a way to heal Native communities. Politically at odds, these logics were practically congruent. Navajo silversmithing, Haida basketry, and Pueblo pottery started being regarded as living traditions, to be protected and incorporated in new practices, art included. After the Japanese fashion, some of their practitioners were granted the status of living national treasures. The greater recognition accorded Indian art encouraged the development of specialized art fairs that loosened the grip tourism had had on the market so far and boosted consideration for “tribal art.” Native artists thus found new opportunities for recognition and income, and new roles to fill as interpreters of tradition. They started evolving seamlessly between different art scenes, museums and fairs, reservation and off-reservation worlds.¹⁴

In these different but connected settings, Native artists’ presence was predicated on the idea that they carried with them a specific type of knowledge. Yet all these contexts also contributed powerfully to shaping the very knowledge they promoted. Butch’s career shows how. Butch had not attended a prestigious Indian arts school

Press, 1994); Ann M. Tweedie, *Drawing Back Culture: The Makah Struggle for Repatriation* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002); Cara Krmpotich, *The Force of Family: Repatriation, Kinship, and Memory on Haida Gwaii* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014); and *We Are Coming Home! Repatriation and the Restoration of Blackfoot Cultural Confidence*, ed. Gerald T. Conaty (Edmonton, Alberta: Athabasca University Press, 2015).

14 On the rise of consultation in museums, see especially Ann McMullen, “The Currency of Consultation and Collaboration,” *Museum Anthropology Review* 2, no. 2 (2008): 54–87; Gwyneira Isaac, “Mediating Knowledges: Zuni Negotiations for a Culturally Relevant Museum,” *Museum Anthropology* 28, no. 1 (2005): 3–18; Ruth B. Phillips, “Community Collaboration in Exhibitions: Introduction,” in *Museums and Source Communities*, Laura Peers and Alison K. Brown, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2003), 157–70; Ann Fienup-Riordan, “Collaboration on Display: A Yup’ik Eskimo Exhibit at Three National Museums,” *American Anthropologist* 101, no. 2 (1999): 339–58.



Fig. 2: Mark Halvorson, curator of collections research for the State Historical Society, holds one of Butch's effigies next to one of No Two Horn's in a display case at the museum.

such as the Institute of American Indian Arts of Santa Fe; he had not majored in art. Consequently, it took him close to twenty years to benefit from this configuration. His first public commissions date back to 1988, when the state of North Dakota prepared to celebrate its own centennial and ask him to design "the Native people's North Dakota Centennial Logo."¹⁵ Similarly, it is only in 1994 that Butch made his first three horse effigies after having started research on the cultural significance of this type of dancing sticks for teaching purposes. The market was receptive: all three effigies were immediately acquired by museum professionals. In keeping with his earlier experiences, this new phase of Butch's work was yet again predicated on his ability to make connections, this time between a dead artist and a very lively art scene centered on museum celebrations. Butch further developed his interest in and his own style of horse effigies through a close collaboration with Castle McLaughlin, who first came to North Dakota researching wild horses and eventually directed the Peabody Museum's celebration of the bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark Corps of Discovery's expedition in 2006. In 1999, one of his horse effigies was acquired by Peabody Museum, to be exhibited in its Hall of the North American Indian. Ten years later, with Castle McLaughlin, Butch cocurated *Wiyohpiyata: Lakota Images of the Contested West* an exhibition on Lakota drawings at the Peabody museum that again featured a horse

¹⁵ "Credits," *North Dakota Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (Summer 1988): 367

effigy by him.¹⁶ In the meantime, his work had been shown at the Thomas Jefferson House and the James Monroe House in Virginia. The Nelson-Atkins Museum, the very same Kansan institution that had first brought horse effigies into the limelight, had also acquired one of Butch's pieces. A chance encounter with McLaughlin in the 1980s, one centered on horses rather than art, finally made it possible for Butch to become an expert with access to a prestigious museum institution. This itinerary did not only allow him to become an heir of sorts for No Two Horn. It also put his art in general, and his horse effigies in particular, in a very specific configuration that yet again modified the way Butch mobilized and produced knowledge (fig. 2).

Hailing from the same community as No Two Horn and a Lakota like him, Butch first asked permission to make horse effigies from No Two Horn's grand-niece, whom he had interviewed several times since the 1970s. This was a formal gesture, a way to pay tribute to an elder, recognize her prior rights to No Two Horn's legacy, and prevent conflict. The visit, often emphasized in the press,¹⁷ was also a way for Butch to claim connection to someone who was not his relative, in a post-NAGPRA era where direct bloodline connection to former Native artists was strongly emphasized.¹⁸ But the research process that took him to museums more than to Standing Rock was not limited to symbolic, diplomatic gestures. Examining museum pieces (and the accompanying paperwork) to identify the material used for these "genuine" items constituted an essential part of the research process. As Butch explained it in our interviews, however, research went beyond identifying materials and techniques to include making an actual connection with the long-gone creators of these pieces. In 2001, on McLaughlin's recommendation, he was asked to produce with his United Tribes students weapons approximating those, now gone, that had adorned the entrance hall of Thomas Jefferson's house at Monticello, Virginia. Like other Native artists contacted for this exhibition, he was given an opportunity to examine old pieces held by the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University and the North Dakota Heritage Center.¹⁹ Physical contact, touching the piece, was a way to connect

¹⁶ On *Wiyohpiyata*, see the Peabody's website, last accessed September 12, 2019, <https://www.peabody.harvard.edu/lakota-images-of-the-contested-west>.

¹⁷ See. Castle McLaughlin, "New Acquisition from the Contemporary American West: Sioux Carving," *Symbols* (Spring 1999): 17–18.

¹⁸ NAGPRA requires the repatriation of human remains or cultural items to descendants provided they can prove "a relationship of lineal descent." The emphasis on a restricted view of (biological) descent is not new in the world of Indian art. The Indian Arts and Crafts Act (first passed in 1935) already required that sellers of art labeled "Indian" or from a specific tribe, be able to demonstrate its authenticity by producing a certificate of tribal membership for the artist.

¹⁹ On Butch's work in the Monticello exhibition, see Castle McLaughlin, Hillel S. Burger, and Mike Cross, *Arts of Diplomacy: Lewis and Clark's Indian Collection* (Seattle: University of Washington Press and Cambridge, MA: Peabody Museum, 2003), 159. On Native artists' relationship with museum pieces, see Judith Ostrowitz, foreword by Nelson H. H. Graburn, *Privileging the Past: Reconstructing History in Northwest Coast Art* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999).

to it and through it, its maker. During our interviews, Butch also emphasized the possibility that objects would directly communicate with him. He made contact by prayer accompanied by proper offerings of tobacco and burning of sage. Contact could also be made in dreams.²⁰

Butch's emphasis on protocol was not an idiosyncrasy of his, but one of the reasons he had been selected for collaboration with the Peabody and Monticello in the first place. In Castle McLaughlin's characterization, it's Butch's ease in the role of a cultural liaison that particularly recommended him for contact with pieces such as peace pipes and weapons, sacred and imbued with power—and for curators a public relations hazard in case they were mishandled and defiled. Butch's skill at reproducing them was always entangled with his knowledge of how to simply be around them. In the museum setting, the relational quality of pieces of Native craftsmanship was exacerbated. They connected staff and the public, museums and Native American tribes, contemporary artists with dead ones, and were held up as an opportunity for Americans to strike up new, potentially better relationships with Native Americans than they had done in the past. Museum pieces literally objectified a project to turn exhibitions into connection-making moments.²¹ And for those moments to be performed appropriately, there needed to be cultural interpreters like Butch.

This new role added yet another layer of knowledge and meaning to the horse effigies he was making. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, Butch made effigies for private individuals. But his work with museums changed the context in which they were understood, as well as the knowledge they were tied to. In North Dakota, Castle McLaughlin was part of a group that spearheaded the protection and promotion of a group of horses they identified as descendants of Indian ponies and a breed unto themselves, the Nokota.²² This project was closely tied to the efforts of tribal members on Standing Rock and elsewhere to promote contact with horses as a specific form of healing and education for youth and adults alike, because horses had been a nexus of Native cultures in the Plains, and because animals facilitated therapeutic efforts.²³

20 On dreaming and Lakota crafts, see especially Hélène Wallaert, "Beads and a Vision: Waking Dreams and Induced Dreams as a Source of Knowledge for Beadwork Making. An Ethnographic Account from Sioux Country," *Plains Anthropologist* 51, no. 197 (February 2006): 3–15; Arthur Amiotte, "Our Other Selves: The Lakota Dream experience," *Parabola* 6 (1982): 26–32; and Clark Wissler, "Some Protective Designs of the Dakota," *Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History*, vol. 5 (1907): 50.

21 See the video of the 2001 ceremony in North Dakota prior to the inauguration of the exhibition, Indian Nations Friendship Ceremony, *C-Span*, August 20, 2001, accessed July 6, 2021, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?165701-1/indian-nations-friendship-ceremony>.

22 On the Nokota horses, see the conservancy's website, especially "Sioux Artists Feature Nokota® Horses in Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Project," *Nokotahorse.org*, last accessed September 12, 2019, <https://www.nokotahorse.org/other-organizations.html>.

23 Jen Janecek-Gartman, "Horse Culture is Focus Of UTTC Science Camp," *Tribal College Journal* 20, no. 2 (Winter 2008), November 15, 2008, last accessed September 12, 2019, <https://tribalcollegejournal>.

Butch took part in these programs, and he also incorporated Nokota hair in his horse effigies. He became an interpreter of traditional horse culture, on which his childhood and later work with Cannonball elders had made him conversant. At the *Wiyohpiyata* exhibition in 2009, the horse effigy he displayed was in turn repurposed. Not isolated as a work of art, but tied to a constellation of objects testifying to Lakota warrior culture, it was connected especially closely with the center piece of the exhibition: a ledger featuring war scenes drawn by nineteenth-century Lakota men. The blue color of Butch's effigy was intended as a direct gesture toward one of the horses prominent in the ledger—the blue roan color being considered a distinctive trait of the Nokota breed.²⁴ In *Wiyohpiyata*, the horse effigy was not simply a modern take on an old practice. It epitomized the work of identification and reconstruction of the ledger's author and universe that structured the exhibit. Technically, the effigy might be little different from the one Butch had made ten years earlier for the Peabody. It was now socialized in a way that connected it not just to No Two Horn, but to other dead warriors, as well as living animals, and an art form: ledger art, in an effort at recreation that encompassed an entire branch of Lakota culture. A direct consequence of this for Butch was his taking up ledger art himself—and putting it on his team's jersey.²⁵

Looking at Butch's career and his recreation of horse effigies, I have approached knowledge production and transmission in the world of tribal art as social and historical phenomena. I have reconstituted Butch's training and followed him in several social settings: the Standing Rock reservation, schools, and museums. While Butch himself relates his ability as an artist to a precise knowledge of material, techniques, and familiarity with genuine pieces, which he teaches and passes on, his itinerary also makes clear that he relied on more than recipes to become an artist. Fundamental in his development has been his ability to make connections. This is not simply a truism (you can learn anything from someone), but a historically-bound phenomenon. The migration of Native Americans off reservations, the migration of Native works into museum collections, the development of a tribal art market, the rise of collaboration with Native artists and consultants in museums, the creation of tribal art programs in Native institutions of higher learning: all these post-World War II developments

org/horse-culture-focus-uttc-science-camp/; and Dana Petersen, "College Fund Receives \$1 Million for Traditional Arts and Culture Preservation Program," *Tribal College Journal*, April 7 2017, <https://tribalcollegejournal.org/college-fund-receives-1-million-traditional-arts-culture-preservation-program/uttc-horse-effigy-demonstration/>.

²⁴ Castle McLaughlin, "The Color of Thunder," *Symbols* (Spring 2009): 4–11 and 18, esp. 18.

²⁵ Ledger art developed throughout the Plains from the 1860s to the 1920s. On the pages of accounting books or even already printed books, Native artists, most of them warriors, depicted hunting and battle scenes in a style that evolved from hide painting. On ledger art, see especially Evan M. Maurer, *The Native American Heritage: A Survey of North American Indian Art* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1977); and Castle McLaughlin, *A Lakota War Book from the Little Bighorn: The Pictographic "Autobiography of Half Moon"* (Cambridge, MA: Peabody Museum Press, 2013).

intensified the need for Native artists to display connections before their work could be taken seriously by professionals of the art world. This is due, in part, to the new sensitivity of representing Native American culture, which embedded Native artists and museum pieces in rituals and quasi-diplomatic interactions. Artists primarily defined as Indian or tribal were asked to behave as cultural intermediaries and interpreters. Their value was strongly correlated to their ability to act as conduits toward past and present Native communities and cultures. For Butch as for other tribal artists, it was, in this historical configuration, always about who you knew—before it was about what you knew. Becoming an artist was first about turning domestic and neighborly relations into credentials. But as I have tried to demonstrate, this configuration did more than enable or constrain Butch's activities, or encourage him to write his résumé with an emphasis on the place where he grew up. It continuously shaped the knowledge that he was basing his very activity on. His horse effigies are a case in point. He first studied them as museum pieces, for teaching purposes, after they had been made "available" as masterpieces of Lakota art. From the start, his making of horse effigies was part of a larger, collective project of preserving Lakota culture, that made the recreation of past artforms a self-conscious attempt to reconstitute knowledge and to display it in museums for educational purposes. In the back and forth between the classroom, the workshop, and the museum, Butch bridged the boundary between teacher and student, dead predecessor and living artist through a combination of knowledge-producing techniques: reading, examination, manipulation, prayer, and dreams. Objects themselves became imbued with relationships. As this world of knowledge and relationships evolved, so did the meaning of Butch's effigies, from homage to a belatedly recognized Lakota artist, No Two Horn, to a summary of Lakota horse culture.

Gail Levin

Frida Kahlo's Circulating Crafts

Her Painting and Her Identities

Alejandro Gómez Arias, Frida's childhood friend, remarked in his 1983 memoir of her that she was "so contradictory [so] multiple, that the personality of this woman can be said [to be made of] many Fridas."¹ This essay will examine how political agendas have impacted the production and consumption of art by Frida Kahlo and how she crafted not only paintings, but also multiple identities. Frida communicated these identities either visually, through the presentation of her own appearance both in and outside of her paintings, or intellectually, through the public discourse she circulated about herself. Her craft—both her paintings and the projected identities—have inspired and continue to inspire creativity in diverse cultures, extending from North America to Asia. Contemporary artists continue to make their own commentaries about Frida and, through her art, also express their own identities.

Recent exhibitions have examined at length how the iconic Mexican painter defined herself through her ethnicity, disability, and politics: at the Museo Frida Kahlo (Casa Azul, Blue House) in Mexico City, ongoing since 2012; at London's Victoria and Albert Museum in 2018, and at New York's Brooklyn Museum in 2019.² However, none of these shows addressed the unresolved question of Frida's self-professed Jewish ancestry, which many people and several museums had previously celebrated as an integral part of her identity, but which more recently some German scholars have dismissed as inaccurate and "invented." Unlike the visible identities that Frida herself circulated, based on her physical disabilities and her claim on the Mexican folk tradition of Tehuana, she did not use visual signs to claim Jewish identity.

The Brooklyn and London shows featured many of Kahlo's personal artifacts, including Tehuana clothing and contemporary and pre-colonial jewelry, as well as her hand-painted corsets and prosthetics, which had been hidden since her death in 1954, packed away in Casa Azul, her Mexico City home. The stated aim of the Brooklyn exhibition in showing these objects was to "shed new light on how Kahlo crafted

1 Quoted in Salomon Grimberg, *Frida Kahlo: Song of Herself* (New York: Merrell, 2008), 13.

2 *Appearances Can Be Deceiving: The Dresses of Frida Kahlo*, at the Museo Frida Kahlo in Casa Azul in Mexico City, was curated by Circe Henestrosa, has been ongoing since 2012 and was visited by the author in January 2020. *Frida Kahlo: Making Her Self Up* was at London's Victoria and Albert Museum in 2018, cocurated by Circe Henestrosa and Claire Wilcox. *Frida Kahlo: Appearances Can Be Deceiving*, at The Brooklyn Museum, February 8–May 12, 2019, was based on the earlier two shows, curated by Circe Henestrosa and Claire Wilcox, with Gannit Ankori as curatorial advisor; Catherine Morris, Sackler Senior Curator for the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, and Lisa Small, Senior Curator, European Art, Brooklyn Museum.

her appearance and shaped her personal and public identity to reflect her cultural heritage and political beliefs, while also addressing and incorporating her physical disabilities.”³

Frida’s Mexican folk identity came in part through her adoption of Tehuana clothing, which she began to wear in her twenties. Kahlo dressed in her own interpretation of traditional Tehuana dress: floor-length full skirts, embroidered blouses, and a regal coiffure associated with a matriarchal society from Zapotec culture located on the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in Oaxaca State, Mexico.⁴ Yet this was neither the culture of Frida’s nuclear family nor of her own neighborhood or community. She was born on July 6, 1907, to a German father, (Wilhelm) Guillermo Kahlo (1871–1941), and Matilde Calderón y González (1876–1932), a mestiza mother, who was born in Oaxaca to a mother of Spanish descent and an indigenous father. Though Kahlo spent most of her childhood and adult life in her family home in Coyoacán, a municipality of Mexico City, she romanticized and promoted her maternal grandfather’s indigenous Oaxacan ancestry and also claimed that her German father was Jewish.

While Frida did not try to express Jewish ancestry with costumes, it has now been well documented that she chose to dress in variations of traditional Tehuana dress. It seems that she preferred this style of dress as a means of distracting from her physical deformities, which were the result of polio, contracted when she was just six years old, and from damage to her spine and pelvis, and other injuries suffered in a serious accident that took place when she was seventeen and riding on a bus that collided with a streetcar.

However, Frida’s original choice of Tehuana dress also coincided with *Mexicanidad*, a romantic nationalism inspired by the Mexican revolution, that emphasized indigenous cultures, once but no longer regarded as inferior.⁵ This celebrated fashion featured flamboyant (often floral) design on a *huipil* (a straight rectangular blouse or tunic) made from either satin or velvet embroidered with ornate floral or geometric borders, which frame the neckline and chest. The *huipil* was worn with a matching floor-length full skirt and could be accompanied by a large starched white lace head-dress called *huipil grande*, which would be worn for traditional fiestas, when women paraded through the streets.⁶

3 The Brooklyn Museum, press release, February 8, 2019.

4 See Circe Henestrosa, “Appearances Can Be Deceiving—Frida Kahlo’s Construction of Identity: Disability, Ethnicity and Dress,” in *Frida Kahlo: Making Her Self Up*, ed. Claire Wilcox and Circe Henestrosa (London: V&A Publishing, 2018), 66–83.

5 Such use of clothing to express political affiliation or preference has been and is still evident in many other world cultures—from Ghana to Afghanistan. See also, for example, Aida Hurtado and Norma E. Cantu, eds., *meXicana Fashions: Politics, Self-Adornment, and Identity Construction* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2020).

6 See for example, Chloë Sayer, “Traditional Mexican Dress,” Victoria and Albert Museum, <https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/traditional-mexican-dress>.

Until recently, Frida's propensity to dress in Tehuana costumes had been attributed to the encouragement of her husband, the artist, Diego Rivera (1886–1957).⁷ However, the cache of costumes and photographs that came to light in Kahlo's home demonstrated that Frida's mother, Matilde, “dressed as Adelita, a heroic revolutionary woman fighter enshrined in Mexican lore,” making it clear that Frida had known these clothes since her childhood.⁸ “La Adelita,” which comes from a song and was not a real historical woman, was the romanticized version, as imagined by men, of the *soldaderas*, women who, by fighting in the revolution, forged a new identity for themselves as equals to men.⁹

Frida came of age at a time of conscious searching for a Mexican identity and a way to express it through an original Mexican artistic language. In 1922, while she studied at the National Preparatory School, José Vasconcelos (1882–1959), the minister of education, called upon students to search for a new “national” art. The philosophy professor, Antonio Cano (1883–1946), urged his students: “Turn your eyes to the soil of Mexico, to our customs and our traditions.”¹⁰ To find that original Mexican language, Frida, who combined and created her own “traditional” costumes, also began to emulate aspects of Mexican folk art in her own work. It has been noted that in her paintings she drew upon “Aztec, Zapotec, and Mexican folk imagery,” reflecting “the nationalist ideology of post-revolutionary Mexico that revered indigenous and past traditions.”¹¹

By 1928, Kahlo had met and married the well-known Diego Rivera, who was more than two decades older. Soon, she was traveling with him in the United States, as he pursued his career as a muralist. Responding to nationalist ideology, she painted many self-portraits inspired by traditional Mexican votive images painted on tin, which she collected and admired for their symbolic details and narrative power. Her 1933 painting, *My Dress Hangs There*, presents her Tehuana dress as a symbol, standing in for her, since she felt alienated while living with Rivera in New York City. She represented herself as the unworn traditional dress, detached from her usual identity, ironically suspended between modern American plumbing and a golf trophy, both mounted on classical columns. The disembodied Tehuana dress appears as a

7 Masayo Nonaka, “The Influence of Frida Kahlo's Maternal Heritage,” in Hilda Trujillo Soto, *Frida Kahlo: Her Photos* (Mexico City: Editorial RM, 2010), 28–29; Henestrosa, “Appearances Can Be Deceiving,” 73.

8 Hamish Bowles, “Behind the Personal Branding of Frida Kahlo,” *Vogue*, June 18, 2018, <https://www.vogue.com/article/frida-kahlo-making-her-self-up-london>.

9 Delia Fernández, “From Soldadera to Adelita: The Depiction of Women in the Mexican Revolution,” *McNair Scholars Journal* 13, issue 1, art. 6 (2009), <http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/mcnair/vol13/iss1/6>.

10 Baltasar Dromundo, *Mi Calle de San Ildefonso* (Mexico City: Editorial Guaranía, 1956), 46, quoted in Hayden Herrera, *Frida Kahlo: The Paintings* (New York: Perennial, 1991), 30.

11 Corrine Andersen, “Remembrance of an Open Wound: Frida Kahlo and Post-revolutionary Mexican Identity,” *South Atlantic Review* 74, no. 4 (Fall 2009), 119–30.

symbol in several other paintings including *Memory* (1937) and *What the Water Gave Me* (1938).

More often, however, Kahlo posed for photographs and depicted herself resplendent in her Tehuana costumes. We see her dressed this way in paintings such as *Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera* (1931); *Self-Portrait (Dedicated to Leon Trotsky)* (1937); *Me and My Doll* (1937); *Itzcuintli Dog with Me* (1938); *Remembrance of an Open Wound* (1938); and in *The Two Fridas* (1939).

Kahlo's distinctive personal appearance and idiosyncratic choice of fashion soon attracted *Vogue* magazine, which featured her in its October 1937 American edition. She was interviewed by Alice-Leone Moats and photographed by Toni Frissell standing next to an agave plant for a feature titled, "Senoras of Mexico."¹² Then, in November 1938, *Vogue* published an article, entitled "The Rise of Another Rivera," by her friend, Bertram D. Wolfe, to coincide with her show at the Julien Levy Gallery in New York: "From the bright, fuzzy woolen strings that she plaits into her black hair and the colour she puts into her cheeks and lips, to her heavy antique Mexican necklaces and her gaily coloured Tehuana blouses and skirts, Madame Rivera seems herself a product of her art and, like all her work, one that is instinctively and calculatedly well composed."¹³

Kahlo's art also appealed to the Surrealist artist André Breton, who saw to it that she got her first solo exhibition in 1938 at the Julien Levy Gallery in New York. Around this time, she purchased at the market in Oaxaca a frame with flowers and birds painted on the back of glass, a technique utilized by folk artists in many cultures: to mention only American, Bavarian, Bohemian, Russian, Peruvian, and Mexican. Earlier modernist painters like Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc had collected folk paintings on the back of glass from Bavaria, known there as *Hinterglasmalerei*, and, in homage, produced their own versions of paintings on the back of glass, all of which they included in their anthology *Der Blaue Reiter*, first published in Munich in early 1912.¹⁴

Into a purchased folk-art frame, adorned with bold flat decorative flowers and birds, Kahlo inserted a realistic self-portrait, her hair adorned with flowers, Tehuana style, which she had painted on thin piece of metal. The frame, into which Kahlo inserted her own image, has been identified as an artisanal product from the village of Santa Catarina Juquila, located in the State of Oaxaca.¹⁵ Kahlo titled her assemblage *The Frame* (fig. 1), and included it in a Paris show in March 1939. This was not the only time that Kahlo used a folk art "frame" for her art, but it is the instance in which her

¹² Alice-Leone Moats, "Senoras of Mexico," *Vogue*, October 1937, photographs by Toni Frissell.

¹³ Bertram D. Wolfe, "The Rise of Another Rivera," *Vogue* (November 1, 1938), 131.

¹⁴ Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc, *Der Blaue Reiter* (Munich: Piper Verlag, 1912).

¹⁵ See <https://www.centrepompidou.fr/cpv/resource/corGag/ryjK6Bn>.

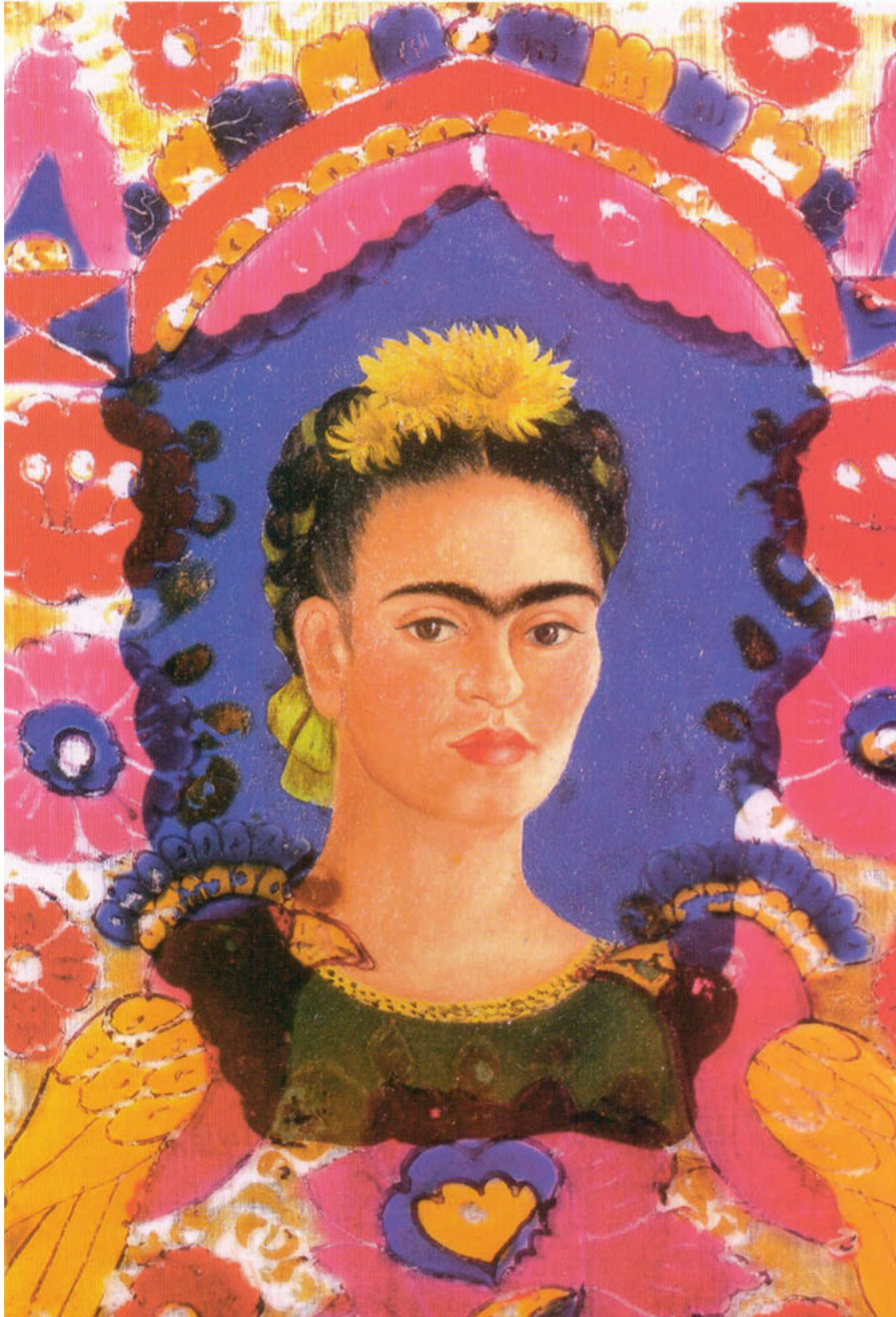


Fig. 1: Frida Kahlo, *The Frame*, 1938. Oil on aluminum and glass frame, 28.5 × 20.7 cm. Achat de l'Etat, 1939. Inventory number: JP 929 P (1) Centre Pompidou, Paris (transfer from the Louvre) Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris.



Fig. 2: Frida Kahlo, *Two Fridas*, detail, 1939. Oil on canvas, 173.5 × 173 cm. Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City.

own painting seems to blend most seamlessly with the adopted frame.¹⁶

After the opening of the Paris show, Frida was pleased to write friends about receiving “great praises for my painting from Kandinsky,” who was then living in Paris.¹⁷ Kandinsky’s enthusiasm impressed Rivera, too, who reported how “Kandinsky was so moved by Frida’s pictures that he embraced her and picked her up right in public in the exhibition room. He kissed her on both cheeks and on the forehead and he was so moved that tears were running down his face.”¹⁸ What Rivera and Kahlo appear to have missed was that Kandinsky had responded to Frida’s use of the same folk tradition that had earlier inspired his own paintings, as well as those of many artists in his circle, from Gabriele Münter to August Macke.

The Louvre also responded to Frida, purchasing *The Frame*, its first acquisition of a contemporary Mexican painting.

The next year, in her unique large-scale double self-portrait, *Two Fridas* (1939, **fig. 2**), Kahlo suggested her dual nature and hinted that she held multiple ethnic identities. Her image on the right is dressed in Tehuana costume, while on the left, she wears a European Victorian-style dress. Some of many interpretations of this picture argue that the Frida dressed in Mexican outfit, who holds Diego’s portrait, is the one that he loved.¹⁹ Painted at the tumultuous time of the couple’s divorce, the image expresses Frida’s pained emotional state, before their reunion just a year later.

Kahlo followed the *Two Fridas* with *Self-portrait as a Tehuana* (**fig. 3**), in which she wears the traditional *huipil grande* headdress. She began this work in August of



Fig. 3: Frida Kahlo, *Diego on my Mind* (*Self-portrait as Tehuana*), detail, 1943. Oil on Masonite, 76 × 61 cm, Jacques and Natasha Gelman Collection, Mexico City.

¹⁶ For other examples, see Judy Chicago with Frances Borzello, *Frida Kahlo: Face to Face* (New York: Prestel, 2010), 25, Frida Kahlo, *Survivor* (1938), in a handcrafted Oaxacan tin frame, private collection; 135, *Diego and Frida* (1944), oil on wood in a frame of shells, private collection; 170, *Fulang-Chang and I* (1937), oil self-portrait with painted mirror frame (reverse glass painting), Museum of Modern Art, New York.

¹⁷ Frida Kahlo letter to Ella and Bertram D. Wolfe, March 17, 1939, Bertram D. Wolfe Archive, Hoover Institution, Stanford University, quoted in Herrera, *Frida Kahlo: The Paintings*, 122.

¹⁸ Isabel Alcántara & Sandra Egnolff, *Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera* (New York: Prestel), 63–64.

¹⁹ See Grimberg, *Song of Herself*, 25, and Nonaka, in *Frida's Photos*, 29, who identified the source for the European costume in an old photo of Frida's mother's family (42–43). Herrera, *The Paintings*, 135.

1940, just as she and Rivera divorced, though she did not complete the canvas until 1943. Her subject, featuring the miniature portrait of Rivera on her brow, broadcast her obsession with him. This work made clear the link in her mind of her traditional Tehuana costumes to her estranged husband, for whom she yearned.

The miniature portrait of Rivera on Kahlo's mind also suggests other aspects of her identity that are not so easily depicted in her paintings. Another link between the couple was their public claim to share Jewish identity. In his introductory essay to the 1995 publication of Kahlo's diary, the late novelist and essayist, Carlos Fuentes (1928–2012), wrote: "But in the U.S.A., as in Mexico, Kahlo and Rivera loved to punctuate pretension and defy prejudice. She descended from Hungarian Jews, he from Sephardic exiles of the Spanish Diaspora of 1492. What better way of entering the U.S.A., when some hotels were barred to Jews, than announcing (ten years before Laura Hobson's *Gentleman's Agreement*) as they registered at the front desk, that they, the Riveras, were Jewish? What greater fun than sitting at a dinner with the renowned anti-Semite Henry Ford and inquiring "Mr. Ford, are you Jewish?"²⁰ Well before anyone questioned Kahlo's Jewish identity, Fuentes, intuitively made a link to Hobson's bestselling 1947 novel that told the story of a magazine writer who researched anti-Semitism by posing as a Jew.

In Rivera's case, the claim to Jewish heritage was authentic. Though a professed atheist, Rivera took pride in his Jewish descent, explaining to the Jewish portrait photographer Marcel Sternberger: "My father told me that my [great] grandfather used to be an Italian Jew ... [The name] Rivera is from Italy—the real name was Rivera Sforza [and] all the people in Italy who have this name are Jewish ... On the other hand, I remember much more about my grandmother—my grandmother was a Portuguese Jewess by the name of Inez D'Acosta."²¹ In a 1952 address, Rivera told a Mexico City audience that his ancestry was "Spanish, Dutch, Portuguese, Italian, Russian, and—I am proud to say—Jewish." He asserted, "My Jewishness is the dominant element in my life. From this has come my sympathy with the downtrodden masses which motivates all my work."²²

Frida clearly identified with Diego's politics and joined him in professing to be Jewish. To understand Kahlo's professed Jewish identity—whether authentic or invented—one needs to reflect upon what Jewish identity is. One argument goes, "One can be Jewish without being observant, or for that matter without being religious at all. Neither is the issue a question of race, for Jews have no genetic partic-

²⁰ Carlos Fuentes, introduction to *The Diary of Frida Kahlo: An Intimate Self-Portrait* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1995), 22.

²¹ Saul Jay Singer, "Diego Rivera's Jewish Roots and The Rosenberg Case," *Jewish Press*, May 4, 2017. <https://www.jewishpress.com/sections/features/features-on-jewish-world/diego-riveras-jewish-roots-and-the-rosenberg-case/2017/05/04/>. Rivera's family traced its Jewish ancestry back to philosopher Uriel Acosta, broadly recognized as Baruch Spinoza's philosophical precursor.

²² Singer, "Diego Rivera's Jewish Roots."

ularity. We don't have a common language, nor even a common culture ... we are a people. A kind of family, held together not uniquely by the memory of an ancient religion, but belonging the one to the other in virtue of our very identification with the Jewish people. Simply put, we are Jews because we feel ourselves to be Jewish."²³ This concept, however, was not enough for the blog, *Jew or Not Jew*, to accept Frida's posturing.²⁴ Nor would it satisfy Orthodox rabbis, who look only for matrilineal Jewish descent, accepting only the children of Jewish mothers or those who go through a complicated process of conversion.

In fact, Kahlo's adoption of Jewish identity occurred in the early 1930s, just after years in which both the governments of the United States and Mexico had tried to discourage Jewish immigrants. In Mexico, as in parts of the United States, insecurity among some of the local Jews who were earlier settlers caused them to discourage further Jewish immigration, fearing that the local economy was already too difficult or that poor immigrants might cause anti-Semitism to increase.²⁵ The Mexican-born Jewish journalist and anthropologist, Anita Brenner, even recalled alarm from Mexican's Jews when they first heard Yiddish spoken there; they feared that their own good fortune would suffer.²⁶ Brenner's book *Idols behind Altars*, published in 1929, was instrumental in publicizing the production of artists working in Mexico, such as Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo, José Clemente Orozco, Edward Weston, and Jean Charlot.²⁷

Meanwhile, Kahlo's professed Jewish identity sparked ethnic pride among Jews. I recall how thrilled the feminist artist Miriam Schapiro (1923–2015) was to learn that Kahlo was a fellow Jew and how she shared with me this news.²⁸ She referenced Kahlo's Jewish heritage in one of her own paintings. In *My History*, of 1997, Schapiro included both Kahlo's portrait and the Jewish Star of David (**fig. 4**). Thus, Kahlo became known, sometimes celebrated, for having had a "Jewish" father, who was correctly reported to have emigrated to Mexico from Germany. Schapiro made multiple homages to Kahlo, appropriating her images.

Though Kahlo never painted herself as Jewish, she did accept a commission to make a painting on the story of Moses, the Jewish prophet. In a speech she made about her 1945 painting, *Moses*, Frida said: "the central theme is Moses, or the birth

²³ David Wasserman, Letter to *New York Herald Tribune*, August 8, 2011, reprinted in *New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/08/opinion/08iht-edletmon08.html>.

²⁴ *Jew or Not Jew*, November 14, 2007, <http://www.jewornotjew.com/profile.jsp?ID=160>.

²⁵ In the United States, laws were passed in the early 1920s that limited Jewish immigration. In Mexico, in 1922, President Obregon made brief overtures inviting Jews, but that openness did not endure. See Adina Cimet, *Ashkenzi Jews in Mexico: Ideologies in the Structuring of a Community* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997), 15.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Anita Brenner, *Idols behind Altars* (NY: Payson and Clarke, 1929).

²⁸ See Gail Levin, "Beyond the Pale: Beyond the Pale: Jewish Identity, Radical Politics, and Feminist Art," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 4, no. 2 (2005): 205–32.



Fig. 4: Miriam Schapiro, *My History*, 1997. Collage, Courtesy Eric Firestone Gallery, New York.

of the Hero ... I started painting the image of the infant Moses—Moses means ‘he who was taken out of the waters’ in Hebrew, and ‘boy’ in Egyptian. I painted him the way legends describe him: abandoned inside a basket and floating down a river.”²⁹ She also commented on Freud’s take on Moses in his controversial 1939 book, *Moses and Monotheism*: “Freud analyzes in a very clear but—for my personality—complicated way, the important fact that Moses wasn’t Jewish but Egyptian. But in the picture, I couldn’t find a way to paint him as either, so I only painted him as a boy who generally represents Moses.”³⁰

In the case of Kahlo’s self-professed Jewish ancestry, it was the artist’s biographers who first wrote about her Jewish identity. Some years ago, art historians ignored the Jewish background of cosmopolitan modern artists such as Man Ray or Sonia Delaunay, who themselves did not broadcast their Jewish identity. In Kahlo’s case, however, both of her early biographers seemed authoritative: Hayden Herrera based her 1983 biography of Kahlo, *Frida*, on her City University of New York doctoral dissertation in art history. She wrote of Kahlo’s parents: “It is somewhat more difficult to imagine what attracted the devout Matilde Calderon to Guillermo Kahlo. The twenty-six-year-old immigrant was by birth Jewish, by persuasion an atheist, and he suffered from seizures.”³¹ In a 1991 book, Herrera wrote: “The son of Hungarian Jews who lived in Baden-Baden, Germany, Guillermo Kahlo emigrated to Mexico in 1891 at the age of nineteen, and in the first decade of this century became one of Mexico’s foremost photographers.”³²

The journalist Raquel Tibol (1923–2015), who also first published a biography of Frida Kahlo in 1983, quoted Kahlo, whom she had interviewed: “The son of Hungarians, my father was born in 1873 in Baden, Germany; and he studied in Nuremberg. His mother died when he was eighteen, and he didn’t like his stepmother, so my grandfather, a jeweler, gave him enough money to go to America, but when he arrived in Mexico in 1891 he suffered frequent attacks of epilepsy.”³³ Tibol concluded the impact of ethnicity on Frida’s development: “At any rate, the contrast between the liberal father of Jewish ancestry and the fanatically Christian mother was another of the things that nourished her precocity.”³⁴

²⁹ Martha Zamora, ed. *The Letters of Frida Kahlo Cartas Apasionadas* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1995), 121.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 121.

³¹ Hayden Herrera, *Frida: A Biography of Frida Kahlo* (NY: Harper & Row, 1983), 6.

³² Herrera, *Frida Kahlo: The Paintings*, 18.

³³ Raquel Tibol, *Frida Kahlo: Una vida abierta* (Mexico City: Editorial Oasis, 1983); English translation, *Frida Kahlo: An Open Life*, trans. Elinor Randall (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), 31.

³⁴ Tibol, *Frida Kahlo*, 36–37. Born “Raquel Rabinovich” in Argentina, Tibol understood Jewish identity. See *EcuRed*, https://www.ecured.cu/Raquel_Tibol. See also Alberto Hajar Serrano, “Raquel Tibol,” *Piso9*, December 9, 2016, <https://piso9.net/raquel-tibol/?lang=en>: “Her development as a historian was

Subsequent authors also tried to find some significance in Kahlo's Jewish identity. In 2000, Jack Rummel, wrote: "Much of Frida's talent for detecting complacency and her sharp eye for uncovering hypocrisy came to her through her father, Wilhelm Kahlo, a German Jew whose failed attempts to fit into Mexican society and whose strong German accent was never lost, equipped him with an outsider's eye for its defects. The elder Kahlo was born in Baden-Baden in 1872 and at birth was already something of an outsider in Germany. He was Jewish in a nation that had never completely accepted Jews as full citizens."³⁵

Then, in 2002, Gannit Ankori published *Imagining Her Selves: Frida Kahlo's Poetics of Identity and Fragmentation*, based upon her doctoral dissertation at Hebrew University in Jerusalem.³⁶ She focused on Kahlo's portrait of her father (**fig. 5**), painted in 1951, and commented upon its brief text: "Frida stresses in this text . . . Wilhelm Kahlo's active anti-Nazi position. This may seem strange within a Mexican context, but it becomes understandable when we remember that Wilhelm was a German Jew." The significance of this statement becomes clear if we take into account the rift that occurred within the German immigrant community in Mexico in the 1930s and 1940s, when many German immigrants living in Mexico espoused Nazi ideology.³⁷ Ankori explains that "Frida, a devout Communist and anti-Nazi activist, wanted to stress the fact that her German-born father was not to be identified in any way with Germany's dark past. Rather, his moral position against Nazism is presented as part of the legacy he left his daughter."³⁸

Among other issues, Ankori uncovered what she considered evidence of Kahlo's Jewish ethnicity by interviewing the Mexican-Jewish art collector Natasha Gellman, who told her that in 1942 Kahlo got along well with Marc Chagall, a Jewish artist, born in Eastern Europe.³⁹ Kahlo's many friendships with Jews, however, do not make her Jewish. The fact that so many of Frida's collectors and supporters were Jewish might have motivated her eager adoption of their identity.

During the summer of 1938, the Romanian-born Jewish-American actor and art collector, Edward G. Robinson, had traveled to Mexico City just to see Kahlo's paintings and had thrilled her by paying her \$200 each for four of them. Then, when Kahlo had her first solo show at the Julien Levy Gallery in New York in November 1938, a number of the twenty-five paintings shown were purchased through this Jewish dealer by Jewish collectors, including Mrs. Sam Lewisohn, Mary Schapiro (Mrs. Solomon)

enhanced by her marriage, in 1957, to Boris Rosen, who gathered a major Marxist library in Yiddish."

³⁵ Jack Rummel, *Frida Kahlo: A Spiritual Autobiography* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 2000), 16.

³⁶ Gannit Ankori, *Imagining Her Selves: Frida Kahlo's Poetics of Identity and Fragmentation* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 17.

³⁷ There is no evidence that Guillermo Kahlo was German-Jewish. Moreover, he was depicted by Kahlo's niece, Isolda Kahlo, in *Frida Intima* (Mexico: Dipon, 2004), as apolitical.

³⁸ Ankori, *Imagining*, 22.

³⁹ Ankori, *Imagining*, 59, note 46; Natasha Gelman, Ankori interview, March 9, 1989.



Fig. 5: Frida Kahlo, *Portrait of Her Father*, 1951, Oil on canvas, Collection Museo Frida Kahlo, Mexico City.

Sklar, Walter Pach, Edgar Kaufmann, and Nickolas Muray, the latter a close friend and lover. Salomon Grimberg has explained why Kahlo kept reshaping herself: “With each transformation she believed she would attain an image that would hold the attention of the people she most wanted to please at that moment, those who provided her with her sense of security and being.”⁴⁰

Ankori also argued, “Kahlo’s visual metaphors are derived from a book of Yiddish poetry that Rivera was illustrating at the time, Isaac Berliner’s *City of Palaces* ... Rivera’s collaboration with Berliner required the translation of Yiddish texts into Spanish ... either her father (who was fluent in Yiddish) or Bertram Wolfe, himself a Yiddish writer, did the translations.”⁴¹ The translation from Yiddish required someone who could read the Hebrew letters with which Yiddish is written, who was likely Wolfe, a Brooklyn-born leftist Jew who had also collaborated with Rivera on *Portrait of Mexico* of 1937 and, later, would write Rivera’s biography.⁴²

The apogee of Frida Kahlo’s Jewish identity was in 2003 in New York, when Gannit Ankori served as guest curator for the Jewish Museum, which presented a small but memorable show, *Frida Kahlo’s Intimate Family Portrait*, on the theme of her Jewish heritage. The *New York Times* critic Grace Glueck reviewed it: “Her early religious roots didn’t concern Frida much (as an adult, she became an ardent Communist), but in 1936, probably affected by the growing menace of Hitler’s anti-Semitism, she painted “My Grandparents, My Parents and I,” a family portrait that included her Jewish ancestors. The painting, owned by the Museum of Modern Art, is the centerpiece of the show” (fig. 6). Glueck described the painting: “In her right hand she holds a ribbon that flows upward on either side of the picture to support floating portraits of each set of grandparents; the Mexican couple on the left, the Hungarian-Jewish pair on the right. (From her Kahlo grandmother, Frida apparently inherited those awesome black eyebrows that almost met in the middle of her forehead.)”⁴³

Just two years after the show at the Jewish Museum, however, the story of Frida’s Jewish father was challenged by a German book, *Fridas Vater: Der Fotograf Guillermo Kahlo*, by Gaby Franger and Rainer Huhle, that traced Kahlo’s father’s genealogy and argues that “despite the legend propagated by Frida,” Guillermo did not have Jewish Hungarian roots, but was born to German Lutheran parents.⁴⁴ This research has since been accepted by other authors.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Grimberg, *Frida Kahlo: Song of Herself*, 13.

⁴¹ Ankori, *Imagining*, 46.

⁴² Bertram D. Wolfe, *Diego Rivera: His Life and Times*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1939).

⁴³ Grace Glueck, “The Multi-cultural Identity Beneath Frida Kahlo’s Exoticism,” *New York Times*, September 19, 2003.

⁴⁴ Gaby Franger and Rainer Huhle, *Fridas Vater: Der Fotograf Guillermo Kahlo Von Pforzheim bis Mexiko*, (Munich: Schirmer Mosel, 2005).

⁴⁵ See Suzanne Barbezat, *Frida Kahlo at Home* (London: Frances Lincoln Ltd., 2016), 23–24: “Frida perpetuated several myths about her father. His family did not have ties to Hungary, but had lived in

Fig. 6: Frida Kahlo, *My Grandparents, My Parents, and I (Family Tree)*, 1936. Oil and tempera on zinc, 30.7 × 34.5 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York, Gift of Allan Roos, M. D., and B. Mathieu Roos.



Kahlo's claim to Jewish ancestry was quite clever and enduring. She said that her Hungarian-Jewish ancestors came from Arad, Hungary. Once the home of a Jewish community in Hungary, Arad is now located over the border to Romania, where its archives remain rather difficult to access.⁴⁶ Kahlo may have taken inspiration from the birthplace of her Jewish lover, the photographer Nickolas Muray, whom she first met in 1931. His hometown of Szeged, Hungary, is a mere fifty-five miles to her chosen town of Arad.

The issues motivating Frida to boast of Jewish identity were complex and can be viewed as a part of her creative craft, similar to her dressing in Tehuana costumes or slipping her art works into folk art frames. On September 9, 1950, less than four years before her death on July 13, 1954, she told Olga Campos, "I ... have no religion, am of the Mexican race, or better to say I am a mixture." Yet, because she had earlier claimed Jewish ancestry, many continue to insist upon it despite the ample evidence that Frida Kahlo fabricated her Jewish identity.⁴⁷

the area around Baden-Baden and Pforzheim ... She affirmed that he was Jewish, but he was baptized as an infant in the Lutheran church in Pforzheim."

⁴⁶ Given anti-Semitism in Germany, a Jewish immigrant might have decided to pass as Lutheran. I wondered about the possibility of a distant relationship of Frida Kahlo's Kaufmann grandmother to the Austro-Hungarian painter of Jewish themes, Isidor Kaufmann (1853–1921), who moved from his birthplace in Arad to Vienna. I asked if Ankori had been to Arad to check the archive and was told that it was too complicated. To find out for myself, I asked several colleagues in Romania. Searching the archives in Arad would require reading old German script used in the Austro-Hungarian empire.

⁴⁷ See, for example, the website entry as of July 25, 2019, on Frida Kahlo at *The Art Story*, <https://www.theartstory.org/artist-kahlo-frida-artworks.htm>.

In Frida Kahlo's case, her claim to be half-Jewish was ironic, since she alleged this at the time the Nazis took power, when so many Jews had to hide their identities to survive. While her father was born in Germany, it now appears that she invented the story that he was Jewish, appropriating convincing details of her paternal grandparents' supposed emigration from Arad. Beyond her statements, however, Kahlo took the trouble to write on the reverse of a photograph of her paternal grandmother, that she was Jewish and from Hungary.⁴⁸ Kahlo's identification with Jews who were threatened or actually lost their lives played a key role in shaping the reception of her art.

Since so many of Kahlo's collectors, dealers, and those who wrote about or photographed her and her husband, Diego Rivera, were liberal, left-wing, and often Jewish, Kahlo appears to have responded to the political agendas of the marketplace. Her choice was no simple matter but was in fact entangled in a complicated transnational drama being played out between Europe, where Nazis threatened and eventually murdered Jews, and the rest of the world, where some Jews and some Nazis took refuge—from Mexico to South Africa to China.

By 2013, Ankori responded to the German scholars' claims that Kahlo's father had only Lutheran ancestors with a new book in which she commented on the many recent discoveries related to Frida Kahlo's life: "Ironically, the uncovered information actually highlights and further accentuates the contradictions embedded in her biographical narrative."⁴⁹ Ankori quotes some of the sources that led her to believe in Frida's Jewish ancestry, most notably the view of Frida's niece, Isolda P. Kahlo, who published her book, *Intimate Frida*, around the same time as *Frida's Vater: Der Fotograf Guillermo Kahlo*.⁵⁰ Ankori addresses the German scholars directly in a footnote: "Their assertion that Wilhelm Kahlo's forefathers were German Lutherans is difficult to substantiate since Judaism is a matrilineal religion and tracing the matrilineal genealogy of the Kaufmann family is virtually impossible. This type of research is, of course, very difficult given the destruction of Jewish communities and their archives throughout Europe during the Nazi era."⁵¹ Perhaps someone will take up the challenge and confirm one way or another whether or not Frida's grandmother descended from a Jewish family before emigrating and marrying into a Lutheran family, however unlikely. Alternatively, the difficulty of obtaining archival evidence from Arad leaves one wondering if Kahlo left a strand of hair that might allow for DNA testing, which would finally resolve the contested issue of her father's ancestry.

⁴⁸ See Gaby Franger and Rainer Huhle, "The Mysterious Father," in Hilda Trujillo Soto, *Frida Kahlo: Her Photos*, 82. Frida kept this photograph of her paternal grandmother, Henriette Kaufmann, and labeled it on the verso: "My father's mother (a German Jew)".

⁴⁹ Gannit Ankori, *Frida Kahlo* (London: Reaktion Books, 2013), 19.

⁵⁰ Ankori, *Frida Kahlo* (2013), references this book as Isolda P. Kahlo, *Intimate Frida* (Bogotá, 2006).

⁵¹ Ankori, *Frida Kahlo* (2013), 202–03.

As late as February 10, 2018, the week before I gave a paper on Kahlo's invention of Jewish identity at the College Art Association meeting in Los Angeles, both the Museum of Modern Art's wall text and its website continued to reiterate the Jewish Museum's 2003 interpretation of its painting, *My Grandparents, My Parents, and I*. MoMA's website posted the 2015 gallery label, which was slightly abridged from the one that I had photographed. It stated: "While Kahlo celebrated Mexican culture by invoking its traditions in her art and wearing elaborate traditional attire, this painting is as much a tribute to her European and Jewish heritage. On the right is her German-born Jewish father and his parents, symbolized by the sea...." MoMA's label also attempted to contextualize this 1936 painting in terms of what was then going on in Germany: "Kahlo made this painting shortly after Hitler passed the Nuremberg laws, forbidding interracial marriage."⁵² While the painting adopts the format of genealogical charts used by the Nazis to advocate racial purity, Kahlo uses it subversively to affirm her mixed origins."

As recently as April 2017, a play called *Frida Fragmented* by Andrea Dantas was presented at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. It was promoted as follows: "After facing an episode of bullying due to her Jewish heritage, a crippled young Frida Kahlo is determined to prove that she is not a nobody. But a tragic accident and a heart-breaking betrayal leave her in shambles. Shattered and alone, she has no choice but to paint." One reviewer, Regina Weinreich, wrote: "Resilient as she was, and talented too, of course, the outside world crippled Frida. Taunted as a child for being Jewish, and later, for being Mexican, bisexual, and a feminist, Frida's key moments form this portrait in fragments."⁵³

In fact, well after the war, on May 18, 1949, Frida wrote to Hans-Joachim Kahlo in Hannover, Germany, responding to his letter inquiring if they might be related to one another. She wrote: "Here are all the facts I can give you. My grandfather's name, Jacob Kahlo born in Baden-Baden. My grandmother's Henriette Kaufmann (I am not quite sure, but I heard from my father that she was from Pforzheim)."⁵⁴ In the same book, we learn that Frida's grandmother's full name was "Rosine (Marie) Henriette Kaufmann." She named one of her daughters Maria Karoline, which seems to reference Mary of the Christian faith.

⁵² What MoMA cut out in brackets: "Kahlo [was fluent in German and closely monitored the rise of Nazism in Europe. She] made this painting shortly after Hitler passed the Nuremberg laws, forbidding interracial marriage." The rest is identical to the label posted from 2015. Shortly after I delivered this paper in Los Angeles in February 2018, MoMA, without communication from me, took down its wall text and updated its website by removing the related text, both of which had accepted and continued to discuss Kahlo's Jewish identity.

⁵³ Regina Weinreich, "Frida Kahlo in Andrea Dantas' One-Woman Show at BAM," *Gossip Central*, April 15, 2017, https://www.gossipcentral.com/gossip_central/2017/04/frida-kahlo-in-andrea-dantas-one-woman-show-at-bam-.html.

⁵⁴ See the photograph of Frida's letter, written in English, reproduced in Franger und Huhle, *Fridas Vater*, 13.



Fig. 7: Miriam Schapiro, *Agony in the Garden*, 1991. Acrylic on canvas with glitter, 229.1 × 183.4 × 5.1 cm. Brooklyn Museum, Purchase gift of Harry Kahn, 1991.112.

Kahlo thus crafted her performance of Jewish identity and broadcast her hyper-identification with what appealed to her patrons: she was someone at once exotic, Mexican, and politically correct. Had she not projected her invented Jewish identity, someone could have incorrectly assumed that her German father was a Nazi. Thus, for her, Jewishness represented a desired status. It allowed her, as a dedicated Communist, to declare

her solidarity with her Jewish friends and patrons without the cloud of her beloved father's German ancestry during the time of Nazism. In addition, her *public* assertion of her identity as Jewish was prompted by her awareness and first-hand experience of anti-Semitism in the United States. She performed empathy for her Jewish friends.

Beyond Kahlo's original intentions, many have responded to the bold self-image she projected both as a modernist and an outsider. Artists continue to appropriate her images, infusing her ideas and identities with their own. Miriam Schapiro, taken with Frida as another Jewish woman artist, produced homages not only to her Jewish identity, but also to her as a disabled woman who persisted despite the obstacles placed in her way. Schapiro painted *Agony in the Garden* (fig. 7) in 1991, recreating Kahlo's image of herself from her 1944 painting called *The Broken Column*, where she showed herself standing on the beach, wearing her restrictive medical corset. For Schapiro's appropriation, she transformed the beach of Kahlo's painting into a fantasy garden of patterned fabric and glitter, as if turning Kahlo's pain and suffering into triumph.

In contemporary Japan, Yasumasa Morimura (b. 1951), who views himself as a cross between an actor and an artist, must appreciate Frida Kahlo's use of "craft" in the sense of her skill in "deceiving others." Within the context of his own visual art, Morimura interprets Kahlo's various deceptive guises as performative, much like Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968) dressed up as his female alter ego, Rose Sélavy. For Morimura's own art, communicated through photographs for which he performs and poses, he uses a mix of heavy makeup, costumes, painting, and digital manipulation to transform himself into iconic figures from pop culture or art history—from the *Mona Lisa* to Marilyn Monroe to Frida. While his self-portraits are certainly homages, they also explore his own identity as an artist, touching on themes of gender, sexuality, and the culture of celebrity.

Morimura's exhibition catalog of 2001 features a conversation between him and Frida, titled "Frida de mi Corazon: An Imaginary Dialogue":

F: Señor Morimura, how many times have you been to Mexico?

M: I've yet to go even once

F: ¡Ay de mi! Bueno, how many paintings of mine have you actually seen?

M: One, I guess.

F: How can you dare to say Frida Kahlo had such an impact on you?

M: I never look at the real thing ... As I am being inspired by you, Doña Frida, I drink in what I like to think of as your essence so as to create a Frida of my own, in my own mind's eye. I'm living in the 2001, so I might even create a 21st-century Frida. It's all a conception of my imagination. In that fantastic sphere, the various elements of Doña Frida and myself mix into a muddle, a chemical reaction occurs, creating this imaginary Frida of mine ... I just wanted to give form to what Doña Frida is to me. Via self-portraiture, that is.⁵⁵

55 Yasumasa Morimura, *FridaKahlo.it*, <http://www.fridakahlo.it/en/morimura.php>.



Fig. 8: Yasumasa Morimura, *An Inner Dialogue with Frida Kahlo (Flower Wreath and Tears)*, 200. Color photograph. Edition of 2: 55.25 × 40.01 cm; edition of 3: 210.19 cm diameter; Edition of 5: 49.86 × 120.02 cm; Edition of 10: 120.02 × 95.89 cm.



Fig. 9: Sambuu Zayasaikhan (Zaya), *Frida under the Steppe Sky*, 2018. Oil on canvas 135 × 162 cm., Private Collection, New York.

In Morimura's version (**fig. 8**) of Kahlo's *Self Portrait as a Tehuana*, for the headdress, he substituted what appear to be silk flowers in place of her lace. Of course, the facial features are his own and there is no vision of Diego Rivera on his forehead, for it is Frida who was on his mind. He called his 2001 show in Tokyo, at the Hara Museum of Art, *Morimura Self-Portraits: An Inner Dialogue with Frida Kahlo*. It featured fifteen self-portraits of him posing as Kahlo, a video, and other work.

More recently, from Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, Zayasaikhan Sambuu, known as Zaya, (b. 1975) has painted his own version of *Two Fridas*, which he calls, *Frida under the Steppe Sky* (2018, **fig. 9**). In his version of *Two Fridas*, Zaya has responded with empathy to what he perceives as a barren Frida, who grieved because she was childless. Thus, he, the father of several young children, transformed one of the *Two Fridas* into a Mongolian woman who gives the other Frida her child, turning her into a "Frida of Hope." Just as the Frida who receives the gift of the Mongolian baby wears her national Tehuana costume, the Mongolian woman is dressed in her own national costume, which includes extra-long sleeves, raised shoulders, and an elaborate

headdress that is “protective for her family.”⁵⁶ By painting these two female images together in this way, Zaya fantasized creating happiness in Frida, which he noticed is difficult to find in her paintings. Of course, his particular assessment of Frida’s life and his original solution has evolved out of his own life and culture in Mongolia.

Thus, Kahlo’s craft—both her paintings and her invented identities—have circulated widely. What might have once been seen as her local, authentic, and typical Mexican qualities are in fact now entangled in a complex transnational contemporary art scene, fueled by images available in books, magazines, online, and in the cinema. Frida Kahlo’s creativity is now tied to a vast history of appropriation. Both her political agendas and the nationalism that originally fed the development of her art are now filtered through the myriad diverse cultures and artists that have drawn inspiration from her work.

⁵⁶ Author’s interview with Zaya (Zayasaikhan Sambuu) in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, July 2, 2019. See also Gail Levin, *Zayasaikhan Sambuu: Mongolia, Lost and Found* (Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia: National Gallery of Art, 2020).

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