

**Weaving and the value of carpets: female invisible
labour and male marketing in southern Morocco**

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ABSTRACT

Whilst there have been important publications on material culture studies in recent years, this literature tends to accept the prior experience of objects as given material facts. This thesis aims at providing a contribution to the conception of materiality through an ethnography of production grounded in long-term fieldwork. The research took place in the Sirwa Mountain, to the South East of Marrakech, Morocco, where the best selling carpets in Morocco are exclusively produced by women, and marketed by men. This thesis develops an ethnography of weaving framed within the francophone anthropology of techniques (*Technologie culturelle*). Particularly, I use the emphasis of the *Matière à Penser* group on the role of the moving body mediated by material culture to examine how particular embodied relationships to specific materialities shape particular gendered subjectivities. Grounded in participant observation, I put myself voluntarily in the situation of a learner, as well as observed the motor and sensory actions of weavers. This allows me to explore how women construct their female moral self, partially through the disciplinary techniques of immobility and confinement, involved in the process of making beautiful carpets. In producing objects that are exchanged by men, weavers contribute to shaping male agency. This thesis aims at exploring the specificity of making and the social meaning of carpets for those who produce them and their communities. I thus locate the Sirwa weavers value in an aesthetic and ethic of doing, in which the physical enjoyment and the mastery of matter, is the place of both the construction of a stable and fulfilled self and the production of others.

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Notes on transliteration

th dh dh do not exist in Moroccan Arabic

When a Berber term is used in addition to an Arabic one, I distinguish Berber (B) from Arabic (A). Also within Berber, it is quite common to find one term used in the mountain, and another in Taznakht or Taliouine (i.e. *ustan* and *aghgum*).

Arabic or Berber term, and technical weaving terms are defined in the glossary.

I do not mark Arabic or Berber plural with the English s and leave it blank (ex: several suq).

ء	I do not mark the hamza
أ	a
ب	b
د	d
ض	d
ف	f
ج	j
غ	gh
ه	h
ح	h
ك	k
خ	kh
ل	l
م	m
ن	n
ق	q
ر	r
س	s
ص	s
ش	sh
ت	t
ط	t
و	w
ي	y
ز	z
ع	.

Introduction

In this thesis I examine a particular category of material culture: the carpets woven by the Sirwa female weavers in the South of Morocco and exchanged by male traders. Rather than focusing on the carpet as a given, finished object, I am interested in analysing the coming-into-being of this materiality through the process of making. The core of this thesis is an ethnography of weaving, which shows the co-production of a subject and an object coming-into-being through practice. One of the premises of this thesis is that the practice of production, which implies bodily movements, gestures, sensations, perception and emotions mediated by material culture, shapes the gender and value of the makers. I argue that only in considering the body in motion acting on materiality can we sensitively understand the significance of productive work for the makers, and their society. This ‘embodied’ perspective can be situated in a long tradition of theorising in French anthropology which can be traced back to Mauss (1934/1979), but can also be found in the Anglo-Saxon anthropology or archaeology of techniques (Bray 1997; 2007; Dobres 2000; Ingold 2000; Mackenzie 1991; Pfaffenberger 1992; Rowlands and Warnier 1995; Schiffer 2001; Sillitoe 1988).

One of my aims is to define the premises of the specificity of making as an embodied and material process. I do this partly through a comparison of the process of production (by which objects come to existence) and the practice of trading in which finished carpets are exchanged.

Thesis outline

The main question that runs throughout this thesis is about the apparent lack of desire of women to challenge the patriarchal norm that defines female subjects as hardworking and confined in the domestic sphere. And this, despite them having an ambivalent relationship to weaving and being critical of men.

The theme of value is woven throughout each of the chapters, the value of subjects and carpets, social and economic value being intertwined and mutually

constitutive. Carpets come-into-being through the action of weavers, but also materiality ‘acts back’ on these subjects, marking them in the materiality of their bodies, that is in their senses and their feelings. The value of the maker and that of the carpets are interconnected: the coming-into-being of carpets is associated with the shaping of a feminine moral self and the building of a feminine knowledge (artistic, technical, organizational, mathematical etc.). Carpets are also ‘things-in-motion’ which are moved between spaces and in the process acquire new shapes, meanings and values. They are aged, transported, displayed and made more visible by men. As objects of exchange, they allow men to circulate in the market sphere, and thus they also contribute to ‘making’ men. Consequently, I am interested in exploring how particular embodied relationships to specific materialities shapes particular gendered subjectivities.

After presenting the theoretical framework of this thesis (**chapter 1**), I propose a historical perspective (**chapter 2**), to situate the construction of the value of contemporary Moroccan carpets. In the colonial period carpets started being commodified on a large scale. The value of Moroccan carpets is constructed today on this colonial heritage in such a way that older carpets are seen as more valuable (or authentic) than contemporary ones. Thus dealers have an interest in presenting a timeless image of weavers and their community, as if they live in an isolated world of tradition, separated from the market sphere. One of the aims of this thesis is to challenge these views of weavers and their production.

Chapter 3 provides the economic framework which shapes weaving practice and products. It describes the organisation of the carpet trade along a supply chain linking the Marrakech and the Sirwa. It highlight power relations between the large Marrakech merchants and their Sirwa middlemen and shows how weavers are the most exploited link in the supply chain.

Chapter 4 shifts the exploration of history and trade at a national or regional level to the Sirwa and Taznakht. After a brief description of the Sirwa and its people, it looks at the evolution of local production and describes new types of outlets which claim to challenge either gender relations or the exploitation of weavers.

Chapter 5 further narrows the focus, setting the ethnographic context of weaving from the point of view of women. It situates weaving work within other domestic activities. It deals with social interactions within the household and the village, and particularly between women to show the dynamic hierarchies which shape these interactions. My fieldwork took place in several places around Taznakht and Taliouine where I know several families and in the mountains, where my host family lived. In the mountain, I spent a great deal of time in the Ayt Ubial area, but also in the Ayt Waghirda region where my host family has kin and client links. As a result I was able to compare the daily life of women in these locations and to see how varied and complex the relationship of women with weaving was. This chapter deals partly with the issue of the ambiguous relation of women to weaving. Indeed, there is a marked difference between weavers' perception of weaving according to whether they live in the mountains or the urban areas (Taznakht, Taliouine, etc...), whether they work all year round or occasionally, whether they produce luxury carpets or plain lower quality products, depending on the gender relations in their household and the place of weavers in it. Although right across the region, the majority of women express their discontent about weaving full time all year round for the market, in and around Taznakht weaving was seen in much more negative way than in the mountains. There, they seemed to enjoy this activity more and to construct their moral female identity through it. But a more attentive observation showed that even in the mountains, women could see weaving as opposed to their desired image of femininity. One of the aims of this thesis is to understand how weaving can both be perceived as positive and costly, can be both desired and hated.

Chapter 6 is an ethnography of weaving based mainly on ethnographic data gathered in the mountains (particularly in my host family) and based on my own experience and apprenticeship of weaving. This chapter addresses the question of how weaving practice is the place of the shaping of a subject, in her body and mind, emotions and morality. The acquisition and practice of embodied and cognitive knowledge cannot be separated from the shaping of a moral gendered identity, where the weavers gain some form of agency through fitting with the patriarchal norm of what it is to be a woman in the Sirwa. I argue that despite (or because of) their constraining

dimensions, the disciplinary techniques of weaving may be enabling and empowering for some weavers.

In **Chapter 7** the ambivalence of weavers towards weaving shifts towards the negative. This chapter is mainly based on data I gathered in and around Taznakht, and in particular in the region of Agwins, where I collected some poems invented by weavers. Here, weaving becomes a source of grief as it is perceived mainly as misshaping weavers' bodies. This chapter raises (and partly answers) the question of why do women carry on weaving and do not challenge men's place in the commercial sphere by showing that they often do not have the choice.

Chapter 8 considers how the practice of trading shapes men's identity. It shows that men also have an ambivalent relationship to the selling activity, which like weaving has many constraining dimensions. This chapter addresses the relationships of younger Berber men with their fathers and other powerful figures of hegemonic masculinity and of Berber middlemen with larger dealers in the supply chain.

Chapter 9 shows that women are aware of the constraining dimensions of the men's work and world and that they take them into consideration in their assessment of the value of their own labour. This is used to further explain their motivation in choosing the norm.

Finally, **Chapter 10** argues that unlike what the literature on Moroccan carpets generally claims, contemporary Moroccan production is still dynamic in terms of aesthetic and technical knowledge and weavers play a very important role in creating value through their capacity to create and innovate.

How the research was carried out

The location for my fieldwork in the Sirwa was determined by the quality of weaving skills in that region. My fieldwork lasted 17 months and took place between 2002 and 2004. I worked mostly among the agricultural societies of the Sirwa mountains, living with a family during my fieldwork in the Ayt Ubial area and travelling from there to Taznakht, where I know several families. Three ethnic groups exist in the area, the *Berbers*, the *Hartani* and Arabs. Italicised terms are defined in the glossary.

I visited several villages around Taznakht and Taliouine, and in the South where the population belongs to the *Hartani* ethnic group and is Arabophone (Foum Zguid). The area I covered in the Sirwa mountains, (North of Taznakht) corresponds to the Ayt Wawzgit confederation of tribes¹ covering: Ayt Khuzama (Amassine), Ayt Semgan (Ait Tigga), Ayt Waghirda (Tazoult, Taouzoult, N`kob, Imeghlay), the Ayt `Athman, Ayt Azilal and the Ayt Ubial, Znaga and Ayt `Amr. Outside the Ayt Wawzgit confederation's region I also visited the area of Taliouine (Isuktan) the *suq* of Tidili and the cooperative of Agouim (see maps at the end of this chapter).

In addition to my host family in the Sirwa and their friends and extended family in other villages and tribes, and the people I befriended and visited regularly in Taznakht, I visited over fifty households across the region to gain a representative idea of the types of items woven, the aesthetical and technical knowledge, to assess whether production was independent or contractual, and what the volume of weaving and the role of weaving income was in the region.

Apart from the Sirwa and High Atlas mountains, I have a long standing knowledge of the Middle Atlas mountains, another important carpet production area, to which I returned during my fieldwork (Azrou, Midelt, Khenifra and Missouri, Boujaad and Khemisset, Ayt Bou Gemmez, Azilal and Beni Mellal). In addition, I contacted various cooperatives producing carpets in the region (Foum Zguid, Agouim, and Sidi Moukhtar). I also visited local *suq* or auction places (Midelt, Khemisset, Khenifra, Rabat, Marrakech), cooperatives (Midelt) and bazaars (Ouarzazate, Zagora, Essaouira, Agadir, Marrakech, Khemisset, Rabat, Fes, Azrou and Meknes). The visit to the Middle Atlas mountains was an opportunity to compare modes of transaction (sales and auctions) existing in other carpet marketplaces in Morocco. In the Middle Atlas women are more present in the *suq*, are more educated, usually speak Arabic and travel. Compared with the Sirwa, the area is less isolated geographically from the wealthier north and historically has been in contact with it much earlier. In Salé and Kenitra, I visited mills which are sometimes part of a weaving factory, either with my father or Boumediane Oumari who used to own a wool mill.

¹ Tribe is understood as a social group who share a common ancestor. It is a practical notion used by the member of the group who feel affiliated to it and will use it in relation to territory, marriage, patronage etc. A confederation is a larger group of neighbouring tribes who share a history. See Tapper (1997) for a discussion of the definitions of tribe.

Moroccan carpets are present in private and public collections in Europe and the United States, but also in Morocco in the private (Bert Flint, Marrakech) and national museums created during or after (Agadir) colonial times. I was given the opportunity to see the national (public) collections together (apart from the Agadir museum's) at the exhibition organised in Meknes in the Jamai museum in 2002.

In order to find information about the history of Moroccan carpets, and photographs and information about the region of my study (Sirwa) which is very little researched I consulted the French colonial archives² in Rabat and libraries in Rabat and Casablanca. The visit to the French colonial archives in Nantes, France (mainly political and education archives) was more productive.

On being a 'halfy' and the difficulty in finding a female assistant.

Unlike many of the Arab women who studied their society but were brought up or educated in the West or whose father or mother was from an Arab country ('halfies'), I was not introduced by my father (as Abu-Lughod 1988 was), accompanied by my mother (as Morsy, 1988) or my husband (El-Solh, 1988). My father is not from the region I studied (unlike Shami 1988). I was an outsider on almost every grounds: as a non-Berber speaker, non-local (not from any village), as educated, urban and from a wealthy background (relatively to them).

Most-of-all, in this setting being a Berber was important. In this conservative and closed host community, suspicious of outsiders, I came to realise the importance of who your father is whenever I was accompanied by a male assistant: invariably they would be asked which village they were from, and on hearing his father's name, they would start to warm to him. One of my assistants even suggested I talked to him in French rather than Arabic when in public places for he thought people would be more cooperative.

The major part of my field research was conducted in the Berber language. I cannot claim that my spoken Berber is fluent, but my vocabulary concerning the technical aspects of weaving is considerable. For interviews I made use of an Arabic-

² The commercial, but not the Department of Craft's archives were available. Fortunately a great amount of information is available in other publications: *Cahiers des Arts d'Afrique du Nord*, *Hespéris*, *Bulletin Économique et Social du Maroc*, and the CHEAM's papers.

speaking assistant (either a family member or a formal assistant). My basic knowledge of Berber also allowed me to check the accuracy of the translations.

Because very few women would travel, either due to their commitment as a mother or a weaver and because of the taboo about female mobility, it was difficult to find a female research assistant. In addition, it would have been a mistake to visit the Sirwa mountains with another of my assistants who was of *hartani* origin in a region where they are openly racist towards them.

Initially I was introduced to the field by a man who, I was to discover later, had some hope to marry me, which jeopardised our relationship. Although I presented myself as engaged, I had not wanted to have a married status because it was a recent relationship and I was well aware of issues of respectability. On reflection it would have been better to pretend to be married, even if to 'divorce' two or three years later if the relationship had not worked out. I should have waited for my father to be available to accompany me on the field. Probably my behaviour was also an issue. Although I was brought up in Morocco and was well trained in avoiding men's gaze, in my one-to-one relationship with men, I probably behaved too directly, did not feel shame or give impression to be shy or reserved when addressing them (unlike Abu-Lughod 1988, Solh 1988, Joseph 1988). I was seen as a *tarmoyt* (a term used to describe Westerners and migrants living in the West) and described as such at times by young married men who were worried about their reputation for being in contact with me. My education and social background, my behaviour and practices gave me a prerogative that men (or women of very low status) had: taking public transport and visiting the *suq*. On the other hand, as a Moroccan, I was also more approachable as somebody who would understand (the validity of) asking favour from (jobs, money, marriage arrangement). Probably the fact that I was a Moroccan living in the West also made me more acceptable as a potential and desirable marital prospect. Perhaps my foreign status (or obvious lack of sexual morality in the eyes of both men and women) made me more approachable for some young women who asked me questions they would not dare to ask other sexually active women on sexuality. Indeed, I soon discovered that my male research assistants were assumed to be having a sexual relationship with me and that

some probably played on this assumption to gain distinction in their competition with other men.

On coming to terms with my position of power and other issues.

I was expecting to see many instances of ‘female resistance’ to patriarchal order as I had in the urban settings, such as young women meeting young men secretly in remote places and on their own despite social prescriptions. Whereas in urban settings and in my father family, women make a scene as a strategy to bend men’s will, in the mountain instances of resistance take more covert forms. For example, although their male cousin had once found some lipstick on one of the young women in my host family and crushed it with his feet, they asked me to bring them back some make up from Europe, with the agreement of their mother. In Taliouine, on hearing that her young cousin who had been sent on an errand, had been followed by a man interested in her, all the way from the grocer to her home, a married woman put a brick in her handbag and went out with the aim of chasing and hitting him with the bag. Whether she really intended to do so or it was just a show of anger or solidarity, the very fact that she plotted this revenge shows that women are far from being passive.

As female ethnographer in a very poor region, I found myself objectified, instrumentalised because of a social status, which I could not identify with: that of a wealthy and powerful woman who could be an allied either as wife³ or a provider of a good job, ideally in Europe. I naively thought that my behaviour would erase our social and cultural differences. Unlike anthropologist such as Margaret Mead who bullied their informant in giving her information, I was more in favour of a non-intrusive approach for I was well aware of how the presence and questions of the ethnographer may lead the informants to try and comply with what they think she wants to hear. For instance, on my arrival in my host family, my questions about rituals led weavers to perform a

3 The degradation of the economic situation, the unemployment of graduates, the lack of fAyth in education as a source of social promotion in towns and the corruption that has even reached the education system and the general access through satellite dishes to Western television showing a dream-life in the West, all contribute to feed the hope of a better life elsewhere and the conviction that the future lies elsewhere than Morocco. Young generations both in the countryside and the cities dream of having an easy life without any more delay even if this entails marrying a woman more than twenty years older than them.

ritual when cutting the carpet which they would probably have not performed otherwise.

Thus I was not prepared for dealing with the issue of the resistance of women towards my power, even if I knew that the ethnographer is by definition a nuisance interfering with their work organisation, often giving them more work, or asking silly questions when they prefer their own conversation or do not want to speak about an activity they spend too much time performing to their liking. From those who did not feel the need to be subservient and who did not gain any feeling of distinction from self-mastery and politeness, I experienced perhaps the closest of hostile reactions ranging from teasing to mocking, to honest expression of thought, to direct financial demands, or to stated contempt for my lack of domestic and weaving skills. In the Sirwa, my main informant was Biya, a 17 year old weaver who spoke Arabic from having been a maid in her extended family. This was a rarity among women in the village. She was very proud of her knowledge and quite popular and envied among the young women of her age. Of an independent character and preoccupied by the worries and dreams of her age, she was not interested in helping me full time. A few days before we were due to visit the village where her mother was going to be re-trained on making an *akhnif* (cloak), she informed me she did not want to come. I had no time to find another female assistant and I was aware that they would not have liked to have a 'foreign' person sharing their intimacy and my favours. The full-time presence of a male kin was unthinkable in a setting where men are tolerated but whose presence conditions the behaviour of women. So I decided to use my camera extensively to record as much data as I could and get the recording translated at a later stage. The night before our departure, there was a discussion with her father in which I was not included but from which I gathered that F was expressing her refusal to come. In fact, she had to comply with her father's decision. As I found out later, it would have been easy to obtain her cooperation through payment. I was however torn between my desire to have a cooperative assistant and the ethical issue of paying a young woman an amount of money she may never receive again. I did not want to displease her father either by giving her money when none of her sisters or cousins had received any from me and I had always paid their father rather than them individually when I bought weavings from them. In addition, I felt that their father was himself in an insecure position, having only

recently become the head of the family, after having lived in the shadow of his elder brother. Himself a reserved man, his authority was threatened by the eldest son of his deceased brother.

In such conditions, Biya's attitude during the 18 days we spent in the village away from her family was less than cooperative. She was not keen on spending time in a family where the girls (three and seven years younger than her) already assumed domestic responsibilities she did not have to take on at home (making bread and cooking lunch). Indeed the week after her return, she was taught to make bread. The girls were also not educated, not as subtle and open minded as she was, having never left their village, and thus she felt offended to have to spend time with them. She soon found some good reasons to be there as she won the interest of some young men and enjoyed the friendship of and competition with other local girls. She also resisted the authority of her mother through refusing to weave and spending time napping. It was the first time I heard her mother use the term lazy to speak about her daughter (*aghuzal*).

Often Biya's translations were a summary of what was being said rather than a detailed or close rendering of a person's words, but my level of Berber was high enough to realise this. On the other hand, her lack of motivation would mean that she would never interfere with the interviewee and advise them 'just say such and such' as her mother or other women advised each other. If interviewing women on their own was almost impossible, the presence of their daughter, female kin or friends, had the advantage of leading them to remember experiences and rituals they had forgotten or to question each other about their respective practices.

The difficult encounters with men on the field and the confrontation with the ambivalent feelings of men towards women like me, who represented wealth and power and the possibilities of getting out of their situation (or at least of gaining some money) showed me that it is not just women that have to negotiate and compromise. I would probably have been less aware of the social pressure on young married and unmarried men (i.e. to behave morally), of their experience of subordinate masculinities, and of their acts of resistances within the confines of this pressure. My difficult relationship to my first research assistant taught me that if he restrained from any physical violence

towards me, out of fear of his father and because it would have diminished his family's reputation, he used several forms of resistance (lies, invented autobiography and narrative, psychological pressures) some of which could be interpreted as feminine in his society: gossip and invented stories to discredit me after the relationship broke.

Methodology and other issues

The exploration of embodied knowledge and of the corporeality and materiality of practice constitutes a great epistemological difficulty. The fact that embodiment is often difficult to express in words makes us forget that the productive work of weaving is a material bodily process comparable to that of the ethnographer gathering data (by pen or through a camera lens), and then typing and analysing it. Whether sitting for hours in front of a computer or in front of a loom, what takes place is a physical labour which requires discipline: the intense use of the sight and hands, prolonged immobility in a sitting position, closeness to the material object, automated gestures, eyes strain, pain in the neck, the back and the legs and fatigue. In both cases we have a physical and mental activity taking place together and shaping dialectically body and mind. As Becker has noted, academic scholars tend to forget the corporeality of writing, making a distinction between on the one hand the "prestigious mental part" (writing) and on the other "typing", the physical activity. "Like other activities [writing] has a physical side, and that side affects the thinking part more than we usually admit..." (Becker 1986: 152). One of the aims of this thesis is to show how the making of objects affects the feelings and thinking of the craftsperson. This thesis is concerned with the process of production and how the 'doing' leads to the emergence of a 'being'. The ethnographic activity is the way the ethnographer comes to integrate into a society in such a way that she is herself affected in her own perception of herself and the world around her. To use Foucault's notions (Foucault, 1987, 1994), in using "techniques of the self", (i.e self-discipline, transformative techniques) the ethnographer is acting on the self, and on the network of actions of those around her as well as being acted upon by others. These techniques of the self may for example take the form of: dressing according to the gender norm, promiscuity and lack of intimacy (I ate, slept and went to the toilets in the open air with other women), and enduring health problems (for instance being eaten alive by fleas and bedbugs). Stoller talks about absorbing and consuming (eating) as

being opened (consumed) by the world of others: "Such is the meaning of embodiment...the realisation that ...ethnographic things capture us through our bodies..." (1997: 23). The subjectivation into an ethnographer is accompanied by the emergence of a new person in a new body⁴ (or at least with a new body).

What are then the epistemological and methodological tools to understand the relation of the "body-in-action-with-objects"? Extensive interviews were conducted in a few villages in the mountains and in Taznakht. Weavers were questioned on their biographical history, participation in or knowledge of weaving rituals, how they learnt, and the work they produced, including its price. I interviewed 25 women in old and new Taznakht, and 20 in a village in Ayt Ubial; in addition I visited several families in various locations mentioned above to gain an overall view of the situation of women and their production in the region.

Interviewing was a difficult method to implement as talking about oneself in the kind of introspective and analytical way one can expect from a Western artist or craftsman is foreign to these societies. Unlike some men of power, who are used to talking to a captive audience, women are generally not loquacious about their experiences, let alone corporeal ones. Most women found the questions asked absurd or did not know what to reply. When for instance I tried to discuss the learning process or the ability of reproducing a motif from memory, "that's the way we do it", "it happens, that's all" were the kind of answers I would receive. Often the body's gesture, and posture, or how the subject sighs, laughs, or sings a song tells us things discourse cannot express. The ethnographer must become sensitive to these barely perceptible minute indexes of joy and enthusiasm, fatigue and impatience. The way they handled material could attest respect or lack of it for the material culture of weaving. Information was also gathered from discussions raised inadvertently from gossip about other weavers or from their emotional reactions to somebody's attitude. For example when one weaver made a joke comparing the beating comb to a woman of ill repute this was seen as lacking respect for the tool.

⁴ It is also the place of the construction of a new object (the data and possibly the thesis).

One method is that of making the practitioners talk about what they do⁵, either during the process or retrospectively using video technology. I was confronted with the question of weavers' time and workload whenever I tried to conduct interviews, which interfered with the good conduct of their own work. The weavers' interest in watching the tapes was mainly motivated by narcissism and they often did not have the time to put themselves through such an experiment. There was also the issue of economising my batteries.

One method I was hoping to use was to observe a beginner weaver which would allow a break from the fascinating but less fruitful observation of the smooth efficient and economic gestures of the skilled weavers. There was no beginner available in the families I was in contact with, most of the girls being still at school or already skilled. I only managed to organise a short session when the weavers were away from the loom, inviting the inexperienced girls (10 and 12 years old) of the family to try weaving in front of my camera. As soon as they realised what was going on, one of the eldest sisters came to supervise, started giving them instructions, and shouted impatiently at them. From the Berber terms used by the elder sisters I became aware of how much weaving is seen as a motor action homologous to moving between spaces, entering and going out. This experiment also gave me an insight into the methods and content of teaching and their assumptions about what is supposed to be known before starting the production of objects, but also about how assumptions determine the quality of learning. They seemed to think that the long observation without practice that girls are exposed to, prepares them to learn the right gestures. Their negative assumptions about the slower and awkward learner of the two (who was their cousin rather than their sister) also meant that they did not encourage her to persevere.

As my primary methodological approach, I decided to learn how to weave. This was an experience I was looking forward to, having always been interested in practicing 'crafts' (coil pottery, painting and drawing, embroidery). My own experience of apprenticeship allowed me to compensate for the difficulty to obtain practitioner's accounts of their production. Voluntarily putting myself in the situation of a learner (Jackson 1983) or apprentice (Coy 1989, Keller and Keller 1996: 136,157,169, Keller

⁵ In France, the Technique and Culture group with the chaîne opératoire, but also Lahire (1998) and Thereau (1992) argue for such a method.

2001) was fruitful particularly as an introspective tool of how it feels to weave in the body and to make sense of gestures observed in others. This allowed me to complete the visual and auditory information with other elements such as touch, balance, vibrations, breathing, pain and to realise the importance of the time factor in the acquisition of embodied knowledge and on feelings (impatience, boredom, excitement and pleasure).

My project was not achieved to the level I was hoping because weaving is an important economic activity for my host family and they did not have the time to teach me. They were not very keen on taking the risk of seeing a total beginner damaging their work or slowing them down. Eventually, I was able to train on my own piece of weaving for a month whilst another weaver was making a small weaving on the same loom. She taught me by showing me the right gestures, often ending up doing the work for me. I interpret this as the result of her conviction that my motivation could not match hers and was just another fancy of the bourgeois visitor I was. When the weaver would leave me on her own, to take a break or because she lost patience with me, another of the weavers would come and give me advice, laugh at my awkwardness, or watch me for a while before correcting a gesture. The mother was the one who gave me practical advice on how to hold the beating comb to avoid pain. This apprenticeship was also interesting in that it gave me some insight into their sense of aesthetics. They were all very adamant that I should not use the background colours I had chosen (natural brown and beige), and when they saw that I would not change my mind, that I should use much brighter colours than the pale blues and yellow I chose for my motifs. Even their father tried to advise me, rummaging through the threads I had bought in England, and picking up a dark burgundy and a bright orange. They also advised me not to align the motif as I did in a band but rather to make individual motifs with space around them. They also wanted me to start my weaving with a yellow band as they always do.

Despite this very basic apprenticeship I was able to learn about the discipline of immobilisation and pain, but also about the excitement and intense pleasure of making. Another aspect of this experience of learning is that they did not want the rest of the village to know I was trying to learn weaving. We were put in a dark room, our loom facing the window, but away from the sight of any visiting neighbours. If any came, they would close the doors between the room and the living room where the other

weavers were working on a carpet. They would tell them that I was asleep or out. One of the reasons of this secrecy was perhaps their concern about gossip. Considering how difficult it had been for me to visit other villagers without upsetting my host family, I interpreted this secrecy as only one in many tools they used to distinguish themselves in the village. I used a video camera extensively, making more than 80 tapes. Back from the field, viewing these was also an interesting way of remembering or noticing aspects of the weaving context that I had not written down (for example, how the presence of men – and in particular the father and prospective husbands- affects the behaviour and demeanour of weavers). In particular, it shows the bodily interactions and unspoken communication between practitioners during the various of operations preceding and during the weaving proper, their anticipation of each others' gesture and their relying on each other spontaneous support.

Investigating the weavers' self-perception and feelings requested using other methods. One of them was to collect sung poems invented by women. Sung poetry often expresses ideas in ways that *Tashelhit** speaking Berbers consider unacceptable in conversational speech. Aimed at a limited local female audience, they express feelings about the self, body and mind, men, and other weavers relating to the making of carpets. Most of these however describe a relationship with the object-coming-into-being which is rather negative, due to their entrance into market economy in the last decade and its consecutive shaping of a lesser valued object.

Thesis's contributions

Carpet trade and contemporary production

No research to date has been undertaken to uncover the organization of trade from the producing villages to the tourist city *par excellence*, Marrakech, whose merchants now also often supply the other tourist towns in Morocco. The only publication (Ramirez and Rollot, 1995) focusing on an important and ancient Marrakech family of carpet dealers and their itinerant middlemen, leaves out commercial information that could be damaging to the dealers' image to potential Western buyers (issues of prices and exploitation) and to their position in the competitive market of carpet. Despite previous publications in other contexts (Spooner

1986, Steiner 1993), this book is conspicuous by its absence of politics (gender, class or ethnic). It ignores contemporary carpets.

The field brought forward several issues that modified my initial concerns and assumptions, partly built on the literature on Moroccan carpets. If the market is a dimension of carpet production which tends to be underplayed in the art literature on Moroccan carpets, on the field one cannot ignore it. My initial questions relating to creativity and heritage seemed suddenly shallow in comparison to the issues of economics of carpet production in Morocco and its related politics.

There is no category for ethnographers in rural Morocco⁶ and I was often taken for a teacher. My presence on the field was explained by my identification with the only foreigners who had come to the area: Western carpet buyers. The only asset that Westerners found of interest in their region being the textile production, local men and women could only see me as a wealthy Westerner preparing my trading career. For women, informed by their male kin, this was the only explanation as to why a rich woman would postpone having children and leave her husband at home. One man even assumed that my husband had sent me to investigate the carpet market for him. I was aware before getting to the field that this status of potential buyer would constitute a barrier in gaining information about prices but my prolonged presence on the field helped break into this area of secrecy.

I also came to realise that my belonging to the 'consumer class' could be extremely useful in gaining easy access to dealers, but also to weavers, although my focus on weavers meant that I initially neglected to socialize with and meet carpet dealers. In fact, I even tended to distance myself from those who I saw mainly as exploitative of weaving families. The turning point in this short sighted approach, happened when I was visited by some friends in Taznakht. In their sixties and working for the French embassy, they had all the 'signs' of prestige and wealth, including an expensive car. Suddenly because of their presence, one of the bazaarists saw in them not just the opportunity to sell to a passing buyer, but that of an entry into the embassy

6 The first ethnographers were spies of the French government and it is only under the current King that the presence of foreigners no longer needs to be reported to the local authorities. Foucault (1884) travelled across Morocco under the disguise of a Jewish man well before the French government invaded Morocco in 1912, taking notes in a tiny booklet. Later, the ethnographic work performed in the region was made by officers of the French Government, first militaries, and then civilians.

quarter in Morocco and even abroad. This particularly keen bazaarist was attempting to skip the obligatory stage of selling to Marrakech dealers. With regards to weavers, the presence of Westerners helped me gather less accessible data on the networks of exchange (including between women). For instance I took them to see a weaver in Taznakht who I knew would have the type of weaving they were looking for. As she had already sold it, she introduced us to a friend of hers, who had originally given her the model of her weaving. This revealed a network of women across villages, who I knew individually, but without realizing they were linked together through family and friendship ties.

One of the aims of this thesis is to understand the value and meaning of weaving for the Sirwa weavers and their communities, with a focus on contemporary production. This is another area that has been neglected in the art literature. In particular I deal with the *akhnif* carpet, which appeared in the mid-1990s and is inspired by an ancient cloak the *akhnif* (see chapter 4). One of the married women in my host family, Lala Fdela who was an Ayt Waghrda woman in her late forties, had made some *akhnif* (cloaks) before coming to the Ayt Ubial village of her husband, and since then had forgotten how to make them. It was arranged that she would go to another village to attempt to make an *akhnif* cloak with another woman in her sixties, who although she had not woven any since the 1980s still knew how to make them. We set off early one morning in July before the village would notice our departure and walked to the village, carrying the wool, tools and gifts to our future hosts. The 18 days stay in this house was a great source of knowledge for me, not merely about the making of a special type of weaving, issues of re-learning, breaks in transmission and technical change, but also because of the differences between the families, their attitude to education and the personalities of the mothers. In addition, in marrying into another tribe, Lala Fdela had acquired new weaving techniques and ways of being (language, rituals, clothing) which her unmarried younger sister questioned. In this family, children were wild, spoke their mind openly and spontaneously, and could be very violent physically. Their mother who was a cheerful, cheeky and spontaneous woman would laugh at their naughtiness and then get very upset with them. This was in great contrast with the behaviour of Lala Fdela, who was reserved, did not make jokes, let alone sexual ones, and always mastered herself greatly. Her daughters equalled her in their self mastery, in which they found

distinction, but they were assertive, balanced, thoughtful and all had a strong personality. It is in this context that I first saw Lala Fdela lose her temper. In contrast with my host family there was also a conflict between the wife and her husband as he had attempted to take another wife, thus losing a considerable authority within his household (of which he was the head) and his extended family (who had opposed the marriage and backed the wife up). This decision he had taken was despite having married her less than 15 years before (she was in her early thirties and very beautiful) against the will of her parents and thanks to the help of his extended family. Thus the couple was not on speaking terms and she was withholding her sexual duties as a wife, sleeping separately from him.

At the end of her apprenticeship Lala Fdela did not think she would be able to make an *akhnif* on her own at home. I suggested she could use the video I had made, to which she replied dismissively, what use would it be? It is all about '*aql*' (intelligence and memory) and *hseb* (counting) not about watching. This shows that weavers think that learning has to be situated in a suitable learning environment, requiring the right people and a specific amount of time, and that practice is the source of that knowledge.

In this instance where the male head of the family was almost ostracised, the room and space of weaving became a space of dissent or resistance where men were mocked and criticised and sexual discourse in the presence of young women or female teenagers and male children was allowed. This was in contrast with my host family where men were often present and discussion of sexuality was taboo. In this Ayt Waghirda village and in an Ayt Semgane one, I saw men in their sixties or over spending the afternoon in the company of the weavers, and even holding a baby. So the weaving space is flexible depending on who the weavers are and which men are present.

Also –probably because of my presence, the young man of the family, would try to weave. His lack of skill was only due to his lack of practice. Men as well as women are exposed to the same data, which would lead them to construct similar information processing mechanisms, but they have a knowledge that is not put into practice.

Ethnography of the region

There is very little literature on Taznakht and the Sirwa mountains region, apart from a few reports produced during the colonial time and still only accessible in the

colonial archives. Some of this information appears in Barthelemy 1996's biography of her father which is based on the colonial archives and on interviews of colonial officers. In the collection of Berber texts collected by a colonial officer in the 1950s (Amard 1997) the data on weaving was taken from the area of Ouarzazate.

Rural female production, between art and economy

The post-colonial literature on weaving in Morocco falls into two exclusive categories: socio-economic or artistic (see below). This thesis is also a contribution on carpet production in rural Morocco, as the only two sociological studies ever undertaken concern urban production (Lahmam 1988; Mernissi⁷ 1979; 1981; 1982; 1985). Although they touch on the exploitation of weavers by traders (particularly Mernissi), they do not describe the carpet trade organization, and neglect the artistic side of this income-generating activity. An exception is the short article by Forelli and Harries (1980) who shows the changing aspect of domestic weaving in the Middle Atlas, looks at transmission and the place of weaving in the family income. This study however is based on data collected between 1964 and 1975.

Symbolism, rituals and beliefs

The issue of rituals and beliefs, meaning and symbols regularly crept into my fieldwork, and would deserve a whole PhD thesis. I have however chosen to leave aside this dimension in reaction to the dominant concern in the literature on Moroccan textiles (and to a great extent of Oriental carpets (Spooner 1986: 209)) over symbolic meaning. As Miller (2006: 32) argues 'we assume that to study texture and cloth is by default to study symbols, representations, and surfaces of society and subjects'. Whether commercial or scholarly, this literature relies extensively (sometimes without crediting them) on the scholarly work produced by colonial officers or ethnographers between the 1920s and 1950s (Doutté 1909; Basset 1922; Westermarck 1926; Ricard 1928) rather than on recent ethnographic study of the production of carpet in Morocco. It tends to insist on the symbolic and lost meaning of carpet motifs (Mourad, Ramirez & Rolot 1998; Ramirez & Rolot 1995; Vandenbroeck 2000) or on rituals and beliefs described in the ethnographic present (Messaoudi & Stanzer 1997).

⁷ See also Rassam (1980) who used Mernissi's research but did not meet weavers.

In the last ten years a large number of books were published under the initiative of the Western art dealers striving to give Moroccan carpets an art status in the oriental carpet sector (Fabric of Moroccan life 2002; Messaoudi & Stanzer 1997) and recently in the ethnographic art field (Les artisans de la mémoire 2006). Most of these dealers also publish articles, usually on their latest 'findings' in the oriental carpet review *Hali*. They regularly publish exhibition catalogues with other art dealers and curators. One of the main problems with this literature, is that it is written mainly by male Westerners who rely on second hand data and contact, usually provided to them by carpet dealers rather than on long term fieldwork. In the rare scholarly writings which focus on weavers, these are analysed as a figure of the mother (Messick 1987) the parturient or pregnant woman (Ramirez et Rollet, 1995; Vandenbroeck 2000). Except from the American anthropologists (Harries 1973; Forelli & Harries 1977; Messick 1987) who observed the practitioners at work, most of the technical studies are structural analysis based on collection holdings (Boëly 1997; 2000; Sober 1998b; 2002a).

Two publications and exhibitions (Tejidos Marroquies 2000; Vandenbroeck 2000) recently juxtaposed the works of Moroccan weavers with Western women's but managed again to make the Moroccan weavers anonymous and homogeneous. It would have been easy to invite some weavers to talk about their work, particularly as the *Tejidos* exhibition took also place in Casablanca, Morocco. Although the collection of art dealer and collector Bert Flint included some contemporary weavings made by two Ayt Waghrda weavers (Bahma and Fatim⁸) whose photographs he provided and whose work he commented on (Flint 2000b), he did not invite them to the exhibition.

Vandenbroeck 2000 is by far the most novel and thoroughly researched study on North African textiles since the colonial time. It is based on recent and colonial anthropological studies, post-modern psychoanalytic and artistic theory. Unfortunately this study is anchored in the past and makes the weavers abstract and outside modernity. Its aim to show North African textiles as unique and autonomous works of abstract art is ethnocentric.

In trying to interpret symbols encoded into carpets, writers have often dismissed the weavers' explanations. As argued by Gerard Boëly one of the speakers in the ICOC 2002 conference in Marrakech, in doing so they refuse to recognise that weavers may

⁸ He did not give their surname or the name of their village.

get their inspiration from their environment, as Western artists do, and that motif names may indeed mean what they describe. In addition, as I came to realise during my fieldwork, these names may have practical use in memorisation and in communication between weavers (see Chapter 6).

With the exception of Boëly (1997; 2000) who acknowledges the interrelation of aesthetics, techniques and function, this literature tends to follow a conventional view of art as opposed to technology (or techniques). Most of this literature defines art as a 'genre of ritual or expressive action whose purpose is essentially communicative to convey information in a symbolic code about such matters as identity and cosmology' (Leach 1966: 403, quoted by Ingold 2001: 19). More fundamentally, in addition to failing to portray contemporary production and producers, this literature fails to provide a novel approach to the materiality of textiles, proposing a very conventional view of the relationship between cognition and things, where carpets are only seen as the passive receptacle of discursive, encoded and possibly unconscious or forgotten meaning. Materiality however can also shape thought, the mind and knowledge as shown by Küchler (2001; 2006) in particular with regards to mathematics, but also by Gell (1999) and Strafford (1996).

Limits

The scope of this thesis does not allow me to investigate the Western traders or the Western desire for antique carpets and authenticity (see Graburn 1976; 1999; Phillips & Steiner, 1999) in detail.

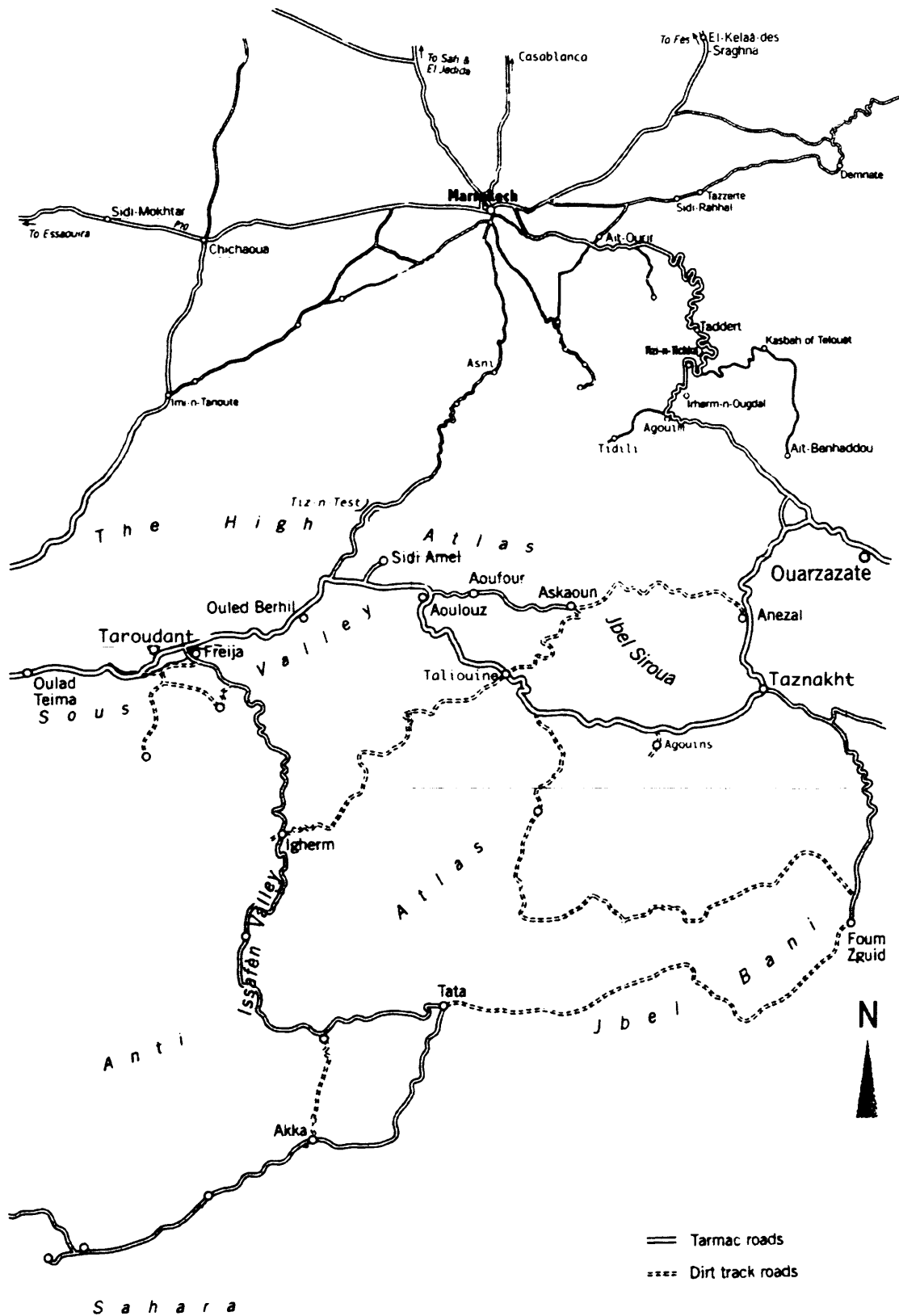


Figure 3 Regional map (source: modified maps from Rogerson 2000)

Chapter 1 Theoretical perspective: The production of material culture and the materiality of production

Whilst there have been important publications on material culture studies in recent years, it has been argued that a theory of materiality per se is still lacking (Graves Brown 2000; Ingold 2000a; 2000b; 2006; 2007). Several approaches could be said to deserve attention as contributions to developing such a theory (Gell 1998; Latour 1993; Miller 1987; 1997). But, as Ingold (2000a; 2000b; 2007) has argued, in accepting the prior experience of objects as given material facts, they tend to ignore the object-coming-into-being. Ingold regrets the immateriality of materiality in the literature, and argues for a detailed study of the properties of materials. He contends that things are not given or static, but coming into being, "immanent in the very process of [the] world's continual generation..." (2006:10).

In this thesis, I intend to follow literally Miller's suggestion to 'show how the things that people make, make people' rather than focusing only on 'what makes people' (Miller 2005: 38). My aim is to provide a contribution to the conception of materiality through an ethnography of production as a process. In comparison to 'material culture', which implies the idea of 'finished' and 'given' objects, the term 'materiality' seems more adequate in considering raw materials, matter in the process of transformation, the physical body of the practitioner and the 'materiality of thought' (Miller 2005: 33 referring to Küchler, 2005). Particularly I aim at exploring how the making of carpets is a shaping of both the body and mind of the weaver. The research took place in the Sirwa Mountain, to the South East of Marrakech, Morocco, where the best selling carpets in Morocco are exclusively produced by women for the Western market. Between this rural Berber area and the urban Arab city of Marrakech where they are sold, carpets are transported and marketed by Berber middlemen, some of which are the male kin of the weavers. This thesis looks at the construction of gendered subjects through the material and spatial practice of making and selling, with a stronger focus on production and weavers.

This thesis considers the shaping and malleability of materiality, but also of the mind and body. I combine the francophone tradition of anthropology of technology with an anthropology of knowledge and practice and studies in cognitive science to understand the working of this dialectical relationship between matter, practice and cognition (see also Knappett 2007; Malafouris 2004).

Throughout the thesis I try to define the implicit and explicit representation Sirwa people have of the production of carpets, and through a comparison between production and exchange to explore what makes the specificity of production as a process.

This chapter is divided into four sections dealing respectively with the topics of production, knowledge, the shaping of gendered subjects and space.

Production and Technology

Production is understood as “the act or instance of the manufacture of things (broadly conceived) from a set of raw materials (again broadly conceived)” (Dilley 2004: 799). Production has been investigated under several headings: technique, practice, labour and art. These terms and notions are not universal and do not necessarily mean the same thing from one culture to another. They, however, all include the same characteristics: the transformation of matter by human action, which implies some investment of time and energy, technical skills and the dialectical coming into being of an object, a subject and social relations.

Whereas the consumption and use of objects has become the main focus of the scholars of the Material Culture department at University College London, French anthropology has traditionally focused on production (Faure-Rouesnel 2001), *techniques* or technology. Thus, the francophone tradition of *Technologie culturelle* is my starting point in considering the production of carpets. The Matière à Penser (MàP) group’s approach provides me with what is lacking in the sociology of technology: Winance argues that by focusing mainly on the action, activity and situation of subjects, it does not consider their emergence, whilst paradoxically implying it (Winance 2001:73).

Despite the fact that they start from the premise that both gender and technology are not given but are mutually shaped or co-produced dialectically, feminist sociologists

and anthropologists of technology (Cockburn 1983; Cockburn and Ormrod 1993; Cowan 1983; Wajcman 1991; see Bray 2007 for a review) fail in two ways from my own perspective: they are more concerned with innovation and use than production per se and they tend to neglect the body, except in relation to medicine and reproduction.

To investigate how human beings ‘think through their fingers’ to paraphrase the subtitle of Warnier’s book (1999), I complement these approaches with the perspective provided by cognitive science and the anthropology of knowledge. Particularly of use is the idea that cognition is embodied and situated, that is, that the mind is situated in a body, itself situated in a material and social environment. In the anthropology of knowledge I am interested in the question of practice and how it is linked with knowledge, and in the notion of community of practice which helps define issues of identity, agency and change.

Technologie culturelle

Technologie culturelle is defined as the study of techniques (Cresswell and Sigaut 1987) or socialised action inscribed on matter (Lemonnier 1994: 225), which puts gesture and effective action on matter in their social context. *Technologie culturelle* is mostly known for the *chaîne opératoire*, a description of the steps of the technical process and an analytical tool to examine the path ‘taken by matter from its state of raw material to its state of finished product’ (Cresswell 1983: 147).

My use of the *chaîne opératoire* is specific in this thesis. Looking at the technical operations (including preparation of the wool and dyeing recipes) as a linear process is an endeavour amply documented in the colonial literature on North African textile (Basset 1922; Chantreaux 1941; 1942; 1946; Delay 1928). Such thorough and historically informed studies on North African textiles are also available in more recent publications (Lamb 2005; Picton and Mack 1993; Spring and Hudson 1995). With reference to previous studies on weaving, it seemed redundant to follow the traditional division of weaving operations into stages (from the preparation of the wool to the mounting of the loom through to weaving). A description of the warping process and the mounting of the loom are to be found in Appendix 1. Instead, I examine mainly the weaving operation itself. I concentrated on basic gestures and positions reduced to their simplest expression (verbs of action such as ‘to bring to’, ‘to take away’, ‘to push’, ‘to

pull', 'to enter', 'to pass between or behind', 'to turn around'). I tried to find out what were the common gestures and movements in the various 'wrapping', 'wefting' and 'weaving' operations and compare these with body techniques used in other domestic activities. Furthermore, in Semitic (Arabic) and Chamito-Semitic (Berber) languages, the roots of words are verbs. I also look at the semantics of 'weaving' in Berber to examine the local conceptions of weaving as a material and corporeal, temporal and spatial process. This allows me to explore questions of where the process of production (and where a weaving object) starts and finishes.

The specificity of weaving

In this thesis, in contrast with the literature on Moroccan textiles, I focus on contemporary production, and specifically on a type of carpet made for the Western market: the *akhnif* carpet. The technique used to make the motifs of this *flatweave* (*tapestry*) carpet can be traced back to a cloak-cape called the *akhnif*, which is not used anymore. One of the main characteristics of the materiality of weaving long carpets on a vertical loom as on the Sirwa is that the form (motifs) and structure (background) are constituted at the same time, from bottom to top, the practitioner seeing only a small portion of the object-coming-into-being, because of the necessity of rolling the woven part around the lower beam. In addition, weavers do not use any material tools (such as a drawing) to make the motifs.

In his approach of weaving as a process through which form and substance, cognitive and physical dimensions come together Ingold (2000b) positions himself against the commonly held idea that form and substance are opposed and making is understood to follow the form. He shows that weaving is characterised by a coming together of both form and substance (2000b: 62-64). Comparing it to coil pottery, Ingold, describes the weaving object as 'a peculiar kind of surface that does not strictly speaking have an inside and an outside at all'. He considers that the form of the (woven) basket is the result of a play of forces both internal and external to the material that makes them up. Weaving also shows the original mode of construction whereas the final smoothing of the surface of the coiled stripes leaves no trace of the structure.

It can be argued that particular materialities shape specific bodies and minds and particular forms of knowledge. Ingold's analysis of the structural specific characteristics

of the weaving media is thus important to understand what constraints weavers have to face. Weavers across the world may share a similar experience of the touch of wool, of the binding dimension of the threads, but they will differ in their use of looms. Surely weaving on a vertical loom (as it is done in the Sirwa) does not feel the same as weaving on a horizontal loom (as when making tents parts in the Middle Atlas mountains or as in weaving *djellaba** fabric in a male urban setting). Ingold's generic description of weaving does not inform us about the way weaving practice affects weavers. How does it feel to weave? Working collectively on a large carpet is different from working alone on a small loom such as the single heddle loom used for making narrow strips in some West African countries. In separating the material from the social to provide analytical clarity, Ingold also provides an asocial account (Knappett, 2007) where the craftsperson become invisible and abstract, and technical knowledge erases issues of self-knowledge.

Weaving has also the particularity of belonging to the domain of mathematics. This is an area emphasized by Küchler (2001; 2006) who is concerned with the materiality of textiles as objects of thoughts. She argues particularly that textiles conduct the mind to make connections and relations. In the Moroccan context, weaving can be seen as actions of layering as well as tying and knotting, but also as trapping and as related to sexuality and power.

The absent subject

In *Technologie culturelle* literature on textiles (apart from aesthetical (Fontaine, 1986) or historical studies on weaving) this topic is approached from the point of view of knowledge acquisition and transmission, know-how, tacit knowledge, gender or ethnic division of knowledge (Chamoux 1996; 1997; Desrosiers 1988; 1997; Handman 1990; Tanon 1996). One criticism that can be levied about the literature of the *Technologie culturelle* tradition is that the makers often seem abstract, emotionless and fleshless, and their community non-existent. For instance, Fontaine's thorough investigation (1990) on the production of pile carpets in the region of Arâk, Iran, provides a detailed analysis of the technical processes from warping through to mounting and weaving along with superbly illustrated descriptions of the various tools, looms and places where weaving takes place (house, private and government

workshops). He uses the *chaîne opératoire* to show the division of the stages of carpet making where most of the work before the weaving processes (warping) and after (shaving the pile and plaiting the warp threads) is performed by other people than weavers. He, however, leaves out the study of carpets in their socio-cultural context.

Considering colonial publications, Clancy-Smith (1999: 28) notes that "...detailed investigations of handicraft production, particularly textiles, scrutinize at great length the articles produced yet often fail to talk about the producers ...". In an article on North African weaving the French sociologist Jacques Berque (1964) noted that to provide new elements of knowledge, new research in this field would need to be based on fieldwork. Since colonial times (except the American anthropologists who published articles rather than monographs: Forelli and Harries 1977; Harries 1973; Messick 1987), no thorough research on the field was undertaken where researchers observed the practitioners at work.

In fact, in most anthropological accounts of weaving processes and particularly in the literature on Moroccan textiles, the practitioner comes across as an abstract maker without senses or feelings, without a body or a mind, who is inert rather than actively making an object. The literature on weaving tends to either focus exclusively on the artistic (often in relation to the symbolic and ritualistic) dimension of weaving or on the socio-economical (Mernissi in Morocco; Berik in the context of Turkey). We need both and more to capture the meaning of the weaving process for weavers. The approach of the MâP with its focus on the subject's embodied and material practice allows us to look at how the emergence of a material form also involves the crafting of a subject, with her feelings, representations and desires and with a knowledgeable, albeit painful body.

Matière à Penser

Claiming direct lineage with *Technologie culturelle*, the group MâP has investigated in detail the question of gestures, movements and positions or to use Marcel Mauss's expression 'techniques of the body', although not from the point of view of production⁹. Under this appellation Mauss refers to the ways that people use

⁹ Julien's research on Chinese migrants (2002) concentrates more on the supply chain of the object. Her description of the productive process of furniture making is more in the *Technologie Culturelle* tradition.

their body in each society. These techniques include motor and sport activities such as walking and swimming, but also resting, making love, caring for children, conjuring etc. They vary from one society to another and from one gender to another. Body techniques are learnt and shaped at the meeting of what he calls the physiological, the psychological, and the societal: which constitute a human being in his totality (*l'homme total*).

Another notable aspect of the MâP contribution is their emphasis on the moving body as inherently linked with the senses and emotions of the subject and with material culture. Warnier argues that there is no action without movement, no movement without engagement of the seven senses¹⁰, and no engagement of the senses without affect. Body techniques, perception and emotions are linked (they are 'sensory-motor-affect' (SMA)) and are also constructed historically and culturally (Warnier 2004:18). Furthermore, there is no individual or social action that is not related to some man-made materiality. This includes for example a disabled person who could only move her eyes: she would experience SMA mediated by materiality of the bed in which she is lying and the technological instruments she uses to communicate.

MâP's analysis could be said to be phenomenological because of their focus on the body, the senses and perception. They however reject the conventional tendency in phenomenology to emphasise the conscious discovery of the self that the action on the world brings, as it tends to neglect the irrational or the 'unconscious'.

It could be said that they extend Bourdieu's notion of practice and habitus by 'making them the objects of investigation' (Harris 2007: 4). The argument that a consideration of bodily movements is central to the definition of embodiment (Farnell 1994: 931) is also shared by those concerned with the study of movements (Farnell 1994; 1999; Kaeppler 1999) and gesture (Kendon 1997), and those anthropologists of sport, boxing, dance, or music. Apart from a few exceptions (Wacquant 2001; 2005; see also Reed 1998 for a review) these are concerned mainly with issues of communication and expression, semiotics and sign action systems. A few studies also consider the

¹⁰ Apart from the five senses, proprioception and vestibular sense are the senses of balance, spatial positionment and corporeal dynamics. Proprioception refers to the perception that the subject has of movements of his own body. The vestibular sense is related to the internal ear, the organ of balance.

somato-sensori modes of knowledge (Howes 1991; 2003) and the question of pain (Scarry 1985).

Medical anthropology has been particularly useful at uncovering the emotional body (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987). For instance, John Blacking (1977: 5) has stated emotions are the catalyst that transforms knowledge into human understanding and bring intensity and commitment to human action (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987: 29).

Incorporation

The group MâP develops Mauss's insights on body techniques. Using recent psychology and neuroscience research, they strive to understand what happens to the subject when she manipulates an object. They provide an 'embodied' perspective on the understanding of the dialectical relationship between subject and object in the double process of structuration /objectification (Miller 1987). They do this through the concept of incorporation, which is based on the notion of 'bodily image' (Schilder 1968), both a neurophysiological and a symbolic construct. Against the conception of objects as prostheses and the Latourian notion of hybrid (Latour 1993) they show that persons and things are not confounded but are separate entities that come into contact in a specific way. Incorporation does not mean that things themselves are incorporated (as prostheses would) but that it is the dynamic of the object that is incorporated by the subject in their 'corporeal schemata'¹¹ or 'body image'. Unlike prostheses, objects do not replace a failing organ or limb.

They extend the capacity of the subject, economise their energy, and shape their subjectivity. The blind man who uses a cane to walk in the street has incorporated the cane into his corporeal schemata and has learnt to modify his spatial and postural dynamics in relation to it: he feels the walls, the pavements through the cane which has become part of his arm as if his fingers were situated at the point of contact of the cane and the pavement. The ensemble of the senses participate in the incorporation of objects. The corporeal schemata of the moving body (or proprioception) expands to incorporate the dynamic of objects and their specific characteristics (shape, weight and volume). Through the synthesis of factors such as time, space and acting subject(s), the

¹¹ For the origin of the notions of 'body image' or 'corporeal schemata', see Julien (1999); Schilder 1968; Warnier (1999).

process of incorporation shifts from a relation of exteriority with material objects to a relation whereby the object becomes obvious or invisible to the moving subject. Any change in one of these factors (tiredness, an accident, an obstacle, old age, etc.) will lead to the ex-corporation of things in a more or less lasting manner (Rosselin 2006).

The incorporation of 'acted objects' (Rosselin 2006) is not determined for ever, even if the incorporation leaves physical traces after the ex-corporation (e.g. muscle pain, larger muscles etc.). Incorporation and ex-corporation happen in our everyday encounters with mundane objects or as Rosselin (1999) showed in our relationship to space and furniture when we move in the familiar environment of our domestic space. When people are engaged in a motor activity (whether sport, washing up or driving) they do not plan in advance and detail what their next move is going to be: this would be counterproductive and would stop them from acting. For example, in football, when the goal keeper saves a shot on goal he cannot be thinking about all the elements in the situation otherwise he would freeze (Warnier 1999: 171). Leroi-Gourhan (1965: 31) described this process as 'mechanical *chaînes opératoires*' (*chaînes opératoires machinales*) which he prefers to such terms as 'unconscious', 'instinctive' or 'automatic'. 'Most of the *chaînes* that we use from waking to going to bed do not require much conscious intervention...'. He notes the switch between habits and reflection or reflexive adjustment when the subject is confronted with an 'unforeseen event in the flow of sequences' (Leroi-Gourhan 1965: 31).

Techniques of the self : the shaping of mind and body

One contribution of the MâP group is that they complement the view of the body as an efficacious tool with how matter 'reacts'. Materiality too shapes the subject. In a heated debate between MâP and Technologie culturelle and published in two consecutive issues of *Techniques & Culture* (39 and 40, 2002), the latter were criticised for their 'transitive view of efficacy' (agency) which considers only the 'efficient action' of human beings on material objects). This debate followed a tradition set by Latour (1996) and Lemmonier (1996) over the agency of guns and human beings. According to Latour, the active agent is neither human nor gun, but human-with-gun. The material properties of things are secondary to the role of the artefact in social relations. In contrast, Lemmonier argues in favour of studying the material properties of

artefacts independently of the human, and only then to analyse how the material and the social come together.

The MâP group argues against reducing actors to simple anatomic-physiologic executants and the body to an inert matter or 'meat-body' (Warnier 2002:180). Acting on matter implies acting on the self (body and mind) but also cannot be separated from the essential question: what does matter do to the subject and how? In acting on materiality, the subject is not just faced with the issue of mastery of the resistance of things, but with the issue of mastery of her own gestures and movements. The body is a materiality which collides with other physical materialities. For technical efficacy to become socially efficacious, it needs to pass through the efficacy of the self or techniques of the self¹² which can be summarised as a work of transformation of the self. Techniques of the self are related to issues of efficacy or agency and subject construction which contradict the Marxist structuralist approach of the *Technologie Culturelle* movement. For members of MâP the agency of objects and subjects are interrelated. They do not consider in a fetishist logic that the power of material culture comes from within it (Pels 1998) or in an animist logic that the agency of things is bestowed upon them. At the centre of this dialectical and reciprocal relationship between material culture and moving human beings are the concepts of subjectivation, techniques of the self and governmentalities which they borrow from Foucault (1979; 1987; 1990; 1994), to which I will come back to later.

Cognitive science and the anthropology of knowledge

Practice and knowledge

The making of carpets is also the production of a knowledgeable and mindful body, that thinks through gestures, the senses, space and a materiality with specific properties. The shaping of the mind through the body is a question addressed by the research in cognitive science and the anthropology of knowledge.

Cognitive science stresses that the human mind is embodied (Johnson 1998; Lakoff & Johnson 1999) situated (Lave & Wenger 1991; Sternberg & Wagner 1994;

¹² By 'techniques of the self', Foucault means: 'the procedures, as they probably exist in all civilizations, that are proposed or prescribed to individuals in order to fix their identity, maintain or transform it, depending on a number of ends, and this by means of a relation of mastery over oneself, or of knowledge of oneself ...' (Warnier 2001: 10).

Suchman 1987) enacted (Varela et al. 1991) and distributed (Hutchins 1995). The mind is situated in a body, itself situated in a material and social environment. Embodiment is a continuum between cognition, action, communication and emotions, where the material (technical, physical, environmental) and the social mutually construct each other. Cognition thus is not planned, individualistic or mechanistic but is based on adaptation, adjustment, experimentation, reconstruction and appropriation within a dialectic between people, context of activity and situation.

I frame my investigation of the making of things within an anthropology of knowledge which considers knowing as a practical and continuous activity. Practice (or 'know-how') is a tacit, situation-dependent, performative, non-propositional knowledge. It is opposed to 'know-that' (Ryle 1984): that is a propositional, theoretical, factual knowledge, conveying meaning, based on rules and laws, not dependent on context (Harris 2007:1). Because it is not necessarily based on language, this knowledge is largely represented in schematic form as generalisation from experience with visual, sensorial, kinaesthetic dimensions (Bloch 1991; 1993; Keller and Keller 1996).

Such an anthropology of knowledge firstly considers practice in its dialectical relationship with knowledge (Coy 1989; Harris 2007; Ingold 2000; Ingold 2006; Keller and Keller 1996), and secondly as shaping identity through social interaction in a 'community of practice' (Coy 1989; Dilley 1989; Keller and Keller 1996; Lave and Wenger 1991). It 'presumes that knowledge governs practices which in turn reproduce or revise prior knowledge and that shared ideas, procedures, and events, which constitute culture, are structured in this dynamic process' (Keller and Keller 1996:159).

The concept of community of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991) associated with the notion of situated learning conveys the idea that the acquisition of skills cannot be separated from the acquisition of shared goals and values by individuals who themselves participate in their construction. Individuals both develop their membership in the community and shape their identity. Situated learning implies that this negotiation of participation in a community is a peripheral process to the activity itself. This concept, which implies a notion of identity and knowledge as creative and on-going, allows for a consideration of change: not only because new generations replace older ones, but also because with the emergence of new generations of individuals the practices of the community are modified.

To deal with the question of non-verbal, embodied communication between weavers but also with issues of creativity and change, imitation and reproduction, the paper of Marchand (2007) on embodied communication between apprentice and practitioner masons in Mali is most useful. Going beyond the dichotomy between the gestural and the linguistic, 'know-how' and 'know-that', he combines mirror neuron research and dynamic syntax theory to show that embodied communication can function similarly to propositional communication. The fact that co-practitioners share a history of working together and a motor context explains how both parties can generate, reproduce or interpret the performance of each other (and may swap roles). Their appropriation of bodily performance, actions and skills is not predetermined, it is not an identical reproduction of the motor context of the other's representation, but a personal and dynamic construction of their own motor representation.

Imitation and creativity

I use some of these approaches (Ingold 2000; Keller and Keller 1996; Marchand 2007) in my ethnography to explore the relationship between practice and representation with the view to show that, against the commonly held assumption that creativity is only the product of a rational, independent mind, creativity emerges from imitation and embodied practice. Tarde's theory of imitation is my starting point in examining creativity in production. Although his perspective is not always applicable to situations of learning, where recent research show that reproduction and transmission is not a mere matter of imitation and observation (Ingold 2001; Marchand 2007; Taussig 1993) I find Tarde's theory of imitation useful in that it is akin to the notion of subjectivation or objectification (Miller 1987) and it has the advantage of questioning the notion of genius. Gabriel Tarde (1890/1993) developed a theory of subject construction around the concept of imitative currents. These currents are normative infinitesimal and tiny repetitions (of gesture, attitudes, ideas, desires and beliefs), neither unified or fixed, which have a power of suggestion on individuals thus compelling them to imitate. Imitative currents which traverse individuals not only link them but also constitute them: they act on individuals to suggest beliefs and desires which end up being adopted voluntarily. Imitation is produced by the subjects who at the same time submit to it. In adopting an external model, the subject works on her

interior to transform this admired and desired external model into a self (this is a work from inside out). In the same movement, she dissolves herself in the relation of imitation (this is an outside act). Tarde's theory makes imitation the linking articulation between exteriority and interiority, norm and desires, society and individual. With regard to the making of beautiful objects, Tarde's perspective allows us to illuminate the social dimension of creativity since it recognises 'knowledge as producing, and being produced in, ... social and cultural contexts that necessarily include other actors.' (Marchand 2007: 183).

The shaping of a gendered body through practice or performance

Performance

It is one of the premises of this thesis that in looking specifically at the embodied materiality of weaving, one will get a more sensitive idea of the significance of making and gestures in the construction of gendered subjects. My argument thus can be situated in a tradition of theorising that analyses gender as achieved through practice or body modification.

One cannot explore gender as what people do without mentioning Butler's performance theory. A heir of a long tradition of theorising practice set by Bourdieu and the ethnomethodologists (see reviews by Morris 1995; Yancey Martin 2003) and the anti-essentialist feminists (Morris 1995) Butler conceptualises gender as the effect of embodied and discursive practices. Butler's (1990) approach to gender construction through performativity (as an act which is both intentional and performative) takes into consideration the material body (but not material culture). Analysing the philosophy of Plato, she notes that the material is associated with the female body and thus with reproduction, which is the result of male action on the female body, thus dematerialised and excluded. Instead of looking at institutions and technologies of subject formation, she turns to the analysis of language as a system of signification through which subjects are produced. Butler uses Derrida's reinterpretation of Austin's notion of the performative in her argument that gender is the product of injunctions and reiteration or repetitions. Gender discourse is constitutive of materialities it refers to, although not in

a purely representational way. One of the problem with Butler's analysis is its emphasises the discursive over the material body and the material world.

Instead this thesis is inspired by such ethnographies as those considering the body learning and practicing dance (Faure 2001), boxing (Wacquant 1995, 2001) or religion in the case of Islamist Egyptian women (Mahmood 2001; 2005). Kaufmann (1997) in his subtle exploration of the practice of household maintenance (tidying, cleaning, ironing etc.) considers material culture as a discreet focus of analysis. In addition he uses cognitive science research (Varela). Gender is absent from the contribution of the group MâP, except for Melanie Roustan who analysed the relationship of young men to videogames as part of a more general research on dependency which looks at consumption and virtuality (2003; 2007).

Body transformation

Downey, who uses research in neuroscience and cognitive science to investigate the shaping of the body of *capoeira* players in Brazil notes that "cultural anthropologists have underestimated the malleability of human physicality, how repeated behaviours and intentional physical projects of self-making might shape us physically" (Downey 2007: 236). A good part of my ethnography of weaving concerns this shaping of the body.

The effect of weaving practice is perceived by the weavers as negative. In modifying their bodies, subjects alter their identity. Although they are aware and reflexive about these bodily changes, weavers are not in anyway practicing weaving as in the 'body works', performed in the Western context of work, sport, hygiene or beauty (Shilling 2005; Wacquant 2001; 2005), a technique for shaping appearance to fit cultural standards. Nor do they constitute a voluntaristic work on the body in order to shape the mind as in the case of Mahmood's Islamist women (2005). This shaping of the body and the mind is rather like what Lave and Wenger (1991) describe as a peripheral process. In fact, intensive weaving practice has the effect of damaging their sense of beauty and health. Thus weavers are torn between two ideals of femininity prevailing in their society: that of hardworking moral woman and that of the beautiful idle woman.

To examine the question of the ambivalent relationship of women to the practice of weaving, I use Katy Davis' study (1995) on women who chose to undertake cosmetic surgery. I also use Mahmood's theorising of the agentival action of islamist women in Egypt to address the fact that many weavers did not seem to resist the norm assigned by their patriarchal society.

Body transformation or alteration (cosmetic surgery, dieting, anorexia, body building, body piercing and tattooing) has extensively been investigated by feminist scholars, mainly in relation to body image, notions of beauty and medical technology. This area has been less investigated from the point of view of work (but see Kondo 1990; Tyle and Hancock 2001) or the making of objects. Although some of this literature falls into the tendency of reading women's choice of bodily alteration through the binary model of submission or resistance, some studies are particularly illuminating to the issue of agency. Instead of seeing bodily transformation as either empowering or subjecting women, they show the complex way in which women appropriate, manipulate and creatively negotiate the prescriptions and conventions of what a woman should be like to create an acceptable sense of self within the limited options of a given society (Davis 1995).

Thus, they allow us to consider how weaving practice can be both desired and hated, both perceived as a source of empowerment and as affecting one's health and beauty. Limiting the analysis of discipline solely to its 'disabling' dimension, does not account for the fact that discipline is a condition of knowledge acquisition. Bordo (1993; 1997) and Gagné & McCaughey (2002) have argued that in shaping their body to comply with the norm of beauty, women gain some control and power over their physical selves and social life. Instead of seeing bodybuilding as a form of resistance, this practice has been interpreted as an explicit and conscious process of self-transformation and empowerment (Benson 1997; Johnston 1996). Davis (1995) referring to the narratives of women who opted for cosmetic surgery, relocates beauty as an aspect rather than as the single goal of women's action and identity. The agentival qualities of music and dance have also been noted. According to Novack, the ballerina 'embodies and enacts stereotypes of the feminine while she interprets a role with commanding skill, agency and a subtlety that denies stereotype' (Novack 1995: 181, quoted by Reed 1998: 522).

I follow the notion of identity developed by Kathy Davis (1995) as embodied, situated, negotiated, and creative. Identity is the outcome of somebody's bodily interaction with the world around her, situated in a culture rather than statically determined by it. It is a negotiated process through which individuals actively and creatively use cultural resources for making sense of who she is/becoming rather than a set of prescriptions. Rather than resistance, women exercise their capacity for negotiation, bargaining or strategising (Davis 1995; Kandiyoti 1988). Davis argues that Western women have to negotiate the tensions within feminine embodiment characterised by being caught between the objectification of the female body as a body and desire to transcend the body to become a subject acting upon the world, in and through it.

Following these writers, I argue that through the embodied action on materiality, women find a possibility for agency despite or because of constraints. They may feel exploited as labourers but they also use various strategies to gain control over their lives and those of men. Weaving practice may be both painful and pleasurable, a source of value and a cause of loss of self-worth, depending on their status, circumstances, time of life, type of weaving materiality they produce, their interaction with other weavers or their position in their family.

Moral value and agency

Mahmood proposes an ethnography of the construction of self in the case of female Islamists in Egypt through the practice of veiling, prayers and discourse. To move out of the submission or resistance divide, she uses Foucault's concept of subjectivation (1994), which considers these oppositions as two complementary dimensions of the same process: subjectivation encompasses the imposition of social norms by society and the undertaking by the subject of these norms.

Subjectivation is closely related to issues of moral value and desire. In his theory of value, Graeber (2000: 21) proposes that value is what links 'society and human purpose' and 'move[s] from meaning to desire'. In the History of sexuality Foucault (1987; 1990) shows how through the process of subjectivation ideology and norm become desired by subjects. He argues that it is desire that poses the question of moral action. One acts by inscribing oneself in networks of action on actions of others. Foucault makes a distinction between morals and ethics. Morals are norms whereas

ethics are the process through which a subject transforms herself in order to achieve a particular state of being, happiness or truth. Ethics are the techniques through which a subject makes norms her own. The construction of subject emerges from historical and cultural prescriptions rather than from a voluntaristic, autonomous effort at working efficaciously on oneself. The paradox of subjectivation is that processes and conditions that secure subject subordination are also the means by which she gains agency (or self realisation). Norms are not simply social impositions on the subject but constitute the very substance of her intimate valorized interiority (Mahmood 2005). She argues that “viewed in this way, what may appear to be a case of deplorable passivity and docility from a progressivist point of view, may actually be a form of agency – but one that can be understood only from within the discourses and structures of subordination that create the conditions of its enactment. In this sense, agentival capacity is entailed not only in those acts that resist the norms but also in the multiple ways in which one inhabits norms” (Mahmood 2005: 114-15; see Ortnner 1995; Davis 1995 for a similar argument).

Still, how can one give a feminist account of the agency of Muslim North African (or Middle Eastern) women, without falling into Orientalism (that is portraying them as passive, subordinate or victims) whilst taking into consideration the cultural specifications of the society studied? Researchers of the Arab Muslim world have searched for spaces of autonomy, fulfilment or self-realisation of women from men’s control, in the domestic private sphere¹³. Mahmood argues that following a negative conception of freedom, these scholars still conceptualise agency in terms of notions of subversion of or resistance to social norms. In examining the conception of freedom that inspires feminism, she distinguishes between positive and negative freedom. Positive freedom is the “capacity of self-mastery and self government” whereas negative freedom is ‘the absence of restraints of various kinds on one’s ability to act as one wants’ (Mahmood 2005: 11). Autonomy is opposed to customs, traditions and social coercion. In both (negative and positive) freedoms, the notion of autonomy (or free will) is linked to a notion of self-realisation through self-transformation. This approach exists historically in many cultures and particularly in religions. Instead she proposes to

13 See for example Abu Lughod 1986; Boddy 1989; Davis 1983; Dwyer 1978; Fernea 1985; Wikan 1991.

separate the notion of self-realisation from that of autonomy. "...if the ability to effect change in the world and in oneself is historically and culturally specific... then the meaning and sense of agency cannot be fixed in advance, but must emerge through an analysis of the particular concepts that enable specific modes of being, responsibility and effectivity" (Mahmood 2005: 114).

Mahmood (2005: 19) shows how Butler forces us to rethink the "external-internal opposition [norms as an external constraining social imposition] by arguing that social norms are the necessary ground through which the subject is realised and comes to enact her agency". The possibility of agency is contained in the fact that the 'iteration' can be resignified, reappropriated for purposes other than the consolidation of norms or can fail. The distinction she makes between performance and performativity is Foucauldian in that the notion of subject is not given (as the notion of performance implies) but contested (as conveyed by the notion of performativity). This distinction is that power both destabilises and produces the subject. Unfortunately as Mahmood argues, after having postulated the notion of agency, Butler comes back to the idea of resistance, erasing the previous argument. Furthermore, her approach of gendered subjectivation is vague and abstract.

This thesis is an attempt to provide an ethnography of weaving as constructing a moral gendered subject and insists on the double power of material culture and embodied practice (rather than discourse) in disciplining the subject. Weavers, partly through making carpets, endow the self with the specific female qualities prescribed by their society: being immobilised and confined long hours, steadfastness, patience and self-mastery. These prescriptions secure the patriarchal order, yet are also the means women have of acting on themselves and their world: in inhabiting (and appreciating) the norm, they gain a place in their community, and become moral.

In my exploration of weaving as partially constructing gendered selves, I am aware that other practices, that are not examined in detail here, are also constitutive of female personhood (for instance marriage and motherhood). I situate weaving practice in the everyday life of Sirwa women in Chapter 5. My account does not pretend to reveal women's subjectivity exhaustively.

Politics of production: Female producers and male transactors

In this thesis, I try to make sense of Sirwa women's behaviour when they leave the marketing of the products of their labour to men. Mies's (1982) study of Narsapur lace makers in India analyses how women's labour is devalued through the ('housewifisation') ideology which claims they are only using leisure time in profitable ways thus downgrading it to a spare time activity. She links this ideology with the organisation of the production as a cottage industry and their exclusion from the exchange network (of agents, traders and exporters). But as M'Closkey (2002: 85) notes Mies 'gives a somehow biased view of gender relations as we do not know where men stand'. Indeed a study of gender (relationships between women and men) should not consider women only, but also the construction of masculinities (Connell 1987; 1995), and the ideals of masculinity that shape their behaviour and gender relations (Cornwall 1997). In this thesis, I propose to look also at the gendering of men through the embodied practice of mobility and exchange. I examine the different forms of masculinities and masculine power (Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1994; Gilmore 1990) that exist among men depending on their social status and ethnicity in the organisation of carpet trade in Southern Morocco.

This approach I believe allows us to go beyond a straightforward analysis of female exploitation by male husbands and relatives and traders where women are just described as victims with no choice. In a study of the weaving industry in India, de Neve (2001) has argued that one should distinguish the relations of production, which refer to the exploitation of labour by capital from the relations in production, between workers and managers. In a similar way we could argue that one needs to look at the gender relations which are in the background of the weaving production both in the domestic sphere and outside (carpet trade organisation) and at the relationship between women (weavers or not) themselves, to have a better understanding of the way carpets are at the centre of the constitution of a differential gendered agency for both women and men.

Space, the circulation of objects, bodies and thoughts

This thesis concerns the circulation of carpets and traders, of shifting identities and fluid ideas (in the form of designs and imagination of what is beyond the village or

town) along a commodity chain (Appadurai 1986; Bestor 2003) from the village to the city of Marrakech. The dominants in a given space may be 'muted'¹⁴ (subordinate) when they move to another (Shirley Ardener 1997). This is true of Sirwa men as well who are subjected (and empowered) through their mobility.

The domestic sphere of female labour is described through an ethnography of the rhythm of daily activities and the relationships of women within this space. This allows us to relativise the division of space into female private and intimate space and male public space (as portrayed by Rosaldo and Lampere 1974¹⁵; Boudieu 1977; 1990; 1998; but see Low and Lawrence-Züniga 2003; Rosaldo 1990; Vom Bruck 1997a; 1997b). Space is constructed through the practices of subjects who do not use it in a homogeneous and predictable manner. The domestic space and the space of weaving are not an all-woman space. The space of marketing may be secret rather than exclusively public and is increasingly invaded by newcomers, both female and from other countries.

Exploring body techniques also involves examining space; bodily postures, movements and gestures involving the manipulation of matter take place in and through space. One way to convey the movement of people and things is to document them graphically and photographically.

Finally, weaving knowledge as involving geometrical pattern and mathematics involves 'spatial thinking' (Clements and Battista 1992; Were 2003). Several anthropologists have studied the role of mathematical thinking in the perception people have of their world (Ascher and Ascher 1981; Eglash 1999; Mimica 1988). Cognitive anthropologists have also explored acquisition of cognitive skills in specific context of situated learning (Saxe 1991; Lave 1988). The role of technology and activity in the early development of geometrical thinking was analysed by Gerdes (2003).

In addition, particularly when looking at creativity, it can be argued that the stock of knowledge of weavers is present in their gestures, tools, mental imageries, and in the many carpets available in their physical space as well as beyond. If the mind can be distributed in objects (Hutchins 1995), it can move beyond the material space of the actor. Gell (1998: 222) argues that people are implicated in networks of materiality as a

¹⁴ The original presentation of the notion of mutedness was developed by E. Ardener (1972/1975) and S. Ardener (1975, 1978). A muted class can be defined as a social group whose mode of expression is not that of the dominant group.

¹⁵ One of the founding texts of academic feminism argues that the universal cause of women's oppression lay in their confinement to the domestic sphere.

‘distributed person’: ‘A person and a person’s mind are not confined to particular spatio-temporal coordinates, but consist of a spread of biographical events and memories of events, and a dispersed category of material objects, traces, and leavings, which can be distributed to a person and which, in aggregate, testify to agency ... during a biographical career which may, indeed, prolong itself long after biological death. The person is thus understood as the sum total of the indexes which testify, in life and subsequently, to the biographical existence of this or that individual’.

Chapter 2 How the market shaped Moroccan carpets

The contemporary literature on Moroccan carpets has constructed their value as originating in a production characterised by its ‘isolated’ dimension: production is supposed to take place in distant spheres of geography (‘rural’, ‘tribal’), temporality (ancient, traditional) and in the private realm (fixed domestic non-economic female sphere). The implication of this construction is the creation of a hierarchy between older and contemporary carpets, the latter being at the bottom. This chapter aims to deconstruct part of these assumptions and show how they contribute to make weavers invisible. Through a brief history of Moroccan carpets from the colonial time, it shows that their commodification increased under the colonial administration, with a lasting influence on both the shape of Moroccan carpets as material objects and the shaping of national and international taste in Moroccan carpets. I explore also the question of quality loss that is supposedly inherent in contemporary production and confront the notion of value constructed by the Western market to the one prevailing among Moroccan consumers.

The assumption of the commercial and art literature

Before I present the commodification of carpets and its effect on today’s production, I would like to examine some of the assumptions most commonly found in the literature on Moroccan carpets (Messaoudi & Stanzer 1997; Vandebroek 2000), with the aim of refuting them in the course of this chapter. Moroccan carpets have been the object of many publications since the 1990s, when they were “rediscovered”¹⁶ by various Western dealers¹⁷ who became active at promoting them with the help of some curators and collectors through numerous publications, conferences, and exhibitions¹⁸.

16 The ‘discovery element’ is crucial in value construction (Steiner 1991: 100 note 4).

17 They tend to prefer the more prestigious term ‘collector’ to dealer. At least, since colonial times, the term ‘carpet dealer’ has commonly been associated with representations of bazaars, bargaining and stealing, from which Western carpet dealers are striving to distinguish themselves.

18 For instance, ICOC, the International Conference on Oriental Carpets (Messaoudi & Stanzer 1997). In the 1997 proceedings of the first conference on Moroccan carpets, most of the Moroccan carpet dealers were listed or advertised. As a result I found that most of the dealers in Taznakht were hoping to find their name advertised in my future publication.

Whether commercial or scholarly, this literature relies extensively on the scholarly colonial work, and emphasises the technical, symbolic (rituals and beliefs) and functional dimensions of weavings. Using extensively the ethnographic present, it presents carpets (and their producers) as coming from a pre-mercantile pre-colonial world. In doing so they satisfy the thirst of their clientele for exoticism, nostalgia and authenticity (Phillips & Steiner 1999) for a lost traditional time which goes hand in hand with a fascination for the manual work lost in the West.

With the aim of separating them from the devalued tourist craft market, dealers promote an image of Moroccan carpets as uniquely produced in leisure time, in the domestic sphere for household consumption, and arriving accidentally on the market following financial difficulties and against the will of weavers who would rather have kept their old weavings as heirlooms. Whilst the economic value of carpets cannot be denied, it is a misrepresentation of the production of carpets in Morocco to describe it as exclusively aimed at domestic consumption. Indeed domestic weaving production in Morocco before colonial times, was also aimed at national (including rural) as well as international markets (Robert Ricard 1936; Rassam 1980; Miège 1953). Furthermore, during colonial times, the production of carpets was adapted to the Western market demand, with a lasting effect on the national economy. The entry of the capitalist economy into the households of weavers has changed Moroccan weavers and consumers' perception of carpets in terms of aesthetics, but also with regard to notions of identity and heritage. In fact the production of the colonial time did not necessarily fit the criteria of uniqueness: a large part of the 'art' carpets still sought after today were produced on a large scale in government workshops or private enterprises during the colonial period and after, which contradicts the assumption that weaving knowledge was handed down from generation to generation between women in isolation from market influences.

Furthermore, the emphasis on so-called 'antique' carpets hides the fact that the stream of ancient textiles is extinct, and that in order to feed their stocks, dealers have to search for other types of textiles (bags, clothing, etc.). In addition, most of the so-called 'ancient' carpets today are at best twenty years old, but may well be new carpets with old features. The aging techniques provide 'antique' weavings that are accepted as such

until a scandal comes to denounce them (Schaffer 2001). Dealers and collectors, lamenting the loss of technical and aesthetic knowledge, prefer to keep their (past and present) role in the design of new carpets and creation of fake ancient carpets hidden.

According to this literature, creativity and art are only part of the past and contemporary production can only be of a poor quality, made identically and on large scale for the Western taste (Phillips & Steiner 1999). As I will argue later, this is denying that contemporary production can still be of an excellent quality both in terms of technical skills and aesthetic knowledge. Furthermore, the assessment of quality differs depending on whether the assessor is a Moroccan or a Westerner.

One of the most striking features of the literature on Moroccan carpets is the conspicuous absence of the weavers. Weavers are mentioned solely for their ancestral (often unconscious) and intimate thoughts and fears (read through their encoded motifs¹⁹) and their Berber tribal and thus exotic ethnicity. Some dealers try to establish the identity of the weavers behind the ancient weavings they acquired, with pictures of elderly women in their 90s wearing the products of their own production, or even better of their mother (Messaoudi & Stanzer 1997).

The result of the timeless and fixed description of weavers and their societies is that weavers can only be regarded as artists when they are dead. Since living artists cannot be shown or acknowledged, the literature on Moroccan carpets insists on carpets used by prestigious architects²⁰ and their influence on designers (Jereb 1990, Vivier 2000) or compares the carpets with works of modern artists. As mentioned in the introduction, two exhibitions (and their accompanying catalogues: Vandenbroeck 2000, Belgium and *Tejidos Marroquíes* 2000, Spain & Morocco) have managed again to make the weavers anonymous, absent, unrelated to any specific community. In the latter exhibition, which took place in Casablanca, Morocco, the two weavers who produced some of Flint's carpets were not invited. Indeed, dealers have a vested interest in keeping producers and consumers apart, including through the invention of an imaginary world for these weaving communities. They often represent themselves as

19 This trend was inaugurated by Ramirez and Rollet 1995 and Vandenbroeck 2000. See for instance Bouilloc 2001; Messaoudi & Stanzer 1997; Viola and Tazi 1999).

²⁰ Pickering's paper presented (by Barbara Sumberg) at the 2001 ICOC Conference on Moroccan carpets can only be praised for its quality. As with any such work they become trivialized when used as commercial tool.

adventurers undertaking 'expeditions' in remote places in search of old and rare textiles, which they saved from oblivion (e.g. Messaoudi & Stanzer 1997).

The invisibility of weavers allows the merchants to feed a mythology of authenticity that justifies their position of expert providers of knowledge difficult to access for Westerners. Rather than brokers who facilitate the relationship between buyers and producers, it could be argued that they in fact are gate keepers of the boundaries, adding layers of (mis)information between the two groups. The scope of this thesis does not allow to investigate the Western traders and therefore only touches on them in that they are contributing upstream to the organisation of trade in Morocco, being the 'brokers' (Steiner 1991: 43) between the Moroccan supplier and their own Western clients, and in that they shape the discourse on Moroccan carpets which the Moroccan dealers use sometimes in their bargaining performance. Moroccan and Western dealers feed from each others' knowledge: the latter rely on the former for information about the origin of carpets or to access producing areas, whereas the former seek information and new ideas about current trends in demand from the latter, thus playing an active part in the development of new types of weaving (form and style). Whether Western or Moroccan, they benefit individually from a collective heritage and from societies they are foreign to.

The romanticised and essentialist portrait made of weaving communities also allows dealers to hide the fact that without the poverty of the producers, there would be no crafts to buy for Westerners. If given the opportunity, weavers would probably give up their work because as in most Third World countries, craft production is not done out of (artistic) choice, but is the result of poverty and lack of employment options (Bray 1968; Johnson 1978; O'Hear 1987; Renne 1997). Apart from the case of fair trade, poverty is not a good selling argument. It also hides their impact on the practice and creativity of weavers (Chapter 10).

Commodification of carpets during the colonial time

The entry of Moroccan weavings (and wool) into the international market does not date from colonial times²¹, but with the colonial administration, the

21 The production of weaving intensified in Spain under Islamic rule, and probably some of the weaving technology was imported from North Africa, who knew the vertical loom before the Romans. Merino

commodification of Moroccan carpets started on a large scale. In the carpet literature (e.g. Messaoudi & Stanzer 1997), the emphasis on the role played by the colonial administration on the preservation of Moroccan heritage underplays the commercial incentive of such initiatives. In 1912, Morocco was the last of the three North African countries to be occupied by the French. The Protectorate lasted until 1956.

For the first general governor Hubert Lyautey (1854-1934) who founded the Protectorate in 1912, the promotion of Moroccan crafts was part of a larger scheme to develop the economy of the country. Tourism was to play an important role. "Since the recent and intense development of large scale tourism, the preservation of the beauty of a country has become of great economic importance. Public and private budgets have all to gain from tourism. The tourists do not come in a country where there is nothing left to visit." (Lyautey 1995 : 494).

Another issue for the new Moroccan Protectorate, was to find indigenous goods to export (Berque 1964: 13). Having, like many other colonial officers noticed the effect of capitalism and colonisation on the local material culture, he was resolute in protecting the architecture and restoring local crafts. In 1909 in Algeria he had already met the man he had in mind for this task, Prosper Ricard (1874-1952) who he appointed in 1913 the director of the newly created *Service des Arts Indigènes* (SAI), with the task to develop a conservation and craft revival policy²². An ex-school teacher and Inspector in the Department of indigenous education in Algeria, Ricard's dream was to compile an inventory of Algerian arts. He was given the opportunity to do so with Moroccan material culture and particularly with carpets. The carpets of Morocco were the first domain of study and the most achieved project developed by the SAI, and the object of careful investigations by French officers. Data about their history and their physical characteristics (techniques and aesthetics) was therefore collected all over the country

wool is the result from a cross between the Beni Merin Berber sheep (with abundant fine wool) with the Churro Spanish indigenous sheep (with a rough fleece) in the 12th century (Lefébure, 1978).

²² The conservation policy cannot be separated from the policy of "pacific colonialism" inspired by Gallieni, which advocated respect of local culture and cooperation with the local hierarchy, and inspired Lyautey. Ironically, whilst causing the progression of modernity in Morocco, many French officials saw it as a threat to the authenticity of the Moroccan culture in general.

and compiled in the four volumes of the *Corpus des tapis marocains*²³, which include full photographs of pile carpets with their grid diagrams. The books provided a marketing device, and were summarised in several publications aimed at tourists. The carpets collected for the corpus were exhibited in the newly created museums²⁴ and lent to government workshops to be used by weavers as models to copy. With a clause stating that Moroccan carpets were only to include the motifs (grid diagrams) from the corpus, deposited at and widely distributed by the office of the *SAI* (future Craft Department), the corpus also constituted the basis for the reproduction at a large scale of identical, relatively cheap, good quality carpets in cities and towns both in governmental workshops and in private factories. The pictures taken in the government weaving workshops and in the colonial private enterprises give an idea of the level of reproduction of these carpets which are today very sought after as authentic ancient carpets. Some Rabat merchants went to Paris in the 1960s in search of these carpets bought by the colonial population and available in antique shops and markets²⁵. The ancient quality of carpets is all very relative: many of the so-called ancient carpets may only date from 1970-1980²⁶ and may have been woven in 'urban' workshops on commission after the corpus. If one looks at some pictures from advertisements of both these institutions one sees the extent to which these 'museum' carpets were reproduced. Yearly colonial statistics from the colonial administration on these factories rather than domestic productions also shows that the offer was superior to the allowed quota for export. A great marketing campaign was set up to reach the Western market with the organisation of exhibitions in Paris and other French cities²⁷. This enterprise was to have a lasting influence on the Moroccan economy and cultural heritage, Moroccan carpets being the third most exported good up to 1988.

23 Each volume covers a region: the first (1923) is on Rabat and 'urban' carpets, the second (1926) on Middle Atlas carpets, the third (1927) on High Atlas and Haouz of Marrakesh carpets. The fourth was a supplement to the others (1934).

24 Musée des Oudaïa in Rabat (1915), Musée Batha in Fez (1915), Musée de l'artisan in Meknes, Dar Si Saïd in Marrakech (1934).

25 Communication James Bynon 2002. Formerly a professor in Berber language at SOAS, Bynon spent several years in Morocco in the 1960s. Berque also mentions the competition of dealers in antique carpets (1964:23).

26 Communication Julie Huston (British Museum) 2003.

27 All the carpets exhibited at the Musée des arts décoratifs in Paris in 1917 and 1919 were sold. Their aesthetic corresponded to the new avant-garde aesthetic in interior design, architecture and art, and their cheap price echoed the emphasis on function, simplicity, organic modernism and mass production of the 20th century modernist architects. More exhibitions followed (colonial exhibitions of Paris, 1931 and 1937).

Indeed the marketing campaign of the colonial administration played an important role, in shaping the Western taste for 'Berber' material culture. The favourable prejudice of the Western customers for 'Oriental carpets' which are associated with urban Moroccan carpets made the task difficult, the rural production being seen as dirty and barbaric, a view now shared by Moroccan buyers. Today Western dealers still have to shape the taste of Western amateurs of non European carpets as reported in Hali (e.g. Evans 2002; Tilden & Canadé 2000).

The colonial classification

Notwithstanding the issue of the actual possibility of realising an exhaustive repertory of Moroccan carpet types, the carpets collected were only to be copied in cooperatives or government institutions and in private enterprises. The idea was to produce quality products of the type expected by Western buyers and to ensure that the capitalist production that was to follow was somehow controlled. The labelling office which was to control this production (for colonial consumption and export) did not aim at controlling 'rural' and domestic production.

The corpus became also the basis of a classification which is still being used today by carpet dealers and curators alike. Linking aesthetics and place of production, it soon became clear that it was often erroneous²⁸, ignoring that people, objects, and technical and aesthetic knowledge move due to intermarriage, war or trade. Ironically, the colonial promotion of carpets was itself transporting the seeds of homogenisation especially in towns, with its imposition of the printed repertory from the corpus and with the provision of the means of faster communicating through the building of roads. The grand scale commoditisation of carpets soon affected their regional distribution in a way the administration could not control: for instance knotted techniques started to be introduced in areas where they were unknown.

This classification distinguishes the 'urban' from the 'rural', and within the 'rural' category, geographically, and ethnically. 'Urban' carpets referred mainly to the

²⁸ The circumstance of the constitution of the classification also led to wrong attributions of origin, as the corpus was elaborated at a time when most of the carpet producing areas were still free from colonial domination. Except for the 'urban' carpets (Volume One of the Corpus), the SAI had to rely on indirect data obtained from the Moroccan carpet dealers or the officers of the information services. Since then, some regional and ethnic attributions have been found to be wrong.

cities of Rabat, Medouina and Casablanca, and were seen as being influenced by the Turkish tradition whereas the nomadic or sedentary production of the countryside, sometimes termed 'Berber' was seen as indigenous. 'Rural' carpets were initially classified into two 'rural' areas: Middle Atlas on the one hand, and High Atlas and Haouz of Marrakesh on the other. Later, the Eastern area was added as a new category. Within each region, the great variety of weaving techniques, patterns, composition, and colours led Ricard to constitute some ethnic sub-categories. For example within the Middle Atlas region, although the Zemmour, Zayane, and Beni M'guild populations produce very similar carpets, these were distinguished from each other and given the names of their 'producing tribes'.

The shaping of both Western and Moroccan taste

The influence of the colonial administration on carpet production affected both the Western and Moroccan consumers in ways often ignored. This classification of carpets in 'urban' and 'rural' categories had a lasting effect on both the taste of Moroccan and Western consumers, whose demand in turn impacted on the form of the material objects themselves. The division between 'urban' and 'rural' was of course political and ideological, fitting with the colonial Arab/Berber divide²⁹, and it is not surprising that today, the 'urban' category is less appreciated than the 'rural' one by Western consumers.

For reasons similar to the colonial consumers, most Moroccan city dwellers prefer the prestigious 'urban' knotted carpets (particularly the *Rbati** carpet) to the 'peasant' productions. They associate these carpets with their producers (seeing them as dirty and dusty, rough and lacking refinement). They prefer classical colours such as deep blue or red for the background and more subtle colours for the intricate motifs (cream, beige, almond green, old pink, turquoise etc.). These are seen as one of the most prestigious objects of the national traditional heritage³⁰ like the *djellaba** or the *caftan**. Generations who lived under the reign of Hasan the Second (1961-1999), are familiar

29 Lyautism idealized Moroccan customs, traditions, and religion, romanticised the countryside over the city, promoted the Berber myth, a self serving array of half-truths concocted to explain the origins of the Maghreb's earliest inhabitants and to justify a policy of divide and rule. The myth convinced the *metropole* that an alliance with these 'indigenes' could be forged out of hatred of the Arabs and affinity with France.

30 On the invention of traditions see Hobsbawn & Ranger, 1983.

with the images transmitted regularly on TV of the king being driven in a convertible Cadillac on roads in Moroccan towns layered with local knotted carpets, gathered by the local authorities among the local population.

Carpets which are commonly thought of as ancient and traditional items are in fact the product of a selection made by the personnel of the colonial administration. The 'urban' pile carpet production was extinct in 1912 due to lack of local demand. Indeed wealthy Moroccans preferred Turkish carpets or the European industrially made carpets (*moquettes*), which were imitated by weavers. The French administration reintroduced the production of 'Renovated' Rabat carpets, which was followed by several challenging commissions from the Sultan, who set a trend with the aristocracy. The taste of Moroccans all over the country for 'urban' *Rbati* carpet has evolved and spread geographically with time. Even in rural areas which produce their own types of pile carpets the trend is towards an aesthetic that looks more and more like the *Rbati* carpet.

Whilst some carpets were promoted and transformed to fit the taste of the Western market, others disappeared due to lack of market demand. The discovery of the *Haouz** of Marrakesh carpet also known as *Chichaoua**, or *Bou Sebaa* carpets in the 1930's was such a success that simplified version of the originals were extensively produced in government workshops and private enterprises. Today these reddish pile carpets present the same aesthetic. In contrast, the 19th century *Salé Hanbal** was an item that the French administration wanted to develop because of its exquisite aesthetic. Unfortunately the consumers preferred pile carpets which did not require the same craftsmanship. Thus this textile has now disappeared from the market.

Today, what can be put under the appellation of 'rural' production is confusing. Because carpets were made in controlled institutions in Rabat, Fes, Meknes, Essaouira or Marrakech, the initial colonial classification ended up referring to aesthetics rather than places of production. The so-called '*Berber carpet**' is an extreme example in case. Hand-made in city factories, this cream or white pile carpet may include a simple motif such as a fibula or clasp, or a simple frame usually made in a brownish colour. It may have initially been a copy of an original Middle Atlas carpet, made entirely of natural wool, but with time, it has become a plain product made with white cotton warp, lesser quality wool, artificially dyed motifs, and that can be reproduced anywhere.

The so-called *Chichaoua* carpets are confusingly not made in Chichaoua but are 'rural' carpets of the South West of Morocco which were produced in colonial institutions in northern cities (Rabat, Fes, Meknes). Conversely, *Rbati* carpets which are supposedly 'urban' are also made in 'rural' areas on commission. Another change can be seen in the way carpets are used: Westerners enjoy the pile facing upward, and consider the pile side as the front. In the Middle Atlas that side was hidden against the ground whereas the 'backside' was visible (Berque 1964:23).

If carpets are still the indispensable element of the Moroccan living room, various factors tend to encourage the use of industrial machine made carpets: the prestige of the industrial Western product (even if made in Morocco) which makes them carriers of signs of wealth, modernity and fashion, the lightness of the object and its lower maintenance³¹, and finally its relative cheapness³². Poor city and 'rural' dwellers tend more and more to acquire pieces of fitted carpets or a plastic mat imitating the traditional vegetal mat. Despite this, there is still a great demand for handmade pile *Rbati* carpet in the middle class who having used industrially made carpets came to realise that they have a short life span. The success of the *Rbati* carpet is due to its sign value as well as its functional value.

Regimes of value: Moroccan versus Western

There is thus a clear distinction between Western taste and Moroccan taste in Moroccan carpets. Whether 'urban' or 'rural' dwellers, whether consumers or producers of carpets, Moroccans today prefer hand made pile carpets. Their aesthetic taste may change from one region to another but they all agree on the advantage of robustness against wear and thickness of the pile as protection from the cold. Flat weave weavings are associated with rurality and with covering the body, (occasionally used for covering walls or a sofa) rather than the floor. In contrast the average Westerner tends to prefer to buy light (flatweave, and to a lesser extent) carpets often with faded colours and a simple aesthetic. Apart from buyers who trust their own spontaneous taste, Western

31 Pile carpets are very heavy and need to be cleaned regularly. To get rid of their dust, they require at least two people to carry them up to the roof or balcony where they can be shaken or beaten. They also need washing once every three to five years which requires again space and hard work.

32 A 2x3 metre *Rbati* carpet costs between 3000 and 10,000DH (£300 to £1000) whereas an industrially made carpet costs for the same size around 1000 DH. A teacher's monthly salary starts at around 4,000 DH.

taste could be said to be conservative or out of date since the carpets which appeal most to the authentic and luxury seeking Western consumer are those whose aesthetic correspond to that of the colonial time up to the 1970's. For the weavers who are on the lookout for new ideas, this aesthetic does not have any appeal and is out of date. They prefer complexity and intricacy to simplicity; in terms of colours, weavers consider that the Westerners have an old fashioned and dull taste, that of their 'grand mothers' to use a recurrent expression. They do not understand why they enjoy old worn out and faded weaving which have been prematurely aged.

Not only is Western taste in carpets in many ways in opposition to Moroccan weavers and consumers' conception of carpet value, but in some cases it is considered as issued from unskilled labour. The case of '*chichaoua*' carpets comes to mind³³: their shaky lines, their naïve figurative motifs, their lack of regularity and symmetry puts them in the category of unskilled production. Most Moroccans (weavers, and rural dealers included) consider this kind of weaving as untidy, slack, or as the work of a beginner or several weavers not working together in harmony. They designate them as *tkharbeq**, nonsense, scribble, the opposite of knowledge and good work. In fact, during a visit in the region of Chichaoua, I noticed a small carpet which could have probably sold well as a '*Chichaoua*'. The mother explained almost apologetically that it was finished by her daughters (then around 10 and 12 years old) when she was ill and unable to get out of her bed. She was not aware of their decision. In the Sirwa, another type of carpet made for Westerners that is also seen as *tkharbeq* is the *kharita** carpet.

For Moroccan consumers a carpet must be new. The middle class housewife who can afford it will change the bedding and flooring of her living room at least every ten years. In Morocco, sofas are usually ordered from a upholsterer who sews the fabric brought by his client and adds the finishing (trimming, braids). The colour and aesthetic of sofa and carpet have to match. The same value is given to brand new carpets in rural carpet producing areas where, including in wealthy families, an opportunity to sell an old carpet at a price above the cost of raw material is rarely declined, whether the seller intends to replace it by one woven in or commissioned outside his or her family. In fact, in families who produce regularly for the market, the production of pile carpets once or

33 These specific weaving have been the main object of Vandebroek (2000) and for the semiotic part on weavers as parturians in Ramirez and Rollot (1995).

twice a year for their own consumption is often done with the knowledge that within ten to five years of use, they will probably be bought by a dealer. Consequently, in most houses in the Sirwa, it is rare to find a carpet more than twenty years old. Carpets are highly economic commodities; inalienability for carpets does not exist³⁴. Thus, distinction on the grounds of market/domestic consumption does not stand in the case of pile carpets which are all made with the same quality of material and work. The exceptional use of handspun wool is dictated by technology, when a finer wool is required in the making of the flatweave technique for pieces of weavings (*djellaba* fabric, *tahaykt**).

Appadurai (1986) and Kopykoff (1986) argue that the value of objects increases through circulation. That economic value emerges from exchange is not a view shared by most Moroccan buyers however, for whom the least circulation and least use means more value. The value of carpets for Moroccan consumers and weavers alike is usually placed in the fact that a carpet has not passed through various middlemen's hand and has not been used by 'authentic others' over a certain amount of time (as with antique carpets). On the contrary, for the Moroccan buyer, the carpet has to be brand new and ideally made to requirements, with good quality wool and dyes. Only poor people buy secondhand goods. Whereas for most Western customers, a high price may mean a more valuable carpet, for the majority of Moroccans, lowering the price of carpets is a priority which is achieved by going directly to the producer. For the fair trade customer, who is concerned that the producers gain a fair share of the profit from carpets, the value of a carpet emerges also from the fact that they acquired it as directly as possible from the producer.

The provision of raw material: the shaping of a perishable materiality

Thus, the assessment of carpet quality differs greatly depending on the audience. Now, I will discuss the question of quality with particular reference to the Sirwa. The issue of quality of work and material is not a new one. As early as 1919 the SAI, worried that the anarchic production of carpets of very poor quality would discredit its

³⁴ Inalienable objects that cannot leave the family (Weiner 1992) could be the bridal shawl, which is handed down by the mother to her elder daughter, or an old silk headscarf believed to have healing properties. If a large amount of money is offered for a weaving, the families will normally sell it.

marketing effort, introduced new regulations and a stamping system, on the model of authenticity stamps developed in France to guarantee the origin of regional products such as wine. This was a measure to control and guarantee the quality and ‘authenticity’ of Moroccan carpets³⁵ made for export and colonial consumption, and thus did not cover rural production. Today the labelling serves mainly for exported or locally sold products (to expatriates or local bourgeoisie).

Dyes

The issue of dyes was one of the first the colonial administration had to deal with. Introduced in Morocco since the late 1880s, the expensive synthetic dyes were often mixed with local natural dyes. The colonial administration tried to reintroduce natural dyeing methods and the culture of indigo in several regions but had to give up because of the lack of local interest, the availability of artificial dyes on the market and their cost. In the past, the knowledge of dyeing was valued because as the song says (appendix 2, no 25-28) without the contrast between colours, there are no motifs. In the past, the skill of dyeing with indigo was jealously kept secret by expert female weavers. Today, producers only use artificial dyes, and the task of dyeing is given to the younger weavers who are not able to read the instructions (in French). They simply boil the wool with the powder and some alum (*azarif*). Some weavers still use materials such as dried figs and alum which used to help the fermenting process of natural dyes, but they probably have no effect.

Whereas only one type of dye is available all over Morocco for weavers’ use, industries often import better quality fast dyes which do not fade in the light or run. These good quality dyes enter in the production of *Rbati* carpets or carpets for export. In comparison to colonial times, dyes offered on the market could provide a larger range of hues than the old traditional red (madder), blue (indigo), yellow (*ushfud**) and green (indigo and *ushfud*). Their use is, however, more standardised: most weavers do not often experiment with mixing dyes and limit themselves to the colours available in commerce (bright red, dark red, brown, yellow yolk, blue, emerald green and aubergine). It is rare to see for example a range of reds (from light pink to deep red) or

³⁵ It was to guarantee the number of knots per square metre, the natural wool and dyes, and the aesthetic compliance with the corpus.

intermediate colours such as orange, violet and green. In fact, dealers do not encourage them to produce new colours or pastel ones since the ageing process (bleach and exposure to the sun) will fade them. For instance the original aubergine colour takes on a brown milk chocolate colour, or the dark blue a denim aspect. Instead they are required to dye their yarn with bright and gaudy colours and not to wash the dyes from the yarns thoroughly before weaving with them. This may facilitate the aging process, but is also used sometimes to show their customers the difference between an unbleached and a bleached carpet, the first one being presented as artificially dyed in opposition to the second.

Wool yarns and cotton thread

The provision of yarns has also been a preoccupation for the colonial administration, who had to accept the progressive use of cheaper industrially made cotton threads for the warp and machine spun wool for the weft in factories for handmade carpets. Cotton warp threads are also better adapted to iron looms which stretch the threads more harshly than wooden ones. Even in rural areas, machine made cotton warp threads have replaced the woollen ones: to obtain a robust woollen warp, one needs to use specific parts of the fleece, which have to be spun first using a comb rather than a card and then twisted. In contrast the work of spinning the weft is easier. Partly due to the drought, which has disseminated the sheep flocks, the (rural) carpet producing areas are not self sufficient and have to rely on the provision of machine spun wool from the large cities of the littoral (Tangier, Kénitra, Rabat, Salé) and the Marrakech region. On a national level, wool production has to be supplemented with imported wool, mainly from Spain and New Zealand. The origin of the wool and the condition of the process contributes to the poor quality of weft yarns: not only is this wool of the lowest quality as it costs money to import it, but it is also often mixed with local wool obtained from leather factories. In addition to being a waste product of dead skin, the wool is stocked on sites, where it is exposed to many chemical (such as sulphur) from the treatment of leather. In some cases, to economise electricity and water, the wool is neither washed, nor passed through the numerous machines designed to remove dust and impurities (thistles elements). This also reduces the loss of wool density and weight as washing wool and spinning halves the quantity.

How to make old out of new

To respond to Western demand for ancient carpets, dealers started producing some old looking carpets with new material and methods. New carpets are aged through washing, sun exposure, bleaching, brushing and burning. Performed exclusively by men, these operations have increased since the 1980s when the large merchants of Marrakech moved the ‘finishing’ operations of washing and aging to the mountains where the workforce is cheaper.

There are two types of aging process: natural and accelerated. The former relies on the natural wear and tear over time which makes the pile of the carpets look flatter and gives it a uneven wear. The fading of the colours is also uneven. Carpets obtained from families who used them for several years fit this category. The accelerated process consists of a bleach bath and exposure to the sun for a few days or weeks depending on the desired effect. Older carpets are also submitted to this treatment by ill-informed dealers who think that their price will increase if the carpets are paler. Unfortunately these are often so bleached that the contrast between colours which makes up the composition and motifs disappear almost completely into a whitish blend. Some carpets are aged by a long exposure to the sun, but bleaching provides faster results. The use of shampoo is a rarity and is reserved to older weavings. The cheapest and least invasive aging process is to wash carpets with the cheapest soap found on the market, and then expose them to the sun for several weeks.

A shallow burning of the fibres with a blowtorch gets rid of the fibres that cover the surface of flatweave weavings, giving them the look of old worn weft; the burning of the back removes the threads used in the *akhnif* technique (see Chapter 4). To reduce labour or facilitate the burning process, some dealers also ask their producers to brush the surface of the carpet with the carding brush. Some older pile carpets are also brushed to give them the long flat lustrous aspect of ancient carpets.

One drawback of the bleaching process is that the chemical elements of the chloride carry on acting on the fibres well after the bleach has been washed off the wool. This causes a progressive yellowing of all colours years after the purchase of the carpet, and eventually leads to fading. In addition, these aging treatments indeed age the carpets, shortening their life span as it weakens the fibre’s elasticity and capacity to

stand wear. On the other hand, carpets which are not submitted to such treatment run as soon as they are in contact with water, rendering it impossible for them to be washed manually³⁶. Furthermore, these bad quality artificial dyes cannot withstand the fading effect of natural light, even when not bleached. For instance, in a carpet from the Sirwa region acquired by my mother in 1985, the blue motifs are now almost white. One cannot help thinking about the waste of material, money and particularly work invested in making objects that will not last. From a short term commercial perspective, the 'finishing' action performed on Moroccan carpets could be said to add economic value to the carpets since it gives them more chance to be sold.

In sum, in addition to making weavers invisible and hiding their own role in the design and ageing of carpets, dealers who have the means to foster the use of good quality materials (even if industrial) have rather contributed to making the materiality of carpets more ephemeral and invisible. On the one hand the use of bad quality wool and bleach make the carpets less robust and reduces their life span. On the other hand the use of bad quality dyes (and dyeing techniques) mean that the very motifs that make the carpets beautiful will in the long term completely disappear thus making the technical and aesthetic knowledge and the labour invested in them useless. The importance of colours (even if reduced to black, white and their combination: grey) cannot be stressed enough as without them there are no motifs, nor techniques allowing these motifs to emerge.

When quality of material means increased women's labour

One of the sources of decline in carpet quality can thus be attributed to dealers' interventions or their lack of initiatives to introduce good quality materials. The use of industrial materials is in part due to the high cost or lack of availability of natural dyes (particularly indigo, and to a lesser extent madder) and wool on the Moroccan market, but also due to the appeal of new technologies to weavers.

The younger generations are often not willing to card and spin wool, and resist the suggestion to use natural dyes. I have met a family who have refused to take on a commission to make a naturally dyed pile carpet partly because of the resistance of

³⁶ Woollen carpets should be washed with soaped water, using one's feet to kneed the pile, and than rinsed before being put to dry. This can be performed by anybody and used to be done regularly by carpet consumers.

the weavers. The *ushfid* plant which provides the yellow dye seems to be affected by pollution or desertification³⁷ as it is available in the wild in the mountain, but not anymore in the urban areas around Taznakht. These prickly bushes have to be collected when they are in flower and then dried. To extract the petals from the prickly stems, one has to beat up the dried plant in a bag and then separate the elements. This is just one example of how the preparation of these dyes is time and energy consuming. Natural dyes also do not give even and predictable results. In comparison powdered dyes are ready and easy to use.

On the other hand, artificial dyes contain heavy metals and toxic chemicals which could affect the health of weavers. Indeed artificial dyes are not washed off thoroughly from the yarns, and in addition to touching them all day, they breath the powder and the dye steam and dispose of the liquid waste on the ground or in the streams. The large plastic containers³⁸ in which these dyes are stocked are labelled with health warnings advising in French not to touch the powder with bare hands and not to inhale the steam coming out of the dyeing liquid. Weavers, who do not read French and never see the containers as they normally buy only the amount of dye they need and store it in plastic carrier bags, have no knowledge of the risks they take.

The issue of raw material quality thus should be considered in relation to women's workload, in terms of time but also effort and difficulty. The introduction of ready-to-use yarns means that the work of wool preparation (washing, carding, spinning and sometimes dyeing) has been reduced. In chapter 4, I will present an initiative which proposes a return to traditional methods of dyeing, combing and spinning (The Stanzer project). But, to be acceptable both on ethical grounds and from the point of view of weavers, the return to traditional wool preparation methods would require a substantial increase in the price of carpets, taking into consideration the heavy work load of women. One criticism that can be levied on this kind of project is that it expresses a conservative agenda (Humphreys 1999). It can also be argued that in expecting poor craftswomen to provide them with cheap handmade objects which costs them their health, Western buyers are participating in their exploitation by middlemen and dealers

37 Its decline in 'urban' or more arid areas may be explained by the fact that it is also used as firewood. When they gather plants to be used as combustible, women pull the roots out, taking the whole bush.

38 Such containers are also recycled and used in households to stock flour or other food.

(Mies 1982). In their desire to preserve the material culture and the conditions of living which produce it, Westerners who are nostalgic about the 'traditional' and the handmade wish that the weaving communities would stay in a state of isolation, carrying on using the technology and material culture of the time when they were 'discovered' by the West. Whilst they themselves enjoy the comfort and modernity of technologies, they expect these societies to remain in a fixed state of poverty, lacking basic amenities and enduring hardship for art's sake. This raises global and class issues around the appropriation by the middle class populations of the West (who can afford it) of the work and culture of the working class of the South (Skeggs 2004).

Material quality loss versus loss of technical knowledge

In addition, if Stanzer can be credited with bringing in a return to good quality production in terms of materials, he can also be accused of deskilling highly technically skilled and creative weavers by giving them the task of reproducing exact copies of very simple carpets using only their knotting knowledge. If the decline in quality of material is incontestable due partly to the needs of weavers to rely on external sources to obtain these essential raw materials, in the niche end of contemporary weavings, the weavers of the Sirwa know a great variety of weaving techniques, including *tapestry weaving**, *twill**, and brocade (*iklan n-ukhnif**).

In the study financed by the Conrad Adenauer charity and produced by the Moroccan craft Department to update Ricard's corpus, the Nouveau Corpus (1988) it is argued that most of the technical and aesthetic features noted by Ricard in the 1930s' had disappeared by the 1980's in the Sirwa region. Indeed, in terms of technology, some changes have occurred due to the adoption of new materials and the intensification of weaving production. But one has to be wary about affirmations concerning knowledge loss. The techniques abandoned were those aiming at increasing the lifespan of carpets and economising the precious and rare wool rather than labour. This was done in a context where wool (*taddut*) because of its rarity and importance for the reproduction of society (as a protection against the elements) was seen as sacred, and where most material culture was recycled. Many songs and proverbs attest these preoccupations and conceptions about wool (Appendix 2.1: 25-28, 31-32).

Thus, instead of the contemporary pile carpets which have short and dense knot rows spaced by two rows of wefts, the old pile carpets used to be characterised by spaced out flat and long knots obtained through combing wool and very fine weft threads. The result of the quality of these long fibres and their special disposition, is that they covered a longer portion of the background wefts which could reach the number of ten or more, creating a very light and flexible carpet, with less wool. Today, weavers use the same machine spun threads to make both their short knots and their wefts, making the carpets more heavy.

Sirwa weavers used to weave bands of different colours of weft between the rows of knots so that when the screen of knots had completely worn out, probably after more than one generation, the now flatweave textile would still show some aesthetic elements. Today, the colour of the weft does not matter, since the weavers will not see the time of the pile disappearing. Like their European counterparts³⁹, rural populations in Morocco have entered an area where material culture is not meant to last for several generations. The availability and relative cheapness of the material and the frequency of production has transformed carpets into an investment in family furnishing, which is recyclable into cash money. As old and worn out carpets lose value, selling them at a good price despite their age and condition appears as a good deal and an opportunity to renew the family furnishing and thus the signs of prestige and distinction. Thus, sentimental attachment to an old carpet has become non-existent. Finally, taste and fashion are ever changing and weavers are keen to keep up with them.

Whilst a special selvage method, technically more complicated, has been abandoned in the making of carpets, others techniques such as plaiting (*twill*) used to consolidate the two extremities of the carpets are still in use. The trademark of Ayt Waghrda weavers, it is now mainly used as an aesthetic and identity feature. The Ayt Ubial only use it as a closure for their weavings.

³⁹ The recycling of material culture in European countries still existed in the 1950s, when objects such as old rags or rabbit skins were collected by ragmen in rural households and taken to be recycled in factories or sewn into furs in towns, and the money of a wooden wardrobe was saved several years before being commissioned from a woodworker.

Conclusion

Western and Moroccan carpet dealers have attempted to separate themselves from the market and hide their own role in the commodification and transformation of the materiality (in terms of techniques, aesthetics, and raw materials) of carpets from colonial times to the present. Far from being the result of the isolation of the productive communities in distant time and places, the production of carpets is shaped by the market that not only makes the weavers invisible but also hides the fact that the value of Moroccan carpets is issued from poverty. Despite having the power to shape the materiality of Moroccan carpets for the best, dealers do not provide weavers with the material means, in terms of raw materials, that their labour, care and knowledge deserve. In fact, they shape a materiality of weaving which is perishable and will eventually become invisible. On the other hand, as I argue in the section on creativity (Chapter 10) the market also contributes to shaping the aesthetics of carpets.

Chapter 3 Carpet trade in the south of Morocco

In the literature concerning contemporary (from colonial times to today) Moroccan trade and market places (Fogg 1938; 1940; Geertz 1960; 1979), only two concern women traders in the Rif (Hajjarabi, 1982) and the area of Beni Mellal (Kapchan 1996). The topic of the carpet trade in Morocco is discussed by art historians Ramirez and Rolot (1995) who however provide us with a depoliticised and outdated perspective on the carpet trade in Marrakech: focusing mainly on the large merchants of Marrakech, it describes the 'itinerant dealers' who supply Marrakech's merchants 'old' pieces without situating them in the supply chain. They ignore contemporary production and do not question the absence of women from the market and their place in the carpet trade organisation. There is no data on how weavers and small dealers are perceived in their own communities, and how they construct themselves in relation to trade and mobility.

Mernissi provides the only study that focuses on weavers' feeling in relation to their work and the product of their labour, and that considers issues of exploitation. In 1979, she documented the increasing exclusion of weavers from the market sphere in the cities of Rabat and Salé. She explained that this exclusion was due to their difficulty to stock expensive raw material⁴⁰, which meant that they were obliged to accept commissions from middlemen. These provided them the material to work with and the requested that they produced simple handmade carpets requiring little skill. Weavers were sometimes expected to work in factories rather in their own home. In addition, government measures to ensure the quality of production added another layer of exclusion: weavers had to transport their carpet to the stamping office where the quality of the carpets was assessed. This meant spending the whole morning, waiting in a queue, dragging their carpet(s) in line and making sure nobody took their place. Another source of stress came from the fact that weavers were in the hands of uncooperative government officers who had the enormous power of attributing a quality

⁴⁰ The middlemen or middlewomen had enough finance to buy wool in bulk, and thus contributed to increasing its price. From my own investigation, middlemen between the private consumer and the weaver are wool retailers and bazaarists. Today they tend to specialise in *Rhati* carpets whereas large factories usually produce Berber carpets*.

label affecting the final price of the carpet. In contrast, large factories were visited by corrupt stamp officers who could be bribed. This was only the beginning of the marketing operation as the weavers then had to take the carpet to the auction⁴¹ and sell it at whatever price was offered. As a forty year old weaver noted: 'If you like the price, you can sell, if you don't, you keep it. You don't eat carpets, do you? So you sell them' (Mernissi 1979: 53). Hence selling was seen as the most difficult part of their job. As a result most women preferred to work in their own house for a middleman, with their kin, at their own pace, managing their own time and without the hassle of having to deal with unfriendly managers⁴² and co-workers⁴³. Ten years later, little seemed to have changed (Lehmam 1988).

Mernissi's study is interesting for several reasons: she starts from the weavers' perspective, to show how difficult it is for them to acquire financial, cultural and social capital, which is in the hands of the Moroccan elite. This latter social group has made its place in the 'closed circles' of 'international wealth and power' (1979: 55) as the intermediaries between the Western consumer and the poor rural craftspeople. Mernissi argues that the exclusion of women from the marketing sphere is 'duplicated in urban areas, where women are more remote from marketing spaces and have to submit to more intermediaries' (Mernissi 1979: 54).

Following on from the main argument of this thesis, that subjects are constructed through the embodied practice mediated by material culture, this chapter postulates that carpets are at the centre of the construction of different types of masculinities along the supply chain. I also look at how the most powerful have organised themselves to limit the access of others to a higher level in the supply chain. At the top of the chain, large dealers control the middlemen's access to the market of Western buyers, whilst further down smaller dealers try to limit the flow of male producers who could be tempted to become carpet dealers. The male kin of weavers, in turn, resist the entry of women in the commercial sphere.

41 In Rabat, the auction place is fortunately close to the stamping office.

42 Expert weavers or *ma'almat** (master weavers) are employed by the capitalist entrepreneurs to recruit, train and supervise apprentices. These are not shown in the official accounts of the company. The *maalmat*, exploited by their managers, in turn exploit the weavers they supervise (Mernissi 1979: 50).

43 Mernissi's interviewees talk about fights and arguments between co-workers, and aggressiveness and humiliation from their manager, a *ma'alma*.

Max Weber (1978) developed a theory of closure that he used in reference to economic relationships. A relationship is defined as closed when a social group is denied participation by another (Weber 1978: 43). Closure gives to some social groups the possibility to maximise advantages by limiting access to privileges and possibilities to an inner circle of selected persons. This is akin to the materialist approach proposed by Rowlands (2005) who suggested that some groups of interest strive to deny others access to self-realisation and material existence. Weber's argument of different groups allied to exclude other groups can be applied to the organization of carpet trade in the south of Morocco, where mobility across space and time is paralleled with a closure based on social status, ethnicity and gender. Between the urban and rural realms, the Arab speaking and Berber speaking spaces, the market and the domestic productive sphere, several enclosures can be traced which limit the access of actors on grounds of social status, ethnicity and gender. To exclude others, groups will use techniques which are based on impeding the geographical flow of capital, people or carpets, and controlling access to market information (about price and regimes of value).

(1) Large Arab urban dealers block the access of Berber middlemen from the mountains to Westerners, using their monopolistic position and various techniques of capital closure. (2) These Berber middlemen exclude these urban dealers from their network of producers (3) Berber middlemen also hold back the producing families from getting to the buyers (Westerners or large merchants). (4) Finally, all men, including the male kin of weavers have an interest in keeping women away from the market.

Capital closure

Larger Arab merchants in Marrakech belong to the elite of the city, are very educated, have a long-standing experience of the market and are very knowledgeable about their customer's needs and the country they come from. They enjoy considerable wealth and power, they live a Western standard of life⁴⁴ and educate their children abroad. The Moroccan elite associates itself with the urban Arab-Islamic culture. The notion of national tradition that is so close to their hearts and appears in the material

⁴⁴ Mernissi (1979) notes that the Westernisation of the Moroccan bourgeoisie explains why they insist so much on national traditions.

culture (*rbati* carpets, *djellaba*, *caftan*, *jabador* etc.) is in sharp contrast with their way of living, which is very Westernised.

In addition, this elite has contacts in the government and get funding to travel to carpet fairs abroad, whereas individual craftsmen and craftswomen do not get such help from the government and find it difficult to enter in contact with Western buyers because of geographical distance. In fact, information as simple as where the main carpet producing areas are, is not available in tourist guidebooks. Thus, despite being one of the two main marketplaces for carpets (with Khemisset) Taznakht is not mentioned in recent editions of guidebooks⁴⁵. We have to go back to editions of the 1980s to get any substantial information on Taznakht as an important place of weaving production. The 1983 edition of the French Guide Bleu for example, advertised the skills of local weavers and mentions the weekly market (*suq*) of Taznakht. The *Ouzguita* are mentioned as a “Berber tribe renowned for its unconventional black weavings (*khenif* or *bournous* with an orange medallion), its pile carpets and its *hanbal* where the white and the black contrast” (Guide Bleu 1983: 376). “A stop in the village of Taznakht will give you the opportunity to visit its craft cooperative and perhaps the desire to buy a carpet or a *bournous* woven by the sedentary *Ouzguita* tribe. Their work, renowned for its delicacy and the vivacity of its colour, is highly regarded today. Furthermore, prices are much lower here than at the *suq* of Marrakech and the choice is wider” (Guide Bleu 1983: 377). One of the reasons for Taznakht’s demise is that tourist coaches, tour guides and individual tourists tend to go to Ouarzazate and Zagora. National tourism⁴⁶ is not worth mentioning as the Moroccan middleclass is more attracted to leisure resorts near the sea or in the mountains, and they tend to consume *Rbati** carpets.

The large merchants in Marrakech are in a strategic position in Morocco to sell carpets to tourists and importers. Some of them have been established in the *suq* of Smarine, their quarter since the colonial period⁴⁷. Nowadays, it is impossible for any

45 An exception is the detailed Cadogan guide which describes Taznakht as being ‘justly famous for its carpets, rugs and kilims, which are woven and knotted in the surrounding hill villages and mentions its *suq* and bazarists (Rogerson 2000: 534-5).

46 As with most rural areas, the average Moroccan has never heard of Taznakht and the place has received no national press coverage.

47 French archives show an emerging class of powerful lobby among carpet dealers in Marrakech in the 1930s.

new comer to acquire a shop in the quarter of carpet dealers. With the development of Marrakech's airport, this city has become the capital of tourism, at the expense of other tourist cities such as Rabat⁴⁸ and Fes which are now only one step on ~~tourist~~ tours starting and finishing in Marrakech. Westerners either shop as soon as they arrive or leave their shopping for the last days of their stay in Marrakech. Marrakech carpet dealers deploy great efforts⁴⁹ to attract customers before they get to the producing regions of carpets. They can also sell directly to Western markets through international and national fairs, an opportunity that is only given to these Moroccan Arab bourgeoisie or elite.

Although they compete with each other to gain access to buyers, large merchants in cities represent an interest group which as a whole is allied in preserving their status by excluding and hindering the competition of smaller dealers originating from the producing areas. Here, lack of mobility is synonymous with power, since they rely on the geographical mobility of the small dealers, who become effectively their middlemen. In contrast to countries where the craft industry is organised into a 'putting up' system in which a few urban merchants use agents in the countryside to distribute material to producers and check the finished product, in the Sirwa the cost of tools and material is usually taken on by the weavers' family itself and only exceptionally by the middlemen⁵⁰. The latter are usually relying on their family's labour as well as on production bought from other families in their village or on the suq. The weavers' responsibility is to dye the wool, make the warp, mount the warp on the loom and weave the carpet. In addition to the outsourcing of the production of carpets, urban merchants also send carpets from other parts of Morocco to the mountains to be washed and aged at low cost. This also allows them to keep the aging and source of carpets secret. The cottage industry system also saves them the burden of the laws governing insurance, child labour, the minimum wage and social security benefits. Relying on tacit knowledge and local ways of learning they do not have to pay for the training of weavers.

48 Their hegemonic position makes them also the main suppliers of carpets produced in the Sirwa region to other Moroccan dealers to the north of Morocco (Rabat, Fes, Meknes etc.).

49 They use unofficial and self appointed 'guides' to take them to their shops. These 'recruit' prospective buyers as early as on the train taking them to Marrakech.

50 These may supply them with difficult to find material such as very fine thread for motifs or for the warp.

The organisation of production and distribution is thus indirectly managed by the large Marrakech dealers who, without investing any capital and taking any risks⁵¹, leave the responsibility of organising and stimulating production and seeking new products to Berber middlemen. They contribute no labour or advance in capital (material, electricity, rent of a place etc.) to the production process. Instead their lack of mobility allows them to block middlemen's access to Westerners whilst concentrating their effort on the coordination of supply and demand, and marketing towards Western markets. Their lack of mobility is very relative, as whilst they do not travel to the subordinate rural areas of the middlemen, they have a greater mobility than these when it comes to travelling within wealthy areas in Morocco and abroad.

Large dealers in Marrakech also cut down on the mobility of their competitor's capital through a credit system called *litra*. The *litra*, from the French *traite* or *lettre de change*, is a sort of IOU by which the large merchant engages himself to pay, within a given time limit, the amount he owes to the small dealers who have left their carpets with him. This is in fact a partial payment on a consignment that the middleman will never be able to recover and which will never be paid entirely, the large dealer indefinitely moving the deadline forward. The small vendor is therefore in the situation where having delivered several carpets and having received part of the amount due, if he wants more money, he will have to bring more carpets. In fact, the *litra* system does not have any legal status, a fact which the small dealer often discovers too late. Seeking an outlet for their stock, and faced with the ever increasing number of other middlemen, they have no other choice but to deal with the large merchants. Their keenness to gain wealth through a privileged relationship with the large merchants explains why they accept to enter into a system of selection and reference which ultimately traps them into a form of a credit relationship (*litra*) to specific large dealers.

Through this system not only do large merchants live on credit but also get access to the stock of valuable, older carpets kept by smaller dealers in their family house in the hope of finding a good buyer (usually a Westerner). As ambitious emerging dealers, all Berber middlemen are potential competitors who accumulate

⁵¹ I witnessed a transaction between a young bazaarist from Taznakht and an established large dealer in Marrakech where the latter showed an interest in the idea of buying reproductions of old *Chichaoua* carpets if the middleman managed to commission them to his satisfaction, but was not taking any financial risk or engagement to buy from him

stock, thus blocking the circulation of carpets to the market. Large merchants of Marrakech thus limit the circulation of capital back to the producing area whilst opening the flow of valuable commodities upwards in the chain.

Despite the new changes in government attitude toward the Berber language and culture⁵², Arab city dwellers still mistrust Berbers, an attitude that is inherited from colonial times. The Berbers in Morocco are seen as a subordinate ethnic group, partly because 'Berberity' is associated with rurality and poverty⁵³ and opposed to 'civilisation' and 'culture' that is 'Arab-Andalusian' heritage. The south of Morocco has also long been a neglected area economically, in terms of infrastructure (roads, schooling, health services, water and electricity supply⁵⁴) and most Moroccans in the cities may have heard of Ouarzazate, but will not have visited the region if they have no ties there. The relationship between large urban bourgeois merchants and their middlemen is unequal because of the monopolistic position of the former but also at a symbolical and psychological level because urban dealers use their higher position in the Moroccan social hierarchy whereas rural Berbers are situated at the bottom.

Kin and client closure

Even if Arab Merchants feel superior to and use the mobility of Berber middlemen, they would not dare to enter into a region seen as troublesome and resistant to any foreign venture. Thus the fact that a Western man (Stanzer, see chapter 4) has managed to produce carpets in the Sirwa mountains, challenges their prejudices. Their only satisfaction is in the problems he met in the resistance of middlemen and male kin of weavers. In fact, he is a shrewd entrepreneur who knows the large dealers personally and the trade organization from within. In his choice of one of the most remote mountain villages with fine weavers, he was very careful not to impinge on the Ayt Waghrda territories. He makes ample use of closure techniques, keeping the designs of his carpets and dyeing techniques secret.

52 The introduction of Berber language in the curriculum is a recent, albeit symbolic introduction, not popular among Arab speaking people.

53 Upward mobility for Berbers often means adopting an Arab cultural identity, which mixes with an urban Westernised one, away from their rural origins.

54 As a result some communities in those neglected areas had to recourse to self-help as reported by Mernissi (1997; 2004).

Bazaarists in Taznakht, and dealers in some villages in the mountains, use their power administratively and politically to control vital funds for entrepreneurial support and attempt to block new local entrepreneurship such as Stanzer or the Association Espace Taznakht. They tried to disqualify the association on legal grounds, arguing that it should not make any profit, unlike cooperatives⁵⁵.

At the regional and rural level, middlemen can be distinguished from each other according to their location, ethnicity and social status. Starting with the wealthiest, Taznakht bazaarists are independent dealers with one or more shops situated in the centre of Taznakht. They usually belong to the Berber bourgeoisie of the plains, are more educated than mountain dwellers and have a mastery of the Arabic language. Some are descendents of the high class of *Amghar** who used to lead tribes and control great amounts of land in and around Taznakht, and who now may have family members in key government posts in the region. They have used their wealth to accumulate stock from the *suq* where weavers sold older and contemporary carpets, but also may have bought bulk stock when the cooperative of the Craft Department shut down soon after Independence. Belonging to another ethnic group than the mountain dwellers (Ayt 'Amr), most bazaarists have no personal access or family links in the mountains and thus rely on smaller middlemen to obtain products. They usually have a house in the old part of Taznakht and may have another property in the new part of Taznakht, on top of owning shops; also they all own a personal vehicle. They may also own a property in another more important tourist town in Morocco. In addition to being bazaarists in Taznakht, they have a long tradition of working as middlemen to the Marrakech dealers.

Bazaarists have an agreement with some independent tourist guides who bring them buyers. These guides speak several Western languages and have learned some selling techniques from other dealers, or from reading the literature on Moroccan carpets⁵⁶. They may come from as far as Ouarzazate, but can also be local men, who

55 According to Moroccan law, associations are non-profit organizations, providing services to the community. Cooperatives are enterprises with taxes, employees and profits. In Taznakht, groups of businessmen created two cooperatives which allowed them to obtain free land from the state to build their premises right in the centre of town. They present themselves as fair trade and profit sharing cooperatives but are in reality private enterprises exploiting weavers' work like any other bazaarist.

56 The literature on Moroccan carpet is the product of the dialectical relationship between the Moroccan and Western dealer.

take visitors to their own family or neighbours in Old Taznakht to buy from them, in exchange for a percentage of the sale.

In contrast mountain dealers are wealthy peasants who rely on agricultural resources in addition to selling carpets. Their initial wealth came from their ownership of large flocks of sheep and goats, fertile land and the production of saffron⁵⁷. The wealthy ones also own grocery shops, trucks and minibuses that they use as a taxi. Grocers who are established in villages rather than those found in the local *suq* are wealthier and own electrical mill(s) and truck(s)⁵⁸. They are amongst those who own a large house made of concrete rather than mud, with modern amenities (television, toilets and a kitchen with tap water). Some grocers trade in carpets as a side activity, having an advantageous position as a creditor of weavers and a regular visitor to Marrakech where they get their supplies in grocery products. In diversifying their sources of income, they take less risk than entrepreneurs who only buy and sell carpets.

Successful dealers rely on two sources for the supply of weaving products: they employ family labour from which they commission carpets or they visit various *suq* where they bargain for low prices. Less successful dealers (or younger men in their thirties who are trying to become dealers) usually rely only on their household labour and the occasional purchase of cheap carpets from the local *suq* or Taznakht. More successful dealers employ other families in various villages with whom they have contract arrangements. Some dealers stock only luxury contemporary carpets whereas others may be bulk dealers who also stock lower quality weavings from regions outside the mountains where weaving is a more recent introduction and weavers are less skilled. They make a profit from selling many cheap items rather than a few expensive ones.

Living in the mountainous and rural productive areas, Berber middlemen have the social capital to find good producers. In their own and neighbouring villages they have access to families' houses where they can see carpets to purchase and can assess the skills of the weavers. They also have the economic means to collect, transport and age carpets without needing to be paid immediately. Through their kin or client ties, local Berber dealers have made themselves indispensable to large merchants who are

⁵⁷ Saffron is a very expensive 'spice' which is sold in grams (in 2004, one gram would cost between 9 and 13 DH, roughly £1).

⁵⁸ They supply goods to the village on a daily basis all year round rather than once a week at the *suq*.

not mobile. Dealers rarely deal directly with weavers, but rather with their male kin who they establish personal relations with. Often the head of the family will present the finished carpet to the dealer in his home or in Taznakht, usually behind closed doors. He will also bring back the next order for the weavers in the form of a picture or a verbal description, along with more difficult to find material (finer wool to make the *akhnif* motifs). They may have arrangements in which the dealer only pays half of the price on delivery and the other half in a fortnight, a month or more later. In return, the dealer will do them some favours such as providing them with difficult to obtain commodities or credit. This can include the purchase in Marrakech of a solar panel or a satellite dish, which require not only good negotiating skills in terms of price, but also the ability to avoid a scam (a defective item) and the provision of a secure way of transporting it. Since peasants do not have bank accounts, the dealers may also provide the payment and transport of large bulk purchases (couscous and sugar). They may also provide drugs from the pharmacy in Taznakht that the villagers can obtain without having to go there in person or pay upfront. In many ways, the patron-dealer becomes an important ally for male members of producing families who feel they are not as equipped to face the urban Arab world. Their greater mastery of the Arabic language and their ability to make connections with Arabic speaking people in large cities gives them power and status in the mountains. These ties can also be secured by a marriage between women of the weaver family and young men from the dealer's family.

It is part of the men's skills to keep a good relationship with the dealer, who usually selects the producing family on grounds of the weavers' ability and their number, but also their loyalty and keenness to keep on good terms with him. One Ayt Waghrda dealer made his wealth using the reputation and the family connections of his father to build up a network of contract suppliers who trusted him enough to accept delays in payments. He now owns a shop in Taznakht where he sells wool and dyes in addition to buying carpets in the mountains. He has also benefited from the help of an associate in Marrakech who has capital for the supply of wool and contacts abroad, for the marketing of carpets.

Ayt Waghrda dealers from a sub-tribe of the Ayt Wawzgit confederation are the most successful dealers from the mountains, some having managed to open bazaars in

towns other than Marrakech. They practice an ethnic closure within the Sirwa area and the middlemen group, and have created a quality name for their products. They are said to help each other and to have created a culture of closure that excludes other dealers from other ethnic sub-groups from buying good Ayt Waghrda weavings. To keep the exclusivity of Ayt Waghrda production, they pay producers well and have made selling on the *suq* taboo (*'ib*). They are also said to have created a design closure, whereby their carpets are exchanged safely in houses or behind closed doors in shops: out of sight of potential competitors. According to this myth of secrecy (see also Chapter 10), their designs “do not go” or “get out”. They have created a trade name for the products they sell so that now ‘Ayt Waghrda’ is associated with quality luxury carpets, and this is even when some of their stock is acquired from non Ayt Waghrda producers, e.g. the Ayt Semgan. This ethnic solidarity is not the only reason for producers’ loyalty to Ayt Waghrda dealers. Weavers are also being pragmatic in that they are aware of the importance of this ethnic ‘branding’ on the market, which they consider to be for their own benefit. If a family does not get the price they want from one Ayt Waghrda dealer, they wait until another makes a better offer.

Carpet hierarchy: closure of producers

Carpets commissioned by dealers are usually part of a luxury niche in terms of quality (material, design and techniques) and size (2x3m or 3x4m or even larger) whereas carpets produced independently are supposedly of a lesser quality and only to be found on the *suq*. In fact, very good quality weavings can appear on the *suq*, as those weavers who are not working for a specific dealers or refuse to sell to their village dealer, may sell them on the *suq*. *Suq* carpets tend also to be of better quality than those bought by Ayt Waghrda bulk traders. In Agouins, I witnessed one of these, who parked in his car on the village square waited for the weavers to come and present him with their work. From his window without leaving his car, he would select them. For a simple 3x4 metre, red or yellow flatweave carpet with a few motifs he was offering 700 *Dirham* (DH)⁵⁹, which meant a profit of around 100DH for the weavers.

⁵⁹ 10 *Dirhams* corresponded to 1 Euro in 2003-2005. In the mountains a fair price for a more complicated design with intricate motifs covering the background, is considered to be 1250 DH (and this is roughly the double the cost of the material).

Contractual production is based on a long-term client relationship with families who tend to have a large number of skilled weavers. Contractual arrangements are most advantageous for families who prefer not to go to the *suq*. This saves them the trouble of having to take their products to the *suq* and the uncertainty of payment. Families produce carpets according to some loose description (overall colour, type of composition and size) set by the dealer. On receiving the carpet, the commissioner will decide which type of carpet he will need next and may pay only half the price, the other half being paid at the next delivery or if the producer comes to need the money. The contract is profitable for both parties. The family receives a secure income every month or so which is seen as safer than risking gaining a better price by selling occasionally to a better buyer. For the middleman the fact that he pays in two parts allows him to save credit whilst ensuring a regular flow of good quality carpets. The prospect of losing this advantageous position also ensures the design will not be given to any competitor. In contrast, weavers who are reduced to selling on the *suq* are in a weaker position. The reputation of the contractual niche market production lowers the value of their weavings. The hierarchy between production types thus has the effect of creating a hierarchy between producers. Indeed those weavers who are kin of dealers can avoid the *suq* and usually get commissions from them.

In the same way that urban-based merchants create a closure towards Berber middlemen, the latter use closure tactics to obtain the lowest possible prices from the producers who are thus unlikely to become competitors. Although they compete to buy from producers, they are allied in pushing producers to compete with each other in the arena of the *suq*. To that effect, bazaarists offer weavers who try to sell directly to them in their shops prices inferior to what they could get in the *suq*. They agree on a standard price and have tactics to break the weavers' resolution to obtain a good price. Weavers who refuse a price one week, will find that the next week the price has lowered even more. Weavers also complain that some *suq* dealers accept the price they ask for but pay only part of it, promising to pay the other part next time and then forget about it. Dealers are used to visiting houses in the hope of buying older carpets at smaller prices⁶⁰.

60 Heads of households who do not want to sell a carpet will therefore keep the dealers away from it. It is easier to hide an object that could interest them than to offend them by refusing to sell it. The families

At Taznakht there is a tacit agreement between dealers that a ceiling (*A itara*) should not be passed during transactions in the *suq*. Only the presence of an outsider who enters the competition and does not know the rules can unsettle this smooth arrangement. In such cases the local dealers will buy the best carpets before the foreigner can, thus placing themselves in the position of selling to him. The ceiling system allows the dealers to assess carpets as simple crafts (in terms of quantity of wool and size) rather than as art, the criteria of value at the upper end of the supply chain (in terms of age, technical mastery, creativity). This system serves to erode differences between producers. This is done despite the fact that both dealers and producers know that it is the technical and aesthetical knowledge frozen in the material object that distinguishes one carpet (and its maker) from another.

The breaking of competition between dealers⁶¹ also exists at the level of the villages, where dealers divide producers amongst themselves and do not trespass on each other's territory. If a dealer is interested in a weaving in a given household, he will make an unfair offer to producers with the assurance that none of the other village dealers will interfere or offer a better price. Sooner or later the producers will need the money and accept the initial price.

Gender closure

In addition to buying the labour of weavers in the region, dealers also rely on unpaid (female) household labour. Apart from their own wives, sisters-in-law, sisters, daughters and nieces, and sometimes mothers who live in the household, dealers usually employ the labour of more distant kin such as an aunt or cousins living in other households in the same village or in the region. These relations may be less amicable than clientship ties, as they may resent not being paid better than any other providers. Large Arab merchants at the top of the supply chain rely on the gender hierarchies and local conservatism of their middlemen societies. Similarly, Berik (1995: 126) in the Turkish context, has noted that in order to expand production carpet traders will look for villages characterised by low income and high hierarchical age and gender relations.

that do not consider selling an older carpet are rare as selling it at the same price as a new one is seen a good deal.

61 In the Ayt Ubial villages, there are on average around five established or emerging carpet dealers.

As carpet production is a collective domestic work that is paid to the head of the household by piecework, both dealer and head of household benefit from the fact that the weavers are not paid individually, which would cost the dealer more and would mean that the male kin would lose his hold on the economic contribution of women. Away from the female gaze, transactions between dealers and male kin depend on a tacit male solidarity that considers women's work inferior to that of men. Dealers know perfectly well that if men were the weavers themselves they might not be as malleable as they are with the product of the work of subordinate members of their family. As men as a group profit from women's subordination, male solidarity takes over class or ethnic solidarity. Merchants thus profit from women's subordination, which is linked to the poverty of their family.

Thus large merchants act on women weavers indirectly. At the top of the distribution chain, the large and wealthy dealers of Marrakech and other large tourist towns monopolize access to the ultimate buyer and determine the value and price of carpets. They impose it along the whole chain, squeezing the smaller dealers who in turn impose low prices on the male kin of the weavers. They also create a hierarchy between weavers with the creation of the niche market of contractual production.

Middlemen create an exclusive relationship with particular mountain weavers via their male kin. These weavers tend to be uneducated, not able and willing to move outside the region, and poor but are particularly skilled. They use their male kin as gatekeepers to the women. Indeed the only woman dealer that I have met in the region, M'Barka, originates from an area outside the mountains, where the patriarchal norm is less strong. She has the status of a middleman working for other Taznakht middlemen who commission from her because she has access to cheaper labour than them. These dealers are not interested in helping or cooperating financially with her. In Taznakht, some weavers who are kin of the bazaarists may also benefit from their help to obtain commissions, but they do not challenge their position by trying to enter the market sphere. On the whole rural, poor women and their families are excluded from the marketing sphere (tourist cities and foreign countries), have no access to the decision makers in the craft sector and do not have the financial capital to buy large amount of raw material. They thus lack financial capital, cultural capital (Arabic and Western

language and ways of thinking) and social capital (connections) that wealthier, Arabic speaking, male dealers have. They also lack information on the value of the carpets at the upper end of the chain.

Chapter 4 Sirwa: the place, people and the history of carpet production

This chapter presents the place of my fieldwork, its people and a short history of carpet production in the region. An important evolution in the carpet production during the past decade has been the appearance of new outlets. I also describe contemporary production, particularly the *akhnif* carpet and its variant, a compelling example of the Sirwa weavers' creativity. Inspired by a male cloak produced in the region for local consumption but also marketed outside it, the *akhnif* has an important place in the history of the Sirwa. I was able to follow the production process of an *akhnif* in an Ayt Waghrda village which I commissioned.

Terms marked by a star (*) are defined in the glossary.

Place and people

The Sirwa is a mountain, and a region. The area can be roughly divided into: (1) mountain regions which are geographically very isolated and (2) the areas that are closer to the main roads, joining Taroudant and Ouarzazate (see maps at the end of the introduction). These urban areas include Taznakht, the capital of the area, and the villages that are close to it and accessible by road or on a short journey by track. The area is delineated roughly by Taliouine to the West and Ouarzazate on the South. Taznakht is the administrative centre of the Sirwa. Both Taliouine and Ouarzazate are roughly 90 km from Taznakht, itself, situated 230 km from Marrakech, and 200km from Taroudant.

The mountainous areas

This thesis focuses on the population in the region of the Sirwa mountain (or Jbel Sirwa) and their contemporary production, possibly the finest in Morocco. The population of this region is mainly Berber. Berber social organization is based on what structural-functionalist anthropologists call the segmentary lineage model (Gellner 1969) according to which societies are divided into subgroups, which in turn further divide. Berber social organization is essentially a product of a transhumant society

based on force and power. Its elementary social unit of analysis is the household, units which belong to lineages or *ighsan*. Lineages belong to clans, and a number of clans make the *taqbilt* or tribe, which spreads over several villages. Sirwa tribes form a confederation, known as the Ayt Wawzgit or Uzgita confederation. According to one local legend the Ayt Wawzgit were originally a vast tribe under the authority of one leader and they then divided into small fighting groups. Another version is that the Ayt Wawzgit is the generic name of an ensemble of small tribes of various origins, some not related to each other. For example, the tribes such as the Ayt Tigdi Dushshen, Ayt Ubial, Ayt Sliman or Ayt Tamassin which were factions of the Ayt `Amr were included in the confederation. Within each clan, there are three ethnic groups: the Berbers, the *Haratin** (ethnic group putatively originating from the South) and the *Shurfa** or *Murabitin* (putative descendants of the prophet and holy saints).

The Sirwa (3304m) is situated at the junction of the High Atlas and the Anti Atlas. It is an empty volcanic crater, covered all year by snow. As it supplies the mountain dwellers with their water, it was and still is to some extent seen as a sacred mountain. The regular sacrifices (ma`rûf) of chicken or kid goats are today performed by each village on their saint shrines and follow the agricultural calendar. This is in order to bring fecundity to the village and can be traced back to the past when bull sacrifices were made to the Sirwa. The agricultural cycle is based on voluntary individual cooperation in the pooling of labour (*tawiza* or cooperation). A system for communal activities organises for instance the repair of terraces and *segua* at the beginning of each planting season or the cleaning of the reservoir of irrigation water, after a flood.

The area is poor in terms of agriculture due to its very arid continental climate characterised by rigorous winters (snow), very hot summers and weak and irregular rains. In the summer the area is subject to heavy flooding which can cause great damage to crops and dwellings. In the mountain, to keep the soil from eroding, they use small walls and terraces. They also grow cereals on 'bours' (dry non irrigated soils) which receive oceanic influences. In the plains they practice the rotation of crops and fallow land. Local production is limited to barley, wheat, corn, figs and almonds. Some mountain villages still visit the summer pasture with their cattle in the *tadrart**, a

greener landscape and pasture above 2000 meters where some families have rudimentary dwellings. For a few weeks or months, in the burning sun, women harvest the corn, vegetables (pumpkins, turnips) and hay (weeds and grass) that they will consume straight away or dry for winter consumption (for both livestock and the family).

Their wealth has traditionally consisted of numerous sheep and goat flocks, the production of weavings (*bournous**, *khidous** and *khenif** and blankets) and more recently the production of saffron⁶². Their sheep were famous for the quality of their black wool from which the *khidous* and *khenif* were made. During the colonial period and before independence the area was plundered by the men of the Glaoui*, a Berber leader, who built an empire through subduing local tribes. Archives show that amongst other things, tax was levied on carpets and weavings in the region (Denat, c. 1946). This is confirmed by old people who remember tax being levied in regular supply of weavings. One woman commented that she would rather sleep directly on the floor than produce any weaving as it would be taken away from her family.

In colonial times, the main objects made to furnish a house were weavings, mainly *hmal** and blankets, as well as a small table and kitchen utensils. Other items of material culture were the tools of wool and agricultural work. In the 1950's the number of looms listed was 300 for the Ayt Wawzgit, which was far fewer than in the South Glaoua (400). They were of two types, corresponding to two areas (Amard 1997: 36-38): (1) the Northern Ayt Wawzgit (Ayt Tidili) and the Eastern Ayt Wawzgit region) and (2) (Ayt Taouya or Ayt Ouaya). The first loom type was narrower than the second, had straight uprights on which the upper beam was fixed with ropes, and required the use of small iron pegs. The second type of loom was constituted of one Y shaped upright supporting the upper beam. Because of the width of the loom, the weavers had a system ensuring that the tension was not weakened in the middle: they 'broke' the upper part into two smaller twin beams, which were attached to the upper beam with ropes. Instead of pegs they used simple cords.

62 In 1918 the production of saffron was already important and a good source of income in the Ayt Atman and Ayt Ubial areas. At the time, the price per kilo was 110 Francs (Maillet 1918 : 27). The production of saffron spread to other regions in the 1970s and increased in those areas mentioned above. Saffron (*Crocus sativus*) is a crocus plant with purple flowers and a bright red stamen. These are carefully removed from the flower, and once dried constitute the saffron spice itself.

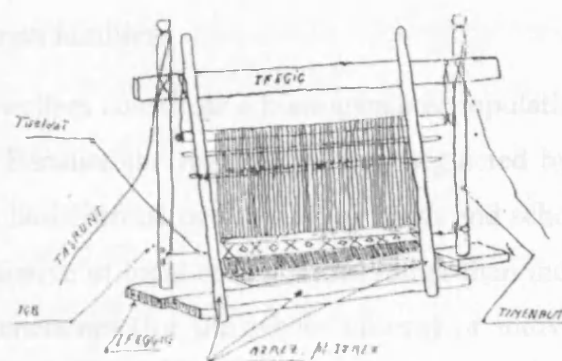


Figure 4 North Ayt Wawzgit loom (source Barthélémy 1990, drawings by Capitain Dorinet 1934).

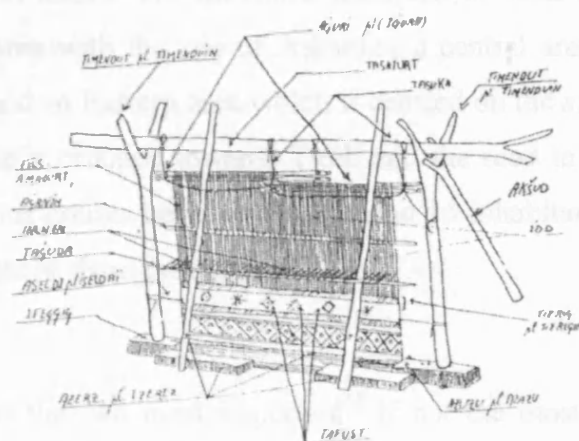


Figure 5 South Ayt Wawzgit loom (Barthélemy 1990 drawings by Capitain Dorinet 1934).

I have seen the first type of loom in Taliouine where it tends to be used mainly for flatweave products and the second type in the mountain, either in families producing only occasionally or who are too poor to acquire the more common iron loom found almost everywhere today. In addition to providing the means of making very even weavings (unlike the poplar wood which bears the tension of the warp with difficulty), the iron loom allows wider products to be made. In the past, the largest weaving produced measured 175cm, but most carpets were around 150 cm (3 cubits). In addition dwellings were never larger than 350 cm (due to the size of tree trunks used in carpentry), corresponding to two carpets' width. Today the width can reach 3 metres or

more. In the Sirwa mountains today, most households are involved in carpet production for the market. It is rare to find a family where the women do not weave, the exception being very wealthy women families.

The mountain dwellers constitute a homogeneous population, partly due to their geographical isolation. Because the region has been neglected by the government, its mountainous areas lack basic infrastructure such as roads and schools. The introduction of electricity on the initiative of local communities rather than the state, only started in the mid-1990's with generators (for the whole village) or individually through solar panels. In some villages, primary schools were only built in the mid-1990s. The population is organized into villages that are often less than 50 households, although some villages such as Imeghlay can be over 100. They are usually around 3 to 5 km apart and connected by dirt tracks. The mountain itself can be seen to be divided into three areas: the western area with the *suq* of Askaoun, a central area with the *suq* of Taliouine and Taznakht, and an Eastern area which is centred on the *suq* of Anezal. The North of the Ayt Wawzgit is oriented towards Tidili and the road to Marrakech. Each households in the mountains houses between 5 (rare) and 15 inhabitants (very common in families where two brothers share the same roof).

Taznakht

Taznakht is one of the two most important⁶³ if not the most important carpet market place in Morocco. In the carpet trade, it is known by carpet dealers all over Morocco. Most Berber *tashelhit** speaking people would have heard the song by the famous *rays* (poet-singer) Utaleb that says : “we go to Taznakht to see the carpets” (*Taznakht mat gi tun, righ anzer Tizerbay nas*). Regionally in the High Atlas, good places of supply for Ayt Wawzgit carpets were the Sidi Ali ou M'Hamed *mousse*m (Khatibi and Amahan 1996) and the Ibn Ya`qub festival⁶⁴, but these weavings were also known as far as Midelt in the Middle Atlas in the 1950s⁶⁵.

Taznakht was an important weekly market before the 1880s with its central location at the junction of caravan routes between the regions of the Souss (West), Draa (East) and Talouet (the Glaoua capital, south of Marrakech). The main industry in the

63 The other one is Khemisset for Middle Atlas carpets.

64 See song appendix 2.

65 Assou Yahya, the son of a notable from Midelt, personal communication 2002.

19th century in Taznakht was the woollen cloak-cape *akhnif* or *khenif*. Its inhabitants also lived from the trade of other products sold in their market such as fleeces, nuts and dates, which they would exchange in Marrakech. The neighbouring tribes of Taznakht used to come there to buy products imported from Europe (tea, candles, cotton goods, sugar, matches) and brought from the North, but also goods imported from the South (the cereals and wool of the Znaga, the oil from the Souss, the dates from the Draa). Unfortunately, in comparison to the mountain, the region of Taznakht was very arid and depended on the cereal production of the Znaga (a neighbouring tribe) to feed itself. With the drought, and the consequent migration of the local population towards greener areas⁶⁶, the *suq* of Taznakht started declining in the late nineteenth century. The size of the population reduced from 300 families (roughly half Muslim and half Jewish) in the early 1880s to 80 Muslim and 55 Jewish families in 1883.

The colonial occupation of the region and the completion of the routes linking Marrakech to Ouarzazate and later Ouarzazate to Agadir, played a major role in Taznakht becoming the central *suq* in the region during the 1930s. However, the importance of Taznakht has declined more recently with the economic crisis (1991) and its progressive abandonment by middlemen in favour of a direct visit to Marrakech.

In contrast with the mountains, which have a more homogeneous and isolated population, Taznakht, capital of the local district, is situated on a main road, between the Western littoral (Agadir) and Ouarzazate. Many historical and economical links attach the population of Taznakht to Marrakech, where carpet traders still travel on a weekly basis. Although Ouarzazate and Zagora tend to pull most of the tourist population, Taznakht is still a place where they stop. The younger generation now go to Agadir to study at University or to work. Its population is more educated and many more speak Arabic⁶⁷ than in the mountain, and women over 30 are generally educated even if only to primary school level. Many families have kin working and living on the littoral or in other important cities in Morocco. In addition, an important number of inhabitants of Taznakht and its surrounding villages receive remittances from kin living

66 The population traditionally migrated to the Haouz or Souss for temporary agricultural work.

67 In Morocco the official language and language of education is Arabic. Berber has only been introduced recently in the curriculum but this is more symbolic than effective.

in France, Belgium, Holland, Germany, Italy and Saudi Arabia or their own retirement pension from Europe.

Taznakht is divided in two: the older part of Taznakht or Kasbah situated 3 km on the road towards Fom Zguid which is the original Taznakht, and the new Taznakht which was built on the road between Agadir and Ouarzazate in the colonial period. Until colonial times, the old *suq* used to take place near the kasbah, a citadel now completely in ruin, which gives its name to the older part of the town. The newer part is the administrative and economic centre, with tourist facilities (carpet shops, restaurants cafes and hotels), trade shops (wood workers, hairdressers, tile, wool, bakers, butchers) and medical facilities, banks, post office and schools.

Originally the population of Taznakht was part of the Ayt 'Amr tribe, with the Ayt Zanifi family at their head⁶⁸. The indigenous population stayed in the old part of Taznakht, from where they commute to the new town, either because they cannot afford it or because this is where they have all their wealth (land, water, buildings). Many of the Berber notable families (usually of *Amghar* descent) live in the old part, or have emigrated to larger cities. Well off Berber families are in decline in the area as they have moved to bigger cities (eg Ouarzazate, Agadir, Casablanca etc).

The rest of the population are of *Hartani* origin, most of whom are poor. In the 19th century, this ethnic group was inferior in number to the Jewish population (de Foucauld, 1998/1888: 110) whereas today they represent the majority. Many are former slaves and they may still have amicable relations with their old masters. They have taken over the abandoned houses of Jews⁶⁹ who left Taznakht in the 1960s. Poorer *Hartani* people have also emigrated from their villages South of Taznakht, and rent their accommodation from the locals. They often rely on weaving and petty services (working in the gardens of the wealthy) to survive. The large majority of women weave as a supplement to their husband's income or as the main source of family income. In Taznakht, the ex-slaves and poor *Hartani* were among those who emigrated to Northern France to work in the mines between the 1950's and 1970's, which eventually allowed

68 Hence among Taznakht's names: Ayt *Uzanif*, *Dar Ez-zanif*, but also *Tazenag*, *khemis* Ayt 'Amr (*Khemis*, corresponding to Thursday, the day of the *suq*).

69 Up to the 1960s there was an important population of Jews, some of which were traders traveling outwards to other towns in Morocco, or peddlers visiting small isolated villages in the region, or employed in the work of leather, silver, or blacksmithing. Women were weavers.

them to gain social promotion. Mr Felix Mora, the French man who came to recruit the future miners is still remembered among the population of Taznakht (see also Cegarra,1999).

In addition to this indigenous population, there are Arabic speaking men and women employed in Taznakht (doctors, teachers, bank employees, police officers, and some administrative personal). Some of the miners employed in the cobalt and asbestos mines of Bou Azzer⁷⁰ in the South of Taznakht are based in Taznakht centre (rather than Taznakht Kazbah).

Taznakht has been affected by drought and the degradation of gardens and fields is very striking there. As a result, Taznakht is less self-sufficient in terms of subsistence production than some villages in the mountains or valleys. Land has been privatised and new charges (rent, electricity, water) have appeared. In the context of increasing commodification and economic stratification, the work of weavers has intensified in order to fulfil new demands for a cash income. With their expenditure exceeding their annual incomes, many families have become engaged in a credit relationship with shop owners, carpet production becoming a means of reimbursing these debts.

History of carpet production in the Sirwa

From colonial times to the 1990s

The central position of Marrakech as the main marketplace for carpets in Morocco started during colonial times and is connected with the tight relationship Marrakech dealers had with the Sirwa region, a region outside colonial control until the mid-1930s. Then, the colonial administration was completely dependent on them for obtaining High Atlas*, Glaoua* and Ayt Wawzgit* carpets. Working hand in hand with the French administration, some traders in Marrakech also opened workshops where wool was naturally dyed, handspun, and woven. Although independent workshops carried on producing carpets in Marrakech after independence, natural dyeing stopped well before 1956. Carpet traders already constituted a powerful lobbying force in the

70 This mine has been exploited since the 1930s, and also has chrome and nickel. In the mountains, there are also mines of manganese.

1930s⁷¹. They have since actively protected their position, relying on their contacts in the government as well as on a tight network of middlemen from the productive regions. Independent workshops owned by large dealers or bazaarists in Marrakech were closed down as they found it more lucrative to subcontract the work to Sirwa middlemen. Some female expert-weavers in the suburbs of Marrakech, however, still employ apprentices and run their own workshops.

The colonial administration installed a carpet cooperative workshop in Taznakht around 1938. A similar initiative organised by a military officer in Zagora (Barthélémy 1990) also promoted carpets and other craft production. Colonial publications describe in the same paternalistic vein 'the degeneration' of production, in particular due to the bad quality of the materials and the necessity and difficulty of making the population aware of this and to train them. Their role was thus to show the Berbers 'that the value of their carpet was being lost in the same way that they were losing the concern for their traditions and habits, and that the commercial methods they were using for pure commercial needs were going to ruin them' (Amard, 1997: 35). They had to show them more efficient ways of producing good quality weavings corresponding to the standard expected by the Western market. This meant introducing new types of tools and looms, training them in matter of dyeing methods and a 'renovation of colours' (Amard, 1997: 35-6).

Until independence, the production of pile carpets followed the lines promoted by the colonial administration (see Chapter 2): the wool was naturally dyed and the models of carpet followed the prototypes published in the *Corpus des tapis* (Ricard, 1927, 1934). The manager of the cooperative in Taznakht, a French employee of the Department of Craft would give wool and material to weavers who would work from home and bring the finished carpets in exchange for payment. He would deal with the marketing of the carpets, sending some abroad or to the cities of the littoral. When the government cooperative disappeared, it benefited the emergence of local entrepreneurs who set up their own bazaar shops or cooperatives. The two cooperatives that opened in the 1980s are in fact private enterprises owned by several male traders who may commission carpets from some weavers, but in general stock up at the *sug*. There are

71 The archives show them lobbying the colonial administration as they compete with general bazaarists for space in the medina of Marrakech.

around 20 bazaar shops in Taznakht, some of which are owned by the same dealers. They occupy one side of the main road facing the cafes, restaurant and hotels on the other side. Some of these shops were situated near the *suq* a hindrance from their point of view since tourists could visit the *suq* instead of visiting them. Since 2005 however, the weekly market has been moved outside the town.

Until cotton clothes were introduced with the colonial occupation, wool was one of the only ways of covering the body in a region where winters are very cold. Thus it was a precious substance, belonging to those with large flocks of sheep. Among the weavings made in the area, I have already mentioned the male cloaks (grey, white, brown *bournous* or *khidous* and black *khenif*) which were made for the market. These prestigious clothes, in particular the *khenif*, were sought after for their efficacious protection against the elements. Women still weave the *djellaba* fabric, saddle bags and the *hmal*. Men used to carry their belongings (food, knife, sewing kit etc.) when travelling in a sort of small bag: the *ghumd*. Other items woven by them were boots with leather soles (*Ijekjad**) and saddle bags. The latter was an item of prestige which showed the skills of his wife (or daughter(s)) to all the men in the *suq*.

Prestigious female clothes included belts (*hzam*), the bridal *tahaykt** and other elements of the dowry woven by girls for their own weddings and future houses. Today, however, these are produced rarely and unlike in other regions (Khenifra, Middle Atlas) such wedding clothes are not made for the market.

A common and daily floor furnishing item was the goat *hmal*, still in use today in rooms other than the ones where guests are received, or as a layer under the carpet itself. Today, ordinary carpets, usually those on which the girls learnt to weave or those that are worn out, are used on a daily basis. More prestigious carpets, which will eventually be sold, are kept in the guest room. Potentially, however, all weavings are for sale.

Thus weavings were fulfilling a multiplicity of uses and were essential to the life of the community. Today, most of these weavings have disappeared. Before the techniques of knotting spread in the mountains or valley villages, known flatweave techniques were *tirira** *iklan n-ukhnif** and *shadwi**, all still in use.

As prestigious ‘urban’ commodities, pile carpets were associated with wealth and mobility: wealthy people who could travel to the large cities and acquire these rugs, played a role in bringing the knotting technique from there. The knotted carpets made in the cooperatives were firstly acquired by the local notables (*pasha*, *khalifa* and *amghar*) to decorate their houses and palaces⁷²: Kasbah of Telouet, Taourirt, Tifoultout, Skoura, N’Goura, Taznakht, Tamdakht, the Ksur and Zawiyat of Tamgrut (Barthélémy 1990) Ighri, Agouins) and from these places production spread. Unlike today where carpets are exchanged between dwellings to be copied, poorer weavers would not have had the means of acquiring so much wool and the expensive dyes.

Whereas the production of pile carpet started in Taznakht in 1938, and probably spread around it quite fast (in Tafunant, Ayt Douchchen), pile carpets were introduced only in the 1960s⁷³ in areas 40 km from Taznakht and even later in the mountain, except for the areas around Tidili which were closer to Marrakech and the *Glaoui*’s palace. In the 1950’s, the Ayt Douchchen were reputed for their white pile with some grey, the Ayt ‘Amr for pile carpets with a frame and a few motifs representing animals (camel, sheep).

Until the 1980s the commercialisation of carpets in the Sirwa area was on a very small scale, and in some households only seasonal. Mountainous regions produced items such as *akhnif* cloaks and pile carpets for the tourist market in the 1970s, but it only was in the 1980s that most of the villages started an intensive production of carpets with a steady increase until the decline following the first Gulf War in 1991 which meant a subsequent fall in tourist visitors. In the mountains, and earlier in Taznakht, producers stopped using handspun local weft and warp. This change came as a result of the 1980s drought when the sheep and goat flocks were decimated. Up to then, at least in the mountain, producing families were dismissive about machine spun wool which was seen as a proof of the women’s laziness in the families who adopted it. In a society

72 Following the successful launch of cooperatives in Taznakht and Zagora, European consumers including artists and writers visited them, despite World War II.

73 Knotted carpet production started at the time of King Hasan II when he first passed in Taznakht in the early 1960s. In the village of Ifanwan, 12 km from Taznakht by track, I was told that people who were brought to Taznakht or came to acclaim the king, were so impressed by the carpets displayed in his honour, that they started making them. These were probably mainly men, but this is not uncommon: my own grandfather (in the area of Beni Mellal in the Middle Atlas) had in mind a very clear idea of the carpet he wanted his wife to make.

which produced objects to last, only natural handspun wool (*taddut*) was valued, as it was seen as sacred; it is still said to improve with time, taking a shine, or to use Ricard's expression in various colonial publications on Moroccan carpets (1924, 1952), 'good wool is like good wine, it matures with time'. Lesser quality machine spun yarn (*rumia*) which contains artificial material is less robust, has a lesser life expectancy and becomes fluffy, dull and lustreless.

With the intensification of carpet production, iron looms reached the domestic sphere. They were introduced in governmental cooperatives during colonial times and after, along with new items (a sort of width stretcher made of wood) and new measurements (metre instead of cubit). The introduction of iron looms in households dates roughly from the late 1980s in Taznakht and the 1990s in the mountains. The acquisition of an iron loom, is a substantial investment usually made by contract producing families who produce an average of a carpet per month. It ensures a quality to the weaving in terms of evenness of width and flatness of the overall carpet which fits with Western standards. In Taznakht, and in a few families in the mountains some of the iron looms also have another feature: a bar at the back, which is supposed to ensure the evenness of the width. New technologies are usually introduced first in Taznakht and then in the mountain in the households who produce intensively.

It is also in the mid-1980s that Marrakshi dealers started to subcontract the cleaning and ageing of carpets in the Sirwa Mountain. Initially, all producing families were providing the service, which was performed by the male members of the families. Now it has become limited to some villages whose infrastructure has allowed for this specialisation on a large scale: the dealers of these villages developed spacious concrete areas around the main village spring (or fountain) for handling the carpets.

Towards the beginning of the 1990's, regions which were not producing carpets intensively or who only knew basic weaving techniques started entering in competition with the established weavers, thus affecting the quality of production and driving the prices down. To distinguish themselves from non-mountainous areas, mountain dealers stopped taking their carpets to the Taznakht's *suq*, carrying them directly to their buyers in Marrakech. After the 1991 crisis and the oversaturation of the market with ordinary or lesser quality carpets, the price of carpets lowered slowly and today it reaches for

most weavers half of what they could get prior to 1991. At best it corresponds to double the price of raw materials invested, at worse, it pays for the wool. The gap between incomes often depends on whether the weavers are independent and have to sell on the *suq*, or have a secure regular income from a commissioner.

There is still a form of patronage production for the Moroccan market, but it is small in comparison to the Western and tourist sector (particularly the hotel industry) and limited to some wealthy families in Taznakht. Carpets for private commission are simplified versions of the *Rbati* carpet: it has larger and fewer motifs situated mainly on the frame, its corners and the centre. There is also a degree of regional specialisation: whereas *akhnif* carpets are made in the Ayt Waghrda and Ayt Ubial in the mountain and the area around Taznakht, the eastern regions of Ayt Semgane and Ayt Khazema (*Ikhuzamen*), make respectively more Glaoui or pile carpets.

New types of outlets in the region

In the 1990s new types of traders started competing with the bazaarists who until then had been the exclusive traders in the region. These new comers are both local Berber men and Westerners. Their arrival was concomitant with the appearance of a new type of carpet, the *akhnif* carpet, which was more economical to produce in terms of labour and material and became a best seller all over Morocco. I will deal with the *akhnif* carpet in the next section. This period corresponds also to the time when weavers stopped producing pile carpets made with a woollen warp and a thin weft, often obtained through untwining industrially spun wool into two strands. Pile became heavier, made with cotton warp and two layers of thicker weft from industrial wool.

I do not mention here the project initiated by Fatima Mernissi in Taznakht as I never heard of it when I was on the field. It is mentioned in a 3 page article published in Sadiqi (2006) and called 'Dream carpet project'. It was launched after Mernissi convinced R.Chraïbi, a Rabat based ex-banker and art collector, to help Taznakht weavers by paying them in advance and letting them freely invent their carpet designs. It is supposed to help the youth of more than 100 villages around Taznakht⁷⁴.

74 In contrast with my own experience in the mountain, Mernissi finds a heritage awareness among the weavers she met in Taznakht, but this could be attributed to the fact that her entrance in the region is mediated by a network of Berber intellectuals who are active defenders of their culture. Despite the fact that these actors are slowly shaping local identities, Mernissi's voluntarist (and optimistic) attitude

Migration et Développement (M&D)⁷⁵ association in Taliouine

This project was initiated in Taliouine around 1995 by the Migration et Développement (M&D) association, an NGO created by Moroccan migrants in France trying to help their village of origin. First involved in the supply of water and electricity to villages, they turned towards poor rural women and children, offering literacy teaching for unschooled girls and boys, education in health and income generating activities. This project concerned rural female micro-enterprises. Its aim was to give a type of micro-credit in the form of machine spun wool, tools and training to poor women to produce carpets the association would sell, the weavers not feeling able to sell themselves. Their photograph was taken and put on the Internet⁷⁶ with a description of their situation (eg. widow, abandoned or with an unemployed or disable husband, age, number of children etc.). The payment of the weaver was to be 13 DH per day which was estimated as being above the poverty threshold. The hourly wage received by some women was 3.7 DH per hour between 1996 and 1998. Motivation and production declined when the weavers realised how difficult it was to reimburse the loan given by the association, which aimed eventually at leaving them with the responsibility of commercialisation (Benbouih 2001: 78). The project was also a failure in that it increased the workload of women, brought a limited income and did not have any effect on gender relations; even successful women were exploited by middlemen as they had no access to the commercialisation networks (Benbouih, 2001: 4-5). It was calculated that to support two other persons from her work, a woman would have to work nine hours per day at weaving. The project, at least in its initial form, was abandoned.

towards civil society (1998, 2004) makes her account biased. As in previous publications (1998) Mernissi is concerned about protecting the local (aesthetic) heritage from disappearing from the memories of younger generations as older carpets are being sold, but she has an ethnocentric view of art. She for example mentions a weaver's use of the term 'family museum' and refers to art as freely produced without questioning these notions.

75 Instead of going directly to the directors of the association as Benbouih did (2001), I used the print out of the listing of weaver members of the association available on the 'virtual souk' website (see next footnote), and tried to meet some of them in their villages, situated between 10 and 20 kilometres around Taliouine. In one village, I found that I could not question weavers openly; in one family in particular the male head was very suspicious of my presence. The third family in another village was very critical of the association, who had not met their expectations.

76 <http://www.tedjohnson.us/resume/peoplelink/vsouk/people.htm> < 30.03.07

Stanzer⁷⁷ and the ‘Amassine project’

In 1995, an Austrian man Wilfred Stanzer started a venture in the village of Amassine (Ayt Khezama) in the Sirwa mountain. Probably initially interested in selling ‘antique’ Moroccan carpets, he soon realised that this niche market was dying out. He found his inspiration from Böhmer a German professor of chemistry who started the D.O.B.A.G. project (Anderson, 1998)⁷⁸ in Turkey in 1982, to reintroduce the use of natural old dyes in some Turkish villages, where profit-sharing cooperatives produce brand new carpets of excellent quality made to last for several generations.

He produces carpets that he presents as Moroccan Berber and Arab, but also African and Jewish⁷⁹. Whatever the (exotic) appellation and design of these carpets they unquestionably do not belong to the local aesthetic. Stanzer does not make use of the exceptional technical knowledge of the weavers of the region, but in terms of raw materials his carpets are of the greatest quality available in Morocco today. After having been washed, the local wool is spun following the lost old tradition of wool combing⁸⁰, which he reintroduced in the village. The warp and the weft of the carpets are handspun and very fine, with the wool kept in its natural colour or dyed with natural dyes. The work is more tedious than normal but is reasonably well paid⁸¹, in that like all contract work, it saves the families the expense of the material and the hassle of looking for a buyer or taking the item to the weekly market. In fact, families often work for him, in addition to continuing to produce their own weavings for the *suq*. This project only helps them temporarily as he is not always present in the village and they have to wait for him to come back to get paid. Not all weavers work for him as he only orders perhaps a dozen carpets every year. Those who have proven to be reliable are now employed regularly and get paid more than they would on the market. The question of long-term sustainability is acute since Stanzer is a foreign man in his sixties. Once he is gone it is very likely that his enterprise will die out. On the other hand it is a very small project and his presence does not have a large impact on the lives of the locals.

77 I unfortunately did not interview Stanzer, who was absent during my visit in Amassine.

78 The Natural Dye Research and Development Project, or DOBAG (the acronym for the Turkish translation) now supports about 400 families in Western Turkey.

79 Lynn Stephen (1993) showed how the ‘branding’ of ethnic identity is an important marketing tool in the case of Mexican rugs in North America.

80 See appendix 3.

81 He pays the washing and combing in quantity of wool and the weaving by the meter square, following the prices practiced locally.

The supervision of the carpet production is done by a man originally from Taznakht, who is being paid a good monthly wage, although Stanzer is the only person in charge of the dyeing process, around which he has built a mythology of secrecy and expert knowledge that is spoken about amongst the local dealers and the Taznakht bazarists. Secrecy is also kept around the design of his carpets, which are sent to his Western customers directly from the village without being seen by any potential competitors. Weavers are not given any freedom in terms of design and have to follow a photograph as closely as possible. The dimensions of the carpet are also closely monitored: weavers are given two pieces of string, each the size of the length and the width of the carpet commissioned.

Unlike Böhmer whose concern was, working in collaboration with a Turkish University, to restore to a community their lost knowledge and then reproduce the experience in other villages, Stanzer's project is very similar to those of the capitalist entrepreneurs of the colonial period, who used a cheap skilled workforce. His enterprise could have been done in any other Third World weaving country if it is not that Morocco is geographically closer to Austria than any other of these countries (apart from Tunisia) and he has connections there. He did extensive research before he embarked on this project, publishing a book (Stanzer and Reinisch 1991) that was the result of his travel all around Morocco where he assessed the viability of his project and found local allies. He chose a very isolated village where weavers are skilled but where their male kin do not represent such a successful and efficacious group of interest as the Ayt Waghrda traders. He has secured his position through his Moroccan connections in the Department of Craft and possesses a good political knowledge of Moroccan society. This has allowed him to keep his position in the village despite the actions of local dealers. He has also been very shrewd at using his 'sociological knowledge'⁸² reinforcing the local conservatism and socially valued secrecy existing in these societies. He also used his international social capital in the carpet industry through his position of presidency of the International Conference on Oriental Carpets (ICOC), (where he presided several times) and played an important role in promoting Moroccan carpets. His project professes to help the people stay local and at the same time aims at a return to tradition, fitting with the new trend in ecological tourism where the visit to

⁸² He presents himself as a sociologist.

an ecological carpet production site is an opportunity to eat and sleep and experience aspect of everyday life and technical processes.

Susan Davis⁸³ in N'Kob

In 2001, Susan Davis, an American anthropologist⁸⁴ set up a new type of project in the village of N'Kob in the Sirwa mountain after having met Rachid, the president of a local NGO. Twice a year she visits the village where she takes pictures and gathers information (size and price) about the carpets the women have woven. She then displays them on the Internet⁸⁵. She has to communicate regularly with her male contact there, who is responsible for taking the carpets to Ouarzazate (over 100 km from the village) where they have to be stamped with the Craft department's quality label (Chapter 2) and sent to the buyers. Despite being advertised on the Internet, the carpets can also be sold to buyers other than Internet buyers.

Weavers are entirely free to choose the price of sale and the design of their carpets, although she encourages them to follow market demand (for instance to produce blue carpets as they sell better). Some claim to be using natural dyes and their production looks like the old type of weaving both in terms of colour and motifs. The price fixed by the weaver is beyond any price they could dream of and way beyond local market rates. Those weavers who produce really special items in terms of quality of techniques and colours and can wait for an online buyer have become very assertive, refusing to lower their price. This is unfortunately not possible for those women with many young children or those under difficult circumstances (health problems in the family).

Apart from the fact that she is disrupting the secrecy around carpet design, which caused local dealers to act against this, Susan Davis comes with a liberal agenda, aiming at changing gender relations. She hopes that women will manage their own money and become dealers themselves. In her discourse and website, she positions herself as an ethical actor who rejects the exploitation of dealers and wants craftswomen to receive a fair payment for their work. Despite aiming at a woman-centred project,

83 I met Susan Davis in Casablanca, in 2004 and 2005.

84 She arrived in Morocco in the 1960's as part of the US Peace corp. She published on women in Morocco (Davis, 1983) and worked as a consultant for the World Bank.

85 Marrakesh express : http://d2ssd.com/www-source/me_gallery/me_gallery.html

Susan Davis had to accept that no woman would take on the risk and responsibility of being on the road each time a carpet was ordered from abroad. So it is Rachid who sends the carpets to the West and deliver the money to the weavers.

Davis is also disturbing the status quo of invisibilisation of weavers through making them visible. In the previous project she was involved with (called the 'virtual souk'), an article specifically mentions her concerns with the issue of convincing women to have their photograph put online to help sell their products. In the 'virtual souk' project, women from the area of Taliouine, were photographed, and details about their biography and financial situation were given. Following the example of the 'virtual souk' Davis has put pictures of the weavers who are participating in her project online and personal information on each of them.

Davis can be criticized for having on the same web site (an issue which she has acknowledged to me but not on the website), two distinct projects: the N'Kob one which is fair trade, and the Ben Smim (in the Middle Atlas) which is a commercial one although still with a gender stance. She has organized tours around weaving areas of Morocco aimed at female tourists. Davis' position lies somewhere in-between the philanthropist and the astute commercial entrepreneur, as she gives the weavers a better share of money than any other initiative or dealers in the area. She has given some weavers, the few that can afford to wait for customers, a fair idea of the value that their work receives in the West. This is a material concrete proof, not just an imaginary or symbolic one. Even if only a few manage to earn good money from their sales, this has given women a new way at looking at their own skills and self, which may have a long term effect on gender relations as well as on relations between weavers and local dealers.

Of course she can be seen to be giving too much of an optimistic idea of the type of price weavers can expect. The invisibility of the buyers and the transaction also create a false idea of what the Internet is about. The concept of the Internet is difficult to grasp for the villagers, some of whom think that Susan Davis knows the buyers. Weavers who have failed to attract buyers with products that appeal to them also interpret the success of other weavers as favouritism on behalf of Susan Davis. Competition within the village and knowledge of corruption and calculative interest

makes them suspicious of such an initiative. Some families imagine that if they as producers can obtain such an amount of money, she as a dealer must make even more money than she claims. With some cynicism, they wonder what is in it for the Western woman.

Fair trade vendors such as Susan Davis argue that by cutting out the middlemen they save money for the buyer and aid the producers to get most of the money. In this specific case, Susan Davis, has however, become a middlewoman, who replaces both the local middlemen and the large Moroccan merchants. In portraying the middlemen in such dark colours, such discourses ignore the organisation of the carpet trade (Chapter 3), and denies the existence of a whole social and economical structure that benefits entire families in the mountain (see also Chapters 8 and 9). If we consider that in each village in the mountains there are 3 to 5 middlemen and that all of them work with several families on a contractual basis, it becomes clear that breaking the network of middlemen would have a negative impact on social and economic life in the mountain. Furthermore, such a punctual and extrinsic initiative is not enough to change the disadvantaged position of women in the regional economy.

Association Espace Taznakht⁸⁶

The Davis venture may have fostered other projects: two years later an association (NGO) was created in Taznakht by the brother of the ex-school director of N'Kob now living in Taznakht. Initially the association was supposed to be made of several members of the youth of Taznakht⁸⁷, including a woman with NGO and development expertise. The project was to create a place to sell all the carpets made by women mainly from the old part of Taznakht. These would deposit their items in the shop until some buyer would pick it up. They would be free to take them back whenever they wanted. The initial idea was to use the old Kasbah building in Taznakht as the shop. Very quickly, conflicts of interest broke, and several of the project's members walked away as they realised that they would not gain individual profit in the short term. The shop was eventually opened in the house of the family of the association's president. This family is one of the most important in the old part of

⁸⁶ Association Espace Taznakht : <http://www.espacetaznakht.com/>

⁸⁷ Some of them had been in contact with the Western carpet traders Stanzer and Rainer.

Taznakht, but the association's president, who is an educated man in his late thirties, had no job prospects. Today, the selling of carpet is working well and the president is thinking about getting married.

To attract passing tourists, signs at the entrances to Taznakht were erected giving directions to the association. These signs were emphasising "fair trade" and "gender" notions. The president is often in the centre, and he has 'helpers' who may direct the tourists. As the president of the association is often in the centre of Taznakht whereas the association is in the old part of Taznakht 3 km away, his unmarried sister has become the main 'guide'. When they enter the garden of the association's site, Western visitors are taken in a small room to see a loom on which one of the sisters has a weaving in process. She shows them the techniques of weaving, offering them to give it a try, whatever their gender. The visitors are then taken inside the house to see the carpets. Pile carpets are layered in the large living room, and stocked in an adjacent room, or on the upper open floor where they can be unfolded in the sun.

The whole setting is organised to please the buyers and occupy them whilst they select their carpet(s) with other more exotic authentic or local experiences such as having a go at weaving, enjoying local hospitality in the form of tea and food shared with the family or observing one of the family women baking bread in the outside oven. The visitors are also taken to neighbouring houses where they can be shown other weaving techniques. In the mean time, Ijja the clever sister of the president finds the time to discreetly contact her brother by mobile phone in the town centre where a 10 minutes ride brings him back for the final transaction. He often takes the visitors to a room adjacent to the one where his sister showed them how to weave. The walls of this room are covered with print-outs from the internet mentioning fair trade and development, photographs of the weaver members of the associations, of plants and material supposedly used in the dyeing such as saffron and alum, photographs showing his old mother spinning wool and even a picture of a toddler (his niece) playing at the loom. There is also a display of at least thirty pictures showing him with previous visitors. On a desk, he has a few trinkets and craft objects to sell or give as a present to his clients, who are also invited to fill in a book with their name, country, email address and comments. In a similar book, a page has been assigned to each weaver member of

the association with her picture or photocopy of her identity card, her name and a reference number for each of her weavings. At the beginning of the project, there was a web site displaying the pictures of the weavers and their name, and mentioning ecological, artistic and developmental ideas.

This project is not appreciated by the local bazaarists who see it as a threat to their business. Using their contacts in the local authorities, they tried in vain, to have it shut down, arguing that the association was illegal. Although it is officially an NGO, in effect, it is a family business, an enterprise with no tax to pay, with a limited stock proper, most of it belonging to local weavers. Still the women gain from it when they can afford to wait for the carpet to be picked up, as they too, set the price they expect. Although negotiable (Westerners always bargain) the money obtained from the carpets sold in the association is superior to that obtained from local carpet dealers.

A year later, several bazaarists took into consideration raising the visibility of weavers as a selling point: they changed the name of their shop to include the term “(Berber) woman”. Some present themselves as an association (with no other content than the title), with signposts showing the way to their own house. Both the bazaarists and the association have clients⁸⁸ who orient the tourists towards the ‘right’ place. The idea of ‘helping’ weavers is not a new one: the male members of the cooperatives created in the 1980s in Taznakht too claim they help the weavers sell their weaving in exchange for a small percentage of the price of the carpet, when in effect they are ordinary dealers exploiting weavers’ work.

The akhnif carpet

The *akhnif* carpet is inspired by the *akhnif*, a type of cloak-cape that was produced and worn in the area. One of the best selling carpets in Morocco⁸⁹ this flatweave carpet is originally from the Sirwa mountain. Its success is such that it is now imitated and produced in other areas of Morocco, hence the need to document its history. Despite its interesting aesthetic, the *akhnif* carpet has been neglected in the

⁸⁸ These may be self-appointed tourist guides who speak several languages, but also any person who is potentially able to convince Western buyers such as personnel of hotels and cafés.

⁸⁹ The other type of best selling carpet is another flatweave carpet classed as Middle Atlas and produced mainly in the Khemisset region, with a light background (white, beige, pale blue) its motifs are often figurative.

literature on Moroccan carpets for its association with tourism. The only author to mention it is Bert Flint (2000) who considers the *akhnif* cloak as being behind the creation of the Glaoua carpets and inaccurately describes the motif techniques as embroidery.

The original *akhnif*

The *Akhnif* was a wide hooded black cape or cloak without sleeves, made in one piece almost without sewing, apart from its hood and finishing. It is a unique garment because of the techniques behind its material shape. Three features can be listed: the semi circular overall shape, the large ‘eye’ on the back, and the motifs.



Figure 6 : The *akhnif* cloak. (Source: Westermarck 1904: 220, fig.38).

The *akhnif* features many of the characteristics of ancient Mediterranean clothing described in detail by Granger Taylor (1982) amongst which are the tunic and toga from classical Antiquity. It is a semi circular garment with no seam, made in one piece, and featuring special types of borders or selvages. As noted by several weavers, once it is woven, it is ready to be worn. Granger Taylor notes about the Antique Mediterranean weavings: “ Sewing was largely a matter of tucking together edges that had already been finished during weaving. [Where] clothing was shaped...this shaping was done on the loom’ (Granger-Taylor, 1982:22). Its main technical difficulty is the fan-shape which requires a special reduction technique. In comparison with carpet

weaving, the *akhnif* requires a 3.25 metre long beam and an older type of loom, with one or two Y-shaped uprights and a upper beam (*tasaturt*) used to hold smaller beams (*ighura*) which look like kitchen rolling pins. The *akhnif* starts downside-up, that is from the hood (*aqalmu*), which is first woven from the centre of the lower beam. Once the hood is woven, the warps of the two wings (*tifert* pl. *tifrawin*) are added on each side of the hood and the rest of the cloth woven. In the past, two more sets of wings were added on each side, one smaller than the other, called children (*tihshmiyin*). The use of these independent beams (*ighura*) facilitates this operation, and allows the reduction of warp threads which gives the cape its fan-shape. A hem made of two colours (red and yellow cords) braided together (*twill*) is added before cutting the *akhnif*. It now needs to be sewn at the level of the hood and is ready to be worn. For an elegant finish it used to be given to the haberdashery expert (A *ma'alem*, usually the local *fqih**) who executed the tablet-woven bands for the edges, the haberdashery breast decoration, the braids of the fringes⁹⁰ (*tayrist*) and the hood's pompon.

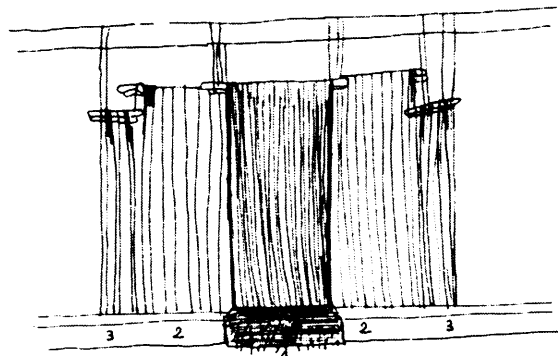


Figure 7 After the hood (1) has been woven, the wings (2, 3) are added.

90 The *tayrist* are twisted in such a way that they look like springs or tiny ringlets. They are also found on other types of clothing such as the female capes (*tahaykt*).

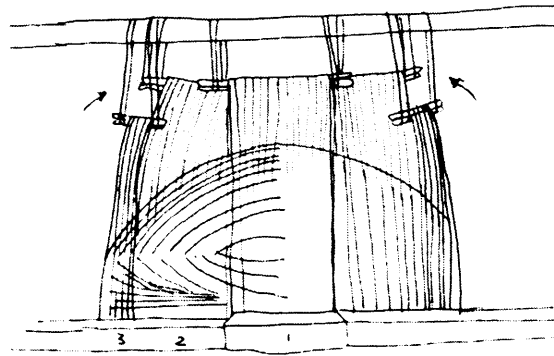


Figure 8 Final stage, before the cloak is removed from the loom. Showing the reduction system and the oval shape.

Another specificity of the *akhnif* is a large orange-red⁹¹ oval shape described as an oculus (eye) or moon on the lower back and ornamented with tiny and intricate motifs in various colours and a long fringe. This shape is termed *gore*, (Burnham, 1980 : 66) and is made by inserting extra weft threads which do not go from selvage to selvage, but can be built up to form a sort of triangle in the fabric (fig. 8). At around 2 *tighilt*⁹², after the hood has been woven and the wings started, the oculus shape is started by curving a convex curve in black, hardly adding any weft in the middle and filling the sides until they get to the level of a third *tighilt*. Then the hole is filled with the red concave shape traversed in its centre with a very nice elongated almond shape decoration. The other side of the red oculus is added and enclosed with the black weft over half a *tighilt*.

Finally the motifs are made in a type of brocade, a technique unique to the region. The effect of this technique (*iklan n-ukhnif*) looks as if the motifs have been embroidered onto the surface of the weave, but it actually results from the addition of small colourful independent threads on the warp threads and the interlacing of these independent threads with themselves and the warp threads, thus appearing as raising above the weft (background). The weaver adds various coloured threads on the line of

91 Depending on the amount of henna or artificial red dye added to the madder dye (in Berber *tarubia*, from the Latin *rubia tinctorium*) the red oculus (B *irghis n ukhnif*) would take a brick or darker red shade. The oculus is supposed to be prophylactic, protecting the shepherd and his flock (of sheep and goats) from the bad spirits (*jann**).

92 A local measure, it corresponds to a small cubit (less than 50 cm).

the weft, folding the independent thread around the warp threads, in a sort of *n* shape, each of its ends falling downward in front of the weft. Passing two or three weft threads above the independent ones holds the loose threads which are then taken one by one upward obliquely towards the left or right to form oblique lines. When they meet they make crosses or *v* shapes. As the wefts are added, the independent threads start forming larger geometrical shapes such as lozenges, large triangles or squares and rectangles, themselves made of intricate triangles and oblique lines. Once the independent thread is no longer needed or needs to be extended with a supplementary thread, it is pushed to the back of the warp. At the back of the weaving, the numerous pieces of hanging multicoloured threads appear.

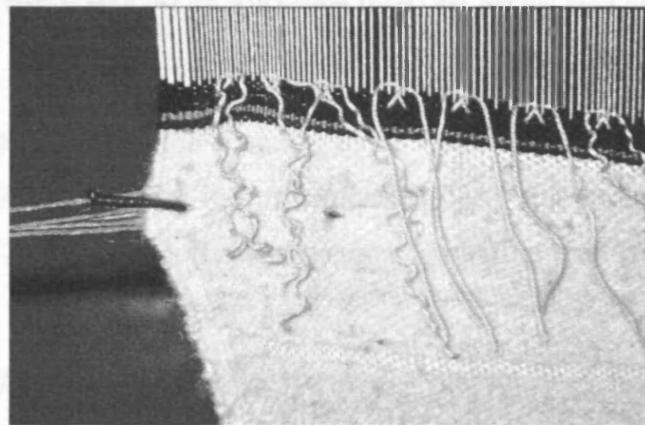


Figure 9 : Detail of the *iklan n-ukhnif* technique (on a carpet), showing the beginning of a motif made after the first layer of dark wefts (two thread lines) has been passed.

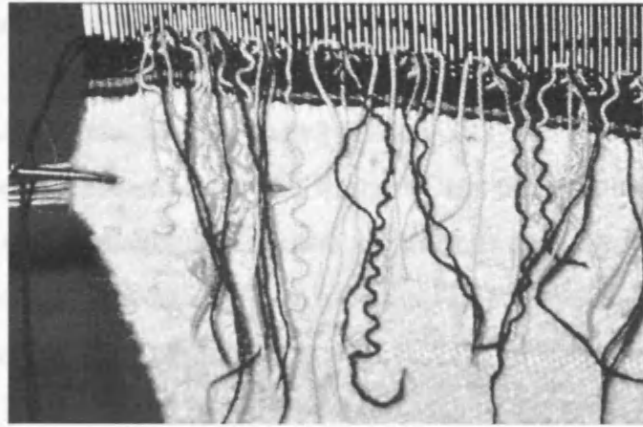


Figure 10 : Next stage, where more coloured independent threads have been added to the white ones. The first weft thread (which will secure them) has not yet been beaten in.

The *akhnif* was made with the beautiful black wool⁹³ of the local breed of sheep and was famous for its robustness, its impermeability and for improving with time. There are still some specimens left in museums, including the British Museum⁹⁴ (Sainsbury wing).

The rare *akhnif* produced today for the tourist market rarely feature the curved shape of the cape and the oculus. They also come in various colours, as natural black wool is more expensive and tourist enjoy diversity in colours. In the 19th century, this item was produced by the majority of the weavers in Taznakht (de Foucauld 1998/1888: 110) where it was traded in its weekly *suq*. It was also probably known in the Sirwa mountains since today this is the only place where weavers can make it. A male outfit, the *akhnif* was worn both by adults and children, Muslim and Jews of the Ayt Wawzgit tribes but also by the Glaoua populations, in the Draa and Souss regions and in the chain of the Small Atlas. A precious piece of clothing, it was kept carefully in the cases of the *agadir* (collective fortified granary) and passed down from father to son. It became however old fashioned and before its decline was only being used by shepherds for its impermeable qualities, sometimes above a *djellaba*. In the 1950's, the colonial

93 And not with goat hair as reported by Picton and Mack 1979.

94 Photographs of the British Museum *akhnif* can be found in Spring and Hudson (1995: 90).

administration who had found out that it was still being produced on rare occasions by the Ayt Semgane and Waghrda respectively in the villages of Ayt Tigga and N'Kob, attempted to re-launch its production between 1952 and 1957 for the tourist market, but this was soon abandoned because of its cost⁹⁵. In the 1970's the production started again and some *akhnif* were produced in green, yellow or red rather than the traditional black background. Production died out again towards the end of the 1980s. Today the *akhnif* has completely disappeared from production and there must be less than ten households knowing how to make it, all situated in the mountain.

***Akhnif* carpets**

The *Akhnif* carpets (fig.12, 13) appeared on the market around 1995. This flatweave with its embroidery-like motifs appeals to the taste of Westerners. Exceptionally light, once folded and packed, it takes hardly any space and thus is easy to carry. Tourists are concerned with the problem of bulk and weight when they consider objects to take back home. Until the 1990's, the *akhnif* technique was dormant. Because of the success of the *akhnif* carpets, which are faster and cheaper to produce than pile ones, its production spread from the Ayt Waghrda villages to the other villages and regions. Ayt Waghrda women taught it to other women outside their villages.

Initially the *akhnif* carpets were mainly red and covered with a few motifs. Today they are found in many colours, blue or yellow being the most common after red, or may include several colours. In the original *akhnif* cloak, a few tiny motifs decorated the extremities of the black cloth, the oculus and exceptionally the hood and the breast. In the *akhnif* carpet, the motifs are usually spread symmetrically over the whole rectangle. In comparison with the cloak, the threads used are thicker and as a result the motifs are larger, which fits with the fact that it is a piece of furnishing. The size of the motifs is another reason why the background weft shows through.

The origin of the *akhnif* carpet is universally attributed to Ayt Waghrda weavers. These have a special advantage over the average local weaver in that their technical expertise is nourished by a larger aesthetical repertory due to their heritage and their contact with the market. In addition they use greater quality products which allow them to produce finer quality weavings with unmatched elegant motifs.

⁹⁵ The craft department paid weavers between 25.000 and 30.000 Francs per piece (Henninger 1957).

Akhnif carpets sell in all tourist towns in Morocco, where they are imported from the Sirwa mountain. They are also imitated in some regions. In the carpet cooperatives of Sidi Moukhtar, near Chichaoua, on the road between Marrakech and Essaouira, weavers use the same technique to create new types of carpets with new colours and shapes. Locally, cheap version are also produced, using thicker machine spun threads and a limited range of motifs. The most common and lowest quality carpet found are red or yellow with very few motifs, awkwardly woven here and there. The thickness and low quality of the thread used in both the motifs and the weft (background) has an impact on the aesthetics of the motifs, which are usually larger, and less densely disposed. Between the lower quality *akhnif* carpet and the luxury type, usually made by Ayt Waghrda women on contract, there are various levels of quality.

***Akhnif* carpet variants**

The competition around the production of *akhnif* has led to the creation of other textiles, variants of the *akhnif* carpet: the *jabbar haydur* and the *kharita* carpets. The *jabbar haydur* (fig. 14) combines the *akhnif* with knotting techniques. The derogatory term comes from a Berber film and means ‘made of various bits’, a ‘mixture of things’, a hybrid. Originally, the main organisation of these carpets was a grid made of pile and the squares were filled with *akhnif* motifs. In a newer version some of the squares are filled with pile motifs too. More original *jabbar haydur*, situated higher in the hierarchy, may also have a more complicated or less symmetrical compartmentation, and include the *tirira** technique (tapestry weaving technique). Another difficult technique in which Ayt Waghrda weavers are almost exclusively expert, this technique is very costly in terms of its impact on the weavers’ sight.

The *kharita* carpet (map in Arabic) includes small elements of the *akhnif* technique but is based mainly on the *tirira* technique and on the *gore* technique (fig. 15, 16, 17), making hundreds of small eye shapes. It takes its name from the fact that it could represent a landscape. A weaver from N’kob (Aisha) calls it *dunnit ikhart* (this world, the other) because it has dark and light parts (fig.15). This piece of weaving is called also ‘*tkharbeq**’ (non-sense, scribble, rubbish in Arabic) which conveys the weavers’ perception of the lack of symmetry and the mixture of meaningless shapes and colours against their aesthetic canon.

This new creation may have been partly influenced by Bert Flint, a Dutch collector and dealer living in Marrakech since the late 1950's who is familiar with the Sirwa region and has commissioned some weavings from the area, possibly influencing their aesthetics. He is one of the rare dealers to have acknowledged the skills of contemporary weavers and the influence of dealers (although not necessarily his) as intermediaries of Western taste (Flint 1993, 1995). He possesses a collection of contemporary carpets that are of the *kharita* type. What distinguishes them from those found more readily on the market is their size (they are square measuring 183x174 or 170x160⁹⁶), colours (orange, green kaki rather than emerald) and the intricacy of the motifs and techniques (*tirira* rather than brocade). The motifs have a blurred almost shaky look as if seen through a distorting lens. The use of light khaki green is rare (emerald is more common). The partitioning is not square or rectangular but rounded, almost reminiscent of the oculus shape. Finally the creativity in the diversity of the motifs and the compartmentalisation (including knots) is striking.

The latest creation in 2003 was a smaller but beautiful version of the black or white female cloak called *tahaykt* but also *taydalt* (fig.11) or *ashdad* (Ayt Waghrda) that has completely disappeared from local use: it is square and it includes a few *iklan* motifs in its corners.

96 These size show that the weavers used the cubit measure rather than meters.



Figure 11 Taydalt



Figure 12 Ordinary akhnif carpet



Figure 13 Luxury akhnif carpet



Figure 14 Jabbar hayd ur

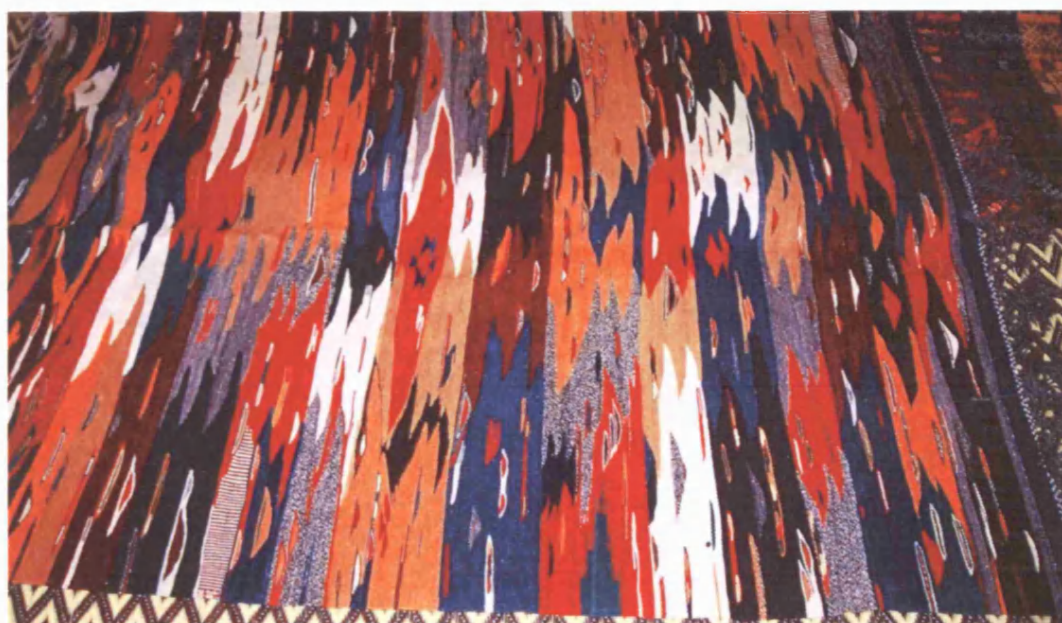


Figure 15 kharita

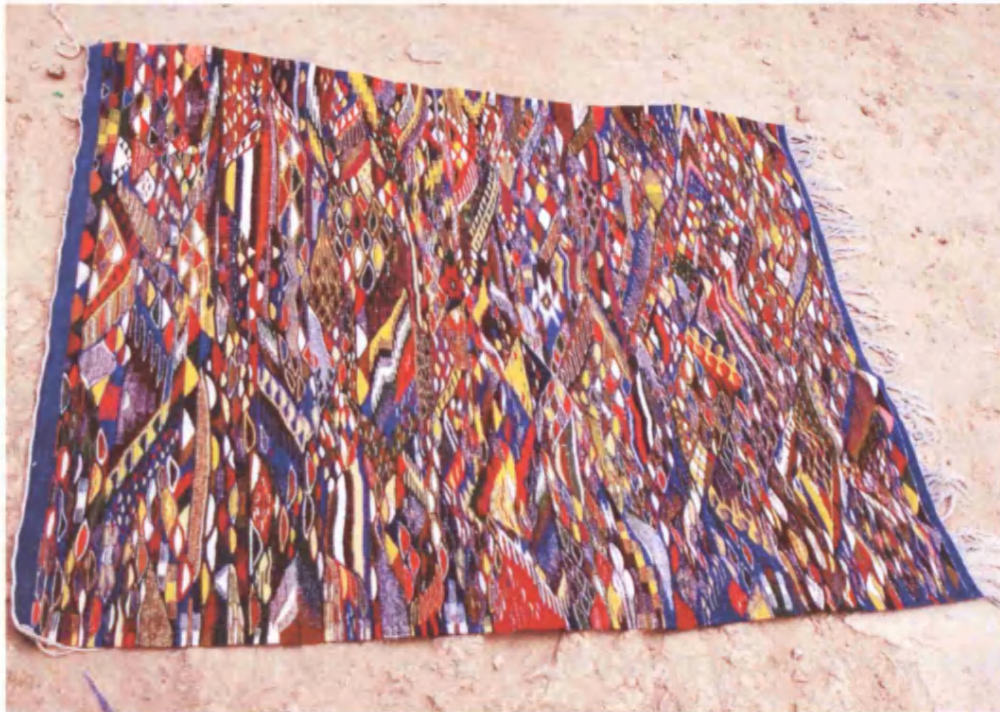


Figure 16 Kharita

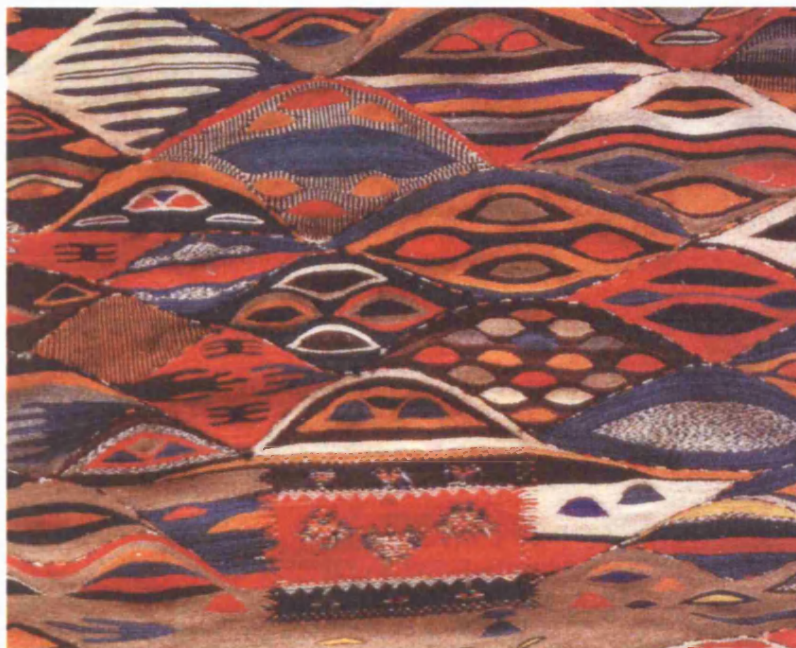


Figure 17 Flint Collection. Source: Tejjidos, p. 115.

Chapter 5 The place of weaving in the everyday life of Sirwa women

This chapter situates weaving within the daily activities that women perform in the Sirwa. It gives a detailed description of their everyday running of domestic life to highlight the hierarchies and competing femininities that shape the social organisation of domestic labour. This chapter aims at showing the variety of situations and circumstances women are involved in and tries to demonstrate the dynamic relation of power and interaction between men and women, and particularly between women in the domestic sphere (which is not limited to the household). Weaving is considered in four different ways: as a source of ambivalent feelings, in relation to female competition, as associated with confinement, and finally in the hierarchy of female activities. I address the question of the apparent lack of subversion of the female norm of weaving for the family, which implies confinement and seems to be opposed to mobility and to an access to the commercial sphere.

An ambivalence towards weaving

This thesis focuses on the mountain weavers, but concerns also those in and around Taznakht. Multisited ethnography showed a coherence of female experience of weaving across the region, but also some marked differences. One striking aspect of weaving is how ambivalent weavers are about the activity. A first difference between the mountainous and the urban area is that mountains weavers do not seem as negative about weaving as urban women. This could be attributed to the fact that they are more educated, are more in contact with the market (*suq* and town shops) and thus being more informed than those in the mountains, they are more aware of their exploitation. In urban areas, women may have other options than weaving, whereas in the mountains, almost every household is involved in weaving. Within the mountains, there seem to be a greater workload for women in areas where they have large garden (*tadrart**) several kilometres away from the village (particularly the Ayt Waghirda) and those whose garden are within reach or in the village (some Ayt Ubiâl villages). And within a given

village, the workload in weaving seems to be greater among weavers whose male head is a emerging dealers (often the Ayt Waghrda).

Across the region, women share an ambiguous relationship to weaving, although the shift towards the negative or the positive tends to vary greatly between women and the dislike seem to be greater in urban settings in families who produce intensively lower quality products (chapter 7). As a sacred matter, infused with *baraka*, natural wool (*taddut*) was and still is associated with notions of moral and value. However, weaving is also a disciplinary technique particularly when performed several hours in a row. Thus, it is both a source of pleasure and grief. For example, when Biya came with me to my father's house near Rabat, she was delighted to spend her time shopping, sleeping, eating and watching television. She however claimed afterward that she missed the activity, which she described with some tenderness as engrossing and addictive. Younger girls more spontaneously express their pride and their feeling of superiority to less skilled weavers. Rqiya, a 14 years old Ayt Waghrda weaver who was working on a weaving comprising only akhnif motifs, kept asking and begging the adult women to let her make a *tirira** motif because she wanted to prove her expertise to another girl. Mothers are unanimous in stating that the younger generations are brighter than older ones and that their daughters have a greater knowledge than themselves. Yet, it is common to hear the same mothers stating that they had to exercise physical violence on their daughters to teach them weaving. This is also true for those who took the initiative to learn outside their family: Farida persisted in visiting her adult neighbour to learn the *akhnif* technique despite having been hit by her on several occasions. In urban areas, women who can afford not to weave and are educated, tend to abandon this activity and to occupy themselves in other feminine activities which are also less associated with rurality, such as embroidery, lace making and even machine knitting. The association of weaving with poverty and rurality, a perception prevailing with wealthy urban dwellers⁹⁷, is now gaining ground in the rural areas. In addition, weaving comes at the bottom of the hierarchy of manual female activities, because of its materiality (inflexible, not easily carried, dirtying, requiring a lot of energy). They may

⁹⁷ This perception of weaving already existed in the urban cities of Meknes and Fes, when in the 1920s (as it is attested in colonial archives), the Moroccan bourgeoisie agreed to send their daughters to colonial schools. They opposed their daughters' enrolment in weaving course, but did not mind them learning embroidery.

however, as their mother, elder sisters and cousins did, challenge themselves at the task of weaving for a period of time before and after marriage.

Thus, on the one hand some women seem to gain fulfilment and pride from weaving, on the other some dream of being able to practice it only occasionally as a leisure activity or not at all. How can weaving be both desired and hated, felt as costly and positive? In this thesis I argue that weaving may be both oppressive/disempowering and enabling. As I will argue throughout this thesis, weaving can be seen as both a means of controlling women's bodies and labour but as one of many strategies (Davis 1995, Kandiyoti 1988) for women to exercise control over their lives (and that of men). In this chapter, I try to situate weaving in the daily life of weavers to show how it fits in the organisation of running the household, and how this is related to dynamic hierarchies between women. Indeed, the relationship of women to weaving depends on many factors, and varies depending on their circumstances, personality, their social status, the family ethos towards women and labour, and the interactions between women in their families and between gender. In this chapter I specifically consider how female status and moral competition shape the special position of weaving in relation to other female activities.

Variety of relationship to weaving

Whether poor or rich, Berber or *Hartani*, most women in the Sirwa mountains and in and around Taznakht weave, but some produce at least one carpet a month, whereas others may only make a few in their whole life. Weaving represents an important medium for the expression but also a tool for the shaping of an ideal or conventional (Connell 1987) femininity characterised by hardwork for the family, confinement and self-mastery (including sexual). This norm of weaving and confinement however touches women to different degrees, but some common traits can be noted.

In Taznakht and its surroundings where the population is less homogeneous, both Hartani and Berber women weave. Although some Hartani families have become wealthy thanks to remittances from members of their kin living in Europe, the majority of the female Hartani population have no other professional option than weaving as a supplement to their husband's income, or as the main source of family income. Some

women engage in agricultural labour for other families because their husband is absent or their sons refuse to do such work.

Even the minority of *Taznakhti* women who do not need to weave such as spouses of miners or those belonging to the bourgeoisie (government officers, modern shop owners such as photo laboratories, bazaarists, school directors, butchers and even teachers) do not contradict the norm of confinement and weaving. In fact, whether they are originally from the area or not, better-off women learnt to weave for the pride of decorating their houses with their own work, but also because weaving is a way of becoming part of this community.

A specific class of local bourgeois women weave to earn some money, but here too, there is no subverting of the norm of confinement and non-access to the market. This is the minority of the original Berber population still living in Taznakht whose women can afford not to weave, but use the money either to supplement the family income, or for their own consumption. Some of them use their bazaarist male kin to obtain commissions, a more advantageous option than selling on the *suq*. This allows them to avoid going to the *suq*, which is incompatible with their belonging to old Berber noble families. Usually over thirty years old and not married (spinsters, widowed or divorced), they tend to work with female relatives or with women of the same class. They may be associates in a rotating money saving system (*jam'ia*). They work as hard as poorer women, weaving on average over seven hours a day.

One of these women in her fifties in Taznakht, Shtimo, despite being abandoned by her husband, has managed, apparently through her weaving work, to build a brand new house which she equipped with modern appliances, a rarity in the town. Her living room is decorated with a very large carpet (7X3 m) in an green almond colour which she obtained from one of her connections in the carpet trade and which she described as being of the best quality colour-fast dye, a type of dye and hue not available on the local market. Whenever I met her in Taznakht, she was working on a large carpet with several other women, at her place but also in other houses. Her elderly mother still works with her, although she tends to be given the parts with only one colour because of her poor sight.

A characteristic of women's workload and confinement in Taznakht is that they have less outdoor activities than mountain weavers. In Taznakht, where people are less self sufficient and need cash to pay for food and services, weaving may become a major source of income. Weavers spend more time in an immobile posture because they have no other tasks taking them away from the loom. On the other hand, this confinement is not attached to one unique place like in the mountains: weavers, who call themselves *timzdawin** (sing. *tamzdawt**), work in other houses, exchanging their labour on each other's carpet. The *timzdawin* system fits with the old system of exchange of work and cooperative collective work (*tawiza*). Taznakht's *timzdawin* are also characterised by the fact that they are from all age groups, with daughters, mothers and sometimes even grand mothers working together on the same loom.

In the mountains, weavers tend to work within their own household, but I have witnessed in an Ayt Waghrda village, the case of a family who 'lend' their 14 year old daughter to their friends who live next door to help them weave a carpet. She worked there for the whole day and had her lunch with them. In this case, this arrangement was part of an exchange of labour for services or goods.

Emergence of new gender relations and identities

In urban settings, couples prefer to separate themselves from the husband's parents. This is not necessarily on the unique initiative of the wife, as some men too may resent being under the authority of their father. Even in the mountain, it is becoming increasingly common for sons and younger brothers to build their house separate from their father's or elder brother's. Young couples chose each other more often too. The apparition of pregnancies outside marriage, particularly among Ayt Waghrda women, which was a topic of great discussion during the 2003 summer was attributed by some women to the influence of foreign soap operas (Mexican ones in particular) which spread unrealistic romantic ideas and raise women's hope to find happiness in marriage. But this was also interpreted as a strategy used by young couples to put pressure on the parents to marry them. I was also told that with their economic importance for some families, young Ayt Waghrda women have gained more bargaining power. Thus fathers who are not happy to lose the workforce of their daughter(s) to another man would be more lax in their surveillance of women. Some

fathers are also said to negotiate with the groom's family that their daughter will carry on providing her labour in carpet production for a year after her marriage. This attests the slow emergence of a new conception of couple, femininity and masculinity and gender relations with a new place given to romantic love.

The celibacy of women in Taznakht represents a social change in a society where marriage is a religious prescription for both sexes and women get ultimate value as mother. The use of the term 'young virgin' (B *tazzit* A *'azba*) is inadequate but there is no category between girls (B *tilshmit*, A *bent*) and women (that is married sexually active, B *tamghart*, A *mra*) or term to designate the position of virgin women who are not young in Berber or Arabic. It is therefore surprising that there seems to be no contestation of the norm of confinement, good Muslim behaviour and sexual mastery. On the other hand, this could be explained by the fact that the class of wealthier women, define their high status through refusing to marry men of lower status (including Hartani) through socialising exclusively between themselves around weaving and managing their own money.

Farida : a case of open subversion of the norm

Despite these changes, there is no subverting of norm of weaving for father and confinement, two important feature of conventional femininity. The only case of subversion of the norm of confinement and work for the father I saw in the mountains, is that of Farida. A twenty years old girl who lost her mother and hates her step mother, Farida is from a poor family. She considers her father with little respect and she fought him back once when he tried to hit her. She prefers to give her labour for free to another wealthy family whose son she is in love with. She is ambitious, and lived for a while in town working as a maid for her extended family. She threatened to go back to town on her own when they dismissed her and took her back to her village, thus resisting (at least in her discourse) the social prescription on women travelling on their own. In refusing to work for her father, she transgressed the rule of being loyal to one's family and deriving status from it. She was in fact trying to gain distinction from her extended family and her social network. She also breaches the taboo of female modesty, behaving in immodest ways to such a point that she was referred to by some young men as a future prostitute. She came back to her village looking much fatter in comparison with

the frail girl I had seen a year before while doing my MPhil fieldwork. In addition to clothing, the prestige and distinction to have lived in town, she pretended to be able to speak Arabic. Farida's behaviour and personality make her very unlikely to ever get married, although she is proud and wishes to gain status through marriage. In my view she is an emancipated artist with a strong will for self-realisation who is too 'avant-garde' for her society. In the view of women in her village, she is a deviant. Unlike their attitude towards resisting against what can be argued to be an unreasonable or unfair treatment from men (e.g. withholding money) the behaviour of Farida is not seen as acceptable resistance. In fact, because she challenges the hard working compliant patriarchal ideal of femininity, her apparent lack of morality means in the eyes of other weavers that she cannot be considered as a skilled weaver.

Competition between women

Money and material possessions

As just mentioned, competition is prevalent between families through women. Evil eye and envy (*hasada*) crop up endlessly in the discourse of Sirwa women. In Taznakht, some weavers put evil eye 'stoppers' such as a knife or a horseshoe in the warp rolled on the upper beam of the loom to ward it off. Competition ultimately boils down to status, although it may be about knowledge, clothing or beauty.

Whereas some families (or heads of families) were not aware of how much money could be earned from weaving or did not think it necessarily worth it to pressurise their only or few daughters to weave, those families who have managed to raise (or maintain) a good status through weaving income, are in great competition with each other through their daughters. Weavers compete with their closer friends or neighbours about their skills and the aesthetics of their carpets. Unmarried women also lend pieces of clothing or exchange or sell them to each other. At festivals and particularly in the evening performance of singing and dancing they compete to be the best dressed in their second hand *caftan* given to them by urban relatives.

For the few well-off families, that is the households who produce carpets regularly or have a grocery shop, the ultimate prestigious feature in the house is the acquisition of a tiled kitchen with a tap and a toilet and shower room. Weavers are very

proud of this feature of their house, which can be known even to those who do not enter it from the type of refuse coming out of the house. The children of my host family explained that they knew who had or did not have toilets and a kitchen, from the rubbish they were throwing out: if you have no kitchen, you have to keep the dirty washing water and other rubbish in one container which is to be thrown outside. For the women of the house, including the older daughters who are only going to use them for a few more years before they get married, such facilities make their daily life easier and more enjoyable: they do not have to get water from the fountain, or to crouch down to do the washing up in a basin, and can work in a clean, comfortable and beautifully decorated environment. Their pride is obvious in the way female members of such families (and their friends) have asked me to take pictures of them in their best outfits standing in front of the sink, pretending to wash up. In new houses the introduction of concrete floors and walls can be attributed to women's lassitude of endlessly sweeping dust out of the house and courtyard. Often in new houses, the kitchen is now an important room, separated from the black and smoky *takkat* room (where the bread is baked) where men sometimes hesitate to enter as it is filled with women from the village. In the summer at night, in my host family, the elder son slept in it, a clever move to avoid bed bugs.

Marriage

Another focus of competition between women is marriage, which determines status. Before marriage, all options are open to women. Although they fall in love and have romantic feelings, women are pragmatic about their marriage options. They know too well that marrying in the family of an emerging dealer or with a poor or unemployed man usually implies a greater work load in weaving in addition to other domestic duties. Within my host family, the attitudes of sisters varied: two of them had high expectations and wanted to marry a man who they would love but who would be well off. Another of the sisters, a cheerful, good humoured eighteen year old claimed not to mind marrying into an Ayt Waghrda family known to be demanding on weavers, probably because she was in love with her potential husband but also because of her energetic personality and good work ethic.

The reputation of Taznakht as a place where women work hard at the loom may be a reason against a potential marriage. In the town of Agouim, which is situated

between Marrakech and Ourzazate, I met a beautiful 16 year old woman who had been noticed by a young man from Taznakht as she was coming back home from school. After his proposal, she discussed the topic with her parents who like her were concerned that despite his claims she might end up spending her life weaving.

Although there were cases in which parents did not seem too concerned about the welfare of their daughters, in my host family there were many opportunities to see that exclusive labour was not the only issue that bothered parents, and particularly the mother. The relationship with the future husband was one: for example a few years earlier, they had not given their consent for one of their daughters to marry a young man who had proposed to her. When Lala Fdela heard that this man was battering his wife, she was relieved in retrospect. The relationship with the mother-in-law is another concern of some parents. Lala Rqiya has many stories describing the meanness she experienced from her now deceased mother-in-law: for instance, because the latter refused to lend her beating comb (which belonged to her daughter), Lala Rqiya ordered one from a blacksmith. Unfortunately, the mother-in-law took the new tool from her and sent it to her own daughter! Lala Rqiya found great satisfaction to hear that the tool got lost and never reached the daughter.

Girls learn about these hierarchies between women first hand from their relationship to (or their position as) the elder sister: not only are they not supposed to compete with their elders in terms of skills or contradict their authority, but elders have the priority on presents, objects and clothes. On the other hand as noted by Kandiyoti (1988) about mothers-in-law⁹⁸, this is a form of patriarchal bargaining, since they know that they can exercise their power on younger sisters, and that when their elder sister will leave to marry, they will be, albeit for a short time, in her privileged position. In addition, elder sisters tend to have more responsibilities and contribute more to the household in terms of workload, at least until they marry or younger sisters reach the age to take them on. They also are under pressure to behave morally and to be a role model of virtue to their younger female siblings and cousins.

That marriage is one object of competition between women became obvious to me when a beautiful woman was proposed to by the relatively wealthy man she was in

⁹⁸ Kandiyoti (1988) argues that young women accept to be subordinate to older women in their youth because they know they will have a position of power when they become mother-in-law. See also Lacoste-Dujardin (1985).

love with. Not only did her best friend take umbrage of this alliance, but their respective families stopped talking to each other for a while, despite their previous closeness and cooperation. The same woman found that she was also the object of great jealousy when she arrived in her husband's village, now that this good prospective husband was lost to the other women.

Success in marriage, happiness in life and social promotion is associated with being able to stop weaving all together either because they have a 'nice husband' or because they have left the countryside. Here freedom is about being able to be relatively idle in comparison to most mountain women, where the duties of a wife are reduced to those of a housewife who keeps an immaculate and well functioning household and cares for her children but has plenty of leisure and time for herself (sleeping, grooming, watching television, socialising and performing enjoyable activities). Thus conversations between women could express their envy of these privileged women. They often criticised the wife of a carpet dealer for being skinny despite having a husband 'who looked after her so well', that is a husband who provided her with for example 'white' flour, ready made couscous, 'tiled and concreted' rooms, a gas oven and cooker and so on. This envy is shared by men as I heard some men making fun of one carpet dealer-grocer who was so concerned about his wife who had hurt herself, that on his way to Marrakech he took the opposite direction and drove more than 50 km without realising it.

Beauty

Women in the Sirwa are thus torn between two ideal and contradictory representations of femininity: that of the moral industrious woman and that of the plump or fat and idle woman. This latter prescription is one imported from the urban sphere and which is difficult to reach unless one marries there. It is an ideal of femininity which is the prerogative of the wealthy women who do not need to perform any heavy domestic (particularly outdoor) work and who spare their bodies from energy expenditure, aging and skin darkening⁹⁹.

I was surprised when a woman who seemed happy in her marriage asked me to get her a drug to help her gain weight. Being fat is not just about being beautiful or

⁹⁹ Fair complexion is considered the ideal of beauty particularly when combined with very dark hair in Morocco.

young looking, or about having sexual appeal to the husband: it is also about prestige and position. Beauty is, amongst other things, about being plump, having curves, especially around the hips and bottom, which women enhance through wearing several layers of skirts or dresses. This woman endured the dizziness and discomfort associated with the drug in order to attain a greater level of plumpness. In my eyes, she fits the Western ideal of beauty and health because she is not fat and has 'curves in the right place'. But she wanted to look like her urban relatives who were so overweight that they could hardly walk and complained about knee pain.

Confinement and weaving

Sexuality

Weaving work is characterised by two dimensions: it implies relative confinement and it is an indoor activity. Because it encloses women within a specific space, weaving is seen as a way to ensure that women keep their virginity and remain virtuous. In Taliouine, in a bourgeois family who did not need their female members to contribute productive work, Hafida wove while waiting for her wedding, her mobile phone by her side, in case the fiancé her parents had chosen for her contacted her. Rather than a pastime, weaving is a technique of control of the mind and hands of the prospective bride, who is kept occupied physically and mentally, indoors and away from the influence of TV soap operas.

Some weaving rituals are believed to seal or tie women's sexual organs and preserve their virginity, albeit not ensuring their virtuous behaviour. The old analogical way of thinking assimilates women's confinement within the domestic space with the closure of their body and sexual organs. Practiced sometimes during their childhood on the mother's initiative, one *tiqaf*¹⁰⁰ ritual consists in getting the girl to pass through the cut warp once the weaving is finished just before removing it from the upper beam¹⁰¹. The passage through the opening in the weaving, between the upper beam and the finished weaving, operates as a symbolic chastity belt which preserves her from sexual penetration. As she passes through the opening, she is lightly hit with the beating comb

¹⁰⁰ *Tiqaf* comes from the Arabic term *witaq* (from the verbal root *WTHQ*) which means to hinder, tie, chain. There are positive *tiqaf* which are aimed at self-protection and negative ones which are imposed by the other on the self.

¹⁰¹ B *Qnat gh-ustta*: closed through *astta*.

on her lower back or bottom three times whilst the following is said: ‘At the time of puberty, that iron knife (penis) which approaches you becomes soft/loose (like the *talamt* plant)¹⁰². The undoing of the ritual requires a gathering up of all the elements of *astta* without forgetting any (see below) and to wash oneself sitting on these elements, with hot water from top to bottom whilst the following words are pronounced: woman becomes loose/untied when men are hard (like an iron weapon)¹⁰³. This ritual could be seen as a symbolic excision aimed at ‘closing’ women. In addition to the positive value of wool, the gestures performed when working the wool have a magical dimension (Doutté, 1909, Westermarck, 1926) because of their dangerous and powerful efficacy in closing spaces (material environment as well as the body). The movements of closing knots, of crossing and tying threads, are seen as akin or related to activities and powers that close, tie, and hinder the actions of other human beings, including men. Thus the knot in the Moroccan context is seen as the opposite to connecting and relating (Küchler 2001, 2006) but rather as trapping or stopping, and of enclosing.

The efficacy of closing women or *tiqaf* is such that it can sometimes not be undone rendering intercourse impossible with their husbands. This is explained by the fact that it is easy to forget one of the many elements of *astta* during the opening ritual. The elements include the *taska*, the screws, the various and smallest elements and the thread used in the *inliten* which is rarely discarded, and usually recycled in the next weaving. In case of failure, a man, the *fqih* or *taleb*, has to be involved. The woman may eventually have to go to the hospital more than three hours drive away. The problem of undoing the closing is so frequent that some mothers have resorted not to use it at all and to rely on education alone to ensure that their daughters do not lose their virginity. Another reason for the decline of this practice is that in performing it, mothers are hindering their daughters’ reputation as *tiqaf* may also be practiced when mothers are worried that their daughters are too promiscuous with men.

There is a strong link between lack of mobility (which implies work indoors) and preservation of virginity through *tiqaf*. Indeed in villages where women do not go

¹⁰² *atgat tuzzâlt ig wanân sim yûshkân talamt*. I was not able to identify this plant, apparently a creeper.

¹⁰³ *atktalamt ig urgâzans tuzâlt*. A similar saying in other regions of Morocco (Basset 1922) and Algeria (Yacine 1993) compares women to a wall and men to a thread in the ‘closing’ formulae and inversely in the re-opening ritual.

out to work in the fields (Ayt Samgan) I was told that they did not need to perform such rituals because of their confinement. On the other hand this was interpreted by weavers who go to fields in other areas as a hypocritical position of distinction. The fact that some grandmothers teach their grand daughters how to handle a man who may be tempted to rape them seems to confirm that men and women do meet despite the ideology of sexual segregation. Indeed some festivals have the purpose of allowing young women and men to meet: for example, at the '*Ashura mussem* of f-Udrar near Taliouine and at the '*Id kbir* festival of the Ayt Ubial tribe.

Virgin women are brought up to regard their body and virginity as vulnerable and needing constant protection from the sexual predation of men¹⁰⁴. Ill-intended men may try to use magic to have sexual intercourse with them. These beliefs are found in old tales, which for instance tell the story of men who will use the help of an elderly woman (often the devil in disguise) to circumvent female confinement and sexual segregation and eventually trick the virtuous woman¹⁰⁵. Old tales have been revived by the contemporary Berber movie industry, which relies heavily on cheap video and DVD diffusion.

The spatial movements of women

This official line about women's confinement is greatly challenged by practice, as women circulate within the domestic space, avoiding specific spatial points or coming out only at specific times of the day. The sphere of domesticity cannot be reduced to the house but includes various distances and degrees of mobility within and around the village. Women may circulate only between close households (as most mothers do), to access the fountain on the main village path (as girls and younger unmarried women do) or to go to the family plot enclosed in or outside the borders of the village. Some activities may thus imply total confinement (e.g. processing and cooking of food, which involves winnowing and cleaning grains or pulses, making sour milk and bread, cleaning and caring for the house and its occupants, work of the wool) or extended mobility within the village boundaries (e.g. fetching of water from and

¹⁰⁴ Ironically men believe that women have natural insatiable sexual needs (Bouhdiba 1975/1985; Mernissi 1975; Sabbah 1984).

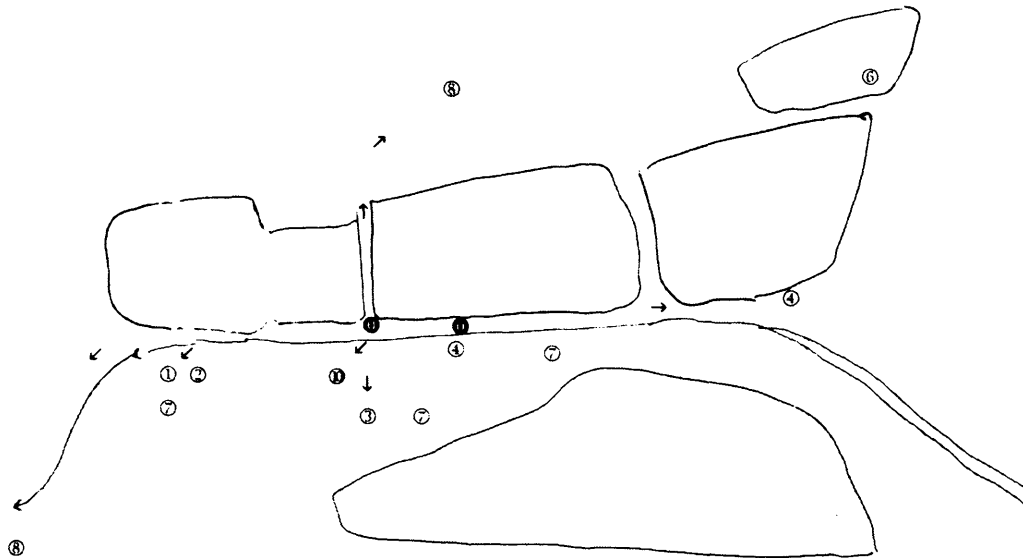
¹⁰⁵ The potential victim is not necessarily a virgin woman but can be happily married.

laundry work at the streams or fountains) and even outside the village (e.g. gathering and transporting firewood, harvesting crops). In some villages women also go to the pasture that is sometimes 10 km away from the village, either visiting several times a week or moving there for the month in the summer (July-October) accompanied by other female kin, and usually a man.

The mobility of women is greatly shaped by the topography and the habitat configuration of villages. Some villages and towns allow for or limit the circulation of women. In an Ayt Waghrda village (fig. 18), there is only one way for those living on the main road to access any important spots in the village (e.g. fountain, grocer's, routes outside the village), which means that women have to pass in front of several strategic spots where men gather for long periods, very much like in the situation of the Kabyle village described by Bourdieu (1977; 1990). Their idle stasis and their controlling gaze annoys adult women such as Lala Rqiya a 50 year old Ayt Waghrda woman who says in jest that: "their balls have taken root in the ground" and has to hide the presents her neighbours give under her dress, if she does not want men to gossip about it. As soon as the 'asr prayer calls men to the mosque, all women come out, including those who do not even visit the pasture. They may go to the saint's tomb, which is accessible from various routes to pick up some wool thread that another woman will have deposited there. This wool is supposed to ease practice and skill acquisition. In addition, these restrictions on women's mobility are completely dropped when women go to the *tadrart*.

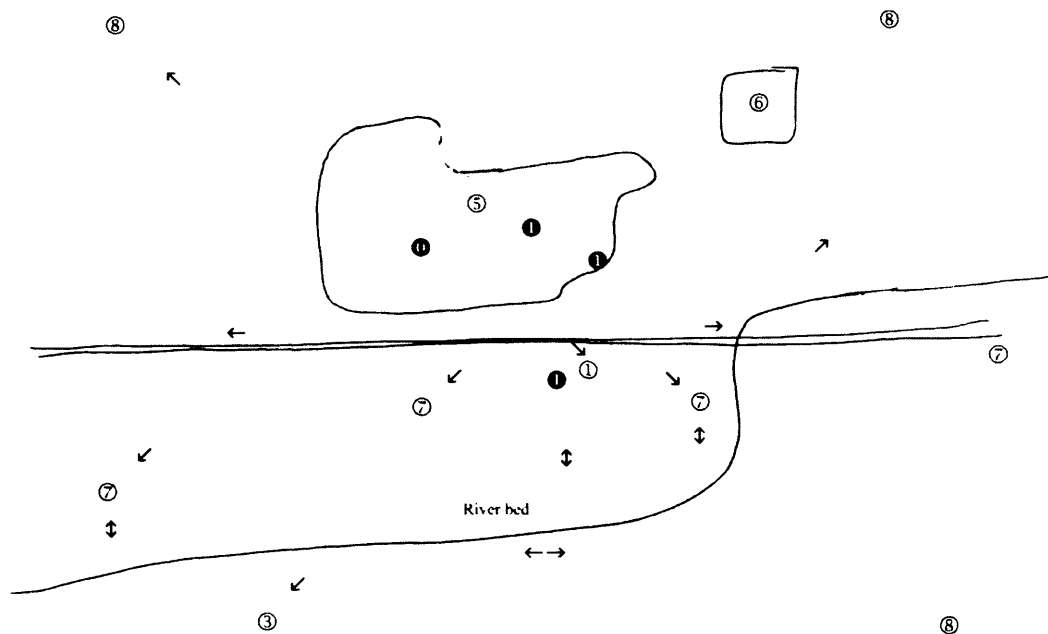
In contrast, in an Ayt Ubial village (fig. 19), new houses are built well apart on a large space, leaving many routes to circulate between houses and to the main spots. Two or three older men have a preferred spot, but they also spend a lot of time indoors. Younger men (numbering sometimes ten or more) have several favourite places (e.g. on the stoned square used to beat the cereals, but also on the other side of the fountain, where they watch the girls, or on a flat space where they play football). In the mountains, women may find a quiet spot to sit or lie down with another or a few girlfriends. By contrast in Taznakht (fig. 20), when visiting the centre, women have learnt not to give any impression of loitering, but to walk with a very precise place in mind (e.g. residential area, *hammam*, shops), at a brisk pace and with a serious

demeanour. Their trajectory is based on practices of detouring and avoiding all-men areas such as main streets, cafés and restaurants where these hang around.



- Main circulation of women
- ① Fountain and laundry point
- ② Washing point for carpets
- ③ Saint shrine
- ④ Grocer's
- ⑤ Collective oven
- ⑥ School
- ⑦ Enclosed small gardens
- ⑧ Large gardens, fields, hills, pastures
- Older men's spots
- ⇒ track suited for motor vehicles
- path not suited for motor vehicles

Figure 18 Map of an Ayt Waghrda village



→Circulation of women

↔ Areas where women wander

① Fountain and laundry point

② Washing point for carpets

③ Saint shrine

④ Grocer's

⑤ Square for events such as dances

⑥ School

⑦ Enclosed small gardens

⑧ Large gardens, fields, hills, pastures

● Older men's spots

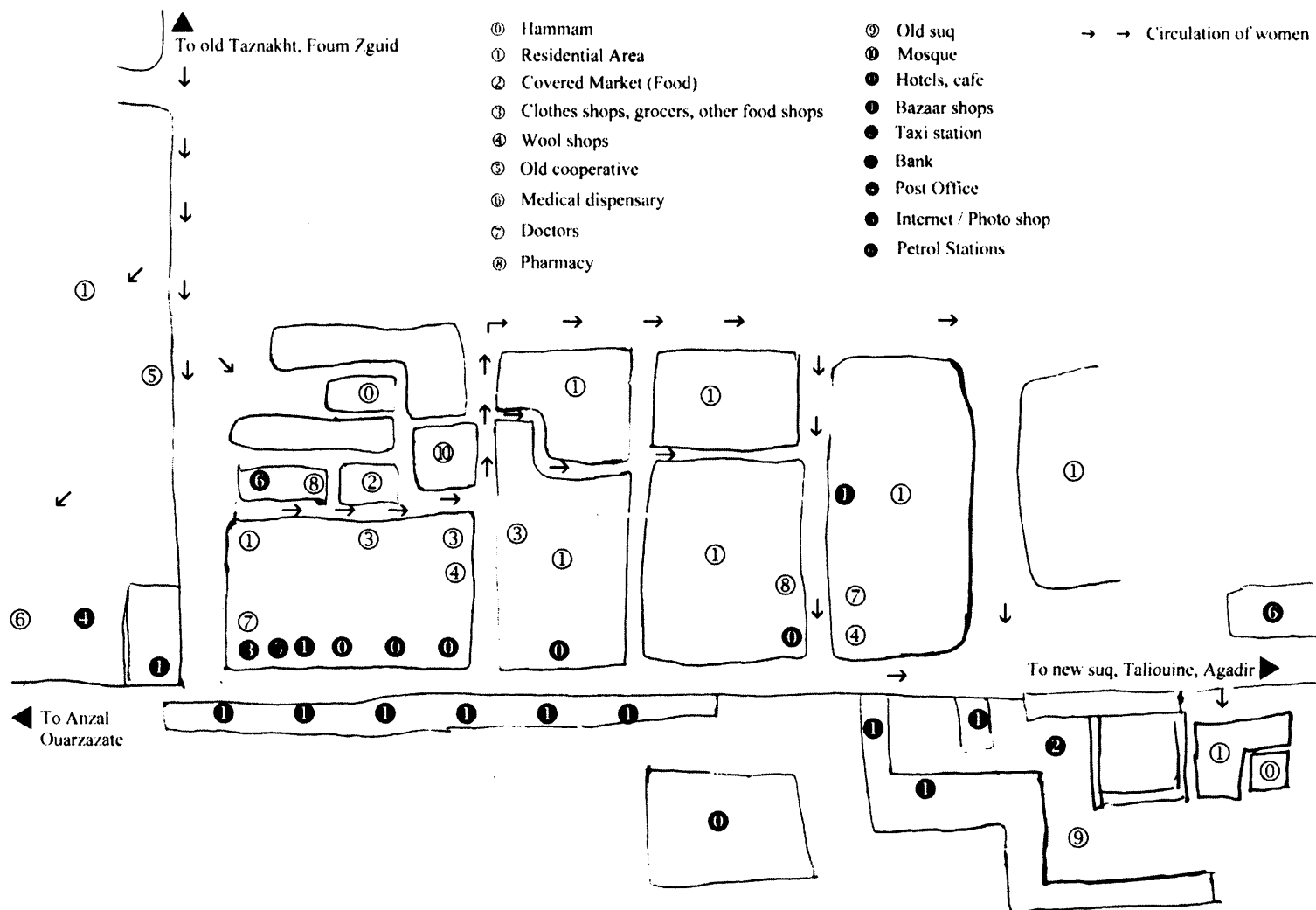
● Young men's spots

⇒ track suited for motor vehicles

→ path

Figure 19 Map of an Ayt Ubial village

Figure 20 Map of Taznakht



It is the circulation of women on the road, outside their extended environment of the village, that has to be justified, useful or exceptional (in case of health problems for instance). Women's physical and geographical mobility, which is opposed to passivity and modesty, is believed to be motivated by the active seeking of contact with men. Even when in educated urban wage labour, women's presence can be interpreted as a new way of finding husbands. There are however many instances of breaking this taboo, since girls may be sent to town as a maid for their urban wealthier extended family, although they may be called back home when they get older to avoid the suspicion about loss of virtue. Mobility is also synonymous with greater knowledge and lesser naivety. It is believed, quite realistically, that their stay in town may also raise their expectations in terms of mobility through marriage. Young men tend to fear less docile wives, whose contact with the urban world, in giving them more knowledge (including the Arabic language) may have rendered them more autonomous. The power of female gossips in the mountain villagers in some cases is such that young women prefer to stay confined within the village than take the risk to stay celibate or to marry below their hopes. Even being away from the village, on a day trip to another mountain village accompanied by their mother may jeopardise the girl's prospects for marriage in the eyes of the other villagers, women being particularly keen at checking each other's behaviour.

Nawel, a male Taznakht teacher opposes the Arabic terms '*tarbiya*' (formal education) and '*zarbiya*' (carpet). Formal education can be seen as opposed to weaving in that it implies mobility and takes the workforce of female children away from the loom. In the mountains, some fathers argue that 'weaving is school'. Sending girls to school, from their point of view, is a waste of money as their labour would be lost. Most villages in the mountains only provide schooling to primary level, and only a small minority of male villagers leave the village for secondary education. As a result, women over 20 in the mountains have rarely been able to go to school and are completely illiterate, and those between 14 and 18 may only have gone to school for two or three years. In Taznakht, the number of girls who abandoned school after having successfully finished primary education is estimated at 39.15 % ¹⁰⁶. For a university education, it is

¹⁰⁶ Statistics for the years 1996 to 2000 provided by Boulahriss (2000:15) from a study made by a deputy head master in Taznakht.

necessary to travel to the large cities, at a great expense. This is why some parents prefer to invest in the sons, their future 'retirement' security.

When considering the mobility of women, one should distinguish daily areas of visits related to labour or leisure, from exceptional mobility related to events. Whereas adult married women tend to stay within the confine of their house, they go out near the saint's shrine to cook the couscous for the *ma'rûf*, which happens several times a year, determining the agrarian calendar. The *ma'rûf* implies the sharing by the community of sacrificial meat. They also accompany their daughters to the village place on the festival nights, sitting on the female side and keeping an eye on them. At weddings, they may be part a delegation of married women accompanying the new bride in the village of her husband. Dancing or singing in public is not allowed once one is married. Married women cannot be confused with unmarried women because they adopt a new headdress and make up their eyes with *khôl* (antimony).

Hierarchy of female activities: the dynamics of division of labour within same sex

If the subjective physical cost of weaving work situates it above outdoor activities such as harvesting or going to large gardens (*tadrart**), weaving is at the bottom of indoor activities. The value attached to indoor activities is not merely related to the local ideological value of confinement, but also because materially, they are cleaner, do not require the same amount of energy and take place in a fresher environment. Fieldwork requires walking long distances and is very dirty, dusty and hard under the harsh sun. Harvesting is very uncomfortable: the prickles of the wheat or barley penetrate the skin through the clothes particularly the soft flesh of the neck and bust against which the bundles rub; the soil which covers them transfers to the skin, clothes and hair, which take on a dark brick shade; the palms of the hands bleed. The exercise of going there by foot and folding one's back for long hours causes back and leg pain and is exhausting. In addition to darkening their skin, outdoor work makes them sweat heavily and smell unpleasant¹⁰⁷.

Weaving is similar to other indoor reproductive activities (such as grinding grain, making bread dough, and making fermented milk) in that it fixes the bodies of

¹⁰⁷ Both women and men love perfume and splash themselves abundantly with it.

women to a space and its material culture, and requires a prolonged sitting position whilst the upper body works intensely. Both productive and reproductive work have a cyclical and repetitive dimension: they recommence every day or so, are never ending and thus are invisible. They are time consuming and often based on collective work. But within indoor activities weaving is the one that is the closest to outdoor ones in terms of physical cost, save for the fact that they are working in a fresh space away from the sun. None of the reproductive activities require the sheer amount of time and constant energy expenditure demanded by weaving, which makes weavers sweat a lot.

Activities which keep women within the vicinity of the house or village have been described as dull and repetitive, not requiring rapt concentration¹⁰⁸, featuring minor independent tasks which order does not get lost if interrupted, and thus as compatible with the responsibilities of childcare and nursing which usually falls on women (Brown 1970; Burton, Brudner and White 1977; Parezo 1982). This is coherent with the Marxist view of division of labour according to which the most tedious, dirty, repetitive, boring, invisible work goes to women whereas men do the easiest work. For instance in Egypt (Lynch 1984) or Tunisia, where men weave, they delegate to women the ‘ancillary task of thread-winding and putting preparatory and finishing touches on the loom and cloth’ (Teitelbaum 1978: 67). In Morocco, the itinerant carpet designers (*raggâm*¹⁰⁹) who were commissioned to produce pile carpets did not do the heavy work of knotting, simply showing the design to female executants. Feminist scholars have shown that a hierarchy between high and low technologies (Cockburn 1983; Wajcman 1991) along sex lines gives less valued technologies to women. Tabet (1979) showed that across cultures often the least technically complex and most rudimentary tools are abandoned by men and left to women. Hence in Morocco, modern and easy to use urban horizontal looms are exclusively used by men. The vertical ones, on which carpets are made, are left to women.

¹⁰⁸ In fact, weaving may require periods of great concentration when performing complicated motifs or during the warping process. The mathematical organisation of weaving allows for interruption, since one can work out where to resume again the motif from the structure, but interruption is incompatible with good quality work (see chapter 5). Mernissi also notes the incompatibility of concentration and child care (1988:181).

¹⁰⁹ Berque (1964: 19) enthusiastically describes the *raggâm* as a designer (*‘modeliste ou cartonnier’*) whose drawings are made with the knots on the warp, artist propagator and adaptor of models. Each *raggâm* has his own repertory of motifs, which he keeps secret and which dies with him if he does not pass his knowledge on.

Techniques of power and the control of weaving labour

Weaving is a collective disciplinary technique (Foucault 1979) requiring teamwork and "consuming many hands" (to use the local expression). Indeed most families involved in high production are invariably those with more than three weavers, who can be sisters, cousins, sisters-in-law, mother and daughters. It is also a space where patriarchal power is directly exercised, delegated or internalised by docile bodies (Foucault 1975). The movement of the weavers is organised by the simple fact that they are confined in a closed space where the time and quality of work can easily be controlled. In carpet producing families this activity can occupy the weavers from seven to twelve hours a day without any interruption other than meals. This is dependent on the personality of the head of the household, the importance of weaving as a source of income for the family and the other types of activities required from the women.

Female space in the context of North Africa or the Middle East has often been described as a domestic sanctuary of intimacy and enclosure of femininity, free from male interference and the knowledge of men (but see critique by Vom Bruck, 1996). The space of weaving is not exclusively feminine since men are often present in it, particularly when this space is also the living room. Men are also present indirectly in the very fact that the head of the family usually delegates his authority to the mother who is held responsible in case anything goes wrong. It was quite common for the father to ask the mother to re-measure the width of the warp after it had been mounted and on one occasion, she had the humiliating task of cutting off a superfluous chunk.

When the family gets a new order, the father informs them of the overall design requested (background colours and composition) and the weavers discuss the details of the future carpet between themselves, the responsibilities of each and the dates of operations (from the dyeing operation to the weaving itself). They often set a deadline, which may correspond to a religious festival where it is taboo to weave. In some families, all the operations are performed in one day whereas in others they might be distributed over several days, some leaving the constitution of the shed system (*inliten*) for the day after the warping and mounting of the loom and starting the weaving itself a day later. This depends on the freedom weavers have to manage their work. Often it is the mother or the team leader (the most skilled weaver) who is in charge of the crucial

warping operation where the measurements of the carpet's width and length are set. The team leader will also organise and ensure the overall aesthetic cohesion of the carpet (common elements such as the frame and separation motifs). Each weaver usually choose the motifs they are going to make in their portion and have to agree on the colour of the background they are going to work on if the composition of the carpet requires several squares of colours.

The mother is in charge of the foundations of the carpet (width and length of warp, its tension and the spacing between each thread), whereas the overall aesthetics (frame, center and transitions between parts) is the responsibility of the most skilled weaver. Men also follow the progression of the weaving and usually keep a count of how many more beaming operations are left before the end. The fact that this space is not merely one of support and cooperation but also one of competition and rivalry, is exploited by the male head of household to encourage productivity. For example, they may try to foster competitiveness between the weavers so that they finish their work quicker. Or they punish weavers who have lagged behind or have created mistakes by demanding that they work later or by humiliating them. One man would get weavers working on two looms in the household to foster competition between each team and thus obtain a higher productivity. Fathers, but also mothers appeal to the weavers' reason, their sense of duty and their feeling of pride to motivate them: do you want to have nice clothes? Do you want to end up begging at your neighbours' doors? Their fear of losing social status is as strong as their pride of it.

The system of the division of weaving into individual portions of work makes each weaver responsible for that portion. Therefore, any mistakes during the process of weaving can be attributed to a specific weaver. If the team leader or family head does not take charge of the surveillance, the other weavers may remind the recalcitrant of her delay, the weaving needing to be always kept at an equal level, for the beaming operation. In fact, the control is often internalized and self imposed. In the Sirwa society, and in the disciplinary space of *astta*, one is always under the gaze of others. This implies self-observation and the control of others over the self. Even from outside the house, the sound of the beating comb (*taska*) informs passers-by, neighbours or the male kin that women are occupied in legitimate activities. In the morning around 6 am

or after the siesta in the hot summer, the first girl to sit at *astta* ‘rings the knell’, giving the first beating to the weft, she signals that it is time to start. The sound of the *taska* calls and encloses all the weavers in the same spatial temporality, their bodies following the alternate tempo of the beating of the weft and that of passing the weft. *Taska* is rarely heard on its own as weavers use at least two, often in a discordant manner, unless one is behind and finds herself alone at the loom.

Allocation of female labour depends on age and status

The workload of women in weaving is related to the number of other female members who can undertake other reproductive activities. In the mountains the allocation of tasks depends on age and status. Higher social status is associated with a higher level of confinement. Wealthy wives may visit other close neighbours or women of their status within the village, but may be dispensed from weaving. As a rule, heavy, outdoor work is left to the younger (daughters, daughters-in-law, sisters of the husband) or lower status women (in some areas *Hartani* or poorer women¹¹⁰). Paradoxically, despite the obsession with the virginity of young women, these are very mobile, performing tasks where they are likely to meet men, such as fetching wood or working in the fields. In fact, the control and confinement of married women is stronger and they tend not to leave the vicinity of the house when they go out, either to chat with the neighbours, or to help them with the warping process.

This hierarchy in the division of labour which gives greater freedom of mobility but greater work load to the youngest, fits with the local value given to age. Older or married women are usually in charge of easier jobs indoors such as cooking or milking cows and making fermented milk, whereas younger women make and bake the bread (which in combination with weaving is a health hazard¹¹¹), work in the field and at the loom. Elderly women occupy functions such as carding and spinning the wool when they can still use their sight and their hands. Otherwise they spend most of their time in

¹¹⁰ Slavery was abolished by the colonial administration in 1912, but the relationship between old masters and slaves has sometimes been kept alive, some ex-slave families giving away a few days of labour on the loom or else to their old master's family; in addition, within a Berber family, the ‘obliged’ female subordinate members will also contribute their work to the more powerful and wealthier ones in their family. Poor women work also in the fields, as ‘*khammas*’ (from the Arabic root *KHMS*, five) which means they will be paid a fifth (or today a quarter) of their harvest.

¹¹¹ The smoke from their oven causes respiratory and pulmonary problems (Golshan et al. 2002, Joshi et al 1994; 1996).

prayers, listening to conversations and giving advice. Women do not see themselves as a homogeneous category: it is clear that the elder sister and the mother and aunts get better treatment than others (in for example, their position in choosing presents or goods brought from the market). Some elder women, particularly if they became widows young and have managed their house with courage and wisdom may take on an important and prestigious position in the village and the region. Older women also have the power to travel alone to visit their family and their daughters.

Older women's workload is also dependent on whether there are sufficient younger female helpers to undertake field or weaving work. The importance of female help, daughters and friends is expressed in many songs (see Appendix 2, songs 1, 2, 3, 8 and 13.1), and particularly the dilemma of letting the daughter leave to get married. Some women may feel the need to weave to prove their value, particularly if the marriage is at stake (with the husband considering taking a second wife) or if they are older divorcees who live at the expense of their family.

Daily rhythm of work and rota systems

Women are organised into a rota system which varies between houses and villages, but is also flexible according to season, who is sick, and who is present. One general principle of the rota system is that some weave while others perform the domestic duties. In a family in Taznakht, the younger daughter was the one who was exempt from weaving, partly because she had a poor sight, partly because she was more spoiled than the others. She helped in other domestic duties. In my host family, not all the weavers had learnt to bake bread or cook. The younger daughters were still going to school and could not weave.

Table 1: One day in a Taznakht family (winter)

Fatim (sister)	Rahma (sister)	Aisha (sister)
7.00 Wakes up	7.15 Wakes up	7.00 Wakes up
7.30 breakfast	7.30 breakfast	7.30 breakfast
7.45 sweeps the weaving room	Washing up	7.50 Starts preparing loom for

		beaming
8.00 Beaming	Beaming	Beaming
8.20 Weaves	Weaves	Weaves
10.00 tea break	10.00 tea break	10.00 tea break
10.10 Weaves	Weaves	Weaves
12.30 Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
13.00 Weaves	Weaves	Weaves
19.00 Rest time, TV and tea	Rest time, TV and tea	Rest time, TV and tea
21.00 dinner		
22.00 Bed time		
Weaving: 7.30 hours		

Depending on the family ethos, each weaver is free to manage her work, spending more time on leisure activities during the day and staying at the loom later at night as long as she does not delay the others. In other families, such freedom is unthinkable, each minute of the day having to be used productively. The Ayt Waghirda women in particular are reputed among women from other villages to be subjected to more rigid schedules. They are not allowed to go on errands, they wake up before everybody else and since the introduction of electricity, will finish weaving well after night falls. In contrast with other families where each weaver is in charge of her individual portion, in these rigid families when one or two of the women are busy dealing with other household chores, the one that stays at *astta* must take on the weaving of the others so they are all at the same level when the others come back. This means she has to move from one extremity of *astta* to the other, making the process more uncomfortable than if she had to work steadily on her own portion. In such families, the male head of the house usually checks on the weavers and shames those who are lagging behind. The materiality of weaving implies that any mistakes made will appear more obvious as the weaving progresses. Therefore, none of them would leave a mistake uncorrected.

Allocation of time to weaving depends on activities that the family requires for its daily maintenance (cooking, cleaning, caring) and for its economic subsistence. In some families where their labour is required during harvest time all women stop weaving altogether. In my host family where weaving is an important source of income, however, the youngest was be assigned to the hated task of harvesting the cereals with the men and one adult woman when her sisters were staying at home weaving. She came back every afternoon exhausted and in a bad mood and spent three hours napping. One way of escaping weaving and agricultural work in my host family was to be sent to their extended family in the cities, as a maid. The argument of having bad health is not limited to women as it is also used by young men to leave the countryside. During Ramadan, in stark contrast to the cities and other urban areas where workers are given more spare time to rest, productivity is higher because food preparation is only required once.

Here I would like to give some details about the work organization of weavers in my host household. The size of the carpet determines the rota and number of workers. In the household there are five weavers. They prefer smaller carpets since they work quicker on them and do not have to all work on them at once. For three cubits carpets which require only three weavers at a time, the rota implies that for two days of weaving, a weaver has a day off. But the rule is flexible and the order can be altered at the discretion of weavers. In table no 2, the column corresponds to the position of the weaver.

Table 2: Rota in a family of five weavers working on a 3 cubits carpet (one weaver per cubit).

Day 1	Amal	Ijja	Biya
Day 2	Rahma	Ijja	Biya
Day 3	Rahma	Tudda	Amal
Day 4	Tudda	Ijja	Amal
Day 5	Rahma	Tudda	Biya
Day 6	Ijja	Amal	Rahma
Day 7	Ijja	Amal	Biya

When working on a five cubits carpet (table 3), the five weavers would keep their respective place until the carpet was finished, and they would manage their time freely. They had to plan so that they fitted in their non-weaving duties with the constraint of beaming every two days, but also with leisure time. For instance, if Rahma was on duty to make the evening meal and the next morning's breakfast, she would need to work a lot either during that day where she was on duty or the next day. I remember wondering how Rahma was going to manage to finish her motif before the next beaming as she was far behind in comparison with her sisters. Although she was usually in charge of baking the bread, her mother did it in her place on the day she needed to work more before the beaming (all weavers have to reach the same level) so as not to delay her sisters and cousins. In fact, she was working on a beautiful motif which although it looked complicated, because it was elongated, took her only two hours to finish. In contrast her sister spent a great amount of time making a complicated and time consuming motif, not as wide and spread, and not necessarily as elegant, but definitively intricate and challenging and she finished just before Rahma. This sister was five years younger and was also very fond of weaving, perhaps because she had woven a great less many years than her. Thus the women in the household rely extensively on each other for many domains of activity and are flexible as to who does what when. Some weavers were more skilled at convincing others to take on their shift. If one of the sisters was sick, one of them had to take over. It was often the one who minded the least and liked weaving the most who ended up doing more weaving work. There was no gender segregation, all meal were taken together and men were often present if they had no agricultural work. As in many families, the father is in charge of making the tea, at each meal, and usually also once in the morning and once in the evening an hour or so before the meal, a task which women only take on when he is not available.

Table 3: One day in an Ayt Ubial family in the Summer

Amal (sister)	Rahma (sister)	Tudda (sister)	Ijja (sister)	Biya (cousin)
6.30 Wakes up	6.45 Wake up	6.30 Wakes up	6.30 Wakes up, sweeps the room and courtyard	6.30 Wakes up
6.40 Weaving	7.00 wash up last night's dishes and prepare breakfast	6.40 Weaving	7.00 Weaving	6.50 Weaving
7.30 breakfast	7.30 serves breakfast	7.30 breakfast	7.30 breakfast	7.30 breakfast
7.40 weaving	Washing up of breakfast dishes	7.40 weaving	8.00 Prepare bread dough and bake it, weaves in between	8.00 Weaves
11.00 tea break	All family members are present			
11.10 bake bread until 11.40, then goes back to weaving	11.00 Weaving	11.00 Weaving	Weaving	Washing up, start preparing lunch
12.30 Lunch	all members of family are the present			
13.00 weaves	13.00 weaves	13. 00Weaves	13. 00 Rests one hour	13.00 Washing up and goes back to weaving
15.00 takes a break, goes back and forth	Wash family clothes with another of her sisters and friends (1 hours) weaves.	Visits friends	Weaves	Weaves
17.00 go and get food for the cow, and feeds her	Weaves	Weaves	Walk to the gardens one hour	Goes and walk with a female friend at the border of the village
18.00 break	outside house with	other female kin (including mothers	and neighbours and daughters)	
19.00 Prepares evening meal	All weave in presence of male kin			
20.00 Tea Break				

21.00 Meal served followed by tea				Weaves min	45
21.30 Washing up	Everybody rests				
22.00 bed time					
Total weaving hours: > 7.30	6	9	7.30	7	

In an Ayt Waghrda family, there was no such rota, girls despite their young age could weave, cook and bake. They also did the laundry. The mother was in charge of the cow and goats, making the fermented milk and the leather containers to store them, and was usually going to the village gardens (*igran*) early in the morning, coming back around 8 am. As it was the summer, her sister-in-law and her youngest daughter visited the *tadrart** twice a week, to fetch herbs and vegetables. The only meal the whole family shared, included the husbands and young boys, was the evening meal, and the father was usually in charge of the meat.

Table 4: One day in an Ayt Waghrda family in the Summer (*tadrart* time)

Lala Fatma 32 (mother)	Rahma (sister-in-law)	Rqiya, 14 (daughter)	Rachida, 9 (daughter)
	5.00 Wakes up and prepares donkey and mule		5.00 Wakes up
	5.15 Leaves the house to go to the pastures		
6.15 wakes up		6.15 wakes up	
6.30 goes to the garden to get some food for the cow		6.30 Sweeps the courtyard and kitchen, makes the dough	
8.00 breakfast		8.00 Breakfast	
8.30 milks the cow		weaves	
9.00 makes the fermented milk		Makes the bread	
9.45 weaves		weaves	
		10.30 takes bread to oven	
		11.00 weaves	
		11.30 starts cooking lunch	

12.30 Lunch		Lunch, then washing up	
13.45 weaves		weaves	
	15.00 back from pastures, unload donkey, puts everything away		weaves
15.30 tea break	tea break	tea break	tea break
15.45 weaves	Weaves	Weaves	Weaves
18.00 cleans and prepare leather container for milk	Starts preparing meal	Helps with food	Rests or spins
19.00 evening meal	in company of head of household male who attends to meat		
20.00 Rests	Clears and cleans	Rests	Rests
21.00 Bed time for all			
Total hours of weaving > 6.30	2.15	<6.00	2.45

Malika, a female carpet dealer

Malika, an Arabic speaking *Hartani* woman in her late thirties, educated to primary level only, is a business woman from an area near Foum Zguid, south of Taznakht. She gained inspiration and support from her own mother. The mother of four children, Malika married a cousin and left Taznakht for his village 60 km south of Taznakht (close to Foum Zguid), but she has kept a close relationship to her mother, a widow of a miner who owns a house in Taznakht. Her mother is a formidable woman, who sells henna and embroidered female clothes. She took loans through micro-credit firstly with her mother and sister. They were among the first families to have taken on micro-credit from Ouarzazate well before it was introduced in Taznakht in 2003. They help each other with the reimbursing of their monthly debt. The mother also provides accommodation to her daughter when she comes to visit to sell her carpets, which she can also stock there¹¹². Malika's eldest son is also now living with his grandmother whilst he studies in Taznakht.

¹¹² One of the costs related to carpets is that of transporting them from her village to Taznakht.

Malika has always been mobile, having been professionally trained as a master-weaver (*ma'alma*¹¹³) in the government craft institution. She has worked for several years for a Marrakech carpet dealer as a weaver in his workshop there, where she improved her weaving skills and probably started thinking about becoming a dealer herself. She attempted to start an association with some other women in her village following the example of another older competitor weaver in the area of Foug Zguid who had greatly benefited from government help in the 1960s and 1970s and created her own cooperative. She soon realised that the format of an association did not suit her needs so she is now in the process of trying to open a cooperative. She also has the project to open a shop to sell her carpets in her village where a tourist road is planned. She would like to own her own vehicle, a motorbike to start with. Although subordinate in the world of men and dealers because of her gender, age, ethnicity and education, she is an important figure in her village where she provides work for weavers through the commissions she obtains. Her conception of her career does not differ much from that of the middlemen who she sees as her competitors: she delegates the weaving work to poorer or subordinate women and takes charge of the transport and marketing of carpets. This is why the format of an association does not suit her: she considers that the exchange work (travel, distribution, finding commissions, transporting items to buyers) gives her the right to a greater share of the final profit from the products.

Her husband, who is in a vulnerable position as he is not able to work in his profession as a builder because of a skin allergy to building materials, keeps away from her business. Perhaps his position as a cousin belonging to the close tied kinship network guarantees his cooperation? Malika has the drive and personality to be a dealer. She knows how to negotiate orders with dealers and takes financial risks (she has several loans from the bank and micro-credit organisations). She is also creative, constantly renewing the design of her carpets and taking the advantage of visiting the *suq* and bazaars to get new ideas. She has ambition, contacts, energy, and can be as reckless with other weavers as male dealers are. She shares with other small dealers her

¹¹³ *Ma'alma*, from 'LM (learning, knowledge) is an Arabic term usually used for weavers who have received a formal training in one of the craft department's institutions. Weavers receive a sort of diploma, in the form of a card, specifying how long they trained for and where. Such a formal title, however, does not really bring any financial recognition to the weavers in terms of bargaining power with traders, particularly in comparison with the Sirwa weavers who are amongst the most skilled in Morocco. It can only guarantee the value of weavers who are not born in a culture of skilled weaving.

lack of access to buyers, despite her greater mobility, her marketing and creative skills. Furthermore, weaving work has allowed her to pay for labour on her henna fields. Her increased income from the sale of weaving goods and other products from her fields allows her to employ other women which means that she has more time for other entrepreneurial income generating activities. She sells powdered henna and mixture of other spices in Taznakht using her network of friends and family to visit each house carrying her products with her.

Conclusion

Considering the allocation of activities between women allows for an exploration of the diversity of relationship with weaving, in terms of freedom not to weave, relative mobility and workload. Depending on women's personal histories and circumstances, size of the family, female and male interaction within the household, family ethos and status, there is a great variation between women.

Chapter 6 Techniques of gendering : female subjectivation through weaving

In the anthropological, sociological and art literature dealing with the process of weaving in Morocco or North Africa, the emphasis on the detailed description of weaving operations and tools tends to push the weaver into the background. When a weaver is mentioned it is often as a skilled reproducer of traditional beliefs and aesthetics, that is as a simple disembodied executant with no thoughts or feelings about the activity of weaving. This shortcoming can be attributed to a reductionist understanding of techniques where the “agents” are mere appendages to their instruments.

This chapter aims at rendering the weavers more visible, through an exploration of the relationship of the weavers to the materiality of weaving, a materiality that is not fixed, finished or passive, but acted upon as well as deeply affecting the makers. It is postulated that the object coming-into-being plays an important role in the crafting of weavers as moral women. I propose to investigate what it feels like to be a weaver and how the bodily and emotional dimensions of practice involved in material culture production construct a subject who acquires embodied skills and dispositions adapted to a specific materiality and society. The concept of incorporation which describes the confrontation of the subject in motion with material culture is central to this analysis. Discipline is a dimension inherent to the incorporation of objects and the mutual construction of material culture, acting subjects and network of actors.

This chapter consists of three sections:

(1) A brief introduction analyzes the Berber terminology of weaving as practice and space, as acted upon as well as endowed with agency, as coming into being rather than finished.

(2) Three aspects of the materiality of weaving are investigated (fixity, dynamics and temporality) to show the dialectical shaping of both a subject (body and mind) and an object-coming-into-being. This section examines the argument that through

disciplinary techniques the weavers gain a knowledge of the self and construct a stronger self.

(3) The last part considers the embodied knowledge of weaving and how it is locally related to notions of value.

Terminology

Practice, space and agency

The reduction of weaving to instrumental techniques appears in the way the Berber term *astta* (or *azta*) is often translated as “loom” in the anthropological or sociological literature (Bourdieu 1977, Forelli & Harries 1977, Messick 1987, Yassine, 1993). Lefébure warns about such mistakes, using the research made by the British linguist James Bynon on *astta* (1963/2005)¹¹⁴. This is certainly due to a functionalist view of what carpet production is about, and can be attributed to the historical approach of techniques as efficacious action of agents on matter. If the term *astta* covers the meaning of technical instruments, it is also a verbal noun¹¹⁵ that shares the same layers of meaning which exist in English: ‘weaving’ in its double ‘dimension of activity’ and ‘product of this activity’. As an activity, weaving implies a temporality in which the motor actions of the weavers are performed. As an object coming-into-being, the life of *astta* starts from the first time the stick is placed in the ground to prepare the warp¹¹⁶. Weavers use the term *astta* from then until the weaving is finished when they cut the warp from the upper beam. Once the weaving is completed, *astta* is perceived as suspended between life and death and must be cut. In the same way that human beings must be buried as quickly as possible after their last breath, the funerary rituals of *astta* must be performed as soon as the last weft is passed¹¹⁷. The finished object, the

114 ‘The translation of *azta* by loom is therefore never obvious; and is in fact often wrong’.(ne s’impose donc en vérité jamais; elle serait même bien souvent fautive). Lefébure 1978 : 90).

115 Although there is a verb to express the meaning of weaving (*gern*), it is more common to talk about *astta*, with expressions such as to warp (to make *astta*, *sker astta*), or to “to sit at *astta*” (*gawr dar astta*). *Dar astta* indicates some kind of place name, which is a step away from the limited meaning of *astta* as tool.

116 For a detailed description of the warping operation, see Appendix 1.

117 As with human beings, the funerary operation involves a sort of toilette, which here consists in putting the teeth of the beating comb in some salty water and passing them between the warp threads saying: “We give you water in this world, water us in the other” (*sqinak f-dunia, sqina f-laxra*). Salt has the property to make evil spirits leave. The cycle of *astta* is also seen analogically to that of the cereal field that dies to be reborn (Basset, 1922). There are many other sayings that accompany the cutting of *astta*. Here is another example: When they cut the carpet, they pass the *taska* in salted water and say:

“independent” piece of textile which can be manipulated in various positions, spread on the floor or folded, then takes on the term of its use: pile rug (*tazerbit*), flatweave floor covering or blanket, *akhnif** or belt. Finally, *astta* is also granted agency or intentionality, as it is believed to feed on wool, to breath¹¹⁸, to be inhabited by angels (*malaika*¹¹⁹), to be vulnerable to the evil eye and to be endowed with deadly powers, especially against men. As a result, weavers treat *astta* with respect, some even saluting it when they enter a room where it is worked on: they pass the palm of their hand on the warp and kiss it before saluting other women in the same manner. The local perception of *astta* seem thus to encompass the idea that the materiality of weaving is both acted upon and acting on human beings.

When it is suspended and in vertical tension, *astta*¹²⁰ constitutes a space which encloses the elements of the loom: the frame (*imasen*) made of the uprights (*timendwin*) and beams (B *ifigigen*, A *madria*) and the heddle rod system (*inliten*). It includes also other elements such as the beating combs (*taska*) used to tighten the weft layers, and a needle (*tasmi*) to correct motifs. *Astta* is also made of the warp (*idd*, *tiddi*), the weaving coming-into-being, the weft yarns (*asawi*), not to be confused with the finer and stronger threads used for the brocade motifs (*iklan*), and also the sitting area (constituted with blankets or old rugs, cushions or small stools), the light, the dust, the temperature and the draught. This whole ensemble cannot be limited to one object and solicits all the senses of the weavers, making the perception of the activity-object coming-into-being a holistic experience, difficult to delimit and describe for the weaver interacting with it.

nbbi gis l-`adunagh	I ‘cut’ (remove) our enemies
nbbi gis amhsdnakh	I cut the envious
nbbi gis anwashkhnagh	I cut the gossip

118 The dynamic mechanism of the heddle rod system (opening and closing warp threads) is seen analogically as the soul of *astta*. This system of tension and forces (B *inliten*, A *nira*) is its vulnerable heart: if the bamboo rod (*agahnim inliten*), which constitutes it, was to be removed, the whole weaving would be ruined.

119 Angels or *jnun* (evil or nice spirit, singular : *jann*), these occult forces are believed to assist the weaver in her work and to flee when she is not virtuous. Some even call *astta* *zawit* (*saint, jann, spirit*).

120 Another interpretation is that *astta* means warp (Lefébure 1978), which could fit our theory since the warp is also an object-coming-into-existence, but this does not convey the meanings of technical instruments and weaving activity. In Arabic, *mansaj* is an instrument noun rather than an action noun. Lefébure considers this could have to do with a Latin origin (*tela*, weave (*toile* in French) means warp, but also by extension the ensemble of unmounted loom elements, *imasen* in Berber).

A more faithful translation of the term *astta* would therefore be one that encompassed the activity (space and temporality), the objects (tools, raw materials and weaving-coming-into-being) and the moving weaver(s) without whom the activity would not take place. The relationship of the weaver and *astta* is seen as mutually constitutive, both coming-into-being in their dynamic relationship with each other.



Figure 21 Four weavers about to finish a carpet. The space of the missing fifth weaver is on the right.

The gendered space of *astta*

The weaving position implies a prolonged corporeal contact and a shared intimacy, each weaver sitting next to each other, their knees sometimes touching, objects (threads, yarns, beating combs, needle) circulating from one lap to another, either on request or through helping oneself. Weavers have incorporated in their own spatial orienting and positioning that of others weavers' bodies, which form part of the 'frame' of *astta*, the gestures and posture of others being always taken into consideration before acting. This shared space of practice shapes their female subjectivity and gives them the feeling of being a participant in a community with which they identify (Lave & Wenger 1991). This community of practice is both about gender and knowledge. If questioned about the reasons why men do not weave, some women respond half-jokingly that they would take advantage of the physical contact to fondle them. In fact, both sexes are uneasy about gender mixing and feel embarrassed

with the opposite sex¹²¹. When men are away from *astta*, its space becomes like a 'café of women'¹²² where they sing, exchange gossip and jokes and where the reserved, restrained and modest behaviour expected of women can be relaxed. Friends and neighbours come and visit and they may give a hand with the weaving during their stay, as if to justify their presence. Tapes exchanged between girls¹²³ are played in the space of *astta*. Men are often the topic of their conversations or the love songs, which feed their romantic mind and their hopes for an ideal husband.

One has to be cautious about talking about an exclusive feminine space, as men can be present or close by and are always in the mind of women. The exclusion of men is not constant, and they enjoy being in the space of *astta*, bringing gossip from outside as much as listening to that of women.

A constraining materiality

Astta is characterised by three constraining dimensions: it is fixed in a space and this inflexibility forces weavers to submit to the discipline of immobilization and confinement. It is also paradoxically in movement and this dynamic has to be integrated into the dynamics of the weaver's body. Finally, it has a slow temporality which reinforces the weavers' disposition towards endurance, patience and self mastery. I will explore how these disciplinary techniques of *astta* can be a source of agency.

Immobility and fixity

Loom place and body position

In the past, the form of the loom required that a specific place was assigned to it. The upper beam of the loom (*isutar*, *tassaturt*) is made of a piece of tree trunk fixed high up in a hole (*aghudi*) in the wall (*agadir*) at a right angle. Parallel to it, on the floor, was the lower beam, a larger and flatter trunk usually made of poplar (*safsaf*,

121 In fact the shyness between sexes is often less important with same generation male kin (sexually forbidden to them) than with "foreigners (potential marriage prospect), and when the information discussed does not compromise a woman's reputation. A young unmarried man may boast about his sexual prowess in front of his sisters or cousins whereas they will be careful not to mention any man they are interested in or may have met in front of their male kin.

122 Cafés are taboo to women. This expression was suggested by Aisha al-Qadi, one of the weavers of Taznakht.

123 This exchange between houses hides from parents or at least the father, the fact that some are offered as presents by men who court them.

Populus tremula) and pierced with regular holes (eyes, *tet pl. tiwalin*) designed to receive the bottom part of the warp. Between these a single upright was fixed in a corresponding hole in the lower beam¹²⁴ and attached with ropes at the level of the upper beam. Thus the second upright was supplied by the wall. The warp itself was not stretched directly on the upper beam but on two or three smaller wooden unfixed beams between 60 cm and 1m long resembling the Western kitchen rolling pin (*igh^ura*), their rounded extremities holding the cord and tightening it to the upper beam.

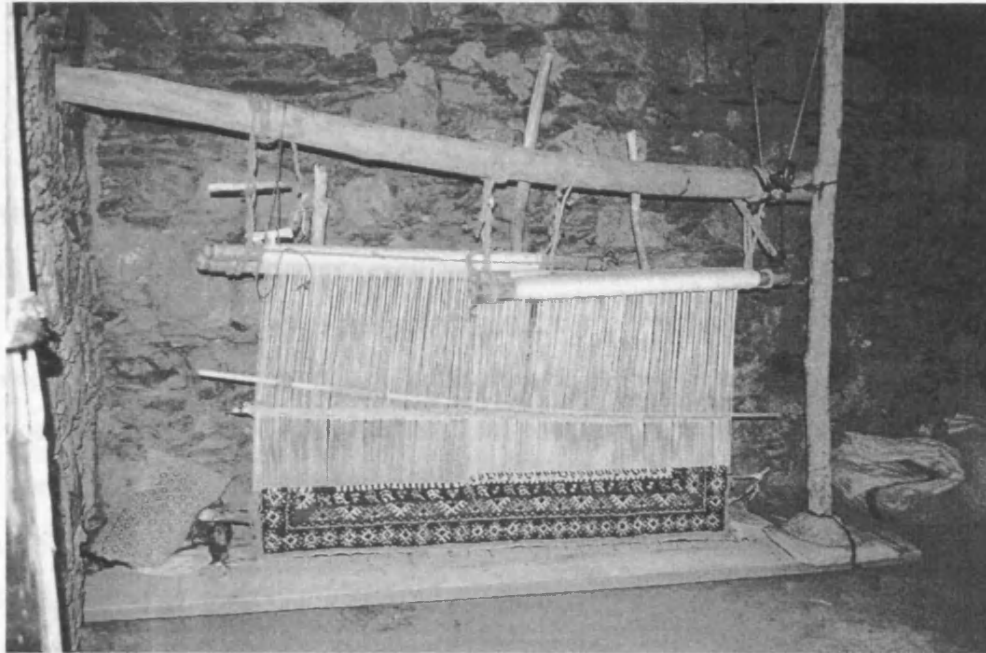


Figure 22 The wooden loom

The precarious balance of the loom explains the necessity of keeping it in the same place and the various taboos¹²⁵ about displacing it. The shape of the weaving is considerably affected by the shape of the loom and any imbalance might result in uneven or misshaped carpets. The loom was often placed behind the main entrance door of the house, in the L shaped hall that sometimes hides the domestic space. This well lit but draughty area, called *ustan* or *aghgum* was perfectly adapted to the fact that in the past, weaving used to take place mainly in spring and summer.

124 Often a grinding mill top made of stone would be used to secure the upright in the lower beam whose stability relied only on that point. Objects also used are old plastic shoes.

125 For instance, Lala Fadma from Ighri had shown the warping process to some visiting Westerners in Taliouine. After they left, as she did not want to waste the work and matter, she decided to carry the mounted warp with the beams back home on her shoulder. She attributed the terrible shoulder and back pains that she had later as the action of the *jnûn**.



Figure 23 Ighura

Although a few of these types of looms are still being used, most families, and particularly those producing carpets regularly, have acquired an iron loom. With the wooden loom, at least three women were required for the beaming process. Now only one is needed, although for ease it is more normal for two weavers to be involved. Wooden looms are associated with the action of pulling. Weavers used to “fight hands, feet and teeth” (to use their expression) to give an even tension to *astta* during the beaming process, pulling the ropes towards themselves with both hands, their arms up, sweating abundantly, to stabilize tensions and forces. A specific tool (a long branch, *Bashenshar*) was used to ensure the tension of the weaving in its width.

The iron loom is made of two individual iron uprights which have been designed to receive the horizontal wooden beams, both pierced with small regular holes on which the warp is attached. It is more stable and therefore easier to use, requiring less energy and guaranteeing more reliable results¹²⁶ and a greater flexibility in terms of carpet size. Although a lot heavier, it requires less cooperation between women than in the past and a more detached relation to materiality since the resistance of *astta* has become easier to master. Not only can it be placed anywhere in the house, but in the event of a wedding, funeral, or other important occasion, it can be dismantled without too much risk to the unfinished weaving.

126 As it allows for an even tension at each extremity of the warp, the resulting weaving is flatter and selvages are more likely to have an even width all the length of the carpet.



Figure 24 iron loom

Today, the position of the loom in the house reflects the changes that have occurred in the gender relations in the family, but also in the improvement of living conditions, often thanks to the income provided by weaving work. Where families have had the means to build a new house, the old is used to keep animals (chickens, cows, sheep, donkeys or mules). Instead of the previous sleeping arrangement in which women slept in the warm stable with the sheep and cows and the men in the room above it¹²⁷, individual rooms have been built, sometimes around a courtyard. Married couples can now isolate themselves in separate rooms, whilst sexual segregation dictates the sleeping arrangement of the other unmarried members of the family. Across the years, but also sometimes during the same year, the use of rooms changes, depending on family events (births, marriages, death), seasons (in the summer, the family often moves to the outdoor terrace), economic circumstances and the whims of the family members. For example a room first used for weaving can become a sleeping room, then a kitchen, and at a later stage a storage room (for clothes, wool and cereals). The same flexibility applies to the placement of the loom as larger carpets often require the widest room. Because of the amount of time weavers spend weaving (daily and all year round), the

¹²⁷ As described by Bourdieu in *The Kabyle house or the world reversed* (1977).

room where *astta* is installed may become the living room, where meals are taken, the television is watched and visitors received. In this way, weavers can work productively without being separated from the rest of the family.

Because of its imposing vertical height, *astta* could be seen as threatening to the weavers who look so small in front of it and who could easily be crushed by the weight of its uprights and beam. Indeed with its protruding iron elements¹²⁸ used to screw and lift the horizontal beams, *astta* is not without danger. It is believed that Lala Mullatna Fatma, the daughter of the Prophet Mohammed, lost a son who died from an injury after he fell on one of the protruding elements of the loom¹²⁹. As children play a lot around the loom, they are often reminded to slow down or to be careful when they approach it. But to see *astta* as a threatening object is to forget that the weavers have a long standing familiarity with it. For instance, elements of *astta*, such as its lower beam or the pillows, are often used by family members to sit on at meal times or tea breaks. Whatever their sex, babies are in contact with it as soon as their mother returns to weaving. In an Ayt Waghirda village I saw a little girl just over a year old, hanging on to the threads, using them to support herself as she walked on the lower beam. From this position, she bent over to lift a piece of cut thread and passed it behind the warp thread as if knotting. During this time her aunt who was looking after her was in the vicinity of the room looking for a pair of scissors.

Exposure to light¹³⁰, which should be one of the most important determinants in the choice of room is hardly ever taken into consideration. In fact the weaving takes place less and less outdoors because winters are harsh and it is quite common for women to weave using only the light of an open door and a small window. With the introduction of electricity, weavers also work longer hours often in the dim light produced by the solar panels or engines, unaware that this may cause early sight loss.

128 *Tigusin* (*B*) are iron sticks which are used during the warping process, but are also part of the loom. *Ziyar* (*A*) are systems of screws and rivets which are used to tighten the loom.

129 This story is given as the explanation of why weaving is taboo on Sunday, the day this accident is supposed to have taken place.

¹³⁰ I did not find that space was divided into male and female, lit and obscure domains such as those described by Bourdieu (1979, 1990). Here I only refer to the fact that a better lighting would avoid them getting blind so early.

The main position is sitting in front of the loom (*barra*, outside) with the back to the rest of the room. However, for the making of the *hmal*, a black and white, long flatweave textile which requires that the evenness and tightness of beating is checked against the light, weavers have to sit behind *astta*, with their back to the wall, in a tiny space, using the light from the door they face. The space between *astta* and the wall is called *uzma*, inside. As the *hmal* usually includes several techniques (*slit tapestry* and *twill*), the weavers have to move *berra* and *uzma*.

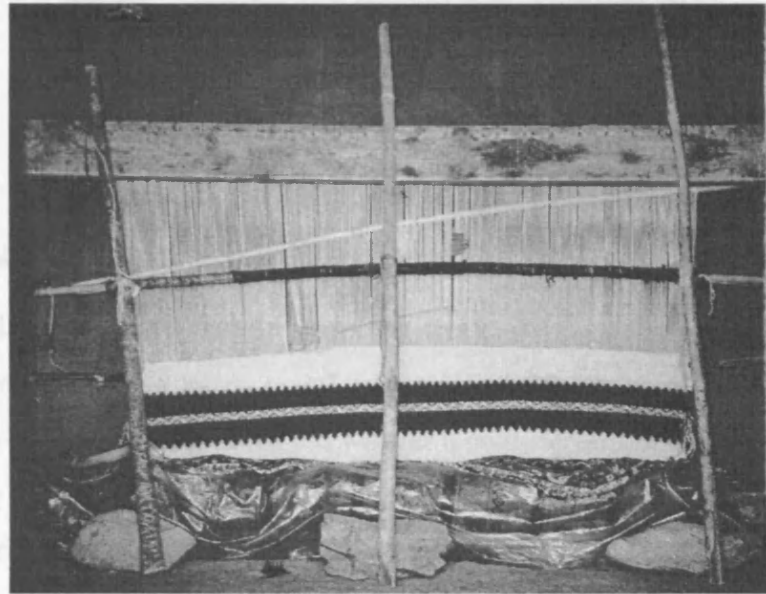


Figure 25 Two Ayt 'Amran weavers sitting in *berra* position (*hmal*)

The *uzma* position is also used in Taznakht by weavers (fig. 26) who pass the weft at the back whilst other weavers sitting at the front knot. This is born out of the necessity to produce carpets faster.



Figure 26 Taznakht mother and daughter making a knotted carpet.

Immobilisation and other constraints

As the expression “to sit at *astta*” (*gawr dar astta*, *gawr gh-ustta*) conveys, *astta* is an activity which requires from the weaver a confinement in a limited space in a prolonged sitting position. This is in marked contrast to other activities such as embroidery¹³¹ for example, where the worker can move to a sunny place when the weather is cold, sit on a comfortable cushion, in front of a TV, or take her work with her when she visits friends. In societies such as those of the Sirwa mountains, where furniture is minimal, usually consisting only of carpets or blankets and low tables, people’s joints and bones have been trained over generations to afford the specific body techniques of sitting on the ground. Mauss (1934/1979) noted that societies have gendered body techniques. Indeed in the Sirwa, daily female body techniques require much more self mastery than men’s. In the sitting position, girls learn from an early age to keep their legs shut and to hold their body straight instead of leaning backwards against a cushion¹³². By the time they start weaving at adolescence, they have integrated

131 Other activities, only practiced in towns and preferred by women are all characterised by a similar freedom of circulation and a greater flexibility of body positions, these include knitting or lace making.

132 Following Mauss’s lead, Maynard, Greenfield, Childs (1999) writing about Zinacantec Maya backstrap loom weaving in Chiapas, Mexico, argue that native learners are endowed from birth with the biology and cultural experience needed for weaving. Maya newborns have distinctive patterns of motor behaviour and visual attention, which are utilized when girls learn to weave. Theya Molleson (1994) showed how the bones and skeleton of Neolithic women in the village of Abu Hureyra (Northern Syria)

most of these body techniques first through coercion and then through self-imposition, repetition and constant vigilance and monitoring of their body practices.

This discipline of the body is further increased through the constraining materiality of *astta*. Some positions whilst more comfortable, such as opening the legs in front of the loom (which allow women to stretch them¹³³) or sitting on both their knees with their bottom up (which would facilitate the weaving of small motifs at a very low level without hurting their back) are parts of these body techniques forbidden to women because they suggest a sexual position or may arouse male desire. Immobilisation is a body technique encouraged in women in other ritual activities. During the decoration of hands and feet with henna, women are invited to sit still for at least an hour. This is a recent introduction, however, as covering the whole palms of the hands with henna paste was common in the past and it was only necessary for the women to sleep with their fists clenching the henna. It is the application of intricate motifs which takes time. The wedding ceremony also requires the bride to stay still for long hours under a white and hot woollen weaving (*tahaykt*), her whole face covered with a red veil, until she is taken to her husband's village.

The main sitting positions starting from the most common are: (1) sitting cross-legged, with both legs symmetrically folded in front of the weaver (*tastwat*), (2) both legs folded parallel on one side with the knees leaning on the lower beam (*sketemt ifaden*), (3) one leg on the lower beam, the other leg behind the body, (4) one leg folded with the knee up at the level of the breast and the other one behind. Positions where the knees are folded in front are said to squeeze the stomach (*tatmerrat addis*). This position also blocks the hand movements of the weaver unless she is working high up and cannot be tolerated for more than a few minutes. The weaver has to find a position where her legs do not become numb too fast and where she can access the weaving without losing her balance. As her upper body is in continual lateral movement, whilst beating the weft or wefting, she needs to have a stable seat (fig.27).

had been affected by their activity of grinding grain on a saddle quern (wear on the big toe and knees, strong musculature of the upper arm and forearm).

¹³³ As in many cases the real reason for which a taboo exist is often covered by another more euphemistic explanation: the time spent sitting in this position (legs open towards *astta*, which expresses a lack of respect) will increase the weaving time.

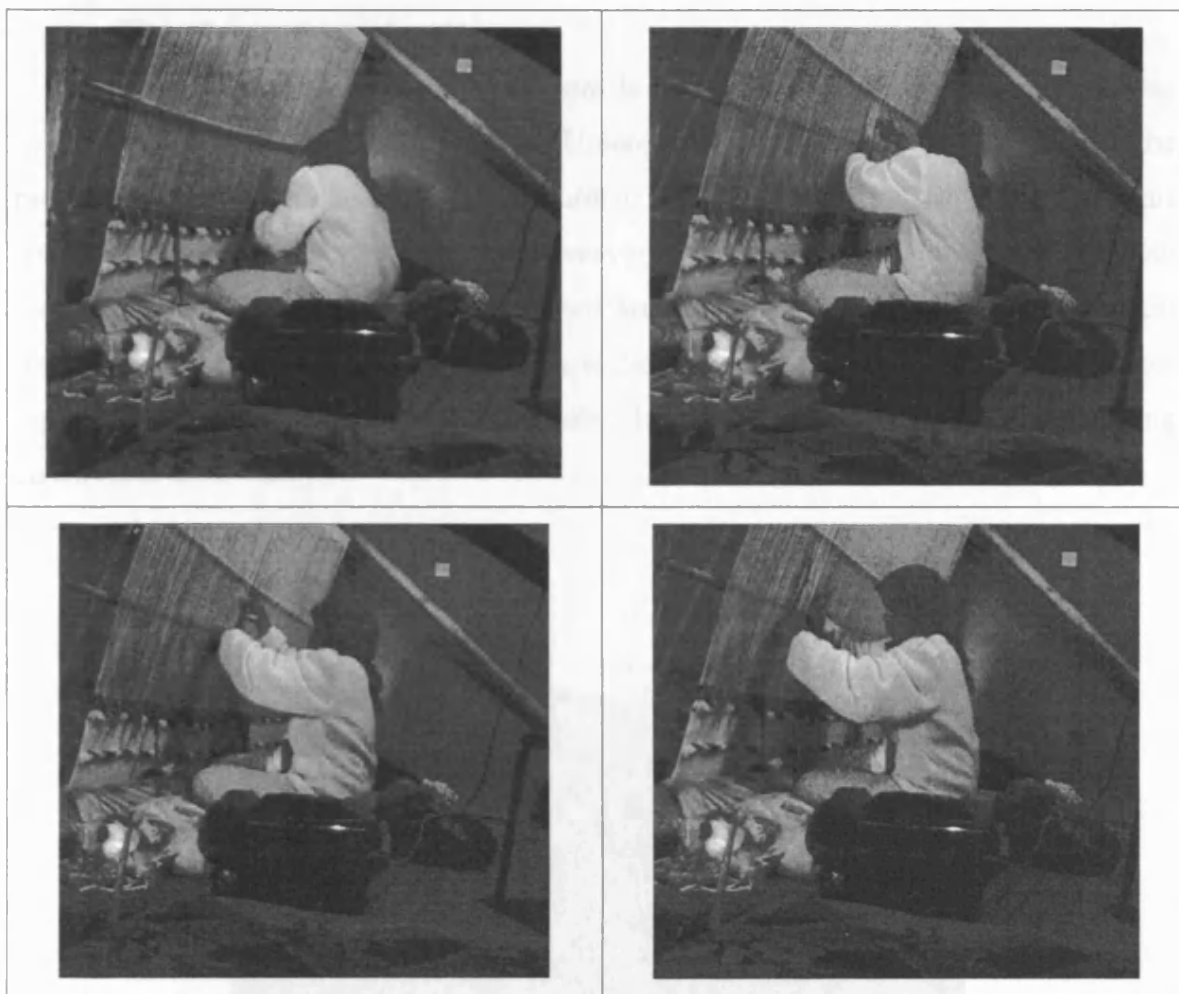


Figure 27 Lateral movements of the trunk whilst weaving

The space imparted to each weaver corresponds to the space that can be covered by the weft movements without the weaver having to stretch uncomfortably towards the left or the right. It is also large enough to avoid colliding with or being disturbed by the weaver sitting next to her. It corresponds to a cubit (*ighil* pl. *ighalen*), the largest and most common unit of measurement used in the area (50-60cm). Added to this, the frame of *astta* (made of the uprights and the bodies of other weavers next to her) limits her space, but also her sight. This frame, with the screen of white threads, channels her sight in front of her in a materiality of close proximity, similar to the relation to a laptop placed on one's lap.

The dynamics of *astta*

The constraining materiality of *astta* is not limited to its overall shape but also includes the weaving-coming-into-being. Unlike activities such as embroidery where the practitioner can manipulate the fabric, turn it in various directions or choose to start working from the centre or a corner, the weaver has to work from bottom to top, adding matter in a linear manner from right to left and then back. The flat and rigid vertical screen of *astta* requires the weaver to follow the progression of the weaving towards the top: as the weaving reaches higher levels, the weaver has to lift herself up using cushions or small stools.



Figure 28 Last stage before cutting the carpet. The weaver is sitting high up, thanks to several cushions, her knees are situated above the beam and against the weaving, her arms are at breast level.

At this point, the woven part is higher than shoulder level, and so the weavers have to work with their arms up, a painful position that is difficult to maintain. In addition, as the woven part is closer to the heddle rod, the meeting of the two warp thread layers become narrower and more difficult to enter, hurting the back of the hand. Usually after every second day, the weavers need to beam the carpet to free up more warp from the upper beam (the reserve of the warp threads).

After this overstretching of the trunk and arms, the weaving is now at the level of her groin, forcing the weaver to fold herself into two, her head reaching the woven part that is hardly visible, her hands being disturbed by the lower beam. Motifs have to be made between the legs, which get in the way of the hands.

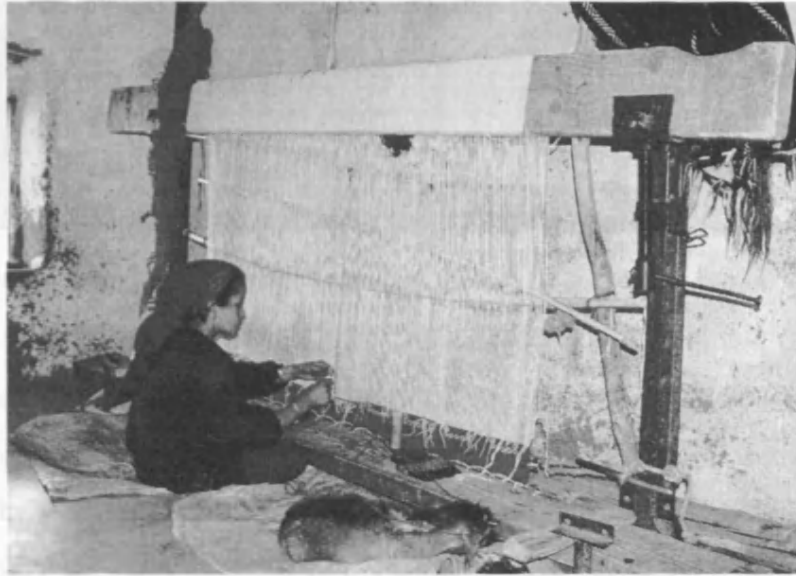


Figure 29 First stage once the warp is mounted. The weaver's back is slightly bent, she is sitting directly on the floor, her hands just above the beam



Figure 30 Just after beaming, the hands of the weavers are touching the lower beam. Note the position of the second weaver's head



Figure 31 Same stage, here the beam is in the way of the beating comb.

Astta's materiality is characterised by its fixity and rigidity. Yet its system of tensions and forces makes it a very dynamic object in the hands of weavers. In its length, warp is held in tension by the very mobile heddle rod system (*inliten*). This system is constituted by a chain, knotted on a bamboo stick (*aghanim inliten*) along the width of the weaving which traps the warp threads alternately on every other thread. According to whether they are trapped or free, each time the weaver lowers or lifts another of the bamboo sticks between these layers of threads, the mechanism brings other warp threads forward or backwards, allowing the weft to pass in an alternate manner. The tension of the warp threads is increased through the use of independent wooden branches (*azraz*), which from the back of the loom, pull the *aghanim inliten*. In its width the weaving is also pulled laterally by small pegs attached to the uprights of the loom.

The weaver's body has to adjust to the dynamic of *astta*. Although fixed at its base, *astta* is animated in its upper parts by regular movements at the level of the heddle rod system put in motion by the weaver. Mirroring this, the lower body of the weaver is often 'cold' and inactive, whereas the upper part of the body is always in intense movement, sweating, and letting off heat and energy. The heddle rod system is often seen as the soul of *astta*, because of the homology between the opening and closing of thread layers and the human breathing system. Another reason given for this is that the

system is the most central and 'vital' part of the weaving, which would collapse totally if it was to be removed or damaged. The homology, however, does not stop there as this system also affects the breathing pattern of the weaver. During the wefting, the arm movements open up her chest and allow for deeper breathing, whereas the operation of beating forces a faster pace of movements and heartbeat. When weaving motifs, the breathing may be constrained by the fact that the weaver is bent over with her arms close together. The regular beaming of the fabric imposes her to lift and straighten herself or inversely to lower and fold herself according to the weaving's position. This too affects her breathing patterns as the latter position limits the capacity of the lungs and causes shallow breathing.

Furthermore the weaver's adjustments to the materiality of *astta* also implies that the weaver integrates some of the dynamics of *astta* in her body image or schemata, which in turn extends to incorporate the object-in-the-making. We are here at the centre of the notion of incorporation: material culture is incorporated in the corporeal dynamics (or body schemata) of the acting subject, who through her seven senses, her emotions and in giving meaning to the process, can 'spread in the space' (Rosselin 2006). At the same time, the subject is affected by material culture as becomes obvious when we look at the details of the weaving process. The operation of weaving is divided into two types of material activity mediated by specific body techniques: (1) the wefting operation, which implies lifting and lowering the bamboo rod to pass alternately through the weft threads, and then beating it down; (2) making motifs (*iklan n-ukhnif**) between each wefting. The former gestures are ample movements of the hand, the wrist, the arm and sometimes the shoulders and back. Often the weaver uses only one hand, on which she puts all her body weight, leaning backwards and pulling, or inversely pushing on the warp threads. In both cases, she opens a larger passage for the hand given to pass the weft between the corridors of even and uneven warp threads¹³⁴.

¹³⁴ See Appendix 1 for descriptions of weaving operations.

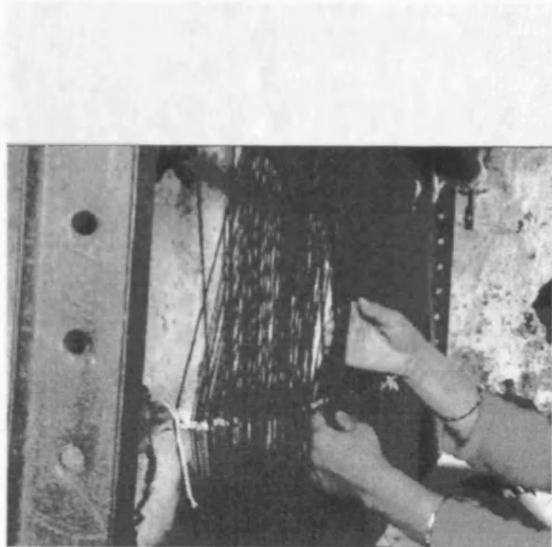
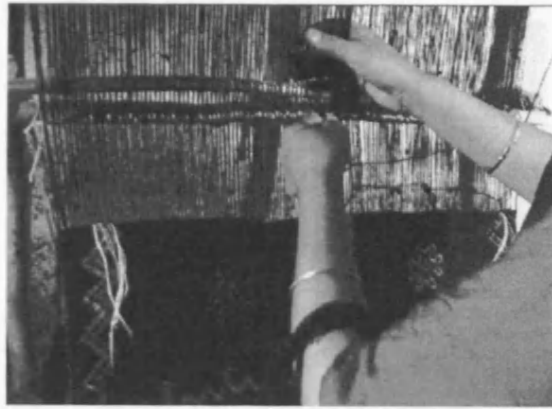
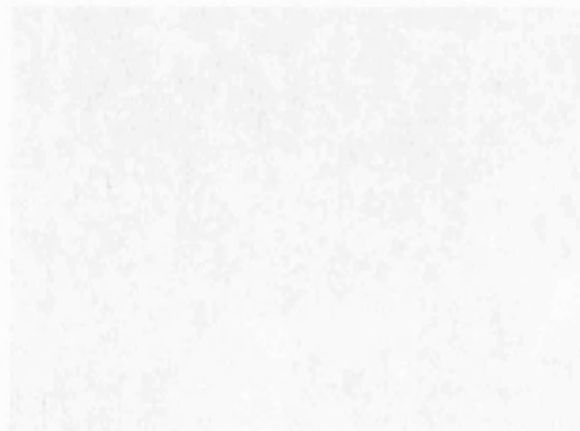
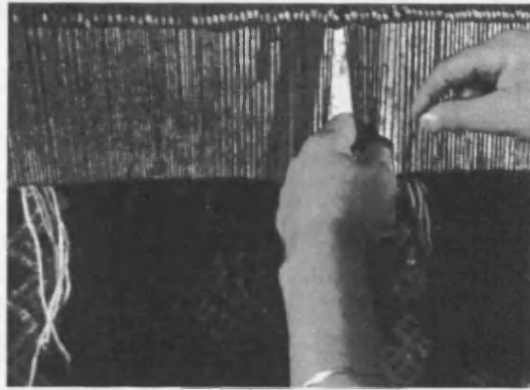


Figure 32 Wefting: hand movements (behind and side view)





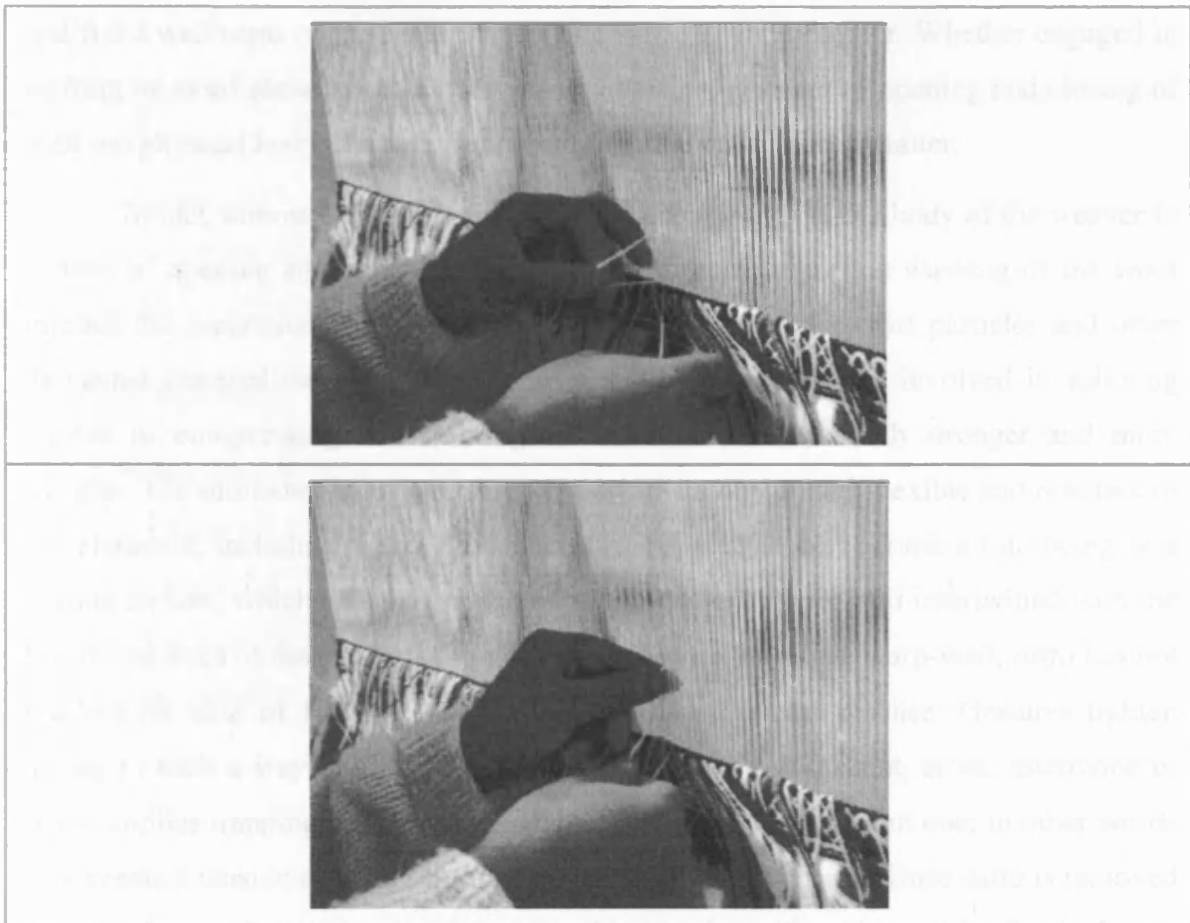


Figure 33 Motif building: finger and hand movements

Gestures involved in the formation of *iklan* are smaller and more punctual, with the body of the weaver concentrated in terms of attention, energy, posture and breathing. Both hands work together on a tiny portion of the warp, the left supporting the right, forefingers and thumbs of both hands working in concert like pliers trapping threads, the forefingers acting as hooks. At this level of manipulation, the warp forms a unique screen like a wall, and it becomes impossible to distinguish between the even and uneven layers of warp threads. It is to this screen that the weaver adds the coloured *iklan* threads. Contrary to wefting, these gestures of “opening” are not parallel and horizontal to the warp as the fingers of the weavers cross the wall from front to back, to throw or recuperate the *iklan* threads. So, whereas during the wefting process the weaver passes her hands in a kind of corridor between two “layer-walls” of warp threads, in the realisation of motifs she traverses a unique wall in an almost magical way for the onlooker who observes it from the side. What seems to be an impassable

and fixed wall turns out to be as porous as a vertical wall of water. Whether engaged in wefting or motif elaboration, all body techniques are gestures of opening and closing of both the physical body (arms, hands, chest) and the manipulated matter.

In fact, almost all the operations of wool work engage the body of the weaver in actions of opening and closing, pulling or relaxing. Whereas the washing of the wool implies the separation and spreading out of the fibres to free dirt particles and other unwanted material (such as prickles from thistles), the gestures involved in spinning consist of compressing and twisting the wool to make it both stronger and more flexible. The ultimate aim of weaving is to create an object both flexible and resistant to the elements, including light. The vertical warp of the object-coming-into-being is a porous surface, which only becomes closed when it is covered and intertwined with the horizontal lines of the weft. As long as the fingers can cross the warp-wall, *astta* has not reached its state of finitude, of being a closed impassable surface. Gestures tighten matter in such a way that no space or air can pass. To pull, knot, cross, intertwine or twist, implies trapping a flexible, loose matter with a stretched, taut one; in other words they create a tension allowing the closure and reduction of space. Once *astta* is removed from its frame, the tension is relaxed but this paradoxically achieves the finished state of the weaving, which becomes even more tightened and closed. The dual dimensions of the weaving process are thus only contradictory in appearance: one opens to close better, one spreads or separates (threads) to tighten (the structure), one subtracts and removes matter to add to the whole. The work of transformation of matter consists in reinforcing it.

In reinforcing matter, the weaver also incorporates it and is shaped by it. The weaving coming-into-being is the result of the weaver's complete bodily involvement in the dynamics of *astta*, a materiality which is only inflexible and static in appearance. She enters *astta* almost literally, expanding her body schemata to include matter, and almost erasing the exteriority of the object. The malleability of the weavers' body to the demands of the activity of weaving is also the process by which she acts on and penetrates the materiality, and invests herself emotionally and physically in the activity. Incorporation is the result of the meeting between two mutually constitutive materialities, that of the subject-body and that of matter. The process of making an

object is one of self-transformation into a physically stronger subject. In the same way that the loosening of the *astta* is proscribed, the weaver must avoid any relaxation of her gesture and body or negligence, and must maintain a constant pace and energy. There is again a homology between the straightening and uprightness of the warp¹³⁵ and the rectitude¹³⁶ of the weaver who has to master her own resistance to prolonged stasis and intense labour. The working of matter is a straightening of the self.

Modalities of incorporation

Pain and the shaping of a stronger body

A proverb I collected from Lala Fadma in Tinider suggests that to learn how to weave selvages, one has to endure visual pain: 'Girls will only learn selva (*tama*) if they sit watching until their eyes hurt' (*Ti'allin yan shart illa uka, a talla d'ifigigen rsant, tana iran atlmad tulma atalla d-ifign rsent*).

The process of incorporation is a progressive adjustment to the resistance of matter which implies physical pain. Before the beating comb (*taska*) becomes an extension of the weaver's hand and makes it a heavy, precise and sharp beating instrument, the weaver has to master her own pain and learn how to limit it. She first experiences the sharp, cold burn due to the rubbing of the skin against the iron and wooden tool. The wrinkly and loose skin at the base of the thumb slowly builds a thicker layer. The calluses become a protection against pain and a physical proof of the weaver's incorporation of the gesture as much as the *taska*'s dynamic: she no longer needs to remind herself about the right way to hold the *taska*. In comparison, the wearing on the *taska* by the human hand is very light: the wooden handle takes on a shiny polish.

The effect of the *taska* on the weaver's body is not limited to rubbing and superficial marking. The misnamed beating comb could be compared to a dumbbell¹³⁷

135 The warp (*idd*) could have an origin in Berber root BD (to stand, as in Latin and old French, Galand, suggested to Bynon 1963 2005). Its feminine version (*tiddit*) has the meaning of 'height of a standing man', and designates the part of the warp that is not rolled on the lower beam. In the Sirwa, weavers distinguish between the previous (not woven and not rolled) characterized by the pronunciation of an emphatic D (*tiddit* pl. *tiddud*) from the part woven and warped around the lower beam (*tiddi* pl. *tiddud*).

136 The association of the 'straight' or 'right' (hand) with rectitude, dexterity, good and beauty was noted by Hertz in 1909 (quoted by Ardener 1997: 5).

137 Dumbbells used in the West for weightlifting weigh either 0.91, 1.36 or 1.5 Kg.

which weighs between one and two kilos. Far from being an exercise in combing, it is a hammering operation, which reverberates in the bones, joints and teeth of the weavers. Added to the muscling of the arms and hands, *taska* imposes strain on the wrists which swell, the arms, and on the shoulder blades. This pain is increased by the repetitiveness of the movement and the weight of the *taska*. But as with callused skin, the aching muscles of the arms and back, the pain recedes as one gets accustomed to the task.



Figure 34 *Taska*

To the outside observer, it is the weaver, who with great violence beats the passive weft¹³⁸, but for the weaver herself this action is experienced violently in her own body as the matter strongly resists her actions. It feels as if matter actually comes towards the *taska* and is partly the origin of this violence. Holding the beater too tightly makes this sensation even sharper. The beginner is advised to relax her wrists and arms and transfer her weight from the heavy part of the beater (handle and iron base) onto its teeth-like tip and beat obliquely from top to bottom rather than at right angles. She has to learn not the most comfortable gestures but the most economical ones. She learns them during the process of doing, adjusting her body to corrections given by more expert weavers, who in passing will note any wrong gestures, and advise on how to

¹³⁸ Weft threads are by far the least robust threads used in weaving. The accumulation of several layers of this flexible and soft material in combination with the grid constituted by the warp, however, constitute a strong material.

correct them. Indeed, with these adjustments, the sensations of resistance of the warp are not felt at the contact points of the hand with the handle but at the tip of the object and the impact is felt less violently. In fact, it is not just the warp or the weft that forms a resistance, but the warp-weft-weaving ensemble constituted of horizontal and vertical threads intertwining. To understand the strength of this ensemble, it is enough to see the weaver lifting herself up from her sitting position using a handful of warp threads. This resistance of the united warp and weft is even more potent in the mark it leaves over the years in the beating comb's teeth: the thread imperceptibly cuts a line in the teeth of the iron tool, which will require repair either through shortening the teeth at the level of the incision or through replacing them.

Astta is too large and imposing to be held in the hands of the weavers. Yet, it is apprehended and incorporated globally in its shape, height and its dynamics by the moving body of the weavers. This process of incorporation touches various material dimensions of weaving, themselves involving specific body parts and senses: the threads of the warp, the woollen particles, the dust, and the dyes. In the process of passing again and again between the tight warp threads, which are separated by a space less than half a centimetre wide, the back of the hands takes on a floury, whitish appearance. This is the sign of the strengthening of their skin against the dry fibres of wool¹³⁹. The fingers, and especially the right hand forefinger, are often cut by the sharp stretched warp. When the fingers are pressed between the warp and weft threads, prickles lodged in the skin become sharp torture instruments. It is quite common to see a weaver pull a pin needle from her dress and attempt (or ask another weaver) to dislodge such uncomfortable elements from her hand. In winter, the environment's temperature renders the hands more sore than in the Summer. Some weavers' forefingers are misshaped¹⁴⁰ by the violence of the knotting gesture. They also become accustomed to breathing the small woollen particles and dust that are present in

139 In Taznakht, some weavers make their own moisturising cream with a mixture of candle wax and lemon, which compensate for the aggression of the warp threads and the corrosive effect of the washing liquid which they use for the washing up and the laundry. In the countryside, the hands of women are often calloused or cut often having embedded prickles or thorns due to picking plants for the cows and wood for the fire. Their hands are used all day long and thus show the mark of their interacting with matter. The cold water makes them swollen and red, an external aspect which describes an internal pain.

140 Permanent deformation of the fingers is also reported in medical and ergonomic research (Radjabi, 1983, quoted in Motamedzade et al, 2007).

industrially spun wool¹⁴¹ and that spreads onto their clothing. Their sweaty hands take on the colour of the dyes of threads that have not been washed enough. To keep their backs straight takes an enormous effort and great self mastery. The constant sight of the white warp creates a retinal strain to which is added the strain of weaving tiny motifs. The technique of *tirira** in particular, is associated with sight loss. At the level of the ground, where they sit, the cold coming from the ground cools their lower limbs and make them go numb. Feet and knees touch the lower wooden beam through which the vibrations coming from the percussion of the beating combs reverberate. The meeting of the wood-iron matter (of the *taska*) against the fine but resistant wool threads causes a specific quality of a metallic and at the same time softened, smothered sound. The sensations of vibrations are inseparable from those of touch, sight and hearing, and they are felt in the legs and hands. Habituation makes the sounds and each intrinsic or exterior element of the activity (dust in the nostrils, wool fluff in the mouth¹⁴² or the clothes, music played on the radio) indistinguishable from the experience of weaving.

In many ways, the pain encountered by the weaver is similar to that experienced by the heavy computer user: the same eye strain, the same repetitive gestures (strain injuries), adopting a prolonged sitting position with pain felt in the back and bottom. The pain has, however, no comparison in terms of intensity, muscle use, energy expenditure and lack of blood circulation (a chair does not put the same pressure on the legs as a very low cushion, and can support the back).

During the process of habituation and incorporation the weaver shifts from a phase of self-defensive reaction (pain) against the violent resistance of matter to a stage of transformation into a strengthened physical state. Although they cannot completely suppress pain, women adopt various strategies to lighten or control it, including music, breaks and *tigga** (both holy days and holidays).

Whereas their mothers used to create or sing songs which sounded like long complaints, young women today have access to a wider range of songs from the tapes¹⁴³

141 This wool may be of bad quality and include chemicals.

142 When they spin they pull on the wool with their teeth, their only free instrument, and then have to spit. Wool fibres invade all the house and have to be swept up regularly.

143 These audio-tapes may be songs commercially produced in studios by renowned Berber singers of both sex, originating from all over Morocco. Others are 'wild', 'live' (as opposed to studio) recordings made at festivals where famous local male poet-singers (*rays*) are commissioned by villagers.

men bring back from the *suq* and which are exchanged by both sexes between households. They know these songs by heart and enjoy listening to them and singing them when weaving. Often mothers do not understand the lyrics and ask their daughters to repeat them. They are used to songs consisting of one sentence repeated over and over. New songs are more wordy and their rhythm is faster. There seem to be a homology of form between the songs on the one hand and the body techniques of weaving and the materiality of *astta* on the other. Where the old songs and movements were long and measured, the beating of *taska* marking the pauses/breaks between the lyrics, the new songs are faster and have a shorter rhythm. The weavings made in the past used to be simpler in their composition (a few bands or the same motif repeated all over, or a few decorations on the selvages and the centre). Today's weavings are layered with motifs and the composition is more complex.

Music gives an emotional impetus and helps to keep a quick but steady pace in work that is characterised by its repetition and slowness. It makes the shared bodily experience of working on a common object a more joyful one. The content of the lyrics of the love songs often resonates with the women's preoccupations or interests and occupies their minds, making them forget about the physical constraints of the activity.

There is a clear distinction between the perception weavers have of the activity depending on whether they are living in mountainous or urban areas. The weavers of the mountain complain less about the pain or discomfort caused by weaving. Some women in the town attributed this to the fact that they were less robust and more sensitive than the women in the mountains. This fits with a conception of pain as a social construct where the experience of pain varies according to whether its perception is seen as mundane or not¹⁴⁴.

In his book on self-construction through household chores in the domestic sphere, Kaufmann (1997) argues that to find the impetus to go back to the task when they lose motivation, women have to work on themselves until they stop resisting. Automatism is the first stage of inscription in the self of the norm, the highest stage being when the internalisation (or incorporation) of injunction becomes theirs. Then it

144 In the world of classical music, pain is considered as a necessary path in the training of a virtuoso (Alford and Szanto 1996).

becomes a structuring force, which escapes reflexivity and accentuates the efficacy of automatisms. The “body brings in itself its own determinations, becoming the frame of reference triggering the movement” (Kaufmann 1997: 188). Kaufmann attributes the perception of pain or discomfort in household chores as the result of the weakening of the automatism and injunction to do housework, which corresponds to a discrepancy between thought and gesture, ideal model and reality. This seems a valid explanation in the case of the urban weavers who are less motivated to weave, for various reasons: higher expectations for themselves, more acute awareness of their exploitation by dealers, feelings of unfairness, etc.

Another factor in mountain weavers complaining less could also be that unlike their urban counterparts, mountain weavers make more use of the possibility to alternate the weaving activity with other daily tasks, which gives their bodies the chance to recover. In the towns, the reduction of agricultural activities and the introduction of technologies could be said to have improved the conditions of living of women. As a result, weavers in towns spend more time weaving without breaks whereas the mountain weavers often allow themselves time for rest, leisure and relaxation in a long day’s work (see chapter 5). Indeed studies in the sociology of work have shown that in occupations requiring long period of immobilisation, the more one is static, the more pain they experience, and the more one walks, the less pain is felt (Messing, Randoin, Tissot, et al. 2004). Rather than attributing these differences solely to socially constructed concepts of pain/discomfort, perhaps we can consider that the mountain weavers have developed better pain management strategies. In addition, weaving represents a more intense and longer exposure to pain than activities such as household chores in a Western context.

Another argument in favour of this interpretation is that in contrast to the mountains, urban women in the area of Taznakht have felt the need to increase the number of days off from weaving. *Tigga* days are days where weaving is taboo: they correspond to religious days or to events such as the death of a villager¹⁴⁵. Other days when women don’t weave are the few days between finishing a carpet and starting

¹⁴⁵ *Tigga* taboos are related to the work of the wool and any other activity. Not respecting *tigga* periods results in grave accidents to weavers during the activity, or less dramatically slows down the process of weaving which is thus perceived as heavier.

another one. In the mountain, *tigga* days usually last between three and seven days. In contrast, the urban weavers have increased the ancient seven-day *tigga* to 15 days. Taznakht women also never fail to take the holy day of Friday off to go to the public bath (*hammam*) and for laundry jobs, whereas in the mountain, laundry, like many other tasks (removing the shells of walnuts and almonds the day before the weekly market or if a visitor comes), seems to take place as and when needed. In the rare families who have toilets/bathrooms, Friday may be a good day for taking a bath, although this is not likely to happen on a weekly basis.

Weavers also find self-motivation from the fact that they do not work on their own. The presence of others as a source of support and emulation constitutes a motivating force which is both psychological and physical. Seeing others making the same gestures and feeling individually pulled towards a common objective facilitates endurance. Many songs express the emotional significance of cooperation (Appendix 2, no 1, 2, 11). One of them says: “there is hope, certainty (*‘ahd, amân*) when we work together, each bringing in her thread, each pulling on the heddle” .

Routine

As she takes her beating comb or a piece of yarn and starts weaving, the expert weaver forgets about the dimensions of the loom, the uncomfortable sitting position, the resistance of *astta* and of her body. It is the novice or a weaver who has not practiced for a while, who is conscious of this confrontation of her body with matter; or the recalcitrant practitioner. But soon, the weaver gets so involved in her activity that she forgets the action of her own fingers and projects herself in the place of the thread, identifying with its circulation between the warp threads, and following it back to the front after a twist around one of the warp threads. In fact this identification with matter means that the dynamic of material culture is not thought as separated from herself, her moving body and perception. She has to map her representation of the correct procedure for weaving (the gestures and movements) with the representation of the ideal carpet, motif or portion of weaving. The apprentice will first disarticulate the performance into its constituent actions and movements and map these onto motor-based representations (Marchand 2007:195). Often the novice does not ask how to proceed, but tries to work out for herself how to obtain a certain shape. In the temporary absence of the

experienced weaver or because of pride or shyness, the novice will check the work of the other, splitting up the various movements made by undoing the threads, and putting them back in place, thus attempting to deduce what the corresponding gestures are.

It is only when she reaches a high level of perfection that the representation of the object adapts to practice: instead of seeing the warp threads as a fixed barrier imposing her to move the coloured motif threads (*iklan*) around them, the weaver realises that it is rather the warp threads that have to be stretched towards herself in an organised manner, one by one, or two or three at a time. Instead of gluing her eyes to the *iklan* threads and involving her whole body, awkwardly using her whole hand and even her forearm, she starts taking some distance from the object, and she become more efficient. Efficacy is about a more economical meeting between her gesture and the points of contact with materiality. As a result, the pain in the neck, back and eyes diminishes.

The highest degree of incorporation is that at which the objects go from an 'exterior' relationship to an obvious relation(ship), where the resistance of both the object and the body-subject have been modified to reach a state of stabilisation (Rosselin 2006). Routine (Schwint 2005) becomes an embodied perceptual sensory skill allowing quick sensory-motor evaluation (visual, tactile, kinaesthetic, auditory or their combination) of what the next step in the activity is with the economy of reflexivity. This "practical thinking" reduces stress, prolonged cognitive efforts (concentration, attention) and energy use in a sensitive and flexible way that a more precise and systematic approach would not equal. "Everyday thinking, in other words, is not illogic or sloppy but instead is sensible and effective in handling the practical problem" (Rogoff and Lave 1984: 7).

The smooth process of weaving is only interrupted when the weaver notices a mistake or when an incident occurs such as the breaking of a warp thread. The incorporation process is suspended, the materiality of *astta* being 'excorporated'¹⁴⁶. Suddenly the weaver becomes more aware of her gesture, which she stops to attend to the problem. Incorporation and excorporation are both marked by time: it takes time to adapt to an object and to interiorize the most fitting and efficacious gesture that goes

¹⁴⁶ Rosselin (2006) uses either the term "désincorporation" or "excorporation".

with it. Incorporation can mark the subject well after she has stopped the activity. Weavers often complain of the stiffness in their legs and back long after they have gone to attend to some other task.

Visually, weavers become able to see at a glance just from the position of the warp threads or the bamboo rod whether the weft needs to be passed in shed or counter shed. They also develop the ability to assess when the weft is not evenly layered or when it is so loose (*iwalwi*) that the white of the warp appears between the weft (*iutten*)¹⁴⁷. Any such fault unnoticeable to a beginner would eventually form a very visible hole if not filled in time. Repetition plays a great role in ensuring that the pattern builds up in the visual memory of the weaver who ends up associating (almost mechanically) particular gestures with specific patterns, her eyes and hands working in concert.

The combination of their tactile and auditory skills allows weavers to judge the tension of the warp just by stroking it with the back of their finger tips in a horizontal movement as if they were the strings of a harp. Tactile discrimination allows them to verify the flatness of the weave and the evenness of the warp tension. The quality of wool is assessed by holding the ends of a thread and pulling: the resistance, the way it breaks, will indicate the quality and properties of matter, for example whether the wool thread is 100% pure or mixed with synthetic material and whether it is handspun or machine spun. This knowledge is born out of an earlier practice of spinning which leads to a tactile knowledge of wool, its resistance and 'stretchability'.

Temporal dimension

A third characteristic of the constraining materiality of *astta* is its slow temporality. The learning process itself takes time: incorporation implies a long bodily and mental investment, the repetition of the same gesture over and over making it understood by the body, which progresses imperceptibly towards competency.

Patience

Weaving is a cyclic, repetitive and almost never ending activity. As soon as a carpet is finished, weavers know that another is to follow. With the intensification of

¹⁴⁷ Unwanted unevenness of weft density is termed 'excentric' wefts* (Emery 1966: 83).

production, weavers are under pressure to finish their weaving faster and produce more in a year. There is a striking opposition between the speed of their thoughts (and potential aesthetic ideas) and the bodily movement on the one hand and the slow pace with which the carpet materialises on the other. Patience is the disposition reinforced through this confrontation of the weaver's body and mind to a materiality which shapes their perception and control of time. In comparison to other domestic activities which are less time consuming and more varied, and where material results correspond to the intensity and speed of action, weaving does not give tangible results quickly. It takes more than a day to weave roughly 20 cm of flatweave thin thread for an average weaver. This slowness can be frustrating as expressed in an elliptic manner in this extract of song invented by Lala Aisha a poet-singer (*raysa*) from Agouins (song no 10 in Appendix 2):

A timgharin ngumittin l-m'isht	O women we fight for subsistence
Igh nbi abzid nghal isikemmel	When we stop peeing, we think we have finished, [but we have not]...

The term used for patience is borrowed from the Arabic “*sher*” and is mainly used by and for women. It means to “wait”, “to endure”, “to resist despite a trying situation”. In the Sirwa, young girls learn patience earlier than boys. They start helping their elders and take on responsibilities earlier than boys. They are also encouraged to master their feelings of anger towards their brothers or male cousins when the latter are aggressive or behave unfairly towards them. This preparation for self mastery is an indispensable preparation for their future married life since they will marry in another village, away from the protection of their family and may have to endure their mother-in-law's whims as well as those of the husband and his brother(s) and father¹⁴⁸. Once married, women learn that complaining to their husband or questioning their actions causes arguments so they refrain from such behaviour. Keeping face in front of the

148 Patrilocality remains the dominant principle, often with the elder brother being the head of the family.

neighbours is always an important incentive for subjugating one's own feelings to the reputation of the family¹⁴⁹.

Women talk about patience primarily in connection to relationships with men or children rather than bodily activities. "If you are not patient (*sber*) you will have arguments, and the neighbours will laugh at you". "All men are the same, men are difficult, you just have to be patient".

In the Sirwa, the passage from childhood to womanhood often starts with the practice of weaving and is then followed by the other apprenticeship of housework. In the mountain, for the generation of those who are now in their sixties, they may have married at the age of ten, whereas those over forty married between fourteen and sixteen. Thus the former would have learnt weaving with their mother-in-law. Today, women tend to marry around twenty and if they go to school learn after they reach fourteen or fifteen. Those who learn earlier may help in the evening after school. In my host family, the young generation of girls could be considered as having a childhood as a Western child would, spending a great deal of time playing, being idle or doing homework, whereas their elder sisters had to help their mother until the younger sister could take over. In many families, women who have many daughters can therefore have a more restful time around forty when their daughters take over weaving responsibilities. Unless the girl actually takes the initiative, learning to weave comes at the expense of play and leisure time and is associated with coercion and violence. But, because of its association with poverty and intensive production, weaving (and any work) is seen as a necessity. In fact, the people believe that without necessity, one does not learn. An Ayt Ubial proverb says: "When you hit the head, whatever you tell it, it will remember"¹⁵⁰.

Biya, who had served as a maid for some kin in town had to learn to weave at the age of sixteen. She described how ashamed she was when she came back in her village. She found the motivation to learn fast as she wanted to gain a position of

149 Patience is associated with a form of shame and embarrassment (*hshuma*) which Dwyer describes as propriety and decorum, consisting of avoiding direct interaction, openly expressing feelings and opinions, and drawing any attention to oneself (Dwyer 1973: 82). *Hshuma* and *sber* are more commonly female behaviour, although subordinate men may experience and express them with their fathers or other dominant figures.

150 *Ighurir irzi ikhf ijji ura iqoy awal ighdard irz kra tritt ighwit.*

respect amongst other girls of her generation. Learning to weave is one of the activities young girls aspire to achieve in their desire to imitate elder women and role models¹⁵¹. Their keenness pushes them to try and start weaving on their own. Often they try secretly, usually between eight and twelve to create their own loom or on their request they will be given some scraps of wool by their mother or sister, who will show them how to make a small narrow loom with a nail on a wall. Girls often make their first belt this way and wear them with pride at the next festival.



Figure 35 Rqiya 11, making her own belt in the *takkat* (old kitchen) room.

Patience is indistinguishable from endurance, and implies the notion of waiting and containing one's own behaviour and feelings. This term is also used in the context of material culture to express its resistance to wear and time, and with the notion of hardening and becoming stronger. There is a strong sense of temporality in the notion of patience, as the ability to withstand unpleasant behaviour or situations implies strategic long term planning or a hope for gratification.

Rather than being thought of as an embodied capacity or disposition, patience has more often a moral connotation of mastery of the mind over the body. Yet it is so deeply embedded in the body and emotions of weavers that when asked what sort of

¹⁵¹ In the process of working on the self to fit a model, through the imitation of body techniques, motifs and techniques, the weavers also appropriate the qualities (technical and moral) of the competent weaver, a concept synonymous with being a virtuous woman. Taussig (1993) sees imitation as a magical social practice whereby to imitate is to appropriate something of the form and power of the original. The figure of virtue can be the mother or some known valued woman, but also historic-mythical figures such as the daughter of the prophet.

qualities a weaver learns from weaving practice or needs to have to be able to make a carpet, patience is not mentioned. Instead they emphasise qualities such as determination (A *al-khatr*), concentration (A *nashta*) and intelligence (A *al-'aql*). It shows that weavers interpret the tenacity, self-motivation and constancy that it takes to keep doing a slow repetitive activity at a constant level of energy as a strength¹⁵². Rather than a passive acceptance of the situation or norm, patience is a technique of the self requiring stamina, determination, strength and steadfastness. It is a moral disposition as expressed in songs describing the antithesis of a good patient woman (appendix 2.1: no 14-18).

Permanence

Another aspect of making that can be enabling for weavers is the quality of permanence of the weaving process. In chapter 2, I discussed the fact that contemporary carpets are not made to last, in terms of materials used and in terms of temporary use in the household. This is also a dimension of the new types of carpets (*akhnif*) with their fragile motifs, originally designed to cover clothing rather than to be trod on. In contrast with the ephemeral nature of the material objects, the activity of weaving itself has a quality of permanence. Weaving has a cyclical dimension of perpetual recommencing, because of the repetitive nature of the gestures and movements performed thousands of times on a daily basis (wefting, beating), every other day (beaming process) or month (when the finishing of a carpet marks the beginning of another). The spatio-temporal qualities of the weaving activity can provide psychological balance as the slow ordering of matter through rhythmic gestures and movements over a long period of time can be a slow ordering of the self. But if for some weavers, the routine of weaving practice gives structure and comfort, quietness and stability, it can also be experienced as disempowering (see Chapter 7).

For women marriage potentially constitutes the utmost period of exposure to a hostile and unstable world. Whereas men are attached to their father's house, women, once married, have to leave their village of origin, their friends and family and probably never see their sisters again for several decades, particularly if they marry far away.

¹⁵² The figure of Penelope, repeatedly reworking her weaving, exemplifies these dispositions of patience, perseverance and faith.

Thus weaving may be the only thing left to link them with their past life. They build a spatial and temporal permanence in their bodies where there is impermanence.

Producing objects implies a great temporal, energetic, physical, psychological and moral investment of the self with an unfinished and thus invasive materiality, which makes it difficult to distance the self from it. Mastery over materiality and the self may give them a feeling of control over their life. Furthermore, the constancy of the producing activity implies that this renewed work on the self is continuous and reinforced.

Embodied knowledge

Imitation

Weaving knowledge is shared by all and available at all times in the bodies of others through observation and imitation. Imitation here, is not conceived as a mere reproduction of gestures or a rule (see Ingold 2001), or as a transmission between minds. Unlike the image Tarde (1993) provides of 'the distant action of a mind on another mind', mimesis is a form of embodied knowledge resulting from communication and individual intentionality. Human beings have a natural tendency to mimesis through the coordination of perception and action of one's body with that of others and through the matching of one's kinesthetic experiences of one's body with the visual experiences of another body. This is the argument of psychologist Paul Guillaume¹⁵³ who says: 'we do not first imitate others but rather the actions of others, and ... find others at the point of origin of these actions'. Wallon, another psychologist who believed in a natural tendency of imitating and empathizing with others, argues that mimesis produces a muscular tension which has the function to prepare or solicit body techniques and is 'the essential function of communication for young children'¹⁵⁴. Marchand (2007) provides a more satisfying account of the complexity of imitation, combining recent neuroscience research on motor imagery and mirror neurons with dynamic syntax theory. He demonstrates that in a similar way as shared utterance involved in verbal communication implies the sharing between parser and producer of a tree structure (semantic based mental representation) and a context that they both

¹⁵³ Paul Guillaume (1926-1971) Imitation in Children, from Merleau-Ponty (1964: 117, quoted by Ingold 2001: 25).

¹⁵⁴ Michel Bernard (1995) Le corps (quoted by Faure (2000: 125).

construct simultaneously, embodied communication involved in skilled practice relies on shared context and on the strategic construction of motor representations. Thus the imitator produces her own approximation of the performer's mental representation in her own mind and body. This mental representation, because it is individual, is not necessarily identical to that of the performer's mental representation and can lead to changes in interpretations and procedures (Marchand 2007).

In the Sirwa, a weaver usually learns in concert with another more experienced person, the mother, an elder sister, cousin or a female neighbour or relative. It is believed that if the 'teacher' has recently been trained, she is more likely to be patient and empathizing. Working together the same carpet coming-into-being allows the apprentice to apprehend the object from the same standpoint as the expert-weaver, thus to 'invest' the gestures of the expert as if they were hers. In contrast, being given instructions or being shown face to face, puts the apprentice in the position of an onlooker, who must certainly perform other cognitive efforts to be able to imitate the observed gestures and who feels less personally involved.

The apprentice is not given any time to think before acting or analysing her movement during the process of wefting; she is pushed, and criticised whenever she pauses or slows down. The unconscious incorporation of body techniques is thus encouraged. Working on motifs, however, requires more reflection.

Thanks to the presence of more expert weavers, practical learning is made less stressful as the apprentices know that they can learn at their pace and that there will always be somebody more experienced who will support them during the early learning stages or correct technical deficiencies or problems at later stages. This system of learning works by scaffolding, by which women learn progressively the easiest tasks before going on to learn the next stages (Childs & Greenfield 1980). Their presence even if they are only watching or being given easy tasks to participate in, ensures that they familiarise themselves with the operation over a long period before it is taught to them. For example, the novice may be given the task of carrying the ball of warp thread from one of the women sitting in front of one of the sticks to the other in the warping operation. Girls start first with spinning, then go on to weaving. They learn how to construct the heddle rod system later and finally (if ever) learn the warping operation.

Before they learn the heddle rod system (*inliten*), weavers gain slowly the feel of the tension of the warp threads trapped by the *inliten* threads, and develop an understanding of the mechanics of the system during the weaving activity. If a weaver learned to weave around the age of fifteen, she may learn to build the heddle rod system around the age of eighteen. This learning is made less time consuming as it is shared by another apprentice, who knots half of the *inliten*. Of course, competition may motivate or hinder them, and the slow ones are often mocked. This progressive bodily familiarisation with *astta* means that the materiality stops appearing as intimidating and as a source of uncertainty about one's own abilities.

Even a skilled weaver may need some help from her peers or a more expert weaver. The most experienced weaver will also have a knowledge of the preferred motifs of each of the other weavers and will only need to be given the name of the motif to help them build it. Names allow concise and accurate communication about shapes and are used as mnemonic devices. Weavers in a given family or community will share a repertoire of mental representations of motifs which they continuously update and contribute to (Chapter 10).

Furthermore, scaffolding learning implies less risk of mistake which would be costly, in a context where weaving is an important source of economic income (Goody 1982; Greenfield and Lave 1982; Tanon 1996). The system of scaffolding can be seen as a sort of rehearsal, a familiarisation of the weaver with the materiality of *astta* which makes a higher level of knowledge mundane (Chambliss 1989).

Some games and activities may contribute to this preparation. For example in Ayt Ubial, I saw one afternoon, Lala Fdela playing knucklebones with her youngest ten years old daughter Jamila. The game consisted in throwing a small stone up in the air after having touched the space between her small finger and the ring finger of her open hand, palm against the ground, and then catching it with the same hand. She would then move on to the next set of fingers until the thumb. Such games develop their dexterity, speed, coordination and counting.

Marchand's approach (2007) is also useful to consider the coordination of performance between co-practitioners. In the case of a one-site embodied communication between a mason and his apprentice in Djenné, Mali, he shows that

practitioners who already share a history of working together, but also share goal representation (visual, propositional or motor) can articulate these in their motor performances to achieve a fluid and efficient skilled practice. Similarly in the Sirwan context, weavers share and construct motor representations that allow them to work together smoothly often with the economy of verbal communication. Always aware of each other's gestures, they are careful to remove their hands out of the way of the dangerous beating comb. The *taska* does not necessarily have to enter the visual field of the weavers, as the eyes are relieved by the ears. Weavers can anticipate each other gestures and take over from each other in completing a task. Some activities rather than others require from the weavers a timely cooperation (warping, beaming) whereas some may allow each weaver to work individually at her own pace, taking over from her co-workers at a later stage. When several weavers pass the weft at the back of the carpet whilst the others knot the pile at the front (fig. 26), the latter are attentive to the tempo of the beating which comes from the wefters whilst those who weft have to keep up with the progression of the line of knots.

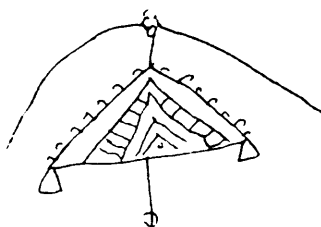
Design in making

Through weaving practice, women develop organisational skills in terms of time management, division of labour, team work¹⁵⁵, and planning. Rachid, the man who assists Davies in her carpet project in N'kob has remarked that thanks to this activity women are well organised and more methodical than men in other activities¹⁵⁶. But what skills are involved in the organisation of motifs and compositions? How does the weaver manage to harmoniously organise complex patterns without the use of any material support (such as a drawing)? This question is inherent in the specificity of weaving techniques. Whilst with pottery or painting, the motifs are added to a surface, in the carpet making process, the surface is built at the same time as the motifs through the interplay of warp and weft threads. This involves not only some kind of memorisation of shapes but also some sort of mental planning of these forms to obtain an organised material composition.

155 If a weaving is not symmetrical, it can interpreted as proof of a lack of harmonious relationship and as bad team work.

156 Susan Davis, personal communication, 2005. We should, however, be careful in taking these remarks at face value as these could also have been influenced by the fact that Davis is interested in women's empowerment.

Ingold rejects the assumption that to ask about form is to ask about design. In his approach to basket weaving, he shows that the final product does not emerge from objects pre-existing in our mind in the form of images which will be merely transcribed materially, but from the repetitive rhythmic movement of the weaver, in “her reciprocal and quite muscular dialogue with the material” (Ingold 2000b: 56-7). Whilst cautiously admitting that the basketmaker must have ‘a pretty clear idea of the form she wishes to create’ (Ingold 2000b: 57) he does not develop what the nature of this idea is, and how this idea may relate to the materialisation of the object. He argues that reflexivity and skilled practice function as a rehearsal, where the practitioner re-view or prepare in his/her mind the movements s/he is going to perform. Instead of opposing representation or reflection to practice we could argue as Faure did that they are two categories of action that are complementary. Leroi-Gourhan (1965: 3) has already noted that habits and reflexive adjustment alternate during practice (or during the *chaîne opératoire*). The smooth almost automatic process of weaving can be interrupted by reflexive moments in situations such as the correction of a gesture, or when a new creative idea emerges from a mistake or a failure. I believe that weavers have a representation in their mind of what they are going to weave (a prototype of the overall carpet or motif), but it is flexible and changes during practice (see chapter 10). This appears in the way Aisha, a 27 year old Ayt Ubial weaver represented a motif (fibula) on paper. If they all have the same overall triangular shape, the treatment of the frame above the Λ shape and the pendants at the base of the triangle differ. They also vary in terms of intricacy and complexity.



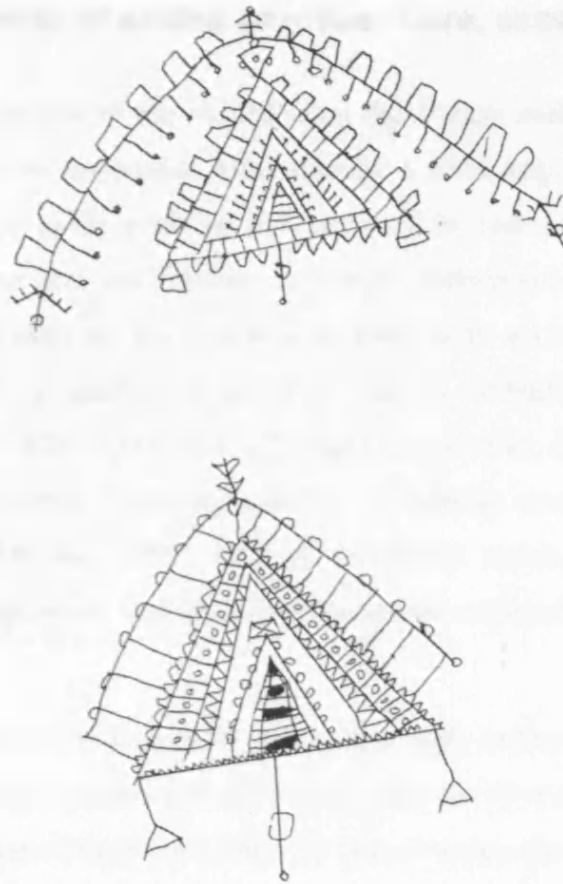


Figure 36 drawing of a fibula: the first two were made on the same day, the third 2 days later

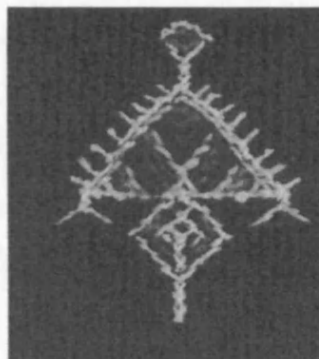


Figure 37 Fibula motif woven by the same weaver, several months later

The moral aspects of skilled practice: Care, excellence and intelligence

Ingold, in his distinction of the skilled from the clumsy maker, argues that the former is a practitioner 'who implement mechanically a fixed sequence of instruction while remaining insensitive to the evolving conditions of the task as it unfolds' (Ingold 2001: 24). Skilled practice and intelligence cannot be understood as the mechanical execution of prefigured design (or body techniques) but as an activity, which 'carries forward an intentionality, a quality of attention that is embodied in the activity itself' (Ingold 2000a: 418). After Pye (1978: 22) Ingold argues that skills entail qualities of care, judgement and dexterity. To account for the 'wonderful amalgam of power and delicacy'¹⁵⁷ (Sue Hall in Dormer, 1997: 156) of the skilled practitioner thus Ingold considers mainly the progressive and attentive perceptual adjustment of the body to materiality.

Chambliss provides us with a more social approach to this question whereby care, attention and dexterity are interpreted as an adjustment to a social context. In a paper on Olympic swimmers Chambliss (1989: 72) deconstructs the notion of talent or excellence, defined as 'consistent superiority of performance'. He argues that excellence is nothing else than a 'confluence of dozens of small skills or activities, each one learned or stumbled upon which have been carefully drilled into habits and then are fitted together in a synthesized whole' (Chambliss (1989: 81). These small skills originate not so much in a quantitative increase in activity or effort but in a qualitative change in behaviour. What distinguishes skilled or successful athletes are their techniques (which we could describe as accurate, attentive and demanding body techniques), their discipline (they are strict with their training, come to work on time, follow the rules and procedures, channel their energy carefully) and their attitude (what others find boring or unpleasant, they enjoy). Thus their performance emerges from what can be summarised as care, attention, precision in practice: a total investment of the self in what they do. This requires a disposition to learn, the ability to search for new ways of doing things and to set themselves difficult goals or challenges. Most of all this qualitative discipline also implies an enjoyment in doing which makes them see as

¹⁵⁷ This expression is used in the context of pottery, about the sense of throwing.

pleasurable what others would see as sacrificial. They find their motivation in mundane things such as seeing their friends at training or feeling stronger after exercising.

In the Sirwa mountains excellence is associated with precision, thoroughness and care in action and gestures. But there is a moral connotation attached to their definition of intelligence. A less skilled weaver is one that weaves without enjoyment and who does not appreciate the discipline inherent in the activity. Inactivity or sloppy work does not bring them anything and is even detrimental to their self-esteem and own value. Good weavers are perfectionists who will untie the knots and start again if the motif is not right. For instance, 23 years old Fadela in Taznakht, who has created the design of a carpet and kept a picture of it, claimed that even if she did not get recognition of her work through a good price, she would not practice the *isghay* technique because it is against her principles. The *isghay* technique allows each weaver to work at her rhythm without having to wait for the others. The principle of the *isghay* technique is that after each passage of the weft, the weaver leaves some 20 to 30 cm of thread hanging down so her neighbour can pick it up when she reaches her level. The *isghay* is arranged in a sort of stair shape (fig. 24, 38) which is quite visible to the exercised eye on the finished carpet (it looks almost as if the parts were sewn).



Figure 38 Weaver beating the weft. On her right the stair shape of the *isghay* is visible.

Fadela's sisters too takes pride in the quality of their work and gain a strong sense of distinction from it. They locate aesthetics and ethics in the doing, in the right gesture¹⁵⁸ (reflected in the finished object, which does not lie). If the inner states, knowledge and value of a weaver can be read in her body techniques and in the object resulting from these, it is because their society sees the process of making as a drilling of moral acts, because materiality affects the self differently depending on how one acts on matter. Thus the technical, aesthetical and moral are closely linked. This 'caring' attitude applies to other aspects of their life and daily activities: they look neat in their appearance and demeanour, they are hygienic, they cook well, their house is well kept, etc.

Intelligence or nimbleness is described as being quick and light witted (*harsh l-'aql*). This agility extends to the memorisation (quick to learn and able to remember for a long time) of complicated formal songs (*imurig*, see appendix 2). In contrast the unintelligent woman (without *'aql*) has a slow, heavy mind. Intelligence is defined as the capacity to open oneself to knowledge. Intelligent weavers are those who are determined to commit totally to what they are doing. The rectitude, attention, dynamism as well as initiative they put in the productive process are matched by their adoption of gendered dispositions and qualities that are considered as morally positive in their communities. Patience for instance involves both submitting to temporal, spatial, material and social constraints and inhabiting them. In Sirwa societies, investing in the norm, accepting it rather than opposing it, is seen as intelligence. Unintelligent women, those who can only weave a plain weft, are not interested in controlling matter and themselves. I was quite surprised to hear members of one family describe in her presence that a weaver was not clever. She did not seem ashamed of it and even seemed to agree with them, but I then discovered that she had some other type of knowledge and power among women: she practiced magic and could stimulate fecundity in women through 'lifting their ovaries'.

Weavers who show initiative, who can weave complicated motifs and complex symmetrical compositions, who are able to supervise the making of a carpet from beginning to end, who have developed an accurate memory, are accomplished artists as

¹⁵⁸ In Kabylia, prospective mothers-in-law observe attentively how young women knead bread dough to read their personality (Virolles-Souibès, 1989).

well as moral women. Inversely weavers who cannot master themselves morally cannot be acknowledged as good weavers, as I have seen with Farida (see Chapter 5).

The most happy and skilled weavers are those who enjoy what they do. This enjoyment is a mixture of social and corporeal emotions: feelings of belonging, the sensuous pleasure of physical exercise, feeling of distinction and recognition, notions of virtue and the daily satisfaction of small accomplishments. It is a particularity of the incorporation process that the dispositions and skills, the emotions and desires emerging from practice appear as indistinguishable from the subjectivity. This resonates with Deleuze's idea that subjectivity has its essence in practice. To do is to be. In the manufacturing of objects, the subject also crafts herself in an active way.

I have shown the intricate relationship between subjects and objects, and how value and knowledge are part of this dialectical construction taking place through body techniques mediated by material culture. Know-how and knowledge about the self emerge as the subject invest herself in the manipulation of objects. Body techniques express the degree and quality of investment, but are also a means of investment. Gestures are generative of more knowledge and value, but also the deeper this physical, emotional, ethical, aesthetical investment, the higher the desire and motivation to renew it continuously. Differentiated body techniques engender differentiated subjectivities: less involvement with the resistance of materiality due to lack of self mastery (laziness, lack of stamina) means lesser degrees of self realization. Because of the mutually shaping relationship between subjects and objects, the action of materiality on people is as important as the investment of self in it.

Purity

This discipline of perfecting knowledge, of doing well, of caring for the object is linked with a caring for the self, often seen as a "purity" process, a reaching of a high stage of self improvement or perfection. Some women consider weaving a work of piety, in that it may bring reward in the other world (*laggis l-ajr*). They identify with the virtuous figure of « Mullatna Fatima », daughter of the Prophet whose *astta* is in Mecca, but only visible to virtuous weavers. Indeed *astta* and wool are both associated

with *baraka*¹⁵⁹, a divine and active force which touches living beings as well as things. This sense of worthiness and virtue is also connected with the idea of doing their duty, or working well. Each weft passed is believed to bring benefactions (*hasanat*) to the weavers and their family, and the wider community. Weaving is supposed to be a path to paradise.

Some religious women even advise to pronounce the *shahada*¹⁶⁰ (profession of faith) each time they lift or lower the bamboo rod! A sort of religious song or formula says: I pronounce the *shahada*, as Mullatna Fatima, the daughter of the prophet recommends it. A female singer-poet (*raysa*) used the term *jihad* to describe the activity of weaving (Appendix 2: song no 6). *Jihad* evokes a sort of heroism in labour as well as a challenge to oneself, a struggle against the self for improvement.

This construction of a moral self cannot be separated from the attempt to distinguish oneself from other less virtuous¹⁶¹, less perfect women and families. Weaving is intricately associated with the learning of gendered moral behaviour: this is why gestures are also read as an external proof of internal virtue. Virtue comes from acts and practice and good practice makes a good woman. This explains why *astta* and its elements, and all objects related to wool and weaving are respected in the same way that the self is.

Pleasure

This total investment of the self in the material activities of weaving makes the process of production intrinsically satisfying in itself. Research in psychology has shown that handwork and enjoyment are closely linked. Activities or actions, which Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990) referred to as “flow” because they appear as effortless actions or as ‘losing’ oneself in the activity, are characterised by challenging aims and intense focus and concentration. Weavers often describe the engrossing effect of working on motifs which make them forget their worries and problems and gives them

159 In this context *baraka* also means prosperity and often by extension fecundity and wealth. *Baraka* means holy properties, saintliness and blessing.

160 The *shahada* consists in saying: *ashahdo anna la ilaha illa Allah wa muhammad rasul Allah*: I attest that there is only one god Allah and that Mohammed is his prophet. The simple formulation of this sentence is a speech act by which the person pronouncing it becomes a Muslim. In this case, it is mainly seen as a proof of religious fervour.

161 Virtue is symbolically associated to purity. Purity exists in relation to its opposite: impurity, dirt. To be pure is to be separated from the dirty.

the impulse to carry on. The enjoyment which is emotional, cognitive and corporeal is so rewarding that it compensates for the sacrifices (time, energy, leisure). Activities that demand the most personal investment and sacrifice and the most discipline are paradoxically those which are perceived as being the most valuable by the maker. Unlike so many other activities the women perform, the carpet is a tangible proof of their hard work of 15 days or a month, and gives them a feeling of achievement.

The pleasure is taken in the process, not just in the end result. As in sport, the intense exercise weaving implies leads to the secretion of endorphin, a hormone which suppresses pain, gives a feeling of happiness and helps concentration. This may partly explain why some women talk about addiction: a long period of leisure gives them the impression of a physiological need that is not fulfilled. Others mention that the knowledge of their own physical and cognitive limits is not without a play dimension that consists in taking on technical challenges.

There is some magic and enchantment in weaving: some women talk about their impatience and excitement when they wake up in the morning, wondering whether the weaving is going to be up to their expectations. Others mention the importance of their dreams in thinking up new patterns.

There is a similar pleasure in opening the carpet and viewing it in its totality for the first time after having woven it. Is it going to be symmetrical? Will it be even in its width? Women describe their joy mixed with impatience and anxiety when having finished a carpet they remove it from the loom, unroll it from the beam and open it. It is a great pleasure for them to admire the material proof of their power of action on matter and themselves. Some find pleasure in the challenge of complicated motifs or in creating new aesthetic ideas. Thus weaving can bring several positive affects¹⁶². It can also bring negative feelings as we will see in the next chapter.

162 Tomkins categorises the innate affects of human beings as interest-excitement, enjoyment-joy, surprise-startlement, fear-terror, distress-anguish, anger-rage, shame-humiliation, disgust. Quoted in Probyn, 2004:242.

Mathematics, measures and problem solving

Lala Anaya in Ifanwan, says that her mother is so skilled, if she sees a motif, say on the saddlebag of a man passing on his mule, she knows straight away the counts (*A la-hseb*) [behind its making]! Butterworth (2000) shows that calculation is a cultural and cognitive faculty directly linked to the fact that we have fingers and can move them. Or to paraphrase Halbwachs, human beings are animals who think with their fingers¹⁶³. Weaving belongs to the domain of number and mathematics (Gerdes 1998; Küchler 2001) and this is not merely because weavers count. It also refers to the ability to recognise patterns, organise, classify and correlate objects, make combinations of geometric forms and to measure. Kitcher (1984) sees mathematics as a process of 'collecting', which involves motor conduct and material culture at a primary level and then with time turns into a more abstract manipulation, a sort of manipulation of objects in the mind. This line of thought is very similar to Papert's argument. In a book on the use of computers as a teaching tool, Papert (1980) shows that mathematical ideas have to be experienced in the body to be understood, and that we think, as children and in everyday life, with objects rather than concepts. His fascination for gears as a child was at the origin of the development of his mathematical thinking. 'gears serving as models, carried many otherwise ideas into [his] head' (1980: vi). He describes this process as projecting himself into the gear's place and understanding through the sensori-motor schemata of his own body how it moved (1980:63-64). The idea that abstract metaphors are based on our body techniques and our upright posture was also developed by Johnson (1999) and by Lakoff and Núñez (2000) for mathematics. Authors such as Lakoff and Nunez position themselves against the absolutist view of mathematics as universal, objective and certain.

Weaving requires a spatial distribution and organisation of threads to form the structure (warp, weft) and motifs (independent coloured threads or *iklan* threads). Making motifs is a process in which operations of addition and subtraction are performed, the weaver adding *iklan* threads and subsequently taking them away by 'throwing' them behind the warp. Operations of multiplications are performed whenever the weaver adds the same number of threads on each side of an axis. These

¹⁶³ Warnier (1999: 34).

are also performed when the weavers execute a motif at a larger or lower scale, which implies increasing or decreasing the number of 'points' in a proportional way. There seems to be no difference in mathematical ability between the weavers who have been schooled to primary level and those who are completely illiterate. This is not surprising as one comes across many illiterate men and women in Morocco who are very numerate. Furthermore, any Moroccan has to perform extensive conversions between the official currency (notes and coins in *Dirhâm*) and the ancient currency (*Ryâl**).

The link between motor action and mathematics has also been highlighted by Lakoff and Núñez (2000) who suggested that there are three basic 'grounding' metaphors for mathematics: arithmetic is (1) 'Object Collection' (numbers are collections of objects and operations are acts of forming collections), (2) 'Object Construction' (numbers are physical or mental objects and operations are acts of object construction) and (3) 'Arithmetic is Motion' : numbers are locations on a path and operations are acts of moving along the path. Earlier, I mentioned the fact that the weaver identifies with the thread and through her eyes that are fixed on it, she moves where the thread goes. Making motifs involves taking paths, entering passages, coming out behind screens, turning around, moving to the front, all motion actions that the weaver feels she is performing, and which help her better understand materiality.

Weaving is characterised by the fact that form (motifs) and structure (background, made of the meeting of weft and warp threads at right angles) are constituted at the same time, from bottom to top, without an overall view of the weaving, which is partly hidden around the lower beam. In addition, weavers do not use any cognitive supports such as designs on paper representing the motifs or part of the carpet. Thus the organisation and planning of the design (motifs and overall composition) require various material and cognitive tools (structure, marking of warp threads, colours etc.) in addition to an embodied memory. The structure and characteristics of *astta* are used at several levels. At the level of the overall composition of the carpet, symmetrical arrangements constitute a technical difficulty since the same motif must be reproduced at a later stage without seeing the 'mirror' or original motif hidden around the beam. At the micro level of the motif, on a space less than half a

metre, symmetry¹⁶⁴ provides an organisational and aesthetical device to obtain a balanced shape: in practice, it means that as long as the weaver knows how to make half or a quarter of the motif¹⁶⁵, she can work out the rest. The central vertical line of a motif usually corresponds to a warp thread. For example, for a large lozenge motif, the weaver has first to place one *iklan* coloured thread around the central warp thread, then 2, 4 and 6 successively after each wefting. That is 1,1, 2,2 and 3,3 on each side of the same central warp thread. Once the weaver reaches the horizontal centrality of the motif, she just has to reproduce the same motif in a mirror, starting from 3,3 and decreasing. If the motif is woven at the beginning and end of the carpet, this central point is marked on the warp as a landmark with a piece of thread for the future reproduction of the same motif. This landmark is tied around the central warp thread at the level of the upper beam and displaced up the warp at each beaming operation. The extremities of the motif may also be marked on other warp threads. The colours of the independent threads are used to organise the details of the motifs. Furthermore, they are usually connected with the background colour so the weaver will remember at a latter stage that the blue background of the square (coming after a red, green, and yellow square) requires a yellow and white motif.

Urton (1997) describes that during the warping operation the Andean Quechua weavers count each warp thread. In the Sirwa mountain, weavers skip this tedious operation. Instead they use anthropometric measurements. For the length of the carpet, they ensure that the space between the two iron sticks (*tagust* pl. *tigusin*) that will hold the warp¹⁶⁶, is the same as the expected length of the weaving, plus one cubit (*ighil*¹⁶⁷) for safety. Similarly when building the knotted width of the warp (*tigrut*) on each of the sticks, they use threads they have already measured to the expected width plus one span (*tadarst*) for extra leeway. Indeed once the warp is mounted on the loom, they often measure it again using a ruler the size of a cubit, and if necessary cut the extra warp threads at one end or side.

¹⁶⁴ They do not seem to have a term to describe symmetry. It is an aesthetical principle and a proof of high skill. An uneven carpet is seen as bad work: *tkharbeq*.*

¹⁶⁵ See Washburn and Crowe (1988) for a detailed description of symmetry types. Bilateral reflection, translation, rotation and sliding reflection are four of the symmetry based on an axis.

¹⁶⁶ See detailed description of warping operation in appendix 3.

¹⁶⁷ An *ighil* correspond to the length from the elbow to the hand, roughly 50 to 60 cm (including the outstretched hand). A smaller measurement is the *tighilt* which is the length between the elbow and the wrist.

These anthropometric measurements follow the dimensions of the arms, hands and fingers. The main measuring instrument and unit of measurement is the *ighil* (cubit) which corresponds roughly to the space the weaver's body occupies in front of the weaving without touching their neighbour. In the material form of a ruler made of wood or aluminium¹⁶⁸, the *ighil* is also used to measure the overall size of the carpets at different stages of the process, particularly at each beaming (marked with a thread sewn in the selvage). This constitutes another control procedure to ensure that the final length of the carpet will be accurate. *Ighil* rather than metre is also used by the dealers when they buy in the region. Other smaller units based on hand and finger measurements are not standardised in the same way because they don't play such an important role, being used for minor measurements. Thus they may be used during the weaving process to assess the space between elements of decoration or their size (motifs, frame). *Titzmam* (pl. *Titzmamin*) corresponds to the two first sections of the forefinger (including the nail section) and is about the same size (perhaps a bit smaller) as *tikemst*¹⁶⁹ (from *ikemz*) or thumb unit. *Awrum* (pl. *iwarman*) corresponds to the whole length of the long phalanges, that is from the finger to the end. *Imi-n-wushen* (span) which means the mouth of the jackal corresponds roughly to half a cubit whereas three *tardast* (pl. *tardazin*) are needed to make one *ighil*. *Imi-n-wushen* and *tardast* are used towards the end of the weaving when weavers need to evaluate how much more is left to weave¹⁷⁰. To assess how much more work is left before the end of the carpet, weavers count in cubit (each time they beam) how many *tiddad*¹⁷¹ have already been woven and deduct it from the unwoven warp (*tiddit* pl. *tiddad*) whose number is set during the warping operation.

The main principle for ensuring harmonious proportions and symmetrical organization of form is preparation: as long as great care is given in placing the main elements forming the composition (motifs for a uniform background, frame, separation

168 As the cubit unit varies depending on body size, each household usually use a standard cubit measure. In families who produce regularly for the trade, this may correspond to 50 cm.

169 *Tikemst* is the diminutive of *ikemz* (thumb). Each finger has got a very specific use and name: the thumb (*ikemz*) is also called the lice crusher (*azduz n-tillishin*), the forefinger is called the leaker of the barley porridge pot (*mannah-tikint*), the next finger is supposed to wear a ring and is called Abdallah (*Abdallah u Khatem*) and finally the smallest is called small Ijja (*Ijja mzin*).

170 If there is more than one *Imi-n-wushen* or *tardast* to weave before night falls, weavers will leave it for the next day as it is believed that *astta* should not be cut at night. This is because *astta* is seen as a living being and cutting it at night would be similar to having a dead corpse standing in the home during the night.

171 Singular Tiddi.

friezes, background colours for a multicoloured carpet) the later stages of the operation will go smoothly. Once the width has been measured and any excess cut, weavers have to weave a band against the knotted chain (*tigrut*) of the warp. This is a standard aesthetic rule¹⁷², each carpet beginning and finishing with a yellow band of the same height.

Weavers also use a combination of approximate measurements and accurate counting at the level of foundation of the carpet. For instance for a carpet made of a series of five large motifs aligned in the width, the team leader will be able to place the centre of each of them. Care is taken in measuring as accurately as possible the space between the selvage and the first and last motif, as well as in finding the centre of the carpet, on which the third motif will be placed. For this latter step, the weaver uses the *ighil* ruler. There are standard measurements for carpets (6x8, 4x6, 5x7 *ighalen*) with corresponding standard types of centres (called *al-mri*, mirror in Arabic). For knotted carpets for example, the *mri* called *bu-tashdwit* requires two *ighalen*, which implies that the weavers will have to plan one *ighil* down and one up from the middle. To find the centre of the width on the mounted *astta*, weavers also use a fast method of counting consisting of pulling two warp threads at a time, with each hand (thus pulling four threads), starting from the two extreme points and meeting up in the middle.

This familiarity with body units of measurement facilitate the weaver's planning and spatial cognition, so that eventually she does not need to use these instruments and can decide at a glance where to place the centre of a motif. This is one of the practical thinking devices that allows the practitioner to act with economy of time and energy. Through the repeated action of her finger in combination with her eyes, she builds visual and kinaesthetic skills which allow her to produce the gesture corresponding to basic geometrical forms (parallel or perpendicular oblique lines //\\ forming and working in combination with V shapes (or its inverse Λ), themselves the basis of more complex geometrical motifs.

172 Whereas this rule is inflexible, weavers enjoy changing details of motifs, frame and separation friezes, which do not interfere much with the overall organisation of the carpets.

Conclusion

The process of making carpets is not just the learning of technical and aesthetical knowledge, but also the shaping of a self which fits with an ideal of female morality as assigned by their society. The deep embodied and material investment of practitioners in the materiality of making affects them in a continuum where the emotional, the ethical, the technical and their gendering are one and the same thing. Both the maker and the object come-into-being together through 'opening' to each other. Acting on material culture implies a bodily and emotional engagement of the self with matter, an incorporation of material culture which is also about being 'penetrated' and affected by it. The effect of this confrontation between two resistances is a strengthening of both the self and the object coming-into-being, a straightening of matter, which is a moralizing of the self. So at an individual level, weaving is also a process where self fulfillment is connected with the self mastery inherent in controlling matter. In addition, weavers gain a level of stability which is related to the structuring quality of continuously shaping a materiality which is always in the making. Permanence and transparency are both dimensions of the productive process wherein the quality and degree of investment in the making appears both in the aesthetics of body techniques and in the resulting finished materiality, a visible proof of their value and knowledge.

Chapter 7 Negative dimension of weaving and the effect of devalued materiality on the self

In the past five years or so, the visibility of women has become a marketing tool. New types of outlets use the image of Berber weavers as a selling argument in the name of fair trade, development and ethnicity (chapter 4). Berber intellectuals who are starting to become active in promoting their ethnic culture often portray Berber women as holders of aesthetic memory and continuator of traditions, of which their community are proud. As a proof of Berber women's importance, I was shown a pile carpet commissioned from Taznakhti weavers representing the Berber Tifinagh alphabet at the head quarters of the Berber association Tamaynut, in Rabat. Women are also invited to participate in the events and conferences organised by this association¹⁷³. Even poets invoke traditional and conservative images of women, ignoring the economic side of weaving in their production (appendix 2.2).

In contrast with these idealized images of carpet production and weavers, this chapter argues that there is a large population of weavers who are marginalized through the denial of their economic and social contribution. This chapter uses female poem-songs collected in urban areas, particularly in the Znaga village of Agouins. To facilitate the reading, only a few will be mentioned in the core of the text, the others (numbered here) are to be found in Appendix 2. This chapter questions what happens to women's self-perception when they produce a devalued materiality.

After describing weavers' contribution to local economies, this chapter considers how the degradation of the materiality of carpets and of work conditions affects the possibility of self-realisation of weavers.

Weavers' contribution to family income

Mernissi (1979a, 1979b) has denounced the fact that Moroccan social scientists have undervalued Moroccan weavers' contribution to the national economy. In the Sirwa, the financial contribution of weaving to the household is difficult to assess since

¹⁷³ Albeit often expected to remain silent.

most families do not disclose the price that their carpet has sold for. If we take the basis of an average of eight regular sized carpets (2x3 m) at 1500 DH (£150) each, produced in a year, the family's income¹⁷⁴ equals 12,400 DH (£1240). A very good harvest of saffron can bring in between 30,000 and 40,000 DH, but this is rare. In some families, however, the income from carpets may reach up to 15,000DH, if the weavers work harder, or if the man in charge of selling the carpets is in a position to obtain a good price (for example if he is a dealer and thus goes directly to the buyer). Added to this income, families also produce dried fruits (almonds and walnuts) which they sell on the market. They also grow barley, some wheat and corn, which provides half of their cereal consumption. Thus the income from carpets can be estimated at between half and a third of the total family income. Women in addition to their usual reproductive contribution (childbearing, care, production of foodstuff, washing, etc.) are in charge of the seasonal work such as the delicate and crucial work of removing shells from almonds and walnuts and removing the stamens from saffron, as well as the daily work of weaving. In comparison to their male counterparts of the same generation (brother or cousin), the young weaver's contribution to the welfare and status of their family is far greater and materially potent. Boys are still important to perpetuate the patrilineal line and as retirement insurance in the form of their future financial and labour contribution to the family and care of elders, but having daughters is an advantage today. Of course, the weaving assets and reproductive labour that sons do not provide can be gained through the marriage of sons. But the income provided by daughters-in-law is not available until the sons are at a marrying age (between their mid-twenties and mid-thirties) and have a job.

Intensification of work, degradation of material culture and weavers' self perception

In 1979, Mernissi documented the increasing economic marginalisation of weavers in the region of Rabat-Salé due to the introduction of Morocco into the wider international market economy. This study is an interesting starting point of comparison for another category of weavers in the Sirwa, those who are affected the most strongly

by the 'degrading effect of capitalism' (Mernissi, 1979b). These are not so much the Sirwa mountain weavers and those in Taznakht who work on commission, but those in and around Taznakht who produce items of lower quality. The argument here is that the 'negative' materiality of the object coming-into-being contributes to altering the self worth of the practitioner. It is not a coincidence that the weavers of Rabat-Salé who expressed dissatisfaction about their work and self-image, and who did not control the marketing of their products, were also producing very simple carpets for the Western market. They saw these carpets as ugly and boring because they were too easy to make. Mernissi noted that younger generations of weavers, being less fatalistic and accepting, rejected old values such as hard work and scorned their work. Instead of believing in work as a way of self-realisation, they opted to find a waged husband.

Female values versus market values

Twenty five years later, in the rural environment of Taznakht some weavers find that their work is devalued and deskilled because of the production of simple carpets for the Western market. In the mountainous areas, people are more self sufficient economically through their agricultural production and have less need of cash thanks to their ownership of land, water and electricity generation. In contrast, in Taznakht and the valley, populations rely on weaving as an important source of income. Some families' expenditure exceeds their annual incomes and they often buy wool but also subsistence food on credit, thus entering into a credit relationship with shop owners. Being more exposed to consumer goods which are more readily available and having a better access to global television networks they resent their low standard of living and poverty more potently than those in the mountains.

Unlike the niche luxury carpet production more common in the mountains, for many weavers in the villages in the valley around Taznakht, entry into market economy means intensive lesser quality production. They produce *akhnif* carpets of the simplest type, usually a one-colour background with a few motifs using cheap wool of the worst quality. They often produce more than a carpet per month. In a village such as Agouins, Ayt Waghrda middlemen come in their car from Taznakht or the mountains and sitting on their front seat, select the carpets weavers present to them, setting the price and

humiliating those whose carpets let the warp show through. They pay 700 to 850 DH (£70 to 85) for 2x3 metres carpets where for weavers an acceptable price is 1000DH (£100).

In the past the working of wool, a sacred and rare matter, was hard work but a vital contribution since it ensured health and life: that is the reproduction of the family. When industrially made clothes replaced woollen ones, women focused their production on items of prestige that marked the social status of both men (*djellaba** and items to put on the mule) and women (weddings and festivals clothes). In the mountains weaving gestures also carry a moral meaning. Weaving is still seen as *hasanat*, good moral actions in favour of self and others, aiming at restoring harmony with the universe, the ancestors and the saints of the village like other contributions of labour in seasonal festivals (*ma'rûf*). Today weaving is still about keeping the family fed and clean. As they state it repeatedly themselves, weavers' work "pays for" (subsistence goods) "sugar, oil, washing soap". "If we stopped weaving it would mean fasting".

It is not a coincidence that the most negative songs-poems were collected in the urban area in the valley in and around Taznakht rather than in the mountains, where many of the old songs and proverbs, but also the rituals relating to weaving still exist. These weaving rituals aim at either improving weaving skills (e.g. visit to Saint shrines and leaving water or wool there) or facilitating the smooth progress of weaving operations usually through keeping spirits (*jnun*) at bay (using salt) or keeping in good term with *jnun* (behaving morally in daily life as well as following taboo days where weaving is forbidden). In the past to cure people who suffered from fever, they were taken on the saint's shrine and a miniature *astta* was warped there. It is believed that the angels that inhabit *astta* will help the good weaver or even do some work for her during her sleep. Rituals using wool are considered as efficacious in curing disease or improving fecundity, protecting the virginity of women or even making men sexually impotent. Not respecting weaving taboo may also affect the health of the weaver or her family. Men too can be affected, as I was told that a husband who cut a carpet before its completion as a revenge against his wife ended up with a debilitating disease. The process of warping a mini *astta* on a saint's shrine is supposed to cure fever.

In the mountains, most women believe that the respect of weaving taboos ensures a smooth weaving process and a beautiful object. It is believed that the moral actions and qualities of weavers have a direct impact on the weaving-coming-into-being and the final object. The material form of carpets is seen as the result of weaver's investment and care in her work. Subjects' actions and qualities are interrelated with the actions and qualities of the objects they make.

Some of these beliefs have been adapted by their inclusion in the capitalist economy: rituals which were meant to bring prosperity and fecundity to the weaver and her family, are now performed to bring wealth in terms of cash. Some weavers believed that they act indirectly on the buyers through the magic of their aesthetic and technical skills and the care put in their work. This corresponds to the definition of art suggested by Gell. According to him, the value of art objects and artists comes from the power they have to make us see the world in an enchanted manner. This magic is the result of technical and creative skills which are used "for securing the acquiescence of individuals on the network of intentionalities in which they are enmeshed" (1999:163). Weavers use techniques of enchantment to make their carpets attractive and visible to buyers who are moved by them and desire to own them.

In the region around Taznakht, the demise of rituals corresponds with the new pace of work and the introduction of new technologies and materials. The weaving rituals which compensated for uncertainty are no longer needed. New technologies such as the iron loom and the use of cotton warp mean greater control over work and predictability of its outcome. Furthermore, the intensification and frequency of weaving operations guarantees a better technical knowledge (warping, erecting the loom, beaming, weaving) than in the past where families used to produce a single or a few weavings a year. Everywhere, including in the mountains, the introduction of electricity means that the taboo about not weaving at night has disappeared. Now, weavers work in the dim light of cheap bulbs (and 10 years ago in the bright and hot light of gas lamps) until late in the evening (10 pm is usually sleeping time).

Gender relations

Whereas carpet production previously was about the consolidation of social relations and the source of moral and spiritual value for weavers, the introduction of the

capitalist economy in households has been accompanied by a degradation of gender relations. Negative change is seen as originating from the outside world of men. Mediators between the outside world and the female realm, the male kin and husbands of weavers bring in new ways of living and thinking. With their access to more orthodox Islamic education, men now mock weaving beliefs as silly female superstitions¹⁷⁵. In order to protect men's potency, women in the mountains still prevent them from entering the room during the crucial operation of cutting *astta*. If a man was for instance taking a nap in the house, they would put a representation of masculinity in the shape of a hoe (*amadir*) by the side of the loom to add another 'male presence', which will oppose the power of *astta*¹⁷⁶. These precautions are now being abandoned by mountain women who have moved to Taznakht as their husbands do not believe in them. Some women state that they have stopped using them for religious reasons, although in practice they still perform them replacing the old sayings by the *shahada* or profession of faith.

In addition to the Islamic influence, the contact of men with the market is seen as bringing negative effects. They link their increased poverty with their abandonment of old practices (and their related beliefs) aimed at maintaining harmony. The intensification of production is affecting older women. A song describes, for example, a husband who insists on his wife still weaving when she has reached an age traditionally considered as the time to take some rest (Appendix 2, no 13). It also means skipping the holy days (*tigga*) where the work of the wool is taboo. The disrespect of this taboo implies losing *baraka*, the divine force of vigour, fertility, efficacy, prosperity and happiness.

Song no 9

Mani ghurn qay tasa s-uzalmd

We have stopped holding our heart on the left.

nghwi tazzut sufasi

And we change taska on the right hand

¹⁷⁵ For instance, all over Morocco women have stopped endowing themselves with tattoos as these practices are condemned by orthodox Islam.

¹⁷⁶ The power of *astta* can be cancelled by two men.

(the world is upside down)

ughi s-uzar rzan tigga rzam l-jami. We do not respect tigga anymore, nor
rzam l-'awashir Friday or l-'awashir*

kigh ghalligh wallu uragh ibid And thus I have no more income.

Many of the weaving song collected have economic themes, dealing with issues of debt, exploitation and uncertainty about the future rather than love or traditional beliefs around wool (*baraka*, pious actions, etc.). These economic issues are related to marriage and women's relationship with their husbands. They often consider marriage as a source of hardship and poverty rather than see it as a time of happiness. From the point of view of women in the region, a good marriage is one where they do not need to weave for a living thanks to the wage of the husband. Ironically, whilst women aim to marry educated men with a profession, rural men without a career look for skilled weavers as wives.

For most women, weaving is a source of moral construction, a path towards marriage. If they marry well, they will withdraw from weaving at an early age, as they gain children and invest themselves in other domestic activities. Women with daughters may be relieved as their daughters become old enough to take over the task of weaving or as their sons marry. For those who marry with a man who is poor or unable to provide for his family, the activity of weaving may increase.

Songs express the feeling that their husbands are responsible for the physical and psychological cost of an activity so devalued it has become equal to working 'for free'. The term *tâmâra* appears repeatedly in relation to weaving in the discourse and songs of weavers. *Tâmâra* designates any exhausting work or chore, a toilsome activity. It is often used to define underpaid or unpaid tedious work, which connotes obligation and physical pain. By extension it also means poverty, misery and subsistence (*l-ma'isha*). In peasant culture work is often seen as coerced labour. The semantics of the word labour in many cultures, shows that work was indeed opposed to the state of nobility and associated with pain and necessity: in ancient Greek society, work was seen as the sphere of necessity and thus of slavery and opposed to the sphere of freedom of the

nobleman, the essence of ennoblement laying in politics (Godelier in Grint 1998:14-5). In Hebrew, the word for work, *avodah*, comes from *eved* (slave) and in Arabic to work (*khadama*) means to serve. In Berber, *tawri* corresponds to *shqâ* in Arabic, to work hard, to endure a painful or tedious labour, and is associated with the idea of patience and *tâmâra*.

Songs associating poverty and marriage express the necessity of weaving for subsistence (Annex songs no 9-12) and put the emphasis on the husband's responsibility. Although exchanged between women, and aimed at a female audience, these intimate songs are indirectly addressed to men (Appendix 2 songs no 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 13). Songs are an important mode of expression of women's feelings and inner thoughts. It can be surprising that husbands rather than carpet dealers are so criticised by women. In fact, in imposing hard work on their wives, husbands are seen as intermediaries of the market and the carpet dealers.

Women resent that their husband, who should have protected them from hardship, have on the contrary contributed to it. Men bring the market world inside the domestic realm, through contracting debts in buying more wool with no guarantee that the carpet will sell at a price greater than the cost of the raw material (song no 4,9). Some songs imply that real men work and protect their wife from such a costly activity. According to Moroccan family law men are supposed to provide shelter, food and clothes to women whose main duty is to supply sexual services.

Song 13.2

ˆla slamtek aghwad dikkan bn ˆAqub	Welcome to you who went to the <i>mousse</i> m of Ibn Yaˆcub
Mashi yatsga n-wasif kaghibid	Who stopped by the side of the river
Ayt Ustta addarik d-Ayt taddut	Who went to the carpet dealers and the wool dealers
mash Ait-l-Ktan urisin ma f-zanzan	But those who sell (cotton)fabric do not

	know why they sell
ighwid 7000 iktant taddut	He earned 7000 Ryal ¹⁷⁷ (350DH) and
	bought wool
islid ifalwan zund ibna el-broj	and on the way back met beautiful lines
	of towers

A wife ironically welcomes her husband back from the Ibn Ya`qub festival where he sold the carpet¹⁷⁸ she made but rather than rewarding her hard work with some nice clothes, he brought her more material to weave with. In buying into the capitalist mode of work the husband devalues his own wife's labour and worth (songs no 10,12). The decline of value attached to weaving corresponds to a decline in their own value.

Song no 13.1

1	Bismillah wa billah wa rahman	In the name of God
2	atnzwara <u>h</u> ra tansawal	I will open the discourse
3	atala d-ifigig rmightent	I am tired of the <i>tala</i> and <i>ifigig</i> ¹⁷⁹
4	ha timgharin tagat n-rebbi attitagha-k	God curses women
5	Jabbar haydur radakh kemmel l-hayat	<i>Jabbar</i> haydur is going to finish us
6	ghiyed n-ghaniye idâren arenterfufun	at night my legs are nervous with fatigue
7	azar nasi tadut arisent nkat	During the day I work the wool
8	maysaynan shdunit l-`aqli	who says life is good?
9	Ayadyasi jabbar haydor igut gh-l-khanshti	When will at last the <i>jabbar</i> haydur be put in the sack [i.e. be ready to be sold]?
10	Akem ihdu rebbi Rhma ugamt gh-	Please Rahma sit at the loom

¹⁷⁷ Although they use Dirham notes, this old Spanish currency is still used in Morocco.

¹⁷⁸ The festival of Beni Ya`qub between Taznakht and Taliouine (near Tinfat) on the first Thursday of April was the occasion of a market that was at some point as important as Taznakht.

¹⁷⁹ Sitting at the back of *astta* (*tala*), and of the beams (*ifigig*).

imasen

11	A timgharin li-ghakund n-shawri	Women. I have something to tell you
12	A khamstasher yum arghanaqma ifalen	who is linked with these 15 days of dyeing?
13	Ayiligh aghdr min ighariwuni	Shoulders are tired
14	Ibbi zizwar idodan y-ufus	The razor [to cut knots] cut my fingers
15	Idaghant iga giwingh tadsa	Where I sit ¹⁸⁰ laughs at me
16	Iga winquelmud igi ifil kiw	There are marks and calluses

In this song the weaver complains of having to supply carpets (*jabbar haydor*) endlessly to her husband who is indifferent (lines 9, 10) and even laughing (lines 15, 16) at her fatigue, physical pain (in the legs and shoulders) and body deterioration (cut fingers, hardened bottom). This song is particularly interesting because the singer associates the degradation of her body with the decline of quality of carpets. Indeed the *jabbar haydor*, a hybrid between the *akhnif* carpet and the pile carpet, is a product for the Western market which has no local value as it is too fragile to be used as a floor covering. Simple *jabbar haydor* save time and material but require no technical skills.

Degradation of materiality, degradation of the self (body and mind)

In these songs the constraining materiality of weaving (immobility, pain, tiredness) is not compensated by a construction of self worth and a recognition of their value by men (kin and dealers). Weavers identify themselves with the carpets coming-into-being (*astta*) and with its tools, which too are seen as victims of unfair treatment. In the same way they sacrifice themselves without return in terms of reward (symbolic and material), carpets are disturbed and moved about (song 1) on the marketplace without being bought.

¹⁸⁰ This ambiguous expression may refer to both her bottom and her husband.

Astta and weaving tools have always been anthropomorphised in old beliefs. Cards for instance are seen to be fed with wool. Here carpets are seen to be mishandled (song 1), to sleep, a metaphoric way of saying 'not to sell' (song 12). Tools are tired (song 11). In parallel, the weavers feel tiredness in their body (song 2, 8, 13, 13.1) they lose their appetite (song 8). Their hands are described as being sprained (song 8), cut (song 4), the skin as burning from contact with dyeing products or losing its colour (song 8); and their bottom as hardening (song 13.1).

Weaving is opposed to health and beauty, in the form of plumpness and whiteness. As a consuming entity, *astta* eats wool which implies also that it consumes weavers who feel hunger as a result of weaving. In most families, the breaks are times when the weavers take some heavily sugared tea and a piece of bread. Eating especially meat, is seen to increase strength and stamina. But, the loss of weight inherent in this physical activity is perceived as destroying beauty. Looking at a picture of her happily married sister, Fatma, a 17 year old girl in the mountains, emphasised how beautiful her sister was since she only produces a couple of carpets a year unlike her other unmarried sisters. Marriage, which implies fecundity and corpulence¹⁸¹ is also associated with health and beauty. Women living in cities are also described as being gifted with these qualities because they take less exercise, which is a sign of wealth and an ideal way of living. Women often complain that they lose their appeal to men when they lose their health, which represents their strength and energy. Women believe that they become or look old faster than men. Finally, weaving, even for women who do not go out in the sun, is seen as a cause of skin darkening. In this society where blackness is associated with lower status and ugliness, white skin is an important feature of beauty.

Weavers describe their bottom as becoming larger from the prolonged sitting position. Beauty is about having an even plumpness, whereas here their body shape is seen as uneven, the bottom becoming too large and heavy. This passive part of their body as the focal point of the body weight, is described as hardening, becoming cold (*karm lik*) and even as detaching from the body because of the numbness due to prolonged immobility on the cold floor. In a joking way, Rqiya an unmarried 22 year old black woman in Agouins, compared her bottom to the shapeless sack (A *khansha*)

¹⁸¹ Women in Morocco take steroids and syproheptadine to become fatter.

filled with old rags and wool scraps that they often use as cushions. Their clothes are misshapen by their sitting position: trousers and dresses become marked and stretched at the level where the knees fold. Weavers feel they are being turned into the weaving object itself: dirty and dusty, greyish, flat and hard, shapeless and sagging.

The continuous contact of their body with the materiality of weaving is felt as a never ending deterioration by contagion. They feel that the negative qualities of carpet or wool (dyes, dirt, fibres,) are contaminating them. Dust and hair particles cover their clothes and penetrate their body, they eat and breathe them. An ironic song seems to imply that they even enter their vagina (Appendix 2, no 10). The dye of the wool transfers to their hands. ‘What’s the point in washing them?’ asks a weaver: ‘They always end up blue’.

This is a lost battle, where what is cleaned becomes dirty, the done is undone and has to be done again. It is an eternal repeating of movements and action, fighting the progress of destruction in a kind of Sisyphean ordeal. As a result, they may give up on looking after their image and feel upset that they are neglecting themselves. There is a feeling of helplessness in front of the imposed self-neglect, and the pervasive invasion of the negative materiality of weaving on their own materiality. In the past, body contact with sacred materials such as natural wool (*taddut**) was used in many rituals as a way to accrue goodness in self. Today, the negative materiality of dirty and rough, unnatural and toxic matter (from the dyes and other products before the stage of industrial spinning) is transferred to them and alters their health and beauty. This personal identification with the negative material object translates into feelings of bodily degradation, lack of mastery and self-hate.

The invisibility of caring for the self and self mastery can be compared with the invisibility of reproductive and productive work. Like housework, weaving is a never ending activity, where once a certain point has been reached, the same gestures and operations have to be performed again: each time they beam the carpet, they know that in the next day or so, they will have to do it again. The finishing of a carpet is only the beginning of a new one. Furthermore, as carpets are sold rather than kept, weaving could be said to have an invisible and ephemeral dimension comparable to housework

(as described by Bourdieu, 1997), which for those who do not make it, often appears to leave no trace, except when undone.

The frequency and simplicity of production is associated with a lowering of technical knowledge and creativity. Weavers are not challenged to weave complicated motifs or search for new ideas. The sensual pleasure of using strong but flexible wool, is replaced by the use of a materiality which hurts the fingers and palms, and gets their clothes and bodies covered with a fine powder of dirt. With the loss of enjoyment and pride, weavers put less care in their work, making less well beaten (with the *taska*) objects for example. The unpleasant materiality and repetitive boring activity also affects their thoughts. The lack of complicated motifs does not allow for concentration and intellectual challenge: the mind flies away from the activity and rambles.

Depression due to loss of self esteem and lack of self-care are also mentioned in songs (no 2, 10, 13.1). Depression arises from the clash between aspirations for self realisation and actual practice. Beautiful and bright 27 year old Amal did not see her future in weaving and believed in education as an emancipatory and important element of life for both sexes. She was able to go to the city to study at University to MA level. Unfortunately once qualified she could not find a job and had to go back to her village and to weaving. She felt she was under an obligation to repay her family for her education. After a year of this situation where she was still not able to get a waged intellectual job, she started to feel very upset. She could not stand the routine of repetitive movements, the fact that she was seeing over and over again the same faces and that the conversations always returned to the same topics. She longed for diversity in activity, peoples and thoughts. There was a discrepancy between her inner feelings and her body techniques, where her body was weaving but her mind longed to be elsewhere. Her complaints did not find any support. Her mother did not understand her dissatisfaction and kept comparing their two generations: whereas the old generation had suffered from hunger, cold, disease, lack of hygiene and clothing, and was still happy despite this, the new generation was too ambitious and ungrateful for what God had given them. Against her mother's value criteria, Amal was looking for more than a provider of material comfort in a husband, and had the ambition to find empowerment

in a job. She reached the stage of depression. Today she has fortunately found a well paid and empowering job in the development sector.

In the structuring aspect of making, in the continuous material presence of sameness, weavers find stability, permanence, and a constant maintenance of their ethical self. The taming of materiality gives them a control of the self which is a motor for a continuous and constant energy input in their productive and reproductive labour. Weavers find morality and happiness in the activity of weaving if the activity they do is fulfilling and if the self-sacrifice is compensated by some gain in terms of self-realization and social recognition. Otherwise the discipline is only felt as constraint without symbolic or financial retribution. They feel they are denied the possibility to turn materiality into aesthetic self-creation, security and dignity. It is felt that they are acted upon by the contact with this invasive materiality without being able to reciprocate the action. The repetition of gesture and movement with material culture marks them without letting them emerge in their own entirety and they become somehow consumed by matter. In the unequal conflict between their materiality and that of the weaving-coming-into-being, they are left with a physical and emotional wound from which they do not recover.

These songs express the discontent of the weavers about their exploitation and an awareness about the source of their unhappiness which could lead them to subvert the norms of their societies. Weavers are aware of the fact that this deskilled and mindless work does not allow them to derive a sense of their own competence and worth. This is particularly the case when there is no possibility of getting out of this situation, either because they are already (badly) married or because there are no marriage prospects for them.

Conclusion

Devalued materiality may hinder the possibility of investment of the makers in their work, making them feel at a loss and incapable of control over themselves and their life. The negative quality of the materiality of production does not allow them to reach self-realisation. The danger with the use of lesser quality raw materials and less challenging activities is that the self-generative dimension of production may be reduced, thus leading to a decline in creativity and technical skills.

Chapter 8 The discipline of mobility, secrecy and the production of men

What is the value and significance that carpets hold for traders who transport and manipulate them as part of their marketing activity? Is the monopolistic position of large urban merchants the only reason why Berber middlemen accept a credit system that entraps them? In this part I intend to answer these questions and to explore the construction of the masculinities of Sirwa dealers.

First I look at how carpet marketing in the Sirwa provides the main source of self-realisation for men, who define themselves through geographical mobility and the management of money. Second, I examine how in emancipating themselves from their elders, young subordinate men often fall into another subordinate relationship with wealthier merchants. Their subordination is embodied and materialised in their practice and experience of marketing but also in that of an ‘in-between’ state of intermediary between two realms. Marketing work comes with status but also at a cost. Between the village, the *suq* and the city, the three layers of space crossed by the middlemen, their status increases or diminishes as they go one way up the supply chain and as they go down, back to their place of origin.

Sirwa men and the market sphere

Social mobility and self realisation

Whereas women’s social mobility in the Sirwa usually depends on who they marry, men find self realisation through extracting the means of providing for both their future family, and their aging parents. Ideally, this means entering the labour market outside the rural area, in waged work. Mobility is associated with prestige and status, not only because it implies non-agricultural work and intellectual rather than manual work, but also because it is associated with cash accumulation, in a rural society that still relies to a great extent on self subsistence. Being a man means joining capitalism through mobility, which implies consumption and the management of family money. In the

hierarchy of work, going abroad (traditionally through contractual work but more and more through marriage) is seen as an almost magical way of becoming wealthy in a short amount of time. This idealized work, as one not incurring a subjective cost and bringing easy money in a short time, resembles what Gell (1999:179-80) calls a 'magical attitude' towards the technical process of making¹⁸².

Apart from physically demanding agricultural work that young men try to avoid, job opportunities for young non-educated men are very limited in the Sirwa region. In Taznakht those who have studied become religious (*fqih*) or administrative officers (*caid*, teachers, policemen and school directors). Those with capital and no education may own or be employed in a business: butcher, baker, hairdresser, taxi driver, café waiters or hotel personnel, owners of shops of all sorts (battery chicken, wool, grocery, vegetable, cloth, photo and internet) etc. In addition to local men there are employees of a bank, the government, and mines who come from wealthier regions of Morocco. In the mountains prospects are even more limited than in the town of Taznakht, since there is nothing else than taxi driving or agricultural work for uneducated men. The selling of saffron in other regions of Morocco may occupy some seasonally.

Thus for most men, carpet dealing, which often starts through extracting the workforce of their female kin, and then wife and daughters, is the main option for self realization. The visibility of other dealers' success provides a source of emulation. Carpet dealers constitute a sort of hegemonic model of masculinity (Connell, 1987, 1995), an ideal of personal wealth that fits with the social norms of breadwinner or family provider. Young men are often given subordinate tasks related with the marketing of carpets, such as aging and washing carpets, or carrying them for the dealers, but these jobs have no long-term career prospects. Some men also perform the occasional task of 'shearing' the knotted areas of carpets when weavers do not do it themselves.

In the Sirwa mountains and in Taznakht the exclusive power of the elder man of the household (father, uncle, older brother) is resented and envied by the cadets, who

182 Against the usual assumption that magic and uncertainty is opposed to knowledge, skills and work, Gell argues that the magical attitude is a by-product of uncertainty, but also of "rational pursuit of technical objectives using technical means... Work...calls into being a magical attitude, because labour is the subjective cost incurred by us in the process of putting techniques into action" (Gell 1999:179).

have to rely on him for all matters including career and marriage. Patrilocality attaches men to the household, unlike women, who move through marriage from one community to another. Being married, older men have the possibility of regular sexual activities that younger men long for. But particularly they manage the family's money and are not ready to share this power. Today, young men who have not found autonomy through waged work outside the family and the mountain, have to wait until they reach their late twenties or mid-thirties before being allowed to marry. If for instance, an elder son drives a taxi or works in the fields, these usually belong to his father or uncle and may only be transferred to him upon his death. Young men are torn between their desire to leave and their fear of the unknown, outside world. Indeed, unless they have family and contacts, they cannot find work and survive in the cities¹⁸³. This wait to enter the labour market is described by Bayart as a liminal experience¹⁸⁴ playing the role of rite of passage through which people become adult (Bayart 2004: 418). In the Sirwa, the entry into the labour market gives men the social status of adult, the right to marry, and some respectability or even notability. As I will argue later, this liminal experience carries on once men have entered the adult world of carpet selling, when they pass from the subordinate state of cadet to that of middleman working for a larger dealer.

Consumption and management of money

Men define themselves, in contrast to women, through their access to consumption and pleasure, which goes hand in hand with exposure to and entry into the capitalist economy. The embodied learning of mobility that is mediated by the material culture of transport is gendered; unlike women who are often car sick, mountain men start travelling in public transport before adolescence. Young boys accompany their father to the *suq*, riding with them on their donkey or mule. In groups, they jump on the back of the village grocer's truck, which provides free transport to the local *suq*, usually between two or ten kilometres away. Taking transportation to the Taznakht *suq* (two hours drive from the village) or travelling further is more of a privilege, or has to be justified by some good reason as it costs money.

183 Rural Berbers are famous in Arab cities for being hardworking and have been successful in the grocery trade. Most mountain dwellers who managed to work in cities, help in a family business or work as waiters in a café or as builders on a building site: jobs they found through family links.

184 The idea of limen (liminal experience) is taken from Victor Turner 1969/1977 who borrowed the notion of the rite of passage from Van Gennep.

As soon as they are teenagers, boys start visiting (mostly on foot) other villages in search of adventure and use hidden routes through the gardens, away from the main track, to meet girls. During the religious festivals (*'id* or *ma 'ruf*) young men from neighbouring villages attend night parties where young prospective unmarried women sing repetitive songs and dance in restrained and simple movements, eyes modestly lowered, whilst men play music and dance in extravagant and free ways. In a symbolic way, these taboos on body techniques express that women are supposed to be static and passive, waiting to be chosen, whereas men have the mobility to look for potential wives, visiting and giving them presents. Young men may also have the freedom and the means to travel several kilometres to go and see an important singer invited for a party or a wedding in another region. Their “hanging out” in open spaces is part of the process through which young men start inhabiting their masculinity.

Men start consuming at an early age. As a child, during the visit to the *suq* they are treated to a toy, a sweet or some DIY material and may also enjoy some food whereas their sisters, who stay at home, don't get anything. Being exposed to the public eye but also to a greater variety of products, they are often better dressed than their female kin (sisters or cousins). For example, they will have watches, fashionable (Western) outfits and leather shoes whereas even adult women wear plastic shoes. Young men between fifteen and twenty-five have the privilege of leisure time and idleness. The main attraction for mountain dwellers, apart from festivals, is the *suq*. They spend the morning in groups, joking, observing, and when they can afford it, consuming cigarettes, tea and food. Their petty crimes and aggressive behaviour are accepted with indulgence: they harass their female kin with their surveillance during the day and frighten women, trespassing in people's proprieties at night.

Mobility gives men access to information exclusive to their sex. In the *suq* of Taliouine for instance, apart from entertainers (clowns or comedians) who make the entirely male crowd laugh, ‘specialists’ provide information and herbal remedies for sexually transmitted diseases. Some have dramatic pictures showing the effect of the disease on male sexual organs. The market is the place where men acquire knowledge, which gives them power and prestige in the eyes of women. Men may bring back gossip

and news from the *suq* and from other villages and towns about events or about people known to the family.

Men's consumption of pleasurable experiences is considered legitimate. Unmarried men above 18 or 20 are collected one evening every two months or so, by a collective taxi and taken to Taznakht to see prostitutes. This is common knowledge even for girls as young as 8, who justify with some contempt men's sexual needs¹⁸⁵.

Perhaps it is in Taznakht and Taliouine, and particularly in families involved in the tourist industry (bazaars and hotels) that young men resent most the weight of their unstable and precarious existence because of their exposure to the consumer world and Westerners. Through their higher level of education and their mastery of foreign languages, they contribute some symbolic capital and labour towards the family income and try to find alternative sources of income above those allowed by their fathers.

Embodied subordination: the material discipline of mobility

In their mobility and their relationship to marketing, men do not constitute a homogeneous group. Not all men are dealers, and among this group, a few are successful. These are usually the middlemen who are in contact with the Arab merchants in Marrakech. Many men are small or occasional sellers such as mountain peasants or shepherds, who may have other sources of income in addition to carpets. Some may be unemployed husbands of a hard working weaver. The Arabic language expresses the fact that marketing involves both the action of selling and buying (a literal translation of the phrase used in Arabic for marketing¹⁸⁶). On the regional market (excluding Marrakech), what distinguishes dealers from those who simply selling the production of their household¹⁸⁷, in this world where most dealers employ their own family labour, is their extended mobility and the regularity of their travel. Most male family members of weavers do not visit Taznakht or the village of the commissioning dealer more than once a month, normally to sell one or two carpets. Small dealers may visit Marrakech a few times during the year to sell a few items whereas established

185 Theoretically, Islam recognizes the necessity of satisfying women's sexual needs. In practice, however men are the ones whose lack of self-mastery is accepted.

186 *Al-bi' u-l-shra* (selling and buying).

187 Under the term producers, I include the weavers and their family as a whole, without distinction of gender, whether the head of the family is a man or a woman who manages the family income.

middlemen visit Taznakht and Marrakech each week to sell the carpets they bought in their region.

In sum at the top of the hierarchy (and the supply chain) there are the large Marrakech merchants who have the possibility to travel abroad but do not visit the producing areas. The group of middlemen who visit Marrakech on a regular basis, can be divided into those who use their own vehicle or public transport. Then, small dealers may visit Marrakech occasionally but they sell mainly in Taznakht or to the occasional Westerner visiting their village. Finally, poorer dealers cannot afford to sell anywhere else other than Taznakht or in their local mountain *suq*. They are closely followed by the male relatives of weavers or weavers themselves. I also mention subordinate men who are not dealer or producers but are employed in the industry to wash and age carpets.

Physical constraints of transport

The embodiment of personal mobility, mediated by material culture is related to social status: wealthy dealers, who only come to the Taznakht *suq* to buy, have their own vehicle. In contrast, poor dealers who visit Taznakht on Friday by taxi (a transit van transporting at least 12 people), travel early, in uncomfortable conditions and carry their carpets themselves. Those who also travel on a weekly basis to Marrakech, leave the following day, coming back only on a Tuesday. This time they travel at the back of a truck, without passing through Taznakht. The auction day in Marrakech is Monday, and they hope to sell carpets there that have not been sold to Marrakech bazaarists. In Marrakech, they will often sleep in an uncomfortable environment such as in carpet shops or cafés only frequented by Berber men. The cost of travel is substantial, representing the price of a small one-metre carpet (100DH), but unlike other public transport the truck takes them directly from their village to the carpet quarters in the medina of Marrakech, in a very secure environment.

Back in the Sirwa, visiting the nearby mountain *suq* may not require relying on anybody else's vehicle or spending a regular amount of money since it can be reached by donkey or motorcycle. It is an opportunity to do the weekly shopping for fresh vegetables for the house or to sell seasonal production. Producers and small dealers alike, be it weavers or their male relatives, have to take public transport to get to

Taznakht's *suq*. Apart from the inhabitants of the town and its suburbs, most visitors to Taznakht's *suq* have travelled up to two hours by shared taxi and mostly on rough tracks, sometimes having to rise as early as 3 o'clock in the morning. In winter, when less taxi drivers will face the difficulty of driving on dangerous slippery tracks, the few minibuses that are running are full and people have to travel on the open roof despite the freezing wind and the rain. They may have to get out of the vehicle and push it out of the muddy tracks or the river.

On Friday morning, when they arrive in Taznakht, the only café open is one belonging to an Ayt Ubial man from the mountains. As there is nowhere to find shelter, they may wait inside the vehicle until the town wakes up. On top of transport fares (up to 40DH return for mountain dwellers) another expense is the entry tax that has to be paid for each carpet to be allowed to sell it on the *suq*. The entry tax is 5DH for small items and 10DH for the larger ones. Thus mountain-dwellers spend at least 45DH to sell a carpet at the *suq* and those who live closer to Taznakht may pay between 20 and 25DH. The cost of transport and *suq* tax is substantial when we consider that 25DH may be the profit made on the carpet above material cost and that it corresponds to a kilogram of good quality wool. Weavers consider they have made a good profit when they make between 50 and 100 DH above the cost of material. This is why, unless they have some other reason to visit the *suq* producers tend to prefer to sell directly in their village to dealers who live or visit them there. Producers and small dealers often cannot afford the expense of visiting the *suq* every week.

Furthermore in 2004, following a pattern found in all towns in Morocco, officials displaced Taznakht's *suq* another 2 km out of the town centre. This means that once they arrived in the centre of Taznakht producers and small dealers have to pay somebody to help them carry the bulky and heavy carpets to the *suq* or carry them on their own back. This administrative decision demonstrates the lack of importance that is given to the producers, who not only have to stand for hours in the sun in a dusty and unfriendly environment waiting for the local elite to come and buy from them, but now have to carry their products further out of town. It could also be interpreted as a decision to isolate the producers. In Taznakht the middlemen and particularly the bazaarists, who have large stocks of carpets, have an interest in frequenting the *suq*

where they can buy carpets cheaply. This is unlike other large towns in Morocco where permanent shop owners snub the *suq*. Town administrators have allocated cheap shops on the *suq* to local (non-bazaarist) dealers to persuade them to move out of the centre. Wealthy mountain dealers and Taznakht bazaarists park their own vehicle a few metres away from the area allocated to the selling of carpets.

The discipline of waiting

The capacity to be individually mobile rather than having to take public transport is a materialisation of the dealer's social status. Their body techniques in occupying the space in the *suq* and handling carpets is also an indication (and a reminder) of their power. On the *suq* of Taznakht, sellers (that is producers and small dealers who do not go beyond the region) can easily be identified from their physical position and body techniques in relation to carpets: they sit on the ground or stand in front of their items, whilst the buyers walk around them. These stop in front of one of their carpets, sometimes without a word, expecting the seller to stand up, open the chosen carpet and show it to them. Then, and only then, they may start discussing the price, or dismiss the object at a glance. Another aspect of marketing is to master one's own feelings of impatience to sell and hide them under an impassable front of indifference. It also involves having to cope with the humiliation and anger of having to accept a low price. Both male kin of weavers and weavers themselves (usually those from Taznakht or from the south of the town) share the same passive experience of waiting to be 'picked up'. In an article published in the weekly magazine *TelQuel* (Bennani 2003) a weekly journal in Morocco, the men in Aouda, 30 km away from Rabat (Morocco's capital) with the mocking self derision and irony habitual in Morocco described their own situation where women are being employed rather than them in fruit fields and factories as a feminising one: 'they (our wives) go to work, and us, we stay here, waiting for them, like women.'

The embodied quality of mobility or stasis is an important factor in reinforcing social status differences and can be used as a technique of domination and humiliation by the powerful. Bayard (2006) argues that waiting can be a 'technique of government' used by States to control their population. In a chapter entitled 'The global techniques of the body' (Bayard 2006), he describes the waiting and queuing body techniques that

city dwellers in the West perform in their daily life, for example in front of restaurants or in airports. He highlights the increasing case of emigrants waiting for months or years at borders. Bayard argues that States govern through keeping stocks of population waiting for an opportunity of self-realisation, in particular poor populations in the South dreaming to go to the Western world. It could be argued that the waiting of the seller in the *suq* is a disciplinary technique used by the large dealers (with the help of the authorities) to crush their pride and self-esteem¹⁸⁸. This puts all the competitors at the same level despite any discrepancy in aesthetic and technical skills or quality of material. The poor subordinate sellers must wait in the *suq* of Taznakht: a technique that weakens any bargaining power and encourages the seller to accept the price offered.

In other areas of Morocco, the spatial organisation of the *suq* with its particular corporeal constraint, also betrays these techniques of government through stasis or movement. In the *suq* of Khemisset, close to Rabat, poor weavers come to sell at dawn to dealers and leave as soon as possible. Whereas poor weavers sell 'at discount' prices at the door of the building specially built for carpet dealers, dealers and wealthier weavers rent a space in this building where Westerners (tourists and expatriates) may visit later in the day. Outside the building they stand, holding their light carpet(s) whereas inside the sellers can sit and wait in comfortable conditions.

In the *suq*, the *dallâl*, a type of auctioneer or middleman works for a small fee on behalf of the sellers (usually women). He is in an ambiguous position. Neither seller nor buyer, he sells his service (the transportation and selling of carpets given to him by the seller). His mobility may mean that he will carry the carpets all the way from the village to the *suq* as in Taznakht or simply one-by-one on his back, in front of each buyer as in Khenifra. Here, the auction system is directly linked with the spatial organisation of this carpet *suq* (or rather the enclosed square (*qisariya**)) as all the buyers (dealers or members of the public) and sellers stand within the space of a square surrounded by carpet shops and it is the auctioneers who move between them, carrying the carpet and shouting its price as it increases. The sellers stand up or sit on the stairs of the *qisariya* whilst the established dealers (who are comfortably sitting at the entrance of their

188 Even large merchants in Marrakech, who take on the role of bazaarists, may feel humiliated by the stereotypes associated with this job in the eyes of Westerners who do not realize that they are from a high social status in Morocco.

shops) stop the *dallâl*, who will open the carpet, roll it open or stand holding it up with both hands. The dealer either offers a price, putting the bid up or does not enter into it, the *dallâl* then resumes his position of carrier. This system is supposed to protect the anonymity of the seller and to give her the best chance of selling at the highest price. In Taznakht's *suq*, the auctioneer, unlike in Khenifra or Marrakech stands in the middle of *suq* in front of his carpets, in the same way as all other sellers.

Status of middlemen, between the rural and urban spaces

Whether they travel by public or personal transport, the body of dealers is shaped by the materiality of mobility. The capacity to be mobile gives them power at the bottom of the supply chain, but as they go towards Taznakht or Marrakech the physical discomfort of travelling, handling carpets and waiting diminishes it. Berber male heads of households are powerful in relation to their family members or in their village, but may be subordinate in the *suq* of Taznakht. Berber traders are dominant in their society but they are 'muted' in relation to the Arabs. Change in position and power depends on space and time (Ardener 1997: 1-4). As they cross the geographical boundaries between their village and Marrakech, Berber dealers enter new layers of emotional, corporeal and material discomfort: the closer they get to the urban sphere, the more they feel their subordination as Berber, rural and poor. Their subordination is embodied and materialized in their practice and experience of marketing but also in their in-between state of intermediary between two realms.

Mobility as a space for secrecy

Having capital (property, assets, cash) and being able to mobilize, move and manage it freely and exclusively without the control of the rest of the family is synonymous with being a man of value and power. But this management of money is often connected with secrecy. Men do not like to discuss their carpet transactions with their wife, either for fear of losing the power of managing the family money or because of the humiliation of acknowledging their failure at negotiating a good price. In the mountains women often do not know the price their husband has sold an item for and to whom it has been sold to. This is often because he refused to inform them. If they ask, they get the reply: "Mind your own business, are you trying to boss me around?" A woman complains: "They never tell you how much they are selling them for". Another

woman said: “They never give you the pleasure of telling you they sold well”. If a wife complains that the carpet was sold too cheaply, he tells her: “If you want to stop *astta* and do nothing (*gawr*), you won’t eat anything”. Women have learnt to keep quiet because they “don’t want trouble” (*sda*). “The girls suffer (*ihshmin, shat babatun*) and carpets sell badly. All men are the same, but God will make them pay (*hsaba illam timgharin*)”. Men tell them: “You wish you had that money, don’t you? Well wait and see what will happen if I was to disappear!” Women are reminded that their position is very vulnerable and relies on the life of their husband.

Men define themselves through their unchecked management of money and time. This is why most men in the Sirwa mountains and the area of Taznakht, are reluctant about marrying an educated woman. This includes educated and wealthy men. As I was told quite candidly, such a wife is too assertive and would want to know their whereabouts and how they spend their money. Although women are often portrayed by men as spendthrifts and futile consumers¹⁸⁹, consumption particularly in the mountains is mainly masculine. Some men have been described by men themselves as selfish spendthrifts who waste family’s money on a nice meat dish when they are in town.

In hiding the behaviour and practices of men from their controlling community, geographical distance gives them a feeling of freedom. At the level of the village, older men exert a reciprocal control on the behaviour of each other¹⁹⁰. Despite all their power and capital, married and elder men are not free from the scrutiny and criticism of other local men, including in matters as private as sexuality and marriage¹⁹¹. A married man is not supposed to talk to other women¹⁹² and attempts at taking a second spouse¹⁹³ are

¹⁸⁹This was noted in other regions in Morocco (Belghiti: 1971, Maher: 1974). Men tend to see the purchase of jewelry or clothes as futile purchases.

¹⁹⁰ Younger men also do not trust each other relating to the matter of honour of their sisters.

¹⁹¹ This applies also to male widowers in their sixties or seventies who will be encouraged to remarry. Although theoretically in Islam, women’s need for a sexual life is acknowledged and marriage is a requirement for both sexes, in practice a female widow will gain respect from not remarrying. Certainly the figure of Aisha, the youngest of the prophet Mohammed’s wives is a model of this since she took on high responsibilities at his death and was in contact with the most powerful men of her time, and never remarried.

¹⁹² As I learnt at my own expense. Whereas I was spoken to and was well known in the village where I was living, on one occasion where I had to speak to some of the villagers in the local *suq*, eight kilometres from the village, these men were embarrassed and tried to avoid me.

¹⁹³ Polygamy is frowned upon in the region, in part because such changes are a source of conflict. In the case of separation between spouses, the wife is supposed to go back to her parents who will then have to support her, a prospect not welcome when older generations rely on the young for their retirement.

not easily approved. The extended family will try to convince the man to abandon the project if they have any power and influence on him and if he lives locally. This is why the rare men who are bigamous or have repudiated their wife to remarry an Arab woman, tend to be those who have a good job in Arab towns or cities. The freedom of distance and financial independence allows them to remarry without consulting their family. In some cases, the psychological ascendancy of the fathers over their son can be analysed as 'castration': men as old as 30 feel ashamed and afraid that their father may hear about behaviour such as smoking or flirting, to such a point that they will refrain from such acts in areas where their father is known (sometimes up to 100 km away). This fear and competition with the aloof and authoritarian father can also be felt by the paternal brothers in a society where the elder male has the right to inherit all the property of his father.

As they leave the village, the town and the region behind, the taboos and conservative behaviour or discourse of their societies dissipate. Taznakht is one stage towards this relaxing of social control and behaviour. The 'anonymous' Marrakech is the ultimate place of freedom and escapism, real or imagined. The city is a place of pleasure and consumption, leisure and perdition, and also potential wealth. The lights, colours and noise of Marrakech are in sharp contrast with their Berber village where lights go out after 10 pm and everyone knows each other.

With their status of intermediaries between the domestic and the market world, between the conservative and controlling world of the fathers and the intense, liberal world of wealthy merchants, they may adopt one identity at one end of the distribution chain and another at the other. Depending on who they interact with in the anonymity of the cities (these relationships may be transient and contingent), they take on a different persona, and behaviour and they may change clothes¹⁹⁴.

In Taznakht or Taliouine self appointed guides in towns or in the mountains, become middlemen in the transaction of carpets between producers and Western buyers. The meeting with Westerners (which allows practices and discourses to some extent outside social scrutiny) constitutes a space for the expression of their masculinity and

¹⁹⁴ Women too adopt different outfits and behaviours depending on where they are located. This I have witnessed with the female president of a cooperative in another region in Morocco.

challenges the hegemonic figure of the father: who has established a good relationship with other adult men, has a reputation, may be feared, and who is a good Muslim. These guides earn some money and manage to acquire through exchange with Westerners or other means, the symbolic signs of their modernity (clothes or items such as rucksacks, cameras, fashionable watches, mobile phones etc.). This space may be felt like a transitory one between the village and the city, the local and the Western world, where one can behave in a different way and invent a new identity. Thus, it can be argued that in providing the possibility for new agency, the space of the market becomes private, allowing those who occupy it to act away from the prohibiting control of others. Men can achieve greater privacy from the village, father or wife through their mobility outside the village, on the tracks between villages, in towns, in cafes and in the streets.

Marketing: making visible and hiding

In the Sirwa successful middlemen are often portrayed as lacking morality in their trading practices. There may be an aspect of envy in the producers' criticism of dealers, but their perception is also grounded in personal experience. Producers who work for a relative often complain he exploits them. In their discourse dealers acknowledge their Islamic beliefs and swear by God. Most of the successful bazaarists and dealers in Taznakht, are *hajj*, that is they have gone on a pilgrimage to Mecca and this is supposed to have washed their sins away. This pilgrimage gives them great prestige at a great cost¹⁹⁵ but popular wisdom has it that it does not really change the man. For example, every year a dealer of Taznakht gives the *zakkat* (alms given to the community at the time of the *mulud** representing 10% of their annual income) but this is read as a symbolic gesture relatively to how much they earn at the expense of the weavers. At the level of the suq, producers have seen that dealers constantly readjust prices to suit themselves according to the season, festivals and the international market. The prices also rise according to increases in subsistence food prices. Before and during Ramadan* and around the period of the *'id Kbir* festival the price of carpet lowers. This corresponds to times when people need money to buy food¹⁹⁶ or goods (school

¹⁹⁵ The pilgrimage to Mecca costs at least 30,000 Dirhams (roughly £3,000).

¹⁹⁶ In such periods the price of products which form the main ingredients of the evening meal (meat, dates and figs) increases. Sheep at the approach of the *'Id Kbir* also become more expensive.

materials). In addition, in the tourist period (February-June, September-October¹⁹⁷) when carpets sell better, the prices stay low for weavers. The explanations of the dealers regarding the global economic crisis and the impact of the 1991 Gulf war on trade are contradicted by the fact that they carried on buying. As many weavers have stated: "When they come and find you working at your loom, they say they are going to buy, when the carpet is cut they complain it is difficult to sell".

The materiality of carpets is characterised by a 'transparency' whereby the quality of its making cannot be concealed. The care, technical skills and creativity of the maker, or on the contrary her sloppiness and laziness, appear in the very structure and surface of the weaving. In contrast with the visibility of the quality of weaver's work frozen in the carpet, it is often felt that dealers show little affinity with transparency and honesty in their relation to producers. Traders have learnt through practice and imitation, and through sight and touch how to assess carpets: whether they are well-beaten, evenly woven and if they will be easily sold. Using their body dealers can quickly assess whether the producer's price corresponds to the cost of making. They only have to measure the length and width in cubits (*ighil*, pl. *ighalen*) using their arm (from hand to elbow) to have an estimation of how many kilos of wool have been used. Carpets come in standard sizes (1x2m, 3x2m, 2,5x3,5m etc.) and thus dealers (as well as experienced producers) have a sort of grid of price in their heads depending on the size and type of carpet. Flatweave carpets often use half of the amount of wool of pile carpets, and hybrid ones which use both techniques (*jabbar haydur*) are in-between. Dyes and warp prices are included in this rough estimation. If weavers cannot lie about the quality and cost of carpets, dealers know how to bargain and negotiate a low price, using unfair arguments despite the good quality of the carpet. Weavers can feel offended by the suggestion that their work is not good when dealers offer low prices or use the argument of a fault in their work to lower the price. This is because the implication of this criticism of their work is that weavers themselves are not good or moral.

In their transactions with Western buyers (as weavers have witnessed) they tend to hide the source of their supply, the aging process and the reality behind production:

197 Summer is a less profitable time for dealers as local families often rely on their visiting families from Europe, who take charge of most of the expenses.

the fact that production is recent, intensive and issued from poverty. Whilst they mask the bad quality of materials (artificial dyes, burning and bleaching of low quality machine spun wool) they make carpets more visible and enchanting through performative bargaining (Steiner, 1993) and discourses which construct carpets and their makers as exotic and ancient. In this, the marketing work of men is one of concealment of female labour, life and feelings.

Some weavers have acknowledged the importance of the selling discourse in persuading the Western buyers because their interest will only be raised when they have been filled with symbolic interpretations of the motifs and a discourse on age and authenticity. For these types of consumers, who base their purchasing decision on criteria of symbolic value rather than personal aesthetical and technical appreciation, the object is only a finished product when it has a faded and worn aspect or when the dealer has attached a 'story' to it. Weavers who have witnessed dealers or tourist guides using such arguments, have no respect for the men who play these roles. In selling fake products, in destroying the natural quality of wool, in embodying trickery in their gestures and discourse, men are seen as becoming amoral. Although producers are pragmatic about the demand of the buyers, and although wool has lost a lot of its virtues and power, there is still a taboo about damaging it through the operations of bleaching and burning. Adulterating matter and lying about what one sells is also condemned by religious authorities (*fuqaha*). Thus men contribute to the symbolic and material transformation of carpets into valuable and desirable objects through discourse and/or aging, from the point of view of the (ignorant) buyer. At the local level however, good quality carpets are still seen to be those made with good quality material and to last. Thus the finishing action performed by men to make carpet more visible and ready for the market are not seen as part of the productive process, but rather as a destructive action: not only of the work put in making it but also of their art. Indeed the materiality of carpets is more ephemeral when the coloured fibres have been exposed to heat and bleach.

Subordination and loss of morality

To become dealers men need to build a network of producers to increase their stock and to find larger dealers to supply it to. Some dealers move from one type of

subordination (father-son) to another (client based). Their new 'patrons' can be relatives in the extended family who are already in the business of carpets or entrepreneurs in the cities. Through them, they also acquire the knowledge associated with marketing when they witness them in action on the *suq*, or in Marrakech bazaars. Being able to rely on the sponsorship of kin may allow for instance free transportation to Marrakech. Thus, men gain status from their geographical mobility, but this comes at a price.

Whereas in their village and region, their status of dealer, gender and ethnicity¹⁹⁸ confer them power, in the cities they feel humiliation and powerlessness when dealing with authorities, large carpet merchants or even women. In their transactions in Marrakech, they are faced with the contempt of the urban Arabs for their Berber and peasant origins. Young educated Taznakht bazarists who visit Marrakech by car and master the Arabic language still find it difficult to integrate into the Arab society where they are ostracized by racism or mocked for their accent. They are bitter about the wealth of large Arab merchants and their control over them. Unlike the generation of their fathers, they are not content to be middlemen. Their knowledge of the high (artistic) value carpets hold this end of the supply chain makes them resentful about their low share of the benefits in comparison to large merchants. Their mastery of languages and knowledge of the 'modern' world make them more aware of their cultural capital, but they lack financial capital.

The reputation of naivety, honesty and hard work that Berber men have in the cities can cost them their business. Thus among Berbers the old notion of *niya*¹⁹⁹ (a mixture of positive naivety and faith) has lost its value. A clever man is one who has heard of the many scams taking place in the cities and towns and thus is prudent with strangers. The association of experience and mobility is expressed in the following proverb collected in Tamsasert: 'the stone of the river [that travelled] is polished and shines whereas the one that stayed is rugged, badly shaped, and rough'. The importance of the clientship and kin network and the trust and loyalty that these entail, can be seen when dealers attempt to free themselves from such ties: in the late 1980s, some mountain villagers from Ayt Ubial who had accumulated large stocks of carpets were

198 Berbers –*Imazighen*, free men, believe that they are superior to *Hartani* people, usually of slave origin.

199 In exchanges and transactions, *niya* (good faith, trust, sense of honour (*nafs*)) is a trust capital often based on the fact that the actors know each other.

ruined by a man who having collected carpets on credit from them in Marrakech, disappeared abroad a few weeks later, leaving an empty shop.

On the one hand, the fact that the market is a place where their power diminishes is safely hidden from the society of their village by the opacity of distance. The space of the market challenges their masculinity in that they lose power in it and are humiliated, feel ashamed of who they are and where they come from, but the very fact that they can move and occupy a space there, however small, gives them power back at home in another context. This invisibility makes them more visible back home. On the other hand, this very invisibility may be the place of their transformation into amoral men.

Mobility often goes with perdition and loss. It is in towns that men start indulging in taboo practices such as smoking. They may indulge in alcohol, an even worse practice strongly condemned by Islam. The soiling effect of foreign (non Muslim) lands extends to the national cities.

Young men dream of following their elder brothers and cousins to the cities or better still, to emigrate abroad. Behind this dream is the unspoken knowledge that easy money may be obtained in amoral ways. The usual belief that Westerners and the Western world are not pure, goes hand in hand with the belief that going there may mean perdition. But as long as wealth and thus value is obtained outside the public eye (that of the community of origin), there is no negative impact on their reputation. There is a distinction to make between the seen and the hidden, the public and the private: what is unseen or acknowledged, does not come into existence. The corruption of the self that some men experience through their contact with the tourist industry or the market is however not irreversible, unlike for women, and one can eventually manage to imitate the father figure successfully, given the economic means.

The love-hate relationship with cities can be compared to their ambivalent feelings towards Arab or Western women, towards whom they feel both attraction and repulsion. Stories abound of the scandalous free sexual life of Arab women, including those who are married. In their vision of urban perversion and perdition, Arab women are only just above Western women. Some of the young unmarried men are torn between their attraction for the perverse Westernised Arab world (which they can paradoxically often only enter through marrying an Arab woman) and the traditional

oppressive world of their fathers. On the one hand, the wealthy Arab world of success and freedom attracts them, on the other hand, it is a source of resentment and humiliation. They often spend their time with other Berber men who have a similar or higher position in the carpet trade in Marrakech. In the hostile and unfamiliar space of marketing whether in the town of Taznakht or the remote city of Marrakech, the feelings of solitude and loss, the stress and danger, the speed and rush of cities, increase as they go away from the local village. Having left their ephemeral existence through mobility, they find themselves destabilised again. They are faced with several norms, that of the conservative rural moral world and that of the appealing liberal soiling urban realm. The outside world of exchange is one of pressure, change, opposition and contradictions.

Marriage anchors them back in the village of origin. It often closes their entrance in the adult world. The risk, hostility and contingency inherent in mobility is compensated by the familiarity and predictability of their domestic environment. The house takes on the status of a sanctuary of virtue and morality, permanence, stasis and comfort. Having a status in their society they can temporarily face the hostile world of marketing. This subordination is a necessary sacrifice towards gaining dignity and financial security in their own world, in a similar way that the emigrant is dominated in the Western world but comes back in his country of origin with all the signs and capabilities of power.

Relation to carpet

Small dealers have a direct contact with carpets: they spend a lot of energy carrying them, loading and unloading them from trucks, hand or donkey carts, folding and unfolding them, lifting them open, and returning them to their display form. Part of the task of any dealer (including those in Marrakech) is to display carpets in front of the eyes of buyers in such a way that they attract their interest and ideally their desire to appropriate them. On the *suq*, sellers display the carpets in a pyramidal shape or folded in two and then rolled so that they do not get dirty on the ground, using the grain bag in which they were carried as a sort of mat. With their interior hidden in the folds, these carpets, could at first glance be seen to show little. In fact, they betray the colour and

size, but also the quality of the work of the weaver frozen in the carpet: the back of the pile carpets show whether the rows of wefts were layered evenly and regularly, or with no care. The threads of the design hanging at the back of akhnif carpets show whether the motifs are intricate and numerous or rare and thick. One can see whether the weft is well beaten or whether the warp is visible on any type of carpets.

The higher the status and the age of the dealer, the more distanced is his relationship to carpets. In Bazaars, the subordinate task of folding carpet after carpet in front of the eyes of the Western buyer, and of tidying up once they have gone, is left to one of the shop assistants. Using body techniques mimicking the servile act of putting objects under some powerful person's feet, these subordinate men disappear behind the enchanting presence of the carpet and the dealer's performance. On the suq of Taznakht, in their immaculate light (in colour and weight) outfits, wealthy dealers perform very little heavy and dirty work. They only touch the carpets with their hands, when the size of the weaving requires them to help the seller open it, at a distance from their bodies. Some have an employee who carries their carpets to their vehicle.

The subjective cost of washing and aging carpets is the responsibility of younger subordinate men. They often work in pairs to tackle the wet carpet which becomes much heavier and smellier. Soaked with washing liquid, the carpet is trodden on, with bare feet in the summer or with boots in the winter, brushed with hard brushes and hit with wooden sticks. With a hose or buckets of water, men splash them, squeeze any excess water from them, roll them up and then lay them out to dry flat. After these spurts of energy, they remain inactive whilst the carpets are left several days on a wall near the fountain until they are dry. Then, they have to carry them back to their house where they will be exposed to the sun. They sometimes have to stretch them on a frame to make their corners more even or to flatten the warp. One given carpet may require several treatments: it may be covered with a detergent or bleach, brushed and left to dry for several days in the sun, and only then washed. Both the bleaching and burning of carpets require careful attention so the products do not get irremediably damaged, a knowledge acquired through practice. Whether wet or burnt, wool gives away an unpleasant smell. Although they use brushes and buckets to spread the detergents and bleach, the skin of their hands and feet as well as their lungs are exposed to these

chemicals. Thus, as in the case of weavers, there is a physical cost in the process of giving the finishing touches that will make carpets more 'visible' to buyers who appreciate old-looking weavings.

The marketing of carpets is characterized by long periods of passivity, where dealers sit inactive and immobile in transport, in the *suq* or in shops. Dealers have an intimate relationship with the finished carpet, which becomes their companion on their long journeys (more than 230 km away) to Marrakech. They lean against the carpets, which make a cushion against the rough steel matter of the truck or minibus, smothering the shocks to the body. In the various places where they spend their night or have a nap, dealers lie over them, using them as pillows or mattresses. During the long periods of immobility, dealers have a passive, harmonious contact with the carpets, which receive, envelop, protect, heat and allow the relaxation of their bodies. This relationship of familiarity is not one of attachment since, carpets as items of exchange, have an ephemeral presence. In addition during the active phases of handling the carpets, dealers have to act strongly on matter, fighting against the resistance of a heavy, bulky and dusty object. Because it is uneasy to manipulate, it has to be folded or rolled in a more humanly manageable form: it can be carried on the shoulder or held under the arm, or seized bodily, squeezed against their trunk, both hands around it, almost like a human body. As such, their body to body contact with the carpet could be said to be less distanced than the one the maker has with the weaving stretched in front of her on the loom. Like weavers, in adapting their body to the materiality of the object, they build a musculature and experience pain. But in being a relationship less constant and regular than that of weavers, it is less structuring as there is less possibility of control of the materiality and self in exchange practice. The 'penetration' of the materiality of the finished object is less invasive, durable and permanent than that of the object-coming-into-being.

Carpets represent this ambiguous in-between life: on the one hand they objectify their agency in that through exchanging carpets dealers become mobile and bring back the financial capital which will allow them and their family to distinguish themselves from other villagers or survive. On the other carpets symbolize their subordination because they are a product of the rural world: a sign of poverty and Berberity. Thus

they are not objects of distinction that the large merchants would buy for their own consumption²⁰⁰. Furthermore, they can be seen as embodying the rural man, his roughness, backwardness and dirtiness. As such carpets can be said to represent not only middlemen's lower status, but also to construct their subordination when they are at the upper end of the supply chain. Carpets are mirrors of how they feel and think about themselves in their relation to large Arab merchants on the one hand and their community on the other. Ironically, in an inverse manner to carpets, that gain more monetary value as they go up the supply chain, Berber middlemen lose power and value. Men gain agency through the mobility associated with selling carpets but this very agency is also damaged through their displacement between one end of the supply chain and the other. This loss-regain of the self, this construction-deconstruction is destabilizing.

Conclusion

In the process of exchanging and transporting carpets, dealers do not merely learn how to sell and buy, they learn to master themselves in the society of successful traders and to make a place for themselves in the workplace of the market that defines their masculinity. Through the physical, material and emotional cost of marketing practice, young men may achieve self-realization and emancipation from the powerful figure of the father. But mobility is associated with an in-between dimension, where one can be torn between two spaces, the familiar and rural world and the hostile and humiliating urban realm.

200 Except to show them to their Western(ised) friends or clients. Probably large Arab merchants experience some form of subordination or humiliation too in their relationship to Western buyers and competitors, but the relationship of Moroccan dealers with Westerners is not the object of this thesis.

Chapter 9 The productive role of women and the value of labour

This chapter aims at investigating further the question of women's absence in the market sphere by looking at how women assess their work in comparison to that of men. I argue that women see the work and world of men as more constraining and costing. To explain why women do not include the cost of their labour in their assessment of the value of carpets, I also examine the place of wool work in the Sirwa society. Finally, this chapter argues that in constructing themselves as non-mobile Sirwa women also craft men as endowed with the power of circulation, consumption and marketing.

The Value of men's world

Fear of men's world: the result of an embodied stasis

Shirley Ardener (1997) argues that space reflects social organisation but also, in imposing certain restraints on our mobility, affects our perception of space, which is shaped in turn by our capacity to move about and by our body techniques. Consequently each sex (or group) in a given society constructs the world on accumulated embodied experience of space and different activities; they do share a conception of the world but their constructs of the world they live in and the outside one will vary. In this part, I would like to show that the stasis of the weaving activity works in combination with lack of geographical mobility outside the village to shape women's perception of the male world as hostile, dangerous and soiling, and thus their respect for men's capacity to work in it.

In the mountains and the regions far away from Taznakht, the lack of mobility of women is often expressed in the saying that the only time, women leave their village is when they marry (moving to their husband's village) or die. Indeed most of the mountain women who have travelled before marrying usually had a major health

problem, which necessitated consulting a doctor in the town of Taznakht or an operation, another 90 km away in the hospital of Ouarzazate.

As it becomes more distant, space becomes more feared: the known space of labour around the village is not as dangerous as the tracks leading to the large fields and pastures, which themselves are less feared than the roads between villages. The confined space of public transport and the potential physical contact with other men's bodies are two uncomfortable features of travel. Unlike men, women do not have the embodied knowledge of travelling by motor vehicle. They cannot relax and clearly feel insecure and apprehensive. Shy in the presence of male bodies, they occupy as little space as possible. Pale and silent they fight against the nausea of road sickness. The knowledge of circulating is also about handling men, being assertive, not fearing the gaze of men and being able to negotiate at the market.

Whenever they circulate outside their village, they are always accompanied by a protective male relative. They are also protected by the lack of anonymity: the driver of the minibus taxi will try his best to enforce sexual segregation, sitting all women together, usually at the front. If this is not possible, he will arrange for the woman to sit next to a window on one side and have the male kin who accompanies her on the other.

The urban environment is perceived as an area of dangerous forces, in terms of temptation or threat to vulnerable women. In the open space of the town, they feel the gaze of its male population, which can be soiling and unsettling. Women are valued for displaying a passive and modest behaviour, not returning the gaze of a man, which would be interpreted as a sexual invitation. Thus, they have long developed the skill of seeing whilst pretending not to. Accompanying a young mountain woman to the doctor's in Taznakht, I witnessed this skill, where she noticed an acquaintance from another village sitting at a café before the male member of her family who was accompanying us.

The *suq* is the most soiling space²⁰¹ and when women visit it²⁰², they feel out-of-place. In the mountain *suq*, the only women tolerated on the *suq* are those who cannot

201 The impure and negative quality of the *suq* transfers to material culture (products of bad quality being called *suwaqi*) and people (*suwwâq*, *wald-as-suq* being man of bad life, who has no word) including religious men ('ulamâ). That goods from the *suq* are of lesser quality (or that products of value are not available on the *suq*) appears in a proverb collected in Ayt Ubiel: 'butter and honey are not

avoid it, women without men. Even in areas less conservative than the Sirwa Mountainss, such as the *suq* of Khemisset close to the capital Rabat, where women are present and there is less stigma attached to women coming to the *suq*, they usually come with a friend and do not linger around after 8 am. They sell to the first buyer who makes them an offer and leave the selling of their carpets at a higher price to wealthier and older women dealers who stay there all morning. In Khenifra, the auction system means that women selling carpets only deal with one man, the auctioneer or *dallâl*, who is supposed to keep the information about prices hidden to activate competition between dealers.

In addition to causing emotional and shameful exposure to the bodies and gaze of foreign men, the *suq* is physically unpleasant. It offers no protection from the cold wind in winter and the harsh sun all year round. There are no sitting places, so women often sit on the concrete steps of the closed shops, crouched on the ground or standing. The ground of the *suq* is made of fine sandy earth that covers everything: their carpets, the sacks in which they carry and on which they display them, and their clothes. A woman in her fifties who I witnessed in the *suq* of Taznakht arrived there with a 10 year old carpet. She looked embarrassed, uncomfortable, out-of-place, did not know where to stand, and kept her eyes down. Her discomfort and embarrassment was very obvious to two dealers who having noticed her, took her slightly apart, made her open her carpet and made a quick offer on it, which she accepted immediately. She left the *suq* as soon as the money was in her hands, less than 10 minutes after her arrival.

Men's work: the sacrificial dimension of travel

Women self-realise themselves and gain moral status through providing their time and energy in productive and reproductive work for the family in a corporeality and materiality of immobility and confinement. The belief in total commitment to the family from all the members with no need of payment other than symbolic is dominant in

available on the *suq*' (*Urili udi temment uran zan agh suq*). The double meaning of this proverb, in fact a criticism against a woman is: 'virtuous beautiful women are not married yet, how do you expect this one to be'.

²⁰² The question of rape is certainly one that is associated with mobility outside the village in the minds of women. Up to colonial times, in part because of poverty but also for political reasons, the Sirwa villages were continuously at war with each other, and virgin women's rapt was an issue. In the Rif region in the north of Morocco, the risk of rape is real even for old women dealers who take desert roads (Hajjarabi 1982: 327).

agricultural societies (Bourdieu and Sayad 1964) but it weighs more on women. If they can feel the subjective cost of energy expenditure they do not consider the question of time expenditure. When they sell their carpets for a low price, they may complain that they 'work for free', but this does not mean that they consider the amount of time they work in comparison to men's time.

Yet, weaving which used to be a seasonal or 'after chore' activity, has become the main occupation for women. Whereas in the time of their grandmothers, women would have woven a few hours in the afternoon, after having done the household chores, today weaving starts early in the morning and often carries on into the night. The introduction of new technology (electrical grinder, tap water, bottled gas) has not reduced women's workload, it has shifted labour to the activity of weaving (and laundry due to raised standards of hygiene). New types of looms, dyes and machine-spun threads respectively save time in some operations or allow them to be skipped but this implies longer working hours at weaving. Weavers now weave between 40 and 55 hours a week.

Rather than attributing their high workload to the unfair sexual division of labour and to question gender inequalities, women tend to emphasise the social status inequalities between women (or families). They are well aware that a woman married with a wealthy man usually has less hardship. It could be argued like Stoler did for Java (Stoler 1977, quoted by Henrietta Moore 1988: 81) that rather than exacerbating conflicts between women and men within the household, the fact that women provide an important contribution in cash income through their weaving labour (and in subsistence through their agricultural work), has only increased differences between households and between individual women, who tend to identify with their family.

In contrast with women, men are not expected to devote constant energy and time into their daily work but rather to provide the means for the reproduction of their lineage through regular but temporary exposure to the market world, at a physical and emotional cost. Without going as far as Abu Lughod (1989:294) who argues that women know more about the men's world and its activities than the reverse, in the Sirwa women know enough about the 'outside world' not to want to be part of it.

Because of their awareness of social status inequalities, women can guess that men are often reduced to sell at low prices.

If men do not officially value women's work, for obvious political reasons, women tend to value men's work proportionally to their dislike and fear of the activity of marketing and the responsibilities of dealing with the hostile outside world. Women consider that social expectations weighing on men are heavier than on women, as they are supposed to be able to provide for their family materially (including their aging parents) which means a stressful exposure to the adverse world of exchange. Women consider that men are better prepared than them to deal with difficult or intimidating dealers since men's responsibilities are those related to public affairs, involving speech skills (weddings, issues and conflicts (sdâ`), shopping and marketing. They see travelling as work, which is also the original meaning of the word in English²⁰³. The material and embodied aspects of women's labour shape their perception of their own role as easier than that of men which is seen as more sacrificial and costing, both physically and psychologically.

What is the value of the work of the wool ?

Weavers do not assess their weaving work in terms of knowledge, time or effort because they use an old system of measurement which equates labour with raw material. Up until colonial times, wool was used as a currency between the pastoralist and the sedentary societies, the rural and the urban world. Upon being shorn, the wool used to be divided into three: one part was kept for domestic use (usually in furnishing, to make carpets and blankets), one part was exchanged for cash, and finally the last part was supplied to the urban male weavers in exchange for some clothes (Berque, 1964). In the Sirwa, when a family who had enough wealth to own or purchase wool commissioned a weaving, they would pay the weavers in the quantity of wool used to transform it into the weaving.

To add to the confusion, the labour of wool in the past did not involve weaving alone, as it included at least the operations of washing, combing, carding and spinning. Measuring and dividing up the labour of wool is not an obvious endeavour. The process

²⁰³ The term travel comes the French *travail*, first used in Middle English as bodily or mental labour or toil.

of transformation of the wool aims at obtaining a materiality that keeps its flexibility and 'springiness' whilst becoming longer, finer and more robust. Gestures applied to matter reduce its volume and weight whilst increasing its density, length and strenght. Today, in the rare cases when women perform these tasks, they find it difficult to separate themselves from the task and a materiality which is conceived as unfinished and evolving. The variety of stages of transformation renders it difficult to attempt to quantify or to make conversion between weights, sizes, shapes and volumes. Weavers only know that the washing operation at least halves the volume and weight of wool. After all, assessing labour in time or by task and measuring materiality in exact quantity is only a recent and Western introduction. As Gudeman (2001:15) has noted: 'The alchemy of money, with its power of commensuration, lies in its ability to dissolve distinctions between value schemes or measuring rods, and to create the fiction that a flattened, comparable world exists'.

In addition, women rarely work individually and occupy themselves in these tasks in sporadic ways, often when they have some spare time between two lengthy tasks or when practicing another activity that requires constant presence but sporadic intervention (for instance when checking that the meal is not burning).

Today the commissioner either provides the wool and pays the weavers the amount of money paid for the quantity of wool used or the weavers buy the wool and then charge the commissioner double the price paid for the wool. Thus labour and raw material still appear to have the same value, and the value of a carpet is made of both. Because wool is bought already spun, considerably reducing the workload of weavers, these consider the deal fair. Indeed, the rare women who handspin wool, sell it for between 60 and 70 DH a kilo²⁰⁴. In contrast, the most expensive machine spun (and dyed) wool on the market costs 55DH, but the low quality wool, which is also the most used, costs between 20 and 25DH. Another reason why weavers find payment in kind fair is that the more expensive the wool, the higher the final payment to the weavers. The most expensive wool is finer but denser and it is supposed to cover the warp in a more effective way, thus allowing the weavers to go up faster.

204 A kilo of unwashed wool costs 15DH, thus wool costs 30DH per kilo. The spinner counts in her labour the washing, carding and spinning operations, at 30 to 40DH per kilo.

In addition many weavers do not have an accurate knowledge of the exact cost of a carpet in terms of raw materials. Invariably those who have such knowledge are either in charge of the management of money going into the making of carpets, being either heads of family because of the death of their husband or because of his absence, or carpet dealers themselves. A large majority of women in Taznakht will know the price of plain, and possibly dyed wool, as they will have bought it themselves from the wool retailers in town. In the mountains, the younger generation under 30 are occasionally sent to the local grocer when they run out of warp thread; wool for the weft is usually bought in bulk by men in the *suq* or in Taznakht. Furthermore, it is very common to obtain the material on an 'as needed' basis: when the wool runs out, the weavers buy more of it and dye it again which explains the variety of shades in some carpets.

In Taznakht, between the 1980s and 1990s when weaving was a lucrative occupation, *timzdawin* used to be recruited by commissioners and paid by the square metre (50 DH). In addition to being fed three times a day, each weaver would be given a box of subsistence goods (e.g. sugar, tea, washing soap), and would be offered the expense of a day off for bathing. Now, *timzdawin* exchange their labour between themselves as a return for the time given: for each day given by a *tamzdawt*, two days are returned. This system is used as an incentive for weavers to help other households rather than work only on their own production. Apart from in Taznakht where this practice is still current, elsewhere the idea that weaving could be paid as a wage is unthinkable. For most weavers, weaving being a collective work, the value of the carpet is assessed as a piece and not as a wage to divide between workers. In fact if we were to evaluate how much a weaver would earn today, the amount would be ridiculous: for a carpet costing 850 DH in raw material (wool, warp thread and dyes) and sold at 1600DH, five weavers working on it for 20 days would earn 10.5 DH per day (or around 40DH a meter square). This corresponds roughly to the threshold of poverty in Third World countries as fixed by the United Nations Development Programme²⁰⁵.

When carpets were selling at a really good price in the late 1980s, the profit may have been triple the amount of wool. Weavers long to go back to this time. Today,

205 The UNPD estimated it at one dollar per day per person which is the equivalent of 10 DH.

weavers consider that a fair payment is one where they earn double the amount of wool invested in the making of the carpet. Such payment is usually obtained from Moroccans who commission a carpet for their household from a given family of producers, or when Westerners are taken to their house and buy from them at a higher price (despite having to give a commission to their guide-broker). A given type of carpet sold at the time for 2500 DH is now worth at best 1600DH but often under 1000 DH. On the *suq*, where competition is harsh, weavers are satisfied when they sell the carpets at a higher price than the invested raw material. A satisfactory profit is considered to be 50 to 100 DH above raw material cost.

In the past, being paid in wool implied the possibility for producers to produce their own weavings. As the means of material reproduction, wool had a sacred value. Today, carpets are made for the markets to obtain cash, with a wool of lower quality which has lost its value, is not anymore *taddut*, but just *rumia**. In keeping the old assessment of their labour in wool, the value of weavers' labour has diminished too. This is even truer when weavers' profit only pays for the wool to make another carpet. Despite these changes, weavers still see wool as a means of reproduction of materiality. In addition, weavers follow the ideology that see their skills as less valuable than men's in a hierarchy where waged, educated, male labour is at the top and manual, collective (including agricultural labour) at the bottom.

Self-exclusion from the market sphere and the crafting of men

This chapter argues that in constructing themselves as non mobile and confined Sirwa women also craft men as endowed with the power of circulation, consumption and marketing. They exclude themselves from the only sphere of social mobility and power available to most of their kin men: carpet dealing. I suggest therefore that the reproduction of the norm is not merely the result of an unconscious incorporation of social norm, but is desired by women because it is linked with their own agency.

At one extremity of the chain, we have large merchants who profit from the geographical mobility of the small dealers. At the other extremity we have the women who too make their kin men and the local dealers mobile. In echo to Jain in another

context, we can note the overlapping contradictory concepts of mobility²⁰⁶, or rather lack of mobility, since whilst for large dealers this lack of mobility²⁰⁷ is synonymous with high social status, in the case of women it is an attribute of the dominated or the lower classes. From this opposite position, they share a refusal and delegation of (the discomfort of) mobility. For both of them, the lack of mobility is a choice. Marrakech merchants have no reason to invest time and energy in mobility when they have Berber dealers who meet those functions so keenly. Women's status is connected with stasis.

Butler argues that men have excluded women from men's sphere through an ideology of making women's bodies passive to define their own as more active (1993). Following her lead, we could argue that men make female bodies static to make their own mobile. But I would rather suggest that this is a dialectical relationship and that women too allow the circulation of men through their own stasis and confinement. Whether wealthy or not, through making objects that they can exchange for money, women choose to give men the means of their self-realisation. Men are who they are not just because they are not allowing women access to knowledge and power, but also because women make them so through their action. Thus against most feminist views that mobility for women is synonymous to self-realisation and personal fulfilment (but see Pritchard 2000), I argue that women choose to exclude themselves from the market sphere and from the capacity to be mobile.

Men bring the wool to make the carpets and the money from the sale of carpets, but they can be mobile partly because women stay in the domestic sphere to perform the reproductive tasks which allow men to be free, and the productive activities that supply men with goods to sell. Rather than being unhappy about unequal gender relations within the family, they see their problems as stemming from their poverty and from the exploitative actions of dealers. The income from women's work is shared by the whole family and as long as they benefit globally from their own work in terms of clothing and food, they do not feel exploited. In addition, because women (although entitled to it) do

206 Jain (2002: 422) asks how is it that those who are highly geographically mobile (policemen, bus and taxi-drivers, mail delivery men, garbage pickup people), whilst they make possible the mobility of others crucial to the notion of a healthy economy, have little opportunity for social mobility. In echo to her question, we could question the contradictions of how the mobility of some means the closure of that of others.

207 They however regularly visit Europe or the United States of America.

not effectively inherit any land and do not bring any material objects or assets to the marriage, they consider their unpaid labour as the only and fair contribution they can bring to the family of their husbands. According to national law women are supposed to inherit land, but in effect they give their share to their brother(s) when they marry. The only objects they bring are supposedly hers (jewellery, carpets, personal effects included in the bride's suitcase). Weavings used to be listed in the marriage act in the area of Azilal (Tidili), a practice which seems to have disappeared.

As described in chapter 5, women can benefit personally from the income generated by the selling of their carpet. This is most obvious when for example the head of the family agrees to spend money on the furnishing of their kitchen. The fact that men's self realisation or financial success is located in women's action is recognised locally by men themselves. Ayt Waghrda dealers are a well known point in case. It is commonplace for other men to analyze the success of these dealers as the result of their women's hard work and technical and aesthetical skills, rather than their own entrepreneurial achievements. In many families, the income generating activities of women have permitted a brother to access higher education or a husband to finance the mending of the house. The possibility for men for gaining value and social mobility depends to a great extent on their wives, sisters and mothers' weaving skills. Women gain value from the symbolic recognition of their contribution to family welfare.

Their personal ambition is usually limited by their own marriage, and they transfer any social promotion opportunities to the men of their family, brothers and sons. This is partly because in doing so they invest in their own future security. If they are aware that their kin men lack the financial and cultural means to have access to a social promotion as high as that of the successful dealers, they also know that it is in their interest that their men are powerful in their own society. They follow the hegemonic ideal of a strong breadwinner who may be tyrannical but can provide for and protect them. One 17 year Ayt Ubial woman told me that she disliked 'weak men' and preferred one who would be respected and feared by other men in his community. A powerful man is one who can protect his family, who will be able to use his contacts in difficult times and who will attract a good husband for his daughter(s).

Production versus exchange

My ethnography shows that weaving is marked by permanence. There is a cyclical dimension in the repeated body techniques, technical operations and the recommencing of carpets, month after month. I have shown that in contrast the finished object is ephemeral, both because of the low quality of its constituents and because of its temporal presence in the household. For the Sirwa people there is a clear distinction between the object-coming into being (or the embodied and material process of production) and the finished object resulting from it, which is attested to in the semantics. *Astta* achieves completion when it is cut from the loom, and then ‘killed’, at this point it becomes a finished object which takes the name of its function (carpet, blanket). This linguistic distinction between the ‘object-process’ and the finished object is probably related to beliefs about cosmology which to some extent are still extant. *Astta* is seen as an entity, inhabited by spirits or as a spirit or saint (*zawit*) itself. I was also told that its ‘killing’ is similar to the sacrifice of the sheep. In Chapter 6, I also mentioned the association of the cutting of *astta* from the loom (and its resulting death) with the cutting of ripe wheat from the field (which once harvested becomes ‘dead’) (Basset 1922). Such associations translate the belief that death is preliminary to all life cycles, the grain being replanted the next year and the ritual of sheep sacrifice being performed every year. The ‘killing’ of *astta* corresponds thus to a necessary sacrifice for the maintenance and the reproduction of life. The labour of weavers as a human cost (physical and emotional) is equivalent to the sacrifice of sacred wool for the production of objects. Labour and wool are renewable and together are generative of materiality, but this finished materiality is perishable.

The objects produced from the work on the loom are still a means of social reproduction: as clothes they were a protection against the elements in the past, as carpets they are a source of income today. Today, despite the fact that wool has lost its value (through becoming a machine made, ready to use matter (but still unfinished)) it is still equated with human cost. Unfinished materiality and body techniques are still seen as the two foundation stones that together allow for the emergence and the reproduction of objects. Thus the production of objects, subjects and societies are all linked through the embodied action of weavers. This fits with Graeber’s theory of value, which considers that the production of things cannot be reduced to the production

of valuable material objects, their exchange or ownership, or to wealth accumulation. Instead, he argues for an anthropological theory of value which recognizes that the production of material forms is a subordinate moment in a larger process that ultimately aims at the production of people (Graeber 2006: 70). Graeber (following on from feminist research) puts women at the centre of this productive labour of creating and maintaining people and social relations, and of securing the growth and self realization of human beings.

Thus through their body techniques on unfinished materiality, women (re)produce things, knowledge, value, and people. How about men? Can we analyse the action of men as participating in production? Here I argue that men's action on the materiality of carpets (both before its coming-into-being and once it is completed) counteracts the generative actions of women. In this middlemen are being subjected to the action of the larger traders at the upper end of the supply chain.

In the context of Melanesia, Josephides (1985) argued that Hagener women who are 'producers' of the Melpa pigs which men exchange to gain symbolic capital should have the right to determine their value. Josephides interpreted this process as a kind of fetishisation which presents pigs as the products of acts of exchange rather than of the labour of tending to pigs and growing crops to feed them. Instead, Strathern suggested to re-examine male and female productive work, the separation between the private and the public, the productive and the exchange spheres along the lines of a dualist male/female divide (Strathern 1981, 1984, 1988). Following on from Strathern's suggestion MacKenzie (1996) in her study of Telefol string bags in Papua New Guinea, has argued that objects made by women and finished by men are issued from an integral relation between processes of production and consumption. In the light of MacKenzie's argument, can we conclude that the objects are given full existence (potential) only when they are finished (through circulation, aging and discourses aiming at making them more visible or desirable to buyers) by men? This is akin to the argument developed by Appadurai and Kopykoff (1986) that the value of objects (and their status) can increase through passing between hands, that objects carry on being created after production as they are constantly altered and vested in new meanings.

Such arguments are questioned by the fact that not all consumers seek antique Moroccan carpets with 'life histories' (Appadurai 1986): both Moroccan and Western fair trade buyers prefer new carpets obtained with the least intermediaries possible. If this interpretation of value, as accruing when objects circulate through the supply chain, is valid from the point of view of dealers and Western consumers, it unfortunately tends to reproduce uncritically the very invisibility (Dilley 2004) that the market creates, reducing production to an abstract concept and thus devaluating the tangible reality and the meaning of making as a process for the producers and their communities.

Furthermore, in today's economic global context, varied regimes of value from one end of the carpet supply chain to the other, are detrimental to the makers whose knowledge, labour and material products are only recognized at the upper end of the chain, that is for the profit of wealthy traders. Indeed large carpet traders rely on the concealment of both the weavers and the process of making which allows them to present themselves as the legitimate expert in carpets. They construct a knowledge which has little connection with the reality of making and which allows them to hide the aging of carpets as well as the margin they make at the expense of the weavers. Thus they profit from the communal knowledge and heritage of a society from which they are foreign and in which their contribution is minimal. In fact they contribute to invisibilising the real value of carpets which lies in the very technical and embodied processes of making them. In addition, they obscure the action of women which is about transparency: making carpets beautiful is synonymous with showing their inner beauty (objectified in the material object). In refusing weavers the financial recognition they deserve, they also undermine their social value.

Producing communities (including Berber middlemen) consider the aging process as destructive rather than constructive, and they would not consume an object that has been burnt, bleached or faded in the sun. This destruction has a long term effect. Far from continuing the enchanting work of weavers, the traders' action can be said to make carpets less visible: the reduction of the carpet's life span means that motifs will literally disappear, but also that buyers will not come back again to acquire more of such items. Thus, it diminishes the value of Moroccan carpets on the international market and jeopardizes the future of the weaving communities who

depend on the income generated through selling them. Rather than accruing value to carpets, in the long run, dealers diminish it.

Mackenzie regards the work of Melanesian women and men as complementary, women being the generators and men the elaborators. This is because in adding feathers to the *bilum* bags made by women, men also construct their masculine identity and add value to themselves and their community²⁰⁸. In the case of the Sirwa, one cannot deny the complementarity of men and women's roles. I, however, consider that weavers' productive and generative action cannot be put at the same level as that of marketers, despite the tendency in the Western world to reward the marketing and sale sphere rather than the producers or artists. In terms of time and energy expenditure, physical cost and in terms of the knowledge required to perform the tasks, the work of men is not comparable to that of women. Women are starting to realize that the labour of marketing is not as daunting as they used to think. The selling knowledge of dealers is easily replicated and acquired, and could be improved, through a real education of the buyers. Rather than an imaginary 'know-what' about their secret life, they can show their 'know-how' about weaving to the buyer and educate them.

If we consider the separation of the domestic and the market as artificial and if acknowledge the dealer's role in the creative process, the action of the market is not as central as the weavers who not only perform the initial, major, indispensable action of generating material forms through their active bodies, but who also have the power to transform ideas, words and images, into an enchanting woollen object. Women are the creators and elaborators, but also the generators of objects and knowledge.

Conclusion

Women ascribe high value to the actions and labour of men because they assess these as more costing than their own, thus constructing men as mobile. Rather than an account of Sirwa weavers as victims, controlled by men and reproducing the norm unreflectively, my data leads me to conclude that women and men in the Sirwa are in a process of creation of each other. Women are doubly at the centre of this generative role where in making things, they make people, craft themselves and the world of men.

208 Female fecundity and motherhood are secretly manifested in the male rituals and objectified by the bags.

Chapter 10 Inside out: the domestication of the market by weavers.

This chapter takes seriously the argument of the literature on Moroccan carpets that weavers are artists (Flint, 1974, 1980, 1997, 1993 a, 1993b, 2000a, Messaoudi & Stanzer 1997, Mourad et al. 1998, Vandenbroeck 2000) but with a focus on contemporary production. In reconsidering the definition of creativity and art on which they are based, this chapter questions the common Western assumption that the isolation of the productive communities guarantees the creativity, uniqueness, purity and traditional character of their material production. I argue that creativity originates in the interaction of the weavers with the market and with other weavers, and that it is based on imitation, networking and communal knowledge.

In part 1, I examine the myths of secrecy and uniqueness, which I confront in part 2 with a theory of artistic production based on imitation, transformation and appropriation. Part 3 looks at how weavers actively seek market and aesthetic information through their male kin and through their female network. In part 4, I explore the financial value of creativity. Finally, I describe some of the characteristics of the Sirwa art and consider how local aesthetic or stylistic choices correspond to a form of transformation through imitation. Throughout the chapter the best selling *akhnif* carpet and its variants are discussed.

The myth of secrecy and isolation from market influences

Towards the end of my field work, as I was visiting a family (B) in my village who produced independently rather than on commission for a dealer, I came across a carpet which looked very similar to one I had seen being made on my arrival more than a year before in my host family (family A, fig. 50). Family A was working on a contractual basis with a dealer and had emphasized several times the uniqueness of their

designs²⁰⁹. Indeed, I had never seen a copy of it in any shop in Taznakht or Marrakech, or in any family or dealers' house in the area. I was accompanied by one of the daughters of family A, and she was a friend of the daughter of family B. Upon my surprise, the mother of family B (fig. 51) explained that they had obtained the model from a kin woman in another village. Whether the weavers of family A had copied family B or the opposite, the weavings were so alike that there was an obvious influence, although they differed in the details: both carpets were red, although not of the same shade, and carpet B was smaller, they both had two central bands with and the rest of the weaving was made of symmetrically distributed lozenge motifs. But on closer inspection, on carpet B the central bands were white with blue motifs whereas in A the background was blue and did not use the *tirira* technique (fig. 39).

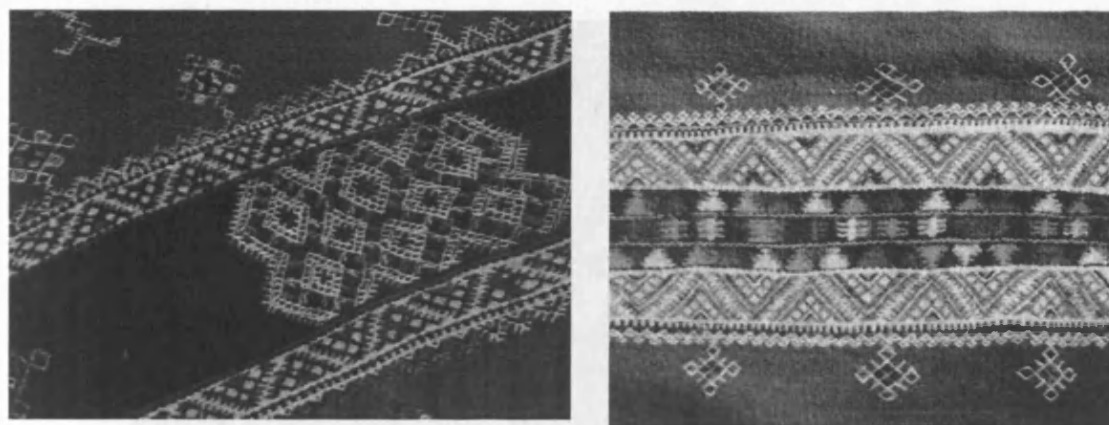


Figure 39 Central band of carpet A (left) and B (right)

The motifs on both carpets were a combination of lozenges and other elements, although more intricate on carpet A (fig. 40, 41).

209 By design I mean the overall composition or look of the carpet, which is made of motifs, several of them forming a pattern. The local term is '*blan*' from the French '*plan*' (drawing, model) probably inherited from the use of drawings of carpets introduced during the colonial times, after Ricard's Corpus; Sirwa weavers work with no such material support.

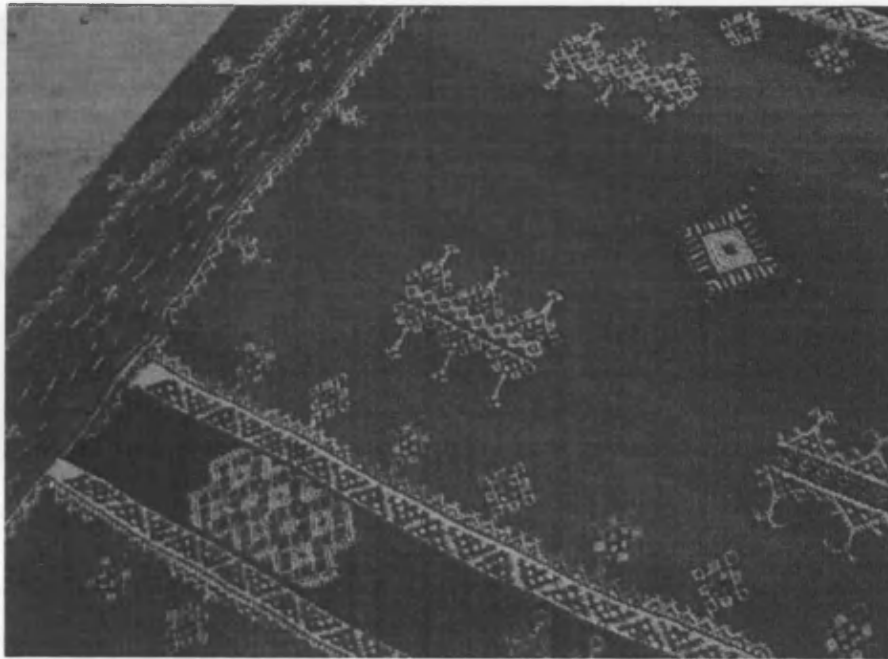


Figure 40 Layout of motifs on carpet A (top) and B (bottom).

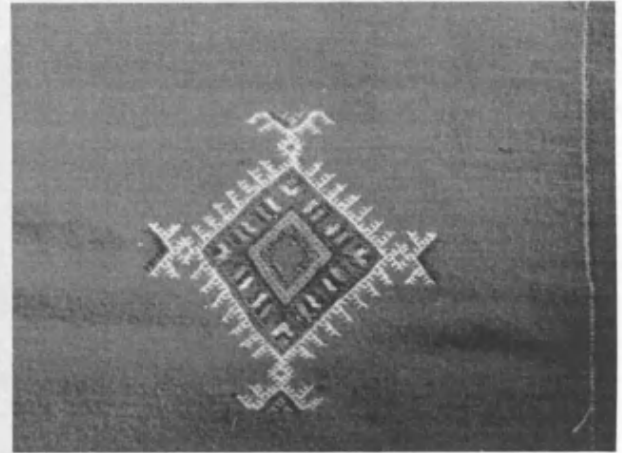
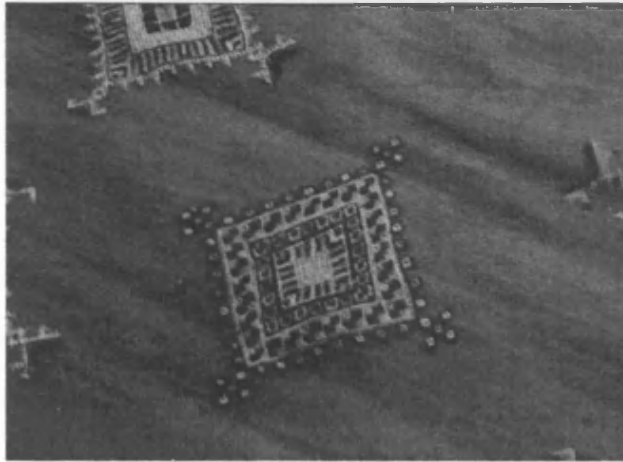


Figure 41 Lozange motif on carpet A (left) and B (right)

At the time of its making, the frieze of the frame of carpet A (fig. 42 Left) was a recent introduction one of the weavers had proudly borrowed from visual memory from another family (fig. 43).

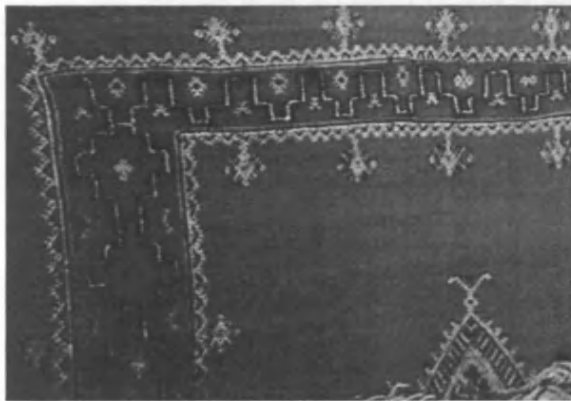


Figure 42 Frame on carpet A (left) and B (right)

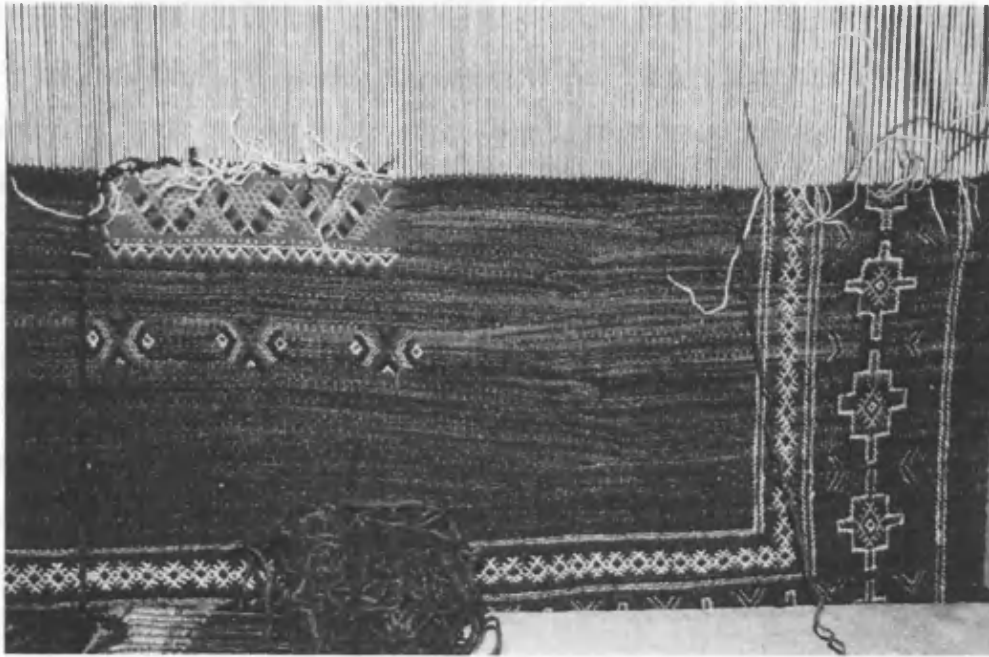


Figure 43 Original frame from which the frame of carpet A was inspired

Which family was at the origin of this carpet? None of the persons involved were willing to say, or knew. Was the daughter of family A only faking surprise when she saw the carpet, and was the mother of family B lying? Could one conclude from the aesthetics of carpet A that this family had originally made the carpet design? What about the influence of traders? Could it be that these families were in contact with the same commissioner?

This example is a perfect illustration of the point I am trying to make in this chapter: that one cannot attribute a design to a given weaver or a group of weavers, because aesthetic and technical knowledge belongs to all of them, who influence each other but also actively seek external sources of inspiration. Against the assumption diffused by the contemporary art market, that the production of unique artistic objects is issued from the independence of artists from social and commercial forces external to their closed environment, I will argue that creativity originates in the circulation of designs through the (indirect) mobility of weavers.

One oft-repeated story given by producing families, particularly in the mountains, is that once the carpets were finished, they were carefully folded and packed in sacks, only to be opened when they reached the buyer in Marrakech. 'Our carpets are

never seen (outside the village)', 'Our carpets do not go to the Taznakht *sug*, they travel directly to Marrakech'. Weavers and their male kin²¹⁰ thus constructed the value of their production as partly based on secrecy. In keeping their luxury carpets out of the sight of competitors (dealers or weavers, at home and in the *sug*), they were distinguishing themselves from other producing families whose carpets ended up on local marketplaces. This hierarchy between luxury, supposedly secret, contract productions and lesser quality and visible independent productions is fostered by traders who insist that families engaged in a contractual relationship with them keep their carpets hidden. This myth is also often associated with the well founded reputation of Ayt Waghrda weavers, whose skills have been marketed for a long time by their male kin, the Ayt Waghrda traders who have managed to become an important element of the organisation of the carpet trade. In the new part of Taznakht, I heard of two Ayt Waghrda women (married to the same man) who closed the door of the room where they were working if they had visitors, a rarity in this town where women work together either in the fresh hallway (*ustan* or *aghgumi*) that often opens onto the streets, and in more recent dwellings, in a room open to everyone. Behind this story is the idea that as technical knowledge is more readily available than aesthetic knowledge, the value of designs lies in their ephemeral dimension (or perishable nature) and thus needs to be protected from the action of sight and time. According to this idea of 'industrial spying', the eyes of other weavers are endowed with the power of accelerating the perishable nature of the design.

A story about the danger of sharing designs frozen in carpets, involving the action of a potential dealer, was recounted to me by the head of a family of weavers, Si Brahim who learnt a hard lesson in the late 1980s when he lent a carpet made by his daughters and wife to a friend from another village who said he wanted the same carpet for his own house. Unfortunately the friend's 'whole village' started producing copies based on the model, thus flooding Marrakech's market with them and making Si Brahim's family lose a substantial family income. As Si Brahim's family was working independently at the time, he had only himself to blame. For families engaged in contractual relationships with traders, the 'loss' of a good design (to reproduction) may cause a breach in relations with the trader they work for, relations which may be based

210 Addressing the eternal potential buyer (and marketer) of their products that the anthropologist is.

on kin or client ties. Traders usually choose their producers carefully on the number of skilled weavers able to produce a carpet to deadlines and according to their requirements, but trust is a crucial basis of this choice.

The new ventures by Westerners in the region (Chapter 4) have also raised issues around the visibility of design and the question of protection from reproduction in the context of a competitive global economy, where the threat from foreign competitors (outside the country and inside the region) to local group interests is important. The project of Susan Davis, the American anthropologist who sells carpets from the Ayt Waghrda village of N'kob on the internet, provoked reactions related to the question of secrecy and copyright. Ayt Waghrda dealers fear that the originality of local production could be threatened through its exposure to the international gaze. Even if this argument is probably motivated by their concern about the threat that this new middlewoman represents to their position in the carpet trade, the competition of other craftsmen and craftswomen in poorer countries is real²¹¹. Despite their statements, in the short term, the real international threat is to middlemen rather than weavers' copyright.

In the Ikhuzammen village of Amassine, the Austrian entrepreneur who commissions carpets keeps their designs secret, his carpets being woven in a very isolated village by a few households and then collected by him and kept away from anybody's sight. Weavers who work from a photograph of the model commissioned, are aware that these photographs, or any material support of memory, should not leave their house. To keep other traders from attempting a similar return to traditional techniques, this shrewd entrepreneur and good connoisseur of Moroccan society has also created a myth of secrecy about his own dyeing knowledge, not allowing anybody to attend the dyeing operation, which takes place behind closed doors. Apart from the ushfid plant, a

211 The so called Berber carpet* previously made for commissioners like Ikea are now produced in other countries. These carpets are easily reproducible and do not require expert weavers; in the 2003 catalogue they were called 'Indian Berber'! During colonial times, one of the major complaints of colonial officers concerned with the production and export of Moroccan carpets, was about the 'unfair' competition of Algerian (colonial) producers who plundered Moroccan designs to produce lesser quality, cheaper carpets for the French market. This problem concerns many countries as a few examples show: in the Southwestern United States, Navajo weavers face the competition of weavers who copy their designs in Guatemala, Peru, Hong Kong, India, Pakistan, Japan, Egypt, Hungary, Romania, Northern Thailand and in particular Oaxaca, Mexico (M'Closkey 2005). US carpet producers complained that Indian weavers accepted to produce Zapotec rugs but refused to make Oriental rugs (Stephen, 1993).

yellow dye which is collected locally for him, he probably imports the madder and indigo dyes from abroad as they are not available locally. This disinformation works so well that instead of going to speak to the local elderly women who may remember traditional dyeing techniques or were trained during colonial times to dye their wool naturally, local men try to obtain the information from outsiders or Westerners.

Living among the producing families, the mountain dealers who act as middlemen between producers and large merchants in cities are well placed to know that limiting the exchange of ideas and knowledge between weavers is impossible. In fact, they themselves use the openness of houses, where carpets constitute the main elements of furnishing and are displayed in the living and guest rooms, to prospect for more items to purchase and possibly for new ideas. Religious festivals and weddings are good opportunities to maintain social and business relations. As social rules of hospitality do not allow the host to refuse to sell if a good offer is made, families who do not want to sell a given carpet usually keep it out of sight. Commissioned carpets are invariably sent to the buyer a few days after they are finished. This measure also ensures that whilst outside weavers may have seen the carpet partially on the loom when it was being woven, they did not have a view of the design in its entirety. Indeed the partial invisibility of carpets inherent in their materiality ensures some protection from 'exact' reproduction: at any given time during the process of weaving, only at most 50 cm (roughly a cubit) of the woven part (*tiddi*) can be seen, as the rest of the already woven warp is rolled and hidden around the lower beam. Of the rolled carpet's back, only its loose ends of threads from the motifs appear (in the case of the *akhnif* carpet) on the lower beam, and these may even be hidden under a piece of fabric which ensures that the carpet stays clean. This property of invisibility remains once the carpet is finished, as it can be folded with the motifs and design safely hidden on the inside. Despite being a flat surface, a carpet is seen as an object with an inside and an outside.

Faced with the demand for unique objects of art from the market, dealers strive to keep the best selling designs secret as long as possible. For want of uniqueness, they use various strategies to stimulate diversity in production. First of all, they only provide weavers with vague directions about the type of weaving they want, in terms of overall composition, specifying mainly size and colour. The first time they order a given type

of design or composition, they may give them a verbal description or show them a photograph. If the photograph is left with the weaver, which is quite rare, the dealer knows that it will give them an idea of what he expects but that the carpet will not be an exact reproduction. This is because weavers either do not see the same thing as the dealer or because they choose practicality or familiarity above reproduction (see below). Once the weaving is produced according to these suggestions and becomes established as a regular production in a given family, it is very likely that it will be reproduced by other families in the same village. This reproduction will not be perfectly exact but will be in the same spirit. Sooner or later this design may lose its value as 'unique' and may need to be replaced by a newer production. So, as a second measure, to slow down the spread of the design (and its 'perishability') dealers usually establish a relationship with only one family in a given village and request secrecy from them. Several families producing the same carpets in a given village would mean an increased visibility of the design which would lose its commercial value faster. So if a dealer orders a carpet A in a village 1 and village 2, it is probable that carpets A1 and A2 will not be totally similar, and their partial reproductions A1.1 done by another family in village 1 will differ also slightly from A2.1.

Secondly, dealers explicitly require from contract weavers that they never exactly reproduce a given carpet twice, which means they expect slight changes in the motifs used rather than in the overall composition. They are aware that despite the aesthetic cohesion and specialisation of each village or region, and the fact that weaving is a collective work, carpets are the sum of several singularities, each weaver having her own taste and personality. Thus, for a given type or design of carpet commissioned from two families, the dealer will get two different weavings.

Finally, as they alternate their orders, this also causes a sort of artificial break in memory. For instance, if they order a red background carpet with a central horizontal line, the next order may be a grid composition with equal size squares and varied colours, and the following one another compartmented *akhnif*, this time with a large centre and smaller squares surrounding it. Some dealers' intervention is limited to asking for less common colours. In Taznakht I have seen a *jabbar haydur* whose framing knots were in a Bramley apple green colour, a rarity in Morocco. In Agouins

the dealer had asked the weavers to produce a yellow mustard or ochre background, easily obtained by adding a bit of black to the yellow dye. This subtle, more natural looking yellow was in sharp contrast to the usual bright yolk colour available on the Moroccan market.

Imitation as the source of creativity

The Western myth of uniqueness, with its implication that beautiful designs cannot emerge from visibility and exchange or are spoiled by reproduction, is related to the Western conception of creativity and art. That the value of art objects is defined by their uniqueness and irreproducibility originates in the Nineteenth Century Western view that artists were geniuses, working independently from social and economic influences. Feminist scholars have contributed to deconstruct the notions of genius and freedom of the artist (Battersby 1989, Nochlin 1971, Pollock, 1999, Pollock and Parker 1981). If we analyze creativity in relation to local practices of learning and making, which are based on copying and communal knowledge, it becomes difficult to accept these notions of the fixity and stasis of ideas and knowledge in people and places. Furthermore, Sirwa aesthetics are about repetition (as we will see in the last part of this chapter).

I argue that innovation comes from the mobility of designs through the exchange and contact of artists with other artists and the market (Flint 1974, 2000b). It is not the closure of access to aesthetic knowledge that increases the value of carpets, but on the contrary the visibility of designs. Creativity is not the result of solitary artists. What we call in the West ‘inventors’ are often benefactors of a communal knowledge. This is the argument of the French sociologist Gabriel Tarde who proposed in a book entitled *The laws of imitation* (1890) a theory of invention rather than a theory of inventors. He explains that invention does not consist in the spectacular act of a ‘great man’ but is the result of the accumulation of several modest and subtle contributions. The core of Tarde’s theory is that what links people is one type of unique relationship: imitation, a natural tendency to develop series of similitude. Imitations or ‘imitative flux’ are continuous imitative processes, which must be envisaged at the infinitesimal level of tiny repetitions (multiplicity of gesture, attitudes, ideas, desires and beliefs) which impose acts and behaviours to human beings often against their own knowledge. The relations or links between individualities (person, people, civilisation), the ‘imitative

currents' or 'flux' which traverse beings, are what constitute them. Or as Candau puts it: 'The inventor is acted (*agi*) by what he invents, which consequently preexists to some extent the invention itself' (Candau 2004: 298).

If we follow Tarde's theory, one cannot attribute novel ideas frozen in material culture (overall composition, motifs) to an individual weaver but to the community of weavers who share a common knowledge they all draw from. Sharing information within a community benefits everyone, including the initial innovator, 'because innovations often occur in series as one stimulates another' (Gudeman, 2001: 117). Gudeman shows, that in the case of women potters in Panama, individual innovations which arise in the space of the kitchen and are seen by mother and children, neighbours and friends, feed from the communal knowledge and the local heritage, to which everyone contributes to and draws from. This point was also made in the context of technology and corporate organizations by Allen (1983). It is also part of the philosophy of the free software movement.

Aesthetic ideas or designs do not exist in the head of specific weavers. They emerge through the imitation of the gestures and material culture of people. Weavers rarely work on their own on a given carpet, particularly the luxury ones whose larger size requires more people. In the Sirwa region, weavers learn techniques and aesthetic canons through copying the gestures of more expert weavers. Because it is embodied, the knowledge of weavers is transmitted between female bodies through imitation. Repeated gestures ensure the memorisation through specific body movements of the corresponding motifs and techniques. A further step in the acquisition of weaving knowledge is when the weaver can skip the stage of imitation through body gesture and visually memorise the design without being shown how to construct it.

Knowledge is also 'frozen' in the carpets which are lent between households within the village, to be copied. Thus it is not rare to find the copy of a given pile carpet in several houses in a particular village, or in a neighbouring one. Weavers do not mind seeing the same carpet in their neighbours' guest room or living room. For weavers in the Sirwa and their community, there is no such notion as uniqueness. They do not distinguish themselves from others through possessing carpets that are completely different, but from their technical skills and ability to weave intricate and difficult

objects. In fact, reproduction and repetition constitute a great part of the form of their aesthetics, both visual and auditory. Their songs and weavings are characterized by repetitive rhythmic elements in which variety is very subtle. Rather than uniqueness, it is originality within convention or repetition, slight changes in motifs or composition within an overall conventional and recognizable design, that they appreciate.

Transformation and appropriation

Another aspect of imitation developed by Tarde that can be linked with Foucault's theory of subjectivation (Foucault 1994) is that imitation is characterised by inside and outside acts. Inside acts correspond to Foucault's techniques of the self, when one transforms the (inner) self to imitate the model one admires. But in being an adoption of a way of being whose model stays exterior, the imitation process works, 'against appearances, from inside out' (Tarde 1993). Outside acts characterise situations when the individuality (person, people, civilisation) dissolves itself in the relational dimension (this could be said to correspond to Foucault's governmentalities). In the process of imitation, the practitioner exerts an inside work on the self to transform external influences and accommodate these to inside personal ones. Imitation is about acquiring and making something one's own, thus is a transformation which is also an appropriation. In the same way that Western painters start from imitating and copying the great masters and in the process acquire their own style, weavers progressively build their own repertory of motifs and personal aesthetics through copying other weavers.

New inputs from dealers and collectors are transformed and reappropriated on a continuous basis. Ideas are fed in from the outside world but reformatted with what is known locally, which leads to a constant renewal of the collective repertory. New compositions, motifs and techniques take the place of old ones, which are forgotten for a while but then reappear in new forms. Tradition is alive when it is changing, it is a process rather than a stage or type. These external influences are assimilated and formatted in such a way that it becomes difficult to distinguish the model from the copy, tradition from innovation.

Sirwa aesthetics have kept their local specificity and coherence despite the introduction of new motifs or compositions. The weavers take on board external suggestions, but readapt them to what they know and like doing, using their own

aesthetic frame of reference. They have the ability to conciliate different conceptions of aesthetics, to please themselves and the buyers. Perhaps the fact that the weavers' contact with the market is not direct but mediated by men and material culture contributes to the originality of their production. Indeed creativity relies to a great extent on a transformational process which can be associated with a break in the circulation of information.

This break is caused by the geographical and temporal distance of weavers from the market as they rely on the middlemen to inform them on Western taste. Some weavers do not even meet the middlemen, the head of the household visiting him to deliver the finished carpet and taking orders on *sug* days. They therefore work from an interpretation of an interpretation. The knowledge about the taste of the Western buyers is submitted to various transformations along the distribution chain, when the information passes from the large merchant to his intermediaries through to the weavers. A counter example of this freedom in creativity is that of Stanzer, the Austrian dealer who commissions carpets in the region: he has left no room for chance, contingency or to use Tarde's terms 'derivation, displacement or transposition'.

In addition to the exercise of transforming the information into a material object, weavers perform further transformative actions when they interpret the words or images given to them. In addition, weavers may not see the same things in a picture that a Western eye does. The issue of shape perception was reported in the Nouveau Corpus (1988) on the High Atlas (that is on the Sirwa and Taznakht) where the researchers concluded after failing to manage to get weavers to identify motifs drawn on paper, that probably they needed to see them in context. Similar observations were made in the context of Indian textiles by Gavin and Barnes (1999: 90-93).

Representation and practice

This inside/outside dialectical relationship is also at work during the creative process, which is the product of a reciprocal shaping of the mind and body, ideas and practice, subject and environment (material and social), the individual and the collective. Ideas are available in material culture and in the moving bodies of other weavers, they pre-exist in a flexible form which changes progressively as the object emerges under the motor action of weavers. Gestures are shaped by technical and

material constraints which are structural (specific to the weaving media) but also cultural. A flowery motif rather than displaying soft curvilinear forms will take spiky and lozenge based forms, within the local aesthetic canons and knowledge about flowers, and the imaginative capacity of the individual weaver. Mental images get modified and evolve as gestures materialise them depending on the material available to the weaver. For example, if the weaver wants to use a thicker thread, say of a green colour that she particularly enjoyed from the left over of a pile carpet, to make an *akhnif* motif, the contrast in thickness between the line of this thread and the one it prolongs may produce a sort of dot, handsomely closing the motif. In addition to changes in the size and colour of independent threads, the suggestion of other weavers (either directly or through seeing their work) may also provide new ideas. Imitation dissolves the boundaries between mind and body, a motif and its corresponding gestures, one's ideas and others', environment and the self. The individual adoption of a motif can only lead to a novel result because of the transformative aspect of making but also because each gesture is singular. As Strathern notes (1996:193) "Mimesis is the imitation of the other, both as a reaction and as an attempt at appropriation, an expression of identity and difference rolled into one (or two)". Each gesture, however repetitive it is, is unique, because body techniques (gestures, movements, positions) engender a singular way of thinking and thus are potentially a source of creativity and inventiveness (Béguin & Clot 2004). When shared with others, this singular corporeal knowledge become collective and meaningful (Candau 2005). With her own capabilities, her will to experiment and take risks, her confidence in herself, her taste for particular aesthetic features, each weaver trying to reconstitute a motif will produce her own. Under the pressure of time or because of her mood, the form becomes elongated and simplified or wider and intricate. Play and mistakes produce new ideas or techniques, as in the case of the 'excentric' wefts*. Creativity does not emerge necessarily as the result of a voluntaristic autonomous act but is reflexive in that when the weaver obtains an unpredicted but enchanting result, she stops and uses this new material to produce something else. This is an ongoing process where the more the weaver cultivates this ability, the more novel her production becomes. As practice changes, the overall aesthetic production of an individual or community evolves.

The search for market information

In the literature on Moroccan carpets, weavers are often portrayed as passive recipients or victims of market influence. In contrast, I argue that dealers may contribute to production in providing weavers with market information, but weavers break their lack of mobility by their own initiative, looking actively for novelty and being open to outside ideas. They use the mobility of their male kin and their female network to find new designs.

The art literature on non Western art, including Moroccan carpets, has constructed an opposition between the commercial domain (of men) and the 'pure', isolated, female sphere of creativity. The construction of the domestic sphere as a realm of tradition and conservation of aesthetic purity (Courtney-Clark 1996; Crouzet et al., 2001; Messaoudi & Stanzer 1997; Saulnier 2000) follows the colonial and paternalistic view of rurality and 'Berberity' as the last bastion against the invasive and regrettable corruption of modernity, Westernization and the market. This conservative, idealized view of the feminine world, although it comes from the perspective of art, could be said to reproduce the Sirwa patriarchal ideology. Yet for both Sirwa men and women the public sphere of commerce and consumption to which men belong is considered as more important than the private sphere of women, which is constructed as merely the invisible space of production. In the context of the Western world feminist sociologists of technology (Wajcman 2001) have fruitfully questioned cultural assumptions about economic categories (consumption/production and private/public divide) and the boundaries of objects (where technical artefacts end and begin) in relation to notions of innovation and agency (what constitutes an inventor and a user). Many of their contributions denounce (at least in the Western world) the ideological attribution of the consumption sphere to passive women as opposed to the valorised production and design sphere to men (Cockburn, 1997). Feminists have denounced the assumption that because female work takes place in the domestic sphere it is separated from the market sphere (Moore 1988) and have shown that women's insertion into the capitalist economy does not depend on separation between home and workplace (Mies 1982, Ong 1987). In this part, I will argue that exchange is not limited to men, and that women's ability to network serves the creativity and dynamism of their production.

Male kin and mobility by proxy

Women are (although indirectly) in contact with the West through their male kin who act as intermediaries between the domestic and market spheres. Apart from some rare weavers in Taznakht who visit the local weekly market or *sug*, most mountain and Taznakht women rely on their male kin to access information about the design and shape of carpets. Male kin may circulate to the village of the middleman who commissioned the carpets, or be middlemen themselves, who visit Marrakech on a regular basis. The latter are best placed to obtain information on carpets that sell, either from the large commissioning dealers or from wandering around the medina where carpets are displayed at the entrances of shops. They bring back from Marrakech excellent quality carpets to wash or age, or from the local *sug*, to eventually sell in Marrakech again. Dealers' daughters and wives are often among the most creative weavers. This is because, the more they are exposed to new designs, the most prestige and challenges they gain. They also avoid boredom. Even the simplest or the most awkward designs seen on a carpet may provide ideas to expand on. Thus, relying on men and carpets as carriers of knowledge, women are mobile by proxy²¹².

The lack of mobility of women and their indirect relationship with the global market, does not mean that weavers are passive executants with no agency or voice, no freedom and personal input. First-of-all, in responding to outside demand, weavers do not exactly produce what is expected of them, adding their own personal and cultural touch to the order. From the gap between the few pictures I was shown of models given by dealers and the actual finished carpet, it is clear that the leeway of the weaver is great. Some were working from tiny (one was less than 2x4cm) or blurred photographs.

In most mountain villages, on their way to wash clothes or to the fields, weavers regularly examine the new acquisitions of the village dealers near their (grocer's) shops, houses or near the fountain, where they have been left to dry or age in the sun. If they meet a Westerner they are curious to find out more about their taste. Television is also a means of accessing new aesthetic ideas from urban areas of Morocco, as well as from Algeria, Egypt or Mexico whose soap operas are followed in the most remote villages on satellite. The sharp eye of the creative weaver hunts for ideas everywhere: on the

212 Through men they also imagine the outside world of Arab cities and the West.

jumper of a visitor to the house, or from the saddlebag of a man passing in the village on his mule. The napkin brought from Europe and seen at a neighbour's may be the inspiration for a flowery or leafy motif, an element of a plastic mat's design may be combined with that of a fashionable carpet. Other media such as industrially made Islamic prayer rugs brought by pilgrims from Mecca (but made in China), illustrating Islamic mosques, are also copied into pile rugs with beautiful effect. Some Turkish motifs for instance may get assimilated to fit the local aesthetics. It could be argued that the weavers experiment more and are freer with the pile techniques because these are productions for their own use (however short) and because knotting techniques allow for more flexibility than flatweave techniques, allowing for the construction of a variety of shapes (round, flowery etc.). I believe, however, that they put care and creativity into both productions. The limitations and difficulties of flatweave techniques can in fact lead to more creativity, once they have been overcome. The weavers' thirst for new motifs could be interpreted as a sort of fickleness, which would lead eventually to heritage loss. I prefer to see it as a reaction to the permanence of the activity and temporality of weaving, but also as the result of self enchantment and a search for enjoyment in production through challenges. In fact, there is a permanence of motifs despite changes in fashion and the loss of material objects as memory.

Independent weavers, who do not work on commission and cannot rely on their kin men for information have to show initiative not just in their search for designs, but in their use of colours. They distinguish themselves from others through the use of less common background colours or unusual colour combinations. For instance M'barka, an independent and ambitious weaver made a *jabbar haydur* carpet where the main colours were black and white, with a hint of red. In general, these carpets combine red, blue and yellow. She also used an unusual blue hue with a cherry red for a *jabbar haydur* (fig. 52). Another way of innovating is to combine several techniques, an old tradition in the region. The so called *Glaoua* carpets combined flatweaves with horizontal bands of tapestry weaving (*tirira*) or twill (*shadwi*), as well as horizontal but also vertical knotted bands. The *jabbar haydur* is made of two techniques arranged into a chess shape. Zahra, a new immigrant in Taznakht, replaced the usual black and white threads in her use of the *shadwi* technique with a rare combination of bright orange and navy blue.

The creativity of weavers is not always appreciated by the middlemen or dealers: M'barka's carpet was criticised when it could have sold very easily because of its minimalist look. In Agouins, a weaver reported that her carpet was scorned by dealers for its use of more flowery motifs rather than the usual geometrical pile ones when it could be seen as a new type of *jabbar haydur* that could have been successfully sold to a Westerner in part for its colour.

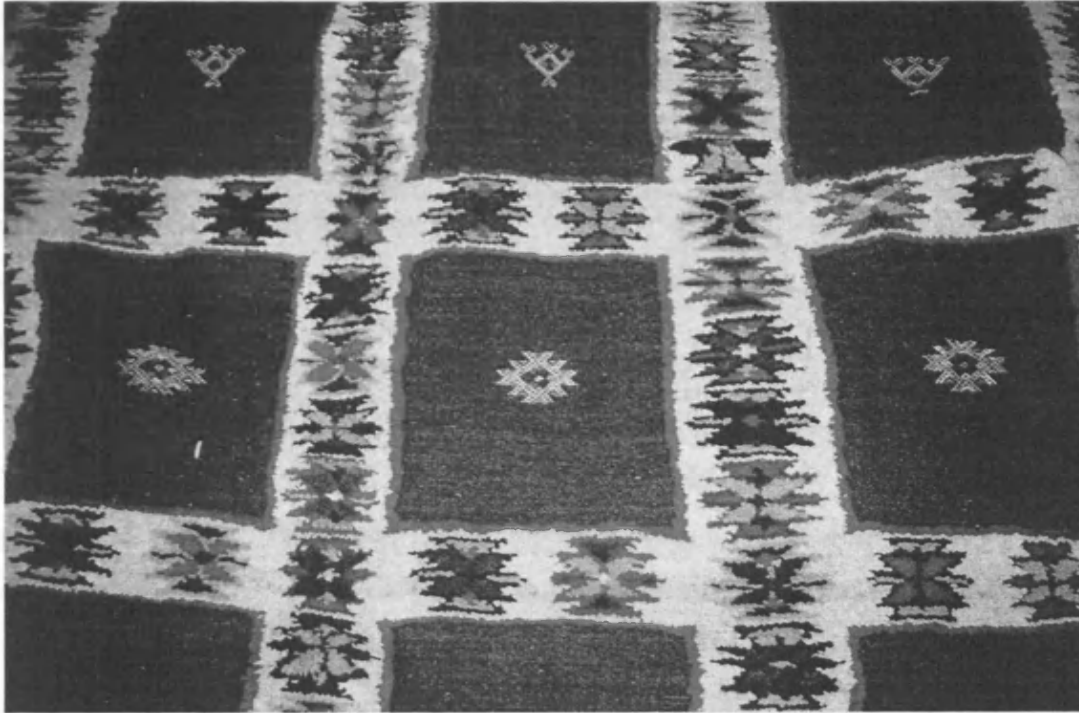


Figure 44 Flowery motifs

Some women visit the *suq* of Taznakht, which despite its lack of 'contract' weavings may have some good quality carpets. A weaver like M'barka, who has the ambition to sell her carpets herself, and from time to time work on commission for Taznakht bazaarists, is a woman who has an active eye: on the market, she always has a look around for new ideas. After all weavers are better equipped in terms of skills (embodied and practical memory, knowledge of how to make a motif just from seeing it, even from far away) than dealers and their male kin to get inspiration and new ideas.

In families who produce the same carpet type over and over again, they challenge themselves with various types of motifs depending on their mood and fancy. A weaver with less time or who is less motivated to work hard may decide to make a

motif that takes little time to build up such as an elongated lozenge whereas her sister may prefer the challenge of a motif including several elements spread horizontally (see Chapter 5).

Networking skills

Creative weavers are those who find new ideas through their networking skills (or social capital, Bourdieu 1986). This knowledge is crucial for the financial success of their family. Their gender gives them access to the domestic sphere and the female network within and across villages and regions from which most dealers are excluded; men usually have access to weavers only in so far as they have personal ties to their male kin or the weavers belong to their extended family. Their network extends outside their village.

Within the community or village

Weaving is a gendered knowledge whose transmission is linked to a practice of copying and imitation. For each house that deals with a carpet dealer on a contractual basis, there is always at least one outstanding weaver who has brought her knowledge to the rest of the female members of the family. The transmission of knowledge is ethnically matrilinear: when an Ayt Waghrda woman marries in an Ayt Ubial village, she ‘produces’ Ayt Waghrda weavers in the new generations of their own daughters and those of other women in the household. Newly married women are also expected to learn the local techniques with her new family. Some women can ‘close’ the access of others to knowledge through refusing to transmit it. For instance, Lala Rqiya in Tazult was denied the right to learn how to make the prestigious male cloak (*akhnif*), a prerogative kept jealously by her mother in law. She, however, observed her over and over and when she died, she put this knowledge in practice and started her own production of *akhnif*. When the knowledge is not available in the household, proactive weavers like Lala Fdela an Ayt Waghrda woman who was from an early age interested in learning to weave, will go out in search of expert knowledge from older women in other households. Their motivation to learn will allow them to overcome the humiliation or physical violence that is sometimes inflicted on them by the teacher.

In Taznakht, weavers work on each others' carpets, but in the mountain, information about designs is gained from visual memory rather than collective practice. If mothers rarely visit each other's houses, their unmarried daughters constitute the active and dynamic elements of the family, circulating between households where they get new ideas. Networking and friendship or neighbour relationships are vital for the creativity of weavers. A weaver can work out the composition of a carpet from regular visits to her friends and reconstitute it almost entirely.

When I took some Western friends with me to my host family, the weavers wanted to see the *taydalt** they had just bought in Taznakht. Aisha, the most expert weaver in the family observed the weaving with great interest and explained that *taydalt* used to be worn by women in her grandmother's youth. Several months later she reproduced the motif on a carpet. The following figures show the accuracy of her memory. The fact that the motif is smaller and less complex may be explained by the constraint of fitting it in a square (chequered *akhnif* carpets) rather than the corners of a *taydalt* (see full size of the *taydalt* at the end of Chapter 4).

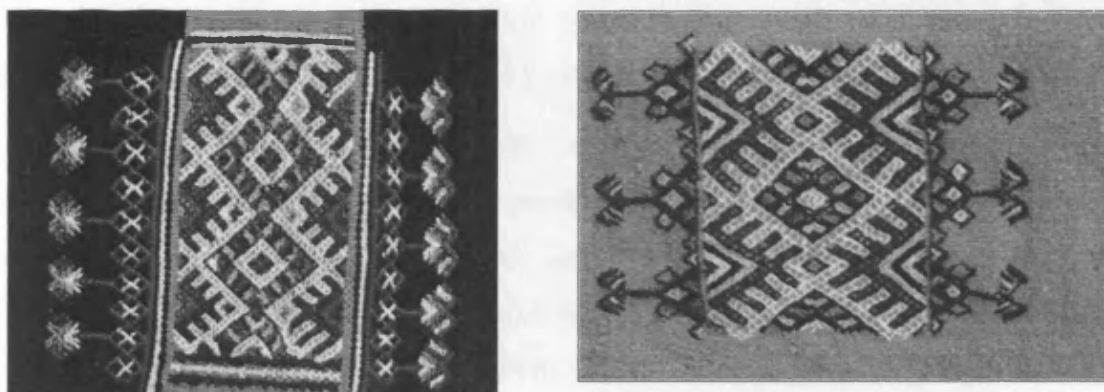


Figure 45 Motif made by Aisha from memory: original on the left, her version on the right

That creativity as 'cutting edge' knowledge acquisition is about social relationships and connections suggests that weavers have to develop skills for networking with other women with whom they can share information and knowledge. The most creative weavers are those who know how to constantly and continuously renew their repertory through diversifying their source of inspiration, one of these being

investing time and effort in their social relationship. They exchange their workforce and technical skills during the warping process. In a given village, there are only a few women who are skilled at this operation, but their help is only requested within a network of women who are often linked through neighbouring closeness, weak kin relations or are from the elite of the village, a position which is connected with their high quality production and close relation to the market.

A weaver who moves to a new village may also bring new work opportunities to some families. For instance I met a good weaver from an Ayt Waghrda village who married in an Ayt Semgane village. Having a small baby and being the only woman able to help her mother-in-law, she had to produce smaller carpets for the dealer she had worked for in her father's house. She found that her newly made friends, a family with several skilled weavers could replace her. She introduced them to the dealer she used to work for after having shown them the skills they needed to know. Weavers newly married in a new village may thus constitute also an asset in that they are 'head hunters' for the dealers, who have no access to the network of women or the interior of houses (where they can only see the skills of weaving frozen in material carpets) in villages where they do not have their own male network. But most-of-all, this weaver had excellent social skills in both female and male networks, that she could link together.

Although women may not be able to compete with other women in their peer group on the grounds of ownership of transportable consumer goods (expensive clothes, watches, etc.) as much as their male kin can, they distinguish themselves from each other through technical skills and aesthetic novelty, and in their ability to copy a carpet solely from memory. Following pattern of concentric circles of social relations, solidarity diminishes as one goes away from the social circle of close kin ties: weavers compete less with their sisters and cousins within the household, than with their close friends and neighbours, but they feel closer to these than to families with whom they do not have close links. Younger weavers living in their own village do not see themselves as building a supportive network from which they draw emotional support²¹³, they regard the transfer of knowledge between households as inherent to social relations; sometimes they may even see it as regrettable but inevitable. Rather than spoiling

213 Nor do they think of themselves as a group who could politically use their network for collective action to gain recognition or visibility.

neighbouring relationships or friendships, weavers accept these unavoidable borrowing practices as they need each other's practical and technical help and knowledge. Also there is no such a thing as feeling of rights of ownership on this common knowledge.

Beyond the village

Despite the distance imposed by marriage and moving from one village to another, women communicate and share their knowledge and carpets, sometimes via the elder mother who is freer to circulate in the various places where her daughters are married. On the one hand it is marriage which stimulates female knowledge circulation, and on the other it is the end of married (and sexual) life which causes again the circulation of knowledge through elder women. These widows with no responsibilities, live with one of their sons or daughters and spend time and money travelling. Older weavers bring knowledge originating from places they have visited which they transmit to their daughters. They also transport their own embodied knowledge which without their mobility would be lost to their daughters. For example, if an Ayt Waghrda woman did not learn the then dormant *akhnif* technique before she married because the market demand did not request it, she may then be able to learn it from her mobile mother when it comes back in fashion. A well informed weaver who uses her social capital intelligently will know that old weavings sell well. For instance Lala Kbira, one weaver in N'kob, found out how to obtain older looking colours from her mother, using a mixture of natural and artificial dyes. For a green, she uses artificial dyes to obtain a range of hues, probably through varying the concentration of the blue and yellow dyes. Thus on one of the weavings woven by her daughter the central tapestry motif was characterised by several green hues instead of a uniform one, a very pleasant feature to the Western eye.

When Lala Kbira in N'kob produces small antique looking items (*ghumd**, *ijgdad**, belts and small female capes (*tahaykt**), her sister in Taznakht is making old looking *tahaykt* of a very large size. Hand-woven in white wool, this weaving was decorated with fine and intricate 'silk' motifs. Silk (*hrir*) in Morocco is a sort of polyester thread called *sabra**. Some threads were made of industrial cotton which is used in Morocco in embroidery (the trade mark is "coton DMS"). Whether they ultimately will be bought as 'ancient' or as 'newly made with old material', these

weavings will find buyers: a Westerner passing by or a local dealer who intends to invest in such work. The weaver asked an extortionate 6000 DH (roughly £ 600) for one of them. Such women are aware of the value of their technical and aesthetic knowledge. They invest time and effort in thinking about and making their products. They also have sufficient financial security to negotiate firmly the price of their weaving.

The women of this network are among the women who use the international virtual network and e-market to sell their carpets through the project of Susan Davis the American anthropologist. Another young woman from this network, Lala Fdela, whose eldest daughter was married to the son of one of these sisters, produced carpets and weavings of a great creativity but could not afford to wait for a better buyer than the local middlemen. She had many young children to feed.

The importance of the female network to obtain information about what Westerners buy is crucial. In the village of N'kob, another weaver who did not have Lala Kbira or her sister's technical skills and care but also was excluded from their network, was unable to sell her products with the same success. Instead of questioning her own capacity to gather valuable knowledge through the ability to network with people who had it, she interpreted their success as due to clientship and corruption: she was convinced that Susan Davis was favouring her opponents, giving them more contacts with the Western buyers.

One weaver who produced exceptionally novel weavings is Farida, who was given a commission to make two carpets away from her village. She provides us with a good example of a weaver who has a high level of craftsmanship and a personal style, and uses outside ideas to renew her local knowledge to produce creative objects.

She wove the first carpet (fig.54) on her own over several months. Given the fact that there was no real financial risk factor taken as it was not made for the market, she experimented on her own, although under the surveillance of the commissioning housewife who had taken her in her family as a maid. Here innovation may also be attributed to the fact that the carpet was woven in town, away from the community's scrutiny. It is probable that working temporarily on her own, she did not fear the criticism of other weavers for taking liberty with the aesthetic canons. At the same, time, she clearly drew her inspiration from her local heritage, although she changed the

conventional overall shape: instead of compartmenting the carpet into smaller sections containing lozenge based motifs, her weaving was constituted out of a large lozenge, itself made of smaller motifs. Furthermore before coming to town she had been in close contact with the daughter of one of the village middlemen and had learnt to weave the *akhnif* technique from the mother of her friend, an Ayt Waghrda woman. She was in love with the son of the Ayt Waghrda woman. This family was producing antique looking weavings for the Western market. Thus, some of her novel ideas may be attributed to her indirect contact with the market through this family. In addition, she is herself unconventional in that she does not fit the local stereotype of femininity. She refuses to work for her family and does not respect her father, who she finds weak. From a very poor family, she had ambition and saw some hope in the opportunity to work, even for free, for her more wealthy extended family in Taliouine. In addition to the prestige of being able to own urban goods, she was hoping to marry one of the sons of her extended family. Indeed, she expressed that she had a project to weave for them, somehow implying that these weavings were a work of love. Furthermore, proud and assertive, when she came back to the mountain village a year later, she paraded herself in the street with her shocking new town outfit, a pink, tight machine knitted sweater and trousers which she wore without a skirt, the conventional expected outfit requiring more than a skirt over a pair of trousers.

For the second weaving (fig.55) she produced away from her village, she decided to copy a weaving from the Middle Atlas region. She adapted her technical knowledge to produce a design which was originally made using a technique unknown to her. She was mistaken in thinking that it involved the use of a needle. Although she did not manage to reproduce the exact motifs, the result was beautiful and novel. In addition to the striking choice of colours (white and blue) and the extended use of the white colour, this weaving was uncommon because its design consisted of successive horizontal bands. The closest weaving to compare this to is the Ayt Waghrda bridal *hmal**, a long weaving made of black and white *tirira** bands, with some red, blue and green. This weaving is disappearing because it is now used only in weddings. Interestingly in her village Farida is not recognised as a talented weaver because of the link that her community makes between personal moral value and technical skills.

Creativity as a source of monetary value

Questioning the boundaries of the domestic and market spheres allows us to look at creative production as emerging from both these spaces and their dialectical relationship. Several actors can be said to contribute to the design of Moroccan carpets in various degrees: weavers, Western buyers and the commercial mediators or brokers. Weavers respond to the demand of the market which thus shapes the materiality of carpets in terms of aesthetics, size and 'uniqueness'. This is not a one-way process. The move of the market inside the weavers' house is paralleled with a 'domestication' by the weavers of the outside world. Weavers influence the taste of buyers, who are seduced aesthetically by the carpets and buy them.

I have argued for a consideration of the creative potential of doing and imitation and that imitative, communal, practical and embodied knowledge is not special or unique, given to a few and hidden to some, it is within the reach of all weavers as long as they work hard and put care in their work. Thus I consider that potentially all weavers could be artists and that art is a work of craftsmanship which includes a personal touch of originality. To take the weavers out of their hidden status, to make them more visible through describing where their creativity originates is to challenge the categories of art and craft. Gell (1992/1999) has deconstructed art and redefined it as technology (see also Dobres 2001; Ingold 2001) that is as the result of a skilled performance which enchants the amateur of art. He argues that it is the transformative process frozen in the finished product which puzzles us. The enchantment of technology is 'the way an art object is construed as having come into the world which is the source of the power such objects have over us – their becoming rather than being.' (1999: 166).

It is the technical skills and the innovative abilities incorporated in the product that fascinates the Western amateur of art, the collector or the tourist buyer and thus what constitutes monetary value. Bodily action is very important in that it involves physically and materially bringing new objects to life, and in that body techniques are what make these objects special. As handicrafts and manual skills are disappearing from the West, objects produced by hand become more valued. The weavers' action on others have a large scope since they have the ability to produce objects for an audience who they do not know and whose aesthetics does not correspond to theirs, to transform

a model using their own prototype and aesthetic ideals, to transform heritage into novelty using their technical and aesthetic skills. They have the capacity to create an object that can touch buyers aesthetically and emotionally and even spiritually beyond time and places.

Gudeman (2001) argues that creativity is at the heart of value creation and profit making. Financial value comes from an interweaving between the market and the 'base', but relies on creativity which emerges from, depends on and flourishes in the situated knowledge of the 'base' (that is the community, the local, the house, the village). He links creativity with the base's practical and communal knowledge, which because it is adapted to a given material environment and historically and socially dependent, cannot be generalised and mechanically applied to different situations. Thus he emphasises the importance of making and doing for the constitution of value, and the crucial role of innovators for their community and beyond. It can hence be argued that the weavers play a greater role in creating value than the dealers themselves. Without the skilled gestures of the Sirwa artists, carpets would not have come to existence in their enchanting form over years and years with such renewed diversity and dynamism, but furthermore, the Moroccan carpet market would have collapsed.

Some features of the art of weavers

In sum, creative weavers in addition to their technical and aesthetic knowledge, have the skills of searching for ideas through keeping an open and sharp eye and through using their social skills. But most-of-all they have to be able to transform these ideas into material forms that please and attract the buyers. Weavers design and make their carpets, they are both designers and craftswomen. They have the technical and aesthetic virtuosity of transforming raw simple matter into another complex, stronger and transportable materiality, or to use Gell's expression (1999) they can "make what is not out of what is and make what is out of what is not".

The distinction between old and new ideas, tradition and innovation, becomes very difficult as it could be argued that tradition is the continuous recycling of past

ideas or knowledge into new ones²¹⁴. This is a definition of craftsmanship, which in French is called “*métier de tradition*”.

We have seen that the material production of the Sirwa weavers has to fit with both ‘local’ and ‘global’ aesthetics. The material and the technical constraints of weaving and the aesthetic and cultural canons create limits which shape the final weaving. For instance, for the chess patterned *akhnif* carpets made of several squares, weavers cannot weave straight lines vertically as it would create a slit, so they make zigzags resembling teeth between each square.

Similarly the technique used to make seemingly embroidered motifs (*iklan n-ukhnif*) is based on a technical constraint: motifs have to be built on oblique lines as they would not be able to sit on the vertical and horizontal structure constituted by the meeting of the weft and warp threads at a right angle. Motifs cannot be built in parallel with these lines. Yet, a striking variety of shapes can be obtained from the combination of obliques lines such as /, ^ and v shapes. Among those shapes is the lozenge which Berque described so poetically²¹⁵ (or its half, an open or closed triangle), often featuring small ‘horns’ or ‘arms’ on two or four sides. Overall shapes such as a rectangle or a square can be made out of several tiny lozenges, filling the shape as in a grid of intricate oblique lines. In the following figures, taken from the same carpet, the treatment of the lozenge varies according to its colours, size and proportions, but also in the ways of filling its centre and in the shape, size and intricacy of added elements at each corner of the lozenge.

214 See Hobsbawn and Ranger (1983).

215 “le losange est roi du style. Il se raffine, se hérissé de motifs digits , cilisés, pectinés. Il combine à l’infini, en identations multiples, la droite et l’oblique, sans jamais faire appel à la courbe. Il reste roide, hautain, et cependant chaleureux par ses beaux tons rougeoyants (Berque, 1964: 17).

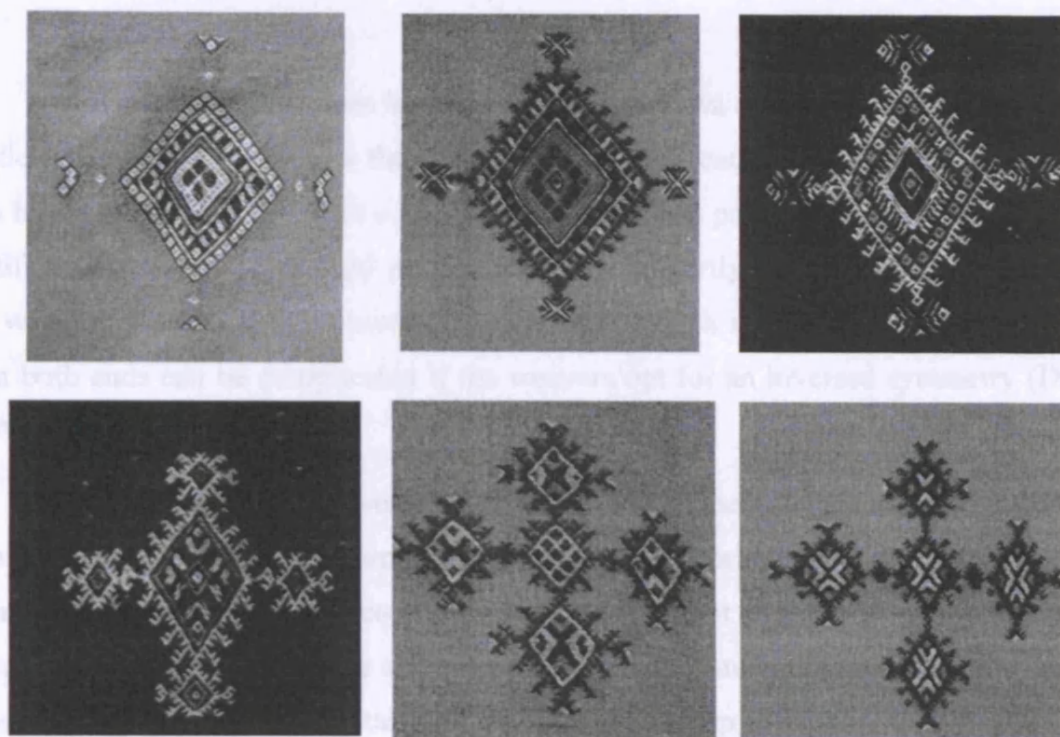


Figure 46 Variants of lozenge shape

The following motif is technically less complex and was made with large threads over a large space, but the result is still beautiful.

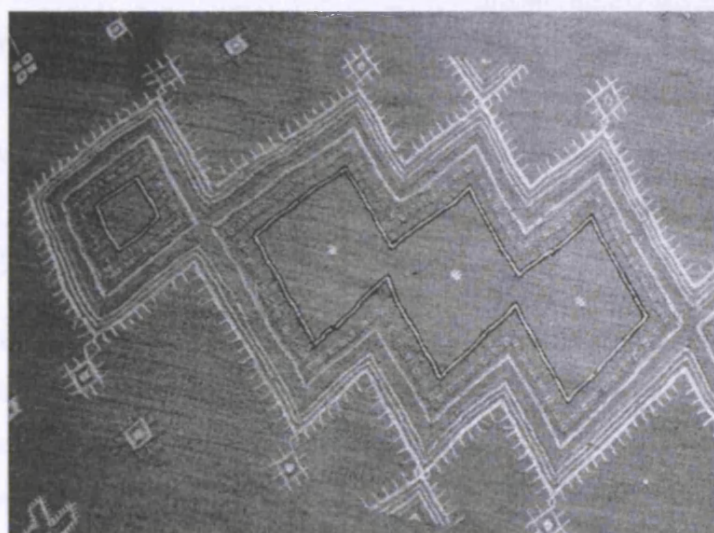


Figure: 47 Another lozenge combination.

This use of oblique lines is one feature of the Sirwa aesthetics, which is based on subtle repetition. Symmetry is the building principle of each motif, based on a vertical or a horizontal line. It becomes a complicating feature as part of the composition. Some motifs may stretch over several metres, thus will be partly hidden in the beam during the weaving process. Furthermore the composition which is required to make A, B, C, D at both ends can be complicated if the weavers opt for an inversed symmetry (D, C, B, A) at the other end.

The materiality Sirwa weavers shape has also to meet the technical limits of the weaving media. Weaving is a process in which the transformation of ideas and material forms is dialectical. The object-coming-into being is not made of separate layers of materiality: the motifs, patterns and colours, the background and the 'decoration' come together progressively from bottom to top. This is in sharp contrast with most other art forms (embroidery, sculpture, pottery, painting) where form and substance often come at two subsequent stages. In painting for example, the contours or sketch of the design may be drawn first on an 'open' visible surface, starting from the centre or any point, and adding the colours and textures at a later phase. In weaving, layers of wool can only be added from bottom to top in horizontal lines of weft. A mistake cannot be removed or hidden under another layer of matter; it has to be repaired as soon as it is noticed, otherwise each new line of weft increases the visibility of the fault. Furthermore, the hidden aspect of weaving makes it a difficult materiality to tackle. In other media, form and substance may come together but are always under the control of the practitioner's eye, whereas as the weaving grows and comes closer to its finishing stage, its woven part, being rolled around the lower beam, becomes hidden.

The materiality has also to fit with the aesthetics of harmonious proportions of shapes and symmetry. Motifs have to be of the right size in comparison to each other, with enough spacing between them. When putting two aesthetic elements from different sources, the weaver has to be able to make a transition between them which does not blatantly betray the transposition. In addition to aesthetic knowledge, this requires mathematical and problem solving skills.

An almost exact reproduction is possible when the weavers work directly from a carpet respecting the original measurements and colours. Creativity emerges from a reproduction that is not totally exact, but approximate or partial. In the context of Western art Bagley describes three types of creative imitation outside the plain duplication of the ideas of other artists: ‘elaboration’, ‘refinement’ and ‘simplification’. Bagley lists: ‘imitation-elaboration which may include a degree of duplication, but which varies significantly from the contribution made by another; imitation refinement of another’s contribution; and imitation-simplification, which reduces the complexity of another’s idea’ (Bagley, 1969: 10). The transformative creations of the Sirwa weavers may include the three categories of elaboration, refinement and simplification. The following examples show how a simple motif (left) can be enriched with an extensive filling of the space (right). The third figure (49) shows an elaboration of the previous shape (48) into a rectangle.

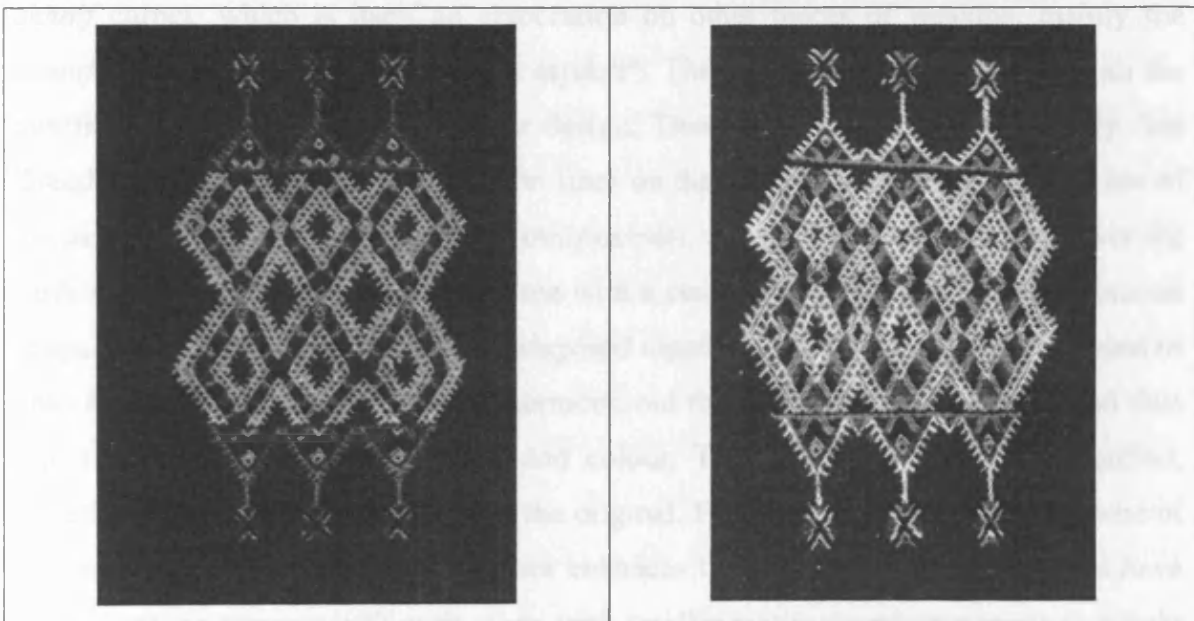


Figure 48 Partially (left) and fully filled (right) centres.



Figure 49 Elaboration of the previous shape as a rectangle.

A good case in point of the category of 'elaboration' is represented in the *akhnif* carpet, which is itself an elaboration on other pieces of weaving, mainly the *akhnif* cloak, but also the *tahaykt* and *taydalt**. The elaboration takes place on both the motifs and the overall composition or design. These motifs are made with a very fine thread on a fine weaving used to lay in lines on the hems or selvages, or in the case of the *akhnif* around the eye shape. In *akhnif* carpets, they are now dispatched all over the surface of the weaving, most of the time with a centre (A *l-mri*). This new organisation of space implies that the motifs are juxtaposed together, and that new types of liaisons or links between them are created. Furthermore, old motifs in *tahaykt* were small and thus full, the threads hiding the background colour. Today motifs have been magnified, sometimes as much as 10 times from the original. However intricate, motifs let some of the weft appear. The background colour enhances the shape of the motif. Colours have to be in strong contrast with each other, with smaller motifs sharply appearing in a light colour on a dark background: yellow, red and white on blue, green or black. Weavers would never put a light yellow and several shades of pale blue on a beige and brown background, as I did, to the horror of my host family, including the father who suggested (as the women did before him and in his absence) that I should use bright red, orange or dark burgundy.

Many of the 'old' motifs have been elaborated upon to create new ones. The combination of oblique lines and lozenges leads to a great diversity of shapes. The designs of *akhnif* carpets and their variants (*jabbar haydur*, *kharita*...) combine elements from the *akhnif* carpet with other techniques or aesthetics: the use of pile and *akhnif* technique is a reminder of the so called Glaoua carpets.

The great aesthetic relation between pile production and flatweave production in some families (fig.53) may also be interpreted as an elaboration. Probably these motifs which used to be part of the repertory of flatweave techniques have been enlarged and adapted to knotting techniques, a more recent introduction.

Carpets which present a refinement of imitation are those with elaborate intricate motifs covering most of the surface of the weaving, as a sort of henna hand painting. This is the case in most intricate and carefully made carpets. Farida's large lozenge can be seen as an elaboration and a refinement of the local aesthetic canons.

An example of the 'imitation simplification' category is Fatima's work. Fatima, who lives in Taznakht, first made a carpet following a picture that a dealer gave her. Photographs (fig. 59, 60) show two carpets she made during the year 2003, and the two previous ones between 2001 and 2003 (fig. 57, 59). A photograph (fig. 56) was given to her by her commissioner. In contrast with the first carpet, the later version has less motifs and colours, which implies a simplification of the task and reduction of workload. In this case, simplification is also the result of lassitude, but the result is still interesting. A weaver may also work from a picture that she has only seen once; selective memory has also a transformative effect. In his research on memory, British psychologist Bartlett (1932) showed that repetition from memory leads to a simplification of forms: people who were given the same form to draw from memory eventually produce a simpler one. With time, the repeated reproduction of the same type of carpet also increases the gap between the initial carpet and the next: as the carpets are taken away to be sold, there is no tangible concrete material culture to remember the original model, be it a photograph or a carpet. Work from memory can equally have the opposite effect of simplification. Indeed, a weaver may start from a simple form and through elaboration create more complex motifs or compositions, as often happens with skilled weavers who enjoy diversity and challenge. Indeed, in the following carpets she

sometimes produces simpler carpets, whilst at other time she make them more complex carpets. She has become very skilled at making the shapes and combining the colours.

Conclusion

The market sphere is not opposed to art and plays an important role in creativity and innovation. The art of the Sirwa weavers is issued from a dialectical relationship between inside and outside, the individual and the collective, present and past (tradition and heritage) and the global and local through the transformative force of imitation. Artists are craftspersons who are able to use their 'market research' skills to find good ideas and who can then transform these ideas into material forms that are efficacious at enchanting buyers. The value of carpets emerges from the creative or innovative capacity of weavers, both as producers or craftswomen and designers. Their thirst for new ideas is crucial in the dynamism of local production.



Figure 50 Carpet A



Figure 51 Carpet B



Figure 52 Jabbar hayd ur



Figure 53 Pile carpet



Figure 54 Farīda's first akhnif



Figure 55 Farīda's second weaving

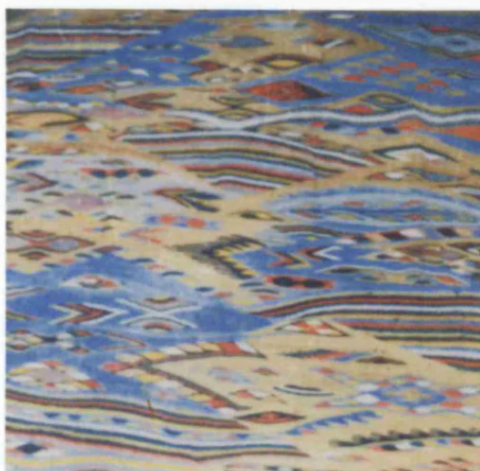


Figure 56 original photograph



Figure 57 reproduction (detail)

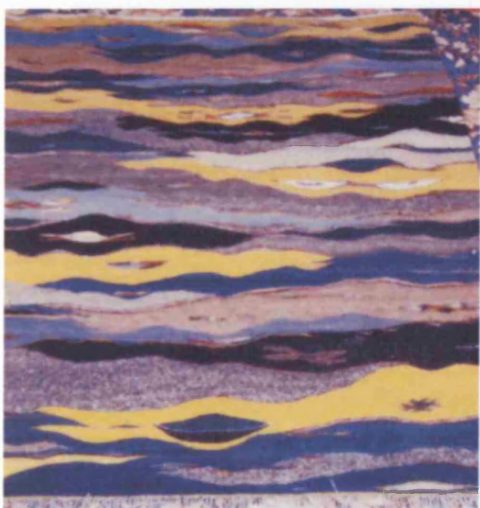


Figure 58 Reproduction (detail)



Figure 59 Reproduction 2003

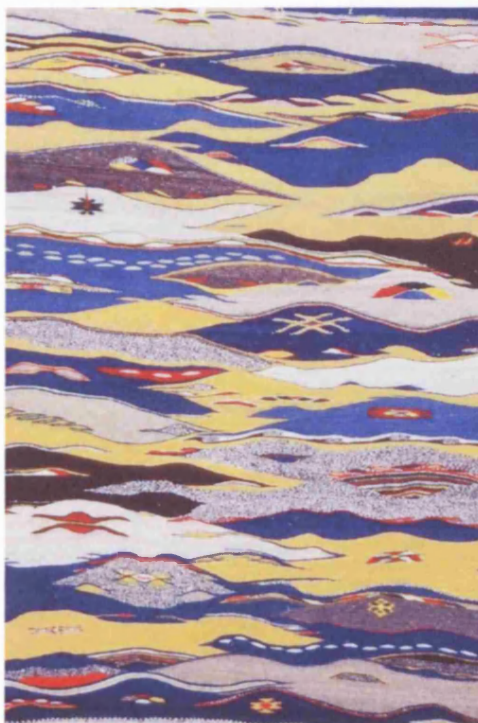


Figure 60 Reproduction 2003

Conclusion: A materiality in the making

In this thesis, I have tried to contribute to an analysis of material culture as an unfinished and emerging materiality, rather than as a given, discreet object. I have used the framework of the Matière à Penser group, who emphasizes gestures and bodily movement together with material culture as shaping people, to show how the material and embodied dimensions of production contribute to the constitution of a differential gendered agency for both women and men. The MâP approach provides us with a way of looking at practitioners as dynamic, social individuals with bodies and affect, who transform matter but are also deeply affected by it. Thus, I argue that by looking at the dynamic aspect of action on unfinished matter one can uncover the subjective significance of productive work for the makers, and their society and possibly implicit forms of worldview.

Finished or unfinished materiality, objects coming into being or objects of exchange, carpets at once shape the gender, emotions, bodies, morality and knowledge of both men and women, although to different degrees. Comparing production and exchange through the lense of the embodied and material relationship of subjects to specific materialities, has allowed me to distinguish some characteristics of the productive process.

I have found three interconnected dimensions that characterize production as a material and embodied process: transparency, permanence and regeneration or reproduction.

Firstly, the Sirwa weavers do not see their relation to the object-coming-into-being as discreet or pure, but as part of a social and material environment where the process, the object-in-the-making, the tools, the spatial and temporal, the social and individual (body and mind), are perceived in a continuum. Particularly, there is a moral dimension to the process of making where the learning of technical knowledge is inseparable from self knowledge, where self mastery is accompanied with a pleasure of the senses and the mind. Second, for the Sirwa people, there is a clear distinction between the object-coming into being (or the embodied and material process of production) and the finished object resulting from it. Both these aspects of materiality-

in-the-making are shown in my ethnography of weaving and are attested in the semantics (of the word *astta*). Thus they conceive production as a material moment which is violently and irremediably closed by the finishing of the object. The operation of separating the warp and the weaving woven on it from its frame is seen as a sort of death of the materiality-in-the-making (both woollen raw material and weaving-coming-into-being). There is no indication that the carpet is seen to have a life after 'birth', when it would start its life on the supply chain.

Third, the value of the maker and the value of the object-coming-into being are interrelated. This is because ethics and aesthetics are inherent in embodied practice. The Sirwa people directly link the quality of the personal investment of the practitioner in the process of making with the perfection of the final object. For the weavers and their communities, the finished object objectifies the knowledge and value of their makers. Materiality is seen as transparent because it betrays the qualities or faults of weavers. Investment is related with efficacy of the self on the self through efficacy on matter. If body techniques are seen as expressing the degree of investment of the self in the making, it is because gestures shape the aesthetic and ethics that will be inscribed in matter. If the product of making is read and interpreted as objectifying weavers' value as moral and knowledgeable women, it is because the process through which material forms emerge is also conceived as the place of the crafting of a self in which knowledge and morality are accrued together in an inseparable manner.

The involvement of the maker with this materiality in-the-making is more lasting, constant and demanding because unfinished materiality is seen as more difficult to distance oneself from and more invasive than a finished object whose boundaries are clearer. The incorporation of matter in the body schemata of the maker is perceived as penetrating their bodies and affect. The gestures of transformation of materiality are also identified as entering a materiality.

The continuous and deep investment of the self in the making process results in a high physical and emotional cost but the gain is proportional to the investment. Weavers experience more physical pain but are happier, more balanced and fulfilled when this investment is deep and when the conditions of work and their value is recognised. They find joy and challenges in the regular and repeated mastering of materiality and

themselves. This control on their environment and daily life may lead to a feeling of stability, permanence and continuity.

In contrast with the constancy and cyclical dimension of the embodied process of making, the finished object is ephemeral, both because of the low quality of its constituents and because of its temporal presence in the household.

Thus gesture as transformative action on matter implies a physical and emotional cost, seen as labour. Productive labour involves a sacrifice of the self but also a sacrifice of materiality (tools which get worn out, substance which is consumed (wool), object-coming-into-being which is tamed. Human sacrifice or cost and material cost occurred in the making process are given the same value for several reasons:

The unfinished materiality of the object coming into being is comparable to that of the raw materials which are both seen as more invasive than finished materiality because of the crucial transformative action performed on them by practitioners. Furthermore, the reason why raw materials and labour are so valued is not just because without them there would be no objects, but because they allow for the reproduction of things.

Thus, there are three stages of materiality fitting into an implicit hierarchy, where the raw materials and the materiality-in-the-making are given a greater value than the finished object. Carpets are not inalienable objects: they are not made to last and are easily replaceable by a newer material form. At a cosmological level, the sacrifice of human labour and materiality are seen as a necessity, which fits into a conception of the world where human beings have to take and return things to the world where they live. Thus the making of objects fits with a conception of a reciprocal relationship of giving and taking, where after a slow emergence, the materiality-in-the-making has to be taken away when it has reached maturity or completion. Production implies a sacrifice of precious matter transformed by labour, which itself has the same value as matter.

In providing the material means for generating more things, these material human and non-human sacrifices are seen as a necessity for a higher goal: social production or reproduction. Gesture in combination with unfinished materiality ensures the reproduction of material forms, knowledge and value, as well as people. Thus my data leads me to the same conclusion as Graeber who argues that the production of

things is a subordinate moment in a larger process that ultimately aims at the production of people (Graeber 2006). My approach emphasises the embodied, material and emotional aspects of making to provide the foundation for an anthropology of production that considers materiality as on-going and in-the-making and self generative. There is a self-generative dimension to production, where knowledge engenders knowledge as a result from motor action on matter, where routine, permanence, repetition, imitation are the place of transformative appropriation, maintenance and reproduction of knowledge. The motivation to sacrifice oneself emerges from the gestures and unfinished materiality, from an aesthetic and ethic of doing.

Who should benefit from weavers' art?

I have argued that weavers and their community give more value to the process of making through which an object-comes-into-being, than to the finished object resulting from it, and that this value originates in the technical and skilled gestures of the makers. This difference between the materiality of production (by which objects come into existence) and the materiality of trading (in which finished objects are exchanged) in terms of the subject relationship to material culture, I argue, can also be used to justify why weavers should be entitled to a greater share of the benefit from the sale of their products. If all actors in the chain to various degrees add some value to carpets or alter their materiality, whether fake or real, discursive or tangible, destructive or technical, it is only after weavers have produced these objects with their own hands. They are the ones who have the primary embodied knowledge which allows these objects to come into existence. In addition to the amount of physical energy, time and physical cost this transformative action implies, they also have the power to make them beautiful. This creative knowledge is what ultimately gives carpets their economic value, and the market its existence. Although production remains largely invisible to the Western buyer, the value given by consumers to technical work and handmade objects seems to confirm the validity of a theory that sees production as the source of value rather than one which places value in sign value and exchange (as argued by Appadurai 1986 after Simmel). All buyers should realise their responsibility and recognise weavers work and art through good payment, ideally directly to them. A focus on exchange or

consumption may thus sidetrack us from the crucial knowledge of the human and material origin (conditions, processes and costs) of things which allowed the emergence of the finished form. Probably in the West, this is the result of our separation from nature and making, not just the influence of the market which makes us forget the human cost of production (as well as the future ecological cost of overproduction of cheap devalued materialities).

Glossary

Terms on textiles and weaving are marked *, Berber terms are marked with a B and Arab terms with a A.

*Ayt Wawzgit	B	The name of this confederation of tribes is given to all types of weavings produced in the Sirwa.
Amghar	B	Tribal leader appointed on a yearly basis to preside over the jama'a.
*Akhniif pl. ikhnafen	B	A special flatweave cloak-cape which inspired the more recent akhniif carpet. See also Khenif
*Astta	B	Weaving-coming-into-being.
*Ashûra pl. 'Awashir	A	See holy day.
'Awashir	A	See above.
Azib	B	Corrals (stone enclosures) where sheep and goats are kept at night (and lamb and kids all the time). Herds used to be shepherded by a young man of the family who spent his summers guarding and moving the flock in pastures near the summer azib. Nowadays this role is taken by a man of the village who often looks after several families' animals.
Baraka	A	Sacred quality inherent in every living being but also things. Baraka means holy properties, saintliness and blessing. Mythic and holy persons, saints and jinn are known for their exceptional form of baraka.
Berber		Autochthonous people culture and language in North Africa. In Morocco, the Berber language can be subdivided in three dialects: Tarifit (language of the Rif mountains, North of Morocco), Tamazight (Middle Atlas, Eastern High Atlas and part of Eastern Moroccan Sahara) and Tashalhit (High Atlas, Souss plain and Anti Atlas). Tashalhit is the language spoken in the Sirwa.
*Berber carpets		Type of pile carpet. Very simple white or cream handmade pile carpets usually mass produced in factories in urban areas for the western market, including buyers such as Ikea. These carpets are a simplified and cheap version of some 'rural' Middle Atlas thick pile carpets. They may feature one of two motifs (fibula) in a corner or a frame, in a light brown colour. The Berber carpet was a best seller up to the late 1980s particularly in Germany and Austria.
*Bournous		Type of wide cloak-cape, still used, in rural and urban areas as an elegant cloak that can be worn above a traditional outfit.
Caïd (qa'id)	A	Appointed official head of the rural administrative district.

*Caftan	A	Qaftan, is a luxury urban female garment, worn at festivals and weddings. It is constituted of two fabrics layered above each other, one opaque and the other transparent, and is usually held with a belt. Like the female djellaba it is an object made by tailors to order, and affected by fashion.
*Chichaoua		A type of pile carpet, standardized during the colonial period to the same aesthetics: a red-orange or red-pink colour, and black sawteeth selvage, often with a few shaky and naïve figurative (camel, snake) or abstract motifs often arranged in asymmetrical manner. These carpets have a minimalist or modernist look. Some are less standardized and display a great variety of colours and shapes. Despite their name, they are not produced in the village of Chichaoua or in the areas around it, but further away towards to coast (between Safi and Essaouira). Was also named Haouz of Marrakesh carpet. Today, the accepted name of this carpet is Tenssift river or Oulad Bou sabaa (Ulâd Bessabâ) carpets. The Ulâd Bessabâ' abandoned the local model to produce the Chichaoua model (Berque 1964:23).
*Djellaba	A	Djellaba in the past were made of a woollen rectangular piece of flatweave sewn into a long narrow hooded coat. Today they are mainly made of industrially made fabric, sometimes handmade on an horizontal (male) loom. In the luxury niche market the Bzawiya (from Bzou) exquisite production is on a vertical loom by women. The female djellaba was introduced to replace the veil, a large cumbersome weaving requiring constant adjustments in which women used to envelop their entire body (Le Coeur 1939/1969). Initially worn with a transparent veil added above the mouth and nose, it is made on the same model as men's. Every woman has got one. They can have many forms (short, with short sleeves, open on the side along the legs), colours and texture, depending on the quality of fabric, the status and age of the wearer, the season and the occasion.
Dirhâm(DH)		Moroccan currency roughly corresponds to the currency of the Euro. 10 DH= 1 Euro. See also Rial.
*Excentric weft		Emery describes this technique as 'non horizontal' wefts or 'excentric' wefts. 'either wage-like or linear inserts can be used to counteract unwanted unevenness of weft density, and that weft density can be intentionally varied to make similar inserts for decorative purposes. One of the most notable results to be achieved by manipulation of weft density is the creation of truly curvilinear figures...in successive passages a weft being used to form a curved figure deviates more and more from the normal horizontal to follow the developing contour. If carried to an extreme...this produces colour areas that in addition to being curved in outline are

		rounded out slightly from the plane of the fabric'...Weft deviating from the horizontal and right angle norm is called eccentric weft, the structure of a tapestry woven fabric is called eccentric tapestry / weave. (Emery 1966: 83-84). See Gore
Fqîh	A	Title given to religious learned men who in the countryside teach children in Koranic schools. Also called Tâleb. Fqîh may specialize in making tablet-weaving and haberdashery but also in crochet. These skills are used to give the finishing touch to male garments such as djellaba and salham. They crochet small elegant hats for men.
*Ghumd	B	A type of small rectangular rucksack which Sirwa men use to wear on their back, the strap across their shoulder. They were decorated with a tapestry technique. They were mainly produced by the Ayt Waghrda, Ayt Semgane and Ayt Khezama weavers.
Glaoui		The chief of the Glaoua Tribe. Madani El-Glaoui served the Sultan Abdul Aziz as a minister of war and became vizir of the Sultan Moulay Hafid. His brother Thami el-Glaoui became the pasha of Marrakech. They undertook the expansion of French rule south of the High Atlas. Initially considered as allies of the French, it became clear that they were in fact in the process of building their own empire within the empire. Thami succeeded his brother Madani in 1918 and inherited the Kasbah of Talouet on Hammou's death in 1934. The Glaoua chiefs lost all their power at Independence in 1956.
Glaoua (sing Glaoui)	B	A confederation of the High Atlas, which during the French protectorate ruled the south of Morocco.
*Glaoua	B	Colonial appellation given to a type of hybrid weaving wrongly attributed to the Glaoua tribe. It was in fact made in the Sirwa region. Less fashionable today, it may combine bands of pile, twill and tapestry weaving with a plain flatweave background.
*Gore		The function of gores is 'either to straighten out a poor warp that is weaving unevenly or to produce a shaping in the finished cloth' (Burnham, 1980 : 66). In the akhnif cloak, this corresponds to the oculus shape, in the kharita to the small 'eyes'. This shape is made by inserting extra weft threads which do not go from selvage to selvage, but can be built up to form a sort of triangle in the fabric. See also Excentric weft.
Hammam	A	Public baths
*Hanbal	A	See Hmal.
Hartani pl. Harratin	A	One of the three ethnic groups in the region (with Berbers and Shurfa). They have an inferior status and could be considered as originating from the Saharan borders from the time of its desiccation. Because traditionally they did not own land, they

		worked as sharecroppers for Arabs and Berbers. Unlike Slaves, Haratin were never integrated into Berber and Arab households, and were seen as “the workers of the soil.” In Berber, however, the Haratine are referred to as iqbliyn, meaning the people of the east or the inhabitants of the southeastern oases. (source: Ilahiane 1996).
*Hayk		A large rectangular piece of light and fine flatweave, in which people wrapped themselves up. See also Tahaykt.
*High Atlas		Ignorant of the real producers, the carpets of the Sirwa were first called High Atlas.
*Hmal	A	Simple flatweave piece of weaving, usually used as a blanket or a cover on which the pile carpet is put. It is usually of a coarser and thicker quality than the hayk, being used more as a furnishing than as a piece of clothing. Folded in two or sewn, it is used as large saddlebags. The coarsest version, and particularly those made of goat hairs tend to be used as a cheap carpet. In wealthy families, it is put under pile carpets as another layer providing more comfort from the cold and hard ground. The Sektana, Znaga and Ayt Oubial produce a woollen hmal in the mountains which alternate uniform black and white bands and black and white decorative bands, (using tapestry and twill techniques) which require the weaver to work from both the back and the front of the weaving. The Ayt Waghrda make a finer woollen tapestry weaving hmal for weddings, where hanging behind the bride, it holds the bride presents. In addition to black and white they use red, blue and green. See also Jabbar Haydur. See <i>Salé Hanbal</i> .
*Hzam	B	Belt made using the tapestry technique, particularly produced by the Ayt Tammassine, Ayt Khezama, Ayt Semagane, Ayt Tidili and Ayt Ounila
Holy days		Friday is the holy day in Islamic countries. ‘Awashir from ‘âshûra, is the festival of 10th Muharram during which alms are given and people visit the shrines of saints. Mulud is one of the most important religious festivals in Morocco, it corresponds to the Prophet’s birthday. The sheep is sacrificed at ‘Id Kbir. See also tigga.
‘Id Kbir	A	See Holy day.
*Ifigig	B	Upper beam
*Ijekjad	B	Boots made in the Sirwa and Tidili (Amard, 1997:34). The top was woven by women and the sole made of leather and sewn by men. The motifs were made in tapestry weaving.
*Iklan	B	Motif
*Iklan n-ukhnif	B	Motif which appear to be embroidered but are added during the weaving process, using the fingers rather than a needle. Independent threads are placed around the warp threads and secured with the passing of two weft layers, and then

		interwoven with the warp after each layer of weft, until they form a motif. Despite being termed akhnif motifs (iklna n-ukhnif), some motifs are also common with other pieces of weavings, for example two female garments the tahaykt and the taydalt. In regions other than the Sirwa mountains, some weavers call it tarz, which in Arabic means embroidery.
*Isghay	B	A technique used by weavers who want to keep the same sitting position and do not work at the same rhythm as the others. They leave a portion of the weft floating (hanging unbound over at least 20 centimetres) for the other weaver to pick up. During the process, this appear as a set of stairs, which may still remain visible after the carpet is finished.
Jabador	A	An urban male garment consisting in a top and a pair of qandrisi trousers (in the shape of those made in Afghanistan or Pakistan). It is worn at weddings and festivals.
Jam'a	A	Tribal assembly, operative at the level of the clan and tribe, responsible for the upkeep of the environmental infrastructure of the land and the arbitration of petty disputes, and composed of men who want to attend.
Jann pl. jnûn		Spirit living next to human beings; some can be evil.
*Jabbar haydur	B	A flatweave carpet, variant of the akhnif carpet, it may be one colour with a few motif which appear as if embroidered (iklan n-ukhnif) or with several coloured squares. Jebbar haydour are called hmal in some areas of the Sirwa.
Kasbah	A	Citadel
Khalifa	A	Tribal official second to the Pasha.
*Kharita	A	A flatweave carpet, variant of the akhnif carpet. In Arabic, kharita means map, and this name is used to refer to the fact that the motifs could represent a landscape.
*Khenif	B	Khenif pl. khenfân (Foucauld 1998/1888:110). Another term for akhnif
*Khidous	B	Another type of akhnif.
*Knotted		Knotted carpets or pile carpets are constituted of lines of knots, usually between two lines of weft.
Ma'rûf	B	An annual and collective sacrifice (chicken, kid) in order to obtain God's grace. On such occasion women gather at the shrine of the saint or mosque and cook for the whole village.
Ma'alma pl. Ma'almat	A	Female master weaver. Ma'alma, from 'LM (learning, knowledge) is an Arabic term usually used for weavers who have received a formal training in one of the craft department's institutions. Weavers receive a sort of diploma, in the form of a card, specifying how long they trained for and where. Such a formal title however does not really bring any financial recognition to the weavers in terms of bargaining power with traders. It can only guarantee the value of weavers who are not born in a culture of skilled weaving.

Mulud	A	See holy day
Muqaddem	A	Tribal official second in command to shaykh.
Mussem	A	Annual pilgrimage and festival of a saint of Islam in Morocco, often corresponding to harvest festivals.
Pasha	A	Government of a province.
*Pile		Another term for knotted carpets.
*Rbati	A	Type of pile carpet. From Rabat, this appellation now covers the luxury oriental looking carpets consumed mainly by Moroccan bourgeoisie and elite. During colonial times, these were distinguished from those made in Salé and Mediouna. Today they may be distinguished from those made in Fes.
Ryâl		Moroccans still use the ancient currency introduced during the Spanish time; one Ryâl is equivalent to 0.05 Dirhâm(DH), so 20 riyal = 1 DH.
*Rumia	A	Wool usually of bad quality, containing artificial material (synthetic fibres) and foreign elements, machine spun and imported from urban areas. Opposed to locally produced 100% natural wool. Rumia comes from Rumi, Westerner.
*Sabra	A	Sabra is a material obtained industrially from a sort of aloe plant. Like polyester thread it has a shiny quality. It is used extensively in the making of haberdashery that goes into the decoration of sofas and traditional clothes for both sexes (djellaba, kaftan, jabador). It is commonly called silk (hrir). The confusion in the term is exploited by carpet dealers who sell a type of shiny looking flatweave carpet, in the aesthetic of Middle Atlas production, as being made of silk to credulous and misinformed tourists.
SAI		Service des Arts Indigènes, the name of the Craft department during the colonial time.
*Salé Hanbal		The Hanbal (another term for Hmal) of Salé near Rabat, is a long flatweave cover quite similar to flatweaves of the Middle Atlas but with alternate flatweave and pile band. The Glaoua present this mixing of pile and flatweave too. This weaving has completely disappeared due to lack of interest for it from Westerners. Up the late 1980s some of the enterprises producing adapted copies of the Corpus models was producing a dull version of the hanbal, in fact more a pile carpet with horizontal bands. Some specimens can still be seen in the bazaars of Rue des Consuls in Rabat.
*Salham	A	A type of male garment worn often above the djellaba. Similar to the akhnif, it is longer and usually made from a piece of woolen fabric 7 cubits wide. Unlike the akhnif which can be worn after the hood is sewn, it requires a tailor.
*Shadwi	B	Twill technique
Shaykh	A	See Amghar.
Shurfa	A	Putative descendants of the prophet Mohammed through the

		line of either Idriss of Fez (the founder of the first Arab dynasty in Morocco in the eighth century) or Mulay Ali Sharif of Tafilalet (founder of the Alawite Dynasty which still rules Morocco). They play the role of mediators among the Berber tribes and are entitled to a number of communal privileges and personal immunities. The Murabitin are thought to be the descendants of holy men who were revered as saints.
Suq	A	Weekly market
Tadrart	B	Greener landscape and pasture situated above 2000 meters where families grow vegetables and have rudimentary dwellings.
*Taddut	B	Wool as a sacred and natural matter. See rumia.
*Tahaykt	B	From Hayk, but smaller. The borders of this white outfit worn by women were covered with tapestry and iklan n-ukhnif techniques. A fine cloth, the tahaykt, is a sort of white long shawl in which women used to wrap themselves in on special occasions (wedding and festivals). This item is still used at weddings to hide the bride and families borrow it from those who still have some, for the period of the wedding.
*Tapestry technique		Weave with one warp and one weft which do not pass from selvage to selvage but are carried back and forth interweaving only with the part of the warp that is required for a particular area. (Burnham, 1980: 144). Tapestry technique includes slit, toothed, interlocking and dovetailed tapestry techniques. The local name is tirira.
*Taydalt	B	The taydalt is a black piece of clothing for women which has completely disappeared. It is less prestigious than the tahaykt.
*Tanilga	B	Special type of selvage, the more common type, that is easier to make is called tamawut.
Tawiza	B	Cooperative rotative labour performed by members of the village or tribe on a reciprocal basis
Tigga	B	Holy days and days off from labour. They are taken in case of death in the village, as a break between the making of two carpets or correspond to religious festivals,
*Tirira	B	Tapestry weaving technique.
Tkharbeq	A	From the root KHRBQ, to riddle with holes, to work without care or seriousness, to waste, this term usually means nonsense, riddle or even rubbish.
Twil		Sort of plaiting consisting in passing two different colours (usually black and white) threads thicker than the weft alternatively back and forth of two weft yarn. The passage of the thread in one way was done in its reverse on the way back, which created a four-yarn plaiting. It is used in the so-called Glaoua carpets in addition to other weaving techniques, and in the hmal in combination with tapestry weaving. See Shadwi.
Ushfud	B	A gorse plant used for dyeing in yellow.
Zakka pl. Zakkat	A	Alms given to the community at the time of the <i>mulud</i>

Appendix 1: Technical operation before weaving proper

Spinning : Carded and combed wool

Carding and combing wool gives very different results which affect both the structure and visual effect of the carpet. Cards are small wooden flat squares with iron nails. Combs consist of a head, a back (both made of horn), a set of iron tines and a wooden handle. They require more work, time and energy than the flat cards and involve the sorting of soft springy even wool from the coarse one (the latter are carded). The process restores the fibres to a near parallel state after the tangling and disarrangement of the natural orderliness of the wool due to washing. The result is a strong rove²¹⁶. Cards are used to make weft threads. The fiber carded with hand cards lies in different directions and the result is a soft fuzzy rove. Combed and carded fibres are separately twisted into rove which is spun onto a spindle; spinning is achieved by rolling the spindle against the leg with one hand holding the rove with the other. There are two types of spindles: the long (izdi) used for the weft whereas the smaller one is used for the warp (tizdit). Today, in the rare cases where women spin some wool, they only use cards and long spindles. The rove obtained may be used to make warp thread.

Preparation of the loom

Warping operation

Before setting the loom it is necessary to create the warp structure: warping is a tedious task that requires the presence of three women. Two sticks are planted on the ground, the distance between them corresponding to the length of the weaving. Unlike the Middle Atlas warping method (and those described in most of the literature on Moroccan carpets) the warping method in the Sirwa uses only two sticks. In the Middle Atlas, the third stick corresponds to the space of the shed stick; in the Sirwa, this stick is placed once *astta* is mounted.

One woman is seated in front of each stick, with one facing the other, and a third one feeds the thread to each in turn, going backward and forwards between them. The shape thus formed is an elongated 0, stretched between the two sticks.

²¹⁶ The rove is the group of fibres pulled out and twisted to be spun.



Figure 61 Warping operation

Each person at each stick, knots the warp thread each time it is fed to her in a sort of knotted chain (*tigrut*).

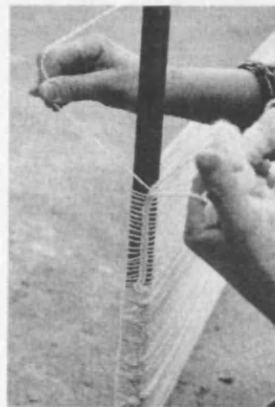


Figure 62 Tigrut

During the process the warp is stretched between the two sticks horizontally. Once ready the warp will be stretched on the loom uprights (*timendwin*) vertically, hence the name of the vertical loom.

The width of the carpet is assessed before hand, when each person sitting at the stick attaches her piece of thread which will be used to trap the warp thread to form the *tigrut*: the length of the thread corresponds to the weft, and is less obvious to assess from looking at it as it accumulates vertically on the stick in the shape of a chain of knots (*tigrut*) packed together and pushed down the stick as the warp thread is fed.

Once opened this chain will unfold and look much larger. Then the warp (delimited by these two chains) will be mounted on the beam; this means that the two chains which were holding vertically on the stick, will be flattened and stretched horizontally on the floor with the warp (in several lines of thread) stretched between them. In fact the chain forms a sort of hem holding the lines of warp threads aligned and parallel. The warp thus stretched is also characterised by the fact that each line of thread is twinned (thus the term of pair and impair warp threads).

Once the warp is completed, they put a small bamboo stick in the centre of the elongated 0 shape so that the threads do not tangle. The two sticks can thus be removed from the ground, which is now prepared to receive the two beams on which the two chains (forming the extremity of the warp) are going to be sewn. The beams are usually placed far apart and parallel. Each beam has a certain number of holes (*tet pl. tiwalin*, eyes) placed at regular interval inside which a needle will be passed to attach the tigrout to the beam.

The half (middle in the length, half way between the *tigrut*) of the warp is marked in black with some charcoal (at the two extremities in the width). Once the warp is attached at each beam, it is stretched. This is to verify that the threads are parallel and not tangled; any foreign matter that could have been attached to it is removed (branches, dirt). During the sewing process, the stick inserted between the twinned lines of threads (the two sets of pair and impair warps) is kept there and it may now be replaced by a longer bamboo stick or a hoe tube which is inserted. This will be useful later to make the *inliten*.

Now more persons are needed, particularly if the carpet is going to be particularly wide: one group of women sits on the future lower beam whilst the other group holds the upper beam. The upper beam will constitute the reserve of the warp threads folded around it. At this point one person usually hits the warp threads to ensure again their even parallelism and may also place the stick on the upper part of the warp (lifted up on one beam) to see how smoothly the stick falls on the warp.

Then, the group holding the upper beam start going away from the beam held on the floor, thus stretching the warp to its outmost; from this point, trying to advance in parallel way and at the same pace, the 'upper beam group' folds the warp onto the beam. This is particularly tricky as the beam is heavy and the weavers have to stretch the warp whilst turning the beam, often using their knees, their whole arms around the beam, and walking towards the lower beam whilst pulling it away from it. By the time the warp is completely rolled around the beam, they have reached the lower beam on the floor. They lay the upper beam on it and can now carry the two beams to the room where the loom uprights have been placed to hold the beams, the lower beam being placed first.

Once the two beams have been adjusted so that the warp is stretched at the right tension between them, the weavers usually take a break, sipping some sweet tea and eating a piece of bread. The mother or the person supervising the operation will measure the width again and if necessary remove some warp thread on one side. If it is felt that the warp threads are too close to each other in one area, a few may be removed to create a more regular and even warp.

The same day or the next, they will make the *inliten*, or heddle rod system. This requires to make another set of knots forming another kind of loose chain system which will hold the twin warp threads (the two sets of warps) onto a rod (in the space left by the bamboo or hoe) so that one goes towards the front while the other is held back or rather the opposite. This system requires some skill and may take as much time as the whole previous process of warping and mounting *astta*. It is usually done by two women who start from each extremity of the width and meet in the middle. Once the heddle rod is built, the weavers can start weaving. The heddle rod is also fastened to some pieces of wood to increase its tension. One or two shed sticks are placed above the heddle rod into the warping, but unlike the *inliten*, they are not attached to *astta*.

In Taznakht one of the practices, not found in the Mountain, and probably inherited from the training provided by the colonial institution, is to put a long iron stick between the warp chain and the beam. This, I suppose, creates a stronger tension at the level where the warp chain is sewn onto the beam, allowing a wider carpet to be made. The side effect is however that once finished the carpet shows a space between the chain and the beginning of the weaving.

For the warping operation of the akhnif (cloak), the kind of chain (*tigrut*) built on the stick is replaced by another one which allows the creation of a loop. This technique (*anerzif*) is characteristic of the old type of loom in which only the lower beam requires the *tigrut* to be sewn onto its holes and the upper beam (*isutar*, *tassaturt*), which is rounder, serves as a support for special types of mini-beams similar to a Western kitchen rolling pin (*igh^ura*), which are attached with ropes to it. The upper beam is fixed much higher than the one used today in a hole (*aghudi*) in the wall (*agadir*) at a right angle with the upright and parallel to the lower beam and mini-beams.

Weaving process

Weaving includes wefting (flatweave) which is the simplest level of skill and knotting. Flatweave techniques includes a variety of techniques.

The position of the weavers vary depending on the technique, and the quality of the work: for pile carpets, some weavers sit at the back of the weft whilst the others knot. This method is supposed to accelerate the process but the wefting and knotting may not be completely even and parallel. This will mainly appear on the back of the carpet where the wefts are apparent and will be more visible if the wool used is finer. To make the *hmal* (a long black and white flatweave cover), weavers have to switch between the front and the back of the weaving depending on whether they are weaving the twill (*shadwi*) or the tapestry weaving (*tirira*); the latter requires that the weavers sit between the wall and the weaving usually facing a light source to ensure 'by transparence' that the weft is well beaten.

Flatweave techniques include: lifting or lowering the heddle rod, thus creating the shed and countershed effect, which allows a weft to be passed (wefting) layer after layer without having to manually count one warp in and leave another out. Each weft is inserted with one hand holding the warp away with the other particularly when the heddle rod is low and the weaving is getting too high as the space between the two sets of warp is made tighter by the fact that the space between the weaving and the rod is diminished. They may even help one hand get the weft at the other end. Otherwise weavers can also pull the weft thread with one hand. Finally, after each inserted weft, the weft is beaten down towards the rest of the weaving with the beating comb (*taska*). For knotting, the weavers have to insert a line of knots between one or several rows of weft.

These techniques usually take up to two years to be mastered in ascending order of difficulty : wefting, knotting, *iklan*, *tirira* and *shadwi*.

There is no specific time for combing carding spinning or weaving as this is done all year round. In the past, wool was shorn in spring time, then washed and prepared until the end of the summer, where the weaving would start and last during winter.

Appendix 2 : Negative economic songs on weaving and carpets

Sung poetry (tandamt or amarg) is a form of social activity to which anybody can participate at festivals although some are more skilled at memorising or composing it. A great freedom is allowed in the language (grammatical, morphologic, syntactical), the vocabulary is very elaborated, full of rare words, which explains why this poetry is difficult to understand and translate.

Most of the female songs mentioned here were collected in the village of Agouins in the Znaga area and were invented by individual women (unlike those found in the next appendix which belong to the collective repertory). To collect these songs I visited several women in their houses. The presence of numerous women made it an enjoyable moment, but as a result I was sometimes unable to distinguish one from the other when trying to transcribe the recordings. Thus rather than attributing songs to the wrong singer, I only mention those I am sure about. These female songs have a very limited audience, often the close friends of the woman who composed them. Sung poetry often expresses ideas in ways that tashelhit speaking Berbers consider unacceptable in conversational speech.

I have attempted to organise these songs, which are all related to economic issues, in three loose themes: the physical and emotional cost of productivity and poverty, Carpets designs and weaving techniques and relationship to husbands. The fact similar topics recur in several songs and are related make it difficult to separate them. The economic necessity of weaving makes the help of other weavers (friends and daughters) crucial, especially for older women. The introduction or invention of new designs or types of carpets (blan) are associated with financial success and harder work because of technical difficulty.

The physical and emotional cost of productivity and poverty

Song by Ijja Samoh and Ijja Mohammed

This song is an exchange between two women, Lala Ijja Mohammed (from Isil, a few kilometres from Agouins) and Ijja Samoh (from Agwins) inquiring on each other's life and how much help they get from their respective families.

Song no 1

Bismillah atnezzur l-wahid rebbi
Ayigh ibed rebbi f-talat f-figig

Ashko ghayd d-iguran igga l-'jub

Ashko l-blan aqdim iters sma'ans

Hurmikh kmin l-famila gh ura tgwat

In the name of God the unique

God make the tala²¹⁷ well stretched on
the ifigig (beam)

Because what we see nowadays is
incredible

Because the ancient plan has a reputation/is
renowned.

O Family members come and visit [help] me

²¹⁷ Depending on context, tala can be translated as weaving; in fact, it is usually the back of astta, when weavers sit between the wall and the weaving.

Akhko l-blan awrig akhunbulled
 Iddu suq argis igenfufud*²¹⁸
 Mayrân ayitis gh-ukân iwurit
 Ashko awuddi arrawunkh urgi shed
 Ayimun taliwi ayidawi l-blân

 Righ aslam akaznagh wala inni harrud
 Isil ukân adrigh angisibid

Lala Ijja man kat git iskizget l-blan
 Al-famila nem isensrem tagwa
 Urda ayin nakur hagh ansrem taggwa
 Ayinni nit isak ursallagh urgigi shed

 Righ aslam akaznagh wala inni harrud
 Hamdgh irebbi dafel l-igen l-jdid
 Ibid da rebbi gh talat f-figig
 Hamdagh irebbi s-l-famila tuggad
 tasgak afasi wa la f-uzalmad
 Ula kemmi nit A Ijja Mohammed
 Aisha Hssi ntat nit a yisugern
 Ayisikam rebbi mulana matterjo
 Ula Rahma tarjat nta nit datittagwa
 Urta nit trashed wala inni tuggat

Ula l-blan urigi khi belled

Because the new plan is complicated
 What if nobody wanted it at the suq?
 Who will buy it?
 Its work is a toil but must be done
 Children please bring me a good plan
 ***Reply of Ijja
 I salute you but reply fast
 This salutation may go to Isil [place where she
 lives] and stop there
 Is your plan carefully made Lala Ijja?
 Does your family still visit you?
 I cannot come to see you
 It is not that I don't want to, but I am not
 available
 ***Reply of Ijja Samoh
 I salute you but reply fast
 Thank god I have new [tools?]
 Thank god I have ifigig and tala
 Thank god I have a family
 [Sitting on the loom] on my right and my left
 [I thank you] Ijja Mohammed
 And Aisha Hssi [who weaves with her]
 God gives you all you ask for
 And to Rahma [the neighbour who helps]
 She is not yet [in age to be married] but can
 weave
 And [can make] designs with care

Ijja Samoh made the following song when her younger daughter got married.
 Invocations to God are often an indirect call to the husband.

Song no 2

Bismillah wa billah wa rahman
 Nkhammim kullu tajma't
 Araw ifta iflit mällât
 Ullah ursul n-sughir amya
 Rmigh ilma irmi d-'aql
 akshush ursuli(li) l-'aql.
 atentark ukân addiqân
 illa wanu illa dâr unwal
 yudayakh gh-illi gis nshrkx
 adas nghur irebbi adiya'fun
 ayikhfer dunub isamahakh
 adas nghur irebbi adiyafun
 l-arzaq arndgiz ikâln.

In the name of God the merciful
 Let's think before we discuss/converse
 [My] daughter is gone (married) and left me
 I cannot do anything anymore
 I am fatigued, the mind is weary too.
 My mind is not anymore into weaving (into wool)
 One has to give up on this destiny
 I have the farm and kitchen work
 Enough of this [weaving] work
 I ask God to relieve me
 God protect and forgive my sins²¹⁹
 God protect me
 Until I am under the ground

²¹⁸ Igenfufud means moved, displaced, trampled on, manipulated ... [in sum mishandled, but not sold].

²¹⁹ Reference to the fact that since there is divine positive value (baraka, hasanat, raja) in weaving, asking for the work to cease could be seen to be a sin.

In the following song, the singer refers to the help of children, who if they have a waged work can send a sort of retirement pension to their parents who do not need to work anymore. Affection is proven through material help. The song also refers to the help or exchange system between timzdawin who return the hours worked on the carpets.

Song no 3

Iwa Sidi rja f-ullah(i)
Ifkak darrit igan tina badan
Izeydaken izu^h izeydak l-'azzi
Makh kafellakh rdennek tin serbis
Ighastagh ardak izri l-moghrib
Ighradis n-fukh righ anghwi hsâbi

Hope in God
Give me children who stay always with me
Who give me [things] and affection
We have to return the service
I weave from morning to evening
So it sells once I cut it

Song no 4

Bismillah akenzor l-wahid rebbi
a jabbar haydor l-mâlnes iwitazzat
'awn arebbi timgharin gh-l-jihâd
imma ifasen furayn kullu f-ifign
Haqqân ukan l-khârij astudun
izd armoy izd uday attissagaln

In the name of God the unique
Jabbar haydor brings money [like a heavy river]
God helps women in the jihad [of weaving]
My hands are cut at the beam
These [Jabbar haydor] may even go abroad
Westerners (Christians) and Jews look for them

Song no 5

Kulu tissugar lli dars illan mûsitant
ula slât nzays urâs mannikant
nekki nit nqar usul nsughir yat nemmagh ukân
talli win-n-ustta gent ukân l-million
rebbi zaydasent l-hift ula sharafât

All the yarns he had [the dealer] I have taken
All the goods are gone
Me, even if I don't weave I fight
May astta be worth a million (10.000 DH / £1,000)
May God give it more value

The singer asks God to realise her imaginary wish that she could live well without having to weave.

Song no 6

nekki dawkan tuhamkh datkhmimakh
Ratan izraz tazzut hashagh-ashenshar
Irih l-qwalib adi yukan tmlin
Imun d-watay igan lasil atensukh .

I think and think
The tools are tired [so what about me]
I want breads of sugar [always stocked, for ever]
And drink good quality tea

It is poverty that imposes this eternal cycle of buying the raw material to make new carpets again and again.

Song no 7

Ahakkak Tamara adagh isghwin
Adnesagh taddut ghablegh ighura

Tamara imposes on us
To buy wool and put it on the ighura (small beam)

Song no 8

Bismillah wa billah urahman
Afus iks l-jîr idamens

ikkis aqbo immagh n-nilj
Ullah arizqolh tâm [ta'm]
afus itkarnas gh-ibûttûln
attenterkkh ukân addiqân
yudayikh gh illi gisân skerkh
adâs nughar irebbi addiyifkun
Ayyis ikhfer dunnub isamkhah

In the name of God the merciful
My hands have lost their colour in the contact with quicklime
Even indigo damages my hands
By God I lost my appetite
My hands are sprained
The only solution would be to give up
I am fed up of what I am making
I ask God to relieve me
I ask God that what I weave relieves me

addas nughar irebbi adiyifkun
razqankh ard ngiz ikâln

Until I die
I ask God to give me subsistence (razq)

Song no 9

*Mani ghurn qay tasa s-uzalmd
nghwi tazzut sufasi
ughi s-uzar rzan tigga rzam l-jami, rzam l-
'awashir
kigh ghalligh wallu uragh ibid
mraka urusi ntadut ur khallisse, mra
adnaffell irgazen tamerwast*

We have stopped holding our heart on the left.
And we change taska on the right hand
We do not respect tigga anymore, nor Friday or l-
'awashir
And thus I have no more income.
If only [men] did not buy the wool, there would be no
credit to pay back

Song by Lala Aisha

This provocative song implies that weavers do not even have time to stop and urinate.
The last verse is ambiguous and could mean that the wool (ibuzern) enters every part of
their body.

Song no 10

A timgharin ngumittin l-m'isht
lgh nbi abzid nghal isikemmel

Nkergh gunn ibuzern iwashiwungh

O women we fight for subsistence
When we stop peeing, we think we have
finished, [but we have not]
We stand up and we put ibuzern in our
vagina

Carpets designs and weaving techniques

Song no 11

abu-tuswin iga iklan
atentakgh ukan adiqan

Even the *hmal* has got motifs now
I might as well give up on it [and do pile]

Song no 12

Bismillah akenzwar l-wahid rebbi
Ayibid rebbi gh-talat f-ifigig
Ashko ghayad d-iguran iga l-'jub
Ashka l-blân aqdim iters ma'ans
Hurmikh kmin l-familia additag(w)et
Ashko ghayad d-iguran iga l-'jub
Ashko l-blân uriga afen gellid
Iddu suq argis i(t) genfufud

Ma iran atis gh-ukan iwurrid
Ashko awwudi arraw unakh urgis l-shed
Ayimun talliw aydyawi l-blân

Let Bismillah precede [in the name of God]
Let's go and sit at the beam
As the technique is extraordinary
As the old plan [model] does not count anymore
Come to the family to see [and learn]
As the technique is extraordinary
As the plan is not simple
[If you take the old plan] At the suq , it sleeps [does
not sell]
Who is going to buy the old [model]?
As she has no more daughters left
To send back for new plans

Angry song about the betrayal of husbands

The following song expresses revengeful thought about the husband who ignores and
mistreats her when she consumed her health and strength to feed him and their family.

Song no 13

A timgharin ngum nit l-m'isht

Arruh ka ittudun ikhsan nmuten
Ajjakh anzri sa't.
Wal id-munkh f-l-ham tun ajmilinkh

O women we haven't found a solution to the problem of
subsistence
I still breath but my bones are dead
Let me pass the time
The one with whom I shared worries and life has

Nda khar dar l-miza ighimund l-hukm
Imma han ddunnit dlemm aygen wins

Song no 13.1

*Bismillah wa billah wa rahman
atnzwār hra tansawal
atāla d-ifigig rmightent
ha timgharin tagat n-rebbi attitāgha-k
Jebbar haydur radakh kemmel l-hayat
ghiyed n-ghaniye idāren arenterfufun**
azar nasi tadut arisent nkat
wayidalallallallalala...
maysaynan shdunit l-'aqli
Ayadyasi jebbar haydor igut gh-l-khanshti*

*Akem ihdu rebbi Rhma ugamt gh-imasen
A timgharin li-ghakund n-shawri
A khamstasher yum arghanaqma ifalen
Ayiligh aghdr min ighariwuni
Ibbi zizwar idodan y-ufus
Idaghant iga giwingh tadsa
Iga winquelmud igi ifil kiw*

Song no 13.2

'la slamtek aghwad dikkan bn 'Aqub

*Mashi yatsga n-wasif kaghibid
Ait Ustta addarik d-Ait taddut
mash Ait-l-Ktan urisin ma f-zanzan*

*ighwid 7000 iktant taddut
islid ifalwan zund ibna el-broj*

forgotten my beauty
Until the last judgement, if there is any justice
He said I was life but he is always persecuting me

By the name of God
I will open the discourse
I am tired of the tala and ifigig
God curses women
Jabbar haydur is going to finish us
At night my legs are nervous with fatigue
During the day I work the wool
lalalalalala....
Who says life is good?
When will at last the jabbar haydur be put in the sack
[i.e. be ready to be sold]?
Please Rahma sit at the loom
Women, I have something to tell you
who is linked with these 15 days of dyeing?
Shoulders are tired
The razor [to cut knots] cut my fingers
Where I sit [bottom] laughs at me
There are marks and calluses

Welcome to you who went to the mussem of Ibn
Ya'cub
Who stopped by the side of the river
He went to the carpet dealers and the wool dealers
But those who sell (cotton) fabric do not know why
they sell
He earned 7000 Rial and bought wool
And on the way back met beautiful doors (lines of a
borj-tower)

Appendix 2.1

The following sung poems were collected in various villages in the mountain (Atuga 14-20, and the remaining in Tinider). They often consist of one sentence repeated again and again, and they are part of the collective knowledge rather than the composition of an individual singer. They associated female personal moral value (modesty, focus, care in work) with their technical virtuosity (selvage, dyeing, warping knowledge) and their organisational skills (the weight of their responsibility for the ultimate result). Some songs stress the economic importance of weaving for families, including a tale. Some songs describe the value of the wool. Weaving knowledge is also compared to composing and memorising sung poems.

Weaving and female value

Song no 14 yanusta l-hrir igrat (=iger) argis ittawi ifili gh-izuzwa	A silk carpet woven by an antelope (a beautiful woman) she passes the threads in the fresh air (when her mind is focused)
Song no 15 ahhamwi idlan tbdan f-rashum	[You the woman] who has lots of idlan, [narcissist, with no modesty] you have not managed to finish the border
Song no 16 harrirm amu-ighumdan ak(u)i tamwut gh-ustta	O woman who speak too much (who is so vain), try to make the tamawut if you are that good
Song no 17 Fadma warrastta warratazzut, warrazrez, 'awwun a rebbi mas da iratizdad	Fadma who is not good at astta, or at tazzut or at azzrez ²²⁰ : she is good at nothing.
Song no 18 urigi usurgho mzit ighab isen yan attigan breg wizraz ikhtisen mala yan	If you can cook, it is not extraordinary [whereas] to weave a symmetrical and even weaving is really extraordinary
Song no 19 tazerbit n-ddurad aggim 'adlan idudan iklân ndura d-ikmal	The skilled fingers make the design of the carpet perfect
Song no 20 nekki urat gerragh aggis nilli kamis mukh	I can't warp, I only can weave
Song no 21 tanilga tella gh-ukhnif atti'alîn	O women, there is tanilga ²²¹ in akhnif

²²⁰ Tazzut is another term for taska (beating comb) and azraz are branches put at the back of the loom to accentuate the tension of the warp threads.

Song no 22
additararat tiramanm

[tanilga] you make the meal going and coming
back²²²

Song no 23
ahhint nkshem igiwr ahhint nfukh

We come in, we come out [refers to the circulation
of threads]

Song no 24
wanna igerran ighibbi shhunit nigh ufan

Those who weave, when they cut the weaving, are
responsible for its final result

Dyeing skills and the importance of colours in aesthetics

Song no 25
al-jîr mghawal d-nilj

Quicklime follows [the application of] indigo²²³

kiwan ighumad irbabâshen

Each person dyes with her colours

yân dar illa nûr d-l-‘aqlns ukân izda shubuhansen

Those who are clever will weave all the colours

yan dar urilli l-‘aqln ukan izda tazibant

Other will weave in grey

Song no 26
Ayhayya atazerbit Bedellnam ighman l-hseb
udraght

Carpet, we changed your colours, and I have lost the
count

Song no 27
Ansay ifalen gh-nilj
Aygis nsker tazarbit

I put the threads in the nilj
to make a carpet

Song no 28
A tadut nusikemd dar i(n)ghumas, aggim ‘adlm
idudan iklan

Wool, I take you to their dyer, to make intricate
motifs

Economic Importance of weaving

Song no 29
Illis l-mzuld lghaka amittisen imma han tawwri
d-iklan harman tasant

The daughter of the poor can only sing, she cannot do
iklan [motifs]

Tale no 30
nekki datellem, datstakh..
idhar f-lam, idhar f-lli.

A couple, reduced to poverty, has now to beg.
The Wife: I spin and weave.
The husband: It shows (if you were doing
something we would not be here).

The value of wool

²²¹ Tanilga Special technique of selvage that has been replaced by a simpler (tamawut) one for rugs.

²²² Reference to the wool seen as feeding astta. To form the selvage, the wool thread has to go back and forth between the warp threads at each extremity of the weaving.

²²³ A reference to the time when natural indigo was used.

Song no 31

Ayis nem rebbi tasgurt f-ifign,

ngri ya rebbi d-rasul ikemmelt tid
ashko l-a'abr asfellankh tella taddut

***Phrase said when starting the first line of weaving:
O God, make the thread to be on ifign (well stretched
between the two beams)
O Prophet make the wool sufficient
As it is counted/precious

Song no 32

yan ukshesh n-taddut sisuggin el-mal

a piece of wool in a silver basket

Knowledge of sung poetry versus weaving skills

Song no 33

nzal izd astta aghakhtalit ayuwal, izdigh
iymurikad istnkullu tanrit

One thinks that in astta words count, but really amarg
(imurig) takes over

Song no 34 by Mohammed el-Marakshi²²⁴

urihuwwil usnu helnikhf ahan turrugza astta
aghallent

Work is not in ahwash [songs] but in astta

²²⁴ Famous singer known nationally.

Appendix 2.2

Songs collected by Ahmed Taghrini from the poet Mohamed Hadda and printed in the Tamazight journal.

Amsiwe! ger ustta amaynu d win zik	Dialogue between an Astta from yesterday and one of today
Imnagger ustta dway inna yan iyan	Two carpets met and said
Aykhfawn ighemna gern ashnuyar ayan	If the fusils meet it is war
Anizar menshka tiqadden menshk akillamen	Let's see how many days I will give you before I crush you
Anizar azazar dawsint timgharin	Let's see the weight women carry
Anizar sidis nuwada gh ukum wa atig	Lets see who of you or me wins in terms of beating and price
Astta aqbur isawul ina nta yawawal	Here is how the old carpet talked
Irebba ma iga ghayyad adan ghukar isharran	By God, you who talks to me like this, name yourself
Urak tgim astta aughma tnemm	You are not a [real] carpet, you only pretend to be one
Amenshki myan aki zenzen taman urlan	How much did they pay for you when you are worth nothing?
Iwint gik yed dwazal walu matlkemt	You are beaten day and night but you got nowhere [women exhaust themselves beating you...in vain].
Ataska s l-qa'ida shur illa nit	Women beat [me] with the taska gently
Ula taddut lassend gh usgan ikhtnam ohhoy	Even [my] wool comes from the mountains (isugan), if you do not believe me
Saqsqn imshdn l-ukshud inyatar matusin	Ask the wooden combs (imshdn) which work your wool
tbsa taddut tzleg gh izdi tiddi tella nit	The wool is spun on the izdi and the tiddi prepared
amu wunde! a(u)k iffigigen kullu gh ugharas	Even the beams have met on the way (give testimony)
wallantid izergan d-izraz d-ughanim	And the stone mil (izergan), izraz and bamboo [too]
ilin iniltan tuzunt idlan* gh tamawin	The iniltan in the centre, the pegs on the selvages
wala timzdwawin gh wawal adino attent	And [I do not forget to add] the helpers [timzdwawin].
ak(u)inigh	
ta'amart talla arak(u)zadent iggan ikemmel	Gathered at the back, who weave to finish [This is what a real carpet is]
Irebba ayamano tgit wiljdid adat mini awawal	So let me tell me you, you the new carpet
Han ighmannekk gam win tmadunt innitsnt ukan	Here are your colours which are those of the sickness [because they are artificial] and you know it
tskerten el-makina tzreb arem mliyi matnnam	It is only the machine which made you swiftly, so what do you say?
Astta amayno isuld omzughuns innayas netta nit	***When the new carpet heard, he replied:
Nekk ayyan astta dawr taylkim ufus	We are the carpets that the hands have not reached (yet)
Miqqar nga win zerb isnit nla tissent	Us even if we are new and made quickly, we are beautiful
Imassen win uzzal manikhtentafat	Our iron tools, where would you find them [you cannot afford them]
mani gh ten tapan id babak henna wa la mmak	Your fathers nor your mother recognise you
Imawinun win okshod urten awkiriyan	Your wooden parts nobody want
Nehtajja sin idodan urd mraw wala tan	We only need two fingers and not ten or eight
Atskrem igudyam gh igider ahan mut laman	You make holes in your wall, it is the end of the world ²²⁵
Astta n tazzit el-jdid adaktn imigh ukan	Furthermore, I have to tell you that I have the pleasure

²²⁵ This is a reference to the fact that the old loom had one end of its upper beam placed in a hole in the wall.

Skremt l-blān l-jdid ighak tnamm ohhoy
asmaqel gh l-mri gh tuzunt d ulghm gh tamawin
Imma aqbor hati najjitn urkan akwiriyan
Ahann aqbor isawult dagh innayas
Nga win taddut ndus ukum illa nit
Ila w aza gha tuzunt tiffinagh ayan
ili (yeli) ufulus gh ufella d -waram iwalatid
ula tazerzit tlla ghingh ikhtsen ayan
iskkilēn win tmazight ntten adnikergh
nttaf tawsna daskremt tamgharin
turit kiyyin aya maghuz at khusum awalngh
Atlkem tuwala amaynu gh uwawal inna yas
Nekk isgugh amtunz ahan nsen mat tinigh
Mra urt kiyyi ayaqbor han muhal adiligh
Akiyyi ayiggen dada gh wawal adnagh

to be the Astta of virgin women
who, you have to know, invent new compositions (if
you don't believe me)
See the mri in the middle and the camels on the
borders
And the old one nobody wants it anymore
***Here is what the old one replied:
We are made of real wool (hand spun) we are more
robust
We have the letter z in the centre, which comes from
the tiffinagh²²⁶
Above, the coq followed by the camels, secondly
And the fibulae (on me), if you know [about it?]
The letters of amazigh I was born with
I have (preserved/transmitted) the culture of women
[so it does not disappear]
And you, the new one, you want to wipe even the
language/meaning (of motifs?)
***Here comes the turn of the new one who said:
My words have no weight
Without you, the ancient, I would not exist
You are my eldest brother in your saying (you
know/talk better)

²²⁶ This is a proof of authenticity.

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