

Amazigh Women's Carpet-Weaving: The Forgotten Artistic Knowledge

Fatima SADIQI

The term “knowledge” is used in this presentation to refer to a more inclusive concept that transcends the frontiers of “conventional” or “formal” written-based knowledge to encompass experiential knowledge (Alcoff 1996). This latter type of knowledge challenges received ways of thinking and casts doubt on our faith in the inherent superiority of writing over orality (Mohanty 1991). It is within this broader conceptualization of knowledge that Amazigh women's carpet-weaving as not only a form of knowledge-production but also if I may say “consolidator” of pluralism as a social good and not as just the upholding of minority rights.

Carpet patterns passed down by women have not only kept Amazigh culture and language alive, but they have served as a source of communication and preservation during the time when it was not permitted to teach or publish in Amazigh language.

They were a source of communication/preservation during the time when it was not permitted to teach or publish in Amazigh language: colonization and before. Mernissi: the only legacy of a once shared Mediterranean culture with its northern and southern shores and its 3 religions and many ancestral cultures. women's artistic expressions may well be the last

threads that link Morocco to both the Mediterranean region and the pre-Islamic era.

What is happening to this art form in the tourist economy of the present?

Amazigh carpet-weaving is still surrounded with mystique and is still thought to be a source of *baraka* (blessing). Indeed Amazigh women are the artists in Amazigh cultures and they still command respect and authority in their communities and beyond. Why?

-The symbolic and sacred aspects of Amazigh women's art not only constitutes the soul of the communities in which it is performed, but also the soul and spirit of Moroccans (and North African) populations today.

-Seemingly, the ancestral presence and current "use" of Amazigh carpet-weaving reflect the role that women played in consolidating the idea of pluralism because they have consciously or unconsciously penetrated Arabic and Francophone NA literature and art. Examples

-They are the source of many oral texts, rituals, and artistic symbols, of Amazigh identity, but also of national and NA identity amazigh aesthetic and symbolic heritage that make this identity unique.

-Source of Tifinagh (the Amazigh alphabet)

-Source of jewellery, and son on.

-Transcend the ethnic line

-Important in a world where inter-marriages, in- and out- land migration, and education much of the Amazigh identity and in a sense, Amazigh

-Finally, Amazigh women's knowledge may be said to bestow symbolic empowerment on all Moroccan women and highlight their agency in an overarching context where neither symbolic empowerment nor agency are recognized in Morocco's mainstream discourses, including secular and Islamic feminisms. However with the twenty-first century re-emergence of Amazigh identity and a distinct public Amazigh movement, women's knowledge started to emerge in the public spheres of authority with the emergence of Amazigh identity at the beginning of the twentieth century and has been enhanced by the Moroccan Spring and the new status of the Amazigh language. As such, this knowledge forces itself first within the Amazigh movement then within the feminist movement.
Larger-than-Islam framework.

Conclusion

Women's artistic expressions could be one of the avenues for building a more truly pluralistic (not just segmented) society in Morocco.

It is a modality to overcome the many conflicts around diversity.

Morocco and the Amazigh offer one informative pathway forward.

Defy tradition/Modernity