

Hamid Irbouh, *Art in the Service of Colonialism: French Art Education in Morocco 1912-1956* (New York: IB Taurus, 2013). 296 pp. \$100.00 Hardcover.

Hamid Irbouh's intensively researched *Art in the Service of Colonialism: French Art Education in Morocco 1912-1956* provides a nuanced account of French art education in Morocco during the Protectorate period. Drawing on unpublished archives in France and Morocco as well as interviews with former art teachers, Irbouh's analysis of art education and its relationship to the social, economic, and political spheres speaks to the enormous complexity of his subject and the arguments he puts forth, which range from the specifics of drawing and design pedagogy to the entrenchment and expansion of capitalism in North Africa. How, he asks throughout the book's three parts and eight chapters, did the French teach art and crafts in colonial Morocco? What were the politics behind the policies the French adopted, particularly those that they marketed as "protecting" and "rehabilitating" what they described as a dying craft industry? And how did this educational system intersect with, and ultimately bolster, the colonial project and colonial ideology more broadly? (5)

To answer these questions, Irbouh takes readers through detailed discussions of, in part one, how French scholars understood Moroccan crafts and how colonial officers planned to reform craft industries; in part two, the theories upon which French education in Morocco was based; and finally, in part three, how a drawing curriculum with roots in mainland France was adapted to the colonial agenda and taught in Moroccan vocational schools. Arguing that art education played a pivotal role in strengthening and diffusing French colonial cultural hegemony in Morocco with consequences that have persisted in the postcolonial period, Irbouh weaves together — and weighs in on — multiple debates that heretofore have largely remained separate or understudied in Moroccan and North African studies as well as in twentieth century art history: the pivotal role of French *women* in colonial society; the hierarchy of fine arts vis-à-vis craft; the ways in which earlier colonial experiences, whether those of the French in neighboring Algeria or those of the British further afield in India, impact policies pursued in newer colonial regimes like Morocco; the history of art education in France and its exportation to the colonies; and the aftermath of independence and efforts to decolonize art and visual culture. The result is a richly textured study that resists the familiar binaries of colonizer and colonized; French and Moroccan; high art and low art. As Irbouh rightly argues, in order to understand Moroccan visual culture, its heterogeneity, and its development, one must take colonial history into account in a way that eschews any oversimplification or "mentality of blame." (22)

One of *Art in the Service of Colonialism's* most important contributions is

Irbouh's emphasis on the ways in which art, visual culture, and education functioned alongside more explicitly violent and repressive forms of colonial domination and control. Irbouh insists that art and education did not simply follow on the heels of military conquest but instead played constitutive roles in shoring up French colonial power. This analysis raises questions about the extent to which the conjoined nature of military and education policies during the Protectorate persist in the independent Moroccan state's well-documented practices of cooptation and coercion. Asking how 1956 might *not* mark a complete rupture with the colonial past could have provided a more useful point of departure for Irbouh's concluding discussion of Moroccan artists active in the first years after independence. Instead, Irbouh's division of these artists into three distinct groups, which he names populists, nativists, and bi-pictorialists, felt reductive, particularly as the conclusion of a study that carefully pushed against overly simplified categories. Moreover, because visual materials like photographs generate different and even conflicting meanings depending on their circulation, contextualization, and interpretation, one wonders how incorporating visual analysis of the materials reproduced in the book might elicit interpretations other than those provided by the archival texts that gloss them and that Irbouh cites. Irbouh's focus on art education within the French Protectorate also prompts questions about how, during the same period, art, education, and colonial conquest intersected in Spain's Moroccan territories, particularly in the capital of Tetouan, where the Spanish established Escuela de Bellas Artes de Tetuán in 1945. Although most studies of Moroccan history and culture continue to privilege the former French territory, almost to the total exclusion of any English-language studies on the former Spanish Protectorate, since the 1990s it is the Institut national des beaux-arts in Tetouan, and not the École des Beaux-Arts in Casablanca, that has produced a new generation of engaged artists.

Ultimately, *Art in the Service of Colonialism* is a nuanced and assiduously researched analysis of Morocco's art, visual culture, and education during the French Protectorate. For scholars of Moroccan history, French colonialism, art pedagogy, and twentieth century art and visual culture more broadly, the book is as valuable for the histories it recounts as it is for the ways in which Irbouh threads them together. Taking into account multiple policies, discourses, actors, archives, and disciplines, Irbouh simultaneously writes against Moroccan nationalists who dismiss the Protectorate as a minor event in the long history of Morocco, against colonial historians who relegate the role of European women to merely being the passive wives of colonizers, and against conservative art historians who marginalize both crafts and "non-Western" artistic production of any kind. The result is a study that will undoubtedly serve as a crucial touchstone and methodological model for historians of art and visual culture working in Morocco, certainly, but also for those whose concerns extend well beyond its borders.

Emma Chubb
Northwestern University