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Algerian Women's Waistcoats – The *Ghlila* and *Frimla*:
Readjusting the Lens on the Early French Colonial Era in Algeria (1830-1870)

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A Senior Honors Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
Requirements of the Honors Degree Program

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Introduction:

Contemporary understanding of North Africa during the 19th century is predominantly informed by French colonial documents, most of which hold a largely homogeneous view of the colonized peoples as inferior, uncivilized, and depraved. In his seminal 1978 publication *Orientalism*, Palestinian academic Edward Said identified and codified this essentializing view of North Africa and the Middle East “as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.”¹ First propagated and subsequently preserved in the form of travelogues, illustrations, photographs, and paintings, this highly biased perception of the countries of the Maghreb characterizes the narrow white male gaze of the French colonist that continues to restrict our comprehension of North African reality—as opposed to French fantasy—during the early colonial period (1830-1870), especially concerning the perspectives and lived experiences of North African women.

Significant shifts in power are apparent throughout this early colonial period which began with France’s 1830 Invasion of Algiers, securing the city from the Ottoman Empire and soon establishing Algeria as France’s first North African colony. While French interest in North Africa began with the need to explore, apprehend, and categorize, this somewhat benign curiosity transformed over time to fascination, obsession, and determined desire to dominate and control. As colonial rule progressed into the mid-19th century, the French formed increasingly detrimental conceptualizations of indigenous populations as inferior and readily recorded and preserved these perceptions in the form of Orientalizing travelogues, photographs, prints, and paintings. This was later facilitated by the construction of the Suez Canal from 1859 to 1869, which provided the French, including Orientalist artists, unprecedented access to North Africa. While existing

¹ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books Edition, 1994), 3.

scholarship on French colonialism in North Africa tends to focus on the nearly century-long period between 1870 after the opening of the canal and 1962 when Algeria regained its independence, this earlier colonial period from 1830 to 1870 offers insight into the evolving colonial power dynamics, gender politics, and cultural relations that laid the foundation for future colonial ideologies and Orientalist expressions. Closely examining the first few decades of the French colonialism in North Africa provides valuable context for the intensifying dynamics between colonial authorities and indigenous populations and the increasingly Orientalizing attitudes and art that arose therefrom.

Unique among France's North African colonies, Algeria offered a perhaps more complicated setting for these shifts in colonial power and interaction with local populations. Unlike Morocco and Tunisia, which were French protectorates exploited primarily for their economic resources, Algeria constituted a settler colony in which French colonists and indigenous Algerians cohabitated. From the very beginning of France's colonial imposition in Algeria, French citizens entered into and settled in the colony, growing dramatically in number into the mid-19th century. More often than not, this forced "coexistence" of the French and Algerians resulted in cultural clashes stemming from France's insistence on the assimilation, or French cultural conversion, of indigenous populations. Perceiving Algerian society as inferior and immoral, the French exercised their colonial power as a justifiable objective of bringing civilization to an uncivilized people.

Nowhere was this growing colonial dominance more perceptible than through the images created of Algerian women, particularly those residing in the Algerian capital of Algiers. Whether in lithograph, photograph, or painting, French Orientalist compositions featuring Algéroises (women of Algiers) relied on the construction of an increasingly submissive and sexually available subject, notably dressed in tailored waistcoats. In Algiers, the *ghlila* and *frimla* waistcoats were

worn by women regardless of race, religious affiliation, or economic status within the *harem* or private women-only interior space of their homes. The waistcoats allowed women across the urban city to partake in fashionable attire, which through subtle differences could convey class or social standing and access to fine materials (whether imported or fabricated locally), within female-exclusive spaces. Meanwhile, the power of Algerian women to determine their own identities and representations drastically decreased through the early French colonial period. As the French increasingly took control of the broader representation of Algeria over the course of the 19th century, they marginalized Algerian women's voices and experiences, to the point that their wearing of embroidered waistcoats fell out of fashion by the early 20th century.

Considering this, a complete image of North Africa from the early to mid-19th century will never come into clear focus without a readjustment of the lens, or perspective, on France's North African colonies. Algerian women's voices are conspicuously lacking from the French colonial discourse. Knowledge of women's daily lives is largely speculative and primarily reconstructed from existing French language texts. Prior to the colonial period and until around World War II, Algerian women were largely illiterate, both in Arabic and in French, and thus relied more on oral tradition than written for preserving and passing on their narratives.² Because of this, women's experiences and perspectives throughout most of the colonial period remain regrettably absent. When actively sought out and researched, women's voices and lives must be pieced together from highly biased European and primarily male sources that frame Algerian women within the limited passive, oppressed, and hypersexualized stereotype held by most Frenchmen and –women.

As an alternative lens, this paper thus proposes the analysis of North African dress practices, specifically the Algéroise waistcoats the *ghlila* and *frimla*, and the realities of the women

² Marnia Lazreg, *The Eloquence of Silence: Algerian Women in Question* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 100.

who crafted and wore these garments as a challenge to the Eurocentric view on this early colonial period in Algeria. These waistcoats were worn daily by women within their domestic spheres and served both practical functions in women's daily activities and aesthetic functions in women's personal tastes and collective fashion trends. Because these garments were worn exclusively by women and were visible only in women-only interior spaces of the home, they speak to women's private day-to-day experiences and perspectives which have been largely lost in the record and retelling of colonial history. Thus, in looking to extant garments and critically reading French Orientalist sources, both textual and visual, we can begin to offer an understanding of North African women from the early colonial period through the clothing they favored, created, and invested in both financially and culturally.

The existing pertinent scholarship that touches upon the lives of women in French colonial Algiers tends to fall into two separate yet intersecting categories: women's fashion histories (which comprises an already minimal portion of colonial literature) and Orientalist written and visual records. While both fields of research concern the Algéroise experience, neither places women's perspectives in prime positions, nor do they wholly integrate the other field's research methods or evidence. While sources focusing on Algéroise dress histories, notably Georges Marçais' *Le costume musulman d'Alger* (1930) and Leyla Belkaïd's *Algéroise: histoire d'un costume méditerranéen* (1998), provide valuable pictures of the evolution of women's dress practice across history and often employ colonial sources as evidence, they do not critically analyze the impact or implications of the French colonial gaze on Algerian women or clothing. At the same time, thorough studies of colonial and Orientalist records of Algeria, which sometimes mention clothing, do not seriously consider the role of dress in shaping French colonial attitudes towards and conceptions of Algerian women. Largely overlooking Algéroise dress, this scholarship often

focuses instead on the level of *undress* of the female body. This thesis thus seeks to integrate these separate bodies of scholarship which complement one another but have yet to be brought together in an intentional and effective way. Once placed in dialogue, these two halves create a novel whole that provides a more comprehensive view of the early colonial era and begins to make clearer the daily lives of Algéroises, especially as expressed through their clothing and relationship to both fellow Algerian women and foreign colonial figures.

This thesis's analysis of existing waistcoats and reassessment of colonial texts reveals shifts in Algerian fashions—tailored to women's practical needs and fashionable tastes—which were largely overlooked in France's written and visual record of its colony. From this examination arises aspects of women's social and economic lives that begin to sharpen the image of women's enigmatic realities during the early colonial era. By contrast, under the 19th-century French male gaze, Algerian women's waistcoats became conflated with women's bodies as a crystallized embodiment of the eroticizing French view of North African women. This French conceptualization of North African women and their clothing as homogenous and stagnant sexual objects utterly erased the reality of women in Algiers, the function of their garments in their daily lives, and the complex history of those garments from the colonial record. Thus, this thesis calls for an examination of Algerian women's wear and reassessment of French colonial texts and images through a feminist lens in order to reinscribe this redacted female narrative from colonial history.

In the first part of this thesis, I will provide an overview of the origins of Algéroise waistcoats in order to establish the diverse cultural dress practices from which this garment is drawn. Next I will present and analyze examples of both *ghlila* and *frimla*, as related but distinct garments. The existence of both styles in the early 19th century suggests these garments were

ubiquitous, useful items of everyday clothing. Women across Algiers, regardless of religious affiliation, ethnicity, race, or economic means, sported these waistcoats within the shelter of their homes. (Outside of domestic spaces, women wore voluminous robes over these waistcoats, obscuring the *ghlila* and *frimla* to onlookers.) Such garments were worn daily by Algéroises as they went about their daily domestic tasks, cared for their families, and socialized with other women within the home. While distinctions in affluence may be apparent from materials used and method of creation, all women regardless of religion, ethnicity, race, or affluence wore these garments in their female-only interior space. This fact indicates that the garments played a far greater role in women's fashions and domestic lives, rather than as hypersexualized and exotic garments suggested by French (largely male) Orientalist sources.

The second part of this thesis shifts to analyze French Orientalist imagery, which I read critically with a more attentive focus on Algerian women's clothing. French documentation of the Algéroise waistcoats consistently frames the garments and their female wearers within a fictitious Orientalist narrative of unrestricted sexual availability playing out in the exotic *harem*. While early Orientalist photographers and artists, such as Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863), based their compositions on first-hand observations and a desire to document new scenes and subjects (including Algerian women and their costume), later Orientalist artists, such as Auguste Renoir (1841-1919), constructed their compositions from circulating imagery, hypersexualized imaginings, and flawed depictions of Algerian women and their clothing. As these images grew increasingly more eroticized, corresponding with the intensifying colonial project and Orientalist movement as the 19th century progressed, the Algéroise body and waistcoat began to merge under the French gaze. Through this process, the garments that played such active roles in women's

private domestic and social lives were repossessed by the French who weaponized the waistcoats against their wearers to further sexualize and objectify Algerian women.

Through this analysis, I highlight the rich fashion history of the women of Algiers, pointing to evolutions in the waistcoats' form and function to service women's practical needs and aesthetic tastes. Through the early colonial period (1830-1870), the gradual shift of these garments from the domain of Algéroises to the imaginary of French colonists is indicative of the larger trend of Algerian women losing autonomy and control in writing their own histories, overshadowed as they have been by French Orientalist fantasies. In order to restore their voices, I suggest novel sources for analysis, Algerian women's waistcoats, which were tailored to the needs and lives of their owners. The *ghlila* and *frimla* physically enveloped women on a daily basis during the mid-19th century and as such comprise a much more sincere and truthful source to shed light on Algerian women's experience under early French colonial rule.

Part I: Algerian Women's Waistcoats

Introduction

In this part of the thesis, I first provide a brief history of Algerian open-front costumes more generally, along with establish regional context for similar dress practices in Morocco and Tunisia. I then progress into a detailed history of the *ghlila* in particular as documented in European documents from the 16th to 18th century. This discussion will establish a foundation for the changing forms, functions, and fashions of the Algéroise waistcoat prior to our early colonial time period (1830-1870) of focus. I then enter into a detailed formal analysis of extant examples of *ghlila* from the 19th century to establish the color, cut, material, and motifs of the garment at this particular time. Within this analysis, I also situate the garment within Algéroise society in terms of the identity and livelihood of the women who wore the waistcoats. Contextualizing the garments

within the beginning of French colonial presence in Algeria, I incorporate visual and written documents in the form of travelogues, administrative documents, illustrations, and photographs that establish the French perception of such garments from colonial (and often male) perspectives. This same process is employed to analyze the *frimla*, which apparently came about at the onset of French colonial authority. Through these methods of analysis, Part I of this thesis aims to contextualize the *ghlila* and *frimla* in terms of its pre-colonial history, changes leading up to the colonial period, function in women's lives, perception by the French, and further implications of the disjoint between the reality of women's waistcoats and their practical use and the eroticized connotation that the garments and their wearers assumed under the French lens.

North African Women's Waistcoats

By the 19th century, the form-fitting waistcoat served as a common, everyday item of clothing for the majority of Algerian women, but this garment originated in the Eurasian steppes during antiquity and was introduced to Eastern and Northern Europe in the 13th century B.C.E. by the Scythians, a Central Asian semi-nomadic empire.³ While the vests became common in the regions of Central Asia and Northern Europe during antiquity, the costume did not become integrated into the Mediterranean wardrobe until much later. Nearly a millennium passed before the Byzantines appropriated the large open-front caftan worn by Persian soldiers and fashioned a new open-front coat which became à la mode during the 12th century C.E.⁴ At the same time, the preexisting Muslim empires, including the Ottoman Empire (1299-1922/23), established in the Mediterranean were also pulling from Persian costuming and importing fine Persian silks to develop their own variations on the open-front tunic.⁵

³ Leyla Belkaïd, *Algéroises: histoire d'un costume méditerranéen* (Aix-en-Provence: Edisud, 1998), 71.

⁴ François Boucher, *Histoire du costume en Occident de l'Antiquité à nos jours* (Paris : Flammarion, 1983), 152.

⁵ Belkaïd, *Algéroises*, 71.

Thus, when the Ottomans expanded their far-reaching empire to the regions of the Maghreb during the early 16th century, the open-front costumes assimilated into local dress practices and evolved into what would later become distinctly North African garments. Algeria was the first of the North African states to come under the Ottoman Empire. In 1516, Hayreddin Barbarossa, an Ottoman admiral, established Algiers as a major economic center for the Turks in North Africa, and expanded Ottoman rule from there to neighboring coastal cities.⁶ This marked the beginning of over three centuries of Ottoman rule in North Africa which strongly shaped the culture, customs, and costumes of Algeria. Influenced by Ottoman fashions, heavily embroidered waistcoats were readily adopted by Algerian men and women alike and gradually diverged into distinct garments, including the *ghlila* and *frimla*, as local tastes, techniques, and designs were incorporated. The most elaborate embroidery traditions were found in Algeria's coastal cities,⁷ where Mediterranean trade and influences combined to create the multi-cultural *mélange* that became characteristic of urban wear in Algeria.⁸ While less is generally known about Algerian embroidered costumes than about other North African counterparts, extant textile examples in museum collections reveal that pre 19th-century Algerian embroidery demonstrated stronger ties to Turkish examples than to other North African embroidery styles.⁹ Specifically in Algiers, embroidery, among other material culture, strongly resembled that of Turkey.¹⁰ This similarity between Turkish and Algerian dress was to be expected, considering Algiers' role as a center of Mediterranean trade and commerce during the early years of Ottoman rule in North Africa.

⁶ Caroline Stone, *The Embroideries of North Africa* (London: Longman, 2003), 91.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., 93.

⁹ Ibid., 91.

¹⁰ Ibid., 93.

Similarly to Algeria, in Tunisia, which fell under Ottoman control in 1574,¹¹ local urban fashions concentrated along the nation's coast embraced the Ottoman open-front costume, as well as drew design and decoration elements from Andalusia, like *passementerie* (gold braid appliqué) and metal thread embroidery.¹² This combination of cultural influences fashioned the aesthetic of Tunisian waistcoats like the *farmla*, which was and continues to be worn by Tunisian women as part of the coastal bridal ensemble.¹³ Morocco too, which evaded Ottoman control, nevertheless developed open-front tunic traditions; however, such garments exhibit less of the Levantine influence¹⁴ present in similar Tunisian and Algerian examples and less commonly feature heavy metal-thread embroidery, which was also incorporated from Turkey and Andalusia.¹⁵

The Algerian Ghlila

In general, the research on Algerian dress, especially prior to French colonial occupation (1830-1962), is sparse, leaving the textile history of the state regrettably incomplete. Coupled with the distorted and reductive accounts of French primary source documents on the region, this lack of scholarship within the field of research has led to a largely one-sided narrative that entirely excludes North African women's voices. Two 20th-century texts, Georges Marçais' *Le costume musulman d'Alger* (1930) and Leyla Belkaïd's *Algéroises: histoire d'un costume méditerranéen* (1998), offer the most complete histories of dress in Algiers, the Algerian capital, and therefore provide the majority of the background for this section. However, these histories, while

¹¹ Ken Jacobson, *Odaliques & Arabesques: Orientalist Photography 1839-1925* (London: Quaritch, 2007), 18.

¹² Stone, *The Embroideries of North Africa*, 91.

¹³ "Raf-Raf Bridal Outfits (Tunisia)," Textile Research Center Leiden, accessed September 5, 2019, <https://trc-leiden.nl/trc-needles/regional-traditions/middle-east-and-north-africa/pre-modern-middle-east-and-north-africa/raf-bridal-outfits-tunisia>.

¹⁴ Belkaïd, *Algéroises*, 74.

¹⁵ John Gillow, *African Textiles: Color and Creativity across a Continent* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2009), 144.

comprehensive, still do not privilege the Algéroise (female resident of Algiers) experience, which this paper attempts to do within the limitations of colonial and contemporary sources.

Origins of the *ghlila*: 16th-18th centuries

The scarcity of documents prior to the French colonial period in Algeria poses an obstacle to reconstructing the temporal transformation of women's costume in Algiers. However, a general image of this change over time can be obtained through an analysis of the existing pre-20th-century documents. One of the earliest Western texts to remark on dress in Algiers is Spanish Friar Diego de Haëdo's *Topographia e Historia General de Argel* ("Topography and General History of Algiers"), published posthumously in 1612, which records the Spaniard's observations of society in Algiers from 1578 to 1581. Noted for the incredible level of detail in his ethnography, Haëdo visited Algeria during this period to investigate the large number of Christians who were enslaved in the country after being captured by the Barbary pirates—including the aforementioned Hayreddin Barbarossa—in the founding of the Ottoman Empire in North Africa.¹⁶

In Chapter 32: "The Costumes of Muslim Women in Algiers,"¹⁷ Haëdo describes women's voluminous blouses and long cassocks, which he identifies as *goleyla* (*ghlila*).¹⁸ During this time, Haëdo notes that the *ghlila*, primarily constructed of satin, velvet, or damask, fell to mid-leg length and featured a wide neckline secured just above the breasts by large gold or silver buttons.¹⁹ The garment also displayed elbow-length sleeves "so that the ladies could wash the forearm when

¹⁶ Daniel Hershenzon, "Towards a Connected History of Bondage in the Mediterranean: Recent Trends in the Field," *History Compass* 15 no. 8 (2017): 2.

¹⁷ The title of this chapter indicates Haëdo's focus on Muslim women's wearing of the *ghlila* without mention of Jewish women who also don the garment in later centuries. This perhaps implies that the garment had not yet become as widely worn as it was by the 19th century, transcending religious, racial, and class distinctions. However, it could also betray Haëdo's bias as a Christian friar who was especially concerned with the circumstances of Christian prisoners under Muslim Ottoman rule.

¹⁸ Diego de Haëdo, *Topografia e historia del Argel*, Valladolid, 1612, French translation by Berbrugger and Monnereau, in *Revue africaine*, 1870-71. Ed. Jocelyne Dakhli (Saint-Denis: Editions Bouchene, 1998), 141.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

necessary for [religious] ceremonies and ablutions.”²⁰ Haëdo describes these details of material, cut, and religious (Muslim) function of the *ghlila* in an objective manner, evidencing the more practical, ethnographic function of his text. This earlier example of documenting Algeria from a Western point of view establishes a precedent that places later colonial texts into perspective. Where Haëdo recorded aspects of women’s dress without objectifying the wearers’ bodies, later French colonial writers tended to entangle the two, discussing women’s clothing and women’s bodies indiscriminately as sexual objects. During the late 16th century, Haëdo provides valuable documentation of the reality of the Algéroise *ghlila*, even if he does not offer insight into the reality of its women wearers. Regardless, contemporary readings of this source can delve deeper into the implications of these shortened sleeves. The existence of this particular cut evidences not only religious significance but also female influence in determining the garment’s style. Although the written record does not document the Algerian women’s perspective, the fact that this garment was carefully tailored to the religious needs of the Algéroises suggests the role of women in shaping their dress.

During the 16th century when Haëdo recorded his observations, women in Algiers would have been working alongside male European captives in their homes as they went about their daily domestic chores and went out into the city to run errands.²¹ The very Christian slaves that Haëdo was so concerned for were in fact serving the Algerian women whose clothing he details in depth. Working for their Algéroise mistresses, these European men would “help them clean their homes, run errands, care for animals and carry paraphernalia to the Turkish baths.”²² The employment of Christian servants was not a luxury reserved only for the wealthy; rather, families regardless of

²⁰ Ibid., 142.

²¹ Lazreg, *The Eloquence of Silence*, 23.

²² Ibid.

their level of affluence employed the European captives within their households.²³ While inside the home, Muslim women did not even veil in front of the Christian captives. This was rooted in women's belief that these men "could not see" and indicative of Muslim Algerian's assumed superiority over Christian Europeans.²⁴ The women would of course have veiled when out in the public, but it can be assumed that they would have freely sported their waistcoats among their Christian servants as they went about their daily domestic activities.

During the 16th century, these waistcoats were appropriated from similar garments worn by Turkish women in the Ottoman Empire's North African colonies²⁵ and worn by women of both Moorish (mixed Arab and Amazigh²⁶) and Turkish descent.²⁷ Additionally, women of both Muslim and Jewish faiths wore the waistcoat, as the *ghlila* became increasingly popular among the women of Algiers. In this way, the garment represented a point of visual, cultural, and fashionable commonality amongst the women of Algiers which united them across ethnic and religious differences. During his visit to Algiers, Haëdo noted two versions of the women's waistcoat which were worn by Algéroises: the "modest" version, which evolved from a local Algerian model of the 15th century, and the "distinguished" version, which was closer to the Turkish garment.²⁸ The modest local variation featured a higher, straight neckline, while the distinguished Ottoman-influenced version sported the deeper, curved neckline seen in extant

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Belkaïd, *Algéroises*, 81.

²⁶ Amazigh is the politically correct term for the more commonly used "Berber" in reference to the indigenous people of northwestern Africa.

²⁷ Georges Marçais, *Le costume musulman d'Alger* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1930), 45.

²⁸ Belkaïd, *Algéroises*, 81.

examples from the 19th century.²⁹ Despite their differences in origins, both garments took the name *ghlila*, an Algerian diminutive of the Arabic word *ghilala*.

While Marçais does not examine the origins of this term in *Le costume musulman d'Alger*, Belkaïd offers possible roots for the word in *Algéroises: histoire d'un costume méditerranéen*. She suggests that the term referred to women's fine undergarments in the Arab world during the time of the Prophet Mohammed. She also references a passage in *One Thousand and One Nights*, which uses the term *ghlila* to describe a women's lingerie dress.³⁰ These two interpretations of *ghlila* connect directly to the function of the garment as a support for a woman's bosom; however, a third interpretation complicates the likely nuanced origins of the word. Some colonial sources, like Venture de Paradis's 1879 *Alger au XVIII siècle*, transliterate the waistcoat's name as *relila* and would therefore indicate the aforementioned Arabic word *ghilala* as *rilala* (غليلة), interpreting the English "gh" as the guttural "r" sound. However, *ghilala* could also be written in Arabic as جليلة, interpreting the "gh" as the soft "j" sound. The Arabic جليلة translates roughly into English as "great" or "All Mighty," often used in attempting to articulate the greatness or holiness of Allah.³¹ This religious connotation of the term perhaps reinforces its connection to the time of the Prophet, as Belkaïd proffers, but it also adds a layer of holiness or sanctity to the female body which the *ghlila* dresses. Thus, this association of a term employed to conceptualize the greatness of God with a garment intended to support a woman's chest perhaps implies the power and importance of female sexuality and fertility within Algerian society. This also reinforces the association of the

²⁹ Leyla Belkaïd-Neri, "Entangled Styles: Mediterranean Migration and Dress in Premodern Algiers," in *The Mobility of People and Things in the Early Modern Mediterranean: The Art of Travel*, ed. Elisabeth A Fraser (New York: Routledge, 2020), 117.

³⁰ Belkaïd, *Algéroises*, 179.

³¹ Dr. Abeer Aloush, Professor of Arabic at Rollins College, in-person conversation, 1 October 2019.

ghlila with women's domestic spheres, which align so strongly with notions and activities of the family.

Just a few decades after Haëdo's observations, French ambassador François Savary de Brèves in his 1628 *Relations des voyages de M. Brèves* briefly described "cassocks of diverse fabrics of silk and brocade" worn under women's veils (*haiks*), which refer to the *ghlila* previously identified by Haëdo.³² During this period and progressing into the middle of the 17th century, Algéroises increasingly showed preference for the deep-necked *ghlila* which subsequently experienced an evolution in cut influenced by Ottoman fashions.³³ One version featured a shorter, hip-length cut which retained the name *ghlila*, while the other was characterized by a longer, ankle-length cut and adopted the Ottoman Turkish name *caftan*.³⁴ The former was worn during the mid-season when the weather was more temperate and the latter worn only in winter. Despite this differentiation, both garments utilized a system of detachable sleeves that allowed the cut to be altered depending on the weather.³⁵

The longer Algéroise *caftan* was inspired by the similarly long *caftans* worn by Ottoman dignitaries during ceremonial events throughout the 17th century and existed contemporaneously with the shorter *ghlila*.³⁶ Such *caftans* were worn by both men and women within Algiers. The women's *caftan* took the form of a richly embroidered velvet costume featuring the same design motifs as the local *ghlila*.³⁷ Figure 1 illustrates a late 19th-century *caftan* that evidences a continuity of this garment into later centuries. Although the Metropolitan Museum of Art identifies the *caftan*

³² François Savary de Brèves, *Relation des voyages de M. de Brèves* (Paris : N. Gasse, 1628).

³³ Belkaïd-Neri, "Entangled Styles," 118.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

as being “probably made in Morocco,”³⁸ the embroidery technique of *passementerie* (appliqués of gold braid) and the distinctive motifs present on the plastron (ornamental front) of the garment clearly align it with the Algerian open-front costume. These design techniques and patterns will be discussed in further detail in the following section. However, this caftan exhibits the most characteristic features of the Algéroise: the decorative *passementerie* buttons, gold thread embroidery along the sleeves and neckline, and the triangular “evil eye” motif,³⁹ which are consistent with the examples from the Bardo National Museum (Algiers) included in Belkaïd’s *Algéroises*.⁴⁰

During the 17th century, this elaborate embroidery functioned for the women of Algiers as a visual expression of their wealth and status within society. As Belkaïd writes, “[i]t reflected their growing desire for a dress that could indicate their social status with opulent gold and silver trimmings and embroidery.”⁴¹ While the garments were worn by women of all ethnic and religious backgrounds within their domestic spheres, the level of ornamentation of an individual woman’s caftan or *ghlila* represented a place of divergence. Elite women could afford the more heavily adorned caftans and *ghlila* which they wore for daily use, while less affluent women possessed less richly adorned garments which were reserved for ceremonial events and festival days.⁴² The visual language of clothing in this instance—its ability to convey to others one’s economic and

³⁸ “Kaftan,” *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/126618?searchField=All&sortBy=Relevance&where=Morocco&what=Costume&ft=kaftan&offset=0&rpp=20&pos=2> Accessed 15 February 2020.

³⁹ It is interesting to note that this caftan exhibits both the evil eye motif and the looping decorative patterns seen in the embroidery of the two distinct styles of *ghlila* discussed later in the section on extant examples of waistcoats. While the different embroidered motifs in the *ghlila* examples seem to indicate the wearer’s wealth, the combination of the two styles in this caftan perhaps suggests an aesthetic merging of the styles or perhaps a lessening alignment of the styles with differences in wealth. Deeper examination of this caftan falls outside the realm of my thesis; however, it presents a fascinating case study for further research on the implications of wealth on the embroidery designs of such garments within Algéroise society.

⁴⁰ Belkaïd, *Algéroises*, 88-89.

⁴¹ Belkaïd-Neri, “Entangled Styles,” 118.

⁴² *Ibid.*

social status within Algiers—is a clear indicator of Algéroise agency by way of their fashions. Not only did the Algéroises adopt the dress practices of male members of their colonial powers, they also fully adapted those garments for their own tastes and purposes and utilized them as a tool for meaningful visual communication within their society. In this way, despite the Ottoman origins of the caftan and *ghlila*, both clothing items were transformed into distinctive local dress practices that uniquely align the fashions with the Algéroises and served a specific function within their social spheres.

Continuing into the 17th and 18th centuries, the longer caftan became a strong symbol of opulence and prestige worn solely by affluent individuals and during special occasions.⁴³ Meanwhile, the *ghlila* became established within women’s daily attire and its hemline continued to shorten for increased comfort and practicality within the home.⁴⁴ While wearing their indoor attire, including the *ghlila*, women in Algiers would tend to their daily responsibilities, including caring for their children, cleaning around the house, weaving and embroidering textiles, and cooking and producing food (e.g. cured meats, vegetables, and fruits).⁴⁵ Even wealthier Algéroises carried out these daily tasks, seeing as “their lives revolved around the same institutions of less wealthy women,” notably the home and family.⁴⁶ Marnia Lazreg explains: “While differences in wealth resulted in differences in status among women, lifestyles in urban centers tended to be similar. The concept of social class, especially in its Western cultural connotations, may not be applicable to precolonial Algeria.”⁴⁷ Further, in precolonial Algeria, “there were no rigid class barriers that created specific class cultures, as happened in European societies.”⁴⁸ Considering this,

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Lazreg, *The Eloquence of Silence*, 25-26.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 25.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 23.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

the ubiquitous nature of the *ghlila* represents a testament to the relatively classless society of precolonial Algiers. At the same time, it also makes the garment an interesting and complicated arena for women to subtly assert their wealth and status within an environment without clear delineations between individuals of varying affluence.

This sort of female-focused discussion is utterly lacking in colonial sources. Nevertheless, such Algéroises narratives may be extricated from these limited colonial records. In 1789, following a gap in the written record, Jean-Michel Venture de Paradis documented the political, social, and economic situation in Algiers during his time as a dragoman.⁴⁹ Speaking generally of Algerian dress, he notes that “[t]he taste of Algerians is for embroidery; men and women have it on all of their clothing for expensive sums.”⁵⁰ He elaborates on women’s dress, recording details of the garment which evidence change in the cut of the Algéroise caftan from that previously observed in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. He describes the “caftan” as descending just until the calves and sporting short sleeves, rather than the formerly elbow-length sleeves.⁵¹ Where Haëdo’s observations in the 16th century remain largely objective, Venture de Paradis’ account injects subjective criticisms of Algerian dress which hint at the shifting dynamic between France and Algeria as the colonial period approaches. He describes the embroidery adorning Algéroise caftans as “coarse,” and conveys his disapproval of the “truly ridiculous” metal thread ornaments which render the garments so expensive.⁵² As in Haëdo’s observation, no attention was paid to the role of women in demanding such decorative elements or driving these changing fashions. This foreshadows the increasing French control of the colonial narrative, and with it, the decline of

⁴⁹ A dragoman acted as an interpreter, translator, and official guide between Turkish, Arabic, and Persian-speaking countries and European embassies, consulates, and trading posts. Venture de Paradis also acted as a dragoman in Syria, Egypt, Morocco, and Tunis.

⁵⁰ Jean-Michel Venture de Paradis, *Alger au XVIIIe siècle*, ed. E. Fagnan, in *Revue Africaine, 1895-1896* (Tunis : Éditions Bouzlama: 1879), 35.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 35-36.

Algerian women's ability to convey and record their personal and sartorial histories. Regardless, the shortening of both the hemline and sleeves of the *ghlila* suggests a motivator stemming from Algerian women's lived experiences or changing tastes that incited this aesthetic or functional alteration.

Into the 18th century, the *ghlila* in its new cut continued to be constructed from fine fabrics, like satin and embroidered silk, as noted by Venture de Paradis.⁵³ But silk constituted an important and ubiquitous fabric in Algéroise fashions from as early as the late 15th century. Following the fall of Granada, the last Muslim-controlled city in southern Spain, in 1492, the use of these luxurious fabrics in Algéroise waistcoats was particularly facilitated by the influx of Moorish refugees fleeing Spain's Iberian Peninsula.⁵⁴ Among the Moorish exiles were skilled artisans who brought with them valuable textile techniques, technologies, and aesthetics—particularly related to silks—that became integral to the creation of Algéroise fashions. The development of Algerian silk workshops and the subsequent flourishing of the local silk industry significantly increased the access of silk garments to a wider range of individuals within Algerian society.⁵⁵ With this expansion of the silk industry, men and women, elite and non-elite, and individuals of all religious backgrounds could more easily afford and acquire silk garments, like the Algéroise *ghlila*. Accessibility of silk only increased over the centuries. By the 17th century, locally produced silks—specifically silk brocades in the case of most *ghlila*—were especially affordable to the general population. In contrast, those imported from Italy were attainable to only the wealthier citizens who purchased their fabrics from prestigious Italian textile centers as a symbol of their elevated economic and social standing.⁵⁶ Mediterranean textile trade between North Africa and Italy began

⁵³ Ibid., 36.

⁵⁴ Belkaïd-Neri, "Entangled Styles," 121.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 122.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

prior to the introduction of Ottoman control to the region in the later 16th century. When Algeria came under Turkish control, Ottoman ships brought similar luxury fabrics to sell in the region; however, the residents of Algiers still preferred Italian silks, specifically those from Venice.⁵⁷ This preference persisted until the eighteenth century, following the decline of Venice, when fabrics for the Algerian elite began to be sourced primarily from Genoa in Italy and Lyon in France.⁵⁸

Extant *ghlila* examples from the early French colonial period

In fact, Lyon's involvement with Algeria through textile trade was one of the catalysts for France's push for colonial control in the region. In his "Roots of French Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century: The Case of Lyon," John Laffey briefly outlines the significant role of the Chamber of Commerce of Lyon in encouraging the French imperialist agenda in Algeria. During the 19th century, the production of silks, which comprised Lyon's major industry, faced challenging issues of acquiring raw silk and subsequently securing markets for the finished products.⁵⁹ In response to these pressing issues, the Chamber of Commerce prepared an address to the French king which emphasized the value of establishing colonial settlements in Algeria. Believing Algeria to have great potential for both textile production and consumption, the Chamber acted as strong advocate for French imperialism in the region.⁶⁰ Unfortunately for the Lyonnais, sericulture (raw silk production) in Algeria did not live up to the optimistic hopes or expectations. However, the French did find a market for silk textiles in Algeria which increasingly constructed garments from French silks as the colonial era progressed.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ John F. Laffey, "Roots of French Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century: The Case of Lyon," *French Historical Studies* 6, no. 1 (1969): 80.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

Featuring the characteristic silk brocade ground, the new shorter cut of the *ghlila* appeared to have persisted, with slight modifications, through the advent of French colonial authority in Algeria in 1830. Analysis of 19th-century examples of *ghlila*—in this case all part of the collection of the Musée d'art et d'histoire du Judaïsme (Museum of Jewish Art and History) in Paris—reveals several unifying characteristics across the diverse *ghlila* which appear to naturally organize into two styles.

The first style, presented in Figures 2-5, represents a more elaborate garment likely worn by more affluent Algéroises. This *ghlila* is characterized by its ornate silk brocade ground, metal thread embroidery, and extensive *passementerie* embroidery, which consists of gold thread braids appliquéd to the ground fabric. The metal thread embroidery, typically of gold or silver, would have been sourced from local Jewish silversmiths, craftsmen who likely settled in the Maghreb with the exodus from Andalusia following the fall of Granada, the last Muslim-controlled city in southern Spain, in 1492.⁶¹ Additionally tying the Algerian waistcoat to Islamic Spain, the gold *passementerie* represents a technique likewise brought to Algiers by Andalusian artisans.⁶² The embroidery is concentrated around the garment's neckline and sleeves, and includes the distinctive triangular evil eye motif below the chest. Note that all four waistcoats exhibit a silk brocade ground fabric in either neutral shades of white or beige (Figs. 2 & 3) or vibrant colors, here red and pink (Figs. 4 & 5). All of these brocades are floral in design, featuring repeated floral motifs in gold across the entirety of the textile. The interior linings, visible in the wide open neckline, are also largely floral in pattern, with the exception of the more geometric pattern of the lining of the red *ghlila* (Fig. 4).

⁶¹ Gillow, *Textiles of the Islamic World*, 53.

⁶² Christopher Spring and Julie Hudson, *North African Textiles* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 111.

In contrast to the more luxurious exterior fabric, the interior lining consists of cheaper printed cotton chintz or calico fabrics. These plainwoven, block-printed fabrics originated in India and were exported to Europe beginning in 1600, becoming fashionable dress in Europe by the mid-1600s.⁶³ The floral chintz cottons were especially popular in France where elite women adopted the hand-painted fabrics in their fashionable dresses and working class women commissioned block-printed fabric accessories.⁶⁴ Considered “the first mass fashion,” Indian chintz afforded people from all levels of society access to colorful, richly patterned fabrics.⁶⁵ Beginning in the late 17th century, European textile manufacturers increasingly produced their own printed chintz fabrics, firmly establishing their dominance in the global cotton trade by the 18th century.⁶⁶ It is likely through French chintz manufacturers that such floral fabrics came into the construction of Algéroises *ghlila*. The variation of these patterned linings, ranging from modest floral to delicate swirls to repetitive geometric designs, perhaps represents another outlet for Algerian women to express their personal tastes and access to fine, increasingly imported, fabrics.

Further adorning the already sumptuous silk brocades is rich gold thread embroidery (*passementerie*) that outlines the neckline, sleeves, evil eye motifs, and “L” shaped extension at top of each evil eye on each waistcoat. These embroidery patterns are consistent across the multiple examples and symmetrical across the central opening of the *ghlila*. In each waistcoat, two rows of *passementerie* outline the short, shoulder-length sleeves and one line traverses the shoulders and continues along the entirety of the open neckline. These rows of *passementerie* function not only as adornment but also as a means of concealing and reinforcing the seams of the garment.⁶⁷ This

⁶³ Sarah Fee and Royal Ontario Museum, *Cloth that Changed the World: The Art and Fashion of Indian Chintz* (Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019): 12.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 13

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁶⁷ Belkaïd, *Algéroises*, 89.

both decorative and functional element is achieved through the technique called *fetla* (فتلة) in Arabic,⁶⁸ which is the name of the twisted or braided gold thread applied to form the embroidery.⁶⁹

The detail image of Figure 2 provides a closer view of this densely packed gold thread embroidery technique—note the areas of embroidery are comprised of individual strands of braided gold thread—as well as offers an image of the triangular evil eye motif present in many examples of *ghlila*. The complex embroidery is comprised of many distinct stitches, which lend the detailing depth, variety, and various shape within the holistic design. These motifs are ubiquitous across 19th-century Algéroises waistcoats (Figs. 2-5), as well as in colonial images of women, whether illustrations (Fig. 10) or photographs (Figs. 11 & 12). Ranging from a triangular shape to a more oval-shaped, this symbol is delineated by gold thread embroidery and makes reference to the evil eye, which has been protective symbol in the Mediterranean since antiquity.⁷⁰ While not exclusive to any one religious canon, the evil eye became integrated into Jewish and Muslim beliefs and practices and thus maintained relevance within North Africa across the centuries. Considering this, the evil eye motif appears on women's *ghlila* regardless of their religious affiliations.⁷¹ In Islam and Judaism, the belief is that the envious eye of others possesses the power to do harm to people. In order to ward off the evil eye, individuals often wear representations of the eye in the form of embroidery on textiles or designs on jewelry or talismans. To reinforce the protective power of the eye, reflective materials like metal threads, mirrors, and sequins are often incorporated into the design, as seen in the small sequins surrounding the central eye motif in the detail of Figure 2. This practice originated in Andalusia and appears prolifically

⁶⁸ This word is derived from the Arabic verb *fatala* (فتل), meaning to twist, braid a rope, or roll in thread. (Notes section of Belkaïd, *Algéroises*, 180.)

⁶⁹ Belkaïd, *Algéroises*, 89.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 92.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 91.

in dress practices across North Africa, continuing even to present day (see the elaborate sequinning of both the late 19th- and 20th-century Tunisian *farmla* in Figures 26 & 27).

The evil eye motifs are also embellished with a curved “L” shaped line of *passementerie* embroidery, mirrored on either side of the neckline. Some of these motifs are thinner and more intricately designed (Figs. 2, 4 & 5), while others are thicker and more simplistic (Fig. 3). The thinner, more intricately designed examples feature a series of trifoil designs and end in a circular loop. The thicker, more simplistic example is instead one continuous, unadorned line of *passementerie* ending in a circular shape. The symbolic significance of this embroidered flourish at the top of each evil eye appears to be unknown. However, they are repeated on each example of the first style of *ghlila* and contribute to the overall symmetry of the garment.

While the evil eye motif did not distinguish Muslim women from Jewish women, it did distinguish Algéroises from Turkish dignitaries in Algiers during the Ottoman colonial period.⁷² In this way, the embroidered design represented a visual point of intentional differentiation between the Algéroises and their colonial powers. Moreover, the persistence of this motif into the 19th century—beyond the end of the Ottoman occupation of Algeria—indicates its assertion of local sartorial styles and cultural significances. In addition to separating the Algéroises from the Ottomans, the eye motif also implicated economic differences within Algéroise society. The quality and form of the embroidered triangular motifs varied based on the wearer’s economic and social standing. For example, those more fortunate may have commissioned a specialist artisan to embroider the design directly onto the ground fabric of the *ghlila*, while those somewhat less fortunate may have instead purchased “prefabricated plates” created by the same artisans to affix

⁷² Ibid.

to their waistcoats.⁷³ Alternatively, less affluent Algéroises could cut the designs from golden brocades or obtain lower quality appliqué plates to achieve the same motif.⁷⁴

Beyond communicating through their clothing within their interior spaces, Algéroises also established subtle modes of communication without using verbal language. In Chapter 6: “Women’s Lived Realities In and Under Colonial Society” of her book *The Eloquence of Silence: Algerian Women in Question* (1994), Marnia Lazreg explains that “women developed an elaborate body language based on eye contact and movement, supported by an occasional word here and there, with their female children and relatives” which allowed them to communicate messages and meanings they wanted to keep secret from men in the home.⁷⁵ Despite the assumed “silence” of Algerian women, as interpreted from their lack of voice in colonial records and commonly held French stereotypes of native women as subjugated,⁷⁶ Algéroises clearly actively communicated with one another even in the presumed “seclusion” of their homes. Thus, in their understated communications via tangible alterations in dress and intangible embodied expressions, Algéroises created dynamic social systems within the interiors of their homes, in sharp contrast to the French colonial perception of women’s lives as stagnant and sheltered.

Worn daily within such domestic spheres, the second style of *ghlila*, presented in Figures 6 & 7, likely represent a garment for less affluent Algéroises. These garments noticeably lack the important evil eye motif. Instead, the waistcoats feature curvilinear embroidered motifs in the same gold thread appliqué technique, concentrated around the neckline. Neither floral nor particularly geometric, these designs consist of organically flowing loops and curls that interlock and overlap

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Lazreg, *The Eloquence of Silence*, 100.

⁷⁶ See Julia Clancy-Smith, “Islam, Gender, and Identities in the Making of French Algeria, 1830-1962,” in *Domesticating the Empire: Race, Gender, and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism*, ed. Julia Clancy-Smith and Frances Gouda (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999): “In the imperial imagination behind the high walls of the Arab household, women suffered oppression due to Islamic laws and customs” (155).

to form an elegant frame around the yoke, or opening of the garment. Like the first style, this *ghlila* also includes two rows of *passementerie* embroidery along each sleeves and one across the shoulder. However, it lacks the additional embroidery along the neckline, which is replaced by the aforementioned curvilinear designs. Additionally, all of this decoration adorns a plain satin silk ground rather than the richer silk brocades of the first style, although the *ghlila* depicted in Figure 7 does feature a subtle striped design within the fabric. Despite the different exterior fabrics, these two examples still retain the floral printed chintz lining exhibited by the four that are more elaborate in style.

The only garment that does not fit into these two seemingly distinct styles is that presented in Figure 8 which possesses the extensive *passementerie* of the first style combined with the plain silk ground of the second version. Like the *ghlila* illustrated in Figure 8, this *ghlila* displays a black silk ground, void of any pattern like the stripes of the waistcoat in Figure 7, but curiously includes two blue velvet patches of fabric at the shoulder between the sleeve and neckline *passementerie* details. This irregularity perhaps represents a later repair or even a preference of the individual wearer. It is also interesting to note the quality of the *passementerie* embroidery—especially the evil eye—in comparison to that of the examples discussed earlier. Where the embroidery seen on the *ghlila* in Figure 2, for example, appears much finer and more carefully integrated into the ground fabric, the embroidery in this *ghlila* appears rather coarser and more like a patch over top of the ground fabric. This perhaps indicates that the embroidery in the first was directly stitched into the silk brocade base—alluding to its wearer’s greater financial wealth—while the embroidery in the first was likely a prefabricated appliqué—alluding to its wearer’s lower financial wealth.

Aside from the distinctions particular to either style of *ghlila*, the waistcoats also showcase a few other commonalities present in all seven examples. All display large ornamental

passementerie buttons along the collar, ranging from eight to ten buttons on either side of the wide open neckline. Rather than functioning to secure the waistcoat, these buttons act as purely decorative baubles. Instead, the waistcoats are fastened by a central button and loop seen at the top center of opening of each example (Figs. 2-7), which allows the garment to flare out, creating its distinctive trapezoidal shape. These *passementerie* buttons are clearly noticeable in the mid 19th-century illustration (Fig. 10) and photographs (Figs. 11 & 12). In addition to this, all of the waistcoats exhibit a pocket on the right-hand side of the garment, with the opening aligned with the side seam. Belkaïd suggests that these pockets feature on extant examples of vests dating to the end of the 19th century, which may provide a possible time period for these examples.⁷⁷

However, pockets have seemingly figured into Algéroise costumes since as early as the 18th century. In Chapter IV: “Of the Turks of the Realm of Algiers” of his *Histoire du royaume d’Alger* (1724), Laugier de Tassy noted interior pockets in men’s and women’s costumes in which the wearers could store various objects—“their watches, their papers, and other similar things”—for their daily use.⁷⁸ This practice appears to have persisted into the 19th century, as seen in the interior pocket present in the long velvet caftan (Figure 1 detail). Positioned in line with the lower four *passementerie* buttons, this pocket lies behind the elaborate embroidery on the garment’s plastron. Considering this, the embroidery likely served an aesthetic purpose, as well as a functional one of disguising the deformations of the fabric over time—particularly silk—due to objects contained within these interior pockets.⁷⁹ In the case of the singular right-side *ghlila*

⁷⁷ Belkaïd, *Algéroises*, 92

⁷⁸ Laugier de Tassy, *Histoire du Royaume d’Alger: avec l’état présent de son gouvernement, de ses forces de terre et de mer, de ses revenus, police, justice, politique et commerce : un diplomate français à Alger en 1724* (Paris: Loysel, 1992) : 59.

⁷⁹ Belkaïd, *Algéroises*, 92

pockets,⁸⁰ no embroidery lies above the interior pouch of the pocket. However, like the earlier interior pockets, these likely served as receptacles for useful objects, in addition to talismans that would have doubled the protective power of the evil eye motif and metallic sequins. The symmetry of the garment also would have served a protective function, at least within Muslim beliefs; thus, the carrying of talisman in this pocket, despite its asymmetry, may have reinforced the protective quality of the otherwise symmetrical garment.

Ghlila in early French colonial written and visual documents

Where written and visual record of Algerian dress was rather rare prior to the 19th century, the onset of the French occupation of Algeria saw an influx of documents from colonial authorities and civilian travelers alike concerning colonial fashion and society. Writing during this initial colonial period, Renaudot outlines Algerian women's dress in Chapter 4: "Des Algériennes Mauresques et Juives" ("Moorish and Jewish Algerian Women") of his 1830 *Tableau du Royaume, De la ville d'Alger et de ses environs*.⁸¹ After describing the adornment of women in Algiers, Renaudot outlines the women's interior costume consisting of a silk blouse with full sleeves, a large fabric belt (*fouta*), voluminous brocaded pants (*seroul*), and the tight waistcoat (*ghlila*).⁸² This ensemble, with the exclusion of the *fouta*, is worn by the third figure in the illustration "Algériennes dans la Maison" included in Renaudot's text (Figure 9). Sleeveless and lacking the previously discussed decorative embellishments, the waistcoat presented in Renaudot's illustration is not entirely consistent with the established style during this period. The sleeveless nature of the garment more closely aligns it with the *frimla*, a variation of the *ghlila* to be discussed in a later

⁸⁰ It is important to note that this is the only element of the waistcoat which not symmetrical. The decision to include only a right-side pocket and not a left-side pocket is unclear, but perhaps connects to the religious privileging of the right hand and side seen in Islam, Judaism, and Christianity.

⁸¹ Belkaïd, *Algéroises*, 95.

⁸² Renaudot, M. *Alger: Tableau du Royaume, de la ville d'Alger et de ses environs* (Paris: P. Mongie ainé, 1830), 61-62, <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/api/volumes/oclc/57298275.html>.

section; however, the *frimla* is characterized by a shorter cut which ends immediately under the wearer's bosom. Additionally, the garment appears more similar to a European corset, cinching the women's midsection from bust to waist, whereas the *ghlila* only fastens with one button at the bust line and flairs out from there. These inconsistencies perhaps owe themselves to the artist's creative interpretation or evidence a verbal description of dress that the artist was then tasked to visually render. Either way, the image and the text it accompanies provides insight into the French perceptions of Algerian women's dress at the onset of the colonial period.

In his *Tableau*, Renaudot remarked on the short sleeves of the waistcoat, stating that this cut "le[ft] the arms naked."⁸³ While Renaudot's pointed noting of the bare arms of the Algéroise wearer betrays his eroticizing Orientalist view on the Algerian female, it also raises questions as to the driving force behind this alteration in cut. Again, no documents explicitly record the Algéroise perspective on these shifting fashions; however, the earlier linkage of the 16th- and 17th-century elbow-length sleeves with religious custom perhaps lies at the center of this adaptation. Alternatively, the shortening sleeves could be related to the role of the *ghlila* within women's domestic spaces and daily chores, to be discussed in greater detail in the *frimla* section.

Just a decade later in 1840, this same cut of the *ghlila* is recorded in an ethnographic lithograph after François Hippolyte Lalaisse labelled *Mauresque d'Alger* (Figure 10). Presenting the Algéroise costume in a relatively objective manner, as compared to later Orientalist photography, this illustration supports Renaudot's earlier observation of the shortened sleeves and hem of the waistcoat. Furthermore, the cut and brocade material of the garment echo those of the first style of 19th-century silk brocade examples analyzed in the preceding section (Figures 2-8). The apparent sheen of the fabric indicates a sumptuous silk ground and the gold brocade takes on

⁸³ Ibid., 62.

a floral pattern like that of the extant examples. The embroidery is once again concentrated primarily along the *ghlila*'s sleeves and collar, as seen in Figures 2 through 5, and features gold thread and *passementerie* embroidery. This elaborate embroidery delineates the characteristic evil motif below the neckline, which is trimmed with ornamental *passementerie* buttons. Now seen worn on the body, the 19th-century cut and fit of the *ghlila* becomes more apparent. The *ghlila*'s open neckline rests just atop the woman's bust line and the waistcoat's lower hem reaches to the top of the wearer's hips. While standing, the open central open hem of the garment hangs flush together, concealing the underlying sheer blouse which is often on full display in Orientalist images of reclining female figures (Figs. 11 & 19).

This same cut is recorded in French colonial photographs of the same period and evidences the ubiquity of the garment in Algéroise fashion. In *Two Women, one sleeping* (ca.1854) by a photographer within the circle of Parisian photographer Charles Marville (Figure 11), two reclining women sport waistcoats consistent with both Renaudot's account and the existing *ghlila*. Although highly Orientalized, as will be deconstructed later, the Marville photograph accurately records this mid 19th-century material and cut of the *ghlila*, including silk brocade, *passementerie*, short sleeves, and hip-length hem. Thus, these examples again align with the more ornate *ghlila* which would have been worn by a more well-to-do Algéroise. As in the earlier lithograph, the cut of the garment is clarified in its dressing of the wearer's body. In the case of the front figure, the *ghlila*'s neckline with its prominent buttons again bisects the woman's bust line. Alternatively, the neckline of the waistcoat worn by back figure lacks the ornamental buttons and appears to dip below her chest, acting more as a brassiere. The difference between these garments perhaps represents an economic disparity between the two women, as visually represented in the distinctions between the two styles of *ghlila* identified in the extant examples. However,

considering the clearly staged appearance of the photograph, the disparate dress is perhaps owed to the limited access of the photographers to Algéroise costuming rather than the veritable economic status of the women who were perhaps prostitutes paid for posing. Were this the case, the women were likely dressed in fine waistcoats to appear elite despite their non-elite status.

Concerning cut, the distinct trapezoidal shape of the waistcoat is especially displayed in the way it drapes on the front female figure. In her text, Belkaïd asserts that the Algéroises purposefully raised the position of the *ghlila*'s central fasten at the beginning of the 19th century which emphasized this trapezoidal shape.⁸⁴ The new button placement allowed for a wider flare at the *ghlila*'s base, thereby increasing the women's comfort and mobility as they wore the garment day-to-day. Accordingly, the photograph also hints at the *ghlila*'s association with women's private spaces within the home. In addition to the *ghlila*, the two women sport the diaphanous blouse and the voluminous pants (*seroul*) included in the characteristic interior dress of Algerian women during the 19th century.

This very same ensemble appears in a photograph just a few years later (Figure 12), worn this time by an Algerian woman in a pose reminiscent to that in Lalaisse lithograph (Fig. 10). Sheer blouse, billowy *seroul*, and ornate *ghlila* adorn the woman who stands within a similarly constructed interior setting. While the pattern of the waistcoat's fabric is somewhat unclear, the material appears to be a shiny satin or silk consistent with all the preceding documentation. Again, *passementerie* buttons line the neckline and the evil eye blinks out from below. The *ghlila*'s central button also seems to take its higher position which would showcase the garment's wide flare were it not for the *fouta*, or large belt, fastened around the woman's waist.

⁸⁴ Belkaïd, *Algéroises*, 95.

Recurring throughout French colonial photographs, postcards, and paintings, this interior ensemble—and the *ghlila* in particular—came to epitomize the French Orientalist archetype of Algerian women as hypersexual and languorous. Unlike this interior costume, Algerian women’s dress outside of the home consisted of all-enveloping cloaks called *haik*, often of wool, with veils covering the lower half of a woman’s face (Figure 13).⁸⁵ In contrast to the modesty of the veil, the perceived sexual nature of the interior waistcoat by the European male eye attracted 19th-century French colonists who, influenced by rising Orientalist ideologies, exotified and eroticized North African women. Contradicting this projected eroticization, however, the *ghlila* possessed no explicit sexual connotations; it would only be visible within a women’s interior space and thus was associated with women’s domestic spheres and private lives but not necessarily their sexual activity. Furthermore, the waistcoat was worn while women worked within their homes, cooking, cleaning, sewing, embroidering, and tending to their children. This reality of Algéroises working in their *ghlila* within these interior spaces hardly matched the French image of women lounging lazily in their *harems*. In direct contrast to the Orientalizing French view, the waistcoat functioned as a woman’s daily domestic dress, showcased her social status, reflected personal taste in color and pattern, and symbolized a continuous and unifying fashion across Algéroise history and society. The stark contrast between the *ghlila*’s everyday connotation and active function within the lives of Algerian women and the distorted French conceptualization of the garment as a sexually-charged object evidences a disjoint between Algerian reality and French fantasy. This disjoint would prove itself ultimately devastating for Algerian women—and North African women at large—as they became central to the French Orientalist imaginary which ultimately reduced the

⁸⁵ Gillow, *Textiles of the Islamic World*, 67.

complex history of the *ghlila* and the experiences of its wearers to a unidimensional Orientalist shorthand for female sexual immorality.

The Algerian Frimla

Emerging during this early to mid 19th-century period, the *frimla*⁸⁶ developed as a shorter, thinner variation of the Algéroise *ghlila*. The *frimla* constituted a summer garment that abandoned the sleeves entirely and deepened the neckline to frame and support the wearer's chest (Figures 14 & 15).⁸⁷ Like the *ghlila*, the *frimla* possessed no sexual connotation within Algéroise society. However, its emergence around the time of colonial intervention placed the garment under the eroticizing view of the French male colonists who quickly projected their sexual desire onto the cropped waistcoat. In *Le costume musulman d'Alger*, Georges Marçais explains that the *frimla* functioned to secure the blouse's sleeves, which "le[ft] the arms available for domestic chores."⁸⁸ In addition to reinforcing the connection between the *ghlila* and female domesticity, this newly developed waistcoat form attests to the influence of Algéroises in the evolution of their wardrobe. Marçais explains that the women often secured their *frimla* so that the cropped waistcoat maintained the voluminous sleeves of the blouse "lying one on top of the other behind the back."⁸⁹ This indicates a clear function for the garment, which likely came about as a response to women's needs to keep their sleeves raised off their arms while performing daily domestic tasks. While Marçais' analysis does not afford the Algéroises agency in the shaping of this garment, the very specific alteration of the waistcoat's cut, tailored to the needs of its wearer, clearly denotes the role of the Algerian woman in shaping her sartorial styles.

⁸⁶ Note that the name closely resembles that of the Tunisian *farmla*, perhaps suggesting a linguistic connection between the two garments.

⁸⁷ Belkaïd, *Algéroises*, 95.

⁸⁸ Marçais, *Le costume musulman d'Alger*, 101-2.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 102.

Referenced by Renaudot in 1830,⁹⁰ represented in Delacroix's 1832 *Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement* (Figure 19), and remarked by Berbrugger in 1843,⁹¹ the *frimla* clearly developed prior to French colonial intervention in Algeria. Unlike the *ghlila*, the *frimla* features a neckline that fully descends below the woman's bust to serve its function of supporting the chest. Like the longer waistcoat, it likewise exhibits large *passementerie* buttons along the open neck, numbering nine and ten on either side in Figures 14 and 15, respectively. Material also remains the same in the case of silk brocaded *frimla* with similar floral chintz lining (Fig. 14). The second *frimla* (Fig. 15), however, reintroduces the material of velvet seen only in the long caftan (Fig. 1) and the curious patches of the irregular *ghlila* (Fig. 8). While the embroidery of both *frimla* examples is not as elaborate as that of the *ghlila*, the garments still display fine gold thread *passementerie* embroidery outlining the contours. An illustration dating to circa 1850-63 depicts an Algerian woman donning a red *frimla* with gold buttons ovetop of the characteristic sheer blouse (Figure 16), implying the continued donning of this particular waistcoat by the Algéroises who evidently found use in the garment. The illustration gives little insight into the specific fabric comprising the garment; however, the large *passementerie* buttons are clearly visible, thereby identifying the distinctive *frimla*.

A second print illustrates a darker-skinned seemingly sub-Saharan African slave wearing a similarly decorated blue *frimla* in 1845-47 (Figure 17). Such sub-Saharan African women typically originated from Sudan and Niger and were brought to Algeria by Tuareg merchants who sold them into servitude in wealthy Algerian households.⁹² Once in Algeria, the black servants were trained in Arabic and worked alongside Algerian women within the home.⁹³ The parallel

⁹⁰ Renaudot, *Alger: Tableau du Royaume*, 62.

⁹¹ Belkaïd, *Algéroises*, 95.

⁹² Lazreg, *The Eloquence of Silence*, 27.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

domestic responsibilities of the servants and their ladies of the house is indicated in their shared garments. Like the Algéroises, this sub-Saharan African woman wears the tight-fitting *frimla* to secure her voluminous blouse in place throughout her daily chores. Her blue *frimla* appears to be made of plain silk or perhaps velvet, judging by the quality of light across its surface rendered by the artist. The buttons and billowy blouse again characterize the Algéroise interior outfit; however, this woman's lower costume consists of a wrapped and knotted textile in lieu of the voluminous *seroul* pants. Considering the woman's presumed position as a slave, this difference in costume apparently represents one specifically aligned with domestic servants within an Algerian household. This particular costume is noted by prominent French feminist activist, Hubertine Auclert, during her time living in Algeria from 1882 to 1892. In her *Arab Women in Algeria* published in 1900, Auclert remarks: "Saharan women, all of them pretty, wear white, blue or red clothes...The Negros Koholanes,⁹⁴ neighbors of Sudan, have as only clothing the *fouta* (handkerchief knotted on the hips)."⁹⁵ While dating to a few decades earlier, this print is consistent with Auclert's later writings and provides a valuable record of the black servant's interior garment as a comparison and counterpart to the typical Algéroise attire. Wrapped clothing was typical of sub-Saharan women across West Africa. Therefore, this difference between the costume of the black servant and the Algéroises likely speaks more to differences in conventional cultural dress practices than in perhaps the servant being banned from wearing the Algéroise *seroul* pants.

The *frimla* appears again in colonial texts in 1843. French archaeologist and Arabist Louis-Adrien Berbrugger remarked on "this very skimpy silk bodice" and described the way in which it "compresse[d] the chest" and accentuated the "extreme transparence of the blouse" worn

⁹⁴ A pejorative term for black Africans.

⁹⁵ Hubertine Auclert and Jacqueline Grenez Brovender, *Arab Women in Algeria* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co. KG, 2014), 46, <http://www.degruyter.com/isbn/9783110427363>.

beneath.⁹⁶ Again, the practicality of this garment's unique form was utterly lost on the French male observer who insisted on viewing this garment solely in the context of its impact on the female form. The inopportune timing of the development of this more revealing garment, corresponding with the beginning of French presence in Algeria, unfortunately played directly into the preexisting and increasing eroticizing mentality of French colonists toward North African women. Berbrugger's focus on the *frimla*'s accentuation of the wearer's chest rather than on the garment's utility itself encapsulates the hypersexualized view of indigenous women that would come to define and dominate France's perception of the female inhabitants of its North African colonies.

Conclusion

The preceding history of the *ghlila* and *frimla*, extracted from European documents and surviving examples, allows us to assemble a partial reconstruction of the Algéroise narrative missing from colonial record. From the Ottoman introduction of the open-front costume, Algerian women adopted embroidered waistcoats, adapted them to local tastes, and altered them as it pertained to their function within their daily lives. Alterations in cut were made to aid in the practical function of the waistcoats within women's daily domestic chores, while shifts in style reflected women's personal tastes and collective trends. Tailored to women's needs and fashions, these garments represented a unifying element across religious, ethnic, and economic lines in Algiers. Despite this uniting quality, the waistcoat also provided an arena for women to assert their power and prominence within female communities. Slight distinctions in prestige of fabrics and embroidery allowed women to convey to one another their elite positions within society which afforded them access to such fine materials. In this way, clothing comprised just one method of communication and action within women's domestic spaces that have been historically viewed as

⁹⁶ Belkaïd, *Algéroises*, 95.

areas of women's silence and subjugation. It is into this complex reality of dynamic female fashions and communications that the French imposed themselves in 1830. With this French colonial interjection, Algéroise narratives and experiences were neglected and overwritten as the French recorded the representation of Algeria in accordance with their colonial agenda.

Part II: French Orientalist Fantasies in Photography and Painting

Introduction

In this part of the thesis, I first establish French colonialism in Algeria, as opposed to that in Morocco and Tunisia. I outline France's conception of the colony as an extension of French land and its corresponding colonial ideology of assimilation, which included the westernization of native dress practices. I then introduce the advent of photography, which provided France with a valuable tool of preservation, manipulation, and domination of the image of Algerian people, including their indigenous dress, within its own biased perspective. The Orientalizing framing of images of the colony is especially apparent in French depictions of women in Algiers, often wearing the tight-fitting *ghlila* and *frimla* waistcoats. Thus, I critically analyze illustrations and photographs which were introduced in the preceding part to provide evidence of the shifting styles and evolving functions of the garments in Algéroises lives. The reexamination of these photographs in this part keeps the reality of these garments forms and functions in mind at the same time that it reveals misconceptions and misrepresentations of the waistcoats and their wearers through the colonial and Orientalist French perspectives.

After establishing representations of Algéroises and their waistcoats in photographs and prints, I then launch into an analysis of representations in paintings, which did not function separately from photographs in the evolution of the Orientalist genre but rather interacted circuitously in their influence upon on another. In my discussion of painting, I analyze Delacroix's

Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement (1834) and Renoir's *Femme d'Alger* (1870) as case studies to illustrate the shifts in both the specific representation of Algéroise waistcoats and the general intensification of the exoticizing and eroticizing Orientalist image of North African women. This part concludes by asserting the inverse relationship between the mounting French colonial control and Orientalist imagery and the diminishing waistcoat practices and overall agency of Algerian women in shaping their representation. From this specific analysis of a single women's dress practice within the larger context of French colonial rule and the Orientalist genre of art, this part deconstructs just some of the circumstances that left contemporary scholarship with its conspicuous lacking of Algerian women's personal perspectives and collective fashion histories.

French Colonialism in Algeria

Unlike Tunisia and Morocco which tolerated relatively mild periods of colonialism as French protectorates, Algeria endured an incredibly invasive and detrimental period as a French settler colony, lasting nearly a century and a half from 1830 to 1962. The French invasion of Algiers in 1830 expelled the Ottomans but introduced an even more severe colonial power to the region.⁹⁷ Even more so than in France's other African colonies, in Algeria, French colonial occupation resulted in extreme cultural, religious, and political clashes, often culminating in conflict which dramatically upset Algerian society. Contributing to the intense Algerian reaction to colonial rule was Algeria's unique position as a settlement colony as opposed to a colony of exploitation, like Morocco and Tunisia.⁹⁸ Both Morocco and Tunisia were considered French protectorates, or territories under French protection, while Algeria was considered an extension of the French state. Within this Algerian *terre française* (French land), the reigning colonial ideology

⁹⁷ Stone, *The Embroideries of North Africa*, 91.

⁹⁸ Steven Loyal, "The French in Algeria, Algerians in France: Bourdieu, Colonialism, and Migration," *The Sociological Review* 57 no. 3 (2009): 410.

was one of assimilation. Rather than simply living alongside the native populations (*les indigènes*), the French (*les colons*) encouraged an adoption of European values, customs, and even costumes.

Writing at the end of France's colonial rule in Algeria, Martin Lewis analyzes the dominance of the notion of assimilation throughout French colonial history in "One Hundred Million Frenchmen: The 'Assimilation' Theory in French Colonial Policy" (1962). Lewis cites French lawyer and law professor Arthur Girault who in 1895 described the assimilative ideal as "the constantly more intimate union between the colonial territory and the metropolitan territory."⁹⁹ This included not only the adoption of French education, laws, language, and customs, but also the adoption of French fashions.¹⁰⁰ Through this process, the French believed that by "inculcat[ing] [the Algerians] with [French] ideals and [French customs]" they could effectively "make [the Algerians] into Frenchmen."¹⁰¹ A year later in 1896, French military officer Joseph-Simon Gallieni expressed a similar sentiment while addressing native populations in Madagascar, saying: "You will always be Betsileos, but you will at the same time be Frenchman. You should learn the French language; you should dress yourselves in French fabrics, renowned the whole world over for their good quality."¹⁰² So, the French encouraged the donning of French clothing across their colonies; however, France's invasive colonial involvement in Algeria yielded particularly detrimental impacts to native dress.

The emphasis on a shift in colonial dress to match that of the French contributed to the gradual decline in the Algerian textile industry and the disappearance of local dress practices. Over

⁹⁹ Martin Deming Lewis, "One Hundred Million Frenchmen: The 'Assimilation' Theory in French Colonial Policy," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 4, no. 2 (1962): 132.

¹⁰⁰ See Arthur Girault, *Principes de Colonisation et de Legislation Coloniale* (Paris, 1st ed., 1895): "[T]hey are educated, they are granted the right of suffrage, they are dressed in the European mode, our laws are substituted for their customs, and in a word, native assimilation is pursued (54).

¹⁰¹ Girault, *Principes de Colonisation et de Legislation Coloniale*, 54.

¹⁰² Hubert Deschamps and Paul Chauvet (eds.), *Gallieni Pacificateur: Écrits Coloniaux de Gallieni* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1949), 218.

the course of France's occupation and exploitation of Algeria, the country saw a significant decay of its local textile industry. Meticulously hand-made products were largely replaced by machine-made products from French textile manufacturers, notably in Lyons, and local textile traditions suffered and deteriorated as a result.¹⁰³ The *ghlila* and *frimla* were among the local dress practices that faded and disappeared over the course of the French occupation,¹⁰⁴ leaving in their place only the modified *ghlila* called *karakou* which developed in the late 19th century and is worn by some present-day Algerian women for weddings and formal events (Figure 18).¹⁰⁵

Given this colonial interruption, less written scholarship exists on Algerian textile traditions during and after the French colonial era, with the exception of mentions of colonial dress in French primary source documents. This also presents a notable contradiction in the French colonial ideology of assimilation and practiced Orientalist fascination concerning Algerian dress. Concurrent with the colonial focus on assimilating Algerian dress into French sartorial standards was a determined documentation of the preexisting indigenous dress in the form of personal or political travelogues, ethnographic lithographs, and Orientalist photographs. This duality in the French fixation on Algerian dress—expressing the desire to both alter and preserve it—thus manifests as a complicated tension in text and imagery throughout the colonial period. Reflecting the Orientalist fascination with colonial dress, photographs during the colonial era grew steadily more exotifying and fantastical in their capturing of women's costuming in particular. At the same time, the dress practices supposedly conserved within these images gradually vanished as they were replaced by French fabrics and fashions. An analysis of French prints and photographs during the early colonial period (1830-1870) within the context of Algerian women's diminishing

¹⁰³ Gillow, *Textiles of the Islamic World*, 67.

¹⁰⁴ Isabelle Paresys, *Paraître et apparences en Europe occidentale: du Moyen âge à nos jours* (Villeneuve-d'Ascq: Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 2008): 236.

¹⁰⁵ Belkaïd, *Algéroises*, 114.

waistcoat practices reveals an inverse relationship between the rise in Orientalist imagery and the decline of Algerian women's personal agency and collective fashions.

Colonial Photography and Illustrations

Even prior to the advent of photography, beginning as early as the 16th century, the French expressed an interest in the peoples, cultures, arts, and architecture of the East.¹⁰⁶ Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798 particularly contributed to the growing fascination with the Orient, as it provided scholars of Egyptology with direct access to the region.¹⁰⁷ Even following France's expulsion from Egypt in September of 1801, the country remained in a state of 'Egyptomania' that resulted in countless intellectual developments, including Jean François Champollion's translation of Egyptian hieroglyphics using the Rosetta stone, as well as numerous artistic and architectural studies. Much of the early photography of North Africa represents archaeological projects commissioned by the French government which functioned as objective records of notable sites and ruins in the service of academic study.¹⁰⁸ In fact, much of the contemporary knowledge of 19th-century Algerian society comes not only from written primary sources but also those photographic. On August 19, 1839 at a session of the *Académie des Beaux-Arts*, French scientist and mathematician François Arago announced Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre's novel invention of daguerreotypes, a form of photography with the ability to capture clear images and intricate details.¹⁰⁹ With the advent of this new photographic method, among others, France acquired the technology necessary to visually record its newly colonized North African territory and, in doing so, capture the very first photographs of any non-Western culture.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ Ken Jacobson, *Odalisques & Arabesques: Orientalist Photography 1839-1925* (London: Quaritch, 2007), 16.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

However, as time went on and the French colonial project grew progressively more antagonistic, the role of photography shifted to a means for the West to expand Orientalist interest beyond the purely intellectual. The commanding tool of photography endowed France with the insidious power to pictorially preserve its colonies within an increasingly essentializing view of the region in service of a colonialist agenda. In line with this colonial agenda and occurring simultaneously with the advent of photography, the French began conducting ethnographic and medical studies claiming to present objective information about Arab character and morality. Seeking to codify assumed differences between Arabs and Europeans, studies throughout the early decades of the colonial period persistently reported negative traits in Arabs, including “unrivaled fatalism, natural cunning, [...] slyness,”¹¹¹ lower intelligence, and “deviant” sexuality.¹¹² In establishing and spreading these false disparities between Algerians and the French, such studies contributed to Western sentiments of the inferiority of Algerian society and worked to solidify a negative stereotype that was subsequently generalized to all of the Arab world. Such a pointed dichotomy between Western and Eastern society also legitimized, from the French perspective, the colonial project whose purported goal was to civilize the uncivilized Orient.

Within this ideological context, the capability of photography to visually convey this warped colonial narrative of an immoral Eastern society in need of French civilization serviced the larger colonial agenda. Through precisely posed compositions, French Orientalist photographers were able to emphasize the aspects of North African people and cultures that reflected the colonial conception of the region as decadent, depraved, and decidedly different from Western society. Because of this, the general picture of North Africa of the 19th century was

¹¹¹ See: M. Cuvelier, "Remarques physiologiques et medicales sur les Arabes et les Européens faites en Algérie," *Rec. Mem. Mid. Chir. Pharm. Milit.*, 50 (1841) : 88.

¹¹² Patricia M. E. Lorcin, "Imperialism, Colonial Identity, and Race in Algeria, 1830-1870: The Role of the French Medical Corps." *Isis* 90, no. 4 (1999): 663, 674.

constructed and framed, both figuratively and literally, within an often deceptive French colonialist lens. Despite the assumed objectivity of the camera lens, which could seemingly capture the realities of the colony, many photographs taken of North Africa were often the result of careful construction in service of rising colonial ideologies. Thus, the correspondence of the new technology of photography with the beginning of France's colonial project in Africa gradually shifted an intellectual and cultural curiosity for the Orient into a fantastical obsession with the region that encapsulated the simultaneous Western attraction to and fear of the Orient.

Bridging the gap between intellectual curiosity and Orientalist stereotyping were ethnographic texts and images which sought to assign arbitrary 'types' or categories to various indigenous Algerian populations. Under the guise of medical or anthropological scholarship, French researchers published studies categorizing Algerians based on various factors, including physiological traits, moral qualities, and elements of dress.¹¹³ Largely invented by French "scholars," these types were established in literature and propagated through photographs which further contributed to negative stereotypes and generalizations of Algerians.¹¹⁴ Considering their purpose of cataloguing various sections of Algerian society, photographic 'types' more often aligned with ethnographic lithographs, like those presented in Figures 10, 16, and 17, than with later Orientalist photographs. While less sexualized than Orientalist imagery, 'type' images employed a similar objectifying lens whereby specific Algerian individuals become anonymous stand-ins for French generalizations.

One such 'type' photograph is illustrated in Figure 12, which reduces the female model to a mere *Type algérien* (Fig. 12).¹¹⁵ Positioned among the rest of the purposely placed props, this

¹¹³ Ibid., 662.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Images of native 'types' were produced and sold by photographic studios during the 1860s, largely sustaining these studios during their early years in the colonies (Jacobson, *Odaliques & Arabesques*, 35).

Algerian “type” becomes merely another object within the larger composition. The clichéd and generically North African rug, vase, and textiles, along with the lute and chaise longue provide a stereotypical Orientalist interior setting. These objects of leisure offer little insight into the reality of women’s lives within their homes, which would have included domestic labor and childrearing. The French male photographer refuses to acknowledge the domestic work of women of Algiers, as “[t]he recognition that a woman was a worker seemed to dissipate the erotic charge aroused in orientalist visions of the harem.”¹¹⁶ Instead the photographer presents the Algéroise in a way that fulfills the French male fantasy: with hand on hip and ambiguous expression meeting the voyeur’s gaze, the woman is posed to offer her body and the clothing dressing it as simply another exotic object within the larger scene. Even formally, the dense grouping of all of these props together in the center of the composition visually conceptualizes both the objects and the woman as a single, unified mass. Altogether, the model, her clothing, and the objects around her are presented to the French male viewer as a consumable, exotic object.

As the colonial project progressed, photographs grew gradually more Orientalizing, which increasingly “Othered” and sexualized Algerian subjects. Oriental fantasies and fears often manifested themselves in meticulously crafted photographs that steadily developed into stereotypical images of North Africa which dramatically diverged from the realities of the region. Despite the seeming objectivity of photography, which ideally records unfiltered reality, Orientalist photograph increasingly presented deceptive French colonial constructions of North African society. Within these images, a distinct conceptualization of North African women emerged which belied the gaze of the typically male photographer behind the lens. Where North

¹¹⁶ Yaël Simpson Fletcher, “‘Irresistible Seductions’: Gendered Representations of Colonial Algeria around 1930,” in *Domesticating the Empire: Race, Gender, and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism*, ed. Julia Clancy-Smith and Frances Gouda (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 204-205.

African men were largely portrayed as threatening and aggressive, women were framed as submissive and sexual. Arab sexuality was of especial interest to the French colonial agenda which weaponized sexual practices as “a graphic means of differentiation between cultures.”¹¹⁷ French ethnographers and medical researchers pointed to—often mistakenly or to an exaggerated degree—sexual practices in Islam, such as sodomy, polygamy, and “excessive licentiousness” as further evidence of the depravity of Algerian society.¹¹⁸ For the French, such sexual “aberrations” further proved that Algerians existed within a less civilized society, which could be remedied by French colonial intervention.¹¹⁹ Thus sexuality, especially that of Algerian women, became yet another tool within the French colonial project. Characterized as “deviant,” Algerian sexuality simultaneously repelled and attracted the French who fixated especially on the sexual lives of women. While French ethnographic studies often asserted broad criticisms of Arab sexuality at large, French photographs frequently displayed a contradictory fascination with this so-called “primitive promiscuity.”¹²⁰

Furthering this trend, the recurring setting of the *harem*, or female-exclusive interior space within the North African home, developed as an expression of “the Frenchman’s phantasm of the Oriental female and her inaccessibility behind the veil in the forbidden harem.”¹²¹ Because the Frenchmen were prohibited from entering this space, the *harem*’s mystery and allure was heightened in their imaginary. Aligned with North African women’s sexuality, the *harem* manifested in the French male mind as a realm of unrestricted sexual activity, existing outside of the bounds of reality. These fanciful French male notions of the North African *harem* and the

¹¹⁷ Lorcin, “Imperialism, Colonial Identity, and Race in Algeria,” 663.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 674.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ Alloula, *The Colonial Harem*, xiv.

women therein materialized in Orientalist photographic compositions. Augmenting the French reveries of female sexuality, Orientalist photographers included within their constructed *harem* settings various props that subtly or explicitly reference sexual activity. Lush rugs and beds provide physical spaces for such erotic fantasies to play out; elaborate pillows and fabrics add to the sumptuous setting; and instruments and hookah pipes suggest a sensuous, leisurely, indulgent, and decidedly foreign atmosphere. Clearly, these fantasies did not reflect the realities of Algéroises in their *harems*, where they completed daily chores, cooked, cleaned, took care of their children, and socialized with other women. Regardless, within these constructed compositions, an almost invariably young, beautiful female model positioned in suggestive poses with seductive expressions appeals to the French male viewer who possesses her image in the form of a photograph or *carte-de-visite*, or postcard.¹²²

One such staged composition appears in *Two Women, one sleeping*, which emulates a series by Charles Marville illustrating Algerian women and men alike positioned in reclining poses within seemingly indigenous interiors (Fig. 11).¹²³ In this particular photograph, two women, both wearing the typical interior dress, recline upon a patterned carpet within a carefully constructed studio set. This imagined interior space and its accompanying interior costume appealed to the French male desire to penetrate the exclusive women's spaces of its colonies and thereby gain access to and dominance over the sexually unrestricted women they believed resided therein. Regardless of the inaccuracy of the overall scene of an Algéroise interior, the women's clothing accurately represent the 19th-century iteration of the *ghlila*. As described earlier, the women's *ghlila* exhibit the characteristics of the 19th-century garment: short capped sleeves, wide neckline

¹²² Developing in the 1860s, postcards continued this Orientalizing trend in photography, reaching a height in the early 20th century. (Alloula, *The Colonial Harem*, 5).

¹²³ Jacobson, *Odaliques & Arabesques*, 253.

rimmed with decorative *passementerie* buttons, sumptuous silk fabric, wide-flared base, and hip-length hem. The sleeping woman also appears to be wearing a pair of embroidered silk slippers, which Renaudot described as part of the Algerian women's interior wear during the 19th century.¹²⁴

Under the eroticizing gaze of the French viewer, this clothing and the female body it adorns became compounded as a singular object of sexual desire. Here, the reclining poses of both women lying languorously atop a stack of pillows—as well as atop each other—suggest the sexual immorality and careless indolence projected upon North Africa by the European colonists. The unnatural image of two women lounging together—which would not reflect the reality of women's relationships and actions even within the relaxed, social setting of the *harem*—clearly points to a projected male fantasy of the sexual availability of Algerian women. The slumbering state of the front woman further intensifies this sexual objectification. Rather than being an active individual, the sleeping woman is presented as a passive form, unaware of the voyeuristic gaze upon her. Furthermore, the cut of the waistcoat, normally neutral in the way it dressed the female form, here takes on a far more sexual connotation. Framed and supported by the *ghlila*, the women's chest becomes the focal point of the composition, presented to the male viewer as an object of carnal desire. While the women's bodies remain fully clothed, the sexually-charged nature of the image rivals even that of an explicitly pornographic nude. The interplay between body and clothing would have tantalized the French male viewer, who even without seeing the female form beneath could easily imagine it. This implied fantasy of the foreign female, dressed in her form-fitting waistcoat, would have only furthered the Frenchmen's eroticized interpretation of the image and the dressed Algerian women it represented. In this way, the Algerian women, along with their ornate costumes,

¹²⁴ Renaudot, *Alger: Tableau du Royaume*, 62.

were offered to the French voyeur as a sort of sexual offering whose body, clothing, and private lives became a mere prop within the Orientalist imaginary.

The caption of this image, *Two Women, one sleeping*, would have only served to further this sexual objectification, framing the figures as inactive even before the viewer made their own interpretation. In “The Orientalist Photograph” (2013), Ali Behdad clearly articulates the manipulative role of title in Orientalist imagery: “The title chooses the meaning of the photograph in advance; it fixes the signified of its iconography in a representative fashion that precludes any other viewing but a guided identification.”¹²⁵ By explicitly pointing to the woman’s (in)action of sleeping, the photograph immediately indicates her submission, or rather silent acquiescence, to the objectifying gaze.

While it was erotic images like this that so captivated the French, the veritable views of Algerian women seen by the French would have been dramatically different. Frenchmen would only have seen Algéroises during their outings in the city, during which time they would be fully covered in their *haiks* (Fig. 13). Women would leave their homes to run errands, bring their children to school, attend religious events, visit other women’s *harems*, or socialize at the *hammams*, or Turkish baths. Concerning religious outings, Sufi (mystic) Muslim women might have left to visit *wali*’s (saint’s) mausoleums. Such visits were of both religious and social significance: “Visits to saint’s mausoleums were occasions for congregating and exchanging tips about how to deal with marital or parenting problems, and about the degree of efficacy of the saints’ grace.”¹²⁶ Similarly, Muslim women’s excursions to the mosque for Friday prayer comprised both a religious and social event. While living in Algeria during the 1880s and 90s,

¹²⁵ Ali Behdad, “The Orientalist Photograph,” in *Photography’s Orientalism: New Essays on Colonial Representation* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2013), 26.

¹²⁶ Lazreg, *The Eloquence of Silence*, 25.

Hubertine Auclert remarked that “[t]he few women there have come [to the mosque on Friday] to talk, not to pray.”¹²⁷ The French feminist perhaps exaggerates in her observation of the women’s sociability, but her text provides valuable insight into women’s lives within the public sphere. Her position as a woman, despite being French, afforded her greater access to Algéroise perspectives and experiences as compared to the Frenchman who would be barred from interacting with respectable indigenous women. Like religious institutions, the Turkish baths (*hammams*) comprised another important social setting for the women of Algiers. As they washed or received cosmetic treatments at the baths, Algéroises would “exchang[e] views and information about personal and social events.”¹²⁸ Lazreg compared the *hammam* for Algerian women to the café for Algerian men in its prime position and function within Algéroises’ social lives outside of the *harem*.¹²⁹

Reflected in Orientalist photography, the contrast between the reality of women’s wear available to the foreign French gaze (the obscuring veil) and that concealed from the colonial powers behind closed doors (the revealing waistcoat) greatly impacted the French imaginary of North African women and the way in which the French framed such figures in early colonial photography. In his 1986 publication *The Colonial Harem*, Malek Alloula critically dissects this French colonial obsession with North African women and their interior spaces. Within his analysis, Alloula touches on the role of costume in the harem fantasy, specifically noting the disparity between women’s dress outside and inside of the house as a source of the French frustration and subsequent fascination. Alloula explains: “The opaque veil that covers [the Algerian woman] intimates clearly and simply to the photographer a refusal. Turned back upon himself, upon his

¹²⁷ Auclert, *Arab Women in Algeria*, 53.

¹²⁸ Lazreg, *The Eloquence of Silence*, 25.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

own impotence in the situation, the photographer undergoes an initial experience of disappointment and rejection.”¹³⁰ Having been refused access to the North African woman’s body in the public space, the Frenchmen interpreted a seemingly calculated attack on not only their authority as colonial powers but also their dominance as men. This undermining of colonial male power further pushed the French to seek entrance into the forbidden cloister of the harem in an effort to reassert dominance and claim what the French considered rightful access to this women’s space and the women within them.

Illustrating the view accessible to the French visitor to Algeria, the photograph from Alloula’s text presents a more candid image of veiled women walking in the street (Fig. 13). In this image, the only part of the woman visible beneath the veil is her eyes which resolutely deny the French viewer access to her body. This likely un-posed photograph, which more accurately reflects the image of Algerian women available to the French gaze, directly contrasts with the clearly staged Circle of Marville photograph (Fig. 11). Featuring the Algerian interior costume, the Marville photograph provides an early example of a colonial photograph depicting the reclining female, or *odalisque*, composition which would become a recurring Orientalist trope in French colonial photography and exemplified this French infatuation with North African women and their *harems*. Within this composition, the clothing becomes synonymous with the woman as both dress and body merge under the French male gaze as a symbol of unrestricted sexuality. This perception is only furthered by the positioning of this hypersexed female figure within the off-limits interior space. Particularly in compositions depicting posed female models in women-only interiors, early examples of photographic Orientalism evidence a pointed French interest in the fantasy of the North African *harem*, and subsequently, the clothing worn therein. Faced with the reality of

¹³⁰ Malek Alloula, *The Colonial Harem* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997): 7.

women's conservative exterior dress, French photographers instead constructed their desired glimpses into the Algerian *harem* and peek at the fetishized interior costume.

Considering the unavailability of Algerian women to French men, French photographers sought out alternate means to access and capture the *harem* and the women it concealed. The majority of Orientalist photographs depicting women's interior spaces were staged on studio sets, indicated by the conspicuous backdrops and props (Figs. 11 & 12), rather than in genuine settings.¹³¹ In lieu of the inaccessible women of Algéroise society, French photographers often hired prostitutes from the margins of society to pose within their false interiors.¹³² Such women posed for compensation but often were unaware of the larger implications of their modelling and later use of their images.¹³³ These women likely did not read or speak French,¹³⁴ so they could not understand what they were agreeing to, nor could they properly negotiate any terms of the reproduction of their likenesses.

In this way, the Algerian women depicted in the resulting Orientalist photographs were stripped of their agency on multiple levels. Firstly, their positions as prostitutes already relegated them to the outskirts of Algerian society. It also equated them to sexual objects in the eyes of the French, leaving them largely to the will and desire of the colonial men who purchased use of their bodies. Even more than their European counterparts, Algerian prostitutes were perceived and portrayed by the French as sexually passive.¹³⁵ This resulted not only in the widespread depiction of Algerian prostitutes in French photography but also in the comprehensive regulation of

¹³¹ Zahia Smail Salhi, "Colonial Visual Representations of the 'Femmes D'Alger'," *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication* 1, no. 1 (2008): 90.

¹³² In *Femmes d'Afrique du Nord: Cartes postales (1885-1930)*, Leila Sebbar proffers that the women could also have been orphans who, like prostitutes, fell into the margins of society.

¹³³ Salhi, "Colonial Visual Representations of the 'Femmes D'Alger,'" 91.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ Bruce W. Dunne, "French Regulation of Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Colonial Algeria," *The Arab Studies Journal* 2, no. 1 (1994): 27.

prostitution in Algeria from the very beginning of French occupation.¹³⁶ Physically and administratively controlled by the French, Algerian prostitutes were then positioned in eroticized compositions that symbolically stripped their agency as individuals. Finally, these images of prostitutes were disseminated under the guise of presenting genuine images of everyday Algerian women. Despite the reality of the models, the photographs and postcards were not marketed as images of prostitutes and were instead deceptively distributed as general images of Algerian women. In exploiting the likenesses of sexually passive and socially powerless prostitutes, French photographers actively manipulated the image of Algerian women more generally, as the reproductions were perpetuated as evidence of the sexual immorality of all indigenous women.

Once within the inaccessible interior space—not literally but figuratively through these careful studio reconstructions—the French were able to project their Oriental fantasies upon the now accessible female subjects, immortalized in photographs catering to the increasing French desire for sexual images. Evidenced in the set and props, as well as the model’s posture, facial expression, and, of course, costuming, the French photographically manifested their view of North African women as exceedingly hypersexual and seductively exotic. As Alloula states, “[t]he phantasmic value of the harem is a function of this presumed absence of limitation to a sexual pleasure lived in the mode of frenzy.”¹³⁷ Focused within the French photographer’s lens, North African women were framed as erotically-charged objects of male desire. Even during the early and mid-19th century, prior to the height of Orientalism in the early 20th century, such colonial photographs still convey the French infatuation with the supposed sexual depravity of North African women. Within this false narrative of unrestricted sexuality, women’s fashions often

¹³⁶ A decree dated to August 11, 1830 required the registration of all prostitutes in Algiers, as well as mandated they receive weekly medical examinations at a police health dispensary. (Dunne, “French Regulation of Prostitution,” 25.)

¹³⁷ Alloula, *The Colonial Harem*, 49.

functioned to further the colonial fantasy. In this way, garments created solely for North African women by North African women, such as the Algerian *ghlila* and *frilma*, were cruelly wrenched from the hands—and conflated with the bodies—of their rightful wearers and repossessed by the French male colonist who insisted on essentializing and objectifying the North African woman.

Once deceptively constructed, Orientalist images were then circulated around France as truthful representations of life in the Algerian colony. Emerging in the 1850s, *cartes-de-visite* consisted of photographs mounted on small visiting cards that functioned as souvenirs for French travelers to North Africa. Such cards could be collected and assembled by an individual into albums or sent home to friends and family who had not yet visited the colonies.¹³⁸ As affordable and abundant images, *cartes-de-visite* became prevalent and popular, as they were accessible to various socio-economic echelons in France. In this way, the *cartes* democratized “the possibility of possessing the eroticized other.”¹³⁹ Without ever leaving France, members of the lower and middle classes could purchase and possess images of the colonies. Such images acted as “their pseudoknowledge of the colony,”¹⁴⁰ becoming their lens into a distant land that they might never visit but they surely could imagine. Moreover, the images not only gave them the ability to imagine North Africa but also to metaphorically exercise power over it. In owning an image of North Africa, the French individual expressed their perceived superiority over the lands—and people—that their nation had colonized. In the exchange and proliferation of these images, North African individuals became inactive objects passed between French hands that served to circulate the Orientalist image of North Africa while also reinforcing French authority over the colonies. The repeated exposure of the French public to staged images of North Africa—and especially of North

¹³⁸ Jacobson, *Odalisques & Arabesques*, 35.

¹³⁹ Behdad, “The Orientalist Photograph,” 28.

¹⁴⁰ Alloula, *The Colonial Harem*, 4.

African women—steadily reified the Orientalist composition which then supplanted the realities of North Africa within the colonial imaginary. This was especially true during the 1860s as photographers began to establish permanent studios in major cities within the colonies, including Algiers.¹⁴¹ These photographic centers facilitated the photographers' prolific production of Orientalism-aligned images which perpetuated the damaging ideology in France where the photographs were readily consumed.

Within the French gaze on the colonies, clothing, above all other accoutrements, became inextricably intertwined with the image of North African women, consequentially molding the perception of these women within the larger French colonial imaginary. While much of the scholarship on Orientalist imagery focuses purely on the depiction of the female body, the representation of women's clothing and the entangled relationship between female dress and body provide a more compelling case with even more nuanced implications. Aligning with this scholarly trend, Malek Alloula expresses in *The Colonial Harem*: “[T]he fixation upon the woman's body leads the postcard to paint this body up, ready it, and eroticize it in order to offer it up to any and all comers from a clientele¹⁴² moved by the unambiguous desire of possession.”¹⁴³ Here, Alloula himself fixates on the body of the Algerian women and only later discusses clothing separately from the female form in his chapter “The Figures of the Harem: Dress and Jewelry.” In this section, Alloula describes the theatrical dressing of Algerian women by French photographers in an “exhaustive, descriptive catalog of the finery of Algerian women.”¹⁴⁴ He proffers these photographs as studies in verisimilitude: photographers bedecking docile models in lavish

¹⁴¹ Jacobson, *Odaliques & Arabesques*, 33.

¹⁴² Alloula's use of the word “clientele” further reinforces the identity of the Algerian female subjects as prostitutes. These women serviced the French men within the colonies, then their images were appropriated to satiate the sexual desire of men at home in France.

¹⁴³ Alloula, *The Colonial Harem*, 52.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

ensembles and offering them to the French public as truthful images. Alloula is not wrong in this argument. However, he chooses to conceive of costume and model as separate: clothing placed on model, more paper doll than active human. Instead, I argue that the two, costume and model, become inextricably entangled in such Orientalist images.

Dressing the hypersexed female form, the clothing becomes a part of the Algerian woman's sexuality and exoticism as perceived by the French viewer. In every photograph taken throughout France's colonial occupation of North Africa, absence or presence of clothing and the way in which that costuming adorns and defines the female body was indicative of the nation's perception of the women of North Africa as hypersexual beings. Regardless of the reality of the Algéroise *harem* as an area of domestic work and familial responsibilities, French Orientalist imagery persistently produced compositions of the Algéroise interior as a sexually-charged space. Informed by the growing French fascination with Oriental imagery, as evidenced in the increasing proliferation of *cartes-de-viste* and postcards throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, French photographers working in the colonies produced increasingly Orientalist compositions embodying this *harem* stereotype. Within these compositions, women's bodies and clothing become one under the French male gaze which perceived both as symbols of erotic fetish. In this way, costuming served to accentuate the female body at the same time as the body imbued life and erotic energy into the lavish clothing. Through this process, the true narratives of women's private lives, perspectives, and experiences along with the histories of their garments—which became mere sex symbols under the French lens—were entirely disregarded and overwritten.

Orientalist Painting

The Orientalist narrative established by early colonial photography was expanded upon in other artistic media, most notably in Orientalist painting. Inspired by the photographs and accounts

returning to France from the North African colonies, French artists began crafting their own compositions bursting with vibrant color and dripping with Orientalist decadence in the early 19th century. However, as Behdad notes, “[t]he relation between Orientalist painting and photography is not that of a linear influence but of a circular reciprocity.”¹⁴⁵ Romantic paintings of the Orient pre-dating the 1839 invention of the daguerreotype informed early photographic Orientalist compositions, while the newly captured images contributed to the increasing fantasy of the Orientalist image.¹⁴⁶ In this way, both Orientalist photography and painting escalated across the early decades of French colonial rule in Algeria, reaching a height in 1870 following the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869.¹⁴⁷ Connecting the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea, the canal provided a more accessible avenue for travel from Europe to North Africa. Many European painters took advantage of this resource to travel to the Orient in search of artistic inspiration, while others remained in Europe and simply constructed their “Oriental” compositions in studios using props and models as the photographers did. Fixated on the mystery of the unattainable women of the colonies, concealed behind their veils and the walls of their harems, French Orientalist painters frequently focused their compositions on the North African woman as an alluring sex symbol in the French imaginary.¹⁴⁸ Within these tableaux, reclining North African women in varying states of dress and undress gaze out at the Western male viewer in a direct appeal to his desire to possess the non-western female figure.

¹⁴⁵ Ali Behdad and Luke Gartlan, *Photography's Orientalism: New Essays on Colonial Representation* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2013), 16.

¹⁴⁶ See Behdad and Gartlan, *Photography's Orientalism: New Essays on Colonial Representation* (2013): “Even a cursory glance at early Orientalist photography reveals its indebtedness to the conventions of Orientalist romantic paintings: Jacques Moulin’s erotic and ethnographic photographs of the Orient explicitly borrow from the works of romantic painters Georges Auguste, Richard Parkes Bonington, and Eugène Delacroix” (16).

¹⁴⁷ Jacobson, *Odalisques & Arabesques*, 19.

¹⁴⁸ Mary Anne Stevens, *The Orientalists: Delacroix to Matisse: The Allure of North Africa and the Near East* (New York, N.Y.: Thames and Hudson, 1984): 18.

This oversexed composition characterized mid- and late 19th-century examples of Orientalist painting; however, earlier compositions evidence a more careful attention to the reality of North African society as opposed to the fantasy within the French imaginary, much like French writings. One such composition is presented in Eugène Delacroix's *Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement* (1834) dating only a couple years after the artist's first and only visit to North Africa (Figure 19). Receiving an invitation to join Comte Charles-Edgar de Mornay's 1832 diplomatic voyage to Morocco and Algeria, Delacroix spent six months in the region during which time he took extensive notes and sketches in preparation for later compositions (Figs. 20-22). During this period, Delacroix spent only three days in Algiers but his short sojourn in the Algerian capital led to the creation of his iconic tableau.¹⁴⁹ The dubious creation story of the composition recounts that Delacroix was able to gain access to a women's *harem* through the chief engineer of the harbor of Algiers, Monsieur Poirel, whose employee agreed to allow the artist entrance into his home to receive a quick glimpse into the off-limits interior space.¹⁵⁰ From this experience, the artist then crafted his famous painting of three Algéroises in repose, tended to by a sub-Saharan African servant, within their home. Uninfluenced by colonial photographs which would not appear for another several years, Delacroix presents a composition more aligned with romantic ethnography than with the high Orientalist paintings that would develop with the progression of the French colonial project and propagation of colonial photography.

Within a lush *harem* setting, the three Algerians sit comfortably on patterned rugs while the standing black servant begins to walk off frame, perhaps fulfilling the request of one of the Algéroises. The elaborate settings of the space, featuring intricately tiled walls, richly colored textile drape, luxurious pillows, and cliché hookah pipe, all appeal to the French ideal of the exotic

¹⁴⁹ Assia Djebar, *Women of Algiers in their Apartment* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 133.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 134.

Orient. Equally as exotic to the French, the elaborately dressed female figures add to the lavish scene but do not possess the same explicitly sexual energy as Algerian women in later Orientalist photographs and paintings. The left-most figure leans nonchalantly against two stacked pillows, meeting the gaze of the French viewer, but she does not exude overt sexuality. Rather, her sensuality is suggested more subtly through her half-reclined pose, impartial yet direct gaze veiled beneath the shadow of her turban, and sumptuous costume. In contrast, the other two Algéroises appear nearly neutral in terms of sexuality. One sits cross-legged and the other with her arm propped on one knee as they turn towards each other, as if in conversation. Yet, the women remain silent, frozen in time and space by the intrusive French gaze and the artist who preserves their images if not their voices. Unlike the reclining figure, these two do not acknowledge the French viewer, which lends the painting a degree of voyeurism. However, this foreign gaze does not exhibit the same eroticizing undertone present in later imagery. In this way, Delacroix's painting represents a starting point for French colonial depictions of Algeria that provides context for later sexually-charged images and evidences the increasingly eroticizing French perception of Algerian women and their dress.

While still relying on the Orientalist ideals of vibrant color and rich detail, along with the trope of the reclining female, *Femmes d'Alger* documents the 19th-century form and style of the two Algerian waistcoats worn by all four figures within the picture plane. The leftmost figure dons the hip-length *ghlila*, which generally aligns with the more elaborate style of waistcoat illustrated in Figures 2-5. The slightly elongated cap sleeves as opposed to shoulder-length sleeves, along with the plain orange silk ground in lieu of a floral silk brocade, represent notable differences between Delacroix's interpretation of the *ghlila* and extant examples of the garment. The additional *passementerie* embroidery on the sleeves and the enlarged *passementerie* buttons also

comprise augmentations of the *ghlila*'s ornamentation, likely exaggerated by the artist for stylistic effects. However, overall, Delacroix's representation of the *ghlila* is consistent with the contemporary materials, cut, and function within the larger interior ensemble. The *frimla* donned by the three figures on the right also align with extant examples. The green *frimla* worn by the central figure appears to be constructed in a silk brocade and correctly frames the woman's chest; however, it lacks the characteristic *passementerie* buttons. As in the case of Delacroix's *ghlila*, his *frimla* exhibits inconsistent embellishments in the form of dangling beaded cords which hang from the two sides of the cropped waistcoat. This central figure appears to wear her blouse sleeves pulled up and secured by the *frimla*, as described earlier by Marçais in 1930,¹⁵¹ as does the rightmost figure. While partially obscured by the Algéroise's arm, the *frimla* of the third figure exhibits a pink silk ground, similar to the *ghlila* in Figure 5, and smaller *passementerie* buttons along its edge. All of these waistcoats, along with the ornate ensembles they make part of, would identify the female models as members of the more elite and affluent section of Algéroise society.

In contrast, the black servant wears a less ornate blue *frimla* as part of an ensemble that closely resembles that of the black slave in Figure 17 and described in Hubertine Auclert's *Arab Women in Algeria*. As in the ethnographic print, the woman wears her modest blue *frimla* overtop a white blouse of seemingly less fine fabric than that of the Algéroises. She also dons a blue and red striped wrapper around her waist, knotted at the front, instead of the voluminous Algéroise *seroul* pants. The silver jewelry worn by the servant along with her more elaborate head wrap represent exaggerations to the costume, as the artist added to the other women's costumes. Despite these creative liberties in costuming, Delacroix's painting exhibits a sensibility to differentiations in costume within the economic and racial distinctions of Algéroise society that more closely

¹⁵¹ Marçais, *Le costume musulman*, 102.

aligns with ethnographic lithographs (Figs. 10, 16, & 17) than with Orientalist photographs (Figs. 11 & 12).

Whereas depictions in later decades of French colonial era reduce Algerian women and their clothing to a singular compacted sexual object, Delacroix's painting presents both the Algéroises and their interior ensembles in a relatively neutral light. Indicating the artist's apparent interest in the Algéroise costume, pastel and watercolor studies produced by the artist suggest his deeper fascination with Oriental dress than even the women themselves (Figs. 20-22). Each of the studies present nondescript female figures wearing carefully rendered costumes along with the artist's notes on color for each item of apparel. It is interesting to note, however, that the artist also includes specific names for the women, including Bayah, Mouni and Zora ben Soltane, and Zora and Khadouja Tarboridji despite the relative ambiguity of their faces and figures.¹⁵² In the postface of her collection of short stories titled after Delacroix's work, Assia Djebar compares these labeled names to a "coat of arms," and remarks that the figures are like "[p]encil bodies coming out of the anonymity of exoticism."¹⁵³ Indeed, there is a strange irony in Delacroix's keen notation of the names of his models prior to purposefully withholding those proper names in the ultimate titling of the painting. Counter to the specificity of the name Delacroix collected, the title *Femmes d'Alger* generalizes these unique figures to a generic stand-in for all Algéroises. The stripping of these women of their names symbolizes the larger silencing of Algéroises in the colonial narrative, even if Delacroix does not go the step further to explicitly sexualize the silenced figures. However, the artist does indeed deserve credit for his recording of these women's names, focus on detailed rendering of the women's costumes, and perhaps more truthful representation of the *harem* interior, all of which evidences the artist's genuine interest in and enthusiasm for the reality of

¹⁵² Djebar, *Women of Algiers*, 135.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

these women's lives. In addition, his thorough representation provides contemporary viewers and scholars with a more accurate and less overtly sexual image of an Algerian *harem*, which would unfortunately devolve into fantasy and fetish in later Orientalist depictions.

Compared to the model's ambiguous faces—which were often simplistically sketched or even blurred, in the case of Figure 20—the costuming is rendered with meticulous attention to detail, design, texture, and color. The two watercolor sketches clearly depict each article of clothing and exhibit a careful attention to the differentiation in texture and weight of each individual fabric (Figs. 21 & 22). The three figures in these watercolors are seen wearing the thin *frimla* waistcoat, billowy blouse, long *fouta* belt, and voluminous *seroul* pants. Both the singular model in Figure 21 and the leftmost model in Figure 22 don *frimla* with the characteristic large *passementerie* buttons along the opening. The sketch in Figure 20, completed following the artist's 1832 visit to Algeria, even includes a detailed study of the *passementerie* buttons lining the neckline of the *ghlila*. This sketch is even more detailed than the earlier watercolors in its rendering of the surface quality and mass of the diverse textiles. The artist also clearly details the evil eye motif and decorative embroidery along the elongated cap sleeves of the *ghlila*, which are seen in the final painting. Considering his careful study of costume, Delacroix's work on *Femmes d'Alger* more closely aligns his painting with the French curiosity with the Orient that characterized the nation's earlier interactions with North Africa. This ethnographic interest likely owes itself to the artist's first-hand experience in the new colony before the image of Algeria became so corrupted through the distorted French Oriental lens. While clearly embellished—as well as partially imagined, considering the unclear circumstances in which Delacroix accessed the women's interior space—the tableau displays a degree of faith to reality that gradually erodes as the colonial period progresses.

Regardless of Delacroix's accuracy in what he *did* chose to depict in his composition, the artist's Orientalizing foreign gaze is belied by what he did *not* choose to include in his work. As discussed earlier in the case of constructed photographic compositions, the French artist edited out any evidence of women's labor or domestic activities within this painting. Based purely off of Delacroix's tableau, one would imagine that Algéroises simply lazed around their *harems*, lounging on their sumptuous carpets and pillows while their black slaves tended to their every needs. However as established earlier, the reality was far different as women labored in their homes alongside their servants. In erasing these signs of women's physical activity within the home, the artist quite literally strips them of their agency as he forces them into the stagnancy and submissiveness that more so aligned with French conceptions of Algerian women. Also conspicuously absent from the composition are children who would also have been part of women's daily lives in the *harems*. The word *harem* itself comes from "an Arabic euphemism for the women of the family, particularly the wives," and symbolized not only women but also the family life encompassed in that space.¹⁵⁴ However, the image of children would hardly have matched the exotic, dreamlike atmosphere Delacroix worked to evoke in his composition. The sound and dynamism of children would have disrupted the ethereal haze and stillness Delacroix imposes upon his Algéroises models. So instead, Delacroix, like artists before him and many to come, manipulates the reality of Algéroises' active, bustling domestic lives in service of the false fantasy of leisure and luxury.

In the decades following Delacroix's painting, Orientalism continued to gain prominence as an artistic movement, mounting alongside the increasingly crystallized French colonial conceptions of North Africa as a place of decadence and depravity. Inspired by Delacroix's work

¹⁵⁴ Ziad Bentahar, "Beyond Harem Walls: Redefining Women's Space in Works by Assia Djebar, Malek Alloula and Fatima Mernissi," *Hawwa* 7, no. 1 (2009): 25.

as well as motivated by the need to appeal to the now firmly established Orientalist tastes to secure a place in the Salon of 1870, Auguste Renoir painted his own *La Femme d'Alger* (1870) a few decades later. Recall that the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 provided unprecedented access to North Africa for artists, among other European citizens. Even those artists who did not travel to the colonies now had access to the increasing imagery provided by others who sketched, photographed, painted, or wrote of their travels in North Africa. So, Orientalism was a popular genre at the 1870 Salon; Renoir's painting of a seductive Algéroise in lush costuming and setting comprised only one of dozens of paintings at the Salon exploring Oriental themes.¹⁵⁵ Immersed in the Oriental fervor of this specific moment, Renoir constructed a composition whose overt sexuality and use of sumptuous clothing in service of this eroticism contrasts with the comparative neutrality of Delacroix's early Orientalist work. Unlike Delacroix, Renoir had not yet at this point visited Algeria—his first trip would take place a decade later in 1881—and thus his composition relied heavily on the Orientalist imaginary and unreliable accounts and photographs, rather than first-hand experience, of North Africa.¹⁵⁶

Appropriating the most sexual of Delacroix's relatively sexually neutral figures, Renoir chose the reclining Algéroise from *Femmes d'Alger* as the sole figure for his *La Femme d'Alger*, which he staged in his Parisian studio. Where Delacroix's Algéroise conveyed a soft sensuality, Renoir's exudes overt eroticism. Seemingly seducing the French male viewer, she gazes out from the canvas with eyes half lowered and lips slightly parted. Unlike the comparatively demure pose of Delacroix's model, she openly presents her body to the viewer as an object of sexual desire: her knees sprawl open and her right hand gestures towards her genitalia, concealed beneath the folds

¹⁵⁵ Roger Benjamin and David Prochaska, *Renoir and Algeria* (New Haven: Williamstown, Mass.: Yale University Press; Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2003), 17.

¹⁵⁶ Ann Dumas, John Collins, and Columbus Museum of Art, *Renoir's Women* (London; New York: Merrell, 2005), 62.

of her garments. The identity of the model as the artist's mistress Lise Tréhot only furthers the sexual connotation of this image.¹⁵⁷ Similar to the depiction of Algerian prostitutes as stand-ins for all Algerian women in French colonial photography, the portrayal of Renoir's white French lover as an affluent Algerian women deeply complicates the reading of the image. The artist appropriates an ensemble central to the private, day-to-day lives of Algéroises and places it on the body of a woman who not only would not—and could not—have understood the importance of the costume to Algerian women. Through this action, Renoir entirely disregarded and grossly undermined the narrative of Algerian women's domestic labor, social lives, personal styles, and fashion histories encapsulated within the interior garment. Moreover, the artist seizes these garments as visual tools to heighten the sexual nature of his composition. Even while fully clothed, the model possesses the erotic energy of an entirely nude female figure poised within the fabricated interior setting. The natural sheerness of the blouse, which drapes suggestively between the model's open knees, is emphasized to reveal tantalizing hints at the color and texture of the bare skin below. The blue and red belt rests just below the model's bust line, calling attention to her scarcely concealed breasts. The creases of the ornate *seroul* pants even mirror, perhaps purposefully, the tapered oval shape of the vulva.¹⁵⁸

Despite all of this manipulation in service of erotic Orientalism, the work nevertheless exhibits a careful attention to costume. Indeed, the sheer blouse, fabric belt, voluminous pants, and silk slippers comprising the interior costume of the Algéroise are all present. The only garment seemingly amiss is the woman's waistcoat. While Roger Benjamin identifies the waistcoat as the

¹⁵⁷ Benjamin & Prochaska, *Renoir and Algeria*, 18.

¹⁵⁸ In a manner that more so reinforces the Orientalist fetishization of the Algerian woman than criticizes it, Benjamin notes: “[The model's] sumptuous garments, covering as they do thighs parted right at the viewer's line of sight, are sensual incitements, ruffled textiles standing in for the folded tissues they conceal” (18).

Algerian *ghlila* in his *Renoir and Algeria* (2003),¹⁵⁹ the cut of this specific waistcoat is not consistent with that of either the *ghlila* or *frimla* of this mid 19th-century moment and as established throughout this essay. While the cap-sleeves, decorative *passementerie* buttons, and luxe silk brocade fabric of the garment recall such 19th-century *ghlila* as those illustrated in Figures 2-7, the short waist-length hem of the waistcoat diverges from the consistent hip-length hem of the contemporary *ghlila*. This hem length does correspond with that of the *frimla* (Figs. 14 & 15), but the presence of the sleeves prevents the garment's identification as a *frimla*. Alternatively, through close inspection, I argue that this waistcoat should instead be identified as the Tunisian *farmla*.

Similar to that of the *ghlila* and *frimla*, the *farmla*'s origins lie in the Ottoman occupation of North Africa. The *farmla* originated in the 18th century through a borrowing of fashions from Turkish women living in Tunisia during the centuries-long Ottoman occupation of North Africa, but the waistcoat soon assimilated into local dress practices that continue to present day.¹⁶⁰ Like in Algeria, the tradition of elaborately embroidered women's waistcoats has been historically concentrated along the country's coast, with the city of Raf-Raf receiving the greatest portion of Western scholarship on Tunisian women's waistcoats to date due to its especially richly embroidered bridal costumes.¹⁶¹ Embroidered by a *ma'allema*, or female embroiderer,¹⁶² the *farmla* was commissioned by a bride's family for her wedding ceremony and donned by the bride on the second day of the wedding, called *jelwa*.¹⁶³

Cross-analyzing the 19th-century *farmla* examples (Figures 24 & 25) with the vest worn by Renoir's *La Femme d'Alger*, one notices the similarity between the two garments' "winged"

¹⁵⁹ Benjamin, *Renoir and Algeria*, 20.

¹⁶⁰ Musée national des arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie, *Noces tissées, noces brodées: parures et costumes féminins de Tunisie; exposition* (Paris: Editions Joël Cuénot, 1995) : 92

¹⁶¹ Caroline Stone, *The Embroideries of North Africa* (London: Longman, 2003): 157.

¹⁶² Gillow, *African Textiles*, 147.

¹⁶³ "Raf-Raf Bridal Outfits (Tunisia)," Textile Research Center Leiden.

sleeves, a characteristic aspect of the Tunisian waistcoat.¹⁶⁴ In both of these cases, the garment's sleeves are ornamented with gold *passementerie* in a similar linear design with decorative edge along the sleeve (Fig. 24). While the surviving *farmla* examples are constructed on a pink silk ground and Renoir's waistcoat appears in a red and gold silk brocade, the length and cut of the waistcoat in the painting is far more congruous with that of the *farmla* than that of the *ghlila*. In fact, another *farmla* example from the late 19th to early 20th century almost exactly replicates the curved center opening lined with large gold *passementerie* buttons of the waistcoat illustrated in Renoir's painting (Figure 26). The misrepresentation of the *farmla* in place of the *ghlila* could have also come as a result of the declining Algéroise waistcoat tradition which ultimately disappeared by the late 19th century. It is important to note, however, that this should not excuse Renoir in his mistaken depiction of Algéroise dress but should rather provide context for the circumstances that allowed for such a mistake. As discussed earlier in the impact of French colonialism on Algerian fashions, both the wearing of *ghlila* and *frimla* by Algéroises declined as the French textile industry usurped the local one and as the French continued efforts to assimilate the indigenous populations into European fashions. Considering this, it is likely that examples and images of the *farmla* would have been more readily available to French painters, like Renoir, as the Tunisian waistcoat practice persisted throughout the 20th century (Figure 27), even surviving into the 21st century.

Regardless, in conflating these two distinct women's waistcoat traditions—whether intentionally or unintentionally—Renoir and his *La Femme d'Alger* encapsulate the French disregard for the diversity of dress practices within the North African colonies in direct service to the French Orientalist and colonial agenda. When Renoir and other French artists appropriated

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

North African women's waistcoats within their compositions, they reinforced and reified the alignment of these garments with the Orientalist fantasy of the North African woman. Adopting the form-fitting garments as a means of accentuating the female form, such French artists erased the rich cross-cultural history and remarkable societal significance of distinct North African women's waistcoats, along with the dynamic private lives of the women who wore such garments. In doing this, the intricacy and complexity of the *ghlila*'s and *frimla*'s history along with the experiences and agency of their wearers were entirely reduced and flattened into an essentialized Orientalist symbol and subsequent tool to perpetuate the Orientalist fantasy of the fetishized North African female.

Conclusion:

Reliable sources on Algerian dress prior to and during the French colonial era are undeniably lacking. The complete dominance of the scholarly documentation by the French over the duration of its colonial occupation of Algeria has crafted the one-sided narrative that entirely overwrites and silences North African voices within this history. Even so, the history of North African garments, including the Algerian *ghlila* and *frimla*, along with their female wearers can be reconstructed if we take the time to critically consider the scholarly and visual legacy we have inherited from centuries of European colonial history. Even so, integrating the separate bodies of research on Algerian women's textile histories and French colonialism and Orientalism proves to be difficult and still requires intensive labor to elucidate the experiences of Algerian women. (The separation of this thesis into two parts is a reflection of the disjoint between these two fields of study, despite their interconnected nature.) Regardless of the current disparity between the studies of Algéroises fashions and French colonial/Orientalist ideologies and imagery, this thesis makes effort to unite the two areas of scholarship in a way that keeps women and their everyday

experiences in a prime position. Where both fields tend to marginalize women—even as they discuss objects, imagery, and ideologies that directly impact women—the preceding analysis attempts to place women in an active role.

In looking at the clothing that women wore day-to-day as they went about their domestic activities and socialized with other women, this analysis reasserts the daily experiences and changing fashions of women whose voices and perspectives have been neglected in the larger colonial narrative. Because women's experiences were often not physically recorded, this thesis also looked to colonial records, both written and visual. Such sources were read critically for what information they did offer and were considered carefully for what information was missing. Between the knowledge of women's fashions, however biased, and the lack of women's daily experiences in colonial sources, there exists evidence of women's agency both within their domestic spheres and in shaping the form of their garments to fit their practical functions. All of this argues firmly against the restrictive French representation of Algéroises as inactive, hypersexual figures cloistered within their exotic *harems*.

From European travel and administrative documents dating as early as the late 16th century arises the complicated cross-cultural interactions and generational resilience of Algéroise embroidered waistcoats. Despite the Ottoman origins of the garments, Algerian women actively assimilated the fashions of their colonial powers into their daily dress, deliberately transforming the open-front costume to reflect local tastes and personal practicality. As the *ghlila* became more established within Algéroise everyday fashions, women took control of their garments for their practical function and as a means to communicate within their female-exclusive interiors. The form of the garment changed according to women's needs for both religious and domestic functions, as the waistcoats serviced the women's needs throughout their religious rites and everyday chores.

For example, detachable sleeves during the 16th century allowed Algéroises to wash their hands and arms for religious ablutions. As the centuries progressed, the sleeves of the *ghlila* shortened for women's needs to have their arms free as they tended to their daily cleaning, cooking, and childrearing within their homes. The development of the *frimla* by 1830 also reflected women's needs for a thin, tight harness to further secure their voluminous blouses for domestic chores. Additionally, women's choice of the fabric color and pattern of their waistcoats expressed personal tastes, while subtle differences in the quality of fabrics and embroidery conveyed socio-economic position and elite status. In this way, Algéroises developed their own unique method of communication to assert status and wealth within a largely classless society. In a visual language universally understood amongst the women of Algiers, Algéroises actively shaped their perceptions and power within female spaces, where not even Algerian men would be permitted, let alone the French men who arrived with the colonial era.

With French colonial intervention in Algeria beginning in 1830, the initially harmless French interest in North Africa shifted to a detrimental obsession which disproportionately impacted Algerian women. The French desire to control, modify, and dominate the Algerian people and society which they perceived as inferior manifested in colonial efforts to forcibly assimilate Algerians into French culture. This assimilative ideology included a campaign to Westernize Algerian fashions while simultaneously recording indigenous dress in the form of lithographs, photographs, and paintings. The contradictory nature of this effort resulted in the concurrent decline of Algéroise waistcoats and desperate French attempts to render these fetishized garments in increasingly Orientalized compositions. Whether in travelogues, photographs, prints, or paintings, Algéroises were viewed through a largely sexualized and submissive lens. The use of prostitutes as stand-ins for the everyday Algéroise in both photographs and paintings further

contributed to the eroticized viewing of indigenous women. Throughout many of these images, the Algéroise *ghlila* and *frimla* figured prominently as symbols of women's exclusive harems and the sexual promiscuity believed to be concealed therein. The French travelers, photographers, and painters who crafted these false accounts utterly ignored the sexual neutrality and practical function of these garments within women's lives. Instead, the *ghlila* and *frimla*—which symbolized women's labor, familial and inter-female relationships, personal tastes, fashion trends, and active roles in their private lives—became mere sexual props and tools within the larger colonial and Orientalist campaign. As a result, the broader picture of the French colonial project displays a clear inverse relationship between French colonial dominance and Oriental imagery, which exponentially increased, and Algerian women's agency and waistcoat traditions, with dramatically decreased. The reverberations of this history are encapsulated in the colonial narrative that has been passed down to us, wherein French male perspective and Orientalist fantasy reign at the expense of Algerian women's voices and fashioned realities.

Despite the vantage point and clear biases of the available sources, a history of the evolution of Algerian women's waistcoats and the dynamic role of Algéroises in molding the form, function, and fashions of their clothing can be carefully extricated and brought into focus. In direct contrast to the French narrative of female passivity and sexual submissiveness, Algerian women's waistcoats and their rich histories assert an account of Algéroise lived experiences and active roles in their interior spaces and social spheres throughout the early colonial era. This missing message from French colonial history will remain overwritten and silent if we continue to passively accept the sources bequeathed to us rather than examine them through a critical lens. Thus, the extraction of women's fashion histories and lived experiences from this Eurocentric history represents a crucial step in the process toward a more comprehensive understanding of the colonial era in North

Africa. I therefore advocate for increased scholarship on the reality of women and their changing fashions during this early colonial period to allow for the reinsertion of Algerian women's voices and agency into the art historical canon.

Illustrations

Figure 1



Kaftan, late 19th – early 20th century. Silk, metal wrapped thread; embroidered. H: 47 in.

Metropolitan Museum of Art. Source:

<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/126618?searchField=All&sortBy=Relevance&where=Morocco&what=Costume&ft=kaftan&offset=0&rpp=20&pos=2> Accessed 11 February 2020

From the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. C.I.53.74.2

Figure 1 (detail)

Caption: Interior pocket sewn into lining of caftan and placed behind heavy plastron embroidery. Such embroidery likely served both an aesthetic purpose and a functional one of disguising the deformations of the fabric over time due to objects held within these interior pockets.

Figure 2



Algiers, Algeria, *Ghlila*, 19th century. Silk brocade, printed cotton, gold thread, cotton and metallic thread braid, purls and sequins, brass. H 68 cm (to the shoulders) x L 51.4 cm. Musée d'art et d'histoire du Judaïsme. Source: <https://www.mahj.org/fr/decouvrir-collections-betsalel/gilet-65029> Accessed 8 February 2020

From the Collection of Musée d'art et d'histoire du Judaïsme. 2005.36.009

Figure 2 (detail)



Figure 3



Algiers, Algeria, *Ghlila*, 19th century. Silk brocade, printed cotton, gold thread, cotton braid, brass. H 63 cm x L 52 cm. Musée d'art et d'histoire du Judaïsme. Source: <https://www.mahj.org/fr/decouvrir-collections-betsalel/gilet-65030> Accessed 23 September 2019.

From the Collection of the Musée d'art et d'histoire du Judaïsme. 2005.36.010.1-2.

Figure 4



Algiers, Algeria, *Ghlila*, 19th century. Silk brocade, printed cotton, embroidery and passementerie in gold thread, cotton and metallic thread braid, purls and sequins, plastic. H 59 cm (to the shoulders) x L 49 cm. Musée d'art et d'histoire du Judaïsme. Source: <https://www.mahj.org/fr/decouvrir-collections-betsalel/gilet-58091> Accessed 8 February 2020

From the Collection of Musée d'art et d'histoire du Judaïsme. 2008.22.005

Figure 5



Algiers, Algeria, *Ghlila*, 19th century. Silk brocade, printed cotton, embroidery and passementerie in gold thread, cotton and metallic thread braid, purls and sequins. H 63 cm (to the shoulders) x L 48.3 cm. Musée d'art et d'histoire du Judaïsme. Source: <https://www.mahj.org/fr/decouvrir-collections-betsalel/gilet-58090> Accessed 8 February 2020

From the Collection of Musée d'art et d'histoire du Judaïsme. 2008.22.004

Figure 6



Algiers, Algeria, *Ghlila*, 19th century. Satin silk, printed cotton, gold thread embroidery, cotton and metal thread braid. H 57 cm x L 46 cm (to the shoulders). Musée d'art et d'histoire du Judaïsme. Source: <https://www.mahj.org/en/decouvrir-collections-betsalel/gilet-65027> Accessed 27 September 2019.

From the Collection of the Musée d'art et d'histoire du Judaïsme. 2005.36.007

Figure 7



Algiers, Algeria, *Ghlila*, 19th century. Silk satin, printed cotton, gold thread embroidery, cotton and metallic thread braid. H 67.5 cm (to the shoulders) x L 47.5 cm. Musée d'art et d'histoire du Judaïsme. Source: <https://www.mahj.org/fr/decouvrir-collections-betsalel/gilet-65028> Accessed 8 February 2020

From the Collection of Musée d'art et d'histoire du Judaïsme. 2005.36.008

Figure 8



Algiers, Algeria, *Ghlila*, last quarter of the 19th century. Silk, velvet, printed cotton, cotton and metallic thread braid, purls and sequins. H 60.5 cm (to the shoulders) x L 50 cm. Musée d'art et d'histoire du Judaïsme. Source: <https://www.mahj.org/fr/decouvrir-collections-betsalel/gilet-71949> Accessed 8 February 2020

From the Collection of Musée d'art et d'histoire du Judaïsme. 99.36.003

Figure 9



Algériennes dans la Maison, ca. 1830. Source : Renaudot, M. *Alger: tableau du royaume, de la ville d'Alger et de ses environs*. Paris: P. Mongie Ainé, 1830. (p. 56)

<http://catalog.hathitrust.org/api/volumes/oclc/57298275.html>

Figure 10



After Francois Hippolyte Lalaisse (French, 1812-1884), *Mauresque d'Alger*, 1840-1842. Lithograph. 34.5 x 48 cm. Source: <http://quaibrantly.fr/en/explore-collections/base/Work/action/show/notice/693495-mauresque-dalger/page/1/>

From the Collection of the Musée du Quai Branly. 75.13265

Figure 11



Circle of Marville, *Two Women, one sleeping*, Algeria, salt print, ca. 1854

Source: Jacobson, Ken. *Odalisques & Arabesques: Orientalist Photography 1839-1925*. London: Quaritch, 2007.

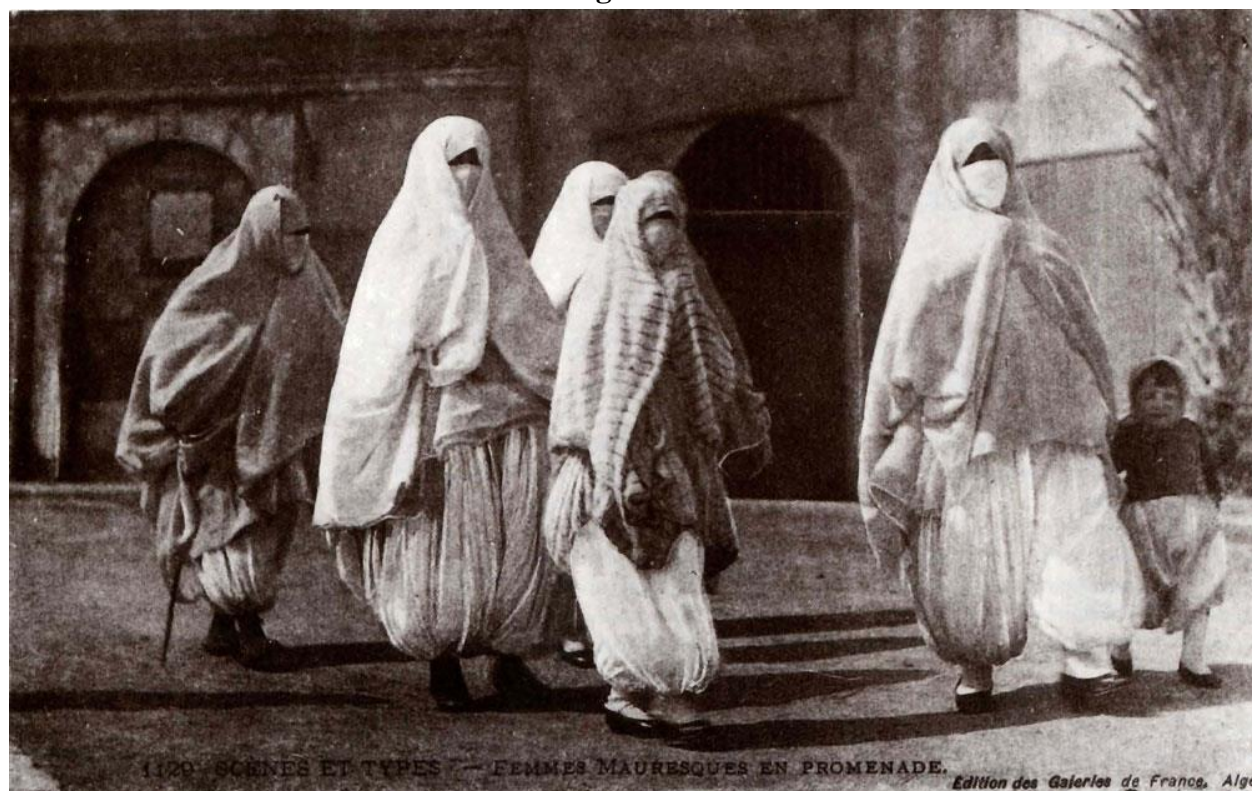
Figure 12



Claude Joseph Portier (French), *Type algérien*, Algeria, salbument print, ca. 1860. 9.9 x 7.2 in.

Source: <http://www.artnet.com/artists/claude-joseph-portier/type-alg%C3%A9rien-3OCyH-ADDbm8V3KNcc46qw2>

Figure 13



Scènes et Types – Femmes Mauresques en Promenade. Editions des Galeries de France, Alger.

Source: Alloula, Malek. *The Colonial Harem.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2012.

Figure 14



(Recto)



(Verso)

Constantine, Algeria, *Farmla/frimla*, 19th century. Silk brocade, gold thread, printed cotton, gold braid. H 20.5 cm x L 48 cm. Musée d'art et d'histoire du Judaïsme. Source: <https://www.mahj.org/fr/decouvrir-collections-betsalel/gilet-52545> Accessed 27 September 2019.

From the collection of the Musée d'art et d'histoire du Judaïsme. 2002.02.006

Figure 15



(Recto)



(Verso)

Algiers, Algeria, *Farmla/frimla*, 19th century. Velvet, printed cotton, gold thread, cotton braid. H 20 cm x L (to the base) 42 cm. Musée d'art et d'histoire du Judaïsme. Source: <https://www.mahj.org/fr/decouvrir-collections-betsalel/gilet-65026> Accessed 30 September 2019.

From the collection of the Musée d'art et d'histoire du Judaïsme. 2005.36.006

Figure 16



Guerdet, L. (B. Villeneuve-Saint-Georges, 1830-?), *Mauresque chez elle*, 1850-63. Engraving. H. 31.7 x L 23.6 cm. Musée d'art et d'histoire du Judaïsme. Source: <https://www.mahj.org/fr/decouvrir-collections-betsalel/mauresque-chez-elle-72831> Accessed 27 September 2019

From the collection of the Musée d'art et d'histoire du Judaïsme. 94.01.001

Figure 17



Théophile Emmanue Duverger (1821-after 1882), *Neger-Sklavin in Algeria*, 1845-1847. New York Public Library. Source: <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e1-130e-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99> Accessed 28 September 2019.

Collection of the New York Public Library, the Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Picture Collection. PC COSTU-Reg-A1

Figure 18



Lorie Caftan karakou algerien Formal Prom Dress 2019. “LORIE Evening Dresses Store.”
AliExpress. Source: <https://www.aliexpress.com/item/4000475212184.html> Accessed 18 April 2020.

Caption: Note the elaborate gold thread embroidery along the center and sleeves of the garment, similar to the earlier *ghlila*.

Figure 19



Eugène Delacroix, *Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement*, 1834. Oil on canvas. H 1.8 m x W 2.29 m. Musée du Louvre. Source: <https://www.louvre.fr/en/oeuvre-notices/women-algiers-their-apartment>

From the collection of the Musée du Louvre. INV. 3824

Figure 20



Eugène Delacroix, *Arab Woman Seated on the Ground and Study of Buttons (Study for “Women of Algiers”)*, c. 1833-34. Pastel on beige paper, 25.5 x 42.5 cm. Musée du Louvre.

From the Département des arts graphiques of the Musée du Louvre.

Source: Benjamin, Roger and David Prochaska. *Renoir and Algeria*. New Haven: Williamstown, Mass.: Yale University Press; Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2003.

Figure 21



Eugène Delacroix, *Women of Algiers (study)*, 1832. Watercolor. H 10 cm x W 13 cm. Musée du Louvre.

From the collection of the Musée du Louvre.

Figure 22



Eugène Delacroix, *Women of Algiers (study)*, 1832. Watercolor. H 10 cm x W 13 cm. Musée du Louvre.

From the collection of the Musée du Louvre.

Figure 23



August Renoir (French, 1841-1919), *La Femme d'Alger or (Odalisque)*, 1870. Oil on canvas. H 69.2 cm x W 122.6 cm. National Gallery of Art, Chester Dale Collection, Washington, DC. Source: <https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.46682.html> Accessed 30 August 2019

From the collection of the National Gallery of Art, Chester Dale Collection. 1963.10.207

Figure 24



Tunisia, *Farmla*, fourth quarter of the 19th century. Moire silk, cotton, metal thread passementerie, silk thread. H 54.5 cm x L (between epaulettes) 76 cm. Musée d'art et d'histoire du Judaïsme. Source: <https://www.mahj.org/fr/decouvrir-collections-betsalel/gilet-50438>
 Accessed 27 September 2019

From the Collection of Musée d'art et d'histoire du Judaïsme. 2006.06.001

Figure 25



Raf-Raf, Tunisia, *Marriage waistcoat (farmla)*, 19th century. Silk with silk embroidery. L: 21 ½ in x W 28 ¼ in.

From the private collection of William D. and Norma Canelas Roth.

Figure 26



Tunisia, *Farmla*, fourth quarter of 19th century, first quarter of 20th century. Silk brocade, cotton, sequins, and cannetilles, silver metallic threads. Lining in silk. H 37 cm x L (to the base) 48.5 cm L (epaulette to epaulette) 47 cm. Musée d'art et d'histoire du Judaïsme. Source: <https://www.mahj.org/fr/decouvrir-collections-betsalel/gilet-57858> Accessed 7 October 2019

From the Collection of Musée d'art et d'histoire du Judaïsme. 2005.06.006

Figure 27



Tunisia, *Farmla*, 20th century. Silk, cotton, wool, metal wrapped thread; embroidered. L: 35.6 cm (14 in). The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Source: https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/85646?searchField=All&sortBy=Relevance&where=Tunisia&ft=* &offset=0&rpp=20&pos=15 Accessed 10 March 2020.

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