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CAN THE TRADITIONAL CRAFTS PURSUED IN MOROCCAN
TOWNS BE ASSIGNED TO THE "INFORMAL SECTOR"? THE
EXAMPLE OF THE MAT WEAVERS OF SALÉ

by

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Since the beginning of the Seventies the term "informal sector" has been appearing in the debate on development policy. This expression defined by Hart (1973) was developed further by the International Labour Organization, Geneva (ILO) under the direction of Sethuraman (1976 and 1981) and was expanded into a strategic concept.

The "informal sector" – a blanket definition, by criteria

The "formal – informal sector" – dichotomy is accepted in its application to the developing countries in the economic sphere, and an attempt is made to incorporate all enterprises in this category. A production unit is redefined and can consist also of only one man (e.g. wage-earner). Despite terminological and conceptual obscurities, the "informal sector" can be defined more closely with the following blanket definition. By "informal production units" is understood enterprises at the lower end of a continuum from the sphere of non-agricultural small and very small (one-man) enterprises which are neglected or disadvantaged by the State. They have neither the security of the law nor governmental protection. The production units are characterized by traditional forms of organization and production. However, a small-scale capitalistic mode of business is becoming established increasingly (cf. Wahnschafft 1984, Herrle 1983); but the conception of the "informal sector" embraces not only crafts and manufacturing, but also services and trade. Emphasis upon the survival economy and the struggle for existence of a class of unprotected persons is a major characteristic of the "informal sector" also.

In addition, an attempt has been made to characterize the production units of the "informal sector" by means of criteria – and here just a single criterion should suffice for classification – namely: small unit-size (fewer than 5 or 10 employees), small scale of production, little capital, simplest or handicraft production methods, little or inadequate schooling, use-related training, no government loans, fairly long working hours, individual or family-operation, ruinous competition, seasonal or semi-permanent production and easy access for job-seekers (cf. Sethuraman 1976 and 1981, Wahnschafft 1984).

The attempts at definition made so far are described in all cases (cf. Elwert et al. 1983) as problematical. In addition, with the aid of the "informal – formal sector" concept theories in the sense of general functional descriptions are formulated, with the aid of which the actions of the persons concerned are explained. At the same time, attempts are made to incorporate a range of activities as wide as possible – ranging from the self-employed businessman to the wage-earner. However, the question must be asked "whether theoretical formulations of this kind imagine – behind the backs of the persons concerned, so to speak, and in misguided imitation of the natural sciences – a world which, despite its fascination for intellectuals, is an illusory world" (Schwemmer 1981, p. 102). Should social science not be conducted in a problem-orientated way, primarily as a continuation of knowledge of the real world upon a systematic, methodological basis, thereby helping to solve our everyday problems? Only a further step should lead – after empirical analysis of several case studies – to the formulation of models and theories, or of invariables. No attempt is made within the scope of this paper to achieve the latter aim; this is attempted elsewhere.

The informal sector – a behavioural approach?

The current debate on the "informal sector" is shifting the attention to some extent to the practical problems of the people concerned, and the directives derived from the models and theories for action for the governments of the countries concerned accordingly turn out to be of a general and not very practical nature.

People are, above all, active individuals who not only react and behave according to a given situation – an action-situation – but will also act when there is a shift or a change in the action-situation, i.e. consciously or unconsciously behave purposefully.

It seems to us to be appropriate to define the "informal sector" according to its origin, i.e. according to its behavioural criterion. The phenomenon "informal sector" only comes into existence, of course, through the search for employment, for additional income, for financial security (e.g. through

combination of different sources of income) and through the struggle to survive within an industry (cf. Elwert et al. 1983). We therefore propose to speak of informal production units if the operators or owners of small and very small units evolve economic strategies and, in so doing, go beyond traditional rules, existing laws, culture-specific "good morals", and thus operate frequently in what is from the European standpoint a grey area between legality and illegality. In addition, we advocate the verification of informal enterprises only by means of empirical investigation, and not their definition according to criteria based upon secondary statistical surveys. Thus, first the action-situation and then the action-strategies of the persons concerned should be reconstructed.

The objection to a behavioural definition – that different tendencies or motivations can be applied only with difficulty in the sense of recognizable differences of behaviour – is untenable, since although tendencies and motivations of people can be of interest, they are irrelevant or survival or for extra income. What is relevant, however, is whether and how far the action, or the achieved effect of the action, is used at all or within a particular industry as a means to the end of survival, or can be interpreted as such a means. How far these actions arise from rational calculation is possibly important for the success of the strategies, but not for their reconstruction. On the basis of the described action-situation and of the action-strategies reconstructed on a rational, teleological basis, for the particular industry studied – such as we wish to attempt for mat weavers, for example – clear directives for action or purposive recommendations can be formulated, for both the public authorities and the craftsmen concerned.

Mat weaving in Salé – a traditional craft

With his description of the interior rooms of some mosques in Fès in the first half of the 16th century, Leo Africanus refers to an important use of rush-mats. The floor is tiled and covered so completely with very beautiful mats that the tiles are not visible. Even the walls are covered with mats up to the height of a man (cf. Leo Africanus, p. 184). Laying out mosques with mats is an old tradition. "According to the Hadiths, Mohammed used a mat of woven palm leaves, and old drawings show that in the early Umayyadian era the mosques were laid out with mats of this kind" (Watt/Welch 1980, p. 294). Nevertheless, many countries of the Islamic world break with this tradition, using carpets and tapestries instead of mats. In North Africa, for the conservative ritual of the Malechites mats are still used. Last but not least, this practice has helped to keep in Morocco, especially in Salé and Tétouan, the mat weavers ('hsairiya' – The Arabic terms are given in the usual French transliteration. In the literature, mat weavers are often also called 'hassara').

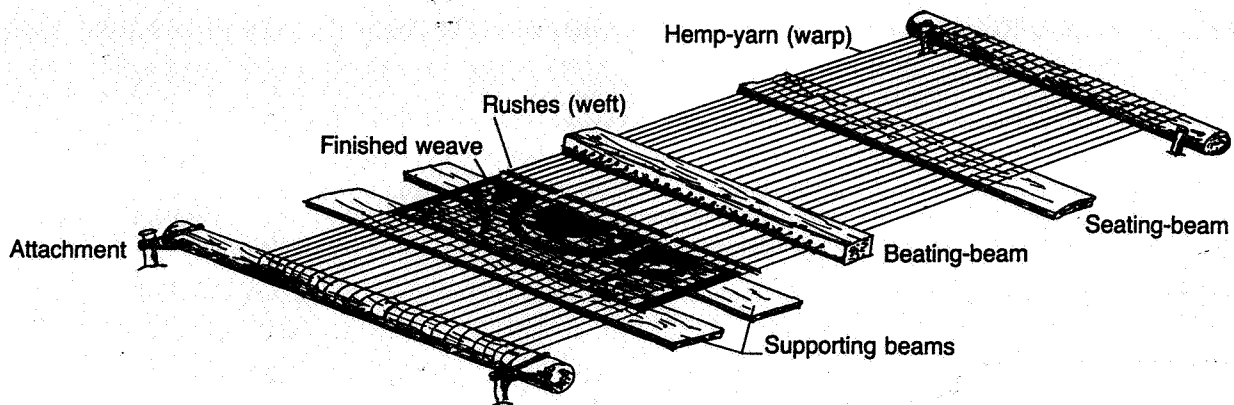


Fig. 1 – *The traditional hand-loom in Salé (cf. Lisse/Louis 1954, p. 64).*

The traditional handicraft of the mat weavers is done – by definition – on the hand-loom, an apparatus of simple construction, consisting of two large round beams of wood, which tension a warp; between them hangs the beating-beam (Fig. 1). Vegetable raw materials are always used. The warp of ordinary mats is made from leaves of the dwarf palm (doum), and that of the better-quality mats from hemp.

Before being worked in, the rushes are first washed, dried and quality-graded by the master craftsman (maalle). The poorer rushes are dyed. The mat weaver formerly used natural dyestuffs and stains; today, aniline dyes have simplified this cumbersome procedure. The number and spacing of the warp yarns depend upon the size and pattern of the desired product. Between one and four workers (sanaa) push the rushes – singly or several at a time, depending upon pattern and quality in each particular case – between the warp yarns, then the craftsmen beat the filling (weft)-material with the aid of the beam on the now completely woven mat. They obtain a great variety of patterns through alternate use of rushes of different colours in different warp-positions. The work requires concentration and is done from the sitting position.

Although hsairiya-workshops differ, in each case, according to the size of the production unit, from knowing all of the workshop it is possible to outline a structure of the work-rooms in the Medina of Salé which is typical of the industry. The hand-loom does not require any great amount of materials, it is true; but a relatively large amount of space is needed, because the warp has to be tensioned over at least one-half or the full length of the desired product. The “typical workshop” has two hand-looms and the appropriate equipment for dyeing the rushes (Fig. 2).

Up to the beginning of the 20th century, the mat weavers of Salé were organized in a ‘hanta’ (guild). This was headed by an ‘amin’, who was in

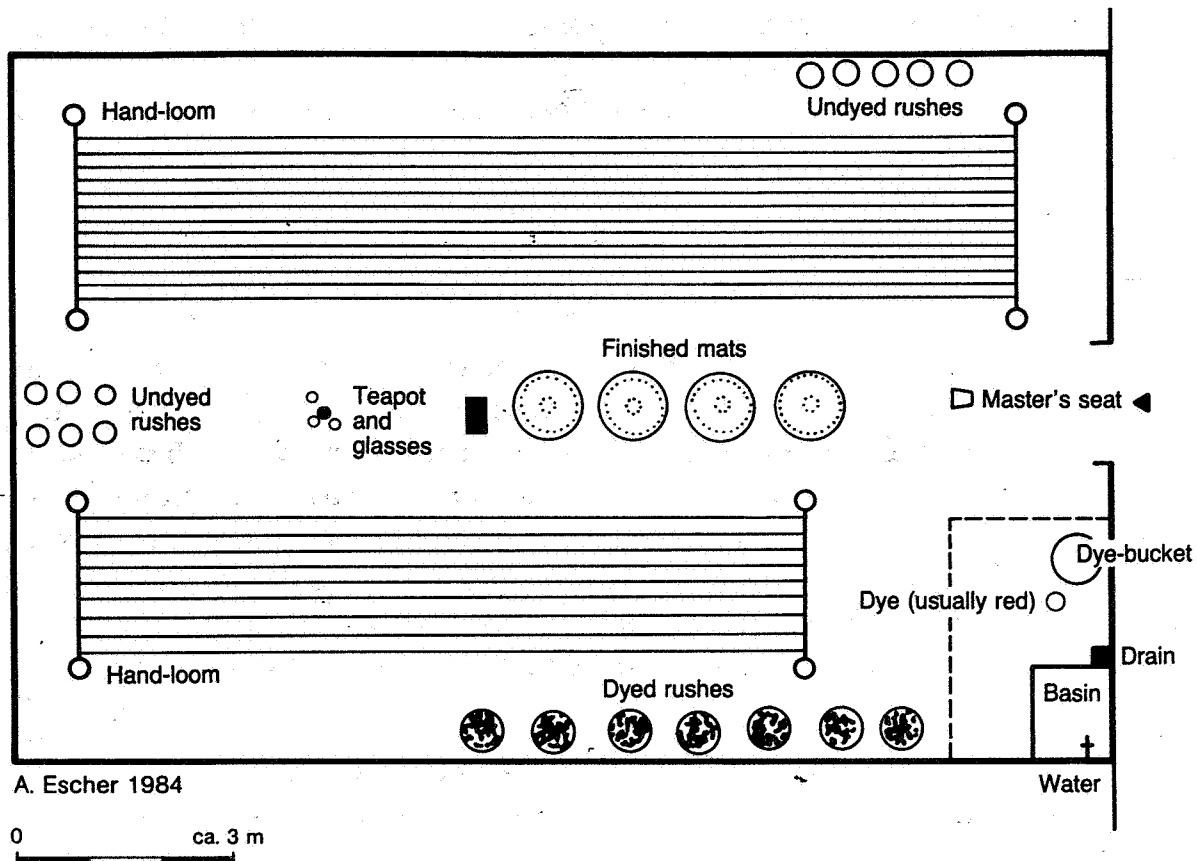


Fig. 2 – A typical work-room of the mat weavers in the Medina of Salé.

contact with the authorities in the towns, represented on the market by the ‘muhtasib’ (market steward). In addition, the amin settled many technical and social problems of the craftsmen.

The important raw materials market of the *hsairiya* was traditionally controlled by two different systems. The traditional ‘dallal’-system was responsible for the warp-material, while for the much more important raw material, the rushes, a procedure had evolved which secured a particular share of the raw material for every *hanta* member. The rushes from a particular harvest-area (defined for Salé) were distributed between all of the masters; it was not possible for dealers to monopolize the raw materials.

“La récolte de jonc des environs Mehdiâ constitue la ‘*qesma*’ qui se partage entre les patrons de Salé . . . Cette récolte est faite par un agent, *hâdi* ou *jâri*, commis par la corporation des nattiers de Salé à l’achat, à la garde et au partage entre les artisans. Cet agent reçoit le jonc qui lui apportent les *compagnards*” (Ricard 1925, pp. 114/115). [Mehdiâ is a small harbour-town north of Salé; ‘environs de Mehdiâ’ presumably means the whole Rharb-area in so far as it was stocked with rushes before being developed for agricultural use by French

colonists. 'qisma' = partition, distribution, division, part, share; lot (decided by God), fate, destiny – cf. Wehr 1976, p. 80.]

The traditional economic system (dallal and qesma) guaranteed the livelihood of every mat weaver. Free market competition did not exist in the traditional society.

The behavioural situation of the Salé mat weavers

At the beginning of the 20th century the mat weavers of Salé are already breaching the traditional rules of the hanta by buying-in raw materials at other places also (cf. Ricard 1925, p. 115). The extra requirement of rushes is due to increasing demand at the beginning of the protectorate. The coloured mats from Salé could be sold all over Morocco, after the country had been pacified and the infrastructure of communications had been enlarged. In addition, the European population made a not inconsiderable contribution towards the sales. The number of hsairiya-workshops accordingly grows again, following

Table 1 – Growth of hsairiya-workshops in Salé

Source	Year	Work-rooms	Masters	Workers (+ apprentices)	Footnote
Miège 1959, p. 179	1865	25 (29)	–	250	a)
Miège 1959, p. 181	1872	16	–	100	a)
Ricard 1925, p. 114	1912	27	–	–	
Brown 1976, p. 131	1913	30	41	200	
Ricard 1925, p. 114	1922	51	56	–	
Massignon 1924, p. 88	1924	–	35/49	143	b)
Ricard 1934, p. 426	1934	–	40	150	c)
Baldoui 1940, p. 407	1940	50	–	200	
Naciri 1963, S. 68	1962	65	–	500	d)
Own record 1983	1983	22	21	70	

- a) For these figures, account must be taken of the fact that they relate to Salé and Rabat. It is noted that most of the workshops are in Salé. For the figure for the year 1945, Miège cites a report by R. F. de la Regnera. This gives in this year for Rabat 4 hassara, so Salé must be assumed to have about 25 workshops (cf. Miège 1959, pp. 179 and 180).
- b) Massignon (1924, p. 27) states "35 hassara". This figure – like most of the data in Massignon's report – was obtained from the muhtasib in charge. In brackets, "49 hassara" is stated, with the note: *référé à l'étude sur les patentes* (Massignon 1924, p. 27).
- c) Ricard (1934, p. 426) also notes: "*Cette industrie, qui a vu doubler en dix ans son effectif, est en ce moment stationnaire, mais non en péril.*"
- d) The figure of 65 workshops in the year 1962 seems rather on the high side, since only 21 workshops are noted on the map "Réparation de l'Artisanat" (Naciri 1963, p. 65).

collapse before the turn of the century in the period following the beginning of the protectorate (Table 1). Owing to their high quality, beautiful colours and richly varied patterns, mats from Salé are in demand in all parts of the country. The increase in the number of production units is accompanied by loss of the hanta-discipline. With further increase of production and problem-free marketing, this does not have any noticeably unfavourable consequences. According to the available data, the number of units remains constant up to the end of the Second World War, after which the sales situation deteriorates and in the Sixties additional problems arise, considerably worsening the situation of the mat weavers.

The warp, which was formerly produced by craftsmen and delivered to the mat weavers by dallala, is sold nowadays by dealers who import hemp yarns and the doum-warp is produced by factories in Safi or Casablanca. However, dealers sell not only the warp yarn today, but also the most important basic material, the rushes. The qesma system no longer exists; a few mat weavers or dealers have acquired the monopoly of the marketing of rushes.

“Actuellement des intermédiaires contrôlent la commercialisation du jonc et par leur entente, interdisent au modeste artisan de se ravitailler directement” (Naciri 1963, p. 68).

Depending upon quality, time of the year and dealer, rushes cost 17.50-20 DH; warp yarns of hemp 13-19 DH a kilo. A hank of doum-yarn costs 3 DH. 1 dirham (DH) \cong 0.40 DM (1983).

Rushes are normally marketed only seasonally, after the harvest, and the individual master must therefore have sufficient capital and storage space in order to be able to buy sufficient raw material for the year's production. The difficulties which arise here are pre-ordained. Wealthy dealers produce large proportions of the marketed raw material and, unlike the small workshops, they have the necessary storage capacity. As a result, they have the rest of the hsairiya in their hands if the latter run out of raw material during the year. Under the traditional system, this was prevented from happening; today, almost all of the workshops have to deal with the problem of procuring rushes (cf. La Vannerie 1978, p. 35). The cost of dyestuff, on the other hand, is negligible.

The most important customer for mats in Salé and other towns is the habous-administration. Orders for the required quantity are given by the nadir (habous-administrator), as follows: At a meeting convened annually, the workshop-managers place their bids (on paper slips) for the required items and the best bid gets the contract. This procedure results in many small workshops having their bids reduced, owing to their lack of capital and the resultant raw material bottlenecks. The orders are usually accepted by only a few workshops, which then pass on proportions of the raw materials to other units.

Apart from insignificant exports, the mat weavers' customers are confined mostly to the domestic market. In addition to the habous-administrations, the traditional customers include craft industries and poorer groups of the population. Marketing opportunities for the hsairiya products have in the meantime sharply declined and it is cheaper nowadays for the poorer households to buy imported carpets and plastic coverings or tarpaulins, instead of rush mats. It is not surprising, therefore, that shops which offer mats for sale should also include in their range competing products such as plastic mats, fitted carpets (in rolls), plastic coverings, etc. Mats are being used increasingly only as decoration for cafes and restaurants.

It has not been possible to compensate for loss of the market. This is clearly reflected in the diminishing numbers of workshops. Monopolization of raw materials and of the habous orders have helped to bring about the decline of the craft industry in the towns, and this tendency is reinforced by the rural competition, whose products can today be distinguished only partially in regard to quality and patterns from the production of the towns. The advantages of location in rural areas are obvious, namely cheaper labour and more effective access to raw materials. This causes serious competition, since transport costs can be disregarded.

The behavioural situation has changed fundamentally during the 20th century. Common protection through traditional institutions has been destroyed and the individual craftsmen now has to face ruthless competition.

To counter this, the Moroccan government is attempting to assist and support craft industry selectively – which means that one of the essential criteria for classification of Moroccan craft industry with the “informal sector” is lost. In most towns, handicraft centres have been set up, through which a number of measures (e.g. foundation of co-operatives, order-broking, loans and much else) are to be implemented in practice.

Under this policy, in 1973 under governmental direction a mat weavers' co-operative (Coopérative Artisanale des Nattiers de Salé) was founded in Salé, despite opposition from several craftsmen. The co-operative has its registered office in the building of the Crafts Centre (Ensemble Artisanal) of Salé and has 28 registered members. The co-operative was intended to break up the ossified structures of the market for raw materials and intensify the sale of mats; unfortunately, none of the set objectives has been achieved and today the activities of the co-operative are confined to its chairman's work in the Ensemble Artisanal. Following the policy for craftsmen, in 1982 an amin was “elected”. As one mat weaver remarked sarcastically, his duties amount to no more than conducting the more important visitors around the centre. Significantly, the amin works not as a craftsman, but as a dealer. Although almost all mat weavers say they are members of the co-operative, they point out in the

same breath that this membership is only nominal and is irrelevant to buying – in raw materials, production and marketing; thus, no loans were procured for mat weavers even after the co-operative was founded.

Despite the above-mentioned general conditions, there are still 21 mat weaving units in Salé today. 18 of these production units have their work-room in the Medina and 3 are established in the nearby quarter of Sidi Moussa. 12 units have 3 workers; 5 units employ between 4 and 6 workers and only 4 have between 7 and 9 workers. A comparison of the spatial distribution of the mat weavers in the years 1963 to 1983 reflects the decreasing importance of the industry (Fig. 3). The former concentration of mat weavers in a central square of the Medina, at the Souk el Ghezal, with 8 production units, is now completely broken up; only four hawanit are still used there, as retail shops for mats and other goods. A concentration (5 units) is to be found only to the south of the Kisseria El Jdida, the other units being irregularly scattered over the Medina. The workshops have been forced out, into the residential areas. It is surprising, moreover, that no tendency to remain in one location can be detected; only one unit still exists today in the place recorded by Naciri (1963). It is owned by one of the three dealers who “have the rushes and mats business in the palm of their hand”. Besides his own workshop with 7 workers, Abd-er-Rahman owns a market stall at the Souk el Ghezal. The dealer Abd-er-Rani operates in the same way; he mentions a production unit, a market-‘hanut’ at the Souk el Ghezal in Salé and a shop at the Bab el Had in Rabat as belonging to him. The third dealer (amin) does not run a production unit of his own.

“Traditional workshops”, with the craft passing from the grandfather to the father and the son, could not be shown to exist. Only 5 of the 21 master craftsmen stated that their father had been a mat weaver. All of the workshop-managers are from Salé, and 85 % of the workers give Salé as their place of birth. The ages of the masters lie between 37 and 70 years, averaging 56. Each unit has 1 or 2 hand-loom; only three units run 4 looms.

Selected representative workshops and the action strategies of the masters

Example unit A

The 54-year-old master craftsman has now been working for three years in his hanut in the Medina of Salé. Before renting the work-room for 100 DH a month, he had been weaving mats for several years in Casablanca. The hanut became available on the death of his predecessor, enabling him to carry on the trade in his home-town Salé, with his family. He describes his social situation as very satisfactory – which his financial situation is not, unfortunately! When he took over the hanut, the lessor – one of the three dealers – made it a

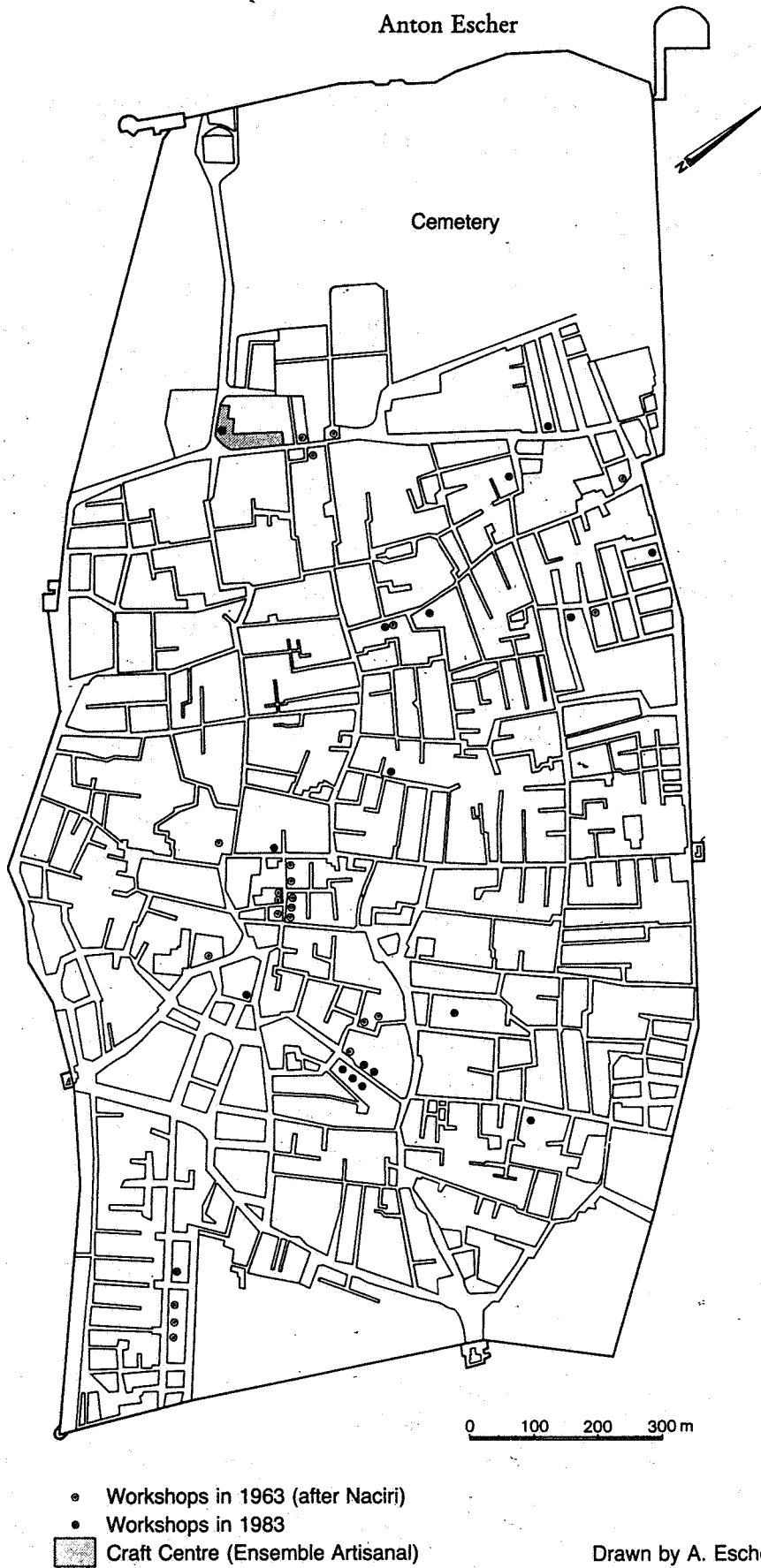


Fig. 3 – Spatial distribution of mat weaving units in the Medina of Salé in 1963 and 1983.

Drawn by A. Escher 1984

condition that the new master should buy his raw materials from the lessor and sell the mats produced to him.

The master sees no possibility of effectively escaping from the dealers' clutches. No other hanut is to be found in the Medina, he said, or else the transfer fee (key money) is too high. He is trying to increase his income by producing more, actually marketing the extra output illegally – despite the agreement – i. e. not through the lessor. Depending upon their age in each case, his six workers, all from Salé and living in Douars on the outskirts of the town, earn 27, 30 or 40 DH a day. In comparison their pay is higher than in other towns of Morocco such as Fès or Marrakech. The hours of work, fixed fairly precisely, are from 0800 to 1700 hours each day, i. e. approx. 8 working hours. The workers' pay is far higher than the nationally guaranteed minimum daily rates in agriculture, and equals or exceeds the corresponding rates of the industrial worker. (Before 1985, the guaranteed minimum daily wage in agriculture was 16.80 DH and it was 18.48 DH thereafter. In the rest of the economy, the rate was fixed at 26.00 DH prior to 1985; today, it is up at 28.64 DH (cf. 'Länderbericht Marokko' 1986, pp. 76/77].) Although the workshop manager has limited scope for action, his workers' earnings are adequate for Moroccan conditions, being above the minimum for subsistence – unlike those provided for the "informal sector".

Example unit B

Even the father of the 50-year-old workshop manager was in charge of the unit as a mat weaver. Although the hanut has room for 2 hand-loom, only one web is worked. The owner himself works on weaving the mats. When work is over, if the employees go home he sorts the rushes and prepares them for the next day's work. He produces only simple and, above all, undyed mats, and pays his two workers only 20 and 22.50 DH/day, respectively. He, too, is completely dependent upon the dealer Abd-er-Rahman, who provides the raw materials and receives the products. In contrast with the preceding example, the master craftsman attempts to survive with a kind of defensive strategy, increasing his own input of work, saving on raw materials (no dyes, for example) and in the workers' pay. But this does not allow him to escape from the dealer and he runs the risk of coming under even stronger pressure if the dealer has difficulties with marketing.

Example unit C

Another master in the same street carries on production with 4 employees working on two looms. In this example, we shall discuss the workers in greater

detail. Actually, the unit operates with 6 workers; 2 workers had left – which is possible in all branches of craft industry, since no fixed contracts exist. If a worker has no desire to work, or finds more lucrative work for the day, he can go after it. The workers need more jobs, because some workshops – like our example unit also – produce for only 6-7 months a year. In spite of the loose working arrangements, a stable relationship is established between the workshop or the master and the workers. Of the workers present, who are 29, 34, 44, and 45 years old and have between 1 and 3, and 10, children, respectively, two of them have already been working for 20 years, one since childhood and the last one already for 7 years in the same workshop. They are satisfied with the daily wage of 30 DH, which is related to the output of mats. Working hours amount to seven or eight hours a day. Usually, no work is done in Friday; although Sunday is the official holiday in Morocco, in Medina they keep to the traditional rules. The above-mentioned example shows that, despite the high fluctuation of the workers (especially migrant workers) a fairly high degree of settledness exists among a portion of them. Thus, the postulated instability of people in the “informal sector” cannot be proved to exist generally among the mat weavers.

Example unit D

One 56-year-old master who has been working for 37 years in the same hanut is following a special strategy. He produces mats only to order; the customer can himself decide the dimensions and patterns and also the colour. After an initial payment has been made he purchases the raw materials. The work is done slowly, because only he weaves. The craftsman is the only person inserting the rushes into the shed, and this has a considerable influence upon the quality of the mat; it is more stable and uniform. Moreover, more striking patterns can be achieved in this way. In normal production, more and more rushes are brought in, in order to speed up the weaving. Since the customer pays for the materials separately, he can calculate his working time completely. The ‘maalleem’ is fully satisfied with his income which, as he expressly stated, he did not wish to discuss. If he has no orders, he does not work. Although the master craftsman has kept a traditional attitude towards the work, his organization of the workshop has been appropriately adapted to the changed activity situation.

Example unit E

The strategy for escaping from the dealers’ clutches which is most promising of success is pursued by a 50-year-old master. For years he tried to hire a suitable place, in a location where rushes grow, in the area around Salé. A few

years ago he found what he was looking for, near Fès; he rented the site for an annual rental of 2000 DH. Now, he does not need to buy the rushes from farmers or dealers any longer, but can harvest the rushes himself with the help of his workers or of casual labour. The master reports enthusiastically how his idea was put into effect. He also buys the warp yarns at a good price through a 'friend' – as the informant calls him – for only 13.50 DH/kg. He has hired the hanut in the Medina inexpensively from habous for 70 DH a month. Outside, in the Sidi Moussa quarter, he runs another workshop. There were two reasons for his choice of this location. In the Medina there are no work-rooms of this kind which can be hired cheaply, since the rentals have risen sharply in the meantime and high key-money charges or other requirements are imposed. In Sidi Moussa he pays only 65 DH/month in rental and no transfer fee or key-money was payable at all, since he is a first-time tenant.

Moreover, wages for the workers recruited there (immigrants!) are lower. He pays each of his four workers in the Medina 30 DH/day; for the same production from the land, the people in Sidi Moussa earn only 22 DH/day. The master's customers are habous, dealers and private individuals. The master is also a member of the co-operative; but as he emphasizes, the co-operative is useless – at present, at least. The master must be described as a capitalistic businessman not only because of his strategy, but also owing to his attitude. We can by no means speak here of an "informal production unit" in the sense of the traditional definition.

Should the mat weavers of Salé be assigned to the "informal sector"?

Owing to the changed behavioural situation, such as loss of the traditional economic organization, competition and much else, the mat weavers have evolved modes of capitalistic behaviour or action strategies, in order to ensure their survival in the industry. Traditional inefficiency has been followed by profit-orientated action.

It was possible to show that the mat weavers behave purposively regarding the survival (or increased earnings) of their workshops. Thus, on the basis of the behavioural definition of the "informal sector" the traditional craft in Morocco could today be assigned to this sector.

Various criteria of the conventional definition of the "informal sector", too, are applicable to the mat weavers. However, the Moroccan government concerns itself selectively with the traditional craft, and one of the essential criteria for the "informal sector" is therefore lost. Even if a few officials mainly line their own pockets or exploit their position, the many different kinds of State support are beginning to be effective. One cannot speak of a dichotomy between crafts and industry in Moroccan towns. The relationships between

the two sectors are many and varied (workers and primary products) and the transitions between them are fluid. Many traditional elements, such as the dallal market and the qesma system no longer exist, and private tradition has been largely broken up, it is true; but the craftsmen have been able "in lively continuation of old cultural traditions, to preserve even today their distinctive individuality, specific to their cultural area" (Wirth 1985, p. 221).

The fundamental re-orientation towards competitive business cannot be explained with metaphysical references, as for the appearance of productive capitalism in the Western world (cf. Weber 1981); it springs primarily from the necessity to survive materially or continue to exist in the mat-weaving trade.

In traditional craft industry in Morocco, one generally does not find the "class of unprotected" – who are to be encountered, however, in the service and small business sectors. For the reasons cited above, in considerations of development policy (for Morocco, at least) crafts and manufacturing should not be discussed together with services and small businesses, but separately.

Recommendations for the public handicrafts authority and for the individual hsairiya-workshop

If, on the other hand, we also turn to incorporating traditional craftsmen in the conception of the "informal sector", then very successful strategies for action of some mat weavers could nevertheless be reconstructed – despite the unfavourable action-situation. With a knowledge of the traditional organization and of the present-day action-situation of the mat weavers, and adopting and developing the positive individual approaches, the following recommendations can be formulated for both the public handicrafts authority and for the individual workshop:

- The method of allocation for habous orders should be changed. At least one-half of the orders should be shared equally between all production units, at a fixed price based upon the cost of raw materials. Every workshop would then have an assured basic income to fall back upon and an effect comparable to the qesma system is thus achieved.
- For the most important raw material – rushes – the possibility should exist of storage in the Crafts Centre (Ensemble Artisanal). Whether the Government or the craftsman concerned is owner would have to be settled in each individual case, possibly through special craft-loans.
- Selective publicity and advertising could enlarge the market for the mat weavers. A change of products, in particular, (e.g. beach-mats and table serviettes) would help to open up the tourist market. A reference to the traditional and religious connections could also result in increased sales among the domestic population (e.g. prayer-mats).

- The workshop manager should rent land for rush-growing, in order to exclude raw material dealers. Loans for annual tenancy will be provided by the handicrafts authority.
- The masters should attempt to rent work-rooms either from the habous-administration or outside the Medina.
- Some workshops should specialize in high-quality mats.
- Different units should produce smaller, high-quality mats which can also be carried as hand-luggage in aircraft. This is important for selling to tourists!
- Workshops situated in main streets should also sell direct to customers.

The recommendations for the individual unit must be modified and adapted according to the individual production structure in each particular case.

The mat weavers are not among the expansive traditional craftsmen in Morocco, it is true – the potters who make ceramics, for example (cf. Escher 1986); but with a constructive policy aimed at preventing any monopolization, and reminding the population increasingly of the material elements of tradition, the mat weavers will continue to be able to claim a secure place in Moroccan society.

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