FEMININE STRATEGIES IN MAGHREBIAN KINSHIP.
MOROCCAN WOMEN NEGOTIATING ARRANGED MARRIAGES

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Patrilineal kinship and gender construction

Most research on patrilineal kinship in the Maghreb has not paid much attention to the influence of women in society. The female presence has been pushed into the background or minimized in studies that analyzed certain spheres of society in which women participate only indirectly or with little visible power. Women were considered by many to be subjects that could legitimise or question the system, not by means of their own decisions, but rather of those that others took for them.

Segmentarism\(^1\), which went into unilinear filiation in greater depth, considered that women neither determined the reality nor were able to transform it since they were excluded from the patrilineal kinship structure (Evans-Pritchard 1949; Goody 1961, 1990; Gellner 1968, 1969, 1973, 1986; Hart 1965, 1973, 1976, 1984; Favret 1966; Jamous 1981, 1992, 1993; Maher 1974, 1978). Women's contribution to the creation of new ties through marriage was not analyzed either.

The perspective of those that studied tribes as an ideology\(^2\) varied somewhat, since it was easier for these to approach individuals (Eickelman 1976, 2002; Peters 1965, 1967, 1987; Vinadgrov 1973, 1978; Seddon 1973, 1976, 1979; Waterbury 1973, 1975; Holy 1979, 1991; Dresch 1984, 1986; Munson 1989, 1993). Nevertheless, their main objective was to understand the relationship between the tribes and the State, which once again meant they distanced themselves from the study of women.

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1 The strictest segmentarists believed that what maintained the order in societies without a State was the segmentarist lineage in an ordered anarchy with no hierarchy: all the segments were equal. Segmentarist society, under the rule of unilinear descent, ensured that property was inherited through the agnatic line. In addition, it was taken for granted that the internal order was maintained without the support of specialised political institutions.

2 In their opinion, the only way to introduce the model of segmentarist lineage in their studies was by incorporating it in the way it was understood culturally and socially by the Maghrébis themselves taking it as a "conscious model". Therefore, in this line of research, these investigators observed the discourse on which kinship was erected: it was essential to contrast how the natives considered themselves, what they said and what they did.
The same occurred with the interpretivists (Rosen 1973, 1979, 1984, 1987; C. Geertz 1979, 1994; H. Geertz 1979; Combs-Shilling, 1989) and at a theoretical level, this did not change until P. Bourdieu (1972), with his research carried out in the Algerian Kabilia, introduced a new variable in the analysis of kinship - cognatism, which was adopted by anthropologists such as Conte (1987, 1991), Boné (1991, 1994) and Copet-Rougier (1994) in the Saharan strip. Prior to the Bourdian contribution to the study of kinship in North Africa, most of the literature had been influenced by the presumed relationship between patrilineality and patriarchy. Since men controlled and dominated women from the kinship sphere, studying the public sphere meant analyzing it from the male perspective. These assumptions, as we shall see, were also questioned by another anthropologist, Abu-Lughod (1987), in her studies on the powers and strategies of Berber women from the Siwa Oasis in Egypt.

This notable feminine invisibility, evident in the above studies, was also caused by the fact that women were considered to occupy marginal (domestic) areas in society. This idea was borne out by other kinship characteristics of North African societies apart from patrilineality, such as patrilocality, preferential endogamy, the extended family and polygynous marriage.

Apart from the influence each of these characteristics has on women in the Berber and Arab kinship in North Africa (Aixèla, 2000:127-147).

5 Their analyses of tribal societies sought other elements that explained the way in which social networks were built up, in addition to those provided by kinship, and delve deeper into the aspect of the tribe as ideology. Their perspective gave a greater protagonism to the individual and their identity.

4 Tunis is an exception in the Arab-Muslim world since after Independence the Madjala was passed which established monogamy as the legitimate form of marriage.

5 This article establishes some comparisons in sub-Saharan Africa in the footnotes, since cultural comparisons enrich the debate. Copet-Rougier (1985:153) who carried out studies among both North African and sub-Saharan societies pointed out that three levels of analysis could be established as regards the effects of patrilineality on the invisibility of women, and these levels are more distinct when this kinship coincides with a patrilocal residence: 1. la norme, définissant les rôles et les statuts sociaux, laisse une position inférieure à la femme qui n'intervient pas du point de vue juridique dans une société essentiellement masculine; 2. la pratique sociale confère une certaine autonomie féminine dans un domaine pourtant décisif pour les hommes: la circulation des femmes; 3. les représentations symboliques révèlent l'existence d'un univers exclusivement féminin sur lequel les hommes n'ont aucune prise. The first level might be widely accepted by the majority of investigators but the second and third are debatable. The second because it still starts from Levis Strauss's idea of the exchange of women, and the third because it recognizes an autonomy of women that a large number of the studies overlooked and which Copet-Rougier (1985:179) probably perceived because it was a system that she admits was "forte patrilinearité et bilatéralisme coexistent". Journet (1985:18) showed how the patrilineal, patrilocal Diola tribe of Casamance in sub-Saharan Africa functioned: "en l'absence d'autorité politique centralisée, des institutions villageoises (classes d'âge et de sexe, initiations...), associées à un système religieux extrêmement complexe et diversifié, assuraient la cohésion et le contrôle social, par l'intermédiaire des cultes rendus aux ukun, génies tutélaires, spécialisés, hierarchisés et sexualisés".
patrilineality was considered the factor that favoured male "domination". Since continuity was ensured through the paternal line, the male figure was exalted as having social prestige and being the representative of the group.

Hence, the significance of the male line had a great impact on married couples since many preferred to have sons rather than daughters (Maher, 1974) because of the advantages for the individual, the family and the community as a whole (Laoust-Chantreux, 1990):

- sons make it possible to perpetuate the group and the family name,
- they revive the family memory,
- they enable property to be gathered within the family,
- they take the father's place if he becomes ill or dies,
- they collaborate in the financial support of the group,
- they maintain, increase or re-establish the family honour.

This, in many cases means that women are pushed into the background in the public sphere, especially as regards decision-making, their visibility in the maintenance of the group, their participation in tasks related to agriculture or farming, and their complete lack of influence in enhancing the family honour (although they are related to loss of honour). The wide-spread assumption emerged that women lacked power, authority and autonomy in these patrilineal descent groups.

In addition to these arguments, used to explain feminine invisibility from the patrilineal perspective, there was the presumption that Arab and Berber societies were patriarchal.

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6. Bourdieu himself, who had underlined the importance of women in kinship systems in North Africa, published a text in 1990 in which he opted for the existence of a universal "masculine domination". Moreover, for other anthropologists, such as Shapiro (1987), who investigated in other contexts, the patrilineal systems were not only ways of organizing kinship but real political systems that governed the relationships between the sexes. Shapiro states (1987:304) "Northwest Amazon villages are organized around the principles of patrilineal descent and sexual opposition... The village is divided in two zones for each sex". And Shapiro adds (1987:308) "If patrilineal descent in the Northwest Amazon can be said to constitute a political system, the relationships of power and authority it regulates are not those between descent groups, but those between sexes".

7. For example, Meillassoux (1986:17) based on his ethnographic experience in sub-Saharan contexts believed that masculine superiority was made explicit, on the one hand, because men were warriors and women "the cause of war" and, on the other, in the patrilineal domestic community "brothers constitute the social run, not sisters".

8. Thus, the relationship between father and son was the basis for reproduction and cohesion of the group, as Turner (1969:233) illustrated in sub-Saharan Africa in the case of the Gisu "on the one hand, patrilineal values are reinforced through the affirmation of the son's adult male status in the symbolic environment of this patrilineal homestead, values which signify include the authority of father over son; while, on the other hand, that very son is endowed with higher jural-economic status, obtains extended rights over land, and sounder economic base for his marriages...".

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“Patriarchality”, as mentioned above, implies the total dominance of men over women through their control of political, economic, religious and family institutions. This meant that women were socially constructed in masculine terms based on certain parameters that classified them in a domestic, family sphere since that was the context in which feminine identity was constructed, the sphere that determined their “social” activities and interests.9

This categorization of women in the family was crucial in explaining the anthropological disinterest in their leeway for action, and was one of the reasons why women’s image of subordination and dependence on men, in general, and those of their group, in particular, was reinforced.

The term “patriarchal” has hampered the visibility of women’s contributions to kinship. Examples of such contributions are the practical cognatism demonstrated in preferential endogamy, marriages arranged by women, or the social recognition women receive for their participation in the family structure itself (for example, the right to a dowry or the right to an inheritance). On the other hand, the female influence in decision-making was considered non-existent, despite the fact that, as Abu-Lughod (1987) pointed out, women had developed strategies that enabled them to transform their everyday environment.

The impact of feminism on anthropology in the 70s questioned patriarchality as a form of social organization and its connotations regarding the influence it exerted on women. The work of various authors such as Rosaldo and Strathern led to a review of female participation10. The controversial patriarchality was abandoned under the premise that women generated their own social strategies in both favourable and adverse contexts.

This affirmation was applied to kinship studies irrespective of the type of family structure and geographical context involved. This premise operated on the fact that despite any possible influence of patrilineality or patrilocality (in the case of Arabs or Berbers) women belonging to “dominant groups” might have greater social prestige than many men.

Despite the criticism showered on the concept of “patriarchality”, North African societies, past and present, have continued to be considered patriarchal by some people. In fact, the discourse may be said to have been reaffirmed both in Africa and in Europe, and is partly responsible for the invisibility of women11. It is based on a patrilineality which established that rights are passed down through the male and not the female line, thereby tending to make men

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9 Social in inverted commas because another of the presumptions made about women referred to their lack of group perspective, since their interests were all supposedly developed exclusively within the family framework.

10 Regarding the impact of feminism and gender analysis on anthropology see Aixela (2005a).

11 In this respect, see Aixela and Planet (2004) and Aixelà (2004). A large proportion of these discourses are linked to emancipatory feminism.
more visible than women, and on a patrilocality that collaborates in the
presumed female dependence, since newly married couples live in the
husband's community thus imposing the “rupture” of the wife's family ties
during the time the marriage lasts.\(^\text{12}\)

The following is a brief review of some of the anthropologist who
considered that patrilineality and patriarchality are characteristics of North
African societies.

Tillion (1967) describes the situation of Maghrebi Muslim women from
a comparative, Mediterranean, evolutionist perspective, in a tone of social
denunciation focused on a patriarchal family that causes repression. Decades
later, Kandiyoti (1992, 1995), who had done interesting work on feminism,
political parties, new nation-states or gender construction in the Egyptian
and in general Arab case, pointed out that Arab-Muslim societies are distinguished by
a patriarchy that kept women oppressed. Combs-Shilling (1989:60) believed
that patrilineality and patriarchy were part of the foundations of Islam because
the kinship system “defines sociobiological affiliation through the male line
(patrilineality) at the same time that it invests ultimate authority in males
(patriarchy)”. Lacoste-DuJardin (1993:184) also considered that in the post-
colonial Maghreb, states were rapidly replacing patrilineality, although
the family was becoming the institution that preserved patriarchal values “the new
families may be different and have freed themselves from patrilineal structures,
but at heart, the roles and functions linked to differences of sex or age are still
those inherited from patrilineality”. Saadawi (1982a, 1982b) denounced the
oppression exerted by patriarchy over Arab women. Finally, Naamane-
Guessous (1992:17, 39) described the submission of Tunisian women before
and after marriage due to their patriarchal/male dependence and the fact that
they are confined to the home.

These studies identify patriarchy and patrilineal kinship as the factors
that favour the male domination of Maghrebi women. However, this article
defends the position that renouncing the concept of “patriarchy” and reviewing
feminine practices in these patrilineal descent groups may facilitate the analysis
of aspects that normally remain concealed, such as the way in which Arab and
Berber women handle their family relationships, or feminine practices related to
the establishment and consolidation of marriages\(^\text{13}\).

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\(^{12}\) Others believe this subordination is due to the close relationship between gender and religion,
and gender and Islamic law. This aspect has not been discussed in this section since it would
detract attention from the objective of this debate. However, studies such as those by Nasir

\(^{13}\) As I argued in my doctoral thesis (Aixelà, 2000), the influence of kinship on gender
construction is still developing despite any possible simplification of the family structure that
may have occurred since the colonial period: women, with their commitment to the family
structure, are the ones that perpetuate and strengthen the group, thus ensuring its continuity.
Feminine social strategies and powers in patrilineal descent groups: marriages arranged by women

The objective of this section is to make visible the influence of women (Arabs and Berbers) in patrilineal kinship. To do this, some strategies and spheres of power will be discussed. Some are to be found in ethnographic studies and others are taken from my own personal ethnographic experience. Outside the narrow margin that women were supposedly meant to occupy in these patrilineal filiation (and also patrilocal residence) groups, some ethnographers have found the existence of feminine strategies that counteracted the masculine preponderance. We refer specifically to Bourdieu and Abu-Lughod.

Indeed Bourdieu's contributions concerning Maghrebi societies have been fundamental in matters such as kinship, honour and spatial distribution according to sex. I will mention just two of his valuable contributions: cognaticism and marriages arranged by women. With regard to cognaticism, Bourdieu (1980:31) described the kinship in Kabilia as an official patrilineal kinship embodied in a practical cognatic kinship. In his view, marriage to a first cousin was, rather than a rule, a game of strategies forming part of the social reality. He considered that patrilineal genealogies responded to the need to give the official version of a clearly cognatic situation. This cognatic kinship was shown when a preferential endogamic marriage took place: if a marriage to the daughter of the father's brother was proposed as being preferential (especially among Arab groups) it was because the kinship transmitted by women was being recognised: "la cousine parallèle patrilinéaire, la plus masculine des femmes...". Bourdieu's second ethnographic contribution was that women arranged marriages. As he pointed

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14 The 2004 Reform of the Mudawana, similar to that of the Tunisian Madjala in 1936 (except that Morocco maintains polygyny and does not recognise the right to abortion) is another factor that may provide women with more leeway for action in the kinship structure.

15 In fact patrilineal groups, whether Arab or not, have almost always been patrilocal (and nowadays due to migrations are also neolocal). An unusual example of patrilineal descent and patrilocal residence was found by Murdock among the Uluwa of the Solomon Isles, as recalled by Goodenough (1968:202).

16 Bourdieu described the polarity of the sexes from the bi-partition of the system of representations and values of two complementary, antagonistic principles. This distinction also meant a spatial division: "l'opposition entre le dedans et le dehors... s'exprime concrètement dans la distinction tranchée entre l'espace féminin, la maison et son jardin, lieu par excellence du harem, espace clos, secret, protégé, à l'abri des intrusions et des regards, et l'espace masculin, la thajma'th, lieu d'assemblée, la mosquée, le café, les champs ou le marché." [Bourdieu (1972:36)]. The outside world was a typically masculine sphere: men participate in public life; the home is the women's space.

17 Bourdieu (1972:96).
Feminine strategies in Maghrebian kinship. Moroccan women negotiating...

out, even when this type of marriage arranged by women could be considered a "minority" and apparently always legitimised by the husbands, the simple fact that they existed underscored the new leeways of action open to women. Bourdieu (1972:271) considered that they were ordinary marriages, in which in most cases daughters were the protagonists. He said that the only objective of these marriages was the marriage itself.

Abu-Lughod (1987) relates how Bedouin women from the Siwa Oasis manifested their power through their songs and so questioned the presumed sexual hierarchization generated by patrilineality. In fact, Abu-Lughod (1990:332) declared that it was necessary to analyze simultaneously from the gender perspective the power and resistances generated by women in order to observe feminine strategies: "my argument has been that we should learn to read on various local and everyday resistances the existence of a range of specific strategies and structures of power". In another study Abu-Lughod (1993) describes the social reality of Bedouin women within the structure that gives them their identity and prioritises their everyday activities, i.e. kinship. Abu-Lughod refers to characteristics such as patrilineality, preferential endogamy or polygamy from the rewritten life stories of women, while admitting that what was to be respected and was the norm may vary in their social practices.

With these contributions from Bourdieu and Abu Lughod, and in order to make more visible the powers and strategies of women, I would like to analyze, based on my ethnographic experience, marriages arranged by women...

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18 This second hypothesis is defended in the studies by Smedley or Gottlieb in the context of sub-Saharan Africa. Smedley (1980:355) describes the important role played by women among the Birom in Nigeria in mediating between relatives and determining who would be the leaders: "it underscores the flexibility and positive value of a clearly defined female role in a male-dominated system. While women could not hold decision-making positions, they had greater impact on the determination of who attained the leadership positions than did most ordinary men". Gottlieb (1990) distanced himself from the studies which under the presumed patrilineal preponderance denied the influence and power of women. He considered that the notions of feminine pollution were a metaphor for the sociological discrimination of women. Gottlieb (1990:128) who studied this question among the Bébeng of Ivory Coast found a correlation between "the entire system of dual descent for a parallel social form". With the exception of the obvious differences between North African societies and some sub-Saharan societies, it is also interesting to mention once again the research done by O. Journet (1985:31) on the Diola in Senegal (patrilineal and patrilocal), since certain similarities may be drawn, such as the fact that the men's authority over their wives is relative ("si les hommes ne semblent détendat-une autorité modérée sur les femmes, quelle est la part et quel est le sens du (des) pouvoir(s) féminin(s) ...") or that the women's power resided precisely in their reproductive capacity: "c'est en tant que mères, et non que productrices, que les femmes entendent concourir les hommes". Another question for Journet (1985:36) was the negative influence that this gender construction had on women: "tout semble se passer comme si l'intérêt social de produire des mères responsables et auto-contrôlées primait sur celui de faire des enfants".

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(Arabs or Berbers) in Morocco, paying special attention to the practical cognatism and feminine appropriation of patrilineality.19

The premise that Moroccan marriages are arranged by men has fitted well into the stereotype of women dominated by men in a patriarchy. This has been endorsed by Moroccan legislation: the Mudawana passed between 1957 and 1958 envisaged the figure of the female’s matrimonial representative (wali) that, with some exceptions, was the prospective bride’s nearest male relative. The 1993 reform of the Mudawana restricted the powers of the wali over unmarried women, and then at last in 2004, the figure of the male legal representative disappeared. Nowadays, women are free to choose their own future husbands.20

However, apart from the effect the legal reform may have as years go by, it should be noted that arranged marriages still take place in Morocco21, and some of them are arranged by women. Hence, of the interviewees whose marriages had been arranged, a minority related how they, their mothers or grandmothers, without the intervention of their husbands, had taken the initiative to marry off one of their nearest relatives. A significant fact is that in general these marriages are arranged by the maternal rather than the paternal family, thus demonstrating a "transgression" as regards the patrilineal matrimonial preference and also an affirmation of women in their respective patrilineal kinship groups. This point is very interesting if we bear in mind that marriage agreements are a way of creating family networks outside the group (with an exogamic marriage), or of reinforcing the relationships of the existing family network (by means of a preferential endogamic marriage), which is one of the systems holding power and prestige in numerous societies. It is interesting to note that women do not usually arrange the marriages of their sons, especially those of their eldest sons (since they are more closely supervised by the father), but rather the marriages of their daughters.

This role played by many women as wives/mothers illustrates one of the feminine strategies employed to gain respect and prestige in their everyday social setting. For example, Jadiya22 explains how her mother’s marriage was arranged by her grandmother and another woman rather than a male relative. This situation was repeated when Jadiya’s marriage was arranged by her mother

19 An interesting article that refers to these arranged marriages supervised by women in sub-Saharan Africa is that by Hohen (1973) dealing with the Amhara of cognatic descent in Ethiopia.
20 These changes in matrimonial practices will become more consolidated in Moroccan society in the years to come, but for the moment, many voices are raised in protest due to the fact that some conservative judges fail to apply the new legislation. For further information, see Aixela (2005b).
21 There are no statistics available on arranged marriages in any Arab-Muslim country, although it is likely that they are more common in some countries than in others. In addition, there may be significant differences within the same state, for example, between rural and urban societies.
22 Jadiya, 39, is an Arab and was born in Casablanca. She comes from a low social class. She is married to a Berber and has three children. She did not finish her elementary education and does not work outside the home. She wears a djellaba and hijab.
and another female relative (of the future bridegroom). In Jadiya's case it seems to be almost a family tradition. Concerning the marriage arranged by her grandmother she says: "my mother was twelve and my father eighteen [when they got married]. From what they've told me they didn't know each other. Apparently, a woman came from Marrakesh to Tangier to ask for my mother's hand in marriage...It was fate. My father was in Tetuan. He already worked there as a soldier, that was where he'd been posted. My grandmother thought that they had seen her daughter or that they'd heard about her. The fact is that my grandmother agreed to the wedding and my parents got married". Jadiya also describes the marriage arranged by her mother: "it was a bit complicated. A woman who was the wife of my cousin on my mother's side and knew the mother of my future bridegroom told her: there's a girl who wants to get married... That's how things are done here! He was a Berber, but I didn't mind. A marriage between an Arab woman and Berber man isn't a problem. They didn't even have to pay any more dowries. What's more Berbers can also have two wives. My husband's brother's got two wives". We know for a fact that when the grandmother arranged the marriage of Jadiya's mother and when the latter arranged Jadiya's marriage, they were not still married, or at least did not live with their husbands (it is not known if the same was true of the other matchmakers involved). This illustrates the control that women exert as regards marriages, especially when the husbands are "absent" [this is also pointed out by Zuhur (2003)].

The husband's absence may be for various reasons such as divorce, migration, voluntary absence from the home (for example, due to polygyny) or death. In such cases, women make the decisions more autonomously. With regard to paternal absence due to polygyny, in our interview with Jadiya, she categorically denied that her father had abandoned her mother and had had other wives and children by them, when it was a well-known fact among her relatives and neighbours: "my mother was the first and the last. I haven't got any half-brothers or sisters". It should be added that Jadiya considered this maternal arrangement of marriage as something normal since she knows other cases in which the marriage had been arranged by the mother and not the father.

Finally, an interesting point is that when women arrange marriages they tend to reinforce their reference kinship group, which in general does not have

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23 It should be pointed out that the authority and power strategies of women in Moroccan society began to be recognised when Moroccan men started emigrating to Europe, as in the case of Hart (1997). Despite this, it should be emphasised that women's responsibility in the family had already existed when they were widows, divorced, or had a polygynous husband, since in most of these situations women were already the head of their family unit (Aixela 2001).

24 In this respect, Zuhur (2003:21) states that there are "increasing numbers of women as head-of-household in rural areas due to male migration, for example in Yemen and Morocco".
much influence because patrilineality gives priority to the male line descendants. Of the cases analyzed in this article, it is remarkable that in both Naima’s family and that of Aisha, the marriages were always negotiated within the mother’s family. In Aisha’s case she was promised in marriage at the age of fifteen and got married when she was sixteen. Her husband was a relative: “my mother arranged the marriage, like she did everything as far as I was concerned. He was a cousin on my mother’s side.”

The eldest son (or the eldest male) may also intervene in the arrangement of marriages negotiated by women. This shows how some wives whose husbands are “absent” may see their eldest son as the male head of the household in place of their husband. For example, Merien explains how, although her marriage had been arranged by her mother, her brother also played an important part: “my husband was a friend of my brother’s”. In fact, when her married life became unbearable she appealed to the solidarity of her family, and when she returned to her mother’s home she told her everything that had happened, which made her mother very angry with Merien’s brother for allowing his sister to marry such a man: “I was 28 and he was younger, 26. We only lived together for two months and we didn’t have any children. In fact, after we got married I discovered that he’d been divorced and had two children, and a girlfriend he had was expecting his baby. The bitch had threatened to commit suicide if he didn’t look after her! I didn’t know anything, when I got married I had no idea of any of this. After the wedding, he told me I had to look after his children, that I had to work for them, that he’d married me because he wanted me as a servant. I wouldn’t accept his conditions and so he began to mistreat me. He had no respect for me; I suppose it was partly because he drank. I’m very religious but the situation became unbearable. In the end, I left him”. In this situation, Merien sought refuge in her mother’s house “she took me in without hesitation. She was very upset when she found out what had happened and she was very angry with my brother because even though he knew everything he was in favour of the marriage. Since my father was dead, my elder brother was the boss at home and so he could do what he liked”. Naima did not expect her mother to react in the same way as Merien’s, although in the end she also took her daughter in when her marriage became unbearable. From the beginning Naima was afraid of upsetting her mother if she

25 Naima, 22, is a Berber and was born in Casablanca. She comes from a low social class. She is divorced from a maternal cousin and has one child. She did not finish elementary education and works in the informal economy (in a canning factory). She wears the djellaba and hijab.

26 Aisha, 18, is a Berber and was born in Casablanca. She comes from a low social class. She is married to a maternal cousin and has one child. She did not finish her elementary education and works in the informal economy (in a factory). She wears the djellaba and hijab.

27 Merien, 38, is an Arab and was born in Casablanca. She comes from a low social class. She has been married twice (exogamic marriages) and has one daughter. She did not finish her elementary education and is unemployed. She wears the djellaba and hijab.
rejected her maternal cousin: "I didn't want to marry him! I didn't like him, not because he was an Arab but because of the way he treated women. I couldn't do anything. What's more I was afraid of making my mother angry". When Naima describes how she felt rejected by her husband's family with whom they lived in a block of flats, she explains why she thought she had married her cousin and why she decided to ask for a divorce despite the family scandal it would cause:28 “one year after the wedding I became pregnant. Well, not even when I gave birth did they bother to ask how I was, my husband was the worst, he acted as though I didn't exist, and he was drunk all day long. They never visited their daughter-in-law! They didn't want me; they accepted the marriage as a favour to my mother! Apparently, my husband didn't want to marry the girl they'd found for him”.

Conclusions

The negotiation of marriages by women underlines the use women make of kinship to reaffirm and extend their social network, since it demonstrates the mechanisms and strategies that they have activated in recent decades in order to obtain new quotas of power. This field study illustrates the appropriation by some women of a kinship that is adverse to their possible influence, such as the patrilineal kinship that visibilizes and favours male interests.

Today's Morocco is beginning to implement certain changes that will have an impact on gender construction; some are legal changes (reform of the Mudawana) and others social (the presence of women in the political and labour spheres). In this new reality, many women face at some time or other in their lives periods in which their husbands are “absent” (due to migration, polygyny, divorce or death). In these situations, women gain autonomy in decision-making.

Marriages arranged by women may be a way of guaranteeing the continuity of the custom in the case of women with “absent” husbands, or a means of appropriating the social practices and mechanisms of power and authority that guarantee this action, while at the same time reaffirming themselves in their patrilineal reference groups. But whether it is in one sense or the other, women are appropriating certain responsibilities that previously belonged to the men in their group, despite the fact that, as we have seen, on some occasions the eldest sons may exert a certain influence on the decisions taken by the mother.

In any case, new times demand a review of feminine strategies in the kinship sphere, unencumbered by the burden of the concept of “patriarchy” or the implications of “patrilineal kinship”. This is necessary in order to observe with renewed interest the close relationship between kinship and gender construction in Morocco.

28 Divorce in the case of preferential endogamic marriage is very complicated since it inevitably generates a serious family conflict. For this reason, divorce in these cases is very rare.
STRATEGII FEMINISTE ÎN ÎNTRUDIREA MAGHREBIANĂ. MAROCANCE CARE NEGOCIAZĂ ARANJAREA CĂSĂTORIILOR
(Rezumat)

Acest text încearcă să treacă în revistă modul în care antropologia socială analizează influenţa femeilor în întrudirea marocană. După verificarea lipsei de interes în această problemă, dovedită de cercetările făcute despre întrudire, în acest articol se vorbeşte despre alte strategii, mai puţin cunoscute. Este vorba despre perspectivele înrudirii marocane prin intermediul căsătoriilor aranjate şi negociate de către femei. Scopul acestui articol este de a prezenta modul în care aceste alianţe prin căsătorie, scot în evidenţă strategiile pe care le practică unele femei din Maroc în viaţa lor cotidiană.

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