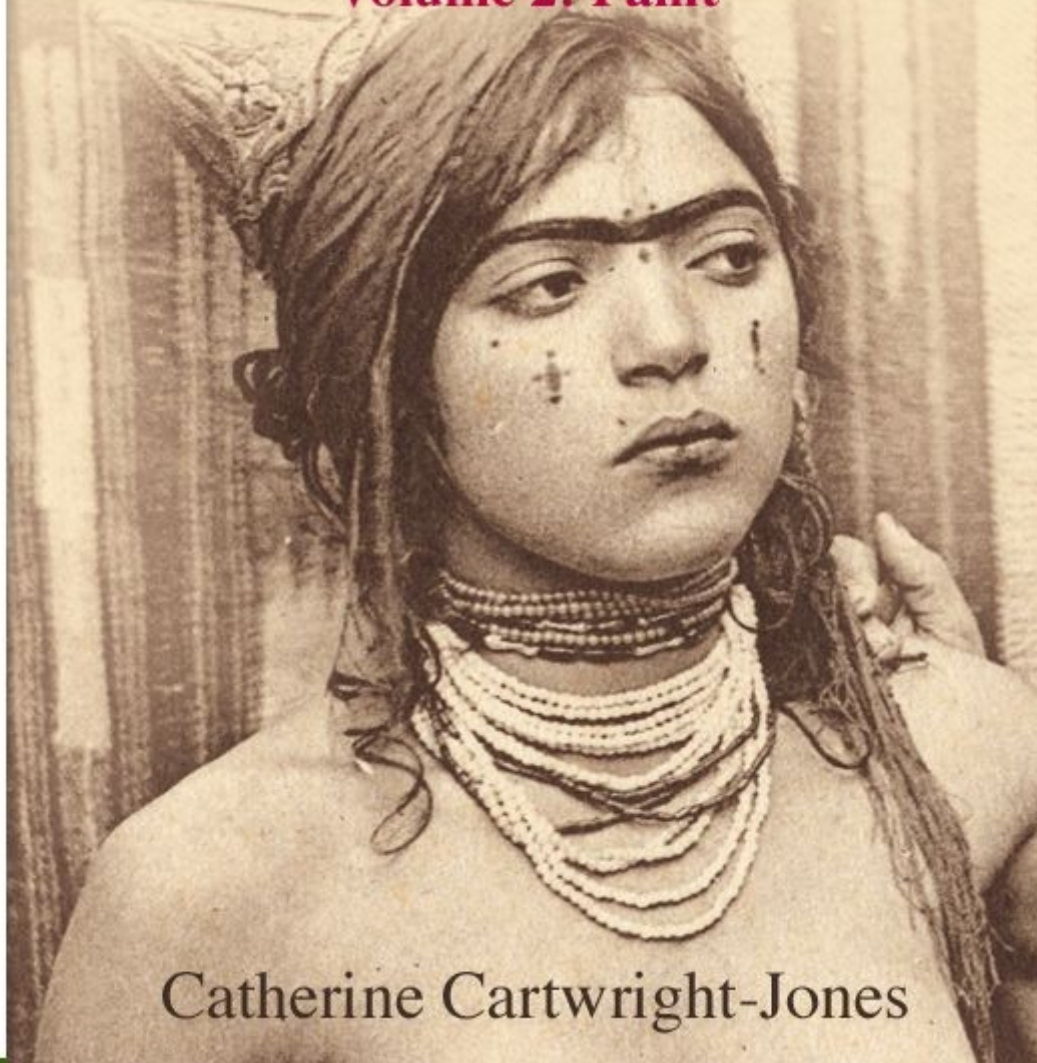




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**Harquus: North African
Women's Traditional Body Art**
Volume 2: Paint



Catherine Cartwright-Jones

Harquus: North African Women's Traditional Body Art Volume 2: Paint
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Volume 2: Paint

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Always use cosmetics and body paints specifically made for safe use on skin. Always use safe, natural red-brown henna in your henna work. If you wish to use kohl on your eyes, please test it with a lead testing kit from your hardware store before using it on yourself; some kohl products contain lead. Kohl containing lead may cause long term health damage. Never use any "black henna" product containing para-phenylenediamine to stain skin. Para-phenylenediamine may cause severe injuries to both artist and client.

Harquus:

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North African Women's Traditional Body Art Volume 2: Paint

North African Women's Cosmetic paints: Method of Evaluation and Interpretation

Catherine Cartwright-Jones

I have collected several hundred original postcards and photographs from the early 20th century that show evidence of traditional body art. The images of women in colonial North Africa, particularly Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco in this book are from my collection. The images chosen for this book are those which show women wearing traditional cosmetics, often referred to in anthropological texts as “harqus”.

Harqus is a general word used for “black” and can refer to any black body art medium in North Africa. Black cosmetics were often crafted by women for their own use, and other times by specialists. The base for harqus is typically carbonized plant material which may be bound with fat, oil, or resin. The most valued black cosmetics were carbonized aromatic woods and herbs, which kept their fragrance after slow, low temperature combustion. Chips of these woods were put in an oxygen-deprived atmosphere (such as between two iron plates) with lignite (a high sulfur form of coal that burns at low temperature) and allowed to slowly smolder for several days. The black material was retrieved from the combustion, and ground wet into pigment for making a black cosmetic. The paint tended to smear if mixed with oil or fat. The paint was sturdier if mixed with heated resin, frankincense or myrrh, but that had to be heated slightly to paint onto the skin. If a woman couldn't afford scarce woods and resins, she might carbonize cotton by dipping old yarn into liquefied sheep fat, then putting that between two iron plates near the edge of her kitchen fire. This soft carbon could be retrieved and used for kohl or other cosmetic paints.

In the old photographs and post cards, there is no way to tell what color the cosmetic paints were. Besancenot's (1988) series of paintings show the costumes and body arts of North African women. These show white, yellow, red, blue and black cosmetic markings, particularly for festive occasions. There are a few other full color paintings of North African women from the colonial period that show colored cosmetics.

Saffron, or even gold, was popular as a cosmetic for weddings and special celebrations. Yellow, white and red clay were finely ground for face paint for ceremonial occasions, when a woman could be relatively still (so as not to disturb the paint), and was willing to spend money and time to look her best. Women photographed in everyday clothing do not have the complex applications as shown in Besancenot; daily wear seems to have been limited to eyebrow and eye enhancement.

Women also stained their lips with *swak*, a piece of walnut bark, husk or root. Walnut has a brown dye that stains skin. They worked swak over their teeth and gums, to clean them and reduce bacteria: the taste was bitter, but they believed swak was beneficial and necessary to oral health. The darkened gums made their teeth look brighter by comparison. Many of these photographs show women's lips with dark stains; sometimes smiles also reveal darkened gums.

Postcards are small media, and their images are often damaged by being passed from hand, or through the postal system. The reproduction processes for these postcards were often cheap, with poor paper and finishing. In a postcard measuring less than fourteen centimeters, the face of the woman in the image is often no more than two centimeters, and the body markings on the image are only a few millimeters at most, and often only visible under magnification.

I scan postcards from colonial North Africa with a hand lens. When I see markings that may indicate presence of traditional body art, I scan the card at 1200 dpi. I adjust the contrast, light and darkness of the

image to enhance the clarity of details. When an area of the image appears to show body markings, I compare it with records of North African women's markings collected by anthropologists and sociologists. This comparison helps reconstruct areas where body art might have been unevenly applied and faded. If I can confirm with other records that the markings are probably intentional, and not an effect of degraded printing or physical accident (such as injury to the person), I diagram what appears to me to be the original pattern.

Not all reproductions in this book clearly show the body art details as can be seen at 1200 dpi with enhanced contrast. The images are scaled here that the reader can see the whole person's face as context for the body art, with normal lighting. I have diagrammed the body art as observed to the best of my ability.



Figure 1: Ouled Nail adorned for dance performance, postmarked 1911: 6433 *Scènes et Types chez les Ouled Nails La Danse*

The purpose of this book is to provide examples of North African women's body adornment from historical record, and present it with period-appropriate variations so that people can enjoy it again in all its vibrancy and diversity. Harqus and other traditional cosmetics can be safely and easily emulated with body paints and henna from <http://www.mehandi.com>.

Have fun; enjoy the beauty and pleasure!
Catherine Cartwright-Jones



Figure 2: Woman with painted eyebrows and forehead dot: Detail of 588 T Tunisienne NP Phot

The inscription on back of this postcard identifies this woman as the wife of a tour guide in Kairouan, Tunisia, in about 1910. A person with thick, black eyebrows can see better in very bright light, and will be less likely to squint. Eyebrow paint may have had the same function as sunglasses, while accenting expressive eyebrow movement.

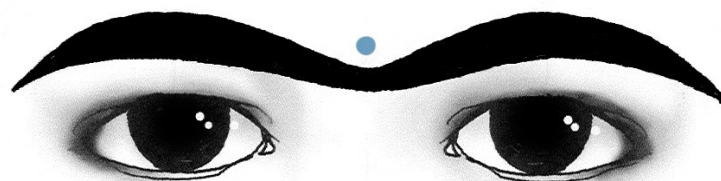


Diagram of eyebrow and dot pattern from Figure 2



Figure 3: Tunisian woman with painted eyebrows and hennaed hands, 1900 - 1910.

Detail of 1331 Tunisie Scènes et Types Femme Arabe

This woman has heavily painted eyebrows, and the back of her hand has henna patterns: her henna patterns are discussed in detail in North African Henna History and Technique, The Henna Page Encyclopedia of henna:

<http://www.hennapage.com/henna/what/freebooks/northafrican1.pdf>

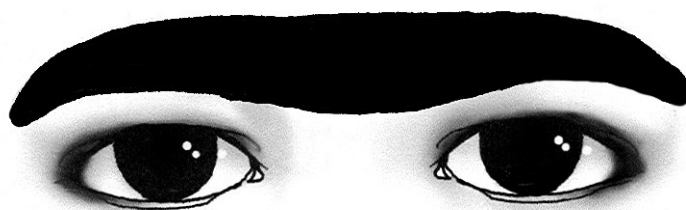


Diagram of eyebrow pattern from Figure 3



Figure 4: Woman with painted eyebrows and eyelashes:

Detail of 270 T Belle Tunisienne ND Phot 1916

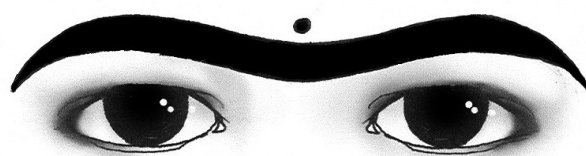


Diagram of woman's eyebrow paint in Figure 4

Women used kohl to outline their eyes. Darkened eyelashes helped them to see more easily in bright sunlight and lessened squinting.



Figure 5: Woman with hennaed fingertips, painted lower lip, eyebrows and forehead, playing a small hand drum. Detail of 92 – *Maroc La Femme au tamourin*, Photo Flandrin

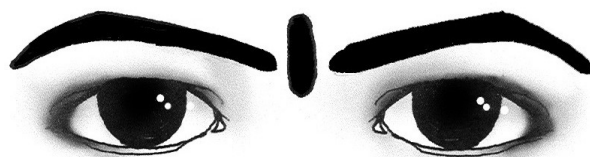
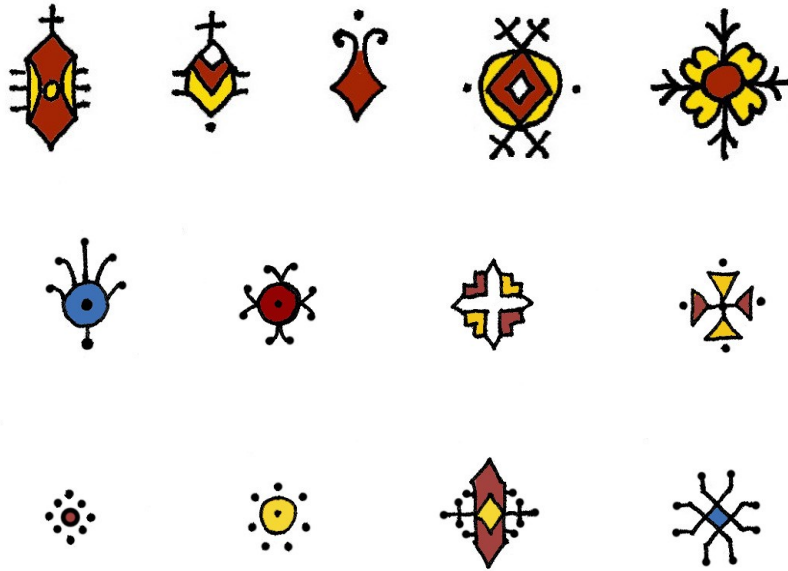


Diagram of eyebrow and forehead paint in Figure 5

Henna strengthens skin and reduces swelling, so hand drummers benefit from hennaing their fingertips. This woman has recently stained her fingertips to the first knuckle, and henna stains on her nails show that she also hennaed about a month earlier.



Variants on forehead marking on Figure 5

Women frequently used saffron, white clay, indigo and red ochre as cosmetic paints in addition to black kohl and harquus.



Forehead and lip markings in Figure 5 are similar to a portrait of a woman from Imarhane by Besancenot, (1988 Planche 34).



Figure 6: Tunisian woman from 1900 – 1910 with painted eyebrows, lips and cheeks, with tattoos under lower lip and on forehead.

Detail of 333 Algeria Mauresques Helio E

North African women stained their lips burgundy to brown with *swak*: a piece of walnut bark, root or husk. Women chewed swak to clean their teeth and gums; they stained and outlined their lips by rubbing them with a piece of swak. Swak was as commonly used as henna and kohl, and considered a lucky and necessary part of adornment. However, some people are allergic to walnut, and some women's stained lips appear irritated or swollen.

This woman's companion has traces of henna stains on her fingernails, as though she had hennaed her hands about six weeks prior to the photograph.

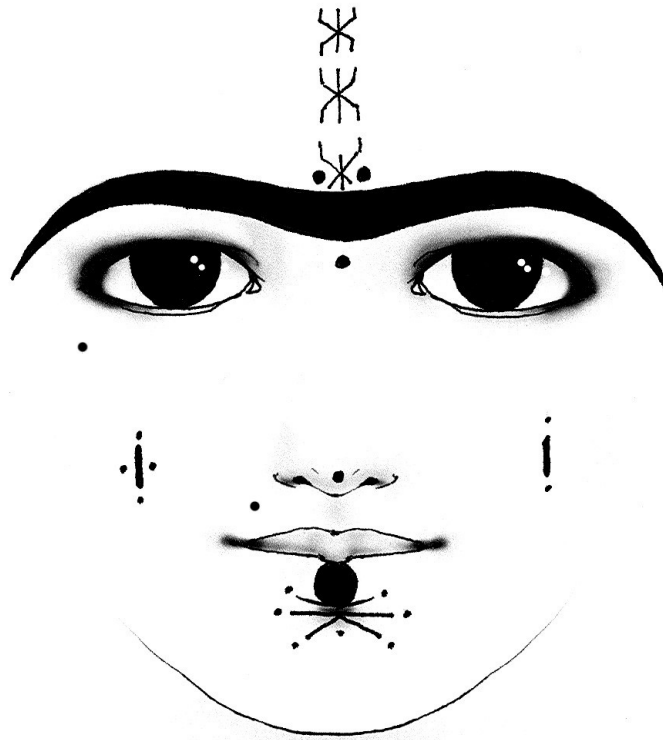
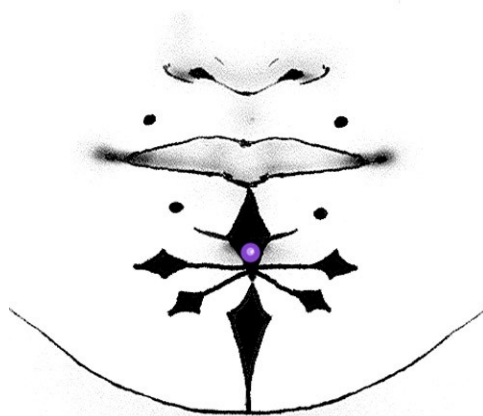


Diagram of paint and tattoo marks in Figure 6



Variant on mouth pattern from Figure 6

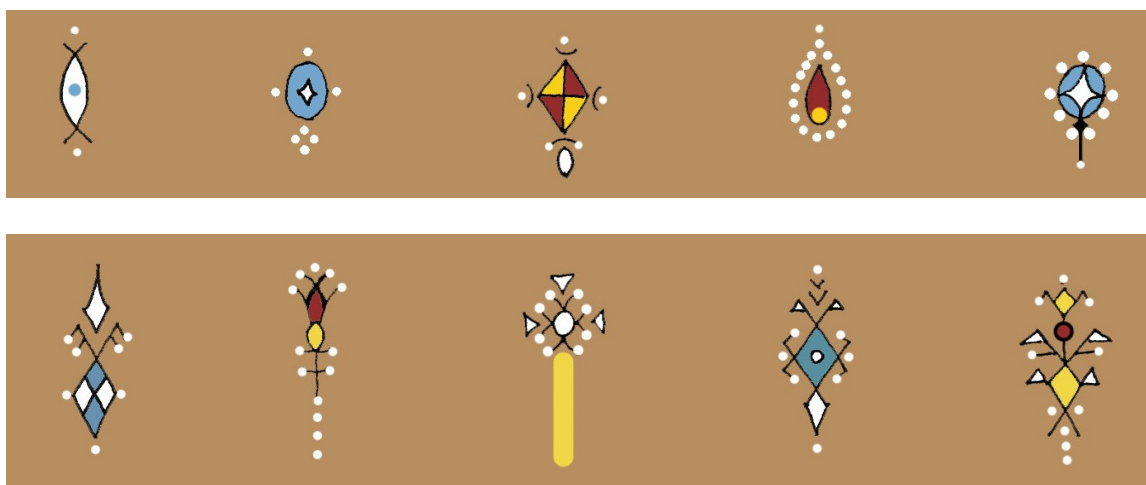


Figure 7: Dancer with painted face and hennaed or tattooed wrist, postmarked 1907:

Danseuse Arabe



Diagram of woman's face paint from Figure 7



Variants on chin and forehead pattern from Figure 7

Besancenot observed that darker skinned women adorned their faces with cosmetic paints in patterns similar to women who tattooed and painted their lighter skin.



Figure 8: Young Moroccan Jewish woman, 1900 – 1910. Detail of 7047 *Maroc Scenes et Types* *Femme Juive*, LL, published by Levy et Neurdein 44 Rue Letellier - Paris

This young Jewish woman has hennaed her fingertips, toes and soles, darkened her eyebrows, stained her lips, and painted a mark between her eyebrows and one on her chin. North African Jewish women wore stain and paint to enhance their beauty, and often painted marks on their skin similar to the tattoos of their Arab and Imazighen neighbors.



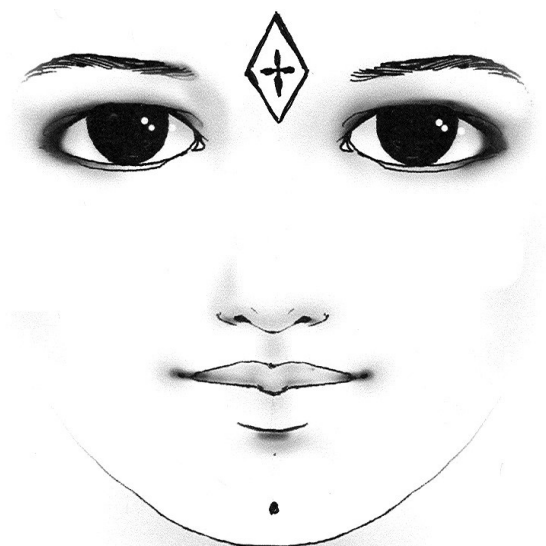
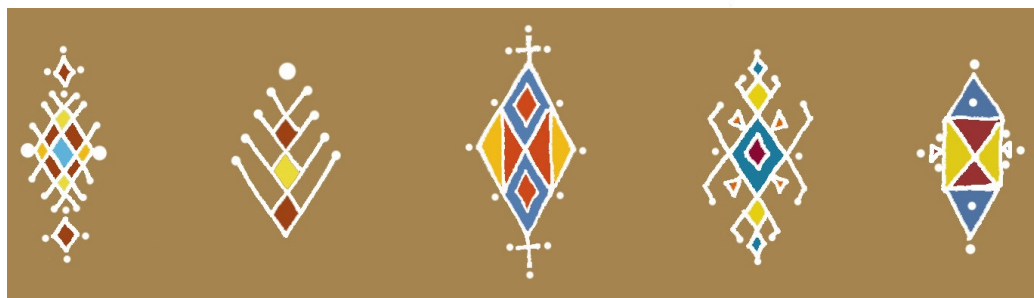
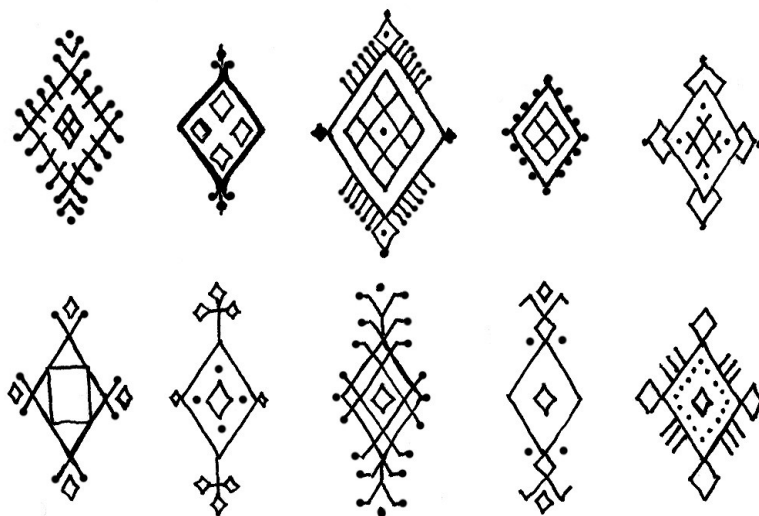


Diagram of woman's forehead mark from Figure 8



Variants of woman's forehead mark from Figure 8



Figure 9: Woman from Souss, Tunisia with painted eyebrows and painted lips. Detail of 7050 Scènes & Types du Maroc Type de Femme du Souss L.L. Levy et Neurdein Reunis, 44, Rue Letellier, Paris 1900 – 1910

This woman has a line drawn across her forehead, crossing a tattoo that is difficult to distinguish in this reproduction. Her right hand has henna patterns, and her left hand and foot have henna on the nails. She may have a tattoo on her chin, but it is not clearly visible.

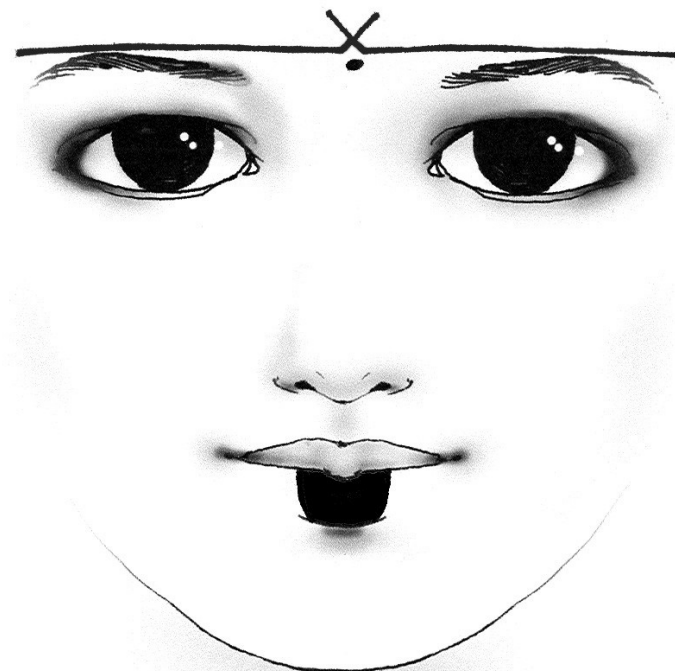
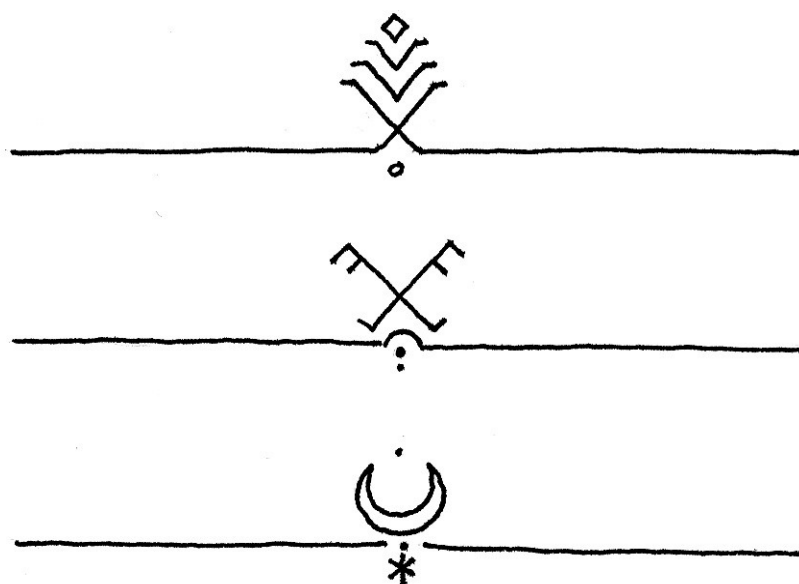


Diagram of forehead pattern from Figure 9



Variants of painted forehead pattern from Figure 9



Variants of painted forehead pattern from Figure 9



Figure 10: Woman with painted cheeks and chin, 1900 – 1910:

7T Mabrouka ND Phot. Mauras, Editeur



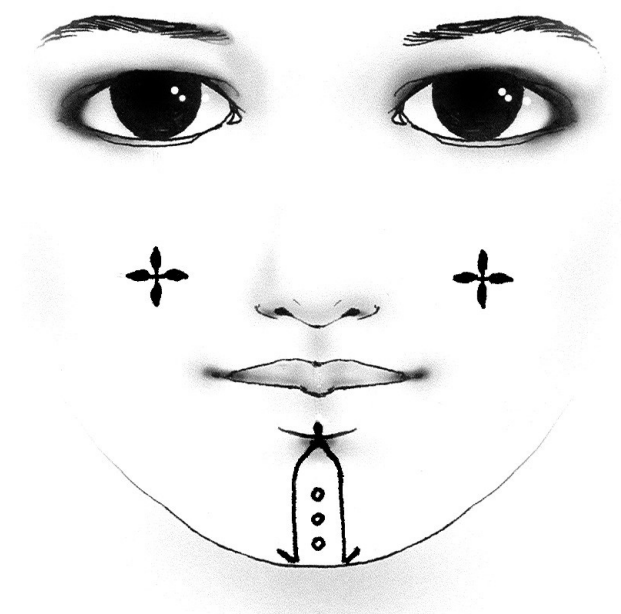
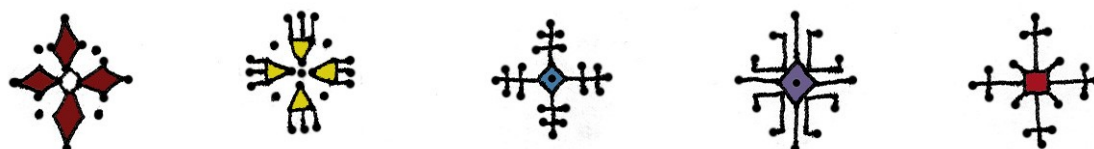
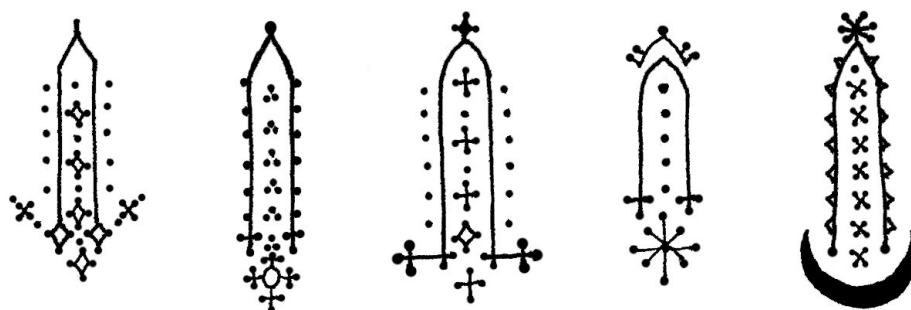


Diagram of woman's painted face patterns from Figure 10



Variants of cheek patterns from Figure 10



Variants of chin patterns from Figure 10



Figure 11: Young Tunisian woman with painted eyebrows, chin and cheeks, and tattoos, 1900 - 1910.
Detail of Jeune Bedouine - Photo Garrigues Tunis, 167

This woman has painted her eyebrows, and has painted dot patterns over her eyebrows, on her cheeks and chin. There are faint markings in this picture which may indicate chin and forehead tattoos underneath the paint, but the hand-tinting of the reproduction has obscured the details.

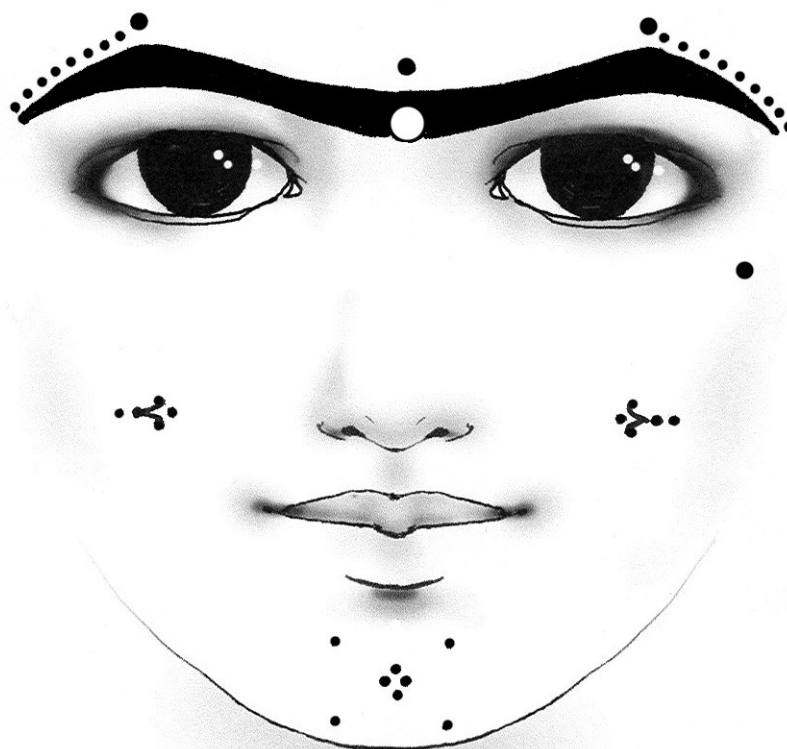
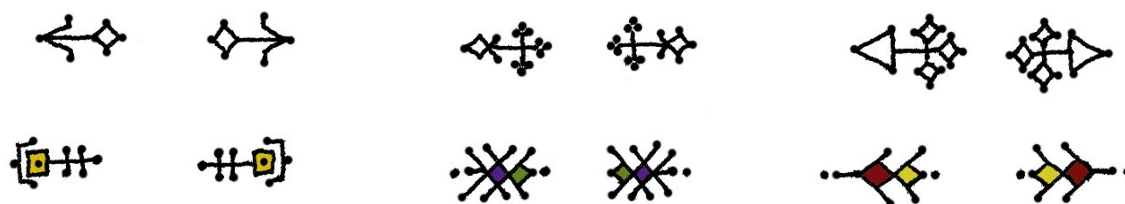
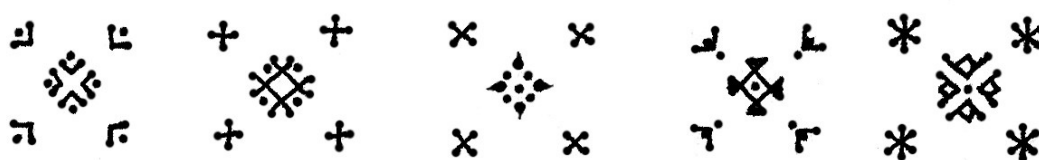


Diagram of eyebrow, cheek and chin patterns from Figure 11



Variants of cheek patterns from Figure 11



Variants of chin pattern from Figure 11



Figure 22: Algerian woman with painted eyebrows, cheeks and chin, with tattoos on forehead, cheeks and chin, about 1900 - 1910. *Algerie Type de l'extreme Sud, J. Geiser*

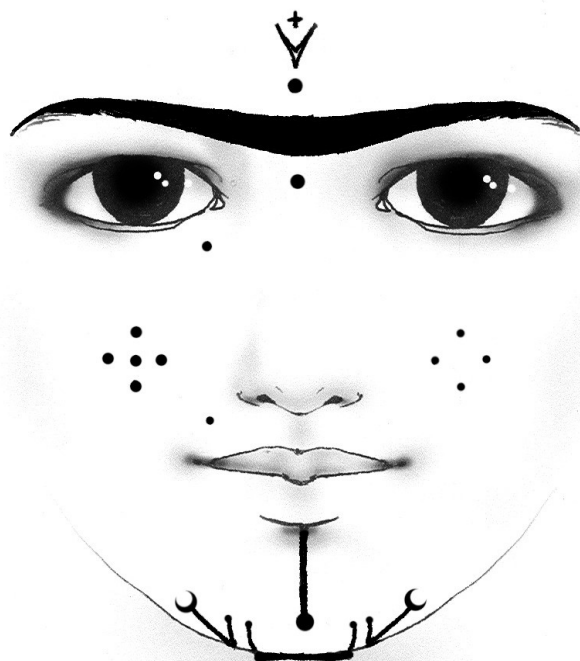
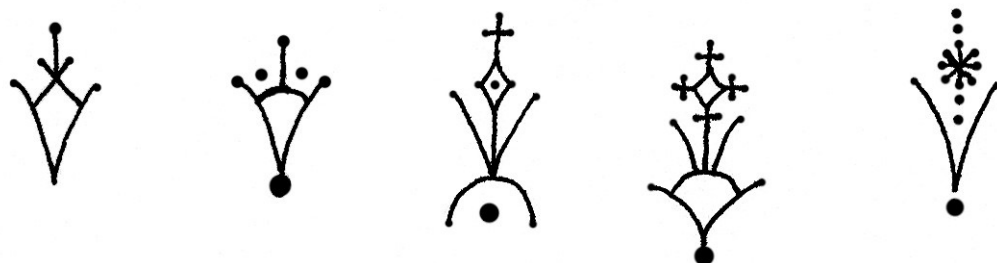


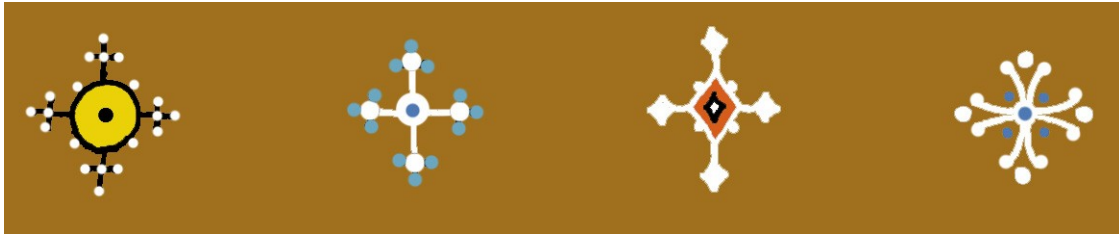
Diagram of patterns on woman from Figure 12



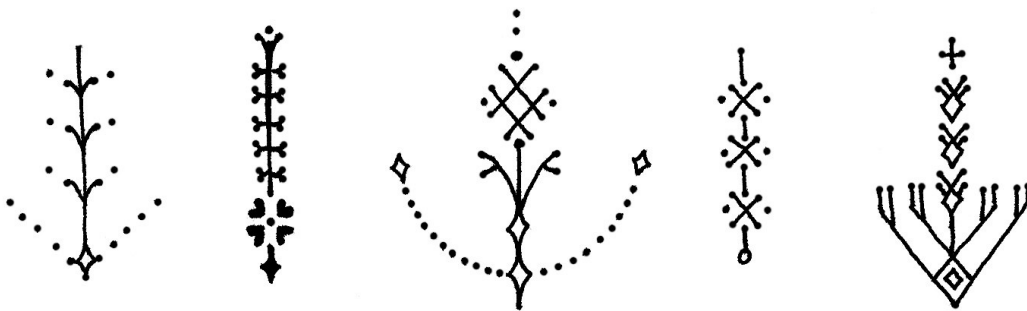
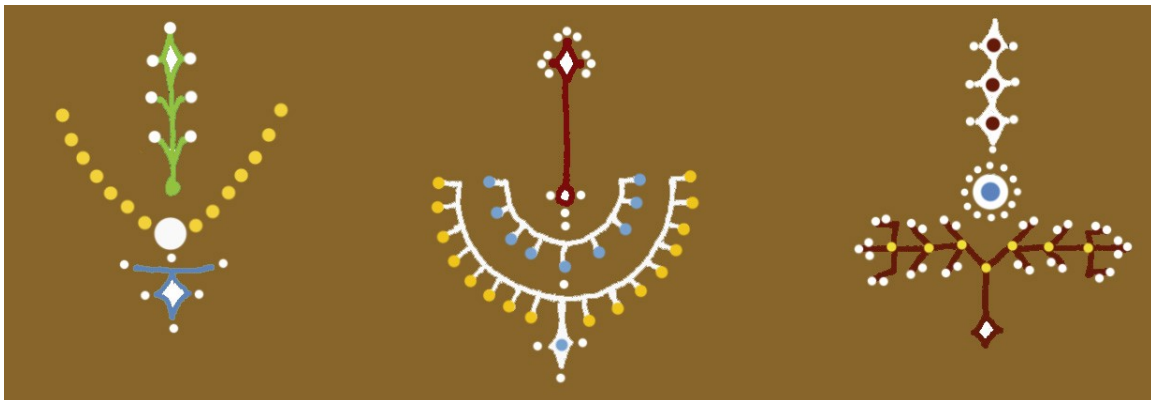
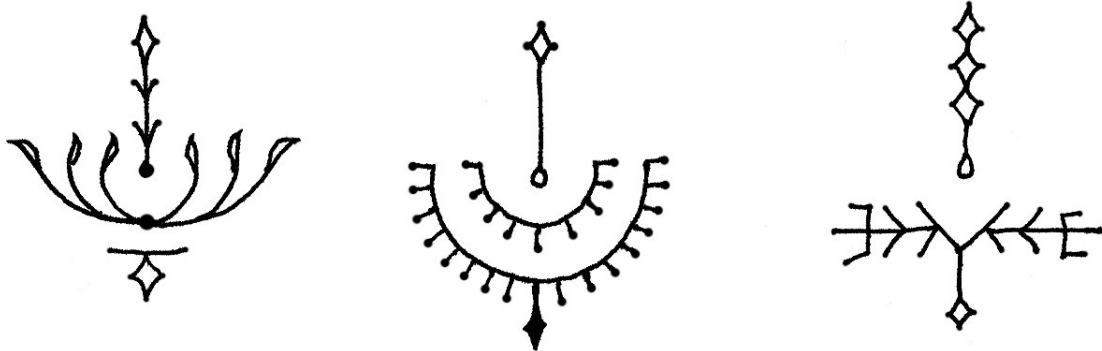
Variants on forehead pattern of woman from Figure 12



Variants of cheek patterns on woman from Figure 12



Variants of cheek patterns on woman from Figure 12



Variants of chin pattern on woman from Figure 12



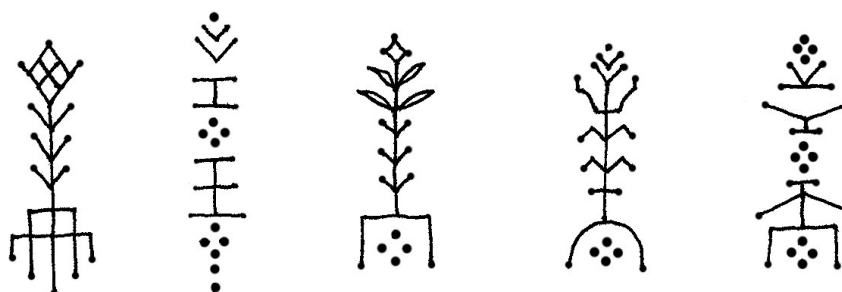
Figure 13: Ouled Naïl woman with painted eyebrows and eyelashes, tattooed forehead, mouth, and chin, 1900 – 1910: Detail, 1097 *Scènes et Types Ouled-Naïls*. Publ Lévy Fils & CIE Paris

Tattoos are often difficult to see in grainy postcard reproductions and the chin and mouth tattoos are not clear enough to see in Figure 12, but are visible at higher resolution.

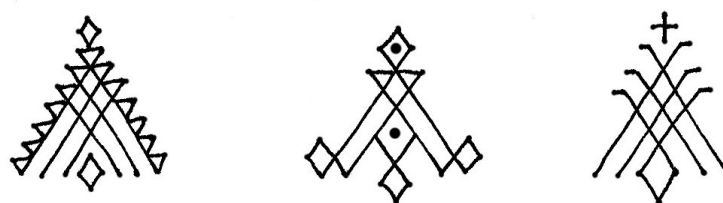
The Ouled Naïl were itinerant entertainers, considered very stylish and beautiful, and often worked as tattoo artists when they visited villages. They wore their earnings as jewelry, and the most successful had heavy adornments of silver and gold coins.



Diagram of tattoos and paint on the woman from Figure 13



Variants on the woman's forehead tattoos from Figure 13



Variants on the woman's chin tattoo from Figure 13



Variants on the woman's mouth tattoos from Figure 13

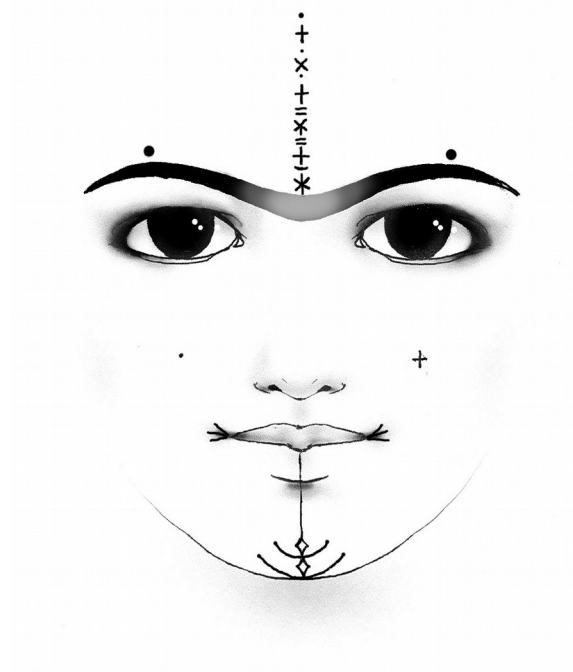


Figure 3: 1097 *Scènes et Types Ouled-Naïls*. Publ Lévy Fils & CIE Paris

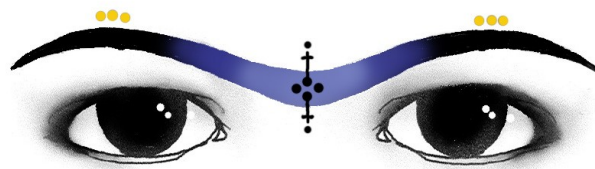


Figure 14: Two young Moroccan women, military issue postmark 1907, *Scènes et Types Jeunes Mauresques*

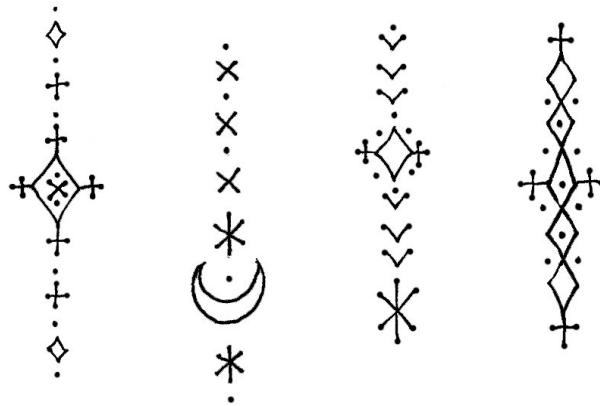
Two young women: woman at left has hennaed hands, forehead tattoo, cheek tattoo, mouth tattoo, chin tattoo, both women have darkened eyebrows. Both women have hennaed palms and fingernails.



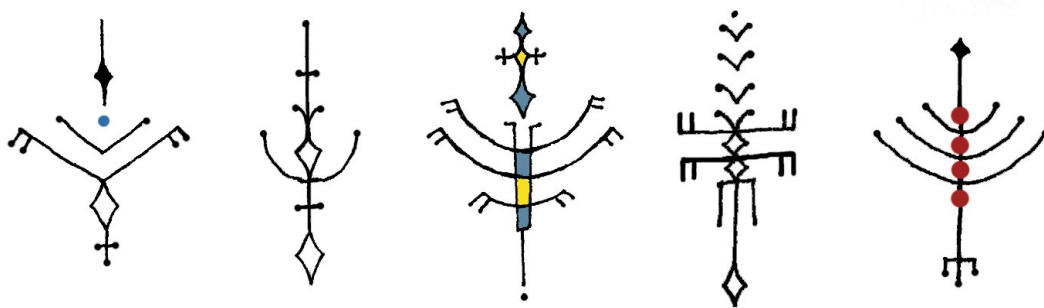
Reconstruction of tattoos and eyebrow paint on woman at left from Figure 14



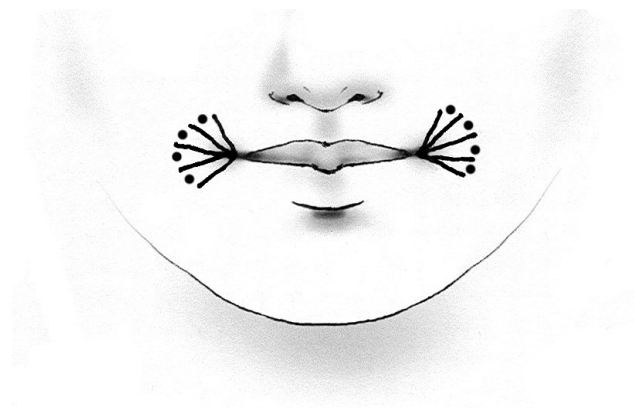
Variant of eyebrow and tattoo pattern from Figure 14



Variants of forehead pattern on woman at left from Figure 14



Variants of chin pattern on woman at left from Figure 14



Variants on tattoo at corners of mouth, woman at left from Figure 14



Variants on tattoos at the corners of the mouth, woman at left from Figure 14



Figure 15: *Missions D'Afrique – Blanches du Cardinal Lavigerie: Type Nomade Sud Tunisien*

This postcard was published by “White Fathers and White Sisters,” an organization founded by the Bishop of Algiers as a program to assimilate and convert the Arab population of North Africa to Catholicism and French culture. The policy of the French government had been neutral to Islam prior to this. The Bishop founded and maintained orphan asylums, industrial schools, hospitals, and agricultural settlements, with the intention of converting and westernizing the people who used the facilities. The religious and cultural assimilation often included discouraging henna and tattoos in favor of European norms of appearance and adornment. The image of this woman may have been published to demonstrate the worthiness of the Bishop’s cause and encourage donations.

Missions d'Afrique - Sœurs Blanches du Cardinal Lavigerie



Type Nomade Sud Tunisien



Type Nomade Sud Tunisien

Hands with henna or tattoos patterns from Missions D'Afrique – Blanches du Cardinal Lavigerie: Type Nomade Sud Tunisien

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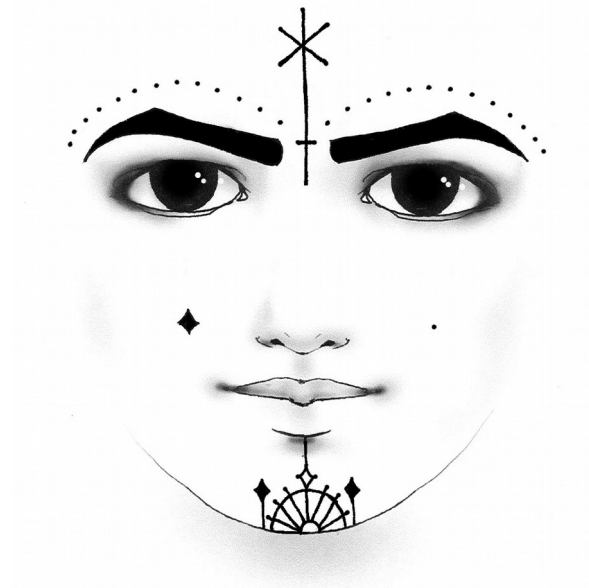
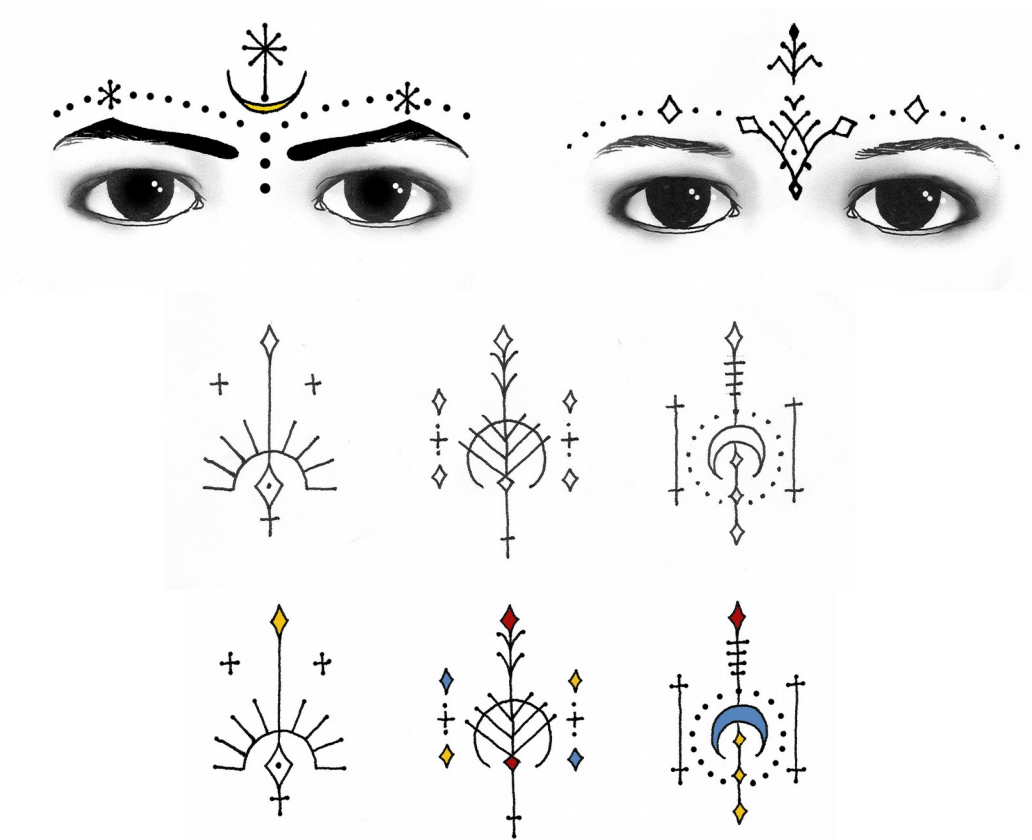


Diagram of woman's eyebrow paint and tattoos from Figure 15



Variants of body art from Figure 15



Figure 16: detail of Ouled Naïl adorned for dance performance, 1910, 6433 *Scènes et Types chez les Ouled Nails La Danse* postmarked 1911



Diagram of face paint from Figure 16 and similar face paint on a woman from a ceremony in Rabat, 1930's, Paydar and Grammet, Figure 3

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