

DEFINING AND REVISING THE GNAWA AND THEIR MUSIC THROUGH  
COMMODIFICATION IN LOCAL, NATIONAL, AND GLOBAL CONTEXTS

By

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Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School  
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In this thesis I examine the shift of Morocco's Gnawa music from a local tradition (marginalized nationally) to one of commercial prominence on national and international stages. The Gnawa are a population in Morocco commonly presented as black ex-slaves whose religion involves trance and possession by various spirits, personifications of significant Muslim figures. Religious debate surrounds the groups and centers on the ontology of these spirits: are they truly saints, or manipulative demons? This theological concern, along with the importation of sub-Saharan ritual and song, has historically rendered the group outside of "acceptable" Islamic practice. Yet, since the 1960s, their music has become increasingly popular with the Moroccan public and international audiences, troubling more orthodox authorities across the country.

By contextualizing Sufism and non-Orthodox practice within Morocco's social and political history, I interrogate the strategies that festivals and the international record industry use in promoting and defining Gnawa music. The ways in which these groups portray the Islamic and sub-Saharan elements directly coincides with their pragmatic goals and target audiences, causing the actors to reconfigure Gnawa music and faith differently for regional, national, and international audiences. These activities define the Gnawa to the rest of the Moroccan population, often with a lack of regard for actual practices and theological positions.

By shifting to the neighborhood setting of Blida, in the heart of Fez's old city, I consider how religious groups incorporate controversial Gnawa musical and ritual traditions into their own practices. By analyzing oral testimony of members of the Hamadcha, Tijaniyya, and 'Aissawa Sufi brotherhoods in Fez and Meknès, I show the poignant and effective strategies, both musical and commercial, that they use to engage with each other, the Gnawa, and the commercial opportunities that exist through Moroccan festivals and in the wider local music scene. These changes and negotiations do not come without a social price, as many of these behaviors evoke criticism from other organizations, the press, and Muslims who question the intent and faith of these novel religious/commercial performances. Spiritual and moral authority is up to debate, a debate that is frequently both about, and argued through, music. The conclusions gained through this work emphasize the potential role ethnomusicology can and should play in anthropological research on Islam and argues that the discursive nature of musical performance creates contested spaces for debates about the validity and authority of religious tradition.



# CHAPTER 1

## THE COMMODIFICATION OF MOROCCAN SUFISM

### **Introduction**

In every area of the world, people come together to create inclusive and exclusive identities. The boundaries between these are formed around any number of “real” or symbolic traits, and are constructed for various pragmatic and ideological reasons. The historical, political, economic, religious, and ethnic variables that influence such constructions are complex. Analysis of artistic expression, ceremonial practice, and the communal expectations of such activities can help discern otherwise hidden elements of social identity. By examining the different values present in performances in various settings and interrogating how history is constructed or reconstructed through these performances and through the debates that surround them, we view the effects of the above variables on the musical style, the people’s identification, religious belief and national identity.

In this thesis I will examine the shift of Morocco’s Gnawa music from a local tradition (marginalized nationally) to one of commercial prominence on national and international stages. The Gnawa are a population in Morocco commonly presented as black ex-slaves whose religion involves trance and possession by various spirits, personifications of significant Muslim figures. Religious debate surrounds the groups and centers on the ontology of these spirits: are they truly saints, or are they *jnun* (demons or evil spirits)? This theological concern, along with the importation of sub-Saharan ritual and song, has historically rendered the group outside of “acceptable” Islamic practice. Yet, since the 1960s, their music has become increasingly popular with the Moroccan public and international audiences, troubling more orthodox authorities across the country.

Yet a “vertical” perspective, one that follows a specific group or tradition through a continuum of settings varying from the household to the neighborhood through the regional and national and beyond, is limited. The definition of acceptable “tradition,” in this case a set of conflated musical practices and religious beliefs, does not work within a vacuum, including only one ethnic or religious group. I will thus follow the celebration and criticism of this musical and cultural change from other political, social, and religious actors. The intense cultural scrutiny surrounding the musical activities of the Gnawa and of other spiritual organizations in Morocco who engage similar practices and beliefs vividly demonstrates the active and pragmatic creation and redefinition of distinct borders around “Moroccan” and “Muslim” as either inclusive or exclusive identities.

When we ignore these “horizontal” structures, interactions that conjoin one distinct group to others, that embed the sound to its settings, we, as ethnomusicologists and anthropologists, lose the “web” or “mesh” of the network that fleshes out and gives depth to the object of our research (see Chapter 2). In this particular case, if we ignore the horizontal connections between the Gnawa, the Tijaniyya, the ‘Aissawa, the Hamadcha, and others, as described in Chapter 5, we lose the neighborhood, the everyday life, and the city of Fez, the fieldwork setting for this study.

This thesis will join scholars (Asad 1986, El-Zein 1977, Gellner 1981, Gilsnenan 1982) who have expressed concerns regarding the dismissal of the local in defining an essential or idealized Islamic practice and theology. This work will also build upon the converse insights of Guilbault (1993), who interrogates the power of the international community upon localized traditions. But I also wish to extend such “vertical” analyses, those that primarily address the relationship of this local-global nexus. Anthropological research on Islam has a long history of overlooking “horizontal” relationships between actors in an effort to define specific paths for

authorities and organizations, like major festivals and recording studios, to bring singular localized styles to regional and international audiences. This thesis will also highlight the importance of locality (beyond pre-existing religious or musical ties) and discourse as I examine the musical conversations between Sufis and reformers, Hamadchas and Tijaniyyas, between Muslims and non-Muslims as they navigate the value-laden terrain, creating personal expression, prayer, and musical entertainment in Fez, Morocco. Through a close reading of ethnographic material on the Gnawa and other Sufi groups, this thesis outlines the importance of considering both these vertical and horizontal relationships in the negotiation of musical products, communal identity, and theological authority. The Gnawa and Sufi rituals discussed in the following chapters fit firmly within this horizontal discourse of variation and authority in the practice of Islam as it exists locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally.

Chapter 1 outlines the central theoretical directions for this thesis and lays out relevant aspects of Moroccan history and religious culture. I introduce the idea of “Islam as Discourse,” highlighting how this approach to the anthropology of Islam will prove useful in the study of both the social position and sudden musical rise of the Gnawa and the ways in which religious authorities in Fez claim and define boundaries based on Gnawa and other musical productions. I then address Morocco’s unique political history, emphasizing the importance of Sufism within dynastic power structures, foreshadowing the importance of Sufi paths in modern religious practice. Finally, I outline the intersections between race, language, and religion in defining what has come to be known as “Moroccan Islam,” identifying specific practices that will prove important when describing the social acceptance or rejection of the Gnawa.

Chapter 2 reviews the development of the anthropological literature on Islam with a focus on research in Morocco. By following how scholars have dealt with tradition in reference to

“great” and “little” manifestations of the religion, I demonstrate, here and in Chapter 5, the need for new perspectives based on relationships between individuals and religious groups at the local level. Through readings of Pierre Bourdieu and Edward Said, I highlight the importance of noting and attempting to counteract the relational disparity between anthropologist and, in this case, musician, or, in a greater sense, “East” and “West.” Yet this is only one of the many interactions that must be examined in order to understand how cultural structures manifest and operate in a heterogeneous society. I use the work of Abdul Hamid el-Zein to find new directions away from the polarizing characterizations of earlier anthropologists who focused primarily on an exclusive duality between “great” and “little” traditions. El-Zein instead engages the interactions between these different ritual practices and beliefs, outlining their mutual interdependence, a framework that Talal Asad continued, as discussed in Chapter 5. This discussion frames an investigation of Gnawa traditions (Chapters 3 and 4), and opens a space for the arguments presented in Chapter 5.

Chapter 3 begins with a basic historical outline emphasizing the position of Morocco as the Western frontier of the Islamic world. Morocco and Andalusia rose to a prominence that rivaled Baghdad and Cairo, the Eastern centers of knowledge, even defying Ottoman rule. Yet, from an Islamic-centered perspective, the region remains the “alien” and “exotic” edge, an ambiguous hinge between Africa and the Middle East. The chapter then explores the “hybridity” often attributed to the country’s multi-ethnic population, by examining the Gnawa *layla*<sup>1</sup> ritual, its participants, music, and theology in greater detail. I argue that in the *layla*, the Gnawa embody this hybridity by fusing sub-Saharan and Islamic figures, ideals, and practices. I then explore the creation of a commodified marketable version of the tradition by discussing transformations in

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<sup>1</sup> Literally “evening,” this ceremony is also known as the *derdeba*.

the ritual music as it shifts into public market squares via traveling musicians and tourists. With a close reading of the differences between the actual musical production in the layla and the market – goals, ritual/musical aims, instrumentations, etc. – I intend to discern the disparate uses of both an in group identity and the Gnawa self portrayal to external or commercial audiences. I argue that commercial presentations accomplished two things: first, they popularized the Gnawa sound to domestic and international tourists, opening up the economic links that would lead to later commercial successes. Second, performances for domestic tourists provided economic incentives for the Gnawa conceive of this music as a product for larger audiences and to remove certain African-derived theological elements. Simultaneously, in those performances for foreign tourists the Gnawa did the opposite, emphasizing those very same elements, demonstrating the intentional negotiation of their art and tradition against other local and international perspectives of what music and entertainment are and imply.

Chapter 4 will consider the Gnawa and their music at the national level, emphasizing the dual processes of nationalism (an intentional national project) and cosmopolitanism (an internationally aware reconstruction of cultural practices and symbols). The chapter begins by outlining how these two forces work to commodify and make use of the spiritual connotations of Gnawa music. A brief explanation of how the current and past kings of Morocco maintained their power by fusing religious and political authority, demonstrating the importance of the King's sacred influence, historically contextualizes the this religious national project.

The chapter then explores major music festivals within Morocco and investigates recording artists who draw upon elements of Gnawa musical practice. A reading of Gnawa music in festival situations illuminates an inclusive or multi-ethnic pan-Moroccan political and cultural priority, highlighting the presentation of Morocco's cultural hybridity. Performers from foreign

traditions, American jazz artists or Malian griots, for example, join Gnawa groups on stage and improvise for a period of time. I argue that these performances are treated as intentional emblems of the potential of collaboration and minimize “African” spiritual elements of Gnawa performances. Festival producers often marginalize the Islamic or sub-Saharan contextual references by scheduling Gnawa performances featuring spiritual elements. The ways in which the music of the festival presentations engage with the “national” Islamic and “international” African spiritual values convey an idealized “hybridity” and provide insight into the complex interactions involved in publically presenting ethnic and religious identity. Simultaneously, as internationally conceived groups utilized Gnawa sounds and instruments, the spiritual connotations were both desirable *and* marketable to world music audiences. I argue that musical priorities follow marketable values as different producers and labels highlight their own philosophical and economic aims.

Chapter 5 shifts to the neighborhood setting of Blida, in the heart of Fez’s old city to consider how religious groups incorporate diverse musical and ritual traditions into their own practices. By analyzing oral testimony of members of the Hamadcha, Tijaniyya, and ‘Aissawa Sufi brotherhoods in Fez and Meknès, I show the poignant and effective strategies, both musical and commercial, that they use to engage with each other, the Gnawa, and the commercial opportunities that exist through Moroccan festivals and in the wider local music scene. These changes and negotiations do not come without a social price, as many of these behaviors evoke criticism from other organizations, the press, and Muslims who question the intent and faith of these novel religious/commercial performances. Spiritual and moral authority is up to debate, a debate that is frequently both about, and argued through, music. The conclusions gained through this work, especially in regards to Chapter 5, emphasize the potential role ethnomusicology can

and should play in anthropological research on Islam and argues that the discursive nature of musical performance creates contested spaces for debates about the validity and authority of religious tradition.

### **Islam as Discourse**

Talal Asad, in *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*, outlines the perspectives of many key scholars. He critiques Gilson's *Recognizing Islam* (1982), noting that by taking Islam as the beliefs of any particular Muslim, situating the religion only in local terms, one loses the religion itself as an analytical object. He describes the paradox of accepting and isolating as doctrine a single believer's perspective since, after all, their personal (or communal or local) conception of Islam is, essentially, "a Muslim's beliefs about the beliefs and practices of others ... And like all such beliefs, they animate and are sustained by his social relations with others" (Asad 1985: 382). However, such a detailed examination of local practice is valuable and underutilized. A small number of authors are writing similar vertical ethnographies, works that examine single groups in reference to the complexities of new global influences and innovations. In the field of ethnomusicology, Deborah Kapchan's recent work with the Gnawa (2007) is one example of this trend, although such deep analyses on Middle Eastern and North African topics continue to be scarce.

These specifically vertical descriptions fail to address the horizontal relationships between local brotherhoods that exist alongside links to larger regional, national, or international organizational facets.<sup>2</sup> Each individual group carries, teaches, and embodies a set of values, some

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<sup>2</sup> Cooke and Lawrence's *From Hajj to Hip Hop* (2005) is an example of the recent trends in literature emphasizing these relationships, embodying the need to recognize the web of social interconnections described in Chapter 2.

of which are controversial, creating methodological and even theological differences.<sup>3</sup> In this sense, we must further examine Asad's theorization. He writes that

Islam as the object of anthropological understanding should be approached as a discursive tradition that connects variously with the formation of moral selves, the manipulation of populations (or resistance to it), and the production of appropriate knowledges. (Asad 1985: 388)

It is through multiple discourses (including music and the productions of knowledge) that people create, inherit, and adapt beliefs and practices. Through performances (both religious and secular) Islam is manifested in any given locality, influenced by vertical and horizontal relationships.

I will examine two of these elements more thoroughly because of their importance to an understanding of how Gnawa music operates within Moroccan society. First, spiritual meanings, both explicit and implicit, give depth to the functional and aesthetic position of Gnawa music. The performances and related rituals connote, to many, the integrations between Islam, "African Islam," and other African communal and spiritualist (or "traditional") religions. Past and current influences of and debates between Sufism and reformist Islam unfold musically, allowing the changes in Gnawa music and performance to lend insight into the interaction between these cultural and theological perspectives. Second, the music of marginalized Gnawa people came to the forefront of the Moroccan nation for a multitude of reasons, not the least of which is the music's popularity with foreign artists and consumers. Through the linked processes of commodification and performance, the sounds were presented on multiple stages and their meanings were manipulated, allowing for identity creation to move the Gnawa from the outskirts

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<sup>3</sup> See Waugh 2005, *Morocco's Mysical Chanters*, for an in-depth look at the variations within different manifestations of Sufi practice in Morocco. Chapter 5 approaches the discursive aspects of these debates.



of the southern mountains to the main stages of international festivals where they present what is “truly Moroccan.”

### **Sufism in Morocco**

Islam’s varying appearances in Africa form a contested space for each population, one that works (and is worked) to align people with local, regional, and global identities and ideologies. It was the Sufi travelers who oriented Islam to Africans on a local level (Brenner 2000, Villalón 2001), revising the relationships between the local and the international (seen here as Islam) during the period of expansion following the death of Mohammed. These Sufi conceptualizations and hybridizations of Islam in Morocco prove important to identity and artistic expression. Therefore, a brief discussion of Islam, Sufism, and interactions between local religions in Africa and in Morocco will introduce the complex struggles between “African Islam” and “Islam in Africa.”

Since “Sufism shares many epistemological and practical features with non-Muslim African religious practice,” (Brenner 2000: 346) it easily took hold in local communities by combining international Islamic principles with previously held traditional ceremonies. The syncretic result is similar to Cuban Santería or Brazilian Candomblé as deities, saints, ancestors, and other religious figures of differing traditions are mapped together and worshiped, contacted, or honored. This African version of Sufism is separate from that of the Islamic intellectual elite who maintain a more concrete theological and ideological connection with the Arabian Peninsula. In Morocco, however, the historical relationship between local Sufism and the prominent royal *ulema* (religious clerics) was much closer than in nearby regions. Here it will be useful to explore more closely the characteristics of Moroccan Sufism’s “traditional” and “reformist” variations of Islam.

Munson, referencing Mannheim, describes “traditional” believers as

simply [taking] their religious beliefs for granted. They do not see them as being in need of defense. They do not even see them as beliefs; they are simply the way the world is. But when tradition is challenged by alternative conceptions of the world, some people leap to its defense – inevitably transforming it in the process. Tradition defended is never entirely traditional” (1993: 78)

Sufi beliefs in Morocco include the five pillars and the texts and traditions central to Islam, but they also add aspects of saint veneration and Sufi practices such as chanting. In past regional dynasties, the ulema promoted or condoned these aspects, even when calling for a closer reading of religious texts.<sup>4</sup> Since they were most often Sufis themselves, there was no significant disconnect between the educated and literate elite and the local “traditional” practitioners until the spread of Salafist reformism in the mid-1900s.<sup>5</sup>

Instead of opposing the distinctly Sufi practice of visiting saints’ tombs, for example, members of the ulema worked to condemn the worship of “ostensibly sacred objects and charlatans posing as saints” (Munson 1993: 83) and continued their own practice of visiting the tombs of revered saints. The theological difference between the two was the understanding that saints cannot impact worldly events, and those who claimed to do so were met with immediate suspicion. They can, however, intercede, requesting the favor of God while also giving their own *baraka* (blessings). As described in Munson’s account, Al-Yusi’s defense of this local practice implies its negative connotation from other theological perspectives despite the “outright condemnation of the veneration of saints ... [being] extremely rare in Morocco until the 1920s” (Munson 1993: 84).

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<sup>4</sup> The thrust toward a more “pure” and true reading of the Islamic texts (the Qur’an and the Hadith) is not a recent trend within Islamic debates. These arguments, however, should not be confused with contemporary political movements around the Islamic world promoting a return to living as the first Muslims during the time of the Prophet. These reformist movements, known as Salafi or Salafist movements, have been involved in struggles for social and political power primarily since the end of colonialism.

<sup>5</sup> After the discovery of oil in Saudi Arabia (1930s), the economic power and religious authority possessed by that country due to control of the Hajj allowed it to promote a reformist literal reading of Islam through education and the funding of acceptable religious leaders throughout Africa.

From 1792 to 1822 the ruler Mulay Sulayman, a member of the Nasiriyya Sufi order, began to condemn popular Sufi practices as *bida'* (heretical innovation). He criticized specific orders for the practice of rhythmic clapping, mixing of men and women, and festivals for the honor of saints. He did, however, maintain that the visiting of saints' tombs for intercession was "not only permitted but recommended by Islamic law – so long as people remembered that the saints could not grant requests themselves but could only ask God to do so" (Munson 1993: 85). Thus, the characterization of popular Islam in Morocco as "African Islam" or "Islam noir" and against the state's formal, educated, and literate interpretations fails to include the proper acknowledgement of debates within the region on multiple class and political levels.

These accepted forms of popular, illiterate, hierarchical, local Sufism, however, still contain aspects of African traditions that earn it distaste from that same elite, such as the clapping, loose gender roles, and the use of musical instruments. Whether these were implemented by the African population or brought from Sufi practices closer to the Islam of Arabia is difficult to say, but it is likely that the effective communion of these two populations was facilitated by shared ritual characteristics. Thus, the Gnawa layla represents an example of this syncretic and local combination of Africa and Islam, one that is related to the Sufism of the Moroccan elite, but still remains outside of the intellectually accepted norm. Because of the vivid African component, its position is also marginalized from the popular Moroccan Sufism. Many Moroccans from different economic classes see the layla itself as specifically *neither Arab nor* Islamic – but because of the long collaborative and inclusive history of Sufism, it is still appreciated, and now with the prevalence of the music, even venerated. Thus, Moroccan Sufism's complex status does not create one simple boundary around "Islam" in Morocco, it

instead celebrates and condemns with a certain logic reminiscent of previous dealings with controversial saint veneration.

### **Moroccan Islam(s)**

Historically, the debate regarding identity in Morocco developed along two distinct axis. The first point of contrast (and contention) is the religious pole of “proper” Islam<sup>6</sup> opposing sub-Saharan African racial and religious identity. The second is between the ethnic conceptualizations of Tamazight (or Berber) and Arab. Both contested axes, one primarily religious, the other centered on ethnicity, have been disputed since pre-colonial times. Their importance within the current political conversation, however, is important. These two axes are often superimposed upon each other, with one drawing force from gross assumptions based on the other in a long and entangled set of discourses.

Political issues involving Tamazigh identification include language education, cultural and artistic promotion, and a general recognition of the specifically Tamazight ethnic components of Morocco by the French and Arab elite. Religious conversations between factions of Islamic thought come into the realm of government as the two become linked under the King, who is aligned as both the political ruler and the “leader of the faithful.” These debates often revolve around the concept of “Moroccan Islam,” a local variation of the international religion based upon the inclusion of some African rituals, a syncretic mapping together of shared saints and spirits, and the practice of saint veneration. Such practices are not unique to Morocco, and are instead common throughout North Africa due to the general trans-state characteristics of Sufism itself (Brenner 2000; Eickelman 1976; Jankowsky 2006; Villalón 2001). These traditions are also

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<sup>6</sup> This concept of “proper” Islam involves those movements attempting to move, or reform, the religious community to an idealized central theology. Whether the proponents are elites educated in France or Saudi Arabia, a shared characteristic important here is the attempted removal of local synchronizations and questionable practice (*bida'*, or “innovation”) and is typically a response to either local Sufi practices or non-Islamic power structures.

not homogeneous within Morocco. In fact discourse about, “Moroccan Islam” simplifies a broad range of religious practices and disparate sets of beliefs. Analytically, it is useful to refer to localized mystical and African variations of Islamic practice as “Sufism” only until I outline individual manifestations in the chapters that follow. After this point I will utilize the local names of respective traditions including the Gnawa, ‘Aissawa, Hamadcha, and Tijaniyya paths. As the later chapters show, the term “Sufism” fails to recognize the wealth of theological and ritual depth that exists between paths, each with its own history, leadership, and perspectives on other groups. In short, it fails to draw upon the horizontal interactions between groups of disparate religious, social, and political leanings. This broad term “Sufi,” glossing all localized forms of Islamic practice under a single umbrella label, closes the “mesh” of the social web, (Redfield [1956] discussed in Chapter 2).

Controversy over the validity of Sufism and its spiritual and cultural manifestations is also not unique to Morocco. Similar practices in Nigeria, Senegal, Niger, and elsewhere come under the contention of reformist groups linked to the Salafi Islam of the Arabian Peninsula. It is also in this trans-state context that the marginalized Moroccan Gnawa must be seen. Neither Tamazight nor Arab, Gnawa are black Africans of a sub-Saharan origin. As a formerly enslaved population, brought by past empires and tied to the trans-Saharan trade, the Gnawa people long remained outside of Morocco’s nationalist conversation, and in many ways remain outside today. Their religious practices and beliefs are a syncretic combination of Islamic subject matter and African ritual and performance practice. While the general mysticism of Sufism predominates, the properties of the musical (and ritual) production are based within a sub-Saharan character. Instruments, dances, the language of lyrics, and the theological focus on spirit possession emphasize the African origins of these practices. Simultaneously, the Gnawa incorporate Islamic

texts, historical figures, the Arabic language, and Islamic prayers and rituals to various ends as the performers appear in different performative<sup>7</sup> spaces. It is how these geographic, cultural, and religious aspects are created, manipulated, and interpreted by both musical producers and the disparate audiences that illuminate the ways in which “Morocco” becomes a label for hybrid identities that manifest in vastly different people.

### **Commodifying the Gnawa**

The process that brought this marginalized religious practice to national-level consumption initially removed some of these difficult “African” elements in order to align the music with both the popular and intellectual religious sentiments. Moroccan Sufism may be willing to celebrate the Gnawa heritage, but certain aspects associated with African traditions must be stripped away in order for acceptance from the larger Moroccan population. Otherwise, the music would remain solely within the realm of the marginalized “Gnawa cult.” Through the continuous and historical commodification of the sounds, first in the market squares and later by major festival producers and record companies, the settings (and therefore the meanings of the music) could be changed. This process, it must be noted, is seen in every area affected by globalization, modernization or “Westernization,” as those in power attempt to define their “nation” and its cultural production.

As the location involved in the creation and consumption of Gnawa music expands from the local to the regional and eventually to the national and international, the participants involved in the latter markets take over, affecting style and meaning of the music. Producers in France and *maalems* (Gnawa masters) in rural towns outside of Marrakech treat Gnawa sounds differently. These differences can be seen in both the performance style and musical content. The music

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<sup>7</sup> See Chapter 4 for further discussion on these strategies and spaces.

industry also causes changes by removing much of the communal ritual and dance from the musical whole through the very act of placing the sound onto a record made in a studio.

However, there is still an interaction between these extremes, and the specific manipulations of the sound illuminate the implicit values used in creating a musical product. Whether the musical style is a simple stratification of different styles or a fusion creating a new type of music, the changes are initiated by a separation of sounds from the traditional layla.<sup>8</sup>

The complexities of these relationships are both confounded and expanded by the existence of major festivals around Morocco celebrating not only Gnawa music, but also Gnawa music placed within numerous contexts exploring fusions with jazz, rock, electronica, etc., and the subsequent conceptual linking of the styles in the minds of both national and international audiences. The fusion of Gnawa music in a French studio and the stratification common to the summer festival have come to represent related commodified forms. The festivals found ways to celebrate the spiritual within Islam, but without elements incompatible with educated discourse. Simultaneously, the music industry managed to highlight the African spiritual character of Sufism without attempting to present “Islamic” music to a Western audience.

This example of using music to manipulate, create, and promote specific forms of identification will be further explored in Chapters 4 and 5. Anthropological and ethnomusicological study on the discourse embedded within the debates surrounding Islamic traditions often fail to recognize the importance of local interactions between disparate groups or organizations. The aim of this thesis is to identify two of the basic levels where these musical debates occur while highlighting the theological and ideological goals and criticisms that power

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<sup>8</sup> The forms of musical production discussed throughout this thesis include attempts at creating new sounds and genres for a growing commercial audience either through musical fusion or stratification. The ethnographic recordings of layla traditional performances for the sake of preservation are not involved except in that they contribute to the creation of a presented identity as discussed in the second half of Chapter 3. They stand along street performances and open, evening demonstrations of the layla as seen in the Essaouira Festival of World Music.

specific decisions. Issues discussed in Chapter 4 revolve around creation of national sentiment, hybridity, and inclusiveness through stratified musical products on one hand and a “universal” spirituality based upon sub-Saharan, rhythmic, and commercially accessible music through fusions on the other. The debates in Chapter 5 are similarly economic, but the national issues (based in Islamic theological concerns) apply on an organizational and theological level as Sufi brotherhoods vie for greater publicity and membership, opening themselves to harsh critique on Islamic grounds.



CHAPTER 2  
THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF ISLAM AND ETHNOMUSICOLOGY

**Introduction**

The following chapter will outline the relevant literature in the anthropology of Islam. As a specialized set of texts, this scholarship developed from firmly within the context of colonial and post-colonial power structures. Over the past 50 years, however, anthropologists have recognized the importance of interactions between individuals. They moved away from the boundaries and the polarizing conceptions of “great” and “little” traditions, opting instead to highlight the relationships between local forces to better comprehend how tradition, innovation, and discourse create fluid social and religious dynamics. This chapter equates the advent of methodological reflexivity with the efforts by authors to employ Islamic voices, opening a space for Muslims to argue their positions in the literature. To close, I use the example of listening as a theoretical tool to demonstrate how ethnomusicological research can forward the current trends in the anthropology of Islamic societies, opening a space for the ethnographic material in Chapters 3, 4, and 5.

**Science and Orientalism**

The relationship between anthropology and Islamic society is long and, as such, it is varied and complex. Issues rise and fall just as attempts at anthropological explanations for behaviors, cultural structures, and other phenomena gain and lose traction within academia. The status of ethnographies and theories based within material from the “Islamic world” are firmly dependent upon relationships between the studier and the studied, a concern of this genre throughout its history, as described by Bourdieu (1977). Yet within research of the Middle East and North Africa, this relationship is contested on grounds beyond those economic and social power relationships between individuals that exist elsewhere. The history between the “East” and the

“West” is not a history of consistent domination of one over the other. It is a narrative of struggle between two world powers attempting to gain access and influence over economically and politically strategic locations. The current primacy of the colonizer over the colonized appears perpetual only from a truncated perspective of history.

“Orientalism,” as defined by Edward Said, is

a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient’s special place in European Western experience. The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe’s greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the other (Said 1978: 1)

He continues by stating, “the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience. ... The Orient is an integral part of European *material* civilization and culture” (Said 1978: 2). The anthropologist, or, even more importantly, the student of anthropological history, must recognize this narrative of the Orient within the gaze of the Occident if they are to realize the depth of this relationship. Moreover, this relational approach to anthropology in general is both fruitful and, as I will show, fairly novel. It is also the place where the field of ethnomusicology has the vast tools to contribute to a stronger analysis of what is typically left to the anthropologist-proper.

The relationship, between Europe (and America) and the “East” (the Middle East, North Africa, India, Asia, and the Far East) is simultaneously one of competition and mutual dependence. This tightrope is part of both the history of the regions and the current state of international affairs. Said writes above that “the Orient is also ... its [Europe’s] cultural contestant” (Said 1978: 1). This competition is rooted in military battles spanning centuries from the early 8<sup>th</sup> century (Battles of Toulouse and Tours), through the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries (the

Crusades)<sup>1</sup>, the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries (Sieges on Vienna), and up to today with wars in Iraq and global political issues centering around Iran, Palestine, Algeria, Lebanon, Pakistan, and Southeastern Europe. As an example of this simultaneous competition and interdependence, when recounting the two sieges on Vienna, “an English historian writing in the beginning of the seventeenth century called the Ottoman Empire ‘the present terror of the world’” (Gelvin 2008: 10). Yet it is the Abbasid Caliphate, centered in Baghdad between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, that the European Renaissance must thank for the renewal of classical thought and the extension of abstract mathematics. Our current economic dependence became all too vivid via the wars of the last 20 years. Douglas Little writes, in reference to the first Gulf War, that “seventy years earlier in the aftermath of the century’s first great war, the Wilson administration had opened the door for U.S. oil companies in the Middle East. In 1991 George Bush would wage the century’s last great war to prevent that door from slamming shut” (Little 2002: 45).

Through these historical notes I have hopefully emphasized the importance of relational perspectives on dealing with the “anthropology of Islam.” These comments, intended to incline the reader toward the thin line between the “East” and the “West,” open a discussion of the needs, changes within, and shortcomings of anthropological thought toward this region of the world. Examining the relational nature of society occurs on other levels of anthropological analysis as well. This chapter has two goals. First, it follows the ways in which the anthropology of Islam increased its focus on interactions between individuals, groups, and societies over the last 50 years, resulting in a deeper understanding and analysis. These groups include those studied, but also they do not ignore the fundamental relationship between the anthropologist and

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<sup>1</sup> See Amin Maalouf ‘s *The Crusades Through Arab Eyes* (1984) for an account of the Crusades drawn from Arab authors and historians. He outlines the internal struggles and power disputes leading to divisions and alliances that opened avenues for the crusaders’ successes. He also notes the impact of Europeans residing in major Arab cities, how they assimilated into their new homes and brought various changes to their neighbors.

the people who inform the ethnography. Second, it demonstrates some ways in which ethnomusicology lends developed tools for the study of these relational activities in reference to musical participation and production, highlighting the usefulness of these tools in coming to terms with Islamic societies. I make special note of authors who have successfully utilized these techniques, developed in ethnomusicological circles, in a deep analysis of non-musical aspects of the Islamic world. I conclude with my own thoughts on the importance of considering relationships between groups and avoiding ethnographic accounts that enforce artificial barriers that do not exist in practice, opening a space for the discussions that follow.

### **Concerns of the Anthropology of Islam**

#### **Historical Disciplinary Power Structures**

Pierre Bourdieu begins his *Outline of a Theory of Practice* with a chapter entitled “The objective limits of objectivism.” The first sentence of this chapter, and therefore of the book itself, states that

the practical privilege in which all scientific activity arises never more subtly governs that activity (insofar as science presupposes not only an epistemological break but also a *social* separation) than when, unrecognized as privilege, it leads to an implicit theory of practice which is the corollary of neglect of the social conditions in which science is possible. (Bourdieu 1977: 1)

The social separation that precludes the “implicit theory of practice” Bourdieu means to criticize is especially apparent in regards to anthropological production in the “East.” While Bourdieu wrote these words in 1972 (translated to English in 1977), he was setting up his study of a population in Algeria, and his careful perspective, actively criticizing the methodological assumptions in anthropologists who preceded him, foreshadow the work done by Edward Said 6 years later.

Said’s concern in writing *Orientalism* was dependent upon a reading of Foucault’s *The Archeology of Knowledge* and *Discipline and Punish*. He writes that his

contention is that without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage – and even produce – the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period. Moreover, so authoritative a position did Orientalism have that I believe no one writing, thinking, or acting on the Orient could do so without taking account of the limitations on thought and action imposed by Orientalism. (Said 1978: 3)

His fervent stance attempts to illuminate the vast ways in which the power of European culture overtook, defining and redefining, control of the Orient. The systematic nature of this limitation of thought “imposed by Orientalism” mirrors the systematic neglect extant in anthropology at the time of Bourdieu’s writing. The assumptions of the “science” of the Enlightenment created an unequal dynamic between these two regions. Returning to Said, “the relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony...” (5). To further politicize Orientalism, Said defines as one of his three aspects of contemporary reality, “the distinction between pure and political knowledge” (9). Criticizing contemporary (and current) perspectives, Said emphasizes the distinctly *political* nature of seemingly apolitical subject matter. “It must ... be true that for a European or American studying the Orient there can be no disclaiming the main circumstances of *his* actuality: that he comes up against the Orient as a European or American first, as an individual second” (11).

Similarly, for Bourdieu, the scientist must recognize the parallel actuality, that this *scientific* perspective carries a number of fundamental beliefs, each of which must be accounted for and, for an ideal ethnographic study devoid of internal bias, overcome.

... It is not sufficient for anthropology to break with native experience and the native representation of that experience: it has to make a second break and question the presuppositions inherent in the position of an outside observer, who, in his preoccupation with *interpreting* practices, is inclined to introduce into the object the principles of his relation to the object, as is attested by the special importance he assigns to communicative functions (whether in language, myth, or marriage). (Bourdieu 1977: 2)

This last example, relating the tendency toward communicative analysis within anthropology, references, among other things, the analysis of art from Saussurian perspectives, forgetting that “artistic production is always *also* ... the product of an ‘art,’ ‘pure practice without theory,’ as Durkheim says” (Husserl, quoted in Bourdieu 1977: 1-2). While it lies outside the scope of this chapter, I believe that this is one specific intersection where ethnomusicology provides insight into anthropological study.

The first step toward recognizing these discrepancies embedded within power relationships, due to either the political power of the Occident over the Orient or the “social separation” of the scientist and his research is to open up a space for voices from elsewhere. Anthropologists constantly struggle to find ways to present the “voice” of their interviewees, undertaking methodological and presentational innovations and engaging within interdisciplinary debates. Harry G. West, in his *Kupilikula: Governance and the Invisible Realm in Mozambique* encloses his chapters in long transcriptions of interview dialogue. His aesthetic and formal decisions here attempt to recreate the need, expressed by Achille Mbembe, to allow emergent “languages of power” from “the daily life of the people” (West 2005: 2). Similarly, debates within Islam deserve study by anthropologists, historians, and other scholars. The discursive traditions within Islamic society are strong, just as they are healthy.<sup>2</sup> Translations are occasionally scarce, but for specific topics (especially this relationship between Islam and the West), they are more ample. *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives*, published in 2006, is a volume containing polemics and analyses from Muslim (and atheist) authors about subjects

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<sup>2</sup> For example, because one primary value of Islamic society is the existence of the *umma* (unified body of believers), and there is not the same overall hierarchical structure that exists in other world religions such as Catholicism, agreement is highly sought after. Thus, speeches and polemics are epitomized efforts to gain large numbers of followers, and to attempt the ideal: unity in thought and deed.

ranging from socialism to democratic governance. These translations are slowly appearing, and they are of utmost importance for scholars considering Muslim voices.

### **Great and Little Traditions—Robert Redfield**

One anthropological debate that is representative of this need for Muslim voices is on Islam itself. By following the 50-year trajectory of this confusion about “great” and “little,” or “true/essential/scriptural” and “popular” Islam, it is difficult to avoid the significance of two specific authors: Abdul Hamid el-Zein and Talal Asad. After insertions these two made into the conversation, it shifted from an esoteric discourse from dichotic anthropological assumptions to useful renderings of Islamic society based upon more locally engaged and discursively aware fieldwork, as described in the following section. In this section I will revisit the development of this anthropological discussion, placing special emphasis on the interplay between “anthropological” or “etic” perspectives and “indigenous” or “emic” ones.

Robert Redfield’s *Peasant Society and Culture* notes that

in a civilization there is a great tradition of the reflective few, and there is a little tradition of the largely unreflective many. The great tradition is cultivated in schools or temples; the little tradition works itself out and keeps itself going in the lives of the unlettered in their village communities. The tradition of the philosopher, theologian, and literary man is a tradition consciously cultivated and handed down; that of the little people is for the most part taken for granted and not submitted to much scrutiny or considered refinement and improvement. (Redfield 1956: 70)

Here we have a dichotomous vision of two distinct “traditions”: that of the philosopher et al., and that of the “little people.” Yet these two, despite the educational divide between those who are “reflective” and “unreflective,” are interdependent: “great and little tradition can be thought of as two currents of thought and action, distinguishable, yet ever flowing into and out of each other” (Redfield 1956: 72). He situates the existence of these disparate-yet-interdependent traditions within the context of specialization. Within a social group where there is little specialization, resulting in “no technical vocabulary,” there is no great tradition. Everyone’s conception of

religious duty is indistinct from that of everyone else's. Where there is a social stratification via economics and education, there emerges superiority: "there are differences as between layman and specialist in the understanding of the religion" (Redfield 1956: 73).

As he fleshes out his model of traditions in peasant (and stratified) societies, Redfield moves more distinctly into specifics. Before discussing Islam he states that "where the hypotheses of the great traditions are considered beliefs, the hypotheses of the little tradition will be considered superstitions" (Redfield 1956: 84). This statement highlights the reliance of anthropologists at this time (and later) on previous anthropologists, almost exclusively. Redfield writes about his personal experiences in India, yet speaks broadly on materials ranging much further than that Asian subcontinent. These assumptions regarding the consideration of hypotheses fail to acknowledge those who may be doing the considering. That the sentence is in the passive is telling. Who considers these hypotheses to be beliefs or superstitions? Anthropologists and the educated elite, perhaps, who write history? While he recognizes the concept of interdependency between the "great" and the "little," Redfield fails to recognize what this actually means or produces.<sup>3</sup> It is a trap in which many fall over the years following Redfield's argument, one that continues for decades.

This polar/related differentiation between a "great" and a "little" tradition also fails in a second sense: it assumes the existence of a singular "little tradition," even if that assumption is made implicitly. What Redfield and others consider to be little involve numerous local variations that cover a wide swath of religious practice. Even within the same locality, these can be major differences. Thus, instead of codifying these little traditions into one monolithic "little tradition"

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<sup>3</sup> What Redfield does highlight comes from G. von Grunebaum's work, noting the integration of local beliefs or practices into orthodoxy. He gives the Prophet's precedent: "giving an Islamic meaning to the heathen pilgrimage rites which he welded into the Muslim *hajj* to Mecca" and "the justification within the framework of orthodoxy of the cult of the saints" (Grunebaum, quoted in Redfield 1956: 84-5).



that stands against and influences the one singular “great tradition,” Redfield’s work from an earlier chapter in his book proves more useful.

He discusses Barnes’ “social field,” something beyond economic and local relationships, yet related to them. In the given example, Norwegian fishermen did not just travel to make transactions or work. They were simultaneously forging social relationships with others: other fishermen, captains, traders, probably even frequenters of bars, lovers, and boarders. This, he called the “network” (Redfield 1956: 50). Loosely conceived by nature, it comprises the whole of personal and professional (which are, in essence, personal) links between individuals. Barnes moves further to consider the “network” to be the remainder after the removal of the territorial and industrial social fields. This idea of “network” collects what has previously been neglected.

Redfield’s call to recognize these connections between people is valid and necessary. They are “so significant as to demand description in their own right” (Redfield 1956: 53), and exist as a field of relationships to be studied primarily by anthropologists. As such, the “network” provides an important source of material, one forgotten by scholars up to Redfield’s time (and frequently since). Sadly, despite the fact that he builds his later ideas on this concept of “network,” Redfield never closes the gap between the “great” and “little” tradition(s). By returning to networks, he had the tools at hand deepen his analysis of how these beliefs and practices interact, from an anthropological perspective. Many later authors approached the topic, but none explicitly utilized this networked framework until Talal Asad in 1986, discussed further in Chapter 5.

### **Responding to Anthropologists—Abdul Hamid el-Zein**

Abdul Hamid el-Zein orients his article, “Beyond Ideology and Theology: The Search for the Anthropology of Islam,” with the following statement:

in all approaches, the meaning of religion as a universal form of human experience and of Islam as a particular instance is presupposed, invariable, and incontestable. Consequently, all claim to uncover a universal essence, the real Islam. (el-Zein 1977: 227)

His argument through this article draws out the implications of this consistent approach.

Expanding on a number of previous studies since, and indebted, to Redfield's work, he notes how each "challenges the often subtle premise of the unity of religious meaning" (el-Zein 1977: 227). This critique of the contemporaneous anthropology of Islam is both novel and insightful. He notes the contradictory nature of some "discoveries emergent within this framework" of a unitary religious "essence" and, as such, steps back and reworks the most influential texts to that point in the development of the field.

Most anthropology discussed in the article occupies itself with rejoining the "local" with something larger, creating a "family tree" of sorts, where each local variant resembles a core, noticeable through the analytical insight gained by science. When discussing Geertz's *Islam Observed* (1968), el-Zein highlights the author's use of "science" as something objective, unlike common sense or religion. He proceeds to emphasize that Geertz's "science" is yet another interpretive realm, reorganizing history, tradition, and cultural symbols to create meaning just as common sense and religion do. It simply has different points of departure and goals. The creation of cultural symbols, like saints, to use Geertz's main example, is a process undertaken by, in this case, religion. Science's attempts to reinterpret those symbols are identical to religion's attempts to revise those created by common sense. Thus, Geertz's reading of Islam must be seen in this interpretive light. This cultural symbolism by which Geertz uses anthropology, however,

succeeds greatly over those who flatten the nature of Islam by identifying it solely with one social structure or another.<sup>4</sup>

By looking at the past as an interpreted symbol in its own right, el-Zein accentuates the importance of the perspective. Just as Said oriented literature as a result of the gaze of the West and Bourdieu problematized the objectivism of objectivism, so to speak, el-Zein identifies the problematic nature of “science,” placing it alongside religion and common sense on a continuum, arguing that it is not, as most believe, something qualitatively different. Science, like religion and common sense, looks at the past as symbolic, a fruitful source of mined meanings. To bring out this use of the past, he examines Eickelman’s *Moroccan Islam* (1976). Here the present is current, and as such, it recreates and represents the past. The social web that creates present meaning, and therefore culture, constantly incorporates and recreates the past according to its own specific interpretive schema.

Thus, to look back at this historical dichotomy between local and elite forms of Islam is to ignore the interpretive functions of scientific, or in this case historical, thought. el-Zein moves on to outline issues inherent in the differentiation of “explicit” and “implicit” ideologies, those traditions of the ulema and the local manifestations of some central Islam, respectively. His general conclusion is that these conceptions (both explicit and implicit) of Islamic practice and tradition as some form of essential, or core, belief with localized segments of a family tree should be seen as yet another “diverse, culturally relative expression of a tradition” (el-Zein 1977: 246), a scientific tradition. This tradition comes with its own set of values, as many reflexive anthropologists have since mused. The idea that folk and elite theologies are not

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<sup>4</sup> This criticism is leveled by el-Zein against the works of Bujra (1971) and Crapanzano (1973) who identify a closed system of interpretation, unlike the malleable symbolism of Geertz. They limit the meanings of religion to hierarchical social structures or ritual and psychological practices, respectively.

competitive, but are complimentary, is fruitful. Since each “defines and necessitates the other,” the object of study, some discovery and illumination of a “real” Islam, can be avoided entirely, leading to a more interesting and worthwhile ethnographic project. This new project would more closely follow the situation, the relationship, as it plays out between these disparate poles of Islamic belief. As el-Zein writes:

man does order his world through systems of meaning. Anthropologically, the problem now is to find a means of understanding that order which reaches the desired level of universality without diluting or destroying the significance of this diversity and the richness of meaning in human experience. (el-Zein 1977: 250)

He continues by criticizing the selective practice of analysis that is so common to anthropological writing:

each investigator selects from the multitude of possibly identifiable features and functions of the saint one or two which are deemed distinctive and which, in the subsequent analysis, are taken *as* the saint. Analysis based on such highly selective reading of ethnographic data artificially collapses the complexity of the “saint” to a single dimension, leaving unexplained many possible questions about the undeniable multiplicity of the cultural construct “saint.” (el-Zein 1977: 250)

This line of thought, of course, is not limited to the study of sainthood in Islamic contexts and, I believe, it follows that the “saint” of this example can be replaced by any topic of discussion. What el-Zein opens here is a recognition of the problematic nature of anthropological research up to the late 1970s (and beyond). Instead he asks:

but what if each analysis of Islam treated here were to begin from the assumption that “Islam,” “economy,” “history,” “religion,” and so on do not exist as things or entities with meaning inherent in them, but rather as articulations of structural relations, and are the outcome of these relations and not simply a set of positive terms from which we start our studies? In this case, we have to start from the “native’s” model of “Islam” and analyze the relations which produce its meaning. (el-Zein 1977: 251)

Thus, he attempts to remove “autonomous entities” so that “each point within the system is ultimately accessible from every other point” (el-Zein 1977: 252). This is not simply the logic of another anthropological system, but, as the author argues, it is the logic of culture itself. By

undertaking such a step, the anthropologist and the native, he writes, will share a logic, one that is embedded within the cultural system that already exists. In an effort to return to the above discussions, el-Zein outlines a system that will, *insha'allah* (God willing), remove the cloudy field of subjectivity that exists between the subject and object, or Bourdieu's "social separation." The paralyzing difficulty that remains, however, is the concrete, or methodological, implementation of this quasi-philosophical approach. The interpretive and symbolic system championed by el-Zein here relies heavily on Geertz, yet it is Geertz himself who is both recognized as insightful and criticized. His interpretations, after all, are neither transparent nor falsifiable, dependent upon his intuition and often lacking in justification. How, then, is this proposed Geertzian system of cultural understanding to be reconfigured into an anthropological approach that provides more information than fodder for perceptive discussion?

### **Moving toward an Anthropology of Islam**

In any anthropological pursuit, there are specific goals and concerns. Some, such as the social and institutional power discrepancy between the anthropologist and those with whom he or she works, have been discussed above. The concerns of el-Zein also apply widely to the field as a whole: anthropology must consider the depth of the concepts (symbols) and structures it studies. Otherwise, it perpetuates misrepresentations instead of accomplishing its main goal, which is precisely the opposite. Through ethnographic and historical data, the product of research should contextualize those practices, structures, and symbols instead of flattening them to single faceted objects of study. This is el-Zein's critique of Bujra and Crapanzano, and the same could be leveled against much of the field's writing. Yet, writing an analysis from which "each point within the system is ultimately accessible from every other point" is unwieldy, impractical, and daunting.

Taking these concerns and adding to them those specific attributes that deserve recognition when dealing with Islam, Islam's history, theology, and the relationship borne through conflict and colonialism, an anthropological approach to this subject matter earns an extra layer beyond the above daunting and impractical challenge. The search for new tools and methodologies opened doors as scholars began to slowly work through the problematic nature of this research. Many of these tools are nothing more than perspectives that were previously unknown to anthropology. They come from sociology, linguistics, psychology, political science (loosely), philosophy, women's studies, area studies, and elsewhere as interdisciplinary work increased during the 1980s and 1990s.

One primary field where many of these perspectives and tools have found solid ground from which to work is ethnomusicology, which, not surprisingly, is an entire field founded on the premise of work around and amongst (betwixt and between?) scholarship that was, at the time, held firmly within specific borders. This liminal field, to carry the Turner metaphor further, has only been in its current state for 50 years. In the early 1950s a number of scholars came together to discuss the benefits of using interdisciplinary methods to more closely examine music. Music, no longer defined narrowly as a product or performance, engages entire societies through practice. It claims space just as it creates borders, it articulates individuality while simultaneously conserving community. It, interestingly, is constantly the subject of a type of meta-musical discourse as participants passionately argue its status: is this sound blaring from the window music, or is it raucous noise? It delineates nationhood and identity for some, universality and divinity for others.

While it is, of course, not the only, or even the most effective, cultural symbol, music offers a cultural formation that fits snugly within the same category as Geertz's saint – it is a

complex and deep cultural symbol that provides the anthropologist with innumerable potential linkages and relationships, most of which lead directly to those topics more commonly associated with anthropological investigation: social structures, cultural habits, rituals, etc. It also proves an evasive object of study, one that is similarly daunting to the uninitiated, and frustrating for those who feel insecure in their knowledge or experience. Because of the inherent interdisciplinary nature of ethnomusicology's development, the tools developed for realizing these relationships and linkages can be useful for searching deeper into the issues of Islamic society, or any other cultural system. By looking at how authors approach these issues, in terms of musical practice within Muslim and non-Muslim systems, I hope to illuminate a semblance of this usefulness.

### **Music and Ethnomusicology**

#### **Gamal Abdel Nasr, Umm Kulthoum, and History as Anthropology**

Before approaching the ways in which ethnomusicological theory and performance theory can appropriately assist in the study of Islam, there is a more straightforward way in which music and ethnomusicology can lend understanding. The following sections will highlight significant ethnomusicological texts that have enriched the scholarship of Islam. The first is Virginia Danielson's *The Voice of Egypt: Umm Kulthum, Arabic Song, and Egyptian Society in the Twentieth Century*. Danielson's work is not significant only for its wealth of information regarding the interconnections between musical and political history, it undertakes these connections from an analytical framework that illuminates the functionality of the intertwined Umm Kulthum and Gamal Abdel Nasr.

The relationship between these two figures embedded the cultural within the political in the rise of Egyptian-led "Arab Nationalism." Just as the Middle East gathered to listen to Nasr's speeches, they huddled around radios to consume the weekly broadcast concerts. As examined

below, Charles Hirschkind later recognizes these moments as the beginning of a national ear, a sensory/political experience. The individual begins to embody the nation just as the nation broadcasts itself, quite literally, onto its citizens. After all, Danielson quotes a “well-spoken, richly bejeweled woman” who states that

it wasn't only her voice – her *character* was the reason for her success. Egyptians not only like her voice, we respect *her*... We look at her, we see fifty years of Egypt's history. She is not only a singer. (Danielson 1998: 4)

Umm Kulthum and Nasr both epitomize personalities, representing their time and place. What Danielson does, in *The Voice of Egypt*, is reconnect these two legendary individuals without forgetting the vast and complete power of recollection, or nostalgia. These two are not only important for who they were, but for what they became, and perhaps more importantly, for what they mean to their society. Danielson puts music into relief of politics, searching for a wider lens with which she can better grasp contemporaneous Egyptian society.

At the same time, she avoids a simple representation of historical fact. Her chapters set historical information about the period alongside stories about the singer, adding depth to both. More importantly, however, she does not see history as static, and instead relies as heavily on interviews, and therefore memories, as she does on documents. This form of history, as what is remembered and carried with individuals in society, is fluid, and changes to fit specific times and places. It is this variety of history that anthropology is only recently beginning to engage. History as fact, text, or document can accurately identify elements of what happened, but to the present, history is neither fact nor document, it is nostalgia, it is fluid, and it must be read by the scholar as such.

## **Listening**

Aside from drawing out these historical connections between cultural systems, ethnomusicology provides more substantial theoretical frameworks. One example includes the



idea of listening. Listening, as a practice, has been largely neglected until the last two decades. The act of listening is now recognized as one major plane upon which people define themselves as participants in a cultural system, and the ways in which this active practice affects the individual and the community is important fodder for analysis. Danielson introduces the topic as such:

assuming that musical meaning is coproduced by listeners and that, as Middleton argues, “acts of ‘consumption’ are essential, constitutive parts of the ‘material circuits’ through which musical practice exists – listening, too, must be considered a productive force.” (Danielson 1998: 6, quoting Middleton 1990: 92)

Richard Middleton, quoted here, does not rely on historical information: his analysis moves deeper, into the theoretical realm of how music works within people’s lives.

In Islamic terms, these reactions between listening and community are much more important than popular music can imply, however the constructs provided by this popular music research, in this case, recognizing listening as a “productive force” in a culture, sheds light onto religious and social activity as a whole, as noted by Charles Hirschkind in *Ethical Soundscapes* and Patrick D. Gaffney in *The Prophet’s Pulpit*. These two writers use the ethnomusicological literature to approach cassette and live sermons in Cairo and Minha, respectively. They do not deal with music as such, but their interests line up directly with those who do.

Perspectives that begin with listening as the central cultural act provide agency to the individual, taking the whole of cultural power from the *khatib* (preacher) or *imam* (leader of prayers) and regulating it back to the individual listener or worshipper. Hirschkind states the importance of this distinction directly.

As I will argue, the contribution of this aural media [the cassette sermon] to shaping the contemporary moral and political landscape of the Middle East lies not simply in its capacity to disseminate ideas or instill religious ideologies but in its effect on the human sensorium, on the affects, sensibilities, and perceptual habits of its vast audience. (Hirschkind 2006: 2)

By noting that within the cassette sermon, the “diverse strands” of “the political, the ethical and the aesthetic” (Hirschkind 2006: 5) are joined, Hirschkind, like Danielson before, re-integrates parts of society that were previously separated by the academe. These elements have been at play, working off of each other in a “web of meaning,” to return to Geertz’s phrase, yet anthropology is only beginning to discern just how widely that web is cast.

Like Danielson above, Hirschkind equates Nasr and Umm Kulthum within Egyptian history, although here, unlike the historical comparison above, he specifically highlights their respective “media events.” For Nasr, it is his “rousing speeches [that provided] Egyptians with their first experience of a collective national audition” (Hirschkind 2006: 51).

Notably, as Nasser’s successors were unable to match his unique rhetorical skills or rely upon the revolutionary enthusiasm that accompanied Egypt’s socialist experiment, they gradually forfeited the ability to enlist the ear as the sense organ of a national imaginary. Instead, hearing and the human voice were rapidly recuperated by an opposition movement grounded in Islamic institutions and the traditions of oratory and ethical audition these institutions embedded. A modern political discourse was, in this way, increasingly incorporated within practices of ethical listening linked to the sermon. (Hirschkind 2009: 51)

Here, Nasr’s “rousing” political oratory becomes the groundwork for the anti-secularist movements that are to follow. It is, then, listening as participation that informs these political movements.

Umm Kulthum, trained in Quranic recitation and folk performance, came to embody the sensibilities of Egyptians in a way that other contemporary performers, lacking experience in the Islamic traditions of vocal performance, could not. In many ways, her vocal style, particularly in the early part of her career, foregrounded the same affective dynamics that underlay the tradition of ethical-sermon audition. (Hirschkind 2006: 51)

Furthermore,

the social and ethical edifice of *tarab* and its actor/listener have, over the last thirty years, broken away from the national public sphere articulated by the voices of Umm Kulthum and Nasser and instead taken root within the Islamic Revival movement and the forms of public sociability and political critique it has engendered. (Hirschkind 2006: 52)

## **Fusing the Sacred and the Profane**

Gaffney, in *The Prophet's Pulpit*, adds depth to these relations between religion and its society.

Religion must not ... be mistakenly reduced to the sacred as opposed to the profane (to recall Durkheim's seminal dichotomy). Such a view fundamentally misrepresents the "religious life" which was not a matter of pursuing the sacred to the exclusion of the profane, but rather the generative fusion of both to produce the "elementary forms" of collective consciousness, a moral order, and ultimately society itself. (Gaffney 1994: 28)

Listening, as described in the texts above, is a central pillar around which these two forms of society, the sacred and the profane, are fused into one. Religious life, through the sermon, through music, through the aural conquering of space, enters the "secular" world, sanctifying it. Gaffney further conflates the two by emphasizes the Weberian ways in which religious inwardness ("inner religious state") has been diminished in importance at the hands of "responsibility," an external ethic and ideal forwarded by these public formations of an Islamic society (Gaffney 1994: 38).

Religion, as such, provides a starting point for ethical action. These actions include discussion and debate, as described in all three of these texts. Hirschkind quotes at length a conversation he overheard in a taxi, Gaffney outlines the importance of media and community interconnections and debates in *Minha*, while Danielson emphasizes the primacy of personal communication in Cairo.

People talked to me readily, repeating, elaborating, and embellishing their tropes. "Talking," an anthropologist friend observed, "is a national pastime in Egypt." All sorts of topics are subject to detailed discussion, evaluation, and comment. Radio and television broadcasts, for example, are not merely to be absorbed, they are to be discussed. They provide a starting point for argumentation of views. (Danielson 1998: 5)

It is this discussion of ideas that anthropology as a field must recognize. And by using listening as a theoretical tool, as these texts have they can more fully realize these debates within their research. Simultaneously, listening begins to break down some of these barriers that so

effectively limit understanding, as described by both Bourdieu and Said above. It is through listening as a theoretical tool and as a methodological priority that the field can move forward.

### **Listening in Moroccan Islam**

The work of Hirschkind and Gaffney demonstrate the value of interdisciplinary theoretical approaches to anthropological research. While listening itself is not a trope carried through this thesis, its practical importance for the subject matter in the next three chapters cannot be denied. It is instead the influential dialogue and debate that comes through and alongside musical and spiritual production that fuels the present study. Yet listening is involved. In Chapter 3, listening is the central engagement between the Gnawa adept and the spiritual world of the layla ceremony. In Chapter 4, listening orients the listener toward either a nationalist project of identity formation or a budding international aesthetic that utilizes the “African-ness” and ambiguous spirituality present in popular forms of Gnawa music. Chapter 5 implicitly places listening in a similar framework as adepts debate religious authority through their participation in any number of musical rituals and commercial opportunities. It is listening that engages people in produce discourse, and it is listening that incites the experiences described below, between this world and the next.

### CHAPTER 3 FROM THE LAYLA TO THE STREETS: GNAWA RITUAL AND THEOLOGY

In Arabic, Morocco's name refers to its distance from the center of the historic Arab empires – it is the place where the sun sets, the West. With the national project, the country's leaders selected the name al-mamlakah al-maghrebiyya ("The Western Kingdom," more commonly referred to as al-maghreb, "The West") to identify its land and people. Al-maghreb is linguistically related to gharib, simultaneously meaning Western, odd, or foreign. In the 1950s, the nationalists recognized within the new name the conception of Morocco as foreign to the Arab world. In other words, Morocco was conceived as an Arabic "Other" from the perspectives of Arabs across the Middle East. It is also significant that many of Morocco's most defining elements come not from the Arab tradition, but instead from the impact of other interacting cultures. Many of the country's musical and artistic characteristics, for example, originated in Spain under the Spanish 'Umayyids and in West Africa before combining with Berber and Arab styles to create Andalusian classical music and the various forms of folk music popular throughout the nation. Even in the choice of hot beverages, Moroccans have become known for their sweet mint tea, a rejection of the Turkish coffee spread by the Ottomans that is constantly and ritualistically consumed by Egyptians and others across North Africa.

During the 11th and 12th centuries the Almoravid and Almohad empires ruled current day Morocco and spread their power up through much of Spain and down toward the southern edges of Mali. These empires held out against others coming from the East, leading to the pride and royal authority of the Maghreb. Their distance from the center of the Islamic world, marked by Mecca and Medina, became a point of strength. The intellectual centers of Fez and Cordoba, similarly, equaled or outshone even the scholars of Al-Azhar in Cairo as a center of science and learning. With this learning, Cordoba especially became known as a home of tolerance and

respect between religions and populations. Jews, Christians, and Muslims from Europe, the Middle East, and sub-Saharan Africa came together under intellectual pursuits.

While much has changed in the past 1000 years, the fact that these Berber empires, the Almoravids and Almohads, captured and fostered such a civilization speaks to the power of the hybridity that existed throughout the history of Morocco as a nation. The current monarch's family is a lineage of Berbers. Many of the historic Sufi leaders to come through Fez continued their travels, becoming influential in West Africa: Senegal, Mali, or Niger. Thus, Morocco has maintained an important relationship with its past centers of culture and science as well as its neighbors to both the north and to the south.

### **The Arab-Berber Racial Continuum**

Despite this history of communication and tolerance, the question of racial identity is both present and problematic. In distinguishing between Berber and Arab in current day Morocco, often those of other ethnic or racial backgrounds are excluded. Many Moroccans of different statuses in society claim, in sweeping statements, that all of their countrymen are either distinctly Arab or Berber. This disagreement is linked to a desire to either pull Morocco into the Islamic Arab Middle East or to maintain pride in local maghrebi uniqueness. The notion that Arabs live in the imperial cities and commercial centers while Berbers live in the mountains provides a second commonly used point of differentiation. Since these two racial categories share most biological traits and “insofar as cultural practices and social style become markers, racial constructs may blur with the concepts of ‘class’ or ‘ethnicity’ or both,” (Turino 2000: 555) only these other non-physical markers are left as useful. With educated travelers from countries to the east (Egypt, Saudi Arabia) and areas to the north (Granada, Cordoba, etc.) studying and settling in cities like Fez, known as intellectual and spiritual centers, this confluence of class and ethnicity certainly holds true in Morocco. Claims to the Berber-ness or Arab-ness of the

population remain in the political spectrum today as educational policies continue to be a contested plain for cultural promotion. This Moroccan discussion of race manipulated the inherent biological and class-related signifiers over the recent past and left the Gnawa outside of the continuum. With the foreign recognition and popularization of Gnawa music, discussed in Chapter 4, the opportunity exists for revisiting the Arab-Berber debates once again with a goal of embracing that minority population's increasing international status.

The Gnawa and other groups of a more definite African biological phenotype were therefore unable to break into the national dialogue. The emphasis of their "blackness" joined with their syncretic Afro-Islamic renditions of their religion solidify this exclusion: from the perspective of the urban, educated elite, it put them into a category linked to, but still beyond the Berbers because of the social, religious, geographic and economic differences – they were specifically not Arab. Some go so far as to claim that they are not Muslim, an attack that comes frequently in conversations with Muslims who claim authority such as the Tijaniyya, scholars, or educators. The Berber could also see them as different, or lesser, because of color and their migrant status to the region. The history of these black Moroccans is not known with certainty, but the widely held belief is that they came from West Africa – many cite Mali or Senegal – through the slave trade under the Berber Empire (Charry 1996, Grame 1970). Therefore, the Berber population uses this geographical dominance over the Gnawa. Through their music, however, the Gnawa circumvented the national and entered the international scene where they suddenly drew in a national attention.

These issues pertain to a new possible reading of Moroccan national identity. The monarchy is forced into a paradoxical process. First it attempts to solidify itself as a strong Islamic country, avoiding that label of "foreign" or gharib. Simultaneously it struggles to

maintain pride in the unique history and colorful cultural influences from Andalusia, Africa and the Sahara. Morocco is Berber, Islamic, and Arab, but it is also African. Variations of these influences, and therefore the multi-axis nature of the debate, manifest in the many styles of local music. Most recently it has been the music of the Gnawa that transcends these boundaries, folding local heritage into a hybrid, international sound. As recording technology and the commodification of music allows for a separation from certain aspects of cultural meaning, the Gnawa sound and its producers are reinterpreting the situation as presented and finding it possible to create a revised and more holistic symbol for Morocco – one that is simultaneously Islamic and African, Western and Eastern, Berber and Arab. And all is done in a way that remains distinctly Moroccan by championing the collaboration and combination of any number of experiences.

As Kapchan argues, the process of cultural creolization is central to Morocco.

Although a creole language . . . does not exist in Morocco, the process of cultural creolization does; the nation of Morocco is composed of a plurality of ethnicities, histories, and languages that together form conceptions of what it is to be Moroccan. (Kapchan 1996:6-7)

A primary example of the Moroccan creole culture, Gnawa music can be seen through an analysis of the music in its local, national and international forms. Careful reworking of Gnawa and Andalusian classical elements form intertwined, stylistic, and innovative sounds. These exemplify the multi-faceted Moroccan national identity, drawing it away from the previous Arab and Berber polarity. Chapter 4 enters into discussion regarding the processes and forces involved in creating and controlling these innovative forms of music (and the values they foster). The present chapter precedes this with narrative regarding the religious and ceremonial elements of the Gnawa layla, and its constant syncretic interaction between Sub-Saharan roots and Islamic beliefs. Later, as the musicians travel as performers to earn their livelihood, impacts of public



performance upon the knowledge and acceptance of the Gnawa in markets across the south construct the foundation for the commercialization and nationalization of the music that is to follow.

### **The Gnawa and the Layla**

The few academic (and many incidental) sources on the Gnawa of Morocco attribute their history to the Berber slave trades. This trans-Saharan forced migration caused uprooting of their culture and forced the population to account for drastic events. Jankowsky (2006) discusses the symbolic memory and representation of the move as it manifests itself within the music of the Stambeli in Tunisia, and while that group is not specifically related to the Gnawa, many of his observations hold true. By emphasizing “the Sahara as a barrier,” common conceptions of the south as the “land of the blacks” and the north as “the land of the whites” “deny the historical role of the Sahara as a bridge.” The travel impacted the memory of slavery in a way similar to that of the ship’s passage across the Atlantic (Jankowsky 2006: 380). A “continual flow” of ideas circulated between the traders and the towns as well as amongst those in captivity. Jankowsky also points to the sheer number of slaves traded, estimated at 9 million – roughly equal to the size of the Atlantic trade. The magnitude of people moved and the length of time in which the trade existed (roughly 650 C.E. to 1900 C.E.) made the bridge and the barrier of the Sahara significant in the memories of all involved populations.

Both the Stambeli and the Gnawa, as well as many others throughout Islamic sub-Saharan Africa, claim their Islamic identity through the figure of Sidi Bilal. Bilal was the Prophet Mohammed’s muezzin, and was a black slave freed later in life. The Qur’anic figure’s position as a muezzin assists in this identification as, like the Gnawa maalem, the muezzin’s primary function is to prepare the people for prayer, reflection, and other spiritual endeavor. Whereas the Gnawa maalem does this through music and the layla ritual, the muezzin’s responsibility is to

chant Qur'anic verse from the heights of the mosque's minarets, signaling each of the five daily prayers. Through Sidi Bilal there exists a connection legitimizing the Gnawa ritual practice, and the syncretic nature of the musical and religious pursuits: he is a prominent figure associated with the Prophet himself, and one who carried out his obligations in a fashion that involves musical chanting.

The rituals of Gnawa musicians carry many of their people's spiritual roots. Embedded within the music is a memory, a cultural memory, of past times. The slave trade is revisited and held central to the "Gnawa" way of life. The spiritual messages that permeate musical tradition, however, are manipulated, or disappear altogether, as the musicians enter non-religious performance spaces and situations. The differences between these stages and audiences impact common beliefs, as the purpose for performance itself becomes economic. Simultaneously performers constantly reinterpret their own tradition in front of an uninitiated group of domestic and international casual listeners. As the audience reads these presented symbols of memory and meaning, the course of musical nationalization advances. First, however, it is necessary to revisit the ceremonial Gnawa music that sat well outside of national debates until its unintended popularity of the 60s.

### **The Layla Ceremony**

The ceremonies and rituals (*laylat*<sup>1</sup>) of Gnawa music involve the performance of music and dancing to incite trance. While people are within a trance, various saints and spirits are called upon through the use of specific rhythms, colors and smells. After the opening of communication and the strengthening of relationships with the ceremonial hosts, the supernatural entities are asked either for help or to cure any number of ailments. There are seven male and four female

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<sup>1</sup> Also translates literally as "evenings," the plural of layla, referring to the late nights and early mornings occupied by the ritual performance.

figures. Other descriptions refer to them as saints, spirits, or *jinn* (plural: *jnun*, Arabic for spirit and carrying an evil or mischievous connotation, also the likely source of the English word “genie”). The seven males are collectively known as the Hausa (*al-hawsawiyya*), recognizing the Sahelian origins of the Gnawa population. Many are syncretic figures from Qur’anic history such as Sidi Musa (Moses), or Moulay Ibrahim (Abraham). The four female figures are revered through the title *lalla*, or Lady, with the last, Lalla ‘Aisha being one of the most prominent, powerful, and common possessors. Each has its own personality and corresponding chants and colors used in the event.

The actuality of what many call “possession” in Morocco is more akin to “ownership” than it is to the connotations conjured by the term “possession.” Each figure/spirit/saint/jinn is called a *mluk* in Arabic. The word comes from the root “to own,” making these figures literally the “owner.” The Gnawa differentiate this idea drastically from the *jnun*, who exist, but are demons or spirits with negative intentions. The *mluk* are these eleven specific personalities. Those who consider the Gnawa to be un-Islamic, or have general concerns with their practice and novel beliefs (including Sufis or self-described reformists) conceptualize the *mluk* to simply be specific *jnun*, they possess individuals and cause trouble for their lives. While the *mluk* is the owner, the *maskun* is the possessed. *Maskun* shares a root with the verb “to live” or “to reside.” The form of the word is the passive form of the noun derived from the verb, and therefore carries the meaning “one who is lived within” or “residence.” A rented apartment is a *maskun*, just as a possessed individual has an owner, a particular spirit who lives within the person. This owner/residee relationship is, once it has begun, permanent. There is no exorcism and there is no pleading for the *mluk* to depart. The *maskun* must learn to work with the *mluk* in order to achieve a healthy, and symbiotic, partnership. It is the *layla* and its associated sacrifices that most directly please a

mluk, and it is there that the mluk will present itself publicly. For the sake of clarity, I will use “possessed” to describe the ecstatic state achieved by a maskun at a layla ceremony. “Owned” will describe the general relationship between mluk and maskun.

The personality of the mluk appears in two ways during a layla ceremony. First, each is known for his or her general character (Figure 3-1). Shurfa, a name derived from *sharif*, is a descendent of the Prophet Mohammed. He is therefore noble, wears white, and is the first to appear in any layla ceremony. Many of the mluks also have specific behaviors and ritual practices. Al-Kuhl (another name for Sidi Mimun), for example, wears black, is powerful, and dangerous. When possessed, his adepts use a knife, cutting repeatedly at their forearms. Gaga, a *maalem* in Fez, is owned by al-Kuhl, and held his arm in front of me to show the long series of deep scars along the length of his forearm. Sidi Musa (Moses) enlisted the power of God to part the Red Sea. His influence over water is what characterizes the behavior of his possessed adepts during the layla. When under the ownership of Sidi Musa individuals dance wildly while balancing a large bowl full of water on their heads. The love of water moves further as they splash it on the ground, fall to the floor, and enact swimming motions. Lalla Malika (Arabic for queen) loves to dance; her portion of the layla has an uplifting party atmosphere. This is the only point where those who are not possessed join in, participating alongside those who are. The other figures are similarly known by their characteristics and those behaviors of their adepts. Recognizing the behaviors and fostering the presence of a spirit is one of the foremost responsibilities of the *muqaddama* and the *maalem*, necessary for the proper unfolding of the ceremony.

The colors manifest in the clothing worn by individuals who hope or intend to become possessed over the course of the evening. They also match colored scarves provided by the

*muqaddama* as the event progresses. The musicians utilize specific rhythmic and melodic portions of their repertoire to arouse each individual spirit or saint. The patterns and chants are directly related to the instruments that have come to symbolize the Gnawa music and the people. Along with the colorful dress and characteristic dance, the *hajhuj* and the *quraqib*, central instruments described below and in Figure 3-3, persist throughout the healing practice. It is these same instruments that appear in popular forms of world beat music referencing the Gnawa, and therefore Morocco, where they are manipulated into new creative musical ideas.

### **Performers and Instruments**

The maalem “directs” the ensemble and audience while playing the *hajhuj*, a three-stringed semi-spiked lute with a hollowed out wooden body and camel neck membrane. A large group of males continue with the *quraqib*, iron castanets, while dancing (see Figure 3-3 for instrument descriptions). The maalem’s responsibility includes choosing the chants for the crowd; a decision that also implies control over which spirits or saints become involved in the spiritual connection. By carefully watching the ceremony’s audience and looking for any hints of possession to promote musically, the maalem can steer the ritual practice via song choice. The music is formally call-and-response, with this elder musician singing the lead role.

His Arabic title implies this position of understanding and experience, as the structure of the word “maalem” points to religious learning and knowledge. The root is shared with ‘ulema, the name of the learned clerics and scholars who hold a responsibility to make decisions and statements regarding the Islamic faith. This is in contrast to the imam, the head of a congregation, whose title literally means “in front of” and implies his leadership in prayer. Despite the presence of a specific imam in a mosque, any member of a mosque community who knows the prayers is able to step forward and lead the service. Thus it is not the maalem’s

direction of an ensemble, but his spirituality and knowledge of Gnawa and Islamic traditions that give him the respected role.

As the learned and experienced leader of the ensemble, the maalem performs on the hajhuj (Figure 3-4). Since the remainder of the Gnawa musicians and audience participate through the quraqib, clapping, and dancing, it is the hajhuj alone that lends an instrumental melody. The instrument's deep tone, reminiscent of an upright bass, and particular playing technique contribute to the identifiable sound necessary for the creation of a greater symbol. The instrument also implies the history of the Gnawa as African, nesting it within a continental musical tradition. Coolen (1984) and Charry (1996) describe the similarities in instrument construction between the hajhuj (also called the gimbri and the sintir) and instruments in West Africa. Figure 3-2, from Charry's article, demonstrates the structural similarities between these different instruments. It also links them to particular ethnic groups, something that the Gnawa do by directly stating the Hausa origins of certain spirits or by describing lyrics as Fulani, despite the fact that many cannot understand Fulani and do not know the meanings of these texts. The construction of the hajhuj holds symbolic value for the Gnawa beyond these ethnic linkages. Much respect is reserved for those who play the instrument, and while it is a popular choice for younger aspiring Moroccans on the streets just outside festival grounds, experience and tradition sustain an important role in professional performance. This applies whether the music is sacred or profane. There is, however, one exception slowly developing as Gnawa-influenced bands bring together Moroccan, Berber, French, and American influences to create a "world beat" form of popular music. With that change in focus, purpose, and audience, the instrument comes to symbolize not the specifically Gnawa people and heritage, but a broader pan-Moroccan cultural identity.

Three portions of the hajhuj's construction remind the layla audience of their history of slavery. First, the long and deep wooden body is said to represent the boats used to bring a number of slaves around West Africa and to Morocco by water. The skin along the face of the instrument, similar to that of the drumhead on a banjo, cites the large kettle drums that commanded the slaves to row. Lastly, the leather chords typically seen along the instrument's neck for tightening and tuning the strings denote bindings used for enslavement.

The quraqib (Figures 3-5 and 3-6) hold a place of respect in the eyes of the participants and dancers.

They [quraqib] are so important to the Gnawa that the musicians swear their oaths by them. That they are made of iron is especially interesting in view of the fact that the lower-caste occupation of blacksmith is one that is much practiced by Moroccan Negroes." (Grame 1970: 79)

These handheld percussive instruments, similar to and often called castanets, audibly remind the knowledgeable listeners of past slavery. The constant sound, the rhythmic core of the Gnawa performance, creates an aural symbol of the metallic shackles used to hold the black population captive during their long trek across the Sahara. The instrument's name, frequently transliterated as krakeb, is from the Arabic root Q-R-B, meaning "to come near," or "nearby." This insinuation of slavery and slave relates to the difficult past, but also to the status of a pious man searching out the nearness of God. Thus, echoes of memory and reverence remain as new musicians as young as 4 or 5 years old begin to learn the quraqib and assist elders in setting the mystical stage for trance to occur.

Lyrics of layla songs and traditions simultaneously make pleas to Allah and Mohammad while inciting the saints and spirits of local traditions. This effort to find spiritual assistance is seen by many Muslims related to jahalia practices of idol worship, making it grossly un-Islamic. Musically, poetically and culturally, the ceremony is based within the contradictions between

Islamic and African spiritual roots. This marginalizes the population on a religious basis that underlies other complications of race. The biological aspects of the race discussion were combined with the economic distinctions between the Gnawa and the Berber, creating “negroid lower classes” and further solidifying the Gnawa outside of a national identity. Grame wrote, for example, in 1970 that:

If the Gnawa preserve their “negroid” appearances it is because, as Carleton Coon puts it, “wherever or however they live, the Berbers refuse to mate with the Negroid lower classes... [despite their symbiotic relationship]” In other words, the members of the Gnawa cult belong to what might reasonably be termed a scheduled caste, and indeed this can be said of most itinerant Moroccan musicians, white or black (Grame 1970: 77-9).

Because of the slave trade under the Berber empire and the color differences between the Berbers and the black Gnawa, segregation continued until recent times. Since they could not share a racial identity with the Berbers or the Arabs due to their constructed race, class and geographic history, it was not until the Gnawa cultural commodification earned the respect of the foreign audience that they entered the Moroccan national debate. After the advent of recording technologies and the opening up of the unique music to the rest of Moroccan society, the negative resonances of the “Gnawa cult” were removed and the group’s prominence began to present its ability to artistically represent the changing image of Morocco. There was, however, an intermediary step. Public street performances introduced much of Morocco to the music and culture of this subaltern population and while the dances and songs were an effort to gain more clients in need of a layla ceremony, the singing and drumming provided spectacle and entertainment for domestic tourists and market-goers as they spent their days shopping on the square.



## **Taking Music to the Streets**

Gnawa musicians historically made a living as traveling performers, moving from city to city around southern Morocco. Marrakech's Jma' al-Fna remains a popular example, and a major hub, for these activities. Within this market square there is always a colorful inundation of music, storytelling, and snake charmers intended for domestic and international tourists alike (Figure 3-7). Philip Schuyler describes the circles, or haqli, of listeners in the Jma' al-Fna as a space to "attract all sorts of entertainers ... acrobats, magicians, fortune tellers, gamblers, and so forth." He writes that "[Jma'] al-Fna is a place of mediation and transition, where rural Morocco becomes urban, and where North Africa meets Europe" (1979: 32). This reading of the performance spaces carved out of the market square have not changed in the 30 years since Schuyler wrote these words, and the processes that he describes for the rwais, Berber musicians, mirror those of the Gnawa. The Gnawa popularity grew through these market performances over time and, while the layla still exists, they are the most public endeavor aimed toward visitors to the city, yet the process of transformation for the Gnawa moved beyond the market squares, as Chapter 4 outlines below. The street acts involve the dress, dancing, and some of the musical instrumentation and chanting from the rituals (Figure 3-8). These can be found continuously, every day in multiple spots around large markets, keeping the Gnawa visible, and therefore in the minds of the Moroccan population.

The focus of the music seen in the markets is not upon a spiritual transcendence. Instead the priority is economic, as is demonstrated by the hats immediately and aggressively held open anytime a tourist photographs the ensemble. The chants are not the same as those used to incite possession and trance, and instead the colorful dance and costumes are of primary importance. The dance involves leaping up and down, bending at the knees in an acrobatic fashion, while continuing a beat on the quraqib. Along with the dancers, other musicians beat a pulse on the

tbal, a large drum of Berber origin carried by a shoulder strap (Figures 3-9 and 3-10). The tbal is used in the layla ceremony, but only in the opening entrance to the house (the *dakhla*) and the preliminary blessing of the space. Because of these two functions, it is primarily considered to be an outdoor instrument. The hajhuj is not present and while the music is not sacred, trance is often “acted out” as entertainment, much to the dismay of layla maalems.

The Essaouira Gnawa people claim that this is an example of the current problems, especially in Marrakesh, where the trance is often debased – even “acted out” as mere entertainment – when it should be preserved in its ancient role as a medium strictly for healing (Rosenzweig and Wetherbee 1994: 2).

It is on the streets of major markets where the music is presented and traditions revisited or manipulated. The resulting music is not necessarily identical to that of the layla, and the performers control the active process of commodifying their population’s musical identity. They remove, or reinterpret, the spiritual tradition and present it to a new audience that is unaware of the deeper involved meanings.

The effect of the “frozen” nature of this performance is an “agenda ... [to] ensure maintenance of cultural integrity” (Dunbar-Hall 2006: 63). These street performances are not part of an overall goal to increase cultural tourism and there is no government body implementing specific activities. Yet, despite these informalities, the open venue of the town square provides an opportunity for Gnawa musicians and dancers to reinterpret their musical and spiritual performances. While walking in the Jma’ al-Fna one summer evening I happened upon a group of younger musicians reclining against a line of mopeds, motorcycles, and scooters as they sang loudly. One member, who was playing the hajhuj (the ma’alem), invited me to sit and join them. The audience that formed consisted of friends, sitting and chatting with the musicians, joining in the singing, and occasionally picking up a set of quraqeb. They were dressed in jeans and t-shirts, rarely soliciting money from passing Moroccans (by this time, most tourists have

found restaurants or retired to their rooms). Yet the young ma'alem had a business card and informed me that his group was going to one of the nearby music festivals. The implication was that they planned on sitting and performing in the street, much in the same way that they were in the square that evening. The music, in this case, was removed from ritual implications and the economic was played down (although it was still important). Here Gnawa musical practice became entertainment, both a call for friends to gather and a reason to do so. This ritual-tradition-turned-economic-opportunity was being revised once more through the values of this younger generation. Their social event was secular, only mildly (or optimistically) commercial, and very public. This presentational approach is neither fully public nor private, yet can be considered as either. This reflects a characteristic of the layla ceremony itself: hosted in a home for invited family and special guests, the layla takes place with open doors as neighbors and strangers wander in and out. Children are able to enter, watch the ritual, and retreat to the street where they play soccer, to the entertainment of adults sitting on chairs and curbs smoking cigarettes.

This manipulation of tradition is part of the long history of cultural tourism in Morocco. This tourism is not only referencing foreign visitors. When speaking to families in Fez, younger members are often dismayed that they have yet to visit the cultural glory that exemplifies Marrakech. Domestic tourism is a big business, especially in the southern areas of the country. Gnawa performances in Marrakech, and elsewhere, are not aimed solely at foreigners, and it is this domestic tourism that spread knowledge of the Gnawa musical traditions (and others) across the country. The understanding acquired by travelers, however, is dependent on the performances given by these public performers. It is at this intersection where we see the significance of Dunbar-Hall's note regarding the "frozen nature" of touristic performance. The

values expressed by the performers in a public setting do not match those that are relevant in ritual. The impact of cultural tourism in Bali is similar to Morocco's situation, and is explained further here.

The cultural tourism presented here is one in which the roles of tourists are set by culture bearers, and are controlled in figurative sites of levels of access to experiences of Balinese performing arts. In most situations, the participation of tourists as the audiences at these events is a superficial interaction, a sampling of music and dance in condensed representations and bounded by momentariness. Often the sample is presented as a museum exhibit, "frozen" in a traditional past, which is emphasized by contrast with the surrounding day-to-day business of ongoing contemporary culture. In actuality, tourists at these events are unwitting witnesses to a range of cultural agendas and practices, and are present at synchronic moments in the diachrony of a living culture. In this way, they are collaborators in, and at times the instigators of, cultural change and development. (Dunbar-Hall 2006: 56)

This procedure shows the Gnawa in a museum-like state. It also placed a border around the music, enclosing it. The traveling musicians remove the dance and music from the ritual atmosphere and place it in a public stage for non-traditional audiences. Since the trance is "faked," it moves away from a center of the performance experience and becomes entertainment. This form of musical commodification is an integral part of the Gnawa population's historical narrative, highlighting cultural differences and the active creation of the self as "Other" within Morocco. It also furthers the progression of the music into the country's consciousness by taking the first steps toward enabling a national reconfiguration of the music's meanings.

### **Moving toward a National and World Music**

In the case of Gnawa music, production and marketing decisions cause a change in musical and religious meaning by creating something more palatable for both the international market and the Islamic nationalistic appetites. As Swedenburg writes,

world music hype about these "traditional" Arab musicians tends to erase their Islamic context and make them artificially exotic. Publicity on Gnawa music generally focuses on its African roots, downplaying the fact that the lilas – the healing/trance rituals which are the main occasion for Gnawa music – consistently invoke Allah, the prophet Muhammad, his companions and family, and prominent Muslim saints, as well as spirits of West

African origin. World music discourse stresses the African side of Gnawa culture, representing it as a Moroccan outpost of the African diaspora, in an effort to sell a cultural commonality with which world music fans can identify. At the same time, this publicity covers over the fact that Gnawa beliefs constitute a syncretic mélange involving the propitiation of Arab/Berber Muslim saints and West African spirits. (Swedenburg 2001: 38)

Outside of the south, the nation's population recognizes the Africanized "Moroccan Islam," but it causes yet another contradiction – one solved through the appreciation of the Berber and Gnawa beliefs from a safe distance for orthodox Muslims. It is also one impacted by political and economic powers – effectively positioning the music into a social, national, and international conversation between the population, the government, opposing religious authorities, and the international markets. Those within Morocco begin to promote the music as a national identifier because of its Islamic lyrics and belief, downplaying portions of the "African" spirituality. In international markets, however, it is that very "African-ness" that catches the interests of listeners outside of the Islamic world. This manipulation of meanings, the subject of Chapter 4, occurs because of the long history of street performers who brought elements of the layla tradition out of the courtyards and into a public space. With the creation of these new renditions of Gnawa music, Muslims from throughout Morocco can identify with some of the popular, unique sounds coming from within their own country.

<b>Mluk</b>	<b>Color</b>	<b>Description</b>
<i>Al-Hawsawiyya</i> (الحوصيون)		
Shurfa (شورفة)	White	Noble, descendent of the Prophet
Al-Kuhl (الكوحل)	Black	Powerful, self-mutilating during layla
Sidi Musa (سيدي موسى)	Blue	Moses, use of water during possession
Sidi Hamu (سيد الحموم)	Red	The maskun passes around a red drink after trancing
Al-Buhala (البوهالا)	Green	Crazy
Mulay Ibrahim (ملاي ابراهيم)	Multicolored	Abraham, quilted clothing of many colors together
Al-Ghabi (الغابي)	Brown	Stupid or slow, holds candles close to face and clothing
<i>Al-nsa' (Women)</i> (النساء)		
Lalla Malika (للة مليكة)	Purple (from China)	Loves to dance
Lalla Rqiya (للة رقية)	Brown	
Lalla Mira (للة ميري)	Yellow	
Lalla 'Aisha (للة عيشة)	Black	Powerful

Figure 3-1. A table presenting the Gnawa mluks as described by Abd ar-Rzaq, a maalem in Fez.

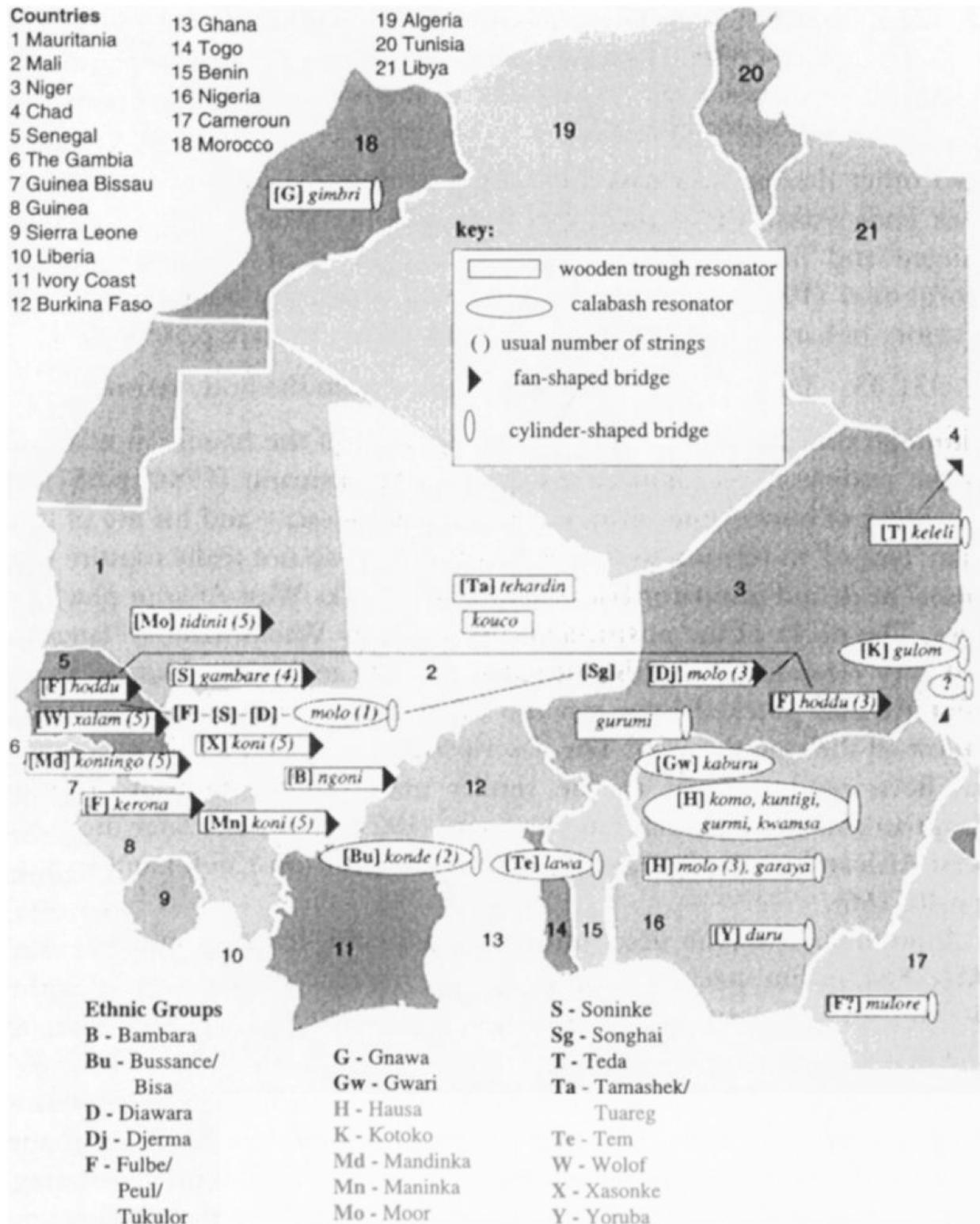


Figure 3-2. Distribution of plucked lutes in West and Northwest Africa (Charry 1996: 8).

Name	Description	Images
Hajhuj (also Ginbri, Sintir)	Three-stringed semi-spiked lute with a hollowed body and a camel neck membrane. Similar to the banjo with one string shorter than the other two and a membrane instead of a sound board.	Figure 3-4
Quraqib	Two iron plates tied together on one end with a small strap of leather. Performed with one set in each hand.	Figures 3-5, 3-6 and 3-9
Tbal	Large military-style drum carried by a strap over the shoulder and played with one straight and one curved stick.	Figures 3-9 and 3-10

Figure 3-3. Table of Gnawa instruments.



Figure 3-4. Abderrahim ar-Rzaq, a maalem in Fez, demonstrating the *hajhuj*.





Figure 3-5. Abderrahim Abd ar-Rzaq and others performing on the quraqib during the opening (dakhla) portion of a layla ritual in Fez.



Figure 3-6. A closer view of the quraqib.



Figure 3-7. Street performers, musicians, and showmen in Marrakech's Jma' al-Fna.



Figure 3-8. Gnawa performers encircled by a crowd in Marrakech.



Figure 3-9. Maalem Gaga (left) demonstrating the *tbal* in a Gnawa household as other members of his group play the *quraqib*.



Figure 3-10. Maalem Gaga (right) playing the *tbal* during the entrance (*dakhla*) of a *layla* ceremony in Fez.

CHAPTER 4  
STRATIFICATION AND FUSION: GNAWA MUSIC ON NATIONAL AND  
INTERNATIONAL STAGES

**Introduction**

The following chapter examines how nationalism and cosmopolitanism interact to create the often-cited “creole” or “hybrid” Moroccan culture. Where cosmopolitanism values a recognition and use of cultural elements from across the globe, allowing aspects of expression to cooperate and perform in a unique situation, nationalization uses them toward an intended end. In this case, that end is a common Moroccan identity and religious authority determined by the national project. The relationship between cosmopolitanism and nationalization is subtly interwoven, and the two are far from opposing poles. Instead they intercede frequently, with cosmopolitanism leading to nationalization while that created identity simultaneously provides a stage for a cosmopolitan statement. In Morocco, popular expressions of Gnawa music show both processes: celebratory music festivals highlight collaborative presentations of a definitively Moroccan and “welcoming” culture while bands within the recording industry demonstrate a deeper musical and cultural fusion.

The musical output itself uses the source elements in two ways: through a stratification of distinct performance styles or through a fusion of the source materials with the intention of creating a new, separate, style of music. This chapter’s discussion follows the performative spaces and presented values for these two types of musical interaction. The stratification common to short-term projects and performances exemplifies a value of cooperation while long-term, or even permanent, groups create a fusion that emphasizes a new singular voice, not differences between the source elements. This voice becomes representative of the involved group (or population).

Cosmopolitanism and nationalization also point to a significant difference between versions of a local music. Just as the streets of Marrakech actively changed the values of local Gnawa music through its specific performative setting, these processes have a great effect on musical meaning through the manipulation of symbols, both embedded and added. National powers and international record companies impact the sounds with their immense influence. The King promotes Gnawa music as “Moroccan” despite its previous racial marginalization under a different ideological national project. In doing so, the Islamic lyrics and content come to the fore of the presentation. The music then assists in working to create and maintain authority by manipulating national identity through the utilization of religious solidarity. The “world music” industry, however, highlights the African and syncretic elements in an attempt to strip Islamic content from the otherwise marketable spirituality of a groovy musical product (Swedenburg 2001). Each of these events – nationalistic utilization of music, globalized marketing, cosmopolitanism, and internalization – are feasible because of the vast effects of commodification. What began in the streets continued within the attention of national forces and global marketplaces. It is therefore necessary to discuss these larger impacts of commodification before entering into conversation about the King’s power, the Essaouira festival, and Gnawa Diffusion.

### **The Globalization and Commodification of Musical Spirituality in Morocco**

The globalization and industrialization of world music has increased the palate of ideas available to artists, placing them into a worldwide (cosmopolitan) community. Artists and audiences are able to utilize the sounds and meanings of music that was previously unknown or inaccessible to them. And as particular artistic communities partake in this process, they enter into an industry that removes the music from “its proper place.” This decontextualized separation results in commodification with varied and lasting effects on both the music makers and the

listeners. Globalization's largest feat, however, may be its impressive redefinition of consumers and creators, separating the two and creating new identities in between.

Schizophonic commodification (Feld 1994, Bishop 2002), the removal of the sound from its setting via recent technology, allows for previously unknown or unusable music to be consumed in new contexts. Religious, social and class-related distinctions are distanced and otherwise inaccessible consumer audiences not only find themselves able to listen to these musics, but they are able to place them into newly constructed symbolic situations. Post quotes McCann, describing this aspect of commodification,

the study of enclosure is the study of attitudes and dispositions, in particular, *commodifying* attitudes and dispositions" [...] it is "what happens when we engage in strategies of 'closure' and 'separation' in the way that we make sense of our experience. We close 'things' off, ring 'things' round, make distinctions between 'us' and 'them', identify, isolate, eliminate variables, and thereby separate, distance, things from other things, people-as-things from other people-as-things, separate ourselves from acknowledgement of many of the realities of our own experience. (cited in Post 2006: 5)

By closing things off and making distinctions and distances between them, commodification facilitates the process of redefinition seen across global and musical boundaries. There is a wider reach for the musicians and accompanying benefits from the promotion and attention, but the coexisting complexities quickly surface.

The procedure applies to current trends in Morocco as the music of the Gnawa suddenly finds itself with the attention of the nation as symbol of its identity. Previously, the population and its expressive culture were restricted to local and regional spaces, popularly recognized as a commodified "folkloric" gesture or as a curious part of a community. This was the music's common resonance to the elite classes under the Kingdom's early project – the promotion of Arab-Andalusian music discussed later. Much of this had to do with the "Afro" portions of their Afro-Islamic beliefs and practices – spirit communication, possession rituals, musical trance settings were not communicable with mainstream Islam – that left the Gnawa on the skirts of a

Moroccan *national* identity, but firmly solidified in *local* contexts. This local level of social organization overlapped with the more populous Berber groups and while the Berbers remain a part of the perceived national racial continuum, the Gnawa were outside of that simplistic and dialectic discourse.

One often ignored agent of change has been the communion between many Sufi and Gnawa religious beliefs. The importance of the experiential, and therefore the music's religious implications and trance-inciting abilities, link the two closely together. As the Islamic world began to revere the mysticism of Sufi tradition, often through a similar process of musical commodification and international exaltation in the global market, the related elements of Gnawa music lost some of their exoticism in the eyes of the greater Islamic population. The association of concepts of African and blackness, however, still hindered national integration of the Gnawa until cultural commodification opened an opportunity to de-emphasize those segments, expanding some symbolic meanings while limiting others. For example, international audiences could take the "spiritual" in the Gnawa local identity in a neo-mystical sense. Europeans, Africans and Americans make the trip to major festivals to experience the spirituality as it is embodied or invoked in musical performance. Festival and regional organizers do not highlight the Islamic elements of performance, although the musicians themselves rarely move far from the Muslim (or Afro-Muslim) subject matter, often singing prayers or evocations and Islamic texts. At the same time, however, both groups go to great efforts pointing out the "universal" spirituality the music invokes and communicates to a prepared international audience.

### **Nationalistic Uses of Commodification**

The idea of Moroccan national identity conceived of Gnawa music by prominently displaying the Islamic nature of the texts and beliefs while downplaying African spirituality. Thus, there is maintenance of the mystical nature of the music without the Gnawa ritualistic and

historical implications. By de-emphasizing the African vis-à-vis the spiritual, and since Gnawa spirituality is linked to African identity, the door was opened for the Gnawa to become a part of the national community. The Islamic side of the artistic expression such as texts, the festival performance appropriations of Arab classical and popular instruments (the *'ud*, flutes, keyboards) and Moroccan linguistic characteristics were highlighted, making connections between the Gnawa and the Arab/Berber cultural tradition.

With this, the creation of a tangible musical product devoid of and no longer implicitly connected to an African racialized identity became feasible due to the commodification by performance and recording. In mediated formats, it is possible to take the recorded sound and interpret it from a number of possible perspectives. The cultural meanings of this new aural-specific performance context can be reunited with the sound, manipulated in any number of fashions or left out as human creativity takes over, opting instead for something aurally and conceptually new. This process's political usefulness in defining and presenting "Moroccan" and "Moroccan Islam," described more fully below, is a primary factor in the actual narrative of popular music's trajectory since independence (Baldassarre 2003). The connections between power and cultural expression are of utmost importance in realizing the potential impacts of commodification.

Because of the presentation of "hybridization" as a national value, the element of "Gnawa" can be added to the concept of "Moroccan" and provide a political tool for the King's attempts at creating an identity. This is despite the uncertain Gnawa genealogy that places the group biologically and historically outside the national discourse and instead emphasizes a (new) cultural connection. Historically, the Gnawa were not conceptualized as Moroccan; they were marginalized as slaves and descendants of slaves with religious beliefs that, at best, were on the



fringe of Islam. Then, with the manipulation of material and musical symbols available after musical commodification and the expansion of the locality of consumers, the opportunity came to deem the music distinctly Moroccan and specifically not Algerian, West African, or anything else. Gnawa music could be reinterpreted as part of the national culture

As Gnawa music entered the music industry it began to lose its exclusive link to a locally defined community and was distanced from local and regional participants. Today, the musicians who play this music come from anywhere around Morocco, North or West Africa, France, Germany, or the world as a whole. What they play is not necessarily “authentic” to the Gnawa people of rural southern Morocco, but it will instead represent any number of consumers globally who have come to understand world music in a postmodern context. As Feld states,

what rhetorically sets world beat apart is often the assertion of a new, postmodern species of “authenticity,” one constituted not in isolation or difference but in creolization proper, an authenticity precisely guaranteed by its obvious blendings, its synthesis and syncretism. (1994: 266)

This “postmodern species of ‘authenticity’” and “creolization proper” occur not just in the international realm, but also within the national and local experience.

It is the recognition of the international in local contexts that completes the cycle in this case and permits the national consumer, previously unable to participate in Gnawa music production or consumption, to see this no-longer marginalized commodity as part of the Moroccan national identity. But in a kingdom such as Morocco, the concept of national music falls under the influence of governmental powers attempting to maintain their authority – in this case through a distinct creation of a national Islamic space. The ways in which the King uses his power to develop and sustain authority illuminate the later promotion of a specific national identity, and it is here that Arab-Andalusian and Gnawa music became important tools.

## **Censorship and the Need for a Created Religious Authority, or “Moroccan Islam”**

Article 19 of the Moroccan constitution defines, or “enshrines” the King as the “Commander of the Faithful” (*Economist* 2006), a term that assists only in creating both contradiction and conflict throughout the nation. The government often employs this religious opportunity of contextualization in an effort to control both the reformist<sup>1</sup> and the intellectualized “secularist” opposition. Contributing to the effectiveness of these abilities is the influence of the government-run media. Through the use of news stations and popular entertainment outlets, the King’s agenda can portray any Islamically rooted opposition as an extremist threat, thereby taking advantage of the resulting negative meanings in the popular press. Likewise, any member of the French-speaking educated elite, Muslim or not, can easily be converted, in popular perception, into an imposing secularist working to destroy the national morality.

Just as his position as the defender of “Moroccan Islam” helps against various forms of opposition, it grants the King license over cultural expression. The ways in which the government promotes and represses international and indigenous musics through festivals and events illuminates the attempts to create national identity. Frequently these use religious rhetoric that defends and upholds the ideal of a “Moroccan Islam.” Beyond the ideal of “Moroccan Islam,” however, little is stated regarding what the religious practice *is*, aside from the apparent popular traditions and the fact that they are observed within the nation’s borders. Thus, its ideological propagation seems to solely serve a political agenda of cultural manipulation.

Occurrences of these processes are historical and yet appear within current events; samples of the King wielding and reinforcing his political-via-religious authority appear in international popular

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<sup>1</sup> “Reformist” readings of Islamic theological and political thought situate themselves alongside a literal interpretation of the Qur’an. While most variations of this policy (including the Justice and Charity party, banned in Morocco) advocate a peaceful protest against authoritarian power, they are often smeared by claims of terrorist activity. This practice will likely increase with the growth of the recently renamed “Al-Qaeda Organization of the Islamic Maghreb” stretching across North Africa.

news sources and the intentional Islamic ideal deserves discussion. This creation and manipulation is subsequently applied to the nationalization and internationalization of Gnawa music.

This state-run media portrays the kingship in religious terms. Hassan II appeared with a Qur'an on major religious holidays in a show of legitimization through ritual, although his actual presence in the Islamic life of Moroccans as defined by Munson is negligible:

... the crucial point is that the king and the monarchy are at best of marginal significance in the popular celebrations of the Prophet's birthday in twentieth-century Morocco. ... [O]ne should not confuse the religious significance attributed to the king by Morocco's government-controlled media with the religious significance attributed to him by ordinary Moroccans. (Munson 1993: 124)

These and similar attempts at the creation of religious authority not only allow for the repressive control of Islamist groups, they also help control secular opposition under the mantle of defending the integrity of Morocco's specific form of the religion. As Kramer writes in *The New Yorker*,

his dynastic title as the twenty-second Alawite king was Commander of the Faithful, which gave him a kind of papal authority over Moroccan Muslims and meant that he could keep both the Islamist extremists and the Marxist republicans at bay by eliminating, in the name of a specifically Moroccan Islam, anyone who challenged his authority. (Kramer 2006)

It remains, however, that the King must create this ideal of a "specifically Moroccan Islam" and do so in a way that includes the majority of the nation's population, improving the "religious significance attributed to him by ordinary Moroccans." Otherwise, his religious status would erode while he is seen as not a defender of the (national?) religion, but a repressor of freedoms. In order to achieve this end, censorship and government media act as mechanisms to portray official policies and actions in religious language and rhetoric. In one particular case, an educated Muslim economist and journalist, Aboubakr Jamaï, impeded too closely upon the three

taboo subjects in the Moroccan “free press:” attacking the person of the king, undermining “Islam as the state religion,” and protesting the occupation of the Western Sahara (ibid.: 6).

One politically interesting case was a piece in *Le Journal* written by Jamaï entitled “The Prophet Muhammad, the Symbol, the Passions” regarding the heated Muslim response to Danish cartoons featuring images of the Prophet Mohammad. Jamaï was offended by the foreign paper’s drawings, however he also staunchly opposed the censorship and blasphemy laws common in his area of the world. He instead supported each Moroccan’s right to be offended, or not. His publisher included what was described as a miniscule photo of a man holding the Danish paper, and after deciding not to take that risk, Jamaï attempted to ink the copies before it hit newsstands. Inevitably, a few snuck through. The protest against *Le Journal* that followed was orchestrated by government news stations portraying the paper as a force “making Moroccans lose respect for the sacred values of their country.” Soon a number of city vans had brought angry protesters from the interior market areas to call for holy war, most of whom Jamaï believes thought that they were protesting in front of the Danish Consulate. The intentional use of illiterate protesters for the sake of creating a media-induced anti-“secularist” sentiment through appeals to religious language demonstrates this created monarchical authority. As Kramer writes, “given that Mohammed VI has no affection at all for his country’s Islamists, it proved to Jamaï that the state was now willing to use its own enemies to destroy him” (ibid.: 5).

The population’s respect for the King’s religious authority comes more from his status as *sharif* (descendant of the Prophet, in this case via ‘Ali) than his political role as caliph (Munson 1993: 128). His *baraka*, or “blessing,” holds weight, and many believe that rule under such a man, however repressive or unjust, is better than the alternative. Hassan II, when asked by Amnesty International about his alleged human rights violations, responded that, “Every head of

state has his secret garden” (*The Economist* 1990). Despite such authoritarian policies and practices, people continue to follow his ideas creating religious and social tradition, often times with visible zeal. The behavior falls in line with a common understanding of

classical themes of Islamic political theory, notably the idea that those who hold power are typically unjust and brutal, but even an unjust and brutal king is better than the disorder that occurs in the absence of a strong ruler... If fear of Hassan II’s secret garden is a key source of his power, so is the fear of the chaos that might ensue if he were overthrown. (Munson 1993: 143)

### **Nationalistic Musical Promotion and the Essouira Festival of World Music**

In a more specifically musical sense, these same efforts working for a controlled “Moroccan Islam” affect the public portrayals of culture. Just after independence in 1956, the “high music” was the *nuba*, an Arab-Andalusian song form highlighting Spanish influences and an Classical Arabic style<sup>2</sup> – a highly cosmopolitan music. The state run Radio Nationale Morocaine and the Orchestre Nationale promoted the *nuba* as Morocco’s “classical” music (Baldassarre 2003: 82). These tools also presented other music from Egypt and the Near East, such as the ‘*asri*, and Egyptian modern song style. The mass production of these sounds influenced Moroccan appetites as well as the musicians themselves. There were, however, other performers working with the distinct local

rhythms, timbres, and sarcastic lyrics peculiar to the music of the Marrakech area, thus shaping a kind of vaudeville that expressed very precisely and even with a humorous vein the desires, frustrations, and hopes of the lay population. (ibid.: 83)

These forms of popular music in the 1960s did not follow the same ideological path promoted by the political powers. While the King’s goal was “the consolidation of a national cultural identity, whose musical manifestation was represented by the Moroccan classical music tradition

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<sup>2</sup> The Classical style referenced originated in Baghdad during the height of the Abassyd empire. The music was focused on the ‘ud, qanun, nay, and riqq, later adding the Kaman (violin). The more recent versions of this style that are still heavily influential came from Cairo during the height of the Egyptian film industry in the 1940s and 50s. A small Western orchestral string section was added and the sound was embodied by the famous Umm Kulthum. See Racy 2003 and Danielson 1997 for more information on Egyptian popular music style.

preserved in the National Music Conservatory,” (ibid.) this other form of music instead identified with the population as a whole.

Even more than the classical music of the conservatory, the government promoted “the patriotic song” (*oughnya al wataniya*) as an emblem of the national sentiment. With simple lyric rhetoric and style, the genre served a definitive purpose of “channeling the imagination and creativity of the masses toward expressive forms strictly useful to the lines of political power” (ibid.: 84). Arabic utilizes the term *watan* to mean “homeland,” a word commonly seen in current Palestinian discourse. With the recent push to satisfy democratic foreign states, Morocco now labels its subjects *muwatanun*, or those who belong to the homeland, homelanders. The term is new and most Moroccans ignore it, instead keeping with the term “subjects,” or “those who belong to the King.” That the patriotic song was presented through popular media outlets demonstrates an early tendency for the Kingdom to create an ideal cultural Morocco. This is despite the fact that the song style was, as Baldassarre writes, “a degenerate outcome derived from the centuries-old tradition of panegyric chant in tribal Morocco ... void of artistic content” (ibid.). The specific goal here was to promote a “monolithic, clear-cut, and reassuring image of the newly born State of Morocco,” in contrast to the previous French conceptualization of the area.

Over time, with the increased fame attributed to Gnawa, Berber, and other musicians unique to Morocco<sup>3</sup>, the national attitude toward these “folkloric” styles changed dramatically. Even though these forms of music were experiencing the creative effects of globalization, the source material and core identity was based within the local community. Social taste was not necessarily aligned with the types of expression held aloft by those in power, and instead it

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<sup>3</sup> Similar localized styles of music were active in Algeria during the same time with *raï* as the primary example. The political significance of these sounds differ, reacting to a vastly different set of governmental circumstances.

congregated around more localized and familiar sounds. After noticing that Arab-Andalusian music was failing to connect with a large portion of the citizenry, the government (and others economically tied to the success of either a “national” sound or musical identity) began to address the gap. While Arab and Arab-Andalusian music still maintained an elite status, these other forms found themselves promoted in a wider popular context.

In the 1960s, groups like Nass al-Ghaiwan and others brought an awareness of rock music and cultural movements to Morocco. As their restylings of local forms incorporated foreign musical and extra-musical elements from instruments to commentary, their popularity grew throughout the country. The influences from the distant London studios worked in conjunction with British and American rock and jazz artists who came to the country for meditation, inspiration, and a novel experience. The Who, Jimi Hendrix, Robert Plant and Jimmy Page, Ornette Coleman, Pharoah Saunders, and others made excursions that gave birth to later collaborative projects – projects that helped these artists to find their own personal voices, but that also left an imprint on the aesthetic of the local communities. Public performances with these visitors, as well as the general rumors and awareness that the music was valued by these figures, began to incite communal excitement around Gnawa and Berber artistic tradition.

As the internationalized versions of Gnawa and Berber music rose in popularity, the governing forces saw that their country-wide presentations of Arab-Andalusian music only engaged specific audiences – those who either identified with the sounds because of their (northern) geographic location and Arab or Spanish heritages, or because of their elite economic class. The vast majority of Moroccans, being of a lower class and less inclined to situate themselves as “Arabs,” largely ignored the “art music,” instead opting for music that drew upon their local traditions. This remains the case with the “globalized” fusions produced in Casablanca

and France that still reference Gnawa or Berber instruments, vocal styles, or musical forms. To account for this disparity between the attempted national ideal and the reality, the promotional goals had to shift. The government began to emphasize the fact that Gnawa music and many other Berber forms are lyrically Islamic through major events celebrating the local (and increasingly international) sound. This is in contrast to the practices of the Fez Festival of Sacred Music, another annual event, where the highlight was on Arab (and occasionally Spanish) musicians of the classical Islamic genre.

In the 1990s, the Essaouira Festival of World Music began, using a small beach town outside Marrakech. This and similar events of a smaller scale present a new perspective on the reconfigurations of Gnawa music. They not only “celebrate friendships” between musicians, but they also facilitate and inspire new directions within the music itself. The program of the 2006 festival, for example presents the philosophy as the following:

the 2006 program affirms more than ever the original philosophy of the Festival, which consists in inviting the best international artists of the moment and confronting them with the music of the Gnawa masters. Then, let the magic work and you get intense moments of musical improvisation. Mixing all styles of music, the Essaouira Festival leaves the artists and audience with unique musical emotions, special moments of sharing through the magic of music. Keeping this incredible experience close to their hearts, the artists will never forget the City of Wind, which is now presented as a “neo-Woodstock”, an inspiring place where they can come and create new sounds. (<http://www.festival-gnaoua.co.ma>)

The space provided on this popular stage allows for a worldwide musical collaboration where the previously inherent inconvenient connotations can be left aside. The primary goal of the event remains the combination of previous musical styles, a cosmopolitan reinterpretation of tradition. The organizers explain this point further as they mention recent changes in the festival’s content:

with the experience of the 8 past years, the 9th edition of the Festival marks a turning point and turns to new sources of inspiration, such as electro, proving that it can find new ways to move on with its times. For it is out of the confrontation of different artistic universes that the magic of the Festival arises, transforming Essaouira into a musical lab, an open-air



studio where the musicians come and share their passion... Essaouira offers to those who look for spirituality, a true music and timeless references, the opportunity to meet and be enriched with words, sounds and feelings. (<http://www.festival-gnaoua.co.ma>)

The “open-air studio” where musicians and consumers search for “spirituality” and “timeless references” does create a “neo-Woodstock,” but one that presents intended Moroccan values. The spirituality found by most tourists at the festival is far from the transcendental saint and spirit connection of the layla. While general ideas of trance and heightened states of awareness may exist in the festivals, especially in the late evening performances where dancing engulfs the smaller town squares, specific Gnawa ideas of spirit possession and jinn communication are largely absent.

Significantly, groups singing Islamic songs, or presenting Islamic ideas while working with American jazz artists are placed at the forefront, often opening for larger international stars. These maalems and their ensembles then perform with the stars, overlaying their two disparate musics. This example of the cosmopolitan values, expressed by the festival organizers (and therefore the governmental directives), emphasizes the open and cooperative Moroccan aesthetic. The musical aesthetic here is one of stratification, where the two groups are on stage performing simultaneously. Most commonly, the maalem and his troupe will begin a song, allowing the groove to settle. Then, the foreign jazz musician will play over the beat, often improvising. Despite the fact that the entire foreign ensemble may perform, there is little actual musical interaction between the two groups as the Gnawa ensemble continues with the same groove, creating a characteristic bed of sound. These layered performances are desirable because of their simplicity, and there is an exchange of creative energy. They do not, however, typically foster the long-term cooperation depicted by the festivities, despite the few isolated collaborative recording sessions since the 1960s.

The African and even Sufi aspects of this spirituality, the trance, and the Gnawa music in a form closest to that of the layla, however, only appear after the concerts conclude at 2 or 3AM. The locations of these stages are buried within the city, occupying a small market square instead of the massive main stages. One pragmatic outcome of this venue change is the creation of a more intimate space, crowded and full of dancing patrons. Another result is the marginalization of the practice due to its syncretic combination of Sufi Islam and African performance tradition. Thus, when Gnawa music portrays the values linked with the national hopes of collaborative and Islamic identity, it receives a prominence rare for such a population. But when it reverts back to its historical roots in African spirituality, trance, and spirit possession – even if these are just symbolized through ecstatic dance – it is hidden, though still available, mirroring the overnight nature of the ritual itself.

Just as Dunbar-Hall (2006) described earlier in reference to Bali market squares, and as was applicable to Marrakech's Jma al-Fna, local music here becomes "world music" by redefining itself through a new context (Guilbault 2006: 139-40). These younger performers listen to Bob Marley, Jimi Hendrix, and popular Gnawa "bands" instead of exclusively following the carriers of "past tradition." They participate in national festivals and with international recording artists, manipulating the sound of the local Gnawa scene by expanding it into a national and international phenomenon. Also, because of differences between the values and ends of these reorganizations, there is a symbolic difference between the national and international stages. Each separately turns back to redefine the local music, but the focus is not the same as one works for authority through identification and the other promotes a product for a market. The end result, however, is a newly born importance for the Gnawa people in both theoretic spaces. Their music, religious spirituality, and cultural impact in the Moroccan dialogue

is recognized through a new set of semantic meanings where Gnawa images, instruments, grooves and identity associate not as a marginalized community, but as one firmly within the conversation of Moroccan nationalism.

### **International Fusion and Diffusion**

The previous stages highlight the cosmopolitan ideals presented by Moroccan musicians, the government, and the people themselves. Individuals and groups of various backgrounds come together to work on projects that combine their talents to engage in a new vision. The end result is frequently a collaborative effort overlapping distinct styles, with some lasting influences sifting through. Pharoah Sanders's work with Maleem Mahmoud Ghania, or Robert Plant and Jimmy Page's album *No Quarter* exemplify the available recordings of this stratification. The foreign musicians come, experience, and work with set Gnawa maalems, but in the end product, the Moroccans begin and end their songs just as they would, had the visitors not been present. The portion of the recording that creates new interest for the international audience is the saxophone, vocal, or guitar lines placed atop the previous composition.

This form of musicality differs greatly from the fusion seen in groups more akin to Gnawa Diffusion or with the work of Hassan Hakmoun. Here the influences go into a sound distinct from the source materials, interwoven in both the creative process and product. These groups frequently fall into categories of "world beat" and they often bring an active global commentary. Whereas the cosmopolitan sounds from Morocco's festivals celebrated the collaborative strengths, these integrated versions of Moroccan music fall more in line with a Bob Marley-influenced African universalism. While the artists do not deny their Islamic beliefs or traditions, they hold the spiritual portions of the African, Gnawa, and Sufi beliefs above any specific religious connotations through their music.

Although the commodification of the layla and other local Moroccan traditions works here in much the same way as the nationalizing recontextualization, the difference in the end result shows the impact of the process. Artists such as the members of Gnawa Diffusion, for example, interact directly with various forms of popular, sacred, and traditional music. Members may come from disparate situations economically, geographically, even nationally, but because the periods of collaboration are longer, even permanent, the created band is not a layering of separate entities, but instead it is the combination of parts and experiences into one unified and integrated whole. Meanings held deep within the individual influences are pieced together to make complex musical and lyric statements, often inducing heated political or social commentary. Just as was the case in the nationalistically charged festivals, however, it is the commodification of musical styles through recording and performance over time that allows the new performance styles.

Within the music itself there are two main characteristics dominated by non-local, sounds: melody and groove. It is here that the combinatory effects of the music industry are most easily heard. It is also here that the Gnawa sound maintains its presence, but after the inclusion of hip-hop, reggae and funk beats, it is more a character than a structural necessity. A certain degree of familiarity with the unique instruments and styles linked to the Gnawa is required to discern specific traits and meanings for international audiences. Gnawa Diffusion, for example, holds its Gnawa identity close to its sound, referencing it both abstractly and directly. But while on tour from Paris to Tokyo, it is no doubt their “world beat” aspects that keep the audience dancing. At multiple old city CD stalls in Marrakech, Gnawa Diffusion’s newest album, *Souk System* (Figure 4-1), was the offering of choice when I would ask the owner for a recommendation. However, the songs are far from the nearby street performer acts and they have little in common with the

styles heard at a *layla*. Gnawa Diffusion's popularity in Fez, an imperial city in the mountains of the north most commonly associated with Arab-Andalusian music, demonstrates the impact of a nationalistic character based upon the Gnawa's expanded locality.

The songs on *Souk System*, and those of other prominent Gnawa-oriented bands from Morocco, Algeria, France, Germany and elsewhere, re-orient the sounds of northern Morocco's Andalusian and Islamic history with southern Morocco's African and Saharan past by manipulating western song forms to include local melodic and rhythmic color. Another scope of fruitful research could easily be conducted to include the complex linguistic content and symbolism as musicians code-switch between French, English, Berber and Arabic dialects, each with its own social and political implications. The references made through the instrumental and vocal channels of production retain their significance with the national audience as well as with the large Moroccan and North African diaspora across Europe. Thus a national element is strong and expands internationally with the participation of a national emigrant audience outside of the country.

In Gnawa Diffusion's combination of styles and genres, instrumentation becomes important for the retention of symbolic and musical content. The use of the *'ud* as a melodic instrument alongside the electric guitar, the *hajhuj* in conjunction with the electric bass in an overlaid groove, and the *quraqib* blended with a drum set's hi-hat mesh the sounds into something cohesive. It remains necessary, however, to highlight each Moroccan instrument during specific times in order to keep them from being "lost in the mix." Through a thick analysis of musical integrations, it becomes possible to examine the deeper interactions between local and international sounds.

Gnawa Diffusion uses musical expectations and insinuations to highlight their use of Arabic, sub-Saharan, and international techniques. Middle Eastern colors come to the fore through the use of extended melodic phrases and the instrumentation from the classical Egyptian *takht* ensemble. By sonically importing, first, the instruments from early- and mid-20<sup>th</sup> century popular music, notably the ‘ud (plucked fretless lute), violin, riqq (small tambourine), and darbouka (hourglass shaped drum), and, second, the characteristics of the *maqam* system of melodic construction, the listener finds something either unmistakably recognizable or exotic, depending on their background. Similarly, the fact that the group’s standard instrumentation, harmonic structure, lyrical content, and visual image is not far from that of reggae or another diasporic genre brings the groups sound to an international audience.

Figure 4-2 shows the melodic introduction of “Itchak al-Baz” using the ‘ud and the guitar together. The sound of the electric guitar’s sustain over the ‘ud’s tremolo on the quarter notes of the second repetition is unique, with both instruments playing a melody that would be as comfortable in a classical Arabic setting as it is here. The modal nature of the E minor passage manages to stay within a classical character even while following a “western” harmonic progression (E-A-B-E, I-IV-V-I). The focus is instead on the guitar/’ud orchestration. The bass part plays a role here, as it avoids an outright statement of the harmonic rhythm and instead accents a polyphonic and rhythmically active forward motion. While polyphony is not common in the Andalusian or Islamic music of northern Morocco, this particular passage accentuates the polyphonic syncopated character of a typical hajhuj line (Figure 4-7, discussed later), referencing the more recent trend of playing ‘ud, flute or other melodic instruments (including guitar) over the hajhuj – a practice of linking sub-Saharan and Arabic styles seen in the stratified presentations of previously discussed projects.

Later in the chorus of same song, the solo 'ud takes over from the vocals. Figure 4-3 shows the instrument used in a way stylistically and idiomatically standard for Arabic classical music, however, the major pentatonic arpeggiations mirror the chordal outlines later in Figure 4-4, and both are far from the classical modality employed with the solo 'ud. The pattern continues in the bridge where the 'ud simply moves down the arpeggios while using more classical rhythmic material, fitting the sound into the harmonic and melodic “Western” scheme.

In “Barakat,” Gnawa Diffusion aligns itself with the traditional Gnawa sound by staying within scales typical to the hajhuj (D-E-G-Ab-C-D) for the entirety of the song and adding the quraqib and hajhuj. The quraqib here play articulated 16<sup>th</sup>-notes, whereas within the layla setting the rhythmic drive of the music comes from the subtle interplay between an 8<sup>th</sup>-note triplet figure with an added 16<sup>th</sup>-note (Figure 4-5) and 16<sup>th</sup>-notes. “Barakat” removes the fluid motion between these two rhythms in order to solidify the groove, setting the quraqib into the predetermined “evened out” rhythmic positions of the reggae infused drum set.

The same procedure of “evening out” affects the hajhuj rhythm. The soloistic character of the hajhuj remains, especially in the opening (Figure 4-6), but the difference between the hajhuj line in “Barakat” and the one in the live Essaouira performance of “Bhar el-Wafa” by Maalem Mohamed Kouyou (Figure 4-7), for example, is the prevalence of the 16<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup>-note pattern in the groove of the latter. This rhythmic motive shifts, like the quraqib, between a duple (16<sup>th</sup>-note based) feel and a loose triplet throughout, although Kouyou actually does use a distinct triplet figure to end the phrase. The looseness of rhythm in the hajhuj and quraqib, not dissimilar from other African-diaspora music like the Brazilian samba, is missing from “Barakat” since the figure is de-emphasized as the Moroccan instruments are placed into a new context with their foreign counterparts. The ornamentations and melodic progression characterize instruments used

in much popular Moroccan music, like the 'ud and synthesizer, and the entire song itself is in the key of D minor, but with a flat-5. Because of the A-flat, there is no dominant harmony and the instrumental passages embellish the mode with their distinctive turns, tremolos and sound. Comparing Figures 4-6 and 4-7 show that the bass does not follow what a hajhuj would typically play, and instead it holds together the song's groove. Moroccan-ness is utilized, even championed, but it is no longer the core of the musical product. It is instead a part of the overall sound, shifted to fit into a new song form.

The presence of the bass and drum set affect the use of the hajhuj and quraqib in the internationalized settings and it is how all of these instruments are reconfigured that creates a new style. Looking back at the live Mohamed Kouyou hajhuj line, the syncopated nature of the rhythm pervades, especially in reference to the 16<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup>-note figure. To continue the forward motion, the second half of the main figure leaves off the first 16<sup>th</sup>-note and what remains carries close ties to the bass lines heard in James Brown's "Sex Machine" and other representative examples of his style of funk. The Gnawa Diffusion bass player, therefore, does not have to shift far from a Western musical style in order to compliment the Gnawa groove. In Figure 4-2 the bass leaves off the downbeat, instead accenting the 16<sup>th</sup>-note syncopations. Later in the chorus of the same song, however, Figure 4-3 demonstrates a return to a more downbeat-heavy playing style, although the structural notes, usually roots of chords, are on 2 and 4 and line up with the guitar's reggae pattern. The harmony is now major, and even the 'ud is playing in pentatonic, lending its timbre and momentarily ignoring its modal tradition.

These passages illuminate the techniques used by Gnawa Diffusion to separate each sound from its past uses, either from the Gnawa layla or those of Arabic classical music. They depict examples of musical fusion, taking the cosmopolitan experiences of band members further into



the creation of a unique sound. Where the festival setting supports a primacy of cooperation, allowing opportunities for efforts in combining existing styles in a symbolic expression of idealized diversity, these groups create their own voice, fashioned from the popular and traditional sounds available to the musicians. Both processes are within the commonly mentioned “hybrid” quality of Moroccan society, but they remain distinctly separate and their specifics elude most descriptions.

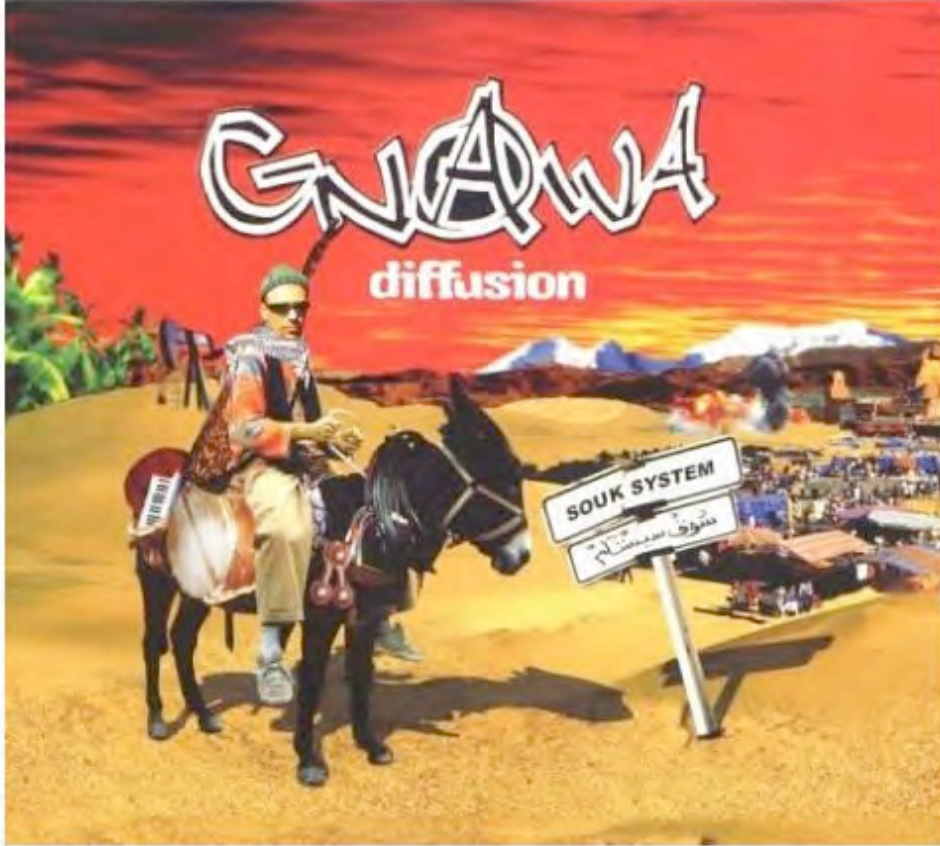


Figure 4-1. *Souk System* album cover



Figure 4-2. Itchak al-Baz: 'ud/electric guitar and electric bass



Figure 4-3. Itchak al-Baz: 'ud and electric bass



Figure 4-4. Itchak al-Baz: 'ud

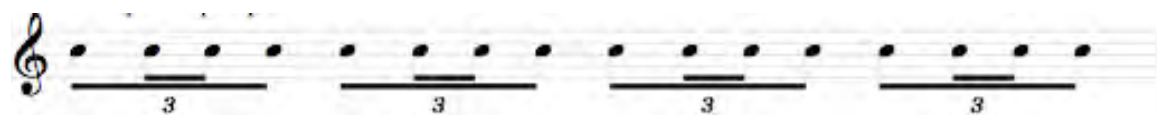


Figure 4-5. Baraket: quraqib



Figure 4-6. Baraket: electric guitar (2<sup>nd</sup> time only) and hajhuj



Figure 4-7. Bhar el-Wafa: hajhuj

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION: DISCUSSING SUFISM AND RELIGIOUS FUSION IN LOCAL CONTEXTS

Explaining the difference between Sufi traditions in Fez, Abderrahim al-Marrakechi told me: there is one source of water, the inspiration and knowledge of Allah, which pours itself down into the garden. What it waters, however, is a bed of beautiful flowers, each with its own distinctive color. Different people are attracted to different flowers, and he, Abderrahim, loves all of the colors. Therefore, he dedicates his life not only to the music and religious traditions of the Hamadcha, but to learning and performing the chants and songs of all Moroccan Sufi brotherhoods.

Abderrahim's position as a main stage festival performer gives him some liberty unknown to many other Sufi chanters. His musical innovations, combining and refiguring traditions in large, public settings, draw criticism from members of these other Islamic orientations. One Gnawa maalem echoed a common sentiment when he discards al-Marrakechi as a businessman, only concerned about making money. He takes no interest in hearing Abderrahim's perspectives on Gnawa music because "he is not Gnawa."

Chapter 3 outlined ceremonial and historical elements of Gnawa practice and belief. Chapter 4 began to examine how pieces of this cultural system became ideological symbols for both a nationalistic project and a burgeoning Moroccan presence in the international music industry. These vertical relationships between the Gnawa and the nation and beyond are important for redefining the social space occupied by the musicians and believers, yet few maalems perform in the major festivals and even fewer earn reputations in France or beyond. It is, therefore, necessary to inspect how the effects of commodification of Gnawa music and spirituality manipulate the social position of Gnawi in more localized settings. These social positions are not dependent only on the Gnawa themselves. The religious, ritual, and

performance communities of Morocco's cities are diverse and interconnected. The Gnawa work alongside and against different Sufi groups to earn popularity, recognition, and spiritual or moral influence, and the interactions between these groups is of utmost importance in understanding urban realities.

### **Moroccan Islam, Revisited**

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Sufism in Morocco is often depicted in monolithic terms. Ethnographies that detail local manifestations of “popular” Islam or Sufism carry titles like “Moroccan Islam” or “Moroccan Sufism.” They often take one of two directions: first, sets of local religious behaviors such as saint veneration are conceived as central pillars in a homogenous Sufism. In the second view, one local manifestation is subject to a singular deep ethnography. Many of these depictions neglect the discursive traditions that, over time, have created multiple identifications of Islam. Only recently have authors, Earle H. Waugh, for example, begun to account for long-standing and novel differences and interactions between multiple brotherhoods. The degree of sacredness for ritual performance comprises a focal point for productive cooperation between brotherhoods, but it also supplies contesting organizations with grounds for critique.

In this chapter I will first outline some of the strengths of viewing interactions between local and international facets of Islam, each with a competing purpose. Ethnomusicology can provide a fruitful perspective on the creation of these relationships because of the importance of commodified musical production and dissemination. The Sufi *dhikr*, a personal or communal act of remembrance, central to all forms of Sufism, is practiced in a number of fashions depending on the specific group. Discourse about *dhikr* helps to shape the relationships within and between religious adepts and organizations. Therefore, this chapter will be dedicated to contextualizing some of these specific differences between *dhikr* traditions and the innovations undertaken by

the Tijaniyya, ‘Aissawa, and Gnawa brotherhoods in Fez, Morocco. The final portion of this chapter will discuss how debates surrounding these religious practices expand into claims regarding the validity of these paths. Contention between brotherhoods combines with representations in the press to create complex and fluid conceptions of how a group is or is not appropriate, or even to be considered Sufi.

As a point of clarification, I use “path” or the Arabic *tariqa*, in order to refer to the set of beliefs, traditions, history, and to the extended community of Tijaniyya or ‘Aissawa believers, for example. While the status of each group is contested by various critics (each other included), I will use parallel terms, highlighting the structural similarities and variations between them. The word “brotherhood” is reserved for local manifestations of these organizations. The brotherhood will be the Tijaniyya or ‘Aissawa adepts who gather together for prayers on any given day, or the Gnawa who perform under the same *maalem*.

## **Private and Public Religious Performances**

### **Tijaniyya Claims to Spiritual Authority**

One of the many significant practices in Sufism is the dhikr. The term in Arabic means recollection, remembrance, or memory. While it is central to many Muslims, dhikr takes various forms in each Sufi brotherhood. This physical and communal practice of religion provides a space for both the declaration of religious identity and a distinct statement of borders, either forbidding or including others. As a point of departure, two of these groups, the Tijaniyya and the ‘Aissawa, consider themselves Sufis. The Gnawa, conversely, do not. A description of relevant characteristics and contexts for dhikr practice in these three paths illuminates how such practices translate into fodder for both cooperative engagement between brotherhoods and debate challenging the validity of religious beliefs and ritual traditions.

Spiritual authority and exclusivity, based on claims to a closeness to the Prophet via Ahmed Tijani, define the Tijaniyya practice and beliefs. The Tijaniyya brotherhood holds a daily communal dhikr. Therefore, of the specific prayer cycles that any Tijani must complete during a day, one is at a prescribed place and time chosen to foster the brotherhood's unity. After the Friday prayers, the congregation of Tijanis will perform a much longer dhikr that, among other things, celebrates the brotherhood's collective, and exclusive, relationship with the Prophet (Abun-Nasr 1965). The prayers are for God, and God alone. They, therefore, are harsh critics of more public groups, as described below. Because of Ahmed Tijani's insistence on having met the Prophet in the desert centuries after his death, this path is itself attacked as heretical. It has historically been a socially and politically powerful tariqa and as such, it is a target of reformist groups across the Middle East and Africa.

### **The 'Aissawa Public Performances and the Commodification of Dhikr**

In contrast to the stark exclusivity of the Tijaniyya brotherhood, the 'Aissawa see themselves as performers. While in Fez this summer an instructor at the University of Florida asked if I could assemble a short Moroccan segment for her study abroad group. Since the 'Aissawas performs dhikr at weddings and other major events, I had no problem finding a group that would welcome this class of 30 students into their ritual. The 'Aissawa dhikr is typically public rather than private; in other words the door is always open, allowing neighbors and strangers in.

When this group came to perform for the students, their ceremony culminated in the blessing of candles given to students for a small donation. They had two large ones as well, reserved for the heads of the household. These were given to the instructor and to myself, two non-Muslims, who arranged the evening. The baraka (blessing) held within these candles transcended the brotherhood, the path, and even Islam. These could be analyzed as economic and



folkloric gestures and our inclusion in the dhikr ceremony would be construed as heresy in the eyes of many other groups. The words of a second ‘Aissawa muqaddem (leader) helped to explain the situation. While visiting Mohammed Ben Guaddane in Meknès, he stated that the intention of any person participating in their ritual is not a concern. “Everyone has a different mind, taking the music as they want... Everyone has the vision to see what they want in this tradition. It is folklore or it is Sufi.”

Furthermore, Ben Guaddane uses the word “musiqi” to describe ‘Aissawa performances. This is unlike members of the Tijaniyya, and many non-Sufi Muslims who reserve that term for secular entertainment. Referring back to “popular, secular, or folkloric” performances he says that, “the ‘Aissawa want to be between the popular and the Sufi.” The commodification of the ‘Aissawa dhikr is apparent: brotherhoods disseminate their popular music through recordings and, more recently, the internet. Mohammed Ben Guaddane’s MySpace page (Figure 5-1) demonstrates artistic associations that stretch beyond the tariqa. Folkloric performance is not only an economic option, it is a primary performance context.

Many of the images and videos on Ben Guaddane’s MySpace page show him next to Abderrahim al-Marrakechi, whose quote about water and flowers opened this chapter. Al-Marrakechi has two MySpace pages: the first is for his Hamadcha performers (Figure 5-2), but the more recent one outlines his new project, Barakasoul (Figure 5-3). As the site states: “Barakasoul is a project initiated and lead by Abderrahim Amrani Marrakechi to give a new expression to folk and mystic musics of North Africa: Gnawa, Aissawa, Hamadcha, Jilala, Ahl Touat.” Here al-Marrakechi is not only dispersing the music of these ritual traditions into a secular context, but he is intentionally creating a popular genre, and by linking them together he creates a national or even regional association of equivalence among them. Unlike other similar

projects in Morocco, this musical development maintains its religious connections. The relationships between these individuals and local brotherhoods create a network and a musical genre based upon an ambiguous idea of “Sufism.” Dhikr, under the guise of musiqi, expands their cooperative spiritual and musical message.

Furthermore, the use of the internet is not a static and limited technique used only intermittently. After a short (45 minute) conversation with Marrakechi over tea in the Fez’s old city, he brought me to one of the many inexpensive nearby internet cafés. Here we sat for over an hour as he began with his MySpace page and pointed me toward each of his listed “friends.” Marrakechi makes use of his internet home multiple times per week in order to maintain contact with fellow musicians, both sacred and secular, popular and folkloric. This computer age form of communication assists him in the discovery of new talent and in the extension of his musical influence.

### **The Gnawa, Defined by their Music**

With the Gnawa, issues of discourse move beyond the layla ceremony itself. As descendents of an enslaved population, the Gnawa were historically marginalized. After it was popularized by American and European musicians, Gnawa music rose to a status that reached well beyond its practitioners and helped to establish major festivals around Morocco, including the immensely popular Festival of Gnawa and World Music.

Publications about this festival highlight the uniqueness of the Gnawa and their history of marginalization, yet in contemporary Morocco, Gnawa musicians interact freely with and are respected by members of other Sufi paths. When I walked through the old city of Fez with my hajhuj slung over my shoulder people would begin to sing Gnawa songs to me. When these songs come over the radio, people, regardless of religious affiliation, would sing along. Similarly, when I spoke with members of the Hamadcha or ‘Aissawa, even the exclusive

Tijaniyya, people would express an aesthetic love of Gnawa music. ‘Aissawa and Hamadcha muqaddems (band leaders) I met not only attended Gnawa ceremonies, but they incorporated the same musical repertory into their own performances. Some members went so far as to perform in ‘Aissawa and Gnawa ceremonies. These behaviors certainly question the strict polarity implied by much scholarship on Islam.

### **Claiming Sufism (for Others)**

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this inter-Sufi conversation arises from a discussion of Sufism itself. When I asked Si Ahmed, a Tijani in Fez, about the Gnawa, ‘Aissawa, and Hamadcha who live and work nearby, he explained that they were not Sufis because the Tijanis use their devotions to honor Allah, while these other groups have economic objectives. Therefore, in Si Ahmed’s view, they gave themselves distractions. The implication here is not just that the performances are secular, but that commodified performance pulls the members away from their spiritual purpose. The public and economic nature of their dhikr, which Si Ahmed called al-musiqi despite its religious content, is detrimental to their spiritual journey. Similarly, when I spoke with a Gnawa maalem about Abderrahim al-Marrekechi’s recent pan-Sufi musical projects, he was quick to respond that, “a Gnawa is a Gnawa, a Hamadcha is a Hamadcha, an ‘Aissawa is an ‘Aissawa. Otherwise [he is in it] for the money.”

Adding to the complexities of these debates are the simplified representations of tariqas coming from the press. *TelQuel*, a local Francophone weekly, referred to the Gnawa as Sufis while promoting the upcoming Essaouira Festival of Gnawa and World Music this summer. The Gnawa share some characteristics of Sufism: they have a ritual, the layla, in which they sing praises to Allah, they form small groups that could be construed as brotherhoods, and they pray through chant. Their differences are significant, however. Throughout the layla, one or more saints or spirits, possess adepts. These figures are not only Islamic (Moses, Abraham, and

‘Aisha, for example), they are also African. Many of the possessing identities are categorized as al-hawsawiyya, those from Hausaland. The local organizations can only be crudely identified as “brotherhoods” in the Sufi sense. While I doubt this observation can be unquestioningly extrapolated to account for all of the nation’s Gnawa, the maalems I worked with in Fez dealt with their group members primarily in terms of employment. As such, the “brotherhoods” are functionally different than those of the Tijaniyya.

The final common argument against the Gnawa’s Sufism is that they have no zawiya, yet this statement fails to recognize recent developments. The zawiya is a place of gathering, worship, and refuge for a Sufi, a sort of lodge. It provides a distinct meeting place, and can show impressive wealth or status for a worldwide brotherhood like the Tijaniyya. The Gnawa have no such central locations. Their layla is performed in various households, where an adept requests and pays for the ceremony and sacrifice. Complicating the matter is the recent work in Essaouira creating a Gnawa Zawiya, a project undertaken by the Association of the 1200th Anniversary of the Founding of Fez. This space is a “meeting place for the Gnawa of Morocco, a legacy part of the oral heritage of the country through the ages” (Casafree.com 2008). According to the director of the project, the second floor will soon become a museum of Gnawa history in Morocco. It was here that Mahmoud Guanya began a Gnawa “school” decades ago, spreading the music and spirituality throughout the country. The building of a new zawiya illuminates the fluid status of the Gnawa population and the imprecise boundaries around Sufism itself.

When asked if the Gnawa were Sufis, Abd ar-Rzaq, a Gnawa maalem, definitively replied, “no.” Yet popular conception, via the press, the music industry, and members of other Sufi tariqas continue this debate, disregarding statements such as his and highlighting the power of discourse between the religious of Morocco.

## What is Moroccan Islam?

The only people I met who discounted the Gnawa as magicians, crazy, or possessed by demons were those who simultaneously discredited Sufis for their *bida'*, innovation. From their perspectives, the differences between the Gnawa, who were *majnun* (possessed by demons), the 'Aissawa, who allowed themselves distractions, or the Tijaniyya, who distorted texts and added many doctrinal "innovations" to Islam are not so important, and these three groups are placed, by critics and by many academics, into a monolithic stack, translated by past scholars as "Moroccan Islam." The danger inherent within this view, Sufis vs. Reformists, or Mystics vs. Textualists, is the neglect of complex relationships and interactions between local, national, and international organizations and individuals, horizontal relationships. It is these discourses that create public opinion and appeal, just as it is these debates that define Sufism.

It is this same debate, public and musical, that confounds the understanding of the Gnawa. Their ability to categorize themselves outside of the Sufi traditions, despite their close relationship to those very practices, is hampered by their musical productions in local, national, and international terms. The ritual tradition of the *layla* is, as discussed in Chapter 3, central to the Gnawa theology and cosmology. Yet this musical practice shares little with parallel Sufi *dhikr* gatherings. While the function of the *layla* involves a specific relationship with a number of *mluks*, appeasing them and honoring their assistance and blessings for easing everyday life, the practices of the Tijaniyya and other Sufi groups from throughout the Middle East and North Africa are more closely aligned with the meaning of *dhikr* – they serve to foster the remembrance and embodiment of Allah's presence. Hamadcha traditions, as discussed by Crapanzano (1973), appear somewhere between these two possibilities, implying a continuum along which various Sufi and non-Sufi musico-ritual performances lie. This variation between

Muslims is far removed from the implications of a categorical Sufism, as implied by media and major events.

It is the national and international influence that muddles this distinction. The national press and the tourist-inclined festival circuit promote Gnawa performances as Sufi rituals, slated after long days of popular music acts and artists. In the Fez Festival of Sacred Music, for example, a festival devoted to displaying spiritual music from around the Middle East and the world, there were nearly as many secular performances in 2008 as sacred ones. Pop stars from Tunisia or Egypt were featured alongside flamenco dancers from Spain. Yet the introductions and descriptions of these performances successfully placed them within a sense of pan-spirituality, coherent within the frame of the festival. This is a fluid spirituality. The definition and categorization of music within and outside of an appropriate spiritual, or Muslim aesthetic carries pragmatic benefits and costs. These decisions and consequences inform the placement of each form of musical or ritual production, guiding artists and religious leaders at all levels of society from the 1200 year old neighborhoods of the Fez medina to the concert stages of Fez and Essaouira, even to the studios of Casablanca, Paris, Marseilles, New York City, and elsewhere.

What is Moroccan Islam? To venture an answer to the central question that lies in the first half of this thesis' title, it is simplest to begin by defining through negation. Moroccan Islam is not a singular, distinct, and unchanging set of rituals. As Eickelmann (1976) noted and el-Zein (1977) emphasized, it has changed through time. It is also not identical to religious belief elsewhere. The unique relationship between the early ulema and the dynastic power in the region forged an interaction between spiritual authorities, mystics, and political leaders. Occasionally a single figure could even embody all of these roles while in power.

Moroccan Islam as a term fails to properly account for the activities that occur even within one single tradition, let alone throughout the innumerable variations of faith and practice that exist within the nation. As Chapters 3 and 4 described, the commercial, national, and spiritual influences pressing against maalems and other members of the Gnawa guide their practices toward different ends. This has a profound effect on how the group defines itself, includes or excludes others, and operates in reference to the rest of the nation and world. It is these forces, from both within and outside of the religious organization, that shape the construction in individual and group identity.

The same forces, local and beyond, apply to the Sufi brotherhoods discussed above. They actively and intentionally redefine their boundaries. More so, they outline the boundaries of others, arguing their validity as “Sufi,” even “Muslim.” Moroccan Islam is contrary to the categorical explanations seen in past anthropological work. It is an important and discursive element of any Moroccan Muslim’s self-awareness. It is a collection of disparate beliefs and practices that exemplify this notion of hybridity, of “Creole” society, to return to Deborah Kapchan’s phrase. It is a malleable umbrella of a term, and when understood as such, it elucidates the complexities of religious practice, not just in Morocco, but with any heterogeneous society.

To return to al-Marrakechi’s statement, there may be one source of water for these different colored flowers, and each may be attractive to some people. It is, however, the sheer quantity and diversity of these colors that makes Morocco an interesting place. While the religious authority technically falls to the King, the Commander of the Faithful, his people actively struggle to find the true path. And while these Islamic and Sufi debates erupt and


subside in the social, economic, political, and religious landscapes, it is helpful to remember a Moroccan proverb: “the ways to God are as numerous as the souls of men” (Debbarih 2008).



myspace **music** | my music | music videos | featured playlists | top artists | shows | classifieds | forums

## Aissawa de Meknes

Trance / Folk / Lyrical



Morocco  
Profile Views: 9919  
Last Login: 10/30/2008

View My: [Pics](#) | [Videos](#)

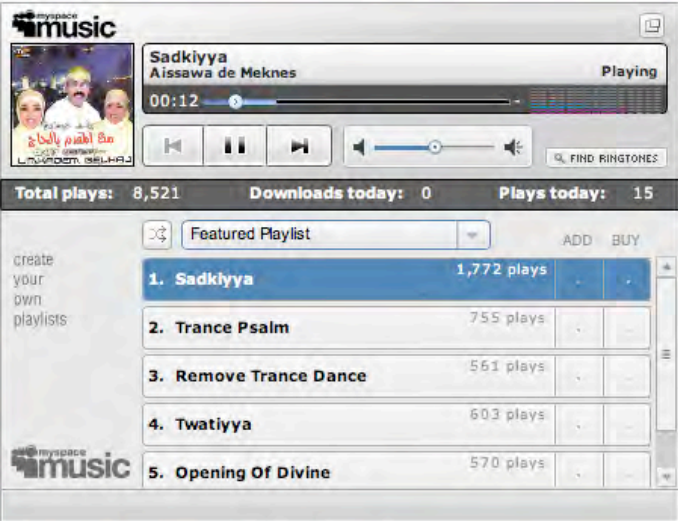
### Contacting Aissawa de Meknes

Send Message	Forward to Friend
Add to Friends	Add to Favorites
IM / Call	Block User
Add to Group	Rank User

**MySpace URL:**  
[www.myspace.com/aissawa](http://www.myspace.com/aissawa)

### Aissawa de Meknes: General Info

Member Since	12/13/2007
Band Website	<a href="http://confreieaissawa.free.fr">confreieaissawa.free.fr</a>
Record Label	Thairi Disque / ManouiPhone Meknes
Type of Label	Unsigned



**Sadkiyya**  
Aissawa de Meknes  
00:12 | Playing

Total plays: 8,521 | Downloads today: 0 | Plays today: 15

Featured Playlist

1. Sadkiyya	1,772 plays
2. Trance Psalm	755 plays
3. Remove Trance Dance	561 plays
4. Twatiyya	603 plays
5. Opening Of Divine	570 plays

**Aissawa de Meknes's Latest Blog Entry** [[Subscribe to this Blog](#)]

[[View All Blog Entries](#)]

**About Aissawa de Meknes**

**Aissawa de Meknes's Friend Space (Top 40)**

Aissawa de Meknes has **109** friends.





			
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Figure 5-1. Screen capture of the MySpace page for Mohammed Ben Guaddane's 'Aissawa' group.

### Hamadcha de Fes

Trance / Folk / Soul

"Hamadcha de Fès"

Fes,  
Morocco

Profile Views: 47140

Last Login: 2/7/2009

View My: [Pics](#)  
| [Videos](#)

**Contacting Hamadcha de Fes**

<a href="#">Send Message</a>	<a href="#">Forward to Friend</a>
<a href="#">Add to Friends</a>	<a href="#">Add to Favorites</a>
<a href="#">IM / Call</a>	<a href="#">Block User</a>
<a href="#">Add to Group</a>	<a href="#">Rank User</a>


**MySpace URL:**  
[www.myspace.com/hamadcha](http://www.myspace.com/hamadcha)

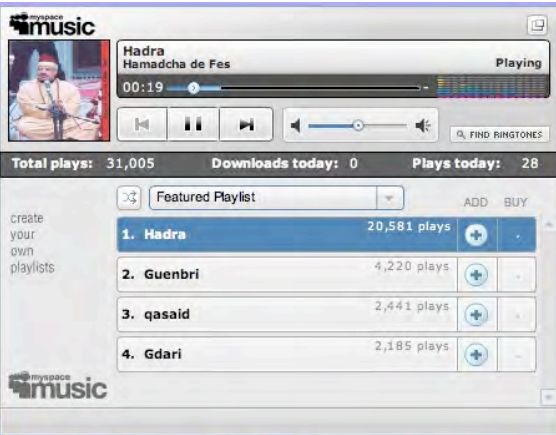
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**Hamadcha de Fes: General Info**

ince 2/5/2007

bers **Hamadcha**





**Hamadcha de Fes's Latest Blog Entry** [\[Subscribe to this Blog\]](#)

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**About Hamadcha de Fes**

Abderrahim Marrakchi Amrani, 44, is musician, teacher and master of the Hamadha sufi brotherhood. He sings God and life. He sings Sufi. His life is a melody and he tells to us in music. Difficult to make him speaking about his own existence. Each sentences is the happy pretext to quote a verse, to hum a poem or to tell a historical anecdote. Amrani is a well of stories and History. Not only about the Hamadcha sufi brotherhood which he's the local leader in the city of Fez in Morocco. He is one of those holders of a memory which dies. With his fingers, he beats the rhythm on the table, pulls on his cigarette and regrets the whole culture that "the only oral tradition is not enough to make survive." Abderrahim Amrani Marrakchi was born in Fez (Morocco), in Derb Mechmacha, the district of the artists, in the heart of the Old City before being taken by his uncle and his aunt in Constantine (Algeria), where he grew up. "Two major places of culture of the Arab world" he says. "I lived in the district of Souk El Assar, homa fennia, in front of a great master of the Arabic-Andalusian music, Haj Mohamed Taher Fergani, and this is how I spent my first 15 years, rocked by this music which I saw today ». The uncle is a Malhoun fan. It was on his knees that Abderrahim learns his first songs and poetry, at the age of 4 years. "a song written by the great M'barek Soussi. At primary school, he

Figure 5-2. Screen capture of the MySpace page for Abderrahim al-Marrakechi's Hamadcha group.

### barakasoul

Trance / Folk / Other



"Baraka Soul"

Morocco

Profile Views: 8172

Last Login: 2/7/2009

[View My: Pics | Videos](#)

**Contacting barakasoul**

<a href="#">Send Message</a>	<a href="#">Forward to Friend</a>
<a href="#">Add to Friends</a>	<a href="#">Add to Favorites</a>
<a href="#">IM / Call</a>	<a href="#">Block User</a>
<a href="#">Add to Group</a>	<a href="#">Rank User</a>

**MySpace URL:**  
[www.myspace.com/barakasoul](http://www.myspace.com/barakasoul)

**barakasoul: General Info**

Member Since	12/20/2007
Band Website	<a href="#">ALLO ABDERRAHIM : 00212 61 81 19 10</a>
Band Members	
Sounds Like	EMAIL : hamadcha_amrani@yahoo.fr ; baraka_soul@yahoo.fr
Record Label	Fassiphone

**music**

Hamadcha Dhikr  
barakasoul

00:11

Total plays: 5,482 Downloads today: 0 Plays t

Featured Playlist

1. Lalla Aicha 2,609 plays
2. Aicha Hamdouchiyya 510 plays
3. Hamadcha Dhikr 867 plays
4. Allah Ya Moulana 90 plays
5. Baba Bahri 86 plays

**barakasoul's Latest Blog Entry** [\[Subscribe to this Blog\]](#)

[\[View All Blog Entries\]](#)

**About barakasoul**

Barakasoul est un projet initié et dirigé par Abderrahim Amrani Marrakchi pour donner une nouvelle jeunesse aux musique Jilala, Ahi Touat etc. Abderrahim est aussi le leader de la confrérie soufie des Hamadcha de Fes au Maroc et directeur artist

Barakasoul is a project initiated and lead by Abderrahim Amrani Marrakchi to give a new expression to folk and mystic mus Ahl. Abderrahim Amrani Marrakchi is also the leader of the sufi brotherhood of Hamadcha of Fes in Morocco and the artistic




Figure 5-3. Screen capture of the MySpace page for Abderrahim al-Marrakechi's most recent project, Barakasoul.

APPENDIX  
GLOSSARY OF ARABIC TERMS

‘Aissawa	A Sufi brotherhood from the area around Meknes based on the teachings of Sidi ben ‘Aissa and Sheikh al-Kamal.
‘Asri	An Egyptian popular song style during the second half of the 20 <sup>th</sup> century that influenced musical styles across the region.
Berber	See Tamazight
Baraka	Blessings accessible through the proximity to a holy man (saint) or place (usually a saint’s tomb).
Bida’	Heretical innovation to Islamic tradition.
Blida	Region in the center of Fez’s old city near the tanneries, Derb Taouil, and close to the religious center (Al-Qarawiyin mosque)
Dakhla	Meaning “entrance,” the name of the opening sections of the Gnawa layla as well as many Sufi rituals.
Derdeba	See layla
Dhikr	Meaning “rememberance,” remembering Allah through the repetition of texts or other practices, depending on Sufi orientation.
Gharib	Literally “Western,” also used for “foreign.”
Hajhuj	Central Gnawa instrument, a 3-stringed semi-spike lute with a hollowed out body and a camel neck membrane. Also goes by the names “ginbri” and “sintir.”
Hamadcha	Sufi brotherhood from the area around Meknes based on the teachings of Sidi ‘Ali. The Hamadsha are closely related to the ‘Aissawa and borrow portions of their ritual and music from the Gnawa.
Al-Hawsawiyya	The group of male mluks in the Gnawa pantheon. They are said to be from Hausaland, but many are syncretically fused with Islamic figures.
Imam	Leader of prayers. Any Muslim can lead prayers, but typically the role of imam and khatib are fused into one official who heads the particular mosque. This thesis deals only with Sunni Islam and this should not be confused with the Shi’a meaning of the term.
Insha’allah	By the will of God. A phrase with a range of meanings implying that all that happens depends on the fate decided by Allah and is out of human control.

Jahalia	Term for the period before the advent of Islam in the Arabian desert, often conceived of as a period of unbelief or paganism.
Jinn (jnun)	The word used in the Qur'an for spirit, typically referring to demons.
Khatib	Preacher, the man who stands in front of a congregation at Friday prayers and gives a sermon.
Lalla	Respectful address for women in Morocco.
Layla	Literally "night." A layla is ritual Gnawa possession ceremony. See Chapter 3.
Maalem	Gnawa ritual leader. Leads the layla ceremony and typically plays the hajhuj.
Majnun	From "jinn," an adjective meaning "possessed" or "crazy."
Maskun	"Lived within," the word used to identify a person who is possessed by a mluk.
Mluk	A Gnawa saint who is able to possess an individual.
Muezzin	The person who has the roll of reciting the call to prayer from the mosque.
Muqaddama	Woman hired to prepare a layla ceremony.
Muwatanun	Citizen, from the word "watan," or "homeland."
Nuba	Suite of music in the Andalusian tradition.
Oughnya al-wataniya	Nationalistic or patriotic song.
Qanun	Lap zither used in classical Islamic music and Egyptian popular song.
Quraqib	Iron castinets used by the Gnawa in the layla ritual.
Riqq	Small, but heavy, tambourine used as the central percussion instrument in classical Islamic music and Egyptian popular song.
Salafi	Describes recent political movements that foster a social return to life as it was lived during the time of the Prophet. Salafism often includes a strict interpretation of religious texts.
Sharif	Title for a descendent of the Prophet Mohammed.

Sufi	Commonly referred to as Islamic mysticism, Sufi practice emphasizes a personal connection between the adept and Allah and often utilizes musical and ritual elements unique to a particular brotherhood. The word “Sufi” is an umbrella term for a number of very different and occasionally mutually exclusive theological perspectives. Literally, the word means “wool” and identifies the ascetic nature of early followers. See Chapter 5.
Tamazight	Adjective of Amazight, proper name of the Berber ethnic group.
Tariqa	“Path,” here used to designate a Sufi path such as the Hamadsha or Tijaniyya tariqas.
Tbal	Large drum used by the Gnawa during the dakhla before the layla ceremony.
Tijaniyya	Sufi path based on the teachings of Sidi Ahmed Tijani.
‘Ud	Plucked lute used in Islamic classical music and Egyptian popular song.
Ulema	Religious elite, most frequently either judges who rule on interpretations of Islamic law or scholars of history and theology.
Umma	The body of followers of Islam.
Watan	Homeland
Zawiya	Sufi lodge, place of worship and gathering for local brotherhoods.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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