

(Re)defining the Dichotomies within Moroccan Sufism: Gnawa and Samaã as Case Studies

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ABSTRACT

Although marked by diversity, the Moroccan Sufi rituals have been associated with mysterious aspects and reputed for the dichotomy of their different facets. The complexity of this field has intrigued my curiosity to investigate to what extent the type of music deployed can contribute to categorizing Sufi orders. In this context, it is worth exploring how the music is used and for which purposes. Through contrasting *samaã* to *gnawa* as major Sufi music genres, this paper sheds light on the duality inherent within the former as an elitist Sufi practice and the latter as its popular counterpart. In support of this, I conduct interviews and focus groups with several Moroccan disciples to further investigate the type of audience they both attract and how the two genres help the disciples to get into the Sufi atmosphere and the desired metaphysical level. By reviewing the literature carried out by Moroccan as well as foreign authors in this field, I also look into how researchers position Sufi activities and whether they approach them with an awareness of the dichotomies categorizing the two genres within high and low cultures.

Keywords: Sufism- *samaã* - *dhikr* - *shaykh* - *gnawa*- *aissaoua*- the dichotomy

INTRODUCTION

Most Sufi orders in Morocco tend to incorporate one or more genres of music or chants in their rituals. This tradition varies according to the region in which the Sufi order is situated. The music in use can be part of a set of inherited traditions or collective memory of both the disciples and the masters of such orders. These genres of music can be generally divided into two types: popular and classical (or elitist). Remarkably, it can be said that this duality is an inherent feature of Sufism in Morocco. In other terms, there are two versions of Sufism: one directed to the common people and the other specifically to the elite class of the society. This can be undeniably problematic on how to proceed with the study of Sufism as a philosophy and by extension as a practice with twofold entities. In this regard, I argue that any research conducted on this subject must deal at some point with the binary oppositions characterizing Sufism. Therefore, this paper seeks to study this matter by examining two opposite samples of Sufi music, *gnawa*¹⁴⁰ and

¹⁴⁰ *Gnawa* or *Gnaoua* is a genre of music that was introduced to Morocco during the time of slavery. Most of its disciples claim to be ancestors of the prophet Mohammed. It uses mostly drums, castanets *gambry* or *hajouj* that are base sound.

*samaã*¹⁴¹, that are deployed by some orders as a catalyst for their rituals. Besides, I will shed light on two other genres that somehow fall in this categorization: *aissaoua*¹⁴² and *dhikr*¹⁴³.

The duality as an inherent feature in Sufism:

While exploring the Sufi literature written in or about Morocco, we often encounter another duality that of the orientalist writers and their Moroccan counterparts. Most of the orientalist researchers (un)intentionally ignore to make a distinction between the opposite trends of Sufism, instead combining them within one harmonious enterprise or one entity. On the opposite side, the findings of Moroccan researchers and writers usually reflect their affiliation to a distinctive Sufi order. In other cases, they can even be part of the Sufi order they are investigating, lacking by that any objectivity in their research, and instead turning themselves into mere propagandists for such orders. Few of the Moroccan writers like Mohammed Aziz Boukili positioned longwinded research into the different stages that the disciples go through to mentally get into the exoteric¹⁴⁴ level. He extensively talks about various esoteric schools in Sufism and the peculiarities of each one of them.

Other Moroccan writers mainly praise the elitist Sufism, and they mostly avoid getting into a real debate about the indescribable side of popular Sufism. Conversely, Abdellah Hamouddi 1997, came up with a projection of Sufism in the sociopolitical life of Moroccans. He argues that the schema of authority seen in the master-disciple dialectic is, to a large extent, the same as the one which shapes all precedent relations, including the superior-subordinate relationship that forms the backbone of modern bureaucratic and political order [141]. The political paradigm is inspired by the Sufi one and consequently, the subjects become the disciples while the monarchy as an institution represents the Sufi order. His work embodies a critical view on the interweaving aspect of the sacred and the profane. The profane here is a reference to politics. The current regime invests more in what concerns the rehabilitation of the brotherhoods and promoting all types of Sufi music festivals such as the yearly one of the city of Fes. This latter gets the attention of major media outlets and benefits from even international fame. It seems, thus, that Sufism with its multiple facets is largely serving the interests of the Monarchy.

The dichotomy becomes a reality in practice while juxtaposing the two facets of Sufism. Once one investigates their rituals and what each group conducts to stay connected to their spiritual drives, one can easily deduce that these two groups are different from each other. The instruments used in their gatherings and ceremonies and evocation are distinctive along with their dances and the body movements that all fit within their binary categorizations. The elitist Sufism uses well-composed classical music which is inspired by the Andalusian Music originally traced back to Southern Spain from the tenth to the fifteenth century. This type of music is referred to as evocation and praise of the prophet Mohammed, otherwise known as *samaã*. For instance, this

¹⁴¹ Samaã is a type of chanting mostly by men. In this respect, Mohammed Thami Lharak argues that its main purpose is to focus more on the universal and omnipresence of divinity.

¹⁴² This genre is associated with the city of Meknes. The head of the band is referred to as a *mqadem* and the instrument used are big drums and small clay ones in addition to the oboe and no string instruments.

¹⁴³ This form of music or chanting depends mostly on the use of the voice of the singers. This latter has to be very strong melodic. It is usually associated with *dhikr* which is the evocation the prophet Mohammed.

¹⁴⁴ This refers to the level where the Sufis go beyond the physical state into the metaphysical one (batinia. see Mohamed Boughali, 2017. The esoteric level is a pivotal one for the Sufis as that what makes them achieve their spiritual objectives.

type of music is performed and broadcasted in the presence of the Moroccan king (as the commander of the faithful) on the celebration night of the Prophet Mohammed's birthday. The same type of music is considerably appreciated during the month of Ramadan.

The controversy about samaã as a religious music chanting:

Dhikr is a form of Invoking, recalling, or remembering God and his prophet Mohammed by deploying religious chanting. The dictionary of Sufism defines it as a form and a method of prayer often individually assigned by a Shaykh, which can be either silent or vocal. Also translated as recollection about collective or group invocation rituals or *dhikr al-hadra* in Arabic. Invocation here involves rhythmic repetition of the name of God, syllable, word (such as Allah), a phrase such as (*Subhan Allah*, Glory to God), or litany tailored to the spiritual needs of the individual seeker. It is common in Morocco to have most brotherhoods (*Zawaya*) deploy one of the forms in their rituals. These forms may vary in the layout, but the purpose seems to be generally similar. Waugh considers that the *dhikr* formula itself provides both the potential and the constraint necessary for encountering deity [252]. This explains how *dhikr* can be a catalyst for the Sufi to connect with deity.

Theoretically, *samaã* and *dhikr* are two of the sound-based spiritual techniques used in Sufism to achieve closeness to God. This is motivated mostly by the willingness to experience Divine love. Hence, this becomes the desired objective of most Sufi Shaykhs and their disciples. Furthermore, *Samaã* is a musical genre that is considered particular to Sufism because it is used with the intent of getting into a trance via which the purification of the soul can be achieved to help overcome one's ego. *Samaã* mostly incorporates the recitation of sacred text and poetry and this happens mostly while performing some movements by the head or the whole body. In this respect, the two dimensions, esotericism, and exotericism can be manifested. The words are religious-based, yet the movements are part of the addition Sufism brought as an extra to the conventional pillars. However, this form triggers a lot of debate among fundamentalist scholars who reject it once the instrument is employed. The ambivalence in Sufi art transcends the dichotomy into a general interpretation regarding all sorts of music and dance. For some of the renowned Sufi scholar, they reject any innovation and seem to embrace fundamentalism. They reject any sort of novel ideas and they even inculcate the Sufis of a deviation from the right path into some sort of heresy. Jilali Karim brings to the fore how these Sufi thinkers such as Zarouk and Ben-Lhaj reject *samaã* and they consider Sufi groups who are using it to digress from the teachings of Islam [156]. These opinions of Zarouk and Ibn lhaj are based, according to Karim, on the four theological schools of thought of Islam that partially reject *samaã* [145]. For these people, once the instruments were introduced in the Sufi practice it lost its poetic mission and became a profane art by which men lose their masculinity and the *samaã* becomes an intensifier for the desire. Fortunately for this form of art, it mainly receives criticism at a certain time in history and is based on some incidents. Nowadays, *samaã* is highly promoted by the highest religious authority in the country, the King, by attending the *samaã* and *madih* ceremonies, especially during Ramadan.

The practice of *dhikr* in different religious spheres is of high value for some of the leading Sufi Shaykhs. Mohammed Thami Elharaq ¹⁴⁵ argues that *dhikr* is a fundamental pillar for the people as

¹⁴⁵Mohammed Thami Elharaq is a Sufi Musician and a researcher in the field of Sufism, Among his latest publication, is *I am going to God*, 2016.

it provides inner peace, *itmiannan*, and at the same time a remedy for the broken hearts, *quloub alila*. It has an essential role in keeping the greediness of human desires down. He refers to how the Shaykh Mohammed El Haraq, [1845], who considers *dhikr* as the way out for anyone who wants to get close to God. For Mohammed Elharaq, *dhikr* consist mainly of reciting some verses from the Qur'an, remembrance of the Prophet, and the recalling of some of the 99 names of God, in addition to other prayers that contemplate the greatness of God. El Haraq contends that it is also a form of ritual that triggers cleanness and purification, *tahara*¹⁴⁶. These are of a pivotal function within this kind of chanting. The Sufis argue that the more people practice and experience *dhikr*, the cleaner their souls get.

Dhikr thus becomes a key in Sufi traditions and caters an added value to their path of worshipping and valuing religion. Yet, there are some requirements for such performance to take place. An efficient combination of both the physical and mental worlds in *dhikr* is pivotal for the success of a Sufi performance. Space is often that of a Brotherhood given its historical, social, and spiritual role. Earle Waugh argues that the meaning of space may be positive as, for example in *dhikr*s performed in an environment made sacred by the saint's tomb or by the space of the *ribat* constructed years ago for the performance of *dhikr* [6]. It is important to physically contextualize the performance for the chanters to get in the temperament. Regarding the notion of time, it can be either a fixed one such as the birthday of the Prophet Mohammed or during Ramadan and it can also be set by the Sufi Chanters. For instance, Assafae Association¹⁴⁷ in the city of Ouazzane, have a set agenda for their performances and an improvising one which is very much affected by national and religious circumstances.

Every member of the group has to be well prepared mentally to retain both the words and the movements should be harmonic to the rest of the members. The performing aspect and the harmony of the body and the chanting intensify the esthetical part of the elitist Sufism in contrast to some other genres. However, *dhikr* is not meant for every devotee and this aspect varies according to the brotherhood's traditions. Diaz Marta argues that most *ṭuruq*¹⁴⁸ either forbid or reserve for the most advanced and senior disciples the possibility of performing this practice in solitary; however, for the vast majority of Sufis *dhikr* is a group ritual. Since it is the core of the universe of Sufi ritual and must be performed collectively, it is a key meaning-giver to the actual existence of Sufi orders [495]. *Dhikr* remains then a pivotal element as a catalyst for the Sufi orders to achieve closeness to the divine. Since it is mentioned in the Qur'an, it has a legitimate presence as a religious type of chanting unlike some other types that are used in profane contexts and these types are often part of the popular Sufism.

Gnawa from slavery form into the internationalization:

Several writers have immensely contributed to revealing some of the aspects of underground Sufism. In this context, Deborah Kapchan's work on *gnawa*, a genre of music which witnessed a real metamorphosis. Her work worth some investigation as she explores this genre of music from

¹⁴⁶ It can refer to another context to the physical ablution, which is required from every Muslim before any prayer. In this context, it has spiritual indications.

¹⁴⁷ This is one of the leading associations in the north of Morocco regarding *Dikhr* and *Samaã*. The members were part of the interviews. Most of them have an advanced academic background and they all highlighted the role of the association in their education and its immense contribution in shaping the artistic side of their lives.

¹⁴⁸ The singular form is *tariqa* which means path or order.

several angles. Part of her work is devoted to the rituals that mark *gnawa* music as a Sufi genre. She displays some of the aspects of the yearly music festival of *gnawa* in Essaouira, which is the biggest of its type in the world. In Essaouira, African rhythms (particularly as they are represented by *gnawa* music) come to stand for an identity that celebrates ethnic and religious differences as exemplified in the larger African diaspora. The festival (re)connects Morocco to its African origins as this music migrated with the slaves and settled in Morocco. She states that during the festival, the African diaspora is constantly evoked, yet the musicality and the aesthetic side overshadow the sad part of the story of slavery [64]. For Morocco, as a country, the festival stands as an emblem of tolerance, peace, and diversity. It is a celebration based on a melancholy story of slavery that remarkably transformed from the lower strata of Moroccan society to international attention.

This music stands as an emblem and a marker of the dichotomy that exists in Sufi music between Morocco's high culture and its low¹⁴⁹ counterpart. It is one of the esoteric music genres par excellence, given the mysterious aspects, this music brings to the fore. It represents a nostalgic longing for the ancestors and the land of origins like Sudan and Mali. *Gnawa's* fame generally in Morocco is built on how it is a healer for the haunted or the people who have some mental issues. The ritual is a nightlong one preceded by various preparations of special incense and slaughtering of a rooster or a goat. These food items are considered as a gift for the jinn¹⁵⁰ where distressed individuals enter into a trance and communicate with the spirits that are causing disturbances and result in their physical or psychological stability and serenity.

In this light, Kapchan argues that this ritual within *gnawa* music has been a source of inquiry for several European scholars. At the same time, it is challenging given the fact that there are no tangible answers for why such a phenomenon is widely spread. Among these scholars, the French philologist Chebel Malek considers Sufism to be "a continual fermentation." For him, Sufism works within the neglected social classes by the official state religion [571]. These people, the lower strata, are seeking recognition and a *raison d'être*, thus, this can be fulfilled through their enrollment in some Sufi orders. In other words, they opt for belonging to a group or a community, an imagined community, regardless of the nature of their cause and how rational their rituals are. It seems therefore that the elitist Sufism is benefiting from the dichotomy as it gives them the legitimacy to exist and stand out as special Sufi orders that are part of the mainstream media. It is worth mentioning that *gnawa* music is one of the few genres that can transcend the original status of the music of slave and street art into its internationalization thanks to the festival of Essaouira.

Fez and Meknes, two Sufi hubs with multiple sides.

Fez has been always a cultural hub for the country. This is also reflected in the diversity of its Sufi aspects. Spadola Emilio delves into how digitalized the field of Moroccan Sufism has become as both the state and the people involved are fully engaging with its promotion. He devotes ample part of his work to cover the outreaching via technology that targets the grassroots social strata. In this context, he explores the jinn rites and how technology is employed in their outreaching. He

¹⁴⁹ see Williams, Raymond. *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1983) Rev. Ed. p. 92.

¹⁵⁰ Jinn stands for the equivalent of spirits in the Western world. In the Arab world, there is a strong belief in the existence of invisible spirits that can cause physiological problems by haunting the body of a person. This belief is enforced by the Quran that mentions them. Please see *Caliph's House* by Tahir Shah.

states that jinn rites matter politically and socially today because the difference they make is not contained within distinct social boundaries. Islamic exorcists launch their call on YouTube, Sufi trance specialist performs on Moroccan radio and satellite television channels; even the smallest and most marginal jinn curers contact their clients via cell phone and carry business cards" [20]. These curers, *roqat*,¹⁵¹ are employing multiple media outlets. They would sometimes even put their ads in newspapers. This makes their recipes reach a large population and potential customers. These curers are socially accepted as the main instrument they use to cure is the Koran therefore it is rare that people question their mission. Their access to public space is evident and people can attend the sessions of exorcisms of jinn individually or with a family member.

While scrutinizing the social dimension of some of the brotherhoods (*zawaya*) in the country, it seems that most of their adherents are of a low social stratum. There are several drives for these people to get into such activities and devote their time and energy to that. In an examination of rituals that take place in Fes during certain times of the year, Spadola considers that these practices are likely to be stemming from nationalism or national duty. It is even a manifestation of the call of the supreme religious authority, our master, *sidna*. In this context, it is clear that it is related to the monarch whose name can be heard and often repeated through such rituals [41]. Apparently, for these people, it is a way of standing out and having their voices heard. If we put this in Spivak's term "the subalterns," it sounds like a perfect enterprise to let them speak. These are the occasion for these people to speak and be heard to be part of the public space. They get the opportunity to perform with funding from the highest authorities. It seems that enjoying these rituals would be very much desired by disciples who would not, therefore, mind traveling within Morocco or even across borders. It is significant to mention how this phenomenon has become transnational as the case of Morocco with the Tijania order adherents who come from Senegal and Mali for their Sufi pilgrimage to Morocco.

One of the leading Sufi orders in Morocco as far the popular Sufism is concerned, is Hamadasha brotherhood of Meknes. Their patron saint is Shaykh El Kamel, who is also known as Sidi Mohamed Ben Aissa. Besides religious festivities, their music, Aissaoua, often takes part in public spaces and it is often performed as a type of street art by which some money can be generated. The rites of this order are described thoroughly by Vincent Crapanzano in his field study. For him, the practices of this order do not usually conceive of the goal as union or communication with God, but rather as the cure of the devil-stuck and the devil-possessed [18]. This demonstrates how the proliferation of brotherhoods in Morocco is. This accounts for the division of Sufi music into at least two major categories. Crapanzano makes it clear by referring to the sophisticated orders, who consider their founding saint as a spiritual master who has provided them with a path to God while the members of the popular ones consider the saint as an object of devotion and the source of power [179]. Consequently, we are dealing with two trends; a trend that seems to be representing orthodox Islam by seeking the path to God and a trend that is venerating the saint himself which can be problematic from a religious perspective as there should be no mediation between God and the worshippers.

¹⁵¹ The curers are often referred to as *roqat/raqi* who can sometimes be imams of mosques who use the Quran to cure people but they can be also just ordinary people who use the Koran for the same purpose, however, they can be just charlatans who are looking for financial incentives.

The peculiarity of Moroccan Sufism resides in the waves of other cultures that Morocco has hosted, which has ultimately brought about a diversity of rhythms in the Sufi Traditions. Throughout its history, Morocco has been a place of diversity and hybrid cultures and even at a certain time as a haven for immigrants from both Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa. Hence, this results in a wide variety of spiritual music and tendencies. In Sufi music, the impacts are so evident, starting from the ones of the Middle East at the beginning of the seventh century to those of the Andalusian era. It has been even customary for some of the Sufi leaders to associate themselves with the Arabian Peninsula from where the Prophet comes. Some even claim to be descended from the same family. These people are generally referred to as *sherifians*. Thus, it can be said that the accumulation of the cultural heritage in Morocco has largely shaped the spiritual practices of the people. It is true, that the orthodox or the core practice of religion is one, which is safely guarded and institutionalized under the orders of the commander of the faithful, the king. Yet, individuals can affiliate themselves with any of the Sufi orders. This subsection of the conventional theology, the Sufi practices, contributes widely to rendering the perception of some of the researchers to often classify the whole tradition as a mystic.

The boundaries seem to be somehow blurry between the elitist Sufism and the popular one as far as music is concerned. I base this discussion on music as a way to investigate the duality of Sufism in Morocco. Although music is universal and cross-social classes, Sufism stands as a marker of the Sufi Identity. The two genres under scrutiny can indeed attract an audience from various backgrounds, especially *gnawa* Music where other genres like Jazz and blues are fuzzed to aesthetically give a beautiful inventive image. The same can be said about *samaā* and *dhikr* that can even be part of the non-religious social gathering such as weddings and family parties. Therefore, regardless of the ambivalent nature of Sufi music, researchers have to deal carefully with the taxonomy and the debate that reputes Sufism as one. Even if the music can convey the same function, we have to consider the division and the fact that we are dealing with a multiplicity of Sufi orders and therefore this should be highlighted under two general categories: elitist and popular.

While contrasting some Sufi events certain subtleties regarding categorization seem to be unavoidable. For some reason, the Sufi festivals tend not to be of interest to the same audience. If we consider, for instance, the festival of sacred music of Fez and the one of Sidi Ali Ben-Hamdouch there are myriad differences in all their facets, the musicians, the setting, and the fame. The festival of Fez is well catered in the social media and TV. The event is even organized within a prestigious label; under the High Patronage of His Majesty the King of Morocco Mohammed VI. It attracts Musicians and audiences from all over Morocco and the world. People have to pay to attend some of the musical shows especially in the prestigious stages like Bab Elmakina. Regarding the Festival of Sidi Ali Ben-Hamdouch, it is associated with a lot of social taboos and apparently, it attracts mainly people from a low stratum. The event usually gets unfolded without any official media coverage. Its fame is built on attracting the guy community for instance and this is not a community that is officially and legally recognized by the Moroccan society and authorities. These two festivals represent a real discrepancy in both views and the practices that are related to the Sufi realm.

The discrepancies sometimes occur even within the same Sufi event. By investigating some aspects of the festival of the sacred music of Fez, obviously, the dichotomies arise. Taieb Belghazi

in this context argues that the discourse on the festival promotes it as an inclusive forum. However, the organizers of the festival employ exclusive strategies that distinguish between various categories of the audience. One of these is the hierarchization of the festival sites. Thus, the events staged at Bab Makina and the Batha Museum are unaffordable for large sections of the population, while the events staged at Bab Boujloud are free to the public. [105]. This division is also projected on the type of musicians who perform. International musicians with some Sufi and spiritual musicians tend to present their shows in Batha and Bab Makina while popular music (*chaabi*), rap, and some other genres take place in Boujloud plaza for a large audience. These genres of music are appealing very much for the audience but the question here is to what extent these types of music represent the themes and sacred Music.

Categorizing Sufi music into two sets provides a subtle paradigm that has been inculcated by society and the media. There are multiple instances where the two forms of music intersect. Besides, they both seem to convey roughly the same artistic and performativity function. Sandor Radnoti considers that the hypothesis that high art fetishizes mass culture is socially constructed [1981-33]. In other words, the existence of the high culture Sufi music is legitimized and completed by the fact of having an enormously popular form of Sufism in the country. This is therefore an empowering as well as distinguishing factor for the high culture Sufism. We might, in this context, emphasize the fact that navigating the esoteric level to get the privilege to become a friend of the deity, *wali*, in a certain way, is not at the disposal of everyone. This dichotomy, therefore, is unavoidable in the realm of Sufism. However, it has to be highlighted by the media outlets or researchers by alluding to the Moroccan Sufism as a double faceted domain and preferably to avoid describing it as a homogenous one.

CONCLUSION

Controversies regarding Sufism will always arise and its dichotomy, or rather its vagueness, seems to be an inherent factor in such field. Subsequently, both the researchers and ordinary people are going to certainly recognize the existence of the categorization of Sufi music into high and low art. It is imperative to consider what Islam says about these from Sufism since our concern is how Morocco as an Islamic country deals with it. This mission requires vigilance as we are in a society that views religion as a social and spiritual practice rather than an individual journey. Contextualizing these and looking into them from a new perspective might help for a better understanding of the subject matter. There is an unlimited number of opinions from the Muslim scholar (*ulama*) about Sufism and Sufi art. It is a discussion that takes multiple shapes when the views of the four theological schools are considered. From a religious perspective, it seems that there is ample controversy among scholars and this itself requires some deep investigations considering that the debate gets more intense regarding popular Sufism.

Regarding the low strata Sufism, it is usually viewed as an indecent representation of Sufism. For these scholars, the popular practices stand for a great deal of superstition. They even consider these people to employ the sacred for the sake of profane. The fact of having the Sufi Shaykh to be venerated is itself problematic. Zeghal Malika argues that in Sunni Islam, the sainthood of a living or dead saint, as well as his or her cult, is established by people who recognize him or her as such. This specific recognition defines the commonalities among the members of a group, often creating a community of dedicated disciples who might be joined by more ephemeral followers [589]. In most cases, the Shaykh is a past legacy and people are just venerating the tomb and bringing gifts,

slaughtering rooster, or a goat as a gift for him for these people to get rid of their psychological trauma or for better luck in their business or marriage. This dull aspect according to orthodoxy Islamic scholars triggers a lot of questions as there should be no intercession in Islam between the deity and the people. Even the prophet Mohamed is not regarded as an intermediary but rather a messenger for the world. People accordingly should not have venerated anyone but send their prayers and quests for God directly if they wish to adjust their spiritual behavior with the core of the religious text.

The dichotomy of Sufi music seems to be impacted by this categorization of popular Islam and the orthodox one. Popular as it is based on the perception of the people who tend to get involved in the practice mentioned above. These people do so without being aware of the fact that they are digressing into some practices that go against the dominant or the official version of Islam. Besides the popular perspective, I have been envisaging in this article the elitist Sufism which seems somewhat to be the closest one to comply with the Sunni Maliki¹⁵² theological vision. The version of Islam seems to be well understood and conducted by people with university degrees who constitute an important section of the elitist Sufi devotees. However, further investigation might be required to see to what extent this compatibility is with the objectives of Sufism at its early stages. It seems therefore that there are ample inextricable links between Sufism and religion and the two consist sites of plenty of interpretations.

Regardless of the controversy and the dichotomy of Sufi music, Morocco remains one of the countries that stand as a territory that Sufism is manifested physically, where mausoleums and domes are everywhere in addition to the collective memory and in the practice of people who are affiliated in a way or other with certain orders. This fact has portrayed Morocco as a country of saints. It is worth highlighting, in this context, that this is a shared aspect among Moroccan Muslims and Jewish ones¹⁵³. On the sociocultural level, all the forms of Sufi music are accepted and have an audience in the country. Morocco promotes all sorts of festivals throughout the year. Some of these have direct ties with certain brotherhoods like the case of the city of Ouazzane, Moulay Idriss, and Madagh.

The dichotomy might arise again when describing these events. Some of them are named festivals (*mehrajan*) like the one of Fez and Essaouira while others are referred to as *moussems*, a social gathering to often celebrate the end of the harvest with rather a rural connotation. Overall, the duality in Sufism is somewhat a re-occurring feature in most of its aspects yet the discipline of Sufism with varied music genres seems to serve the interests of the country. It (re)presents Morocco as a place of diversity, tolerance, and freedom of religion. It is also viewed as an antidote to encounter extremism and fanatic ideologies. The state invests in such disciplines and renders them accessible for young people so that they can enroll in such activities and get rid of their negative energy. This potentially might shield young people from waves of extremism that proliferate and take different formats. By promoting the Sufi festival and Sufi culture, the state is

¹⁵²It is one of the four theological schools of Islam which was founded in the eighth century by Malik ibn Anas and it is a reference for most north African countries.

¹⁵³In Judaism, they don't consider their religious leaders as saints but this is a case of acculturation in Morocco by which the Jewish community adopted this practice in their social and religious an example is that of Amram ben Diwan who is buried in Ouazzane and who is highly esteemed among the Jewish community.

trying to preserve the status quo. The fact of having the entire religious sphere under the authority of a progressive king explains it all.

In concluding this discussion, I would argue that the dichotomy is both obvious and subtle; obvious while comparing the two Sufi practices in the country, and subtle when dealing with one order or event. This latter was well explained by the case of the sacred festival of Fez. The duality is rather a marker and an identifier for the domain of Sufism. Almost every aspect of Sufism in Morocco and even in other countries is composed of two sides. There are consistently two juxtaposed worlds; the first is the elitist one or the wishful one and the second is the underground where the culture of possession mingles with superstition. Music as a catalyst and as an intensifier for uplifting the spirit and getting into the trances remains a marker that stands clearly to represent these two Sufi divisions. In other words, once a given Sufi order is mentioned you can easily link it to the type of music in use. We can, therefore, consider that the Sufi music is a twofold one, evoking chanting and well-versed *samaa* with the minimum use of instruments is employed in some of the Sufi orders that represent the official Sufism and therefore the official Sunni Islam of Morocco. Such orders are headed by the *Boutchichia* order to whom the minister of religious affairs is a member. Other forms with heavy instruments and sometimes very loud sounds are deployed in *gnawa*, *aissaoua*, *hamadasha*. This type of music is very much associated with the mass and public space, where there is an encounter of the profane and the sacred. The dichotomy thus is a fact that can not be concealed.

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