

Tony Langlois's presentation discussed the cultural politics of sufism in contemporary Moroccan society, and its implications for music making. In particular he looked at the Butshishiyya sufi movement, which has grown considerably over the last decade. His interest in Butshishiyya stemmed from its unprecedented appeal to middle-class and international adherents, its association with the Fes Festival of Sacred Music, and the fact that its original zawya is based near Berkane on the Algerian border, a region in which Langlois has conducted fieldwork since the mid 1990's.

Given the sometimes dubious nature of music in Islamic cultures, it should be no surprise that a range of views are held as to its morality. However, music is so central to both popular religious practices and Moroccan popular culture in general that opinions tend to vary on the moral associations of particular kinds of music rather than about musical activity per se. Some kind of practical musical taxonomy may be found on the webradio site of Medi 1, one of the most popular radio stations in the country (<http://www.medi1.com/musique/index.php>).

Presentation Citations
Moroccan Sufism, Music and Power
Tony Langlois (University of Limerick)

It is a well-documented characteristic of North African Islam, that its practice, is almost as diverse as the ethno-linguistic minorities that inhabit the region. These practices inevitably have a political significance in that they distinguish between communities formed around concepts of race, gender and class.

Although the official, state-approved line is inevitably an orthodox one, the religion of the mosque and Qur'an has long co-existed with maraboutic traditions which invoke the supernatural intercession of saintly figures, sufi brotherhoods seeking ecstatic experiences, and syncretic practices drawing upon sub-saharan religions and an animism which has survived despite the influences of Islam, Christianity and 'modernity'.

A very wide variety of streamed musical recordings are divided into two broad categories; 'Sufi Music' and 'Arabo-Berber Music'. This latter category includes pop genres, Algerian singers and the great stars of Egypt and Lebanon as well as indigenous musicians; stretching between the very different moral spheres inhabited by Um Kulthumm on the one hand and Cheikha Remitti on the other. The 'Sufi' section is just as catholic, including the works of artists from nearly a dozen different countries, although Morocco is more thoroughly represented. What this kind of taxonomy suggests, and which supports my own experience, is that a conceptual distinction is made between 'Sacred' and 'Secular' musics, regardless of the great difference in status and moral associations that exist within each section. Of course webradio may be directed at international as well as local audiences, and this division could be scrutinised in more detail if one knew which listeners made *hits* to particular recordings and where from. Nevertheless, the programming of the terrestrial station is bifurcated along similar conceptual lines, so it may be safe to assume that Moroccan audiences make such distinctions themselves. What is important here is that, as Rouget indicated, listeners may very well *attend* to sacred and 'profane' musics in entirely different ways, and this is why, despite the great stylistic differences between music in each category, mixing them conceptually is avoided. Such a representation of musical material says much about attitudes towards music and morality more generally in contemporary Morocco. Diversity, whether based upon ethnicity, style or era, is tolerated,

even embraced, and it seems to be left to the individual to navigate those choices. Nevertheless, music with a religious orientation is regarded as distinct, whatever its source. Sufi music, which to some extent does represent a heterodox religious experience, is neither privileged nor outlawed but simply accepted in the context of being part of a sacred 'world music'. In practice, these distinctions and the choices between them may be more loaded than they appear to be.

For the last ten years such musical and moral boundaries have been marked most publicly by the activities of the Fes Festival of Sacred Music, which holds a week of international performances, cultural debates and sufi lodge, (or *zawia*) gatherings each summer. Festival organisers are inclusive of religious musics from the world's faith communities, though Sufi groups from Pakistan, North Africa and Turkey typically enjoy prominent places in the programme. By night, sufi lodges from various parts of Morocco perform devotional music and *dhikr*. That the festival's programme is strongly supported by the Moroccan government and national media sponsors, suggests that such manifestations of heterodox Islam are not just prestigious, but are an accepted matter of state policy. Moreover, the festival's publicity, which courts audiences from outside Morocco, effectively 'brands' the country with representations suggestive of musical ecstasy; of global religious harmony and the regional exotic. It is no coincidence that the first Fes Festival took place in the year following the 9-11 attacks on New York. As a response, both to the ideology of Islamic political extremism and Western negativity towards the Islamic world, it offered images of a cultural 'third way'; exotic representations of an Islam that is inclusive, diverse and unthreatening. Musical, 'cultured' and even 'new age', the Fes Festival presents the West with images and sounds which counter more frightening discourses.

Butshishiyya in Morocco

The new-age sufism, and the Butshishiyya in particular, promoted to an international audience



Zikr Circles

Courtesy of www.sufism.org

I have been carrying out research in the border between North –Eastern Morocco and Western Algeria since the mid 1990's, but have only been aware of this sufi lodge over the last few years. Partly this is because its *zawia* is located at Madagh, a few miles outside the town of Berkane, so its

influence upon the urban centre of Oujda, an hour's drive away (and where I conducted most of my fieldwork) was a subtle one. It may also be, as Haenni and Voix (2007) suggest, that the lodge has become more aparent since it changed its direction and 'market' in recent decades.



Courtesy of www.tariqa.org

The Tariqa Butshishiyya was founded in 1942 as a local offshoot of the widespread Quadiriyya sufi order, which has been based in Morocco since the 15th century. Originally centered around a rural religious elite amongst the Beni-Snassen tribe, the Budshishiyya turned to active proselytising from the 1960's, and succesfully attracted a significant number of intellectuals, politicians and university students to membership. The particular appeal of the new Butshishiyya philosophy was its shift from a doctrine of rigid obedience and aescetism to one of self-discovery and improvement. Dhikr and other collective acts of religious enthusiasm are engaged in, but under Sidi Hamza (the current Sheikh of the order) practices involving the mortification of the flesh and the veneration of saints' shrines have been dissaproved of.



Courtesy of www.tariqa.org/qadiriya

When I visited in 2007, the once remote Madagh *zwaia* complex was undergoing extensive re-building, an adptation necessary to accommodate increasing numbers of indigenous and international followers. The *mawlid* celebration, led by Sidi Hamza (above) himself or one of his deputies, is said to attract thousands of visitors each year. Once there they take part in collective religious singing or 'sama', solo reciters perform 'mawwal' elaboration of sacred poetry, and men and women practice dhikr in separate groups. Much of these musical events can be heard oonline through radiosama.com.

There can be no doubt that such a rapid growth of any cultural movement, which has attracted a considerable number of the bourgeois intellectual classes in Morocco - which has expanded to include a vast international following- and has even shaped global representations of the state itself, could not have taken place without the support of the government. Moroccan rulers have for centuries 'managed' religious and ethnic movements lest they become a political threat to their authority and current state approval of this development is no different in this regard.

The most important reasons for state approval of butchichiyya activities appear to be political on both national and international levels. Locally, the Moroccan authorities are extremely wary of Islamic political movements, especially since the attacks in Casablanca in 2003. In disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods around the country, local religious renewal organisations, supported by anonymous international benefactors, are active in community development projects, where they organise 'clean-up' campaigns of both the physical and moral environment. Just as they did in Algeria in the late 1980's, such community organisations have the potential to gravitate towards politicisation, or even insurrection, and so these groups are watched carefully by the Moroccan authorities. In addition, the *Jamiat al-Adl wal-Ihsan*, a popular and influential organisation which proposes stronger religious influence in Moroccan politics, is a consistent critic of both the monarchy and heterodox religious practices. In this context, and as Cavatorta (2006) points out, government support for the more moderate position of Tariqa Butshishiyya can be seen as a tactic of divide and rule between two ideological factions. At present at least, it is in the government's interest to invest in the cultural capital of this modernised form of sufism, which has no explicit political ambitions. The Butshishiyya are especially attractive to university students and young professionals, the very sectors of society which are otherwise most likely to become politicised.

So to summarise, what influence does the growth of this movement have upon musical practices in the country? Given the widespread adherence to the Tariqa Butshishiyya throughout the country, and the media platform provided for sufi musics in general at major festivals, my view is that the influence may be subtle but cannot be insignificant.

Within the lodge itself, instrumental music has been banned, yet prestigious performances of sama by groups associated with the *zawia* are common and these are both recorded and broadcast. In recordings male or female choirs are interspersed with highly skilled soloists, who employ classical sufi poetry (such as texts from Busiri and Ibn Arabi) as the basis for qasida and mawal. Beyond the lodge's own activities, it still has an indirect influence on music, at least in the border region. In 2006 I was present at a performance of Tarab el Gharnati Andalous music in the city of Oujda. This performance took place shortly after the death of a prominent local politician, and I was informed that normally it would have been cancelled as a show of respect. On this occasion the orchestra was allowed to play so long as the texts had a religious theme, ideally utilising the same poetic sources employed by the Butshishiyya in their ceremonies. As there has historically been a considerable overlap between the andalous tradition and sufism it was not difficult to organise a concert concentrated on such a repertoire, but I was struck by even the mention of the *zawia* by the musicians, as I couldn't recall the subject ever being mentioned in the ten years I have been discussing their musical practices.

It could be said, although further research is required to be say it confidently, that the butshishiyya lodge has actually had a conservative influence on musical culture, in that it promotes traditional, sacred music over other genres in the most public of spheres. In the case of my andalous example it has in practice sacralised what I had understood to be a somewhat elitist but largely secular 'art' music. The sufist impulse behind the Fes Festivals has attracted an international interest, but those drawn as far as Madagh will find a straightforward dhikr ceremony, with neither instruments nor lavish embellishments, with men and women occupying in different spaces. - possibly a much simpler and direct form of Islamic practice than the new-age dressing might promise.