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**The popular arts of Marrakech:
the oral tradition and music in
Djamâa-El-Fna**

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I. THE LAST JUGGLERS?

There was a time when the real and imaginary worlds mingled, when names supplanted the things that they designated and invented names led an existence of their own: they grew up, developed, bred and reproduced like beings of flesh and blood. The market, the town square, the public space were the ideal venue for their development: all kinds of discourse blended, legends took on new life, the sacred was the butt of mockery but remained sacred, the most acerbic parodies were reconcilable with liturgy, a neatly turned story kept the audience on tenterhooks, laughter mingled with acts of grace and the juggler or strolling player chose his moment to pass the hat round.

This world of second-hand clothes vendors and water carriers, craftsmen and beggars, horse dealers, loud mouths, people who got by somehow or other, charlatans, card readers, hypocrites, doctors of innate science, this colourful, open and nonchalant world has gradually given way to a nascent bourgeoisie and the state which patrols our cities and our lives. It is no more than a vague memory in the technically advanced countries, which have sometimes lost all contact with their roots.

The inhabitants of Marrakesh and its visitors enjoy a unique privilege: that of being in the presence of a turbulent world. A world in which medieval man had sovereign control over his own time, gave free reign to his instincts of play and his taste for show, formed an open and fraternal circle round the public storytellers, absorbed their stories indefatigably and elaborated through them the notions and rules of conviviality. The universe of jugglers, described in the superb poems of Ibn Quzman in the 12th century, has lost none of its topicality.

Public and private spaces intermingle: everything takes place in full view of everyone. Something is always happening. Clowns, bards, strolling players, quacks, anchorites and owners of trained animals are a magnet for a host of peasants, shepherds, soldiers and tradesmen who have made their way from the bus station, the taxi ranks and the hire cars to merge into the idle crowd, lost in contemplation of the collective effervescence.

The oral heritage is of course fragile and vulnerable. Hundreds of traditions have disappeared from the face of the earth in its long history. A war, a conquest, the acculturation of a people by the cultural hegemony of another, the whims of a despot or a restrictive interpretation of social life have the power to destroy it, as does uncontrolled modernity. Jamaâ el Fna can be destroyed by decree, but it cannot be created by decree. The attempts by a number of town planners elsewhere in the world to invent other Jamaâ el Fnas have ended in failure or at best in half-success. The square of Marrakesh has been threatened repeatedly and will have to face up to the challenges of the 21st century. The humble people who gather there and the anonymous actors who perform for them would not be able to make their modest voices heard to oppose an arbitrary decision.

The gathering of Marrakchis, men and women from other Moroccan towns, foreigners and tourists is unaware of the precarious nature of this symbolic centre of the town which they contemplate or cross. The vertiginous pace of the actors' performance and the shifting audience gathered around them reduce beings and things to simple images of memory: everything conspires to point an accusing finger at the fleeting present and the uncertain future. As the novelist, Gamal Ghitany, rightly points out, there have always been "winners and losers; today's winner may well be tomorrow's loser and the man who follows tomorrow may easily have disappeared on the next day. Everyone is transient, nobody is ever installed permanently, hence the name of Square of Destruction".

The existence of the square itself has come about by chance: a rich heritage beset by all kinds of traps. Its safeguarding is necessary and urgent in compliance with the UNESCO Declaration of Principles of 4 November 1966: "The preservation of traditional and popular culture is essential to the enrichment of the cultural heritage of mankind and the protection of cultural identities".

Popular literature, unlike its intellectual counterpart, is always disseminated by oral means. Recitation favours a narrative structure in which prosody plays a role that is at least as important as semantics. The discourse of the troubadour, with its verbal and gestural staging, is addressed to the collective memory

of the audience. The repertoire of the halqua comprises most of the narrative genres of the Moroccan - Arab and Berber - tradition: myth, legend, verse-chronicles, tales and a series of stories of different kinds - thematic and moral, satirical, facetious - often intermingled and enlivened by riddles addressed to the audience and prayers and quotations from the Koran. The audience learns to respect the meter and emphasis proposed by the story, to distribute sentences which match them and forget the "normal" distribution.

What could the history of the Square tell us? Oral literature bears no trace of the past. But, despite it all, Jamaâ el Fna retains the memory transmitted by those who lived in, through and for it, and entrusts that memory to the jugglers, to the hlaïquis who appear only to disappear again as the years pass. If its name evokes the idea of death and if we still recall some of its darker memories - the groups of hanged men strung from its walls - the first testimonies set down in writing by visitors already spoke of its gaiety, tumult, agitation and multiple facets: the presence of a prodigiously vibrant crowd, with a relaxed and cordial familiarity.

Jamaâ el Fna is the privileged venue for words, for a tale which is no more and no less than a never-ending story: a Penelope's cloth woven by day and unravelled by night. The hlaïqui serves up a well-known theme to an audience which can never get enough tales, nourishes their expectations with a sustained imagination, uses the feints and artifices of mime when the need arises, plays on the voice and its many registers. The audience forms a circle round the merchant of illusions, taking in his sentences with rapt attention, abandoning themselves totally to the spectacle of his varied and mimetic activity: onomatopoeia to simulate a galloping horse, the roaring of wild beasts, the screaming of the deaf and the falsetto voice of old man, the vociferation of giants and the sound of sobbing. Sometimes, he interrupts his narrative at the crucial moment and a worried expression clouds the faces of the dumbfounded children in the wavering light of an oil lamp. His tale invites the public to play an active part and acts on them like a psychodrama, develops through a play of identification and antagonisms the rudiments of their embryonic role in society.

The different strata of popular language existing on the Square are a source of inspiration for writers, dramatists and actors in search of the living treasures accumulated and created from generation to generation, and waiting perhaps for the right moment to attain the higher realms of literary and artistic creation. The storyteller, every storyteller, is the roving treasurer of a long series of age-old tales and legends. If he dies without leaving any disciples, his disappearance is a loss to the culture which nourishes us because he does not belong solely to the present, but prolongs the past and breaks the bounds of straightforward contemporaneity.

But Jamaâ el Fna has managed to withstand the combined assaults of time and degrading modernity. Despite the loss of a number of famous halaiquis, the halguas continue to prosper, new talents are revealed and an audience, which remains as fond as ever of storytelling, forms a circle around these storytellers and artists. The Square is far more than a festive venue. It is a way for Marrakesh and its inhabitants to go on stage and gain their true identity.

Protecting this space is an effective way of ensuring the humanity of our own future. Its model could and should serve as a beacon for other cities of the world, because the collective cohesion and well being of conurbations do not depend solely on material conditions of housing and life in general, but also on the shared dream which takes shape there through the stage setting, the stories and games which catalyze their imaginary world.

As the UNESCO document on the adoption of measures for "Living cultural assets" stated, "The goal of the system is to safeguard this intangible heritage and hand it down to future generations. What is more, the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage aims to ensure the survival of traditional culture in modern society and hence to enhance the universal cultural image of mankind."

II. JAMAÂ EL FNA SQUARE: THE LEGEND OF THE ORIGINS AND THE ORIGIN OF THE LEGEND

Jamaâ El Fna Square, that living "mysterious museum", embodies the quintessential world of Moroccan culture: literature, Soufism, medicine, pharmacopeia, masked parades, epic narrative...

The cohesion of this dissimilar whole is built on respect for the diversity of the men who invent it anew in their daily lives. Nor is there any need to recall the fact that the diversity, which is an integral part of this powerful spur to a convivial culture - the heritage to be preserved - draws its strength from its spiritual references.

Any rehabilitation of values must necessarily involve the restoration of things that have been lost or damaged. From that point of view, restoration of the civilization of the oral tradition and its presentation through the perfect example of Jamaâ El Fna Square, is certain to throw a creative and enriching light on the new notion of the oral (or intangible) heritage of mankind.

In his endeavour to place this fragile oral heritage in its proper perspective, the scholar Ahmed al-Khoulâssa included a few brief thoughts in the book he wrote in defence of Ben Brahim, the poet of the red city of Marrakesh, "Shâ'ir al-Hamra", in the early years of this century. Unfortunately, this testimony only appears incidentally in the posthumous attacks on this poet who was taken out of the context of Jamaâ El Fna and elevated to the rank of a subject for studies.

Among the assemblies in the square which Ahmed al-Koulâssa lists as forming part of this "mysterious museum", there are those of the "tellers" of historical events, heroic exploits and narratives. Responding to a social demand and a "need for literature and faith", the principal actors of these gatherings (or hlaquis) recounted the deeds of 'Antara Ibn Shaddâd' in nine volumes; each volume of the story took a year or perhaps more to tell. The storytellers dwelt at length on every aspect of the tale with its rich content of fragments of poetry and prose, truth or imagination. They recounted the doings of the legendary hero, King

Sayf, or the life of "Imam Ali, rich in edifying titles of glory," and the tales of the Arabian Nights".

As to the oral traditions which concern the square itself, the circles from which they emanate are barely accessible nowadays. They tell the tale of the history of the name of the square according to an uninterrupted chain of oral transmission and, similarly, the modern narrator of the Arabian Nights, al-Ayyâshi, is intent on emphasizing the filiation from master to disciple from which the only true authority for the exercise of his art of storytelling derives.

One traditional idea has it that the soil of the square cannot serve as the foundation for any building, as though the space of Jamaâ El Fna were destined to remain empty for all time and dedicated to the memory bound up with its enigmatic name. Instead of recounting the history of this square which is so atypical for an Islamic city, a vast body of tales has elected domicile here to replace the missing history. But reference to that history helps us to throw light once and for all on the term "fanâ" which apparently means in this instance "absolute destruction".

The tale dates back to the era of the Merinids, the epoch of the city which remains shrouded in the mists of time and inglorious, when Marrakesh was born to be the capital and the base camp of the great empires of the Western Muslim world. That period is well-known to have been generally unfavourable to Marrakesh. The tale unfurls, as was only to be expected, in the Eastern part of the city and recounts the successive destruction, first of the Master and then of the Prince. The Merinid Prince referred to here perished with his court when a curse was cast on him by a rebel disciple of the Soufi master and mathematician, Ibn al-Bannâ al-Murrâkushî.

In passing, it is perhaps worth noting that the hero of this tale, Ibn al-Bannâ (literally "the son of the builder") is regarded as the emblematic figure of Marrakesh. As a master among the "People of the Way", the tale presents him as being above the ambitions of this base world and even above the search for the charismata bound up with the alchemists' quest. He became the standard bearer of the ancient fallen capital of the empire - a function which came to be identified with his city, because it even took the

popular name of al-Murrâkushî.

The tale tells us that, through jealousy and failure to control the world of his imagination, the Prince sentenced the spiritual master to death. Still according to this tale, which forms part of the oral tradition, the rebel disciple took a decision to avenge himself. He turned up by ruse inside the princely palace which was delimited by the current boundaries of the square and proposed to build a mosque. Once it had been built, he demolished it over the heads of the prince and his court assembled for prayer through the extraordinary power of his science of letters. Hence the name Jamaâ El Fna, the Mosque of Destruction...

Of course, the historian finds no mention of such events. But our interest lies elsewhere. It is founded on the oral traditions which the chroniclers of Marrakesh may perhaps have known. At all events they did not set it down in writing.

The relegation of this colourful tale to the background may well be explained by its original purpose: after all, the virtue of such stories is to strengthen the will of the disciple in his closed circle. And even if they bring a new interpretation capable of enriching the polysemy of the name of this square - some of these meanings being too rich to be developed in detail here - they do underline, first and foremost, a fundamental principle of the oral tradition.

The square is the venue par excellence for storytellers - but there is more to it. The square is itself the subject of the tales. It becomes an integral part of a cycle of stories. This full cycle closes in on itself like the perfect circular shape of the halqua which unfurls on the square.

The tales and story generally emanate from traditional circles; more still, they put across certain aspects of the "high traditional intellectual spirit".

The best known example is that of the Arabian Nights: a truly unique open air professorial chair of this literary masterpiece still functions in Jamaâ El Fna; or the eloquent memory of allusions to the language of birds.

Placed in the context of its intellectual and spiritual background, the oral heritage of the square becomes clearer. Allâh created beings through a single word "Be!" and just as the world of living creatures stemmed from the divine spirit, so the storyteller brings up to date within himself the innate potential of language like a distant shadow.

This linguistic vision of the universe is the shared spiritual heritage of the great masters from whom the storytellers glean the essential content of the material which shapes their art.

In the case of Jamaâ El Fna, the civilization of the oral tradition is carried by that of books or rather the book, par excellence, the Koran, which is an abridged statement of the whole universe. The memorable halqua of the storyteller Lakhîrî met in the shadow of the Koutoubia mosque in a kind of "barzakh", or space between two worlds. It did not enter the space of the mosque but neither did it mingle with other circles of the square, whose sacred nature is less evident. The reference to the books of the storytellers must be put into its correct perspective: reference to books alone is not enough. That reference must be completed by an oral initiation.

Ultimately, if "the world in its totality is the divine word", it is in comparison with this "human-verbal" current that the true depth of the oral heritage is revealed.

III. JAMAÂ EL FNA SQUARE: HISTORY

Attempting to write a scientific history of Jamaâ El Fna square is a tough challenge for the historian because of the lack of documentation. The authors who have broached the subject have remained imprecise and incomplete, if not completely silent, on the origin of this Rahba which became Jamaâ El Fna square.

The paucity of the sources has led a good many authors to put across apocalyptic or panegyric tales and legends, whose rigour leaves much to be desired. Despite this difficulty, many questions remain to be solved but some answers can be given to them:

- What changes has this space undergone over a period of time?
- What was the perimeter of this place between the 17th and the 19th centuries?
- What does the term Jamaâ el Fna mean?
- When did the "halquas" and other activities first appear on this square?

The first known plan drawn in 1867 shows the square to have been more extensive than it became fifty years later. On the other hand, the polygonal aspect which we know today already existed, even if the recessed and projecting areas are not identical.

The first written testimony (from the mid-17th century) of the "halqua" is due to al-Youssi, a young student who came to Marrakesh in quest of knowledge. Other tales are the work of foreigners who visited Marrakesh for a variety of reasons (businessmen, travellers, doctors). This is not at all surprising since it is a well-known fact that a culture is often revealed only through the eyes of other people.

One of the characteristics of the Muslim city is the existence of a great square opposite the principal mosque. That will help us to understand the mystery of the name Jamaâ El Fna.

The first mention of the square by this name dates back to 1695. Abderrahman Essaadi, a chronicler who came from Timbuktu, relates the events of the reign of the Saadi Sultan El Mansour (1578-1603) in his Tarikh Assoudan (History of the Sudan, Unesco Collection 1964). He tells us that the Sultan ordered the construction of a mosque known as Jami Al Hana (the Mosque of Felicity) on which construction work was not completed because of many difficulties encountered. Its name was then transformed into Jamâa El Fna (or the Mosque of Destruction).

Although no trace of that mosque is visible today, its existence is nevertheless reported by various sources:

- the Washington Plan, 1830
- the Merry y Colon Plan, 1861
- the Story of Catel, 1862

If we are to lend credence to the account of the

chronicler and the other sources cited above, the enigma of the name can be held to have been elucidated.

Historical evolution of the square

The Moroccan chronicles dating from the 17th and 19th century often cite a "rahba", a vast esplanade situated not far from the present Koutoubia Mosque. More specifically, these chronicles spoke of the Rahbat Al Qasr (Palace Esplanade) which was the muster station for the army and the place where public events were held. The palace in question was the Qasr Al Hajar (the stone fortress) which was the first urban nucleus of Marrakesh built by the Almoravids in the late 11th century at the foot of what is now the Koutoubia.

The medina for its part was constructed a long way away from the Qasr Al Hajar around the great Ben Youssef Mosque, founded in the early 12th century.

The consequence of this bipolar configuration of the Medina Palace was to be the creation between these two entities of an extensive space, the Rahbat Al Qasr, which prefigures the square as we know it today. This is confirmed by the geographer El-Idrissi (in the mid-12th century).

This space was to be used to display the strength of the State through military parades, the punishment of rebels and princely processions, or more simply as a place for the people to celebrate joyful events or give vent to their anger.

Leo the African (early 16th century), describes the environs of the Koutoubia as "a mass of ruins and abandoned orchards".

The Spaniard, C. Marmol, who lived in Marrakesh in the mid-16th century, gives a description of the square and its surroundings without actually naming it and mentions its commercial role: "There are several stalls on this square: ironworkers, cobblers, carpenters and all kinds of people who sell things that are good to eat. On one of its sides is the place where silk, linen, cotton and fine or coarse woollen cloths are sold. This is where the customs office is situated and where the Christian merchants from Europe display their wares and where the commerce of this city takes place".

The author does not mention the popular performances which probably already existed in his day. However, the commercial importance of the square deserves to be highlighted with its two features:

- the trans-Saharan caravan trade, and
- trade with Europe

and its status as a crossroads for trade between Europe, Morocco and Africa. In passing, it is interesting to note that this square already had the cosmopolitan aspect which is so typical of it today.

Lambert, a contemporary of Sultan Moulay Abderrahmane (1867), left chronicles and a plan showing a mosque, a "foundouk" for the storage of wood and coal and a "rahba" which was a market for cereals and a foundouk for animals; there was also a cattle souk, held on Fridays, and a space reserved for horse races on festive occasions.

While Marmol makes no mention of the "Halqua" in his chronicles, the Moroccan Aboul Hassan El Youssi (mid-17th century) is the first to have left us a written record of the halqua in which an elderly storyteller told comic tales to a large audience. The scene is set in the "rahba".

From all this, we may deduce that the square experienced periods of glory and others of decline. Its importance as a commercial centre or a crossroads for trade is deeply rooted in its history; while its expansion depended at one time on its status as the capital of an empire, the demographic expansion and strategic situation of Marrakesh likewise contributed to its development. This expansion of the city finally turned the square into a place on which everyone converged within the urban fabric of the city.

The creation of the Protectorate in Morocco was to strengthen the importance of the square to the city of Marrakesh by the construction of public buildings such as the post office, the State Bank and the administrative buildings of the colonial authorities. More importantly, the terminus of the first railway line lay just a hundred yards or so from the square and later became the site of the main bus station at which coach

and taxi passengers could alight. As a commercial, administrative and communication centre the square was to see its role grow rapidly - perhaps too rapidly. As a result, the colonial authorities, who wanted to retain the "picturesque" character of the square, classified it as a zone "non-edificandi" by a Royal Dahir of 1922. The appearance of the surrounding facades is protected and "each building will be treated as a case in its own right", according to a report published in the same year.

The law was to protect the square as an urban space which was coveted by speculators of all kinds who wanted to promote this development and turn a quick profit.

As to the "picturesque side", this was supposed to be self-protecting. The profound vitality of the oral culture which typifies Jamaâ El Fna square, its integration into this wider space and its character which contains the very essence of the Moroccan personality were to be the main guarantors of the continuity of this tradition. Although the strong attraction exerted by the square on camera-wielding tourists makes a contribution to its economic prosperity, it also in a sense brings about a degradation of the site.

However, the essentials are safeguarded and memory remains present and alive. It bears witness to the past and points the way to the future. That future is still more distinctly perceived today now that there is a growing opposition to the pressure of an ill-conceived sense of modernity which might easily destroy this site.

IV. THE HALQUA: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

When you arrive on Jamaâ El Fna square beset by sounds, smells, colours and people, your attention will be drawn to circles of spectators, some dense others less so, around one or more personages. The "Hlaiqui". Who are they? What are they doing here?

History

While it is difficult to determine the origins of the "Halqua" precisely because of the paucity of historical documents, we can, nevertheless, safely trace it back to a distant age, so much does it seem part of the daily existence of an entire population - like eating and sleeping.

This total integration into the life of the city perhaps explains the absence of any need to "record" this space, which reproduces tradition while also being open onto creation in a state of perpetual renewal and destined to survive.

The folk memory has retained a good many names of people who have left their imprint on this oral art rooted in the collective memory and culture of the city. In the early part of the 20th century, the creation of the Protectorate had as its corollary the opening of Morocco onto Europe, and an inflow of foreign visitors (businessmen, travellers looking for exotic experiences, writers and photographers...) who produced a whole set of living testimonies in the form of travel notebooks, tales and postcards which give an idea of the square in general and of the halqua in particular. Their view from the outside was of course compounded by the local standpoint of the last players and spectators of this square, the final living witnesses to a dying era.

Rules and rites of the Halqua

The first act of the Hlaïqui was to delimit his personal space on the square before purifying it with water. He then invoked Saint Sidi Ahmad or Moussa and Sidi Bel Abbès, the patron of the town, a good and charitable man. This opening ceremony encouraged the spectator to follow the holy man's example and show the same generosity. So the Hlaïqui began with this invocation:

"Patron of patrons who watches over the city and knows no peace until every resident or passing visitor has stilled his hunger".

After that invocation, the Hlaïqui invited the spectators not to forget him:

"When the generals have had their laugh, they will give

something out of sheer generosity. For those who wish to pray, the mosque is over there...!".

This introduction to the Halqua, in which the profane and the sacred mingle, left its mark on the conduct of the Hlaiqui himself who observed a certain ethic of the halqua.

So we find the sayer of the Prophet's tradition in his white garments, with his slow delivery and economical movements: no remuneration is asked for or suggested. Each spectator will give what he thinks sufficient, according to his own means.

On the contrary, the charlatan Hlaiqui will use all the resources of psychology to drive away a spectator who bothers him by making him the subject of derision, before setting about winning over the audience to sell his second-rate wares, supposedly the key which will make every dream and fantasy come true.

The spiritual dimension of the Halqua is represented by the Fquih, who recounts the life of the Prophet and traditionally officiated in the morning, and also by the members of the Zaouias (religious brotherhoods) such as the:

- Haddaouas
- Aissaouas
- Oulad Sidi Rahals
- Oulad Sidi Ahmeds or Moussas
- Abidat Errmas

Then again, we find tellers of the story of Antar which predates even the Islamic period, and the teller of the Arabian Nights Tales ...

The Hlaiqui is a man of remote origins. He is our link with the past and our contact with the future. He is not here simply to entertain us and make time pass agreeably: he is the depository of the collective memory. He reminds us firmly of that fact to make us think and see to it that we do not lose our way. He tries to save the memory of man by restoring it to them because it is at once the past, the present in the future. When the Hlaiqui speaks, the spectators fall silent and, watching their eyes, he sees them plunged into the world of his tale, in the depths of their own

memories. Does he not have certain scruples like a breaker of dreams when the tale comes to its end and the time comes to stop, so obliging the spectator to return to reality? After all, he has conquered the heart of men.

The situation today

The ordinary visitor, who is usually in a hurry and brings his own stock of cliches, is content with a superficial view and a few photographs of the snake charmer and water carrier - followed by a more reassuring panoramic view from a café terrace away from the crowd and its perpetual movement.

The Hlaïqui, surrounded by a varying number of spectators, does not hold the normal visitor's attention for long because some effort is needed to accede to his world. The more attentive visitor will constantly try to tame this moving space, and endeavour to find a way of decoding it.

So he will be able to watch how the Hlaïqui attracts his audience and uses all the resources of his art to retain it, because the competition is tough and the spectator has merely to take a step or two to change from one spectacle to another. These techniques of creating audience involvement include the cleverly manipulated break punctuated with music appropriate to a digression, to keep the spectator on tenterhooks; or else the browbeating of a heckler by making the audience laugh and obliging the intruder to leave the halqua.

All of this reflects a consummate art which uses a whole gamut of tactics: first the spectator must be won over if the performance is to be a success; then his interest must be held, and participation and communication maintained.

Future prospects

If we were to ask today what prospects for the future arise for Jamaâ El Fna square, the answer would not be easy. Several factors do not militate in favour of its continuation or the safeguarding of its arts:

- the absence of a statute to organize the profession and encourage those who exercise it;

- the advanced age of a great many creators of halguas and the failure of successors to emerge;
- the constant invasion of the square by traders selling food and drinks and the occupation of at least half its area by occasional trade during Ramadan, Achoura, the feast of Maoulid and that of Al-Adha; this places a stranglehold on the square and creates difficulties for the Hlaïquis who find themselves in a state of enforced idleness at the very time when they need to work;
- the presence of cars and mopeds which are increasingly jamming up the square and exercising a negative influence on its activity.

That is why the need has arisen to review the situation of this square that is unique in the world so as to guarantee its preservation as a venue for the oral heritage of mankind and protect this intangible heritage in all its forms and with all its actors.

V. POPULAR MUSIC ON JAMAÂ EL FNA

Popular music is learned by practice and transmitted by the oral tradition rather than in writing. This fact makes it resemble an essentially oral culture.

It is therefore not at all surprising that we should find music as one of the component parts of the halqua. Its presence may be manifested autonomously (Malhoun, Rouaïss, Gnaouas) or else as a dramatic accompaniment to other forms of halqua.

Typology

The historical past of Marrakesh and its status as the capital of an empire, which once extended from Black Africa to Spain, its geographical situation in Morocco at the crossroads of the Berber and Arab-speaking regions, explain why we find in Jamaâ El Fna a whole range of different types of music drawing on various traditions: Arab, Berber and African.

These three sources have contributed to the endowment of

the square with a range of rhythms, melodies, modes and instruments that is very wide. Without going into technical considerations which are not the subject of this study, we shall confine ourselves to conveying some idea of these different musical traditions.

1. ARAB MUSIC

By Arab music, we mean music sung in Arab dialect. Beyond its diversity, it is generally distinguished by an "ilqai" style either in the form of pieces or interrupted by musical phrases played on the "nay", the "kamanja", the "guenbri" and percussion instruments, the "taarija", "douf", the "tara" and the "handka" which beat out the rhythm. The quality of the text is important to such an extent that some people describe this spectacle as popular literature with music a mere accompaniment.

The pieces generally start at a slow rhythm and tend to accelerate before slowing down again. The finale then gathers pace until the rhythm overshadows the melody.

2. BERBER MUSIC

This is based essentially on solo or choral singing. The instruments play an accompanying role. The hands and feet are also used to mark the rhythm notably in the pieces that are sung and danced at the same time. It is also distinguished by a special mode: the pentatonic mode which is thought to be an early form of music. This confers upon it a very special sound which is easy to recognize.

3. AFRICAN MUSIC

The origin of the music of the Gnaouas is self-evident to every visitor. It is distinguished by its rhythm and the dialogue between the musician and the dancer in which each in his turn can influence the play or movement of the other.

Many external factors such as the clothing, the use of the sentir, a three stringed instrument originating from the Southern Sahara, together with the "bambara" dialects, testify to the authenticity of the musicians belonging to this brotherhood.

THE INSTRUMENTS USED**A) Stringed instruments**

1. The Guenbri: a three stringed instrument; depending on the type of music, the strings are either plucked with the fingers, brought into vibration with a cut feather or struck with a piece of wood.
2. The Ribab: a single stringed instrument made of horse tail hair. Its sounding box is round. Sometimes it has fine gut or nylon strings on which little beads are threaded; these add an ornamental touch to the note by their vibration on the sounding box. The player has a semi-circular bow whose strings are also made of horse hair.
3. The Kamanja: or violin whose strings are tuned on two notes. The way of holding this instrument is specific to Morocco. It is placed vertically on the musician's knees.
4. The Oud: this five stringed instrument is tuned to suit the type of music and the singer's voice.
5. The Loutard: a kind of guenbri with three or four strings used by the Rouaïss.

B) Wind instruments:

1. The Naï: a reed instrument whose length and sound vary according to the types of music to be performed (pentatonic or other).
2. The Ghaïta: a kind of flute which requires a strong wind and is used especially by the Aïssaouas.

C) Percussion instruments:

1. The Taarija: an earthenware instrument of different sizes, open at one end and covered with a stretched goat skin at the other. Generally decorated in lively colours, it produces a dull sound.
2. The Bendir: (or Tallount in Berber) a circular

instrument with a wooden circumference or a hole by which the instrument is held. Two strings threaded with beads are often stretched inside the sounding box; these strings vibrate when they are struck and introduce a decorative note. This is the "royal" instrument, notably in Berber music where it is held by the leader of the group.

3. The Tbal: its shape differs from one type of music to another. A big round drum with skins on both sides in the case of the Gnaouas, slung from the musician's neck by a thong. It is struck on both sides with wooden sticks.
4. The Krakeb: a pair of metal pieces in the shape of a figure of eight which the musician fixes in each hand and claps. It is used in particular by the Gnaouas.
5. The Naqouss: a heavy piece of metal, hollow inside, struck by two metal rods and used to beat the measure.
6. The Sannajat: a kind of copper castanet fixed to the fingers and often played by women.
7. The Douf: this is a hollow wooden square over which a goat skin is stretched.
8. The Derbouka: this is used for percussion in the halquas of oriental and modern music.

Observations on the evolution of music in the Square

- The musical instruments used in these halquas have a local character like the song itself. The Melhoun, Haouzi and Rouaïss are of Marrakesh origin and the instruments and songs of the North or the Atlas mountains are never encountered. Some songs like the ad-Daqqa, Ahouach and Houara exist in the city, but not in Jamaâ El Fna.
- This square has only known stringed instruments (Guenbri and Rbab) in certain halquas such as those of the Rouaïss and the Melhoun, while the drum, the tambourine and the Daâdou (a big taârija) are commonly used because they are better-suited to attract a wider audience.

- Jamaâ El Fna square did not see Eastern singing and instruments with a richer harmony until its latter years. They only made their way into its halquas after the second world war when young people returning from Algeria and France sang Algerian and Tunisian songs on the square, to the accompaniment of modern instruments like the banjo and the mandolin.
- Percussion instruments are used in just four halquas and percussion and stringed instruments in eight. In other words the musical side - if we may venture to use that term - represents only 40% of the halquas that are practised regularly; the remainder, i.e. eighteen halquas, are occupied by storytellers and comedians.

As a musical space in which several distinct traditions mingle, Jamaâ El Fna square has been the source of inspiration for many Moroccan and foreign authors and composers of such different genres as classical, Arab and Berber music, jazz, pop music and the modern Moroccan song of Nass-el-Ghiwan and Jil-Jillala. It is a permanent source for artists who find modernity in the return to their origins.

VI. OTHER PLAYERS ON THE SQUARE

Many people attracted by the effervescent world of Jamaâ El Fna do not come there simply in search of amusement: they also hope to cure a real or imaginary illness and learn their destiny which will be told by cartomancers or fortune tellers who read the lines of their hands. Seated on a little stool, protected from the sun and indiscrete eyes behind a parasol, the chouafa (or medium) reveals to her customer the ways of eluding the sometimes mortal hazards of a bad spell.

Other magicians use talismans and charms to ward off evil and guarantee the sweetness of a tranquil life to persons who are ill or suffering from anxiety.

"Doctors" surrounded by curative powders and coloured anatomical engravings declaim the list of dangers which lie in wait for the female body. They claim to have exclusive possession of an infallible panacea,

pronouncing words of exorcism which put the devil to flight: good health, happiness and marital love for the modest sum of a few dirhams.

The dentist-mechanics also have their custom; a display of white dentures with a frank and joyful smile proclaim the professionalism and dexterity of the artist.

The herb vendors, mostly coming from the Sahara, offer their wares after intoning a few litanies and invoking the blessing of the patron saints of Marrakesh; illustrations from medical treatises are often accompanied by little articulated skeletons and photos of Mecca.

The competition between these other actors of Jamaâ El Fna and those of the halqua is voiced in a succession of multiple and simultaneous cries. The audience can abandon one peroration for the novelty and excitement of the next gathering. Hence the need for the "doctors" and herb vendors to hold the spectators captive, to attract and win their interest, while distracting them from the siren song of rivals: the ultimate aim being of course to relieve them of money as a recompense for the stubborn virtuosity of the player.

VII. JAMAÂ EL FNA - A TOWN PLANNING PROBLEM

The development of Marrakesh between the early years of the century and the present day has been characterized by intense urban development towards the West and North of the old city. This has made the site of the Medina increasingly marginal in relation to the whole conurbation.

The town planning scheme proposes in the long term to bring about a relative recentring of the conurbation around its Medina, so restoring it to its role as the central pole of a city with a million inhabitants stretching out over nearly 150 km². In this future urban configuration, the Jamaâ El Fna square would see its central status strengthened so that the urban pressures experienced by any city centre, which has attained a considerable size, would be further amplified. These include the heavy pressure of traffic and transport, in direct proportion to the growing attraction of trade and services which naturally seek to

become established near areas where population flows are the most important. This in turn would increase the demand for parking space and public transport, while land prices would rise in consequence. These pressures and this demand are very real today and are expressed through a series of development projects now in the hands of the administration (car parks, underpass).

Photographs of the Square taken in the 1920s show architectonic features which gave it a distinctive style that is tending to disappear today. First the Dar Mac Lean facade - now an ordinary wall - made of pointed brickwork along the bottom of which ran a long public bench which stressed the scenographic character of the Square, while offering an opportunity for tired walkers to rest. Then the wall adjoining the Bab Ftouh Gate is clearly visible, dominating the square and, through its horizontal alignment, creating in a sense a counterpoint to the vertical minaret of the Koutoubia. Finally on the ground, the roadways were clearly delimited from the pedestrian precinct, so underlining the use of space.

Architecturally speaking, Jamaâ El Fna square does not have any outstanding monuments apart from the buildings of the Bank of Morocco and the post office, which date back to the early years of our century. Most of the concrete structures bordering on the square merely highlight the architectural banality and the uniform use of space. Paradoxically, this lack of monumental buildings favours the freedom of expression of oral culture in the heart of the square. This is a development principle which must be preserved for the future of the square.

Assuming that planning remains based on *laissez-faire* and projecting the existing tendencies into the future, it is likely that pressures, stakes and with them land prices too will rise, so inexorably encouraging the gradual concentration on the centre of the town of the economically most attractive activities and obliging the events which now take place on Jamaâ El Fna square to move elsewhere, probably near to the points at which pedestrian and motor traffic networks meet close to the gates of the city, to the extent that open spaces and unbuilt up fringes still exist and are capable of receiving it.

The strategic importance of the potential protection of

Jamaâ El Fna square is immediately apparent and by no means all the implications in terms of town planning have yet been explored. What is certain is that, by opting for the preservation of the oral heritage in its existing natural space, Marrakesh will herald a new approach to town planning by setting aside a square - its square - for the expression of the ancient imaginary world of its inhabitants.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The "Recommendation on the safeguarding of traditional and popular culture" adopted by the 1989 General Conference underlines the fact that the intangible cultural heritage is the essential source of the identity of many peoples, an identity that is deeply rooted in their history. That is the case with the popular arts, music and oral tradition of Jamaâ El Fna. Unfortunately, several manifestations of the Halqua have disappeared in the past twenty years or are now disappearing. The rapid development of audiovisual techniques and their general spread to all the strata of the population with, by corollary, the emergence of a standardized international culture makes the existence of the traditional arts and of this oral and musical heritage of the central square of Marrakesh still more precarious, despite the fact that its character as a place for meetings and convivial experience all year round is unique in the Arab world. The number of persons exercising the arts of the halqua and of persons who might one day take over from them is in fact falling, while their traditional knowledge is being lost to some extent. The hlaïqui, the living museum, enshrines the memory of a whole people. Its disappearance would be a loss to all mankind.

Therefore it is urgent to prevent further losses of this expression of the popular arts and the degradation of its space. The safeguarding of the remaining traditions and their transmission to future generations should be accompanied by measures of conservation through collections of documents and testimonies, recordings and archiving.

The participants in the Marrakesh consultation will enable us to discover various cultural spaces which are also threatened with disappearance. We hope that, in

the spirit of the 1989 recommendations of the "Living Human Treasures Programme", Unesco will mobilize its resources to alert the international community to the need to persevere and urgently revitalize the various manifestations of popular culture which are transmitted orally. To that end, Unesco might each declare several different cultural spaces in the world to be an integral part of the oral heritage of mankind.

The different measures which will be proposed to safeguard the oral heritage of Jamaâ El Fna square and, in particular, the creation of an independent "non-governmental organization" may serve as a model to countries elsewhere in the world.

APPENDIX I:**Actions proposed to safeguard the intangible heritage of Jamaâ el Fna Square**

This provisional synthesis is the outcome of a broad consultation of prominent figures and experts in the world of culture, in addition to the hlaïquis and musicians who ply their trade on the square. The studies of the former, and the attachment of the latter, to the heritage of the square are the source of inspiration for the remarks and proposals set out below.

This collective process of study reveals the need to create an independent association of Friends of Jamaâ El Fna square. A preparatory commission consisting essentially of prominent figures will draft the statutes of the Association locally in Marrakesh itself. The Association should manage all the activities and measures taken in favour of the Square.

Each member of this commission will have to accept responsibility for one aspect of the work to be done in order to achieve the Association's goals, in the light of his or her own respective areas of expertise:

- . Field research and contact with the different actors in the square (storytellers, musicians etc...)
- . Bibliographic research
- . Collection of audiovisual documentation
- . Preparation of a repertoire of projects seeking to enhance and rehabilitate the square
- . Monitoring the phases of work
- . Tracing and collecting as much oral information about the square as possible

Concrete proposals

1. Spatial characteristics of Jamaâ El Fna square

The Square is delimited by monumental administrative buildings (the Post Office, Bank of Morocco) and recent reinforced concrete structures with no architectural merit which impart a universal banality on the square (café, police station, district offices). The other features of the Square which should be given particular attention are:

- * shops and souks which should revert to their original specialization;
- * mosques which should be restored and embellished;
- * one of the elevations of Riad el Warzazi which should be protected and restored;
- * the visual axis of the Koutoubia which should be highlighted;
- * replacement of the existing asphalt by traditional brick (or bejmat) alternating with patterns of oued pebbles.

2. Jamaâ El Fna Intangible Heritage Foundation

In the long run, thanks to the donations and patronage of Moroccan and other sources, the association should manage the Jamaâ El Fna Foundation whose goals and services will accord with the prestige and international image which this foundation is intended to embody. Various services would be created:

- . research and study
- . a traditional café dedicated to the hlaïqui's (storytelling) art (perhaps decorated with calligraphic works, prose or poetry texts taken from the great tales recounted on the square and also with the aid of miniatures illustrating aspects of the square and representing the heroes of the tales). The café will host weekly sessions of traditional storytelling and music

- . a library to preserve all kinds of documentation about the square
- . information about the heritage recorded on different media (photographs, written or audiovisual documents, postcards, posters...)
- . publication and sale of books, guides etc. about the square and support for the reissue of tales
- . creation of a "sight and sound" room modelled on the Paris Videothèque or the Institute of the Arab World in Paris, in order to make audiovisual recordings about the square available to the general public
- . collection of other tales from the Arab world and elsewhere (the story of the Banu Hilals recorded by the Egyptian artist, Abderahmane Abnoudi...)
- . contact with the services of the Institute of the Arab World which has a substantial stock of recordings of the traditional art of the Muslim world
- . organization of the "Moussems" of the Storyteller in the shape of annual gatherings of traditional Moroccan and foreign storytellers to mark the day of the square, arranged each year with the assistance of Unesco. This would also be an opportunity to revive the traditional masked events which used to be held on the square
- . reinstallation of the Koutoubiyines (the former booksellers) in the vicinity of the square (the famous minaret of the Koutoubia dating from the 12th century which overlooks the square, draws its name from the Koutoubiyines, i.e. the booksellers and book trades in general). The square should recover one of its former functions, the book trade, once a suitable site has been set aside for these different trades, i.e. copyists, calligraphers, miniature artists, painters, traditional book binders, antiquarians, sellers of rare books and old manuscripts
- . preservation of the existing hlaïgis and

restoration of those which have ceased their activity for various reasons

- . creation of an economic aid fund in favour of the elderly hlaïqis who no longer ply their trade
- . arrangement of a guided tour of the square led by guides trained by the Foundation
- . encouraging schoolchildren to listen to and watch performances on the square
- . organization of national tours of schools to enable pupils to discover the storyteller's art
- . making the arts of the square known more widely in the Medina: the restored galleries round the old fountains in the Medina (Mouassine, Bab Doukkala) could serve as meeting places for writers, musicians and storytellers in the setting of an old-style café

Possible headquarters of the foundation:

The members of the Preparatory Commission suggest that one of the following prestigious places on the square should be chosen as the seat of a Foundation, which should become an international reference in the area of rehabilitation of the oral heritage:

1. The head office of the Bank of Morocco

This is a serious proposition if the administration of the bank decides to move away from the square.

2. Riad El Ouarzazi

This house with an interior patio looks out over the square. It is the only really old building whose construction in red brick and traditional materials recalls the beautiful old architecture of Marrakesh. This Riad has been put up for sale by its owners. For several decades it was an important venue for culture and hospitality (see

the revue Horizons Maghrébins, Special Issue devoted to Marrakesh, 1994).

3. The old C.T.M. garage

The road transport company has now left the square and use of its premises could be negotiated with the persons responsible.

4. The former premises of the French Mission

This building has been vacant for many years.

5. Part of the premises of the Club Méditerranée

This would be possible if the Club were to move away from the Medina.

Appendix 2: Opinion poll on Jamaâ el Fna Square *

The history of Jamaâ El Fna square is closely bound up with that of the town. It can be regarded as a heritage that is as important as the many historical monuments of the city itself.

It is therefore only normal that the evolution of Marrakesh should be reflected in that of Jamaâ El Fna square itself which, under the impact of the development of informal activities, is tending to become a space set aside for all kinds of trades and services to the detriment of the traditional cultural and recreational activities.

The depersonalization and banalization of the square is as unwelcome to its users and tourists as it is to the local authorities. Hence the need, felt in some quarters at least, for intervention - in other words to put a number of questions and try to provide answers to them.

It is evident that any intervention seeking the general interest must be based on detailed familiarity with the views of the population concerned; opinion polls are therefore vital.

The purpose of one of these polls conducted in April 1992 was twofold: over and above the purely scientific contribution, the intention is to assist the decision-makers, i.e. the local and municipal authorities, to take the right decisions by making available to them the reactions of the members of the population who are most directly concerned, i.e. users and visitors to the square.

* A. Bellaoui et al. Contribution à l'étude des grandes places, exemple de la place Jamaâ El Fna, Atlas Marrakesh, No. 1993. The full text of the chapter will be circulated later.

Preliminary results of the poll

A. The survey of users

1. Jamaâ El Fna square is first and foremost a working place for young people who are either illiterate or poorly educated.
2. Jamaâ El Fna square is a working place for Marrakchis and people who have moved in to the town from the surrounding countryside.
3. It is a square on which trade and service activities predominate.
4. Jamaâ El Fna square is an important source of income for a great many Marrakchi families.
5. Jamaâ El Fna square is also a major source of income for the Marrakesh-Medina municipal authority.
6. The square has very close links with the Medina system.
7. The square is used primarily by a Moroccan clientèle of male urban residents.
8. The square is very lively, especially on summer weekends and during major festivals.
9. The square suffered greatly from the transfer of the bus station to Bab Doukkala, but people like its present state.

B. Survey of visitors

1. Visitors from all over the world
2. The square is regularly visited and frequented
3. The physiognomy of the square has changed greatly over time, but visitors like it as it is now.

Some remarks

We would not wish to conclude this contribution to the study of Jamaâ El Fna square on the basis of the outcomes of an opinion poll without emphasizing a number of methodological questions. As we already pointed out earlier, every intervention involves a number of questions. In the specific case of Jamaâ El Fna, four questions seem to us to be of particular interest. They are:

1. What are the intentions for the square?

That amounts to defining the goals of the intervention and choosing for instance between the following objectives:

- Is a place of rest and relaxation to be created within the ramparts, despite the lack of space in the Medina?
- Is this square to be "reserved" for tourists, especially foreigners, who are looking for culture and civilization "shocks". A kind of "beacon" square or even an "urban nature reserve"?
- Is this to be a multi-functional square in which everyone will have an opportunity to meet, a great centre open to all without any form of discrimination, as indeed it is today?

2. What form of intervention is possible?

In other words, the limits of the intervention must be defined. Should the actions to be undertaken be discreet, progressive and specific? Or, should they, on the contrary, be ambitious and bring about far-reaching changes?

3. What instruments should be used?

Should major financial and technical resources be brought to bear or should we, on the contrary, confine ourselves to limited resources, such as architectural renovation of the buildings round the square?

4. Who should be the main players in this intervention?

The Ministry of the Interior and Local Authorities or the Ministry of Cultural Affairs? Or alternatively the Ministry of Tourism? Last but not least, what should be the role of the university, the cultural associations, artists and, first and foremost, the users of the square?