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The Promise of Sonic Translation: Performing the Festive Sacred in Morocco

ABSTRACT How do international music festivals produce experiences of the sacred in multifaith audiences? What is their part in creating transnational communities of affect? In this article, I theorize what I call "the promise of sonic translation": the trust in the ultimate translatability of aural (as opposed to textual) codes. This promise, I assert, produces the "festive sacred," a configuration of aesthetic and embodied practices associated with festivity wherein people of different religions and nations create and cohabit an experience of the sacred through heightened attention to auditory and sense-based modes of devotion conceived as "universal." The festive sacred is a transnational (thus mobile) phenomenon inextricable from the enterprise of sacred tourism. Such festive forms not only produce a Turnerian communitas but also create new transnational categories that mediate religious sentiment and reenchant the world. [Keywords: festivals, Islam, music, religion, tourism]

IT WAS AN UNUSUALLY cold May night in Fes, Morocco. The locals were wrapped in their woolen burnouses and jellabas, whereas many of the tourists had borrowed blankets from their hotel rooms. The concert venue was outside, the stage set up in front of a large 19th-century portal called Bab Makina and the chairs extending for hundreds of rows. I had managed to get a press pass that year and so proceeded to the reserved section. There was a buzz of excitement—television cameras from Morocco and France, dignitaries arriving, and Arabic, French, and English conversations swirling in the air. But then Faouzi Skali, the founder of the Fes Festival of World Sacred Music, stepped onto the stage. He announced the evening's concert in Arabic, and his words were then loosely translated into French by artistic director Girard Kurdjian and then into English by Zeyba Rahman. The audience broke into loud applause, but a hush quickly fell over them as the Whirling Dervishes from Turkey took the stage and the ritual of *sama',* or attentive listening, became a shared ritual for thousands (see Figure 1).

How do international music festivals like this one perform sacred imaginaries for multifaith audiences? What is their part in creating transnational communities of affect?[1] And what role does the sonic play in "sacred tourism?"[2] Although religious festivals and pilgrimages to them are certainly not new, I assert that international festivals that are marked for the sacred do create something different at the level of the transnational. Drawing together heterodox (that is multifaith) audiences from all over the globe, these festivals create public sentiment through the reappropriation and fetishization of the category of "the sacred," creating in the process a new form of pilgrimage in sacred tourism and a new kind of liturgy in world sacred music.

If the predominant narrative of both European and U.S. secularisms has been a promise of freedom and peace through a universalizing and redemptive rationality—Max Weber's forecasted "disenchantment of the world" (Weber 1930)—then the promise of the festive sacred shifts that balance, locating those promises in the sacred and sonic traditions of the religious.[3] This promise literally reenchants the world (from the Latin, *incantere*—meaning to work magic, often through the incantation of spoken or chanted words, tones, or formulae). It does this, however, without erasing the particularities of discrete religious traditions—being inclusive without threatening dissolution. This is possible because the meeting of these traditions is not found in orthodoxy but in aesthetic praxis, and particularly in sacred sound.

Taking place in a Muslim country, what has come to be known as the "Fes Festival" sculpts a public face for Islam both nationally and internationally while also creating a forum for a nonsectarian experience of the sacred. On the basis of more than a decade of research with Sufi

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practitioners in the Boutshishiyya tariqa (a Sufi path in the Qadiri lineage, whose members have until recently been prominent at the festival), I demonstrate that the complicities of religion and tourism produce more than just commercial effects (Meyer and Moors 2006:3). Although not representing a resurgence of religious interest per se, I argue that the phenomenon of the sacred music festival draws on the religious sentiment evoked by sacred music to create a transnational (thus mobile) notion of "the sacred" that is in many ways a counterpoint to the specificity and ideology of more orthodox forms of religious practice. It does so by enacting a promise—what I refer to as the "promise of sonic translation"—premised on the belief that music can translate affect across cultural and linguistic divides. What part of this promise is fulfilled?

THE FESTIVE SACRED AND THE PROMISE OF SONIC TRANSLATION

Sacred music festivals are proliferating worldwide. Not only does the Fes Festival attracts thousands of sacred tourists each year but also it has spawned sister festivals: the Festival of World Religious Music in Gérona, Spain; the Festival of World Sacred Music in Dijon, France; and others in Perpignan, France, Sintra, Portugal, and Florence, Italy. These festivals are linked to the festival in Fes, in that they often have the same musicians, the same theme, and many of the same sponsors. What is more, the Fes Festival and what is called "the Fes message" has recently toured 18 cities in the United States.

The Fes Festival is an international affair, and its influence is expanding. I was at the home of festival founder,

a

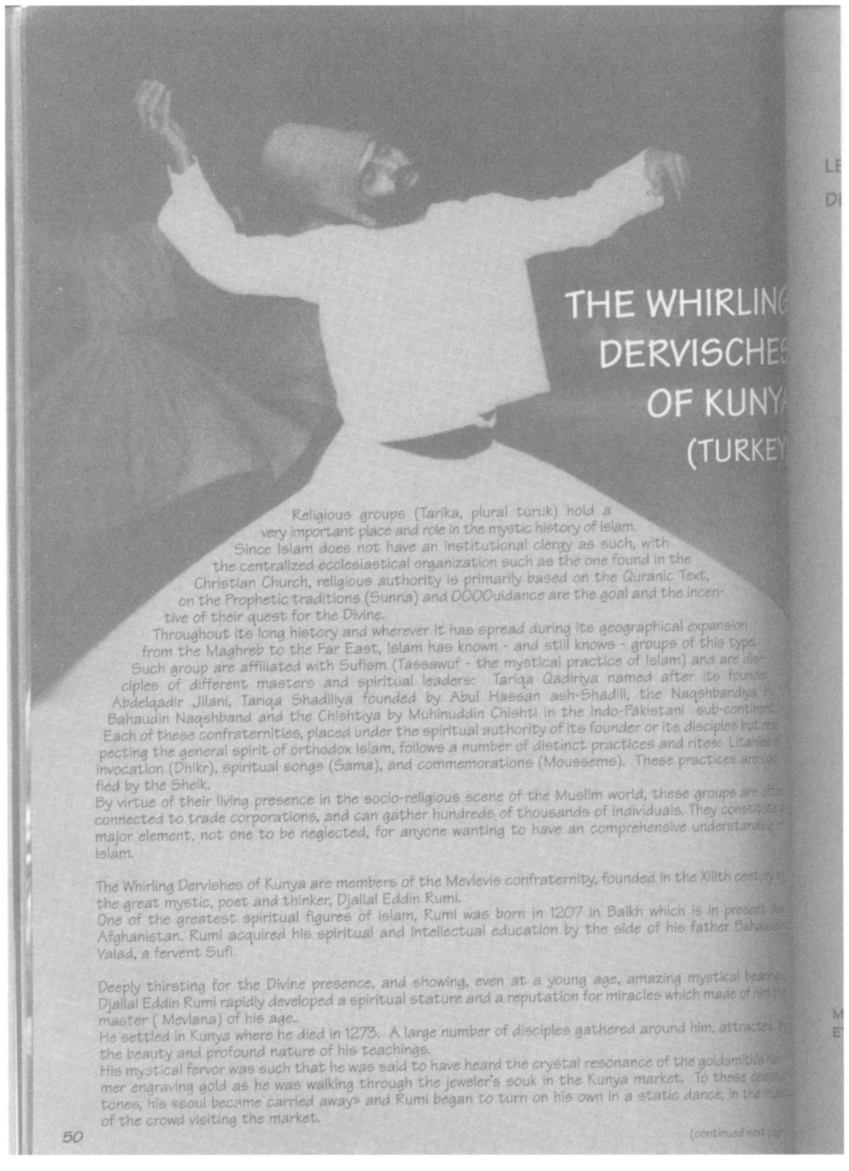

FIGURE 1. (a–b). Turkish Dervishes on the pages of the 2000 Fes Festival brochure.

b

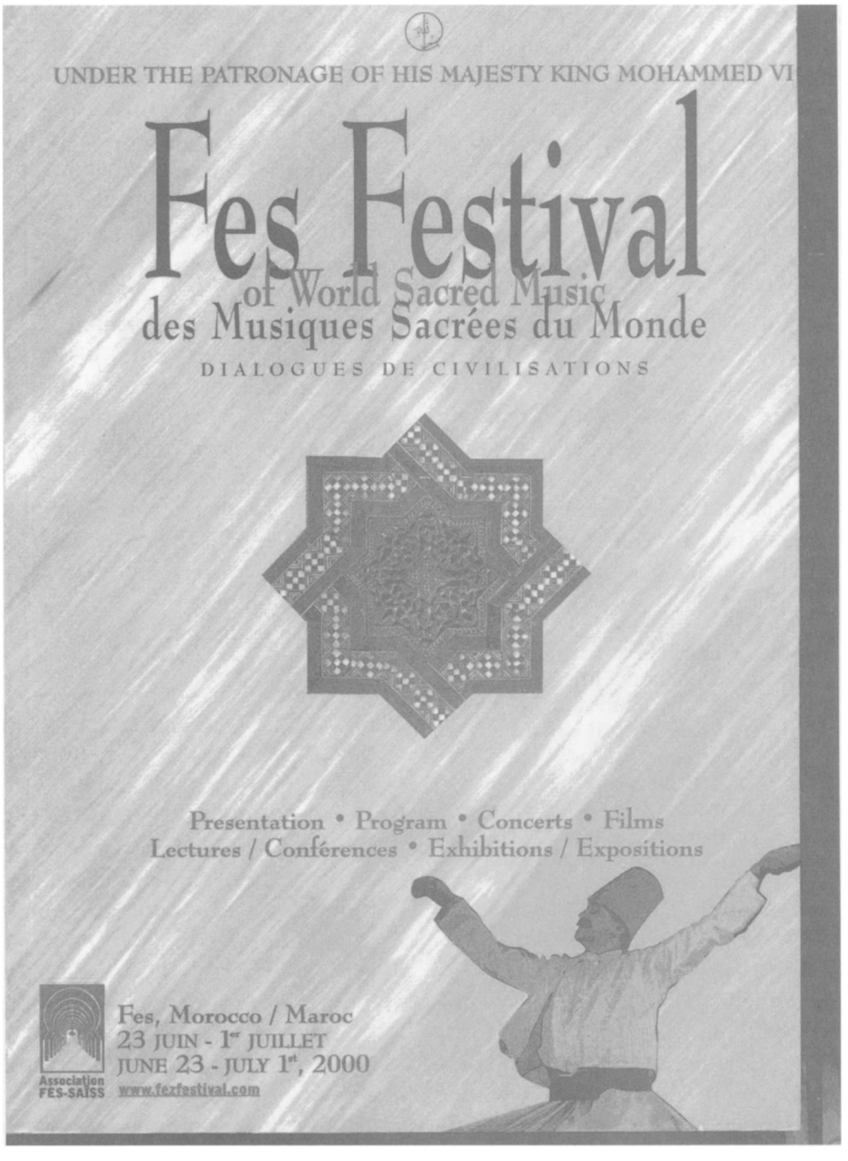

FIGURE 1. Continued.

Faouzi Skali, the day the fax came from the Dalai Lama, announcing his plans to also create a series of sacred music festivals in Geneva, Los Angeles, and elsewhere. Skali—a charismatic Sufi who also has a doctorate in anthropology from the Sorbonne and is the author of several books on Sufism (see Skali 1989, 1993, 1996, 2000)—had recently attended an interfaith meeting with the Dalai Lama and others at which the Fes Festival had been a topic of discussion. Not long afterward, the Dalai Lama gave his sponsorship to a sacred music festival in Geneva and in Los Angeles that brought international artists to local stages. The World Festival of Sacred Music in Los Angeles was born. This festival now takes place every three years. The website for 2005 exhorts potential audience members to "open your hearts and listen" (World Festival of Sacred Music n.d.).

The promise of sonic translation is ubiquitous around the world. Indeed, audiences at the Fes Festival come from Morocco, France, and the United States year after year to listen to the sacred sounds of many religious traditions. They are the festive faithful. How then do heterodox audiences become perennial coauditors of sacred and affecting sounds?

I assert that these listeners find common ground not through their religious beliefs per se but, rather, through participation in a common promise: that of translation, which holds that all languages, although different, are allied through kinship and thus may be known (Benjamin 1969). This promise does not have to be fulfilled to be effective; indeed, translation contains the seeds of its own failure. As Jacques Derrida notes in his study of Walter Benjamin, a "translation never succeeds in the pure and absolute sense of the term. Rather, a translation succeeds in promising success, in promising reconciliation. . . . a good translation is one that enacts the performative called the

promise with the result that through the translation one sees the coming shape of a possible reconciliation among languages" (Derrida 1985:123). For Derrida, this reconciliation is ultimately impossible. Nonetheless, the discourse that posits the belief in and hope for a kind of utopian "transparency of codes" does important social work (Crapanzano 2004; Miyazaki 2004).[4] It is the work of the promise that moves mountains, so to speak, at sacred music festivals around the world.

A promise is a "performative": it enacts rather than refers and by its very action accomplishes its goal, which is to create an intersubjective contract that is often affective and implicit rather than acknowledged and juridical (Austin 1962). But the verb *to promise* is also a transitive construction: I promise to meet a deadline, to arrive on time, to be faithful, and so forth. A promise engages the promiser and promisee in an affective exchange that extends beyond the moment of utterance. Indeed, a promise and a translation are akin in their assumption of an unstated trust:

> All understanding, and the demonstrative statement of understanding which is translation, starts with an act of trust. This confiding will, ordinarily, be instantaneous and unexamined, but it has a complex base. It is an operative convention which derives from a sequence of phenomenological assumptions about the coherence of the world, about the presence of meaning in very different, perhaps formally antithetical semantic systems, about the validity of analogy and parallel. [Steiner 1998:193]

As an "operative convention," translation—and its promise—takes us into the heart of what it means to be human together, cocreating "the presence of meaning" in embodied and semantic domains. This is not just a cognitive endeavor. As Benjamin reminds us, "translation is a mode" (Benjamin 1969:70). Like music, translation is emotionally inflected, carrying mood and character, whether translating from language to language (interlingual translation) or across semiotic systems such as from music to words, for example, and back again (Jakobson 2000:139). Translation is an act that requires the translator to imagine "reconciliation" and to embody that imagination.

Audiences in Fes inhabit the promise of this reconciliation, but the language of promise is musical: that is, what festival organizers promise—in brochures, travel literature, and conference discourse—is sonic translation, the "trust" in the ultimate translatability of aural (as opposed to textual) codes. In the Fes Festival, the promise of translation is cultivated first in publicly circulating discourse and subsequently created somatically in sonic experience.

LEARNING TO LISTEN

This promise falls on well-tilled ground and on educated ears. Indeed, the phenomenon of world beat music has been instrumental in creating new auditory practices that prepare audiences to embrace and enact this promise. Although music is often held up as the "universal language," in fact aesthetic attunement is always learned (albeit often early and unconsciously). World beat has tuned the ear to difference by developing new ways of listening and new things to listen to and for (see Erlmann 2003; Feld 1994; Taylor 1997). These "literacies of listening" (Kapchan n.d.) create an audience defined by diverse tastes but a common desire: namely, to consume and sonically inhabit a multiplicity of (in this case, sacred) cultures. When U.S. auditors listen to qawwali music at the Fes Festival, for example, they can identify the Pakistani origins of the music, but they also hear the resonances of world music radio programs, of concerts in university auditoriums, and perhaps even of interviews on National Public Radio. "Qawwali" indexes "Pakistani music" and "Sufi Music" but also the ubiquity of global trance and new-age mysticism—at least for those in the United States and Europe. Not surprisingly, Moroccan audiences are smallest at qawwali concerts. Unlike gospel or jazz music, qawwali is rarely heard on the Moroccan airwaves. World beat, although pervasive, is not even in its influence.

Nonetheless, the self-selecting festival audience embraces the promise. Whether meditatively listening to gamelan music, bobbing the head up and down in trance to the Moroccan Gnawa, or rocking out to the gospel music of Doctor Bobby Jones, auditors open their ears to new sounds and their minds to new understandings of what "sacred" might mean in different traditions. These include Hasidic songs from Eastern Europe, Gregorian chants from England, Mudéjar music from Spain, religious gypsy songs from France, qawwali music from Pakistan, and Sufi music from Morocco, Turkey, and Egypt. Couple these traditions with "dancing monks" from Tibet and South African choral music and a large section of the sacred globe is represented. By employing sounds iconically linked to particular sacred traditions and recontextualizing them in contexts of heterodoxy, festival organizers self-consciously create a sort of doxa of their own, one that downplays national and religious differences to emphasize "spiritual" or "sacred" homogeneity (Bourdieu 1977). The sacred is extracted from these traditions like essence is extracted from flowers.

THE FESTIVE SACRED: BEYOND THE NATION

> "We must learn to judge a society more by its sounds, by its art, and by its festivals, than by its statistics."
> —Jacques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*

Historically, festivals in Morocco brought people together around the celebration of a saint or religious holy day (Eickelman 1976). Festivals were set apart from quotidian time, creating a "time out of time"—and space (Caillois 1960; Falassi 1987:4).[5] Of course, large gatherings of pilgrims provided an ideal opportunity for commercial exchange, and saints' festivals (or *moussems*) and markets were often held at the same time and in the same place. This practice continues today in such celebrations as the moussem of Moulay Brahim in the High Atlas mountains (Hell 2001). After independence in 1956, however,

nonreligious festivals like the Marrakech Folklore Festival became increasingly popular. This festival and others that followed displayed the cultural diversity of Moroccan music and dance traditions to both European and Moroccan tourists. In the 20th century, international festivals—in Morocco and elsewhere—continue to display national diversity to local audiences but increasingly attract diverse audiences to exotic and often "sacred" locales (cf. Bauman et al. 1992; Brandes 1988; Guss 2000; Noyes 2003; see also Abrahams 1987; Turner 1982). Moreover, it is now necessary to demarcate festivals that self-consciously construct "the sacred" from those that enact it under other guises; some festivals, that is, are specifically marked for "the sacred" with strategic intent.

In postindependence Morocco, festivals became both more international and more secular. Indeed, Morocco is now a country of festivals. Although there are still religious festivals associated with a local saint, each year the Ministry of Culture sponsors more than a dozen nonreligious festivals that celebrate local traditions as much as they fete the diversity of national culture. The Festival of Andalusian Music is held in Chef Chaouen, for example, the oldest Andalusian city in Morocco. Likewise the 'Aita Festival is held in Safi, the city most known for this genre of music (often called shikhat music). Several of these festivals celebrate the cultural and linguistic diversity of Morocco (particularly the Festival de Poésie et Chant Amazigh in Midelt and the Festival Poésie et Chant Hassani in Dakhla), thereby giving value to populations and races that have been marginalized, if not oppressed and discriminated against, in the past (Guss 2000). There are also celebrations of *zajal,* spoken poetry in dialect, as well as symposia on Moroccan literature and visual arts. In addition to these national festivals, there are several international festivals in Morocco patronized by the King and sponsored by the private sector: these include the Mouazzine ("Rhythms") Festival in Rabat, the Tangier Jazz Festival, the Essaouira Gnawa Festival of World Music (Kapchan 2008), and the Fes Festival of World Sacred Music.

The Moroccan monarchy has many stakes in the spate of yearly festivals. They construct a public discourse of neoliberalism and engage the producers (usually artists and academicians nominated to political positions in the Ministry of Culture) in the active creation of Moroccan culture as a product for national and international consumption (the tourist industry being one of the most lucrative sources of income for the Moroccan state). In short, the nation has much to hope for in festival production, both materially and otherwise.

These festivals, however, are not without their public opponents. On June 25, 2004, for example, the imam of the Hassan II mosque in Casablanca delivered a sermon *(khutba)* in which he condemned several practices in the Moroccan public sphere, among them, women's access to public beaches, mixed-sex working conditions, and music festivals. This sermon, broadcast on Moroccan radio and television, exemplified a conservative backlash provoked by both the newly instituted family code laws (giving women more rights) and the fear unleashed by the Casablanca bombings a year earlier. Coming at the height of the festival season in Morocco, journalists as well as festival promoters did not fail to counter this attack in their own media coverage, writing passionately about the sociopolitical benefits of festivals and touting the ability of religiously diverse crowds to live and celebrate together. Such public debates place festivals in the center of moral, political, and religious scrutiny.

As sacred festivals take on lives of their own, they become a testing ground for free speech, free-market capitalism, and civil liberties—the hopes, it may be said, of a modernizing nation. Yet, the hand of the state is not the only agent in the production of these festivals. Despite the fact that they take place in very historic cities like Fes, the festivals are in no way local in their effects. Religious and cultural identities are also constructed and contested in these forums. Indeed, the festive sacred participates in a new order that is, in part, a response to the proliferation of sectarian and mobile movements that characterize the postmodern moment (Appadurai 2006). These movements—exemplified in Morocco by Islamists but also by the so-called "good Muslims" (Mamdani 2002), in this case Sufi groups with local roots but international followings—thrive in the tension between the centripetal forces of nationalism and the centrifugal forces of transnationalism.

Sacred music festivals represent the antithesis of religious conservatism not only because they are explicitly denounced by people like the imam of the Hassan II mosque but also because the festival organizers as well as the participants self-consciously construct an alternative notion of "the sacred" for public and popular consumption. It is not just "the secular" that threatens the imam, at least in the case of the festival, but another way to define the religious.

DEFINING THE SACRED

Since the Enlightenment, "the sacred" has often been understood as a transhistorical and universal category (Asad 2003). Yet as Anna Tsing has shown, the construction of the "universal" is often deliberate and strategic (Tsing 2004). Just as scholars of religion like Émile Durkheim created the very concept of "the sacred" in analyses of world religions (Asad 2003), what we witness almost two centuries later in the age of the international festival is a similar re-creation of the sacred as universal category—now defined not in terms of abstract concepts and theologies but in terms of lived aesthetics. Festival creators are unaware that their use of this category actually redefines the sacred as a mode of multifaith "worship." Yet it is clear that the festive sacred is sedimenting new aesthetic practices in a community whose beliefs are diverse but who are united by a promise: not the secularist promise of peace through the (disenchanting) human capacity for universal rationality (Weber 1930; cf. Jakobson and Pellegrini 2008) but, rather, the promise

of reenchantment through belief in the universality (translatability) of sonic devotion.

An example will illustrate this: there is a French journalist who comes to the Fes Festival every year. Having spent time in conflict areas in the Middle East, she understands how difficult it is to get Jews and Muslims to listen to and really "hear" one another. Yet at the Fes Festival, she attends a concert where Jewish performer Françoise Atlan sings with Muslim Aisha Redouane and Christian Monserrat Figueras. "It is quite remarkable," the journalist tells me later. "Here in Fes there is a part of magic. We have an example of what the world could be if we listened to each other (*si on était à l'écoute l'un de l'autre*). It's only then that we know how to get along. I think it has something to do with the music" (conversation with author, June 2, 2003). The journalist's use of an idiom that has to do with hearing is not spurious: to be *à l'écoute* is to be tuned into (as the radio), to listen or be attentive to. This idiom inundates the festival literature as well, where audition, not textual literacy, becomes a means of accessing the universal, and music, not negotiation, is the means to social change. Defining "the sacred" through sound and developing new literacies of listening are foundational strategies in the festival agenda.

THE FES FESTIVAL OF SACRED MUSIC IN SITU

The Fes Festival was initially a local response to a global crisis—the (mis)representation of Islam to the West during the first Gulf War. Since then, the festival has attracted thousands of spectators each year who, during ten days, listen to music from different religious traditions, watch films, and attend panels that bring together religious, political, and cultural leaders (including scholars, artists, and "secularists") to discuss the role of religion and religious expression in contemporary societies (see Curtis 2007). People such as Jacques Attali (France), Benjamin R. Barber (United States), Leïla Chahid (Palestine), Rabbi Bradley Hirschfield (United States), Mireille Mendes-France (France), Siddhartha (India), and Wim Wenders (Germany), among many others, come to lend their ears and ideas to a dialogue for peace. Although it is billed as a "festival" (and thus partakes in the politicoeconomic history of other large-scale display events in late capitalism), it has an explicit political agenda, embodied most clearly in the permanent theme of the yearly colloquium: "giving a soul to globalization." The interlocutors at the Fes Festival, in other words, attempt to wed religion to politics via music. Furthermore, religions are represented by and consequently redefined through their musical traditions. Although the colloquium that accompanies the festival involves (sometimes heated) debate, the constant reference point for the speakers—their counterpoint so to speak—is the sacred music that brings them together.

The Fes Festival has kept in step with current political crises and is now deeply implicated in creating counternarratives to that of the Muslim as fundamentalist and terrorist. What is unique about this effort is the use of aesthetics as a primary tool of encounter. As Sufis, Faouzi Skali and his associates believe that actively listening to the sacred sounds of another tradition creates a mode of reception and communication not usually accessible in rational thought. "All cultures and religions have sacred musical traditions," Skali told me, "whether chanted prayers or calls to prayer" (conversation with author, June 25, 2003). Indeed, the participants at the festival and its yearly colloquium share this interest in comparativism. Commenting on the relation between the Fes Festival and the sacred arts, the late dancer and choreographer Maurice Béjart noted that "chant is the origin of all spiritual traditions. The Qur'ran in Islam or the Upanishads in Hinduism are sacred texts that are chanted, like psalms. Behind this chant, the primordial sound links us to the creation of the world" (2004:108). For Béjart, Skali, and others, there is a universality to these expressions of praise, although the aesthetic systems differ from place to place. Indeed, tuning the ear of diverse audiences to different aesthetic systems to create attunement across religions is one of the challenges of the festival.

This aesthetic enterprise is of necessity implicated in an economic one as well, involving the creation of sacred tourism—in this instance, "Sufi tourism." Although pilgrimages often exist hand-in-hand with a tourist economy (Badone and Roseman 2004; Delaney 1990; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998), the sophisticated markets created in the production of an international festival of this dimension and in its wake mean that the pilgrimages taken to destinations like Fes are highly orchestrated capitalist events. They have included postfestival tours to the Sahara Desert to participate in Sufi dhikr ceremonies and specialized tours for groups of new-age adherents from the United States and France. In Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's words, "destination culture" becomes here "destination religion" (1998).

These groups are not visible at the concerts so much as in the hotel lobbies and restaurants, sometimes wearing Moroccan robes and scarves and often carrying prayer beads or other religious insignia. Indeed, it is at the hotels (two through five star) that the different interest groups meet and often politely avoid each other, usually mingling only with their language group.

"THE SPIRIT OF FES" AND THE REIFICATION OF PLACE

> "Fes doesn't reveal itself easily. To have access to it, it is necessary to go in through the big door, both visible and invisible, of the sacred. Because Fes is a shrine. It is thus that the Soufis, the initiates of Islam, have always called it: the *zawiya*." [Skali 2004, translation by author]

The Fes Festival builds much of its promotional materials around the "shrine" of Fes. Fes is the home of al-Qarawiyyen, a theological university, or *madrasa,* built in the ninth century (C.E. 857) that is one of the largest centers for Islamic learning in North Africa. The famous Sufi saint Ibn al-'Arabi had a vision in Fes, and it is the spiritual home to numerous Sufi *turuq,* or paths. Indeed, the 2001 brochure describes Fes as what Pierre Nora would call

a "lieu de memoire" (Nora 1989), a site of memory for the "Sacred," with a capital "S":

> This festival was created from the meeting of people of diverse interests and itineraries with Fez [sic], a city that holds the memory of what once was the culture and tradition of the Sacred. Tied to this past, the medina (medieval city) of Fez still continues to live by the rhythm of the call to prayer and religious celebrations.... Founded by Moulay Idriss in 809, Fez is the oldest of the imperial cities, and the religious and intellectual metropolis of Morocco. The city has opened its doors to many populations: the Berbers, Arabs, Andalousians, Jews. [Association Fes-Saiss 2001]

Like the music it hosts, the city becomes an actor in this narrative, offering the rhythms of the "Sacred" and opening its doors to heterogeneous populations, including Jews who comprised a significant part of the Fes population until a mass migration to Israel after Moroccan independence in 1956. (The Jewish cemetery is a popular tourist destination.) But this attitude toward Fes as a place of diversity and power is not restricted to festival brochures. As political scientist Roland Cayrol noted, "I believe in the necessity of making tradition live. I think that Fes, where in only turning a corner one meets Ibn Khaldoun, [and] Ibn al-Banna or Maimonides, is marvelously placed to do this, since as a [former] capital, it knows how to make intellectual and religious contributions live together" (2004:96, translation by author). Stressing its history as a crossroads of multiple ethnicities and faiths, Fes—like Andalousia in much contemporary scholarship (Shannon 2007; see also Menocal 2003)—comes to represent a place of tolerance and multiculturalism in a world torn by intolerance and religious strife.

A considerable amount of Morocco's revenues come from tourism, and the Fes Festival attracts the largest amount of international tourists to this destination. Nonetheless, it is difficult for the Fes business people to sustain themselves on tourism alone, especially after the attacks of September 11, 2001, in the United States and the subsequent war with Iraq. Tourism to Arab countries (on the part of citizens of the United States and United Kingdom, in any case) is down. As one bed-and-breakfast owner put it: "Fes comes alive for the ten days of the festival and then goes back to sleep for the rest of the year" (conversation with author, May 20, 2003). Nonetheless, Fes continues to perform its role as a site of pilgrimage, the *zawiya,* the city as sacred shrine. Indeed, for the ten days of the festival, Fes becomes a "living museum in situ" where tourists can visit the tanneries, the spice markets, some old madrasas, and the public ovens and baths (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998:54). Only Muslims, however, can visit the mosques. In Morocco, this sacred space is off-limits to non-Muslim tourists.

Among Moroccans, Fes has the reputation of being a conservative Muslim city where religious activity is particularly fervent. State elections were postponed in 2003, for example, as it was estimated that the religious right would have won the city of Fes as well as a few other major areas. It is considered the spiritual capital of Morocco because of the religious conservatism present but also because of the presence of many (not necessarily conservative) Sufi groups.

ATTENDING TO AUDITION

Ambivalence about what qualifies as sacred music, however, haunt the Fes Festival. In the early years, the musicians were drawn from the three monotheistic religions "of the book"—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (particularly Sufism)—but more recently the festival has featured Tibetan Buddhist "dancing monks" as well as Balinese gamelan music. When I expressed a bit of dismay to and asked Skali how he defined "sacred" music, he replied, "All music that praises God qualifies as sacred" (conversation with author, June 25, 2003). Indeed, the musical director has taken pains to be inclusive of as many traditions as possible. As the festival has grown in popularity, however, the program has featured more music that is indisputably secular, artists like the Israeli singer Noa and the late South African Miriam Makeba (see Figure 2). Again, when I pressed Skali to respond, he said that "some music is also included for its political presence—an Israeli singer whose repertoire includes songs in Hebrew, Arabic, Ladino, and English, for example, sends a message of tolerance. Makeba's songs against racism contain messages important to the festival's ideology" (conversation with author, June 25, 2003). He went on to say that his aspirations for the festival exceeded sacred aesthetics: "My hope for the festival," Skali told me, "is that it be a model for inter-cultural civil society" (conversation with author, June 25, 2003).

However, there are some musicians who seem to be there just to attract a crowd. The Moroccan performer Rouisha has rarely, if ever, performed a sacred repertoire, but he is a performer whose fame as an Amazighi (Berber) artist in the 1960s has entered him into the Moroccan canon of popular music (see Figure 3). (The Amazighi population in Morocco are considered the autochthonous peoples of North Africa; they converted to Islam in the sixth century after the Arab invasion). His 2004 performance, with female singing and dance accompaniment, took place in the ancient Roman ruins of Volubulis, in implicit deference, it may be said, to the antiquity of the Berbers on Moroccan soil but more because of their value as emblems of national folklore and heritage (Boum 2007). Likewise the songs of Syrian singer Sabah Fakhri are mostly nonreligious, although he begins his sets at the Fes Festival with songs of the *muwashshahat* (an Arab-Andalusian genre) that exist in both sacred and secular repertoires, with only the lyrics changing in each case. Given his status as an internationally renowned musician, Fakhri draws a large and very enthusiastic crowd. It is clear that the "sacred" music festival has loosened its criteria a bit with the passing years to please audiences and to bring in larger revenues. However, there are sacred standards that are consistent: every year the whirling dervishes are on the bill, as are musicians from the

FIGURE 2. The late Miriam Makeba performing at Bab Makina.

three religions of the book such as Sister Marie Keyrouz, for example, who sings Christian songs in Arabic, and Rabbi Louk, who sings songs from the Jewish diaspora. Indeed, the festival always begins with a concert of voices: Muslim, Jewish, and Christian singers collaborating together.

It is the activity of listening, however, that festival organizers deem even more sacred than the music itself. *Sama'*—attentive and active listening, called "deep listening" by Western scholars and composers (Becker 2004; Oliveros 2005)—is a method of spiritual discipline in Sufi doctrine that leads to the development of what may be called the "higher senses and emotions."[6] The doctrine of sama' imbues much of the discourse in festival brochures. "In the musician-auditor couple," notes artistic director Girard Kurdjian, "it is the latter who is really able . . . to allow him- or herself to focus on the extremes of intensity and celestial delight that obtains from this 'spiritual audition' (Sama')" (2004:10). In discourses like this one, the Sufi practice of sama' becomes the modus operandus for the festival itself. Kurdjian goes on to say,

> sacred musics are . . . works of reason and lucidity, in which art, technical mastery and knowledge are linked to the potential for exaltation and trance-states at the heart of all sacred music. The intense concentration borne over the moment connects to outpourings of enthusiasm (in the proper sense of the original Greek Enthousiasmos, 'carried away by God') that flows from the heart. [Kurdjian 2004:10]

Here Kurdjian writes a kind of manual for the concert-goer that links the "enthusiasm" inspired by the music with spiritual states in the listener. Indeed, like the city of Fes, "musics and songs of the sacred" are given their own agency, functioning as "a sort of direct illumination that, partly without our being aware of it, and beyond the limitations of words, languages and distinct customs, touch our bodies, our souls and Spirit, and awaken them to vast

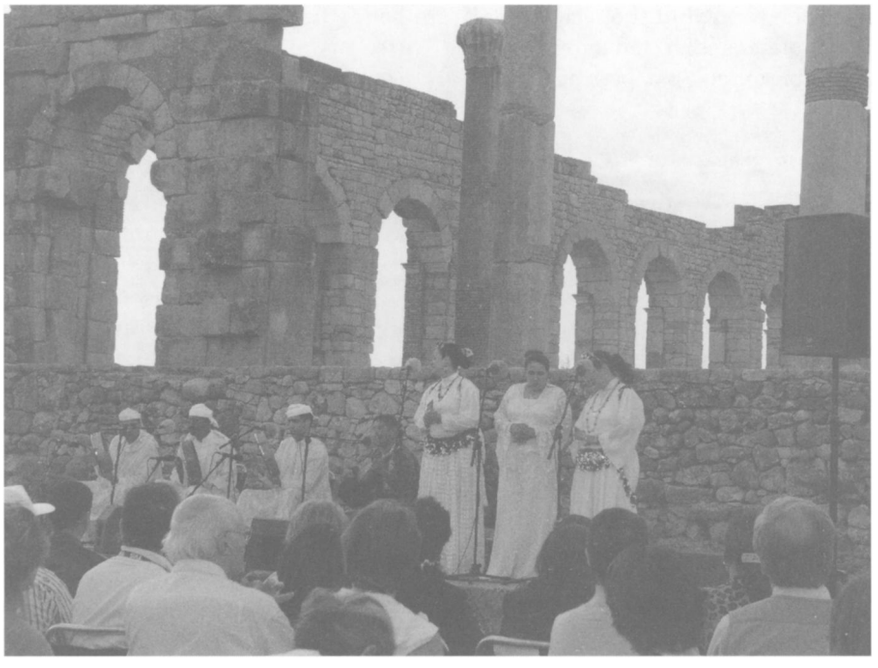

FIGURE 3. Rouisha performing in the Roman ruins of Volubulis, outside of Fes.

and profound orders of higher reality" (Kurdjian 2004:10). In this brochure and other promotional materials, the technique of deep listening (what Kurdjian calls "spiritual audition") carries the promise of a "trans-temporal Knowledge" or spiritual gnosis that auditors learn together.

Deep listening is a pedagogy at the festival, and auditors become apprentices of this method. Insofar as they learn an auditory discipline, they become symbolic disciples of sacred sound, sharing in the communion that such colearning constitutes. The audience is encouraged to become a coauthor, or in this case a coperformer, in the musical event (Brenneis 1987; Duranti and Brenneis 1986). This is not a mundane event but a "sacred" one. Audiences come to the festival predisposed to have transcendent experiences and, listening together, they often have them. The music at the Fes Festival is, to borrow the words of Attali, "more than an object of study: it is a way of perceiving the world" (1985:4). It is the goal of the Fes Festival to create a new perception.

Not unlike the Egyptians in the piety movement that Charles Hirschkind studies, many of the audience members with whom I spoke "listen with their heart" (Hirschkind 2006; Shannon 2006) to cultivate a spiritual self and community with others. Unlike those in the piety movement, however, the audiences in Fes do not delimit themselves doctrinally but are encouraged to listen as a way to bridge and even transcend ideologies. Seated under a huge magnolia tree at the afternoon concerts, French and U.S. tourists in jellabas, turbans, and scarves sway with eyes closed to the music of Egyptian Sufi, Shaykh Yassin al-Tuhami. But Moroccans are also swaying with eyes closed. This is not to say that listening practices are uniform among heterogeneous audiences. To the contrary, the participatory nature of Arab music and the ecstasy *(tarab)* it produces are very different than Western practices of audition, particularly in regard to sacred and classical music (Shannon 2003; see also Racy 2003). Although Moroccan audiences often chat, socialize, and express their appreciation with verbal exclamations at the festival performances, Western audiences are offended by such behaviors, turning around to "shush" their Moroccan neighbors. In 1999, when the opera diva Montserrat Caballe and her daughter Montserrat Marti were on the bill, my Moroccan neighbors were having an animated conversation during the performance. The French couple next to me were appalled and made their feelings evident: "Taissez-vous" [be quiet], they said, turning with annoyance to the Moroccans, who rolled their eyes at the reprimand. But even these intercultural enactments are instructive. As the years have passed, Moroccan audiences have become quieter during operatic performances, for example, and Western audiences have become more expressive, especially during performances of more popular Arab music where they witness the rapture of Moroccan audience members surrounding them. During one Sabah Fakhri concert, the Moroccans were the first to stand up and dance, but the French and U.S. tourists did not tarry in following their lead. Pointing to the Westerners doing their renditions of belly dance, one rather formal Moroccan gentleman near me laughed in amusement and then got up to join the fun. Tarab may be said to be contagious in this regard.

In the 11th century, al-Ghazzali presciently noted that "whenever the soul of the music and singing reaches the heart, then there stirs in the heart that which it

preponderates" (1901). In the context of the sacred music festival, what the heart preponderates is often its own opening and transformation: so promised, so experienced.

SUFI NIGHTS, SACRED TOURISM

Experience is, in fact, key. The Fes Festival now sponsors what are called "Sufi Nights" after every major concert. These "nights" are held in the open air in the courtyard of the Fes-Saiss headquarters. Beginning after ten each evening and sometimes lasting until three or four in the morning, the Sufi Nights are intended to give audiences a taste of authentic Sufi ritual, including music, al-hadra (a form of Sufi movement that leads to ecstasy and transcendence), and chanted prayer. On the bill in 2004 were the 'Aissawa brotherhood, the Hamdouchia, the Sqalliya, and others (see Figure 4).

These rituals are free and open to the public. They therefore attract a large crowd, including a large number of Moroccan youth. There are also food tents set up in the area where attendees may refresh themselves with soft drinks, soup, dates, and sweet mint tea. ("Taste" is the sense most utilized in Sufi metaphor: it is necessary to actually incorporate the transcendent, to taste and become one with the divine.) These "nights" are particularly important because they extend the reach of the sacred music festival to people who may not be able to afford to attend the main events or to those whose enthusiasm for sacred music reaches beyond the mere pleasure of audition to the enactment of ritual.[7] Although the ritual practitioners are clearly set apart in their dress, the demarcation between performer and audience is much more porous at the Sufi Nights, with audience members in trancelike states in close proximity to the performers (see Figure 5). These ceremonies display a formerly private event for initiates to an eager and often naïve public. In so doing, they gain publicity for the Sufi tariqa and its particular musical styles (all without exception made a compact disc recording that was on sale at the event), while adding an element of mysticism and excess to the festival program, as festival goers stay up until the small hours of the morning to have an "authentic" experience.

Although music has always been a part of Sufi ritual, the category of "Sufi music" was essentially born with the world beat phenomenon, as Sufi musicians from Morocco to Pakistan toured the world, entrancing Western audiences with hypnotic and holy beats (Bohlman 1997; Keil and Feld 1994; Shannon 2003; Taylor 1997). Perhaps the most well-known (commodified) example is that of the Whirling Dervishes who spin on the balls of their feet with one arm extended up toward God and the other down towards the earth, seeking axis with and access to divinity. Just as the dervishes have become the emblem of Turkey for the tourist industry despite their repression in the sociopolitical sphere for so many years, so Sufism writ large has become the banner of Muslim tolerance in the face of more orthodox forms of Islam represented in the press (Bohlman 1997:66–67). Moreover, in the transnational era of sacred tourism where pilgrimages involve air travel, hotels, and often new disciplines of the body at holy sites (yoga, chanting, and forms of dress), sacred tourism—which in Morocco becomes "Sufi tourism"—finds its own special niche (see Cornell 1998; Eickelman 1976). Sufism comes to signify an ancient and mystical knowledge that tourists can nonetheless experience through music, movement, and the senses.

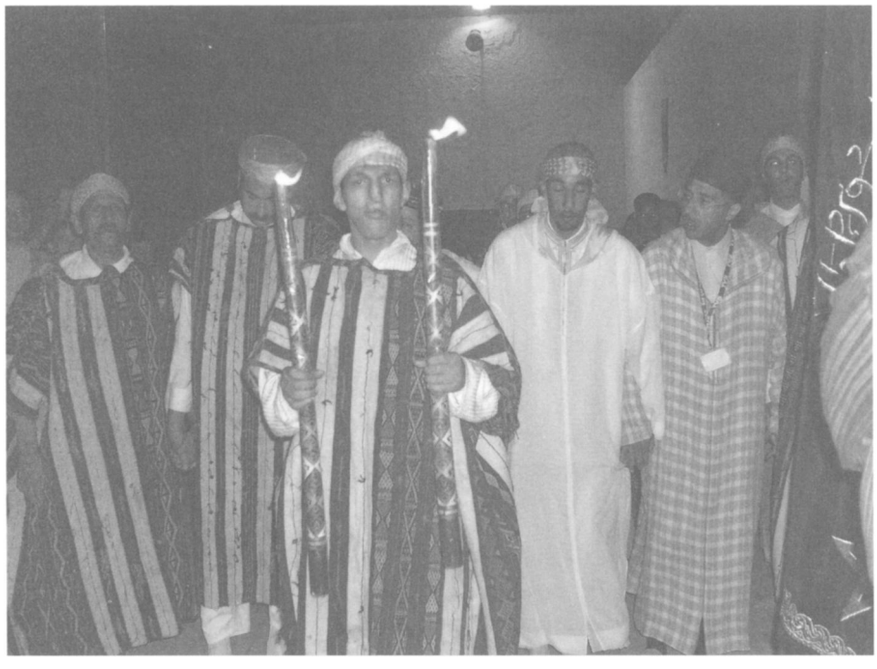

FIGURE 4. Sufi Nights: The 'Aissawa.

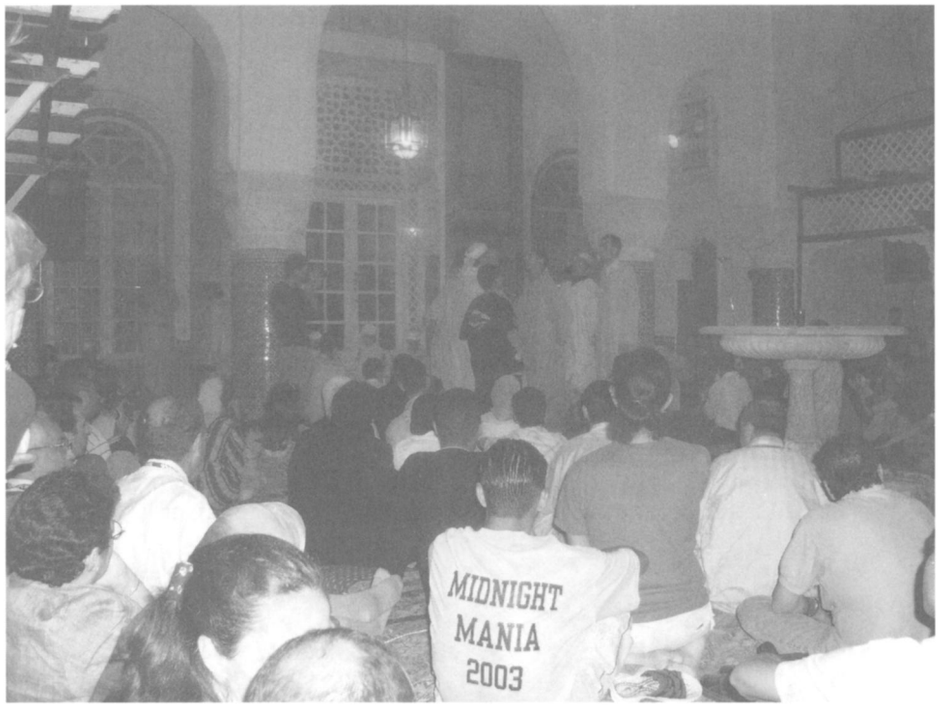

FIGURE 5. An audience member trances with the Sufis.

The Sufi Nights provide the most intimate listening experience at the festival. People walk around, talk, and eat. They also push against each other while straining to see the musicians, sway in trance, sit knee to knee, and strike up conversations. But the performance of Sufi ritual has more than just aesthetic import. Now, as in Moroccan history, Sufism plays a strategic political role (Cornell 1998). Although the forms of Islam practiced in Morocco are influenced by many kinds of Sufism, one path is particularly prominent: the *tariqa qadiriyya boutshishiyya,* a Sufi path in the Qadiri lineage (named after shaykh Sidi Boumadyane Ben al-Mnawwaral Qâdiri al-Butchîchi) whose living leader is Shaykh Hamza in northeastern Morocco.[8] Since the death of King Hassan II in 1999 and the ascension to the throne of his son, Mohammed VI, several high government positions have been filled by Sufi practitioners in this path, including the Minister of Religious Affairs, Ahmed Toufiq (see Figure 6). The founder of the Fes Festival, Faouzi Skali, is also an adherent to this path. The close alliance of the monarchy and this branch of Sufism is strategic. Although politics and religion are of necessity intertwined in an Islamic society, the new prominence of Sufis in the political leadership provides an ambiance that is recognized as tolerant (a counterinfluence to the growing Islamist movements in Morocco and abroad) and that accepts musical traditions as expressions of faith.

"GIVING SOUL TO GLOBALIZATION"

Since 2002, a conference has been taking place during the festival that explores the difficult issues and intersections of religion and globalization. Like the festival, this conference is the brain child of Faouzi Skali and proceeds on the premise that deep, attentive listening, even in the intellectual domain, may be transformative. Katherine Marshall, the former director of "Ethics and Values" at the World Bank, has been instrumental in garnering the funds and the speakers for this conference, which has included scholars, activists, diplomats, and artists from all continents of the globe. The 2002 "Giving Soul to Globalization" conference had such politically divergent speakers as Thai public intellectual and social activist Sulak Sivaraksa and World Trade Organization director Mike Moore. Putting spiritualists and materialists together was a challenge to everyone's capacity to listen to one another and was sometimes frustrating, verging on argumentative. I remember one prominent French participant turning to me, shaking his head and mumbling, "*on ne fait rien ici*" ([we're not doing anything here]; conversation with author, June 2, 2002). In 2004 the conference participants were more united, whether by design or because the Iraq War garnered the criticism of most all the participants. Palestinian activist Leila Chahid and Moroccan-born Israeli filmmaker Simone Bitton brought the audience to tears with their testimonies concerning the war in the Middle East. Economist and former advisor to former French president Mitterand, Jaques Attali, argued with Buddhist monk and activist–author Mathieu Ricard about the agency of compassion. Hans-Peter Duerr, nuclear physicist, philosopher, and former director of the Max Planck Institute, advocated a cosmic approach: "Reality is made of matter," he said, "but matter disappears in nuclear physics and only the connection remains. It is necessary to focus

not on unity, but [on] the connectedness of everything" (field notes, May 29, 2004). These scholars rarely stress religion; rather, the "sacred" in all traditions becomes the universal currency.

Internationally recognized intellectuals have given their stamp to the Fes Festival as a forum where not only music moves audiences but also audiences, in turn, move out into the world with what has come to be called "the Fes message." What's more, the participants are now referred to as "le club de Fes"; they are the musicians, intellectuals, and perennial attendees who, despite differences in religion, ideology, nation, race, or gender, believe that the "spirit of Fes" is an affective force generated at the festival by the collective efforts of the participants and then transported outside its context of origin to spiral into the world (see Figure 7). The people who come to the Fes festival are elites: artists, intellectuals, filmmakers, and scientists. They (like I) can carry the "Fes message" beyond the borders of Fes.

CONCLUSION: SACRED AESTHETICS AND THE FESTIVE SACRED

> "Imagination understands in modes foreign to reason."
> —Ibn Al-'Arabi, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn Al-'Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination*

What is the difference between "world music" and "world sacred music" as represented in Fes? Much like the Moroccan multilingual who is able to understand elaborate code switching from Arabic to French to Berber to English and back, the auditor for world music has a trained ear that is able both to identify the different stylistic components of the music and to locate their own identity as global citizens in its iconic resonances. The world beat phenomenon,

a

FIGURE 6 (a–b). Sufism in action: Faouzi Skali and Ahmed Toufiq at the Fes Festival.

b

FIGURE 6 Continued.

FIGURE 7. The "club de Fes": Mathieu Ricard, Frédéric Lenoir, Thierry de Montbrial, Idrissa Seck, and Jacques Attali.

in other words, has produced a "literacy of listening," an ability to hear the components in the mix (Kapchan n.d.). Indeed, it is this literacy that allows the festive faithful to inhabit a promise, without which these festivals could not exist. World beat has gone out into the world like a prophet preparing the way (Attali 1985).

World sacred music, however, is usually not a hybrid fusion of traditions and styles. In the case of the primarily monotheistic religions of the Book presented at the Fes Festival, it is the voice that carries power and purity (not hybridity) that is celebrated (however invented, reconstructed, or revived). The majority of the acts are vocal and represent a singular religious tradition (however hybrid the tradition has been in the making). The voice—which carries the connotation of the unmediated in all the "religions of the book"—becomes iconic of the authentic and the true.

The discrete traditions presented at the Fes Festival have a long history of decontextualization from their ritual contexts, yet the festival commodifies the aesthetic elements of religious traditions to the exclusion of their concomitant beliefs. This is not a simple process of secularization, however. To the contrary, the recontextualization of these "sacred" musical traditions in a festive environment is accompanied by a promise of affective reenchantment. Although the organizers of the Fes Festival invite people of different religions (but often the same class) to experience the transcendent aspects of discrete traditions, promising to translate what is recognized as religious sentiment across cultural and aesthetic divides, they are also invested in creating something that can be formalized and repeated. To this end, compact discs are made every year, and the festival-goers return to their place of origin with sounds that link them to Fes as well as to each other. Audiences are brought back to the "sanctuary" and their pilgrimage through sonic memory and an auditory token.

The Fes Festival reifies existing sacred aesthetic traditions, drawing on concepts like "heritage" *(turath)* and "tradition" (*taqalid*) in their literature, while spinning these concepts in the direction of the universal. "To enrich the cultural memory of ***humanity***," noted Turkish musician Kudsi Erguner in the 2001 colloquium, "it is indispensable that each person be able to access their *own* cultural heritage" (Erguner 2003:203, emphasis added and translation by author). Being grounded in one's "home" tradition is a necessary prerequisite to contributing to the more "universal" heritage of world sacred music (Tsing 2004).

Victor Turner's insights into the "communitas" created in festive environments delimits the way embodied ritual performances create common feeling for social actors who usually share a common history (Turner 1974). In the age of the global festival, however, neither history nor religion are held in common. Indeed, it is the work of the international festival, especially those whose express theme is the "sacred," to create common cause and common affect across lines of religion, ethnicity, nation, and—to the extent that women perform sacred Islamic repertoire—gender. Feeling together, however, is not the same as feeling the same thing. By making deep or attentive listening (sama') the designated sacred practice of the festival, organizers draw on the literacies fostered by the world music market to cultivate auditory practices that themselves perform promise, engaging audiences in a work in common—a kind of listening for peace at a moment in history when tensions between religious groups are high.

It is no accident that the Fes Festival takes place in a Muslim country at a time when all Muslim productions are being heavily scrutinized and analyzed by "the West." Nor is it accidental that the "moderate" and tolerant face of Sufism is being used by the Moroccan government for political ends. The Fes Festival creates both a national profile internationally and a transnational community in a Muslim locale. It also produces revenues for the state and for the city residents. There are times when the hopes of artists, intellectuals, NGOs, the state, and international banks coincide.

Ultimately, however, interests of national and global corporations fit uneasily with artistic and, in this case, sacred visions. To wit, in 2007 the Fes Festival changed directors. The budget of the festival was curtailed and its ownership put into question, despite the fact that Skali claimed the copyright for the festival and its name (Alami 2006). In short, Skali's power and autonomy were challenged, so he left the festival and began another—"The World Festival of Sufi Music and Culture"—the goals of which are more specific: to promote Sufi culture to non-Sufis, whether Moroccan or U.S. and European.

The (re)turn to Sufism is significant. As a Sufi, it is what Skali knows best. But the implications are broader than that. Sufism does important political work both nationally and internationally, challenging the conflation of Islam with orthodoxy and conservatism. (Indeed, Skali is currently involved in the opening of a Sufi university in Morocco.)

"Sufi music" is also more "authentic" to Morocco, appealing to the adept in sacred festivity who wants to deepen knowledge of a particular strand of mystical tradition. The promise of sonic translation is still extant but the comparative base is smaller. The festive sacred as a configuration of aesthetic and embodied practices is also present, although with a twist: that is, people of different religions and nations create and cohabit an experience of the sacred through heightened attention to auditory, sense-based, and Sufi modes of devotion. There is precedent for this more specialized enactment in festivals like the Estonian International Festival of Orthodox Sacred Music (CREDO) or even the Alwan Sacred Music Festival in New York, billed as "Arab Sufi Music with Tarab" (ecstasy). The interdependence between particular ritual and universal sacredness is itself a credo.

Although Skali's relations with the organizers of the Fes Festival of World Sacred Music are now amicable, he nonetheless has decided to consecrate himself entirely to

what he most recently has called the Fes Festival of Sufi Culture, having incorporated a forum called "a soul for globalization" into the mix (conversation with the author, September 26, 2008). These recent events signify Skali's refusal to be co-opted as well as the power of capitalist interests to produce (or at least fund) the festive sacred on a large scale. Indeed, sacred tourists continue to attend the Fes Festival of World Sacred Music. Broken promises at the local level do not necessarily abrogate the need for the promise of sonic translation on the international level. As long as the circumstances that necessitate such promises continue to exist (war, terrorism, xenophobia, racism, religious fanaticism, etc.), sacred tourist markets that produce the festive sacred will proliferate, catering to people of different religions and nations who hope to learn and embrace a new sonic imaginary defined as "universal."

This is not to wax cynical about the effects of such promises, however. Market economies can also be spiritual ones. Pilgrims are, and have always been, tourists of a certain ilk. The sacred is, in part, a commodity with use and exchange value, both circulated as a kind of spiritual capital and causing the circulation of people, things, and affect. This is evident in the profusion of sacred music festivals internationally: the World Sacred Music Festival of Hiroshima, the Michigan Festival of Sacred Music, The Festival of Universal Sacred Music in Manhattan, the Brighton Festival of World Sacred Music, the Festival of Sacred Music and Art in Rome, the Fireflies Festival of Sacred Music in Bangalore, India, and the list goes on. There is even a Foundation for Universal Sacred Music, whose mission is to "gather written and recorded examples of works that exemplify the spirit of universal sacred music" (Foundation for Universal Sacred Music n.d.).

The festive sacred not only produces a Turnerian communitas but also creates new transnational imaginaries that mediate religious sentiment and reenchant the world (although the world has never, in fact, been "disenchanted"). It is this enchantment, this magical engagement, that is promised and delivered. Translations fail. Not all sacred music moves the auditor toward universal transcendence. But the promise of translation cannot fail. The promise performs its own fulfillment: it mobilizes and it generates hope, capital, affect, and community. Most importantly, it creates an intersubjective and affective contract. Attending to the sacred through sound, audiences learn to listen—and sometimes to hear—difference, while labeling it "universal." Holding the categories of "cultural alterity" and "heritage of humanity" together may generate paradox and perhaps spiritual bewilderment (*hayra* in Arabic). In Sufi thought, however, it is precisely the ability to embrace paradox that opens the heart and soul (Chittick 1989:4). Although this does not guarantee social transformation, it does hold out some promise.

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NOTES

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1. On community and affect, see Munoz 2000.
2. On the history of secularisms and the creation of the modern subject, see Asad 2003; Jakobson and Pellegrini 2008; Mahmood 2005.
3. I have attended nine festivals as a participant-observer, a speaker at multiple colloquia, and an interviewer. I have talked at length with the founders of these festivals over the years as well as with the musicians, audience members, and local residents. Although I do not explore the "reception" of sacred music at these festivals, I do examine the intentional production of a promise that shapes audience expectations and that posits a community of sacred affect that tourist–pilgrims then inhabit.
4. Hope is an emotion imputed with intention, a driver of religious fervor and activity, integral to notions of temporality and to conceptions of utopia (Crapanzano 2004:97–123).
5. According to Caillois, they offered an agonistic and ludic alternative to war. Indeed, for Caillois, festivals were all about the transformation of sacred—and often savage—affect into social performance.
6. See Becker 2004; Oliveros 2005. Becker equates deep listening with trance:

> Both trancing and deep listening are physical, bodily processes, involving neural stimulation of specific brain areas that result in outward, visible physical reactions such as crying, or rhythmical swaying or horripilation.... Both, I suspect, are initially aroused at a level of precognition that quickly expands in the brain to involve memory, feeling, and imagination. Deep listening and trancing, as processes, are simultaneously physical *and* psychological, somatic *and* cognitive. [2004:29]

7. The Fes Festival has recently diversified its class base as well. Although the majority of the festival concerts during the first eight years were for paying customers, limited to an elite Moroccan minority and foreign tourists (Belghazi 2006), its audience quickly expanded as demand for public access grew. In response, there are now outdoor and free concerts for the local residents who cannot afford the expensive prices of the festival program as well as food stands that give an impression of general celebration. The festival is also televised live. Nonetheless, the perception by Moroccans that the Fes Festival caters to the elite of Morocco and other nations is pervasive.
8. It is noteworthy that the Sufi poet of the 11th century, Abdeljallal Rumi, is the best-selling poet in the United States (rendered into very contemporary language by Coleman Barks).

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