

Summer Festivals in Morocco: International Influence and a Factor of Social Cohesion

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Morocco, known as a country of sun, is also a country of festivals. Since the late 1990s, the organisation of festivals has experienced a spectacular growth. Contributing to its international influence, the development of these events makes clear the changes that have occurred in this Mediterranean country. In 2007, more than eighty cultural and artistic events were organised, many of them celebrating the Mediterranean (*Festival des deux Rives, Festival de Volubilis, Les Nuits de la Méditerranée, Festival des Cultures Immatérielles Méditerranéennes*). Beyond the challenges and problems of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (free exchange area, security cooperation) and at a moment when projects of the “Union for the Mediterranean” are emerging from both sides, they are an expression of the dialogue and the intercultural exchanges between the peoples of the two shores. The new music scene initiated by Moroccan youth lies within this perspective.

Overview of the Cultural Landscape in Morocco

The Moroccan cultural field reflects the changes and aspirations of a country in full transition. The current cultural dynamic is linked to the processes of political, economic and social opening experienced by Morocco. During the former reign of King Hassan II, the number and importance of the annual festivals were limited. The only festive moments were mainly devoted to the celebration of national holidays (festival of the throne, green march) and ancestral popular ceremonies (the *Moussem*) encouraged by the authorities. The cultural policy of the early years of independence was marked

by the exploitation of culture in a nationalist perspective. The newly independent state mainly focused on the consolidation of the “national constants”; i.e., Islam, the monarchy, Arabism and territorial unity. Nationalism was understood as a global identity favouring cultural standardisation to the exclusion of any cultural difference. Consequently, the cultural sphere was deprived of creativity. In fact, it was the result of a folklorised heritage at the service of tourism and the established order. And even if since the 1970s Moroccan society has seen the birth of a cultural movement whose pivot was the film clubs, music groups (*nass el ghiwane, Oussman, Imchaheb*) and journals (*Jamalif, Anfass*), it goes without saying that “official” culture prevailed.

The State interest in festivals has notably increased in recent years, especially after the coronation of Mohamed VI. Some see in this profusion evidence of an opening linked to the new reign and others see it as prompted by tourism (10 million tourists are expected by 2010). In fact, the country is in full transformation (demographic, social and cultural) and the Moroccan cultural landscape has changed drastically. After the terrorist attacks of 16th May 2003 (perpetrated by 14 *Islamikazes* against civilian targets in Casablanca) the importance given to festivals grew. The civil and political actors have realised the importance of these artistic events as a wall against obscurantism and terrorism. Since then, the official investment in this domain has been in the context of a fierce battle between the authorities and the radical Islamists for the appropriation of the public space.

In function of their organisation, we can distinguish two types of festivals in Morocco: on the one hand, the official festivals organised by government departments (ministries) and institutional departments (local groups); and, on the other, the non-official festivals initiated by the fabric of associations with the support of patronage. Many of the festivals in Morocco are organised “under the high patronage of the King.”

TABLE 35 Main Festivals Organised by the Ministry of Culture in 2007

Festival	Place	Date
Festival de Dakka et des Rythmes	Taroudant	23-26 May
Festival International du Luth	Tétouan	25-27 May
Festival National de Abidat R'ma	Khouribga	01-03 June
Festival Madih Wa Samaa	Moulay Idriss Zerhoun	07-09 June
Festival de la Musique Andalouse	Chefchaouen	21-24 June
Festival de la Musique Gharnatie	Oujda	28 June- 01 July
Festival de Volubilis	Volubilis	12-17 July
Festival Ben Amar	Moulay Idriss Zerhoun	15-22 July
Festival Rawafid azawane	Laayoune	20 -29 July
Festival Ahidouss	Ain Louh	3-5 August
Festival El Aïta	Safi	10-12 August

The Official Actors in the Promotion of Festivals

The Ministry of Culture is the regulatory authority of the cultural and artistic sector in Morocco. According to the decree stipulating its powers, this department's objective is "to produce and implement the policy of the government in the field of heritage and cultural and artistic development." The promotion of festivals falls within the competence of arts management responsible for "developing and promoting the fields of theatre, music, [...] and defining initiatives of encouragement and support for artistic creation while guaranteeing dissemination and commercialisation." The fields of action are several: music, dance, theatre, video art and comics.

Festivals are an important activity of the Ministry of Culture and it annually organises around twenty cultural and artistic festivals at a national or international level. It also gives subsidies to non-official festivals. The criteria of the Ministry in its policy of organisation and subsidy of festivals are the following: preserving and fostering cultural heritage, opening up to other cultures, and supporting Moroccan artists.

Along with the Ministry of Culture, several official actors are involved in the organisation of festivals. A large number of ministerial departments take part in this field through the support and organisation of these events (Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Higher Education). In addition to the *Wilayas* and the prefectures, the local groups and the elective assemblies (region, town council, *commune*) have an active role in this field; each area has its own festival calendar. Other official institutions are associated with it: Moroccan National Board of Tourism, Regional Investment Centres, Royal Institute for Amazigh Culture.

The Contribution of Civil Society and Patronage

In Morocco, the summer festival season starts around May. The driving forces of many of these events are local NGOs and the private sector. Several associations have been especially created with the aim of initiating and promoting the festivals in their respective regions: Forum Casablanca, *Esprit de Fès*, *Alegria Chamalia*, *Fondation des Festivals de Marrakech*, etc. Cooperation between several local participating entities is another form of festival organisation (for example, the Group of Associations in Nador and the Association Conte'Act with the support of the Development Agency of L'Oriental for the first year of the *Festival des Cultures Immatérielles Méditerranéennes*). The famous festivals are supervised and promoted by figures close to the decision centres (advisors to the King or former ministers: A. Azoulay, H. Aourid, M. Kabbaj, M. Bennaïssa).

Among the active structures at this level is the *Fondation Esprit de Fès*, created in 2006. Presided by M. Kabbaj, former advisor to the King and current governor of Casablanca, it is supported by a large network of institutional and private partners. This NGO participates in the development and the influence of the town of Fes through many festivals (*Festival de Fès des Musiques Sacrées du Monde*; *Festival dans la Ville*; *Les Rencontres de Fès*; *Festival du Malhoun et de la Poésie Urbaine*; *Festival National de la Culture Amazighe...*). The festival of holy music has enhanced the image of Fes and has made it a town known worldwide.

The sponsoring of the festivals also depends on the private sector. The posters of these events include the name of different commercial entities (banks, companies, media outlets...) as active parties in the organi-

TABLE 36 Main Non-Official Festivals in 2007

Festival	Place	Date
Festival Mawazin Musiques du Monde	Rabat	18-24 May
Festival de la Musique du Désert	Merzouga	24-26 May
Boulevard des Jeunes Musiciens	Casablanca	31 May-3 June
Festival Musique Sacré du Monde	Fes	1-10 June
Nuits de la Méditerranée	Tangiers	2-8 July
Festival Timitar	Agadir	4-7 July
Festival National des Arts Populaires	Marrakesh	11-15 July
Festival Alegria	Chefchaouen	12-14 July
Festival Gnawa et Musiques du Monde	Essaouira	19-23 July
Casa Music	Casablanca	19-22 July
Festival des Cultures Immatérielles Méditerranéennes	Nador	25-28 July
Festival les Calèches	Marrakesh	8-12 August
Festival des Jeunes Talents Gnawa	Essaouira	18-21 August

sation. Throughout the summer of 2007, the telephone companies have taken the initiative of organising activities on the beaches of several Moroccan towns: “beach concert of Méditel”; “beach festival of Maroc Télécom”; “urbayan fever tour de Wana.” Moreover, several embassies (France, Spain, Belgium, Great Britain) along with foreign cultural institutes and centres (*Institut culturel français*, Instituto Cervantes, British Council...) support the different events in Morocco.

Importance and Achievements of the Festivals

As vectors of human and economic development, the festivals contribute to the influence of Morocco at an international level and to the promotion of universal humanistic values. Several slogans created on the occasion of these festivals focus on the principles of dialogue, peace and tolerance. Bringing together Moroccan and foreign artists in these artistic events symbolises the importance of intercultural exchanges and the opening towards the other. Festivals form part of a cultural tourism strategy making visible the wealth and diversity of the local heritage (arts and crafts, culinary art, architecture). Simultaneously, conferences and public debates are organised to reflect on the future of the towns.

The Ministry of Culture strives to “make these events a means of cultural and artistic invigoration by defining their specific objectives: the opening towards other cultures; and the awareness-raising of the government and non-government actors about the need to favour the expression of the local and regional cultural potentialities.” In their turn, the associations aim to celebrate their town and region, contribute to their development and promote their international influence. Through the creation of new

jobs and infrastructures, the festivals prompt a socio-economic dynamic that sometimes revives the town as a whole. The example of the town of Essaouira is illustrative. Marginalised for a long time, Essaouira currently benefits from the positive effects of the *Festival de Gnawa et Musiques du Monde* which in 2007 was held for its tenth year. The success of the festival and its international prestige have encouraged the organisers to initiate other festivals with a view to guaranteeing annual activities in the town (*Festival des Alizés*, *Festival des Musiques Andalouses*). By defining itself as a promoter of the town and its lasting development, the association Essaouira Mogador, which organises these festivals, was created in 1992 and is presided by A. Azoulay (advisor to the King). It contributes, among other aspects, to resolving the shortcomings in infrastructure of the town and the rehabilitation of historical sites.

Moreover, one of the main achievements of these events is the involvement of the citizens in the affairs of their town. The organisers put forward notions of participation, ownership and citizenship. Moroccans are invited to go onto the street to attend the numerous festivals whereas in the past they just passively consumed the official cultural production offered by television. The festivals, organised in the open air and free, are attended by a public of all ages and different social classes. They therefore reveal the emergence of an urban culture and of new forms of sociability and ownership of the public spaces.

Youth Festivals: *Nayda* or the Moroccan *Movida*

Henceforth, young Moroccan artists have their own label: *Nayda* (literally, wake up; revival). In all Moroccan

STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN SOCIETY

A significant aspect of 2006 was the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on "Strengthening the role of women in society" held on 14-15 November in Istanbul. The Euro-Mediterranean partners, under the auspices of the European Union's Finnish Presidency, based on their shared international, regional and national commitments, agreed to work within a common framework for action to strengthen women's role in political, civil, social, economic and cultural spheres, as well as to fight against discrimination.

The Conference was held in accordance with the Barcelona Declaration of 1995 and the Five Year Work Programme agreed during the 10th Anniversary Euro-Mediterranean Summit, held in Barcelona in 2005. It was then stated that partners would adopt "measures to achieve gender equality, preventing all forms of discrimination and ensuring protection of the rights of women," while at the same time taking stock of the Rabat Preparatory Conference held on 14-16 June 2006. Prior to that, certain preparatory reports had been drafted by the Anna Lindh Foundation, Euromesco and Femise civil society networks under the aegis of the European Commission.

The Euro-Mediterranean ministers stressed that equal participation of men and women in all spheres of life is a crucial element of democracy and confirmed that only by the inclusion of all people and determined action will the region's women be able to fulfil their ambitions and aspirations and, by extension, contribute towards the realisation of the underlying objectives of the Barcelona Declaration: the attainment of a common area of peace, stability and shared prosperity in the Mediterranean region. This goal, based inter alia on democracy, respect for human rights and sustainable development, can only be achieved by guaranteeing all women full enjoyment of their rights.

In the conclusions agreed by the Euro-Mediterranean partners they state that they will include women's political, civil, social, economic and cultural rights in their dialogues, including in the framework of the Association Agreements, the European Neighbourhood Policy action plans and in the European Union programmes and projects. In this framework, the ministers recognise that a strengthened dialogue and cooperation between governmental and non-governmental actors across the whole Euro-Mediterranean region is necessary. This will include the promotion of dialogue among parliamentarians within the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly, as well as civil society organisations, women's associations, youth, trade unions, and business and professional associations in accordance with national legislation as

appropriate and cooperation between national, regional and local administrations.

In the declaration all the Euro-Mediterranean partners commit themselves to mobilise financial resources to support implementation of this Framework of Action. In addition to national funding, the European Union will provide adequate resources for its implementation at national and regional levels through technical and financial assistance provided through the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), bilateral contributions from EU member states, FEMIP and other relevant financial instruments.

Recognising that international covenants on human rights include the obligation to ensure equal rights of men and women to enjoy all economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights, the Euro-Mediterranean partners will embrace this holistic approach based on the following interdependent and interlinked priorities:

- Women's political and civil rights;
- Women's social and economic rights and sustainable development;
- Women's rights in the cultural sphere and the role of communication and the mass media.

In this resolution the Euro-Mediterranean partners, according to the shared internationally agreed commitments, will pursue the objective of strengthening the role of women through mainstreaming of full enjoyment of human rights by women and their needs into all plans, projects and other relevant activities of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, and likewise supporting specific measures in favour of women.

One significant aspect at this Conference is the introduction of a review mechanism, since the Euro-Mediterranean partners have committed to work towards the objectives contained in the document over the next five years. In this regard, they invite the Euromed Committee to convene, at least once a year, a Euromed ad hoc meeting at expert senior official level, to review the implementation of the present measures contained in these conclusions and to inform the Annual Euro-Mediterranean Foreign Affairs Ministers Conference. A follow-up Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference to discuss the various issues related to the full enjoyment of all human rights by women and the progress made in the implementation of these measures will take place in 2009.

Summary prepared by Maria-Àngels Roque (IEMed)

towns, groups of young musicians are emerging and express a new form of identity through their artistic performances. Some of these music groups have acquired a fame that goes beyond national borders (Hoba Hoba Spirit, Darga, Amarg Fusion, H-Kayne, Bigg). Several observers equate this new cultural dynamic with the Spanish *movida*. More than a fashion, it is a movement of cultural renewal started by the new generation. Beyond the protest dimension of their intentions, the actors of the Moroccan *movida* have the aim of acting and participating in the creation of the Morocco of tomorrow. They appear as producers of

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a committed message related to the daily aspects of their society and the problems of their peers (social inequality, unemployment, illegal immigration, etc.). For them, artistic expression is a means of exhorting changes and a way of doing politics differently. Several songs deal with corruption, the drama

of terrorist attacks and terrorism. Coinciding with the legislative elections of September 2007, the music groups participated in the campaign of mobilisation to encourage the young to participate in the elections.

The premises of the *Nayda* movement go back to the late 1990s with the organisation of the *Boulevard des Jeunes Musiciens*. This festival, created in 1999 by the Association of Artistic and Cultural Education, annually brings together the fans and groups of the new music scene in Casablanca. It is one of the fastest growing music events in Africa and the Arab-Muslim world. In its last year, it collected more than 150,000 young people for four days. Following its success as a springboard for young artists, other festivals have been inspired by this experience. In 2007, we saw the birth of the *Festival les Calèches* in Marrakesh which was added to the *Festival des Jeunes Talents Gnawa* in Essaouira in its fourth year.

After an underground phase marked by stigmatisation and accusation (14 young musicians went to prison in 2003), the music scene in Morocco has reached a phase of normalisation. It currently enjoys notable official recognition (subsidies from the Ministry of Culture and access to public media). Also, the presence of young groups is increasingly more central to other festivals (*Mawazine*, *Festival National des Arts Populaires*, etc.). However, certain Islamists and conservatives attack the organisers of these events and disparage the young artists. These detractors suggest that the festivals encourage perversion and debauchery and accuse the young musicians of Westernisation and loss of identity.

In virtue of its context, its actors and its ambitions, *Nayda* is defined as a citizen movement, which emerged

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from the reality of Morocco and is in keeping with its time. Its initiators are part of processes of production of a new form of Moroccan identity which goes beyond the “classical” nationalist ideology. Moroccanness and patriotic feeling are clearly stressed (a famous album by Bigg, a star rapper, is entitled “Moroccans until death”). The reconstruction of this identity involves the reclaiming of national heritage, correlated to the opening towards the culture of the Other. The use of dialects (Darija, Amazigh) appears as an identity label which lends importance to these mother tongues spoken by the majority of Moroccans. The songs and names of the groups mix darija and foreign languages. As a result of the artistic and cultural mixing, “fusion” as a new composite music genre is notably appreciated by the young. Thus, this new cultural wave, *Nayda*, illustrates a pluralist Morocco which moves to the rhythm of festivals, creation and cultural interactions.