

Deviant body. The stakes of an identity construction

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Anthropological literature in the Maghreb has often classified religions in dualities between popular Islam and scholarly Islam, or religion has thus been understood as a backdrop against which oppositions such as saints versus laity or orthodox Islam and popular Islam have been identified (Dermenghem, 1981, Gellner, 2003, Jamous, 2002). This opposition of the religious fact is far from being the fruit of ethnographic observation; it is rather the result, on the one hand, of a projection of the religious categories, popular as well as official, borrowed from Christianity, and, on the other hand, it is «the product of an optical effect engendered by this compelling need for distancing implied by the construction of the ethnological object itself» (Melliti, 2006, p. 166). On the other hand, the relationship between myths and healing rituals has been given little importance (Crapanzano, 2002, Rachik, 1990, Rhani, 2014), despite the fact that this relationship is fundamental for the analysis of social and religious dynamics.

Beyond the religious, this article seeks to analyze the social and cultural dynamics within the *mousssem*¹ of Sidi Ali ben Hmdouch. Here, I pay particular attention to the figure of Aicha Al Hmdouchia and the effeminate. Thus, the field observations are analyzed from their respective contributions (plural) of each saint—Sidi Ali and Sidi Ahmed—in the construction of the *baraka*² and the sacred space. In this dynamic, the effeminate *chowaf*³ corps plays a primordial role in the construction of the relationship to the therapeutic power associated with Sidi Ali. The heterogeneity of the stories around the arrival of Aicha in Sidi Ali village has generated several different rituals related to Lalla Aicha Hmdouchia or Lalla Aicha Dhgrouria Soudania. Aicha allowed the entry of the new actors of the *baraka* (chowaf and chowafa); it is about men marked by the feminization of their body.

Through Aicha several things are expressed at the social level; she creates order and disorder from the way of perceiving sexuality, which reveals a strong link between sexuality and the body. It is in this sense that sexuality symbolizes power in Aicha, and the sexual referent plays a key role in the formation of referents in terms of ritual given to Aicha.

The *ethnographic work* was done at Sidi Ali Ben Hmdouch, a village belonging to the Mghassyine "*commune*", city of Moulay Idriss Zerhoun, the holy city located on the famous Zerhoun mountain and 15 km from the city of Meknes. Many powers are attributed to Sidi Ali Ben Hamdouch, and some patients spend the night in the walls of mausoleums in order to cure a chronic or incurable disease, ward off the evil eye, or solve problems related to infertility or celibacy. Beside Sidi Ali, Aicha holds a power that exceeds the power of Sidi Ali, to the point that the ritual today gives it more importance. This article seeks to show, through the relationship between myth and rite, that Aicha is placed at the top of the hierarchical power for the visitors.

¹ Annual festival dedicated in Morocco to a saint; it is an activity at once religious but also associated with festive and commercial activities. It is a space-time that incorporates rites, beliefs, and traditions; some *mousssems* have disappeared but others continue and even gain in force.

² *Baraka* literally means blessing, it can reside in beings, actions or objects. *Baraka* is a divine grace; it is acquired hereditarily or by the accomplishment of a miracle.

³ *Chowaf* masculine, *chowafa* feminine. The term means farseeing and is a character who claims to predict the future, as part of Lalla Aicha, the *chowaf* presents itself as an intermediary between Aicha and the visitors.

This ethnographic work was realized in Sidi Ali between 2013 and 2016 with a focus on observation of rituals during the *moussem* that takes place every year for a week on the occasion of the birth of the prophet Mohamed. In order to diversify the sources of the data, we have also made other observations in the village on weekends where several visitors travel from Morocco and abroad to visit Lalla Aicha, to make a *lila*⁴ or to fund of donations. In addition to the observation, about twenty semi-structured interviews were conducted, in which the purpose was essentially to bring together the different myths around Aicha. This work seeks to sketch the role of Lalla Aicha as conciliator of tensions that cross society, a link between the body and social dynamics from a sacred place. It is in this context that the myth, the rite, and the body mingle to give meaning to the power held in the margins.

Myth and power

Myths have framed much of the history of humanity and the gods; they gave legitimacy to the installation of powers, whether in its profane or sacred version. The so-called origin myths have the function of creating «late apologies that seek to ratify contemporary rules by making them both original and timeless» (Meillassoux, 2001, p. 347). In his analysis of the myths Levi-Strauss applies three rules to myths: first of all a myth cannot be interpreted at one level; a myth must never be interpreted alone; finally, a group of myths can only be interpreted in relation to the individual, that is, from the ethnography of the society producing the myth (Levi-Strauss, 2012). However, for Levi-Strauss a myth owes nothing to the rite; each one of them has its own structure, and a single myth does not form a ritual but is the crossings of several myths that share the same figures, which will eventually produce one and several rituals. The strength of the ritual is not related to the depth of the myths but to the way in which the individuals approve this myth and stage it.

Myths in this sense change textualization according to those who tell them. «A myth or set of narratives that make up a system with a rite or rituals whose practice itself obeys specific collective constraints, partly autonomous from oral memory» (Privat, 2014, par. IV). The myth thus depends on the interactions in which they occur, and on the political, religious, social and economic context of its production. I will not enclose the myth in the social structure, since the myth is only the symbol of static and immobile societies. The myth in the approach that I chose is part of a creative orality; it functions to explore the possibilities in the group (the imaginary) and is not faithful to a tradition but is especially pragmatic. The myth seeks to establish the origin of the group, ensures its survival, and allows for renewal by the people who tell it. The latter end up by appropriating it to transmit it from various contexts.

Myths play key roles in the construction of difference but also in the power of the margin. In the analysis of the place of orality in traditional societies, Lévi-Strauss analyzes the mechanisms of change in these societies as being mastered by the place that orality plays, as a brake so that changes have a minimal effect on these societies (Goody, 2014). Memorization and oral transmission mean that the past is constantly renewed and updated by interpretations of tradition. The body of the effeminate finds in the rite and the myth a

⁴ *Lila* means night, it is a Sufi ceremony in the form of *dikr* (songs of praise to God and to the prophets), in the frame of *Moussem* of Sidi Ali, it is dedicated to Aicha, with songs made by musical groups, the Issawa or the Gnawa, where one essentially celebrates the spirits.

source for overcoming the social control of the body. The myth is understood and interpreted to have a precise function. This is the example Tzvedan gives to the interpretation of the conquest of America by the Indians, who perceive the conquests of the white man as a return of the gods invoked in the ancestral myths (Tzvedan, 1982). The myth has the function of accepting reality by interpreting it in the work of the present. The orality around Lalla Aicha allows an inversion of the relations of gender, the relations with the *baraka* and the hierarchy. This orality is not based here on reinterpretations to maintain the social order but rather the inversion of this order to give access to those who are excluded because the mechanisms of orality are invested by myths. These myths are mobilized to interpret, integrate, and live a reality. The relationship between written history and orality is not so summarized in the relationship between tradition and modernity; it is not lived in the dichotomy but in a relationship that is permanently interchangeable. They define themselves relative to each other, and the boundaries are mobile. The body functions as a performance instrument; in a provocative sense, it relies on the strength of Aicha.

According to my interlocutors, Sidi Ali arrived at the village of Beni Rached near Meknes towards Moulay Driss Zahroun road. He was lost, and his mule's stopping at the village is the genesis for the foundation of his new *zawya*⁵. Sidi Ali, according to my interlocutors, performed a miracle at the time of Sultan Moulay Ismail (17th century). The myth says that the young wife of Moulay Ismail could not get pregnant despite the fertility of the Sultan who never ceased to give his wives and his concubines children. It is said that at his death he left ninety-nine children. One of the servants told Lalla Auda to go and visit Sidi Ali. A few days after the visit, she became pregnant. No longer able to hide her pregnancy from the Sultan, she told him her secret. The sultan recognized the miracle and asked for the construction of the mausoleum with a *qobba* "dome" so that the saint could be revered.

The key for this article is not retelling these various myths, but what draws our attention in these myths is the place accorded to the body. Sidi Ali certainly performs a miracle, but this miracle allows a double birth: the birth of a child of Lalla Auda and the birth of the saint himself through the miracle. Another myth tells that Sidi Ali was the muqaddim of the fierce Sultan Moulay Ismail. One day, the sultan ordered Sidi Ali to fetch Sidi Bu'abid Charqi. But before agreeing to go back to Sidi Ali, Sidi Charqi asks him to turn the mill. When the latter began to turn the mill, Sidi Charqi touched his hand and then the mill continued to turn alone without Sidi Ali noticing it. A black woman pointed out to Sidi Ali that the mill was grinding the grain by itself, but Sidi Ali asked her to be quiet and cursed her, at which point she became blind. When Sidi Charqi saw the blind woman, he asked Sidi Ali to leave, but then Sidi Ali hid next to the door and Sidi Charqi fell ill and began to vomit. Sidi Charqi asked the woman to clean up his vomiting. When she left, she found Sidi Ali at the door, the latter took the bucket and drank all the vomit of Sidi Charqi. This myth does not appear in the writings of the brotherhood and is even rejected by a local scholar of Hmadcha who recognizes only the mystical side of the saint.

Contrary to Sidi Ali, Sidi Ahmed Dghoughi did not found a *zawiya* peculiar to him but rather remained attached to his master. He is the origin of the trance practices among the Hmadcha. The shrine of Sidi Ahmed is in the village El Qli'a, three kilometers from the

⁵ *Zawya* a term that literally means angle, where Sufis gather to practice their mystical ritual, *zawya* has played an important role in the political history in Morocco.

mausoleum of Sidi Ali. The myth told by both the disciples and the descendants of the two saints relates the connection of Sidi Ahmed as a disciple of Sidi Ali, He is a disciple attached to his master. Back in the village after a meeting with Sidi Charqi, Sidi Ali arrived at Ayn Kbir "the big spring" in the village of Beni Rached where he met Sidi Ahmed Dghrouri. Sidi Ahmed wanted to be the servant of Sidi Ali. When he insisted, the saint then asked him to prepare water for his ablutions. Sidi Ahmed required that Allah give him the *baraka* of Sidi Ali if he prepared his water. Sidi Ali replied that Allah would grant his request. The myth says that Sidi Ahmed or Sidi Ahmed Bouchakour, saw that his master did not have a wife, so he proposed to bring back a wife to his master. In insisting, Sidi Ali accepted the proposal of his disciple provided that it was Aisha the daughter of King Ol Khir of Sudan. Sidi Ahmed accepted this, traveled to Sudan, and upon returning learned that his master had not left his room for three days. The other disciples informed Sidi Ahmed that Sidi Ali had not given any sign of life for a few days. Sidi Ahmed went home to his master and found him dead on his rack "paillet." Then, Sidi Ahmed took an ax and began to cut his head while invoking Allah hay 'Living God,' and this is how the Hmdouchi rite began. However, the death of Sidi Ali coincided with the disappearance of Aisha, and it was "as if the earth had swallowed her, when she heard the death of Sidi Ali", an expression dear to those who tell the myth of Aicha. Thus, in the case of Sidi Ali or Sidi Ahmed, the two saints are placed in a process of feminization for a number of reasons related to the fact that the task of turning the mill is a female activity related to the status of khadam 'servant' of Sidi Ahmed. First, the image given from the myths to Sidi Ali and Sidi Ahmed focuses on their physical proximity. From the status of servant, Sidi Ahmed puts himself at the disposal of his master (Hammoudi, 2001). The brotherly order of Hmadcha is based essentially on this hierarchical and ambiguous relationship between two men, a creative relationship of the brotherhood order. The visitors must visit first Sidi Ahmed then Sidi Ali; it is Sidi Ali before his death who established this rite of visit according to the descendants: «Those who wish to visit me must begin with Sidi Ahmed». According to the myth Sidi Ali died before he could marry Aicha, which explains the myths relating the androgynous position of Aicha. The androgynicity of Aicha intersects with the bond of Sidi Ali and Sidi Ahmed, but she separates from this bond because it gives birth to an ideal union of difference. This explains why almost all the myths about Aicha focus on the eventual marriage bond with Sidi Ali. Aicha did not marry Sidi Ali but was brought back in order to complete the other half of the saint. The purpose of a woman's presence to maintain order is threatened by a dubious connection between the two saints. The stories around Aicha, Sidi Ali, and Sidi Ahmed imply the risk of sexual inversion at any moment. As the dynamics of order and disorder are found within myths and rituals, this ambiguity motivates the saint's visit for our interlocutors because if Sidi Ali is perceived as the protector of Sidi Ahmed, Aicha as a double (human and spirit) protects the two saints. The sexual proximity between the two saints is thus central for the *chowaf* as for the effeminate visitors. Indeed, some visitors call Sidi Ali the patron saint of *zwama*⁶, and Aicha is the spirit who watches over them.

The myth gives birth to the therapeutic power of Sidi Ali but also affects Sidi Ahmed and Lalla Aicha from other myths. This is the creation of the marginal figures represented by Sidi Ahmed and Lalla Aicha. The feminization of the body of Sidi Ahmed and the presence of

⁶ A pejorative term for qualifying homosexuals

Aicha created an ambivalence of power between the three saints⁷. Certainly myths try to hierarchize the relationship between saints as an asymmetrical relationship between master/disciple, but the rite intervenes to produce ambivalence. The power to heal is no longer centralized and is no longer conditioned by genealogical affiliation⁸, Lalla Aicha is a way to access the *baraka* for those excluded from *charaf*⁹. There is a sort of crystallization of a new center of power around Lalla Aicha, and her presence introduces a new paradigm through the passage of the disciple to the adept. We have surely a segmental relation, but it is a segmentarity which becomes hard because it is a circular segmentarity «which does not cease to move, but remains invariant in its displacements, returning to a machine of resonance» (Deleuze *et al.*, 1980, p. 259). Thus, the circular dynamic of myths has created two different processes. On the one hand, there is a saint Sidi Ali connected to a mystical dynamic whose disciples seek to purify the myths around him through writing, excluding any form of orality in connection with Aicha. A descendant of Sidi Ali during an exchange made me understand that any story about Sidi Ali apart from what the descendants say has no legitimacy, and he insisted that, as a researcher, I must take into account only the stories of the brotherhood. This descendant expressed to me his dissatisfaction with my desire to looking for other stories from Lalla Aicha. Moreover, the question that my interlocutor asked me regarding the relevance of the statements collected outside the brotherhoods, how I could trust stories told by *Lak'hab* 'prostitutes' and *zwamal*. When the descendants of Sidi Ali establish written accounts, they try to discourage the transgression of the norm. It is in this context that the function of *chowafat*'seers/fortune tellers' becomes a source of transgression, and this function is guaranteed by the links maintained with Lalla Aicha.

Aicha. A Feminine Power

Lalla Aicha presents the tension between the genealogical power of Sidi Ali and the therapeutic power of Aicha. Thus, the power of Aicha allows for the reversal of the access to the *charaf* through the feminization of the source. Women and the effeminate have easy access to the status of healer and *charaf* through Aicha. These are two powers that live in parallel, but each one needs the other to exist; they are inseparable and coexist, passing one into the other. The presence of Aicha within Sidi Ali's territory refers to the nature of the social formation that visits the saints, but the visitors do not have the same expectations, the same goals, and so on. Aicha's body is both in the visible world and the invisible; it is at the border of two worlds. It guarantees the rite of legitimation through transgression as Aicha is both in and out of society. By its position, it allows the margin to draw new boundaries between the normal, abnormal, and unusual in the society.

Unlike the two saints, Aicha is present everywhere; she is mobile, and it is difficult to identify all the myths around her. Her body has no fixed sanctuary as she has disappeared. The different places of her veneration are in fact only the symbols of her ontological existence.

⁷ The stories of our interlocutors refer to this ambiguity, which explains for them the presence of "homosexuality" in the *mousseem*.

⁸ See also chapter six, Rhani Z, 2014. *The Power to heal. Myth, Mysticism and Politics in Morocco*. Leiden / Boston: Brill. The figure of Bouchra, a therapist in Ben Yeffu, is a social exception, because she is not only a descendant of the saint, but she also escapes male authority, trying to reverse, or rather - to establish, the order of the transmission.

⁹ *Charaf* is a position social and religion, it is acquired by the hereditary way, or by the accomplishment of a miracle.

She is the real intermediary, a figure that sums up the ambivalence of pilgrims visiting the place. She is almost holy but is not; she has a double position. The founding myth of her arrival at Beni Rached and her disappearance reinforce this ambivalence; she is not the wife of Sidi Ali but was destined for him. Thus, she is neither human nor djiniya 'spirit' but appears half djiniya and half human. It is her feet that deceive her, cow's feet for some or camel for others. Her myth is movable in space and is temporalized, in contrast to Sidi Ali or Sidi Ahmed who are located and identified in a mausoleum that encloses them.

In her ritual, Aicha gathers hospitality and hostility (Rhani et al, 2015) in the same rite, which is not granted to any of the two saints. The relationship between hostility and hospitality is not dualistic; one completes the other, and the final hostility ends up being hospitality through the sacrifice of an animal for the spirit of Aicha. The power of Aicha places it both inside and outside the human universe where the visitors, her subjects, and her myth and ritual are located, interweaving power and the sacred. Aicha gives everyone the opportunity and the means to obtain what they seek, and all who come to her are divided according to the same categories of domination and subordination. For Aicha to fulfill requests and expectations requires each woman and each man to be subject to her conditions and not to doubt her power, *nija* 'intention.' The *nija* formula found in ritual practices, whether in orthodox Islam, Sufi Islam or so-called popular Islam is the condition of all things and all order. In the world of politics, as in the world of rituals, the strength of power lies in the application of proper rituals, and the rules and prohibitions are respected. The ritual aims at the interpretation and control of the event (Augé, 1994), which requires respect for the principles underlying the ritual.

Unlike the biological affiliation subject to constraints and hierarchies of brotherhoods, the hierarchy is based on the order of proximity and degree of use of the consanguineous link. The link with Aicha for the actors who are at the margin is presented as a kinship that escapes the normative link established by the anthropologists of the *charaf*.

Becoming *chowaf/a* of Lalla Aicha

Sidi Ali did not leave a child; the descendants of the saint are in fact only the children of his brother. Here we have a strong argument for *chowaf/a* to reject any form of *charaf* manipulation by descendants. The arrival of *chowaf* in Sidi Ali is linked to economic and spiritual interests. The relationship of the Hmdouchiyan with the village Ben Rached is not based on a blood relationship; they are foreign to the territory. This explains the migration of several Hmadcha families from the village from the moment they are excluded from the economic sharing of income related to Sidi Ali's visits. A young man from the village living with his family in Meknes explained to me that his father and other Hmadcha family left the village to avoid going into conflict with cousins who had their hands on the income of the master and monopolize the mausoleum.

The *chowaf* accompany the visitors during the rites; their links with Aicha guarantee the passage through the rite of legitimation. Like Aicha, *chowaf* are both inside and outside of society. By their positions at the margin, they draw the boundaries between the normal and the abnormal in the society. The status of the Lalla Aicha-affiliated *chowaf* takes the double position, so the *chowaf* are in and out of the group; they allow by their role to be

intermediaries between order and disorder through the arousal of fear and the offering of solutions in addition to their status and ambivalence. Thus, Aicha of Sidi Ali essentially allows with his ability the legitimization and institutionalization of the margin from the social point of view.

Which process follows the *chowaf* of Lalla Aicha? The body of the *chowaf* is part of a double symbolism through the social and the cultural (Mouna, 2015). It is an essentially individual process, the initiation link with Aicha is a personal journey that takes into account only the personal experience, an encounter with a spirit, seeing personal suffering that brings the *chowaf* to healers who ultimately end up becoming *chowaf*, because Aicha has blessed them. I will give here the example of a *chowaf* and a *chowaf* apprentice.

The Stories

Rachid is a *chowaf* apprentice from Tangier who works and lives with a *chowafa* in the city of Salé (five kilometers from the city of Rabat the capital). He has a mathematics science baccalaureate level, and since 2012 he has been frequenting Sidi Ali but comes especially for Lalla Aicha/*mwima* 'mother.' He is defined as inhabited by the spirit of Aicha; in moments of crisis he is self-harming and says that it is difficult to control himself in these moments but finds relief with Aicha. He must visit and venerate her; if he does not do that, she will take revenge on him. Work with the *chowafa* allowed him to occupy the position of assistant; he prepares the customers, the products for visits, he launches *youyous*, etc. He occupies this position of disciple with another girl who practices prostitution in addition to her job as helping *chowafa*. Rachid describes himself as obsessed with cleanliness; he spends his time cleaning his body and the places where he is. Apart from his work with the *chowafa*, he is unable to work; he cannot produce any effort outside the work that is done with *chowafa* but always has money in his pocket, "You know I do not work, but I still find money in my pocket, and I do not even know who gave me this money, I have never stayed without money." This work as disciple of *chowafa* also allows him to learn the job; he himself offers sacrifices for *mwima*. Lalla Aicha does not let him get married, and when someone hurts him, Lalla Aicha takes revenge on that person. "One day Lalla Aicha *mwima* came to see me in my dreams; she told me that there is a certain black man who will kill me. In the morning I woke up blind; I consulted doctors but without success...she came to see me two days ago and she told me to give her a white hen, but I did not do what she asks me, so since yesterday I have been mutilating myself and I do not sleep at night anymore."

The second story is from *chowaf* Hamid; the latter comes every year to Sidi Ali and offers a spectacle of trance and self-harming to his clients. He films everything for those customers who cannot travel to see him. Hamid defines himself as inhabited by Aicha and having a pact with her. It is she who gives him his blessing, and he on his part fulfills his requirements. During the moussem of 2016, Hamid from Casablanca came with his family, his friends, and his customers as every year. However, unlike 2015, Hamid was accompanied by effeminates and girls who carry candles during his trance in public. During the trance, Hamid came out with his face covered with a white veil, wearing a white *kamiss*, black cape and a black hat. He was followed by a group of Gnawa, and the group of girls and effeminates carried great candles and were charged with throwing *youyous* and prayers on the prophet. Unlike

previous years where Hamid goes around Sidi Ali, during the last *mousssem* Hamid performed a ten-minute trance in front of the rented house then went back inside the house and finished the trance in the living room where he started the trance, continued until he was exhausted, and when he fell to the ground, he started kicking. At this moment a woman dressed in red went round the show to offer visitors dates and milk, and Hamid stood up saying, "Here is *bacha* Hamou, the king of the jinn who does the lap himself," referring to the woman who was offering dates and milk. Another man/helper put down a chair covered with a red cloth in the middle of the living room, and the present people paraded around the chair to have the *baraka* of Sidi Hamid.

To have the *baraka*, Hamid removed the veil for women and stretched their hair and passed his hand over their body while whispering in their ear. For the boys he removed the hat and the caps and also passed his hand on their body. Each beneficiary of the *baraka* left at least fifty dirhams. During the ceremony, there was a young effeminate nicknamed Monica who had come to deflower using the word *yatsarah* (have sex the first time). He came to accompany what he called the boss *dyal zwamal* 'the leader of the gays,' that is, Sidi Hamid. At the ceremony, Sidi Hamid sent his *baraka* to two women present by WhatsApp, one from Saudi Arabia and the other from Belgium.

The Body of the Effeminate, a Source of Transgression

The effeminate are embarrassed to see me asking the question about the power of Aicha, probably because they feel that my question places them outside of orthodox belief, I have the right for answer: «It is only God who heals, but Aicha is a *sbab*¹⁰ / reason». It is not Aicha who is central in this procedure but rather what the body is capable of accomplishing by putting Aicha as *sbab*. The *chowaf* plays on the whole body, on the sensitive body, «not this possible body of which he is possible to maintain that it is an information machine, but this current body» (Merleau-Ponty, 2011, p. 9). With his body he comes to reveal the other bodies. The profession of "true" *chowaf* requires a body and an associated body, one that is placed to regulate tensions and find the middle ground between the social order and the otherness that the *chowaf* carries within him from his own body. It is an experienced body which has been able to cross obstacles. The Cartesian argument tended to separate the soul from the body, but Merleau-Ponty reversed this argument (Merleau-Ponty, 2011, *op. cit*) by making the soul and the body come together. It is not the opposition that allows both but is the continuity of the one in relation to the other that defines them. The moving body is a visible body that carries within it an invisible world. The body of the effeminate creates a new form of expression in the space of Sidi Ali, «it generates a break with its normative world» (Mouna, 2015, p. 113) and transgresses a social use of the body, It is in this sense that «transgression can be a way of going beyond an entire social order, of undermining it in a radical way» (Balandier, 2012, p. 31).

The actors distinguish between lesbianism and homosexuality. Lesbianism is considered to be less serious for the moral order than the male homosexual. The body of lesbians is less stigmatized than that of men; it is considered less dangerous for the social order established by men because a man cannot be deprived of his masculinity to become deviled.

¹⁰ *Sbab* can be understood here as a reason but also as the cause in the literary sense of the term.

Homosexuals are equated with *zwamal* 'fags', and lesbians *lkhab* 'whores/prostitutes.' Between *zwamal* and *lkhab*, there is a major difference in terms of sexual status. Men are deviled; however, the women are assimilated to deviant behavior. Thus the former is excluded from intercourse because of its status, and the second is stigmatized by her conduct. However, Aicha creates duality among the effeminate followers; they are neither entirely men nor entirely women, but it is not a duality based on opposition but rather in unity. The mythical narrative plays the role of this unity by expressing the union; thus the narration establishes the order. As it is a mythical narrative, fertile myths give rise to a transformation in terms of sexuality and body.

Aicha gives the *chowafas* and effeminates a reference, an ambivalent framework that is essential in the Moroccan imagination. Aicha's power is based on symbols, rites, imaginations, beliefs, and the disorder implied by the "mystical" ritual. This ritual makes it possible to push back the borders of the impossible and is about a ritualized insubordination which operates only in the ambivalence and which serves as a guarantee of the anti-conformity as the actors confront the dominant norms. Between personal choice and manipulation, several respondents say they come for personal choice, whereas others follow the desire of family so as not to feel excluded. The link between the order of the visible and order of the invisible is effected by the means of ritual with the body and the symbolic registers of this link. The initiatory path that the disciples of Aicha accomplish allows them to appropriate her symbolic power, the power to heal for others, and the power to be healed for others. It is competitive power that puts in crisis the normative way to access the *charaf* of the descendants of Sidi Ali.

The androgenic position of Aicha has given rise to multiple rituals of consecration and initiation. It does not reveal forms of relaxation of social pressure alone; Aicha gives birth to people in the sense that the rite which is devoted to her is a rite of maturation, a rite - in the context of the inversion - which is not to feminize men's bodies or to masculinize women's bodies totally, but «to give each sex its necessary complement of the opposite sex» (Balandier, 1985, p. 60). Aicha contributes to the formation of a sexual identity, and she is associated with many sexual sufferings of men. However, she is also the woman who protects in the sense of a mother because she has the capacity to procreate a new sexual and social identity, and the rites of initiation or consecration that are devoted to her give her a central position. In the rite of inversion, there is a transformation, a becoming to be created. It is a passage to other things; the body carries signs of passage, and this inversion is not a dream nor a fantasy but is real. On the other hand, what is it? Inversion does not produce another person; it is ontological in the sense that it produces the person himself, the self in the sense of Ricœur (Ricœur, 1990). The ego produces the I, and the affiliation with Aicha becomes a means of inversion as the result of a genealogical counter-process. This relationship is based on the foundation of alliance with the spirits that allow an encounter with oneself. The myth is mobilized here as a passage; it is a means of defining a possible place of inversion. It is the dynamics of the rituals as observed that animate the myths. This meeting of the me with the I is told by the followers of Aicha as a moment of transition. Insofar as sexuality is constitutive of the symbolic field, it is the source of a series of differentiation between man and woman and is «on the basis of sexuality that pure/impure opposition takes on all its

clarity. [...] It must be added that sexual continence contributes to highlighting moments of collective life, or strong belonging to the religious community» (Balandier, 1996, p. 12).

The image of Aicha is no exception in Moroccan culture; women who have transgressed the social norms of gender are numerous, women who position themselves between two: not quite a woman but not a man either. The symbolism of Aicha is identical in this sense to that of the Kharboucha, which is an important figure in the construction of *chikha*¹¹ identity. The function of Kharboucha causes the sheikhs to be marginalized. «But this status of marginality is not immutable. The social definition of the "*chikha*" follows the evolution of society. Today it takes place on a new basis, between folklore and art, which suggests many changes» (Soum-Pouyalet, 2007, p. 22). Thus, the story of Kharboucha called Hadda in the tradition of the *'ayta*¹² puts an end to a historical blur to give all forms of "*ayut*" «and their different interpreters a common ancestor. In spite of its vagueness, it defines at its symbolic threshold, a referent in nothingness and the confusion of the history of the *'ayta* and sheikhat.» (Soum-Pouyalet, 2007, *op. cit.* p. 33).

Aicha allows the passage of the Other to the Self. It is an eccentric identity, is the game of center and margin, and is identical to that found in the Greek world. Is there no place here to compare «a figure like that of Artemis, the goddess of the margins as well as the power of integration» (Vernant, 1996, p. 57), to Aicha? Artemis represents the margin and the world of the frontier which is moving people on the frontiers of culture to that of social «identity to allow precisely that social roles are clearly defined. Now, today, they have become much fuzzier» (*ibidem*). The threshold is not defined, and the guarantee of passage from one to the other passes through figures like that of Aicha. The modern world has invented in the name of "modernity" its own ritual of passage, the "Coming out," which is indeed a ritual passage that allows people to announce to the general public, family, relatives their sexual orientation. To say that modern societies have severed the link with ritual remains difficult to sustain; the tradition is not a regression compared to modernity in the same way that the modernity did not cut the link with the ritual. It is above all the purpose of the ritual and its functionality. Every society establishes rules and at the same time blurs others to allow its own continuity, and every society seeks to resolve the tensions that may appear to be related to the body. Aicha tends to maintain the link with the social world by breaking the boundaries of the body because, by doing so, it allows for the crossing of borders, and the body explores these borders through the questioning of its sexuality. Thus, the ritual of the effeminate is based on the vital force of Aicha; this figure rejects any form of duality of the body and brings the body back to the mind. It is in this association that the body is an intelligence in action.

Conclusion

The study of the body of the effeminate shows how «The body is the form of social and cultural significance that leads us simultaneously to the heart of human societies and the heart of anthropos» (Le Broton, 1995, p. 21). The body is a space on which the schemata of

¹¹ It is a term that refers to an elderly woman, wise, chieftain, etc., but in the field of Amazigh musical heritage, it refers to the position of the singer as leader of the group.

¹² The musical genre practiced in the regions of Abda, Chaouia and Doukkala, not far from Casablanca.

social norms are played out (Chebel, 1984). The ritual of the inversion game exists on two registers; it is at the same time spectacle and ritual/party, which associate and oppose a part of the society. An illustrative example is the 19-year-old Hassan whom I met during the *mousssem*. Hassan was accompanied by a homosexual who met him during the *mossem*. When I asked Hassan how he knew this young man, Hassan answered: «I do not know this person, I met him with his family, he had a good income 'may God bring him back to the right path,' he came here to look after his immoral behavior. He is not a real man, like him there are a lot here. He told me he is inhabited by spirits. » This dynamic represented by Hassan and his temporary companion reflects the relationship of order and disorder. Hassan relativizes the homosexuality of his companion and also distances himself from him by talking about the coincidence of the meeting. The body of the effeminate is the image of distance that Hassan takes with his companion Sidi Ali, and this distance needs figures capable of maintaining social order and balancing tensions.

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