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Female religious agents in Morocco: Old practices and new perspectives

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Chapter Three: Sufism and Hagiography in Moroccan Context

To further contextualize Moroccan female sainthood, this chapter focuses on Moroccan Sufism and hagiography. Its first section goes into Moroccan culture and identity, discussing Moroccan Islam in relation to Moroccan geography and history. The second section deals with Moroccan Sufism and the way it is approached by different scholars. The final section focuses on the genre of hagiography amidst other genres, and on the characteristics of Moroccan hagiography in particular.

3-1 Moroccan Geography and History: A Brief Overview

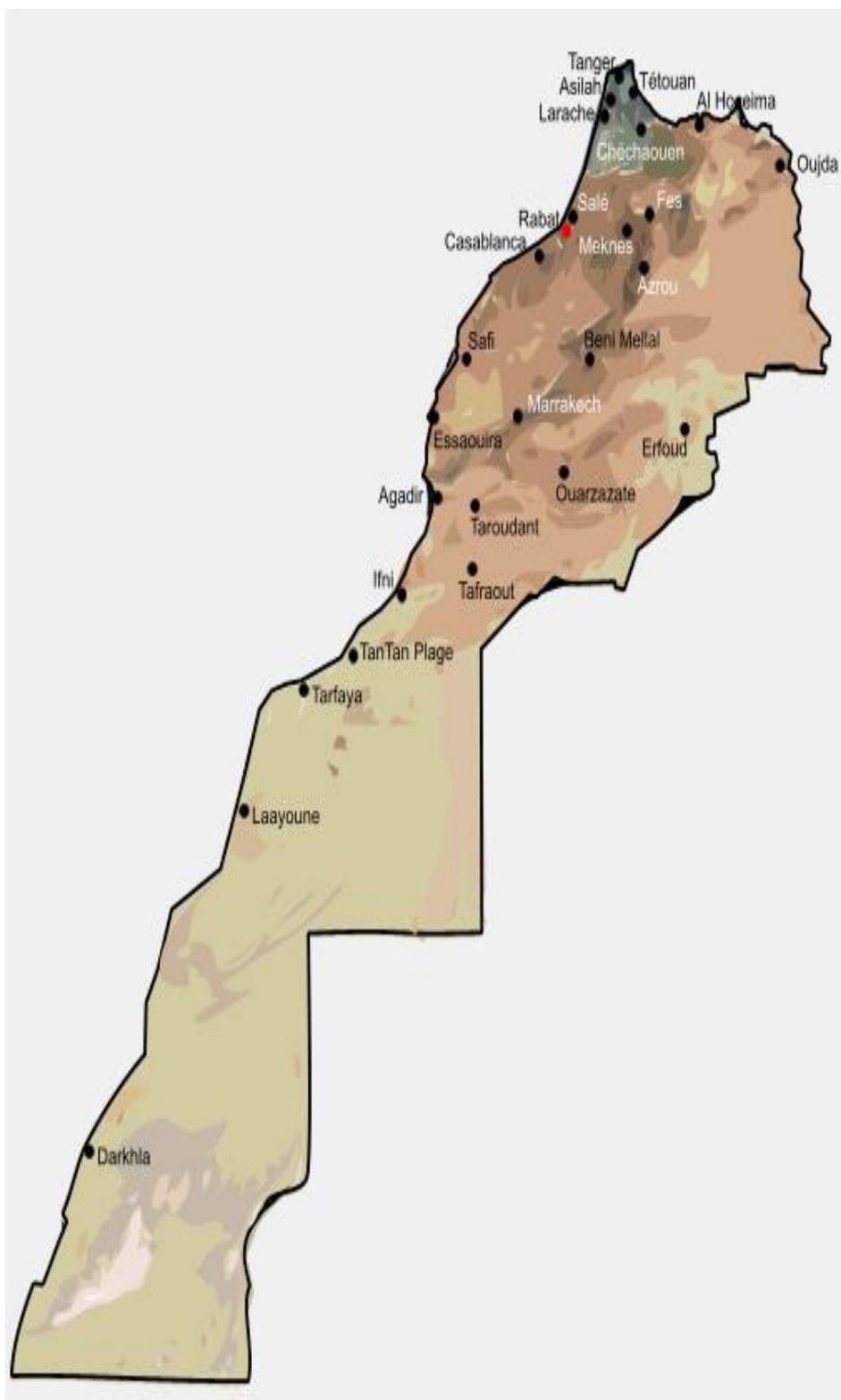
A short presentation of Morocco's geography is relevant to the understanding of the country's history. Morocco is located in the westernmost part of North Africa and is characterized by ecological diversity. Encompassing 446,000 square kilometers, it is bordered by the Mediterranean Sea to the north and the Atlantic Ocean to the west, and shares borders with Algeria to the east and Mauritania to the south. The whole geographical space of Morocco is composed of three major ecological zones: mountains, plains and desert (Sahara). The mountains include the Rif Mountains in the north and the Atlas mountains stretching centrally from Fez to Marrakech.¹⁴³

Morocco's diverse ecology explains the country's economically productive and unproductive zones. The richest agricultural lands are located in the plains in the northwest region, which used to be referred to as "le Maroc utile" (useful Morocco) by the French colonialists. It is also called "blad al-Makhzen" (a place to store treasure but also, and most importantly "the land of law enforcement").¹⁴⁴ It lies between the Rif and Atlas Mountains, and has been an important gathering place for a great number of Moroccan population groups. The economically unproductive zone refers to the non-agricultural areas including the mountains and desert. It is called "blad siba" (lands of dissidence) because it remained autonomous, independent and non-submissive to the central authority for hundreds of

¹⁴³ al-Nāṣirī 1954

¹⁴⁴ Eickelman 1981, 16

years.¹⁴⁵ Hence, the geography of Morocco is characterized by diversity, which has played an important role in the accommodation of the different Arab and Berber tribes.



¹⁴⁵ Gellner 1969, 1

The first inhabitants of Morocco were Berbers.¹⁴⁶ They called themselves “Imazighen” (free men) and were also called “Amazigh” (Berbers). They were the earliest people to inhabit North Africa and have remained the main population of Morocco. Moroccan Berbers are classified into three groups: the Zenata, the ṣanhaja and the Muṣmuda. The Zenata are the Rif Berbers living in the North, the Ṣanhaja are Imazighen inhabiting the High Atlas Mountains and the Muṣmuda are Ishelḥin Berbers located in the Anti-Atlas Mountains and on the South-western coastal plains.¹⁴⁷ A long series of invading peoples, ending with the Arabs and French drove the Berbers into the mountains where they took refuge from the successive invading enemies. Both mountain chains served as a shelter for a particular group of Berbers: the Rif Berbers settled in Rif Mountains; Imazighen in central High Atlas Mountains and Ishelḥin in the Anti-Atlas Mountains. The Berbers led a dissident and politically autonomous life. The central authority failed to put them under its control, and they remained autonomous and independent until the colonial period.¹⁴⁸

The Berbers’ language is Tamazight. It has three different varieties: tarifit, tamazight and tashlḥit. Tarifit dialect is spoken by Berbers inhabiting the Rif Mountains in the North; Tamazight is spoken by Imazighen in the Middle Atlas and part of the High Atlas. Finally, Tashlḥit is the dialect of Ishelḥin in the High Atlas and Anti-Atlas region. The Berber language is a branch of Hamito-Semitic language family spoken in North and East African countries. It resisted dominance by the languages of its conquerors including, Coptic Punic, Latin, Arabic and French.¹⁴⁹

Another contributor to Morocco’s identity is Islam. The seventh century is marked by the invasion of Arabs who brought Islam to Morocco. The Muslim ‘Uqba ibn Nāfi` and his companions converted the Berbers to Islam. By the seventh century, Islam was the official religion of Morocco, and Malikism was its school of jurisprudence. The king’s designation as amīr al-Mu’minīn (the commander of the faithful) and sharīf legitimizes Moroccan Islamic monarchy today.¹⁵⁰ However, Berbers were not “converted” in a simple way. There was resistance and then a largely voluntary adoption of Islam on the part of Berbers. The subsequent spread of Islam in the region was mainly the work of Berbers. Morocco was completely Islamized by the end of the 12th century but until now it is not completely Arabized.

¹⁴⁶ ‘Amazigh’ is the right word but I use the word “Berber” because it has no negative connotations in English.

¹⁴⁷ Hoffman 1967, 21-22

¹⁴⁸ Charrad 2001, 10

¹⁴⁹ Sadiqi 2001, 65; Ennaji 2007

¹⁵⁰ Sadiqi 2003, 40

The Berber urban elites were the first to adopt Islam. They were the ones who enthroned the first Arab Sultan (Idrīs I) and married him to a Berber woman (Kenza).¹⁵¹ The urban spaces became the centres of formal Islam and witnessed the intrusion of Arabic language, which became the official language of the new Islamized cities.¹⁵² The propagation of Islam and Arabic language in urban spaces was promoted by the Idrisids (172-304 H), the first Moroccan sharifian Muslim Arab dynasty. This dynasty was supported only by some of the rural Berber tribes.

The Arabization and Islamization of Morocco had been enhanced by the different dynasties that ruled Morocco in the course of its history. Each dynasty had contributed to the propagation of Islam in Morocco. The six dynasties, Idrisids (172 AH-787/304 AH -990), Almorāvīds (434 AH-1042/557 AH-1185), Almohads (485H- 1126 CE/595 H-1226 CE), Merinids (614 H-1217 CE/869 H-1465 CE), Sa‘adiyīns (916A H-1525 CE/1021 H-1603 CE) and ‘Alawites (1664 CE to present), ruled in the name of Islam.¹⁵³ They propagated Islam and constructed a number of Qur’anic schools and religious centers in urban and rural spaces.

Morocco experienced two major waves of Islamization. The first wave was initiated by the Arab conquerors. The Sharifian Idrisids dynasty initiated an effective Islamization of urban Berbers. The Idrisids themselves are of two branches: the local Berbers who became Muslim, and the fewer Arabs. The Idrisid kings were Shurfa meaning that they were descendants of the Prophet. The Berber Idrisids also claim the same status of “Shurfas,” and many of them still live in Sefrou and Fez. The propagation of Islam in Morocco was subsequently promoted by the Sa‘adi and ‘Alawite Sharifian dynasties.¹⁵⁴

The second wave of Moroccan Islamization was introduced by Muslim Berbers. The different Berber dynasties ruled Morocco: the Almoravids and the Almohads. These dynasties contributed considerably to the conversion of the remaining Berber tribes to Islam. The religious and spiritual masters of the Almoravids and the Almohad dynasties disseminated Islam among the dissident Berber tribes. During the reign of the Merinids dynasty, Islam was spread to remote rural locations. Many Qur’anic schools were constructed and many religious educational missions were launched under the patronage of Sufi and spiritual masters.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ben Rochd 2007, 19

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ One of the great masters of the Almohads and Merinide periods was Abū Meddyān Chu‘ayb al- ḥusayn (1126-1198). His order was perpetuated by his disciple Abdessalam ben Machich whose murīd, the Shaykh abū al-Hassan Shādīlī, the founder of the Shādiliya order.

Islam entered Morocco and was spread in urban centres, but it was Sufism that played an important role in the proliferation of Islam both in urban, and more importantly in rural areas.¹⁵⁶ The dissemination of Islamic religion was put under the patronage of Sufi scholars and Sufi political leaders during these three Berber dynasties.¹⁵⁷ Amidst this massive Islamization of Morocco, what are Moroccan Sufism's properties?

3-2 Moroccan Sufism

Malikism, the Islamic school of jurisprudence (madhab) of the North African countries, as founded by Mālik bin Anas (8th century), underlines the importance of Sufism. *Qawā'id al-Taṣawwuf* (the Rules of Sufism) by Aḥmad Zarrūq (1992) is the most important source of Maliki jurisprudence, which still informs jurisprudence in Morocco.

Aḥmad Zarrūq (14th century) was one of the Sufi leaders of Fes, Marinid Morocco. At the al-Qarawiyyīn in Fez, the most prominent Islamic educational institution in Morocco, he studied the Qur'an, the Sunna of the Prophet, and most importantly, the principles of jurisprudence (uṣūl al-Fiqh). During his studies, he became acquainted with Taṣawwuf. His grandmother, Umm al-Banīn, was a faqīha and played an important role in the development of his Sufi orientation.¹⁵⁸ Zarrūq developed a critical approach to Sufism. He introduced the ideology of "uṣūli Sufism" that displayed the fusion of Sufism with the Sharī'a (jurisprudence). He sought the fusion of legal and saintly discourses within Sufism.

Zarrūq's reformist approach to Sufism and his critical teachings were negatively received by one of his contemporaries, the Sufi scholar Ibn 'Ajība. He criticized Zarrūq's approach and considered it as a constraint to the saints' authority.¹⁵⁹ However, Zarrūq's approach is widely accepted by his pupils who propagated it in Morocco and the Middle East.

His book clarifies for Muslims the instructions of Sharī'a and the Prophet's religious performances and utterances. Zarrūq, stresses the importance of the Shari'a in the Sufi literature. His book *Qawā'id al-Taṣawwuf* elucidates 216 principles of Sufism. It is a compilation of instructions for teaching students the principles of mainstream Sufism. The content of *Qawā'id al-Taṣawwuf* demonstrates that Zarrūq studied religious science; he became a jurist and placed his legal and literary skills at the service of Sufism. He asserts that

¹⁵⁶ Cornell 1998

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ben Abdallah 2001, 164

¹⁵⁹ Kugle 2005, 195

the jurist who wants to become a Sufi has to consider Shari'a and Sufism. He coined the word “‘ālim ṣūfī” (Sufi jurist) meaning a Sufi who unites the juridical and spiritual competences. Zarrūq's theory of Sufism combines the outer knowledge of Islamic law (al-‘Ilm al-zāhir) and the inner knowledge of Sufism (al-‘Ilm al-Bāṭin).

Furthermore, Zarrūq explains that the conditions of discipleship can be summarized in the following points. The first condition is the testing of the spiritual guides, so as for them to prove that they possess adequate religious knowledge of the Qur'an and Sunna as foundational sources. Second, testing their knowledge of the instructions of Shari'a is important. Third, the disciples should study books and treatises on religious orientations. Fourth, the disciples should consider the Prophet as their own spiritual guide so as to follow their spiritual path successfully. Finally, the killing of the ego and of one's physical identity is important before embarking on the Sufi journey. According to Zarrūq, the disciple has to exert his or her efforts (mujāhada) to renounce the material world and purify his/her heart before entering the Sufi path. Thus clarifying the necessary conditions of entering into discipleship, Zarrūq invites people to challenge the authority of spiritual masters who do not respect the education of people in the Sufi path.

In his theory of Sufism, Zarrūq stresses the combination of the knowledge of the Qur'an and Sunna and Sufism. For him, one must be trained as a jurist first, and then he/she can become a Sufi. In his twenty-sixth principle, Zarrūq writes that anyone who does not develop legal and juristic reasoning is unqualified to be a Sufi. Sufis cannot practice Sufism independently of jurisprudence. So the jurist and Sufi are present in the same person, “jurist saint”. This combination is characteristic for the Maliki School. Mālik bin Anas writes:

He who practices taṣawwuf without learning sacred law corrupts his faith, while he who learns sacred law without practicing taṣawwuf corrupts himself. Only he who combines the two proves true.¹⁶⁰

This stance is also acknowledged by another Sufi jurist, al-Tādilī¹⁶¹, who required the combination of knowledge of the religious and legal sciences in the search for God. Thus, Zarrūq and other Maliki scholars base their perception of Sufism on the basic principles of Islam (Qur'an and Sunna). In as far as Zarrūq is talking about Sufism in general, there is no

¹⁶⁰ Zarrūq 1992

¹⁶¹ al-Tādilī 1997

tension with the work of al-Ghazali on Sufism as discussed in chapter 2. Thus, Moroccan Sufism is a Sunni Sufism that is based on Sharī`a.

Moroccan Sufism is different from the Middle Eastern one, which focuses on philosophy and disregards social reality.¹⁶² Moroccan Sufism shows an important interest in dealing with people's social matters and crises. Some scholars present Sufism in Morocco as a human phenomenon that emanates from a society that is in crisis.¹⁶³ However, Sufism has not come as a consequence of the different socio-political crises that Morocco witnessed in history. The proof for this conclusion is that Sufism did not disappear once the socio-political crises were solved. Instead, Sufism remains one of the important historical and cultural bases of Moroccan civilization. Socio-political crises enhance the growth of Sufism. If this were not so, how can we explain the presence of saints particularly in peaceful times? Indeed, Sufism exists in various historical periods.

Saints played spiritual, religious, social and political roles that show the saints' and Sufis' engagement in society. Some Sufis propagated Islam and Sunni Sufism in spaces that Islam did not reach. They also organized meetings to teach people about their religion. They encouraged Muslims to participate in Jihād against the enemy, or the Berber tribes to defend themselves against central authority,¹⁶⁴ organized trips to ḥijāz (pilgrimage trips), safeguarded commercial activities and maintained social security among the tribes and central authority.¹⁶⁵

It is these saints' roles that make Sufism in Morocco a crucial civilizational and historical component, developed as it was in Muslim Spain in the heyday of Muslim 'ulama. The importance of the saints' role has been substantiated by different scholars' such as Al-Bādisī (14th century) who said that in Morocco there were ṣulahā', 'ulamā and fuqahā'.¹⁶⁶ ṣulahā' were saints, 'ulamā were scholars and fuqahā' were religious preachers. These people all had a Sufi background and authority in their communities.¹⁶⁷ The enormous number of saints, jurists and Sufis resulted in Morocco being labelled "arḍ al-Awliyā'" (the land of saints).¹⁶⁸ Hence, Sunni Sufism across Moroccan history was transformed into a symbolic authority as a result of Sufis' and saints' interrelationship with society. Consequently, zāwiyas and ribāṭs acquired an importance that should be dealt with in any historical, social, cultural, economic and political study of Morocco.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ al-Shādilī 1989, 315-316

¹⁶⁴ Bellaire 1921

¹⁶⁵ al-Nāṣirī 1954, vol. 7, 45 and vol. 8, 76-78. See also Hajjī 2008, vol. 7, 2396-2397

¹⁶⁶ al-Bādisī 1982, 73

¹⁶⁷ Cornell 1998

¹⁶⁸ al-Nāṣirī 1954, vol. 2, 233-23

Ṭṭarīqa played important religious, economic and socio-political roles in Moroccan history. Members of ṭṭarīqas participated in the fighting against the Iberians and French colonialists during Morocco's struggle for independence; they also offered help to the poor, sheltered the homeless and instructed the murīd. They played a crucial role in the alleviation of oppression, discrimination and social injustice caused by the colonialists. In modern Morocco most of ṭṭarīqas have lost their power and ceased to play the roles they used to. Their role has become limited to the practice of religion and spirituality especially on particular occasions such as in the sacred month (Ramadan) and the Prophet's birthday (Mouloud). Most of the disciples and followers of Moroccan ṭṭarīqas gather on these occasions to live their piety and spirituality, propagate Islamic teachings and organize meetings to discuss relevant issues.

3-2.1 Approaches to Moroccan Sufism

Anthropologists who studied Islam and Sufism in Morocco have often made a sharp distinction between orthodox and popular Sufism in Morocco. Several issues are noteworthy in this respect.

3-2.1.1 Orthodox versus Popular Sufism

Most anthropological studies on Moroccan Islam equate orthodox Sufism with the religion of the Qur'an and Sunna, as embraced primarily by the intellectual urban elite, and popular Sufism with the religion of the rural population, especially Berbers. In his study, *La Religion Musulman en Berbérie*, Bel (1938), defines popular Sufism in terms of a fusion of Islam and Berbers' local cultural beliefs and practices, including belief in the forces of good and evil, magical forces and saint veneration of saints. The spread of popular Sufism in rural Berber Morocco is due, in Bel's view, to Sufi scholars who propagated Islam by adapting it to the belief system of the Berber population. He also argues that the socio-political situation of medieval Morocco enabled the spread of Sufism among Berbers: the weakening of the central authority, the Iberian conquest of the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts, and the growth of religious orders impelled Moroccans to seek security under the patronage of the Sufi spiritual leaders.¹⁶⁹ Bel writes:

¹⁶⁹ al-Jazūlī, the leader of the religious brotherhood a-Jazūliya, used to have thousands of disciples and followers.

Sans doute faut-il attribuer ce repli de l’Islam sur lui-même a partir du XVI siècle, à la vague de fanatisme suscité par les attaques et les conquêtes des chrétiens sur les cotes de la Berbérie. C’est depuis lors que se substitua à l’Islam intellectuel et relativement libéral du moyen age, un mysticisme populaire, sans grandeur. Désormais les confréries mystiques et les marabouts répandirent parmi les lettrés et les ruraux une religion, réduite à quelques obligations culturelles, à la portée de tous, et entièrement orientée contre l’étranger, le mécréant, comme nous l’exposerons....¹⁷⁰

Bettina Dennerlein (2002), scholar in Islamic and gender studies,¹⁷¹ criticizes the “xenophobic and parochial character” of Bel’s work on Moroccan Sufism. She suggests that Moroccan saints and holy people have a power and authority that Bel fails to study. In his conclusion, Bel states that Berber religiosity is mainly based on pagan and magical beliefs. This conclusion is influenced, Dennerlein concludes, by a political goal: colonialism. Such an understanding of Moroccan cultural beliefs facilitated the propagation of French colonial dominance over the whole territory of Morocco. Bel writes:

Pour gouverner et administrer les indigènes de ce pays... pour exercer sur eux une tutelle avisée, il y a un intérêt primordial à bien connaître leurs croyances et leurs mœurs. Leur mentalité est avant tout une mentalité de croyants.¹⁷²

In this quote Bel seeks to illuminate Moroccan cultural beliefs for governmental reasons. For Bel these cultural beliefs involve a reduction of the grandeur of Islam. In his study *Islam Observed* (1968) Geertz also stresses the tension between orthodox and popular Sufism. He defines popular Sufism as “the classical religious style” of pre-modern Morocco. He demonstrates that Moroccan religion is characterized throughout by cultural beliefs, including saint veneration. Geertz writes that

Islam in Barbary was and to a fair extent still is – basically the Islam of saint worship and moral severity, magical power and aggressive piety.¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ Bel 1938, 17

¹⁷¹ Dennerlein 2002, 131

¹⁷² Bel 1938, 9

¹⁷³ Geertz 1968, 15

Geertz on the other hand defines orthodox Sufism, which he calls scripturalism, as the religion of the Qur'an, Sunna and fiqh. He refers to it as the religion of the 'ulama who continuously preached against popular practices of Islamic religion.

The tension between orthodox and popular Sufism is also emphasized by Dale Eickelman (1981) and Gellner (1969). Eickelman, an American anthropologist, underscores the tension between the two aspects of Moroccan Sufism in his study of practices in a pilgrimage centre of the Sharqawa Sufi order in post-independence Morocco. He writes:

Throughout the nineteenth century and earlier, the difference between the maraboutic synthesis and the formal, 'orthodox' teaching of Islam was recognized by religious scholars. As previously mentioned, foreign observers of Morocco in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries reported interviews with marabouts and religious scholars who sharply distinguished between maraboutism and the formal tenets of Islam.¹⁷⁴

In his *Saints of Atlas* (1969), Gellner, a scholar of social anthropology, studies the relationship between sanctity and politics in rural agro-pastoralist Iḥṣal tribes. In his research on Iḥṣal tribes in pre-colonial period, Gellner attempts to answer a series of questions, the most important of which is: How is order maintained in Iḥṣal Berber tribes? The answer to this question, Gellner writes, is that the order is maintained in Iḥṣalen tribalism because the latter have a segmentary character and a saintly lineage. Iḥṣalen saints consider themselves to be shurafā', which means that they are descendents of the Prophet. This authorized them to perform a number of functions: mediations of conflicts, arbitration, and organization of the elections. Iḥṣalen saints control the collective sermon activities and run various affairs of the different sub-segmentary groupings.¹⁷⁵ Therefore, saintly arbitrator roles and segmentary structures constitute the primary means for maintaining order within Iḥṣal pre-colonial tribes. Through popular Islam, Gellner argues, the social cohesion of the Berber tribes in Morocco is guaranteed. He contends that "the town constitutes a society which needs and produces a doctor [AO: religious scholar] whilst the tribe needs and produces the saint."¹⁷⁶ Gellner thus also distinguishes between two aspects of Islam: orthodox and popular. According to Gellner orthodox Islam is characterized by:

¹⁷⁴ Eickelman 1981, 60

¹⁷⁵ Gellner 1969, 54-5

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

scripture and literacy, puritanism ... and strict monotheism, minimalization of hierarchy and spiritual equality, abstention from ritual excess, a tendency toward moderation and society, a stress on rules rather than emotion.¹⁷⁷

On the other hand, popular Islam consists of:

Personalization of religion and anthropology, ritual indulges proliferation of images and symbols of the sacred, religious pluralism, local incarnations of the sacred, hierarchy and mediation.¹⁷⁸

Other researchers have critically reflected on Gellner's segmentary theory. According to Tozy (2007), Gellner traces the different roles and religious practices that saints perform to the maintenance of order within segmentary groupings, but fails to consider their relationship to the local tribesmen's daily religious practices and performance.¹⁷⁹

Dennerlein (2002) also criticizes Gellner's approach of pre-colonial Morocco. According to her, Gellner does not refer to maraboutism as the local form of religion. Gellner discusses the popular and orthodox aspects of Islam only in terms of the contrast existing between the doctor (i.e. the religious scholar) and the saint.¹⁸⁰ Dennerlein instead describes orthodox and popular Islam as two aspects that characterize any Muslim society, and argues that Gellner fails to consider maraboutism as a key aspect of Moroccan Islam.¹⁸¹

Interestingly, both Cornell (1998) and Munson (1993) explicitly criticize the assumption that there is a clear division between orthodox and popular Sufism. According to Munson, there is no sharp tension between popular and orthodox Sufism. He adds that the anthropologists who have studied Moroccan Sufism have neglected the study of history, and therefore fail to recognize that the twentieth century division between orthodox and popular Sufism did not exist in the past.¹⁸² Munson also argues that, although literate and illiterate Moroccans belong to different social strata and interpret religion differently, they perform similar religious rituals even when they are affiliated with different religious orders and

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 7

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Tozy 2007, 24. Interestingly Moroccan anthropologist Abdallah Hammoudi also discusses some primary aspects of Gellner's segmentary theory in his article "Segmentary Social Stratification, Political Power and Sciences and the Humanities" (1996). Hammoudi argues that Gellner's theory, which recognizes the egalitarian aspect and lack of social stratification of segmentary tribes, is not applicable to Atlas Mountains tribes particularly the Ait 'Atta tribes. The latter exhibited a social stratification, which had an influence on political order.

¹⁸⁰ Dennerlein 2002, 133

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Munson 1993, 84

saints.¹⁸³ In Munson's opinion, anthropologists have disregarded the study of rituals, which were more intertwined with orthodox religious rituals in the past than in the present.¹⁸⁴

In addressing the question of the tension between popular and orthodox Sufism, Cornell (1998) stresses the relevance of hagiography and history. He adds that in history there existed a narrow relationship between the two strands of Sufism, rather than a sharp distinction. The veneration of saints, in Cornell's view, was not only characteristic of popular Sufism but also of orthodox Sufism.¹⁸⁵ In line with Cornell and Munson, I found from studying women's different religious rituals that orthodox and popular Sufism were more homogeneous in history.

Throughout my research in *zāwiya al-Butchīchiyya*, for example, I noticed while Sufism entails an acceptance of the foundational texts, beliefs and practices of orthodox Islam, it also includes additional beliefs and practices that Sufis believe are derived from and not in contradiction with the foundational texts. Dhikr, for example, derives from the command found in the Qur'an to remember or mention God. Early Sufis turned this command into a ritual that is performed individually and communally. They also formalized a path (or method-*ṭṭarīqa* to follow)¹⁸⁶ to transform the individual in ways that enable him to cultivate character traits and attributes that the Qur'an describes as necessary to be a pious Muslim. Sufis developed the idea that individuals need a guide to become pious Muslims. In other words, individuals need spiritual leaders that have reached a level of advancement that shows them the way to do the same. These guides, who are venerated as saints, are recognized as having acquired special abilities or powers, some of which exceed normal human capabilities, such as communication with disciples through dreams and the transmission of baraka. From my own experience and research I thus found that popular and orthodox Sufism are intermingled until this very day.

Other issues that need to be addressed in this context are the relationship between popular Sufism and maraboutism, the role of the saint and baraka.

3-2.1.2 Sharifism and Maraboutism

In most of the anthropological studies mentioning sharifism it is defined as the belief that the descendents of the Prophet have a special place as religious and political leaders. These

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Tapper and Tapper 1987

¹⁸⁵ Cornell 1998, 95

¹⁸⁶ This point will be discussed below.

descendents of the Prophet are called “shurafā” (singular: sharīf; in Moroccan vernacular shrīf, plur. shurfa), which means the noble. Sharifism came to Morocco in the eighth century. The first Sharifian dynasty that ruled the region is the Idrisid dynasty. Moroccans had chosen Mūlāy Idris as their sultan. They relied on Idrīs’ descent from the Prophet Mohammad for his legitimacy.¹⁸⁷ Sharifism rises and falls in Morocco’s past. Its decline in some historical eras was due to the Berbers tribes’ choice to rule the country. But Sharifism emerged again when some saints and holy masters claimed to be Shurfa. Sharifism also revived during periods of dissatisfaction with existing leadership.¹⁸⁸

Maraboutism is another factor in the development and spread of sharifism. Berber Sufis showed a great respect and adherence to the Arab shurfa, descendents of Mohammad, and aspired to be like them, taking them as models. They gained prestige when they headed zāwiyas and forged alliances with other marabouts. The latter’s acquaintances with shurfa promoted them to assume shurfa qualities. Moroccans did not distinguish between a sharīf and a holy man because both were seen as bearers of Divine blessing.¹⁸⁹

Geertz (1968) contends that “popular saint worship, Sufis doctrine ...and the Sharifian principle all flowed together, like a swelling stream, into a simple pre-cut spiritual channel: maraboutism”.¹⁹⁰ Thus, the shurfa’s alliance with the marabouts to serve God and the people displays that sharifism and maraboutism ended as one.¹⁹¹

According to Bel (1938), maraboutism refers to the local expression of Islam in Morocco in particular and North Africa in general. He adds that maraboutism is a fusion of different forms of local Berber practices of religion and Islam. It is a mixture of Islam and local Berber traditional culture.¹⁹² Geertz also stresses that maraboutism is a local cultural expression of Islamic religion of the pre-colonial Morocco, which, in his opinion, is based on the belief that marabouts are “attached, bound, tied –perhaps the best word is shackled –to God”.¹⁹³ Gellner (1969) also stresses maraboutism as the cultural specific form of religion in Morocco. From these definitions of maraboutism, we can conclude that maraboutism, like popular Sufism, is based on the precepts of orthodox Islam and on the traditional local forms of Berber pre-Islamic religion. But who is the marabout? Is he like a saint? The next subsection deals with this question.

¹⁸⁷ Bel 1938, 381

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Geertz 1968, 45

¹⁹¹ Terasse 1949, 149

¹⁹² Bel 1938, 370

¹⁹³ Geertz 1968, 43

3-2.1.3 Sainthood and Baraka

Bel (1938) considers the Sufi saint to be the central figure of Sufism. According to this author, the Sufi saint is called “l’homme fetish,” meaning a holy man who has a magical force called baraka. The marabout is derived from the Arabic root marbūt, which means the Sufi who is tied for prayers. This word is used to refer to holy people, saints and Sufis in Moroccan context.

As we saw before, Geertz (1968) defines Sufism as the belief that holy men or marabouts are attached and bound to God.¹⁹⁴ The proof of the bond between the holy man and God is baraka, which Geertz rightly presents as an “endowment – a talent and a capacity of a social ability - of particular individuals.”¹⁹⁵ As we already saw in Chapter One, baraka, according to Geertz, is an important criterion in defining the status of saints and a sharif. It is charisma, a spiritual power and a divine blessing. Saints are conceived by their followers as having the power and ability to transmit this divine blessing they got from God to the world. In *his Islam Observed* (1968) Geertz says:

Marabouts have baraka in the way men have strength, courage, dignity, skill, beauty, or intelligence. Like these, though it is not the same as these, not even of all of them put together, it is a gift which some men have in greater degree than others, and which a few, marabouts, have in superlative degree. The problem is to decide who (not only among ... the living but also among the dead) has it, how much, and how to benefit from it.¹⁹⁶

Here Geertz stresses that baraka is perceived as a divine gift that has different manifestations. He also defines baraka as a means through which the divine reaches into this world and as an inherited endowment. However, in Morocco people often consider baraka as an achievement, not only as an inherited force. Geertz overlooks in his study how this divine blessing is perceived as reached and achieved by men and women themselves.

In this thesis, I would like to study baraka as a constructed historical dynamic force instead of an inherited endowment. I will explore here the ideas of society about having and acquiring baraka. Geertz also argues that the amount of baraka differs from one saint to another. In my thesis, I will show the opposite: namely, that the amount of baraka is not

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 43

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 44

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

important but that it is the quality of the baraka that is seen as crucial. It is a dynamic force within the context of orthodox and popular Sufism that empowers saints, be they men or women, to gain power and authority.

3-2.1.4 Gender

Most of the anthropological studies mentioned above don't discuss the issue of gender explicitly. Eickelman (1981) does mention women's participation in his study of the Sharqawa order in Bujād, without, however, discussing or interpreting the meaning of their participation. Similarly, Crapanzano (1979) mentions that women participate in Hamadsha ritual practices as well. But Crapanzano does not study the reasons for their participation as he did with male participants. As Hopkins (1976) put it:

In his analysis of the origin of the inflictions of Hamadsha adepts, Crapanzano has emphasized masculine problems; women, too, are Hamadsha, and so it would be instructive to complete this analysis of the psycho-analytic reasons for male trance and cures with a parallel analysis of the reasons why women are drawn to the Hamadsha.¹⁹⁷

Moroccan feminine mysticism is, as I will demonstrate in what follows, visibly highlighted in written hagiography. However, many scholars have disregarded the ways in which women engaged in Sufism and created saintly personalities that impacted their communities socially and politically, thus overlooking women's actual agency and fulfilment in the religious space. Notable exceptions are, however, Kugle (2007), Schimmel (1975) and Smith (1935) which were already discussed before. The latter included a number of Moroccan women saints, in his study on the meaning of saints and their bodies in Islamic mysticism. He analyzed their sainthood and the way they engaged their bodies to express their piety and sainthood as a challenge to the patriarchal order. Similarly, the Moroccan anthropologist abū Barik (2010) also studies feminine sainthood in Morocco and discusses the techniques women saints follow to reach sainthood and how Sufism helped women to live their piety and spirituality freely. In what follows we will see how especially Moroccan hagiography presents women saints.

¹⁹⁷ Hopkins 1976, 142

3-3 Islamic and Moroccan Hagiography

This section discusses some main characteristic of Islamic hagiography and of Moroccan hagiography in particular.

3-3.1 Islamic Hagiography

Before we focus on Moroccan hagiography we will elaborate a bit more on the main characteristics of hagiography amidst other laudatory genres.

As we already saw in Chapter One, hagiography literally means writing about holy people. It is a historical discourse on virtuous and religious individuals, which includes stories on their lives, compiled from written and oral recollections. Hagiography thus compiles memories of religious people aiming to the survival of their moral legacies. Hagiographers precede their entries on saints and Sufis in a traditional manner with a short introduction. In it the compiler mentions his name, offers praise to God and asks for the bestowal blessing upon the Prophet. They also explain the reasons for writing their compilations and their intentions behind narrating the saints' life stories. They open each entry with the chain of reliable reporters, *isnād*, by which the information has been transmitted, as well as with the name of the saint's geographical origin. They also give basic information on this place and its significance within his/her family and local community. After that, hagiographers recount the way the saint is chosen to do the will of God.

Other laudatory genres are *Manāqib*, defined by lexical scientists in terms of *akhlāq* (virtues) and qualities. *Manāqib* valorize traits of character and behavior. Their purpose is not only to record the temporal details in the biography of the person's actions but also to evaluate the virtues of the individual. *Manāqib* celebrate the qualities, virtues, talents and good deeds of a particular person. They are biographies that have a laudatory character and that praise the traits of an individual or a group of individuals.

In the first centuries of Islam, there were other literary forms which, like *manāqib*, served a laudatory function. *Tarjama* served primarily as a biography¹⁹⁸ and *ta'rif* constituted another neutral literary form of the presentation of an individual.¹⁹⁹ Likewise, *akhbār* is another genre that served to compile historical anecdotes on people and ethnic and social

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

groups²⁰⁰. Finally, *faḍā'il* (virtues) is a genre similar to *manāqib*. All these genres have a common denominator: to celebrate the Prophet's Companions' virtues.

Sīra is an additional form that includes *manāqib* materials. It is a traditional biography of the Prophet that emerged with the growth of the Islamic empire, characterized by a new socio-political context where multiculturalism flourished. To preserve the Prophet's cultural heritage, Muslims engaged in compiling the Prophet's life stories and those of His Companions. They composed the Prophet's biography to preserve it for the subsequent generations and to perpetuate the essential foundations of Islamic identity. The pioneers of *sīra* were 'Urwa ibn Zubayr (8th century), Ibn 'Uthmān (8th century) and Sharhabīl bin Sa'd (8th century). These scholars constitute the first generation of Muslims who were interested in writing about Islam. The compilations of *sīra* on the Prophet were written down by Abū Muḥammad Abd al-Mālik Ibn Hishām (9th century). The latter collected Ibn 'Ishāq's works, the genealogy of the Prophet and His divine revelations. Another important example of *sīra* is *Sīra al-Hanbaliyya*. *Sīra* remained a fundamental reference of Islamic history.²⁰¹

Another genre of Islamic literature that competed with *manāqib* are biographical dictionaries. The latter appeared in the mid-seventh and at the beginning of eighth century. Muslim biographers committed themselves to the writing of the Prophet's life as well as that of the Prophet's Companions by relying on the Hadith and the oral transmissions. As mentioned earlier, the growth of the Islamic umma and the expansion of Islam in various remote areas required further efforts in the gathering of other Prophetic sayings and behavior that Muslims sought to emulate. Muslims began to search for the Prophet's detailed utterances and deeds from the transmitters of the Prophet's tradition. Likewise, Muslim biographers recorded the lives of the imams or founders of the schools of Islamic jurisprudence and other important religious figures. These biographies not only validated *manāqib*, which recount virtues and traits of the Prophet and His Companions but also their life stories.²⁰² Hence, these biographies developed into hagiography.

Hagiography in the Muslim context is rooted in the Islamic tradition. The Qur'an contains hagiographical material in as far as it contains stories of human beings known for their exceptional characters, traits and actions. The prophets Adam, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muḥammad are mentioned, and there are stories of pious and spiritual women like Eve and Maryam bintu 'Imrān. The Hadith is an additional source of stories about the Prophet

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ al-Buṭi 1993, 7

²⁰² Encyclopédie de L'Islam, vol. VI, 54

Muḥammad. It is a compilation of the Prophet's deeds and Sayings recorded orally by His Companions during and after the Prophet's lifetime. The Prophet's Companions also transmitted stories about the Prophet. Many tales celebrate the Prophet's acts and sayings from the time of His birth, during His infancy and childhood, as well as along His adult life when He received divine revelations and founded the Islamic religion. The transmitters of Hadith usually prefaced a quote or story with an isnād or a chain of previous transmitters, that is, the people who heard from someone else and could authorize the veracity of the sayings. Isnād stretched all the way back to the Prophet and His Companions, Some of them included or even originated with the Prophet's wives and other women who knew Him.²⁰³

Faithful Companions such as Abū Bakr and `Umar experienced the company of the Prophet and miraculous events which took place in His lifetime such as His receipt of Divine visions, performance of wondrous deeds, interpretation of dreams, prediction of future events and communication with animals. Their accounts bear witness to these events. Their companionship with the Prophet impelled them to become compilers of this sacred tradition. The Prophet's Companions were engaged in this compilation process not only to better understand the Qur'an, but also to find solutions to their contemporary crises and to preserve their Islamic identity, which began to be lived out in a competitive social and political environment.²⁰⁴ Thus, the Companions' stories on the Prophet constituted an important model for the subsequent biographers and hagiographers who sought to record religious people's life stories.

The rise of written hagiography was enhanced by the development of Sufism and the spread of religious centers in the Islamic world. In the eleventh century, Islamic hagiography presented the lives of saintly people who were engaged in the world of Sufism and sainthood. Several spiritual masters appeared and various Sufi orders developed. The death of these highly respected spiritual masters impelled their disciples and followers to develop hagiographical and biographical anthologies and to dedicate them to their audience. Among these hagiographical texts which presented the life stories of Sufis are *al-Tabaqāt al-Sūfiya* (Sufi Generations) by Sulamī (11th century) and *Tadhkirat al-Awliyā'* (Remembrance of God's Friends) by Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭār (13th century). These works are compilations about saints and Sufis who were known by their strong spirituality and charismatic deeds.²⁰⁵

²⁰³ John 1944, 3

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Encyclopédie de L'Islam, vol. VI, 333



A medieval Islamic hagiographic manuscript

As we will see in what follows, this as well is the main characteristic of Moroccan hagiography.

3-3.2 Moroccan Hagiography

In Morocco, a variety of developments spawned the emergence of hagiographical writing. According to Halima Ferhat (1986), it is very difficult to locate its birth exactly because thousands of Moroccan hagiographies still languish in manuscript form and only very few are edited and published.²⁰⁶ It is often assumed, however, that Moroccan hagiography originated in the eleventh century and flourished in the twelfth century when Morocco witnessed the expansion of Sufism. The increasing number of marabouts in urban and rural twelfth-century Morocco characterizes many regions. This proliferation of Sufi orders and *zāwiya*s favored the emergence of hagiographical texts and historical records of spiritual masters and holy people. Their leaders engaged in writing entries on their faithful saints and Sufis. The sharifian dynasties also played a role in documentation in the form of hagiographical works. Almoravids and Almohads dynasties were led by Sufis and saintly kings such as Yūsuf ibn Tāchafīn and Ibn Tumart. Each of these patron saints authorized the production of hagiographical manuscripts, family documentations and biographical dictionaries to preserve their saintly life stories.²⁰⁷

Moroccan hagiographers followed the model of Eastern hagiographers such as that of Sulamī, *abi Nu`aym al-Aṣḥānī* (11th century) and *al-Qushayrī* (11th century). The Moroccan hagiographer *Ibn al-Zayyāt al-Tādilī* (13th century) composed his compilations following the

²⁰⁶ Ferhat and Triki 1986, 18

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

model of Abū Nu‘aym al-Aṣḫānī (11th century)’s *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā’ wa ṭabaqāt al-Aṣfiyā’* (The Ornament of the Saints and the Generations of the Pure).²⁰⁸ This work constitutes a storehouse of information on the utterances and deeds of the pious. Like Eastern hagiographers, Moroccan hagiographers compiled their narratives on saints by drawing on professional narrators, other scholars, predecessors and family members. Thus, the main sources used by Moroccan hagiographers in composing their surveys were scholars and people of confidence whom they considered to be authentic sources of information on Moroccan saints.

Most of Moroccan hagiographical entries have a similar structure, compared to each other and to hagiographies from the other regions. In addition, the general texture of Moroccan hagiography includes a variety of devices such as lengthy narratives about the saint’s miracles, passages describing the saint’s physicality, personality and piety. The entries usually end with the death of the spiritual hero. Hence, Moroccan hagiography has a chronological texture.

Moroccan hagiographers’ purposes for compiling saints’ life stories are the moral and ethical messages that they contain. Saints’ entries served to guide religious education and spiritual orientation. Hagiographers intended through their exposition of saintly figures to strengthen the moral character of their communities to which saints belonged. The description of the lives and characters of religious people buried in different parts of Morocco served, as al-Kattānī puts it, the pedagogical aim of erecting models of ethical conduct.²⁰⁹ Saints’ educational messages still find expression in the religious performances of the current generation. Moroccan saintly moral messages deriving from saints’ life stories impel people to respect the saints’ conduct. Hagiographers and their followers cherished their favorite saints’ spiritual and social status. Consequently, the devotees of the saints inherited their saints’ religious and social actions, practices and attitudes, and they sought to emulate them. This practice turned out to be part of the daily rituals that they still celebrate in the saints’ sanctuaries to this day. Sometimes the people transformed their saints’ ethics into rituals underpinning the survival of saints’ hagiographical reference.²¹⁰

Furthermore, Moroccan hagiographies preserve the collective knowledge of an entire society. They constitute a window through which one can see the life stories of individual saints’ and the local values and norms they embody. Hagiography is a tool through which one

²⁰⁸ al-Aṣḫānī 1932, vol. 10, 38

²⁰⁹ al-Kattānī 1900, vol. 1, 16

²¹⁰ Hefferman 1988, 15-16

can acquire knowledge about the religious collective consciousness and the general worldview of the period in which the saint lived.²¹¹ In other word, saints reflect the religious ways of life of their contemporary community, and, through their entries, hagiographers indirectly made reference to the saints' historical environment and to the impact of the local historical events on their pious lives.²¹²

The first hagiographic literature that appeared in Morocco includes the following: the hagiographic dictionary and important cultural relic *al-Minhaj al-Wadih fī Karāmāt Abi Muḥammad al-Ṣāliḥ* (14th century), which was unfortunately lost;²¹³ the hagiography *Al-Tashawwuf ilā Rijāl al-Taṣawwuf* (Insight into The Tradition Bearers of Sufism) by the Sufi-Jurist Ibn Zayyāt al-Tādilī (12th century), which constitutes the primary source on Moroccan men and women saints, and one of the important compilations I consulted. *Al-Tashawwuf* is a source for the first generation of Moroccan saints and the early phase of Moroccan sainthood and its development. It contains 279 hagiographic notices devoted to the Sufis and saints' of Southwestern Morocco during the Almoravids and Almohad periods, which it claims were passed down from oral sources. Al-Tādilī records the lives of the saints he encountered during his life or heard about. The book on the whole focuses primarily on the saints and Sufis belonging to the almorāvīd and Almohad dynasties. *Al-Tashawwuf* remains a key reference for future scholars of hagiography.

Huwat abī Rabī` Sulaymān (13th century) is a hagiographer who wrote on Fasi saints, based on oral stories only. Another hagiographic work, from the fourteenth century, is *Uns al-Faqīr wa 'izz al-Haqīr* by Aḥmad ibn al-Aziz al-Qusṭanīnī who is known by the name of ibn Qunfudh. It is a hagiographical compilation of saints and Sufis belonging to the fourteenth century Maghrebin countries. Ibn Qunfudh wrote his hagiographic work during his journey across Maghrebi countries to describe the phenomenon of sanctity and to compile the entries of saints and Sufis who were disciples of the axial saint Abū Midyān al-Ghawth.

Another hagiography is *Dawḥat al-Nāshir*, written by the Sufi-jurist ibn 'Askar al-Shifshāwunī (16th century). It deals with the lives of the Northern Moroccan saints and Sufis.

Other Moroccan hagiographers are Muḥammad al-Huḍaykī (18th century), and Mukhtār al-Sūsī (20th century). Al-Huḍaykī is one of the great Sufi scholars of the Sūs region. His *ṭabaqāt* is a compilation of hagiographic entries on 813 Sūsī Sufis. Al-Sūsī accounts mostly on al-Huḍaykī for his compilation on Sufi saints of the Sūs region.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ferhat and Triki 1986, 18

²¹³ al-Tādilī 1997, 31

Another hagiography is the one of Ja‘far al-Kattānī (20th century). In his *Kitāb Salwat al-Nafās*, al-Kattānī devotes more than 1,100 pages in his three volumes to present extensive data on Fes, its holy people and religious scholars. Al-Kattānī compiled entries on the great saints of Fes by borrowing narratives from other hagiographers such as Huwat abī Rabī‘ Sulaymān (13th century) and historical narrators of stories on residents of Fes. He arranged his compilations according to the location of the saints portrayed. He started with the saints whose tombs are located in the center of the urban space before proceeding toward the city’s outskirts.

All these hagiographic works rely on al-Tādilī’s *al-Tashawwuf* for their entries on awliyā’ Allāh living before the 13th century. Therefore, his work is prominent in the following section, where we go into the main characteristics of Moroccan hagiography.



A Moroccan hagiographic manuscript

3-3.2.1 Diversity and Hierarchy of Moroccan Sainthood

In what follows I will take a closer look at the content of the main Moroccan hagiographies, specifically the ones of al-Tādilī and Ja‘far al-Kattānī. Moroccan hagiographers interestingly record a diversity of religious styles and modes of religious authority in their compilations. In *al-Tashawwuf*, al-Tādilī refers to different types of religious figures, ‘ulamā’ (religious scholars), Sufis, saints and pious individuals, as well as people who followed the path of

blame, known as the Malamatiya (‘malama’ = to blame) meaning people who never cease to blame themselves in front of God,²¹⁴ and those characterized as majdhūb, or possessed by religious fervor. He seems to aspire to completeness rather than to a strict division and opposition between literate and illiterate saints or between orthodox and popular religious people.

As a hagiographer, al-Tādilī is interested in Sufi ‘amal (religious practice) and ‘ilm (religious knowledge). Al-Tādilī writes: “In this book I refrain from dealing with the sciences.... [I have confined] myself instead to providing information about rijāl (the actors).”²¹⁵ Al-Tādilī thus included in his compilation jurists (fuqahā’), ascetics (zāhid), pious believers (‘ābid) and the like. He is concerned with all Sufis whose religious practices promoted them to be friends of God. This is clear in his continuous reference to particular terms in his description of saints. For example, he repeated in each entry the expression “he or she was among the people of religious learning and practice” (kāna/ [kānat] min ahl al-‘ilm wa al-‘amal). This statement signifies the combination of legal sciences with the manifest pious practice and virtuous conduct associated with the Sufi way of life, particularly asceticism, zuhd. Thus, al-Tādilī stressed the importance in using this expression to define the way individuals constructed sainthood.

Al-Kattānī’ adopts al-Tādilī’s definition of sainthood in his work. His compilation likewise includes biographies of scholars and virtuous figures, ‘ulama’ and Sufi ascetics and majādhīb (Sing: majdhūb). Like al-Tādilī, al-Kattānī seems to aspire to completeness and inclusiveness rather than exclusiveness or establishing a strict division between literate and illiterate, between orthodox and popular saints. Al-Kattānī clearly promotes non-oppositional relations between orthodox and popular saints.²¹⁶ In his *Salwa*, al-Kattānī presents life stories on saints that he derives from written hagiographies and oral sources. He classifies the saints’ entries according to their lineage, starting with the shurfa i.e. the descendants of the Prophet, followed by scholarly saints and finally by holy people.

Abdellah Laroui (1997) describes al-Kattānī’s organizational structure as follows: the shurfa are placed at the top of the list, classified according to the purity of their genealogy and the miracles ascribed to their lineage. They are followed by the learned and knowledgeable saints such as the ‘ulama’. The latter are followed by the more or less illiterate awliyā’ and majādhīb.²¹⁷ But this ranking of saints, in the opinion of al-Kattānī, is non-oppositional,

²¹⁴ See C.H Imber “Malamatiyya” in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 2, 223-28

²¹⁵ al-Tādilī 1997, 22

²¹⁶ Cornell 1998, 273

²¹⁷ Laroui 1997, 109

meaning there is no tension between orthodox and popular saints. In spite of their different genealogies, degree of sainthood and scholarly education, Fassi saints shared a power and authority that put them in harmonious relationships and that entailed cooperation among them. Al-Kattānī's saints provide insight into the construction of religious authority. Al-Kattānī maintains that orthodox saints, such as 'ulamaā', and popular saints, such as majādhīb, constitute forms of religious power and authority that do not exist in opposition in late nineteenth century and beginning of twentieth century. Each saint, whether literate or illiterate, has a sacred power that impacted people on different spiritual levels. Al-Kattānī thus draws on different religious styles and sheds light on their authoritative status and emotional appeal.

Moroccan hagiographers as al-Tādilī and al-Kattānī thus approve of the complementarity of fiqh and Sufism in the construction of saintly personalities. Al-Tādilī refers to a number of Sufis and jurists who stressed the importance of 'amal alongside 'ilm in achieving sainthood. An example from al-Tādilī's is the Sufi Abd al-Azīz al-Tūnisī, who constructs himself as a celebrated Maliki jurist who taught jurisprudence to the Maṣmuda Berber people of the High Atlas in a ribāṭ in 'Aghmāt. In the course of his religious teaching, he found out that those of his students who became jurists started to exercise authority over people. He said:

I disapprove of teaching fiqh fearing that you would attain worldliness (dunyā) with it, but you have lost the knowledge of right and wrong (al-ḥalāl wa al-ḥarām).²¹⁸

As a consequence, Tūnisī stopped teaching jurisprudence because it was a way of gaining worldly, and not other worldly, benefits. He decided to consecrate the rest of his life to Sufism in his ribāṭ.²¹⁹

By depicting sainthood through descriptions of their 'ilm and 'amal and other practices, Moroccan hagiographers highlight the traits, characters, virtues and practices that made saints into friends of God. They reveal that many saints chose to be not only jurists and orthodox religious figures, but also Sufis, two distinct, but interconnected professional branches and spiritual pathways, which complemented each other in the construction of their saintly personalities as well as impacted the communities.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 34

²¹⁹ Ibid.

In the description of saints, hagiographers employ a variety of terms. In *al-Tashawwuf*, words like *kabīr al-sha'n* (great importance) and *kāna min 'ahl al-afṛād fī waqtih* (he was among the peerless of his time)²²⁰ are widely used in the description of saints. Women saints also are described using these expressions. Muniya Bint Maymūn al-Dukkālī (12th century) was presented as one of the elite (*kānat min ahli al-Afrād*).²²¹ In addition, she was described as being among the miracle workers (*aṣḥāb karāmāt*).²²²

We can conclude that another indication of Moroccan hagiography's inclusive and non-oppositional account of forms of spirituality, sainthood and authority, is its inclusion of women. Both al-Tādilī and al-Kattānī include them as spiritual exemplars and authority figures. They refer to a number of women saints, Sufis, ascetics and *majdhūbāt* (feminine plural of *majdhūb*). They recognize women's abilities to create their own specific religious style and include stories on their lives. Women are considered to be among the *rijāl*, meaning ideals of sainthood, exemplaries of spirituality and models of moral selfhood. Thus, in their compilations these Moroccan hagiographers consider gender a neutral dimension.

Al-Tādilī's recollection of saints living in the south of Morocco focuses on axial saints, both men and women. The latter achieved spiritual status and authority through knowledge or piety, which impressed the great axial Sufi jurist al-Tādilī, as well as other hagiographers who offer them a space in their scholarly writings.

Al-Kattānī's compilation of the great saints of Fes includes fifty Fassi women saints and holy women who belong to elite families, but also to lower social classes. In spite of their lower class origin, these exemplary women were part of the elite, in the opinion of al-Kattānī, because they achieved saintly personhood.

Finally, it is noteworthy that Moroccan hagiography presents male and female saints' entries differently, in that the women saints are presented with more details on their family relations and marriage than male saints. The main hagiographic sources of this study all are similar in this respect. A brief look at two of these can illustrate this different approach of male and female saints.

In *salwat al-Anfās*, al-Kattānī without exception describes women saints, Sufis and *majdhūbāt* in terms of their family situation. He presents them, next to their being saintly scholars, and great mystics, as married women, wives, mothers and as relatives in large families, which are usually headed by male saints and Sufis. For example, the great Sufi

²²⁰ Ibid., 135

²²¹ Ibid., 316

²²² Ibid.

‘Āicha bint Shaqrūn al-Fakhār (17th century) is described as the daughter of the male saint Sidi Shaqrūn al-Fakhār (16th century) and as the wife of the male saint, Ahmed ibn ‘Abdullah al-Ma‘n. She is also presented as the mother of the female Sufis: Ruqayya bint Muhammad ben ‘Abdullah al-Ma‘n (17th century), ‘Āicha bint Muhammad ben ‘Abdullah al-Ma‘n (17th century) and Sayyida Safiya bint Sidi Muhammad ben ‘Abdullah al-Ma‘n (17th century). Furthermore, al-Kattānī presents ‘Āicha’s three daughters as sisters, wives and mothers who were very faithful to their husbands, families and relatives. Another example is Al-Kattānī’s record of the life of another Fassi woman saint called Faṭīma, who is presented without any surname, merely as the wife of the axial male saint Muhammad al-Qādirī.

In contrast, al-Kattani never describes male saints and Sufis in terms of family relations and marital situations but only in terms of their public activities. He presents them not as husbands, fathers and brothers, but rather as performers of public miracles, and in terms of their public relationships to other great male saints and Sufis. The male saints are only described as jurists, teachers, scholarly saints and Sufis. Examples are the many male saints in Fes, such as Sidi Shaqrūn al-Fakhār whose family status and marital situation is absent in his entry. Al-Kattānī also describes Sidi Shaqrūn al-Fakhār’s high educational level, deep knowledge of religion, spiritual practices and scholarly talents. He stresses his preaching and teaching people both in Fes and other Moroccan regions.²²³

Likewise, al-Tādilī gives a list of male saints’ entries describing only their, scholarly knowledge and public miracles that highlight their public status in their communities. In his *al-Tashawuf*, al-Tādilī never refers to these male saints’ family situation. An example is Mohamed Abdsalām al-Tunusī, whose entry describes his deep public piety, spirituality and miracles, all of which impressed his people and presented him as an axial saint. Al-Tādilī makes no reference to his family situation. He focuses only on the saint’s pious public activities.²²⁴ In his reference to women saints, al-Tādilī presents some of his women saints as married women and mothers. For example, he presents the woman saint Muniya as the daughter of a man called Mimūn al-Dukālī. He called her Muniyya bint Mimūn al-Dukālī. In her entry, al-Tādilī also presents her as a mother.

This pattern of describing male and female saints differently mirrors the patriarchal nature of Moroccan society. Hagiographers were influenced by their patriarchal environment in describing women saints and Sufis in terms of their family relations, because that is the

²²³ al-Katānī 2004

²²⁴ al-Tādilī 1997, 110

way women in general are defined in the Moroccan patriarchal order.²²⁵ In this respect, Kugle 2007 distills from the hagiographer's different approach of male and female saints that they wanted to show that these women could not have achieved sainthood without the assistance of their male relatives. But in what follows, we will see that the hagiographers in no way belittle the women saints, presenting them instead as excellent Sufi's and saints. Their introduction in terms of family relations seems to only mirror the conventions in a Moroccan environment.²²⁶

3-3.2.2 Authenticity

Moroccan hagiography originates according to its authors from authentic oral and written sources. Al-Tādilī, for example, claims to rely on narrators who were known for their truthfulness and uprightness. He mentions his father as the primary source of data for many of his prominent saints.²²⁷ He also writes on contemporary saints and Sufis with whom he shared saintly lineage, family relations and strong friendships. Hagiographers' personal proximity lies at the basis of their belief in the authenticity and veracity of what they wrote about the saints, their miracles and extraordinary actions.

Nevertheless, the authenticity and veracity of hagiographies constitutes a major source of debate, in particular due to their legendary nature. Many entries include actions that call into question their authenticity, such as walking on water, talking to wild animals and flying in the air. This might mean that hagiographers' strong attachment and deep relationship to saints made it possible for them to believe in all that was said about them whether real or unreal.²²⁸ Cornell (1998) acknowledges the difficulty of distinguishing in a precise way whether hagiographic narratives were based on fact or fiction. He adds that pre-modern Moroccans believed in their saints' narratives because both saints and their followers "lived in a sacred cosmos in which the transcendent, not the material, represented their reality."²²⁹ What is important to Cornell is that, whatever our modern and postmodern assumptions on hagiography may be, hagiographies remained true to the saint's subjects' cultural space and time. This requires "that we acknowledge the Walī Allāh as both a transmitter of spirituality and an agent of the miraculous".²³⁰ Rather than being concerned about the veracity and authenticity of hagiographies, Cornell thus concentrates on their presentation of saints as

²²⁵ Sadiqi Forthcoming

²²⁶ Kugle 2007, 115

²²⁷ al-Tādilī 1997, 20

²²⁸ Zeggaf 1991

²²⁹ Cornell 1998, xlv

²³⁰ Ibid.

agents of miracles. Dennerlein (2002) and Kugle (2007) also discuss the nature and use of hagiography in this respect. In spite of the fact that the authenticity of the stories about saints is questionable and cannot be verified, hagiography remains an important source, according to these authors, because it reveals so much about the way people understood and constructed sainthood. Hagiography in Morocco, too, has recently come to be perceived as a source of materials that reflects important features of societies within which they were composed.²³¹

The hagiographers - believing in all the dimensions of their saints' sainthood - reveal material from different historical era's concerning the abilities, character traits, attitudes, personality types and other features, such as they felt characterized exemplary religious people.

Since historians marginalized women in their writings, I hardly found anything on religious women in history in non-hagiographic historical records. Stories on women are rare. As we have seen in the previous chapter, there are several stories on women in the Qur'an and Hadith. Furthermore, we only find some records in biographical dictionaries²³² on women of piety and sainthood.

The historian Mahmah (1978) discusses feminine Sufism and cases of historical women saints in the last section of his book. He stresses the fact that the form of Sufism practiced by Moroccan women is Sunni Sufism. They sought Divine closeness without neglecting earthly ties. He advises the readers to consult the Moroccan hagiographical literature for more details on women saints. In many cases, hagiographies constitute the primary sources on which historical, biographical and genealogical accounts rely in their presentation of women saints. I thus relied on hagiographic records more than historical and biographic literature, because the former contain rich material in comparison to other sources. In all the sources, women saints are rare in comparison to male saints, but their stories are more detailed in hagiography. Histories, biographies and genealogies include the names of saints but have limited details of their lives. Thus, hagiography is the main source on women's religious roles in history.

My aim here is to investigate the ways female saints are portrayed as subjects of hagiography. I am not concerned with determining whether hagiographic stories are factual or fictional. What concerns me is the ideal laboratory hagiography offers for analyzing the character and the phenomenon of sainthood. Accordingly, I have drawn on hagiographies and

²³¹ Toufiq 1997

²³² Kahhāla 1982

oral traditions as the major sources for my next chapter on female Moroccan saints and the way they reached sainthood.

To collect hagiographic stories on Moroccan women saints, I consulted different libraries, such as the library of al-Qarawiyyin University in Fes, and the Bibliothèque National de Rabat, which is the most important repository of Moroccan hagiography. This repository, which is called *Qism al-Tarājim wa al-Manāqib*, includes very early historical manuscripts on Moroccan sainthood. When I consulted this collection, I was faced with nearly thousands hagiographic works, all non-edited manuscripts. I consulted several librarians who are specialists in the study of hagiography, to guide my research. I was given a list of hagiographic works in which female saints and Sufis are mentioned.

3-4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I went into Moroccan Sufism's particularities. In this respect, I addressed orthodox Sufism, which is strictly based on the Qur'an and Sunna, and popular Sufism, which is also based on these sources but as well includes local practices and ideologies. These practices of popular Sufism concern the celebration of Sufis and saints. I discussed the main properties of Moroccan hagiography as one of the primary sources on Moroccan male and female saints. From these narratives: how did Moroccan women saints reach sainthood? What are the techniques they followed to become saints?