

Deciphering Moroccan ‘Cool’

In 1999, with a new king heading the state, an opportunity opened up for the monarchy and Moroccan powerful elites to leave behind the ‘Lead Years’¹ and reimagine the *new* Morocco. The novelty translated into an engagement with the country’s road to democracy, human rights and addressing social inequality under the guidance of King Mohammed VI. The young king’s attempt to position the country as an exception in the region soon materialized in satisfying, at least partially, feminist demands for a new family code in 2004, acknowledging the until then overlooked Amazigh identity with the inauguration of the Royal Institute for Amazigh Culture (IRCAM) in 2002, and launching the National Development Initiative (INDH) to fight poverty. These changes also affected the cultural scene, particularly music, with a booming of music festivals in the 2000s. This new spirit of change, however, was fractured in 2003 when terrorist attacks in Casablanca shocked the country and questioned the king’s strength as a political leader. That same year, the state’s arrest of over a dozen metal heads accused of satanism mobilized large numbers of urban youth. In light of this situation, the expanding state-funded music scene conceived rappers as a better fit to embody Morocco’s newly crafted image as a ‘modern’, youthful, religiously moderate and liberal country. This chapter lays the ground to decipher the main cultural, political and economic ecologies of the Moroccan music scene in the 2000s. It provides the necessary overview to understand the sudden state and elites’ interest in the mid-2000s for a rap scene already extant in Morocco for over a decade. This chapter

looks critically at discourses where the Moroccan state and urban elites capitalize on rap as a symbol of coolness and youthfulness to counteract the effects of growing opposing groups deemed as too radical—Islamism or heavy metal—and thus get back on track in becoming an ‘exceptional’ model of democratization, moderation, and progress for the rest of the MENA region.

SKETCHES OF THE *NEW MOROCCO*

Morocco is located both geographically and culturally in North Africa, between Europe, the Middle East, and the American continent. This location makes it a particularly unique context in which to explore a diverse range of social, political, historical and artistic events. The idea of uniqueness is also fed from within, where the state markets Morocco as an exceptional country in the MENA region in a process of democratization under the leadership and guidance of the monarchy (Bouasria 2013: 37; Maghraoui 2011: 681). As a postcolonial nation, Morocco has been dominated by the absolute power of the monarchy sustained by the state headed by the *Makhzen*. The Makhzen is a socio-political entity that emerged in the twelfth century after the separation of the Moroccan sultans from Abbasid rule in Baghdad. At the time, it was responsible for gathering the taxes (religious taxes, money reserves, arms and ammunition) and sending them to the treasury of the *umma* (the Islamic community). Over time, the Makhzen went from being officials in charge of the government’s treasury, to a group that accumulated a great deal of power. Until 1912² during the pre-colonial period, the areas controlled by the Sultan were referred to as *bled al makhzen*, while the rebellious regions, mainly inhabited by Amazigh tribes, the indigenous inhabitants of North Africa, were the *bled es siba*. The period of French and Spanish rule in Morocco (1912–1956) unified pre-colonial divisions and in the process strengthened the authority of the Makhzen, thus helping to construct what would become postcolonial Morocco (Daadaoui 2011: 46, 54). The term Makhzen, used nowadays as synonym of the state, alludes to a central authority formed by political and economic ruling elites, which provides the country’s administrative structure, legal framework and military manpower to increase the monarchy’s authority (Daadaoui 2011: 46; Maghraoui 2001: 12; Sater 2010: 3). The institution of the Makhzen serves to absorb and deflect direct criticism from the king, allowing him to be presented as ‘independent’ of the state and thus

increasing his authority. Although the media often employs the Arabic word *dawla* (state) to refer to the state, the word Makhzen is still used by people in everyday language as part of the local lexicon to refer to power (Bourqia 1999: 244). The Makhzen has been a powerful voice in articulating, both internally and internationally, the narrative of development, reform and change ensuring the monarchy's hegemonic position within Morocco's complex political and economic systems.

Reforms began in the early 1980s with the transformation of post-colonial Morocco into a neoliberal state. French rule had shifted power from interior cities of Fez and Marrakech to the coastal area by making Rabat the administrative capital and Casablanca the economic capital. This shift stimulated an intense human rural-urban migration that together with rapid population growth (from 12 to 31 million between 1961–2003) and a governmental programme of privatization foregrounded what became Morocco's contemporary economic problems (Joffé 2009: 158). Uprisings broke out in Moroccan urban centres in 1981 after the government announced a rise in food prices caused by a soaring economic crisis. In September 1983, the Moroccan government resorted to the International Monetary Fund as a result of its rise in foreign debt. The programme of privatization began the same year, and affected the already high unemployment rates, particularly in urban areas. By the end of the 1980s, King Hassan II expressed his desire to privatize all public companies, an aim that was realized in a 1989 law. At the beginning of the 1990s, the European Union promoted the same sort of privatization policy via neoliberal economic reforms in the MENA region as part of a strategy to counter economic migration into Europe by stimulating domestic employment. Concealed by the language of the free market, these neoliberal reforms conveyed new forms of patronage and exploitation "in which the state apparatus changed its modes of intervention but still played a crucial role" (Bogaert 2013: 223). Privatization in Morocco implied that the kings, Hassan II and later Mohammed VI, became the country's most significant businessmen owning the majority of shares in Omnium Nord Africaine (ONA), merged with the Société Nationale d'Investissement (SNI) since 2010, the most important private holding in the country.

The 1990s brought social and political reforms with two constitutional revisions, in 1992 and 1996, and a slight liberalization of the press. The preamble of the 1992 constitution declared Morocco's respect for human rights as universally recognized and also set the

grounds for implementation of the *alternance*, which came in during the 1996 constitutional reform by relegating everyday politics to the prime minister and political parties. *Alternance* meant that after the 1996 constitution the power had to be alternated between the two major political coalitions of the central-right and central-left. However, control over the ministries of the interior, foreign affairs, justice and Islamic affairs remained in the hands of the king. King Hassan II's commitment to *alternance* helped the monarchy shape Morocco's political landscape as a 'truly' parliamentary democracy (Storm 2007: 120). Although the government of *alternance* brought hope for political liberalization, in reality, political pluralism strengthened the role of the king as the supreme arbiter (Maghraoui 2011: 683). In this sense, Morocco's monarchy has proven to be extremely flexible in ensuring its survival while maintaining absolute power (Joffé 2009: 152).

With the enthronement of the new king Mohammed VI in 1999, political and social reforms continued alongside the narrative of democratization and change. One important long-demanded reform was the implementation of a new family code or *Moudawwana*, approved in 2004. The new code has improved the legal status of Moroccan women, but did not completely fulfil the demands of feminist groups. In particular, complaints voiced the failure of family judges to apply the laws and the fact that many women, especially in rural areas, remain largely unaware of their legal rights under the new laws. This reform is also perceived as part of King Mohammed VI's aim to capitalize on women's 'rights' to promote the country in tune with Western concepts of 'democracy' and 'modernity'³ (Kozma 2003: 127; Sater 2010: 81), as well as a strategy to counter the growing Islamist opposition (Cavatorta and Durac 2011: 63–64). The passing of this code marked a rupture with Hassan II's authoritarian rule, a rupture that was even more apparent in the establishment of the Equity and Reconciliation Commission (IER) in 2004. This new committee was charged with investigating four decades of disappearances, arbitrary detentions, and cases of torture starting from the country's independence to 1999. The IER, despite its flaws, was a unique initiative not only within Morocco, but also in the Arabic-speaking region (Kausch 2009: 167; Laachir 2013: 46). More changes occurred during the first years of the reign of Mohammed VI, including, as mentioned, the inauguration of the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture (IRCAM) in 2002, which was intended to promote Amazigh identity in Morocco, as a way of counteracting the postcolonial

neglect of the group. These new initiatives were designed to project the image of a reformer on Mohammed VI (Errihani 2013: 57; Linn 2011: 5). It is in this same vein that the National Development Initiative (INDH) can be seen, a programme to fight poverty and exclusion that took off in 2005. The programme helped shape Mohammed VI's image as the 'king of the poor' and handicapped (Bouasria 2013: 38).

Despite their number and scope, these economic, social and political reforms have been merely a cosmetic⁴ strategy to ensure the survival and indeed the sovereignty of the monarchy. Implementing cosmetic reforms allowed the monarchy to successfully navigate the rough waters of the MENA region's uprisings in 2010–2011, also known as the 'Arab Spring'. At this time, the region experienced a series of popular uprisings distinguished by their pro-democracy movements, which emerged rapidly in the different countries where it took hold. The long decades of oppressive, tyrannical and authoritarian rule of the postcolonial MENA countries were threatened by the people's call for change.

Morocco's first demonstrations were limited and took place in solidarity with the Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings. Soon, however, the demands for internal political changes were gathered in a call for national mobilization on February 20, 2011. The people, both organizing and participating in the protests, demanded social-economic justice, as well as condemning the systemic oppression and corruption in the country. The February 20 demonstrations, which engendered the February 20 Movement (F20), however, differed from the rest of the region in not questioning Morocco's monarchic system of rule or King Mohammed VI's position as leader. The F20 nevertheless posed a threat to the hegemonic power of the king with their continuous demonstrations throughout 2011. These were seen to have been successful when, on March 9, 2011, the king announced constitutional reforms including an increase in the prime minister's powers, an independent judiciary, an increase in individual and collective liberties, and the recognition of Amazigh as an official language. Despite these promises, the process for constitutional reform demonstrated to be all but inclusive of diverse social and political organizations (Féernandez Molina 2011: 439). Protesters of the F20 openly manifested the new 2011 constitution's weakness towards democratic changes by boycotting the referendum on July 1 and continuing the demonstrations. The Makhzen, however, succeeded in framing this constitutional reform as part of Morocco's 'exceptionalism' in the region. From 2011 onwards, as a result of the

Makhzen's propaganda, internal conflicts, and organizational deficiencies, among other reasons, the F20 lost momentum.

MARGINALIZED URBAN YOUTH

The cosmetic character of years of social, economic and political reforms had—perhaps predictably—not had any effect, as the country continues to suffer from high rates of poverty, unemployment and illiteracy. Removing the state from the economic process in particular was inefficient in reducing unemployment or poverty (Bahmad 2013: 17; Cohen and Jaidi 2006: 38; Joffé 2009: 160). Cohen and Jaidi (2006: 39) set at 5.3 million the number of individuals living in poverty out of a total population of over 30 million. Moreover, although industrialization of the urban milieus has created new middle classes, neoliberal economic changes put through in the 1980s and 1990s have not had any positive effect on rural areas that employ almost half of the labour sector (Sater 2010: 107). In fact, although privatization has encouraged the emergence of an entrepreneurial class, economic prosperity is limited to the economic elites and concentrated in the economic capital of Casablanca (Sater 2010: 106–107). There is still a significant gap between elites or upper classes and the underprivileged majority of the country's population.

This gap is highlighted in the fact that illiteracy remains one of the main social problems in Morocco. According to UNICEF and the World Bank, the literacy rate (meaning the people who can, with understanding, read and write a short, simple statement on their everyday life) for those over 15 years old is 67%.⁵ Yet, this statistic overlooks the great difference in literacy between schooling in urban and rural areas and the gender gap (Boutieri 2012: 444). Also problematic is the fact that the elites use these low literacy rates as an obstacle for democracy, therefore divesting the responsibility for lack of change from the monarchy (Maghraoui 2001: 17; 2011: 681). Widespread illiteracy rates and the social and economic problems that affect youth, particularly education but also unemployment and housing, have been hijacked by the Makhzen as part of the official discourse. In supporting youth's struggles, the elites are able to neutralize the attacks of oppositional groups on the country's social malaises. The state can thus be seen to co-opt young people's cries of exclusion and despair, positioning them in the front row of the country's concerns (Bourqia 1999: 251). Despite the

fact that King Mohammed VI is considered an advocate of youth integration into society (Hegasy 2007: 31; Laachir 2013: 45), the bulk of Morocco's population [30% aged from 15 to 29 (*World Bank* 2012)] still feels marginalized from the rest of society. Poverty and unemployment affect a large percentage of urban youth, with 30% of those educated past the primary level unemployed (Cohen and Jaidi 2006: 39). The 2012 World Bank report argues that youth have been largely marginalized from the country's economic growth in the last decade. However, as the report also shows, the high level of unemployment only partially explains the exclusion of Moroccan youth from economic life: gender disparities, lack of education, and a failure of governmental programmes aiding job searches and placement have increased this exclusion. Feelings of failure and distress are increased by the fact that young men in particular are expected to become breadwinners and take care of their future families. According to the Human Development Report commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2005), despite the fact that young people in Morocco constitute the largest part of the population, politicians have failed to integrate youth within society. With regard to the Makhzen's concern with youth, these grievances may easily turn young people into a social pressure cooker and a threat to the monarchy's hegemony, especially in times of unrest.

TERRORISM, HEAVY METAL AND ISLAM

On May 16, 2003 12 men who had strapped themselves with bombs attacked a five-star downtown hotel, a Spanish restaurant and a Jewish community centre in Casablanca. Shortly after the blasts, the Moroccan Interior Minister blamed the attacks on international terrorism, connecting the perpetrators with violent Islamist movements (Aboullouz 2011: 161). An alternative interpretation signalled poverty as a common denominator amongst the bombers, who were all residents of Sidi Moumen, the largest slum in Casablanca (Bahmad 2013; Beau and Graciet 2006). The targets for the bombing were not nationally strategic or political locations like tourist areas or government offices, rather they were "the closest site[s] associated with conspicuous consumption, immorality and foreigners in Casablanca itself" (Sater 2010: 79). The alternative readings of the attacks triggered a political debate on the country's social disparity and the role of parties linked to political

Islam which had been growing in followers such as the Justice and Development Party (PJD), which in turned also questioned the authority of the king. Beyond internal debates, the attacks and the government interpretation saw years of arbitrary arrests of those perceived as Islamists or linked to Islamist groups.

The focus on Islamist radicalization allowed the state to capitalize on the attacks as a way to control not only the growing PJD but also the Justice and Charity group and other Salafi groups.⁶ In the 2002 national elections, the PJD had surprised the country by coming third after the Socialist Union and the nationalist Istiqlal Party (Howe 2005: 134). The electoral success of the PJD was particularly surprising because it was allowed to participate only after agreeing to present candidates in a limited number of districts to ensure it would not win the elections (Storm 2007: 88). However, the 2007 legislative elections did not see the same success for the PJD and the party did not earn enough votes to enter the government. The elections overall had a very low turnout, however, which was read as a lack of confidence in the political system, an idea shared by the Justice and Charity group (Cavatorta 2009: 146; Joffé 2009: 161; Kausch 2009: 169). After the tumultuous beginning of 2011, the PJD would win the parliamentary elections in November that same year, proving it was still a force to be reckoned with.

Youth and the music scene also became main stakeholders in 2003. In February of that year, 14 young heavy metal musicians and fans sporting black t-shirts and owning guitars and/or skulls were arrested in Casablanca and accused of satanism. In her consideration of the incident Sonja Hegasy (2007: 29) argues that this case had an effect on how the youth of Morocco viewed the king's legitimacy. Newspapers and magazines like *TelQuel* and *L'Economiste*, and even the less critical outlets generally aligned with the state such as *Aujourd'hui le Maroc*, perceived the government's persecution and condemnation of the teens and the resulting prison sentences as a threat to freedom of expression.⁷ Well-known journalist and former editor of *TelQuel*, Karim Boukhari wrote, some ten months after the event, that the news of the arrests had had the same effect on the country as a bomb (*La Vie Économique* December 5, 2003), and quickly took on a national dimension. In response, a collective of critical organizations⁸ began demanding the release of the teens (Callen 2006: 3). The newspaper *L'Economiste* (December 31, 2003) in its New Year's Eve edition called the arrests and ensuing social mobilization against them something that was "never seen in the history

of Morocco” and noted that “the case had mobilised a large section of the civil society. Without this reaction, the outcome of the trial would have been different.”⁹

Though the case of the teens has largely been left out of the debate on the terrorist attacks, which focuses on the country’s foreign policy, when considering the internal implications of the attacks and their aftermath the arrest of the metal music fans can also be read as oppression of the public display of youth’s discontent. The press also related the arrests to PJD’s entrance to the Moroccan parliament after the 2002 elections.¹⁰ As the defence lawyer for the metal heads argued, the trial was a “witch-hunt aimed at pleasing Islamists” (*The Guardian* March 11, 2003).¹¹ However, as Callen (2006: 3) shows, numerous Islamists were also arrested in the months prior to this case, which suggests that both events were efforts by the Makhzen to remove dissent from both sides: Islamists and young metal heads representing urban youth. So, in the end, the state pleased the Islamists with its condemnation of Western ‘satanic’ cultural invasion, but its arrest of people accused of being militant Islamists belied the real fight of the Makhzen against the rise of political Islam and violent Salafi movements nationally and internationally.

THE END OF ‘EXCEPTIONALISM’

The Moroccan ‘exception’ refers to the official narrative whereby Morocco is globally marketed as a religiously moderate country without religious terrorism, and guided by a monarchy in charge of securing the country’s future by pushing for democracy and political stability (Bouasria 2013: 37; Maghraoui 2011: 681). National and international media have articulated this as *l’exception Marocaine* (the Moroccan exception), and have reinforced the discourse of Morocco’s road to democracy and liberalism under the new king Mohammed VI (Laachir 2013: 45).¹² Even if there have been changes connected to the new king, as argued above, reforms had started during the last years of King Hassan’s reign. Hassan II was aware that the political system was built around him as king, and therefore there was a danger of leaving a void in Morocco’s political system when the king died (Willis 2009: 232). The change of king in 1999 represented a moment of crisis that could endanger the continuity and legitimacy of the monarchy’s hegemonic power. This moment, however, was reimagined as a point of inflexion with regard to Hassan II and the ‘Lead Years’, that is, a moment

of improvement from dark years of repression (Zisenwine 2010: 1). The new king was presented as the central figure responsible for guiding Morocco towards its future and guaranteeing its stability in the face of the incapability of political parties and the unpreparedness of the population for democratic change (for example due to the obstacle of illiteracy and the threat of Islamist movements) (Maghraoui 2011: 681). This narrative seeks to promote Morocco as an exceptional country within the Arabic-speaking region because of its moderate Islam, reforms in the domain of human rights, freedom of the press, and increasing democratization, thereby promoting the image of Morocco as a ‘modern’ country under the leadership of King Mohammed VI (Errihani 2013: 57).

The strategic narrative of change to gain support for the new king, however, was seriously damaged after the terrorist attacks in Casablanca on May 16, 2003. This event harmed Morocco’s international stance as a ‘democratizing monarchy’ and its image as a country exempt from Islamic extremism and terrorism (Maghraoui 2009: 200):

The Moroccan mosaic of religious tranquility has long been an image marketed to westerners and international donors to show them how the kingdom was fundamentally different from the Middle East hubs of radical Islamism and immune to the scourge of terrorism. (Bouasria 2013: 37)

After the attacks it became apparent that the country was not an exception to terrorism and that the militant Islamist phenomenon had taken root (Howe 2005: ix). Moreover, the terrorist attacks also meant that Morocco “was no longer protected by its political uniqueness behind the figure of the commander of the faithful” (Aboullouz 2011: 160). In other words, the threat was not only to the country, but also to the ability of the king as a political and religious leader to protect. The failure of the king to protect the nation is especially significant in Morocco as this is one of the symbols of power that grants the monarchy its legitimacy, as Chap. 3 will discuss.

The idea of exceptionalism was reinforced after the 2003 events by implementing changes that were demanded by secular groups, such as the family code (see above). The reforms boosted the image of King Mohammed VI as a modernizing and liberal ruler and, at the same time, presented the monarchy as the only institution able to fulfil the demands of the secular sectors (Cavatorta and Dalmasso 2013: 128). Moreover, Mohammed VI used his status as *‘amīr al mu’minīn* (commander of the

faithful) to make significant reforms in religious law. The religious discourse favoured major Sufi groups such as Tariqa Boutchichiya to counter its attacks on Islamist movements (Bouasria 2013: 38). The reforms allowed the state not only to maintain the idea of Morocco’s exceptionalism after the watershed of the Casablanca bombings, but to perpetuate its strategy of dividing oppositional groups (Cavatorta 2009).

The bombings thus fragmented civil society, as the Makhzen managed to divide the secular from Islamic groups in the field of human rights, preventing a broad consensus (Cavatorta and Dalmasso 2013: 129). The Makhzen tackled the rise of the PJD and the increasing support of Islamist movements by using cultural production to exhibit the narrative of exceptionalism. Belghazi and Graiouid (2013: 269) refer to the idea behind the king’s cultural patronage as the “modernist project”. This project is the cultural manifestation of the state’s Moroccan ‘exception’, and aims to support the king’s legitimacy together with religion and saintliness (Graiouid and Belghazi 2013: 269). Control over the cultural patronage system allows the Makhzen to contain the impact of the PJD and the Islamists as well as to present Morocco as a liberal and tolerant country by sponsoring and funding big music festivals and artists, in particular some Moroccan rappers.

POPULAR MUSIC AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

National identities and nationalist ideologies play an important role in the formation and articulation of musical practices (Biddle and Knights 2007: 9; Bohlman 2010; Nooshin 2009: 3). It not only serves as a tool for social control, but also plays an important role in building and shaping identities (Bohlman 2010: 58; Folkestad 2002: 151). In the post-colonial cultural sphere, the Makhzen has established itself as the major cultural patron, funding and spearheading important cultural associations. As cultural patrons, the state capitalizes on music to promote its dominant idea of the nation as one of the main signifiers of identity in Morocco, together with Islam and Arabism. These have become symbols of legitimacy that enable the monarchy’s dominance of Moroccan political culture (see Chap. 3). The concern for national music in Morocco began during the colonial period (1912–1956) when French rule established the *Laboratoire de Musique Marocaine* for musicological research (Baldassarre 2003: 80). The main focus of the centre was on the Amazigh musical tradition, while disregarding the Arab music that was

at the time popular among the Moroccan ruling class (Baldassarre 2003: 80–81). This project needs to be framed within the French policy of ‘divide and rule’ whereby the colonizers attempted to divide Moroccans, marginalizing the elites’ Arab identity and favouring Amazigh culture.

After independence in 1956, state-controlled radio and television promoted its particular ideology through the direct patronage of composers and performers (Baldassarre 2003: 82; Callen 2006: 32–33; Mubarak cited in Fernández Parrilla and Islán Fernández 2009), a tendency that extends to rap music today. At the time, King Mohammed V ordered Egyptian artist Morsi Barakat to teach Moroccan musicians the principles of contemporary Arabic music, a genre based on Egyptian popular songs, which were imitated and disseminated in Morocco by Bouchaib El Bidaoui (Ayoun 2001: 145).¹³ Moroccan elites favoured this Egyptian genre, known as *chanson moderne* or *musiqā asriya*, which had already crossed over to other Arabic-speaking countries thanks to records, radio and films endorsing a Pan-Arab ideology as well as the power of Egyptian media and its cultural dominance (Callen 2006: 32–33). At the same time, Moroccan singers like El Bidaoui and Houcine Slaoui¹⁴ became the pioneers of Moroccan modern popular music, focusing on genres such as Aïta¹⁵ and Malhun¹⁶ (Baldassarre 2003: 83). Other music genres inspired by rock ‘n’ roll and soul music also emerged at this time (Massaia 2013: 40).

The Moroccan popular music scene was then dominated by oriental Arab, patriotic, nationalist music (Mubarak cited in Fernández Parrilla and Islán Fernández 2009: 153). The Moroccan nationalist movement favoured music genres of Moroccan origin, specially the Nuba Istihlāl, a musical form of Moroccan Andalusī music, which was dedicated to expressing feelings towards independence. Artists were encouraged to dedicate their songs to patriotic concerns, developing a style called *ughniya wataniya* (patriotic song) (Baldassarre 2003: 82; Callen 2006: 33). In the case of Morocco and Palestine, in particular, patriotic songs were based on the national folkloric model that was also characteristic of countries in the Soviet Bloc (Baldassarre 2003: 83; Massad 2005: 179). Thematically, postcolonial patriotic songs in Morocco are similar to those in Egypt, Lebanon and Palestine, played by Umm Kulthum and Fairuz. Within the MENA region, Umm Kulthum and Fairuz’s songs sparked feelings of attachment to the nation (Lohman 2009; Massad 2005; Stone 2007; see also for example Zirbel 2000). Umm Kulthum’s role in developing an Egyptian national consciousness, unity and pride has been recognized as especially important (Lohman 2009; Zirbel 2000: 124).

Despite the promotion of the *chanson moderne* which reproduced the monarchy's symbols of legitimacy (Islam, Arabism, and Moroccan nationalism), during the 1970s new music trends emerged which dramatically changed the patriotic dominance. A new music genre inspired by Moroccan traditional popular music genres fused with international genres like rock appeared, creatively broadening and reimagining the boundaries of national Moroccan popular music. The Moroccan group Nass El Ghiwane played a main role in shaping the genre and greatly influenced music in the country, becoming a pillar of Moroccan contemporary culture (Aadnani 2006: 25). Nass El Ghiwane emerged from an artistic event in Essaouira in 1969, where musicians like Brian Jones from the Rolling Stones and Jimi Hendrix established links with Moroccan artists, and connected with Moroccan music genres such as Gnawa¹⁷ (Baldassarre 2003: 86). The group members came from the poor neighbourhood of Hay Mohammadi in Casablanca, and embodied a new generation of politically engaged youth influenced by the Vietnam War, the Chinese Cultural Revolution, the Argentinean revolutionary Che Guevara, and the Arab-Israel War in 1967 (Fernández Parrilla and Islán Fernández 2009: 151). The group reused traditional Moroccan stories from the *halqa*,¹⁸ as well as quatrains from the Moroccan Sufi poet Sidi Abderrahman el Majdoub. This was a significant development since both were performed in Darija, the spoken dialect of Morocco. Despite links with foreign groups, Nass El Ghiwane and other groups that followed this trend like Jil Jilala and Lamchahab remained rooted in the Moroccan tradition not only because of their lyrics and use of Darija, but because they based their repertoire on the musical instruments and music genres of a diversity of regions in the country. The aesthetics of fusion music have surfaced more recently in groups such as Hoba Hoba Spirit, Darga and Mazagan, as well as the rap crew Fnaïre, which formed in Marrakech at the beginning of the 2000s with a particular rap style that they called *taqlidi* rap (traditional rap), which mixes rap beats inspired by Moroccan traditional music.

The nation remains a recurrent theme in contemporary Moroccan music, although the aesthetics of the music has changed since the initial promotion of Arabic and national traditional genres in postcolonial Morocco. In the Maghreb¹⁹ region, the theme of the *bled* (the country) is found not only in Andalusí and contemporary music inspired by Egyptian music but also in popular music genres like *rai*, originating in Algeria, *cha'abi* (which translates as 'popular'), Moroccan fusion

and rap. For example, the Algerian singer Souad Massi, Algerian raï singers like Cheb Khaled and Cheb Mami, and the Moroccan cha'abi singer Daoudi all have songs called “Bladi” (My Country). Particularly in Moroccan rap, this trend extends to rappers such as Don Bigg, H-Kayne, Casa System and Lhaqed whose songs titled “Bladi” confirm the continuous centrality of the nation in the country’s popular music.

THE BIRTH OF MOROCCAN RAP

Moroccan rap albums were informally released as audiocassettes as early as the mid-1990s. They were not played on public media, however, since rap was seen as a foreign genre, evidence of American cultural imperialism, and thus an attack on Moroccan identity (Abkari 2008). The rap artist Muslim started writing lyrics during the 1990s in Tangiers and believed he was the only one rapping in the country (Muslim 2013, interview, June 26). Muslim created his first group in 1996, named Out Life. That same year, the group Double A, formed by rapper Aminoffice and Ahmad from the city of Salé, released their album *Wakie* (Reality), and in 1998 they came out with a second album *M3ak Dima M3ak* (With You, Always With You). Two years later, Muslim formed his second group Zan9a Flow and released the album *Tanjawa Daba* in 2001. Some rappers and DJs who emerged during this decade had, as I discovered during my fieldwork in Morocco (2011–2013), started out as breakdancers. Khalid Douache, also known as DJ Key, was a breakdancer until he discovered the art of DJing, as was Masta Flow (2011, interview, November 2) from the group Casa Crew, who told me he was a breaker until he got injured and decided to start rapping. During our interview, Muslim also connected the beginnings of the rap scene to breakdancing as it was in one of Tangiers’ meeting points for youth known as Dawliz where he discovered that other people met to do both. By the end of the 1990s, Hicham Abkari—director of the Mohammed VI Theatre in Casablanca, and former programmer of the Festival de Casablanca—had organized and recorded videos of rap crews and breakdancing battles in the popular neighbourhood of Hay Mohammadi, also home to Nass El Ghiwane, in Casablanca.²⁰ Between the late 1990s and the beginning of the following decade, groups that have become extremely popular began to form in other urban centres of the country, like H-Kayne in Meknes, Fnaïre in Marrakech, the crew Thug Gang—the group of Wydad one of the first female rappers in the country—and Mafic C, led by rapper Don Bigg, both from Casablanca.

Media outlets such as *TelQuel*, the radio station Hit Radio, as well as music festivals have played a key role in disseminating the work of Moroccan rappers. *TelQuel* is a weekly magazine written in French and known for pushing socio-political boundaries including criticism of the monarchy. The focus on this magazine is related not only to the fact that *TelQuel* frequently features Moroccan rappers' work, but also because it is perceived as an outspoken and independent—from political parties and the state—oppositional source (Gershovich 2013; Hegasy 2007: 29; Orlando 2009: xviii; Storm 2007: 108). However, it is important to acknowledge that *TelQuel's* staff have been criticized for belonging to the same elite the magazine attacks (Cohen and Jaidi 2006: 8). Hit Radio, one of the country's most successful music radio stations amongst youth, benefited from the liberalization of the broadcasting sector in 2006. Since the start, Hit Radio has provided Moroccan rappers with support, organizing concerts, including rap songs in playlists, and routinely inviting rappers for interviews and to present their new work in live shows.

While hip hop was taking root in Moroccan cities, at the turn of the millennium big music festivals began popping up in the country, coinciding with the coronation of the new king and bringing forward rappers as new figures in the national music scene. However, the first festival to include rappers was not state sponsored but was an independent project that aimed to provide a springboard for local groups engaged in contemporary music genres such heavy metal, fusion and rap. The first edition of this music festival now called L'Boulevard de Jeunes Musiciens took place in 1999 in Casablanca. Later, music festivals like the state-funded Mawazine Rhythms du Monde in Rabat, Festival de Casablanca and Festival Timitar in Agadir began in the mid-2000s to include Moroccan rappers on their yearly programmes, to the detriment of other genres like heavy metal. The result was a flourishing rap scene, a genre rapidly going from being despised to being praised. While rappers profited from the media, state and cultural stakeholders' recognition of their art, this attention, I argue, was not without charge.

CULTURAL PATRONS AND MUSIC FESTIVALS

Since 1999, most of the country's big music festivals have been sponsored by the monarchy (Aït Mous and Wazif 2008: 295–296; for accounts of this relationship, see Belghazi 2006: 101). Although these festivals are promoted as being “under the high patronage of his majesty

King Mohammed VI”, they are managed de facto through cultural associations supervised by figures close to the monarchy. For example, André Azoulay, adviser of Hassan II and Mohammed VI, is the patron of Festival d’Essaouira, and Mohammed Kabbaj, Mohammed VI’s adviser and wali of the Casablanca region, is the creator of the Fondation Esprit de Fès that participates in many festivals in Fez, including the Fez Festival of World Sacred Music. During the years that Kabbaj was wali of Casablanca, the authorities of the city²¹ initiated the Festival de Casablanca, with a focus on urban culture, to provide a forum for the cultural and artistic entertainment produced in the region (*Aujourd’hui Le Maroc* June 1, 2006). Though many festivals are state sponsored, it is the music festival Mawazine Rhythms du Monde, launched in 2002 in Rabat, that has particular significance due to the high profile of the artists invited to perform and its large budget. After the success of the first edition of the Festival de Casablanca in 2005, the Makhzen also wanted Rabat to have a major music festival and thus Mawazine started programming internationally known artists like Shakira, Kanye West and The Scorpions, among many others. Since then the festival has given the capital city of Rabat both national and international visibility each year contributing, in turn, to the centralization of political power in the capital city, which is otherwise considered a mere administrative centre. L’Boulevard festival, however, founded and supervised by Momo Merhari and Hicham Bahou—also directors of the association EAC-L’Boulevard—is not directly related to the state. In the years following its conception this festival encountered difficulties in obtaining public and private financial support (Callen 2006: 141). In 2009, EAC-L’Boulevard accepted a cheque from the king for two million dirhams (£143,000) so that the association could pay off part of its debts, an event that jeopardized its claim of being the only independent music festival in Morocco.²² The significance of music festivals is that they embody the hegemonic control of the Makhzen over the music scene. This becomes problematic because it means that the ruling elite is able to choose the artists that participate, and those to be excluded.

Yet, the economic liberalization has translated into the emergence of new music patrons who perform as ‘independent’ agents with the approval of the state. In more recent years, the music scene has been dominated by a selected handful of cultural managers, with two main figureheads worth discussing: Younes Boumehdi, the founder and main shareholder of the private music station Hit Radio, and Brahim

El Mazned, the artistic director of the Timitar Festival and director of Visa For Music, a professional music salon for the music of the MENA region. Both also head the HIBA Foundation, Boumehdi as its president and El Mazned as its director. Created in 2006 by King Mohammed VI's initiative, the HIBA Foundation is a "non-profit organization working for the development and promotion of art in all its forms: Cinema, Music, Photography, Fashion and Design, Street Arts, Dance and Theatre."²³ Among other activities, in 2015 the foundation inaugurated its new recording studios on the outskirts of Casablanca with the aim of facilitating the production of music albums by Moroccan youth: "It aims to promote the professionalization of musicians and groups to contribute to trade and export of Moroccan creations towards international markets" (*Aujourd'hui Le Maroc* January 16, 2015).²⁴ The global promotion of Moroccan music is also the aspiration of MoMex (*Le Bureau Export de la musique marocaine*, or the export office of Moroccan music) founded by El Mazned, which works in partnership with the Ministry of Culture and the HIBA Foundation. While these organizations present themselves as individual initiatives (Hit Radio, Visa for Music, MoMex) or non-profit foundations supported by the king (HIBA Foundation and HIBA Studio) the result is that the music scene in Morocco rests in the hands of a few. The fact that the music scene is managed through figures close to the king and a small circle of people allows tight control over the artists who are allowed to enter and subsist in this field. The repercussion for the music scene is massive, as the lack of diversity in cultural patrons has a negative impact on rappers and other musicians whose music does not cater to these elites' vision of what 'Moroccan music' should be.

While opening recording studios bestows these cultural stakeholders and the monarchy with the symbolic capital of supporting the country's young musicians, it also allows them to hinder those who do not perform their vision from recording their work. After assisting at the inauguration in 2015 of the HIBA Studio, I asked several people close to the studio about the recording prices, which remain unclear and absent from their webpage.²⁵ The initial answer I received was that the prices had not been set, even when the studios were already open. Later, one of the studio's sound engineers reported that the price per day was 7000 dirhams (£550). In a country where the monthly minimum salary is around 3000 dirhams (£340), this is an unaffordable amount for the majority of Moroccan youth. As is the case with large music festivals, these institutions help to promote an image of a country engaged with its youth

and its music scene, yet the state and a few ‘independent’ figureheads team up to remain in control of spaces of performance and the ability of musicians to economically subsist.

There are a few cultural patrons who, despite not having expensive recording studios, have established affordable infrastructure in the form of rehearsal studios. Boultek managed by the association EAC-L’Boulevard, and L’Uzine established by the Touria and Abdelaziz Tazi Foundation, both in Casablanca, have rehearsal rooms available for any band that needs a space to perform. While Boultek offers rehearsal rooms for free, L’Uzine charges the symbolic amount of 200 dirhams (£15) per year to each band member for the right of booking a room any day of the week. Both of these cultural centres organize diverse activities across the arts allowing Moroccan young people a free space in which to gather, rehearse, and ultimately elaborate any artistic project they desire. Moreover, music events are regularly organized in both spaces. There is, however, a major problem with these and the aforementioned music hubs: their location. While young people of Casablanca and neighbouring towns may benefit from these infrastructures and networks, many young people are far from the Casablanca-Rabat axis and have difficulty accessing rehearsal or recording studios. One initiative from the British Council in Morocco, called ‘Pop-up Studio’, has been set up to bring free studio infrastructure to young musicians from rural areas in the form of artistic residency. Yet, foreign institutions are problematic per se, especially in the domain of rap music, as this genre is often used across the globe as a state tool for diplomacy to satisfy other countries’ agendas.

The United States, France and Cuba have capitalized on rap music in different ways. While the US has used jazz and recently hip hop to improve its image abroad, in France, rappers functioned as a way to integrate Muslim minorities (Aidi 2011). Presenting a similar case to Morocco, through its patronage, the French government has been able to choose which Muslim artists to support and thus drive a particular discourse of inclusion (Aidi 2011: 35). Hisham Aidi uses the example of two French rappers, Abd Al Malik and Médine; while the former has developed a spiritual discourse based on Sufi Islam, the latter deploys a strong political discourse denouncing social exclusion and proclaiming the need to protest. Where Abd Al Malik receives official recognition from the Ministry of Culture, Médine is ignored in the mainstream media, pointing out the state’s use of rap culture to carry out particular political agendas (Aidi 2011: 35–36). The Cuban government

is another example where through its organization and financing of an annual hip hop festival, as well as the establishment of the Cuban Rap Agency (*Agencia Cubana de Rap*) which employs an elite group of rappers, it has been able to dominate the scene (Baker 2005: 369; Miliani 2002: 767; Mitchell 2001: 7). Although Baker (2005: 393) asserts that the idea for the agency sprang from rappers who were frustrated at their lack of commercial success, he also admits the on-going debates about it being a tool to control Cuban rap.

Moroccan rappers participate in many official festivals every year, and benefit from the symbolic and economic capital gained through participation. Rappers have thus been described as a device to promote the image of Morocco as an open and tolerant society (Aït Mous and Wazif 2008: 297; Boum 2012: 24). Because the state needs to manage and control feelings of exclusion experienced by youth, youth popular culture and especially hip hop has become an important method through which to impose a dominant political and social narrative. In this sense, the study of rap music in Morocco provides evidence of the power struggles or battlefield within the cultural field. Despite the fact that other music genres such as heavy metal and fusion have also become popular in Morocco and do 'resist' the state's dominant political, economic and cultural narratives, rap in Morocco has reached youth, including artists, fans and audiences, but also broadcast, traditional and digital media, to a much greater extent within the last decade. Therefore, rap is unique in reflecting the tensions between youth, the music scene and the politics of the cultural field in Morocco.

IMAGINING THE MOROCCAN 'COOL': THE *NAYDA* MOVEMENT

Changes in the Moroccan cultural field which occurred following the accession of King Mohammed VI in 1999 were labelled as *Nayda* on the cover of the Moroccan Francophone weekly magazine *TelQuel* (June 10, 2006). The term *Nayda* comes from Moroccan Darija and means 'stand up' or 'wake up', and has been taken by the artistic movement as a call to free Moroccan youth of oppression: "In Morocco, the *Nayda* Movement translates [as the idea of] a libertarian [and] artistic revival, [that is] plural, [and] independent, [and that] works against conservatism. A breath of fresh air for Moroccan youth."²⁶ The *TelQuel* issue frames *Nayda* in similar terms, as a movement focused on language and the emergence of new artists in the public sphere: "Through the real talk authorized by Darija and the hymn to creativity that these underground talents

bring, another Morocco is born” (*TelQuel* June 10, 2006). The documentary *Casanayda* (2007), directed by Farida Benlyazid and written by Dominique Caubet, uses the term to reflect on what is considered a new generation of artists. The documentary, filmed in Morocco, revolves around artists’ occupation of spaces for self-expression and suggests that the emergence of new musical genres like rap and heavy metal since the start of the new century has revolutionized Morocco’s youth.

The term has also been used in the song “Issawa Style” (2006) by H-Kayne, called one of the blueprints for the Moroccan hip hop scene. The song’s chorus repeats the lyrics:

All Moroccans!	<i>lkoula mgharba</i>
H-Kayne brings the catchy Issawi rhythm	<i>h-kayne briterem issawi jadba</i>
get up, wake up,	<i>raha nayda nouda</i>
let’s go crazy!	<i>nhablouha nouda</i>

On the surface, the term *Nayda* is used here to invite the audience to stand up and move; however, H-Kayne uses the action as a leitmotif in their lyrics to set Moroccans in motion, to make them think and react. Another rapper from the group, Othman, builds on the idea and sings in the track “Kima Dima” (As Usual, 2006),

Melody and style,	<i>nagma o style</i>
crazy, start to move,	<i>7ma9 hbile, bda tharak</i>
don’t stay sitting down	<i>matab9ach galas</i>
Shut up and try to understand properly	<i>skot fham mazyen</i>

And Don Bigg in “Mgharba Tal Mout” (Moroccans Until Death, 2006) says at the end of this song:

New style new shit	[in English]
100% Moroccan music	<i>Moussi9a 100% Maghribiya</i>
the beat is over there	<i>Lbeat men lbih</i>
and rap is over here	<i>w rap men bna</i>
and wake up!	<i>w nayda!</i>

The term is used as such in the young Moroccan’s daily life, as well as in some rap songs, but also used in a different sense meaning ‘turn up’ as used by Anglophone youth and therefore, not linked to this particular narrative of artistic movement as such.

Rapper Mobydick agrees with researchers such as Fatma Aït Mous (2008: 299), Caubet in *Casanayda* (2007), and *TelQuel* (June 10, 2006) in relating Nayda to the booming of music festivals and rap music by 2006. Although Mobydick does not employ the word Nayda, the rapper sets 2006 as an important year in Moroccan rap, saying that it marked a turning point in the quality of production:

2006 was when everything started, before then there were some tapes, some demos, but they weren't very interesting. Then in 2006 a few albums were released, from Bigg and H-Kayne. As you can see, we're talking whole albums, not just singles or just one group that puts out one single every three years, it wasn't a big thing if you know what I mean. It was that way before 2006, just a few singles on the net or RapTV. (Mobydick 2013, interview, July 5)

Mobydick's insight follows the timeline of the Nayda, the same one that *TelQuel* and *Casanayda* (2007) had set out. More importantly, Mobydick links this timeline with the fact that in 2006 rappers found themselves all of a sudden promoted:

What happened was that the politics in Morocco made it so the artists were pushed forward with no reason, we didn't have the level [of experience], we didn't have anything to contribute with. But, because the political agenda claimed rappers, and we were well paid, we found ourselves [...] with a microphone; you know what I mean? We didn't have a career [before]. (Mobydick 2013, interview, July 5)

Mobydick points out that the Moroccan rap scene took off when media and the Internet advertised their productions, thus providing rappers with access to a larger audience. According to Mobydick, the media and music festivals called on rappers to feature in their programmes without the artists having developed a solid music career. This was also the case for himself: "I had the experience of going on a huge stage, with thousands of people in front of me, while all I'd really done was a single". The case of Mobydick, who gained fame after winning the Tremplin du Boulevard²⁷ in 2006, parallels the experiences of H-Kayne, Don Bigg and Casa Crew. As Hatim Bensalha (2011, interview, July 2) from H-Kayne told me, when they won the Tremplin in 2003, they had not applied to participate. Rather, they were called on to participate in the contest; they went, performed and won. In terms of the rap movement, L'Boulevard festival, and the artists it promoted, is central to the Nayda

narrative as the fact that it is considered the only big ‘independent’ festival couples well with the secular civil society’s agenda.

Morocco’s strong secular intellectual tradition includes actors from secular civil society who subscribe to the principles of the French concept of *laïcité*, whereby religion should remain separate from state institutions (Cavatorta 2006: 212). In the MENA region such a tradition of civil society acts as “a counter-weight to the state” (Sater 2007: 4). Civil society may be further defined as an autonomous group of institutions and associations that stand between the state, the market, and family as a way of preventing tyranny (Cavatorta 2006: 205). Examples of Moroccan civil society groups are the AMDH (Association Marocaine des Droits de l’Homme), ADFM (Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc) and UPFM (Union Progressiste de Femmes Marocaines). It is worth mentioning that secular liberal groups are often founded and run by members of the French-educated elite, for example the leaders or members of women’s associations (Cavatorta 2009: 148). It has been argued that some of these groups have difficulty relating to the majority of the Moroccan population due to the educational and socio-economic gaps between them (Cavatorta 2009: 148; Smith and Loudiy 2005: 1096).

These elites have played a significant role in shaping Nayda as a movement of young rebels through association with the Spanish ‘Movida’. The term ‘Moroccan Movida’ has been borrowed from the *Movida Madrileña*. This cultural movement, which emerged in Spain after the death of Franco (1975) and the transformation of the Spanish constitution (1978), resulted in groups of people gathering in Madrid wishing to express themselves freely through different art forms. The name has nevertheless been abandoned in Morocco because, unlike Spain, the country has not experienced a swift change towards democracy. However, the association with the Spanish Movida suggests a rather superficial comparison between the Spanish transition to democracy and Morocco’s change of king based on the work of a group of artists, and bolsters the Makhzen’s narrative of exceptionalism. This narrative was rescued during the ‘Arab Spring’ in Zakia Salime’s article “Rapping the Revolution” that perpetuates the romanticized perception of Nayda claiming, “Nayda is now widely celebrated as an urban youth protest movement”.²⁸ The article’s emphasis on the idea that Nayda is exclusively a ‘protest’ movement reduces the complex music scene as this book attests and, more importantly, overlooks the fact that artists and cultural stakeholders, who supposedly belong to this movement, are critical about Nayda.

Though these scholars consider Nayda a social and—some argue—a politicized movement of artists, when I asked Casa Crew member Masta Flow about Nayda he answered, “I have never understood exactly what that means” (2011, interview, November 2). As the rapper further explained in our interview, according to him, youth in Morocco associate the term with partying and dancing, not with a politicized movement. In the same vein, Don Bigg states that “there has never been Nayda here” (*TelQuel* June 7, 2012), also claiming in an Al-Jazeera report that Nayda is a word used to label hip hop and everything made by youth in contemporary Morocco, pointing out the superficiality of the concept.²⁹ Hicham Bahou, one of the founders of the music festival L’Boulevard, recalls that it is journalists who constructed the idea: “[Nayda] is made up by journalists. They have invented Nayda. We never spoke about a movement or anything similar.”³⁰ The instrumentalization of Nayda by documentaries and books—as Hicham Bahou points out—suggests a trendy and over-romanticized perception of the term: “In what has already been done, there are some interesting things, however it is often romanticized, and commercialized. The concept of Nayda is more related to a fad, but it is more than that” (*TelQuel* May 22, 2010). Hicham Bahou went on to lament the lack of in-depth analysis in dealing with Nayda in Farida Benlyazid and Dominique Caubet’s documentary *Casanayda* (2007): “It’s a very good thing. But I think it lacks in depth. It remains a superficial approach” (May 22, 2010).

This narrative of Nayda, that includes a call for ‘progress’, ‘openness’ and ‘modernity’, is as much one of some secular civil society groups as of the state itself. In the case of Nayda, a romantic perception bred by groups within secular civil society aids the Makhzen in claiming an ‘openness’ for the monarchy, which is in line with their official narrative of the Moroccan ‘exception’. In this way, the Makhzen is able to control dissent and appropriate civil society groups’ strategies to enthrall the country’s youth. Moreover, the state has proved efficient in its aim to divide and rule the opposition movements (Cavatorta 2007: 188). Instead of using methods of coercion, the Makhzen has chosen co-option and selective rewards to consolidate authoritarian rule. The Moroccan state has undertaken a similar plan with the music scene and in particular rappers, where some are promoted and others overlooked as the following chapters evidence. However, despite the competing ideological groups who have praised rap music, many rappers have learned to navigate the field. While some have decided to profit from the benefits of

being favoured by the elites, others have managed to build their careers ‘resisting’ a scene that asphyxiates any rapper who does not accommodate the needs of the elites, whether these stand near the monarchy or belong to the urban French-educated.

Certainly, the Moroccan rap scene has benefited from a combination of social and political circumstances that have led it to acquire an unparalleled privileged position within the rap scene of the MENA region. In Morocco, I was frequently told that King Mohammed VI simply likes rap. The king’s taste in music may be one of the reasons for granting rappers performances on big state-funded festival stages across the country and awarding them with royal medals. However, the stakes at play in ‘resisting’ or performing dominant political narratives and thus helping or not to perpetuate the monarchy’s power are too high. One must wonder, if rap is mostly associated with ‘protest’ culture, why would the king ‘like’ it and, further, economically support and promote it? This question establishes the underpinning of the following chapter, where I will discuss the construction of Moroccan postcolonial identity and the birth of patriotic rap. The chapter will show that rap music may be perceived not only as an invaluable political asset to ‘resist’ attacks to Morocco’s status quo, but also as a space in which on-going debates about the nation come to life and thus, one of the rare spaces for youthful participation in this neoliberal authoritarian regime.

NOTES

1. The ‘Lead Years’ are known as a period characterized by extreme repression that started in the 1970s after Hassan II suffered two coup attempts and lasted until the mid-1990s.
2. In 1912, the Sultan signed the Treaty of Fes by which Morocco became a French protectorate. Later that year, the French and the Spanish signed an agreement whereby Spain would take control of the northern region including the Rif Mountains.
3. See *Islam in Liberalism* (2015) by Joseph Massad for a comprehensive study on the construction of ‘democracy’, ‘modernity’ and women’s ‘rights’ as part of the narrative of European liberalism.
4. Lisa Storm defines cosmetic changes as those that “are either not substantial or focus on areas of the constitution that are of minor importance to the development of democracy” (Storm 2007: 195). In this sense, the amendments to the constitution of 1970, 1972, 1980, 1992 and 1996 can also be described as cosmetic.

5. http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/morocco_statistics.html [Accessed September 5, 2016]; <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ADT.LITR.ZS> [Accessed September 5, 2016].
6. Though Salafism is sometimes described as a radical and violent movement (see for example Daadaoui 2011: 79), violence characterizes only some sections within Salafism, normally referred to as Salafiyya Jihadiyya or Salafi-jihadists. See Mohamed Tozy (2009) and Abdelhakim Aboullouz (2011) for an account of Salafism in Morocco.
7. <http://www.bladi.net/la-condamnation-de-14-jeunes-accuses-de-satanisme-suscite-une.html> [Accessed September 25, 2016].
8. The coalition included three human rights organizations [the Association Marocaine des Droits de l'Homme (AMDH), the Organisation Marocaine des Droits Humains (OMDH) and the Forum pour la Vérité et la Justice (FVJ)], together with feminist organizations and the union of left movements (the Gauche Socialiste Unifiée, or GSU), and the Party of the Independent Left.
9. <http://www.leconomiste.com/article/retro-2003brsalafia-et-satanisme-la-justice-mise-rude-epreuve> [Accessed September 25, 2016].
10. <http://www.bladi.net/maroc-appel-a-la-revision-du-proces-de-musiciens-soupconnes-de.html> [Accessed September 25, 2016].
11. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2003/mar/11/arts.artsnews> [Accessed September 25, 2016].
12. See for example Ahmed Benchemsi's article "The Arab Exception" in *Politico Magazine*, March/April 2014, Available at http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/02/morocco-the-arab-exception-103884.html#_Uw-DMkJ_y9d [Accessed September 25, 2016]; *TelQuel's* (October 29, 2013) special issue "l'Exception Marocaine: du myth à la propagande"; "Morocco: Constitutional reform will not save regime", March 15, 2011, Available at <http://www.marxist.com/morocco-constitutional-reform-will-not-save-regime.htm> [Accessed September 25, 2016].
13. See a sample of Ahmed Al Bidaoui's music at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N0-c-bJhdOs> [Accessed October 1, 2016].
14. For more on Slaoui refer to an article in the Moroccan magazine *Zamane* (March 3, 2014, Available at <http://www.zamane.ma/houcine-slaoui-le-chaabi-crooner/> [Accessed October 1, 2016]). See a sample of Slaoui's music at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0uzLmCEeEAE> [October 1, 2016].
15. Aita is a popular music genre practised in the Atlantic region, from the coast of Casablanca to the southern town of Asfi. Sung by women and men, Aitas generally start with an invocation to God and the saints (Aydoun 2001: 108).

16. Malhun is a kind of oral poetry in Darija which usually involves percussion instruments.
17. Gnawa musicians are Muslim, sometimes described as Sufi due to their similar organizational practices, who claim Sidi Bilal el Habashi as a patron saint (Bentahar 2010: 42). Although their origins are uncertain, Gnawa is rooted in sub-Saharan Africa, arriving in Morocco through trans-Saharan trade. (For a detailed analysis on Gnawa origins see El Hamel 2008.)
18. Halqa (meaning 'circle') is a performance in a public space that includes music, dance, storytellers and fortune-tellers.
19. The Maghreb is formed by Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, often including also Mauritania and Libya.
20. See for example a breakdance battle in 1999 at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LSJXwnp0jk> [Accessed October 1, 2016] or a performance of one of the first rap groups in Casablanca, Thug Gang, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BrtuVh528RE> [Accessed October 1, 2016].
21. These include the Wilaya du Grand Casablanca, Ville de Casablanca, Région du Grand Casablanca and the Conseil Préfectoral de Casablanca.
22. See Kiwan and Meinhof (2011: 63–77) for more information on L'Boulevard.
23. <http://fondationhiba.ma/content/presentation> [Accessed September 14, 2016].
24. <http://aujourd'hui.ma/culture/un-nouvel-elan-pour-la-creation-musicale-115895> [Accessed September 14, 2016].
25. <http://www.studiohiba.ma/en/> [Accessed September 14, 2016].
26. <http://www.africultures.com/php/?nav=article&no=8772> [Accessed September 14, 2016].
27. Tremplin du Boulevard is a music competition that takes place within L'Boulevard festival to promote new talent.
28. <http://muftah.org/rapping-the-revolution/> [Accessed October 2, 2016].
29. See video at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_sm29N6laQ [Accessed October 2, 2016].
30. <http://metropolis.ma/?p=254> [Accessed April 9, 2014].

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