

The Ḥamadša Re-visited: Trance, Folklore and Media among Followers of a (g)Local Sufi-cult.

Martin Zillinger¹

¹University of Siegen, Research Group Trance Mediums and New Media / Department for Media Studies, Siegen, Germany

martin.zillinger@uni-siegen.de

Not only in Morocco but also among anthropology students worldwide, the Ḥamadsha-brotherhoods, followers of a local Sufi-saint of the 17th century, are famous for their ecstatic Trance-rituals. At the turn of the 21st century they are part of a religious economy shaped by three main interests. (1) Facing massive migration and the pluralisation of Islamic practices the king and the nation-state try to establish and foster a “Moroccan Islam” (Eickelman); (2) a growing market for folkloristic entertainment and „world-music“ promises access to a global culture of consumption and potential earnings on a new scale; and (3) Moroccan migrants search for „cultural intimacy“ (Herzfeld) in a transnational space and healing in times of crises.

Mediating divine and demonic power, the adepts of the Ḥamadsha and (nowadays fusing with) the ‘Isāwa use technical media in multiple ways. They store films and photos of their rituals in private archives; they circulate CDs and DVDs among their followers and within the transnational networks of migrants; and they use the Internet to offer their services to Moroccan migrants and entrepreneurs of “sacred music”. Drawing from extensive fieldwork in Meknes, Morocco, this presentation suggests to use insights of the actor-network-theory in order to think about an actor-media-approach to transnational religious spheres. By examining the use of analogue and digital media in healing rituals and ritual sacrifices that are financed by and celebrated for Moroccan migrants, the paper explores the ways experts, clients and demons are mediatised and transnational networks of devotion and co-operation are established.