

In Conjunction with



massachusetts institute of technology

Anthropology of the Middle East



Abla, an epic heroine. 20th century folk art - painting under glass, Tunis, Tunisia. (Image by Prof. Susan Slyomovics.)

Instructor:

Prof. Susan Slyomovics

Course Highlights

This course features a documentary by Prof. Slyomovics, as well as a wealth of photographs and folk art, in the [study materials](#) section.

Course Description

This course examines traditional performances of the Arabic-speaking populations of the Middle East and North Africa. Starting with the history of the ways in which the West has discovered, translated and written about the Orient, we will consider how power and politics play roles in the production of culture, narrative and performance. This approach assumes that performance, verbal art, and oral literature lend themselves to spontaneous adaptation and to oblique expression of ideas and opinions whose utterance would otherwise be censorable or disruptive. In particular we will be concerned with the way traditional performance practices are affected by and respond to the consequences of modernization.

Topics include oral epic performance, sacred narrative, Koranic chant performance, the folktale, solo performance, cultural production and resistance.

Special Features

- Special feature video
- Image gallery

Technical Requirements

QuickTime® Player software is required to view the .mov files found on this course site. RealOne™ Player software is required to run the .ram files found on this course site.

Syllabus

Instructor

Prof. Susan Slyomovics

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Calendar

WEEK #	TOPICS
1	Introduction
2	Orientalism
3	Performance: The Egyptian Dancing Girl
4	Popular and Folk Culture
5	The Performance of Folktale: "The Story of Solomon and Sheba" -- Christian, Muslim and Jewish texts
6	Performance and the Koran
7	Women and Poetic Performances

WEEK #	TOPICS
8	Wedding Song
9	Professional Entertainers: Solo Females
10	Professional Entertainers: Arab Oral Epic Performance
11	Islam in America: Parades and Mosques

Readings

QuickTime® Player software is required to view the.mov files in this section. RealOne™ Player software is required to run the.ram files in this section.

Required Texts

Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. New York, NY: Pantheon, 1978. ISBN: 0394428145.

Abu-Lughod, Lila. *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986. ISBN: 0520054830.

Nieuwkerk, Karin Van. *A Trade Like Any Other: Female Singers and Dancers in Egypt*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1995. ISBN: 0292787200.

Eickelman, Dale F. *The Middle East and Central Asia: an Anthropological Approach*. 3rd ed. Englewood Cliff, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1998. ISBN: 0131230190.

WEEK #	TOPICS	READINGS AND VIEWINGS
1	Introduction	<p>Videotape: <i>Algiers</i> (1938) with Charles Boyer and Hedy Lamarr.</p> <p>Videotape: <i>The Battle of Algiers</i> (1967) plus handouts of film scenarios.</p> <p>Fanon, Frantz. <i>The Wretched of the Earth</i>. New York, NY: Grove Press, 1968, pp. 38-39. ISBN: 0802150837. (Handout.)</p> <p>Eickelman, pp. 1-26.</p>
2	Orientalism	<p>Said, Edward. <i>Orientalism</i>. New York, NY: Pantheon, 1978, part 1, pp. 1-110, and 166-197. ISBN: 0394428145.</p> <p>———. "Orientalism Reconsidered." <i>Cultural Critique</i> 1 (1986): 89-107.</p>

WEEK #	TOPICS	READINGS AND VIEWINGS
		al-'Azm, Sadiq Jalal. "Orientalism and Orientalism in Reverse." <i>Khamsin</i> 8 (1981): 5-27.
3	Performance: The Egyptian Dancing Girl	Eickelman, pp. 27-52. Lane, Edward, and Gerard de Nerval. <i>Description de l'Egypte</i> .
4	Popular and Folk Culture	Slyomovics, Susan. "Arabic Folk Literature and Political Expression." <i>Arab Studies Quarterly</i> 8, no. 2 (1986): 178-85. (PDF) ———. "Arabic Traditions." As originally published in <i>Teaching Oral Traditions</i> . Edited by John Miles Foley. New York, NY: The Modern Language Association, 1998, pp. 266-272. ISBN: 0873523717. (PDF) Videotape: <i>The Power of the Word</i> . Webber, Sabra. "On Canonicity, Literacy, and Middle Eastern Folk Narrative." <i>Edebiyat</i> 4, no. 1 (1993): 35-48. <u>Middle Eastern 20th Century Folk Art images.</u>
5	The Performance of Folktale: "The Story of Solomon and Sheba" -- Christian, Muslim and Jewish texts	1) Bible. Old Testament: I Kings, I Chronicles; http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/kjv/browse.html 2) Bible. New Testament: Matthew 12.42 and Luke 11.31; http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/kjv/browse.html and 3) Koran: Sura 27 http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/HolKora.html Handouts: <i>Targum Sheni on The Book of Esther</i> and al-Kisa'i, <i>Stories of the Prophets</i> . de Nerval, Gerard. "The Tale of the Queen of the Morning." In <i>Journey to the Orient</i> . London, UK: Michael Haag, 1984, pp. 123-213. ISBN: 0720600111.
6	Performance and the Koran	Nelson, Kristina. <i>The Art of Koranic Chant</i> . Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1985, pp. 1-51. ISBN: 0292703678. Fernea, Elizabeth Warnock. <i>Guests of the Sheikh: An Ethnography of an Iraqi Village</i> . New York, NY: Anchor, 1965, pp. 106-126. ISBN: 0385014856. (Section on women's kraya.) Eickelman, pp. 249-323.
7	Women and Poetic Performances	Abu-Lughod, Lila. <i>Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society</i> . Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986. ISBN: 0520054830. Joseph, Terri Brint. "Poetry as a Strategy of Power: The Case of the Riffian Berber Women." <i>Signs</i> 5, no. 3 (1980): 418-434. Eickelman, pp. 123-173.

WEEK #	TOPICS	READINGS AND VIEWINGS
8	Wedding Song	<p><i>Wedding Song: Henna Art Among Muslim Women in New York City</i> (1990). Slyomovics. Wedding Song, accompanying booklet. (PDF)</p> <p><u>Photo stills from Wedding Song.</u></p> <p>Eickelman, pp. 174-221.</p>
9	Professional Entertainers: Solo Females	<p>Nieuwkerk, Karin Van. <i>A Trade Like Any Other: Female Singers and Dancers in Egypt</i>. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1995. ISBN: 0292787200.</p> <p>Fernea, Elizabeth Warnock, and Bassima Qattan Bezirgan, ed. "The Umm Kulthum Nobody Knows." In <i>Middle Eastern Muslim Women Speak</i>. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1977, pp. 134-165. ISBN: 0292750331.</p> <p>Eickelman, pp. 222-247.</p>
10	Professional Entertainers: Arab Oral Epic Performance	<p>Slyomovics, Susan. <i>The Merchant of Art: An Oral Epic Egyptian Poet in Performance</i>. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987, pp. 1-35, and 264-268. ISBN: 0520097378.</p> <p>Videotape: Slyomovics. <i>The Merchant of Art</i> (1986). (MOV - 85.3 MB) http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21a/21a.453/merchantofart.mov</p> <p>———. "Approaches to Transcription and Translation of Arab Oral Epics." (Unpublished English translation of "Methodes de transcription et traduction d'une performance de geste orale arabe." In <i>Le Conte</i> (1987): 127-139. Edited by Pierre Lyon and Paul Perron. Montreal, Canada: Didier.) (PDF)</p> <p>———. "Asig Ra'bad: The Passion of Ma'bad." <i>Oriente Moderno</i>, XXI n.s. (LXXXII), no. 3 (2002). Edited by Claudio lo Jacono of Istituto per l'Oriente C.A. Nallino of Roma (Italy). (PDF)</p>
11	Islam in America: Parades and Mosques	<p>Aswad, Barbara. "Arab Americans: Those Who Followed Columbus." <i>Middle East Studies Association Bulletin</i> 27 (July 1993): 5-22.</p> <p>Slyomovics, Susan. "New York City's Muslim World Day Parade." In <i>Nation and Migration: The Politics of Space in the South Asian Diaspora</i>. Edited by Peter Van Der Veer. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994, pp. 157-177. ISBN: 0812215370. (PDF)</p> <p><u>Photos from Muslim World Day parade.</u></p> <p>Slyomovics. "<u>The Muslim World Day Parade and 'Storefront' Mosques of New York City.</u>" In <i>Making Muslim Space in North America and Europe</i>. Edited by Barbara Daly Metcalf. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996, pp. 204-216. ISBN: 0520204034. The Regents of the University of California.</p>

WEEK #	TOPICS	READINGS AND VIEWINGS
		<p>———. "Comparing Mosques to New York City's Ethnic and Social Clubs." In <i>NY Masjid: The Mosques of New York</i>. Edited by Jerrilyn Dodds. New York, NY: Storefront for Art and Architecture, 1996, n.p. Catalogue essay with photographs for a museum exhibition, Nov. 30, 1996-Jan. 30, 1997 held at the Storefront for Art and Architecture, New York City. ISBN: 1576871355. (PDF)</p> <p>Photos from Storefront Mosques of New York.</p>

Week 4 – Readings

ARABIC FOLK LITERATURE AND POLITICAL EXPRESSION

Susan Slyomovics

Unlike written literature—whose received form and contents are, by virtue of being written, fixed—orally transmitted and preserved folk literature readily lends itself to spontaneous adaptation. As a result, such oral literature, no matter how traditional and familiar, frequently serves as a vehicle with which to express opinions about contemporary events. Such topical allusion is, in fact, one of the special pleasures an audience derives from oral performance. In the local, parochial context of an oral performance in a village, the reciter will characteristically insert variations into his text so as to comment on both more and less remarkable aspects of local, everyday life, for example, insults or praise directed towards well known figures in the audience, or gossip about mundane scandals. So too, the reciter will regularly inflect his text so as to express opinions about national matters, especially political and economic predicaments.¹ Moreover, because the reciter of oral folk literature regularly exploits the allegorical potentialities of the narratives he expounds (for instance, interrupting his narrative in order to gloss the significance of particular actions), and because he regularly exploits and remarks on the multiple significances of the figurative language he employs (through implicit and explicit stress on puns, lexical double entendres, etc.), the audience for such performances is accustomed to attributing implicit, unspoken meanings to the narrative it hears.² Accordingly, such performances lend themselves to oblique expression of ideas and opinions whose utterance would otherwise be censorable or dangerous. In the context of contemporary Arabic folk literature, this kind of provocatively suggestive political discourse, registered by all even when altogether implicit, is especially important. Moreover, because Arabic oral performance is by its nature both more ephemeral and relatively unsusceptible to policing surveillance, such oral performances characteristically essay bold and explicit political commentary.

There is, of course, a vast corpus, in many dialects, of Arabic oral folk literature. By discussing a few examples, I want in this paper to give some sense of the range and variability of topical and political allusion that is typically evident in such orally performed literature. My examples are drawn from two genres, *sīra* and *dar*. For the most part, I rely upon my fieldwork

Susan Slyomovics recently received a Ph.D. in Near Eastern Studies from the University of California at Berkeley, and is currently preparing an English translation of *Sīrat Banī Hilāl*.

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‘Asig ma’bad (The Passion of Ma’bad): The Epic Confronts Hilali History

Susan Slyomovics ¹

Why did the Bani Hilal Bedouin Arab tribes depart their ancestral lands in the Arabian peninsula to march westward against North Africa? Beginning in the eighth century with westward migrations to Egypt, by the eleventh century their descent on the Maghreb would be compared to “clouds of locusts.” This famous description of the Hilalis North African incursions characterizes the influential analysis proposed by fourteenth century historian Ibn Khaldun, who sought the causes of the Hilali invasion in the complex political intrigues that opposed Egyptian and Tunisian rulers: when al-Mu’izz Ibn Badiq, ruler of Ifriqiyya, switched allegiance from Cairo to the ‘Abbasid Caliph of Baghdad, the Egyptian Fatimid leaders sought vengeance by unleashing the Hilali tribes against Tunis.

Scholars also point to severe cyclical famines in the Arabian peninsula which historically have contributed to waves of tribes migrating westward towards the more fertile coastal areas along Mediterranean shores.¹ While famine and international politics are readily acknowledged as the twin precipitating factors for Hilali migrations and invasions, in contrast many epic poets and storytellers of Upper Egypt, who recite the popular cycle of tales about the Hilali tribes known throughout the Arabic-speaking worlds as *Sīrat Banī Hilāl*, present an alternate literary history and reading from traditional chroniclers such as Ibn Khaldun.

According to the performed version by the Upper Egyptian epic poet ‘Awadallah ‘Abd al-Jalil ‘Ali, it is a father-daughter tale of incest that frames, indeed instigates, the occasion of the Hilali invasion of North Africa. The incest theme is enshrined in the opening sequence of Part II of the customary tripartite division of *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* entitled the *riyada* or “reconnaissance,” even as it is enunciated in the opening tale’s subtitle as given by the poet ‘Awadallah: “The Passion of Ma’bad for His Daughter” (‘asig ma’bad ma’ bintuh).

‘Awadallah ‘Abd al-Jalil ‘Ali is an epic poet from the province of Aswan in Upper Egypt. He sings in the surrounding southern Egyptian marketplaces, in cafes, during public ceremonies, and at people's homes to celebrate births, weddings, circumcisions, a return from the hajj to Mecca, and Ramadan break fasts. I have described elsewhere the complex status of the epic poet in southern Egypt as well as my research project to record versions of the epic by professional reciters.² ‘Awadallah begins his “elicited” performance,

recorded 13 March 1983 in Luxor, Egypt,³ first with the title, then with a brief praise-poem or *madiḥ* (lines 1-2):

1. Patience is foremost [first]
2. Patience is more important than worry

The tale continues as he recounts how the ruler of Tunis, Sultan Ma 'bad, chances to ascend the upper levels of his vast palace there to encounter, presumably for the first time, his grown-up and now beautiful daughter, 'Aziḡza. Overcome at the sight of her, Ma 'bad falls to the ground in a swoon causing his daughter to gather him up in her arms (lines 3-33):

3. Ma'bad is seated on his throne,
4. father of 'Aziḡza, a sultan.
5. All the Arabs seek his counsel,
6. All the horsemen, seek him.
7. Then one day among the nights,
8. months and destiny came to pass,
9. he never ascended the lofty palace
10. to his wife atop the many-pillared castle,
11. he ascended the lofty palace,
12. and looks down from atop the building.
13. While ascending the stairs,
14. he glances with his eyes,
15. he looks on the elegant 'Aziḡza
16. as she was leaving the baths,
17. wafting musk with perfume,
18. from her scent, the sick are cured,
19. if one lay near death, a last breath,
20. when she lines the kohl stick along her eye
21. she makes those who fast, break Ramadan
22. wearing a robe, scented and diaphanous,
23. 'Awadallah: he is ensnared
24. watch how her breasts break loose in front.
25. See the maiden, beautifying her form, ah,
26. from atop the high palace,
27. kohl-darkened eyes as was her custom,
28. few of her description among the maidens.
29. O how beautiful she was,
30. rounded, firm legs,
31. O her rounded, firm legs,
32. and who among the maidens has her beauty,
33. you would say a silted island when the water rises
33. the girl, imagine her beauty.

As 'Aziḡza tends her fainting father, father and daughter meet in a seemingly

innocent physical embrace (lines 34-46) and 'Aziḡza presciently inquires if her father's fainting spell means he has lost his reason.

34. 'AziḡzaMa'bad gazed on 'Aziḡza,
35. his sound reason became twisted,
36. astray above the high castle,
37. he fell down the staircase.
38. 'Aziḡza gathered up her father
39. between her breasts, they are like pomegranates.
40. He smelled musk and scent,
41. the sultan smelled perfume from afar.
42. She said, "O my father, God protect you,
43. God protect you, O sultan,
44. O my father, what happened to you?
45. Your sound reason is turned around?"

Succored between her perfumed breasts, Ma'bad falls in love with his own daughter using phrases well known to amorous Upper Egyptian partners (lines 46-54): "when are lovers to be blamed."⁷ Love conquers all, according to the sultan, even permitting him the authority to marry, rather than marry off, his own daughter:

46. He said, "O 'Aziḡza, let me be,
47. when are lovers to be blamed,
48. O daughter, I desire you,
49. love is a marvel, a person cannot be blamed.
50. O 'Aziḡza I desire you,
51. and my heart yearns for you.
52. O my daughter, I will draw up a marriage contract myself,
53. I will draw up one with you,
54. and proceed with you according to lawful custom."

Comparing ownership of his daughter's body to his stewardship over the land, he demands his rightful sexual rights equating them to agricultural bounty. "Who is like your father?" he demands of his daughter, reversing the kin relation most socially taboo, to promote the closest member. Though the preferred marriage partner in Upper Egyptian society for a daughter is in the first cousin line, especially the father's brother's son, Ma'bad's questions to his daughter are disconcertingly direct and sexual to an Upper Egyptian listener: "peaches" and "pomegranates" to be harvested are common similes for a women's breasts, the "orchard" to be "entered" stands for penetrating the female genitals and "to rule and trace the riverbeds" describe the interior fold of the vagina and sexual intercourse.⁸

55. "O daughter, who is like your father

56. to harvest the peaches and the pomegranates?
57. O 'Aziḡza who is like your father
58. to enter the orchard?
59. O my daughter, who is unto your father
60. to rule and to trace in the riverbeds?
61. O my daughter, marry your father
62. and you will live in joy and safety.

'Aziḡza protests marriage with her father and calls for supporting legal protections, the Muslim shar'ia that regulates and ordains lawful unions as interpreted by clerics:

63. "O, my father, may God protect you,
64. truly your sound mind wanders.
65. Who, before you, has married his daughter
66. according to Christian law or in Islam?
67. O my father, bring the clerics,
68. people of moral virtue and of the Koran.
69. If they tell you, marry 'Aziḡza,
70. then write me a marriage contract according to lawful custom."

Ma'bad convenes his clerics and presents them with a series of questions. As Otto Rank observes in his study, *Incest in Literature and Legend*,⁹ it is noteworthy that cross-culturally an element of the father-daughter incest theme often includes riddles posed by the father to suitors.

Ma'bad's questions to the clerics are prefigured in the rhetorical series already asked to his daughter, ostensible riddles whose meanings are fully understood by 'Aziḡza. The father's purpose, avers Otto Rank, is to set up impossible tasks by asking riddles thereby keeping rivals and suitable love objects from the daughter and permitting the father to possess his own daughter. Rank draws on numerous medieval European tales, ancient Greek, Babylonian and Persian legends, to compare the ways in which suitors must solve impossible riddles or, functionally another substitutable narrative element for a riddle, suitors must overcome dangerous obstacles set by the father before the daughter is awarded to the winner. In these cases, the daughter is an important love object but otherwise she is absent during the important exchanges between the father, her current owner, and a future owner-husband.

In 'Awadallah's rendition, the Muslim clerics precede, perhaps stand in for potential suitors, because they represent the surrounding religious and social sanctions. Ma'bad's riddles are equally transparent to them and even though they are in need of more food and clothing as the month long Ramadan approaches, not even material concerns can buy the clerics acquiescence to Ma'bad's requested transgression:

71. Ma'bad sent around a crier
72. to scholars every place.
73. The scholars all rejoiced,
74. the sighted lead the blind.
75. Some say he will clothe us,
76. for Ramadan is soon upon us,
77. and others say he will cut off our heads
78. he will come to cut off the blind.
79. They gathered inside the diwans,
80. in the diwan of Ma'bad the sultan.
81. He called out and said, "O clerics,
82. to you I do not conceal my words:
83. I have a date tree at my home,
84. it became ripe out of season,
85. is it permissible to eat it
86. or give it as charity to orphans?"
87. The chief cleric said to him:
88. If indeed it is a date tree,"
89. he said to him, " eating dates is permissible,
90. but if it is the beautiful 'Aziḡza
91. it will be a crime, O sultan."
92. Ma'bad wielded his sword
93. against them, he brought forth the javelin,
94. Ma'bad wielded his sword.
95. They emerged fleeing this commission,
96. the clerics emerged fleeing,
97. the sighted dragging the blind.

Since Ma'bad, the sultan, cannot possess his own daughter according to law or her own consent, as her father and ruler of Tunis, he swears that he will prevent any other man from having her. Otto Rank notes that in the myths of Perseus, Gilgamesh and Romulus, the father secludes the daughter presumably to preserve her virginity. Frequently, the father's persecution of his daughter arising from rejected love takes the symbolic form of her isolation in a tower:¹⁰

98. Ma'bad swore an oath:
99. As for me, during my entire life in this world,
100. 'Aziḡza will not marry men."
101. Ma'bad summoned builders,
102. they came to him, shoeless, from Syrian lands,
103. he summoned brick-makers
104. ten to lay out the building,
105. engineers, so many of them,
106. they laid out the many-pillared castle,
107. they laid out 'Aziḡza's castle.

108. He swore making stronger his oaths:
109. "For my entire life on this earth
110. 'Aziḡza will not taste a man."

Aziza is immured in her castle with a maidservant, Mayy, who will serve as the link between Tunis and Arabia. It happens that Mayy is a Hilali Bedouin who appears in the slave markets of Tunis. She has been purchased by the sultan to care for 'Aziḡza, and she whiles away time amusing the miserable and bored 'Aziḡza by recounting tales of her Arabian home and its mighty warriors.

Through narrative and storytelling, 'Aziḡza falls in love with Yuḡnis, the hero Abu Zayd's nephew. The two women contrive to send messages back to the Hilalis in Arabia to inform them that Tunis is weak and easily invaded. The daughter's revenge against the father is powerful, personal, and political. Ma'bad the sultan will lose possession of his daughter just as he will be toppled as ruler. In both instances, his nemesis are the Hilali Bedouins.

What does this performed tale mean to the audience, to the storyteller, and to the folklorist collector? During the performance, listeners clucked their tongues disapprovingly as the narrative unfolded. During discussions after the performance, most listeners denied that any instance of father-daughter incest had ever occurred in 'Awadallah's village of Najis al-Haj. In our private conversations, 'Awadallah remembered specific village examples and recounted one flagrant case of a daughter impregnated by her father whose child was adopted by her family as her sister at the same time as the sinning father was banished from the village.

While these contested and often repressed village histories may or may not support actual cases of known incest in Upper Egypt, what is emphasized in my analysis is the fantasy and the fantastic dimensions of folklore in general, and of popular transmitted folk epic in particular. According to Otto Rank, the fantasy creations and substitutes emerging from the father-daughter incest complex are always presented from the father's perspective, not the daughter's. Rank larger claims are that "artistic activity is intended to gratify and justify male sexual fantasies."¹¹

Comparing father-daughter incest with psychiatry's assertion of the more serious infraction of mother-son incest, Rank notes a diminished degree in kinship between father and daughter and no serious age difference to impede the realization by males (e.g. fathers) of their violent and satisfying expression of fantasies. The father-daughter incest theme in this Upper Egyptian epic shares elements that correspond to many of Rank's characterizations, but at one extreme. The incest is conscious and must be consciously foiled. Therefore it cannot be contained within the family context, instead this instance of father-daughter incest is resolved within vast social and political frameworks: extreme political upheaval will ensue completely reorganizing for centuries to come the geography, boundaries,

even the ethnic and religious composition of North Africa. An historical catastrophe for a region, in Ibn Khaldun's words meriting a description of "locusts descending," can only have as its motivating source, according to Upper Egyptian epic singers, the wrath, incest fear, and ultimately, the realized passion of a woman who cannot be thwarted.

¹ For viewpoints on the geographical and political causes of Hilali movements westward, see Ibn Khaldun, *Kitab al'ibayr wa diwawun almuftada wa-al-khabar*, trans. W. MacGuckin de Slane, *Histoire des Berbères et des dynasties musulmanes de l'Afrique septentrionale* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1925-26); H. R. Idris, "Hilal," *Encyclopedia of Islam*, IX?, p.; and Jacques Berque, "De nouveau sur les Banu Hilal?" in *Studia Islamica* 36 (1972), pp. 99-111.

² See my *The Merchant of Art: An Egyptian Hilali Oral Epic Poet in Performance*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988; "Methodes de transcription et traduction d'une performance de geste orale arabe," in *Le Conte*, ed. Pierre Lyon and Paul Perron Montreal: Didier, 1987), pp. 127-139; "The Death-song of Amir Khafaji: Puns in an Oral and Printed Episode of *Sirat Bani Hilal*," *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 18 (1987), pp. 62-78; "Arabic Folk Literature and Political Expression," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 8:2 (Spring 1986), pp. 178-185; and "Praise of God, Praise of Self, Praise of the Islamic People: Arab Epic Narrative in Performance," *Classical and Popular Medieval Arabic Literature: A Marriage of Convenience? Festschrift in Honour of H. T. Norris*, ed. Farida Abu-Haidar and Jareer Abu Haidar, London: Curzon Press, in press.

³ The text of 'Awadallah's story is based on my unpublished fieldwork tapes recorded in 1983 in Upper Egypt. A complete set of 'Awadallah's version of *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* is available in the Folk Arts Center, Tawfiqiyya, Cairo, Egypt.

⁴ Transliteration protocols for Arabic follow Slyomovics, *The Merchant of Art*, pp. 269-273: Appendix A: Notes on Translation and Transliteration.

⁵ See *The Merchant of Art*, line 237, p. 114 for 'Awadallah's multiple puns of the phrase.

⁶ *Ibid.*, line 1036, p. 221 for 'Awadallah's multiple puns of the phrase.

⁷ 'Awadallah employs variants to the phrase, "when are lovers to be blamed," in his rendition of a tale from *A 1001 Nights*, where the theme of a royal father who locks up his daughter because she falls in love with a prince is repeated. See my "Performing 1001 Nights in Egypt," *Oral Tradition* 9:2 (1993), pp. 390-419.

Susan Slyomovics ²¹

⁸ Ibid., pp. 398-399 where 'Awadallah compares metaphorically the folds of a woman's genitals to delicate bird tracks.

⁹ Otto Rank, *The Incest Theme in Literature and Legend: Fundamentals of a Psychology of Literary Creation*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991, especially pp. 300-337 on father-daughter incest.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 313-314.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 301.

Middle Eastern 20th Century Folk Art Photos



Epic heroes carved in pink sugar candy, Cairo street.



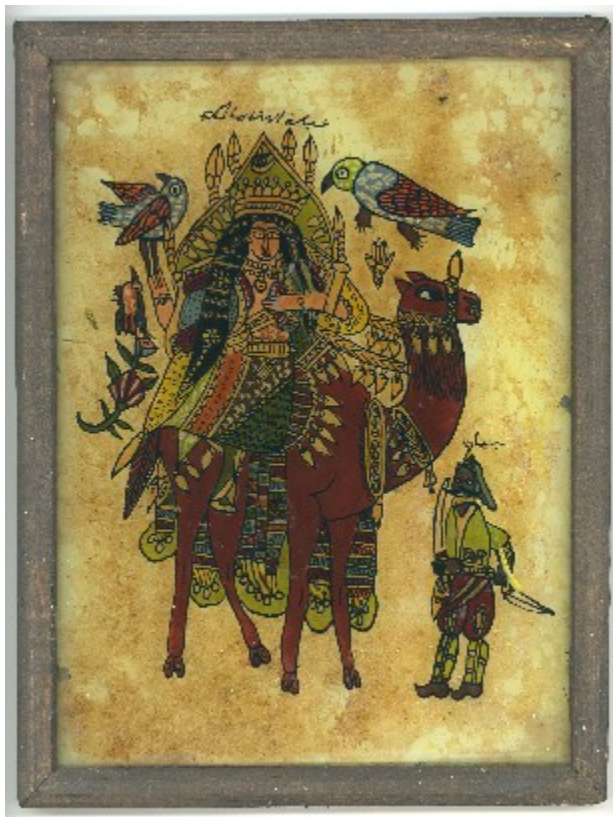
Antar Ibn Shaddad, epic hero. Painting under glass Tunis, Tunisia. 20th century folk art, owned by Prof. Susan Slyomovics.



Abu Zayd al-Hilal Salama, epic hero. Block print, Cairo, Egypt. 20th century folk art, owned by Prof. Susan Slyomovics.



Battle of epic heroes. Painting under glass Tunis, Tunisia. 20th century folk art, owned by Prof. Susan Slyomovics.



Abla epic heroine. Painting under glass Tunis, Tunisia. 20th century folk art, owned by Prof. Susan Slyomovics.

Wedding Song Photos

All photos by Susan Slyomovics.

Photos still from Wedding Song: Henna Art among Pakistani Women in New York City



Henna painted hand.



Painting the bride.



Bride.



Painting the bride.



Wedding Party.

World Muslim Day Parade Photos

All photos by Susan Slyomovics.

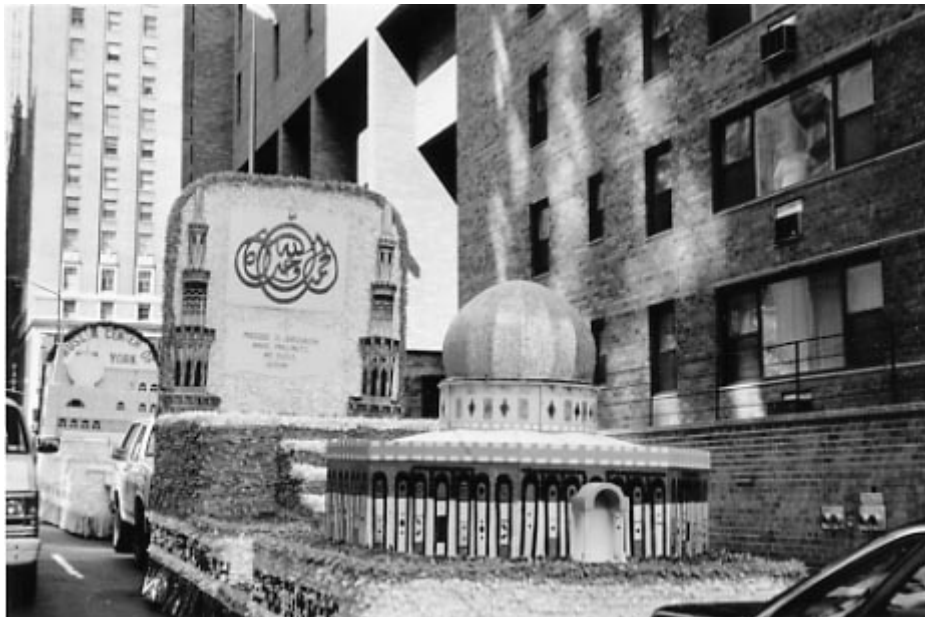
Photos from Muslim Day Parade, New York City, 1991



Lexington Avenue and Thirty-third Street becomes an outdoor mosque.



Float of the Queens Muslim Center, with sign of the basmala (In the name of Allah, the compassionate, the merciful).



Float of Jerusalem's Dome of the Rock.



Marchers head south down Lexington Ave. between 23rd and 32nd St. Banner in Arabic:
The Islamic Circle of North America.



Float of the Ka'aba (Mecca).



Float of the Qur'an.



Banners preceding the float of the Ka'aba.



Float of the Ka'aba.

Storefront Mosques of New York City Photos

All photos by Susan Slyomovics.



Temporary quarters of the Queens Muslim Center: kitchen cabinets serve as minbar and mihrab.



The muezzin of Masjid Al-Falah performs unamplified calls to prayer.



Islamic Sunnat-ul-Jamaat: Hanafi Sunni mosque in the Bronx.



Interior of Sunnat-UI-Jamaat mosque: The Imam points to masking tape lines that orient worshippers to Mecca.



Students leaving Islamic Sunday school at Masjid Al-Fatima in Queens.



Beginnings: a basement mosque with masjid painted on lower left corner, the Bronx.



Masjid Al-Falah Hanafi Sunni mosque in Corona, Queens under construction.



The Turkish community's Al-Fatih Mosque: former movie theater ticket booth converted to a religious bookstore.

Study Materials

[QuickTime® Player software](#) is required to view the .mov files in this section.

[RealOne™ Player software](#) is required to run the .ram files in this section.

Videos

- *Wedding Song: Henna Art Among Muslim Women in New York City.*
Streaming video ([RM - 16k](#) audio only) ([RM - 56k](#)) ([RM - 80k](#)) ([RM - 220k](#))
- Merchant of Art Video ([MOV - 85.3 MB](#))

Related Resources

Related Readings

- [Bible](#), King James and Revised

- [Koran](#)

Other Links of Interest

- [UC Berkeley Comparative Islam links](http://ias.berkeley.edu/orias/Islam.html) <http://ias.berkeley.edu/orias/Islam.html>