MOROCCAN DIALOGUES

Anthropology in Question

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An Approximate Chronology of the Faqir's Life

Date	Faqir Muhammad	Brother Ali	Village and Region	Morocco
1910	Born			
1912				Beginning of French Protectorate
1920		Born		
1922	Father dies			
1925			Beginning the rule of Qaid Bush'ib. who remains for thirty years	
1937	Begins to work on European's farm. staying three years			
1940	Tries without success to go to France.			
1941	First marriage		Rationing period begins	
1944	Divorces			
1948	Remarries Joins Tijanni brotherhood	Employed by Public Works for six months	Rationing period ends	
1949	Employed by Public Works, for three years	Marries		
1950	Buys large plot of land a short distance from the village			
1951	First child, a son, born			
1952	Leaves Public Works job Begins full-time farming			
1953	Taken to patrol in Casablanca	Divorces		Sultan (later King) Muhammad V exiled by French authorities

Date	Faqir Muhammad	Brother Ali	Village and Region	Morocco
1954		Remarries		
1955			First mechanical irrigation pump in the village	Muhammad V returns from exile
1956			Village run by its own leaders for two years (1956-58) Region has no qaid for two years (195658)	Morocco regains independence
1957	Family moves to land outside village Becomes village leader (*moqaddem*)			
1958	Begins to buy sheep			
1959	Buys another large field for farming			
1960			Earthquake in Agadir kills more than 10,000 people	
1961			First truck in village	Muhammad V dies; succeeded by his son, King Hassan II
1963	Mother dies		Local and national elections	
1964	Buys his first mechanical irrigation pump		First tractor in village	
1965				King Hassan II declares "state of exception" Opposition leader Ben Barka kidnapped and disappears in Paris
1967	Second mechanical irrigation pump			
1968	Leaves moqaddem position	First child, a son, born		
1970	My first visit to Ouled Filali, and to the Faqir and his family. I stay eighteen months.			
1971	I leave Ouled Filali			Assassination attempt on King Hassan
1972				Another assassination attempt
1973	I visit the Faqir and family for one month during the summer			
1974	Marriage of his daughter Zahara Death of his young son			
1975	I visit for two months during the summer			Fall: the "Green March" and the outbreak of war in the Western Sahara

Cast of Characters

1. The Faqir's Family
   A. Faqir Muhammad b. 1-'Ayashi Sherardi
      Fatima: his wife
      Mehdi: the eldest son, now in his early twenties; works on the family land
      Khadija, 'Aisha: two daughters, married and living in other villages
      Zahara: a recently married daughter, living with her husband and his family in the Medina
      Habiba: a fourteen-year-old daughter; often works on the family land
      1-'Aribi (diminutive of 1-'Arbi): a twelve-year-old son; works most of the time as the family's shepherd, and some time working on the family land
      Mbiriku (diminutive of Mbaraka): a nine-year-old daughter
      Kbibir (diminutive of Abdelkbir), Hmida (diminutive of Hmed), l-'Awiwish (diminutive of l-'Ayashi): three young sons
      Hisen (diminutive of Hsen): a young son who had recently died.
   B. Ali: The Faqir's younger brother, now in his early fifties; works on the family land
      Khadija: his wife
      Hmida: his eldest son, age seven
      Muhammad, Fatima: two younger children

2. Villagers
   b. Sadiq: eighty years old, now inactive due to ill health; a Tijanni brother and close neighbor of the Faqir
   bu Ruwwis: in his late fifties, a Tijanni brother, and seller of dates, figs, and nuts in regional markets
   Faqir Hmed: almost fifty, and formerly a regular worker for the Fa-

qir; now works his own land in the village and does occasional jobs for others (see ch. 7)

Hajj Hmed: old, very respected; went on the Pilgrimage to Mecca before World War II; now oversees the village mosque

Hashim: in his mid-thirties; owner of one of the two successful village stores; a frequent party-goer who loves to have a good time (see ch. 10)

Hassan: in his late forties; has worked in France and now farms his own land

Qebbor: a tea and sugar merchant in regional markets; in his early fifties, and a very good friend of the Faqir's brother, Ali; extremely tall, robust, and lively

Sessy: an important figure in the village during the colonial period, when he was the village leader (*moqaddem*) and inspired much resentment; he is quite old now, and the hostility he generated earlier has turned against him

Sessy b. Muhammad: old, infirm, nearly blind; a Tijanni brother.

Si Hassan: wealthy, about sixty years old; takes part in many of the same social gatherings as the Faqir.

Saleh: thirty years old; once worked in France (see ch. 4)

3. Outsiders

A. Bukhensha: living in the Medina, he is the father of the Faqir's daughter Zahara's husband (see ch. 8); he introduced me to the Faqir in 1970

Muhammad b. Bukhensha: the Faqir's daughter Zahara's husband

Fatima: Bukhensha's wife

Mehjuba, 'Aisha: Bukhensha's two daughters

B. Others

Sidi Ali: a leader of the Tijanni religious brotherhood (see ch. 2)

Sheikh: an impressive man, in his mid-fifties; an important local official and a good friend of the Faqir (see ch. 9)

Tahami: a man from another region who occasionally worked for the Faqir (see ch. 6)

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The First Dialogue

RESEARCH TASKS IN QUESTION

I arrived in Morocco in June 1975 with no specific research task planned. I suspected that a clear research project, designed to respond to current theoretical concerns in anthropology, would tend to suppress and severely distort the spontaneity and normal behavior of people I encountered, forcing them to fit into categories, modes, and aspects defined by the project. In particular, I had no intention to construct a "life history," an informant's "autobiography." I simply wanted to spend the summer with people I cared about and who seemed to care about me.

Several issues had perplexed me ever since 197 1. when I first realized that my relationship with the Faqir had become important to both of us in a way that went beyond what were then the needs of my research. I wondered, first of all, what made this relationship important to both of us; what was the relationship between the Faqir, a Moroccan villager, and me, a New Yorker, built upon? Second, what significance did this relationship have for the practice of anthropology? After all, the relationship was born within the context of an anthropology that takes the encounter between individuals of different societies as its primary research tool, yet this relationship had had no explicit place in my dissertation nor, as far as I could see, any easy position in the genres other anthropologists had written in. Finally, I was dismayed that, with so much of my relationship with the Faqir expressed verbally, my written notes captured it so inadequately and most of it was quickly lost as my memory of it faded; and that, unlike other people I felt close to, the disruption imposed by long periods of absence could not be partially relieved by letter writing (except of the most rudimentary sort, because the Faqir is illiterate). [1]

*The Faqir felt this disruption too, although in a manner different from mine. There is some discussion of this in the dialogue in chapter 11.

With little more than these thoughts, poorly articulated, in the back of my mind, I thought I would try to record talks with the Faqir on tape, something we had not done much during my earlier visits to Morocco. For the first talk, I had no definite subject in mind, nor was I certain that either of us would have any desire to talk into a tape recorder again. I prepared only two specific questions (in "What do you think about . . . ?"), but also noted in key words a number of broad subjects that I intended to ask about in a vaguely chronological order (in "Work. . . marriages . . . Colonial period . . .).

FIRST DIALOGUE

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT.. . ?

Faqir, you spend a lot of time working out in the fields. What do you think about while you're working?'

I look at what I'm working at, and I'm concerned about what will come from it. Let's say that I'm beginning the plowing. You know, I'd like to see the crop come up well--corn, or barley, or farina, or gourds. I'd hope there would be enough of it to eat a bit in our home and to sell a bit, in order to be able to buy sugar.

In earlier times, you know, there wasn't the kind of work outside the homestead that there is today. Now, if you can send one son to work on the farms,[3] he'll bring back sugar, or he'll bring back soap, or something that he's bought for his wage. But in those times there was nothing outside of our own cultivation. Nothing. You'd have to get sugar from that, and soap, and clothes. You'd have to get a living from it-everything. All the men who were living in the house at that time would work in their fields or be shepherds. In the early years. there was no outside work on the farms. And even if you worked for someone else in the village, your pay was just the food for your stomach: work was paid cheaply.

If you think about your life, what do you see as important in it?

Well. . . [the Faqir paused]. . . I have a lot of thoughts. And during my life, every year, new thoughts, new ideas come to me: this is a question of

'This question and the following one are both general questions (I did not even ask, "What were you thinking about today?') and as such are symptoms of my lack of a clear topic for the dialogue. On the other hand, they illustrate two dominant interests of mine that motivate many of the questions occurring in this and ensuing dialogues: the importance I attach to "everyday" matters and to the Faqir's thoughts, rather than to what might be termed the "exotic" and empirical detail.

[3] I use *farms* to translate the Faqir's word firma, which always refers to large, relatively modern and mechanized agricultural enterprises. These were initiated in the region by Europeans during the period between the two world wars, and their number and size grew quickly after World War II. Most have by now come under Moroccan control.

age. But what is important to me now is the situation we are in now, the times that we are living in now.

What is important to you about this?

What's important is: I'm concerned that, after knocking myself out over work, I can get enough to eat. And, wait a second, there is more. I don't want to run around and eat out in the wilds; I hope not to steal, or to get into fights, or to cause the smallest problem. I hope to work as I am able, to sit on the ground and eat what God provides, as I am able; to be free, not owing anyone anything; and to be far away from places where there are arguments. And that if I have something to say, I will settle upon my words at home, before I go outside, and will not enter into a dispute with anyone.

There was a time, earlier in my life, when my only concern was to take what I made into the wilds. That is, eating at home gave me no joy: I enjoyed only those things that can be done outside, in other places, in places that aren't proper. What I ate in our home was no fun at all.

Did you haue these thoughts when you were a boy?

No. When I was a boy, I had neither these thoughts nor the others. I didn't think about enjoyment on the outside, or about enjoyment in the home. I only thought about what I'd eat and what I'd wear.

And when did you begin to have those wayward thoughts?

When I reached the age of fasting, when I was fourteen or fifteen years old.[4] Then I began to think only of taking what I had to the wilds. Only that I be really good-looking, better than everyone else; and tougher than everyone else; and a bigger operator than everyone else. I hoped for all that. But I didn't work at this seriously. Most of my running around was a waste, it just passed. But then, I didn't have the thoughts I have now.

WORK. . . MARRIAGES. . . COLONIAL PERIOD . . .

When you began to fast, what kind of work were you doing?

Always in our own farming, for our house. You know, I never worked for someone in the village, unless I worked his land in partnership, or contracted for a special task. I never asked for day labor. When I worked for them, I was still free: when the work was finished, he and I would split up.

I did work for a time outside of our farming, on the first European farm that was set up in our region, that of Monsieur Friks. He came from Belgium and was sent here by some company. I worked for him for about three years and at the same time I worked on our own farming. My job was to dig the ditches for the orange trees.

[4] The Faqir is referring to the religious fast from sunrise to sunset that lasts throughout the month of Ramadan.

When was this?

Oh, about five years before the rationing period."

What was this Friks like?

Friks, all in all, was all right. But he was a tough one!

How so?

Well, if he had dealt with you and had turned to go, he would never turn back, he would go straight ahead. And he would never glance sideways as do other Christians, or as the Arabs do: when he wanted to look sideways he would turn his whole body. And if he happened to pass you by, you had to run after him until you got in front of him: he'd never turn around. And if he said anything to you at all, don't answer him back, don't say, "No." Don't say, "It's not like that." Just say, "Good, fine." And do what he told you.

His wife was a crafty-one. She'd turn around, come and bend down with the boys, look at the workers. She was crafty, his wife. But not Friks.

Why did you stop working for Friks?

Well, I left because my own farming was suffering and I had to return to it. At that time, you know, I only planted barley or corn. If I wanted to sow corn, for example, I'd have to wait until Saturday-we were off from the work on the farm Saturdays—and I'd have to ask for Friday off in order to do the plowing. And when it was my turn to irrigate my land from the canals, I'd have to ask for the day off in order to irrigate.

You didn't cultivate vegetables then?

I couldn't because the work on the farm kept me away, it didn't allow me the time to do vegetables.

Couldn't your brother have helped you?

He was too young, about Hmida's age [Hmida, the oldest son of the Faqir's brother, Ali, was about seven years old].[6] There was only me and my two sisters, and my mother.

You were still living in the village at that time, weren't you?

Yes, we lived on our family land in the village. I was born there, and, when I was small, we went to live for about two years in another village. I don't remember that at all. Then we came back here, and my father died just then. After our father died, we remained in the village a long time, until independence, when we moved here.[7]

After your father died, who took care of the house?

[5]The rationing period began during World War II and ended some six years later, in 1948. Most Moroccans in the Sous Plain refer to this period as *l-bo,* from the French word ***bon,*** meaning rationing coupon.

[6]From other information, Ali was probably slightly older, perhaps from ten to thirteen years old, at the time the Faqir worked on the Friks farm, between 1936 and 1939.

[7]Shortly after independence, which villagers associate with the return of the exiled King Muhammad V to Morocco on 18 November 1955, the Faqir's family moved to a home they had built on a large plot of land about a fifteen-minute walk from the village.

I did. My mother would tell me what to do and I'd go and do it. I'd go to market to sell clarified butter and I'd carry it in my cupped hands like this. I wouldn't even go on a donkey.

Didn't your mother or anyone else help in the farming?

No, I was the one who did the farming. I'd struggle with a pair of cows for the plowing when I was just l-'Aribi's age [one of the Faqir's sons, age twelve]. Even that small, I'd struggle with them. My mother would just tell me, "Go there," or "Do this" or "Do that". And I couldn't tolerate that at all, that she would direct me. Even at 1-'Aribi's age, I couldn't stand that. So I did what I wanted, myself.

Then too, I'd deal with outsiders. I'd work their land in partnership, and if guests came to visit I'd host them myself. And when taxes were due, I'd go to friends of my father to borrow. I'd say to them, "Let me have some money to pay the tax," and they'd give me money. When it was due, I'd pay it back. And if I had a calf to sell, I'd take it to market and I'd ask someone to help me drive it there. But I'd sell it myself, alone. They'd try to get the better of me and I'd try to get the better of them. That's how things were until I grew up and things settled down.

And you hadn't yet married?

No, not yet. After I got back from working on that European farm, I farmed here for a while, and then the rationing period came. As that started, I got married.

Whom did you marry?

A woman from the Medina,[8] from the neighborhood of the Grand Mosque.

How did you get to know her?

You know how! It was during those wayward years that we were talking about before. Well, for a long time before that I had been wasting my time; and then I had gotten to know this woman in the Medina. But I didn't want to get married and I was getting sick and tired of running around. I didn't know what to do.

So I said, "Let me try to go to work in Bordeaux." I went to Rabat, but with no luck. The war with Germany had just started, and they stopped taking people to Bordeaux to work. So I came back here, absolutely broke. I had nothing. And nothing to do. Nothing, nothing, nothing. When I got back here the corn hadn't yet been sowed, so I sowed it, and began to work at settling down a bit. I usually managed to get together enough money for sugar; if not, I didn't drink tea at all.

How did you make that money?

Well, I'd get some by selling a bit of clarified butter from the cow, or a bit of argan oil, or some argan nutshells. Or I'd sell grass feed in the

[8] Most villagers refer to Taroudannt simply as the *Medina,* the Arabic word for *city.* I have followed their usage throughout.

markets. And I'd bring back a bit of sugar with that. As for food, I'd bring it in from the farming. And then, I got married.

Why did you get married then?

Well, I said to myself, "It's not good for this fooling around to go on much longer." I was beginning to get some sense. And my mind had been divided between here and the Medina, my head was too heavy, it wasn't in harmony. So I said, "I'll bring here what is holding my mind in the Medina."

So you brought the woman here. How long did she stay?

For three years.

And there were no children?

No. No children. She stayed here for three years, and it came to nothing. And I divorced her.

Why did you divorce her?

We fought.

About what?

A lot. A lot. [The Faqir's responses were terse, and he seemed very pensive.]

About something specific?

She wasn't happy, she wasn't happy at all. She would say that she didn't like it here and I couldn't accept that.

Was she a Medina woman originally?

Yes, she was a Medina woman-she didn't speak Berber. She was born in the Medina and died in the Medina, that's all.

Did she take to the work out here?

She took to the work and knew it all; but it didn't go easily with her. And we say, "What is built without foundation, falls."

What does that mean?

Well . . . a marriage without good roots is no good. You know, our acquaintance wasn't made in the right way, it was made in the street. We got to know each other the wrong way. It wasn't nice, not nice at all.

So your mother didn't know this woman?

No, my family didn't know about her until I told them, until I told them that I wanted to bring her home. But, in fact, they had known something, they had suspected something. They had asked me about it until they tired of it. And I kept saying, "There is no one. I don't know anyone." Well, this thing was dragging on, and they told me that if I really needed that woman, that I must bring her home. They saw that the noise in my head was too much. So I went and brought her here.

What do you mean, "The noise was too much"?

They'd say, "You have something outside," and I'd say, "Nothing. I don't know anyone." And they'd say, "What's the matter with you? If you've gotten to know someone, bring her here. We'll all partake of what

God has given." So that I wouldn't leave work undone, or take everything and spend it in the wilds. And so that there would be children, and that my mind would be centered on the home. Well, when they spoke to me in this way, I thought things over. I saw that there was no way for me to let the woman go, no way to break up with her. So I married her.

You know, we had been together for three years, she and I. And I found her good, she had taken root in me. She didn't hold herself back from me, she didn't cheat on me, and she was very fond of me. For a time, I was looking for a way to break with her but I couldn't find one. I was looking for a reason to let her go, for some defect in her, but I couldn't find one. She was fine. She would do whatever I'd tell her, and she was very fond of me. That's why she stuck in my mind.

Perhaps she had put a spell on you?[9]

Perhaps. You don't know, one can't know that. The most powerful spell is one that works on your will. If the woman is insolent and does sorcery that's a different thing. But the real spell is one that works on the will.

So this woman said to me, "Wherever you tell me to go, I'll go." And she left her family, and came to us here. That is what I desired. I was tired of getting nowhere, of having nothing for her. You know, I would go to her broke, with nothing, and she would bring food for us from her family's house.

And she was very fond of you?

Very much, much more than is usual. We were entangled, tied together, that's all. Just as you and I are tied together now. That's it. I couldn't break with you, I couldn't say, "Get out, you American. Out of the way!" I couldn't do that, now. I couldn't, even if I were to die.

So much the better.

Well, you know we're not lying, by God. You and I have partaken of so much, so much. It is now inscribed, with God.

Well, that's the reason.

When you married, whom did you live with?

With my mother, and my brother and sisters; and with the family of my mother's brother. Our family was together then, on our land in the village. But each had its own hearth.[10]

Did your wife get on well with your mother?

Yes.

[9]Without intending to, I had phrased this question so that I appear to accept the effectiveness of witchcraft and spells.

[10]The Moroccan term *kanun* (hearth) indicates both the earthenware hearth over which food is cooked, and the group of people served from one collection of cookware. By extension, *kanun* may also refer to all family members who compose one economic unit and whose resources are shared, even if they do not strictly cook and eat together.

Did they fight at all?

Yes, a bit, she and my mother fought a bit. My mother would say to me, "No children. There are no children." And I was worrying, I too was worrying that my life was going by and that there were no children. I was worried about that and my wife probably overheard something. She understood what was meant and she probably said to herself, "There are no children, and these people perhaps don't want me here any more." Then she said to me, "Take me home." And I took her home.

So *she wasn't happy here?*

No, not with those words that she had heard. She was happy-wherever I was, she could be happy. But she understood that because there were no children, people would be disrespectful toward her.

Were you of the same opinion, that you should bring her back to her house?

Well, if the commotion was going to continue, then I had to take her away. If it had quieted down, I wouldn't have taken her away. But with all the disturbance-it was too much.

What was on your mind at that moment?

When the noise became too much, I thought, "Enough, I'll take her home." And the first time, we had gotten as far along the road as that first riverbed when she said, "Let's return. I don't want to leave. I want to go back with you." And I brought her back to my home.

Then, a second time, I took her away. This time. just as we reached the city walls, she kissed my head: "Don't tell my father or mother. Just tell them that we've come to see them." I went and bought some sugar, and we went to visit them. Just as you have come to us now. And we didn't say anything. My head was turning this way and that. Anyway, we kept quiet and stayed with them two or three days, and her family gave us corn flour and a container of olive oil, and they slaughtered a chicken for us. Then we came back here.

And then, about five months later, I brought her to her house again, just the same way. And again she changed her mind and kissed the top of my head: "Don't tell them anything, please." Again we stayed two or three days and came back here.

The final time-wait, I forgot something. On that occasion I just mentioned, after she had gone out of her house, I returned to her father. I said to him: "You shouldn't think that when we visited you months ago, we visited you freely. We came for this reason and for that. But when we got here, your daughter pleaded with me. We didn't want to ruin your pleasure, and we kept quiet, and went back to our land. Now, again, we have not come to you freely."

What did her father say, God rest his soul? He said to me, "My son." I answered, "Yes?" He said: "That day, no one brought you two together, you got to know one another yourselves. And now, she is my only daughter, and I love her very much. I couldn't hit her. She is now grown up, and she no longer fears me. If you decide to continue together, the two

of you, thank God and God bless you. If you no longer have the same good humor as you had in those days, then split up. But you mustn't think that you are no longer welcome here. Believe that you are my son and she is my daughter. If you take her, you are always welcome here; if you don't take her, you are always welcome here. Now go **and come** to an agreement, or else separate." That was the second time.

Finally, the third time, I just brought her into their house, and I ran away. I beat it and came back here, and that was that.

Did you ever return to their house after that?

I never went there again. After I came back here, I sold some sheep in order to get the one thousand two hundred rials for the dowry; [11] one thousand two hundred rials at that time was difficult. I sold the sheep and went to her mother's sister's son. I said to him, "Listen friend, you must go to this woman and tell her that we have to meet at the scribe's."

Why didn't you go to her house to tell her?

I didn't want to embarrass her father. For her father had told me: "If you stay together, you should have only the best; but if she wants to separate, I can't force her to stay. If you separate, whenever you want to come here, you're welcome." So her mother's sister's son went for her, and we met at the scribe's.

The scribe asked her, "Does this man owe you anything; has he taken anything that was yours?" Because she had brought some things to our house from her first marriage-a light rug, one heavy rug, a brass kettle and brazier, and a table. The scribe said to her, "Hasn't he taken anything from you?' She said "No." He said, "Does he owe you anything?" She told him, "No." He said, "You're not carrying a child?" She said, "No." He said, "Well, do you two want a divorce now?' And she said, "Well, sir, that's what he wants." That's what she said. And he said, "Here's your money."

Was she actually in agreement about the divorce?

She had to, of necessity. But she could no longer speak. She began to cry.

Didn't she say anything?

What could she say? Could she say, "I want him against his will?" Well, when we split up there, I gave her that dowry of 1,200 rials, she was given her divorce paper, and that was that.

I came home, and I remained unmarried for about four years.

[11] **The dowry is a sum of money settled upon by the fathers of the spouses when the marriage contract is drawn up. This sum must be given to the bride's family by the groom's in the event the couple divorces. (See ch. 8 for further discussion.)**

The Moroccan currency system is based on the dirham, which is divided into one hundred francs. In common speech, the unit of account is the rial, which is equal to five francs, although the rial is not recognized officially in currency terminology. Between 1969 and 1975, the official exchange rate for one dirham varied between twenty and twenty-five cents U.S. One rial was therefore worth between one and one and one-quarter cents U.S.

***Did you think about her** afterwards?*

Yes. I still think about her. It's painful, it's painful. For three years, perhaps four, I remained unmarried.

Did you see her at all** after **the divorce?

No, not until about two years later. Then, when we'd see one another in the marketplace, she'd come and greet me, or I'd greet her. Anyway, after those four years, I got married again.

Did she marry again too?

No, she didn't marry again. She did nothing. She stayed until I got married again and then she died, just then. I had just been remarried for three months or so when she died.

During those** four **years when you were single, did you associate much with your** friends in **the village?

I had friends, but I cut them off, cut them all off. There was all that ill will during the rationing period, and then I had that unhappiness from the divorce. I cut down on everything. For two years, I couldn't even bear talking to people. For two years. I'd go down to do my farming, early in the morning, and I'd come back at sunset. I'd see no one and no one would see me.

After that divorce, it was exile! There was misery from one direction, for at that time there wasn't a good crop, and that separation from the other. I was in anger. For two years, I couldn't stand talking to anyone. I don't know whether it was a spell, as you said, I don't know. I was like an animal, I didn't want people, no one at all. No one at all.

What did you work at during those years?

Farming, that's all. Just farming. I grew some vegetables, a bit of watermelon, some gourds, corn, and fava beans. We'd substitute the fava beans for the corn sometimes, because they gave a high yield and we'd sell them, not eat them much at all. And I'd sell clarified butter and argan oil.

But you didn't have much land then?

I had some of my own, and I worked some parcels of others.

When did you** begin **to think** of **marrying again?

Three years went by and then, during the next year, I was looking to get married. How did I look?[12] I said, "All that has gone before was worth nothing. What I need.. .

What had been worth nothing?

All that noise, all that waste, that wild life. I needed, for myself, to become humble, to make do with what is here. And to marry someone humble. That is how I saw things then. And by then my sister had married, and her husband had a sister, and I married her.

So, before getting married that second time, you thought you wanted a woman who

[12]The Faqir, here, was anticipating what he thought would be my next question.

who was, you know, of a small mind, without the build or the style of a city woman. You know the type. She should be a country woman and humble like **us. This one was an orphan**; her father was dead and so was mine. Well, those were the reasons. And I said to myself, "This way, I'll be in peace."

When you were a married man, did you used to gather with other villagers?

No, very rarely, and only with those I knew well. **I** didn't hang around with street friends. I was married and they weren't, so I didn't go around with them. Once I got married, I didn't sit around with people.

You didn't go to parties?

No. If there was a general village party, to which everyone went, all right. But special parties, like those with peers-no, nothing. I stayed out of friendship circles. [13]

When you did get together with your friends, in those times, what did you talk about?

Well, we'd talk about what so-and-so did, or we'd joke around; and we'd drink tea, that's all. Like the gatherings of Qebbor. [14]

Did you talk about colonialism, or about France?

No. We didn't comprehend "colonialsm" then or know much about the French. And we couldn't say either, "Frenchmen" or "colonialism." Nothing.

You couldn't say the words?

No, never, Words about the government couldn't be said. Someone might hear you and that would mean punishment. And the government kept us busy with work; we'd have to work fifteen days, and then again four days, each year. Then, right after the war with Germany, they began to work us fifteen days every two months. And there was always work to be done for the qaid. [15] Whenever they found you, whenever

[13] In addition to celebrations marking significant stages in the life cycle (e.g., circumcisions and weddings) and those associated with important religious events (such as the traditional Muslim feast of 'id l-Kbir, or the festivals of local saints), there are two other sorts of party within the village: village-wide parties (*rma'*), which used to be held at least once a year but are now held very occasionally, less than once a year, at no set time; and small, weekly gatherings (*zerda*) of a small circle of friends, consisting of between five and ten people, not all of whom need be villagers. At the weekly gatherings, each friend takes his turn hosting and providing the food and refreshment.

[14] A villager whose parties I regularly went to.

[15] The major officials in the present local administrative system are the qaid, the sheikh, and the moqaddem. The qaid, appointed by the Moroccan Ministry of the Interior and generally not a native of the region, is the highest official to whom villagers have direct access. Sheikhs, several of whom serve under each qaid, are appointed by the qaid in consultation with important local figures and with the inhabitants. Moqaddems are of two sorts: those who work directly under the authority of the sheikh and are chosen by him and do his bidding; and those who are informally chosen by the people in each village to lead them, and whose functions are essentially social.

In the colonial period and well into the independence period too, the qaid's word was

you went out on the road, the sheikh might find you and say to you, "Get wood and bring it to the qaid's house," or "Get some grass feed to' the qaid's ."

And was that work paid for?

Never. Whenever they found you--it could be today and then again tomorrow-you were never given anything, except some punishment perhaps. I'd just try to stay near the house and do my own work. Trouble came from every direction.

What was the rule of the qaid like in those days?[16]

In the beginning it was good—he would judge with the Law. You'd say to him, "Rule over me by God and by Islamic Law," and he'd clout you and tell you, "I am myself the Law." He would judge then and there, and if you owed a rial you'd pay it right then. Or go to prison until you paid. None of this shilly-shallying. No delaying, not even one hour. The money, or prison.

And the Qaid Bush'ib would look at the guy from afar and know what was in his head. If he didn't see this at first, he'd say, "Go back and return to me again." When the guy would return to him he'd know what was in his head. Sometimes the qaid would put his hand on the fellow's and from that know what was in his head. Amazing work there.

So, he ruled alone?

He ruled alone, for thirty years. From the time I was l-'Aribi's age [about twelve]. Toward the end, just before independence, the French control officer was with him. And for a while, earlier, a captain, a fellow of Jewish origin.

Was that fellow actually a Jew?

He had been a Jew, but he had become French. He was a shrewd one, very shrewd. Whenever he thought the sheikhs were giving him problems, he would remind them, "Listen, sheikhs. You know that the Qaid Bush'ib and I are holding the cow by the horns for you, and that you are milking it." That is, "We're holding the government and you're taking turns milking it." He had some manner! He was short, very very short, too.

In any event, when that French control officer came on the scene, the qaid began to grab for money. In his early days, he'd never take money, and he'd be concerned for the poor people-he was Number One. But

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law, the sheikh's power considerable, and the moqaddem's importance in the village very substantial, both socially and politically. The force of each of these positions has become somewhat weaker in recent years, although the qaid still wields great power.

[16]We were talking about Qaid Bush'ib, who was the dominant political figure in the region throughout the colonial period. Bush'ib became qaid in the mid-1920s and remained in the post until the last days of colonial rule, in 1955. For those adults who remember the colonial period, their memory of it is intimately tied to the rule of this single individual. (See also ch.4.)

toward the end, when the control officer ruled with him, when his command was divided, it was as though the government no longer had faith **in** him, as though he no longer had its confidence. So he began to grab for money. And then, too, the nationalist movement was clearing the terrain.

What was the nationalist movement about?

Morocco began to make noise, to have organizations. People began to get together at night: "Let's get so-and-so. We want to do this. We want to speak for ourselves. We want to be free." It was concerned with freedom, and it had been going on for a long time before we found out about it, for twenty-six years before independence. Part of the movement was here, part in Casablanca, part in every region. But it was led from Casablanca. And whenever anyone in it was discovered, they were arrested, or killed, or beaten.

Wait, let's go back a bit,. to your second marriage.[17] *How did that wedding proceed?*

We registered it, but we had no big celebration, no entertainment. We were poor and weak and, besides, all that celebration serves no purpose. We say that only those with no sense do it, that it is worth nothing. That boisterousness, those amusements, we say it's sinful.[18] And also, we were poor.

And when did you begin to have children?

About a year and a half or two years later. I was concerned. And I was very happy to have children, and my mother was very happy. The first was a daughter who died. Then came Mehdi, who is the oldest of all. Then my daughter who is married here in the village. Between each of them was about one and a half years.

This was right after the rationing period ended. What was life like during the rationing period?

Things were pretty tough, tough with respect to food, and sugar, and clothes. *Gar nichts,*[19] nothing. No clothing materials at all! We'd wear that coarse wool, and the women would wear that and all kinds of rags. No materials, none at all.

[17]I wanted to return to a proper chronology; I was perhaps wrong to be unhappy with the conversation but, at that moment, it seemed too formless to me.

[18]Later that summer, 1 learned that the Faqir had clashed with the family of his daughter's husband on just this issue: the degree of ostentatiousness of his daughter's wedding (see ch. 8). Did his remarks here reflect that dispute?

[19]The Faqir had only very few non-Arabic words that he saw as such in his vocabulary. These included (from the French): *Je m'en fous* (I don't give a damn), ***fatigué*** **(tired), *fou* (crazy), *toujours* (always), and *non* (no). There were many other words that, although borrowed from European languages (primarily French and Spanish), had been fully integrated into Moroccan Arabic. I have kept the former in their foreign form but have translated the latter into English. How the Faqir came to know the German term *gar nichts* (nothing at all) is a question I never asked.**

And how was it otherwise?

As for food: we'd get sugar, sometimes half a kilo a month, sometimes three-fourths; sometimes, if there was a lot, one kilo. Per head. But the merchants would always make off with some of that. And we'd get a bit of tea, leftovers. And soap, one or two soap bars, from month to month. And we had a book that would be punched every month. Grains were scarce, too. Scarce. Sometimes a small bit of wheat was given out, but rarely. Food was really lousy, it was no good at all.

What were your thoughts -during this time?

What was I thinking? I was thinking.. . like now, you know, with the Sahara. The Sahara problem has made tea more expensive for us.[20] Then, I was saying, "Let God settle things over there in Europe so that we can have our things here." That's what I said.

Things were tough, much worse than now. Now, everything can be had, but then times were tough. With the black market then, a sugar cone would cost a thousand francs, a thousand francs at a time when there was no money around. That's one hundred rials a kilo, twenty rials for 100 grams. And a man would watch over his sugar, hoard it until he had 100 grams, and then he'd bring it to provide drink for ten or twelve people. Today, with 1.50 grams, we provide drink for just one. There was even a time when instead of sugar, we used dates. We'd drink tea, and suck on a date instead of using sugar. Then dates got expensive and everybody began to try and deal in dates. I did that for a while, too.

Did you make any profit from it?

What I made I drank up. It passed quickly. For about a year, people were using dates with tea. It was tasteless.

Well, things went that way for a while, until my brother had grown up a bit. Then he began to sell feed grass for us, and I began to do a lot of farming, on my mother's brother's plots. I'd work three or four of his gardens. I had four donkeys and, at the time of the crop, I'd sell gourds, watermelons, and so on.

And when did your brother get married?

He got married. . . about two years after the rationing period ended, to the daughter of my mother's brother.

Was it your brother who said to you, "I want to get married."?

No, it was my mother and I who said to him, "You must get married." He said, "All right." We told him, "Your mother's brother's daughter."

[20] **The Western Sahara was still under the control of the Spanish in Summer 1975. In the fall of 1975, as the Spanish departed, King Hassan II and the Moroccan government organized the "Green March," in which several hundred thousand Moroccans marched into the Western Sahara to claim it, or reclaim it (depending on one's point of view) for Morocco. The area is now claimed by both Morocco and the Polisario Front; the latter seeks recognition for an independent state.**

And he said, "All right." Then, we were just he and I, and my mother, and the two women. My two sisters had already married by then.

Your brother divorced his first wife. How did that come about?

After a while, they no longer got on together. And her mother came and told her, "Don't knuckle under to them. Your father has a lot and can support you." That is, "Don't work hard for them, don't get upset." My brother heard this and told her, "Get out, I don't want to see you. Go to your father if he has so much." And she left.

I went to my brother and I told him, "You must take her back." But he said, "No, I'm not taking her back. Never, never." So I left it.

And after your sisters married, did you often go to visit them?

Of course.

When you saw them, did you ask them. . .

No, I don't ask. I don't question them. But when I see them, I say, "How are you. Is everything well?" That's all, that's it. Even with my daughter now, I don't question her at all.[21]

Why don't you?

It would be shameful. What would I ask her? I've nothing to say to her.

But, I mean, if you were concerned about her, might you ask her whether she was happy in her new home: or whether they were treating her well?

No. "Hello, how are you?", that's all. She'd say nothing but that, and I'd say nothing else to her.

And to her mother? Would she be embarrassed in front of her mother?

Her mother can question her. She will tell things to her mother. To me, no. I couldn't ask her.

That's enough. That's all now.

[21] The Faqir was referring to his daughter Zahara, who recently married and now lived in the Medina (see ch. 8).

2

A Meeting of the Religious Brotherhood

One Friday morning in mid-June, the Faqir asked me to go outside the compound, to greet someone sitting in the shade of the pear trees. I recognized Sidi Ali immediately from a distance: I had met him only once before, but he was very corpulent and not easily forgotten.

Sidi Ali was the second son of a man who had been the regional leader of the Tijanni religious brotherhood.[1] Many years earlier, Sidi Ali's father had emigrated from Fez, where the brotherhood's central lodge is located, where its largest library is housed, and where pilgrims assemble annually at the tomb of the founding saint, Hmed al-Tijanni. His father established a Tijanni lodge in Taroudannt. Upon his death, the mantle of Tijanni leadership in the Taroudannt region passed to the eldest son, and Sidi Ali moved to Marrakech, where he married and now lives. There, he has no position in the Tijanni hierarchy.

Sidi Ali has not allowed his regional brotherhood ties to lapse, but actively renews them twice each year when he returns to the southern plains to visit Tijanni brothers: he travels from village to village, spending a day or two in the homes of the more generous faqirs, and accepting as his due whatever alms they offer him. He used to make these rounds on a donkey or mule, but now he is more often relayed from one brother's motorcycle to another's pickup truck to another's tractor. His round ends in the Medina, where he spends some weeks with his brother's

[1]The Tijanni are one of a number of Moroccan religious brotherhoods, each of which claims to follow the particular path to Islamic salvation laid down by its own founding saint. In comparison to other brotherhoods, the Tijanni appear especially pious and puritanical. In Ouled Filali, there are about ten Tijanni brothers; the only other brotherhood in the village, the Derqawa, is much larger, with approximately thirty-five members. The Derqawa also have a separate branch in the village for Derqawa women.

For further information on the Tijanni, see Abun-Nasr (1965). For a study of a contrasting, "ecstatic" brotherhood, see Crapanzano (1973).

family and other kinfolk, and he then returns by bus to Marrakech to bide time until the next cycle.

I had been sent outside to keep Sidi Ali company while the **Faqir** laid out his best rugs in the guest room. My sentiments, as I approached him, were mixed. At times, Sidi Ali could be very witty, and his views on religious matters, which he offered only rarely and then in a condescending manner, were taken to be authoritative. But more frequently, his self-assertive, arrogant style would impose rather long silences, which he would interrupt in order to collect bits of gossip that might serve him at his next stopover or to relate those that he had culled at his last. Then, too, he might awake from a doze with an abrupt request, "Well, let's have some walnuts and almonds!" or, "Don't forget to bring back a beautiful watermelon from the fields!" His presence also meant that, as long as he stayed, I would have no chance to talk with the Faqir.

When I reached him, Sidi Ali was seated under the pear trees upon an inverted wooden crate, which serves more commonly to package farm produce; occasionally, as it did then, it enables distinguished visitors to avoid sitting on the ground. Sidi Ali had spread his small, red prayer rug over the crate. He and I exchanged greetings and he introduced me to Sidi Hmed, a brother whose title indicated that he claimed descent from the Prophet Muhammad, but who was here simply because he had brought Sidi Ali on his motorcycle.

A short time later, we entered the guest room. Sidi Ali took for himself a disproportionate number of pillows, stretched himself out at full length on the rug, and began to doze. Other Tijanni villagers whom the Faqir had sent for began to arrive: the Hajj Hmed, an old man who had made the Pilgrimage to Mecca by boat long before it became common to do so by airplane; Bu Ruwwis, a middle-aged seller of nuts and dates whose quick cackling laughter often made me feel that I had missed a joke; Sessy b. Muhammad, old, enfeebled, and nearly blind; b. Sadiq, a close neighbor whose son had married the Faqir's second daughter; and Hassan, a village cultivator.

The Faqir's eldest son, Mehdi, brought in the tea utensils and the Faqir's brother, Ali, initiated the verbal fencing that often determines who prepares the tea, saying, "Set them down in front of Sidi Hmed."

"Make it yourself!" Sidi Hmed retorted.

Ali parried, "But I don't make it well."

"We'll drink it however you make it," responded Sidi Hmed. "God will show you the way. Besides we're tired."

The last words weakened Sidi Hmed's otherwise strong defense. Ali, who had just returned from a hard half-day's work in the fields, saw the opening and replied, "It's obvious that we're more tired than you are."

This was decisive. Sidi Hmed conceded and said simply, "Give it here."

We drank the tea before and after a small snack of barley bread and

clarified butter. It was by now almost time for the mid-afternoon prayer, and this would lead directly into the weekly Tijanni group seance (*dhikr*). Ali and Mehdi returned to the fields to work and the other men, in turn, left the guest room in order to ritually wash themselves with warm water in preparation for the prayer and seance. I overheard Sidi Ali bluntly remark to the Faqir, "When will you finally build that small room in which one can wash? It is no good like this: people may see us from the roof."

Inside the guest room, Sidi Ali led the afternoon prayer, and then, with the sun now lower in the sky, the brothers moved into the shaded courtyard. They sat down on a reed mat, in an elliptical formation, and began the special Friday afternoon seance, which continued, with one short break in the middle, for about an hour and a half. It was completed, as required, before the time of the sunset prayer. The first part of the Friday seance consists of the office (*wadifa*), a series of recitations that must also be performed by every Tijanni at least once a day. During the second part, the formulaic *Hailalah* is chanted. In addition, twice daily the Tijannis perform another litany (*wurd*), once in the morning, and once in the evening. These specifically Tijanni duties do not replace the ritual obligations incumbent upon all Muslims: rather, they are said to be without value unless the basic Islamic obligations are carried out.

The seance began and most brothers, but not all. closed their eyes. All were extremely intent. They chanted in unison. rhythmically. The formula for penitence was repeated thirty times: count was kept on a hand-held string of beads: "I ask forgiveness of Allah. the Great, than whom there is no other God, the Living and the Self-subsisting."[1] Then the *Salat al-Fatih* (the Opening Prayer) was repeated fifty times: "0 God, bless our master hfuhammad, who opened what had been closed, and who is the seal of what had gone before; he who makes the Truth victorious by the Truth, the guide to Thy straight path, and bless his household as is the due of his immense position and grandeur."

In the middle of this recitation, the Faqir got up, brought a white cloth from the guest room, and carefully spread it out within the ring of brothers.

The Hailalah was repeated one hundred times: "There is no God but Allah."

The next recitation, the *Jawharat al-Kamal* (the Perfect Jewel), is the centerpiece of the Tijanni prayer. Hmed al-Tijanni claims that it was taught to him directly by the Prophet. It was repeated twelve times:

> 0 God, send benediction upon and salute the source of divine mercy, a true ruby which encompasses the centre of comprehensions and meanings, the son of Adam, the possessor of divine Truth; the most luminous lightning in the profitable rain-clouds which fill all the intervening seas and receptacles;

[1] This and the following translations are taken from Xbun-Nasr (1965).

Thy bright light with which Thou has filled Thy universe and which surrounds the places of existence.

0 God, bless and salute the source of Truth from which are manifested the tabernacles of realities; the source of knowledge, the most upright; Thy complete and most straight path.

0 God, bless and salute the advent of the Truth by the Truth; the greatest treasure, Thy mysterious Light. May God bless the Prophet and his household, a prayer which brings us to knowledge of him.

This was followed by a brief silent prayer, and then a ten-minute rest period. Two people had entered during the seance; they were now greeted, and some normal conversation was carried on.

Then, the second portion of the seance began. This was shorter and took about twenty minutes. "There is no God but Allah," was repeated six hundred times; "Allah" was chanted six hundred times, another silent prayer was mouthed, and the brothers terminated the seance by signaling their return to worldly affairs with the characteristic Muslim greeting, "Peace upon you."

Throughout the seance, I had tape-recorded the litany. The Faqir had requested this and Sidi Ali admitted that it was a worthy idea: it would permit the brothers to hear and enjoy a collective litany whenever they wished. I did not think that this would be so soon. Indeed, just as the seance ended, with the chanting rhythm of the six hundred "Allah"s having hardly subsided, the Faqir said, "Let us hear the litany." I played back a sample. "No," the Faqir insisted, "Let us hear all of it." For another hour and a half, the litany that Hmed al-Tijanni had given to his followers again echoed in the courtyard. This, of course, silenced almost all conversation, but it did not distract from the evening prayer, which was performed at the proper time, to the accompaniment of the tape-recorded litany. When it ended, the visitors from the village left, and we ate our evening meal and then prepared to sleep.

In the evenings, before going to sleep, I had the habit of talking for a while with either Ali or Mehdi. We would meet outside the compound, sit in the cool, open air, recount the village gossip. and joke with one another. It was a pleasant time and a change from the Faqir's righteous concerns; he was usually performing the evening Tijanni litany at that very moment.

Mehdi's first remark that night was, "Did you get your fill of noise today?" This cut in two directions: he was referring to the fact that the litany, for which he had (as yet) no use, had been repeated, and alluding to the occasional disturbance that my "always making noise with questions" generated. Mehdi insisted, in an apt metaphor of size, that Sidi Ali was "puffed-up and overblown. Ask him anything, and he always says, 'I know.' He's too haughty and has no shame. He is always coming through here and is never too embarrassed to take the money that my father offers." 'And he added, showing that such metaphors may work in unex-

pected ways, "He is what we call an 'Ant Faqir': he leaves the hay and carries away the grain."

A pickup truck was to come the next morning, at about 7 A.M. to take Sidi Ali to "44," the commercial center of the region, which, in its role as the major marketing depot for crops destined for the north and Europe, was appropriately named for the number of kilometers that separated it from the nearest port. By 9 A.M. the driver had not arrived, and Sidi Ali was already impatient. The Faqir attempted to mollify him, saying, "He probably took an early load to the Saturday market as he said he might."

But Sidi Ali knew the region well. "If so, he would have been back already. He's probably gone and taken another load from there to '44.'"

By 11 A.M., Sidi Ali was agitated. The Faqir sympathized: "These modern fellows, never put any confidence in them. They put on European trousers and a French jacket, and they think that with a little knowledge of mechanical things, they're big shots." The air is hot by 11 A.M., and traveling over the dirt roads at this hour produces an unpleasant mixture of sweat and dust. Conversation lagged now even more than usual. The Faqir was himself annoyed at the driver who had, as he said, "thrown Sidi Ali upon me when I have my own work to do."

At about 2 P.M., as we began to eat a midday meal of barley garnished with gourds, the barking of the dogs signaled the pickup's arrival. "If he has made that extra trip to '44,' I'm going to tell him off," said Sidi Ali. The Faqir shook his head sternly and said, simply, "No."

The driver entered and rinsed his hands. A place was made for him at the table. We ate for a long time in silence. Sidi Ali's eyes and mine were the only ones that moved from face to face; all others were fixed upon the meal.

As we licked our fingers after the meal, Sidi Ali asked, in a matter-of-fact manner, "So, everything was all right this morning? No problems with the police?"[3]

The driver said, "No problems."

"How was the Saturday market? Was it busy?"

The driver replied that it was as usual, nothing special.

"Then I suppose," Sidi Ali continued, "that you couldn't find a load to take to '44'?"

"To the contrary," the driver answered, either brash or unsuspecting, "I took one load there, and then another from there to the Medina."

This still did not account for all the time between sunrise and 2 P.M. and, for me, it raised several questions: "Hadn't you agreed to come

[3]Pickup truck drivers are constantly harrassed by the police on the roads. Legally, the drivers are allowed to carry produce but not passengers; however, they frequently carry both. Should they encounter a police roadblock when they have passengers, the drivers, on rare occasions, may have to pay a stiff fine. More commonly, the drivers avoid the fine by simply giving a small amount of money (usually referred to as *qahwa* [coffee]) to the police.

here early? How much money were those two extra loads worth, that you were willing to inconvenience all of us? Are you sure that you didn't spend a couple of hours in the Medina just amusing yourself?" Others may have had similar questions, but none of us posed them.

Little was said after that. The driver drank his final glass of tea quickly, and we followed him as he went to put cold water into the pickup's radiator. Sidi Ali wiped the sweat from his forehead with a handkerchief and unrolled his red prayer rug on the dust-covered seat of the cab. The Faqir bid him good-bye, wished that his trip would be peaceful, and slipped two hundred rials ($2.50) into his hand. The pickup's departure left the dust swirling.

WHAT TO DO?

I was not happy with the first dialogue. Although it noted a number of prominent events in the Faqir's life and provided some insight into his thoughts about them, it seemed to lack focus, to be too diffuse. Also, the Faqir had appeared somewhat disinterested, except at moments in his talk about his first wife. Perhaps the dialogue made this impression because I had arrived only a few days earlier; perhaps, too, the questions were too general or too boring and the dialogue needed more forethought and direction.

The first dialogue had ended, conveniently, by bringing the past up to the present, but I did not readily see where our talk might go from there. I considered choosing a series of topics such as religion, family life, agriculture, and so on; I might prepare a set of relevant questions and the Faqir and I could, then, systematically discuss each topic in turn. But I felt little enthusiasm for such an approach: it seemed at once too coercive, because it would force the Faqir's thoughts into categories he had no say in forming, and too arbitrary, because the categories themselves would have no necessary pattern, no definite beginning or end, no strong tie to our mutual experience. At that moment, I was neither optimistic about finding subjects for future dialogues nor even certain I would seek to hold them.

In any case, during Sidi Ali's visit private conversation with the Faqir was impossible. But the visit, the seance, and the accompanying incidents invited a number of questions that I thought appropriate for a taped dialogue. Here, at least, was a fairly well-defined event that we had both witnessed and that we could easily discuss together.

I prepared a number of questions. First, I was interested in how the Faqir came to be a Tijanni ("Becoming a Tijanni . . ."). I was also interested in how Islam, a religion in which all believers are said to be equal before God, could accommodate "saints" who not only attain privileged status themselves but who, by their example, help to confer a similar privilege upon their followers; and how, in such a system, the

Faqir would compare his brotherhood with the Derqawa brotherhood, which was dominant in the village and very different from the Tijanni ("Between man and God"). Finally, I had some questions on more practical matters, touching upon his attitude and that of others toward Sidi Ali ("Sidi Ali . . . the driver. . . the Faqir's brother. . .").

SECOND DIALOGUE

BECOMING A TIJANNI . . .

I'd like to talk to you about the Tijanni Brotherhood. When did you take up the performance of the Tijanni litany?

There were about eight years left to the protectorate, or maybe ten [1946–48].

And why that litany and, not another?

Well, that is god's beneficence (*rezq*), you know. I'd sit with those of that litany, and I saw that its light was for me. I said to myself, in my mind, "It is better." I liked their litanies of praise.. . , and I saw that in the books it was preferred.

What was preferred?

That Sheikh Tijanni is to be preferred over all sheikhs.

Why is he preferred?

For example, our Holiness the Messenger of God is the Seal of the Prophets. That is, he is better than all the other prophets. The other, let's say, is the seal of the. . . uh . . . saints. My mind provides me with that comparison. In other words, he is the seal of the saints. Do you understand my language now?

I'd listen, and I'd see, and from what is in the books.

Did you hear this litany when you were young, or only when you got older?

Even though I heard it when I was young, I had no interest in it, because I saw no purpose to it. Then, when I reached a certain age, I had to. How would it enter my mind when I was young, if I saw no purpose to it?

When did you begin to pay attention to it? How did you begin, because when you were small you were unconcerned with it?

I didn't care about it. Well, we say that it was written, inscribed, in early times. Inscribed, written. What the Lord inscribes for you comes to appear.

When I heard the litany, **I** would be sitting with them, I was as old as Hmida [age seven]. In the beginning, the Brothers would come to my uncle's, in another section of our compound, only about once a year. His friends would come and stay with him for a week, and they would have a feast, a party that was one week long, from year to year. His friends would come, those who were his partners in commerce, those who were his partners in money, those who were his partners in livestock.