

## **Significance of blood in religion and magic rituals in Morocco**

**Dr. Moundir Al Amrani**

*(Department of English Studies and Humanities /National Institute of Posts and Telecommunications, Morocco)*

---

**Abstract:** *Believed to have supernatural and magical powers, blood has maintained significant presence in sorcery as seen in its omnipresence as an offering to supernatural powers in magic rituals. In Morocco, although Islam considers it as impure and takes sacrifice in any other name than Allah's to be illicit and blasphemous, blood has preserved a remarkable status in the local popular belief. By looking at the use and role of blood in magic rituals, this paper comes close to its significance in these rituals to understand the cultural image associated with this substance. This paper starts with the notion of blood sacrifice in Islam. Since Moroccans demonstrate close attachment to Islam and its teachings, it is necessary to look at the relationship between Islam and magic with regard to blood and its significance, especially that many religious beliefs in Morocco are associated with beliefs in magic and vice versa. Finally, to contextualize this study in its frame of reference, this paper approaches the practice of blood offer and sacrifice and its role in some magic rituals.*

**Keywords -** *Magic, rituals, Islam, sacrifice, offering, blood, jinn*

---

### **I. Introduction**

Although determining the roots of the significance of blood offering in popular culture remains an issue for debate, this significance has survived a long chain of cultural and socioeconomic changes throughout history, and it still characterizes many practices and rituals as various as their background beliefs. In Morocco, it is neither a surprise nor an exception to find blood strongly present as a cultural signifier in magic and religious beliefs. Therefore, a look at the presence and significance of blood in religion and magic rituals reveals the significant value of this substance and the amount of mysticism shrouding its influence in the collective cultural beliefs in Morocco. As a substantial element in witchcraft and magic, it makes an interesting subject-matter for study in this paper to weigh its value in and influence on the paranormal belief system of the Moroccan society through getting close to its meaning and significance in Islam and in magic.

### **II. Blood And Sacrifice In Islam**

In Islam, there is no requirement for sacrifice to God, and no blood offering is ordained except for two cases that have been confused with sacrifice for God. Islam enjoins blood sacrifice in two occasions: at the Feast of Sacrifice, also referred to as Eid Al Adha, a commemorative event of Abraham's sacrifice, and at childbirth when the child receives a name. The implication of these two sacrifices in Islam is not of blood offering to God or atonement, but rather the act of showing gratitude for Allah's sustenance and blessings, and they are occasions of sharing with others. As stated in the Quran, 'It is neither their meat nor their blood that reaches Allah, but it is piety from you that reaches Him. Thus have We made them subject to you that you may magnify Allah for His Guidance to you. And give glad tidings (O Muhammad) to the Muhsinun (doers of good).' [1] This verse sets the rule and objective of blood sacrifice in Islam and it is made clear that this objective is to thank Allah for his blessings, with emphasis on the necessity of sharing the sacrifice with the poor and needy. As a way of showing gratitude, one has to share Allah's blessings with the others. The sacrifice in itself has no meaning if this condition has not been observed.

Another form of offering that seems to have some, but not total, bearing on religion is the one meant as charity to show one's gratitude to Allah for alleviating some serious illness or sparing one's life. For example, when one survives a deadly illness or some serious accident that could have taken one's life, one feels inclined to show one's gratitude through 'sadaqa,' or 'charity.' In Morocco, this offering of charity usually consists of offering a meal of couscous to some guests and even delivering it to the poor or to the mosque in the neighborhood. Couscous can be served alone or accompanied with meat or chicken, depending on the financial ability of the person offering the charity. If this person is wealthy enough to afford a blood sacrifice, in this case the sacrifice can be either a sheep or a bull.

In consistency with the principle of 'sadaqa,' or charity, a vow could be made and has to be fulfilled once one's prayers have been heard; if the prayers have been heard but the vow is not kept, the latter remains a debt which one has to pay. According to Van Baal, 'vows are made in prayers sent up by a barren woman desiring a child, by a family for the recovery of a sick father or son, by a dismissed official for a new job, etc. If

the prayer is heard a sacrifice shall be brought at a certain sanctuary on the day appointed for such occasions'. [2] A remark that should be made here is that like sadaqa, vows in Islam are not conditioned by performing any kind of blood sacrifice; they can be in any form including simple acts of charity, but what vows and charity have in common is that they both are based on the principle of sharing with the others. Slaughter-sacrifice in Islam is performed primarily as a form of showing gratitude and sharing Allah's blessing and benediction; it is not a form of blood offering or oblation, because Islam deals with blood in two different ways.

In Islamic teachings, blood swings between sanctity when it refers to life and impurity when it refers to other practices. Prophet Muhammad insists on the sanctity of human life in his saying 'Verily! Your blood, property and honor are sacred to one another (i.e. Muslims).' [3] The word 'blood' here refers to life, which is forbidden to take without a rightful reason. In the Quran, there are several verses that forbid taking someone's life and consider it a sin to do so. In The Quran, we read:

And (remember) when your Lord said to the angels: "Verily, I am going to place (mankind) generations after generations on earth." They said: "Will You place therein those who will make mischief therein and shed blood,—while we glorify You with praises and thanks and sanctify You." He (Allah) said: "I know that which you do not know. [4]

In this verse, Allah is addressing the Angels and informing them of his decision to create and place mankind on earth. In response, the Angels ask how come that Allah would place on earth 'those' who will make mischief and shed blood, meaning 'take lives,' a huge sin in Islam that is not supposed to be committed. Blood derives its sanctity by being equated with life, which can only be taken for a reason or by Allah. To show the sanctity of human life, Prophet Muhammad informs his people that 'The first cases to be decided among the people (on the Day of Resurrection) will be those of blood-shed.' [5] Islam is clear about this and there are many other verses that forbid taking a person's life unless under specific circumstances.

Another example of the sanctity of blood is when it is shed to defend Islam or for the sake of Allah, which is the highest form of martyrdom in Islam. Contrary to Islamic rituals that stipulate that a dead Muslim's body is to be washed prior to burial, soldiers who die in a battle for a religious cause such as defending Islam or for the sake of Allah are buried without washing, even if they are covered in blood. This was the case, for instance, in the battle of Uhud when the Prophet ordered to 'Bury them (i.e. martyrs) with their blood.' [6] On the day of Resurrection, according to Prophet Muhammad's saying, 'None is wounded in Allah's Cause but will come on the Day of Resurrection with his wound bleeding. The thing that will come out of his wound will be the color of blood, but its smell will be the smell of musk.' [7] Probably these are the only instances when blood is dignified and sanctified; the other instances consider blood as impurity and uncleanness.

There are two clear references to blood as impurity, namely menses and 'nifas,' or maternal blood, which is the blood that follows childbirth. During menses a woman may not pray or have intercourse with her husband and she has to wait until her period stops. In this regard, according to the Prophet's wife Aisha, during menses the Prophet said to her, 'Give up the prayer when your menses begin and when it has finished, wash the blood off your body (take a bath) and start praying.' [8] If ever this blood stains a person's garment, this person may not pray unless the stain is cleaned. Once, a woman visited Prophet Muhammad inquiring him about what to do if ever a woman's clothes get stained by blood during menses. The Prophet replied as follows: 'If the blood of menses falls on the garment of anyone of you, she must take hold of the blood spot, rub it, and wash it with water and then pray in (with it).' [9] In the case of menses, blood is regarded as impurity that should be washed away before a woman could pray. Now let us look at the Quran's position towards blood as food.

The Quran makes it clear that blood and slaughter-sacrifice other than those authorized by Islam are forbidden as food for Muslims. Blood is forbidden as a drink not because it is sacred or holy, but because it is considered as impure and unclean. By the same token, animals that have not been slaughtered properly are not allowed as food. In order for animals' meat to be halal or permitted as food, the animal has to be slaughtered properly in accordance with Islamic rituals to drain the blood from the animal's body. The Quran specifies the kind of food that may or may not be consumed in various verses, and the following verse is an example.

He has forbidden you only the Maitah (dead animals), and blood, and the flesh of swine, and that which is slaughtered as a sacrifice for others than Allah (or has been slaughtered for idols, on which Allah's Name has not been mentioned while slaughtering). But if one is forced by necessity without willful disobedience nor transgressing due limits, then there is no sin on him. Truly, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. [10]

The verse above stipulates that it is forbidden to eat dead animals because they have not been slaughtered properly to drain blood from their bodies. Blood is mentioned clearly as forbidden food for Muslims, and also any sacrifice that is not carried out according to Islamic teachings and on which the name of Allah has not been mentioned. Animals sacrificed for any reason other than showing gratitude to Allah's

blessing are not allowed as food for Muslims. As will be dealt with later, such forbidden types of food for Muslims would be part of magic rituals and spells. However, there are two exceptions to this rule, which are the liver and spleen of the animals as they are allowed as food in Islam.

### **III. Practice Of Magic In Moroccan Society**

Humanity has known magic since antiquity and Moroccan society is no exception when it comes to belief in and practice of magic, which extends from the pre-Islamic era up to present time. Belief in the power of magic and its dominance in present day Morocco are but a continuity of the long streak of belief in the supernatural that 'is grounded on some innate disposition of human nature.' [11] In ancient times, Moroccan Amazigh, often referred to as Berbers, put up with life according to their understanding and interpretation of the phenomena around them. Their belief in the supernatural or the paranormal forces they honored was, according to their belief, capable enough of shielding them from natural disasters and enemies, of offering them welfare and of curing them from disease. These beliefs are justified by the constant state of insecurity seen in the 'fear of neighboring groups, problems of food supply, water supply, constant feuds and local wars, protection along trade routes, female barrenness, and disease [that] were a few of the sources of their anxiety.' [12] According to their beliefs, the responsibility of their misfortunes and miseries lies on evil spirits or their agents, and in order to exorcise this evil, they resorted 'to employ a variety of magical formulas.' [13] James T. Shotwell (1910) summarizes the role of magic in people's life as follows:

[Magic] is a rude and mistaken science, in which man began his struggle with the mysterious forces of the world. By spell and by charm he met those dangerous powers whose presence he saw revealed in the multifold crises of his life: in sickness and death, in the chances of the hunt or the perils of war, in birth, in sexual relations, in the terror of spilt blood, in the gloom of the night, in the march of the storm, in all the terrible and the wonderful in his miracle-wrought universe. [14]

The Amazigh belief in the forces of evil was specifically directed to women, who were believed to possess supernatural qualities. Hagopian compares this image of women to that of women in different parts of the world. This belief in the evil power of women led to the belief in some women as being 'devil incarnate.' [15] These women 'had the power to make their husbands impotent and were particularly adept at the use of the evil eye.' [16] Although a woman was believed to be saintly and angelic, 'in whichever of these categories the woman fell she was now seen as a person with mystical qualities.' [17]

The view of women as the specialists in evil practices of magic is endorsed by the common social view of men in Morocco as the bearers of religious piety. According to David Hart, 'it should be made clear that religion (*dīn*) is regarded by Muslims as essentially the open, overt and public domain of men, whereas magic and sorcery, which in Morocco [...] are basically a part of the hidden, covert and secret domain of women.' [18] However there are exceptions to this general rule as there are many men who get involved in magic and witchcraft as professionals. These men employ rites of magic and sorcery differently from women. While women employ other techniques and ingredients, men generally employ Quran verses in their magic prescriptions. [19]

The coming of Islam was supposed to mark a break with the practices it considers as non-Islamic and pagan; however, although Islam forbids the practice of magic, it does not deny its existence, which, in a way, explains the way Islam was adopted as a religion. Islamic teachings forbid many practices and beliefs that it considers unreligious and blasphemous, and this means that a big chasm existed between Islam as it is and the social makeup of Morocco at that time. Therefore, Islam put on its mystical garment to get to the people of Morocco. As Elaine Hagopian puts it, 'Contrary to Orthodox Islam, Islam in mystical clothing was readily accepted in Morocco. Whereas acceptance of Orthodox Islam implied major social changes almost impossible to effect in the Moroccan context, Islamic mysticism actually facilitated the functioning of Moroccan society as it was.' [20] Thus, Islam had to show its transcendence of earthly phenomena in order to substitute whatever non-Islamic beliefs prevalent in Morocco back then.

This also explains the prevalence of saints with the sanctity attached to their shrines and tombs. Indeed, saints in Morocco are placed at a high status and people take them as mediators between people and God, because these saints, as the popular belief goes, possess the 'blessing,' or what is locally known as 'Baraka.' Moroccans have a strong attachment to Baraka in their culture and it is strongly connected with the attributes of Saints as well as other objects. This Baraka, or blessing, is 'at the same time a magical potency which attaches to anything that is sacred, even to objects that are in no way connected to persons.' [21]

Baraka in the Moroccan popular culture and belief is a source of protection against evil in its various forms, but it is closely connected to protection against evil spirits and demons. These are referred to as *jinn* who, according to Park, are 'a species without individual characteristics. On the other hand, certain evil spirits identified with the *jinn* are known by name. Around these names there has grown up a body of legend which has given them, in the popular imagination, substance and an individuality which the anonymous and more ephemeral spirits did not achieve.' [22] Therefore, Baraka stands in midway between good and evil, with the

former exemplified by Patron saints who are pious and holy dispensers of Baraka and the latter attached to demons and evil spirits. There are festivals held in honor of the patron saints at fixed times of the year where seekers of Baraka make offerings and sacrifices to these saints to invoke their blessing.

#### **IV. Intertwined Religious Practices And Pre-Islamic Beliefs**

The mystic cover under which Islam managed to find room within the pagan belief system in Morocco also provided cover for many non-Islamic beliefs to survive throughout the centuries. Many of the cultural practices that have religious origin have been mixed up and confused with pagan practices, and the majority of the people ignores that or pays no attention to it. Added to this is the mystical aspect of religion and which has been magnified in social practice and, hence, got blended with practice of magic. All this explains the way magic and religion, in Moroccan popular belief, are more than often intertwined and misleading to the people themselves. This could also be further amplified by the similarity in nature between religion and magic, a point raised by H. S. Versnel who emphasizes the fact that what 'magic and religion have in common [is] that they refer to supernatural forces and powers, a reality different from normal reality.' [23] David M. Hart agrees on the same idea and states that 'there is no sharp dividing-line between the domain of religion and the domain of magic: the one, indeed, tends to fuse with the other.' [24] This is the case with the position and role of magic in Moroccan popular culture, where at the first encounter with Islam, this religion got filtered through the native's beliefs; the result of this is that many of the superstitious beliefs in Morocco are mistakenly attributed to religion, at least in the popular belief. James T. Shotwell puts this as follows.

One cannot separate religion from magic by a mere definition. The further we examine the phenomena of religions the more we find them interpenetrated with strains of magic forces, and where our comparatively keen analysis fails to detect those elusive penetrations of varying grades of intensity and power, the primitive mind certainly never was able to distinguish them. [25]

Indeed, as far as general knowledge is concerned, world religions do emphasize the necessity of belief not only in material proof, but also in supernatural and paranormal phenomena. Despite the fact that Islam does forbid the use and practice of magic and discredits witches and witchdoctors, we find various religious practices that are performed in the name of Islam because many people, especially those with low or no education, have inherited the belief in the sanctity of many practices that are originally superstitious. An example of this is the Feast of Sacrifice, or Eid Al Adha, in Islam, when a sheep is slaughtered as a religious requirement in the commemoration of the sacrifice of Ibrahim of his son Ismail. The sanctity of the sheep-sacrifice in the Feast of Sacrifice, which is originally a religious requirement, predisposes it for other uses in witchcraft and sorcery. In the beliefs of the sect of Gnawa, for instance, the blood of the sacrifice in the Feast of Sacrifice has enormous magical powers and it is of particular preference to the king of the jinn. The Gnawi soothsayer takes the advantage of this feast to get close to Mira, a Queen of the jinn, to grant her knowledge of the fate of the people, since, in the local popular belief, the jinn have the ability to get knowledge from the Preserved Sheet on which people's fate is written. To be granted this knowledge, the soothsayer prepares the setting by the seven kinds of incense and prepares other offerings and once the sheep is slaughtered, the soothsayer drinks from its hot blood and the sect's leader marks her forehead with blood. Although the act of drinking blood is forbidden in Islam, yet it constitutes a pillar in the practice of magic. In this way, magic employs a substance forbidden to drink in Islam, because it is impure, to satisfy supernatural powers. The act of drinking the sheep's blood in the Feast of Sacrifice has been mistaken for a religious blessing, since the sacrifice is a religious act; therefore, most of the people who drink this blood believe that it will rid them of evil and offer them Baraka.

To understand this mixture between the sacred and the profane, in his review article of Edward Westermarck's book *Ritual and belief in Morocco*, Robert park distinguishes between what he calls 'official religion' and 'popular religion.' In his view, 'popular religion' is the resulting hybrid mass of traditions and beliefs that have been shaped by historical, social and cultural factors side by side with the 'official religion.' Robert Park puts it this way:

The Official religion of the Moors is Mohammedan; but the popular religion—a mass of local tradition, custom and magical belief, in which it is possible to trace the influence of Rome, of Egypt, and Carthage as that of Negro and Christian slaves—still survives all changes and has blended with and modified the orthodox Mohammedanism imposed upon the native populations by Arab invaders. [26]

This is why many people still believe in the supernatural powers of the blood of this sheep to heal and drive away evil spirits who also require certain offerings in the form of blood sacrifice as part of a ritual of magic. Blood is often required for the fulfillment of many rituals, especially as an offering to get some Saint to heal a sick person, grant a barren woman the ability to bear a child, or to get this saint to be an intermediary between the person making the offer of the sacrifice and God; other forms of blood sacrifice are offered to demons, popularly referred to as jinn, as part of a magic prescription to get them to carry out some action.

The belief in the ability and powers of evil spirits and their responsibility for many misfortunes and catastrophes that inflict upon people has been counter-balanced by the healing powers of saints, both dead and alive. Saints are believed to possess the necessary powers to counter the evil of demons and jinn. This belief in the powers of saints stems from their religious status among people during their life and their Baraka that lasts after their death. Therefore, in the people's view, they are worthy of offering and sanctity because they are pious men of God and they have powers; they can even interfere and mediate between God and common people. The practice of offering sacrifices for jinn has been transferred to saints and many of the rituals have been preserved in the process. Here, we have Makenzie Douglas' view that 'Generally we apply [superstition] to religious beliefs which once were living and powerful, but which have been outgrown by the average mind of the community. It is therefore a term of vague and variable application.' [27] This echoes Hagopian's view that 'it is conceded that the local culture affects what will be accepted, what will be rejected, and what will be modified.' [28]

### **V. Saints And Blood Offer**

In Morocco, there are more saints than one can count or identify, but there are some of them who are known for certain specialties to grant certain wishes or fulfill a miracle, on which the nature of the offer or sacrifice depends. Generally, a visit to a saint's shrine in Morocco may not reflect the visitors' interest in the saint's person or the story behind his saintship. During their lifetime, saints are known for their sincere commitment and devotion to their religion and good deeds. There are also those who were known for their wide knowledge and expertise, and those who are believed to be descendants of the house of Prophet Muhammad. Such characteristics bestow on these saints Baraka, which is proven by possessing certain miraculous attributes that are believed to remain everlasting even after the saint's death. Therefore, it is the miraculous power of Baraka that people are after when they visit saints' shrines. This explains the nature of people's requests and expectations from a saint.

Saints are honored by their followers during specific seasons or feasts during which various rituals and celebrations take place. During these feasts certain rituals are performed including blood sacrifices and offerings. The saint is held at a higher status and so are his shrine and even the village where he is buried; therefore, respect must be paid and shown by following certain rituals and making offerings. The walls, the threshold, the doors, even water and anything related to the shrine becomes sacred as it has the saint's Baraka. Upon entering the shrine, a usual and common step the visitors should make is to light candles and make a donation. They also recite verses of the Quran and pray to the saint for mediation with God. All this falls within showing due respect to the saint so that he would approve the visitor's request. Other practices related to this are more extravagant and exotic as the visitors have to offer a sacrifice to the saint, depending on the saint and the prerequisites of granting the wish. All this has made of saints' shrines holy sanctuaries and bestowed on them sacred attributes. It should be noted, though, that such visits to saints' shrines and the practices involved in them are non-religious and Islam forbids them.

### **VI. Blood In Magic Rituals**

Now we come to the stage where the use of blood in magic ritual sacrifice in Morocco needs to be addressed. The significance attributed to blood in ritual sacrifice originates from its power as a 'divine sanguinary substance,' [29] and being divine in nature means that it has divine power in driving away evil spirits and demons as 'blood also arouses fear and repulsion.' [30] In the context of the Feast of Sacrifice in Islam, for example, blood can have a dual role. First, it is used to repel evil spirits, but it can also attract these spirits; therefore, the sacrificial blood has to be kept away from them to preserve its purity. This is attained by sprinkling salt near the sheep's throat and around the place where the sacrifice is to take place. In a similar context, instead of being used to repulse demons, it is used for propitiatory purposes to those demons. Many magic and witchcraft rites involve the offering of blood as part of the requirement for the fulfillment of the ritual. An instance of this is provided by Edward Westermarck who studied rituals in Morocco extensively.

When the Moors build a house or dig a well, they always take precautions against gnum. The Angera people put some salt and wheat and an egg in the ground, and kill a goat on the threshold of the new house; otherwise, they say, the children of the house would be stillborn or would soon die. In various parts of Morocco some animal—a goat, or a sheep, or a cock, sometimes a bullock—is killed both when the foundation of a house is laid, and when the house is ready, or nearly ready for occupation. In the latter case the sacrifice takes place on the threshold, and afterwards the slaughtered animal is eaten by the proprietor, his family, and invited guests. When a well is dug, a goat or a sheep is also killed, especially if there be no sign of water. In Angera I saw a well of which the lining brickwork was broken, and my native friends told me that it had cracked immediately after it had been built up, because no animal had been sacrificed to "the owners of the place (1899: 255-256). [31]

This excerpt enumerates several instances when blood offering is practiced in Morocco, which shows the depth of belief in the supernatural powers of blood among Moroccans. However, the excerpt also shows that Moroccan people believe in sharing their existence with the jinn, or 'the owners of the place' as they are commonly referred to locally, and, hence, they need to show them their respect by providing them with what is believed they love or need the most, which is blood. According to Westermarck, the sacrificed animals range from a cock, a goat, to a bullock. This is so because, according to Van Baal, 'apart from human beings the only animals that let themselves be sacrificed, i.e. killed on the spot chosen for the celebration, are domestic animals.' [32] The sacrifice is meant to satisfy the jinn in order to avoid their wrath and enmity and to have a good neighboring relationship, since they own the place before the coming of the humans to share it with them. Therefore, the sacrifice is meant as a peace offering to the jinn and to show them that their ownership of the place has been acknowledged and their presence is respected. This offering of blood to satisfy the jinn is further emphasized in other rituals that involve approaching them and appeasing their temper as it is the case during the rituals of Gnawa. These beliefs and practices are still alive among the people, especially those with little or no education

## **VII. Blood In The Rituals Of Gnawa Sect**

The sect of Gnawa has close ties with the paranormal world as it is clear in the rituals practiced by this sect and which bring together religious hymns and praises of Allah and the Prophet together with mysterious supplications linked with the world of jinn and spirits. Genealogically, Gnawa are the descendants of the slaves who were brought to Morocco from what is known at present as Mali and Sudan. The integration of Gnawa in the Moroccan social fabric has been paralleled by the integration of their pagan beliefs and faith they brought with them and which have been handed down from generation to the next. This integration of belief systems resulted in a new identity disguised in Islam that denies any link with paganism. This explains the blend of Islamic and pagan practices in the rituals of this sect with regard to jinn and spirits. Moreover, Gnawa never consider their beliefs and practices to be non-religious, although most of the religious scholars consider Gnawa to be a non-religious sect that promotes pagan beliefs and rituals.

The sect of Gnawa organizes a night known as 'Derdba' when their rituals are performed in honor of the kings of jinn whom they cherish and sanctify. A significant date for this night is mid Chaaban (the eight month in the Muslim Hijri calendar) before the jinn are chained during the following Holy month of Ramadan. According to their belief, at this night, the fate of the people is greatly influenced by the jinn. Derdba is the most important ritual ceremony because it is the night when the kings of the jinn descend among the followers of the sect. This night is celebrated on the rhythms of the music played on the sect's instruments including 'sentir,' a string instrument made from goat bowels, flute, and drum. The clothes worn by followers of this sect are also significant and they respect the king of jinn's favorite colors in order not to anger them.

Derdba night consists of three stages that start by touring the streets with the sacrifice, then the stage of intense rhythm, and finally the culmination of the night by the presence of the kings of jinn. In the first stage, the sect members accompanied by a woman soothsayer, called 'shwafa,' and her assistance, take the animal to be sacrificed in a tour of the city to announce the preparation for the night of Derdba by playing the music of the sect.

The second stage starts by the preparation for receiving the kings of jinn by increasing the rhythm of the music and the beats of the drums. During this phase, the setting of the ritual is filled with different kinds of incense and cloths in the favorite colors of the kings of jinn are brought. This phase is exclusively for the sect members and followers; therefore, strangers leave the celebration for fear of the harm of the jinn, because in this phase, the sect members get communal with the jinn, so all strangers are not allowed to attend.

The preparations for the third phase start by reciting chants and supplications for their kings. This phase is the most important part of the night because it is the time when the kings are present in the ceremony, which is characterized by intense musical rhythms and the air filled with the smoke of the jinn's favorite seven kinds of incense. Here comes the role of the woman soothsayer who is the closest to the kings of the jinn in this ritual.

The presence of the kings of jinn is announced by the body of the soothsayer, or 'shwafa,' starting to shiver. At that time, her assistance upsurges incense and the rhythm of the music gets more intense. Then, the soothsayer is covered by each of the cloths of the different colors until she calms down, which shows that the color that has calmed her down is that of the king, or Queen, who has descended. The Queen uses the soothsayers as a mouthpiece to address the crowd with her prophesies by revealing their problems and giving each one the prescription to solve them. The whole ritual culminates in the slaughtering of the sacrifice.

The sacrifice of the animal follows a certain course to satisfy the requirements of the kings of jinn and is used as a source of Baraka. The animal sacrificed has to be a black he-goat, as the jinn would not accept any other as sacrifice to them. Prior to its slaughter, the animal is given milk to drink and is sprinkled with flower distill before the leader of the sect cuts its throat. The shwafa drinks from the hot blood and the leader dips his

right hand in the animal's blood and prints a mark on the shwafa's forehead. The sacrifice is taken to the leader's house to be cooked with couscous without salt since the jinn do not stand salt (remember that salt is used to drive jinn away), and presented to the privileged and lucky members of the sect who share it with the kings of jinn. At the early hours of the morning, the jinn withdraw back to where they came from and the setting is cleared.

It has become clear by now that the employment of blood as an offering to the jinn and the act of drinking it counters the teachings of Islam, which means that there is a clear divide between the two. However, the mainstream belief in Moroccan society sees religion and magic as complementary to each other. The sacrifices offered to the saints and the rituals of Derdba night by Gnawa, with all its religious supplications and praises of the prophet, mingle with praises of the jinn and glorification of their powers that people believe they should reckon with. Amidst all this, there is blood as a central element in the rituals. Blood has the necessary magical power that predisposes it to be the perfect offering to the jinn, despite the fact that in Islam blood is impure substance, except under specific conditions and circumstances. Another instant of the importance of blood as an offering to the jinn is found in the rituals of treasure hunting.

### **VIII. Blood And Treasure Hunting**

It is a widespread and common belief in Morocco that the land hides countless and huge treasures that need to be dug up. However, the problem with these hidden treasures is that their locations are kept secret by their guardian jinn who impose certain conditions to reveal the place of the hidden treasure. The key to the place of the hidden treasure is a Zouhri person who is usually a young myopic child, boy or girl, below the age of ten, which is the age of innocence, with a special mark on his or her palm. In the Moroccan popular belief, the bearer of this mark, which is a clear and direct line across the palm and/or tongue of this person as well as other characteristics known to and recognized only by treasure hunters and sorcerers, is believed to be a son of the jinn who replaced the real human child at the child's early days, or whose mother got impregnated by a jinn because her husband did not mention Allah's name before having intercourse with her, so the jinn took this opportunity and had intercourse with the woman simultaneously with her husband. Therefore, this genealogy makes it impossible for anyone apart from the Zouhri to come close to the treasure as this person is originally one of the jinn and the guardians of the treasure cannot harm him or her, unlike the other ordinary human beings who might get seriously injured, exiled, or even killed by these guardians if they ever come close to the treasure.

The popular belief regarding the Zouhri is that this person's blood should be offered in sacrifice to the jinn who will offer the treasure in return for it. This is why sorcerers and witchdoctors are believed to be behind many unexplained cases of the kidnapping and murdering of Zouhri in Morocco. In extreme cases, a Zouhri is sacrificed on the treasure location because of the belief that the jinn love the Zouhri's blood and only this kind of blood can make them drop their guard and relinquish the centuries-long preserved treasure.

The image of blood in religion is well framed and clearly defined, but when it comes to magic in Moroccan society, this image is altered as blood becomes a sacred substance with magical powers. Such a belief does not stand on any logical grounds. As Agassi and Jarvi put it, 'to be more precise, it is generally believed that the act of believing in a belief, or of holding on to a belief, may or may not be rational; not really the object of the act—the belief itself, the doctrine, the theory in question.' [33] Here, we are before a theory that governs the use of blood in magic rituals, a theory built on Islamic mysticism and Moroccan society's use of and belief in ancient rituals that have made it up to the present times. The Baraka that was first introduced with the coming of Islam found grounds in the local cultural belief prevalent at that time prior to the coming of Islam and has been extended since then to cover other spiritual and paranormal phenomena that had remained unexplained up to then or were assigned new definitions and hence their integration in the society's newly adopted belief system. The adoption of the Islamic belief system entailed the adaptation of paranormal and supernatural explanations. This also explains the failure of establishing a credible and rational belief system to rule out the mystic yet powerful system of magic. Islam has always warned against falling for witches' and witchdoctors' canny tricks and so has science, but it seems that magic rituals and the significance they assign to blood have been too strong to break, although science has employed every possible scientific method to subvert the unrealistic magic belief system. Michael Polanyi explores the principles a given conceptual framework exerts its hold on the mind of the person believing in it.

Science and magic are both comprehensive systems of beliefs, possessing a considerable degree of stability, and a comparison of the two systems has shown that the convincing powers of both are derived from similar logical properties of their conceptual frameworks. Yet the two achievements of stability are not on part, but are mutually exclusive. [34]

As for the use of blood in magic rituals, Herbert Thurston explains that it has stirred the imagination of primitive and barbarous peoples who find the sight of torrential blood gushing from an open wound impressive enough to incite them to use blood in ritual. 'Often enough,' Thurston says, 'this takes the form of an

actual drinking of blood, or its transfusion from one individual to another.’ [35] Shotwell seems to share the same opinion as Thurston and explains that ‘certain things are electric with mysterious power. They cause fear, awe, or wonder. There is both danger and blessing in the blood that is the symbol of life as well as death.’ [36]

### **IX. Conclusion**

Moroccans have always held Islam and its teachings close to their hearts, but the part magic beliefs have managed to use as a cover has found room in the people’s belief system. Many practices that Islam forbids and urges people to stay away from have become part of people’s everyday life, including the use of blood in witchcraft. The notion of sacrifice acquires a totally different meaning and blood becomes the solution to people’s misfortunes and its magical power, and its being the demons’ favorite gift they get from humans, make of it one of the most important cultural signifiers in Moroccan society.

### **References**

- [1]. The Holy Quran (22:37)
- [2]. Van Baal, J., Offering, Sacrifice and Gift’, *Numen*, 23(3): 1976, 161-178. P. 171
- [3]. Sahih Al Bukhari (Vol. 1, Book 3, No. 67). <http://www.sahih-bukhari.com/> Accessed 23 December 2012.
- [4]. The Holy Quran (2-30)
- [5]. Sahih Al Bukhari (Vol. 9, Book 83, Number 4).
- [6]. Sahih Al Bukhari (Vol. 2, Book 23, Number 430).
- [7]. Sahih Al Bukhari (Volume 7, Book 67, Number 441).
- [8]. Sahih Al Bukhari (Volume 1, Book 6, Number 327).
- [9]. Sahih Al Bukhari (Volume 1, Book 6, Number 304).
- [10]. The Holy Quran (2:173)
- [11]. Charles W. Super, Vicarious Sacrifice, *International Journal of Ethics*, 15(4): 1905, 444-456. P. 444.
- [12]. Elaine C. Hagopian, The Status and Role of Marabout in Pre-Protectorate Morocco, *Ethnology*, 3(1), 1964, 42-52. P. 44.
- [13]. Ibid.
- [14]. James Thomson Shotwell, The Role of Magic, *American Journal of Sociology*, 15(6), 1910, 781-793. P. 782.
- [15]. Elaine C. Hagopian, The Status and Role of Marabout in Pre-Protectorate Morocco, *Ethnology*, 3(1), 1964, 42-52. P. 46.
- [16]. Ibid.
- [17]. Ibid
- [18]. David M. Hart, Magic Witchcraft and Sorcery in Morocco: The Sociology of Evans-Pritchard and The Ethnography of Mustapha Akhmis, *Bulletin (British Society for Middle Eastern Studies)*, (14)2, 1987, 183-193. P. 183-184.
- [19]. David M. Hart, Magic Witchcraft and Sorcery in Morocco: The Sociology of Evans-Pritchard and The Ethnography of Mustapha Akhmis, *Bulletin (British Society for Middle Eastern Studies)*, (14)2, 1987, 183-193. P. 184.
- [20]. Elaine C. Hagopian, The Status and Role of Marabout in Pre-Protectorate Morocco, *Ethnology*, 3(1), 1964, 42-52. P. 44.
- [21]. Robert E. Park, Ritual and Belief in Morocco by Edward Westermarck, Review. *American Journal of Sociology*, 32(5), 1927, 833-836. P. 834.
- [22]. Robert E. Park, Ritual and Belief in Morocco by Edward Westermarck, Review. *American Journal of Sociology*, 32(5), 1927, 833-836. P. 835.
- [23]. H. S. Versnel, Some Reflections on the Relationship Magic-Religion, *Numen*, 38(2), 1991, 177-197. P. 178.
- [24]. Ibid., p. 183.
- [25]. James Thomson Shotwell, The Role of Magic, *American Journal of Sociology*, 15(6), 1910, 781-793. P. 784.
- [26]. Robert E. Park, Ritual and Belief in Morocco by Edward Westermarck, Review. *American Journal of Sociology*, 32(5), 1927, 833-836. P. 833
- [27]. W Douglas Mackenzie, Faith and Superstition, *The Biblical World*, 27(6), 1906, 408-417. P. 411.
- [28]. Elaine C. Hagopian, The Status and Role of Marabout in Pre-Protectorate Morocco, *Ethnology*, 3(1), 1964, 42-52. P. 42.
- [29]. Dennis J McCarthy, The Symbolism of Blood and Sacrifice, *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 88(2), 1969, 166-176. P. 166.
- [30]. Ibid.
- [31]. Edward Westermarck, The Nature of the Arab Ginn, Illustrated by the Present Beliefs of the People of Morocco, *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 29(34), 1899, 252-269. Pp. 255-256.
- [32]. J Van Baal, Offering, Sacrifice and Gift, *Numen*, 23(3), 1976, 161-178. P. 162.
- [33]. J Agassi, and I.C. Jarvie, Magic and Rationality Again, *The British Journal of Sociology*, 24(2), 1973, 236-245. P. 236.
- [34]. Michael Polanyi, The Stability of Beliefs, *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*, 3(11), 1952, 217-232. P. 230
- [35]. Herbert Thurston, Blood Prodiges, *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, 10(37), 1921, 25-38. P. 25
- [36]. James Thomson Shotwell, The Role of Magic, *American Journal of Sociology*, 15(6), 1910, 781-793. P. 789.