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*Fantasia:*  
Performing Traditional Equestrianism as Heritage Tourism in Morocco

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Anthropology

by  
Gwyneth Ursula Jean Talley

2015



## ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

*Fantasia*: Performing Traditional Equestrianism as Heritage Tourism in Morocco

by

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Master of Arts in Anthropology  
University of California, Los Angeles, 2015  
Professor Nancy Levine, Co-chair  
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In Morocco, the *fantasia*, the traditional equestrian display, is not only a sport, but also an important aspect of the region's cultural heritage. This thesis explores the ways in which the *fantasia* evolved from a cavalry tradition to celebratory display in traditional tribal and regional celebrations of religious saints, or festivals, usurped by the French colonial agenda, and re-articulated within the colonial and, later, contemporary society of Morocco as a state-regulated heritage sport. This paper examines the historical role of *fantasia* within the images and national history of Morocco, its central role in *moussems*, and how the state created a national and global identity around this performance. I examine how the state has effectively moved a traditional horse display from a charge of horses and triumphant ritual to a state-regulated tourist spectacle for domestic and foreign tourists by requiring most festivals to have governmental approval (such as the festival of Mousseem Moulay Abdellah Amghar) and more festivals being organized by the state (Salon du Cheval and La Semaine du Cheval). I discuss why the horse in Morocco is an ideological heritage symbol that helps promote the national identity through repetitive use and performance. I use historical references to the *fantasia*, ethnographically explain the performance in the context of the Mousseem Moulay Abdellah Amghar, and discuss the use of the horse as a representative symbol in Moroccan tourism.

The thesis of Gwyneth Ursula Jean Talley is approved.

Aomar Boum

Nancy Levine, Co-chair

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University of California, Los Angeles

2015

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## TRANSCRIPTION AND USAGE PROTOCOL

For the transliteration of Modern Standard Arabic, I follow the French and Moroccan transliteration with the following exception: Moroccan place names are in accepted English form (Fez, Meknes, Marrakesh, El-Jadida).

I use words that have been previously translated or used in English and French literature and will continue with the spelling of *fantasia* or *tbourida* as the spelling referring to the Moroccan equestrian display. I also add the English ‘s’ onto Arabic singular nouns.

My usage of the word “Berber” is principally used to refer to the overall Amazigh community and culture in Morocco. I acknowledge the fact that many of these tribes have different customs and traditions, but I employ it to differentiate Arab versus Berber culture in tourism, which in Morocco can sometimes be very confusing due to the long term integration of the Arab culture and the Berber culture together since the Arab conquest in the 680s C.E. Understandably this is not an ideal word with its historical connotation, but I find it fulfills the role of an umbrella term for the many indigenous groups in Morocco.

In this thesis, I refer to the Barb horse. This horse has a complex breeding history with Arab horses and also becoming their own breed. Scholars use the term Barb interchangeably with Arab, North African horses, and the term Barb is widely accepted internationally as indicative of this particular North African breed of horse that originated with the Berber tribes of North Africa and has a strong influence on most of the modern Spanish and French breeds. This word usage comes from the term Berber, but maintains a more neutral connotation with regards to the horse.

## PHOTOGRAPHIC PERMISSION

The photos used in this thesis are the original photos by the author and are under copyright with the exception of one photograph. I have been given permission by Herschel B. Talley to use his photo as part of this work.

## INTRODUCTION

Sports and sporting events are essential factors in contemporary global culture. As Morocco moves toward the globalization limelight, the demand for sports heritage tourism is expanding. Heritage tourism refers to the focus of the tourist economy on the legacy of physical artifacts, but mostly on the intangible cultural attributes and practices of a group or society (UNESCO 2015). With a goal of growing the tourism industry to 20 million tourists by 2020<sup>1</sup>, the Moroccan state has recognized the significance of the tradition of *tbourida* or *fantasia*, the traditional equestrian display, as a sport and symbol that is linked to developing the identity of Morocco on a variety of levels. Locally, the *fantasia* accompanies most *moussems*, or saint's days celebrations, harvest festivals, or weddings. Nationally, *fantasia* competitions bring groups from all over Morocco to the capital of Rabat to compete annually for the Hassan II Trophy and prize money. This award recognizes the troupe that best recreates this heritage tradition, and attracts hundreds of spectators. On the transnational and international fronts, the tourism industry uses the horse and rider in brochures, websites, and postcards as a historical symbol and evocative image to draw visitors to Morocco.

While *fantasia* is currently a performance, its roots are deep in the centuries-old traditional cavalry maneuver historically unique to the Maghreb region (Morocco (Sedrati et al. 1997), Algeria (Lorenzo 1988), Tunisia (Douz Festival 2015), and Libya (BBC 2015)). In Morocco, the *fantasia* consists of a *sorba*, or group of six or more horse riders, in traditional loose white pants, white shirts, and capes, armed with gunpowder rifles,

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<sup>1</sup> B2B Travel 2015

standing in their stirrups and charging their horses approximately 300 meters before simultaneously firing their rifles in the air. The beauty and difficulty of *fantasia* is the synchronization—the charge of all the horses together and the simultaneous firing of the rifles, so that only one loud shot is heard—comparable to the firing of a cannon. After the discharge of the gunpowder, the riders roughly rein in their horses together, and dramatically stop at the finish line inches away from the spectators in front of them. The *fantasia* differs in each country but Morocco, Algeria, and Libya are the most similar in terms of style and execution. Tunisian *fantasias* have integrated a demonstration of acrobatics into their traditional horseback riding.

*Fantasia* is synonymous with *tbourida*, meaning “to release the powder” or *laab al baroud*, “the powder games,” which is taken from *baroud*, the Arabic word for gunpowder. The name *fantasia* is a deformation of the Arabic *fantaziya* meaning “ostentation.” Assia Djebar, the Algerian writer, defines it as “a set of virtuoso movements on horseback executed at a gallop, accompanied by loud cries and culminating in rifle shots” (1993[1985]:iv). Eugene Daumas, a French general in Algeria during the 1880s, described the *fantasia* as “a dashing display of horsemanship and prowess with weapons” (1971[1850]:31).

Morocco is an ideal field site for this research because it has a long history of being fertile ground for anthropological research. Early French colonial authors, typically military officers, give very detailed, though often racist or biased accounts, that led to a new wave of anthropological interest in Morocco after independence in 1956. American scholars have focused on a plethora of themes such as studying Moroccan Islam

(Eickelman 1976, Burke III 2014, Geertz 1971), the *souk* or market (Geertz 1979), human rights performance (Slyomovics 2005), smuggling and migration (McMurray 2000), Berbers (Hoffman 2008), and Jews in Morocco (Boum 2010, 2012). There is a large body of literature from Morocco, as well as the rest of the Arab world, concerning the caring, raising, treatment, breeding, and art of horse-keeping, although when it comes to the role that the *fantasia* has within cultural heritage, this is a largely unexplored topic. Historically, the *fantasia* once played a fundamental social, military, and communal role in the lives of Moroccans. By examining the emergence of *fantasia* as a performance of heritage, it sheds light on the advances in the conceptualization and development of a ‘cultural heritage tourism industry’ within Morocco.

This thesis seeks to explore the ways in which the *fantasia* evolved from cavalry charges and celebratory displays in local saint’s days, or *moussems*, how the French usurped and absorbed these practices into the French colonial agenda, and re-articulated under the French colonial government, and more recently, contemporary society of Morocco as a state-regulated heritage sport. The discussion examines: the historical role of *fantasia* within the national story of Morocco, its central role in *moussems*, and how the state created its national and tourist identity around this performance. During post-independence (1956 onward), the Moroccan state began to build its tourism industry using previous French colonial practices to reinforce a united nationalist identity by taking control of and regulating local festivals. By requiring most festivals such as the Moussems Moulay Abdellah Amghar to have ministry approval and more festivals being organized by the state (for example: Salon du Cheval and La Semaine du Cheval), I

demonstrate that the state has effectively moved this traditional horse display from a cavalry charge and celebratory ritual to a state-regulated tourist spectacle, which is an “invented tradition” (Hobsbawm 1992[1983]).

I discuss why the horse in Morocco is an ideological heritage symbol that helps promote the national identity through repetitive use and performance. This thesis uses historical references to the *fantasia*, ethnographically explains the display in the context of the largest festival or *moussem*, Moussem Moulay Abdellah Amghar, and discusses the use of the horse as an icon in Moroccan tourism. Aside from a few colorful picture postcards and photo essays, researchers largely ignored the *fantasia*. Research specifically on the *fantasia* is practically non-existent, although research interest in the tourism industry in Morocco is abundant.

## METHODOLOGY

Some of the books on the subject of *fantasia* include ethnographies (Rabinow 1977), photographic essay collections regarding Morocco (Hyman 1979), equine cultures (Lebreton 2003), and historical collections (Geertz et al. 1979). These say little about *fantasia* as a tourist attraction, tradition, sport, or a cultural phenomenon. Within Morocco there also are striking contrasts regarding the perceptions of *fantasia*. Being a horse trainer in Meknes, my 2010 Moroccan “host father” thoroughly enjoyed the *fantasia*, while my second host family in urban Rabat knew about it, but generally had no interest in seeing it. *Fantasia* can be uniquely classified as a performance Moroccans are obliquely proud of, but they also understand that it is no longer a real cavalry. Moroccan

tourists and local spectators bring their families to these events with the purpose of socializing, shopping, listening to traditional music, and seeing the horse display. The *moussems*, or saint's day festival, is an important heritage event to local regions. Unless the event is widely advertised in French and English, many of the spectators at local *moussems* are domestic tourists with very few, if any, international tourists to observe the festivals. As the *fantasia* is also a large part of local festivals, it expands its national appeal to the general public making the event suitable for all ages. International tourists usually only see *fantasia* on postcards, which carry the images of this horse display to their various countries creating a Moroccan national identity. While this is not the only image of Morocco that goes abroad, the *fantasia* becomes an image associated effectively with Morocco.

This fieldwork focuses on Morocco specifically, rather than the greater Middle East and North Africa region. Because riders perform the *fantasia* regularly, Morocco offers an engaging location for research. Algeria is said to have *fantasias* similar to Morocco, but more reminiscent of the French colonial Spahi cavalry, meaning that they cling to a more pseudo-French "invented tradition" (Lorenzo 1988). Tunisia conducts *fantasias* less frequently, and they are more acrobatic spectacles (i.e. Djerba festival on the island of Djerba). In Libya, riders perform their traditional horseback riding in the southern region for weddings, perhaps offering a more authentic *fantasia* than what is seen in Morocco as touristic. Traditional horseback riding was also a symbol of pride under the Gaddafi regime (Curtis, 2012).

I base my fieldwork on participant-observation of seven festivals, each of which contains 20 to 25 groups per festival. I observed and spoke with the people involved in *fantasias* in the coastal cities of Rabat (2014), El-Jadida (2014), Essouira (2012), Mohammedia (2012), and the more inland city of Meknes (2012). These regions are famous for their horse culture, and each houses a regional *haras* or stud farm featuring Arab and Barb stallions for breeding. The regional *haras* also includes equestrian and veterinary facilities, competitive arenas, and offers farrier services (separate hoof care). The *fantasias* I observed usually occurred from Thursday to Sunday, with the exception of the weeklong Moussem Moulay Abdellah Amghar in El-Jadida in August 2014, and the *Salon du Cheval* in El-Jadida in October 2014. To supplement my notes, I video-recorded and photographed many aspects of the *fantasia* and incorporated news coverage in my ethnographic description.

#### THEORY OF THE “INVENTED TRADITION” AND PERFORMANCE

According to Hobsbawm, the term “invented tradition” means, “a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seeks to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition which automatically implies continuity with the past” (1992[1983]). Whenever possible invented traditions “normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past (Hobsbawm 1992[1983]:1). The rebuilding of the British parliament after World War II, with the exact architecture as the previous edifice, and the adoption of the old “roguish and barbaric Highland” identity as a national Scottish identity, were retrospectively



invented traditions (Hobsbawm 1992[1983]:2; Trevor-Roper 1992[1983]:15). These demonstrations of “invented traditions” are responses to specific events or occurrences that refer to the historic ways and re-establish themselves through repetition. Hobsbawm explains that ““invented traditions occur more frequently when a rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys the social patterns for which ‘old’ traditions had been designed” (1992[1983]:4). I use Hobsbawm’s model of “invented traditions” to understand and interpret the Moroccan *fantasia* in its original form as a cavalry maneuver, celebratory, and chivalric demonstration and the *fantasia’s* evolution after independence by the Moroccan state. Finally, I show how the existing traditional practices, the practice of horsemanship, the costumes, and the participants “were modified and institutionalized for the new national purposes” of the Moroccan state (Hobsbawm 1992 [1986]:6).

One of the key goals of the liberation movement in Morocco under the French Protectorate (1912-1956) was to create a collective and national identity. According to Gellner, “nationalism...is the general imposition of a high culture on society, where previously low cultures had taken up the lives of the majority, and in some cases of the totality, of the population” (2006[1983]:56). Following this imposition means that state administrated ideas diffuse through schools, academies, and bureaucratic entities creating a shared culture sustained and reproduced by folk cultures. In addition the new nationalism greatly modifies the “high culture” as it gravitates to the “low culture” people; the foreign high culture does not replace old local culture; “it revives, or invents, a local high (specialist-transmitted) culture (with traditions) of its own, though admittedly

one which will have some links with the earlier local folk styles” and performances (Gellner 2006[1983]:56). The Moroccan people helped solidified this aspect of the new national identity by repeatedly performing the *fantasia*.

Performance “is a mode of behavior, an approach to experiences,” and includes ritual, play, sport, aesthetics, popular entertainments like theater, experimental theatre and more” (Turner 1986:4). By studying the performance of *fantasia*, I focus on the performers, their actions, what part the audience plays, and what role the state plays. This helps us to understand how this Moroccan equestrian sport went from a long-time warfare maneuver and celebratory performance at local festivals in the pre-colonial era, to a government mandated performance in both the French Protectorate and postcolonial state.

By examining the progression of *fantasia* through Victor Turner’s dramaturgical theoretical lens of performance, using Gellner’s explanation of how nationalism affects culture, and Hobsbawm’s definition of invented traditions, these theoretical frameworks offer a way of explaining the changes and how and why *fantasia* provides a useful prop for performing invented traditions that are useful in understanding important ideas about national identity. These authors show us how the *fantasia* moved from an early practical usage in the community for defense and celebration (Arab conquest to the French Protectorate) to a state-sponsored spectacle for tourism. Turner notes that cultural performance is “reciprocal and reflexive” where people “set aside times and places for cultural performances. Cultural events are part of the ongoing social process—through witnessing and often participating in such performances...giving meanings to people’s

own lives as members of a sociocultural community”(1986:22). he acknowledges the usage of “cultural performances” to include aesthetics or stage dramas (1986:81). This thesis will demonstrate how *fantasia* evolved into a performance of heritage or, as I refer to it, an “invented tradition,” and how Morocco incorporated it into the state’s tourism industry.

## HERITAGE TOURISM IN MOROCCO

Heritage tourism focuses on the intangible cultural attributes, cultural practices, and performances of a group or society for the tourist economy. Sport tourism and heritage literature have recognized the possibilities within heritage sports for generating and stimulating tourism (Fairly and Gammon 2005; Gibson 1998; Hinch and Highmam, 2004; Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1997; Wakefield 2012). Wakefield addressed sports heritage tourism in terms of the activity and the practice of involving tourists in the sport of falconry in the United Arab Emirates (2012). The majority of the literature on sports heritage tourism focuses on large-scale locations such as stadiums, halls of fame, and museums. Gammon suggests that scholars currently discuss these sites in terms of tourism with little mention of heritage (2010[2007]:2). John Bale considers that all sports are cultural expressions of the cultural landscape, and that sport identities are depictions of particular cultures in particular places and particular times (1994; Wakefield 2012). Through the process of creating, preserving, and displaying a culture’s heritage, the question often arises do we somehow destroy cultural meaning of the sport if it is made into a means of economic gain, such as sports heritage tourism (Gammon 2010[2007])?

With the progression of heritage, new meanings emerge for sporting displays and practices that are presented to the public, whether they are citizens or tourists.

As modern tourism developed in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Western Europe and the United States, the colonial powers brought this concept to North Africa and the Middle East, starting in 1830 with Algeria after the French conquest. In the late 1860s, Egypt and Syria caught on, and the rest of the region followed shortly thereafter (Hunter 2007: 579). Morocco was one of the last nations to adopt tourism and increased foreign trade. Between 1911 and 1914, Morocco saw some of the most rapid changes in the economic and political landscape, as well as tourism infrastructure. Thanks to very early travel journals such as Eugène Delacroix's musings from his journey in the 1830s, more modern travel memoirs like Edith Wharton's *In Morocco* in 1918, and the first edition of the guide book *Le Maroc* by Prosper Ricard, who worked for the French colonial administration, in 1919, these publications put Morocco on the tourism map. "Between 1919 and the mid-1930s, modern tourism rapidly developed in French Morocco" with tourists keeping to the port cities and rarely venturing into the interior (Hunter 2007:580). For the next ten years, the French Ministry of Commerce and Industry launched tourist facilities in every major city and even remote rural towns, growing the number of tourists arriving in Casablanca from 1,458 in 1924 to 4,166 in 1926 (Hunter 2007:580).

Under the French Protectorate, the Resident General Hubert Lyautey, Marshal of France, designed a plan for Morocco. Beginning in 1921 to his death in 1934, Lyautey envisioned a colonized Morocco through the principle of association "(predicated on the

contingent, if definitive, superiority of the colonizers) where there was precise and subtle differentiation and division of peoples, societies, and cultures into race-based hierarchies” (Minca 2006:159). Through urban planning and indigenous policies, the idea was to keep traditional Moroccan cities intact, build new European cities alongside, keep the Moroccan monarchy under French control, and encourage traditional arts and handicrafts via French backing. The final linchpin to this plan was the “valorization of the cultural heritage” of Morocco, creating an exhibition for the rest of the Western world (Minca 2006:165). After independence in 1956, the Moroccan government absorbed this French exhibition of traditional arts and crafts for their own purposes.

Morocco has a long, rich heritage with many diverse groups of people including the indigenous Berbers (Amazigh), Arabs, Jews, Andalusians, and various communities from Sub-Saharan Africa. As with many cultural identities in Morocco, members of each claims certain rituals and traditions as their own, making a post-independence single-national identity difficult to create. Many studies and ethnographies show that during the pre-colonial era these populations, while different, intermingled easily, especially during certain festivals surrounding Moroccan saints. Jews and Muslims gathered together and worshipped similar shrines in many cases (Boum 2012; Kosansky 2002). Trying to create one Moroccan culture with such vast diversity proved problematic. It left the Berber/Amazigh community marginalized in Moroccan society, their language and culture suppressed, labeling it as folkloristic and “stigmatized in popular culture and associated with backward tradition” (Boum 2007:215). During the postcolonial era, this shuffling and consolidating of identity is referred to as a time of Arabization (Zhour

2014:44). After two failed military-led coups d'état against the Moroccan monarchy, the government relegated Berber culture to national festivals and tourist experiences. The Moroccan government actively subjugated Berber rights and language, while the state began a cultural project attempting to establish a single national identity. The Ministry of Tourism and Ministry of the Interior, which organized the festivals, allowed the Berber folklore and dance to continue where tourists visited, "becoming the center of the tourist industry in Morocco" (Boum 2007:215). After the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, followed by Moroccan independence in 1956, Jews began emigrating from Morocco to Israel, reducing the Jewish population in Morocco to a few select communities. The Moroccan government highlighted the significant holidays and traditions of all the cultures within its borders (Berber culture, Andalusian, Jewish and Islamic traditions, etc.) to create a distinct national persona. Herzfeld suggests that "people increasingly identify nation with culture, and thereby surrender the right of cultural definition to the agencies of the state control: folklore gives way to folklorism" (Herzfeld 2005[1997]: 90).

Only after Morocco gained its independence did this country have the time to reflect on its heritage and how to employ it to the Morocco's advantage. Sports during the post-colonial period became a "political development," and a tool to motivate the masses "while maintaining a social balance and stability for the political system" and bring together a collective identity (Amara 2012:35). For the Moroccan people, it was time to participate in the world sports arena and to build sports infrastructures. In 1958, Morocco founded the primary horse association, the Royal Moroccan Equestrian Sports Federation

(Fédération Royale Marocaine des Sports Equestres, FRMSE). There is evidence that the government formed the equestrian federation in 1958 due to Prince (later King) Hassan II's penchant for horses. Morocco entered its first competitors in wrestling, fencing, shooting, boxing, and track at the 1960 Olympic Games in Rome, Italy<sup>2</sup>. With these developments, it is surprising how heritage, identity, and sports were not more firmly linked from the beginning, since they both use performance as their medium to convey a message. Morocco's economy relies heavily on its tourism sector (45% of the GDP), with 60% of tourists visiting Morocco for its culture and heritage (Shackley 2006: 43-44). Only industry (38.95% of the GDP) and agriculture (14.7% of the GDP) together overshadow it<sup>3</sup>.

After 1956, the Moroccan government realized how lucrative tourism could be compared to the agricultural industry or attempting to establish an industrial economy. Creating a tourism sector acted as a great unifying project among Moroccans because it relied upon the mass involvement and motivation of the public and, ideally, it also benefits the masses. This rather "heavy-handed public intervention," which was "reminiscent of many colonial strategies under the Protectorate," continued until 1978 (Minca & Borghi 2009:30). In the 1970s, the combination of oil prices, phosphate crises, and the financially expensive annexation of the Western Sahara, forced economic cuts to the tourism project, effectively killing it in its infancy (Minca & Borghi 2009:30). Despite these challenges, the tourism sector grew steadily from the 1960s onward. In

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<sup>2</sup> Sports Reference 2015

<sup>3</sup> Statistics as of 2010. Economy Watch 2015;  
[http://www.economywatch.com/world\\_economy/morocco/](http://www.economywatch.com/world_economy/morocco/)

1960, Morocco had only 146,000 tourists, but by 1984, the number grew exponentially to 1.3 million travelers (Moroccan Ministry of Tourism 2000). As the economy recovered and focused once again on the tourism industry, Morocco used the colonial infrastructure established during the Protectorate. Morocco highlighted tours of the “imperial” cities, namely Fez, Meknes, Marrakesh, and Rabat, because these cities were the first destinations of early tourists and housed the capital of Morocco at various points of history.

At the beginning of the 1990s, the Moroccan government commissioned a French advertising agency to create a new tourism campaign around the slogan “Morocco: Dazzle the Senses”. This approach drew on and utilized the exotic, Orientalist, and colonial views of the “Moroccan experience” (Minca & Borghi 2009:24). The Ministry of Tourism and the advertising company played on pervasive dream-like, exotic views of Morocco, and coupled these with modern amenities now available, advertising it as a mysterious, yet accessible get-away destination close to Europe. Drawing historically on colonial and Orientalist writers that visited Morocco in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Ministry of Tourism followed the French model during the Protectorate of “reviving and reinterpreting within the contemporary Moroccan restaging of the colonial for the tourist masses” and using invented traditions (Minca & Borghi 2009:25). The Moroccan government also built more modern draws for domestic and international tourism.

The main focus of tourism in Morocco is on large music events that draw Western tourists, such as the Mawazine festival with major artists from all over the world including Western pop stars; the Tangier Jazz Festival; the Ganowa Traditional Music



Festival in El-Jadida; and the Fez Festival of World Sacred Music. Resorts that cater to the Western vacation experience and excursions that exhibit the more traditional side of Morocco are also popular. Even though the government designed the festivals as an economic development strategy, they have had less impact than expected due to the seasonality and the dependence on the European economy and media (Boum 2012:25). For the Moroccan state, the “festivalization of arts and culture has been a key method of managing dissent, blunting the force of social movements and sanding the political edges of a new form of cultural expression...while creating an image of Morocco as liberal and fun-loving for outside consumption” (Boum, 2012:25).

Under King Mohamed VI, the tourist industry flourished through initiatives such as “Vision 2010” to attract 10 million tourists by 2010, and achieved the rank of 25<sup>th</sup> top tourist destination worldwide (Roudies 2013:3). This proposal coincided with the “Plan Azur,” an investment project led by the Moroccan government, overseeing the creation of six coastal resorts (Hoare 2008). In 2010, Morocco reached approximately 9.3 million tourists and finally reached 10 million tourists in 2013 (Moroccan Ministry of Tourism 2015). Morocco has now launched “2020 Vision” to build on the principles of “Vision 2010.” The goals are to improve upon the sustainability of Morocco’s “natural resources and the well-being of its citizens,” ecotourism, strengthen the economy, and continue to promote “a rich heritage of civilization and culture, a welcoming, tolerant people, and a responsible nation committed to the values and principles of sustainable development” (Roudies 2013:3).

Morocco has an interest in growing its sports culture and promoting its local and national teams in soccer and other Olympic events. The country's World Cup Committee even vied with South Africa to be the first African host of the World Cup in 2010. This effort demonstrates foresight to build and financially benefit from large sporting events, and repurpose them for future projects, which appeal to tourists. The country recently stepped onto the global sports stage in various arenas such as having its first equestrian entries in the 2014 World Equestrian Games in Normandy, France, sending their first competitors to the Youth Olympic Games in China in 2014, and encouraging the development of sports such as karate, boxing, and golf (Interview with former Moroccan Minister for Youth and Sports, Mohamed Ouzzine, August 8, 2014). While *fantasia* is not at the forefront of international sports, Moroccans demonstrated *fantasia* at the 2014 World Equestrian Games. In Morocco, people of all ages become involved with *fantasia* either for fun or for sporting competitions. Locally, many festivals conduct *fantasia* competitions purely for fun, prestige, and the roar of the crowd, but there are also national *fantasia* competitions for top trophies (Al-Ashraf, 2011). Through various outlets, the *fantasia* became an image of Morocco, commonly displayed for tourist purposes: postcards; paintings sold to tourists, and on Morocco's official tourism for websites.

Today, Morocco's official tourism website uses the slogans "Morocco: Travel for Real" and "Morocco: The country that travels within you." It presents photos of picturesque landscapes with less of an ethereal, dream-like quality, focusing on the natural beauty of Morocco, with only a smattering of cultural heritage in the forefront.

The website homepage highlights sport recreation tourism such as golf destinations, surfing, and wind-surfing on the coast, hiking in the mountains, and camel and equitrekking (trail riding on horseback) in the Sahara as major draws. Photographs of beautiful landscapes, including the desert, the ocean, and the mountains are key attractions. The website also features hints of nightlife in Morocco, presenting the awards Morocco has received for the 2<sup>nd</sup> cleanest city in the world (Ifrane), CNN voting Rabat as a top destination for 2013, and Responsible Tourism Award for Outstanding Initiatives in Sustainable Tourism<sup>4</sup>. The emphasis now on ecotourism and away from the crowded urban areas helps allay fears of the “Islamic opposition” and terrorist threats that are prominent in Western media. The use of Orientalist landscapes and the exoticized photos are no longer the forerunner of the Moroccan tourist agenda. Instead, these are under the surface in the website. The tabs on the website make suggestions of “what to do” and “what to see” in Morocco, maintaining a distance from the typical colonial tourism façade. The homepage offers only thumbnail pictures from an array of activities. Clicking on the “I Enjoy” tab and then the “Festivals and Moussems” from the drop down menu, leads a browsing tourist to the brief description about local festivals and *moussem*. Accompanying this information are two pictures of the Moroccan *fantasia*.

#### *FANTASIA AND HERITAGE TOURISM*

After Moroccan independence in 1956, the Moroccan government appropriated the *moussems* and created music festivals to foster a single national identity, to reinforce

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<sup>4</sup> Visit Morocco website

the legitimacy and power of the monarchy, and to break the power of the local religious class (Reyssso 1991; Kossansky 2003, Boum 2007, 2012). The use of *fantasia* in Moroccan festivals and *moussems* has undergone changes in structure and placement. This is an effort to assert Moroccan sports heritage over French and global values through rationalization within the process of “inventing tradition” (Hobsbawm 1992[1983]). It also demonstrates approval of the monarchy and state’s leadership by involving patrons of the festivals, the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Culture. Khalaf in his anthropological study of camel racing in the United Arab Emirates, argues that groups of people create heritage predominantly as a response to the threat of globalization (1999). I believe the use of *fantasia* as part of national identity helps maintain their specific identity, but also draws in tourism to help Morocco grow economically in the wake of globalization. In Morocco, the creation of the tourist industry around the Berber culture was a reaction to the need of returning to the pre-colonial days, before the French saturated the Moroccan culture, making it difficult to separate the Moroccan heritage culture from the French. Trekking to the desert on camels, sleeping in tents, and visiting Berber apothecaries were common highlights of Morocco during colonization and continue today in the modern cultural tourism sector.

Hobsbawm argues that the reason historians and, in this case, anthropologists pay attention to the idea of invented traditions is that there are “important symptoms and therefore indicators of problems” of larger social developments and that “it throws considerable light on the human relation to the past...using history as a legitimator of action and cement of group cohesion” (1992[1983]:12). On the surface, this train of

thought seems to demonstrate that Morocco's practice of featuring equestrian displays at saint's day celebrations draws on larger issues relating to building a national identity and is a response to globalization within Morocco. This view does not help differentiate "invented traditions" from other traditions. In the case of Morocco, the invented equestrian tradition can harken to the idea that pre-colonial Moroccan memory and heritage are authentic and true, while post-colonial Morocco is unauthentic, invented, and worse, false. The problem with this view is that it assumes that culture is static and unchanging, while culture is in a constant state of flux. However, "it can be argued that all traditions are to some extent socially constructed and therefore invented" (Wakefield 2012:282). The argument Hobsbawm is interested in is the national "inventions", not the traditions and activities that are part of everyday life: leisure activities and interests, work practices, family and communal events, and local festivals. Leisure and the interest in leisure time are key factors in analyzing the relationship between sport and heritage. The grander scale of leisure and communal events actually leads to the national "inventions" of large sporting events, competitions and notice. In this case Hobsbawm must take this into account when examining the "invented traditions." These leisure activities can also turn into public performances.

Understanding how the Moroccan state creates heritage, and how citizens



Moroccan Military Exercises or *Fantasia*  
Oil Painting, Eugène Delacroix, 1832

become actively involved in co-producing heritage as part of their participation in and consumption of sports, is vital to exploring how Moroccans resist or co-produce these official forms of heritage. Citizens naturally create this dialogue on heritage and give it legitimacy. Moroccans are not only cultural carriers and transmitters, but also ‘agents’ in the heritage enterprise itself. Through Turner’s view of the dramaturgical performance of heritage where the people are “the actors in a social drama”, we can refer to the groups that perform as troupes of riders, which likens them to a troupe of actors in a play or stage performance (1986:76).

What the heritage protocols do not generally account for is a ‘conscious reflexive subject’ (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 2007[2006]:163). In the case of sports and festivals, the Moroccan equestrian display of *fantasia* is a living, changing, and vibrant cultural resource. With this ‘invented tradition’ adapting and taking on new meanings, it also becomes a reflexive forum for the riders, male or female. The rider “may come to know themselves better through acting or enactment; or one set of human beings may come to know themselves better through observing and/or participating in performances generated and presented by another set of human beings” (Turner 1986:81). This performance benefits the participants and those who observe it as local or foreign tourists. The *fantasia* did not only evolve because it has a deeply embedded significance to Moroccans, but also serves as a symbol of national identity through tourism. *Fantasia* is not a static, unchanging tradition, but a constantly evolving one within wider socio-economic and cultural transformations occurring in modern societies.

## HISTORY AND USAGE OF *FANTASIA*

Since the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE, similar to medieval jousts, the *fantasia* or *tbourida* was a ceremonial way to demonstrate warrior prowess to the sultan or king. In times of war, Moroccan horse soldiers used the *fantasia* as an effective cavalry maneuver, showing no fear to the approaching enemy. Throughout the Arab world, this type of practice is known by the Arabic word *furusiya*, referring to the Islamic chivalric tradition and martial arts associated with the Golden Age of Islam (mid 8<sup>th</sup> century to late 15<sup>th</sup> century ending with the loss of the Iberian Peninsula). Being a knight meant that one must possess the skills of true horsemanship and horse-care, be an excellent swordsman, an accomplished archer, and be able to charge on horseback with a lance (Smith 1979:8). In a *hadith* (or sayings of the Prophet) narrated from Hazrat Ibn Umar (R.A, 614CE-693CE), he reported that the Prophet said, “Teach your children swimming, archery, and horseback riding.” *Furusiya* was also an ethical and moral code to live by, and many treaties were based on the subject, one of the most famous being *Kitab ‘ilm al-furusiyya wa l-baytara*<sup>5</sup> written by Ibn Akhi Hizam (Olsen and Culbertson 2010:78). Thus, the tradition of horsemanship as a chivalric practice predates Islam throughout the Middle East and North Africa region. As Europeans ventured to Arab shores, many wrote about or drew their impressions of the horsemen of the desert regions.

In the Umayyad Dynasty (661-750CE) across the Middle East and North Africa region, the mounted tribal raids, or the *ghazyas*, were popular forms of looting and warfare maneuvers. As it spread to Morocco, *fantasias* grew out of these tactics. The

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<sup>5</sup> This transliteration is the most common found for this particular book on Horsemanship and Military Exercises.

Moroccan light cavalry raids were famous in the late 1400s during the Reconquista of the Iberian Peninsula. When used as a war tactic, this group of riders acted as the vanguard, or *al-muqaddama*, which comes from the Arabic word meaning “to go forth” (Cook Jr. 1994:40). In 1437, the Portuguese King Duarte’s expedition introduced hand-held guns to Morocco, but the technology did not spread very far into Morocco. During the late 1490s, Moroccans acquired more handguns via capture from outsiders, contraband or piracy (Cook Jr. 1994:139). Most early forms of gunpowder weaponry were artillery, and by the 1530s, Morocco manufactured its own gunpowder and rifles (Cook Jr. 1994:181).

In 1832, Orientalist painter Eugène Delacroix traveled through Morocco and Algeria, recording the cavalcade’s menacing maneuvers (Prideaux 1966:112). In his journal, he described them as “disorder, dust, din...thousands of shots fired in our faces” (Delacroix 1939[1822-1863]: 109-110). The *fantasia* unnerved him with the wildness and apparent violence. Subsequently, he undoubtedly became enamored of this display because he painted many scenes of the *fantasia*, as well as Arab horsemen (Prideaux 1966:112). The artist’s early notes and sketches called the *Studies on the Arab Encampment* show scenes of horses with the traditional saddles, tied closely to the camps of the warriors. In 1833, Delacroix ultimately coined the term *fantasia* when the “Moroccan Military Exercises or *Fantasia*” was unveiled in Paris (Peyon 1997:2721). Delacroix’s early sketches had to be made quickly and left unfinished due to the constant traveling. The tradition appears continuous, because in 200 years, the typical *fantasia* scene has changed very little from Delacroix’s observations.



The French General Eugène Daumas spent many years in Algeria during the 1850s and 60s, and extensively studied the tribal culture of the Sahara. Daumas initially led military campaigns in Tlemcen and Mascara, Algeria. He learned Arabic and became the French army's foremost expert in Arab culture in Algeria. Eventually, he captured the famous Algerian General Abd El-Kadir and kept him as a prisoner. Daumas consulted and relied on El-Kadir as an informant for his colonial ethnographic notes about Algeria without social commentary, possibly under duress (Kiser 2008:205).

Daumas notes that there (in the Sahara) “glory is held as doing harm to the enemy, destroying his resources, upon augmenting one's own” (Daumas 1971[1850]:10). Riders performed *ghazyas* on horseback, and were common from the Arabian Peninsula all the way to the Middle East and North Africa region. Traditionally, the warriors rode mares (female horses) because they were quieter than stallions (uncastrated male horses), and would not alert their enemies to the warriors' approach (International Museum of the Horse). After a long day of *ghazyas*, riders returned to their camps, and as the heat would lift in the late afternoon, Daumas writes, “You others, the bold horsemen, cause to be seen, in a brilliant *fantasia*, what your horses are and what you are yourselves. The women are looking at you, show them what use you can make of a horse and rifles” 1971[1850]:31). Many occasions, such as war, victory, peace, and return to one's homeland, warranted a *fantasia*. When the tribes completed their negotiations for peace, the riders created the noisiest *fantasias*: “The horses caracole, rifles reverberate, women shriek; it is joy, good fortune, delirium” (1971[1850]: 36). The *fantasia* was not solely a military maneuver, but had multiple social aspects aside from war, but its opposite as a

peace treaty. As the French power came to control the Algeria region, they recruited indigenous horsemen of the French colonies, who made up a light-cavalry known as the Spahis. This group was the vanguard for the regular French colonial troops in the region. Daumas later became the leader of the native Spahis regiment formed in Algeria in 1914 and a respected rider in the Arab saddle (Kiser 2008:205; Descoins 2007[1924]:14).

Daumas noted that “next to a *goum* (a troop of horsemen armed for war) departing for war, nothing is as splendid as the departure to, or the return from, hawking” (1971[1850]:79). The Moroccan *goums* became an essential military asset during World War II. Even though the French reduced the Moroccan *goums* to infantry, these rural recruits created a name for themselves fighting against the Germans in Tunisia, Sicily, Corsica, France, Italy, and Germany (Bimberg 1999: xii). In World War I, World War II, and the Algerian war, not only were *goums* advantageous for the rough mountainous terrain where they were fighting, but also the “tough little North African Barb horses” and donkeys proved ideal transportation for these highly mobile units (Bimberg 1999:7). The North African campaigns often required soldiers with animal management skills due to the terrain and road-less areas of Tunisia (Bimberg 1997:23).

The Moroccan *tabor*, or battalions, revived the *ghazyas* to fit the need for surprising enemy soldiers, creating a persona of foreign colonial soldiers likened (by the foreign enemies) to the barbarian auxiliaries of the Romans (Bimberg 1997:113). Eventually, the “cavalry of the Tabors, the mounted reconnaissance platoons, existed to the end (of the world wars), although in reduced numbers. The Moroccans prided themselves on their horsemanship, and every country fête featured a *fantasia*, a spectacle

of equestrian skill ending with a wild charge, the riders firing their ancient weapons in the air” (Bimberg 1997:119). In war or celebration, the *fantasia* became a widely known symbol of Moroccan warrior prowess to foreign soldiers in the North African theater of war.

Today, in Moroccan *fantasias*, large tents are set up for the groups of riders. Horses are adorned with colorful decorative saddles and tied to heavy rocks awaiting their masters. The tent design and placement are the same tents and organization Moroccans have used for centuries during their early history as nomads, and at *moussems* and festivals. In the books produced about *fantasia* published by the Royal Moroccan Equestrian Federation (FRMSE), it is emphasized as a masculine sport, which encourages chivalric qualities that grandfathers and fathers pass down to their sons; some of whom begin riding as young as two years old (Sedrati et al. 1997).

#### THE STATE OF *FANTASIA*: FROM LOCAL TO INTERNATIONAL TOURISM

Horse owners who have *fantasia* saddles and Barb horses, earn money offering local children and tourists rides and pictures with the famous Moroccan horses. These take place in large public spaces such as the El Hadim square in Meknes, the Djema el Fna square in Marrakesh, or along the coastal beaches, offering tourists rides and pictures with the famous Moroccan horse with the traditional saddles.

Postcards for tourists are common in most cities in Morocco. Boutiques, or *hanouts*, offer four or five different scenes of the *fantasia*, Barb horses, or the traditional clothing and accessories. These expose tourists to the *fantasia* without having to go out of their way to find a *moussems* or festival to attend.

There was little mention in the streets about these Moroccan festivals, or in tourist literature. For those not fortunate enough to travel outside of the cities, the only way tourists would see the *fantasia* is on the front of a postcard being sold in a shop in the *casbah*, both the medieval fortress and extended walled Arab city that is now a main tourist attraction. Most *moussems*, festivals, and other events that feature the *fantasia* revolve around the lunar calendar, and plans are not finalized until as little as two weeks prior to the event. Posters and websites publicize national events or well-known events several months in advance, such as *Le Semaine du Cheval* (the Week of the Horse in Rabat), Mousseem Moulay Abdellah Amghar, and *Le Salon du Cheval* (the national horse festival modeled after the Paris equestrian event). Troupes perform *fantasias* for other special events such as Berber weddings in the south of Morocco, although these are less frequent as the state organizes and institutionalizes more *fantasias*.

While Turner mentions the contradicting ideas of “‘multiperspectival’ anthropology that sees society as ‘crisscrossing of processes’, he explicitly defined performances as discrete entities: ‘Performances are never amorphous or open-ended, they have diachronic structure, a beginning, a sequence of overlapping but isolable phases and an end’” (Turner 1986:80; Palmer & Jankowiak 1996:238). I explain the *fantasia* from the beginning with the arrival of horses and riders, to the costuming, the riding specifics, and the finer details of the *fantasia* competition as it is today in the 2010s. Its structure is like Turner’s definition of performance; it is a sequence of overlapping but isolable phases.

Groups come from all over the region and sometimes as far away as six hours by car, to participate and ride in a *fantasia* for a weekend celebration. Riders generally transport their horses in the back of a pickup truck, unlike the typical Western horse trailers or horseboxes. Wealthier families might have a semi-trailer or tractor-trailer, if they bring more than five, horses to the festival. The men pitch large tents, install sizable carpets for flooring, line the tent with cushions, tables, small refrigerators, cook stoves and utensils, and equipment for the next several days. Many *sorbas*, or troupes of riders, have their own large tents to accommodate their riders, assistants, and a few wives over the weekend, while the horses are hobbled, tied by their ankles, close to the tent.

The earliest horses came to North Africa by way of Northern Egypt around 1750 BCE, where the breeds probably had not yet diverged (British Museum). Saharan rock art across Libya, Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco illustrates horses first being used to pull chariots, and then humans riding them by

100 BCE. There is early evidence of pockets of herds of horses settling in the Maghreb region and the Arab Gulf region, and then intermingling in the Classical world. Investigative research is inconclusive about which horse, the Arab or the Barb, developed first, but all agree



Black Barb Stallion, 2014  
Photo by author

upon a proto-Arab/Barb horse. As time went by, groups in the Maghreb and the Gulf bred the horses for different features. Romans first encountered the North African horse from

the Numidians (the inhabitants of now modern Algeria). The Numidians were already skilled cavalymen, allied with Carthage against the Romans. Third century BCE mosaics from Tunisia depict many hunt and race scenes of horses that look similar to what is now the Barb in North Africa, the Lusitano, and the Andalusian horses in Europe (Blanchard-Lemée et al. 1996).

The Barb horse is a foundation breed, second only to the Arab. Early horse breeders used the Barb as bloodstock for many breeds throughout the world, and today it is considered a relative to the Spanish Barb found in Andalusia (Edwards 1991:30) Early warriors and tribes chose Barbs because of their temperament and responsiveness to their handlers (Grutz 2007). The Zaïne Berber tribe of the Middle Atlas mountains of Morocco believes the horses are symbols of strength and independence (Lebreton 2003:156). The native Barb horses or Arab-Barb (cross bred) stallions is the mount of choice for riders who perform in the *fantasia*. It is renowned for its speed over short distances, agility with sound hooves, and stands approximately 15 hands (152.4 cm or 60 inches) (Edwards 1991:31). Owners leave the manes and tails to grow out long and thick, and do not shoe

their horses (with horseshoes). The common colors of the horse are black, bay (black mane with a dark brown body), and grey with dappling (spots or



Saddle, breast strap, and bridle on a Barb horse  
Capital Festival of Traditional Horseback Riding, Rabat,  
August 2014

Photo by author

round patches). For the *fantasia*, the trainers specifically desensitize the horses to gunfire. The 2014 World Equestrian Games in Normandy honored and recognized the North African horse breed as part of their “Breeds from Around the World” exhibit.

Each North African saddle has the same basic design, but different decorations for their *fantasias*. The Moroccan and Algerian saddles have the most qualities in common. At the turn of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, craftspeople developed the Arab saddle to include stirrups and a high cantle (back of the saddle), plus a large front piece called the *karbous*. The *karbous* was advantageous for war, keeping the soldiers steady while attacking an enemy with a spear, lance, or withstanding the recoil from their rifles. During the 1920s, the French General Descoins wrote a military manual about Arab equitation and horsemanship for the French and Spahi cavalrymen (2007[1924]). Descoins described the structure of the saddle saying “the Arab saddle gives the rider a steadiness such that he is not chagrined by certain of the horse’s vices which normally worry us” (2007[1924]:28; Daumas 1971[1850]:138). This saddle has changed very little over time. The style of the saddle draws the stirrups up higher than the modern saddles, giving riders full calf contact with the horse, enabling them to put most of their weight in the stirrups. The stirrups are boxy triangles, designed for the whole foot to be placed on it, allowing the rider to stand upright. Traditionally trained craftspeople design and make the saddle with the tree, pad, and bridle all by hand (2M 2012). In Morocco, leatherworkers continue to make all the saddles by hand in *souks* or markets, usually around Casablanca, Marrakesh, and Fez. Craftspeople take up to three months to create one saddle from raw materials. The hand embroidery for the saddle alone takes more than 40 hours and costs upwards of

\$USD 4,000 depending on the quality. Teams usually share matching colors for the saddles and the leader, or *muqadem*, has a different color saddle. The triangular metal stirrups sport thick, color-coordinated cord on both sides. The bridle hangs heavy over the horse's brow with fringe, beadwork, and bells. Elaborate embroidery on the blinders and brow bands match the saddle's colors, and the metal bit offers staunch control of the horse's mouth. The sun does the most damage to the saddles through fading, so team members take great care to drape covers over the saddles while they wait to mount their horses and for the *fantasia* to begin.

Before the riders mount their horses, they must be fully costumed. Troupes vary their costumes according to their region, and the handicrafts produced in those areas. Many costumes differ slightly from group to group, but there are two distinct costumes that are commonly seen at most *fantasias*. The first ensemble, usually indicative of the groups around the larger cities, is the all-white costume made of finely woven linens.



Left: Traditional Arab costume  
Right: Traditional Saharan costume  
Salon du Cheval 2014  
Photo by the author

The riders wear a white traditional style or collared shirt, white loose pants, and a long cape with a hood. Many men wear white or a white weave-patterned *djellaba* (hooded robe), and a head covering or *rezza* (Salon du Cheval 2014). The boots, or *tamaug*, for riding are white or yellow leather with embroidery on the sides, and slick leather soles so



there is no risk that the rider's feet will get caught in the stirrups. Two different straps are arranged cross-wise over each shoulder. The first strap holds a pocket or small square bag that contains a mini Qur'an, and the other holds a traditional dagger or *koummiya* or *khanjar*, or a single-handed sword or *nimcha* (Salon du Cheval 2014).

The second identifiable ensemble is the blue *gandora* of the Saharan *sorbas* from the south of Morocco. These costumes are typical of the nomadic indigenous Berber/Amazigh group Sahrawi, known to be camel herders who live in and on the edges of the Sahara. Riders wear white shirts and white pants under the loose blue *gandora*. Black capes, or *burnous*, are worn over the top, with a loose hood that previously served the purpose of keeping out dust and sand from the face. Their colorful boots, in contrast to the blue robes, are bright yellow leather, similar to their northern counterparts. Groups with Saharan roots tend to forgo the satchel with the Qur'an, and the dagger or the swords. They primarily focus on their rifles.

Portugal introduced gunpowder to North Africa in 1437 with King Duarte's expedition to Tangiers (Cook Jr. 1994:86). Early versions of gunpowder rifles like the *harquebus*, a muzzle-loaded firearm, predated the gunpowder rifles used in the



A young member of this *sorba* leads the group in practice rounds. 2014. Photo courtesy of the author.

*fantasias*. Various troupes proudly display the gunpowder rifles outside the tents on wooden racks until it is time for them to be primed. All the rifles have a black wooden stock, elaborately patterned with geometric designs, with long metal barrels. Being four feet long and about twelve pounds, these rifles are heavy and take a muscular arm to manage. After the riders mount, helpers fill the rifles with gunpowder, and cautiously hand them to the riders near the starting line. The government strictly regulates the gunpowder at these events because safety is key. Designated areas away from the horses allow assistants to discharge the rifles if a rider misfired, or the rifle did not fire. Depending on the age and usage of a rifle, the rifles might blow apart, separating the stock from the barrel. This is a common cause of injury; so many riders wrap their rifle hand in cloth, wear gloves, or braces over the palm and wrist.

The leader, or *muqadem*, of the group wears different colors, and rides evenly spaced at the center of the line of horses. Skill, and not age, determines leadership in the troupe. The *muqadem* is the master over the signals, orders, and timing of the *sorba*. As the less experienced riders (usually younger) and horses join the group, they must ride on the outer edge of the team, so that they are able to break apart if they cannot control the direction or behavior of their horse. These riders are also said to be more likely to misfire their rifles.

As the men don their costumes in their group tents, members assist each other, fastening buttons, tying and retying the white turbans or *rezza*, and gathering in a practice formation with all of them holding their rifles. A young member of the group stands in front of them shouting orders, such as when to raise their rifles, position them for

shooting (usually bracing the rifle against their shoulder or more commonly their breast bone), and practice a dry run without powder. The troupe repeats the exercise multiple times as a warm up, creating muscle memory that is thoroughly needed when factoring the horse into the equation for the actual performance.



Two riders pray after a practice round outside Rabat. *Photo by author.*

After completing full costuming and practice, the *sorba* conducts a group prayer either prior to mounting their horses, or after their first practice round on horseback. The group prays for a good ride, for one shot to be heard, and for everyone to ride without injury. Some groups ride a practice round with powder-less rifles on the field in front of the gathering

crowd, before the official opening of the *fantasia*, and then pray before the crowd.

The name of the *fantasia* field is *melaab*, referring to a “place of play” or *muharek*, “the place of movement”. The *fantasia* fields differ in size and consistency according to event and region. When the events are held outside of the major cities, the field is typically a fallow field (usually corn or hay) which means loose dirt and very dusty. At more established *moussems*, there are specific fields with space for spectators to sit and watch at a safer distance. These areas usually have a mixture of sand and loose soil, which is easier on the horses’ hooves.

As each *sorba* lines up for their *fantasia*, the *muqadem* gives the orders to his riders as practiced prior to mounting. He circles his troupe with his horse, checking to make sure everyone lined up correctly. Many times in big festivals, the *muqadems* use lavalier microphones so that not only the riders, but also the judges and audience can hear the orders given. On the order of the *muqadem*, the *sorba* proceeds onward, the horses begin to prance, and the audience can hear the jingle of the saddles' beads and bells. The *bwardis*, or riders, keep their balance by standing straight up in the stirrups, gathering the reins tightly in one hand, and grasping their rifles ready to maneuver. As they gain speed, the *muqadem* gives the order to advance, which triggers the riders to give the horses' reins some slack, cuing the horses to a fast gallop. At this point, the main focus of the riders is maneuvering their rifles in unison with their fellow riders, which commands precise timing. Some daredevil riders even manage to stand straight up on their saddle seats rather than balancing more securely on the stirrups. As the *sorba* quickly approaches the judging tent, the end maneuver signals the timing for pulling the trigger on the rifles, sending a volley of smoke either into the air, or toward the horses' feet. The style of discharging the rifles varies by the *sorba*, and their region. After the riders fire their weapons, they halt their horses, usually by pulling aggressively on the reins, bringing the horses to a sliding stop, before running the horses and their riders into the tent.

In this 30 to 40 second maneuver, many things can go wrong requiring the group to restart, regroup, or return to the starting line. If, halfway down the field, the *sorba* cannot seem to keep in relative line, the *muqadem* will stop the group before they

disgrace themselves. If newer or younger riders have fallen off their horses, this is the time to readjust the saddles and remount. Other times, the mistakes are at the finishing volley of fire. Instead of a large unison firing that sounds like a canon, a *sorba* can have five members shoot together, and the rest fire too early, too late, or not at all. Firing in unison is essential to gaining the crowd's and the judge's favor.

*Moussems* are directly related to a local saint's shrine and pilgrimages to these areas. The state and local government regulate the festivals with especially with commerce being conducted. These festivals are similar to America's Midwestern rodeos or state fairs, which consist mainly of local attendees and domestic tourists with little to no foreign outsiders in attendance. The national competitions draw the crowds of foreign tourists. These Moroccan spectacles are local and draw many families to join in the celebration.

Vendors sell toys and games for children at the *moussems*, as well as rides on rickety metal contraptions such as bumper-cars and mechanical swings. Stalls filled with pottery, *tajines* (traditional cooking pots), cotton candy, dates, and roasted chickpeas line the dirt road toward the field. Surrounding the fields are local vendors who set up tents full of handicrafts, argan oil, leather sandals, and traditional food, balloons, and sweets for the children. There is no admission charge to attend and observe the show, and those who arrive earliest to watch obtain the seats in the most desirable places in the tents.

With approximately 40 to 50 *sorbas* (it is almost impossible to count the groups because many of them have very similar costumes), the field was always occupied with a lineup of the next ten *sorbas*. Each sideline had a single file trail of the horses and riders

of the *sorbas*, which had just performed, and then the *sorba* that was racing toward the end of the field before firing their rifles. Little children screamed, squealed, and covered their ears as the groups got nearer and fired; other times, some of the horsemen would not stop their mounts in time to prevent getting too close to the tent (luckily with no injuries).

As the *sorba* raced down the field, the spectators would cheer if the group maintained a straight line, fired as one, and then pulled up on the reins to keep their horses perfectly aligned. The roar, applause, and shouts of “bravo” would briefly continue as they filed back to the starting line. The audience ignored other *sorbas* who unfortunately fired too early, who fell out of alignment, or fired too late. At other *fantasias*, I observed that men who misfired were forced to dismount, and had to walk back to the starting line as part of a humiliating punishment for not performing well.

Injuries to the riders and horses are a common occurrence in this sport. Approximately 90% of the injuries come from falling from the saddle and/or being thrown from horses, which are not behaving or responding to the rider. During the charge sequence, the traditional narrow girth holding the saddle on the horse frequently loosens, resulting in the riders falling, and sometimes accidentally being trampled by their group mates. Others sustain injuries directly related to the gunpowder rifles. Riders often cannot maintain a proper hold on the stock of the rifle and are hit by the powerful recoil in the face, neck, and chest.

During a *fantasia* on the outskirts of Rabat, one young man’s rifle recoiled into his forehead, which gushed blood, but he remained in the saddle and stopped his horse effectively in sync with his *sorba*. Perhaps it was the shock, but he did not allow himself

to fall off the horse until the team was ready to return to the starting line. This was a major feat of strength and control to not cry out or fall off the horse before his group's *fantasia* was completed. Luckily, almost every government-sanctioned *fantasia* has emergency medical technicians at the ready for these kinds of injuries, and the young man was taken care of quickly.

Injuries to the horse are another common occurrence, but the more skilled the rider, the less likely either will be hurt. The metal stirrups have the dual purpose of providing balance to the rider, and also acting as spurs due to their pointed square edges. Many times these cut into the horse, permanently scarring the girth (area behind the shoulders) of the horse. While some horses rear back, very few horses seriously injure themselves, but accidents that are fatal only horse occur in transportation.

Judging of the *fantasias* generally only occurs on the final day of the festivals. The days leading up to the final are practice rounds before the judges and/or patrons of the festival arrive to judge the abilities of the groups. It is the time when families of the area come with their children to watch and enjoy the *fantasia*, usually followed by a traditional music concert. An appointed representative of the community judges the *fantasias*, but the larger festivals that are under the patronage of the king typically have a member of the royal family in attendance to act as the celebrity judge. The Royal Moroccan Equestrian Sports Federation (FRMSE) designates two other judges usually from the region. Under the rules of the FRMSE, judges allow each *sorba* three performances on which they base their scores. Judges rank the teams based on the quality of horses (maintenance, comportment, physical standards via the desired qualities in Barb

horses), quality of traditional clothing, tack, and consistency of the saddles among the riders. The group's points also rely on the alignment of the team, handling of the rifles, the clarity of their leader, and their synchronization (FRMSE 2015).

In Turner's examination of performance, he includes "flaws, hesitations, personal factors, incomplete, elliptical, context-dependent, situational components, as well as "genuine novelty and creativeness" as the central focus of analytical postmodern theory (1986:77). Performances allow for reflexivity, creating a place where the riders or "actors" can learn more about themselves and where the audience, who participate in or observe *fantasia*, can learn more about themselves by watching this display that is important to Moroccan identity (Turner 1986:81). Turner allows for two types of performances: the "social performance" which includes social dramas and the "cultural performances," which consist of aesthetic or stage dramas (1986:81). The *fantasia* can be accounted for in both categories where it is a social drama between the sexes of the riders and the riders of different regions, and it is a cultural or ethnic performance in which the Moroccans observing view it as a local and national sport enjoyed by all ages.

The Souissi Youth Organization organizes the largest *fantasia* in Rabat, called the Capital Traditional Horsemanship Festival, which runs for five days featuring *fantasias*, musical concerts, local vendors, and the King's cousin, Lalla Smeea, who awarded the final trophies to participants. Adil, the President of the organization, was a *bwardi* or a knight, or rider, and the Vice President, Fatna, grew up in a horse-riding family. Adil organizes the *fantasia* and also participates in it. His grandfather taught him the traditional horseback riding when Adil was a child and furthered his interest in



continuing this sport and his passion. This led to his founding of this annual festival. Many riders' family encourages their participation in *fantasia*.

The national television program entitled "The People's Story" (Mehdi 1 TV 2014) explores everyday issues in Morocco. The host, Nihad Benakidh, interviewed three men and one woman; two who participate in *tbourida*, one that assists the *sorba*, and one woman, Halima, who began riding with the men. Zakaria, 23, a *muqadem* or leader of a *tbourida* group, spoke about how Moroccan culture associates *tbourida* with the idea of manliness; it shows that he is brave, self-confident enough to handle a horse, and dedicated. His older sister Halima was one of the first female riders, and she suggests that the *fantasia* is a man's monopoly. Frequently, Moroccans refer to the *tbourida* as *patrimoine* or heritage that is synonymous with *fantasia*, inferring that this is a male-dominated tradition passed down from father to son. There are no words that describe a female rider. If the son of a *bwardi*, a man who participates in *fantasia*, does not want to ride horses, his father considers this son as humiliating the family, and not honoring the tradition. Zakaria also discussed how other people in his area do not ride horses because they are scared of falling and hurting themselves. Comparing the people that come to just watch the *fantasias* and those that ride, he says that "your heart has to be strong and you have to be capable. Your personality has to be strong so you can ride the horse and approach it" (Mehdi 1 TV, 2014). Benakidh mentioned *tbourida* or *fantasia* as a synonym of manliness; Zakaria concurred saying "it means toughness...if you are not really a man and a stallion or an alpha, you cannot do *tbourida*. These values form the *tbourida*" (Mehdi 1, TV).

The other man Khalid, works as a groom for his team, and also rides the horses. At age eleven, Khalid began riding in *fantasia* because his uncle owned horses, and traveled to *fantasias*. His uncle instilled in Khalid the importance of this tradition continuing in the family. The other young man interviewed, Mohamed, 18, started riding with his cousin at about eight years old. When they were older, they traveled together to a month long event where *fantasia* riders and horse owners educated them on how to take care of horses, and to ride in the *fantasia* style. Familial influence and participation in *fantasia* go hand in hand with the families that have active riders such as fathers, uncles, brothers, and cousins. Mothers are supportive but cautious, always worrying about injuries that might occur.

“Adaptation takes place for old uses in new conditions and by using old models for new purposes” (Hobsbawm 1992[1983]:5). Allen Guttman argued that after colonialism, there is no way to leave a sport untouched and “wherever traditional sports survive, they tend either to take on some of the characteristics of modernity or to persist in the form...referred to as “residual culture” (Guttman, 1994). A significant point to emphasize about the *fantasia* for those participating in the event is that it is an all-male environment devoted to “maleness” and masculinity, with the recent exception being a select number of women joining male groups or competing in their own groups. “The event is usually an all-male gathering centered on a display or performance of maleness combined with peripheral activities of male sociability” (those helping with the horses or young men who do not ride, but travel with the *sorbas*), all serves to express and reinforce men’s self-identity (Marvin, 1984:60). The *fantasia* endures as an “invented

tradition,” partially because it attempts to balance modernity and culture, as Hobsbawm suggests (1992[1983]:5), in this instance, by adapting to the inclusion of women. However, there are struggles: some male leaders do not invite women to come and compete at local *fantasia* festivals, or the men shun the women troupes. While *fantasia* exists today in various forms in the other Maghreb countries, the *fantasia* tradition continues to grow in Morocco. A contributing factor is women’s participation, as I will describe below.

Women riders are not mentioned frequently in Maghreb historical contexts. The feminist Moroccan author, Fatima Mernissi, recalls in her book, *Dreams of Trespass*, the story about one of her grandmother’s co-wives. This warrior Berber wife of her grandfather,

who rode horses and carried a rifle during the French colonial era in Morocco, was an example of a strong woman rider. Mernissi’s imagery of “war heroine” who had a “*khandjar*, or dagger dangling from her right hip,” who wore “a real cape” and “the kind of bracelets that you could use to defend yourself if necessary” associates her description of how *fantasia* developed out of centuries of Moroccan Arab and Berber cavalry riders, and the traditional costumes worn in *fantasias* (1994:51, 53). Since 2004, women are



Donia Gara, winner of the 2010 Hassan II Trophy, at Moussef Moulay Abdellah Amghar, El-Jadida, August 2014  
Photo by author

increasingly involved in *fantasia* performances, participating along with men, and also forming their own groups.

Princess Lalla Amina, King Mohamed VI's aunt, was the president of the Royal Moroccan Federation of Equestrian Sports from 1999 until her death in August 2012. "Princess Lalla Amina was elected president and organizer of the Week of the Horse in Rabat, coached the national Moroccan dressage team, and the national jumping team" (Horsetalk, 2012). She encouraged women to compete in all categories of equestrianism, and from 2009 to 2012, she created a class in which the women could compete for the Hassan II Trophy. Contemporary peers, like Princess Haya of Jordan and others, considered Princess Lalla Amina a major pioneer in Moroccan equestrian circles. Following her death, it remains to be seen whether women will continue to participate in equestrian events without their female patron.

The women are conspicuous at competitions with their flamboyant dress and colorful makeup, have the support of their families, which affects their involvement in this predominantly male traditional sport, and understand what it means to the future of competitive *fantasias*. The female groups' determination and honing of their skills put them at the top of their classes at the annual *fantasia* competitions.

Three women won the Hassan II Trophy for *tbourida* during the years Princess Lalla Amina organized the competition: Halima Bahrawi (2006, 2007, 2009), Amal Ahamri (2008), and Donia Gara (2010). She credited the women with improving the offspring of the Arab and Barb and Arab-Barb horses, for their creative costumes, their handling of the horses, and the development of their skills of *fantasia*. Female riders

praise the Princess for beginning the *tbourida* feminism movement, and laying the foundation for equality in this traditional sport.

Amal and her sister trained and competed for a year, before her male counterparts began to take her seriously. She organized one of the first groups out of Kenitra, Morocco (Hamouche, 2013). They trained rigorously and created bright, vibrant costumes to wear to coordinate with their saddles. In the beginning, she only received support from her sister, mother, and close relatives (Hamouche, 2013). Amal holds a diploma in specialty farming and breeding horses. After marrying her “horse-training husband” Mehdi, Amal and her sister now have the ability to ride and work with horses (Hamouche, 2013). Mehdi and Amal own a horse training and breeding facility, allowing them to continue to prosper in the Moroccan horse world. Each year, at the Week of the Horse and Le Salon du Cheval, Amal offers stud services for her Barb stallion and participates in interviews and shows throughout the events.

Establishing teams has spread and after seeing a female group compete, Hammou Elhaj, a man from Khemisset, Morocco, decided to start his own group for women (Feminin TV, 2013). Elhaj blames the poor education of local people and the unwillingness to be open-minded, for the lack of acceptance and support of the women’s teams. The male relatives had a significant influence on these women who became involved with horses and participating in *fantasias*. The parents of the girls believe there is no harm in riding horses, and consider it a sign of gender equality by competing. Some of the girls have only been riding for two years, or they have to ride fairly ‘green’ or untrained horses. Other problems occur when women marry and their husbands force

them to give up riding on the teams. During an interview, one girl from the team in Khemisset claimed, “that you can marry me on the condition that you have to accept my horse” (Feminin TV, 2013). But even after almost a decade of women appearing on the competition field, men are still not ready to accept women in their sport. “They think we are weak, but I really want to participate, and prove to them that we can do what they do,” said one of the women, “We will fight to show them that we have something to say.” At the end of the men’s *fantasia* display, the women brought their horses and performed (Feminin TV, 2013). Having male relatives and backers that support them in *fantasia* is vital for the women to continue participating.

As mentioned previously in the Moroccan talk show *The People’s Story*, siblings Zakaria, 23, and Halima, 28, children of a horse owner, were interviewed about their different experiences in becoming *tbourida* riders (2M 2014). Zakaria, the son, grew up learning how to ride, thanks to his father. Halima, the daughter, did not ride as often. One day she wanted to ride, but her father would not let her, especially in front of the group. She felt humiliated, but then she started training herself to ride like the men and perform the *tbourida*. Eventually, she had the skills that granted her *shyakha*, or a special written or verbal license from an older rider who said she could be an official *fantasia* rider. Halima obtained the license from two different *muqadem* from different *sorbas* in two different regions, to prove she was a worthy rider. Zakaria, her brother, had never needed this because men typically do not need the licenses. In the interview, Halima insisted that she needed the license because the men constantly underestimated her. Only a few

women have gone through the necessary requirements for certification, which includes demonstrating riding ability and knowledge of the sport.

Finally, Halima began taking part in competitions with male groups, but she was not always welcome. She shamed them because often times, she was a better rider than the men. After that, she wanted to lead a group as a *muqadema* or leader. Her father tried to dissuade her because they already had a difficult time trying to integrate her into the male groups. Halima suggested that she begin her own female group, but her father was opposed to this idea so she organized her own group in secret. She recruited her school friends, and started training them on her father's horses. One day, her father caught them training and urged them to compete at festivals. This was about the same time Princess Lalla Amina began encouraging women to compete alongside the men and Halima won the Hassan II Trophy in *Tbourida*. Now Halima is a trainer, who trains girls in the art of *tbourida*, and has other female-led groups that she competes against. Even though some of those girls are now rivals on the field, she is proud to have women competing.

Shortly before Princess Lalla Amina died in 2012, she and King Mohamed VI revoked the women's class for the Hassan II Trophy. One of my informants explained that due to personal conflicts between the three female *fantasia* champions who had won the Hassan II Trophy, the disagreements became more public and the women riders came under scrutiny. When this information reached the Princess, she rescinded her support of them, eliminating the women's class for the Hassan II Trophy. Currently, there are no classes for female *sorbas* at the national level. Prince Moulay Rachid, brother to King

Mohamed VI, is now the overseeing patron of the FRMSE and currently, has no plans to reinstate the class in which the women can compete.

This setback has not hindered young women from riding with their fathers and brothers, continuing to ride with pride, and start their own groups. While changes to tradition like this happen over time, these adaptations (such as allowing women to compete in their own class or in the future with men) proves that this is another phase of an “invented tradition,” because “when the old ways are no longer available or viable, they are not deliberately used or adapted” (Hobsbawm 1992[1986]:8). Originally the *fantasia* was part of the local indigenous Moroccan heritage, afterwards the *fantasia* became a French invented tradition that was then revamped and repurposed again by the Moroccans. Through all this change, it is now flexible enough to accommodate women. The female riders work around a hegemonic male tradition, and using this tradition of *fantasia* assists in “establishing or symbolizing social cohesion or membership within a group” (Hobsbawm 1992[1983]:9). Through the *fantasia*, the women’s goal to participate equally with their male counterparts assists them in establishing their membership within the modern Moroccan identity. The female riders help legitimize each other, and are purposefully used to socialize and create their own groups, and build a better, more elaborate *fantasia* (Hobsbawm 1992[1983]:9). In the past 15 years under the rule of King Mohamed VI, Morocco has experienced a re-gendering through many different outlets such as the divorce reform, the dissolving of the need for the *wali* or male guardian of women. This has paved the way for women to become prominent actors in tourism.



The women's involvement in this sport heritage tourism allows for many opportunities. First and foremost, the women are entering a predominantly male arena and competing equally. The message the women riders communicate to their male counterparts is that they are on the same level as them, getting even better and earning their respect (Hamouche 2013). Second, the rise of women in this sport catches the eye of the media and the limelight shines on the women in English, French, and Arabic news. The New York Times Lens blog recently covered the photographic exhibit of the Moroccan artist Zara Samiry who captured the female *fantasia* for the Arab Documentary Photography Program (Estrin 2015).

While the focus is on the women, the sport of *fantasia* obtains a media boost promoting the country of Morocco as a place for tourism. Currently, the number of women in Morocco who compete in jumping, dressage, and especially *fantasia*, is steadily rising. While the women no longer have a class to compete in for the Hassan II Trophy, more all-female troupes are forming and seeking venues in which to perform, one being the Moussem Moulay Abdellah Amghar. With the female riders at the forefront of this tradition in international media, the women also break the stereotypes that the West perceives of women in the MENA region. Through this practice of learning how to ride and perform *fantasia*, women riders become heritage holders or performers of heritage and might pass the tradition on to the next generation. They add themselves to the identity of their nation in a new way in larger venues.

*FANTASIA* IN MOUSSEM MOULAY ABDELLAH AMGHAR AND OTHER  
LOCALES



King's Portrait on the Exhibition Field at Moussem  
Moulay Abdellah Amghar 2014  
Photo by author

Every August in the coastal city of El-Jadida, Moussem Moulay Abdellah Amghar takes place, gathering 500,000 people daily for a full week. Originally, this *moussem* was the yearly assembly of all the tribes in the Doukkala region of Morocco. Regionally, it

was “an important crossroads of the three economic poles of Morocco: Casablanca, Marrakesh, and Agadir” (Moulay Abdellah 2014). On the coast approximately 9 kilometers from the city of El-Jadida, tents are pitched near the fortified mosque. Historically, “the festival celebrates the memory of the leader Moulay Abdellah Amghar and the battles against the occupying forces” of the Portuguese in 1060 C.E. during the Almoravid dynasty (Moulay Abdellah 2014; Hnyen 2014). The region of Doukkala is also widely associated with the Berber tribes that led some of the strongest resistance

against the French. Another aspect of the *moussem* is the inclusion of falcons for hunting which demonstrates a more ostentatious display of heritage. Falconry groups, like *fantasia* groups, come from all over Morocco to fly their falcons at this festival. Festivities at the *moussem* include daily readings of the Qur'an, the daily *fantasias* that bring approximately 3,600 riders, falconry displays, games, markets, and musical performances (Moulay Abdellah 2014). Currently, this festival falls under the jurisdiction of the regional government of Doukkala and the Ministry of Tourism. This *moussem* demonstrates how the Moroccan government has taken a regional festival and assumed control of it under the Ministry of Tourism. On the *moussem*'s website it must display the identification slip and licenses granted to the organizers. The website posts train times and maps to instruct how to get to the fairgrounds broadening the appeal and accessibility of this festival to all tourists, domestic and international.

It is unknown exactly when the Moussem Moulay Abdellah Amghar came under government jurisdiction, although it is clear that the festival has benefited greatly due to the collaboration. In the past seven years, attendance at this festival has doubled from 250,000 attendees to 500,000 in 2014. With this many people in attendance and performing, the government subsidizes many standard supplies to help with the cost for those who make a pilgrimage to



Royal Guard outside the mausoleum of King Mohamed V, October 2014  
Photo by Herschel Talley

the city, come to compete in *fantasia*, or fly falcons. The government provides free water, tea, sugar, and electricity to participants. On the field where the exhibitions take place, a large portrait of the king hangs on the entrance gates so that all the spectators can view it, similar to many shops found in the cities.

The government's recognition of *fantasia* does not stop at the *moussem*. Adaptations or aspects of *fantasia* appear all over the country. At the mausoleum of King Mohamed V (1909-1961) in Rabat, four military guards sit on horseback in traditional costume and trappings, guarding this significant historical monument. They are similar to the British Household Cavalry, sitting at attention for mostly tourist purposes. This does not necessarily mean that any display of military attire is the tradition of *fantasia*, but they serve the same touristic purpose.



Baroud Sultan Gunpowder Moroccan Green Tea. Stock photo.

A unique, yet very popular place to see *fantasia* without leaving home, is in the branding of a famous Moroccan tea. While the tea is imported from China, the Moroccan tea ceremony (also an invented tradition) and the branding of it are very central aspects of Moroccan culture and seen in almost every tourism advertisement (Hoyt 2009). The typical Moroccan tea is brewed from “gunpowder” green tea, because the consistency and dry look of the tea leaves make it look like gunpowder. Advertising agencies have put a Moroccan twist on the popular tea. For the brand Baroud Sultan Gunpowder Moroccan Green Tea, their tea's logo is the

famous *fantasia* rider on a Barb horse with his rifle. A pair of crossed rifles and the North African dagger sits under the name of the tea. The *fantasia* image pervades all aspects of Moroccan culture.

## CONCLUSIONS

Using sports heritage tourism, Morocco adapted the French colonial tourism model to build a national identity that features the *fantasia* as an ‘invented tradition.’ Through history, scholars see how the *fantasia* evolved from a cavalry maneuver and celebratory act to the French “readily modifying” the Moroccan practice for their own usage in colonial wars and international wars. After independence, Moroccans “modified” or adapted this performance again “to meet the changing practical needs:” they no longer use this performance for war. As Hobsbawm notes, the “invention of tradition...occurs more frequently when a rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys the social patterns for which ‘old’ traditions had been designed, producing new ones to which they were not applicable or when such old traditions and their institutional carriers and promulgators no longer prove sufficiently adaptable and flexible” (1992[1983]:4). Morocco was an exotic country in the 1800s with a few painters and explorers casting an “Orientalist gaze” towards it (Minca & Borghi 2009:21). Until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, few visitors or tourists ventured into the interior of the country. Rapid change occurred in Morocco as its neighbors, Algeria and Tunisia, came under French rule. Within a span of 100 years in Morocco, the society saw rapid transformation among traditional ways, French ways, and ultimately re-establishing a Moroccan identity after independence. By using the models the French had in place, Moroccans built their own

federations and started competing on the world stage projecting an image of Moroccan national identity complete with Western sports and performances of their own. Boum argues the Berber culture is central to tourism in Morocco and the term “Berber” became a bestselling commodity of Moroccan national tourism (2007:215). He notes that “the Berber discourse of the *Office National de Tourisme* and the Ministry of Culture cannot be differentiated from the orientalist accounts of the French colonial travelers because the image is still exotic” (Boum 2007:215). The French transformed the traditional Berber culture or folklore to a commodity or folklorism and the Moroccan government has maintained that position. As people embraced the new cultural identity of Morocco, they surrendered the right of cultural definition to the agencies of state control, allowing the

*fantasia* to “give way from folklore to folklorism” (Boum 2007:215).



Horse rearing at the finish line  
August 2012  
Photo by author

At approximately the same time, Morocco needed to create an industry to boost the economy. Tourism was the answer. The government “formalized” and institutionalized the *fantasia*, promoting it for competition and use as a tourist attraction. While there is no evidence for the *fantasia* specifically, the formation of the equestrian federation coincided with the formation of many other sports federations to promote Morocco on an

athletically competitive global scale.. While the *fantasia* is one aspect of a larger tourism campaign, the ethnography demonstrated how the government repackaged a once older tradition to a new ‘invented tradition.’ This performance works as a reflexive entity for the masses of Moroccans who watch the *fantasia* and for those who participate in it. The more the riders perform this ‘invented tradition’ of *fantasia* (which is built on repetition), the more the “actors” or riders come to know themselves and the audience comes to recognize and accept this new Moroccan identity as generated by the riders (Turner 1986:81). Local tourists observe and absorb this performance at *moussems* like Moulay Abdellah Amghar, promoting for domestic tourism and also heritage tourism. This kind of tourism focuses on the intangible cultural attributes, cultural practices, performances, or folklorism of a group or society for the tourist economy.

Finally, as this practice of heritage tourism accelerated into the new millennium, the newly ‘invented tradition’ evolved yet again, with women participating in the *fantasia*. Once again, the *fantasia* performance experienced a modification to meet the practical changing ideals of the society with women’s roles becoming more prominent in the public sphere. While FRMSE and Prince Moulay Rachid have yet to reinstate the all female class for the Hassan II Trophy, the number of women riding and competing in *fantasia* is growing. The ‘invented tradition’ continues to prosper and adapts to meet the demands of the riders, the Moroccan people, and the tourist industry.

Although this thesis demonstrates the importance of *fantasia* in sports heritage tourism of Morocco, there are questions left unanswered, which are worthy of further research. While I discuss tradition and performance, another aspect to investigate is

tradition versus modernity and the *fantasia*. There are several authors who examine this at great length, and it would be a unique approach to thinking about the *fantasia* as tradition or ‘invented tradition’ and discussing it in the terms of “modernity beyond Europe” (Mitchell 2000).

Looking at the *fantasia* from the tourist angle, an alternative study could examine how the *fantasia* can be promoted to appeal to international tourists. It would also be interesting to consider what organizations network, promote, and sponsor *fantasia* competitions.

Other possible research foci will include detailed demographics of the riders, male and female, including socio-economic background and familial history. I intend to explore the economics behind *fantasia*, such as the costs for those who ride in local festivals for pleasure versus those who compete. Another question to answer; will the sphere of competitors increase or be localized in specific areas of Morocco? Scholars also have not documented the economics of maintaining animals in Morocco for work and pleasure, nor do animal owners keep a breeding record of the Barb horses in Morocco. Examining the *fantasia* by investigating how male riders think of it as an outlet to express their masculinity is my focus for future research. With women becoming increasingly involved in *fantasia*, it is also significant to see how women in sports in Morocco compare to other Muslim countries where the West scrutinizes women’s rights. By focusing on case studies from Morocco, the research links women’s growing participation in equestrian sports to royal and state policies of patronage and agency (public policies favoring women, women appointed to government positions), in relation



to changing internal gender dynamics of an equestrian world in which women now routinely compete equally against men. Conducting comparative studies with other countries that allow women horseback riders, such as Oman, are feasible. The patronage and agency of Moroccan and Omani monarchies and class structures are crucial to studying cross-cultural values of male and female sports participation. Women's increasing involvement in equestrian sports offer an interesting aspect for looking at tradition, class, and modern social reforms intersecting in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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