



PRODUCED AND ORGANIZED BY



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



Institute for Advanced Studies



CoT Chair of Transitions

# ROUND TABLES ON GNAOUA CULTURE

SATURDAY JUNE 27, 2026

## CHAIR OF TRANSITIONS : GNAOUA BETWEEN SINGULARITY AND UNIVERSALITY

**Casablanca, June 22, 2026** - Beyond its artistic and musical vocation, the **Gnaoua and World Music Festival** has, for several years, established itself as a space for reflection on the major cultural, social, and human transformations shaping our time. It is within this context that the **Festival** and **Mohammed VI Polytechnic University (UM6P)**, through its **Institute for Advanced Studies (IAS)** and the **Chair of Transitions**, established a collaborative partnership.

Alongside the **Human Rights Forum**, the **Berklee at Gnaoua and World Music Festival program**, and the many initiatives dedicated to transmission, creation, and reflection that shape each edition of the Festival, the **Chair of Transitions** continues its exploration of Gnaoua culture and its many contemporary resonances.

Taking place on **Saturday, June 27, 2026**, the two roundtables organized within the framework of the Chair will bring together researchers, anthropologists, historians, artists, musicians, and practitioners around a central theme: **“Gnaoua Between Singularity and Universality.”**

Through this initiative, the **Festival** and **UM6P** affirm a shared conviction: **great cultural traditions are not only a heritage to be preserved, but also living intellectual resources that help us understand the transformations of the contemporary world.**

Through its history, its circulations, its cultural cross-fertilizations, and its constant ability to reinvent itself without abandoning its foundations, Gnaoua culture offers a unique lens through which to observe the dynamics of transmission, identity, and creation that shape today’s societies. Emerging from complex historical trajectories linking Sub-Saharan Africa, the Maghreb, the Arab world, and beyond, it illustrates how cultures are built through exchange, movement, and encounter.

This year’s discussions revolve around a central question: *how can a deeply singular tradition, rooted in a specific history, cosmology, and ritual practices, achieve a universal resonance? What mechanisms allow certain cultural expressions to cross geographic, social, and symbolic boundaries while preserving their distinctive identity?*

The first roundtable, **“Gnaoua in the Diaspora: Origins, Inventions, Dispersions?”**, will explore the circulation of Gnaoua culture across diasporas, the forms of transmission through which it is sustained, and the processes of reinvention that accompany its expansion into different cultural contexts.

The second, “**Trance, Ritual, and Healing: Gnaoua and the Question of Ritualized States of Consciousness in Contemporary Societies,**” will examine the ritual, symbolic, and therapeutic dimensions of this tradition, focusing on the role of trance, ritualized states of consciousness, and healing practices in contemporary societies.

The discussions will bring together leading scholars and practitioners from a variety of disciplines and backgrounds, including **Raphaël Liogier (France)**, sociologist, philosopher, and Director of the **Chair of Transitions**, **Marouane Jaouat (Morocco)**, postdoctoral researcher at the Institute for Advanced Studies (IAS), Mohammed VI Polytechnic University (UM6P), and researcher within the **Chair of Transitions**, **Wendell H. Marsh (United States)**, Associate Professor of African Humanities within the Chair of Transitions, **Hisham Aidi (Morocco / United States)**, political scientist, music critic, and filmmaker, **Nathan Chapman Lean (United States)**, writer, cultural historian, and scholar of religion, **R.A. Judy (United States)**, professor of critical and cultural studies, **Kai Mora (United States)**, Africanist, historian, and writer, **Manoël Penicaud (France)**, anthropologist, and **Mohamed Tozy (Morocco)**, academic and professor of political science.

By fostering dialogue between academic knowledge, artistic creation, and lived experience, the **Chair of Transitions** seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of Gnaoua culture as a living heritage and as a source of reflection on the major cultural, social, and human transformations shaping our era.

## **PROGRAM**

**Saturday, June 27, 2026**

Atlas Essaouira Riad Resort – La Caravelle Room

**4:00 PM – 5:00 PM**

Gnaoua in the Diaspora: Origins, Inventions, Dispersions?

**5:15 PM – 6:15 PM**

Trance, Ritual, and Healing: Gnaoua and the Question of Ritualized States of Consciousness in Contemporary Societies

**6:15 PM – 6:30 PM**

Q&A Session