

“Al Habous”

At the center of Casablanca is Al Habous district. Built in a Moorish style by the French over a hundred years ago, Al Habous means *wqaf*—a charitable endowment. Inhabited by the aristocrats of those days, it has been transformed into a beautiful cultural district with mixed local markets loaded with history.

I was accompanied by my host, the Secretary General of the Islamic Culture Association in Tétouan, where I attended the laying of the foundation for my late father’s mosque; the fifth mosque in the Arab world which was built from his will, and where I attended Al Othman award ceremony for Quran memorization which is held under the supervision of *Bayt Zakat* in Kuwait, Lebanon, Yemen, Morocco, and Egypt. Our story, however, is about the Association of Andalusian Music Lovers based in Al Habous quarter.

In that quarter stood a small house with a yard that is no more than 100 square meters, the house was old but well maintained. It had a dome and pillars decorated with Andalusian engravings, and the walls were turned into a beautiful museum of historic Andalusian instruments and books about Sufism. In the middle of the small yard stood a chorus of musicians and vocalists and at first I thought I was attending a concert with professional musicians.

From the moment I walked in, all eyes were looking at this “oriental” man, which is the name that Moroccans call visitors from the Middle East. I could sense they were curious about what I was doing there since no “oriental” men had visited their cultural forum before. Unfortunately, cultural tourism doesn’t seem to be important among Gulf and Arab tourists. When the show was over, everyone came to greet me and introduce themselves. It was a surprise for me that all the players