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Stambali-vism: From Slavery to the Creolization of Subversion

Post the 2011 Arab Spring revolution, Tunisia witnessed attacks on Sufi shrines, but many remained steadfast in their devotion, to preserving historical sites and rituals. This allowed the emergence of political resistance which allows the practitioner to take up space that may look a lot like activism, or, when combined with art, artivism. One alternative art movement is that of *Stambali* fusion. *Stambali* is a rich traditional healing music and dance rite that had its genesis in African slavery and then evolved to become a modern creolized expression of resistance. By creolized, I mean that *Stambali* now has multiple metaphysical meanings to various stakeholder groups. For some, it serves as a healing ritual, a protective space against malevolent spirits. Others view it as a profound connection to their black and pagan ancestors. There is also a group that finds resonance in the Sufi Islamic element, particularly in the invocation of saints. The *Stambali* people embody a unique blend of Sufi traditions influenced by Sub-Saharan heritage. In my paper, I unravel the intersections of Tunisian identity, blackness, gender, and marginalization.