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# Haja: Incorporating Aghani Al-Banat into a Western Popular Music Recording Project

An exegesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
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## Abstract

The album 'Haja' is a cross-cultural collaboration based around recordings I made of female artists from Sudan who perform a traditional form of music called Aghani Al-Banat (*girls songs*). Working class in origin, Aghani Al-Banat is only performed and composed by women and is predominantly heard at wedding ceremonies in accompaniment of the traditional Sudanese bridal dance called the Subhia. After hearing this music at my own wedding in Khartoum, I returned there a year later to record with two separate Aghani Al-Banat groups including one that played at my wedding led by Gisma, a famous *Ghanaya* (woman who plays Aghani Al-Banat). This was done with the intention of merging this music with my own, being western contemporary pop and then embarking on a process of further collaboration with contemporary popular artists from New Zealand. This experiment was undertaken in order to determine from a purely musical perspective what, if any, were the unifying themes shared by the two different forms of music. Secondly, by juxtaposing the source material with that of the female artists from New Zealand I collaborated with, bring attention to the commonalities between the lives and the work of female artists from two entirely different parts of the world (both with major differences in history, culture, religion and government). Finally, by placing these voices together, I intended to highlight some of the misconceptions found in certain stereotypes concerning the roles of Muslim females in Islamic societies currently being propagated in the west.

The purpose of this exegesis is firstly to provide historical and cultural context for the collaboration via the works of key scholars who have researched Aghani Al-Banat. Secondly, it provides an overview of the production process – demonstrating how cross-cultural collaboration took place, as well as the technologies and creative processes I used. In doing so it also provides insights into my own personal creative and spiritual journey.

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