

## Glossary

**adriss** (Hassaniya, from Zenaga). The Hassaniya word for the *Commiphora gileadensis*, a tree common in the Western Sahara. The word also refers to a bucket carved from the adriss tree that is used for milking.

**arahhal** (Hassaniya, probably borrowed from Zenaga). A harness and saddle for a camel generally ridden by Bedouin women; also used as a storage rack or table inside a tent.

**Asr prayer** (Arabic). One of five mandatory Islamic prayers. It is performed halfway between noon and sunset.

**azan** (Arabic). The Muslim call to prayer.

**bait** (Hassaniya, from Arabic, meaning “chamber”). A leather pouch for carrying a pipe, tobacco, and smoking accessories.

**bismillah** (Arabic). A Muslim invocation, literally “In the name of Allah,” often used to express gratitude.

**calife** (Arabic). A political and religious leader of an Islamic state.

**fatilan** (Arabic). Literally, “a thin thread.” Much like the man in the moon to Westerners, the word *fatilan* is said to be visible to Bedouins as an inscription on the moon on very clear nights.

**freeg** (Hassaniya, from Arabic, meaning “team”). A Bedouin community or group of tents.

**guirbah** (Hassaniya, from the Arabic *qurba*). An animal skin for holding and carrying water.

**grigri** (also *gris-gris*, origin uncertain, possibly from the Yoruba word *juju*, “fetish”). A talisman or amulet used for protection and good luck. It is often a leather pouch inscribed with traditional verses or folkloric sayings and containing ritual objects. The word can also refer to a person who creates and sells grigri.

**Hajj** (Arabic). The annual pilgrimage to Mecca, one of the Five Pillars of Islam.

**hajjab, hajjaba** (from the Arabic verb “to hide” or “to censor”). A traditional healer whose powers and cures are believed to put a wall between a patient and evil spirits and influences. *Hajjab* refers to a male healer, and *hajjaba* a female healer.

**harira** (Arabic). A rich, thick Moroccan soup.

**Hassaniya**. The dialect spoken in much of Mauritania. It is an Arabic dialect that incorporates elements of Berber, French, and a number of African languages.

**hida** (Arabic). A song sung by camel herders to their camels.

**hajab** (from the Arabic verb “to hide” or “to censor”). When transliterated this way in the text, a charm that provides protection from evil spirits or influences.

**Hizb** (from Arabic, meaning “part”). The portion of the Quran a faithful Muslim reads daily, equal to one-sixtieth of the full

Quran; in Mauritania it is about ten pages of a standard six-hundred-page edition.

**h'sairah** (Hassaniya, from Arabic *hasser* or *ssad*). A sitting mat that is woven from straw and thin leather threads.

**imam** (Arabic). The person who leads prayer for a community.

**InshAllah** (Arabic). Interjection, literally meaning “If Allah wills it!”

**jinni** (sing.), **jinn** (plural) (Arabic, from the verb *janna*, “to hide”). Supernatural beings that cannot be seen.

**kiblah** (Arabic). The direction Muslims face when they pray, which always points to the Kaaba shrine in Mecca.

**Laaguil**. Part of the Trarza region of Mauritania, an area of the Sahara known for relatively shallow water wells. Ahmed's home.

**legzana** (Hassaniya). A fortune-telling art in which the fortune-teller inscribes symbols in the sand and interprets them.

**Makamat** (Hassaniya). A form of poetic writing employed most famously by al-Hariri (1054–1122); this form has a characteristic rhythm.

**Malikite**. Belonging to one of the four schools of Islamic jurisprudence.

**miswak** (Arabic). A twig used as a toothbrush, common across the Islamic world.

**mrah** (Hassaniya). The area in or near a nomadic camp where camels are kept for the night.

**Sahliya** (Hassaniya, from *sahel*, “coast”). The wind that sweeps eastward from the Atlantic across the Sahara.

**salam alaikum** (Arabic). A variation of the traditional Muslim greeting *as-salaam alaikum*, meaning “Peace be upon you.”

**Shahada** (Arabic). The Islamic creed or profession of faith: “There is no god but Allah, and Mohamed is the messenger of Allah.”

**shikwah** (Arabic). A small animal skin used to store milk and water and to make buttermilk.

**Subuh** (Hassaniya). Another name for *fajr*, the Islamic dawn prayer.

**Surat** (Hassaniya). Variation of “sura,” a chapter of the Quran.

**Tayammum** (Arabic). Ritual purification using sand.

**titarek** (Arabic). A plant or shrub (*Leptadenia reticulata*) used for a variety of medicinal purposes in many parts of Africa, the Middle East, and the Indian subcontinent.

**zakat** (Arabic). Alms given in charity.

**zrig** (Arabic). Buttermilk mixed with water and sugar or with water and salt.