

**Beyond the Field: Navigating the Personal
and Professional Impact of Interlocutor
Death on Ethnomusicological Research**

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TUNISIA



International Festival of the Sahara



Souq ech-Chaouachia (Hat Market)



Yasser Jradi



Initial Questions Considered

- How do we process the death of interlocutors? How is it different when they are thousands of kilometers away?
- What is the impact on our work when informants die?
- How do we reconcile being objective researchers with our personal experiences? How does this get acknowledged in writing?
- When we talk about this, who is the audience? When I memorialize an interlocutor, who is the memorialization for and to whom should it be directed?
- Are concerns about loss coming purely from a place of Western colonial privilege? To what degree does my position afford me the luxury to contemplate this?
- How can we prepare future researchers and students for the emotional toll of relationships with interlocutors?
- As researchers, how might our approach change if we knew that an interlocutor could die or disappear at any time?

"Although we tend to forget about it, death is part of life, it is its natural end of life. If we study human communities, we need to prepare ourselves for the death of their members; and this applies not only to exceptional cases or when researching specific issues and groups, but as a standard part of our study. Even if everything goes fine, even if there are no extreme situations, people – our informants – may die. The longer our research, the more probable it is, and a long-term research dramatically increases this probability. As researchers and as lecturers, we should bear this fact in mind and take it into serious consideration when preparing for fieldwork." (Jakoubek 216)

I wish I would have asked all my informants these questions

- Who may I contact if I can't reach you?
- In the event of your death, is there something specific you'd like me to do with the photos, videos, and other stuff I have related to you? Should I share them with family members?
- In the event of your death, is there someone else I can reach out to about what you did?
- In the event of death, what would you like me to know about the research I might continue related to your musical activities?
- Is there anything else I should consider?

Considerations and Questions

- Carefully consider the nature of your relationships with interlocutors. Consider boundaries and physical, emotional, and mental wellbeing.
- If one individual is very critical to your work, try to find someone else who could fill the void if they were no longer able to participate, or if they died. If there is no one, consider what might happen to that line of inquiry.
- Have an emotional support system in place, both in the field and at home, in case of an informant accident, death, or other trauma.
- Is there something you'd wish to tell your informants? Have you thanked them as profusely as you'd like?
- If an informant were to die, what connection might you have with their family? Might you have some meaningful interactions with the family afterwards?

In Memoriam

Yasser Jradi

Hedi Abdelmalek

Hedi Bouali

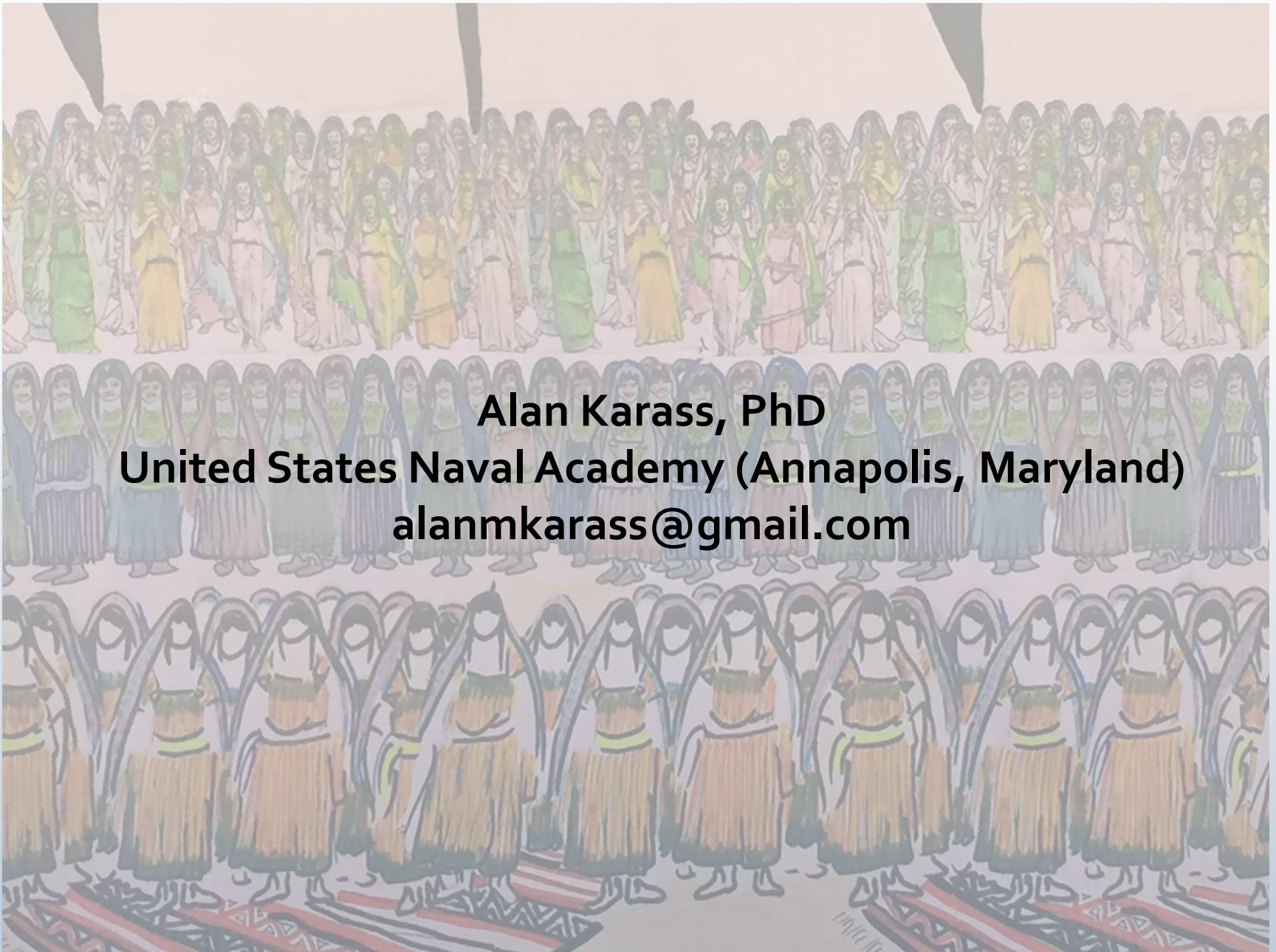
Zouhair Belheni

Sadoq "Bashtula" Ben Mohamed

Habib Jouini

Hamad bin Muhammad Baraka

Hamza Malouch



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