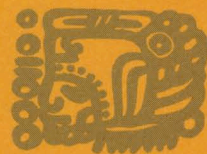


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Folk Music and Ceremonies of ETHIOPIA

Recorded and Edited by Lin Lerner and Chad Wollner



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1974

MUSIC LP

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SIDE 1

1. Shellela (Tigre Tribe)	4:10
2. Lembola (Sidamo Tribe)	1:16
3. Camel Song (Adjuran Tribe)	4:20
4. Haile Selassie's 80th Birthday Celebration	
A. Burgi Tribe	4:03
B. Borana Tribe	4:30
5. Personal Song (Somali Woman)	2:20
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	20:39

SIDE 2

1. Shepherd's Flute Song (Waito Tribe)	3:20
2. Try His Chance: Drawing from the Sand	1:20
3. Amharic National Song	5:45
4. Wessena Dube (Galla Tribe)	2:00
5. Trance Chant (Garris Tribe)	5:20
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	17:45

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and Ceremonies of
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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET
COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

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FOLK MUSIC AND CEREMONIES OF ETHIOPIA

Recorded and edited: Lin Lerner and
Chad Wollner
Musical Transcriptions: Tara Marcus
Engineers: Larry Voelker and Tara Marcus
Photographs: Lin Lerner and Chad Wollner

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The traveler who comes into Moyale, Ethiopia from Moyale, Kenya immediately notices that there are no hospitals or banks, post offices are three miles away, the sky is crystal blue and the people look you straight in the eye when they speak to you. Unencumbered by the trappings of Western civilization, they have heightened sensitivities and possess nothing unnecessary. Living in total harmony with their land, they plant according to the seasons and give thanks when the harvest is gathered. A work day begins when the sun has fully risen and ends as it dips behind the Western hills. Tending cattle or sitting bartering in the market, the people pass the days content in their minds. Their music and dance reflects all this.

The music of the desert areas that lie directly to the South of Dilla, Ethiopia has just begun to become documented. Unique within the totality of the African musical tradition, these regional folk ceremonies with their accompanying breathe accents, rolled trills, and nasal and throat sounds produced by harshly indrawn breathe, are the essence of a musical heritage which descends from a primitive culture based on essential values: water, land, and fire are the three primary elements that the tribal people prize. Whether the tribe is an agricultural, cattle/farming cooperative, or a camel herding tribe which migrates from Kenya to Ethiopia near Moyale, the people, whether settled or nomadic, usually worship a Spirit Father or Chieftan to whom they pray for continued health and prosperity.

Most of the tribes like the Burgi, the Adjuran, and the Borana, live in areas where water is scarce and usually must be hauled long distances across trackless lands. The people rarely have the luxury of wells and running water and must bathe in lakes infested with Bilharsia, a lethal worm which infects the intestines. Yet, in this noble and sacred land, the people remain happy and give themselves freely to the dance of life. The enraptured frenzy of the rituals and ceremonies inspires both the musicians and the dancers to totally merge with one another and enter into trance states of bliss.

Dancing and singing, clapping hands, imitating the motions of a cow or camel, the dancers move through and around the beats of the hand drum. Shoulder "shimmies", undulating pelvises, accompanied by side to side and backward-forward head bobs, and sudden hops or jumps in the air, or giving in to writhing on the ground make the dancer the tone and color of the music. Twenty or thirty in a group, sometimes only men or only women, sometimes all together in a huge pulsating circle. Pausing for breath, the dancer may play on a bamboo flute...a constantly flowing ceremony.



Garris dancer in a trance during the festival commemorating the 80th birthday of their Emperor, Haile Selassie.

In the tradition of the wandering minstrel, the musicians of the Sidamo and Gemu-Gofa provinces of Southwestern Ethiopia play at weddings, Luba (initiation ceremonies), funerals, and

special events like the 80th birthday of Emperor Haile Selassie. In the larger tribes, an instrument caretaker protects and repairs drums, flutes, krars (five to seven stringed harps), and masenqos (guitar-like). Some villages have a special person to care for each family of instruments. Usually a tribal elder, this man is exempted from work in the fields.

Unable to travel as much as they once did because of lack of food and water, most people farm their land and only tribes like the Adjuran who travel on camels continue to migrate as nomadic herdsmen. Living on the subsistence level, eating *injera*, an unleavened bread, and *wat*, a vegetable-root-herbal curry, the tribes depend on rain to irrigate their fields and sun to ripen the harvest. Passing tradition through song, everyone chants songs like the "Shellela", praising friends, relatives and tribal heroes of ancient battles. Encouraging his tribal brothers to imitate his actions, a Tigre man sings the "Aulo".

Collected during the months of July, August, and September of 1972, this music is part of the Dawa Library of ethnic music. The Dawa School is a non-profit organization dedicated to perpetuating, documenting and exploring ecologically threatened cultures.

Special thanks must be given to Josef Belaschew who served as translator and guide for the recording expedition. Without his generous help and assistance, these tapes would not have been possible. A filmstrip documenting the trance ceremonies is available through Current Affairs Filmstrips, 24 Danbury Road, Wilton, Connecticut.

SIDE I

1. Shellela-Tigre Tribe

This song is in praise of the warrior. There are many different versions and the singer improvises the words as he plays. It is performed on a seven-stringed hand held harp with strings tuned successively in a pentatonic scale. Melody is created by changing the order in which the strings are strummed. As in a raga, the one series of notes are chosen for the song and neither instrument nor vocalist deviate. The melody is a selection of patterns which change rhythmically according to the expression of the words. Sometimes the vocal line sustains a pitch while the strumming continues to move in a different pattern. The players' fingernails make a noise as he strums the strings so the effect is a melody with simultaneous percussion. Chords are played usually near the end of the phrase. The rhythms are natural, not rigid. This is a traditional Tigre song which has been passed down from one generation to the next through the oral method.

I.1. Shellela + male voice
Performed one octave below:

A. *Repeat Patterns*
SLOW + FREE TEMPO
OPENING TEMPO

B. *voice enters - Shellela Pattern after each voice phrase.*
Shellela
Shellela solo
Shellela accompanies and answers voice.

C. *Solo Shellela as in accompaniment*

D. *Shellela solos alternate with 3 similar vocal choruses.*

Last chorus
VOICE

E. *Last chorus*

F. *Shellela solo ends song.*

2. Lembola-Sidamo Tribe

The Lembola is a new year's song and is performed with the people in a circle. The harshly indrawn breathe is characteristic of the agricultural people who live near Hagre Salem in Southern Ethiopia. This song is a two part chant which is sung by improvising the verses as it progresses. The Ethiopian New Year usually occurs in September.

I. 2. Lembola

Lembola part 3

Solo

Chorus

Adjuran Camel Song - male leader and chorus

Leader: Chorus: L: C:

swaying camel-walk rhythm ~
tendency toward lengthening the measure.

As the song goes on, the pitch rises.

L: C: L: C: L: C:

Inhaled breath
Camel sound
Accompaniment

Pitch notation is not exact. As feeling grows, call and response overlap.



Three boys in sack cloth dress in Moyale, Ethiopia

3. Camel Song-Adjuran Tribe

The Adjuran people are desert nomads who live with their camels in the Southern areas of Ethiopia, and continually migrate between Moyale and Dilla. A sub-group of the Garris, the Adjuran stand over six feet tall, and are probably the tallest tribe in Ethiopia. Singing in polyrhythmic structures, these people form lines or circles and dance within them. In this song they attempt to imitate the camel, its life and movements. While one percussionist makes the sounds of the camel as it eats, drinks and talks, the other members of the tribe undulate their bodies in porpoise-like movements, their head flowing with their bodies as they move gracefully through the air. Using their bodies as instruments, they dance and sing apart from their woman. As the song goes on, the pitch rises; after some clapping and finger snapping, the chorus gets louder and louder.

4. Haile Selassie's 80th Birthday Celebration

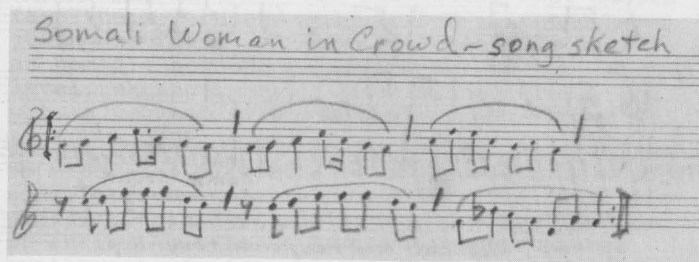
Part I-Burji Tribe
Part II--Borana Tribe

During festivals such as the birthday of the Emperor, all the tribes from the neighboring villages come to Moyale in order to celebrate, drink, eat and dance. Food is given free by the government and raw meat and tedj, the local mead beer, is consumed. Circle dancing and chanting all day and night, the people dance and sing into trance as the spirit of the ceremony envelopes their bodies and life. Ritual people, the agricultural Burji and Borana live in harmony with the land, and worship the forces of the rain and wind, the earth and the sky.

5. Personal Song-Somali Woman in Crowd

Recorded during the birthday festival of the Emperor, this song is a traditional chant of the pastoral Somali people. Singing about the simple virtues of life and how good it is to be alive, this Somali woman raises her voice to God and tells about her life and loves.

Fragment:



SIDE II

1. Waito Shepherd Flute Song

The Waito tribe is usually associated with the Tigre and live in the region of Gondar. They are nomadic and live close to the Earth. This song is a traditional call to the flock, improvised while watching the animals eat and play. A spontaneous, harmonious song played on a hand made bamboo flute with six holes, this melodic improvisation passes the time of day for the shepherd who tends his flock.

2. The Drawing From the Sand

A conversation with Josef Belashew about the ceremony in honor of the birthday of Haile Selassie. It is not unusual to see one man eat glass or walk on a bed of nails.

3. Amhara National Song

The Amhara is the largest tribe of Ethiopia, and they rule the country. This song is the national anthem of the country and praises the country and its long traditions. It praises the Emperor and the warriors who have fought to keep Ethiopia free from outside invasions. Skipping and hopping, jumping into the air, writhing on the ground, the people dance and sing their song. Dressed in bright reds and blues, they chant with a spirit and fervor of happy contented people. Men dance either with women or with other men and circles of people form around the dancers, singing and chanting. This national dance is a form of symbolic communication where the movements of the dancers express their feelings and emotions. Even the words fall second to the expression achieved through movement. Children participate

in this song while they usually do not play in other ceremonies.

4. Wessena Dube-Galla Tribe

This Galla song, like the Shellela, is in praise of the defenders of the land. Pastoral, cattle farmers, the Galla live in peace with their animals and find in their lives the spirit of all life and creation. Quiet meditative people, they realize the value of water and worship the spirit from which it comes. Today, the Galla are almost extinct as their tribe has intermarried. They have little to eat but remain happy and content.

5. Garris Trance Chant

Trance is a state of suspended existence where the real and the illusion merge. Josef, our guide, explained this to me one day. When the action of the mind can cease to interrupt the concentrated awareness, a person enters a state of trance.

