

TUNISIA

Volume 3: Folk Music

Recorded in Tunisia in 1960 by Wolfgang Laade Folkways Records FW 8863



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MUSIC LP

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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

Library of Congress Catalogue Card No. R 62-013
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17 W. 60th ST., N.Y.C., U.S.A.

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

TUNISIA

FOLKWAYS RECORDS Album No. FW 8863

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Vol. III

Folk Music

Recorded in Tunisia by Wolfgang Laade

Notes and photos by Wolfgang Laade

History:

In the course of its long fascinating history Tunisia was exposed to many foreign influences. Its original inhabitants are Berbers. In the 12th century B.D. the Phenicians founded their establishments at the African coasts, and the mighty city of Carthago "queen of the Mediterranean flourished in this Punic period. After the conquest of Carthago the Romans ruled the country which was then called Numidia. Still the country bears the signs of this flourishing period in form of the many ruins of arcs de thriomphe, temples and whole Roman cities which are to be found at the coast as well as in the western mountains and the sandy desert of the South. In 430 A.D. the Vandals swepted the Maghrib and founded their North African kingdom which fell in decadence and was conquered by the Byzantines who also left many trances of their Christian architecture. In 668 the Arab invasion began and brought the doctrine of Islam to the West. But it could not suppress the strong and fierce national spirit of the Berbers which nevertheless were converted to Mohammedanism. The Arab conquerors soon lost their political power which went over into the hands of several Berber kingdoms which lasted from about 800 until the middle of the 12th century. This time of a high cultural standard was ended by the second Arab invasion which bears the name "Hilalian" as the Beni Hilal were the mightiest of the conquering tribes. These rough hordes of nomads from the Arabian desert completely ravaged the country. Burning down towns, woods and corn-fields they destroyed the fruits of a high cultural development of many centuries. Once abounding in forests with many species of animals, once the granary of Rome the land now became the prey of the desert sands. A land of rich agriculture changed to a waste sandy pastoral country with roaming bands of nomads. It is since that time that the national character of the Berbers, their language, manners and customs more and more passed away, contrary to the more isolated mountain regions of the neighboring Algeria where Berber people with their ancient customs and also music can still be found nearly intact.

On the ruins of the old culture the dynasty of the Hafzids rose in 1236 bringing the land again up to a considerable standard which once more became extinguished by the Turkish invasion in the 16th century. The French influence dates back to 1830 when the city of Algier was occupied by Marshal de Bourmont, and since 1881 the land was practically in the hands of the French, in form of a protectorate. In 1956 the present president of Tunisia, Habib Bourguiba, led the country into independence.

It is nowadays very difficult to find the traces of Berber relicts. Their language has almost died out and is only spoken in some single villages in

the region of Matmata and in the South of the island of Djerba. These people, however, do not know any song in the Berber language. Only if we compare some Tunisian song types with Algerian mountain songs of Berber origin we can find certain similarities. This concerns mainly songs from Western Tunisia, particularly the mountain region.

Music:

The music of the Tunisian peasants is mainly vocal. There are song-types always sung in solo or following the leader-chorus principle. Choral songs are very rare and unvariably sung in unisono. The most popular instruments for accompaniment are the darabukka (vase-shaped clay drum) and the târ (small bell-clad tambourine) and bendîr (large tambourine with snares inside), both tambourines having one skin only.

The prototype of instrumental music is that one played by professional musicians on the zukra (double reed instrument) and t'bâl (Turkish drum). This music can be heard on every marriage or circumcision festival throughout the country. In the central regions also the bagpipe (mezûd) is in use. It has a double pipe with clarinet-type reed, both pipes having five finger-holes; there is no drone. To the end of the pipes a section of cowhorn is attached serving as sound-opening. The same instrument, single or double pipe, without bag, is played in the Southeast (in the neighboring Libya it is one of the most popular instruments).

The simple clarinet is called reita, the double one magrûna. Most typic of the Beduins is the gasba, a vertical flute made of cane and having six or more finger-holes. By closing the lower ones the pitch of the instrument can be changed. This flute is used as solo instrument as well as for the accompaniment of certain songs. A short flageolet or recorder, named fhal, with six finger-holes can be found here and there sporadically and is of no importance compared with the gasba. Both flutes are often made of metal tubes. A big jug-like clay drum also called darabukka is a speciality of the oasis of Nefta whereas a broad flat wooden kettle-drum is used sporadically in the Southeast. There are no stringed instruments outside of the cities and their more refined music.

Song-types:

The Tunisians have an abundant number of various song-types an alphabetical list of which will follow afterwards. Some of these song-types are known throughout the country others limited to but local importance. The names of these song-types are sometimes geographic (see Ardhawî, Mornagi, Kibli), sometimes ethnic (see Chamtûri, Temara,

Hararza, Chedhi, Hamrûni, etc.), sometimes they bear the name of their inventor (see Salhi), sometimes the name indicates their function (see Yahâfi, Njouÿ, Nawahi), sometimes their emotional character, tempo or form.

The songs can be roughly divided into two categories: chanted poetry and real songs. Only some single types of the latter show the influence of the classical urban music (for example Salhi). Most of the folk songs, however, and particularly the chanted poetry and the women's songs show such a great difference from the classical Arab music that we are inclined to consider them as nearly unchanged since pre-Islamic times. The women's songs at marriages, victories etc. may even recall Biblical scenes. Thinking of Ibn Khaldûn's words (quoted in Vol. I of our Tunisian anthology) we may assume that on the basis of these songs the classical music was developed in the cities after the Mohammedan conquests and under various foreign influences while the genuine folk songs of the peasants remained nearly untouched until the present time.

The listener can easily find a difference between two styles of song: a simple syllabic one with plain melodies and a highly ornamented, melismatic style. Whereas the syllabic songs are always sung with natural voice in a natural middle register the latter are mostly sung with much strained voice in the highest possible register.

If we speak of the peasant's folk songs the term "folk song" has a rather variable character. Among the women's songs we find for example songs which are always sung by professional or at least semi-professional female feast-singers to the sound of the darabukka. These singing-women are engaged and paid for entertaining the (female) guests in the bride-house at marriages or to sing the festival songs of circumcision ceremonies. The repertoire of these singers varies from old and new songs of any kind to songs of own composition. The strict ritual songs of marriages, however, which are sung at fixed moments of the ceremonies are mostly sung by all assisting women in unisono-chorus. They seem to be fixed in text and melody. On the other hand the chanted poetry of the Beduin men is in fact a real art: in contrast to the classical musical art of the urban population this is the traditional oral art of the nomadic people of the Arabian desert. Nearly every man was (and the old men are still) able to make poetry and still every day the old traditional forms of poetry are used by them to compose new verses in praise of their president, Habib Bourguiba, of his steps to bring progress and welfare, and in praise of their young independant republic. In former times the Beduin poets often held contests and the victors were much honoured by their tribes. The classical cycle of Beduin poetry contains the following parts: tala or matla, ksîm (can be replaced by mûgef), mseddes, malzûma, burjîla, sîga and hîla. A good poet had to go through all these forms in a contest.

Alphabetical list of Tunisian song - types

It was very difficult to obtain informations on the different song types. The singers sing but can not explain their songs theoretically. Even the most educated musicians of Tunis were not able to give satisfactory information. It was only Baron d'Erlangers former assistant, Mr. Manoubi Snoussi, who kindly helped me with explanations. They are sparse but may be of help in further research work.

'AHSINNI, is always a dance-song, found at Ksour^{*)} (Middle West). Name is obscure.

'AKHDAR^{**)}, this term signifies only the subject of the text which talks of women and love. Many song-types can be "akhdar". The singers explained the word as meaning "green", akhdar being the "green song", while Manoubi Snoussi interpreted it as meaning "rough, coarse, unpolished". The contrary of akhdar is yat.

'ARDHÂWÎ, means "music from El 'Arad" which was the old name of the southeastern region reaching from Gabes to Tripoli. According to M. Snoussi it can also signify "slow, largo". This musical type belongs particularly to the region between the cities of Sfax and Gabes and to the tribes Ghraira and Methelith but is now widely known. Originally it is a vocal style and it's words always love-laments telling of separation and absence. Ardhâwî is at the same time a musical mode built up on Fa and with minor third and septime and diminished sixth up and down. D'Erlanger gives it's scale as f-g-a^b-b^b-c-d-e^b. Ardhawi has also found it's way into the semi-classical Tunisian music and that of the religious sects.

'ARÛBÎ, from "arbaha" - four; it is an improvised quatrain, the counterpart of the Oriental mawal, a specialty of the Maghrib. If a song is very long the poet likes to entwine it with free improvisations. In the classical music the kasîde is used for this purpose, in the folk song or poetry the 'arûbî. Their metre is mostly 5/4 but there is no strict rhythm. In Tozeur the singers told that it is always sung as a solo in very slow tempo and they liked most to sing it during various works. In that oasis I heard a road worker and a worker in a date palm garden sing 'arûbîs and kiblîs.

BITTEBDÎL, a song in which stanzas of zindâli and 'arûbî alternate.

BURJÎLA, the word signifies a man who has but one small foot. The verses contain narrating poetry always with the same length of 1 foot and 12 syllables bundled to varying groups of 8 or 12 verses. Like the malzûma it is usually sung with an assisting (responding) singer. It is known throughout the south.

DAGGARI, Song type from the region of Tatahouine.

DARBASHI, name of a folk hero, a much adored brigant from El Hamma de Gabes. He did many troubles to the French and was finally killed by them. A whole repertoire of songs has preserved his various adventures. These songs belong pretendedly to no fixed song type.

GIBLI, also KIBLI, KEBLI, KABÎLI and KEBLÂWÎ. In Ksour people called it "kabîli" explaining

^{*)} All geographic names are given in French writing as used on maps.

^{**)} The kh is always spoken like the Russian h, softened it is gh.

this song type as having originated in the Algerian Kabylie. But this is definitely wrong. In Tozeur it was told that the "kibli" or "keblâwi" has its name from the oasis of Kebili on the other side of the Shott Djerid; but this is also wrong. In fact "gibli" or "kibli" means "south:" giblis are songs of the south, of the desert, and they are always a little "sauvage et fruste" (M. Snoussi). The giblis are a specialty of the whole Djerid region but known northwards to Ksour. They are mostly (at Nefta always) accompanied by the gasba or by zûkra and t'bâl.

HAMAMI, song type of the great Hamama tribe in Central Tunisia, perhaps a collective term for all the songs of this nomadic tribe.

HAMRÛNI, song of the negroid Hamârna tribe in the region of Gabes and Mareth (see also Yahâfi). Collective term for all their songs.

HÎLA, free poetry, often sung in form of a dispute. Belongs to the standard cycle of Beduin poetry.

JENDÛBI, song type of the Kroumirie, the north-western province of Tunisia. Tribe: Jendûba, living around Souk el Arba. It is said to be a variant of rîsh. Is widely known in the west.

KSÎM, (also gsîm), important part of the Beduin poetic cycle. According to M. Snoussi only the contents make out a ksîm which is always moralizing. It is a solo and it may be spoken or sung. It is clearly a melodic recitation in syllabic style.

MADHA, "madh" means "apology"; "madha" is an apologetic chant or poem; "maddâh" is the singer of the madha. It can also be recited or sung.

MAHZÛZ, variant of the malzûma. Literally "to make a mark", signifying a song of light character. Mainly in the region of Sfax. Sung in antiphony. The two sections of the mahzûz are called "rekâb" ("stirrup") and "shrîda" ("palm branch").

MALZÛMA, means "the necessary (part)". Is the principal part of the Beduin poetic cycle. Invariably sung in antiphony by a soloist (the poet or main singer) and one or more assistants. The solo part is called "ghannâi", the chorus "shadded". It is always in double metre, of a very clear simple rhythm and moderately quick tempo. There are numerous local variants of the malzûma. See also BURJÎLA, MAHZÛZ, SUGA, TABAÏ, ZIRÂWI.

MARBÛA, song type of the Hamama. Is usually sung by four persons with alternating solos. Each singer has to contribute his own idea to a given subject.

MATLA, means "prologue". The same as tala. While tala is the product itself, matla signifies the means by which it is made. See TALA.

MERZÛGI, general term for the songs of the Merazig tribe of Douz. MERZÛGI

RADASSI: "radassi" signifies the movement executed when treading out corn or treading the washing. Seems to imitate this movement in rhythm and tempo.

MERZÛGI HARGALI: a camel is "hargal" when trotting. Seems to imitate also the movement and tempo of the camel's walk. In Douz it was explained as being the same as Burjîla.

MERZÛGI TAWAHI: tawahi means "wide"; "expanded"; "largo". Highly melismatic style. Sometimes compared with Salhi, but shorter than this. Sung in sad mood, mostly with gasba accompaniment. According to another information it is sung by women at marriages and corn grinding.

MLÂLI, found at Ksour and Tadjerouine, both times sung with instrumental accompaniment (gasba or zûkra). No informations.

MORNÂGI, Particular song type from the region of Djebel Mornâg.

MÛGEF, from lit. Arabic "wakafa" - "to make arise", as it is always sung or recited standing upright. To its performance belong always two assistants as chorus. They are called "khammes" (from khamsa - five) as they have to repeat the fifth verse. It starts mostly with a tala. The southwestern corner is the main region of the mûgef but it is sung and chanted all over Tunisia. The mûgef is a part of the standard poetic cycle of the Beduins.

MÛLED, is the birthday of the prophet or any other holy man who is ceremonially venerated. The word is also used for the songs sung at these occasions.

MSEDDDES, derived from "setta" - "six". Part of the poetic cycle. Is a stanza of six lines. It is an improvisation and a variant of the ksîm. Not quantitative as the classical metres. Only the accent characterizes it, the length changes. It is always sung.

NAWÂHI, means "lament" and denotes originally the funeral dirge.

NJÛÏ or **NJÛA**, the only genuine song type of the Fraishish tribe according to another information a song type of the Hamama. "Naja'a" is a tribe (with warriors and herds) leaving the camp for the annual migrations. "Njûi" are the songs of these people sung at this occasion, i.e. wandering songs with descriptions of the way, the landscape, occasional little fights with other tribes, etc. The njûi tunes are also often played on the gasba solo.

RADASSI, "radassa" means "treading (out corn)" or "treading (the washing)" and signifies the movement of these actions. Songs of various characters were recorded under this name. Specialty of the Merazig tribe from Douz (see also MERZÛGI RADASSI)

RAGASSI, from "ragass" (say rags) - "to dance". Means "composed in dance rhythm". Usually sung to the accompaniment of

gasba and darabukka or t'bâl, or to the accompaniment of the mezûd. According to M. Snoussi a variant of the malzûma. Among the Negroid Hamarna of Mareth it is the music accompanying the festive belly-dance of the women.

REBÂÏ, songs of the Reba'â, a pure nomadic tribe at the Libyan border.

RÎSH, means "bird's down". Song type of the Kroumirie in the Northwest. The tempo is like at plucking the feathers of chicken; originally sung at this work. These songs are improvisations on every possible subject. The rîsh - singers of the Kroumirie who are called "raïashi" are widely known in Tunisia.

SALHI, about forty years ago a member of the tribe Swalhaïa (sub-tribe of the Methelith living in the district of Sfax) became the inventor of this very popular type of song. It is told that he (whose name was Salhi) was put into prison for political reasons. In jail he created the melancholic, lamenting Salhi. This song type is clearly influenced by the urban art music and it is said to represent an energetic reaction against the dogmatic modes of the classical music. It is the manifestation of the common people's will to add their own inventions to the fund of musical modes. *) The salhi afterwards also entered the repertoire of the religious songs (in classical style) of the Moslem sects. Its creator has without any doubt been a very capricious, headstrong and obstinate character.

The original and main region of the salhi is the district of Sfax but nowadays it is sung everywhere in Tunisia and has become a true favourite. It is marked by the complete absence of fixed metre and rhythm and by long wailing phrases with special inflections of the voice. The words are of secondary importance and are nearly drowned by the broadly flowing strains of melody. The tune always follows a fixed model starting on the fifth and falling down in a zigzag line crossing a neutral third. It embraces just a pentachord. The singers like to be accompanied by a gasba or zûkra.

SHA'ÂR MALHÛN, literally "having a fault". Sha'âr is the classical refined poetry (the poet being called sha'îr); sha'âr malhûn is folk poetry which has faults and is somehow deformed: The metre is not much respected. The term was only used at Sbeitla and Sers.

SHAMTÛRI, belongs to a sub-tribe of the Methelith named Shnetra, living in the region of Sfax. The only recorded example is an antiphonic duet.

SHEDHI, got its name from the Uled Shehîda, a sub-tribe of the Uerghamma, living south of Tadjerouine. Well known in the whole Southeast. It is always sung by men and unvariably a love song.

SÛGA or **SÛKA**, mainly found in the West. The root word "sûg" means "to conduct". Suga signifies: many stanzas follow each other, it runs on. Is a kind of long malzûma mostly sung following the kâlm.

SULTANI, song type of the Uled Sultân, sub-tribe of the Uled Shehîda; region of Tatahouine. The inventor of this song type was an Uled Sultân.

TABAI, from "tabia" - "to follow, to accompany". An assistant singer has to follow the soloist. The first singer sings 2-4 verses, the assistant repeats one of them (it must not be the last one). Derived from the malzûma. Has, however, an own rhythm and another length of the verses. The assistant can also be replaced by an instrument.

TALA, means "rising": the voice rises. The tala is the first verse of a song (in the Bedin poetic cycle) and the first musical theme. A kind of prelude

*) Another mode invented by rural people is Asbain. Also the Ardhâwi may be mentioned here.

to call for attention. It is a long drawn melodic line without fixed metre and rhythm. The tala is the Maghribian counterpart of the Oriental madhab. (see also MATLA)

TARBIJ, means "to cajole". The lullabies of the Hamama women of Sîdi Bou Zîd were called like that.

TARG, particular instrumental tune always played by gasba solo. The gasba has a very particular intonation with trills, "dirty tones", a kind of flageolet-like sounding tones, etc. The only targ which is still existant is the "Targ es Sid" (sid - lion) having originated on Cape Bon but now generally known in different versions and fragments. The targ is a kind of "program music" as its music is always telling some story and imitating musically certain action in a realistic way.

TARGI, (plural: TRUG; also known under this name). Vocal imitation of the targ. The singer sings with a special timbre and style which is completely different if he is accompanied by a zûkra. He tries to imitate all the particularities of sound and technique of the gasba.

TARHÂNI, means "slow", "largo"; found in Tadjerouine.

TEMÂRA and **HARÂRZA**, in all recorded examples they were combined together. Temara is derived from the name of the village of Metameur near Medenine in the Southeast. It signifies the inhabitants of this village and also their songs. Hararza comes from the name of a sub-tribe of the Uerghamma living near the Temara.

TRUG, see TARGI.

YAHÂFI, from "yahfa", camel palanquin as used by the bride during marriage ceremonies. It is the song for the camel which carries the bride to the house of the bridegroom - her futural home. Negro

women who in this region always serve as semi-professional marriage assistants and singers follow the camel and sing the yahâfi in metre and tempo of the camel's walk. It is a song type of the Hamarna, a sub-species of the Hamrûni songs of Mareth and Gabes.

YAT, means "serious" and signifies the contrary of "akhdar". It refers also to the subject of the song text only. The words can be religious (about the prophet, a great marabout, a holy place) but they can also tell of heroes and battles.

ZINDÂLI, song type of various contents. The verses are always composed of eleven syllables.

ZIRÂWA, malzûma of the Berber tribe Zrawa living near the famous cave-dwellers' village of Matmata in the Southeast.

Table of metres and rhymes of some song-types according to Hans Stumme *)

The letters z, y, x indicate the rhymes. A "f" after these letters means that the rhyme remains fixed throughout the song. A "v" indicates that every stanza has a new rhyme.

Single Zindâli

--- z
--- z) once

Composed Zindâli (with modifications)

--- z^f
--- z^f) once

--- y^v
--- y^v } repeated
--- y^v } ad lib.

'Arûbi

--- x^v
--- w^v
--- x^v
--- w^v

Kâim, type I

--- z
--- y) repeated ad lib.

Kâim, type II

--- z
--- y) repeated ad lib.

Mûgef

--- z^f
--- z^f } repeated ad lib.
--- z^f
--- z^f

Malzûma, type I

--- z^f
--- z^f) once

--- (-) y^v
--- (-) y^v } repeated ad lib.
--- (-) y^v
--- z^f

Malzûma, type II

--- z^f
--- z^f) once

--- (-) y^v
--- (-) y^v } repeated ad lib.
--- (-) y^v
--- z^f

Malzûma, type III

--- z^f
--- z^f) once

--- y^v
--- y^v } repeated ad lib.
--- y^v
--- z^f

Mseddes

--- z^f
--- z^f } once
--- z^f

--- (-) y^v
--- (-) y^v } repeated ad lib.
--- (-) y^v
--- (-) y^v
--- z^f

Mahzûz, type I

--- z^f
--- y^f } "rkâb", repeated ad lib. *)
--- y^f
--- z^f

--- x^v
--- w^v } "shrîda", rep. ad lib.

Mahzûz, type II

x-x-x-x-x-x^f
x-x-x-x-x^f } "rkâb", rep. ad lib. *)
x-x-x-x-x^f
y^f

x-x-x-x-x-x^v
x-x-x-x-x^w } "shrîda", rep. ad lib.

Notes on the recordings.

*) Tripolitanisch-tunisische Beduinenlieder, Leipzig, 1894. p. 41

*) Ends always with "rkâb".

1. Wedding music from the island of Kerkennah, recorded during a wedding at Remla, northern island. The people of Kerkennah are fishermen who sell their fish at Sfax, a great town at the Tunisian coast opposite to the islands. Their women have little gardens on the barren ground to grow some fruits and vegetables. Beside of their fishing the men also make basket-work from halfa-grass. A wedding ceremony is celebrated at two places following the general Arab custom. At the house of the bridegroom his family and all his relatives and friends are assembled. One or more nights are spent in the open court of the square house drinking tea and palm wine and being entertained by a band of professional musicians. This band is invariably composed of two zûkras (oboes, the Oriental zurnas) and two t'bâl (Turkish drum) players. Their costumes with red tasseled caps, white embroidered vests and long white shirts resembles somehow the dress of the Greek Evzones. It may be mentioned that many Greek sponge-fishers are living on the Kerkennah islands. But we may probably assume a Turkish influence. This band entertains the guests all the night long. The musical repertoire consists partly of traditional instrumental tunes to which the musicians themselves dance in a very graceful and almost solemn manner doing little steps to the right and to the left, waving slowly their upper bodies, turning around, moving to and fro across the petrol lamp lit court while the long back tassels of their caps are floating here and there with the movements of the dancers. The drummers sometimes do even acrobatic acts while dancing swinging their instruments up on their shoulders or heads or turning quickly around with the heavy instruments without stopping to play. Beside of these instrumental tunes they sing songs of every kind to the sound of their instruments: wedding songs, greeting songs, Beduin songs from the continent, political songs in praise of their president Bourguiba and the young republic, modern fashion songs of urban origin and popular Egyptian song hits. Every song and dance is applauded by a shrill "zagharat" *) or rapid tongue-trill of the women. These sit separately on the roofs of the houses round the open court watching the spectacle from above. Their white garments floodlighted from the court lamps are strangely contrasting to the black sky. There is moreover a "mâitre de plaisir" who recites praises to the bridegroom and his family and welcomes guests with verses improvised at the spot. These praises have to be paid to him and thereafter the musicians take post in front of the spender and play a shorter or longer honouring tune its length being adequate to the amount of his gift. The master of ceremonies hands the money over to some members of the family who collect it and pay it finally in the morning to him and the musicians. Thus the whole night is spent and if the family of the bridegroom should be rich they let follow another one and perhaps a third one until finally the bride is escorted from her parents' house to her new home. These procession is also led by the master of ceremonies and the band which plays now fixed tunes on the different stations of the procession (i. e. at arriving at the bride's house, when the bride is coming out and entering her palanquin, at the arrival at her new home). This recording is made during the nightly entertainment in the bridegroom's court. The zûkras are played

by 'Alî ben Hassen Souissi and Said Glila, the t'bâls by Hassen Melitti and Bechîr Mekki **).

2. Wedding song in the house of the bride, Remla, Kerkennah. While the feast is going on in the bridegroom's house the family of the bride with all their relatives and friends have gathered in her home spending the night in the same way. There are no men allowed to be present. Before this the bride is ritually dressed and made-up, her hand and feet painted with hennah. One or more female singers who before also did this work serve now as entertainers, singing to the humming sound of the bendîr or big tambourine with snares inside. Their songs are also mixed up of praising songs about the beautiful bride and the handsome bridegroom, folk songs, songs from the Tunisian radio programs and from Egyptian movie pictures. Here we listen to a more serious song telling of the virtues of the Holy City of Mekka. The voice of the blind singmaster Khadîja Cholka (30) is nearly drowned in the general noise of the chattering and laughing women guests. Another woman is accompanying her on the bendîr.

3. "Halel holé", wedding dance song, sung by Aicha Ahmed (ca. 50), accompanied by her daughter. Aicha is the professional wedding singer of the oasis of Chenini de Gabes. She is a Negress as all the wedding assistance is rendered here by Negro women who do the bathing, dressing and make-up of the bride as well as the musical entertainment. Aicha who was of a very noble attitude and hearty nature has herself composed numerous songs on various subjects. She also plays herself the darabukka or pot drum while singing. The recording was made in an exuberant palm garden of the oasis.

4. Targ es Sid, gasba (Beduin flute) solo, played by Ahmed-ben Salah (35) from El Hamma de Gabes. "Targ es Sid" is true program music telling of a girl who is going to be attacked by a lion. A brave Beduin chevalier appears on the scene and kills the beast thus winning the beautiful girl as his wife. The roaring of the lion is musically as well depicted as the happy tongue-trill of the women who have come up in haste and their song of joy honouring the victor. The tune is mainly based on the mode of Salhi.

5. Ragassi, music for the festive belly dance of the women, performed at wedding entertainments, etc., in the village of Mareth south of Gabes. The magrûna (primitive clarinet with double pipes) is played by Belgacem ben M'barek Laghiri (26), semi-professional Negro musician of Mareth. His constant musical partner, the drummer 'Alî ben Mohamed ben 'Abdallâh N'kadess (29), also Negro, actually had no drum to accompany the music. As was told he had spent his instrument in drinking as both musicians liked much the palm wine. So being of a character as witty as that of his companion - he did the drumming on the door of the room. Some other men sitting around added their handclapping. The dance tunes of

*) It is commonly called "yuyu", following the French expression.

***) The names of the performers are always written in the French manner according to the local custom.

which Belgacem played a lot invariably started with a slow warming-up prelude without fixed metre and rhythm. When he entered the main body of the dance tune the drummer joined in. This music - as most of the music in the whole southeast - shows clearly influences from the Fezzan particularly in the rapid hammering drum rhythms. Beside of this the magrûna was only found in this region and it is also the most popular instrument in the neighbouring Libya.

6. Song in praise of president Bourguiba and the new republic. Type: Temara and Hararza. Sung by Mosbah ben Mohamed ben Mosbah Nagnag (46), the best singer of the village of Metameur, and two assistants. Metameur lies in a region of a very particular architecture, the so-called "ghorfas" which are houses of tube-like chambers built up to even three or four storeys.

7. Old syllabic wedding songs of the Ghebunten women. Recorded in their hamlet of Sidi Makhoulouf, north of Medenine. The Ghebunten are a small tribe of Negro descentance, now regarded as sub-tribe of their former masters, the Uerghamma. They seem so have been brought here via Fezzan. The women who, curiously enough, are of a darker complexion than their men, still wear their traditional hair dresses composed of many little tresses. The wedding ritual songs which are recorded here were sung with high shrill voices with many glottal cracks. The single verses of the songs are separated by long pauses.

8. Wedding songs with flat wooden kettle-drum, performed by the Ghebunten men. The singers divided into a group of two singers and another one of four singers singing in antiphony. The leading parts of these antiphonic songs are always sung by two singers. It may be mentioned here that the drum is also used as talking drum although only very simple signals are used as were also known to the Beduins. The drum is beaten with two sticks.

9. Song about the nomadic caravan journey. Type: Ksîm, beginning with a short tala. The words are composed by the deceased singer Khalifa Daggari who lived in the region of Tatahouine and was a member of the great Uerghamma tribe which inhabits the whole southeast. Singer: Saâd ben Fradj (76), born in Tripoli. This song represents purely the syllabic chanting style of the ancient Beduin poetry of which Ibn Khaldûn is talking (see vol. I of our Tunisian anthology).

10. "Makhûl andara" (Black Eyes), folk song from Kairouan. Situated amidst the vast barren steppe of Central Tunisia this fascinating town with its dazzling white walls and buildings and its hundreds of mosques and minarets is the only city of Tunisia possessing the real charm of a Thousand-and-One-Night's atmosphere. The Arab invaders led by Okba ben Nafi have founded it in 671 and a long time it remained their capital and Holy City.

The song recorded here represents a type of urban folk music that was also found at Teboursouk and Nabeul where it was played by groups of young amateur musicians. Here the group is composed of semi-professional musicians. Singer: Salah Karkoud (31); mazûd (bagpipe): Mohamed 'Alî Idi (35); darabukka: Mohamed Mraou (30); and bendîr: Shaikh Hedi Gerfala (45).

11. Love song, type: burjîla. Singer: Mohamed el Mouldi ben Sliman Laouini (44) who belongs to the Awîn, a sub-tribe of the Nefzâwa who are living around the oasis of Kebili east of Shott Djerîd. The singer has also composed himself a number of poems and songs. While singing this song he closed his ears with his fingertips which is a very common custom around the Mediterranean sea. It could be observed also many times in the western region of Tunisia but it is done only when singing distinct song types *).

12. Song of the Salhi type. Singer: Mohamed ben Hassen Bousbia (27); zûkra: Khamais ben Mohamed (35), professional Negro musician; both from El Hamma de Gabes. The Salhi is always sung with a very particular voice and its lamenting strains are full of trembling and quivering tones. The accompanying zûkra player was a very capricious and as well humorous man. This is also felt in his very particular style of playing: in the true sense of the word he plays with the notes of the Salhi scale adorning them with many trills, rapid runs and modifications of sound.

13. Love song addressed to a girl; type: Merzûgi. Singer: Amor ben Belgacem Gelaoui (48) assisted by Mohamed ben Ghirra (40). Both singers belong to the Merazig tribe living around the small market place of Douz, south of Kebili, at the borders of the Sahara. Most of the Merazig are still living as nomads.

14. Lullaby, sung by an elder woman from Tozeur, Djerîd region. Built on Roman ruins Tozeur became an important flourishing trading place as it was the gate to the Sahara and a terminus of one of the great caravan routes which led to the Negro countries of the Guinea coast. Nowadays the richness of its inhabitants has its base in the abounding date palm gardens the palms of the oasis numbering about 230,000.

15. Song describing a beautiful girl who is compared with a pigeon. Type: Kibli. Singer: Ahmed Ezzine (30) from Tozeur. The singer was just working in a palm garden of the oasis - it was during the date harvest - when I heard him singing in the top of a tall palm tree while cutting the date shrubs. The songs which he (and others) liked to sing during their work were mostly of the Kibli and Arûbî types.

16. "Zgara", typical sword dance of the Djerîd region. Recorded at the oasis of Nefta. Wooden gasba: Belgacem Khsouma (20) whose parents belong to the Guerib or Nefzâwa tribes respectively. The flute is accompanied by two big jug-like drums called "darabukka fazâi" (great darabukka). These particular darabukkas are manufactured only at Nefta as a by-product of the local pottery. The pottery of Nefta is - contrary to that of Nabeul or Guellala (in the south of Djerba) - only of local importance and restricted to the manufacture of simple utensils and the fabrication of bricks. The architecture of the Djerîd villages (mainly Tozeur and Nefta) owes its bizarre charm particularly to the special arrangement of these bricks in fanciful patterns. The sword dance recorded here is usually danced leading wedding processions as it was also found at other places (the sword mostly being replaced by a stick). The music belongs specially to this dance.

*) The same use was also observed on the island of Corsica.

17. Children's play songs from Nefta: a) "Ya haleil, ya haloul", b) "Ya hnou khalti" (My uncle), c) "Helli hilli hilli". These songs are usually sung while the girls about ten years of age play a very international play also known to us. There are two pairs of girls. Each girl takes the hand of her partner the arms of both pairs thus forming a cross. Now they start turning around like a wheel becoming quicker and quicker. Five girls of Nefta are to be heard on this recording.

18. Lamenting love song; type: Targi. Sung by Salah Labidi (35) and Bacha Labidi (38). Both singers belong to the small hill tribe named Labidi living near Tadjerouine in the Western mountain region. Many small tribes or even family groups can be found in this region from Kasserine in the South to Souk el Arba in the North. Here we can probably find certain relations to the mountain Kabyls of the neighboring Algeria and also musical Berber relicts if there are any at all in Tunisia.

19. Women's wedding ritual songs, sung by three women (about 50) from Besseriana, near Tadjerouine. This song is a ritual song, i. e. it is a fixed part of the wedding ceremonies contrary to other songs sung merely for the entertainment of the guests. They represent a very distinct type of song as used by the women at wedding and circumcision ceremonies. They are always sung with high shrill voices and glottal cracks so sharp that I was forced to turn the microphone off the singers. There is no fixed tempo and rhythm. The wailing melodic strains always end in a pause before the next verse is started. It was difficult to record the women's songs but a nice collection of them could be made. Their style was un-variably the same in this region. The women stood mostly in two pairs the partners facing each other and singing to each other behind their raised veils. This particular song is usually sung during the night when the bridegroom has entered the bridal chamber.

20. Song describing a beautiful girl. Type: malzûma. The words are composed by the poet El Ghazelli from Tunis who lived about one hundred years ago. Singer: Taieb Garouachi (46) of the Bejâwa tribe inhabiting the central north. This recording was made at Mateur. We have now entered the agricultural region of the north situated at both sides of the river Medjerda.

21. "Shtiah", old dance tune. Played by a band of musicians from the mountains. Gasba: Tijani ben Said ben Mohamed (40); bendîrs Jaffal ben Gandin (55) (sings also) and Salah ben Khamais ben Ayar (35). Recorded at Djebel Abiod a little hamlet in the Kroumirie. The Kroumirie is said to be inhabited by a pure Berber population, and the Krûmirs have long time defended their own little mountain republic against the Bey of Tunis. "Shtiah" is an ancient general term meaning "dance". It came out of use as the female dancers were of a bad reputation, and this word was associated with them. Nowadays dance is again respected but is now called "ragass". Our shtiah opens with a slow introduction underlaid by a rattling tattoo of the bendîr. The drummer adds some sung lines to this prelude. Then the dance starts with a fixed lively rhythm. The flutists move to the fro while playing and with these movements the sound of their instruments fades and comes back.

22. Song of the Rîsh type, talking of women and love. Singer: Mohamed ben Salah ben Gderi (42); zûkra: Mohamed Boularez (30) both being Krûmirs from the Shaikhat Tabarba, region of Djebel Abiod. This song was recorded during a nightly wedding entertainment at the bridegroom's house.

23. Song of the Krûmir women to incite their men and the warriors in a battle. Two female singers: Mabrouka bent Said and Dlala bent Naouar (both being about 25 years of age). The song was commented as being "purely local" and "in true mountain style". It was recorded at Djebel Abiod, Kroumirie.



A dancer of the Kebili oasis



The "darabukka fazai" of Nefta