TUNISIA

Volume 3: Folk Music

Recorded in Tunisia in 1960 by Wolfgang Laade Folkways Records FW 8863
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.C. 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 arcos de triomphes, 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 swept the Maghrib and founded their North African kingdom which fell in decadence and was conquered by the Byzantines who also left many traces 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 Hafizids 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 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 relics. 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.

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 invariably sung in unisono. The most popular instruments for accompaniment are the darabukka (vase-shaped clay drum) and the tar (small bell-clad tambourine) and bendir (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 sakra (double reed instrument) and the taq (Turkish drum). This music can be heard on every marriage or circumcision festival throughout the country. In the central regions also the bagpipe (mezOud) 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 retta, the double one magruuna. Most typical 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 fal, 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 specialty 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 Ardhwai, Mornagi, Kibili), sometimes ethnic (see ChamTuir, Temara,
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 Salhil). 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 Khaldun's words (quoted in Vol. I of the 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 unison 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 go through all 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 the young independent republic. In former times the Beduin poets often held contests and the victors were much honoured at their homes. The classical cycle of Beduin poetry contains the following parts: tala or matla, kasm (can be replaced by mûgef), maddès, malžûma, bûrjila, 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.

'AHSSINNI, 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.

'ARDAWI, means "music from El 'Ard" 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. Ardawi 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-a₁-b₁-b₁-c-d-e-a₁. Ardawi has also found it's way into the semi-classical Tunisian music and that of the religious sects.

'ARUBI, 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 'arubi. Their metre is mostly 5/4 but there is no strict rhythm. In Tozeur the singers told me 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 'arûbs and kibils.

BITTEBDIL, a song in which stanzas of sindâli and 'arûbi alternate.

BURJILA, 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 pretendly to no fixed song type.

GIBLI, also KIBLI, KEBLI, KABLI and KEBLAWI. In Ksour people called it "kabli" 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 Jellâbû, 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 Djellâbû region but known northwards to Ksour. They are mostly (at Nefta always) accompanied by the gasba or by zûkra and tâbi. HILA, free poetry, often sung in form of a dispute. Belongs to the standard cycle of Beduin poetry. HAMAMI, song type of the great Hamama tribe in Central Tunisia, perhaps a collective term for all the songs of this nomadic tribe.

HAMRÛNî, song of the negroid Hamarna tribe in the region of Gabes and Mareth (see also Yahâïî). Collective term for all their songs.

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

JENDUBI, song type of the Kroumirie, the northwestern 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 gaîm), important part of the Beduin poetic cycle. According to M. Snoussi only the contenta make out a kaïm 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 mahûz are called "rekâb" ("stirrup") and "ahrûdâ" ("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 "ghamânî", the chorus "shaddah". 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 BURJILA, MAHZûZ, SUGA, TABAI, ZIRAWI.

MARBUÀ, 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.

MERZûGÎ, general term for the songs of the Merazig tribe of Douz. MERZûGÎ RADASSI: "radassi" signifies the movement executed when treading out corn or treading the washing. Seems to imitate this movement in rhythm and tempo.

MERZûGÎ HARGALÎ: 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 Burjila.

MERZûGÎ TAWAHÎ: tawahi means "wide"; "expanded"; "largo". Highly melismatic style. Sometimes compared with Sahî, 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 Tadjerouline, both times sung with instrumental accompaniment (gasba or zûkra). No informations.

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

MÛGÉF, 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 mugîf but it is sung and chanted all over Tunisia. The mugîf 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.

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

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

NJÎ 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. "NJî" 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 njî 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. Speciality of the Merazig tribe from Douz (see also MERZûGÎ RADASSI).

RAGASSI, from "ragas" (say râgas) - "to dance". Means "composed in dance rhythm". Usually sung to the accompaniment of
gasba and darabukka or t'bal, or to the accompaniment of the mezūd. According to M. Snoussi a variant of the malzūma. Among the Negroid Hamarins of Mareth it is the music accompanying the festive belly-dance of the women.

REBĀI, songs of the Reba'ā, a pure nomadic tribe at the Libyan border.

RĪSH, 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 rīsh - singers of the Kroumirie who are called "raaashi" are widely known in Tunisia.

SALHI, about forty years ago a member of the tribe Swalhāia (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. As he creared 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 domatic 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 chord. The singer sings with a special 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 first singer sings 2-4 verses, the assistant repeats one of them (it must not be the last one). The assistant can also be replaced by an instrument.

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

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

TARBIJ, means "to cajole". The lullabies of the Hamama women of Sidi Bou Zid 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 intonation and style which is completely different if he is accompanied by a zūkra. He tries to imitate all the particularities of sound and technique of the gasba.

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

TEMARA and HARARZA, 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.

YAHAFI, from 'yahaf', 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 bridegroon - her futural home. Negro
women who in this region always serve as semi-professional marriage assistants and singers follow the camel and sing the yahâfî in metre and tempo of the camel's walk. It is a song type of the Hamrûni, 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Single Zindâli</th>
<th>Composed Zindâli (with modifications)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;z&quot; once</td>
<td>&quot;z&quot; once</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;y&quot; once</td>
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<td>repeated ad lib.</td>
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<tr>
<th>'Arabî</th>
<th>Maeddes</th>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;x&quot; ad lib.</td>
<td>&quot;z&quot; once</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;w&quot; ad lib.</td>
<td>&quot;y&quot; once</td>
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<tr>
<th>Kâm, type I</th>
<th>Mahzûz, type I</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;z&quot; repeated ad lib.</td>
<td>&quot;rkâb&quot;, repeated ad lib. *)</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;y&quot; repeated ad lib.</td>
<td>&quot;shrîda&quot;, rep. ad lib.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Mügef</th>
<th>Mahzûz, type II</th>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;z&quot; repeated ad lib.</td>
<td>&quot;rkâb&quot;, rep. ad lib. *)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;y&quot; repeated ad lib.</td>
<td>&quot;shrîda&quot;, rep. ad lib.</td>
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</tbody>
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Notes on the recordings.

*)* Tripointasch-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. Besides 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 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 henna. One or more female singers who before also did this work serve now as entertainers, singing to the humming sound of the bendir 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 singer-master Khadija Cholkaf (30) is nearly drowned in the general noise of the chatterting and laughing women guests. Another woman is accompanying her on the bendir.

2. "Halel halel", 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.

3. "Targ es Sid", wedding song, sung 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 Sahl.

4. 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 Laghirî (26), semi-professional Negro musician of Mareth. His constant musical partner, the drummer 'Âlî ben Mohamed ben 'Abdallah N'kadesa (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 unvariably 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 mainly influences from the Fezzan particularly in the rapid hammering drum rhythms. Beside of this the magrūna was only found in this region and it is also the most popular instrument in the neighbouring Libya.

6. Sing 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 ghurfas 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 Makhlouf, north of Medenine. The Ghebunten are a small tribe of Negro descendance, now regarded as sub-tribe of their former masters, the Uerghamma. They seem so haven been brought here via men 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: Ksfim, beginning with a short tale. The words are composed by the deceased singer Khalifa Idrissi who lived in the region of Tatahouine and was a member of the great Uerghamma tribe which inhabits the whole southeast. Singer: Sād ben Fradj (76), born in Tripoli. This song represents purely the syllabic chanting style of the ancient Beduin poetry of which Ibn Khalidun is talking (see vol. I of our Tunisian anthology).

10. "Makhūl 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 Nafī 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 Tebourouk 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); mazūd (bagpipe): Mohamed 'All ʿIdi (35); darabukka: Mohamed Mraou (30); and bendir: Shaikh Hedi Gerfala (45).

11. Love song, type: burjila. Singer: Mohamed el Mouldi ben Sliman Laouni (44) who belongs to the Afn, a sub-tribe of the Nefrâwa who are living around the oasis of Kebili east of Shott Djerid. 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 Hassene Bousbia (27); zūkra: 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 zūkra 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: Merzūgi. Singer: Amor ben Belgacem Gelaoui (48) assisted by Mohamed ben Ghriba (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 elderly women from Tozeur, Djerid 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 Guinean 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 Essâine (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 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 Arūfl types.

16. "Zgara", typical sword dance of the Djerid region. Recorded at the oasis of Nefza. Wooden gasba: Belgacem Ksouma (20) whose parents belong to the Guerib or Nefrâwa tribes respectively. The flute is accompanied by two big jug-like drums called "darabukka fażal" (great darabukka). These particular darabukkas are manufactured only at Nefza as a by-product of the local pottery. The pottery of Nefza 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 Djerid villages (mainly Tozeur and Nefza) 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 procession 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 hou n khalti" (My uncle), c) "Helli hili hili". 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 Kabyl 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 invariably 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: malzama. The words are composed by the poet El Ghazelli from Tunis who lived about one hundred years ago. Singer: Taieb Garouachi (46) of the Bejawa 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); bendir 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 Krâmir 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 bendir. 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 Kâsh type, talking of women and love. Singer: Mohamed ben Salah ben Gderi (42); zikra: Mohamed Boularez (30) both being Krâmir 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 Krâmir women to incite their men and the warriors in a battle. Two female singers: Mabrouka bent Said and Diala 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 fazal" of Nefta