

MUSIC OF MOROCCO

Recorded by Christopher Wanklyn Ethnic Folkways Library FE 4339



FOLKWAYS FE 4339

AISSAWA DANCERS
GNAWA DANCERS
MUSIC OF THE HAHA TRIBE
TOQTOQA JABALIA
HAOUZIA MUSIC
AHOUACHE FROM TATA
TOQTOQA FROM SIDI KASSEM
AISSAWA PROCESSION
AHOUACHE DYAL TELATENOUS
AHOUACHE DYAL TELATENOUS,
2nd Selection

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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

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Recorded and with notes by Christopher Wanklyn



The drums are Benadr (sing, bendir) they appear in several places in the album.

Morocco is an intensely musical country. Yet nobody here is considered 'talented' because he can sing or play a musical instrument adequately: it is a common and unremarkable achievement. On the occasions when children are given presents, these presents are usually drums or crudely made musical instruments. Even without benefit of drums, Moroccan children give vent to a highly developed rhythmical sense, going through the streets in groups, clapping out complex rhythms with their hands. All festivals, private and public, require musicians, and they are used to playing all night. In the country,

shepherd boys play pipes on the hillsides, evoking memories of sentimental Victorian paintings. In the Gharb, a man guiding his wooden plough behind a mule and a camel yoked together, bellows his song to the flat and empty plain. More often than not, a camel-driver will be able to play an awad, a long flute with a low droning sound, with which he bulwarks himself and his resting animals against the solitude of desert nights. Olive pickers sing in chorus from tree to tree. Every region has its own favored genre, mirroring a rich cultural variety throughout the country.

Ethnically speaking, Morocco is a Berber country, and its population is a predominantly rural. The Folk music of Morocco is essentially Berber music, which has been influenced in varying degrees by the music of the Arabs and the Negroes. The Arab influence is most pronounced in the north, in the music of the Jebala mountains, where the emigres from Moorish Spain settled after their expulsion. A strong tradition of Andaluz music, which is 'art' music, composed by the court musicians of Cordoba and Granada in the 12th and 13th centuries, still exists and flourishes in Morocco. Some of the airs and forms of this music have been combined with the native Berber music of the northern regions to form the popular music found in the countryside and towns today. (Examples of this are the two 'toqtoqas', I, 4, and II, 2.)

On the other hand, we have the music that is either purely black African, or, more often, Berber with strong Negro influences. The drumming and chanting of the Gnaoua Dancers (I, 2) is an example of purely Negro music, and it is probably very similar to the music the forbears of these musicians, of many generations ago, brought with them from the Sudan when they came to Morocco as slaves. The Ahouaches of Tata and Talatenouss have words in Tashilhait, the Berber language of the Moroccan south, but there is a black African quality in the drumming. The Haouzia music, from the region of Marrakesh, is sung in Arabic, and uses a violin (Kamenja) which is not a Berber instrument. The Arab influence here probably comes from the cosmopolitan city of Marrakesh, where Haouzia music is much appreciated.

The Aissawa pieces, (I, 1 and II, 3) present a problem of classification. The Aissawa are a religious sect, which originated in Meknes in the 17th Century, but its members are to be found throughout North Africa and there are marked regional differences in the music and in the attendant ritual. In Marrakesh, the snake charmers are all Aissawa (the point here being that the baraka or grace of their patron, Sidi Aissa, renders them immune from physical dangers, even from snake bite). The snake charmers have a music somewhat similar to that of the procession at Tamesloht, in which the rhaita melody has a distinctly oriental flavor. But the Aissawa of Sid Kassem, in the north, play in a manner more reminiscent of the strongly Berber music of the Rif mountains, a region where the Arab influence in music, as in general culture, has been slight.

For its size and population, Morocco has an extraordinary variety of music, which these few selections may indicate, but do not represent. It should be emphasized that the folk music of Morocco is a living tradition, not a re-created one. The deprivations of mass culture, cinema, radio etc., have not managed to standardize tastes and destroy regional differences. For the most part, the music being played in these selections is the only music the musicians know how to play, and it is very often the only kind of music that the various audiences which were listening to the performances want to hear.

SIDE I

Band 1. Aissawa Dancers

Recorded at the 'Amara of Sidi Kassem, near Tangier, 8/9 July 1961. (An 'amara is a pilgrimage

and a festival, lasting from a day to a week, in honor of a saint - in this case Sidi Kassem - and takes place in the vicinity of his tomb or qubba. While some of the people who attend 'amaras go to pray at the saint's tomb, and benefit from whatever curative powers or grace (baraka) he is renowned for, many go simply to enjoy the festival: there are musicians and dancers of various kinds performing day and night. Families camp out in the open, and the men gather in cafes constructed for the occasion of branches and palm fronds. See also Side II selection 2.)

The Aissawa are a religious sect or brotherhood, whose members extend throughout North Africa. Their ritual varies from place to place, and includes the music and singing one hears in this selection. In Marrakesh, and south of the Grand Atlas mountains in Morocco, all the snake-charmers are Aissawa. In the north, until recently, the music and dancing produced in the adepts a trance-like state, during which they could perform all manner of self-lacerations with impunity. The more violent part of the ritual is now prohibited by the authorities, and is unlikely to be seen in public.

In this case, the musicians and dancers performed in a circle about 100 feet in diameter, ringed with spectators. The singers do a shuffling, back and forth dance. There are eight drummers using tbel (sing. tbola), small military style drums, struck with sticks, and at a further remove, four players of rhaita, a form of oboe.



Band 2. Gnawa Dancers

Recorded in Marrakesh, on the Place Djemaa el Fna, 18/2/61. The Gnawa are another religious fraternity, to be found throughout Morocco. They are almost always Negroes, whose forebears probably originated in Guinea and came up to Morocco as slaves. As with the numerous other groups of musicians and dancers who perform daily on the Place Djemaa el Fna, their function here is purely to entertain, but the ritual music and dancing of the Gnawa is much in demand by Moroccans, and not restricted to members of the sect, for the exorcising of evil spirits (curing of mental diseases), purification of houses after a death, and at weddings and festivals. The instruments used here are tbel (four) struck with long curved sticks, and iron cymbals called garqaba, shaped like dumbbells sliced in half, one pair to each hand. The Gnawa perform an energetic dance, squatting and straightening up, shooting their legs out in front of them. They wear white cotton robes, and skull caps with long

tassels, which at times they cause to gyrate above them.

Band 3. Music of the Haha Tribe

Recorded during the Aachor celebrations at Essaouira (ex-Mogador) on the Atlantic coast of South Morocco, 22/6/61. Aachora is an Islamic festival, celebrating the Moslem New Year. In Essaouira, this festival has a double significance, since it also commemorates the final reconciliation of two traditionally warring tribes of the region, the Haha and the Chiadma, which happened at this time of year. Only a few of the performers in this selection are regular musicians of the Haha tribe; the rest are ordinary citizens of Essaouira, to whom the music and the patterns of the dance are quite familiar. Instruments used: 5 tarija, small cylindrical pottery drums with an indented 'waist' a skin covering at one end, the other open. They are tapped with the fingers. The noise of feet stamping and hand-clapping is prominent. Two awad or small flutes, and a naqus: the word means 'bell' in Arabic, and can be any piece of metal struck with a metal rod. In this case it appeared to be part of a bicycle, and was carried on top of the player's head.

Band 4. Toqtoqa Jabalia.

Recorded in a cafe in the city of Tetuan, northern Morocco 14/3/61. The toqtoqa Jabalia is a popular form of Jebala music (i. e. from the Jebala mountains, which extend from the northern Atlantic coast along to the beginnings of the Rif mountains). This piece has a song as prelude, finishes with a 'dance' in which there is the characteristic acceleration of tempo, and changing of key. Although the form of the music is fixed, the words of the song in this case are improvised. The performers sing whatever comes into their heads, with almost no continuity of ideas - a kind of scat singing. Instruments used here a banjo, 3 derboukas (cylindrical drums, like tarijas but larger), a tar or small tambourine, and a guinbri, which is a primitively constructed 3 stringed guitar, with a wooden sound box covered with skin on one side.

Band 5. Haouzia music.

Recorded at a private party in Marrakesh, May 1962. The Haouz is the plain to the north of the Grand Atlas mountains in which the city and oasis of Marrakesh is situated. This is the music of that region. Instruments used: 2 kamenjas, or violins, played in the fiddle position, 4 small tarijas played by the women, who also sing and dance. The songs are in Arabic, and the words are improvised for the occasion.



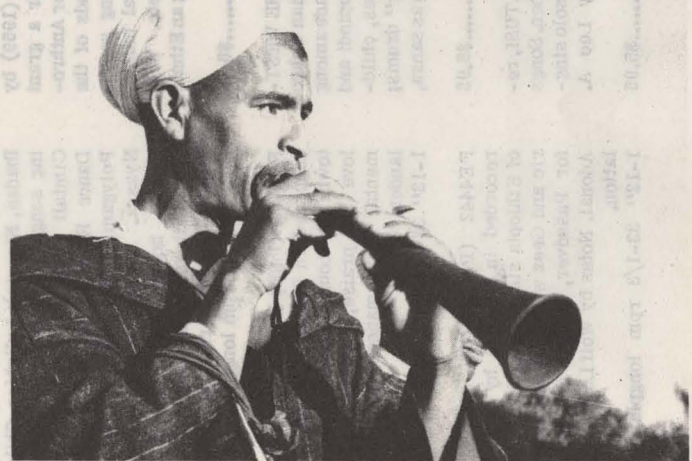
SIDE II

Band 1. Ahouache from Tata.

Recorded in Agadir Lehenne, principal village of the Tata Oasis in the extreme south of Morocco, 18 November, 1961. Instruments: six benadr (sing. bendir), one sided circular drums, about 18 ins in diameter and 4 ins deep. There is a hole in the side into which one thumb is inserted, and the drum is then balanced on the palms of both hands, open side facing the drummer, and is struck with the fingers. A naqus: in this case a small axle drum, propped up on a pair of slippers and struck with metal rods. One awad, or small flute. About twenty small girls and four women move in a shuffling circle about the drummers (men) who kneel in the center. The piece begins with a solo song by one of the drummers, which is sung in Tashilhait, the Berber language of the region.

Band 2. Toqtoqa from Sidi Kassem

Recorded at the 'amara of Sidi Kassem, 10 July 1961. (see Side I selection 1) Instruments, 2 kamenjas, 4 tarijas. This is another example of the toqtoqa form (see Side I selection 4). The musicians were seated on a mat in a cafe constructed of branches and palm fronds. During the piece, a boy dances, dressed in traditional Jebala fashion, in a woman's clothing.



Band 3. Aissawa procession

Recorded at the Moussem of Tamesloht, Grand Atlas mountains, near Marrakesh, 19 August 1962. (A Moussem is a festival similar to an 'amara). The recording was made as the Aissawa, preceded by their standard bearers, come out of the Zaouia or shrine, of Sidi Tamesloht, and go down a country road. Instruments: one rhaita, tbel and benadr.

Band 4. Abouache dyal Telatenouss.

Recorded at the Moussem of Moulay Ibrahim, Grand Atlas mountains, near Asni, 20 August 1962. Singers, benadr, and qarqaba. The high pitched ululation comes from women in the audience. All the performers are men.

Band 5. Ahouache dyal Telatenouss, second selection.

PHOTO CREDITS:

Photograph page 1 - MOROCCAN OFFICE OF TOURISM
Other photographs - M. Bertrand of Marrakesh, Morocco.

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