

# TUNISIA

## Volume 2: Religious Songs and Cantillations

Recorded in Tunisia in 1960 by Wolfgang Laade Folkways Records FW 8862



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## SIDE I

- A: MOSLEM  
 Band 1: MUEZZIN'S CALL TO PRAYER  
 Band 2: QORAN, SURA NO. 63, "AL-MUNAFIQUN"  
 Band 3: MOSLEM SECT BU 'ALIYA OF NAFTA  
 A: "Salem a Netfa yel meshi"  
 B: "Ya liledi menhu makhum"  
 Band 4: MUEZZIN'S CALL TO PRAYER

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## SIDE II

- MOSLEM  
 Band 1: MOSLEM SECT SULAMIYA OF BEJA  
 B: NEGRO CULT  
 Band 2: STAMBALI MUSIC FROM BEJA  
 Band 3: NEGRO CULT MUSIC FOR THE SAINT SIDI MARZUQ.  
 TYPE "MSARHA" FROM NEFTA, DJERID  
 C: JEWS FROM THE ISLAND OF DJERBA  
 Band 4: CIRCUMCISION CEREMONY AT THE VILLAGE OF  
 HARA KEBIRA, ISLAND OF DJERBA

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

# TUNISIA



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Vol. II

## Religious Songs and Cantillations from Tunisia

Recorded in Tunisia by Wolfgang Laade

Notes and photos by Wolfgang Laade

On this record we present examples of chants of the three main religious groups of Tunisia: Moslems, Negroes, and Jews. Nowadays each group can quietly hold to its faith. All - including Christendom - are fairly tolerated by the Tunisian government and there are no more any rivalries or quarrels between them. Every one is respected by the others and all are enjoying equal rights. Inter-marriages and changing of religion are officially allowed but hardly occur.

In ordinary Mohammedanism music and song are quite disliked. The chant of the muezzin and the melodic recitation of the Koran are the only musical expressions to be found there as they are not regarded as music. In contrast to this the numerous darvish sects use music just as one of the essential parts of their ceremonies. Negroes in Tunisia are all formal Moslems but have mixed up Mohammedanism with practices and beliefs imported from Guinea; song, drumming, and dancing - quite African in style - are inseparable from their cult celebrations. The third group presented here is that of the Jews of the island of Djerba, one of the oldest and most orthodox Jewish communities outside Palestine.

### A) The Moslem Sects.

The religious orders of the Islâm have their roots in Sufi mysticism. As to the question of origin Hitti writes (in: History of the Arabs, p. 436 seq.): "The attention and interest of the Moslem Arabs were drawn quite early to those branches of learning motivated by the religious impulse. The necessity of comprehending and explaining the Qorân soon became the basis of intensive theology as well as linguistic study. Contact with Christendom provoked in the first century at Damascus theological speculation". While in their own homeland they found the various Christian sects in the persian-indian countries they met with the sects of the Buddhists. These contacts led to the rise of corresponding Moslem schools of thought with strong tendencies to mysticism and ascetism.

In ancient times Sufism was purely a matter of individual concern without any formal organizations. Adepts might form a group around an inspiring teacher but scattered not long after his death. There were no permanent groups. During the troubled Seldjuk-era, that is certainly not before the 6th century of the Hijra, organized groups or *tarîqas* did appear. First of them was the fraternity named after the great saint 'Abd el-Qadîr al-Gilânî. From that time onwards countless sects came into being.

The orders trace back their canons and ceremonies to the most famous men of the prophet's own companions. But this is merely legend. In reality

the mass of these sects flourished - as already indicated - during the pressing times of the Turk and Mongol reigns, i. e. since the 12th century of the Christian era. Some modern writers even affirm that some of the practices of the Moslem darvishes probably can be traced back to Shamanistic rites of Northern and Central Asia where the conquerors came from.

The various Moslem sects differ greatly in their ideas and practices. But they all have one common aim: to attain complete ignorance of the bodily life and the mystic union with Allâh or God.

In every country of North Africa hundreds and perhaps thousands of little white cube-like buildings are to be found. They are roofed with a cupola and commonly called marabouts. They are the tombs of saints, and such small buildings are called *qubba-s* by the Arabs. Many villages and many regions have their local patron saints. Tombs of more important saints led to establish a *zâwiya* or religious centre. There the descendants of the holy man live from gifts offered by many adorers of the saint from near and far. The *zâwiya* thus becomes the religious headquarters of a Moslem brotherhood. Each *zâwiya* which is mostly built near the tomb of the sect's founder includes first a praying room with *mihrâb* or a little mosque, secondly a room exclusively dedicated to the recitation of the Korân, thirdly a *maktab* or Korân-school, fourthly chambers for the monastic members of the sect which in former times lived constantly there, and finally rooms which are freely given to pilgrims and pious visitors of the *zâwiya*.

In the Maghrib such buildings were also called *ribat*. During the times of the warlike Moslem expansion and long after in the constant struggles with the rebelling Berbers the *ribats* were a kind of fortified monasteries in which the half religious, half military orders lived and did their exercises, also both religious and military. The inhabitants of the *ribats* were called *murâbitîn* (sing. *m'rabat*) from which word the Europeans derived "marabout". In a strict sense the word marabout means a holy person. He is the holiest chief of a main *zâwiya*. The title "Sîdi" - or in Marocco "Mûlây" - is always added to his name. There are also holy women whose names are distinguished by the Berber title "Lâlla". At present the word marabout is freely used to denote everything that is holy, that is holy persons, places tombs, trees, etc.

The marabout or highest of a sect lives at the mother *zâwiya*. In the daughter *zâwiya* he is represented by the so-called *mokkadem* or *shaikh* around whom gather the (1) *khwân* or "brothers", i. e. the ordinary members of the order. It is the *mokkadem* who makes the neophytes acquainted with the

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canons and ceremonies of the sect. The religious brotherhood as a whole is called *tarīqa* which means "(the right) way (of religious perfection)".

One of the most important things to be made known to the neophytes is the "*silsila*" or (genealogical) chain" of the *tarīqa*. This *silsila* starts normally with Gabriel but sometimes even with Allāh himself. Gabriel is said to have transmitted the verity and the knowledge of the right way (of the Islām) to the prophet Mohammed who is the next important personality in the "chain". Then it goes on farther with a number of names till the historic founder or patron of the sect and from him to the present head including all his predecessors. Every member is made acquainted with the *silsila* by the *mokkadem*, and every one has to know it completely without missing any name. By this learning of the *silsila* every member comes into a direct relation with Allāh himself. The initiation includes esoteric teachings of many kinds. And its end is the complete devotion to the canons of the order which are regarded as the essence of the Islām, and also to the *tarīqa*'s special exercises and ceremonies.

These practices vary greatly. The union with Allāh can be reached by quiet meditation as well as by wild ecstatic means. All orders have as a common institution the so-called *dhikr*, a gloryfying invocation of Allāh. The use of the *dhikr* is deduced from the *Qorān*, where is said: "Oh you, who believe (in Allāh), think of Allāh with much praise!" The *dhikr* is a set of certain words which are ritually repeated, often more than hundred times a day according to the regulations of the particular sect. These words repeated quietly (in mind only) or loudly and they may be combined with certain practices of breathing or bodily movements. And also they may be chanted with or without instrumental accompaniment. Every order has its own *dhikr* which is fixed by the founder of the *tarīqa*. The *dhikr* is explained by an adept as follows: "The *dhikr* is something which sets you far off yourself as you experience the existence of God in yourself. And it draws you off yourself as you visualize God. Prayer (*dhikr*) is visualizing the godly being and dying of the mortal nature (of yourself)". In the *Qādirīya* order the adepts are expected to say the following *awrad* after the five regular daily prayers a hundred times: "*astaghfir Allāh a-'Azīm*" ("I beg the pardon of God, the Great"), again a hundred times: "*subhan Allāh*" ("God may be praised!"), and another hundred times: "*la ilāha illa 'llāh*" ("There is no god but God").

Another means to rise religious emotion are *song* and *music* which are sometimes combined with certain forms of dance and practices leading into trance. This is called "*samā*" which means "listening (to music)" and may be translated as "spiritual concert". The Arab writer *Qusairi* explains the meaning of music in religious ceremonies as follows: "It is a voyage which leads to God. To some people the musical performances are God himself (an experiencing of God), his visualization in his transcendence (unbodyly nature). To others (the music) brings commands of the heavenly majesty. To still others it bears signs of godly grace, to again some others signs of signs of the godly omnipotence. Thus God presents himself to the devotees as the end and at the same time as an object of the listening (to music). Music therefore is a tearing away of the veil (which hides God), an unveiling of the mysteries, a lightening which flashes, and a sun who rises. The minds (of the devotees) hear the music while their hearts... listen visualizing the majesty of the Almighty, and no sensual wants will move them. When they have

listened to music you therefore see the monks in the state of exhaustion (caused by their dance), and (you see them) bewildered, staring, frozen, down-cast and paralyzed."

Music thus is playing a very important role in the practices of the Moslem sects. But it is not at all appreciated by everybody; the dislike of music in Islam is well known. Nevertheless the sects own a wealth of music as on of the most effectful means to create religious enthusiasm. The song texts are mostly composed by the members of the *tarīqa* or its founder himself. The melodies follow strictly the rules and models of classical music<sup>1)</sup>, i. e. the songs are sung in the classical modes, the rhythms are that of the classical music, and finally the whole cycle of chants has the same order as the classical *nawbah* or suite of Arab-Andalusian music. To the traditional modes some popular ones are added which are nevertheless inspired by the classical prototypes as for example "*ardhāwi*", "*sālhi*" and "*asbuayn*". Some of the sects use the large tambourine-like "*bandīr*" as the only musical instrument. Others add the *tar*, a small tambourine to which rattling metal plates are fixed, and a pair of small copper kettle-drums called "*naqqārat*". Sometimes even a *zūkra* (oboe) or any other instrument may be added.

Music is performed during the weekly friday holy service (*hadra*) which includes also prayers and reading of the *Qorān*. The most brilliant occasions are the *mulūds* or birthdays. Every order has its great celebration of the prophet's birthday and another one of the patron or founder of the sect. The fraternities play an important role also at the time of wedding and circumcision ceremonies. Moreover the birth of a child as well as a boy's successful school examination or one's entering into military service may be celebrated with music. When a pilgrim returns from Mekka as "*hadj*" he is welcomed with religious music, and during the times of French occupation also French officials were greeted in this way. The sect is always paid for such services.

It was rather difficult to give a complete list of the religious orders to be found in Tunisia. Only their names which are all derived from the names of their founders or patrons will be given here. Thus we find the *Qādirīya* in Bizerta, Kairouan, Nabeul, Tozeur and Nefta; the *Shādhilīya* <sup>\*)</sup> in Tunis, Nabeul and Bizerta; the *Tidjānīya* in Tunis, Bizerta, Gabes, Tozeur, and Nefta; the *'Aissāwiya* (or *'Aissāwa*) in Bizerta, Le Kef (*zāwiya*), Mateur, Kairouan (2 *zāwiyas*), Sousse, Sfax, Gabes, Gafsa, Tozeur, and on the islands of Kerkennah and Djerba; the *Sūlamīya* in Tunis, Nabeul, Bèja, Tozeur and Nefta; the *Azzūzīya* in Nabeul; the *Halfawīya* in Tunis and Nabeul; the *Arūsīya* in Tunis (Mosque *Sīdi ben Arūs*); the *Hafūdīya* in Nefta; the *Bū 'Alīya* in Tunis, Sfax, Gabes, Hammamet (mosque), Nefta (local patron saint). This list is not all complete. Other sects existing in Tunisia are the *Rahmānīya*, the *Baramīya*, the *'Ammārīya*, *Taibīya*, *Madamīya*, and *Derkāwā*. Some of these sects are only offshots

1) Thus it is not surprising to hear that the senior lutist of Tunisian classical music, *Khemais Tarnan* (born 1880), did his first steps towards classical music by entering a religious sect of his birthplace, Bizerta. The forms and technical terms of this music will be explained on Vol. I of this anthology.

\*) The earliest *tarīqa* to stem out of North African soil, founded by the Moroccan *Abu 'l-Hasan 'Alī ben 'Abd Allāh al-Shādhilī* (1196-1258 A. D.



of the mighty Qâdirîya and Shâdhîfiya, most of the sects originated in Morocco and a few in Algeria.

The Moslem sects presented here with their chants are:

The SÛLAMÎYA. This brotherhood is regarded as having the most fine music. It was founded by Sîdi 'Abd es-Selam Lazmâr, a native of Tripolis. He also died there about 700 years ago in the age of 101 years. During his lifetime he had also been in Tunis. Now he is venerated only in Libya and Tunisia.

In Beja and in Tozeur the members of this tariqa only sing without dancing. They sit in form of a rectangle and chant one song after the other without any repetition. All the songs are handed down orally within the families of the leaders or makkadems.

In Tunis and Nabeul the members form a circle, faces to the centre, and do a solemn dance with little steps, the whole ring moving counterclockwise. The singers in Nabeul informed me that all the texts of their songs were created by the founder of the sect himself while the melodies (lakhn) were composed by the singers of the local tariqa themselves.

The BÛ'ALÎYA. There is a particular qubba at Nefta, well-known oasis west of the great Shott Djerîd. It is a zâwiya of Sîdi Bû 'Alî, patron saint of the village. He has also secondary zâwiyas at Gabes and Hammamet, both located at the eastern coast of the country. The latter was founded in 1863. At Nefta a member of the municipality, Brâhim Zaoui, told me the following accounts of Sîdi Bû 'Alî.

Sîdi Bû 'Alî was born in Morocco. His real name was Hassen Abû 'Alî. His genealogical place is the 13th generation of Fatma, daughter of the prophet Muhammed, i.e. Sîdi Bû 'Alî's 13th grandfather, 'Alî Bû Taleb, was son-in-law of the prophet. In this way Sîdi Bû 'Alî belongs to the same line of the prophet's family as king Mohammed V of Morocco. The mutual ancestor of both was Driz "el Aqbar".

Sîdi Bû 'Alî has reached an age of 105 years. It is said that he lived through three centuries; the meaning of this is that he really lived in three centuries as he was born in 1598 and died in 1705.

He was a very orthodox man having studied theology following the Sunna branch of Islâm. He was himself a member of the famous Qâdirîya. He did not like the "maraboutism" and surely would not have liked what his devoted followers did after his death: they introduced a sect under his own name, the Bû 'Alîya as a branch of the great Qâdirîya.

Sîdi Bû 'Alî had found that at his lifetime great changes had already taken place in the North African mohammedanism. Lots of sects and small dervish-groups had already broken the unity of the doctrine. So his aim became to purify it again in the sense of the orthodox Sunna.

At no place in North Africa he seems to be more venerated than in the oasis of Nefta. It is even told that it was him who first planted date palms there, by which act he has likewise become the legendary founder of the oasis itself. This does not at all accord with the historical facts but it is only to say: everything good at Nefta - and the dates of the oasis are the most precious things there - came from Sîdi Bû 'Alî.

Many legends are woven around the figure of this saint. When he once came from Morocco crossing the vast lands of the Sahara he was only accompanied by his little sister. They were orphans,

and there was nobody to care for the little girl than Sîdi Bû 'Alî himself. So he had to take her with him on the terrible hardships of his voyage. His mind was already completely absorbed by religious meditation and thinking, and it was quite difficult for him to take care of the little one who was constantly begging for food and rest. Finally she became sick. Sîdi Bû 'Alî did not know what to do. He fell down on his knees and prayed to God for help. At the very moment the little girl expired and Sîdi Bû 'Alî was free to continue his voyage and to follow his mission. Sîdi Bû 'Alî stopped at Nefta and settled there. He founded a monastery and the news of his wonderful teachings soon spread. At the same time there lived another wise man at the other side of Shott Djerîd among the Nefzâwa tribe. His name was Abû Yaqûb Turri. When the news about the holy man of Nefta reached his ears he asked himself: "Who can this man be? Why do people talk so much of him? Does he really teach the right doctrine?" He wrote a letter to Sîdi Bû 'Alî and the latter gave his answer in form of a fine religious poem which convinced Turri of Sîdi Bû 'Alî's greatness. So Abû Yaqûb Turri made himself on the way to visit the great man. He changed his outer appearance completely and reached Nefta. He found the marabout in his abundant monastery garden sitting among his disciples and feeding many poor people. Abû Yaqûb Turri sat down with the poor to dine and he listened to the teachings of their master. As it is oriental custom not to ask a guest about his desires within three days of his arrival no word was changed between the two men. When the fourth day had arrived Sîdi Bû 'Alî asked the stranger who had neither saluted him nor anybody told his name: "How old are you?" And Turri answered "Now I am three days old", meaning my life has just begun when I arrived here and heard your teachings.

Nefta soon became a centre of religious education led by Sîdi Bû 'Alî. He had close contacts with the "holy city" of Kairouan and to Tunis where the well known "Zitûna" was the official Moslem university (founded in 732 A.D.). After getting proper training from him Sîdi Bû 'Alî's pupils usually went to Tunis to finish their formal examinations at the Zitûna. Sîdi Bû 'Alî had also many friends and relatives in the capital. One day a large caravan of them was on the way from Tunis to Nefta to visit the great saint. When the mighty expedition with their camels, asses and carriage, palanquins, drivers and guards crossed the vast desert a heavy shower began to fall confusing everybody and disturbing the whole order of the caravan. They started praying fervently and from that moment on they could march and rest in absolute dryness: while still heavy rain was falling around them they marched like sheltered under a mighty umbrella. Nobody else but Sîdi Bû 'Alî himself had sent this help, so it is told.

Sîdi Bû 'Alî had a particularly gifted pupil named Mohammed ben Brâhim who had also afterwards finished his examinations at the Zitûna at Tunis. He once made a voyage to the Orient and Egypt. His name was already known to the Egyptian scholars but they wanted to test his capacity. They gave him an extremely thick book, a theological treatise. They said to him: "Tomorrow you have to commentate this book before all our learned men!" Mohammed was in great despair. How could he do something for what others would need months or even years? He could hardly sleep that night. He sighed and implored at his great teacher for help. Then he had a strange dream. He saw himself walking through his own garden at Nefta, that garden which his master himself had given to him. He promenaded under the shadowy palms and among flowers and blossoming bushes. Suddenly he discovered a heavy

book lying opened on a big blossom. The garden's watchman called in the same moment: "Take it!" The young man took up the book and read very attentively the pages which had just been opened. Next morning he remembered well every word of the text. He went to the scholars' assembly. They gave him the fatal book opened; he had to commentate the pages they showed him. At first sight he discovered that it was just the same text he had read during the night in his dream. He closed the book saying: "There is no need to read this text," and he commentated precisely word after word. When he had finished everybody kissed his hand in deep devotion.

When Sidi Bû 'Alî had died his many friends and relatives, disciples and admirers ordered a famous Moorish-Andalusian architect, an Arab refugee from Spain, to build a mausoleum. It was constructed in a quite particular style being "like an egg shell". Once it was located quite near to the village itself. But the old village disappeared. The extending gardens of the oasis have completely displaced Nefta. Now the kubba lies about 800 meters from the village within the green palm gardens of the oasis.

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#### B) Negro Cult

In Tunisia we find a considerable Negro population. Once they were brought as slaves from two directions: That part coming from the Eastern Sudan and Fezzan via Ghadames or Tripolis is now to be found in the region of Medenine and Gabes in the Tunisian southeast. Others were brought from the West Sudan and Guinea to the oasis of Tozeur, west of the Shott Djerid, and sold there to merchants of the north who in exchange gave corn which was largely grown in the north but did not flourish in the desert sands of the south. By a caravan route the slaves from Tozeur were brought up to Bèja which lies in the centre of the agricultural region. From there they were sold to Tunis and its environments. There is still the saying known "To sell corn in the South" which means: to buy Negro slaves.

Nowadays there are no slaves anymore in Tunisia. But the freed Negroes here and there have formed real "tribes" of their own with a Qaid as their chief. They now regard themselves as sub-tribes of their former masters' tribe-groups. Thus we find the Hamrûni in the region of Gabes, the Ghebûnten (as a sub-tribe of the Warghamma) in the region of Medenine, etc. These groups are hardly touched by any influence from outside as they are living quite isolated in the southeastern desert country. They still have their own social order, their women still wear Negro-African coiffure and, their music and dances are hardly touched by their Arab surrounding. They all speak, of course, Arabic and are Moslems.

In other regions the Negroes are more scattered and do not form any tribal communities. Nevertheless they unite in their particular religious cults in which old African beliefs and practices are draped up with a thin Moslem cloth. No such cults to be known to the southeastern group of Gabes-Medenine. It is a particularity of that group which came via Tozeur, i. e. the West Sudan-Guinea groups, the people and same institutions are to be found in Algeria as well as in Morocco.

In general the Negro Moslem cults of the Maghrib are called "Genâwa" which word is derived from "Guinea". The assemblies of the celebrants are commonly called "stambali" in Tunisia which means "réunion", "gathering". The Tunisian groups have as their patron saint Sidi Marzûq who has his tomb at the Djerid-oasis of Tozeur. In honour of him annually a great celebration is held there which lasts three or four days. Another qubba of the same saint is in the neighbouring oasis of Nefta where the celebration also is held. In Tunis the Negroes' marabout was Sidi 'Alî 'l Azmar whose tomb once was situated within the city but is no more existing. In former times every holy friday a gathering was held at his tomb. Young girls used to bring offerings there to get a husband. At present the cult of Sidi 'Alî 'l Azmar is forbidden officially. In the village of Sidi Saad in the region of Djebel Mornag southeast of Tunis, stambâli was also practiced. Still two stambâli singers are known by name, Baba Yatâr and 'Alî ben Turqiya who beside of their singing were acting as oracles after being intoxicated with wine.

Beside of the friday and mûlud functions of the Negroes stambali is also held at weddings. In Nefta all the wedding guests stay a whole night at the qubba of Sidi Marzûk singing and dancing. Thus their functions are according to that of the Arab Moslem sects.

All the ritual songs of the Negroes are in a non-



Arabic and non-Berber language called "ajmi" by the Tunisian Negroes. This is merely an Arab word meaning "foreign". The source of this language is completely unknown to them and even European specialists to whom I sent recordings specially made for that purpose were not able to identify that language as in the course of time it became too much corrupted.

The songs are always sung in antiphony by a leader and the chorus. Two musicians are playing the drums while the rest of the singers clap their iron castanets called "chakchâgas". The one-stringed fiddle or lute called "gembri" which once was only played at the most serious occasions as the annual festival of the saint and the curing of sicknesses has now nearly disappeared.

In all these cults the so-called "arîfa" plays an important role. She is a priestess, a particularly inspired one, who acts as the medium between the human world and that of the jnûn or spirits. She knows the different sicknesses which are caused by the various jnûn. She knows their names and therefore can invoke them. She orders the musicians to come and procure the music for the ceremonies. When she burns the incense all jnûn hurry to come, the spirits of the sea, the air, and the earth. The arîfa knows well the one djinn who has caused the illness and she calls upon him. Then all the other jnûn will at once disappear; only the one whom she has called will stay. She asks him why he has caused the sickness and orders him to leave the sick body. That he does usually by any watery way as for example the sea or some water pool. Thus the arîfa leads the whole ceremony. She adds new incense if it is burned up, she puts questions to the spirits and receives their answers. The highest of all jnûn answer her questions when she is giving oracles. Beside of the jnûn various Moslem saints are also invoked.

The celebrations start with music and song. The dancers form a circle and begin to move with shuffling feet to the sound of the percussion responding in chorus to the song phrases of the leader. Clouds of strong incense arise; the instruments never play without being censed. The highly decorated arîfa enters the circle of the male dancers with a group of female assistants. The women begin to dance and soon fall into trance possessed by any of the good or bad spirits. During healing ceremonies the sick person is brought into the circle of the dancers and sometimes starts himself to dance. The whole celebration is led by the priestess who herself does a magical dance. It is her who drives the bad spirits back to their dwelling places which mostly lie in the ocean. To provoke trance often wine or takrûri (hashish) are used. A white and a black cock and a goat are then brought by a male helper. The dancing arîfa takes the first cock and while dancing on tears his head off. The possessed women mark their foreheads and breasts with the flowing blood. Then the goat is slain by a male helper. For this act he uses a sword which is purified in the smoke of the incense. The assistants now wash hands and feet in the blood or suck it from the wound of the still warm body of the animal. The dancing grows more and more excited until the first of the possessed drop to the ground. Later on the goat is roasted, sometimes not before the next day, and a feast held for the celebrants. It is always the privilege of the arîfa and her female assistants to eat the kidneys and the liver.

The Negro cult groups can hardly be called formal organizations. They have no statutes and no codes.

There is only the arîfa who organizes the celebrations and seances. She does her task semi-professionally and is paid by the families of the cured persons. She has always some female assistants. The musicians are also semi-professionals which are officially engaged for the ceremonies and paid for their musical contributions. Beside of the income by medical actions the members earn remarkable gifts during their annual celebrations in honour of the prophet Mohammed and their particular saint, Sîdi Marzûk or as he may be called. These celebrations always start with a long procession throughout the city or village. In this procession the animals which are to be sacrificed - a little bull or a goat - are carried gaily decorated with garlands of flowers.

There is no literature written about the North African Negro Cults and nothing written about their music.

### C) The Jews of the Island of Djerba

The Jewish population of Tunisia is about a quarter of the total, Europeans not counted. Whereas the Jews live more or less scattered throughout the country being fewer in the west and southwest, two villages on the island of Djerba are entirely Jewish settlements, so-called "hara-s". These communities both are of remarkable age; they are said to have settled in Djerba shortly after the destruction of the Second temple. And both have preserved a strict orthodoxy of faith and rites.

The bigger one, Hara Srira, is situated rather isolated in the middle of the island. Its population may count about 3,000. Hara Srira is famous throughout North Africa for its synagogue, named "La Ghriba", which is commonly interpreted as "The Wonderful One" ignoring that the word is of Arab origin and merely meaning "The Foreign One". According to legend a strange female fortune-teller once was burned at this place. It is told that her body was not consumed by the flames and that her face had been brightly shining. To her memory the synagogue was built already in the first century A.D., so it is told. Annually in the month of May hundreds of Jews from every part of North Africa and even from abroad come here for a great pilgrimage to visit one of their oldest sanctuaries. Nowadays nothing of the former splendour of this synagogue is to be seen. It shows now the style of the late 19th century. But inside the sanctuary ancient scripts, tables of the law and many precious old cult objects are to be found along with priceless offerings in great quantity.

The other village, Hara Kebira, lies not far off the main town of the island, Houmt Souk. It has about 1,000 inhabitants. In spite of this little population there are not less than 17 synagogues all connected with synagogal schools for the boys. The lessons are held in a quite orthodox manner and, of course, in Hebraic language. To learn Arabian and French the boys later visit the school at Houmt Souk. The men of this village almost all work in the near town of Houmt Souk. They are mainly working as jewelers and gold-smiths, and they are much renowned for their artistic taste and skill. As in Tunis and other big cities they also have their special alley within the sùks or basar as other professions have their particular alleys, too. But in the jewelers' alleys of all Tunisian sùks you will hardly find other people than Jews working. Beside of these others work as tailors or dyers.

Walking through the small and poor village of Hara Kebira one will find at the house walls blue designs



of five-armed synagogal lamps or of fish (an ancient Christian symbol) or of the hand of Fatma, prophet Mohammed's daughter, often even two of all of these combined. This peaceful union of symbols stemming from three different religious confessions is believed to bring good luck and to help against bad luck and everything evil. Each of these symbols the same power was attributed originally - by Jews, by Christians or by Arabs. Now the people of Hara Kebira have multiplied the good powers by combining all three symbols.

Both villages, Hara Srira and Hara Kebira, now suffer from the growing emigration of the youth. The population decreases more and more as the young people prefer to go to Israel or to the United States. Thus the population becomes gradually superannuated. But still they hold strictly to their customs and faith and preserve a large store of old traditions.

We are able to present here a veritable documentary sound-recording of a traditional Jewish circumcision ceremony held some morning in a little household of Hara Kebira. It was just during the feast of Tabernacles, and some men therefore appeared with fresh green palm-branches in their hands. While an old rabbi was praying in the narrow court the "doctor" inside the house carried out the operation after which cooked broad beans, hard-boiled eggs and beer were distributed to the guests. This was said to bring prosperity and health. During the ceremony dried pinks were used to perfume the hands.

Literature (music only): Robert Lachmann, "Jewish cantillation and song in the isle of Djerba", published by the Archives of Oriental Music, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1940.

#### Notes on the Recordings

#### A) MOSLEM

##### SIDE I

Band 1: Muezzin's call to prayer, chanted by Mahmûn 'Amara, 22 years old, from Kairouan. As the singer of this example demonstrates the muezzin's call can be highly melodious. Every muezzin composes his own melody for this call following only a certain musical model which can be modified and extemporized at will. The order of the text is fixed, and there are never any changes in the repetitions of the words. While other muezzins use only two or three notes to call the people to prayer we find here a highly developed melody.

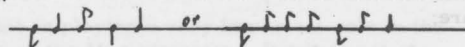
Band 2: Qorân, Sura No. 63, "Al-Munafiqun". The singer is again the same as in the preceding item. He sings the Qorân very fine. His voice has all the subtleties and flexibility of a good Qorân singer.

Band 3: Moslem sect BÛ 'ALÏYA of Nefta.

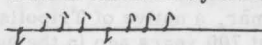
- a) "Salem a Nefta yel meshi" ("Man, if you go to Nefta, bring my salute to Nefta, i. e. to the marabout!")
- b) "Ya ûledi menhû makhrûm" ("Oh, my son, who is the lover (of the marabout)?")

In Nefta, neighboring oasis of Tozeur, west of the Shott Djerîd, Sîdi BÛ 'Alî is the local patron saint. Traditionally the singers and poets of the marabout recruit themselves from the family Ûlad Etila. There are two main singers which at the same time play the bandîr-s or large tambourines: Lazhari ben Omara and his brother Monamed Tahâr both aged about 40. They are accompanied by two other singers who form the chorus. All the solo parts are here sung in duet by the two leaders. Normally there are more accompanying singers. During the recording several women were listening from out-

side and adding their ear-piercing "zagharat" or trills. The singers could not inform me of any modes of their songs. The main rhythm of the first part is:



i. e. the btâyhî rhythm, played with some modifications. This is followed by a rapid barwala, being



Band 4: Muezzin's call to prayer, chanted by the muezzin 'Alî ben 'Alî Houidi (70) from Mansûra, oasis of Kebili, east of Shott Djerîd. While the first call of this kind was a highly developed melody the muezzin of this recording only uses two notes of a half tone-interval.

##### SIDE II

Band 1: Moslem sect SÛLAMÏYA of Bèja. The leader is Khemais el Hasnaoui (21). He sings most of the solos and plays the bandir. The other singers are Bechîr el Hasnaoui (30), Brâhim el Hadj Sassi (33), and Mohamed Balegh (23). They are all from Bèja. While alternating in song the soloists sometimes turned the microphone causing a little noise on the recording.

The hymn is composed of:

- a) "Yia Naïssa el Ajfan",
- b) Qasîdah - in different modes,
- c) "Yia mahla nuru fi el kawn djala" - mode: Ardhâwî,
- d) Barwala.

Parts a, c, and d are sung in antiphony by the leader and the chorus. Part b is a solo of different alternating singers.

#### B) NEGRO CULT

Band 2: Stambali music from Bèja. Leader of the group and principal singer who at the same time plays the chakchagas or iron castanets: Salah ben Mohamed ben Salem Sûdani. The one-stringed calabash fiddle is played by the blind old 'Aî ben Hassîne. Responding singer and tabal (drum) player is 'Abdelwahab ben 'Abderrahmân Elbeji. Some assisting women add their shrill "zahragat" or tongue-trills.

Band 3: Negro cult music for the saint Sîdi Marzûq, type "Msarha" from Nefta, Djerîd. Leader of the group who also plays the "benga" - drum (see photo): Brâhim Echuchen. He sings also the solo phrases which are answered by the chorus. A second benga drum is added while the rest of the singers play the chakchagas.

#### C) JEWES from the island of DJERBA

Band 4: Circumcision ceremony at the village of Hara Kebira, island of Djerba. The ceremony starts with a song during which the boy is brought to the operation chamber. While he is left there at the hands of the "doctor" and some women his father and some other man remain in the court. There an old rabbi recites prayers for the boy's father whose name is Beni Amin Haddad. Now the father himself starts to pray while the operation is carried out inside the house. The doctor comes out of the chamber while all the men in the court intone a chanted recitation. Now the rabbi prays again while distributing special red wine. Then everybody perfumes his hands with dried pinks called "bsamin" a prayer is said particularly for this herb. This is followed by the Kaddish and by the name-giving: We here that the boy is given the name Kalfûn Hûita Fraim Chaûl Sibalon. The women inside the house spend applause with their high tongue-trills. The ceremony is concluded with the gratulation song "bayût" which is based on a psalm.