Recorded by Paul Bowles.
At Arcila, Morocco.
August 27, 1959.

Music of the Djebala.

1. Aaita Djebaliya (7 male voices, 2 tbola, 2 Rhiyata, 1 tarija.)

2. **Ech Chiffa** (2 rhiyata)

3. **Ech Chiffa** (Ramadan) (1 rhaita)

Performers: Maalem Abdeslam Sarsri el Mahet Arzila, and Ensemble.

The Djebala are the inhabitants of the extreme northwestern corner of Morocco; their country extends roughly from a few miles east of Alcazarquivir (El Ksar el Kebir) all the way across to the Mediterranean shore at Río Martín and from the Fehs country behind Tangier to the mountains around Xauen. They are slightly Arabized Berbers, speak Moghrebi Arabic. One indication of their Arabization is the fact that it is necessary to indicate the instrumentation of each separate number, whereas in Berber tribal music any variation is an exception. Here each piece has its traditional "orchestration", to which the performers adhere rigidly, insisting that any change is impossible. Thus in number 1 we have a combination which, although there are thirteen numbers in all, is not duplicated again; indeed, save for the rhaita solos, each one of the thirteen selections has a different instrumental and vocal combination.

In number 2, although the sonority is highly unsuccessful, it does not lend itself either to nearby listening or to recording, as the second rhaita performs some interesting breathing techniques, he uses his cheeks as a bagpipe, while continuing to blow hard more back while he is breathing all into his lungs, so that he gets an unexpected sound.

Number 3 is a concert version, as it were, of the music played by the rhaita from the minaret of a mosque during Ramadan, the difference being that in the functional version of the piece, there is a long pause between each musical phrase, whereas here the pauses are omitted. The melody is a setting of Koranic text.
Music of the Djebala.

1. Aaita Djebaliya bel Kamenja (5 male voices, 3 taarij, 1 guinbri)
2. El Missacuiya. (kamenja and guinbri)

Performers: Maalem Abdeslam Sarsri el Mahet Arzila and Ensemble.

The Berbers of Morocco have a propensity to place the vocal range of a piece somewhere around an octave higher than the register which would appear to be comfortable for their voices. The resulting muscular strain is both audible, in their efforts to reach the high notes, and visible, in the agonized expressions on their faces, (much as Flamenco singers are obliged to make strenuous grimaces while singing.)

The 5/16 plus 4/16 meter is a common one in Djebala music.
Recorded by Paul Bowles.
At Arcila, Morrocco.
August 27, 1959.
Music of the Djebala.

1. Forhou bel Malik Jana (Guinbri, kamenja, 4 taarij and 6 voices)
2. Haouziya Chaabiya (2 taarij, kamenja, guinbri and 3 voices)

Performers: Maalem Abdeslam Sarsri el Mahet Arzila and Ensemble.

In number 1, I was beset by a problem which constantly cropped up during recordings, and which so far I have not been able to deal with successfully. Moroccan folk-music is overwhelmingly percussive, it is true, as is most African music, but this does not mean that melody is therefore inaudible. However, it generally is nearly that, whether one is listening from afar or from nearby, and this means that any recording of it will also show the enormous disparity of volume between the rhythm and melody sections. If one resonates the musicians so that the drums are further from the microphone, the men automatically modify their dynamics in order to maintain the same relationship of percussion to melody. The inescapable conclusion is that for them the drums must predominate, and that melody is dependent for its effect on a heavy foundation of insistent rhythm. This is the way it always sounds in performance, and the way it seems destined to sound in recordings as well.

("Forhou bel Malik Jana" is a slangy way of saying: "We're happy the King Came Back to Us." Haouziya Chaabiya is a generic title meaning literally Popular Haouziya. "Popular" is a word with a new meaning in Morocco; it refers to time, and means "contemporary". The present-day in Morocco could be called the Chaabiya Era; "the people" are conscious of themselves as an entity for the first time. Haouziya is a genre peculiar to the region of Marrakech. Any piece from the repertory of the musicians of the Haouz is called a haouziya.)
Recorded by Paul Bowles.
At Arcila, Morocco.
August 27, 1959.

Music of the Djebala.

1. El Rhnya Darifa Sidi Habibi (2 liûra, tbel and taarija)
2. El Rhnya Darifa Sidi Habibi (solo voice, kamenja, tbel)

Performers: Maalem Abdeslam Sararsi El Mahet Arzila and Ensemble.

The Maalem was loath to play the liûra; he considered it a poor substitute for the rhaïta, which was only natural, as the latter is a much more evolved instrument and requires far greater musicianship. However, I finally persuaded him to oblige me with a piece for liûra, although he refused to make it a true solo, insisting that he must have a second instrument with him. Fortunately the Maalem was possessed of an extraordinary versatility insofar as instruments went: he was an expert kamenja-player, a superb performer on the rhaïta, and, I think, an unusually competent man on the liûra, although I should have liked him to unbend a bit and play something which permitted a little more personal expression. However, he was a fanatical classicist, and for that I suppose one should be thankful. Also, the presence of a dozen or so soldiers sitting with their guns across their knees at a few paces from the players undoubtedly put an effective damper on any possible flights of musical fancy. (One must remember that Moroccan musicians were subjected to constant brain-washing in rehabilitation a few years ago, and have not forgotten the experience.)

It is interesting in number 1 to note the similarity of both melody and rhythm to a jig or a hornpipe. Some centuries ago it was the custom for the acrobatic dancers of the Souss (which region still furnishes such specialists to small circuses in Europe) to travel to the British Isles and perform there as wandering minstrels. The entertainment was called Moorish dancing, which term is said to have been transformed colloquially to Morris dancing. I am unable to vouch for the authenticity of this report, but it occurred to me when I listened carefully to portions of El Rhnya Darifa Sidi Habibi, in its instrumental version.
Recorded by Paul Bowles
At Arcila, Morocco.
August 27, 1959.

Music of the Djebala.

1. Ouannane Quali B'Aïni fih Ribat Istiqlali
   (2 rhiyata, 4 taarij)
2. Haouziya. (2 rhiyata, 2 tbola, 2 taarij)
3. Aiyouwa D'Moulay Abdeslam.(rhaïta solo)
4. El Haft.(2 rhiyata, 2 tbola, 2 taarij)

Performers: Maalem Abdeslam Sarsri El Mahet Arzila and Ensemble.

We had been promised a six-hour session, but when evening came
the Maalem informed me that he would have to leave with his troop
earlier than we had agreed, in order to go some forty miles away to
play all night at a wedding, so after some four and a half hours we
broke it up. El Haft was his attempt to create a feeling of finality.

Number 3 was a great success with the crowd when I played it
back, mainly because many present had heard the Maalem perform the
identical piece at the moussem (annual pilgrimage) of Moulay Abdes-
lam, the most popular local saint. The people travel for days on don-
keys and on foot to the top of a high mountain where the moussem is
held. There they spread tents (some 50,000 of them) and remain for a
week or so, enjoying themselves vastly, and only incidentally observ-
ing religious prescriptions as a kind of social obligation. Moulay
Abdeslam is the most important moussem in northern Morocco.