

23A

Recorded by Paul Bowles.

At Segangan, Rif, Morocco.

September 15, 1959.

Music of the Beni Bouifrour Tribe

Performers: Cheikh Hamed bel Hadj Hamadi ben Allal and Ensemble

1. Lalla Bouya (zamar, 4 benadir, darbouka)

2. Dedications (" " ")

Throughout the Rif I had been inquiring about the zamar, an instrument I had been told about but had never seen save in photographs. At each place the musicians assured me I should find it in the next region further east. It was not until I got to the extreme eastern edge of the Rif, in Segangan, (Riffian pronunciation: Azrheung-ng'n) that I finally saw and heard the zamar. It consists of two separate reed pipes wired together, each with its mouthpiece and perforations; each pipe terminates in a large bull's horn. The instrument can be played both with and without the horns, which are easily detached. Unfortunately I was unable to get two zamar players, although I did my best. I had made a special trip from Nador out to Segangan the previous day in order to make contact with the musicians and find a place to record without interference, and at that time had tried to insist on a second instrument. When I brought up the subject, meaningful glances were exchanged between the Cheikh and the Caid, and the language shifted from Arabic into Riffian; I knew then that I was defeated, and after that my attempts were purely academic. For some personal reason the Cheikh did not want another zamar, and that was that. The next day when I went back to Segangan, there was, of course, only one, which naturally was better than none.

The Dedications are of a militant order. The health of the Sultan is requested, as well as that of his two sons, Moulay Hassan and Moulay Abdallah. Also the Governor of the Province of Alhucemas comes in for his share of praise, because he settled the Riffian Rebellion last year in a fashion which pleased many Riffians. France does not fare very well here; her defeat is demanded in the present war, and Allah is requested to aid the Algerian insurgents in their struggle for independence.

23B

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At Segangan, Rif, Morocco.

September 15, 1959.

Music of the Beni Bouifrour Tribe

Performers: Cheikh Hamed bel Hadj Hamadi ben Allal and Ensemble

1. Tarfiaa (zamar, 2 benadir)
2. Medouni Mouts el Houah (qsbah, darbouka, 2 benadir)
(Boujmaa ben Mimoun, qsbah)
3. Impromptu Dance (zamar, 4 benadir, darbouka)
4. Zamar Solo (with bull's horns)
5. Zamar Solo (without bull's horns, accompanied by 2 benadir)

This group would accept no signal for starting; they also had a propensity for stopping a piece in the middle of a phrase, on a completely arbitrary signal from the Cheikh. This behavior of his left me mystified. I never knew when the music was going to start or stop, nor, it appeared, did the musicians. The cheikh seemed to derive a strange pleasure from this high-handed assertion of authority, although it made no musical sense whatever.

The bendir in northern Morocco is an instrument I could do without. The membrane is loose and thus has a heavy reverberant sound; this is augmented by a wire stretched across its surface from one side of the rim to the other, so that what is heard is a dull buzz when it is struck. This sound is appreciated and sought after; it makes for auditory confusion in recordings; unhappily also the bendir players are usually the singers, so that there is no way of reducing the noise of the drums without losing the voices entirely. In the south the membranes are tight and not wired, so that the sound is high and clean. (Compare the benadir of the Haha and Taf-raout Tribes with those of the Beni Bouifrour and Beni Ouriaghel.) In Einzoren I sent the bendir players out to build a fire and heat their membranes, but it did no good.

The very brief sequence which I have labelled "Impromptu Dance" is a recording of a little jam-session the musicians had got into while we were being served tea. When the performers became aware that they were being watched and recorded, they put an end to it.

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Performers: Cheikh Hamed bel Hadj Hamadi ben Allal and Ensemble.

1. Lalla Bouya dial Azrheung-ng'n

(4 voices, 3 benadir, darbouka, zamar)

2. Reh dial Beni Bouhiya (qsbah solo)

3. Aaouad dial Azrheung-ng'n (3 benadir, zamar, darbouka)

I wanted a vocal selection in which one could hear the voices. The Cheikh said the zamar must play; he did not say why. So I let him play, but seated him at a distance of about thirty feet from the singers. Then I begged the singers to play their benadir as lightly as possible, which they did in number 1, and for the first time, because the Cheikh repeated my order to them, fearing that his zamar would be covered by their racket. It was covered, but by a well-balanced ensemble. He was not pleased by the playback.

Then I asked Boujmaa ben Mimoun to play me a qsbah solo. The Cheikh immediately said it was impossible, whereupon ben Mimoun agreed that it could not be done. After calling in the Caid, who had not heard the beginning of the conversation, and who seemed to think that a qsbah could play alone if necessary, I got what I wanted, and was delighted with the results. (This is the music of the lone camel-driver sitting beside his fire at night while the camels sleep. It is a moving experience to come upon the sound in a landscape of immensity and desolation and listen for a long time to the querulous, hesitant cadences. I think, more than any other music I have heard, it is the music which best expresses the essence of solitude.)

As usual we were recording outdoors, and as usual the wind came up during the process; by the very end it had reached a high velocity, so that the final zamar coda is considerably damaged by its soar. Number 3 was a spirited dance, with everyone leaping in various directions while he played and/or sang. It is impossible to set a level with players rushing at the microphone and away from it; that is one of the main problems in recording in Morocco,--that and the sudden screaming of both men and women at unexpected moments.

24A, continued.

Again and again I have been struck by the similarity of rhythm in Moroccan music to that of our own jazz. There are other similarities, of course, but the rhythm is the most obvious.

The Cheikh was not satisfied at the end of the last piece with merely letting it finish; he had to call out: "Safi!" (That's that!) I think the superiority of this reel over the others recorded at Segangan was partially due to the fact that the players had smoked a certain amount of kif by that time and were "in" the music. The problem of whether or not to dispense kif (marijuana) at a recording session is a delicate one, since it is legally prohibited, and invariably there are governmental officials, both civilian and military, present at them. Yet probably ninety-five percent of Moroccan musicians smoke the weed when they perform, and smoke it publicly. I found that the best system was simply to offer it to the musicians individually; if they accepted it, that meant that they knew the officials would not object. Almost always they accepted.