

26B

Recorded by Paul Bowles.

At Fez, Morocco.

September 25, 1959.

Andaluz Music of Fez.

Abdelkrim Rais, director (and rebab)

Opening of the Nouba: "El Hgaz el Mcharqi".

(4 kamenjas, 2 ouds, rebab, darbouka, tar, vocal soloist and chorus)

This was a test recording which was not supposed to be kept, but given the fact that Andaluz music of quality is the most difficult of all to find and the most expensive to record, I did not erase it afterward. Subsequently Abdelkrim Rais demanded \$600 (finally reduced to \$500) to play one nouba. The piece here presented cost \$50, which is already a fairly large sum in Moroccan currency. Andaluz music is much in demand for weddings and parties in general, which explains the relatively large sums the directors of orchestras are able to command. The Moroccans are very much aware that this is their only true art-music, and value it accordingly.

The Andaluz musical literature consists of eleven noubas, nearly all of which were in existence long before the Moroccans were ejected from Spain at the end of the Fifteenth Century. The texts were written by the poets in vogue at various times during the occupation of Spain, which lasted roughly seven centuries (from the Ninth through the Fifteenth.) Each nouba was conceived of as corresponding to a particular bodily humor (very much in accordance with the mediaeval European idea of the humors.) Furthermore, each nouba is composed in a mode suitable to a different time of day, and each nouba consists of five sections. The generic term for one of these sections is misane. A misane is subdivided into an indeterminate number of parts, each of which is a complete piece; there is a sense of progression and continuity, however, in these separate pieces if they are performed in sequence. The tradition is oral and has been kept intact until now. At the moment there is a tendency (a deplorable one, in my opinion) to "revitalize" Andaluz music by introducing completely extraneous instruments such as the piano, the clarinet and the saxophone. The example on this tape, however, is wholly traditional. (The electric current failed briefly twice during the session.)

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Selections from the Nouba: "El Hgaz el Mcharqi".

1. Overture
2. Opening of Misane Qoddam
3. Bitaine "Hamdane"
4. Conclusion: "Toghtia"

(4 kemenjas, 2 ouds, rebab, darbouka, tar, vocal soloist and chorus)

Abdelkrim Rais recorded these selections in a room of the Musée du Batha in Fez, only after extensive arrangements made by telephone with the government in Rabat. There was an extraordinary atmosphere of secrecy and intrigue connected with the arrangements for recording Andaluz music in Fez, something which I had not met ~~in~~ in any form until then. A special advisor had to be sent from the capital before any recordings could be made. It was he who set the prices, the hours, the places and the conditions for recording. He also specified that each time Abdelkrim's name was mentioned in print, the following words must be added: "through the courtesy of the Services des Monuments Historiques, des Arts et du Folklore, Conservatoire de Fès."

The mode in which the nouba "El Hgaz el Mcharqi" is composed is one for use at midday. Naturally, since it would take some ten or eleven hours to play through one nouba, only small parts of any given nouba are performed at one time; the most which is ever done is a complete misane. This I heard in Fez in 1931, but it is not the custom nowadays to perform anything which goes on for such a long time without a break.

As an experiment, I played 26B and 27A, performed at about an hour's interval, simultaneously on two different tape-recorders, and was astonished to find that for long periods they sounded as one. In certain spots the tempo of 27A is slightly faster; otherwise they are identical in every respect, save of course that 26B contains only the Overture and a part of the opening of the misane "Qoddam".

27B

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At Fez, Morocco.

September 25, 1959.

Music of the Southern Djebala

Maalem Mohammed Rhiati and Ensemble.

Taqtoqa Jabaliya (Hgaz)

(8 guinbris, tchnatchn, darbouka, chorus)

The first thing I noticed about the ten men who formed this ensemble when they filed into the recording room at the Musée du Batha was that they were exactly the same men to whom I used to listen in 1947 and 1948 on Friday nights when they gave regular concerts in another part of the palace. I should say that at that time the average age of the members of the group was 55; now they are all twelve years older, and no new faces have been added. I made a point of asking if they had any young men being trained as replacements; the reply was in the negative.

This is essentially Djebala music, but Djebala music which has had long contact with the civilizing influence of the city of Fez. The people of Fez consider it "country" music, and they are right; nevertheless, no country music has the sonorous richness of this country music arranged for city people's taste. Compare the Aaita Djebaliya bel Kamenja (no. 1 of 14B), for instance. Again compare particularly the Djavalia bla Kamenja, (no. 1 of 18A), which is also a taqtoqa in more rudimentary form. (The final section of a taqtoqa provides an opportunity for improvisation above an organ point on each note of the original scale.) The fault I have to find with the taqtoqa of this present tape is that the "specialist" brought from Rabat cut short the otherwise lengthy first section of the piece, for reasons best known to himself, and thereby ruined the equilibrium of the taqtoqa's form. Before the song has even established itself, we are already into the final section. The sonority, however, is gratifying. I know of no other music in Morocco where the guinbri is treated with such seriousness. There are three types used here: the hajouj, the frakh, and the souissane. The tchnatchn are finger cymbals, the same that in Tafraout are called tismamaïne.

27B, continued.

Note: The apparent orthographical chaos: (djebaliya, 14B; djavalija, 18A; djebeliya, 21B; jabaliya, 27B) is a result of my phonetic transcription of regional (and possibly personal) variations on the adjective deriving from the word for mountain.