

37A

Recorded by Paul Bowles

At the Military Post of Ait Mohammed, Morocco.

October 24, 1959

Music of the Ait Bou Guemmaz Tribe (Grand Atlas)

Mohammed bel Hassan, leader.

The Valley of the Ait Bou Guemmaz, where the people performing this music live, lies at an altitude of more than 9,000 feet in the Grand Atlas, at the foot of one of the highest peaks of the range, the Ighil M'Goun.

Rhna dial Imdyazen. (Bourhanime solo, Brahim ~~Gazzal~~ ^{Moha Linazi})

The piece is divided into two parts: a prelude in which only the imdyazen perform, and a dance, which forms the body of the piece, and in which fifteen people took part. (The imdyazen ^{there} ~~were~~ ~~there~~ a quintet composed of one soloist on a wind instrument and four drummers, who also sing.) In this case the soloist of the imdyazen performed on the bourhanime, which is a double reed instrument like the Riffian zamar, but without the addition of bull's horns. There is no extra-Berber influence in the music of the Ait Bou Guemmaz.

In the Grand Atlas among certain tribes (notably the Ait Hadidou, who live near the Ait Bou Guemmaz in an equally inaccessible region) it is the custom for small bands of men to journey on foot from town to town, earning their livelihood by playing and singing music. These troubadours are called imdyazen. Among the crowd of performers at Ait Mohammed there were five who identified themselves as imdyazen; the rest were villagers, who formed the chorus.

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Adersi (taaouadit solo: Lahcenou ou Mouha)

The taaouadit is a thin metal flute about ten inches long; the one played by Lahcenou ou Mouha was the only one I have seen. The drums of the Ait Bou Guemmaz are benadir, (they call them talount) but the men seem to be aware of the unpleasant buzzing produced by the wire strung across the membrane, and accordingly manage them with great restraint, unlike most of the Moroccans who use them. They also kept a brazier beside them and heated the instruments frequently; in other places I had to suggest it, and often even so the musicians replied that it wasn't necessary.

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Qsida dial Malik (bourhanime solo, Brahim Moha Zinazi)

This begins with four unaccompanied male voices. After a short bourhanime bridge, it goes into a section for the imdyazen, the talount being used with great discretion. This is the traditionally restrained second "movement". The bourhanime bridges then into the final section, which is always the most animated. The end of this third section contains some exciting vocal rhythmic byplay.

38B

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At the Military Post of Ait Mehammed, Morocco.

October 24, 1959.

Music of the Ait Bou Guemmaz Tribe (Grand Atlas)

Mohammed bel Hassan, leader.

1 Qsida Tarheroute dial Oued Bou Guemmaz

2 El Rha el Bou Guemmaz

The Moroccans always insist that the qsida existed here before the arrival of the Moslems thirteen centuries ago. Whether these present examples have anything in common with the ancient prototypes, no one can say; certainly there is little similarity between this Qsida Tarheroute dial Oued Bou Guemmaz and the urban examples found today in Fez and Meknès. This particular song has for its subject-matter the river that flows through the country of the Bou Guemmaz. The extraordinary female voices at the close of the piece are performing what they call a mait. The sound intrigued me so much that I requested another song using the women, but it appeared that the women, apart from their traditional youyou, (which pops up occasionally during most music at which women are present in Morocco, whether they are performing or not) never sang anything save the mait, and the musicians did not want to sing another song using that particular device.

As the latter vocal section of El Rha el Bou Guemmaz illustrates, clearly, Berber music is not exclusively a monolinear affair. It often has a primitive kind of parallel motion counterpoint, which inevitably suggests, at least to the European ear, the presence of a basic harmonic system.

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Idihan dial Bou Guemmaz

This is another three-movement piece. The first, rapid and syncopated; the second, somewhat quieter; the third, as vigorous 5/8 finale. The movements are held together by the indefatigable playing of the taaouadit. The last half of the first movement, (and I think many enthusiasts of modern jazz would agree) contains several elements found in contemporary American jazz.