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BANNING EYRE

Tuareg Guitar Music

Tuareg (or Kel Tamasheq, 'Speakers of Tamasheq') are traditionally seminomadic people who inhabit the Sahara and Sahel desert regions of Niger, Mali, Algeria, Libya and Burkina Faso. A diasporic community of Tuareg exiles from Mali and Niger migrated to Algeria and Libya beginning in the 1960s, where they developed a new style of guitar music as a means for community building and political protest. Their songs became popular among the wider Tuareg community in the 1990s through the clandestine circulation of cassette recordings promoting armed resistance in Mali and Niger. By the late 1990s peace accords allowed for public performances, shifting the genre's main messages away from resistance to other topics of interest to Tuareg. Since the early 2000s Tuareg guitar music has gained recognition worldwide through touring bands and tourism in the Sahara. On account of the diverse linguistic and political contexts in which Tuareg guitar music has circulated, it is known by several names, including *ishumar*, *tishumaren*, Tuareg blues and simply 'guitar.'

Emergence and Early Circulation in the Sahara

Drought, conflict with government military forces, state policies antagonistic to marginalized nomadic populations, and increasing reliance on a wage-labor economy led many Tuareg in Mali and Niger, mostly young men, to migrate to cities in southern Algeria and Libya beginning in the late 1960s. Their mobility usually involved crossing borders illegally and without official identity papers. In new urban contexts, these *ishumar* (a term likely adapted from the French *chômeur*, 'unemployed person') established diasporic enclaves and broke with the traditionally hierarchical structure of Tuareg society, developing new forms of social solidarity in support of each other's pursuits of housing, employment and financial aid.

In Tamanrasset, Algeria, the *ishumar* community organized around festive occasions known as *zahuten*, which were often held in private residences or outside of town to avoid confrontation with local authorities. These gatherings featured *tende*, a Tuareg drumming and singing tradition performed primarily by women; poetry and songs accompanied by *anzad*, the Tuareg monochord fiddle played exclusively by women; and they were accompanied by informal choruses of men and women. Often, the plastic jerrycans that serve as water vessels in the region replaced the traditional *tende* drum, which is constructed from a mortar; among children these containers were also converted into *guitares-bidons* (can guitars). The new performance settings reformulated aspects of rural traditions but also introduced novel poetic forms and themes relating to the emerging *ishumar* lifestyle. One of the important early singers and hosts of *zahuten* was Lalla Badi, a Tuareg woman whose songs were recorded on cassette and shared with those who could not attend.

By the late 1970s these practices, as well as men's poetic composition (*assak*), were synthesized in a new guitar form that was primarily performed by *ishumar* men. The earliest figureheads of the emerging guitar music in Tamanrasset were Ibrahim ag Alhabib and Inteyeden ag Ablil, both originally from Mali. Together with several other *ishumar* in the area, these musicians formed the group Taghreft Tinariwen ('Reconstruct the Deserts,' later shortened to Tinariwen), which became the most important force for popularizing *ishumar* guitar music in the Sahara and, later, worldwide. Accompanied by a jerrycan drum and women who would sing call-and-response phrases, the early guitarists drew inspiration from an eclectic array of regional and international musical styles, including the *takamba* dance popularized by *agiwwin* (griots) from Timbuktu, star Malian guitarists (e.g., Ali Farka Touré, Kar Kar [Boubacar Traoré]), Sahrawi guitar songs of the Polisario Front in Western Sahara, *raï* and *chaabi* music from the Maghreb and artists with global popularity such as Jimi Hendrix, Dire Straits and Bob Marley.

The early *ishumar* songs were ruminations on the experiences of *ishumar*, frequently referencing hunger, thirst and the soul; foremost among their

themes was *essuf*, the nostalgia and isolation one encounters in the uninhabited desert. Cultural autonomy, language preservation and protest became similarly important topics due to the marginalization of Tuareg in Saharan nations. As increasing numbers of *ishumar* men sought military training during the 1980s, particularly in Libya, their songs took on an increasingly militant nature; in fact, most *ishumar* guitarists at this time were not regarded as professional musicians but as militants. They began promoting values of endurance, bravery and sacrifice, and advocated revolutionary projects based on the concept *toumast* ('Tuareg people' or 'nation'), aspiring to unite Tuareg in ways circumventing their traditional social structure.

The messages of these songs became of primary importance; on cassette recordings circulated and duplicated among *ishumar* throughout the Sahara, song texts were frequently recited before being performed so that their meaning was clear. Because of the subversive nature of these songs, public performances and cassette recordings of *ishumar* guitar music were outlawed in Algeria, Mali and Niger. Yet, *ishumar* ideologies and guitar music continued to circulate clandestinely, particularly through the work of Tinariwen and, in Niger, the group Takrist-n-Akal led by Abdallah ag Oumbadougou. In the early 1990s the simmering tension among *ishumar* led them to undertake major armed rebellions against the governments of Mali and Niger as they sought to improve Tuareg political self-determination.

Post-Rebellion Developments and Global Recognition

Peace accords in Niger (1995) and Mali (1996) brought some resolution to the rebellions. As one condition of post-rebellion reconciliation, which saw a new emphasis on regional semi-autonomy and privatized development in Niger and Mali, public performance of Tuareg guitar music was not only permitted by these states but integrated into political life. Where guitarists sang of resistance before, since the peace accords they increasingly valorize reconciliation, democracy and dialogue among Tuareg and multiethnic national communities, while retaining an interest in revitalizing Tuareg culture and language. They are often hired to perform for political rallies and nongovernmental organizations, or are sent by Saharan governments on tours promoting peace. Guitar groups also regularly participate in youth festivities that in preceding decades had featured only *anzad* and *tende*. In all of these cases, professional ensembles have emerged among Tuareg where professional music-making was traditionally regarded with ambivalence. Guitarists are not just former *ishumar* but may be from any number of social backgrounds, although many hail from the elite stratum of traditional Tuareg society known as *imajeghen*. The popularity of the style is not limited to Tuareg alone, and it has been adapted by members of other ethnic groups and in multiethnic bands (e.g., Etran Finatawa).

The release of one of the earliest albums of this music available outside Africa, Tinariwen's *The Radio Tisdas Sessions* (2001), introduced European, North American and other global listeners to the blues- and rock-inflected sounds of Tuareg guitar, to the mythic narratives of *ishumar* engaged in rebellion and to contemporary Tuareg concerns. Several groups have formed among the Tuareg diaspora in Europe, particularly in France, while others have formed in refugee camps where many Tuareg fled during conflict and drought since the 1990s (e.g., Tartit). International tours by Tuareg bands and the production of albums by both major and independent record labels, which tap into world music as well as indie rock listener bases, attract large audiences worldwide today. For example, the cult following for Tuareg guitar supported a US-based crowdfunding campaign to produce *Akounak Tedalat Taha Tazoughai* ('Rain the Color of Blue with a Little Red in It,' 2015), an adaptation of the film *Purple Rain* (1984, starring the US artist Prince) set in Agadez, Niger; mainstream support was evidenced when Tinariwen won the 2012 Grammy Award for Best World Music Album with *Tassili*.

This large international audience provides Tuareg with a venue for garnering support for their political aspirations and to attract travelers to the Sahara, where festivals (e.g., the Festival in the Desert), desert treks and other opportunities support cultural tourism, one of the major avenues for economic development among Tuareg. However, both tourism and the mobility of Tuareg musicians are restricted by recurring concerns about terrorism in the Sahara, and visa fees occasionally prove prohibitive for some

performers. Nonetheless, contrary to being a passing fad (see Borel 2006), Tuareg guitar music continues to draw sustained interest from both Saharan and global audiences.

Musical Characteristics

At their most fundamental level, Tuareg guitar music performances feature a solo voice and an acoustic or electric guitar. More frequently, the music is performed in groups of three or more musicians and includes one or more rhythm guitars (and occasionally a bass guitar), which draw on *tende* rhythms and play drones and simple chords, sometimes in a style reminiscent of reggae. The lead guitarist often plays the lowest string with the thumb as a drone as well, likely an adaptation from the performance techniques of West African lutes. Frequently, the guitarists are accompanied by percussion. This usually takes the form of handclapping, tapping on an acoustic guitar or drumming on a *tende*, but it is not unusual to have accompaniment on drum kits (more common in Niger), calabash gourds or *djembes*.

Song melodies are usually strophic in form, pentatonic, and sung with minimal ornamentation, which differs from highly ornamented poetic traditions. These characteristics in particular lend much Tuareg guitar a 'bluesy' appeal for international listeners. A chorus, sometimes made up of spectators during community performances, will often sing responses to the solo singer. Song lyrics are almost always in Tamasheq, the Tuareg language, although French, Arabic and local indigenous languages may be mixed into the texts; occasionally songs will include rapping. The guitar is performed almost exclusively by men, which is remarkable given that women traditionally are held in great prestige in Tuareg musical practice. Although a few women guitarists do exist, when women participate in Tuareg guitar music it is generally by singing and clapping.

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ERIC J. SCHMIDT

Tufo

Tufo is one of the most popular musical song and dance styles of coastal communities in northern Mozambique. It is a soft, lyrical vocal music sung by groups of women and accompanied by four tuned frame drums. The interweaving rhythms of the *tufo* drums and the accompanying rising and falling movement of the dancers are said by many Mozambican *tufo* singers and dancers to reflect the undulating waves and ripples of the Indian Ocean, which is at the heart of their music and their culture. An original version of *tufo* is thought to have been brought to the northern coast of Mozambique by Arab traders as early as 900 AD, while its present form dates back to the 1930s. The vocal lines, lyrics and rhythm draw on the diverse cultural influences of the region, fusing the Bantu and Sufi traditions of the Swahili Coast. Loved and respected throughout Mozambique for its delicate sensuality, *tufo* song and dance combines the nation's relationship with the sea, its pride in its rich cultural history and the legendary beauty and strength of its women.

It is said that when the Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama first landed on Mozambique Island (*Ilha de Moçambique*) in 1498 he was greeted by four boats 'under sail and oar, with people *tangendo e cantando* [loosely, swaying and singing]' (Joao de Barros, *Primeira écada da Ásia*, Book IV, cited in Lutero and Pereira 1980, 20). More than 400 years have passed between this recorded event and the formation of contemporary *tufo* groups during the re-Islamization of the region in the early 1930s. Oral history tells of a trader called Iussufe who came from Quíloa (var. Kilwa), an area of Tanzania founded in the tenth century AD whose power, at its height in the eleventh century, stretched along the Swahili coast. Iussufe is said to have spent long periods of time on Mozambique Island in the 1920s and 1930s, continuing to visit until the 1970s (Lutero and Pereira 1980, 20). It is thought that Iussufe was behind the formation of some of the older *tufo* groups on Mozambique Island such as Estrela Vermelha, the oldest *tufo* group still active there, having been formed in 1931 (Arnfred 2011, 281). Estrela Vermelha was previously named Mahafil Islam; the group changed its name following Mozambican Independence in 1976 and the new secular communist rule of the liberation front FRELIMO (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique).

Originally *tufo* was performed by men, in particular at Maulid to celebrate the birthday of Prophet Mohammed. The name *tufo* originates from the Arabic name for the frame drum known as the *daf* or *duff*. The Portuguese colonizers of Mozambique pronounced this 'adufe' or 'adufo,' which the Emakhua speakers of northern Mozambique then transformed to 'tufo' (Lutero and Pereira 1980, 19). Women's dances and songs similar to *tufo* may be found across the Arab world. They are often associated with the Prophet Mohammed's arrival in Medina, where he was greeted in the streets by girls singing and playing the *duff* (Doubleday 1999). Such performances may be found throughout coastal East Africa, and *tufo* singing and dancing still forms an essential part of Maulid celebrations among the Islamic coastal communities of Mozambique. However, the male *tufo* groups were eclipsed by the women's ensembles, whose songs and dances are popular both at Islamic celebrations and festivities and during secular occasions.

Although *tufo* has become increasingly secularized, the clothes worn by the women still reflect the Islamic values of women's piety and the modesty of the genre's early beginnings. The women dress in matching brightly colored *capulanas* (printed cloth worn by