



FADIMOUTOU WALLET INAMOUD
ISSWAT

The recordings on this disc are music of the desert. Specifically, music from the region of Adrar D'Ifoghas in the Azawad territory North of Mali. It does not have a proper name, only the designation "music," and as such is here given that term, *isswat*. This is music performed in the nomad camps by Tuareg or Kel Tamashek. The desert here is scrubby and sparse, and nomads are scattered throughout the region. In the rainy season, the rains form seasonal pools, and families gather together around the shallow water lakes. Isswat happens in the night. It is for the youth and the unmarried. The songs talk of love and nostalgia.

The music is characterized by a woman singing a solo melody accompanied by clapping, stomping, and drumming on an upturned bowl or jerrycan. The underlying drone is accomplished by a circle of men who maintain a low vocal hum throughout the song. The songs are sometimes topical and improvisational, addressed to people in the audience. Other times they are popular songs, transmitted from person to person.

Translations are a subjective art. In this translation we have attempted to keep the text as close to the original as possible. These are not archaic songs or ancient folk ballads, but contemporary compositions, and the translations use modern language. These translations are more literal than poetic - certain phrases like *tarha n ibliss*, which can mean romantic or passionate love translates literally to "the devil's love," and here we use the latter. What they may lack in poetic structure, we hope they make up for in an accurate reflection of the Tuareg language.

The recordings here were made in the Maison de Luxembourg Studio in Kidal in 2008. They were originally released on CD and cassette. They are some of the only studio recordings of Isswat music.

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YALALELA

This land is huge. My mother, my father, we are separated.

I am in the deep nostalgia of my memories, and I'm drowning in it.

This nostalgia is stronger than the wind blowing in the season of *gharat* and the dust devils that come before the stars fall down.

Me, I won't leave him even if he is married, if it is not God that has decided, or if the earth is split in two to separate us.

My friend I want to tell you, the one you love, you can't leave him.

Tell him to stay with me and if he refuses it is better to leave him until the bodies and the hearts separate.

When he speaks, pretend you don't hear him. When he comes towards you, don't wait for him.

Now let's hear about what I have lived through, nostalgia and mourning just seeing the place he used to sleep.

After the last prayer, I slept late and the nostalgia woke me up. I said to this nostalgia, oh poor me. I miss his broken teeth.

I was so hurt when he left that I watched until he turned around the trees and the moment that he went towards the west.

My heart said to me that it wants to come out and I told it, patience! God created love, it gnaws at me, but I hide it.

By God, my heart burns in my chest, it doesn't get water to refresh it. This man, he took my heart and he broke it, and he left the people around me to sew it. I told my heart, pray to God, that is what will refresh it.

ILANA

Oh, the poor Milane who has a white turban, coming during a clear day with the gentleman, you talk with him and he asked you to leave with him.

Oh, my Milane, we are walking so much, but the person you love is like an infection, when it is in your heart it burns.

Oh Milane, my soul!

Oh Milane, how he wraps his turban. When I remember the guilty thing on which we spent time I feel bad.

Oh, there is a small rope that keeps love between our hearts.

Oh, Milane, it is sure that the devil's love exists now, and when it happens with a girl she becomes your mother.

Oh poor Milane, when I think of you my soul burns and thinks about small things.

Oh Milane, when romance exists you will be blind to the mistakes of your lover! It will be your dream to see him walking in front of you. When the love exists you will love his lovely walking.

The soul thinks when you are in love. Love is yummy and disgusting. Even if you are good Muslim, you will look at him during prayer and ask others to pray for you.

Oh Milane, love cannot be hidden.

Oh Milane, you talk to me and my heart burns. Oh Milane, the eye pays attention to everything that is around.

Oh Milane, my female friend I am telling you this hard lesson which hurts my heart and my body.

Oh Milane, know that your protection is better than being deaf.

WANA L'ANCIEN

We came to the *tende* where Anodam was present and I asked who is the owner of this beautiful creature. Is he for God?

Oh, this white soul that makes my face smile. Oh, this white and great soul which makes my face look good! The great white soul which makes the night shorter and pushed me to cancel my trips!

I left the awesome beautiful gentleman with my heart burning for his love. Oh, souls separate even in life, but much more after death! Only prayers from your mother can take the yucky water of love away from your heart.

Your old boyfriends would be walking around you and not one of them would ask God to forgive you for the bad thing.

Kaala with her lovely white mouth and her cute smiling! Her value is better than a 4x4 Toyota and V8 Toyota!

Oh, my soul is thirsty for the lovely gentleman who wears the beautiful clothes.

Oh, the nostalgia of this man is stronger than someone dying in the north of Chogan who has asked for forgiveness.

Oh, as soon as my heart sees the prayer rug souvenir between us, it relaxes me!

Oh, the poor gentleman of the beautiful clothes, I see you walking on the dunes and sitting on them.

Oh, I see him standing up and kneeling on the dunes.

As soon as I see this, the sand becomes larger and huge to me.

WANA LE NOUVEAU

Oh, my heart is full of the brown men with their long hair.

Oh, poor Touta who refused to give us the military uniforms found on the street

Oh, I pray God to send Touta here, so I can scream at him for doing this and we won't feel this in our hearts anymore.

Oh, my mother I am asking you to forgive me because death is not afraid of me and it won't ask me when it is coming!

Oh, my friend from Idnan, what I saw had stolen my heart and made me think about it even if I am sleeping, and it has created dreams.

I think of him while watching the moon and as the stars are falling down. I stand up looking under the shade.

Oh, looking for the traces of my camel!

Oh, my female friend Khayra, I am telling you that this evening I am very touched!

Your children and someone that you love like yourself, you caress him like your child.

We came West of Eghay when I separated with this white love.

ADYAMINA

Oh, my friends who are in the middle, we are talking to you.

Look at Baye who is sitting between gentlemen who are in a Toyota with Kalashnikovs and their multicolor garments. With his smell and flowered clothes.

Oh, my friend, we see this! Listen to this, it is not a speech from the air.

What do you think about those tanks, those Kalashnikovs, those missiles of revolutionary men?

With their headlights, and their tail lights - don't they look like the Americans who came looking for Saddam Hussein?

Oh, those revolutionaries can let the fire burn while laughing.

Oh, those who are protective, they can leave at the end of the day and get anywhere before the sunset, they are burning my heart.

The smoke comes out of my heart! Even if you don't have a place for someone, talk to him a little bit before you move on!

Love is a dry tree from which shade can be created.

The devil's love in a heart can't be taken away even with a knife, it is a love you can't cut with any kind of knife, when it exists.

Oh, my friends, what is this example of someone who you love and his love fills your body?

With whom you can stay talking to the evening until four in the morning without realizing the time you are spending?

This is a place where I can go walking, and do some strange things on purpose and talk about what I want!

AHAYLALOU

I am going to tell you some words that you should understand even if they are not great or shameful, if people want they can talk about it, but it's the truth.

The world of journalists are here for Abdullah, Baba, Ag Jodan, but for me I am just looking to Baba.

Baba, who came finally when the night fell down and was charming. Especially when he says he is jealous. When he is jealous, he gets angry, he swears, and he is serious.

I went to stand up on the mountain west of Etghar to see a man who wears three piece clothes, with his lovely white mouth. My heart was beating to see this person who is unique, Baba!

I have seen anyone that I like besides you or Zeinadine! This is a gun that is stronger than the Kalashnikovs and pistols of France.

Oh, the young man who leads the front who took control of Gao, Segou, and Kidal had stolen my heart.

Oh, this man dressed in blue broke my heart and left people to sew it!

Oh, the problem with someone you love is that you lay on his arm, your heart goes in his pocket and the more that happens the more you miss him!

Oh, this man with his stitching, his words are more than paradise.

Oh, the gentleman who wears the 3 piece clothes, I love him more than his mother does, his mouth tastes like sugar, and his breath is like ice!

Oh, who you love puts you in bad habits. Sometimes you will be walking and think of him during difficult situations.

Oh, gentleman know that you are carrying my love, even if I die, keep it for me!

Life wants to do the impossible thing which is taking me away from the one who left his indigo on me.

ALEHAWAN

Oh, my soul that has been taken away by this man!

Oh, this man who looks sharp when he is hunting gazelles with a Toyota truck.

Oh, to who God gave a chance to meet his lover.

I will look for the Toyota of my love with who I chill from the beginning of the night until the morning.

Oh, the love of someone that doesn't have a guarantee, it's like my heart is burned and tumbled into a well that and you can't get to it.

Oh, I have never seen anything more dangerous than a hard love gave by a young gentleman who gave you his word!

Oh, here where my heart is burning for this man who says '*bismillahi*' when he ties his turban.

Oh, his love is in my heart and burns it, and I am telling anyone who is jealous.

You can give him a well sewed tent house and a marriage.

AHIMANA

Oh, my soul! Oh, this tende!

Oh, I have never seen an animal that kills me like a camel with his saddle and dress!

Oh, my boyfriend with whom I share memories! I think about you even if I am praying!

Oh, my soul, even if I am sick, I don't miss your appointments.

Oh, this is where the misfortune and suffering gather to make my heart suffer.

Oh, my soul, however, I remember the time we were spending time in the dark at night until the morning!

Oh, the camel that carries the business, when I see it my heart relaxes.

Oh, my friend, who I see the time I am sleeping in the car.

Oh, poor gentleman who just came and spent an hour without talking, we understood that he was angry.

Oh, this burned my heart and I didn't sleep the whole night.

At the end, he told me I speak like a great creature.

Oh, since then I couldn't sleep without dreaming of him.

My heart is painful and has more fire than a gun used by a gentleman.

Oh, today the souls cry because they miss others. Oh, my soul.

Oh, my soul, his example is something that I've never known from my mother nor my father before the night he came.

INAREGH

Only two dancers, three doesn't work here!

Oh, I don't care even if you are not present in the circle,
for me it is all the same.

Oh, young gentlemen who met me.

Oh, the owners of the white turbans!

Oh, that God make happen that I met the young veiled
men with brown lips.

My flashlight showed me the group of turbaned young
people. At the head of the line there is a handsome
man.

Oh, to love someone like this who is not yours is like
borrowing! It's like drinking boiled water when you are
thirsty.

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