



LULLABIES
IN THE WORLD OF ISLAM

FOREWORD

Intangible cultural heritage is the practice, representation, expression, knowledge and skills that is transmitted from generation to another, and that is constantly recreated by communities in response to their environment, interaction with nature and their history. It provides a sense of identity and continuity, interconnected with cultural spaces associated with instruments, objects and artefacts that communities and individuals recognise as an integral part of their history, thus endorsing an understanding for cultural diversity and human creativity.

Music, including the spoken words, is perhaps the most universal form of the performing arts, which is found in every society, most often as a central element of intangible cultural heritage. From festive events to oral traditions, these arts are more than mere performances for an audience, as they can be found in the most diverse contexts. In some instances, they can recount a community's history, and in settings that are more intimate, they are sung to help a baby sleep. Lullabies embody mothers' fundamental responsibility through transmitting values via tales. Mothers are the true storytellers, and their songs and lullabies play the ultimate role in the conveying of the notion of love and acceptance.

This publication represents the limitless opportunities we have to place emphasis on a living heritage that is performed by people, often collectively, and communicated through shared experiences. The research and documentation in this publication and recordings is a highlight of the Department of Culture and Tourism's continuous efforts in safeguarding such heritage, to ensure its essential status, and to encourage reflection about its importance.

Mohamed Khalifa Al Mubarak
Chairman
Department of Culture and Tourism - Abu Dhabi

CREDITS

(Countries in alphabetical order)

ALBANIA

Research, documentation and photos: Vasil S. Tole
Project coordination: Niko Mihali
Translation: Edmond Cane
Sound and video recording: Klodian Qafoku

CHINA

Research, documentation, video and sound recording: Mukaddas Mijit

EGYPT

Research and documentation: Ratiba El Hefny

ETHIOPIA

Documentation and coordination: Ilaria Sartori
Research: Ilaria Sartori, Abdulmalik Abdullahi, Amir Redwan, Adil Redwan
Video and sound recording: Ilaria Sartori, and Adil Redwan

INDIAN OCEAN

Research, documentation and sound recording: Victor Randrianary

IRAN

Research and documentation: Maryam Gharasou
Sound recording: Siamak Jahangiry
Video recording: Akbar Mohammadi

IRAQ

Research and documentation: Habib Dhaher Al Abass
Sound recording: Furat Abdel Aziz Al Habib, Ahmed Salah
Video recording: Ali Fadel Nadem

JORDAN

Research, documentation, sound and video recording: Youssef Tannous

LEBANON

Research, documentation, sound and video recording: Youssef Tannous

MALI

Research, documentation, sound and video recording: Elisabeth den Otter
Research assistance and translation: Moussa Dakité
Original songs and texts analysis: Lassine Sidibé
Translation and transcription of songs: Nienke Muurli

MOROCCO -----

Research, documentation and translation: Ahmed Aydoun

NIGERIA -----

Research, documentation, translation and photos: Abdalla Uba Adamu
Sound and video recording: Yakubu Adamu Abdullahi

PAKISTAN -----

Research, documentation, sound and video recording: Uxi Mufti

PALESTINE -----

Research, documentation, sound and video recording: Youssef Tannous

RUSSIA -----

Research, documentation, sound and video recording: Henri Lecomte
Translation of songs: Elmira Khabiboullina

SENEGAL -----

Research, documentation, photographs and sound recording: Luciana Penna-Diaw.
Video recording: Pierre Lecomte

SYRIA -----

Research, documentation, sound and video recording: Youssef Tannous

TAJIKISTAN -----

Research, documentation, video and translation: Jean During

TUNISIA -----

Research and documentation: Fethi Zghonda

TURKEY -----

Project coordination: Ocal Oguz
Research and translation: Ocal Oguz, Evrim Olçer Özünel
Research assistance and music consultancy: Armagan Elçi
Photos: Evrim Olçer Özünel, Andrew Brimmacombe
Sound and video recording: Hüseyin Elçi

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES -----

Research, documentation and video recording: Khalid Albudoor, Dr Rajah Balakrishnan, Moideen Koya Keloth

UZBEKISTAN -----

Research and documentation: Iroda Dadadjanova
Project coordination: Nigora Yakubova, Tolqin Sobirov, Bahromjon Usmonov
Translation: Fahriddin Nizomov, Iroda Narimonova
Sound and video recording: Erkin Murodov, Iroda Narimonova

YEMEN -----

Research and documentation: Gaber Ali Ahmed

Introduction

Certain forms of songs and children lullabies were spread in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), all used to express mother's love for their children, and also reflect the UAE's environment and milieu.

These songs and children lullabies had a great impression and unique impact on our society with its special resonance and distinctive type at a time that lacked modern means that could have occupied the mother from singing lullabies for their babies. In fact, these songs as a whole were the result of religious faith and the desert environment suitable for the cultivation of palm trees, the emblem of donation, tenderness and the source of life at that time. Thus, these lullabies continued to the present to be a significant part of our heritage though they gradually disappeared due to modern development and advancements.

World cultures vary from one country to another, influenced by the heritage, language and environment thereof. Each country usually has special culture and children's songs that reflect the passion and emotions of the mother who keep singing the lullabies, embracing her child, or shaking the cradle, lulling him to sleep. She also used to caress and amuse her children as a great felicity, embodied in her compassionate lullabies, inundates her. Lullabies gained special concepts and expressive denotations in the UAE, particularly in Abu Dhabi.

Chief among the popular songs and rocking lullabies were: First cradle and dancing songs. These were old songs sung by mothers to lull their children to sleep, or play with them as these lullabies bore the most beautiful meanings of love and compassion. Mothers used in the past to put their kids in a swing, called in the Emirati dialect called al-menz. Women used in their simple nature, reiterate these songs that lulled and cradled their babies. These songs revealed the mothers' upbringing style and family life.

The desert environment in the UAE had a great impact on the songs and lullabies in different styles that are sometimes associated with scared names or prayers. Sometimes it was related to praying to Allah in many ways to preserve and protect the kids. We should not overlook the fact that in this environment people's lives depended on the palm trees and the fish they got from the sea bounties. We discern from those lullabies touches of grief, wishful thinking and supplication to Allah, the Almighty, to protect and save children from all evils.

Although these songs are still reiterated hitherto they started to recede and disappear gradually under the momentum of everyday work and the problems of life, these lullabies will remain engraved in our hearts as an important part of our history and heritage.

These kids' songs and lullabies varied in the UAE in their various forms, and modulations. There are attractive models with pleasant melodies, including those mentioned by the narrator Umm-Salem¹, where she was the mother who cradled and lulled her baby to sleep, singing in a whisper:

**Hala.. Ha la.. O Loly!
Let Maryam be lulled,
And cradled in peace
To fall in deep sleep.**

These words are considered as a prayer to Allah for the little girl Mary to grow up and roam in the yard of the house and go with her peers to fetch water from the well.

She, as a little girl, remembers and reports that she used to sing some of the songs:

**Our palm trees are so high,
They will yield well-nigh,
If I die
They will bury me here underneath!
I wonder who will bewail me,
No one but my mum,
Will cry with drops of tears.**

This rocking lullaby symbolises pride and richness for that family, and the mother's great love for her child. In the days of Feasts, they used to chant:

**Here we are, dear girls,
In the feast, playing as pearls,
It is so endeared,
The feast is there at the coast of Dubai,
Dazzling and glorious!**

One of the most popular songs and lyrics was the one that symbolised and revealed the religious dimension of the families:

**There is no god but Allah,
Mohammed is the Messenger of Allah,
Mohamed is most beautiful,
Born in the morn Monday.
Mohammad resided in the vale
With no water or food!
O camel driver,
Urge the caravan to move
On to Allah's House**

**Fatma shone and loomed,
Leaving her blessed father
To the everlasting paradise
Where all residents pray to Allah
To endow His blessings and peace
To the Messenger of Allah!**

Umm-Ebeid² narrated: "when the child becomes nine months old and starts to crawl people used to chant this song:

**Oh dear baby,
Rise to your feet,
Without the aid of anyone!
Move, rise, walk, dance,
Let's all rise and prance!**

One of the old popular songs that symbolised the palm trees' effect in that environment was the song of Umm-Ahmed³ as mothers used to sing it for their children (from two months to ten months) as she used to say:

**Oh dearest,
May you grow and rise,
And own an orchard
Of palm trees that are soaring sky high.**

These verses reveal how endeared is the child to his mother as she wishes him to own a garden of palm trees that soar sky high. Thus this song reflects how attached people are to the palms that are the symbol of granting and donation.

In conclusion, we have a duty towards our heritage that we must uphold and rejuvenate as it is an extremely crucial part of our heritage represented by the revival of this style and type of rocking lullabies and kids' old songs that we chant and reiterate, conveying them to the present and future generations.

Aysha Khamis Al Dhaheri

Senior Researcher

Department of Culture and Tourism - Abu Dhabi

1 Umm-Salem is one of the elderly narrators, and has a long experience in obstetrics. Al Jahili district, in Al Ain city 5/9/2008.

2 Umm-Ebeid is a narrator who has experience in the field of herbal medicine Sarooj in Al Ain on 7/3/2008.

3 Um Ahmed: is one of the famous of narrators of folk tales. Al Maqam district, the city of Al Ain on 10/9/2008.