

Ethnomusicological collections in the Sound Archives in the face of globalisation

Véronique Ginouvès

▶ **To cite this version:**

Véronique Ginouvès. Ethnomusicological collections in the Sound Archives in the face of globalisation. XIII International Oral History Conference – International Oral History Association - Roma, 23-26 giugno 2004 - Memory and Globalization = Memoria y globalización = Memoria e Globalizzazione, Jun 2004. halshs-00004094

HAL Id: halshs-00004094
https://shs.hal.science/halshs-00004094

Submitted on 11 Jul 2005

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Ethnomusicological collections in the Sound Archives in the face of globalisation.

During the 1970s, many associations were fascinated by regional cultures and started to make oral collections all around France. The buzz words of the moment were “regional identity”, “traditional culture”, or “popular culture”. Historical research — under the designation “oral history” —, as well as certain departments of linguistics (dialectology, sociolinguistics), and ethnographical research were stimulated by the movement. Researchers dedicated themselves to describing and understanding the vision particular communities had of their own history. Thus oral inquiries emerged as a new source, or at least felt revived after a long time of negligence.

After national institutions had been set up — Phonothèque nationale and Archives de la parole in 1911, which was to join the Phonothèque later, or the Musée national des arts et traditions populaires, (MNATP) in 1939 —, the 70s witnessed the creation of sound archives, at State, association or private levels, on local or regional scales. But towards the mid-80s, the activity knew a regressive phase. Old enthusiasts appeared tainted by ideology. And they were seen as a backward-looking, demagogue and populist lot. For a close analysis of the phenomenon, I send you to a 1997 study by Jean-Noël Pelen, *L’histoire, l’Autre, le texte. Difficultés de la raison ethnographique* [History, the Other, the text : problems with the ethnographic reason]. And, to emphasize the phenomenon, some musicians, generally former collectors from the “folk” movement, felt no longer at home in regional music, and feared to have their works associated with the “folklore” label. They tried to give their musical creativeness a positive image. Their words were “métissage” (crossing), “community traditions”, “world culture”…

An inventory

An inquiry made in 1997 and updated in 1999 by the Sound archives of the MMSH, collecting the answers of 126 sound archives from South European countries, reinforces our analysis. The following table shows an obvious decline in collection making, and consequently in deposits from the early 80s onwards. The inquiry made by questionnaire allowed us to make a precise census and evaluation of 126 sound archives from Spain, Italy, Southern France, Greece and Cyprus[1].

Diagram 1 — How old are sounds collections in Southern Europe

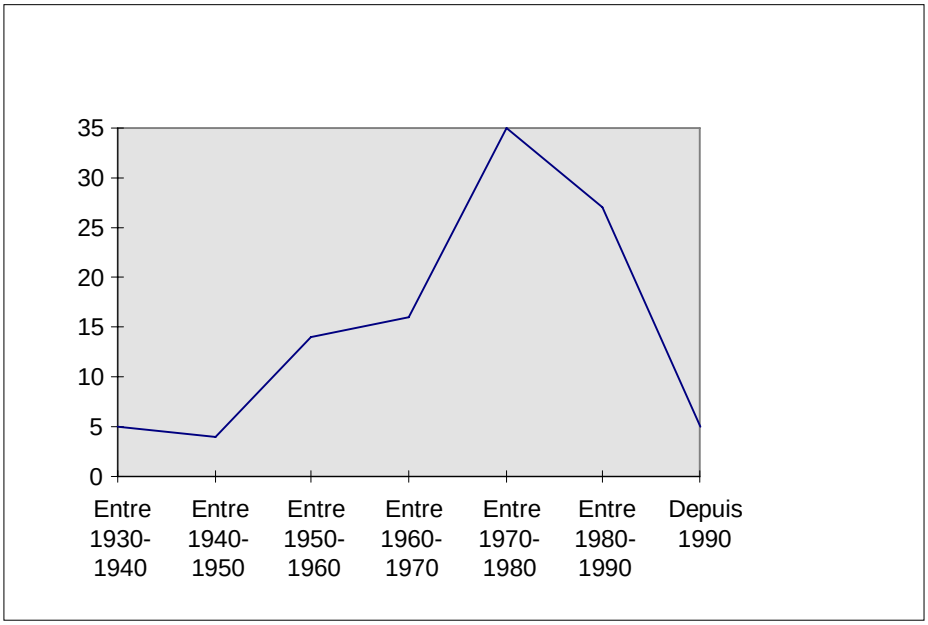


Diagram 2 — Typology of sound collections in Southern Europe

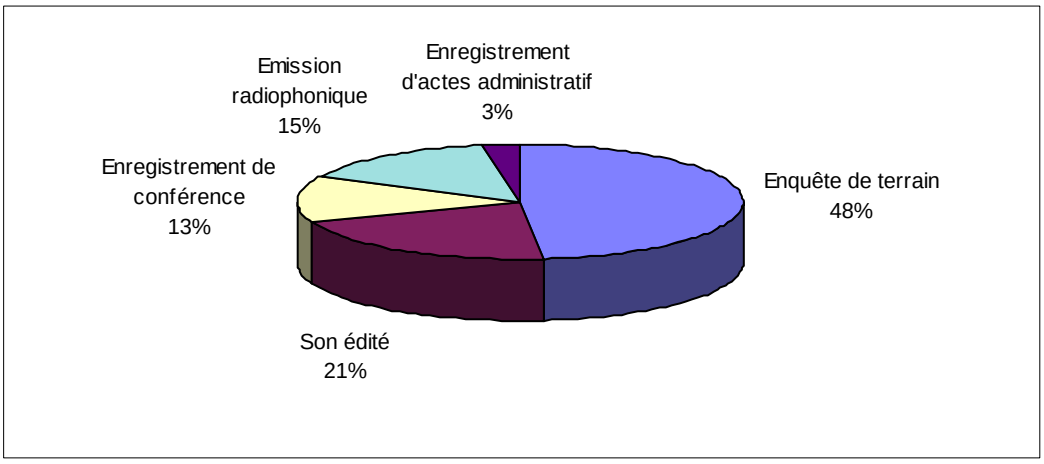
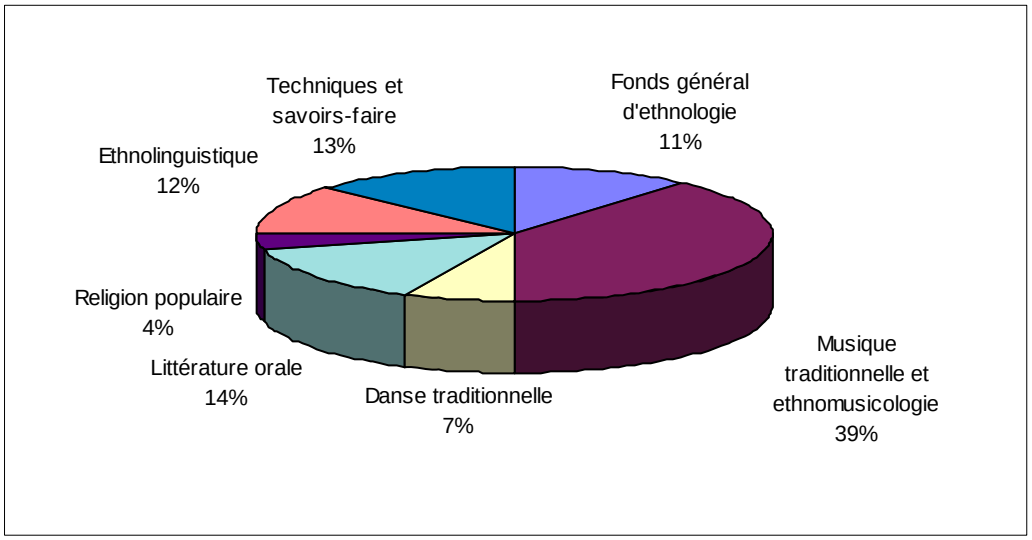


Diagram 3 — Set of themes in sound collections with an ethnological interest



Getting deposits is a crucial need for a sound archives to reach the critical mass that will make its collections relevant. In national sound archives, deposits have virtually come to a standstill. The Audiovisual Department of the Phonothèque Nationale has preferred to develop associated areas of activity within the regions, whereas the MNATP which is going on with the collecting campaigns, finds it difficult to get the inquirers to deposit their collections in its own museum. On the contrary, sound archives which we might call regional or local continue to get sizable deposits. For instance, at Dastum, a Breton association founded in 1972, singing and instrumental music make up to 80 % of a 5 000 hour collection and their 50 000 songs or instrumental pieces can be or accessed by Internet on the www.dastum.com site.

The 1970-born Conservatoire occitan (Centre for traditional music and dance in Midi-Pyrenees) located in Toulouse, has gathered over 1 000 hours of musical recordings within the Midi-Pyrenees cultural area, which amounts to 70 % of their collections. We find the same rate at the Metive, founded in 1969 in Poitou-Charentes, with roughly 10 000 hours of listening time. Let us add to these three centres the sound archives I am in charge of, which was created in 1979, with 4 000 hours of sound collections: with Dastum, Metive and Conservatoire occitan it makes up the associated area created by the Bibliothèque nationale de France in 1999 through the FAMDT network (Fédération des associations de musiques et danses traditionnelles) in the field of ethnomusicology and oral literature. Those association-

made sound archives are pioneers in their field. They are very well organized for conservation and documentary processing. They have reached the critical mass that may attract interest.

Resuming field collections…

At the MMSH Sound archives, unlike other centres which immersed in their region's culture, we realized that we were getting more and more deposits of non Provençal music, that is music from other areas often defined as "Mediterranean". We have linked the new deposits to those being made in the Centre des musiques traditionnelles in Lyons (which is a member of CMTRA: Centre des musiques et danses traditionnelles Rhône-Alpes). In fact, MMSH and CMTRA are both located in urbanised areas. With rural life on the wane, the functional character of traditional musics has disappeared as well. At the same time, in urbanised zones, migrant or recently settled communities have brought with them their own music which carries a real practicality, since the groups' departure from their rural surroundings took place recently.

At the CMTRA, such new collections, started in 1990, make up 20 % of unpublished sound collections. All of them have been recorded on DAT format. The publication of CDs in the "Atlas sonores" series has boosted this type of field recordings. For instance, the *Musiciens du Maghreb à Lyon* CD (No 11 of Atlas sonores) and the *Le Flamenco* CD (Atlas No 14) have allowed the deposit of about 10 hours each; the *Lyon orientale* CD (Atlas No 16) has allowed us to get a 50 hours deposit, and the *Musiques du monde dans les villes de Rhône-Alpes* CD (Atlas No 15) has been made from a 50 hour long collection. The *Atlas sonore des Pentes de la Croix-Rousse* CD (Atlas No 17) is issued from a 80 hours collection.

For about ten years now, in the PACA region of Southern France, we have noticed the emergence of new associations proposing initiation classes on cultures of the Mediterranean, chiefly on languages, music and danse. The prime concern of such structures was to welcome new immigrants and help them integrate in the host society, especially through literacy and administrative formalities. They have tried to widen their scope by adopting a dual-way approach: that they, the hosts, discover the culture of their guests.

Such classes are very successful and trigger new waves of practices, such as Oriental dancing which attracts a mainly French public. This results in many attempts at gap bridging between local and foreign cultures. However, we have to keep in mind, as several researchers think,

that any attempt at ethnicization in music is an illusion. In fact, how could it be possible to define and limit a musical practice within a geographical space and period of time which has tight limits, where we have observed no rapprochement, or borrowing, or influence, or exchange of any kind with other regions?

The target those associations want to reach is starting a dialogue and sharing emotions. If the teaching they propose may introduce an uninitiated public to folklore, it can also help migrant communities resume their links with their native country, the research for socialization being deeply rooted in dance and music especially in family celebrations. The link will be maintained with the second and third generation children, who are in need too. Associations base their work chiefly on the help of players and dancers to illustrate their yearly sessions. Such artists have formative experiences of unequal quality, they acquired by observation, daily practice, or the teaching of masters in their native countries. In these associations, occasional formative sessions are organized on the spot or in foreign countries.
A wide network of associations and activities has made oral cultures more visible in host societies, but equally has helped musicians of different origins to meet together. Crossed experiences between musicians, singers and dancers from various regions sharing their emotions and artistic sensitivities are countless. Some of them make a return journey of sorts by completing their formation and improving their skills with the new culture they come in contact with.

Collecting and releasing

And here comes the question of transmission. As we can see, in the framework of associations' activities or in artists' experience, all such cultural handing over is closely linked to or entirely dependent on individual experience and personal determination. If apprenticeship is commonly made by direct experience, it may also depend on collection making under very diverse conditions. And apprenticeship is too rarely considered as an end in itself. The collecting conditions are hazardous and if they are limited to the productions of artists, they do not lend themselves to a transmission by deposits in documentary centres.

Still, the collections deposited in sound archives are more and more in demand by researchers and students in ethnomusicology or oral literature and even by some artists. I think advisable to open such sources to a wider audience, for instance associations and other structures of transmission such as schools for example. Without referring to musical traditions which are,

as we have seen, too rigid, vague, difficult to use and often obsolete, the conservation of field observations made by non scientific investigators, could provide the public with valuable and keener information on day to day life, going beyond the trendy but hollow appellations of métissage and world music.

A dancer's attitude or a musician's sound are not plain aesthetic material, readily transposable on just any type of format. They are part and parcel of a cultural and societal entity and reflect a practice at a particular moment. Thus they are pieces of cultural information, and they lose some of their meaning if deprived of that dimension. Hence our insistence to make enquiries in a real-life situation and the need to deposit them, for a better sharing. They are valuable to artists in search of inspiration or in a learning period, to the public discovering another culture, or to communities eager to keep a link with their roots. Finally, there is a major scientific advantage in collecting and depositing musical inquiries: as time passes, such collections may constitute a corpus to illustrate how a musical practice in a society has been produced, exchanged, been the object of variations and evolution.

For a long time now the leading cultural model has ceased to be based on direct exchange and cultures still using the oral media are being marginalized. When they are investigated, the patrimony collected is very often given in a narrow and stereotyped shape, which results in a limited interest from the public. Still, giving access to these sources introduces a new role for sound archives: try to replace oral transmission of a culture otherwise deemed to disappear. Nowadays, the collections of traditional music are no longer confined to the cultural and geographic areas the regionalist movements of the 70s claimed as their turf, but broaden their scope to include musical practices of migrant or nomadic communities passing in France. Deposits being made in sound archives should reflect this kind of shift.

Véronique Ginouvès,
Maison Méditerranéenne des Sciences de l'Homme, Phonothèque

Bibliographie / discographie :

Bonnemason (Bénédicte), Ginouvès (Véronique), « Les phonothèques de l'oral : Collecter, documenter et valoriser les musiques traditionnelles », *Bulletin des Bibliothèques de France*, 2002, t.47, n°2, p.60-65.
En ligne : http://bbf.enssib.fr/bbf/html/2002_47_2/2002-2-p60-ginouves.xml.asp

Bours (Étienne) (éd.), Seeger (Pete), « Lettre écrite aux jeunes du monde entier en 1972 », *Trad Magazine*, 1999, n° 68, p. 14-16

Centre des musiques et danses traditionnelles Rhône-Alpes. (Atlas sonores) :
Musiciens du Maghreb à Lyon, 2000 (n°11)
Le Flamenco, 2000 (n°14)
Lyon orientale, 2001 (n°16)
Musiques du monde dans les villes de Rhône-Alpes, 2001 (n°15)
Pentes de la Croix-Rousse, 2001 (n°17)

Dufour (Annie-Hélène), « L'ethnologue et l'enregistrement de terrain », *Sonorités, Cahiers du patrimoine sonore et audiovisuel*, n°4, 2002, p. 13-23

Ginouvès (Véronique), *Constitution d'un réseau d'échanges sur le patrimoine oral en Europe du Sud : mise en place d'un système d'analyse documentaire commun. Rapport rédigé dans le cadre de la Communauté européenne - Direction générale XXII - Education - Formation – Jeunesse (Convention n° 95-06 MLC-0043-00)*, Doc. Dactylogr., Aix-en-Provence, mars 1997, 70p.

Ginouvès (Véronique), *Répertoire des collections sonores du patrimoine oral en Europe du Sud*, Aix-en-Provence, MMSH, 1997. 109p.

PELEN (Jean-Noël), " L'histoire, l'Autre, le texte. Difficultés de la raison ethnographique ", in MÉTRAL J. (coord.), *Les aléas du lien social. Constructions identitaires et culturelles dans la ville*, Paris, Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication, diffusé par La Documentation française, 1997, p. 173-190.

Viola (Paolo), « Quelques observations sur l’utilisation des sources orales », Mélanges Vovelle, Aix-en-Provence, Université de Provence, 1996, p. 429-436.

Notes

[1] Convention n° 95-06 MLC-0043-00 - Direction générale XXII - Education - Formation – Jeunesse