



## **Road to Rembetika: music of a greek sub-culture, songs of love, sorrow and hashish**

*Gail Holst*

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The rembetika, songs that were sung in the poor quarters of Smyrna, Istanbul and the ports of Greece in the late nineteenth century, and became the popular bouzouki music of the 1930s to 1950s, have many parallels with American blues. Like the blues, the rembetika were the music of outsiders, who developed their own slang and their own forms of expression. Road to Rembetika was the first book in English to attempt a general survey of the world of the 'rembetes' who smoked hashish and danced the passionate introspective zebekiko to release their emotions. The author Gail Holst, an Australian musician and writer who first came to Greece in 1965 and who has continued to perform and write about Greek music ever since, describes her own initiation into the rembetika, outlines its historical and sociological background, its musical characteristics and instrumentation. The second part of the book is a collection of rembetika songs in Greek with the English translation en face. The text is illustrated with photographs of the period, musical examples and original manuscripts of the songs. Although Road to Rembetika was first published many years ago, this revised edition of this now classic book still remains the most vibrant portrayal of this musical genre.

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