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The Palestinian music-making experience in the West Bank, 1920s to 1959: Nationalism, colonialism, and identity

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The Palestinian Music-Making Experience in the West Bank, 1920s to 1959: Nationalism, Colonialism, and Identity

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Abstract

The dominant theme of this dissertation is to highlight the significance of national discourses in the formation of Palestinian national identity in the context of songs. The research has been steered through chronological investigation of the widespread signs and formalities which pertain to music-making. Such traits are examined from the perspective of Palestinian identity, its development and change from the 1920s to 1959. The two case studies of Lebanon and Jordan have complemented the research, with the Palestinian West Bank as the focus. The dissertation explores how Palestinian national discourses manifest various facets and connotations of the nation's identity and often function as either unifying or divisive forces. Palestinian songs directly impacted the various communities they represented and point to the meaning of such encounters. By the late 1920s, songs were already a popular medium for expressing nationalism in Palestine, not only on the streets but also in schools. On March 1, 1936, the Palestine Broadcasting Service (PBS) began a radio broadcast from a transmitter in Ramallah which marked the beginning of a new era in Palestinian music-making. The British divided PBS's listening community according to religious identity and language, and subsequently three sections were created to serve each community: Arab, English, and Jewish. Within weeks, the three-year Arab Revolt in Palestine began. Despite the PBS being under British control, Palestinians used it as a tool for national expression. In 1948, Israel declared its independence, and subsequently hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were displaced. Therefore, two main historical periods will be examined in terms of identity-making and sustainability, 1920s–1948 and 1948–1959, which marks the complete transition of PBS to Jordanian rule. As identity in music can be challenging to trace, discussions of songs will be examined from either Western and Eastern musical perspectives, or both, as necessary.

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List of Recordings

Historical recordings of Palestinian music are hard to come by. The following are the categories of audio recordings in this study:

1. Rereleased recordings: recordings from the early 1900s to the 1960s were released by record companies that went out of business decades ago. Some of these were rereleased commercially by organizations that focus on research and archiving.
2. In the last two decades, many private collections started to float by private collectors, enthusiasts, forums, and organizations.
3. Broadcast recordings from radio or television programs that were never released commercially.

Information about such productions is minimal, and often speculative. In the case of copyrighted recordings, I use excerpts to demonstrate my point, given the extreme difficulty I have encountered in attempting to obtain permission. There are many recordings that I received from collectors, of which I use both excerpts and full recordings as needed.

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Recording 1	Audio	Muḥārib Dhīb, "Nūf"
Recording 2	Audio	Yūsif Abū Lail, "Nūf"
Recording 3	Audio	Rajab al-Akḥal, "Janaytu Min Khaddihā," Baidaphon B084580/B084581 (A and B), (presumably 1923)
Recording 4	Audio	Rajab al-Akḥal, "Salabū al-Ghuṣūn," Baidaphon B084582/B084583 (A and B), (presumably 1923)
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Recording 7	Audio	Thurayyā Qaddura, "Mawlāya Kam Ḥamal al-Nasīm," Baidaphon, (presumably 1920s)
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Recording 11	Audio	Nūḥ Ibrāhīm, "King Ghāzī," Sodwa, (presumably 1930s)

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Note on Musical Analysis

I do not provide a full musical analysis of the repertoire I discuss in the study. I provide analysis as necessary to fulfill the purpose of this study. The term *maqām* is often used interchangeably to describe the *maqām* system, which entails all the practices associated with it, and the scale itself. In order not to confuse the *maqām* system or practices with the *maqām* scale or mode, I use the phrase "*maqām* scale" each time I mention *maqām* as a scale (see Glossary).

Note on Translation and Transliteration

All translations are mine, except where noted. For the most part, I have followed the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* system of transliteration, except in the following instances:

1. The names of certain Palestinian cities, sites, and villages. Although I use Jerusalem instead of al-Quds, I use Yāfā instead of Jaffa, ʿAkkā instead of Acre. I do this because names of Palestinian villages and towns and cities, as well as how they are pronounced, were mentioned in Palestinian songs as an issue of contention signifying collective memory and identity.
2. The use of the definite article al is replaced with the as its equivalent in English for nouns other than names. For example, al-Muntada magazine will become the Muntada magazine, and al-Ṣarīḥ newspaper will become the Ṣarīḥ newspaper, but when the definite article appears in the middle of the name of a place, newspaper, magazine and so on it will be retained, such as Mirʾāt al-Sharq newspaper.
3. When the definite article al appears in the family name such as for example ʿAzmī al-Nashāshībī, the al will be retained: ʿAzmī al-Nashāshībī resigned in 1956, or when appearing at the beginning of a sentence, al-Nashāshībī resigned in 1956. However, if the name of the family appears by itself signifying the family, not only one person, then the al will be dropped and replaced with "the." For example, instead of the al-Nashāshībī family was powerful; the sentence will become the Nashāshībī family was powerful.

4. When two separate words are connected in how they are pronounced an underscore symbol will be used. For example, al-nawm al-thaqīl will become an-nawm_ith-thaqīl.
5. The sun and moon letters and hamzat waṣl pronunciation rules apply to all transliterations, especially in the lyrics of songs. The exceptions to this rule are the titles of songs, names of places, book titles, articles titles, newspaper names, genre names, and personal names. For example, I use ʿAzmī al-Nashāshībī instead of ʿAzmī n-Nashāshībī, and I use *raqs al-samāḥ* (a dance genre) instead of *raqṣ_is-samāḥ*.

Glossary of Terms[1]

ʿatābā	ʿAtābā is a traditional ad libitum song form in colloquial Arabic.
baḥr	The meter of the rhythmical poetry is known in Arabic as *baḥr* (pl. *buḥūr*). The measuring unit of *buḥūr* is known as *tafʿīla*, and every *baḥr* contains a certain number of *tafaʿīlāt* (sing. *Tafʿīla*) which the poet has to observe in every line of the poem. Each line consists of two identical hemistiches, and each hemistich consists of a number of *tafʿīla* that form feet. The measuring procedure of a poem is very rigorous. Sometimes adding or removing a consonant or a vowel can shift the *bayt* (verse) from one meter to another. Also, in rhymed poetry, every *bayt* must end with the same *qāfiya* (rhyme) throughout the poem. The most popular *buḥūr* are *al-basīṭ*, *al-mutadārak*, *al-raml*, *al-rajaz*, *al-wāfir, al-kāmil.* In traditional contexts, the poetic meter is named according to genres, such as the *dalʿūna baḥr*, or *murabbaʿ baḥr*, and so on.
bashraf	*Bashraf* is an Ottoman instrumental form which is similar in structure to the *samāʿī*. The main difference is that the rhythmic structure of the *bashraf* is generally more complex and preserved throughout the piece. The *bashraf* is also based on a *maqām*.
basta	*Basta* is a term used primarily in Iraq describing *shaʿbī* songs.
dabka (pl. dabkāt)	Traditional line dance. The term also refers to the act of dancing or stomping.
dūlāb	Short instrumental piece that aims to present a *maqām* before a longer piece of music or song.
dalʿūnā	Traditional song-type in colloquial Arabic that often accompanies dance on multiple occasions.
darbukka	A goblet-shaped percussion instrument.
dawr (pl. adwār)	An Egyptian composed vocal form. It is complex to produce and perform, and very demanding of the vocalist.
dhimma	*Dhimma* refers to the people of the *dhimma*, a historical term referring to non-Muslim communities living in an Islamic state with legal protection (Campo 2010).

[1] Words not included in standard English dictionaries are italicized if they are not included in this glossary. All definitions are by the author except where noted.

farʿāwī	A type of sung *zajal* in colloquial Arabic typically addressed bravery, courage, strength, triumph, practiced at weddings.
ḥidāʾ [singer called ḥadādī or ḥaddaya]	A type of sung *zajal* in colloquial Arabic typically practiced while riding.
layālī	The *layālī* is a solo vocal improvisation on the phrase *yā lail yā ʿain* (O Night, O Eye). The phrase is just a pun on words and does not imply a literal meaning. It functions as a vehicle for vocal ornamentations and transitions. *Layālī* can stand alone, but often before other vocal forms such as *mawwāl*, or *qaṣīda*.
Maqām (pl. maqāmāt)	The *maqām* system is the principal musical practice in Middle Eastern music, which encompasses the general principles which govern the melodic, rhythmic, and aesthetic construction of repertoire.
maqām scale	The *maqām* scale is a set of pitches used to translate *maqām* principles. Some of the *maqāmāt* mentioned in the study include bayātī, rast, sikāh, huzām, ḥijāz, jihārkah, ʿajam, nahawand, kurdī, rāhit il-arwāḥ (see "List of Maqāmāt" in the Appendix).
Mashriq	The Mashriq refers to the countries bounded between the Mediterranean Sea and Iran. Currently, it loosely refers to Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Jordan. Its geographical corollary is the Maghrib, which comprises the countries of North Africa.
mawwāl	*Mawwāl* is an ad libitum song-type in colloquial Arabic.
mihbāsh	*Mihbāsh* is a carved wooden coffee grinder, which includes a base and pestle. A *mihbāsh* is the Arab emblem of honor, leadership, and hospitality since historically, only tribal leaders would afford serving coffee.
mījānā	*Mījānā* is an ad libitum and metered song-type in colloquial Arabic.
mijwiz	Double-tubed reed woodwind traditional musical instrument.
muʿanna	A type of *zajal* appears typically in weddings, common in Lebanon.
murabbaʿ	A quatrain type of *zajal* appears typically in weddings and accompanying *saḥja* (*malʿab*) dances. This type includes the phrase *yā ḥalālī yā mālī*, always repeated by the attendees. The term is used to describe two things, the poetic meter or *baḥr* of the *murabbaʿ* and the *murabbaʿ* song type.

muwashshaḥ (pl. muwashshaḥāt)	*Muwashshaḥ* is a strophic and secular song genre mostly known in Aleppo. It is accompanied by *takht*, and several *maqāmāt* and rhythms may occur in the same song.
nashīd (pl. anāshīd)	The Arabic verb *nashada* means to recite, sing, or ask. In music, a *nashīd* is a work of vocal music. It is either. There is the *nashīd dīnī*, religious song, typically sung acapella or accompanied and or accompanied by a percussion instrument, or musical instruments such in *nashīd waṭanī*, national song, accompanied by a band or other musical instruments. Anthems fall into the latter category.
nāy	*Nāy* is a wind instrument that consists of a hollow cylinder with seven finger holes.
qānūn	A trapezoidal shaped plucked zither used widely in the Middle East.
qarrādī	A metered fast traditional song. It is often sung during wedding ceremonies while people are seated and not during dances.
qaṣīda	When translated, the term means a poem in standard Arabic. In music, it refers to two song types: 1) *qaṣīda muʾaqqaʿa*, a metered or pulsed song; 2) *qaṣīda mursala*, non-metered, and free. Both song types are set to standard Arabic poems. Such songs are usually performed by a solo vocalist accompanied by *takht*. They tend to be elaborate and complex in terms of *maqām*. The reason I use the term pulsed, not rhythmic, is that rhythmic cycles are not strictly followed if exited in the first place. Rhythmic values can be equal to one beat, two beats, three, four, and so on. In Byzantine music, this practice is called tonic rhythm, where the weight of the music, the downbeat, is determined by the accent of the word. For more about this, see Nicholas M. Kastanas (1990).
Qurʾan	The Muslim holy book.
rabāba	The *rebab* is a type of a bowed string instrument, typically with one or two strings.
santūr	A hammered dulcimer used in the Middle East, Central Asia, and part of Asia Minor.
samāʿī	An Ottoman instrumental form. It consists of four sections; a refrain called *taslīm* follows each. The first three sections are in the rhythm 10/8, and the fourth must be based on a different rhythm. It is based on *maqām*.
shaʿbī	*Shaʿbī* songs are derived from traditional tunes where additional sections or expanded melodic phrases occur. The word *shaʿbī*

	(populist) comes from *shaʿb*, meaning people. A *zajjāl* may also become a *shaʿbī* poet, or *shāʿir shaʿbī*, a poet of the people. The Arabic word *shaʿbī* does not precisely mean popular, which is its literal translations. Based on this context, the term implies poetry-writing, which is expressive of what the people feel. Such poems are set according to local poetic forms. The closest word to it in English is "populist."
shabbāba	The *shabbāba* is a wind instrument that consists of a hollow cylinder with six finger holes.
shurūqī	A type of ad libitum sung poetry to narrate a story or highlight a specific moral. It appears in traditional *zajal* contexts.
takht	An ensemble consisting of *ʿūd, qānūn, nāy*, violin, percussion (*bendir* [frame drum], *darbukka*, or *riq* [tambourine]).
taqsīm (pl. taqāsīm)	A form of instrumental improvisation where the instrumentalist chooses a melodic mode, offers an interpretation of the mode, ascends or descends in pitch, and modulates to other modes.
tarḥīl	A vocal technique is called where the singer drags behind the pulse for dramatic effect and then finally lands on the downbeat. It is also used as a cadence.
tarwīda (pl. tarāwīd)	A slow type of traditional song, with a beat, but non-metered. Common among women.
ṭaqṭūqa (pl. ṭaqāṭīq) (also ihzūja or uhzūja [pl. ahāzīj]	A short song with multiple verses and a repeating refrain, often strophic. It utilizes simple rhythms and accessible lyrics, easy to sing along to or memorize.
ṭarab	*Ṭarab* refers to the ecstatic experience associated with the performance of *maqām* music.
ʿūd	A short neck lute type pear-shaped string instrument. Commonly used in the music of the Middle East.
ughniya	A generic term meaning song. It has been used to describe a long song developed toward the middle of the twentieth century.
yarghūl	A double-tubed reed woodwind traditional musical instrument. One of the tubes is longer than the other.
zajal	A generic term describing various forms of vernacular poetry declaimed or sung at social and family celebrations and in daily life.

zajjāl (pl. zajjālīn) The person who recites or sings *zajal* is called *zajjāl*, poet-singer.

List of Abbreviations

ALECSO: Arab Organization for Education, Culture, and Science

AMAR: Foundation for Arab Music Archiving and Research

AUB: American University of Beirut

CMS: Church Missionary Society

FRUS: Foreign Relations of the United States

ISA: Israel State Archives

LRC: Lebanese Recording Company

NEBS: Near East Arab Broadcasting Station

NLI: National Library of Israel

PBS: Palestine Broadcasting Station

NAWA: Palestinian Institute for Cultural Development

PLO: Palestinian Liberation Organization

USSR: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

UAR: United Arab Republic

UN: United Nations

UNGA: United Nations General Assembly

UNISPAL: United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine

UNRWA: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

YMCA: Young Men's Christian Association

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