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

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Conclusion

Music Under the British

Recordings of Palestinian songs from the 1920s and 1930s present a nuanced and complex picture of how Palestinians responded to their surroundings. Some songs reflected the apolitical approach favored by the British while others sought to resist them by expressing public opinion. Nūḥ Ibrāhīm and Nimir Nāṣir wrote songs that belonged to the second category. Their songs reflected the local nationalist sentiment and focused on responding to current events. They wrote their lyrics in the colloquial variety of Arabic that is specific to the coastal regions of Palestine, and their music featured expanded local and regional song types. Although their songs were not musically complex in comparison to those of al-Akḥal, Qaddūra and ‘Awaḍ, both Ibrāhīm and Nāṣir composed in *maqām* and used traditional musical instruments in their performances and recordings. Because Western musical practices were at that point limited to mission contexts, the musical sensibilities of Ibrāhīm and Nāṣir remained relatively distant from Western music, which was also the case with the songs of al-Akḥal, Qaddūra and ‘Awaḍ. The songs of Ibrāhīm and Nāṣir were popular among Palestinians but did not appeal to the British.

Singing about subjects that induced violence or political action—as in the songs of Nimir Nāṣir, ‘Abd al-Raḥman al-Barghūtī, and Nūḥ Ibrāhīm—reflects a strong sense of agency. However, because broadcasting became an essential platform for composers and singers to showcase their works, retaining control over songs placed musicians in a predicament in which they had to choose between having agency or becoming outcasts. Ultimately, the position of the Arab Section of PBS, and its willingness to play an apolitical and pragmatic role, affirmed its commitment to the interpretation and implementation of British policies. For example, upon Nuwayhid’s appointment at PBS, he prohibited various songs that he deemed “tasteless and shameful” (Nuwayhid 1993, 260). As he put it:

I had an inclination, which I hoped will grow in the Arab countries, namely, the fight against vulgar songs, including those recorded on discs. I sifted through the discs at the PBS library and banished all recordings of this kind. This cleanup was necessary to elevate the taste of Arab listeners for the better. (ibid.)

Moreover, Nuwayhid insisted on having the Western-trained al-Batrūnī educate all Eastern musicians in reading and writing music. However, there is no indication that this was reciprocal, which was consistent with the notion of “educate and elevate.” Due to this arrangement, Western-trained musicians were given the upper hand and were assumed to be superior to their Eastern counterparts, rather than equal. While under Ṭūqān, Nuwayhid and al-Nashāshībī, there was no mention if Eastern and Western-trained musicians were working together to address the notion of musical progress. Instead, the pressure was on the Arab musicians operating in the realm of traditional music to “progress” and “educate” themselves. Essentially, under the British, PBS managed to achieve the following with its Arab Section:

1. separate folk musicians from their communities by dictating the subjects and lyrics that they sang on the radio;
2. establish the perception of rural musical practices as decaying remnants of the past;

3. stage folk performances and used them as the basis for the development of other forms;
4. enforce the apoliticization of music-making;
5. allow musicians to express patriotism but only as substitute for free political expression;
6. confine music-making to established colonial ventures and prepare the locals to play a similar role in the future;
7. keep all types of music and musicians separated from each other, and reflect this separation through the inequality in broadcast times and programming;
8. provide Western-trained Christian Palestinians with the means to disseminate Western music through PBS; and
9. establish Western music as superior to its local counterpart and emphasize the notion of “educate and elevate” through its colonial perspective of “modernization first” (Stanton 2013, 3).

Up until the establishment of PBS in 1936, Western music-making occurred in missionary settings. However, it was through PBS that such practices were scaled to the public sphere. The songs that al-Batrūnī and ‘Arnīṭa wrote during this period were set in standard Arabic and focused on educational and patriotic themes. Although this practice helped Palestinian Anglicans and Catholics sustain a patriotic image in the public sphere, it distanced them musically and culturally from the rest of the population. The reason for this is that their songs followed European musical aesthetics and performance practices. Pratt ([1992] 2008) has argued that relations between the colonizers and the colonized are not based entirely on separation, but rather include interaction and co-existence. With regard to the British and

Christian mission, these interactions steered Palestinian Anglicans and Catholics to a pragmatic position characterized by conflicting elements, such as compromise, resistance, assertion, imitation, hybridity, and adaptation, as I described in the introduction (see Childs and Williams [1997] 2013). Their rural musical practices were becoming gradually irrelevant, obsolete, and artifacts from a previous life.

Broadcasting After 1948

Although peasant and Bedouin songs occupied a small but resilient space within PBS before 1948, their importance grew consistently after 1948. When Nuwayhid once again directed the station while it was under control by Jordan, songs continued being apolitical, offering a generic sense of patriotism, and they were still channeled into the narrow realms of governmental censorship. By the end of the 1950s, Jordan Radio's productions shifted towards Bedouin dialect, and its broadcasts heavily promoted Bedouin heritage. This approach is evident not only in terms of the quantity of radio productions that were Bedouin-themed but also from testimonies by people who were active during that time, including Salwa (1943–), who witnessed all of the complexities of that era. When the station moved to Amman in 1959, this repertoire took the main stage not as a gesture of inclusivity of the various musical traditions that PBS previously presented, but as an instantiation of Jordanian nationalism. As governmental establishments, radio stations in Lebanon and Jordan had funding and steady means to compensate musicians for their work. Accordingly, for most musicians, the option of depending on record sales while maintaining political agency was not as reliable and lucrative when compared with stable appearances on the air, as well as exposure and potential future paid work. Essentially, the limited agency that Palestinian musicians endured under the British continued under Arab governments after 1948.

Negotiating Notions of Identity and Nation after 1948

Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Egypt, and Lebanon were actively building their national institutions and navigating questions of nationalism, religion, local and international alliances, and sovereignty. At first, the Palestinian presence in Jordan and Lebanon was welcomed, despite the economic and social disparities. However, during that period, tensions related to the emergence of Palestinians as a potential political and cultural force began to surface. Under these circumstances, Palestinian musicians adjusted the presentation of their identity and nationalist outlooks, as is evident in the cases of al-Rūmī, al-Bandak, al-Khammāsh, al-Sharīf, and al-‘Āṣ.

On the other hand, music offered Palestinian refugees with the means to retain some of their values, customs, and traditions. While continuing to use traditional musical practices as a matter of culture and socialization, they also utilized musical performance as a means to voice their narratives, preserve their identity, and affirm their nationalist and political positions. Because refugee camps were made up a concentration of many villages, and were essentially big clusters of displaced Palestinians, refugee populations advised new positions towards their surroundings. In 2017, I interviewed Palestinian filmmaker and lyricist Sobhi al-Zobaidi. Al-Zobaidi was born in Jerusalem in 1961 but grew up in Jalazone, a refugee camp seven kilometers north of Ramallah. He recalled the intensity of narratives, stories, images, and accents, saying that:

In different weddings there were different songs in different accents. I memorized so many of those songs. At age ten, I knew what people from the city of Lid sing in their weddings, the songs of the people from Beit Nabala, and the songs from the village of Al-Dawaymeh, and so many more. (interview with Al-Zobaidi, 2017)

Ultimately, and despite their dire conditions, Palestinian refugees retained agency with regard to their expressions and had more control over music-making in the dominions of refugee camps.

Colonial Discourses

During the Mandate period, intellectuals and notable families alike dominated the cultural and political discourses in Palestine. With the help of the British, they positioned themselves to assume social and political authority, and took upon themselves the responsibility of speaking on behalf of the people. However, the contrasting and often conflicting views concerning the Palestinian national discourse among the various communities in Palestinian society presented serious challenges to the development of a cohesive Palestinian identity. For example, al-Sakakini feared that the 1936 revolt would lead to inhumane practices similar to those of previous revolts and warned people about the dangers of the Islamic jihadist movement of 'Iz al-Dīn al-Qassām. He also criticized PBS's music broadcasts and openly embraced Western music as a symbol of progress. The evolution of a secular nationalist thought among intellectuals and notable families coincided with consistent alienation by Zionist ideology and colonial policies. Their Christian identity was yet evident in most of their writings. Yet, despite their pragmatism, al-Sakakini and Totah approached the conflict from a humanistic perspective.

The events experienced by communities in Palestine forged opportunities that prompted musicians, Jewish and non-Jewish, to express aspects of their identity, including their political positions. Zionism and the British colonial rule may have provided additional reasons for Palestinian nationalism to grow more quickly and prompted Palestinians to prepare for potential statehood. However, this period was characterized by intense geographic, demographic, and religious separation between these communities, which was apparent in how they expressed identity in various ways, including music. The dealings between the colonizers and colonized Arabs fluctuated between co-presence, collaboration, sympathetic understanding of British motives and practices, as well as alignment. There are numerous examples of such interactions. One that stands out is that of Ibrāhīm, who, prior to joining the resistance movement, gifted

various British officials copies of his nationalist recordings in the hopes that they would change their mind with regard to their policies in Palestine. In contrast to Ibrāhīm’s performative approach in his songs and actions, the 1956 Birzeit concert represented a pedagogic approach, which attempted to emphasize European musical and cultural models and highlight the Anglican community’s social preeminence and worthiness to engage in building a nation. This approach is consistent with that of al-Sakakini and Totah. These two approaches, which are illustrated in the diagram below, capture the ways in which Palestinian communities differed in terms of how they expressed identity, nationalism, as well as ideology.

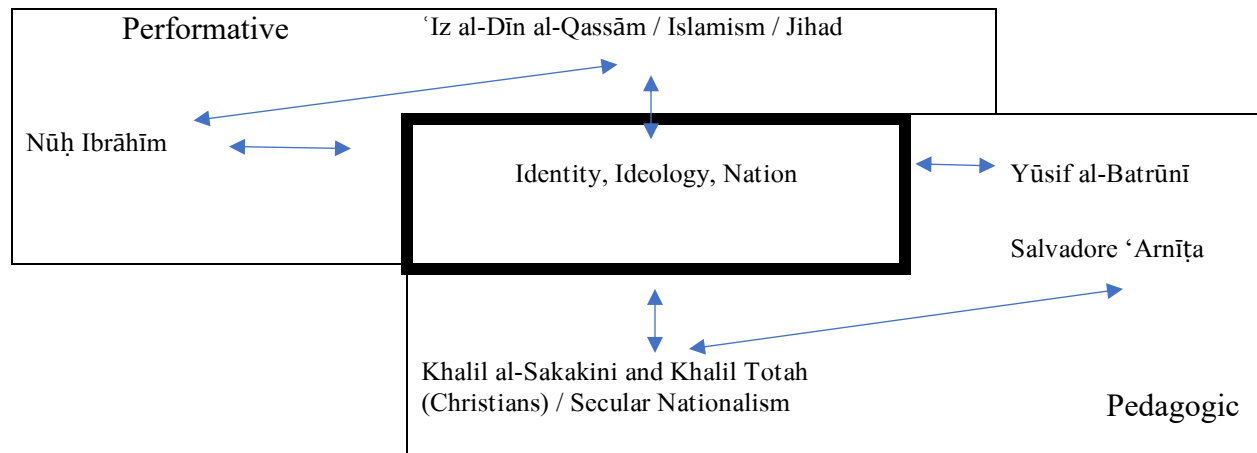


Figure 54. The notions of identity, ideology, and nation.

During the 1930s and 1940s, the divided fabric of Palestinian society was further articulated through the distinct fields of time and space that notable families created for themselves. Within these fields of space and time existed various practices that were proclaimed as worthy of becoming national discourses, such as those of Totah, al-Sakakini, al-ʿĀrif, Nuwayḥid, and al-Nashāshībī. Ultimately, these ideals were influenced by social stimuli that came from the Ottomans, Europe, Christian mission, and the policies of the Mandate government. The significance of the 1956 concert, therefore, lies in how Christian mission and

British policies contributed to the rearrangement of the Palestinian population in terms of Western versus Eastern musical practices, culture, politics, and religion. It also signifies the beginning of established engagements that were nurtured by local families as way of embracing and leading colonial discourses.

The turbulent directorial tenures of Ibrāhīm Ṭūqān from 1936 to 1940, ‘Ajāj Nuwayhid from 1940 to 1944, and ‘Azmī al-Nahsāshībī from 1944 to 1948 all demonstrate how the role of the Arab Section remained under the control of the British. The differences between the three men, however, reflected regional as well as international developments. For example, a few weeks after PBS started broadcasting under Ṭūqān, the Arab Revolt in Palestine erupted, presenting the leadership of the Arab Section with a political dilemma. This situation was not the only impasse that Ṭūqān was forced to navigate: his father, ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ Ṭūqān, was arrested in 1936 for his involvement in the Revolt and was eventually exiled by the British to Egypt (Ṭūqān 1985). Ṭūqān, nevertheless, kept his job with the British at PBS and did not react publicly to his father’s deportation. Nuwayhid faced similar dilemmas, which eventually lead to his resignation in 1944. As for al-Nahsāshībī, he continued to act pragmatically while dealing with the British and condoned the Hashemites as an alternative to al-Ḥusainī’s leadership of the Palestinian people.

In a 1936 editorial in the Arab Palestinian newspaper *Mir’āt al-Sharq* (Mirror of the East), published in Arabic in Jerusalem, the author criticized the Arab section of PBS for its inadequate programming and favoritism (November 14, 1936, 3). The article was signed by the name Jamīl, which was probably an alias. The article mentioned names, specific music genres, and offered multiple examples of how PBS malfunctioned. The author wrote in despair that it was unfortunate that the station was rounding up mediocre, forgotten singers and monologists

and giving them pride of place. He added, sarcastically, that what made matters worse was that the station opened its doors to such individuals, and was teaching and training them how to sing at the expense of millions of educated ears and tastes (Jamīl 1936). He went on to accuse the Arab section of being selective in its hiring of musicians, writers, actors, and playwrights, a trend that I discussed earlier (see Chapter 2.6).

PBS became a tool to help the British establish colonial institutions, especially on the Arab side. As a contact zone, it became the ultimate manifestation of how the British viewed and interacted with the Palestinian locals, as well as how local urbanites and notables situated themselves with regard to the British. Although music-making evolved tremendously at PBS, as shown in Chapter 2, the apolitical path that it adhered to attests to the fact that the British wanted to appease the population and neutralize its political impact. These discourses were determined by the British and disseminated to Palestinians through PBS publications and broadcasts.

The impact of the British was apparent to listeners, especially at the level of PBS's structure, organization, and political function (Stanton 2013). Stanton has discussed how various Palestinian newspapers throughout the station's history accused PBS broadcasts of disseminating the government-approved news. These criticisms extended to PBS's inability to freely report news of immediate relevance and interest to Palestinian communities (ibid.). Stanton has also argued that, unlike BBC and BBC Empire programming, the music, talks, news, and other programming broadcast from Cairo, Jerusalem, and Yāfā reflected and projected not a British identity but rather an Egyptian, Palestinian, and Arab nationalist one (Stanton 2013). However, it appears that only during the tenure of 'Ajāj Nuwayhid from 1940-1944, which coincided with World War II, did the British offer limited flexibility in music and cultural programming (Nuwayhid 1993); the overall direction of PBS continued to be entirely controlled by the

British.⁹⁵ Palestinian publications of the period criticized the influence of the British at the level of programming in PBS, as well as the station's obvious allegiance to Britain and notable local families (al-Sabi' [the *Ṣarīḥ* newspaper] 1950). The Arab Section in PBS, nonetheless, took advantage of the station's access to resources. It used the tools that were available to it in an attempt to shape a sense of national identity but stopped short of demanding sovereignty or engaging in political debates.

All three directors of the Arab Section were educated urbanites and understood the need for change. Although they are considered nationalists, their writings show that they had fundamental differences regarding the definition of nationalism.⁹⁶ Their different views, convictions, allegiances, pose various questions about the nature of their nationalist visions, as well as the forces that motivated them to engage in broadcasting, namely the British and the Hashemites. Essentially, their legacies are different from each other. Ṭūqān and al-Nashāshībī came from notable Palestinian families from Nablus and Jerusalem, respectively, while Nuwayḥīd was born in Lebanon and settled in Palestine. In all cases, however, the British were in total control. For example, after meeting with the British on November 27, 1935, al-Sakakini reflected on the meeting in a letter to his son the following day, writing, "I still believe that appointing a director of the Arab Section will be based on the [British] government's opinion, and what Mr. such-and-such recommend" (al-Sakakini 2006, 178). Al-Sakakini understood, not

⁹⁵ According al-Jūzī (2010) PBS was run by mostly Palestinians and some Egyptians and Lebanese. They occupied various positions in the station, including program supervisors, musicians, administrators, announcers, engineers, producers, and writers.

⁹⁶ Al-Nashāshībī was the most vocal and prolific of the three directors. His columns appeared regularly in PBS broadcast programs, and he gave a ten-minute weekly address to listeners. He also continued to publish in local newspapers and magazines.

only as an insider but also as an intellectual, that the British designed PBS to be an institution that fulfilled a specific duty and that they were only going to hire individuals who agreed with their vision.

On February 1, 1936, a few weeks before Ṭūqān took the sub-director position, Mūsa al-‘Alamī visited al-Sakakini and asked him to consider accepting the job. This time around, the request was coming from Sir Arthur Grenfell Wauchope, then the High Commissioner (ibid.). The appointment and dismissal of Ṭūqān, as well as the appointment and departure of Nuwayhiḍ and the appointment of al-Nashāshībī were all British decisions, conceived and implemented to accommodate and reflect British policies and vision. Each one of these individuals fulfilled the role designed for them, with an assortment of results, summed up as follows.

1. Ṭūqān helped PBS gain credibility among Palestinians who viewed the station with deep suspicion (Stanton 2013).
2. Nuwayhiḍ ensured the political pacification of the nationalist movement and alliance with the British during World War II (Nuwayhiḍ 1993). He was also directly involved in mediating the annexation of the West Bank.
3. Al-Nashāshībī had close ties with the British and the monarchy of Transjordan and helped ease the transition to the 1950 annexation. Al-Nashashībī family was known for having close relationships with the royal family of Transjordan and for being fierce opponents of Amīn al-Ḥusainī (al-Ḥūt 1981).

As Robson (2011), Willson (2013), and Haiduc-Dale (2015) describe, British administrators’ plans to separate musical cultures and impose imagined new ones were an integral component of their intention to have divided populations to respond differently to their surroundings. One of the most profound results of this is that the Palestinian Christians who had

been exposed to Western music since the mid-nineteenth century were by that time determined to express themselves through Western music, while also signifying a strong national identity. For example, in a letter on January 2, 1936, al-Sakakini assured his son Sarī that, upon his return to Palestine from the United States, he would not find music concerts, dance parties, theater, literature, or cinema (al-Sakakini 2006). Despite the magnitude of evidence referring to cultural activities in Palestine during that period, al-Sakakini did not consider such events valuable. In a letter on March 30, 1936, al-Sakakini reiterated this view upon the opening of PBS, described its music broadcasts as vulgar and unworthy. In various other places in his memoir, al-Sakakini makes several references to engaging in listening to and singing Western music. He mentions specific concerts of Western music that he and his family attended at the YMCA and comments on these experiences. He appears to have engaged only with Western music, which suggests that his notion of good music was exclusively Western music. Furthermore, he reiterated that modern and Western values and culture are crucial to knowledge and advancement. This belief had roots in the transformations that began in the late Ottoman period and were in accordance with colonial and Christian mission discourses.

Palestinian music-making was successful in distinguishing itself from the Zionist project, and PBS displayed confidence in its attempts to guide the evolution of Palestinian identity and enforce an Arab nationalist sentiment that was distinct from the Jewish one. It also contributed to the polarization of Palestinians in terms of their socioeconomic, religious, and political affiliations and aspirations. While the central conflict appears to have engaged two antagonistic groups, Muslims and Jews, the role played by Christians fluctuated between fighting alongside the Muslims by advocating for and supporting the Muslim community and observing and accommodating the will of the powerful.

Given that the Zionist project served only Jews, not Muslims or Christians, the Muslim majority defined its political power based on this premise. Before 1948, many composers, including Nūḥ Ibrāhīm, wrote songs praising monarchies. Although Ibrāhīm only honored the royal family of Iraq, and not Jordan's, he refrained from attacking it. Ibrāhīm articulated his understanding of the identity of the Arab as Muslim and Christian. He did not acknowledge the Jewish connection to the land, nor the existence of an indigenous Jewish community in Palestine or the Arab-ness of Jews. He also never said the word “Jewish” when referring to the conflict, and instead used the term “Zionist.” His references to the Islamic religious nature of the resistance occupied the most significant portion of his later writings, while references to Arab nationalism seemed secondary.

The Redefinition of al-Mashriq

Palestinians did not become passive objects of the larger forces that surrounded them. To the contrary, evidence from this period shows that they acted on the notion of identity and agency whenever possible and made choices that corresponded to the most critical phase of their history. The post-1948 contributions of Palestinian intellectuals, artists, and professionals reflect the visions that these individuals had for their own country before 1948. Essentially, Palestinian music-making did not stop; rather, it seems to have taken a different shape that was conceptually similar and in some cases identical to the original visions that were pursued by both the PBS and NEBS in Palestine—at the level of songs, lyrics, dialect, and performance practices, as well as at the level of the song types that found their way onto the scene throughout the 1940s. Most importantly, Palestinians brought perspective, best practices, and experience to al-Mashriq.

For Ṣabrī al-Sharīf, extending his vision 135 miles north towards Beirut was just an extension of the same idea that he had for Palestine. In some ways, his vision back at the NEBS

similarly revolved around the same concepts, people, tools, philosophies, strategies, and approaches to music-making. Al-Sharīf's attempt to modernize music, shorten songs, and utilize local musical heritage and dialects as the main components for al-Mashriq's new song was not restricted to Palestine. It was instead a vision for the whole of Mashriq, a geographic area that both the PBS and NEBS covered in their broadcast and programming. The ideals and vision of al-Sharīf that he planned for al-Mashriq materialized in Lebanon. For him, it was that simple: the notion of Palestine versus Lebanon did not seem to be on his mind. Subsequently, music-making in Lebanon took off forcefully at the hands of al-Raḥbānī Brothers, with Ṣabrī al-Sharīf as their legal partner. Manṣūr Raḥbānī recalled that period and said that at some point they realized that what Egyptian and Bedouin music offered at the time were sufficient to fully explore what they wanted to say through their songs (Zughaib 1993).

Upon moving NEBS's production unit to Beirut, al-Sharīf utilized a diverse group of musicians, composers, choreographers, actors, poets, and professionals and gave them the chance to develop, discuss, enhance, produce, and think creatively. Shortly after al-Rūmī discovered Fayrūz and introduced her to Raḥbānī Brothers, al-Sharīf began to work closely with Fayrūz and the Brothers. His relationship with them flourished, lasting for decades, and marked the characteristics and evolution of the Lebanese song, as discussed in Chapters 3 and 4. In Lebanon, al-Sharīf and al-Rūmī became actively involved in seeking talent and putting it to work and continued to do so throughout their careers (al-Rūmī 1992; Sabri 2012). Ultimately, they discovered hundreds of local talents. Through their work—al-Sharīf in the private sector, and al-Rūmī and al-Khammāsh in governmental settings—they materialized a vision of creating music that spoke to the particularities of al-Mashriq.

Summary

Before 1936, musical practices in Palestine relied heavily on colloquial poetry, especially in rural communities, which constituted most of the population. The transcriptions of Dalman, the Jessups, Iṣṭifān, Foley, and Ford explored some of the music and folk poetry that existed among Palestinian communities in Bedouin, peasant, and urban settings. These records, along with the writings of al-Jawhariyyeh and Lachmann, and some historical recordings, reveal many differences and similarities between these song types. Such observations can be seen through poetry, dialects, *maqām*, and form, and point not only to the musical diversity that existed at that time in Palestine but also to a demographic one. Between Ottoman influences, the activities of European and American Christian missionaries, the Arab Renaissance, and the British Mandate, Palestinian music evolved as a reflection of the social, cultural, and political evolution of Palestinians.

Records show that during the 1920s, Palestinians became an extension to the Arab Renaissance and immersed themselves in literature and music. Some of the prominent musicians who emerged during this period were Thurayya Qaddūra, Rajab al-Akḥal, and Ilyās ‘Awaḍ. Their songs demonstrate outstanding musicianship and exhibit local characteristics and sensibilities. They referenced the emblems of Arab literature such as Salma and highlighted the cultural and historical connections to regional poets. Steering gender spaces, Qaddūra sang the poems of ‘Ā’ishah Taymūr, one the leading feminists of the time highlighting the importance of women in society as well as their ability to contribute to building the nation. However, evidence shows that these artists engaged only in apolitical expressions, which points to how they responded to the colonial discourses in both Egypt and Palestine, which were heavily influenced and controlled by the British.

In the mid-1930s, Nūḥ Ibrāhīm and Nimir Nāṣir wrote political songs that spoke of resistance and solidarity among Arabs as well as Muslims and Christians, not Jewish or Druze. Rural and, to a lesser extent, urban communities accepted these songs and interacted with them as attested to and witnessed by Zu‘aytir. Meanwhile, epic poems such as Nūf, and folk songs such as those of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Barghūfī, reflected how Bedouin and rural communities positioned themselves politically at odds with the Ottomans, the British, and the Zionists.

The British Mandate defined how demographic classes interacted with one another, namely peasant, urban, notable, poor, Muslim, Christian, and Jewish. Stanton shows that as early as 1928, discussions about how to set up the PBS had a religious overtone (Stanton 2014). Her examination of the period points to the activities of the Christian mission being supported by the fact that Great Britain had a state religion, which is the Church of England. In her assessment, this dynamic was considered the basis for the establishment of the PBS by the British (ibid.). Willson also illustrates that such efforts were led by dissenting British Protestants in the late eighteenth century, whose missionaries disseminated their moral and social ideals worldwide (Willson 2013).

Upon the establishment of PBS in 1936, the Arab Section classified song types and music genres and kept them separate from each other, including Bedouin, peasant, urban, Western, religious, educational, and patriotic. PBS upheld these distinctions and exposed older differences and divisions between Palestinian communities, thus mirroring the social hierarchy and promoting a vision for a nation that would sustain such attributes. Meanwhile, the Arab Section did not engage in politics or discussions of nationalist ideologies in its broadcasts or publications, a strategy that was reflected in all its programs, including music. It advocated for unity among all Arabs and presented itself as an advocate of diversity. The Arab Section in PBS

perceived itself as a bridge between Arabs and the West, and a vehicle for broader regional progress of the Arab region, particularly al-Mashriq. The type of rhetoric that it hinted at up until 1948 was patriotic and unterritorial and had a wider reach within the scope of al-Mashriq. Its conceptualization of what Arab nationalism meant did not seem to conflict with that of the British. It also aligned well with the monarchies of Transjordan, Iraq, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. Musically, PBS reflected this approach through the daily broadcasting of a variety of songs that originated from its immediate surroundings.

During this period, Palestinian music-making evolved exponentially, resulting in the expansion of various folk tunes into sha‘bī songs, the creation of the Palestinian qaṣīda song genre, new compositions of instrumental music for traditional and Western music formations, the establishment of choirs and children music programming, and active engagement in composing in the styles of the dominant Egyptian genres of the time as well as muwashshahāt.

Historically, Western music practices among Palestinians were already in motion since the mid nineteenth century but were limited to European and American Christian mission institutions, including schools. In such settings, Christian liturgy and hymns as well as secular songs were mostly European but were sung in standard Arabic and revolved around choirs (see Willson 2013). These practices were apolitical and focused on religious topics or were used for educational purposes, especially at mission schools. Direct contacts between Christian missionaries and local Christian populations essentially resulted in developing local talent in Western music such as Lama, al-Batrūnī, and ‘Arnīṭa (Willson 2013). It was after 1936 when Arab Christian composers of Western music started to write patriotic songs, mostly through PBS and other mission or Christian organizations.

From the perspective of PBS being a contact zone, there are several profound impacts of PBS and the British Mandate on music-making in Palestine, which include:

1. the scaling of Western music practices from Anglican Christian religious settings to secular contexts;
2. the apoliticization of songs;
3. the systematic filtering and censorship of traditional lyrics that included sexual references (see Işţifān 1928 and Nuwayhiđ 1993);
4. the establishment of modernization efforts of local musical practices as a notion of progress; and
5. the emphasis on music pedagogy as a matter of cultural and political hierarchy.

After 1948, Palestinians preserved some aspects of their peasant and Bedouin musical cultures and identity in refugee camps, villages, town, and urban pockets in and outside of Palestine (see Foley 1956). In the West Bank, musicians engaged in making primarily folk and sha‘bī songs, which were favored by the government of Jordan. Western music productions, on the other hand, were not sustained by the Jordan Radio (previously PBS). Subsequently, Western music practices went back to being confined to private and Christian mission organizations. Although al-Batrūnī and ‘Arnīţa continued to compose patriotic songs, such engagements were restricted to much smaller social circles in and outside of Palestine.

Palestinian musicians found themselves at the frontier of implementing a new political and cultural vision in Jordan. As a dynamic instrument for transformation in the region, they engaged in the development of music not only in Jordan but also in Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq. However, and despite being among the most educated of their peers, the continuation of an urban musical narrative like that of PBS and NEBS did not seem attainable in Palestine proper.

Since the mid-1940s, Palestinian musicians and intellectuals realized that Egyptian music was not able to transcend cultural and linguistic barriers in Palestine, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, and Lebanon. Although there are common forms of emotional communication between the inhabitants of the Near East, including Egypt, the Egyptian music industry and media were not able to condition the region into becoming musically Egyptian. By the early 1950s, it was apparent that some musicians and intellectuals such as al-Rūmī, al-Sharīf, al-Bandak, al-Khammāsh, and Ṣabrī al-Sharīf were determined to develop a vocabulary that reflected the topography, scenery, culture, dialects, and history of al-Mashriq, one that was independent of Egypt's. At that point, the nationalization of musical practices in al-Mashriq was moving at a fast rate, and musicians working the scene navigated all such trends simultaneously. Al-Sharīf and al-Rūmī in Lebanon, al-Khammāsh in Iraq, al-Bandak in Syria, and al-‘Āṣ in Jordan all took advantage of their positions and launched a renaissance of music-making throughout al-Mashriq. Al-Sharīf's input, intuition, experience, and convictions stand out as one of the most pioneering achievements of Palestinian musicians outside of their homeland. Operating in nongovernmental realms, he helped to make the music scene in Lebanon what it is today.