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The Social Life of the Tunisian Musical Modes:  
Fingerprinting Sound through Theory and Practice

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy  
in Music

by

Jared Daniel Holton

Committee in charge:

Professor Scott L. Marcus, Chair

Professor David Novak

Professor Dwight F. Reynolds

Professor Bishnupriya Ghosh

September 2022



The dissertation of Jared Daniel Holton is approved.

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Scott L. Marcus, Committee Chair

September 2022

The Social Life of the Tunisian Musical Modes:  
Fingerprinting Sound through Theory and Practice

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Jared Daniel Holton

To Catherine

وإهداء إلى روح المرحوم الدكتور عمر الرباطي

## Acknowledgments

The paths of learning are long and uneven but filled with so much help and goodwill. My doctoral committee was beside me throughout the journey. I could not have written this dissertation without their guidance and generosity. Dr. Bishnupriya Ghosh is everything I could ever hope to be as an intellectual, a teacher, writer, and magnanimous human being. Her input – which unfailingly came at the right times – was insightful beyond the dissertation and has enabled me to imagine a future for myself that is rich, expansive, and loving. Thank you. Dr. David Novak challenged me again and again with his uncanny wit, knowledge, and depth of comprehension. Our time together during the pandemic was especially meaningful to me and gave me confidence to put my best thoughts forward. Thank you for those moments. Dr. Dwight Reynolds is a masterful and patient guide. His extensive understanding of the Arabic language and all things Andalusí is a constant source of joy to me. His commitment to me as his student truly knew no bounds. I am thankful for his scholarly networks, profound publications, wisdom, and Chicken Provençal - all of which he shared generously.

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some of the most rewarding and unforgettable memories I have of this project. *Alf shukr yā mudīr al-‘azīz.*

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## Abstract

The Social Life of the Tunisian Musical Modes:  
Fingerprinting Sound through Theory and Practice

By

Jared D. Holton

The *ṭubū‘*, or musical modes, of North Africa are a system of music theory and a collection of performance practices. These modes build the repertoire of the *nūba*, a suite form that contains multiple poetic and musical genres and – along with the *ṭubū‘* – are recognized as expressive culture within the broader Arab music tradition and in the Andalusī tradition, more specifically (Guettat 1980, 2000; Reynolds 2015a:260; 2021:207). The period of al-Andalus, or medieval Muslim Spain was a significant span of history in the Mediterranean that lasted from the 8<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> centuries and contributed many political, social, and cultural developments across the region which continue to the present. Today, Tunisian musicians, pedagogues, and scholars transmit sixteen musical modes. Thirteen of these modes constitute the traditional *nūba* repertoire called *mālūf* in Tunisia. Many Tunisian individuals and institutions value this repertoire and its modes for the history and identity they represent. In this dissertation, I study the systems through which the Tunisians transmit the *ṭubū‘* and also the process through which these systems constitute identity.

One of the most significant aspects of the *ṭubū‘* is the degree to which Tunisian musicians and pedagogues articulate how the *ṭubū‘* relate to a modal system in the Eastern Mediterranean (Ar. *mashriq*) called the *maqāmāt*. Part One of this dissertation presents the *ṭubū‘* through this articulation. In Chapter One, I describe how my collaborators structure and conceptualize the *ṭubū‘* by tetrachordal theory – an approach to melodic analysis that is rooted in ancient Greek music theory and has become common in Arab and Ottoman-Turkish

tradition musics since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Zouari 2006; Marcus 1989a; Farraj and Abu Shumays 2019; Signell 1977; Aydemir 2010; Ederer 2015). Tunisian musicians and pedagogues greatly value this *lingua franca*, or “common language,” for analyzing melodic movement. In Chapter Two, however, I analyze how the ṭubū‘ are distinct and different from other modal traditions through practice and performance. My Tunisian collaborators transmit certain musical phrases that reoccur in performance practice and have become characteristic for a mode, in terms of their melodic and, at times, rhythmic qualities. They teach these “phrases” or “imprints” in the classroom with various words, including (in the singular): *jumla* (Ar.), *cliché* (Fr.), *formule* (Fr.), *ṣīgha* (Ar.), *khalīya* (Ar.), *empreinte* (Fr.), and *baṣma* (Ar.) – the latter of which refers to a “fingerprint.” To Tunisian musicians, these characteristic melodic-rhythmic phrases are not just musical. They also provide a musical means to constitute social and cultural distinctiveness in the region; and they cultivate these distinctions as they conceptualize and practice the ṭubū‘ in classrooms and perform them on stages.

The high degree to which my Tunisian collaborators articulate these melodic-rhythmic phrases enables a study of how musical modes have specific effectivity (Ar. *ta’thīr*), that is the capacity to relate participants to their social, cultural, and natural environments. Ancient Greek, medieval Arab, and present-day scholars and theorists have documented this point for centuries but have not explained *how* modes actually assist people in assembling these meaningful relations. Part Two of this dissertation explores this process in three chapters. In Chapter Three, I consider how extra-musical associations are made when participants perform musical modes. Relying on the post-structural philosopher Gilles Deleuze and his concepts of difference, immanence, and transcendence (1968/1994, 1997;

1991/1996 with Guattari), I consider how the distinct melodic-rhythmic phrases of the Tunisian ṭubū‘ enable participants to presence their difference in the moment. In Chapter Four, I analyze how one Tunisian mode inscribed the meanings of *Arab* and *Andalusi* at the 2019 Testour Music Festival. Adding theorists Félix Guattari (1980/1987) and Elizabeth Grosz (2008), I discuss the process of “territorialization” and specifically how sound – as a mattered object – comes to cause effect within and upon these assemblages of meaning.

Lastly, in Chapter Five, I bring together my ethnographic and theoretical work to introduce “sonic stamping,” a phrase I coin in this dissertation to describe how Tunisian musicians and pedagogues utilize the ṭubū‘ to inscribe difference and form social and cultural meaning. Metaphorically, this process is *fingerprinting sound*, an expressive phrase that captures how musicians talk about these melodic-rhythmic clichés as social function. Relying on Alexander Galloway (2012), I view these clichés as a musical “interface” that activates effects. Participants perceive the interface in practice and transition to various relations to their environment.

This dissertation is the first comprehensive study of the Tunisian ṭubū‘ in the English language – a study that is ethnographic in how I present the ṭubū‘ through my collaborators’ articulations; archival in my substantial use of French and Arabic sources, especially written by Tunisian scholars; and interdisciplinary as I consider how musical modes come to have social lives.

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## Preface

“Movement, for its part, implies a plurality of centres, a superposition of perspectives, a tangle of points of view, a coexistence of moments which essentially distort representation...”  
Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980/1987:56)

This study is about the movement of musical things. But it may not seem that way from the start. Scholarly descriptions of cultural phenomena, such as music, dangerously walk the edge between reveling in the dynamism of people, places, and things, and fixing that dynamism in written discourse. For me, cultural dynamism is about unceasing movement. Even if the following analysis or manuscript itself threatens to stabilize that dynamism, I begin my study with a significant gesture to how important cultural movement is to the way I view the world.

My personal story in relation to the musical objects in this dissertation is saturated with movement. In 2008, I relocated with my family to Tripoli, Libya to teach music at a well-funded high school that was offering an international curriculum to a variety of local and foreign students. Over the next three years, my days were wonderfully busy with teaching duties, Arabic language learning, and building a new network of Libyan musician friends. These friends introduced me to the rich histories and performances practices of modern Andalusí and Arab musics. My heart broke in February 2011, when the growing violence from the region’s revolutions disrupted Tripoli and forced the displacement of many people, including myself and my family. I migrated to Tunis at the time, and then to London, Suffolk, then to the United States.

In the years following 2011, I remained connected to many Libyans. Some stayed inside the country, and others left, deciding to reimagine their lives in Tunisia, Europe, Turkey, or elsewhere. Driven by a desire to see these friends again and, honestly, to process my own trauma, I returned to Tripoli in January 2013 to teach in a different international high school and also in the Music department of the state-run University of Tripoli. The next year and a half were intensely rewarding for me as a teacher, learner, and musician. In working with Libyan music professors at the university, I not only learned how to perform my first Libyan Andalusí song (“Bushrā haniyya”) but I also experienced alternative pedagogical methods inside an Arab music department and collaborated with Libyan music professors. At the time, the department was led by the esteemed Libyan master musician and educator Dr. Omar al-Rabti. Dr. Omar became a great friend and mentor to me. His love of Andalusí music was infectious; his musicality profound; and his hospitality unmatched. It was under his care and within his department that I first encountered the deep musical traditions of North Africa.

I left again in June 2014, one month before the international airport in Tripoli was bombed. The conflict spiraled deeper into chaos. I turned my attention towards a doctoral program that would allow me to continue working and playing music with my network of Libyan musicians and to better understand the history and culture behind their musical worlds. I began the Ph.D. program in Ethnomusicology at the University of California in Santa Barbara the following year, but not before I took one more trip to Libya in April 2015. Back in Tripoli, I packed my family’s belongings left from the previous summer and spent a great deal of time with Dr. Omar and other musicians. I began interviewing musicians during this trip about their Andalusí music traditions and also collected what print sources I could

find – most of them were given to me by Dr. Omar. It was during this trip that I spent more time with the magnanimous Libyan master musician Shaykh Bahlul Abu al-Arqub. He told me that many of the musical traditions of Tripolitania (i.e., Northwestern Libya) actually came from Tunisia, starting in Mahdia on the coast (200 km or 125 miles south of Tunis) and running further along the coast to Tripoli. Movement, in other words, was always at the core of how some people conceptualized their musical tradition. This comment would prove invaluable for my future fieldwork. As the trip ended, I said goodbyes to friends and musicians, and (what would be a final farewell) to Dr. Omar and headed back to California. It was one of the best trips of my life.

Dr. Omar died the following year and mourning his loss nearly capsized my doctoral work. When the time for fieldwork came, I had reframed my study on Libyan Andalusí music to consider the *circulation* of Andalusí music traditions across southern Tunisia and western Libya. I received a generous one-year grant from the American Institute of Maghrebi Studies to pursue research. Following the guidance of Shaykh Bahlul, I relocated to Sfax, Tunisia – the second largest city in Tunisia, and the largest city in the southern coastal region – in August 2018, and undertook fieldwork until August 2019. As it turned out that year, violence and political trouble hung over the neighboring Libyan region like a familiar but soiled robe. I was not able to travel there. However, I did manage a festival project in the summer of 2019 that brought several Libyan musicians to Tunisia – Shaykh Bahlul included. This dissertation most specifically emerges out of the encounters during that fieldwork year with Tunisian musicians and pedagogues in Sfax, Sousse, and Tunis and with Tunisian non-musicians who had much to say about Tunisian music and its cultural associations. But these encounters arose from a number of other relationships, networks, times, and events –

movements upon movements that have shaped my approach and understanding of the expressive culture that I study.

### **The Musical Modes of Andalusī Music**

One of the most meaningful concepts to emerge from Sfax during my fieldwork was the degree to which Tunisian musicians and pedagogues invested themselves in the traditional Tunisian musical modes – called the *ṭubū‘* – and articulated how these modes related to a different modal system – called the *maqāmāt* – from the Eastern Mediterranean. The *ṭubū‘*—or *ṭab‘* in the singular<sup>1</sup>—are the musical “modes” of Tunisia, associated with genres of music that are classified today as “Andalusī” (see below) and practiced across North Africa in the countries of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya. These modes, like all structures of expressive culture, have undergone a great deal of transformation over times and places.

Today in Tunisia, musicians and pedagogues transmit 16 musical modes. Thirteen are categorized as “traditional” – most commonly said *taqlīdiyya* in Arabic, or less commonly *rāqīyya*; and three are labeled “popular” or “folk,” depending on how one translates *sha‘biyya* from Arabic to English. Since the musical genres of Tunisian Andalusī music depend upon the 13 traditional modes, I found that this was a likely place to begin a deep study of Tunisian Andalusī music.

Although the term “Andalusī music” (Ar. *mūsīqā andalusīyya* or *al-mūsīqā al-andalusīyya*) is a modern classification for a wide variety of performance practices and repertoires, the term in general describes genres of music performed across the southern and

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<sup>1</sup> This plural form *ṭubū‘* of the singular term *ṭab‘* is a technical form that Tunisians use only to denote “[musical] modes”. The standard Arabic plural forms of *ṭab‘* are *ṭibā‘* or *aṭbā‘* (Wehr 1979:644).

eastern Mediterranean region: from Morocco in the far west, across North Africa, to Egypt, and the countries of the Levant, including Syria in the far east. The term “Andalusian” was used first by Western scholars in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to describe certain performance practices and repertoires in North Africa that they believed to be reminiscent of medieval European music (Shannon 2009). Despite its non-indigenous origins, the term has since been adopted by many North Africans across the region. Said to derive from Muslim Spain – historically called *al-Andalus* in Arabic – during the 8<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> centuries,<sup>2</sup> these song forms and musical practices are regarded as high, classicized, urban, and traditional across the region. Modern governments in the region have valorized these musics as “heritage” (Ar. *turāth*, Fr. *patrimoine*) and invested a great deal of resources around their preservation and educational dissemination as part of the process of constructing national identities (cf. Langlois 2009; Davila 2012, 2013:174-180). In this dissertation, I will use the Arabized term “Andalusi” – rather than “Andalusian” – to refer to these musical traditions. I do this to differentiate between the cultural and social phenomena that are said to derive from medieval Muslim al-Andalus (“Andalusi”) and not from Andalucía, a modern province in southern Spain (“Andalusian”) (Reynolds 2021:8-9).

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<sup>2</sup> Muslim-backed forces crossed the Strait of Gibraltar and took southern Iberia in 711 CE. But the *music* of al-Andalus, from which the 13 traditional Tunisian modes derive, has a particular genealogy to the appearance of Ziryāb – a historical figure who migrated from Baghdad to Cordoba in the 9<sup>th</sup> century and innovated cultural expressions, even if the stories are more legend than historical fact (cf. Reynolds 2008; 2022:109-13). Tunisians continue to remember Ziryāb in their historicizing of Andalusi music traditions. For example, Salah Mahdi – one of the most important modernizers of Tunisian musical traditions – is nicknamed “Ziryāb” (Louati 2012:76); thus, I start my dating with the 9<sup>th</sup> century and end with the final expulsion of the “moriscos” – Muslims who had converted to Christianity under force – by 1614. The final expulsion of the Jews – many of whom practice the same and similar music traditions – had already occurred in 1492, two months after the fall of Granada due to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella’s Christian-backed forces. For more historical details of these expulsions through which I date the period of al-Andalus, see Amelang 2013.

The countries of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya still transmit and perform a musical suite today called the *nūba* (Tun. Ar.; formal Ar. *nawba*). The *nūba* is a compound or “suite form” of genres that are performed distinctly across the regions of North Africa (Reynolds 2015a:260; 2021:207). In today’s modern nation-states, the *nūba* form is considered quintessentially Andalusī; and each of the North African countries has specialized repertoire and performance practices that differentiate each *nūba* tradition from the others (Guettat 2002; Reynolds 2000a, 2000b; Wright 1994). In Fez, Rabat, Tangiers, and Tetouan (cities in Morocco), the tradition is called *āla*; in Tlemcen and Algiers (cities in Algeria), *šana’* or *gharnātī*. In Constantine (eastern Algeria), Tunisia, and western Libya, the *nūba* tradition is called *mā’lūf* or *mālūf*, as it is commonly spoken in Arabic dialect. All of the song transcriptions I analyze in this dissertation are from the Tunisian *mālūf* repertoire, and most of them are included in the *nūba* suite form.

The *nūba* has a long history that dates back to the early ‘Abbasid court in Baghdad during the 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> centuries CE. Musicians of the court would take a “turn” or a “shift” (Reynolds 2022:102) performing for the ruler. This schedule of “turn-taking” (Ar. *tanāwub*, also *bi-nawba*, “by turns”) later evolved in al-Andalus in the 9<sup>th</sup> century—and subsequently in the living music traditions of the *nūba* tradition across modern North African countries—to refer to turn-taking between the musical modes rather than between the musicians (Reynolds 2021:207; 2022:114). Since musical modes were often arranged according to the times of the day, seasons, or astrological signs, each mode had an eventual and reoccurring



turn.<sup>3</sup> The suite form is most often named along with its mode for a performance, such as *nūbat al-dhīl* (“the nūba of dhīl”) or *nūbat al-mazmūm* (“the nūba of mazmūm”).<sup>4</sup>

Today, just like in the past, a nūba performance in Tunisia contains instrumental and vocal pieces in a single mode that are mostly organized by rhythm (see Appendix 1). In this dissertation, I refer to a number of these pieces. The *istiftāḥ* is the instrumental “opening” to the suite that features a mode’s characteristic melodic phrases, performed in unison by the instrumentalists in a slow and unmetered tempo. After a number of other instrumental, metered pieces, the vocalists enter with the first sung “lines of poetry” called the *abyāt* in Arabic, and then proceed to sing the first song in the *biṭāyḥī* (pl. *biṭāyḥīa*) rhythm. This rhythm is one of five that structure the vocal section in a Tunisian nūba. In order of performance, the others are: *birwal* (pl. *birāwil*), *draj* (pl. *adrāj*), *khafīf* (pl. *khafāyif*), and *khatm* (pl. *akhtām*). The ensemble can choose to perform only one song in each rhythm or multiple songs in the same rhythm; but in each nūba performance, the order remains the same and progresses unidirectionally from the *biṭāyḥī* to the *khatm*. To introduce the first instance of a rhythm, or to play in between songs of the same rhythm, instrumentalists can play an “interlude” called the *fāriḡha* (pl. *fāriḡhāt*) or sometimes called the *lāzima* (pl. *lāzimāt*). Additionally, instrumentalists play an instrumental composition called the *tūshiya* between the *biṭāyḥī* and *birwal* song(s). The *tūshiya* is in the *next* musical mode – the one that follows

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<sup>3</sup> See Chapter 1 for one of these arrangements based on the times of the day.

<sup>4</sup> The presence of a “t” on “nūba” simply shows that this Arabic phrase is an *iḏāfa* construct, that is a special phrase that ties together two nouns.

the one being performed.<sup>5</sup> This order is established through a well-known poem in colloquial Arabic (see Chapter 1 for the text) and demonstrates the “turn-taking” aspect (i.e., between the modes) of the nūba as it developed in 9<sup>th</sup>-century al-Andalus. With all of these instrumental, vocal, textual, and rhythmic aspects, the Tunisian nūba is a highly structured musical suite that musicians have assembled across many centuries.

The world of Andalusī music has produced a lot of writing in recent decades within international scholarship. Regional ethnographies have highlighted how diverse the North African Andalusī traditions are from one another (Ciantar 2012; Glasser 2016; Shannon 2015; Reynolds 2000b; Davis 1986, 2004). Some publications treat these expressive traditions more historically, emphasizing the aspects of songbooks (Davila 2015), important figures and medieval treatises (Reynolds 2015, 2020), or its connectedness to musical traditions of the Arab East (Guettat 1980, 2000).

However, outside of brief references or charts that portray the Tunisian Andalusī modes as ascending and/or descending scales (Guettat 1980, 2000; Snoussi 2004; Mahdi 1972, 1982), very little is documented about the musical modes in terms of how they sound and how they are practiced. Outside of colonial-era publications that illustrate a mode by short melodic transcriptions (*Safāyin* 1872) or also with scalar diagrams (D’Erlanger 1949), the single best written reference on the Tunisian modes is a publication in Arabic that gives some commentary on each mode and analyzes aspects of their constitution within the nūba repertoire (Zouari 2006). But even the most basic questions about the modes are still not answered in the literature, such as how musicians explicitly differentiate between them,

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<sup>5</sup> The tūshiya has been documented as an instrumental piece since the 12<sup>th</sup> century (in the writings of Maimonides) and may be the earliest documented genre of *instrumental* (i.e. not vocal) music in the Arab music tradition (Reynolds 2021:184).

transmit them to students, or relate them to the rich and historic modal systems of the Mediterranean and the Middle East.

This is a substantial gap in knowledge, considering that scholars and historians have documented the musical modes of the nearby Eastern Mediterranean – especially in Egypt – for some time. The dictionary of Jean Laborde or writings from Guillaume André Villoteau – published in the late 1700s and early 1800s, respectively – gave a sampling of early modern work on Arab music from this Eastern region. But one of the most authoritative analyses of these musical modes is by Professor Scott Marcus (1989a). He provided extensive documentation not only on how to theoretically build a mode but also on relevant performance practices (see also 1992, 1993, 2002, 2007:16-42). Marcus also gave a thorough evaluation of how these aspects have changed over centuries (1989a, 1989b). A more recent publication in Arab modal theory and practice demonstrates that the Eastern Mediterranean musical modes are still a focus of research and analysis, particularly in terms of performance practice (Farraj and Abu Shumays 2019). Although I do not relate the Tunisian modes to those in Turkey, scholarship on Ottoman and Turkish music theory is also extensive and shows that although the musical cultures of the Mediterranean are very distinct, there are many interconnections with Tunisian music theory (cf. Feldman 1996; Aydemir 2010; Ederer 2015). Tunisian musicians teach that their modes comfortably sit beside these other traditions, especially in terms of how they are structured. But their documentation is not as extensive as that from the Eastern Mediterranean.

Moreover, I also realized that even though scholars are aware that musical modes are important cultural objects that connect participants to their ecology (During 2002), there is a lack of investigation into *how* modes actually do this. In fact, it seems to be a given that

musical modes – wherever they are found – can elicit feelings, colors, or images for people, or can relate humans to nonhuman beings, times and seasons, and the cosmos. From ancient Greek to medieval Arab theorists and into the present-day, modal music was seen to have specific “effect” or “influence” (Ar. *ta’thīr*) on people.<sup>6</sup> But how do modes do this work? More broadly, how does music theory and practice actually assist people in assembling what we might consider “society” or “culture”? This dissertation aims to respond to both of these gaps, namely by providing: a detailed description of the traditional Tunisian *ṭubū‘* that are utilized in the Andalusī music repertoire *as Tunisians transmit them today*, as well as an analysis of how Tunisians use these modes to emplace themselves in a variety of meaningful relations to their social, cultural, and natural environments.

### **Fieldwork Practices, Methods, and Data**

I relocated to Sfax, Tunisia to begin fieldwork in August 2018. At the time, I was most interested in tracing the circulation of Andalusī *mālūf* traditions across the border between southern coastal Tunisia and western Libya, and analyzing how social, political, and cultural constraints have shaped their shared musical traditions since the 1930s. Sfax seemed to be an appropriate (and politically stable) urban base to investigate these topics.

There were additional reasons, however, for choosing Sfax as a research site. Music scholars of Tunisian cultures have mostly based their research in the northern part of the country, which contains the capital Tunis among other important urban centers. There is good reason for this, as Tunis is a grand and historic city, regionally networked, intellectually

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<sup>6</sup> For example, see Aristotle, *Politics*, viii. 5-7; 9<sup>th</sup>-century writings of al-Kindī (Wright 2012); 11<sup>th</sup>-century writings of Ikhwān al-Safā’ [The Brotherhood of Purity] (see translation in Wright 2011, and Wright’s introductory comments on pp. 15-22, 45-6); Farmer 1929:109-10; Guettat 2000:137; Popper 2019:318-20; inter alia.

vibrant, politically engaged, and culturally rich. Contributions from scholars are extensive, including a history of the significant Rashidiyya organization that has been one of the primary institutions responsible for the preservation of mālūf on a national level (Davis 1997a; al-Mustaysir 2014); ethnographies of diverse Sufi groups, some of which have transmitted mālūf for centuries (Jones 1977) and others that have promulgated the popular sub-Saharan Black expressive culture of *stambeli* (Jankowsky 2010, 2021). Sādiq al-Rizqi's treatment of *Tunisian Songs* from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (1989) and Mourad Siala's analysis of Sufi *ḥaḍra* events in Sfax (2017), however, offered indications that there was more to the story than portrayals of Tunisian musical culture that were based in the more widely studied north.

Sfax became my base. After several months of overcoming administrative hurdles and seeking various permissions in Sfax, I successfully registered as a first-year music student in the Higher Institute of Music within the University of Sfax, a state-operated institution that was established in 1999, and connected to the national network of universities across Tunisia. The administration told me that I was the first Euro-North American person to study at their Institute.<sup>7</sup> Although Tunisians can study the musical modes in a number of private conservatories or schools, those programs are costly and not always accessible for everyone. The state university programs are free and open to eligible students. Because of this, some Tunisian students first begin formal training in the musical modes as a first-year university student. But, beyond state and private sectors, the musicians and pedagogues employed at the university are often masters in their craft and in high demand across the

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<sup>7</sup> See Loopuyt 1988 for a brief account of the experiences a European student had at an Arab-Andalusi music school in Fez, Morocco.

country. It was the case that many of my teachers at the University of Sfax were also teaching in private conservatories or in other university music departments across the country, as well as performing music outside of the university setting.

The administration and professors at the Higher Institute of Music in Sfax allowed me, as a first-year student, to take any classes that I needed for my research. During the 2018-2019 academic year, I took weekly classes in the Tunisian ṭubū‘ and separate weekly classes devoted to the Eastern Mediterranean maqāmāt in both the first- and second-year programs. I also took weekly classes on the *nay* (reed, end-blown flute) and *ūd* (lute) instruments, and played in two performance ensembles: one in traditional mālūf and the other in “musique du monde” or “world music.” Informal and formal conversations with the professors and students at the Institute figure prominently throughout this dissertation. Other interviews I did with musicians in Sousse and Tunis. I recorded 60 hours of audio files, comprised of segments from class sessions and also formal interviews. I have written records for the additional data that I was not able to record in audio.

I attended many music concerts throughout my fieldwork year which were opportunities for me to observe participants and note the repertoire in circulation. The Fall and Spring concerts in Sfax by Ziad Gharsa – a prominent performing musician in the Andalusī repertoire – were highlights in my exploration of the Andalusī repertoire. By the Spring concert, I knew enough repertoire to sing a few of the songs with him from my seat during his concert at the Muhammad Jamoussi Center for Music and the Arts (Sfax). Concerts at the French Cultural Institute (*Maison de France*) of Sfax, the Municipal Theater of Sousse, and other downtown Sfax and Tunis venues provided many rich moments to

watch participants on and off stages. Occasionally, I archived a few of these moments and returned with seven hours of audio and visual files and over 100 digital images.

One outstanding event of my fieldwork year was the Malouf Slam Festival – a collaborative Tunisian and Libyan music festival in Sfax and Tunis that I planned and directed with local and international funding in July 2019. From a brief week of rehearsals, conversations, and performances, I recorded 11 hours of audio files, four hours of video footage, and took over 200 digital images.

Tunisian scholars have published many monographs and issued recordings on traditional music throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I returned to the United States from Sfax with a suitcase of books and professional recordings on Tunisian music. I bought most of these resources at the bookshop of the Ennajma Ezzahra (Ar. *al-Najma al-Zahrā'*) – the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century palatial residence of French scholar and music patron Baron Rudolphe D'Erlanger – as well as from a bookshop located on Avenue de Tunis, just outside the Bāb al-Bḥār (Tun. Ar. for “the seaside gate”) in the Old City of Tunis. The delightful Espaces Diwan bookshop on Rue Sidi Ben Arous in the Old City also provided a number of printed resources.

### **Roadmap to the Dissertation**

Divided into two parts, this dissertation explores the Tunisian musical modes, in terms of theoretical structure, performance practice, transmission, and social and cultural significance. Part One describes and graphs the 13 traditional ṭubū‘ as I learned them at the Higher Institute of Music in Sfax, and as I researched them diachronically through Tunisian and European scholarship from 1932 to the present. Since the ṭubū‘ are generally unknown in English-language literature, this section provides a foundational understanding of the modes,

in terms of their musical qualities. More specifically, the two chapters of Part One orient the reader to the Tunisian ṭubū‘ as musical objects that musicians and pedagogues transmit to undergraduate music students. During my fieldwork, I came to understand that transmission occurred through a certain process by which the modal system was defined, transmitted, and understood as existing in parallel with – and in contradistinction to – the Eastern Mediterranean maqāmāt system of modes. Master teachers continually referred to the maqāmāt when teaching the Tunisian ṭubū‘. The musical similarities and differences that came out of this comparative logic – a *dialectic* – positioned the Tunisian modes as both shared and distinct heritage for students. Chapter One describes each Tunisian mode according to a shared lineage in the Mediterranean that conceptualizes musical modes through tetrachordal theory. In Chapter Two, I describe how Tunisians differentiate their modes by distinguishing specific musical practices. Certain characteristic melodic-rhythmic “units” – referred to as *clichés* or *formules* in French, or *ṣīyagh* in Arabic – populate the ṭubū‘ and express musical difference. I illustrate a number of these units for each mode and discuss how they operate in performance practice.

Part Two analyzes how performances of musical modes have effectivity for many Tunisians, that is, how performance practice accomplishes outcomes for participants in relating them to their own bodies, to other human bodies, to nonhuman beings, and to the natural environmental. The analysis in this section probes the processes that activate such outcomes. The purpose in this section is to understand how musical structure corresponds to social and cultural formations that many people in Tunisia consider significant to their sense of self and place. With an understanding of how Tunisians transmit the musical modes dialectically, my analysis moves to investigate how such musical practices constitute



expressions of social and cultural difference. The first chapter in this section, Chapter Three, develops the topic of difference. Scholars have long discussed social and cultural difference and, most recently, have related difference within society to salient micro-experiences that form super-structures, such as race, ethnicity, gender, or sexuality. My discussion utilizes the post-structural philosophy of Giles Deleuze—and that developed with his collaborator Félix Guattari—to establish a crucial understanding of difference outside of these super-structures. Chapter Four takes these concepts and investigates the act of inscribing difference to make social and cultural formations. The process of territorialization, which Deleuze and Guattari extrapolate through the structures of music, curate difference by acts of selection, reoccurrence, and valorization. These aspects assist me in analyzing two ethnographic vignettes in Tunisia involving the *ṭubūʿ*. Finally, Chapter Five collates the insights from Chapters 1-4 and proposes an interpretation of musical modes as the practice of relating non-musical difference to musical structures and practices. More specifically, I analyze discursive statements from my Tunisian collaborators about the social life of a mode and liken the practice of these modes to a media interface. “Sonic stamping” is the phrase I coin within this chapter, a phrase based on the terminology Tunisian musicians use when describing the process they enact when performing and transmitting the musical modes to presence their difference.

The internal organization of my dissertation purposely demonstrates that musical structure relates to and channels how one understands one’s social and cultural being-in-the-world. My discussion of music theory in Part One turns to probing how these musical structures have effect for Tunisians in Part Two. As such, my dissertation demonstrates the importance of music theory (i.e., the conceptualization of musical structure) for the

expression and maintenance of identity in everyday life. It is in this way that the Tunisian musical modes have a “social life” of their own as my dissertation title suggests, that is a dynamic, material presence in people’s lives to elicit significant relations to the world.

### **Translation, Transliteration, and Notation**

Arabic was the main research language during my fieldwork; but the French language was also spoken frequently during class time, and many Tunisian music sources are published in French. All translations from the Arabic and French languages in this dissertation are my own and have been checked by my committee. I particularly thank Dwight Reynolds for his meticulous care over my language work. At times, I give alternative translations, especially when the meaning of an Arabic word, for example, exceeds the denotative meaning of one English word in translation. At all times, I make it a point to use the Tunisian Arabic dialect (“Tun. Ar.”) terms rather than those of formal or Modern Standard Arabic. For example, the musical Arab-Andalusian suite of the *nūba* is also spelled as *nawba*. The former is in the Tunisian dialect and the latter is in formal Arabic. I will choose to write *nūba* throughout the dissertation but give the other spelling of *nawba* to avoid confusion across the literature.

I use the transliteration system of the International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES) throughout this dissertation.<sup>8</sup> Because of the ease in using diacritical marks on computers, I have kept these details throughout the dissertation even though it may be awkward for some readers. For example, the keywords of ṭab‘, ṭubū‘, maqām, maqāmāt, and mālūf remain in the text with these dots and macrons (i.e., the lines on top of letters). I also

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<sup>8</sup> The IJMES system is accessible at <https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-file-manager/file/57d83390f6ea5a022234b400/TransChart.pdf>.

do not use ersatz Anglicized plural forms but keep to Arabic plural forms, as people speak them in Tunisia or other Arab-majority countries. Several Tunisian modes are *ṭubū'* and not ṭab'-s; and several Eastern Mediterranean modes are *maqāmāt* and not maqām-s. Although I deeply desire for non-specialists to understand my writing, I also value the care I can demonstrate by more accurately representing the richness of the Arabic language. In saying that, I do not use the Arabic grammatical form that differentiates *two* of a kind (the dual) from three or more (the plural) of a kind. My collaborators, neighbors, and hosts did not use the dual form in vernacular speech. At the end of this dissertation, I have included a short glossary of terms to deal with any confusion that may arise when non-Arabic speakers read this work.

Arabic names are a special case. Many of my collaborators transliterate their own names on social media; and because they are also French speakers – a European language which has a slightly different transliteration history than English – their transliterations may not match the way Arabic names are often read by English readers. In many cases, I followed the transliteration as represented online, such as on Facebook. I have also kept the transliteration of Tunisian scholars' names who have published in French. To me, it appears to be a re-orientalizing of people to take, for example, the scholar Salah Mahdi and transliterate his name to Ṣāliḥ al-Mahdī. In each case, I have chosen a transliteration and used it consistently throughout the text. To aid those who wish to know how these names are spelled in Arabic, I put a standardized transliteration of the name in the References Cited.

There is a lot of debate and discussion on the use of Western staff notation in transcribing sound and/or music in ethnomusicological discourse. I use Western staff notation in this dissertation precisely because my Tunisian collaborators use it in all of their

musical activities. From the university music classroom to rehearsals on stages, Tunisian musicians are used to Western notation, and pedagogues continue to transmit music with these signs and symbols. Many have done so since at least 1872. Tunisian musicians are proficient in the solfege system and do not use the alphabetical system to name notes. And on this, I have made a different decision. For the lower octave, below “middle C,” I double capitalize the letters, e.g., GG, AA. For the middle octave, I use capital letters, e.g., C, D, E. And for the higher octave, I use lowercase letters, e.g., c, d, e. In this way, I can quickly name the notes *and* reference the octave.

**PART ONE: The 13 Traditional Ṭubū‘ of Tunisia: Structuring Musical  
Commonalities and Performing Musical Difference**

## Introduction

The overall objective of Part One is to investigate the Tunisian ṭubū‘ as musical objects in a dynamic relationship with the Eastern Mediterranean maqāmāt. The latter geographical region is referred to as the “East” or *mashriq* in Arabic, and applies to the nation-states of Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Israel, Lebanon, and Syria.<sup>1</sup> The Arabic word *mashriqī* is used to describe social and cultural phenomena from this region. As a music student at the University of Sfax, I was surprised to find that all music students – throughout the three years to degree – took weekly classes on *both* Tunisian and Mashriqī modal systems. In fact, these classes formed the core of an undergraduate musical education in a network of other topics deemed important for students, such as musical transcription, sight singing, history, performance practice, rhythm, and instrumental technique. From this educational structure, I learned that competency in both the ṭubū‘ and maqāmāt was valued at the highest level of formal education in Tunisia – a level that is maintained across the country through university departments that the Ministry of Culture directs.

The bifurcation of modal theory and practice into “ṭubū‘” and “maqāmāt” institutionalizes the idea that these systems are distinct; but inside the classroom, I found that the story was more complex. Tunisian teachers and students did not conceive of these modal systems as mutually exclusive from one another; in fact, to the contrary, the languages of the both systems were interchangeable at times. Teachers explicitly taught students, for example,

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<sup>1</sup> Iraq is not my realm of focus; but some scholars consider Iraq to be a part of the Mashriqī region, musically-speaking, even though Iraq’s modal system – commonly referred to as Iraqī maqām – is understood to be distinct from the Mashriqī maqāmāt (cf. Hassan 2002:311).

that the Tunisian four-note *jins ḥsīn* (D-E<sup>♭</sup>-F-G) “resembles” (Tun. Ar. *yshebbah*) the Mashriqī four-note *jins bayyātī* (D-E<sup>♭</sup>-F-G). On another occasion, when students were singing melodies in the Tunisian mode of *al-nawā*, the instructor pointed out that the melodic phrasing “resembled” the Eastern mode of *al-nahāwand*. Or during another lesson, the professor remarked that the base pentachord of the Tunisian mode *raṣd al-dhīl* “resembled” the same base pentachord of Mashriqī *nakrīz*. Again and again, statements such as these caused me to wonder if the differentiation between these two systems was largely semantic.

But exceptions to these resemblances were frequent and not semantic. Referencing the same examples cited above, a professor said that Tunisian *al-ḥsīn* is like Mashriqī *al-bayyātī*, *except* that the intonation of the *al-ḥsīn* E<sup>♭</sup> is played higher than the *al-bayyātī* E<sup>♭</sup>. Musician-teachers said that the melodic rendering of Tunisian *al-nawā* can be very similar to Mashriqī *al-nahāwand*, *except* that Tunisian *al-nawā* phrases omit certain notes of the scale and demonstrate a distinctive musical moment that differs from typical *al-nahāwand* phrases in the Mashriq. The pentachords of Tunisian *raṣd al-dhīl* and Mashriqī *nakrīz* are close in structure, a professor taught, *except* for the fact that *raṣd al-dhīl* has *two* distinct pentachords on the base note. Blending the two pentachords in performance practice gives the Tunisian mode of *raṣd al-dhīl* its characteristic “feeling” (Ar. *iḥsās*), not to mention that it is impossible in the Mashriq to have two base pentachords for one mode. Rather, the Mashriqī system is organized around a single base group of notes which “circumscribes” or “delimits” (Tun. Ar. *tahaddid*) the mode (Gharbi 2019a).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Of course, these rules would change when musicians want to modulate to other modes in the *maqāmāt*. But if a musician plays within one *maqām*, there is only one base group of notes that defines the mode. This is not the case with the Tunisian mode of *raṣd al-dhīl*.

This constant comparison and differentiation between the ṭubū‘ and maqāmāt – hereafter called a “dialectic” – did not take place only in the university. I documented dialectical statements in conversations with composers or master musicians who taught in private music schools, and in written publications by Tunisian music scholars. Some of these scholars and musicians used interchangeably the very words for “mode” in these systems. A musician in Tunisia might refer to a mode as a “maqām” rather than a “ṭab‘” – the Tunisian term for a mode. Modal systems are musically complex; but so is the way people talk about them.

This section of the dissertation describes the Tunisian ṭubū‘ primarily through this dialectic, mainly using the language of music theory. I wish to emphasize that my presentation of the ṭubū‘ follows the way I learned them at the Higher Institute of Music in Sfax. I utilize the language, illustrations, and metrics that Tunisian musicians and pedagogues used to teach me and the other students these modes in the classroom and also in their scholarly publications. In presenting the Tunisian modes as objects that emerge within a dialectic, I want to draw specific attention to how cultural objects are made – the central impetus of the investigation found in Part Two of this dissertation. The ṭubū‘ emerge for musicians as particular *in-relation-to* objects that – by their relations – carry meaning beyond the structuring of notes and scales, even as these structures are of importance to musicians. Scales appear rigid, structural, and fixed. But dialectics are dynamic relationships and prone to shift based on the participants and their intentions. In this view, the dialectic I observed demonstrated a certain kind of time-bound object. It is with this sentiment that I aim to inscribe the ṭubū‘ as an object of study in this first section of the dissertation – an object that I apprehended *as a blur of dialectical motion* during a specific time of fieldwork and



research. In no way should my inscription here delimit the dynamics of this dialectic by preventing or truncating the cultural movement of these musical objects in other immanent moments.

## **Chapter 1. Encountering the Tunisian Ṭubū‘: Theorizing Modal Sameness**

The most substantial similarities between the ṭubū‘ and maqāmāt have to do with theoretical structure, namely in terms of tetrachordal analysis and scalar representation. In this chapter, I present the 13 Tunisian ṭubū‘ through this language of theoretical structure based upon pedagogical transmission events I attended as a music student at the Higher Institute of Music in Sfax. I also include a critical presentation of these modes based on scholarship, mostly by Tunisian music theorists. The overall purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate how the language and conceptualization around the ṭubū‘ follows that of other modal systems in the Mediterranean region, namely the Mashriqī maqāmāt system. The dialectic between the ṭubū‘ and the maqāmāt, as explained in the introduction to Part One, is a vibrant method for Tunisian musicians, pedagogues, and scholars to create and maintain distinct identities through musical expression.

### **Theorizing the Tunisian Musical Modes**

The classes in the ṭubū‘ and maqāmāt that I attended at the Institute always began with learning musical repertoire. Out of musical practice, students came to learn “music theory,” that is the way musicians, pedagogues, and scholars have come to conceptualize practice, and the even the potentials of musical practice itself. Tunisians conceptualize the ṭubū‘ in ways that are common to the theorization of other modal systems in the region. This point may be unsurprising for music historians and theorists who know about the transmission and pedagogy of Arab music, specifically through the Cairo Congress of 1932 or even earlier, through the medieval treatises on Arab music theory (e.g., al-Fārābī’s *Kitāb*

*al-mūsīqā al-kabīr* [The Great Book of Music], 10<sup>th</sup> century). But more than describing the nuts and bolts of such conceptualizations of music, the fact that these conceptualizations are somewhat *shared* regionally has and continues to forge social and cultural connectedness for my Tunisian collaborators. Music theory is not just about systems and taxonomies but about structures that relate people and places.

As Tunisian music students sufficiently learn the repertoire in class, music professors discuss a theoretical way to understand the melodic movement in the repertoire, based on groupings of notes called tetrachords. Tetrachordal theory posits that musicians build performance practice on structures of three, four, or five notes called a *jins*, or *ajnās* in the plural.<sup>3</sup> The Arabic *jins* is understood to be a loanword deriving from *genus* in the Greek language, both of which correspond to the meaning of “genre” (Farmer 1929:107; Marcus 1989a:275). As a “genus” of something, a *musical jins* designates a group of notes that are sequential or stepwise to some extent, usually as a trichord (three-note), tetrachord (four-note), or pentachord (five-note). “Tetrachordal theory” is an overall term that describes such an analysis or conceptualization of music.

Analyzing performance practice with these *jins* structures first began with ancient Greek theorists, whose writings later came into the hands of medieval Arab music theorists – beginning in the 9<sup>th</sup> century – and greatly influenced the way Arab theorists have conceptualized musical practice.<sup>4</sup> In his study of the maqām modal system of the Mashriq,

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<sup>3</sup> Tunisian musicians also use the Arabic word *‘aqd* in colloquial speak (*‘iqd* in formal Arabic, and *‘uqūd* in the plural) to describe these structures. However, in the classroom, teachers and students most often use *jins* and *ajnās*, and I will do the same throughout this dissertation. It was rare to document Tunisian musicians and pedagogues discussing the *ajnās* with the words, “trichord,” “tetrachord,” or “pentachord.” Music scholars in Tunisia are conversant with such language. But in pedagogy, I found that the word *jins* is used most consistently to name these note groupings.

Scott Marcus noticed a particularly crucial moment in the application of tetrachordal theory on Arab music during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Marcus 1989a). Rather than elucidating a musical mode only through a melodic line or phrase – which was perhaps the standard method of transmitting Arab modes (cf. Mashāqa 1840) – Arab theorists and scholars took up tetrachordal theory *again*<sup>5</sup> during the 1932 Congress of Arab Music in Cairo, as well as the European model of a “scale” (Ar. *sullam*, Fr. *echelle*). A mode was like a scale, in that combinations of ajnās could be conceptualized as a “ladder” – a corresponding image of and possible translation to both of the designations *sullam* and *echelle*. They also chose to analyze the melodic movement of modes as a progression from one jins to another jins. But Arab scholars also differentiated themselves from the Western conceptualization of “scale,” remarking, for example, that modal-scales did not necessarily duplicate at the octave. This was an unprecedented recognition of alternative scalar structures at the time (Marcus 1989b).

Since that particular adoption of tetrachordal theory and scalar structure in 1932, Marcus documents that Arab theorists and pedagogues have simplified this kind of analysis, although an analysis of melodic movement based on ajnās and scales remains relevant in Arab music genres. Multiple examples from my time at the Institute in Sfax demonstrate how Tunisian musicians and pedagogues have continued the use of ajnās and scales in Arab music classrooms. For example, in a ṭubū‘ class for first-year music students, the professors presented the Tunisian mode of al-nawā with the following graph, showing groupings of

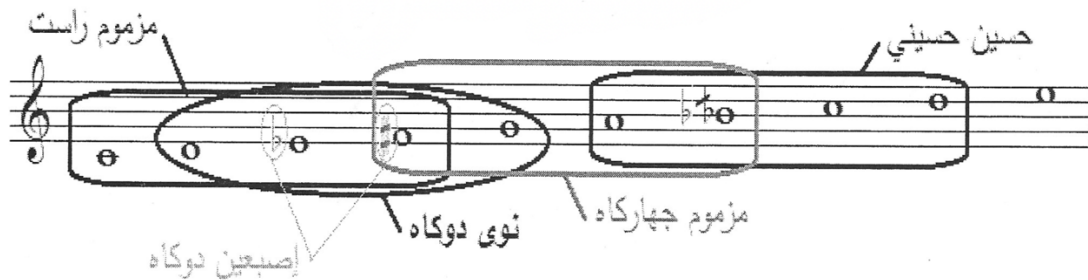
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<sup>4</sup> In the 9<sup>th</sup> century, Arab scholar al-Kindī adopted aspects of Greek music theory in his academic work. But it was the Arab scholar al-Fārābī in the following century that deepened the application of Greek theory onto Arab music (cf. Wright, et al. 2001).

<sup>5</sup> In a larger historical frame, this decision was to accept *again* the notion of tetrachordal theory on Arab music performance practices, as Arab theorists in 10<sup>th</sup>-century ‘Abbāsīd Baghdad had already structured many musical performance practices from Greek tetrachordal music theory. For a full discussion of this period, see Farmer 1929 (esp. pg. 107) and Marcus 1989a.

ajnās – in this case, all of them as tetrachords or four-note groupings – and an ascending scale to bring cohesion between the ajnās.

The ajnās and scale of *ṭab‘ al-nawā*.



Above the staff, from left to right: *mazmūm rāst* [C], *ḥsīn ḥusaynī* [A]

Below the staff, from left to right: *iṣḥāqīn dūkāh* [D], *nawā dūkāh* [D], *mazmūm jahārkāh* [F]

From this graph, it is clear that ajnās each have distinct names based on their fundamental or tonic note (Ar. *qarār*) and that ajnās can overlap by one or many notes. It is also clear that a scalar structure links many of these ajnās together, creating a sort of network of ajnās that can be used to analyze the most common melodic movements within a mode. Unlike Western music conceptualization of the scale, this scalar representation exceeds one octave and ranges from C to a high e. In essence, this one example shows how many Tunisian theorists and musicians theorize the musical modes in the classroom through tetrachordal theory and scalar structure.

The Tunisian modal system recognizes 16 ajnās that are integral to the 13 traditional modes.<sup>6</sup> A comparable number is with the Mashriqī maqāmāt system of modes which has 9

or 11 standard ajnās in use (Marcus 2002:36-7, 299).<sup>7</sup> Below is a chart that notates, names, and places the 16 ajnās of the ṭubū‘, beginning with the lowest note of the Arab scale on GG (Ar. *yakāh*) and ascending to B<sup>b</sup> (Ar. ‘*ajam*).<sup>8</sup> Musicians transpose some of these ajnās, and I give this information in the chart. But when applicable, I present the jins in its fundamental place, where the name of the jins (e.g., jins dhīl) becomes the name of the corresponding mode which starts with this jins (e.g., ṭab‘ al-dhīl). Doubled upper-case notes are played in the lower octave; single upper-case notes in the middle octave; and single lower-case notes in the upper octave. Information on the transcription markings are explained individually within the descriptions of each mode in this chapter. But readers can access Appendix 2 for a ready overview of intonational issues in the Tunisian ṭubū‘.

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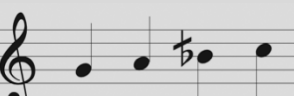



<sup>6</sup> It may be that the Tunisian repertoire supports more than 16 ajnās. But based on my fieldwork learning the ṭubū‘ and my reading of the available literature, these 16 ajnās in the following chart represent the majority – if not all of – the ajnās in the traditional ṭubū‘.

<sup>7</sup> Marcus lists 12 other ajnās that either have some transmission among music specialists or are present in historical sources (cf. 1989a:304-8) but were not “standard” practice at the time of research.

<sup>8</sup> If one considers jins ḥsīn D and jins ramal al-māyah D as separate ajnās, then the count is 17.

The Ajnās of the 13 Traditional Ṭubū‘ of Tunisia

Name of base note	Transcription	Name and transposition of jins (if applicable)	
GG Yakāh يكاه		Aṣbahān or Ar. <i>ḥarakat al-rahāwī</i> [the movement of rahāwī], in ṭab‘ al-dhīl	
C Rāst راست		Raṣd al-dhīl	Also on F, G, c
		Dhīl	Also on GG, G, c
		Māyah	Also on c
D Dūkāh دوكاه		Iṣba‘īn	Also on GG, G, A, d
		Ramal	Only on D
		Ḥsīn	Also on AA, A, d
		Ramal al-māyah	Only on D
		‘Irāq	Only on D

		Nawā (Ar. نوى)	Only on D
E♭ Sīkāh سيكاه		Sīkāh	Also on BB♭, B♭, e♭
F Mazmūm مزموم		Mazmūm	Also on FF, C, c
G Nawā نوا		Mḥayyar sīkāh	Also on D <sup>9</sup>
		Mḥayyar ‘irāq	Also on D
A Ḥusaynī حسيني		Ar. <i>naw‘ kurdī</i> [kurdī-type]	Only on A
		Ṣabā (see discussion for this jins under the descriptions of ṭab‘ al-ḥsīn and ṭab‘ al-mazmūm in this chapter)	
B♭ ‘Ajam عجم		‘Ajam	Only on B♭

<sup>9</sup> Jins mḥayyar sīkāh D (D-E-F-G) occurs only in the popular or folk mode of al-mḥayyar sīkāh. Tunisian theorists do not categorize this mode as a traditional one.



A number of points are raised by this chart. First, some of the ajnās have the same intervallic structure but are named differently. This is clearly the case with several of the diatonic ajnās, namely nawā and mḥayyar sīkāh, and mazmūm and ‘ajam, but also with several non-diatonic ajnās. The ajnās aṣbahān, māyah, and mḥayyar ‘irāq each have the same intervallic structure, including a half-flat as the third note of the group and appear synonymous outside of their different fundamental notes. Secondly, the jins of ḥsīn and ramal al-māyah is the same, which needs explanation.

In each case, Tunisian musicians would recognize these ajnās as distinctive structures due to their melodic character. Jins mazmūm F (F-G-A-B<sup>b</sup>[-c]) might appear to be a transposition of jins ‘ajam B<sup>b</sup> (B<sup>b</sup>-c-d-e<sup>b</sup>), but the melodic movements associated with these two ajnās are distinct. The intervallic structure of ajnās aṣbahān, māyah, and mḥayyar ‘irāq is similar but the melodic qualities of jins māyah C (C-D-E<sup>b</sup>-F), for instance – with a stepwise descent from the note B<sup>b</sup> to C (see Chapter 2) – could not be more distinct to Tunisian participants from the melodic character of jins mḥayyar ‘irāq G (G-A-B<sup>b</sup>-c) which emphasizes the note B<sup>b</sup>. The case of ajnās ḥsīn and ramal al-māyah resemble each other profoundly, in terms of intervallic structure, intonational practice, and even melodic character. Other features of melodic movement, however, within the repertoire of each mode, distinguish these two ajnās from each other (see Chapter 2 for a full discussion of melodic paths). Simply put, Tunisian musicians in the ṭubū‘ distinguish between the ajnās based upon their melodic character in addition to their intervallic structure.

The procedure for creating a scale from these ajnās occurs first by designating one fundamental jins and assembling other ajnās around it based upon the performance practice of a mode, including written and oral repertoire as well as common improvisation methods.

The lowest note of the fundamental jins establishes the “resting place” (Ar. *qarār*) or tonic of the mode. The fundamental jins also gives the mode its name. Additional ajnās assemble around the fundamental one – and each other – to build a scale. In the ṭubū‘, these ajnās can overlap by one or multiple notes or sit adjacently to each other. In this way, theorists build a mode’s “note range” (Ar. *majāl ṣawtī*) across one or two octaves. In this chapter, I will demonstrate an assembly process for each mode, jins by jins, with commentary, so that the reader can track the structuring of a mode from its fundamental jins to a scalar diagram. Those who are familiar with the Mashriqī maqāmāt, in terms of how they were conceptualized in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and how they are taught today through tetrachordal theory, will relate to how Tunisians structure the ṭubū‘ and, consequently, how I present them in Chapter One.

In this chapter, the final scalar diagram for each mode resembles a number of ajnās that can interpret most types of melodic movements in that mode’s repertoire. When learning to analyze the repertoire, Tunisian music students gain competency in understanding how ajnās help to interpret melodic movement. They describe musical phrases using the name of the jins and its base note. For instance, a melody that manifests a jins dhīl on C is named “jins dhīl ‘alā rāst” or simply “jins dhīl rāst.” Instead of using the Arabic note name for C (“rāst”), it is common for Tunisian musicians to use the European Solfege system and say “jins dhīl do.”<sup>10</sup> Analyzing melodic movement is the central topic in Chapter Two of this dissertation.

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<sup>10</sup> In Arab music theory, each note has a specific name. Some of these names derive from the Persian language. For a complete list of these names across two octaves of twenty-four tones each, see Marcus 1989a:99. Tunisian musicians, scholars, and pedagogues also use the European Solfege system to name the notes. Originally created by the 11<sup>th</sup>-century Italian music theorist Guido D’Arezzo, and innovated by John Curwen in the 19<sup>th</sup>

A modal scale demonstrates one fundamental jins (except for ṭab‘ raṣd al-dhīl, which has two fundamental ajnās) and a number of secondary ajnās. A longer melodic phrase might manifest several ajnās. In this sense, these structures work together as a *network*, a fitting metaphor that explicitly conveys the idea of movement and connection. Recent Arab music theorists of the maqāmāt have conceptualized melodic movement with ajnās in a similar way, creating diagrams of lines and hubs between ajnās that resemble a busy trainline or subway map (Farraj and Abu Shumays 2019).<sup>11</sup> These helpful diagrams are a rare contribution to present-day Arab music theory and resemble aspects of D’Erlanger’s earlier documentation of the maqāmāt from the 20<sup>th</sup> century that many Arab musicians eventually dismissed as pedagogically too complex (cf. Marcus 1989a:36-40).

Tunisian theorists have an alternative method of interpreting melodic movement, other than through tetrachordal theory. They describe a type of pentatonicism that is embedded melodically in six of the ṭubū‘ in general, and in ṭab‘ al-raṣd more specifically. Pentatonic or “gapped” scales have spaces in the sequence of notes due to the fact that five notes – rather than seven – are used across one octave (Drabkin 2001). This phenomenon is not typical of Mashriqī conceptualizations of music theory. And although Tunisian theorists may disagree about how to apply pentachordal theory in the ṭubū‘, the overall consensus is

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century, the Solfege system was promoted as an educational tool to help music students improve their oral skills in hearing pitch relations between the note degrees of a given scale. Egyptian Maḥmūd Aḥmad al-Ḥifnī, who was the Secretary of the 1932 Cairo Congress and also the leader of the Committee on Musical Pedagogy, was impressed with the “Tonic Solfa” (Solfege) system of learning musical melodies, namely because it produced quick results among the Egyptian students he observed. al-Ḥifnī concluded that the Solfege system is a good way to prepare advanced music students for reading (*qirā’a*) and dictation (*imlā’*) (*KMMA* 1933:372). Coupled with past French occupation, al-Ḥifnī’s conclusions most likely also influenced future music pedagogy in Tunisia. The alphabetized system of naming notes from A to G is not used in Tunisia, or in the wider Mashriq to my knowledge.

<sup>11</sup> The metaphor is intentional and based on the writers’ experiences with the New York City subway (cf. 2019:278).

that this method of interpretation is important to understanding the social and cultural history of the musical modes. I will discuss Tunisian pentatonicism in depth when presenting ṭab‘ al-raṣd in Chapter One and when presenting pentatonic melodic movement in other modes in Chapter Two. Appendix 3 also focuses the topic more for the reader.

In the scalar diagrams that follow each mode’s description in this chapter, a “pivotal” (Ar. *mahūrī*) or “central” (Ar. *markiz*) note within a mode is represented as a half note in the scale. These are prominent non-tonic notes that shape melodic movement through reoccurring cadences (Zouari 2006:42). In essence, pivotal notes are crucial non-tonic hubs in the mode and enable melodic movement to shift up and down the scale, and away from the fundamental jins. These notes correspond to the role of a *ghammāz* in Mashriqī musical discourse (cf. Marcus 1989a:538-69), even though I did not hear this specific word spoken by my Tunisian collaborators during fieldwork. Pivotal notes, like a *ghammāz*, are often the fifth or fourth notes in a mode’s scale. But they can also be a second above or below the tonic, a third above or below the tonic, or a fourth or fifth below the tonic. I will deal with each mode’s pivotal notes in the commentary below.

The scale diagrams also show a number of other important points. First, the fundamental jins will be double-boxed, and the qarār or tonic note is represented as a whole note in order to distinguish its significance from the other notes of the scale. My diagrams for the ṭubū‘ are not prescriptive for musicians, even if one can choose to use them that way to improvise or compose. Rather, my diagrams are products of many data points: my teachers’ presentations at the Institute; historical sources; and modern performance practices. When these sources offer conflicting analyses – which they often did – I present contrasting versions or a compromised version (which I note). I then discuss the possible reasons for

variance. In all of my diagrams and descriptions, I attempt to capture the astonishing richness and sophistication of the traditional Tunisian ṭubū‘.

### Sources and Contexts

My representation of the Tunisian ṭubū‘ through tetrachordal theory comes from ethnographic and archival sources. Musicians and pedagogues in Tunisia have used Western staff notation since at least 1840, when the first Tunisian military academy was established in Bardo (near the Old City of Tunis) and staffed by Italian music teachers (Ben Amor 2010:196; Davis 1993:n18; 2002:325-6). The first transcription of the Tunisian modes in Western notation seems to be in the *Safāyin al-mālūf al-tūnisī* (Songbooks of Tunisian Mālūf), published in 1872 by a group of officers from the Bardo academy.<sup>12</sup> The first third of this manuscript is a pedagogical guide for learning to read Western staff notation and how this notation corresponds to some European and Arab musical instruments. After illustrating the European major and minor scales, the last two-thirds of the manuscript diagram the Tunisian ṭubū‘, notate melodies and texts of the nūba repertoire, and transcribe a number of Tunisian traditional music pieces. Notably, the ṭubū‘ are illustrated only by melodic phrases and not by a scale (see pp. 176-80).<sup>13</sup>

Tunisian musicians and pedagogues transmit their modes today, in part, through scalar diagrams. As previously mentioned, this major cognitive turn was largely a product of the

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<sup>12</sup> A *safīna* is a “songbook,” a collection of strophic poetic texts that have musical markings (cf. Reynolds 2012: 74-5). Even though the Arabic plural is rendered as *safā’in*, the spelling of *safāyin* is a common way of speaking the plural (without the hamza). This manuscript then is a collection of “songbooks” that assist in learning, performing, and remembering the texts and music of the Tunisian nūba suite forms.

<sup>13</sup> I gained access to the *Safāyin* only at the end of this dissertation study. Consequently, the manuscript is not integrated into Chapter 2, where it would have been most beneficial. A separate study of the *Safāyin* is a worthy project. My gratitude to Dr. Alla El Kahla for sending me a copy of the manuscript.

1932 Congress on Arab Music, an international conference hosted by the Egyptian government in Cairo but led by a number of participants, including the French benefactor and music aficionado Baron Rudolphe D'Erlanger. D'Erlanger has been living in Tunisia for many years by that point and had published one volume of *La Musique Arabe*. Before his death in October 1932, only six months after the 1932 Cairo Congress, D'Erlanger handed the supervision of volumes 2-6 to the Tunisian music scholar Manoubi Snoussi. Snoussi was a member of D'Erlanger's private musical ensemble (*takht*), along with Muḥammad Ghānim and Khamays al-Tarnān, all of whom no doubt contributed to the transcription of the Tunisian ṭubū' in the fifth volume. Other Tunisian collaborators include Aḥmad al-Wāfī, 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Bakkūsh (D'Erlanger's first secretary), and the well-known historian Ḥasan Ḥusnī 'Abd al-Wahhāb (al-Mustīsir 2014:88, 95, 112). Studying the transcriptions in this fifth volume of *La Musique Arabe* enabled me to compare and evaluate my ethnographic notes.

Manoubi Snoussi was an influential musician-scholar in his own right, and would go on to give a series of public radio presentations in Tunisia during the 1960s on the musical modes. These public addresses were published in 2004 as *Initiation à la Musique Tunisienne* (An Introduction to Tunisian Music). This book was also an insightful resource for this chapter.

The second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was a crucial time for adopting the modes as a symbol of national identity. The central issue was in naming an ethnic or historical geography for the “special features” (*khuṣūṣiyāt*) of Tunisian music. Salah Mahdi powerfully steered this discussion at this time. During the 1960s in particular, Mahdi was simultaneously the director of the Rashidiyya Ensemble (est. 1934), the preeminent traditional music

ensemble in Tunisia; the Music and Popular Arts division of Tunisia’s recently founded Ministry of Culture; and the National Conservatory of Music (Davis 2004:56). From this perch, Mahdi described the musical khuṣūṣiyāt of Tunisian music as region-specific expressions within the larger musical geography of “Arab music,” which he viewed as grounded predominantly in the Eastern Mediterranean’s maqāmāt system. In fact, he rarely used the word “ṭab” in his publications but instead preferred “maqām.” Mahdi also supervised the publication and dissemination of a nine-volume series of books called *al-Turāth al-mūsīqī al-tūnisī* (*Tunisian Musical Heritage*), called *TMH* hereafter.<sup>14</sup> These volumes provide lengthy articles on the Tunisian modes, rhythms, and classical forms as well as biographies of select Tunisian musicians and sketches of music history. The majority of the volumes’ contents are devoted to the poetic texts and Western staff-notated transcriptions of hundreds of songs that are considered mālūf. The *TMH* volumes are today considered canonical and are used extensively in Tunisian music conservatories and university music departments. Throughout this section of the dissertation, I use these transcriptions for most of the musical examples and also Mahdi’s article “al-Maqāmāt al-tūnisiyya al-muqārana” (The Tunisian Modes Compared) (*TMH* vol. 8, p. 3-8). For the names, taxonomy, scales, and notes on performance practice, I consulted several of Mahdi’s books outside of the *TMH* volumes (1972, 1982, 1999).

In 1980, the esteemed Tunisian music scholar Mahmoud Guettat published a landmark book entitled *La Musique Classique du Maghreb (Classical Music of North Africa)*, which was reissued with minor revisions in 2000 as *La Musique Arabo-Andalouse*:

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<sup>14</sup> The publication year and page numbers are not always printed in these volumes. However, since the first and last (ninth) volumes were published in 1962 and 1979, respectively, it is appropriate to date all of the *TMH* volumes to the 1960s and 1970s.

*l'Empreinte du Maghreb (Arab-Andalusi Music: The Imprint of North Africa)*. Rather than highlight the Arab geography solely in relation to Tunisia's musical khuṣūṣiyāt, Guettat also emphasized the historical geography of al-Andalus, placing aspects of Tunisian musical heritage beside similar heritage in Morocco, Algeria, and Libya. Guettat deals with the ṭubū' mainly from a historical perspective and includes extensive documentation of the repertoire and ensemble practices of these traditions across North Africa. On two pages in both the 1980 (pp. 270-1) and 2000 (pp. 367-7) publications, he diagrams an ascending and descending scale for each of the thirteen ṭubū' transmitted in Tunisia today.<sup>15</sup> These diagrams were helpful in constructing scalar representations of each mode.

Fathi Zghonda's liner notes to three mālūf recordings of nūbat al-dhīl, al-ramal, and al-'irāq are noteworthy in that they describe intonation and give scalar representations of the modes. The Radio Tunis ensemble recorded each of the three nūba suites, under the direction of Abdelhamid Bel Eljia and supported by the Tunisian Ministry of Culture and French Maison des Cultures du Monde, during the years 1959-1960. These records were digitized and reissued on CD in 1992-3.

The most important publication on the Tunisian ṭubū' in recent years is by the Tunisian music scholar Lasaad Zouari, entitled *al-Ṭubū' al-tūnisiyya min al-riwāya al-shafawiyya ilā al-naẓariyya al-taṭbīqiyya (The Tunisian Ṭubū' from Oral Transmission to*

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<sup>15</sup> In the 2000 revision, Guettat added three other modes: *mḥayyar al-'irāq*, *mḥayyar al-sīkāh*, and *rahāwī*. All of my Tunisian interlocutors unanimously categorized the first two modes of the three as “popular” or “folk” musical modes (Ar. *mūsīqā sha'biyya*). Most musicians consider *rahāwī* to be an older Tunisian mode that is no longer transmitted today. A vestige of this mode remains connected to certain melodic movement called “ḥarakat al-rahāwī” (a movement of *rahāwī*) on notes below C, including GG-AA-BB♯ or BB♯-C (for an explanation of intonational markings, see Appendix 2). This movement is most closely associated with *jins dhīl* GG (GG-AA-BB♯-C), for example, in the song *Āh 'alā mā fāt* in ṭab' raṣd al-dhīl. None of my Tunisian interlocutors related this “movement of *rahāwī*” to the Mashriqī maqām system, but the Eastern Mediterranean has a C-based mode called “*rahāwī*” that also emphasizes the lower register of the scale (Marcus 1989a:842).



*Applied Theory*). Although the date of publication is not indicated, other Tunisian music scholars cite the year as 2006, and I follow suit (e.g., Gharbi 2013). Zouari discusses each of the thirteen modes by giving a brief introduction and analyzing the mode based on a selection of sung repertoire from the nūba suite form. Based on extensive qualitative musical analysis of the nūba repertoire, Zouari then delineates which ajnās for a given mode are “principal” (*al-ajnās al-ra’īsiyya*) and which ones are “ancillary” or “secondary” (*al-ajnās al-far’iyya*). To come to these statistics, Zouari counted the repetitions of a given jins throughout a nūba, translated these numbers into a percentage based upon the appearance of all other ajnās, charted them in a bar graph, and compared the data numerically across the mode. This distinct methodology for analyzing modal music is the *modus operandi* for Zouari’s claims on which ajnās are truly primary and which are secondary. No other published source has made these claims about the Tunisian ṭubū‘. Finally, Zouari ends each mode’s analysis with a number of Western notated staves that give the mode’s note range, pivotal and focal notes, characteristic phrases, and melodic-rhythmic paths for manifesting the mode outside of the sung repertoire. Tunisian music scholars consider Zouari’s study to be the most complete analysis of the Tunisian ṭubū‘, and as a faculty member at the Higher Institute of Music in Sfax, Zouari has greatly influenced generations of music students and professors, in terms of how they learn and write about the musical modes.

Lastly, I depend upon my own ethnographic notes, recordings, classroom handouts, and personal experiences learning the Tunisian ṭubū‘ while a student at the Higher Institute of Music in Sfax during the academic year of 2018-2019. I attended the classes of Professors Fatma Lajmi and Wajdi ‘Alila’s classes on the ṭubū‘, which comprised Year One and Year Two curricula, respectively. In these classes, I learned to perform, identify, and notate each

of the thirteen traditional (*taqlīdiyya*) modes and three popular (*sha‘biyya*) modes of modern-day Tunisia. Lajmi and ‘Alila were two of Zouari’s doctoral students and transmitted his methodology of modal analysis in our class sessions. I also greatly benefited from my conversations with Kamal Gharbi on the topic. Even though Gharbi was teaching Year Two maqāmāt among other classes at the Institute during my fieldwork in Sfax – and I sat in his class weekly – he often teaches the Tunisian ṭubū‘ in Sfax and also at the Higher Institute of Music in Tunis, as well as performing them on national and international stages. His insights – not to mention his remarkable MA thesis entitled *al-Maqāmiyya fī al-mūsīqā al-tūnisiyya bayn al-tanzīr wa-l-mumārīsa* (Modality in Tunisian Music Between Theory and Practice; 2013) – aided my understanding and transcription of the modes; and my recordings of his crystal-clear ‘ūd and singing style have provided hours of pleasurable listening.

### **Order of the Musical Modes**

I present the thirteen ṭubū‘ in the order that follows a well-known poem (Ar. *zajal*) in colloquial Arabic dialect. The writer is anonymous, but the poem circulates throughout institutes of music education. Students often memorize it, and Tunisian music scholars have canonized this particular order (al-Rizqī 1989:200-238; *TMH* vol. 3-8; Mahdi 1999:6; al-Zwārī 2006). I reproduce the poem below from the Arabic version in the *TMH*, and include footnotes about alternative spellings and commentary:

بالذيل قلبي كاوي  
سيكه مع الحسين  
أما النوى في غاية  
رست الذيل يحييني  
على اصبهان يسلم  
ماية في الفصلين

يجر الرباب رهاوي  
أما العراق يساوي  
الرصد ورمل الماية  
الاصبعين دوايا  
بالرمل حين تنغم  
مزموم بيه نتّم

yijarr al-rabāb rahāwī  
ammā al-‘irāq yusāwī  
al-raṣd wa-ramal al-māyah  
al-iṣba‘īn dawāyā  
bi-l-ramal ḥīna tinaghgham  
mazmūm bīhi nitammam

bi-l-dhīl qalbī kāwī  
sīkah<sup>16</sup> ma‘a-l-ḥsīn  
ammā al-nawā fī ghāya<sup>17</sup>  
rast<sup>18</sup> al-dhīl yaḥyīnī  
‘alā aṣbahān yisallim  
māyah fī-l-faṣlayn

The rabāb is bowed in *rahāwī*  
Truly, ‘*irāq* is equal to  
*Raṣd* and *ramal al-māyah*  
*Iṣba‘īn* is my medicine  
*Ramal*, when you hum  
*Mazmūm*, with it, we finish

By *dhīl* my heart is seared  
*Sīkah* with *ḥsīn*  
Indeed, *nawā* to the utmost!  
*Raṣd al-dhīl* revives me  
Greetings *Aṣbahān*  
*Māyah* in two seasons.<sup>19</sup>

In my translation above, I have italicized the musical modes and removed the definite article (“al-”) to clarify the listing, which yields the following: rahāwī, dhīl, ‘irāq, sīkāh,

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<sup>16</sup> Alternatively spelled *sīkā* (Jones 1977:289), *ṣīkah* (Mahdi, *TMH* vol. 3, n. 16), or *sīkāh*.

<sup>17</sup> Also: *zīd al-nawā fī ghāya* (Increase al-nawā to the utmost!) (Gharbi 2019b).

<sup>18</sup> Alternatively spelled *raṣd* (Mahdi, *TMH* vol. 3, n. 17).

<sup>19</sup> “*Māyah* in two seasons” refers to the temperament of al-māyah, in that it has hot and cold natures. In a conversation about this poem, Kamal Gharbi likened al-māyah to water – the lexical meaning of the mode’s name – and its ability to effect people with different natures (2022). The poem refers to the perception of al-māyah as a mode that is flexible, soft, and able to effect in various ways. Alternatively, Mahdi interpreted this phrase as follows: “Considering that [al-māyah] is the last of the nūba suites, the shaykh of Tunisian reciters ‘Alī al-Burāq would place it at the end of each of his recitations” (Mahdi, *TMH* vol. 3, n. 18). In other words, one part of al-māyah is its role as a fully-fledged nūba suite with its own repertoire. The second part of al-māyah is its role in ending qur’anic recitations, which apparently was a practice of the well-known Tunisian Shaykh ‘Alī al-Burāq (1899-1981). The anonymous zajal poem predates the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, the “al-māyah in two seasons” appears to be an older meaning of this phrase, although Mahdi’s explanation demonstrates how musical modes continue to take on alternative meanings and functions over time.

ḥsīn, raṣd, ramal al-māyah, nawā, iṣba‘īn, raṣd al-dhīl, ramal, aṣbahān, mazmūm, and māyah. With the exception of rahāwī, each of these modes are transmitted in Tunisian music schools today and comprise the thirteen “traditional” (Ar. *taqlīdiyya*) modes.<sup>20</sup> Outside of the poetic text, there is no other normative conceptualization of why these modes are ordered as such. However, in one interview I conducted, the master musician and ṭubū‘ scholar Kamal Gharbi intimated that this modal order may be more than randomly drawn up (2019b). For example, the second verse (Ar. *bayt*) of the poem links the modes of ‘irāq, sīkāh, and ḥsīn, which for musicians is more than coincidence. Although sīkāh is an E<sup>♯</sup>-based mode and ḥsīn is D-based, they both utilize the notes E<sup>♯</sup>-F-G in their base jins. Also, in both the sīkāh and ḥsīn modes, the E<sup>♯</sup> is conventionally played higher than the E<sup>♮</sup> within other Tunisian modes. Additionally, the mode of ‘irāq contains the base jins of D-E<sup>♯</sup>-F-G. In other words, if you insert sīkāh into ḥsīn (“...*sīkah* with *ḥsīn*...”), you get ‘irāq (“...truly, ‘*irāq* is the same...”). Gharbi’s point opens a door into understanding modal order not as a series of lists or taxonomies but as a nuanced and interrelated set of musical relations.

The canonized order that derives from the poem is not the only representation of a modal list. Without a doubt, the most famous alternative order is in a poem composed by the 14<sup>th</sup>-century Sufi Shaykh al-Mazār Sīdī Muhammad al-Ẓarīf (d. AH 787/1385 CE). The poem is called the *Nā‘ūrat al-ṭubū‘* (The Water Wheel of the *ṭubū‘*) and embeds the known musical modes of the time within a narrative about a songbird. The list is as follows: rahāwī, dhīl, ramal, aṣbahān, sīkah, muḥayyar, mazmūm, ‘irāq, ḥusayn, nawā, raṣd dhīl, māyah,

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<sup>20</sup> The Sufi ‘Isāwiyya group still transmits a semblance of the rahāwī mode (Jankowsky 2021:49), even as my university teachers stated that this mode has disappeared from use.

raşd, aşbi‘ayn (al-Sādiq 1989:193).<sup>21</sup> This list of 14 modes includes the mode muḥayyar, which Tunisians today consider to be an expression of musical folklore (Ar. *mūsīqā sha‘biyya*) and is further divided into two distinct modes: mḥayyar ‘irāq and mḥayyar sīkāh. These two modes are important to Tunisian musical history and are transmitted regularly in music schools, although teachers categorize them as non-traditional.

After documenting the *Nā‘ūrat al-tubū‘* in his book on *Tunisian Songs*, the revered music scholar al-Sādiq al-Rizqī gives an alternative listing of modes (1989:193). He begins with ḥsīn and names four of ḥsīn’s derivative modes, including ḥsīn aṣl, ḥsīn ṣabā, ḥsīn ‘ajam, and ḥsīn ‘ushshāq. The fourth derivative, ḥsīn ‘ushshāq, is no longer transmitted in Tunisia today. His list continues with māyah, and then ramal, ramal al-māyah, dhīl, raşd, raşd al-dhīl, mazmūm, nawā, and sīkah. Next, he includes the two forms of muḥayyar mentioned in the previous paragraph, and also aşbi‘ayn and aşbahān. The final mode in his list – ‘irāq ‘ushayrān – is no longer transmitted in Tunisia today. Later in the same chapter when it comes time to discuss the mālūf repertoire, al-Rizqī changes the list again and presents each nūba suite in the conventional order used today within the anonymous poem cited above.

At least one form of a modal list was preserved alongside a melody. In his article on the nūba in the third volume of the *TMH*, Maḥdi states that musicians use the text of the anonymous poem in a song in nūbat al-nawā with the rhythm of *dkhūl birāwil* (cf. Maḥdi 1999:6 for the same reference). Unfortunately, he does not provide a musical transcription of this song in the nūbat al-nawā in *TMH* vol. 6. But in nūbat al-işba‘īn, documented in *TMH* vol. 7, pg. 17, the first song in the *draj* rhythm lists many of the Tunisian modes in a song

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<sup>21</sup> In her dissertation, L. JaFran Jones includes an annotated translation of most of the poem and describes each mode lexically, as it emerges within the narrative itself (1977:283-5). My thanks to Rachel Colwell for pointing out Jones’ excellent work on the topic.

that begins with the line *Min al-nawā yawm al-firāq* (From al-nawā comes the day of parting). Within the song's text, the following modes are given in this order: nawā, 'irāq, ḥsīn, aṣbahān, mazmūm, sīkāh, māyah, iṣba'īn, rahāwī. Again with the exception of rahāwī, these modes are still transmitted in Tunisia today.<sup>22</sup>

A final ordering of the modes is perhaps from an older arrangement that aligns each mode with a time of day. Tunisian ṭubū' scholar Zouari gives this list in his introduction to the musical modes (2006:41, n1), as follows:<sup>23</sup>

Dawn ( <i>fajr</i> )	al-ḥsīn
After the rising of the sun	al-māyah
Mid-morning	al-'irāq
Noon ( <i>zawāl</i> )	al-aṣbahān
After noon ( <i>'aṣr</i> )	al-iṣba'īn
After sunset ( <i>maghrib</i> )	al-mazmūm
After evening ( <i>'ishā'</i> )	al-dhīl
First third of the night	al-ramal
Midnight	al-sīkāh
Middle third of the night	raṣd al-dhīl
Last third of the night	al-nawā

Each of these 11 modes are transmitted in Tunisia today. The modes of raṣd and ramal al-māyah are absent from this list.

For this chapter, I follow the conventional way Tunisian music scholars order the thirteen ṭubū', namely via the anonymous poem above. Tunisian pedagogues, however, teach the modes in a variety of orders based on the discretion of the teachers and the prior

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<sup>22</sup> This song was included in the iṣba'īn repertoire that Year-One music students learned at the Higher Institute of Music in Sfax during my fieldwork. I observed that students were more familiar with this song than others and, subsequently, needed less instruction and drilling for this song when running the repertoire.

<sup>23</sup> Five of the temporal events in this list align with the times of prayer that are customary in Muslim communities, namely *fajr*, *zawāl*, *'aṣr*, *maghrib*, and *'ishā'*. The noon prayer is usually called *zuhr* instead of *zawāl*. In the list above, I have included the transliterations of these five particular times to mark their social significance within Islam.

knowledge of the students. It was the case during my fieldwork year that teachers of both the Year One ṭubū‘ and maqāmāt classes began with modes considered diatonic<sup>24</sup> (e.g., ṭab‘ al-mazmūm, maqām nahāwand) and progressed into modes that had versions of half-flats (e.g., ṭab‘ al-māyah, maqām bayyātī) later in the year.

This chapter will describe and discuss the thirteen modes of traditional Tunisian music in the following order, again, as transmitted in the anonymous poem:

1. al-Dhīl
2. al-‘Irāq
3. al-Sīkāh
4. al-Ḥsīn
5. al-Raṣd
6. Ramal al-Māyah
7. al-Nawā
8. al-Iṣba‘īn
9. Raṣd al-Dhīl
10. al-Ramal
11. al-Aṣbahān
12. al-Mazmūm
13. al-Māyah

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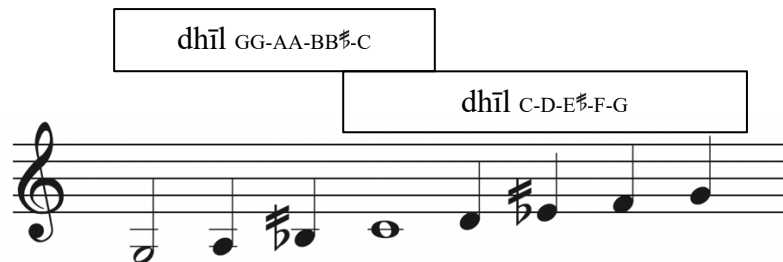
<sup>24</sup> Modes that contain only whole steps and half steps between notes.

## The 13 Traditional Ṭubū‘ of Tunisia

### 1. Ṭab‘ al-Dhīl

Ṭab‘ al-dhīl is the first mode in the poetic arrangement. My analysis will emphasize a common network of ajnās used for this mode, including: several al-dhīl ajnās, ‘irāq, sīkāh, māyah, mḥayyar ‘irāq, mḥayyar sīkāh, mazmūm, and forms of iṣba‘īn that occur within a derivate mode called “mjannab(āt) al-dhīl.”

Jins dhīl C (C-D-E $\sharp$ -F-G) is the fundamental jins, containing five notes from the tonic C to G. I also include jins dhīl GG (GG-AA-BB $\sharp$ -C) in the chart below, due to its importance in emphasizing the tonic on C.



Jins dhīl may comprise four or five notes depending upon where it is located in the scalar range of a mode. In ṭab‘ al-dhīl the fundamental jins dhīl C is a full five-note grouping. Jins dhīl GG most often manifests as a four-note grouping through melodic movement due to how the tonic C acts as a top boundary for this bottom jins dhīl. The prominence given to jins dhīl GG is where the mode gets its name as the “tail” (Tun. Ar. *dhīl*).<sup>25</sup> The note GG is

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<sup>25</sup> Snoussi 2004:48; transliterated as *dhayl* in Modern Standard Arabic (Wehr 1979:366).



emphasized in melodies and cadences and is marked as a pivotal note – a half note – in the chart above.<sup>26</sup>

Both of these ajnās have a high half-flat on the third note degree, marked in this chart with a double-slash sign (♯), as utilized by the late Tunisian musician and statesman, Salah Mahdi to signify a note flattened 20% of a “whole-step” (Ar. *al-bu‘d al-‘ādī* in Mahdi’s article in *TMH* 8:4; also, Fr. *ton* in Mahdi 1972:37). Tunisian musician and professor emeritus Fethi Zghonda approximated this intonation as a two-comma flattened note (Zghonda 1992a).<sup>27</sup> I follow these Tunisian scholars in my al-dhīl transcriptions, although some Tunisian musicians – and published transcriptions such as *TMH*, vol. 3 – mark this intonation with a single-slash flat sign (♭), which is considered a lower half-flat intonation. The higher half flat (i.e., ♯) is indicative of al-dhīl, especially when played within al-dhīl’s characteristic melodic phrases.

The two-comma flattened note E<sup>♯</sup> is also utilized in another jins of this mode: jins ‘irāq D (D-E<sup>♯</sup>-F-G). But again, transcriptions and musicians often use a conventional half-flat (♭) sign to signify this highly intoned flattened note. One such example is documented in

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<sup>26</sup> A “movement of rahāwī” (*ḥarakat al-rahāwī*; see footnote 8 above) is one type of melodic movement on the notes of jins dhīl GG, just as the poem attests: “The rabāb is bowed in *rahāwī* / By *dhīl* my heart is seared.” Perhaps this relationship between rahāwī and al-dhīl – instituted in part through the poem’s arrangement – is one reason why Tunisian musicians most often associate a melodic movement of rahāwī in the mode of dhīl.

<sup>27</sup> Tunisian music theory recognizes different tunings for half-flat intervals (cf. Appendix 2). Thus, when learning a new jins which includes a half flat, attention must be given to the characteristic tuning of this note. Using the system of cents where each half step (e.g. D to Eb) is represented as 100 cents and a whole step (e.g. D to E) is represented as 200 cents, an equal tempered half flat (e.g. D to E<sup>♭</sup>) would occur at 150 cents. If we apply cents to Mahdi’s statement that jins dhīl’s E<sup>♯</sup> is 20% flat, then we see that he has placed the E at 160 cents above D, slightly higher than the equal tempered half flat.

Pythagoras, a 6<sup>th</sup>-century Greek theorist, is credited with inventing the concept of commas to analyze intervals, a comma being an interval of roughly 23.5 cents. In the Pythagorean system the whole step (e.g., D to E) is roughly 204 cents. If we apply cents to Zghonda’s statement that dhīl’s E<sup>♯</sup> is flat by two commas (roughly 47 cents together), then he has placed the E<sup>♯</sup> at roughly 157 cents (204 minus 47). This measurement is close to Madhi’s understanding of dhīl’s E<sup>♯</sup> at 160 cents.

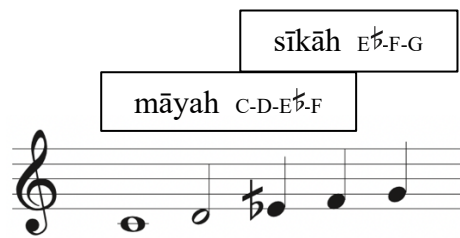
the liner notes of the 1960 recording of *nūbat al-‘irāq*, performed by the Radio Tunis Ensemble (Zghonda 1993). Fethi Zghonda transcribes the note E in *jins ‘irāq* D with a single-slash flat sign (♭) but still writes that this intonation corresponds with a two-commas flat intonation. Contrastingly, in a previous publication on *ṭab‘ al-dhīl*, Zghonda specified that a double-slash flat sign (♭♭) is also played with a two-commas flat intonation (1992a). In other words, musicians have used both flat signs to signify the highly intoned flattened note in *jins al-‘irāq*. The processual space between transcription and performance practice is a simple explanation for this incongruity. While *jins ‘irāq* is often transcribed with a single-slash flat sign, the practice—as Zghonda writes—seems to be relatively stable: it is widely accepted that musicians perform the note slightly higher than the conventional half-flat sign signifies.

Tunisian musicians consciously recognize that *ṭab‘ al-dhīl* and *ṭab‘ al-‘irāq* are closely linked, partly due to the high intonation of the E note within characteristic melodic phrases. Due to the last point, I mark *jins ‘irāq* in the mode *al-dhīl* with a double-slash flat sign (♭♭). The note D in *jins ‘irāq*—marked in the figure below as a half note—is a pivotal one and concludes many cadential melodic phrases in this mode.



The range from C to G host two other *ajnās*: *jins māyah* C (C-D-E♭-F) and *jins sīkāh* (E♭-F-G). Melodically, *jins māyah* and *jins sīkāh* often work together (see *ṭab‘ al-māyah*); and the note E♭ in these *ajnās* is tuned slightly lower than the E♭ in *jins ‘irāq* D and *jins dhīl*

C. In other words, melodic phrases in ṭab‘ al-dhīl can utilize different versions of the E note, including a “thinly” or slightly flattened E<sup>♯</sup> (jins dhīl and jins ‘irāq) and also a more lowered E<sup>♭</sup> (jins māyah and jins sīkāh). Knowing when to use these intonations links to how musicians phrase melodies, as ajnās often have signature melodic phrases that emphasize specific intonations. Musicians alter the note E in performance based on these specific types of melodic movement.



The note G is another pivotal scale degree in ṭab‘ al-dhīl. The ajnās mḥayyar ‘irāq (G-A-B<sup>♯</sup>-c) and dhīl (G-A-B<sup>♯</sup>-c-d) occur from G and are differentiated by melodic phrasing. Although the note B in jins mḥayyar ‘irāq is most often marked in Tunisia with a single-slash flat sign (♭), it is understood that musicians still perform the intonation closer to that signified by a double-slash flat sign. In this way, ajnās dhīl G and mḥayyar ‘irāq G have a great deal of correspondence. Additionally, the note B<sup>♭</sup> is used. When introduced, the musician signals jins mḥayyar sīkāh (based on G) and sometimes jins mazmūm (based on F)—the latter existing normally as a larger five-note jins.

Ṭab‘ al-dhīl is one of the most extensive modes in Tunisia, in terms of scalar range (GG to d) and repertoire. D’Erlanger presented an analysis of the mode, assembled in the early 1930s and published in 1949, in which he demonstrated the complexity of al-dhīl by presenting three separate but related modes: dhīl, *istihlāl al-dhīl* (“the introduction of dhīl”), and *mujannab al-dhīl*. His sample melodies show the use of an E $\flat$  in dhīl (but not in *istihlāl al-dhīl*); an emphasis on the notes G and above in *istihlāl al-dhīl*; and an emphasis on the bottom ajnās in dhīl (1949: Fig. 148 and 150). Today, Tunisian musicians do not differentiate between the modes of dhīl and *istihlāl al-dhīl*.

However, the third mode of *mujannab al-dhīl* is distinct in D’Erlanger’s analysis (1949: Fig. 151), and Tunisians continue to transmit this mode as a variant or “derivative” (Ar. *far‘*) of ṭab‘ al-dhīl.<sup>28</sup> The word “*mujannab*” refers to something that is set to the side or kept adjacent. Musically speaking, *mujannab* might refer to notes that manifest adjacently to the more common notes of the al-dhīl scale. These types of changes to the arrangement of a more normalized al-dhīl scale demonstrate the older instrumental technique of *tajnīb*, whereby an “adjacent” note is played by the index finger on an open string of an ‘ūd

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<sup>28</sup> The Arabic word *far‘*, translated as “derivative,” has a long history of use in music theory. I explain this phenomenon in more detail in my description of ṭab‘ al-ḥsīn later in this chapter. Among the ṭabū‘, only ṭab‘ al-dhīl and ṭab‘ al-ḥsīn have derivative modes.

instrument.<sup>29</sup> The “mujannab” notes are those that come as a result of this adjacent relationship between the played note and open string.

In the case of the Tunisian *ṭubū‘* – much like the history of this technique – ‘ūd musicians use their index finger to play a note next to the nut of the instrument, which sounds a fully flattened note (i.e., a half step) higher than the open string. It follows that with a modern ‘ūd tuning, the notes are as follows: AA<sup>b</sup> on the GG open string, E<sup>b</sup> on the D open string, A<sup>b</sup> on the G open string. Two of these three notes become a part of a jins. Musicians will play the lower (AA<sup>b</sup>) and upper (A<sup>b</sup>) mujannab notes within a jins *iṣba‘īn* grouping (GG-AA<sup>b</sup>-BB-C and G-A<sup>b</sup>-B-c, respectively). In contrast, the mujannab note of E<sup>b</sup> is not included within a jins – such as jins *iṣba‘īn* D (D-E<sup>b</sup>-F<sup>#</sup>-G) – but rather played as a melodic coloration within final cadences that finish on the fundamental note of C.<sup>30</sup> Tunisian scholars have called all three of these notes (i.e., AA<sup>b</sup>, E<sup>b</sup>, A<sup>b</sup>) in Arabic *mujannabāt*, the pluralized form of *mujannab* (Mahdi 1982; Guettat 2000). Thus, the variant mode of mujannab al-dhīl is one that uses these three notes within its melodic movement, two of which are within a jins *iṣba‘īn* grouping. The chart below illustrates the mujannab derivative scale of al-dhīl:

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<sup>29</sup> The Arab music theorist al-Fārābī (10<sup>th</sup> cent.) writes that the function of these mujannab notes were ornamental to the melody (Sawa 2004:81, 98); and Arab music philosopher al-Ḥasan al-Kātib (11<sup>th</sup> cent.) called this technique *tajnīb* (Sawa 2004:98 n69). Although I did not hear Tunisians use the word *tajnīb* to describe the mujannab al-dhīl derivative mode, their use of the mujannab notes often served to ornament the melody or a cadential phrase – a contemporary technique that Tunisians utilize particularly with the E<sup>b</sup> in melodic movements that make use of mujannab al-dhīl (see Chapter 2 in this dissertation for examples). My gratitude to Dwight Reynolds for pointing out the historical significance of the mujannab technique.

<sup>30</sup> In the Mashriqī maqāmāt, Scott Marcus writes that it is common to add pre-cadential accidentals to melodic phrases, and that these accidentals follow certain patterns. In his examples, these accidentals are notes that are just above (“discontinuous upper neighboring tone”) established notes of a jins (1989a:617-20). In the Tunisian *ṭubū‘*, the mujannab al-dhīl note of E<sup>b</sup> can be understood to be a discontinuous upper neighboring tone that offers pre-cadential coloring leading to a cadence on the fundamental note C. To study this concept in more depth, as it was first proposed, see Nazir Ali Jairazbhoy’s book *The Rāgs of North Indian Music* (1971).

iṣba'īn GG-AA<sup>♭</sup>-BB-C
iṣba'īn G-A<sup>♭</sup>-B-c

The final presentation below is a structural compilation of the most utilized ajnās of ṭab' al-dhīl. The pivotal notes of GG, C, D, and G are emphasized with inflated note values—the note C given the most value as the fundamental note of al-dhīl.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Melodic phrases in al-dhīl frequently leave out the F and B (or BB) scale degrees. Tunisian music theorists understand this melodic feature to index pentatonicism in the mode (Mahdi 1972, 1982, 1999; Zghonda 1992a; see Appendix 3 on Tunisian pentatonicism). In this, many Tunisian musicians perceive strong resemblances between the melodies in ṭab' al-dhīl and another mode, ṭab' al-raṣd.

Figure 1. Ṭab‘ al-Dhīl

The figure illustrates the Ṭab‘ al-Dhīl scale through a staircase of mode boxes and a corresponding musical staff. The boxes, from top to bottom, are:

- mḥayyar sīkāh G-A-B $\flat$ -c
- mḥayyar ‘irāq G-A-B $\flat$ -c
- dhīl G-A-B $\flat$ -c-d
- mazmūm F-G-A-B $\flat$ -c
- sīkāh E $\flat$ -F-G
- ‘irāq D-E $\flat$ -F-G
- māyah C-D-E $\flat$ -F
- dhīl GG-AA-BB $\flat$ -C
- dhīl C-D-E $\flat$ -F-G

The musical staff below shows the notes corresponding to these modes. The notes are: G, A, B $\flat$ , C, D, E $\flat$ , F, G. The staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B $\flat$ ).

At the bottom, a rounded box contains the following elements from left to right:

- A box with the text: iṣba‘īn GG-AA $\flat$ -BB-C
- A flat symbol (b)
- A box with the text: iṣba‘īn G-A $\flat$ -B-c

## 2. Ṭab‘ al-‘Irāq

Ṭab‘ al-‘irāq is the second Tunisian mode and has several structural similarities with the first mode, ṭab‘ al-dhīl. The following description will highlight the most common network of ajnās in al-‘irāq, including ajnās dhīl, sīkāh, and mḥayyar sīkāh, as well as the most important base jins of ‘irāq.

Ṭab‘ al-‘irāq is based upon jins ‘irāq D (D-E $\sharp$ -F-G)—a jins that resembles jins ḥsīn D (D-E $\flat$ -F-G) and jins ramal al-māyah D (D-E $\flat$ -F-G), in terms of scale degrees

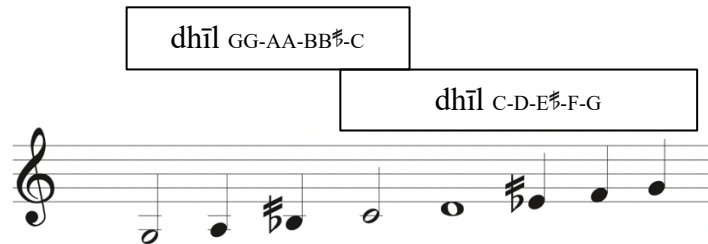


Listeners and musicians distinguish these three ajnās by melodic and rhythmic movements specific to each jins (see Chapter 2). But one other distinguishing feature of jins ‘irāq D is intonation. As mentioned in the description of ṭab‘ al-dhīl above, the second note degree (notated as E $\sharp$ ) is performed slightly higher than the half-flats of both ajnās ḥsīn D and ramal al-māyah D. It is noted that this double-slash flat sign is not often marked as such. Many Tunisian theorists choose to use the more conventional half-flat sign ( $\flat$ ). Regardless of the which sign people use to inscribe this intonation, it is understood that performers know to raise this degree slightly higher than a conventional single-slash flat sign when playing certain melodic movements.

In this mode, the fundamental jins ‘irāq D overlaps with the five-note jins dhīl C (C-D-E $\sharp$ -F-G), which also utilizes the higher E $\sharp$  intonation. Jins dhīl also occurs on GG (GG-



AA-BB $\sharp$ -C-D) but as a four-note jins.<sup>32</sup> Notably, jins dhīl GG signals a known melodic phrase in this mode which descends to GG, leaps to the C, and quickly sinks to the BB $\sharp$  before ascending to D for a cadence. The two ajnās al-dhīl, on GG and C, extend the scale to a full one octave, from note GG to note G, and solidify two pivotal notes for the entire scale: GG and C. Both are marked as half-notes in the following chart:



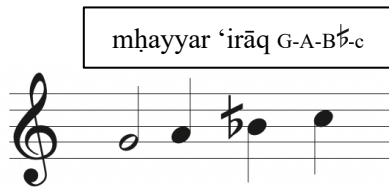
Jins sīkāh is crucial in ṭab‘ al-‘irāq, occurring at the bottom and top of the scale, beginning on the notes BB $\flat$  (BB $\flat$ -C-D) and B $\flat$  (B $\flat$ -c-d). As with the note E in jins ‘irāq D, the base notes of jins sīkāh in this mode are slightly raised above the conventional half-flat sign. However, Tunisian music theorists rarely mark BB $\flat$  and B $\flat$  with a double-slash flat sign, perhaps due to the fact that the Arabic note name of sīkāh has traditionally been marked as E $\flat$  in Tunisia (D’Erlanger 1949:339) and in the surrounding Arab region more broadly. Regardless of written indications, it is customary for musicians to play BB $\flat$  and B $\flat$  slightly higher in ṭab‘ al-‘irāq than the conventional half-flat intonation. In my notation below, I leave jins sīkāh marked with a traditional half-flat sign. The note range now extends to the note d.

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<sup>32</sup> Several contemporary Tunisian music theorists document jins dhīl GG in ṭab‘ al-‘irāq (e.g., Zouari 2006:76, Lajmi 2018-2019, and Wajdi 2018-2019). However, jins aṣbahān GG is also present in the repertoire (Gharbi 2013:92, 127), notated as GG-AA-BB $\sharp$ -C or GG-AA-BB $\flat$ -C. Note that these note spellings would resemble the spelling of jins dhīl GG. Tunisians differentiate between jins aṣbahān GG and jins dhīl GG through melodic movement. For example, one of the melodic features of jins aṣbahān GG is an emphasis on the note BB $\sharp$ /B $\flat$  much more than in jins dhīl GG melodic movements (Gharbi 2019b). For ṭab‘ al-dhīl, I choose to mark the jins GG-AA-BB $\sharp$ -C primarily as jins dhīl rather than jins aṣbahān, following a consensus of Tunisian theorists.



Jins mḥayyar ‘irāq G (G-A-B♭-c) is also common in this mode and establishes the note G as a pivotal note in ṭab‘ al-‘irāq. This jins often works in tandem with jins sīkāh B♭.



Gathering the most common ajnās, the following chart for ṭab‘ al-‘irāq shows a remarkably bottom-heavy mode, which in fact is a reality in much of its repertoire. Cadential melodic phrases maintain a strong presence of the note BB♭ in their movements to the tonic D. Beyond maintaining this consistent presence in the mode, the note BB♭ is also named ‘*irāq* in Arabic, perhaps giving the reason why this mode is so named even though the fundamental jins is on D. Apparently at one point, this mode was also called Irak Sultan<sup>33</sup> (Mahdi 1972:46). Interestingly, D’Erlanger presents a version of ṭab‘ al-‘irāq in his posthumous 1949 work, calling it ‘Irāq Aṣl (“the foundational/authentic ‘irāq”). But, as it manifests through D’Erlanger’s sample melody (1949: Fig. 167), this mode is not an example of the Tunisian version transmitted today. Rather, D’Erlanger’s melody corresponds more to the structure of maqām ‘irāq from the Eastern Mediterranean, tonicized on BB♭. For the

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<sup>33</sup> Transliterated today as ‘Irāq Sulṭān.

Tunisian ṭab‘ al-‘irāq, experienced listeners recognize an emphasis on the note  $BB\flat$  but an established tonic center on the note D.

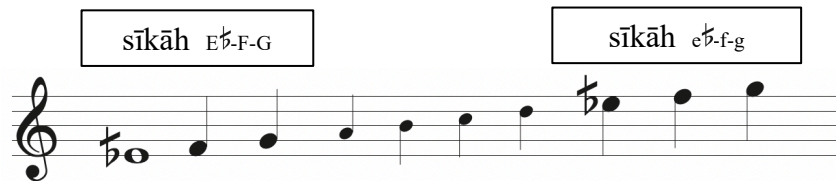
Figure 2. Ṭab‘ al-‘Irāq

The figure displays a musical staff in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody consists of the following notes: G4, A4, B-flat4, C5, D5, E-flat5, F5, G5, A5, B-flat5, C6, D6. Above the staff, five boxes indicate the scales for different modes:

- dhīl** (GG-AA-BB $\flat$ -C): G, A, B-flat, C
- sīkāh** (BB $\flat$ -C-D): B-flat, C, D
- ‘irāq** (D-E $\flat$ -F-G): D, E-flat, F, G
- dhīl** (C-D-E $\flat$ -F-G): C, D, E-flat, F, G
- mḥayyar ‘irāq** (G-A-B $\flat$ -c): G, A, B-flat, c
- sīkāh** (B $\flat$ -c-d): B-flat, c, d

### 3. Ṭab‘ al-Sīkāh

The third mode is ṭab‘ al-sīkāh, or more colloquially called *al-sīkāh al-tūnisiyya* (“Tunisian sīkāh”), based on its fundamental note E♭ (Ar. *sīkāh*). This mode is the only one in Tunisia tonicized on a half-flat note. The basic structure for al-sīkāh is jins sīkāh E♭ (E♭-F-G), most often thought of as a three-note grouping—or “trichord”—marked below in the chart. But, some Tunisians consider jins sīkāh a four-note grouping, i.e., E♭-F-G-A—or “tetrachord”—due to the fact that the note A is integral, at times, to the melodic movement of the jins within the repertoire. Jins sīkāh also occurs in the higher octave from the note e♭ (Ar. *buzrak*; e♭-f-g). With these two ajnās, the initial scale for this mode extends beyond one octave, bookended by the notes E♭ and g.



The note E♭ is a note of variable intonation in the performance practice of the Tunisian ṭubū‘. The repertoire reveals that melodic phrases in jins sīkāh E♭ and e♭ often precede or follow other melodic phrases that are based in ajnās tonicized on the notes C or c. As the notes C and c have less intonational variation than E♭ and e♭, these C-based ajnās provide a grounding to intone the E♭ and e♭ notes. Jins māyah C (C-D-E♭-F) and jins māyah c (c-d-e♭-f) in the upper octave steady the sīkāh ajnās through cadential melodic movement back and forth from E♭ to C and e♭ to c. Tunisian musicians are accustomed to recognizing this interval between the notes C and E♭; and this recognition limits some of the intonational possibilities of the E♭ that exist elsewhere in the Tunisian modes. The notation below shows

how the structural overlap of *sīkāh* and *māyah* *ajnās* work together to secure consonance in melodic movement. The result is that the notes E $\flat$  and C are the most pivotal notes in this mode.

The image displays two musical staves illustrating the structural overlap of *māyah* and *sīkāh* *ajnās*. The first staff shows *māyah* (C-D-E $\flat$ -F) and *sīkāh* (E $\flat$ -F-G) overlapping on notes F and G. The second staff shows *māyah* (c-d-e $\flat$ -f) and *sīkāh* (e $\flat$ -f-g) overlapping on notes f and g.

The notes F and G are base notes to a variety of potential *ajnās* that make melodies in *ṭab' al-sīkāh* colorful and appealing. Three such *ajnās* are given in the following chart. *Jins mḥayyar 'irāq* G (G-A-B $\flat$ -c) is one of the most common *ajnās* in *al-sīkāh*, using a characteristic B $\flat$  as the third degree in the *jins*. The other two *ajnās* highlighted below employ the note B $\flat$ : *mḥayyar sīkāh* G (G-A-B $\flat$ -c) and *mazmūm* F (F-G-A-B $\flat$ -c). These latter two *ajnās* overlap, resulting in cadences that frequently alternate between the two.

The image displays three musical staves illustrating different *ajnās*. The first staff shows *mḥayyar 'irāq* (G-A-B $\flat$ -c). The second and third staves show *mḥayyar sīkāh* (G-A-B $\flat$ -c) and *mazmūm* (F-G-A-B $\flat$ -c) respectively, which overlap on notes G, A, and B $\flat$ .

Intonational issues come to the foreground with two mid-scalar *ajnās*, *jins iṣba'in* G (G-A $\flat$ -B $\sharp$ -c) and *jins raṣd al-dhīl* F (F-G-A $\flat$ -B $\sharp$ -c). Both of these *ajnās* contain a wide interval between either the second and third note degrees of the *jins* (i.e., *iṣba'in*) or the third and fourth note degrees (i.e., *raṣd al-dhīl*). Tunisian music theorists have notated *jins iṣba'in*

G with a variety of possibilities for the A and B scale degrees. The following configurations of jins iṣba‘īn G demonstrate a few possibilities. I present them chronologically, starting with the oldest published source and ending with my most recent ethnographic sources:

G-A <sup>♭</sup> -B <sup>♮</sup> -c	(Snoussi 1963-66/2004:57) <sup>34</sup>
G-A <sup>♯</sup> -B <sup>♮</sup> -c	(Guettat 2000:367)
G-A <sup>♯</sup> -B <sup>♭</sup> -c	(‘Alila 2018-2019)
G-A <sup>♭</sup> -B <sup>♮</sup> -c	(Lajmi 2018-2019)

There is remarkable diversity, particularly when notating the A. Overall, Guettat, ‘Alila, and Lajmi agree that the note A is flatter than a conventional half-flat. The half-slash (♭/♮) flat sign signifies intonation between a conventional half-flat and a full flat. Lajmi marks a full flat to transcribe the A. If these theorists follow Mahdi’s system of intonational symbols (see Appendix 2), then the flat signs are separated by roughly one-tenth of a whole tone. Some musicians measure this separation as approximately one centimeter on the string of a modern Arab ‘ūd instrument (Gharbi 2020; see Appendix 2). In other words, although these intonational differences are small, they are discernable.

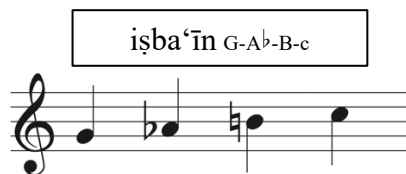
There seems to be more agreement among these theorists for the transcription of the note B, as Snoussi, Guettat, and Lajmi use the natural (♮) sign rather than ‘Alila’s use of the half-flat (♭/♮) sign. In his writing on al-sīkāh, Snoussi asserted that even though he transcribes with a B<sup>♮</sup>, the B is “less strong than B<sup>♮</sup>” (“moins dur que le Si naturel,” 2004:57). “Less strong,” is “less high” in relation to a natural symbol. This point causes a reconsideration of ‘Alila’s B<sup>♭/♮</sup>, especially since it is understood that Tunisian musicians often play the

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<sup>34</sup> This 2004 publication contain a series of written transcripts from a number of radio broadcasts that Snoussi gave in Tunisia between 1963-1966.

conventional half-flat marking higher than an equal-tempered measurement which puts the sound halfway between a flat and natural note.

In one sense, each of these configurations for the A and B notes can be considered correct. Written transcription symbols are referential and not representational. However, *işba‘īn* is not just a *jins* but also a fully-fledged mode in Tunisia called *ṭab‘ al-işba‘īn* (see the eighth mode in this chapter). Based on my classroom experiences at the Higher Institute of Music in Sfax, as well as the most recent analysis of Tunisian modes by Zouari (2006:146), *jins işba‘īn* D (D-E<sup>b</sup>-F<sup>#</sup>-G) in *ṭab‘ al-işba‘īn* is most often notated with a fully flat and fully sharp sign for the second and third note degrees, respectively, when the base note is D. This interval corresponds with fully flat and fully natural signs when the *jins* is based on the note G instead of D. And so, for *jins işba‘īn* G in *ṭab‘ al-sīkāh*, I follow these conventions. Even so, the notes A<sup>b</sup> and B<sup>♯</sup> are perhaps “less strong” – using Snoussi’s language – than an equal-tempered version. In other words, the note A can be performed less flat, or slightly higher (perhaps marked as A<sup>♭</sup>); and the B less natural, or slightly flatter (perhaps marked as B<sup>♯</sup>).<sup>35</sup>




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<sup>35</sup> In his study of the Mashriqī maqāmāt, Scott Marcus analyzes the theoretical and performance practice discourses of the augmented second interval – the same interval in *jins işba‘īn* G between the notes A and B. Marcus calls these intervals “shrunk intervals” due to how musicians actually practice this interval with a distance that is less than the theoretical augmented interval of 3 half steps (or 6 quarter steps). In describing their intonation of the notes in this interval with phrases such as “raised a little” or “lowered a little,” musicians have “shrunk” the theoretical interval. It is a case of the theory not reflecting the reality of performance practice, and musicians have recognized this discrepancy (1989a:213-228). Perhaps a similar history is reflected in the Tunisian *ṭubū‘* for this interval by the use of phrases such as “less strong.”

Likewise, *jins raṣd al-dhīl* F shares similar notational issues, except that the extended medial interval is between the third and fourth scale degrees rather than the second and third degrees. Tunisian music scholars have also documented this *jins* in several ways:

F-G-A $\flat$ -B $\flat$ -c	(Gharbi 2013:115)
F-G-A $\flat$ -B $\flat$ -c	(‘Alila 2018-2019)
F-G-A $\flat$ -B $\natural$ -c	(Lajmi 2018-2019)

As with *jins iṣba‘īn* above, the note A has three possibilities, and the B has two options.

Looking to performance practice for assistance, it is widely accepted for Tunisian musicians to play the note A flatter than a half-flat ( $\flat$ ) but higher than a full-flat ( $\flat$ ). The half-slash flat sign ( $\flat$ )<sup>36</sup> signifies intonations between these two signs, and thus, seems to be a helpful designation for the A in this *jins*. And similar to the note B in *jins iṣba‘īn* G, the B in *jins raṣd al-dhīl* is often played slightly lower than an equal-tempered natural ( $\natural$ ) sign. Because of this, Gharbi and ‘Alila both mark B with a conventional half-flat ( $\flat$ ) sign.

*Raṣd al-dhīl* is not only a *jins* but the name of a Tunisian mode with its own notational conventions (see the ninth mode in this chapter); and these conventions influence the transcriptions of *jins raṣd al-dhīl* used in other modes. In the mode of *raṣd al-dhīl*, the third degree of *jins raṣd al-dhīl* (C-D-E $\flat$ -F $\sharp$ -G) is usually marked with a half-flat sign ( $\flat$ ) even though during classes at the Institute, teachers taught me to play the intonation lower. The same is true of the fourth scale degree. This consideration, along with my fieldwork at the Higher Institute of Music, lead me to transcribe *jins raṣd al-dhīl* F in *al-sīkāh* with the notes A $\flat$  and B $\natural$ , as in the following chart:

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<sup>36</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the half-slash flat sign, see *ṭab‘ al-ramal* in this chapter.





In summary, the B $\flat$  notation aligns with that of jins iṣba‘īn G, yet the note in both ajnās is played slightly lower. As for the A, I consistently heard musicians play a flatter A for jins iṣba‘īn G than for jins raṣd al-dhīl F, depending on the melodic movement and how notes affect each other within this movement. Tunisian musicians talk about the “attraction/gravitation of notes” (Ar. *tajādhub al-darajāt*), a concept that assists them in locating correct intonation. For example, in this scenario, a melodic phrase that cadences on G in jins iṣba‘īn G will pull the note A flatter. This pull is less strong for the A when cadencing on the F in jins raṣd al-dhīl F.

The following chart is a synthesized view of ṭab‘ al-sīkāh, as it is practiced in Tunisia, and demonstrates how melodies can exploit a number of ajnās possibilities in the middle range of the al-sīkāh scale.

Figure 3. Ṭab‘ al-Sīkāh

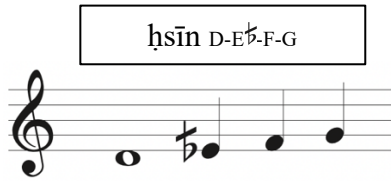
The diagram illustrates the Ṭab‘ al-Sīkāh scale structure. It consists of a series of boxes stacked vertically, each representing a different level of the scale. The boxes are arranged in a descending staircase pattern from right to left. The notes are represented by letters and Western musical notation (sharps, flats, and naturals). The staff below shows the sequence of notes: C, D, E-flat, F, G, A, B-flat, C, D, E-flat, F, G.

iṣba‘īn G-A <sup>♮</sup> -B-c	
mḥayyar sīkāh G-A-B <sup>♭</sup> -c	
mḥayyar ‘irāq G-A-B <sup>♭</sup> -c	
raṣd al-dhīl F-G-A <sup>♮</sup> -B-c	
māyāh C-D-E <sup>♭</sup> -F	
māyāh c-d-e <sup>♭</sup> -f	
sīkāh E <sup>♭</sup> -F-G	sīkāh e <sup>♭</sup> -f-g

Staff notation: C, D, E<sup>♭</sup>, F, G, A, B<sup>♭</sup>, C, D, E<sup>♭</sup>, F, G

#### 4. Ṭab‘ al-Ḥsīn

The fourth mode of ṭab‘ al-ḥsīn is an extensive musical mode in Tunisia, based on a wide-ranging traditional (Ar. *taqlīdiyya*) and popular (Ar. *sha‘biyya*) repertoire. Within nationalized and privatized music schools, ṭab‘ al-ḥsīn is delineated in four scalar forms called *ḥsīn aṣl*, *ḥsīn nīrz*, *ḥsīn ‘ajam*, and *ḥsīn ṣabā*. Ḥsīn aṣl means “the root (of)/foundational/authentic ḥsīn” and represents the fundamental scalar form through which the other three forms are derived. Ḥsīn nīrz, ḥsīn ‘ajam, and ḥsīn ṣabā are termed *furū‘* (“derivatives,” sing. *far‘*) or “branches.” For centuries, the image of a tree – with its root or trunk and branches – has been a standard metaphor for theorists to describe the relationship between modes which share the same fundamental jins. For ṭab‘ al-ḥsīn, each scalar form shares jins ḥsīn D (D-Eḥ-F-G) and perhaps a number of other ajnās. Ḥsīn aṣl is the most extensive – in terms of ajnās – and is the “root” of the mode. Ḥsīn nīrz is close to ḥsīn aṣl in terms of scalar range but diverges as a “branch” or derivative in its use of a jins based on C. Ḥsīn ‘ajam and ḥsīn ṣabā are much less extensive derivatives, again, in terms of the number of ajnās that are conventionally used in their repertoires. I mark ḥsīn aṣl and the three derivatives in bold-face type below for easy reference. The full network of ajnās for al-ḥsīn begins with multiple placements of jins ḥsīn, and also includes ajnās māyah, mḥayyar ‘irāq, mazzmūm, mḥayyar sīkāh, and ‘ajam (for ḥsīn ‘ajam). But, over and above these many ajnās variations, the primary jins ḥsīn D—with its fundamental note D, followed by Eḥ, F, and G—is the sine qua non across all manifestations in ṭab‘ al-ḥsīn.

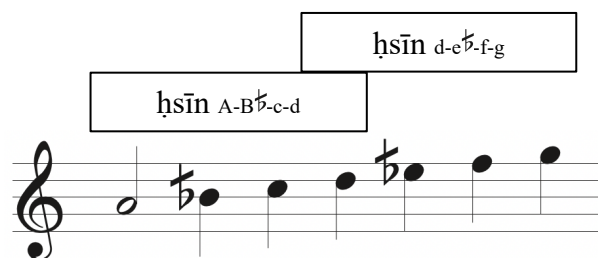


**Ḥsīn aṣl** is the “root” or bedrock structure for the entire modal network of ṭab‘ al-ḥsīn, as its name implies. In addition to its placement on D, jins ḥsīn is common also on the notes A (A-B♭-c-d) and d (d-e♭-f-g). The note A, in particular, is a pivotal note in ḥsīn al-aṣl and features prominently – along with jins ḥsīn A – throughout characteristic melodic phrases in al-ḥsīn.

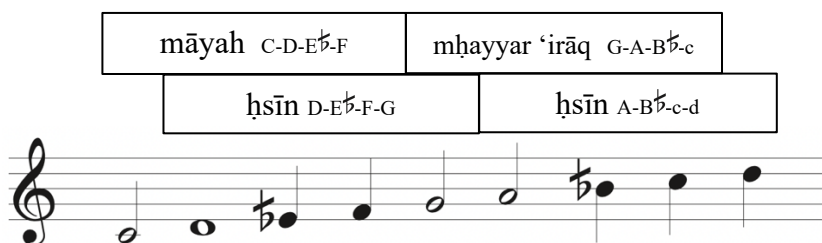
It is customary to play the second degree half-flat note in ajnās ḥsīn D, A, and d in an “almost natural” position (Fr. “presque bécarre”; Lajmi 2018-19). The intonation of the E♭ is close to that of E♭; and the intonation of the B♭ is close to that of B♭. This is a distinct characteristic of al-ḥsīn and not necessarily for other ajnās that utilize a half-flat (e.g., jins māyah C [C-D-E♭-F]). In my classroom experiences at the Institute, Professor Lajmi would often correct her students’ practice of this intonation, telling them to “raise” (Tun. Ar. *mshayya* ‘, مشَّيَّعٌ<sup>37</sup>) their half-flat intonation. However, despite the practice of raising the intonation of these half-flats in ajnās al-ḥsīn, it is *not* customary to use the double-slash flat sign (♭̂), as some Tunisian musicians may do for jins dhīl. It is not clear why this is the case. Since ṭab‘ al-ḥsīn is routinely compared to the Mashriqī maqām al-bayyātī which always uses a conventional half-flat for these ajnās, perhaps this may have become the convention for al-ḥsīn as well.

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<sup>37</sup> In its more normalized usage, the Arabic root of M Y SH (م ي ش) – from where the word *mshayya* ‘ derives – refers to an act of paying respects to a deceased body (Ar. *juthmān*) or sending a deceased body to God through funeral rites. This gesture of *lifting up* a body to God is the correspondence to the way my collaborators used *mshayya* ‘ to describe an intonation that was *lifted up* slightly higher than a conventional half-flat. My thanks to Dr. Ghassen ‘Azaiez for this helpful explanation.



Both of the ajnās ḥsīn D and A work closely with two other nearby ajnās, in particular, jins māyah C (C-D-E $\flat$ -F) and jins mḥayyar ‘irāq G (G-A-B $\flat$ -c). In sharing the notes A, B $\flat$ , and c in their structure, jins mḥayyar ‘irāq G and jins ḥsīn A overlap.<sup>38</sup> In a similar manner, jins māyah C overlaps with jins ḥsīn D on the shared notes of D, E $\flat$ , and F. It is common for melodic phrases to weave together these two pairs of ajnās, highlighting cadences on both C and D or on G and A. Because of this feature in al-ḥsīn, the notes of C and G are two additional pivotal notes for melodic movement, joining the A. The chart below shows how these four ajnās are paired within the scale and give structure to the main octave of ḥsīn aṣl.



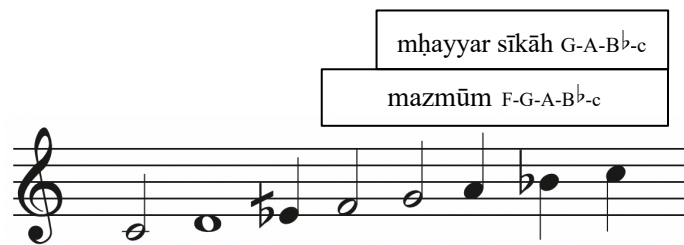
Regarding the half-flat intonation in these two new ajnās, the B $\flat$  in mḥayyar ‘irāq is played “almost natural,” thus sharing ḥsīn’s intonation for this note. But the same is not true of the

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<sup>38</sup> On the practice of overlapping ajnās to form scalar structures of modes, see the section on the Tunisian ajnās in the introductory section to this chapter.

E♭. It is understood that musicians generally play the E♭ in jins māyah lower than the one in al-ḥsīn.

The note B♭ often replaces the note B♮ in melodic movement in this mode, which alters the ajnās in the upper half of the octave scale. Jins mḥayyar ‘irāq G becomes jins mḥayyar sīkāh G (G-A-B♭-c); and when the cadence is on F, musicians demonstrate jins mazmūm F (F-G-A-B♭-c).



The note F, in particular, is a pivotal note for ṭab‘ al-ḥsīn. Musicians often establish a center on F and play within jins mazmūm F. But musicians also highlight the F in jins ḥsīn D (D-E♭-F-G) by extending the jins one note higher and constructing melodic phrases on the notes F-G-A.

The last jins connected to ḥsīn aṣl is jins aṣbahān GG (GG-AA-BB♮-C), which comprises the notes below the fundamental note D and also the pivotal note C. Characteristic melodic movements in jins aṣbahān may cadence on the note GG; but what is more characteristic of this jins in al-ḥsīn is melodic movement that emphasizes the note BB♮ without a full descent to GG.

The full, two-octave scale of ḥsīn aṣl is in the graph below, including the notes from GG to g with the pivotal notes on C, F, G, and A. As in all of the scalar structures in al-ḥsīn, the fundamental note is D.

Scale of ḥsīn aṣl.

**Ḥsīn nīrz**<sup>39</sup> is a derivative (Ar. *far'*) of ḥsīn aṣl, sharing the same scalar range and network of ajnās. The differentiation of ḥsīn nīrz as a branch has to do with the important overlap of two ajnās: māyah C (C-D-E $\flat$ -F) and ḥsīn D (D-E $\flat$ -F-G). When melodic phrases repeatedly focus on the note C with emphatic cadential use of jins māyah C (C-D-E $\flat$ -F), Tunisians categorize the song or instrumental piece as “ḥsīn nīrz.” Although there are only a few vocal and instrumental pieces known today in ḥsīn nīrz,<sup>40</sup> perhaps a wider repertoire

<sup>39</sup> In Tunisia, the word *nīrz* is etymologically linked to (but distinct from) *nayrūz*. This is complicated by the fact that the musicians in the Eastern Mediterranean also utilize *nīrz* in their modal system, but not in the way Tunisians do. As described in the text above, Tunisians use *nīrz* to name a derivative mode of al-ḥsīn with a tonic on D that emphasizes C-based melodic and cadential movement. *Maqām al-nayrūz* is the name Tunisians give to the C-based Mashriqī mode, which comprises jins rāst C (C-D-E $\flat$ -F) on the bottom and jins bayyāfī G (G-A $\flat$ -B $\flat$ -c) on top. Interestingly, in the Mashriq, this same maqām is called *nīrz* (Marcus 1989a:842). I find these circular relationships with nomenclature fascinating, especially since in this case, it is uncommon in the Mashriq for C-based and D-based modes to mix as musicians perceive them to have “tonic incompatibility” (Marcus 1992:184). In a footnote within the same article, Scott Marcus elaborates that “Greek music practice allows frequent shifts from a C tonic to a D tonic” (1992:193n19). The Tunisian instrumental piece, *Bashraf nīrz*, in the mode of ḥsīn nīrz (cf. *TMH* 1:10-11) has frequent shifts from C-tonic to D-tonic phrases – a hallmark of ḥsīn nīrz. It is tantalizing to consider how Tunisian ḥsīn nīrz may relate to past and present Greek modal musics through such investigations into modal nomenclature and their performance practices.

existed in the past, which would have solidified these C-based melodic phrases as a distinct formation within the group of al-ḥsīn modes.

**Ḥsīn ‘ajam** has a more limited scalar range than other al-ḥsīn branches. Extending from the note C to e<sup>b</sup> in the upper octave, this mode has a consistent focus on the note B<sup>b</sup>—called ‘*ajam* in Arabic—thus giving the entire mode its name. Tunisians categorize songs and instrumental pieces within the ḥsīn ‘ajam repertoire in two nuanced ways. First, when melodic phrases emphasize the note B<sup>b</sup> repeatedly in a line, without spelling out or “clarifying” (Tun. Ar. *yūduḥ*) the entire jins ‘ajam B<sup>b</sup> (B<sup>b</sup>-c-d-e<sup>b</sup>), the songs are in *ḥsīn ‘ajam*. In the second category, when phrases feature the B<sup>b</sup> in cadences as well as fully elucidate jins ‘ajam B<sup>b</sup>, Tunisians classify the songs as ‘*ajam tūnisī* or “Tunisian ‘ajam.” Tunisian ṭubū‘ repertoire illustrates both ḥsīn ‘ajam and ‘ajam tūnisī, even though the former is more common.<sup>41</sup> In pedagogical transmission today, Tunisian teachers sometimes call both expressions “ḥsīn ‘ajam” and elide the nuanced melodic differences between them.

The following graph features jins ‘ajam B<sup>b</sup> in the overall scalar range attributed to the branch of ḥsīn ‘ajam. Other ajnās from ḥsīn aṣl that fit this scale—such as jins māyah C (C-D-E<sup>b</sup>-F) and jins mazmūm F (F-G-A-B<sup>b</sup>-c)—can also be used.

Scale of ḥsīn ‘ajam with featured jins ‘ajam B<sup>b</sup>



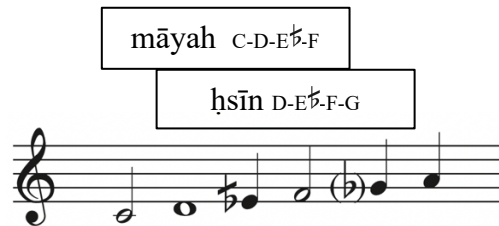
<sup>40</sup> See especially the vocal song *Yā kaḥīl al-ṭarfi* (TMT 9:97), or the well-known Tunisian instrumental piece *Bashraf nīrz* (TMH 1:10-11).

<sup>41</sup> See the song *Yā ghazalan bayna ghizlāni al-yaman* (TMT 9:94) for a well-known example of ‘ajam tūnisī.



**Ḥsīn ṣabā**, the final derivative mode in al-ḥsīn, is the most limited in terms of scalar range. This limited note range is perhaps the mode’s most distinguishing factor. Ḥsīn ṣabā predominantly uses the notes from C to A, highlighting two ajnās: jins māyah C (C-D-E♭-F) and jins ḥsīn D (D-E♭-F-G). The note F in jins ḥsīn D is a focal point for melodic phrases (Mahdi 1982, 1999), marked as a half-note in the graph below:

Scale of ḥsīn ṣabā.



The word “ṣabā” in the mode’s title is misleading to those with a knowledge of the Eastern Mediterranean maqām al-ṣabā. In the Mashriq, jins ṣabā D (D-E♭-F-G♭) has a characteristic flat fourth scale degree. But in the Tunisian ṭubū‘, a formally designated ṣabā tetrachord, such as the Mashriqī one, does not technically exist in the official theory of ṭab‘ al-ḥsīn. Jins ḥsīn D (D-E♭-F-G) is not marked with a G♭—or even a G♯, if that is closer to the performed intonation (cf. Snoussi 2004:59)—to change the jins from ḥsīn D to ṣabā D. Rather, the flattened G simply occurs in performance practice, when a singer or instrumentalist expresses the note G♭ in a melodic line. Music pedagogues in Tunisia teach this as a standard feature or “accentuation” (Ar. *ibrāz*) of jins ḥsīn D and not a separate jins. This accentuation relies on the note F, which stabilizes the intonation of the flattened G. For

example, from the F, a musician might bend the melodic line upwards towards the  $G^{\flat}$  or  $G^{\sharp}$  and back again.<sup>42</sup>

Some Tunisians classify this melodic movement with its Mashriqī name: “jins ṣabā D”; whereas others call it an accentuation of the melodic phrase in “jins ḥsīn D.” Interestingly, the choice of terminology often aligns with a musician’s stance about whether the Tunisian ṭubū‘ are more alike or more different than the Mashriqī maqāmāt. Or musicians choose the side of this dialectic they want to emphasize in that moment of teaching.<sup>43</sup> In the figure above for ḥsīn ṣabā, I side with those who emphasize difference between these modal systems, and who maintain that boundary of differentiation by naming the  $G^{\flat}$  as a possibility of accentuation within jins ḥsīn D rather than calling it jins ṣabā D.

To fully describe ṭab‘ al-ḥsīn today, Tunisian musicians and pedagogues typically teach ḥsīn aṣl as the primary scalar structure along with three al-ḥsīn derivatives, named ḥsīn nīrz, ḥsīn ‘ajam, and ḥsīn ṣabā. It is notable that D’Erlanger’s transcriptions from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century present additional variations of the Tunisian al-ḥsīn mode that are not transmitted today. In fact, nearly twenty-five percent of the ṭubū‘ in his list (i.e., seven of his 29 ṭubū‘) have jins ḥsīn D as the fundamental base jins (1949: Fig. 144-147).<sup>44</sup> These seven are as follows:

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<sup>42</sup> Marcus would call these notes “discontinuous upper neighboring tones.” See footnote 35.

<sup>43</sup> During my fieldwork experiences in Sfax, I learned that Tunisian musicians are comfortable performing Mashriqī maqām al-ṣabā and also comfortable with the ambiguity around “jins ṣabā” in the Tunisian mode of ḥsīn ṣabā. However, the prevailing understanding among Tunisian musicians is that “ṣabā” is from the Eastern Mediterranean and not originally from Tunisia. As such, it is not usually included in discussions of the Tunisian ṭubū‘, even when the practice seems to correspond to that of maqām al-ṣabā. One exception is with ṭab‘ al-mazmūm, where “jins ṣabā A” is a Tunisian description for a certain melodic feature.

<sup>44</sup> The modes *irāq* and *ramal al-māyah* are also in D’Erlanger’s list and contain a fundamental ḥsīn-like jins on D. But musicians differentiate these modes as entirely separate modes from ṭab‘ al-ḥsīn. They are not derivatives of al-ḥsīn.

[Ḥsīn] Nīriz<sup>45</sup>  
 Ḥsīn ‘Ajam  
 Ḥsīn Aşl  
 Ḥsīn Saba

Ḥsīn ‘Ushayran  
 Saba  
 ‘Ajam

The first column on the left side are transmitted with ṭab‘ al-ḥsīn today in Tunisia, either as the foundation of the mode (ḥsīn al-aşl) or derivatives of the mode (ḥsīn nīrz, ḥsīn ‘ajam, ‘ḥsīn şabā). D’Erlanger’s modes in the second column on the right are currently obsolete. Some discussion is needed for these obsolete modes. For Ḥsīn ‘Ushayran, D’Erlanger follows the scale of al-ḥsīn al-aşl but sets cadences on the note AA (Ar. ‘*ushayrān*), a practice that is unknown in the current performance practice of al-ḥsīn. Interestingly for “Saba,” the transcription uses a G<sup>♭</sup>, while that for “Ḥsīn Saba” features a G<sup>♭</sup>—which is the only actual difference between the two melodic transcriptions in Fig. 161 (Saba) and Fig. 157 (Ḥsīn Saba). As noted above, theorists often do not transcribe a G<sup>♭</sup> or G<sup>♭</sup> in today’s version of ḥsīn şabā.

As for “‘Ajam,” D’Erlanger gives a sample melody that is strikingly similar to that of his “Ḥsīn ‘Ajam.” Both utilize the same ajnās; and both present melodic phrases that spell out jins ‘ajam B<sup>♭</sup> (B<sup>♭</sup>-c-d-e<sup>♭</sup>) – although his ‘Ajam transcription does this clarification several times.<sup>46</sup> In fact, outside of his inclusion of the note C in the Ḥsīn ‘Ajam scale (and not in the scale of ‘Ajam), it is not entirely clear why D’Erlanger separated these two modes. In the 1980s, Tunisian musicians aligned the nomenclature for “ḥsīn ‘ajam” and “‘ajam tūnisī” with certain performance practices, in that melodic phrases in ḥsīn ‘ajam put emphasis on the

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<sup>45</sup> Four of these seven modes are transliterated differently today, as follows: Ḥsīn Nīrz, Ḥsīn ‘Ushayrān, Ḥsīn Şabā, and Şabā.

<sup>46</sup> See Fig. 155 for the melody in Ḥsīn ‘Ajam, and Fig. 172 for that in ‘Ajam (D’Erlanger 1949).

note B<sup>♭</sup> while those of ‘ajam tūnisī clarify jins ‘ajam B<sup>♭</sup> (B<sup>♭</sup>-c-d-e<sup>♭</sup>) (Gharbi 2019b).<sup>47</sup> It could be that D’Erlanger recognized these melodic distinctions in the performance practice of his time because his sample melody for Ḥsīn ‘Ajām would be called “ḥsīn ‘ajām” today; and his melody for ‘Ajām would be “‘ajam tūnisī” today.

Regardless of how Tunisians today make sense of the obsolete modes of Ḥsīn ‘Ushayran, Saba, and ‘Ajām in D’Erlanger’s work, one point is clear both then and now: al-ḥsīn looms large in the ṭubū‘ with its extensive history of transcription and repertoire. The following graph condenses the contemporary Tunisian ṭab‘ al-ḥsīn to one chart. Ḥsīn aṣl— with ḥsīn nīrz—exhibits the largest scale of all the derivatives, whereas ḥsīn ‘ajām (with ‘ajam tūnisī) and ḥsīn ṣabā are narrower in terms of scalar range. The asterisks in the ranges of ḥsīn nīrz (on note C) and ḥsīn ṣabā (on note F) indicate crucial cadence points which musicians employ to structure specific melodies in that derivative.

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<sup>47</sup> Gharbi specifically used this word “clarify” (Tun. Ar. *yūḍuḥ*) to describe a certain melodic-rhythmic cliché of jins ‘ajam B<sup>♭</sup>. In brief, this cliché begins on the note B<sup>♭</sup>, drops to the A, leaps to the note c, and then settles on the B<sup>♭</sup>. In both instances of the B<sup>♭</sup> the notes are sustained longer than the A and c. I learned essentially the same cliché for expressing ‘ajām in maqām al-bayyātī when taking ‘ūd lessons with Professor Scott Marcus at UCSB during the 2016-2017 academic year – one year before my fieldwork in Tunisia began. What is distinct about Tunisian performance practice is how melodic phrases can make use of the B<sup>♭</sup> *without* clarifying jins ‘ajam B<sup>♭</sup>, and that Tunisians classify these two melodic manifestations with different terminology.

Figure 4. Ṭab‘ al-Ḥsīn

The figure shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (Bb). The melody consists of the following notes: G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. Above the staff, several boxes indicate different modes and scales:

- aṣbahān GG-AA-BB<sup>b</sup>-C
- māyah C-D-E<sup>b</sup>-F
- ḥsīn D-E<sup>b</sup>-F-G
- mḥayyar sīkāh G-A-B<sup>b</sup>-c
- mazmūm F-G-A-B<sup>b</sup>-c
- mḥayyar ‘irāq G-A-B<sup>b</sup>-c
- ḥsīn d-e<sup>b</sup>-f-g
- ḥsīn A-B<sup>b</sup>-c-d

Below the staff, several phrases are listed in boxes, some with asterisks indicating specific notes or accidentals:

- Ḥsīn aṣl
- Ḥsīn nīrz \*
- Ḥsīn ‘ajam
- ‘ajam B<sup>b</sup>-c-d-e<sup>b</sup>
- Ḥsīn ṣabā \* G<sup>b</sup>

## 5. Ṭab‘ al-Raṣd

Ṭab‘ al-raṣd is a unique musical mode in Tunisia, in terms of history and configuration. Commonly known as *raṣd ‘obaydī* (Tun. Ar. “raṣd of the slaves”), Tunisians memorialize this mode as a sonic vestige of the Black sub-Saharan slaves brought to North Africa over the centuries.<sup>48</sup> Their presence across the region—even as enslaved peoples—indelibly marked the expressive cultures in each North African nation-state where they were forcibly displaced. In Tunisia, ṭab‘ al-raṣd is built on the fundamental note C, called in Arabic *rāst*. Some say that the morphing of *rāst* into *raṣd* is a linguistic marker of cultural difference, recalling a Black African musical past that was eventually grafted into the Arab-Andalusi ṭubū‘ system of music (Zouari 2006:106; Gharbi 2019b).<sup>49</sup> Peculiar to how Tunisians name every other mode, raṣd is not the name of the fundamental jins. Instead, the name of ṭab‘ al-raṣd derives distinctly from its history.

There are two theoretical paths for interpreting the mode of al-raṣd. The first is directly linked to its Black sub-Saharan African past and interprets melodic phrases through pentatonic theorization. The second is linked to an Arab-Andalusi lineage of interpretation, which utilizes *ajnās* to understand melodic movement. But proponents of this second stance also agree that the mode is inherently pentatonic (Fr. *pentatonique*; Ar. *naḥs khumāsī*). This differs from proponents of the first stance, who insist that theorists should interpret the

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<sup>48</sup> In his study of the Black Tunisian musical tradition of Stambeli, Richard Jankowsky notes that even though slavery across the Sahara to North Africa has existed for perhaps millennia, these accounts are mostly undocumented. This changed in the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE when Islam spread to North Africa. Muslim merchants and rulers – such as Ibrahim ibn al-Aghlab (756-812) of medieval Tunisia – kept records of trade which did include slaves from sub-Saharan Africa (Jankowsky 2010:49-50).

<sup>49</sup> In an 1887 article on intervallic measurements within five Mashriqī modal scales (Fr. *gamme*), Ibrahim Mustapha begins with the mode of *rāst*, spelling it *raṣd* in Arabic (1887:250). He does not link this morphology to a Black African musical past, as some Tunisians do with *ṭab‘ al-raṣd*. However, it is an intriguing early example of such documentation. My thanks to Scott Marcus for pointing this article out to me.



It is clear from this initial structure of al-raṣd that the notes BB, E, F, B, and c are not stopping notes. It is also clear that pentatonicism for Tunisians does not limit a scale to five notes per octave. Tunisians perceive the note c in the higher octave as a reflection of the tonic note C, and thus a potential stopping note. But the other notes of BB/B, E, and F have a different evaluation. From the first transcriptions of al-raṣd in staff notation to present transcriptions, music theorists have noted that the F and B/BB notes are usually omitted in al-raṣd melodies (D'Erlanger 1949; Snoussi 2004; Guettat 1980, 2000; Mahdi 1972, 1982, 1999). In fact, it is the omission of the F and B/BB notes that musicians perceive as pentatonicism within melodic phrases.<sup>51</sup> The note E is not a stopping note but is one of the five notes that comprise a pentatonic scale (e.g., C-D-E-G-A) *within* the heptatonic scale charted above. Also, numerous melodies in al-raṣd rely on an interval of a third, often between AA-C, C-E, or E-G; and E figures prominently in two of these common intervals. Many Tunisians use both of these points about the presence of thirds (specifically with the E) and the absence of F and BB/B notes to maintain the pentatonic quality of melodies in ṭab‘ al-raṣd (see Appendix 3).<sup>52</sup>

The second interpretation of ṭab‘ al-raṣd utilizes the structures of the ajnās to understand melodic phrases. This is a way of listening to al-raṣd that Tunisians link to Arab-Andalusi lineages of music theory. Proponents of this interpretation do not deny the pentatonic qualities of ṭab‘ al-raṣd. Rather, they recognize the structures of ajnās in addition to a perception of pentatonicism. Due to this second interpretation, the ajnās vocabulary

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<sup>51</sup> The gaps that occur melodically in pentatonic scales – demonstrated in al-raṣd by the omission of F and B/BB notes – is why music theorists refer to pentatonic scales as “gapped” scales (Drabkin 2001).

<sup>52</sup> A few sample melodic phrases are diagrammed in the next chapter on the melodic-rhythmic formulas of the ṭubū‘.

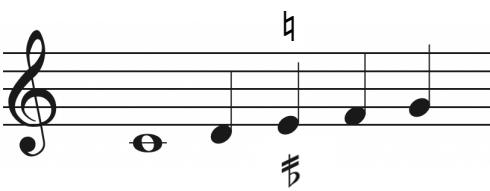


continues to have import; and so, the following discussion seeks to name several of these ajnās in the repertoire.

Some music scholars agree that the base jins of al-raṣd resembles that of jins dhīl C (C-D-E<sup>♯</sup>-F-G) (Zouari 2006:109; Gharbi 2019b), even if the transcriptional history of al-raṣd does not match this intonation. The note E in al-raṣd is usually marked as natural (♮); but transcriptions mark the E in al-dhīl with a single (♭) or double-slashed (♯) flat sign. To complicate matters, musicians tend to play the E<sup>♭</sup> in al-raṣd “a little less” (Ar. *aqall shwayya*) than an E<sup>♭</sup> in Western tuning (Gharbi 2019b). So, a slightly flattened E<sup>♭</sup> could correspond to the E<sup>♯</sup> transcription in jins dhīl C.<sup>53</sup>

But leaving the E<sup>♭</sup> as such has other ajnās possibilities. In fact, jins mazmūm C (C-D-E<sup>♭</sup>-F-G) is evident in the al-raṣd repertoire. And so, taking both an E<sup>♭</sup> and an E<sup>♯</sup> in consideration for the base jins of al-raṣd, two ajnās are possible: jins mazmūm C (C-D-E<sup>♭</sup>-F-G) and jins dhīl C (C-D-E<sup>♯</sup>-F-G), as in the following:

mazmūm C-D-E<sup>♭</sup>-F-G

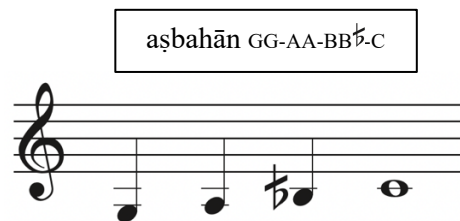


dhīl C-D-E<sup>♯</sup>-F-G

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<sup>53</sup> To remind the reader, according to Mahdi, the note E<sup>♯</sup> in jins dhīl C is flattened by 20% of a whole tone from an E<sup>♭</sup>. See Appendix 2 on intonation in the Tunisian ṭubū‘.

As mentioned earlier, a pentatonic understanding of al-raşđ includes the frequent omission of some notes in melodic movement. One of these notes is B/BB. D’Erlanger and Snoussi both indicate a B♭ in their al-raşđ scales; but Mahdi mentions that a melodic phrase can pass through a BB♭ but must not stop on this note (1999). While it is true that musicians omit these notes when eliciting pentatonicism, it is also true that within al-raşđ’s repertoire melodic movement sometimes utilizes these omitted notes. For example, many Tunisian listeners recognize jins aşbahān GG (GG-AA-BB♭-C) below the tonic C; and this is not a coincidence, as the repertoire shows a characteristic aşbahān-like melodic phrase in some of the well-known songs.<sup>54</sup> The inclusion of jins aşbahān BB♭ in al-raşđ’s constitution also clarifies the inclusion of this note in Mahdi’s scale of al-raşđ (1999).



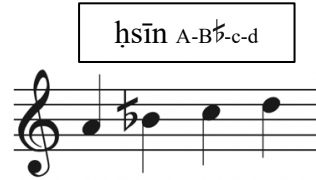
Another characteristic melodic phrase in the al-raşđ repertoire utilizes the notes A-c-d in a way analogous to how jins ḥsīn A (A-B♭-c-d) manifests melodically in ṭab‘ al-nawā (another pentatonic-like mode).<sup>55</sup> Indeed, some Tunisian musicians say that al-raşđ is closer

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<sup>54</sup> See the next chapter to view characteristic phrases of al-aşbahān. During one transmission event of *ṭab‘ al-raşđ* that I attended in Sfāx, students heard and named *aşbahān* in the melody of “Wa-lammā badā,” a song that opens the Tunisian nūba of al-raşđ. The professor clearly demonstrated his theoretical stance when he responded that although the melodic phrase sounded like *aşbahān*, it was not since al-raşđ did not have ajnās.

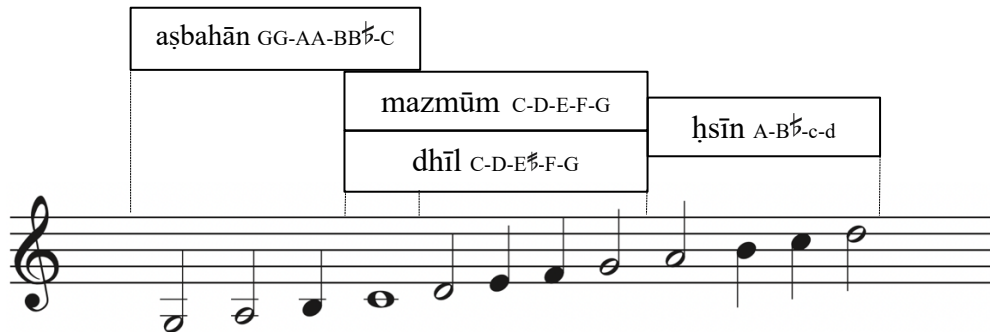
<sup>55</sup> D’Erlanger includes a B♭ in his al-raşđ scale, but within parentheses and as a part of a different jins: G-A-B♭-c (1949: Fig. 153). Today, Tunisians name this jins mḥayyar ‘irāq G. Within his sample melody for al-raşđ, D’Erlanger manifests the B♭ only once, occurring in a stepwise ascent from the G. D’Erlanger does not explain why he places the note in parentheses within the scale; but one might assume that since the notes BB and F are also in parentheses, D’Erlanger is trying to show how pentatonic melodies in al-raşđ typically omit BB, F, and B♭.

to ṭab‘ al-nawā than any other musical mode in Tunisia (cf. Gharbi 2019b). Thus, I include jins ḥsīn A as a possible jins within al-raṣd.



From this discussion, it is possible to synthesize a small network of ajnās in ṭab‘ al-raṣd. This final chart shows some of the most important ajnās that Tunisians reference in this mode, if the speaker acquiesces to the ajnās interpretation of al-raṣd. The stopping-notes interpretation of al-raṣd is layered onto this chart in the representation of these notes as half-notes below. The whole note reveals the fundamental note on C.

Figure 5b. The ajnās interpretation of ṭab‘ al-Raṣd



In summary, even though sources from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century document *ṭab‘ al-raṣd* through the *ajnās* (D’Erlanger 1949; Snoussi 2004<sup>56</sup>), the defining theorization of *al-raṣd* since the 1970s is the lack of *ajnās* structure (Mahdi 1972, 1982, 1999; Guettat 1980, 2000; Zouari 2006; ‘Alila 2019; Lajmi 2019). These music theorists interpreted *al-raṣd* through note “stops” (*waqfāt*) on certain scale degrees and not through the *ajnās*. But regardless of either interpretation, all of the sources recount that this mode is understood to be pentatonic in character; and all theorists code pentatonicism through the expressive culture of Black sub-Saharan African peoples. In transmission events that I attended, professors presented *ṭab‘ al-raṣd* in some form of scalar organization, either with a sequential one-octave scale or in a more fragmented, gapped ascending scale. But the focus was on the stopping notes of *al-raṣd* and not how the mode manifests *ajnās*.

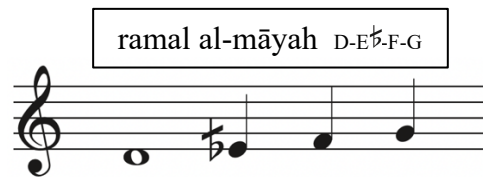
Theorizing *ṭab‘ al-raṣd* is complicated by the current intersections of race and class and demonstrates how theoretical analysis itself derives from social and cultural formations. In short, each of these two interpretations have social implications for how Tunisians think about themselves and their origins in the modern nation-state. These implications deserve more attention in a singular study of *al-raṣd*.

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<sup>56</sup> Although published in 2004, this book is a series of transcripts from a number of radio broadcasts that Snoussi gave in Tunisia between 1963-1966.

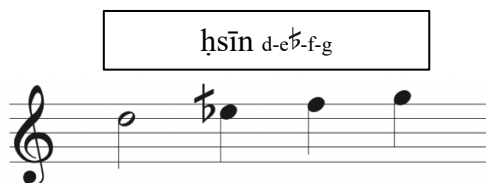
## 6. Ṭab‘ Ramal al-Māyah

The sixth mode of ṭab‘ ramal al-māyah is based on the fundamental jins of D-E $\flat$ -F-G. Even though the nomenclature of this jins resembles jins ḥsīn D (also D-E $\flat$ -F-G) and jins ‘irāq D (D-E $\sharp$ -F-G), in this mode Tunisians call this group of notes “jins ramal al-māyah D.”



Tunisians differentiate the three modes of ramal al-māyah, ḥsīn, and ‘irāq through characteristic melodic-rhythmic phrases (see Chapter 2). Musicians perform ramal al-māyah phrases by way of a network of ajnās, commonly occurring in the repertoire. These ajnās include ḥsīn on the notes A and d (in the upper octave), māyah C, mḥayyar sīkāh G, mazmūm F, mḥayyar ‘irāq G, and raṣd al-dhīl F. I briefly sketch each jins below.

It is appropriate to begin in the higher octave, as one of the defining melodic characteristics of ṭab‘ ramal al-māyah is that musicians emphasize this register. Jins ḥsīn d (d-e $\flat$ -f-g) is common in this mode’s melodic movement and extends the mode’s range from D to the note g. The note d is a pivotal note for ṭab‘ ramal al-māyah, represented as a half-note in the following chart:



Back in the middle octave, melodic movements commonly highlight the pivotal note C in cadences within the structure of jins māyah C (C-D-E<sup>♯</sup>-F). A usual way to arrive at jins māyah C is a quick descent from the note B<sup>♭</sup> in jins mḥayyar sīkāh G (G-A-B<sup>♭</sup>-c). Due to this movement I present both of these ajnās together to highlight that characteristic phrase in ramal al-māyah:

The pivotal notes of G and F supply many ajnās possibilities. The use of the note F, in particular, a prominent feature of this mode. One of the possibilities on this base note is jins mazmūm F (F-G-A-B<sup>♭</sup>-c). Jins mḥayyar ‘irāq G (G-A-B<sup>♯</sup>-c) and jins ḥsīn A (A-B<sup>♯</sup>-c-d) overlap and feature the note B<sup>♯</sup>. Tunisian musicians often use a B<sup>♯</sup> to ascend to the octave and a B<sup>♭</sup> to descend – a common practice in other Arab music repertoires. But in ramal al-māyah, melodic movement tends to exchange the notes B<sup>♯</sup> for B<sup>♭</sup> (or vice versa) even when either ascending or descending. The three ajnās of mazmūm F, mḥayyar ‘irāq G, and ḥsīn A are demonstrated in the chart below. Together with mḥayyar sīkāh G (G-A-B<sup>♭</sup>-c) from the chart above, these four ajnās guide the distinctive melodic feature of B-note exchanges.

mazzmūm F-G-A-B<sup>♭</sup>-c

ḥsīn A-B<sup>♭</sup>-c-d

mḥayyar ‘irāq G-A-B<sup>♭</sup>-c

Melodic descents from the upper to middle octaves often occur through the ajnās mazzmūm F (with the B<sup>♭</sup>) or raṣd al-dhīl F (F-G-A<sup>♯</sup>-B-c). The latter jins is a coloring for cadences and has a variety of intonations (cf. ṭab‘ al-sīkāh in this chapter). I notate jins raṣd al-dhīl F with an A<sup>♯</sup> and a B<sup>♯</sup>, although it is common for Tunisian musicians to intone the B slightly flatter and the A slightly higher than what the signs typically indicate.

raṣd al-dhīl F-G-A<sup>♯</sup>-B-c

The final graph below synthesizes the most common ajnās for ṭab‘ ramal al-māyah. The many half notes demonstrate the many pivotal notes within the mode’s scale.

Figure 6. Ṭab‘ Ramal al-Māyah

The diagram shows a scale structure for Ṭab‘ Ramal al-Māyah. The scale is represented by a series of boxes, each containing a name and its corresponding notes:
 

- ḥsīn A-B<sup>♭</sup>-c-d
- mḥayyar ‘irāq G-A-B<sup>♭</sup>-c
- mḥayyar sīkāh G-A-B<sup>♭</sup>-c
- raṣd al-dhīl F-G-A<sup>♯</sup>-B-c
- mazmūm F-G-A-B<sup>♭</sup>-c
- māyah C-D-E<sup>♭</sup>-F
- ramal al-māyah D-E<sup>♭</sup>-F-G
- ḥsīn d-c<sup>♭</sup>-f-g

 Below the boxes is a musical staff in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B<sup>♭</sup>). The notes are: D (quarter), E<sup>♭</sup> (quarter), F (quarter), G (quarter), A<sup>♯</sup> (quarter), B (quarter), C (quarter), D (quarter), E<sup>♭</sup> (quarter), F (quarter), G (quarter). Vertical dashed lines connect the boxes to their corresponding notes on the staff.



## 7. Ṭab‘ al-Nawā

Ṭab‘ al-nawā is the seventh Tunisian musical mode and not to be confused with the Arabic note G also named “nawā.” This mode and the note G are uniquely differentiated by Arabic spelling and pronunciation in Tunisia. With a small morphological change to the final syllable, the *mode* of nawā, spelled نَوَى, is visually distinct from the *note name* nawā (G), spelled نَوَا. This difference is lost when transliterating the Arabic words to the Latin alphabet, using the common IJMES system.<sup>57</sup> Both are spelled “nawā.” In spoken Arabic dialect, many Tunisian musicians further distinguish the two by pronouncing the name of the mode with an upward inflection (“nawA” or “nwA” – accent on the final syllable) and the Arabic note G with a downward inflection (“nAwa” – accent on the first syllable).

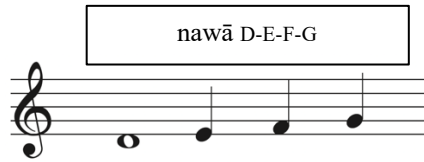
Ṭab‘ al-nawā has a particularly vibrant past for Tunisians. Musically performing the mode al-nawā was said cause a number of ills, such as the separation of friends, eliciting tears of self-pity in a camel’s eye (Snoussi 2004:54), or even breaking up an ensemble attempting to play a full nūba in the mode (Mahdi 1972; Guettat 1980:286). The most common extra-musical association is that al-nawā was/is effective in conjuring harmful spirit beings (Ar. *jinn*) (see Chapter 3). Today, Tunisian musicians and listeners are ambivalent about the latter causation. Some consider this association still active or, at the least, possible, while others deem it premodern and past.

The fundamental jins nawā is based on the note D (D-E-F-G). Tunisian musicians often compare the intervals between notes in jins nawā D (D-[whole tone]-E-[half tone]-F-

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<sup>57</sup> The IJMES system is accessible at <https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-file-manager/file/57d83390f6ea5a022234b400/TransChart.pdf>.

[whole tone]-G)<sup>58</sup> to that of jins nahāwand D (D-E-F-G). However, Tunisians strictly associate “nahāwand” with the Eastern Mediterranean modal system. A network of ajnās give structure to the ways this mode is performed, namely: ḥsīn A, mazmūm C and F, and iṣba‘īn D. But first, the fundamental jins nawā D sets the melodic foundation for the scale.



Apparently, past music theorists did not always position D as the fundamental note in ṭab‘ al-nawā. For al-nawā, D’Erlanger set the note AA in the lower octave as the al-nawā’s tonic note, and he demonstrates this point by concluding his sample melody for al-nawā on AA (1949: Fig. 166). It is not altogether clear why he associates the Tunisian al-nawā with AA, because with the exception of this tonic note, D’Erlanger’s sample melodic path follows the way contemporary melodies manifest al-nawā.

Today, even though the fundamental note of the mode is D, the melodic starting point for al-nawā is often on the pivotal note A, the base note of jins ḥsīn A (A-B♭-c-d). Perhaps this is the reason D’Erlanger specified the significance of the note AA, despite the octave difference. Characteristic melodic phrases in jins ḥsīn A—particularly in al-nawā—emphasize the notes A-c-d, skipping the note B♭. As in my discussion of al-raṣd, Tunisians attribute this melodic omission of the B♭ to the mode’s inherent pentatonic quality. Tunisian musicians understand their pentatonicism as the omission of the notes F and B (including B♭

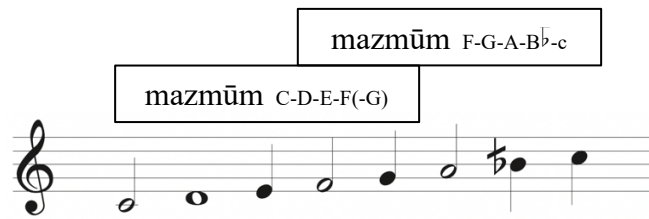
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<sup>58</sup> Ar. *bu‘d* (“a whole tone”), *noṣṣ bu‘d* (Tun. Ar. “a half tone”).

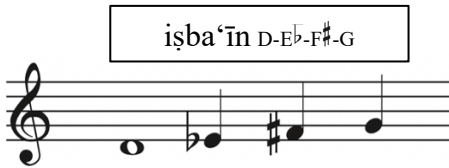
or B<sup>♭</sup>) and an emphasis on thirds, such as C-E, E-G, or A-c (cf. Snoussi 2004; Mahdi 1972, 1982, 1999; Lajmi 2018-2019). In the al-nawā repertoire, Tunisians continue to interpret melodic movement through ajnās structures. But they also highlight a kind of pentatonicism. In other words, melodic phrases in the al-nawā repertoire utilize the F and B notes at times and also exclude them. When musicians omit the B<sup>♭</sup> in jins ḥsīn A, a well-known melodic-rhythmic phrase descends further all the way to the D through jins nawā D. Thus, jins ḥsīn A and jins nawā D often function together.



In addition to D and A, the notes C and F are also important for melodic phrases in al-nawā. These notes comprise the base notes for two mazmūm ajnās, as C-D-E-F-G and F-G-A-B<sup>♭</sup>-c. Melodic phrases in jins mazmūm may employ four- or five-note groupings. In the chart below, I illustrate jins mazmūm F as a five-note jins, and jins mazmūm C as a four-note jins with an optional fifth note on G. When musicians bring these two ajnās together in melodic movement, it is often the case that jins mazmūm C manifests as a four-note jins in order to support a tonal center on F for jins mazmūm F. It is common to hear the melodic leap of F-C-F (interval of a perfect fourth) in al-nawā which serves to confirm the melodic movement between these two mazmūm ajnās and center F as a pivotal note in the al-nawā scale.



In ṭab‘ al-nawā, it is common to play the note F $\sharp$  as a melodic “accentuation” (Ar. *ibrāz*), which intensifies the note G, before descending to D via F $\natural$  in jins nawā D. In such a melodic example, the F $\sharp$  is not considered a part of a jins but simply a lower neighboring tone to the G. When musicians include the F $\sharp$  within a jins, it is jins iṣba‘īn D (D-E $\flat$ -F $\sharp$ -G), transcribed below:



Tunisians often compare ṭab‘ al-nawā to ṭab‘ al-mḥayyar sīkāh, a popular/folk mode (Ar. *ṭab‘ al-sha‘bī*) not included in the nūba heritage repertoire.<sup>59</sup> This is due to the fact that ṭab‘ al-mḥayyar sīkāh shares the same notes with jins nawā D (D-E-F-G). As in the case with ramal al-māyah, ḥsīn, and ‘irāq, when the characteristic melodic phrase is in the mode of

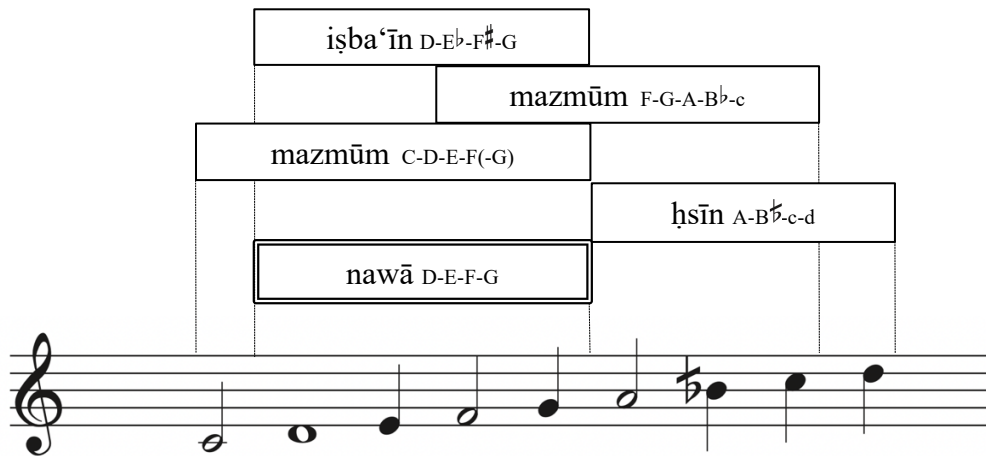
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<sup>59</sup> In addition to ṭab‘ al-mḥayyar sīkāh, there are two other Tunisian popular/folk modes not included in the nūba heritage repertoire: ṭab‘ al-arḍawī and ṭab‘ al-mḥayyar ‘irāq. In 1980, Salah Mahdi composed a modern nūba for both ṭab‘ al-mḥayyar sīkāh (1999:114-24) and al-mḥayyar ‘irāq (1999:103-13), which essentially elevated a popular musical mode from a lower to a higher social status (cf. Benaissa 1997:63). This is an interesting case of social uplift that deserves focused attention in a separate study.

mḥayyar sīkāh, then the fundamental jins of D-E-F-G is called “jins mḥayyar sīkāh D.”<sup>60</sup>

Tunisians distinguish between al-nawā and mḥayyar sīkāh—as they do between all Tunisian modes and also between the Tunisian ṭubū‘ and Mashriqī maqāmāt—by characteristic melodic-rhythmic phrases. The ajnās network of nawā D, ḥsīn A, mazmūm C and F, and iṣba‘īn D comprise the most used ajnās in ṭab‘ al-nawā. The following chart combines these ajnās on a scale for ṭab‘ al-nawā.

Figure 7. Ṭab‘ al-Nawā

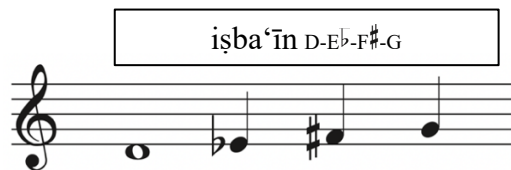


<sup>60</sup> As a reminder, Tunisian musicians and theorists do not use alphabetical letters to name the notes of a scale. For instance, “jins mḥayyar sīkāh D” is enunciated as either “jins mḥayyar sīkāh *re*” or “jins mḥayyar sīkāh *dūkāh*.”

## 8. Ṭab‘ al-Iṣba‘īn

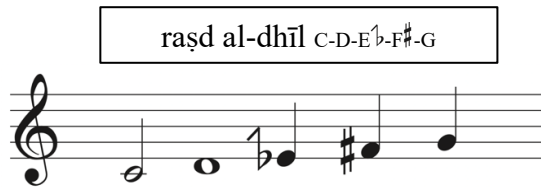
The eighth Tunisian musical mode is called ṭab‘ al-iṣba‘īn – a mode that Tunisians liken to the Mashriqī al-ḥijāz. The spelling “iṣba‘īn” with an initial “i” vowel correctly follows the way this mode is most often pronounced in the Tunisian Arabic dialect. This term corresponds to the modern standard Arabic form of *aṣba‘īn*, meaning “two fingers” (cf. Wehr 1979:586). Jins iṣba‘īn D (D-E<sup>b</sup>-F<sup>#</sup>-G) is the fundamental base for this mode, and the large interval between the E<sup>b</sup> and F<sup>#</sup> notes is played by “two fingers” spread apart on same string of an ‘ūd (Ar. “lute”) instrument. Thus, the name of iṣba‘īn recalls this characteristic interval heard throughout the mode’s repertoire.

The specific intonation of the notes for jins iṣba‘īn is discussed at length under the section for ṭab‘ al-sīkāh (see the third mode in this chapter). But in short, as with the A<sup>b</sup> and B<sup>♯</sup> notes in jins iṣba‘īn G (G-A<sup>b</sup>-B<sup>♯</sup>-c) in al-sīkāh, the notes E<sup>b</sup> and F<sup>#</sup> here are perhaps less flat and less sharp, respectively, than the standard tuning indexed by the flat and sharp signs in an equal tempered scale.



Jins iṣba‘īn D melodically overlaps with a second jins, raṣd al-dhīl C (C-D-E<sup>♭</sup>-F<sup>#</sup>-G). To remind the readers, the Tunisian intonation of a half-slash flat sign (♭) is between the fully flat (♭) and conventional half-flat (♮) signs (see Appendix 2). Alternating between ajnās iṣba‘īn D and raṣd al-dhīl C describes numerous melodic phrases in the repertoire. For example, a melodic descent from the note d—the top part of the first octave—might

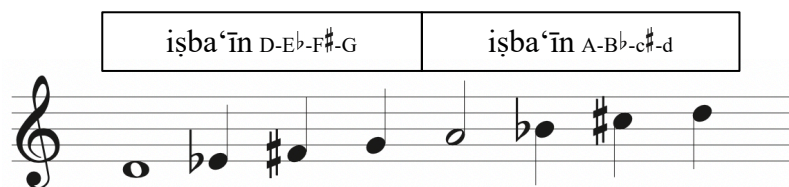
temporarily cadence on the note C, a 9th below (using jins raşd al-dhīl C), and then rise to the note G or A before settling down on the note D (using jins işba‘īn D) for a final cadence. As also discussed in ṭab‘ al-sīkāh, I have chosen to mark the intonation of jins raşd al-dhīl differently than jins işba‘īn, namely because of how the base note of an işba‘īn jins pulls the flattened second scale degree (i.e., written E<sup>b</sup>) flatter than the base note of a raşd al-dhīl jins pulls the flattened third scale degree (i.e., written E<sup>b</sup>). The result is that the note E is understood to be played slightly flatter in jins işba‘īn D than in jins raşd al-dhīl C. The frequent cadences on C emphasize this note as a pivotal note in the al-işba‘īn scale; it is marked as a half-note below.



The use of jins işba‘īn A (A-B<sup>b</sup>-c<sup>#</sup>-d) reveals a crucial melodic distinction in ṭab‘ al-işba‘īn that affects how Tunisians name modal expressions within this mode. When musicians do not play jins işba‘īn A, Tunisians call the melodic path “ṭab‘ al-işba‘īn”; but with the inclusion of jins işba‘īn A, Tunisians differentiate the melodic path and call it “inqilāb al-işba‘īn,” translated as “the transposition of işba‘īn.”<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> The Arabic word *inqilāb* signifies the flipping, inverting, or transformation of something. However, jins işba‘īn A is not the inversion of jins işba‘īn D but—in technical music speak—the *transposition* of the jins from D to A, without any other alterations. So, I translate *inqilāb* as “transposition.”



Notably, the name “inqilāb al-iṣba‘īn” is missing from D’Erlanger’s documentation. He gives two sample melodies that correspond to how Tunisian musicians perform and transmit al-iṣba‘īn today, calling one “Aṣbu‘ayn” and the other “Hijāzi” (1949: Fig. 165 and Fig 159, respectively).<sup>62</sup> Interestingly, “Aṣbu‘ayn” focuses almost entirely on jins al-iṣba‘īn A (A-B<sup>♭</sup>-c<sup>♯</sup>-d), and “Hijāzi” rests on the jins of D-E<sup>♭</sup>-F<sup>♯</sup>-G throughout its melodic movement.<sup>63</sup> In other words, D’Erlanger’s “Aṣbu‘ayn” corresponds to inqilāb al-iṣba‘īn today, and his “Hijāzi” aligns with al-iṣba‘īn today.

The Tunisian Sufi musician Shaykh Aḥmad al-Wāfi (1850-1921) is credited as the one who named this feature “inqilāb al-iṣba‘īn,” instead of using the Eastern name of “maqām shāhnāz.”<sup>64</sup> Today, Tunisian musicians and pedagogues are aware that inqilāb al-iṣba‘īn is a local coding of the Mashriqī maqām shāhnāz, just as al-Wāfi did. What is not clear is why D’Erlanger – a colleague of al-Wāfi in Sidi Bou Said from 1914-1921 where

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<sup>62</sup> Today, aṣbu‘ayn is transliterated as *aṣba‘īn* (or *iṣba‘īn* in the Tunisian dialect), and hijāzi is *hijāzī* (cf. “International Journal of Middle East Studies Transliteration System for Arabic, Persian, and Turkish.” Available online at [www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)).

<sup>63</sup> D’Erlanger states that C is the tonic for his “Hijāzi” scale. However, this must be a mistake since his sample melody does not manifest a cadence on C but always on D.

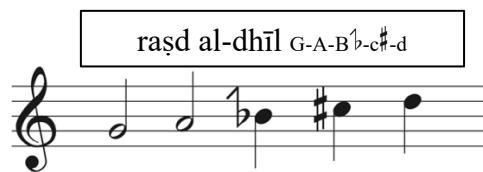
<sup>64</sup> See the article by ‘Uthmān al-Ka‘āk on al-Wāfi (*TMH*, vol. 5, pp. 5-20). A description of al-Wāfi’s innovation with al-iṣba‘īn is on page 15 of this article.



they collaborated on *La Musique Arabe* – decided to use the names “ḥijāzi” and “aṣbu‘ayn” instead of “al-iṣba‘īn” and “inqilāb al-iṣba‘īn” for his two melodic samples, respectively.

In music lessons, Tunisian pedagogues enfold these two melodic paths together as one mode—under the name “ṭab‘ al-iṣba‘īn”—and do not insist on the Eastern Mediterranean terminology (ḥijāz or “Hijāzi” [sic]) to define the Tunisian ṭubū‘, even though Tunisians commonly compare iṣba‘īn to ḥijāz in oral transmission. The Tunisian musicians who I learned from do not recognize inqilāb al-iṣba‘īn as a separate derivative mode (Ar. *far‘*), but use the name to call attention to the melodic use of jins iṣba‘īn A in the larger mode of al-iṣba‘īn. Melodic phrases that utilize jins al-iṣba‘īn A are common; and so, the note A in the graph above is presented as a pivotal note.

As with jins iṣba‘īn D and jins raṣd al-dhīl C, jins iṣba‘īn A frequently interacts with jins raṣd al-dhīl G (G-A-B<sup>♭</sup>-c<sup>♯</sup>-d) with overlapping melodic phrases. Cadences on the notes G and A are exchanged between the two ajnās, and the note e<sup>♯</sup> in the upper octave is an ornamentation, or upper neighboring tone, for the note d in both ajnās. As is the case for notes C and D, G and A are also pivotal notes in the al-iṣba‘īn scale.



In addition to ajnās raṣd al-dhīl G and iṣba‘īn A, the notes G and A host two other ajnās: mḥayyar ‘irāq G (G-A-B<sup>♭</sup>-c) and ḥsīn A (A-B<sup>♭</sup>-c-d). Emphasizing the note B<sup>♭</sup> is a feature of these ajnās in this mode. Melodic phrases also use the note B<sup>♭</sup> regularly, and in

doing so, utilize the structure of jins mḥayyar sīkāh G (G-A-B<sup>b</sup>-c). Musicians often use this jins to descend the scale to the lower ajnās raṣd al-dhīl C or iṣba‘īn D.

The image displays two musical staves. The left staff contains two boxes: the top one is labeled 'ḥsīn A-B<sup>b</sup>-c-d' and the bottom one is labeled 'mḥayyar ‘irāq G-A-B<sup>b</sup>-c'. The right staff contains one box labeled 'mḥayyar sīkāh G-A-B<sup>b</sup>-c'. Both staves show a sequence of five notes on a treble clef staff: G, A, B<sup>b</sup>, c, and d.

The ajnās network in ṭab‘ al-iṣba‘īn features several paired ajnās: iṣba‘īn D with raṣd al-dhīl C; iṣba‘īn A with raṣd al-dhīl G; mḥayyar ‘irāq G with ḥsīn A. Jins mḥayyar sīkāh G is extensively used in combination with the entire network of ajnās. The following chart synthesizes this network. Due to its importance in the mode, jins iṣba‘īn A is marked as “inqilāb al-iṣba‘īn” next to the fundamental jins iṣba‘īn D. Melodically, it is quite possible to extend the scale’s range beyond the note d by duplicating, for example, jins iṣba‘īn at the higher octave on the notes d-e<sup>b</sup>-f<sup>#</sup>-g. However, for the purposes of representing the most common ajnās in the al-iṣba‘īn scale, and to follow contemporary Tunisian pedagogy, I present the scale only from note C to note d.



## 9. Ṭab‘ Raṣd al-Dhīl

Ṭab‘ raṣd al-dhīl is an exceptional Tunisian mode, in that the tonic note C is shared by two fundamental ajnās, conventionally transcribed as C-D-E $\flat$ -F-G and C-D-E $\flat$ -F $\sharp$ -G. The note F is noticeably different between these two ajnās; and it is understood that listeners will also hear different intonations on the note E. Because both ajnās are fundamental to the mode, some Tunisian musicians call each one “jins raṣd al-dhīl C.” Alternatively, one jins can be marked “first type” (Ar. *naw‘ awwal*) and the other “second type” (Ar. *naw‘ thānī*), depending on which one the speaker considers to be the most prominent in the mode’s repertoire. Based on spelling alone, musicians and theorists often call jins C-D-E $\flat$ -F-G as “jins dhīl C,” due to the common practice of intoning the E $\flat$  higher in this jins than a conventional E $\flat$  (see ṭab‘ al-dhīl in this chapter). Consequently, some theorists spell this jins as C-D-E $\sharp$ -F-G, which resembles the intonation of jins dhīl C (Zouari 2006). If that is the case, the second jins spelled C-D-E $\flat$ -F $\sharp$ -G is called “jins raṣd al-dhīl C,” tethering the mode’s overall name to one of the two fundamental ajnās—a commonplace practice in how musicians name Tunisian modes.

Both of these ajnās are indispensable for a full understanding of ṭab‘ raṣd al-dhīl, even though the repertoire has songs and instrumental pieces utilizing just one of the fundamental ajnās and excluding the other. Many pieces, however, mix together both ajnās in the same melodic lines and Tunisians recognize this mode mainly for these melodic characteristics. For the sake of clarity, I will use the names jins dhīl C for C-D-E $\flat$ -F-G, and jins raṣd al-dhīl C for C-D-E $\flat$ -F $\sharp$ -G in my description, as shown below:

A few transcriptional issues arise from the above graph. First, as mentioned above, while jins dhīl C in ṭab‘ al-dhīl is regularly notated as C-D-E<sup>♭</sup>-F-G, jins dhīl C in this mode is most often notated as C-D-E<sup>♭</sup>-F-G. To be clear, this is a transcriptional issue, as Tunisian musicians customarily intone this third note – the E – closer to the intonation of a double-slash flat (<sup>♭</sup>) sign.

But more than just with jins dhīl C, my presentation presents two versions of the note E – E<sup>♭</sup> and E<sup>♭</sup> – and transcriptions inscribe these intonations in different ways. For example, in the state-sponsored transcriptions of nūbat raşd al-dhīl in volume 7 of *TMH*—one that I follow in my presentation—the key signature fixes an E<sup>♭</sup> as the standard E-note intonation. When jins raşd al-dhīl C occurs in the melodic line, the transcriber writes a half-slash (<sup>♭</sup>) flat sign for these E notes.

During my fieldwork at the Higher Institute of Music in Sfax, however, some transcriptions used in the classroom were exactly opposite to the *TMH* transcriptions. The key signature showed an E<sup>♭</sup> (instead of an E<sup>♭</sup>) and an F<sup>♯</sup>. When the melodic line expressed jins dhīl C – with an E<sup>♭</sup> and F<sup>♯</sup> – the transcriber wrote a half-flat (<sup>♭</sup>) sign for E notes and natural (<sup>♮</sup>) signs for F within the staff. Interestingly, most of the repertoire I studied in these class sessions used jins dhīl C throughout the songs, which meant that the transcriber had to

alter all of the E and F notes to E<sup>♭</sup> and F<sup>♯</sup> since the key signature standardized these notes as E<sup>♭</sup> and F<sup>♯</sup>.

One point of analysis is with how musicians handle the note E in this mode between two fundamental ajnās. As a general reminder, the E<sup>♭</sup> is intoned slightly higher than the E<sup>♮</sup>; and the E<sup>♮</sup> is lower than both of them. The question is how standardized transcriptional practices correlate to the way musicians actually play these intonations. If the key signature is marked with an E<sup>♭</sup>, musicians customarily play it higher when performing a melodic phrase in jins dhīl C, and lower when expressing a phrase in jins raṣd al-dhīl C.

Performance practice often warrants different intonations than are transcribed. The performance practice of the raṣd al-dhīl repertoire clearly demonstrates a number of alternative intonations for the note E, depending on the jins and the corresponding characteristic melodic phrase. These points suggest that Western art music notation tends to force standardization on musical systems, and musicians are left to manage the constraints of standardization in their dynamic performance practice. But, to be clear, Tunisians adeptly utilize Western notation to archive and transmit musical performances; and they also subvert these standards when practicing their modes. Ṭab‘ raṣd al-dhīl is a case in point.

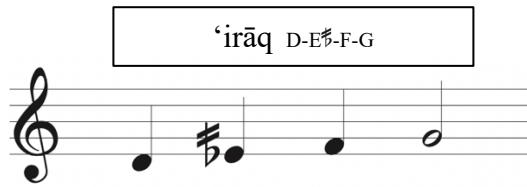
A second point of analysis is considering how Tunisian musicians understand the two fundamental ajnās in the mode’s repertoire. In short, Tunisians do not agree which one is the mode’s original form (Ar. *aṣl*). Those who favor jins dhīl C (C-D-E<sup>♭</sup>-F-G) as the primary one emphasize the point that this jins composes approximately 70% of the musical pieces in the mode’s repertoire, both within and outside the nūba form (Gharbi 2019b). Theorists who maintain this position will most likely put an E<sup>♭</sup> in the key signature. Those who favor jins raṣd al-dhīl C (C-D-E<sup>♮</sup>-F<sup>♯</sup>-G) as the primary jins for the mode remark that this jins—with the

F<sup>♯</sup>—is what uniquely sets ṭab‘ raṣd al-dhīl apart as distinct from other Tunisian modes.

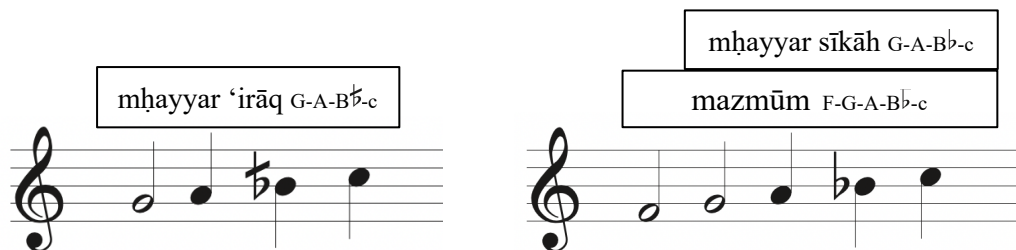
Theorists who take this position will most likely put a flatter E (i.e., E<sup>b</sup>) with or without an F<sup>♯</sup> in the key signature.

At the least, this debate shows that many Tunisian musicians expect modes to have only one fundamental jins rather than two. Perhaps this is a more modern conceptualization of modal theory that theorists have overlaid onto an older performance practice – a practice that was not concerned with standardizing practice through single-lower-tetrachordal analysis or musical transcriptions. But, to follow the debate, the second explanation which claims jins raṣd al-dhīl C (C-D-E<sup>b</sup>-F<sup>♯</sup>-G) as the primary jins misses a substantial point. The Tunisian ṭubū‘ are differentiated from one another—as well as from the Eastern Mediterranean maqāmāt—by characteristic melodic phrases and not merely scale degrees. Thus, the uniqueness heard in the use of the F<sup>♯</sup> in jins raṣd al-dhīl would not define the mode on its own. Rather, the combination of these two ajnās – and all of the intricate melodic nuancing around the uses of the F<sup>♯</sup>, F<sup>b</sup>, and several versions of a flattened E – is what distinguishes this mode from the other Tunisian ones. As for the other position, the prominence of jins dhīl C (C-D-E<sup>b</sup>-F-G) throughout the repertoire is a strong point and informs the position I take in my description of this mode.

Beyond a discussion of the two fundamental ajnās, one other jins regularly uses the notes between C and G. The higher intonation of the third degree in jins dhīl C establishes a resonant home for hearing jins ‘irāq D, which utilizes a high E<sup>♯</sup> (D-E<sup>♯</sup>-F-G). Jins ‘irāq D is especially common throughout the raṣd al-dhīl nūba repertoire (Zouari 2006:162). The note G is a pivotal one for this jins, as well as jins dhīl C. The special melodic leap between notes D and G in jins ‘irāq D is a formulaic indicator of the jins.



Moving up the scale, the pivotal note G is a base for melodies that outline jins mḥayyar ‘irāq (G-A-B♯-c) and jins mḥayyar sīkāh (G-A-B<sup>♭</sup>-c) by alternating the notes B♯ or B<sup>♭</sup>, respectively. Musicians can alternate between these two notes even within the same melismatic phrase. But more systematically, as in other Tunisian modes, ascending melodic phrases routinely use the B♯ (with jins mḥayyar ‘irāq) and descending melodic phrases typically sound out the B<sup>♭</sup> (with jins mḥayyar sīkāh). Connected to G-based jins mḥayyar sīkāh is jins mazmūm F (F-G-A-B<sup>♭</sup>-c). In one characteristic melodic phrase, jins dhīl C (C-D-E♯-F-G) rises to the note B<sup>♭</sup> and then settles down on the pivotal melodic note F. This movement highlights mazmūm F. The chart below shows ajnās mazmūm F and mḥayyar sīkāh G graphed together, as they often coordinate melodically on the note B<sup>♭</sup>.





The upper and lower range of ṭab‘ raṣd al-dhīl is structured by three common ajnās. Jins dhīl GG (GG-AA-BB♯-C) extends the scale to the low note GG.<sup>65</sup> Jins mḥayyar ‘irāq c (c-d-e♭-f) and jins ḥsīn d (d-e♭-f-g) extend the scalar range to the note g in the upper octave.<sup>66</sup>



The final composite chart below highlights a central characteristic of ṭab‘ raṣd al-dhīl: that the mode has two fundamental ajnās on the tonic note C. I put these two ajnās in double-bordered boxes above and below the staff in emphasize this point. The alternative way of naming these two ajnās are also included inside the boxes. I position jins dhīl C as the “first type” or most prominent fundamental jins in the mode.

<sup>65</sup> See footnote 8. In the song *Āh ‘alā mā fāt* in this mode, a melodic phrase that makes use of the notes of jins dhīl GG is also called a “ḥarakat al-rahāwī” (a movement of rahāwī).

<sup>66</sup> It is less clear which ajnās typically function in the upper octave. Guettat brackets a tetrachordal jins on d (d-e♭-f-g) in the ascent, a tetrachordal jins c (c-d-e♭-f) in the descent, and the ajnās common to raṣd dhīl (c-d-e♭-f-g and c-d-e♭-f-g) on both the ascent and descent (1980:270). Despite the fact that all of these ajnās are unnamed in Guettat’s documentation, the tetrachordal ajnās are most likely “jins ḥsīn d” and “mḥayyar ‘irāq c.” But, again, it is unmarked. In Guettat’s revised publication, he alters the raṣd al-dhīl scale slightly by removing the tetrachordal jins d (2000:367). In my fieldwork at the Higher Institute of Music in Sfax, classroom handouts only listed mḥayyar ‘irāq c in the upper octave; and in an interview with Kamal Gharbi, he emphasized jins ḥsīn d in an improvisation of raṣd al-dhīl. Additionally, the *TMH* nūba transcriptions for raṣd al-dhīl (vol. 7) clearly express a number of jins ḥsīn d (d-e♭-f-g) occurrences. I follow my fieldwork and the *TMH* to document both of jins ḥsīn d and jins mḥayyar ‘irāq c in the composite chart above for this mode.

Figure 9. Ṭab‘ Raṣd al-Dhīl

The figure shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody consists of the following notes: C4, D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, C5. Above the staff, several boxes indicate different modes and scales:

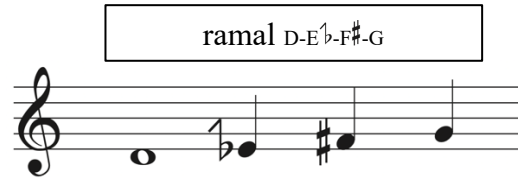
- dhīl** GG-AA-BB $\sharp$ -C-D
- ‘irāq** D-E $\sharp$ -F-G
- dhīl** C-D-E $\sharp$ -F-G  
raṣd al-dhīl, 1<sup>st</sup> type (*naw‘ awwal*)
- māzmun** F-G-A-B $\flat$ -c
- mḥayyar sīkāh** G-A-B $\flat$ -c
- mḥayyar ‘irāq** G-A-B $\flat$ -c
- mḥayyar ‘irāq** c-d-e $\sharp$ -f
- ḥsīn** d-e $\flat$ -f-g

Below the staff, a box indicates another mode:

- raṣd al-dhīl** C-D-E $\flat$ -F $\sharp$ -G  
raṣd al-dhīl: 2<sup>nd</sup> type (*naw‘ thānī*)

## 10. Ṭab‘ al-Ramal

Ṭab‘ al-ramal is the tenth Tunisian mode, based on jins ramal D (D-E<sup>♭</sup>-F<sup>♯</sup>-G), the fundamental jins of the mode:



The second degree (E<sup>♭</sup>) of jins ramal D is a crucial melodic feature of the mode; and so I will give more attention to this specific intonation in ṭab‘ al-ramal’s description, even though musicians also utilize this same half-slash flat sign in other modes. In Tunisian Arabic, this half-slash flat sign (♭) is called a *bemol khāṣṣa*, a “special flat.” Most likely, the word for “special” or *khāṣṣa* (خاصة) is a linguistic adaptation of the Egyptian dialect word *khāssa* (خاصة), meaning “weakened” or “thinned.”<sup>67</sup> The only difference in spelling is with the doubled “s” letters (ṣ/ص vs. s/س). In the case of ramal’s E<sup>♭</sup>, the “special flat” sign would refer to a “thinned” flat in relation to a full E<sup>♭</sup> intonation. The thinning between an E<sup>♭</sup> and E<sup>♭</sup> is very small, for instance, on a many modern ‘ūd instruments. Mahdi indexed the intonation of the half-slash flat sign as a 40% lowering of a whole tone (1972:37; cf. Zghonda 1992b; see Appendix 2). This intonation in al-ramal is for an E note intoned slightly higher than an E<sup>♭</sup>.

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<sup>67</sup> Personal communication with Azaiez (2019), who heard this explanation as a university music student from the widely respected 20th-century Tunisian musician and scholar Muḥammad Sa‘āda. The word *khāssa* is indeed used today in Egypt when discussing intonation (cf. Marcus 1993:41). Tunisians have adapted the word to fit the context of ṭab‘ al-ramal with a slightly *raised* E<sup>♭</sup>, meaning that the E<sup>♭</sup> is “weakened” or “thinned.”

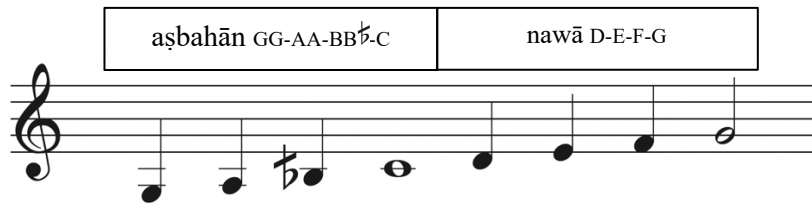
Even though the state-sponsored transcription of *nūbat al-ramal* utilizes an E-bemol *khāṣṣa* or E<sup>♭</sup> in the key signature (see *TMH* vol. 7), not all music theorists of the Tunisian ṭabū‘ use this type of flat sign. For example, D’Erlanger notated jins ramal D with the note E<sup>♭</sup> rather than E<sup>♮</sup> (1949:Fig. 164). Manoubi Snoussi, who was a main collaborator with D’Erlanger, notated jins ramal D as D-E<sup>♮</sup>-F<sup>♯</sup>-G in his series of radio addresses from the 1960s (2004:53). Mahmoud Guettat documented jins ramal D with two different understandings of the note E in his publications on North African Andalusī music. In the 1980 and 2000 editions of his work, Guettat presents the intonation of the note E as E<sup>♭</sup> and E<sup>♮</sup> (1980:270; 2000:367, respectively). Snoussi and Guettat, in other words, may not mark the note E in jins ramal D with a “special flat” (♭); but they have consistently inscribed the intonation of the E in ramal higher than an E<sup>♭</sup>. In my description of ṭabū‘ ramal, I follow a lineage of Tunisian music theorists who use a *bemol khāṣṣa* or “special flat” (♭) for the intonation of the note E.

But even in using a *bemol khāṣṣa*, some Tunisian musicians consider jins ramal D to resemble jins iṣba‘īn D (D-E<sup>♭</sup>-F<sup>♯</sup>-G) that uses an E<sup>♭</sup>, as noted below:

The relationship between these two modes is an important one for understanding how characteristic melodic formulas – rather than transcription symbols or intervallic structures with ajnās – manifest a Tunisian mode. I explore this point in the next chapter referring

specifically to jins ramal D and jins iṣba‘īn D. But suffice it to say that, although I mark the note E with two different signs in my analysis here, some Tunisians notate both jins ramal D and jins iṣba‘īn with an E<sup>♭</sup>. In that case, transcriptions will not distinguish between ajnās ramal D and iṣba‘īn D. The characteristic melodic paths, however, that these two modes take are different, and herein lies the method that Tunisians use to distinguish them, despite the potential for synonymous transcriptional symbols. For example, jins ramal D melodically stresses the E<sup>♭</sup> note, while jins iṣba‘īn does not. Perhaps this is a reason why musicians distinctively play the “special flat” in ramal as a raised E<sup>♭</sup> more so than in al-iṣba‘īn – to separate and distinguish the intonations. The wider intervallic distance between D and E<sup>♭</sup> attributes more sonic distinction to presence the mode and elicit its network of meanings.

Other ajnās are also important in ṭab‘ al-ramal. Jins aṣbahān GG (GG-AA-BB<sup>♭</sup>-C) has an indelible relationship to the mode. Although this is a four-note grouping based below the tonic D on the notes GG-AA-BB<sup>♭</sup>-C, jins aṣbahān GG is usually introduced by a melodic descent from the notes F or E via jins nawā D (D-E-F-G). Since jins nawā D sounds the notes E<sup>♮</sup> and F<sup>♮</sup>—as opposed to the E<sup>♭</sup> and F<sup>♯</sup> in the fundamental jins ramal D—the melodic change can be striking for listeners. It is also common for jins aṣbahān GG to manifest in ṭab‘ al-ramal without this strong connection to jins nawā D, such as in featuring the note BB<sup>♭</sup>. But since the characteristic melodic descent is often very recognizable to many Tunisian musicians, I represent both ajnās aṣbahān GG and nawā D in the chart below as a connected, one-octave melodic motif.



In Zouari’s analysis of ṭab‘ al-ramal, he found that the nūba repertoire often uses jins mḥayyar sīkāh G (G-A-B<sup>b</sup>-c) (2006:174-5). A melodic emphasis on the note B<sup>b</sup> leads to cadences in mḥayyar sīkāh on the pivotal note G, sometimes utilizing the note F<sup>#</sup> as a lower neighboring tone. Another jins which shares the base note G with mḥayyar sīkāh is jins mḥayyar ‘irāq G (G-A-B<sup>♯</sup>-c). This jins emphasizes the note B<sup>♯</sup> rather than the B<sup>b</sup>.



Other ajnās occur less frequently within ṭab‘ al-ramal in the nūba repertoire, such as jins raṣd al-dhīl G (G-A-B<sup>b</sup>-c<sup>#</sup>-d) or jins dhīl c (c-d-e<sup>#</sup>-f-g). These ajnās are not included in the chart below, but the scalar range extends to the note c to d to indicate that musicians do occasionally use the upper octave. The most common ajnās structures in this mode are compiled in the following graph:

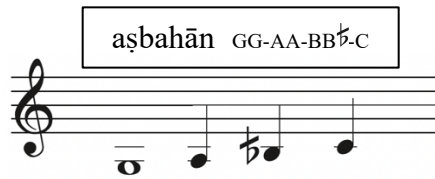
Figure 10. Ṭab‘ al-Ramal

The figure shows a musical staff in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody consists of the following notes: G4, A4, B-flat4, C5, B-flat4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. Above the staff, four boxes provide lyrics and scales for different parts of the melody:

- aṣbahān** GG-AA-BB<sup>♭</sup>-C (aligned with the first four notes: G, A, B-flat, C)
- nawā** D-E-F-G (aligned with the last four notes: D, E, F, G)
- ramal** D-E<sup>♭</sup>-F<sup>♯</sup>-G (aligned with the last four notes: D, E-flat, F-sharp, G)
- mḥayyar ‘irāq** G-A-B<sup>♭</sup>-c (aligned with the first four notes: G, A, B-flat, c)
- mḥayyar sīkāh** G-A-B<sup>♭</sup>-c (aligned with the first four notes: G, A, B-flat, c)

## 11. Ṭab‘ al-Aṣbahān

As the eleventh musical mode, ṭab‘ al-aṣbahān is often pronounced as “iṣbahān” in Tunisian Arabic, which explains a few instances of this spelling in French language publications (see D’Erlanger 1949:Fig. 169; and Guettat 2000:367). A spelling of “iṣbahān” is closely related to the spelling of the historic Iranian city of Isfahan (Ar. *iṣfahān*, Wehr 1979:22).<sup>68</sup> Ṭab‘ al-aṣbahān is the only Tunisian mode whose tonic is below the note C, based on the note GG which historically is considered the lowest point of the conventional Arab music scale.<sup>69</sup> The half-flat third degree (BB $\flat$ ) of jins aṣbahān is the principal melodic feature of this jins.



Melodic phrases of jins aṣbahān GG feature the note BB $\flat$  and that melodic feature works well with an overlapping jins, based on BB $\flat$ : jins sīkāh BB $\flat$  (BB $\flat$ -C-D).



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<sup>68</sup> In a similar intermingling of letters, Arabic speakers commonly refer to the author of the multi-volume *Kitāb al-aghānī* (*Book of Songs*) as Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī (d. 971), while others use al-Iṣfahānī. Cf. Kilpatrick 2003:351n3; “Abū l- Faraj al- Iṣfahānī,” *EI3* online, Sebastian Günther, accessed March 2, 2021.

<sup>69</sup> The Arabic name for the note GG is *yakāh*, which derives from the Persian word *yakgah* meaning “first position” (Marcus 1989a:74). The meaning is that GG is the “first position” or beginning point for ascending to other notes.



Despite the fact that the fundamental note of ṭab‘ al-aṣbahān is GG, the note D is so important as a melodic base that it is common for songs and instrumental pieces in al-aṣbahān to achieve a final cadence on the note D rather than GG, or even for an entire piece to start and conclude in D-based ajnās. As such, the note D hosts a variety of ajnās in ṭab‘ al-aṣbahān, just as the note G hosts numerous ajnās for C- and D-based modes. The D-based ajnās of ṭab‘ al-aṣbahān revolve around changing the intonation of both the E and F notes, which can occur numerous times throughout a given melodic phrase. The rest of this discussion of al-aṣbahān will mostly focus on the myriad of choices musicians have with D-based ajnās in this mode.

The first and, perhaps, most important of these D-based ajnās is jins nawā D, which utilizes the notes Eḩ and Fḩ (D-E-F-G). Intensely linked to the sound of ṭab‘ al-aṣbahān, these notes often begin a characteristic melodic stepwise descent to jins aṣbahān GG (see ṭab‘ al-ramal in this chapter). However, the notes Eḩ and Fḩ can also melodically function in other ways, especially when the musical phrase includes the notes G and A. For example, in voicing A-G-E-D (see graph below), an Fḩ can act as an upper neighboring tone to ornament the note Eḩ.<sup>70</sup> For this practice, some Tunisian musicians and listeners hear a melodic formula associated with ṭab‘ al-raṣd and not ṭab‘ al-aṣbahān. Because of this, some might label this melodic structure “jins raṣd D” (‘Alila 2018-2019), even though such a named jins does not exist in ṭab‘ al-raṣd or any other Tunisian mode. The brief melodic phrase, however, is deeply characteristic of ṭab‘ al-raṣd; and so, the name of “jins raṣd D” is meant to index

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<sup>70</sup> See footnote 35 for a discussion of “discontinuous upper neighboring tones.”

this common melodic phrase rather than structure a formal jins. The chart below demonstrates how Tunisians theoretically structure the notes E $\flat$  and F $\flat$  in ṭab‘ al-aṣbahān. In both ajnās, the note D acts as a pivotal note.

nawā D-E-F-G



“raṣd” D-E-(F)-G-(A)  
as a descent



Two other D-based ajnās manifest when only one of the notes E or F is marked as a natural note. With an F $\sharp$  and an E $\flat$ , jins ḥsīn D (D-E $\flat$ -F $\sharp$ -G) occurs. With an E $\flat$  and an F $\sharp$  (half-sharp), jins mḥayyar ‘irāq D (D-E-F $\sharp$ -G) appears. The intonation of the rarely used half-sharp sign ( $\sharp$ ) in jins mḥayyar ‘irāq D corresponds roughly to raising the note by thirty percent of a whole tone (Mahdi 1972:37-8).

ḥsīn D-E $\flat$ -F $\sharp$ -G



mḥayyar ‘irāq D-E-F $\sharp$ -G



The notes E $\flat$  and F $\sharp$  manifest jins iṣba‘īn D (D-E $\flat$ -F $\sharp$ -G) – a common occurrence in this mode’s repertoire. Much less common, but still represented in the repertoire, is jins raṣd al-dhīl C (C-D-E $\flat$ -F $\sharp$ -G). Readers are reminded that ajnās iṣba‘īn and raṣd al-dhīl often

interplay melodically when together in other modes, such as in ṭab‘ al-sīkāh and ṭab‘ al-iṣba‘īn. The different intonational marking on the note E between these two ajnās is said to be approximately one-centimeter distance on a modern ‘ūd instrument (Gharbi 2020; see Appendix 2).

In the above charts, I feature six D-based ajnās for ṭab‘ al-aṣbahān to demonstrate the variety of melodic possibilities that emerge on the notes D-E-F-G scalar degrees. Moving high up the scale, the note G is also a pivotal note, most frequently manifesting jins mḥayyar ‘irāq G (G-A-B♭-c). This jins, in fact, plays a key role in one of the most known characteristic melodic phrases of al-aṣbahān (see Chapter 2).

Finally, jins raṣd al-dhīl G (G-A-B♭-c♯-d), extends the register of ṭab‘ al-aṣbahān to the note d. The note e-natural often acts as an upper neighboring tone to the note d.

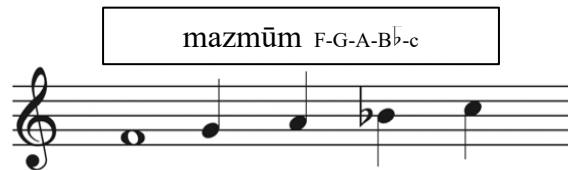
rašd al-dhīl G-A-B<sup>♯</sup>-c<sup>♯</sup>-d

The last chart is a composite of all of the most common ajnās for ṭab‘ al-ašbahān. The scalar range of the mode extends across one and a half octaves, with a remarkable diversity of D-based ajnās that are most frequently used to express this mode.

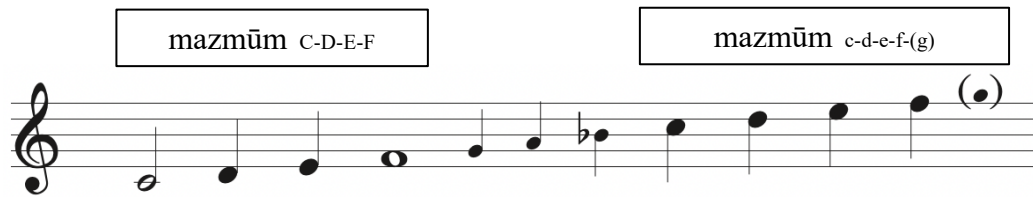
Figure 11. Ṭab‘ al-Ašbahān

## 12. Ṭab‘ al-Mazmūm

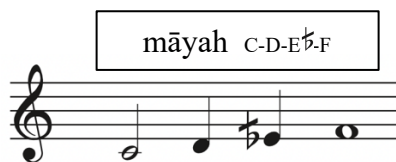
The structure of ṭab‘ al-mazmūm – the twelfth Tunisian mode – emerges from the fundamental jins mazmūm on the tonic note F (F-G-A-B<sup>b</sup>-c).



Similar to jins dhīl, jins mazmūm can function as a four-note (“tetrachord”) or a five-note (“pentachord”) grouping, depending on its placement in the scale and melodic rendering. For the mode of mazmūm, jins mazmūm F is a full five-note grouping from the notes F to c. A lower jins mazmūm emerges on C (C-D-E-F) and is most often rendered as a four-note grouping due to the strong intervallic relationship in melodic lines between the pivotal note C and tonic note F. Expressing this interval serves to stress a tonic center on F. An upper jins mazmūm develops in the high octave, similarly framed by the interval of a fourth between the notes c and f. In its duplication of jins mazmūm C at the octave, jins mazmūm c (c-d-e-f) also duplicates the tonic note F at the octave, which strongly situates the high f note as an upper melodic boundary for the scale of al-mazmūm. Jins mazmūm c, then, is usually a four-note grouping in melodic phrases. However, it is not uncommon for a melodic phrase in jins mazmūm c to use the note g (included parenthetically in the chart below) as an upper neighboring tone, which again demonstrates how jins mazmūm in general can stabilize as a four-note or five-note jins. The overall scale of this mode follows the outline of three mazmūm ajnās on the notes C, F, and c. The transcription below shows the two ajnās mazmūm on either side of jins mazmūm F (in small notes):



One of the more common melodic deviations away from the *mazmūm ajnās* is to *jins māyah C* (C-D-E $\flat$ -F). The characteristic melodic descent associated with *jins māyah C* – from the note B $\flat$  descending stepwise to the note C, passing through E $\flat$  – is *not* a feature in *ṭab‘ al-mazmūm* as it is in other modes, such as in *ṭab‘ ramal al-māyah* or *ṭab‘ al-māyah*. Melodic descents from the notes c or B $\flat$  in *al-mazmūm* more commonly stop on the tonic F and then confirm the tonic by rendering the interval F-C-F. But when the melodic movement uses the notes between the C-F interval, *jins māyah C* is often the choice.



The note A is a pivotal melodic base in *ṭab‘ al-mazmūm* and highlights two unique *ajnās* within the Tunisian *ṭubū‘* repertoire – both of which Tunisians say derive from the Eastern Mediterranean *maqāmāt*: *ṣabā* and “*kurdī*-type” (Ar. *naw‘ kurdī*). *Jins ṣabā A* (A-B $\flat$ -c-d $\flat$ ) alters the note B $\flat$  in base *jins mazmūm F* – to the note B $\flat$  – and also adds the note d $\flat$  in

the higher octave. Tunisians consider “ṣabā” to be a jins from the East; but they adapt the same terminology without an issue into their modal system.

This is not the case with the second jins on A. Jins naw‘ kurdī A (A-B<sup>♭</sup>-c-d) has the same notes as “kurdī A” (A-B<sup>♭</sup>-c-d) – as named in the Eastern Mediterranean – and, arguably, the same characteristic melodic phrases. But, many Tunisian musicians and pedagogues make a distinction in the naming of these phrases in order to index difference. Thus, Tunisian theorists call a melodic analysis using this jins, “kurdī-type A,” rather than “kurdī A”– the latter a name they see as strictly derivative of a Mashriqī system. Calling their own melodic expressions a “type” of kurdī creates some meaningful separation for some Tunisians. It is noteworthy that only in ṭab‘ al-mazmūm is this Tunisian description of “kurdī-type” and its note grouping (A-B<sup>♭</sup>-c-d) structured in the mode as a jins.



The final composite chart of ṭab‘ al-mazmūm highlights the most common ajnās in the mode’s scale, which spans one and a half octaves from the notes C to g.

Figure 12. Ṭab‘ al-Mazmūm

The figure shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody consists of the following notes: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B-flat4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5, A5, B-flat5, C6. Above the staff, several boxes indicate the modes and scales for different sections of the melody:

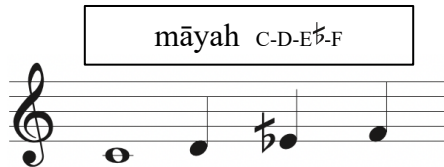
- māyah** C-D-E $\flat$ -F (Covers the first four notes: C, D, E, F)
- mazmūm** C-D-E-F (Covers the first four notes: C, D, E, F)
- māyah** C-D-E $\flat$ -F (Covers the first four notes: C, D, E, F)
- mazmūm** F-G-A-B $\flat$ -c (Covers the notes: F, G, A, B-flat, c)
- ṣabā** A-B $\flat$ -c-d $\flat$  (Covers the notes: A, B-flat, c, d-flat)
- kurdī-type** A-B $\flat$ -c-d (Covers the notes: A, B-flat, c, d)
- mazmūm** c-d-e-f(g) (Covers the notes: c, d, e, f, g)

The final note of the melody is a dotted note (.) on the G5 line.

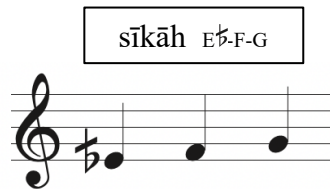


### 13. Ṭab‘ al-Māyah

Ṭab‘ al-māyah is the thirteenth and final Tunisian mode of the traditional, Andalusī repertoire, named after the fundamental jins māyah C (C-D-E $\flat$ -F), based on the tonic note C.



The note E $\flat$  is a melodic feature of jins māyah C, so much so that cadences often take place on this note. In this case, the E $\flat$  becomes the fundamental base for jins sīkāh E $\flat$  (E $\flat$ -F-G), which overlaps with jins māyah C on the notes E $\flat$  and F.



Ajnās māyah C and sīkāh E $\flat$  have an enduring musical relationship, and music scholars have documented this relationship in various ways. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the respected Tunisian scholar Ṣādiq al-Rizqī wrote that ṭab‘ al-māyah is “a type of Eastern [maqām] rāst mixed with sīkāh” (1989:236n1).<sup>71</sup> Maqām rast C (C-D-E $\flat$ -F) would

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<sup>71</sup> Ṣādiq al-Rizqī (1874-1939) was an influential journalist, scholar, and arts advocate in early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Tunisia. Written in the 1920s, his *al-Aghānī wa-l-‘ādāt al-tūnisiyya* (Tunisian Songs and Customs) is unarguably one of the most important books, covering traditional and popular music during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, some of their repertoires, and a brief history of the Sufi confraternities responsible for transmitting these traditions. The book was later retitled and reprinted as *al-Aghānī al-tūnisiyya* (Tunisian Songs) in 1967 by La Maison Tunisienne d’Edition, with a second edition in 1989 (cf. Louati 2012:157-8).

correspond to the structure of jins māyah C, and it is of interest that al-Rizqī says that the Tunisian māyah is actually from the East or the Mashriq. In the early 1930s, D’Erlanger documented a Tunisian mode called “Māyah.” His sample melodic transcription of this mode corresponds to many characteristic melodic phrases of ṭab‘ al-māyah as musicians practice it today. However, D’Erlanger puts the mode’s tonic on E♯ and confirms this decision by ending the sample māyah melody on E♯ (1949: Fig. 171). Decades later, in a book on Arab music, Salah Mahdi includes a C-based scale that he calls “Tunisian al-māyah” with a jins containing the five notes of E♯-F-G-A-B♭. The mode is Tunisian; but Mahdi names this specific jins “Eastern māyah” (*Ar. māyah sharqiyya*, 1999:15).

Tunisian musicians regularly tonicize ṭab‘ al-māyah on C, unlike D’Erlanger’s example cited above. But they also prioritize the melodic relationship between the ajnās based on C and those based on E♯, which may explain both D’Erlanger’s divergent tonicization and al-Rizqī’s comment that Tunisian māyah is a C-based mode “...mixed with sīkāh [i.e., the note E♯ or the jins E♯-F-G]”. In the present-day Eastern Mediterranean, the mode entitled “sīkāh māyah” has a tonic on E♯ on the following scale: E♯-F-G-A-B♭-c-d-e♯ (Marcus 1989a:844). The first five notes of this scale correspond to Mahdi’s transcription of the jins that he calls “Eastern māyah” even when he tonicizes the mode of Tunisian māyah on C. So, from this discussion, one point is certainly clear: jins sīkāh E♯ has a special place in the continuing performance practice of ṭab‘ al-māyah.

Musicians frequently manifest the mode of māyah with a melodic descent that begins on the note B♭ and falls to C by way of jins māyah C. The upper part of that melodic descent is jins mazmūm F (F-G-A-B♭-c), which also has a particular significance in ṭab‘ al-māyah. Some of the melodic material structured by this jins, in fact, is found in no other Tunisian

mode that uses the jins mazmūm F, such as in ṭab‘ al-mazmūm and ṭab‘ ramal al-māyah. For instance, one of these special characteristics in ṭab‘ al-māyah is that a jins mazmūm is featured in the lowest octave, on the base note FF (FF-GG-AA-BB<sup>♭</sup>-C). It is rare in Mediterranean modal musics for a jins to be based on FF – typically the lowest note is GG.<sup>72</sup>

A prominent use of the note B<sup>♭</sup> also manifests jins mḥayyar sīkāh G (G-A-B<sup>♭</sup>-c), especially when the melodic phrase cadences on the note G. The note F, however, is of more pivotal significance than the note G. The transcription below represents both ajnās mazmūm F and mḥayyar sīkāh G together, since melodic phrases often imbricate these ajnās in the repertoire.

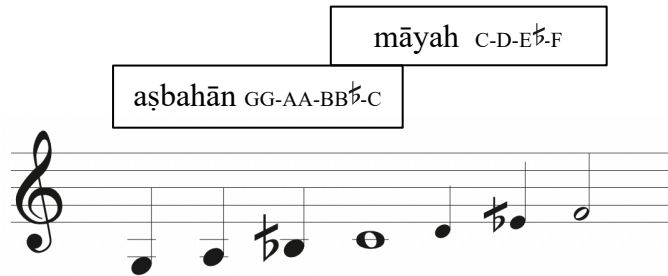
mḥayyar sīkāh G-A-B <sup>♭</sup> -c
mazmūm F-G-A-B <sup>♭</sup> -c

Melodic phrases in ṭab‘ al-māyah often exploit the notes below the tonic note of C. At times, musicians emphasize only the notes BB<sup>♭</sup> and AA. These types of phrases often begin on C, dip below, and then rise back to cadence on C. At other times, the melodic line descends further to GG for a cadence. Both of these types of melodic movements feature jins aṣbahān GG (GG-AA-BB<sup>♭</sup>-C) – a jins which tends to feature the note BB<sup>♭</sup> whether a final

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<sup>72</sup> As mentioned in footnote 45, the Arabic name of *yakāh* for the note GG linguistically derives from the Persian word *yakgah* meaning “first position.” Musicians refer to the note FF – below GG – as *qarār jahār-kāh* or “the low octave F-note.” *Qarār* here means “low octave.”

GG is reached or not. Musicians often achieve this characteristic descent to the lower octave starting from the note F. In other Tunisian modes, such as ṭab‘ al-ramal, this phrase occurs with the note E♭ in the D-based jins nawā (D-E-F-G). But in ṭab‘ al-māyah, this characteristic aṣbahān descent manifests with the note E♯ in jins māyah C. Although musicians can manifest jins aṣbahān GG without this characteristic fall, the chart below shows jins aṣbahān GG with the additions of the notes in jins māyah C (reduced in size) in order to highlight the melodic feature of aṣbahān within ṭab‘ al-māyah.



The final composite chart of ṭab‘ al-māyah demonstrates the scalar structure around five core ajnās. Each jins in this network has a special manifestation within this mode. These melodic expressions are uniquely found in al-māyah even when the jins is used widely in other Tunisian modes.

Figure 13. Ṭab‘ al-Māyah

The figure displays a musical staff in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody consists of the following notes: G4, A4, B-flat4, C5, D5, E-flat5, F5, G5, A5, B-flat5, C6. Five segments of the melody are labeled with boxes and their corresponding scales:

- aşbahān** GG-AA-BB<sup>♭</sup>-C
- māyah** C-D-E<sup>♭</sup>-F
- sīkāh** E<sup>♭</sup>-F-G
- mazmūm** F-G-A-B<sup>♭</sup>-c
- mḥayyar sīkāh** G-A-B<sup>♭</sup>-c

## Summary

In this chapter, I have described the 13 traditional Tunisian musical modes through multiple components that are often represented in works of tetrachordal music theory, such as *ajnās*, intonation, and scalar structures. This is how master musicians and pedagogues transmit these modes to Tunisian music students at the Higher Institute of Music in Sfax, one of the most pre-eminent places to learn the *ṭubū‘* in Tunisia today. In transmitting their modes through such structure, Tunisians join hands with Arab and non-Arab musicians in the region. Tetrachordal theory and scalar structure are crucial aspects in how Tunisians conceptualize the *ṭubū‘*. These aspects are a *lingua franca* for musicians throughout the Mediterranean region. As such, Tunisians are participating in a shared method of modal conceptualization. Musicians and theorists throughout the region would readily recognize and understand the theoretical approach to musical modes presented in this chapter.

But Tunisian musicians repeatedly contrast the Tunisian modal system to the *maqām* system in the Mashriq. The schematic depictions of musical modes alone are incomplete reflections of their musical practice. In Chapter Two, I now attend to the dimension of performance practice in order to describe more of how the *ṭubū‘* exist outside of codified music theory. In practice, the *ṭubū‘* reflect musical difference – a way of performing the musical modes that cultivate distinction. As I have alluded to in these discussions and will explore in greater depth in Part Two of this dissertation, the musical practices that I will present in Chapter Two is a method for identification and belonging.

## Chapter 2. Encountering the Tunisian Ṭubū‘: Practicing Modal Difference

There exists for each mode a characteristic melodic formula [*formule*]...  
Guettat 1980:282 and 2000:384 (translation mine)

It is true that the musician is free to prefer this or that rhythmic or melodic figure, and use them according to their personal taste..., but it is also true that these figures, [even] without taking them as “models” or as “formulas” that repeat themselves, represent some sort of “prints” [*empreintes*] which make it possible to perceive what Arab musicians call *rūḥ* (spirit [*l’âme*]) of the ṭab‘ or maqām.

Guettat 1980:283 and 2000:385 (translation mine),  
quoted in Gharbi 2013:29

Perhaps it was D’Erlanger who first documented how Tunisian musicians differentiate their modes by formulaic musical content when he said that the sample melodies of the ṭubū‘ he transcribed were “engraved” (Fr. *gravées*) in the minds of the musicians (1949:342); but the clearest gesture to the characteristic melodic-rhythmic formulas of the ṭubū‘ is in the above quotes from Mahmoud Guettat’s *La Musique Classique du Maghreb* (Classical Music of North Africa) published in 1980 and reprinted with some changes in 2000. In these quotes, Guettat describes how “characteristic melodic formula[s]” are essential for manifesting the ṭubū‘.<sup>1</sup> He maintains that these formulas have a structural dynamic (“as ‘models’”), that they reoccur in performance practice, and that as “prints,” these melodic formulas provide a stable method for musicians to elicit the “spirit” of a mode.

Researching many years after Guettat’s publications in 2013, Kamal Gharbi – a renowned Tunisian ‘ūd performer, beloved university music professor, and one of my

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<sup>1</sup> In the same chapter, Guettat mentions four other modal features of the ṭubū‘, namely: scalar structure, note hierarchies, melodic ornamentation, and modal feeling (cf. 1980:277-87).

fieldwork collaborators – excavated Guettat’s quote and placed it in his master’s thesis. In his innovative thesis, Gharbi analyzes the melodic formulation of three Tunisian modes that have the same tonic on D and also contain a similar jins on the tonic, namely: jins ḥsīn (D-E<sup>b</sup>-F-G), jins ramal al-māyah (D-E<sup>b</sup>-F-G), and jins ‘irāq (D-E<sup>#</sup>-F-G). How can three modes, containing such similar scale degrees within their fundamental jins, as well as same tonic notes, be different modes? Gharbi concludes that Tunisian modes differ from one another—as well as from other modal systems, such as the maqāmāt—through the use of reoccurring, formulaic melodic units and not primarily through scale degrees, intonations, or pitch hierarchies, such as those examined in Chapter One.<sup>2</sup>

In the previous chapter, I described the Tunisian musical modes through theoretical structure, as I learned the ṭubū‘ at the Higher Institute of Music in Sfax. Among professional Tunisian musicians and musicians-in-training who perform the ṭubū‘, this type of interpretation of the modes is common. The language of ajnās and scales connects Tunisian participants to other musical traditions in the Mediterranean that use the same language and music theory structures to define practice. Tunisian pedagogues at the Institute in Sfax were aware of this fact and cultivated these regional connections in their curriculum by teaching both the ṭubū‘ *and* the Mashriqī maqāmāt (albeit separately) in each year of the three-year music degree program. In doing so, the structures of music theory, as a lingua franca, enabled my Tunisian collaborators to maintain vital connections to larger geographies of belonging. Through tetrachordal theory, Tunisians belonged to a lineage of “Arab music” traditions that had a historical re-formation in the Mediterranean during the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century, and that also

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<sup>2</sup> In Gharbi’s thesis and my conversations with him on the topic (esp., 2019b), he largely attributes the recognition of modes through intervallic relationships to be the central way musicians distinguish between modes in the Mashriqī maqāmāt and teach these distinguishing features.



stretched much further back in time to 9<sup>th</sup>-century Baghdad. In utilizing networks of ajnās or in formulating ascending and descending scales, Tunisian musicians cultivate an affinity to Arab musical traditions.<sup>3</sup>

Yet even the similarities of theoretical structure that exist between the ṭubū‘ and maqāmāt never caused the ṭubū‘ to be folded into the maqāmāt – a profound sociological and cultural point to observe. Despite the fact that the language of tetrachordal theory has shaped modal music throughout the Mediterranean for nearly a century, and despite the Tunisians’ embrace of this coherence of music theory at the most prestigious places of musical transmission, Tunisians continue to retain the ṭubū‘ as a distinct musical tradition through a certain kind of differentiated practice. The ṭubū‘ and the maqāmāt might have layers and layers of similarities; but they are also not the same.

In this chapter, I locate how Tunisians cultivate a disconnectedness from the maqāmāt and, in doing so, promote uniqueness in the ṭubū‘ system. More than just the cursory differences that manifest across musical geographies – such as in the names of modes or in how musicians perform a localized repertoire – the deeper disjuncture between the ṭubū‘ and maqāmāt occurs in how Tunisian participants perform and listen to their musical modes.

Musicians put recognizable and characteristic melodic-rhythmic phrases together by creating a “melodic path” (*masār laḥnī*) to manifest a ṭab‘. I demonstrate such a melodic path, and then turn to each of the thirteen Tunisian modes in order to document these characteristic melodic-rhythmic phrases. In some cases, music scholars have documented the phrases that I choose to present but did not always highlight their significance in presenting

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<sup>3</sup> Although Tunisian music is also indebted to Ottoman-Turkish musical influences, it is the Arab music tradition that Tunisian music theorists have highlighted more in their telling of music history (see Guettat 1980, 2000; Mahdi 1972, 1982, 1999).

the distinctiveness of Tunisian modal music. I use French Baron D'Erlanger's *La Musique Arabe* (Arab Music; vol. 5)—published posthumously in 1949 and perhaps compiled before his death in 1932—to demonstrate the historical presence of some of these phrases as well as the nine-volumes of *Tunisian Musical Heritage* (again, *TMH*) perhaps all published in the 1960s. The scholarly works of Mahmoud Guettat (1980, 2000) and Lasaad Zouari (2006) also contain specific musical phrases that emphasize the differences of Tunisian modal music. In other words, it is not only my fieldwork that attests to the importance of these melodic-rhythmic phrases. Nearly three-quarters of a century of notated melodic texts supports the argument that these phrases, for a long while, have continued to be a resilient and durable performance and listening strategy for Tunisian musicians, pedagogues, and listeners. But before an analysis of these characteristic phrases, I situate these phrases as practice through my own experiences as a music student at the Institute in Sfax.

### **Spring Exams in the Ṭubūʿ**

It was Tuesday, May 7<sup>th</sup>, in 2019, the last day of a two-week examinations cycle at the Higher Institute of Music in Sfax. The academic year was coming to a close. The Islamic month of Ramadan had started just the day before, on May 6<sup>th</sup>. Tunisians in Sfax respect the public rhythms of Ramadan involving daytime fasting and nighttime celebration. But the Institute's administration considered these rhythms less conducive for teaching and learning; and so, in a rush to quickly finish the Spring semester, the administration decided to cut classes shorter than usual and start exams at an earlier date. The ṭubūʿ exams were the last ones in the exam cycle, and students considered them the hardest to pass.

Officially, I was a registered first-year music student at the Institute, albeit a strange one. All of the students at the Institute sought a degree in music – the equivalent of an undergraduate music degree. But as a non-Tunisian researcher interested in mainly in the *ṭubūʿ*, I was not seeking a degree in music but sat in weekly lessons to join the transmission process. In other words, I did not need to take the examinations. But in order to honor my professors and their commitment to my learning, as well as commiserate with my student colleagues (I was also fasting), I decided to take the Year 1 and Year 2 *ṭubūʿ* exams anyway. As it happened, I did my Year 1 exams in the morning of May 7th, and the Year 2 exams later that afternoon.

I felt like a grade-school student again. I was nervous about my performance. I stressed over the material. As I waited for my turn to come, I rehearsed in the Institute’s hallways and gossiped with other students about which professors were the hardest to please. The students told me what to expect, as the *ṭubūʿ* exams took the same format every semester. The examiners wrote the four or five modes of that semester on separate slips of paper and put them inside a hat. Upon entrance into the examination room, a student drew a mode from the hat and accepted their fate. The jury committee—made up of music professors from the Institute—expected the student to sing repertoire from memory in that particular mode, and then improvise a melodic path that manifested the mode. Lastly, the student had to answer questions orally about the mode’s scale, fundamental note, network of *ajnās*, and pivotal notes, as well as field questions about specific rhythms from the *nūba* repertoire.

For me, the most unnerving part of the exam was the improvisation. It is said that musicians truly understand a mode when they can improvise a “melodic path” (*masār laḥnī*)

using the central network of *ajnās* for a given *ṭab‘*. Our music professors had taught us that *ajnās* have characteristic melodic formulas that properly elicit a mode. These formulas are essential knowledge for a Tunisian musician versed in the *ṭubū‘*. We had practiced singing melodic paths in class. But students (including myself) were better at recognizing them – hearing these formulas and calling out the *jins* – than at improvising a seamless, solo-sung melody which characterized each *jins* and also the mode as a whole. To do the latter, students had to know the full *ajnās* network for each mode in the examination, the figurative melodic phrases that identified each *jins*, and weave it all together in some sort of aesthetic, ordered modal melody in front of a jury committee.

I entered the examination room and greeted two music professors from the Institute. They warmly greeted me in return and then motioned to the hat. I drew *ṭab‘ ramal al-māyah*...and sighed with sorrow. Out of the four modes we had studied that semester, this mode was the most extensive in terms of repertoire. The two music professors on the committee nodded and waited for my first song choice in the *ramal al-māyah* repertoire.

I sang through a song in the *dkhūl birāwil* rhythm with plenty of melodic and linguistic mistakes – admittedly, I had been memorizing the final lyrics in the hallway before the exam had started. “Can you sing other songs in the *ṭab‘* for us?” the professors asked. I sang parts of a song which opens the *nūba* in the *biṭayḥī* rhythm, and also the first lines of a song in the *khatm* rhythm.<sup>4</sup> One of the professors was visibly happy. “Good. That is definitely *ramal al-māyah*!” he said. “Now, please sing us a melody in the mode’s melodic path.” The moment had come. It was time to bring the character and specialties of this mode together in a connected, nuanced melodic line.

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix 1 for a description of the *nūba* suite form.

I started on the note A—even though the mode is fundamentally based on the note D—and first featured the notes B<sup>♯</sup> and c before settling back on the note G. I sang these notes again but within a characteristic melodic formula common to mḥayyar ‘irāq G (G-A-B<sup>♯</sup>-c): G...G c B<sup>♯</sup> B<sup>♯</sup>...A G. Then, I swapped the B<sup>♯</sup> with a B<sup>♭</sup>—a feature in ramal al-māyah—and focused on the ajnās mḥayyar sīkāh G (G-A-B<sup>♭</sup>-c) and mazmūm F (F-G-A-B<sup>♭</sup>-c). Now, it was time to descend to the fundamental jins on D, but not before a brief cadence on jins māyah C (C-D-E<sup>♯</sup>-F). I descended from F to C using the note E<sup>♯</sup>, and then to solidify the sound of al-māyah with a melodic formula, I leapt up to the note B<sup>♭</sup> and descended quickly, stepwise all the way back down to C. Next, it was time to perform the fundamental jins ramal al-māyah D (D-E<sup>♯</sup>-F-G). I sang from C to F, wavered briefly between the notes F and E<sup>♯</sup>, ascended to the A, and then leapt back to the F, concluding with F G F E<sup>♯</sup> D – a characteristic formula for ramal al-māyah D.

I was halfway finished. One of the excitements of ṭab‘ ramal al-māyah is in the melodic octave leap that occurs from D to d or from D to f. I next sang an octave leap, from D to d, followed by a known melodic formula highlighting jins ḥsīn d (d-e<sup>♯</sup>-f-g): d f e<sup>♯</sup> f d... I held the note d, before descending to the G, by way of the B<sup>♯</sup>. I again switched the B<sup>♯</sup> for the note B<sup>♭</sup> and settled again on the G, manifesting mḥayyar sīkāh G (G-A-B<sup>♭</sup>-c). A proper melodic path ends on the fundamental jins—in this case, jins ramal al-māyah (D-E<sup>♯</sup>-F-G)—and so, I utilized the same characteristic melodic formula that I had sung earlier for ramal al-māyah. I sang the notes F and E<sup>♯</sup>, ascended to A, leapt back to the F, and highlighted G before a final stepwise descent to D: F E<sup>♯</sup> F E<sup>♯</sup> F A...F G F E<sup>♯</sup> D. My performance of the melodic path was complete, and after a few questions on modal structure and nūba rhythms,

the exam was finished. “Great job. God give you health, Jared!” one of the committee members remarked with a wide smile.<sup>5</sup> I had passed.

### **The Melodic Paths**

In what follows, I explore the characteristic melodic-rhythmic phrases that constitute the contemporary performance practice of the Tunisian *ṭubū‘* demonstrated in the preceding anecdote. Tunisian music students learn how to listen to and manifest each Tunisian mode based upon these characteristic phrases. From the perspective of my Tunisian collaborators, these reoccurring phrases are a primary means of distinguishing the Tunisian *ṭubū‘* from other modal systems, such as the Mashriqī *maqāmāt*.

My first encounter with these melodic formulas of the *ṭubū‘* was as a student in the Higher Institute of Music at Sfax – a state-run music program, established in 1999. For each *ṭab‘* presented in class, professors taught students how to manifest that mode through a “melodic path” (Ar. *al-masār al-laḥnī*). In these paths, students sang short phrases based on each *jins* that was considered important to that mode. Subsequently, a network of *ajnās* emerged from these practice sessions. My professors in Sfax taught students to sing a mode’s network of *ajnās* in any order for the exams; but the more competent musicians become in the *ṭubū‘*, the more likely it is that they emphasize certain modal features in their renditions, such as where to begin in the scale, when to ascend and descend the scale, or where to place cadences.

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<sup>5</sup> The common Tunisian phrase *ya ‘tīka ṣaḥḥa* translates in English to “May God give you health.” But it is also a simple means of showing one’s general approval and support.

In listening to melodic paths across all of the traditional and popular Tunisian modes over the course of my fieldwork year, I came to realize that there were formulaic ways of singing most ajnās. My music instructors in the Institute confirmed this point throughout the Year One and Two ṭubū‘ classes. They taught students to recognize and produce these formulas in certain melodic and rhythmic ways in order to elicit the mode. This method was also the central way students were to identify one jins from another, even when other features—such as specific intonation or common neighboring tones (“accidentals” in Western music theory)—can play a considerable role. In that sense, a path’s “improvisation” – or *istikhbār* (when instrumental) and *irtijāl* (when sung) in Tunisian terminology – had points of prescription and fixity. Instructors went further than aural methods and provided sample melodic paths transcribed on Western staff notation. These sample paths were models for correctly manifesting a mode.

It is important to mention the pedagogical process that my ṭubū‘ professors followed during a typical two-hour class. Overall, they primarily focused on transmitting the repertoire to students and, secondarily, on learning theoretical structure with the aid of singing melodic paths. Students spent most of the class time learning and practicing selected songs in the repertoire for a given mode; and professors inserted corrections to their melodic lines or Arabic pronunciations throughout the session.<sup>6</sup> After an hour or an hour and a half of singing a mode’s repertoire, the characteristic features of that mode saturated the students’ ears and minds. At this point in the class, teachers discussed theory and improvisation.

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<sup>6</sup> Song texts are composed in an older form of Arabic – a higher, more poetic register than everyday Tunisian colloquial speech. Learning the “correct pronunciation” of a song for Arabic speakers is a part of learning the song itself.

My instructors often ended class by singing melodic paths or by discussing theory (e.g., naming the ajnās, assembling a scale, emphasizing modal features on certain note degrees). The paths resembled a pedagogical plenary, a summative exercise to draw together the main melodic features and ajnās of the mode *that students had already been singing* into constellation. The path was transcribed on a handout for the students. We sang these melodic paths in unison, jins by jins, using solfege syllables. It was clear that the small melodic units for each jins of the mode matched melodic units within our practiced repertoire. And this was the point of the exercise. Instructors and students named each of these melodic units in the melodic path as a jins, fitting melodic phrases to theoretical structure, and tethering the melodic formulations to the repertoire. As they sang melodic paths, instructors and students regularly commented on how a particular melodic line from a vocal piece we had just sung corresponded to a specific melodic formula in the path. There was direct correlation between melodic paths and repertoire. Specific melodic repetition was a way of apprehending the complex modal melodic phrases in the repertoire and presenting the entire system as “Tunisian.”

By singing melodic paths, students learn two important qualities of the Tunisian ṭubū‘: first, ajnās and scalar structure; and, second, characteristic melodic-rhythmic formulas attributed to these ajnās. The following transcription of a melodic path is of ṭab‘ ramal al-māyah—the mode I sang in the opening vignette for the Spring 2019 examinations. It is a facsimile of the classroom transcription we used in Year 2 ṭubū‘ studies to practice learning melodic paths in this mode.



A sample “melodic path” (*masār laḥnī*) of ṭab‘ ramal al-māyah (‘Alila 2018-2019). Year 2 Ṭubū‘ class. Higher Institute of Music, Sfax, Tunisia



A sense of melodic freedom emerges from the unmeasured staves and stem-less noteheads in this transcription. And perhaps that is one of the points of such a presentation. The fermatas (◌̣), however, provide points of pause which communicate that there is more structure than meets the eye. In actuality, these fermatas mostly act as cadential points to transition the path from one jins to another; and each cadence marks a melodic unit that propels the path forward in its purpose of fully manifesting ṭab‘ ramal al-māyah in all its structural fullness. With the fourteen fermatas used throughout this sample transcription, eleven of them conclude the presentation of a jins and three provide transitional melodic material.

I replicate this melodic path of ṭab‘ ramal al-māyah below but add metacommentary in boxes to reveal how the fermatas within this path stabilize the mode’s structure and its emergence through a network of ajnās. The boxed comments reveal the manifestation of a jins; and the double-boxes signal cadences in the mode’s fundamental jins. Professor ‘Alila did not include these metacommentary boxes in his classroom handout; but the boxed

material does synthesize the pedagogical discussions that the students had with ‘Alila around this melodic path.

A sample “melodic path” (*masār lahnī*) of ṭab‘ ramal al-māyah. Adapted from ‘Alila 2018-2019.

The image displays three staves of musical notation in treble clef, illustrating a melodic path. Each staff is annotated with tetrachord names and transitions.

- Staff 1:**
  - Opening ḥsīn A (A-B $\flat$ -c-d) motif to base G
  - mḥayyar sīkāh G-A-B $\flat$ -c
  - mazmūm F-G-A-B $\flat$ -c
- Staff 2:**
  - Transition from mazmūm F back to mḥayyar sīkāh G
  - māyah C-D-E $\flat$ -F
  - ramal al-māyah D-E $\flat$ -F-G
- Staff 3:**
  - Transition to note d in high octave
  - ḥsīn d (d-e $\flat$ -f-g)
  - mḥayyar ‘irāq G-A-B $\flat$ -c
  - mḥayyar sīkāh G-A-B $\flat$ -c
  - ramal al-māyah D-E $\flat$ -F-G

Thus, what first appears as a more free-flowing melodic path with intermittent fermatas is actually intensely structured point-by-point by a network of ajnās as well as transitional melodic material. Additionally, by annotating the names of these ajnās onto the melodic path, one can see that melodic phrases often exceed the notes of a jins. For example, jins māyah C (C-D-E $\flat$ -F) leaps to B $\flat$ , a note far above the tetrachord ending on F. Also, jins ramal al-māyah D (D-E $\flat$ -F-G) twice emphasizes the note A above its tetrachord as a critical move in its cadence. Both of these examples would be characteristic melodic-rhythmic

formulas for these ajnās, thus demonstrating that formulas can involve sonic features outside the typical theoretical structures of trichord, tetrachord, and pentachord.<sup>7</sup>

I want to draw further attention to the melodic phrasing for jins ramal al-māyah D. Both occurrences of this jins are remarkably alike. After a short play between the notes F and E<sup>♭</sup>, the melodic line rises to A and holds for a fermata. Then, the line leaps back to F and performs a descending, stepwise movement from G to the tonic D. In singing such melodic paths, students certainly learn about the main network of ajnās that expresses a mode; but more than this, they also learn how some of these ajnās manifest in typical melodic movement, such as with this cadential figure of jins ramal al-māyah D. The reoccurrence of these phrases is not coincidental but a crucial mark of Tunisian performance practice. These distinct melodic-rhythmic formulas – and a specific pedagogy of them – set the practice of the Tunisian modes apart from the Mashriqī maqāmāt and provide a dynamic and musical means for Tunisians to express social and cultural difference in the region.

### **Characteristic Melodic-Rhythmic Formulas**

Up until now, I have mostly used the word “phrase” to describe these melodic-rhythmic figures. This is a direct translation of the common Arabic word *jumla* (جُمْلَة, pl., جُمَل, *jumal*) that Tunisian and other Arab musicians use to describe a musical unit embedded within a larger song or instrumental piece. My collaborators used this word often to talk

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<sup>7</sup> Music theorist Abu Shumays calls these notes “baggage” in relation to a jins, in that they are *extra* sonic features that are important to manifesting a jins but are outside of a jins’ conventional tetrachordal structure (2013; cf. Abu Shumays and Farraj 2019:198). No doubt, ajnās shift their shape across the repertoire and sometimes manifest beyond their conventional structure. In the Tunisian context, many of these melodic-rhythmic clichés utilize notes that are outside of the conventional ajnās structures, or even extend across multiple ajnās (e.g., see the clichés given in this chapter for the modes of al-nawā and al-aṣbahān). But since these musical clichés are so important to performing and teaching the Tunisian modes, such extra notes are actually *not* extra as the meaning of “baggage” implies.

about bits of music; and in the most recent analysis of the *ṭubū‘*, the Tunisian scholar Zouari specifically uses “characteristic phrases” (Ar. *al-jumal al-mumayyiza*) to name these melodic-rhythmic figures that reoccur in performance practice (2006:42-3). But in more colloquial usage, the Arabic word *jumla* is a linguistic “phrase” or “sentence,” which, for music scholars, brings to mind broader conversations about the interrelationships of music and language. Helpfully, Tunisians use many other words to describe these musical figures, other than *jumla*; and these words give more insight into how Tunisian musicians use these figures in their creative practices.

Tunisian music pedagogues typically describe a characteristic melodic-rhythmic figure as a “formula” or a *ṣīgha* (Ar. *صيغة*; pl., *صيغ*, *ṣiyagh*). In Arabic, a *ṣīgha* is simply a form or shape. For example, when applied to various fields of knowledge, a *ṣīgha* can signify a grammatical “form,” a mathematical “formula,” or a “version” of a letter or announcement (Wehr 1979:620). I translate *ṣīgha* as “formula” due to how Tunisian musicians and pedagogues—fluent in Arabic and French—use the French word *formule* interchangeably with *ṣīgha* during transmission events with students and in scholarly writing. Melodic-rhythmic *ṣīgha*-s,<sup>8</sup> or “formulas,” are musical units that have characteristic melodic and rhythmic qualities. Musicians learn to express these formulas vocally and instrumentally in order to manifest a mode. Listeners apprehend these musical units again and again in the performance practice and come to hear them as characteristic. These actions of expressing and apprehending creative practices enable Tunisians to mobilize their modes for social and cultural meaning.

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<sup>8</sup> I adapt the Arabic singular word, *ṣīgha*, to an Anglicized plural spelling (with an “s”). This practice is common among scholars who write about Arab music in the English language. Thus, *ṣīgha*-s has the same meaning as *ṣiyagh*: both are plural forms of *ṣīgha*.

A “characteristic melodic-rhythmic formula” (Ar. *ṣīgha laḥniyya īqā‘iyya mumayyiza*) is distinguishable from other melodic material within the same *ṭab‘*. Melodic-rhythmic *ṣīgha*-s are formulaic in all aspects of its performance. There are specific intonations, intervallic relationships, or melodic and rhythmic motifs that help Tunisian participants elicit and apprehend these units. And with their network of *ṣīgha*-s, Tunisian musicians and listeners distinguish their modal music from other modal Mediterranean musics, especially the Mashriqī *maqāmāt*. In essence, these characteristic melodic-rhythmic formulas are the sonic building blocks for creating and maintaining a unique musical expression in Tunisia.

Another way Tunisian music pedagogues talk about these melodic formulations is with the Arabic word *khalīya* (خَلِيَّة; pl., خَلَايَا, *khalāyā*). Taken from biology as term of individuated structure, the word *khalīya* refers to a “cell” of an organism or even the “cell” of a beehive (Wehr 1979:301). A cell is the most fundamental building block of any living organism, an individuated thing that operates within a larger ecology and assemblage to form larger masses of living forms. It follows that a “characteristic melodic cell” (Ar. *khalīyat laḥniyya mumayyiza*) functions in a similar manner. A melodic cell is an individuated musical phrase with structure in its constitution but also in its existence alongside other noteworthy melodic cells. In its formulized nature, a melodic cell does the work of manifesting the persistent characteristic nature of a given mode.

That persistent nature is also a critical part of how these musical phrases effectively differentiate Tunisian modal practices from other regional practices. In the classroom, Tunisian instructors most often employ the French word *cliché* to describe these phrases. In its use in the English language, a “cliché” is an object that is stereotypical to the point of

overuse (OED). However, a Tunisian melodic-rhythmic cliché does not carry any negative connotations, as in this English usage. Rather, “cliché” links semantically to *ṣīgha*, *khalīya*, and *formule* to inscribe that structural and musical object in Tunisian performance practice which defines and manifests the individual modes and serves as a strategy of modal listening and interaction. Phrases become characteristic through reoccurrence, and in that sense, the musical units are like a “cliché.” To put it simply, without certain melodic-rhythmic formulas or cells, you cannot perform a Tunisian ṭab‘.

To summarize, when Tunisian musicians speak about modal musics, they use the words “cliché,” “cell” (Ar. *khalīya*), “formula” (Ar. *ṣīgha*; Fr. *formule*), and “phrase” (Ar. *jumla*) to name certain reoccurring figures in the practice of melodic modes that differentiate their practices from other regional modal systems. These figures populate the repertoire, and as students learn the repertoire, they ingest these figures. But Tunisian music pedagogues further isolate and transmit many of these figures through the creation of melodic paths. These exercises teach students to learn the most common network of ajnās for a mode, but forming melodic paths also emphasizes key musical and rhythmic phrases for these ajnās that are the foundational practices for eliciting a mode.

### **(Re)Arranging the Ṭubū‘ for Difference**

I now turn to the 13 traditional musical modes and transcribe several of these cliché figures for each one. In the following explication of these figures, I will interchangeably use the same linguistic designators that my Tunisian collaborators use: “cliché,” “cell” (Ar. *khalīya*), “formula” (Ar. *ṣīgha*; Fr. *formule*), and “phrase” (Ar. *jumla*).

Characteristic melodic-rhythmic clichés not only differentiate the Tunisian ṭubū‘ from the Mashriqī maqāmāt, but also one Tunisian mode from another. In order to illustrate this

differentiation in a compelling manner, in what follows, the ṭubū‘ are grouped by their fundamental note. This ordering will demonstrate the method of differentiation despite the obvious similarities that exist between the Tunisian modes, in terms of scalar arrangement (Ar. *tartīb*). For this alternate ordering of the modes, I follow Gharbi’s thesis (2013) and pedagogical method (2019b). Rather than present the ṭubū‘ conventionally through an ordering in the well-known colloquial Arabic poem (see Chapter 1), Gharbi began studying the ṭubū‘ in his graduate work according to modal likeness on the fundamental jins. This rearrangement emphasizes how similar some of the Tunisian modes are to one another and best sets up the practice of differentiation. In the Mashriq, musical modes are differentiated primarily by their fundamental note and corresponding base jins source. And while Tunisian musicians transmit this information to students today (see Chapter 1), it is not ultimately the best method for understanding modal differentiation.

For this arrangement, the thirteen modes are divided into three tonic-based “groups” (Ar. sing. *zumra*, pl. *zumar*) or “families” (Ar. sing. *‘ā’ila* [Tun. Ar. sing. *‘āyila*], pl. *‘ā’ilāt*).

<sup>9</sup> The three groups comprise eight of the thirteen modes. The other five modes do not share a tonic or (in the case of al-raṣd and al-nawā) the same notes in the fundamental jins. I arrange

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<sup>9</sup> I prefer to use “groups” in the English language rather than “families” to describe these modal groupings due to how music theorists of the Mashriqī maqām system have used “families” as a translation of the Arabic word *faṣā’il* (sing. *faṣīla*) when they refer to a group of modes based on the same base tetrachord (Marcus 1989a:377; Farraj and Abu Shumays 2019:268 but not inclusive of the Arabic term *faṣīla*). Tunisian musicians use *faṣā’il* in this way as well with two modes: al-dhīl and al-ḥsīn. In each of these two modes – as in the nine Mashriqī *faṣā’il* – there are modes that are called *farū’* (“derivatives,” sing. *far’*), meaning that they all share the same base jins but differ in adjoining ajnās and in practice. For example, the *farū’* of al-ḥsīn include ḥsīn nīrz, ḥsīn ṣabā, and ḥsīn ‘ajam. These modes are derivative modes of ḥsīn ‘aṣl, meaning that they share the same base tetrachord (D-E<sup>b</sup>-F-G) but differ in their practice. As this chapter will explore, the use of *‘āyila* (Tun. Ar. for a human “household”) and *zumra* (a “group,” often of people) is a distinct Tunisian conceptualization that groups modes based on the same tonic and a *semblance* of a base tetrachord.

these remaining five modes in a fourth group, ordered by their tonic note from the lowest note to the highest:

#### Arrangement of the Ṭubū‘ into Modal Families based on Tonic and Fundamental Jins


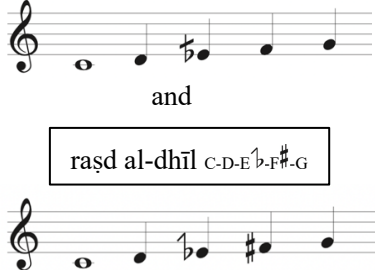

1. C-based group: al-dhīl, raṣd al-dhīl, and al-māyah.
2. D-based group: al-ḥsīn, ramal al-māyah, and al-‘irāq.
3. D-based group: al-iṣba‘īn and al-ramal.
4. Single modes of:
  - al-aṣbahān on GG
  - al-raṣd on C
  - al-nawā on D
  - al-sīkāh on E♯
  - al-mazmūm on F

As I present each of these “families” below, I first diagram the fundamental jins of each mode to show how the modes of that group share structure. Then, I reveal and discuss key melodic and rhythmic formulas for each mode to demonstrate how a Tunisian musician or listener might apprehend the mode despite the similarities in the fundamental jins. My objective in presenting these formulas is to show how each mode is configured in fixed musical material for the musician and listener. Thus, I attend to each of the thirteen modes systematically. Readers will not find an exhaustive taxonomy of formulas, as this information would require a lifetime of research involving a large array of North African collaborators that far exceed those referenced for this dissertation. Nonetheless, by the end of this chapter, I trust that readers will appreciate the degree to which this type of modal listening strategy enables Tunisians to differentiate their own musical practices from those in the East. Modal melodic clichés provide an interface for Tunisians to mobilize social and cultural meaning, which will be the topic of discussion in Part 2 of this dissertation.



**1. C-based modes: al-Dhīl, Raṣd al-Dhīl, and al-Māyah.** The following three modes are in the C-based ṭabū‘ group. For each mode, the fundamental note is C, and the base ajnās greatly resemble each other, as demonstrated in the following chart:

Figure 1. C-based modal group, related by the tonic C and fundamental jins.

<p>Ṭab‘ al-dhīl</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;">dhīl C-D-E<sup>♯</sup>-F-G</div> 	<p>Ṭab‘ raṣd al-dhīl</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;">dhīl C-D-E<sup>♭</sup>-F-G</div> <p style="text-align: center;">and</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;">raṣd al-dhīl C-D-E<sup>♭</sup>-F<sup>♯</sup>-G</div> 	<p>Ṭab‘ al-māyah</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;">māyah C-D-E<sup>♭</sup>-F</div> 
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More than sharing the fundamental note C, these three modes also share many other note degrees in the base ajnās, with the exception of the various E-intonations, lack of note G in jins al-māyah C, and the double base jins for ṭab‘ raṣd-al-dhīl. These exceptions certainly demonstrate difference between these three modes; but these differences do not categorically distinguish one mode from another. For example, the intonations of the E are quite diverse. The E<sup>♯</sup> of al-dhīl has a high intonation; and even if this jins is marked with an E<sup>♭</sup> in ṭab‘ raṣd al-dhīl, musicians know to play this note closer to E<sup>♯</sup> and not as marked. Jins māyah has the conventional E<sup>♭</sup>; and jins raṣd al-dhīl demonstrates the lowest of E scale degrees, marked as E<sup>♭</sup>. To remind the reader, the distance between each of these three E-intonations is approximately one comma (i.e., approximately 20 cents; see Appendix 2). But regardless of

intonation, and however important the nuance of intonation is to deliver a musical phrase, Tunisian musicians distinguish their modes primarily through reoccurring musical and rhythmic clichés – as I will demonstrate in this chapter. Thus, these different E-intonations do not prohibit the grouping of these modes by the base jins.

Moreover, the fact that ṭab‘ raṣd al-dhīl has two fundamental ajnās—one of which contains a note (i.e., F<sup>♯</sup>) not shared across this group—does not occlude this mode’s inclusion in the C-based group. As a reminder from the chapter one (see ṭab‘ raṣd al-dhīl), many Tunisian musicians consider jins dhīl C as the primary fundamental jins in the mode, a stance that encourages comparison with ṭab‘ al-dhīl and ṭab‘ al-māyah.

In the following discussion, I look at each of the three C-based modes to specify how Tunisians differentiate the mode through characteristic melodic-rhythmic formulas. These clichés perhaps best elicit the mode. Although there are many other clichés that musicians can play to elicit each mode, I present the ones that are perhaps well-known to the Tunisian participants with whom I studied, as well as ones that have a history of documentation.

### **Ṭab‘ al-Dhīl**

Ṭab‘ al-dhīl includes many formulaic phrases that are instantly recognizable to Tunisian musicians and listeners familiar with the ṭubū‘. The higher intonation of the note E<sup>♯</sup>—and also B<sup>♯</sup> or BB<sup>♯</sup> when jins dhīl is transposed to G and GG, respectively—is distinct in this mode. However, for Tunisian listeners, intonation is subsidiary to melodic formulation when differentiating one mode from the next. The following melodic-rhythmic clichés, which occur as cadences and sourced from the nūba repertoire in TMH (vol. 3) and my classroom notes, manifest the mode of al-dhīl:

The image contains four musical examples in 2/4 time, each on a single staff in treble clef. Ex. 1a shows a melody starting on G4, moving to A4, B4, and then descending to C4, with a dotted quarter note on D4 above C4. Ex. 1b shows a similar pattern but descending from D4 to C4. Ex. 2a shows a more ornate descent with sixteenth notes, starting on G4 and ending on C4. Ex. 2b shows a similar ornate descent, but the final note before C4 is E4 with a flat (E♭), which is circled in red.

Examples 1 and 2 follow particular patterns common in al-dhīl. The first example (1a and 1b) descends from the note G to C but does so by skipping the note F – a feature that leads many Tunisian music theorists to classify ṭab‘ al-dhīl as a pentatonically-inflected mode (see Appendix 3). The descent also sustains a hold on the notes E♯, D, and BB♯ on the way to the tonic C. Quick sixteenth notes ornament this downward movement and heighten the inevitable arrival on C. In example 1a, that arrival is from the D above the tonic; and in example 1b, that arrival is from the BB♯ below the tonic. Both melodic movements, in 1a and 1b, demonstrate a crucial play of notes around the tonic before a final rest on C. Listeners hear the mode of al-dhīl in such expected movement.

Musicians stylize this cadence in many ways. Examples 2a and 2b above demonstrate how musicians ornament a fall to the fundamental C by gesturing with the E♯ or the E♭ (circled in 2b). The latter E♭ ornamental note is a distinct melodic feature in a derivative mode of al-dhīl called *mujannab(āt) al-dhīl* (see ṭab‘ al-dhīl in chapter 1). The scale of *mujannab al-dhīl* highlights the note E♭ alongside ajnās al-isba‘ in G (G-A♭-B♭-c) and GG

(GG-AA<sup>b</sup>-BB<sup>b</sup>-C). The tonic remains on C. Even when the melodic line does not reference either ajnās al-isba‘in, the presence of the E<sup>b</sup> indexes this derivative mode and distinctly recalls al-dhīl for the listener.

Music theorists have documented these same al-dhīl formulaic cadences since the Tunisian modes were first transcribed on Western staff notation. D’Erlanger writes the following cadence below for two of his sample melodies in al-dhīl:<sup>10</sup>

Final cadence of “III. Istihlālu-dh-Dhīl” [*sic*] (1949: Ch. 16, Fig. 150), and “IV. Mujunnabu-dh-Dhīl” [*sic*]. (1949: Ch. 16, Fig. 151)



Melodically, this cadence is nearly identical to my first Example 1a above (mm. 2-3). The melodic formula outlines a steady but punctuated descent to C. Two of the notes of longer duration (E<sup>b</sup>-D-C) are ornamented by lower neighboring tones played quickly as sixteenth notes. The quick playing of C before D sequences the quick playing of BB<sup>b</sup> before the final C note.

In “Dhīl,” D’Erlanger used the same cadential phrase twice, except the E<sup>b</sup> is transcribed as an E<sup>b</sup> (see 1949: Ch. 16, Fig. 148, mm. 8-9 and 49-50).<sup>11</sup> Interestingly, the

<sup>10</sup> As explained in the previous chapter under ṭab‘ al-dhīl, D’Erlanger divided al-dhīl into three modes he called *dhīl*, *istihlāl al-dhīl*, and *mujannab al-dhīl*—listed in this footnote by modern transliteration practices.

<sup>11</sup> The second occurrence of this cadential cliché is mistakenly transcribed as E<sup>b</sup>-C-D-GG<sup>b</sup>-A. D’Erlanger clearly supports C as the tonic in al-dhīl in his scalar diagram on the same page. So, it is unlikely that he would purposeful end the sample melody for al-dhīl on the note A. The correct transcription should be E<sup>b</sup>-C-D-BB<sup>b</sup>.

note E<sup>̄</sup> occurs nowhere else in his melodic sample except within this cadence. In other words, whether this cadential formula used an E<sup>̄</sup> or E<sup>̂</sup>, it was characteristic of al-dhīl and its derivatives for D'Erlanger.

Writing decades after D'Erlanger, Mahmoud Guettat includes a few formulaic phrases of al-dhīl in his treatment of North African Andalusī music. In this section, Guettat confirms the importance of a “characteristic melodic formula” to elicit a North African ṭab‘ (1980:282). Guettat transcribes the following for the Tunisian mode of al-dhīl:

Reproduced from Guettat 1980:284<sup>12</sup> (reprinted in Guettat 2000:387-8).



The similarities between Guettat and D'Erlanger are striking. Guettat's formula first demonstrates the omission of the note F, as the melody in the first measure leaps between the notes E<sup>̄</sup> and G. The cadential descent goes to C by way of the more sustained notes of E<sup>̄</sup> and D. Lower neighboring tones complement this movement. As D'Erlanger, Guettat transcribes the E with a conventional half-flat sign rather than a double-slash flat sign. In the

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C, which follows the representation of this cliché throughout my chapter. An extra staff line was mistakenly inserted on the final two notes of D'Erlanger's cadence, which lowered the last two notes by an interval of a third.

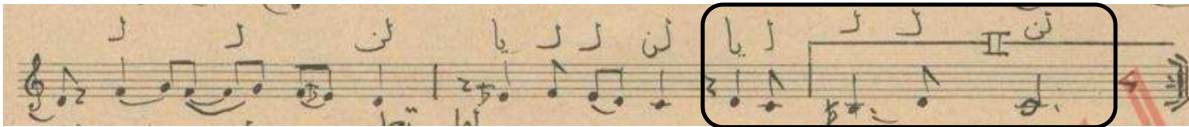
<sup>12</sup> This first two-measure al-dhīl musical text is extracted from a staff which includes other modal melodic formulas. The staff has a treble clef sign and no key signature.

second stave above (in m. 2), Guettat indicates another formulaic cadence for al-dhīl. In this instance, the unit begins on the lowest note of the scale, GG, includes an upper neighboring tone on A, and then leaps above the fundamental to D before concluding on C. Tunisian musicians and listeners might also expect an E<sup>♯</sup> or E<sup>b</sup> flourish before that D and final on C (see my Examples 2a and 2b above).

The nūba repertoire, represented in the *Tunisian Musical Heritage (TMH)* volumes, yields other instances of this same melodic-rhythmic formulation. The two song examples below are well-known to Tunisians; and during my fieldwork at the Institute, students learned these songs in the Year Two ṭubū‘ class:

- A. Excerpts from *Antum fī al-dunyā ghāyit murādī* [You are my utmost love in this earthly world], the sixth song in the khafif rhythm. Nūbat al-dhīl. (*TMH*, vol. 3)

No page number given. Stave 3 of the song.



No page number given. Stave 7 of the song.



B. *Khamrat al-ḥubb askaratnī* [The wine of love intoxicated me], the first song in the barwil rhythm. Nūbat al-dhīl. (*TMH*, vol. 3)



The two boxed melodic units in the *Antum fī al-dunyā* song excerpts highlight the now familiar cadential formula of al-dhīl. Each one steadily descends to the tonic note C but with punctuations from quickly-played neighboring tones to heighten the cadence’s dramatic finish. The melodic unit in the first box arrives on C from the D above, whereas the second box arrives on C from the BB♭ below. Additionally, the melodic unit in the second box demonstrates that conventional al-dhīl leap from D to G to E♭ - a melodic movement that omits the note F. As a second song example, I give the song *Khamrat al-ḥubb* in full to show a cadential formula that uses the E♭. Just before a final rest on C, the notes BB♭ and D provide ornamental play around the tonic.

### Ṭab‘ Raṣd al-Dhīl

Ṭab‘ raṣd al-dhīl is unique among all of the Tunisian ṭubū‘, as discussed in the previous chapter, because it is the only mode that features two fundamental ajnās based on the same tonic note. This is a structural feature of the mode that is not found in the Mashriqī modal system. Despite the fact that there is some disagreement among Tunisians about which

one of these two ajnās is most central to the mode, the argument for jins dhīl C (notated here as C-D-E $\flat$ -F-G) over jins raṣd al-dhīl C (notated here as C-D-E $\flat$ -F $\sharp$ -G) is strong. Most of the repertoire features jins dhīl C in its melodic movements (Gharbi 2019b). Given this, ṭab‘ raṣd al-dhīl is included here in the C-based modal group with al-dhīl and al-māyah, as its fundamental jins of C-D-E $\flat$ -F-G is essentially identical to their fundamental ajnās, in terms of note degrees.

Characteristic melodic-rhythmic formulas differentiate these C-based modes. But, for ṭab‘ raṣd al-dhīl, perhaps the most conspicuous formulation is in the combination of both of the fundamental ajnās types within the same melodic line. I will give two examples from the repertoire of how these ajnās types combine to manifest the mode. But before I do this, since not all of the raṣd al-dhīl repertoire includes this combination, I begin with a rendition of the melodic paths for each jins type, as Kamal Gharbi performed them for me (2019b), to demonstrate how interrelated these two ajnās are to one another, in terms of melodic movement:

Jins dhīl C (C-D-E $\flat$ -F-G)

Jins raṣd al-dhīl C (C-D-E $\flat$ -F $\sharp$ -G)

With the exception of the note F $\sharp$  in jins raṣd al-dhīl C, the melodic paths of the two fundamental ajnās are equivalent in Gharbi’s melodic path. I point out a few of the general



characteristics of his modal path: the beginning of the path features melodic skips C-E $\flat$ -G; the note G is emphatic in the first two measures of both paths; m. 2 of both paths feature a leap from G to E $\flat$ ; the note E $\flat$  is emphatic in m. 3; and each note in the five-note jins appears systematically in the four-measure melodic paths. For the habituated listener, the wide intervallic distance between the notes F $\sharp$  and E $\flat$  in m. 3 (within jins ra $\mathring{s}$ d al-dh $\bar{i}$ l C) is distinctly heard. But other than this last point, the melodic paths for both ajn $\bar{a}$ s follow the same melodic movement; and musicians can elicit  $\mathring{t}$ ab' ra $\mathring{s}$ d al-dh $\bar{i}$ l through either jins.

It is the combination of the two ajn $\bar{a}$ s, however, that truly marks  $\mathring{t}$ ab' ra $\mathring{s}$ d al-dh $\bar{i}$ l as distinct from the other C-based Tunisian modes. The hearing of a melodic line which alternates the F and F $\sharp$  notes—as well as the accompanying intonational differences with the E $\flat$  in this alternating movement—is a formulation in itself that elicits the mode. For example, the well-known Tunisian song *Āh 'alā mā fāt* features both fundamental ajn $\bar{a}$ s in the first three measures of its beginning melodic line, as shown in my transcription below:

Excerpt from *Āh 'alā mā fāt*, in the bi $\mathring{t}$ āy $\bar{h}$ i rhythm. Transcribed from handouts in Year One  $\mathring{t}$ ubū' class. Higher Institute of Music, Sfax (2018-2019).

Lyrics: *Āh 'alā mā fāt* [Ah, for what happened]

āh 'a-lā — mā fā - t mā fā - - - t

Some ra $\mathring{s}$ d al-dh $\bar{i}$ l features initially stand out, such as the sustained presence of the G in m. 1 or the stepwise movement in m. 2. Both of these features display the first type of ra $\mathring{s}$ d al-dh $\bar{i}$ l

(i.e., jins dhīl C). However, the note B $\flat$  at the end of m. 2 begins an extended sixteenth-note descent to the tonic note C, featuring the second type of raṣd al-dhīl (i.e., jins raṣd al-dhīl C), which includes the note F $\sharp$ . Thus, in the beginning of the song, the listener hears the combined movement of both fundamental ajnās that elicit the mode of raṣd al-dhīl.

The following example is from the *TMH* nūba repertoire and exhibits the same combination of both fundamental ajnās in the melodic movement:

Beginning excerpt from *Ḥalaftu yamīnan lā uḥibbu siwākumu*, the opening song (*al-abyāt*) in the biṭāyḥī rhythm. Nūbat raṣd al-dhīl (*TMH*, vol. 7, pg. 56)

Lyrics:

(A) *Ḥalaftu yamīnan lā uḥibbu siwākumu* [I took an oath not to love another like you]

(B) *wa-lā shāqanī illā nasīmu hawākumu...āh* [Nor for another to arouse me except the breeze of your love...ah]

The song *Ḥalaftu yamīnan* begins with one single line of Arabic poetry called a “bayt,” which is divided into two hemistiches that I have labeled (A) and (B). The melodic movement in the first hemistich (A) begins on the note E $\flat$  and develops with the notes of jins dhīl C (C-D-E $\flat$ -F-G). The final ornamented and stepwise descent of (A) in m. 4-5 – from the featured note G to the tonic C – illustrates a cadence in jins dhīl C. The second hemistich (B)

begins on the note G in m. 5 and, after a brief rise, returns to G and utilizes the notes of the second fundamental jins raṣd al-dhīl C (C-D-E<sup>♭</sup>-F<sup>♯</sup>-G).<sup>13</sup> In a series of three descents to the tonic, the melodic movement confirms and reaffirms the structure of jins raṣd al-dhīl C throughout the remainder of (B), until the cadence in m. 9. In summary, the first bayt of the song presents a melodic combination of both fundamental ajnās in ṭab‘ raṣd al-dhīl. It is characteristic of the mode and serves to elicit the mode immediately for participants. It is true that since the nūba opens with instrumental pieces, musicians have already elicited the mode for participants (see Appendix 1 on the order of pieces in the Tunisian nūba); but this song is the entrance of the sung repertoire and is an important place to re-establish the mode’s musical characteristics.<sup>14</sup>

### **Ṭab‘ al-Māyah**

Ṭab‘ al-māyah is the third member of the C-based modal group, established by the resemblance of its fundamental tetrachord, jins māyah (C-D-E<sup>♭</sup>-F), to those of al-dhīl and raṣd al-dhīl. As with the previous two modes, characteristic melodic-rhythmic formulas establish how musicians and listeners differentiate al-māyah from other modes. In my transcription below, I illustrate two such formulas that are common in the repertoires I studied from the TMH (vol. 8) and at the Institute in Sfax:

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<sup>13</sup> The note F<sup>♯</sup> is first transcribed in m. 5, just after the start of (B) but serves to anticipate the pivotal note G and jins mḥayyar ‘irāq G (G-A-B<sup>♭</sup>-c) at the beginning of m. 6. The first true F<sup>♯</sup> in jins raṣd al-dhīl C occurs after this movement in the second half of m. 6.

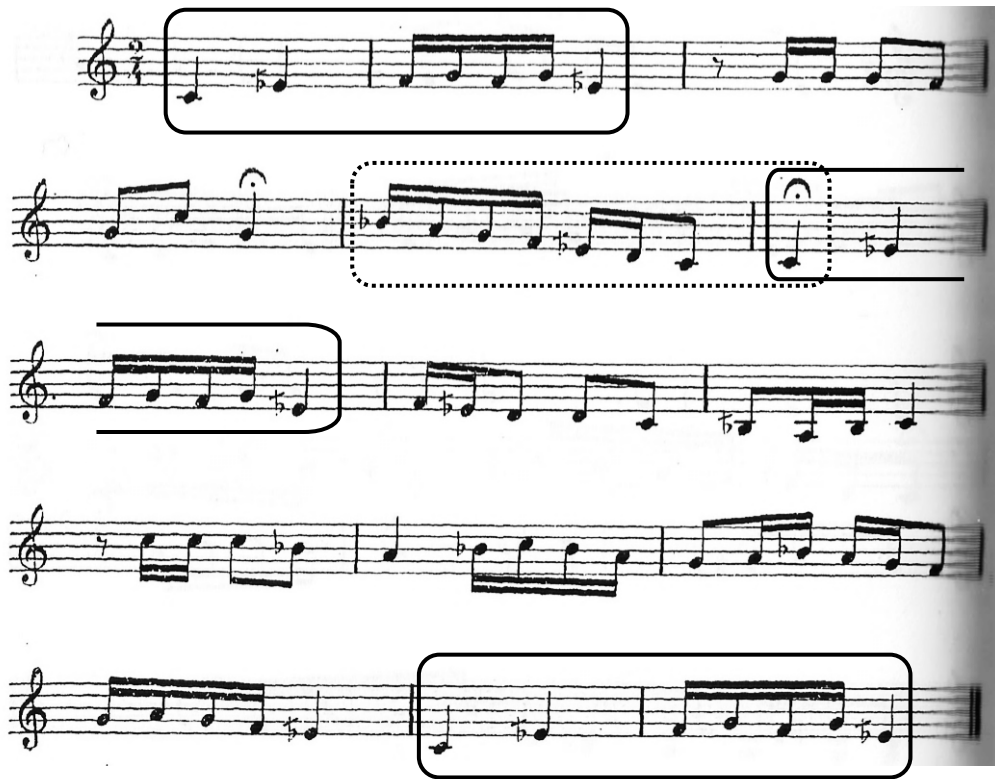
<sup>14</sup> See Appendix 1 for information on the structure of the nūba suite form in Tunisia.



Both of these examples feature notes outside of jins māyah C (C-D-E♭-F). Example 1 emphasizes the note E♭ on an arrival from the tonic note C and after a flourish of F-G notes. Musicians often play this flourish quickly as marked with sixteenth notes. Example 2 combines jins māyah C with jins mḥayyar sīkāh G (G-A-B♭-c). From the beginning on G, the melodic line leaps to the B♭ and descend stepwise quickly, through both ajnās to the tonic C.

Both of these clichés are found throughout the repertoire, and they immediately elicit al-māyah for Tunisian listeners. D’Erlanger was the first to transcribe these clichés in his al-māyah melodic sample in *La Musique Arabe* (vol. 5). I give his full sample below to demonstrate how integral these two melodic-rhythmic formulas were for musicians three-quarters of a century ago. D’Erlanger transcribes the first example three times in the sample (mm. 1-2, 6-7, 14-15) and the second example once (mm. 5-6). Taken together, these two formulas comprise half of the melodic material in D’Erlanger’s transcription for al-māyah. Also, D’Erlanger’s transcription is remarkably analogous to the way Tunisians perform and transmit these clichés today.

“XXIV. Māyah” in D’Erlanger 1949: 5:16, Fig. 171.



These two al-māyah clichés are also preserved in mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century transcriptions from the *TMH* volumes. The following songs taken from these volumes demonstrate several instances of both formulas but are particularly demonstrative of the second formula which descends from the B $\flat$  to the tonic C by sixteenth notes. In this figure below, I present three excerpts from three different songs. The first song is in the nūba of al-māyah; but the second and third song examples are from two different modes: al-ḥsīn and ramal al-māyah. Melodic-rhythmic clichés exist to elicit a particular mode. But in many cases, modes are interrelated. When jins māyah C manifests in modes other than al-māyah, Tunisians expect the same type of melodic-rhythmic formulas. Since the modes of al-ḥsīn and ramal al-māyah utilize jins māyah C in their network of ajnās, it is insightful to see how al-māyah’s clichés operate in

different modes of the repertoire. In fact, the three song extracts below clearly establish how a certain formulaic hearing of al-māyah pervades this repertoire.

- A. Beginning excerpt from *Wa la-rubba laylin tāha fīh najmuhu* [For many a night the stars wandered about], the opening song (*al-abyāt*) in the biṭāyḥī rhythm. Nūbat al-māyah (*TMH*, vol. 8, pg. 116. Staves 6-7)



- B. Beginning excerpt from *Qad bashsharat bi-quḍūmikum riḥu al-ṣabā* [The east wind forecast your arrival], the opening song (*al-abyāt*) in the biṭāyḥī rhythm. Nūbat al-ḥsīn. (*TMH*, vol. 5, pg. 62. Staves 6-9)



- C. Beginning excerpt from *Aṣfarat shamsu-l-‘ashiya* [The evening sun turned yellow], the third song in the biṭāyḥī rhythm. Nūbat ramal al-māyah. (*TMH*, vol. 6, pg. 42)





The first boxed unit in example A above features the cliché that emphasizes the note E<sup>♯</sup> (from C) in tandem with the F-G flourishes. All of the other four boxed units above provide instances of the second cliché – al-māyah’s stepwise descent from B<sup>♭</sup> to C. I find this cascading descent to be a particularly salient formula that elicits al-māyah throughout the ṭubū‘ repertoire. The songs of excerpts B, *Qad bashsharat*, and C, *Aṣfarat shams*, are beloved Tunisian pieces, both of which begin the first sung section in nūbat al-ḥsīn and nūbat ramal al-māyah. The descending, sixteenth-note formula is clearly identified both by its melodic quality and rhythmic character. The formula most often begins on the note G before leaping to the B<sup>♭</sup>; but other formulations are possible, such as starting from the note D (in jins ḥsīn D) before leaping upwards to the B<sup>♭</sup> (see second boxed unit in *Qad bashsharat*).

To summarize, the three C-based modes of al-dhīl, raṣd al-dhīl, and al-māyah appear remarkably similar in terms of their fundamental jins spelling with a tonic on C, despite the intonational differences that occur with the note E and also the use of the F in ṭab‘ raṣd al-dhīl. Grouping modes by this method prompts the question: how then are the Tunisian modes differentiated, if not solely by theoretical structure of intonation? As explained above, each mode expresses characteristic melodic-rhythmic phrases; and as these phrases reoccur in performance practice, they have become cliché and formulaic for Tunisians to the extent that Tunisian musicians listen to the modes through these phrases to apprehend and perform modes. This listening strategy is the primary way that Tunisian musicians and listeners distinguish one ṭab‘ from another, and also the way they differentiate the ṭubū‘ from the Mashriqī maqāmāt.<sup>15</sup>




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<sup>15</sup> Readers who are familiar with the maqāmāt may disagree with this statement in light of the first cliché I presented for al-māyah. This cliché (i.e., emphasis on E<sup>♯</sup> from the tonic C, and a flourish on F-G) could

**2. D-based modes: al-Ḥsīn, Ramal al-Māyah, and al-‘Irāq.** Based on the note structures of their fundamental ajnās, five of the thirteen Tunisian ṭabū‘ fall into one of two D-based modal groups.<sup>16</sup> One group coheres around a half-flat second scale degree in the fundamental jins and includes the modes of al-ḥsīn, ramal al-māyah, and al-‘irāq. Another group assembles around some sort of augmented second interval, i.e., a wide intervallic distance, between the second and third scale degrees of the fundamental jins. This group includes the modes of al-iṣba‘īn and al-ramal.

The D-based modal group of al-ḥsīn, ramal al-māyah, and al-‘irāq are gathered below, based on their fundamental ajnās:

Figure 2. D-based modal group, related by the tonic D and fundamental jins.

<p>Ṭab‘ al-ḥsīn</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;">ḥsīn D-E<math>\flat</math>-F-G</div> 	<p>Ṭab‘ ramal al-māyah</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;">ramal al-māyah D-E<math>\flat</math>-F-G</div> 	<p>Ṭab‘ al-‘irāq</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;">‘irāq D-E<math>\flat</math>-F-G</div> 
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arguably be a phrase of maqām al-rāst. Moreover, the base jins of al-rāst (C-D-E $\flat$ -F) is the same spelling as al-māyah’s (C-D-E $\flat$ -F), and the intonation of the rāst E $\flat$  in practice is similar to that of al-māyah – even when considering regional differences. My Tunisian collaborators did not comment on the relationship of ṭab‘ al-māyah to maqām al-rāst, but the evidence demonstrates some affinity. However, when heard alongside the other clichés in the repertoire, ṭab‘ al-māyah has difference and, ultimately, this uniqueness is how Tunisian musicians perceive and transmit this mode.

<sup>16</sup> Perhaps since D is an open string on the lute instrument, it is not surprising that several musical modes would have this as their fundamental note.



It is clear that these ajnās share many of the same notes (i.e., D, F, G), and that all three modes feature the note D as the tonic. The only explicit transcriptional difference between the fundamental ajnās is the intonation of the second scale degree. In al-ḥsīn and ramal al-māyah the note E is marked with a conventional half-flat sign, and in al-‘irāq with a double-slash flat sign, a small but perceptible intonational difference (Gharbi 2019b; see Appendix 2).<sup>17</sup> Although there is intonational variance between the two placements of E within this D-based modal group, Tunisian musicians and listeners do not tend to differentiate these three modes based on the E-intonation however noticeable it is.<sup>18</sup> Further, the E<sup>♯</sup> in ṭab‘ al-‘irāq is sometimes marked as an E<sup>♭</sup>—as it is in the *TMH* (vol. 4). In that case, transcriptions of these three fundamental ajnās would show no variation between the note spellings of the fundamental ajnās.

Musicians and listeners familiar with the Tunisian ṭubū‘ have learned to distinguish these modes based not on intervallic relationships within the jins, nor on intonation, but through characteristic melodic-rhythmic formulas. The case of al-ḥsīn, ramal al-māyah, and al-‘irāq illustrates this primary point, as the fundamental ajnās are nearly identical. The following section will introduce a few formulas from each of these D-based modes to demonstrate modal difference.

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<sup>17</sup> See Appendix 2 for more information on Tunisian practices of intonation.

<sup>18</sup> Some Tunisian musicians and pedagogues do not use Mahdi’s scaled intonation from his 1966 study (see footnote 8), nor do they employ his system as a standard for all of their transcriptions, despite its archival presence in *TMH*. During fieldwork, my collaborators tended to teach intonation using other language at the Institute. For example, to raise the E sufficiently for jins ‘irāq D, they most often said “presque bécarre” (almost natural) to conceptualize the relative distance of a *higher* double-slash flat sign (♭) from a conventional half-flat sign (♭).

## Ṭab‘ al-Ḥsīn

Ṭab‘ al-ḥsīn has a wide-ranging repertoire that is based on ḥsīn aṣl (“the root (of)/foundational/authentic ḥsīn”) and includes three al-ḥsīn derivative modes: ḥsīn nīrz, ḥsīn ‘ajam, and ḥsīn ṣabā. The base jins ḥsīn D (D-E<sup>♭</sup>-F-G) is common to all forms of al-ḥsīn; so, I will analyze a few melodic-rhythmic formulas that occur in this jins. The transcriptions below demonstrate several such reoccurring formulas in al-ḥsīn, as I documented them in sample melodic paths (e.g., Gharbi 2019b) or at the Institute in transmission events during ṭabū‘ class:

The image shows three musical formulas in 4/4 time, written in treble clef. Formula 1 is a single line of music starting on D4, moving stepwise up to F4 and then down to D4. Formula 2a starts on C4, moves up to D4, E4, F4, and then down to D4. Formula 2b starts on G4, moves down to F4, E4, D4, and then up to G4. All formulas end with a final rest on the tonic D4.

The first formula (1) is a standard presentation of jins ḥsīn D, occurring within or at the end of a melodic path for this mode. The note F is clearly a melodic priority in this formula. But the melody highlights each note of the four-note jins in a mostly stepwise motion ascending and descending. The second cliché (2a, 2b) is a conventional al-ḥsīn cadence. Type (2a) follows a stepwise motion but begins on the note C as a precursor to the final rest on the tonic D. The use of the note C at the beginning of an al-ḥsīn cadence often comes after a melodic line has just featured jins māyah C (C-D-E<sup>♭</sup>-F), which is an important jins in the al-ḥsīn network. Type (2b) begins on the upper jins note G – rather than on C below – and

descends stylistically to the tonic D. Both cadential types (2a) and (2b) manifest a common sixteenth note al-ḥsīn turn (i.e., F-G-F-E<sup>♭</sup>) at the end of the phrase before resting on D. Notably in type (2b), the melodic line sequentially falls from A to E<sup>♭</sup>, and then G to D, before that familiar turn of sixteenth notes leads to the tonic.

In *La Musique Arabe* (vol. 5), D’Erlanger transcribes the same sixteenth note turn (i.e., F-G-F-E<sup>♭</sup>) multiple times for cadences in jins ḥsīn D.<sup>19</sup> But he also gives an alternative cadential formula for the same jins, as notated below:

Melodic formula of al-ḥsīn, as transcribed by D’Erlanger (1949) in “VII. (Ḥsīn) Nīriz” [*sic*] (Fig. 154, mm. 5 and 19) and “IX. Ḥsīn Aṣl” (Fig. 156, mm. 12 and 15-16)



This rendition of a jins ḥsīn D cadence is not too far from the previous turn (i.e., F-G-F-E<sup>♭</sup>). Instead of a melodic turn on F before descending to D, this unit begins on the note A and descends stepwise to a final rest on D. Although this descending formula appears in present-day repertoire, it occurs less than the F-G-F-E<sup>♭</sup>-D melodic turn. Perhaps this is because the A-D stepwise descent is often folded into the A-E<sup>♭</sup> G-D sequence mentioned previously. But

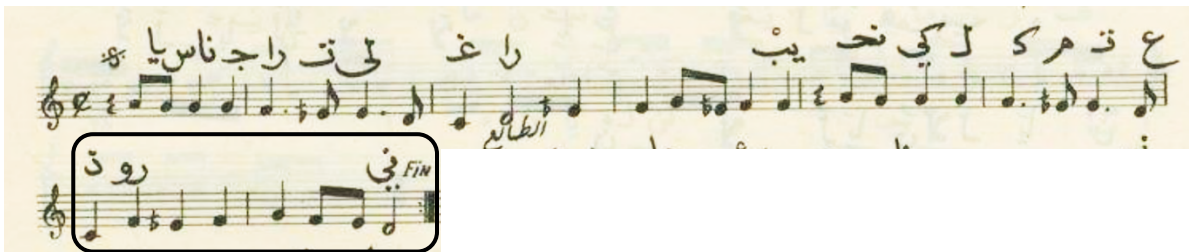
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<sup>19</sup> Cf. melodic samples for ḥsīn al-aṣl (Fig. 156, mm. 6 and 14-15) and ḥsīn ‘ushayrān (Fig. 158, mm. 3 and 12) in vol. 5 (D’Erlanger 1949: Ch. 16). Ḥsīn ‘ushayrān is not transmitted in Tunisia today. D’Erlanger documents this mode as a scale from the low AA (Ar. ‘*ushayrān*) to higher e<sup>♭</sup>, which includes a series of three conjunct ajnās sharing the notes D or A (i.e., a bottom tetrachord of AA-BB<sup>♭</sup>-C-D, a middle pentachord of D-E<sup>♭</sup>-F-G-A, and a top tetrachord of A-B<sup>♭</sup>-c-d; see 1949: Ch. 16, Fig. 158). The F-G-F-E<sup>♭</sup> melodic turn occurs twice in the middle jins; and both times, the turn concludes on the note D for a brief cadential pause. So, despite the fact that Tunisians today do not practice D’Erlanger’s ḥsīn ‘ushayrān, his use of formulaic al-ḥsīn phrases demonstrates that he considered this derivative a member of the al-ḥsīn modes.

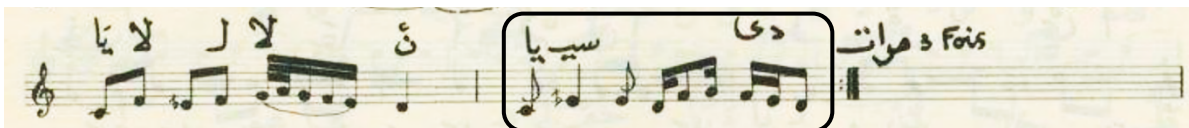
I cite D’Erlanger’s A-D cadential feature in part due to how he also uses this same cliché for cadences in a different mode: ramal al-māyah. If melodic-rhythmic clichés differentiate between modes, then the sharing of clichés between al-ḥsīn and ramal al-māyah is problematic for participants. I will return to this issue of the shared cliché in the next section on ramal al-māyah.

Three excerpts in the following figure extract a few of cadential moments of jins ḥsīn D, as they occur within larger melodic movements in songs:

- A. Excerpt from *Yā nās jarat lī gharāyib* [O people, strange things have befallen me], the first song in the barwil rhythm. Nūbat al-ḥsīn. (*TMH*, vol. 5, pg. 70)



- B. Excerpt from *Badā bi-qaddin ahyafīn* [It began with (his) slender physique], the tenth song in the barwil rhythm. Nūbat al-ḥsīn. (*TMH*, vol. 5, pg. 74)



- C. Excerpt from *Qad bashsharat bi-quḍūmikum rīḥu al-ṣabā* [The east wind forecast your arrival], the opening song (*al-abyāt*) in the *biṭāyḥī* rhythm. *Nūbat al-ḥsīn*. (*TMH*, vol. 5, pg. 62. Staves 6-10)

The image shows a musical score with five staves. The top staff is labeled 'الابيات' (Al-abyāt) and contains the lyrics 'رَأَيْتُمْ دُقَّ' (Ra'aytum duqqa). The second staff has 'رَبِّكُمْ مِرْدُوقٌ يَبِيتُ' (Rabbikum mirduququn yabitu) and 'تَلَصَّصُصُ' (Talaṣṣaṣṣu). The third staff has 'رَبِّكُمْ يَوْمَ يَأْمُ' (Rabbikum yawma ya'mu) and 'أَبَا حَزْمٍ وَمَوْ' (Abā ḥazmim wa muw). The fourth staff has 'أَبَا حَزْمٍ وَمَوْ' (Abā ḥazmim wa muw) and 'أَبَا حَزْمٍ وَمَوْ' (Abā ḥazmim wa muw). The fifth staff is labeled 'arighah 1' and 'الفارغة الأولى' (Al-fārġa al-awwalī). Several melodic units are boxed with black lines: a unit on the first staff, a unit on the second staff, a unit on the third staff, and a unit on the fourth staff.

All but one of the boxed units in these excerpts manifest the *al-ḥsīn* F-G-F-E♭-D cadential turn discussed earlier. But these turns occur in various rhythmic configurations. Excerpts A and B indicate how the note C (within *jins māyah C*) is a reoccurring starting point for a melodic cadence formulated in *jins ḥsīn D*. In these two cells, the melodic line rises from the C to either F or E♭, and then descends by a step before marking the *al-ḥsīn* formulated cadential turn. In excerpt C, the first boxed unit features the F-G-F-E♭ turn twice in the melodic line before a brief cadential stop on D. The second and third boxed units in the same excerpt manifest the formulaic melodic falls: first, from A to E♭, and then from G to D. In particular, the third unit concludes the first sung Arabic line of poetry (*Ar. bayt*) with an elongated and stylistic cadence in *jins ḥsīn D*. In quick melodic bursts, the note A characteristically falls to E♭, the G to D, and the familiar turn on F eventually leads stepwise

down to the tonic D. At this point, the instrumental ensemble plays the “first interlude” (Ar. *al-fāriḡha al-ūlā*).

These cadential formulas of al-ḡsīn are intensely common throughout the repertoire and in contemporary renditions of a melodic path. Tunisian musicians and listeners familiar with the ṡubū‘ perceive these clichés – among others – to elicit the mode of al-ḡsīn. These are expected melodic-rhythmic cadential movements, and music scholars have transcribed them for three-quarters of a century.

### ṡab‘ Ramal al-Māyah

Jins ramal al-māyah D (D-E $\flat$ -F-G) contains the same notes as jins ḡsīn D (D-E $\flat$ -F-G) and also shares some melodic-rhythmic phrases, making it difficult to differentiate between these two modes. Listening to ramal al-māyah and al-ḡsīn is a process of hearing more than just clichés. Musicians network clichés with other melodic features to manifest each mode. After presenting a few ramal al-māyah clichés, I discuss how clichés connect with other melodic features to confirm elicitation. As gathered from my classroom experiences in Sfax and also particularly from Gharbi’s sample melodic paths (2019b), musicians mark jins ramal al-māyah D in the following ways:

The image shows two musical staves, labeled 1 and 2, representing melodic phrases for jins ramal al-māyah D. Both staves are in 4/4 time and use a treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat).  
 Staff 1: The melody starts with a quarter note D4, followed by an eighth note E4 with a flat, then a quarter note F4, and a quarter note G4. This is followed by a half note D5, then a quarter note E5 with a flat, a quarter note F5, and a quarter note G5. The phrase concludes with a quarter note D6, a quarter note E6 with a flat, a quarter note F6, and a quarter note G6.  
 Staff 2: The melody starts with a quarter note D4, followed by an eighth note E4 with a flat, then a quarter note F4, and a quarter note G4. This is followed by a half note D5, then a quarter note E5 with a flat, a quarter note F5, and a quarter note G5. The phrase concludes with a quarter note D6, a quarter note E6 with a flat, a quarter note F6, and a quarter note G6.

As with the al-ḥṣīn formula types (2a) and (2b), the above clichés also highlight cadential movements common in jins ramal al-māyah D. In the first example, the D-based jins is approached from the note C below the tonic. The melodic line ascends quickly to the note G and, more prominently, to the A with a half-note sustained hold. The leap from F to A at the end of m. 1 is a critical movement for the melodic line, as is the leap back down to F at the start of m. 2. This intervallic leap between F and A is a formulized way of performing the top part of jins ramal al-māyah D, even though the note A is not usually included in jins ramal al-māyah D.<sup>20</sup> The descent from G to D is stepwise, much like that of jins ḥṣīn D.

The second cadential example is common across the ramal al-māyah repertoire. The F-A-F movement, beginning in the middle of m. 1, notably prepares the descent to the tonic in m. 2 utilizing the F-G-F-E♭ turn, as is the case for jins ḥṣīn D. I return to the issue from the last section on the formulas of ṭab‘ al-ḥṣīn, and ask again: if melodic-rhythmic clichés differentiate modes, how do participants distinguish between ramal al-māyah and al-ḥṣīn when a central cadential cliché is nearly equivalent?

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<sup>20</sup> As discussed in footnote 7, sometimes ajnās formulas utilize notes outside of their usual constitution, as was the case with jins ḥṣīn D in my analysis above. Jins ramal al-māyah D is most often represented in Tunisian scholarship as a 4-note jins of D-E♭-F-G (Mahdi 1972 [but named as jins bayyātī D]; Guettat 1980:270, 2000:367; Zouari 2006). In the Year Two classroom handouts at the Institute in Sfax, Professor ‘Alila represented jins ramal al-māyah D as a 5-note jins with the note A on top: D-E♭-F-G-A (2018-2019). In my description, I keep with a long tradition of Tunisian scholarship and present jins ramal al-māyah as a 4-note grouping. However, the clichés described here for ramal al-māyah – and other modes – show how notes both below and above traditional groupings of ajnās (in this case, C and A, respectively) can be important to expressing a jins. For many Tunisian music theorists, there does not seem to be a need to extend the 4-note jins structure to include notes outside of this structure as “baggage” (see fn 7; Abu Shumays 2013), even if such a melodic interpretation attempts understandably to better meld practice with tetrachordal theory. Instead of strictly keeping with a jins interpretation of melodic movement, melodic clichés present an alternative interpretation of modal music. At times, the two approaches overlap nicely. Many melodic clichés exist within the 3-, 4-, or 5-note jins grouping. At other times, clichés exceed the ajnās structures that theorists of modern Arab music have conventionally applied to melodic movement. The Tunisian conceptualization of melodic-rhythmic units is insightful for Arab music theorists.



Ramal al-māyah and al-ḥsīn share the F-G-F-E♯ cadential turn as a cliché; but they also share a five-note, stepwise cadential descent from A to D. D’Erlanger documented the latter phrase for both ṭab‘ ramal al-māyah and ṭab‘ al-ḥsīn, transcribed below. This phrase – recognized today as a cadential formula – occurs in his sample melody of ramal al- māyah.

Melodic formula of ṭab‘ ramal al-māyah, as transcribed by D’Erlanger (1949) in “XXI. Ramal Māyah” [*sic*] (Fig. 168, mm. 14). Transposed up by a fourth interval.<sup>21</sup>



The formula moves from A to D stepwise in sixteenth-note fashion. This cadential formula – as an indicator of both ramal al-māyah and al-ḥsīn – demonstrates that D’Erlanger and his

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<sup>21</sup> Comparing D’Erlanger’s representation of ṭab‘ ramal al-māyah to the ramal al-māyah that Tunisians transmit today is problematic. D’Erlanger documented the tonic on the note AA and presented a one-octave scale from AA to A, with conjunct ajnās sharing the note D (i.e., a bottom tetrachord of AA-BB♭-C-D, and a top pentachord of D-E♭-F-G-A; see 1949: Ch. 16, Fig. 168). Interestingly, in a series of radio presentations during the 1960s, Manoubi Snoussi – one of D’Erlanger’s Tunisian collaborators – presented a similar structure for ṭab‘ ramal al-māyah, also on the tonic AA. Snoussi’s 7-note conjunct scale ended on G, including two ajnās that share the note D (i.e., a bottom “bayyātī” tetrachord of AA-BB♭-C-D, and a top “rāst” tetrachord of D-E-F♯-G; see 2004: 46-7). If both D’Erlanger and Snoussi’s notations are moved to a tonic on D, then the scales would resemble the presentation of ṭab‘ ramal al-māyah today, as all other Tunisian music theorists, musicians, and pedagogues tonicize ramal al-māyah on D and include the same types of ajnās.

Although I do not understand why D’Erlanger tonicizes ramal al-māyah on AA, I still consider his presentation of the mode to match the contemporary practice of ramal al-māyah for two reasons. First, he included a specific jins modulation to the pentachord notated as C-D-E♭-F♯-G (1949: Ch. 16, Fig. 168), which—mutatis mutandis—corresponds today to the same known modulation in the D-tonicized ramal al-māyah. D’Erlanger’s version corresponds to jins raṣd al-dhīl F (F-G-A♭-B♭-c) transmitted today in the ramal al-māyah network. Secondly, D’Erlanger ended his melodic sample with the five-note, A to D cadential unit that I transcribe in the text above. Tunisian musicians today consider this phrase a melodic-rhythmic cliché of ramal al-māyah. As stated repeatedly in this chapter, Tunisians differentiate modes based primarily on these clichés. And so, it is appropriate to locate continuity between D’Erlanger’s transcriptions of ṭab‘ ramal al-māyah and the current transmission of the mode through this cadential unit, despite the peculiarity of D’Erlanger’s AA tonic. Consequently, I transpose D’Erlanger’s cadential formula to the D-tonicized position used today.



Tunisian collaborators apprehended these two modes with similar melodic material. In other words, the insistence from my Tunisian collaborators that melodic-rhythmic formulas differentiate the ṭubū‘ needs further clarification.

This very issue about ramal al-māyah and al-ḥsīn came up during Year Two ṭubū‘ class at the Higher Institute of Music in Sfax. I and the other students were learning *Aṣfarat al-shamsu al-‘ashiya*, a well-known Tunisian song in ṭab‘ ramal al-māyah, transcribed in *TMH* (vol. 6). At the end of the first bayt, the melodic line cadences with the sixteenth-note turn F-G-F-E♯-D, a melodic formula that also elicits al-ḥsīn. Students were confused as to why a ḥsīn melodic phrase would be ramal al-māyah.

Professor ‘Alila concurred that this cadential turn did elicit ṭab‘ al-ḥsīn. But, with the addition of the melodic movement immediately following this cadential turn – occurring on the Arabic word *qaribū* – confirmed the mode as ramal al-māyah and *not* al-ḥsīn. I transcribe this melodic movement below to illustrate ‘Alila’s response. On “qaribū” in the first example below, the melodic line abruptly leaps to the high note f (Ar. *māhūrān*) from the tonic D after the F-G-F-E♯ cadential turn. This dynamic one-octave-plus leap is distinctive for participants and occurs regularly in melodic lines of ramal al-māyah.

Excerpt from *Aṣfarat al-shamsu al-‘ashiya* [The evening sun turned yellow], the third song in the *biṭāyḥī* rhythm. Nūbat ramal al-māyah (cf. *TMH*, vol. 6, pg. 42 for a full transcription).

1

-shī ————— qa - ri - bū

2

-t sham - su-l - 'a - shi - ya

So, the cadential turn and the large melodic leap elicited ramal al-māyah rather than al-ḥsīn.

But, Professor ‘Alila went on to say that the melodic movement had already elicited ramal al-māyah even before these two features. In the previous line of sung poetry, on the words *sham-su-l-‘ashiya* (example 2 above), the melodic movement interchanged the notes B<sup>b</sup> and B<sup>♯</sup> within the same phrase. This was also a feature of ramal al-māyah. The combination of the characteristic cadential formula, the large melodic leap, and the play on the various B-note intonations had all elicited ṭab‘ ramal al-māyah rather than ṭab‘ al-ḥsīn.

The case of differentiating between ramal al-māyah and al-ḥsīn reveals that although the melodic-rhythmic clichés of a mode are indispensable for eliciting that mode, these clichés can operate within a broader assemblage of a mode’s features in order for participants to apprehend the right mode. Reoccurring cadential formulas of both ramal al-māyah and al-ḥsīn—either utilizing the melodic turn of F-G-F-E<sup>b</sup>-D or in the descending stepwise movement A-G-F-E<sup>b</sup>-D—work together with other modal features to evoke the mode in the most distinctive way. Conversely, the melodic formulation of ṭab‘ al-‘irāq – the third mode in

this group – does not share these melodic features and, thus, is more distinctive to apprehend even with similar notes in the fundamental jins.

### Ṭab‘ al-‘Irāq

Some Tunisian musicians place ṭab‘ al-‘irāq—whose fundamental jins is D-E<sup>♯</sup>-F-G— in a D-based modal group with ṭab‘ al-ḥsīn and ṭab‘ ramal al-māyah, even though the second scale degree of E<sup>♯</sup> is understood to be intoned higher than the E<sup>♯</sup> in the other two modes. Many Tunisian musicians actually prefer to leave al-‘irāq’s intonation marked E<sup>♭</sup>, rather than E<sup>♯</sup>, perhaps in order to standardize the notation of this D-based group of modes. But regardless of how a musician marks the second note degree in ṭab‘ al-‘irāq, this mode is distinguished firstly by its characteristic melodic-rhythmic formulas and not by these transcriptional differences. The following cliché, namely, manifests ṭab‘ al-‘irāq for musicians and listeners (Gharbi 2019b):



Musicians crystallize the fundamental note D in jins ‘irāq D through its upper intervallic relationship with the note G and its association with the lower notes of C and BB<sup>♭</sup>.<sup>22</sup> The melodic cliché begins with the characteristic expression of the D-G interval followed by a quick C-BB<sup>♭</sup>-C melodic movement. Musicians usually perform the notes C and BB<sup>♭</sup> in quick

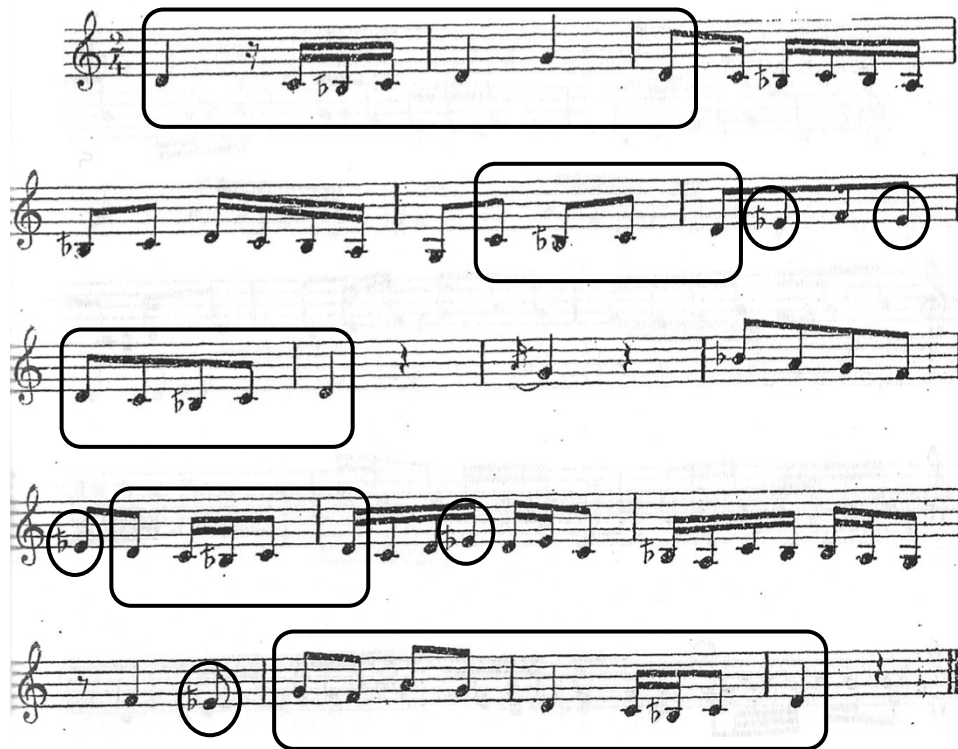
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<sup>22</sup> It may be that the repeated association of the tonic D with the note BB<sup>♭</sup> – whose Arabic name is *‘irāq* – is one of the reasons that this mode is named “al-‘irāq.” But my Tunisian collaborators did not make this connection for me. It follows that the Tunisian ṭab‘ al-‘irāq should not be confused with the Mashriqī maqām al-‘irāq, whose tonic is truly on BB<sup>♭</sup> (cf. Marcus 1989a:844).

succession, demonstrating that rhythmic features are important to correctly performing characteristic formulas. The phrase continues with an expression of the D-G interval again and then expresses the G-F-A-G-D movement, which is essentially a play around the note G followed by a leap back to D. The fundamental note D is confirmed in m. 3 before and after the repeating, rhythmic expression of C-BB $\flat$ -C. Conspicuously, the note E $\sharp$  is absent from this melodic formula.

There is no doubt that D'Erlanger's short transcription of *ṭab' al-'irāq* is the one practiced today, a continuity of practice over three-quarters of a century evidenced by melodic-rhythmic clichés. I include his transcription in full below to demonstrate these enduring formulas – all of which I isolate by boxed units:

Figure. "XV. Irāq" [*sic*] in D'Erlanger 1949: Ch. 16, Fig. 162.



The five boxed units show how musicians confirm the fundamental note D through an intervallic leap to and from the G and also through the stepwise C-BB $\sharp$ -C motif below the tonic. The last boxed unit also manifests the G-F-A-G melodic phrase in the upper part of jins ‘irāq before leaping back to D. The second scale degree of ṭab‘ al-‘irāq—marked here as E $\sharp$ —is not present in any of these boxed units. Rather, I have circled each occurrence of the note to demonstrate how the note participates in melodic movement but not within this specified characteristic formula of jins ‘irāq D.

Tunisian music scholar Mahmoud Guettat also documented a melodic cliché for ṭab‘ al-‘irāq in his 1980 publication on North African Arab-Andalusi music traditions. In his transcription that I duplicate below, Guettat focuses on the intervallic relationship between D and G and the G-F-A-G melodic movement at the top of jins ‘irāq D.

Reproduced from Guettat 1980:284 (reprinted in Guettat 2000:387).



The rhythmic C-BB $\sharp$ -C motif with the return to D is absent; but the presence of the E $\sharp$  within this movement sets up a sequence of neighboring tones (e.g., F-E $\sharp$ , G-F, A-G), peaking at the A before the expression of the D-G interval.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> As for the intonation of the note E: even though Guettat transcribed an E $\sharp$  in this figure, he transcribed an E $\natural$  in the scalar representation of al'irāq (1980:270; 2000:367). It is a true statement that Tunisian theorists—and even individual theorists—do not always follow the same transcription methods for specific intonation in the ṭabū‘.



expressed with less force. This performance point establishes that the F is more important than the E $\flat$  in the melodic movement. The overall point is that the note E $\flat$  in al-‘irāq is not considered vital to the formulation of these clichés.

To summarize, the D-based modal group of al-ḥsīn, ramal al-māyah, and al-‘irāq share scalar arrangement (Ar. *tarīb*) in the fundamental jins and also the E-intonation to some degree. But these organizational principles are secondary when it comes to differentiating these modes. Tunisian participants differentiate the modes based on how these notes reoccur in specific ways throughout melodic movement. In view of the characteristic melodic-rhythmic clichés of these modes, al-‘irāq stands out from al-ḥsīn and ramal al-māyah. But even with the closeness that al-ḥsīn or ramal al-māyah have, musicians elicit each one through formulas in tandem with other features of the mode.

**3. D-based modes: Iṣba‘īn and Ramal.** Next, I present a second D-based modal group, including the modes of al-iṣba‘īn and al-ramal. Tunisian musicians and pedagogues find structural similarities between these two modes, as well as between these modes and the Mashriqī D-based *ḥijāzī* modes: they all feature some form of an augmented second interval, i.e., a wide intervallic distance between the second and third scale degrees E and F (e.g., E $\flat$  and F $\sharp$ ). This D-based modal group coheres around this intervallic principle that is expressed in the fundamental jins. The interval between the E and F notes in the fundamental ajnās of al-iṣba‘īn and al-ramal is wide, even if musicians consistently nuance the intonation of the two notes in various ways. The fundamental ajnās of al-iṣba‘īn and al-ramal are below:

Figure 3. D-based modal group, related by the tonic D and fundamental jins.

<p>Ṭab‘ al-iṣba‘īn</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block; margin-bottom: 5px;">iṣba‘īn D-E<sup>b</sup>-F<sup>#</sup>-G</div> 	<p>Ṭab‘ al-ramal</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block; margin-bottom: 5px;">ramal D-E<sup>1/2</sup>-F<sup>#</sup>-G</div> 
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As I transcribe them above, the notes D, F<sup>#</sup>, and G are shared. Scholars and performers treat the second scale degree variably. I have marked al-iṣba‘īn’s second degree with a full flat and al-ramal’s with a half-slash flat sign.<sup>24</sup> The audible difference between the two notes is subtle, especially when played or sung in a melodic line. Some Tunisians spell jins ramal with a full-flat on the note E. If that were the case, the transcriptions of both jins ramal D and jins iṣba‘īn D would read as D-E<sup>b</sup>-F<sup>#</sup>-G, solidifying further the reason for this modal grouping. In this section, I attend to how Tunisians conceptualize these two neighboring modes through melodic-rhythmic clichés.

### Ṭab‘ al-Iṣba‘īn

The following transcription is an opening phrase for a melodic path in al-iṣba‘īn, utilizing two ajnās: jins iṣba‘īn D (D-E<sup>b</sup>-F<sup>#</sup>-G) and also jins ḥsīn A (A-B<sup>1/2</sup>-c-d). I practiced such phrases in the Year One ṭubū‘ class at the Institute, and also documented them in conversations with Kamal Gharbi (2019b).

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<sup>24</sup> For a deeper analysis of the E-intonation within jins iṣba‘īn D and jins ramal D, refer to each ṭab‘ in Chapter 1 as well as Appendix 2.





There are many parts of this melodic formula that stand out as characteristic of al-işba‘īn.

The first measure features a known melodic-rhythmic cliché that begins on the fundamental note D, immediately leaps to the note G, and arrives stepwise at the note A from the F#. As I will show later in this section, the al-işba‘īn repertoire often utilizes this same short formula, sometimes with an eighth-note rhythm—as notated above—or also in combination with sixteenth-notes. The melodic path continues with a known expression of jins ḥsīn A (A-B<sup>b</sup>-c-d), followed by a stepwise descent from A to D for a cadence. Each of the scale degrees in jins işba‘īn D are featured in this stepwise descent. In hearing such an opening of a mode’s melodic path, Tunisian musicians and listeners hear ṭab‘ al-işba‘īn.

I want to draw attention to the opening unit of the melodic path above (m. 1).

Musicians and scholars of the Tunisian ṭubū‘ have documented this five-note unit from D to A in connection to al-işba‘īn for nearly three-quarters of a century. The first notated example of this cliché is in D’Erlanger’s transcriptions. In *La Musique Arabe* (vol. 5), D’Erlanger documents two modes, “Hijāzi” and “Aşbu‘ayn,”<sup>25</sup> that today, are folded into the one mode of al-işba‘īn. The melodic material of “Hijāzi” corresponds to what is considered the melodic renditions of al-işba‘īn today; whereas D’Erlanger’s melodic sample of “Aşbu‘ayn” focuses on a specific melodic use of jins işba‘īn A (A-B<sup>b</sup>-c<sup>#</sup>-d) within the mode (see ṭab ‘ al-işba‘īn

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<sup>25</sup> Transliteration practices today render these spellings as *ḥijāzī* and *işba‘īn* (Tun. Ar. dialect) or *aşba‘ayn* (Modern Standard Ar.).

in Chapter 1). Today, musicians label such melodic uses of this jins, “inqilāb al-işba‘īn,” or the “transposition of [jins] işba‘īn,” from D to A.

This five-note melodic cliché begins D’Erlanger’s sample melody for Hijāzi (again, called al-işba‘īn today) with rhythmic variation. This melodic unit is replicated in below:

Extract from “XII. Hijāzi” [*sic*]. 1949: Fig. 159. m. 1-2



This al-işba‘īn melodic formula takes the same gestural shape as in the melodic path: D leaps to G, and, with the use of F# as a lower neighboring tone to G, the movement rises to A. D’Erlanger’s notation of this melodic unit in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, alongside my transcription, establishes the fact that this melodic unit has continued to shape the hearing of al-işba‘īn for some time.

This particular melodic-rhythmic cliché, however, is not only in Tunisian ṭab‘ al-işba‘īn. Musicians and listeners familiar with the Mashriqī maqāmāt will recognize this phrase as an indelible melodic expression of maqām al-ḥijāz. For example, the well-known song *Is‘al rūḥak*—composed by Muḥammad al-Mūgī and Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, and first performed by Umm Kulthūm in 1970—begins with this exact phrase in jins ḥijāz C (C-D<sup>b</sup>-E<sup>b</sup>-F). Within the first lyrical lines of the song’s first verse, a performer sings this phrase at least five times and usually more depending on the singer’s discretion in repeating the

verse. Perhaps it was not inaccurate, then, for D’Erlanger to name the mode “ḥijāzī” rather than “iṣba‘īn.”<sup>26</sup>

In returning to the Tunisian repertoire, this same cliché reoccurs throughout the nūba of al-iṣba‘īn, as documented in *TMH* (vol. 7). The following three song extracts are from three different songs in this nūba and demonstrate the prevalence of this formula in the repertoire within various rhythmic configurations:

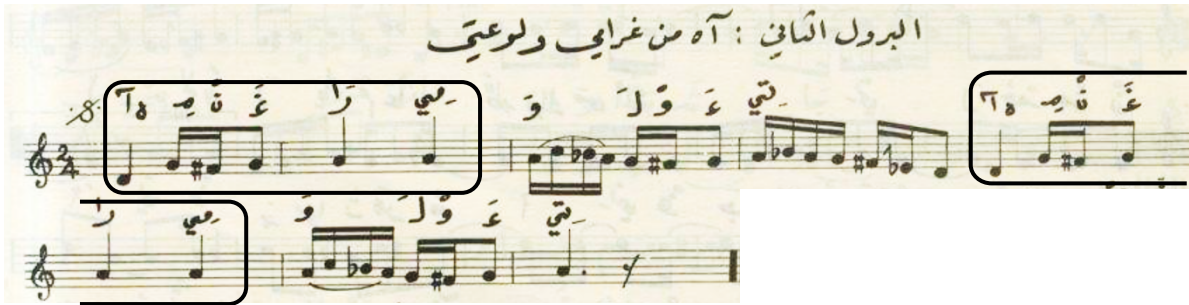
- A. Beginning extract from *Yā man idhā abṣaranī* [To anyone who might see me], the opening song (al-abyāt) in the biṭāyḥī rhythm. Nūbat al-iṣba‘īn. (*TMH*, vol. 7, pg. 26)



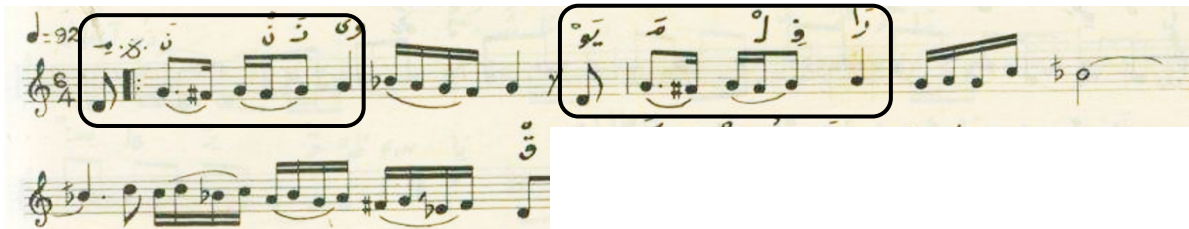
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<sup>26</sup> I had the pleasure of playing *Is'al rūḥak* and also *il-Hilwa Dī* (a Sayyid Darwish song from 1918 [Fahmy 2011:180]) with the UCSB Middle East Ensemble while preparing this manuscript. Sayyid Darwish (1892-1923) was an Egyptian musician and composer in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century – the same time that al-Wāfi was innovating ṭab' al-iṣba'īn in Tunisia. The five-note melodic cliché from D to A is characteristic of each example I mention and points to a wider performative coherency between these modes before the 1932 Cairo Congress. My appreciation to Scott Marcus – the director of the UCSB Ensemble and my doctoral advisor – who taught me from the beginning to play this five-note melodic phrase as a common starting point for an improvisation (*taqāsīm*) in *maqām al-ḥijāz*.

- B. Extract from *Āh min gharāmī wa-law ‘atī* [Ah, from my infatuation and love-sickness], the second song in barwil rhythm. Nūbat al-iṣba‘īn. (*TMH*, vol. 7, pg. 33)



- C. Extract from *Min al-nawā yawm al-firāq* [From the lover’s separation, on the day of parting], the first song in darij rhythm. Nūbat al-iṣba‘īn. (*TMH*, vol. 7, pg. 37)



All of the boxed units in the song extracts illustrate a melodic elicitation of al-iṣba‘īn that is expected by participants. In each case, the melodic phrase leaps from D to G on route to the note A, which is usually sustained longer than the other notes in the phrase. The note F# is a lower melodic ornament to G in the movement and important to establishing jins iṣba‘īn D (D-E<sup>b</sup>-F#-G) without the presence of the second note degree.

### Ṭab‘ al-Ramal

Even though al-ramal contains a type of wide interval in the fundamental jins between notes E and F (i.e., D-E<sup>b</sup>-F#-G), Tunisians do not tend to relate the mode of al-ramal to the Eastern mode of ḥijāz, as is the case with ṭab‘ al-iṣba‘īn. When played within a

melodic line, the base notes of ṭab‘ al-ramal are close to the intonation of jins iṣba‘īn (D-E $\flat$ -F $\sharp$ -G). There is no standard way of transcribing or playing these intonations (i.e.,  $\flat$  or  $\sharp$ ); although, as mentioned above, their structural similarities establish the pairing of these two modes in a D-based modal group.

The melodic formulas for ṭab‘ al-ramal are distinct and become the primary method for Tunisian participants to differentiate this mode from al-iṣba‘īn. Notated below is such an example of a common melodic expression of al-ramal’s base jins (adapted from Gharbi 2019b):



In the first measure, the descent from the note A to the note D is not fully stepwise, as is often the case with al-iṣba‘īn. The note A jumps to the note F $\sharp$  – skipping the note G – before descending stepwise to the base note D. The second measure features the note E $\flat$  with several sustained notes, marked here as dotted-quarter notes. Also important in m. 2 is how the base note D functions as a lower neighboring tone to E $\flat$ . In mm. 3-4, the final cadence highlights the lower note B $\flat$  in an intervallic relationship with the tonic D. The melodic gesture of D-B $\flat$ -D is critical here. This cadential feature is perhaps the most recognizable formula in ṭab‘ al-ramal, even though the other melodic features of this sample also index al-ramal for listeners.

Restated, it is often the D-B $\flat$ -D qafla that undoubtedly elicits al-ramal for the listener (see Snoussi 2004:53; Mahdi 1972:43, 1982:37; Guettat 1980:284, 2000:387;

Zghonda 1992:9). D'Erlanger documents this cadence twice in his brief melodic sample of al-ramal. Both of these instances are extracted from his sample, and replicated in the following transcription:

Excerpt from “XVII. Ramal” (D'Erlanger 1949: Fig. 164, mm. 6-7, 14-15)



The first two measures—which correspond to mm. 6-7 in D'Erlanger's transcription—come at the cadential point of the first melodic phrase. The first measure and subsequent downbeat function as a cadence, followed by a new ascending phrase that starts on D. After the D-BB♭-D cadence, a new melodic phrase begins again on D and ascends stepwise. The last two measures above—which correspond to mm. 14-15 in D'Erlanger's transcription—end the entire 15-measure sample. The melodic phrase descends from the note A stepwise to the tonic D without omitting the G. Again, the familiar cadence D-BB♭-D concludes the melody.

In Mahmoud Guettat's scholarly treatment of North African Andalusí music, al-ramal is one of three modes that he represents with a melodic-rhythmic “formule” or cliché. Guettat transcribes the known D-BB♭-D cadential formula. He also documents one other al-ramal cliché, presented with two rhythmic possibilities

Reproduced from Guettat 1980:284<sup>27</sup> (reprinted in Guettat 2000:387).



Even though final cadences are common performance moments for musicians to insert a melodic cliché, these moments are not the only places to elicit a mode with a formulaic unit. Guettat’s second stave above details how musicians can manifest al-ramal internally in a melodic phrase using the notes of jins ramal D (D-E<sup>b</sup>-F<sup>#</sup>-G).<sup>28</sup>

The cadential cliché as well as al-ramal’s specific descent from A to D are documented within the nūba of al-ramal (*TMH*, vol. 7). The two song extracts below demonstrate a few of such iterations of these formulas, all highlighted within the boxed units:

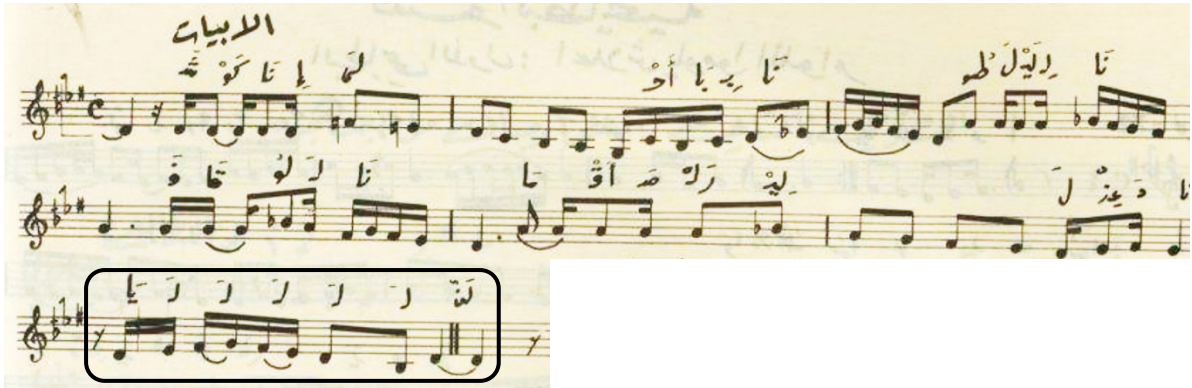
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<sup>27</sup> The first stave does not have a treble clef sign nor a key signature because I extracted it from the middle of Guettat’s longer stave that included other modal clichés.

<sup>28</sup> In this transcription, Guettat uses an E<sup>b</sup> for al-ramal’s second scale degree, but there is no consensus for transcribing this intonation. When Guettat transcribes the scale of al-ramal in another section of the 1980 publication, he also uses an E<sup>b</sup> (1980:270); but in the slightly revised edition, published in 2000—which reproduces the same melodic formulas as this transcription—Guettat transcribes the second scale degree of al-ramal as E<sup>#</sup> (2000:367).



- A. Beginning extract from *Shakawnā ilā aḥbābinā ṭūla laylinā* [I complained to my companions that the night was long], the opening song (al-abyāt) in the biṭāyḥī rhythm. Nūbat al-ramal. (*TMH*, vol. 7, pg. 85)

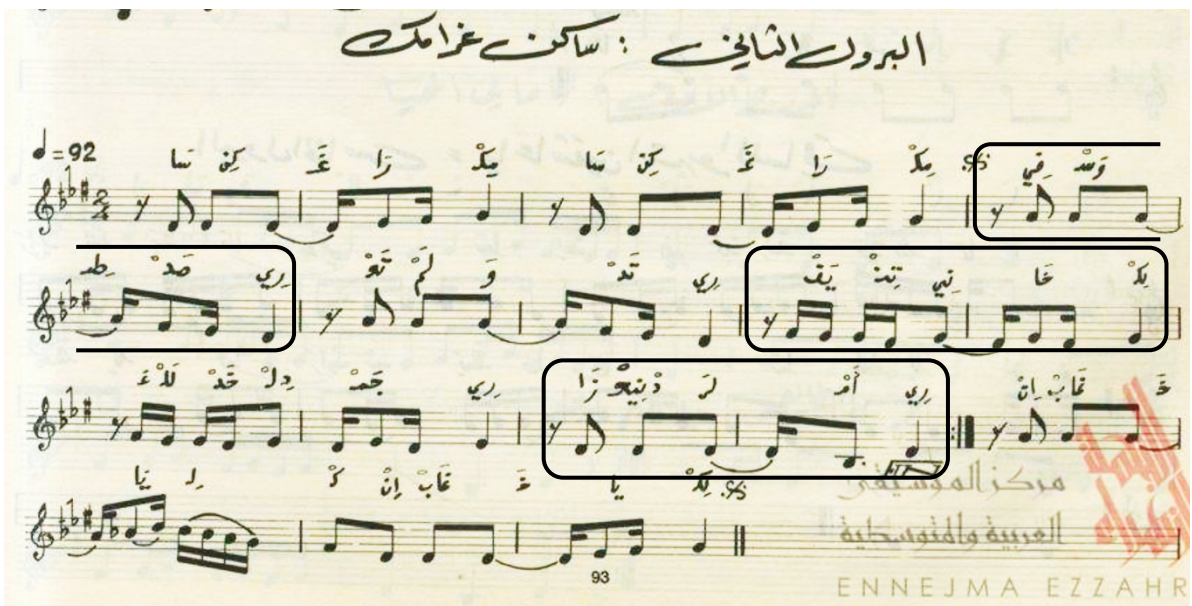


- B. *Sākin gharāmik* [Love for you dwells], the second song in the barwil rhythm. Nūbat al-ramal. (*TMH*, vol. 7, pg. 93)

Lyrics:

sākin gharāmik	fī wastī ṣadrī	ta‘lam wa-tadrī
yaftinnī khālik	‘alā al-khadd al-jamrī	zādnī ‘alā amrī

Love for you dwells / in the bottom of my heart / You know full well.  
I am infatuated with the mole / on your glowing cheek / which intensifies my longing.





The first song excerpt from *Shakawnā* displays the cadential cliché of al-ramal in the box: D-BB♭-D. The second song *Sākin gharāmik* is given in entirety. This song brings together all three of the melodic formulas discussed in this section. The first boxed unit demonstrates the intervallic leap from A to F♯, which serves to emphasize the note F♯ on a descent to D. The second box shows a rhythmic interplay between the notes E♭ and D. In performance practice, musicians accent the E♭ in this melodic movement and treat the D as a lower neighboring (unemphatic) tone. Lastly, the third boxed unit produces the familiar al-ramal cadence, which serves to deepen the elicitation of a mode that participants have already signaled in the song prior to this cadence.

In summary, the D-based group of al-işba‘īn and al-ramal maintain a similar scalar structure in the base jins, particularly with the presence of a wide interval (labeled an “augmented second” in equal temperament terminology) between the second and third scale degrees, E and F. In regard to this interval, Tunisians relate these structures—especially that of al-işba‘īn—to the ḥijāz modes of the Eastern Mediterranean maqāmāt system. Tunisians differentiate between al-işba‘īn and al-ramal by melodic formulas, a few of which are described above. In the case of al-işba‘īn, Tunisians also relate this ṭab‘ to expressions of jins ḥijāz through melodic formulation. Rather than differentiating modal worlds primarily based on jins structure, note order, or intonation, Tunisians apprehend a specific mode through such nuanced and reoccurring melodic-rhythmic clichés.

#### **4. Remaining modes: al-Aşbahān, al-Raşd, al-Nawā, al-Sīkāh, al-Mazmūm.**

According to the tonic note and its fundamental jins, eight of the thirteen Tunisian modes group together through commonalities. These eight modes distribute across one C-based and two D-based groupings. The remaining five modes do not align with these

groupings due to other tonic notes or note differences in the fundamental jins. Organized from the lowest tonic note to the highest, these five modes are:

al-aṣbahān	on GG
al-raṣd	on C
al-nawā	on D
al-sīkāh	on E♯
al-mazmūm	on F

I will proceed in this section to describe each of these modes in this order, beginning with al-aṣbahān on GG and ending with al-mazmūm on F.

But before these descriptions, it is important to note that Tunisians perceive a certain type of pentatonicism in four of these five modes, i.e. al-sīkāh is the exception. Along with these four modes, Tunisian musicians also consider al-dhīl (in the C-based group) and al-‘irāq (in one of the D-based groups) to feature the same type of pentatonicism. In fact, the Tunisian music scholar Salah Mahdi understood this feature to be a potential arrangement for grouping modes. In *La Musique Arabe* – a book which generally elides differences between the maqāmāt and ṭubū‘ under the name of “Arab music” – Mahdi arranged many Tunisian and Eastern Mediterranean modes together based on their tonic notes (e.g., on C, on D). This type of arrangement worked for seven of the thirteen Tunisian ṭubū‘. For the other six ṭubū‘, Mahdi created separate categories based on the feature of pentatonicism (1972:45-7). Simply put, when Tunisians hear a type of pentatonicism in their musical modes, they hear musical difference. The Mashriqī maqāmāt do not feature such melodic movement.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> See Appendix 3 for a more complete description of Tunisian pentatonicism.

The melodic clichés that follow in my discussion of al-aṣbahān, al-raṣd, and al-nawā will correspond to the pentatonic interpretation above.<sup>30</sup> I finesse these points contextually in each mode’s description according to the cliché I choose to present.

### Ṭab‘ al-Aṣbahān

If you were to ask a Tunisian, who is familiar with the ṭubū‘, to sing a melodic phrase from al-aṣbahān, they will most likely start with the following melodic unit:



The fundamental note of al-aṣbahān is a GG note (Ar. *yakāh*) in the lower octave. However, this melodic phrase does not reinforce this tonic note but rather emphasizes the note D – a notable feature of ṭab‘ al-aṣbahān and other modes that express a certain pentatonicism (see Appendix 3). There are other unique features of this formulaic phrase, such as: the intervallic leap between notes G and D (m. 1); a sustained hold on the B♯ (m. 2); the mostly stepwise descent from the A to D with a leap from G to E (mm. 2-3); the quick, rhythmic tremor between the notes E and F, performed with an accent on the note E; and the phrase’s conclusion on D. These characteristics are important for establishing the upper-end of the al-aṣbahān scale and giving the “flavor” (Ar. *madhāq*) of the mode. It is common for

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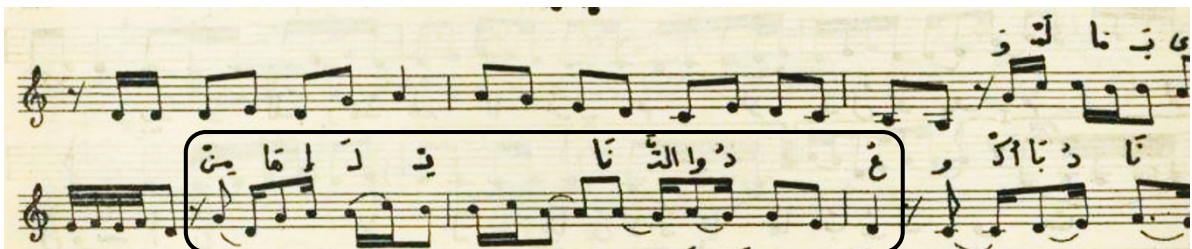
<sup>30</sup> Tunisians consider al-Mazmūm to also feature pentatonicism in melodic lines. However, the melodic-rhythmic clichés that I choose to discuss in this section do not align with this description.

musicians to continue this melodic-rhythmic cliché with a fuller descent that eventually concludes on GG and establishes the tonic of al-aṣbahān.

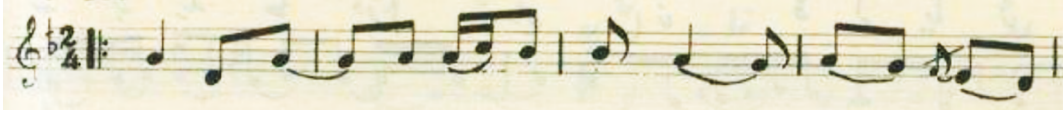
Transcriptions of the nūbat al-aṣbahān in *TMH* begin with this same melodic-rhythmic formula in the opening instrumental prelude, called the *istiftāḥ* (see vol. 8, pg. 49). Throughout my fieldwork, I recorded the same formula from various collaborators which suggests that the *TMH* transcriptions have become archival for Tunisian musicians today or that the pre-composed *istiftāḥ* is expressive of older melodic lines. In fact, it was this ubiquitous modal cliché that first alerted me to the importance of melodic formulation within the ṭubū‘. Elicited in discussions on the distinction of the ṭubū‘ among other modal systems in the Mediterranean (Zghonda 2019), or recorded in sample melodic paths for al-aṣbahān (Gharbi 2019b), or sung during practice sessions at the Institute when learning the Tunisian musical repertoire; this al-aṣbahān melodic-rhythmic formula became a fixture in my early experiences of listening to and practicing the Tunisian modes.

More than just eliciting ṭab‘ al-aṣbahān, other Tunisian modes use this cliché when indexing the presence of al-aṣbahān in their network of ajnās. Extracted from the *TMH*, the two excerpts below are from nūbat ṭab‘ al-raṣd and nūbat ṭab‘ al-ramal:

- A. Excerpt from the song *Wa-lamma badā’ minha ilaynā al-tawādu’u* [When the farewell began between us], the first song (*al-abyāt*) in the biṭāyḥī rhythm. Nūbat al-raṣd (*TMH*, vol. 6, pg.19)



B. Excerpt from the instrumental *tūshiyat aṣbahān* in *nūbat al-ramal*. (*TMH*, vol. 7, pg. 92)<sup>31</sup>



Both excerpts clearly demonstrate the same al-aṣbahān formula but with small variations in the rhythm. The leap of G-D-G features in the beginning of the phrase, leading to a brief ascent to the note c with emphasis on B♭ (or B♮ in the first excerpt). The melodic movement follows with a mostly stepwise descent from A to D with that critical melodic leap from G to E, omitting F. Rhythmically, the parallels between the two excerpts are remarkable. Excerpt A documents more syncopation within the phrase; but the shape of both remains essentially the same.

Excerpt A illustrates the al-aṣbahān cliché in the mode of al-raṣd. To remind readers, some Tunisian theorists are ambivalent about analyzing ṭab‘ al-raṣd according to the ajnās of tetrachordal theory, saying that al-raṣd is a pentatonic mode with the omission of BB/B and F notes (i.e., a “gapped” scale). Since Excerpt A uses these notes in its melodic movement, some theorists may deny that this excerpt actualizes al-aṣbahān.<sup>32</sup> Additionally, the figure in

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<sup>31</sup> The *tūshiya* is an instrumental piece, conventionally played between the first and second rhythm types in the vocal section of the *nūba* suite. The purpose of the *tūshiya* is to feature the next mode in the cycle, according to the traditional arrangement of the 13 modes (cf. “*nūba*” in the glossary). The *tūshiya* is essentially a sneak-peak into what audiences can expect for the next day’s performance. In the arrangement of ṭubū‘ through the cherished *zajal* poem in Tunisia (cf. Chapter 1), the mode of al-aṣbahān follows the mode of al-ramal. Thus, in excerpt B, the *tūshiya* piece in al-ramal features the melodic figures of al-aṣbahān. The piece begins with the well-known melodic cliché to elicit al-aṣbahān in the most expedited fashion.

<sup>32</sup> See a full explanation of how Tunisian theorists variously conceptualize the melodic movements in the repertoire of ṭab‘ al-raṣd, see the al-raṣd section in Chapter 1.

Excerpt A is transcribed with a B $\flat$  instead of al-aṣbahān's B $\sharp$  - a conventional way to transcribe this intonation. How pivotal is intonation for eliciting al-aṣbahān?

I respond to these issues with an ethnographic experience. When learning this very melodic figure (i.e., Excerpt A) in the Year 2 ṭubū' class at the Institute, students immediately recognized the cliché as one from al-aṣbahān. But the students had already learned the peculiarities of al-raṣd, in that some Tunisian theorists did not utilize the network of ajnās to interpret melodies in al-raṣd. Interestingly, the elicitation of al-aṣbahān with this cliché did its work regardless. The students asked Professor Wajdi 'Alila to explain how such an emblematic melodic-rhythmic formula of a named mode ("al-aṣbahān") could manifest in al-raṣd – a mode that apparently does not utilize the ajnās.

In his response, Professor 'Alila adhered to the non-ajnās stance of al-raṣd but also concurred with his students: this phrase was indexical of al-aṣbahān. The only difference was the presence of a B $\flat$  instead of a conventional B $\sharp$ . Our class sang this phrase over and over again, trying in essence to alter the cliché in our heads by singing a higher intonation (the B $\flat$ ) instead of the students' proclivity to sing the al-aṣbahān B $\sharp$ .<sup>33</sup>

This vignette is a testament to how important melodic-rhythmic clichés are within the performance and listening practices of the ṭubū'. For the students just beginning to understand a curated conceptualization of al-raṣd, it was not the B $\flat$  intonation that defined the phrase, but rather the *known* phrase that pulled the intonation to its learned, reoccurring

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<sup>33</sup> In actuality, Tunisian musicians I worked with consistently perform this B $\sharp$  of al-aṣbahān higher than a conventional half-flat. In fact, some Tunisian theorists mark this intonation with a B $\sharp$ . In that case, the intonation would be closer to B $\natural$ ! My vignette shows a teaching moment in which Professor 'Alila wanted his students to maintain the stance that interprets al-raṣd without ajnās theory. And so, the exercise was to sing this (otherwise) al-aṣbahān cliché different than the usual rendering of the cliché. During that particular moment, the difference was in singing a B $\flat$  instead of a B $\sharp$ .

place as a B♯. Theoretical structures – such as ajnās theory or specific intonation – did not prefigure modal elicitation for these students. Even the understanding that al-raṣd lacked ajnās theory did not prevent students from hearing the very thing it lacked theoretically: “al-aṣbahān.”

This discussion confirms that Tunisians hear formulaic phrases and normalize this listening process with musical modes, even when there are theoretical structures—such as written intonational signs—that problematize this listening process. The hearing of al-aṣbahān’s cliché came before its theorization. The students’ discussion also demonstrates more broadly that the correlation between listening and theory is dynamic, perhaps in this case, precisely because theoretical stance indicates social and cultural formations of identity. Without the ajnās, al-raṣd is a formation of a Black, sub-Saharan alterity. But with ajnās, al-raṣd is a mixture of alterity with an Arab-Andalusi lineage of tetrachordal theory. The fixity of the al-aṣbahān cliché – even with rigidity – should not obscure the dynamic vitality melodic-rhythmic clichés have to inscribe the social and the cultural in ever-present moments.

### **Ṭab‘ al-Raṣd**

The mode of al-raṣd is a complicated Tunisian ṭab‘ in terms of theoretical interpretation (see Chapter 1). Many Tunisian musicians and pedagogues hear social and cultural alterity in al-raṣd and ascribe this musical difference to the historical presence of Black sub-Saharan slaves and their expressive culture within the province of early modern *Ifriqiya* (i.e., present-day Tunisia). From this stance, al-raṣd is not a mode conceived primarily through the ajnās structures but through a type of pentatonicism (Fr. *pentatonisme*;

Ar. *nafs khumāsī*; see Appendix 3). The five notes of C-D-E-G-A, in any octave, comprise the scale in which Tunisians both identify and produce melodic renditions in al-raṣd, as rooted in the perceptions of a Black African past.<sup>34</sup>

Although other Tunisian musicians and pedagogues use the ajnās structures to interpret melodic material in al-raṣd, the most common melodic-rhythmic clichés in al-raṣd derive from its pentatonic structure, where the B and F notes are omitted in specific melodic movement. The following transcription shows three such clichés across the scalar range of al-raṣd. The parenthetical notes of B and F are omitted when performing these clichés; but I transcribe them in parentheses for clarity.



Melodic lines in the repertoire of al-raṣd often feature these three groupings in a descent and in a variety of rhythmic patterns. One of the most common groupings is in m. 2 with the notes A-G-E-D. Even though the note C is tonicized in al-raṣd, the second scale degree of D is emphasized with a number of cadences or other melodic movements that utilize A-G-E-D (cf. Mahdi 1972: 46). The earliest transcription of such clichés is in

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<sup>34</sup> In a series of radio lectures in the 1960s, Tunisian music scholar Manoubi Snoussi said that al-raṣd came from indigenous Amazīgh (i.e., Berber) peoples. However, the primary historicity of al-raṣd today among Tunisian musicians and scholars is that al-raṣd came to Tunisia with Black sub-Saharan slaves. Some of this expressive culture remained within the Black communities in the form of *Stambeli*, a ritualized musical tradition associated with West African animistic beliefs and healing practices (cf. Jankowsky 2010). Thus, those who ascribe to this historicity view a type of pentatonicism in al-raṣd as derivative of Black expressive culture, which musicians integrated into the Arab-Andalusi musical structures and performance practices.



D’Erlanger’s *La Musique Arabe* (vol. 5) in the melodic sample of al-raṣd. I extract several of these figures and transcribe them here:

Excerpts from “VI. Raṣd (abīdī)” [*sic*].<sup>35</sup> (D’Erlanger 1949: Fig. 153)

1 (mm. 6 and 20)

2a (m. 8)      2b (m. 12)      2c (m. 17)

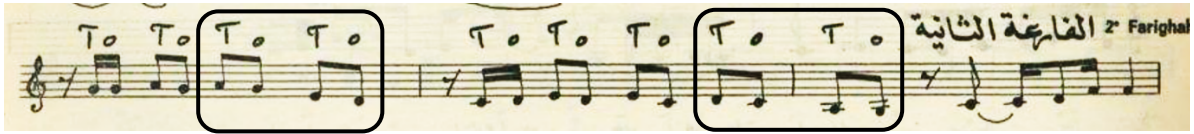
Both examples 1 (using the D-C-AA-GG group) and 2 (using the A-G-E-D group) reveal various rhythmic iterations of how these note groupings melodically descend. Participants learn to expect these melodic descents in al-raṣd. The interval of a minor “third” (Ar. *thulathiya*) is prominent within each example as the descent skips either the BB (ex. 1) or F (ex. 2a-c). In these melodic moments, theorists most strongly hear Tunisian pentatonicism.

Examples of these four-note pentatonic melodic descents abound throughout the nūba repertoire of al-raṣd. I include two song excerpts from *TMH* (vol. 6) below, to demonstrate how these clichés are integrated into longer melodic movements:

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<sup>35</sup> The title of “Raṣd (abīdī)” recalls how Tunisians have historically networked this mode to “enslaved” (Ar. *‘abīdī*) Black Africans. Today, Tunisians are more likely to call this mode *raṣd al-obaydī* in their Arabic dialect rather than *raṣd al-‘abīdī* in Modern Standard Arabic. Both mean “raṣd of the enslaved [ones].”

- A. Excerpt from the song *Wa-lamma badā' minha ilaynā al-tawādu 'u* [When the farewell began between us], the first song (*al-abyāt*) in the *biṭāyḥī* rhythm. Nūbat al-raṣd (*TMH*, vol. 6, pg.19)



- B. *'Aynī kaḥīla* [My (beautiful) kohl-blackened eye], the third song in the *barwil* rhythm. Nūbat al-raṣd (*TMH*, vol. 6, pg. 25)



Excerpts A and B illustrate all three note groupings used in melodic phrases of al-raṣd to signal a type of pentatonicism. The majority of the boxed units in both excerpts use the A-G-E-D grouping, often as cadential material. In excerpt A, the second boxed unit demonstrates the grouping of D-C-AA-GG in the lowest part of al-raṣd’s range, which, in this example, concludes the sung portion on the syllable “āh” before the second instrumental interlude (Ar. *al-fāriḡha al-thāniya*). The grouping of d-c-A-G, in the higher part of al-raṣd’s range, is illustrated only in excerpt B – a complete transcription of the song *'Aynī kaḥīla*. The second to last boxed unit, which begins the new *ṭāli'* section of the song, starts on the note c in the higher register, and descends in a syncopated fashion with an expected leap over the

note B. The descent pauses on the note A before moving to the A-G-E-D grouping in the last boxed unit. The final measure of the *ṭāli'* section (m. 10) – as well as m. 7 which concludes the song – manifest cadences on the note D, the *second* scale degree of al-raṣd. I mark these places with an asterisk in the excerpt above. Again, a common means of emphasizing pentatonicism in the ṭubū' is a reliance on D, even when the actual tonic is on another note (i.e., C in al-raṣd).

### Ṭab' al-Nawā

One of the most memorable formulas for the musical mode of al-nawā is a one-octave descent, starting from the notes c or d and arriving on the tonic D. The following transcription of this familiar melodic-rhythmic cliché is a result of many conversations with musicians about al-nawā, as well as my class notes from Year One ṭubū' class in Sfax:



Structurally, this transcription highlights two ajnās: ḥsīn A (A-B<sup>♭</sup>-c-d) in m. 1, and nawā D (D-E-F-G) in m. 2. But structure alone is not sufficient to understand how the transcription in its melodic movement. First, the entire phrase is performed as a descent in a single gesture. In this cliché, participants hear a one-octave presentation of al-nawā from the high note d to the tonic note D. Secondly, the note A has particular significance in the descent. Perhaps this is due to its mediatory role between two disjunct ajnās or due to its relationship with the tonic note through the interval of a fifth (D-A). The A is also the highest

note of the five-note Tunisian pentatonic scale (C-D-E-G-A). The d-c-A motif in m. 1 highlights A twice, and the final descent in m. 2 to the tonic occurs from the A. Thirdly, and most critically, the note B♯ in the d-c-A motif (m. 1) is not included. As with other such melodic movement across the performance practice of the ṭubū‘, this note omission indexes a type of pentatonicism that Tunisian musicians say comes from Black sub-Saharan slaves brought to North Africa over centuries. Melodic movements in al-nawā can utilize the note B♯, and I will present examples in the analysis below. However, the omission of the B♯ is common when musicians perform this melodic-rhythmic formula of al-nawā.

This cliché has a documented history in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Within a fourteen-bar sample transcription of ṭab‘ al-nawā, D’Erlanger transcribes the same melodic movement twice: first, in measures 4-6 and also in 9-12. Below, I reproduce his transcription of the cliché from measures 4-6:

Excerpt from “XIX. Naw\_ā” [*sic*]. D’Erlanger 1949: Vol. 5, Ch. 16, Fig. 166, mm. 4-6.

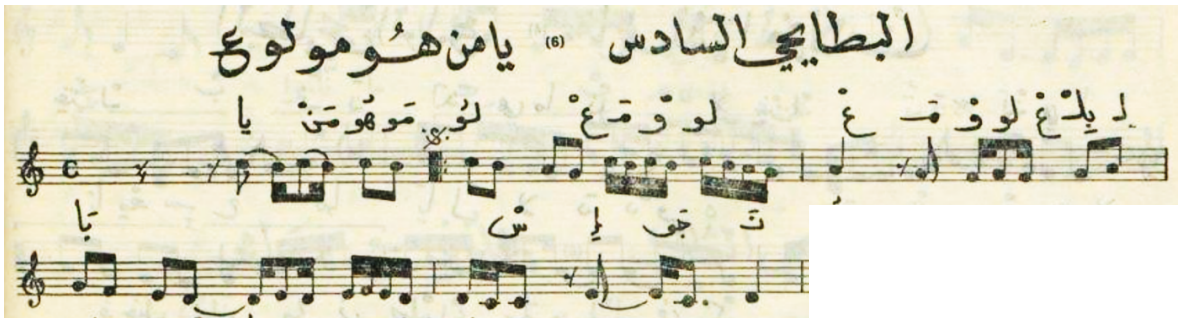


The continuities between D’Erlanger’s transcription and my transcription from fieldwork are striking. In like manner, D’Erlanger’s phrase begins in the higher register, one octave above the tonic note of D, and outlines jins ḥsīn A without the use of the note B♯. The note A anchors the phrase throughout the three-bar formulation, and the descent from A to D in m. 3 is stepwise and rhythmically fast. In contrast to my version of the cliché, D’Erlanger

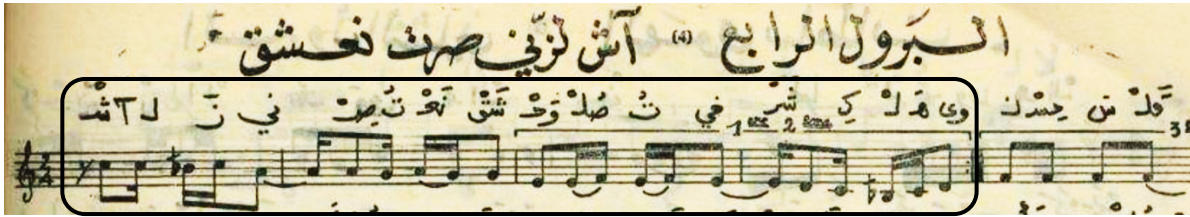
included an F half-sharp (♯) in m. 3; but this is not out of the ordinary for al-nawā. In general, the raised F – often notated with a conventional sharp sign or half-sharp sign – is a melodic feature of the mode and serves to emphasize the note G, which (like the A) has a special relationship with the tonic D (Lajmi 2018-2019). The notes D, G, and A form intervals of a fourth and fifth. While not generally understood to suggest pentatonicism, in this case, the presence of these intervals are understood to reinforce a perception of pentatonicism.

Other examples of this octave-descent formula are found throughout the nūbat al-nawā repertoire, as transcribed in *TMH* (vol. 6). I include three examples from song excerpts in order to demonstrate how musicians can adjust the rhythmic configuration of the formula within a longer melodic line and still express the well-known cliché.

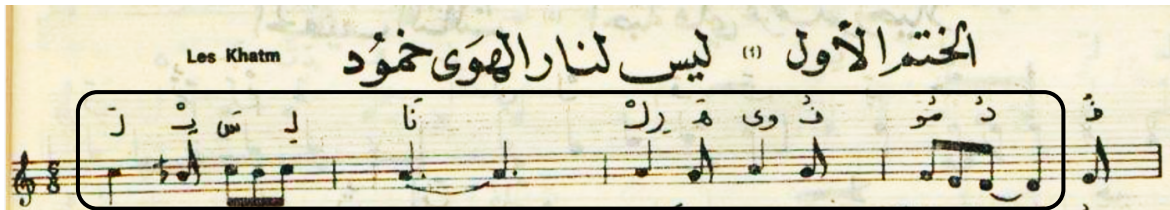
- A. Excerpt from *Yā man huwa mawlū' bi-l-libās* [O, to him clothed in burning love], the sixth song in the biṭāyḥī rhythm. Nūbat al-nawā (*TMH*, vol. 6, pg. 74)



- B. Excerpt from *Ash lazzanī širtu na 'shaq* [What is it that has pushed me to be in love?], the fourth song in the barwil rhythm. Nūbat al-nawā (*TMH*, vol. 6, pg. 78)



- C. Excerpt from *Laysa li-nār al-hawā khumūdu* [The flames of love do not die out], the first song in the khatm rhythm. Nūbat al-nawā (*TMH*, vol. 6, pg. 84)



Song excerpts A, B, and C express the same al-nawā cliché in various ways. Excerpt A takes the cliché and extends the one-octave descent across five measures and includes jins mazmūm C (C-D-E-F) along with the expected uses of jins ḥsīn A and jins nawā D. Notably, the transcription presents the B♯ (unmarked as such in excerpt A) consistently within the melodic movement of jins ḥsīn A; but arguably, this B♯ functions as a lower neighboring tone, to emphasize the note c.

The boxed units in excerpts B and C are standard presentations of the al-nawā cliché. The expression of the B♯ in m. 1 serves to accent the note c. The movement next descends to the A, omitting the B♯ on the way. The note A is heavily emphasized (especially in excerpt C, m. 2-3) and the descent continues stepwise to the tonic D. Interestingly, this final descent in excerpt B omits the note F between G and E♯ (end of m. 2 and beginning of m. 3). Again,



this is a typical performance of Tunisian pentatonicism along with the frequent omissions of the note B.

al-Nawā's one-octave descent is expected by Tunisian participants skilled in the creative practices of the ṭubū'. Tunisians explain this typical melodic-rhythmic movement both in terms of ajnās theory and pentatonicism. Some Tunisian melodic-rhythmic clichés are brief, cadential, or structured by the notes of one jins. But this formula from al-nawā demonstrates a more extended rendering of a cliché. Examples from the repertoire also show that there are a variety of ways to perform this cliché, melodically and rhythmically. But even with such variation, the cliché is a recognizable figure in the practice of al-nawā.

### **Ṭab' al-Sikāh**

Many times throughout my fieldwork I heard Tunisian musicians comment on the uniqueness of “Tunisian al-sikāh” (Ar. *al-sikāh al-tūnisiyya*) in the repertoire. In his seminal study of the ṭubū', Tunisian music scholar Lassad Zouari reports that, “Jins sikāh in Tunisian music is an exception in Arab music, for it emerges by way of a reliance on six scale degrees and not just three [i.e., E♭-F-G], the way one is acquainted with sikāh in the *mashriq*” (2006:86, translation mine). Zouari then transcribes three versions of the Tunisian jins sikāh, as they manifest melodically in the repertoire. Each version demonstrates a diatonic scale of six descending scale degrees (i.e., c-B-A-G-F-E♭), as transcribed below:

The six scale degrees of Tunisian jins sīkāh. Adapted from Zouari 2006: 87.<sup>36</sup>



It is clear that these three versions of Tunisian jins sīkāh differentiate from one another on the notes B and A. The note B is either fully flat, half-flat, or naturalized across these versions; and in the version on the far right, the A is fully flat to form a wider interval with the B.

Tunisian pedagogues continue to distill jins sīkāh in the Tunisian ṭubū‘ as a three-note trichord, which, for ṭab‘ al-sīkāh, is on the notes E♭-F-G. However, it is true that melodic formulations of the six-note descent that Zouari documented are found throughout the Tunisian al-sīkāh repertoire, often in cadences. For the following analysis, I will analyze this six-note melodic unit through various transcriptions from D’Erlanger’s work to that in *TMH*, as well as from a song transmitted in my classroom experiences at the Institute. The distinction of Tunisian al-sīkāh as unique among other al-sīkāh modes in the East lies partly in how these cadential clichés manifest in the repertoire.

Most versions of al-sīkāh’s six-note cadences descend stepwise from the note c to the fundamental E♭. The descent is often transcribed as a quick sixteenth-note run. However, the earliest transcription of this descent presents the cadence as a five-note unit, starting from the note B♭ rather than the note c. The ending cadence of D’Erlanger’s al-sīkāh transcription concludes as follows:

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<sup>36</sup> My adaptation of Zouari’s material keeps the notation exact but omits the lyrics. In his publication, Zouari extracts this cadential phrase from the song *Mā ‘abd’ a al-niwār ‘alā shuṭūṭin al-sawāqī* [How amazing are the lights on the banks of the streams!] from nūbat al-sīkāh, as transcribed in *TMH* (vol. 5). The song is ordered in *TMH* as the second song in the khafīf rhythm, which has six-quarter note beats per measure. The cadence comes at the end of the first bayt on the word *bāqī*. In my transcription, I have removed the overlay of lyrics in order to focus on the melodic-rhythmic formulation of the phrase.



Final cadence from “XXIII. Sīkah.” (D’Erlanger 1949: Fig. 170)



D’Erlanger is by no means the only scholar to document a five-note cadence instead of a six-note version. In a transcription of the song *Khabbarānī* from *TMH* (vol. 5), this same five-note descent concludes each bayt of the lyrics, as shown below:

Excerpt from the song *Khabbirānī* [Tell me, both of you!], the second song in the *biṭāyḥī* rhythm. *Nūbat al-sīkāh*. (*TMH*, vol. 5, pg. 42)



Zouari specifically mentioned a six-note characteristic formulation, which includes the note c along with the diatonic stepwise scale degrees from B to E. The following song example from the *nūba* repertoire in *TMH* demonstrates the six-note formulaic cadence of *al-sīkāh* with a B $\flat$  in the descent.

*Bi-rabbi allādhī farrīj ‘alā ayyūb* [By the Lord who comforted Job], the third song in the *biṭāyḥī* rhythm. *Nūbat al-sīkāh*. (TMH, vol. 5, pg. 42)



This transcription presents the well-known song *Bi-rabbi allādhī* in full. The formulaic six-note descent from *c* to *E♭* (utilizing a *B♭*) occurs at the end of each bayt throughout the song. All of these cadences are marked in the figure within the boxed units.

The next song excerpt from *Imlā wa-isqīnī* demonstrates the third type of six-note *sīkāh* cadence that descends to the tonic using a wider interval between the *B* and *A* notes. I transcribe the excerpt below based on the way Professor Lajmi transmitted this song to students at the Institute. I mark the *B* and *A* notes *B♭* and *A♭* which correspond to either *jins išba‘īn* *G* (*G-A♭-B♭-c*) or *jins rašd al-dhīl* *F* (*F-G-A♭-B♭-c*) – two typical *ajnās* in the *al-sīkāh* network. As mentioned previously for *ṭab‘ al-sīkāh* (see Chapter 1), The *B* and *A* intonations are not standardized across Tunisian transcriptions. If Tunisian musicians were using this

transcription, they would most likely perform the B♯ with a higher intonation than marked (i.e., closer to a B♮) and the A♯ with a lower intonation (i.e., closer to an A♭ or A♮).

Excerpt from the song *Imlā wa-isqīnī yā ahyaf* [Fill (my cup) and pour (wine) for me, O slender one], adapted from classroom handouts in the Year Two ṭubū‘ class. Higher Institute of Music, Sfax (2018-2019).



This example from *Imlā wa-isqīnī* also illustrates a formulaic way of stylizing this descending cadence – a distinct listening experience for participants in al-sīkāh. The c-A♭-c-B♯ intervallic movement at the beginning of the cadence signals the descent before the stepwise movement proceeds, first from G to c, and then down to the tonic E♭.

*Imlā wa-isqīnī* features this melodic movement with a wider interval between the B and A notes; but musicians perform this stylized cadence using the other six-note versions as well. The pre-composed instrumental excerpt below, for instance, demonstrates the stylized descent with B♯ and A♮ notes:

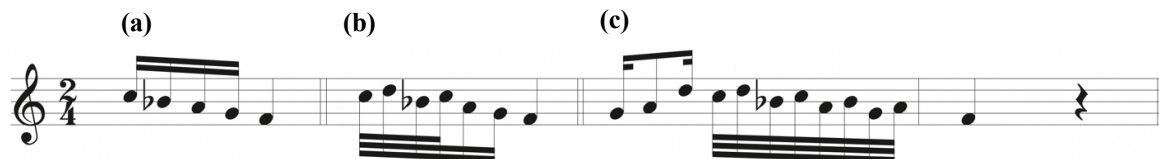
Excerpt from an instrumental “interlude” (Ar. *fāriḡhah*), in the first song (*al-abyāt*) in the biṭāyḡhī rhythm. Nūbat al-sīkāh. (*TMH*, vol. 5, pg. 39)



This pre-composed piece – located in the middle of the first sung piece of the nūba – presents clearly the stylized melodic-rhythmic formula. This stylized cliché is less common within the transcribed repertoire than the general stepwise al-sīkāh descents discussed earlier, but the movement is nonetheless recurrent and memorable.

### Ṭab‘ al-Mazmūm

One of the most recognizable melodic-rhythmic formulas in ṭab‘ al-mazmūm takes place within the fundamental jins mazmūm F (F-G-A-B<sup>b</sup>-c). In these sequences, the melodic line formulaically falls from the top of the jins to the tonic on F. As such, many of these characteristic phrases act as cadences for melodic phrases. The figure below demonstrates these common descents in jins mazmūm F. The top-down, stepwise melodic descent is outlined in (a) and then reiterated with various common ornamentations in (b) and (c):



The quick, stepwise descent of (a) is also clear in (b) and (c), despite the melodic elaborations of the latter two. The third example (c) demonstrates the prevalent use of the high note d in al-mazmūm melodic formulas – a note that is outside of the five-note jins. Also in (c), the descent is approached from notes G and A and then begins after a noticeable melodic leap to the note d. The quick sixteenth-note descent is a rhythmic feature of the cliché; no matter the style of ornamentation, musicians will typically play the descent swiftly in route to the fundamental note F.

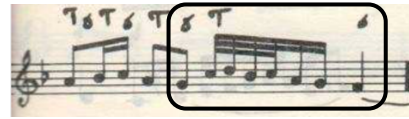
Music scholars have documented this same al-mazmūm descent for at least three-quarters of a century. In his sample melody of al-mazmūm, D'Erlanger twice transcribed the sixteenth-note, stepwise descent from c to F. In both instances, the melodic unit was cadential (cf. 1949:5:16, Fig. 174, mm. 4 and 11-12). Examples in *TMH* follow closely – if not match – the clichés that I have transcribed at the beginning of this section. I have extracted a number of examples from the nūba of al-mazmūm for comparison, in the following:

- A. Excerpts from *Khala‘at ‘alayya yadu al-nawā khila‘ al-ḍanā* [The hand of separation has bestowed on me the robe of grief], the first song (*al-abyāt*) in the *biṭāyḥī* rhythm. Nūbat al-mazmūm (*TMH*, vol. 8, pg. 81-2)

Pg. 81. Stave 7, m. 2-3



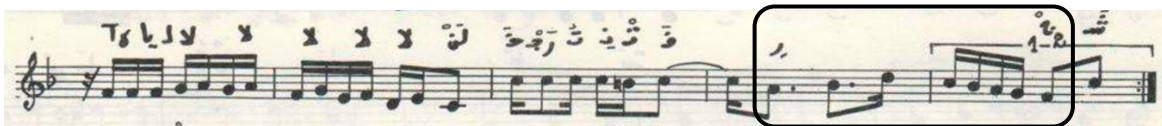
Pg. 81. Stave 14, m. 1



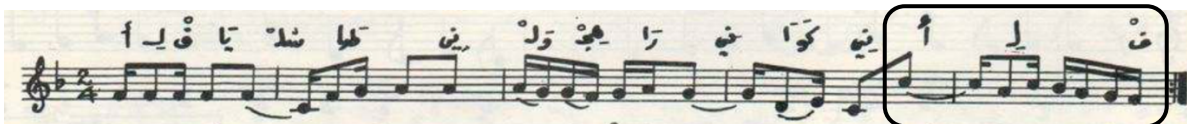
Pg. 82. Stave 2, m. 2-3



- B. Excerpt from *Badā al-rabī‘* [Spring began], the fourth song in *barwil* rhythm. Nūbat al-mazmūm. (*TMH*, vol. 8, pg. 87)



- C. Excerpt from *Alif yā sulṭānī* [(You are the) first, O my ruler]<sup>37</sup>, the fifth song in *barwil* rhythm. Nūbat al-mazmūm (*TMH*, vol. 8, pg. 87)

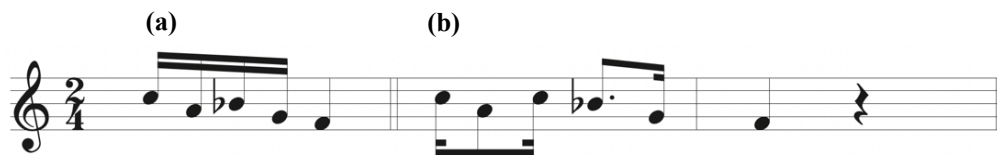


These excerpts all manifest a common practice of playing *jins al-mazmūm F* in a descent formula from the note *c* (or *d*) to *F*. They also demonstrate that the descent is often approached from below by the notes *G* and/or *A*, and involves some sort of leap up to the top

<sup>37</sup> The Arabic text of this well-known song is an acrostic. In beginning with *alif* – the first letter of the Arabic alphabet – the poet embraces their Beloved as the first and the best one (of them all). Each subsequent hemistich (i.e., a half line of poetry) begins with the next letter of the Arabic alphabet. The poet not only follows the Arabic alphabet in order (*alif, bā’, tā’...*) but also crafts Arabic words within the hemistich to begin with that letter.

of jins mazmūm (or note d) to begin the quick, stepwise descent. The consistency across examples is both melodic and rhythmic. With exposure, listeners can apprehend this cliché throughout the al-mazmūm repertoire even when musicians densely ornament the descent.

There is also a formulaic manner of breaking up the stepwise movement of the descent. One example deserves special attention due to its many occurrences in the repertoire. It is transcribed in the following figure:



Examples (a) and (b) in the figure are rhythmically different but melodically the same. The stepwise movement is exchanged for two downward intervals of a third: first from c to A and then from B $\flat$  to G.

This descent-by-thirds is also a standard cliché in the repertoire. I include a transcription of the first bayt of the well-known song *Laysa li-nār al-hawā khumūdu* in the figure below which manifests this type of descent as a cadence, even though a musician can freely choose to pay the stepwise option at any time:



Excerpt from *Laysa li-nār al-hawā khumūdu* in khatm rhythm. Transcribed from handouts in Year One ṭubū‘ class. Higher Institute of Music, Sfax (2018-2019).<sup>38</sup>

Lyrics: *Laysa li-nār al-hawā khumūdu* [The flames of love do not die out.]  
*wa-lā li-qāḍi al-hawā shuhūdu* [The arbiter of love has no witnesses.]

Lay - sa li - nā - ri-l - ha - wā khu - mū - du  
 wa - lā li - qā - ḍi-l - ha - wā shu hū - du

Whether a musician decides to play the al-mazmūm descent stepwise or by thirds, both of these formulas – along with the many styles of ornamentation applied to the formulas – elicit al-mazmūm for a listener.

## Summary

In this chapter, I contend that characteristic melodic-rhythmic “formulas” or “clichés” – as the Tunisians call them – constitute the core performance practice of the ṭubū‘, in terms of regional differentiation. Tunisian musicians and pedagogues are clear that the ṭubū‘ are *not* the maqāmāt to some degree; and they conceptualize this difference in musical ways in the thirteen traditional ṭubū‘.

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<sup>38</sup> Tunisian musicians have repertoire for each of the ṭubū‘ that are not contained within the *TMH* volumes. Here is a case in point. The song *Laysa li-nār al-hawā khumūdu* is a beloved Tunisian song but is not included in the *TMH* transcriptions for the nūbat al-mazmūm (cf. vol. 8).



Taken together, both chapters one and two form a comprehensive description of the *ṭubū* as a performative object with bearing on how people perceive themselves in a number of dynamic geographies. In Part Two of this dissertation, I will investigate difference on its own terms and consider how Tunisians use these characteristic melodic-rhythmic clichés to stabilize expressions of difference. In doing so, I seek to demonstrate how music theory – and the ways theory is both transmitted and how it is manifested in performance – can align with human processes of making meaning.

**PART TWO: The Ṭubū‘ as Fingerprints: Processes of Stamping Social  
Distinction in Sound**

## Introduction

The Tunisian musical modes emerge dynamically within a meaningful dialectic. The *ṭubūʿ* are transmitted as musical objects that resemble other modal systems in the Mediterranean, namely the Mashriqī *maqāmāt*; but the *ṭubūʿ* are also perceived as distinct from other systems. The melodic-rhythmic clichés or formulas are musical practices for Tunisians that provide a musical means to differentiate from others in the region. The process of articulating resemblances and differences in the theorization and practice of the modes demonstrates how musical modes do work for many Tunisians beyond their purely musical qualities. Performing the modes on stages and transmitting them in classrooms is more than just teaching music theory and repertoire. These practices dynamically mediate people to their social, cultural, and natural environments. In Part Two, comprising three chapters, my investigation of the *ṭubūʿ* turns towards this process and considers how the practice of the *ṭubūʿ* activates these relations.

Performing musical distinction can be an act of expressing social differences that have already been identified and given value. The melodic-rhythmic phrases express cultural geographies related, for example, to the nation-state (“Tunisia”), to an ethnic lineage (“Arab”), or to a valorized genealogy (“Andalusi”). The capacity of the *ṭubūʿ* tradition to express these identities continues to be an important aspect for many Tunisians, and I will give evidence in this section of how these participants utilize the practice of the *ṭubūʿ* to express pre-formed identities, so to speak, or identities that are ready for use. In Chapter 4, I feature the 53<sup>rd</sup> annual Testour Festival of *Mālūf* and Traditional Arab Music that I attended. Musicians opened the festival with *ṭabʿ al-sīkāh* and, in doing so, inscribed the sonic event with musical clichés of *al-sīkāh* that indexed ethnonational heritage. “Tunisian *al-sīkāh*” – as

the name implies – expresses identities related to the nation-state; but their practice in the Testour event also links to aspects of Arab and Andalusī geographies.

But more than simply express ready-made identities, musical performances also potentiate and innovate such expressions. In Chapter 3, I detail my observations of one Tunisian student musician at the Institute in Sfax who is affected by nonhuman beings called the *jinn* during a transmission event of ṭab‘ al-nawā. Historically, Tunisians have associated this mode specifically with the *jinn*. The *jinn* affected one student in the event that I observed and not the others. As I watched a range of encounters taking place with ṭab‘ al-nawā – including my own as a participant – I realized that even though the *jinn* are historically related to the performance practice of al-nawā, this relation is not universal. During the same Testour festival, I observed the celebration of the nation-state through the musical mode of al-sīkāh. But the way the ensemble performed al-sīkāh was unique and not pro forma. These and other fieldwork experiences led me to consider how the ṭubū‘ – and specifically the practice of the melodic-rhythmic phrases that elicit and differentiate between each mode – are a vital, dynamic musical resource for Tunisians. In practicing these modes, participants express more static forms of identity; but they also potentiate these formations. Said another way, many Tunisians utilize the ṭubū‘ as a living resource for relating to their world, the effects of which emerge only in the immanent and present performance event.

Investigating that effectivity of the ṭubū‘ upon participants is both an ethnographic and philosophical undertaking. I begin each chapter in Part Two with a vignette that describes a *sonic event*, a moment when Tunisian musicians practice these clichés and an *encounter* transpires between the modes and participants. Because Tunisians potentiate the musical modes – that is, give them power and potency to do things when practiced beyond

their formal musical qualities – practicing them is an active, “face to face” encounter with sound that activates meaningful relations. Talking about the performance practice of the *ṭubū‘* with this language enables a more invigorating discussion of (modal) musical traditions in how they align with past structures of meaning and provide the means to adjust or create new meaningful relations.

Ethnomusicologists have paid more attention to the expression of identity in musical traditions than to how participants encounter the practice of musical tradition as events with potential for (re)constituting social and cultural formations. This is not a critique. Musicians and their communities have much at stake in the expression of identities with fixed forms. Master-student lineages are crucial for passing down and preserving musical knowledge. Documenting such lineages and readymade identities is crucial for understanding human individuals and communities.

But framing ethnographic moments as *sonic events* that have potential and vitality to shape seemingly fixed forms of identity is also crucial for understanding how human agents utilize music, in this case, to do the work of becoming. In Tunisia with the *ṭubū‘*, musicians play these melodic-rhythmic clichés and participants encounter the nuances of the *ṭubū‘* that have been a resource for Tunisians to relate to their social, cultural, and natural environments for centuries. In this way, these musical phrases are a gateway to consider how musical structure relates to social meaning. Part Two comprises three chapters which take this consideration seriously. The music theory analyses of Part One give way to philosophical and anthropological discussions in Part Two in order to better understand how the Tunisian clichés have become such an important musical marker for social distinctiveness. I do this by exploring concepts and processes such as “effectivity,” “immanence,” and

“territorialization.” This shift from musical notation and structure, to philosophy and cultural theory is perhaps abrupt. It is not common in music studies scholarship to triangulate music theory, ethnography, and (post-structural) philosophy. In doing so, I aim to animate a discussion that takes seriously the music, so to speak, and the conceptual language one can use to think about the cultural and the social. Sonic events are musical events. But I take them also as perceptual events beyond a linguistic framework. Perceiving musical events in this way gestures to how music makes new geographies and how sound, in particular, carries on in this live, performative way that is not reified within structures of “tradition” or “canon.” Inside the immanent, ever-present, performance moment, sound does more than carry musical tradition.

The fulcrum of Part Two is on the melodic-rhythmic clichés, as described in Chapter 2, and how Tunisians settle upon this musical material in their modal tradition to express their social and cultural particularities. Difference – and the classification of differences as “variation” – is so fundamental to knowledge-making in the academy that some may question the need to talk philosophical about “difference” at all. This is particularly the case in disciplines, such as Anthropology and Ethno/Musicology, where human expression of difference is the essential starting point for nearly every type of research inquiry. But the way scholars have classified difference *as variation* in body, geography, or musical tradition, for instance, is not the only way to conceptualize an encounter of difference in the world. In Chapter 3, I will turn to the post-structural philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and his understanding of difference which have become highly influential for recent scholarship in the humanities and social sciences. Principles of Deleuzian difference give insight into the assembling of social and cultural formations, which is a perspective that has benefits for

scholars that practice ethnography. An orientation to difference through Deleuze allows me to investigate how the Tunisian clichés (when performed) come to activate participants and have effect, such as what I observed during fieldwork.

The second chapter of Part Two (Chapter 4) is about how difference gets curated and assembled into territories of meaning. I analyze an event from the famous Testour music festival that I attended in Tunisia to demonstrate how these musical formulas activate territories that mean “Arab” and “Andalusi” for many participants. Underutilized in music scholarship, the principles of territorialization – put forward by Deleuze and his collaborator Félix Guattari – conceptualize how a chaotic world of forces, intensities, and movement can be stabilized and domesticated. Elizabeth Grosz posits this process as making home. For these theorists, a territory is a “little return,” a *ritournelle*, a Refrain – metaphors that are musical but illustrative of social function. Sound, in particular, was a unique combination of matter and motion to Deleuze and Guattari; and I discuss in this chapter how their insights can benefit music scholars who seek to understand how music signifies yet do so without losing the sound’s ephemerality and its resolutely *unsemiotic* qualities. With that perspective, I analyze how the melodic-rhythmic clichés of the Tunisian modes establish territories of meaning that participants still use to stabilize their world and inscribe meaning.

The third and final chapter of Part Two (Chapter 5) brings together the entire dissertation around the term “sonic stamping,” a phrase I coin through the language and metaphors of my Tunisian collaborators. Sonic stamping describes their process of fixing structures of sound and rhythm to manifest social and cultural difference. I liken the networks of melodic-rhythmic clichés that popular the *ṭubū‘* to a media *interface* through the work of Alexander Galloway, Nishant Shah, and Jonathan Sterne. These musical phrases

elicit each mode and thus are the key components for activating any extra-musical meaning that have become attached to the musical modes over times and places. Participants articulate this process of activation through sensory perception (Ar. *iḥsās*) and think of these musical figures as “fingerprints.”

In summary, Part Two takes the insights from the previous two chapters on Tunisian music theory and practice and investigates how these musical insights have social bearing. Sonic stamping is a process that presents the Tunisian musical modes as objects that have a social life, as the title of this dissertation posits. And that social life occurs dynamically against the background of people’s perennial movement in the world.



### Chapter 3. Ṭab‘ al-Nawā and the *Jinn*: Investigating the Intersection of Associations, Performance Practice, and Difference

#### Ṭab‘ al-Nawā and the Jinn

The music students gathered at the Higher Institute of Music in Sfax for a lesson in the ṭubū‘. Today was to be another transmission event of *ṭab‘ al-nawā*, one of the thirteen musical modes of Tunisia. I climbed several flights of stairs, ambled down a narrow hallway, and entered the classroom. The seemingly endless stretches of tile and blank, white-washed cement walls made a cacophonous journey with all the music rehearsals and lessons. I heard *al-nawā* on my way up. Students were singing some of the melodies from last week that we had learned. I entered the classroom, greeted everyone, and sat down in a row amidst a dozen Tunisian students. I prepared myself for the two-hour transmission event.

At class time, our dear Professor Fatma Lajmi authoritatively entered the room, ready to teach. For at least one week, we had been learning the music of *al-nawā*. Our classroom repertoire came out of the old repertoire, which is said to derive from medieval al-Andalus, or Muslim Spain, around the 9<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>1</sup> Practicing the old repertoire in class was a delight! During Lajmi’s transmission events, musical modes manifested in the room like family friends, old mentors, or sometimes – in their difficulty – disciplinarians. Lajmi had already taught us many characteristics of *al-nawā*. For example, we knew that certain

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<sup>1</sup> Although Muslim-backed forces took southern Iberia in 711 CE, I begin my dating with the arrival of the musician Ziryāb, an historical and also legendary musical figure, who migrated to Cordoba (al-Andalus) from Baghdad during the 9<sup>th</sup> century. The 17<sup>th</sup> century marks the final expulsion of Muslim-turned-Christian (“*morisco*”) people in al-Andalus. This was a process that began soon after the conquest of Granada by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella in 1492 and continued to 1614. As for the Jewish people who were also transmitting Andalusi music traditions, Christian forces expelled them much earlier, perhaps beginning in 1391 across many Andalusi cities. Persecution against Andalusi Jews – and the forced migration which resulted – continued throughout the 15<sup>th</sup> century due to the Inquisition, and reached a climax on March 31, 1492 with the Capitulations of Santa Fe after the conquest of Granada. Jewish-turned-Christian (“*converso*”) people who remained in al-Andalus were gradually absorbed into Christian Europe (cf. Amelang 2013).

melodic-rhythmic clichés elicited al-nawā like an announcement; we could improvise a melodic path in the style of al-nawā; and we had learned to recognize particular sonic features of al-nawā. Printed pages of musical notation were in front of us – these songs were our exemplars of the al-nawā repertoire. The printed notation resembled basic melodic skeletons of the songs and functioned as a memory aid while students ornamented the melodies in creative ways.

But more than notation and musical features, al-nawā had other relations. Today, Lajmi would also tell us that al-nawā “brought the jinn,” those non-human beings associated with Islamic cosmology. This point was new to me, and I quickly wrote it down; but the students already seemed familiar with it. With these ideas, melodic features, and pieces of notation before us, the mode of al-nawā was already in the classroom before we began to sing its repertoire. But present and immanent performance moments always have the potential to create much more than the sum of these parts. We knew that we would elicit al-nawā again today during transmission, and I wondered how al-nawā would show up.

We spent an hour and a half practicing and singing through three of the four al-nawā songs in our classroom repertoire. Lajmi stopped us from time to time in order to correct our Arabic pronunciation or adjust our renditions of the melodic lines. We finally reached the fourth and final song of the set, singing “The flames of love do not die out”...*Laysa li-nār al-hawā khumūdu*. We were knee-deep in al-nawā, in that the melodic-rhythmic clichés and other features of the mode saturated the space and our sensory faculties. The sonic intensity doubled in the room with this song. The fast three-beat rhythm of *Laysa li-nār* propelled its well-known cliché of an octave fall from a high d to the tonic D. More than other formulas in

al-nawā, this one singularly defined and elicited the presence of the mode. It got raucous in the room.

Professor Lajmi perceived the shift in “mood” (Ar. *jaww*). The *jaww* was just right, she said, to teach us another al-nawā song. This was unplanned, but she freely wrote the Arabic lyrics on the board from her memory and began to teach us both the melodic phrases and lyrics: “O my heart, be patient with what you desire”... *Yā qalbī sabaran ‘alay mā kunta tihuwa!* The students responded ecstatically to the novel call-and-response style of the singing. How exciting and pleasurable musical difference can be, even in its very compositional form. The students were visibly enjoying the melodic lines and also the growing intensities of our *jaww*.

At one point, Lajmi stopped again to correct our singing. The students punctuated her pedagogy with jokes and asides. “I swear, al-nawā brings the jinn!” remarked one student, as the laughter was particularly rowdy at one point. “Bismillah!” [In God’s name], answered another student, indicating that he knew how to respond when threatened by the jinn. Playful and full of effectivity, the actualization of al-nawā continued.

Lajmi led us straight through *Yā qalbī sabaran* and seamlessly back to the previous song *Laysa li-nār*. The energy intensified even more. The students knew this last song well. They raised the volume of their voices, and it was electric. We finished the song at a clip, ending on beat two of three. This rhythmic conclusion gave me the feeling of suspension and abruptness. Students smiled at each other, trying to catch their breath and exuding satisfaction in their quick learning. Again, laughter peppered the chatter.

A female student in the row in front of me diverted my attention. “I got hot!” [anā skhunt], she exclaimed. For her, the actualization of al-nawā had somatic consequences.

What she meant was that al-nawā had, in fact, elicited the jinn. Her reddened cheeks and I'm-really-serious expression caused a host of responses from the other students. One student quickly got up to open a window to cool her body temperature. Another student smiled and said programmatically, "Bismillah!" [In God's name]. More laughter. But other students were just smirking slightly or not laughing at all. They seemed to empathize with the jinn-inflicted student. Raised eyebrows. Slight anxiety. Nervous laughter. Everyone consented that al-nawā was in the room; but the students had *variably* interpreted its effects. You could say that the room was full of our singular encounters with al-nawā, as the effects were not aligned from one student to the next. And those singularities were having multiple reverberations as the students observed each other and reacted. It had all started with the force of al-nawā.

In the midst of this visitation...with the laughter...those disconcerted...the curious...the affected...and the unaffected, the transmission event came to a close. With the same jovial humor from the class session, Lajmi ended class, "Dégagez!" [Get outta here].

### **The Effectivity of the Ṭubū‘**

The ṭubū‘ affect, or influence, Tunisian participants; but how does this process happen? How do participants utilize the musical modes to relate to non-musical phenomena, such as the jinn? All of these modes have histories of sensory and extra-sensory associations. For example, besides summoning the nonhuman jinn, ṭab‘ al-nawā is also said to provoke the separation of friends due to how the mode induces feelings of sadness and nostalgia (Snoussi 2004:54).<sup>2</sup> Another anecdote relates that historically Tunisian ensembles tended not to

perform an entire *nūba* in *al-nawā* because each time they attempted it, the ensemble would fall apart (Mahdi 1972:47). Apparently, *al-nawā* influences animals too. From a series of radio broadcasts in the 1960s, the well-known Tunisian musician and scholar Manoubi Snoussi said that *al-nawā* “has...the reputation of making a tear of sadness flow from the eye of the camel, when recalling its state of servitude and humiliation” (2004:54). The students I observed did not talk about camels and nostalgia when we sang through *al-nawā* that day. But the *jinn* came, which demonstrates that *al-nawā* still affects people, in that it relates them to specific social, cultural, and natural environments.

In another fieldwork event, during a rehearsal of the *Musiques du Monde* (World Music) ensemble at the Institute, I observed how the director, Professor Ghassen ‘Azaiez, used a musical mode from the Eastern Mediterranean to ease students’ fear and anxiety after a traumatizing event. At the beginning of the rehearsal, as one percussionist warmed up on his drum, he lost control of his instrument and his body due to an epileptic fit. Both instrument and body fell to the ground violently, without restraint; and as I and others rushed to his side, Professor ‘Azaiez called emergency medical staff. Soon after, medical personnel arrived and took the percussionist out of rehearsal on a stretcher. The students were visibly shocked and disturbed and silently filed back to their seats. At this moment, Professor ‘Azaiez led everyone in unison singing within the mode of the *Mashriqī al-bayyātī*. Starting on the note D and then slowly ascending the notes of the scale to B<sup>̄</sup> (i.e., D-E<sup>̄</sup>-F-G-A-B<sup>̄</sup>), we sang *al-bayyātī* following ‘Azaiez’s lead. After this exercise, a somewhat normal music rehearsal transpired.

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<sup>2</sup> In Arabic, *nawā* is translated in English as “remoteness” or “distance” (Wehr 1979:1188), which corresponds to this idea of separation between friends.

“What was the purpose of *that* singing?” I asked ‘Azaiez after rehearsal. He smiled and appeared pleased that I had noticed this brief musical moment. He said that the students had needed to release their emotions after the trauma of seeing their colleague in an epileptic fit. “al-Bayyātī is good for this,” he said, and the catharsis had been successful, evidenced by the tears of one student, and the heaves and sighs of others. In that event, it was not just the fact that music affects people but also that musicians can harness this power and use it effectively to relate participants to intensities of the body that were deemed unhealthy. The practice of al-bayyātī through singing enabled some students – perhaps not all – to make those relations.

The point that musical modes – or music in general – influences participants is hardly a new idea. More specifically for Arab music, many medieval and some modern music theorists and scholars have discussed *ta’thīr* or the “influence” of a mode’s practice upon humans (Marcus 1989a:747-54 ; Popper 2019:318-20).<sup>3</sup> Most often, discussions about ta’thīr resemble classifications – taxonomies of relations – between named modes and specific non-musical associations. From emotions, moods, and bodily humors to times of the day, seasons of the year, and the zodiac, theorists and scholars cite the variation of relations that people make to certain modes (cf. Benaissa 1997:71-8). The statement that the Tunisian mode of al-nawā “brings the jinn” is a statement within a long line of similar documentation which establishes the fact that participants make associations when certain modes are practiced.

Based on both vignettes, however, it is more accurate to say that al-nawā has the *potential* to affect participants in specific ways. One ethnographic event yields a multitude of

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<sup>3</sup> Ta’thīr is distinct from – but inclusive of – *ṭarab* experiences in the Eastern Mediterranean. *Ṭarab* (ecstasy or enchantment) experiences occur within certain musical genres and social contexts, as well as associated with certain performance practices (Racy 2003:5-7).

observations; and in my retelling of the al-nawā event, I have foregrounded the multiplicity of encounters with al-nawā that I observed and participated in. There was a general excitement in the classroom as we practiced al-nawā; one student related to the jinn; and others had different encounters and reactions through the practice of al-nawā. That intersection between difference, encounter, and association, or said another way, between difference, performance practice, and social or cultural actualization is of interest to me. In that intersection, the ṭubū‘ potentiate the actualization of culture and society. Not only do Tunisian participants maintain historical forms of actualization in this moment – e.g., “al-nawā brings the jinn” – but they also shift those historical forms or create new associations altogether.

Musicians intuitively, perhaps, understand that music affects people. Despite not always theorizing it, they put music into practice. Musicians do not know how their improvisations or standard repertoire performances will influence participants in the moment – just as Professor Fatma Lajmi did not plan for a student to relate to the jinn in our classroom. But the practice of musical modes releases the potential to actualize associations, manifest and possibly innovate tradition, and form meaning. Professor ‘Azaiez harnessed this potential to assist his ensemble with processing trauma. In transmitting the performance practice of modes, musicians and pedagogues do not just pass along tradition but disseminate the capacity of music to potentiate it.

The capacity that modal music has to potentiate social and cultural formation is a point that is *not* expressed in conventional discussions of ta’thīr, perhaps because potentiality is not the actualization of associations. These classification systems are more evident to record; and how exactly does one document potentiality? Nevertheless, musical modes have

potential to dynamically relate people to their bodies and environments. With a focus on potentiality rather than a list of associations, the *process* of actualization becomes a primary concern for investigation, and the types and variations of associations become secondary. And even though both music's potential and its non-musical associations are insightful for music scholars, the former is arguably more insightful. Non-musical associations change over time. Old relations are innovated and/or replaced. What is consistent, however, is that the ṭubū' continue to potentiate the experiences Tunisians have in relating to their environments. The modes still bring vitality to the process of actualizing social and cultural meaning. One insight for music scholars is that al-nawā, for instance, brings the jinn. But the greater insight is in how participants consistently practice al-nawā – including elicitation and recognition – in order to make such associations. How do participants utilize modes to do this kind of work, to make relations to social, cultural, and natural environments?

This inquiry drives the pursuit in Part Two of this dissertation. In it, I analyze aspects of my fieldwork to conceptualize the process I witnessed as well as search for language that articulates the potentiality that resides in the practice of the ṭubū'. This process – one that, at its center, utilized the melodic-rhythmic clichés of the ṭubū' – enables Tunisians to re/un/make meaning. "Effectivity" is another translation of the Arabic word *ta'thīr* and is an appropriate departure point to enter this pursuit. "Affectivity" – with an "a" – describes the potential of an object to influence something/one by inducing some sort of emotional quality (OED). The musical modes have affectivity, as demonstrated by Professor 'Azaiez's use of *Mashriqī al-bayyātī*, for example; and several Tunisian music scholars have also documented the emotional qualities of the ṭubū' (cf. Zouari 2006, Snoussi 2004). Affectivity, in general, is one of the central ways modern Arab theorists have understood *ta'thīr* (Marcus



1989a:748). But Tunisian modes relate participants to more than emotions and moods, as my first vignette illustrates with al-nawā. Based on both vignettes, it is better to say that, at base, the ṭubū‘ have the potential to produce an *effect*, or a result, in participants. Some of these results may be of an emotional quality while others have to do with additional qualities of the body, or of time, or on place. Potentializing a result through intention or desire is to say that the ṭubū‘ “effectuate” or have “effectivity” (OED). Through performance practice, musical modes are sonic objects that can bring about a change in participants, or accomplish an intention or desire. Thus, the ṭubū‘ have *effectivity*, in that they are full of potential to accomplish a result when practiced.

At times, the effects of the ṭubū‘ are heavily curated and coded. For the Tunisian music students, pedagogues, composers, and professional musicians whom I interacted with during fieldwork, the ṭubū‘ have effectivity to relate them primarily to the nation-state. From day one in a music student’s education, the modes are “Tunisian” and also “Arab” and “Andalusi.” These are all state-supported identity formations that Tunisian and non-Tunisian scholars have documented persistently as important for the social expression of the ṭubū‘ (Guettat 2002; Davis 1997a, 2003; Poché 1995:19-20; Langlois 2009). From informal conversations with a Tunisian family in Tunis during the first week of my fieldwork, to observations at summer mālūf festivals during the last months of my fieldwork, I heard Tunisians consistently code the ṭubū‘ as a unique, national expression (“Tunisian” or *tūnisī*) that was also connected to other nation-states of North Africa (*maghribī*) as well as older lineages stretching back to medieval Muslim Spain (*andalusī*), Arab (*‘arabī*), and even Ottoman-Turkish cultures. At the Institute in Sfax, the ṭubū‘ were considered one of the core musical aspects of a national heritage (Ar. *turāth*, Fr. *patrimoine*), an association bolstered by

the state through such publications as the nine *Tunisian Musical Heritage* volumes which features repertoire associated specifically with these modes. When practiced, the ṭubū‘ elicit this “grid of intelligibility” for participants, in that the music makes modern citizenship and its structures and affects legible.<sup>4</sup> I discuss this legibility in more detail when discussing my observations at the Testour Festival of Mālūf and Traditional Arab Music in Chapter 4.

At other times, the effects of the ṭubū‘ are less curated and more experiential, as demonstrated in this chapter’s vignettes. The melodic-rhythmic clichés of the ṭubū‘ provide a sort of blueprint to distinguish between modes so that participants can make relations to a wide range of non-musical phenomena. But it is not a guarantee that curation will succeed – that certain types of relations will be made for participants. Difference plays a key role in this regard. My Tunisian collaborators first alerted me to difference in their descriptions of the practice of the ṭubū‘ via the melodic-rhythmic clichés. They called these clichés “distinctive” and “characteristic” (Ar. *mumayyiza*) for themselves when comparing their musical tradition – and themselves – to other musical traditions and people in the Mediterranean region (see Chapter 2). At times, I heard them reason that these distinctive musical clichés were like a “dialect” (Ar. *lahja*) among other Arab music traditions (Gharbi 2019a, 2019b; Lajmi 2018-2019). It makes sense, then, that Tunisians also call these special musical clichés, “phrases” – a word that is also used to describe a linguistic sentence (Ar. pl. *jumal*, sing. *jumla*). In this perspective, every region that practices modes has specific musical phrases that establishes difference, just like a dialect delineates social and cultural difference. Linguistic metaphors,

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<sup>4</sup> French philosopher, historian, and critical studies scholar Michel Foucault (1926-1984) discussed the *grid* as a system that classifies human individuals and their experiences according to structures of knowledge and power in a given time period (1966). Foucault uses discourse analysis to reveal the grid and make it legible, that is, able to be read. I draw out this phrase “grid of intelligibility” from Foucault’s first volume in the *History of Sexuality* (1978:93). My thanks to Bishnupriya Ghosh for emphasizing this phrase in our conversations about the ṭubū‘.

such as this one, are useful to understand how the ṭubū‘ relate people to meaning, and scholars and theorists of Mediterranean modal music traditions have often used these types of metaphors to describe performance practice (Abou-Mrad 2015; Royer-Artuso 2015; Farraj and Abu Shumays 2019:415).<sup>5</sup> Difference, seen through a linguistic metaphor of “dialect,” is *variation*. Dialects vary one from another; but they are all still classified together within the same classification system: language or, in this case, Arab modal music. Tunisian musicians conceptualize their practice of the ṭubū‘ within the more generalized category of Arab music – a category that, again, demonstrates how effectively the ṭubū‘ relate participants to ethnic and nation-state formations of meaning and belonging.

Yet, what surprised me during some transmission events of the ṭubū‘ was how participants encountered and experienced the ṭubū‘ differently, outside of variation. In these observations, I understood difference not in terms of variation but in terms of something less representational and more present, experiential, and dynamic. After several months of learning the ṭubū‘ and talking to musicians inside and outside of the Institute, I had gathered that for my collaborators, the distinctive practice of the ṭubū‘ was far more important than the taxonomies of associations that practice elicited. The melodic-rhythmic clichés were the most critical aspect of transmission and not the knowledge of historical associations. The melodic-rhythmic clichés assuredly sounded the nation-state – and everyone knew that; but these clichés were also a resilient kind of musical interface or network for Tunisians to experience their present moment and consider old and new relations to their environments – relations

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<sup>5</sup> A grammatical interpretation of musical modes is not the only kind of metaphor in use. For example, some theorists and musicians interpret practice through gustatory discourse, describing melodic features and even jins structure as “spices” or “flavors” that differentiate performance practice (Aydemir 2010:8; Ederer 2015:131; Gharbi 2019b).

that were not always associated with the nation-state. Thus, musical practices that seemed to only amplify the associations of the nation-state (e.g., “Tunisian”) began to demonstrate to me a broader functionality to enable expressions of a more profound understanding of difference. These expressions could re/create those seemingly fixed and stable associations.

I return again to the idea that the effectivity of the *ṭubū‘* demonstrate how musical modes potentiate social and cultural formations. If some kind of fundamental, alternative state of difference is present in the ethnographic events that I observed, then the highly structured practice of the melodic-rhythmic clichés provided a dependable modality for this difference to emerge and be inscribed into the relations that inform society and culture. In other words, these musical events showed that something precedes meaning, and that organized sonic structures played a crucial role in this formation process.

This type of difference – rather than the classificatory kind of difference as “variation” – needs investigation. In what follows, I parse difference through the work of Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995), a French philosopher who began his theoretical work with an eye towards difference, during the important post-structural decade of the 1960s. Not only do the language and metaphors of Deleuze offer scholars alternative ways of conceptualizing society and culture, but scholars across the social sciences and humanities have recently found his ideas productive for rethinking how social and cultural formations occur (Massumi 2015). More specifically, music scholars have recently utilized the world of Deleuze—and that with Guattari (1980)—in recent work to understand listening practices, create materialist ethnographies, and theorize social becoming (Kielian-Gilbert 2010; Gill 2017; Moisala et al. 2014 and 2017; cf. Hulse and Nesbitt 2010). The Deleuzian concepts of difference, immanence, and transcendence that I now explore – along with the process of

territorialization in Chapter 4 – help me to understand the processes of inscribing difference into social and cultural formations via the practice of the Tunisian ṭabū‘ that I analyzed in Part One of this dissertation.

### **Gilles Deleuze: Difference as Multiple Singularities**

During the transmission of al-nawā, Professor Lajmi and the students practiced al-nawā by performing its repertoire which presented a number of characteristic melodic-rhythmic clichés and other musical features of the mode. The mood in the room was exuberant; and by the end of the event, one student had an experience with the jinn through encountering al-nawā. I would argue that questioning whether such “spiritual” manifestation is real or not, is antiquated and bends toward exoticizing the encounter. For me, a crucial point is that the musical mode of al-nawā elicited a non-musical association with the body – a series of relations that is unaccounted for in the scholarly literature on modal music. Equally intriguing is why this actualization of al-nawā was not a collective experience for all the participants in the room, including myself. Students had a variety of encounters with al-nawā and reactions to the nonhuman visitation: playful disbelief, outright incredulity, ambivalence, empathy, and others. Instead of glossing over these differences, I seek to understand how meaning comes out of such events. My curiosity raises questions not only about how to approach ethnographic events for analysis but also how to theorize an openness to the variables, contradictions, and obtuse non-normative shapes that emerge during transmission.

Ṭab‘ al-nawā had effectivity, but those experiences were singular. In other words, al-nawā did not elicit one set of meaningful relations; rather participants had multiple experiences during the event. That kind of observable reality of *difference* or “multiple singularities” is a concept associated with Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995) in his pioneering study

entitled *Repetition and Difference* (1968/1994).<sup>6</sup> Challenging the very basis of Western philosophical thinking from Plato to the present, Deleuze argues that “difference” is the only logical starting point for building up structures of representation, analogy, or other comparative stances – all common structures of logic in university disciplines. When Deleuze published his magnum opus in the 1960s, “difference” was the *mot du jour* for many intellectuals who viewed the human experience not through universality but through sets of power relations and particularities. Many of Deleuze’s contemporaries and intellectual companions, such as Michel Foucault (1926-1984) and Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), dealt more with literature or history in their dismantling of universal structure. For them, as with Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975), words and language were *discourse* that had a “living impulse” to do powerful things in the world (Bakhtin 1972/1981:292). Deleuze emerged out of the academic discipline of (Western) Philosophy to advance his post-structural insights about difference and often did so with examples of sound and image. It is for this latter reason, in particular, that Deleuze offers scholars of music profound insights on how to think about difference alongside the medium of sound.

Synthesizing the crucial arguments that Gilles Deleuze makes in his seminal publication *Difference and Repetition* is like describing the taste of a lemon. The experience of reading Deleuze is distinct, impressionistic, and unforgettable but also seemingly impossible to articulate fully. I commence with the phrase “multiple singularity” as a pathway into the Deleuzian labyrinth and quote from his preface: “Beneath the general

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<sup>6</sup> Deleuze (1925-1995) was a French philosopher that achieved remarkable influence during his lifetime during the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In *Difference and Repetition* – published in 1968 and translated to English in 1994 – Deleuze arguably overturned basic principles in philosophy and metaphysics embedded within the Western tradition, beginning with Plato and Aristotle. His contributions to many fields in the humanities are vast, and his highly imaginary and creative writing style – especially in the co-published work with Félix Guattari – continues to shape discussions today in areas such as biopower, new media, and new materialism.

operation of laws,[...] there always remains the play of singularities” (1994:25). The “laws” are the logics of generality and repetition, and the “play of singularities” is difference defined as a univocal or singular expression. But all of this needs further unpacking.

In *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze deals with the dialectic of sameness and difference – a dialectic of logic that he genealogizes to the dialogues of Plato in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Instead of posing that the fundamental experience with the world is through a logic of sameness or imitation – as Plato and Plato’s lineage did – Deleuze emphasizes difference by pointing out the logical fallacies of sameness to fully explain manifestations in the world. For Deleuze, difference is the something that troubles the human tendency to pattern behavior or order thinking (1994:138). Difference is the *surprise* in human experience, the *glitch* in carefully ordered protocols, the *slip* in a curated presentation, and the *trans* in human identity formations. Instead of conceptualizing these realities as secondary to order, Deleuze frames the observation of difference as a first-order, fundamental “encounter” (1994:139). This is a stance that defines encounters with the world before the interpolation of those encounters into patterned formations of culture and society.

The surprise of finding manifestations in the world that are unrecognizable or out-of-alignment in form or shape becomes Deleuze’s philosophical moment to consider difference not as the absence or disorder of something else but as the very presence of something in itself that he calls “difference in itself.” Deleuzian *difference in itself* is one of the most difficult concepts to understand, even in its centrality to the entire argument. Part of the reason for this is Deleuze’s insistence that the way to apprehend this unadorned and base-level form of difference is through its opposite: repetition, order, and patterns of recognition. That seeming contradiction needs a great deal of explication.

## The Logic of Representation

First, Deleuze sets out to analyze repetition and sameness before getting to *difference in itself*. Sameness is defined by representation, meaning “*identity* with regard to concepts, *opposition* with regard to the determination of concepts, *analogy* with regard to judgement, [and] *resemblance* with regard to objects” (1994:137, italics mine). These four figures of identity, opposition, analogy and resemblance are methods for forming representation inside an event. They are the tools of a representational logic. To Deleuze, objects that are constituted through representational logic are assemblages of matter, ideas, and intensities do not necessarily belong together. He argues that representation is a contrived logic, meaning that objects assembled through this kind of logic are not reflective of the world as it really is. The logic of representation brings out an artificial alignment – a sense of rightness – to things and beings that move in the world. Aspects of asymmetry, chaos, and disorder are hidden through such alignment. Representations assist humans in making sense of the world from encounter to encounter. But this logic also masks the play of difference that, according to Deleuze, is the most logical constitution of the world.

Deleuzian singularity proposes the very deconstruction of Western philosophy – the touchstone of university departments, academic disciplines, and their methodologies. “Beneath the general laws of operation” – or underneath the logic of sameness and imitation that is said to normalize a fundamental encounter of the world – there is the play of non-normative difference. Deleuze’s argument is tantamount to saying that perceiving the world’s phenomena through relations of sameness is not perceiving the world as it really is. Imitation



is normalized way to make sense of phenomena, but that no thing has a match of components. Difference is all there is.

There is a wide separation between the disciplines of Philosophy and Ethnomusicology, in terms of – but not limited to – methodology. But representational logics circulate across disciplines. An ethnomusicologist of Middle Eastern music may not realize that they follow Plato’s representational logic when they group musical phenomena into the category of “Arab music.” But that attempt to make congruency between disparate manifestations of expressive culture allows for such a categorization. What seems to be a significant danger to Deleuze about representational logic—a danger that many scholars would share—is how representations innately have a certain disregard for differences. Deleuze proposes that this act of erasure happens in two ways: (1) humans categorize objects with the same exteriority even though the interiority is disparate; or conversely (2) humans categorizes objects with a similar interiority but a differentiated exteriority. For instance, returning to the category of “Arab music,” Arab ethnicity could be considered exterior congruency to establish such a category, even though scholars and musicians are well aware that non-Arab or mixed-Arab descending musicians (i.e., an interior quality of “Arab music”) are lumped into “Arab music.” If one considers “modal music” a category of expression, interior sameness could be defined as scales and tetrachordal structures. That interior congruency has enabled scholars and musicians to compare musical phenomena across vastly different geographies from Morocco to Central China (i.e., an exterior shape of “modal music”). “Arab music” and “modal music” are both representational categories that account for expressive culture in the world. But in each case, Deleuzian theory on difference demonstrates that some kind of incongruency must be elided to make that logic work.

This argument is a philosophical one, despite its helpful and harmful consequences for human and nonhuman collectives. Deleuze does not think like an anthropologist, for instance, noting how representational logic in the form of language or kinship organization is helpful, if not necessary for human survival. Representations hold a set of phenomena – no matter their incongruencies – and constellates them in relation to one another for a purpose. These constellations enable social and cultural formations and processes – such as education and transmission – which, again, have significance for the survival of humans. Representational logic gives architecture to the world. The constellated categories that emerge through Deleuze’s figures of identity, opposition, analogy and resemblance have purpose, even in their contrived and illogical semblances.<sup>7</sup> “Arab music” and “modal music” are helpful categories, in that they constellate musical practices to tell stories about connection. Likewise, in the very act of comparing the *ṭubū‘* and *maqāmāt*, Tunisian musicians and pedagogues establish a constellation of sorts that structures musical encounters for people, in terms of their listening habits, their sense of self and other, their connection to pastness, and their trajectory for musical participation – to name a few aspects.

But, for Deleuze, the persistent issue is that representational logic does not fully explain the world humans inhabit nor account for the diversity in human and nonhuman lifeways. The architecture of representational logic can be ersatz (a problem of exteriority) and also a façade (a problem of interiority). To put it plainly, making congruency can overwhelm the structure itself, offering delusions, disempowering human autonomy, and

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<sup>7</sup> I use “illogical” in a non-pejorative sense to call attention to how representations must foreground sameness and background difference in order to make the relations work. It follows that representations are not necessarily “logical.” It follows that the theories of Deleuzian difference actually end up legitimating and giving value to aberrant, “illogical,” and non-normative aspects of human lifeways.

controlling human movement. The grim consequences of universalizing representations are many and demonstrate the need for post- and de-structural thinking. Enter: *difference in itself*.

### **Difference in Itself**

As mentioned previously, a difficulty in understanding Deleuzian difference is in figuring out how to apprehend it. For, Deleuze argues that *difference in itself* is mediated only through representational logic. He means that only through the figures of identity, opposition, analogy, and resemblance are people able to perceive the presence of difference (cf. 1994:34-5). Simply put, only under the cover of sameness does difference emerge. The logic of Deleuze at this point seems to be circular, if not outright contradictory. If he is interested in deconstructing the representational logic of Western Philosophy in order to privilege difference, how is it that representational relations become the vehicle to manifest difference?

It is at this point in the argument that Deleuze drops deeply into the thinking of John Duns Scotus (1265/66–1308 CE), a medieval European philosopher and Christian theologian who proposed the concept of the *univocity* of being. The parameters of this argument and how Deleuze extends and extrapolates upon it, is beyond the scope of this chapter. But one of Duns Scotus' conclusions is that even though representational logic is used to name all objects – in his case, the object of “God” – it does not mean that the attributes behind this analogic naming are the same. Being is “univocal” in that existence is a state of sameness for living things. This category of sameness glosses difference despite the obvious manifestations between things that live, such as humans, plants, and animals. For Duns

Scotus, the principle of univocity enabled one to talk about the divine using the same language to talk about humans or animals – an issue for many medieval philosophers at the time. But even in speaking representationally, utilizing the same linguistic constructs, the attributes of existence are different – vastly so – down to the minutiae.

The principle of univocity that Deleuze lifts from Duns Scotus proposes that irreducible difference—singular in its expression—constitutes all beings; and that in saying “all beings,” this proposition does not displace difference. Deleuze gives a synthesis of Duns Scotus’ univocity in the chapter on “Difference in Itself,” writing that “equal being [i.e., univocity] is immediately present in everything, without mediation or intermediary, even though things reside unequally in this equal being” (1994:37). With the additional aid of the Dutch Jewish philosopher Spinoza (1632-1677), Deleuze demonstrates how this principle of univocity uncovers difference not as an absence of something but as a presence that constitutes a thing at a fundamental level. Moreover, *difference in itself* is universally distributed across humans and all existent forms. It is the substance and dynamic underlying an ontological (read: real) encounter with the world (1994:40).

Apprehending ontological difference underneath layers of repetition and representation is a fundamental tension in Deleuze’s work. Difference is the only real constitution of everything in the world – but elusively so. Instead of describing the world as a patterned reality, built from Ideal forms, such as Plato and Aristotle proposed, Deleuze reverses the logic to say that the world actually manifests through differences that are singular in their essence and never to be repeated.

This Deleuzian metaphysical move that understands the singularities of the world as the most basic aspect in constituting social, cultural, and natural environments is having a

profound effective on scholarship today. Perceiving difference in this way has proven productive, especially in the areas of embodiment and affect studies, and new materialism (Lorimer 2008; Cadman 2009; Coole and Frost 2010). These and other areas of study are often categorized (ironically!) as non-representational topics or, better put, “more-than-representational” (Lorimer 2005). It is not that representational logic ceases to exist. Rather, Deleuzian difference has drawn attention to the incongruities, excess, and misalignments of representational objects in order to give value to what falls between the cracks. In such scholarship, Deleuzian principles of difference have been exceptionally conducive as a conceptual practice for scholars to reimagine and rethink their objects of study. Additionally, Deleuzian thinking has pervaded the ethnographic methods of some scholars to such an extent that the orientation to difference is called a “recursive turn” or “ontological turn” (Holbraad, Pederson, de Castro 2014; Holbraad 2017; Heywood 2017; Biehl and Locke 2017). Understanding the point that ethnographic events manifest multiple singularities which lie outside of salient social and cultural formations is a critical move in these reorientations; and Deleuze’s logic of immanence is also necessary to fully make sense of these moves.

### **Immanence and Transcendence**

The jinn and trauma – two associations from my opening vignettes – are both more-than-representational things. Conventionally, the jinn are nonhuman and unseen beings that affect humans negatively; and trauma can be understood as the result of emotional ruptures in the body that the psyche is not prepared to deal with in the moment (Freud 1961). In both situations, the ṭubū‘ enabled participants to make these kinds of relations, and several did.

One student related to the jinn through her encounter with al-nawā; and several students related to and expressed emotions through their encounter with al-bayyātī. Some participants did not make these relations. Everyone had their own encounters with the manifestation of al-nawā and al-bayyātī, and these multiple singularities as difference is an appropriate place to start in thinking about the intersection of performance practice and extra-musical associations. Some singularities stood out more than others, and I have curated these singularities in my own retelling of these stories in this chapter. Singularities have reverberations and resonances too within an event. In the al-nawā vignette, the student's somatic experience reverberated strongly among the students and caused a number of other behaviors which added to one's knowledge of and experience with al-nawā. The incongruous encounters with al-nawā that I witnessed (and experienced myself) were actualized moments with al-nawā as a present, performed thing.

To say this with Deleuzian language, the *immanent* unfolding of the event manifested a "swarm of differences" (1994:50) that would, in turn, feed the *transcendental* concept of al-nawā and give it life beyond this particular event. Tunisian students learn al-nawā as a transcendental concept through disciplinary expertise (i.e., melodic techniques, scales, and repertoire). But students encounter al-nawā as a vital and immanent force through sound and performance practice. Privileging difference (*pace* Deleuze) in analyses and ethnographic descriptions is saying that immanent encounter is so crucial to social and cultural formation that the granularity of difference that comes out of these encounters dictates the abstract and transcendent out-of-time-and-place concepts that move across events. Put another way, difference is the lifeblood of the superstructures of representation that makeup social and

cultural formations. The key conceptual move is to locate difference in immanence and not in transcendence.

Immanence is the location where difference emerges as a singularity. Ethnographers already inhabit immanence through fieldwork. Even though the methodology of “being there” has undergone many transformations since Malinowski’s time, the practice of actualizing presence with people over extended periods of time continues to be an authenticating factor for scholars who study cultural formations (Clifford 1997:61). But inhabiting immanence as a methodology does not equate to abstracting immanence as a conceptual practice. To Deleuze, immanence is a philosophical space that enables thinking about something due to the emergence of any kind of actualization. Said in a more poetic way, immanence is that real moment-to-moment space where materials traverse, affects dance, intensities pulse, and where subjects and objects actualize in an event.

Deleuze collaborated with another scholar, Félix Guattari (1930-1992) – a French psychoanalyst and political philosopher – in several publications that discuss immanence, namely *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987) and *What is Philosophy?* (1996).<sup>8</sup> In both works, they spatialize immanence as a “plane” (Fr. *plan*), using the phrase “plane of immanence.”<sup>9</sup> Insightfully, this word *plan* in the original French publication renders two perspectives: a pre-assembled background and an orientation for future becoming (de Beistegui 2005:83). In other words, immanence is both the conceptual background for thinking about encounters

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<sup>8</sup> These dates relate when these publications were translated to the English language. The original French language publications were issued in 1980 and 1991, respectively.

<sup>9</sup> In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari introduce this concept as the “plane of consistency” which later becomes the “plane of immanence” in *What is Philosophy?*.

inside an event, and also a conceptual space that orients the consequential trajectories of an event.

It follows that for ethnographers to conceptualize immanence during fieldwork events, they consider occurrences and encounters in two ways: as a part of past formations, and as newly emergent for the (re)assembling of formations. Notably for Deleuze and Guattari, immanence is not defined by a certain cultural theory or philosophy or academic discipline, even as they emerge from their own academic lineage in (Western) Philosophy. Rather, they ground immanence in chaos. The plane of immanence is a “section of chaos” when the unthought condenses to the thought, where movement prevails, and where the speed of that movement is fast and exceptionally curvy (1994:42). Thinking about an ethnographic event is abstracting chaos, *pace* Deleuze and Guattari. The curves of movement (i.e., difference embedded in a lived life) straighten during the actualization process; but in posing immanence as a conceptual starting point for perceiving the world, the unthought of chaos is always present to (de)tangle formations.

To relate Deleuzian immanence to other humanities fields, the concept is somewhat akin to “critical distance.” A common methodological stance is that scholars should maintain distance from the object of study in order to perceive that object in a critical way as well as reflect on one’s own presuppositions and biases. Understanding immanence as a method and also a conceptual practice collapses this distance and disallows the removal of the thinker from thinking about events. To say it another way, scholars can perceive an event critically without accepting “distance” as a normative stance. And because the actualizations of objects occur on this plane of immanence, the bold claim is that ethnographers can investigate the assembling of meaning before it is inscribed. It follows that abstracting immanence allows an



exterior view of large formations such as *history*, *society*, and *culture*. Deleuze and Guattari would view each of these large formations as intensively territorialized assemblages rather than the a priori starting point for analysis – which is arguably a way archivists and ethnographers conventionally approach their objects of study.

The consequences of ignoring immanence align to the same consequences of universalizing representational objects. Without viewing the assembly process, formations tend to control, manipulate, and reify illusion. Without a pre-actualized and philosophical space to think about an event, the world-shaping danger is that formations remain universalized and hide the “play of singularities” that manifest during immanent events.

Immanence, then, is the starting point for apprehending difference. But transcendence – its binary opposite – is also a critical piece of the conceptual apparatus. As an event manifests multiple singularities, it also makes visible transcendent or universalized formations that flow through and across events. This complicated Deleuzian relationship between immanence and transcendence is key to understanding how difference manifests in an ethnographic event and how these singularities come to sustain all human social and cultural formations.

In my first vignette, the students met together to actualize a transcendent object: *ṭab‘ al-nawā*. Transcendental objects are constellations of certain singularities that have accreted over time through processes of curation. Professor Lajmi began the transmission event by telling us some of these points in the constellation: that people believe *al-nawā* brings the jinn, that certain melodic-rhythmic clichés elicit the mode, that *al-nawā* has a scalar form, that people associate specific melodic features with *al-nawā*. Disciplinary knowledge and expertise come in and out of immanent events to carve the movement of difference. But in

those performative moments of al-nawā, one finds the transcendent riddled with holes. The students' asides, mocking laughter, and singular encounters with the sounding of al-nawā demonstrates that the musical mode is much more than its transcendent constellation. The multiple singularities encountered through al-nawā's immanence demonstrates "breaks of continuity" and "impassable fissures" between things in the world (Deleuze 1994:35). How does one accommodate difference in an immanent event? By making it inferior to transcendent forms, or by arbitrarily choosing which singularities fit the transcendent forms, or by dismissing difference altogether? Ultimately, these questions get to the heart of how I can come to understand the effectivity of a musical mode during performance.

Perhaps the first step within an immanent moment is to never discount difference. Deleuze insists that "...every time we find ourselves confronted or bound by a limitation or an opposition [i.e., representational logic], we should ask what such a situation presupposes. It presupposes a swarm of differences, a pluralism of free, wild or untamed differences...all of which persist alongside the simplifications of limitation and opposition" (1994:50). In that case, the transmission event of al-nawā manifested a plurality of effects. To me, this demonstrates that whatever al-nawā has come to mean across events, this structure is not the final say in what effect al-nawā has in the immanent moment. Said in another way, the representational moments of comparison, resemblance, and identification that the Tunisian students actualized in their encounters of al-nawā became openings for me to perceive the presence of difference; and these singularities unsettled the disciplinary, structural forms of al-nawā.

My purpose is to discuss the importance of how multiple singularities (now understood to be enwrapped in comparison, resemblance, and identity) are observable within

an immanent event and have the potential to reassemble larger social and cultural formations that act transcendently, passing between events. For if the transcendental form of al-nawā—as an assemblage of scales, music theory, and repertoire—exists, it does so through the sustenance of immanent moments. Deleuze famously posits that “immanence is...a life” in one of his most evocative and well-read essays (1997). He argues that the plane of immanence reveals an essence of a thing as it emerges in that time and in that place. The essence or “this-ness” (Latin: *haecceity*) of a thing precedes its constitution into a “subject” or an “object.” To Deleuze, things *become* a Subject or an Object during immanent events. Subjects and Objects are assemblages that pass across time and place. As such, they are influential within the immanent moment; but they do not explain the manifestations of difference in that moment. A thing itself simply exists in that moment, outside of larger assemblages, even if such a thing is a part of assemblages from other connected events. The mode of al-nawā was a Subject/Object during our transmission event at the Institute. It was a known structure across time and place. But in the performing of al-nawā, Deleuze would argue that it has a presence differentiated from its constitution as a Subject/Object. Its this-ness feeds into its Subject/Object constitution, making alignments and demonstrating misalignments. The interplay of immanence and transcendence is how culture gets made.

To explain further, Deleuze likens the immanence of this-ness to the moment of death for a human, referencing a scene from the novel *Hard Times* by Charles Dickens (1997:4). In its existence, a human life from cradle to grave reveals multiple representations and identities. But in that moment of death, a singularity of being cuts through those identities and “a life” in its pure singularity is gone. Conceptualizing “a life” in this way is a unique stance. It is not a Subject (“I am...”) nor an Object (“He is...”). This singularity of being

nourishes each of these representations; and likewise, Deleuze posits that singularities on the plane of immanence sustain the forms of transcendence across times and places. Immanence feeds the transcendent forms. Difference gives life to society and culture.

Deleuze's concept of immanence and its relation to transcendence is challenging for ethnographic analysis. How does one keep the chaos of the unthought (immanence) in simultaneously play with the determinants of the thought (transcendence) when observing an event? Is it better to emphasize the forceful constraints that transcendent forms exert on the immanent moment rather than conceptualize how difference – under layers of resemblance – moves upon the plane of immanence? Is there really an outside to social and cultural formations? Is there ever a moment when “a life” is *not* subjected to exterior forces?

It is certainly the case that the conceptual world of Deleuze (and that with Guattari) must sprout legs to have relevance with ethnographic practice; and on its own, Deleuzian difference and immanence are more conceptual moves than fieldwork practices. But there are advantages to abstracting immanence and, in turn, conceptualizing an exteriority to large formations or structures. In returning to my vignette a final time, the divergent reactions and dynamic repercussions of al-nawā's effectivity are not side-lined but become essential for understanding the vitality of modal music in transmission. The constellation of points about al-nawā that Professor Lajmi assembled for us that day created a structure for students to encounter the mode through practice. And through performance – most specifically by playing melodic-rhythmic clichés of al-nawā that elicited the mode – the mode had effect for participants. Both structure and performance were significant to my Tunisian collaborators. The transcendent forms of scales and tetrachordal theory and the immanent practices of performing these modes are both important for the vitality of the ṭubū' today. But

apprehending al-nawā's immanent life – which we only get through ethnographic vignettes – gives us a vibrant granularity that pulses through the transcendent forms.

Deleuzian difference encourages us to conceptualize the outside of meaning with delineations of ontological difference that emerge from a plane of immanence in order to analyze how such structures (re)assemble inside events and change structure. Another central component understanding the assembly process is in theorizing reoccurrence, such as in how Tunisians practice certain melodic-rhythmic phrases to the points of deep familiarity. This is the topic of the next chapter.

## Chapter 4: Assembling *Arab* and *Andalusi*: Territorialization and the Ṭubū‘ in Tunisian Mālūf Music

### The Testour Festival, July 2019

The city of Testour conjures unique senses of history for many Tunisians. Located an hour west of Tunis in the north of the country, Testour is a small town famous for its lineage of Andalusi migrants who came to the region during the 10-15<sup>th</sup> centuries. I had arrived to attend the opening of the 53<sup>rd</sup> annual Testour Festival of Mālūf<sup>1</sup> and Traditional Arab Music, a multi-week summer event that revels in Arab and Andalusi music traditions.<sup>2</sup> The coming weeks of evening performances would feature well-known singers and musicians across Tunisia, as well as top-notch guest performances from other Arab countries. Tonight’s opening performance featured Tunisia’s Ensemble of Arab Melody (Ar. *firqat al-nagham al-‘arabī*), directed by the Sfaxian-born musician, statesman, and respected professor Muḥammad ‘Abīd.

The title of the night’s performance was *Mṭarrāz al-Sīkā* in the Tunisian dialect, a title that framed the event for participants before musicians performed a sound.

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<sup>1</sup> The transliteration of *mālūf* aligns to how this word is commonly spoken in the Tunisian and Libyan dialects. The transliteration of *mā’lūf* – with the apostrophe – corresponds to the formalized Arabic language spelling. I use the first rendering in this chapter. Mālūf is a collection of repertoires, musical styles, and performance practices in eastern Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya. In Arabic, the word describes that which is “familiar” and “customary,” perhaps referring to the everyday topics of love, emotions, and the natural environment, for instance, that are in the song lyrics. Known as traditional music in these areas, mālūf is said to derive from al-Andalus – medieval Muslim Spain – and was transmitted to North Africa mainly by Muslim and Jewish Andalusi immigrants.

<sup>2</sup> For a brief history of how the Tunisian government positioned the small town of Testour as a center of nationalized mālūf performance, see Ruth Davis’ chapter “Cultural Policy and the *Ma’lūf* of Testour” (2004:71-89).

Figure 1. “Mṭarrāz al-Sīkā.” Social media advertisement for the first night of the Testour Festival of Mālūf and Traditional Arab Music, featuring the Ensemble of Arab Melody, directed by Muhammad ‘Abīd. July 20, 2019.



As the title announced, the musical mode of *al-sīkāh* – another common spelling of the mode – would be the musical focus of the night;<sup>3</sup> and the reference to *mṭarrāz* referred to a decorated, embellished, and ornamented object. Translated to English as “The Embroidery of al-Sīkā” or “The Tapestry of al-Sīkā,” this title promised listeners a sensual experience with the elaborate music of al-Andalus. With such a title, I could not help but think of Ibn Sanā’ al-Mulk’s 13<sup>th</sup>-century songbook entitled “The House of Brocade” (Ar. *Dār al-Ṭirāz*).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The performance would resemble a Tunisian *nūba* suite. It follows from the historical conventions of the *nūba* that musical pieces for the evening would be in the mode of *al-sīkāh*. For more information on the transmission of the *nūba* from Baghdad to al-Andalus and to Tunisia, see Appendix.

“Brocade” and “embroidered” – or *al-ṭirāz* and *mṭarrāz* – are from the same Arabic linguistic root (Ar. *T R Z*) (Reynolds 2022:157); and for people who knew the musical history of al-Andalus, the reference was unmistakable. Just like highly intricate embroidered textiles became a hallmark of Andalusī opulence and power in the 10<sup>th</sup> century (Manzano 2016), the Andalusī *nūba* suite form which contains *al-sīkāh* has become a strong index of an Andalusī past. The Tunisian *nūba* is the bedrock musical suite for Tunisian *mālūf* with its sophisticated rhythmic organization, complex melodic structuring, and finely crafted poetry. A night that highlighted “The Embroidered *al-Sīkā*” was sure to emphasize this repertoire. The *nūba* repertoire is a vast collection of songs that resembles a densely ornamented tapestry, both artistic pieces of material culture that are highly valued.

Muḥammad ‘Abīd and his ensemble got to work. The night was sure to be entertaining. But, more than entertainment, the task of relating sound to people and earth is intensive work. The participants expected a certain kind of territorialization that night. The Testour festival is renowned in Tunisia, from the circles of *mālūf* aficionados to the common citizen. On a conceptual plane, the nationalized festival territorializes its participants into certain citizens, a process of repetition and return that links listeners to a curated past deemed properly constitutive of people in this nation-state.

Tonight, the Tunisian mode of *al-sīkāh* was at the center of this valued and complicated nexus. Sophisticated and trained listeners of *mālūf* would recognize modal nuances in the music tonight, and perhaps link these melodic features to a citizenship imbricated with a glorious Andalusī past. I did not conduct any audience interviews on this occasion. But from interviews with participants in another such *mālūf* festival just days

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<sup>4</sup> Parts of this songbook have recently been translated to English. See Reynolds 2022 for a critical translation of al-Mulk’s introduction to the songbook, and Compton 1976 for a dynamic translation of 34 song texts.



earlier, I heard participants talk about this music as *turāth*, or “heritage” (Fr. *patrimoine*): a material mark of citizenship in a nation-state (Davis 1997b:75; the “official view” in Davis 2004:67). Even participants who did not find *mālūf* entertaining still viewed the music as objects of pride that deserved protection. Scholars of cultural heritage have long taught that such objects must be valorized and maintained by institutions or individuals of power across time to create and uphold “heritage” (Kirschenblatt-Gimblet 1995; Rice 1987). But the process of heritage is never complete. It is an on-going procedure of territorializing materials and ideologies within intensive levels of place and perception. The territorialization associated with the *ṭubū‘* occurs through an interface of recognizable melodic-rhythmic units; and this network of units is taught as a unique musical expression for Tunisians. But the process of making meaning with these musical structures is not unlike how a plagal cadence might gesture sacredness, or blues notes might stimulate Black mood.

The ensemble’s first song set manifested the musical form of the *nūba*, beginning with an instrumental *mṣaddar* piece<sup>5</sup> and then progressing through many songs, ordered by six different rhythms. Most of the songs were in *al-sīkāh*; but a few were in the mode of *al-māyah*, a mode closely related to *al-sīkāh*. All of the songs were thick with melodic-rhythmic clichés that corresponded to *al-sīkāh* or *al-māyah* (see Part One, Chapter Two). In particular, I noticed the five- and six-note cadences that manifested *al-sīkāh al-tūnisiyya* (“Tunisian *al-sīkāh*”). Melodic-rhythmic clichés, such as the Tunisian *al-sīkāh* cadence, have presence as distinct expressions.

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<sup>5</sup> The *mṣaddar* resembles the form of a Turkish *samā‘ī* instrumental piece but performed with a six-beat cycle instead of a 10-beat cycle. For more details, see Appendix 1 on the Tunisian *nūba* performance suite.

These familiar clichés stood out to me most prominently in the instrumental piece that was performed just before the first song section of the *nūba*. In a slow and unmetered fashion, maestro ‘Abīd led the ensemble in unison note-by-note through a formula-ized rendition of *al-sīkāh*. It was like a summary statement of the mode, preceding a transition to the song set. The phrasing emphasized those important six notes of Tunisian *al-sīkāh* (i.e., c-B-A-G-F-E<sup>b</sup>), as transcribed below:

Figure 2. Transcription. As performed by the Ensemble of Arab Melody, directed by Muhammad ‘Abīd. Testour Festival of Mālūf and Traditional Arab Music. July 20, 2019.



This melodic gesture was pre-composed for this occasion; but the cliché was there in the use of these six notes played sequentially and also in the stylized descent that made use of the c-A-c-B (see Chapter 2: ṭab‘ *al-sīkāh*). There was an intentional focus on manifesting *al-sīkāh* without the distraction of other melodic phrases that one would hear within the repertoire. The musical gesture was clear; and as participants transitioned between the instrumental and vocal sections of the *nūba*, *al-sīkāh* resounded clearly.

An *istikhbār* (improvised solo) followed on the *nāy* instrument (an end-blown reed flute) that dynamically performed melodic phrases across *al-sīkāh*’s range. When the solo finished, maestro ‘Abīd directed the ensemble again in the same *al-sīkāh* gesture transcribed above. Note-by-note, the ensemble fixed *al-sīkāh* in a familiar way with a closing cliché of the six bottom notes of the *al-sīkāh* scale. The second playing of this gesture functioned like

an embroidery needle coming back up from underneath the fabric after the innovation of the nay solo. It was an unembellished phrase in unison; but the reoccurrence enacted inscription, a hemming in of materials, ideas, and intensities through al-sīkāh to stitch together sound and meaning.

After a second *istikhbār* – this time on the violin – the vocalists began to sing. Five songs followed in a variety of rhythms, all ordered according to the conventions of the *nūba* form. None of these songs were in the *Tunisian Musical Heritage* publications, a set of nine volumes full of biographical articles, historical narratives, technical terminology, musical know-how, and – most importantly – dozens of song transcriptions. Ever since the 1960’s, these volumes have maintained an archive of musical heritage for Tunisia as a modern nation-state (cf. David 2004:51-2). The ensemble’s first song set demonstrated an expansiveness to the production of heritage beyond the officiated archive. The announcer had described the songs as deriving “from heritage” (Ar. *min al-turāth*) – an anonymity which gave the songs credibility and a sense of authenticity. The melodic-rhythmic clichés of al-sīkāh became the necessary nexus of sound and nationalistic sentiment.

The ensemble concluded the *nūba* suite with a final song in the *khatm* rhythm. But, surprisingly, maestro ‘Abīd did not end the performance just yet. Instead, he directed the ensemble through another slow, unmetered melodic phrase, played in unison on the same six notes of al-sīkāh highlighted in the earlier gesture.

Figure 3. Transcription. As performed by the Ensemble of Arab Melody, directed by Muhammad ‘Abīd. Testour Festival of Mālūf and Traditional Arab Music. July 20, 2019.



This melodic gesture was slightly different than the one the ensemble had played at the beginning of the song set (see previous Figure 2). But each of the six notes of Tunisian al-sīkāh were present and the final stepwise descent undeniably confirmed the mode.

Configured in this manner, the unison moments bookended the entire nūba set. This gesture was an effective way to end the thirty minutes of repertoire that had been mostly in the mode of al-sīkāh. In the continual return to these characteristic notes of Tunisian al-sīkāh, ordered in that cadential fashion, the musicians territorialized the event with sound. The Testour location, the prized Andalusi past, the pageantry on stage, the ordered nūba form, objects of a Tunisian nation-state – all of these ideas, materials, and pieces of earth gathered together under the cover of al-sīkāh. And in that space of compression, when the music played, al-sīkāh inscribed them with meaning. It was as if the sonic formulations of al-sīkāh were the needle that stitched together the performance, creating an embroidered image that far surpassed this moment, this time, this space. *Mṭarrāz al-Sīkā* indeed. “The Embroidery of al-Sīkā” had also become “al-Sīkāh, the Embroiderer.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The grammatical difference in standard Arabic between “embroiderer” (*muṭarriz*) and “embroidery” (*muṭarrāz*) is one vowel in the final syllable. In the Tunisian dialect, vowel differences such as this example are not common in colloquial usage. The Testour event did not mark vowels on the advertisement poster (see Figure 1); but most likely, the meaning aligned to “embroidery,” in that the mode of al-sīkāh was an embroidered musical object (read: sophisticated, elegant, and ornamented). I am considering “embroiderer” – with the vowel change – to emphasize how these musical objects also accomplish social and cultural work and that they are not just products of society.

## Sound, Inscribing, and Meaning

How does sound—and structures of sound—have effectivity within human formations of society and culture? In Part Two of this dissertation, I am claiming that the melodic-rhythmic clichés of the Tunisian ṭubū‘ are vital, musical components that constitute formations of meaning, such as “Arab” and “Andalusi.” They embroider, stitch together, or *inscribe* meaning into performance events. Musical performance is a meaningful activity for participants, and the literature is full of descriptive case studies. But rare is the opportunity to observe how reoccurring, isolated units of musical material – such as with the melodic-rhythmic clichés – come to effect relations of meaning. Observing and documenting these formations are important tasks, especially for those who have high stakes in their transmission.

However, in this chapter, I am most concerned with how these formations come into being through the structured and cliched components of sound that reside with the ṭubū‘. By analyzing the constitution of formation rather than the formations themselves, I aim to probe the significance of sound for human ecologies. In this respect, the 2019 Testour Festival is an occasion to observe how these melodic-rhythmic clichés come to constitute the very thing that the Testour Festival is known for in Tunisia: a celebration of “Mālūf and Traditional Arab Music” through Tunisian-state valorization, patronage, and maintenance, as well as general public support of these heritage productions. My assertion is that these clichés do vital social and cultural work for people, and that to varying degrees, people are aware of this work. In the case of Tunisian mālūf music, music scholars have documented how the nation-state has captured this repertoire in particular ways, created institutions to maintain value, and disseminated these valuations in Tunisian society for nearly one century (Langlois 2009;

Davis 1986, 2004; Davis and Jankowsky 2006). I direct readers to these sources for detailed information how *mālūf* is tethered to nation-state powers and institutions.

In this chapter, I draw attention to the unique mattering of sound, as well as the very reoccurring presence of Tunisia's melodic clichés to reflect on the effectivity of music in constituting social and cultural formations. On the one hand, this analysis requires a degree of conceptualization, or a thinking abstractly about sound, and the function of its organized and enrhythmed reoccurrences within the practice of the *ṭubū'*. On the other hand, I consider ethnographic events important for grounding the use of concepts. Vignettes at the front and end of this chapter attempt to demonstrate how abstractions assist in understanding synchronic, time-bound events.

I return to my first question: how does sound—and structures of sound—have effectivity within human formations of society and culture? Considering sound's transitory nature, I also ask: how does such an ephemeral, trans-medial phenomenon such as sound accomplish any purpose or have any effect? My conclusion is that structures of sound get bundled with other things, and that the reoccurrence of these bundles begin to take effect in larger assemblages of events. First proposed by Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987), the "assemblage" is a non-homogeneous group of abstract and material components. These components are analyzed beside one another because of how they relate within a specific ethnographic event. One of the unique aspects of assemblage theory is its unconventional inclusion of non-human bodies and virtuality as fully active components within an analysis alongside material objects and human agency. This arrangement challenges the way scholars have traditionally constituted ethnographic events. It is critical to note that in assemblage theory components are known more through what they

*do* rather than what they *are*, in terms of ontological being. The latter is perceived as a move toward hierarchical thinking and essentialization, while the former is a theoretical move toward processes of becoming. This unfinished quality of becoming distinguishes assemblage theory from social constructivism, particularly in how the latter is often used to reify abstract structures rather than document their unique assembling in the immanent moment (cf. DeLanda 2006:2-3).

Assemblages form territories, and territories are like home for humans. Territories are groupings of virtual and material bundles that traverse real land, all of which actualize in a familiar pattern or rhythm for people. Territories offer stability, giving encoded social and cultural formations a sense of fixity and it-will-always-be-this-way feeling. I use these words “assemblage” and “territory” in a technical way related to the post-structural work of Deleuze and Guattari who I introduced in the previous chapter. In this chapter’s analysis, I branch into other aspects of their philosophy of difference and immanence. But I also depend upon Elizabeth Grosz’ treatment of territorialization, and how she figures the unique qualities of sensation in the process. For these cultural theorists, sound is unique and worthy of special treatment. I will draw particularly from the writings of Deleuze and Guattari to think again about the effectivity of that Testour event – and others like it – and how melodic clichés in the ṭubū’ inscribe formations. Territorialization is not a panacea for the labyrinth of culture. But this process of actualization productively analyzes how sound gets caught up in the creation and maintenance of social and cultural formations.

## The Process of Territorialization: Making Home

From my observations at the Testour event, I am arguing that the melodic-rhythmic clichés of al-sīkāh were a musical resource for the participants to relate to meanings of *Arab* and *Andalusi*. This word of bringing materials and ideas into formations of meaning is a process of “territorialization.” Territorialization is a process of making home in chaos, according to theorists Deleuze, Guattari, and Grosz. The raw forces of earth outside of territories are untamed, undomesticated – perhaps not a typical starting point for ethnographic analysis. Nevertheless, these forces are simultaneously palpable and intimate to human life, as well as disorganized, uncontainable, and uncontrollable. In this sense, earth is an “unknown homeland” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 320), a place welcoming and life-giving as a home, and yet bursting with intensities and magnitudes that disrupt and destroy life as humans know it. Elizabeth Grosz describes chaos not as an unwieldy and wild force, but rather as “a plethora of orders, forms, wills—forces that cannot be distinguished or differentiated from each other” (2008:5). For these theorists, chaos is not a void or formless other. Chaos is a co-mingling of elements and forces that exist and move, just without any kind of relationality.

Chaos becomes a territory by an act of framing, a way of architecturally inserting an arbitrary line or wall to create partition. But specific acts of framing happen first within a *milieu*<sup>7</sup>, a technical term referring to the expansive, complex, multi-layered, and multi-agential domain within which an organism ekes out a lifeway (Grosz 2008:46). The milieu is an initial ordering of chaos based upon lived experience. It is a domain much larger than a territory. In sound studies language, a milieu is analogous to a *soundscape*, a conceptual

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<sup>7</sup> I will avoid the French plural of *milieu* (which is, *milieux*) and utilize *milieus* for English language readers.



frame in environmental and acoustic architectural studies credited to R. Murray Schafer (1977). A soundscape is an expansive, albeit, bounded field of sounds. Organisms, such as humans, learn to listen to these bounded fields wherein reoccurring sound patterns (e.g., crashing waves, street traffic); and these reoccurring patterns establish a connectedness to ecology for the listener that can become full of meaning. Soundscapes and milieus are types of territories, in the broadest sense, since they are delimited realms from expansive chaos. But the *territory*, as Deleuze and Guattari define it, is yet another framing.

The territory is a further delimiting of the milieu, a more concentrated domestication of matter, forces, and their intensities. This delimited space comes about through rhythms that occur across a milieu. Deleuze and Guattari use “rhythm” to mean that which is regulated, consistent, and expected. Rhythmed lifeways not only exude a sense of relative stasis for its inhabitants, but also establish new boundaries for a territorial *home* (Grosz 2008:47). Home is a fitting metaphor for this conceptual description of human territory. The rhythms of home create networks of activity, ideation, and embodied sensibilities. Rhythms and regulation have a consistency and pulse to them which breaks up the higher intensities and uncontrollable excess found in milieus and chaos. Indeed, when humans are unable to regulate their ecology through a rhythmed consistency, then they have left their homeland, their territory. Excess is definitive of chaos as contrary to processual measures. In a similar way, Deleuze and Guattari posit that humans perceive movement within the milieu and chaos as fast and even furious. Such furious movement within a territory is catastrophe for the stability of home, since such movement is unable to be regulated. For any territory to come into fruition, there must be steady rhythms that curate chaos. These are patterns that become known and familiar. Reoccurrence becomes the constitutive feature of a realized location.

The concept of “territory” (Latin root: *terra*, “land”) presupposes a piece of earth. Deleuze and Guattari posit that anything can be territorialized, such as material objects, ideas, or sound, because everything “always carries earth with it” (1987:312). All expressions of any territory actualize in a place, on earth. This relationship between an expression and the earth is crucial for the process of territorialization even if humans do not explicitly conceptualize that relationship (1987:312).

The relationship between earth and expression is perhaps Deleuze and Guattari’s meaning of “natal” – an ambiguous concept in their discussion of territorialization. They say that for humans, the “mystery of the natal” (1987:509) is the unequivocal connection of people to the earth – a relation that pervades all social and cultural expressions. This connection is both innate through birth and acquired during a lifespan (cf. 1987:332-3). And while the earth is included in the marking of milieus and territories, the earth is not subject to these processes. Earth is chaos, unwieldy and wild. The natal, then, is that expression of earth within a territory: personalized and emplaced for an individual and also adopted through acquisition and labor.

In some respects, this concept is a retelling of the nature/nurture debate; but for Deleuze and Guattari, the natal is a rampant, undomesticated through-line connecting phases of territory, milieu, and chaos. In its excess – that which defines the regulations of a territory – the natal draws out the potential of a thing to become other. To describe it another way, the natal is the wildness seeded into every regulated territory. This wildness continues to create and shape the territories where it is seeded. Wildness is impossible to domesticate in an absolute sense. That impossibility of the natal, for Deleuze and Guattari, is the “intense center” at the heart of every territory (1987:321, 325). It is the excess, the chaos, that is

resident within each expression of a territory and by which the territory trembles with potential to be other.

It is helpful to take a pause at this point and emphasize the importance of this “intense center.” With this relation of the natal, Deleuze and Guattari are posing a certain ontology of metaphysics in their discussion, saying that at the center of every social and cultural formation, there is a force that undomesticates and pulls things into disarray. Undoubtedly, this is Deleuzian difference, as discussed in Chapter 3 and the bedrock principle to all of Deleuze’s conceptualizing. If everything has a radical difference at the core of its composition, then the way humans create and categorize various formations is reflective of their mechanisms of control rather than how the world really is. Radical difference is simply uncategorical. And if this radicality is at the center of territorial formations, then “doing culture” (so to speak) is an act of bridling chaos, which perennially has the potential to rear, snort, and bite in any event of transmission and performance. Simply put, humans are not fully in control of their formations. Instead, humans create apparatuses to capture the natal to the best of their ability and manage it.<sup>8</sup> This pivotal point allows Deleuze and Guattari to

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<sup>8</sup> By “apparatuses” I am referring to the “desiring-machines” of Deleuze and Guattari that are entirely unique to their metaphysics and well-known within the academy. Due to the vast organic movement of forces and intensities across all actualized existence and their ontological turn to this kind of movement, Deleuze and Guattari focus their analysis on inorganic, machinic assemblages that hinder, obstruct, and redirect such free and unstratified movement. State apparatuses (e.g., “War Machine”) are such examples that seek to control and manipulate free movement. The outcome of this theorization has led some scholars to differentiate the “disciplinary society” of Foucault from the “control society” of Deleuze and Guattari (1995:177-8). In short, Foucault’s discipline society lacks analyses about how power dynamics form. The oppressive All-Seeing Eye is impermeable to analysis. In other words, there is no outside to a discipline society, no recourse to structures of power. But in giving attention to constant movement and the intensities of force, Deleuze and Guattari study power dynamics through the construction of desiring-machines which control flows. For example, the War Machine has its origins in nation-state mechanisms and seeks to align movement and intensities of force within a hierarchical structure. It follows that control societies—unlike discipline societies—have an outside that is apprehendable and open to investigation. Scholars can observe and analyze the building and functioning of machines because the movement of rupture and rhizomatic flight – that which cannot be controlled because its very nature is nomadic – is the starting point. Although the theorization of control societies begins abstractly with conceptualization of ontological difference, ethnographers can consider any kind of human actualization through its propositions.

later theorize “becoming” as the most appropriate way to talk about people and things as they emerge in the immanent moment. Interestingly, anthropologists and ethnomusicologists have most recently found this kind of theorizing to be a promising way of nuancing agency, tracing the flexible nature of human social and cultural formations, and undoing determinism (see Biehl and Locke 2017; Moisala, et al. 2014; Kielian-Gilbert 2010).

Thus, the natal is a crucial aspect of territorialization. Territories provide a sense of stability; but in actuality, there is constant aberrant motion beneath the rhythm of that territory due to the presence of the natal. When this contrary motion becomes too great for the territory’s regulation, a rupture occurs and the territory shifts. That shifting is *deterritorialization*. The assemblages that comprise a territory change shape, loose/add components, or alter intensity.

Deterritorialization is not a new process within scholarship that utilizes ethnography. For instance, this process was aptly described by anthropologist Arjun Appadurai in his well-known publication *Modernity at Large* as “one of the central forces of the modern world” (1996:37). This may be the case, especially in view of his overall argument about how structures of the nation-state have been overcome—or reterritorialized—by human migration and imagination, as traced through the global flows of media and technology. He argues that the intensities of social and cultural movement have destabilized the territorial home of the nation-state, much like the natal has the potential to destabilize the rhythms and regulations of a territory.

Appadurai’s thesis stops on the ruptures of this movement and its consequences for the late modern world. Deterritorialization is the only constant. However, in Deleuze and Guattari’s logic, deterritorialization always leads to *reterritorialization*. Organisms

instinctively territorialize the ruptures, seeking stasis and control. And due to the persistent presence of the natal, deterritorialization occurs again and again. To be certain, nothing can stay the same when the intense center of a territory is full of trembling potentials – even when control apparatuses direct those potentials. The natal is ultimately that which deregulates and destabilizes the rhythms of territories. But the point of territorialization is that movement is inevitable, change and becoming are essential due to the natal. The natal—that slice of chaos, the wild—is present in every expression, every actualization. It is fair to say then that processes of territorialization occur with rupture and recapture, and not in some sequential manner. Creating and maintaining territories is “de/re/territorialization” – despite the awkwardness of these forward slashes. For Deleuze and Guattari, this pushing, pulling, settling, and rupturing of territories is creative, wonderful, and mysterious; and their impetus to analyze territories is not only to mark change and transformation but to analyze how the flow occurs and what apparatus or assemblage is directing that movement.

In summary, the process of territorialization is a process of making home in the expansive spaces and fields of the cosmos. Rather than being vacant, these areas are filled with forces, materials, and intensities. The gradual delineation from chaos to a milieu to a territory is about rhythms and regulations that emerge in how organisms relate to things and forces and to one another. It is a process of signification, but it also biological and deeply connected to land, which separates Deleuze and Guattari’s conceptualization from other comparable ones, such as Bourdieu’s “habitus” (1977:72–95). Reoccurring relations between forces, materials, ideas, and intensities mark out the homeland. But land—and the forces and mattered composition of the land—contain the natal which cannot be domesticated in an absolute sense. Herein lies radical difference which is not a threatening force, although

control apparatuses might see it that way since difference escapes control and predictability. Instead, the radicality of the natal renews, energizes, and innovates through its inability to be constrained within a regulated territory. The natal exudes radical movement and growth; and thus, territories are continually deterritorialized and reterritorialized as they emerge and manifest in actualized events.

How does sound – as a movement of energy or a mattered cultural object – have effectivity in the process of territorialization? How do structures of sound, such as with the melodic-rhythmic clichés of the Tunisian *ṭubū‘*, network materials, ideas, forces, and intensities to maintain a territory for participants? The next section turns to these questions.

### **Territorialization and Sound: The Refrain**

Sound has a special place in the conceptual worlds of Deleuze and Guattari. In their treatment of territorialization, they famously pose the concept of the “refrain” (in English translation) or “ritournelle” (in the original French language). In fact, at the end of his life, Deleuze reflects that the refrain – hereafter, Refrain – is his signature contribution to philosophy (2007:385).

For music scholars and performers of 17<sup>th</sup>-century European symphonic music, the *ritournelle*, or “ritournello” in the Italian language, describes a recurrent section of instrumental music within a longer musical work. This “little return” first delineated the reoccurrence of an instrumental section when vocalists were involved in the performance. But the appellation soon came to also refer to the return of a full orchestral section after an instrumental solo episode (Wolf 2003:733). What seemed to intrigue Deleuze and Guattari the most about the *ritournelle* form was its somewhat predictive yet dynamic unfolding. For

them, the performative process of the ritournelle said something about the consolidation of bundled sonic materials and virtual ideas within a territorial assemblage, and how these assemblages are replete with the familiar and also the unknown. Said another way, the way a reoccurring musical Refrain occurred became their metaphor for their understanding of territorialization. The “little return” gestured to the rhythmic pulse and expected bundles of a territory that provides cohesion and a sense of stability amidst other intensities of movement.

But more than just focusing on the recurrent nature of the Refrain, Deleuze and Guattari also used this metaphor to specifically address sound as a unique medium. The uniqueness of sound for them had to do with how sound deterritorializes a plane of composition more effectively than any other artistic medium. They admit that it is not entirely clear to them why sound effectuates territories like this. I quote from their speculation on the topic in the chapter “Of The Refrain” in *A Thousand Plateaus*:

But [deterritorialization by sound] does not happen without great ambiguity: sound invades us, impels us, drags us, transpierces us. It takes leave of the earth, as much in order to drop us into a black hole as to open us up to a cosmos. It makes us want to die. Since its force of deterritorialization is the strongest, it also effects the most massive of reterritorializations, the most numbing, the most redundant. Ecstasy and hypnosis... The refrain is sonorous par excellence... (1987:348)

Deleuze and Guattari seem baffled by the effectivity of sound. Sound causes a response, and these responses can be surprising to participants, just as it seems to be for these theorists. The energy and intensity of sound pulls one into uncharted chaos or a disorientating black hole, as they describe it.<sup>9</sup> But at the same time, sound can reterritorialize to such an extent that it can

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<sup>9</sup> The “black hole” is a concept in Deleuze and Guattari’s writing. It is a place of disorientation after one has been pulled out of territories of meaning. That disorientation can be a static experience, as if one is hanging between formations of meaning. This disorientation can also be territorialized as a “catastrophe,” Deleuze and Guattari write. The former black hole is a place of stasis, where meaning has not yet been inscribed. The latter black hole is a place defined by chaos, crisis, and disarray (see 1980:334). The point of the black hole in this quote is that sound, to Deleuze and Guattari, has the force to dislocate, reorient, and alter territories of meaning for participants.

effect a dulled stasis (“ecstasy [or] hypnosis”) within the listener. The Refrain or “little return” is a combination of dullness and rupture which provide both a sense of stability and one of shock and surprise.

The Refrain, as a preeminent metaphor of territorialization for Deleuze and Guattari, is dependent on sound. Utilizing their own vocabulary, they call sound a “phylogenetic line” or a directional manifestation that is a unique blending of matter, energy, and movement (1987:407). They are not concerned with how physicists consider sound as regulated energy and not matter. Instead, Deleuze and Guattari matter sound, apparently due to its superpower to effect and cut across actualized territories. With that motion of *across*, sound is likened to a line, or more accurately, a “destratifying transversality” (1987:335). The movement of transversality cuts through and across territories, pulling components in and out of assemblages. The transversal line is the rhizomatic “line of flight,” a highly theorized concept in *A Thousand Plateaus* which has been vital for music scholars in understanding processes of social and cultural becoming (Gill 2017; Moisala et al. 2017). The transversal line exhibits movement that is originally its own. The point of origin is not critical to the composition of the line. Rather, the interest is the qualities and intensities of direction within a present moment: how new assemblages form, how territories are made and remade through these assemblages, and how more expansive networks actualize through that transversal cutting. As a transversal within a Refrain, sound is a matter-flow or a matter-energy component that actualizes in familiar ways for participants (*I know this*) and yet in infinitely non-familiar ways (*This is original and creative*).

Deleuze and Guattari often elide sound and music in their theorization, and the music that they reference in *A Thousand Plateaus* and other publications is almost entirely Western



European art music (e.g., *ritournelle* is a Baroque musical form).<sup>10</sup> Yet, as discussed above, there is an awareness in their work that sound is a unique medium of expression beyond typical Western philosophical conceptualizations. They argue that sound deserves special attention due to its persistent manner to de/re/territorialize. Sound has a unique potential to alter its performance ecology, even when participants simultaneously experience that sound customarily. Documenting musical manifestations without giving attention to the mattering and effectivity of sound has been a mainstay in 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century music studies, perhaps because of the consolidation of musical objects into those customary forms, such as repertoires, canons, and traditions. These objects seem to resist the notions of rhizomatic movement and change that Deleuze and Guattari claim emerge in every actualization of a territorial assemblage.

Strikingly, Deleuze and Guattari use the same musical forms of late German Romanticism to validate sound's transversal power to *deterritorialize*, even when other scholars have used the same to territorialize musical tradition. In "Of the Refrain," Deleuze and Guattari connect their theoretical interest in the Refrain to the musical forms of the *leitmotif* (Eng. "leading motif"), as expressed in the operas of Richard Wagner. Deleuze and Guattari concur that leitmotifs – or short musical themes which punctuate a performance and provide cohesion through their reoccurrence – are repetitive (and perhaps tiresome) but also transform and become something other through their reoccurrences. I again quote at length from this chapter's section on the leitmotif:

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<sup>10</sup> Music scholars who use Deleuze and Guattari in their analyses are aware of these limitations to some degree. But the task remains to disentangle these two theorists from their musical case studies and the perniciousness of a universalized (German Romantic) aestheticism. In a moment of reflection at the end of his life, Deleuze says that music is the "trickiest case" to analyze since it is an object combining the three forces of affects, percepts, and concepts (1995:137). That insightful statement needs separate commentary; but in the least, it demonstrates the high regard Deleuze had for music to explicate his metaphysics.

But as [Wagner's operatic] work develops, the motifs increasingly enter into conjunction, conquer their own plane, become autonomous from the dramatic action, impulses, and situations, and independent of characters and landscapes; they themselves become melodic landscapes and rhythmic characters continually enriching their internal relations. They may then remain relatively constant, or on the contrary grow or diminish, expand or contract, vary in the speed at which they unfold: in both cases, they are no longer pulsed and localized, and even the constants are in the service of variation; the more provisory they are, the more they display the continuous variation they resist, the more rigid they become. (1987:319)

Deleuze and Guattari eloquently describe how a reoccurring thematic phrase, or leitmotif, can become more than the sum of its repetitions. They “become autonomous” from the performance context that first generates the melodic theme, and develop “internal relations” between the occurrences. This process of becoming within a musical work causes the leitmotif to evade a “pulsed and localized” representation. In other words, all of the reoccurrences create a universalized, out-of-context rendition that persists in the minds of listeners and musicians long after the performance is finished. This universalized rendition is virtual and real – it exists and informs how people participate in future performances. But when the leitmotif is actualized again in performance, it occurs through variation which extends that universalized rendition into the potentials of that leitmotif. For Deleuze and Guattari, all of these de/reterritorializations of the leitmotif are possible due to sound as a quasi-agent to effect movement off an established territory. Reoccurrence does not prohibit a breakthrough of the wild and transgressive aspects of sound's transversal movement.

Considering the possibilities of how a known musical cliché can actualize in infinite, improvisatory variation, is bewildering. But these theorists are certainly not the only scholars who have acknowledged that musical motifs present a lot of variation during the performance of a musical work – variation which exceeds representation.<sup>11</sup> Rather than attributing musical

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Whittall 2001.

variation to performance practice or musical form (e.g., Theme and Variations) or pedagogical lineage (“in the manner of...”), Deleuze and Guattari insist on the presence of the natal, in that every territory – particularly those which privilege sound – is linked to land which in turn has qualities and intensities that are excessive for the rhythm and regulation of that territory. A single performance of a leitmotif, then, joins a territorial Refrain of that leitmotif. The Refrain is able to hold semblances of universalized ideas and also a considerable amount of performed variation. Form sits with improvisation; structure coexists with embellishment. In this, a territorial homeland has flexibility but is subject to rupture when a transversal fully cuts through and escapes the configuration.

I argue that the melodic-rhythmic clichés of the Tunisian *ṭubū‘* function like the Refrain of Deleuze and Guattari. These clichés are formulaic, and musicians reproduce them with constrained amounts of embellishment and improvisation. The ultimate goal is to elicit the musical mode that the formulas announce and network participants to the associations of that mode. In the same way that Deleuze and Guattari are able to conceptualize how expressions relate to and assemble people, land, matter, ideas, and their variances of quality and intensity without capitulating to arbitrary, transcendent structures (“canon” or “tradition”), I employ the territorial Refrain to apprehend how melodic-rhythmic clichés can come to have effectivity, or how these clichés can cause people to feel or think about something beyond mere sounds. For Deleuze and Guattari, sound has this capacity to effect a potential doing and undoing.

To reiterate the main points in this section: sound matters to Deleuze and Guattari because of its unique combination of matter and motion. As energy-in-motion, or matter-in-movement, sound never loses its raw, elemental edge when it is constituted in assemblages

and in territories. But the metaphor of a Refrain – a reoccurring, repeatable sonic something – is evidence of how Earth’s elements can be inscribed into somewhat stable relationships with other materials and human ideas, even when those elements are innately instable and always on the move. Sound has a proclivity to transverse those structured Refrains and fray significations, even as people consolidate them time and time again within such reoccurring motifs. The Refrain, for Deleuze and Guattari, is a territorial assemblage par excellence because it precisely demonstrates how persistent movement is fundamental to every milieu and territory and not exceptional. That movement is the “intense core” of every territory, which both establishes spatial organization and material distribution (“territorialization”), pulls those relationships apart (“deterritorialization”), and reorganizes them again (“reterritorialization”) ad infinitum.

### **Territories, Space, and Sound**

A further point regarding sound’s importance with Deleuze and Guattari deserves discussion. In mattering the pulsating force of sound with the Refrain metaphor, they inscribe space. The entire theoretical complex of these theorists is heavily dependent on spatial metaphors with the words *territory*, *milieu*, and even *chaos* to some extent. They go on to describe spaces of territories as “smooth” and “striated” to observe how social and cultural phenomena are free to move and become-other (smooth), or are constrained and constricted (straited).<sup>12</sup> Thus, the point that sound must have space to manifest its waveforms of energy

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<sup>12</sup> The concept of “smooth” and “straited” space first came from the composer, conductor, and musician in Western art music, Pierre Boulez (1925-2016), who presented these ideas in lectures at Darmstadt, Germany during the 1960s (Campbell 2013:70-6).

is not lost on Deleuze and Guattari in their configuration of the territorial Refrain. It is just that sound is one component among many, albeit an essential one, in a Refrain.

Scholars of music and culture have investigated the relation of sound and space across a variety of disciplines. In this section – before returning to my Testour vignette – I want to discuss a few of these scholars who explicitly cite the metaphysics of Deleuze and Guattari in their work in general, and that of territorialization more specifically.<sup>13</sup> These scholars have taken the implications of Deleuze and Guattari further into lived experience and provide a basis for me to analyze my own fieldwork.

In a definitive statement on sound and space, Andrew Eisenberg gestures broadly to the work of Deleuze and Guattari. For him, sound in territories establishes spaces of interiority and exteriority, or the “sonorous enactments of publicity and privacy in inhabited spaces” (2015:199). It appears that he came to this conclusion based on earlier research, where he probes the Muslim call to prayer in multireligious communities of Mombasa, Kenya and how these soundings constitute various public and private expressions (2013). The spatial implications of sound across this neighborhood – and the boundaries of exclusion and power that indexed sound can enact – strike political nerves for many non-Muslim citizens. In this case, it is the dynamics of force relations between territories of sound that Eisenberg discusses, rather than the essentially deterritorializing nature of sound that Deleuze and Guattari pose. And many scholars follow suit with Eisenberg (Larkin 2014; Lee 2003; Weiner 2014). They critique the political consequences of clashing sonic territories rather

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<sup>13</sup> Because of this focus on Deleuzian metaphysics, some scholars are conspicuously absent from this discussion, such as Alain Corbin who analyzed the territorializing nature of church bells in 19<sup>th</sup>-century France (1998).

than demonstrating how territories that privilege sound are innately instable due to sound's excessive presence.

Two recent studies on sound and territory warrant attention because of how they posit the relationship of sound to land and also because they both reference Deleuze and Guattari in their conceptual formation. In *Listening to War*, Martin Daughtry considers "acoustic territories" in wartime Iraq from 2007-2012, mostly from the perspective of American soldiers (2015:188-212). The "bellophonic" wartime sounds of guns, tanks, bullets, and RPGs had pivotal roles in emplacing and displacing these soldiers in relation to landscapes. In these moments, a soldier-auditor listens to survive. Daughtry extends Deleuze and Guattari's theory of territorialization to consider how sound's physicality effects the body during war. Sonic reverberations in body cavities, across fleshy surfaces, and through the porous body bundle to affects of fear and dread and alert the soldier to move directionally within a landscape. Daughtry's ethnography is a reminder of how drastic sound's effectivity can be with virtual and material assemblages. Humans gain orientation to space and place through their perceptions of listening, even as these reoccurring wartime sound motifs herald the destruction of place.

Perhaps because humans understand sound's capacity to effect uniquely, another aspect of recent analysis is how human regimes harness sound to modify territories and their inhabitants. A case in point is the recent publication *Soundscapes of Uyghur Islam* (2020) by Rachel Harris. In the sixth chapter of her book, Harris argues that sound is caught up in a distinctly territorial manner as the anti-religious extremism campaign – supported and propagated by the Chinese state – works among the minority Uyghur people in the capital city of Xinjiang in Central China. The state's repression of certain Muslim Uyghur sonic

rituals, such as the call to prayer, and also the state's coercion of "song and dance" performances by Uyghur people is tantamount to reclaiming the land where the Uyghurs live. Harris deftly describes these acts by the Chinese state as territorial and also corporeal, in that harnessing sound in particular ways not only shapes landscapes but also embodied practices. The endgame appears to be that the Uyghur territory will most fully be under Chinese state control and that its inhabitants will be proper citizens (read: not Muslims). Through such an analysis, Harris demonstrates how territorialization by sound is an immanent, open-ended process (2020:170), and that regimes can partially harness the force of deterritorialization with success, even if that success is liable to deteriorate due to Uyghur resistance and otherwise.

These studies complement and extend Deleuze and Guattari's conceptualization of the Refrain by probing sound in its active capacity to emplace and in its passive resourcefulness to control. But sound studies that utilize processes of territorialization could further benefit from Deleuze and Guattari's framing. Studies that privilege sound and its relation to territory – especially with political slants – infer that sonic territorialization is exceptional. But the reoccurrence of the Refrain by definition is what constitutes a territory to begin with. Regulated territories are not necessarily matters of power and control but instinctual to organisms that inhabit the earth.

### **Returning to Testour: Territorialization and the Ṭubū‘**

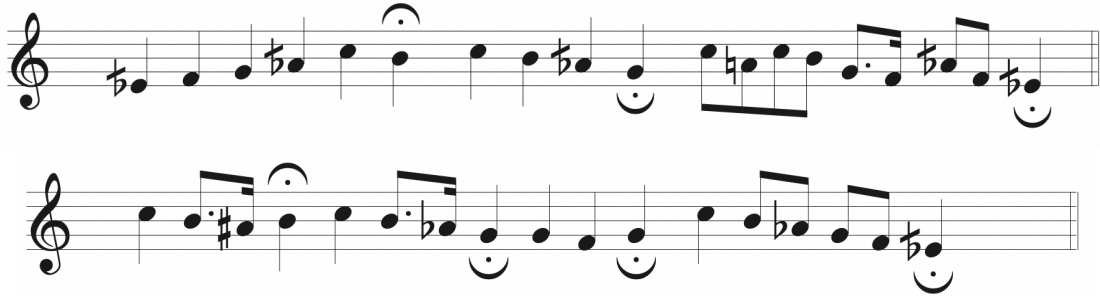
Territorialization is as much a physical and material process as it is a virtual, abstract, or ideological one. Framing sound in this way enables one to view a musical event, such as the one I attended in Testour, as an actualized territory where expressive culture is an active

component in the process of making immanent meaning. But how does sound inscribe territory? For participants of the Tunisian musical modes, sets of melodic-rhythmic phrases provide a dynamic method for making and maintaining meaning. These clichés are aspects of musical tradition that present as stable and dependable in their reoccurrences during performances. For Deleuze and Guattari, the essence of such objects as *mattered sound* is not insignificant but gestures to destabilization, change, and transformation within the stability they provide. What is helpful to me as an ethnographer is that by acknowledging the potential of sound to deterritorialize during an event, I am better able to think about and observe how sound can also inscribe through reoccurrence. I return to the initial ethnographic vignette to parse out these components, utilize the vocabulary of Deleuze, Guattari, and Grosz, and consider how the melodic-rhythmic formulas of the ṭubū‘ do the work of territorial inscription.

In Testour, the opening performance of “Mṭarrāz al-Sīkā” manifested reoccurring musical Refrains. Amidst the flurry of happenings, emergences, and manifestations within multiple territories of meaning in the festival’s first night, the melodic clichés of al-sīkāh inscribed a Refrain of home related to “Arab” and “Andalusi” geographies. I bring back the two clichés from this performance that I introduced in the beginning of this chapter below:



Figure 4. Melodic-rhythmic clichés of al-sīkāh. As performed by the Ensemble of Arab Melody, directed by Muhammad ‘Abīd. Testour Festival of Mālūf and Traditional Arab Music. July 20, 2019.



The ensemble played these phrases in unison as bookends to the first nūba section of vocal songs. To remind the reader, Tunisian musicians differentiate their mode of al-sīkāh from other al-sīkāh modes in the Mediterranean through various clichés, one of which employs a five- or six-note stepwise descent from the note B or c to the fundamental E♯ (i.e., c-B-A-G-F-E♯). The notes B and A can have various intonations during this descent. Additionally, the first staff demonstrates one common way of stylizing this descent by c-A♭-c-B melodic movement.

These clichés were one component beside others that night in Testour. From media advertisements to stage setting and the fame of Testour itself, the territorial assemblages were in full motion before musicians played the first musical piece. The territories of “Tunisia,” “Arab,” and “Andalusi” were under assemblage once again. But these two musical gestures transcribed above *sounded* those Refrains. The reoccurrence of these musical gestures in al-sīkāh were central components in these territorializations.

Maestro ‘Abīd and his ensemble interpolated these clichés into the performance in a unique and creative way. ‘Abīd and the ensemble innovated these clichés in noticeable ways.

The clichés were unmetered, played in unison, and performed as brackets to the vocal repertoire.<sup>14</sup> These sorts of embellishments around the known al-sīkāh clichés demonstrate the potentialities of these bundled formulas to reoccur on the plane of immanence in familiar and uncharted ways. It was a singular moment to express the difference of that land, those people, that evening; but the clichés were already components of a known musical network that establish such territories of belonging. Reoccurrences over time of patterned melodic-rhythmic formulations have established a form of al-sīkāh as “Tunisian” – a mark of differentiation that is grounded (literally) to earth and related to other geographies.

This process of bringing together sound, structure, ideation, and place is a bundling process. Sound achieves effectivity in meaning by that accumulation of things (e.g., materials, ideas, affects) that are related and bound together, like a bundle.<sup>15</sup> More than items of music theory and tuning, bundles of sound contain immanent place, affect, and behaviors, among other things. Bundles include more-than-representational items, such as tendencies and potentialities (cf. Massumi 1995, 2015), as well as the Deleuzian *natal*, that disorganized and disaffected presence of chaos in sound ready to break out of the bundle to

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<sup>14</sup> Those familiar with the Tunisian *nūba* form are aware that a complete suite begins with an instrumental *istiftāh* played by the full ensemble. Ensembles play this “opening” or “commencement” in a manner similar to maestro ‘Abid’s gesturing of al-sīkāh. The rhythm is slow and unhurried, and the melodic phrasing emphasizes the central features around the mode’s tonic note. In the past, this opening was probably improvised by a solo performer. Today, the *istiftāh* is notated and mostly fixed in form, as represented in the *TMH* volumes. The examples I transcribe from the performance of maestro ‘Abid’s ensemble is not the same as in the *TMH* version for al-sīkāh (cf. vol. 5, pg. 38). Thus, ‘Abid’s ensemble were innovative in their expression of al-sīkāh, even though it resonated with the way participants might listen to the fixed *istiftāh* for the mode.

<sup>15</sup> This last statement (“...being bound together”) is purposely passive. Agency is a critical debate in the humanities and social sciences, not just in terms of how to observe and document *human* agency, but also on how and in what ways non-human organisms and/or non-organic matter express agency. I am side-stepping this topic to focus on how pre-formulated bundles – such as these melodic-rhythmic clichés – operate in processes of territorialization.

de/reterritorialize movement.<sup>16</sup> Bundles are components of assemblages, and assemblages form territories. I understand the melodic-rhythmic clichés of the *ṭubū‘* to be particularly effective bundles in bringing stasis to territories of expressive culture related to “Arab” and “Andalusi” intensities. These clichés exist to elicit a particular musical mode, which are networked to feelings, non-human beings, cyclical time, and cosmic forces – all of which are linked to specific pieces of earth. These bundled clichés, then, are fastened to larger assemblages that manifest how musicians and listeners experience themselves in relation to their ecology, including their own bodies.

Conceptualizing the meeting of sound, structure, ideation, and place as bundles that assemble territories of meaning is holding a modularity *with potential*. On the surface, this conceptual step seems small and perhaps insignificant. But without theorizing potential, one excludes the earth – the very grounding of any ethnographic event. Understanding the melodic-rhythmic clichés of the *ṭubū‘* *and* the path of performance maestro ‘Abīd took in Testour enables one to see how sound is both an encoded *and* emancipatory resource for human territorialization. With both fixity and improvisation, the clichés appear as a resilient resource for Tunisians to make and remake their connection to themselves, each other, and their land.

Musical improvisation and imitation are both effects of sound within territorialized spaces. And according to the Testour event, both are important for solidifying human assemblages of meaning. The creative force of the natal – implicit in acts of improvisation –

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<sup>16</sup> In this manner, bundles of sound are more than the “sonic objects” (Fr. *objet sonore*) of Pierre Schaeffer. I extract sonic bundles out of musical contexts (from the *ṭubū‘* repertoire) like Schaeffer extracted sonic objects from recordings. But I do not perceive bundles as “acousmatic” – sounds that are heard and not seen – nor do I isolate bundles of sound to a tonal singularity (cf. Steintrager and Chow 2019:6-8).

get regulated and enfolded into territories inside an event based upon reoccurrence – implicit to structures of “tradition” and “music.” The Refrain of Deleuze and Guattari folds improvisation into imitation. The creative force of the Natal folds into a regulated, rhythmmed landscape that is as familiar as a home.

The territorializing process is never completed once for all, but rather humans live in and between webs of interrelated territories consistently made and unmade and remade. As mentioned previously, Elizabeth Grosz likens the territorial assemblages of Deleuze and Guattari to that of a *home*. But her image of the home is not a closed system. Rather, Grosz posits that homes (as territories) have yards, and also exits (2008:52). Homes cannot fully domesticate the natal of the earth. Places around the home are the broader spaces or yards by which a territorial home motions to excess.<sup>17</sup> And since excess is not containable even within a yard, the yard yields to a “way out” or an exit from the territorial home. For Grosz, the “way out” is the eternal possibility that the object is *deterterritorialized* and then *reterritorialized* to an alternate or overlapping territory. To keep a home a home, one must return. But the possibility of taking leave is ever present. Within that tension of movement, the dynamism of the present moment becomes the opportunity to make home yet again. The domestication of “tradition” is a continual process.

The Testour Festival is an opportunity to consider how sound accomplishes an act of meaning. Viewing social and cultural assemblages as territories that establish home but also flexibly provide an outside to home and even a way to escape, is a helpful analytical tool when considering sound’s effectivity. Most accurately, the opening performances that night

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<sup>17</sup> Grosz utilizes the word “sensation” in her analysis of excess (2008:8, 16). She posits that sensation is the substance of Art (music included) that escapes capture. In other words, sound as a medium of sensation continually spills off the page, exceeds the musical form, or bleeds out of a representation.

in Testour were productions-in-becoming of nationhood and historical imagination, a process that captures assemblages to make meaning. Musically, the melodic-rhythmic clichés of al-sīkāh were exceptional material among other bundled expressions to enact meaning. But nationhood has not always been the assemblage for capture associated with these clichés, nor will it necessarily remain so.<sup>18</sup> Territorialization requires reoccurring events that regulate a certain degree of normalized capture. For Tunisia, the festival of Testour itself has become a reoccurring event where these bundled units of sound are captured to normalize the production of citizenship with that of “Andalusi Mālūf and Traditional Arab Music.” Bundles – which privilege the expression of sound – made that possible.

Deleuze and Guattari’s conceptualization of territories has a malleability to understand both repetition and difference. And, in their insistence that sound carries additional import, the metaphor of the Refrain travels well between case studies without being impositional. It is the task of the next chapter to transfer these concepts into an overall explanation of the effectivity of the ṭubū‘; and I will do so privileging the language of my Tunisian interlocutors. Territorialization as such, and with its own language borrowed from Deleuze, Guattari, and Grosz, complements the language that I will develop in the following chapter. But on the way, I pass through Testour one more time to relish the way people’s ingenuity manifest these bundles of sound in the ṭubū‘ to effect the scene and territorialize difference. Difference is never the same from person to person or from place to place, but

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<sup>18</sup> Following from my synthesis of ṭab‘ al-sīkāh in Chapter 2 in this dissertation, it is possible to say that this five- or six-note melodic cliché has manifested “Tunisia” since at least the early 1930s, when D’Erlanger transcribed the sample al-sīkāh melody for publication (posthumously in 1949). The al-sīkāh melodic clichés that I heard in Testour greatly patterned this transcription of D’Erlanger’s. Not much can be said about the melodic clichés of ṭab‘ al-sīkāh before D’Erlanger’s first transcriptions since musicians typically transmitted the poetic lyrics to songs rather than a transcription of (melodic) sound. But it is fair to acknowledge that the ṭubū‘ were not always so caught up in the semantical web of nation-state as they are today. Thus, the potential for assemblages linking sound and meaning to shift even as the melodic clichés transmit is expected.

these melodic clichés produce a musical network of home that enables the social and cultural formations of a homeland to resound in-between and across these spaces. They are effective.

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As the first song set ambled on, the crowd continued to gather at the Testour Festival. Maestro ‘Abīd and the Ensemble of Arab Melody had just started off the 53<sup>rd</sup> annual festival with a traditional nūba suite, carefully curated and performed to highlight the musical mode of al-sīkāh. The performers played “Tunisian al-sīkāh” with a number of instrumental and vocal pieces – all of which expressed the musical features of the mode. I particularly noticed the clichés of the al-sīkāh cadences with the descending five- or six-note sequences, some of which were stylized in typical ways. The clichés had a presence and weight to them. These structures of sound and rhythm networked to body, place, pastness, and stories; and through these stories, people found themselves connected to each other and to the earth.

Unambiguously, these phrases, bundled to ideas and affects, announced an imaginary past and a modern state. The melodic-rhythmic formulas inscribed “Tunisian” on this night. The supra-state formations of “Arab” and “Andalusi” – formations that include a myriad of peoples and places stretching from the Western Mediterranean to the Levant and Eastern Europe – were also inscribed in the event. Territories often overlap. Perhaps it is the ambiguity of what exactly lies behind these sonic structures that enables (re)combinations of assemblages and imbrication in territories during actualization.

The first song set finished, and after a brief pause, the second set started. This set continued in the mode of al-sīkāh but not with the rhythms of a classicized nūba form. Rather, one male and one female vocalist took solo opportunities in turn with the accompaniment of the instrumental ensemble. Between each solo, a remarkable reoccurrence

happened, but not with the type unmetred al-sīkāh phrasing that the ensemble had played in the first half. Rather, the ensemble played a verse from the well-known Tunisian song *Ṣāhib al-‘uyūn al-ḥiwārā* (“Lord of the Beautiful<sup>19</sup> Eyes”) – a song included in the transcribed *TMH* repertoire (vol. 5, pp. 43-44). What was remarkable was how this song maintained the same territorial assemblages of the concert’s start through the al-sīkāh clichés. But these clichés were embedded within an old cherished song. A child clapped along to the rhythm, and a few audience members sang along to the tune, when the ensemble first played the Refrain after the male soloist:

Figure 5. Transcription of *Ṣāhib al-‘uyūn al-ḥiwārā* [Lord of the beautiful eyes], bayt 1. As performed by the Ensemble of Arab Melody, directed by Muhammad ‘Abīd. Testour Festival of Mālūf and Traditional Arab Music. July 20, 2019.

ṣā - ḥib al - ‘u - yūn — al - ḥi - wā - rā al - ḥi - wā - rā al - ḥi - wā - rā

al - ḥi - wā - rā — la - ḥā - za - raf — wa - ma - ‘ā - nī wa - ma - ‘ā - nī

wa - ma - ‘ā - nī wa - ma - ‘ā - nī yā lā lan yā — lā — lā lan ma - ‘ā - nī

āh — āh — wa - ma - ‘ā - nī yā lā lan yā — lā lā lan yā lā lā — lā lan

<sup>19</sup> *Aḥwar*, the singular form, is much more common in Arabic poetry. My thanks to Dwight Reynolds for this insight. In these Tunisian lyrics, the eyes of the beloved are *al-ḥiwārā* (also spelled *al-ḥiwarā* in *TMH*, vol. 5: compare pp. 34 and 43), meaning that the whites of the eyes are pure white and the black pupil is deeply black. The lover expresses the contrast of the white and black of the eyes as extremely beautiful. Thus, I translate *al-ḥiwārā* as “beautiful.” My thanks to Dr. Ghassen ‘Azaiez for helping me understand the cultural significance of this song’s title.

Each reoccurrence of the song functioned as a transition between the solo artists. But the ensemble did much more than simply transition singers. The melody was familiar enough to participants; but the cadence especially was grounding (see boxed unit above). The cadential cliché was an aural reminder of “Tunisian al-sīkāh” with its distinct phrasing. The familiar layered on the familiar, its reoccurrences stitching sound to sentiments and stories of the past all within an immanent, innovative present.

Each Refrain of *Ṣāhib al-‘uyūn al-ḥiwārā* – each “little return” – served its purpose to tether the improvisation, artistry, and innovation of what the vocalists and instrumentalists achieved to the homeland of al-sīkāh. And upon this plane existed ideas, compartments, and sentiments of citizenship, upon the very ground of Testour with a lineage to a real and imagined al-Andalus. I marveled at the work of al-sīkāh in this second song set. And as the sound faded and the ephemerality of live performance passed and passed and passed again, I acknowledged the possibilities of sound’s becoming-other. Its sheer presence is nothing but regulated energy. But the energy *mattered*, and in this movement of becoming upon territorial assemblages of meaning, I was sure that al-sīkāh had more to say and do.



## Chapter 5. Sonic Stamping: Processing Social and Cultural Distinction through the Tunisian Musical Modes

“The melodic cliché or formula is the carrier (Ar. *ḥāmil*) of the *başma* or *empreinte*.”

(Gharbi 2019b)

Kamal Gharbi and I were at the Higher Institute of Music in Sfax, having one more conversation together before I left Tunisia after a year of fieldwork. We were discussing the melodic paths for each one of the Tunisian modes. In between his masterful vocal renditions for each mode, Gharbi impressed upon me the importance of certain melodic-rhythmic clichés in how they functioned within the paths. These formulas were often cadences, located at the end of musical phrases. But this was not always the case, as these clichés also occurred within the course of a mode’s unfolding. Said in the middle of our discussion, Gharbi’s statement above was not about how to perform these clichés or how to transcribe them or even how to locate them within a path. His statement was about the social significance of these melodic-rhythmic units. His statement disclosed that these clichés did the work of carrying something; and that the object they carried was likened to an “imprint” or “impression” (Ar. *başma*, Fr. *empreinte*) of something else.

How does sound carry? More specifically, how do these melodic-rhythmic clichés transport an imprint or impression? The purpose of this chapter is to explore these questions. In truth, the preceding chapters in this dissertation have enabled a point of departure for this

chapter. Part One elucidated the Tunisian ṭubū‘ through structures and practices that I learned beside Tunisian students at the Higher Institute of Music in Sfax. Tunisian musicians and pedagogues in formal centers of musical transmission, such as this one in Sfax, constitute the ṭubū‘ through discourses of sameness and difference beside the Eastern Mediterranean maqāmāt. Tunisians understand themselves to be fully integrated within the maqāmāt modal traditions. But certain melodic-rhythmic formulas associated with each mode are perceived as exceptions, and also the melodic paths that manifest these formulas. This pedagogical approach is crucial in pinpointing how musical material can come to make and distinguish social and cultural formations. In this chapter, I will call this network of melodic-rhythmic phrases an *interface*, in that it is a transitional network between a participant and their musical being-in-the-world that assembles and maintains social and cultural formations.

Sound is vital as a creative force for making and unmaking the world, as I conceptualized in the previous chapter. Gharbi’s statement leads one deeper into this paradox. Some Tunisian musicians utilize the modal interface of the ṭubū‘ and, in doing so, seek stability and even permanence in social and cultural formations. In this chapter, I coin the term “sonic stamping” to describe that process. As I will explain, *stamping* derives from how Tunisian musicians in university music departments talk about the ṭubū‘ and their importance for their communities as well as from the etymology of the word *ṭab‘* itself.

### **The Imprint and the Ṭubū‘**

Gharbi’s use of the word “imprint” (Ar. *baṣma*, Fr. *empreinte*) to describe that which the melodic-rhythmic formulas of the ṭubū‘ carry follows the semantic network of the Arabic word *ṭab‘*. *Ṭab‘* is most often translated as “mode” in the English and French languages.

However, exploring the semantic network beyond a sole translation of “mode” explains how these musical objects have effectivity when performed. It will become clear that my use of “stamping” stems directly from the linguistic roots of *ṭab*‘ and how Tunisian musicians describe melodic-rhythmic clichés in their performance practice.

Up until this chapter, I have translated *ṭab*‘ as a “[musical] mode.” My Tunisian collaborators – speaking in Arabic and French – network these musical structures to other similar structures in Arab music, and also Ottoman-Turkish and Persian music. Tunisian musicians and pedagogues relate the *ṭubū*‘ to the *maqāmāt* and insist on the likeness between these two systems, in the sense that both of these are modal musical systems (Ar. *nizām mūsīqī maqāmī*, in the singular), and that each mode is represented as a “modal-scale” (Fr. *l’echelle modale*; cf. Guettat 1980:115).

But the main English-language dictionaries of modern Arabic do not give “mode” as a viable translation for *ṭab*‘ (cf. Wehr 1979:644; Lane pg. 230; Hava 1899:417). Notably, this point has bearing even for the *maqām* system. Hans Wehr in his comprehensive Arabic-English dictionary includes the translation of “mode” for *maqām*; but it is the seventh semantic domain of possible translations (1979:936). In other words, *maqām* as a “[musical] mode” is not the central definition of the word. A *maqām* is more commonly a “site” or “location,” and in that sense can refer to a saint’s tomb or a stage of the journey a Sufi adherent takes towards union with God. My point is that other attendant, figurative meanings for *maqām* – and the same is true for *ṭab*‘ – enable a far richer understanding of how these musical structures come to have social lives.<sup>1</sup> I contend that a key to understanding the

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<sup>1</sup> “Maqām” is the word that my Tunisian collaborators used for a Mashriqī “mode” and not the words *lahn* or *naghm*, both of which Arab musicians and theorists have been used in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. For example, more recently in the 1980s, the Egyptian ‘ūd virtuoso George Michel used *naghma* in conversations with my

sociality of the Tunisian musical modes, as Tunisians conceptualize, practice, and transmit them, lies within the richer semantic web of *ṭabʿ* beyond the meaning of “mode.”

Far from a meaning of “mode” as musical and scalar, a nominal sense of *ṭabʿ* describes an object that has been imprinted or impressed, just as Gharbi described in his statement. A more quotidian use of the word signifies a “printing” of a book, that is a book which is an imprinted object achieved by a printing press. Other nominal forms are closely related. A *ṭabʿ* can be a “seal,” “insignia,” or a post office “stamp” (*tābiʿ*). A finger can also leave its impression as a “fingerprint” (*tābiʿ al-aṣābiʿ*) (Wehr 1979:644-5). This meaning parallels the other word Gharbi uses in his statement: a *baṣma* can also refer to a “fingerprint” (*baṣmat al-iṣbaʿ*, cf. Wehr 1979:76). When other Tunisian interlocutors said *baṣma* in relation to the clichés of the *ṭubūʿ*, they often gestured simultaneously with their thumb by pressing it on the table like an inked stamp. In all of these nominal forms, a *ṭabʿ* is the result of activities related to imprinting or impressing.

In actuality, such objects carry the force of another. It is the force of that encounter that leaves a material and figurative mark. For instance, books are printed materials; but they figuratively carry the thoughts of a writer within the imprintation. Wax seals and institutional stamps transmit authority and authenticity, even though it is a simple material form. Security formations use fingerprints as a material mark of the human body and relate those marks to figurative forms of identity associated with a body. Imprinting something gives a material form. But in that material process, legitimacy transfers from a source to the imprinted

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advisor Scott Marcus. I do not wish to reduce the many ways that people refer to “modes” in the Mediterranean region but rather consider how the two main terms that Tunisians use – i.e., *ṭabʿ* and *maqām* – have other non-musical lexical meanings that open a rich discussion on their social and cultural function beyond the topic of music.

material object. That resultant object is a *ṭabʿ*, and through its material constitution, the legitimacy and character of the imprinter is maintained.

In that sense of carrying legitimacy, a second vital meaning of *ṭabʿ* becomes clearer. *Ṭabʿ* is commonly translated as “character,” “disposition,” or “natural propensity” (Wehr 1644). When applied to a form of biological life, the meaning still connects to *ṭabʿ* as an imprintation. For example, a human individual has a “nature” (*ṭabīʿa*) (cf. Lisan al-arab pg. 2634). In the field of Psychology, Tunisians use this word to describe “moods” or “temperaments” (Ar. *al-ṭibāʿ al-naḥsiyya*).<sup>2</sup> In this case, a human is pre-disposed to qualities and intensities that are imprinted upon the soul or psyche (Ar. *al-naḥs*) from birth. So, even though a *ṭabʿ* defines an object – whether that be a postage stamp, a musical mode, or a temperament – the word also intimates a process of transference that the object carries in its very constitution.

A *ṭabʿ* as a “[musical] mode” does not just refer to an object that is structured by *ajnās* or scale. A Tunisian musical *ṭabʿ* is also an imprint or stamp of certain qualities and intensities in sound. *Ṭabʿ al-dhīl* is “the mode of *dhīl*” but can also be translated as “the imprint/stamp of *dhīl*.” This latter translation queries *al-dhīl* as a set of qualities and intensities, temperaments and affects. Playing the “imprint of *al-dhīl*” is eliciting these specific relations for a participant who may or may not be successful in capturing those relations. It follows from Gharbi’s statement that musicians are responsible to know the melodic-rhythmic clichés that elicit such a system of relations since these clichés carry these differentiated imprints. As experts in these musical objects, musicians directly produce,

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<sup>2</sup> I am grateful to Dr. Ghassen Azaiez for pointing this out to me.

transmit, and manage social and cultural meaning when they elicit such worlds of associations.

For at least four decades, some Tunisian music scholars have placed an importance on conceptualizing *ṭabʿ* not just as a “mode” but as an “imprint” for a specialized North African geography. In 1980, Tunisian scholar Mahmoud Guettat published his landmark book on Arab-Andalusi music, entitled *La Musique Classique du Maghreb* (Classical Music of North Africa). Twenty years later, he issued a revision of this book under the new title *La Musique Arabo-Andalouse: l’Empreinte du Maghreb* (Arab-Andalusi Music: The Imprint of North Africa). The text from one edition to the next was largely unredacted; but I draw attention to the revised title of the 2000 publication which includes the word “imprint” (Fr. *empreinte*).

In his introduction to the etymology and meaning of *ṭabʿ*, Guettat confirms the significance of these musical imprints for social and cultural formations:

The key term, which highlights the importance of the mystical conception within the music of the Muslim West [i.e., *maghreb* or Muslim Spain (al-Andalus) and North Africa], is the *ṭabʿ* (plural, *tubūʿ*): character, nature, even all of the manifestations and reactions that humans can have with beings and things. Everything mysterious about [this] music is abstracted within this syllable, of which the signification is broader than that of the *maqām*... adopted by the school of the Arab East [i.e., *mashriq* or Eastern Mediterranean]. The concept of *ṭabʿ* designates both a modal scale, its characteristics as well as the psycho-physiological relationships of that scale [which] can activate (*déclencher*) beings and things in general, and humans in particular. (Guettat 1980:114-5 and 2000:137, my translation)

Guettat writes that the North African *ṭabʿ* system is uniquely connected to human ecologies.

At once structural and scalar—Guettat gives scalar diagrams later on in both editions (1980:270-1; 2000:367-8)—but also “mysterious” and “psycho-physiological,” the *tubūʿ* function like a sonic gateway for humans to relate to their ecology and form geographies connecting participants to human collectives across vast spaces and times. Guettat conceptualizes all of these networks of relations in the word *ṭabʿ* and describes how these

musical modes comes to “activate,” launch, or trigger these networks for human and nonhuman beings and things.

This process of activation is what concerns me and how musical structure in performance practice enables such a process. In describing a ṭab‘ with the words *empreinte* and *başma* (also *şīgha*; cf. Chapter 2), activation for Guettat and Gharbi involves not just ideology but also materiality. Imprints are material marks that affix legitimacy and authority in its visible (or audible) traces. It is appropriate to restate a quote from Guettat’s scholarship that I featured at the beginning of Chapter 2 in Part One of this dissertation. In this statement, Guettat formally connects the sonic materiality of these melodic-rhythmic clichés or “imprints” to cultural ideas about the “spirit” of a musical mode:

It is true that the musician is free to prefer this or that rhythmic or melodic figure, and use them according to their personal taste..., but it is also true that these figures, [even] without taking them as “models” or as “formulas” that repeat themselves, represent some sort of “prints” [*empreintes*] which make it possible to perceive what Arab musicians call *rūḥ* (spirit [*l’âme*]) of the ṭab‘ or maqām. (Guettat 1980:283 and 2000:385, translation mine; also quoted in Gharbi 2013:29)

The *rūḥ* or “spirit” of a mode is its essence, or that which enables the recognition of that mode as a differentiated object (e.g., the *mode of al-dhīl* or the *mode of al-raṣd*). Recognition of musical essence begins a process that transitions participants from sound to association. The importance of Guettat’s statement cannot be overemphasized. The *rūḥ* in Arab modal practice is often understood as an immaterial, even mysterious, degree of expertise for a musician who successfully executes performance practice. As an immaterial possession, it is not something that can be taught; rather, music students somehow come into modal *rūḥ* through intensive listening and playing over many years.<sup>3</sup> With this statement, Guettat

partially demystifies *rūḥ* by connecting its constitution to the expertise Tunisian musicians have in the performance of melodic-rhythmic formulas or imprints.

While the Tunisian modes have scalar structure, and pedagogues transmit these structures to students, the effectivity of the ṭubū‘ ultimately occurs through a network of the melodic-rhythmic formulas. In their reoccurrence, these formulas function as cliché – in the best sense of that word – to presence the *rūḥ* or “spirit” of a mode with its cultural and social associations. The clichés carry these associations, in that their material sonic constitution has become a dependable *interface* for musicians and listeners alike to fingerprint their experiences in the world.

### **Modal Imprints as an Interface**

Music scholars do not typically use the word “interface” as a conceptual metaphor for analysis. Perhaps the word is fixed to electronic technology via the Musical Instrument Digital *Interface* (MIDI) device created in the early 1980s. But for scholars of media and technology—especially those that deal with new digital media objects such as computers, tablets, smart phones, and of course the MIDI—the interface is a rich conceptual field of inquiry. In the following discussion, I am not referring to new media devices per se. Rather, I want to stress the process of activation that media scholars draw attention to with interfaces and to employ this conceptual frame alongside Guettat and Gharbi’s comments on the function of the melodic-rhythmic clichés. Guettat’s statement that clichés “make it possible to perceive what Arab musicians call the *rūḥ* or “spirit” (Fr. *l’âme*) of a mode is a statement

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<sup>3</sup> Anne Elise Thomas investigates a similar situation in her chapter on the *tafasil* or “details” of Arab music. These musical aspects are crucial for musicians to perform correctly Arab music. But her Egyptian collaborators did not consider these aspects teachable. Rather, a student absorbs these practices through listening over time. See 2006:178-225.



on how sound enables transition for participants to cross thresholds into meaning. The clichés are the vital material for this transition; and I understand this networked and musical material as an interface.

Interfaces are in-between objects and also medial processes (OED 2022). By their surfaces, interfaces mark boundaries between things or between spaces and allow users to transition from one thing to another. Using an interface is crossing a threshold; and with that sense, media and communication scholar Alexander Galloway begins his discussion of interfaces by gesturing to windows, doors, and metal detector arches as such sites of interfacing between spaces (2012:25). But Galloway desires to push through the delineation of interfaces as objects in order to probe how the process of an interface is about effect, or a “structure of action, a recipe for moving procedurally toward a certain state of affairs” (2012:120). Because interfaces are embedded within the context of this medial effect, he argues that they are dynamic thresholds with layered procedures that move hermeneutically with users. To say it another way, interfaces are not inert devices but networks of processes that activate ethical and political effects.

Galloway utilizes visual imagery in his argument to show how mediation moves even upon a seemingly static surface. In doing so, he successfully demonstrates how the surface of a media interface creates a dynamic effect when engaged. Most users do not know about the processes behind the creation of an interface’s effect but simply accept that effect when they operate the interface. Galloway explains that users can become aware of the medial process responsible for the interface effect; but it is not a normative outcome of interfaces. Rather, on their own, interfaces assemble input and arrange outcomes to produce an effect – or a transition – for the user. Interfaces do this with and without the awareness of a user. In fact,

interfaces perhaps work best when users merge with the network and readily accept the transition. The effect, in other words, is the desired outcome of an interface and not the micromanagement of its processes.

Posed in this way, interfaces appear to have a mind of their own in how they hide the micro-movements of process and flow. In *The Oxford Handbook of Media, Technology, and Organizational Studies*, Cultural Studies scholar Nishant Shah conceptualizes the interface as a gatekeeper with intentionality because of how interfaces mask these medial processes for users (2020:262). Shah goes so far as to say that an interface disciplines the user, in that the interface measures a user's input and rewards the user when they meet the standards of that interface's design (2020:263). With this frame, media objects with interfaces are far from benign and individuated. Due to the interaction that they require, interfaces are deeply a part of their ecologies and take on decisive roles when they transition users. But more than Shah, I would stress that the process is interactive. Interfaces cannot function on their own. They need specific interaction upon protocols that initiate transition to achieve outcomes. In that sense, interfaces require and cultivate human technique.

Sound studies historian and media scholar Jonathan Sterne parses the deep connection between technique and media through a Greek philosophical lineage (2003; 2006). The centuries-old debate is about *technē* and *epistēmē* – two different forms of human knowledge. *Technē* is “embodied knowledge” or a form of knowledge concerned with know-how and practice. From *technē* comes the word “technique” which describes a skill or practice that performs a specific task. On the other hand, *epistēmē* is a form of knowledge concerned with abstraction and reasoning. Sterne utilizes this distinction between *technē* and *epistēmē* to articulate practices of listening. For example, in his seminal sound studies book *The Audible*

*Past* (2003), Sterne argues that *technē* produces *epistēmē*, in that humans developed new listening practices around new technology objects in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; and these techniques led to the creation of certain knowledge about sound. For instance, the invention of medical stethoscopes and sound recording devices (e.g., phonographs) created new logics and metalanguage about sound based on how humans developed techniques and know-how to use these inventions. Technique was embodied, in that participants created mechanic and bodied practices to use the new technology. Ultimately, by highlighting the new *technē* that accompanied new machines, Sterne advances his argument that humans created new embodied listening techniques which formed new understandings of sound in the modern age.

Sterne does not use the frame of *interface* to analyze media technology like Galloway and Shah do. But his descriptions of modern audile technique demonstrate how important embodied practices are for humans who participate in devices that mediate. One clear difference, however, between Sterne and Galloway are about the devices themselves and the purpose of *technē*. For Sterne, humans use embodied practices to operate machines, which accomplish outcomes beyond the capabilities of a human body. Technology transcends human endeavor; and the possibility arises for machines to undo, reorder, or overtake the human (i.e., “technological determinism”). But for Galloway, embodied practices set an interface in motion so that a user can move into, through, and beyond the interface to other modalities of being. The operations of an interface do not transcend human practices but complement and collaborate with them to achieve an effect for the user.

Musicians and listeners are not users, in the most banal sense of that word. Nonetheless, participants who learn to recognize and perform the melodic-rhythmic clichés

of the Tunisian ṭubū‘ act as users of a musical interface. The protocols of this interface—perhaps perceived through intervals, scalar structure, intonation, and the like—guide and transition participants into thresholds of meaning beyond the materiality of music. The technē of this kind of musical performance is not related to instrument or vocal technique, i.e., how to hold an instrument, how to vocalize a pitch. Rather, participants of the ṭubū‘ interface learn to identify modes based on sets of melodic-rhythmic units – a know-how or technē that comes with professional training or years of enculturation. The technē of producing these units is the ability to activate the interface that allows participants to transition to extra-musical relations in their social, cultural, and natural environments.

### **Perceiving the Interface**

Tunisian musicians in private and public music programs across the country learn how to recognize and perform the melodic-rhythmic clichés to elicit the ṭubū‘.<sup>4</sup> In other words, they learn how to activate the interface of the ṭubū‘. But how do participants perceive these clichés, enabling one to use the interface to make relations to an ecology?

My interlocutors’ responses consistently used the Arabic linguistic root of *HSS* (ح س س) when articulating their “perception” of modal music. For English language readers who associate such perception with “listening,” it is important to realize that my collaborators did *not* use that word, which corresponds to a different Arabic root of *SM* (س م).

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<sup>4</sup> As I found in Sfax, musicians and professors that teach in the state-run university system (read: “Higher Institute of Music”) also teach in private conservatories and in individual and group lessons. So, even though I mostly researched in and around Sfax, Sousse, and Tunis, it is not inaccurate to say that music students across Tunisia learn the basics of the melodic-rhythmic clichés when they learn the ṭubū‘. But as always with such statements, more ethnographic research in places such as Gafsa, Gabes, Tatouine, Kairouan, Bizerte, and Tabarka would be most welcome to fill-out a broader understanding of music pedagogy of the Tunisian modes.

ع م). The difference between these two Arabic linguistic bases is more than semantic. *H S S* (ح س س) articulates a semantic domain that elides the act of feeling or sensing (or listening) with the general act of perception. Listening, in this domain, is not the type of modern audile technique that Sterne set about defining via early sound recording technology. Rather, the act of listening to musical modes in Tunisia is primarily an act of sensory perception where hearing is not necessarily separated from other ways of bodily reception.

For example, Gharbi and many other interlocutors consistently utilized this linguistic root to talk about how one can apprehend a musical mode. Gharbi urgently stated in one of our interactions that modal perception occurs by apprehending the melodic-rhythmic clichés in this perceptual way rather than through other types of theoretical knowledge, such as intervals or *ajnās*: “You perceive (*ḥassīt*) the melodic-rhythmic phrase and not a phrase defined by the theoretical help of steps and half-steps” (2019a). In other words, when a musician plays the distinct melodic-rhythmic clichés of *ṭab‘ al-nawā* – or when they activate the *al-nawā* interface – *ṭab‘ al-nawā* manifests and participants *yḥissu al-nawā* or “perceive/sense/feel *al-nawā*.”

Tunisian musicians use this linguistic root in a number of ways to talk about how they “feel the [melodic-rhythmic] phrase” (Tun. Ar., *ḥassīt il-jumla*) (al-Gharbī 2019a). Melodic-rhythmic clichés activate a “modal feeling” (*iḥsās maqāmī*) which corresponds to a particular mode. The “feeling of *ṭab‘ al-ramal*” (*iḥsās ṭab‘ al-ramal*), for instance, articulates the successful elicitation of *al-ramal* by way of its melodic-rhythmic clichés. What is of interest in these statements, especially for those ensconced in listening practices that separate hearing from feeling, is how the semantic network of *H S S* (ح س س) befuddles that separation. In differentiating modal music, Tunisian articulations of hearing sound is feeling-full. The

delineations between hearing, feeling, and sensing are obscured in *ihsās*, all under a general framework of sensory perception.

*Ihsās* are not differentiated by labeled feelings, such as “nostalgic,” “sad,” or “joyful.” Rather, participants first perceive a mode before any named sensory associations are made. This technicality is integral to how Tunisians transmit the *ṭubū‘*. The constitution of the modes necessitate perception before codification. For example, Tunisians musicians understand the modes *al-ramal* and *al-iṣba‘īn* to have the same base *jins* (D-E<sup>b</sup>-F<sup>#</sup>-G), even if they nuance the intonation of the E differently (see Chapter 2). How then are they to differentiate the *ihsās* between these modes? How does “feeling of *al-ramal*” (*ihsās al-ramal*) differ from the “feeling of *al-iṣba‘īn*” (*ihsās al-iṣba‘īn*)? The answer is through the melodic-rhythmic clichés which are unique to each mode and able to transition participants to codified emotions. A perception of the interface comes before any extra-musical associations assembled to the musical mode. In this manner, as I explained in Chapter 2, Tunisians have musical modes that share the same base *jins* but are differentiated, nonetheless.

Outside of the Arabic word *ṭab‘* with its orientation to stamps and (finger)prints, the semantic network of *HSS* (ح س س) is of utmost importance for understanding how the *ṭubū‘* activate sensory and extra-sensory associations. Across the Arab world, the word *ihsās* is a common discursive way of describing musical perception. In describing Egyptian Sufi song (*inshād*), ethnomusicologist Michael Frishkopf mostly translates *ihsās* as “feeling,” but also takes a granular look into how such feeling is more of a process of perception among his Sufi interlocutors. For these participants, differentiating *ihsās* is a professionalized activity (2001). He explains that a *munshid*, or lead Sufi singer, perceives/feels a performance event by taking stock of sacred objects and affects of place. Based on this feeling or perception

(*ihsās*), a munshid selects poetry and melodies in the moment that seem to align with those perceptions. A munshid's *ihsās* is crucial for Sufi participants. Excellent perception leads to a selection of the right songs for an event, which heightens the affect to produce an atmospheric "feeling" (*shu 'ūr*) that unites participants at the event. Although related and often translated as "feeling," both *ihsās* and *shu 'ūr* are different. *Ihsās* is a transitional process of conscious perception, and *shu 'ūr* is a coded social affect in the room.

In Frishkopf's case study, *ihsās* is a cultivated and deep "intuition" not unlike the deep knowledge and performance experience that is required of Tunisian musicians who master the *ṭubū'*. In both cases, *ihsās* is about sensory attunement and perception in order to produce a meaningful transition during social events. It is in this way that the Tunisian melodic-rhythmic clichés act as an interface. But more than just intuition, these clichés are conceptualized, often transcribed, and transmitted between musicians. And in their infinite reoccurrences across performance events, all participants can learn these sensory paths which manifest a mode...and then its associations. When Tunisian musicians enact a specific musical mode, it is a first-order act of perceiving (Tun. Ar. *yḥissu*) specific melodic-rhythmic units. These clichés act as an interface that brings an effect or a profound transition for them in terms of moving through individuated listening and its singular experience, into collective paths of signification.

### **Perception and "Structures of Feeling"**

In his Master's thesis, Gharbi states that *ihsās* is "a particular personal condition" (*ḥāla nafsiyya mu'ayyana*) (2013:30). This seems to be the case, considering that even though Tunisians talk about getting a "modal feeling" (*ihsās maqāmī*) or "feel[ing] the

phrase” (Tun. Ar., *ḥassīt il-jumla*), there is very little talk about correct perception of musical phrases in terms of certain extra-musical associations. Sensory perception is a singular and unique experience. But the fact that the clichés have long provided a resilient and dependable musical structure to stimulate the sensorium complicates the singularity behind Gharbi’s statement. How does one understand how deep musical structure can elicit deep social and cultural meaning across collectives if the perception process is singular, unable to be replicated? Said another way, how do the Tunisian *ṭubū‘* provide collective experiences of perception that then relate to structures of meaning?

Add to this aporia the fact that for centuries music scholars have documented sensory and extra-sensory associations with modal musics. Few scholars, however, attempt to detangle this situation, that is how modes are able *musically* to elicit such collective meaning. For example, if a particular mode signifies sadness but not all participants feel sadness when listening (which is the case as sensory perception is a singular process), then the relation between the mode and the affect of sadness is arbitrary. At this point, scholars have tended to turn to descriptions of the musical structure and less so to the act of perception or the formation of sadness in connection to that structure. A ground-breaking exception to this statement is Denise Gill’s *Melancholic Modalities* (2017). As a musician and an ethnographer, Gill writes about Turkish-Ottoman classical music in light of one affect, that of melancholy, and how musicians transmit and perform it. She finds that although affects are slippery and rhizomatic (read: difficult to trace), they still have effectivity. By tracing that effectivity through various multi-directional movements, such as performance, transcription, oral transmission, and even instrument-making, Gill productively relates musical structure to social structure. Her argument is that the perception of melancholy is not a by-product of



performance events or centuries of musical notation. Rather, this perception is central to the tradition and is a vital force for the continuity of the tradition.

Melancholia is a crucial effect of the Turkish-Ottoman music tradition for musicians and listeners alike, even if the experience of that melancholia is singular and unique during the perception process. Collectives are consistently shot through with difference. Tunisian musicians of modes structure their perceptive experiences by a vital interface of musical clichés, even as they rightly claim that perception is “a particularly personal condition.”

What enables this modal system to work and take effect for Tunisians is that perception and feeling, or *ihsās*, is explicitly linked to the melodic-rhythmic clichés. For example, whatever feeling or mood emerges from al-nawā in a performance event—and many will say that it is sadness and nostalgia (cf. Snoussi 2004:54)—that texture of *ihsās* is overtly grounded to apprehending practice through al-nawā’s clichés. The expression behind the “feeling of al-nawā” (*ihsās al-nawā*) is singular and unique across participants; but that experience is structured by the melodic-rhythmic formulas which enable activation much like a media interface does.

This discussion of structure, feeling, and experience recalls an earlier scholarly conversation from the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In *Marxism and Literature* (1977), cultural studies scholar and literary critic Raymond Williams poses the phrase “structures of feeling” to develop his ideas about the intersection of historical structure and personal experience, and how this intersection is replete with possibilities for the social and cultural. Williams’ theoretical propositions are considered outmoded in today’s academy, perhaps due to the way he centers human agency and relentlessly favors structural Marxism. But I emphasize Williams’ work in connection to the Tunisian *ṭubū‘* because of how he contends that deep

structure is an ever-present constraint for the immanent moment, in terms of forming sensory perceptions.

Williams' "feeling" corresponds to Tunisian *ihsās*. For Williams, feeling is broadly construed as perception without a separation of the senses, including cognitive reflection. "Structures of feeling" are actually structures of *experience*, he argues, where people make their lives based on their own embodiments and affective orientations during interactions and encounters (1977:132). The structural part of Williams' argument corresponds to the transcendent forms of Deleuze and Guattari's logic. These are social and cultural formations that are curated from past encounters, given value, maintained as valuable, and transmitted from event to event. A "structure of feeling" is the articulation of an overlap that occurs in an event between these structural, transcendent forms and one's own unique orientations. In short, by posing the phrase "structures of feeling," Williams brings process into structure. The social and cultural are structured but open to change through a process of experience in an immanent event. And to the reverse, immanence is not isolated or immune from transcendent structure. In fact, Williams contends that structure puts limits on experience or "feeling" within an event.

Most memorably, Williams concludes his argument by stating that structures of feeling are "social experiences *in solution*" (1977:133, italics his). Social formations are not immediately available to people inside these experiential events. Instead, structure combines with sensory perception in an ambiguous state (i.e., "in solution" or suspended in liquid), allowing the structuring of experience and the deforming of structure. As a literature scholar, Williams is most interested in processes of the creative arts that he considers different experiences of life and "not covered by...other formal systems" (1977:133). In previous

chapters, I discussed Elizabeth Grosz' understanding of art as the elicitation of *sensation*. Like feeling, sensation does not entirely fit into the compositional frame but exceeds it as excess, that is the rendering of chaos, pace Deleuze and Guattari. Williams' "structures of feeling" fits, then, into a longer line of scholarly thinking that considers the materiality of things, such as feelings, to be crucial aspects in re/de/forming social and cultural structure.

Holding firmly to structure is essential when investigating how the Tunisian *ṭubū'* contribute to social and cultural formations. For example, the structural idea that *al-nawā* elicits sadness is important to how Tunisians perceive *al-nawā* today in performance events. But both the structure and immanent encounter hinge upon the musical-modal interface of *al-nawā*. These melodic-rhythmic clichés activate *al-nawā* and connect transcendent ideas of sadness to sensory perception. To be more specific, these clichés amount to "structures of feeling" themselves, in that through their reoccurrence in transmission and performance, participants learn to link sensory perception to known social and cultural formations associated with the *ṭubū'*. The clichés structure experiences for participants *in solution*, as Williams might say. In this, there is both the trajectory of meaning as participants have experienced *al-nawā* before the event, and also the undetermined possibilities of singular encounter that gives vibrancy to the process of signification.

### **The Act of Stamping Sound**

Melodic-rhythmic clichés. Fingerprints. A musical interface. Perceiving and sensing the interface. All of these components come together to describe the process some Tunisian participants undertake in order to utilize the *ṭubū'* as vital sonic elements that relate them to bodies, nonhumans, affects, time, earth, and other extra-musical associations. I call this

procedure *sonic stamping*, a practice that fixes structures of sound and rhythm in order to manifest social and cultural difference. Sonic stamping is a process of inscribing difference within musical expression by way of a structured interface. In Tunisia, it is a process that encapsulates pedagogical transmission, musical performance, sensory perception, and curations of meaning due to how useful this musical interface has been for participants in making relations to their social, cultural, and natural environments.

Sonic stamping is an act of “fingerprinting sound,” even though such a phrase is a conundrum. Sounds are waveforms of energy. But even if one matters sound as a cultural object of significance, it is still difficult to conceptualize how one might fingerprint it. Nevertheless, many of my collaborators use the word *başma* – or “fingerprint” – to describe these musical clichés and simultaneously make a thumbprint on a table or some surface nearby. That embodied gesture links sound, rhythm, and body and socializes the musical object. For them, a modal cliché is quite literally a thumbprint, a unique marker of something beyond the sonic and rhythmic intensities. A musical *ṭab‘*—like the imprint of a book’s text, a postage stamp, or a fingerprint—is a social and cultured thing. I choose “stamp” instead of “fingerprint” to follow the lexical meaning of *ṭab‘*. But it is clear from my fieldwork that the “stamp” of a mode is also a “fingerprint” for Tunisian participants.

The act of stamping sound and rhythm has an intense structural center. The musical formulas are highly structured units that reoccur on stages, in classrooms, on the radio, and elsewhere to presence difference that is most often associated with a nation-state identity today. This musical structure is so noticeable that after one year of study, I as a non-Tunisian began to recognize the clichés in recordings and performances.

But despite this strong structured core, when Tunisians do social and cultural work with their musical modes, it is not a process that proves the Structuralism stance from the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Assembling a nation-state expression through the musical clichés is a prime signification today; but it has not always been the case. In other words, the deep structure of the clichés across thirteen musical modes does not correspond to deep subconscious units of meaning that are universal for all Tunisians – or non-Tunisians for that matter. Participants do not listen to the clichés like they are a Levi-Straussian “mytheme” – a cultural unit that travels and carries the same meaning from place to place. And even though a cliché might induce a somatic response or relate to the natural environment in some way, this relation is not necessarily shared across all participants in a performance event.

Sonic stamping is a not a structural experience but deals in a structural interface. Fixing sound and rhythm in certain phrases and then transmitting and performing these phrases time and time again is a way of building structure that has the resiliency and durability to activate meaning of many kinds. Instead of focusing on the fact that sound means this or that, the process of sonic stamping in Tunisia demonstrates simply that sound *means*. The ethnographic vignettes I have shared in Part Two attest to the fact that meaning is not shared between individuals within an event. Based on the multiple singularities of encounter, meaning is curated and assembled to constitute Objects and Subjects. These components are not universal elements but conditioned to the event and contingent upon those who curate. Studying the musical modes based on what they have come to mean through their constitution, then, only displays these conditions and contingents rather than describing ontological reality. In other words, the method of semiotics – a way of studying signs and symbols – is illusive and not able to describe real lived experience.

Sonic stamping is not a move away from highlighting structure in cultural processes. Rather, the way Tunisian practice, theorize, and transit the musical modes demonstrate important qualities of sound itself. Sound is a vibrant, mattered object that has effectivity, the capacity to activate, elicit, or achieve an outcome. Structuring sound and rhythm into dependable units of musical phrasing is a way for the Tunisians to preserve expressions of difference, even when those constitutions of difference (e.g., associations to time, sensory feeling, nation-state identity) change across times and places. The deeply structural aspects of a mode's interface is perhaps a method of dealing with the intensities and movement of life on earth that challenge the survivability of humans. Sonic stamping manages cultural change and social movement.

The interface of the melodic-rhythmic clichés are *carriers*, as Gharbi conveys, and this articulation implicates processes of cultural movement within musical tradition. The idea that sound as a mattered object-in-motion is also a “carrier” of something is provocative. But more than just solitary sound objects, the modal interface for Tunisian musicians is a musical network of highly structured sound and rhythmmed units. This point should not be overlooked; in structuring sound through melody and rhythm, and in transmitting these units as formulaic, Tunisian musicians stabilize sound and assemble territories of meaning with it for the purposes of making home (pace Grosz). I choose to view the melodic-rhythmic clichés as a response to dynamic human and nonhuman ecologies: a way to slow down rampant geological movement, lessen the intensity, and provide regulation for the sake of domesticity. From such a vantage point, “tradition,” “canon,” and even “folklore” are regulated and rhythmmed objects – a response to chaos. These structures are a method of “living with” the forces, intensities, and matterings that subsume human existence.

Difference is unassailable and ultimately unassimilable. Difference emerges in surprising ways during immanent events. I relished the transmission events that I observed in the classrooms of the High Institute of Music at Sfax. On many occasions, music professors – the central curators for meaning during such events – welcomed difference as students encountered the musical modes. During the al-nawā session I wrote about in Chapter 3, it was clear to me that some of the students (including the professor) did not share a belief in the jinn nor the possibility of being “possessed” (Ar. *maskūn*) as that one female student. But the professor allowed that experience to circulate, nonetheless. On another occasion at the Institute, when studying ṭab‘ al-raṣd, I observed that one song elicited different rhythmic configurations to one student. The student had learned the song with a rhythm different than the one the professor was teaching. The two rhythms were distinct and racialized the song differently, one through the Arab-Andalusi stream and the other through the Black sub-Saharan stream. Rather than prohibit the student from expressing rhythmic difference, the professor allowed difference during transmission.

The point is that I witnessed how modern-day curators of the Tunisian ṭubū‘ both taught deep musical structure and also allowed for singular experiences of that structure based on one’s own difference. The correct perception of the musical modes was differentiated not by an alignment to certain ideological commitments or extra-sensory associations but by a correct rendering or perception of the melodic-rhythmic clichés. The “feeling of al-nawā” (*iḥsās al-nawā*) or the “feeling of al-ramal” (*iḥsās al-ramal*) is decided primarily by the perception of the mode’s clichés and not by the correct alignment to certain ideas or bodily sensations.

Sonic stamping is a durable process that presents participants of the ṭubū‘ with a musical interface for assembling social and cultural formations. It is durable in the sense that these melodic-rhythmic clichés have been transmitted for some time. In this dissertation, I have traced many of the musical formula that I learned at the Institute to the 1949 publication of D’Erlanger’s *La Musique Arabe*. Perhaps new clichés emerge from time to time. But the current interface is a durable – even resilient – one to continue the work of aligning certain patterns of organized sound and rhythm to social and cultural difference. Sonic stamping is an active and dynamic process, where participants can try on formal identities (“Arab” or “Tunisian”) or experiment with established relations from the past (“al-nawā brings the jinn”). But the consistency that the stamping aspect – in terms of how the reoccurring clichés carry fingerprints of meaning – provides participants a musical interface for this work.



## Concluding Remarks

The two main sections of this dissertation have several key points that deserve a brief reiteration in this conclusion. Part One presented the Tunisian musical modes through a dialectic: Tunisian musicians and pedagogues conceptualize and practice the ṭubū‘ in relation to the Mashriqī maqāmāt. I documented this approach during fieldwork, primarily as a registered music student at the Higher Institute of Music in Sfax. Formal interviews and informal conversations outside of the Institute in the cities of Sousse and Tunis confirmed many aspects of this dialect. I consider an ethnographic approach to studying musical modes important. The ṭubū‘ are musical objects that developed across centuries of history; but they emerge in the present – and will continue to emerge – as dynamic objects-in-motion that are expressive for people *today*.

The bifurcation of theory and practice in Part One is based upon my fieldwork with Tunisian musicians and pedagogues. Networks of ajnās, arrangements of note degrees into a scale, and nuances in intonation remain a central way that Tunisians transmit their modal system (Chapter One). Tetrachordal theory is a system that conceptualizes and structures musical practice. But, as I observed at the Institute, it is also a means by which Tunisian musicians relate to other musicians and repertoires in the region. In analyzing musical practice with these structures, Tunisians join hands with Arab musicians in the Eastern Mediterranean, most specifically, and cultivate connectedness across place.

Acknowledging the importance of the melodic-rhythmic clichés in the transmission of the ṭubū‘ was a crucial moment for me to understand a particular function of the modal system to inscribe difference for many Tunisian participants (Chapter Two). As I have stated elsewhere in this dissertation, the practice of differentiated musical phrases is not unique to

modal systems. In truth, as I worked through the writing of this dissertation by giving presentations on various chapters at conferences, several scholars and musicians commented on how they recognized similar practices in their respective traditions and topics. What is unique about the Tunisian transmission of the ṭubū‘ within Arab music traditions is the extent to which they conceptualize these musical phrases. The numerous terms used to call out these units (e.g., *cliché*, *formula*, *imprint*) – whether in the literature or during classroom lessons – demonstrates the high value Tunisian musician and pedagogues have for this musical material. In particular, the word *başma* or “(finger)print” is noteworthy, namely because it indicates how the valuing of these musical phrases is directed towards social function. The musical clichés give presence to social considerations. The entire musical tradition of the traditional ṭubū‘ and its main repertoire, the nūba, is social, of course. But in conceptualizing these melodic-rhythmic phrases with such precision through discourse and ways of practice, my collaborators taught me a deeper intensity to how these phrases might function for them in terms of social and cultural difference.

Part Two explored this deeper intensity, taking material that might be categorized as “music theory” in scholarship and applying concepts within philosophy and cultural theory to better understand where human meaning and musical practice align. The way ethnographers conceptualize difference, makes a difference (Chapter Three). Rather than only understand the Tunisian musical clichés as a linguistic dialect of the region (i.e., difference as variation), the ways I observed participants encountering the modes during transmission or performance events suggested that a more profound conceptualization of difference was necessary for my analysis (i.e., difference as ontological, or a fundamental aspect of reality). That latter Deleuzian “play of difference” presupposes the importance of conceptualizing immanence –

the present moment – for every type of social and cultural formation that assembles and transmits from event to event. Tracing this type of difference as it emerges in the present focuses on process and becoming, which is already a helpful starting point when considering that sound is an ephemeral, moving object.

Investigating how the Tunisian melodic-rhythmic clichés come to relate people to their ecologies requires additional steps. These musical practices are one aspect of other materials, ideas, and behaviors within an event that all assemble together to bring about meaning (Chapter Four). That process of “territorialization” is a signature concept of Deleuze and Guattari (1994). But even as one aspect of many, I contend that the melodic-rhythmic clichés of the *ṭubū‘* are central to the events I observed. The clichés are structured musical objects and participants have a certain level of expectation to encounter these phrases in some musical traditions, such as the *nūba*. The clichés then form a media “interface,” pace Galloway (2012), that enable a transition for participants in relating to their social, cultural, and natural environments. “Interface” is perhaps a ubiquitous and unoriginal word to use for such a function. But media theorists demonstrate that interfaces are more than simplistic terms but rather are processes of transition that can take on gatekeeping or managerial tendencies through its operation. The way some Tunisians talk about the effectivity of the *ṭubū‘* to have force, presence, or power when practiced is reminiscent of such theorizing.

The *ṭubū‘* interface activates participants through sensory perception (Ar. *iḥsās*) in relating to various environments, such as their own bodies, each other, land, specific social formations (e.g., nation-state), times and seasons, nonhuman *jinn*, and other cosmic forces. And in this way, a *ṭab‘* is not just a musical mode but an “imprint” or – more apropos – a “fingerprint” (Ar. *baṣma*). I coin the term “sonic stamping” to bring these many concepts and

musical practices together to describe this process of inscribing experiences with difference in sound (Chapter Five). Despite the ephemerality of sound – i.e., the impossibility to immobilize it – it is possible to view the social life of the Tunisian ṭubū‘ via the practice of the melodic-rhythmic clichés, as a method of stamping or fingerprinting sound to manifest social and cultural difference.

Presenting aspects of the ṭubū‘ that demonstrate specific processes of social function is a compelling way to understand musical modes and how these complex systems have had such wide-ranging effectivity with participants across centuries. I seek to develop conversations about musical modes – specifically those in Arab music traditions – that takes the deep and rich documentation of their theoretical bases (i.e., scales, tetrachords, intonations) and investigates how such aspects activate extra-musical associations and meaning. Arguably, the latter has been a central reason why musicians have continued to transmit musical modes over centuries with such specificity to organization and intoned sound. The nuances of sound entail nuances of human meaning.

To extend this study, I ask: if the Tunisian melodic-rhythmic clichés are “fingerprints,” then *whose fingerprints are they?* One of the main limitations of this study is that my fieldwork largely derives from the musicians and pedagogues associated with the Higher Institute of Music, an official, state-run institution. Within these valorized halls of learning, how far do the fingerprinted representations extend? And how does the effectivity of modes expand or contract in these various contexts? My younger colleagues at the Institute cherished the ṭubū‘, and Tunisian composers continue to create music in the traditional modes. But I also spoke with a Tunisian composer who explicitly uses the maqāmāt (and *not* the ṭubū‘) for compositions, and I have watched YouTube videos of

younger musicians who are innovating and experimenting with the ṭubū‘. These extensions to my research would present a more diverse understanding of the ṭubū‘ across many places; but they do still demonstrate that the Tunisian ṭubū‘ continue to be a dynamic resource for many people today – a fundamental perspective of this dissertation. These and other stories of how people enjoy, teach, practice, reject and/or utilize complex and richly historical systems of musical modes will continue to demonstrate the social lives of modes.

## Appendix 1: The Nūba in Tunisia<sup>1</sup>

The *nūba* in Tunisia is a musical suite of instrumental and vocal pieces, arranged by a variety of rhythms. A *nūba* suite begins with an extended instrumental section. In the *istiftāḥ* (“opening”) of this section, instrumentalists play melodic lines in heterophony, in a slow and unmetered manner. These lines emphasize several of the most characteristic melodic-rhythmic phrases of the chosen mode, as well as other musical features that insightfully elicit the mode. In the past, the *istiftāḥ* was improvised by a solo musician. But today, this opening is pre-composed and played by a group, as notated in the *TMH* volumes.

Instrumentalists next play a piece called the *mṣaddar* (Tun. Ar.; formal Ar. *muṣaddar*) in 6/4, which resembles the form and performance practice of a Turkish *samā’ī*, although the latter is performed with a 10-beat cycle. A *mṣaddar* features a series of verses (sing. *khāna*) and one reoccurring refrain (*taslīm*). After three or four verses are played, each followed by a performance of the refrain, the *mṣaddar* ends and a brief but faster *tūq* (Tun. Ar.; formal Ar. *ṭawq*) section commences in 3/4 or 6/8. The rhythm increases again in the following *silsa* or *selsa* (Tun. Ar.; formal Ar. *silsila*) instrumental section (in 3/8) after the *tūq*. The increasing tempo of the rhythms from the *mṣaddar* to the *tūq* and then *silsa* sections is an overall performance feature in the Tunisian *nūba*. This type of rhythmic development occurs two more times during the course of the *nūba* suite, both in the vocal section that follows this instrumental introduction.








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<sup>1</sup> The main source for this appendix is *al-Nūba fī al-mā’lūf al-tūnisī* (The Nūba in Tunisian Mā’lūf), published in 1982 by the Ministry of Culture in Tunis.

The fast, rhythmic speed of the silsla dynamically ends the instrumental section. The next piece is resolutely slower, creating a dramatic moment for the “entrance” (Tun. Ar. *dkhūl*; formal Ar. *dukhūl*) of the vocal section. The *dkhūl* is a brief instrumental introduction to set the new tempo for the first sung lines of poetry called the *abyāt*. In the past, these sung lines were improvisatory. But today these melodies are pre-composed. Music students often learn and memorize the *abyāt* for the traditional musical modes in conservatory or university classes. The *abyāt* is in the *biṭāyḥī* rhythm (in 4/4), and is the first sung material of the *nūba*.

After the *abyāt*, singers perform any number of songs in the *biṭāyḥī* rhythm. The *biṭāyḥī* is a fairly slow rhythm and marks the first of five rhythms used throughout the vocal section of a Tunisian *nūba*. In all, these rhythms are *biṭāyḥī* (pl. *biṭāyḥīa*), *birwal* (pl. *birāwil*), *draj* (pl. *adrāj*), *khafīf* (pl. *khafāyif*), and *khatm* (pl. *akhtām*). Programmatically, these five rhythms progress in two stages, both of which emphasize the rhythmic development of changing the tempo from a slower to faster pace. The first stage begins with the fairly slow *biṭāyḥī* (in 4/4) and moves into the faster *birwal* rhythm (in 2/4). The second stage begins slowly again but with the *draj* rhythm (in 6/4), increases in tempo with the *khafīf* rhythm (in 6/4), and ends with the quick *khatm* rhythm (in 6/8 or 3/4) – the fastest rhythm in the *nūba* suite. The *dkhūl birāwil* rhythm (in 2/4) is also commonly played in songs when performers move from the *biṭāyḥī* to *birwal* rhythms. In translation, “*dkhūl birāwil*” is the rhythm that announces the “entrance of the *birāwil* [songs].” Tunisian musicians conceptualize this rhythm as a subdivision of the *birwal* rhythm and not a rhythm that formalizes its own vocal section in the *nūba*. Transcriptions of these rhythms are as follows:

Order of the rhythms within the vocal section of the Tunisian nūba:

1. biṭāyḥī 
2. birwal 
- dkhūl birāwil 
3. draj 
4. khafīf 
5. khatm  or 

KEY  = dumm (strong beat)  = takk (weak beat)

Ensembles can play any number of songs in each of the five rhythms in the sung section of the nūba; but the arrangement of rhythms is fixed in the above order. Interspersed between the rhythms are instrumental “interludes” (Ar. *fārighāt* or *lāzimāt*; sing. *fārigha* or *lāzima*). These interludes introduce the next rhythm, as well as provide some variety to the sung section.

One other piece needs mentioning. The *tūshiya* (Tun. Ar.; formal Ar. *tawshiya*) is an instrumental piece that is performed within the vocal section of the nūba. Conventionally, it



is played between the biṭāyḥī and birwal rhythms and serves to introduce the musical mode that comes next in the nūba cycle, as listed by the canonical order of modes from the anonymous zajal poem (see Part One, Chapter One). It follows that the tūshiya preserves an important historical aspect of the nūba’s lexical meaning of “turn-taking.” As explained in the glossary and Chapter One of this dissertation, that turn-taking in 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup>-century Baghdad was between court musicians fulfilling their shift of playing music for the ruler. But in al-Andalus, the meaning changed and came to refer to turn-taking between the musical modes in the performance cycle. The tūshiya – as a section or piece within the nūba suite – has been documented since the 12<sup>th</sup> century in the writings of Maimonides, which may be the earliest documented genre of *instrumental* music in the Arab tradition (Seroussi 2003:133-5; Reynolds 2021:184).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> My thanks to Dwight Reynolds for pointing out this important historical detail.

## Appendix 2: Intonation and the Tunisian Ṭubū‘

Intonation is an aspect of musical practice that is both performed and conceptualized. Performance can be idiosyncratic. Musicians stylize and nuance sound in these moments as a response to participants, to the acoustic nature of the space itself, to the material capacities of their instruments, or simply due to personal preference (cf. Marcus 1993:48). But these nuances also occur within structures or conceptualizations that narrow the range of what might be considered acceptable practice. Conceptualizations are discursive, in that a musician can read about intonational practices in some musical traditions or talk about them with a master-musician in others. Simply put, intonation is both an art *and* a science. In my experiences of listening to, performing, talking and reading about the Tunisian ṭubū‘, I have found that specific intonations within the modes have a fluidity of practices. At the same time, Tunisian musicians have discursive and embodied knowledge that tend to constrain that fluidity.

Systematizing constraints is notoriously difficult. I agree with Owen Wright’s comment that systems of music theory are the result of “passing the raw material of practice through a filter of theoretical presuppositions” (1978:227). I would also add that these filters produce systems that come to influence the “raw material” as well. My observations of Tunisian musical practices around the ṭubū‘ demonstrate that although many are aware of notational practices – which designate fixed positions for the various notes – these designations do not create a uniformity of practice. The best way to ascertain any consensus on a specific intonation is to listen to Tunisian musicians live or recorded. More than likely, a *consensus* will emerge from these listening moments but not a uniformity of practice. It is in

this spirit that I offer an appendix on Tunisian intonation based on a few points of consensus that I have gathered from my own experiences with the ṭubū‘ and with Tunisian musicians and pedagogues.

Before discussing the archive, I wish to state that my Tunisian collaborators did not foreground intonation during my lessons in the ṭubū‘ at the Higher Institute of Music in Sfax, nor in conversations about the ṭubū‘ outside of the Institute in Sfax, Sousse, and Tunis. Rather, my collaborators addressed intonation rather indirectly, e.g., when their students were learning repertoire and needed correction. There is extensive discourse from musicians, theorists, and scholars on Arab music intonation, some of which views the topic primarily as a scientific endeavor of precise measurements and ordered scales. These discussions are helpful for considering how the practice of music intersects with how people conceptualize and systematize it, and my formation as a music scholar includes such training. However, my Tunisian collaborators simply did not talk to me in this way about intonation. By putting my remarks on Tunisian intonation in an appendix, I wish to privilege the manner in which my teachers instructed me in the ṭubū‘ by relegating this discussion as an aside, in an appendix. At the same time, this appendix serves as a gesture to the wider conversation about intonation for those who are interested.

### **The Archive**

A written archive of transcriptions of the Tunisian modes have inevitably influenced the transmission of its practice. In 1949, Tunisian musician Manoubi Snoussi published the fifth volume of *La Musique Arabe (Arab Music)* on behalf of the French Baron and music scholar Rudolphe D’Erlanger who had died earlier in 1932. It is not altogether clear whether

the presentation of intonation in this volume represented the conceptualization of D'Erlanger in 1932, or that of Snoussi and other Tunisian collaborators in 1949.<sup>1</sup> In the publications that resulted from the 1932 Cairo Congress, the Tunisian modes are transcribed with European flat and sharp signs, as well as a half-flat (♭) and half-sharp (♯, not †) signs (*KMMA* 1933:249-58). Apart from giving more information about the theoretical and melodic shapes of the ṭubū‘, the 1949 publication also uses these same four intonational categories, only changing the half-sharp sign to the conventional one used by Tunisians today (†). No mention is made of the specific tuning system that these symbols represent.

Whatever the case may be with these earlier 20<sup>th</sup>-century transcriptions, Tunisian music theorists later deemed these four notational signs insufficient for describing the wealth of nuanced sound which musicians regularly performed in the practice of the ṭubū‘. In 1972, the cultural statesman and musician Salah Mahdi proposed an alternate system in *La Musique Arabe* (*Arab Music*) – the same title of D'Erlanger's volume but a different publication. Mahdi also published a version of this system in the eighth volume of the canonical *Tunisian Musical Heritage* (*TMH*) series (n.d.:4). Many Tunisian musicians and pedagogues use Mahdi's system today when teaching students, even though they do not refer explicitly to Mahdi as the theorist behind the system. In that sense, Mahdi's system of marking Tunisian intonation in the ṭubū‘ has been influential for music schools and deserves a detailed mention.

In the 1972 publication, Mahdi described how the 1932 Cairo Congress on Arab music – a conference attended by leading music scholars and theorists of the day, including Arab, Turkish, Iranian, and European participants – was significant for setting intonational

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<sup>1</sup> D'Erlanger passed away in October 1932, just months after the conclusion of the Cairo Congress.

practices in 20<sup>th</sup>-century Arab (and thus, Tunisian) music. A central issue revolved around how to transcribe sounds in these musical traditions that “exceed[ed] the limits” of the Western isometric scale of steps and half-steps (1972:36). In his publication, Mahdi briefly presented both the modern-day Turkish and Iranian systems of intonational transcription. The Turkish system utilized a number of non-Western signs to differentiate a variety of tones within one whole-step; and the Iranian system used two signs, namely the *koron* for half-flats (♭̇) and the *sori* for half-sharps (♯̇). Mahdi stated that the Cairo Congress attendees adopted the Iranian system to transcribe non-Western tones in Arab music but choose different symbols to represent these measurements. Today, these two symbols are ♭̣ (for a half-flat) and ♯̣ (for a half-sharp).

Based on his own assessment of the Congress, Mahdi admitted that he was “little convinced” by the results and decided to perform his own quantitative study of intonation (1972:37). He did this on August 25, 1966 while at the Interlochen music camp in the United States, using a Strobococonn 6T-3 electronic sound measuring device. The musician who provided music for this experiment was the legendary Tunisian ‘ūd player Khamays Tarnān. It is unclear how Mahdi carried out his experiment or even which of the ṭubū‘ Tarnān played for Mahdi. Both of these queries would help one better analyze Mahdi’s enduring results. But after measuring a number of tones, Mahdi formulated an intonational system, as follows (1972:37-8):

To raise a tone by 20%: ♯̣

To lower a tone by 20%: ♭̣

To raise a tone by 30%: ♯̣̣

To lower a tone by 30%: ♭̣̣

To raise a tone by 40%: ♯̣̣̣

To lower a tone by 40%: ♭̣̣̣

Mahdi said that he authenticated these results with several international music scholars at a conference in the Goethe Institute in Beirut, including Marius Schneider (University of Cologne, Germany), Ahmet Adnan Saygun (Conservatory of Ankara, Turkey), and Khatchi Khatchi (Conservatory of Tehran, Iran). It is probable that Mahdi considered his system to describe non-Western tones practiced across all Arab countries and not just in Tunisia, for he concludes his discussion with a remarkable warning to “certain Arab countries” that even in their adoption of Western instruments, they should not risk losing their musical heritage and forgetting any musical nuances that are characteristic of modal music (1972:38).

### **Playing Mahdi’s intonations**

Mahdi’s system is certainly more descriptive for a variety of intonations in the *ṭubū‘* than the results of the Cairo Congress in 1932. In his system, he includes the two symbols from the Congress – to either raise or lower a tone by 30% ( $\sharp$  or  $\flat$ ) – and adds four other symbols to further subdivide a tone: by 20% ( $\sharp$  or  $\sharp$ ) or by 40% ( $\sharp$  or  $\flat$ ). But if theorists or musicians are interested in calculating a specific measurement for these percentages, in terms of cents, a persistent issue with Mahdi’s system is that the tone is never identified. In the *TMH* publication (vol. 8, pg. 9), Mahdi states that the tone is a “normal interval” (Ar. *al-bu‘d al-‘ādī* [pg. 4], Fr. *ton naturel* [pg. 9]). One can understand the “normal” measurement for this interval as either 200 cents in the equal-tempered system or 203.91 cents in a Pythagorean system.

Assuming that Mahdi is referring to an equal-tempered system where half-step intervals are 100 cents and whole-step intervals are 200, Mahdi’s symbols can be understood as follows, in terms of versions of the note E above C:

E $\natural$	natural	400 cents (i.e., 2 whole steps from C)
E $\sharp$	20% flat	360 cents
E $\flat$	30% flat	340 cents
E $\flat$	40% flat	320 cents
E $\flat$	50% flat	300 cents

One of Mahdi’s students, Dr. Fethi Zghonda, takes a different approach, using the comma, a central interval of Pythagorean tuning. Pythagorean tuning recognizes the whole step as 203.91 cents, and the major 3rd (2 whole steps) as 407.82 cents. The Pythagorean comma is 23.46 cents. For example, Zghonda designates al-ramal’s E $\flat$  as “-4 commas” or four commas less than an E-natural (1992b). Using the comma and the Pythagorean system would yield the following measurements for the flats of E, as measured from the note C in the following:<sup>2</sup>

E $\natural$	natural	407.82 cents (i.e., 2 whole steps from C)
E $\sharp$	2 commas flat	360.899 cents
E $\flat$	3 commas flat	341.055 cents
E $\flat$	4 commas flat	317.595 cents
E $\flat$	5 commas flat	294.13 cents

Comparing Mahdi’s and Zghonda’s intonation representation, we find a considerable level of accord:

E $\natural$	natural	400 cents	natural	407.82 cents
E $\sharp$	20% flat	360 cents	2 commas flat	360.899 cents
E $\flat$	30% flat	340 cents	3 commas flat	341.055 cents
E $\flat$	40% flat	320 cents	4 commas flat	317.595 cents
E $\flat$	50% flat	300 cents	5 commas flat	294.13 cents

Another approach to understanding Mahdi’s system is by approximating the space between intonations on the neck of an Arabic ‘ūd instrument.<sup>3</sup> For example, in my

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<sup>2</sup> My thanks to Scott Marcus for his exceptional guidance in understanding these tuning systems and their corresponding measurements.

<sup>3</sup> I am talking about the ‘ūd *‘sharqī* (Eastern ‘ūd) and not the ‘ūd *‘arabī or tūnisī* (Arab or Tunisian ‘ūd).

correspondence with Tunisian master ‘ūd musician and theorist Kamal Gharbi, he stated that the difference between an E<sup>♭</sup> and an E<sup>♮</sup> was approximately 1 cm (2020). Does the measurement of one centimeter on the neck of a modern ‘ūd align with a one-comma Pythagorean measurement?

The Pythagorean comma of 23.46 cents would vary, in terms of space, on the length of a string on a modern ‘ūd instrument, lessening as the musician moves up a string from the nut, towards the bridge. At the nut on a conventional 58.5 cm string length, the equivalent of 23.46 cents approximately equals 0.8 cm (0.7874 cm). On the D string, the difference between an E<sup>♭</sup>, an E<sup>♮</sup>, an E<sup>♯</sup>, and an E<sup>♯♯</sup> – all 10% of a tone apart according to Mahdi – would be approximately 0.6341 cm, 0.6272 cm, 0.6195 cm, respectively (see the figure below).<sup>4</sup>

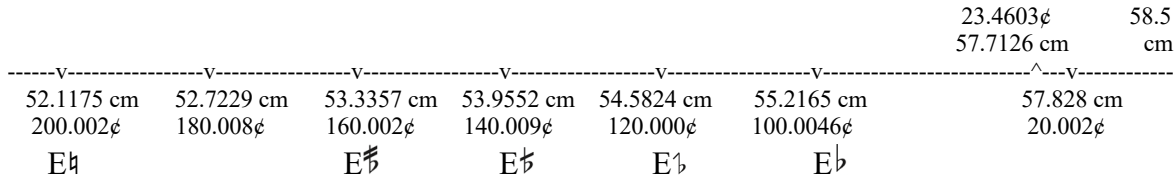
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<sup>4</sup> My thanks again to Scott Marcus for his detailed descriptions of these measurements and above-and-beyond help with these charts.



Diagram showing the intonational positions, in terms of string length and cents of a 20-cent interval, a Pythagorean comma, and the notes E<sup>b</sup>, E<sup>1</sup>, E<sup>2</sup>, and E<sup>3</sup> on a D string of an 'ud. The length of the string is calculated at 58.5 cm.

*Left to Right: Moving from the bridge to the nut*



Note: From the nut, a 20-cent interval is at a distance of 0.672 cm  
 From the nut, a Pythagorean comma is at a distance of 0.7874 cm

	interval from C	length of open string	position on the string	=	distance from the nut	distance between adjacent notes 20 cents apart
E <sup>b</sup> on D string	300 cents	58.5	55.2165	=	3.2835 cm	0.6341 cm
E <sup>1</sup> on D string	320 cents	58.5	54.5824	=	3.9176 cm	0.6272 cm
E <sup>2</sup> on D string	340 cents	58.5	53.9552	=	4.5448 cm	0.6195 cm
E <sup>3</sup> on D string	360 cents	58.5	53.3357	=	5.1643 cm	0.6128 cm
	380 cents	58.5	52.7229	=	5.7771 cm	0.6054 cm
E <sup>4</sup> on D string	400 cents	58.5	52.1175	=	6.3825 cm	

NB: The numbers in this figure are very close but still approximate, as the cents values are not exactly at the desired interval. For example, the desired 100-cent intervals is actually 100.004618119150809 cents in the above calculations.

The measurements reflect that the distance between Mahdi's intonations are closer to a half cm than 1 cm. Although the reality of these measurements are smaller than Gharbi's comment, perhaps his suggestion of 1 cm is a useful way musicians talk about the small but perceptible intonational differences between the divisions of Mahdi's intonational system.

## Talking About Intonations

Some Tunisian musicians and pedagogues use Mahdi's intonational system when teaching. Many of my collaborators at the Institute in Sfax utilized these signs in their classroom transcriptions. But this archive still does not necessarily create uniformity of practice...nor of transcription. Even the *TMH* volumes – which arguably represent a canon for Tunisian traditional music and was materialized through Mahdi's leadership – do not always follow Mahdi's 1972 method. For instance, Mahdi transcribes an E<sup>♯</sup> for ṭab' al-dhīl in his 1972 publication whereas the nūbat al-dhīl in *TMH* uses an E<sup>♭</sup> (vol. 3).

Tunisian musicians have oral methods for correcting intonation without having to refer to Mahdi's system. I documented several examples during classroom transmission events that support this point. For instance, jins mḥayyar 'irāq G (G-A-B<sup>♭</sup>-c) is a common jins in many of the ṭubū'. The third degree is conventionally marked with a conventional half-flat. But when learning to perform this jins, my teachers would say to play it "high" (Ar. *'āliya*) or "very high" (Tun. Ar. *'āliya barsha*). The note is still called B<sup>♭</sup>, *al-awj* in Arabic; but my teachers remark that the "accentuation of B<sup>♭</sup>" (Ar. *ibrāz darajat al-awj*) is a feature of jins mḥayyar 'irāq whenever it shows up in melodic movements. For a similar higher half-flat intonation, Mahdi marked it with a double-slash flat sign (♭<sup>⌘</sup>), such as for the E in jins al-dhīl C (C-D-E<sup>♭</sup>-F-G) and jins al-'irāq D (D-E<sup>♭</sup>-F-G). However, mḥayyar 'irāq is still traditionally marked with a single-slash (♭) flat sign.

Even intonations that are arguably expected from signs, such as the sharp (♯) and natural (♮) signs, have customary practices that do not match the sign and require a word from the teacher. The raised fourth degree in jins raṣd al-dhīl, for example, is usually

performed lower than transcribed. Whether this jins is based on C (C-D-E<sup>♭</sup>-F<sup>♯</sup>-G) or on G (G-A-B<sup>♭</sup>-c<sup>♯</sup>-d), the fourth degree is slightly lowered in practice. Tunisian pedagogues teach students to play this note “a little less” (Tun. Ar. *aqall shwayya*).<sup>5</sup> If that scale degree is a natural note, such as with the B<sup>♯</sup> in jins raṣd al-dhīl F (F-G-A<sup>♭</sup>-B<sup>♯</sup>-c), my teachers said that this note is “not natural” (Tun. Ar. *mish bikār*). The latter phrase follows the French technical word for a “natural,” *bécarre*.

The point is that transcription is not prescription. Even with Mahdi’s system that has been disseminated widely in theory and repertory texts, Tunisian musicians still practice modal intonations dynamically within an acceptable range of options. Apparently, theorists also have an acceptable range of options even in transcribing the music. Intonational practice in the ṭubū‘ – whether in written transcriptions or in oral pedagogy – is not uniform.

## Conclusion

I value Mahdi’s warning to readers in his 1972 publication that adopting and normalizing transcriptional and tonal systems that were not made for the ṭubū‘ (or maqāmāt, for that matter) runs a risk of losing the certain intonations that have become characteristic for modes and their performance practices. Mahdi is not alone in coming to such a conclusion (Abu Shumays 2013; Farraj and Abu Shumays 2019:176). For my Tunisian collaborators, the ultimate method for ascertaining intonational nuance within a melodic phrase is in listening to live or recorded performances. Of course, Tunisian musicians will play these nuances differently, again, within an acceptable range.

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<sup>5</sup> For a similar phrasing in the Mashriq, see Marcus 1993:41.

Lastly, although intonation is a key component in manifesting a specific jins and, thus, plays a role in differentiating between ajnās, Tunisian musicians do not articulate the fact that intonation differentiates ajnās. Rather, they describe how ajnās manifest through melodic-rhythmic clichés or phrases that may or may not have characteristic intonations. The practice of intonation is dynamic, perhaps more so than the musical clichés that continue to decisively elicit a mode.

### Appendix 3: Pentatonicism and the Tunisian Ṭubū‘

The C-D-E-G-A grouping of notes was first called a “pentatonic scale” by Carl Engel in his 1864 monograph *The Music of the Most Ancient Nations*. As a German-background composer and musicologist of Western art music, Engel constituted this set of five notes through the Western diatonic tonality of a C major scale, as shown in the following chart from his publication:

The first theorizing of the “pentatonic” in Western music studies. Reproduced from Engel 1864:124.



Based on ancient Greek music theory, Western diatonicism refers to the structuring of a scale “through” (Gk. *dia*) the “whole tone” (Gk. *tonos*).<sup>1</sup> In reality, a Western diatonic scale includes semitones or half-steps, which Engel bracketed in his diatonic scale above over the E-F and B-c intervals. Engel’s five-note pentatonic scale that follows the diatonic one omits the F and B notes. In the second stave above, Engel gives that pentatonic scale in an

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<sup>1</sup> “Diatonic” is also translated as “proceeding by whole tones” (William Drabkin, 2001).

ascending and descending form and brackets the intervals of a third that result when omitting the F and B notes.

Based upon Engel's transcription and his tethering of the pentatonic scale to diatonicism, it is no wonder that music theorists have continued to conceptualize the pentatonic scale as a "gapped" scale in which notes are missing (Randel 2003). But in truth, pentatonicism is a melodic feature that relies on a connected – rather than gapped – set of five notes (Day-O'Connell 2007:4). Pentatonicism is a profoundly ubiquitous and complex musical practice around the world. Most note sets are anhemitonic, in that they do not contain any half-steps between notes. Only rarely are the sets hemitonic, containing intervals less than a whole tone. For example, the hemitonic pentatonic scales associated with Japanese Gagaku court music or Chinese art music contain intervals that are between half- and whole-step intervals, as measured by Western equal temperament standards (Khe 1977:79-80).

Pentatonicism can function melodically in diverse ways. For example, different pentatonic sets can combine in melodic phrases to create the appearance of a heptatonic scale; or, conversely, melodic phrases can utilize a heptatonic scale but emphasize only five of the seven notes, highlighting pentatonicism inside scalar structure (see Khe 1977:81). These and other points motivated the Vietnamese music scholar Van Khe Tran to conclude that, "There is not a sole pentatonic, a sole 5-note scale applicable to any or all [music] traditions but, rather, a large number of pentatonic systems which vary according to ethnic origins, geographic regions and musical traditions." (1977:83). Thus, when considered globally, pentatonic *scales*—in the plural form—can manifest through a variety of musical practices.

The pentatonicism expressed in the melodic lines of the Tunisian ṭubū‘ are one example of such pentatonic diversity and ultimately must be understood within a wider frame of cultural and social signification. To Tunisian musicians, scholars, and pedagogues, pentatonic structure figures clearly in the ṭubū‘ (CF. Guettat 1981:35-8). During my time at the Higher Institute of Music in Sfax, musicians and pedagogues had distinct articulations of how pentatonicism manifested in the repertoire associated with the thirteen traditional musical modes. In this brief appendix, I will first present how my Tunisian collaborators identified the components of pentatonicism in the ṭubū‘ and comment on the signification of this musical conceptualization.

### **Tunisian Pentatonicism in the Ṭubū‘**

In Arabic, the word *al-khumāsī* refers to the “fivefold” scale, also translated as “pentatonic” in the English language. Tunisian musicians and theorists also use the Arabic phrase *al-naḥs al-khomāsī* (in dialect) to mean “pentatonicism.” This phrase literally translates to “the pentatonic inclination/soul,” alluding to the musical components within compositions and performances that constitute a five-note pentatonic scale. These musical components are taught and not innately perceived. At times, these components are overstated for listeners, especially in ṭab‘ al-raṣd which Tunisians interpret as the quintessential pentatonic mode in the ṭubū‘ (Guettat 1981:35). But most of time, these features are embedded within heptatonic scales. The perception of pentatonicism in these melodic moments is highly nuanced and stylized. In that respect, listeners demonstrate expertise when they identify these melodic components and relate them to pentatonicism.

The identification of pentatonicism in the Tunisian ṭubū‘ occurs through the perception of learned musical components rather than the structuring of a strict five-note

scale. None of my Tunisian collaborators, in fact, conceptualized any of the thirteen traditional ṭubū‘ as a five-note scale. It should also be noted that scholars and musicians of the Eastern Mediterranean maqāmāt have *not* conventionally perceived pentatonicism in the melodic movement of Arab traditional music, rather associating it with folklore (Ar. *fūlklūr*) or popular music (Ar. *mūsīqā sha‘biyya*).<sup>2</sup> Thus, the fact that Tunisians perceive pentatonicism within their *traditional* repertoire is a provocative point, and one that necessitated an additional explanation.

One explanation was developed by the Tunisian musician and statesman Salah Mahdi in his 1972 book entitled, *La Musique Arabe* (Arab Music). In this book, Mahdi proposed a classification system that integrated the traditional Tunisian ṭubū‘ with the Mashriqī maqāmāt. Of the modes that he discussed, he organized them according to three categories. In the first category, Mahdi presented modes that he considered to be built by trichords, tetrachords, and pentachords. This category excluded any perception of pentatonicism. Mahdi put all of the Mashriqī’s maqāmāt in this first category as well as seven of the Tunisian ṭubū‘,<sup>3</sup> arranging them in an order based on the ascending tonic notes of C, D, E♯, and F. In the second category, Mahdi organized modes based solely on a semblance of pentatonicism. The Tunisian mode of al-raṣd is the only mode in this category. In the third category, Mahdi put modes that had a composition which assimilated the concepts of both

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<sup>2</sup> In his discussion of developments in Arab art music since 1918, Christian Poché briefly mentions that although scholars have recorded music from Yemen, Sudan, Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia that are based in pentatonic scales, pentatonicism in Arab music as a general and valid theoretical and pedagogical tool for melodic interpretation was validated much later at the Congress of Khartoum in 1984 (Wright, Poché, and Shiloah 2001).

<sup>3</sup> In order of their fundamental note, by ascension, these seven modes are al-māyah, raṣd al-dhīl, al-ḥsīn, ramal al-māyah, al-isba‘in (under al-hijaz), al-ramal, and al-sīkāh.



tetrachordal theory and pentatonicism. He placed the remaining five traditional Tunisian *ṭubū‘* in this third category, namely *al-dhīl*, *al-‘irāq*, *al-nawā*, *al-aṣbahān*, *al-mazmūm*.

Mahdi’s categorization demonstrates that six of the 13 traditional *ṭubū‘* – nearly half – as somehow inflecting pentatonicism. This is a remarkable point, considering that Arab music theorists did not validate this type of theoretical analysis in traditional Arab music until late in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Wright, Poché, and Shiloah 2001). Pentatonicism has remained an important characteristic of many of the *ṭubū‘* throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and many Tunisian music theorists and historians have continued to mark these musical features when writing about the *ṭubū‘* (e.g., Guettat 1980:281; 1981:35-8; Snoussi 2004:44, 54). In seeking to integrate the *ṭubū‘* with the *maqāmāt* in a comparative theoretical system, Mahdi had to propose an alternative classification system that added another method of conceptualizing melodic movement other than tetrachordal theory.

For the remainder of this appendix, I will discuss these pentatonic features. For Mahdi, pentatonicism in the *ṭubū‘* emerges “...by the insistence on the second [scale degree] and by the almost constant avoidance of the fourth and the seventh [scale degrees]” (Mahdi 1972: 46, translation mine). Although Mahdi does not give a tonic to explain this statement, other Tunisian theorists name the fourth and seventh scale degrees as notes F and B, respectively (Snoussi 2004: 44, 54; Guettat 1980: 281), which means that C-based modes perhaps best exemplify the kind of pentatonicism that Mahdi depicted. That “insistence on the second” scale degree also demonstrates another feature of Tunisian pentatonicism. My fieldwork in *ṭubū‘* classes at the Higher Institute of Music confirmed these two features and also revealed that pedagogues consider the interval of a fourth or fifth from the tonic to solidify a pentatonic quality in these modes. That is even the case for *al-mazmūm*, when the

interval of C to F emphasizes the tonic on F – a note frequently omitted in other pentatonic-like modes. Putting together all of these statements, Tunisian musicians and pedagogues locate pentatonicism within the *ṭubū‘* by the following musical features:

1. Omitting the notes F and B in melodic lines.
2. Emphasizing the note D as a tonic or cadential stop.
3. Relying on intervals of fourth or fifth from the tonic.

I will discuss each one of these points below in order to give further clarity on how musicians and pedagogues come to perform and perceive pentatonicism in traditional music that utilize the musical modes.

### **Omitting the notes F and B in melodic lines**

One of the main musical features of a Tunisian perception of pentatonicism is in the omission of the notes F and B in melodic movement. As mentioned earlier with Engel’s ascending and descending pentatonic scale, this is not just a Tunisian sensibility but a common understanding of pentatonicism in general, especially when the five-note set is C-D-E-G-A. Tunisian music theorists have documented the omission of F and B notes within their practice of pentatonicism from at least 1972 with Mahdi’s publication. In my fieldwork, many Tunisian musicians and pedagogues cited this melodic feature as pentatonic and related to six modes, namely *al-raṣd*, *al-dhīl*, *al-‘irāq*, *al-nawā*, *al-aṣbahān*, *al-mazmūm*.

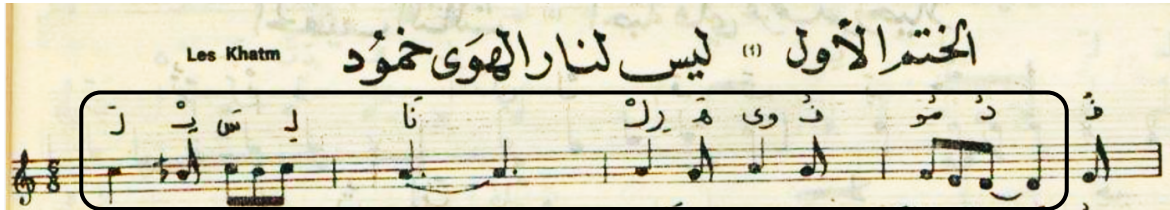
The six *ṭubū‘* associated with pentatonicism, however, still use F and B notes in melodic movement. Yet, the omissions occur regularly in these movements and often within melodic-rhythmic clichés that best elicit the mode. It follows that participants use a heptatonic scale in these modes – even in the quintessentially pentatonic mode of *al-raṣd* –

but still perform and perceive pentatonicism when practicing these clichés which feature the omissions of F and B. Adding to this complexity is the fact that musicians might play the F and B notes as neighboring tones in those clichés which regularly feature their omission. For example, a musician might leap from G to E (thus, omitting the F) and emphasize the note E by playing a melodic gesture that alternates from E to F. Or, the musician might emphasize the note c with the lower neighboring tone of B♭. In both cases, the melodic emphasis is on E and c and not on F and B♭ despite their presence within the melodic phrase. Thus, even though F and B notes are present, they are under-emphasized to the point that the participants perceive their absence.

Several of the melodic-rhythmic formulas that I discuss in Part One, Chapter Two of this dissertation reveal this very point: that pentatonic and ajnās interpretive grids can territorialize the same phrase without a contradiction for Tunisian participants. I reproduce three of these clichés below to illustrate my point. These examples elicit three of the six pentatonic modes, namely al-nawā, al-aṣbahān, and al-raṣd.

1. Melodic-rhythmic cliché from ṭab‘ al-nawā

Excerpt from *Laysa li-nār al-hawā khumūdu* [The flames of love do not die out], the first song in the khatm rhythm. Nūbat al-nawā (*TMH*, vol. 6, pg. 84)

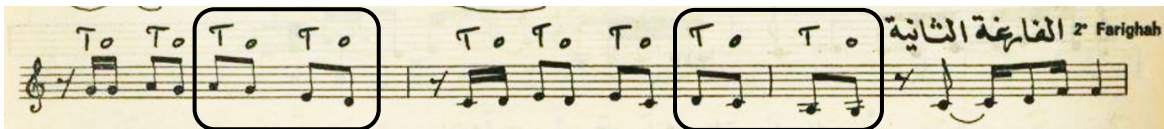


2. Melodic-rhythmic cliché from ṭab‘ al-aṣbahān



3. Melodic-rhythmic cliché from ṭab‘ al-raṣd

Excerpt from the song *Wa-lamma badā’ minha ilaynā al-tawādu’u* [When the farewell began between us], the first song (*al-abyāt*) in the biṭāyḥī rhythm. Nūbat al-raṣd (*TMH*, vol. 6, pg.19)



In the first al-nawā example, the B $\flat$  and F occur in the melodic formula. But, in practice, the B $\flat$  is treated as a lower neighboring tone of the note c and the leap from c to A is emphatic. The F is present in the final measure as a note within the stepwise descent from A to D. In the al-aṣbahān cliché, both the F and B $\flat$  notes occur again in the melodic phrasing. In this example, the B $\flat$  has more melodic emphasis at the beginning of m. 2, while the F in m. 3 is treated in practice as an upper neighboring tone of E. This formula demonstrates that these notes (i.e., B $\flat$  here) can even play an emphatic role at times in the melodic movement of a pentatonically-inflected mode. In the last well-known al-raṣd clichés, the F and B notes are

completely omitted. Each example demonstrates that the omission – or the under-emphasizing – of these two notes bring about a perception of pentatonicism to Tunisian participants, even within the formation of heptatonic scales.

With the omission of F and B notes, intervals of a third emerge from the melodic line, namely between G and E, or c/C and A/AA. Interestingly, the early 20<sup>th</sup> century German music scholar Erich von Hornbostel noticed when listening to recordings of Tunisian music that the music had “frequent occurrence of steps in thirds” (1906:41).<sup>4</sup> This is a summative statement on Hornbostel’s listening experience. He does not further document where these intervals emerge. But this early comment is a tantalizing one for considering how pentatonicism for Tunisians – in the practice of thirds designed to omit certain notes – has been an important mark of distinction in their practice of the *ṭubū‘*.

### **Emphasizing the note D**

A second characteristic of pentatonicism within the *ṭubū‘* is the “insistence on the second” scale degree (Mahdi 1972: 46). In this quote, Mahdi is referring specifically to the note D within the mode of *al-dhīl* based on the tonic C, and not to the second scale degree of others scales based on different tonic pitches. For the pentatonically-inflected modes of *al-dhīl* and *al-raṣd* – whose tonic is on C – this point aligns nicely with scalar structure. Both of these modes clearly highlight the note D as the second scale degree within melodic movements in the repertoire and even cadence on the note occasionally. Notably, D’Erlanger documents the tonic of *al-raṣd* as D (and not C) in his scale and melodic sample for this mode

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<sup>4</sup> My gratitude to ethnomusicologist Stephanie Leder for translating this article.

in *La Musique Arabe* (see vol. 5, ch. 16, fig. 153). This is not the way Tunisians transmit al-raşd today. But the documentation demonstrates how melodically important the note D is within the mode, even in final cadences that express one of the most important resting places of the mode.<sup>5</sup>

For the other pentatonically-inflected modes, whose tonic is not on C—i.e., al-aşbahān on GG, al-‘irāq on D, al-nawā on D, and al-mazmūm on F—this point needs further explanation. One of the key principles to keep in mind is that Tunisians conceptualize pentatonicism as a five-note scale (C-D-E-G-A) perennially based on the note C, where D is the second scale degree of that scale. When the scalar structure does not align with the C-based pentatonic scale, the note D continues to have importance in the melodic material of the mode even though it is no longer the second scale degree. For the modes of al-‘irāq and al-nawā, the D is already tonicized and heavily represented in melodic movement. For al-aşbahān, D is a fifth above the tonic on GG and frequently serves as a cadential stop. In fact, some of the al-aşbahān repertoire gives a final cadence on D rather than GG. In al-mazmūm, D is within jins al-mazmūm C (C-D-E-F), which is a conjunct tetrachord *below* the F tonic. Perhaps for this reason, the note D is not as crucial to melodic movements in the al-mazmūm repertoire. Rather, the interval between the C and F is emphasized and has become a mark of pentatonicism, as explained in the next point.

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<sup>5</sup> In discussing Moroccan Andalusī music, Philip Schuyler writes about two versions of “al-rasd” (as spelled in his article), one of which is called “Rasd Gnawi” with the scale of D-E-G-A-c-d. He writes that this name comes from “its pentatonic structure” and is “reminiscent of the African melodies of the Gnawa religious brotherhood” (1978:36). The connections to Tunisian al-raşd are clear, despite the differing tonicizations. It could be that the Moroccan version is also tonicized on C and that – as in the Tunisian case – the melodic movement frequently emphasizes the note D, even by cadences that cause the note to appear as the tonic.

### **Relying on intervals of fourth and fifth from the tonic**

There is no obvious reason to link intervals of a fourth or fifth to pentatonicism. But Tunisian participants perceive pentatonicism in six modes when the melodic movement demonstrates such features. The intervals are not just any fourths or fifths but those expressly linked to the tonic. As mentioned for al-mazmūm above, the C to F interval establishes the tonic on F when practiced but also performs pentatonicism for participants, despite the fact that the omitting the F note in other modes is also a perception of pentatonicism.<sup>6</sup> In like manner, the interval from GG to C or D in al-dhīl can establish the tonic on C but also express pentatonicism, particularly if leaping to D – a featured note in the same type of perception.

The two pentatonically-inflected modes of al-nawā and al-‘irāq—both tonicized on D—as well as al-aṣbahān on GG confirm this feature by highlighting fourths and fifths *above* the tonic. The intervals of D-G and D-A are common in the al-nawā repertoire, although these intervallic relationships are often implicit within the movement rather than outlined simply as a leap from D to G. For example, the well-known song *Laysa li-nār al-hawā khumūdu* (The flames of love do not die out) illustrates these relationships, as transcribed below. The opening melodic phrase emphasizes the relationship between the A and D by the descent from c to A, and then the stepwise descent to D (mm. 1-4). This phrase is repeated again in mm. 6-9. But in m. 11, the emphasis changes to the note G by way of the F# (see the boxed unit in m. 10-11). This is a common feature in al-nawā to reinforce G (Lajmi 2018-

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<sup>6</sup> For example, see the opening melodic phrase of the Abyāt (the first sung lines) in *TMH*'s version of nūbat al-mazmūm (vol. 8, pg. 81). On the first word *jala‘at*, the melody begins on F, leaps down to C, and then leaps back to F. My thanks to Dr. Fatma Lajmi for pointing this out to me.

2019). After this phrase is repeated again, the melodic movement returns to the opening phrase with emphasis on the A in its overall descending movement to D.

*Laysa li-nār al-hawā khumūdu* [The flames of love do not die out], the first song in the khatm rhythm. *Nūbat al-nawā* (TMH, vol. 6, pg. 84)



As mentioned in Part One, Chapter One of this dissertation under the description of al-nawā, the notes G and A are “pivotal” notes for this mode, in that they are prominent non-tonic notes that shape melodic movement through reoccurring cadences (see Zouari 2006:42). Like the *ghammāz* tradition in the Eastern Mediterranean, pivotal notes serve to shift melodic movement up or down the scale from the tonic note. What is unique in this situation is that the intervallic relationships between D and the pivotal notes of G and A also index pentatonicism for Tunisian participants.



Perhaps this point about how fourths and fifths from the tonic can elicit the perception of pentatonicism is clearest with al-‘irāq. Below, I reproduce a melodic-rhythmic cliché from this mode that I have sourced from my fieldwork (Gharbi 2019b; ‘Alila 2018-2019) and D’Erlanger’s transcriptions (1949: Vol. 5, Ch. 16, Fig. 162).

Melodic-rhythmic formula from ṭab‘ al-‘irāq



The D-G interval is clearly emphasized as a melodic leap in mm. 1-2. The relationship between the D and A is demonstrated in m. 2, when the melodic line rises to the A before dropping back down to the D at the start of m. 3. In such melodic movement, Tunisians participants perform and perceive pentatonicism. It is worthy to note that F is omitted from much of this melodic movement, which would reinforce a perception of pentatonicism.

### **Pentatonicism and Race**

The social legacy of pentatonically-inflected ṭabū‘ in traditional Tunisian music is socially coded as stemming from Black sub-Saharan communities.<sup>7</sup> Tunisian music theorists, historians, and pedagogues explicitly link their version of pentatonicism to these communities, most of whom were forcibly brought in Tunisia in the slave trade across the Sahara. Richard Jankowsky’s documentation of the Tunisian Stambeli tradition fills in many

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<sup>7</sup> Alternatively, Manoubi Snoussi wrote that the Amazigh people, or native North African Berbers, were the original contributors of pentatonic melodic material within the Tunisian ṭabū‘ (2004: 23, 44).

historical details on these slave routes as well as describes a tradition – separate from the Arab-Andalusi one – that is attributed fully to descendants of these communities (2010). I direct readers to his studies.

To a large degree, it is still unknown how Black expressive culture came to integrate with Arab-Andalusi modal traditions in Tunisia. Tunisian musicians and theorists generally agree that ṭab‘ al-raṣd is the quintessential pentatonic mode in the ṭubū‘. For some, this statement leads them to disallow the use of tetrachordal analysis to interpret melodic movement in al-raṣd (see the descriptions of al-raṣd in Part One, Chapter One and Two of this dissertation). Ṭab‘ al-raṣd and the five other modes associated with pentatonicism – i.e., al-dhīl, al-‘irāq, al-nawā, al-aṣbahān, and al-mazmūm – demonstrate a crucial contribution to Arab music theory scholarship in terms of how modal music can be interpreted in ways other than tetrachordal analysis. Moreover, these modes offer a valuable case study to other music scholars in terms of evidencing how people code racial constructions through sound and practice. More specific research in how participants think racially about themselves and others when listening to al-raṣd and these modes is needed and can contribute to understandings about how music theory and practice – especially in traditions that use musical modes – inform, challenge, and support cultural and social ideology.

## Glossary

The following words are used extensively in this dissertation. Despite the fact that I generally define terms within the text, this glossary provides a ready reference. I also urge readers to consult Appendix 1 on the Tunisian nūba suite for more information on many of these terms.

<i>abyāt</i>	The first sung lines in a Tunisian nūba suite.
<i>al-Andalus</i>	A historical epoch in the medieval Mediterranean area that refers politically to Muslim-backed forces whose rule, at its height, extended across two-thirds of the Iberian Peninsula (present-day Spain and Portugal) and parts of North Africa (present-day Morocco, Western Sahara, and Algeria). The political rule began in 711 with Tariq ibn Ziyad's invasion of Iberia and ended in 1492 with the fall of Granada to Christian-backed forces. These eight centuries of al-Andalus are also called (medieval) Muslim Spain or Moorish Spain. The social and cultural developments during this period were greatly consequential across the region, from the 8 <sup>th</sup> century to the present.
<i>barwil</i>	The second of five ordered rhythms in a Tunisian nūba suite. This rhythm occurs in the sung section of the suite. Plural: <i>birāwil</i>
<i>başma</i>	A print (as in <i>fingerprint</i> ), imprint, or stamp.
<i>bayt</i>	One line of Arabic poetry, often divided into two half-lines of verse called a hemistich depending on the poetic form.
<i>biṭāyḥī</i>	The first of five ordered rhythms in a Tunisian nūba suite. This rhythm begins the sung section of the suite. Plural: <i>biṭāyḥīa</i>
<i>daraja</i>	A scale degree or note, as in <i>darajat rāst</i> or “note C.” Plural: <i>darajāt</i>
<i>draj</i>	The third of five ordered rhythms in a Tunisian nūba suite. This rhythm occurs in the sung section of the suite. Plural: <i>adrāj</i>
<i>ḥiss</i>	A “feeling” or “sensation” and also the “perception” of that feeling. Modal melodies affect participants; and Tunisian participants talk about these overall effects of a particular mode with <i>ḥiss</i> or with a close cognate <i>iḥsās</i> (also “feeling”, “sensation”, or “perception”). A correct melodic rendering of a

mode produces the corresponding *ḥiss* by which the mode is known or perceived.

*irtijāl*

A vocal improvisation.

*istikhbār*

An instrumental improvisation. In the past, a performance of a Tunisian *nūba* opened with an instrumental *istikhbār* to set the mode of the *nūba*. Today, this opening – called the *istiftāḥ* - is notated and fixed in the *TMH* volumes.

*jins*

Sequences of notes, usually in groups of 3-5, ordered in a stepwise fashion. In Tunisia, these sequences are referred to by a specific name, along with the name of its fundamental note. For example: *nawā ‘alā dūkāh* is the sequence of *nawā* beginning on the base note D/Re and also including the notes E, F, and G. In this dissertation, I name this grouping *jins nawā* D. Although *jins* can be translated as “trichord,” “tetrachord,” or “pentachord” depending on how many notes are in the sequence, the word *jins* is a loanword from the Greek language, literally “genus,” and refers to any organizational subset or category, no matter the size. Additionally, my Tunisian collaborators, who understood tetrachord language, would simply use “jins” to refer to any of these sequences. Thus, in this dissertation, I have chosen to retain use of the word “jins” in my English language writing. I also use the plural form *ajnās* for both the dual and group reference. NB: In French sources, the translation is *genre* (cf. Mahdi 1972:35). Plural: *ajnās*

*khafīf*

The fourth of five ordered rhythms in a Tunisian *nūba* suite. This rhythm occurs in the sung section of the suite. Plural: *khafāyif*

*khatm*

The fifth of five ordered rhythms in a Tunisian *nūba* suite. This rhythm occurs in the sung section of the suite. Plural: *akhtām*

*mālūf* or *mā’lūf*

The performance practices of the *nūba* within eastern Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya. In classicized Arabic, the term refers to that which is “familiar,” “common,” or “customary” (Ar. *mā’lūf*). The repertoire elucidates this broad definition, as its preserved texts feature a myriad of everyday topics, from love, infatuation, and friendship to themes of nature and morality. In Tunisian and Libyan dialect, the term is spoken without the hamza glottal stop (i.e., *mālūf*). I privilege this dialectical use of this word, based on conversations with North African musicians and scholars, and use it throughout my dissertation.

<i>maqām</i>	A melodic mode associated with the Eastern Mediterranean region that extends from the nation-states of Egypt to Lebanon and Syria. In Arabic, this region is called the <i>mashriq</i> and the expressive culture from the region is <i>mashriqī</i> . These modes are deeply historical and are said to derive from a number of ethnic and religious sources. They have been extensively studied and performed on a global scale. Plural: <i>maqāmāt</i>
<i>melodic mode</i>	Often compared to a scale, a melodic mode is a combination of certain note degrees and specific intonations, as well as characteristic melodic movements. In the 20 <sup>th</sup> century, Arab musicians and scholars adopted scales as a way to notate, practice, theorize, and teach their complex musical systems. Thus, even though Arab modes are more than the sum of their scalar parts, Arab musical modes often emerge in pedagogical settings and in print primarily as scalar structures.
<i>nūba</i> or <i>nawba</i>	A musical suite, fixed by a number of sung and instrumental pieces that are ordered by rhythms. Across Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya, the <i>nūba</i> is a repertoire said to derive from al-Andalus. The contemporary Tunisian <i>nūba</i> musical form developed firstly as a schedule of “turn-taking” (Ar. <i>tanāwub</i> ; also <i>bi-nawba</i> , “by turns”) between musicians who were performing for the ruler in the early ‘Abbasid court in Baghdad (8 <sup>th</sup> -9 <sup>th</sup> centuries). The <i>nūba</i> later evolved in al-Andalus and in North African to refer to turn-taking between the musical modes and not between musicians. Musicians arranged the modes according to times of the day; and, in this sense, each mode had a turn. In modern Tunisian performance practice of the <i>nūba</i> , an evening performance usually features one mode and can last for several hours depending upon the choice of repertoire. North Africans utilize both spellings of <i>nawba</i> and <i>nūba</i> in speech, although the latter is from dialect and the former is formal, standard Arabic. When combined with the name of a mode, a final “t” is added to presence the “tā’ marbūṭa” within an Arabic iḍāfa construct, such as <i>nawbat al-dhīl</i> or <i>nūbat al-mazmūm</i> .
<i>ṣīgha</i>	A “formula” or established shape used in Tunisia to talk about melodic phrases that differentiate one mode from another, and differentiate the ṭubū’ from the maqāmāt. Plural: <i>ṣiyagh</i>
<i>ṭab’</i>	A melodic mode associated with traditional and popular musics of North Africa (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya). These modes are deeply historical and are said to derive from al-

Andalus, beginning in the 9<sup>th</sup> century CE, even though the performance practice of these modes today is without doubt a rich amalgamation of regional sources across centuries. Plural: *ṭubū‘*

*tanzīl*

The act of setting Arabic lyrics to a melody and rhythm.

TMH

The 9 volumes of *Turāth al-mūsīqī al-tūnisī* or *Tunisian Musical Heritage* published in the 1960s and 1970s. These volumes are a significant archive of the Tunisian *nūba* repertoire, among other musical pieces.

*tūshiya*

An instrumental piece in a Tunisian *nūba* suite, performed between songs in the *biṭāyḥī* and *birwal* rhythms. The purpose of this piece is to introduce the *next* musical mode, as ordered by the anonymous *zajal* poem (see Chapter One).

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