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The Transmission of Coptic Orthodox Liturgical Music: Historical and Contemporary Forms of Theorization, Translation, and Identity Construction

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The Transmission of Coptic Orthodox Liturgical Music:

Historical and Contemporary Forms of Theorization, Translation, and Identity Construction

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Music

by

Nicholas Joseph Ragheb

Committee in charge:

Professor Scott Marcus, Chair

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September 2019

The dissertation of Nicholas Joseph Ragheb is approved.

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of Theorization, Translation, and Identity Construction

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VITA OF NICHOLAS JOSEPH RAGHEB
JUNE 2019

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ABSTRACT

The Transmission of Coptic Orthodox Liturgical Music: Historical and Contemporary Forms

of Theorization, Translation, and Identity Construction

by

Nicholas Joseph Ragheb

This dissertation explores the historical and contemporary forms of musical

conceptualization, theorization, and transmission associated with the sacred music of the

Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt. Through analyses of historical and contemporary forms of

musico-theoretical discourse, I explore the ways in which the imagination and transmission

of Coptic musical structures are implicated in the formation and transmission of narratives of

Coptic history, and ultimately contribute to the construction and maintenance of Coptic

identity. While this study includes an extensive review of previous scholarship on Coptic

music, this historical component of the dissertation is focused on how theorizations about

Coptic musical structures reflect the cultural contexts and ideologies of their authors. In a

similar manner, this study incorporates ethnographic observation and interviews both in

Egypt and in the North American diaspora, in order to map out contemporary acts of musical

conceptualization and theorization.

While ethnomusicologists have long been interested in the role of religious and secular institutions in shaping indigenous musical practices, as well as the dynamics of musical conceptualization and theorization in localized acts of musical transmission, this study merge these two areas of interest, exploring both institutional and individual aspects of Coptic music culture as intertwined phenomena. This occurs through the analysis of individual acts of musical theorization (i.e. the "vernacular musical theorizations") of theorists and church cantors, as well as the analysis of processes of musical translation among groups within the institution of the Coptic Orthodox Church, and an exploration of the epistemological shifts associated with the use of new technologies for the preservation and transmission of Coptic hymns.

In doing so, this study utilizes theories and ideas from the scholarly subdiscipline of ethnotheory and the epistemology of music in order to draw connections between a growing body of work on Coptic identity and a separate but equally promising body of work on the forms and structures of Coptic music. The results of this study demonstrate both the implicit and explicit claims inherent in particular acts of Coptic music theorization, and more generally, the interconnected nature of musical theorization and identity construction.

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A NOTE ON TRANSLITERATIONS

In this dissertation I have generally chosen to follow the guidelines of the International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES) for the transliteration of most names, terminology, and quotations from the Arabic language. In some cases, individuals have translated their own names into English differently, in which case I have adopted their preferred spellings (i.e. "Ragheb Moftah" instead of "Rāghib Muftāḥ," and "Nabila Erian" instead of "Nabīlah ʿAryān").

INTRODUCTION

Who are the Copts?

Coptic Orthodox Christians are a community with deep historic and cultural roots in the land of Egypt, and they make up the largest indigenous Christian community in the Middle East. As a religious community, they trace their history back to the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt recounted in the Christian Bible (Matthew 2:13-2:23), and the subsequent introduction of the Christian religion to Egypt in the middle of the first century by the Apostle Mark, whom they consider to be the first Patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church. Beyond religious identity, Orthodox Copts also understand their identity through narratives of ethnic and racial heritage that claim a continuity with Pre-Islamic and sometimes also ancient Egyptian culture. One important component of these narratives is the continued use of the Coptic language in Coptic liturgical services, a language that evolved from the ancient Egyptian Demotic language and was the common vernacular language of Egypt until it faded from daily use following the Arab invasion of Egypt in the seventh century. Modern day Copts also point to the Church's continued use of a solar calendar derived from the pharaonic calendar, as well as modern day legends about the ancient Egyptian origin of certain Coptic ritual practices and hymn melodies, as evidence of a continuity with ancient Egyptian culture. Many also claim that Copts are the biological descendants of the ancient Egyptians, a simultaneous statement of racial identity and indigeneity.[1] While Coptic identity is complex

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[1] For a more detailed discussion of ethnic and racial narratives of Coptic identity, and the interpretation of Coptic identity as an "ethnoracial" identity see (Ragheb 2018).

and multifaceted, claims of ethnic and racial heritage are almost always tied in some way to the history of the Coptic Orthodox Church, either as coterminous with the evolution of Coptic culture or as the institution that preserved a preexistent Coptic culture throughout centuries of persecution and periods of partial cultural assimilation.

The word "Copt" and its Arabic equivalent "*qibṭ*" are derived from the Greek word "Aigyptos," which means "Egypt," and prior to the seventh century the term was used by Arabs to refer to all of the people who lived in the Nile Valley. Christianity flourished in Egypt in the second and third centuries, particularly among Greeks in the coastal city of Alexandria, with figures such as Greek philosopher and theologian Titus Flavius Clement (160 CE-215 CE) and his student Origen (b. circa 185CE) becoming well known across the Christian world for their theological treatises (Hasan 2003: 23-5). However, during the period from 30 BCE-642 CE Egypt was under Roman rule and Christians there also periodically underwent waves of persecution, the most notorious occurring in 284 CE with the ascension of the Roman Emperor Diocletian, a year which is now memorialized as the first year of the Coptic calendar and referred to as the first year of the martyrs (Ibid.: 25). Yet these periods of persecution were interspersed with periods of relative calm, some which even saw Christianity promoted, such as during the reign of Emperor Constantine in the fourth century (Ibid.: 26).

Arguably one of the most important historical moments for the Egyptian Church during this era was the Council of Chalcedon (451CE) in which it along with a handful of other Eastern churches (what are today called Oriental Orthodox churches) split with the rest of Roman Christendom over a theological doctrine concerning the nature of Christ. The Roman churches advocated for diphysitism—that Christ was composed of two distinct

natures—while the Egyptian Church advocated for miaphysitism—that Christ was composed of divinity and humanity that were united but unaltered (a theological position that has often been glossed by non-Copts as monophysitism although Copts reject this label). This schism marked the beginning of a period of political and theological isolation of the Egyptian Church from Christian churches in the West that lasted until the twentieth century (Van Doorn-Harder and Vogt 1997: 9-10). It also marked a turning point for the Egyptian Church because it was followed by the imposition of a pro-Chalcedonian Melchite (Byzantine) Patriarch on the city of Alexandria that effectively split the city between pro-Chalcedonian Greeks who followed him and anti-Chalcedonian Egyptians who saw this new Patriarch as the head of a foreign church (Hasan 2003: 28). This, in conjunction with a series of persecutions of anti-Chalcedonian Egyptians from the fifth to seventh centuries, undoubtedly contributed to the Egyptian Church's disassociation from its Greek roots and eventual identification as Egyptian, and as Sana Hasan has argued, the schism itself was a powerful statement of the Church defining itself as "Orthodox," in contradistinction to Roman churches that it considered heretical (Ibid.: 25).

In 642 CE Egypt was conquered by the forces of the Arab caliph 'Umar I and while this led to the preeminence of Islam in the region it also solidified the authority of the non-Chalcedonian Egyptian church because it led to the Church becoming the representative of local Christians to the Muslim government (Papaconstantinou 2006: 68). Arietta Papaconstantinou has argued that historical accounts by Christians about the occupation of Egypt during this era attempt to "define a new identity for the Egyptian Christian dhimmis, an identity that would be solidly structured around the Monophysite Church and its institutions" (Ibid.: 69). She goes on to claim that the association of Chalcedonians with

Roman culture and "Monophysites" (Miaphysites) with local Egyptians was put forth in the historical writings of John of Nikiu and George the Archdeacon in the two centuries following the Arab-Islamic invasion of Egypt, and that this period saw the construction of a new type of indigenous Christian identity (Ibid. 2006: 70):

> As the story goes, the Romans left the country after their defeat, and the Christian community that remained in Egypt had a common ethnic origin, a privileged position in the landscape, and a common history of suffering at the hands of foreigners. The Egyptians, speakers of the Coptic language, thus turned into the Copts, the indigenous population of the Valley and members of the Coptic, that is to say anti-Chalcedonian, Church. Thus, the terms defining the group acquired a meaning that was simultaneously religious and ethnic. (Papaconstantinou 2006: 72)

In this way the ethnoreligious identity of the Copts, and the identity of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt may be understood to have been shaped most dramatically by the schism in 451 CE and the Arab-Muslim invasion in 641 CE.

In the centuries that followed, the Coptic language was gradually replaced by Arabic, and by the twelfth century, Coptic Orthodox Pope Gabriel II ibn Turayk was instructing his priests to minister to their flocks in Arabic because the people no longer understood the Coptic language (Moawad 2014: 225-6). This gradual disappearance of Coptic from every-day use combined with the influence of Arabic language and culture in the following centuries has led to a Coptic identity that today is understood almost entirely through the prism of the Orthodox Church, which has safeguarded the few remaining linguistic and ritual practices that distinguish Copts from Muslim Egyptians today.

In modern times the Copts have fortunately not undergone the persecutions that recurred throughout their early history, however they have endured regular discrimination and exclusion from Egyptian political life, most notably during the periods from the late 19th century to WWI when nationalistic, pan-Arab, and pro-Islamic sentiments were heightened, and also following the founding of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1929 which ushered in a period of increasing Islamization of Egyptian cultural and political life (Van Doorn-Harder and Vogt 1997: 11). This pressure on Egyptian Copts intensified following the Egyptian Revolution of 1952 when President Nasser's land reforms led to the confiscation of properties from many wealthy Coptic families, and his policies on free education led to more Muslims receiving an education and competing with Copts for jobs, leading to successive waves of Coptic emigration by the 1970s and the growth of diaspora communities in North America, Europe, Australia, and elsewhere (Ibid.). As Coptic migration out of Egypt increased during this period, the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria began to establish churches outside of Egypt. Today, there are substantial diaspora communities of Coptic Christians in the United States, Canada, Europe, and sub-Saharan Africa, with hundreds of churches existing outside of Egypt; the establishment of these communities and their participation in discourses of Coptic history and identity have contributed to a truly transnational Coptic culture.

The Current Study

This dissertation is both a study of the transnational Coptic culture that has emerged as a product of these waves of migration in the late-twentieth century and also a product of

its emergence. The latter is true because I myself am a child of a Coptic immigrant to the United States who left Egypt in the 1970s, followed by three of his siblings who each raised families in different parts of North America. While I was raised outside of the Coptic Orthodox Church, I came to know it through infrequent visits to see uncles, aunts, and cousins who were devout church-goers and would spend long afternoons in the large church cafeteria and common room eating and socializing after the Sunday morning Liturgy. In my youth I knew the Church largely as the backdrop for family gatherings. The smells of frankincense burning in the priest's censer were as much a part of the environment for me as the taste of salty fish cooked in cumin, and the solemn intonement of the Mass in Coptic as pronounced a memory as the lively Arabic chatter of families and friends. Over time I developed a desire to understand the deeper meaning of the liturgical traditions that brought these families together, and my own positionality as a Copt "by birth" (in a patrilineal sense, which is the dominant perspective in Egyptian and Egyptian-American culture) yet in an ambivalent relationship to the religious institution of the Church, led me to question the nature of Coptic identity. At the same time, my life trajectory has taken me deeply into the study of music, first as a musician and later with ethnomusicological research in Turkey. All of these factors contributed to my current focus on Coptic liturgical music and its relationship to Coptic identity.

In this dissertation I examine the different factors that shape the transmission of hymnodic knowledge. This includes an examination of both historical writings and also contemporary efforts to theorize and translate Coptic hymns, all of which demonstrate how the perception and transmission of musical structures are shaped by cultural and epistemological factors. Broadly speaking, I explore the transmission of Coptic hymnody in a

dual sense: firstly, in the sense of transmitting structural knowledge about music, and secondly, in the more implicit sense of transmitting narratives of history and identity that are implicated in the ways that individuals interpret and represent this musical knowledge. With these two types of transmission in mind, I examine both historical writings and contemporary verbal and written discourse about Coptic music, as well as two topics that are especially significant for the transmission of hymnodic knowledge in recent years: efforts in North America to produce standardized arrangements of Coptic hymns in the English language, and the changing role of the church cantor or *mu'allim* as a preserver and transmitter of Coptic hymnody.

My project has incorporated extensive library research, ethnographic observation, and formal and informal interviewing. My fieldwork sites included a number of Coptic Orthodox churches and various church-affiliated institutions and events both in Cairo and Southern California. During the first part of my research, I spent roughly six months total in Cairo including a preparatory trip from July to August in 2014, and a longer more intensive period of research from October 2015 to February 2016. A core part of my research methodology during this period was ethnographic observation in church spaces that occurred before, during, and after liturgical rites. During most weeks I would attend the morning Divine Liturgy on two or three different days at different churches, always including the Saturday morning Divine Liturgy, which is the most well-attended weekly liturgy in Egypt. My observation of these liturgies provided me with the opportunity to become more familiar with the melodies and ritual function of many liturgical hymns as well as the differences between congregations in terms of melodic performance, ornamentation, and the use of percussive accompaniment. I observed liturgies at eight different churches: the Church of the Archangel

Michael (Sheraton), the Church of the Virgin Mary and St. Athanasius (Nasr City), the Church of St. Mark (Khalafawi, Shubra), the Church of the Virgin Mary and the Archangel Michael (Khalafawi, Shubra), the Church of the Archangel Michael (Rod al-Farag, Shubra), the Church of St. George (Agouza), the Church of St. Barbara (Old Cairo), and the Hanging Church (Old Cairo). Because many of these liturgical rites would be followed by communal eating and socializing, my observation would often segue into conversation and sometimes formal and informal interviews with priests, deacons, cantors, and laypeople at these gatherings. I also attended special seasonal services for Holy Week leading up to the feast of the Resurrection and the Lakkan service performed for the feast of the Epiphany.

In addition to observing liturgical rites, and speaking with the aforementioned people, I also approached several church cantors (Arabic: *mu'allimūn*, s. *mu'allim*) at these churches with requests for weekly hymn lessons and interviews focused on learning more about their training, their current role in the church community, and the way in which they understand and communicate about the musical structures of Coptic chant. Two *mu'allimūn* met with me weekly for a period of about two months, and several others participated in one or two brief interviews. In addition to this I also visited a number of different sites involved in Coptic music education including the Institute of Coptic Studies (ICS), where I attended hymn classes, and a roundtable on Coptic music research, the St. Athanasius Deacons' School in Nasr City, where I observed several classes and conducted interviews, and the Didymus Institute at the Church of St. George in Shubra, where I completed a lengthy interview with the Institute director Father Faim al-Anba Bishoy and learned a great deal about the training of *mu'allimūn* that occurs there. Following my research in Cairo I conducted two additional periods of research in North America from April 2016 to October 2016 and October 2017 to

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February 2018. During these time periods I attended hymn classes and liturgical services at the Archangel Michael Church in Simi Valley with periodic visits to several other Coptic churches in the Southern California area. I also conducted thirty-five phone interviews with deacons, priests, and one bishop in North America, the majority of whom were involved in hymn translation efforts or the creation and maintenance of online resources for Coptic hymns.

Ethnomusicologists have long been interested in both the role of the individual and the role of institutions in the transmission of musical traditions. While some scholarship has tended to view institutional influence in the shaping of musical traditions as an external force of Westernization or an agent of government reform external to the indigenous culture (e.g. Danielson 1997: 30, Youssefzadeh 2000, Değirmenci 2006), a growing body of ethnomusicological scholarship has focused on the relationship between institutional musical theories and theories outside of those institutions, as well as the cultural negotiations and constructions of musical authority within them (e.g. Weintraub 1993, Stock 1996, Wong 2001, Cohen 2009). At the same time, numerous ethnomusicological studies have explored the dynamics of transmission in the context of the student-teacher relationship (e.g. Berliner 1994, Rice 1994, Brinner 1995, Bakan 1999, Fatone 2010, Gillan 2013). In this dissertation, I explore the musical conceptualization and theorization of individuals and institutions, and discuss how both contribute to the construction and maintenance of group identity.

All of my research was conducted with the goal of understanding how particular ideas and values shape the transmission of Coptic music, and how these ideas and values contribute to the construction of Coptic identity. Central to my discussion of Coptic identity is how the attribution of cultural authority transforms particular ideas or discourses into

representations of the broader cultural group. I focus both on how particular ideas or narratives are valorized but also on the way in which particular "ways of knowing" or epistemologies are granted more or less authority. Because of the importance of the concepts of "identity" and "epistemology" in my study, I will briefly introduce my approach to both.

Identity and Epistemology

My understanding of identity is as an inherently unstable, mutable construction rather than as a stable, ahistorical, essentializing conception of an individual or group. I therefore theorize identity, building on the observations of Stuart Hall, as something "never unified and, in modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions" (Hall 1996: 4). Because of this inherent multiplicity and fragmented nature of identity I examine both historical and contemporary discourses, written publications and what I call "vernacular musical theorizations" that exist primarily in the realm of speech. By examining a variety of discourses and discursive practices I hope to reveal different formulations of Coptic identity that are shaped in part by the cultural authority granted to them in a given context. I also agree with Simon Frith who has argued for an understanding of identity as something "*mobile*, a process not a thing, a becoming not a being," and acknowledge the ways in which both historical and contemporary discourses continually evolve through interpretation and reinterpretation by different individuals and groups in different contexts (Frith 1996: 109).

In addition to understanding identities as fragmented, multiple, context-dependent, and processual, I engage with identity as something inherently performative in that I consider the representations that are generally perceived to be the result of the identity or essential nature of a group to actually *constitute* its identity. In this way I am taking a lesson from Judith Butler who has famously theorized both sex and gender categories as performative (Butler 1990: 25). Ruth Solie also notes this performative dynamic in the context of constructions of sameness and difference, one of the fundamental components of identity formation: "Theorists interested in the construction of difference are quick to point out that representation must be taken, not merely to reflect or refer to some preexistent reality, but actually to produce that reality" (Solie 1995: 12). Simon Frith has advocated for this model of identity expression over approaches that utilize a "homology" model in which ideas and values are agreed upon by a group first and then later expressed in cultural activities (Frith 1996: 111).

Taking into account the fragmented and multiple nature of identity, its performative character, and also its fluid and processual quality, I adopt Thomas Turino's formulation of identity as "the representation of selected habits foregrounded in given contexts to define self to oneself and to others by oneself and by others" (Turino 2004: 8). Turino's use of the concept of "habits" here encompasses all human practice ("being, doing, thinking") and in this dissertation will include discursive practices such as ideas and writings about Coptic music. In the context of Coptic music culture, I explore both historical and contemporary efforts to describe, explain, and ultimately theorize Coptic music and I argue that both the explicit ideas that my interlocutors conveyed in writing and speech, as well as the (re)performance of particular forms of musical representation, such as the use of particular

notational symbols or the adoption of the theoretical framework of the Arab *maqām* system,

constitute some of the "habits" of group identity construction. In addition, I interpret

Turino's crucial notion of "foreground[ing] in given contexts" as a process of valorizing or

empowering particular discourses. In other words, this "foregrounding of habits" equates to

the granting of cultural authority to particular ideas and narratives. An important part of my

exploration of Coptic identity in this dissertation involves an exploration of the ways in

which certain "habits" are foregrounded, i.e. how certain discourses are granted authority.

While discourses are certainly valorized through their deployment in particular contexts, I

also wish to acknowledge the role that privileging of particular epistemologies plays in

identity construction.

Epistemology is a branch of philosophy concerned with the nature of knowledge

itself, and epistemological inquiry helps to illuminate the underlying theory of knowledge

that undergirds particular subjectivities and behaviors. Scholar Gregory Bateson notes how

the word "know" is not only used to refer to different phenomena in the English language,

but that people frequently shift between these different meanings:

> The word "know" is not merely ambiguous in covering both *connaitre* (to
> know through the senses, to recognize or perceive) and *savoir* (to know in the
> mind), but varies –actively shifts—in meaning for basic systemic reasons.
> That which we know through the senses can *become* knowledge in the mind.
> (Bateson 1987[1972]: 143)

While Bateson is primarily interested in how the assumptions underlying different

epistemologies, what he referred to as "epistemological premises," (Ibid.: 341) are implicated

in different psychiatric pathologies, other scholars that I discuss in more detail in Chapter 5

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have looked at the conceptualization of knowledge and knowing in terms of broad societal trends.

In the latter half of this dissertation (primarily chapters 3-5) I deal with the notion of epistemologies as different ways of understanding and performing knowledge that are embedded in narratives of history and identity. I examine the authority given to particular ways of knowing in specific contexts with the assumption that different forms of vernacular musical theorization (Chapter 3), different understandings of the relationship between music and text in Coptic hymns (Chapter 4), and different understandings of the role of the mu'allim (Chapter 5) all reflect different configurations of cultural authority that are determined in a large part by how these forms of knowledge are mediated. By addressing this relationship between epistemology, cultural authority, and identity, I hope to demonstrate how the granting of authority to both discourses and also epistemological orientations can contribute to a group social identity.

<u>Outline of the Dissertation</u>

In Chapter 1, I provide historical context for the conceptualization of Coptic music through a review of all available pre-twentieth century sources on Coptic liturgical music including the earliest Arabic-language sources from the 13th and 14th centuries and the 17th-19th century writings and transcriptions of Europeans. In Chapter 2, I explore how the narratives of history and identity present in the pre-twentieth century writings about Coptic music continue into the twentieth century but I demonstrate how an important shift in musical representation and conceptualization occurs beginning in the 1970s. I argue that this

representational shift, which includes the adoption of the notational symbols of modern Arab music and terminology and conceptual frameworks of the *maqām* system onto a music that had previously been written about by Europeans using European-derived musical frameworks, reflects a partial decolonization of Coptic music studies, while at the same time perpetuates aspects of the colonial ordering of Egyptian music conceptualization, which were firmly established in music education and academic discourse by the 1930s. In Chapter 3, I examine present-day conceptualizations of Coptic music that I call "vernacular musical theorizations," arguing that these ideas are part of the conceptual possibilities that may contribute to a more authoritative Music Theory, and that the different ways of conceptualizing the intonation of Coptic music and the "essential melody" of liturgical hymns reflect different constructions of cultural authority with respect to the privileging of certain cultural texts and also to the privileging of specific epistemologies. In Chapter 4, I examine the processes of musical translation among groups in the Coptic North American diaspora. Through extensive interviews with members of three different working groups that were formed by North American bishops to arrange and record standardized English-language versions of Coptic hymns, I demonstrate how the act of translation is influenced by larger constructions of Coptic identity in a way that shapes the musical structure of the hymns. Finally, in Chapter 5, I explore the role of the professional church cantor or *mu'allim* and I demonstrate how changes in the perception of his relative authority as a preserver and transmitter of hymnody reflects shifts in authority between different epistemes or widely-shared epistemological frameworks.

It is my hope that this research will contribute both to a recently emerging body of scholarship on Coptic identity, and to ethnomusicological scholarship probing the

relationship between musical structures, and the beliefs, values, and epistemological orientations that shape how they are perceived and transmitted. Within the former category, I situate my work within a diverse array of scholarship on Coptic identity, which includes studies on representations of women and gender in modern Coptic society (Armanios 2002; Armanios & Amstutz 2013), studies of the role of the Coptic Orthodox Church in shaping Coptic identity (Moawad 2014), studies of Coptic identity as an ethnic or racial identity (Papaconstantinou 2006; Ragheb 2018) and studies of how narratives of Coptic identity intersect with constructions of national identity and minority politics (Hatina 2006; Galal 2012). By focusing on music, I hope to connect broader issues of identity formation to the growing scholarship on the forms and structures of Coptic music (e.g. Borsai 1968, 1972, 1979; Borsai and Tóth 1969; Buṭrus 1976; Erian 1986; Kuhn 2009, 2011, 2014, 2016). In doing so I hope to reveal how thinking, writing, and talking about Coptic music contributes to the understanding of what it means to be Coptic.

Within the discipline of ethnomusicology, I am contributing to a relatively long history of scholarship exploring the relationship between musical structures and a broader worldview or identity. One facet of this is scholarship on musical conceptualization and representation, sometimes referred to as "ethnotheory," which initially focused on eliciting the interiorized knowledge of individuals about musical structures with the assumption that perceived structures reflected a unified cultural system (e.g. Zemp 1978, 1979; Rice 1980; Feld 1981), and later incorporated approaches that accounted for individual variation within a cultural group (Monson 1998; Perlman 2004). My discussion of Coptic music theory reflects a similar focus on the relationship between perceived musical structures and broader cultural values, and my examination of "vernacular musical theorizations" in Chapter 3 is an effort to

take an even broader accounting of the different ways in which individuals theorize Coptic music and the ways that these individual perspectives are informed by shared ideas and values.

Another facet of ethnomusicological scholarship that I engage with is scholarship that has explored the epistemological basis of musical experience (e.g. Hoffman 1978; Feld 1992, 1996, 2003 [2000]; Sterne 2003; Eisenberg 2013), and I build on this scholarship by incorporating insights and theoretical frameworks from performance studies scholar Diana Taylor (2003, 2010) in order to expand analysis of epistemological domains beyond a focus on unified, monolithic epistemes that characterize much of this work. Andrew Eisenberg (2013) does provide one recent example of ethnomusicological scholarship addressing two distinct epistemological domains, however his work is focused primarily on epistemic conflict. I add a new perspective to discussions of epistemological multiplicity involving sound and music by accounting for the ways in which epistemes inform each other in the construction of cultural authority. Ultimately, I hope that this research will help to illuminate the intertwined nature of musical transmission and identity construction in the context of the modern Coptic community as well as other communities similarly involved in the preservation and transmission of their musical heritage.

CHAPTER 1

A Review of Pre-Twentieth Century Sources on Coptic Music

In this chapter I describe and discuss pre-twentieth century sources on Coptic liturgical music including 13th- and 14th-century Coptic writings in Arabic and 17th- through 19th-century writings of Europeans who made transcriptions of Coptic music and attempted to articulate its theoretical structures with varying degrees of specificity. This discussion is intended to provide historical context necessary for situating contemporary remarks on Coptic music and Coptic music theory discussed in later chapters. I have organized this chapter and the following chapter as a chronological overview of individual contributions to Coptic music writing and theorizing. In doing so I am adopting an approach similar to Gillespie (1967), Buṭrus (1976), Moftah et al. (1991), and Ramzy (2010; 2014c) in their overviews of Coptic music history and Coptic music transcription, however the focus of my review here is somewhat broader in that I am interested in forms of musical theorizing and musical representation beyond musical transcription, such as different approaches to the modal analysis of Coptic chant. At the same time, my approach is somewhat narrower than Ramzy (2010) in that I do not explore in these chapters forms of music writing that lack a unified approach, such as the idiosyncratic forms neumic notation known as *hazzāt* (Arabic: lit. "movements") commonly used by Coptic chanters.[2]

Today there does not exist a unified system of music theory to describe Coptic liturgical music. This absence of a theoretical framework to describe the music may be

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[2] See Appendix A for my brief discussion of the contemporary and historical forms of *hazzāt* used by Coptic Orthodox chanters.

understood partly as a result of the absence of a tradition of a shared system of musical

notation within the Church, and partly due to the primarily oral/aural and mimetic nature of

transmission by which the liturgical music is passed on from one generation to the next.

Despite the absence of a modern Coptic music theory, certain terms and concepts used within

the Coptic community today appear to reference the existence of earlier theoretical structures

or extramusical categorizations that may also have been associated with musical features at

some point in the past. The most obvious example of this is the six melodic/ritual types used

to categorize Coptic liturgical hymns, or *alḥān*: festal (Arabic: *farāyḥī*), sorrowful (Arabic:

ḥazāynī)[3], Palm Sunday (Arabic: *sha'ānīnī*), Kiahk (Arabic: *kīahkī*), fasting (Arabic: *ṣiyāmī*),

and annual[4] (Arabic: *sanawī*).[5] While these terms have a clear connection to the themes of

the rituals with which they are associated (i.e. festal hymns are performed during feasts

commemorating joyous events like the birth of Jesus Christ or at weddings, while sorrowful

hymns are performed during ritual moments remembering Jesus' death or during funerals,

and Kiahk hymns are all performed during the Coptic month of Kiahk, preceding Christmas),

there is little evidence to suggest that these categories also conform to distinct melodic or

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[3] The Arabic terms for festal (*farāyḥī*) and sorrowful (*ḥazāynī*) given here are the colloquial Arabic forms of the words most commonly used. The classical forms of the words are "*farā'iḥī*" and "*ḥazā'ini*," respectively.

[4] The term "annual" (and its Arabic equivalent "*sanawī*") is used in the context of Coptic liturgical hymnody and Coptic rites more generally to describe hymns or rites that occur *throughout* the year in contrast to seasonal rites that occur during a specific day, week, or month on the Church calendar.

[5] With the exception of the term *kīahkī*, which is an Arabicization of the name of the Coptic month of Kiahk, all of these other terms are words taken directly from the Arabic language. There are no equivalent Coptic terms in common use today.

modal patterns.[6] Despite this, many Copts, including some professional cantors believe that these terms reference unique melodic or modal types.

While there have been recent efforts by individuals to transcribe Coptic hymns using Western notation, sometimes to perform the music using the musical instruments traditionally found in Arab music ensembles, and at times to describe some of the music using modal terminology taken from traditional Arab music, no contemporary scholar, musician, or cantor has conceptualized a unique set of Coptic modes. Contemporary instances where individuals have used the names of Arab *maqāmāt* to describe specific pieces of Coptic liturgical music have generally occurred in the form of notes found in the heading of written musical notation, and these terms only reflect a rough correlation between the intervallic structure of the music and the intervals of particular *maqāmāt* without other characteristics of the *maqām* such as the direction of melodic progression (e.g. ascending or descending melodic line), use of specific melodic motifs, use of particular cadential formulas and accidentals, use of typical modulations within a group or "family" (*faṣīlah*) of related modes, or other characteristics associated with the tradition of Arab *maqām*.[7]

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[6] Swiss musicologist Magdalena Kuhn has argued for the idea of Coptic melody-types, but her discussions have focused on the melodic-poetic categories "Adam" and "Batos" associated with the *theotokia* chanted during the night-time services of Vespers and Midnight Praises, as well as Kiakh hymns of the Psalmodia rather than the broader ritual categories that apply to all liturgical *alḥān* including those used during the Divine Liturgy (see Kuhn 2011: 4; 2014: 74-5).

[7] For an in-depth discussion of these and other aspects of maqām see chapter ten in Marcus (1989: 438-754), and also Marcus (1992).

Early examples of the theorization of Coptic music may be found in the writings of Abū Isḥāq al-Mu'taman Ibrāhīm Ibn al-'Assāl (early 13th c.), Yūḥannā Ibn Abī Zakariyyā Ibn Sibā' (late 13th c.),[8] and Shams al-Ri'āsah Abū al-Barakāt Ibn Kabar (early 14th c.). Each of these Coptic authors discusses four pairs of eight *alḥān* (s. *laḥn*), an Arabic term that is sometimes translated as "tone" or "mode," but might be more accurately rendered as "melody-type" in this context.[9] They describe how each pair of melody-types evoke particular emotional responses in the listener and are thus intended for particular ritual contexts (e.g. the first and fifth melody-types are joyful and are used during celebratory feasts, the third and seventh are sorrowful and are used during funerals, etc.).

Scholars have observed how these references to melody-types organized into groupings of four pairs appear to mirror features of the modal system of the *oktōēchos*, which was adopted by the Armenian, Byzantine, Georgian, Latin, Slavic, and Syriac churches during the Middle Ages, and scholarship on this material, largely dealing with the writings of Ibn Kabar, has focused on the question of whether these references to melody-types reflected the actual use of an *oktōēchos* in the practice and pedagogy of Coptic chanters during this era (Borsai 1974; Moftah et al. 1991; Kuhn 2011, 39). More recently, George Ghaly (2013) has

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[8] Moftah et al. (1991) identify a reference to eight modes in *al-Jawharah al-nafīsah fī 'ulūm al-Kanīsa* (*The Precious Jewel in the Sciences of the Church*) of Ibn Sibā', however they do not cite a specific chapter or other location within the original Arabic text and I have so far been unable to locate the reference.

[9] See Harold Powers (1992, 2001) for a discussion of the concept of "mode" and the different meanings attached to this concept. Powers convincingly argues that the understanding of "mode" as "melody-type" is only one meaning that has been historically applied to the term, and that general references to the term mode should be qualified with more specificity.

explored the wider literary context of such writings and argues that a Coptic *oktōēchos* existed as an ethical and philosophical discourse, but most likely did not exist as a system for organizing the Coptic liturgical calendar, or as a system for organizing musical structures. The intertextual references discussed by Ghaly, and the placement of these references within larger discussions of ethics and apologetics rather than within descriptions of liturgical practice, suggests that the musical theorizing of 13th- and 14th-century Coptic intellectuals was governed by what musicologist Carl Dahlhaus has referred to as a "theological epistemology," or an intellectual orientation in which: "the theorist aims to display the design of the universe as manifested in music" (Cook 2007: 80).

Abū Isḥāq al-Mu'taman Ibrāhīm Ibn al-'Assāl (early 13th century)

Abū Isḥāq al-Mu'taman Ibrāhīm Ibn al-'Assāl (also known as *mu'taman al-dawlah*) was the third and youngest brother of the 'Assāl family (often collectively identified as "Awlād al-'Assāl") which rose to prominence in the Ayyubid court in Cairo sometime in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century (Atiya 1991: CE:309b-311b). Abū Isḥāq[10] wrote primarily about philological and theological matters including a lexical reference of Coptic and Arabic vocabulary *al-Sullam al-muqaffah wa-al-dhahab al-muṣaffah*, (*The Balanced Ladder [Dictionary] and The Pure Gold [of Its Words]*) which later served as the basis for 17th-century Jesuit priest Athanasius Kircher's *Lingua aegyptiaca restituta* (*The Egyptian*

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[10] Following the naming practices used in the Claremont Coptic Encyclopedia, I identify Yūḥannā Ibn Abī Zakariyyā Ibn Sibā' as Ibn Siba' and Shams al-Riʾāsa Abū al-Barakāt Ibn Kabar as Ibn Kabar. By contrast, I identify Abū Isḥāq al-Mu'taman Ibrāhīm Ibn al-'Assāl by his given name Abū Isḥāq. This is necessary because the name Ibn al-'Assāl could refer to at least five different members of the al-'Assāl family, three of whom were writers with surviving manuscripts from this era.

Language Restored), and the theological work *Majmūʿ uṣūl al-dīn wa-masmūʿ maḥṣūl al-*

yaqīn (The Entirety of the Achievement of Religion and the Audible Yield of Certainty)

(Atiya 1991: CE:1748b-1749a). In this latter work, Abū Isḥāq presents a defense of the use

of music in Christian worship divided into ten parts, each part discusses a specific reason

why music should be considered acceptable in Christian worship (see reproduction of the

original Arabic along with a German translation in Graf 1948-9: 161-178).[11] In the third part

of this defense of liturgical music, Abū Isḥāq quotes the words of the priest Yaʿqūb al-

Mārdīni (Jacob of Mardin) from a book entitled *Daʿwat al-qusūs* (*The Calling of the Priests*)

in which Father Jacob discusses the relationship between eight moods (*amzija*, s. *mizāj*) and

eight musical modes (*alḥān*, s. *laḥn*), as well as the specific emotions that correspond to each

of these modes. The words attributed to Father Jacob do not specifically reference Coptic

Orthodox chant, and their vagueness with regard to any specific music or ritual practices as

well as Abū Isḥāq's inclusion of these remarks in the context of an ethical debate over the

permissibility of music rather than as part of a description of liturgical practice suggest that

they are part of larger regional discourse about musical sound, affect and ethics rather than a

description of musical theorizations used in the pedagogy and practice of Coptic Orthodox

chanters.[12] Moreover, Jacob of Mardin's name suggests that he was from Mardin, part of

modern-day Turkey, and an area in which the Syriac Orthodox Church, and not the Coptic

Orthodox Church, had a significant historical presence.

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[11] It seems logical that this discussion by Christian thinkers was at least partly a response to ongoing debates about the permissibility of music among muslim theologians, mystics, and intellectuals over the preceding centuries. See Shehadi (1995) for an overview of this debate within the Middle Eastern muslim community from the 9th-14th centuries.

[12] George Ghaly has made this observation about similar remarks by Ibn Kabar (2013: 74).

Abū Isḥāq's primary argument in this section appears to be that the eight musical modes act to instill specific emotional responses, such as providing courage or stimulating patience or humility, which may aid in worship and proper Christian behavior:

Since hearing is one of the bodily senses, and since all sensations of what is eaten, drunk, smelled, seen, or felt have eight moods, and since there are eight moods, then there must also be eight melody-types [alḥān], so that the sense of hearing is not less than the other senses.	لما كانت السمعية من جملة الحواس الجسمانية وكان جميع ما يرد على الحواس مما يؤكل ويشرب ويشم ويصر ويلمس لجميع الناس له امزجة ثمانية وإذ كانت الامزجة ثمانية وجب ان تكون الالحان ثمانية
Thus emerged the eight melody-types [alḥān] and their eight moods. Nothing was subtracted from them just as nothing was subtracted from the moods belonging to the other senses, and nothing was added to them.[13]	بحيث لم ينقص حظ الحس السمعى عن حظ أصحابه فوردت عليه الالحان الثمانية ذات الامزجة الثمانية ولم ينقص منها كما لم ينقص من الثمانية الامزجة الواردة على الحواس ولم يزد فيها

Scholar Nabila Erian provides an English translation of the proceeding portion of the 13th-century manuscript.:[14]

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[13] My translation

[14] Erian appears to confuse Abū Isḥaq's name with that of the 10th-century Coptic author Abū Isḥāq Ibn Faḍlallāh (see Samir 1991) in her introduction to this translated excerpt, and she also dates this work to the year 1260, but it is unclear if this date has been confirmed or if it is an estimate.

The first and fifth were for joy (i.e., joyful occasions); the third and seventh were for sorrow, and were to be used for funerals and the burial of the dead; the fourth and eighth are the encouraging tones, to be used for the suffering of the martyrs and the commemorations of their trials and persecutions for the edification of those who hear, so that fear would not get hold of them and they faint; as for the humiliating tone, it is the second added to it the sixth – It was composed for humility and modesty and for the Passion week of the Master. (Erian 1986: 210 trans. of Abū Isḥāq)

The most plausible explanation for Abū Isḥāq's reference to these eight modes, their organization into four pairs of primary and derivative modes, and their association with particular extra-musical qualities, is that Abū Isḥāq was drawing on the oktōēchos, a theoretical framework that originated outside of Egypt and that was adopted by numerous Christian churches in the region by this time. The term "oktōēchos" is a reference to this system of modal organization utilizing eight musical modes divided into four pairs, which can be traced back at least to the eighth century CE, and most likely originated in Jerusalem and the Palestinian monasteries in the surrounding area (Jeffery 2001: 208-9). Over time, the oktōēchos system was adopted by Armenian, Byzantine, Georgian, Latin, Slavic, and Syriac Orthodox communities first as a framework within which their existing chants could be organized, and later it was developed independently by each community into a set of rules for the composition of new chants (Jeffery 200l; Frøyshov 2007). While early evidence of the influence of this modal framework appeared in the aforementioned communities in written remarks similar to the discussion of the four pairs of liturgical modes by Abū Isḥāq, the concept of the oktōēchos was gradually introduced into the organization of chant collections

and integrated into the structure of liturgical worship in a manner that did not appear to occur in the Coptic Orthodox Church.

<u>Yūḥannā Ibn Abī Zakariyyā Ibn Sibāʿ (late 13th century)</u>

Yūḥannā Ibn Abī Zakariyyā Ibn Sibāʿ was a 13th-century Coptic theologian and author of *al-Jawharah al-nafīsah fī ʿulūm al-kanīsah* (*The Precious Jewel in the Sciences of the Church*), an encyclopedic work that focuses primarily on the organizations and traditions of the Coptic Church with a detailed description of liturgical practices (Atiya 1991: CE1272a-1272b). According to Moftah et al., Ibn Sibāʿ "detailed contemporary usages of liturgical music in his opus, *al-Jawharah al-nafīsah*" and along with Abū Isḥāq and Ibn Kabar he "outlined the Coptic schema of the oktoechos" ("Coptic Music: History" 1991: 1715a-1747b). At least three editions of *al-Jawharah al-nafīsah* are in circulation today including a 1922 publication that contains the Arabic text and a French translation of the first 56 chapters (Périer 1922), a 1966 publication that contains the Arabic text and a Latin translation containing 113 chapters (Mustarīh 1966), and a 2001 Arabic-language publication containing 115 chapters (Iskander 2001). The latter two sources are both presented as complete publications of *al-Jawharah al-nafīsah,* suggesting that the differences in their length may reflect the use of different manuscripts for their source material. Despite exploration of all of the aforementioned publications, I have so far been unable to locate the remarks concerning Coptic liturgical music and its melody-types referenced by Moftah et al. (1991). While the high-quality scholarship of these authors suggests that the relevant passages do indeed exist, more work is needed to identify the relevant material using proper citations and to make it accessible to both Arabic and non-Arabic-speaking scholars.

<u>Shams al-Ri'āsah Abū al-Barakāt Ibn Kabar (late-13th century – 1324)[15]</u>

Ibn Kabar was a scholar born to a wealthy Coptic family who attained a high position in the civil service, became well known for his literary contributions to the fields of theology, history, and linguistics, and around the year 1300 became the presbyter of the Hanging Church (*Kanīsat al-mu'allaqah*) in Cairo, which was at that time the seat of the Coptic Patriarchy (Atiya 1919: CE:1267a-1268a). Ibn Kabar authored a twenty-four-section encyclopedia of Coptic religious knowledge entitled *Miṣbāḥ al-ẓulmah fi īḍāḥ al-khidmah* (*The Light That Lights the Darkness in the Explanation of the Service*)[16] that provides detailed descriptions of church doctrine and worship practices and briefly discusses eight modal-ritual types (Ibid.). Erian provides an English translation of an excerpt from this manuscript:

> The number of the [rites] used in the Church are eight: the first added to it the
> fifth: is lyrical, that is why it is used for the greatest of feasts and weddings,
> because it was composed for the two pompous, holy feasts of the birth of our
> Master Jesus Christ when the angels announced the salvation of mankind, and
> the feast of the resurrection of God when He said that He killed death and sin.
> There is no joy to compare with the joy of these two feasts, and no happiness
> equals the happiness of these two situations. The fifth laḥn resembles it, and
> that is why it was composed for the day of Assumption of the Savior into
> heaven and the return of mankind to its elevated state. Their mood is hot and
> humid. The second laḥn, added to it the sixth, are both humiliating and

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[15] Atiya gives the more elaborate name "al-Shaykh al-Mu'taman Shams al-Riyasah Ibn al-Shaykh al-As'ad Abu al-Barakat Ibn Kabar" (Atiya 1991:CE:1267a-1268a).
[16] The oldest existing manuscript of Ibn Kabar's *Miṣbāḥ al-ẓulmah*, now in the Vatican library, is dated to 1333 (Ibid.).

submitting. That is why they were composed for the time of humiliation and subjection, i.e. the week when Jesus the Savior and Propitiator of mankind suffered. Their mood is cold and humid. The third and seventh are both sorrowful. That is why they are mainly used for funerals, or better, for burying the dead, memorials and commemorations. Their mood is hot and dry. The fourth and eighth laḥn, both encourage the coward, and kindle affection. They are used mainly for the trials of martyrs and the commemoration of their different kinds of persecutions, so that listeners would be encouraged by what they hear, and fear would not cause them to falter. In this way is the order and organization of the alḥān for the hymns and psalms, measured. For all composition goes back to these eight alḥān and is derived from them. The alḥān are really but four in number and the other four are derived and composed out of them. The Greeks use transposition so that the composer does not make faults or deviate from the previously mentioned rules and categories. (Erian 1986: 210-11) [17]

Ibn Kabar then goes on to describe the power of music to affect the bodily senses or emotions, and its usefulness in transmitting the meanings of religious texts to the listener:

If [the music] is free from confusion, and is composed faultlessly, then it will aid in captivating the bodily senses and stir vitality wonderfully, and it will persuade human beings to accept what is being recited with music more quickly.

واذا كانت سليمة من التخليط
مؤلفة تاليفاً برياً من الاغاليط

اثرت في جذب الحواس
وتحريك النشاط تأثيراً بديعاً
واستمالت الانسان
الي قبول ملايتلا بها سريعاً

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[17] I have replaced Erian's use of the Arabic terms "toqus" and "Nasara" with their English equivalents "rites" and "Nazarenes" for the sake of clarity.

Therefore it was adopted by the believing Nazarenes and it was permitted by the Christians, because meanings of the holy books and the psalms of David affect minds and souls, and the structure of the ecclesiastical hymns affects the intensity of emotions, because meaning affects the soul and melodies [*alḥān*] affect the emotions.[18]		ولذلك اتخذها النصاري المؤمنون واجازها المسيحيون لان معاني الكتب الإلهية والمزامير الداودية تؤثر في العقول والنفوس وتقاسيم الترانيم البيعية تؤثر في قوي المحسوس لان المعاني تؤثر في النفوس والالحان تؤثر في المحسوس	

Following this passage, Ibn Kabar provides the names of the eight alḥān (i.e. melody-types) (Moftah et al. "Coptic Music: History" 1991: 1715a-1747b):

No.	Coptic Transliteration	Coptic	Description as summarized by Moftah et al. 1991
First	Protos	ⲡⲣⲱⲧⲟⲥ	"excite joy, and are used for pure and glorious feasts"
Fifth	Planerothou / Planprotou	ⲡⲗⲁⲛⲏⲣⲟⲑⲟⲩ / ⲡⲗⲁⲛⲡⲣⲱⲧⲟⲩ	
Second	Teutros	ⲧⲉⲩⲧⲉⲣⲟⲥ	"humble us, and are used for times of humility and humiliation like Holy Week; their temperament is cold and humid"
Sixth	Planteuteros	ⲡⲗⲁⲛⲧⲉⲩⲧⲉⲣⲟⲥ	

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[18] My translation

Third	Tritos	ⲧⲣⲓⲧⲟⲥ	"make us sad, and are therefore most frequently used for funerals and burials; their temperament is hot and dry"
Seventh	Baris	ⲃⲁⲣⲓⲥ	
Fourth	Tetartos	ⲧⲉⲧⲁⲣⲧⲟⲥ	"encourage bravery, lift the heart, and are meant to encourage the listeners, not put fear into their souls; their temperament is cold and dry"
Eighth	Plantetratou	ⲡⲗⲁⲛⲧⲉⲧⲣⲁⲧⲟⲩ	

Much like the mention of eight melody-types by Abū Isḥāq, the placement of these remarks in a chapter on ethical discourses, and the lack of references to specific Coptic liturgical practices, suggest that Ibn Kabar's description of these modes does not reflect the use of such terminology or theoretical frameworks in the pedagogy or ritual performance of Coptic priests or cantors in Egypt (Ghaly 2013: 74).[19] Since known references to the oktōēchos in Coptic literature are confined to the examples from the 13th- and 14th-centuries discussed here, and since no evidence for the use of such a system in the Coptic Orthodox Church has been discovered in later writings and does not exist in contemporary practice, it is unlikely that such a system was ever really utilized by priests or cantors in any widespread manner. Moreover, scholars such as Jeffery (2001) have demonstrated how the oktōēchos system of modes was initially adopted as a framework that each Christian community used to organize already extant chants and only very gradually in each culture did a system of rules develop for the composition of new chants. This would suggest that even if the oktōēchos system was

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[19] For a more detailed discussion of the intertextual references that reflect Syriac Christian as well as Islamic musical and ethical discourses in Ibn Kabar's writings see Ghaly (2013).

gradually integrated into liturgical practice in the Coptic Orthodox Church over the following centuries, the unique structural characteristics of Coptic liturgical music from this era would likely have predated any influence of an eight-mode system.

<u>Early European Writings</u>

<u>Father Athanasius Kircher (1602-1680)</u>

Athanasius Kircher (1602-1680) was a 17th-century German-born Jesuit priest who is credited with the first-known attempt to transcribe Coptic music using any form of written musical notation. Kircher was a polymath who published treatises on myriad topics, and his appointment as the chair in mathematics at the Collegio Romano in Rome in 1638 as well as his ties to the large and influential Jesuit organization likely contributed to the large printings and wide distribution of his work (Hamilton 2006: 204). Although Kircher was primarily interested in the Coptic language—his understanding of which was based on historical manuscripts—he also wrote briefly about the culture and liturgical practices of the Coptic Church. Kircher never travelled to Egypt, instead referencing contemporary informants whom he encountered in Rome. It is in a supplemental chapter in his *Lingua aegyptiaca restituta* (*The Egyptian Language Restored*) (1643) that he presents several remarks about Coptic liturgical music and provides a transcription of what he claims is a portion of a Mass that was chanted for him by his Coptic "amanuensis" or scribe (Kircher 1643: 515). Kircher's scholarship on the Coptic language was subject to a large amount of criticism by his peers and later generations of scholars, for inaccuracies, careless mistakes, and some instances of outright fabrication, but his work is not completely without merit. The portions

of his writings dealing with Coptic history and ritual practice include some elements that suggest veracity along with others that are questionable.
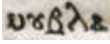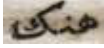
It is useful to understand something about Kircher's own religious and scholarly background in order to place his brief remarks about Coptic music in context. Kircher joined the Jesuit order, known as the Society of Jesus, in 1618 and he began a career as a scholar and educator, teaching mathematics as well as languages such as Greek, Hebrew, and Syriac (Hamilton 2006: 203). He was ordained in 1628 with the intent of becoming a missionary for the Catholic Church, and it was around this time that he encountered the *Thesaurus heiroglyphicorum*, a 1610 publication by Johann Georg Herwart von Hohenburg, which stoked Kircher's initial interest in hieroglyphs as well as the history and culture of Egypt (Ibid.). In the mid-1630s the Roman Patrician Pietro Della Valle entrusted Kircher with a manuscript containing works that he collected in Egypt between 1615 and 1616, which included codices with Coptic-Arabic dictionaries and works on Coptic grammar written in Arabic from the 13th and 14th centuries (Ibid.: 200-1). Kircher used these codices as the basis for his *Prodromus coptus sive aegyptiacus* (*The Coptic or Egyptian Forerunner*) (1636), which includes a detailed discussion of Coptic grammar, and he later published a Latin translation of the contents of Della Valle's manuscript in the *Lingua aegyptiaca restituta* (1643) (Hamilton 2006: 206).

Kircher was the first European scholar to correctly identify the Coptic language as a direct descendent of the ancient Egyptian language, a deduction he presented in his *Prodromus* a century and a half before the discovery of the Rosetta Stone made Egyptian hieroglyphs decipherable to European scholars (Frimmer 1969: 38; Hamilton 2006: 207; Woods 2005: 109). While Kircher's observations about the link between the ancient

Egyptian and Coptic languages was correct, he also falsely claimed to have deciphered Egyptian hieroglyphics and went so far as to publish four volumes, *Obeliscus pamphilius* (1650) and the three-volume work *Oedipus aegyptiacus* (1652-1655), containing translations which contemporary scholars have discredited as completely unrelated to the original texts (Frimmer 1969: 38). Kircher's translations of Coptic and Arabic in the *Lingua aegyptiaca restituta* are not completely erroneous, unlike his attempts to translate the ancient Egyptian language, however his work is full of minor and major errors. Evidence suggests that these errors were partly due to carelessness (e.g. the accidental transposition of Arabic letters), partly due to Kircher cutting corners (e.g. basing his translation of Coptic words on what he assumed were their correct Arabic translations in the source manuscripts he was translating from), and partly due to Kircher's lack of ability with both Arabic and Coptic (Hamilton 2006: 210-211). These more general issues with Kircher's scholarship suggest that his remarks about Coptic liturgical practice, as well as his transcription of Coptic chant may be flawed or inaccurate, however a close reading of this excerpt suggests that it is at least partially based in truth.

Kircher begins the second section of the supplemental chapter at the end of *Lingua aegyptiaca restituta* entitled "On the Institutions, Customs and Patriarchs of the Coptic or Alexandrian Church" ("*De Ecclesiae, siue alexandrinae institutis moribus, patriarchis*" 513-525) with some general remarks about the Coptic Church and its history, as well as some theological critiques of the supposed monophysitism[20] of the Copts (Kircher 1643: 513-515). He then describes their liturgical practices, and notes the following:

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[20] Coptic Orthodox Christians actually identify as miaphysites, but they have been identified as monophysites for centuries by European Christians. Monophysites believe that Jesus Christ had one nature that was divine or a fusion of divine and human in which the human

They perform liturgies and other offices by singing to God, in doing which they inflect their voices according to fixed grades, leaps or tones (which the Copts call ⲟⲩⲉⲃⲗⲁ and the Arabs حنك 'Hink,' now straining, now relaxing them, so as to produce a pleasant harmony for those listening) (Kircher 1643: 515, trans. David Butterfield)

The Coptic term that Kircher presents appears to be *oubla* ("ⲟⲩⲉⲃⲗⲁ" = Ōu-Epsilon-Bēta-Lola-Alpha), with the first letter Ōu ("ⲱ") partially erased. Understood in this way, the letters *ou* ("ⲟⲩ") represent an indefinite article, and according to Georgetown University's online Coptic-English dictionary the following word *bla* ("ⲃⲗⲁ") is a term for a musical instrument.[21] Kircher's use of the term to describe the "fixed grades, leaps, or tones" of Coptic chanting appears to differ from this currently known definition of *oubla*.

In the context of Coptic liturgical terminology, one present-day meaning for the Arabic term *hink* is a quantity of poetic meter. The online Index of Liturgical Terminology hosted by the Church of St. Mary and St. Anthony in Nasr City (Cairo, Egypt) defines *hink* (pl. *hinkāt*) as "a metered segment; a group of *hinkāt* constitute an *istikhon*; Some consider a *hink* to be the same as an *istikhon*" (my translation).[22] The word *istikhon* (pl. *istikhonāt*) is an

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was consumed or erased by the divine. Miaphysites believe that Jesus Christ had one nature containing both divinity and humanity but that these two aspects were both united and unaltered. By contrast, the Roman Catholic Church and other Western churches are dyophisites, who belief that Christ was of two distinct natures. While the Oriental Orthodox churches are miaphysites who see themselves as distinct from monophysites, dyophysites such as the Roman Catholic Church regard miaphysitism as a form of monophysitism.

[21] https://corpling.uis.georgetown.edu/coptic-dictionary/

[22] for original Arabic see entry 153: http://www.athanasiusdeacons.net/data/pagedata.aspx?id=2745

Arabicization of the Greek word *stikhon* meaning "wing" and it is used to describe a hemistich (Erian 1986: 219). The *istikhonāt* are a primary organizing unit of shorter Coptic chants, the majority of which are divided into the categories of *adam istikhonāt* containing six syllables and three accents, and *watos istikhonāt* containing eight syllables and four accents (Ibid.). Four *istikhonāt* constitute a *rubʿ* (pl. *irbāʿ*)—the Arabic word for "quarter"— which is a strophe or the equivalent of a couplet (Ibid.). While one might be tempted to interpret the "fixed grades, leaps, or tones" in Kircher's description of the term *hink* as melodic characteristics, understanding his remarks as references to prosody is more consistent with this definition of the term *hink*.

In addition to this understanding of *hink* within Coptic liturgical studies is a phonetically similar term, *hank*. Ethnomusicologist Ali Jihad Racy notes that *hank,* a derivation from the Persian word *ahang* ("tune"), has been used in Egypt since at least the 19th-century to describe "either melismatic vocalizations on the syllable *ah*, with intermittent dronelike passages by the chorus, or more syllabic and metric dialogues based on a few syllables and occurring between the *muṭrib* [lead singer] and the chorus with occasional overlapping into polyphony" (Racy 1983: 398-99). These etymological connections to music and vocal performance suggest a possible relationship to Kircher's term *hink*. Moreover, while Kircher explicitly writes the term "Hink" using the Latin alphabet, he presents the Arabic term without short-vowels (which are often not written in Arabic), and thus the identity of the crucial vowel as "a" or "i" (equivalent to the short vowels *fatḥah* or *kasrah* in Arabic) is ambiguous in the Arabic version of the word. It is possible that Kircher erroneously transliterated this vowel altering the word from *hank* to *hink*, or that *hink* was an alternate pronunciation of the term Racy identifies as *hank*. The relative obscurity of the term

hink in the Arabic language[23] and these links to ideas of poetic and vocal performance, suggest a possible connections, but without further information it is not possible to say more.

After discussing the terms *oubla* and *hink*, Kircher presents a transcription of a "solemn intonement of Mass, expressed in musical notes," which he reports that he received "from the mouth of [his] Coptic amanuensis" (Kircher 1643: 515, trans. David Butterfield):

Figure 1-1. Athanasius Kircher's 17th c. transcription of a Coptic hymn.

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[23] *The Hans Wehr Arabic-English Dictionary* contains no instance of any verb or noun with the *h-n-k* root structure. There is also no entry for the term *hink* in *Lisān al-'Arab*.

The Coptic text that Kircher includes in his transcription contains some minor errors, but it is comprehensible. He begins the transcription with the word *fen* ("ϕⲉⲛ"), which is not a known Coptic word but quite likely a misspelling of the commonly used word *khen* ("ϧⲉⲛ": "in"). Corrected in this manner the first phrase reads *khen epshoys ihsos pikharistos,* meaning "In the Lord Jesus Christ." Several Coptic Orthodox deacons with whom I spoke noted its similarity to the phrase "*khen pikharistos ihsos penshoys*" ("in Christ Jesus our Lord"), which is chanted during the Divine Liturgy by the congregation or one of the deacons during the Fraction (the ceremonial breaking of the Eucharistic bread) immediately following the Lord's Prayer (Mikhail, Albeir. Ed. *Il-Asās fi khidmat al-shammās*. 2007: 140). However, there is no obvious relationship between the melody transcribed by Kircher and the melody used in this contemporary rite, and the next words in Kircher's transcription appear to have no relationship to this portion of the contemporary Divine Liturgy. Taken altogether the passage has the following meaning:

> In the Lord Jesus Christ the everlasting wonder,
> and the Word of Purity the Father with the Holy Spirit,
> the Father our Lord and our God and our Savior
> (Kircher 1643: 515-6, trans. Yourdanis Sedarous).

Kircher does not include the *jinkim* accent mark in his text, a symbol that alters the pronunciation of vowels and consonants, however this omission is not uncommon in Coptic writing (personal communication, Yourdanis Sedarous, Sept 1st 2016). At the end of the second line he writes *efiotemepnevma* ("ϕⲓⲱⲧⲉⲙⲡ̄ⲛ̄ⲁ"), which appears to be the phrase *efiot nem epnevma* ("ϕⲓⲱⲧ ⲛⲉⲙ ⲡ̄ⲛ̄ⲁ") with the words run together and the elision of the letter Ne

("ⲛ"), although it is unclear whether this is an error in transcription or simply an intentional elision made by Kircher in order to set the words within a limited amount of space underneath the musical notes, or perhaps to represent an elision that occurred in the actual chant of his amanuensis. The Coptic letter Hori ("ⳓ") also appears to be printed backwards when it is used in the word *ouoh* ("ⲟⲩⲟⳓ": conj. "and") in the second, third, and fourth lines.

My own conversations with several Coptic deacons, as well as the inquiries of ethnomusicologist Carolyn Ramzy (2014: ft.5) have uncovered no contemporary examples that are melodically similar to the example in Kircher's transcription. Kircher uses a form of mensural notation that was gradually becoming replaced by modern European musical notation by the 17th century (personal communication, Temmo Korisheli[24]). I have translated his excerpt into modern notation below:

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[24] Temmo Korisheli is the director of the Adelphos Ensemble based in Santa Barbara, CA, and supervisor at the UCSB Music Library. He holds an MA in Music History and has achieved PhD Candidacy in the field of Historical Musicology.

Athanasius Kircher's Transcription (translated to modern notation)

from *Lingua Aegyptiaca Restituta* p.515

Figure 1-2. Athanasius Kircher's 17th c. transcription of a Coptic hymn translated into modern European staff notation

The chant transcribed by Kircher does not appear to contain any motifs or formulaic rhythmic or melodic fragments that would immediately identify it as Coptic in style[25]. It has an ambitus spanning from G to E, which is a relatively normal pitch range for a Coptic *laḥn*. Less ordinary are the two intervallic leaps at the very beginning of the excerpt, forming a G-major arpeggio with the word *khen*.

It is important to note, however, that both the limits of European mensural notation (and modern European staff notation) to convey detailed information about intonation, as well as Kircher's presumed lack of familiarity with the pitch sets and musical structures of

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[25] For examples of musical themes and motifs found in many different types of Coptic liturgical chants see Nabila Erian's discussion of "wandering themes," Erian 1986: 246.

Coptic chant, suggest that much interpretation and potential misinterpretation could have been involved in the creation of this transcription. Kircher may have confronted considerable difficulty in both perceiving and also in notating the pitches of a melodic line that may not have conformed to European pitch categories. In addition to lacking notational symbols to represent pitches that diverge significantly from European pitch categories, Kircher may not have even perceived divergent tones as anything other than out-of-tune instances of the pitches that were more familiar to his ears. His remarks about Coptic intonation state that it was sonorous in a way more similar to Gregorian chant and Greek psalmody than to Jewish chant or the chant of other Near Eastern peoples:

> It does not differ greatly from our Gregorian chant, and it has some resemblance to the Greek psalmody; for it is not dissonant, like the song of the Hebrews and some other Oriental peoples, set forth without any art or sound. (Kircher 1643: 516, trans. David Butterfield)

Considering Kircher's lack of scholarly consistency and his presumed unfamiliarity with Near Eastern musical sounds it would be unwise to take his comparative observation at face value.

Another way to understand Kircher's comparison to Gregorian chant is that it reflects his own motivations as a scholar-priest with inclinations towards missionary work and a loyalty to the Roman Catholic Church. Kircher's religious and political affiliations explain why he begins his discussion of the Coptic Church with a review of what he considers to be its theological errors, but they also explain why he draws so many parallels between the Roman Catholic and Coptic Churches and portrays the Coptic Church in a relatively positive

light. In his writing, Kircher expresses his desire to bring the Coptic Church into union with the Roman Catholic Church, which he hopes to assist by demonstrating the similarities between Coptic and Catholic rites and biblical exegesis (Hamilton 2006: 205). In addition to furthering the goal of a unified Church, the identification of such similarities also serves to validate the antiquity of the Roman Catholic tradition since the two churches had had no formal contact since the schism following the Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE, and any liturgical or theological parallels would presumably pre-date this event. In this way, Kircher's perception of Coptic chant as melodically more similar to Gregorian chant is a point of potential reconciliation between the two estranged religious institutions as well as an observation that emphasizes the deep historical roots of the Roman Catholic tradition. At other moments in his writing Kircher is even more direct about this desire to draw parallels between the churches, asserting his willingness to translate the Coptic liturgies in order to demonstrate their similarities to the Roman Catholic rites (Kircher 1643: 515). In addition, Kircher saw his exploration of Coptic culture as a gateway to understanding pre-Christian civilization and uncovering the mysteries of a supposed unified religion of antiquity that was a precursor to all monotheistic faiths (Hamilton 2006: 205-6). These motivations, rather than any substantial musical parallels between 17th-century Coptic and Roman Catholic chant, may explain both Kircher's assertions as well as his starkly different regard for the chant of Jews and other Near Eastern peoples whose music he considers dissonant.

The rest of Kircher's writings on the Coptic Church and his discussion of its liturgical traditions is similarly ambivalent in terms of accuracy. Kircher mentions that Egyptian Copts perform the liturgies of St. Basil, St. Gregory, St. Cyril, St. Mark and St. Peter (Kircher 1643: 515). The liturgies of St. Basil, St. Gregory, St. Cyril and St. Mark are recognized liturgies in

the Alexandrian Rite, but the liturgies of St. Cyril and St. Mark are essentially the same liturgy. The Liturgy of St. Mark was reportedly performed first by St. Mark the Evangelist in Greek in the first century CE and it was later translated into Coptic by Pope Cyril the Great in the 5th century with this Coptic language version being known as the Liturgy of St. Cyril. The Liturgy of St. Peter, which Kircher also mentions, was not a liturgy that was historically used in the Coptic Orthodox Church but instead emerged as a combination of Byzantine and Roman rites in 12th-century Italy for use among Greek communities (Livingstone, E.A. Ed. 2005: 1271). It is possible that Kircher heard about the historical use of this liturgy among Greek communities in Rome and falsely assumed a historical connection through them to the Egyptian Copts. On the other hand, some of the details in Kircher's writings ring true, for example when he mentions the Coptic practice of leaning on a staff or crutch during lengthy liturgical services, something that he would be very unlikely to learn about except through reliable first-hand accounts of Coptic worship in Egypt, and which is confirmed in the writings of Villoteau more than a century and a half later (Kircher 1643: 515; and Villoteau 1809: 755).

Kircher does not provide any information about the identity of the amanuensis who is supposed to have provided him the example of Coptic chant. In the third section of the supplementary chapter entitled "*De Nominibus Dei*" ("On the Names of God"), immediately following the section under discussion, Kircher mentions two Coptic informants, Juhana Kozi and Michael Schatta, who assisted him with questions about Coptic manuscripts (Kircher 1643: 527). However, he does not identify them specifically as cantors or as his amanuenses. In addition to these two men, Kircher mentions an earlier encounter with a Coptic priest in Rome who took Kircher as his confessor in an undated letter, bound with

other correspondence from 1669 and 1670 (Hamilton 2006: 205). While it appears that Kircher came into contact with Coptic laypeople and clergy who travelled to Rome, there is currently not enough information to confirm whether Kircher truly did receive this chant from a Coptic amanuensis or who that amanuensis was. Ultimately, Kircher's writings raise more questions than answers about the status of Coptic music in the seventeenth century. His musical transcription and its accompanying text do not clearly correspond to any known contemporary *laḥn*, and a number of Coptic cantors and deacons whom I spoke with perceive the notated music as stylistically incongruent with the majority of Coptic liturgical music. While Kircher's work may prove to corroborate other not-yet-discovered historical writings and transcriptions of Coptic liturgical music from this era, as an independent source it is too inconsistent to be relied on as a clear window into the history of Coptic chant.

Guillaume-André Villoteau (1759-1839)

About a century and a half after Kircher's comments concerning Coptic liturgical music were published in *Lingua aegyptiaca restituta*, the French musician and scholar Guillaume-André Villoteau (1759-1839) wrote about Coptic music, this time drawing primarily on first-hand observations as a part of the military and scientific expedition of Napoleon Bonaparte in Egypt from 1798-1801. Villoteau was trained in music from a young age, becoming a choirboy and student of literature and music at the cathedral music school in Le Mans (Fétis 1867). After this he began his studies at the college of Le Mans but soon left to become a wandering church musician or *vicarier* in order to avoid joining the priesthood (Ibid.). After tiring of the life of an itinerant musician he underwent a short stint as a soldier followed by work in the choirs of Le Mans and La Rochelle, and studies at the college of

Montaigu and the Sorbonne in Paris (Ibid.). He then became ordained and was recommended for a prestigious and lucrative position with the cathedral of Paris, however, the French Revolution erupted causing Villoteau to abandon this career path, instead taking the position as leader of the chorus of the Opera from 1792 to 1797 during which time he was invited to join a group of scholars accompanying the 1798-1801 military expedition of Napolean Bonaparte to Egypt (Ibid.). After returning from this expedition with musical instruments, manuscripts, and recorded observations from his journey, Villoteau spent the next several years composing four treatises that would be included in the *Description de l'Egypte (1809-1829),* a series of publications based on the work of approximately 160 scientists and scholars who accompanied the Napoleonic expedition. He based his work on his own material as well as ongoing research in the libraries of Paris during this period (Ibid.). Two of Villoteau's treatises were published in volumes detailing the musical practices of ancient Egypt: *"Dissertation sur la musique des anciens égyptiens"* ("Treatise on the music of the ancient Egyptians")*,* and "*Dissertation sur les diverses espèces d'instruments de musique que l'on remarque parmi les sculptures qui décorent les antiques monuments de l'Égypte, et sur les noms que leur donnèrent, en leur langue propre, les premiers peuples de ce pays"* ("Treatise on the various kinds of musical instruments which are among the sculptures that decorate the antique monuments of Egypt, and on the names that the first peoples of this country gave to them in their own language,")*.* Two others were published in the volumes dealing with modern Egypt: "*De l 'état actuel de l'art musical en Égypte, ou relation historique et descriptive des recherches et observations faites sur la musique en ce pays"* (*"*On the current state of musical art in Egypt, or historic and descriptive account of researches and observations made on the music in this country")*,* and "*Description*

historique, technique et littéraire des instruments de musique des Orientaux" ("Historical,

technical, and literary description of the musical instruments of the Orientals").

      Villoteau's remarks on Coptic music constitute a chapter entitled *"De la Musique des*

Qobtes," ("On the Music of the Copts") a relatively small part of his writings on modern

Egyptian music in the treatise, *"De l'état actuel."* In contrast to Athanasius Kircher, who

regarded Coptic music as a sonorous cousin to the Gregorian chant of his own Catholic

church, Villoteau draws no such parallels and describes the Copts and their music with

extreme distaste, bordering on resentment. Indeed, his writing on the Copts and their music is

mostly a lament of how the ancient music and traditions of Egypt have been lost by the

indigenous Copts through indifference and neglect of their heritage, as well as a scathing

critique of the monotonous and boring nature of the Coptic chant he observed. Despite the

obvious bias and frequent vitriolic digressions in Villoteau's writings, he makes a few

remarks that are of interest to the scholar of Coptic music, and he ends the chapter by

providing a transcription of a melismatic Coptic chant set to the word "Alleluia." Like

Kircher's transcription, Villoteau's transcription does not appear to correspond to any known

present-day Coptic chant.

      Villoteau reports attending several Coptic liturgical services, and after experiencing

fatigue and boredom, which he attributed to the "savage and soporific melody" of Coptic

chant as well as the discomfort associated with long periods of standing during those church

visits, he decided to invite "one of the most skillful Coptic singers" to give a private

demonstration.[26] This singer performed a melismatic chant set to the word "Alleluia" and

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[26] These and the following English translations of Villoteau are taken from Maryvonne
Mavroukakis' translation on the Library of Congress website:
https://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.200155950/

repeated the chant, allowing Villoteau to notate it. Villoteau described the performance thusly: *"The chant of the Egyptians lacerated our ears; this one did even more; it spread over all our senses a kind of poison which nauseated our hearts and irritated our souls to an intolerable point."*

Figure 1-3. Page one of Villoteau's transcription of an "Alleluia" hymn (Villoteau 1809: 756)

Figure 1-4. Page two of Villoteau's transcription of an "Alleluia" hymn (Villoteau 1809: 757)

Villoteau's transcription of this "Alleluya" chant represents a much more extensive transcription than Kircher's in terms of melodic length, but with a much simpler text. The range of the transcribed piece is slightly over an octave (from a low G to a high G with a single F-sharp below the low G and a single A above the high G), which is not uncommon in

longer, melismatic Coptic chants. Villoteau's inclusion of a "g" consonant in syllables like "go" and "guo" is somewhat unusual. In contemporary Coptic chant the consonant "y" is often inserted into melismatic phrases sung on the vowel "e," and "w" is inserted into phrases sung on the vowel "o" or the diphthong "uo," but "g" is never inserted into such phrases. It seems unlikely that the introduction of a "g" consonant represents a characteristic style of vocal performance as this type of consonantal addition is not present in contemporary Coptic chant, and no other examples of this phenomenon have appeared in historical transcriptions or writings about Coptic liturgical music, but it is impossible to tell whether Villoteau's inclusion of them reflects the idiosyncrasies of the Coptic singer who performed for him or if they were an erroneous addition that was the result of Villoteau's misinterpretation of a combination of sounds and vocal textures with which he was unfamiliar and excessively bored.

In addition to performing this chant, the Coptic chanter also reportedly explained to Villoteau that Coptic chant consisted of ten different modes, which he performed for Villoteau but which Villoteau tragically neglected to record, citing his discouragement and disgust at what he considered to be terrible music. The identification of ten modes within the tradition of Coptic liturgical music only raises further questions about the conceptualization of the music during this time period, as it is different in number from the eight different modes discussed by 13th- and 14th- century writers Abū Isḥāq al-Mu'taman Ibrāhīm Ibn al-'Assāl, Yūḥannā Ibn Abī Zakariyyā Ibn Sibā', and Shams al-Ri'āsah Abū al-Barakāt Ibn Kabar, and it is also different in number from the six melodic/ritual types that are recognized within the Coptic Orthodox Church today. While the discussions of Abū Isḥāq, Ibn Sibā', and Ibn Kabar about an oktōēchos (i.e. a modal framework of four primary and four

derivative modes) were most likely references to a system of modal organization that was purely theoretical, and the six melodic/ritual types in current use do not appear to correspond to specific modes, Villoteau presents no information that would help to contextualize the ten modes that he claims were presented to him. If Villoteau's report of the existence of ten modes is indeed accurate it could indicate that the oktōēchos discussed more than four centuries earlier by Coptic writers had gradually been absorbed into liturgical practice and that the practice of assembling existing Coptic chants into the eight modal categories led to the creation of two additional modes in order to accommodate melodies that were not compatible with these initial eight modes, similar to the "mesoi" or "middle modes" that emerged in early Byzantine music theory (Jeffery 2001: 183). Conversely, it is possible that Villoteau's informant demonstrated specific chants belonging to ten different melodic/ritual types similar to those used today, suggesting the previous existence of a greater variety of ritual categories than is currently recognized. Unless additional references to ten Coptic modes emerge, Villoteau's observations will reveal very little about the conceptualization or practice of Coptic music.

François-Joseph Fétis (1784-1871)

François-Joseph Fétis was a Belgian musicologist, music critic, and a friend of Guillaume-André Villoteau. Fétis is best known for his biographies of musicians and historical writings on music including the expansive eight-volume work *Biographie universelle des musiciens et bibliographie générale de la musique* (*A Universal Biographical Dictionary of Musicians and a General Bibliography of Music*, 1833-1844), and the five volumes of his uncompleted *Histoire générale de la musique* (*A General History of Music*,

1869–76). Fétis did not travel to Egypt as Villoteau did or study Coptic liturgical chant through observation of Coptic chanters outside of Egypt as Kircher claimed to have done. Instead he drew on the writings of Villoteau as well as other historical sources, making novel arguments linking Coptic liturgical music to ancient Egyptian sacred music and discussing the intonation of Coptic music with a greater level of detail than previous scholars despite issues with his specific methods and conclusions.

Like Villoteau and Kircher before him, Fétis considered Coptic liturgical music to be a more or less faithful representation of ancient Egyptian music. In the first volume of his *Histoire générale de la musique*, Fétis argues that there was no opportunity for the introduction of "the chant of idolatry" ("chant du culte idolâtre") into early Christian liturgical chant despite schisms and heresies during this period, because successive rule by the Ptolemies and the Romans protected the religion and customs of Egyptians from outside influence (1869: 208). He also notes, based on the writings of Saint Augustine of Hippo (354-430 CE), that each of the "Eastern" churches (presumably meaning all of the early churches that are identified today as either Eastern Orthodox or Oriental Orthodox) had unique and different forms of liturgical music by the fifth century, and concludes from this that the different forms of liturgical music in each church emerged from the preexisting traditions of sacred chant in each of their respective regions, suggesting that Coptic liturgical music emerged as an extension of ancient Egyptian sacred music traditions (Ibid.). This view downplays other potential influences, particularly Greco-Byzantine and Hebrew musical and religious cultures, which were in close proximity to the early developing Egyptian Church.

Fétis is perhaps the first scholar to posit a connection between the prominence of vowel sounds in contemporary Coptic liturgical chant, the depictions of chanters on ancient Egyptian monuments, and the supposed prominence of vowel sounds in ancient Egyptian liturgical music. In the first volume *Histoire générale de la musique*, Fétis' second chapter is entitled "*Traditions des Égyptiens sur l'origine de la musique – usage qu'ils faisaient de cet art dans les cérémonies religieuses et dans la vie civile*" ("Egyptian traditions on the origins of music – their use of this art in religious ceremonies and civil life"). In this chapter he discusses a brief passage written about Egyptian music in the late-4th or early-3rd century BCE by Athenian orator Demetrius of Phalerum, in which Demetrius describes Egyptian priests as singing hymns to the gods using seven vowel sounds, and Fétis claims that this report is corroborated by depictions of "priestly singers" ("des chanteurs sacerdotaux") on ancient Egyptian monuments who have varying numbers of hieroglyphic leaf symbols above their heads representing the repetition of vowel sounds (Fétis 1869: 204). Fétis goes on to discuss how the "*Alléluia*" chant transcribed by Villoteau c.1800 (transforming the spelling from Villoteau's "*Alleluya*") provides another outstanding example of this same emphasis on vowels in the "religious chant of ancient Egypt" ("chant religieux de l'ancienne Egypte") (Ibid.: 205).

Fétis presents Villoteau's transcription of the "*Alleluya*"/"*Alléluia*" chant and he uses this transcription as the basis for a discussion of the pitches present in Coptic music, which he equates more generally to ancient Egyptian music (Fétis 1869: 205-7). Surprisingly, a comparison of this replicated transcription with Villoteau's original publication reveals several differences between the original and Fétis' republished version including the alteration of the syllables transcribed in two adjacent measures from "go ouo ouo" to "ouo -

- ," the complete erasure of a measure of music, and the transposition of individual notes by the intervals of a half-step, whole-step, and major second in three separate locations in the chant. Unfortunately, he makes no explicit acknowledgment of these changes and it is unclear whether these discrepancies were the result of Fétis' lack of care in replicating Villoteau's work, or if Fétis attempted to correct what he perceived to be errors in the original transcription.

In addition to the altered version of Villoteau's transcription, Fétis presents a scale of the tones he derives from the chant:

G – A – A# - B – C – C# - D – D# (or Eb)[27] – E – F – F# - g – g# - a.

He does not appear to distinguish between pitches that are part of a fundamental mode and pitches that might be considered functional equivalents of accidentals or temporary leading tones, thus the pitch inventory that he presents is relatively unhelpful for understanding the modal structure of the chant. He also neglects to include a low F# (3rd line, 2nd measure in Fétis' replicated transcription) that, if included, would expand the lower range by an additional note.
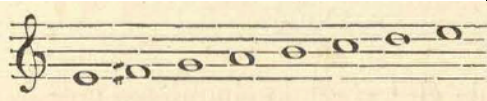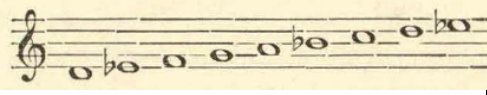
Fétis does find one interesting application for this scalar information; he points to two different ancient Egyptian temple reliefs that contain what he describes as "priestly musicians" who are singing and playing harp, and he notes that the harps in each relief contain too few strings to play the fourteen notes that he isolated from Villoteau's

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[27] Fétis presents this scale using staff notation with the word "ou" (English "or") between the notes D# and Eb (1869: 207). It is unclear why he presents alternate note names for this scale degree but not for others.

transcription (Fétis: 1869: 208-9). Based on this observation he argues that there must have existed genres of instrument-accompanied sacred music using different numbers of pitches from the vocal genre observed by Villoteau. There are a number of questionable assumptions within Fétis' reasoning, such as whether the ancient Egyptian images of harps on temple reliefs accurately reflected the number of strings musicians used, and whether Villoteau's transcription is an appropriate source from which to derive the collection of pitches used in ancient Egyptian sacred music. While Fétis' overall conclusions may be flawed, his use of the temple reliefs of ancient Egypt to link the characteristics of contemporary Coptic liturgical chant to ancient Egyptian sacred musical practices is an observation that was later replicated by French musicologist Armand Machabey, German musicologist Hans Hickmann and other more contemporary scholars to demonstrate how the use of extended melismatic phrases (sometimes referred to as "vocalizes") within Coptic music has roots in ancient Egyptian musical practices.

Several years after his discussion of the relationship between Coptic liturgical chant and ancient Egyptian sacred music, and a cursory discussion of the pitches supposedly utilized in these traditions in the first volume of *Histoire générale de la musique*, Fétis again revisited Coptic music in his fourth volume of the same work. In chapter seven entitled "*Le Chant dans les églises de l'Afrique*" ("Chant in the Churches of Africa") he includes a section on the chant of the Coptic Church, which is mostly a review and discussion of the writings of Villoteau but also includes the presentation of the ten modes of Coptic liturgical music, which Villoteau referenced but said that he did not record. Fétis claims in a footnote that he extracted the information on these ten modes from a treatise written in Arabic held in his

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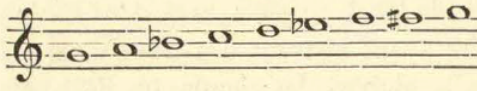
personal library entitled "*Kitāb Adwār,*"[28] which he states contained information on the notes of each mode indicated by "the numbers of the general scale of Arab sounds" ("*Dans ce traité les notes des tons sont indiquées par les chiffres de l'échelle générale des sons arabes*")(1874: 97ft3). These are the scales that Fétis presents along with some related remarks (Fétis 1874: 97-9):
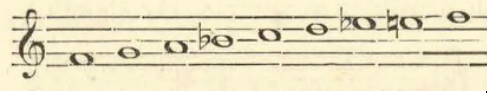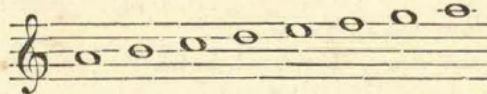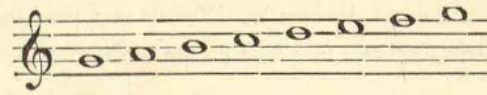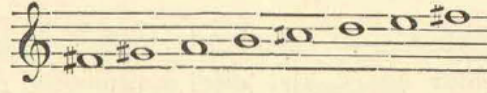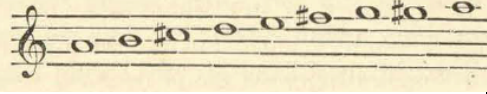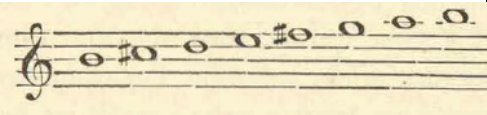
#	Fétis' description	Dominant[29]	Transcription
1st	An E minor scale "without the leading tone" ("*sans note sensible*"[30]: Fétis 1874: 97).	A	
2nd	This mode corresponds to C major ("*ut*") and is often blended with the first mode (Fétis 1874: 98).	G	[Fétis does not provide notation for this scale]
3rd	This mode is as follows: D, Eb, F, G, A, Bb, C, D, Eb (Fétis 1874: 98).	G	

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[28] The title appears very similar to the 13th-century *Kitāb al-Adwār* (*The Book of Modes*) by Ṣafi al-Dīnal-Urmawī but my cursory review of this work has found no reference to Coptic liturgical music or any presentation of a group of ten distinct modes (French translation in d'Erlanger 1938, *La Musique Arabe*, Tome Troisième, Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Guethner.).

[29] Fétis describes the dominant ("*dominante*") as the note within the mode that is most frequently heard (Fétis 1874: 98).

[30] French: "note sensible": "The French apply this term to what was called by the old musical writers the *subsemitonium modi*, *i.e.* the subsemitone of the mode or key, namely the leading-tone or seventh degree of any major diatonic scale." (Warner, James Franklin & Gottfried Weber. 1842. *A Universal Dictionary of Musical Terms*. Boston: J.H. Wilkins & R.B. Carter: LXI).

	[Here Fétis presents the scale of the mode as extending the range of a ninth, although he presents the eighth and ninth scale degrees as equivalent to the first and second scale degrees of the mode, indicating that his extension beyond the octave is to indicate the range of pitches typically realized in hymnodic performance, rather than any non-duplication of pitches at the octave.]		
4th	This mode corresponds roughly to G minor, but more exactly to the "third *tabagah* [sic] of Isfahan mode, ninth circulation of the Arabs" ["*Le quatrième ton repond à nôtre ton de sol mineur, mais plus exactement au troisième tabagah du mode isfahan, neuvième circulation des Arabes.*"] (Fétis 1874: 98).	None identified	

5th	The fifth mode contains nine pitches, mostly analogous to an F major scale, with the exception of the seventh scale degree (Eb) (Fétis 1874: 98).	C	
6th	This mode is equivalent to the second mode of Roman plain-chant (Fétis 1874: 98).	D	
7th	This mode is equivalent to the eighth mode of Roman plain-chant (Fétis 1874: 98).	C	
8th	This mode is derived from the fifteenth *tabagah* [sic] of maqām Rast without the leading tone, and equivalent to F-sharp minor (Fétis 1874: 99).	B	
9th	This mode contains nine scale degrees, equivalent to A major with an additional seventh degree (Fétis 1874: 99).	E	
10th	This mode corresponds to B minor (Fétis 1874: 99).	E	

Fétis' remarks accompanying the fourth and eighth modes are noteworthy, because he appears to use musical terminology in a manner that conflicts with his own observations in

an earlier volume of *Histoire générale de la musique*. Fétis states that the fourth mode of

Coptic liturgical music corresponds to the "third tabagah [sic] of Isfahan mode, ninth

circulation of the Arabs," and the eighth mode is "derived from the fifteenth tabagah [sic] of

maqam Rast" (1874: 99). His use of the term "*tabagah*" appears to be an alternate spelling of

the Arabic term *ṭabaqah*, which Fétis also spells as "tabaka" in the second volume of his

Histoire générale de la musique (1869b) where he defines these musical structures as the

note groupings (one tetrachord and one pentachord) that are combined to form a scale in

Arab music (1869b: 40-1). These tetrachordal and pentachordal note groupings may be

referred to collectively as "genera" (s. "genus," Arabic: *ajnās*, s. *jins*), and Fétis clearly

argues for an understanding of *ṭabaqah* ("tabagah"/"tabaka") as equivalent to genus in this

earlier publication. He goes on to critique Villoteau for using the term to describe a different

type of musical structure, a derivative scale produced by transposing one of eighty-four

octave scales known as "circulations"[31] (1869b: 50).

　　　　Despite criticizing Villoteau's use of the term *ṭabaqah*, and explaining that the term is

equivalent to genus and does not reference a specific transposition of a circulation, Fétis

appears to use the term in his discussion of Coptic modal scales in the same manner as

Villoteau as transposed octave scales. Furthermore, while Fétis remarks that the fourth mode

of Coptic liturgical music is the "third tabagah of Isfahan mode, ninth circulation of the

Arabs" ("*Le quatrième ton repond à nôtre ton de sol mineur, mais plus exactement au*

troisième tabagah du mode iṣfahan, neuvième circulation des Arabes" Fétis 1874: 98), he

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[31] "Circulation" appears to be Fétis' French translation of the Arabic word *dawr* (pl. *adwār*).
I use the word "circulation" as well since its English form carries the same meaning amongst
other different meanings. In the context of early Arab music theory, the word *dawr* is
sometimes rendered in English by scholars as "cycle" or simply as "octave scale" (e.g.
Shiloah 1995).

actually presents Isfahan mode as the forty-fourth and forty-fifth circulations in volume two

of *Histoire générale de la musique*, and he identifies the ninth circulation as a form of

"'ushshāq" mode (Fétis 1869b: 43-8). These inconsistencies do not completely undermine

Fétis' discussion of Arab and Coptic modal theory, but they do raise questions about the

consistency and reliability of his work.

More importantly, the book title "*Kitāb Adwār*," and Fétis' exposition of a theoretical

framework composed of 84 circulations suggests that he was possibly using as his source

Kitāb al-Adwār (*The Book of Modes*) written by Ṣafī al-Dīn 'Abd al-Mu'min ibn Yūsuf ibn

al-Fākhir al-Urmawī in the thirteenth century. This source was about six hundred years old at

the time that Fétis wrote his *Histoire générale de la musique*. Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Urmawī's system

is constructed on three types of smaller intervals (a standard tone, a large semitone, and a

limma), which are combined to form two genera (a tetrachord and a pentachord) that

comprise an octave scale or "*dawr*," of which there are 84 total in number (Shiloah 1995:

113). By contrast, Arab contemporaries of Fétis were describing a very different system

music theory in the nineteenth century. Around 1840, the Lebanese-born scholar Mashāqah,

who was living in Damascus, and the Meccan-born scholar Shihāb al-Dīn living in Cairo,

both completed treatises that outlined a musical system based on a quarter-tone scale

(Marcus 1989: 44-7). Fétis' tendency, undoubtedly representative of a larger tendency within

European scholarship on the Near East during this time period, was to present Arab music in

ahistorical terms and to rely heavily on very dated, written material.

It remains unclear, however, what the source was for the ten Coptic liturgical modes

presented by Fétis. While Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Urmawī clearly outlines the 84 *adwār* in the manner

described by Fétis, *Kitāb al-Adwār* does not appear to contain ten distinct modes presented in

the manner relayed by Fétis, nor are there any clear references to Coptic music in this

treatise. If these modes did exist in a unique manuscript of Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Urmawī's *Kitāb al-*

Adwār in Fétis' personal library, they would most likely be evidence of a modal theorization

from the thirteenth century and their actual use by cantors, priests, or laypeople during this

time period would be uncertain at best. More likely, Fétis either derived the ten Coptic modes

through some specious inference about ideas discussed in Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Urmawī's

manuscript, or he completely fabricated the reference to Coptic liturgical music and related

modes based on what he understood from Villoteau.

Father Jules Blin (1853-1891) and Father Louis Badet (1873-1933)

Father Jules Blin was a French Jesuit priest, who published a set of transcriptions of

the Coptic liturgy of St. Basil as well as chants associated with several other important rites

in 1888 entitled *Chants liturgiques des Coptes. Notés et mis en ordre par le père Jules Blin*

de la Compagnie de Jésus missionnaire en Egypte (*Liturgical chants of the Copts. Recorded*

and arranged by Father Jules Blin of the Society of Jesus, Missionary in Egypt). Father Blin

completed these transcriptions during his service to the Coptic Catholic Church in Egypt, a

community of Coptic Egyptians that broke away from the Coptic Orthodox Church as a

result of the influence of Franciscan and Jesuit missionaries that began in the seventeenth

century. The Patriarchate for Coptic Catholics was formally established in 1824 and Ottoman

authorities allowed for the construction of Coptic Catholic churches by 1829.[32] Coptic

Catholics use the same liturgical rites that are used in the Coptic Orthodox Church, and

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[32] Catholic Near East Welfare Association Website:
http://www.cnewa.org/default.aspx?ID=63&pagetypeID=9&sitecode=us&pageno=1

Father Blin's transcriptions are some of the earliest attempts to record these rites in written notation.

Father Blin was born in Le Mans, France, conducted missionary work in Algeria, and later spent time in Syria and Lebanon before being sent to Egypt to teach grammar at the Collège of the Holy Family ("*Father Jules Blin 1853 to 1891.*" Online Text.)[33]. According to his preface for *Chants liturgiques des Coptes*, Blin's transcriptions were a continuation of the work of the late Coptic Catholic Bishop Abraham Agapios Bishai (1831-1887), which was completed by Father Blin at the request of the newly appointed Apostolic Visitor Antoun di Marco.[34] The preface also includes a letter from Cardinal Simeoni, Prefect of the Southern Congregation for Propagation of the Faith, indicating that the transcriptions were to be used by a Reverend Father Foujols to teach the chants to Coptic Catholic Bishops at the seminary in Egypt.

Blin's brief remarks introducing these transcriptions suggest a much more positive view of Coptic liturgical music than that held by Guillaume-Andre Villoteau, whose earlier remarks on Coptic music Blin references when he explains his desire to "avenge" the Coptic rites for the criticisms of unknowledgeable and ill-intentioned authors (preface, no page number, 1888). His defense of the inherent beauty of the music was rooted in his view of the music as a close relative of the Roman Catholic tradition. Responding to Villoteau's characterization of Coptic chants as "savage and soporific melodies" he responds first by arguing that they "have nothing of the roughness of Arabic melody" and later highlights the

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[33] Retrieved from the Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.200155940/. (Accessed December 16, 2016)

[34] An apostolic visitor is an envoy from the Holy See (i.e. the Papacy in Rome), usually dispatched to a Catholic institution encountering serious difficulty and in need of outside help.

particular beauty of hymns that he claims demonstrate modulations evocative of plain-chant, a clear rebuke to Villoteau's earlier description of Coptic chant as full of "post-Baroque" modulations (Ibid.; Villoteau 1809: 755).

In the preface to his collection Blin discusses how he struggled to accurately reflect the musical intervals and the intonation of the chants. Blin set all of his transcriptions to a C-major key signature because he believed that this would make the music as accessible as possible to the seminary students whom he intended to use his work. While the majority of the hymns in his collection either begin or end on a C pitch, a number of them have starting and ending pitches other than C, suggesting that Blin was attempting to convey the different modal character of particular hymns using only diatonic pitches. He presents the idea that Arab music uses third-tone intervals, citing as his source for this idea a presentation at the Institut Égyptien[35], and he raises the possibility that Coptic music also utilizes a similar tonal system that might not be amenable to European musical notation (Blin, preface). Blin does not, however, present a clear statement about the intonation of the music that is depicted in his own transcriptions, and his emphasis on the preliminary and tentative nature of his work gives the impression that he regarded them to be approximations of the actual performed chants and that he had no firm sense of the actual intonation of the pitches in each hymn.

Blin also presents an awareness of how the theory and practice of pronunciation diverge in Coptic cantillation, noting how vowels and sometimes their preceding consonant are repeated during long melismatic portions of Coptic melodies, and he notes that in two- or three-syllable words as well as in words where two consonants appear one after another a

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[35] Father Blin cites a presentation at the Institut Égyptien on December 3rd 1887 entitled, "*Dans les gammes actuellement usitées il n'y a que des intervalles: ton majeur et mineur, 2/3 de ton, 1/3 de ton. Les intervalles de ½ et ¼ de ton font défaut.*"

"quasi-vowel" ("*quasi-voyelle*") is often introduced after the first consonant. Blin maintains the original Coptic text in his transcriptions but also adds these additional vowels and consonants in Latin characters, and he denotes this latter type of added vowel as a "scheva,"[36] which he delineates with italics in red font.

While the textual content and order of chants appears to accurately reflect the liturgical tradition as it is practiced today, the notated melodies are strikingly different. While Blin's avoidance of accidentals, uncertainty concerning the intonation of pitches, and his introductory remarks emphasizing the very preliminary nature of his work might explain some errors, the nearly unrecognizable melodic lines of most of the notated hymns is somewhat puzzling considering the relative accuracy of the text and rites. To what degree the differences in Blin's notated melodies represent flaws in his transcriptions versus historical differences in how the hymns were actually chanted is unclear. In either case, Blin's commentary and his effort to depict the additional consonants and vowels that are inserted into the liturgical text in performance with the use of different colors and alphabets is perhaps the first example of an author addressing a divergence between the theory and practice of Coptic cantillation.

Like Father Jules Blin, Father Louis Badet was also a French Jesuit priest who came to live in Egypt and taught at the College of the Holy Family (*Collège de la Sainte-Famille*) in Cairo (Lancaster, Jan. *Father Louis Badet 1873 to 1933*. Online Text.[37]). Father Badet served as a supervisor, professor, and choirmaster beginning in 1895, and he was the

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[36] The term "scheva" here appears to be an alternate spelling of the linguistic term "schwa," which is a term still used in modern linguistics to refer to a neutral vowel inserted between two consonants.
[37] Retrieved from the Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.200155941/.Accessed December 22, 2016.

assistant director of the Coptic Seminary from 1898 to 1899 (Ibid.). In 1899 he completed

two volumes of *Chants liturgiques des Coptes, notés et mis en ordre (Liturgical chants of the*

Copts, notated and placed in order), which was an extension of the work of Father Blin, and

contained explanations and corrections to the original transcriptions of Father Badet

published eleven years earlier.[38] In his preface to the first volume, Badet mentions plans for a

third volume that would include the chants performed by the congregation and deacons for

rites other than the Divine Liturgy, such as funerals, baptisms, confirmations, and weddings,

however it appears that this third volume was never completed. While Badet's revision and

expansion of Blin's original transcriptions involved some minor changes to the melodies, his

different approach to the work also marked a shift from a descriptive to a prescriptive

approach to musical transcription. Charles Seeger describes descriptive music-writing as "a

report of how a specific performance…actually did sound" and prescriptive music-writing as

"a blue-print of how a specific piece of music shall be made to sound" (Seeger 1958: 184).

This shift is an important one because it suggests an increased influence of European and

Roman Catholic ideologies and sonic epistemologies on the preservation of Coptic music of

that time period.

  Blin took great care to notate the additional vowels and consonants that are not part of

the liturgical texts but were frequently performed by Coptic chanters, while Badet chose not

to include these sounds in his transcriptions and also went so far as to remark that these

additional sounds should not be performed (Badet 1936: vii). Badet also presents very

specific remarks about the intervallic structure of Coptic music, asserting that Coptic music is

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[38] The first volume of this work is available through a 1936 reprint (Rome: La Filografica) as well as online through the Library of Congress website. The second volume is accessible through the Franciscan Center for Christian Oriental Studies in Cairo.

"diatonic," while Arab music is "chromatic," and that European music with its use of

harmony utilized both diatonic and chromatic features (Ibid.: i). Badet appears to conflate the

idea of a musical mode with that of a scale as he goes on to explain that Coptic music is

diatonic, consisting of "scales or modes" ("échelles ou modes") which are diatonic and

without chromaticisms, in the following manner (Ibid.: v):
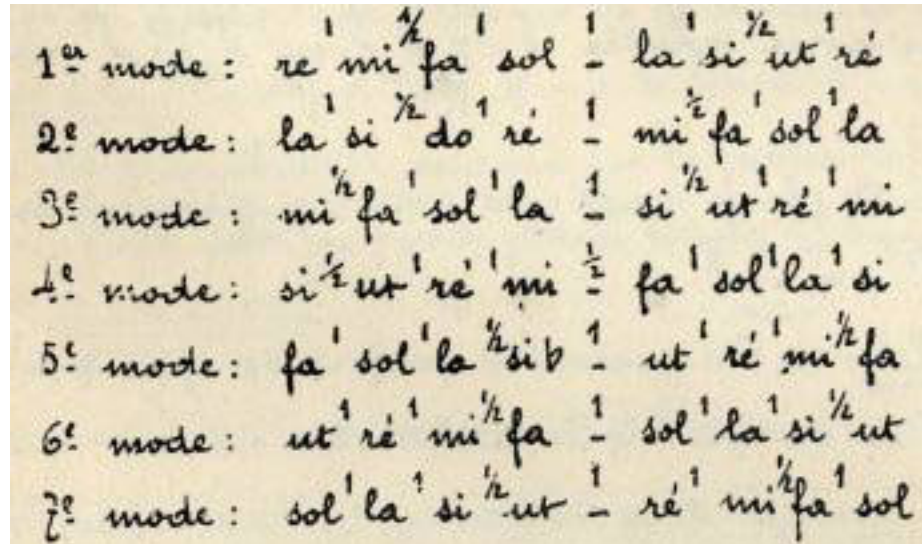
While Badet labels these seven musical structures as "modes," he is essentially outlining the

seven diatonic scales that may be constructed without the use of accidentals, which he

contrasts with "chromatic" scales that contain tetrachords consisting of two half-steps and

one minor third in the following manner (Ibid.):
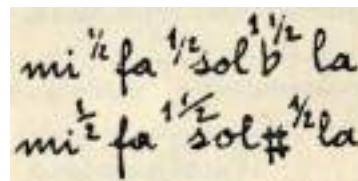
Badet appears to be developing a theoretical framework based on his own inferences and the

inferences of Blin concerning the music that they attempted to preserve and teach in the

Coptic Catholic community in Cairo. While Blin explained the absence of accidentals in his

musical transcriptions as an intentional omission for the purpose of facilitating the

pedagogical purpose of the notation, and he conveyed uncertainty about the tonality and intonation of the music, Badet appears to have retained many of the assumptions put forth by Blin while changing his tone to one of certainty. Rather than conveying insights about modal conceptualization within the Coptic community, the work of Blin and Badet instead demonstrates how the belief of a common heritage between the Roman Catholic and Coptic Orthodox traditions (and the lack of shared historical roots between Copts and Arabs) should manifest itself in musical parallels between the traditions as well. Similar to how Athanasius Kircher drew a clear distinction between Coptic and Arab music and emphasized the supposed musical similarities between Coptic music and his own Roman Catholic chant tradition, Father Jules Blin embedded this assumption of difference into his own analysis of Coptic tonality with the distinction between diatonic and chromatic musical styles. Father Louis Badet's discussion of Coptic music theory appears to further integrate this perspective into an analysis of the structures of Coptic music, but his description of the music does not appear to contain new insights derived from observation of the music as it was performed by the indigenous Copts.

Conclusion

Overall, the historical evidence concerning both the theory and practice of Coptic liturgical music is sparse, unreliable, and presents more questions than answers about how the music was conceptualized and performed by Copts before the twentieth century. The writings of thirteenth and fourteenth century authors Abū Isḥāq Ibn al-ʿAssāl, Ibn Sibāʿ, and Ibn Kabar are most likely part of a larger regional dialogue among the intellectual elite of the

various Christian churches, particularly the Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox churches, rather than an indication of how Coptic liturgical hymnody was understood by cantors, priests, or laypeople. The notion of the *oktōēchos* as an organizing modal framework for these varied regional church traditions did not initially emerge as a reflection of local musical practice but was instead understood as a universal framework for understanding Christian liturgical music that was slowly absorbed and adapted by local Christian communities in different ways. As other scholars have noted (e.g. Borsai 1974, Jeffery 2001), the relatively late appearance of a discussion of the oktōēchos by Coptic writers in Egypt, combined with the absence of any concept of eight modes in present-day Coptic liturgical practice, suggest that this system was never adopted by the Coptic Orthodox Church and that the references to this system made by the aforementioned writers should be understood as a regional conception of universal principles of Christian liturgical music rather than evidence of a Coptic modal framework. Since evidence of the early adoption of oktōēchos in many Christian communities consisted of the organization of existing chants into the eight-mode framework in the form of hymn books, it seems plausible that the absence of such a system in Egypt may be related to the absence of a standardized written musical notation in the Coptic Orthodox Church.

The later accounts of European writers are clearly more focused on describing the actual characteristics of Coptic liturgical chant, but these attempts at description are clouded by assumptions and preconceptions about the Copts that were driven by sectarian agendas, orientalist attitudes, and the desire to find in Coptic liturgical music evidence that would affirm the contiguity of Western Christian traditions with the traditions of the Early Church and Pre-Christian antiquity. While Athanasius Kircher discussed Coptic music in relatively

positive terms, and Guillaume-André Villoteau was scathingly negative about it, both writers were largely interested in Coptic music as a window into Ancient history, rather than as a contemporaneous practice. Kircher explored the music as a means to further glorify his own Roman Catholic Church, while Villoteau reacted bitterly to what he perceived to be a tradition that had been neglected by its caretakers leading to the loss of an important opportunity for himself and others to glean knowledge about ancient Egyptian history that he regarded to be the birthplace of Christianity and the progenitor to Western civilization. While Kircher and Villoteau both provide short transcriptions of Coptic chant, Kircher's relatively limited access to Egyptian Copts in Rome, and Villoteau's sharply dismissive discussion of the content of the Coptic chant he observed, raise questions about the accuracy of their work. The writings of François-Joseph Fétis is even less edifying in that Fétis appears to base his remarks primarily on extremely dated written material that has no clear ties to Coptic culture. Like many orientalist scholars of his time, Fétis assumes a monolithic and unchanging Egyptian musical culture in which the writings of thirteenth-century author Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Urmawī, and the observations of Villoteau at the turn of the nineteenth century could be combined to construct an image of an ahistorical Coptic music. It appears likely that Fétis' presentation of ten Coptic modes was based at least in part on the larger theoretical framework of circulations found in Ṣafī al-Din's *Kitāb al-Adwār*, which would suggest that these modes are little more than the decontextualization of writings from a very different time period and culture.

Similar to Kircher, Villoteau, and Fétis, the discussion of the tonality and intonation of Coptic liturgical music by Fathers Jules Blin and Louis Badet reveals more about these writers than about the music that they discuss. The shift from acknowledged uncertainty to

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prescriptive assertion in the work of these two authors without the presentation of any

additional information concerning local forms of musical conceptualization suggests that the

characterization of Coptic music as "diatonic" and Arab music as "chromatic" was primarily

an etic perspective. Moreover, Blin's references to apparently dated ideas concerning the

intonation of Arab music gleaned from a presentation at the Institut Égyptien (Blin 1888,

preface), which contrast with the writings of Egyptian and Syrian authors during that period

(Marcus 1989: 44-7) suggest a reliance on historical writings rather than direct observation

and measurement of the traditional Arab music and the Coptic liturgical music, which he and

Badet both discussed.

Perhaps the most interesting element of all of these historical writings about Coptic

music is the musical transcriptions of Blin and Badet. The accuracy of the texts and order of

rites in their transcriptions combined with the unrecognizable content of their notated

melodies is both puzzling and in need of further study. While earlier European writers had

very little investment in presenting Coptic liturgical melodies with any degree of accuracy,

Blin and Badet were intimately involved in the instruction of Coptic Egyptians themselves

and their institutional roles as well as their constant contact with the practitioners of the

liturgical music that they were describing make it difficult to understand how their notation

could be completely inaccurate. Alternately, if their transcriptions were even partially

accurate, the differences between these transcriptions and the contemporary form of the same

hymns today would suggest either major transformations in the hymns between this time

period and when audio recordings of the same hymns began to emerge in the twentieth

century, or would at least indicate a variability in the melodies used for particular Coptic

hymns that has largely disappeared today.

CHAPTER 2

Coptic Music Theory in the Modern Era: From an Ancient Artifact to a Living

Musical Tradition

In this chapter I explore the history of efforts to transcribe and analyze Coptic chant

in the twentieth century, and I distinguish between two broad trends. The first is the

production of European scholars, including the work of composer and violinist Ernest

Newlandsmith in the 1920s and 1930s, the work of German comparative musicologist Hans

Hickmann in the 1940s and 1950s, the work of French missionary René Ménard in the 1950s,

and the work of Hungarian musicologists Ilona Borsai and Margit Tóth in the 1960s and

1970s. The transcriptions and musical analyses of each of these individuals is informed by

specific developments in European cross-cultural music studies as well as by their more

general approach to the study of Coptic music culture. With the exception of Ilona Borsai

who gradually adopted some of the notational symbols associated with traditional Arab

music, they all generally avoided what Ter Ellingson has referred to as "conceptual music-

writing," which attempts "to portray musical sound as an embodiment of musical concepts

held by members of a culture," in favor of a more objectivist-discovery model of musical

transcription, which treats the music as a collection of sound-objects distinguished by pitch

and temporal placement (Ellingson 1992: 110).

The second trend that I identify is the emergence of scholarship by Egyptian Copts

beginning with the Master's Thesis of Nabīl Kamāl Buṭrus in 1976 and the Ph.D.

Dissertation of Nabila Erian in 1986, and followed later by additional scholarship as well as

non-academic publications of musical notation. I argue that this more recent production by

Egyptian Copts constitutes a partial decolonization of Coptic music studies while at the same time reconceptualizing Coptic chant as "music" through the application of musical terminology and theoretical frameworks associated with traditional Arab music. Prior to this point in time indigenous writings on Coptic hymns dealt with Coptic liturgical chant primarily as a form of spiritual communication with emphasis placed primarily on the liturgical text and the ritual function of the chants. These scholars and musicians utilized the logic of traditional Arab *maqām* to produce transcriptions that are much less detailed than the fine-grained descriptive notation of Borsai and Tóth, and in doing so they have a created a way of representing Coptic chant that is accessible to Egyptian Copts for prescriptive use and has also been adapted for instrumental performance.

Ter Ellingson discusses how a profound transformation occurred in the practices of cross-cultural musical transcription and analysis among European scholars at the end of the nineteenth century: "Europeans were beginning to discover music as it existed in the real world of cultural diversity, rather than as imagined and misperceived through the constrictions of their own localized practices and theories" (1992: 116-7). This included much more refined approaches to the measurement of intonation, critiques of the limitations of European notation, and greater attention given to the perspectives of non-Europeans. Importantly, Ellingson argues that this "rapid advance in transcriptional methods and results in the late 19th century" was not simply the result of technological advances in tonometry that improved the ability of Europeans to measure musical sounds, because such advances did not necessarily mean that measurable differences would be regarded as musically significant (Ibid.). Rather, Ellingson attributes this evolution in cross-cultural musical awareness to two factors. The first was "the growing entry of non-European scholarship and

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viewpoints into the cross-cultural musical dialogue" and the second was the increased "participation of scholars other than professional musicians bound to the perspectives of European music," specifically those from anthropology, psychology, and philology who contributed methodologies and theoretical frameworks that greatly influenced the European study of non-European musics (Ibid.: 118). This influence of non-European and non-musician perspectives, which Ellingson summarized as the "de-Europeanization" and "de-musicalization" of the cross-cultural musical dialogue, lay the groundwork for twentieth-century European and North American music studies.

While Ellingson argues that a "de-Europeanization" of European cross-cultural music studies occurred at the end of the nineteenth century, I would argue that a similar process did not occur specifically in the context of Coptic music until the 1970s when the first Master's Thesis on Coptic music was completed by Coptic Egyptian scholar Nabīl Kamāl Buṭrus in the Helwan University College of Music Education in Cairo, Egypt in 1976. This thesis on Coptic music, as well as the 1986 Ph.D. dissertation of Coptic Egyptian scholar Nabila Erian comprise the first substantial contributions of Coptic Egyptians to the academic study of their own liturgical music. However, while Ellingson described a "de-musicalization" of European comparative musical analysis in the late-nineteenth century, the emergence of Coptic Egyptian approaches to the study of Coptic liturgical music beginning in the 1970s was marked by a reorientation towards methods of analysis and theoretical frameworks that were specifically within the domain of Arab music studies. Thus this shift, which has continued to influence academic as well as non-academic transcriptions and analyses of Coptic music, has constituted both a "de-Europeanization" and a "re-musicalization" of Coptic music studies.

I will review the work of each of the aforementioned scholars and discuss how particular ideas about Coptic chant as well as more general ideas about music and cross-cultural music studies shaped each of their approaches to transcription. I will then apply this understanding to specific examples of their transcriptions in order to demonstrate how these ideas influenced their representation of Coptic music, and discuss the implications of these different forms of musical conceptualization and representation for their use. In doing so I hope to demonstrate the significant transformation of conceptualization and representation that characterizes the emergence of this second stream of Coptic Egyptian musical notation and analysis as well as the effect that such a transformation has had on the use of musical transcriptions of Coptic chant and the perception of Coptic chant among scholars as well as by practitioners of Coptic chant outside of academia in religious and non-religious performance contexts.

By focusing on forms of musical representation and analysis, as opposed to the acts of musical performance that they represent, I attempt to reveal how the perspectives and goals of the transcribers and theorists are embedded in particular academic discourses and culturally specific epistemologies. The ways in which European scholars from the 1920s to the 1970s have notated Coptic chant reflect a particular way of conceptualizing musical sounds as artifacts that may be objectively described, refined, or reconstructed in order to reveal secrets of the ancient past. By contrast, Coptic Egyptian scholars beginning in the 1970s have notated and analyzed the same oral tradition using notational symbols and theoretical structures that emphasize shared qualities between Coptic chant and other forms of contemporary Egyptian music, and in doing so they present Coptic music as a living tradition, and as *music*, an admittedly amorphous concept but one that nonetheless presents

different indexical associations and articulates to different aesthetic and ethical discourses than those which are embedded in an understanding of these sonic practices as chanted prayers.

My discussion also illustrates how transcribers and theorists transcribe their identities as they transcribe Coptic chant. In this case I will acknowledge Stuart Hall's point that identities are "never unified" and "increasingly fragmented and fractured" (Hall 1996: 4), and adopt the perspective of Simon Frith that identity is "*mobile*, a process not a thing, a becoming not a being" (Frith 1996: 109). I believe that Thomas Turino addresses these issues constructively when he formulates identity as "the representation of selected habits foregrounded in given contexts to define self to oneself and to others by oneself and by others," as I noted previously in my introduction (Turino 2004: 8). At the same time, the representations that I am focused on in this chapter are discursive, and as Stuart Hall notes, it is because identities are constructed within discourses that they are situated within specific histories and institutions, involved in power dynamics, and produced partly through "the marking of difference and exclusion" (Hall 1996: 5).

Also, I do not wish to think about the transcription of identity purely in the sense of a homology in which values are produced by a social group and then expressed through different cultural forms (e.g. Hebdige 1979). Instead I agree with Frith who notes how cultural activity isn't just the product of a cultural group, but also constitutes the group, again gesturing to the fluid and performative nature of identity (Frith 1996: 111). In this way, transcribers and theorists of Coptic music are constructing a particular identity for themselves and others through the construction of discourse including the notation of music. The

"habits" that are represented in their theoretical constructs and musical notation practices thus constitute their identity at a given point in time.

Early Twentieth Century Writings

Ernest Newlandsmith (1875-after 1957)

Ernest Newlandsmith was an English violinist, composer, and author who worked with Coptic Egyptian Ragheb Moftah in the 1920s and 1930s to produce what was at the time the largest and most comprehensive set of transcriptions of Coptic Orthodox liturgical music. Newlandsmith came from a family of Protestant clergymen and pursued a career as a professional musician in London at the turn of the twentieth century until harsh newspaper criticism of his work and a sense of disillusionment with an emerging public interest in musical modernism motivated him to pursue the more eccentric path as the leader of a spiritual movement that stressed the interconnected nature of artistic and religious expression (Newlandsmith 1927: 14-32). From around 1904 to the mid-1920s Newlandsmith published numerous books and pamphlets outlining his spiritually inflected artistic philosophy and criticizing the popular music, literature, and drama of his day, in addition to performing one-man passion plays, recitals, and lectures to raise money for his organization (first called the Laresol Society, later renamed the Religious Art Society, and finally the New Life Movement) (Ramzy 2014).

It was in the context of these pilgrimages to fundraise and promote his movement that Newlandsmith undertook a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1926 and while he was passing through Egypt on his way to Jerusalem he met Ragheb Moftah, a pious Egyptian Copt who

was keenly interested in the preservation of Coptic liturgical music (personal communication, Laurence Moftah, January 8th 2017). The following year, Moftah formed a contractual agreement with Newlandsmith to travel to Egypt and transcribe the *alḥān* of the Coptic Orthodox Church and from 1927 to 1931 Newlandsmith made a series of trips to Egypt staying on the houseboat of Ragheb Moftah docked on the river Nile, while he transcribed *alḥān* as they were recited by Muʿallim Mikhail Girgis al-Batanuni (Ramzy 2014). In 1931 Newlandsmith organized a series of lectures at Cambridge and Oxford Universities, in which he argued that Coptic Orthodox hymns were an extension of the sacred music traditions of ancient Egyptian music while at the same time sharing roots with the sacred music traditions of Western Europe, and by 1936 Newlandsmith had finish compiling sixteen folios of transcribed chants including the complete Liturgies of St. Basil and St. Gregory as well as a series of important liturgical rites including those used for weddings, funerals, and the ordination of priests (Ibid.).

While the story of the collaboration between Ernest Newlandsmith and Ragheb Moftah has taken on the status of near-legend in the history of Coptic chant and its preservation, the transcriptions produced by Newlandsmith have rarely if ever been used for research or pedagogical purposes. This is partly due to a preference on the part of deacons and muʿallimūn to use audio recordings as pedagogical tools (including Moftah's recordings of Muʿallim Mīkhaʾīl chanting with his student Muʿallim Ṣādiq ʿAṭāʾ Allāh from 1940 to 1957). Another reason, however, is the systematic inaccuracies in Newlandsmith's notation, most notably with his apperception of all of the chants into a system of European intonation. Ter Ellingson notes that many European scholars began to identify divergence from European pitch categories in their musical transcriptions by the late 19th century (Ellingson

1992: 116-7), and Father Jules Blin (1888) noted this himself in the context of Coptic music several decades before Newlandsmith produced his own transcriptions. Yet Newlandsmith had no training in comparative musicology or cross-cultural musical transcription, which explains both his inability to identify non-Western pitches as well as the harsh criticism that German comparative musicologist Hans Hickmann targeted at Newlandsmith and his work, and which was again reiterated by musicologist Marian Robertson-Wilson decades later (Hickmann 1952: 103; Robertson-Wilson 1987: 194).

In addition to Newlandsmith's lack of training in cross-cultural music studies, his Eurocentric perception and representation of Coptic intonation as well as his tendency towards less detailed notation likely reflected his own philosophy on spirituality and the arts. Newlandsmith frequently praised the value of musical simplicity and criticized a tendency towards needless complexity and a lack of spiritual affectiveness in modern music:

> Personally, I think that before we begin to introduce young people, indeed any musically-uncultivated people, to the more complicated works of the great masters, we should do well to see that they know something of the simplicity and quality through the finest examples of national songs and Hebrew and Christian worship (Newlandsmith 1927: 28-9).

Indeed, the lectures that Newlandsmith gave at Cambridge and Oxford Universities in 1931 describing Coptic liturgical music demonstrate his view of Coptic chant as window into the ancient history of Western Christian sacred music, but in contrast to Fathers Athanasius Kircher (1643), Jules Blin (1888), and Louis Badet (1936 [1899]) who saw parallels between European chant and Coptic chant as validating the antiquity of Roman Catholic traditions, Newlandsmith made more expansive associations that also traced these shared roots to

Protestantism as well (Newlandsmith 1932a: 184). Presenting simplified renditions of Coptic melodies using diatonic intervals, Newlandsmith remarked that "after a careful study of these very simple themes we cannot but feel that much of the music of Western civilization must have its source in the Orient" (Ibid.).

No doubt influenced by his belief in the spiritual efficacy of simpler forms of music and his romanticized view of the Coptic tradition as an ancient part of his own Christian musical heritage, he considered the ornamentation typically used by Coptic muʿallimūn to be "an unfortunate outer coat" of Arab musical influence that obscured the "true Egyptian idiom" of the fundamental melody (Newlandsmith 1932a: 146). Newlandsmith believed the current state of Coptic liturgical music to be one of decay in which Coptic melodies were gradually being corrupted by Arabic, Turkish, and Greek influence, and he argued that particular themes in Coptic music demonstrate that the music is not "oriental" but is instead a "'modern perversion' of an earlier and nobler art." (Ibid.:161). Ultimately, while Newlandsmith regarded Coptic Orthodox liturgical music to be fundamentally different from Arab music in that Coptic music was an extension of a biblical music tradition, while Arab music was not, he considered all "Oriental music" to have had its roots in great early civilizations, and he interpreted the musical characteristics and sounds that were most unfamiliar or unpleasant to his ears as evidence of varying degrees of decay:

> But as has been well said: "Oriental music is like a real nobleman who, by misfortune, has been dragged into squalor. When it has been purified and clothed in suitable dress it can take its rightful place, and very little imagination will be required to divine its origin." It is only when it has been cleansed that it can claim recognition (Ibid.: 185).

In addition to the apperception of Coptic music into a system of European intonation and the arguably excessive simplification of Coptic melodies, Newlandsmith expressed ideas concerning harmonization that were beginning to face robust critique among comparative musicologists by this time. He finished the above quote asserting that "when this [cleansing of Coptic music] has been done it is possible that the many beautiful musical expressions and forms, and the harmonies they imply, will open up an entirely new and undreamed of vista to the Western musical world" (Newlandsmith 1932a: 185). More generally, he claimed that some of the themes of Coptic music would be "greatly improved by harmonization (and by their very structure demand modern harmony)," and noted that while for some *alḥān* modern harmonization would not be possible or desirable, the oldest and most beautiful *alḥān* imply harmonization (Newlandsmith 1932a: 146, 161). This view of Coptic chant reflects a theory of harmonic evolutionism, which Ter Ellingson has described as "a thesis…deriving from Mersenne's physical universalism, [which] held that music was the product of natural laws leading to the evolution of Western harmonies" (Ellingson 1992: 121). As Ellingson notes, this idea received renewed attention by scholars following John Comfort Filmore's harmonization of the transcriptions made by Alice Fletcher of Omaha Native Americans published in 1899, but was ultimately rejected by scholars such as music psychologist Benjamin Ives Gilman (1908), and anthropologists Franz Boas (1955[1927]: 342) and Francis Densmore (1927: 82-4) (Ellingson 1992: 122-3). Newlandsmith's uncritical references to this idea along with the other issues associated with his transcriptions highlight his positionality outside of the realm of North American and European music scholarship. Ultimately, Newlandsmith's collaboration with Mu'allim Mikha'īl and Ragheb Moftah may have lent a certain amount of prestige and legitimacy to his otherwise eccentric vocation as a

spiritual leader, but it did very little to advance the understanding of Coptic music or to accurately preserve Coptic melodies through musical notation.

Hans Hickmann (1908-1968)

Hans Hickmann was a German comparative musicologist who had a special interest in organology and the music of ancient Egypt. He first became interested in the music of the Middle East during a 1932-1933 trip to the Sīwah Oasis in Egypt while working for the Berlinner Phonogrammarchiv, and in 1933 he settled in Cairo where he would reside until 1957 when he returned to Germany to take a position as chair of ethnomusicology at the University of Hamburg (Neumann 1969: 316-7)[39]. During his time in Egypt and afterwards, Hickmann published numerous articles about Egyptian music including a few articles examining ancient musical instruments, which he dated to the Coptic era (c. 3rd-7th centuries CE) (Hickmann 1946-7, 1950, 1958). In these articles, he draws on some information from historical reliefs and other sources to glean information about their potential use with sacred music in ancient Egypt, but he does not present clear evidence for their use in actual liturgical rites of the Coptic Orthodox church. In addition to these archaeological-organological studies, he also authored several other articles that discuss Coptic liturgical music and its relationship to ancient Egyptian sacred music traditions (Hickmann 1947, 1952, 1960, 1963). Like other European scholars before him, a consistent theme in Hickmann's writings on Coptic music is his emphasis on the importance of Coptic liturgical music both as

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[39] Gamil (1998) cited in Thomas (2006) also suggests that Hickmann moved to Egypt in order to escape the Nazi regime that came to power around this time.

a window into ancient Egyptian sacred musical practices and also as a way to understand the roots of Western Christianity.

Hickmann's earliest published writing dealing specifically with contemporary Christian music in Egypt is a short piece entitled *Kirchenmusik in Aegypten* ("Church Music in Egypt") published in the German evangelical trade magazine *Musik und Kirche* (Hickmann 1947). While this article is targeted towards a non-specialist audience and contains only very general information about Coptic music, the content of his remarks suggest that Hickmann was at this point relatively unfamiliar with contemporary Coptic liturgical practice. Specifically, Hickmann makes the surprising claim that Coptic liturgies at the time of his writing use not only triangles, cymbals, and castanets (an apparent reference to small cymbals), but also hand drums and sistrums[40] ("*Heute sind es Triangel, Becken, Kastagnetten und gelegentlich auch Handtrommeln und Sistren*") (Ibid.: 163). While there is some evidence to suggest that percussion instruments other than the triangle and cymbals may have been used in Coptic Orthodox worship—for example, S.H. Leeder (1918) reported the use of a tongueless bell struck by a metal rod—mention of the use of hand drums and sistrums is absent from any other known historical description of Coptic worship and was likely an erroneous assumption on the part of Hickmann. Several years later he describes the use of hand drums and sistrums as a mere historical curiosity, apparently walking back this earlier claim (Hickmann 1952: 102-3).[41]

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[40] A sistrum is a type of idiophone that was used in ancient Egypt and Iraq.
[41] Hickmann also later argues that the cymbals used to accompany Coptic music likely originated in Asia, were then adopted in Egypt where they became manufactured in significant numbers, and were later exported to the neighboring regions of Nubia, Ethiopia, as well as Greece and Rome (Hickmann 1960).

Hickmann's main contribution to the study of contemporary Coptic liturgical music was his advocation for improved research methodology, which is evident in his remarks at the 1950 International Congress of Sacred Music, published in the article "Some Observations on the Liturgical Music of the Copts of Egypt" ("Quelques observations sur la musique liturgique des Coptes d'Egypte") (Hickmann 1952). In this article Hickmann directly addresses the work of Ernest Newlandsmith, criticizing it as unscientific both because Newlandsmith produced transcriptions without the aid of audio recordings and also because he was unreflexively constructing ideal melodies by combining information from multiple performances of the same hymn in a single melody. Hickmann was echoing earlier critiques by Benjamin Ives Gilman who argued for the use of the phonograph as an important transcription tool by distinguishing the "indicative form" or actual musical performance from the "imperative mood" or ideal of musical performance, a distinction that was later elaborated by Charles Seeger in his discussion of "descriptive" and "prescriptive" music-writing (Gilman 1908: 8; Seeger 1958).

In response to what he perceived to be Newlandsmith's somewhat haphazard construction of an ideal melody, Hickmann presented his own transcription of the Bright Saturday laḥn Fiete Ouon Mashg (Coptic: ⲫⲏⲉⲧⲉ ⲟⲩⲟⲛ ⲙⲁϣϫ English: "He Who Has an Ear") alongside an excerpt of Newlandsmith's transcription while highlighting alleged errors in the latter (1952: 106). Advocating for a more "scientific" approach that distinguishes between descriptive performance and prescriptive musical ideal, Hickmann explains that he transcribed the same hymn multiple times, including several live sessions with a few weeks between the first initial hearings, as well as a transcription made from a recording (Ibid.: 104). Interestingly, both Newlandsmith and Hickmann transcribed the *laḥn* Fiete Ouon

Mashg utilizing only pitches within the system of European intonation, yet the *laḥn* is recognized by Coptic monk Abraam Guirguis in a transcription from 2018 as containing quarter tones that do not exist in Western music. This suggests that Hickmann, despite his efforts to be more rigorous in his methodology, fell victim to the same apperception of Coptic chant into a European system of intonation. In presenting his own final transcription, Hickmann presents a primary melody but includes a series of footnotes that indicate moments of variation that occurred between the performances that he observed.

It is important to note that Hickmann was not opposed to the construction of prescriptive ideal melodies in general, but rather he regarded Newlandsmith's lack of reflexivity in doing so to be the primary issue. Hickmann's own approach was essentially modeled on what Ter Ellingson has called a "literary-philological method of comparing textual parallels and variants to eliminate unclarities and mistakes, and thus to establish the intent of the author(s)/compiler(s)," an approach developed by Stumpf (1901), Gilman (1908), and Hornbostel and Abraham (1909) decades earlier (Ellingson 1992: 125). By distinguishing between specific performances in his analysis he was able to make claims about what elements of the melody were the result of "the temperament of the cantor" ("tempérament du chanter"), and contrast these with what he identifies as likely mistakes in Newlandsmith's transcription (Hickman 1952: 104).

Broadly speaking, Hickmann adopts what might be called an objectivist-discovery model of transcription, a term I am adapting here from the ideas of Ter Ellingson who describes the approach as a form of "classical Hornbostelian transcription" in which "musical features are presumed to be unknown and awaiting discovery in the objective representation of musical sound; and the transcriber is responsible for precisely and exhaustively notating

all objective features of musical sound that might lead to any significant discovery whatsoever" (Ellingson 1992: 141). This contrasts with a conceptual approach to musical transcription in which "essential features are presumed to be already known through fieldwork, performance lessons, study of traditional written and aural notations and learning and leadership processes. The [conceptual] transcription then becomes not a means not of discovering, but of defining and exemplifying the acoustical embodiment of musical concepts essential to the culture and music" (Ellingson 1992: 141-2).

Hickmann's thoroughness in exploring all aspects of musical performance extend to his observations of the notably different timbre of mu'allimūn when compared to performers of Arab music as well as his inclusion of an additional staff line in his transcription representing the rhythm of the chant as it was demonstrated through the clapping of a Coptic mu'allim while he sang (1952: 104, 105-6). What distinguishes Hickmann's objectivist-discovery approach to the transcription of Coptic music from a more conceptual approach is that his choice to focus on these components of the music do not seem to reflect their importance from the perspective of his informants. Hickmann himself notes that the hand gestures of mu'allimūn are not a part of actual liturgical practice, and his interest in cheironomy appears to reflect his own desire to identify connections between Coptic liturgical practice and depictions of ancient Egyptian music, which he elaborated on in earlier writings (Hickmann 1952: 104; Hickmann 1949). Likewise, his focus on timbral differences between Coptic and Arabic singing may be understood as an extension of his interest in identifying aspects of Coptic music culture that may have resisted Arabic influence and thus reveal information about ancient Egyptian or early Christian culture, but there is no evidence to suggest that timbre was intentional or important to the mu'allimūn that he observed.

René Ménard (b.?-?)

There is very little information about the life and work of René Ménard beyond his actual publications. According to John Gillespie, Ménard was a French missionary who spent at least five years in Egypt in addition to much longer periods elsewhere in Africa (Gillespie 1978: 236). Ménard published several articles examining Coptic liturgical music, among them a 1954 article in *Revue de Musicologie* entitled "Une étape de l'art musical égyptien: La musique copte. Recherches actuelles" ("A stage of Egyptian musical art: Coptic music. Current Research"), and a 1958 entry on Coptic music in the encyclopedia *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* that is accompanied by a transcription co-authored by himself and Hans Hickmann. While Ménard maintains the same focus as earlier European scholars on the connections between contemporary Coptic liturgical music, ancient Egyptian music, and early European church music, his 1954 article is unique in its focus on very broad musical structures of the Liturgy as well as efforts to apply modal analysis, both of which I discuss below. By contrast, the transcription and discussion in his 1958 article demonstrates a much stronger influence of the literary-philological method of Hickmann, emphasizing a comparison of transcriptions of two performances in order to ascertain musical intent and distinguish between embellishment and more substantive musical differences.

In "*Une étape de l'art musical égyptien*" Ménard presents the familiar argument that Coptic liturgical music is a stage in the evolution of ancient Egyptian musical heritage rather than an imported cultural form, but unlike his predecessors he is the first scholar to provide a clear definition of Coptic music, taking into account both historical and contemporary contexts, and distinguishing sacred from secular musical forms. He defines the term "Coptic

Music" ("*Musique Copte*") as an expression specifically referencing liturgical music and argues that this music emerged alongside the Coptic rite, Coptic literature, and Coptic art in the fourth or fifth century as part of the awakening of a national Egyptian consciousness and continuing up until the present (Ménard 1954: 21-22). This contrasts with scholars such as Hans Hickmann, who would often discuss any musical artifacts from Egypt dated to the period between the 3rd and 7th centuries as "Coptic" with little distinction made concerning their use in sacred or secular music (Hickmann 1946-7, 1950, 1958).

While Hickmann would sometimes make tenuous connections between contemporary Coptic liturgical music and ancient Egyptian sacred music (such as connecting the hand movements of contemporary muʿallimūn with ancient Egyptian depictions of singers, or connecting the melismatic extensions of vowels in contemporary Coptic chant with markings in one temple relief that he interpreted as repeated vowels being performed by an ancient Egyptian singer), Ménard's analysis of Coptic music tends towards more comparisons with early European church music. Specifically, Ménard is the first scholar to conduct rudimentary modal analysis of Coptic chant. While Belgian scholar François-Joseph Fétis and early Coptic writers Abū Isḥāq Ibn al-ʿAssāl, Ibn Sibāʿ, and Ibn Kabar discussed Coptic modes out of context from actual performed music, Ménard conducted his own analysis of Coptic chant that he observed and transcribed, and he used European church modes as a basis for understanding the music.

Initially, Ménard analyzes the melodic structure of the Divine Liturgy in very broad terms, arguing that it is possible to divide up the Liturgy into three sections each containing a distinct melodic and modal theme. He describes each section in terms of its general range and prominent musical intervals, and specifically describes the second and third sections of the

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Liturgy as employing the structure of the European church modes Tritus Plagal and Protus Plagal respectively (Ménard 1954: 23-4). In using the diatonic church modes as his basis for analysis, Ménard's discussion is reminiscent of the writings of Father Louis Badet, who asserted that Coptic chant is completely diatonic. Like Father Badet, Ménard did not identify aspects of intonation in the music that diverged from European intonation, although he did acknowledge that certain hymns did not completely conform to his broad melodic categorization of the Liturgy into these three phases (Ibid.: 24).
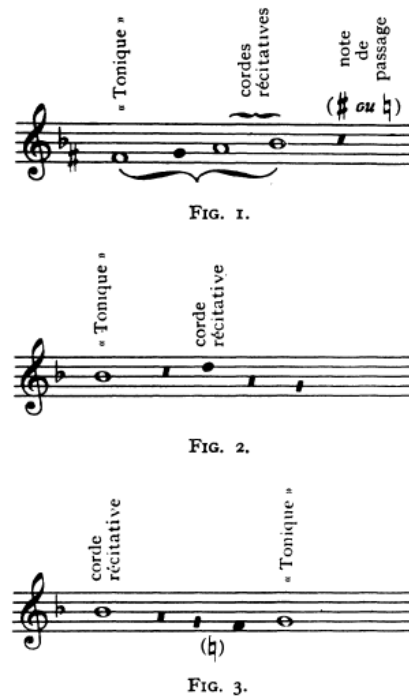
Figure 2-1. René Ménard's outline of the modal structure of a Coptic mass (Ménard 1954: 24)

While Ménard's sweeping approach to melodic analysis is novel and raises interesting new questions about larger musical structures that might be present in the Divine Liturgy, his specific conclusions are flawed both due to the extreme generalizations involved

concerning melodic movement and also due to Ménard's apparent lack of familiarity with the content and context of the Liturgy that he observed. The extremity of his generalizations concerning melodic movement are apparent when considering that a typical performance of the Divine Liturgy can last three hours or more and utilize many dozens of different chants, yet Ménard describes this entire service as revolving around only three significant melodic developments. Ménard is actually conscious of this issue and refers to his analysis as an "over-simplification" ("*cette schématisation à outrance*") yet he neglects to argue for what insights this temporally broad, and melodically simplified approach to analysis might offer even if only tentatively (Ménard 1954 : 24). Moreover, Ménard acknowledges frequent exceptions to his analysis, noting at one point that each part of his analysis contains hymns that do not match the modal themes that he identifies, raising further questions about usefulness of such categorizations (Ménard 1954: 23).

In addition to his broad analysis of the Divine Liturgy (presumably the Liturgy of St. Basil), Ménard gives special attention to the subject of improvisation in Coptic chant. Ménard uses this term to refer to the relatively limited "a-rhythmic flourishes" ("*des fioritures a-rythmiques*") of chanters during the group performance of congregational hymns, and the more extensive improvisations of professional cantors who through a process of centonization[42] elaborate on the singing of vowels and significantly lengthen particular hymns (Ménard 1954: 35). In the latter case, however, he appears to misunderstand instances

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[42] Centonization is a type of formulaic musical composition in which new melodies are composed through the synthesis of pre-existing melodic fragments (Chew and McKinnon 2001).

of precomposed seasonal variants of annual[43] *alḥān* as examples of muʿallimūn improvising

to extend a hymn during these special occasions. For example, he notes how

> …on one Easter day, a celebrating Coptic priest sang a 3-minute vocalize on a
> syllable that usually only includes a single rhythmic beat and a single note of
> the melodic pattern. Well, in spite of this, the "improvisations" to which the
> singers let themselves go on such occasions are only a skillful application of
> known melodic formulas. And the great proof is that the people continue
> without difficulty the so-called "improvised" song that the official cantor has
> just begun. If there was pure improvisation, it is quite obvious that the people
> would be incapable of pursuing it in this way. (Ménard 1954: 35, my trans.
> from French)

Ménard's explanation for how the church congregation was able to follow the performance

of their muʿallim and join in chanting the hymn at the appropriate time without difficulty was

that the muʿallim was improvising in a manner that was formulaic and easy to predict. In

actuality improvisation by a muʿallim or chanter is generally not used to extend a known

hymn in this way. Instead a hymn performed in annual services, such as the Trisagion, often

has a special extended variant performed during feasts (a "joyful" variant) or solemn rites (a

"sorrowful" variant). In these cases a long melismatic melody is added within the initial

phrase of the hymn, which then concludes in an identical manner as the annual variant. Thus

Ménard was likely witnessing the chanting of a joyful or sorrowful variant of a *laḥn* whose

annual version he knew, and he misinterpreted the lengthened introductory melody chanted

by the muʿallim as improvisation. Underscoring this interpretation is the fact that Ménard

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[43] As noted in Chapter 1, the term "annual" here refers to hymns or rites that occur
throughout the year, not once a year.

also remarks that one of the few examples of lengthy improvisation he witnessed was when a mu'allim was performing the Trisagion on Good Friday, an occasion when the joyful variant of that *laḥn* is performed in place of the annual variant (Ménard 1954: 34-5).

While Ménard does not include transcriptions of any of the chants that he discusses in his 1954 article, his 1958 entry in *MGG* on "Coptic Music" ("Koptische Musik") is accompanied by transcriptions of two *alḥān* that he co-authored with Hans Hickmann. The first transcription depicts the performances of two different priests chanting the Trisagion (Greek: Agios O Theos). Ménard appears to reference this transcription in his 1954 article where he mentions that the priests are from different "schools," one from the Delta region and the other from Upper Egypt (Ménard 1954: 34). This comparative transcription contains a greater level of descriptive detail than Hickmann's transcription of *laḥn* Fiete Ouon Mashg (1952) demonstrated by the more frequent use of (+) and (-) symbols to represent microtonal deviations from European intonation, the use of single measures containing a different time signature from the main time signature of the *laḥn*, and the use of note grouping such as triplets (including 32nd note triplets) and sextuplets depicting very intricate details of vocal performance (1958).[44]

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[44] The transcriptions accompanying this encyclopedia entry are contained as an insert between pages 1616 and 1617 in *MGG* (1958).

Figure 2-2. The first page of Ménard and Hickmann's comparative transcription of two priests chanting the Trisagion, attached as an insert between pages 1616 and 1617 in the 1958 edition of *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Allgemeine Enzyklopadie der Musik.* Vol.7 (Jensen-Kyrie). Basel-London-New York: Barenreiter Kassel.

Figure 2-3. The second page of Ménard and Hickmann's comparative transcription of two priests chanting the Trisagion, attached as an insert between pages 1616 and 1617 in the 1958 edition of *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Allgemeine Enzyklopadie der Musik.* Vol.7 (Jensen-Kyrie). Basel-London-New York: Barenreiter Kassel.

In this transcription Hickmann and Ménard indicate that the original absolute pitches

of the first chanted syllables of each priest and note the length of each performance in

minutes and seconds, suggesting that they produced their transcription from audio

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recordings. They transpose both renditions to the same starting pitch, and normalize the temporal structure of their notation by setting both performances to the same time signature. Interestingly, several examples of more contemporary notation of this hymn, including my own transcriptions of several different mu'allimūn, depict this hymn as starting on a F and frequently using an E-half flat quartertone pitch below the tonic, Hickmann and Ménard notate the equivalent musical interval using a G and F#, representing a qualitatively different interval throughout the hymn. This again suggests that the priests that performed for Hickmann and Ménard may have sung using an approximately three-quartertone interval between those tones but Hickmann and Ménard nonetheless perceived the musical intervals as a half-step due to the tendency to interpret the sounds through the European musical framework they were most acculturated into.

Ilona Borsai (1925-1982) and Margit Tóth (1920-)

Scholars Ilona Borsai and Margit Tóth greatly expanded on the work of Hans Hickmann and René Ménard through Borsai's articles on different aspects of Coptic chant and Tóth's large number of highly detailed transcriptions. Borsai was Romanian-born scholar who studied music education and musicology in Budapest, Hungary, and later went on to work with ethnomusicologist Zoltán Kodály at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences studying folk music. According to her biography in the Coptic Encyclopedia, she travelled to Egypt for the first time from 1967-1968 and on this trip she made a number of recordings of Egyptian folk music and Coptic liturgical music (Moftah et al. 1991 "Musicologists"), however she mentions in a footnote of a 1969 article that she recorded Egyptian Mu'allim Ṣādiq 'Aṭā' Allāh in 1966, suggesting that her trip actually occurred earlier (Borsai and Toth

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1969: 92ft.6). After Borsai returned from her first trip to Egypt she began to collaborate with Hungarian scholar Margit Tóth who was the head of the Ethnographic Museum in Budapest and a former student of Kodály as well as ethnomusicologist László Lajtha, and Borsai later returned to Egypt two more times for the Second Conference of Arab Music in 1969 and in 1970 to conduct more field recordings ("Margit Tóth" LOC; Moftah et al. 1991). Based on her fieldwork in Egypt, Borsai published a number of research papers in the late 1960s and 1970s that explored different aspects of Coptic liturgical music and it was during this same period that Tóth became involved in producing transcriptions of Coptic chant, including some that she contributed to Borsai's publications and a large number of additional transcriptions made over the following decades that would eventually be compiled and published by the American University in Cairo press as a comprehensive set of notation for the Liturgy of St. Basil in 1998.

The scholarship of Ilona Borsai was clearly shaped by the method for comparative analysis of folk music developed by Zoltán Kodály and Bela Bartók in their studies of Hungarian folk music. Kodály and Bartók produced numerous, incredibly detailed transcriptions of the music of Hungarian villagers and compared these with transcriptions of other European folk music as well as with notation from 17th and 18th century manuscripts, ultimately identifying shared tonality and melodic formulas between Hungarian and Czech communities (Borsai 1968: 70). Similarly, Borsai argues that the lamentations, lullabies, and work songs of the Egyptian *fellaḥīn* (i.e. peasants), as well as the religious hymns of Coptic chanters and monks, are oral traditions that most closely reflect the music of ancient Egypt, because the *fellaḥīn* were largely unaffected by Arab-Islamic cultural influence due to their suburban environment and low social status and the Copts were insulated from this same

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influence due to religious stratification (Borsai 1968 : 71-2, 78). The approach of Kodály and

Bartók and later adopted by Borsai was a type of musical archeology that treated sonic forms

as artifacts that could be unearthed through careful comparative analysis and their focus on

the "folk" assumed a certain degree of racial purity, inextricably linked to musical

expression. Because of the importance they placed on detailed comparison between musical

performances Bartók and Kodály both produced incredibly fine-grained transcriptions that

portrayed small vocal inflections in pitch and subtle rhythmic ornaments. Ter Ellingson

describes Bartók's transcriptions of Eastern European folk music as some of the most

complex modifications to European staff notation, noting how his notation was sometimes so

complex that Bartók added an additional staff containing a simplified melodic line below his

transcriptions for clarity (Ellingson 1992: 142). Borsai is quick to note the compatibility of

this methodology with the interest of European scholars in Coptic music as a means to reveal

historical truths about ancient Egypt.

While the publications of Borsai and Tóth in the 1960s and 1970s reflect a greater

degree of descriptive detail in their transcriptions as well as a comparative approach derived

from the European folk music studies of Bartók and Kodály, their work also reflects a partial

shift away from a more pure objectivist-discovery approach to musical transcription and

towards a more conceptual approach that incorporates musical-theoretical frameworks from

Egyptian culture. This is primarily reflected in two ways. The first is through the use of

forms of musical notation including the less frequent use of arrows above specific notes to

indicate microtonal variation from Western pitch categories, and the inclusion first of half-

sharp and later half-flat symbols that had been in common use with publications of traditional

Arab music since the 1930s (Racy 1977: 39). The second is Borsai's focus on identifying

structural parallels between Coptic music and Egyptian folk music, which she was interested in because of her belief that it could reveal information about ancient Egyptian musical survivals, but which also promoted the use of emic conceptual frameworks that could easily explain intonation and melodic form for both types of music.

Borsai's first article on Coptic music identifies similarities between the melodies and intonation of Egyptian folk music and Coptic liturgical chant, noting melodic parallels between specific congregational responses used in the Palm Sunday Mass (after the reading of the Acts of the Apostles) and a well-known Egyptian folk song "*yā Nakhlatēn fī l-'alālī yā balāhum dawā*" recorded in the city of Akhmīm (Sohag Province) (Borsai 1968: 87-88). Although Borsai's transcriptions of these three pieces depicts the pitch notated on the F staff line as varying between a natural and sharp (with additional moments of microtonal variation in "*yā Nakhlatēn* "), she argues that all three pieces share an intonational structure characterized by an alteration of semitones (e.g. ½, 1, ½, 1), which are sometimes transformed into ¾ tone intervals, rather than identifying the specific intonational differences in her transcriptions through distinct notational structures (Borsai 1968.: 88-9). In this comparison she notates the microtonal pitches in "yā Nakhlatēn " with arrows above the notes (similar in meaning to the "+" and "-" symbols used by Ménard) but for all three pieces she also includes a "(!)" symbol in the key signature to indicate this variable intonation:
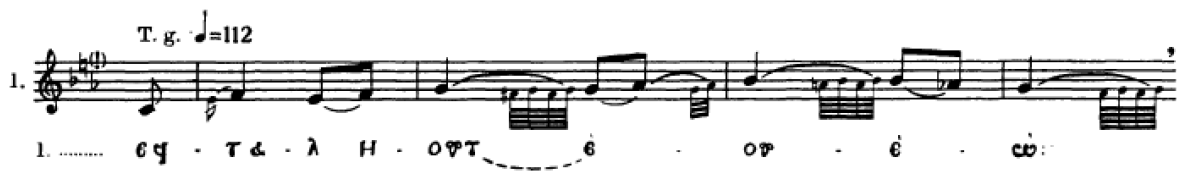
Figure 2-4. Excerpt from Ilona Borsai's transcription of responses from the Palm Sunday Mass (after the reading of the Acts of the Apostles performed by Coptic Catholic priest Father Gérard Viaud in Faqus (Sharqiyya province) (Borsai 1968: 87).

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Figure 2-5. Excerpt from Ilona Borsai's transcription of the well-known folk song "yā Nakhlatēn fī l-'alālī yā balāhum dawā" recorded in the city of Akhmīm (Sohag Province) (Borsai 1968: 88).

Figure 2-6. Excerpt from Ilona Borsai's transcription of the beginning of the Anaphora in the Liturgy of St. Basil (performer unknown) (Borsai 1968: 89).

Borsai's choice to represent certain pitches in this ambivalent manner marks a shift away from attempts at the objective description of sound and towards a reconceptualization of Coptic music in terms of musical frameworks in which the use of semitone/whole-tone intervals and ¾-tone intervals are understood as variations on a single practice or as products of the same musical intent of the performer. While she utilizes arrows in effectively the same manner that Hans Hickmann and René Ménard used "+" and "-" symbols to provide more precise information about intonation than is normally represented in European staff notation, her references towards intonational ambiguity both in her key signature and in her written description of the pieces mark a shift away from a purely objectivist-discovery mindset that would prioritize the precise measurement of pitches over broader frameworks of tonality and intonation.

In a study published the following year, Borsai and Tóth examine the variety of improvisatory embellishments performed with the laḥn Tenousht Emefiot (Borsai and Tóth

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1969). Tóth's transcription (based on a 1968 recording of Mu'allim Ṣādiq 'Aṭā' Allāh made by the Higher Institute of Coptic Studies) utilizes the half-sharp symbol common to traditional Arab music and does not include any other markings to indicate microtonal deviation from Western pitch categories:
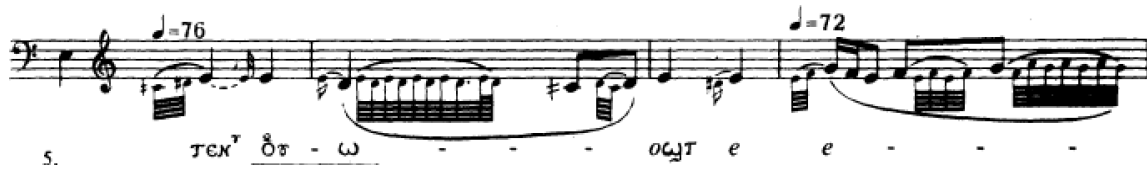
Figure 2-7. Excerpt from Margit Tóth's transcription of laḥn Tenousht Emefiot performed by Mu'allim Ṣādiq 'Aṭā' Allāh in 1968 (Borsai and Tóth 1969: 93)

Several years later, following a second period of fieldwork in Egypt, Borsai published a study of the Coptic laḥn O Monogenis, comparing it with the Byzantine hymn that contains the same text, and she also includes the use of the half-flat symbol typical of traditional Arab music notation as well (Borsai 1972).

Figure 2-8. Excerpt from Ilona Borsai's transcription of Coptic laḥn O Monogenis performed by Father Sidrak Hanna Ibrāhīm of St. George's Church in the Mansi district, Cairo (Borsai 1972: 334)

In this study of laḥn O Monogenis Borsai also expands on her previous methodology of comparative analysis in an attempt to reconstruct Coptic modes. While she previously identified similar intonation and melodies between Coptic liturgical chants and Egyptian folk songs, arguing that this was evidence of musical survivals from ancient Egypt, in her study of laḥn O Monogenis, she identifies portions of the same melody that are shared between laḥn O Monogenis and a version of the Trisagion performed on Good Friday (Borsai 1972). Noting that headings in some liturgical books introduce the Good Friday version of the Trisagion by indicating that it must be chanted "in the mode of the crucifixion" ("*bi-l-laḥn al-ṣalabūt*") she argues that this mode must characterize both hymns as well as others and constructs a melodic schema from this shared melody to represent the mode (Ibid.: 348-354). Her approach here represents an interesting confluence of influences. She constructs melodic schemas similar to those employed by Ménard, while avoiding the imposition of European church modes on the music. Her objectivist-discovery approach to musical transcription is shaped by a methodology of sonic archaeology championed by Kodály and Bartók, yet she adopts the half-flat and half-sharp symbols of traditional Arab music and conflates specific intonational variants into shared conceptual frameworks in a manner that suggests influence by Egyptian perspectives on musical intonation.

While Borsai's 1972 study of *laḥn* O Monogenis reflects small departures from an objectivist approach to musical transcription and towards a conceptual one with the use of half-flat and half-sharp symbols reflective of local Egyptian forms of musical representation, her next study continues this progression towards a more conceptual approach. Seven years after her study of laḥn O Monogenis, Borsai published a study with a similar methodology, comparing two chants performed during Holy Week: the Paschal Praise Thok Te Tigom and

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a portion of the responses chanted during the Psalmos of the sixth canonical hours on Monday (with verse 4 of Psalm 121) and Tuesday (with Psalm 119), arguing that they both demonstrate the "sorrowful" mode (a.k.a. the Adribi mode) (Borsai 1979). She continues to utilize the half-flat and half-sharp signs common to traditional Arab music notation in her transcriptions, and also places them in the key signature in a format equivalent to the standard key signature used with maqām Rast on G in traditional Arab music[45]:

Figure 2-9. Excerpt from Ilona Borsai's transcription of the responses chanted during the Psalmos of the sixth canonical hours on Monday and Tuesday of Holy Week (Borsai 1979: 17).

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[45] Thanks to Professor Scott Marcus at UCSB for pointing out the Rast-on-G key signature format. For additional information on how the *maqāmāt* are classified using key signatures see (Marcus 1989: 397-412).

Again diverging from an objectivist approach to transcription, she explicitly notes that the B half-flat and F half-sharp in her key signature do not reflect exact intonation, explaining that the actual intonation of these pitches is variable (Borsai 1979: 17, 24). She even goes on to say, "if we want to receive an idea of this melody that is the closest to reality, let us imagine it with F sharp and B fully flat - except the parts where the arrows indicate the opposite" ("*Si nous voulons recevoir une idée de cette mélodie qui soil la plus proche à la réalité, imaginons-la avec fa dièze et si bémol réels — sauf les parties ou les flèches indiquent le contraire*")(Ibid.: 24). While this remark raises questions concerning why Borsai did not notate the music with an F# and Bb instead if this is a more accurate way to represent the pitches that she heard, it clearly indicates that Borsai is intentionally representing pitches in a manner that is not "closest to reality." The high level of detail of other aspects of her transcriptions suggests that this is done purposefully to frame the transcription in terms of the emic tonal categories of contemporary Egyptian culture. While her focus is on rediscovering non-Arab musical structures and ideas that had been forgotten by practitioners of Coptic music, she draws on the half-sharp and half-flat symbols of modern Arab music. These symbols, which only began to be commonly used in Egypt in the 1930s (Racy 1977: 39), reference a contemporary system of quartertone intonation, which was only widely adopted in Egypt around the turn of the twentieth century (Marcus 1989: 70). Borsai's adoption of aspects of a local theoretical framework, at the expense of a more precise representation of pitch, reflects a move towards conceptual forms of musical transcription and away from an objectivist-discovery modal that characterized much of the European scholarship that preceded her.

A Shift in the Conceptualization of Coptic Music

Beginning in the 1970s Coptic Egyptians began to participate more prominently in the academic study of Coptic music, and their participation was characterized by a shift in the frameworks used to conceptualize Coptic music. Tracing the approach of Europeans from Newlandsmith to Borsai, an evolution may be from observed from Newlandsmith's uncritical application of European frameworks, to Hickmann's objectivist approach to musical representation, to attempts at modal conceptualization by Ménard using the historical musical frameworks of the European church and Borsai's efforts to reconstruct lost Coptic modal structures using the sonic archaeological methods of Kodály and Bartók, while also gradually adopting some local forms of musical representation. The Master's Thesis of Nabīl Kamāl Buṭrus in 1976 at the Helwan University College of Music Education in Cairo, Egypt, marks a continuation of this trend in that it focuses heavily on modal analysis, but it also marks a break with earlier European scholarship because of its heavy reliance on the theoretical frameworks of traditional Arab music. This shift towards utilizing the terminology and the conceptual categories of the *maqām* tradition is significant for several reasons.

Firstly, by utilizing terminology that is currently used to describe contemporary forms of music, it reframes the discussion and analysis of Coptic music in contemporary rather than historical terms. The interest of Europeans in Coptic music has always been for its connections to ancient Egypt and the early history of the European Church, and while these historical questions are of interest to Coptic Egyptians as well, the European tendency has always been to discuss Coptic music as an artifact of the past rather than a living tradition that has immediate relevance in contemporary society. Secondly, this use of contemporary

musical terminology reinforces the sense of Coptic music as *music*. Similar to Muslim

muezzin-s or *qari*-s who learn by ear to recite the call to prayer or read the Qur'an using

intonation and melodic characteristics that are shared with the *maqām* tradition, and yet who

often do not have an explicit knowledge of these theoretical frameworks, Coptic mu'alimūn,

deacons, and lay parishioners also generally do not understand the sonic structure of their

sacred chants through any type of theoretical framework (Marcus 2007: 14; Nelson 1985:

114). I argue that the application of maqām terminology and associated forms of

conceptualization in musical notation has promoted a new sense of Coptic chant as Egyptian

music, a trend that has continued with the recent phenomenon of professional performance

groups that rely on European staff notation and use musical instruments such as the David

Ensemble in Egypt and the St. Kyrel Choir in the United Kingdom, as well as the more

frequent use of musical notation outside of academic scholarship, such as the prolific

transcriptions of Father Abraam Guirguis shared between thousands of individuals through

the Facebook group "Coptic Hymns Notations."

     This shift towards conceptualizing Coptic music as contemporary Egyptian music,

rather than as a historical artifact set apart from secular sonic practices, is an important

moment of decolonization of Coptic music studies. In contrast to the "de-Europeanization"

and "de-musicalization" of European cross-cultural music studies that Ter Ellingson

identifies at the beginning of the twentieth century, this indigenous impact on the study of

Coptic music may be understood as a much belated "de-Europeanization" of Coptic music

studies through the engagement of Egyptian Copts in dialogues valorized by academic

institutions, as well as a "re-musicalization" of Coptic music studies through the reframing of

Coptic music as contemporary music rather than the sound objects of objectivist analysis or

the degenerate vestiges of the once vibrant musical forms of the Early Church or ancient Egypt (Ellingson 1992: 118). It is important to note, however, that this process of decolonization, and this specific case study of "de-Europeanization," is not a totalizing process in which European influence is completely disentangled and eliminated from musical discourse. This would, of course, be impossible in any absolute sense, and the continued use of European staff notation as well as the historical influence of European ideas and values on many of the components of *maqām* theory, such as the quarter-tone scale, demonstrate a continued legacy of colonial influence on Coptic and Arab musical discourse.

Nabil Kamal Buṭrus and Nabila Erian:

While Ilona Borsai gradually adopted the half-sharp and half-flat symbols, and the key signature formatting of modern Arab musical notation, and in doing so incorporated additional aspects of modern Arab music theory such as the organization of pitch categories into quartertones, it was the Master's Thesis of Nabīl Kamāl Buṭrus completed in 1976 at the Music College of Helwan University in Cairo that was the first academic publication to fully utilize the *maqām* system to describe Coptic chants. Buṭrus transcribed six chants and he presents a measure-by-measure analysis of their genera (i.e. trichords, tetrachords, and pentachords, Arabic: *ajnās*, s. *jins*) and summarizes the maqāmāt used in each chant:

Hymn	Performer	*Maqāmāt* Used	Reference
Festal Epouro	Muʿallim Farag ʿAbd al-Massīḥ	Bayyātī on D Rāst on C Sīkah on E half flat Rāst on G	(Buṭrus 1976: 281)

		Jahārkāh on F	
The First Hos	Muʻallim Farag ʻAbd al-Massīḥ	Jahārkāh on C ʻAjam on F ʻUshshāq on D Kurd on E	(Buṭrus 1976: 289)
Part of the Praise Song of the (Burning) Bush (*madīḥah al-ʻulīqah*)	Muʻallim Farag ʻAbd al-Massīḥ	Rast on C Bayāti on D Huzām on E half flat Shūrī on D Sūznāk on C	(Buṭrus 1976: 297)
Tai Shuri	Choir of the Coptic Orthodox Clerical College in Cairo	Huzām on E half flat Bayāti on D Rāst on C Huzām on E half flat Bayāti on G	(Buṭrus 1976: 303-4)
Shere Ne Maria	Choir of the Coptic Orthodox Clerical College in Cairo	Jahārkāh on F Kurd on A Bayāti on D Bayāti on G ʻAjam on Bb Rāst on F Sīkāh on A half flat Huzām on E half flat	(Buṭrus 1976: 316)
Thok Te Tigom	The Hymn Ensemble of the Buṭrusiyya Church	Nahāwand on E ʻAjam on G	(Buṭrus 1976: 323)

Both the large number of *maqāmāt* used relative to the length of each hymn, as well as the

specific *maqāmāt* being modulated between are extremely unusual in the context of

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traditional Arab music.[46] Nabila Erian, who completed a Ph.D. dissertation on Coptic music a

decade later, identifies the large number of *maqāmāt* in Buṭrus' analysis as an indication that

Arab modal theory is not well suited for the analysis of Coptic liturgical music and she

concludes that some of the genera that Buṭrus identified contain the pitches that correspond

to the genera of traditional Arab music, but that the "melodic treatment" (i.e. the other

characteristics of *maqām* mentioned above) is absent in the music (Erian 1986: 4-5, 276).

While Erian may be correct that Coptic liturgical melodies contain many of the

genera of traditional Arab music, while lacking other modal characteristics of corresponding

Arab *maqāmāt*, Buṭrus' analysis also fails to draw a clear distinction between the

identification of genera, which are note groupings that are bounded by tonic and dominant

(or sub-dominant) pitches, versus the identification of complete *maqāmāt*, which incorporate

two or more genera as well as the much broader set of characteristics that Erian summarizes

with the term "melodic treatment." While Buṭrus concludes his analysis of each hymn with a

table containing a column entitled "*maqām*" that lists modal terms that Buṭrus identifies for

each musical phrase of the hymn, and he follows each table with a summary that includes a

list entitled "The *maqāmāt* that are used in this *laḥn*," Buṭrus is actually referring to genera in

most of these instances. He includes the term "*al-jins*" ("genus") parenthetically under the

term "*maqām*" in the first two pages of his summary table for the first hymn (The Festal

Epouro) that he analyzes, but only the term "*maqām*" is included in the following pages of

analysis for that hymn as well as in all other tables and summaries for his analyses of other

hymns. In addition to this confusion of terms, it is important to note that the identification of

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[46] For example, Marcus notes that modulations between *maqām* Bayyātī on D and *maqām* Rast in C—which is the first modulation described by Buṭrus—do not occur in traditional Arab music (1992: 178).

genera is an interpretive practice, and that Buṭrus is perhaps overly zealous in his effort to identify the appearance of new genera (e.g. he identifies "Rast on C" in the third passage of the Festal Epouro despite any clear sense of the "C" being established as a new tonic or dominant). With the understanding that Buṭrus is mostly identifying genera, rather than *maqāmāt*, his analysis does not actually distinguish the hymns that he examined from compositions of traditional Arab music as Erian suggests. While modulations between eight *maqāmāt* would be extremely unusual in a musical composition that was only five or six minutes in length, the appearance of eight genera in a similar length of composition is much less unusual, particularly when considering that a more conservative analytical approach would have identified even less genera.

Nabila Erian expanded on the analytical work of Buṭrus with a detailed examination of the intervals, scales, and genera that she identified in approximately thirty-nine hours of recordings issued by the Music Department of the Higher Institute of Coptic Studies. Using the quarter-tone interval as the smallest intervallic unit, Erian constructed a scale for each chant and after eliminating repetitions of scale patterns isolated 151 unique scales (Erian 1986: 258). Using these scales she tallied the number of occurrences of each kind of interval:

Kind of Interval (in quarter tones, ordered by frequency of occurrence)	Number of occurrences
2	574
4	552
3	127
6	35
1	30

5	12

(Erian 1986: 259)

Erian's conclusion from this intervallic analysis is that Coptic music uses primarily half-tone (2) and whole tone (4) intervals, that the relatively infrequent use of three-quarter tone intervals (3) indicates that Coptic music is "basically a diatonic music" and that the less frequent use of three-quarter tone (3), one-quarter tone (1), and five-quarter tone (5) intervals may suggest that "the quarter tone intervals could possibly be a later influence of Arab music" (Erian 1986: 259-60). Unfortunately, Erian does not provide any data about traditional Arab music through which to compare the frequency of occurrence of quarter-tone intervals. She assumes that the number of one-, three-, and five-quarter tone intervals in her data is a lower proportion of the total intervals found in Coptic liturgical music than would be present in compositions of traditional Arab music, however a comparative analysis of traditional Arab music is necessary to support this conclusion.

Erian also derives scales from her data and identifies genera, which she compares to Greco-Byzantine modes and Arab *maqāmāt*:

Number of occurences[47]	Intervals (in quarter tones)	Greco-Byzantine modal equivalent	Arab *maqām* equivalent
7	4+4+2	Ionian, Mixolydian	'Ajam
7	2+2+2		
6	4+2+4	Dorian, Aeolian	Nahawānd
6	4+2+2		

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[47] Erian distilled all of the intervals that she recorded into a set of 25 scales. This category reflects how many times a genus appeared in those 25 scales.

4	2+4+4	Phrygian or Locrian	Kurd
3	2+6+2		Hijāz
2	2+2+4		
2	3+3+2		Ṣabā
1	2+4+2		
1	3+3+4		Bayāti
1	3+4+3		ʿIrāq

(Erian 1986: 275).

She concludes from her comparative analysis of modal intervals that four genera do not

correspond to genera in either Greco-Byzantine or Arab modal traditions and are unique to

Coptic chant: (4+2+2, 2+2+2, 2+2+4, and 2+4+2) (Ibid.). Erian's conclusion is problematic,

however, as interval 4+2+2 actually corresponds to the genus Ṣabā Būsalik and 2+4+2

corresponds to the genus Ṣabā Kurd, also known as Ṣabā Zamzamah, both rarely used but

still acknowledged by contemporary Egyptian music theorists (Marcus 1989: 305).

Moreover, it is difficult to ascertain whether her designation of 2+2+2 and 2+2+4 as distinct

genera rather than as tonal combinations containing leading tones, passing tones etc. is

reliable without more context. Further complicating the question of whether Coptic liturgical

music is compatible with the Arab maqām tradition, Erian concludes her discussion of Coptic

modal analysis with a discussion of two alḥān, laḥn Meghalo and laḥn Azbasesta, arguing

that both appear to correspond roughly to the Arab maqām Huzām in terms of the pitches

used in each hymn, but that laḥn Meghalo is inconsistent with the maqām in terms of

"phrase-ending notes, starting notes, pitches of emphasis, melodic direction and hierarchy of

pitches" while in laḥn Azbasesta these characteristics are "classically treated." (Erian 1986:

276). This observation suggests that the modal character of Coptic liturgical chant and its relationship to traditional Arab music may not be uniform across the canon of Coptic music.

Swiss Musicologist Magdalena Kuhn has argued that Coptic liturgical music does not utilize modes or scales at all but is composed through the formulaic combination of tropes (Kuhn 2014: 75). She claims that there are specific rules for the composition of tropic formulae, and that the first formula in each melody "serves as a 'recognizing melody' for the genre of a certain feast day" (Ibid.). At the same time, Kuhn recognizes the exact same formula or "recognizing melody" across three different melody-ritual categories, making it unclear how such a melody can signifying one genre or what function the typology serves if it does not (Ibid.).[48] Kuhn's reference to potential compositional rules is an extension of the observations of Erian, who noted the recurrence of "wandering themes" in Coptic music and the potential role of centonization in its composition, while also not precluding the use of scalar and modal analysis (Erian 1986: 246-8). Regardless of how systematized tropic composition of certain *alḥān* may have been, the theory provides one possible explanation for why certain chants contain genera used in traditional Arab music, while not demonstrating the broader characteristics of melodic movement and modulation associated with a particular maqām. However, the "classical treatment" that Erian identifies in *laḥn* Azbasesta would suggest that even if this tropic compositional approach was used for some hymns, others contain melodies that were composed in accord with common-practice maqām development or that were changed over time to reflect these practices.

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[48] For a more detailed discussion of these "recognizing melodies" (German: "Erinnerungsmelodien") see Chapter 14 "Musical Formulas" ("Musikalische Formeln") in Kuhn 2011: 370-98.

In terms of approaches to transcription, both Butrus and Erian depict melodies with less detail than Ilona Borsai and Margit Tōth, and their notation uses the half-sharp and half-flat notational symbols that reflect the theoretical framework of a quartertone system. Both scholars also transcribe hymns on absolute pitches that reflect the standard root positions of the maqāmāt. For example, Butrus (1976) and Erian (1986) both transcribe the *laḥn* Epouro, whose tonic, pitch set, and intervals correspond to maqām Bayyātī, on a D tonic with a B half-flat and E half-flat, the standard position for the maqām.
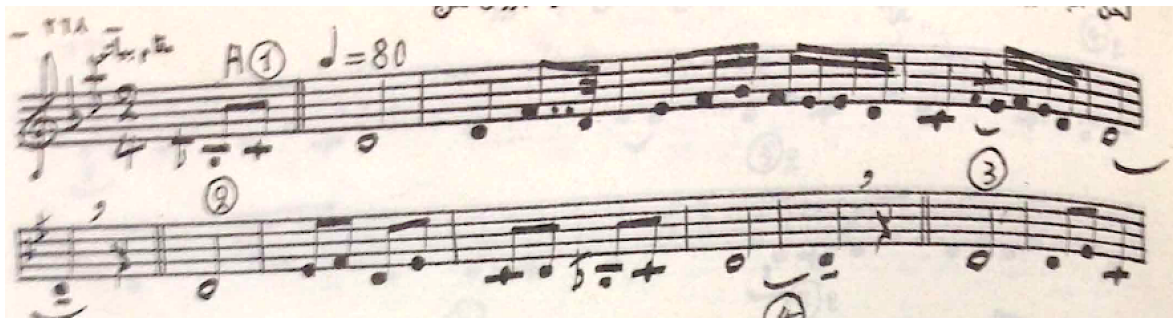
Figure 2-10. Excerpt from Nabīl Kamāl Buṭrus' transcription of laḥn Epouro, based on D, with "maqām Bayyātī" indicated above the time signature (Buṭrus 1976: 268).

Fig 2-11. Excerpt from Nabila Erian's transcription of laḥn Epouro, based on D, without an indicated key signature (Erian 1986: 244).

These notational practices reflect the broader theoretical frameworks and representational norms of the *maqām* tradition, and by utilizing them in this way Buṭrus and Erian are contributing to the construction of Coptic identity and situating it within the musical discourse of traditional Arab music.

<u>Contemporary Conceptualization of Coptic Chant</u>

While the use of European staff notation to describe or teach Coptic chant is still not widespread in the transnational Coptic community, its use has emerged in association with the use of musical instruments in non-liturgical performance contexts—something not permitted during the actual Liturgy—and in some otherwise more traditional pedagogical situations in diasporic communities. While there are some differences in the form of the notation used, the most widely shared examples all use the quartertone system of modern Arab music as an organizing principle and often also make some reference to the theoretical structures of the maqām system.

The most prominent group currently performing Coptic music in non-liturgical contexts are the David Ensemble, a Cairo-based group founded by ensemble leader George Kyrillos. The David Ensemble was originally established in 1975 as a four-member group with George Kyrillos singing and playing the 'ud, Nagi Fayek on piano, Edward Hanna on violin, and Moris Aziz on guitar. Over time the group grew into a large ensemble containing dozens of singers and instrumentalists and since the mid-1990s they have performed concerts in the Cairo Opera House in Egypt, as well as in different venues in France, Sweden, Germany, Italy, Greece, Russia, Serbia, Kazakhstan, Estonia, Canada, London, and the

United States. The David Ensemble website contains a page that provides PDF files of

musical notation for approximately fifty different Coptic hymns that are performed

monophonically as well a dozen or more original compositions by Kyrillos using four- or six-

part harmonies that he explains were inspired by the forms and melodies of Coptic music.

While Kyrillos' original compositions that employ harmonization avoid microtonal pitches,

and a small number of the Coptic chants that he notates are primarily diatonic and do not

utilize non-Western pitch categories, the rest of the Coptic chants are notated using the half-

flat and half-sharp symbols of modern Arab music. In at least one instance, for the laḥn

Epouro, he identifies a maqām in the header of the musical notation using the phrase

"SCALE: G Bayati":

Figure 2-12. Excerpt from George Kyrillos' transcription of laḥn Epouro (undated).

While it is unclear whether Kyrillos was using the bayyātī designation to suggest that the

laḥn simply utilizes the scale of maqām bayyātī (i.e. contains the same intervals between

pitches) or if the laḥn reflects the characteristics of the maqām (i.e. melodic movement,

characteristics phrases, typical starting and ending pitches etc.), my own interviews with

Kyrillos suggest that he does consider the maqām system to be a valid way to understand

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Coptic chant (personal communications, George Kyrillos, August 1st, 2014; February 6th 2016). In one exchange I had with him in a 2014 interview I asked him what research projects he thought would be most useful to pursue with regard to Coptic chant and he responded with the suggestion that I should catalogue all known Coptic hymns (which he tallied as 1048 in total) by their maqām (personal communications, George Kyrillos, August 1st, 2014). In addition, while Kyrillos did not identify maqāmāt for all of his online transcriptions, he did label all of the chants that he transcribed in his Master's Thesis with the names of corresponding maqāmāt (Kyrillos 2013: see tables on 96; 164).

In addition to the musical notation of George Kyrillos, the most prolific transcriber of Coptic chant using European staff notation is monk-priest Abraam Guirguis from the Monastery of St. George in Manūfīah Governorate, just north of Cairo. Father Abraam was ordained a monk in April of 1995 and shortly thereafter began notating Coptic chants using his 'ud as a musical aid. In 2011 he created the Facebook group "Coptic Hymns Notations" where he has continually uploaded notation for hundreds of Coptic hymns. Father Abraam's transcriptions contain a relatively low level of detail, what he himself describes as the "bone" of the melody for each chant (personal communication, Father Abraam Guirguis, May 4th 2016). He uses a type of free music notation software that does not permit the use of the traditional half-flat and half-sharp symbols of traditional Arab music, but he has adapted the notation by shrinking the size of accidental symbols in the key signature to express the same ideas. For each chant, Fr. Abraam includes a descriptive line in the header of the notation stating either the "maqām" to indicate that a chant is in a particular Arab maqām, using the phrase "fundamental maqām" ("al-maqām al-asāsī"), to indicate that the chant roughly follows a particular maqām but may deviate from it in certain ways, or the phrase "key

signature" ("al-dalīl," lit. "guide") to identify accidentals and sometimes a tonic pitch when no recognizable maqām correlates to the given chant. For example, in Fr. Abraam's transcription of the laḥn Epouro he identifies the piece with the Arabic phrase meaning "fundamental maqām: bayyātī" in the upper-right corner of the notation, indicating that the melody of the chant is roughly in maqām bayyātī but may not fully conform to all characteristics of the maqām:

Figure 2-13. Excerpt from Fr. Abraam Guirguis' transcription of laḥn Epouro (transcribed in 2013).

What these modern examples of notation of Coptic chant suggest is that despite some ambivalence surrounding the suitability of the quartertone system and the modal structures of the maqām system to describe and teach Coptic chant, these ideas have become the standard way for Egyptian Copts to describe and discuss their liturgical music. Like the later work of Ilona Borsai, contemporary Egyptian Copts notate their liturgical music using the half-flat and half-sharp symbols that reference the quartertone system, but unlike Borsai and earlier scholars they choose absolute pitches for their transcriptions that are compatible with the maqām system and also often explicitly reference particular maqāmāt, despite sometimes acknowledging their imperfect fit.

These recent efforts at conceptualization of Coptic music reflect a different approach than European scholars like Ménard who used European church modes as the basis for his analysis of Coptic music, and Borsai, who attempted to reconstruct traditional Coptic modes through the sonic archaeological methods of Bartók and Kodály. While the practitioners of this new approach to Coptic music conceptualization acknowledge differences between Coptic and traditional Arab music, the language and forms of representation of traditional Arab music have become the standard means through which to represent and discuss the structures of the music. Undoubtedly part of this shift is due to the fact that Egyptian Copts are now primarily in control of the theoretical discourses about Coptic music and they understandably draw on the language, terminology, and theoretical frameworks that are dominant in Egyptian culture.

Moreover, the performance of Coptic sacred music using musical instruments reinforces the perception of Coptic chant as *music*, rather than a sacred sonic practice that has primarily been of interest to scholars for what it may reveal about the ancient Egypt, or the Early European Church. In this way, the work of Coptic Egyptian scholars and musicians has connected Coptic music to a discourse on musical aesthetics that has long surrounded the practice of traditional Arab music. In his presentation at the International Congress of Coptic Studies in 2016, Dr. Michael Henein, the founder of the UK-based Coptic music performance group the St. Kyrel Choir, described his collaboration with musician Osama Fakhry, relating how he would sit and chant hymns while Osama worked to transcribe them. Dr. Henein noted how Osama was an extremely accomplished performer of traditional Arab music, explaining that he had performed with famous artists including Umm Kulthūm, the most famous Arab performer of the modern era, and despite being Muslim, Osama at one point

began to cry during their sessions, overcome by the beauty of the music (presentation by Dr. Michael Henein at the International Congress of Coptic Studies in Claremont, California, July 27th 2016). This anecdote highlights how the changes in musical conceptualization of Coptic chant first developed in the academic work of Nabīl Kamāl Buṭrus, Nabila Erian, and later elaborated in the transcriptions of Father Abraam Guirguis and the discourse of performance groups such as the David Ensemble and the St. Kyrel Choir have reinforced the notion of Coptic music as aesthetically valuable both within and outside of the Coptic Orthodox community.

CHAPTER 3

Vernacular Conceptualizations of Coptic Music

There is no system of Coptic music theory that has been widely adopted or acknowledged as authoritative by a significant number of Orthodox Copts. In Chapter 1, I discussed how 13th-and 14th-century Coptic intellectuals discussed their liturgical music with reference to an oktōēchos, or system of eight modes, however there is no evidence to suggest that these discussions ever had a tangible impact upon the pedagogy or performance of Orthodox liturgical chant in Egypt during that era or later, and this modal system is not used in pedagogy or musical analysis today (see Jeffery 2001; Borsai 1974; Ghaly 2013). In Chapter 2, I examined how the representation and conceptualization of Coptic music gradually shifted from frameworks that implied a connection to European musical and religious heritage to ones that reflected a more modern Egyptian conceptualization of the chant tradition using the half-flat and half-sharp symbols that became normative after the 1932 Cairo Congress, as well as references to the modal terminology of the maqām tradition. However, these accidental symbols do not necessarily equate to a clear doctrine on the nature of Coptic intonation, and references to maqām terminology are generally also accompanied by ambivalence concerning the limited ability of the terminology to accurately describe the forms and structures of the music.

While there is no clear consensus on intonational or melodic frameworks through which to conceptualize Coptic music, it is also true that individuals in the Coptic Orthodox community are continually conceptualizing Coptic music in different ways, in some cases for the practical purpose of communicating to each other about the music in order to facilitate

teaching and performance, and in other cases as more intellectual exercises that are aimed at provoking discussion and which often contribute to discourses about Coptic history, identity, and social and religious life. A number of scholars have discussed how systems of music theory are culturally mediated (Wright 1978: 2, 25; Burnham 1993: 77; Christensen 1993: 305; Perlman 2004: 4). While certain theoretical or interpretive musical frameworks may indeed be better or worse suited to describe particular musical phenomena, no system of music theory is simply a logical derivation of musical forms and practices detached from the extra-musical values and worldviews of its creators and practitioners. Moreover, theory always exists in a dialogic relationship with practice.

One way in which this dialogic relationship reveals itself is when the introduction of a new interpretive framework gradually changes how music is perceived and performed. An example of this dynamic may be observed in the adoption of the oktōēchos as a modal framework in the early Christian churches. Peter Jeffery notes how the oktōēchos system was originally introduced to new church communities as a thematic system of organizing and interpreting already extant hymns and then gradually came to influence the composition of new hymnody and approaches to improvisation as these categories became normalized over time (Jeffery 2001: 150). Similarly, Marcus (1989) has demonstrated how new ideas about the Arabic maqāmāt were introduced into theoretical discourse, and ultimately influenced practice as well.[49] Touching on this dynamic relationship between theory and practice, John Baily has introduced the distinction between a "static *representational* model that describes

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[49] e.g. There was a shift from conceptualizing a "finalis" or ending note for each maqām to the more Western notion of a tonic that is always the first and most prominent note of the central octave of the maqām. This in turn led to musicians introducing "ascending" renditions to maqāmāt that had traditionally been understood to have "descending" progressions in performance (Marcus 1989: 439-442).

what the musician already knows but which has little or no direct role in performance" and an "*operational* model that has a dynamic role in the control of ongoing musical performance" (Baily 1988: 114). Understanding the relationship between theory and practice as dialogic means being aware that representational models may sometimes transform into operational models and vice versa over time.

When musical conceptualization is examined more broadly, a distinction may be made between musical theorizations, and a formalized system of Music Theory. This distinction is primarily one of authority, which is often tied to the relative acceptance and deployment of particular theoretical frameworks within a given community but also to other processes through which authority is asserted, maintained, and normalized, such as proximity to particular institutions, codification in particular forms of media such as textbooks or hymnals, and recognition by particular individuals or groups that act as cultural gatekeepers or authorities in both musical and nonmusical domains. In this chapter I will examine musical theorizations that have some functionality, i.e. that at least some practitioners find to be useful in communicating and understanding their music, but which have not garnered the type of hegemonic status characteristic of more widely acknowledged, authoritative theoretical systems. I will refer to these as forms of *vernacular musical theorization*. In the context of Coptic Orthodox liturgical music, where no unified authoritative system of Music Theory exists, I argue that these forms of vernacular musical theorization are significant because they constitute the multiplicity of ideas and perspectives from which a more centralized, more authoritative interpretive framework may ultimately emerge.

I am situating this chapter within a body of scholarship that several scholars have referred to as "ethnotheory" (Feld 1981: 43; Nattiez 1990: 186; Agawu 1992; Perlman 2004:

4-6), a subset of the anthropological field of ethnoscience that emerged in the 1970s as a way of understanding insider approaches to musical conceptualization with a focus on interiorized knowledge and cognitive structures. Early scholarship in ethnoscience focused on mapping out semantic domains such as "kinship terms, plant and animal taxonomies or colour classifications" in order to better understand the worldview of individuals and communities (Ingold 2000: 160-1). This approach was prefigured to a certain degree in John Blacking's analysis of the organological nomenclature of the Venda (1967: 20-1) and more fully developed by Hugo Zemp (1978, 1979) in his classificatory studies of 'Are'are musical instruments and concepts, Tim Rice (1980) in his examination of the classificatory schemes of Bulgarian villagers, and Steven Feld (1981) in his exploration of Kaluli musical theorizations.

While this early ethnotheoretical work treated the conceptual frameworks as relatively homogenous ones with boundaries that corresponded to those of a specific community or cultural group, more recent scholarship in this vein has attempted to account for the variation of individual perspectives within a given community. Ingrid Monson has explored how the different approaches of George Russell and John Coltrane to theorizing improvisation in the context of modal jazz reflected particular transnationally-oriented spiritual and musical interests and political views (Monson 1998), and Marc Perlman has examined the theories of "unplayed melody" espoused by three different practitioners of *karawitan*, demonstrating how these different theories are linked to different cognitive strategies (Perlman 2004). Like Monson and Perlman, I do not describe a single, representative, perspective that characterizes the entire Coptic Orthodox community, but instead engage with the multiplicity of approaches to conceptualizing particular aspects of

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Coptic liturgical music. I explore these in the context of two specific issues: intonation, and the concept of the "fundamental *laḥn*"—a polysemous phrase that carries with it the meaning of both a fundamental "melody" and also the larger encompassing notion of a fundamental "hymn."

The specific individuals whose perspectives I examine here are worth special consideration because of their ability to influence the future codification of a more formal music theory. These include muʿallimūn, who are considered to be the most highly trained experts in Coptic cantillation and whose authority derive from their extensive memorization of hymns as well as their roles as leaders in their respective church communities, educators in the small number of formal institutions where Coptic music is taught, and musicians and ensemble leaders who are at the forefront of the production of musical notation, academic discourse, and public performance of Coptic music. By examining their remarks on the intonation of Coptic music, as well as the strategies that they propose for determining the essential melody of a liturgical hymn, I reveal the different assumptions concerning hymnodic authority and the different forms of knowledge that have the potential to shape a Coptic music theory.

It should also be noted that I treat the assertions made by my interlocutors concerning what does or does not constitute Coptic intonation, or the essential melody of a given *laḥn* as statements about musical ideals. When such statements are made in the context of any musical tradition they do not describe how all practitioners realize their musical performances. Rather they assert a practical standard that acts as a way to determine which performances are correct and which are not. In this way, such statements, when granted authority by the wider community, serve as a disciplinary force on the pedagogy and

performance practice of members of that community. Thus I explore these statements for their potential to serve such a disciplinary role, but ones that currently have only limited influence because of the multiplicity of such perspectives and the lack of an authoritative endorsement of any one perspective in this current historical moment.

Conceptualizing Coptic Intonation

A great deal of ambivalence exists in the historical remarks about the intonation of Coptic liturgical music. In the mid 17th-century, Athanasius Kircher describes the intonation of the music as more closely resembling Gregorian chant and Greek psalmody than "the song of the Hebrews and some other Oriental peoples" (Kircher 1643: 516), and Villoteau's transcription of Coptic music from the turn of the 18th-century contains no indications of pitches outside of the European twelve tone scale, however based on his polemical remarks of disgust at the music it appears likely that he would have misinterpreted intonational divergence from European pitch categories as poor technique (Villoteau 1809: 754-7). François-Joseph Fétis claimed to have a text in his personal library that described ten Coptic modes using "the numbers of the general scale of Arab sounds" ("*Dans ce traité les notes des tons sont indiquées par les chiffres de l'échelle générale des sons arabes*"), suggesting an equivalence between Coptic and Arab musical sounds, yet he describes the modes using a patchwork of references to then-contemporary European scales, apparent 13th-century Arab modes, and Roman plain-chant modes (Fétis 1874: 97ft3). In his transcriptions of liturgical hymns, Father Jules Blin clearly expresses the idea that the intonation of the music does not conform to the pitches of a European diatonic scale, and he references European theories that

postulated third-tone Arabic intervals as a potential alternative system that might explain Coptic intonation as well (Blin 1888: preface, no page number).

By contrast, when Father Louis Badet's revised edition of Blin's transcriptions was published eleven years later, Blin asserts the clear diatonic character of Coptic music, going so far as to present the seven primary diatonic scales of the European system as the modes of Coptic music, implicitly suggesting an equivalence between European and Coptic intonation (Badet 1936 [1899]: v). The writings and transcriptions of Ernest Newlandsmith replicate these ideas concerning Coptic tonality as "diatonic" in contrast to the "chromatic" tonality of Arab music (Newlandsmith 1932a, 1932b), and while the transcriptions of Hans Hickmann (1952: 106), René Ménard (1954: 24; 1958: 1616-1617), Margit Tóth, and Ilona Borsai (Borsai and Tóth 1969; Borsai: 1968, 1972, 1979; Tóth 1998). began to incorporate notational symbols to indicate microtonal deviations from the European pitch categories represented in the system of European staff notation that they used, they avoided making generalizations about intonational norms in favor of close readings of specific performances, leaving open the question of whether a distinct system of Coptic intonation exists.

Following the emergence of Coptic Egyptian scholarship on the liturgical music tradition of the Coptic Orthodox Church, Nabīl Kamāl Buṭrus (1976) and Nabila Erian (1986) began to utilize the half-flat and half-sharp symbols of traditional Arab music as well as terminology from the theoretical framework of the maqām tradition. Buṭrus does not address the question of intonation explicitly, but his enthusiastic adoption of genera (ajnās) and modes (maqāmāt) of traditional Arab music as analytical tools for describing Coptic hymns implies an acceptance of the normative intonation associated with those frameworks. While Erian is more critical of the application of maqām theory to Coptic chants, she also

acknowledges the presence of Arab genera while noting that the specific intonation of performers varies widely (Erian 1986: 257). With the work of Buṭrus and Erian, as well as in later transcriptions and scholarship by Egyptians, there is a gradual convergence on forms of musical notation and discourse that imply an equivalence between Coptic and Arabic intonation, despite an absence of explicit statements about intonation.

However, Erian's recognition of the variability of intonation among different performers reveals the disjuncture between an ideal theory of tonality that may never be perfectly realized and intonation as it actually exists in practice. Absent authoritative discourses concerning the nature of Coptic intonation, the relative authority of the intonational norms of traditional Arab music within Egypt may influence the ways in which both performers and scholars of Coptic chant think and talk about their liturgical music. At the same time, these norms may be contested through vernacular music theorizations, discourses on the nature of Coptic musical form and structure that situate Coptic music in a larger network of meanings, which also inform constructions of Coptic history and identity. One of the most prominent aspects of these discourses involves situating Coptic music as either part of a larger contemporary Egyptian musical world through the acknowledgment of shared Coptic and Arabic sonic structures, or as separate from contemporary Arab music and tied to a pre-Islamic musical history in ways that draw connections to the culture of ancient Egypt or even the shared roots of Coptic Egypt and Christian Europe. Understanding these vernacular musical theorizations as implicated in these politics of identity, I will examine several different perspectives on Coptic intonation that were expressed to me by individuals who participate in the performance and education of Coptic hymnody today.

I will now explore the vernacular musical theorizations of a few individuals who are uniquely situated to influence the perception of Coptic liturgical music within the Coptic community. These include ensemble directors Michael Henein and George Kyrillos who both direct large Coptic music performance groups and frequently speak publicly about the tradition to Coptic and non-Coptic audiences, theorist and educator Māgid Samu'īl Ibrāhīm who was the director of the Department of *Alḥān* and Coptic Music at the Institute of Coptic Studies at the Patriarchal compound in Cairo at the time of my research, and lastly, a musician who performs instrumental arrangements of Coptic music on a popular Coptic satellite television station whose name I did not learn. I will review each of their remarks on Coptic intonation and discuss how their perspectives are implicated in particular discourses of identity.

Michael Henein is the leader of a UK-based charity for poor Coptic-Egyptian students called the St. Kyrel Trust, and his organization is affiliated with a Coptic music performance group called the St. Kyrel Choir, which performs Coptic *alḥān* with instrumental accompaniment at cultural and religious events in the UK and continental Europe. On the website for the group, Henein offers a perspective on Coptic intonation that aligns closely with the view of many Orthodox Copts: "Coptic sacred music today consists mainly of chanted hymns using the quarter tones of the Arabic scale, although it is not identical to Arab music" (http://stkyrelchoir.com/coptic-music/ accessed Thursday Sept. 20th 2018). This statement asserts an equivalence between Coptic and Arabic intonation while emphasizing a fundamental difference between the musics. The nature of this difference is left unexplained, but it may be interpreted from a social functionalist perspective as a way for Henein and

other Copts to "assert authority and control over their history or the interpretation of their own texts" (Solie 1993: 2). At the same time, the recognition of a shared system of intonation makes Coptic music intelligible as *music*, rather than simply as sacred sonic practice. This notion of musicality is reinforced by the Choir's use of instrumentalists trained in traditional Arab music who themselves rely on musical notation that was created by Coptic Egyptian Safwat Guirguis and Muslim Egyptian Osama Fakhry, who conceptualized the chants using the modern Arabic system of intonation as well as the maqām system as the basis for their transcriptions (presentation by Dr. Michael Henein at the International Congress of Coptic Studies in Claremont, California, July 27th 2016).

A similar but slightly different response emerged when I questioned George Kyrillos, the leader of the Cairo-based group the David Ensemble, which also performs choral arrangements of Coptic *alḥān* with instrumental accompaniment, internationally as well as on Coptic satellite television. When I asked Kyrillos about the relationship between Coptic and Arab music, he did not readily accept the equivalence of intonation between Coptic and Arab music. Instead, he claimed that the two traditions were distinguished by microtonal differences in intonation. He explained that the half-flat and half-sharp pitches were not exactly equal-tempered but were sometimes slightly higher or lower in pitch. This perspective raises interesting questions about the divergence of theory and practice with regard to intonation in traditional Arab music. In practice, microtonal variation of particular scale degrees is actually something standard to the performance of traditional Arab music (for multiple perspectives on this phenomenon see Marcus 1989: 228-235).[50] While these

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[50] For example, many professional musicians in Egypt are taught that one should perform the note E half-flat slightly lower for maqām bayyātī and slightly higher for maqām rast.

aspects of intonation are generally not addressed in music theory books they are an important part of performance training in music schools as well as among private instructors. When I mentioned to Kyrillos that this intonational variance was also common to traditional Arab music performance, and gave the example of my own training on the 'ud with Professor Hussein Saber from the Music College of Helwan University, Kyrillos seemed unaware of the practice but did not disagree on this point. This may be explained by the fact that Kyrillos earned a Master's degree in conducting at the Higher Institute for Arab music with a heavy emphasis on European Art music, but did not have extensive training in Arab music performance. While he may not have had a clear understanding of intonation in traditional Arab music performance, his assertion of a fundamental difference between Coptic and Arabic intonation performs the same function of asserting authority and control of the history and interpretation of Coptic musical heritage.

A different perspective on how Coptic intonation was structured came from Māgid Samu'īl Ibrāhīm, the head of the Department of Alḥān and Coptic Music at the Institute of Coptic Studies in the Winter of 2015. After the conclusion of a class on alḥān I had a conversation with the class instructor John Nasry Zakher and Dr. Ibrāhīm (personal communication, Māgid Samu'īl Ibrāhīm, December 26th, 2015). During that conversation Dr. Ibrāhīm explained that his personal view on Coptic intonation is that it has "soft genera" ("agnās rakhwa"), a concept that Dr. Ibrāhīm apparently borrowed from Ancient Greek and modern Byzantine music theory.[51] He explained that the outer notes of a soft tetrachord are

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[51] Curt Sachs explains that in Ancient Greece, "a tetrachord was considered softer than another if the distance between its two top notes was larger" and that later "Arabian theorists" defined a Greek tetrachord as "soft if one of the three steps exceeded the sum of the two others" (Sachs 1943: 212).

fixed in pitch, but that the pitch of the inner notes shift depending on the notes that precede and follow them in a composition. To illustrate this point he had my instructor John chant the beginning of the *laḥn* "Pi-ehmot Ghar," while following along with a transcription of the same *laḥn* that I had completed earlier. While doing this he claimed that the first Eb that John chanted was "standard" but that a later Eb that came before a large intervallic jump was approximately 30 cents sharp, and he argued that this variability of pitch is characteristic of Coptic music. Moreover, Dr. Maged went on to argue that one of the reasons melodic instruments are not permitted with the performance of the alḥān in ritual contexts is that the use of musical instruments distorts the pitch by flattening out the pitches of these slightly raised or lowered notes.

Finally, during a visit to the Institute of Coptic Studies in early 2016, I attended a small roundtable given by two prominent Coptic scholars, Father Basilius Sobhi and Bishop Makar of Shūbra, concerning how to conduct research on Coptic music, and following this event I encountered a young man sitting in a nearby administrative office who explained that he was a musician who performed on the CTV Coptic Orthodox Church Channel (personal communication, Unknown, January 29th, 2016). After explaining his work playing the 'ud and violin, I asked him if he thought there were any substantial differences between Coptic music and traditional Arab music and he replied that he thought that Coptic music was more similar to Turkish music, giving the example that the pitch of the note sīkāh is more varied between different maqāmāt in Coptic music than in traditional Arab music. His explanation was different from George Kyrillos, in that he was aware that such pitches already vary in the Egyptian maqām tradition. Instead he distinguished Coptic music by arguing that the intonation varied more, similar to the Turkish system in which a whole step is divided into

nine smaller intervals (commas), five of which are realized in actual performance. Using the comma system, Turkish music theorists conceptualize variant intonation in a more methodical manner than in traditional Arab musical performance where microtonal deviations are not typically described or conceptualized using any system that recognizes precise intervallic ratios. Similarly, the CTV musician's theorization differed from Dr. Ibrāhīm's notion of "soft genera" in that he described a consistent pitch for each note within the same maqām rather than a variance of pitch determined by the notes preceding and following a given note.

These four perspectives on Coptic intonation may be summarized as follows: that it is the same as Arabic intonation, that it differs in unspecified ways from Arabic intonation, that it differs through microtonal deviations of specific notes based on the Byzantine concept of "soft genera," and that it differs through the microtonal deviation of specific notes in a systematic way similar to the modern system of intonation used in the Turkish makam tradition. While each of these perspectives presents a fundamentally different perspective on Coptic intonation, each also makes different cultural and historical associations. As mentioned above, Michael Henein's assertion of equivalence between Coptic and Arabic intonation establishes a basis for musical and cultural equivalence. By contrast, the claims of George Kyrillos, Māgid Samu'īl Ibrāhīm, and the CTV musician, assert a uniqueness of Coptic music on a more basic level. While Kyrillos elaborated less on the specifics of this uniqueness, Dr. Ibrāhīm and the CTV musician presented more developed theories of difference that articulated Coptic music to different musical traditions and cultures. Dr. Ibrāhīm's implicit references to Byzantine music theory suggest a musical connection to the traditions of the Eastern Orthodox churches that utilize this system today. Eastern Orthodox

churches are predominantly European, and were once in communion with the Coptic Orthodox Church but separated following the Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE. A shared system of intonation between these groups implies cultural ties to Europe and to the Early Church, suggesting that the differences between Coptic and Arab music reflect the preservation of early Christian musical practices. By contrast, comparisons to the modern Turkish system of intonation establish parallels between the Coptic tradition and an artistic tradition with roots in the multicultural musical heritage of the Ottoman Empire. While Egypt was under Ottoman rule for a period, there is no obvious historical explanation for Turkish-Coptic cultural influence that would not also be mirrored by Turkish-Arabic cultural influence. Thus claims to similarity between the Turkish and Coptic systems of intonation more immediately evoke general sentiments among many Egyptians concerning Turkish artistic sophistication.

<u>Conceptualizing the *Lahn*</u>

The Arabic term "*laḥn*" has at least three distinct but overlapping meanings in the context of Coptic music. These meanings include *laḥn* as "melody," *laḥn* as "hymn," and *laḥn* as "melody-type" or "mode." The first meaning of *laḥn* as "melody" is a more general meaning that is utilized by Coptic and non-Coptic Arabic speakers. The concept of *laḥn* as a genre designation for a type of liturgical hymn is unique to Coptic culture. In this second sense, the term *laḥn* is generally used to refer to all congregational and diaconal chants used in Coptic Orthodox liturgical services, however there is some ambivalence concerning whether the shortest liturgical chants should be referred to using this term. For example,

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scholar Nabila Erian distinguishes smaller, strophic chants from longer through-composed ones using the term *ṭarā'iq* (s. *ṭarīqah*) for the former and *alḥān* (s. *laḥn*) for the latter (Erian 1986: 218). While Erian suggests that this binary categorization of liturgical chant was part of common usage by priests and cantors at the time of her writing in the mid-1980s, none of my own interlocutors in Egypt or the United States were aware of this meaning for the term *ṭarā'iq* or of this broader classificatory framework suggesting that the distinction may now be obsolete. At the same time, I did encounter different approaches to using the term *laḥn* that were informed by the relative length of the chants, with one deacon that I interviewed referring to a short congregational response as "that three second *laḥn*," while others insisted that the term *laḥn* only really applied to chants that were a few minutes in length. In these latter instances my interlocutors would describe chants that were too short to be considered *alḥān* with terms referencing the specific function of chants (i.e. "responses," "lections," or "aspasmos") rather than with a more general term such as *ṭarā'iq*. Despite this ambivalence in the semantic boundaries of the term *laḥn*, the more general understanding of the term as designating a genre is consistent throughout Coptic Orthodox culture, and unique within the larger cultural context of Egypt.

The meanings of *laḥn* as "melody" and "hymn" are also often deployed ambiguously, for example in the frequent references to different length hymns that utilize the same text and contain a portion of the same melody. Such hymns are often distinguished by phrases such as "*al-laḥn al-mulakhkhaṣ*," ("the abridged hymn"/"the abridged melody") or "*al-laḥn al-kabīr*" ("the long hymn"/"the long melody"). In addition to these ambiguous uses of the term, specific hymns are identified with unique names that clearly deploy the term *laḥn* as an equivalent to the English concept of "hymn" such as *laḥn al-baraka* (lit. "The Hymn of

Peace," referring to the hymn Tenousht Emefiot), *laḥn al-thalāth ṭaqdisāt* (lit. "The Hymn of the Three Sanctifications," referring to the hymn Agios O Theos), and *laḥn ḥulūl al-rūḥ al-qads* (lit. "The Hymn of the Incarnation of the Holy Spirit," referring to the hymn Pi Epnevma) (see Buṭrus 1976: 144 for additional examples).

The third meaning of the term *laḥn* as "melody-type" or "mode" has roots in some of the earliest Coptic writings in the Arabic language. Marian Robertson explains that use of the term *laḥn* in the context of Coptic music emerged initially as a translation of the Coptic term *ikhos* (ⲏⲭⲟⲥ), itself derived from the Greek term *ekhos*, to reference "a certain melody or melody type" (Robertson 1991: 1425a). This early usage includes the work of Coptic scholar Abū Isḥāq al-Mu'taman Ibrāhīm Ibn al-'Assāl from the early 13th century, in which Abū Isḥāq describes eight theoretical modes that mirror the oktōēchos of other Eastern Christian churches (see Erian 1986: 209-210). However, while Abū Isḥāq used the term to refer to (theoretical) modes, more recent use of the term *laḥn* may be better understood as a less precise reference to melody-type that corresponds to the six primary types of Church rituals: festal (Arabic: *farāyḥī*), sorrowful (Arabic: *ḥazāynī*), Palm Sunday (Arabic: *sha'ānīnī*), Kiahk (Arabic: *kīahkī*), fasting (Arabic: *ṣiyāmī*), and annual (Arabic: *sanawī*).

These terms are often used to distinguish between chants that have the same text but different melodies corresponding to a broader aesthetic and spiritual orientation. For example, there are three different versions of the *laḥn* Agios O Theos (also known as "the Trisagion"): an annual version that is chanted during regular liturgical services, a festal version that is chanted during feasts and weddings, and a sorrowful version that is chanted on Good Friday and during funerals. Priests, deacons, and laypeople will often describe these hymns by saying that one is "in the festal melody-type" ("*bi-l-laḥn farāiḥi*") or "in the

sorrowful melody-type" ("*bi-l-laḥn hazāynī*"), however conceptions of the nature of these melody-types varies widely with some believing that they correspond to modes similar to the Arabic *maqāmāt,* others believing that only basic motifs or more general melodic characteristics are shared within a particular melodic/ritual category, and still others believing that no consistent melodic structure exists within these categories at all and thus use such descriptive phrases in a manner more in line with the first meaning of the term *laḥn* as "melody" (i.e. to identify a version of the hymn as being "in the festal melody" rather than melody-type). As I discuss in Chapter 2, Ilona Borsai has also argued that this type of terminology found in written form in older liturgical books suggests a historical understanding of Coptic modes that is now lost, and she has attempted to reconstruct modal knowledge by identifying parallels between such terminology and portions of melodies shared between particular hymns (Borsai 1972: 348-354). While the use of the term *laḥn* to refer to melody-type or mode is uncommon outside of the Coptic community, Scott Marcus has noted its use to refer to musical mode in this manner by 19th-century Lebanese historian and theorist Mashaqah as well as more limited references to the term by other theorists of traditional Arab music in the modern era (Marcus 1989: 323-4). In the remainder of this chapter I will interrogate the concept of "*al-laḥn al-asāsī*," which may be understood in the context of my interviews and ethnographic observation to mean both "the essential melody" and "the essential hymn," but in this case does not refer to the concept of mode or melody-type.

<u>Bones versus Flesh: The Essential melody</u>

While historical efforts at standardization within the Coptic Orthodox Church have focused largely on the order of rites, the specific texts used, and the names and order of specific *alḥān* that are to be performed at different ritual moments, there has been much less attention paid to the actual standardization of the melodies of the *alḥān*. There are significant differences in the performance of *alḥān* that might be attributed to regional styles (e.g. the Alexandrian rendition of The Trisagion "Agios O Theos" compared to the Cairean rendition) indicating a multiplicity of conceptualizations of the essential melodies of the *alḥān* that has not been entirely controlled or unified by religious authority. Moreover, as is common in oral traditions, variation also exists within recognized regional stylistic groups and such variation is observable both between particular church congregations, and between individual chanters.

Agios O Theos
(The Trisagion)

Figure 3-1. My transcription of five renditions of a portion of the Coptic *laḥn* Agios O Theos from cantors in or around Cairo. The transcriptions of Cantors Zaki Mowad and Maged Milad are based on my own recordings, those of Cantors Gad Lewis and Ibrāhīm Ayad are made from recordings on tasbeha.org, and the transcription of Cantor Mikhail is based on a recording from the Ragheb Moftah collection hosted by the Library of Congress. I have pitch adjusted the transcriptions in order to facilitate comparison.

To a lesser degree, variation is also observable within the same chanter's renditions of the same *laḥn*.[52] While regional variation is generally recognized as an indication of fundamental differences in the melodic performance of the *alḥān*, these other types of melodic variation are interpreted by practitioners of Coptic chant as variation that exists within the bounds of a coherent tradition. Within this context, melodic differences are explained as forms of ornamentation or embellishment, and melodic consistency is asserted through the

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[52] For an example of melodic analysis that incorporates variation both between different chanters and also between different renditions of the same chanter see (Hickmann 1952).

conceptualization of an "essential melody," an abstraction which is posited to exist in an identical form across performances.

Because the Coptic Orthodox liturgical tradition does not recognize a single authoritative source for the essential melody of each hymn, this normative concept takes the form of a multiplicity of vernacular musical theorizations. The issue of an essential melody for each *laḥn* is an ideological one, as every performance of a *laḥn* is an act of interpretation in which a melodic ideal is given voice. I made a number of observations concerning how people talked about this topic during visits to the Institute of Coptic Studies at the Patriarchal compound in 'Abbāsiyya and St. Mary and St. Anthony's Deacon School in Nasr City, and I spoke with several cantors, priests, and Coptic music scholars about this concept. I discovered that the notion of an essential melodic line is widespread in the Coptic community, and that it is often discussed using the same metaphorical language and concepts used by non-Coptic Egyptians when discussing other types of music. I elicited strategies for distinguishing the essential melody from vocal ornamentation, and through the responses that I received I was able to construct a more detailed picture of the different ways in which the concept of an essential melody is conceptualized and the implications of these conceptual models for the performance and preservation of the Coptic *alḥān*.

I first learned about the common metaphor of "bone" ("*aẓm*") and "flesh" ("*laḥm*") to describe melodic performance in the winter of 2015/2016 as I spent several months studying the 'ud – a traditional Arab lute – with Dr. Hussein Saber, a senior professor at the College of Music Education (*Kulliyat al-tarbiyyah al-mūsīqiyyah*) at Helwan University in Zamalek, Cairo. Every week I would meet with Dr. Hussein and we would begin my lessons by reviewing scales, and then I would present the repertoire that I was given to learn the

previous week at a tempo of his choosing, usually followed by a discussion during which Dr.

Hussein would give me warm and paternal encouragement and sometimes an anecdote or

larger lesson relating to music or life before we launched into the more laborious task of

correcting my many mistakes. During one of these mid-lesson exchanges we began

discussing acceptable and unacceptable ways to ornament the melody of a *samāʿī*

composition that I was studying, and Dr. Hussein diverted the conversation with an anecdote

from the early days of his career when he was a young performer who had just joined the

prestigious Arab Music Ensemble (*Firqat al-Mūsīqā al-ʿArabiyyah*). "One day," he recalled,

"the maestro said to me that before I could ornament and embellish the piece that I was

performing, I needed to master the basic melody. He said, first you need the *ʿaẓm* — the bone

– then you can have the *laḥm* – the flesh. In the same way, you need the bone of the melody

to be perfect, and only then can you add the various ornaments to make it sound truly

beautiful." I reminded Dr. Hussein of this exchange months later and he reconfirmed the

notion, mentioning that both Maestro ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Nuwayrah of the Arab Music Ensemble

and Maestro Aḥmad Fuʾād Ḥasan of the equally prestigious Diamond Ensemble (*Firqat al-*

Māsiyah) made similar remarks to him during his time with both ensembles. In the context of

ʿud performance, Dr. Hussein characterized the distinction between bone and flesh as a

distinction between the exact replication of written notation and replication supplemented by

the use of various techniques involving the inclusion of additional notes and rhythmic

movements not present in the written notation (see table 1 below).

Table 1: Bone vs. Flesh in 'ud performance

Bone	Flesh
Melody performed in basic rhythm (i.e. exactly as presented in musical notation)	Additional layer of rhythm played within and across the temporal space of each note.
No octave doubling	Octave doubling
No additional notes	Additional notes, such as ascending or descending melodic lines that connect the end of the final note of a *khānah* or *taslīm* to the first note of the following *khānah* or *taslīm*.
No trills	Trills on long sustained notes
All half-flats played with static intonation	Some half-flats played by sliding upward from a full flat to a half-flat or slightly higher (Note: Dr. Hussein described this particular technique as a "Turkish" in style, despite being an approach that he taught regularly)

      The broader lesson here is one familiar to many students of music throughout the world: master your fundamentals before focusing on the more complicated and nuanced aspects of your musicking. What later became clear to me, though, was that this particular metaphor for conceptualizing the melodic essence of a composition (the Arabic word *'aẓm* meaning "bone") in contrast to the relatively malleable and idiosyncratic musical characteristics that are the product of performative interpretation (*laḥm* meaning "flesh"), and the larger metaphor of the living body for this relationship, is an idea that shapes the conceptualization of the religious repertory of the Coptic Church just as it influenced Dr. Hussein's own understanding and that of his esteemed mentors in regard to the largely

secular repertoire of Arab art music which they performed. However, while Dr. Hussein explicitly contrasted the melodic metaphor of bone with the complimentary metaphor of flesh, the scholars, cantors, and clergy from the Coptic community who I spoke with would generally only use the term "bone" when discussing the essence of Coptic musical forms, and would contrast this with more detailed terms such as *'urab* (embellishment) and *ḥilya* (ornamentation).

It is also important to emphasize that while Dr. Hussein regarded the exact performance of written notation as the bone of a melody, the tradition of Coptic liturgical music still relies almost entirely on aural/oral sources (including a heavy reliance on online audio recordings). Despite the widespread recognition of the existence of a bone for each Coptic *laḥn*, the specific character of the bone is often determined by working backwards from a uniquely fleshed-out melody rather than by reference to an authoritative representation of the bone itself. This process of determining the bone of the *laḥn* using different unique renditions produces a certain degree of variability in the construction of the ideal, essential melody, however this variability was often dismissed as insignificant by the Coptic scholars, cantors, and clergy with whom I spoke about them. It is important to note here that this dismissal was not indicative of a lack of intellectual curiosity or reflective of an ignorance of the conflicting interpretations present in the analysis and theorization of Coptic liturgical music. Rather, it identifies what types of difference and similarity are important within a Coptic worldview.

As a musician and music scholar raised in the thoroughly text-based tradition of European and North American art music I would often write out the *alḥān* that I recorded in church or during lessons with cantors in order to properly "see" the melody so that I could

better understand and memorize it. Often different renditions of the same *laḥn* by different individuals would sound very similar to me and it was not until I had transcribed the sounds that I began to see substantial differences between the renditions. By contrast, the numerous individuals that I engaged with who were raised learning *alḥān* through primarily oral/aural methods and who were generally unfamiliar with Western musical notation understood difference with their ears alone, and their criteria for difference and clarity concerning the bone and the flesh of a *laḥn* were different from mine. My own bias towards a particular idea of clarity and exactness is intertwined with my use of written musical notation as a primary means of representing actual and idealized musical performance. After transcribing the often fluid and dynamic vocal sounds that I heard into the rubric of discrete notes and metered divisions of tempo I would produce a visual representation of those sounds that would allow me to make binary comparisons (e.g. "this note matches"/"that note doesn't match"). By contrast, most practitioners of Coptic music determine similarity and difference based on broader ideas of melodic contour, the identification of distinctive melodic figures, and counting the number of times particular phrases or ideas repeat.

Thus the very notion of what constitutes a precise definition of a bone or essential melody of a particular *laḥn* is rooted in the method by which musical sound is conceptualized. When musical sound is transcribed using Euro-American musical notation, the written text contains a certain degree of ambiguity that is accepted and regarded to be insignificant in the representation of the essential melody. Numerous choices exist for the performer within this space of indeterminacy: changes in pitch that are small enough so as not to transgress the limits of being "in tune," changes in tempo that are similarly small enough so as to maintain the perception of being "in time," changes in amplitude that may

not be proscribed or may be only loosely defined by terms that present a range of energetic possibilities, changes in timbre that are rarely proscribed at all in written musical notation, etc. These performative choices are often codified as elements of style rather than as variations in melodic performance, and they are often ignored or deemed insignificant.

Similarly, many participants in the performative tradition of Coptic liturgical music reveal a space of indeterminacy within their own conceptualization of the music. When I translated renditions of *alḥān* into the format of Euro-American musical notation, much of this indeterminacy was then translated into melodic difference. The practice of deducing the bone of a *laḥn* using unique examples of its performance does result in frequent melodic differences from the perspective of the text-based Euro-American tradition, but these differences are not substantial differences according to most of the practitioners with whom I spoke. The use of different unique performances as the basis for deduction, and the different methods of deduction themselves were understood to generally produce the same melodic bone. This bone contains within it spaces of indeterminacy in the same manner as the written texts of the Euro-American tradition, however the specific nature and boundaries of this indeterminacy are different.

The first time that I encountered the metaphor of bone as melodic essence in the context of Coptic liturgical music was during a visit to the weekly Friday class "The *Alḥān* and Coptic Music" at the Institute of Coptic Studies. It was December 26th, 2016 when I attended class that day, usually a day subsumed into the Christmas holiday season in the United States, but not so in Egypt where Coptic Orthodox Christians celebrate the Feast of the Nativity on January 7th. John Nasry Zakher, a deacon and aspiring scholar working towards his Master's degree in Coptic music, was the lecturer in class that day. After passing

around some incense for each of us to take as a *baraka* (blessing) and leading a joint prayer to open the class, John welcomed me as a visitor to the class and explained that they were working on memorizing the annual Verses of Cymbals. John had his laptop connected to a projector displaying the words to the Verses of Cymbals in Coptic, alongside a translation of their meaning in Arabic, and for the rest of the class he led us through the *laḥn*, verse by verse, first pronouncing the Coptic words, then reading their translated meaning in Arabic, and finally reciting the Coptic words using the appropriate melody and having us repeat him each time until we rendered the words and melody correctly. Near the end of the class one of the students responded abruptly to John's rendition of the final notes of the *laḥn*, "but doesn't it end like this?" and the student repeated the melodic line of the *laḥn* extending the last vowel of the final word in the verse with a few additional tones. "Muʿallim Gad sings it like this," he added, referencing a senior cantor of the church. In response, John chided him gently, "this is not the bone (*ʿaẓm*) of the *laḥn*. It is embellishment (*ʿurab*)." The student, who often interjected questions and appeared to enjoy playfully challenging John throughout the class, seemed satisfied by this response, and did not press the issue. When I spoke with John after class he reiterated the idea to me that he taught only the "bone" (*ʿaẓm*) of the *alḥān* in his lectures and avoided any kind of embellishment (*ʿurab*) or ornamentation (*ḥilya*).

The same metaphor arose again a month later during a brief exchange I had on Facebook messenger with Father Abraam Guirguis, a priest at the monastery of St. George in al-Khaṭāṭbah, a village in the Manūfīah province of Egypt. Father Abraam has been transcribing Coptic *alḥān* using Western musical notation for the past thirteen years, and he is well known among deacons of the Church and other Coptic music enthusiasts for his multitude of transcriptions, which he distributes through the private Facebook group "Coptic

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Hymns Notations" [sic]. Father Abraam is continually active on this 7600+ member group, posting new transcriptions for the *alḥān* accompanying various church rites, and joining in discussions about the different issues and challenges of Coptic music research. I messaged Father Abraam and asked him about his transcriptions, and whether he produced them from memory, or if he used recordings of a particular priest, cantor, or deacon as a basis for his transcriptions. Perhaps not fully understanding my question at first, his initial response to my question was that he did not notate any particular rendition (*adāʾ*) of the *laḥn* but only its "bone" (*ʿaẓm*).

I gradually became aware of more and more instances of this metaphor of "bone" used both implicitly and explicitly by priests, cantors, and deacons in Egypt. Eventually I adopted this as one of the terms I used outright in questioning people about how they perceived the boundary between the essence of the *laḥn* and its performed rendition. The other Arabic term I heard and used frequently was "*al-laḥn al-asāsī*," which has the literal meaning of "essential" or "fundamental melody," but which in the context of Coptic music also has the additional meaning of "essential hymn," due to the special use of the term *laḥn* as indicative of genre. I asked priests, cantors, and deacons, how it is possible to determine the essential melody, or "bone" of the *laḥn* and to distinguish this from the embellishment present in any recitation. This line of inquiry ultimately produced several different strategies for identifying the essential melody or determining it through inductive comparison. The following are the five most common strategies that I encountered:

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1. Single-Source Strategy

A commonly proposed strategy for determining the essential melody of the *laḥn*, one I will call the single-source strategy, entails referencing the oldest recording of the *alḥān* by an authoritative source, generally identified as the recordings of Muʿallim Mīkhāʾīl Girgis al-Batanūnī. It is frequently stated that these recordings are the purest, most correct rendition of the melody and pronunciation of *alḥān*, and this sentiment was reiterated by the Holy Synod when it issued a decree in 2015 emphasizing the authoritative role of Cantor Mīkhāʾīl recordings as a standard for proper pronunciation. Implicit in this strategy is the idea that the listener must exert his or her own judgment as to what details of Cantor Mīkhāʾīl's vocal line are embellishment and what parts are the essential melody of the *laḥn*. Most people I spoke with agreed that the recorded recitation of Cantor Mīkhāʾīl contains tones and characteristics beyond the essential melody, but they generally believed that deriving the essential melody would be evident and not require any systematic approach.

It should be noted, however, that most Coptic priests, cantors, and deacons do not seem to learn the *alḥān* or refine their understanding of the *alḥān* using the recordings of Cantor Mīkhāʾīl. This was apparent as only one of the many people I spoke with at churches and institutes in Egypt had an actual copy of portions of Cantor Mīkhāʾīl's recordings, and no one else, including the faculty members I spoke with at the Institute of Coptic Studies, knew of a way to access these recordings except in person at the Library of Congress in the United States or by directly contacting Laurence Moftah, the inheritor of the Ragheb Moftah Estate who originally donated the recordings. I ultimately concluded that Cantor Mīkhāʾīl may be well known among Coptic Christians, but very few people have listened to his recordings at length or use them as references for correct recitation.

Two notable exceptions to this are Albair Mīkhā'īl and George Kyrillos, who are both

deacons and musical directors of choruses that perform Coptic *alḥān*. Albair is a deacon

based in Alberta, Canada who heads the Heritage of the Coptic Orthodox Church Choir

(HCOCC) and is very active in teaching and publishing materials relating to church rites, as

well as recordings and writings about *alḥān*, *madā'iḥ* (praise hymns), and *tamāgīd*

(glorification hymns). According to his website, he has explicitly modeled the melodic

performance of his choir on the recordings of Cantor Mīkhā'īl along with early recordings of

other cantors where recordings of specific hymns performed by Cantor Mīkhā'īl are

otherwise unavailable. George Kyrillos leads the Cairo-based David Ensemble and he

identified Cantor Mīkhā'īl as one of his primary references when transcribing hymns for his

group (personal communication, George Kyrillos, February 6th 2016). While these two

musical directors are high profile educators who produce and distribute recordings of their

performance groups singing *alḥān*, their active use of Cantor Mīkhā'īl as a reference does not

reflect typical practice even among Copts who are passionate about learning and performing

Coptic music, and I believe it is driven by their unique need to distill the essential melody in

order to record it in written musical notation. This unique need for written musical notation is

in turn driven by the perceived need for greater synchronicity and homogeneity in

performance expected in studio and concert settings as well as the use of musical instruments

in the case of Kyrillos' group. Moreover, while both regard the renditions of Cantor Mīkhā'īl

as the most authoritative source for correctly determining the essential melody of the *alḥān*,

they also recognize other recordings as authoritative sources that may be referenced when

they do not conflict with a rendition by Cantor Mīkhā'īl.

In summary, this single-source approach to determining the essential melody of a *laḥn* is to reference the oldest authoritative recording available (generally those made of Cantor Mīkhā'īl Girgis al-Batanūnī by Dr. Ragheb Moftah beginning in the 1930s), and then to use personal judgment to identify the tones and melodic figures that are part of the essential melody and those that are not. This critical last step was not explicitly theorized by people who described this approach but it is likely influenced by their implicit understanding of the melodic character of Coptic hymns, formed through many years of participation in church rites, in addition to certain unarticulated ideas about the metaphorical "bone" and "flesh" of a melody. Nevertheless, the ambiguity in this exercise of personal judgment necessarily leads to a certain ambivalence in the production of a written or performed rendition of the essential melody as a result of differences in the subjective experiences and dispositions of any analyst-transcriber.

2. Multiple-Source Strategy

A more strongly theorized variation on the single-source strategy is the multiple-source strategy, an approach that offers a more explicit method to separate the essential melody from extraneous embellishment and ornamentation: comparative analysis of a number of different authoritative recordings, identifying similarities as markers of the essential melody and differences as markers of individual rendition or ornamentation. While the single-source strategy identifies the earliest available authoritative rendition of a *laḥn* as the only explicit reference point for determining the essential melody, the multiple source strategy takes into account that separating the "bone" of the *laḥn* from its performed rendition requires knowledge of the boundary between individual performance and collective

tradition. Several people I spoke with who espoused the single-source strategy often amended their response to a version of the multiple-source strategy when elaborating on their response. George Kyrillos, for example, initially offered a single-source strategy when I asked him how it was possible to determine the essential melody of a *laḥn*, but upon elaborating on his own process of transcription he explained that he actually used recordings from a number of different cantors including Mīkhā'īl Batanūnī, Ṣādiq 'Aṭā' Allāh, and Farag 'Abd al-Messih (personal communication, George Kyrillos, February 6th 2016). While he regarded Cantor Mīkhā'īl's recordings as the most authoritative rendition of the *alḥān*, he would often compare them with recordings of these and other respected cantors to clarify particular tones or melodic figures that were distorted or muffled in the recordings of Cantor Mīkhā'īl. Moreover, he explained that this comparison would reveal which melodic features of each rendition were idiosyncratic aspects of performance because they would differ between recordings, while the essential melody would be shared across all versions. When I asked Father Abraam Guirguis how to distinguish between the essential melody and the embellishment and ornamentation of individual cantors, he also identified this multiple-source strategy as his approach (personal communication, Father Abraam Guirguis, May 4th 2016).

This approach may be further divided into <u>hierarchically-valued</u> and <u>equally-valued</u> multiple-source approaches. A hierarchically-valued multiple-source approach involves weighing each source utilized as more or less authoritative and representative of the tradition, thus determining how closely that rendition is likely to correspond to the essential form of the *laḥn*. For example, if a difference is noted between the renditions of cantors Mīkhā'īl, Ṣādiq, and Farag, this difference may be identified as evidence of individual interpretation

within the parameters of the tradition, and the simplest version performed by any of the three cantors will then be recognized as the essential melody. However, a hierarchically-valued approach might set the precondition that Cantor Mīkhā'īl's rendition is the closest reflection of the essential melody, while Cantor Ṣādiq and Cantor Farag's renditions are slightly less accurate reflections of the essential melody and the analyst must then decide whether the differences between each rendition are the result of performative differences that are within the parameters of the tradition, or whether differences indicate momentary divergences from the core tradition. In the first situation, the simplest rendition would be identified as most representative of the essential *laḥn*, while in the second situation, Cantor Mīkhā'īl's rendition would be identified as the closest embodiment of the essential *laḥn* because of its status in this hierarchy of authority.

My articulation of this distinction between hierarchically-valued and equally-valued approaches does not reflect a clear distinction between the strategies of my interlocutors. Rather it is meant to highlight the ambivalence in their approaches to conceptualizing the essential melody. They often resisted a definitive choice between hierarchically-valued and equally-valued approaches, sometimes identifying the recordings of Cantor Mīkhā'īl as the most authoritative and at other times identifying numerous recordings of respected cantors as equally correct and representative of the essential *laḥn*, particularly recordings of those who worked closely with the office of the Patriarchate, The Higher Institute of Coptic Studies, and the Coptic Orthodox Clerical College. In either case, both hierarchically-valued and equally-valued multiple source approaches begin by defining an initial set of sources as authoritative reflections of the tradition. The distinction between these approaches lies in the relative authority assigned to each individual source within this predefined set.

3. <u>Group Performance Strategy</u>

A third approach to determining the essential melody of a *laḥn* is the <u>group performance strategy</u>. Dr. Māgid Samu'īl Ibrāhīm, the head of the Department of *Alḥān* and Coptic Music at the Institute of Coptic Studies in Cairo, first proposed this approach to me when I asked him how to determine the essential melody of a *laḥn*. He explained that by listening to a group of Copts performing *alḥān* together, and in particular to the recordings of the chorus of the Higher Institute of Coptic Studies, it is possible to hear a consistent thread of melody and to distinguish it from the intermittent heterophony that occurs when some voices perform variations or additions to the essential melody (personal communication, Māgid Samu'īl Ibrāhīm, January 29th 2016). In other words, when many people perform the same *laḥn* the essential melody is amplified, while the presence of embellishments and ornamentation that are performed differently by different individuals are less pronounced in the collective sound of the group. While this strategy appears to work well to separate out melodic additions and transformations that are particularly idiosyncratic, it is seemingly less effective in separating out variations on the essential melody that are used by many in a formulaic manner. This also points to the deeper epistemological question of what constitutes the essential *laḥn* and whether embellishment and ornamentation are understood to be fundamentally idiosyncratic in nature.

It is worth noting that the group performance strategy advocated by Dr. Ibrāhīm was informed by his understanding of the socio-religious function of the *alḥān*: to promote unity. During a different discussion, Dr. Ibrāhīm argued that the use of melody in Coptic chant performed the practical function of making it easier for all of the congregation to say the

same words in unison, facilitating a unity of voice that was paralleled by the spiritual unity formed through weekly fasting[53] (personal communication, Māgid Samu'īl Ibrāhīm, December 18th 2015).[54] He further elaborates on the central role of unity as both a purpose and result of liturgical singing in his Ph.D. dissertation from Helwan University, where he argues that the *laḥn* is a site of unity between the spirit and body, in which chanted vowel sounds are the enactment of musical tones (*naghmah*) and create spiritual resonance, while chanted consonants are the enactment of time (*zaman*) and are expressions of the body (Ibrāhīm 2001). Understood in the context of these statements, his advocation of the group performance strategy may be interpreted as an extension of the general importance that he attributes to unity and the role of liturgical music for its promotion and expression. By identifying the unified sound that emerges from group performance as the essential *laḥn*, Ibrāhīm demonstrates the central role of unity as a religious and cultural principle that "scaffold[s] cognition, production, and interpretation of patterned sound in a social setting" and underpins his vernacular musical theorizations (Feld 1981: 45).

4. Memorization strategy

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[53] Fasting in the Coptic Orthodox tradition most often takes the form of reversion to a vegan diet, and may also include fish during a small number of the seasonal fasting periods. In addition to seasonal fasts such as Great Lent, many Orthodox Copts also fast (i.e. abstain from eating animal products) weekly every Wednesday to commemorate Christ's betrayal by Judas Iscariot and every Friday to commemorate Christ's crucifixion, and complete abstinence from food and water is generally practiced before communion is taken beginning on midnight the previous night (Saturday night in North American churches) until the ceremony occurs the next morning.

[54] A related argument concerning the way in which group liturgical singing instantiates a certain type of unity may be found in an interesting essay by philosopher Terrence Cuneo (2016).

A fourth strategy for determining the essential melody of a *laḥn* was presented to me by Cantor Maged Milad from the Church of St. Barbara in the Cairo district of Old Cairo. When I asked Cantor Maged how I might determine the essential *laḥn* and distinguish it from embellishment (*ʿurab*) and ornamentation (*ḥilya*) he grabbed me affectionately by the shoulder and said "memorize the *laḥn*! If you memorize it, then you will know the essential melody." While this might appear initially to be a form of circular reasoning—how can one memorize a melody without first knowing what one should be memorizing?— it is just as effective as any of the other strategies discussed here. The <u>memorization strategy</u> involves listening to and learning to replicate a particular rendition of a *laḥn* with one's own voice. One assumption of this strategy is that through cultivating the ability to reproduce the *laḥn* oneself, the distinction between the bone and the flesh of the *laḥn* will be learned by the reciter.

Here we should note an important distinction between the process of memorizing a *laḥn* with an audio recording as is common today, and the more traditional, but also still extant, process of memorizing a *laḥn* in-person from another individual. While the former process necessarily involves repeated listening and reciting along with a rendition of a hymn that may be replayed in a more-or-less identical form, the latter process involves a renewed human utterance for each repetition, which has the potential to introduce small differences between renditions each time. I would argue that memorization through tutelage with another individual offers the student a chance to absorb numerous renditions of a *laḥn* by the same individual and might act in a manner similar to the multiple-source approach, except that the renditions of the *laḥn* may all be provided by the same person, and instead of an explicit comparison between renditions there is an implicit blending of renditions inherent in the

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encoding of the *laḥn* to memory. By contrast, neither an explicit comparison nor implicit blending of renditions occurs when learning from a single recording.

While the comparative aggregation of renditions is one way to understand the effectiveness of the memorization strategy, another perspective is that the act of memorizing the *laḥn* produces an embodied knowledge of the essential melody that is learned implicitly but which the chanter may largely be unaware of. Benjamin Brinner has described this type of musical knowledge as "procedural" in contrast to "declarative" knowledge (Brinner 1995: 39). The former is a knowledge of "how to do something" that may be expressed in a number of non-linguistic forms and often occurs automatically, while the latter is a knowledge *of* something, typically expressed through language and always consciously. One may be unable to articulate the essential melody by itself, while at the same time be able to correctly perform the *laḥn* in its embellished, fleshed-out form in a manner that confirms implicit knowledge of the essential melody. In this case procedural knowledge of the *laḥn* is implied in the ability to consistently create different embellished versions of it.

5. <u>There is no essential *laḥn*</u>

Finally, a response given to me by Cantor Maged Samy of the Virgin Mary and Archangel Michael Church in Shubra, Cairo was that there is no bone or essential melody to any *laḥn* (personal communication, Maged Samy, January 26th 2016). While this is not a strategy per se, it is important to note that the idea of an essential melody is widespread but not monolithic in the Coptic community. Cantor Maged noted that every performance of a *laḥn* necessarily involves some idiosyncratic characteristics and qualities unique to that performance and the idea of an essential melody is not something definitive that can be

agreed upon by everyone. While he had clear ideas about what constituted the correct performance of each *laḥn* that I studied with him, the existence of an essential *laḥn* acting as a foundation on which to build a beautiful rendition of the *laḥn* does not serve as a basis for his conceptualization.

Conclusion

Both the theories of intonation in Coptic music, and also the strategies for determining the essential melody, have broader associations that shape constructions of identity and the boundaries of the tradition of Coptic hymnody. This occurs both through implicit and explicit comparisons to other musical traditions in the case of intonation, and also through constructions of authority with regard to correct hymnodic practice. The vernacular theorizations of Coptic intonation varied with regard to how complex or systematized they were, but they all either equated Coptic intonation to Arabic intonation, or asserted a greater level of intonational complexity through associations to Byzantine or Turkish systems. With regard to conceptualizations of *al-laḥn al-asāsī,* the single-source, and multiple-source strategies locate authority in the recordings of a single cantor or the recordings of a select group of mu'allimūn. These different localizations of authority reflect the more general valorization of different historical narratives of particular mu'allimūn as the true preservers of the hymn tradition.

By contrast, the group performance strategy locates authority in the unified performance of many congregants together, linking a broader cosmological framework that associates congregational performance to the theologically informed functional imperative of

unity. The memorization strategy reveals a different emphasis on procedural, rather than declarative knowledge through an emphasis on performance as a type of knowledge. This different understanding of what it means to "know" a *laḥn* reflects a shift in the attribution of authority from more abstract forms of knowledge to more embodied forms of knowledge.

Finally, the complete rejection of the notion of the essential *laḥn* suggests that despite its frequent use, the concept is not indispensable for thinking about the proper performance of *alḥān*. These different perspectives on Coptic intonation and melody reflect the "historical dynamic by which music-theoretical knowledge is acquired, or insight gained" (Bent 1992: 9-10), which operates primarily through attempts to "systematically make musical knowledge explicit" (Perlman 2004: 9).

CHAPTER 4

Music as Theology: The Translation of a Liturgical Tradition

Coptic Christians are the largest indigenous Christian group in the Middle East, and the Coptic diaspora in North America has been steadily growing since the founding of the first North American Coptic Orthodox church in the 1960s. While North American Coptic communities initially performed their liturgical services in the Arabic and Coptic languages, churches gradually began to incorporate the use of English in order to accommodate younger generations of non-Arabic speaking Copts. This process of linguistic transition was first addressed locally, with the members of individual churches taking translated texts and setting them to traditional Coptic melodies in different ways. However, over time the leadership of the Church took an interest in producing standardized forms of these hymns, first with a hymn translation and standardization project in the Southern US Diocese in the year 2000 and later with two subsequent projects to standardize translated hymns for use across North America in 2010 and 2014.

In this chapter I examine the work of these three hymn-standardization working groups and I will explore how their approach to the task of translation and arrangement changed over the course of about fifteen years. This involved a shift in focus from the preservation of the melody to one of clarifying the language, and from unity of worship to the larger issue of cultural unity or belonging in North-American Anglophone culture. Moreover, these changes were accompanied by a transformation in how the hymns were conceptualized. One aspect of this epistemological transition included a change from understanding the melody and language of each hymn as relatively separable, independent

phenomena, to a recognition that melody and language are interconnected in a number of different ways. Ultimately, by examining these three different working groups as part of a larger process of linguistic, musical, and cultural translation, I intend to highlight the dialogic nature of the translation process, which is integral to the localization or domestication of Coptic hymnody in North America.

Ethnomusicologist Zoe Sherinian has explored how Christian liturgical hymnody in Protestant churches in South India is developed in a dialogic manner, noting how certain beliefs inspired by a form of liberation theology were incorporated into the development of new hymnody and also how the dialogic nature of the process itself instantiates these beliefs by foregrounding the agency of individuals who are otherwise politically and socially subjugated (Sherinian 2014). She explores how the prolific production of Tamil Dalit theologian and composer Rev. Dr. James Theophilos Appavoo influenced the nature of worship in Protestant Churches in South India through "a cyclical dialogue of hermeneutic inspiration, composition, transmission, reception and re-creation of music as theology" (Sherinian 2014: 2). Sherinian's study demonstrates how the liberation theology espoused by Rev. Dr. James Theophilos Appavoo is inherently local, in that it is born from an understanding of the Divine that is informed by local experience and action, rather than a universalist understanding of God, and thus like politics and musical meaning, this locally situated theology may be manifested in sound as a form of resistance to internalized casteism, sexism, and classism (Ibid.: 3).

The theology and ritual traditions of Orthodox Coptic Christians are in many ways different from those that Sherinian documents. They espouse a more universalist understanding of the Divine, and work to preserve their ritual traditions and liturgical hymns

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from change or degradation, based on the belief that these practices were formed almost two thousand years ago for very specific theological reasons that transcend any given historical moment or local context. At the same time, Orthodox Copts do not consider the Coptic language, or any other language, to be inherently sacred, and as diaspora communities have expanded dramatically outside of Egypt since the 1960s, local communities in North America, Europe, Australia, and elsewhere have increasingly worked to translate the liturgical hymns of the Church into new languages. While Orthodox Copts are not engaged in the composition of new hymnody in the manner of Rev. Dr. Appavoo, I argue that the act of translating their liturgical hymns is an act of domestication or localization of their hymnody that shares certain features with the indigenization of Christian liturgy in Southern India. Moreover, the adaptation of Orthodox hymnody in North America extends beyond the translation of language to the conceptualization of the musical structure of the hymns, which is, in turn, influenced by the values and beliefs of the diasporic community in which these acts of translation occur. In this way I identify a process of musical transmission and re-creation that is similar in certain ways to the "dialogical (re)creative praxis" observed by Sherinian among Tamil Dalits, but which occurs specifically in the repeated acts of translation that the Coptic hymn working groups undertook in three different iterations, acts of translation that involved the dialogic incorporation of the values and beliefs of a younger generation of Coptic-Americans into the creative process of arranging the English-language hymns.

In exploring how the approach of the translation working groups evolved in a dialogic, (re)creative manner, I will discuss how the values and beliefs of the working group members influenced the translation process. In doing so, I wish to avoid the impression that

the presence of ideological influence is an indicator of a compromised translation process. Rather, I gesture towards the reasoning of a number of scholars who have emphasized the inherent impossibility of any kind of objective, non-ideological translation, and I extend this critique to further implicate the translation of musical form and meaning as well. Walter Benjamin has noted how it is the task of the translator to discern and reproduce "intention" rather than form and that "all translation is only a somewhat provisional way of coming to terms with the foreignness of languages. An instant and final rather than a temporary and provisional solution of this foreignness remains out of reach of mankind" (Benjamin 1968 [1923]: 75). Indeed, this temporary and provisional character to linguistic translation is a reflection of the living and constantly evolving nature of languages, as well as the way in which, according to Martin Heidegger, language "is historical in the sense of, and written within the limits set by, the current age" (Heidegger 1993 [1959]: 422).

Similar to language, the form and meaning of musical sound may be understood within the context of larger systems that are in certain ways incommensurable with each other, governed by the intention of the composer, and shaped by historical forces. Moreover, the process of translating Coptic liturgical hymns, which themselves consist entirely of chanted words, is one in which the boundaries between music and language or melody and text are not intrinsically defined and must be negotiated in the translation process. This occurs most clearly when the final working group, the English Hymns Committee, begins to distinguish between portions of the hymn melodies that "belong" to the source language and those that do not, as I describe later in this chapter. Moreover, these working group members gradually incorporate a more explicit awareness of a melodic and linguistic "essence" of the

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hymns in their reflections on their work process while at the same time recognizing the necessarily provisional and uncertain nature of their specific choices.

Translation theorist Lawrence Venuti has noted that "[t]ranslating is always ideological because it releases a domestic remainder, an inscription of values, beliefs, and representations linked to historical moments and social positions in the domestic culture" (Venuti 2000: 485). While Venuti was specifically addressing the translation of speech or writing from one language to another, I argue that this "domestic remainder" extends beyond language and may involve the inscription of values and beliefs in the perception of musical structures as well. To demonstrate this process of dialogical (re)creative praxis in the context of the Orthodox Coptic Christians in North America and the domestic remainder that manifests itself in both music and language, I will discuss how the approach of the three hymn-translation working groups in 2000, 2010, and 2014 changed over time to reflect a growing concern for clarity of speech, cultural unity, and a different conceptualization of musical form.

Each of these three working groups has focused primarily on the arrangement and recording of the same forty-eight congregational responses, which range from about ten seconds to a minute and a half in length each, and are performed during the Divine Liturgy by the congregation in between various ritual acts and priestly and diaconal chants. While there was some overlap in membership between the three translation working groups, the overall makeup of the groups shifted to increasingly represent younger deacons who were native English speakers and in some cases did not speak the Arabic language of their parents. Because each group essentially conducted the same work on the same hymns, a review of the differences in their work processes and the final product of each working group presents an

interesting opportunity to examine how a generational shift in the beliefs and values of the participants influenced the translation process.

The Translation of Congregational Responses in North America

Since the establishment of the first Coptic Orthodox churches in Canada and the United States in the 1960s,[55] Copts in North America have been performing and participating in the Divine Liturgy using the Coptic, Greek, and Arabic languages in the same manner as Egyptian congregations have for centuries. Over the decades, as these diasporic Coptic-American communities became more rooted in North American Anglophone culture, and priests and deacons saw the need to make their services more accessible to the younger generations of American-born Copts, individuals and groups in local parishes began to translate portions of the Liturgy into English and to use English along with the original Coptic and Greek, and the Arabic versions of ritual texts in weekly church services. Initially, these translation efforts emerged organically as a response to the needs in each local church community and while they were tacitly accepted by the Church leadership, there was no effort to centralize and standardize these individual translation efforts, leading to a diversity of translations. Because almost all of the ritual text in the Divine Liturgy is chanted to a melody, these translated English texts were also set to the sacred melodies of the Liturgy in different ways as well.

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[55] St. Mark's Coptic Orthodox Church in Toronto, Ontario was the first Canadian church and was founded in 1964, and St. Mark's Coptic Orthodox Church in Jersey City, New Jersey was the first United States' church and was established in the late 1960s and formally incorporated in 1970.

The translation and standardization efforts that I discuss in this chapter occurred after roughly two decades of these initial translation and arrangement efforts occurred at the local level, and they should be understood as an institutional response on the part of the Church leadership to the growing diversity in English-language liturgical practice that became increasingly concerning to North American church communities as both the number of churches and the use of English in North American liturgical practice expanded dramatically in the 1980s and 1990s. The project of translating and standardizing the congregational responses of the Divine Liturgy has occurred in several iterations, beginning with recordings made for the Southern US Diocese under the oversight of Bishop Youssef in 2000, followed by initial efforts in 2010 to create recordings as a model for all North American Coptic Orthodox churches, and more recently by a group called the English Hymns Committee formed in 2014 whose efforts have produced the first recordings officially endorsed by the Coptic Orthodox Church as definitive models for recitation in English across the entire Archdiocese of North America.

While a small number of additional hymns are performed by the congregation during regular weekly services, and longer, more elaborate hymns are performed by the congregation during special seasonal rites, these congregational responses constitute the core liturgical chants that are regularly performed, at least weekly and sometimes more often, by the widest cross-section of Coptic Orthodox worshippers. Through interviews with most of the deacons and clergy who have been central to these efforts I explore how the approach of their working groups has transformed over time, and how these changes reflect a gradual transformation in how they have conceptualized the responses.

I begin by outlining the recent history of translation and standardization efforts in the Coptic Archdiocese of North America with the production of the first official English-language translation of the texts of the three Divine Liturgies[56] used in Coptic Orthodox worship and the three subsequent efforts to arrange the translated texts of the congregational responses used within these liturgies to the traditional melodies that are used with the Coptic language versions of these responses. After a description of the work of each of these working groups I provide further context concerning how the group members conceptualized the liturgical hymns that were the focus of their work as well as the process through which they constructed and agreed upon the particular arrangements that they eventually performed and recorded. This review of the approach and conceptualization of each group reveals how their values and beliefs are inscribed in the musical structures of the translated hymns, constituting a musical "domestic remainder" akin to that described by Venuti in the context of language (2000: 485), and developed through a process of dialogic re-creation similar but less explicit than that observed by Sherinian with Tamil Dalit Protestant hymnody (Sherinian 2014).

Standardized English Translation of the text of the Divine Liturgies

Before any formal efforts to standardize the melodies and melodic arrangements of English-language Coptic Orthodox hymns in North America were undertaken, the Church leadership recognized the need to produce an official English translation of the texts of the three liturgies used in modern Coptic worship, including the texts for the hymns and chanted

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[56] See Appendix C for an explanation of the three liturgies used by the Coptic Orthodox church and their general components.

responses therein. In 1990, the late Coptic Patriarch Pope Shenouda III gathered nine priests from different parishes in the United States, Canada, and Australia, including Father Markos Hanna whom I interviewed, along with three prominent Coptic professors in St. Bishoy Monastery at Wadi al-Natron in Egypt and appointed them to the task of producing an English language translation of the Divine Liturgies of St. Basil, St. Gregory, and St. Cyril (personal communication, Father Markos Hanna, May 4th 2016). Over the course of seventeen days these twelve men drafted a translation, which was then circulated to Coptic priests throughout the English-speaking world for comments. After a year-long period of review and a handful of minor revisions, this standardized English-language translation of the liturgies was set alongside Arabic, and Coptic and Greek texts and published by the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States under the oversight of Bishop Youssef of the Diocese of the Southern United States, and Bishop Serapion of the Diocese of Los Angeles, Southern California, and Hawaii. While there had been a number of attempts to translate these liturgical texts by priests and deacons in different English-speaking communities for decades preceding the publication, this was the first English translation officially commissioned and endorsed by the Church leadership. Now in its second edition, the production of this official translation was an important milestone in the transformation of the Coptic Orthodox Church from an institution largely circumscribed by Egyptian cultural and linguistic boundaries to a truly transnational, multilingual See. While this publication includes the texts to most hymns used in the three liturgies of the Coptic Orthodox Church, certain hymns whose use are optional (e.g. laḥn Apinav Shopi, which may be performed on fasting days before laḥn Ouo Nem Otaio during the Offertory) are referenced but their complete lyrics are not included. Moreover, only the texts for hymns are included but no

information is provided concerning the melodies of the hymns or the manner in which the English texts should be set to these melodies.

<u>Initial Efforts to Create Standardized recordings of English language *alḥān*</u>

Following the initial publication of standardized English texts for the liturgies of St. Basil, St. Gregory, and St. Cyril in 1991, members of the Coptic community in North America gradually began to focus on standardizing the melodies and melodic arrangements of alḥān and shorter chanted responses in English. In 2000, Deacons Peter Awad and Maged Guirguis were involved in creating the first audio recordings of English-language liturgical responses that had the official endorsement of church leadership and these recordings were intended to be used as a model for recitation in the Southern US Diocese.[57] Maged and Peter both described the variation present in the cantorial practices of North American Coptic Orthodox churches as a difference primarily in how English words were being set to the melodies of the traditional Coptic chants. Because of the differences between the Coptic and Greek texts and their English counterparts in terms of the number and length of words, as well as in the number of vowels in each word, the English words may be set to the same melody in a number of different ways, leading to different approaches in different church communities.

Maged explained how the problem of variation in North American cantorial practice led to the decision by Bishop Youssef and other members of the Southern US Diocese to produce standardized arrangements:

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[57] See Appendix B for a map of the current North American dioceses of the Coptic Orthodox Church with their respective dates of formation.

It's just the way we sing the hymns, when we do it in English, every church came up with its own way of dividing the hymn with the tunes….We were the first generation. We were still establishing our churches and every church was trying to take the English words and use the same tunes, the same music, and they tried to divide or to spread the English words, however they tried to fit it together. So instead of having every church doing it in a different way in English, they decided in the Southern Diocese to unify how we do the hymns in English. (Personal communication, Maged Guirguis, May 13th 2017)

Peter Awad noted several liturgical responses that were notably different between church congregations because of these differences in how the English words were set to the Coptic melodies, including "Through the Intercessions" (Coptic: *Hiten Ni-Epresvia*"), "Amen, Amen, Amen, Your Death Oh Lord" (Coptic: "*Amin Amin Amin Ton Thanaton So Kirie*")*,* "May Their Holy Blessings" (Coptic: "*Ere Pou Esmou Ethoab*"), "As It Was and Shall Be" (Coptic: "*Osper In Ke Este Estin*"), and "The Cherubim Worship You" (Coptic: "*Ni-Sherubim Seousht Emmok*").

At the request of Bishop Youssef, Peter and Maged met in June of 2000 at Maged's home in Tampa, Florida and over the course of a weekend they recorded the forty-eight congregational responses to the Liturgy of St. Basil as well as the Distribution hymns "Psalm 150" (Coptic: "*Ihsos Pikharistos Epshiri Emefnoti*") and "The Bread of Life" (Coptic: "*Pi-oik Ente Eponkh*") on cassette tapes. Maged Guirguis recalled that Bishop Youssef emphasized that the goal of this project was to unify the manner in which diaconal responses were chanted across all churches in the diocese:

[Bishop Youssef] said 'why don't you get together with Peter Awad because I am thinking of doing a recording of the Liturgy in English for the Southern Diocese' so that way when somebody goes to another church he doesn't hear something different, everybody singing in a different way. We want to be able to all sing all together the same way whatever church that we go to. And I believe that that is what he was telling me at that time or something along those lines. (Personal communication, Maged Guirguis, May 13th 2017)

In a similar manner, Peter Awad described the project as aiding in the unification of cantillation practices, which in turn has helped to facilitate prayer in diocese gatherings that involve members of different churches:

[Now] almost every church [in the diocese] chants the [English] responses in the same way, I would say maybe 90% the same. There are some little places here and there [that differ], but it makes things very easy and smooth when having any kind of a diocese convention. You don't have multiple different ways that people pray. (Personal communication, Peter Awad, April 20th 2017)

After approval of their recordings of the congregational responses by Bishop Youssef, they were copied onto multiple cassette tapes that were then distributed throughout the diocese, and they were later digitized and uploaded to the official website of the Southern US Diocese where they are currently available for streaming and downloading.[58]

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[58] http://www.suscopts.org/deacons/hymns/audio/english/lit_hymns/

<u>The Approach of the Southern US Diocese Standardization Project</u>

In terms of their specific approach to setting the English text to the Coptic melody, Peter and Maged both described their work process as one of trial and error in which one of them would chant a response in a way that seemed intuitively correct and the other would generally agree but would occasionally present an alternative method to perform the same chant that was readily accepted by their counterpart.

> [W]e worked out the words and it came out perfectly actually…we agreed. And if he said something and extended some word, I'd say no, no… this is probably more accurate and he'd say 'yep.' Or vice versa, I'd say something and he'd adjust it for me. (Personal communication, Maged Guirguis, May 13th 2017)

They did not have a specific set of criteria to determine whether the integrity of the melody had been satisfactorily preserved, nor did they articulate a method for how the English words should be set to the melody. Nevertheless they identified as part of their task preserving the Coptic melody and making sure the English text did not sound "strange." When I asked Maged how he and Peter determined the specific placement of the English words within the Coptic melody, Maged replied that their decisions were largely driven by the desire to preserve the relative length of words and specific vowels as they were normally stressed in spoken English. He explained that their strategy was to preserve the melody and

> …to make the English pronunciation also make sense. For example, you don't extend a word in English that makes it sound weird. So we want to say a word, you know you can cut it quicker than another word because in English

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it would sound better that way. So whether you make one shorter and then the next word you extend it, make it longer, that's also depending on how it sounds in English, the words. Sometimes, you don't want to extend a certain word because it may sound weird to your ears. (Personal communication, Maged Guirguis, May 13th 2017)

While Maged and Peter both identified the preservation of the melody and the arrangement of the English words in a manner that sounded correct as the two components of their task, they judged these criteria based upon how potential responses resonated with their internal sense of what sounded right and what sounded "weird to their ears." It is important to note that the words sounding "correct" or sounding "weird" are largely aesthetic judgements; the cantillation of a particular word set to a melodic line in a particular way may sound "weird," while being completely comprehensible to the chanter or other listeners. This conceptualization of the textual component of the hymn in aesthetic terms would give way in later efforts to a greater focus of the comprehensibility of the text.

Initial Efforts to Unify North American English language *alhān*

In 2010 the first effort was undertaken to create audio recordings of the Basilian Liturgy responses that would replace the Southern US Diocese model and unify the English-language worship of all North American Coptic Orthodox Churches. At this time there were only three Bishops serving North American communities, Bishop Youssef, Bishop Serapion, and Bishop David (who was at that time a general Bishop representing the Pope, but would later serve the diocese of New England and New York that was not yet formed). Albair Gamal Mikhail, a deacon at The Virgin Mary and St. Athanasius Coptic Orthodox Church in Mississauga, Canada, approached Bishop Youssef and Bishop David to discuss the need to

standardize the English-language arrangements of the hymns and specifically to unify the liturgical responses for the Liturgy of St. Basil across North America (personal communication, Albair Gamal Mikhail, March 19th 2017). The Bishops approved of Albair's idea and they appointed two other deacons from different dioceses and sent them to work with him at his home over the course of a weekend. Deacon Peter Awad, who worked on the previous set of responses for the Southern US Diocese project, was appointed to the task by Bishop Youssef and Deacon Amir Bekhit (now Father Gregory Bekhit) was appointed by Bishop David. The three deacons completed recordings of the approximately forty-eight standard responses[59] for the Liturgy of St. Basil during that weekend.

This same year that the three deacons completed their recordings of liturgical responses the late Pope Shenouda III was scheduled to visit Boston from August 2nd-August 4th to head the annual North American Coptic Clergy Seminar at the Virgin Mary Spiritual Vineyard in Massachusetts, and Deacon Albair sought approval from the Bishops to take their work to the Pope there and seek his endorsement in order to give their project binding authority. According to Albair, Bishops Youssef and David gave a tentative agreement to this request, but Bishop Serapion did not and so the work of Albair, Peter, and Amir was never presented to the Pope, and the project was set aside for the next few years.

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[59] The exact number of responses varies slightly because a handful of responses have shorter and longer versions. The 2010 working group appears to have completed their recordings of the responses without alternate versions of these chants, and so their total number of responses would be slightly less than forty eight.

<u>The Approach of the First North American Standardization Project</u>

The approach of Albair, Peter, and Amir (Fr. Gregory) to this new North American standardization project evolved somewhat from the earlier approach to the Southern US Diocese recordings. The earlier work of Maged and Peter focused on the Coptic melody and English pronunciation, but their criteria were largely implicit and their method for working through each potential response was primarily a trial-and-error process in which the sound of each response to their ears and how those sounds resonated with each of them guided them to the correct renditions. With this new group, an explicit criteria emerged with a clear hierarchy. Preservation of the original Coptic melody was the most important goal, followed in importance by the need to maintain "proper pronunciation" of the English language. While the criteria of the Coptic melody and English pronunciation were in many ways the same as the criteria underpinning the earlier Southern US Diocese effort, the relative importance of English pronunciation increased somewhat in this more recent effort, perhaps partly due to the influence of Amir on the work process of the group.

> With the…group it was just two [criteria]: The Coptic music, followed by the
> English pronunciation. (Personal communication, Albair Gamal Mikhail,
> March 19th 2017)

> I think [matching the Coptic melody] was primarily the goal, and of course we
> wanted to make it match the diction, or actually pay attention to the diction, in
> the English language…If you were to elongate certain syllables in the English
> that wasn't a syllable that was stressed in the word when it's normally spoken,
> there was some concerns, particularly on Amir's part… that maybe he
> mentioned a couple of times… (Personal communication, Peter Awad, April
> 20th 2017)

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Reflecting back on the work of this group, Father Gregory (Amir) spoke the most explicitly about maintaining proper English pronunciation as well as the need to address errors in pronunciation that had been introduced by earlier generations of non-native English speakers in the Church:

> The essential goal was to try to unify the hymns and match them as close as possible to the Coptic while also not losing the pronunciation of the hymns…So, being Egyptian you have the classical errors, the classical grammatical errors of '*the*' [ðe] instead of '*the*' [ðə], '*them*' [ðɛmm] instead of '*them*' [ðɛm], the *Holiest* Spirit as opposed to the *Holy* Spirit.[60] So the stress on the notes—at least from my perspective—the stress on the notes needed to essentially make sense for the English language. We heard many recordings at that time of various different English responses and many of the responses were stressing the wrong vowels…and essentially what we tried to do was, without jeopardizing the English pronunciation, we tried to match the Coptic hymn as close as possible without losing the English pronunciation, and that was the biggest challenge for us but we eventually got through it. (Personal communication, Fr. Gregory Bekhit, December 12th 2017)

According to Peter, all three of the deacons began their work by each chanting responses in the way that they were used to in their home churches, and comparing those renditions to recordings of the response in Coptic (usually drawn from the recordings of the

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[60] I reference the International Phonetic Alphabet here to convey the different pronunciations that Father Gregory (Amir) is demonstrating. He pronounces the word "the" using two different vowel sounds, firstly with [e], equivalent to the vowel sounds of "met" or "bed," and second with [ə], equivalent to the first vowel in "away." He then distinguishes between the word "them" pronounced with emphasis on the terminal consonant [ðɛmm] and without emphasis [ðɛm].

Higher Institute of Coptic Studies), making changes to these responses in order to best match the original Coptic melody. After this initial focus on matching the melodic shape, they turned their attention to how the English words were set to the preexisting melody.

Their intention was to ensure that syllables stressed in spoken English would also be the most elongated in the chanted response. While they described much of their work as proceeding smoothly and with a great deal of unanimous agreement, when their individual approaches differed or the most correct sounding rendition was not immediately obvious to everyone involved in the project they returned to their two criteria of matching the Coptic melody and preserving the cadence and stress of spoken English by translating syllabic stress to the relative length of chanted syllables in the music.

Unlike earlier efforts, the relative importance of the melody over the arrangement of the English words set to the melody was clear. Moreover, Peter noted that while all three deacons identified the preservation of the Coptic melody as the first and most important task of the group, it was primarily Amir who expressed concern about the need to stress particular syllables in the chanted responses during their work.

The English Hymns Committee

After the initial work on a set of recorded liturgical responses for North American churches was put on hiatus for a few years, there was a renewed attention to the unification of North American hymns by the North American bishops. Albair Gamal Mikhail described the revisitation of the project as a response to the steady growth of North American congregations, the increased transience of Coptic parishioners, and the continuing growth of mission churches (Coptic Orthodox churches that specifically cater to English-speaking

culturally North American congregants) (personal communication, Albair Gamal Mikhail, March 19th 2017). Shortly after the enthronement of Bishop Mina as the first Bishop for the Diocese of Mississauga, Vancouver and Western Canada in April of 2013, the Bishops of North America began to discuss revisiting the project to unify the English-language hymns and responses within their archdiocese, leading to the formation of a new committee in 2014 called the English Hymns Committee (EHC) that consisted of six deacons from different North American dioceses. [61]

Although work on hymn standardization for North American churches was officially on hiatus from 2010 until the formation of the EHC in 2014, a number of deacons, including several members of the EHC had been working on related issues informally for some time. Beginning in 2012, more than a dozen deacons interested in the standardization of North American hymns began to meet in an unofficial group on Google Hangouts to discuss how to perform hymns in English and to share experiences and ideas (personal communication, David Labib, February 25th 2017). This group included deacons David Labib and Michael Guirguis (later ordained as Father Nathanael Guirguis in November 2017) who would eventually be selected to work on the EHC, and during this time Michael Guirguis also helped to create an unofficial website entitled coptichymnsinenglish.com that was used to host sound files of English-language hymns contributed by Coptic Orthodox deacons from across North America (personal communication, Michael Guirguis, August 31st 2016). Michael recalls himself and other deacons raising concerns to the bishops about growing divergences in the way that hymns were recited across North America, divergences that were

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[61] See Appendix B for a map of the North American dioceses and their dates of establishment.

becoming increasingly problematic for Copts who were living in a society in which families were increasingly mobile:

> [The Bishops] kept on hearing nagging from deacons like myself saying, we need to get on the same page because we're at a very sensitive time in history, where we want to prevent what's happening in Coptic music…we don't want a Southern Diocese way of saying this, a California way of saying this, a New York way of saying this. As the world becomes more transient we need to create a centralized way of chanting the beauty and depth of our Coptic music in English, in order to help in liturgical worship, so we're all able to pray in one body and one spirit. (Personal communication, Michael Guirguis, August 31st 2016)

In response to this and similar concerns of deacons and lay parishioners in their churches, the six bishops serving North America decided to form the EHC and they each selected a deacon to represent a region of North America: Samuel Beshara was selected by Bishop David to represent the Diocese of New York and New England, Morcous Wahba was selected by Bishop Youssef to represent the Diocese of the Southern United States, Albair Gamal Mikhail was selected by Bishop Mina to represent the Diocese of Mississauga, Vancouver, and Western Canada, Arsani Sedarous was selected by Bishop Serapion to represent the Diocese of Los Angeles, Southern California, and Hawa'ii, and deacons David Labib in New Jersey and Michael Guirguis in Washington, D.C. were selected by the bishops to represent additional regions that were at that time under the purview of the Archdiocese.

This committee was tasked with producing official versions of the liturgical responses and seasonal *alḥān* that would then be submitted to the North American bishops for approval. This six-member committee gathered for three days at the St. Stephen Conference center in

Titusville, Florida in 2014 where its members decided on the English translation and appropriate melodic arrangement of the forty-eight congregational responses within the Divine Liturgy and established a list of criteria that now serve as the basis for their continued work in producing and evaluating English-language versions of the *alḥān*. After this initial meeting and recording of the congregational responses, they submitted their work to the North American bishops and made minor adjustments based on their feedback. Afterwards, the bishops instituted a period of review in which they shared these recordings with different church communities across North America for feedback, and during this time the group was directed to continue work on seasonal hymns for the Great Fast, Holy Week, and several important feasts (twenty of which have been completed and approved as of May of 2018). Since the formation of this group, dozens of additional members have joined this project as part of subcommittees assisting in the translation and arrangement of particular *alḥān*.

Michael Guirguis, a member of the core committee, explained to me that one goal for this project was to expand involvement through the establishment of multiple subcommittees that would be able to focus on particular types of *alḥān*, however the actual process of reviewing and approving the work of these committees was not yet been fully determined (personal communication, August 31ˢᵗ, 2016). While the standardized translations of the liturgical texts have been disseminated primarily through the publication of printed books that are found in church bookstores and in the pews located in Coptic Orthodox sanctuaries, the more recent efforts to produce arrangements of the *alḥān* have only resulted in the production of audio recordings of the *alḥān* that are posted on the website coptichymnsinenglish.com, which began as an informal platform for deacons to share their

arrangements of Coptic hymns in English, but became the formal site of the English Hymns Committee after its establishment.

The Approach of the EHC

While the approach of the EHC to the project of hymn arrangement and standardization was an adaptation from the previous approaches to the 2000 Southern US Diocese project and the initial work towards the standardization of hymns in the North American Archdiocese first undertaken in 2010, the EHC approach in 2014 was also significantly different in a number of important ways. First amongst these was a shift in priorities away from the focus on preservation of the Coptic melody and towards the preservation of English pronunciation. Deacon Albair reflected on this shift in priorities between melody and pronunciation that occurred between the 2010 and 2014 efforts:

> We started to have another [set of] criteria. The [set of] criteria we chose was
> a little bit more detailed than the first one and had significant…difference,
> which is the first two items swapped. So in the first committee [in 2010],
> when we were only three, seven years ago, the main thing was Coptic music,
> and the second one was English pronunciation. The [priority of the second
> committee] was English pronunciation first, this was the number one
> [criterion], and the second was the Coptic music. Although this didn't effect
> too many hymns, a couple of hymns so far in the Liturgy of St. Basil, but the
> concept behind it is I think important and significant. (Personal
> communication, Albair Gamal Mikhail, March 19th 2017)

In addition to this shift in focus from melody to language, the group published a much longer and more detailed list of criteria laid out in a specific order of importance. Members

of the committee discussed the ideas that would be the basis of this set of criteria first during discussions on Google Hangouts that preceded the formal establishment of the EHC, and they solidified the final version of the criteria in their 2014 meeting at St. Stephen's Conference Center in Florida. Shortly after, they published this set of criteria on the EHC official website:

1. The first criterion is English Pronunciation. The English pronunciation and accentuation of each word, phrase, and sentence is of the utmost importance.

2. The second criterion is the Coptic Melody. The Coptic music must be the base that is used to standardize the English hymn so that the English hymn accurately conveys the same feelings intended by the Church in the Coptic tunes.

3. The third criterion is that of Removal of Redundant Notes. Sometimes the notes in the Coptic hymn are repeated solely because of the number of syllables in a Coptic word, phrase or sentence. Therefore, if the English translation of a Coptic text has fewer syllables than that of the Coptic, then the redundant notes of the Coptic chant would be removed in the English composition.

4. The fourth criterion is the Original Music Theme. The English composition should represent an understanding of the nature of the Coptic music. For example, if the Coptic hymn has no elongations in any of its syllables, the English composition should likewise seek to reflect same.

5. The fifth criterion is the English Sense. The English composition should not only correctly pronounce each word, but should also stress and accentuate the key word within that phrase or sentence.

6. The sixth criterion is that of Consistency and Symmetry, whereby all English compositions must follow that same criteria indicated above in the order of importance detailed above to ensure consistency, symmetry, and harmony throughout all English compositions. In the future, the Committee will publish an article describing these criteria in more detail and giving examples of each.

(http://www.coptichymnsinenglish.com/establishment-vision/ accessed Oct. 25th 2017)

Describing how the EHC used this set of criteria, Deacon Michael Guirguis explained,

> So we kind of go through it and say okay does this fit the criteria, we'll go
> through one segment of the hymn and then literally just take 15 minutes to
> think of all the various renditions of that part of the hymn, how that verse can
> be chanted in English. Then we listed all the options and say okay well does
> this option fulfill all the criteria, well no it only fulfills two, okay how about
> this option? Does it fulfill more of the criteria or not. Or if I close my eyes
> and hear this hymn can I understand the words that are being chanted, or is it
> kind of in the gray area, I can't really understand it? So various things that
> we'll look at, and then at the end of the day there might be two more options
> that are very, very close that it's just completely opinionated and then we take
> a vote at that point. (Personal communication, Michael Guirguis, August 16th
> 2016)

In practice, the committee members used the first two criteria as guiding principles, similar to
the preceding translation effort, while criteria 3-6 were generally addressed only as a means
to mediate between different options that arose during this work process. In cases where the
group was unanimous or near unanimous in their agreement on a particular rendition of a
response, the latter criteria were not necessarily discussed. Nevertheless, the ideas presented
in the last four criteria help to reveal how the committee members conceptualized the
responses.

First and foremost, these six criteria demonstrate a larger number of elements being
considered by the working group during the translation process. For example, the first
criterion of "English Pronunciation" includes more specific references to "pronunciation"
and "accentuation." While the issue of accentuation (i.e. the manner in which particular

elements of speech or chant are stressed) was a focus of the 2000 and 2010 working groups,

the focus on accentuation at various textual levels (words, phrases, and sentences) is a level

of complexity that was not clearly articulated by participants in previous efforts. Moreover,

the fifth criterion "English Sense" is essentially an elaboration of this idea. In addition to this

broader view of accentuation or stress, the understanding of "pronunciation" as distinct from

"accentuation" suggests an additional focus on the articulation of vowels and consonants,

which was addressed by Father Gregory (formerly Deacon Amir) concerning the efforts of

the 2010 working group, but which was not specifically addressed by Peter or Maged when

discussing their earlier efforts. While this broader understanding of accentuation and

pronunciation appears to be an outgrowth of the ideas of earlier working groups, the

articulation of these specific components constitutes a more detailed approach to defining

and addressing the issue of English pronunciation.

Despite this focus on the "accentuation" or stress in the chanted responses, the EHC

did not articulate a specific way in which stress is to be understood in the context of chanted

responses. While stress in spoken English may be understood in terms of the duration or

volume of a particular syllable, the recitation of a text to a fixed melody introduces additional

factors of pitch and rhythmic or metric structure that can influence the perception of stress.

For example, a syllable may be perceived as the stressed syllable in a chanted text when it is

held for a longer duration, or when it is the highest pitch in a musical phrase, or when it

occurs on the first beat of a repetitious rhythmic unit in the chant. If these moments occur for

different syllables within close temporal proximity to each other, then it is unclear which

syllable would be perceived as stressed. During an email exchange with EHC member David

Labib, I asked him about how he and other EHC members dealt with this ambiguity in the idea of stress being translated from speech to music:

> In the music, when you talk about making a syllable stressed (in order for it to be equivalent to its stress in speech) are you thinking of the stress being equivalent to the pitch? In other words, the highest note is the most stressed? Or do you think of the stress in the music as also related to whether a syllable falls on the rhythmic pulse (i.e. on a "downbeat")? Or also the duration of the note itself? Or some combination of these? (Email Communication, Nicholas Ragheb, September 12th 2017)

As always, David offered me a thoughtful response:

> It is hard to explain the way we stress a vowel in the music to make it sound like the spoken language. Going off of your suggested reasons, I believe it is a combination. At times we try to shift more notes to the vowel that is accentuated in the spoken language and at times we try to use the higher pitched notes on the vowel/syllable that is accentuated if the melody permits. Sometimes it just can't be done and we have to settle. (Email Communication, David Labib, September 13th 2017)

In addition to the more complex articulation of the issues surrounding the pronunciation of the English language, the EHC criteria demonstrate previously unarticulated assumptions about the relationship between text and melody and their relative importance. Perhaps the most interesting is criterion #3 "The Removal of Redundant Notes," because it makes an assertion as to why certain portions of the melodies of the original Coptic language responses were originally composed in a particular manner:

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Sometimes the notes in the Coptic hymn are repeated solely because of the number of syllables in a Coptic word, phrase or sentence. Therefore, if the English translation of a Coptic text has fewer syllables than that of the Coptic, then the redundant notes of the Coptic chant would be removed in the English composition. (Source: http://www.coptichymnsinenglish.com/establishment-vision/ accessed Oct. 25th 2017)

It is important to note here that this criterion does not address the translation of extremely long melismatic passages that are set to a single vowel, something which does occurs in a number of Coptic-language chants although not in the congregational responses under discussion. The EHC criterion concerning musical redundancy specifically addresses situations in which translation significantly alters the length of passages of text, which is not generally the case for these long melismatic passages. Moreover the work of the EHC at the time under discussion focused primarily on chants that were largely syllabic (i.e. 1-3 notes for each syllable of text) with shorter melodic passages only occasionally interspersed throughout.

This reasoning given in criterion #3 above is noteworthy because it assumes that these portions of the melody exist only in service to the form of the text and that they should not always be preserved in the translation process, while other portions of the melody are essential components of the responses that should always be preserved. Rather than interpreting criterion #2 concerning the "Coptic Melody" as a directive to preserve the exact pitch and duration of each melodic line, criterion #3 leads to a different understanding of criterion #2 in which certain portions of the melody should be preserved because they were composed to evoke a particular emotional or spiritual state in the chanter, while other

portions of the melody should be discarded because they exist solely to support the structure of a particular language. In addition to highlighting a distinction between different types of melodic components, this distinction also draws attention to a relationship between melody and language or music and text that was absent in previous working groups.

This more explicit focus on the relationship between music and text is further revealed in criterion #4 "Original Music Theme."

> The English composition should represent an understanding of the nature of the Coptic music. For example, if the Coptic hymn has no elongations in any of its syllables, the English composition should likewise seek to reflect same. (Ibid.)

In their description of this criterion, the EHC members assert that the presence of "elongations" or long melismatic passages sung to a single vowel, should remain the same in the Coptic and English versions of the same hymn, suggesting that despite significant differences in the number of syllables between Coptic and English versions of the same text, the specific number and placement of melismatic passages are part of the fundamental character of the hymn regardless of the language being used. Because the duration of chanted syllables is determined by how the translated text is set to a given melody, this criterion is essentially an attempt to preserve a particular type of relationship between the music and text when a new English text is introduced.

It is important to note the tension that this criterion raises concerning the different factors that influence the duration of chanted syllables in the English language responses. While on the one hand, the need to reproduce the patterns of stress in spoken English should

often lead the working group to elongate particular syllables, the fourth criterion of "Original Music Theme" introduces a different reason for elongating (or not elongating) syllables in each response, and distinguishes the most elongated syllables as more essential to the character of the hymn. While these criteria do not necessarily contradict each other, it would appear that certain instances of elongating words in order to match the overall patterns of elongation in a chant would conflict with the need to have each word, phrase, and sentence reflect the durational patterns of syllabic stress in spoken English. Whether such conflicts were resolved by using pitch as an alternate indicator of stress at those moments, or by giving priority to preserving the stress patterns of speech over the broader patterns of elongation in the chant is unclear. What is perhaps more interesting about the question of preserving "elongations" is that the group appears to be conceptualizing these elongations as fundamentally important to the character of the hymn, in contrast to the repetitive phrases that were understood to be extensions of the principle melody rather than irreplaceable components of it.

A comparison of the opening phrase of the 1967 Higher Institute of Coptic Studies recording of the Cherubic Hymn (Coptic: "*Ni-Sherubim*") with the EHC rendition (see below) demonstrates some of the temporal changes that occurred in the translation process.

Figure 4-1. A comparison of the opening phrase of the 1967 Higher Institute of Coptic Studies recording of the Cherubic Hymn (Coptic: "*Ni-Sherubim*") with the rendition of the English Hymns Committee released in 2018.

In this case the portion of the melody that accompanies the syllables "-o-osht" is doubled in tempo and the melody accompanying "em-" is slowed down an equivalent amount.

Similarly, a comparison of the HICS response "Again We Believe" (Coptic: "*Ke Palin Pisteoman*") with the EHC rendition demonstrates similar temporal changes that are less symmetrical and more distant from each other in the melodic line.

Figure 4-2. A comparison of the opening phrase of the 1967 Higher Institute of Coptic Studies recording of the hymn "Again We Believe" (Coptic: "*Ke Palin Pisteoman*") with the rendition of the English Hymns Committee released in 2018.

In addition to these moments of lengthening and shortening the melodic line that the EHC members introduced in order to capture the cadence and syllabic emphasis they considered to be appropriate in the English language, transformations of pitch also occurred that reflected their effort to address this issue. In an intermediary melodic phrase that occurs in the response "Through the Intercessions" (Coptic: "*Hiteni Epresvia*"), the relatively simple melodic line in the HICS 1967 Liturgy is transformed with the EHC rendition to contain an additional raised pitch on the beginning of the word "Spirit," which helps to emphasize the accentuation its first syllable as occurs in spoken English.

Figure 4-3. A comparison of the opening phrase of the 1967 Higher Institute of Coptic Studies recording of the hymn "Through the Intercessions" (Coptic: "*Hiteni Epresvia*") with the rendition of the English Hymns Committee released in 2018.

From the preceding discussion it should be clear that the approach of the EHC is more systematic and deliberate, than the approach of the Southern US Diocese working group in 2000 and the approach of the first North American working group in 2010. Several important assumptions have also emerged in the more recent work of the EHC. Firstly, the idea of "proper English pronunciation" has taken greater prominence and is understood with more complexity. Even when acknowledging that the order of criteria only indicates the order through which the committee will address particular issues, rather than a clear statement of the relative importance of each item, the placement of "English Pronunciation" as the first criterion in the EHC's published list, along with remarks by the deacons involved in the working group suggests an elevation of pronunciation to a place of more central and immediate concern than was the case in earlier working groups. Moreover, the explanation of this criterion demonstrates a greater degree of complexity in the understanding of "English

Pronunciation" by breaking down this category into separate components of "pronunciation" and "accentuation" and highlighting the different levels (words, phrases, sentences) which must be scrutinized.

Overall, the transformations that I have highlighted demonstrate how the shifting priorities of the working groups, and the values and beliefs that these priorities reflect, result in a change in how the working group members are conceptualizing the temporal and melodic structure of the hymns as well. The lengthening and shortening of particular moments of the melodies, and the transformations of pitch outlined here were not understood by the EHC members as constituting significant changes to the original hymn. Rather, they were the result of a process through which "preservation" of melody was balanced with the competing need for "preservation" of English pronunciation. From this perspective there was no approach that could ensure perfect preservation in both senses, and the members worked to maximum both of these imperatives in tandem with the understanding that neither could be fully achieved.

Speech, Belonging, and Spiritual Communication

This steadily increasing focus on pronunciation, and its operationalization through ideas concerning the relationship between syllabic stress in speech and the pitch and duration of chanted syllables raises a question: Why this focus on English pronunciation? And more specifically, why does this focus on pronunciation extend beyond a concern with the potential mispronunciation of vowels and into the realm of stress patterns in speech that are invariably different in musical performance? Why do Coptic chants in English need to reflect

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patterns of stress used in speech when the original Coptic chants as well as other sacred and popular musical traditions with long histories in Anglophone culture have not been constrained by this concern? I argue that this focus on qualities of speech in music addresses a concern within the community about the experience of belonging in North American culture. Indeed in my conversations with Michael after he was ordained in November 2017 as Father Nathanael Guirguis in November 2017, this reference to sounding "American" sometimes emerged explicitly in descriptions of the goals of the EHC:

> If there is a way to capture the beauty of Coptic music, to capture the essence of the musical structure of the hymn but at the same time pronounce it in such a way that sounds English, that sounds American, that's gold, that's what we're trying to achieve. (Personal communication, Father Nathanael Guirguis, February 27th, 2018)

> So we're thinking of how to pronounce and chant this in the clearest way and the most American way it can portray the proper vowels, syllables, and words. (Ibid.)

Elizabeth Iskander has examined how "discourses of belonging" operate in media produced by the Egyptian State and the Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt. She concludes that Egyptian national discourse is based on a "framework of exclusion/inclusion" associated with particular religious identities, produced through "discourses of national unity and displacement, either by forgetting or by placing the blame on an othered 'them'" (Iskander 2012: 120-1). This dichotomy, which is the result of the monolithic ideological control of the State and Church discourses, perpetuates sectarian tensions by continually representing Copts as contrasting with Muslim Egyptians. Instead, Iskander claims that it is through alternative

national media channels outside of these two domains that a national discourse of unity may be propagated, which is not based on discourses of religious belonging but on alternate discourses of unity that do not perpetuate this divisive distinction.

The situation of the Coptic North American diaspora is different than that of Copts residing within Egypt but the need to reconcile religious and ethnoracial identities with a sense of national belonging are also present in the diaspora. In Egypt, Christianity marks one as an "other" and Christian religious affiliation is used by some demagogues and religious partisans as reason to question the loyalties of Copts to the Egyptian nation, while the shared use of the Arabic language is a point of commonality between Egyptian Muslims and Egyptian Christians. By contrast, in North America, Christian belief signifies belonging and it is the native use of the Arabic language and the non-native pronunciation of English in ways that belie this upbringing with the Arabic tongue that are signifiers of difference in a nation that is tacitly understood to be Anglophone and Christian.

While Iskander focused on media and the discourses of belonging depicted therein, this case study is about how belonging is mediated through the (re)construction of sacred chants within the bounds of how performance of the language of the nation is conceptualized. The distortion of patterns of stress in speech is to some degree inevitable when text is set to a melody, but while such distortions are often considered to be acceptable (or not even noticed) in many forms of sacred and secular music, individuals involved in the official translation and standardization work of the Coptic Orthodox Church in North America see these distortions as the partial result of a lack of competence with the English language among the earliest generation of Coptic immigrants in different church communities, and these distortions signify difference and hinder belonging in North American culture. When Deacon

Albair explained the primary purpose of the EHC's work, he identified unification of worship as an important factor but immediately added, "the other thing is to be accommodating to the new generation" (Personal communication, Albair Gamal Mikhail, March 19th 2017). He went on to explain that the most important aspect of this is related to pronunciation, "because a lot of youth or young kids make fun of and they laugh at older deacons if they mispronounce English words, and they feel it's a joke. It's not really a prayer, it's a joke if you don't pronounce it the right way" (Ibid.).

While this increased attention to pronunciation may be understood as an expression of the need to belong in an Anglophone culture, the need to preserve the essential character of the hymns is also incredibly important because it is necessary for the preservation of the Coptic Orthodox tradition in a largely non-Orthodox culture. Yet this task of preservation is complicated by the task of translation. The numerous differences between the Coptic and English languages means that the length of passages of text in each respective language and the number of vowels in particular words and their translated equivalents differ, sometimes greatly. There are many ways to set the English words to the original Coptic melody and none of these perfectly reflect patterns of stress used in speech. While certain arrangements may present particularly extreme divergences from normative stress patterns, the added melodic and rhythmic dimensions introduced by singing or chanting a text complicate the very notion of stress itself and often lead to differing interpretations of what is or is not correct.

How then is it possible to reconcile the need for belonging, in which English pronunciation is seen as an important marker, with the need for cultural preservation, in which the essential character of Coptic hymns must remain unchanged despite the inevitable

distortions that result from the English language being used with these melodies? I argue that the members of the EHC reconciled these competing needs of national belonging and the cultural preservation of their liturgical traditions by identifying particular temporal, melodic, and linguistic components of the chants with their underlying spiritual function, while simultaneously identifying other components with the local cultural context in which the chants were composed and potentially evolved. Ultimately, they adopted a religiously informed epistemological orientation towards the hymns in which they conceptualized them as forms of spiritual communication and were thus able to find common ground between the primarily spiritual function of the hymns and the need to maintain what was perceived to be a "correct" (read: "native") sound.

In contrast to members of previous working groups, some members of the EHC were particularly concerned with the function of the hymns and the role that these hymns played as a form of communication with the Divine. Deacon Michael Guirguis (now Fr. Nathanael Guirguis), reflecting on the internal discussions of the EHC, described how they understood hymns to be a form of prayer in which the prayer text is augmented by the use of music as a "language of the soul":

> It was a lot of discussion and we just said, okay at the end of the day, what are we doing? What is the whole point of hymns? The whole point of hymns is to transcend my prayer in using the language of my soul, which is music, and fusing the two together in worship. (Personal communication, Michael Guirguis, August 16th 2016)

Further emphasizing how members of the group conceptualized the hymns as a form of communication, Michael went on to discuss how clarity of the text was of the upmost

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importance, and that the larger task of unifying liturgical worship was being undertaken so that those chanting the hymns were better able to understand what they were chanting:

> If that's the essence of what 'hymns' is then the clarity of the text should be there, the clarity of words that I'm saying. We need to make sure that the pronunciation is the number one criteria, because me, as a deacon, if I'm chanting the words improperly, or it's not clear, and there's somebody that's listening to the word, and they're saying, 'wait did he just say *ma*ry or ma*ry*' or 'did he just say a different word,' we don't want to cause that, so the whole point is to unify liturgical worship so people will be able to understand what the hymn is that we're chanting. (Personal communication, Michael Guirguis, August 16th 2016)

In addition to this heightened focus on clarity in communication and reflecting a sense of belonging by sounding more "American," Father Nathanael consciously and deliberately drew a distinction between the melodic "essence" of a hymn and additional components of the melody of the Coptic-language hymns that are not essential to the hymn but exist solely to accommodate the structure of the Coptic language. He contrasted the exact melody of the Coptic-language hymns with the "essence" of each hymn, explaining that some notes present in the Coptic-language hymn were redundant rather than essential notes, such as those in the repetitive phrases referenced in criterion #3 of the EHC. Interestingly, when I pressed him to articulate how the determination was made between redundant and essential notes, he acknowledged the difficulty and uncertainty in the approach and shifted focus to the spiritual function of the music:

How do you determine that? I have no idea. But what's helping make that decision is thinking about the hymn pastorally as well. Again we're trying to bring everyone together in common worship…that the template of the hymn is the same, but if we're moving some of these redundant notes that's going to help some guy named Joe that knows nothing of hymns and cares about the music, just make it a little bit easier for him to chant it, okay great. But at the same time we can't go to one extreme in really stripping down the hymn to basically nothing, saying the hymn really quickly with no music involved, we can't go that extreme. Where do you draw the line? I'm not really sure. (Personal communication, Father Nathanael Guirguis, February 27th, 2018)

Deacon Albair also notes how the removal of "redundant notes" was important in order to make the hymn sound more authentically English and would be better suited to the "new community" of younger American-born Copts:

[The removal of redundant notes] is also important because without it you feel that it is originally not English. Whereas if you dig deeper in the music itself, the music of the hymn, you might be able to fit it better to English and the new community. (Personal communication, Albair Gamal Mikhail, March 19th 2017)

In addition to the removal of "redundant" notes, Father Nathanael also explained how they lengthened and shortened certain phrases to accommodate the length of specific words, in order to better fit the English language:

For example, the Coptic word "ethoab" is three syllables, the English word is 'holy,' it's two syllables, so that doesn't mean I'm going to stretch out 'holy' just to make sure I match the Coptic 100%. I mean I'm catching the essence of

the scale or the tempo, and all that stuff but I'll shave off that extra note because Holy is only two syllables. (Personal communication, Father Nathanael Guirguis, February 27th, 2018)

Perhaps most surprising was Father Nathanael's acknowledgement that this approach, adopted by the EHC and sanctioned by the Church leadership, is based on a view of the nature of the hymns that most Coptic people would reject:

> What I'm mentioning now, the English Hymns Committee agrees on as a whole, but the vast majority of Coptic people would disagree with that, and their entire, sole, reason is for it to be identical, breath by breath, to the Coptic, and when you dive deeper into why the vast majority of Coptic people would say that, psychologically, it's that we're always on the defense as a Coptic community. And that's been built in us from persecution, always trying to defend and preserve our hymns. We've lost so many because of the Islamic invasion and people dying and all this kind of stuff, this Church. So we feel like, if I remove that extra note on "holy" instead of keeping it, because it was "ethoab" with three syllables, then *enough*, I'm losing part of our Coptic heritage. Many of them will view it that way… [but] our Coptic Heritage is going nowhere. Coptic heritage is more than capturing every single syllable. The essence of our hymns is the fabric of our church and of our identity—it's not going anywhere—and how we want to capture the beauty of our music, and now putting it into our native tongue. (Personal communication, Father Nathanael Guirguis, February 27th, 2018)

Father Nathanael's rather remarkable acknowledgment of the divergence in the perspective of the EHC from that of most other Coptic people belies the more hierarchical concentration of decision making that underlies the hymn translation project. While the

North American bishops have sought consensus among the members of their respective dioceses concerning the EHC produced hymns, the philosophy with which the EHC has approached their task has not been informed by popular sentiment as much as by the drive to conform to the sensibilities of native-English-speaking Copts and the wider Anglophone culture of North America. This desire to make the chants sound "right" within this context has in turn been addressed through the articulation of particular temporal, melodic, and linguistic components to the spiritual function or "essence" of the chants, and the articulation of other components to the local cultural context. Moreover, Father Nathanael's characterization of the typical Coptic view as a product of defensiveness born from a history of persecution suggests that he regards this view as outdated, and that Coptic heritage is intertwined with language and a sense for beauty that is linked to linguistic form and cultural context.

This distinction between aspects of the Coptic-language responses that were essential parts of the chant and other aspects that were tied to language, emerged when I discussed another aspect of the chants with Deacon Albair. In most longer melismatic passages in Coptic chants, specific consonants are typically inserted into the vowel passages depending on which vowel is being sung. For example, when the vowel "o" is performed at length, a "w" is inserted, often multiple times, so that the passage will be vocalized as "o-o-wo-o-wo-wo-wo." When the vowel "e" is performed at length, a "y" is inserted into the passage, such as in "e-ye-e-ye-e-ye-ye." This practice of syllabic insertion is regularly done today when Coptic-language chants are performed, and evidence of the practice goes back to at least to the 1880s, when Franciscan Priest Jules Blin noted these syllabic additions in his transcription of the Basilian Liturgy (Blin 1888: 11, the syllables of the Coptic are

transcribed in Coptic letters using black ink, while the added syllables are transcribed in

Roman letters using red ink):

Figure 4-4. An excerpt of Franciscan Priest Jules Blin's transcription of the Basilian Liturgy with Coptic syllables in black ink and additional sung syllables in red ink (Blin 1888: 11).

Albair argued that this practice of inserting consonants in longer vowel passages should not

be carried over to the English versions of the hymns because "this is not faith, this is not

theology, it's art" (Personal communication, Albair Gamal Mikhail, March 19th, 2017).

Speaking about the younger generation of American-born Copts he added, "It's their tastes,

it's their language, it's their own thing. They don't do this in their language, so why should

we impose it on them?" (Ibid.). Similar to Father Nathanael's distinction between

"redundant" portions of the melody that could be removed because their purpose was

primarily to accommodate the Coptic language, rather than to further the underlying spiritual

goal of the chant, Albair explained that this long-standing practice of syllabic insertion was

"art," in other words it is not a practice tied to the underlying spiritual goal of the chant and

could also be discarded in translation.

Conclusion

Father Nathanael's view on musical preservation as a process involving adaptation to language and context, rather than as an exacting replication of musical sound is evocative of a type of modernization project in which old ways of thinking need to be updated and transformed. In her study of the Coptic Orthodox reform movement that emerged in the 1940s and 1950s in Egypt, Sana Hasan has argued that individuals acted to "modernize the Coptic community" while at the same time being inspired by an ideology of (invented) tradition (Hasan 2003: 6). Hasan demonstrates how the utilization of hierarchical structures and traditions of the Coptic Orthodox Church were used to instill ethics and values compatible with modernity. For example, she discusses how modern values of self-control and punctuality, as well as the substitution of a public ethic for personal commitments were inculcated in a generation of Orthodox Copts through a revival of strict Orthodox monastic teachings (Hasan 2003: 61-70). In a similar manner, the EHC's approach to hymn translation reflects a very modern conceptualization of the hymns and the task of musical preservation, but this modern approach is applied through the traditional Church hierarchies and is informed by traditional theological perspectives on the spiritual purpose of Coptic chant.

This paradoxical deployment of modernity through tradition is similarly accompanied by a religious worldview that is paradoxically framed by a modern form of secularity. While scholars of religion in the mid-twentieth century such as Mircea Eliade have argued for the influence of myth, religion, and theology even over "the great majority of the irreligious" (Eliade 1959 [1957]: 205), more recently scholars have explored how the very conceptualization of "religion" as a category of difference rather than as an ontological

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reality is the product of a modern worldview shaped by modern secularity (Asad 1993; Masuzawa 2005; Taylor 2007). Similarly, the issues of musical preservation addressed by the EHC are issues that only take meaning through acts of translation that are made necessary by the modern transnational character of the Coptic community. The need for unification of the Coptic chant tradition—something new to the history of the Coptic church—reflects a sense of religious identity and boundaries shaped by a secular age of religious pluralism in which the integrity of the tradition is intertwined as much with identity (defined in contrast to other religions) as it is by religious experience.

Scholars exploring the interaction of modern secularity with religious experience in the performance of sacred music have understood this dynamic in terms of both the negative impacts of the former on traditional practices as well as the adaptation of the latter to conform to modern epistemologies. Scholar Pi-yen Chen has examined the influence of global media and modern ideologies of secular rationalism and capitalism on the tradition of Chinese Buddhism, arguing that a shift in linguistic terminology from "fanbai" ("chant") to "fojiao yinyue" ("Buddhist music") reflects a larger process of modernization, which creates tension between the "inconsumable spirituality" of Buddhist chants and the "consumable representation of music" in the hegemonic culture of the larger society (Chen 2004: 94). By contrast, Jeffers Engelhardt has examined how members of the Estonian Christian Orthodox community reconcile the religious absolute with modern secularity through notions of musical style that are codified in the values and ideas of "right singing" (Engelhardt 2015). Arguing that "musical style was the religious absolute given voice according to and against the limits and norms of the secular," (Ibid.: 4) Engelhardt demonstrates how the ontology of religious absolutism is not vanquished by modern values of pluralism and secular

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rationalism, but rather that the experience of the religious absolute may be located in the experience of "secular enchantment" that accompanies the performance of sacred music.

Ultimately, if one is to trace the trajectory of Coptic hymn translation efforts in North America, from the recordings of the Southern US Diocese in 2000 up to the most recent work of the English Hymns Committee today, it is apparent that the conceptualization of this liturgical music and the approach to translation has been increasingly intellectualized, and that this has occurred through a dialogic process that increasingly incorporated the concerns of the younger generation of American-born, non-Arabic-speaking Copts. This process gradually transformed the way in which working group members conceptualized the hymns in several ways. One was the way in which the boundary between music and language was conceptualized, which was operationalized through the categorization of particular components of the hymns as either belonging to the "essential hymn" or to the source language. Another was the distinction made between the spiritual and aesthetic associations of specific musical forms, wherein certain features were perceived to be rooted in "theology" while others were rooted in "art." Just as Lawrence Venuti has noted the "domestic remainder" that is always present in the translation of language, these distinctions constitute part of the "domestic remainder" of the translation process that specifically concern musical form, reflecting values and beliefs of the younger generation of North American Copts, their need for belonging and their increasingly reflexive and intellectualized understanding of their hymn tradition.

CHAPTER 5

Cultural Authority Across Multiple Epistemes in the Transmission and Preservation of Coptic Hymns

The Muʿallim at an Epistemic Crossroad

Since his youth, Muʿallim Mīkhāʾīl devoted himself to learning the *alḥān* with seriousness, proficiency and an intense zeal for absorbing them all at the side of two of the seven most learned cantors, Muʿallim Murqus and Muʿallim Armānīūs. Pope Cyril V (who was fluent in the *alḥān*) soon noticed his talent, and personally oversaw his education. When any cantor was withholding a *laḥn* from Muʿallim Mīkhāʾīl, the Pope would hide him underneath the simple sofa that he used to sit on—I still remember its place in the northwestern nook of the Grand Hall of the previous Patriarchate—and then the Pope would request to hear this *laḥn* from the cantor, and ask him to repeat it when necessary while Muʿallim Mīkhāʾīl grasped it absolutely perfectly with his tremendous memory.

-Reflections from Ragheb Moftah (1898-2001) on Cantor Mīkhāʾīl Girgis al-Batanūnī (1873-1957), published in al-Kirāzah Magazine (Moftah 1975: 5); my translation from Arabic.

I remember when we started learning hymns in St. George in Bellflower here in California… we have Abuna Abrahim Aziz, who is considered to be a master in hymns, but we didn't know any hymns. So he was encouraging us to learn, but at the beginning we didn't know, so we would stand in front of the altar and just play a tape—the Higher Institute tapes—playing the *tasbīḥah*, because we didn't know the *tasbīḥah* at that time. And we would just stand

and play the tape, *chuckle* we stand in reverence in front of the altar, the Higher Institute singing the *tasbīḥah*, and we're standing, and in the middle of the week we tried to learn what we were playing. So that's how it started. It was purely 'Mu'allim Sony' as we say, who taught us the *tasbīḥah*. That's because there was no one around to teach us.

-Father Joseph Boules of St. Mary and St. Verena Coptic Orthodox Church in Anaheim, California, USA, September 19th, 2017.

The two recollections presented above demonstrate how the role of the professional church cantor, or *mu'allim*, in the Coptic Orthodox Church has transformed in recent decades. In 1975, Coptic music scholar Ragheb Moftah published his reflections on the great mu'allim Mīkhā'īl Girgis al-Batanūnī in the Church-operated magazine *al-Kirāzah* ("*The See*"), and his story included the remarkable image of the late Pope Cyril V hiding the mu'allim under his sofa. The implication in this story is that Pope Cyril did this in order to deceive other cantors into believing that they were alone with the Patriarch, and would thus be willing to perform the jealously guarded hymns that they would otherwise have refused to share with another mu'allim. While this story is more likely to be legend than a realistic depiction of historical events, the fact that Ragheb Moftah's narrative is plausible enough to be printed in the pages of *al-Kirāzah*, the most widely disseminated regular publication of the Coptic Orthodox Church, and indeed became a well-known story shared among Coptic clergy, deacons, and laypeople, suggests that it resonated with a deeper understanding of the role of the church cantor and the nature of cantorial authority.

Historically, the mu'allim, or professional church cantor, was the local repository of hymnodic knowledge in each church community. He alone was expected to have memorized

all of the liturgical hymns performed by deacons and congregants for regular weekly services as well as for weddings, funerals, baptisms, and the many important seasonal ritual events on the Coptic calendar. In addition to preserving the hymns of the Church through the embodied practices of mimetic learning and performance, the mu'allim led others in chanting during church rites, and also taught hymns to deacons and priests, ensuring the transmission of these hymns from one generation of Coptic Orthodox worshippers to the next. While today, knowledge of any Coptic liturgical hymn is understood to be part of a shared heritage that should be readily available to any who seek it, stories like the aforementioned tale provide a window into an earlier time in which certain hymns were performed exclusively by particular mu'allimūn, jealously guarded, and would sometimes tragically disappear from the canon of church music with the death of those individuals. Stories of such secrecy appear to have buttressed the unique and important role of the mu'allim in each church community as the local authority on Coptic hymnody and the gatekeeper to knowledge about Coptic hymns.

At the same time, Moftah's anecdote itself may be read critically for its contribution to an ongoing epistemological transition in the Coptic community. This epistemological transition is a shift in authority from embodied forms of hymnodic knowledge and transmission to knowledge that is preserved and transmitted through its inscription in material forms. Something that may be glossed using terminology from performance studies scholar Diana Taylor as a transition in cultural authority from "the repertoire" to "the archive" (2003, 2010). Understood in this way, Moftah is applying the values of the archival episteme onto the practices of an era that preceded that episteme's preeminence, valorizing the image of Mu'allim Mīkhā'īl as a type of human archive that could approximate the forms of preservation and transmission that are today associated with audio recording archives.

This shift in epistemic authority also coincides with the gradual diminishment of the importance of the role of the human mu'allim. The second quote above, from an interview with US-based Coptic Orthodox priest Father Joseph Boules, describes what has become a normal mode of transmission for Coptic hymnody in places such as North America. The traditional church cantor was replaced with "Mu'allim Sony," Father Joseph's tongue-in-cheek reference to the cassette player that he and other deacons would use in the 1980s and 1990s to learn from cassette recordings of the chorus of the Higher Institute of Coptic Studies that were brought from Egypt by friends and acquaintances. However, this trend is not exclusive to the North American diaspora. As I discuss later in this chapter, the use of audio recordings has become commonplace in Coptic hymn pedagogy in Egypt as well, as exemplified by institutions such as the St. Athanasius Deacons' school in Nasr City, Cairo, which has transformed Coptic hymn education from its earlier context defined by interactions between individuals and small groups of deacons in informal settings to a modern scholastic context involving hundreds of students with standardized curricula and evaluations. In this new institutional setting, the pedagogical role of the mu'allim has been entirely replaced by an online database of audio recordings that accompanies classroom instruction by *khuddām*, volunteer laypeople and deacons. In addition to the developments in hymn education in Egypt, and the realities of global migration that have influenced the mu'allim profession in the diaspora, the emergence of internet-based tools for the archiving and transmission of information are another important aspect of this ongoing epistemological transition. The website tasbeha.org has become the most widely used archive for recordings of Coptic hymnody in Egypt and around the world, and the mobile phone application Coptic Reader has become an equally well known reference for liturgical texts. As I will explain later in this

chapter, the development and use of these two online platforms demonstrate new forms of authority for online recordings in the transnational Coptic community today.

At the same time that the authority of the mu'allim with respect to the preservation and pedagogical transmission of Coptic hymnody has diminished in Egypt, the formal role of mu'allim is also largely absent in diasporic churches. One explanation for this absence of mu'allimūn in the diaspora is the economic untranslatability of the profession outside of Egypt, in particular to communities and nations where dramatically different standards of living have made it impractical for churches to support full-time mu'allimūn. At the same time, the decision to not invest money into supporting full-time mu'allimūn also reflects the way that the preeminence of an archival episteme influences the priorities of these diasporic churches. Because the authority of hymnodic preservation is now located primarily with audio recordings, the power to transmit those preserved hymns are spread among khuddām, which has further diminished the mu'allim's authority in these contexts. Despite this, the mu'allim profession has persisted in Egypt and despite its formal absence in North America, select deacons actively involved in their local churches are frequently identified as "mu'allim" in an informal sense. These "informal mu'allimūn" often serve the same liturgical and community functions in their churches as mu'allimūn in Egypt, and are treated with the same respect and affection as their Egyptian counterparts.

So if the authority of the mu'allim as a preserver of knowledge and as a pedagogical transmitter of knowledge has been so greatly diminished, why has the role persisted and continued to be a valued part of the Coptic community? I argue that the continued importance of the mu'allim in Egypt and abroad reflects the persistent authority of a virtual epistemological orientation, what Diana Taylor has referred to as "the virtual," in Coptic life.

While cultural authority has transitioned from the understanding and perception of hymnodic knowledge as embodied practice to the understanding and perception of hymnodic knowledge as a thing that may be disembodied and inscribed in material culture, another epistemological orientation has coexisted with these that is associated specifically with ritual time and space. This virtual episteme is characterized by the simultaneous existence of the self in both earthly and spiritual realms, and within this epistemic domain the mu'allim's authority has remained consistent. I argue that it is the mu'allim's role and abilities as a facilitator of rites, and the dynamics of human-divine transmission, characteristic of ritual chanting, that has led to the continuance of the mu'allim tradition in Egypt and the perpetuation of the role in an informal manner in the North American diaspora.

While I draw my general theoretical framework, and the specific notion of multiple coextant epistemologies, from the work of performance studies scholar Diana Taylor, I expand on her work by exploring how the different logics of several coextant epistemes may simultaneously contribute to the construction of cultural authority. Taylor's scholarship initially focused on two epistemes ("the repertoire" and "the archive") and their presence within the context of colonial encounters, while her later work on "the digital" had a more singular focus on this more recently formed epistemic reality (Taylor 2003, 2010). By contrast I explore four different epistemes operating within the same community and demonstrate how the dynamics of each are important for understanding the cultural authority of the modern mu'allim. Moreover, I hope my study will contribute to scholarship specifically exploring the epistemological basis of musical and sonic experience and understanding. This includes work by Stanley Hoffman, who examined how musical knowledge in the context of Javanese gamelan reflected underlying assumptions about

knowledge that pervaded Javanese culture more generally (Hoffman 1978), Jonathan

Sterne's examination of the emergence of a shared epistemology of listening and the "audile

technique" associated with it (Sterne 2003), and Steven Feld's work on "acoustemology" and

the interrelationship of sound, subjectivity, cosmology, and the environment (e.g. Feld 1992,

1996, 2003 [2000]). By applying Taylor's framework to the analysis of multiple

interdependent epistemes I am also drawing some inspiration from the work of Andrew

Eisenberg's exploration of "acoustemological multiplicity and contestation" among Muslims

in Mombasa Old Town, Kenya, whose work shifted Feld's focus from the description of a

single cohesive episteme (or acousteme) to the interaction between different ones (Eisenberg

2013). However unlike Eisenberg, or for that matter Taylor, I am not exploring the clash of

different epistemes represented in moments of encounter, but instead the coexistence of

epistemes and the ways in which they inform each other to construct a singular cultural

dynamic.

In order to address this argument I will first provide a more detailed explanation of

Diana Taylor's model of epistemic systems and my reasons for adopting this analytical

framework. Second, I will demonstrate how Taylor's different epistemic frameworks, or

epistemes, operate within Coptic Orthodox culture. Third, I will draw on historical writings

and scholarship as well as my own ethnographic research in Cairo and North America to

explore the changing role of the mu'allim in Egypt as well as the emergence of an informal

mu'allim in North American Coptic communities. Finally, I will address how new forms of

technological mediation that are present in both Egypt and North America reflect new

constructions of epistemic authority. Ultimately, I argue that the continued importance of the

mu'allim is rooted in the persistent authority of a virtual episteme in Coptic Orthodox life,

one which governs the understanding of Coptic chant as prayer and the role of the mu'allim

as a prayer leader and facilitator of church rites.

Taylor's Model for Understanding Epistemic Systems

Using Diana Taylor's model of multiple coextant epistemic systems, including "the

repertoire," "the archive," "the digital," and "the virtual," I will examine how different

epistemological orientations or epistemes have influenced the production of knowledge about

Coptic hymnody by non-Copts, as well as by members of the Coptic Orthodox community

themselves. Before delving into these case studies, I will first explain why Taylor's model of

multiple coextant epistemic systems is a desirable model for understanding the ways in

which historical writers as well as individuals currently active in the transnational Coptic

community preserve and transmit knowledge. In order to understand the advantages of Diana

Taylor's model of epistemic systems for illuminating the dynamics of modern Coptic

regimes of knowledge, it is first important to understand how Taylor's approach diverges

from earlier scholarly approaches to understanding the cultural development of the

preservation and transmission of knowledge.

Scholars such as Marshall McLuhan and Walter Ong have addressed this topic,

presenting models for understanding the development of human thought as it has been

shaped by the widespread adoption or interiorization of different technologies (McLuhan

1962; Ong 1982). McLuhan argues that cultures are defined by a particular ratio of the

senses, and that major developments in technologies of communication have transformed

those sensorial ratios as cultures have progressed from orality to literacy, and ultimately to a

new type of electronic interdependence symbolized by the "global village" (1962: 31-2). Similarly, Ong argues that numerous differences in thought and expression between contemporaneous communities as well as between different historical periods of the same community may be understood in terms of the influence and degree of interiorization first of writing, which introduced a degree of autonomy and alienation, then print technology which marked a shift from hearing-dominance to sight-dominance in thought and expression, and finally by electronic technology, which ushered in an era of "secondary orality" defined by the sense of closure inherited from print technologies along with new ways of thinking and communicating (1982: 31-6, 114-21, 134-5).

While these scholars bring much needed attention to the ways in which thought and subjectivity are mediated by technologies that are implicated in expression and communication, their approaches are problematic for at least three reasons. First, they reflect a kind of ethnocentric cultural evolutionism in which societies are considered to develop in a roughly linear manner from orality to more complex modes of thinking and being in the world, and contemporaneous societies that have not fully interiorized these later stages of thought and expression are equated to the earlier developmental stages of currently "developed" modern societies. McLuhan's states that "[p]honetic writing has the power to translate man from tribal to the civilized sphere" (McLuhan 1962: 27), and at times he uncritically appeals to somewhat questionable sources to demonstrate this claim, such as the first-hand account of a Western missionary doctor who penned an article in the *East African Standard* entitled "How Civilization Has Affected the African" (Ibid.: 33-5). Similarly, while Ong does acknowledge that such stages of development are not absolutely distinct and that earlier stages of development may leave residual effects on later ones, his model precludes

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the existence of multiple epistemes within the same society and thus creates a direct association between particular ways of knowing and specific societies while maintaining a historical hierarchy between these epistemes that is then unavoidably transferred to the societies themselves.

Second, the frameworks of McLuhan and Ong are problematic because of their complicity in an ideology that Jonathan Sterne has critiqued for treating the senses as a "zero-sum game, where the dominance of one sense by necessity leads to the decline of another sense" (2003: 16). For example, McLuhan makes the frequent assumption that a transformation in the cultural significance or engagement with one sensory modality must necessarily lead to the devaluing of others, necessarily resulting in a dominant sensory modality, such as when he asserts that "[t]he interiorization of the technology of the phonetic alphabet translates man from the magical world of the ear to the neutral visual world" (McLuhan 1962: 18). Ong similarly builds on these assumptions of a transition from aural to sight dominance as well. While one may arguably identify specific ethnographic moments in which one sense appears to dominate the perception or the conceptualization of experience of an individual or group, the notion that this dynamic is so omnipresent and consistent that it may be used to singularly describe broad historical and cross-societal trends is unsupported and readily questioned by anecdotal evidence.

Third, McLuhan and Ong depict technologies as the cause of change in societies and in doing so they treat technologies as largely autonomous in origin rather than as products of human action or extensions of pre-existing cultural practices or orientations. Jennifer Daryl Slack and J. MacGregor Wise present a critique of this type of technological determinism and argue that assumptions that "technologies are seen as the cause of change in society" and

that "technologies are autonomous in origin and action" underlie a mechanistic perspective on causality that is inherently flawed and that conceals many of the relationships and influences that constitute the larger cultural system (Slack & Wise 2005: 102-4). By contrast, a nonmechanistic perspective is built on the assumptions that "technology is not autonomous, but is integrally connected to the context within which it is developed and used," that "culture is made up of connections" (as opposed to "things"), and that "technologies arise within these connections as part of them and as effective within them" (Slack & Wise 2005: 109-110). McLuhan's remark that "[t]he alphabet is an aggressive and militant absorber and transformer of cultures" is one example of deterministic orientation towards technology (McLuhan 1962: 48). By contrast, Jonathan Sterne's study of the development of "audile technique" is one example of an attempt to adopt a nonmechanistic approach to studying culture and technology by focusing on a group of ideas, practices, and values articulated to ways of listening and understanding sound, which effected a number of seemingly (but not actually) autonomous technological developments (Sterne 2003).

An alternative to the frameworks of McLuhan and Ong that avoids a cultural evolutionary perspective, allows for a more nuanced understanding of sensory paradigms, and better situates technologies within a cultural web may be found in the work of Diana Taylor, who explores how different overlapping and intertwined epistemes are implicated in the preservation and transmission of knowledge and cultural memory. In *The Archive and The Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, Taylor presents an argument for coextant ways of knowing that include what she refers to as "the archive" and "the repertoire." Avoiding the focus that the written and spoken word have on memory and knowledge advanced by McLuhan (1962; 1967;1970), Ong (1982), Goody (1977;1987), and

Harris (2000), as well as Jacques Derrida (1997[1967]), Taylor instead takes epistemological orientation as a starting point. She frames the "archival" as that which is perceived as being resistant to change, including the "documents, maps, literary texts" and "letters," but also "archeological remains, bones, videos, films [and] CDs" (2003: 19). By contrast, "the repertoire" consists of the enactments of embodied memory, such as "performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance [and] singing" (2003: 20). Unlike an evolutionary model of technological literacy, Taylor's approach does not present a prescripted path of linear development for all human societies. Instead her framework accepts that different regimes of knowledge may exist alongside each other in the same society, and interact in complex and interesting ways. Rather than viewing human societies as imbued with a culture that is periodically impacted by an external technological force that replaces the earlier cultural milieu with a newer, more modern one, Taylor's paradigm presents broad cultural systems involved in the preservation and transmission of knowledge as constantly present, but always in flux as a result of shifts in the authority given to particular ways of knowing and changing perceptions of the ephemerality or concreteness of particular forms of knowledge.

In addition to rejecting a linear model of ascending and disappearing epistemological regimes, Taylor also avoids the construction of a simple binary of competing epistemes by acknowledging the existence of others: "The relationship between the archive and the repertoire…is certainly not sequential (the former ascending to prominence after the disappearance of the latter…). Nor is it true versus false, mediated versus unmediated, primordial versus modern. Nor is it a binary. Other systems of transmission—like the digital—complicate any simple binary formulation" (Taylor 2003: 22). In addition to "the archive" and "the repertoire" she introduces the idea of "the digital," to encompass new

forms of knowledge preservation and transmission shaped primarily by the use of the internet and related technological innovations, which she explores in more detail in her later scholarship (Taylor 2003: 21-22; Taylor 2010). She also mentions epistemes such as "the virtual," and "the visual" as other distinct but interrelated ways of knowing while leaving the door open for scholars to identify and explore other epistemic systems as well (Taylor 2003: 21; 2010: 3). The multiplicity and open-endedness inherent in Taylor's framework, along with the way in which she avoids a reductive approach to cultural development, technology, and the senses, makes it especially useful for understanding how the preservation and transmission of knowledge, the mediation of particular technologies, and the influence of different sensory modalities are interrelated.

Four Epistemic Frameworks: The Repertoire, The Archive, The Digital, and the Virtual

In order to better understand how Taylor's epistemic frameworks apply to the transnational Coptic community I will briefly explore four of these frameworks in the context of the preservation and transmission of liturgical hymns among Coptic Orthodox Christians. It is important to emphasize that these frameworks categorize how knowledge and memory are conceptualized, performed, and transmitted but that the objects of conceptualization, performance, and transmission are not necessarily unique to each episteme, and the same ideas and practices might be interpreted through one or another epistemic framework. From the perspective of the repertoire, a hymn is inseparable from the act of singing the hymn itself, and its preservation is equivalent to the continued potential for its performance that is latent in the embodied memory of the performer. Understood through the epistemic frame of the archive the same hymn may instead be a series of notes and ideas about rhythm and

voice, which can be abstracted into written musical notation or a specific performance that is detached from the performer through its inscription in a cassette or CD and made nearly endlessly replicable.

In contrast to the repertoire and the archive, "the digital" as it is discussed by Taylor, references how the use of the internet and other computer-based technologies accompany unique ways of creating, storing and transmitting knowledge that draws on ideas and orientations associated with both the repertoire and the archive (Taylor 2010). In the context of the digital, a hymn, such as those accessible on the popular online archive tasbeha.org, which I will discuss more below, may be transmitted through reproducible audio recordings or written notation in a manner similar to the archive, and yet the preservation of the hymn on web-based archives and other online resources is often experienced as more ephemeral than the hymns in a printed text or a CD library. While online platforms allow access to vast amounts of information in a way that is usually associated with the archive, they facilitate access to even greater amounts of information across greater distances at greater speeds. Moreover the practice of "copying" is greatly accelerated beyond the individual mimesis involved in the reproduction of knowledge as it is understood via the repertoire, and even greater than the relatively limited ability to copy print material associated with the archive, to a nearly unlimited ability to reproduce, while still potentially maintaining the practices of selection and valorization that are characteristic of the archive (Taylor 2010). This acceleration of the spreading of information through space and time along with the exponential increase in the ability to copy it is linked to shifts in the authority associated with different forms of knowledge and different ways of preserving and transmitting knowledge.

Finally, a useful epistemic framework for understanding how Coptic Orthodox Christians experience hymnodic performance is "the virtual," an orientation in which the self exists in two contiguous spaces at once. While the concept of virtuality has been explored in the more contemporary context of online virtual spaces (e.g. Hillis 2009), Sue-Ellen Case has also examined the "architecture of the virtual" that connects the laboratory, the Church, and the theatrical stage in the history of Western Europe, noting how "the medieval cathedral purported to provide an architecture of the virtual space of heaven, where the 'spirit,' or the actor/character was cast as an effect of that space" (Case 2007: 9). Diana Taylor notes that a virtual orientation towards creating, preserving, and transmitting knowledge can also be identified in historical Aztec ceremonies, the trance states of *candomblé*, and other forms of sacred music and dance (Taylor 2010).

Like followers of most religious traditions, Coptic Christians also acknowledge a spiritual realm separate from the worldly realm. The idea that hymns may have a spiritual impact on the listener apart from the comprehension of the words themselves may be understood as part of the foregrounding of a virtual episteme, and this impact may be understood as a form of affective knowledge that is distinct from the embodied knowledge generally associated with the repertoire or the abstract knowledge that is detached from the knower and inscribed in the objects of material culture generally associated with the archive. This virtual episteme is sometimes expressed through the understanding that Coptic hymns are prayers and that certain characteristics of the melodies of Coptic chants directly impact the spiritual state of the chanter. A more explicit version of this is present in the scholarship of Māgid Samū'īl Ibrāhīm, who has argued for a direct relationship between the vowel sounds present in melismatic Coptic chants and the spiritual state of the chanter (Ibrāhīm

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2001). A more subtle version of this is present when members of the English Hymns Committee in North America are translating Coptic hymns from Coptic to English and they take care to set specific phrases with heightened spiritual meaning such as "Theotokos Mary" ("Mary the God-bearer") to the same melodic shape while other words and phrases are set to different points in the melody to accommodate the different structure of the English language.

Epistemic Mediation

An important aspect of each of these four epistemes is that they are all mediated. The archive is generally mediated through the selection and valorization of particular archival objects. For example, the earliest audio recordings of Coptic chant were recordings produced by Ragheb Moftah of Muʿallim Mikhāʾīl Girgis al-Batanūni. While Moftah could have chosen from dozens or perhaps hundreds of different muʿallimūn for his recordings, the selection of Muʿallim Mikhāʾīl essentially canonized this particular cantor as the primary historical representation of Coptic hymnody, and in doing so he gave significant authority both to his idiosyncratic style as well as what many consider to be a regional Cairean style of cantillation. This archival mediation was likely also influenced by the ideas of Ernest Newlandsmith, an English composer and performer, whom Moftah recruited to transcribe Coptic hymns. Newlandsmith believed that the ornamentation he heard in Coptic chant was the product of Arab musical influence and was a corruption of the tradition. It was because Muʿallim Mikhāʾīl chanted in a simpler way with less ornamentation that Newlandsmith initially chose Muʿallim Mikhāʾīl over other cantors for his transcriptions and this

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undoubtedly led Moftah to focus on Muʿallim Mikhāʾīl in his earliest recordings. Thus the specific choices made by Moftah as well as Newlandsmith's preconceptions about Coptic and Arab culture and music were crucial in determining the content of the Ragheb Moftah collection that would initially be housed in the Institute of Coptic Studies in Cairo, and later in the Library of Congress.

Mediation of the digital episteme often operates in a similar manner. In the case of the Ragheb Moftah collection, when it was accepted by the Library of Congress it was also digitized, and the ideas, choices, and actions that shaped it initially when it was a collection of reel-to-reel tapes, then cassettes, and eventually CDs, still left their mark when the music was transformed and migrated into an online platform. In other cases a complete collection is not migrated from the archive to the digital en masse, but is formed online through processes that are unique to the digital episteme, such as in the case of the online hymns archive tasbeha.org. In the case of tasbeha.org, the site's creator initially selected specific audio recordings from cassettes sold and exchanged at Egyptian monasteries but as the site grew in popularity a group of *khuddām* (church "servants") became involved in managing and maintaining the site and they began to solicit online contributions from Copts around the world who were using the site. While a small group of *khuddām* were involved in the final decisions concerning which contributions would be incorporated into the digital archive, the initial process of selection that provided them with many of their options was outsourced to a much more geographically dispersed group of individuals.

Unlike with archival and digital epistemes, the mediation of the repertoire is often overlooked, primarily because of the mistaken belief that a lack of mediation is intrinsic to "live," embodied transmission. However, Taylor notes that "[p]erformances also replicate

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themselves through their own structures and codes [and] this means that the repertoire, like the archive, is mediated." Walter Benjamin discusses this type of embodied transmission in the context of epic storytelling, noting how the story "sinks…into the life of the storyteller, in order to bring it out of him again. Thus traces of the storyteller cling to the story the way the handprints of the potter cling to the clay vessel" (Benjamin 1968 [1936]: 91-2). With oral transmission of hymns the traces of the listener-cum-reciter cling to the hymn as well, but instead of taking the form of elaborations or variations on a narrative, these "handprints" are perceptible in small melodic variations that reflect the individual's own idiosyncratic style of vocal performance as well as his or her personal conceptualization of the boundaries between the fundamental melody (Arabic: *al-laḥn al-asāsī*) and embellishment (*'urab*) or ornamentation (*ḥilya*). While the notion of a fundamental melody for Coptic hymns, sometimes also expressed through the Arabic metaphor of a melodic "bone," was frequently acknowledged by clergy, mu'allimūn, and laypeople whom I interviewed in Cairo as well as in North America, their strategies for conceptualizing the fundamental melody varied significantly, as I discussed in Chapter Three.

Just like the archival, digital, and embodied epistemes, the virtual episteme is also mediated. In the context of the virtual online community Second Life, Ken Hillis argues that online avatars are both a representation of the self and an extension of the self, claiming that "networked society has arrived at that juncture of desire and belief that the individual can somehow reside within technology—that he or she can join with it…through the hybrid vehicle of the sign/body" (Hillis 2009: 146). Hillis claims that this duality of representation and extension may be understood through Derrida's notion of a semiotic "trace," in which all of the past significations of a sign remain associated with it in any new context. Thus when

Hillis observed teachers who sometimes expected disciplinary action from their institutions over the behavior of their own online avatars or researchers who felt the need to secure IRB approval for research conducted entirely within a virtual world of representations, he argued that it was this trace of past significations that explained their actions (Ibid. 131-2). In this instance, the traces of past significations mediate the virtual experience.

While Hillis was focused on what he considered to be non-religious rituals of online communities, Jeffers Engelhardt has explored how Orthodox "Estonians continually mediated between the social, political, and cultural and the religious absolute" (Engelhardt 2009: 16). In the case of Engelhardt, his examination of religious experience is one of virtuality in a religious context, a spiritual transcendence rather than a technological one. He goes on to argue that "ideals of right singing shaped by institutional narratives, local parish traditions, and individuals' religious knowledge and musical abilities were the style of this mediation" (Ibid.). I would argue that the religious virtuality of Orthodox Copts is mediated by similar factors, but that the multi-lingual nature of Coptic worship also reveals interesting ways in which language mediates spiritual experience.

The three primary liturgies used in the Coptic Orthodox Church today were originally composed largely in the Coptic language but also contain a small amount of Greek as a result of the influence of Greek Hellenistic culture and the status of Koine Greek as the lingua franca of the Eastern Roman Empire in the early centuries of the first millennium when the liturgies were first composed. Following the Arab invasion of Egypt in the seventh century, Egyptians were gradually assimilated into Arab culture and the Arabic language became their native tongue with the Coptic language disappearing from daily use only to survive in the liturgies of the Church. Interestingly, while Copts recognize the Coptic language as an

important part of their cultural heritage, it is also widely acknowledged that Coptic is not a sacred language and that the Liturgy may be performed in any language if an appropriate translation is available. Churches in Egypt generally mix the use of Coptic and Arabic throughout each weekly performance of the Divine Liturgy in order to balance preserving Coptic heritage with the need for native Arabic-speakers to understand the meaning of the liturgical chants.

In many diaspora communities in North America (and elsewhere in the world) this linguistic diversity is even more pronounced as many churches perform the Liturgy shifting between Coptic and Greek, Arabic, and English. It was in this context that one US-born Coptic Orthodox deacon said to me that he felt that chanting a hymn in the Coptic language affected him in a more deeply spiritual manner than reciting that same hymn in English or Arabic, while simultaneously acknowledging that he *should not* feel that way because this contradicted the Church's teachings about liturgical language use. This anecdote demonstrates one way in which spiritual transcendence may be mediated by language in manner oppositional to a dominant ethical framework.

<u>The Changing Role of the Mu'allim</u>

The current usage of the term *mu'allim* (pl. *mu'allimūn*, literally meaning "teacher") as a formal title for a professional cantor probably emerged in relatively recent history. As recent as the early-nineteenth century the term mu'allim was used instead as an honorific title for powerful Coptic government officials such as finance minister al-Mu'allim Jirjis al-Jawhari (d.1810) and his successor Mu'allim Ghali (1776-1822) (Motzki 1991; Shoucri 1991; Goldschmidt: 62). Conversely, Father Louis Badet describes working with chanters at

the turn of the twentieth century to notate Coptic hymns and he refers to them using the term *'ārif* (pl. *'urfān*) (meaning "one who knows") rather than mu'allim (Badet 1936[1899]). These *'urfān* were blind teachers in small Coptic village schools (*kuttāb*) who taught religious topics including the recitation of hymns, arithmetic, and the Arabic language (Seikaly 1970: 249). Unlike the contemporary mu'allimūn, the recitation of Coptic hymns was only one of several topics that an 'ārif was responsible for teaching, and while some 'urfān may have also led their respective church congregations in chanting during liturgical rites, they did not necessarily receive a salary for their service in church or a standardized education in Coptic hymns and rites.

There is very little information about professional church cantors prior to the twentieth century, but Ragheb Moftah and Martha Roy suggest that it was through the reforms of Pope Cyril IV (r. 1853-1861) that the role of church cantor became more professionalized (Moftah & Roy 1991: 1736-7). Pope Cyril IV, known as "the Father of Reform" ("*Abū al-Iṣlaḥ*"), purchased a printing press from Austria that would become the first privately owned press in Egypt (and second press ever after the Bulaq Press introduced by Naploean), and he established the Coptic Patriarchal College for the purpose of educating clergy as well as the Great Coptic School for high school students, both in Cairo, which emphasized the study of Arabic, Coptic, and foreign languages along with Church rites and hymns (Elmasry 1982: 329-332; Moftah et al. 1991: 1736-8; Ramzy LOC undated). Pope Cyril eventually recruited a blind cantor known as Mu'allim Takla[62] who was teaching at the

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[62] Some sources describe Takla as a priest, e.g. Elmasry and Moftah (al-Kirāzah Magazine, Year 6, Issue 2, 10 January 1975, p.4), while others refer to him only as a cantor and deacon, e.g. Moftah et al. 1991. To add to this confusion Moftah et al. describe the mu'allim as being "ordained a deacon, Abuna Takla by name," thus indicating that he was not a priest while at

Great Coptic School, to help improve the standard of cantorial performance in Egypt, and

under the Pope's direction, Mu'allim Takla travelled through Upper and Lower Egypt

learning hymns from mu'allimūn in other churches, eventually returning to Cairo where he

helped to published the first edition of the important liturgical reference *The Service of the*

Deacons (*Khidmat al-shammās*) with deacon 'Iryān Girgis Moftah in 1859 (Elmasry 1982:

329-332; Moftah et al. 1991: 1736-8; Ramzy LOC undated).

Mu'allim Takla appears to be the first cantor who is identified as having a close

relationship with a Patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church, and this relationship marks the

beginning of a lineage of cantorial discipleship that is still present in the Church today.

Ragheb Moftah describes Mu'allim Takla as having seven disciples who carried on his

legacy including Mu'allim Murqus and Mu'allim Armānīūs[63] who themselves were the

mentors of Mu'allim Mīkhā'īl Girgis al-Batanūnī, also known as Mu'allim Mīkhā'īl the

Great. In turn, Mu'allim Mīkhā'īl served as the cantor of St. Mark's Cathedral in Azbakiyya

where the seat of the Papacy was located at that time, was the instructor in liturgical hymns at

the Coptic Patriarchal College that trained Coptic clergy, and was the first mu'allim to ever

be recorded using audio recording technology by English music professor Ernest

Newlandsmith in the 1930s (Moftah 1975: 4-5). Following Mu'allim Mīkhā'īl came other

mu'allimūn who were also assigned to St. Mark's Cathedral and had central roles in the

education of important cantors and clergy including Mu'allim Fahim Girgis and Mu'allim

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the same time using the honorific "Abuna" that is generally reserved only for priests in the
Coptic Orthodox tradition.
[63] In his article on Mu'allim Mīkhā'īl in the *Coptic Encyclopedia*, Sulayman Nasim identifies
Mu'allim Armānīūs and Mu'allim Ṣalīb (rather than Mu'allim Murqus) as the "only two
chanters [who] specialized" in the hymns that Mu'allim Mīkhā'īl would later learn (Nasim
1991: 1629-1630).

Asād, who in turn taught Muʿallim Sadek ʿAṭāʾ Allāh, Muʿallim Farag ʿAbd al-Messih, and Muʿallim Ibrāhīm ʿAyād who is the current muʿallim of St. Mark's Cathedral (which was relocated from Azbakiyya to Anba Ruweiss in the ʿAbbāsiyya district of Cairo in the 1960s) and is a senior instructor at the Clerical College and the Didymus Institute in Cairo.

Upon reading Ragheb Moftah's story about Pope Cyril V hiding Muʿallim Mīkhāʾīl under his sofa, one question immediately comes to the mind of the casual reader, yet is rarely asked by Orthodox Copts themselves: Why did Pope Cyril not simply command other muʿallimūn to teach their hymns to Muʿallim Mīkhāʾīl? The most obvious answer, that the Pope feared these muʿallimūn would refuse his command, would suggest a potentially stunning act of insubordination against the spiritual and political leader of the Church that is difficult to reconcile with the extremely authoritarian structures of power within the clerical hierarchy (see Hasan 2003). A more nuanced explanation for the Pope's deception is that he feared such a command might undermine the authority of the muʿallim as the preserver and gatekeeper of knowledge to Coptic hymnody more generally. By tricking these muʿallimūn into unknowingly teaching muʿallim Mīkhāʾīl the more obscure *alḥān* that were not widely known, Pope Cyril V was able to continue the preservation and revitalization of Church traditions that began with reforms of his predecessor, Pope Cyril IV, while at the same time preserving the system of cantorial authority in which the muʿallim was regarded by himself and others as indispensable to his local church community, as well as to the larger Coptic community.

While this story certainly reflects the epistemological orientation of the storyteller, Ragheb Moftah, depicting Muʿallim Mīkhāʾīl as a human archive who has the ability to consolidate all Coptic hymnody within himself, the negotiation of Pope Cyril also reflects a

moment of transition, one in which cultural authority must be balanced between the repertoire of embodied knowledge that exists only in the performance and reperformance of different mu'allimūn, which has no clear boundaries and which is never complete in any one individual or in any given moment of performance, and an emerging orientation towards an archival episteme in which hymnodic knowledge is discrete, localizable, and may be collected in its entirety. Ragheb Moftah would later continue this realization of Coptic hymnody as archival knowledge by recording Mu'allim Mīkhā'īl on reel-to-reel tapes and cassettes, ultimately inscribing these hymns into material objects and completing this process of disembodiment of hymnodic knowledge, and this transcendence of an archival episteme is reflected in the changing conception of the role of the mu'allim.

Today, the authority of the mu'allim is no longer derived from a monopolization on access to Coptic hymnody and while his role as a teacher in his local community has continued, several other types of educational institutions have emerged that rely instead on *khuddām* to teach the performance of hymns. In Cairo, only the Clerical College and the Didymus Institute exclusively employ mu'alimūn as teachers of hymnody, while hymn classes at the St. Athanasius Deacons' School and at the Institute of Coptic Studies are generally taught by deacons. Mu'allimūn who I interviewed in Cairo all identified the role of congregational and diaconal chant leader during liturgical services as their primary responsibility and they claimed that what distinguished them from other deacons who were knowledgeable in hymns was their extensive memorization of hymns that allowed them to lead congregations and assist priests with a responsiveness and timeliness that knowledgeable deacons could not. Thus they saw their expertise as tied to their training and

the immediacy of their ability to access hymnodic knowledge rather than specific knowledge of particular less-well-known hymns.

Moreover, while they acknowledged the existence of a small number of rare hymns that were known by older, knowledgeable mu'allimūn, such hymns were generally described as belonging to a historical corpus of material that had lost relevance in the modern era. For example, one mu'allim explained how particular chants were once used for exorcisms and the treatment of rabies, but were now largely forgotten by modern cantors since such conditions were now understood and treated through the paradigm of modern medicine. Conversely, all of my interlocutors regularly described Coptic hymnody as a closed corpus of chants with a definite number (some refused to suggest a number, while others identified it as approximately two thousand chants), with the implication that this referred to a modern canon of Coptic sacred music that was still in use in churches and monasteries across Egypt, and excluded other chants known by a small number of priests, nuns, and monks that were historical relics of a pre-modern era.

<u>Coptic Educational Reform and the St. Athanasius Deacons' School</u>

One profound influence on Coptic Orthodox institutions that also effected the role of the mu'allim within the context of religious education was the twentieth-century Coptic Orthodox reform movement. Beginning in the 19th century, Coptic churches began to introduce new educational and social outreach programs as a response to the presence of Franciscan Catholic and later Protestant missionaries establishing churches in Egypt and converting Orthodox Copts (Hasan 2003). These changes included the introduction of

sermons into the Coptic Liturgy as a response to sermons in Protestant churches, and the establishment of Sunday catechism classes and social work programs in a manner similar to Catholics (Ibid.: 73). While Hasan explores these innovations in Coptic religious education as a reaction to the influence of European Christians, Timothy Mitchell's Foucauldian analysis of the political reordering of Egypt in the 18th and 19th centuries also suggests that it may be understood as an extension of the colonial ordering of Egypt that influenced every facet of Egyptian life, including education (Mitchell 1991[1988]). Mitchell notes that because the British colonial project of control relied on the continual appearance of order, it produced "the equally continuous threat: the problem of 'disorder'" (Ibid.: 79). This perception of disorder may be understood as an underlying motivation for the modern Orthodox Reform movement, known as the Sunday School Movement, that emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1918 the first general committee of the Sunday School Movement was officially established under the leadership of Ḥabīb Girgis, a pious layman who dedicated his life to church service and educational reform and who was canonized as a saint by the Holy Synod in 2013. Girgis introduced Sunday lessons that included the study of the Bible, Coptic rites, Church history, and hagiographies, and he introduced a question-and-answer form of instruction that contrasted with the traditional lecture format that was typical in Egyptian educational settings at the time (Ibid.: 74-5).

Because Girgis and his contemporaries were largely drawn from the middle-class and were themselves deacons and pious laypeople their efforts at reform were distinct from earlier efforts at Church reform that had been dominated by upper-class, secular Copts, who were largely concerned with wresting control of political and economic affairs from the Church leadership and empowering a Community Council (*Maglis Milli*). While reform

efforts by secular, upper-class Copts were fiercely resisted by the clerical leaders of the Church and resented by pious, working-class Copts who regarded their agendas as elitist and Westernizing in nature, the efforts of Girgis were largely embraced and had a much more lasting influence on the Church that included the formation of the Didymus Institute for training mu'allimūn and the Institute of Coptic Studies (formerly the Higher Institute of Coptic Studies) that both still exist today. By the 1940s, a wave of university educated Copts began to enter positions of influence in the Church first as deacons and gradually rose through the ranks of authority to positions of great influence, including figures such as Bishop Samuel, Abbot Matthew the Poor, and Pope Shenouda III, who would later become some of the most important social and political leaders of modern Coptic Orthodoxy (Ibid.: 60-1).

One facet of this twentieth-century reform movement was the development of Coptic Orthodox educational institutions, which included the sites where clergy, cantors, deacons, and laypeople receive education in the Bible, Coptic hymnody, and Church rites and traditions. These included the theological seminaries where Coptic priests are trained, the two branches of the Didymus Institute where mu'allimūn are trained, the Institute of Coptic Studies, which caters primarily to non-clerical university-educated students, and, more recently, the St. Athanasius Deacons' School, which is the largest institution in the world devoted to the education of Coptic Orthodox youth. During my fieldwork in Cairo from 2015-2016, I observed that the teachers of *alḥān* at the Didymus Institute in Cairo as well as at the theological seminary were exclusively mu'allimūn. By contrast, the singular class on *alḥān* at the Institute of Coptic Studies and all of the classes at the St. Athanasius Deacons' School that I observed, and which prominently featured the memorization of hymns, were

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taught by deacons who were not muʿallimūn. This difference in the presence of muʿallimūn as regular teachers also coincides with a difference in the social and historical character of each institution: The Didymus Institute and Theological Seminary are undoubtedly more traditional and conservative in terms of pedagogical approach and institutional philosophy, whereas the ICS and the St. Athanasius Deacons' School both model their educational curricula and pedagogical style after Western secular educational institutions, and place a greater value on being "modern."

The St. Athanasius Deacons' School is perhaps the most interesting Coptic educational institution for exploring recent trends in Coptic Orthodox education because it is among the most recently formed institutions, first organized in 2001, and it currently claims more than two thousand enrolled students in contrast to approximately 70 students enrolled at the Didymus Institute, and approximately 50 at the Institute of Coptic Studies during my visits in 2016. While the training of muʿallimūn and priests has historically been overseen by an eminent and small group of clergy and cantors throughout most of the twentieth century, the training of deacons has historically been overseen by local priests and muʿallimūn in each church community. Thus the large deacons' school represents a shift away from the traditional relationships between priest, cantor, and deacons and this shift has been accompanied by changes in cantorial authority in the context of hymn education. As I will discuss below, the St. Athanasius Deacons' school does not simply involve larger numbers of students, but also employs more dynamic pedagogical approaches that integrate internet-based technologies and audio archives in a manner that further distances the muʿallim from his historical role as a preserver and transmitter of Coptic hymns.

<u>Hymn Education in the St. Athanasius Deacons' School</u>

On Friday morning, January 29th, 2016, around ten o'clock I arrived at the Church of the Virgin Mary and St. Anthony in Nasr City, Cairo. I had visited the large and magnificently appointed church nine days earlier to attend an evening ceremony for the Feast of the Epiphany (*'Īd al-Ghiṭās*) and was struck by its resemblance to St. Mark's Cathedral in Anba Ruweiss were the Coptic Patriarch resides. Nasr City is one of the wealthier areas of Cairo, built as an extension to the upper-class neighborhood of Heliopolis in the 1960s, and both the large size of the church, which could easily accommodate seven or eight hundred worshippers, and its surrounding compound of tiered courtyards, offices, and meeting rooms, reflected its upper class surroundings. After the deacon whom I planned to meet did not arrive at our appointed meeting time, I eventually located a church office where friendly staff members recruited another deacon named Andrew to give me a tour of the school that was located at St. Mark's Center, a large non-descript multi-storied building next door. The school holds classes from 10am-11am and 11am-noon for all different age groups on Fridays throughout the year and also on Wednesdays during the summer. One first-floor class I observed for several minutes contained a dozen or so boys and girls around eleven years old listening intently to a teacher discussing a biblical story at desks piled with different booklets about topics such as the *Agpeya* (canonical hours) and the Liturgy of St. Basil. Andrew mentioned that they also had CDs that they used at home for studying and completing homework assignments. Later I visited another class on the second floor with an older group of about twenty men ranging from twenty to sixty years in age who were listening to a deacon explain the meaning of a portion of a liturgical ritual.

As I observed this lesson, I witnessed a young man walk into the room brandishing a large black plastic device that resembled the hand-held scanners used in retail department stores in the United States. People absent-mindedly held out their ID cards as he slowly worked his way through the rows of chairs, using the device to scan the barcode on each one. I was later told that this was the standard way in which attendance was tallied. I continued to go from one class to the next, and after ending my tour of classes in the adult education classroom where a deacon was teaching a large room of men and women a *laḥn* while punctuating his lesson with discussion of the ritual context of its use, a different deacon named Peter greeted me at the door and walked me back to the main church grounds. As I chatted with Peter on my walk back to the registration office of the church where I had first begun my tour, I began asking him questions about the role of mu'allimūn in the Deacons' School. As we arrived at the registration office, he explained that there were three mu'allimūn in the Virgin Mary and St. Athanasius Church. I asked him why I had not observed any mu'allimūn teaching that day despite the fact that many of the classes I observed were studying *alḥān*. Peter shrugged. "The mu'alimūn do very little in the Deacons' School," he replied, "They don't have particularly good voices."

I would later learn from Deacon Mīna Madḥat, an instructor and member of the initial twelve-member planning committee at the school's inception, that mu'allimūn would sometimes teach at the school just as any deacon or *khādim* (church servant) might, but that there were no special classes or unique role for the professional church cantors in that institution (personal communication, Mīna Madḥat Shafīq, February 11th 2016). While Peter's casual dismissal of the idea of a mu'allim teaching *alḥān* in the Deacons' School surprised me, I gradually came to realize that this attitude reflected a more general sense

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among deacons and laypeople about the role of the mu'allim in Coptic Orthodox society. Peter, like many other Coptic deacons and laypeople, saw the mu'allim as an important facilitator of Coptic ritual, whose memorization of Coptic hymns provided him with the expertise to assist the officiating priest and lead the congregation in chanting sacred hymns. At the same time, the mu'allim's lack of higher education and his lack of experience teaching in a lecture-based format that integrated a knowledge of church history, rites, and biblical exegesis meant that he was not regarded as particularly well suited for the role of Deacons' School educator, despite the huge emphasis placed on the memorization of hymns in the Deacons' School's curriculum.

The St. Athanasius Deacons' School was first formed in 2001 when Dr. 'Ayūnī Magdī, a member of the Church of the Virgin Mary and St. Athanasius in Nasr City, Cairo, approached Father Antonius Dāwud with the idea of expanding classes on hymn memorization that normally occurred during the summer months to include year-round classes with a more standardized curricula, so that the memorization of particular hymns would not be repeated from one year to the next. Following this initial proposal, a committee of twelve (male) church servants was formed, which developed the curricula, publicized the school through church revival (*nahḍa*) events, and initially enrolled close to 250 boys and girls of different ages to begin in seven classes in October 2002. While women and girls may not become deacons in the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Deacons' school included a hymn education class for 80 female youth in its first year, and today includes a relatively equal mix of male and female students of all ages. It currently claims more than two thousand enrolled students.

The classes in the Deacons' School are organized into multiple levels based on the age and educational level of the student, beginning with an introductory level for pre-school students, followed by levels 1-3 for primary and secondary school students, level 4 for high school students, and levels 5-6 for university students and graduates. Each level is divided into multiple years of instruction and each year is divided into three separate terms. For any given term there is a set curriculum covering knowledge of Church rites, Coptic language, and the memorization of specific *alḥān* and *madā'iḥ*. Each year students take exams in these three subjects and after passing these exams and receiving approval from the diocesan Bishop the male students of certain levels are considered prepared for specific ranks of deaconship. For example, students who successfully complete the second year of level one are eligible to become "chanters" (Coptic: *epsaltos*), the lowest rank of deacon, while students who complete the third year of level three are eligible to become "readers" (Coptic: *anagnostes*).

While clergy still exercise absolute authority concerning the ordination and promotion of deacons and they take into consideration additional factors such as the student's behavior and spiritual state, the Deacons' School system has made the process of education for deacons more consistent and structured. Notable, however, is the absence of the mu'allim in a prominent pedagogical role. While in many Coptic Orthodox churches the mu'allim works closely with male youth to help them memorize hymns and learn the appropriate ritual actions that are expected of deacons, it is possible for a student at the Deacons' School to acquire all of this knowledge without ever receiving instruction directly from a mu'allim. At the same time, the Deacons' School system clearly provides a much more robust set of educational opportunities for female students. While girls and young

women in many churches receive some formal training in hymns, rites, and Coptic language in Sunday school classes, this training is often less extensive than that given to the male students, in part because young men in other church communities often receive additional guidance and training from the local priest and mu'allim with the expectation that they will be actively participating in the rituals performed in the inner sanctuary (Arabic: *al-haykal*) of the church. By centralizing religious education in the context of mixed gender classes, female students find themselves more encouraged and supported to study material that they might otherwise abandon as the gendered status of deaconship influences the educational process.

One striking feature of the Deacons' School that I observed during my visits was the high quality and organization of classroom materials, far exceeding what one might expect in an Egyptian public school or even many private schools in Cairo. Paper booklets became a standard pedagogical feature of the school in 2004 and were frequently revised and updated as the curriculum was adjusted and features were added. The booklets used for hymn memorization are organized by year, with each booklet containing information on all of the hymns assigned for that year. Each hymn is introduced by name, followed by a sentence explaining the "timing" of the hymn within a particular rite. In the introductory level booklet this information is followed by three columns of text containing the original Coptic or Greek text of the hymn, the transliteration of the text in Arabic letters, and the translated meaning of the text in Modern Standard Arabic.[64]

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[64] Higher level classes do not contain this middle column (nor do most digital displays in Coptic Orthodox sanctuaries in Egypt or North America) because the use of transliteration is considered to be a crutch that inhibits worshippers from learning to read and pronounce Coptic letters.

In addition to the concise and organized textual information, the school organizers began to pair the booklets with cassettes containing recordings of the hymns in 2006, and these cassettes were eventually replaced with CDs. The audio tracks for these hymns have been taken from multiple sources, some from the recordings of the Higher Institute of Coptic Studies, others from recordings of respected mu'allimūn, and even some from popular choirs performing with instrumental accompaniment when more traditional recorded renditions were not available. In addition to allowing for faster access to renditions of *alḥān* and *madā'iḥ*, than would be possible when relying on in-person training from a mu'allim, these CDs also offer an advantage over the use of online recordings on *YouTube* and internet-based archives like *tasbhea.org*, because they allow students to access the recordings without having to use the internet and they provide recordings for some hymns which are difficult to find or potentially unavailable online.

In addition to the CDs, the organizers of the Deacons' School have added an additional feature to their booklets that further facilitates access to these recordings for students with smart phones. In each hymn booklet a two-dimensional barcode or "quick response" (QR) code is printed next to the title of each hymn. By scanning this barcode using a free downloadable application on their phones, students can instantaneously download and listen to the corresponding audio file for each hymn that they are studying. While the use of media sharing sites like *YouTube* and internet-based archives like *tasbeha.org* is already common, the QR code has made the process of retrieving audio recordings even faster and more efficient for students. It also promotes a more unified approach to cantillation by providing a single rendition of each hymn, rather than the multiple prerecorded renditions available online or the repeated live recitations of an individual mu'allim, both of which

present a certain degree of variation. While many of the students who belong to the large

church associated with the Deacons' School may never even meet one of the muʿallimūn in

their church, the audio resources managed by the Deacons' School, combined with their

personal technological devices, allow them to access approved renditions of hundreds of

hymns that are studied in their classes.
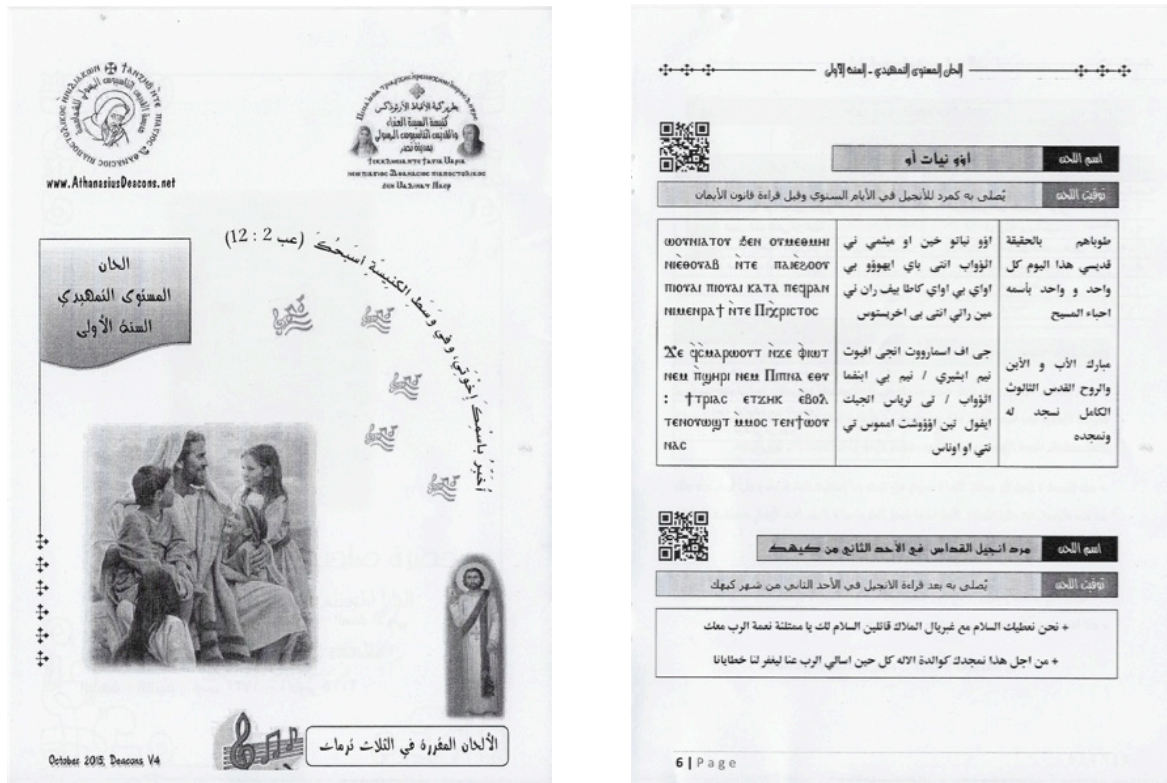
Figure 5-1. The cover and excerpted page from an instructional booklet for introductory level students at the St. Athanasius Deacons' school in Nasr City, Cairo. Of note are the two-dimensional barcodes (QR codes) on the right-hand page used to instantaneously access audio recordings of each hymn.

While the St. Athanasius Deacons' School is unique in terms of its size and resources,

it embodies modern orientations towards institutional organization, pedagogy, and the

integration of new technologies into the educational process that are emerging across the

transnational Coptic community more generally. These forms of organization, pedagogy, and

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technological integration have in turn further displaced the mu'allim from his traditional role as preserver and transmitter of Coptic hymnody, leaving his responsibility as a facilitator of chant during liturgical services as the defining characteristic of his profession.

The "Mu'allim" in North America

While almost all Coptic Orthodox churches in Egypt have at least one mu'allim, the position has never been formally replicated in the Coptic diaspora. The Coptic Orthodox Church only confers the title of "mu'allim" on graduates of a 5-6 year training program for professional church cantors, and these programs are only offered at two branches of the Didymus Institute in Egypt (one in the Shubra neighborhood of Cairo and another in the monastery of Muḥarraq in the Southern Egyptian city of Asyut). Young men sometimes begin training in these schools after being recruited by the priest of their local church with the expectation that they will serve that congregation as a mu'allim upon graduation. In other cases, priests who need a mu'allim for their church visit a branch of the Institute and select a recent graduate, or they send a formal request and one is appointed to their church by the school director. There are no comparable institutes for training cantors in the diaspora, and in contrast to clergy, mu'allimūn trained in Egypt are not assigned to churches outside of Egypt.

Despite the lack of formally trained mu'allimūn in the diaspora, the congregations of many North American Coptic Orthodox churches have deacons and priests who are recognized within their communities as "hymn masters." Knowledgeable deacons who are active in teaching *alḥān* and leading congregants in the recitation of hymns during church

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rites are often referred to as "mu'allim" informally despite their lack of accreditation or training in the formal cantorial programs in Egypt. I met one such deacon by the name of Nader Mansi in August of 2013 during a visit to St. John the Baptist Coptic Orthodox Church in Oxnard, California, when I went to visit a Saturday hymn class that he was leading there at that time. The class was attended by a group of boys approximately ten to fifteen years old and Nader led the group in the memorization of hymns that were to be performed during the rites associated with the upcoming Coptic New Year in September of that year. Nader taught the group in a manner that would later become familiar to me when observing similar classes in Coptic churches in the United States and Egypt, the same method employed as well in the classes at the Higher Institute of Coptic Studies and the Clerical College in Cairo. Nader would begin by reciting a small initial portion of a particular laḥn and would have the class repeat after him. Gradually he would add more and more to his recitation, giving longer and longer segments of the hymn and his pupils would respond in kind with their repetitions of his phrases, slowly building up to phrases that were a few minutes in length. Occasionally he would correct pronunciation or point out mistakes by noting the number of times a musical phrase would dip or rise in tone while counting these musical movements on his fingers. In this way he would lead the young deacons of the congregation in learning alḥān that they would all be performing in church several weeks later in the context of worship.

That hymn class was followed by the arrival of the pupils' parents and other families in the main sanctuary room where the canonical hours were prayed by the congregation, followed by the Vespers Raising of Incense ritual that was led by Father Youssef Zaki, and after this ritual Nader led the congregation in singing praise songs (*tasbīḥah*), which is a regular part of Saturday evening worship. I came to know Nader well in the months and

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years following our first encounter at St. John the Baptist Coptic Orthodox Church in Oxnard. We would meet occasionally for coffee on his breaks from work at a tech company in Santa Barbara, where he would discuss aspects of hymns and rites of the Church, and I came to learn that his service at the Oxnard church was only part of his service as a teacher of hymns and a leader of recitation. Nader would regularly travel to other churches in the area to lead hymn classes for deacons and his home church was actually the Archangel Michael Coptic Orthodox Church in Simi Valley. Upon visiting the Archangel Michael Church several months later I connected with Nader after the conclusion of a Sunday morning Divine Liturgy service.

Typical of such services in North America as well as in Egypt, the members of the congregation would gather in the church cafeteria after the service to eat and socialize with each other. I sat down with a plate of home cooked food next to Nader, catching up with him as other people casually filtered in and out of our conversation to greet him and exchange pleasantries. During the course of our conversation I began discussing with him his role as a mu'allim in his local community and he quickly replied "I am not a mu'allim," explaining that this was a title reserved for graduates of specific programs in Egypt and that, technically, there were no mu'allimūn outside of Egypt. In immediate response a woman seated next to us who was briefly listening to our conversation interjected, "you are *our* mu'allim, ya Nader!" to which Nader blushed and in his typically humble manner sought to downplay his expertise by countering that he was only self-taught and was simply doing what he could to help at the request of the priests of the churches in the area. Indeed, many community members voiced a similar respect and affection for Nader as I later witnessed towards the formally appointed mu'allimūn in churches in Cairo. Moreover, the priests of St. John the

Baptist Church in Oxnard, and The Archangel Michael in Simi Valley clearly relied on Nader not simply to lead the deacons and congregants in recitation during church services but also to help train the young deacons and to organize them for major church events and holidays.

The absence of professional mu'allimūn in North America, and their replacement by deacons acting as informal mu'allimūn, is partly the result of economic factors. While the relatively modest salary of a *mu'allim* in an Egyptian church is enough to make the position a viable career path for many young Egyptian men, there are obvious difficulties in translating this same system to other nations with drastically different economies, standards of living, and labor laws. At the time of my fieldwork in January of 2016, a typical *mu'allim* might earn around 600 EGP a month (worth approximately $77 USD) if he were working in a church during his training and as much as 1000 EGP (around $128 USD) a month if he graduated and worked for a larger, wealthier church in Cairo (Maged Samy, personal communication, January 24th 2016). The expense of supporting a full-time cantor at a wage that would be considered an acceptable standard of living in places like North America, Europe, or Australia, would make the position a substantial expenditure for a church in one of these areas, and while a priest is considered indispensable in diasporic churches, Orthodox Copts in diaspora communities generally believe that the different roles of a church cantor can be fulfilled by others who donate their time freely as a *khidmah* or "service" that is part of the religious duty of community members.

Despite this, the absence of fulltime professional cantors in the diaspora has resulted in some new difficulties in diasporic churches. In some cases knowledgeable deacons are unavailable, hymn classes are not taught, and already overworked priests do their best to

provide guidance to deacons to ensure an acceptable level of competency in their chanting. In other situations, such as in the case of Nader, one deacon serving as an informal muʻallim may teach hymn classes and participate in church rites at two or more churches, which has the effect of limiting his time and energy to contribute to each congregation. Moreover, because the deacons fulfilling the functions of the muʻallimūn in their respective churches do so as a form of spiritual service rather than as a fulltime profession, their other commitments to work and family sometimes conflict with these duties.

In my discussions with several California-based Coptic Orthodox priests, they noted how their churches were at some point adversely affected when a knowledgeable deacon who was teaching hymns and leading the other deacons in their chanting moved elsewhere in the country for a new job. Despite these issues, the vast majority of clergy and deacons whom I spoke with in Egypt or North America thought that there was no need to extend the system of training and employment for muʻallimūn to diaspora communities. This lack of interest in replicating the muʻallim profession outside of Egypt reflects the authority of an archival episteme and its influence on how the work of the muʻallim is understood. Because the preservation of hymns is something that occurs primarily through their inscription in audio recordings, and the importance of the muʻallim is primarily as a facilitator of liturgical services or a community leader, the traditional work of the muʻallim may be divided among *khuddām* and various media technologies, and deficiencies that emerge from the absence of muʻallim may be dealt with through greater commitment from deacons and lay parishioners as well as better organization within each church community.

New Technologically Mediated Forms of Memory and Transmission: Tasbeha.org and

Coptic Reader App

In addition to these logistical issues in replicating the cantorial system in the Coptic diaspora, the widespread global use of particular internet-based archives and media platforms has been accompanied by dramatically different ways of learning and transmitting hymns. Abigail De Kosnik notes how the rise in popularity of digital media as a site of memory-based making has shifted the balance of power from archive to repertoire, essentially granting much more power of influence to the embodied performative acts that are essential to the construction and maintenance of both literal and metaphorical archives (De Kosnik 2016: 7-8). These embodied performative acts involved in seemingly mundane tasks such as writing computer code or signing a check and mailing a letter to keep one's internet bills paid, are often overlooked but essential to the operation of digital archives. At the same time the reality created by the use of digital forms of memory and transmission introduces new influences on the authority of the mu'allim. In what follows I will provide background information on two important digital platforms, the website *tasbeha.org* and the mobile application Coptic Reader, and then discuss some of the challenges to the mu'allim's authority that have arisen from the digital epistemological orientation that is associated with these examples.

The website *tasbeha.org* has become the most widely used online archive of audio recordings and texts of Coptic *alḥān* (and to a lesser degree *madā'iḥ* and *tarānīm*) and it is a resource used both by the laity as well as by clergy and professional cantors. The site was first created by Ray Wassef, an Orthodox Copt who was born and raised in Jersey City, New

Jersey, and who began teaching a class on Midnight Praises[65] to members St. Mark's Coptic

Orthodox Church there around the year 2000 (Ray Wassef, personal communication, May

19th 2017). Initially, the website only contained recordings of Ray himself performing

various midnight praise hymns and was only intended for students in his class, but as others

began using the site he eventually removed his recordings and added recordings of Father

David Bebawy, a local priest well-known for his beautiful recitation of hymns.

Ray frequently travelled to Egypt to spend his summers in different Coptic Orthodox

monasteries there, and during his trips he collected cassette recordings of different

mu'allimūn and priests reciting hymns and performing liturgies, which he gradually added to

the site until it became an extensive archive containing a large catalogue of hymns by many

different reciters. After 2 or 3 years the amount of internet traffic, the expense of hosting the

site, and the work required to manage the site became too great for Ray and he made an

agreement with Father Abraham Slemen of St. Mark's Church for the church to take on the

financial support and management of the site. Today the site is well-known by Orthodox

Copts around the world, and its content far exceeds the scope of any other online archive of

Coptic hymns.

Recalling a story I mentioned above, while I attended the class on *alḥān* at the

Institute of Coptic Studies, our instructor, a deacon and *khādim* named John, taught us

liturgical hymns in the rote-repetition style typical of Coptic hymn education. One day he

was teaching the class the ending to the Verses of Cymbals (Arabic: *Arbā' al-nāqūs*), and

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[65] Midnight Praises, known in Arabic as *tasbīḥah*, are typically performed in churches late at night preceding an early morning liturgy. In North America this generally occurs on Saturday night preceding a Sunday morning liturgy, although it does not necessarily occur exactly at midnight.

after demonstrating the final moment of the hymn a student raised his hand and interjected with a slightly different ending to the hymn saying ""Mu'allim Gad sings it like this," referring to a rendition by Mu'allim Gad Lewis. That particular rendition of Mu'allim Gad was a widely circulated recording available on *tasbeha.org*. It was clear from this interaction that both John and all of the other students were familiar with these recordings on *tasbeha.org* and that they played an important role in shaping their shared conceptualization of the hymns that we studied in class.

Similarly, a deacon in a Coptic Orthodox Church in New Jersey once described a visit to his congregation by Mu'allim Ibrāhīm 'Ayād, the cantor of St. Mark's Cathedral in 'Abbāsiyya, Cairo, in which the famous mu'allim referred to his use of the online archive. This deacon recalled that Mu'allim Ibrāhīm asked him and other deacons who were assembled at that church to find him a recording of a particular hymn that he would be demonstrating later because it was not available on *tasbeha.org*. This anecdote again demonstrates the pervasive use of the online hymn archive, even among the most esteemed and well-trained cantors of the Coptic Orthodox Church.

One result of the more frequent use of audio recordings that has been accelerated by the use of tasbeha.org is that hymns are now more readily separated from their ritual context. Swiss musicologist Magdalena Kuhn once noted in her research with mu'allimūn that it was often difficult for her to get a mu'allim to recite particular hymns outside of their context within a particular church rite or during a time of year when they were not used in liturgical services (Kuhn 2014: 73-4). With online audio archives, a recorded rendition of a hymn can be played and re-played without this dependence on context. Conversely the context-dependent and dynamic nature of these hymns is sometimes obfuscated, such as with the

Alleluia of the Oblations, a hymn which is almost entirely sung to the syllable "Ah," which is understood to be the first syllable in the word "Alleluia." As the hymn concludes, it is immediately followed by another hymn (such as "Alleluia Fai Pe Pi" or "Alleluia Je Efmeyvi") that begins with the completion of the word "Alleluia." Because the two hymns are linked and not meant to be performed separately, their artificial separation in an audio archive requires a break either before or after the completion of the word "Alleluia," and different ways of breaking up the two hymns reveals different approaches to introducing conceptual boundaries between them that are not evident when the hymns are performed during the Liturgy.

Just as tasbeha.org has become nearly omnipresent in the transnational Coptic community, a more recently developed mobile phone application has become similarly popular in Egypt and among diaspora communities abroad. I became aware of its popularity in late October of 2015 when I made my first visit to the Coptic Orthodox Church of St. Barbara in the Old Cairo neighborhood of Cairo. I had spoken with Mu'allim Maged Milad at the church by phone and explained my interest in studying hymns with him, and he invited me to attend a Friday morning mass at the historic church so that we could meet in person and speak more about my research. As I arrived early that morning at the Mar Girgis (St. George) metro stop, I circumnavigated the ancient walls of the Fortress of Babylon that surrounds many of the oldest Coptic churches that remain in that area, eventually descending down a set of steps and through a dusty passageway beneath its walls and into the heart of the district of Coptic Cairo. After passing an urban monastery and a couple of ancient churches I arrived at the Church of St. Barbara, originally built in the 5th or 6th century CE, later restored

to house the relics of St. Barbara at the end of the first millennium, and still operating in 2015 with daily liturgies and a substantial congregation.

After entering the historic building, I met Muʿallim Maged who was preparing for the morning liturgy. He paused his preparation to greet me warmly and began to pepper me with questions. Was I ordained as a deacon? Would I like a *tūnīah* (a diaconal liturgical garment) so that I could participate in the liturgy? No, I was not a deacon. What was I interested in learning? I explained that I was interested in learning about how hymns are taught and learned, but that initially I was hoping to learn more about the structure of the Liturgy, and to get a better understanding of how those hymns were chosen and performed. While there is a great deal of structure to the Divine Liturgy that is determined by the various feasts, fasts, and seasonal events that occur on the Church calendar, even within those constraints there are numerous hymns that are optional and no single Liturgy is ever performed in exactly the same way. As Maged listened to me politely he guided me through the church pews and past the ancient marble pillars, towards the corner of the sanctuary where he would collect his own *tūnīah* as he began to prepare for the upcoming service. "Do you know Coptic Reader?" he asked. I paused, not completely understanding his question. Seeing my confusion, he reached into his pocket and pulled out a mobile phone. "Coptic Reader, it has everything that you need," at which point I realized that he was referring to a popular mobile phone application that contains the majority of the liturgical texts and their translations. I was momentarily stunned that a muʿallim in one of the oldest Coptic churches in the world was recommending a mobile phone application as the best way to learn the structure of the Liturgy, but I came to realize that the Coptic Reader application had indeed

permeated all corners of the Coptic Orthodox community, and was the most common go-to reference even in that ancient church deep within that historic district of Cairo.

The origins of the Coptic Reader application can be traced back to 2010, when an English language version of *Service of the Deacons* was created, primarily through the translation work of Deacon Mark Soliman, and was later published by the Southern Diocese of the United States. Father Matthias Shehad, currently the priest of St. Mark's Coptic Orthodox Church in Houston, Texas (who was at that time Deacon Nader Shehad) was approached by members of his local church to create a platform that would allow deacons to view the English translation of *The Service of the Deacons* on their smart phones. Father Matthias was a software engineer by training but with no prior experience programming mobile applications, and he explored this concept first by developing software that would display Coptic fonts on an android phone. He eventually realized that the mobile application platform had the potential to do much more than present texts in a format similar to their original publication. Most notably, the many variations in the chanted texts and order of rites that occur based on the liturgical calendar could be automatically determined by the application with only the relevant information being displayed to the reader. Father Matthias developed his ideas into a plan for a mobile application that would integrate various liturgical texts and references while also tailoring the display of information to what was relevant to the reader on a particular day.

In 2011 Father Matthias brought the idea for the Coptic Reader application to Bishop Youssef and others who were involved in the publication of liturgical texts in the Southern United States Diocese. Bishop Youssef gave his approval for the project and Father Matthias began work with other deacons who aided in the collection and organization of various texts

that were translated into English by different committees in the diocese. This culminated in the first release of the Coptic Reader application in 2012 that contained the diaconal and congregational hymns and responses, which would automatically adjust to the current (or manually selected) date, as well as the *Agpeya* (also known as *The Book of Canonical Hours*). The application has been regularly updated since its inception and now includes the Coptic and Greek texts and the Arabic and English translations of The Psalmody, The Holy Bible, The Readings, Praise Hymns (Arabic: *madā'iḥ*), as well as for rites such as baptisms, funerals, and consecrations, in addition to the three forms of the Divine Liturgy with texts for priests, deacons, and congregants as well as frequent annotations.

In addition to displaying texts in English, Coptic/Greek, and Arabic, the current application contains several important features that have contributed to its popularity with Coptic Orthodox worshippers worldwide. It presents the texts of longer hymns with a (+) or (-) icon next to the hymn title and these icons can be selected by the reader to reveal or hide the relevant hymn text. It also displays the texts recited by the officiating priest in a semi-transparent font, which helps the reader distinguish it from the texts used by the deacons and congregation, and the application also contains menus that are accessed by swiping right or left on the screen, allowing for quick navigation to other parts of the rite or to other liturgical texts and references. These features, along with the dramatic expansion of content and the development of a version of Coptic Reader for iOS (it was originally only designed for android platforms) has led to its widespread use by clergy, deacons, and lay parishioners as a tool for learning. In some cases it has even been adopted as a replacement for the software that was previously used in certain congregations to display the liturgical texts on screens in church sanctuaries during services.

When I asked Father Matthias whether he thought there might be significant changes or additions to the application in the future such as the incorporation of audio files or other types of media for pedagogical purposes, he revealed that this exact idea was considered, tested, and ultimately left unimplemented (personal communication, Father Matthias Shehad, April 25th 2017). According to Father Matthias, he and other deacons discussed how they might develop Coptic Reader as a tool for people to learn hymns by incorporating links to specific audio files that would appear next to the titles of hymns and also simultaneously link to files depicting *hazzāt*, idiosyncratic forms of neumic notation that would be uploaded by the user. The goal of this idea was to seamlessly integrate audio recordings and the personal musical notation of the user in a way that could be accessed with a simple touch of the device screen while scrolling through the contents of a rite. While the value of this idea for pedagogical purposes was instantly recognized by everyone involved in these discussions, and Father Matthias confirmed that it was technically possible, concern over the selection of particular hymn renditions became a sticking point.

"I did a proof-of-concept of it and it worked," explained Father Matthias. "The problem was not a technical problem. We knew technically there would be some challenges but it's not impossible. The problem had to do with… So because Coptic Reader has become so popular, people see it as the definitive source for things. And if you were to put audio, then the whole question is what version of the audio do you put? And we spoke actually to His Grace Bishop Youssef and he has some opinions about which audio he thinks is the most correct, that represents the traditional ways that the hymns were chanted, but everybody has a different opinion" (personal communication, Father Matthias Shehad, April 25th 2017). The Coptic Reader application is technically produced by the Southern United States Diocese for

use by members of that diocese, which would imply that in the absence of a specific directive by the Holy Synod, Bishop Youssef has the prerogative to choose what hymn renditions should be regarded as the most appropriate pedagogical models for the members of his diocese. In practice, however, the popularity of the application has granted it a perceived authority beyond the confines of the diocese and Bishop Youssef recognized the potential problems that might arise if the selection of certain hymn renditions for use in the application were interpreted as Church-wide endorsements. "[Bishop Youssef] said essentially, he would have to bring this up to the Holy Synod and discuss it and see if there is a consensus on what version of the audio should be used. So that was several years ago, and since then I think it just kind of fizzled out" (Ibid.).

Ultimately, what would have been a substantial development to the Coptic Reader application was never realized because of a need to leave questions concerning the authority of particular hymn renditions unanswered until they were formally addressed by Church leadership. While more recent developments such as the 2015 statement by the Holy Synod affirming the authority of the recordings of Muʿallim Mīkhāʾīl Girgis al-Batanūnī, and the approval of the English-language hymn renditions of the English Hymns Committee in 2018, appear to address some of the concerns that were discussed by Bishop Youssef and the creators and developers of Coptic Reader, it is unclear if this issue will be revisited in the future. Moreover, the recordings of Muʿallim Mīkhāʾīl and the English-language recordings of the EHC make up an important, but relatively small portion of the entire repertoire of Coptic chants in Coptic/Greek, Arabic, and English that is referenced by the Coptic Reader application, and would therefore not fully address these questions of hymnodic authority.

The concern of Bishop Youssef and others over this development demonstrates the authority of Coptic Reader as a site of preservation and transmission, yet the Bishop's ultimate decision to not implement the change also reveals an inherent tension. Unlike with written musical notation, which may convey knowledge in a depersonalized form, audio recordings are disembodied but also clear representations of the performer. Because of this, authority is not completely detached from the performer, and the choice to select one recording or another as a model for recitation is inevitably a granting of authority in this sense as well. This dynamic suggests that the transition from the repertoire to the archive is not a complete one, since traces of authority associated with embodied performance still influence decisions such as these.

One of the most profound effects of the widespread use of the online audio archive tasbeha.org and the Coptic Reader mobile phone application is that their use marks a shift in authority with regard to hymn preservation and performance. Historically, each church would model its style of recitation after the style of their local mu'allim, and this system, along with the relatively sedentary lifestyle of most Egyptians prior to the late-twentieth century, led to the development of distinctive local and regional styles of recitation. Despite the gradual standardization and centralization of clerical and cantorial education in Egypt in the twentieth century, regional variation in hymn performance has always been accepted as part of the tradition of Coptic hymnody. Moreover, the lack of adoption of written musical notation and a relative lack of interest in applying a consistent and exacting method for distinguishing between the fundamental melody of a *laḥn* and aspects of a performance that constitute embellishment or ornamentation of that melody have resulted in a great deal of ambiguity and variation within those regional styles as well. The result of this is that authority has and

continues to be concentrated in the individuals or groups who recite the hymns rather than in depersonalized musical texts, as is the case when written notation is used as a primary model for proper recitation. This is reflected in the way that the Coptic hymn translation working groups discussed in Chapter 4 were exclusively focused on producing audio recordings rather than written musical notation, and it also helps to explain why Margit Tóth's transcriptions of the Liturgy of St. Basil using European staff notation that were published in 1998 were never recognized as authoritative models for recitation.

While the proper preservation and transmission of hymns was localized in the twentieth century, with each church community deferring to a local mu'allim as the authority for preservation and transmission of Coptic hymnody, this localization of authority was gradually displaced through new ways of understanding how hymns are preserved and transmitted. Initially, the standardization of clerical and cantorial education presumably produced a firmer sense of a higher authority governing the knowledge of those mu'allimūn, then the proliferation of cassette (and later CD) recordings of particular priests and mu'allimūn that began to be frequently traded and sold at church bookstores beginning in the 1970s led to the formation of a canon of individuals who are perceived to be great reciters based on their knowledge of hymns and the beauty of their voices, and finally the trend accelerated exponentially with the widespread use of the Internet, making the site tasbeha.org, and to a lesser degree YouTube and other media-sharing sites authoritative platforms used by laypeople, mu'allimūn, and clergy to reference hymns and how they should be performed.

One result of this trend towards the use of internet-based collections of audio recordings is that examples of many different reciters are available, with over a hundred

different individuals or choirs currently hosted on tasbeha.org, so that there are often several different renditions available for any one hymn. At the same time, the site generally does not contain different recordings of the same hymn by the same individual or group, so only one recorded rendition of a given hymn by a particular mu'allim or priest exists in the online archive. Thus the archive provides a greater variety of individuals and groups to choose from as models for recitation, but the sources themselves are static, single recordings that lack the subtle variations, which might be observed with repeated live performances or through observation of different recordings of the same performer at different times.

Moreover, the majority of the recordings on tasbeha.org identify the name of the performer or group of performers, but most do not contain a specific date or location for the recordings. According to Ray Wassef, who first constructed the site and made many of the initial contributions to its archive, this information is generally not known by the site creators and managers because these recordings were often taken from cassettes and CDs that may not have contained such information or in the case of more recent contributions, the site managers were simply not concerned with documenting this information (Ray Wassef, personal communication, May 19th 2017). Thus the use of tasbeha.org and the distribution of hymns online more generally, has expanded the number of individuals and groups that are used as authoritative examples of hymnodic performance, but has still maintained the focus on the people themselves as the authoritative sources rather than on the renditions or recordings as sites of hymnodic authority. This is in stark contrast to the print example of Margit Tóth's transcriptions of the Liturgy of St. Basil in which Tóth meticulously notes the finer ornaments of mu'allim Ṣādiq 'Aṭā' Allāh's chanting and distinguishes his ornaments from the primary melodic line, yet she never identifies mu'allim Ṣādiq anywhere in the book,

effectively making even his idiosyncratic vocal nuances a disembodied example of Coptic style. This need for masking or erasure of the identity of the chanter in the archival episteme suggests that his presence would otherwise threaten the sense of a completely disembodied hymn that accompanies its inscription in a material form, and yet the identity of the mu'allim reemerges in the digital episteme, in part because of the reliance on audio recordings rather than written notation and the presentation of Coptic heritage through a collection of different voices rather than a single authoritative representation found in a written publication such as Tóth's.

The Mu'allim's Virtual Authority

In the preceding portion of this chapter I have discussed how a shift in authority from the repertoire to the archive has diminished the authority of the mu'allim as a preserver of hymnody and pedagogical transmitter of hymnodic knowledge by ushering in a new understanding of the nature of hymnodic knowledge as something inscribed in material form rather than embodied. At the same time the realities of an emergent digital episteme that accompanies a vastly increased access to audio recordings, has had a more mixed effect on the role of the mu'allim. On the one hand Coptic digital platforms have elevated the audio recording, along with all its significations of embodied performance attached to the human voice, above written musical notation as the primary archival medium and this has returned some degree of authority to the mu'allim as the preferred voice (along with priests and bishops) in such sites. At the same time, such online digital recordings and the sites that host them are still devoid of much contextual information, and ultimately operate independent of

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the mu'allim himself, often without his permission. This suggests that the ideas and agendas, as well as the embodied activities that contribute to the functioning of these online platforms have adopted some of the autonomy and authority once relegated to the mu'allim before the use of these media. So what explains the persistence of the mu'allim both in Egypt and North America? I argue that it is his value as a facilitator of rites, and the dynamics of human-divine transmission in the virtual episteme that explain the continued authority of the mu'allim.

As I explained above, the virtual is characterized by the simultaneous existence of the self in both earthly and spiritual realms, and it is this quality that places the mu'allim in a unique position with regard to the human-divine transmission that characterizes both spoken and chanted prayers. As philosopher Terrence Cuneo has observed, Eastern Christian liturgies are generally characterized by the prevalence of singing, compared to an emphasis on proclamation in Reformed liturgies demonstrated by the prominence of the clerical sermon in those traditions (Cuneo 2016: 126). Importantly, Cuneo notes how reading a liturgical text is generally understood as conveying a particular important meaning, what he calls a "content-engaging" act, whereas the practice of liturgical singing itself actually enacts certain spiritual intentions and obligations towards peace and unity, what he calls a "content-instantiating" act (Cuneo 2016: 141-2). Moreover, he argues that each individual in the group having a shared intention, and an awareness of each other's intentions is crucial for this instantiation to occur (Cuneo 2016: 135-6). There are several implications to this dynamic, which characterizes a virtual episteme in which spiritual efficacy governs the transmission of hymnody from humans to God. First, each individual involved in this act of content-instantiation must have intention to create peace and unity through liturgical chanting and

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others must see him or her as having this intention. This is one reason why audio recordings have not replaced human chanters, and why "Mu'allim Sony," the cassette recording used by Father Joseph in the example above, was deemed appropriate for transmitting the hymns in the context of pedagogy, but not for the human-divine transmission that occurs during the liturgical rite itself.

The importance of intention in this dynamic of liturgical instantiation of spiritual acts also helps to explain the anxiety some deacons and mu'allimūn have expressed to me in interviews over the potential use of written musical notation (specifically European staff notation rather than the neumic *hazzāt*), by chanters during church rites. Such anxiety is often expressed through vague remarks concerning how such notation might make the music more "robotic," or lose its affective or spiritual efficacy, but these remarks speak to a more generalized concern over a partial dislocation of the hymnodic knowledge to inscribed material forms (i.e. a valorization of archival knowledge) that might also distance it from the active intentions of the chanter. Describing fears of the music becoming "robotic" reflects a concern over the music becoming less human, something which reflects this deeper concern for human intention in the act of liturgical singing.

In addition, the understanding of hymnodic knowledge as something embodied but also imbued in one's spiritual being makes the specific skills of the mu'allim particularly important. One distinction between knowledgeable deacons and mu'allimūn is the extent of their memorization of hymns. Through near-complete memorization of all of the Coptic hymns used during church rites, the mu'allim is able to guide the service in particular ways that are key to his role as a facilitator of worship. This includes an immediate sense for the ambitus of each chant, something which may vary between different version of the same

chant used on different ritual occasions. This is crucial during a liturgical service, because it is the mu'allim who will often choose or quickly correct the starting pitches of particular chants so that the hymns do not exceed the range of most congregants who are chanting, something which is a skill developed through the cultivation of an embodied sense of correct pitch formed from years of chanting. The mu'allim also occasionally corrects a priest or deacon who may accidentally begin chanting the wrong prayer or hymn during a service. While this is not a frequent occurrence, multiple mu'allimūn have described this to me as one of their roles during the liturgical service, and something which they are uniquely able to address because of their embodied knowledge of Coptic hymns and the order of the rites. While some deacons may train and study enough to attain this type of facility with the order and content of church rites, the demands of this type of memorization and embodied cultivation of knowledge are significant enough that the mu'allim profession is still considered important for churches in Egypt and in the diaspora. While economic realities have allowed the mu'allim to persist as an official role in Egypt, the different situation in North America has led to the acknowledgement of informal mu'allimūn in order to satisfy this persistent need that characterizes the virtual episteme, which is preeminent in the space and time of liturgical rites.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explained how historical and contemporary practices related to the preservation and transmission of Coptic liturgical knowledge may be understood through Taylor's model of coextant epistemic systems. Rather than interpreting the epistemological

changes associated with audio recording and archiving or online transmission as part of a monolithic cultural shift driven by outside technological forces, I argue for an understanding of epistemological multiplicity. From this perspective, I examined the changing role of the modern muʿallim in Egypt and North America and discussed how recent changes in the role of the muʿallim reflect a shift in authority from the repertoire to the archive, but one which is not complete or final, and which is now intertwined with digital forms of memory and transmission that complicate a simple epistemological binary.

The role of the muʿallim is a particularly interesting site to observe epistemological multiplicity because of the different types of knowledge production, performance, and transmission that the muʿallim is engaged in. Thus, the greater authority of an archival epistemological orientation coincides with a diminishment of the authority of the muʿallim as a preserver of hymnody because the notion of preservation associated with material archives has superseded the notion of preservation associated with human memorization and recollection, but this has led to a reemphasis on the role of the muʿallim as a facilitator of church rites, which valorizes the intersection of hymnodic knowledge in the virtual episteme with procedural knowledge of the Liturgy in a way that reorders, but preserves his authority. Moreover, as new forms of memory and transmission emerge through the use of online archives and software, the localization of authority with particular muʿallimūn rather than with more general understandings of how to perform a hymn through the abstraction of written musical notation has maintained aspects of the valorization of individuals and the embodiment of hymns associated with the repertoire.

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation I have examined how historical and contemporary acts of

musical theorization and conceptualization are linked to discourses and narratives that

contribute to a transnational Coptic identity. In doing so I have not only demonstrated the

specific link between musical theorization and identity in the Coptic context but hopefully

also the way in which "music theory" itself is bounded by attributions of authority (both in

terms of authorized texts, ideas, and individuals, and also in terms of privileged

epistemologies). Thus what turns musical theorization into Music Theory is the

"foregrounding" of particular ideas and practices, the same mechanism at the heart of identity

formation. This link between musical interpretation and the hermeneutic of identity

construction is important because it suggests that how we understand ourselves, and what we

value about ourselves, plays a key role in how we think and talk about music. Moreover, the

influence of these ideas and values on our conceptualization of music feeds back into the

actual structures and forms of the music through acts of transmission and translation. Thus

identity, musical theorization, and musical form are intertwined.

Because of the intertwined nature of identity, musical theorization, and musical form

we should be cautious and critical about what it means to use musical theorization to

"understand" a musical tradition. This means incorporating into this type of analysis the

realization that theorizing about music is as much a statement about ourselves as it is a

window into the musical and non-musical ideas and values of the composers and performers

of that music. While a clear separation of the ideas and values of the composer and theorist-

analyzer may not always be possible when theorizing about musical forms, this does not

preclude a fuller understanding of each through other means. It merely indicates that we should be wary of any attempt to penetrate such ideas primarily through an analysis of musical structures. In the case of Coptic music, however, almost no information exists about the origins of the music or its evolution prior to the twentieth century, which has led individuals theorizing about Coptic musical structures to dig deeply for historical and cultural lessons and in doing so they have imposed their own contemporary ideas and values on the music.

My review of the historical evidence on Coptic music theory and practice in Chapter 1 suggests that the evidence on these topics is sparse, and yet even the earliest writings on the subject reveal a keen interest in linking Coptic music to a broader Christian identity. This is demonstrated by references to the oktōēchos that suggest an appeal to a "universal" ordering of Christian sacred music rather than a reflection of current practice in Egypt. These 13th- and 14th-century sources provide an insight into one way that Copts from this era conceptualized their music, however their writings do not discuss or describe particular musical structures, and thus leave open the question of how Copts actually articulated identity formation and musical theorization to musical forms. While later European writings beginning with Athanasius Kircher and followed later by Guillaume-Andre Villoteau, François-Joseph Fétis, and many others provided information about the structures and forms of Coptic music, such descriptions were clearly influenced by their own values and positionality in addition to other issues of accuracy and methodological rigor.

In Chapter 2, my study of how Coptic music was represented and (re)conceptualized in the 20th and 21st centuries reveals a shift in musical conceptualization away from Eurocentric European approaches and towards new modes of analysis and representation

drawn from forms already associated with traditional Arab music. I argue that this shift demonstrates a change in musical conceptualization in terms of intonation and modal organization but that these changes also reflect changes in the narratives of history and identity that are associated with the music. Rather than serving as a window into the early history of Western Christianity, Coptic Egyptian scholars applied theoretical frameworks of the *maqām* system to Coptic music, effectively reimagining it as a living tradition that could be understood as part of a larger Egyptian or transnational Arabic-speaking culture with distinct narratives of history and identity.

In Chapter 3, I examine contemporary vernacular musical theorizations in order to better understand how different ways of conceptualizing Coptic music are intertwined with particular forms of cultural authority, both in terms of authority granted to particular discourses and also in terms of the authority granted to particular epistemologies. This question of authority is important in mediating between identity, musical theorization, and musical form. The authorizing of particular discourses, as well as the authorizing of particular epistemologies are acts of "foregrounding" whose importance Turino has noted in the context of identity formation, and which also play a key role in how we conceptualize and abstract musical frameworks, and these theorizations effect how we perceive, experience, and reproduce musical forms (Turino 2004: 8). In Chapter 4, I extend my examination of the interconnectedness of musical form, musical conceptualization, and identity construction in an analysis of three different translation working groups that produced English language versions of liturgical hymns in North America. I demonstrate how the gradual influence of a younger generation of North American Copts introduces an ideological shift, which in turn influences the translation process effecting the musical structure of the translated hymns.

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Finally, in Chapter 5, I extend my exploration of the attribution of authority in Coptic music by focusing on how the changing role of the mu'allim reflects the shifting of authority between epistemological regimes. This final chapter strays somewhat from my prior focus on the identity-theorization-form relationship but the purpose of this shift in focus is to provide a clearer understanding of authority as a mechanism that mediates between these three domains. In doing so I demonstrate how authority is not simply granted or denied but rather it is negotiated. While trends in the valorization of particular epistemologies within Coptic communities might influence the authority of the mu'allim, the identity of the mu'allim may also transform leading to a reconfiguring of cantorial authority. This reconfiguring of cantorial authority then has implications for how music is theorized, for example, by influencing whether the "fundamental *laḥn*" is articulated to a particular mu'allim or recording).
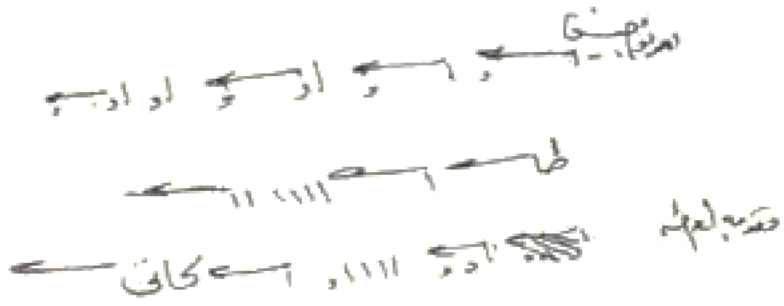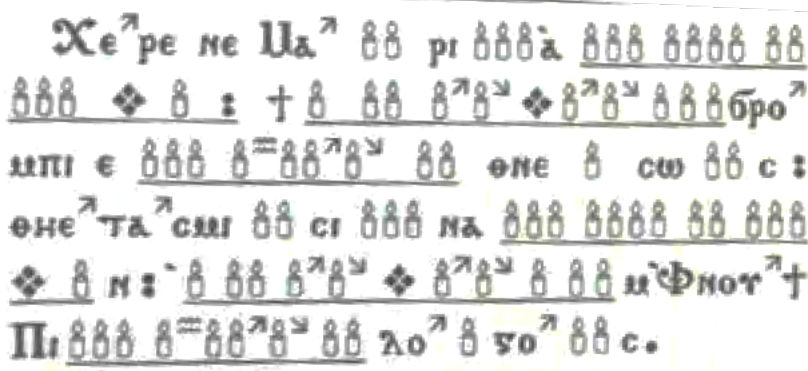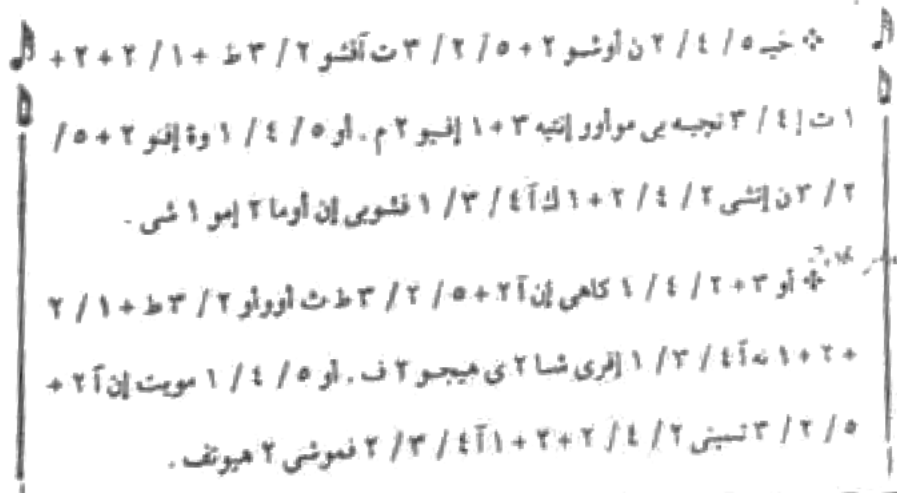
Each of these chapters demonstrates some aspect of the connection between musical form, musical conceptualization, and narratives of history and identity that inform what it means to be Coptic. Taken together they demonstrate how narratives of identity may inform musical conceptualization as well as how forms of musical conceptualization may inform identity. Similarly, I demonstrate how the "foregrounding" of particular habits that is so crucial to group identity construction occurs through the attribution of authority to both discourses and also to the epistemological frameworks through which music and the world are apprehended and interpreted. This points to a truly dialogic relationship between Coptic identity and Coptic music in which the construction of one is continually informed by the other.

APPENDIX A:

Hazzāt and Historical Forms of Neumic Notation

There is currently no historical evidence to suggest that any form of standardized musical notation was widely adopted by Coptic chanters or educators prior to the twentieth century, and standardized notation (in the form of European staff notation) is still only rarely used. At the same time, different types of idiosyncratic, neumic notation are commonly used by deacons, muʿallimūn, and priests, and while individual approaches to notating Coptic *alḥān* vary significantly, they are all referred to collectively as *hazzāt* (s. *hazza*), an Arabic term meaning "movement(s)," in reference to the melodic movements represented by different notational symbols, or sometimes as *kharāyiṭ*, meaning "maps," in reference to an entire collection of such symbols that provides a musical map of a given hymn (Ramzy 2010). Magdalena Kuhn demonstrates several different approaches to *hazzāt* including approaches that utilize different combinations of dots and slashes as well an approach utilizing pictures of candles and crosses and another utilizing numbers inserted throughout a liturgical text (2014: 73):

"Points"	
"Flashes and stripes"	

"Stripes only"	
"Words in combination with flashes and stripes"	
"Words, candles, flashes, and crosses (Monastery of Menas)"	
"Numbers and words (Bishop Aimad Ishak and Anba Tadros)"	

Kuhn's examples of different combinations of dots and dashes (what she calls "flashes") are archetypes of some of the most common symbols used in *hazzāt* notation. However even these seemingly straightforward symbols are written and interpreted in a variety of ways. The following images are of two different approaches to notating the Holy Pascha hymn Pekethronos (Coptic: Ⲡⲉⲕⲉ̀ⲑⲣⲟⲛⲟⲥ, "Your Throne, O God, Is forever and ever"), which I collected from two different Coptic-American students at the University of Texas at Austin during a hymn practice and bible study there on February 23rd 2011. The two students whom I collected these *hazzāt* from studied hymns together, and produced their notation in part by copying the notation of their fellow chanters while at the same time introducing changes into their own notation in ways that made it more intelligible to themselves. Thus these two examples demonstrate the shared use of certain symbols, as well as other idiosyncratic aspects including different approaches to notating repeated segments of melody and the unique use of color coding in the latter example.

Figure A-1. Page 1 of the *hazzāt* used by a Coptic-American university student for the seasonal *laḥn* Pekethronos.

"Your throne, O God is forever and ever, Alleluia."

Figure A-2. Page 2 of the *hazzāt* used by a Coptic-American university student for the seasonal *laḥn* Pekethronos.
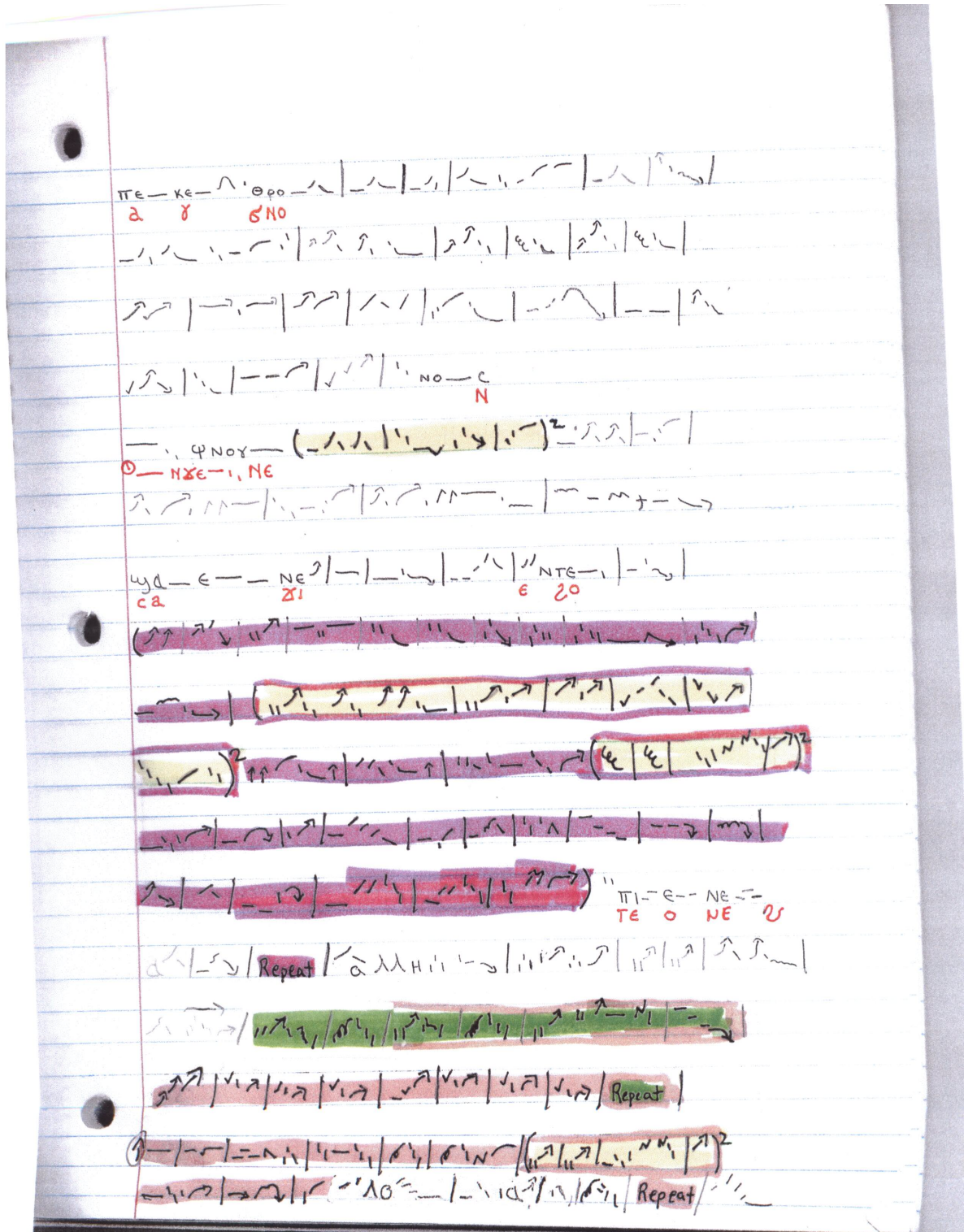
Figure A-3. An alternate set of *hazzāt* used by a different Coptic-American university student for the same seasonal *laḥn* Pekethronos.

In addition to hand-written *hazzāt* notation, Carolyn Ramzy has noted the more recent phenomenon of larger, more organized forms of *hazzāt* creation and distribution in churches among the Coptic diaspora as well as the production of *hazzāt* using computerized fonts and their distribution on the web site *hazzat.com* (Ramzy 2010). Another recent example of a more standardized form of *hazzāt* is a series of books recently published by Epi-diakon[66] Osama Lotfi in Cairo. Lotfi's earliest *hazzāt* collections appear to include *Alḥān of the Month of Kiahk and the Feast of the Nativity* and *Alḥān* (2009) *and Tamāgīd for the Fast and Feast of the Holy Virgin* (2009) with at least ten other collections published from 2010-2014. These books are noteworthy because they all contain an identical key at the beginning of each book that gives explicit definitions for each character or *hazza*:

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[66] An Epi-diakon is the fourth of five ranks of deaconship including epsaltos (chanter), anagnostes (reader), epi-diakon (subdeacon), and diakon (deacon).

اُ	هزة مضمومة
اُّ	هزة مضاعفة الضمة
اَ	هزة مفتوحة
اَّ	هزة مضاعفة الفتحة
اِ	هزة مكسورة
اِّ	هزة مضاعفة الكسرة
ا	هزة بدون تشكيل = إيه
اُّ	هزة مضمومة بهمزة
اُ	هزة طويلة مضمومة
اَ	هزة طويلة مفتوحة
اِ	هزة طويلة مكسورة
ا	هزة طويلة بدون تشكيل = إيه طويلة
←	للتعبير عن امتداد الهزة
↙	للربط بين هزات المجموعة
⌒	للربط بين هزتين متباعدتين أو أكثر
(((	للتعبير عن التتالي وتنطق حسب التشكيل
عـ	للتعبير عن علو النغمة
هـ	للتعبير عن هدوء النغمة

* يجب التمييز في النطق بين (ف ، ڤ) ، (ج ، چ) ، (أو ، أوُ) ، (و ، وُ)

* حرف الهاء (ـه) في بعض الكلمات للتعبير عن حرف (Ⲉ) في اللغة القبطية

الذي يُنطق (إيه) كما في كلمة (شيه ريه)

Figure A-4. The key to *hazzāt* symbols in the introduction to *Alḥān of the Holy Pascha* (Lotfi 2011: 1).

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Lotfi's books provide yet another example of the Coptic hymn Pekethronos in his own

system of *hazzāt*:

Figure A-5. Page 1 of Osama Lotfi's *hazzāt* for the seasonal *laḥn* Pekethronos (Lotfi 2011: 83).

Figure A-6. Page 2 of Osama Lotfi's *hazzāt* for the seasonal *laḥn* Pekethronos (Lotfi 2011: 84).

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Figure A-7. Page 3 of Osama Lotfi's *hazzāt* for the seasonal *laḥn* Pekethronos (Lotfi 2011: 85).

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كرسـيك يـا اللّـه إلى دهـر الدهـور. الليلويا

- ثـم يُكمَّل بـاقـي المزمور بـاللحن الإدريبي كـالمعتـاد في بـاقـي مزامير البصخة .

Figure A-8. Page 4 of Osama Lotfi's *hazzāt* for the seasonal *laḥn* Pekethronos (Lotfi 2011: 86).

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While internet sites like hazzat.com and publications such as Lotfi's *hazzāt* collections move

the practice of *hazzāt* more in the direction of standardized practice, there is still a great deal

of ambiguity and variety in the practice as it exists in myriad forms today. At the same time,

the large-scale production and mass distribution of *hazzāt* in print publications and online

certainly demonstrate the potential for such practices to be transformed into standardized

notation systems. Moreover, the many different approaches to *hazzāt* demonstrate a shared

repertoire of symbols (i.e. dashes, lines, and dots) that are not universal, but are widely

enough used and adapted as to suggest a widely shared aesthetic of musical representation.

The similarities that these symbols share with the dots and dashes of historical forms of

ekphonetic notation suggests the possibility that the contemporary Coptic style reflects a

practice with certain characteristics that have been preserved and transmitted across

generations since the early history of the Church. Another possibility might be that chanters

in modern times began utilizing these symbols more recently after learning about historical

examples and consciously adopting forms that they decided reflected their heritage.

The Historical Use of Neumic Notation

While there is a dearth of information about the historical use of written musical

notation with Coptic hymnody, scholars have identified potential examples of neumic

notation in ancient Egyptian and Ancient Greek cultures that they have argued may have

connections to an emerging Coptic Christian culture in Egypt. In addition to these earlier

examples, a set of papyri fragments with markings above what appears to be a hymn text in

Coptic has been dated to the 10th or 11th century CE, and another set of manuscripts whose meaning is contested by scholars and could potentially constitute a form of musical notation has been dated between the 4th and 7th centuries CE. I will briefly review these examples below.

An example of markings in ancient Egyptian temple carvings that may possibly refer to musical sounds was first identified by French Egyptologist Pierre Montet who argued that the repetitious inscription of two hieroglyphic symbols next to the image of an apparent chanter of sacred music on the Middle Kingdom (21st to 17th centuries BCE) tomb of Beni Hasan may indicate the repetition of vowel sounds characteristic of melismatic singing (Montet 1925: 359). This observation was later discussed by French musicologist Armand Machabey (1948: 8) and elaborated on by German musicologist Hans Hickmann, who noted at least one other similar example of the use of one of these hieroglyphic symbols in a "dance hymn" to the God Min (Hickmann 1955: 491-5). While these scholars present interesting interpretations of these ancient artifacts, the sparsity of such examples means that any attempt to link them to later practices among Coptic Christians is necessarily only within the realm of speculation.

In addition to the possible use of hieroglyphic symbols to describe musical sounds in ancient Egypt, scholars have identified what appears to be an early Christian hymn recorded on the back of a papyrus fragment containing a grain account from the late third century CE. The papyrus manuscript, Oxyrhynchus 1786, No.15, was collected during one of the excavations that occurred between 1896 and 1907 in the ruins of the ancient city of Oxyrhynchus, where the modern-day city of al-Bahnasā in Minya Province now stands (Cosgrove 2011: 129). The manuscript was initially examined by papyrologists Bernard Pyne

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Grenfell and Arthur Surridge Hunt in 1918 and published in 1922 (Grenfell and Hunt 1922). It contains a Greek hymn text with a series of symbols placed above the text that include eight notational symbols representing different scale degrees and a series of dashes and dots that constitute a system of rhythmic notation, all of which are decipherable to scholars of Ancient Greek music (Cosgrove 2011: 28-31)[67]. While this artifact provides the most extensive evidence currently known about early Christian music in the form of fragments of melody depicted in the melodic and rhythmic notation above the text, it is unclear how representative this example is of Christian worship in Oxyrhynchus or greater Egypt during this era. It should also be noted that the Coptic Orthodox Church only emerged as a distinct autonomous entity in Egypt following the Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE, which involved the separation of the Coptic Orthodox and Greek Orthodox Churches of Alexandria. Because the Oxyrhynchus papyrus reflects the sacred music practices that preceded this schism it should be understood as a reflection of Pre-Chalcedonian musical practices rather than a reflection of Coptic Orthodox sacred music in any contemporary sense of the term.

In addition to Oxyrhynchus 1786, scholar Denise Jourdan-Hemmerdinger has analyzed three additional Egyptian papyri containing dots surrounding text that she argues are a form of ekphonetic musical notation (Jourdan-Hemmerdinger 1979). While two of these papyri are from the third century BCE, the other papyrus (British Museum, Inv. 230) was found in Fayyūm and dated to the third or fourth century CE and it contains portions of a Greek psalter. Like Oxyrhynchus 1786, this papyrus is an artifact of pre-Chalcedonian Christian music practices and reflects a period of early Christianity in Egypt, which a number of Eastern and Oriental Orthodox churches identify as part of their heritage. Jourdan-

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[67] For a detailed description of this notational system see West (1992)

Hemmerdinger (1979) herself connects the Fayyūm papyrus to the historical evolution of a

Syriac system of ekphonetic notation. Evidence of Syriac ekphonetic notation from as early

as 411 CE has been identified, along with examples of an increasingly complex system of

dot-like notation evolving from the 5th to the 11th centuries, which were later discussed in

detail in the writings of Gregory bar-Hebraeus in the 13th century (Engberg 2001).

Unlike the Syriac examples, there is only one historical example of possible

ekphonetic notation among Coptic Christians, a series of manuscript fragments from the 10th

to 11th centuries that were catalogued and described by Coptologist Walter Crum (Crum

1909). These manuscript fragments are part of larger collection of more than 6,000

manuscripts purchased by Enriqueta Augustina Rylands from James Lindsay, the 26th Earl of

Crawford of Haigh Hall, and include manuscript fragments 25-29 that contain what appears

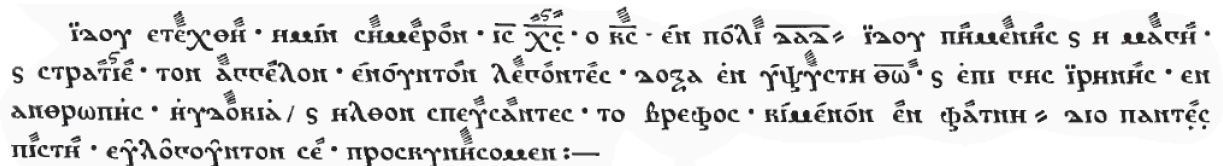to be a type of ekphonetic notation above Greek hymn texts (Crum 1909: i-xi).

Figure A-9. One of the more elaborate examples of possible ekphonetic notation above Sahidic text from the
10th-11th centuries (Crum 1909: 10).

These manuscript fragments from the 10th-11th centuries may constitute the only historical

evidence of any form of musical notation associated with Post-Chalcedonian Coptic culture

prior to the modern era.

One additional example dated from the 4th to 7th centuries known as the Gulezyan manuscript also exists, but its status as musical notation is debated.[68] The manuscripts were among the private family papers of Armenians Hadj Sarkis Gulezyan and H. Aram Gulezyan who brought them to the United States in 1896 (Robertson 1993: 355). They consist of six vellum leaves, which include meticulously drawn circles of different sizes and colors as well as writing in Coptic, Copto-Greek, and Demotic. Most notable are the phrases "Symphōnia Pneumadikos" in Coptic script, and "Hagios Hymnodos" in Greek script on the first leaf, which Robertson explains might be interpreted to mean "Spiritual Symphony[69]" and "Sacred Hymn-singer," and the term "Sēou" ("сноү") on the fifth leaf, which has the more general meaning of "time" but could carry a more specialized meaning related to a concept of rhythm (Robertson 1993: 356-7).

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[68] Moftah et al. (1991: 1735) describe the Gulezyan manuscript as being from the 5th or 6th centuries. While these dates reflect the estimates made by Georg Steindorff and Eric Werner, Arthur Hill and George Sobhy Bey suggested a date as early as the fourth century, and Ludlow Bull proposed that it was from the fifth to seventh century (Robertson 1993: 359ft4).

[69] Robertson notes that the term "symphony" here does not carry the meaning of "symphony" associated with modern European art music, but rather refers to a concordance of two or more sounds (1993: 356).
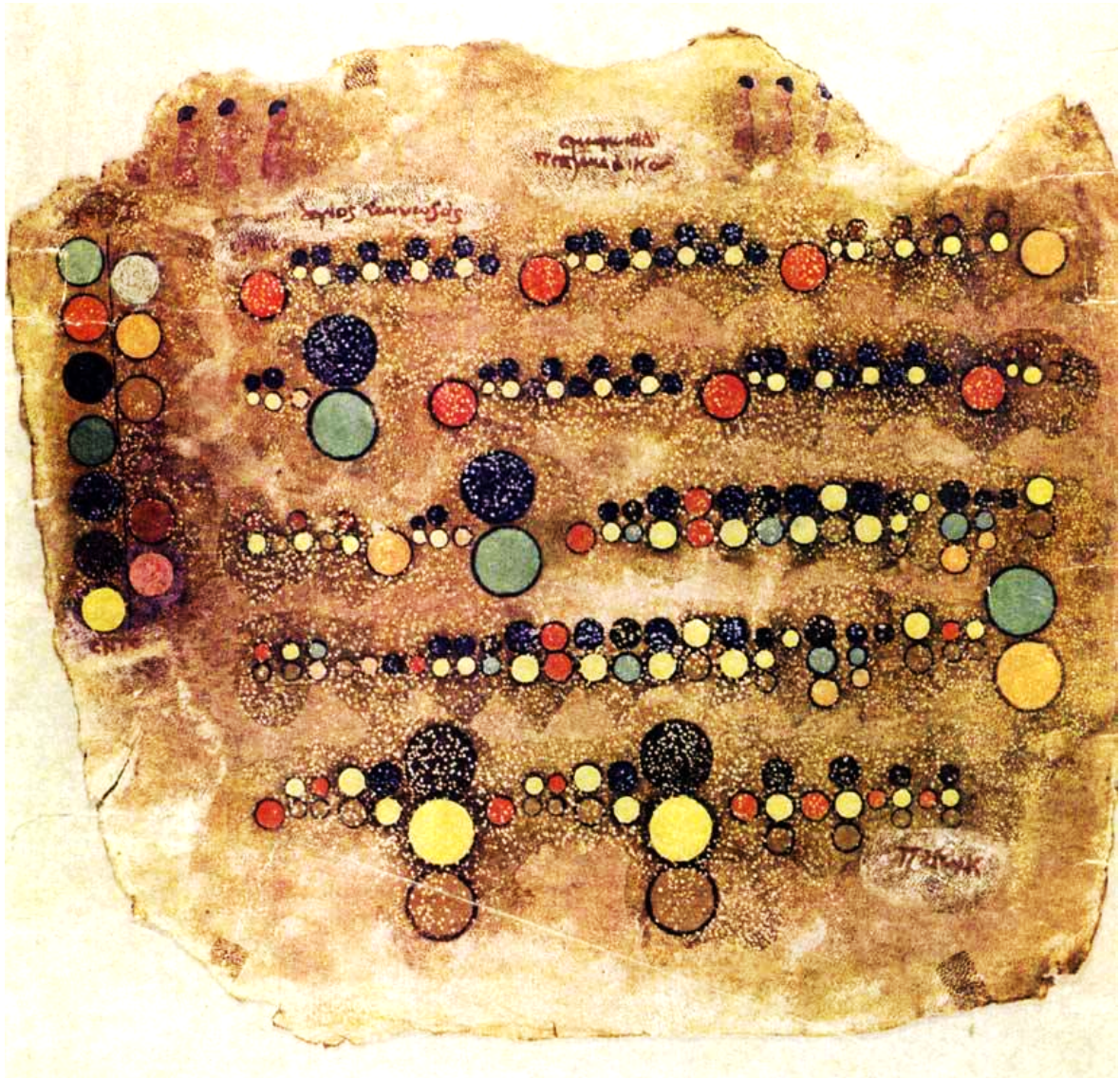
Figure A-10. Leaf One of the Gulezyan Manuscript containing colored circles that may be a visual depiction of the Harmonia Mundi of Ptolemy of Alexandria, a form of musical notation, or both. In the top center of the leaf are the words "Symphōnia Pneumadikos" in Coptic script. Below and to the left of this are the words "Hagios Hymnodos" in Greek script.
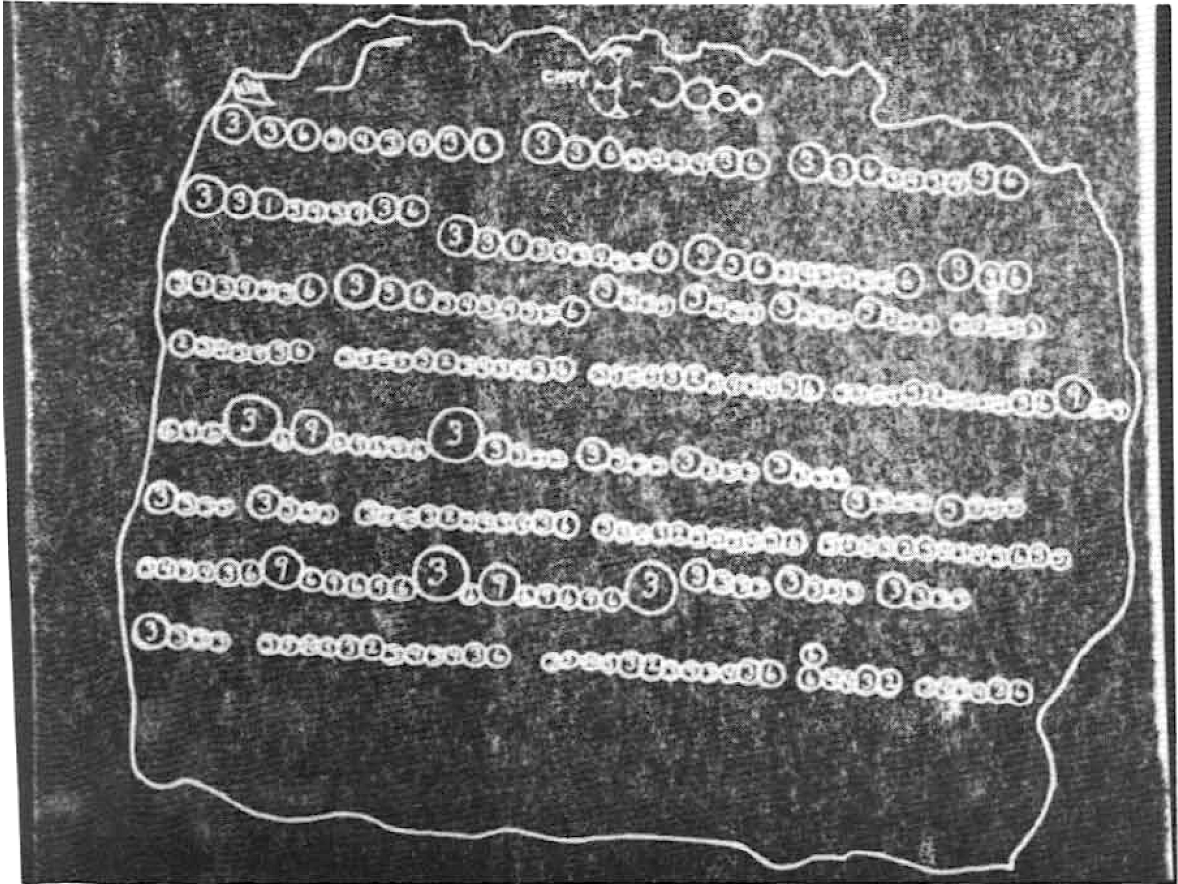
Figure A-11. Leaf Five of the Gulezyan Manuscript (black and white image copied from Robertson 1993: 365), showing rows of circles with numbers and headed with the word "сноγ," which Marian Robertson explains has the general meaning of "time" but could potentially be related to the idea of rhythm (Robertson 1993: 356-7).

Because of the potential textual references to music, the number and arrangement of the colored circles into two groups of seven and five (which scholars have noted evoke a seven-tone diatonic scale with five additional notes to complete a twelve-tone chromatic scale), and historical writings by Aristotle and other ancient thinkers in which a mathematical relationship between colors and sounds is discussed, several scholars have argued that this manuscript may be a form of musical notation, and one group of scholars went so far as to construct a code that equates pitch to color and circle diameter to note duration, ultimately transcribing the product of their analysis into Western staff notation (Robertson 1993: 357).

An alternate interpretation was initially offered by musicologist Eric Werner in his correspondence with the younger H. Aram Gulezyan in 1949 (son of the H. Aram who initially brought the manuscript to the United States), who noted that the references to music, and the arrangement of seven and five circles could be meant to depict the twelve zodiac signs and the larger work a reflection of Ptolemy's *Harmonia Mundi*, a theory that each planetary body rotating around the earth produces a specific sound (Robertson 1993: 357-8, 359 ft.4). While this latter interpretation has been favored by a number of scholars (e.g. Gillespie 1967: 8-9), Robertson has convincingly argued that these interpretations are not mutually exclusive, pointing out that the colored circles are grouped in a manner incompatible with a Ptolemaic understanding of the planets and noting that ancient theorists "also equated the seven Ptolemaic spheres to the strings of the <u>Lyra</u>, a term equally applied to the ancient lyre and lute, the latter more specifically called the <u>Kithara</u>" (Robertson 1993: 358). Whatever the actual meaning of the text and images in the Gulezyan manuscript, future study of it may only be confined to photographs and the writings in past scholarship because it was sold in 1952 through an auction house to an unidentified private buyer and its current whereabouts are unknown (Robertson 1993: 355).

Similar to the dearth of theoretical writings about Coptic sacred music, there is a dearth of examples of written musical notation as well. If we leave aside the contested example of the Gulezyan manuscript, Crum's 10th-11th century example is the only one from a time period in which the Coptic Orthodox church had taken on an institutional and theological identity that resembles its current state. The earlier examples of Oxyrhynchus 1786, No.15, and British Museum, Inv. 230, are both from a period of the early Christian church before the ecumenical schisms and the political and theological evolution that led to

the recognition of an autonomous Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria. Moreover, the apparent basis of the Oxyrhynchus symbols in a form of Ancient Greek musical notation appears to distinguish it from the British Museum manuscript and suggests that different notational systems may have been in use by Egyptian Christians in the 3rd and 4th centuries. Because of the scarcity of historical examples, it is unclear how historically continuous or consistent ekphonetic notational practices were or what connection they have to contemporary approaches to Coptic *hazzāt*. Some historical examples may represent idiosyncratic notational practices, the use of foreign notational systems to describe a local musical practice (e.g. Egyptians borrowing a system used more consistently by Syriac chanters), or a system established in a particular region or throughout Egypt for a relatively short or much longer time period.

Map of the North American Archdiocese of the Coptic Orthodox Church
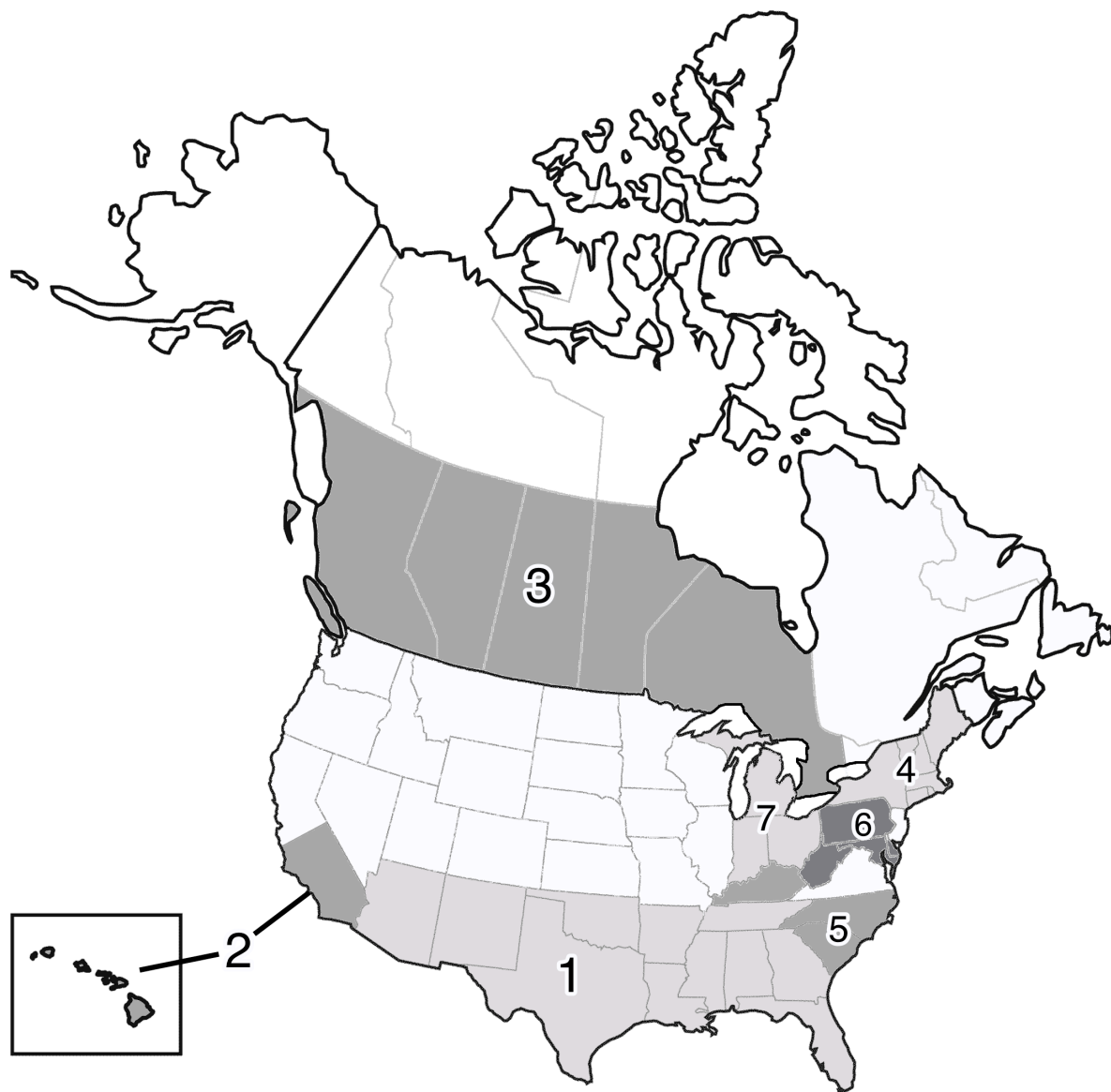
Figure B-1. Map of the North American Archdiocese of the Coptic Orthodox Church

1. The Diocese of the Southern United States: Established in 1993 by Pope Shenouda III[70]; First bishop enthroned Nov. 1995; Includes Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas.

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[70] Based on information gathered from a reliable informant within the Church as well as some additional internet research it is my understanding that a diocese is only officially formed with the enthronement of its first bishop. However, the website of the SUS Diocese

2.   The Diocese of Los Angeles, Southern California, and Hawa'ii: Established in 1995 by Pope Shenouda III; First bishop enthroned Nov. 1995

3.   The Diocese of Mississauga, Vancouver and Western Canada: Established in 2013 by Pope Tawadros II; First bishop enthroned Apr. 2013. Includes British Colombia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario (west of Mississauga).

4.   The Diocese of New York and New England: Established in 2013 by Pope Tawadros II; First bishop enthroned Nov. 2013. Includes Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New York, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

5.   The Diocese of South Carolina, North Carolina, and Kentucky: Established in 2016 by Pope Tawadros II; First bishop enthroned Jun. 2016.

6.   The Diocese of Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and West Virginia: Established in 2017 by Pope Tawadros II; First bishop enthroned Nov. 2017.

7.   The Diocese of Ohio, Michigan, and Indiana: Established in 2017 by Pope Tawadros II; First bishop enthroned Nov. 2017

In addition to these seven dioceses, some news media sources describe the establishment of the Diocese of Ottawa, Montréal & Eastern Canada in 2015 by Pope Tawadros II, including Ontario (east of Kingston), Québec, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador. This date reflects the appointment of Bishop Eklemandos to the position of General Bishop of the churches of these areas, however he was not enthroned as a diocesan bishop and was eventually moved to another position elsewhere. Currently, there are also indications of the upcoming formation of a Diocese of Northern California and the Pacific Northwest (California, Oregon, and Washington).

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as well as some news articles about other dioceses make reference to their establishment before the enthronement of their first bishop, perhaps reflecting announcements by the church leadership concerning plans for the establishment of the diocese. For this reason I have provided both dates for clarity.

APPENDIX C:

The Coptic Rite and the Liturgies of the Coptic Orthodox Church

The complete set of ceremonial practices and observances in the Coptic Orthodox

Church is known as the Coptic Rite (and along with the Ge'ez Rite of the Ethiopian

Orthodox Church comprises the Alexandrian Rite). The more general term for the eucharistic

liturgy performed weekly in Coptic Orthodox churches and daily in Coptic monasteries and

convents is the Divine Liturgy. Today, each performance of the Divine Liturgy may draw on

textual material and chants from one or more of the three liturgies of the Coptic rite: The

Liturgy of St. Basil, the Liturgy of St. Gregory, and the Liturgy of St. Cyril. Each group of

rites is also sometimes described using the term "Anaphora" rather than "Liturgy" (e.g. "The

Anaphora of St. Gregory"), a term that references one of the most important portions of the

Divine Liturgy in which bread and wine are consecrated. One reason for the use of the term

"Anaphora" is because the Liturgy of St. Basil is the only complete liturgy (consisting of the

Offertory, the Liturgy of the Catechumens, and the Liturgy of the Faithful) while the

Liturgies of St. Gregory and St. Cyril in their existing forms only consist of the Anaphora,

which is a component of the Liturgy of the Faithful, along with a small number of additional

prayers. Because of this, the Liturgies of St. Gregory and St. Cyril are never performed in

isolation but are combined with the Liturgy of St. Basil in order to form a complete Divine

Liturgy. Despite this, the combination of the Liturgies of St. Basil and St. Gregory are often

glossed by practitioners as "the Liturgy of St. Gregory" and the combination of the Liturgies

of St. Basil and St. Cyril are similarly referred to as "the Liturgy of St. Cyril." To further

complicate these distinctions, the use of material from any of these liturgies is at the

discretion of the priest officiating the Divine Liturgy, and while certain trends are followed it is not unusual for a given priest to combine the components of these liturgies in slightly different ways. While the complete Liturgy of St. Basil is often performed during regular weekly services, priests generally draw on the Liturgy of St. Gregory, which contains more elaborate prayers and chants, for special seasonal rites. The Liturgy of St. Cyril is sometimes used during Lent and the Coptic month of Kiahk, but its use is rare today.

The following is my general description of the Liturgy of St. Basil and its three components, the Offertory, the Liturgy of the Catechumens, and the Liturgy of the Faithful:

The specific form of the Divine Liturgy used on standard days of the Church calendar is the Liturgy of St. Basil, a series of rites grouped into three components: the Offertory, the Liturgy of the Catechumens (also called the Liturgy of the Word), and the Liturgy of the Faithful. The Offertory Rite includes the ceremonial donning of white robes by the priest and deacons as they recite The Hymn of Blessing (Coptic: *Tenoousht Emefiot* Arabic: *laḥn al-baraka*) and the selection of the Eucharistic bread accompanied by chants of "*Kirie eleison*" in Greek, "*ya Rabb irḥam*" in Arabic, or "Lord have mercy" in English. The Liturgy of the Catechumens includes readings from the Bible and a sermon delivered by the priest to the congregation, after which he recites three litanies using improvised melodies created by linking together familiar melodic tropes. This portion of the Divine Liturgy concludes with the Apostolic Kiss where members of the congregation touch each other's palms and kiss their own hands while reciting a variant of the

Aspasmos Adam, usually one called "Rejoice O Mary" (Coptic: *Onfo Emo Maria* Arabic: *Ifraḥī yā Marīam*). The Liturgy of the Faithful includes Eucharistic and confessional prayers and more extensive litanies, concluding with the ritual consumption of Eucharistic bread and wine. In this final portion of the Divine Liturgy, the priest administers the Eucharist first to the deacons and then to the male lay parishioners and finally to the women of the congregation, all while everybody chants the hymn Psalm 150 (Coptic: *Esmoo e Efnoti* Arabic: *al-Mazmūr 150*) followed by various strophic praise songs belonging to a genre of religious songs identified by the Arabic name *madā'iḥ* (s. *madīḥa*). After every desiring member of the congregation has received the sacrament of the Eucharist, the priest concludes the service with Dismissal prayers, walking down the center aisle amidst the congregation, pouring handfuls of holy water into his hand from a glass container and casting them into the crowd as people eagerly huddle towards him trying to expose themselves to the scattered droplets that transmit a *baraka* or blessing. (Ragheb 2018: 152-4)

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