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AN ANXIETY OF AUTHENTICITY?  
—*FUSION* MUSICS AND TUNISIAN IDENTITY—

BY RACHEL ROSE COLWELL

HONORS THESIS *for* MUSICAL STUDIES  
*with a focus in* ETHNOMUSICOLOGY

2010 ~ OBERLIN COLLEGE

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Rob and Robin, my parents, for teaching by example and for taking me along all these years.

## الفصل الأول الفصل 5

تقوم الجمهورية التونسية على مبادئ دولة القانون والتعددية وتعمل من أجل كرامة الإنسان وتنمية شخصيته.

تعمل الدولة والمجتمع على ترسيخ قيم التضامن والتآزر والتسامح بين الأفراد والفئات والأجيال.

— دستور الجمهورية التونسية

### Chapter 1, Article 5

“The Republic of Tunisia shall be founded upon the principles of the rule of law and pluralism and shall strive to promote human dignity and to develop the human personality.

The state and society shall strive to entrench the values of solidarity, mutual assistance and tolerance among individuals, social categories and generations...”

— Constitution of the Republic of Tunisia

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## *PREFACE*

Tunisia has always been a crossroads, a place where cultural contact between diverse peoples is the norm. Sandwiched between significantly larger Maghrebian states—Algeria, to the west, and Libya, to the east—Tunisia is far too often overlooked as a significant cultural center. The northern peninsulas, Cape Blanc and Cape Bon, are home to city outposts and military bases, Bizerte most notably, that have been prized strategic locations, both militarily and for trade, from the days of the Phoenicians and Romans through and beyond the Second World War, when German troops were stationed there. The bay of Tunis, tucked between these two protective peninsulas, centrally located along the Mediterranean Sea, has been always been an active trading hub.<sup>1</sup> Tunisia's northern rolling hills were once the breadbasket of the Roman Empire. But beyond its role as a fertile agrarian cradle, Tunisia has nurturing cultural reform as well.

Many civilizations have invaded or have risen and fallen on what is now Tunisian soil, a total area slightly smaller than the state of Florida. Although textbook histories tell stories of successive kingdoms, newcomers triumphing and reigning supreme over predecessors, a far-reaching and all-encompassing cultural memory is important to contemporary Tunisian conceptions of national history. The Tunisian national identity, as upheld for centuries and as reinforced by central powers since independence, is one characterized by inclusion, exemplified by Tunisia's history of religious tolerance; strong Jewish and Christian communities thrive amongst their Muslim compatriots.<sup>2</sup> Rare among predominantly Muslim Arab countries, citizens

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<sup>1</sup> See Map of Tunisia, Appendix A.

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted, however, that the vast majority of Jewish individuals emigrated from Tunisia to reside permanently in Israel and France by the late 1960s. Sizable communities continue to reside just outside Tunis, in La Goullette; on the small island of Djerba, the site of the El Ghriba synagogue; and in smaller towns throughout the country. Jews comprise the largest indigenous religious minority (Report on Human Rights Practices for 1997–Tunisia, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/anti-semitism/hrtunisia97.html>).

need not be Muslim to be considered, in both a legal and social capacity, “Tunisian” (though all Tunisians are considered Muslim by default unless they state otherwise).

Despite a history of cultural openness and a notably inclusionary framework of national identity, today’s Tunisian traditionalists and purists perpetuate debates over appropriate ways of upholding and maintaining cultural practices, particularly when it comes to music and other aspects of artistic heritage. These concerns create “anxieties of authenticity” in Tunisia. Like so many societies the world over, Tunisians suffer from an ever-heightened fear that the rapid expansion of inter-state economies, what many call “globalization,” will ultimately lead to homogenization of the world’s diverse lifeways. More directly, this anxiety suggests Tunisian apprehensions that imperial French influence, and long-standing over-arching relations to the “Arab world” will come to dictate Tunisianness. The creation and consumption of the expressive arts and material culture in Tunisia, and the ideologies and identities to which they are inextricably wed, have perennially been linked to these preoccupations with “authenticity.”

Although “mainstream” national identity, as propagated by governmental powers, dominates in Tunisia, many groups exist along the marginal fringes of society. Berbers, who call themselves “Imazighen,” have inhabited the region that is now Tunisia for more than eight thousand years and are believed to have first emigrated north from sub-Saharan Africa. The Imazighen, in many ways, have integrated their personal and community identities into that of a collective Tunisian national identity, however reluctantly. A strong claim of land ownership and pride remains among the indigenous Imazighen community, despite acts of violence against their persons, practices, and beliefs at the hands of numerous powers who have invaded Tunisia throughout history. The identity of Imazighen as Tunisian, and their contributions to “Tunisian



culture” are contested by some individuals; nevertheless, Imazighen folklore, religious ritual, iconography, and language have become part of the everyday Tunisian experience.

The same could be said, and to a similar extent, of Sufist practice, a form of “mystical” Islam that has existed for over a millennium. In particular, distinctly *dhikr*-like (“theomnemosis” or the remembrance of God’s names through repetition) rites, characteristically practiced within Sufi sects, are prominent in much Tunisian Sunni Muslim prayer. Tunisian Sufi groups have long been marginalized in urban and rural regions alike, but crackdowns following independence of 1956 drove brotherhoods entirely underground, forcing them to practice clandestinely, keeping a very low profile. Tunisian Sunnis, by far the religious and Muslim majority in the country, rarely, if ever, relate their own practices to those of Sufis, a sect whom they considered to be religious aberrants. Although it typically goes unsaid, Sufi brotherhoods have played an extremely important role as protectors and custodians of sacred and secular music in Tunisia, from ancient chants and other religious music to secular *ma’luf* (Jones 1982). Unlike their Sunni counterparts, Sufi religious rules explicitly allow for the inclusion of more explicitly musical elements in the context of religious rites. Ethnomusicologist JaFran Jones has found that, in general, “...the most copious and enthusiastic practitioners of [Muslim] religious music have been Sufi brotherhoods” (Jones 1982:110).

Tunisia’s history reads like an exhaustive list of European and Islamic imperial powers. Phoenician Queen Elyssa (Dido) is fabled to have cut a raw deal with the locals around 815 BCE. She promised her people, immigrants from the Phoenician city of Tyre, would claim only the land that she could cover with a single ox hide (bursa). Cutting the hide into thin strips, legend has it that she circumscribed all that was to become the city of Carthage, today the site of

Ben Ali, the current president's, extensive bayside presidential palace; impressive Presidential Mosque; and the neighborhoods of Tunisian bureaucrats and French expatriates.

Carthage, made legend by the great Roman poet, Virgil, in his *Aeneid*, was the seat of two great empires. In the first few centuries of the Common Era, the region that is now the metropolis of Tunis was a booming Mediterranean trading port for Queen Elyssa (Dido) and her Phoenician subjects. Carthage was symbolically “sown with salt” when the Romans abandoned the city and German Vandals and Byzantines (Christian Eastern Roman Empire) kingdoms each ruled successively thereafter. By the seventh century, Islamic invaders had made their presence known, ransacking what was left of local Roman temples and Christian basilicas to piece together new patchwork mosques, and laying siege to all strategically important buildings and regions. Between the tenth and twelfth centuries, mass immigrations of Andalusian Muslim and Jewish refugees fleeing the Spanish Inquisition sought safety in Tunisia and all along the northern shores of Africa. These immigrants brought with them their regionally specific customs, language, and music, each deeply influenced by a long cultural history in Spain. In 1574, Tunisia became part of the vast Ottoman Empire until the French placed it under a Protectorate in 1881.

The year 2010 marks the fifty-fourth anniversary of Tunisia's independence from France in 1956. The Tunisian Republic has had only two presidents to date, both authoritarian in their rule: the first, greatly revered modernist and liberal reformer, President Habib Bourguiba (1956-1987) and the second, President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, Prime Minister under Bourguiba, who overtook the government in a bloodless coup in 1987, citing doctor's records as evidence that President Bourguiba's failing health had left him unfit to govern. President Ben Ali is still in office today, having secured his seventh term in a landslide electoral victory in October, 2009.

Tunisian national identity is internally understood to be a patchwork composite. The Great Mosque of Kairouan illustrates, in marble and ceramic tile, Tunisia's history of cultural integration into hybrid entities through combination, coalescence, and unification; in the tradition of Islamic architectural spolia, so many different Roman and Byzantine temples were sampled and recycled for its construction that one is hard-pressed to find two identical columns or capitals in the entire mosque complex. In the sixteenth century, sections of the mosque were decorated with Turkish patterns, some covering Andalusian-style tiles and others laid directly alongside, adding further dimensions to the rich architectural diversity of the building.



**Figure 1** Architectural spolia showing two distinct column styles at the Great Mosque of Kairouan, Tunisia. Photography courtesy of the author.

Physical artifacts like the Great Mosque of Kairouan—structures not only extant, but continuously modified material expressions of culture—present themselves as tangible evidence

of complex histories. The significance of Tunisia's history of successive kingdoms, conquests, and occupancies is more profound than the physical realities manifest in the layering of new roads atop Roman cobblestone. Archaeologists and cultural anthropologists interpret this history, venturing beyond the concrete; they aim to piece together an understanding of the socio-cultural and ideological layering, integration, and hybridization wedded to material artifacts of culture or those without physical manifestation. These pursuits, like those I attempt through my own research, provide findings of broader anthropological interest. The cultural anthropologist's or ethnomusicologist's ultimate ambition is to suggest ways in which cultural histories have shaped and continue to inform contemporary realities and identities and, conversely, how people today might actively imagine and re-imagine history to suit the particular realities of the day.

In the analyses and discussions that compose this study, I endeavor to examine the ways in which a number of musicians, bands, and the musics they produce, articulate senses of Tunisianness and individualized connections to cultural heritage. I explore how these *fusion* musicians negotiate between the expectations, demands, and frameworks of local and international audiences. The musics discussed here are more than a window into understanding cultural phenomena and the people that consume the products of such projects in a rapidly changing world; music is part and parcel of inventing, manipulating, and displaying the constellation of habits and values that compose Tunisian's various collective and personal identities.

In taking a closer look into the history of musical hybridity, as perceived by Tunisians, I aim to tease out which elements act as "authenticators" for musical Tunisianness and how approaches that fall under the banner of *fusion* (since the 1980s) relate, structurally and

discursively, to older practice. Additionally, I explore “anxieties of authenticity” and Tunisian sensibilities regarding preservation, cultural continuity, and innovation.

I suggest in this paper, based upon my own findings, that Tunisian agendas of musical preservation grasp at the “authenticity” of a musical practice that has always been in flux and that is rooted in Andalusian origin myths. Despite its inflated importance as a national icon, standardization, codification, and “unification” as “pure,” *ma’luf* is, by specialists’ accounts, a borrowed and profoundly hybrid re-working of Arab, Andalusian, Sufist, and mixed Mediterranean influences.

The ethnomusicological analyses that comprise the following study, draw principally upon individual research that I conducted during a four-month study-abroad program through the School for International Training (SIT) in the Spring of 2009. The SIT curriculum stresses the importance of individual research and designates the final month of each of its programs as a period for independent field study. My studies in Tunisia included both modern standard Arabic (*Fus’ha*) and Tunisian dialect (*Darija*) classes, in addition to anthropology and history-based lectures and seminars that approached topics of “globalization” and “modernization” in Tunisia and the greater “Arab World.”

Based in the capital city of Tunis for the majority of my stay (I resided with a local family in the small, neighboring town of La Marsa), I was fortunate to have the time to travel a great deal as well. Accompanied by my professor and fourteen American colleagues, I spent a week visiting southern Tunisia (Kairawan, Gafsa, Tozeur, Chebika, Tamerza, Mides, Douz, Fawar, Matmata, Djerba, and El Jem) in late February and, in March, another week in the north (Bizerte, Ghar el Melh, Utica, Tabarka, Sejnene, El Kef, Hammamet, and Douga). I traveled to Kaliba, El Haouaria and Monastir as well.

Although my research—interviews with *fusion* musicians, music enthusiasts, and Ministry of Culture officials, along with attendance at public concerts—was carried out exclusively within the Tunis metropolitan area, my travels greatly broadened and informed my perspectives on Tunisian history and current realities. My esteemed research advisor and guide to Tunis, Hatem Bourial, was an immeasurably valuable asset to my research and gave generously of his time as translator for a number of my interviews.

Chapter 1 offers a sketch of Tunisian musical history, as understood internally and externally, to provide a historical backdrop for interpreting trajectories of change that have led to the development of the new (1980s and onwards) musical projects and paradigms called *fusion*. In Chapter 2, I challenge, and ultimately accept, the efficacy of “hybridity” as a model for musical contact in Tunisia. Drawing upon a diversity of definitions—Holzinger’s musical hybrid forms, Bhabha’s “third space” concept, and Bakhtin’s “intentional” and “organic” hybrid binary—I tailor existing models to further theorize relationships between Tunisian *ma’luf* and intentional and explicit Tunisian *fusion* projects. In Chapter 3, I approach two Tunisian case studies: *oud* (Arabic lute) player Anouar Brahem, and Arab-Appalachian band, Kantara. Through an analysis of these *fusion* musicians’ hybrids, I investigate what elements are required for internal and external musical “success” and for bringing political and activist agendas to the fore. Chapter 4, a synthesis of the previous chapters’ findings, draws conclusions about Tunisian “anxieties of authenticity” by linking cultural ideologies that allow for multiple authenticities within current *fusion* projects.

Listening examples, as referenced in-text, are listed in Appendix C. and can be found on the accompanying CD supplement.

## ***CHAPTER 1. A SELECTIVE INTRODUCTION TO TUNISIAN MUSIC HISTORY***

The significance of particular *fusion* musics and the celebration of intentionally and explicit hybrid composition projects in Tunisia are rooted in a history of multiple cultural occupancies and integrations and in a particular geographical location. These musics are equally a product of Tunisian societal norms—recognized (both internally and externally) as culturally and religiously tolerant—and of relatively liberal-minded governments (under both Bourguiba and Ben Ali) intent on building and maintaining strong socio-political connections with Europe, the Arabic-speaking world, and with Africa. My findings here hinge on the premise, widely accepted within ethnomusicology today, that locally specific conceptions of what it means to create, combine, preserve, or identify with certain musical practices are informed not only by international trends and influences, but also by cultural histories.

In Chapter 1, I begin to approach internal notions of “Tunisianness” as musically conceived, located, and articulated along a historical timeline. As I introduce in this first chapter, and support throughout the paper, for many Tunisians, music is most “Tunisian” when it recognizes and credits its diverse origins. Mediterranean, Arab, Andalusian, Berber, and French elements each contribute important semiotic, semantic, and musical elements to composite Tunisian soundscapes: recognizable musical indicators, labels, signs, and selective histories act as “authenticators” of musical provenance.

Representations of Tunisia’s varied cultural components are framed by the propagation of origin myths, oral histories of hybridity that speak to Tunisian musical sophistications as inclusionary. In the fluctuating popularity of particular perspectives on history and their reflection in corresponding vogue musics, we see the facility with which Tunisians select, and re-

arranging their histories to project representations of their individual, group, and national identities.

Such flexibility is exemplified by Tunisians' general disagreement over the degree to which Imazighen, or Berber, music resonates in *ma'luf*, Tunisia's "traditional" and national music. Unlike approaches employed by neighboring governments in Algeria and Morocco, Tunisia's anti-Berber policies, enacted after independence was established in 1956, were highly successful in curtailing Imazighen rights in the name of the "Arab nation." These efforts resulted in remarkably effective "Arabization" of the Tunisian population and the near eradication of the Imazighen language (Davis 2003a:76). Tunisians who are unsupportive of cultural oppressions, such as those against the Imazighen people, are more likely to exaggerate Berber musical contributions to today's Tunisian music in an attempt to recognize indigenous peoples and re-introduce the group into the socio-musical landscape. Ibrahim Bahloul, for example, a musician particularly interested in re-constructing ancient Berber instruments, points to a number of Imazighen elements in modern-day *ma'luf* and has devoted a great deal of research, time, and energy to reconstructing pre-Arab-era Tunisian Imazighen music.

Tunisia's geographical location, among other factors, permits certain sectors of society, particularly social elites, to emphasize chosen historical connections over others. The choice to highlight ties to ancient Andalusian Spain and modern-day France, for example, over the Sahara and other desert regions that occupy over half of the country,<sup>3</sup> is particularly revealing. An informed reading of Tunisia's histories of importation, indigenization (the process by which foreign cultural materials and ideas become localized and familiar), hybridity, and the roles these

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<sup>3</sup> Tunisians of Sub-Saharan Africa origin whose ancestors were brought to North Africa as slaves in the late nineteenth century are also grossly under-represented within Tunisian national frameworks (Davis 2003a:76).



musical processes have played in inventing and shaping national identity, is critical for contextualizing the current re-worked expressions and explicitly hybrid musics that I address in this paper.

In this chapter, I commence an analysis that approaches musics from internal perspectives, with the intent of returning agency to musicians and listeners and in the hope that my research method might aid in the liberation of the local experience from the cloaking paradigm of “hybridity” as a strict and predictable function of “globalization.” As anthropologist Clifford Geertz so eloquently said, “...it is still the case that no one lives in the world in general;” rather, our experiences of reality are grounded in locally-specific conditions (Geertz in Taylor 2007:210). Tunisian examples, as I demonstrate in detail in Chapter 3, indicate that culturally-specific histories and the long-standing and deeply-rooted ideologies to which they are wed, establish firm frameworks for informing *local* ways of music-making and interpretation. Local specificities are critical in painting an accurate picture of change, particularly today when discourses of homogenization and standardization dominate, internationally, in popular media and academia.

### ***An Immigrant’s Music becomes the “Local”***

The vast majority of urban<sup>4</sup> Tunisians point to Arab-Andalusian influences as central to the development of Tunisian musics of all eras since the Andalusian influx and nearly all genres. From the tenth to seventeenth centuries, Muslim and Jewish refugees fleeing Christian conquest and harsh persecution in Spain sought refuge along the northern coast of Africa. They brought

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<sup>4</sup> In 2008, sixty seven percent of Tunisians lived in cities (CIA Factbook Tunisia. <http://www.cia.gov>).

with them their tunes, modes, and rhythms, collectively known today as *al-musiqa al-andalusiyya*, “Andalusian music.”

Oral histories recount the establishment of four sub-genres of immigrants’ music: *ala*, “instrumental music,” in Morocco; *sana*, “work of art,” in Algeria; *garnafi*, “from Granada,” in Western Algeria; and *ma’luf*, “familiar” or “customary,” in Eastern Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya (Davis 2004:2). All Maghrebian Arab-Andalusian-derived musics share the large-scale form of the *nuba*, “a song-cycle characterized by unity of mode, or melody type, and diversity of rhythmic-metric elements” (Davis 2004:2). The song texts, written in classical Arabic, regional Arabic dialects (such as those used in Tunisia or Algeria), and mixtures of the two typically portray romantic themes focusing on love, wine, and nature. *Nubat* (the plural of *nuba*), therefore, tell epic tales of the divine and the worldly, love gained and lost, homelessness, longing, joy, and regret (Anderson 2001:3). The ambiguity of some of these topics has been exploited by Sufi sects, particularly in expressing love as both divine and worldly, nature as an important route to heavenly ascension, and wine as the elixir of God (Davis 2004:2).

Refugees, those forced to leave Seville, settled in Tunis during the first wave of immigration, between the tenth and twelfth centuries. *Ma’luf*, the Tunisian branch of *al-musiqa al-andalusiyya*, arrived in Africa relatively early on in the history of the Muslim and Jewish immigration to the region. The founders of the three other branches of classical Arab-Andalusian music followed suit, fleeing Cordoba, Valencia, and Granada between the twelfth century and 1492, when Granada fell completely to the Spanish. Both popular belief and ethnomusicological research point to these patterns of immigration as responsible, at least in part, for shaping the subtly nuanced musical differences between the four rival branches of Arab-Andalusian classical musics (Davis 2004:2).

In Tunisia, today's cannon of *ma'luf* recognizes only thirteen known *nubat*, though it is said that once, in the early days of *ma'luf*, a different suite or program existed for each day of the year and for major events and holidays (Anderson 2001:3). It is difficult to fathom that even a master musician could maintain such an extensive repertoire, hundreds of tunes in dozens of *maqamat*. These are complex sets of melodic guidelines based on scales with particular modes that include ascending and descending patterns of pitches, emphasized pitches, characteristic patterns, and microtonal distinctions. It is especially remarkable that such a repertoire could have been transmitted solely as oral tradition. Transcription projects, initiated by Baron Rudolfe d'Erlanger, began only in the first few decades of the twentieth century (Davis 2004:44). By that time, relatively few *nubat* survived in the collective memory of Tunisian musicians and their audiences.

The Rashidiya Institute for Tunisian Music, named for Muhammed al-Rasid Bey (b. 1931), an early twentieth-century aristocratic patron of *ma'luf*, has been the heart and soul of Tunisian *ma'luf* since the founding of the Institute in 1934. The aim of the music school and acclaimed musical ensemble of teachers and students has always been the “conserving and promoting [of] traditional Tunisian music and [the] encourag[ment of] new Tunisian composition” (Davis 2004:51).

Indeed, the Rashidiya was founded with ambitious intentions of publicizing, reviving, centralizing, and standardizing a music that had been kept alive in relative secrecy for centuries. In a cultural and religious context in which secular music-making in public had long been considered a shameful act (associated with drinking and hashish smoking, an indulgence reserved for the lower classes, Sufis, and Jews) the Rashidiya school, founded by former President Habib Bourguiba, made a bold statement that music performance and composition was

to become an acceptable profession in Tunis. Ruth Davis, ethnomusicologist and preeminent scholar of Tunisian music, remarks, “the very concept of a public secular institution devoted to the performance of indigenous music was revolutionary” (1997:5). For the first time, the government provided the Tunisian people with a distinctly non-French music school, a venue where “amateur musicians, regardless of religion or social class” could learn in a “respectable performing environment” (Davis 1997:4). A deeply entrenched Islamic taboo against public music-making had been legally addressed, lifted via governmental mandates in the hope of achieving a level of “modernity” that could rival French counterparts and strengthen Tunisian nationalist agendas.

However democratizing and revolutionary the establishment of the Rashidiya was, post-independence Tunisian governments, and for the most part, Tunisian people, have never recognized the dedicated musicians who kept the *ma'luf* alive for centuries through private instruction and semi-public performance. Sufi brotherhoods, particularly in northern Tunisia, had long been the guardians of *ma'luf* before Bourguiba’s government decreed that the music held particular significance to Tunisian cultural heritage and took on the task of the music’s standardization and promotion as nationally iconic (Davis 1996:316). For centuries, Sufi brotherhoods rehearsed *ma'luf* alongside their sacred repertoire, often combined the two by singing sacred texts to familiar *ma'luf* tunes (Davis 1998:6). Davis’s research suggests that members of the long-established Jewish community located on the small Tunisian island of Djerba (see Map 1) set Hebrew prayers to *ma'luf* tunes as well, as far back as the twelfth century.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ruth Davis recorded, among other examples, “Tsur Mishelo Achalnu”, a post-Sabbath meal prayer for thanksgiving as sung to a “traditional Djerban tune,” identified by a Djerban muslim as identical to “Rayitu al-Riyadha” (“I saw gardens”) from the *ma'luf* (Davis 1998:6).

Sufi brotherhoods publicly performed *ma'luf* following their religious ceremonies, allegedly to “calm the heightened emotional atmosphere” (Davis 1996:317). These concerts were widely attended by the greater (non-Sufi) population and it was through these performance venues and musical instruction within the brotherhoods that the music was maintained, and that a rich diversity of localized variations developed through creative elaboration and re-interpretation (Davis 1996:317). Still, for centuries, taboos against the *ma'luf* were strong and brief Sufi performances did little to counter staunch opposition from Sunni religious leaders and from the general population. Although most Tunisians know little of *ma'luf*'s history before the Rashidiya, without doubt, much of the “Tunisianness” of *ma'luf*, as compared with other Maghrebian musical styles and practices, must be traced to the adoption by and continuance through these brotherhoods. Sufist teachers and performers did more than “protect” the *ma'luf*; they respected the music as an evolving form, adding individual and regional flair to renditions of the repertoire.

The Rashidiya, founded in 1934, was established at a time charged with political potential for change. In the same year, former President Habib Bourguiba founded his Neo-Destour Party, a group that actively resisted the French Protectorate in Tunisia and, by the 1950s, had become one of the main voices for a new self-sovereign state (Davis 1997:3). According to Davis, a specialist on the Rashidiya school, ensemble, and Tunisian *ma'luf*, the Rashidiya was established not only as an “indigenous” counterpart to the French music conservatory in Tunis (founded in 1896), but also as a direct musical and cultural manifestation of the burgeoning schism between the Protectorate and France and a significant step toward the construction of a new Tunisian national identity. Today, the Rashidiya and *ma'luf* are nearly synonymous, inseparable in the minds of many. To many Tunisians, especially older generations, who lived

through the nationalist era of independence, the Rashidiya and *ma'luf* are a tremendous source of pride and a nostalgic reminder of a continuous and seemingly seamless Tunisian musical history.

As I discuss at length in Chapter 4, nostalgic memories and nationalist associations with the Rashidiya's *ma'luf* are rooted in personal experience, shared experience, and imagined significance. Ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino's semiotic framework differentiates between signs that are grounded in lived experiences, *indices*, and those that are imagined or conceptual representations, *icons*. Indices, rooted in place and time, are far more tangible than icons, signs that act as potential or imagined emblems of a collective identity, community, or nation. Icons and indices are key semiotic tools for conceptualizing *ma'luf's* role in informing Tunisianness and, as I address in Chapter 4, for understanding Tunisian constructions of "authenticity" (1999:7-8).

### ***Today's Ma'luf***

"*Ma'luf*," as I quickly discovered when speaking with Tunisians, is a loosely defined and ambiguous term among many musicians living and working in Tunis today. One common conception held by many musicians, as evident at the time of my research in 2009, is that nearly any music that identifies itself as "Tunisian" is connected, however indirectly, to music historically recognized as the "original" *ma'luf*. Many compositions and renditions that appear to depart significantly from the *ma'luf* standards, as disseminated by the Rashidiya for the last seventy years, including the work of luminaries and popular standby musicians like Lotfi Bouchnak, Sonia Mbarek, Anouar Brahem, and relative newcomer, Dhafer Youssef, are all, generally speaking, recognized as *ma'luf*. These newer interpretations of *ma'luf*, developed since standardization during the era of independence, are not only considered valid and acceptable.

They are frequently preferred, by at least some urban Tunisians, over stricter and “drier” re-enactments of early recordings produced by the Rashidiya and its adherents, and other such attempts to “protect” and “preserve” the *ma'luf* as untouchable. For many Tunisians, all music played, composed, or re-interpreted since Andalusian Arabs landed on African shores is connected, whether implicitly or explicitly, to iconic roots in *al-musiqa al-andalusiyya*, “Andalusian music.” When asked how new compositions at the Rashidiya relate to musical history, Muhammad Triki, one of the institution’s most popular and prolific composers and the first leader of the Rashidiya *ma'luf* ensemble, replied that *ma'luf* stands as “*la base*,” the “groundwork” for all new composition (Reported in Davis 1996:318). More broadly, Davis posits, and my research also suggests, that “[f]ar from being in opposition with, or representing a new direction from, the traditional repertoire, the new media songs [such as those made famous by super stars Sonia Mbarek, Lotfi Bouchnak, and Anouar Brahem] were perceived as being in sympathy with it (tradition): the old and new songs [are] seen as a continuum, the older repertoire providing the inspiration for the new” (1996:318).

*Ma'luf* first came to stand for “Tunisia” during the era of independence, the music’s true heyday that extended from the 1930s to the 1960s. Firmly grounded as “Tunisian music,” it is no wonder that the single standardized repertoire of *ma'luf*, as presented by the Rashidiya, burst into myriad interpretations following independence. While a single unifying standard was particularly powerful, perhaps even necessary during resistance movements against the French Protectorate, post-independence-era Tunisia has seen an ideological return to the importance of diversity, personal interpretation, and representations of hybridity. Today, any music that makes even a superficial gesture towards locating itself as Tunisian is considered more than “*ma'luf*-inspired:” it is, for many, a form of “*ma'luf*” itself. These gestures include instrumentation, making use of

Tunisian *maqam* (particularly *hijaz*, the *maqam* that has become iconic of Arabic music and that relies on minimal micro-tonal nuance), *iqa* (rhythmic patterns), familiar melodies, or lyrics in *darija*, the Tunisian Arabic dialect.

The diversity of musical styles produced under the auspices of the term *ma'luf* is remarkable. In Tunis I learned of musicians who were well recognized for playing *ma'luf* on saxophone (Riadh Sghaïer), on re-constructed instruments modeled on ancient Berber designs (Ibrahim Bahloul), and on an *oud*-and-electric-guitar hybrid instrument (Nabil Khemir). There are, however, listeners who refuse to accept these newer interpretations and developments of the *ma'luf* (more closely addressed in Chapter 4), but overarching trends suggest that new expressions and hybrid forms are becoming more widely acceptable and that the musicians who perform these musics already have a sizable and devoted Tunisian and international base of listeners.

The inclusionary label, *ma'luf*, however myth-based or imagined, reflects contemporary Tunisian conceptions of cultural heritage, and government cultural policies. Constructions of history as complexly layered are important in approaching relations between *ma'luf* and musical hybridity, both historically and in the context of more recent intentional and explicitly hybrid-style projects. The genre, although difficult to define, has always been framed by time, locale, and by cycles in which the music is standardized by centralized powers, and then reclaimed by the public. *Ma'luf* is mutable, moldable, participatory, resilient, and improvisatory in the hands of historical and modern-day musicians. The fact that the *ma'luf* has maintained its integrity as socially meaningful throughout these various formations and reformations is telling of a deeply-rooted Tunisian musical ideal that values continuity but allows for substantial variation and change.



For many listeners, particularly those heavily invested in new Tunisian hybridities, musical and otherwise, the *harubi* (cultural history) is respected and enlivened through individualistic and temporally relevant expressions of *ma'luf*. According to a number of the musicians with whom I spoke, coming to know *ma'luf* means learning to recognize exactly how *you*, as a musician, connect with your Tunisian heritage. In this introspective pursuit, the musician experiments until he or she discovers how best to inspire audiences to love the *ma'luf* as well, and to thereby love being Tunisian.

### ***A Case Study in the Interpretation of Ma'luf***

Riadh Sghaïer, Tunis-based saxophonist, has found his own individualized interpretation of *ma'luf*. Speaking in a mix of Arabic, French, and English, he explained to me the flexibilities of *ma'luf*; its characteristic openness to influences of time, space, personal interpretation, and international borrowing and exchange. At the same time, he stressed the responsibility of the musician to create and present music that successfully captures the essence of older *ma'luf* and connects meaningfully with current audiences. In reference to his own music as *ma'luf* and as *fusion*, he explained,

In our days we need to have music circulating and the best way to get it to the other people is to phrase it the way they can hear. The basic idea is to work on the musical sentence that we have and then to use *fusion* in instruments, in rhythms, and also in the way we create the music itself. Doing *fusion* is just about speaking another language with the same basic music (pers. comm., May 5, 2009).

Sghaïer described his work further for me, explaining that, although the new sounds are his, he uses a great deal of “former material” most of the time. The *process* of creating music, he says, is something that brings you to your *harubi* (your cultural heritage or “roots”) but allows

you to express those roots in your own style. To continue his own metaphor, in aligning his work clearly with Tunisian *ma'luf*, Sghaïer re-works the structure, syntax, and vocabulary of the Tunisian musical sentence, modernizing the phrases so they sound less archaic and translating insider terminology so that both modern-day Tunisians and foreigners might be able to listen and understand the musical content. Sghaïer assured me that although he puts a great deal of himself in his music, “at the same time [he is] not losing the heart of it, always preserving the heart of the sentence.” He is molding the sound for today so that “when you listen to it, you always find [a] score that is absolutely present” (pers. comm., May 5, 2009).

When asked to elaborate on his choices in instrumentation, Sghaïer defended the saxophone as a valid vehicle for Tunisian music-making, stating, “All I am doing is I am translating feelings into sounds. The saxophone is just my *gasba* (flute), *qanun* (zither), or violin” (pers. comm., May 5, 2009). In the midst of a long and exuberant stream of Arabic, Sghaïer switched to English to ensure that I understood entirely, “The musiqa Tunisiya, it’s *mine*.” Sghaïer sees his music, what he often called his “*fusion*,” as his personal way of continuing the tradition of *ma'luf* and connecting with his Tunisianness. For him, playing the saxophone is “empowering [the *ma'luf*] because sometimes when [he] listen[s] to it, [he] find[s] it kind of poor... you can not really represent yourself with those kinds of sentences.” Sghaïer’s message then is broad one, and his intended audiences extend beyond the borders of Tunisia. According to him, musicians in Tunisia must make new sounds today to begin to play a “global tune so you can be heard and you can be compared to what is done *now* in the realm of music. I am a Tunisian musician, but I am also a musician to be understood throughout the world” (pers. comm., May 5, 2009, his emphasis).

Such ambitions are indicative of current political and economic climates; similar sentiments are held by cosmopolitans in other urban centers around the world in developed and developing cities alike. Sghaïer's notion of a "global tune" speaks to the relatively new existence of thriving international audiences, markets, high-powered record industries, and to new commercial demands for "world music."

All the same, Sghaïer also tells a specifically Tunisian story in which *ma'luf*, labeled in many contexts as representative of national identity, acts as a musical medium open to self-expression, interpretation, and recontextualization through imported and indigenized vehicles. *Ma'luf* is Tunisia: made iconic, and now individualized by musicians like Sghaïer who are activists in their own right, reclaiming the *ma'luf* on behalf of the Tunisian people. These musicians, working within a vein of national solidarity, approach the *ma'luf* as a living and breathing cultural entity by countering notions of exclusion, elitism, and preservationism. These musicians recognize the relevance of temporality and the necessity of re-interpretation of cultural heritage in an international era. In the hands of musicians like Sghaïer, *ma'luf* becomes flexible enough to represent the diverse ways of being Tunisian: both to Tunisians themselves and to the world. These new *fusion* musics, new free interpretations and re-contextualizations of Tunisian *ma'luf*, democratize once nationally-"protected" musics and grant agency to music-makers. There have always been many *ma'luf*'s, many ways of connecting with *harubi* (cultural heritage); new explicitly hybrid forms are fresh interpretations that reinforce and reiterate this multiplicity.

### *Art Music and Popular Music in Tunisia*

Beyond the complexity of *ma'luf* as interpretative and temporally understood, definitions are further problematized by ambiguity in genre-type. The ambivalence of Tunisians toward classifying *ma'luf* as either “art music” or “popular music” has wrought confusion and disagreement in ethnomusicological interpretations of the musical form’s social implications. Challenges faced by Tunisian musicians today in negotiations (particularly in marketing) between Tunisian, Arab, and European genre paradigms are illuminated by an understanding of *ma'luf*’s historical ambiguity as both “art” and “popular” music.

Left not only undefined, but also altogether neglected in much scholarly literature, it is difficult for anyone unfamiliar with *ma'luf* to conceptualize or imagine the social contexts and meanings of the music in practice. More importantly, the lack of distinction between genres, the necessity of which is altogether a European-centric fixation, has led to frustrations for Tunisian musicians and confusion for Western (both European and American) audiences. The nationalist-era standardization and professionalization of music, alongside simultaneous popularization at the hands of the codifying Rashidiya Institute, further clouds the distinction between the two.

Ruth Davis questions the relevance of the art-versus-popular music classification and points to the findings of other scholars working within Middle Eastern contexts. Jihad Racy, renowned specialist on Middle Eastern music, argues that, at least in the case of Egyptian music, “the classical-popular distinction, with all its familiar implications, can be particularly misleading” (Racy in Davis 1996:314). Umm Kulthum exemplifies the wildly famous musician whose music has been canonized by Egyptians and the greater Arabic-speaking world as both *fann* (art) and *tarab* (enchantment or entertainment) with little distinction between the two classifications (Racy in Davis 1996:314).

Davis cites one Tunisian definition of *ma'luf* as “notre Musique populaire traditionnelle [our traditional popular music].” Such categories suggests that, as in Egypt and other parts of the Middle East, dichotomies between art music and popular music, clearly recognized in European and American musical discourses, cannot be imposed on Tunisian music, at least not with regard to *ma'luf*. Overlaying such etic (outside) categories as “popular music,” “art music,” and “folk music” over Tunisian music where local taxonomies differ significantly does little to aid in understanding emic (internal) socio-cultural musical meanings (Bailey in Davis 1996:314). My own findings support Davis’ argument that “in Tunisian urban society...such clear-cut categories are not readily apparent, and to the extent that relevant distinctions might appear to exist, they [Tunisians] are at most, ambivalent” (Racy in Davis 1996:314).

The Tunisian case challenges Racy’s statements that “in each major Near Eastern or Asiatic ‘high culture,’ one should expect to find a self-contained, indigenous musical repertoire, which is authentic, ancient, musically sophisticated and socially exclusive” and that “[s]uch a repertoire is usually described as ‘classical music,’ ‘art music,’ ‘court music,’ and ‘serious music.’” *Ma'luf*, the Tunisian music that would best fit Racy’s description of an “ancient” and “authentic” art form, most decidedly does not fall, under a “classical” category for Tunisians. In opposition to comparable forms in neighboring Arab countries, rural and urban Tunisians alike have not, historically speaking, considered *ma'luf* to be an elitist or exclusionary form, nor do Tunisians describe *ma'luf* solely as “art,” “classical,” or “court-based” without further modifiers that link the genre directly to everyday life. Today, in post-independence Tunisia, the *ma'luf* is connected not only to formal evening concerts at the municipal theater in Tunis, extensive schooling, and virtuosity, but also with cafes, the radio, and with life-cycle rituals, like weddings and circumcisions.

*Ma'luf* is participatory enough, Davis argues, that, at least historically, “anyone [could] join in, regardless of talent, training or expertise.” At the same time, however, it also fulfills nearly all the “credentials” of a full-fledged art music; Tunisians locate the “authenticity” of *ma'luf* as a classical music in relation to Arab, Turkish, and Persian urban musical centers. These constructed claims of direct connections are valuable cultural currency in an “Arab” nation composed of Andalusian migrants, former sub-Saharan slaves, more recent Italian and Maltese workers, marginalized Imazighen and Sufi populations, and French expatriates (Davis 1996).

As far as courtly patronage is concerned, though the Rashidiya now claims an authoritative grasp on the *ma'luf*, the repertoire was once independently performed and decentralized in multiple Sufi brotherhoods. Active governmental promotion of Tunisian *ma'luf* as representative of the nation, from the 1930's to today, popularized *ma'luf* by promoting the music as connected to everyday Tunisian people, both urban and rural. For Tunisians, Davis contends, more relevant dichotomies lie between the local and the foreign, most notably between cultural artifacts that are considered to be decidedly Tunisian and those that are thought of as generically Arab or Egyptian (Davis 1996:315).

The irrelevance of the distinction between “art music” and “popular music,” the power of the cloaking term *ma'luf*, and the importance of imagined musical continuity between Arab-Andalusia and contemporary sounds each contribute to Tunisian methods of labeling and categorizing music. Discourses that loosely tie any music that seeks honestly to re-contextualize and personalize Tunisian connections to “primordial” Andalusian mythologies set the stage for new musical articulations, the intentionally hybrid, or *fusion* projects that began in the early 1980s and continue until today. With a history of invasion, immigration, safe harbor, and a

succession of occupancies, Tunisia as liberal, tolerant, and culturally-permeable has, in many ways, set a welcoming place at the table for musical innovations, for *fusion*.

### ***Difficulties in Definition: Ma'luf and Tunisian Fusion***

From an ethnomusicological standpoint, *ma'luf* is clearly a nebulous musical category. Consistency of stylistic markers that ethnomusicologists typically look for in defining a genre or a specific musical style are few and far between in the practice of *ma'luf* today and historically. As soon as a particular pattern emerges to the analyst, she is sure to stumble upon exceptions that defy such categorization. For instance, while one might be tempted to take the usage of Arabic dialect, *darija*, as a consistent marker of *ma'luf*, purely instrumental interpretations, like Anouar Brahem's or Riadh Sghaïer's, contradict such classifications. Instrumentation, furthermore, is highly inconsistent, as Brahem and Sghaïer's respective adoption of *oud* and saxophone demonstrate. Contexts for performance are also variable. As exemplified in the previous section, the gross majority of factors that define the ethno-taxonomy of *ma'luf* are ideological, conceptual, and difficult to ground in musical sound alone.

Above all, it appears that intentionality, sincerity, and respect for the *harubi* (the cultural heritage, whether substantiated or imagined) are central to the identification of a piece of music as *ma'luf*. These elements, associated with process rather than product, play important roles in constructing a set of significant meanings that magnify the mythic "aura of authenticity" semantically imbued within the label *ma'luf* itself.

Put simply, for many Tunisian *fusion* musicians who invest deeply in their own work and the work of their peers, their investment in labeling the practice *ma'luf*—however the music might sound to an outside listener—connotes a highly-personalized and respectful connection to

*harubi*, to Tunisianness, to ancestors, and to the musician's audiences. The work of composition and creative innovation is taken seriously by musicians and comes with a number of responsibilities, as I illustrate later, in Chapter 3.

Tunisian intonational preferences, specifically Tunisian *maqamat*, vocal styles, familiar tunes from the Rashidiya's repertoire, along with 1930s through 1950s radio smash hits, are regularly considered suitable fodder for constructing new *ma'luf* repertoire. However, it is the presentation through explicit labeling as *ma'luf* that is the one true constant in defining the genre. Labels are often necessary, particularly in contexts where seemingly fabricated or exaggerated musical connections are commonplace.<sup>6</sup> A familiar tune strengthens genre identification, but any number of relatively superficial motives and indicators, such as evocative song titles, are enough to lead to classification of a musical practice as *ma'luf*.

Nonetheless, in spite of these labeling practices, my conversations with musicians suggest that many struggle to define their own work. The musicians with whom I spoke made it clear that they were composing music that is Tunisian, no matter what the sound, and that it is their right, and, for some at least, their responsibility, to shape and contribute to the current repertory of *ma'luf*. Several classified their compositions as both *ma'luf* and *fusion*. The difficulties in distinguishing between the two go beyond the challenges inherent in describing the nuances of music, deeper than the impossibility of verbally "explaining" music. The connection between the two, I argue, is significant. The two terms, *ma'luf* and *fusion*, if not synonymous in reference to some musical practices today, overlap a great deal in definition.

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<sup>6</sup> Consider, for example, Anouar Brahem's juxtaposition of song titles (like "Le Voyage de Sahar") that reference southern Tunisian desert regions, where *ma'luf* is not necessarily the dominant musical paradigm, alongside titles that appear to establish Brahem's music as rooted in Northern Tunisian traditions of *ma'luf* (like "Halfaouine," the name of the neighborhood in Tunis where Brahem lived as a child).



*Ma'luf*, as a category, has maintained its meaning and relevance throughout history by striking a careful balance between adapting to new societal needs, pressures, and tools, and retaining seminal elements perceived by many as “authentic.” *Fusion*, on the other hand, a relatively new term borrowed from European neighbors, is employed by Tunisians and international audiences today to position musical combinations, innovations, and re-contextualization as departures from cultural continuity, as explicit and intentional hybridities. In delineating between the two, *fusion* and *ma'luf*, it is important to recall that sonic change has characterized musical practices subsumed under the title of *ma'luf* for hundreds of years. What is most telling of Tunisian conceptions of identity, informing and informed by music, are current projects that recognize and advertise their work under both banners. This phenomenon, which I return to in Chapter 3, co-references explicit and intentionally hybrid musics as both aligned with and divorced from Tunisian cultural continuity, maintaining, all the while, the identity of the hybrid as Tunisian.

## ***CHAPTER 2. INTERPRETING TUNISIAN MUSICAL HYBRIDITY***

In the following chapter, I challenge, and ultimately accept, the efficacy of hybridity as a model for musical contact in Tunisia. Mindful of essentialization, postcolonial situations, and the perils of over-generalization, particular ways of theorizing hybrid musics—*fusion* in Tunisia—lend sophisticated tools for unpacking local understandings of contact and the role that explicitly combinative musics play in shaping identities. With the ambition of developing a useful definition or schema for approaching Tunisia *fusions* (1981-2009), I examine various theories of hybridity, actively posited and contested by social scientists today. Useful attributes of Wolfgang Holzinger's (2002) typology of hybrid musics and Pnina Werbner's (1997) "intentional" and "organic" hybridities as adapted from Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin's (1981) linguistic models, each contribute analytical elements to my resulting definition, which I present in the final section of the chapter.

### ***Problematizing Cultural "Hybridity"***

Stories of cultural continuity—and musical continuity—are familiar cross-culturally. "Authenticity" and cultural purity have been deconstructed time and again in the social sciences; today, ethnomusicologists describe musics and their practice as possessing evolutionary timelines of influence. It is widely accepted within the field that, as with any cultural artifact or ideology, interaction has caused the intermingling, inspiration, polarization, and hybridization between musical ideas since the very first lullabies, bone flutes, and clapping sticks.

What is relatively atypical however, I would argue, is how frequently similar concepts (of interaction, diffusionism, and hybridity) are employed emically (by Tunisians) to explain cultural phenomena. Across the board, Tunisians point decidedly to Tunisia's patchwork history—

civilization after civilization occupying, claiming, and changing the physical and cultural face of the land—as central to their own identities. Many recognize the Tunisian national values that they hold dear, liberalism, tolerance, and inclusion, as closely linked to a history of exchange, a history of hybridity. Relatively little has been written on music’s relation to this essential Tunisian ideal, an ideal surprisingly not in direct opposition with notions and agendas of national unity as disseminated by the government.

While conducting my research in Tunis during the spring of 2009, many of my American academic peers (each of whom was conducting an individualized month-long field-based research project) picked up on strikingly similar sentiments of locally understood histories of hybridity. It was not until the end of our research period, during the final presentations of our research to each other, that we saw how remarkably convergent our findings had been. Above all else, it was the significance of hybridity in Tunisian culture that connected our seemingly unrelated research topics and contexts: Tunisian urban architecture, the importance of soccer alliances, Tunisian Sufism, desert tourism, language code-switching, nutritional habits, and mainstream media advertisements, to name a few. It is no coincidence that, at the end of the day, the connections between our projects had led to discussions of cultural hybridity and fusion as not only a significant factor in informing Tunisian conceptions of self, but as representative *of* Tunisian national identity. For Tunisians living these histories, hybridities between internal and external, modern and ancient, mark Tunisians as a warm, open, welcoming people, unique in the Maghreb.

In investigating Tunisian national identity markers in relation to billboard and television advertisements, Sarah Hogan, a research colleague of mine, found that, the “most common topic when discussing their identity was the history of Tunisia” (Hogan:24). Hogan notes as well that

when asked the question, “what makes Tunisians, Tunisians,” respondents, more often than not, proceeded to rattle off a short history lesson on the many civilizations that have come and gone through Tunisia, citing Tunisia’s strategic location along the coast Mediterranean and at the very top of Africa as central to this history (Hogan:24). Many of my own interviews had started with a similar recounting of history. In Hogan’s research, Tunisians described themselves as diverse; highly adaptable to change; skilled at integrating new ideas; and, most importantly, tolerant, respectful, and accepting (Hogan:24-5). Tunisians are proud of their history, particularly the way so many different cultural groups have shaped, or so they say, the Tunisian character.

*Darija*, the Tunisian Arabic dialect, is another particularly diverse cultural entity, commonly raised by Tunisians as evidence not only of Tunisia’s cultural diversity, but of its hybridity as well. Besides its primary sources, Arabic and French, *darija* integrates many vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammatical features from Maltese, Spanish, and Italian (you can see Sicily on a clear day from the most northerly tip of Cape Bon, Tunisia).<sup>7</sup> In exploring the football fandom of the Tunisian teams, “Club Africain” and “Esperance,” another of my colleagues, Gabriel Manga, found that cheers and soccer anthems in Italian are essential for properly cheering-on Tunisian teams (Manga:15). Tunisians “Arabicize” French words, “Francacize” Arabic words, and create complex linguistic amalgamations beyond simple juxtapositions and borrowing of vocabulary.

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<sup>7</sup> See Map 1

## ***Hybridity: Post Eugenics, Postcolonial***

*"The price of metaphor is eternal vigilance"*

*A. Rosenblueth and N. Wiener*<sup>8</sup>

Names—for people, places, and ideas—are more than abstract tools for classification and description. Beyond connotation, words are laden with layered semantic histories and can be charged with personal and group political, religious, and moral fervor. Names and labels have often been wielded as weapons of conquest, manipulative defacers of identity, and tools with which dictators of imperialist undertakings have established and maintained political, cultural, and linguistic control of people. More often than not, this labeling, naming, and identifying is by the hand, or pen, of the scholar. As Taylor warns, “[n]aming reifies, and reifications all too often prove surprisingly enduring” (2007:160). With an awareness and sensitivity towards anthropology’s own troubled past, I approach the question of selecting meaningful and appropriate terms for my discussion of cultural and musical contact.

Taking the history of the terms “hybrid,” “hybridity,” and “hybridize” into account, two primary issues call for closer examination. I approach these concerns, in turn, in the ultimate pursuit of a working definition of hybridity for Tunisian musical phenomena, tailored particularly to intentional and explicit *fusion* musics of the latter twentieth century. The first matter is ethical in nature: should ethnomusicologists and other social scientists continue to use terms such as “hybrid” and “hybridity” in their scholarly discourses or does such usage perpetuate the historically racist and colonialist sentiment linked to these names? These terms do have some current usefulness and history within the field. Whereas some terms’ meanings morph

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<sup>8</sup> Arturo Rosenblueth and Norbert Wiener in Lewontin 2000:4

beyond recognition over time,<sup>9</sup> atrocities executed in the name of “hybridity” are alive and well in the collective memories of the descendants of those whom the Eugenics movement displaced, debased, and disenfranchised. In writing on phenomena that fall within the bounds of “hybridity,” it is the responsible ethnomusicologist’s duty to give due consideration to the history, efficacy, and ethics of her chosen theoretic framework and terminology. The second matter is strictly academic: how useful are terms borrowed from the natural sciences for describing musical and cultural processes, particularly when terms are simply adopted rather than adapted to new contexts? How best should we strike a balance between recycling and inventing terms? In addition, like Wolfgang Holzinger, whose concerns I address below, I challenge the use of biology-based and “naturalistic” language in ethnomusicology. I turn first, to a discussion of history.

Historically speaking, the term “hybrid” was first employed in a scholarly sense in the natural sciences, particularly in the field of biology. This is no surprise, as the first known use of “hybrid” referred to the offspring produced by a domestic pig and wild boar.<sup>10</sup> As commonly practiced in the fields of population biology and ecology, research on “hybridity” is essential in discussions of speciation and genetic relationships between closely related species in geographical ranges in a state of sympatry (overlapping in space). Currently, the term refers as well to intentional genetic crosses between varieties, sub-species, or species of plants or animals.

One need only mention Spencer, Malthus, or Galton, the masterminds behind social Darwinism and progenitors of the eugenics movement, to recall the risks of directly adopting biological concepts into social science discourse. “Hybridity,” and more particularly “the

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<sup>9</sup> “Degenerate orbitals” in chemistry, for instance, are those at equal energy levels. The term, used within the specific field, has no negative implications, no relation to a debasement of mental or physical constitution as its other definitions suggest (*Oxford English Dictionary* s.v. “Degenerate Orbitals”).

<sup>10</sup> The first usage of the term *hibrida* is credited to Pliny II, Roman naturalist and writer (b. AD 23-79). For further etymologies and early usage (*Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “Hybrid”).

hybrid,” were fascinations of the mid-nineteenth century (Young 1995). They are terms entrenched in the historical discourses of race and feature prominently in much eugenic writing.

Darwin (1859) set the stage himself when he used the term “hybrid” in his groundbreaking, *The Origin of Species*,<sup>11</sup> but others gladly adopted the term for their own “scientific” agendas. According to Robert Young, postcolonial theorist, cultural critic, and historian, Darwin’s work, in respect to people, “displaced some racial ideologies, but replaced them with others” (1995: 13).

As Robert Young put it, Darwin used hybridity to “describe the offspring of humans of different races,” implying that “the different races were different species” (1995:9). Successful hybridization, the production of viable offspring over several generations, was taken as evidence that all humans belonged to a single species and that “races,” as the Europeans saw them, were not species-level classifications (Young 1995:9). The disproving of distinct species did little, however, to dispel racist views in Europe, which were prevalent at the time. For many, the distinction simply replaced “species” with “type.” Most Europeans assumed that “these distinctions [would] continue as long as the races continue to exist,” that is, as long as humanity existed (Henry Hotze in Young 1995:14). Common consensus at the time was that the human hybrid would soon become extinct, that the racial types would maintain their differences and perhaps diverge further. The hybrid human was, to “civilized” folk, “a degradation of humanity,” a beast “rejected by nature” (Robert Knox in Young 1995:15). The dominant paradigm from the 1850s through the 1930s was the notion that although “amalgamation” was possible, “mixed breeds” died out quickly and reverted to their permanent “parent types.”

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<sup>11</sup>“The hybrids or mongrels from between all the breeds of the pigeon are perfectly fertile” (*Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “Hybrid”).

Hybridities were thought to vary between “proximate” and “distant” species or types: unions between “allied” races are fertile, and those between “distant” races tended to be infertile and degrade to a dominant parent type (Young 1995:18). The seamless transition from the use of hybridity in scientific-based racial theory to its use in anthropology and other social sciences today has left the concept more convoluted than ever. Although, as Young points out, “[hybridity] may be used in different ways, given different inflections and apparently discrete references...it always reiterates and reinforces the dynamics of the same conflictual economy whose tensions and divisions it re-enacts in its antithetical structure” (Young 1995:27). Any close reading of the texts of racial theory proves that they are contradictory; the theories undo themselves time and again (Young 1995:27).

Young writes conclusively, in a statement that speaks to the mutability, ambiguity, and historical significance of terminology, that “[t]here is no single, or correct, concept of hybridity [within scholarly discourse]: it changes as it repeats and repeats as it changes.” By invoking the same terminology, in contexts however distant, abstract, and seemingly disconnected, “we resonate and rehearse them covertly in the language and concepts we use” (Young 1995:27). “Hybridity” exemplifies the challenges of historical “semantic baggage” all too well. It is only through full disclosure and clear articulation of new definitions that we might discover ethically sound uses of these terms and concepts. Certainly, we are “trapped in our own history” as Foucault put it, but we are also inventing and re-inventing those histories and acting out new ones daily (Young 1995:28).

With the term’s dark history exposed, ought we to employ the term “hybridity” when discussing music inspired and rooted in cultural contact, particularly in a state like Tunisia where colonialist influences have already deeply altered the human landscape? In many ways, Tunisia



has been under the thumb of one foreign power or another since Queen Elyssa, “Queen Dido” by Virgil’s account, arrived from Tyre and cut the local Imazighen a raw deal on Bursa hill. However much Tunisians and Europeans romanticize the history of the region and count the number of empires that fought over Ifriga, Carthage, or the bay of Tunis<sup>12</sup> as a marker of the land’s innate promise, the truth of the matter is that imperialism, slavery, and brutalities are re-occurring patterns in Tunisian history.

The concept of hybridity is by no means a new one within cultural studies; “the earliest history of travel, exploration, and colonialism, has always entailed various kinds of serendipitous, mutual, strategic, and subversive cross-cultural borrowings and more transgressive masquerades” (Brah and Coombes 2000:10). Surely there are, and have always been, as many types of exchanges as there are definitions of hybridity. Notions of borrowing and mixing upon contact (Kartomi 1994) exist emically (locally) and independently in myriad cultural contexts, but the genesis of discourses of hybridity in postcolonial studies and anthropology can be firmly located in the eighteenth and nineteenth century compulsions of European scientists towards categorization, phylogeny, and the betterment of humanity (Brah and Coombes 2000:3). In this sense, “hybridity” is inextricably linked with “progress,” colonialism and imperialism. Can there be any hope of improving the way history is written and the ways subalterns (peoples living postcolonial realities) are represented if academics continue to use Western-derived racist and naturalistic terminology? Must hybridity imply colonizer and colonized? Many who challenge the validity of hybridity as a model, hold that use of the label threatens to essentialize, reify differences, and uphold hegemonic power structures. They argue that the concept of hybridity, as used in postcolonial studies, typically connotes an equal sharing between contributing parties, glossing over economic, social, and political inequalities, which are all too often present (Brah

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<sup>12</sup> The name has changed with its occupiers and occupants.

and Coombes 2000:1). In the current post-French Protectorate age in Tunisia, an early era of sovereign statehood, these questions are particularly pertinent and worth examining.

Starting in the 1990s, the term “hybrid” became fashionable in discussions of “globalization”, multiculturalism, cultural criticism, and postcolonial theory (Brah and Coombes 2000:1). Some of the first great thinkers on hybridity as a cultural process (the distinction here between cultural and racial is essential), particularly as manifest in linguistics, were Homi Bhabha and Michail Bakhtin. I address their work in the next section.

In his discussion of the taxonomical task of describing and categorizing certain types of musical hybrids, Wolfgang Holzinger, professor of ethnosociology at the University of Klagenfurt (Austria), warns against the use of scientific language in describing cultural and musical elements.<sup>13</sup> He sees the borrowing of scientific terms as a “dangerous and foolish temptation” and posits that “walking into the trap of naturalism” means “attempting a full rationalization of the language of music” (2002:293). Fundamentally, Holzinger feels that scientific terms can only over-simplify or over-specify the “otherness and splendor of music,” that “Music always defies full rational comprehension and eludes the grasp of science in many respects” (2002:293). Though categorization is a vital tool for making sense of a culturally complex world, one can easily see the risks that absolute and completely fixed classifications pose on mutable and interpretable cultural practice and material.

For instance, organology, the study and classification of musical instruments, lends useful language and definitions for the effective communication of ethnomusicological findings and cross-cultural comparisons. However, any academic who seeks to work from organological

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<sup>13</sup> It should be noted that Holzinger is a social scientist and makes clear in his paper, “Towards a Typology of Hybrid Forms,” that he is not a musicologist. In his own words, “I am neither a musicologist or a musician, but a social-scientist who loves music and who has become interested in what is going on in the popular music scene” (Holzinger 2002:257-258). He presented his model as a preliminary step towards filling what he saw as the “current analytical vacuum” with models of hybridity typology.

models and systems must define, as well, how these taxonomies and typologies are culturally constructed. Wary of presenting social science as wholly objective or absolute,<sup>14</sup> Holzinger stresses, and I would as well, the importance of presenting terms selectively borrowed from the natural sciences as purely metaphorical. This way, “negligent acceptance of ... false notions about fusion in music” can be avoided (Holzinger 2002:263). By employing metaphor, we can explicitly recognize the differences between current and historical meanings of hybridity and “fusion” (a related term that we examine and employ in subsequent chapters) while acknowledging their interrelated and semantically connected etymological ancestors. Art historian, Ernst Gombrich, spoke wisely when he warned, “As long as [we] do not forget that [artistic] classifications, like any particular language, are [our] creations, i.e. changeable and adaptive, they will be good servants in our daily work” (Holzinger 2002:294).

Certainly, there are instances in which terms or processes borrowed from the natural sciences do not accurately describe musical or other socio-cultural phenomena. But when musical processes clearly resemble, at least metaphorically so, phenomena already described in another field, inventing new terms can mean reinventing the wheel, so to speak. Clarity in definitions and re-definition, I feel, must be a compromise between recycling and invention. The careless adoption of scientific terminology without adaptation to cultural contexts can result in dangerous consequences for ethnomusicology. Such practices feed fallacies that single, fixed, objective, and accurate ways of seeing the world actually exist and that etic (outsider) taxonomy holds the only key to understanding “reality.”

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<sup>14</sup> That is not to say that there are no arbitrary or constructed factors in defining taxonomies and typologies in the natural sciences. The specific markers for speciation are extremely complex and are hotly contested within biology. Taxonomic relationships between species, genera, families, orders, etc. are constantly being debated and re-constructed with the advent of novel tools, new data and innovative ways of interpreting findings.

Critics' concerns over the use of "hybridity" in social science discourse are well founded and important in approaching conclusions about the practical efficacy and ethical viability of the term "hybridity" in current ethnomusicological theory. The term is undeniably laden with problematic imperialist histories and, however nuanced or metaphorically used in anthropology, the concept was co-opted from the natural sciences and retains naturalistic connotations.

I endeavor, in the remaining sections and chapters to follow, to locate ways in which elements of the concept and term are both useful and morally sound in relation to specific Tunisian musical case studies. I aim to develop definitions of hybridity and fusion that accurately represent existing phenomena in Tunisia and take into account emic (insider) understandings. "Hybridity," presented as the inevitable result of cultural contact or "globalization," grossly belittles the agency of local innovation and choice. Descriptions and analyses of historical exchange and transformation are aided by the term, however, in contexts that grant agency and disclose observed inequalities as experienced by all parties.

I have acknowledged here, openly and honestly, the troubled history behind the term and its discourses in the sincere hope that my research, and the research of future anthropologists and ethnomusicologists, will reflect a greater awareness towards the use of loaded terms like "folk," "traditional," "primitive," and "race." Academics have a responsibility to actively work to develop representations and dialogues that respect the people and communities that are the subject of our studies. As post-postmodernists we know that Foucault is correct; "we are trapped in our own history" (in Young 1995:28). As anthropologists, however, we are also not unaware, of linguistic relativity, as defined by Boasian linguists Edward Sapir and his student, Benjamin Warf; not only do culturally constructed categories and concepts influence the living social

medium of language, but our language choices have the power to create and support new ideas and social change (Whorf 1956).

### ***Working definitions***

*“[Hybridity] is biological, yet resists definition. It is precisely its resistance that forces us to look closely. Under a microscope, the concept transforms before our very eyes.”*

*D. Kapchan and P. Strong<sup>15</sup>*

Strategies for approaching cultural contact are ever theorized within scholarly fields like anthropology. Hybridity—as one enigmatic trope—poses more than a single “elusive paradox;” it is “celebrated as powerfully interruptive and yet theorized as commonplace and pervasive” (Werbner 1997:1) It is presented frequently in social science as powerfully magical, radical, liminal, and transgressive. Following on the heels of anthropological paradigmatic structuralists who emphasized the significance of social binaries, boundaries, and liminality,<sup>16</sup> scholars involved in the deconstruction of these barriers, through theorizations of the hybrid, were engaged in a bold endeavor. Yet all too often, the term undoes itself; if a true hybrid seamlessly blends once distinct elements, how are we ever to know that the resulting entity is hybrid? Equally paradoxical, by definition, is the consequent dilemma; if everything is hybrid, then nothing is hybrid. Surely, the term and concept cause as much confusion as they provide investigative aid. Further scholarly attention is pressing as “hybridity” continues to accrue diverse definitions and take on increasing colloquial usage in the media.

While no social scientist would disagree that “because of its ambiguity, the term hybridity is bothersome” (Kapchan and Strong 1999:240), there are a number of approaches to

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<sup>15</sup> (1999:240)

<sup>16</sup> Most influential were Durkheim, Mauss, Weber, Herskovits, Levi-Strauss and Bascom (Kapchan and Strong 1999:244).

addressing the issue. Some theorists shy away from the term, wary of connotations and bogged down by diverse and seemingly contradictory definitions, as scholars constantly create new terms to describe identical or similar phenomena. Others reject hybridity entirely, chasing shadows of what they deem cultural “purities” and investing their energy in designing different models, many of which do not necessarily contradict the hybridity theories they so quickly dismiss. Still others are hesitant to embrace the paradigm as they see notions of “hybridity” as manifestations of multiculturalists’ attempts to counter centuries of essentialization and fascination with the “exotic” and the “primitive.” Those in opposition to notions of hybridity see such theories as just another postcolonial self-conscious effort to counter deeply-rooted essentializations, or “de-other” the world, an agenda that seeks to project a sentiment of sameness, whether present or imagined, in all situations of cultural contact.

In *Beyond Exoticism*, ethnomusicologist Timothy Taylor recognizes the relevance of the current debate on hybridity, noting that though “few terms are bandied about more in discussions of contemporary musics than this one, a label believed to capture the mixtures of music prevalent in this era of globalization and transnationalism.” The usefulness of the term suffers, despite its prevalence, or perhaps because of it, as it “has so many uses in and out of music that it has come to represent a variety of other cultural forms, discourses, political strategies, and identity conceptions” which are “...frequently intertwined in complex ways that can complicate investigations into a particular facet of the term, and the musics and peoples that it is supposed to characterize” (Taylor 2007:140).

Indeed, no single model can fully and effectively describe, holistically, any given music or culturally, historically, and geographically specific locale. A theory of hybridity that is contextualized and thoroughly defined, however, can help us to grasp how cultural practices

described as *fusion* today, and throughout the first fifty years of Tunisia's independence, actively articulate and inform Tunisian national, individual, and regional identities. In the analyses that follow, I show how concepts of "hybridity" can illuminate our understanding of Tunisian musical history, and illustrate, more clearly, the nature of musical relationships between Tunisia, and Europe/United States.

It is critical to note that Tunisians have their own constructions of musical hybridity, the most developed of which appear to belong to the community of diverse musicians that create, develop, and promote musics they call *fusion* and *ma'luf*. Coming to understand Tunisian ideas about their own musics is part and parcel of the development of my own etic hypotheses; in many cases, their voices, from interviews and informal conversations, inform my definitions directly.

Not only are criteria and characteristics of hybridity locally constructed and applied, but they are open to sonic interpretation as well. The laws of observer relativity remind us that even though a listener may be consciously trying to "listen with Tunisian ears," two listeners can hear very different elements in a single piece of music. My own experiences in Tunisia suggest that Tunisians raised with myths of Andalusian musical origins can sometimes isolate Andalusian or "Tunisian" musical elements from a *fusion* texture that outsiders, like myself, were unable to recognize. What is hybrid to a Tunisian may not, analytically speaking, "qualify" as such to an outsider who does not possess the same contextually developed tools to make the same judgment. Boundaries between genres are broken down by these relativities; whereas a Tunisian listener might identify Anouar Brahem, *oud* player born and raised in the city of Tunis, as producing "Tunisian music" or "*fusion* music," most European markets brand the music as

“Jazz” or “World music.” These definitions are clearly context-relative, another case for hybridity as a constructive tool for investigating the politics of identity.

### ***Useful Definitions and their Relation to Tunisian Music***

Homi K. Bhabha, postcolonial literary critic of the late twentieth century, is one of the most provocative theorists to have written on hybridity to date. His work, mainly in linguistics, focuses on cultural hybridity in relation to postcolonial power dynamics, resistance, choice, and agency. Tunisia, independent since 1956, was never a French colony like its neighbor to the West, Algeria, but the country did spend nearly eighty years as a French Protectorate. The state’s colonial past has left the land and its people in situations not at all dissimilar to postcolonial realities. Bhabha’s findings prove useful for approaching the Tunisian case; some appear to apply directly.

Bhabha’s description of the cultural or linguistic “hybrid” extends well beyond “the composite” or the mixture of heterogeneous elements. His definition, in relation to negotiations of national and individual identity in postcolonial contexts, describes a “third space,” a space occupied by something that is “neither one nor the other but something else besides, in-between, the existence of which enables other positions to emerge” (Bhabha in Taylor 2007:145).

Bhabha’s definition allows for a great deal of innovation, freedom, and creativity.

Acknowledgement of the “third space” leads decidedly to a dismissal of hybridity’s connotations of impurity and “in-authenticity,” implications that frequently underscore many other definitions and discourses of hybridity, especially in regard to intercultural fusions. The “third space” model for postcolonial cultural contact areas is a legitimizing force; in the “third space,” there is no need for the hybrid to answer to “purity.” Those who exist or create art within this “third space”



locate themselves and their work as liminal and refuse to identify exclusively with any one pre-conceived genre or category.

The question begging to be asked, however, is what people and musicians might exist in this “third space,” particularly in the case of post-Protectorate Tunisia? How have these people identified themselves and their artistic endeavors historically, and how do they relate to the greater Tunisian population today?

Among Tunisians, with their emic sense of historical layering and inclusionary system for the integration of diverse identities, “hybridity,” as locally understood, is not, by any means, a novel paradigm in Tunisian artistic or cultural ideology. I would posit that it is Tunisia *itself* that is a “third space.” Tunisia is neither strictly Western nor Eastern (whatever these binary constructs might imply), neither solely Arab nor Mediterranean, but stands as a constellation of these identities, actively highlighted and projected by particular sectors of society, classes, age groups, immigrant communities, regions of the country, and by Tunisian expatriates in Europe. Tunisians’ answer to a world that demands boundaries and demarcations is simply that Tunisianness *is* adaptation, integration, tolerance, and hybridity. *Fusion* musics today, those that combine traditionally Tunisian tunes, scales, rhythms, and tonalities with European and American counterparts, are by no means a new phenomenon in Tunisia. Tunisia’s general acceptance of the strength and viability of this “third space,” alongside the promotion of a diverse and hybrid national identity by the government and other institutions, has left the door wide open for artists; many have seized opportunities for innovation and have individualistically or individually, creatively, and freely voiced their own ways of being Tunisian.

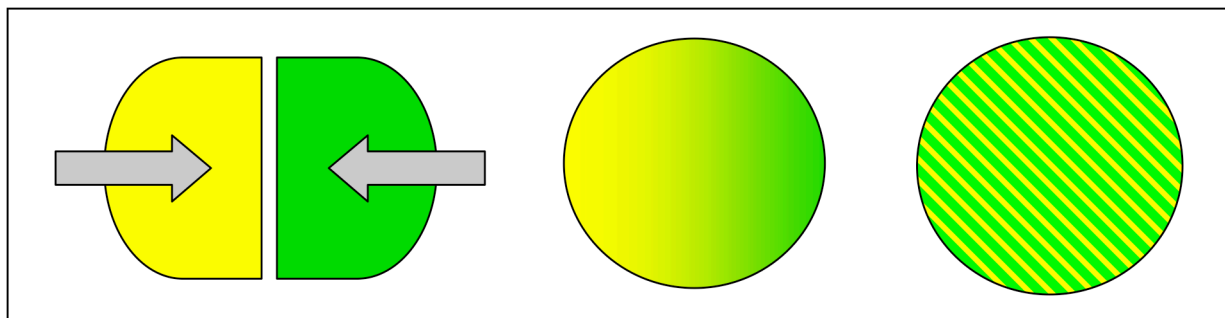
A Tunisian sense of cultural hybridity—most recently the blending of French and Arab ideals about family, gender roles at home and in the work place, the role of religion in daily life,

and in myriad other realms—recognizes certain elements of habits, thoughts, and actions as hybrid and others simply as Tunisian. This pattern of adoption, integration, and indigenization is familiar to anthropology, though each case is unique and cannot be reduced, necessarily, to predictable patterns. These cycles occur everywhere, however they are locally perceived and understood. The challenge of pinpointing the very moment at which particular cultural elements meet and fuse or defining whether or not a given cultural artifact—physical, performative, or ideological—is “hybrid” or not is generally a futile pursuit. Such concerns over precision are misguided in that they fail to recognize the relativity and subjectivity that lies in the perceptions of these cycles of indigenization and cultural hybridization. The situation differs, however, when musicians explicitly present their work as *fusion* projects and identify their music as the intentional melding of two utterances into a single expression, a process that they see as an intrinsically Tunisian approach.

In his system for describing musical hybridity, Wolfgang Holzinger classifies hybrid musics into one of five categories; the nuances of these categories, in definition and title, are subtle, but they do lend themselves as useful tools for locating and describing Tunisian processes of musical hybridization. These five types, described in an article exclusively devoted to the taxonomy of hybrid musics, are: “combination,” “coalesced,” “mélange,” “unification,” and “emergence” (Holzinger 2002:273). The first four types are of particular interest to my analyses as they relate directly to the Tunisian *fusion* case studies addressed in Chapter 3. The fifth type, “emergence,” is not applicable for these case studies.

Holzinger’s first hybrid type, the “combination,” is an intentional juxtaposition. In “combinations,” the two or more different components are presented as a single entity, but each element retains its own integrity. “Coalesced” music, on the contrary, express a “covert

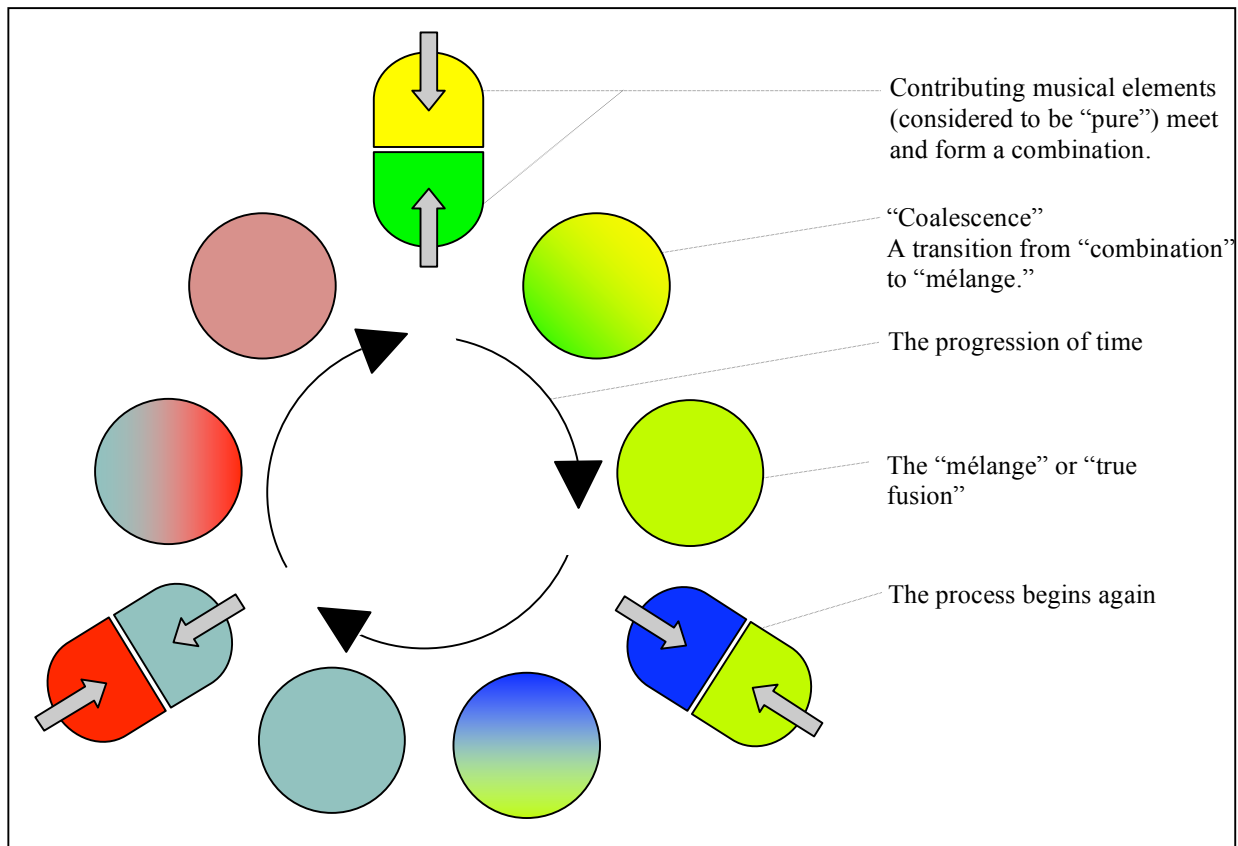
hybridity,” a “true fusion” in which these constituent components combine completely to create something that cannot be identified as solely the first nor the second element, but yet retains enough of the original distinctions that listeners “*can* detect a hybrid structure” (Holzinger 2002:273, my emphasis). The third category, “*mélange*,” shares much in common with the coalesced hybrid, but differs in that “experts cannot come to a definite agreement concerning which style or genre the ‘blended’ pieces primary belong to” (Holzinger 2002:273). These first three types are modeled below in Figure 2



**Figure 2** Holzinger’s “combination,” “coalesced,” and “*mélange*” models for Hybrid musics, from left to right (2002: 255-296).

The fourth method of hybrid production, “unification,” is perhaps the most useful type in that it acknowledges “representation of music in the collective mind” and the mutable conceptions of a given music or pieces (Holzinger 2002:272). “Unification” stands for both a process and product. The hybrid produced through unification is the only type that Holzinger explicitly situates in specific societal contexts and the only model in which he links musical hybridity to space and time. Unification tells the story of the relation between the “pure” and the “hybrid” and is “based on the view that over generations human consciousness obliterates knowledge about the hybrid origins of music created in the past, so that contrary to the facts, it appears to us to be a non-hybrid, or stylistically ‘pure’” (Holzinger 2002:272). The concept of unification, well known in anthropology, is useful for representing cultural contacts, borrowing,

and the location of meaningful labels. The diagram below demonstrates how the process of unification “normalizes” processes of hybridization by positioning *all* cultural entities as located within cycles of integration, an assertion that most anthropologists and ethnomusicologists would wholeheartedly approve.



**Figure 3** Holzinger’s “unification” model for Hybrid musics (2002: 255-296).

In generalizing about the paths musical hybridization follow in Tunisia in the hands of musicians, the Holzinger model of “unification,” which draws upon his earlier models of “coalescence” and “mélange,” exemplifies the local imaginings of Tunisian musical history, at least in regard to *ma’luf*. The sense of temporality that unification lends to our theory of hybridity is essential. Although, the Rashidiya’s projection of *ma’luf* is touted by the majority of

Tunisians as the “purest” national music today, supposedly unchanged since Andalusian refugees arrived on African shores, the music itself has changed significantly over the centuries.

Relatively recent changes, occurring in the twentieth century within the Rashidiya’s *ma’luf*, reflect popular Egyptian and European orchestration in the inclusion of large string sections, bongo drums, and select instruments of the Mashriq, or Eastern part of the Arab world. The Rashidiya’s process of standardizing and nationalizing the *ma’luf* aided significantly in the popular construction of the Rashidiya’s brand of *ma’luf* as “pure.”

Nationalist agendas led directly to the unification of *ma’luf* in two ways. The first is seen in the integration of new instruments into the standard *ma’luf* ensemble and the expansion of the orchestra, as exemplified by the Rashidiya. The second process collapsed what were once diverse and localized Tunisian musical expressions of the cultural heritage into a single utterance through the sequential processes of combination, coalescence, *mélange*, and finally, unification. I posit that it was through simultaneous threads of hybridizations that Tunisian *ma’luf* became well known as an integral “Tunisian music.”

Some musicians who identify their music as *ma’luf* or as *fusion* (or sometimes as both) refute the construction of Rashidiya’s musical purity. Many of the musicians with whom I spoke recognize the relativity and ambiguity of the label and note the lack of ostensible elements to identify any given music as more pure than another. Tunisians’ general ideological acceptance of diversity and dismissal of cultural boundedness suggest the artificiality of the Rashidiya’s monopoly on “Tunisianness.” I suspect that without the nationalist era and President Bourguiba’s push for frequent radio broadcasts of the Rashidiya ensemble just forty or fifty years ago, much of the music labeled as *fusion* in Tunisia today would not, necessarily, be seen as combinations of once “pure” elements. Explicitly and intentionally hybrid projects that identify musical

products as solely *ma'luf* stand as evidence that beyond national constructs of the Bourguiba era of independence, Tunisian musical history is characterized by integration, inclusion, coalescence, and *mélange*. This nationalist era unification project in Tunisia—processes of hybridization that standardized heterogeneous elements into a single “pure” *ma'luf* at the Rashidiya—was a politicized, government-sponsored endeavor that, I believe, in many ways, opposed deeply-rooted musical understandings of Tunisianness.

### ***Intentional and Organic Hybridity***

Many Tunisian musicians have internalized the notion that whatever musics they create through mixing must be *fusion*. Some see their work as combining seemingly “pure” elements while others locate their work, whether they call it *fusion*, *ma'luf*, or both, along a continuation of historical hybridity. The question of distinguishing between a history characterized by implicit hybridity and the creation or adoption of new words to describe more active expressions of multiple utterances—such as *fusion*—is a topic of great interest in contemporary discourses of hybridity. Among those who have taken up the question are Pnina Werbner in “The Dialectics of Cultural Hybridity” (1997) and Marwan M. Kraidy in “Hybridity or the Cultural Logic of Globalization” (2005). Each offer definitions of two modes of hybridity—“organic” and “intentional”—labels coined by Bakhtin who first referred to them in linguistic contexts in 1981 (Werbner 1997:4).

Werbner identifies these two types, “organic” and “intentional,” as tools to aid her distinctly anti-racist, activist agenda. She defends the special transgressive power of the “intentional hybrid” by differentiating it from its “routine,” quotidian counterpart, the “organic” hybrid. She sees “intentional cultural hybrids” as liminal symbolic entities, “endowed with

unique powers, good or evil...hedged with elaborate rituals, and carefully guarded and separate from mundane reality” (Werbner 1997:1). This definition contrasts sharply with the ubiquitous presence of other forms of hybridity, so Werbner turns to Bakhtin’s terminology. Organic hybrids are, according to both Bakhtin and Werbner, “unconscious hybridity... a feature of the historical evolution of all languages.” Werbner extends the concept further to effectively deconstruct cultural boundedness and the existence of distinct “cultures.” Organic hybridization, as she asserts, “does not disrupt the sense of order and continuity: new images, words, objects, are integrated into language or culture unconsciously.” Conversely, the intentional hybrid, also called the “aesthetic hybrid,” is designed and built to “shock, change, challenge, revitalize or disrupt through deliberate intended fusions of unlike social languages and images.” These are artistic inventions that are special; they are capable of “fusing the unfusable” (Werbner 1997:5).

Anti-racist elements were virtually absent in the Tunisian strategies and musics I studied, and the degree to which intentional hybrids fight for revolutionary goals in Tunisia is extremely diminished. However, some of the components in Werbner’s definitions are manifest in the Tunisian music I encountered. While most artists at the Rashidiya, as well as some independent musicians, are compelled to adhere to practices focused on preservation, many musicians who identify as *fusion* artists see their music as symbolically powerful, as a means of bringing about social change or transmitting certain messages. These messages, however, at least in the case of those musicians with whom I spoke, are unlike those Werbner and Bakhtin describe. Where Werbner’s intentional hybrids actively resist authority by fighting hegemonic structures and challenging the nation-state, Tunisian hybrid projects, like those of Anouar Brahem; Riadh Fehri and his current band, Kantara; Riadh Sghaïer; and Dhafer Youssef challenge, if anything, standardization and codification. As individuals, they claim creative authority over “Tunisian”

forms, tunes, and tonalities (as demonstrated by Brahem's bold incorporation of European-style diatonic keyboard instruments into his music) and, collectively, they highlight Tunisia's "organic" hybrid musical and extra-musical histories. By way of diverse and individualistic interpretations of the *ma'luf*, a music called "*la base*" (the "foundation"), *fusion* musicians articulate what it means to be Tunisian today, in a world where theories of hybridity have only recently become widespread topics in transnational political and cultural economies. *Fusion* musicians imagine and perform what *ma'luf*, now a nationally recognized iconic music, *really* stands for: continuity and connectedness to legends, to *harubi* (roots). In Tunisia, however strongly some purists still cling to auras of authenticity, *fusions* are not transgressive; they are increasingly being recognized as one of the most representative vehicles for performing and informing Tunisianness.

While Tunisian intentional musical hybrids are not as outlandish, disruptive, or as rare as Werbner's definitions would suggest, *fusion* musicians are far more empowered to create and invent new combinations, coalescences, and *mélanges* than their strictly preservation-minded counterparts. Although *ma'luf* was, and has always been, an inclusive music, many Tunisians, particularly those of older generations, privilege the old over the new. These cultural conservatives struggling to maintain and guard the *ma'luf* from changes seen as polluting and dangerous.

One *could* see the relation between supporters of *fusion* (whether or not these audiences have found the particular hybrid project that appeals aesthetically to them) and those who attempt to curb reinterpretation by reinforcing the standardized canon, as a power struggle. Within a framework of binary oppositions, intentional hybridizers are part of a resistance movement, though they are not necessarily composing music counter to "tradition." Realistically



speaking, however, it is cultural purists, those who argue against the existence of hybridity altogether, who are resisting a deeply-rooted tradition of integration and cultural permeability in Tunisian musical soundscapes.

Where Werbner argues that “[r]ather than being open and subject to fusion, identities seem to resist hybridization” (1997:3), the Tunisian case offers evidence to challenge these claims. Articulations of Tunisian identity as hybrid to the core—already neither this nor that, existing in Bhabha’s “third space”—set the stage for further fusions of cultural identities. Tunisian audiences anticipate, and often embrace, projects that intentionally demonstrate hybridities as representative of Tunisian musical history, of Tunisian national identities.

#### ***A Working Definition of “Hybridity” for Tunisian fusion Musics (1980 – 2009)***

Musical hybridity in Tunisia, from an etic ethnographic perspective, occurs both organically and intentionally. It is extremely difficult to ground these definitions in “empirical” sonic analyses; accurate findings require knowledge of specific composers’ and musicians’ conscious intentions and ambitions. By their nature, the concepts of organic and intentional hybridity are nebulous categories and are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Even with clear verbal verification of intent, these two types do not exist in binary opposition, but lie along a continuum and continuously inform each other. The distinction between these two types, in the context of this analysis and on the ground in Tunisia, semantically empowers musicians who explicitly and consciously create hybrid musics with individual and group agency.

The Tunisian projects that I present as case studies in the following chapters are each examples of *fusion* (in their own right), where *fusion* functions as a descriptor rather than a specific genre. *Fusion* musics do not appear, at least to the outsider, to share any ostensibly

distinctive unifying musical features. For example, Anouar Brahem and Kantara, primary topics in Chapter 3 combine *ma'luf* music with jazz and Appalachian music, respectively. Instead, they are connected by similar and overt ambitions and by a common interest in novel integrations of seemingly disparate musical forms. Projects created through active, conscious, and intentional integration of heterogeneous musical elements from multiple locales are defined, henceforth, as *intentional hybrids*. Intentional hybrids in Tunisia seek to highlight, and often succeed, in highlighting phenomena of organic musical hybridity that have been occurring in Tunisia for millennia. These kinds of projects directly reflect histories of cultural layering, combination, and recombination. “Organic hybridity” has, through processes of intentional “unification,” standardization, and codification, normalized localized forms of Tunisian *ma'luf* into a single “pure” music, one iconic of the nation.

From an analytical perspective that combines the two theories together (Holzinger’s combination, coalescence, *mélange*, and unification along with Werbner’s intentional and organic hybridities), the majority of current Tunisian intentional musical hybrids are, by Holzinger’s definition, intentional “combinations.” These types of juxtapositions, though not “true fusions,” thrive on the very nature by exploiting their distinguishable components. Unlike other hybrid forms, musical combination projects, like the Arab-Appalachian band, Kantara (discussed further in Chapter 3), have the ability to send clear messages, to voice specific agendas through the simultaneous expression of two or more *distinct* utterances.

In general though, for Tunisians, the worth of a hybrid musical expression lies in the ability of an extremely talented musician to seamlessly blend distinct styles into a single “third space” that is clearly neither one nor the other of the constituent element or where the musics are mixed so expertly that the “original” components cannot be clearly identified. These *fusions*—

“coalescences” or “mélanges” by Holzinger’s (2002) definition—are relatively scarcer in Tunis, but tend to be more highly respected by listeners than their strictly combinative counterparts. Though the terms “combination,” “coalescence” and “mélange” are cloaked with the single term *fusion* in Tunisia, a distinction between the two approaches does exist, however implicitly. In Tunisia, successful “coalescences” or “true fusion” are indicative of remarkably talented musicians. These musicians, epitomized by the legendary *oud* player Anouar Brahem, are held up by Tunisians from a diversity of backgrounds, classes, and ages, as fine examples of Tunisian musicianship. These artists also are viewed as musical ambassadors worthy of representing Tunisian music within the country, to Tunisians abroad, and to the world.

Although an “anxiety of authenticity” dominates the listening preferences of some Tunisians, manifest in harsh dismissal of *fusion* musics as folly, as ridiculous and superficial, for many others, intentional hybrids are seen as profoundly meaningful personal and community investments. *Fusion* musicians consciously work within a musical “third space” as a statement of their creative ingenuity, talent, virtuosity, individual agency, and responsibility for connecting with musical continuity and with their *harubi* (cultural heritage). The fusions, as I explore in the following chapter, are essential contributors to today’s Tunisian musical discourses and soundscapes.

**CHAPTER 3.**  
***TUNISIAN FUSION MUSICIANS – PROJECTS, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND GOALS***

The morning I met Hatem Bourial dawned grey and rainy. We'd planned to meet downtown in the European quarter of Tunis. Glancing at my watch, I wondered if the bellhop standing to my left at the entrance of "Hotel Africa," our designated meeting place, thought it strange that a young American woman had been standing under the hotel's awning for twenty minutes. Hatem finally pulled up on his bike wearing his winter jacket, scarf, and beanie, his glasses spattered with rain. He apologized for being late as a formality; nearly every Tunisian arrives "late" by American standards and I had expected to wait. Slowly, we made our way back to his "office," ducking under shop awnings and trying to dodge the rain that sloshed up from the washed-out streets.

Hatem is a playwright by trade, though he has dabbled in a number of different artistic endeavors and creative collaborations. His "office," as I came to see, consisted of a single black table and chair in the back of a small theater. The table and chair were spattered with years' worth of colorful theatrical-set paint, a wonderfully bohemian pair. We came to meet here several times at his "office" during our subsequent meetings; I always looked forward to discussing the progress of my research in such a peaceful place imbued with artistic genius. Later, I also interviewed a number of his colleagues and friends from that same small table, audio recorder and notebook in hand.

Today, though, we had arranged to meet to begin planning my research project. Hatem disappeared into the corridor and returned with another chair so we could get down to business. His English was excellent and I was thrilled to be able to have an in-depth conversation with a Tunisian without the language barriers that had hindered so many of my relationships during my stay. I told him I was interested in Anouar Brahem's music in particular, as well as Dhafer

Youssef, a Tunisian *oud* player and expatriate living in Europe. Just days before, I'd had a lengthy conversation about Brahem with a Tunisian friend over mint tea at a café overlooking the sea; he'd never spoken so passionately about Tunisian music before. I asked Hatem if there was anyone he knew who could provide me with an overview of the music history that lead up to *fusion* or if there were any books or articles that I might seek out. Again, he stepped out for another moment and returned this time with a few sheets of computer printouts, which he turned over for a clean, blank surface. Complete with dates, names of specific projects and albums, and, in many cases, phone numbers, Hatem proceeded to chart out, from memory, a timeline of the musicians he saw as the most influential contributors to the history of Tunisian *fusion*. His account was the most comprehensive I ever came by in Tunisia during my four-month stay, and went well beyond anything I have managed to gather from published sources since.

### ***Approaching a History of Fusion Musics in Tunis***

Outlining the history of Tunisian *fusion* projects since the early 1980s is a daunting task for a number of reasons. Articulating a history of the *fusion* music movement and its primary contributors and patrons in Tunis is problematized by the nebulous and fluid nature of the movement. As I have discussed previously, nuanced distinctions between *ma'luf* and *fusion* are typically semantic and context-based rather than grounded in particular stylistic markers or performative changes. A great diversity of intentionally and explicitly hybrid musics have been, and continue to be created under the auspices of *fusion*. The single most significant marker of *fusion* music is an identification or labeling of the music as such and explicit intent to create patent hybrids.

In my selection of case studies, I sought out not only “big names,” but also musicians (and their collaborators) who were, more importantly, recognized by Tunisians as exceptionally talented, creative, and innovative. Like so many of its Arab neighbors, Tunisia has a significant market for “World Music,” “Arab Pop,” or perhaps, “World Pop,” some of these musics are produced locally, but the majority are imported from Lebanon. Their general *modus operandi* is the straightforward insertion of superficial indicators of local “otherness,” such as the loose use of *maqam* and iconic instrumentation, into recognizably western idioms, patterns, and musical formulas. Most notably, many people do not consider them Tunisian, but rather label them as bland, generic, and formulaic “pop” music for discothèques and bowling alleys (two favorite pastimes of young Tunisians).

In approaching my interviews with Tunisians, I clarified that my primary research interest was in a particular cluster of *fusions* that grounded themselves firmly in the Tunisian *ma'luf* tradition and whose performers were recognized by the general Tunisian population as well-trained, talented, and reputable performing concert musicians. Other superficially “popular” musics are, undeniably, close cousins to these intentional hybrids on which I focused my interest, but they belong to a separate grouping (as they are typically classified in Tunisia) and warrant study in and of themselves. At times, when I was hard-pressed by my interviewees to describe what types of *fusion* I was asking about, I referenced directly the music of classically- trained professional musicians, like Anouar Brahem, whom I discuss in greater detail in the next section.

Little scholarship currently exists on the subject of *fusion*'s musical history in Tunisia; my own research in Tunis in 2009 was limited significantly by both time frame and linguistic challenges. In comparison to relatively recent musical styles, like Algerian *rai*, phenomenally popular during the 1980s in Algeria and Europe, Tunisian *fusion* is grossly understudied.

Although Tunisian musical timelines and hybrid projects are certainly relatable to their Algerian counterparts, locally-specific conditions inform the art of *fusion* in Tunisia and have factored heavily into the development of a particular set of meanings now articulated by and located in new *fusion* musics.

No overview of *fusion*'s inception and history in Tunis would be complete without recognition of shifts in intentionality and labeling, in addition to performance and composition itself. In many ways, this labeling is critical. Central to understanding each of these shifts is an awareness of the accelerating international patterns of musical exchange and consumerism, as manifest in the development of markets for genres like "world music." The growth and development of new international markets has promoted both homogenization and diversification as regards musical forms, styles, events, and meanings. In Tunisia, postcolonial artistic relations with France (and Europe as a whole) are characterized by a series of "feedback loops" that inform Tunisian national identities (and French ones as well) by a process of exportation, return, re-examination, and re-articulation of musical Tunisianness (addressed further in Chapter 4). These loops, which are particularly powerful forces in shaping musical sounds, meanings, and identities, inextricably link Tunisia with France and Tunis with Paris. Arab classical-based music in Tunisia has been hybridizing "organically" with Andalusian, Sufi, Berber, and European musics for centuries; what differentiates *fusion* as a new approach to articulating Tunisianness (starting in the 1970s and blossoming through the 1980s and 90s) is the development of explicitly and intentionally hybrid musical combinations and coalescences.

The term "*fusion*," French in origin, was taken up by Tunisians and applied as a new label as early as the 1981. It is no surprise that the French term, similarly used in English, should have come into popular use in Tunisia. Nearly every Tunisian who has completed secondary

school speaks French with some degree of fluency, and French is currently the primary language for discourse focused on medicine, science, academia, and any topic, like *fusion*, that relates directly to Europe in some way or another. It is interesting to note, in comparison, that many musicians and music enthusiasts continue to discuss “new *ma'luf*” and other hybrid projects in the Arabic language, choosing to index their music as also congruent with Arab and Tunisian classical music by way of linguistic markers. The presentation of *fusion* or *ma'luf* as both deeply rooted in *harubi* (cultural heritage) and resolutely positioned in today’s postcolonial and francophone Tunisia speaks to a “third space” where hybridity is not only the linguistic norm, but a musical and cultural model as well.

As Davis sees it, *ma'luf* has always been open to new musical forms and innovations. Her 2003 article, “‘New songs, Old tunes:’ Tunisian Media Stars Reinterpret the *Ma'luf*,” focuses on the way radio stars like Lotfi Bouchnak and Sonia Mbarek re-created the *ma'luf* and shaped Tunisian music (2003b). Although she does not address Anouar Brahem or Kantara (two musical approaches I address presently), Davis elucidates many of the socio-political conditions under which intentionally hybrid projects came to the fore. In addition, she comments on the roles that particular “intermediary” actors played in connecting the Rashidiya’s standardized *ma'luf* of the 1950s and 60s to today’s *fusion* and new *ma'luf* expressions.

Davis points in particular to Lotfi Bouchnak, a Tunisian *oud* player known throughout the Arab world for his “interpretation of an eclectic range of Tunisian and Egyptian styles,” as a primary actor in re-shaping the musical makeup and performative elements of the *ma'luf* (2003b:123). Bouchnak, beloved by Tunisians, became popular for his shortened or “abbreviated *nubat* (musical suites)” and his distinct soloistic and virtuosic style. In true star spirit, Bouchnak’s success thrived on the promotion of the particular nuances of his own voice and on



the quality of his chosen instrumental accompanists. Davis describes Bouchnak's *ma'luf* as a distinct shift away from the "impersonal [and] perfectly coordinated, choral renderings of the radio ensemble" and as "an entirely different approach" (Davis 2003b:123). Bouchnak's mid-1990s popularity rode on the heels of Tunisia's "cassette culture" boom; it was his renditions of age-old love songs that blasted from the tiny cassette vendors' shops all along Habib Bourguiba Avenue in downtown Tunis. Bouchnak garnered audiences in Europe as well and toured extensively in other parts of the Arabic-speaking world.

Sonia Mbarek, Lotfi Bouchnak's contemporary and counterpart, also reached stardom by way of soloistic reinterpretation of familiar songs. She got her big break at a 1995 concert at the "Ennejma Ezahrira" (Resplendent Star) palace held in honor of 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of Shaykh Khemais Tarnane, the original chorus master of the Rashidiya ensemble (Davis 2003b:122). Sonia Mbarek's work is closely tied to support from the Centre des Musiques Arabe et Méditerranéenne (Center for Arab and Mediterranean Music or "CMAM"), a state-funded institution created in 1992 by President Ben Ali. Although her popularity can largely be accredited to her exposure through radio and "cassette culture," Mbarek is still, in many ways, a government-sponsored musician.

The continued popularization and commoditization of *ma'luf* by these two innovative media stars set a standard for new compositions that challenged *ma'luf* as fixed and pure. The label, applied to so many new and diverse reinventions, became all the less grounded in ostensible musical identifiers and all the more conceptual. In many ways, Bouchnak and Mbarek performed *ma'luf* in a pre-Rashidiya style, channeling and voicing Tunisianness through diverse and individualized musical interpretations. Intermediary stages between the Rashidiya's nationalized *ma'luf* and *fusion* established precedence and illustrate how *fusion* could have come

to mean so many different things to different groups of people. Challenging a nationalized standard—exemplified in recordings made by the National Radio Ma'luf Ensemble as early as 1958—set new *ma'luf* and intentional and explicit *fusion* in motion.

Lotfi Bouchnak and Sonia Mbarek made clear statements about the musical relation they wanted with the *harubi*, relationships that countered the standardization and stagnation of the Rashidiya's *ma'luf* and promoted “new sounds and old tunes” (Davis 2003b:123). Similar aims, held dear by today's *fusion* artists, are informed by the vision of these earlier media stars who shaped the *ma'luf*, as established by the Rashidiya yet rooted in pre-Rashidiya material, to modern expectations and paradigms while never losing sight of Tunisian *taruth* (tradition or patrimony).

Political changes, most notably President Ben Ali's bloodless coup of 1987, have also significantly impacted music-making and space for innovation in *ma'luf* and *fusion*. Davis argues, and my own findings support, that

Subsequent policies of decentralization have contributed to a cultural climate favoring individualism and self-expression in which the concept of *ma'luf* as an emblem of national identity, forged by the Rashidiya and promoted by the previous government, has given way to a variety of more fluid, personal approaches to the tradition. (Davis 2003b:134)

President Ben Ali's support of the preservation and enlivening of cultural heritage is exemplified by the work carried out at the CMAM, the institution that, working hand-in-hand with the Ministry of Culture and Heritage Safeguarding, is charged with “conservation, exhibitions related to Tunisian musical heritage and museum activities, reports and research as well as arts and activity programming” ([www.cmam.nat.tn](http://www.cmam.nat.tn)). Under President Ben Ali, this ministry has supported the arts through both preservation (through archiving) and practice through the encouragement of performance. Mounir Hentati, assistant director at the CMAM elaborated,

We [CMAM] are very much concerned and interested in promoting musical creation, yes, in Tunisia by providing opportunities for Tunisian musicians to perform here even at an experimental level and this is one of the rare places where people can come and submit projects which maybe would not find any takers anywhere else in the country because we are dedicated to music and one of our missions is to promote cotemporary Tunisian music production. (pers. comm. in English, April 21, 2009)

Although defining the CMAM's positions on *fusion* is a sticky matter,<sup>17</sup> there is no doubt that a diversity of artistic projects have flourished in Ben Ali's liberal, modern-minded, introspective, and cosmopolitan state.

As Davis argues that these “intermediaries” working during the 1990s (between the Rashidiya's nationalist-era *ma'luf* and *fusion* of 2009), “while appearing innovative and exceptional in their time...represent well established phenomena in Tunisian music and by extension, in Middle Eastern music as a whole” (2003b:123). Just as Lotfi Bouchnak and Sonia Mbarek returned to older soloistic practices, many current *fusion* projects have goals (explicit for some and implied for others) of harkening back to compositional and performative styles that were more personalized and inclusionary than those of the nationalist-era Rashidiya music. These new *fusion* projects, in some ways, exemplify Tunisian music-making before codification and standardization at the Rashidiya.

Whereas those I interviewed pointed to a number of particularly influential Tunisian *fusion* musicians and bands, addressing each in turn is beyond the scope of this paper; many are cited in Appendix B. Hatem Bourial, my guide and friend during the research for this project,

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<sup>17</sup> Hentati, in response to a question about Anouar Brahem commented that,

musicians can meet and can dialogue, but mish mashing or putting, you know, I don't believe that much and I don't think that we, here, at least at the center, we have welcomed any[thing] that is called “fusion” today. I don't think it's welcome here. We believe that we are open to all expressions, provided that they are authentic. (pers. comm., April 21, 2009)

introduced me to one such project that was presented quite early on in Tunisia's era of *fusion*, and remains particularly provocative to this day. Hatem stressed, during several of our meetings, the significance of a particular set of staged musical and theatrical projects, "Nouba" (A reference to the Maghrebian song-cycle characterized by unity of mode, or melody type, and diversity of rhythmic-metric elements) and "Hadhra" (literally "presence," a Sufi ritual that includes *dhikr*, Qur'anic recitation, and other elements), which premiered in 1991 and 1989 respectively. These two performances were grand spectacles, written and choreographed by Samir Agrebi and Fadhel Jazir and a collaborative group of artists and musicians including Riadh Sghaïer and Mounir El Arqui. According to Bourial, these cutting-edge projects explicitly addressed the question of what constitutes Tunisian music, performance, and theater. "Nouba" and "Hadhra," seminal *fusion* projects, worked between the artistic mediums of music, theater, and dance to boldly challenge what constituted musical Tunisianness and what possibilities might lay ahead.

In the remaining two sections of this chapter, I explore the roles, ambitions, responsibilities, identities, and musical compositions of Tunisian *fusion* musicians through close examination of two examples, Anouar Brahem (with the various ensembles in which he has participated), and the band, Kantara. By engaging specifically with these artists and their music, I approach questions of change in the practice of intentional and explicit musical hybridity over the last thirty years; what makes not only an acceptable, but also an excellent *fusion* (as judged by Tunisians) and also approach the issue of *fusion* as political and activist in nature. While a thorough discussion of these topics is beyond the scope of this paper, my analysis aims to present specific examples in the hopes that the Tunisian musical *fusion* movement may be more clearly defined. In addition, connections and commonalities between these case studies allow for

generalizations that further our analytical conceptualizations of musical hybridity, particularly in relation to the construction and maintenance of Tunisian national identity.

### ***Making an “Excellent” Fusion: Anouar Brahem’s Fame***

Anouar Brahem is a household name in Tunisia. He is, quite arguably, the popular Tunisian musician most adored by Tunisians, both in Tunisia and the diaspora, and by other audiences around the world. Born in 1957, Brahem enrolled at the National Institute of Music in Tunis at age ten, where he studied Tunisian *oud* and Arab classical music with *oud* master, Ali Sriti. For four years, Brahem took daily lessons at Sriti’s home, immersing himself in Tunisian and Arab musical history. At the same time, however, he had an ear to the stereo. He became increasingly interested in “foreign” musics, and looked first to geographic and cultural neighbors for inspiration, including Mediterranean and Iranian styles. Later, his curiosity led him to explore classical Hindustani music from India (Driss 2009:3). Once he discovered jazz he never turned back.

Brahem began echoing jazz influences in his *oud* compositions through the incorporation of distinctly new melodies and harmonies. *Fusions* appeared even in those songs and albums that he considered to be more strictly “Tunisian” or “Arab” than jazz “fusions.” His interest in jazz eventually led Brahem to spend an extended stay in Paris starting in 1981, but by 1985 he had returned to Tunisia, ready to premier music from his new collaboration with Turkish and Tunisian Arab classical musicians and French “jazzmen” (a term commonly used by Tunisians to refer to jazz musicians). This 1985 performance earned Brahem Tunisia’s Grand National Prize for Music. His musical collaborations and developing hybrid styles continued to garner growing audiences in Tunisia and abroad; by the 1990s he was well recognized across Tunisia, in Paris,

and by cosmopolitan-minded audiences everywhere (Driss 2009:4). Since 1981, Brahem has traveled back and forth between Europe and Tunisia and has toured extensively throughout Europe, Canada, and the United States. He has performed alongside renowned European musicians, as well as with Tunisian artists, most notably for this study, with Sonia Mbarek.

It is worth taking a closer look at the qualities of a musician who has, in many ways, come to stand as an icon of Tunisian music and an ambassador for “Tunisianness” abroad. These characteristics speak more generally to the significance of *fusion* as a means of informing and performing identity for many contemporary Tunisians and thereby provide evidence of the viability of Tunisian intentional and explicit *fusions* in early twenty-first century Tunisia. Brahem’s ability to move audiences with his hybrid projects, his creation of musics that are iconic and meaningful to Tunisians, I would argue, is tied closely to a national identity that accepts and celebrates its cultural hybridity in the past, present, and the future.

The majority of the Tunisians I interviewed for this project held Brahem’s music in the very highest regard, though it would be unfair to assume that mid to upper-class Tunis urbanites represent or hold a monopoly on defining “national” likes, dislikes, or identities. In this regard, my findings here can be generalized only to a degree. Overall, those I did interview were not only enthusiastic about sharing their appreciation of his music, but became visibly excited, more animated, and particularly expressive when they spoke about their personal experience of and relation to his music. While some people had difficulty articulating exactly what it was about the music that they loved, fans of Brahem were quick to identify themselves.

For Tunisians, much of the beauty, power, and appeal of Brahem’s music is located in its indefinable genre and character: Brahem is firmly rooted in both Tunisian (and Arab) musical traditions and extremely well versed in jazz paradigms. Brahem’s projected identities as a

musician and the labeling of his music, both self-declared and ascribed to him by others, are particularly illustrative of how Tunisians conceptualize *fusion* music, and music in general. Much in line with Werbner's assertions on the nature of cultural hybrids in postcolonial contexts, Brahem's music has at times been "celebrated as powerfully interruptive and yet theorized as commonplace and pervasive" (Werbner 1997:1). His music, in keeping with Werbner's analyses, is considered powerfully magical and liminal as well, although few would call it "transgressive" or truly radical. His music occupies the "third space" that is Tunisia yet also stands to represent some of its constituent parts: Tunisian/Arab and French. Brahem's music negotiates the Tunisian "third space" by way of particular hybridities that allow their constituent parts to retain their iconic links to contexts where they are considered to be more "pure."

When the questions, "Who is Brahem and how would you describe his music? Is he a simply a 'Tunisian' playing 'Tunisian' music or something else?," were posed to those Tunisians I interviewed, I received diverse responses, none of which exclusively marked Brahem as a "Tunisian creating Tunisian music" or a "French musician composing Jazz." Collectively, these responses articulate and define the "third space"—simultaneously hybrid as both liminal and central—in which musical *fusion*, and, I would argue, Tunisia as a nation, exists. While most respondents recognized Brahem as a Tunisian musician, his identity as a jazz musician is more contested. For example, Riadh Fehri, *fusion* musician and founding member of the musical project, Kantara, laughed at the suggestion that Brahem might be a "jazzman." He clarified, "Anouar Brahem is not jazz music. It is world music. Anouar Brahem is my friend, my very [good] friend. [His music] is not jazz music" (pers. comm., April 26, 2009).

Riadh Sghaïer, a Tunisian *fusion* saxophonist currently playing new interpretations of familiar and "classic" Tunisian tunes, agrees that Brahem is doing something very special; he

cannot be defined strictly as a classical Tunisian *oud* player or as a jazz artist. For Sghaïer, Anouar Brahem's music "belongs to the world" (pers. comm., May 5, 2009). The younger generation of musicians I interviewed—many of whom are in their early twenties—seem to agree with Sghaïer. Mejrissi, a young *fusion* enthusiast and musician himself, first described Brahem as "a rootless Tunisian musician who is playing, who is yearning to join Tunisia, with his *oud*, to his Parisian atmospheres" but later tempered his statement, "well, rootless is a pretty brutal word...I guess all I care for is that he is a musician. But sometimes you feel from the titles and stuff that he wants to go to wonderland, to his own wonderland which is wonder-Tunisia probably" (pers. comm., April 27, 2009). Touihri, who is also in her early twenties, commented that, "he [Brahem] is a Tunisian playing world music. He wants to be known all over the world and maybe he doesn't like traditional ways of music" (pers. comm., April 30, 2009). Although many classify Brahem as a "world musician" (either explicitly or implicitly) he is directly emblematic, for many Tunisians, of Tunisia itself. Much of Brahem's success and popularity, in Tunisia and world wide, stems from his uncanny appeal to a broad range of audiences.

Other primary factors in Brahem's wide-reaching and long-lasting popularity are the indexical conceptions of his music as emotionally powerful, spiritual, and even magical. This is surely Brahem's "it" factor, as they say in the music business. It is challenging to tease out just which attributes of this characterization are directly linked to Brahem's practice and production of *fusion* (a practice grounded in the marking of this music as explicitly and intentionally hybrid) and those that are linked to local Tunisian recognition of Brahem's personal "genius" and musical virtuosity.

Either way you approach the issue, Brahem's fans describe his musical creations as near to the divine. Laïla Toubel, director of the Theatre el Hamra in Tunis, described Anouar



Brahem's particular style as characterized by a unique and powerful ability to "wake up emotions" and to connect people on a visceral and sentimental level (pers. comm., April 22, 2009). *Fusion* musician, Riadh Sghaïer, is an avid Brahem fan and said of his music, "It moves me...I enjoy his way of saying his music and doing it, and the simplicity of what he is doing too. It's basic; it's pure" (pers. comm., May 5, 2009). Mejrissi, and others, decidedly pronounced Brahem to be a genius, emphasizing chiefly that,

Anouar Brahem is an innovator...[he] is a well-trained musician, and obviously knows how to...I don't know...there is something about him composing, writing music, that you can not describe. For example, if you write poetry or you write music, you feel there is a sort of flow that just tells you what to press and which keys you should touch and which instruments you [should] use and stuff like that... (pers. comm., April 27, 2009)

Mounir El Mehdi, a man profoundly invested in the institution of Rashidiya, yet one who also appreciates the concept of *fusion*, described Brahem's music as "deep" and deemed it "very successful," mainly because of Brahem's firm grounding and expertise in Arab classical music (pers. comm., May 5, 2009).

Both Tunisians and Brahem listeners abroad frequently employ magical and supernatural terminology when describing Brahem's music. Stéphane Olivier, whose comments are posted on Brahem's official website ([www.anouarbrahem.com](http://www.anouarbrahem.com)), describes Brahem as "the *oud*'s conjurer, a master at bringing out the acoustic magic this age-old traditional Oriental lute carries in its calabash, all the musical heritage of the Arab and Islamic worlds" (Olivier 2009:1). There is something that strikes me as soulful and "human" about the timbre of the *oud* when Anouar Brahem plays solo improvisatory sections. Perhaps it is the connection of the *oud* to the human voice that has a hand in creating such "spiritual" experience for Brahem's audiences; it is nearly impossible to discern when he is only playing *oud* and when he is also singing along quietly.

There is a clear precedence for singers who accompany themselves within Arab classical music; immortal Arab singers, from Umm Kulthum to Tunisian artists like Fethia Khairi, Mohamed Jamoussi, Oulaya, and Hedi Jouini, are known for accompanying themselves on *oud*, in addition to playing *oud* as a solo instrument. In the case of Brahem's music, the choice to continue a tradition of instrumentation that features the singing *oud* player, firmly grounds Brahem in the *ma'luf*. His vocals, however, unlike those of Umm Kulthum or Tunisian predecessors (cited above) are limited strictly to wordless melodies that accompany *oud* melodies rather than the reverse (see CD 1).

Brahem's singing, barely audible and almost humming, caught me off guard during his performance at the Jazz à Carthage Festival in April of 2009 where he premiered both his new quartet (Klaus Gesing on base clarinet, Björn Meyer on electric bass guitar, Khaled Yassine on percussion, and himself on *oud*) and a fresh repertoire (see CD 2). As an articulation of Tunisian affiliations, Brahem's group traveled to Tunisia, to Carthage, to give their first show before embarking on an extensive tour of Paris, Berlin, Brussels, Sofia, Budapest, Vienna, and Zurich (Jazz à Carthage by Tunisiana).

When first beginning my research, I was taken aback by the exoticizing and "spiritualistic" vocabulary used both by Tunisians and by foreign audiences (though perhaps by different means and to justify different ends) to describe Anouar Brahem's music in internet biographies and the program notes for the performance in Carthage mentioned above. Exoticization seems to come with Brahem's "package deal." Such is the case, argue Tunisians, for most successful "mainstream" musicians (as many of my interviewees described Brahem) who have recorded nearly a dozen albums under multinational labels like ECM. These forms of exoticism cater to audiences abroad in Europe and the United States; and they have come to be a

significant tool in the marketing of “world musicians” within this milieu. Undeniably, there is much to be celebrated in the minds of creative musicians; it seems hyperbolic, however, to say that Anouar Brahem, the “magician of the *oud*,” is “creat[ing] a completely original universe” and that “[a]dmirers of Anouar Brahem in Tunisia, like elsewhere, [are] hypnotized by the tender instance of his musical climates and the un-imitatable ability that he has...to invent new relationships with other musical forms” (Jazz à Carthage by Tunisiana). Although the man has devoted a great deal of time and energy to becoming an expert musician in two musics (*ma'luf* and jazz), realistically speaking, his method of melding musical styles and material from Tunisia and abroad is carried out, primarily, through collaboration with musicians who stand as “authenticators” of each musical style.

Although his *fusions* are indeed masterful, Brahem is no magician. Stéphane Olivier describes Brahem, in an online biography, as “the *oud*’s conjurer,” suggesting Brahem’s ability to elicit profoundly authentic music from history or, perhaps, from other worlds. To Olivier, Brahem is also a “culture smuggler ever inclined to adventure beyond his own limits, pushing back musical frontiers without ceding an inch of the aesthetical standards forged across time and tempered in a profound respect for tradition” (Olivier 2009:1). I am surprised not only at Olivier’s knack for casting “culture smuggling” into a positive light, but I am baffled as to why anyone would describe Brahem in this way. Olivier’s comments, highlighted on Brahem’s official homepage, suggest Brahem’s origins are in external frameworks.

A peripheral perspective on Brahem allows far more easily for seemingly judgmental identification of musicians as musical or cultural thieves of other “cultural” styles. For Tunisians, who count music as an important component of highly revered national and cultural affiliation, such suggestions of thievery seem a blow below the belt. Perhaps notions of musical ownership

are changing though; as Mejrissi put it, “[w]hichever riff you (Tunisians) like, this is your root. This is your music. It is free for you and if you like it, [you] just listen to it” (pers. comm., April 27, 2009).

Brahem is consistently preoccupied with constructing and authenticating his image as “Tunisian” for audiences both within Tunisia and abroad. By giving album titles like, *Le voyage de Sahar* (The voyage of the Sahara), where he associates everything that is “Tunisian” with icons like the desert, Brahem is, in a way, engaged in a project of self-exoticization, even self-essentialization. He explicitly “traces” personal connections from his music to the Sahara, although he was born and raised in Tunis. Although he acknowledges that there is much more to Tunisia, he collapses these multiple identities into a single representation. This strategy both aids his appeal to as many audiences as possible and to reach listeners who are looking for a model that plays up familiar stereotypes. His association with the desert is an awkward “authentication:” the track titles on *Le voyage de Sahar* (note the French title) also pay tribute to the city of Tunis in the song title, “Halfaouine;” and to Arab-Andalusian connections, in titles like “Cortoba.” These references have nothing to do with the Sahara desert regions of southern Tunisia where *Imazighen* (Berber) influences dominate. Some of the primary factors that have aided Brahem in his pursuit of both internal and external success have included collapsing national culture into a single representation, while at the same time retaining a semblance of diversity within, coupled with careful packaging, visually and linguistically. Tunisians, however, are, relatively speaking, less aware of this factor than I am. From an outsider’s perspective, I feel labels and packaging are central to Brahem’s continued celebrity status both within and outside of Tunisia.

Brahem's choice to integrate jazz into his hybrid compositions has been, I would argue, equally as important to his fame among Tunisians as his self-conscious attempts to "authenticate" his Tunisian, Andalusian, and desert (loosely Imazighen-identified) roots. It is no coincidence, I feel, that Brahem gravitated towards jazz. Jazz is extremely popular in Tunisia, particularly in urban regions like the Tunis metropolis. It appeals mainly to audiences who are currently in their forties and fifties, as well as, more recently, Tunisian youth.

At Brahem's Carthage concert in the spring of 2009, I was struck by the realization that there are, in fact, a number of musical and extra-musical connections between the genres of jazz and classical Arab or Tunisian music as genres and in performative practice. Watching the quartet pass the tune from musician to musician and take turns leading and laying down new riffs reminded me of both solo *taqasim*, the virtuosic improvisatory form that I'd marveled at during a Rashidiya concert, and improvisatory jazz sessions I had sat in on in the United States. The central role of improvisation and virtuosity in performing jazz or *ma'luf* is the primary musical commonality between the two and the sonic and performative ligature upon which Brahem's personal style of *fusion* hinges. These commonalities, seen particularly in performance practice, (see CD 3) are partly responsible, I feel, for the musical and social success of his amalgamation. The importance of audience reaction and involvement in the music are another set of performance-based similarities, elements critical for creating the desired dynamic interaction between performer and audience for both Arab classical musics and most subgenres of jazz. Encouragement, in the form of exclamations and clapping from the audience during or after particularly creative lines of *taqasim* or virtuosic solos during a jazz session, is part and parcel of what these musics mean to performers and audiences.

Both jazz and *ma'luf* are intentionally inclusionary genres with permeable boundaries that are constantly being tested, accepting new styles, schools, and innovations. Additionally, both “genre” classifications have retained their integrity despite significant change over the years since inception. The retention and practical application of the flexibility found in each music satisfies audiences grounded in either musical framework and strengthens the viability of the hybrid product as offered by Brahem. In general, I would argue, encompassing musical labels, jazz and *ma'luf* alike, are more open (than stricter classifications) to permitting musics and audiences the possibility of overcoming “anxieties of authenticity.”

The matter of hybridities between jazz and *ma'luf*, which some Tunisians and listeners abroad have termed a “perfect union,” raises, once again, the question of labels. In Brahem’s search for the “Tunisian wonderland,” as Mejrissi described it, between jazz and Tunisian music, Brahem seems to have struck a particular balance. Perhaps his music is not considered “jazz” by the greater Tunisian population, but rather something more “authentically” Tunisian; the Tunisian people, or at least a certain audience, have “taken back” Brahem, welcomed him back “into the fold,” despite the fact that he is abroad much of the year and no longer resides only in Tunisia. These people have chosen to hold him up as a national icon. Mounir El Argui, an artist and theatrical director, for instance, defined Anouar Brahem as simply “an artist,” arguing that “he (Brahem) has his masters (teachers) here [so] basically he belongs to here (Tunisia)” (pers. comm., May 5, 2009).

Although many Tunisians claim him as the nation’s “native son,” Brahem’s status as Tunisian icon has become increasingly challenged, particularly along the basis of social class. While the notion and practice of *fusion* is embraced and celebrated by many, or perhaps by *most* Tunisians, there are certain audiences, particularly those of young working- and middle-class

Tunisians, who feel a disconnect between their Tunisian identities and experiences and the interstate appeal of Anouar Brahem's music. The increasing consumerism that has characterized the production of his albums and the fanfare of his grand shows in Tunisia only add to a growing class-based schism between those who can afford to identify with Brahem and those who cannot. Toubel, a great appreciator of Brahem's music, offered a personal observation, that "now, something is happening in these late years [with] Anouar Brahem...it is kind of implying a snobbish effect. Now we just go because it's something like an international icon, but on the other hand we don't really care about the music and you don't really listen to the music because it's more a social event" (pers. comm., April 22, 2009).

There may, in fact, be particularly high class associates tied to Brahem's music today, but assertions of Brahem's "classiness" was taken as an unfair and offensive accusation against Brahem by many of my interviewees. The mention of such a possibility led several of them into heated defenses of Brahem's music as honest, meaningful, and profoundly nationalistic. These enthusiasts defended their love of Brahem's music itself beyond the pomp of performance and musical commodity. Mejrissi dismissed the idea of Brahem's "classy" appeal in general saying, "really, if you want to show off, you can go to any disco club. I doubt that the people you want to show off to really care if you go to Anouar Brahem" (pers. comm., April 27, 2009).

When asked if appreciation of Brahem's music had anything to do with projection or display of "high class" in Tunisia, Touihri commented that this labeling of "high class" and "low class" music has everything to do with an artificial dichotomy between "sophisticated" and "popular" music. In essence, for Touihri, Brahem has recently acquired particularly "high-class" associations, primarily because he has touted his connections to the European jazz scene more and more, a presentation which has inflated the perception of Brahem's music as more

sophisticated and “high class” in Tunisia. Secondarily, she says, the development of Brahem’s “snob factor” is due to the labeling of other musics as “popular.” The division that results in “low” and “high” music in Tunisia, she argued, is “made by the ticket price.” Therefore, “this music (Brahem’s) belongs to [those] who can pay, and it’s a pity” (pers. comm., April 30, 2009). In this way, Brahem’s music cannot be representative of the Tunisian people as a national whole. Perhaps class-based contentions over positing his music as “representative of the nation” run deeper than strictly monetary apprehensions.

Despite the fact that Brahem’s music is now readily accessible, lower- and middle-class Tunisians seem, still, to have little interest in engaging with Anouar Brahem’s music. Corner music shops in Tunis sell ripped and pirated CDs and cassette tapes for less than a dinar, or about USD\$0.71, and Brahem’s music is now easily downloadable via the Internet.<sup>18</sup> Still, Brahem is seen, in many ways, as a music for the Tunisian elite. Touihri remarks that, these people “know this music is for high class [Tunisians] and they don’t buy [these] CD[s] (or cassettes) even when it is one dinar [because they know they] cannot see this man...so there are people Anouar Brahem is not representing” (pers. comm., April 30, 2009). Indeed, why would anyone wish to associate or identify with a music that has been presented to them, by a Tunisian nonetheless, as of them yet it is not of them because of the inter-state, classy, sophisticated, and cosmopolitan associations and projections that have little to do with the “average” working-class Tunisians? Future research on this topic should engage with more working-class Tunisians to better understand how they relate to Brahem’s music and ambitions. In his presentation as cosmopolitan and elitist, Brahem’s music fails to connect profoundly with some working-class Tunisian audiences, not because of particular hybrid musical characteristics, but, again, because

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<sup>18</sup> There are no music copyright laws in Tunisia to speak of, a topic for another research project.



of the way Brahem's packaging articulates, politically, a particular approach to Tunisian-Parisian inter-state relations.

I turn now to a discussion of more explicit negotiations of political and activist agendas by way of musical hybridity. In examining musical relations between Tunisia and former (direct) and current (indirect) colonial powers, questions of national representation, agendas of peace, and anxieties over preservation and "authenticity" are brought to the fore. Again, the reader must bear in mind the problematic discursive histories of "hybridity" and, as romanticized as projects like *Kantara* (the case study I address in the following section) appear, it is pertinent for the responsible ethnographer to examine these politicized musics through critical lenses.

### ***Fusion as Political and as Advocacy: Kantara's Arab-Appalachian Music***

The Fehri Riadh Conservatoire de Musique in Sidi Bou Said is a music school where students of all backgrounds, many of whom are children of American or French expatriates residing in the Tunis area, can engage with music. The school offers both Western classical music lessons as well as Tunisian *ma'luf* for violin, *oud*, and percussion. One Saturday morning, as I was heading out from my own *ma'luf* violin lesson (I studied at the conservatory for about three months), Riadh Fehri, of whom I knew very little at this time, invited me to join a motley crew of Tunisian, American, and French children in the foyer of the conservatory. Parents were helping to set up rows of white lawn chairs and music stands for an orchestra rehearsal. I gladly stayed; it had been far too long since I had played anything outside the solitude of my home-stay bedroom. I don't remember quite what I was expecting that we'd be playing, but I'll never forget how surprised I was when Fehri put an arrangement of "Angeline the Baker," one of my favorite classic Appalachian tunes, on my music stand. A single bass player joined the two sections of

violins and Mehdi, a *darbuka* teacher at the conservatory, who had been just passing through, gladly threw himself into the mix as well. “Ear-bending” is the only way to effectively describe my first experience with Arab-Appalachian music, but I was hooked by it. Fehri nodded at me from across the room, gesturing for me, the only American in the room, to play through the tune once as a solo to get the orchestra going; then we were off.

As I learned soon enough, this Arab-Appalachian musical interaction extended beyond the ad-hoc orchestra I had stumbled upon at Fehri’s conservatory. Riadh Fehri, an *oud* player like Brahem, is one of the founding members of Kantara, an Arab-Appalachian band composed of Tunisian and American members. Kantara means “bridge” in Arabic, but the name also elicits musical associations for anyone versed in Latin, Italian, or Spanish.<sup>19</sup> Nora Dempsey, who works for the U. S. Department of State in Tunis, is exceptionally proud of her role in introducing Riadh Fehri, an already well-established classical Tunisian and *fusion*-style *oud* player, to Brennan Gilmore, American multi-instrumentalist bluegrass musician who works with her at the Department of State. The group traces their beginnings to a jam session in Dempsey’s living room in 2005. The musical community in Tunis is a small one, and I happened upon Dempsey one afternoon in the buzzing Fehri Riadh Conservatoire de Musique. Overhearing what Fehri and I were talking about, she eagerly leapt into a lengthy explanation of her role in Kantara’s inception,

I love music and I got to know Brennan (Gilmore). I [already] knew Riadh [to be] the most talented person I ha[d] ever met in Tunisia. He’s a naturally creative person and Brennan is also a brilliant mind and so I thought, God, these guys have to meet... none of us could believe how good the Appalachian music sounded with traditional Tunisian music” (Personal Communication, April 26, 2009).

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<sup>19</sup> As far as my interviews suggest, this connection is happenstance.

Fehri and Gilmore, who both play in the current band, were also struck by how “eerily” the two musics seemed to mesh. Dempsey described Kantara’s creation as, “so interesting because it was born of the human spirit” (pers. comm., April 26, 2009). The project, as described by Dempsey and the members of the band, has a decidedly “story-book” history and, overall, a highly romanticized sentiment.

Fehri and Gilmore each invited musical colleagues to join the group. From previous collaborations with “Walker’s Run,” (Gilmore’s Virginia-based “mountain-music” band) Gilmore invited Zach Blitter (upright bass), Brian Calhoun (guitar), and Ann-Marie Calhoun, an award-winning American fiddler who has played and toured extensively with Walker’s Run, Jethro Tull, and the Dave Mathews Band. Fehri welcomed well-known Tunisian musicians to the ensemble as well: Lassaâd Hosni, *darbuka* (Tunisian hour-glass drum) master and perhaps the most well known percussionist in the country (he has also toured and recorded with Brahem), and vocalist and manager of the group, Amel Boukhchina ([www.kantaramusic.com](http://www.kantaramusic.com)). The group has toured extensively across Tunisia and the United States (including a performance at the Kennedy Center) and has performed at venues in Italy, France, and Morocco. Kantara released its first full-length (eponymous) album in the fall of 2009.

Not unlike Brahem’s rationales for hybridization, Kantara also points to a belief in similarities between the musical materials they have chosen to combine. Beyond the types of musical commonalities that Brahem seeks to highlight between jazz and *ma’luf* (improvisatory and virtuosic elements), Kantara sees its musical genesis as the *direct* intersection of Arab classical music and Appalachian Bluegrass. Riadh Fehri, founding member of the band, commented in an interview that Kantara’s music is, metaphorically speaking, the intersection of two planes; if American music is a vertical plane and Arabic is a horizontal one, Fehri sees

Kantara as the “unifying point” where the two meet, the musical common ground (pers. comm., April 26, 2009). Fehri boldly asserted that, in essence, there is very little difference between American and Tunisian cultures and American and Tunisian musics. He suggested that when you listen to either *ma'luf* or bluegrass independently you can very nearly hear the other simultaneously. After all, he says, there are number of common rhythmic patterns, melodic modes, and shared instruments like the violin and mandolin. It is precisely this intersection of a “shared” musical framework, according to Fehri, that allows for the successful creation of Kantara’s hybrid Arab-Appalachian music. Fehri commented specifically that Lassaâd Hosni’s contribution on *darbuka* sometimes leaves him thinking, “My God, country music was created to be played with *darbuka*” (pers. comm., April 26, 2009). For Fehri and many listeners, including Bourial, my advisor who published an article about the project in 2006, Tunisian drumming is particularly important in Kantara’s musical *fusions*; “You listen [to] Kantara and *darbuka*, *darbuka* is no[t] dissociated, [it] is no[t] bizarre in this project... Yes, it’s natural. You [would] think he [had] play[ed] country many times with *darbuka*” (pers. comm., April 26, 2009).

Additionally, the group cites common histories of displacement and immigration as unifying factor, an interesting interpretation of history. Kantara describes the two musical histories of Tunisian and Appalachian music as “lead[ing] to a third path, not yet walked [or perhaps not walked previously], where the melodies of the Scots-Irish seeking a new life in the Americas meet the musical tradition of Iberian Muslims expelled during the reconquista of Spain and Portugal” (www.kantaramusic.com). From the periphery, this historical link seems forced but it is a remarkably meaningful connection for the ensemble itself and perhaps for some of the ensemble’s listening base. I must agree, however bizarre it sounds at first, that the incorporation of percussion in songs like “Just one Moment,” where the drum mirrors the rhythmic strumming

of the Gilmore's guitar, feels comfortable (see CD 4). In the familiarly Scotts-Irish feel of "Blue Ridge Mountain Home/Tamalyn" the *darbuka* (hour glass drum), and perhaps *bendir* (frame drum), could easily be mistaken for a *bodhrán*, an Irish frame drum (see CD 5).

Kantara's activist and political leanings are not challenging to locate. There is much to be said of the contribution of American musicians to the success of the project and the role that the U. S. State Department has played as a primary patron. The group, however casually conceived, makes a powerful political statement about not only American-Tunisian relations, but, as Fehri sees it, Arab-American connections as well, "All day in [the] news, on TV, my children, Arabic children, and American children see many wars and many problem[s] in this world. I think this little project, this vision, is a big project for change. I want to change this vision in this world into positivity" (pers. comm., April 26, 2009). He stressed the critical role of artists, specifically, in encouraging peaceful international relations and identifies collaborative *fusion* music as, arguably, the most powerful form of exchange. Though Fehri does not see his work as politically-charged, it is his hope that Kantara's music is iconically representing the types of harmonious interactions and friendships that are possible on a greater scale between the Muslim Arabic-speaking world and the United States. Kantara must move people because,

In this moment, [there] is not very good communication [between the] two people (Americans and Arabs). [There is some between] American people [and] Arabic people but this communication is commercial, of politic[s] ... [there] is no social communication, [there] is no love, there is no communication for [the] sentimental [things] (pers. comm., April 26, 2009).

Tunisian-American (or American-Tunisian) *fusion* music, Fehri feels, has the unique power to create bridges between peoples who are fixated upon what he sees as superficial socio-cultural, political, and religious differences between themselves and whoever is defined as the "other." *Fusion* music, according to Fehri, has the power to reveal underlying commonalities, as

superficial as they may seem in musical rhythms and modes, and, ultimately, to bring people to more clearly see their shared humanity. Emphasizing shared humanity over difference is an ambition shared by others interested in *fusion* as well. As Miriam Touihri, young Tunisian *oud* player, put it, “the world is linked together, not only in music, [but in] everything else. We haven’t an authentic thing for one nation that the other hasn’t. We share. We share the knowledge” (pers. comm., April 30, 2009).

It comes, then, as no surprise that Brennan Gilmore, guitarist, mandolinist, and vocalist for Kantara, was awarded the prestigious U.S. Secretary of State’s Award for Public Outreach in the fall of 2006 for “ground-breaking efforts to engage non-traditional audiences and promote Arab-American cultural understanding through music” ([www.kantaramusic.com](http://www.kantaramusic.com)). Though one can only make a guess as to what the Secretary of State meant to imply by “non-traditional audiences,” Brennan and Kantara’s vision of education towards cultural understanding was duly recognized.

In many ways, Kantara’s music itself exemplifies the group’s mission of equal exchange and communication. The band’s repertoire includes an assortment of hybrid types (by Holzinger’s definition), which, I would argue, increases audience appeal. For many Tunisians and Americans, the music thrives on mystical and magical integrations not dissimilar to Holzinger’s (2002) hybrid “*mélange*,” *fusions* that identify themselves as hybrid but meld seamlessly into a third and novel entity. On a more objective and strictly musical level, however, most of their songs have components that are easily isolated as directly indicative of American or, as the band often generalized, “Arab,” musical practices. The group specializes in pieces that juxtapose new interpretations of familiar tunes from Appalachian and Tunisian repertoires, hybrids that, again by Holzinger’s (2002) definitions, are “combinations” in musical form.

In one such example entitled “Shady Grove,” Kantara juxtaposes the American folk tune made popular by Bill Monroe, Doc Watson (see CD 6), and The Kingston Trio with “Sidi Mansour (Ya Baba),” (see CD 7) an extremely popular song claimed by Tunisians as their own, but made famous by the “Raï King,” Algerian singer Cheb Khaled. Kantara’s combination (see CD 8) alternates between the two songs, American and Tunisian, connecting them somewhat, but maintaining recognizable distinctions between the two. Linguistically speaking, the transitions between Arabic and English are clear, even somewhat jarring for first-time listeners. Although the lyrics of the two constituent songs are thematically disparate, the tunes do seem to combine successfully.<sup>20</sup> These types of “side-by-side” hybrid combinations allow each contributing component to maintain its integrity but suggest close relations between the two.

An attempt at equal representation of Tunisian and American elements, what Fehri calls a “fifty-fifty,” is present in these types of hybrids that alternate between songs, particularly as the use of familiar tunes and lyrics clearly index the two constituent genres. Musical juxtapositions like “Shady Grove” identify themselves clearly as explicit and intentional hybrids, an important characteristic for an expressly politicized music with specific agendas for promoting peace. I find myself wondering if truly “ethical” or “fair” *fusions* are possible, particularly when considerations of marketing, consumerism, advertising, and labeling factor significantly into the creation and promotion of musical hybrids. Even entitling the track “Shady Grove” favors one contributor over the other.

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<sup>20</sup> This is not the first time that “Sidi Mansour (Ya Baba)” has been used as inspiration for new music. The tune is particularly catchy. German Disco band, Boney M.’s 1977 smash hit, “Ma Baker,” was supposedly inspired by the song “Sidi Mansour (Ya Baba)” when one of their band members heard the song while vacationing in Tunisia. Interestingly enough, American pop diva, Lady GaGa, cites her hook “ma-ma-ma-mah” in “Poker Face” as a sample from Boney M’s “Ma Baker.”

Conceptually, however, the notion that two musical systems must be presented as equals to create a “good *fusion*” is one held in common by many of the Tunisian artists and musicians with whom I spoke. Mounir El Argui, an artist based in Tunis who has previously used music as the backdrop, or “carpet” to use his own words, for various theatrical shows, spoke of a similar concept, emphasizing that *fusions* must be truly equal exchanges between the composite elements. In El Argui’s opinion, when one music dominates another, for instance, as “Western music” has come to dominate many musics around the world, ethical *fusions* become impossibilities (pers. comm., April 22, 2009).

Overall, the question of the role of Tunisian *fusion* within the country and beyond its borders was one that many of those I interviewed seemed to struggle to answer. Musical fusions and collaborations with goals as explicit as Kantara’s are rare, and for most *fusion* musicians and groups, any aims for their music beyond “art for art’s sake” are far more implicit or are suggested merely by their fan base.

Miriam Touihri, a young Tunisian *oud* player and dear friend, believes that music is perhaps one of the best ways for Tunisians to tell their story to the world. She hopes that perhaps the conservatism and pessimism that she feels once characterized Tunisia’s reaction to change is abating. Nursing her cappuccino in a loud café in downtown Tunis, she spoke passionately about Tunisia’s relation to the world,

[The old] population which assumes the wars and assume[s] everything, [they] have to fear...the older generations, they [are] afraid [of] the foreign countries. They say ‘they just colonize us, they make war, they don’t allow us to go wherever we want,’ and they are afraid of music...Now youngsters are just wanting to show people, ‘I am not so terroristic. I have a civilization and a great one,’ and if I just stick in my place and say ‘they don’t like us’ nothing will change.” (pers comm., April 30, 2009)



Touihri continued to describe the possible roles for *fusion* citing, among others, *fusion* music as a way to promote tourism; “When a musician performs in another country, maybe he will bring tourists to Tunisia” (pers. comm., April 30, 2009).

Emina, one of Touihri’s peers and a musician herself, does not necessarily see these goals as possibilities for *fusion* music. Although she suggests that *fusion* may be an effective way of introducing Tunisian music to those abroad who have never heard it before, she feels that it is best to keep music as separate from politics as possible; “When you’re making music you shouldn’t really be concerned...you just have to feel the music and do whatever expresses your feelings and your way of being, so you’re not to make music and think ‘so this is going to help do that sort of thing’ (have an explicit purpose beyond an artistic one)” (pers. comm., April 29, 2009). Mejrissi, a young musician as well, agrees with Tourihi’s position on appropriate relations between politics and music and points out that in his own artistic field, “oriental metal,” without explicit political agendas, “It [*fusion* music] has already done it; it has already brought people together” (pers. comm., April 27, 2009).

## ***CHAPTER 4. TUNISIAN ANXIETIES OF AUTHENTICITY***

In this final chapter, I explore Tunisian locations of “authenticity” in music and identify anxieties associated with concerns over maintaining particular material and practice. By engaging with a diversity of Tunisian perceptions of “authenticity,” I hope to better understand and represent the socio-political, historical, and cultural space that *fusion* occupies in Tunisian musical discourses. Ethnomusicological approaches for examining these articulations—as derived from Walter Benjamin’s (1969) seminal work on “authenticity” and, more recently, as theorized by ethnomusicologist, Timothy Taylor (2007)—allow for closer analysis of the importance these authenticities play in constructing identity on the ground. In the case of Tunisia, insider constructions of hybridity, particularly in relation to views of history, are closely tied to locations of “authenticity,” anxieties of preservation, and the relative popularity of particular musical forms and expressions.

### ***Multiple Authenticities and Tunisian Musical Hybridity: A Semiotic Approach***

Certain Tunisian audiences have made Anouar Brahem’s music wildly popular while others continue to promote the Rashidiya’s *ma’luf* as the “purest” and “perfect” Tunisian music. A third group of individuals embrace both interpretations of *ma’luf* as legitimate expressions of Tunisian cultural heritage. The co-existence and popularity of multiple forms, in a context where *ma’luf*’s cultural and national value clearly dominates, raises questions of “authenticity.” In the midst of such diversity, is it possible that there might be a single *ma’luf* that is considered, by Tunisians, to be the truest or most profoundly connected with cultural heritage? Peircian semiotics, as tailored to ethnomusicology by Thomas Turino (1999), lend useful tools for parsing out musical representations of nationalism and ways in which simultaneous

authenticities might exist within single societies. Discrepancies between Tunisians' locations of musical "authenticity" can be explained, at least in part, by the role that "indices," or "sign[s] that [are] related to [their] object[s] through co-occurrence in actual experience" combined with "icons" (in this case, signs perpetuated through nationalist and community-based semiotic discourses) play in defining musical origins and purity (Turino 1999). The processes of unification (see Chapter 2, Figure 3) that standardized and collapsed the music collectively known as *ma'luf* or *al-musiqa al-andalusiyya* (once varied, regional, and interpretable) into a single iconic sound during Bourguiba's era of independence (1934 through the 1950s) has been the most powerful musical semiotic unification in Tunisian history to date. Semantically, *ma'luf* was co-opted by political powers to refer to a single sonic utterance. Semiotically, that single utterance was to stand for a single and very powerful nationalist sentiment.

Age groups within societies, a group of "cultural cohorts," to borrow ethnomusicologist Turino's (2008) terminology, have similar sets of indexical associations that spring from shared experience. For older audiences within the greater Tunisian population, *ma'luf* has a single sound. This sound is grounded in nationalist-era icons, as promoted by Bourguiba's Neo-Destour party, but also co-signify (co-reference) personal experiences (indices) of nationalism. Reactions to the *ma'luf* involve visceral resurgence of national pride for many older Tunisians who continue to attend Rashidiya performances season after season.

The tendency for younger generations of Tunisians to locate a sense of musical "authenticity" in Brahem's rendition of the *ma'luf* is indicative of a similar phenomenon. Well after the nationalist era of independence, stars like Bouchnak and Mbarek began the reintroduction of individual musical interpretation into the Tunisian soundscape. Children who grew up listening to Brahem's musical articulations of the Tunisian cultural heritage are,

consequently, more receptive to freer and less codified representations of their cultural heritage compared to those of the Rashidiya.

The preferences demonstrated by these two generational cohorts suggest that because indexical associations are temporally grounded, “authenticity” may be located in the Rashidiya’s *ma’luf* for older generations of Tunisians, *and* in Anouar Brahem’s *ma’luf* for younger generations who were more likely to have grown up listening to Brahem’s *fusion*.

The label and notion of *ma’luf* (the Rashidiya’s interpretation for some and Brahem’s for others) has remained, semantically speaking, a primary icon of the nation. What have shifted, however, are many of the characteristics of the music itself. *Ma’luf*, the *name* (symbol) for the musical “signifier” (sign) still relates to Tunisian nationalist sentiments, or “the “signified,” in much the same way as it did sixty years ago; what have changed for some Tunisians, however, are the particular characteristics of the musical sign.

For example, note the vast discrepancies in size between the Rashidiya’s full-orchestral ensemble and Brahem’s trios, quartets, and quintets. Whether you chose to call it *ma’luf* or *fusion*, Brahem’s choices in instrumentation depart dramatically from the Rashidiya ensemble as well; the inclusion of diatonic keyboard instruments (accordions and pianos) significantly alters Brahem’s intonational possibilities, and microtones are all but removed entirely from pieces that include these Western additions (see CD 9). Brahem’s use of microtones is limited to short solo *taqasim* (improvisatory interludes) when accompanying diatonic instruments remain on a single note or drop out momentarily. These changes reflect international relations, particularly postcolonial identity-informing feedback loops between Tunisia and France. Feedback loops are systems by which Tunisian artists, already famous or lesser known, acquire increased prestige from audiences abroad and, in doing so, validate their musical significance in their country of

origin. Those who are lucky enough to become popular in Paris are greeted as local celebrities when they return home after European tours. Such loops have played a significant role (among others that link Tunisia with the Middle East and with Sub-Saharan Africa) in shaping how younger generations of Tunisians conceive of their Tunisianness and how *ma'luf*, as national icon, has adapted in name, practice, and sound in order to continuously represent the Tunisian people.

My interviews with Tunisian music enthusiasts were biased, proportionally, towards those who identified closely with *fusion* and other more “open” expressions of *ma'luf*. However, I did encounter a few critics of *fusion* who were eager to defend their positions. Some were uncomfortable with the very concept of musical hybridity while others cited personal experiences with *fusion* that had not been to their liking. Most among them were heartily in support of the Rashidiya’s monopoly on “authenticity,” yet did not articulate nor even conceptualize unification process that masked the diversity and profound hybridities that already existed in Tunisian *ma'luf* long before the blossoming of new hybrid projects in the 1980s. These cultural conservatives believe the Rashidiya continues to perform the musical heritage exactly as it would have been heard centuries ago at the primordial birth of the nation when Andalusian immigrants arrived in Africa. These “timeless” interpretations privilege the old over the new and oppose notions of hybridity, both organic and intentional.

Ahmed Achour, the director of L’Orchestre Symphonique Tunisien, the premier ensemble performing both Western classical music and new *ma'luf*-based Tunisian compositions for symphonic orchestra, had strong opinions of Brahem’s music, particularly in light of his current musical meldings for symphony orchestra. Immediately following a performance of selections from W. A. Mozart’s *The Magic Flute* and a J. Haydn Cello Concerto that featured a

student from the Institute of Music in Tunis, I made my way backstage to see if I could pose a few quick questions to Achour. Judging solely by his age, I suspected that he might not be a strong supporter of Tunisian *fusion* music, but I had not imagined he would tell me, with a look of utter disgust on his face, that “jazz and Arab music have nothing in common” and that “they should not ever mix.” Exasperated at the very idea of *fusion*, he argued quite bluntly that “there is no natural way to successfully combine Arab music and jazz because they share nothing at all” (pers. comm., April 23, 2009). He likened *fusion* musics, and the very concept of mixing musics together, to a crowd of people speaking several different languages simultaneously, no one comprehending the other.

Furthermore, to Achour, Brahem’s music is a “fad,” a fashion that will, as quickly as it came into vogue, become passé. The ease with which Achour discounted Brahem’s continuous popularity over the past forty years as “fashion” speaks to his interpretation of *ma’luf*’s history as timeless. It was remarkable to hear a complete dismissal of not only current *fusion* projects, but of the notion of hybridity altogether, particularly from a man who has been composing and arranging works inspired by Arab music for his Western symphonic orchestra for decades. By my own definition, Achour is, in a way, a creator of *fusion* himself, though he most certainly would never chose to identify as such.

Emina (who chose to be cited by first name only), a friend and young violinist who played both *ma’luf* and western classical music, and who’s father played with the Rashidiya ensemble decades ago, shared sentiments similar to Achour’s. She was my guest at the orchestra concert where I met Achour, and acted as the generous ad-hoc research translator for my post-concert interview with Achour. Later, I asked her directly if she found *fusions* to be as outlandish and meaningless as Achour had suggested. In response, she noted that, indeed, “somehow [she]

think[s] there is a part of a trend in it” (pers. comm., April 29, 2009). Additionally, she stated, almost embarrassedly, that she was also “... sort of concerned about original, well, real original Tunisian music” and that she “think[s] that somehow it is in peril” (pers. comm., April 29, 2009). The diversity found in Tunisian concerns and perspectives over purity and the “proper” maintenance of the *harubi* (cultural heritage) point to multiple “legitimate” constructions of musical “authenticity.”

Emina’s primary concern with *fusion* was what she identified as a Tunisian propensity for “superficial” combinations of *ma’luf* with other forms, like jazz or metal (forms she specifically cited). To Emina, these hybridities disrespected Tunisian musical histories of intimate connection to the *harubi*. With regard to many of the *fusion* projects today, Emina lamented a negligence of responsibility in musical education, and also to the perpetuation of cultural legacy and tradition. She said of such “superficial” makers of intentional hybrid musics: “they don’t know enough about their music and that’s frightening, I think, because there’s a lot to know and a lot to discover” (pers. comm., April 29, 2009).

Although her “anxiety of authenticity” implies a tendency towards preservationism in musical preferences, it is significant that Emina recognizes, despite her personal preferences, that “both (*fusion* and the Rashidiya’s *ma’luf*) can exist simultaneously” (pers. comm., April 29, 2009). Beyond musical likes and dislikes, Emina’s acceptance that others find meaning, value, and perhaps even “auras of authenticity” within recent intentionally hybrid musical expressions suggests the coexistence of a number of diverse audiences with different investments in and acceptance of diverse musics within the current greater Tunisian musical field and in the discourses that accompany and explain it.

### *Hybridity as Authenticity in Tunisia*

The relativity, impermanence, and location of contemporaneous anxieties over the maintenance of “authenticity” in Tunisia actively deconstruct Benjamin’s scholastically influential concept of a singular and fixed “authenticity:” “the essence of all that is transmittable from its beginning, ranging from its substantive to its testimony to the history which it has experienced” (1969:215). Benjamin traces the “cult value,” or social popularity and significance of a given artistic entity to its “aura” of “authenticity,” the “testimony” that evidences historical ties to an established “original” (Benjamin 1969:214).

During the nationalist era in Tunisia, the cult value of *ma'luf* was firmly dictated by the Rashidiya institute, which monopolized the rights to define Tunisian musical “authenticity,” and, in doing so, established particular sounds as iconic of the nation. However carefully and particularly Tunisian musical history was presented during the Rashidiya’s heyday and however brightly the aura of “authenticity” seemed to glow (re-enforced by musical markers, but more-so by Andalusian origin myths), the Rashidiya’s “authenticities” were constructed in order to establish a more unified nation, an “imagined community,” from a group of people whose histories were characterized by diversity, cultural layering, and hybridity. The success of the “aura of authenticity” that was defined and presented by the Rashidiya piggybacked off origins already recognized and touted as culturally and historically important, primarily Andalusian musical migrations. The unification of musical hybridities into standardized and “authentically” pure music by the Rashidiya left little room, however, for interpretation or articulation of diversity or hybridity, ideologies that are, perhaps, as close to the hearts of Tunisians as their legends of Andalusian heritage. It is the Tunisian location of “authenticity” *in* musical hybridity



that the Rashidiya has never successfully been capable of articulating for certain “cultural cohorts” within the national community.

The importance and popularity of *fusion* musics in Tunisia, an approach epitomized by the work of Anouar Brahem, can be traced to a number of specific factors. It is the conjunction of these factors—a historical proclivity for locating cultural and artistic “authenticity” in hybrid entities, the internalization of national history as culturally inclusionary and layered, and the more recent external influences of “world music” discourse—that has created social and sonic environments in Tunisia, particularly in urban centers, that are not only *amenable to fusion*, but that welcome hybrid forms as exemplary of nationalist identities.

Ethnomusicologist Timothy Taylor’s theoretical frameworks for understanding locally defined authenticities lend themselves well to discussions of Tunisian musical contexts and conceptions vis-à-vis expectations of cosmopolitan World Music markets. Although it is not Taylor’s aim in *Beyond Exoticism: Western Music and the World* to “explore hybridity as a ‘real,’ on-the-ground mode of cultural production,” a topic I discuss at length in this thesis, he is “nevertheless interested in how the conceptions of hybridity, the discourses of hybridity, affect understandings of musicians and music, and how identifiable musical hybrids are treated discursively” (2007:141).

Taylor emphasizes the significance of the international music industry’s recent (1980s and later) adoption of the label “hybrid” into a growing repertoire of marketing handles for “world music,” a vocabulary that includes “authentic” among other terms. The introduction of hybridity into the consumerist-charged discourse of “world music” through labeling and marketing “means that listeners are now more likely to have multiple referents for their sense of the authentic when hearing world music” (Taylor 2007:141). The construction of new and

multiple indices for “authenticity,” actively shaped and re-shaped among cosmopolitan audiences, is by no means divorced from Tunisian understandings and re-articulations of what constitutes musically “authentic cultural heritage.” Feedback loops between Tunisia and Europe (particularly France) have had profound influences on Tunisian senses of self, Tunisian creative sensibilities, and modes of articulating identity. It is not difficult to see how “world music” markets, both abroad and in urban cosmopolitan circles in Tunisia, are reflected in re-positioning of an “aura of authenticity” for certain sectors of Tunisian society, particularly younger urbanites who engage more heavily, and on a deeper level, with *fusion* than their rural counterparts. After all, the way we discuss musical phenomena influences not only the way we hear and think about music, but practice itself; as Taylor put it, “the ‘real’ and the discursive are not easily disentangled” (2007:146).

Brahem’s success (in Tunisia and abroad) and the popularity of others who followed in his footsteps, like *oud* player Dhafer Youssef, thrive on their reception as “authentic” in terms of both etic (world music) and emic (inclusionary Tunisian) frames of hybridity. For Tunisians, the location of “authenticity” in hybrid forms and styles can be historically traced; in world music models, hybridity has only recently begun to carry meaning in relation to the “authentic.” Parisian and Tunisian audiences each have particular frames of reference for interpreting Brahem’s musical projections of Tunisianness (and neither ought to be thought of as entirely insular), but all of Brahem’s audiences, I would argue, describe his hybrid as “authentic” in one way or another.

As discussed at some length in Chapter 3, however much young Tunisian’s authenticities might rest in hybridities, *fusion* musicians like Anouar Brahem and the members of Kantara, do take measures to “authenticate” the Tunisian components of their hybrids. It is no coincidence

that Brahem makes a clear point of premiering the music of each and every new album and ensemble in his home city of Tunis. Similarly, Kantara's use of pre-existing and easily recognizable songs, like *Rai Star*, Cheb Khaled's rendition of "Sidi Mansour" (Ya Baba), harkens back to historically familiar and "authentic" or classic Tunisian melodies. While such gestures indicate something of an "anxiety of authenticity," as experienced by Tunisian *fusion* artists, celebrations and promotions of *fusion* as "authentic-as-hybrid" have tipped the scales in *fusion's* favor for Tunisian listeners younger than forty. *Fusion*, I would argue, is well on its way to becoming a new location of "authenticity" for Tunisians.

## ***GLOSSARY OF TERMS***

<i>al-musiqa al-andalusiyya</i>	Andalusian music
<i>darija</i>	The Tunisian Arabic dialect
<i>dhikr</i>	“Remembrance of God,” a Sufi practice of worship that typically involves the repetition of the names of God (theomnemosis).
<i>fann</i>	“Art”
<i>fusion</i>	A Tunisian musical approach (started in the 1980s) characterized by intentional and explicit musical hybridity.
<i>garnafi</i>	“From Granada”
<i>gasba</i>	A Maghrebian reed flute in the style of the Turkish <i>nay</i> .
<i>harubi</i>	Tunisian cultural heritage or “roots”
<i>hijaz</i>	The <i>maqam</i> which has become iconic of Arabic music and which relies minimal on micro-tonal nuance.
<i>Imazighen</i>	A cultural group commonly referred to as “Berber” in Tunisia.
<i>iqa</i>	Rhythmic patterns for Arab music.
<i>ma'luf</i>	“familiar” or “customary,” the name for Tunisia’s Arab-Andalusian-derived Tunisian musical form.
<i>maqam</i>	A set of melodic guidelines based on scales with particular modes, emphasized pitches, characteristic patterns, and microtonal distinctions.
<i>maqamat</i>	The plural of <i>maqam</i>
<i>nuba</i>	A Maghrebian song-cycle characterized by unity of mode, or melody type and by a diversity of rhythmic-metric elements.
<i>nubat</i>	The plural of <i>nuba</i>
<i>qanuun</i>	An Arab zither (not specific to Tunisia)
<i>rai</i>	An Algerian popular music originating in the 1930s that garnered significant international audiences.

*taqasim*

The plural of *taqsim*, an improvisatory solo in Arab classical music.

*tarab*

“enchantment” or “entertainment”

*taruth*

“tradition” or “patrimony”

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**APPENDIX A. — MAP OF TUNISIA**



**Map 1** Map of Tunisia and surrounding areas of Libya and Algeria.  
(CIA Factbook Tunisia. <http://www.cia.gov/>)

## APPENDIX B. — GLOSSARY OF MUSICIANS

- Anouar Brahem Active within *fusion* from 1981 to the present, *oud* (and some wordless vocals), works between *ma'luf* and jazz, currently on tour, resides both in Paris and in Tunis.
- Dhafer Youssef Active within *fusion* from 1991 to the present, *oud* and vocals, works between *ma'luf* and jazz, resides in Europe.
- Fadhel Jaziri Director and choreographer for “Nouba” and “Hadhra,” two early theatrical and musical *fusion* projects that premiered in 1991 and 1989, respectively.
- Ghalia Ben Ali Female singer residing in Belgium whose music reflects Arab, jazz, and Hindustani influences. She defines her music as “indie” on her MySpace page (<http://www.myspace.com/ghaliabenaliofficial>).
- Ibrahim Bahloul Teacher of percussion at the Higher Institute of Music in Tunis, photographer, and composer, Bahloul is interested in re-constructing pre-Arab-era Imazighen instruments and musical styles. He describes his work with Ifriga (the ensemble that he established in 1999), as a “temporal *fusion*” that explores ancient local heritage with contemporary styles. His started a related project, Raquesh, in 1986.
- Lotfi Bouchnak Renowned radio star, innovative *oud* player and singer, most popular during the 1990s. Trained at the Rashidiya Institute.
- Mourad Sakli Musicologist and musician currently based at the Center for Arab and Mediterranean Music in Sidi Bou Said as resident musicologist. Explores relations in Tunisia between mass media and the promotion and perpetuation of Tunisian musical heritage.
- Nabil Khemir *Fusion* musician most widely known for his hybrid instrument, the RayJam, that has an *oud* (fretless) neck and an electric guitar (fretted) neck. Khemir works mainly between *ma'luf* and jazz and, in 1997, was awarded an honor by President Ben Ali for his “cultural contribution to the country” ([www.nabilkhemir.com](http://www.nabilkhemir.com)).
- Riadh Fehri Renowned Tunisian *oud* player active in several *fusion* projects, (beginning in the 1990s) that sought to de-construct national-boundedness. His 2005 album was entitled *Le Minaret Et La Tour* (The Minaret and the Tower) and featured compositions for *oud* and piano. Fehri is a founding member of Kantara and has toured with the band in Morocco, Europe, and to the United States.

- Riadh Sghaïer Tunisian Saxophonist based in Tunis. Since the 1990s, he has been creating new interpretations of the *ma'luf* that he calls, interchangeably, both *fusion* and *ma'luf*. He was involved in Agrebi and Jaziri's "Nouba" and "Hadhra" projects.
- Samir Agrebi Contributed musically to "Nouba" and "Hadhra," two early theatrical and musical *fusion* projects that premiered in 1991 and 1989, respectively.
- Sonia Mbarek Renowned radio star, singer, famous for her individualized and soloistic interpretations of the Tunisian *ma'luf* repertoire. Most popular from 1995 to today.

## *APPENDIX C. — LISTENING EXAMPLES*

CD 1: “L’aube” (Sunrise) by the Anouar Brahem Trio: Anouar Brahem (*oud*), François Couturier (piano), Jean Louis Matinier (accordion); on *Le voyage de Sahar*, 2006.

CD 2: “Stopover At Djibouti” by the Anouar Brahem Quartet: Anouar Brahem (*oud*), Klaus Geing (bass clarinet), Björn Meyer (bass), Khaled Yassine (*darbuka*); on *The Astounding Eyes of Rita*, 2009.

CD 3: “The Modok’s train” by the Anouar Brahem Trio: Anouar Brahem (*oud*), Barbaros Erköse (clarinet), Lassaâd Hosni (*bendir, darbuka*); on *Astrakan café*, 2000.

CD 4: “Just One Moment” with permission from Kantara on *Northeastern*, (Soon to be released).

CD 5: “Blue Ridge Mountain Home/Tamalyn” with permission from Kantara on *Northeastern*, (Soon to be released).

CD 6: “Shady Grove” (American folk tune) by Clarence Ashley and Doc Watson on *The Original Folkways Recordings of Doc Watson and Clarence Ashley*, 1994.

CD 7: “Sidi Mansour” by Gougou de Zarzis on *Folk Music and Dance*, Tunisia, 2009.

CD 8: “Shady Grove” with permission from Kantara on *Northeastern* (Soon to be released).

CD 9: “Cortoba” the Anouar Brahem Trio: Anouar Brahem (*oud*), François Couturier (piano), Jean Louis Matinier (accordion); on *Le voyage de Sahar*, 2006.