

**THE TUNISIAN 'ŪD 'ARBĪ:
IDENTITIES, INTIMACY AND NOSTALGIA**

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Salvatore Morra, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

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Abstract

This thesis examines various identities of the Tunisian musical instrument *ūd 'arbī* within the context of *mālūf* urban music. I consider how the *ūd 'arbī* inhabits and performs several aspects of cultural and national identity formations in modern Tunisia (1830-present), highlighting the diverse ways in which the instrument is constructed, transmitted and performed. I argue that the ways in which several types of social actors, including players, luthiers and *mālūf* aficionados, shape the identity of the instrument can be considered through Herzfeld's (1997) theory of cultural intimacy.

In combining techniques such as interviews, analysis of texts and artefacts in workshops of luthiers, in musical instrument museums (London, Brussels, Tunis), in domestic and public performances, as well as the examination of various visual representations of the instrument, I locate the Tunisian *ūd 'arbī* in a web that provides ways of engaging with its "hidden" identities. I analyse how cultural intimacy (Herzfeld, 1997 [2005]) contributes and animates the life of the Tunisian *ūd*. I argue that it acts mainly as an identity metaphor and nostalgic sentiment (i.e. illustrating the Andalusian paradigm of loss and nostalgia); a dynamic association of sounds and other phenomena (namely in the calls for a Tunisian *ūd* timbre); and a craftsmanship of tradition (e.g. wood, shapes and their marking of identity). Drawing on theories and methods from ethnomusicology (Bates 2012; Dawe 2001), anthropology (Herzfeld 1997 [2005]; Boym 2001), and material culture (Woodward 2007; Miller, 2005), my thesis contributes an ethnographic and music-centered approach to interdisciplinary debates about post-colonial nationalism, public intimacy and cultural identity.

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Notes on Spelling and Transliteration

In this thesis, I use a slightly modified version of the system employed by *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden, E. J. Brill) for the Arabic terms. My concern is to provide enough information both about the pronunciation of spoken Tunisian and written modern standard Arabic. For the term which is the subject of this dissertation, I have privileged conventional transliteration (*'ūd*) over pronunciation (*oud*), preceded by the English article "an". For its plural, and that of other terms, I have opted to simplify matters by presenting it with an unitalicised "-s" at the end of the singular form, e.g. *'ūd-s* rather than *'idān* or *a'wād*. Arabic words that are present in the English dictionary such as *Ramadan*, *Sufi*, appear here without diacritical marks. Similarly, the names of places and cities that have conventionalised Western forms maintain those forms rather than more technical transliteration of the standard Arabic; so Sfax rather than *Şfāqs*, Kairouan rather than *Qayruwān*, Sidi Bou Said rather than *Sidī Bū Sa'īd*. Likewise, the names and surnames of Arabic scholars maintain the known forms in their translated publications where I think this will help with bibliographic searches, for example: Guettat rather than *Qaṭāt*, or the legendary player *Ziryāb* rather than *Zirīāb*. Concerning the treatment of the letter *alif* (a, ā) and its common pronunciation in Tunisian Arabic as e or ē, I have opted in some distinguishing occasions to use the Arabic Tunisian one; so *Leīla* rather than *Lāīla*, *sheykh* instead of *shaīkh*. In this respect, I am consistent throughout the thesis except for one term such as the Arabic name *Ziād*. I use the conventional transliteration for the famous player *Ziād Gharsa*, while instead I use the less official and more friendly Arabic Tunisian sound of the letter ē (*Ziēd*) for the player *Ziēd Mehdī*. Lastly, I use the Arabic Tunisian form of *mālūf* instead of *mā'lūf*.

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Introduction

I feel the sense of "immersion", the sonic presence of the ethnographic moment. I am tuned into the surroundings, resonating through the senses, converting the medium of culture into my corresponding consciousness (after Helmreich, 2007). Perhaps my ethnographic diary can tell of other worlds of experience:

The last concert, 31st of May 2015, of the 80th anniversary festival of the foundation of the Rashīdīa Institute of Tunis is about to begin, and I am making my way past the entrance into the court of the palace, the former building of the music institute, founded in 1935 and devoted to the education and promotion of Tunisian music. The site is nearby the qaṣba at the 7 nahaj Drība, among narrow tiny streets of the ancient Medina, which natives informally call: 'arbī. For Tunisians, the Medina is 'arbī, Arabic - to distinguish it from the 19th century French and Italian built urban areas around it.

The hall is already full so I decide to stand at the back to take some photos next to 'Alī Sayarī, a well-known mālūf aficionado. There are young and old, men and women, chatting and greeting, here people never listen in silence, most are well- dressed. After some opening remarks by the new director Hedī Mohulī, the invited orchestra of the town Soussa takes to the stage. They are dressed in typical costumes of Andalusian musicians in Tunisia, coloured robes topped by red woollen hats. The ensemble consists of some thirty musicians performing on the standard Egyptian/Oriental style Arab lute ('ūd), violins, ṭār (tambourine) and darbuka drum, a solo flat-back mandolin, a mixed choir of male-female and children's voices, and only one 'ūd 'arbī player in the middle.



Figure 1. A PERFORMANCE AT THE RASHĪDĪA MUSIC INSTITUTE 31ST MAY 2015. THE ENSEMBLE RASHĪDĪA OF SOUSSA. PHOTO: SALVATORE MORRA.

They begin performing the nūba in the Tunisian mode mēya from the established national repertoire (1960s). As the melody lifts into the higher register and the rhythm is accentuated, the ‘ūd ‘arbī plays several distinctive accents and I can feel the strong touch of the boned rīsha (plectrum). This fluttering effect of the special plectrum has an unusual combination of roughness and warmth, as some particular resonances with the tuning came to materialise a unique sonic timbre. I listen carefully to discern the alien world this sound draws. The stroking gesture recalls the intimate sense of crafting the instrument, the shaping of its organic matter and potential relationships between the player’s body, the ‘ūd, and its maker. It creates a sense of being in a landscape that extends beyond the confines of sound.

It is a typical festival performance, convivial, cheerful and well presented. While musicians perform the fast movement (khatam) of the suite towards the end of the evening, I greeted some other friends who I had not seen for a long time. After the concert, with enthusiasm and immersed in the chaotic excitement of the very end of the festival, I introduced myself to the ‘ūd ‘arbī player of the evening, Ridhā Amamū, telling him that I was fascinated by this peculiar instrument. He soon bemoaned the fact that young people are not interested in it anymore. “All they want is to play the guitar,” he said. There is the whole summer ahead and plenty of time to do some work.

This account traces one route through the central topic of this thesis: how musical instruments come to be intertwined in making social and cultural identities. It is orientated around the Tunisian ‘ūd ‘arbī with which people perform contemporary *mālūf*, one of urban Tunisia’s foremost musical genres. Each ‘ūd ‘arbī is, at once, the creator of stories about players, makers and the instrument itself, as well as being an existing material object which is experienced through many musical, artisan and sentimental practices. The instrument, then, inhabits a space between myth and reality, between materiality and the social-cultural contexts it circulates. The stories "behind" the instruments provide means by which people recognise identities and the boundaries which separate them (see Bates, 2012).

I start from the premises that *mālūf* plays a key role in Tunisian Arab culture providing a complex artistic heritage of poetry, music and history and that it and its practices both reflect and shape social, cultural and economic transformation. As Maḥmūd Guettat explains,

"Starting from their own indigenous cultures, North Africa and Andalusia arrived at an important artistic tradition by way of Islam and the Arabic language [...] As we observe the course of this music, we can discern "high" periods of development and intense production; periods of retreat,

reflection and preservation; and today resurrection, renaissance and widespread diffusion" (Guettat, 2002: 441).

In this complex historical music making of *mālūf*, few traditional musical instruments have today retained their role and importance within this musical genre. While the bowed fiddle *rebēb* or the keyboard *harmonium*, have been replaced by violins and electric pianos, traditional percussions and 'ūd-s, instead, are still key components of the various ensemble formations. The 'ūd (often spelt *oud*, sometimes named also *kouitra*, *kwitra*, *quwaytara*), a plucked instrument, is the most prominent musical instrument of the Arab-Islamic world. Throughout the twentieth century, it developed an unusually large following in the Arab world and outside, capturing the imagination of musicians more so than many other Middle Eastern traditional instruments. A recognised standard Arab/Egyptian model ('ūd *sharqī*, oriental 'ūd, also called 'ūd *miṣrī*, Egyptian) is the most used type along with the Turkish one, whereas models from Iran, Greece, Iraq and Syria are also variously found. In Tunisia, there co-exist several practices and styles of 'ūd as well as a unique type recognised as indigenous and genuinely Tunisian named 'ūd 'arbī, today also known as 'ūd *tunsi*. The 'ūd 'arbī is a four double-course short necked instrument. It consists of a sound chest made of a series of ribs, linked to a flat front surface of wood, and pierced by three sound holes, near which a membrane made of shell and wood protects the belly from the strokes of the plectrum. Its shape differs from the standard Egyptian model, as do the tuning according to different regional traditions, whose 'ūd-s are known variously as *kouitra* and 'ūd 'arbī in Algeria, 'ūd *ramal* in Morocco.



Figure 2. THE TUNISIAN 'ŪD 'ARBĪ. PHOTO: DAVID SAN MILAN, COURTESY HORNIMAN MUSEUM

This instrument has an uneven and ambiguous diffusion throughout the country and "reading" its origin, features and use, however, can be problematic. The 'ūd 'arbī's identity is not fixed; its essence appears differently from different angles and in diverse contexts, hence the need for contextual and historical specificity. The knowledge around this instrument in Tunisia is sometimes frustratingly abstract, vague or speculative. For these reasons, I have attempted to ground my investigation of 'ūd 'arbī's identity in a broad spectrum of notions of ethnicity, nation-state, craftsmanship, sound and so on, which help to explore its many facets.

As I discovered early on in my research, compelling ideas about identity shape its transmission, construction and performance, take on varied significance in the hands of *'ūd* players in Tunisia and abroad. I became increasingly aware that by developing a perspective on the Tunisian music sphere through attention to this instrument I could shed new light on traditions and practices of North African music, and indeed challenge some established narratives in the literature. The following pages take numerous routes through this terrain, discussing, amongst other things: how the *'ūd 'arbī* is seen as part of the *mālūf* story, with emphasis on the significance of music transmission; the ways a musical instrument is caught up in allegorical webs overflowing with national symbolism and symbolic associations; how practices including the making of this musical instrument in contemporary Tunisian society incorporate broader Arab-global discourses. I try to weave these routes together into a story about players, makers and audiences who pervade the instrument itself with the range of values and meanings through which it assumes its importance in culture identity. I want to use the word "identity" very flexibly here. The task is not to define what I mean by "identity", but to treat peoples' reactions to *'ūd 'arbī* (usually implicit) as one object of enquiry. This task might include places and spaces, phenomena and sentiments, but is also made with much more specificity: the thread of a story featuring a significant *'ūd 'arbī* in museum collections, *this* piece of wood (rosette) carving, *that* instrument belonging to a legendary player.

Further, these interests could be rephrased: I am also interested in how identities are "shaped" through the instrument, and how individuals participate in them. Since the 1960s in contemporary societies, identity has usually been imagined particularly in relation to matters of ethnicity or nation, yet "practised" in a wide variety of ways (Stokes, 1994). For example, *'ūd 'arbī* players talk about their instrument as "Tunisian". I start from this assertion to explore whether and how it evokes and identifies their culture, and how makers, the crafting of the instrument, its materiality, all contribute to this identity construction. As I elaborate below, the uneven character of the Tunisian *'ūd* in Tunisia means that from some angles it appears to be a single collective tradition, even dying away, but it nonetheless seems to be practised and experienced in a variety of ways and places: Tunis, Sfax, Monastir, Kairouan, Binzert and more globally France and Italy. This motivates my insistence above, namely that the last sentences of the opening ethnographic sketch, [Amamū]: "all they want is to play the guitar," should be taken as distinctive rather than representative.

As a bridge between literature on the *'ūd* and ethnomusicological perspectives on music and identity, we need to consider existing academic ideas on self/national identity, the development of policies of cultural heritage and forms of hybridity, and the ways these are connected in a historical perspective. The following questions are intended to shape the research combining these main areas. In what ways does this peculiar Tunisian instrument re-configure or re-formulate identities within the

social contexts and spaces it is found? How should we conceive of national identity through a musical instrument? (see Bates, 2012).

Initial observations suggest that there may be a link between the idea of an artificial construction of the past with its present representation, and the social and national importance that the *'ūd 'arbī* has developed within Tunisian urban music in 20th century. I ask whether the *'ūd 'arbī* is embodied within several historical issues of cultural and national identity formations, music institutionalisation, public and private dichotomies and more modern revival practices in Tunisia, and how these roles have shaped its contemporary understanding in the society. Discourse about the apparent risk of its being abandoned, for example, brings us to reflect on the question: has the Tunisian *'ūd* experienced a "cultural loss"? Responding to this issue, one of the main aims of this research is to contribute to the growing musical research on nostalgia in the Mediterranean (Shannon, 2015a; Davis, 2015, Glasser, 2016). Just as musical practices contribute to how identity is "made", so I will argue, intimacy (Herzfeld, 1997 [2005]), contributes and animates the Tunisian *'ūd* life. It acts mainly as an identity trope and nostalgic sentiment (i.e. illustrating the Andalusian Tunisian paradigm); a dynamic source of sounds and other phenomena (namely, in the calls for a Tunisian *'ūd* timbre); a material resource (e.g. wood, shapes and their symbolic associations), and a powerful imaginary that provides ways of engaging with the identity of the musical instrument. I will investigate why this instrument matters in terms of Tunisian, North African, Arab-Andalusian, Arab and Mediterranean music.

As ethnomusicological studies on instruments have demonstrated, the meanings, representations, material qualities and status of instruments vary over time. Attention has been given to examining the entanglement of musical instruments with globalisation (Dawe, 2001), commodification (Keister 2004), with mass tourism (Gibson and Connell, 2005), 'world music' projects (Dawe, 2010; Seyama, 1998), trans-national musical elements (Charry, 1994; Jacobson, 2008), and with changes in instrument-making (Polak, 2000). Ethnomusicologically speaking, the *'ūd 'arbī's* case is one of patrimonialisation and revival. This can be traced in the artistic, pedagogical, political and symbolic meanings given to the instrument, as well as in its varying material qualities over time. The focus of my study, within the discipline of ethnomusicology, is the mutating course of the *'ūd 'arbī's* public life, situating the instrument's changing performance practices, meanings and values within a heterogeneous cluster of sociocultural currents that interact with individual and national actors.

Jankowsky has argued that an anxiety about national cultural loss and its re-appropriation is a feature of the religious and ritual-spectacle performance of *Hadhra* in Tunisia (2017: 882). The *'ūd 'arbī*, I suggest, reveals a degree of apprehension about a loss of connection to the notion of Andalusia, and a concern with its supposed lack in living national musical traditions. My claim is comparable with that of Jonathan Glasser, who argues that in other neighboring countries such as Algeria, the central

conceit of Andalusian music revival is based on a narrative of rescue from loss and of musical origin in a "lost" paradise (Glasser, 2016: 4). As I will demonstrate, the materiality and identity of the Tunisian *'ūd 'arbī* have become imbued with nationalistic values, coming to symbolise an Andalusian past and to mediate nostalgia for the same. The instrument acts as an emblem of cultural identity, carrying importance as a national instrument, similarly to what happened elsewhere in the Mediterranean for instruments such as *saz*, *nay* and *lyra* (Bates, 2012; Dawe, 2005; Senay, 2014). This juxtaposition of Andalusia and Tunisia reveals continuities in ideas about longing, and about a sense of loss over time, demonstrating the variety of perspectives involved in the nostalgic framing of the Tunisian *'ūd 'arbī* as Andalusian. Differently, in other ethnomusicological researches, revival stories are less about loss than about finding ways to reclaim cultural identity by integrating historic practice with contemporary experience (Nooshin, 2014; Hill, 2014; Hill and Bithell, 2014). The inevitable cultural recontextualisation of the *'ūd 'arbī*'s revival instead will demonstrate tensions between notions of high and low cultures and between the dynamics of national institutions versus private milieu.

The Theoretical Frame

I began the previous section by suggesting that each *'ūd 'arbī* discussed in this thesis is both an actual material object as well as an authored story about a person, an instrument, a place. What I have in mind can be condensed into a central interest with materiality (Miller, 2005). This shapes the theoretical arguments and methodological approaches at stake throughout this thesis and so seems a good place to start. This thesis follows in the footsteps of the internally diverse body of studies in material culture, specifically of musical instruments seen in terms of cultural meanings and their contributions to social relations (Qureshi, 1997; Bennett and Dawe, 2001; Bates, 2012). As Woodward (2007) indicates, there are different ways of approaching materiality, but Miller's (2005) broad characterisation is useful here:

"Much of what we are exists not through our consciousness but as an exterior environment that habituates and prompts us", "the most obvious expression that the term materiality might convey is artifacts which is the focus of *habitus* and indeed much of recent material culture studies" (Miller, 2005: 5).

In short, Miller explains that we need to show "how the things that people make, make people" (Miller, 2005: 38). The Tunisian *'ūd* in question involves multiple social contexts, ranging, as the ethnographic example above shows, from Soussa to Tunis, from adult to young generations. When social contexts are multiple, the definition of interactions becomes a more complex process. In the initial ethnographic sketch, Ridhā Amamū, for example, seems just as engaged practically with this instrument as he is with lamenting its abandonment from which he stands apart. A musical

instrument, then, can be seen as a system of action, intended to change the world rather than encode symbolic propositions about it. In turn, the Tunisian *'ūd* would be located not so much in culture as in the dynamics of social interaction - which indeed may be conditioned by culture but which is better seen, as Gell suggests, as a real process (Gell, 1998: 10).

Central to the entire discipline concerning musical instrument and material culture is the concept explained by Dawe that musical instruments are now viewed as:

"Objects existing at the intersection of material, social and cultural worlds, socially and culturally constructed, and as active in the shaping of social and cultural life" (Dawe, 2001: 220).

Bates suggests that a musical instrument: "is not only central to human social networks but is also itself an actor with agency" (Bates, 2012: 363). Musical instruments therefore are now also seen as speaking of the whole society and the complex processes by which they were made, of the events they are attached to. They communicate messages across peoples, environment and time. On Woodward's insistence that "it is stories and narratives that hold an object together, giving it cultural meaning" (Woodward, 2009: 60 [quoted in Bates, 2012: 366]), Bates argues that the aim in music studies is to define the affective, symbolic and embodied meanings of musical instruments within the cultures in which they belong. My concern is in what the *'ūd 'arbī* may tell us about the culture to which it belongs. On a more abstract level, first I intend to investigate what the *'ūd* signifies specifically for Tunisian music and Tunisian culture. Secondly, I wish to examine what kind of social meaning develops among groups and individuals in particular discourses about Tunisian national music. The aim is to understand better both social structures, inequalities and social differences or dualities, and also human action, emotions and meanings generated by the *'ūd* within contemporary Tunisian urban society.

Traditionally, the field of material culture has been outlined as a subset of other theories of culture, from philosophy to arguments about reason and logic, with its multidisciplinary perspectives and contributions from anthropology, sociology, psychology, design and general culture studies (Woodward, 2007: 4). I will use what Woodward lists as a "cultural" approach (2007: 29) rather differently in order to understand a musical instrument as material culture. This approach insists that an object has important cultural meanings, a capacity of making meanings, including matters of social difference, but my focus is on how the instrument establishes social identities, how it also assists in the formation and performance of subjective identity through material engagements, and to questions of social-identity structure and inequality. In anthropology of art for example, material culture is intended as the mobilisation of aesthetic principles in the course of social human-object interaction. According to Gell (1998):

"There must be some kind of social agency whenever we encounter an effect surrounding us"
(Gell, 1998: 2).

In Gell's work, the object is an extension of the agency of particular individuals within a certain culture, the object becomes a form of instrumental action (1998: 17). Gell's basic thesis is that works of art, images, icons, have to be treated, in the context of an anthropological theory, as person-like; that is, sources of, and targets for, social agency (1998: 2).

More recently, Jane Bennett explains that we must readjust the status of human actants: not by "denying humanity's awesome, awful powers", but by presenting these powers as evidence of our own constitution as "vital materiality" (Bennett, 2010: 10). In other words, "human power is itself a kind of thing-power" (Bates, 2012: 373). Bennett's orientation directs me to ask questions about agency. How is the Tunisian *'ūd* implicated in socio-cultural processes? How do shapes and materials (wood, strings, plectra) come to be socially meaningful as markers of identity for some *'ūd 'arbī* players and makers? I will address such questions by exploring a range of activities and interactions, that take place in the instrument making, including availability of materials, technical and cultural exchanges, human interactions with raw materials, including work of craftsmanship. Sennett's concept of craft of experience by which "crafts provide insight into the technique of experience that can shape our dealing with others from the organic to the society" (2009: 290), helps me argue that crafting the Tunisian *'ūd 'arbī* shapes the instrument's identity too (chapter 3). I will examine the intimate sense of crafting *'ūd-s 'arbī*. What can we discover from the work of shaping organic matter into this culturally distinct instrument? How do luthiers and players understand the materials constituting these instruments? The identification of standard elements in the making process of the *'ūd 'arbī*, will cement the hierarchical relationships between traditional and modern, authentic and hybrid, dominant and subaltern instruments (Stross, 1999; Causey, 1999).

Importantly, material objects are concerned with another term, also less familiar to ethnomusicology: *anthropomorphisation* (see Bennett 2010), that is, according to Bates' example of the *saz*, being regarded "as capable of crying or feeling sorrow" (2012: 394). We are going to take into account Bennett's assertion that it is wrong to deny vitality to non-human bodies, and that a careful dose of anthropomorphisation can help reveal that vitality (Bennett, 2010: 33). This also leads to an interest in fetishism, which means attending to the invisible, the immaterial, the supra-sensible (chapter 1). As William Pietz has argued, the "fetish" emerges through the trading relations of the Portuguese in the West Africa in the sixteenth and seventeenth century (Pietz, 1985). For Pietz, fetish as a concept was elaborated to demonize the supposedly arbitrary attachment of West Africans to material objects, to their false manufactures as opposed to the true ones of the catholic church (Pietz, 1985: 10). Later, European entrepreneurs were interested in objects only to the extent that they could be transformed into commodities. This thesis is especially allied with various reworkings of the term

fetish by authors including Patricia Spyer and Peter Stallybrass, who are broadly engaged with the possibility that history, memory and desire might be materialised in objects that are touched, loved and worn (Stallybrass, 1998: 186). In this respect, one of the issues is to discover how Tunisian musicians and audiences make a cultural classification of this musical instrument within a system that is, for Durkheim and Mauss's theory of classification (1963), essentially symbolic, and where musical instruments are also seen as sites of memory and recollections (Erll and Nunning, 2008). At the heart of this thesis is the idea that the *'ūd* in Tunisia might be seen as a crucial link between the social (groups) and the individual actors, between collective and individual memory becoming itself a social marker and an expression of identity.

Both these concerns with anthropomorphisation and fetishism also lead me to ask questions about materiality and *dematerialising* (chapter 2 and 3). If there exists a life principle that animates matter, what would happen to our thinking about musical instruments if we experienced "materiality" as "actant"? How do makers relate to the instruments they make at different stages in the making process, and how does the historical instrument mediate between contemporary instrument maker and user? How do makers adapt to changes in the available raw materials, construction tools, and instrumental design available to them and subsequently alter the way in which instruments are made? Just how far can construction techniques change without resulting in a *new* or hybrid instrument? (see also Bates, 2012: 388). Finally, I ask whether there are organologically improved versions of instruments, and what do they tell us about instrument-performer-maker relations in terms of style, technique and new sound solution? So I am interested here in how two different kinds of agency, material and non-material, relate. The latter, borrowing directly from Bennett, concerns "the force of things" (2010: 1). The former concerns how this musical material, in our particular *'ūd*, is made. Attending to the relationship between the two raises a crucial point: that, as Adorno puts it, there is always a nonidentity between the thing and its representation, and nonidentity resides in denied possibilities in the invisible field of surroundings the world of objects (see Bennett, 2010: 13-15). So my argument will be that the *'ūd 'arbī* and its identity are combined in and by collections of material sequences through time and space. If this sounds too abstract a formulation, exploring the Tunisian *'ūd* will demonstrate that such co-relation is in fact highly practical, requiring technical and material work.

Moreover, my interest in the notion of materiality is not just as a tool for scrutinising the co-action of music and identity in the Tunisian *'ūd*, but is bound up in the way that investigation is done. The ethnographic and theoretical aspects of this study are themselves performed in a world of material objects, both in museum archives and in performance contexts (chapter 2 and 5). As Bennett points out, a lot more happens to the concept of agency when non-human things are figured less as "social construction and more as actors, and once human themselves are assessed not as autonomous

but as vital materiality" (2010: 21). Thus Bennett's theory of distributive agency, things as "agentic" assemblage (2010: 23), is crucial to my theoretical research frame. For Bennett:

"A body enhances its power in or as a heterogeneous assemblage and the agency is distributed across rather than being a capacity localised in or by human efforts" (Bennett, 2010: 23).

Here Bennett goes beyond the exclusive relation of human/non-human assemblage. This concept of assemblage helps to explore the *'ūd 'arbī* intertwined identities, whether African, Tunisian and Arab Andalusian, some or all of them, dislodging agency from its exclusive mooring on individuals on whom so far too much weight and intention has been placed. Therefore, I take into account that the actant's peculiarity is that it is "vibratory" (Bennett, 2010: 35), that is the *'ūd's* association with identity is a site to explore wider social attitudes towards life and culture. This is, in short, a research about the identity of this Tunisian musical instrument, told through its actors and the instrument itself. Finally, and as I mentioned at the start, what does being a "Tunisian" instrument mean is the question at stake here. As we are going to see, the *'ūd 'arbī* has ambiguous positions in the society and it inhabits cultural spaces: the *sheykh* familiar tradition, the national ideology and intimate hidden individuals, that overlap, intersect and transform continuously the identity of the instrument.

My interest in making a case for ethnomusicologists to consider the particular relevance of musical instrument in the shaping of musical practice as well as social values and ideals is not entirely new. Similar aims were surely behind Regula Qureshi's "The Indian Sarangi: Sound of Affect, Site of Contest" (1997), Andy Bennett and Kevin Dawe's book *Guitar Cultures* (2001), and Senay's more recent article "The Fall and Rise of the Ney: From the Sufi Lodge to the World Stage" (2014). Each of these works, in various ways, intersects with my theme of musical instrument and identity. Bennett and Dawe (2001) present fine-grained ethnographies of the guitar as a global phenomenon, emphasising how a musical instrument tends to embody deep patterns of thought and experience that can vary with place and time in a society. They state that their interest lies in the meaning and values that players, makers and audiences bring to the guitar world and the way in which they become cultural icons at national and global levels. These guitar cultures cover a range of themes that engage with some of the core concerns of cultural studies, and this is something I seek to emulate in Chapter Two and Three. My focus in classifying the Tunisian *'ūd* instrument, for example, lies in the cultural study of musical instruments (chapter 2). It is a study of a musical instrument in the field, in Tunisia, not in a laboratory, but through deep immersion in the instrument's musical culture, its role in the cultural settings and the context in which the instrument is made and played.

This cultural dimension is also present in the work of Regula Burckhart Qureshi (1997). Qureshi argues that the Indian *sarangi* is uniquely endowed with meaning and its sound mostly

immediately evokes situated experience. Concerning sound, I also attempt to take one interpretative step beyond those made by Qureshi (chapter 4). She explores for example the interrelations between audible aesthetics of sound and instrumental symbolisms (see also Bates, 2009: 368), but does not ask what other possible ways of interpreting and experiencing sound might have if not simply through listening. My own study benefits from the recent surge of works in sound studies. It emerges as an expanding discourse involving many disciplines (see Feld and Brenneis, 2004), from musicology to anthropology, social theorists, historians and scholars in science and technology studies, who focused mainly on listening and reception. I aim to highlight that when it comes to the players, identity shifts to the playing of the instrument and inevitably to the sound they perceived. It is often argued by players that the *'ūd 'arbī* "sounds Tunisian" in certain ways, through specific sensorial effects and particular resonances that come to materialise a unique sonic timbre. Drawing on Connor's (2004) theory of intersensoriality, I explore the reflexive dynamic of those effects by which intersensorial experience of *'ūd 'arbī* through touch, sight and hearing roots the instrument's sound in Tunisian society (chapter 4).

From the opening pages of Senay's article (2014), the parallels between *ney* and *'ūd* were clear to me and, by the end of the article, they were overwhelming (the connection with public life, national cultural policy, the diffusion in new concert spaces, the instrument's renaissance and the new auditory and pedagogical sites). The way in which the *ney* and its interaction between individual, national and extra-national actors also resonate with common narratives about *'ūd 'arbī*'s appeal. However, Senay compellingly demonstrates that the expansion of the *ney*'s musical genres and its incorporation into popular music forms stylised as "Sufi music" play a central role in the public construction as a "spiritual instrument". In the case of *'ūd 'arbī*, the link between emblematic clichés and nationhood may not present itself quite so explicitly, but the ways in which the personal and the private aspects of instruments' experiences are raised to the level of social imaginaries is one that I share in this thesis.

'ūd 'Arbī, Intimacy and Nostalgia

One of the major concerns of this thesis is the contribution that the *'ūd 'arbī* and its music make to representations of intimacy in the Tunisian public sphere. Such representations, I argue, provide one of the principal sources of *'ūd 'arbī*'s identity, generating shared points of reference that afford possibilities for 'cultural intimacy' (Berlant, 1998; Herzfeld, 1997 [2005]). Moreover, I aim to demonstrate how memory and nostalgia (Erll and Nunning 2008; Boym, 2001), play important roles in the transmission of the instrument's identity and the generation of particular kinds of hidden practices and sociality. Whether it is the place of memory, a music café, a particular instrument, an object of memorabilia, such idioms of nostalgia enable people to connect with others, thereby generating a certain kind of intimate shared experience (chapter 1). However, idioms of nostalgia can also have

ambiguous and distancing effects, drawing attention to myths and rhetorical forces. Thus, idioms of nostalgia, as I argue in Chapter One, simultaneously create both intimacy and collective memory. This dualistic dynamic, I suggest, is central to the experience with the instrument, which gives birth to acts of both nationalistic folklore and perpetual memory. Tropes of nostalgia, memory and loss that characterise these acts bring us back to issues of identity; that is, how we experience, evaluate and modify our thoughts, feelings and actions in relation to top-down imposed rhetoric.

In this respect, the Arab-Andalusian-Maghrebian ideological framework (Shannon, 2015a; Davis, 2015; Glasser, 2016), which continues to elaborate a psychology of cultural nostalgia in modern musicology, involves a dynamic of memory that determines the form and conveys the nostalgic messages. The 80th anniversary festival of the foundation of the Rashīdīa Music Institute of Tunis (2015) of the initial ethnographic sketch, represents not so much the passing of an era for *mālūf* music in Tunisia as a moment of changes. It is, in part, a moment of self-recognition, collecting memory, nostalgic glance and anxieties about national heritage. It is this Andalusian identity as cultural fixity in which the *ūd 'arbī* finds itself entrapped that I wish to challenge. In this respect, I investigate the dominant power and agency of the *ūd 'arbī* for *mālūf* music practice, and by exploring the indicative social character of the instrument, begin to demonstrate how the scholarly construction of Arab Andalusian music is founded on nostalgia, and how this facilitated contributions to cultural nationalism arising in Tunisia since the French occupation (1881) (chapter 1). This view has forced us to see the *ūd 'arbī* embedded with the *mālūf* cultural heritage without considering other possibilities of identity.

However, investigating this issue around the *ūd 'arbī* and *mālūf* through the concept of nostalgia had not been a formal part of my early research. Beyond that, I carried out such work at a time when a book written by the Tunisian journalist, actor and songwriter Ṭahār Melligi (1937-) titled *Tunis Nostalgie* (Tunis Nostalgia) was published in 2016. Melligi describes an artistic "epoch" that spans half a century from the 1930s onwards through the radio, music theatres, cinema and television, conveying a sense of nostalgia for a colonial period of multiculturalism and Tunisian self-identity construction. My subsequent approach to understanding Tunisians' relation to history and heritage has been influenced by this work in the way that a sense of nostalgia (Boym, 2001) embedded in the Arab Andalusian heritage, I suggest, needs relocating to a more recent time of great artistic development and nation-state formation as placed by Melligi in the 1930s-1940s. As I attempt to show, the *ūd 'arbī* becomes an icon of nationhood at the turn of 20th century bearing an alleged Andalusian past along with it (chapter 1).

Building on reflections of Svetlana Boym's *The Future of Nostalgia* (2001), I suggest that the sentiment of nostalgia through which this "Andalusian golden past" (Delitzsch 1836 [see Davis, 2015: xv]) is "made" and constructed can be diversely conceived. Through the Tunisian *ūd*, musical practice

and various musical objects (sounds, instruments, videos, recordings, images and so on) participate, provoke, sustain and transform strongly felt sentiments and anxieties about their homeland and nation, without involving a somewhat bizarre everyday juxtaposition of past and future, images of pre-modern and modern concerned with the Arab–Andalusian Muslim courtly tradition of medieval Islamic Spain (Rounet, 1922b; d'Erlanger, 1917; al-Mahdī, 1981a; Guettat, 1980, 2002; Jones, 1977, 2002a; Davis, 2004, 2015). Their role is all the more important for being subtle and unexpected, and for revealing how musical instruments participate in broader social discourses about identity.

In the context of national cultural policy, while Tunisian musical nationalism is generally associated with cultural policymakers and public institutions involving Andalusian music in the mid-twentieth century, the *ūd 'arbī* reveals imposed behaviours and identity formation. I borrow from Herzfeld a kind of ambiguity lying between "lability" and "fixity" (Herzfeld, 2005: 89), to shift the focus from official ideology to what players say and do, providing us with insights into the *ūd 'arbī*'s shifting cultural significance throughout my thesis. I am interested in how the national music ideology growing from independence has found depth in the Andalusian trope for a "modern homogeneity", what Herzfeld again calls an idiom of structural nostalgia (Herzfeld, 2005: 95).

My approach to studying the relationship between music, national construction and nostalgia in public culture has been influenced particularly by the work of Martin Stokes (2010) on Turkish popular music. Stokes seeks to show how sentimental music culture in Turkey and elsewhere play key roles in conceptions of citizenship. Drawing on Michael Herzfeld's (1997 [2005]) concept of 'cultural intimacy', Stokes (2010) argues that sentimental music cultures tend towards intimate, as opposed to official, representations of the nation. I aim to highlight how similarly intimate and ambivalent modes of attachment are at work in the *ūd 'arbī*. Stokes is also concerned with analysing how specific iconic performers help to structure and sustain sentimental public discourse, whereas I am mainly interested in how iconic forms of musical instruments act as magnets that bring people's identity together. I nevertheless seek to shed light on both of these dimensions. Thus, on the one hand, I examine how individuals and their intimate expressions fuel the *ūd 'arbī* identity throughout the country, challenging the marginalisation and impoverished official transmission of the instrument (chapter 4 and 5). On the other, I am concerned with how the sense of nostalgia that such icons enable is offset by their contribution to an insatiable public desire for heritage representations and national discourses on the individual (chapter 1). I aim to demonstrate how the *ūd 'arbī* gives culturally specific meanings to sounds, materials and practices, which, in turn, shape ideas about identity and social subject formations. Before going further, though, I should say something about the Tunisian *mālūf* context and raise some specific questions about modernity and the Tunisian *ūd 'arbī*, questions that will reverberate through the thesis.

An Overview of *Mālūf* and the 'ūd 'Arbī

Mālūf is the most complex musical genre in Tunisia. Its complexity is a result of its inclusion of multiple musical forms (*nūba*, *qaṣīda*, *shughūl*, *bashraf*, *istikhbār*, *zendelī*, *mūwashshaḥāt* and *zajāl*) and its lack of connection to specific religious, ritual or ceremonial contexts, making it the go-to genre for many leisure, celebrations and stylistic influences (African, Egyptian and Turkish Ottoman). Defining *mālūf* is a difficult task. On the one hand, *mālūf* varies a great deal according to historical moment, geographical area, social class and performance context in Tunisia. On the other, the difficulty also has to do with the fact that other genres in neighboring countries may refer to similar styles of *mālūf* using different terms, which also vary according to geography, social class and history. In this thesis, I employ the term *mālūf* as a broad definition for the music that with the 'ūd 'arbī at the heart of my study is typically performed. Most Tunisians I encountered referred to *mālūf* simply as *mūsīqa taqlīdīyya* (literally, 'traditional music'). Generally, *mālūf* can be read as more or less synonymous with what Ruth Davis refers to as "Tunisian art music" (2002: 505), and Maḥmūd Guettat refers to as *nūba* (2002: 449). However, such terms rely heavily on context. They are also used to refer to a vast array of Tunisian musical practices including distinct regional styles, as well as genres that are perceived to be less traditional, artful or sophisticated, for example, the *ughnīa*, (Tunisian popular songs) (Sakli, 1994), variously performed by the *jawq de mālūf*, the *firqa classique*, *l'orchestra de l'harmonium* and the *jawq nouveau*, and in different performance contexts. I will explain the subtle intersections between these terms and genres in Chapter One of this thesis. Here, I begin, however, by sketching some of the general features that define the genre before proceeding to map out the specific use of the 'ūd 'arbī.

In many parts of Tunisia, particularly among urban centers, *mālūf* is such a general term that it is sometimes a synonym for 'music' or 'song', which tends to display certain key characteristics. They can be condensed in what Guettat calls the 'edifice' of *mālūf*, namely the *nūba* (musical session or suite) (Guettat, 2002: 446). Rhythmically, the *nūba* is based on continually repeating units made up of compound sequences. One can usually discern this rhythmic pattern in the instrumental accompaniment (often percussion) rather than the melody, which is typically heavily accompanied. In modern *mālūf* performance, each *nūba* is named for one of the melodic modes, and each in turn is divided into several rhythmic movements based on primary meters.

In North African music, the mode system differs from the eastern one. For fear of upsetting them, you should never say to a purist *maloufeji* that *sikāh* is like *naḥawand* or that *aṣba'in* is like *ḥijāz*. In Maghreb, the term traditionally used for mode is *ṭab'* – pl. *ṭubū'a* (nature, effect, temperament), which means to "imprint", "embed" (Baldissera, 2006: 210), while the modal unit tetra-chords are named *'iqd* – pl. *'uqūd* (Davis, 2004: 15). Tunisian modes *ṭubū'a* incorporate for the most part micro intervals that are not common in other Arab Levant musical traditions of *maqām* (Iraqi and Egyptian) such as: *ramal*, *dhīl*, *ramal mēya*, etc. (al-Mahdī, 1982). Few modes have pentatonic characters (e.g.

dhīl). Each mode is associated with a particular hour of the day, the natural elements, aspects of the human emotional or physical condition, and through these, potentially, the broader concept of ethos (Davis, 1996: 423; Wright, 1992: 566). For Guettat *ṭab'* is the recalling of a cultural identity (Guettat, 1980: 278).

Since the era of mass media and commercial recording, the two systems *maqām/ṭab'* have readily overlapped in Tunisian music culture. Tunisians recognise exactly when a mode is part of one or another system and they are free to choose which one to use in their compositions. The co-existence of these two systems raises the question of whether they are strictly intended to be played on respective instruments of the different music culture they belong to. Researchers have not gone into this in much detail. Many of these musical characteristics overlap with other North African musical genres. For example, genres such as the *āla*, *san'a*, and *al-gharnātī* – associated with the Maghreb (Rounet, 1922b; Guettat, 1980; Jones, 2002a; Elsner, 2002; Davila, 2015; Reynolds, 2015a, b) – and other repertoires and practices of the region, such as Sufi, *Gnāwa*, *Ṣṭambēlī*, etc. – that engage with different ethnicities inhabiting the space (Saidani, 2006; Langlois, 2009; Jankowsky, 2010; Mahfoufi, 2015).

Urban music is related to African-Tunisian rhythm, which is usually intensely joyful, in contrast to the haunting sub-Saharan slave (trade) music *Ṣṭambelī* and its incessant percussive *shqāshiq* (Jankowsky, 2010: 35), or again to the *shahāda* in accelerating high-pitch climax of the Sufi *dhikr* practice (Jones, 2002: 516). But the various *instikhbārāt* (pl.) solo improvisations on the *'ūd 'arbī* keep the continuous compound rhythms of the songs as if this were their very purpose. It identifies the somehow similar idiomatic and percussive beats here and there in all Tunisian musical practices, whether traditional or more modern. From the initial 2/4 *barwal* or its variation of *dakhūl barwal* with 3 dum to the 3/8 *khatam*, or the slow 6/4 *khafif* and the more complex *mṣaddar*. Tunisians discuss the problem of modernisation and identity endlessly, examining them from all angles in search of a solution. Sociologists and anthropologists study it, musicologists listen to it in concerts and debates in lectures. *Mālūf* fans, traditionally, pass the time in constructing complex personal philosophies of life, sometimes mystical Sufi, that surprises outsiders who do not expect such elaborate abstraction as a common theme in popular Tunisian culture. "We are Sufi", Seditrī, a choir member, told me during rehearsal in Gharsa's *mālūf* club of the capital. Historically, music was so central to many *ṭuruq* that they were perceived as music schools of the prestigious Andalusī musical tradition (Davis 2004). Many icons of *mālūf*, such as Aḥmad al-Wāfī (1850– 1921) and Khamaīs Tarnān (1894–1964), were influenced by their musical experiences as members of Sufi orders (Jones 1977: 30). Sufi lodges in Tunisia, as in other Muslim countries, constituted the foremost places to pass on music. Therefore, *mālūf* does not seem to belong exclusively to a specific Tunisian identity, where a clear-cut division

between musical genres is evident. Instead, it encompasses features, stylistic phrasing and tempos that are shared among much Tunisian music.

Concerning the *ūd*, although there have been many ethnomusicological studies on the instrument and its development in the Arab world (Chabrier, 2000; Poché, 2001; Ḥassan, 2001; Guettat, 2006), there has been little discussion to date about the context and practice of this peculiar *ūd 'arbī* in Tunisian *mālūf*. It has not figured much in research on the Arab Andalusian music of Tunisia by d'Erlanger (1949), Guettat (1980, 2000), al-Mahdī (1981a) and Davis (2004). Even less research is available on other similar North African *ūd* traditions in Algeria and Morocco (Loopuyt and Rault, 1999; Saidani, 2006; Elsner, 2002; Houssay and Früh, 2012).

The only five studies focusing on this instrument are short Masters' theses that have started contributing to scholarship on *ūd*-s in the Maghreb. Anīs Qlibī's thesis (2000) - *ṣanā'atun al-ūd al-'arbī (tūnisī) wa-al rabāb fī dhākratī al-ajīsāl*, (The fabrication of the *ūd 'arbī*, *tūnisī* and the *rebēb* in the collective memory), in Heritage and Science Archeology at the University of Manouba - usefully details the importance, since roughly the 1930s, of historical evidence concerning instrument making: Muslim makers, as well as Jewish and Italians working in the capital and exchanging craftsmanship, and later, luther masters teaching in their home workshops. In the thesis, Qlibī briefly explores contemporary instrument making through ethnographic observations at Bēlaṣfar's luthier workshop in Tunis, establishing the first scientific account of Tunisian instrument craftsmanship.

In his Master's thesis (2001) *Oud 'arbī, Oud Tunsī, Le Luth Maghrébin à Quatre Cordes. Essais d'identification (facture, organologie, performance)*, Oud 'arbī, Oud Tunsī, The Maghrebian lute of four strings. Essays of identification (craftsmanship, organology, performance), at the University of Paris X-Nanterre, Bertrand Cheret, instead, recognises the importance of incorporating the instrument into a broader North African *ūd* family, comparing features with other models from Algeria and Morocco. Cheret gives an overview of existing North African *ūd*-s from the other regions, providing photos and descriptions of aesthetic features in detail. Similarly, the work of Samīḥ Maḥjūbī (2005) *Mudārs al-ala al-ūd fī mashreq 'arbī baina al-Tatrīb wa-al-Ta'abīr*, (The study of the *ūd* in the Arab Middle East between phrasing and expression), at the Higher Institute of Music of Soussa, explores, even more broadly, the many types of *ūd* in the Arab world questioning, in terms of organology, how and in what ways the Tunisian *ūd* differs from the other models through its style of performance. Despite its generality, this thesis provides useful tables of comparisons of measurements of a substantial number of instruments.

Along similar lines, in the Higher Institute of Music of Sfax, 'Abīr 'Ayādī's Master's thesis (2009) *Ala al-ūd al-tūnsī: al-khasusīāt al-urghanulugīa wa al-Tarikhīyya wa al-munah al-tahrīs* (The Tunisian *ūd*: organological and historical specificities and educational method), focuses on the Tunisian *ūd*. The

work is divided in two parts: first, an historical overview of the instrument attempting to hypothesise its Andalusian origin, and an exploration of new making processes at the workshop of the Tunisian luthier Ridhā Jandoubī. Second, a pedagogical section aiming to provide a complete method for playing the instrument. Muḥammad Dammāk's thesis (2010), *al-ūd al-magharbī: al-khasusīāt al-taqaniyya wa al-ta'biriyya min khalāl al-istikhbār*, (The Maghrebian *ūd*: technical and expressive specificity through the *istikhbār*), at the same institute in Sfax, while giving another overview of *ūd*-s in North Africa, instead focuses on comparative analytical studies of some historical recording of improvisations to highlight the instrument's technical and musical features. Where in these studies the emphasis is on the general history of the *ūd 'arbī* and comparison with other similar instruments, situating the Tunisian *ūd* in a family of North African plucked lutes of four courses of strings, my concern in this thesis is exploring other possibilities of exchanges and connections as well as investigating details of players' lived experience. Further, while these studies focus on technical construction, I use ethnographies centred on makers' workshops to explore the making of the Tunisian *ūd* model, giving particular emphasis to details about craftsmen, makers' skills, raw materials and what is involved in studying both an authentic and transforming crafting tradition.

In my ethnographic sketch at the start of this Introduction, I mentioned the player Ridhā Amamū, long-suffering for not having pupils of *ūd 'arbī* in Soussa and for seeing the instrument scarcely used among the new generations. He presents a particular Tunisian *ūd* cliché: the instrument seems to appear and disappear over the decades as indeed do the players from official representations. Amamū seems as practically engaged with this instrument as he is with complaining about its abandonment from which he stands apart. The musical instrument in this case can be seen as a system of action, intended to change the world rather than encode symbolic propositions about it. Amamū is a current member of the Rashīdīa ensemble of Soussa, a *mālūf* orchestra renamed by the minister Mourad Sakli after 2011 within the policy of reorganising these genre orchestras and their decentralisation. The ensemble in Soussa is made up of both amateurs and professionals as well as young students. The idea is a total peer-to-peer orchestra system in which the sons/daughters of the adult players join the ensemble to learn from the more expert, a sort of large musical family transmission system. Amamū is the only current and constant player for the *ūd 'arbī* among several oriental *ūd* ones, despite his efforts to convince other people too. The main problem Amamū highlighted in our subsequent interviews was that apart from the star celebrity player Zīād Gharsa, there are no true masters who play it, who can inspire and teach it. This anxiety of Amamū about the lack of transmission resonated throughout my years of research.

Amamū's reaction at that concert evening also provokes reflections on the difficulties involved in understanding *ūd 'arbī* history since 1960s. Over the years, the number and visibility of *ūd 'arbī* Tunisian musicians in local *mālūf* orchestras and in the more organised Rashīdīas has varied

considerably. As I attempted to show in this thesis through recording history (chapter 4), just one member per orchestra always seemed sufficient, as happens today. It was only in the first decade of the foundation of the Rashīdīa Music Institute that they varied. Sometimes the *'ūd 'arbī* player was the composer and "silent" leader like the legendary Khamaīs Tarnān, whereas the singers took a major role on stage (see the divas Ṣalīḥa, Msīka, Roshdī). Later on, the *'ūd 'arbī* player was the actual leader of the ensemble, often singing and playing along with the choir when solo singing was not needed, the case of both Ṭahār and Zīād Gharsa since the 1960s until today, the latter often even taking on solo singing.

The Rashīdīa of Kelibia represents another local example of the problem that the *'ūd 'arbī* is not always played and taught. During the Rashīdīa of Kelibia concert at Ennejma Ezzahra palace for the 80th festival anniversary of the Rashīdīa music institute in 2015, I asked around why it is not played. "They don't need it", was the frequent answer. At the end of the concert, in which the instrument was not to be seen, I realised that they rarely played any part, song or section of a *nūba*. Instead, they performed what Sakli describes as the *ughnīa*, (chansons Tunisienne) (Sakli, 1994). I began thinking that the *'ūd 'arbī* seems entrapped in that *nūba*'s repertory which carries collective ideas of the past, of Andalusian identity, of loss and nostalgia in public music contexts. But it is not often clear why it is excluded in formal ensembles, whether depending on the repertory performed or with respect to the regional area the groups come from. The instrument's presence even in *mālūf* ensembles of the Rashīdīas seems inconsistent too. This is also true in smaller local areas, as the case of the town of Kelibia which participated in the festival.

Kelibia is a well-to-do town by the sea in the gulf of Hammamet, which I visited in the first summer I was taking standard *'ūd* lessons in Tunisia. My teacher at that time, Selmi Mongi, suggested calling on Yūsef Grītlī, the owner of a downtown *mālūf* club called *Nādī al-fanān* (artist's club). A club that offers music training to children and runs a different program to the ensemble Rashīdīa of Kelibia. Grītlī played on the *'ūd sharqī* a couple of songs for me of the "sea", very typical of the area and pleasantly traditional. After years of working through the videos I took that day in the club, I now can recognise an *'ūd tūnsī* hung on the wall and left there among other traditional instruments. Unlike the case of Amamū and the local regional group of Soussa, the instrument in Kelibia is there but often unused. I noticed that when I was expected to find it in public performance of official ensembles like the Kelibia's Rashīdīa, it was missing. On the other hand, in smaller and less known local private clubs, there it was, but they never take it to a performance. These first-hand accounts, which might seem mere anecdotes, instead reveal that the instrument has an uneven and ambiguous diffusion around the country, and often, when present it has an iconic function, regardless of whether it is used or not.

Concerning the *'ūd 'arbī* and *'ūd sharqī* dichotomy, through the 20th century, players of *'ūd 'arbī* appearing in local regional orchestras of *mālūf*, were no more than one, and were doubled by several

ūd sharqī players too. Those making music before independence easily scaled up from one instrument to another, from *ney* to *ūd*, violin and so on. As attested by Tarnān, al-Mahdī and ‘Abd ‘Aziz Jemāil, to mention just the most important leaders, this was a habit to experience music and in particular *mālūf*, through many object-material means. The same musical instrument as focal object shared by as many people as possible, the same people then commanding many musical instruments as possible to "possess" the music entirely, to become *malufeji*. Thus notion is evident also in the contemporary figure and aura of Zīād Gharsa, son of Ṭahār Gharsa. It seems even easier to think that players could move between organologically similar instruments, from a standard *ūd* to the Tunisian one, or from a *rebēb* to a violin. Generations of the 1930s and 1940s, who then taught the current 50 - 60 year old musicians, often never learned their instruments from a teacher who truly played that instrument himself. It is not surprising that Khāled Bassa, teacher of *ūd* in the ISM for decades, learned the instrument from a violin player, or that ‘Abd ‘Aziz Jemāil who played the *rebēb*/violin as his first instrument taught ‘Alī Sritī, who then became the founder of the *ūd* school in Tunisia (Morra, 2013). Likewise, the first violin player of Zīād Gharsa ensemble, moving around the most important orchestras of the country, playing at the side of singers like Bushnak and Ejeija, learned to play the violin with the *ūd* player ‘Alī Sritī. What was then taught if not a specific technique for the instrument? The answer is the music, the phrasing and the rhythms of the *mālūf* musical forms. "If you know the repertoire by heart you can then perform it on any instrument you manage to play", the CMAM director and musicologist Anīs Meddeb once told me.

An example of this is the role of the artist Sofīān Zaidī has, which depends not simply on his *ūd arbī* playing but also on his voice and singing skills. Zaidī, based in Tunis but from the town of Zaghūān, is the current *ūd arbī* player of the Rashīdīa orchestra after Gharsa left. He has had a prolific career in other musical spaces too, due to his voice and his wide-ranging repertoire. In each different music context and for each genre, Zaidī's attitude to the Tunisian *ūd* changes. On one level, he is perceived as the typical Tunisian wedding entertainer, even more structured in terms of management, style repertoire and dress code than Gharsa's recent wedding activity. But his musical training of *mālūf* as a student and choir member of the former Gharsa ensemble is well known in Tunisia and is a feature propagated on his personal profile, his Facebook page, media interviews, and documented in past television programs. On another level, Zaidī pursues the lineage of Tarnān, who was conductor at the Rashīdīa's performances.

During my research, singers often appeared at public performances embracing an instrument, specifically an *ūd*, and when it is the Tunisian one, it becomes more interesting for the fact that we would expect them to play long solo passages. But for players like Zaidī, it is a symbolic object of tradition and belonging, and is often held for image purposes rather more than its Tunisian sound fascination. Zaidī, like few Tunisian star singers, has achieved a balance between uniqueness and

ordinariness. On one hand, he is unique in terms of combining tradition with modernity, jumping from singing at a Rashīdīa concert, playing the *ūd* and leading the performance, sitting in the middle of the court surrounded by the orchestra, to the kitsch wedding spaces at the *Berges du Lac* in the northern Tunis neighborhood, standing with the microphone and having fashionably dressed and jubilant wedding guests dance along. In the latter context, he does not bring his instrument, it is not necessary for the image or for the music, because there will always be a live ensemble to accompany him. I have even seen him not showing up with the *ūd*, at a wedding of a known musician in the summer of 2017, where from a musical viewpoint it was worth bringing. On the other hand, he is ordinary because, he does this simply as a normal Tunisian popular singer would do, using potent symbols (traditional dress and musical instrument) but in an understated way, casually without giving his whole life over to just one of the many Tunisian musical genres. This competing performance of appearing or not appearing with the *ūd 'arbī*, suggest a complex struggle over the figure of the *ūd 'arbī* player, recruited as exemplar of national instrument when appropriate.

Concerning the *ūd 'arbī*, Zaidī does not teach the instrument in the Rashīdīa, but rather young *mālūf* enthusiasts study his singing style privately. Surprisingly, no one follows him for the *ūd*. And he does not - as he told me once - waste his time and money on teaching it. This story, which is crucial to understanding his position, raises the problematic narrative of instrument transmission within *mālūf* circuits, particularly the official national Rashīdīa, against a backdrop of impoverished transmission and inadequate national support. Most important, perhaps, has been the very nature of the instrument, the perception that it is essentially an accompaniment for voice, and only for singers who take a serious path to *mālūf*. Thus, Zaidī has an intriguing position. While his artistry, skill and musical position help paint him as a "typical" Arab singer, he may at the same time be seen to represent the "ideal *ūd 'arbī* player", who participates in the revival of the instrument and Tarnān's manuscripts and keeps it alive at the various Rashīdīa performances through the year.

In my master research (2013), I agree with the widely held-view that the Tunisian *ūd* school owes its formation to Tarnān for the *ūd 'arbī* but argue that it has also largely been created by 'Alī Srītī and Aḥmad al-Qala'ī for the *ūd sharqī*. The key aspects of the members' discipleships can be modelled as follows¹:

¹ The following scheme has been borrowed from my master thesis (Morra, 2013: 72).

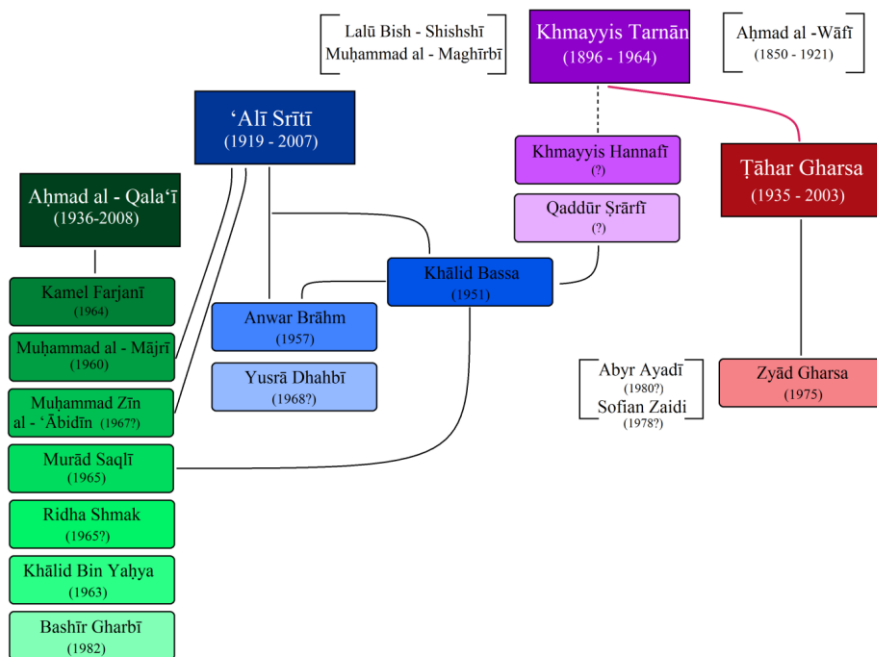


Figure 3. TUNISIAN 'ŪD SCHOOLS

Today, more specifically, Tunisian 'ūd 'arbī players are predominantly players of standard oriental 'ūd first, and these 'ūd performers have subsequently become passionate for the Tunisian version of it. By contrast, the Tunisian musicians who do not take up the 'ūd 'arbī, are inevitably fascinated by Turkish, Iraqi instruments and styles. This instrument division of 'ūd practices and object/material, where the Tunisian 'ūd is at a second step appeal, has been the same in music making for generations since the Khamaīs Tarnān era. This latter himself was an Oriental 'ūd player first and for Ṭahār Gharsa it was a conscious choice to have only played the Tunisian (Morra, 2013). However, the dominance of standard oriental 'ūd in Tunisia distinguishes the Tunisian one from a range of social, musical and identity features in the twentieth first century, where the Tunisian instrument has not had a lion's share of political policy, upper class society or players' encouragement. While the 'ūd 'arbī in the 1960s had, like the oriental *sharqī* one, many performance possibilities, this was a market associated and marketed with Tunisian music supported by the Bourghiba government through the figure of Ṣālah al-Mahdī, in last decades, the instrument struggled to find its concert space.

However, many regionally localised players never reached the mass-mediated system as Gharsa's family did, remaining in an intimate imaginative space among the orchestras and the representation of the instrument. On the one hand, most of their names, which do not figure in the recording acknowledgements, are forgotten, and no written records of concerts include such information. On the other hand, there were regular players of this instrument who from time to time bought the instruments displayed in shops such as that of the well-known maker Bēlaṣfar. There were players adopting the 'ūd 'arbī for private use, intimate gatherings, or public performances around the country. However, this would not enable the players to establish a durable and closely linked image

between themselves, the instrument, and the public. The weakness of this bond among *mālūf* orchestral settings in the 20th century only in local regional orchestras, depends both on elements of political centralisation in the capital and private, intimate ways of experiencing the instrument and its transmission. For the Tunisian *ūd*, crossing professional and non-professional worlds, public and intimate spaces, the link between musical sound, intimacy and nationhood may not appear so explicit. However, Ridhā Amamū tells us something about the fate and transmission of the *ūd 'arbī* inside Tunisia, but this is certainly not the only representative example: as we shall see below, music and identity intertwine in different ways for other people and contexts.

Methodology: Practical and Theoretical Issues

Like many ethnomusicologists/anthropologists researching in academia, I also worked at something else and studied other people's music in my extra time because I loved it. After the music college in Italy, I began my university studies half-heartedly, with the idea of returning as soon as possible to a life as guitar performer. My research in Tunisia began in July/August of 2007 when I participated in a two-month intensive summer language course (standard Arabic) at the Bourghiba School of Languages in Tunis. This time in Tunisia enabled me to meet musicians and to attend different music festivals and ritual celebrations as well as taking my first *ūd* lessons. Afraid that I might never be able to return to the country, which I had already visited as a tourist in my childhood, a country that enchanted me, I travelled from Tunis to Soussa by coast, returning from Kairouan and falling in love with Tunisia on the way. During the subsequent academic years, I wrote an undergraduate dissertation on traditional "school" of *ūd*-s of Egypt and Iraq, based on secondary materials. I arranged all my further studies around returns to Tunisia in the next summers, paying very much attention to the music. There, I observed, recorded, participated and discussed the role of traditional musical instruments in the modern Tunisian society. These activities gave me an important foundation upon which to base my future research.

I returned to Tunisia for 3 weeks in May 2013 in order to conduct research for my Master's thesis on the *ūd* "school" of Tunisia, a natural subject for a guitarist turned anthropologist. I made contact with several *ūd* players and teachers, who granted me the opportunity to study and analyse the music. The dissertation outlined a 20th century "Tunisian school" of *ūd* performance on the basis of analytical evidence of master/disciple relationships among participants of both the Oriental *ūd* (*sharqī*) type and the traditional Tunisian *ūd 'arbī* upon which I focus in this thesis. Although at this point my Tunisian dialect skills were extremely basic, I managed to make lasting contacts with players and makers who I continued to consult during fieldwork for my doctoral thesis. I conducted the main period of fieldwork for this thesis between May and September, and in November 2015, November

and December 2016, between February and July 2017. The majority of this time was spent in and around Tunis though I visited Soussa, Monastir and Kairouan for some weeks in November 2016, Sfax for two weeks between December and November 2016 and a week in March 2017, Binzert for a few days in February 2017, and Paris for two weeks in November 2015 and a week in February 2017. In addition, I also visited the collection of the Horniman Musical Instrument Museum and Gardens in London twice in 2015 and 2016, the Musical Instrument Museum of Brussels in November 2015, the museum of the Royal College of Music of London, the sound archive of Berlin in January 2016 and the H. G. Farmer archive in Glasgow in May 2016. Moreover, although limited, my experience of making *ūd* *‘arbī* – producing a finished *ūd* in the workshop with Faīṣal Ṭwīrī in Bardo, Tunis in March-June 2017 – and observing several aspects of making at Hedī Bēlaṣfar’s workshop in Entilaka, Tunis between May and July 2015, and Ridhā Jandoubī’s workshop in Menzel Temīn in November 2016 and February 2017 – has been invaluable towards understanding makers’ comments.

A fundamental component of ethnomusicological research is fieldwork. However, defining where or what the ‘field’ is can be a difficult task. The ‘field’ may be conceived of in a variety of ways. As Timothy Rice (2008) reminds us in *Shadows in the Field*, the “field” in which we work is a metaphor, there is no “there” to which we must go (2008: 48). Some of the conceptual challenges I faced in this research were similar to those faced by ethnographic researchers for decades: coping with insider/outsider dichotomies (Nettl, 2005); balancing objective, subjective and reflexive interpretation (Rice, 1994, 2008; Shelemay, 2008); gaining the trust of consultants (Beaudry, 2008), and managing one’s place in relation to competing interests and pre-existing social hierarchies, tensions and rivalries.

In this thesis, I use the term *field* to describe the social relations and cultural phenomena that coalesce around the *ūd* within its contexts, both on a local geographical scale and in combination with diverse cosmopolitan aspects in contexts outside Tunisia. I suggest what especially characterises this study is a concern with the notion of *field* that is both sound-visual, object-material, public-private. What results is a very much a multi-sited (Marcus, 1995) sense of the fieldwork, its inhabitants, materiality and feelings. Further, the notion of cosmopolitanism provides anchor points for the discussion. Tunisian historical cosmopolitanism, effecting particularly urban centres and the *ūd*, is nonetheless a thing that connects and animates the contemporary field too. In the field, the instrument itself has this pre-eminent position for one main reason. The existence of different schools, styles and genres of *ūd*, whether *‘arbī* or *sharqī*, or even *kwitra* music, means that the local Tunisian context is home to multiple musical traditions, none of which are common to all players, even if certain ones among them are especially prevalent or valued.

In terms of its history, I have already outlined in the previous section the key factors in the field’s emergence roughly since the 1930s. Nonetheless, it perhaps bears repeating that this study

works to supplement existing scholarly histories (Davis, 2004; al-Mahdī, 1981), focusing on the broad effects of 19th century transnational travel of musical instruments in collections and exhibitions, contemporary performance practices, memorial events and new concert spaces, with a more fine-grained account of specific stories. In my fieldwork, one aim is to move from a single story happening in the field to the multiple personal histories of which it is composed. The field is also defined in part through shared practices: almost everyone in it *plays* the *ūd*. I argue that other activities – listening (mediated and live), teaching, learning, writing, reading, making recordings, buying scores and music, composing, making and collecting instruments (museum or private), to give an incomplete list – are grounded in certain shared practices of fetishism (Stallybrass, 1998: 186) and a common identification as *ūd lover*. All these people that populate my fieldwork have a special investment in the *ūd* and so play an important part in my analysis. Summing up, the field is made up of overlapping geographies, histories, and practices, none of which are unifying factors, but which, in combination, help to give further form to individuals' diverse engagements with that which does define the *field*, namely a Tunisian identity orientation towards the *ūd* itself.

However, one of the greatest conceptual challenges for me in conducting this ethnographic research was dealing with insights and more intimate feelings of public artistic figures. While the anthropologist might succeed in organising formal interviews with relatively unknown people, he can find difficulties attempting to penetrate strong boundaries between insider and outsider positions, public-private dichotomies, and intimate sentiments. In some respects, this challenge parallels those of Sherry B. Ortner who proposes the practice of 'interface ethnography', which she defines as 'doing participant observation in the border areas where the closed community or organization or institution interfaces with the public' (2010: 213). The most obvious example of this 'interface ethnography' from my fieldwork was my attendance at live *mālūf* concerts of Zīād Gharsa as well as participating at his private *mālūf* club. While sometimes I had 'backstage' access, I often attended events as any other aficionado and often I struggled at the club hoping he would bring me a particular instrument from his collection or have time to answer some questions.

Another problem I frequently came up against in my encounters with *ūd 'arbī* and instrument makers, for example, is their professional social relations that are intricately bound up with patterns of economic exchange. The initial capital that an ethnomusicology graduate student has when approaching artisans and instrument makers is fairly limited compared to that of a customer who wants to commission an instrument. Joshua Gamson's observation, that the academic researcher is 'perceived as someone wanting a piece of the action for free, with nothing to trade' (1995: 87), is apt here. During my fieldwork, my approach to all three of the instrument makers investigated in detail required buying a new instrument from each of them in order to observe their making skills, thoughts, movements and craftsmanship secrets. I took a step further in the case of the luthier Hedī Bēlaṣfar

from who I received the permission to film the main stages of the making process accompanied by a professional camera operator.

I initially also used video recording of music performances as part of my data collection strategy, and later on I contributed to the fields of visual anthropology and film studies (Hockings, 1975; Zemp, 1988; Baily, 1989) with this short movie called "The Making of the Tunisian 'ūd".² I actively participated in the creation and circulation of content about the instrument on line. Transforming my filming into a participatory activity, I soon became visible to the community and to other professionals in doing their own research. My case is a particularly rich example pointing to the relationship between cultural production and artefacts. The community was especially curious about this video, as it is the first ever made video full of details on the making of this peculiar instrument. Users in the Facebook post of the film began asking questions about the 'character' in the video with comments in online discussions. Both others and myself responded by affirming the benefits of filming the instrument as a cultural practice. I explain that the main reason for making and posting this video was to establish an online presence for the 'ūd 'arbī in order to develop a network around the instrument. This short film was screened officially in Tunis, preceding an evening concert at the Rashīdīa Music Institute titled "*Tarnimāt al-'ūd al-'arbī*" in June 2017. The year before it was launched at the 1st Symposium of the ICTM Study Group on Audiovisual Ethnomusicology at the City Museum of Ljubljana, Slovenia (August 2016). While the ideas emerging in forums are familiar with my ethnographic interviews, filming the construction of the instrument points to the existence of a collective imaginary about making it, one built from disparate experiences of 'ūd-making in the Arab world, incorporating the voices of both prominent makers and relatively unknown ones.

However, ethnomusicologists and popular music scholars in general have failed to theorise ethnographic research on musical instruments and players from the perspective of cultural intimacy. In theorising this type of research it is important to highlight three things. First, due to issue of access, scholars tend to rely on textual readings and musicians' work (songs, films, performances etc.) and any ethnographic research is typically limited to the audience and media rather than directed to the more famous players. Second, due to the intricately linked histories of anthropological enquiry and post-colonialism, the ethnomusicologists implicitly tend to assume that the ethnographer occupies a historically defined position of power. This position tends to limit the researcher from gathering more individual insights from stars and famous people than their already known public image. As a white, in particular Italian ethnomusicologist researching in Tunisia, a close by country of the Mediterranean basin and no stranger to French imperialism, I am surprisingly not implicated in these historically pervasive power relations. My position, therefore, as *Italian* has been very much favorable to this research. Third, interest in objects as material culture results in a multi-sited ethnography anchored in

² Written and directed by Salvatore Morra, Assistant Claudia Liccardi, Camera Operator Muḥammad Azziddin, Post Production coordinator and Editor David San Milan, Subtitles Ikbal Hamzaoui and Stephen Conway. Morra© 2015

sound and its meanings rather than just observation of places, institutions, people or performances. The obvious reason is because musical instruments mainly make sound. Vinyls, CD recordings as well as the radio and the internet, have all played and continue to play, an important role in the sound experience of the musical instrument. However, more intimate accounts of the instrument's sound, such as specific social qualities, recounted memories and evocations, metaphorical "assonances", provide a less accessible opportunity for researchers to investigate the players' intimacy, but a unique one. In this thesis, I suggest that the application of multiple intersensorial analysis of touch, sight and hearing (Connor, 2004) to musical instruments as a method, helps to explore ideas of sounds rooted in intimate feelings of the people who interact with them.

Language skills have been extremely important to my research. Only one person I met as part of my research spoke a little Italian, and only two other spoke English. All those I encountered spoke Arabic, Tunisia's main official language, and a basic level of French. I had taught myself the basics of Arabic at the University of Naples "L'Orientale" between 2005 and 2010 but I hadn't any previous formal training of Tunisian when I began my PhD. However, I decided to undertake three months of tuition at the SOAS (School of Oriental and African Studies) in London in October/December 2014 of standard Arabic again. Although the Arabic spoken by many Tunisian contains the odd loan words from Tunisian dialect, by the end of my first fieldwork I was able to speak fluently to them. My language skills enabled me to follow conversations, song lyrics and lesson-talk, as well as information on TV, on radio, on websites and in newspapers. They also allowed me to engage with local Tunisian and general Arab scholarship.

Conversations, ranging from informal chats to formal interviews, formed a key part of my fieldwork and are central to my research method. I regularly listened to *mālūf* recordings through the digital national archive of the Centre of Arab and Mediterranean Music (CMAM) website, watched videos online as well as in the form of YouTube clips and read websites and newspapers. I have conducted research in the libraries of the (ISM) Institut Supérieur de Musique de Tunis, Soussa and Sfax, *beīt el-Bennani*, the (CEMAT) Centre d'étude Maghrébines à Tunis, (IBLA) Institut des Belles Lettres Arabes - *Mahad al-Adāb al-'Arabīyya*, the national library of Tunisia, the National Archives and the Television. For *Leīla* magazine and other periodicals, I have had access to the private library of Nadia Mamelouk in Tunis. I also followed the activity of people on Facebook. In these virtual domains, at one extreme, we can count very well-known individuals: teachers with many students who are frequently involved in institutional activities; prominent *'ūd* makers whose instruments sell widely; those involved in organising events and associations. At the other extreme are those players and aficionados, not necessarily in remote locations or musically any less skilled, who interact very little with others, preferring to play for themselves or to listen to what others post on-line. Thus, internet enabled me to follow who was performing, when and where, as well as make sense of networks of

people. Facebook was also an extremely important way of building and maintaining relationships and contacts both during and after fieldwork.

Another component of my research method is concerned with music analysis of a number of *'ūd 'arbī* music. This thesis, however, does not specifically use descriptive-analytical methods which provide objectively quantifiable and analysable data as tools for discovering musical intents and specific performance practices according to a model. The aim is to highlight the sets of elements that may have varying degrees of importance for a musical performance style within the Tunisian *'ūd* practice, where I attempt to understand them in their specific and changing contexts. These elements will serve my argument about the players (chapter 4 and 5), where a more concrete frame of reference is needed. How to distinguish one player from another? In what way do they take similar or different directions in playing the instrument and what is the relationship among them in terms of master-student dyads? In this respect, on the one hand, learning the *'ūd 'arbī* enabled me to become more familiar with the rhythms, melodies and structures of *mālūf*, on the other hand, it afforded me certain skills to better understand this instrument type of playing (see Baily, 2001; Rice, 1994).

The transcriptions, made in western music notation (five-line system, no tempo measurement or bar divisions), take into account notes and alterations of the Arab-Tunisian music system (*tbu'*) by adapting the procedure of analysis used by Zūarī (2006). According to Zūarī, the transcription examples are divided in segments, in order to define meaningful musical units by establishing boundaries at relevant points in the musical flow, for example: a distinctive closing formula. Both music symbols and Arabic names of notes refer to the *Maqāmāt al-Mūsīqā al-'Arabīyya* (Modes of Arab Music) by al-Mahdī (1982), from which I borrow the Arab notes nomenclature (49 notes), from *G yakāh* to *G jawāb nawā* (1982: 24). Concerning the specific Tunisian modal system, I use the terminology employed in the *Initiation à La Musique Tunisienne I*, edited by Rashīd Sellamī, Lassad Kria and Mourad Sakli (2004). The transcription criteria were also prepared and checked according to the procedure used by my Tunisian *'ūd* teacher Kamel Gharbī to classify methods in practice performances. Finally, I have transcribed all the segments in chapters Four and Five except the examples of 'Abīr 'Ayādī's "*Amal*", which are taken from the original score (unedited manuscript) kindly donated to me by the author.

With these elements in mind, I can now sketch some other characteristics of the field: its sites, practices, and personnel. Today, among the *'ūd*-s of North African types, the *'ūd 'arbī* is played throughout urban Tunisian centers (Tunis, Sfax, Soussa, Monastir), parts of North Africa (Algeria and Morocco), and in a range of diasporic communities from France to Italy. In Tunisia, there are three makers of this instrument: the Bēlašfar family (Tunis), Ridhā Jandoubī (Menzel Temīn), and Faīšal Ṭwīrī (Bardo). Their contribution sets out crucial information regarding the construction of the

instrument, that is, in these three case-studies, a result of traditional and innovative procedures transmitted orally through generations.

The *‘ūd ‘arbī* coalesces also in a variety of sites: concert halls such as the *Masraḥ al-Baladī*, *Acropolium Chartage*, *Rashīdīa* Institute of Tunis, Sfax, Monastir, Kairouan; practice rooms of the *Institut Supérieur de Musique*, *mālūf* clubs such as *Conservatoire al-Farabi*, teaching studios, one example being *Les Jeunes du Maluf Tunisien*, private homes, museum collections in London, Brussels and Tunis, online Facebook groups, such as: *Le Malouf Tunisien*, *al-Malūf club de Chant Arabe*, *Rashīdīa -Monastir*; YouTube channels like: *Jalēl Benna* with 1.647 followers and *‘Alī Sayarī* with 9.431 followers; instrument makers’ workshops (Tunis, Sidi Bou Said, Hammamet); websites (oudmigrations.com, chikioud.com, christianrault.com, musique.arabe.over-blog.com, andalousia.over-blog.org), outdoors spaces (*Ennejma Ezzahra*), and recording studios, to give, again, only a partial list.

A little more about the people who make up the *‘ūd ‘arbī* world remains to be said. Here, I introduce just three of the numerous individuals of this study, not to provide a representative selection, but to illustrate how and why, in different ways, people become a part of my research. Zīād Gharsa is the son of the *sheykh* Ṭāhar Ghara, who was pupil of the legendary *sheykh* Khamaīs Tarnān, and therefore a direct lineage of transmission with the musical heritage. He is in his forties and lives in the capital. Like his father, since the age of four, Zīād has lived a music culture context centred on the *Rashīdīa* Music Institute and various private *mālūf* associations. The Gharsa "family" conceived its work as a self-conscious attempt to continue and preserve its identity and without doubt, today, Zīād has a central role in the dissemination of *mālūf* in Tunisia (*Association Carthage de Malouf et Musique Tunisienne*) and abroad. His knowledge of *mālūf* and technical skills on the instrument are recognised and appreciated widely, and he features in this thesis mainly because of his prominence within the field.

‘Abīr ‘Ayādī is a 35-year-old *‘ūd ‘arbī* player from Sfax, who, like Zīād, has considerable experience performing and composing for the instrument, as well as institutional involvement; she is one of the *‘ūd* teachers of the ISM of Sfax; and she has also served on the *mālūf* orchestra of Sfax and Tunis and organises summer schools. She is also a professional *‘ūd sharqī* player, giving recitals with both instruments, not common for *‘ūd ‘arbī* players and an example of the way in which they often belong to the multiple *‘ūd* worlds. So, ‘Abīr appears in this thesis partly because of her importance within the local *‘ūd* scene of Sfax, and as a female player in contrast to the dominant male *sheykh* tradition, but also because she seems to me to have a personal mission concerning the Tunisian *‘ūd* and its social function. Unlike Zīād, she is a keen teacher who gives great importance to everyday musical education and works towards a wider appreciation of the instrument among young

generations, who draw inspiration from her career. Interestingly, she is also currently doing a doctorate on the subject of the Tunisian *‘ūd* in pedagogical studies³.

Ziēd Mehdī is a twenty-eight-year-old Tunisian accountant who lives in Paris, and a passionate and prolific *‘ūd* player. Ziēd trained as a player with Kamel Gharbī, and within his family who are settled in Tunis his brother and sister are amateur musicians too. Ziēd owns several different construction *‘ūd*-s *‘arbī*, and he is obsessed by the sound this traditional instrument makes. He lives most of the time in Paris, where he attends the *Mālūf Tunisien*'s association directed by Aḥmad Ridhā ‘Abbēs, who we are also going to encounter in this thesis. I was introduced to Ziēd at a concert evening at the CMAM of the *mālūf* group from Kelibia by a common friend in May 2015. Alongside continued encounters at such events, my fieldwork also includes several visits to his place in Paris and Tunis phone/email correspondence with Ziēd. The "Tunisian sound" of the instrument appears as an overt theme in Ziēd's attitude to music with the *‘ūd*. This points to a specific motivation for including Ziēd in this study: many of his feelings are richly embedded in homeland memories, incorporating recordings and performances, suggesting that Ziēd would prove an articulate and thought-provoking participant for my research.

There have been times in Tunis when I knew that at any moment I wanted to sing, I could take the metro to some places in the city where people would be playing music. Arab music, generally, is essentially based on the voice, and the voice on the rhythm. Tunisians, like me, sing for the pleasure of it. Accompaniment is the norm for the *‘ūd*. But for me as a foreigner and for my European friends in the growing *mālūf* underworld in Tunis, the *‘ūd* rewarded and frustrated us. In all eyes, you would never emancipate this instrument from the voice. The concept of a solo recital is first of all truly Western and it was adapted to Arab music only in the 20th century by way of Turkish and Iraqi musicians [Sharīf Muhīeddīn al-Dir Ḥāidar Targan (1888–1967), Munīr Bashīr (1930–1997)]. For many people the *‘ūd ‘arbī* is still an instrument of ensemble, although for others, as we will see, it has finally taken the stage also as solo performance. Both the singers and the players, inside and outside the *mālūf* clubs, tell me that in their eyes, this music revolves around relations between lyrics and *istikhbār* melodies, relations that musicians and observers alike question. And many Tunisian professional musicians and observers imply that, especially in the wake of decades of "soft" political repression during Ben ‘Alī, they also feel the *mālūf* bears the weight of other forms of identities, perhaps forms of self-recognition in which people commonly engage.

The Tunisians who started my long apprenticeship in the Arab/Tunisian mode system and the musical instrument were the middle-aged music teachers of the old quarters of the Medina, who celebrated Ramadan faithfully with parents and families, eating dates and drinking milk as the sun set

³ See ‘Abīr ‘Ayādī's conference paper in *Sixième édition du colloque international d'anthropologie et musique*, Constantine 2015.

at the end of fasting. Musician friends with whom I was sharing my experience also helped with their comments each lesson about the one before. They would come to my house, or meet me at the music conservatoire library, bringing the necessary information to be updated with concerts, events, *mālūf* festivals scheduled every evening of the holy month. In homes in quarters such as *Manzah 1-2* located on hills around downtown, laughing Tunisians watched me struggling through my first *istikhbar* improvisation, a word and musical form that not only refers to an improvisatory prelude to a song and combination of melodic patterns, but also to the special Tunisian modes. This *istikhbār* way is seldom heard outside Tunisia.

On one of the city's sunny June/Ramadan days, I found myself alone in Halfaouin, a quarter of the Medina, with a certain fame following the movie *Boy of the Terrace* (1990) by the director Ferīd Boughedir with the original soundtrack composed by the eclectic Tunisian artist Anouar Brahem. A few weeks earlier, I had moved to my house in *bēb el-khaḍra*, a similar area next to it. I realised that I was free to look for addresses that, for years, I had jotted down one by one, never really believing I would someday be able to follow them up, these were places people thought *mālūf* was played. I pulled out my unique Tunisian decorated notebook and begun by making my way through miles of narrow tiny streets to find restored historical Medina houses whose bemused inhabitants gave me sheets of addresses of neighbourhood cultural programmes that included the *mālūf*. The night of that same day, in my first music class, other students and onlookers provided information that sent me on more journeys all over the city, piecing together a universe I had not known existed. The rhythm of my encounters and meetings rapidly accelerated resulting in my second encounter with the artist Zīād Gharsa.

"But why do you play this instrument?" an acquaintance asked in a conversation with several unbelieving Tunisians, who included the owner of a private conservatoire named "al-Farabī" in *Menzah 7* where Gharsa's club rehearsed. The owner's wife, who had initially expressed similar bewilderment, suddenly lit up. She announced to the rest of the group in the Arabic understood on Tunis streets, "*khaṭer ye'jebnī*", because I like it. And she was right. Then the owner asked me to play something on the *'ūd*. At that time I only played the Egyptian model, I was still waiting for the maker to finish my commissioned Tunisian one. The owner was a violinist, a former *rebēb* player. We played together a few Egyptian tunes, such as Riyād as-Ṣunbātī's (1906-81), *Lūnga Farahfaza*. With enthusiasm he gave me a lesson on microtones, and a distinct pitch, the famous Tunisian E half-flat, which has never really been theorised (d'Erlanger, 1949; al-Mahdī, 1982). I was in a very familiar world from my years as a player, but also a world that gave me back my Mediterranean roots and the modes of behaving in southern regions and from which my earliest perception of Tunisians had formed. As the *'ūd* threw all this sharply into focus, I recuperated something that had been obliterated, I recuperated ways of knowing, ways of knowing myself and others.

Organisation of the Thesis

Chapter One focuses on the production of discourses on the *'ūd 'arbī* as an instrument of *mālūf*, on notions of Arab- Andalusian music, "Andalusian identity", "Andalusian origin", and how the instrument has become part of national identity within broader social, historical and cultural shifts (colonial, post-colonial). I provide an overview of the terms and boundaries and I locate *mālūf* musical developments within social and political shifts, exploring some of the changes with *mālūf* of the 1940s and 1960s. The ethnographic accounts describe and analyse the celebration of the Rashīdīa Music Institute 80th anniversary, reflecting on the historical role of the institute and its modern directions. I suggest that Khamaīs Tarnān's *'ūd-s 'arbī* held at the Rashīdīa Music Institute and at the Binzert's club, as well as 'Abd 'Aziz Jemaīl's *'ūd 'arbī* (1923) in the private collection of the painter Jellāl Ben 'Abdallah in Sidi Bou Said, are examples which develop a sense of collective memory and of nationalised heritage. This historical framing serves also to locate my discussion of contemporary *'ūd 'arbī* in the remainder of the thesis.

My focus in Chapter Two is the instrument morphology. I intend to reveal aspects of identity and ethnicity beyond the traditional studies of organology. The chapter is based on *'ūd-s 'arbī* in museums and private collections, their historical sources and their contemporary interpretation. I present a number of observations about examples from the oldest surviving *'ūd 'arbī* (1867), in an attempt to consider a lineage between the 19th and 20th centuries, from pre-colonial to colonial time, from Europe to Tunisia. I suggest that this challenge of following a lineage by tracing construction styles, features and identity markers, contributes to a heritage construction for the *'ūd 'arbī* in Tunisia. While I chart aspects of the instrument and local factors that help make a cultural classification of it, I consider evidence indicating that the instrument has paths of influences from West African lutes, what I call an "African phenomenon".

With the craftsmanship as its focal object, Chapter Three traces the stages of the making process from the sourcing and shaping of materials to their circulation as commodities. It foregrounds *'ūd* making: the makers 'feelingful' relationships with materials and instruments, and the analysis of musical instrument design in contemporary Tunisia, emphasising the link between the crafted-instrument and the maker. Further, through several stories of makers and instruments discovered in the hands of players or in private collections, I explore the history of *'ūd 'arbī* making, the exchanges and transmission roles of the Bēlaṣfar family, and other makers (Cherif Meher and Ḥabīb Reqīq) who represent different aspects of the Medina craftsmanship tradition. I seek to show, examining the idea of a "standard" *'ūd 'arbī* crafting, that making this instrument in Tunisia is part of a network of historical artisan workshops of the urban Medina spaces, which grounds the instrument in its Arab/Tunisian identity. Finally, I argue that new made instruments are "hybrid" in that they have been produced as a result of local and other Middle East cultural flow of *'ūd* making.

In Chapter Four, I discuss several ways in which discourses on the *'ūd* relate to its sound. First, I sketch a brief historical overview of recordings of the *'ūd 'arbī* that helps place the sound of the instrument as well as the people and places. Second, I explore the reflexive dynamic through which certain resonance, and timbre effects of *'ūd 'arbī* root the identity of the instrument in various locations, both inside and outside Tunisia, and then interpret this rootedness throughout the notion of a metaphorical "territory" (Labelle, 2010), which evokes specific Tunisian social qualities. I investigate these evocations the *'ūd 'arbī*'s sound creates and their mediation through intersensorial experiences (Connor, 2004) with the instrument, to reveal what the *'ūd 'arbī*'s sound means for people and society.

My research of other players, which started through the recordings of the instrument, shifts in Chapter Five to contemporary activities. I provide various accounts of the identity of the Tunisian *'ūd 'arbī* in relation to players of the 21st century, investigating issues of transmission processes (the *sheykh* tradition) and explaining its isolation in the context of the rise of institutionalised music education (see chapter 1). I analyse how the instrument was historically integrated in the oral music transmission grounded in the *sheykh*'s role and give examples of this. I also examine contemporary players attitudes and activities, across multiple localities and regions, as sites for the creation of intimacy (Berlant, 1998). In short, I explore how contemporary *'ūd 'arbī* players are made and how they participate in relation to the instrument's public life/*sheykh* tradition to construct intimate and new identities.

ONE

‘Ūd ‘Arbī and National Identity

In books, musical scores and visual representations, the identity of the *ūd ‘arbī* is shaped through the repertory of *mālūf*, its new status as a "national classical music" after independence (Davis, 2004), and the idea of its Andalusian heritage. They are important for the practice, transmission and revival of *ūd ‘arbī* music. This chapter focuses on how the instrument has become part of processes of patrimonialisation and national identity formations and will develop a critique of certain strands of nationalised heritage. To what extent, I will ask, does the *ūd ‘arbī* embody the Tunisian national identity? And how is this negotiated? Is the *ūd ‘arbī* a symbol of Tunisian music identity that is closely embedded in *mālūf*? I will suggest that in the 20th century the instrument became "Tunisian", while bearing an alleged Andalusian past at the same time. In the first section, I investigate *mālūf*'s position in the Andalusian heritage and its varied definitions. I move on to demonstrate how *mālūf* is experienced today in private clubs to understand what the *ūd ‘arbī* relationship is with the national milieu, listening beyond the concepts of nostalgia that continue to dominate thinking about Andalusian music. In the second section, by exploring the *ūd ‘arbī*'s image represented through national paintings, I trace one further example of how national identity has become entangled with the instrument, and I go on to illustrate how new sources of *ūd ‘arbī* help rethink the standard narrative of national music discourse. In the last section, I investigate how the Rashīdīa Music Institute of Tunis functions as a space of memory for Tunisian and Andalusian heritage, introducing the *ūd ‘arbī* as a powerful object of nostalgia.

Arab Andalusian Music, a National Construction

A brief historical recognition of early visual representations of the *ūd ‘arbī* helps introducing my argument. In terms of the instrumentation of *mālūf* ensembles, since the 19th century (Rezgui, 1989 [1968]; d’Erlanger, 1949; Guettat, 2000), the Tunisian ensemble (*jaouq*) has typically used the *ūd ‘arbī*, *darbūka*, sometimes also *nagharāt*, as percussions, and the *rebēb* (a two string fiddle) as also shown in this drawing titled: "Les Musiciens Tunisiens dans le Parc du Trocadero", signed by Burnand to illustrate the article "Le Café Tunisien et son Orchestre" written by Philippe Cantemarche for the Paris exhibition 1878 (Cantemarche, 1878: 78).



Figure 4. LES MUSIENS TUNISIENS DANS LE PARC DU TROCADERO", SIGNED BY BURNAND.
COURTESY ANIS MEDDEB.

Earlier evidence shows other combinations too. In the 19th century French painting by George Paul Joseph Darasse (1861-1904), titled *The Turkish Musicians* (unknown date), for example, the *ūd* resembles exactly some 19th century examples investigated in two European museums (see chapter 2) - the *ūd arbī* is paired with two percussion instruments (*tār* and *darbūka*); and the photo titled "Young man seated, playing an *oud*, while a young woman stands nearby", possibly taken by the photographer Tancrède R. Dumas between 1860 and 1900 in Tunisia and held at the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. (USA), is the oldest known photograph of the instrument.



Figure 5. "YOUNG MAN SEATED, PLAYING AN OUD, WHILE A YOUNG WOMAN STANDS NEARBY". PHOTO: [HTTP://WWW.LOC.GOV/PICTURES/ITEM/2004670407/](http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2004670407/)



Figure 6. GEORGE PAUL JOSEPH DARASSE (1861-1904), *THE TURKISH MUSICIANS*. PHOTO: [HTTPS://WWW.1ST-ART-GALLERY.COM/GEORGE-PAUL-JOSEPH-DARASSE/THE-TURKISH-MUSICIANS.HTML](https://www.1st-art-gallery.com/george-paul-joseph-darasse/the-turkish-musicians.html)

In the former, from the title, we learn that Turkish players might have used this instrument. Although we do not know where Darasse painted it, this is a rather problematic hypothesis, though it supports the idea that the 1872 manuscript of *mālūf* scores compiled by Beycal military musicians (see later) shows that this genre and its instruments were also in the hands of Ottoman - Turkish players or at least people belonging to this milieu. In the case of the painting, it is likely Darasse had been told or imagined that they were Turkish from a black gland/acorn, the *kobbīṭa* accessory attached to the red woollen hat, the Arab-Tunisian-Andalusian *shēshīa*, which is part of the traditional *beldī* (the urban citizens of the Medina such as producers, artisans, shoppers) costume (Ben Becher, 2006: 52) and maybe posing in one of the Ottoman Beycal palaces of North Africa. But this is pure speculation. However, what is also interesting is the age/social class distinction among the three musicians, the *ūd* player is clearly older than the two percussionists, with a whitish beard and wearing a turban called *kashṭa* instead, which is a symbol of the *makhzin*, a higher social class mainly made up of politicians and council administrators (Ben Becher, 2006: 77), therefore the leader, the *sheykh* (see chapter 5). The photo held at the USA library, shows the *ūd* player wearing similar clothes, a *sedrīa* - a kind of shirt without an opening on the chest, plus a cardigan with long arms and the typical Arabic trousers *sirwāl*, as well as a *shēshīa* with *kobbīṭa* (Ben Becher, 2006: 20).



Figure 7. KHAMAĪS TARNĀN

Both the painting and the photo show musicians with a traditional Arab-Tunisian outfit, although the alleged Andalusian cloak is absent. In this respect, also emblematic is the *jaouq*'s photo, unfortunately undated, in which the *rebēb* is left on the table, and the player is instead holding a violin, and an unknown *ūd* player with the same costumes described is also present. This last photo, held at *beīt el-Bennani* library, has been published several times in *mālūf* research

contexts (Guettat, 1992; Davis, 2004; Mostaīsir, 2014). It is considered an icon of *mālūf* musical genre along with the Tunisian delegate photo of the ensemble of the Cairo Congress 1932, which features the legendary *ūd 'arbī* player Khamaīs Tarnān (1894-1964). Despite the fact that these early visual sketches of the *ūd 'arbī* tell several different stories and use of the instrument, in the 20th century, the *ūd 'arbī* will be closely embedded with Tunisian *mālūf* and its role as national music. The most emblematic image is that of Khamaīs Tarnān with the *ūd* on a post stamp after Tunisia became a republic (Perkins, 2004: 100).

In Tunisia, traditionally and by now institutionally, art music (*mālūf*) is understood in scholarly accounts as synonymous with Arab Andalusian music, with roots in the courtly tradition of medieval Islamic Spain (Guettat, 1977, 1980, 2002; al-Mahdī, 1981; Jones, 2002a; Davis, 2004). In the article

"Arab-Andalusian Music of Tunisia" (1996a), Davis echoes the historical account of the origins of this distinctive Arab musical tradition dating back to the early 9th century. In Davis's words:

"According to popular belief, this music was imported to North Africa by so-called Andalusian refugees-Moslems and Jews fleeing the Christian reconquest of Spain from the 10th to the 15th centuries" (Davis, 1996a: 423).

Despite all the musicological efforts to trace historical boundaries, this music is seen as a co-existence of two languages: "classical" and "popular", both urban, with their variety of styles which are often a mixture of art-music *mālūf* (lit. familiar, custom) and religious music (Sufi) (Davis, 1996b: 315). More broadly, in North Africa today the term addresses two different concepts according to its semantic root: *'ta'līf* (composition) and *'mā 'ūlifā samā'uhu'* (what one is used to listening to) (Saidani and Belghbrit, 2015: 8). In Tunisia (Davis, 2002: 510) and elsewhere in the Maghreb (Shannon, 2015a; Glasser, 2016), every instance of al-Andalus as lived experience evokes the memory of a grand civilisation, one that competed with other civilisations and came out on the top. Drawing attention here to this specific phenomenon helps contextualise my argument. Davis refers to this music as:

"being labelled 'classical' or 'art music' by both Tunisian and Western scholars, promoted as such by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs and generally considered the foundation of all Tunisian urban music and historically the 'tradition' "(Davis, 1996b: 313).

In her extensive research of Tunisian *mālūf*, she reminds us that, in the 20th century, this music had been linked to an ideology of national identity and nostalgia for a past golden age. As Davis pointed out, this explanation was supported by drawing on the myth of the *mālūf*'s Andalusian origins to justify the authority of the canon of *mālūf* published notations (1960s) after independence: *al-turāth al-mūsīqī al-Tūnisi* (Tunisian Musical Heritage) (Davis, 2002a). The preface to volume II *Ensembles des Tawchihs et Zajals Tunisiens* (second edition 1967), written by al-Mahdī, the head of the Fine Arts department, for example begins with the following statements: "In *Andalusia*, musicians used to assign a specific musical mode to each part of the day [...] The melody known as the «malouf» corresponded to the time of the day when the performance was held" (1967: 3). On one hand, perpetuating the golden past of al-Andalus as a mythical discourse raises questions about the forms and possibilities of contemporary North African music and its identity in relation to real music practice. On the other hand, in Herzfeld's words, the language of national or ethnic identity is indeed a language of morality. It is about inclusion and exclusion and talking of elites and ordinary people, of classical, art and of popular music, concealed a common ground where *mālūf* music could be read on equal footing with the hegemonic western canon. As we have learned from thinkers such as Herzfeld, social actors adopt, reformulate, and recast official idioms in the pursuit of often highly unofficial personal goals, often in direct contravention of state authority. Thus, for example, the use of the Andalusian token in a nationalistic formation creates social identification bound up with notions of nostalgia and national identity.

I draw from Herzfeld the concept of “cultural intimacy”: the idea that nationalism treats national identity as a system of absolute values (2005: 78) is applied here to consider how the Andalusian nostalgic sentiments have been reified into a set of eternal verities. By this I mean that, *mālūf* as national music, prepares the top and bottom layers of the society as two of “a host of refractions of a shared cultural engagement”, which Herzfeld defines as “cultural intimacy” (Herzfeld, 2005: 3). In short, Bourguiba’s policies (1960s) concerning music served to stabilise its identity and put *mālūf* at the centre of a national musical hierarchy (Davis, 2004). It was a duty to cultivate *mālūf* as musical heritage in consequence of political union and independence. Today, *mālūf* includes the Tunisians in situations where a collective display of cultural heritage is called for (notably in superficial definitions of *mālūf*), but often excludes them when Tunisians have occasion to dwell on what they perceive as traditional music. As we will see below, in everyday discourse the “fixity” melts away, and the word *mālūf* simply means someone doing something customary.

This space, of cultural policy and cultural intimacy, from which the Tunisian *‘ūd* suffers ambiguous identities, emerges when Arab Andalusia music and *mālūf* became closely associated with the Rashīdīa Music Institute (al-Mahdī, 1981; Davis, 2002a, 2004). After independence, this institution and the volumes of *mālūf* transcriptions *al-turāth al-mūsīqī al-tūnisi* (Davis, 2002a: 506, 507), were virtually a symbol of the national community's adherence to official norms, since it is the normative and conservative body of the Tunisian music heritage. The foreword to the first volume of the collection titled *Ensemble des «Bachrafs» Tunisiens* written by M. Messadi, the secretary of the state for national education at the time, states that: “the ministry of National Education has decided to issue a series of music publications dealing with various pieces of *mūwashshahāt* and *zajāl*, folk songs, and other compositions inherited from *Andalusians* and adapted to the Tunisian taste” (n.d.: 4). The published collection, *al-turāth al-mūsīqī al-Tūnisi*, conceived as a deposit of the ‘true’ representation of the past is in this way a “sustaining of power” to command history and knowledge. These transcriptions of oral music practice do not lead the culture forward or fuel a revival but rather simply seek to document it. Normally this corpus is the main repertory you perform with the Tunisian *‘ūd*. To play this instrument, one can simply practice *mālūf*, following its characteristics and the music lines. Ideally, the *‘ūd ‘arbī* is to be found in the Rashīdīa Institute, this is the place to go searching for it. The music you play with it, the *mālūf*, is already all there, as the player Zouair Gouja told me, on answering my question what is *mālūf* for him: “It is simply the musical system, our musical system! The modes are developed there,” he continued. This is a typical answer from a practicing musician’s point of view. Although the struggle to pass from oral to written transmission is still an issue of debate in Tunisian studies (Akhoua, 2015), what is important here is the idea of Tunisian national music (Guettat, 1980, 2000) as *classical* and a single, unified “Andalusian” inherited genre. This idea thus encapsulates, at least by historical allusion, the embedding of nationhood in Andalusian identity, which is close to what *mālūf* and subsequently the *‘ūd ‘arbī* has also come to strongly imply.

The foreword of volume I of *al-turāth al-mūsīqī al-tūnisi* begins with the following assertion: "One of the foremost duties of the ministry of National Education is to safeguard all forms of national culture [...] the highest values of modern civilisation lie in the tremendous conquests of science, the spiritual dissemination of poetry and literature" (n.d.: 4). For the nationalists (al-Mahdī etc.), Arab Andalusian, as terminology, has a fixed semantic field, combining geography of historical migrations with the concept of a common heritage derived from classical literature, poetry and art, ordinarily understood by the term *mālūf*. In everyday discourse, as I mentioned, this fixed semantic field melts away. The word often used is *nouba* rather than *mālūf*, "Ziēd! Pick the 'ūd up and play some *nūba*", as his grandmother used to say, Ziēd Mehdī told me. In other words, "Arab Andalusian" music comes to be identified with the musical genre of the Tunisian elite class. It includes the Tunisians in situations where a collective display of cultural patriotism is called for, but often excludes them when the Tunisians have occasion to dwell on what they perceive as national feelings, in brief, as evidence of their other identities that make up the Tunisian ethnic mosaic. The ambiguity of terms such as Arab-Andalusian music, *musique classique*, *mālūf* etc. derives from the duality of the colonial historical experience: tension has always existed between the idealised, western derived models of high culture and the often far less flattering self-recognition that Tunisians associate with cultural intimacy (see Herzfeld, [1997] 2005).

The term *nūba* precedes that of *mālūf*, as the Tunisian musicologists Anīs Meddeb and Maḥmūd Guettat pointed out. At the end of the 19th century, the term *mālūf* emerged to identify a repertory that included not only the structured suites, but rather designated a broader concept of heritage and tradition (Davis, 2004). In practice, this was not always true. Looking at the programme of the Rashīdīa's debut concert in 1935, the first piece is *Air Isbihane*, from *Nouba Malouf*, as if this latter was a suite or a piece itself. Here the two terms are linked and used to substantially mean the same concept: a corpus of songs, what Sakli describes as the *ughniā*, *chanson (Tunisienne)* (Sakli, 1994). According to Sakli, throughout the 20th century, Tunisian cultural policy gave, willingly or not, to this "flexible" and "multifunctional" form the role of *musique officielle*, variously performed by the *jawq de malūf*, the *firqa classique*, *l'orchestra de l'harmonium* and the *jawq nouveau*, and in different performance contexts such as: private house feast, the cafes, *les cafés chantants*, theatres and concert halls, restaurants and hotels, recording studios and the radio (Sakli, 1994: 326-366). Then following other pieces from separate genres and forms such as: *Kellili y Souhbou a Mouchah*, a *Bachraf*, *Ya Chouchana a Fondou*, a *Chansonette* from *Zendali*. According to the player and connoisseur Fethi Zaghonda, *Zendali* and *foundou*, the former a form of prisoners' songs, are considered lower in comparison to the more elegant music structure of the *nūba* suite and therefore they have almost disappeared from the Rashīdīa concert programme. This programme example can be seen in what Glasser calls the "Andalusi or *nūba* complex" in the context of Algerian music (2016: 16, 98-99), a

heavy core occupied by the *nūba* and a periphery of lighter song forms. Something suitable for the small *jaouk* ensemble and the prominent rhythmical role of the *'ūd 'arbī*.

In musical terms, the *nūba* is an organisation of suites according to their melodic mode. *Nūba* literally means "one's turn". The historical evolution of this form has tempted scholars to claim possible surviving elements of medieval Andalusī music in North Africa, but only based on the inference that the *nūba* is today a more complex structure with a greater number of parts than its medieval precursor. Today, the different use of this term in other practices in Tunisia, namely *Ṣṭambēlī*, has also been investigated. Each member of the *Ṣṭambēlī* pantheon has its own *nūba* or tune (Jankowsky, 2010: 68). It is also used among Berbers of Kabylie (Algeria), to define instrumental music composed of melodies called *nnuba* (Mahfoufi, 2015: 49). However, *mālūf* has not absorbed the very similar popular perception of the term that we encounter in other music practice, for example, certain music in *Ṣṭambēlī*, *Mizwid* etc. In other words, as I am going to argue, the *mālūf* shaped an identity from Andalus to be suitable for the elitist national construction.

Between 2012 and 2016, five years after the revolution of 2011, the government introduced legal reforms to innovate the cultural sector, offering a new vision of Tunisian cultural policy based on cultural rights, private investment, heritage tourism, digital culture, copyright etc. (Aboudī, 2016). The aims were: (1) decentralisation and local governance of culture, (2) the promotion of creative and cultural industries, (3) the transversality of cultural sectors with other sectors such as education and youth (2016: 6). In order to effect its policy, the government established a network of International Cultural Cooperation (TCP) with the EU, UK, Germany, UNESCO and other players. The current cultural policy advisor, Bilēl Aboudī, told me in an interview that the notion of national culture, "culture as a vector to educate the nation and build human resource capacities", promoted a few years after independence (Kacem, 1973 [quoted in Davis, 1997: 1]), is now completely absent from the major axes of cultural reforms, although public funding for the sector reaches 80% of the overall sector spending.

However, if you go to Tunis, Zīād Gharsa's private *mālūf* club, named after his father *Club de Chant "Ṭahār Gharsa"*, is the place from which to begin exploring *mālūf* and yet it is not a public institution. The place is a large villa, home of the private music school *al-Fārābī*, with a large rehearsal room at the rear that faces onto the back garden. Generally, the clubs of *mālūf* are ambiguous and the organisation of the musical culture more individualised, usually without any state patronage. But Gharsa's club is unique, firstly because Zīād, Ṭahār Gharsa's son, is the *mālūf*'s most eminent and publically known artist; secondly, because this family has come to symbolise the well-trodden path from the Khamaīs Tarnān national *mālūf* revival era to contemporary modern practices (Davis, 2004). Ironically, this club stands outside of any official national representation or ideology. For this reason, today, Gharsa's position within Tunisian society is very much ambivalent. He identifies both the unique public figure for *mālūf*, as we are going to see in Chapter Five, and its entire opposite: a significant private scene of *mālūf*.



Figure 8. CLUB DE MĀLŪF "ṬAHĀR GHARSA". PHOTO: SALVATORE MORRA

In the right-hand corner of the main room, a group of *mālūf* aficionados is having tea after a sound check. Instruments sit in the numbered chairs of the opposite corner while, Zīād, the leader, is setting up for a second rehearsal section. I was moseying around the musical instruments. Zīād glances at me distractedly, as though daydreaming. "*Mālūf* is daily bread", he says, tugging at his hair. "What do you mean?" I ask. "It is a habit and our heritage," Zīād answers. *Mālūf* is something that is integrated into the rhythms of everyday life. "It is like going to the gym," one of the clubbers once told me. If they are in the class, followers of the Gharsa *mālūf* club wait for the leader Zīād to assign them a new piece, or each can agree with a fellow member of the class to try and smooth out a difficult passage and the rhyming of the lyrics. If the session is the normal weekly practice, participants know each other by sight, so they are likely to greet each other cordially and proceed to sing. Each is drawn to the club by their interest in *mālūf*. It happened several times to me. A predictably large number of aspiring professionals look on: would be performers and teachers, as well as the occasional amateurs who have made it to the stage, come back to practice and greet friends. Mirrors on one side of the room, rows of chairs for about forty regular participants and a large framed poster of Ṭahār Gharsa on the wall by the entrance, complete the picture. When ready, Zīād starts improvising a prelude, which introduces the new song to learn. Similarly to the club ran by his father in the 1990s (see Davis, 2004: 110), the room falls silent and people start passing around the lyrics of the photocopied handwritten poems. Today, Zīād, the son, is the leader of the family, but no longer the conductor of the Rashīdīa. Zīād teaches every phrase, singing and accompanying himself on an electric piano rather than on the *ūd*. The participants repeat and memorise in turn and all together until the song is mastered. At the end of the day session, they enjoy singing a song off-program, even Egyptian or from other genres, often performed by a soloist who volunteers to sing.

Most participants are women, largely from the bourgeoisie - upper class society of the capital, who like *mālūf* and enjoy singing. One of the youngest amateurs, Jīhēn Arūme, an international business entrepreneur, often engaged with me in discussions about the nostalgic flavour of the texts

and their endless love themes. Sometimes elderly and revered players of the club sit surveying the assembly, willing to give opinions and tips to less experienced players. Only one of the young successes, Safwen Ghasmī, attracted attention by appearing at every session with an *ūd 'arbī* I attended during Ramadan 2015. He must have been an outstanding pupil to be able to play the instrument in Zīād's club, I thought. But it is not always like this. Others appeared when I frequented the club more regularly and for longer, like Muḥammad Bou 'Alī, two winters after. Muḥammad is a zealous *ūd 'arbī* student and is part of that modern Maghrebi society which has little knowledge of "paradise lost" and the golden days of cities like Seville, Cordova etc. In the club's musical practice and social relations lie openings for poetic innovation, for social and professional repositioning, but not for engaged nostalgic sentiments. Singing *mālūf* in Gharsa's club is not about feeling nostalgia, it is something customary, usual to do, and no less than for the pure joy of it.

During my attendance at the club, I interviewed thirty-six of the regular forty participants, asking one main question: what is *mālūf* for them, their experience with it. The most common definitions and adjectives were: it is fine music, it benefits your soul and is therapeutic, it is Tunisian musical heritage and culture identity, it is musically rich, it is a stimulus of memory, it is moving, magic, pleasure, passion, memory and exaltation, it creates dependence, it is the history of Tunisian music, it has something of me, of our identity... and a few "it is of Andalusian origin". I have conducted the same survey in two different contexts, among music students and professional players in two courses of the ISM of Tunis, and at the *mālūf* Festival of Soussa in 2017. In both cases, the reference to Andalusian heritage was never mentioned. In the former context, definitions such as traditional Tunisian heritage, and even more so "it is a genre of Tunisian music", were the most frequent, as if it is an official definition given in educational institutions. One player sees *mālūf* like "breathing", he cannot live without it; another says that it gives a good feeling to the soul of (*nafasiyya*) the listener, while only one mentions its superiority among Tunisian music genres, using the word elite (*al-rāqī*). In the latter context, the term "mode" often appears, such as modal heritage, of the Tunisian mode, it is the *nūba* which contains the Tunisian modes, as well as others like: heritage, traditional modes and rhythms, our identity, inspirational, scientific, Tunisian society, culture and mystic. Only one mentioned the Rashīdīa, only one used the term classical North African music, and only one made a difference from popular music *sha'abiyya*. Many interviewers consider *mālūf* to be the channel for the transmission of heritage and identity, but more specifically the actual Tunisian mode system, in the sense of the repertory. Since 2012, it is also a local concept in Kairouan, Soussa, Monastir etc. where there are numerous Rashīdīa orchestras (see later). People negotiate the tensions of social identity and daily life within the turbulent context of the modern nation-state, they are Andalusian and Tunisian at one and the same time. In the club, the authoritative definition of Andalusian music often contrasts starkly with the variety of interpretations that we meet in everyday speech. These emotions described

through various definitions are aspects of the interior of a human being, the very substance of cultural intimacy (Herzfeld, 2005: 89).

In conclusion, the aftermath of the independence (1960s) saw an exploitation of the power of both the Andalusian-Classical music and *mālūf* discourse to generate a semblance of timeless truths. Here, Herzfeld's concept of morality was co-opted by the state, creating a dichotomy between high and low music culture, i.e. *mālūf* and the *La Musique Classique du Maghreb* (Guettat, 1980). Then this state identity is inserted in the resulting canon of values coming from the practice and talking of this musical genre. To this concept of Andalusian music heritage as it is construed in Academia, can be ascribed the interplay of "fixity" and "lability" of terminology described by Herzfeld (2005: 82), as a counterpoint to the status of "high cultural/musical civilisation" and its geographical embodiment, namely "al-Andalus". These terms are all derived from the nationalistic view of Tunisia as the continuation of ancient Andalus and therefore as the source of its state culture. Thus, the Tunisian *'ūd 'arbī* caught up with this institutionalisation of the tradition, absorbing nostalgic sentiments from the *mālūf* context.

New Sources of National Music Discourse: *Safāin al-mālūf al-tūnisī* and *Leïla*

In the following pages, my argument is illustrated through the presence of the *'ūd 'arbī* in sources from the colonial time, and this enables us to approach the matter from a different perspective, in which the metaphorical construction of the nation was a culture and political resistance against the coloniser, or, in other cases, it was not foundational at all. After independence, Tunisia returned to a nation-building phase with the problem of defining the political and cultural community and establishing a legitimate political authority. In this sense, the increase in governmental control of the nation's cultural activities since the 1960s may have been an important factor in redefining *mālūf* (Davis, 2002, 2004). Here, I question the importance of those volumes of *al-turāth al-mūsīqī al-tūnisī* (1960s) during the forging of a nation, and what predated them. Through their publication, *mālūf* underwent a process of redefinition, from oral transmission into Western notation, as part of the larger project of culturally unifying the nation, presented officially as such by al-Mahdī (al-Mahdī, 1967-1979: 8; Davis, 2002a). Davis defines the collection with the Western terminology "canon", both for this compendium and for the sound archive created by the national radio, which complemented the music notation (Davis, 2004: 93, 99).

Since that publication, the *'ūd 'arbī* player Khamaīs Tarnān, who already twenty years earlier had been a source for the transcriptions of the Tunisian music systems of modes made by d'Erlanger, slowly began to embody the icon of the heritage that d'Erlanger had propagated. Davis notes that in the last decades of the nationalist movement until independence (1958), "the modernized ma'lūf symbolized the Tunisian national identity", and was officially designated the national musical heritage

coinciding with the Arab concept of *turāth*, although it was virtually disappearing from the cafes in the cities and the repertoire was rarely performed at wedding celebrations (Davis, 1997: 79, 85). Davis (2002a, 2004) argues that *mālūf*, as an Arab musical and literary repertory, reflected the government's policies "to Arabise Tunisian culture"; it had the prestige associated with the Arab Andalusian heritage (2002a: 510; 2004: 71).

While these various arguments are important, there are some inconsistencies and omissions that are significant. To judge from writers like d'Erlanger (1917), as taken up by Davis (2002b), *mālūf* was approaching obscurity at the beginning of twentieth century. D'Erlanger, recognised as the key figure in the revival and conservation of Tunisian music, and co-organiser/contributor to the Cairo Congress of 1932, demanded a critique of condition of vulnerability of the *mālūf* repertory in his 1917 article, "*Au Sujet de la Musique Arabe en Tunisie*" in *Revue Tunisienne*.

"... A Tunis, aujourd'hui, il nous serait impossible de faire interpréter convenablement la moindre page de musique classique: nous ne saurions trouver les cinq musiciens nécessaires pour l'exécuter". (24: 91).

"... Today, in Tunis, it will not be possible anymore to interpret pages of classical [Tunisian] music: we will not be able to find the five musicians who could do it". (Trans. Morra)

This quote demonstrates the necessity of a criticism to define a music and to keep it relevant for contemporary players. The story we know from Davis tells that, believing the repertoire to be on the threshold of extinction, d'Erlanger devoted the rest of his life to remedying foreign European influences on Arab music (Davis, 1997: 73). D'Erlanger transformed his palace in Sidi Bou Said into a centre of education, performance and transmission, gathering a group of outstanding Tunisian musicians, including the *'ūd 'arbī* player *sheykh* Khamaīs Tarnān (1894-1964) as his prominent mentor.

But how is it possible that d'Erlanger was not informed about a Tunisian "symphonic" orchestra that had existed since 1872, or the ensemble of the Bardo military school, with its important music manuscript (1872)? And what about the theatres, music halls and *café chantant* at the turn of the century described by Raoul Darmon in the *Bulletin Economique et Social de la Tunisie* (1953: 90)? The Municipal Theatre, located in the heart of Tunis on the Ave. H. Bourguiba (66 Ave. Jules Ferry before independence), is close to the former French Embassy and the Cathedral. It was inaugurated in 1902 and could hold over a thousand spectators. Corriou notes (2005):

"La construction du Théâtre Municipal correspond bien à la mise en place des infrastructures culturelles françaises qui suivent plus tardivement l'organisation administrative et politique du protectorat." (Corriou, 2005 [*Les Français* 103-106]).

"The building of the Municipal theatre matched well with the setting up of the French cultural infrastructure that followed on from supported the administrative and political organisation of the protectorate." (Trans. Morra)

French and European drama and music dominated theatre programming in the interwar period (see also chapter 3). As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, at the end of 19th century, Tunisia was a cosmopolitan hub in the Mediterranean, where musical influences came from the East and the North.

We might assume that these influences contributed to a diminished appreciation of *mālūf*, and that a hybrid process of reinterpreting the traditional music repertoire according to contemporary aesthetics (Egyptian) was occurring widely, to the detriment of local tradition. I argue the contrary, because on the basis of this rich musical scene emerging from the sources, it seems that *mālūf* was neither rescued by d'Erlanger's efforts for revival and patronage, nor by the first published notations of *mālūf*, and that the view of a *mālūf* on the verge of eclipse is doubtful.

In fact, the most important source of *mālūf* dates from more than sixty years before the very foundation of the Rashīdīa Institute. Officers⁴ at the military School of Bardo, which was created in 1840 by Aḥmad Bey I (1837-1855), compiled a manuscript of *mālūf* compositions in western musical notations titled *Safāin al-mālūf al-tūnisī* (the "boat", a metaphorical guide to the Tunisian *mālūf*) and *Dhawabīt ta'lim al-ālāt wa nawbāt al- mālūf* (Methods of teaching musical instruments and *nūbas* of *mālūf*), both for military fanfare orchestrations and traditional ensembles in 1872. With respect to the Tunisian *'ūd*, it is the first official source for this instrument in Tunisia. It presents the instrument, its morphology and the tuning which correspond to today's instrument, as well as showing note positions on the neck of the instrument with graphics. The unedited manuscript⁵ contains scores in western notation of *nūba-s dhīl*, *ḥasīn*, *ramal*, *raṣd dhīl*, *aṣba'in* along with their texts, and description of instruments such as: clarinet, piano, violin and *rebēb*, and *'ūd 'arbī* (page 68). The drawing of the *'ūd* is relatively accurate and one can clearly distinguish important features of the instrument such as: the four courses of strings, pick guard shape and three sound holes. Those visual sources of the *'ūd 'arbī* provide images of the instrument and the players in various contexts highlighting how it is embedded in different social and ethnic milieu. They also help hypothesising a 19th century use of the instrument, possibly detached from national identity and ideology.

⁴ Grītlī Aḥmad Khlīl, Ben Aḥmad Gharbī, Ben 'Abd Allāh, Ben al-Ṭayyīb Ghlībī.

⁵ A bound copy (1963) is held at the ISM of Tunis.



Figure 9. 'ŪD 'ARBĪ IN SAFĀ'IN AL-MĀLŪF AL-TŪNISĪ. PHOTO: SALVATORE MORRA

This manuscript originates in an era of modern Tunisia, which has routinely been understood as a secular modernising state due to its cosmopolitan construction during the 19th century (Chaldeos, 2016: 381). In the reign of Muḥammad III al-Ṣadīq (1859–1882), Tunisia issued the first constitution in the Arab world, inspired by the constitutional monarchies of Europe, that was signed in 1861 and declared judiciary independence (Martin 2003, 41–43). However, the passing from the Empire to the protectorate (Treaty of Bardo on 12 May 1881) set a line of demarcation on how Tunisian music was understood. This shift makes us rethink the Andalusian music heritage and the 'ūd 'arbī in Tunisia, by seeing it in a context of modernity and modernisation previous to the colonial discourses and nationalist anxieties (see d'Erlanger, 1917; Davis, 2004).

It is not only the manuscript that enables us to rethink the narrative of extinction. Concerning the instrument, sketches of players from written sources and recordings for example may also give a different sense and contribution to the ideas about it today⁶. Anīs Meddeb, the Tunisian researcher and director of CMAM since 2017, for instance, recently found in the Tunisian national archives the signed contract of the player who took part in the Tunisian music ensemble café at the 1889 Paris exhibition, 'Alī Ben Muḥammad 'Aīsha, who may be regarded as the first known Tunisian 'ūd 'arbī player. There is no other known significant information about this player, indicating that music practice regarding this instrument was shared between amateur use and professionalism. 19th century images representing the Tunisian ensembles at exhibitions in Paris include: one or two percussions for example such as *nagharāt* and *darbūka* or *tār*, 'ūd 'arbī, sometimes a *rebēb*, which became a standard formation until the Cairo congress of 1932 (Rezgui, 1989, [1968]: 58-61). In subsequent years, the number of players increased, forming orchestras of up to twenty-five musicians - a phenomenon widely experienced also in Egypt throughout the 20th century (Castelo-Branco, 2002). At the Rashīdīa's archive, recently opened to researchers, I have examined several documents that list players and the relative instruments for each event and performance during the 1930s and 1940s. At the foundation concert of the Rashīdīa institute on June 5th 1935, three musicians were playing the Tunisian 'ūd, namely: Khamaīs Tarnān, Lālū Bishishī and 'Alī Banwas, in order of appearance on the poster. At another concert six years later on May 1st 1941, the number of 'ūd players doubled and included: Khamaīs Tarnān, who was the first on the list, 'Abd Raḥman al-Maḥdī, Hedī Ben Adwas, and 'Alī Sritī who

⁶ I explore this further in Chapter Four.

certainly played the *'ūd sharqī*. Since independence up until recently, the presence of the Tunisian *'ūd* varied according to the size of the orchestras and essentially for random reasons.

A further source that encourages us to revisit the history of *mālūf*, its Andalusian and national identities is a Tunisian women's periodical entitled *Leïla*⁷. This was written in French, published under French colonisation, and gave prominence to entertainment that included music performance, theatre and cinema (Mamelouk, 2008). *Leïla* had articles by both Tunisians and French on cultural subjects, including music, where existing political and social boundaries (colonial/nationalist, modernity/tradition) were tested by educated Tunisian elites. Articles from *Leïla* are extremely useful for broadening our perspective on various types of Tunisian nationalist voices prior to the conceptualisation of a national culture after independence. What was national music at the time of the protectorate? How did it reflect the Andalusian-Tunisian paradigm?

Certain articles demonstrate that the *Leïla* project includes the writing of a 20th century Tunisian music history. A short article ("Une charmante dictatrice," Dec. 1936, 17) about the singer, Shāfīa Roshdī, emphasises her performance at the *Grand Café d'Alger*. According to Mamelouk, her name first appears in an advert for the *Grand Café d'Alger* on the front interior cover and again at the end of the magazine in a short article, "Le chant, la danse: Shāfīa au Café d'Alger" (2008: 57). Shāfīa Roshdī⁸, an orphan born in Sfax, began singing at weddings at the age of twelve. She sang in several orchestras (*Ḥabīb El Manaā's*, *Fadhīla Khetmī's*, and *el Mostakbel el Tamthili*) before creating her own, *Noujoum el Fen*, and becoming the principal singer of the *Rashīdīa*, founded, it is worth noting, only one year before this article. When Muṣṭafa Ṣfar, founder of the music institute, passed away in 1941, she left to sing at weddings where she could earn more (Corriou, 2005 [*Les Français* 213-214]). Shāfīa Roshdī is a striking figure for the *Rashīdīa* because she featured at the inaugural concert at the foundation in 1935 as the singer and leader of the ensemble. In the concert poster held at the institute's archive and recently available for consultation, her name is in the centre and written larger than any other players of the group. This points to a shift of perspective from the kind of repertory and social function the institute had at its beginning. Although Roshdī was accompanied by musicians like Tarnān, who later on contributed prominently to a national music culture, this bottom up view, directly from the "stage" of the performance, makes us see people's role and their activities less implicated in any nationalist revival. Indeed, at the time of forming the institute, the common repertory and the actual practice of making music was more important than its nationalist aim or any intellectual speculation. It was conceived as a "show", what today in French, a *ḥafla* (party, feast) of the *Rashīdīa*, is called a *spectacle*, and more generally a music event.

Other contemporary music associations (*La Sahelienne* 1912 and *Philharmonie Arabe* 1900-1907 of Soussa, *Cheikh Medina* 1896, *La Chorale* 1897 and *La Naceuria* 1925, *Association pour la*

⁷ December 1936 to November 1940, first series.

⁸ Pseudonym for Zakīa Marrakchī (1910-1989).

conservation de la Musique Tunisienne 1935 of Tunis), reveal an active music life in the capital and elsewhere, which increased after the Beycal decree of 15 September 1888 on the concession of free music associations. The cultural activity of those associations does not underestimate the Rashīdīa efforts in promotion and conservation, rather it gives an overview of the music activities during colonial time that were Tunisian *mālūf* orientated. Both the *La Sahelienne* and *Philarmonie Arabe*, whose president was a certain Hamida Sacca, indicate a prolific activity in the Sahel region. The *Philarmonie Arabe* states that its repertory includes: "des airs indeignés Arabe avec les instrumentes usité dans tous le musiques, la marsilleise et la marche du Bey", while the orchestra *Cheikh Medina* of forty musicians conducted by Clément Nataf which performed in Berlin in 1896 shows a remarkable international activity. Similarly, the association *La Chorale* participated in several competitions abroad (Alger 1892, Grenoble 1903, Paris 1900, Roane 1910), always with funding from the council of Tunis. Concerning the *La Naceuria*, there are sources describing its activity as a school for choir and music in French and Arabic for adults.

In this respect, it is clear that music life in Tunisia, related to Tunisian music, did not begin in d'Erlanger's time and under his patronage or even with the Rashīdīa Music Institute (1935), as some literature has suggested (Davis, 1997, 2002a, 2004). The colonist presence urged raising awareness about Tunisian music culture in general that was taken up by the several associations mentioned above for example. As Mamelouk notes, a decade later, the editorial team of *Leïla* clearly states this and stands behind critics in "Leïla vous parle" (24 Jan. 1941, 2):

"Notre Musique et Théâtre doivent, en effet avoir le cachet du pays. Et cela est d'autant plus indispensable qu'ils constituent la manifestation réelle de notre vitalité."

"Our music and theatre must have the cachet of the country. And this is so much more necessary because it constitutes the real manifestation of our vitality." (Trans. Morra)

Editors insist on a Tunisian music and theatre, claimed for the community through the terms *notre musique* and *notre théâtre*. For Mamelouk, the editorial team demonstrates coherent and long-term objectives that defend and contribute to a national identity (*notre vitalité*) through a cultural criticism that defines the new nation (2008: 260).

The position of the Rashīdīa institute in *Leïla* is somewhat ambiguous. In March 1941, attention is given to the history of the Rashīdīa, which by then had only existed for six years. An anonymous writer describes an institution that is anchored in the community, as its directing committee had seventy-five members chosen from writers, musicians, and amateurs of music ("La Musique, La Rashīdīa," 16 Mar. 1941, 3). *Leïla* suggests the Rashīdīa as a model for a musical group promoting a national music. The proposal for a Tunisian orchestra at *Tunis-National* appears once only, never to be repeated ("L'Orchestre Tunisien de 'Tunis-National'," 24 Jan. 1941, 5). In May 1941, the founder, Maḥmūd Zarrūk himself contributes an article, "La Musique: Les Sources Modernes de la Musique en

Tunisie" (2 May 1941, 5), that summarizes the problems of developing a national music in the interwar period. He specifically points to the flooding of the Tunisian market with Egyptian music and the resulting imitative music produced by Tunisian composers. Zarrūk hails the founding of the Rashīdīa as the major musical event to turn the tide: "triomphe de la musique tunisienne". The word *triomphe* suggests a successful confrontation with colonial cultural domination, and movement toward the independent nation through the promotion of a national music. From *Leīla's* articles we understand that, on the one hand, the Rashīdīa was an elite affair on the level of intellectual speculations of national consciousness formation. On the other hand, it was constituted of musicians and singers who concentrated simply on interpreting a variously popular musical repertory in a style that seemed "classical".

For example, since the 1920s Manoubi Snoussi worked in the music domain, particularly for the Baron d'Erlanger project of the six volumes *La Musique Arabe* published posthumously by Geuthner between 1930 and 1959 (Sakli, 2003: 7). Nonetheless, Snoussi joined the Tunisian delegates at the Cairo Congress when at that time d'Erlanger had already passed away. Recently in 2003, the Center of Arab and Mediterranean Music, published the first volume of *Initiation à La Musique Tunisienne* edited by Rashīd Sellamī, containing large extracts from Snoussi's 36 radio programmes about Tunisian musical genres broadcasted in the 1960s by the National Radio RTT (Sakli, 2003: 7-9). Among Tunisian musical experts, Snoussi's work is today regarded of high musicological importance for Tunisian music and more volumes are soon to be published. In the article "De l'état actuel de la musique arabe" (June 1938, 10-11), Snoussi's suggestions include: 1) a documentation of *la musique classique tunisienne*, especially the *ma'luf*, instead of depending on oral tradition; 2) an educational program or a school for professional and amateur musicians to learn a minimum of music theory taught by an Arab musician from another country. The Rashīdīa is at the heart of a Tunisian national music, and its influence increased with its radio performances. This text by Snoussi, prompts reflection: the terms *musique classique* reinforce following the colonial cultural power. If colonised elites at opposite ends of the French Empire were unsatisfied with the music culture production, their commitment could only be to defend Tunisian and Arab music traditions while applauding renewal on the basis of constructing an elitist music genre. Therefore, the use of the term "*classical* Tunisian music" in *Leīla* and taken up in later decades by music scholars, particularly Guettat (1980), was a challenge to the music of the Western coloniser. The ambiguity of the Rashīdīa lies in symbolising national music on the intellectual and cultural level while practising and performing musical forms that were popular. This implies an existing overlap between intimate and formal uses of the terminologies such as: classical, Andalusian, elite etc.

A second point to be drawn from the articles in *Leīla* is that through images of players and instruments, music and painting contributed, before and after independence (1930s-1960s), to the dismantling of colonial ideology and the restructuring of a national identity fuelled by cultural

resistance. For example, illustrated with a drawing by Jellāl Ben ‘Abdallah (1921-2017), the article “De l’état actuel de la musique arabe” (June 1938, 10-11), draws the reader into the initial formulation of a national music that appeared in the first series of the magazine *Leïla*.

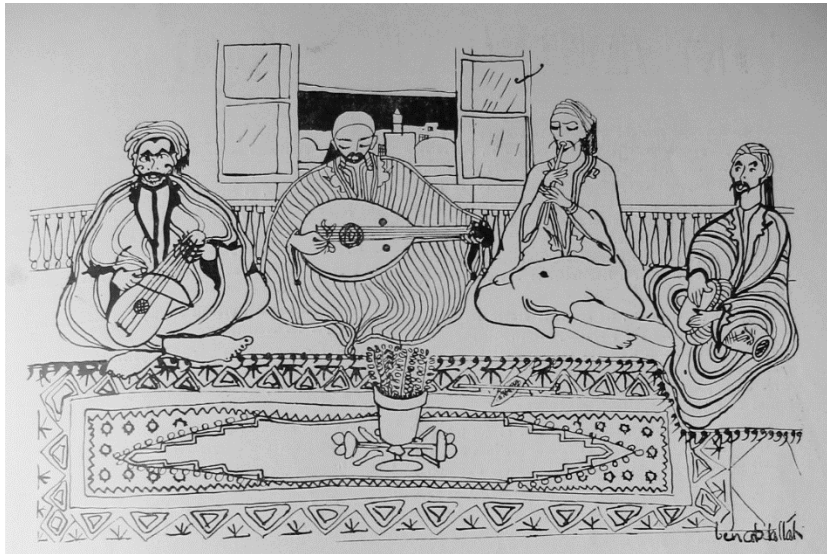


Figure 10. JAOUK ENSEMBLE, JELLĀL BEN ‘ABDALLAH (1938)

In the picture, there is a *jaouk* ensemble (from left to right: *rebāb*, *‘ūd tūnsī*, *ney*, *nagharāt*), with Tunisian musicians sitting on a carpet in a room, a window behind them overlooking a minaret symbolising their Arab Muslim identity. Jellāl Ben ‘Abdallah drew attention to the *‘ūd tūnsī* in some detail. Jellāl Ben ‘Abdallah was the most prolific painter of musical instruments among the group “*école de Tunis*”⁹ (Bouزيد, 1998: 35). This pioneering group of Arab painters assembled in 1949 (Bouزيد, 1998: 19), was swept up in nationalist sentiment. The cultural heritage of the area, including music (*mālūf*, *ṣṭambēlī* and traditional ensembles) became a subject to paint and folklore was either left aside or transformed for the nationalist project (Boussabeh, 2002: 7; Bouزيد, 1998: 20). It seems clear that when Jellāl Ben ‘Abdallah chose to paint an *‘ūd*, it would have to be the Tunisian one.

In another of his paintings, “*Unnamed 97X66 Acrylique sur Contre Plaqué*”, Jellāl Ben ‘Abdallah uses an *‘ūd ‘arbī* as a model. It was made by the first certified professional Tunisian-Arab luthier ‘Abd ‘Azīz Jemaīl (1895-1969), whose craftsmanship may be considered a bridge between unknown Tunisian *‘ūd* makers of the 19th century and today’s luthiers, and as such forms a part of the history of Tunisian national identity in all its complexity (see chapter 3). This story of the *‘ūd ‘arbī*, as a part of Tunisian national identity, but held in a private collection, can be traced in the context of French colonial administration, anticolonial resistance movements, and nationalist political programmes cultivated through the first half of the 20th century. I discovered it in June 2015, when I had been researching the Tunisian *‘ūd* for some weeks and took a weekend off to visit Marsa, a town near Sidi Bou Said on the north east coast of the Tunis gulf. Most foreigners, mainly Italians and Americans who

⁹ Yahia Turki, Ammar Farhat, Abdelaziz Gorgi, Nello Levy, Jellāl Ben ‘Abdallah, Edgar Naccache, Emmanuel Bocchieri.

work and study in Tunis, choose to live in Marsa. Its two main attractions are a 16th century palace known as *‘Abdalliya*, and the famous restaurant *Şaf şāf* which has the best handmade *brīk* and sweet *bambālūnī*. It was not my first time in Marsa, but I went there this time in search of a private gallery, "Alexandre Roubtsoff", which advertised a new exhibition with tableaux by painters of the "*école de Tunis*". On the front door of the gallery was a poster featuring a painting of musical instruments, among which I recognised an *‘ūd tūnsī*. I had been reading about Tunisian nationalist painters but I had been unsure whether to continue with that line of research until that moment. Naturally, from then on, I was in search of the painting and the painter himself.

Seif Chaouch and his daughter inaugurated this private art gallery in 2014, naming it after the Russian painter Alexandre Roubtsoff (1884- 1949), who lived in Sidi Bou Said during the 1920s and painted numerous Tunisian folklore scenes and landscapes. I was particularly interested to know why the curators chose this painting to represent the exhibition. When we spoke after the visit, Chaouch explained that the theme of music was provocative, and gave curators the chance to present the Tunisian painting school from a new angle. Through music, they could contemplate a history of Tunisia and simultaneously offer a perspective on current music life. As I picked up my bag and was about to leave, Chaouch reminded me that Jellāl was still living, that he would be ninety-four years old that summer.

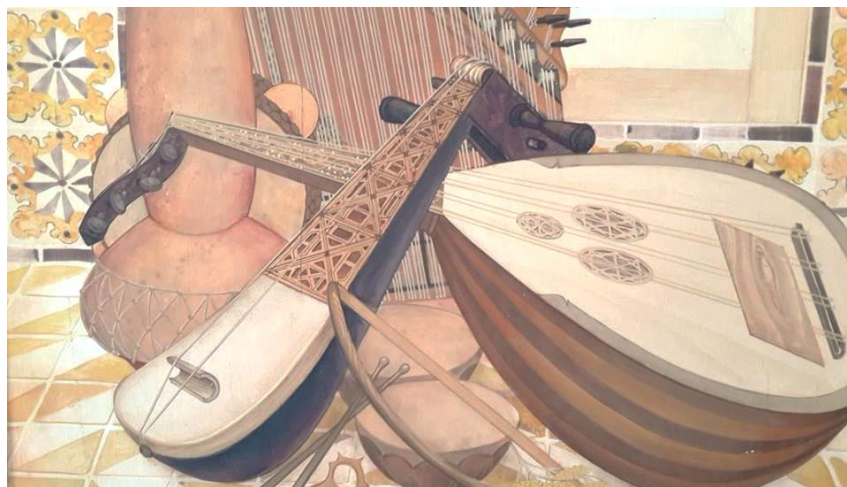


Figure 11. "UNNAMED 97X66 ACRYLIQUE SUR CONTRE PLAQUÉ" (DETAIL), JELLĀL BEN ‘ABDALLAH. PHOTO: SALVATORE MORRA. COURTESY GALLERY "ALEXANDRE ROUBTZOFF".

This particular painting was probably made in the late 1960s. On a pale yellow background of traditionally decorated tiles, a wide range of Tunisian traditional musical instruments used at that time and still today (*rebēb*, *ney*, *qānūn*, *darbūka*, *nagharāt*, *ṭār* and *‘ūd tūnsī*) are leaning against the wall, as if musicians had left them there when taking a break. On looking at the painting, I tried to imagine the sound of the encounter between instruments and musicians. I looked carefully to distinguish the details portrayed by Jellāl: strings, rosette carving, the pickguard shape, the leather folding at the edge and the four double courses of strings. During my visit to Jellāl Ben ‘Abdallah's

house on the hill of Sidi Bou Said, where he moved in 1938, Jellāl explained that his interest in *mālūf* and musical instruments had led him to paint musical subjects and use instruments as models; he experimented with historical examples from his family collection to work out designs. Some paintings, like *L'atelier du Luthier* 10X13 (1960s), depict musical scenes through typically Tunisian styles of private musical entertainment, or collections of musical instruments as still lifes, such as *Nature morte au luth tunisien* (2005) and the stamp collection realised in 1957 for the Tunisian Republic, which included an *'ūd tūnsī* (Bouker, 2013: 335). Some tableaus feature pictures of an *'ūd* player (1980), often holding a *rīsha* – one of the most iconic examples of a Tunisian musician. Since his youth, Jellāl was surrounded by a musical environment. His father was a friend of Muṣṭafa Šfar, founder of the Rashīdīa institute, of Tarnān and al-Mahdī. Jellāl's family collection of musical instruments, from which he took inspiration, includes a guitar made by an Italian named Prestigiacomo (1940s), a *qānūn*, *nagharāt* and a *rebēb*. Jellāl was also an amateur guitar player.

At the beginning of our conversation, Jellāl looked at me and said: "I painted these instruments because I was attracted by the shape, by their form". For him, painting seems to be a conscious visual memorisation of objects. Painting musical instruments in this way could be a form of participating in the music itself, in *mālūf* and in its sentiments. The creative act is a passage where the *'ūd* of the artist captures the imagination, and the materiality of the object becomes a vehicle for that memory. From the richly painted details, I was sure Jellāl Ben 'Abdallah owned a Tunisian *'ūd*, and when he welcomed me into his living room, it was there in a corner next to an old wooden chest. A dark wooden face was pierced by three moons, perhaps Lebanon cedar or mahogany. Jellāl said that it was a family instrument, and it turns out to be the only known surviving example of a Tunisian *'ūd* made by 'Abd 'Aziz Jemaīl (1895-1969). The label shows the date of 10th of August 1923.

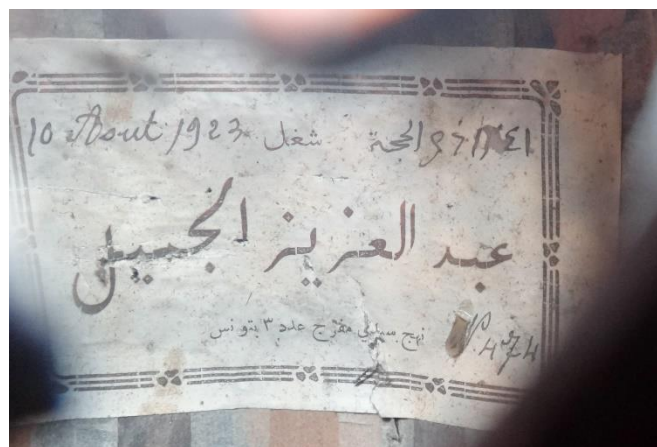


Figure 12. 'ABD 'AZĪZ JEMĀĪL, 'ŪD 'ARBĪ'S LABEL. PHOTO: CLAUDIA LICCARDI. COURTESY BEN 'ABDALLAH.

In conclusion, I argue that those new sources, reveal both that, on the one hand, *mālūf*'s Rashīdīa activity or d'Erlanger patronage was not a revival of this music because there existed previous examples, and on the other hand, that national music construction (see *Leīla*) was begun by an elite class against the coloniser, and that notions of Andalusian heritage were absorbed after independence.

In Search of the *'ūd 'arbī*: Clubs, Institutions and Collective Memories

My fieldwork began in the ten-day long celebration of the Rashīdīa Institute 80th anniversary (May 2015). During the festival, the Rashīdīa set up an exhibition in the *Kheireddīne* palace of the Medina, just a three-minute walk from the institute building, illustrating its eighty-year long history since its foundation. This exhibition titled *Documentaire: La Rachidia à Travers l'Histoire*, was inaugurated on the 21st of May 2015 at the festival opening. When I managed to find the place in the labyrinth of the ancient Medina, Taūfīq, the official porter of the institute, said as I entered: "This is the memory of the Rashīdīa". The exhibition was organised by the institute itself with part of the ordinary funding it receives annually. The collection was an opportunity for self-reflection for Tunisians, but even if it shares the same images and quotations, is not the same as national memory. Rather, it displayed a history of the Rashīdīa, musicians and performances that proved to be a recognised collective memory. For Tunisians of the *mālūf* circle, the exhibition brought together highly evocative moments of the institute's history, seeking to be a statement both of their unique heritage and of its emotional and artistic hold on interested audiences. Visiting the several rooms, it soon reminded me of the metaphorical construction of the nationhood as culture as highlighted by Herzfeld. Here, it was music that closely identifies that metaphor (Herzfeld, 2005: 77). Exhibiting becomes "practical essentialism" (Herzfeld, 2005: 28), creating resemblances through the use of stereotypes in social interaction. This is also one of the circumstances in which the Andalusian stereotype is used, which reifies people in culturally coded roles.

The exhibition as a whole, with its photos of the official ensembles of the past - the famous one of 1968 with 'Abd ar-Raḥman al-Mahdī holding an *'ūd 'arbī* at the centre of the *firqa*, others with Khamaīs Tarnān and 'Alī Bānwās - sustain nationalism directly predicated on resemblance, where players, their images and iconic power, "naturalise" the culture (Herzfeld, 2005: 91). Photos of more recent years, in particular the period in which professor Muḥammad Sa'āda (1981-1989) was the conductor of the ensemble, and under the direction of 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Bel'algīa (1996-2000), or the various students groups (2001-2013), images of a concert tour in France in 1984 (5-20 April), of a concert celebration for and with Ṣālah al-Mahdī in 2009, of two concerts with Zīād Gharsa in 2005 and 2008 performing on his father's *'ūd*, as well as some music manuscripts, posters of star players like Khamaīs Tarnān and Ṭāhar Gharsa, offer an important and new historical overview when compared with the Ṣālah al-Mahdī publication (1981). Those exhibited photographs are traces that refer to the past, not as its representation but as its product. In Ruchatz's words, they function more as a reminder that triggers or guides remembering than as a memory in itself (2008, 370). Tunisians should recognise the danger of self-indulgent reflection as inherent in this national music institute and in its related responses. But it is the institute, its national implications and its responses, related mediations on identity, nostalgia and the various expressions of *mālūf*, that has responses of cultural intimacy. The

mix of the national sentiment, cultural heritage and personal feelings that Tunisian recognise as appropriate feelings towards *mālūf* music, instruments and spaces of performance, implies highly personal experience. For them, *mālūf* is as public as private and intimate.

As mentioned, the 80th anniversary festival brought *mālūf* ensembles onto the stage of the Rashīdīa and the CMAM from cities such as: Tunis, Soussa, Kelibia, Sidi Bou Said; in the cafe *Drība* of the Medina, karaoke and workshops, a conference "*La Rachidia, Le Malouf Marocain et Andalou*", as well as the Algerian *ūd* *arbī* player 'Abās Righī and his ensemble of international fame. Participating in the rehearsals of these ensembles had not been a formal part of my early research. I carried out this initial work at that time when the Rashīdīa institution was restructuring, reorganizing and changing leadership after the fall of President Ben 'Alī (2011). Different divisions resulted and new Rashīdīa(s) orchestras were created in Monastir, Binzert, Kelibia, Soussa etc. under the directorship of the scholar and musician Mourad Sakli, minister of culture at the time of the reform. Davis' 1980s ethnographic accounts about the development of the institution seemed to be finally coming to a valuable conclusion (Davis, 2004). Players of the Tunis Rashīdīa, from the capital, made the point that their group had transmitted the authentic ways and only they could appreciate its spirit.

On one occasion, I interviewed two teachers, a married couple, the Bohurī, who worked for several years at the Rashīdīa of the capital. I recognised them some time later in a photo seen at the exhibition, who then opened their private music school in the central avenue *Muḥammad V*, especially designed for young enthusiasts (*Jeunes de Maluf Tunisienne*). There was one *ūd* *arbī* player in the ensemble, the young Khāled Mokhtār, who I learnt continued his *ūd* studies two years later at the ISM of Soussa, playing the Tunisian *ūd* from time to time in ensembles. There is a phenomenon of urban centralisation of making *mālūf* music, which results in a rather contradictory process. The several branches in the country are not really part of the Rashīdīa phenomenon, they are institutions with musicians assembled from the regional state conservatoires. As we know, the national music syllabus, which combined studies in Tunisian, Middle Eastern and Western music, was formalized by presidential decree on the 1st January 1958 (Davis, 1997: 5). For example, especially for the ensemble coming from the holy city of Kairouan, the music practice at the conservatory does not seem relegated only to *mālūf* repertory. A year later, I visited the conservatory in Kairouan several times during the week when they have lessons and on Saturdays for rehearsals. A peer-to-peer method of traditional teaching takes place when members of the orchestra gather together, as happens for the older Rashīdīa in Tunis.

In this respect, the interchange between the national conservatories, high institutes of music and the Rashīdīa(s) around the country, is a phenomenon to be considered when exploring ideologies of national identity. What did inviting the Rashīdīa "of Soussa", "of Monastir", "of Kairouan" to the celebration really mean? The combination of the two terms "Rashīdīa", after the 18th century Tunisian patron of *mālūf* Muḥammad Rashīd Bey, and the city's name show a significant development on the

basis of the Rashīdīa's example in the capital. The phenomenon (1980s-1990s) reported by Davis (2004: 72) by which music training started and developed from the Tunis Rashīdīa (1935) and spread to the rest of the country's networks of amateur music clubs, National Conservatories of Music and Higher Music Institutes, was suddenly inverted. We cannot officially talk anymore of "The" Rashīdīa Music Institute, rather numerous Rashīdīas involving several socio-cultural contexts, sometimes with fragmented local stories, where the *'ūd*'s identity and transmission become unstable processes. As we shall see later in the thesis, those local contexts are also a space for people to experience *mālūf* and the *'ūd 'arbī* differently from national public ones, which mainly happen in the capital. The obvious question arises of whether it is only a matter of name or if we are discussing truly different and new musical practices in terms of *mālūf* repertory. What were developing and being offered for the national diploma of Arab music, separated from the conception and aims of the Rashīdīa of conserving and promoting only Tunisian music, are now contributing to the Rashīdīa goals, at least formally by adopting its name and the cultural values which it represents. Styles and genres performed at the Rashīdīas mean that the contemporary *mālūf* scene is the home to various musical repertoires. Although their repertory is a chosen *nūba*, mostly performed entirely from the *istiftāh* to the *katham*, this reveals many different kinds and degrees of unavoidable problems facing the official syllabus of the conservatories, the cultural national policies and so on.

The exhibition at the 80th anniversary celebration of the Rashīdīa can be regarded as a form of *loci memorie* (Boer, 2008: 21), serving as a unified, exclusive, universal, and intensely historical site. Borrowing from Boym's (2001) conceptualisation of places of memory, the site of the Rashīdīa, contextualised in the city-urban structure of the *'arbī* Medina, is a symbol of celebrations, emblems, monuments, and commemorations. At this moment of celebration, the Rashīdīa became a site of memory, challenging visual iconic symbols and the construction of Tunisian memory. For the artists and musicians, this moment is a moment of their own memories. When Tunisians speak of the Rashīdīa's creation they express a mythical event for Tunisian music. The institute owes its popularity in part to emblematic figures on the exhibition walls. The festival was nostalgic in the sense that it sought to restore the musical activity of the Institute and recover the unofficial tradition of the colonial time, but a process of transformation was already at work in the institute.

While the anniversary celebration offered an example of a distinct national history, just after it, the current director Hedī Mouhlī with a team of musicologists (Anas Ghrāb, Myriem Akhoua), Medina cultural associations (Aswar el Médina, Carthagina, Collectif Créatif, ENAUVATEUR & ARC ismt), social entrepreneurs (Dār Ben Gacem, Blue Fish) and some public institutions (Institut National du Patrimoine, *Ennejma Ezzahra*, Bibliothèque Nationale et ASM Tunis), launched a project called *Dār el Day*, aiming to safeguard Tunisian music within the international context of the 21st century¹⁰. It is

¹⁰ I was told this by Leïla Ben Gacem years later when the project's search for funding ended. Leïla is a Tunisian entrepreneur in the Tunis Medina and co-organiser of the project.

important to note that the safeguarding of Tunisian music was also one of the official initial aims at the foundation of the Rashīdīa in 1935 (al- Mahdī, 1981; Davis, 2002a). During the celebration, it seemed that the Institute deserved this commemoration because it no longer exists as people have grown used to knowing it. The patina of nostalgia had to give way to a reinvention of this tradition. The creation of a "lived" archive, in Assman's words (2008:102) "the archive is the opposite of the memorial space", broadens the knowledge about the institute's history and the divas who have played a key role in spreading *mālūf* musical taste.

Dār el Day is an old house, the former home of the institute, in the heart of the Tunis Medina, but left abandoned and unusable by the government for fifteen years. The project intends to restore and transform the building as a new space for Tunisian music and culture. In their words, the place should become a: "centre de recherche et d'innovation pour les jeunes musiciens et un espace de coworking à la Medina de Tunis", [a centre of research an innovation for young musicians and a space of coworking in the Medina of Tunis] with the aim of modernising methods and approach for the diffusion of Tunisian music. Since 2015, the institution has experienced difficulties with the government concerning the funding, therefore the project changed its name (*Tous pour la Rachidia*) and focused on another space already currently in use by the Rashīdīa *Dār Laşram II*. This place is the institute archival storage. Tons of books, articles, concert programs, photos and musical instruments, some of them exhibited for the anniversary, were left in cupboards since the foundation of the institute, though the archivist Taūfiq Ben Khlīfa sometimes kindly opens them to scholars. Through crowd-funding, in which 38 private donators participated, the institute received a total funding of 18.724,800 Tunisian dinars to restore the house and digitise the complete archive. All the work was carried out by the end of summer 2017 and today the Rashīdīa is witnessing a new era with the support of individuals, who live and experience the institute every day. It has been transformed into a "hub" of Tunis Medina cultural activities, which may include not only music and *mālūf* alone. But the continuous evocations of a national past and golden epochs through memories and symbols reconstruct emblems and rituals that offer, as Halbwachs says (1925, 1941, 1950 [quoted in Erll, 2008: 1]), zones of stability and normativity in the current of changing modern life. In this sense, the restoration of a "monument" and its archive is an attempt at selective reconstruction of history (Boym, 2001: 79). *Mālūf* nostalgia is not really for the mythical past of Andalusia but rather for the Rashīdīa foundational epoch and its national consciousness construction (see Melligi, 2016).

Tuning back to the Rashīdīa's 80th anniversary exhibition, two *'ūd 'arbī* were displayed in the middle of the first room. Although the *'ūd 'arbī* has so far not shown a constant presence within Tunisian official music education, often seen as a mere symbolic artefact, its presentation prompts the question as to how Tunisians recognise and appreciate it when it is on display. These two instruments suggest that the *'ūd 'arbī* is firmly embedded in national consciousness through the Rashīdīa and its players. Perhaps, as I will suggest, it exercises a certain power over the collective, depending on a

types of fetishism (Spyer, 1998). 'Alī Sayarī, an 'ūd 'arbī aficionado if I may call him that, insisted that I see the exhibition and made sure I took photos of the two 'ūd-s 'arbī on display there. This was an aspect of veneration toward those objects that I did not expect. I already knew one instrument from my 2013 fieldwork. I will address their material qualities further in the section, but here I am interested in how the two instruments on display at the exhibition call for a response that in itself is a cultural configuration of collective memory. Reading the historical facts in the photos and profiles on the walls of the room, one connects them to the instrument and the music performed on it. The two artefacts become memorabilia of several specific notions: the representation of Tunisian music, the identification of an iconic player and the restorative nostalgia for the epoch in which the player lived. The presence of the instruments is connected to Tarnān's memories, and his broader role, in other words the fact that they were his, existing in an intimate sonic connection that lives on. The "fetish" here, emerges through the relations and attachment to the material object in connection to its iconic power. As a photograph is an icon of its subject, the two instruments played by Tarnān are an icon of its subjects: national music, *mālūf* and the 'ūd 'arbī iconicity itself.

According to standard history, the only person who could resist modern trends and hold onto Tunisian *mālūf* values while conquering the sophistication of Tunis Medina in 1917 was the legendary Khamaīs Tarnān (1894-1964), whom Tunisians unanimously praise as the greatest 'ūd 'arbī player of all time (al-Mahdī, 1981b). "*Baba*", affectionate for father, as they used to call him, was born in the provincial town of Binzert in 1894 into a family who were adepts of the Sufi 'Īsāwīyya brotherhood (al-Mahdī, 1981b). Sheykh Khamaīs Tarnān, who already in the 1920s had been a source for the transcriptions of the Tunisian music systems of modes made by the French musicologist d'Erlanger and his team of translators and musicians - slowly began to embody the icon of the heritage that d'Erlanger was struggling to preserve (Davis, 2004). In 1940, he was placed in charge of a commission appointed by this institution to collect and preserve Tunisia's musical heritage. Shortly after independence (in 1956), he was appointed instructor at the National Conservatoire, and subsequently as a director of the National Radio choir (Guettat, 2005: 21). As a result, Tarnān was seen as contributing to the nationalist movement: as Davis (2004) says, his original compositions and the recordings and concerts of the Rashīdīa Institute's orchestra ensured that the genre was not entirely eclipsed by increasingly popular contemporary Egyptian and European music. As described at the beginning of this chapter, the historian Perkins reports that his portrait, while wearing traditional costume and holding the 'ūd as figured on the postage stamps after Tunisia became a republic (1960s), symbolises the respect and appreciation for the same Tunisian heritage that the neo-*Dustūr* party elected and defended (Perkins, 2004: 100). The clothes (a traditional streamed line *jūbba*, and a *shēshīa*) suggest stereotyped Tunisianness (see figure 7).

Both the two 'ūd 'arbī displayed at the 80th anniversary exhibition are unlabelled, raising equally ambiguous questions concerning their making. The story of attribution told by the archivist,

porter of *dār Laṣram II* and old member of the orchestra, Taūfīq Ben Khlīfa, and also reported by many aficionados, is rather vague. Outside the Rashīdīa circle, at the CMAM and at the ISM of Tunis, musicians and scholars nonetheless talk of their historical importance. We do not know if the instruments were donated before or after Tarnān's death, and of course there are no documents to prove this. What we know is that they evoke intensely personal responses from individuals. Comparison of Tarnāns' photos at the archive with the two instruments do not prove much in terms of resemblance. Instead, what is at stake here is the iconic dimension that the figure of Tarnān invests after his death and the fetish nature of the instruments. The figure of Tarnān is always highlighted to people who visit the palace where the musical instruments are usually conserved. The two *'ūd* are kept today in the institute's building *dār Laṣram II*. During the many times I have been there in helping with the renovation and digitalisation of the Rashīdīa's archive, I have noticed how the instruments raise debates on *mālūf* and its historical players. Taūfīq, who is more than a simple member of the choir of the Rashīdīa and who has worked there since the years of Ṭahār Gharsa and Bel'alḡīa, stresses the fact that they belonged to Tarnān, indicating his photos on the walls. It is important to note here that those kinds of photos of Tarnān are to be found all over, on the walls of other music clubs too, for example in Binzert and Sfax, and luthiery ateliers like in the one of Hishēm Bū'allāq in Tunis the capital.

However, one of the two *'ūd* at the Rashīdīa has a card inside indicating a date printed in capitals both in Arabic and Latin numbers: "October 1957". The two instruments clearly show signs of repair, although there are no documents noting this at the Rashīdīa, neither do the members of the institute remember such. I had seen these instruments for the first time before the exhibition of 2015, during my master fieldwork in May 2013, and they already showed those signs. The finishing in particular is very shiny and has no signs of usage. These are details proving that both the varnish might be no older than ten or twenty years, and that after it had been repaired the instruments were kept on display rather than played. The example with the date inside also has other signs of repair. On the face, a large piece of wood (4 cm wide) is inserted to replace a section that probably collapsed at the junction where it joins with the neck. The bridge, too, does not seem original. It has five holes for the passage of strings instead of four, maybe wrongly replaced from an oriental *'ūd* bridge. Most likely, those small and quick repairs were done by luthiers of the Medina. Of the two, this *'ūd* is certainly less fine in construction, and it also seems older than the other unlabelled one. This latter also shows signs of bone inlays replaced here and there especially on the neck of the instrument. Those aesthetic details and observations indicate that, in economic terms, different valuations of the objects are at play, but they are not the focus here. The patina of age and authenticity that covers the instruments speaks of beyond the materiality of the object. The condition they are in today, but also their evident poor workmanship might suggest that no professional would really play them. Instead, the Tarnān touch, like a "spirit of matter" (Pels, 1998: 6), makes them a striking memorabilia of longing, identity and self-reflection. In Spyer's words, the relationship between materiality and immateriality, between the

spirit of Tarnān and the instrument that is still with us today, evokes loss and delight as well as the social attitudes towards the wide range of sentiments produced in the face of such objects (Spyer, 1998: 5). As we are going to see, the notion of authenticity infuses forms of fetishism concerning players and makers, and opening up spaces for the construction of agency.

These two *ūd*-s may be grouped with a similar *ūd* held in the club *Nādī al-Fanān* in *dār taqāfa Cheikh Idris*, an amateur musicians club in the name of Khamaīs Tarnān in his hometown. When I visited the club in winter 2017, this *ūd* was simply lying on a settee to the side all the while that the aficionados slowly arrived.



Figure 13. NĀDĪ AL-FANĀN IN DĀR TAQĀFA CHEIKH IDRIS, BINZERT. PHOTO: SALVATORE MORRA

Arriving in Binzert one humid March afternoon, I found the memory of Tarnān to be very much alive on visiting the club, which has marked his legacy and importance since 1960. Traversing the narrow corridors, it seemed to be the very picture of authenticity. Stepping through the main entrance, I was greeted by a waiter in a white *jūbba* and red *shēshīa*, reminiscent of the Sufi costume that members in the *ṭāriqa* wear, in a large room with tea and coffee facilities. Various items adorn the walls, black and white photographs of the old orchestras and significant events, small inlaid wooden frames and mirrors, pictures of Tarnān. However, not only Tarnān himself seemed of importance here. When I asked Yūsef Lazem, manager of the club and violin player, about the foundation of the club, he turned to a photo of an ensemble "Troupe Binzert" in 1959, and began telling me about musical activities in Binzert since independence. The ensemble took part at the Testour music festival from 1963 onwards and around the 1972 the *ūd* *arbī* player was a player named Hedī Sa'id. Later that evening, as other members of the club joined the rehearsal, their current Tunisian player Ridhā Darnaoui began performing with an *ūd* made by Khamaīs Bēlaṣfar in 1996. He then switched to Tarnān's *ūd*, filling the club with an *istikhbār* in mode *ḥasīn*. His performance included a rendition of what was clearly an old way of holding the *rīsha* and playing this instrument: continuous and heavy tremolo among the strings - perhaps the most typical result for a Tunisian sound inspired by Tarnān (see chapter 4). His sound

was enhanced by that of Tarnān's images around the club, his aura embodied in an *'ūd* said to have belonged to him, an old looking *'ūd* like the unlabelled ones at the Rashīdīa 80th anniversary exhibition.

Having photographed the old instrument and returned to looking over some photos again, I took a seat and settled down to listen to the music. This *'ūd* is left there in the club in homage to Tarnān, but unlike the other two of the Rashīdīa, it can be played by any player in turn. A group of 12 musicians, both young and older, were seated across the room and conducted by Yūsef Lazem. They were performing the *khatam* from the *nūba ramal*. The youngest performer, a student, entered the room and picked up Tarnān's old *'ūd* from the settee and joined the rehearsal. Rayan Nefzi, a fifteen-year old boy, is one of the many young music students around clubs in Tunisia who learn to play this instrument spontaneously, without a master to specifically teach them, without a *sheykh*, but following the etherophonic line of other players orally on other instruments. In my brief chat with Rayan after the rehearsal, he told me that he does not have a Tunisian *'ūd* of his own, that he likes playing this old one, but that he is thinking of buying a modern one from the maker Ṭwīrī. As Spyer maintains, whether explicit or implicit, this affirmation does not "demagicalise" the fetish object (Spyer, 1998), but despite the need for a better quality instrument, Rayan also affirmed that frequenting this club in homage to Tarnān inspired him to come close to the *'ūd 'arbī* among other instruments. Picking up this instrument to play, is a sort of encounter between Rayan, Tarnān and all that his epoch represents. This Tarnān's *'ūd* changes from being a museum "exemplary", like the two Rashīdīa examples, to a rather "unique" *'ūd* used by many people.

Memory of the past is materially represented by and bears values beyond the *'ūd*-s *'arbī* of these collections. Each of them has a story related to the national music identity and to the collector's and people's perceptions. As Susan Legene (1998: 52) says, each fetish object represents a moment of contact between two worlds. In this respect, these three instruments were not contemporaries to the formation of the exhibition in 2015. They were transferred from a private collection to a public museum and a music club, thereby investing those objects with powers that transcend their material culture. They have been removed from a high colonial historical moment (probably 1930s, 1940s), in which they marked intense commitment to nationalist endeavour, as shown through the magazine *Leīla*, and set into a contemporary Tunisian world of museum artefacts. Although the *'ūd* held in the private club points to a different fetish experience, I suggest that they all highlight one main fetishist property enhanced by Tarnān's "touch" and embodied in their materiality. Further, recollecting the *'ūd 'arbī* in national institutions in the 20th century, also draws attention to the conflicts of meanings between different historical eras - colonial and post-colonial - proving a powerful cultural base where official ideologies can be made and remade in national museum collections. Considering the *'ūd 'arbī* as a museum object in Tunisia, its homeland, provides use with the theoretical space to understand the nationalist tensions between the colonial-post-colonial paradigm, and the confrontation with public collective memory and cultural intimacy.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I hope to have demonstrated how the *'ūd 'arbī* is caught up in the shaping of national identity in various ways. I have sought to give an historical overview of certain aspects of *mālūf* in response to the alleged Andalusian identity of the *'ūd 'arbī* from end of the 19th century to the present. Such musical developments occurred in relation to profound social, cultural and political transformations. As we know from Davis, the Rashīdīa Music Institute and d'Erlanger's patronage enabled *mālūf* to be captured and crystallised into an elitist national project that brought the same project to marginalisation, bringing distant concepts of Andalusian nostalgia into a constructed heritage. The *mālūf* volumes of transcriptions, in particular, afforded this repertoire the status to compete with western canons but making it a permanent fixture in people lives, while *mālūf* had meant a more complex entity of forms, social milieus and cultural identities, as evidenced by the *Safāin al-mālūf al-tūnisī* manuscript and *Leïla* magazine. The increasing importance of the idea of *mālūf*'s revival in the 20th century, coupled with the rise of national consciousness, misunderstood the wholly nationalistic project. The fact that a revival, in its strict sense, was not occurring, changes our idea of *mālūf* within the state authority and national identity formation after independence. As we have seen, these ideas are similarly absent today from intimate music spaces outside of national cultural production. Here, instead of nostalgic sentiments for a golden age, we find nostalgia for a colonial time (see Melligi, 2016). The notion of *notre musique* in *Leïla* was closely related to a concept of the nation grounded also in other music associations preceding the Rashīdīa and in music that was expressed by the flexible form of the *ughnīa*. What else is *mālūf* if not a corpus of songs, Tunisian modes based, welcoming high and low classes, inherent traits from Sufi music, Bedouin chants, or other forms of Arab musical genres?

In conclusion, I have discussed how the ceremonies for Rashīdīa's 80th anniversary were one such occasion that reinvented Tunisian music and its Andalusian heritage at the same time. For *mālūf*, I argue that it switches from the Andalusian token of nostalgia and its great civilisation of antiquity to the enchanted epoch of colonial time and its memorabilia (1930s onwards) through the history of the Rashīdīa institute. As Boym says (2001: 44), in this type of "restorative nostalgia", distance is compensated by intimate experience, such as music making and the availability of a desired object - for example, Tarnān's *'ūd*-s in a national museum space. Nostalgia creates a space where performing the *'ūd 'arbī* is encouraged as an instrumental means of increasing authenticity. However, it also serves to generate and sustain bonds of national consciousness between and among the players and public. In this respect, the *'ūd 'arbī* is a site for national identity; and yet, as we are going to explore, this depends on a paradoxical expression of absence.

The *ʿūd ʿarbī*:

Morphology, Features and African Identity

In this chapter, I shift attention away from familiar discourses of Andalusia and Tunisia, to probe some less-frequently addressed questions about the broader region. In the first section, I will be interested in the interrelations between *ʿūd ʿarbī* and other African *ʿūd*-s types, focusing particular on North African *ʿūd ʿarbī* now held outside Tunisia, in European museums. I will consider questions of classification, and tracing a lineage of makers, elements of construction, features and markers of identity on the instruments, placing these within our thinking about tradition. I will analyse how various features, along with the instruments' overall dimensions, respond to design patterns on other, and how we can construct a history of *ʿūd ʿarbī* making in Tunisia.

Moving on, I suggest a possible classification for the *ʿūd ʿarbī* on the basis of historical sources and ethnographic accounts of the instrument examples explored in the previous section. Applying the typological classification to the instrument (Kartomi, 2001, 2005), I argue that two different dimensions classify the *ʿūd ʿarbī* as Tunisian, both Maghrebian and African: respectively the "string nomenclature" and the note intervals combination that I will call the "octave" variant. I suggest that this classification of the *ʿūd ʿarbī* takes into account other aspects, for instance, understanding the instrument's tuning in its cultural meaning, considering local influences. Finally, I will explore the tuning variants in more details, demonstrating that they present features that are used in such a way that the *ʿūd ʿarbī*'s context shifts to a "non-Arab"/"non-Tunisian" site of cultural markers, rather to an "African phenomenon" that it draws on; and that it is not reducible to any of its Tunisian, Arab, Algerian, Ottoman and ultimately sub-Saharan referents.

The *ʿūd* *ʿarbī* between the 19th and 20th Centuries: Europe and Tunisia

It is reasonable to assume that the majority of 19th-century or earlier North African *ʿūd*-s were lost or have disappeared, but a few old instruments were kept by their owners. If in 19th-century Tunisia the instrument was in the hands of musicians and devoted musical amateurs (Paris expositions, 1867, 1878, 1889)¹¹, during this period in Europe, the *ʿūd* largely existed as an instrument residing in the widespread collective imagination for the exotic East, what Fauser defines as the "sonic Other" (Fauser, 2005: 161-165). Although many Tunisian *ʿūd*-s appeared with some frequency in the café settings at the various Paris international exhibitions¹², those antique instruments that had managed to survive were mostly confined to European museum collections. North African *ʿūd*-s were collected in the 19th century in London (1867), Paris (1873), Berlin (1894) and Brussels (1878, 1896). None of them saw any regular use once they had entered into this historical framework of the museum collection. On the one hand, these collections help trace historical paths, while on the other, they pose questions regarding the instrument materiality and features. Unlike when the instrument is taken up as a symbol of nationalism, the investigation of museum collections, as Thomas notes, "stabilises the identity of a thing in its fixed and founded material form" (Thomas, 1991 [quoted in Hoberman, 2003: 467]). In what way do those instruments act as constructors of identity? How were those instruments perceived in terms of nomenclature? With what knowledge and by what names did those instruments arrive in Europe? Whether *ʿūd*, *ʿarbī*, *sharqī* or *kwītra*? And specifically regarding geographical provenance, whether generally North African, Tunisian, or Algerian etc.? Some of the instruments analysed in the collections are listed here:

Horniman Museum & Gardens (London)	M24.8.56/95, Egypt, Barbary States	1867
Musical Instrument Museum (Brussels)	0395, Tunisia	1878
Musical Instrument Museum (Brussels)	0877, Tunisia	1896
Musical Instrument Museum (Brussels)	0392, Morocco	1878
Musical Instrument Museum (Brussels)	0393, 0394, Algeria	(?)

Figure 14. TABLE: *ʿŪD-S ʿARBĪ* IN EUROPEAN MUSEUMS.

Features of instrument construction such as pick guard shape, plectrum, inlays and rosette design, point to a specific "Tunisian" identity and are part of the history of the instrument. Those markers of identity are parts of the instrument and they act as "embodiments of meaning" (Dawe, 2001: 221), attached to a variety of metaphorical analogies which possess agency. Makers and players attribute symbolisms to items that contribute to the look and identity of the *ʿūd ʿarbī*. Tunisian luthiers

¹¹ Images of the ensembles have been digitally collected by Anīs Meddeb and generously shared with me.

¹² A Tunisian café (including musicians with *ʿūd*, violin, percussion and a dancer) was also present in the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition in 1876 (Luckhurst, 1951: 125).

and players differentiate between *ʿūd ʿarbī* and other eastern models on the basis of its features in association with elements of socio-cultural meanings. So for example, the maker Ṭwīrī talks of his fine "moustache shape bridge", as distinct from the standard flowery one, or the pick guards that are regarded by Bēlaṣfar and others as being a "sweet Mediterranean pastry". Both are said to be identity markers. They identify some parts of the instrument as having an association with Tunisian cultural aspects, forming a sub-cultural division in the classification of the instrument. These types of analogies are "strong" and "universally" recognised, faithfully reproduced by makers, despite some exceptions that open the way through transformation (see chapter 3).

The first instrument on my list is one that arrived in England in 1867 thanks to the German born organologist Carl Engel (1818-1882)¹³, a pianist who had worked his way up in the British Library to become an expert in the field of old keyboard instruments and antique instruments (De Keyser, 2016: 11). His *Descriptive Catalogue of the Musical Instruments in the South Kensington Museum* published in 1874 is a monumental work, and includes a 128-page essay on the origins of musical instruments. The catalogue, which Engel compiled in 1874 for what is now the Victoria and Albert Museum, was only superseded in 1968 (Engel, 1874: 142-155). It lists a considerable number of African instruments that were donated to the South Kensington Museum by the Khedīve of Egypt, and registered in 1869, not all of which were Egyptian. The core of the collection of musical instruments in the South Kensington Museum was purchased at the London World Exhibition of 1851 and first kept at the Marlborough House in 1852. It was not until 1857 that the collection moved to the South Kensington Museum, renamed the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1899. A good part of the instruments acquired in the period between 1860 and 1880 are owed to the initiative of Carl Engel (Simmonds, 2008: 105). However, this "*oud*" was donated to the museum after the Paris *Exposition Universelle* of 1867.

The documentation on the acquisition of the *ʿūd* number M24.8.56/95, which was passed to the Horniman Museum & Gardens by the Victoria and Albert Museum, attests to the fact that the instrument was shown in the Paris Exhibition of 1867, that its 'Date of receipt from Stores' was 1st January 1868, that it was given by 'His Highness the Khedīve of Egypt', and that its registration number at the South Kensington Museum in 1869 was 689.'69. Engel's publication (1874: 142) specifically states that it is from 'Egypt' and that it is 'Modern', and this is also indicated in the above-mentioned documentation which the Horniman acquired from the Victoria and Albert Museum. We should discount that the term modern was used by Engel to indicate that it was a newly created type of instrument. Modern here might mean that the instrument was recently made, perhaps even on commission for the exhibition in Paris and its subsequent donation to England, and possibly that this construction featured new styles in terms of decoration for example. Regarding the reference to Egypt, the matter is slightly more problematic. It is not clear where this *ʿūd* was made, whether in Algeria or

¹³ See also Beckles Willson (2016). <https://oudmigrations.com/2016/03/06/cairo-to-london-1867/>

Tunisia, or again in Egypt on the basis of Algerian and Tunisian designs. But, as I go on to show, it features characteristics of 20th century Tunisian *ūd* construction. In today's terminology, it should then be referred to as a North African *ūd*, possibly an *ūd arbī*.

Is it possible that Engel mistakenly described the instrument as coming from Egypt? As I demonstrate through similar existing models in Tunisia, this instrument is undoubtedly of the North African type, but probably Engel simply did not pay attention to its particular features as is deducible from the catalogue. He must have assumed the instrument was used in Egypt because it was a direct donation from the Khedīve of Egypt, but among the instruments of the same donation there are others labelled 'Egypt and Barbary States' (Engel, 1874: 142), for example the one catalogued before: *rebēb* 688. '69. Observing the map "A Correct Chart of the Mediterranean Sea from the Straits of Gibraltar to the Levant" (Seale, 1747) held at the British Library of London, North African populations of Algeria and Tunis are clearly labelled as 'Barbary', and opposed to the Arabs as 'Levant'. I argue that the additional geographical indication such as 'Barbary States' can be interpreted as applied to all the items of the collection given by the Khedīve of Egypt, or at least a section. It probably arrived as a whole group of instruments collected in Egypt and the Barbary States, without making distinctions among them. Engel fails to fully define the second geographical indication omitted in the item *oud* 689. '69, not because he thought that only *kwitras* were used in the Barbary whereas *ouds* (Engel's spelling) were played in Egypt, but rather for exactly the opposite reason: *ouds* were used extensively from Egypt to the Barbary. Further, might it have been possible that the Bey of Tunisia gave it to the Khedīve of Egypt simply as a gift too? There are no sources proving the use of this type of instrument in Egypt, neither in the 19th century nor later in the 20th century. The contrary is generally assumed, namely that in the 20th century the Egyptian *ūd* type was absorbed in North African Arab music.

Today, this instrument is indeed labelled as a 'lute', '*ūd*', '*quwayṭāra*', where it is on display in its current home, the Horniman Museum in London. The name *quwayṭāra* most likely originates from Jean Jenkins, the musical instrument curator at the Horniman Museum until 1978, and Poul Rovsing Olsen's exhibition catalogue *Music and Musical Instruments in the World of Islam* (Jenkins and Rovsing Olsen, 1976: 35), which itemises a '*kuitra*'¹⁴ what he most likely thought was an Andalusian long neck lute with four pairs of strings. However, Engels' nomenclature for the item *oud* 689.'69 shows that the instrument was perceived among European experts of collections as a *ūd*, which was an *Arab* instrument. Nonetheless, some of its specific features demonstrate a radical attribution to an instrument used in certain limited areas and musical genres in parts of Tunisia and Algeria. These assumptions overlap with the ongoing discussion in Tunisia about the second term attached to the name *ūd*, for example *arbī* or *tūnsī*. As explained in the introduction to this thesis, the term *arbī*, from the Arabic root *'rb* which linguistically defines the Arab ethnic group (Allam, 2007: 24), does not

¹⁴ The term *quwayṭāra* is its alternative transliteration, which is given in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (1984, Vol. 3: 176).

appear in 19th century Tunisian sources¹⁵. We do not know whether Engels came across such a definition, and his choice of the term *oud* alone shows the contrary, but I argue that this need to distinguish (*'arbī, sharqī* or *tūnsī*), was a factor strictly within the instrument's native countries such as Tunisia and Algeria. Further confusion can be found in the writings of Shaw, who attests the presence of *'ūd*-s in the "Barbary" much earlier, in 18th century:

"They have the *ouds*, or *bass double stringed lute*, bigger than our viol, that is touched with a *plectrum*, besides several smaller *gittar* (or *quetaras*, according to their pronunciation), of different size each of them tuned an *octave* higher than another [italics by Shaw]" (Shaw, 1757: 203).

Shaw makes a distinction in terms of the sounds he was hearing. The *kwitra* were probably smaller *'ūd*-s, sounding higher in pitch, like the *'ūd 'arbī* today. What Shaw calls *ouds*, were likely to be the deeper register "Egyptian" ones. However, there is some evidence to suggest that what has been called *'ūd 'arbī* since the late 19th century was previously (1872) simply known as *'ūd*, or even hypothetically by the name of *kwitra* in Tunisia and Algeria. A simple hypothesis is that the word *'arbī* was added later to distinguish it from the Egyptian model mentioned earlier.

Photos of this *'ūd* taken at the laboratory of the Horniman museum in May 2015 attracted the interest of Tunisian musicologists, musicians and makers as I entered the field for the first time during my doctoral studies. Most people interviewed were astonished to see an *'ūd 'arbī* model with such a patina. Many were sure the instrument had been made in Tunisia, given to the Khedīve of Egypt as a gift and then sent to England; others considered the possibility of it being made instead in Algeria. Some, for instance 'Alī Louatī, even suggested a name for the possible maker: Ṭahar bin Muḥammad Surūr. In particular, the scholar Rashīd Sellamī pointed to the possible connection between the Fatimid dynasty from Mahdīa (Tunisia) during the founding of the city of Cairo (930), the Egyptian origin of Ibnū al-Ṭaḥān and the slight resemblance in proposition of his *'ūd* with this one in London. But it is more probable that Ibnū al-Ṭaḥān's instrument model went through several changes from the 11th to 19th centuries. The uncertainty on the origin of this instrument also among Tunisian experts once again shows that the *'ūd 'arbī*'s historical nomenclature is still obscure.

However, the instrument "*oud* 689. '69" held at the Horniman Museum and Gardens in London since 1867, the oldest surviving *'ūd 'arbī* of the North African *'ūd* family, can be taken as a starting point to reconstruct the heritage for this type of instrument.

¹⁵ See the 1872 manuscript on page 68 (Grītlī, Ben Aḥmad Gharbī, Ben 'Abd Allāh and Ben Ṭayyib Ghlib).



Figure 15. 'ŪD 'ARBĪ M24.8.56/95. HORNIMAN MUSEUM & GARDENS. PHOTO: DAVID SAN MILAN. COURTESY HORNIMAN MUSEUM.

In terms of its design, the instrument does not differ from what we now think of as *'ūd 'arbī*. The body (length 480mm) is smaller, the neck (250mm) and diapason (610mm) are similarly proportioned. However, the shape is reminiscent of an instrument that is a blend of an Egyptian *'ūd* and a *kwitra*. Eleven ribs, about 50mm wide, make a beautiful shell with a depth of 185mm. They are locked by a large strip of wood around the back edge of the body, which also functions as decoration. Inside the body, paper strips have been glued perpendicular to the ribs to fasten them securely, and nine harmonic bars are set in the area of the rosettes and in the upper and lower part of the soundboard.

The face is made from six parts glued to one another longitudinally. Most likely, they are glued with the organic *ghīra* made from calf-leg, an abundance of which is found inside the shell. The well-preserved face indicates that the instrument has not been played much. 3mm thick, it has a decorative edge made of goatskin that binds it to the body and protects the delicate edges. Three rosettes with a geometrical design are carved directly out of the soundboard and embellished with coloured foil/glass decorations. The upper rosette, with a diameter of 60mm and elliptical decorations, is 135 mm from the fingerboard; the lower pair of rosettes, with diameters of 75mm, are 205mm from the base end. The rosette patterns can be observed in several *'ūd 'arbī* in Tunisia, from the 20th century ones made by Muḥammad Belāṣfar, to the anonymous ones in the Rashīdīa Institute and by the maker 'Abd 'Azīz Jemaīl (1923). Its design is also reproduced by contemporary makers such as Jandoubī and Ṭwīrī (see chapter 3). Among makers, this rosette design is named after the legendary player Khamaīs Tarnān.



Figure 16. ROSETTE DESIGN. M. I. BELĀṢFAR. PHOTO: SALVATORE MORRA

In the summer of 2015, the luthier Belāṣfar in making my first *ūd arbī* asked me to choose between the two designs, one by Tarnān and the other by Gharsa. This does not mean that Tarnān commissioned that type of carving, nor that he only played *ūd-s* with such a design. It is a posthumous attribution, which through the rosette gives an aura of tradition and heritage to the look and meaning of the instruments. Here was an interesting use of items of material culture to symbolise a major musical dichotomy within the Tunisian *ūd arbī* community. The two rosettes types come to represent the two most publically known players. Neither Belāṣfar, father and son, nor other luthiers who confirm the attribution, attempted to explain how the design of the rosettes have related in any way to the two players. However, it seems that the oldest design is attributed to the older player and so on. Clearly, the rosette cannot be a feature to distinguish Tunisian and Algerian makers from each other, but it certainly distinguishes the Tunisian *ūd* from its eastern counterparts.

The bridge, measuring 170mm in length, is moustache shaped, glued directly onto the face, and covered by ivory and shell. This moustache design is another common trend in North African lutes, especially Algerian ones (see Christianowitsch, 1863). The style is characteristic of Algerian *kwitra* and Tunisian *ūd-s arbī* acquired by the Cité de la Musique in Paris (1873), and the Museum of Musical Instruments in Brussels, in 1878 and 1896 (Houssay, Früh, 2012). A wooden pickguard, which is finely decorated with ivory around its edge, protects the surface from plectrum strokes. According to all contemporary Tunisian makers, its shape recalls the layered pastry known as *baklava*. This pickguard¹⁶ denotes a culinary design metaphorically, and depends on perceptions of analogy. Here the analogy operates as a bond between created instruments and the visible Tunisian cultural world (see Kartomi, 2005). The invention of layered pastry has been claimed by both Greek and Turks (Perry, 1994: 87), and it was most likely imported into Tunisia by members of the Beycal families. A

¹⁶ Flat, not layered, but curved with precision, with similar shape pick guards, are also known in 17th century Italian lutes and 18th century Neapolitan mandolins and Venetian theorboes that I observed at the Naples musical instrument museum at the Conservatory San Pietro a Majella and in the collection of the Edinburgh musical instrument museum.

similar form can also be observed in the traditional Tunisian pastry *maqrūd*, made with semolina and stuffed with cooked dates. The metaphor here is expressed in the form of the pickguard reproduced in all the more than fifty *ūd-s 'arbi* I have seen during my research. Indeed, such culinary cultural design appears essential to the identity of the instrument.



Figura 17. *ŪD 'ARBĪ'S PICK GUARD.* PHOTO: DAVID SAN MILAN. COURTESY HORNIMAN MUSEUM.



TUNISIAN MAQRŪD. PHOTO: SALVATORE MORRA.

The neck, made perhaps of rosewood, is inset with pieces of animal bone. It joins the body three-fifths along the length of the string. The headstock is probably made of walnut, carved out of only one piece of wood, and then painted black. It is 192mm long on the top side and 222mm on the back. The pegbox houses eight simple bone pegs, and is inlaid with bones, like the neck. All the original gut strings seem to have been preserved since its arrival at the South Kensington Museum in London in 1867. The pegs are probably made of rosewood. Although we have no record of their having been replaced, they seem newer than the rest of the instrument. A different peg design is identified as older and traditional. As for the rosette design, a flowery peg design lends an aura of heritage and is metaphorically connected to the jasmine flower bouquet. It consists of many petals fastened to each other forming a pyramid on a small stick: an object of fashion and beauty to smell and be worn on the left ear by Tunisian men in search of amusement. Every Tunisian maker has this peg design in his repertory as another marker of identity along with culinary and flowery designs, rosettes, pick guards, tuning pegs etc. As Kartomi has shown in her research of instruments in Aceh province of Sumatra, these aspects point to an entirely metaphorical way of thinking about their instruments (Kartomi, 2005).

The other instruments on my list are ones that arrived at the *Musée Instrumental* of the *Conservatoire Royal de Musique de Bruxelles* in the 19th century, all of which were labelled *kouitara* by the curator and collector Victor- Charles Mahillon (1841-1924) (see table above). These instruments have common features with the *ūd* of the Horniman museum but show a different label nomenclature. Mahillon was first and foremost a manufacturer, a musical instrument builder, who actively engaged in the acoustics of musical instruments. He was appointed curator of the Musical Instruments Museum at the Brussels Conservatory on February 1st, 1877 (De Keyser, 2006: 5). The museum opened its doors

on May 6th, 1877 with the collections of Sourindro Mohun Tagore (1840-1914) and François-Joseph Fétis (1784-1871), a collection of which 80% came from outside Europe (Willaert, 2011: 61). Under Mahillon's guidance, this basic collection grew to 3,666 pieces (De Keyser, 2006: 6). As Willaert reports, Mahillon collected as many extra-European instruments as possible, developing a large "exotic" department (Willaert, 2011: 66).

Mahillon bought instruments at universal exhibitions, at auctions and from antiquarians, and asked acquaintances living in Africa to buy specific instruments (Willaert, 2011: 67). These African 'ūd-s came to Europe possibly in three important sub-collections along with Chinese instruments from several gifts. L.J.F.E. von Ende, a captain in the East Indies Army, donated mainly Indonesian instruments in 1879 and the engineer Auguste Herpin in Cairo donated a collection of 52 instruments from the Maghreb countries in the period between 1879 and 1880. Further, Vermandele, a teacher of mime at the Brussels Conservatory, donated a further 27 African instruments (De Keyser, 2006: 17). In particular, at the Paris World Fair in 1878, Mahillon bought 27 instruments for the museum of instruments, from the Maghreb countries, Persia (Iran), Egypt, Central Africa, Siam (Thailand), China, Peru, New Caledonia, Java and from the lands of the North American Indians, among which a *kouitāra* from Tunisia 0395 (De Keyser, 2006: 69). Mahillon catalogued that two instruments were from Tunisia 0395 (1878), 0877 (1896), one from Morocco 0392 (1878), and two from Algeria 0393, 0394 (Mahillon, 1893 [1978]: 298). These instruments have a number of features connecting them specifically to North African 'ūd-s, only two of which are recognised today as being *kouitra*-s (0393, 0394). The rest can be defined as Tunisian 'ūd 'arbī (0395, 0877), and Moroccan 'ūd ramal (0392), maintaining their geographical provenance attributed by Mahillon. They have a face over which three geometrical designed rosettes are engraved directly into the wood and onto which a moustache-shaped bridge and a *baklava* shaped pick guard are attached, and they sometimes have a leather edge cover. These instruments have other features linking them also to West-African lutes. They have longer necks than Eastern 'ūd 0395 - 24.(5) cm; 0394 - 26cm respectively, and the octave tuning for the open string, notated by Mahillon in the catalogue, which allows for a continuous high frequency drone like in African lutes (1893 [1978]: 298).

Mahillon corresponded with his colleagues, curators such as Engel in London and Balfour in Oxford, building up an information network that broadened with his growing international reputation. Mahillon often copied Engels in terms of nomenclature for extra-European instruments, though in this case he differed, defining the instrument as *kouitara*-s (1893 [1978]: 3). In naming the former instrument *oud*, Engel indicates a general definition of an instrument both possibly originating from Egypt, whereas Mahillon indicates an instrument specific of the Barbary States geographical area. The fact that, in European reception, two different names had been given to two similar examples of the same type of instrument tells us that, on the one hand, the M24.8.56/95 in London was received in Europe as an *oud*, known as an Arab lute and reaching UK through an Egyptian imagery. On the other

hand, the name *kouitara* instead must have been used widely in North Africa in the 19th century during exchanges with collectors and musicians, although its affiliation to a particular instrument might have occurred in the 20th century.

According to Willaert, although Mahillon never visited Africa, "his views on African musical instruments proved to be fresh, accurate and open-minded, with a vision on their value as museum objects which was in advance of its time" (Willaert, 2011: 61). Generally, Mahillon gives precise information on the provenance, name giving and use of instruments. His catalogue abounds in data on the making and use of the instruments, providing when possible acoustical analyses, pitches, and linguistic comments (De Keyser, 2006: 91). In the second edition catalogue (1893), on the *kouitara* 0392's accompanying notes with pictures, its tuning is written in G clef notation. Information of how the strings are stroked and what material they are made of are given (1893 [1978]: 298). Instead, in the *Écho musical* (Brussels), a periodical launched on Mahillon's initiative, which began publication in 1876 and ran with some interruptions until 1897, the *kouitara* 0392 from Morocco was described as a *'ūd*:

"Le roi vient de donner une nouvelle preuve de la haute protection dont il honore le Musée du Conservatoire. S.M. a offert au Musée une collection d'instruments africains, l'une des plus remarquables qui soient en Europe. Elle se compose de douze [quatorze!] spécimens, extrêmement intéressants et dont quelques-uns sont rarissimes. En voici la liste : ... Un Eoud (maroc), luth de petite dimension, quatre cordes doubles ..." (*Écho musical*, 1878: 7/12).

"The King has just given new proof of the high protection with which he honors the Museum of the Conservatory. S.M. offered the Museum a collection of African instruments, one of the most remarkable in Europe. It consists of twelve [fourteen!] specimens, extremely interesting and some of which are highly rare. Here is the list: ... Eoud (Morocco), small lute, four double strings ..." (Trad. Morra).

In the same periodical, the *kouitara* 0395 from Tunisia was confirmed as such:

"La réunion des instruments de tous les peuples, à l'Exposition universelle de Paris [1878], a permis de faire pour le musée les acquisitions suivantes ... Une Kuitra, sorte de guitaïre à 4 cordes doubles, en usage parmi la population juive de la Tunisie" (*Écho musical*, 1878: 7/12).

The gathering of the instruments of all peoples, at the Universal Exhibition of Paris [1878], has allowed the museum to make the following acquisitions ... A Kuitra, a kind of guitar with 4 double strings, used among the Jewish population from Tunisia" (Trad. Morra).

This instrument 0395 was at the *Exposition Universelle* in 1878, and the description of the instrument raises intriguing questions about its use. Why does it include information about the Jewish population of Tunisia? Were there Jewish musicians from Tunisia at the fair from whom Mahillon gleaned such information? It is plausible that Mahillon either bought it from a display or directly from the musicians present there. As mentioned earlier, in *Le café Tunisien et son orchestre*, Philippe Cantemarche

describes a Tunisian café and its orchestra at the fair in the *Trocadero* section. The instrument is compared to a type of mandolin by Cantemarche; it might have been very small, although he called it: *haud* (1878: 78). On page 77, an engraving of the ensemble with the instruments clearly shows a Tunisian *‘ūd*, but it lacks specific details such as the leather around the edge, or the bridge on the face that is covered by the arm of the player, to compare the image to the instrument in the collection (see figure 4).



Figure 18. 'ŪD 'ARBĪ (0395) IN MUSICAL INSTRUMENT MUSEUM, BRUSSELS. PHOTO: DAVID SAN MILAN. COURTESY MIM.

In terms of its design, the instrument 0395 does not differ from the model at the Horniman Museum in London, indeed, its close resemblance is the issue here. The proportions of the body (length 490mm), the neck (240mm) and diapason (590mm) are similar. They differ by only 1 cm. Fourteen ribs, about 40mm wide, make the shell with a depth of 180mm. A strip of wood around the back edge of the body is missing. Three rosettes with the same geometrical design, a diamond shape and elliptical junctions, are carved directly out of the soundboard. The upper rosette, with a diameter of 65mm, is 130 mm from the fingerboard; the lower pair of rosettes, with diameters of 80mm, are 230mm from the base end. The rosette pattern is the one named after the legendary player Khamaīs Tarnān as for the M24.8.56/95. The bridge, measuring 180mm in length, is moustache shaped, glued directly onto the face, and only made of wood. A similar wooden pickguard, which is not decorated, has the traditional shape of the layered pastry *baklava*. It suggests that this type of *‘ūd* belonged to people who played it in the area of Algeria and Tunisia (the Barbary States), here sharing common features due to their geographical proximity.

At the turn of 20th century, there was a change, particularly in Tunisia, where historical *‘ūd*-s began showing labels from the makers Ṭāhar Ben Muḥammad Surūr (1918) and ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Jemaīl (1923). It is known that earlier makers were often Jewish-Tunisian, and were usually musicians (see chapter 3). ‘Abd ‘Azīz Jemaīl was certainly influenced by this late 19th century Jewish-Tunisian tradition, given that from the 1920s onwards luthiery was mainly in the hands of wood-workers of the Tunis medina, where Jemaīl had his first job (Jemaīl, 2016). Jemaīl was a *rebēb* player, although he also mastered the *‘ūd* and *qānūn* (Jemaīl, 2013: 40). He spent his early life in the Jewish quarter known as *Hafsia*, one of the main Tunis Medina streets, and the instruments were made in Jemaīl’s workshop in

3 Sīdī Mfarrej (Jemaīl, 2016: 88, 94). One of the particular features of this *‘ūd ‘arbī* is that it predates the earliest surviving oriental (Egyptian/Syrian style) *‘ūd* made by him. This challenges the popular idea that Jemaīl preferred *sharqī* to *‘arbī ‘ūd*, and that he was keen on Oriental/Egyptian musical influences. Despite Kalthoum's book as an attempt to revive Jemaīl's importance for Tunisian music, he is never mentioned in academic research nor in talks about *mālūf*.¹⁷

At that time this meant being able to work with materials such as wood and wire, and copying other instrument makers. It is possible to claim that Jemaīl was an amateur aficionado of music who worked in the music domain, because he was passionate about it and a woodworker too (Jemaīl, 2013 [2016]: 74). Kalthoum pointed out that with the Husainid Beycal family (since 18th century in Tunisia), social life changed according to urban and architectural development. At the beginning of the 20th century, the middle classes moved from the small houses of the ancient Medina, where everyone knew each other, to the bigger villas around the city. To what extent he developed as a carpenter is unknown, but his career as a maker is still relevant today. His atelier was also a school of music, as well as a club frequented by important musicians of the century such as ‘Alī Rīaḥī, and open to Arab music in general. Among his renowned *‘ūd* pupils: ‘Alī Sritī, Aḥmad al-Qala’ī etc. It is known that Jemaīl was making instruments before Bēlaṣfar, and I may further attest that he made *‘ūd ‘arbī* already in the 1920s, and according to Mostāisir, probably for many players of that time such as: Tarnān, Maghribī, Bshīshī and Msīka. In the latest edition (2016) of Jemaīl's biography, Kalthoum portrays her grandfather as a person devoted to modernity and to foreign Arab music influence without accounting for the fact that he also made traditional Tunisian *‘ūd*.

Finally, the *‘ūd-s ‘arbī* held at the CMAM, made by Ṭāhar Ben Muḥammad Surūr present similar markers of identity to the earlier 19th century examples. The instruments are in very good external condition, the finishing in particular is new and polished, but they were restored by Bēlaṣfar in the 1990s. Although I have interviewed Hedī Bēlaṣfar several times on the matter, he does not remember the precise type of restoration made. Both C-24 and C-25 differ here and there from C-23¹⁸. All the faces, except for C-25, with the two stylised rosettes and the finely shaped pick guard, seem restored or completely redone by Bēlaṣfar. The body shell, neck and headstock are instead more likely to be original. Unless broken, those sections of the *‘ūd* are fastened to each other, therefore it is less probable that they had been restored or replaced. The shell of unlabelled C-24 is made of 26 fine ribs of white and a darker wood, making it the *‘ūd ‘arbī* with the highest number of ribs. Its body seems original since pieces of broken ribs were adjusted and inserted in the final section where the neck joins the body. This and the thick varnish of the body prove that this part has been retouched. The C-

¹⁷ Interestingly, in Melligi's book *Tunis Nostalgie* (2016), Jemaīl is often briefly mentioned in connection with people and facts about the Rashīdīa although he did not take part in it, as if the important historical facts worthy of mention started with this institute. "The Jemaīl" is often presented by Melligi as if the reader already knew who he was without any need to introduce him (2016: 43).

¹⁸ For photos see the museum catalogue *Les Instruments de Musique en Tunisie*, Sidi Bou Said: CMAM edition (1992).

25 instead, seems more roughly made in terms of thickness of the face and irregular proportion of the body. The *'ūd* C- 23 is the most highly decorated. What is the normal wooden interposition among ribs of the shell is here substituted by thick pieces of ivory along the ribs from the bottom onto the back of the neck. The top of the neck has decorative flowers with ivory too. What is interesting here and very much a characteristic of the *'ūd 'arbī* applied until today, is the fact that some wooden parts, for example the headstock, are painted in black ink/paint. According to Bēlaṣfar, "it is a decoration style". The often-white colour of the bones and ivory inlays makes a contrast with the next black section. The C-23 is an important and unique example of this as the full shell, back neck and headstock are painted in black. An image of this *décor* detail was chosen for the *'ūd* festival poster held at the centre in 1997. Throughout the 20th century, this decoration colour has been absorbed into the markers of identity for the instrument as I have observed in a substantial number of instruments from Jemaīl (1923) to the first Bēlaṣfar made for me in 2015 (see chapter 3).

With only three examples available today it is possible to detect Surūr's personal features only partially, and his work as a luthier is strangely unknown. In terms of basic construction such as the mould's shape and rosette carving, as well as handcrafted details of bones decoration and painting colours, the instruments show common features with 19th century examples. All those instruments are part of the history of the *'ūd 'arbī*. They point to a common origin despite the different collecting stories they tell. Their features form the basis from which to construct a hypothetical lineage to the modern *'ūd 'arbī* instrument.

The *'Ūd 'Arbī: What Possible Classification?*

As Kartomi concluded in her article (2001: 308), no classification scheme can be perfect, indeed that any scheme amounts to a compromise between the demands of logic and inclusivity in the real world of instruments seen in their socio-musical contexts, I therefore wish to attempt a classification of the *'ūd 'arbī* that is culture-specific, to place the instrument in what Kartomi has called "the broad picture". Kartomi uses the term "culture-emerging" to distinguish those so-called "natural" classifications that have emerged informally the post-colonial studies of the 1970s from within a culture or sub-cultures (2001: 298). The universal division of instruments into idiophones, membranophones, aerophones and chordophones developed by Hombostel and Sachs (1914 [1961]) and intended for application in comparative cross-cultural scholarly purposes, is not designed to illustrate and classify the complex variable details of similar instruments like the *'ūd* from Iraqi to Moroccan models (Kartomi, 2001: 288). Nor is it designed to depict the complex details of historical changes in the instrument (Farmer, 1931b; Chabrier, 2000; Ḥassān, 2002; Poché, 2001; Guettat, 2006).

Since Carl Engels' studies and especially Victor-Charles Mahillon's (1880) first systematic scheme of instrument classification, lately expanded by Hornbostel and Sachs, the *'ūd 'arbī* has been classified among string instruments of a geographical space, namely North Africa, and locally in Tunisia. Rezgui, groups the Tunisian *'ūd* among an assortment of Tunisian traditional instruments, highlighting its tuning, distinct from the eastern model, namely the Egyptian *'ūd* ([1968] (1989): 58). When I asked Guettat about the general nomenclature of the specific *'ūd 'arbī*, he told me that the word *'ūd* could be seen as a common term for "plucked string instrument in the Muslim world". For example, a *gumbus* in Yemenite music culture is also defined as "*'ūd* of Yemen" (Guettat Ḥakīm, 2015: 58). M. Guettat applies Schaeffner's definition of the lute to the *'ūd* while distinguishing the Oriental model from the North African one, a sort of first level of grouping *types* of *'ūd* rather than a group of *variants* (2000: 331). The *'ūd* is seen as an "instrument with strings", from a high-level classification to lower levels of specimens regarding dimensions of the body and neck and tuning patterns (Guettat, 2000: 333). In the *Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Poché groups the *'ūd* from Iraq to Morocco, according to its number of strings (2001: 25-27). Nevertheless, the number of strings does not necessarily make a model or a type. Six courses of strings is the most common for *'ūd*-s used in different regions and traditions such as Egypt, Iraq and Turkey, but in each country it is a different type of the same instrument family due to its form and tuning. Among players of different regional traditions from Iraq, Turkey, Egypt, etc. a common question is: how do you tune your instrument? And some apply a different tuning to the same model instrument, showing how the tuning in principle can change types. Other examples of string number type, for example the 7th course one, are more rare.

One common academic story among Tunisians about the *'ūd 'arbī* sets out various historical facts about the origin of the instrument itself and introduces some nomenclature issues. In 2013, Hedī Bēlaṣfar, the luthier at the workshop of the Centre of Arab and Mediterranean Music (CMAM) in Sidi Bou Said, a village twenty kilometres from the capital, made a copy of a *'ūd* following the Tunisian scholar Rashīd Sellamī's report of measurements and proportions described in an ancient manuscript. This is the Abu al-Ḥassen Muḥammad Ibnū al-Ḥassen, also known as Ibnū al-Ṭaḥan al-Mūsīqī, which is preserved in Cairo's *Dar al-Kutūb* library, *Hāwī al-Funūn wa Salwatuūal-Mahzūn* (The Collector of Arts and the Consolation of the Vexed, II book, chapter 3) dating from 1030 (Shiloah, 2003: 110). Although Sellamī never published his work, during an interview he argued that the *'ūd 'arbī* we know today in terms of size and measurements resembles the one described by Ibnū al-Ṭaḥan. Comparing it with today's models, the proportions are generally similar, in particular regarding the length of the head-stroke and the neck. The measurements of the width, depth and rosette distance to the neck have astonishing similarities¹⁹.

¹⁹ Other manuscripts have suggested the possible origins of the *'ūd 'arbī*, although they remain speculations. For example, Mahmūd al-Siyāla al-Qadiri al-Shafaqusi's *Qānūn al Aṣfiā' fi 'ilm Naḡhamāt al-Adhkiyā'*, (The Law of the Honest to know the Secondary Melodies) ('Alūlū, 1986: 169). In this manuscript, the *'ūd* resembles the one in the manuscript known by the name of *Ma'rifat al-Naḡhamāt at-Thamān*, translated by H. G. Farmer in his article "An Old Moorish Lute Tutor" (1931a). On page

I start with the classification made by Oskar Elschek (1969, in [Kartomi, 2001]) based on a detailed inspection of attributes of instruments, which are classified according to increasingly higher levels of generality, in order to isolate variants, groups of variants and types. This method helps arrange the *‘ūd ‘arbī* in a multidimensional form according to the intersection of its attributes; what later came to be called a *typological* method (Kartomi, 2001: 289). I borrow various elements suggested by Elschek as working names, but applied according to the *‘ūd* features to form a first level of dimension. For example, *variants* of *‘ūd* or plucked instruments (length of the neck and tuning patterns, number of strings and their names), *groups of variants* (octave, nomenclature), *types* (African and Maghrebian [Algerian, Moroccan and Tunisian]), and *groups of types* (east and west). This typological method helps construct "groups or variants" of the instrument, taking into account variants such as: dimensions and patterns, number of strings and their names; and "group of types" respectively considering elements that are "African" and others that are "Maghrebian"- North African (Kartomi, 1990: 201-2; 2001: 290). This is a first level of classification. Then, the "markers of identity", emerging from contemporary ethnographic observations among instrument makers and their comparison with museum examples, will form a second dimension of classification. An example of this second dimension is Victor Fucks account of symbols and meaning of the gamut of *Waiaipi* musical instruments in the imperilled Brazilian community. He observed ethnic markers that help reinforce the instrument's identity through various mythical and practical references (Fucks, 1990 [in Kartomi, 2001]). For the Tunisian *‘ūd*, those markers empower the physical artefact with identities that can expand its taxonomy.

Two different "groups of *variants*" take into account the Arabic names attributed to the strings of the instrument, what I call the "string nomenclature", and the note intervals combination, which I call the "octave" variant. This latter variant, considering the ethnic groups using the same interval combination, means the *‘ūd ‘arbī* falls into two *types* of classification: African on the basis of the "octave" group of variants, Maghrebian according to the groups of variant based on the strings nomenclature. Firstly, I am going to analyse the group of variants concerning the nomenclature of the strings in this section and the "octave" one related to the tuning pattern (pitch note) in the last section of this chapter. Before going into details of the analysis, I introduce some other issues concerning the neck's length, body dimension, and how the name of the instrument has historically changed since 18th century sources.

Regarding the variant of the length of the neck, in answering the question if the *‘ūd ‘arbī* is a short or a long-necked instrument, and just how it should be interpreted for classification, much of the

21, a drawing of the instrument and the number of strings (4 courses) matches the North African *‘ūd*-s used today. Moreover, the famous Tifāshi al-Ghafsī's (1184-1253) *Mut'at al-asmā' fi 'ilm al-samā'* (Hearing Pleasure of the Musical Science) conserved at the library *Ashūriyya* in La Marsa, and written during the Hafaside dynasty, contains information on the North African *‘ūd*-s used among the people of al-Andalus in Spain such as: dimensions, drawings, fretting and fingering (Shiloah, 2003: 184).

literature since the mid-1990s argues that the North African longer neck lute family is akin to its eastern counterparts. This emphasis probably derives from the account of Zyriāb's journey²⁰ to the Western Arab world. In a more recent doctoral thesis by Ḥamdī Makhlūf (2011), the Tunisian *ūd* is classified among the other short-necked *ūd* from Turkey to Morocco, giving its length and that of other North African plucked instruments such as *kwitra*, *ūd ramal*, as the longest point an *ūd* can reach. It is not clear yet whether there can be a musical explanation through the Tunisian musical system of modes for the longer neck, but this argument claims it as a distinct *variant* for the North African *ūd* type, and it is followed and replicated carefully by all contemporary makers. As we go on to see below, this feature is also common to West African plucked lutes, a key point in relation to the African *ūd* *arbī* identity.

A short or a long-necked instrument is not a separate matter, but it should take into account the relation between the neck and size of the body, which is always proportional according to the different instrument sizes that exist. In the *ūd arbī* the ratio between the vibrating string and the length of the neck has to be an interval of 6th. For example, if the vibrating string is 60cm giving the note C, the neck will be 24/25cm long giving at its connection with the body the note A. Two Moroccan *ūd*-s are conserved, one in the musical instrument museum of the Royal College of Music in London and the other in the MIM of Brussels. They have significant differences in size (body) but the same ratio. The former has a full length of 890mm, the strings measure 640mm, and the neck, from where the neck joins the body until the headstock, is 300mm long. The latter is the smallest conserved North African *ūd*, similar to a mandolin in size. Its full length is 550mm, the strings measure 392mm, and the neck is 190mm long. The instruments together prove that it is true that different sized *ūd*-s were used (see Shaw, 1757). Ben Abderrazak, further, applies a downward classification in the form of a branch diagram governed by one technical character at each step, placing the *ūd arbī* among the lutes with an "assembled" case, whereas the family of the Tunisian *gumbri*, *hajhūj*, *gambra*, *fakrūn*, *lotār* etc. among the lutes with "split" case (Ben Abderrazak, 2015). Although the case assemblage is an interesting aspect to differentiate local instruments from each other, the tuning patterns and therefore the number of strings seem more important among players. For this reason, in my classification, I do not consider body form because it is not a particularly relevant feature to warrant a change in its classification. This micro-taxonomy detail of Abderrazak, and the fact that numerical differences in body sizes and forms are irrelevant to an upwards classification, as the small *ūd*-mandolin size

²⁰ The importance of Ziryāb himself, it is argued, is primary symbolic, standing as if for the establishment and diffusion of a tradition between Cordoba and Baghdad (Wright, 1992: 558). On one hand, Ziryāb is a principal determining factor for claiming eastern Arabic melodies' migration towards the Arab west, on the other, he is also considered a figure whose reputation falls somewhere between myth and history. Standard narratives claim that the music of Andalusian refugees from Syria has echoes of the music created by Ziryāb (Shannon, 2015a: 39). As the Tunisian scholar Guettat notes, it was "... a turning point for Andalusian music, completing its re-orientalization" (Guettat, 2002: 442). More recent attention in academia has focused on the contradiction of some of these assertions about the mythical figure of Ziryāb. According to Reynolds, Ziryāb's narrative is entirely constructed on the single voice of the famous historian al-Maqqarī, who systematically eliminated from his source, the well-known 7th century Ziryāb's biography kitāb al-Muqtabis of Ibn Hayyān, all passages that shed unflattering light on Ziryāb, thus creating a legendary portrait (Reynolds, 2008: 156).

conserved in MIM proves, we may therefore argue that body dimension is not a pivotal feature to apply when classifying *ūd* in a top-down view from east to west Arab and Muslim worlds and vice versa. Although Eastern *ūd*-s have a shorter neck and bigger body, whereas western ones have a longer neck and smaller body, this does not make two different groups of variants.

An important historical event concerning the "name" of the instrument was documented at the beginning of the 20th century. Enrich Von Hornbostel, an Austrian comparative music scholar, recorded a *ūd* in Berlin in March 1904 during a performance by a visiting Tunisian group. According to Hornbostel's description (1906), the *ūd* played in that ensemble by Daidou Msika, resembles the Tunisian model:

"Die Darbouka, die Msika Laute begleitete, war auf Fis gestimmt, also eine Oktave unter der tiefsten Lautensaite" (Hornbostel, 1906: 4).

The *Darbouka*, which accompanied Msiqa's lute, was tuned on F-sharp₁, i.e., an octave below the lowest string of the lute. (Translation by Katz, 1975: 329)

Taking into account this tuning description, which is the Tunisian *ūd* today transposed a major 3rd (D₂, D₃, G₂, C₃), could we assume that this instrument type was used to make that recording in Berlin? Is it the same *ūd* described by al-Ṭaḥaṇ? Is it the kind of *ūd* that Tunisian luthiers make today? Is it the same *ūd* described in the Beycal military school manuscript? Is it the instrument we are trying to classify?

To make things more complicated, at the beginning of 20th century, there was widespread confusion in terms of nomenclature for this type of musical instrument. In *The Music and Musical Instruments of the Arabs* (1914), Salvador-Daniel Francisco reports that of all the instruments the most commonly used in Algeria was the *kouitra*, known in that region as the:

"Tunisian guitar - the shape, together with the name, recalling, the *cithara* of the Greeks" (Daniel, 1914: 61).

In the book's preface, H. G. Farmer adds a note on the physical description of the instrument:

"[it] is smaller [than the oriental *oud*], has no frets, and the head instead of being turned at a right angle is almost straight" [Farmer in (Daniel, 1914: 239)].

Eight years later (1922) in the *Encyclopédie De La Musique et Dictionnaire du Conservatoire*, Rouanet describes in detail an instrument named *kwitra* as being the most favorite plucked one among musicians of North Africa (Rouanet, 1922b: 2926). A decade later in 1934, Domingo Prat, in his *Diccionario de Guitarristas*, mentions a *kouitra* as an Arab guitar, also called "*guitarra de Túnez*" (Tunisian guitar) (Prat, 1934: 411).

A shift to modern nomenclature concerning the *ūd* begins at the Cairo Congress of 1932, when the instrument is played for the Tunisian and Algerian delegations, respectively by Khamaïs Tarnān

and Omar Bekhchi, to represent a typical musical instrument of the North African *mālūf* ensembles (Guettat, 1992: 71; Bouzar-Kasabdji, 1992: 92). Since then, the distinction between the *kwitra* and the *ūd ‘arbī* becomes sharper, although a certain ambiguity remains: Jurgen Elsner identifies the four-stringed *kwitra* or *ūd ‘arbī* as being characteristic of the 20th century Algerian ensemble (Elsner, 1992: 193). During the same period, Rezgui couples the instrument name with the adjective "Tunisian": *ūd tūnsī* (Rezgui, [1968] 1989: 58). Later, both Scheherazade Qassim Ḥassān and Maya Saidani report that the *ūd ‘arbī* is mainly used in Algeria, the city of Constantine (Saidani, 2006: 182), and in Tunisia, where it is also known as *ūd tūnsī* (Ḥassan, 2002: 406). For them, the *kwitra* is another regional short-necked lute used only in Arab Andalusian urban ensembles in Morocco and Algeria (Ḥassan, 2002: 407; Saidani, 2006: 182). Recently, at the symposium on "Musical Traditions in North Africa" in Sidi Bou Said (Tunisia, December 2014), the Tunisian Saifallah Ben Abderrazak maintained that the *ūd ‘arbī* (also called *ūd maghribī*) is the same instrument in Tunisia and Morocco, but in the latter it goes by the name of *ūd ramal*. The *kwitra* (pl. *kyātir*) instead is an instrument used essentially in Algeria but very similar to the *ūd ‘arbī*. Today, both the terms *ūd tūnsī* and *ūd ‘arbī* are in use, though with a slight preference for the former also in academic contexts²¹.

The instrument tends to figure in historical terms, although the present-day Tunisian *ūd* is a relatively stable and uniform object. The group of variants which defines the instrument as Maghrebian is the "string nomenclature". The inclusion of the Tunisian *ūd* model with four courses of strings and its tuning in western notation in the *Dhawabīt ta’lim al-ālāt wa nawbāt al-mālūf* (1872: 68) manuscript, beyond technical details, provides information on its context. The instrument is seen played specifically in the musical context of the *mālūf* repertory transcribed in the subsequent pages. This is crucial, considering that it is the earliest surviving example and that it is compiled in an official institution of Beycal functionaries belonging to what was still the Ottoman Empire. The name of the strings is the key here, not the pitch of the notes in each different tuning. In terms of pitches and notes on the score in Western (G clef), [Do 1st, Sol 2nd, Re3rd, re (octave) 4th], the tuning matches the contemporary practice exactly. The names of the strings, instead, do not correspond to the names of notes identified by mode names adopted as terminology in North Africa following Muḥammad Bū’aṣāmī’s indications in the 18th century. Bū’aṣāmī does not explain why, in the Tunisian tuning, *dhīl*, *ḥasīn*, *mēya* and *ramal* are the names for respectively the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th string of the North African *ūd* reported in today’s practice (Ben ‘Abd Jalīl, 1995: 24; Guettat, 2006: 157). In the 1872 Beycal manuscript, although the notes correspond to this pattern used today, they have different names such as 1st *ramal* (sol), 2nd *mēya* (re), 3rd *ḥusaīnī* (la), 4th *dhīl* (do), a combination of fourth and fifth intervals (sometimes an octave between the first and second strings) in which the highest pitch string is

²¹ See ‘Abīr ‘Ayādī’s conference paper titled: *Mukāna al-ūd al-tūnsī fī al-mūsīqa al-taqlīdiyya wa fī al-munāhj al-ta’alīmīna* (The status of the *ūd tūnsī* in traditional music and in educational curricula). In Centre National de Recherches Préhistoriques, Antropologiques et Historiques, Sixième édition du colloque international d’anthropologie et musique, Savoir-faire et transmission dans les musiques de tradition orale et le Malouf constantinois, Constantine Algeria.

positioned in the middle of the other strings as for the Tunisian *'ūd 'arbī* and the Moroccan *'ūd ramāl* (Guettat, 2014; Loopuyt and Rault, 1999).

Scholars have been unable to demonstrate why the strings are named like the modes, and why they were named differently (*bamm*, *mathlat*, *mathna* etc.) by early medieval writers, some of whom even Andalusian (al-Kindī, Tīfāshi al- Ghafsī, Ibn Bāja). As explained, they began appearing for the first time in the 17th century sources (see Muḥammad al-Bū'āṣāmī, 1738 in [Ben 'Abd Jalīl, 1995]), in relation to modal and rhythmic questions. According to these sources, if we take this change into account as an historical era of openness to influences, where those influences came from and how the encounters with other cultures were possible are pertinent questions. In Maghrebian music cultures, naming the strings has been a common habit. In Tunisia, for example, as reported by Jankowsky, the *gumbrī* of *Ṣṭambēlī* is said to "speak" to the spirits which is reflected in its components like the strings: old man, youngster, and the *kūlū* - the one who answers and replies (Jankowsky, 2010: 99). Further, this *cantino* position is known in western lute studies as the internal or inward tuning, and it could be found in the southern Italy guitar and Spanish lute of the 17th and 18th centuries. These tuning patterns are *variants* of specimens and place the models in strictly circumscribed areas namely: Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia and the Mediterranean basin. I argue that this unmatching of tuning and strings nomenclature in the *Dhawabīt ta'lim al-ālāt wa nawbāt al-mālūf* manuscript (1872) raises questions of intersections of *'ūd* variants and other local influences.

In this respect, I suggest that the instrument is tied to several localities between Tunisian and Algerian cultures. As mentioned, Kartomi's studies (1990, 2001) of a great variety of indigenous classification schemes shows how musical instruments are connected to fields of meaning. At one end of the scale, these fields pervade entire cultures and even nations, whilst at the other they are tied to quite specific contexts and localities. The *'ūd 'arbī* is Tunisian but it is also Algerian. The comparison of tunings will help illustrate the strong link between similar instruments with similar names, repertoires and geographical proximity, shifting the instrument taxonomy towards a multiple dimension level. Through extensive fieldwork, I came across *'ūd-s 'arbī* in an area ranging from the Constantine region heading north east to Tunis for 400 km and continuing south down to the city of Sfax for another 250 km. This includes several cities in this circumscribed area I visited such as: Tebourba, Binzert, Kelibia, Sidi Bouzid, Kairouan, Soussa and Monastir. In the 20th century, Algeria had a prolific *'ūd* making scene. In an interview during the *mālūf* festival of Sfax, the *sheykh* Salīm Fergani recalled several names of makers belonging to that period such as: Ben Cheikh Lefgoune, Raḥmin Guenassia, Benelbedjaoui. Today, as indicated by the Algerian players Salīm Dada, Salīm Fergani and Badreddine Guettaf I interviewed, Algerians buy *'ūd-s 'arbī* from Tunisian makers, as there are few surviving local makers in their cities such as Nifer Jamel in Algiers. The presence of Algerian musicians in Tunisia during my research attests to a mutual exchange of music culture between the two related musical traditions. Several times, Guettat has analysed the relations of tuning systems between the

North African and the eastern ones (Guettat, 1980, 2006, 2014), by using the Algerian tuning pattern as a variant of the others (2014: 14).

With respect to this typological classification, my classification moves from smaller, more local variants (Tunisian/Algeria etc.) to a higher degree of variants that are geographically more distant (eastwards). I differentiate this East/West dichotomy at a higher level of groups of types. I classify the Tunisian *ūd 'arbī* according to its string and tuning patterns, grouping it by *variant*, then considering African/Maghrebian types according to regional models: Tunisian, Algeria and Moroccan. I take into account the tuning patterns in relation to ethnic and historical aspects, as a primary *variant* within the group of variants, which differentiate types. A substantial number of *ūd*-s investigated in my research show how the variants become constant in the 20th century, and that the markers add the final delineation of the identity of the items. As we shall see later in the thesis, tuning is the primary means by which players define the instrument as "sounding Tunisian", i.e. it is neither Algerian with the same number of strings, nor Egyptian with a different number of strings. However, the main features of the *ūd 'arbī*, such as length of the neck and tuning pattern, operate as variants among several intersecting levels, just as its geographical localities across the North Africa operate as an *ūd* type grouping.

A Tunisian-African, but "non-Arab", Instrument

In 2013, during my Master's course at the University of Cambridge, the African scholar Kofi Agawu gave a lecture in the colloquium series and visited the students for an informal round table. When my turn came to asking questions and presenting my research, Agawu said, "at least we share the same geographical area". This anecdote remained in my mind for a long time during my doctorate, reminding me that local surrounding factors are essential to identity formation. The question of whether the *oud* 689. '69 really is an *ūd* is part of the "African phenomenon", is still not clarified and widely accepted. The phenomenon I intend to describe is part of what Dawe indicates as "other fields" (2001: 220, 221), in which the instrument acts as an indicator of ethnicity and as "sensor" of place. A musical instrument on display is "out of place", in Dawe's words: "it may take on the role of something else to somebody else, someplace else" (Dawe, 2001: 222). In the case of the item *oud* 689. '69, its story and materiality reveal that the Tunisian *ūd*'s identity is subject to transformation by local influences, and that meanings can be added and subtracted from it. A path of influence from West African lutes concerning the neck length and octave intervals may be an example of this. Both the tuning patterns (from Morocco to Tunisia) and the longer neck (5 cm, a diatonic interval) of the North African *ūd* are distinctive features from eastern *ūd* models (from Egypt to Iraq) but common to West African lutes. It is the second hypothesis that I wish to draw attention to here, namely its complex relationships of people, objects, and social meaning (Dawe, 2001). I do not mean that these instrument families have the same origin, but rather that their development has possibly overlapped down

through the centuries and influenced each other. However, the trace of the instrument in a local African culture phenomenon is as powerful as its contribution to a certain way of imagining Tunisian identity and what it is to be an African instrument in Arab -Tunisian society.

In Tunisia, I had many discussions about morphological features with makers and music scholars, who did not offer plausible explanations to questions about the longer neck and the octave interval of the tuning. Instead, musicians, in particular the young *'ūd 'arbī* player Şāḥbī Muşṭafa and the multi-instrumental player Zouair Gouja, often had intriguing answers from a practical and technical point of view, supporting the hypothesis that African lutes and North African *'ūd ('arbī)* could belong to similar musical instrument families. Tuning was of particular importance, thus here I return to the tuning pattern variant in terms of note intervals, and also discuss morphological features to illustrate and facilitate comparison with the Maghrebian lutes family originating from West Africa. This issue is framed by the following question: is Andalusian music influenced by an Afro-Maghrebian tuning?

"In Medieval Andalusia, who were the Moors? They were the Berbers of North Africa". These are the words of Anīs Meddeb, the director of the CMAM since 2017, musicologist, archaeologist and music professor at the ISM of Tunis, while speaking to me about al-Andalus. Traditionally, it has been argued that the musical ethnic tapestry of North Africa is rich and complex and that, in this frame, Berbers have remained the unbroken backdrop of the Maghreb since prehistoric times (Jones, 2002a: 432). According to the North African historian Ibn Khaldūn: "[Berbers] have inhabited the Maghreb since the beginning" (Ibn Khaldūn, [14th century] 1978). Recently, Jankowsky (2010), in examining Şṭambēlī Negro practices in Tunisia, highlights that ethnic groups, namely the Berbers and Jews, have traditionally been considered indigenous *others* to politically dominant Arab speaking Muslims. In Jankowsky's words: Şṭambēlī 's ontology is predicated on its Otherness, its "sub-Saharaness"; in other words, being *'ajmi*, literally means being "non-Arab" (2006: 381). However, research into Berber culture has a short history. While a few studies have been made by the (INALCO) *Centre de Recherche Berbère*, concerning language and costumes (Basset, 1969; Chaker, 1992; Bougchiche, 1997), since the 1970s a process of Maghrebisation (*Maghrébinisation*), has made increasing numbers of peoples to become recognised as "North African" (Chaker, 1998: 2), although it is still too slow a process to reach academic circles.

Henry G. Farmer (1928) made claims linking the origin of West African and Maghrebian plucked lutes, though such claims are now much repudiated. Others instead have suggested these instruments in West Africa are distinct from those of North Africa and ancient Egypt (Charry, 1996: 3; [Schuyler, 1979: 127]). Nonetheless, there is indeed evidence of structural similarities between West and North African lutes, as well as significant differences, which continue to fuel discussion on the matter. Plucked lutes of a variety of forms and appellations (*gambare, koni, kontingo, xalam, hoddu, tidinit*), are found among a wide variety of peoples across the African continent (Mauritania, Togo,

Mali, Niger, Cameroon) throughout much of the desert, in the Sahel and savannah regions (Charry, 1996: 8). As Jankowsky highlights, the trade of trans-Saharan slave caravan, "foregrounds histories of contact and multiple crossings that challenge the absolutist territorial logic ascribed to the nation-state by nationalist cultural policymakers" (2006: 380). In this rich culture of lute playing in West Africa, the instruments share certain morphological characteristics and differ only in a few features, primarily related to size and bridge form. They are all wooden-trough resonator lutes with a fan-shaped bridge, and importantly for *ūd 'arbī* connections, they have two main playing strings, usually tuned to the interval of a fourth, including any number of added strings which are played open (Charry, 1996: 10). What is important here is the peculiar octave interval which renders a unique African identification in a drone-like bass bourdon.

The peculiar neck of West African plucked lutes (inner-spike) and resonator shape do not fit neatly into the morphology of the North African *ūd 'arbī*, although it is possible to observe other possible connections in the tuning. Generally, each tuning of West African plucked lutes is a combination of fourth interval and of an octave, though several pieces can be played with different tunings. Within the Wolof-speaking parts of Senegal, for example, the *ngoni* has several tunings; they are based on the melodic strings in perfect fourths, with the supplementary strings tuned an octave higher. This tuning is also observed on the Moorish *tidinit*, which uses four strings. The lower melodic string is referred to as the *ba* (mother) and the higher string is called the *jeli*. These interval combinations are also common to other instruments such as the *xalam*. Similar, but not identical, long necked lutes can be found from Morocco to Tunisia, particularly a family of instruments known as *gumbri*, *gunibri* (Christianowitsch, 1863: 31; Rouanet, 1922b: 2929; Farmer, 1928: 25; Meddeb, 2016: 2; Gouja, 1996, 2014, 2015) a three-string plucked lute. According to Farmer, quoting Delphin and Guin, the former was used by the Negroes, and the latter, a smaller two-string version, according also to Christianowitsch, by the Arabs and Moors (Farmer, 1928: 27; Christianowitsch, 1863: 31; Rouanet, 1922b: 2930). In contemporary Tunisia, a *gumbri* model with cylindrical body and three strings tuned a fourth and an octave (*shayb*, *sheb*, *kūlū*) is also used as a ritual instrument in *Ṣṭambēli* (Jankowsky, 2010: 97). In this cylindrical *gumbri* of Tunisia, for example, Jankowsky also observes the same three-string tuning combination (2010: 99), but the lowest-pitched string (*shayb*) is positioned instead in the middle of the other two. In a recent article, Anīs Meddeb points out that the *gumbri* (what Farmer called *gunibri*) strangely disappeared from the Tunisia musical scene from the first quarter of the 20th century, despite, on the basis of iconographic and literary sources, it being the most photographed, played and popular instrument of Tunisia for a long time in the past (Meddeb, 2016: 27).

In this respect, the tuning of the North African *ūd*-s, similarly consists of a fourth interval between the first and second strings, either C-G as a practice in Tunisia, G-D used in Algeria (Constantine) or D-A in Morocco, and a fifth, between the third and fourth strings (Guettat, 2000: 334). Several Algerian players such as Guettaf and Righī have confirmed to me that often the note C is tuned

into A, forming an octave between the 3rd and 4th strings, which is a constant and uniquely Tunisian feature (d 3rd, D 4th) among those Maghrebian tuning patterns. This octave interval is central to my argument of the *'ūd 'arbī's* identity which touches on other local factors embedded in its African context.

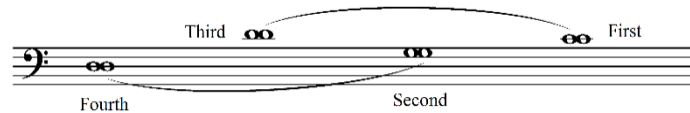


Figure 19. TUNING OF THE TUNISIAN *'ŪD 'ARBĪ*

The intersecting relation between the West African lutes and North African *'ūd-s* has been argued by Gouja (2014: 73-75), comparing several instruments' tunings across North African plucked instruments such as: *gumbrī*, *hajūj*, *'ūd 'arbī* etc. outlining, how the octave interval is present in all of them. If the first string of the *'ūd 'arbī* C is taken out and the remaining strings are compared to the three strings of the *gumbrī*, for example, the G-d-D intervals sequence is the same. On the basis of these features, players of both instruments argue that the tuning affects the style, body and hands movements, musical phrasing notwithstanding the repertory performed.

These tuning patterns, though crucial, may not be sufficient to make a hypothesis on the influence among West African lute practices. What is more important, and what characterises these instruments and North African tunings, is the position of the highest pitched string among the other strings. This feature definitely distinguishes a diverse tuning practice from eastern *'ūd* models (from modern Egypt to Iraq), marking a watershed within the use of *'ūd 'arbī* versus *'ūd sharqī*. A specific characteristic of the former is its tuning, by which the unusual position of the "melodic" (*cantino*) results in peculiar and difficult right hand techniques, as many players confirm. On one hand, the case of *'Ayādī* in this thesis will serve to show how players are forcing makers to adapt eastern *'ūd* construction features to facilitate the Tunisian style of playing. On the other, as we shall see in later chapters, for the Tunisian *'ūd*, traditionally, the first string is often used as a passage string, just as the lowest-pitched one is a bass bourdon. In my many discussions and playing demonstrations on instruments like *gumbrī*, *hajūj*, *gunibri* and *'ūd 'arbī* with Z. Gouja and Šāḥbī Mušṭafa, it emerges that the tuning, namely whether to use the 6th or the octave intervals, depends on the modes you play. At the same time, the style of playing and modal interpretation are influenced by the tuning pattern in turn. The absence of the note C *rašd* in the *'ūd 'arbī* makes the style and interpretation of the mode *rašd dhīl* for example different from playing it on other instruments or on the Oriental *'ūd*. The interpretation of the *istikhbār* in *rašd dhīl* in the Cairo congress by Khamāīs Tarnān is clearly affected by the mode's final note C which has to be played on the highest string D (the 3rd, *mḥair*), making the phrasing an octave higher than C *rašd* (therefore C *kerdēn*). For them, this tuning pattern ascribes the *'ūd 'arbī* to a non-Oriental/non-Arab identity.

The *ūd 'arbī* is in one respect, with the "internal"- inward tuning, an "African phenomenon". By this term, I mean that it bears African identities through morphological features. Over the centuries, the instrument would have been played and adapted to other local African morphologies of instruments by the different ethnic groups using it. However, it is believed that the instrument has gained a central place in *mālūf* music, and has helped to define this Andalusian - North African musical genre, although it presents varying degrees of direct and indirect engagements with other cultures surrounding it. This African phenomenon brings together elements of geographically close instrument families, namely West African Lutes (Farmer, 1928; Charry, 1996; Gouja, 2014) grounded in a wide range of musical genres. Both the length of the neck and tuning system are commonplace elements in the plucked lutes (with fingers or plectrum) of West Africa. As such, it is important to gain a sense of the *ūd 'arbī* as an African instrument whose tunings (Algerian, Moroccan and Tunisian) and associated playing techniques are the product of its appropriation and use of a specifically African musical context.

It is possible to hypothesise that the instrument was at a certain time adopted by an ethnic group that used it with its own tuning practice, what I define as an "Afro-Mediterranean- inwards string pattern". It can also be reimagined as an African influence on secular music practices among Arabs of the Maghreb. Different ethnic groups, who were familiar with this inwards-string tuning, adopted instruments that were probably unusual within Muslim Arab communities practicing Sufi rituals, such as the *ūd*. In this respect, such tuning observations raise questions whose answers might have appeared straightforward and certain at the start of this research, and that now may open up new discussions. Without assuming for certain that the *ūd 'arbī*, as it is today but with minor changes, was only played by Andalusians, who then has been playing the instrument since its origin in the geographical space of North Africa? This is to say that the use of the *ūd* was probably not limited to the Arabs or Arab Andalusian; I suggest it merely followed in the wake of the Arab expansion, surviving at a great distance also within the conquered peoples, mainly North African Berbers and sub-Saharan communities. According to Jankowsky, in Husaynid Tunisia, the institution of slavery was largely shaped by the dynamic of Islamic culture and they were provided with the most prestigious education (2010: 43). If we take up this hypothesis, it opens up an endless variety of possible combinations due to the intimate relationship of the individual slave with his favourite instruments to play.

In Mahfoufi's studies of the urban music of the city of Kabylie, we can trace further connections with other North African music. Particularly, in the conference proceeding entitled *Les Musiques Populaires Arabes et Berberès Participent du substrat de la Musique dite Andalouse* (2015), Mahfoufi hypothesises possible connections in the *nubā* form, on the basis of musical examples, between Berbers and Arab - Andalusian communities. Further, among the wide variety of plucked lutes in West Africa, for example indicated by Charry (1996: 22), the instrument called *tidinit* is assigned to the Moor ethnic group in Mauritania, and it is still practiced today. This is something that is also perceived

as such among Tunisian players today. Common features of the modern *'ūd 'arbī* of North Africa and those lutes of West Africa have never been investigated, and it may well be that contact preceded the fall of Granada in Andalusia, for the white communities (Jew and Berber) were by no means unfamiliar with the long necked lutes of the Negros (Meddeb, 2016). In *Promenade a Tunis*²², the author, Capitan at service of the king of the Two Sicilies, described a group of musicians in 1842 as follows:

"Elle était composée de quatre hommes et de trois femmes, tous juifs, et qui paraissaient extrêmement misérable. Une des hommes jouait d'une espèce de mandoline, l'autre d'un tambour de basque, le troisième d'un violon, ou plutôt d'une pochette à deux cordes" [...] (1844: 16).

"The group was made up of four men and three women, all Jewish, and that appeared in miserable conditions. One of the men played a kind of mandolin, another played a sort of Basque drum, the third one a violin, or rather a kind of *pochette* with two strings". (Trad. Morra)

The mandolin could have been a smaller sized *'ūd*, and the two strings violin/*pochette* a *gunibri* or *gugay*. As Jankowsky clearly explains, overarching sociocultural politics of identity in Tunisia are framed in religious and ethnolinguistic terms, often identified, for example, with Arab versus Berbers (2010: 16). In Jankowsky words, "Ştambēlī did not remain sealed off from the wider Tunisian society. From at least the early 1700s, Ştambēlī had been performed at shrines for local saints venerated by both sub-Saharan and Arab Tunisians" (Jankowsky, 2006: 376). Those encounters also make us rethink other music practices and instruments in Tunisia. The legendary stories of the *'ūd*, along with the myth of Zyriāb and the Andalusian heritage going back and forth between North Africa and Spain after the Christian re-conquest of Granada, no longer seem a plausible explanation for the diffusion of the instruments. Considering different ethnic groups sharing the same territory however may allow a sense of real life, intimate encounters between instruments, geographical areas and people. I draw on Jankowsky's claim that music/ritual practices in Ştambēlī and Ştambēlī itself "was never only of, and only for, the sub-Saharan community" (2006: 373), to hypothesise that if Ştambēlī is a product of an encounter between sub-Saharan and North Africans, practices of certain tuning patterns and instrument constructions evoke an encounter between Arab-Berbers- Tunisians and sub-Saharan people and their fusion into something unique in Tunisia. Therefore, the *'ūd 'arbī* is not just Tunisian-Andalusian in *mālūf*. The instruments show a radical difference in appearance, sound (see also chapter 4), and function, and can be considered to be, both from within and without, an African instrument, also non-Arab and (thus) non-Tunisian.

²² *Une Promenade à Tunis en 1842. Par le Capitaine, ancien officier suisse au service de S.M.le Roi des Deux Siciles*. Paris, Chez Dentu, Palay Royal, (1844).

Conclusion

This chapter has ended with the "African" identity of the *'ūd 'arbī*, identifying how local ethnic factors are ordered, given meaning and ascribed function in the instrument itself. In line with typological instrument classification (Kartomi, 2001; Elschek, 1969), the *'ūd 'arbī* is situated in numerous dimensions that intersect at different levels among each other. Variants of *'ūd* (length of the neck and tuning patterns, number of strings and their names), groups of variants (octave, nomenclature), types (African and Maghrebian) and groups of types (east and west), are the results of transformation and adaptation. These factors are by no means static, indeed, they often overlap, so that the instrument is classified for some aspects as Tunisian, Maghrebian, and for others African and Eastern. I have concentrated on analysing historical instruments in museum and private collections in Tunisia and abroad, the aspects, shapes and measurements of which the *'ūd 'arbī* was regularly made. I have argued that the way the instruments were made is intricately related to questions about heritage construction and lineage of culture transmission for the *'ūd 'arbī* passage from the 19th to the 20th century. I have demonstrated that the *'ūd 'arbī* can be evaluated according to "markers of identity"; that are based on symbolic analogies. These markers are the key to defining the instrument through intimate expressions held today by makers and players.

Thus, in this chapter, the *'ūd 'arbī* has largely abandoned the metaphors of Andalusian nostalgia, adopting instead a more concrete, material, direct mode of identity. Following Jankowsky (2006), concerning exchanges between different communities in Tunisia, I have suggested that practices of certain tuning patterns and instrument constructions evoke an encounter between Arab-Berbers -Tunisians and sub-Saharan people and their fusion into a unique *'ūd 'arbī*'s African identity. Further, I have also suggested that the tuning pattern, as a variant of the instrument, shifts the *'ūd 'arbī*'s context to a "non-Arab"/"non-Tunisian" one which is ascribed to its African aspects. Equally important in accounting for the cultural significance of the *'ūd 'arbī*, has been an understanding of the interchange of Arab Andalusian - African cultures in which the instrument itself participates. I suggest that this search for the instrument's identity is shaped by aspects of public intimacy, which simultaneously provide a potential means to understanding the materiality and identity of the instrument in relation to its contemporary crafting, to which my attention turns in the next chapter.

THREE

Making *'ūd 'arbī* today: Heritage of Craftsmanship and New Directions

Spending time in Tunisia with *'ūd* performers and makers provided me with a wide variety of observations on *'ūd* construction, including divergent beliefs about how *'ūd*-s are made and whether there is a standard way to make the Tunisian *'ūd*. Borrowing from Bates, my arguments here spring from the musical instruments found, from their tangible materiality and the stories that they tell us (Bates, 2012). In the 20th century, makers copied instruments they had to hand, so I ask whether there is a lineage to be traced through the instrument making's transmission. Where does *'ūd 'arbī* making come from in Tunisia? And in what ways has it developed?

In the first section, I suggest that luthiery in Tunisia has been continued through the work of the Bēlaṣfar family, with some interruptions in the 20th century, and that the construction tradition of the instrument is built on craftsmanship, woodwork and carpentry skills. In the second section, I ground this argument further by exploring the work of this community of makers and selecting two specific examples, Sherif Meher from the Medina of Tunis and Ḥabīb Reqīq from the Medina of Sfax, who represent different facets of the Medina craftsmanship tradition. I explore the following questions: how does *'ūd 'arbī* crafting relate to the local artisan work? And was there a market for *'ūd 'arbī*? I argue that making the *'ūd 'arbī* in Tunisia is part of a network of historical artisan workshops of the urban Medina spaces, which grounds the instrument in its Arab/Tunisian identity.

In the third and fourth sections, I focus on the making of the instrument, specifically on what type of identity is added by the maker or evoked when the instrument is shaped and crafted. Richard Sennett's approach toward the study of craftsmanship, "the skill of making things well", which addresses the issue of technique as a cultural entity, is germane here (2009: 8). My engagement with contemporary *'ūd 'arbī* making resonates with the idea that "every good craftsman conducts a dialogue between concrete practice and thinking" (2009: 9), and it focuses on the intimate connection between the head and the hand. I seek to show that the *'ūd 'arbī*'s construction as an official and transmitted standardised process lies in the hands of only one maker, but that he does not use a rigid theoretical and calculated method for crafting this instrument. The result comes from carpentry skills, which develop from copying and applying observed features and materials. I argue that the identity of the *'ūd*

'*arbi* is acquired through years of hands-on practice, by touch and movement, which goes beyond the rigid concern of the right measurements and cuts.

Multicultural Exchanges, from Artisan Woodworker to Professional Luthiery

During the French protectorate, the Tunisian capital city became the site of cosmopolitan multicultural experiments, aimed at imprinting Arab, Tunisian/Maghrebian and European theatrical and musical traditions onto its diversified communities (Besha, 2013). A brief historical overview of these influences is useful here, understood as developing in various intersecting trajectories. First there was a development beginning in 1856 featuring acculturation of foreign elements; this was followed by an intercultural dialogue of staging plays and operas translated and adapted to Arabic taste (Besha, 2013: 20-30). Then, at the turn of the 20th century, stigmatised by local elites as the place of new life, theatre and music, the area just off *bēb al-baḥr* made room for migrants from regions beyond the Tunisian borders; for this very reason, it became the site of converging interests for different groups. There were recently assimilated groups (Greeks, Corsicans), candidates for assimilation (the majority of Jews) and people from other nations (French, Italians and Maltese of Tunisia) (Memmi, 1965: 13).

The two main communities participating in the Tunis music scene in the early 20th century were Jewish-Tunisian, who were considered native (Merimi, 2012: 187), Jewish-Italian from Livorno, who arrived in Tunisia in the 18th century (Melfa, 2008: 68); and people of Italian origin but of French nationality (Taieb, 1999: 203). From 1923 until independence, they became French nationals by a process of "naturalisation" (Allagui, 1999: 204). Migrants from Italy to Tunis in the 19th century were mainly employed in agriculture and construction, or in various kinds of artisan work. The Italian community had reached 100.000 by 1926 (Melfa, 2008: 65). According to Daniel Passalacqua, who curated the music columns of the Italian journal *Il Corriere di Tunisi*, and whom I interviewed several times by phone in Tunis in June 2015, Italians had created cultural spaces in Tunis a century earlier (since 1815). They built theatres such as the Palazzo *Gnecco*, *Théâtre Tapia*, *Théâtre Italiano* in *Sidi Zahmul* street (demolished in 1920); the *Gran Teatro* in *Rue al-Jazira* (1876-1899), *Théâtre Paradiso* (1885-1952) in *avenue de France*, *Théâtre Nuovo* known as *Théâtre Cohen* in 1875, *Théâtre Rossini* (1903) in *Avenue Jules Ferry* and *Théâtre Palmarium* in *Avenue de Carthage* (1906) (Passalacqua, 2000: 214). All of them were largely devoted to Western classical music. The first Italian Opera, *La Traviata* by Giuseppe Verdi, was performed at the *Théâtre Paradiso* in 1886 (in 1856 at *Théâtre Tapia* according to Sakli and Abderrazak, [2000: 219]) and the first French Opéra (*comique*), *Girofle-Girofla* by Lecocq, took place at the *Théâtre Cohen* in 1879 (Besha, 2013: 58-60). Such musical activities continued until

the 1940s along with the development of Egyptian theatre and ensembles of Arab instruments *tār*, *'ūd*, *qānūn* of 'Abd Qadrī and Zakī Mrād (Besha, 2013: 69).

Elements of this cosmopolitan cultural context merge into other aspects of music making too. The Italian musical community would not learn to make Arab Tunisian traditional instruments, but it would develop a constant exchange of information, skills and practical knowledge on musical instrument construction in general. As Rashīda Jaibī, a Tunisian doctorate student in France, informed me in an interview, those exchanges happened within master-student relationships. She owns her grandfather's music manuscripts and musical instruments (mainly wind instruments) which belonged to the Italian players Nicola Bonura and Gaetano Podda, with whom her grandfather studied. Along with many Italian musicians working in a number of theatres (Strino, Pullicino, Guglielmo Gurrisi, Salvatore and Giuseppe Venezia, Armando De Carlo, Angelo Cellura, Boccanera, Bonura), there were sellers like Naracci, Trionfo and Scotto, who mainly imported bow instruments, pianos and guitars to Tunis (Passalacqua, 2000: 215). In the *Annuaire Tunisien* of business, agriculture, industry and administration of the regency, a list of shops of *Instruments de Musique* attests the presence of five shops, all of them run by Italians. They were: Vaiani in *cit  Boulakia*, Bembaron in *rue 7 Charles de Gaulle*, Naracci in *rue 25 al-Djazira*, Scotto in *14 rue es-Sadikia*, and Trionfo in *14 avenue de Carthage* (1949: 494).

Aldo Scotto and his family music shop was founded in 1927 and lasted until the 1960s; for this reason, he probably remains in the Tunisian makers' collective imagination as the most prominent musical instrument seller who contributed to exchanges on construction design with Tunisian makers. Hedī and 'Abd al-Laṭīf Belaṣfar have several times remarked that their father worked for some years (1958-1964) in the same workshop with Scotto located in *b b Jedid*. It is also supported by a photo of B laṣfar in Scotto's shop, which is held by both brothers 'Abd al-Laṭīf and Hedī. Scotto's son Eric, who now currently runs a music shop in Marseille - the family left Tunis in the 1960s - told me in an email exchange that "Aldo was not a luthier". Aldo Scotto had skills in repairing musical instruments, especially the piano, and he used to advise B laṣfar on "how to improve making and selling better instruments". A document in Qlibi's thesis confirms this, attesting a period of apprenticeship of Hedī B laṣfar in 1964 issued by the Scotto Company renamed that year *Au Diapason (Pianos, accordeons et tous instruments, lutherie general r parations)* (Qlibi, 2000: 38). On the one hand, there were practical and cultural exchanges concerning music between Italians and Tunisians since the first half of the 20th century. On the other, with respect to instrument making, Italians were mainly merchants and shop owners rather than makers. Interestingly though, they were also furniture makers and woodworkers. Scotto's advertising of his shop and business appears regularly in the Italian periodical *Il Corriere di Tunisi*, which circulated in the capital in the years 1957-62.

The Jewish Tunisian makers, instead, were part of the professional trade as testified by the existence of two Oriental *'ūd*-s made by Cl ment Berdah and 'Aim Bshir  in the d'Erlanger musical

instrument collection (see chapter 2). It cannot be excluded that they made *‘ūd ‘arbī* too, as also reported by al-Mahdī (Qlibī, 2004: 13, 36). This narrative is very well known in Tunisia, and the difference in ethnicity and religion of many divas and stars (Journo, Msīka, al-‘Afrīt) has been clearly noted in Tunisian music history (Chelbi, 1985: 134-138; Abassi, 1991: 5-6). Although there are no instrument examples left to prove that within the Jewish Tunisian community luthiers were making traditional Tunisian instruments such as *‘ūd ‘arbī* and *rebēb*, it is highly possible that they made those unlabelled instruments, circulating in the first half of the 20th century. This hypothesis is supported by the collective imagination and a few scattered assertions, as attested by al-Mahdī concerning a maker called Raḥmīn Berdah (Qlibī, 2004: 36), circulating among players, makers and aficionados. Although we know that Tarnān did not use *‘ūd*-s made by Jemaīl or Muḥammad Bēlaṣfar and that surviving instruments possibly belonging to him are unlabelled, the fact that Zīād Gharsa testifies that his father used instruments made by makers of the Jewish-Tunisian community, still remains a conjecture.

However, some examples highlight the ways in which unlabelled *‘ūd ‘arbī*, pre-Jewish-expulsion (1960s), have continued their “life” in the hands of future generations of players. The story that Myriam Akhoua²³, *‘ūd* and modal improvisation teacher of the ISM of Tunis and Muḥammad Bennani²⁴, told me about Hamādī Essid’s²⁵ *‘ūd*, a story subsequently confirmed by Zīād Gharsa, is a remarkable example. As pieced together primarily from Bennani, the story goes like this. In 1961, Ṭahār Gharsa performed at the wedding of Hamādī Essid in Sidi Bou Said. On that occasion, Gharsa played an *‘ūd* which belonged to Khamaīs Tarnān. It was also said that it had been restored by Tarnān and made many years before by an unknown Jewish maker. Hamādī was enchanted by the sound of Gharsa’s *‘ūd*, and asked Ṭahār to leave the instrument to him. Some years after Essid’s death in 1991, his German wife sold records from their collection and this Tunisian *‘ūd* to Muḥammad Bennani, known to be a collector and owner of a library in Tunis of unique items. The records passed into CMAM sound archive as the “Bennani-Essid” collection, but the instrument was sold to Zīād Gharsa some years after his father’s death. The instrument was unlabelled and said to have been made by a Jewish maker. This story of Bennani was expanded on by Lakhoua, who trained in *mālūf* at the Rashīdīa with Ṭahār Gharsa. She reported that Gharsa “always talked with nostalgia about this *‘ūd*, and how it sounded amazing”. The story ends in mystery, as before his death, Ṭahār asked his son Zīād to search for this *‘ūd*, but unfortunately, according to Zīād Gharsa, the instrument was destroyed in a fire at his studio a few years before.

Another example - but this still found in Zīād Gharsa’s own *‘ūd* collection - passed down from his father and possibly many others too from Tarnān. This is an *‘ūd* that I investigated in 2016 in

²³ Daughter of the Akhoua former director of the Rashīdīa of Tunis.

²⁴ Collector and owner of the private library beīt el-Bennani.

²⁵ Hamdi Essid was a journalist, poet and music aficionado of international recognition. He wrote in French for many Tunisian and French journals such as *Annale Politique*, *Jeune Afrique*, *La Press*, *Revue Palestinienne*, *Le temps*, *Le Maghreb* on topics concerning politics, nationalism, racism and Arab identity in general (Essid, Hamādī. *Questions aux Arabes ... et Aux Autres*. Tunis: Editions Etablissement A. Ben Abdallah, (1992).

Gharsa's club, and that remains a remarkable example of a traceable history of unlabelled *'ūd-s* reaching us today. This instrument, however, is half "original", which means Hedī Bēlaṣfar had repaired it in the 1990s. The case and the headstock are what largely remain of the original instrument. Ṭahār Ben Omar, a close friend, donated the instrument to Ṭahār Gharsa. The instrument clearly arrived unlabelled. It contains a note written by Bēlaṣfar with the name of the previous owner Ben Omar. Zīād Gharsa did not remember in what kind of overall condition it had reached them, but from close observations of the material and confirmation by Gharsa and Bēlaṣfar, the face and neck had been replaced. In this respect, the practice of repairing musical instruments in Tunisia lies somewhere between incorrect procedure and underestimated values: "Something that could be repaired is better than replacing it", the maker Ṭwīrī once told me. This way of working is shared among several instrument makers of Tunisia also today. The player Zīād Mehdī, for instance, bought an *'ūd 'arbī*, made by Muḥammad Bēlaṣfar (1970s), from his son 'Abd al-Laṭīf Bēlaṣfar in 2017. The instrument had a crack in the lower part of the face. The maker Ṭwīrī, first wanted to change the face, but Mehdī discouraged him. Later on, he changed the neck completely, replacing it with an Oriental *'ūd* neck style. This type of neck is an easier operation for repairs as it attaches over the face of the instrument, precisely what Ṭwīrī has applied to his new *'ūd 'arbī* model. Instead, replacing the neck of *'ūd 'arbī* and keeping the face intact requires accurate crafting of joints between the face over the initial part of the neck. In the end, Mehdī gave the instrument to Hedī Bēlaṣfar, who then removed the face entirely without adjusting the crack. In conclusion, what remains of the initial instrument are very few and minor elements. This common practice of renovating what should be carefully adjusted and repaired with new materials is also one of the reasons why it is difficult to find unaltered early 20th century *'ūd 'arbī*.

Ben Omar and Hamādī Essid's *'ūd-s 'arbī* highlight an important fact. Unlabelled instruments that were in fairly good condition to play at a professional level were mostly in Gharsa's hands, particularly for his musical reputation in the country. Nevertheless, those instruments underwent substantial changes and replacements by the leading maker, namely the Bēlaṣfar family, so that identifying distinct construction features of previous makers is almost impossible. The *'ūd 'arbī* making, as I am going to show in this chapter, has reached a "standardisation" throughout the 20th century with the Bēlaṣfar family. I argue that this happened by observing and copying unlabeled instruments repaired in the family's workshop. In fact, following independence and social transformation in Tunisia, there was, and this has been confirmed by Zīād Gharsa, an intense trade of *'ūd 'arbī* among aficionados and professionals. This led to a concentration of instruments, then, in the atelier of Bēlaṣfar family. Since 1927, Bēlaṣfar has been the only luthiery family that has been devoted to making the Tunisian *'ūd 'arbī*, including other traditional instruments, passing down the knowledge through generations until today. I suggest that, if Muḥammad Bēlaṣfar's sons had not continued his

father's job, there probably would not have been any standard way of *'ūd 'arbī* construction to observe and transmit, neither would there be any significant trace of his artisanship (see later).

Nevertheless, the *'ūd 'arbī* of 'Abd 'Azīz Jemaīl (1923) found in the collection of Ben 'Abdallah (see chapter 1), proves that, before this family of makers, others were also active in the capital, and that Tunisian makers had skills in many other Oriental musical instruments too. It now seems unlikely that Jemaīl was only concerned with Oriental/Egyptian music and musical instruments, as argued by by 'Alī Sritī (Qlibī, 2000: 26), later founder of the Oriental *'ūd* school of Tunisia (Morra, 2013). It seems in fact that Tunisian musicians were able to command both traditions. As al-Mahdī attests, players such as Khamaīs Tarnān, Hedī Qamām, Ḥabīb 'Amrī, 'Abd Raḥmān al-Mahdī, Khamaīs Hanāfī were able to perform on both Egyptian and Tunisian *'ūd*-s (Qlibī, 2000: 17). The extensive research and interviews with al-Mahdī, Hanāfī, Mostaīsir, Ben Becher and many others, have led Kalthoum Jemaīl to see his grandfather 'Abd 'Azīz Jemaīl as a point of departure for Tunisian music in general and instrument making (1916) in particular in the 20th century (Qlibī, 2000: 22; Jemaīl, 2016). We can explore his role more fully here.

Although Jemaīl reports in a radio interview, transcribed in the book by his granddaughter, Kalthoum Jemaīl, that "he was a self-taught maker" (Jemaīl, 2016: 99), the influence of other makers' craftsmanship is unmistakable in this *'ūd* here. One of the particular interests of this *'ūd tūnsī* is that it predates the earliest surviving oriental (Egyptian/Syrian style) *'ūd* made by him. This challenges the popular idea that Jemaīl preferred *sharqī* to *'arbī 'ūd*, and that he was keen on Oriental/Egyptian musical influences. It was not the custom for any makers in North Africa to sign their instruments in some way until the beginning of the 20th century, but it is known that earlier makers were often Jewish-Tunisian, and were usually musicians. 'Abd 'Azīz Jemaīl was certainly influenced by this late 19th century Jewish-Tunisian tradition, given that from the 1920s onwards luthiery was mainly in the hands of wood-workers of the Tunis medina, where Jemaīl had his first job (Jemaīl, 2016).

The transmission of Jemaīl's heritage was interrupted when Jemaīl's son, Muḥammad Hedī, who continued his father's work in the same Medina atelier, died in 2006. Muḥammad did not have the same kind of reputation as his father, perhaps because of his lesser skills. Although Jemaīl's reputation from the 1940s to his death in 1961 was very high as a musician and instrument maker (*Leīla*, 1940), it has somehow been obscured until the recent research made by Kalthoum Jemaīl (2016). Muḥammad Jemaīl's *'ūd 'arbī* of 1980 belongs to Kamel Gharbī, the *'ūd* teacher at the ISM of Sfax. He bought it when he was a student to play the only exam of *'ūd 'arbī* for the *'ūd* diploma. In fact, the instrument has a lower degree of craftsmanship compared to his father's *'ūd* (1923) in terms of material used and forms. Measurements lack precision and the body does not balance the neck properly. When playing it, Gharbī often mentioned that there was something wrong with the way it had been made. The high strings position makes it hard to play and the notes are difficult to find on the strange neck, despite the right four courses tuning. This is because the neck measures 20 cm instead of the standard 25 cm, like

the one of an Oriental *ūd*. However, what is important here is that the Tunisian *ūd 'arbī*'s markers of identity such as the pick guard, pegs etc. are all there to identify the instrument as "Tunisian". Those markers, as we shall see, point to a standard idea of Tunisian *ūd 'arbī*, which found its way of transmission through one landmark family of makers in the capital, the Bēlaṣfar.

Muḥammad Ben Ḥassan Bēlaṣfar, born on October 5, 1910, set up his first workshop of musical instruments in the east Medina of Tunis in *bēb el-khadra*. From the late 1920s, he made Oriental *ūd*-s at another workshop in *bēb- Suīqa*, where he remained until the end of the 1930s (Qlibī, 2000: 36). Bēlaṣfar's construction history starts relatively late in the century with respect to the earlier mentioned luthiers and considering that the Egyptian *ūd* was widespread in the country decades before (Sakli, 1994; Rezgui, [1968] 1989). However, it still lasts until today through his nephew Muḥammad Islam Bēlaṣfar, and his work influenced most of the instrument making in the 20th century Tunisian capital and other urban centers. A photo (1927), hanging on the wall inside the atelier of one of Muḥammad's sons 'Abd al-Laṭīf, shows him and the famous Tunisian satirist Ṣalāḥ al Khamīsī standing next to an *ūd* case in their first workshop in *bēb- Suīqa*. Al-Khamīsī was probably one of his earliest apprentices. The family workshop moved to Bardo in 1943.

According to his sons, Muḥammad made Tunisian traditional instruments, including *ūd 'arbī*, from the beginning of his career. There are several *ūd*-s made by Muḥammad Ben Ḥassan Bēlaṣfar, one belongs to the musicologist Saifallah Ben Abderrazzak and one is in Rashīd Sellamī's private collection, respectively of 1964 and 1973, another one belongs to the musician of Kairouan, Anīs Lejmi (1966), another is held at the Monastir regional conservatoire (no date). Although there are these few examples left, the comparative table below shows two important points I wish to make concerning Bēlaṣfar's *ūd* making. First, that the instruments (1960s-1970s) Muḥammad Bēlaṣfar was making show constant markers of identity, which are common to the older 19th century existing examples. Therefore this would prove that a continuous lineage of *ūd* making somehow arrived until the following century without substantial transformation. Further, because he did not have any direct apprentices, we may assume that *ūd* making and luthiery in general in Tunisia was a craftwork learned by copying and improving errors. As Sennett explains, artisanship changes slowly and is a result of collective effort (2009: 70). The craftwork transmitted from Muḥammad to his sons, in particular Hedī, involves years of hands on experience of working with the instruments. Standardising this craftwork had to have generations of developments. Secondly, those four instruments signed by him that I investigated, show a basic level of quality compared to later instruments by his sons, and all of them differ slightly from each other in terms of measurements and materials used.

<i>'ūd-s and owners</i>	<i>Neck length</i>	<i>Body</i>	<i>No. ribs</i>	<i>Overall length</i>	<i>Markers²⁶</i>
M. Bēlaṣfar /Ben Abderrazzak (1964)	30.5cm	17cm	15	72cm	R, J, M,
M. Bēlaṣfar /Rashīd Sellamī (1973)	25cm	16cm	11	82cm	R, J, M,
M. Bēlaṣfar /Lejmi (1966)	26cm	17cm	15	80cm	R, J, M,
M. Bēlaṣfar /Monastir (?)	25cm	17cm	15	80cm	R, J, M,

As we shall see in the second section of this chapter, although I argue for a standardisation of *'ūd 'arbī* making, none of the instruments also made by Hedī Bēlaṣfar are exactly similar. Where experimenting does not mean changing features and identity but within the standard crafting process, how the available material responds to the movements of hands effects the overall instrument result in terms of look, sound and quality.

Muḥammad Ben Ḥassan retired in 1975 (Qlibi, 2000: 40), and died the year after. He had thirteen sons, and since the 1950s, four of them - Ridhā, Hedī, and the twins Khamaīs and 'Abd al-Laṭīf, also known as Loṭfi - have continued his work in three separate ateliers. The following diagram shows that of the four of his sons employed in luthiery, only one nephew, Muḥammad Islām Bēlaṣfar, has continued his grandfather's work (see family diagram below).

Muḥammad Ben Ḥassan Bēlaṣfar
(1910-1975)

Ridhā Bēlaṣfar (1943-) **Hedī** Bēlaṣfar (1944-) **Khamaīs** and **'Abd al-Laṭīf** Bēlaṣfar (1961
Muḥammad Islām Bēlaṣfar (1985-)

The oldest, Ridhā, is currently retired. He was mostly active at his father's atelier and there are no *'ūd-s*, that I know of, signed by him. His brother Hedī, born on November 26, 1944, has been the most prolific in instrument making. Hedī made most of the Tunisian *'ūd-s* circulating around the entire country in the second half of the 20th century. Between 1982 and 1996, he ran an atelier and a musical instruments shop, the "*Maison des Instruments de Musique*", in the area called *cité Tahrir* of the capital at *rue de Palestine*. Since 1999, he has been working with his son Islām in the family atelier in *Entilaka*, a quarter north of the capital where he also lives. In 1999, he was appointed the director of the workshop at the centre of Arab and Mediterranean Music in Sidi Bou Said where he works three days a week. This official position gives Hedī an influential authority regarding the Tunisian *'ūd*, and has broadened his reputation concerning all kinds of Tunisian musical instruments in the country. 'Abd al-Laṭīf, the youngest son (now 56), started working on his own in 1976. From 1987, he worked in Soussa (15 rue de Chartage) for about 15 years. 'Abd al-Laṭīf makes both Oriental and Tunisian *'ūd-s* as well as other Tunisian instruments such as *rebēb* and *ṭār*. The small model toys found among the shops of the Tunis Medina are made by him for the tourist market, and shaped in the style of *'ūd 'arbī* with four

²⁶ R = *raqama*, face protection, J = *jild*, leather edge, M = *malāwī*, pegs.

strings. 'Abd al-Laṭīf's twin brother Khamaīs also worked as a luthier. An 'ūd of Khamaīs has already been mentioned in earlier chapters while being played during my visit to the Tarnān club in Binzert. Since 2002, 'Abd al-Laṭīf has had an office - atelier at number 34 of *al-dīwān al-waṭānī al-ṣinā'āt al-taqlīdīa*, "The National Office of Traditional Craftsmanship" in *Den Den*, Tunis. Muḥammad Bēlaṣfar held this position between 1964 and 1975, then it was held by Hedī Bēlaṣfar between 1964 and 1980. Therefore, it may be said that their craftsmanship business and institutional participation with the National Offices for traditional Tunisian crafts, represent official Tunisian musical instrument making in the 20th century.

It is not known where Muḥammad Ben Ḥassan Bēlaṣfar and 'Abd 'Azīz Jemaīl learned to make musical instruments at that time in Tunisia, but most likely by repairing old instruments that came into their hands. So where does the 20th century making tradition come from? Questions like this help to flesh out the story of the 'ūd 'arbī's recent life, but the lack of an answer leaves many issues unaddressed. After several discussions, and at different times (2015-2016), that I had with Hedī and 'Abd al-Laṭīf Bēlaṣfar, one hypothesis emerges that sets out an important fact about the instrument construction, and which shuttles back and forth between historical sketches, scholarly argument and contemporary imaginaries. Until the early 20th century, wooden instruments were made either by musicians themselves, or by those familiar with woodworking. The 'ūd made by Jemaīl in the collection of 'Abdallah is an example of the former case, the Bēlaṣfar family of the latter.

This journey through the history of 'ūd 'arbī making in the 20th century Tunisia suggests that activities oriented towards craftsmanship, self-cultivation, and the process of music-making – all of which Tunisian luthiers see as characteristic of the instrument making approach to the 'ūd 'arbī – provide valuable models for maintaining that luthiers were, and also today in some cases, woodworkers and furniture makers. Historically crafting the 'ūd 'arbī comes from and is enriched by woodwork skills as well as by cultural and artisan exchanges with local communities, such as the Italian and Jewish, of the capital. The transmission of this craftsmanship remains in close family circuits, the Bēlaṣfar one in particular favored a development towards a standard way of making the Tunisian 'ūd 'arbī.

Medina Luthiers, Artisan Work for the Market

On the basis of the historical sketches analysed so far, I refer to the master craftsman luthiery shops of the Tunis Medina surviving from the 20th century as "Medina luthiers". They represent a history of craftsmanship of which Bēlaṣfar's father too was part, and from where the family developed its career and the Arab Tunisian luthiery in general. Some other makers remained with the shops and

ateliers in the Medina and call themselves "*artisan luthiers*"²⁷. Interest in playing and making quality, professional instruments is much more common inside the modern capital Tunis. Clearly, these are all differences of degree not kind – practices are never exclusively found in one place and not another – but they are significant. The instrument's fate within other centers is highly complex and associated with different "master craftsman" and locations – making it hard to compare "Tunisian" and for example "Sfaxian" approaches in any straightforward way. In Tunisian cities today, there are several luthiers who can make a Tunisian *'ūd* on commission. By association, they are also part of a 20th century Medina luthier craftsmanship community. As I mentioned in the Introduction of this thesis, the Ancient Medina - for Tunisians - is "*'arbī*". The *'ūd* is *'arbī*, is Arabic in the way that it is crafted in that urban area of Arabic identity. Further, it means that it is "Arabic", meaning it also "Tunisian (Arabic)" - in opposition to foreign settlements outside the ancient Medina circle. The Medina is the place where this craftsmanship grows and, as we are going to see, from where it develops.

In the subsequent weave of anecdotes and observations, my goal is not only to provide an overview of the *'ūd 'arbī* makers in Tunisia. Rather, I will try to suggest that making this instrument in Tunisia was a practice shared among craftsmen of the Medinas. Those are professional artisans. One of the remaining makers in the Medina of Tunis is the luthier Sherif Meher. My encounters with the luthier Meher span nearly ten years, beginning in 2007 with my first language field course, where I commissioned my very first *'ūd* (Egyptian). The dozens of *'ūd*-s Meher has made in his life and his workshop located in *bēb Sūīqa* since he opened his first atelier in 1981 (a busy pedestrian area in the Medina of Tunis), have earned him a high reputation among amateurs and beginners.

There is a broad agreement that the best *rīsha*-s of the country are made by Meher. They are made out of bullhorn, an entirely natural material, and crafted by hand. This is a practice that identifies the skills a Medina luthier should have. Crafting *rīsha* for players was a significant part of Bēlaṣfar's work too. According to Hedī, he used to travel south Tunisia towards the desert to find real feathers. Today, Meher can spend hours forging the plectrums to make the perfect shape customers are looking for, weighting the thickness you require and trying out the agility on the strings. A first cut from the main piece is made simply with a saw and a pair of strong scissors. The piece is then roughly shaped by a lathe on which abrasive papers are attached. Meher makes a standard form from this raw material and then shapes it according to the *rīsha* customers want, in terms of length, thickness and weight. A final stage consists of regenerating its organic material and rendering the surface smooth by massaging it with almond oil. My last conversation with him, in 2016, talking about the *'ūd 'arbī*, revealed contradictory attitudes towards a multitude of issues affecting these instruments in the second half of the 20th century, including changes in *'ūd* making, materials and forms.

²⁷ "Meher Chérif Artisan Luthier, la Lutherie entre soupirs et espoir." M.H. Abdellaoui (2nd April, 2010).



Figure 20. RĪSHA-S AT MEHER'S ATELIER. PHOTO: SALVATORE MORRA

In an interview, Meher agreed that on one hand the *'ūd 'arbī* functioned as an iconic symbol for Tunisian musical identity promoted through *mālūf*. On the other, generic musicians and *'ūd* players began losing their interest and it became relegated to a small group of specialists and aficionados including the makers. Meher, for example, has not made many *'ūd* of this type in his career and was able to show me only one in a recent photo. More recently, in 2017 he worked on a *'ūd 'arbī* made for a student of Zīēd Mehdī's course in Paris. He showed Mehdī and myself an old mould adapted for the Tunisian *'ūd*, said to have belonged to Jemaīl from which he made the instrument. It is possible that information and pieces were shared among ateliers in the Medina. Further, Meher said that for some time he was a pupil of Jemaīl. Looking at the *'ūd* closely, I recognised the pickguard that Meher makes for his Oriental models, and also the body seemed like a pear shape of the Egyptian *'ūd*. The three rosettes are placed next to each other; they are very close, almost as if intersecting. Meher adapts these two features of his oriental *'ūd* to the Tunisian one, but surprisingly, he keeps the traditional flowering design for the tuning pegs. In his own way, Meher continues the tradition of Jemaīl. Meher is the most representative, perhaps because the oldest, among others such as Hishēm Bū'allāq in *avenue de la liberté*, of a kind of luthier who follows the demand of the market. He has a real shop on a known street of the Medina, a meeting point for musicians, as well as a small store for repairing. I call him a master craftsman: a *medina luthier*.

Today, Meher is the most important exponent of this Tunis medina luthiery scene. He is in charge of restoring Rashīdīa's instruments and is part of a network of creative industries and urban regeneration in the Medina of Tunis. A project implemented under the MEDNETA, a Cultural Mediterranean Network for the Promotion in the Arts, Crafts and Design for the regeneration of historical cities, supports the communities and creates a web of economic activities that form the urban and social settings of the historical Medina of Tunis. Directed by Zoubeir Mouhlī and initiated by the *Association de Sauvegarde de la Medina de Tunis* in 2014, it mapped over 500 artisan workshops practicing more than 20 different crafts. Meher figures on the cover of this book. In the 18th century,

the Medina housed over 27,000 artisans and in the 19th century, there were more than 13,000 artisans. The study shows an important growth in the number of shoemakers and metal coating artisans, as well as a significant decline in saddle making, arms and musical instrument making (Mouhlī, 2014: 8-10).

Another Medina luthier is the 57 year-old Ḥabīb Reqīq, who for thirty years has been living and working in Sfax, a city 200km from the capital to the south. The first time I saw an *ūd tunsī* made by Reqīq, it was not in Tunisia, but in Paris in 2015. I interviewed Aḥmad Ridhā ‘Abbēs, the director of the Parisian-Tunisian *mālūf* ensemble (*Mālouf Tunisien*), at his home in *Créteil*-Paris, and the instrument was there in the living room on a stand next to the television. It is known that Ridhā instead plays the oriental *ūd* in the ensemble, but to also own an *ūd tunsī* is a commitment for him as the president of a Tunisian association that promotes national music abroad. It reminds Ridhā of his attachment to *mālūf* and Tunisian musical heritage, but it also shows that in general amateurs buy *ūd tunsī* from shops and not from luthiers. At first glance, Reqīq's *ūd* seemed poorly made, truly for beginners. When back in Tunisia a year later, I found other *ūd*-s by Reqīq: there was one in a shop of the capital called "Galaxy" near the *Lafayette* shopping center run by Khalīl Afouf, another played by Muḥammad Bouzguenda (a young teacher at the Monastir regional conservatoire), in his brother's private music school in Monastir and another played by Ridhā Gourbel in the club of ‘Alī al-Ḥashīsha in Sfax, in the conservatoire of Kaiorouan, and in the famous musical instrument shop of Sfax called "'Alī Baba". The spread of Reqīq's *ūd*-s *‘arbī* in music shops around the country points to a new and different dimension from Bēlaṣfar and other Medina luthiers.



Figure 21. 'ALĪ BABA SHOP'S LABEL. PHOTO: SALVATORE MORRA.

Reqīq's *ūd*-s are found all around the country because they are cheap. Sfaxian makers such as him did not travel to discuss aesthetics with their Tunisian counterparts, they were either selling study models to shops or looking for other jobs. In Reqīq's workshop, an annex in his garden house, where he has always worked by himself, he produces a small number of instruments per year, utilising many traditional handtools. The first *ūd* he made was oriental Egyptian style. He is almost retired now and,

compared to the 1990s, very few of his instruments are sold in shops today. He is a self-taught maker, making instruments ranging from *qānūn* to *rebēb* and *ūd*-s, but he also has a degree in Arab music with the *ūd* as the principal instrument, awarded in 1994 at the Tunis Music Conservatoire. A player who makes his own instruments.

Ḥabīb welcomed me to his house for lunch one Tuesday in November 2016. He played a tune in the *ḥasīn* mode on the *ūd sharqī* as if it was being played on the *ūd 'arbī*, imitating the style, and telling me the story of his life. When I met him that day, he looked even more dispirited than before. He told me of budget cuts, an increase of mass-produced readymade instruments circulating in Tunisia and coming from abroad markets, and his lack of commissions. The *'Alī Baba* music shop in Sfax stopped buying instruments from him recently. Reqīq comes from both the world of traditional Tunisian handicraft but is attentive to the market dynamics. Reqīq's *ūd 'arbī* crafting creates a shift from the high crafted-value (see Bēlaṣfar) to an object of commercial value, of commodity.

Before concluding this section, it is worth mentioning another example which highlights further this aspect of *ūd 'arbī* mass production. In Sfax I visited the 'Alī al-Ḥashīsha's club called *Club des Musiciens*. al-Ḥashīsha was the conductor of the ensemble *Tahkt al-Turāth* of Sfax. Recent photos from the 1980s on the wall of the club display an *ūd 'arbī* player, Ridhā Gourbel, in al-Ḥashīsha's orchestra. Looking closely at the photos featuring the ensemble at the festival, I recognised an *ūd 'arbī* made by Hedī Bēlaṣfar in Gourbel's hands. But when we met for the second time, Gourbel brought another one of his *ūd 'arbī* with him. This instrument has a label inside indicating the name of the vendor rather than the maker and was bought by Gourbel in the *'Alī Baba* shop in Sfax. The label says: *Ferradj Musique, vente tout instrument de musique fanfare sono et lumiere*, and the phone number indicates a shop located in Algeria. Some of the features reminded me of the maker Ḥabīb Reqīq, but the instrument was definitely not made in Tunis the capital. Gourbel recalled the name of the maker Ṣāḥbī Dammāk from Sfax, but he was not sure. Although the neck is a hybrid between the Oriental and Tunisian *ūd*, the leather around the edge, the flowery pegs shape and the baklava shaped pick guard, as a whole make it a typical *ūd 'arbī*. I have not observed the special geometrical design of the three rosettes on any other *ūd 'arbī* I saw in Tunisia, but certainly it has been borrowed from other eastern *ūd* styles. Importantly, again this instrument shows a market of *ūd 'arbī* in local shops in cities other than the capital, where the presence of the Bēlaṣfar family has obscured many other makers.

These two luthier figures based in the two largest urban centers of the country point to a long-standing craft history of the *ūd 'arbī* in Tunisia. They demonstrate different levels of craftsmanship regarding the instrument, making models that were intended for beginners and amateurs, proving one of my main theses of this research that the *ūd 'arbī* was very much used at all levels of music making (amateur and professional). They show that the instrument was commissioned but also sold in shops, it was an object of the market, even mass produced; but that importantly, luthiery in this country was and probably still is valued as artisan work based on handling wooden material.

Standard *ʿūd ʿarbī*, Crafting Wood by Hand

Various aspects of my ethnographic project gradually shifted my attention to the role of the craftsman and his work, exploring whether there is a traditionally recognised way of making *ʿūd ʿarbī*, and how this idea is perceived among makers and players. My observations of instrument construction by the luthier Hedī Bēlaṣfar at the workshop of the Centre of Arab and Mediterranean Music (CMAM) in Sidi Bou Said, Tunisia, in June 2015, led me to consider that there was a collective imaginary about making *ʿūd ʿarbī* in Tunisia. If you ask a musician, from the most renowned public figure of *ʿūd ʿarbī* in Tunisia, Zīād Gharsa to upcoming players like Zīēd Mehdī, what *ʿūd ʿarbī* they play, they will answer: "an *ʿūd* made by Hedī Bēlaṣfar". It is not a matter of abstract quality: Hedī Bēlaṣfar's technical skills are considered cultural merits rather than mere procedures, embedded in Tunisian national craftsmanship. They are transmitted orally and come from a past from which few examples survive today²⁸. I will suggest that that investigating Bēlaṣfar's craftsmanship means tracing a "standard" way of making *ʿūd ʿarbī* in Tunisia, and that it emerges from a "Medina" craftwork context very much of both Arab- *ʿarbī* and Tunisian- *tūnsī* identities.

Just as wood is the main material for making *ʿūd*, and carpentry a skill, a particular set of techniques also make up the "traditional" method of construction. Many people interviewed such as Mehdī, ʿAyādī, Mostāṣir and Gharsa, consider Bēlaṣfar the only luthier who knows, "the traditional way of making the instrument". Some of them also define this as "authentic". Their use of the term "traditional" is rather misleading, since it is not known what the "traditional" way is. When did this tradition time frame start, who passed it down, to what tradition exactly are they referring? The tradition they perceive can be found in the cultural milieu in the time of the French protectorate, as both Gharsa and Mostāṣir have told me. It is the 1930s -1940s, years of particular cosmopolitanism and cultural exchange, years that are felt with nostalgia. As Mostāṣir told me, everything coming from that time is imagined to be traditional, authentic, and the Bēlaṣfar family luthiery emerges from that era. Also Jemaīl's activity comes from that era, but as I mentioned in the previous section, there is not the same continuity today as there is with the Bēlaṣfar family. In chapter two, I sought to construct a lineage between the 19th and 20th century *ʿūd* examples to show that an unknown history of musical instrument crafting was rich and very much fixed in forms, types, decorations etc. However, these 19th century instruments are all in European museums. In Tunisia therefore, Bēlaṣfar is the starting point. The term "traditional", in Arabic *taqlīdī*, is even more loaded than in Western languages, and slowly I began to understand that what this might really mean is rather a "standard" way of making this type of *ʿūd*. In the conservatory of Monastir, a Bēlaṣfar *ʿūd ʿarbī* is there to be borrowed by students. Moreover, considering Hedī Bēlaṣfar's craftwork a standard method today, reveals that the tools, uses, hand movements and terminologies all have their roots in woodworking and furniture making.

²⁸ The M24.8.56/95 of the Horniman museum has similarities in craftsmanship.

Notwithstanding that in a similar way to Bēlaṣfar other makers have interpreted the identity of *ūd 'arbī*, adding their personal touches to the instrument, they all seem to have developed their artisanship from working in these trades.

What does this standard making process consist of and how is it related to woodwork in general? Through the months of May and June 2015, I observed Hedī Bēlaṣfar making an *ūd 'arbī* that I commissioned at the start of my doctorate. The various stages and order of working are flexible, but the basic process involves creating the mould, "*qālib al-qaṣ'a*", a model for the body. Luthiers have several moulds for several models of *ūd*, and as Hedī Bēlaṣfar's son, Muḥammad -Islām, told me they have the "old" and "authentic" mould for *ūd 'arbī* in Tunisia. This is made of redwood pine, chosen for its stability and adaptability to climatic changes. On the mould are attached the ribs which form the base for the case of the instrument. The ribs can be made of varying wood types such as rosewood, mahogany etc. Important in this phase is the *al-k'ab*, a small cubic block that goes both on the upper and lower part of the body (*al-qaṣ'a*), where the ribs are attached. The two *al-k'ab* are the last pieces that keep the ribs attached together, and they separate them from the mould. In both the Bēlaṣfar and Ṭwīrī workshops, the Arabic word (*k'ab*) is substituted with the Italian *tacco*. They know that the word is Italian and are aware that they must have inherited it from some kind of exchange during the woodworking, something that they take for granted. Literally, a *tacco* is a heel or a wedge. The sound of this Italian word is transliterated into Arabic letters, so they write it as *ṭaqqu*. In the spoken jargon of everyday workshops in Tunisia, words concerning basic wood cutting and shaping are terms used in general artisan work, particularly in woodwork-furniture contexts, and taken from another language, which is not French but Italian. Many of the resident Italians, originally from Sardinia and Sicily, were probably employed as artisans. I came across other Italian words, typically used in carpentry, in Tunisian luthiery such as: *squadra* for set square, or *martello* for hammer. The most interesting one is *filetto*, which does not have an equivalent in Tunisian dialect in luthiery. It denotes the fine cut of decorative wood that is placed between one rib and another. This is a job of threading, particularly common for decorating furniture. These and other Italian words point to an exchange of knowledge, skills and craftsmanship during the protectorate era among the different communities. Similarly in Algeria, Glasser describes an overlap of musical specialisation and artisan milieu (particularly textile) woven into lexicon of musical and craft vocabulary, for example the ornamental "tie *rabib* and the bow fiddle *rabab*" (2016: 63).



Figure 22. 'ŪD-S MOULDS IN BELĀŞFAR'S ATELIER (CMAM). PHOTO: SALVATORE MORRA.

As indicated in the previous sections, the Italians of the musical instrument shops were not instrument makers. It is difficult to imagine that they shared terminology on the tools in the context of luthiery, which must therefore have been inherited from other contexts. I suggest that making musical instruments was a skill that overlapped with furniture making in which Italians were very much engaged in early 20th century Tunisia. Apprentices of instrument making were trained in this field or they came to luthiery with this background. The ability to work the wood and the use of machinery, which we are going to explore, are crucial both for musical instrument making and woodworking for furniture. This exchange happened around the Medina circle walls, between *bēb Manār* and *bēb Jedīd*, for instance, where the Scotto shop-atelier was situated. So, instrument making was surfacing from the closed local medina area, slowly making headway into the other surrounding cultural world.

The ribs, called *aḍlā'a* and literally meaning "sides", are between 2 and 3 cm long and 3 ml thick that are reduced to 1.5 ml after cleaning and smoothing. Their shaping is achieved using a saw (*munshār*). After cutting the ribs, Bēlaşfar bows them (curve) *taqwīsh*, literally "arch" or "arcade" - dipping them in water and adjusting on a hot surface. The last part of this stage is the manufacturing and fastening of the ribs. The aim is to give a support, what he calls *al-'amūd al-faqrī* - literally meaning "backbone" or "spine" - to the body starting with placing the ribs from the middle of the *qālib*. The direction in placing the ribs is from the right hand side - then left and again right and so on - from top down, to be welded by adding a sharpened spike (*dabābīs*). Then it is left to dry (*tajaffa*).

The number of ribs for the 'ūd 'arbī is between 15 and 21. When they are dried, a fine strip of paper (*sharīṭā al-waraqiyā*) is added among them to keep them accurately joined together with an organic glue. The glue, called *ghīra*, made from calf-legs, is dried, treated and then dissolved in water under heat (in the interview Bēlaşfar highlights the quality of this glue and its property to let the sound propagate through the wood). However, not just the type of glue but the way Bēlaşfar uses it, is another key point here. Some may think of Bēlaşfar's craftsmanship as poor quality work. Once in an interview with the German maker Wolfgang Früh - who co-supervised Cheret's master thesis and is very interested in North African 'ūd-s - in his workshop in Paris in 2015, he told me that on visiting

Tunisia and the CMAM's workshop of Bēlaṣfar he was impressed but rather nauseated by how much glue he used, so much so he had to leave. In luthiery, glue is an important factor in terms of sound, and it can make or break whether an instrument can be considered a piece of furniture or truly a musical instrument. Also recently, student apprentices at CMAM, who previously trained with the maker Ṭwīrī during an apprenticeship at the ISM of Tunis, confirmed the substantial amount of glue used by Bēlaṣfar. It seems a precise amount of glue cannot be calculated. I have seen Hedī Bēlaṣfar using this and other organic material with "natural movements" as if every touch on the instrument, even the most careful for precise gluing, is to be conducted without overdoing it. Bēlaṣfar knows the results he wants on the basis of his years of experience with sight and touch. As Sennett (2009: 9) reminds us, the intimate connection between head and hand, the thinking and the real putting into practice, are the focus of the craftsman. The use of glues between the rib papers, for instance, is the result of Hedī Bēlaṣfar's hand movements. It is entirely a conscious movement, a consciousness transmitted from the mind to the hands after years of work.

The lock, *al-qafḷa*, clamps the ribs tightly together. It is a strip of wood around the edge of the body, also with a decorative function. The soundboard (*al-waja*) "face", is made up of 4 or 5 pieces of 2 mm in thickness. In luthiery, normally the face would be made of only two pieces. This facilitates the gluing and renders the face more stable. Bēlaṣfar's faces are still today generally made of cedar rather than EPICIA (spruce). The *'ūd* he made in 2015 has a cedar soundboard. Cedar is an odd wood for the *'ūd*'s face, as for similar instruments like mandolins or guitars, for which standard luthiery uses spruce, but Bēlaṣfar told me that *'ūd 'arbī* had always been made with a cedar face. Today, no makers except Bēlaṣfar make *'ūd 'arbī* with a cedar face. To cut the shape, Bēlaṣfar puts the two parts face to face on a table (soundboard) and body, to draw the exact outline of the shape with a pencil and cut it with the saw. He cuts the wood precisely to smooth the surface, and then the pieces are glued together²⁹. The face is often a few millimeters larger than the case. This is a feature that can also be observed in 19th century models and that Bēlaṣfar reproduces accurately. He told me that it is done in imitation of a violin edge. Finally, he uses abrasive paper (*al-waraqa al-zajājī*) to make it smooth. Up to this point, the entire crafting is done by hand.

Crafting the rosettes (*al-qamrāt*), literally "moons", belongs to a work of artistic manufacturing. The *'ūd 'arbī* has 3 rosettes. They are placed towards the chest of the soundboard; the top rose is always 13 cm apart from the neck-joint, the pair of roses in the middle of the soundboard are 27 cm apart from the neck-joint. A reinforcement using another wood, often spruce, (3-4mm) is placed underneath the rosette (the reverse side of the surface). The idea of reinforcing under the face of the instrument goes against the principles of lightness and sound propagation, as the luthier Ṭwīrī likes to highlight. The reinforcement inevitably makes the instrument heavier, he says. The weight of an *'ūd 'arbī*, approximately 1kg, is above the average of other models of *'ūd*. As we shall see in later chapters,

²⁹ This job is done with chisels of several sizes and with another two other kinds of chisels called *al-lazīra* or *mumlasa*.

this feature affects the overall style of playing, how to hold the *rīsha*, the type of stroke and the tension of the strings. To design the rosette, a piece of paper with geometrical and floral figures is placed on this part to draw the rose decoration model and to directly carve (engrave) it using a machine with a thorn, called *al-takhshīsh*. This is the only machinery used so far for crafting the instrument and it is also employed in standard woodworking. The harmonic bars, literally called *al-jusūr* or *al-musāṭar* (plane, line), are usually 9 (Bēlaṣfar mentioned they can also be 7). Four of these bars, 3mm thick and 4mm wide, are placed in the area of the *qamrāt*; five of them are 6mm thick and 14mm wide, two of which are set in the upper part of the rosette area and three in the lower part of the rosette area.

The lower bridge "*al-fars*" literally "horse", or "*kursa*" chair is glued in the lower part of the surface measuring 36 cm from the *musāfa* (end of the body and beginning of the neck). The section where the strings are attached measures 10.5 cm. The neck is 24 cm long. On the *fars* there are 8 grooves to insert the strings. A membrane made of wood (rosewood or mahogany and decorated with mother of pearl), *al-wiqāya* literally "protection" or *raqma* is placed below the two roses to protect the surface from the strokes of the plectrum. In the *ūd 'arbī*, a piece of leather is placed around the edge of the body to keep it securely fastened and protect it against high temperatures. Leather and other decorative textile materials³⁰ than wood point to a North African historical link of musical instrument and traditional textile industry (see also Glasser, 2016: 63). Thick bone inlays and mother of pearl, for instance, render the instrument heavier, particularly towards the neck side. The neck is made of red pine, covered with ebony wood on the top and decorated with several patterns with black ebony and white cow bones. It is 24 cm long and 4cm wide at the "capo" and 5 cm where it meets the body, 2.5 cm in thickness. The neck is attached to the body by a piece of wood that ends at the other extremity literally with a *dhīl khuṭāf* (Tunisian expression) *ba'abūs al-kharīfa*, a "swallow tail" or "dovetail" (*rondinelle*) with four angles inserted into the neck. Makers do not need to glue it as this feature slots into both parts and fastens securely.

The headstock, called *al-bunjuq*, is normally made of walnut (*al-jūz*), and carved from only one piece of wood. It is 24.5 cm long and about 4 cm thick. It is standard practice to paint it black. According to Bēlaṣfar, it is painted for decoration, whereas for Ṭwīrī it is to hide the poor quality wood used in this part of the instrument. As Ṭwīrī says: "if you use a noble wood you should not paint it". The pegs, made of rosewood and called "*al-'asāfir*", literally bird or *al-malāwī*, are 2 cm apart from each other. The decoration of *malāwī* changes in 3 different designs. The "capo" named *al-anf* or *al-'atba*, literally limit or threshold, is the limit of the bridge that drives the string from the lower bridge *karsa* to the pegs. The *malāwī* are made of strong wood without nerves to avoid cracks.

From this description of crafting the *ūd 'arbī*, two features of the instrument are important to the point I wish to make here. The first concerns the fact that the instrument is very much a robust

³⁰ Cotton and velvet in the Moroccan *ūd* of the RCM of London.

plucked instrument. It is constructed to be heavy and sturdy. Consequently in some ways, especially due to the thickness of the neck and the tension of the strings, it is also hard to play. This difficulty is a principle characteristic of the *'ūd 'arbī*, and results in a unique resonance for the instrument. Furthermore, this feature renders the instrument distinctive from other *'ūd* types and even among North African models. In the Bēlaṣfar instrument, it is a matter of the overall amount of material, the wooden reinforcements, the amount of glue for example. As Guettat observed, the *'ūd 'arbī* traditionally has a strong, solid construction that makes it a suitable instrument for open-air performances (Guettat, 2000: 336).

In conclusion, what is characteristic of Bēlaṣfar's *'ūd* making initially seemed a rather casual approach towards the accuracy of details and the lack of personal design innovations: wood, bone ornamentations, rosette carving, overall design shape, and materials all fall within an imagined, idealised Tunisian crafting tradition. This idealised tradition has come about from all the numerous *'ūd 'arbī* he has seen, repaired and constructed in his life. Consequently, through this practice he has established a standard craftsmanship. This idea of Bēlaṣfar personifying a standard reference for this instrument is very strong among aficionados and players. It is so strong to the point it seems that the "tradition" is the individual expression of Bēlaṣfar. In other words, people identify him with the "tradition". This "traditional, authentic" way that Bēlaṣfar has of crafting the instrument without lending special attention to acoustic principles unexpectedly still results in excellent musical crafts. With Bēlaṣfar, crafting is a physical hands-on practice, of touch and movement rather than a imaginative process or an activity following a theoretical acoustic principle. As I said, this enduring crafting comes from woodworking and technical training involving hands-on contact with the instrument. In turn, Bēlaṣfar's *'ūd-s 'arbī* can be considered genuine and rustic, almost rural, earthy. He encompasses *'ūd 'arbī* nature, evoking the instrument's rhythmic attitude. These values in how the instrument looks also reflect in the sound the instrument produces, a sound that prominent players such as Zīād Gharsa and Zīēd Mehdī have said imitates characteristics of Tunisian identity, connected with sentiments of both its African and Arab/Tunisian sources (see chapter 4). As I mentioned in the earlier section, such an idea is connected to what Sakli said about the urban Medina space as being "*'arbī*", and the *'ūd* consequently adopting this identity.

Crossing Identities, the Tunisian *'Ūd* in the 21st Century

Alternative methods of *'ūd* construction, all involving some degree of changes and improvements, have developed since the start of the 21st century. Apart from Bēlaṣfar, other *'ūd* makers in Tunisia use a variety of methods, both traditional and newly invented, to make their instruments. There are varying materials being used, a range in the availability of tools and machinery, as well as differing knowledge and aesthetic preferences. There are differences too in the business

models associated with high-end instruments, making slowly by hand versus quicker, more mechanised modes of production. The distinction between traditional and modern methods represents a significant, though not clear-cut, division between finer and less precise construction approaches. Further, precision and replicability, along with the implications for the cost and quality of the instrument, are prominent in the discourse around *'ūd 'arbī* produced using non-traditional methods.

Many luthiers make *'ūd-s 'arbī* that are considered modern by them, or made in a personal style. The instrument is transformed from a standard crafted object of the historical Tunisian luthiery of the "Medina", into various instruments whose forms are transplanted as a result of the impact of eastern *'ūd-s* on its Tunisian counterpart. As the *'ūd 'arbī* moves from the "Medinas" it changes. The reproduction, reinvention and circulation of the instrument changes how it is made, the material it is made from, and ideas about what it means to make an *'ūd 'arbī*. With this in mind, here I explore how new processes of construction and changing features that are so crucial to instrument making interact with the *'ūd 'arbī's* significance as a cultural object.

Mokthar Methni, the owner of the shop *Sonomusic*, which supplies instruments, sound equipment etc. to important Tunisian markets, situated in the *Charguia* area in Tunis, created two prototypes of electrified *'ūd 'arbī*, using new materials, and redesigning the instrument by adding, removing and abstracting its component parts. One of them is sometimes used by Gharsa in his *mālūf* club and the other one is on display in the shop. The instrument is made of solid wood, common to electric guitars and *'ūd*. It has two main parts: the edge, which delineates the form of the instrument - and the neck/headstokes - which continue through the body. The body is empty in the middle, and some component parts appear abstracted here and there.



Figure 23. ELECTRIC *'ŪD 'ARBĪ* IN SONOMUSIC OF M. METHNI. (THE INSTRUMENT IN THE MIDDLE)
PHOTO: SALVATORE MORRA.

For example, as Methni told me, he used models that are standardised for other electric *'ūd* types. So the body form and size are redesigned for this *'ūd 'arbī*. He then added three rosettes as the *'ūd 'arbī*

requires, whose design (octagonal) is based on the model of the Tunisian maker Muḥammad Sha'ben suggested by Gharsa. The rosette decorations are painted by digital vectorial calculation by a software rather than crafted directly onto the instrument. So is the decoration around the edge of the entire instrument. In the end, what remains of the look of *'ūd 'arbī* are only those rosettes and the four courses of strings.

Although this is an extreme example of how the *'ūd 'arbī* is stretched into new forms, the task of describing a generic instrument becomes increasingly difficult when dealing with makers' construction techniques in detail (Bates 2012: 388). Instruments have *'ūd 'arbī*-like traits in their form, markers of identity and dimensions, but they are also hybrid instruments that combine physical ideas from different *'ūd* cultures. I am interested here in *'ūd-s 'arbī* that show distinct traits that come from different types of *'ūd*, connecting the instrument with the notion of hybridity. Have Tunisian makers made hybrid *'ūd 'arbī* by blending other *'ūd* types? As a way of theorising the case studies, the discussion draws ideas from a variety of sources including organology and material cultures (Bennet and Dawe, 2001; Bates, 2012) in connection with the notion of hybridity. The idea of Brian Stross (Stross, 1999), who proposes a "cycle of hybridisation", according to which we move historically from more heterogeneous forms to other more heterogeneous ones, without any being "pure", seems especially pertinent here. This way of thinking can be applied to the surviving 19th century *'ūd-s 'arbī* discussed earlier in that the instruments not only create something new, but they also challenge the unknown forms, from which they were derived. Therefore, if Bēlaṣfar's craft is considered standard, what moves to different crafting directions, crossing other types of *'ūd-s* making, reshape the Tunisian *'ūd* and its identity.

In this respect, I turn to Causey's suggested term "conflation" - literally blow together, to fuse, as an alternative to hybrid (1999) in transforming material culture. In Causey's words "it is a term that evokes a more inspired and spontaneous joining of art style elements" (Causey, 1999: 432); I use the term conflation here as a metaphor to show how, on the one hand, innovation in connection with aesthetic aspects of the *'ūd 'arbī*, perpetrates an act of creation by joining two or more elements, without changing its standard organology (tuning and neck length). On the other hand, reshaping of forms, decorations and measurements, result in a multiple "hybrid" musical object.

Although partly determined by the scant number of *'ūd 'arbī* makers, the two discussed here, Ridhā Jandoubī and Faīṣal Twirī, span across Tunis and Kelibia, city and countryside, occupy various positions on the spectrum from amateur to professional players, and make a range of different kinds of instrument. Rīdhā Jandoubī, for example, produces his *'ūd* by first using metal reamers to shape the mould of a rib length of wood, sealing the ribs together, then shaping the inside of the *'ūd* gluing papers. Faīṣal Ṭwīrī instead, still fabricates the case of his *'ūd* by using a mould based on his measurements of what he believes is a standard *'ūd 'arbī*. His atelier is fully equipped with machinery. Ṭwīrī cuts all the materials himself, except the soundboard, from the raw status. For the face, made

only of two pieces, Ṭwīrī applies techniques that “enable the exact reproduction of a fine face profile in every instrument made”, he says, remarking on the fact that precision in calculating geometrical proportions is what the maker should always aim for. Both makers are now using laser techniques to drill the three face holes and then make final adjustments by hand. Although the instruments are less and less handcrafted, I argue that this *‘ūd ‘arbī* making still involves people in affective engagements with the identity of the instrument and that such engagements are shaped by wider discursive formations connecting the *‘ūd ‘arbī* and Egyptian, Turkish, Iraqi *‘ūd*. And yet, these engagements are generative of hybrid ways of thinking about and making the instrument and so reshape the *‘ūd* physically and sonically.

Jandoubī, based in Menzel Temīn, a small village in the region of Nabeul, makes both Tunisian and oriental models of *‘ūd*. He was born in 1959, and worked since his youth as a furniture maker. In 1997, he obtained the official certification of “musical instrument making” (*‘ūd*) from the Artisan Office in *Den Den*, Tunis, which belongs to the Minister of the Tourism and Artisanship. In the same gulf of Kelibia, together with the family maker Ḥaddād, who is instead based in the village of Qurba, Jandoubī shares 35 years of *‘ūd* crafting. Although Ḥaddād makes fine *‘ūd*-s and has clients such as Tunisian musicians like Dafer Youssef, he has never made a Tunisian *‘ūd*. Like the older makers, Jandoubī too was a former carpenter. Jandoubī has a somewhat different take on the making process from Bēlaṣfar. For him, there is “no predefined voice of the *‘ūd ‘arbī* but also the variables are not limitless”. He told me that this idea comes from the skills he has on playing the instrument too. Unlike some makers, Jandoubī does not see the making process as intuitive, indeed, he emphasises the importance of precise measurements and systematic testing of the instrument’s sound; the position of the harmonic bars etc. But past experience, trial and error adjustments and careful listening are all crucial. With oriental *‘ūd*, the maker’s “aim is predefined” and is realised, more or less successfully, by precisely controlling the entire assembly of the instrument. Making *‘ūd ‘arbī* puts more emphasis on what Jandoubī calls the “collaboration” between maker and player, the interplay between the player’s characteristics and the maker’s skill and aims. This, he explains, better accounts for the fact that different makers would, hypothetically, produce particular instruments for different players, rather more than the idea that each piece has an inherent “voice”. Nevertheless, the Tunisian *‘ūd* can be the most experimental of the instruments because its crafting tradition is somewhat unique and, as we have seen, it is in the hands of a close family circuit.

Jandoubī’s work demonstrates how needs for quality improvement and for speeding up the process, can lead makers to respond attentively to innovation. He has perhaps the most experience compared to other makers of using “innovative” methods of construction, in particular for assembling the ribs into a shell. Jandoubī is the only maker in Tunisia who no longer uses a mould, indeed since 2010. “Time wise, it slows down the work and the result is less accurate”, he told me in our first interview. Traditionally, for Bēlaṣfar, Meher and others, the mould is the ‘heart’ of the instrument, its

most intimate part which reflects the personal intention of the maker. Meher, for example, says that he uses a mould that comes from Jemaïl's old atelier, to invest the work with authenticity. As Bēlaṣfar's son Muḥammad- Islām told me: it is the most important feature, it differs from one maker to another, it represents the true personal touch. Jandoubī's abandoning of the mould astonished both other makers and myself when discussing in other ateliers. Twirī, for instance, commented on this as a way of speeding up the work rather than an effective structural improvement. Whereas, for Jandoubī, the primary need was to achieve more stability in the drying process of the case. What exactly does Jandoubī's innovation consist of? The ribs are cut and curved one by one, by lightly damping and shaping them on a hot curved surface. He then verifies the shape, attaching the ribs to one that acts as a model, instead of using the mould (photos ribs). Once the ribs are shaped, three of them are assembled at the same time using synthetic glue for wood, both the European brand *Pattex* or the Arab brand *Colla* [notably an Italian word], *ghirā khashab* (glue for wood), and sellotape to hold them stacked together. When the ribs are completed, they are left to dry attached on both extremities of the wedges to a piece of wood. Paper strips are glued subsequently once the ribs are completed.



Figure 24. RIBS, FREE MOULD TABLE IN JANDOUBĪ'S ATELIER. PHOTO: SALVATORE MORRA.

For Jandoubī, using a sort of "free ribs mould" for all types of *ūd* making is the culmination of a long process involving understanding the meaning of the mould, saving time to meet the demand, learning how to improve the accuracy. Jandoubī's comments also highlight how makers often turn to the mould at an early stage in their instrument-making career, before they knew about or could find other solutions. Different needs also open alternative manufacturing methods. This diversification signals an increasingly flexible conception of what methods can be used for *ūd* making and how they can be developed. Like later stages in the making process, the shaping of the mould can be understood in terms of the responsive relationship between maker and instrument body. However, Jandoubī's *ūd* *arbī* mould is still there in his atelier. It hangs on a wall but very close to the working table, as if something to glance at with nostalgia or perhaps with a certain satisfaction at having abandoned it.

Jandoubī has developed two models of *ūd 'arbī* from his experience of Oriental *ūd* crafting and since he dispensed with the mould. The early model includes *ūd-s 'arbī* made for Zīād Gharsa, 'Abīr 'Ayādī, Sofīān Zaidī, the amateur Ḥassen Ghargourī, the ISM of Sfax and the student Muḥammad Bou 'Alī. To a degree, this model conserves basic markers of identity of the *ūd-s 'arbī* like the leather edge, the baklava pick guard shape, the typical headstokes. Practically speaking, one key feature of Jandoubī's construction already found in this early model is its peculiar neck: tapering towards the body, then outwards again in the short section to the headstoke. This gives the slim linear neck, narrow and Oriental *ūd*-like, so crucial to contemporary *ūd 'arbī* making transformation. It is clear, however, when talking to players that a slimmer neck is useful not just as a comfortable hand position or because of its acoustic properties (light etc.), but as a form that they already knew and gives it an easiness. Jandoubī's *ūd 'arbī* neck demonstrates how musical and practical needs can lead construction to close engagements with light and heavy instruments (see chapter 5). This is a difference in modern Tunisian *ūd* making versus the Bēlaṣfar standard craftsmanship.

Moreover, Jandoubī also shifts attention from the mould to other parts of the instrument. For Jandoubī, various features, not just the mould, can bear a new identity of the Tunisian *ūd*. In November 2016, he posted on his Facebook page a photo of a finished instrument with the following comment: "*ūd 'arbī* dresses Oriental". The absence of the leather protection around the edge, for example, which makes it more closely resemble an oriental *ūd*, as well as the soundboard carved with only one rosette instead of the traditional three, are the most obvious "conflation" represented by the material form. When I asked Jandoubī about this change of features, he gave very little explanation except to say he had been asked to do so by the commissioner. "The instrument will go to Algeria", he said. Jandoubī describes himself as "the Tunisian maker who sells the most *ūd 'arbī* to Algerian players". More than 80% of *ūd 'arbī* he makes are commissioned by Algerian players, who ask to adapt or change details of the instruments like these. Despite his stated intention of creating something "new" on the basis of a commission, I also suspect that he must have got the idea from his often urgent need to simplify the features and decoration in order to focus on sound and acoustic improvements. Also the *ūd 'arbī* he made for me lacked some markers of identity like the leather around the edge, though I had asked him to make his standard model of *ūd 'arbī*. Nevertheless, he avoided markers of identity adding features that are of Oriental *ūd-s*. In this respect, I draw from Causey the notion of "conflation of intent": "an agent performs an act of melding in an object of material culture by two or more intents" (1999: 433). Jandoubī created a conflation of *ūd* forms by joining two features from a diverse *ūd* type to the *ūd 'arbī*. Rather than a hybrid notion of two disparate parents creating a unique progeny, the conflation takes place between the same family instrument. With this in mind, it becomes clear that the possible *ūd 'arbī*'s shift of identity involves various "foreign" elements that have been inventively "fused" by the Tunisian maker himself.

A maker's motivations in choosing alternative features are complex, but questions of identity are rarely distant: the desire to modify the aesthetics, the appearance of the instrument, the removing of identifiable features; standardisation of features towards an oriental-Turkish *'ūd* model and satisfying customer demands - all these play a part. Ṭwīrī's experiences highlight how instrument making participates in complex local and more global histories, since passing down skills rests not on a timeless resource, but on the long-term interplay between the master craftsman and enthusiasm of apprentices in their learning and improving. The accuracy of every detail, a shiny modern finish through *brilliant* V63 polyurethane varnish, geometrical calculations and scientific measurements, are at stake in Twirī's work.

Ṭwīrī is the only maker who trained exclusively in a musical instrument atelier without any previous experience of carpentry work. He learnt the traditional method of construction from Bēlaṣfar but developed a new model and adopted new methods. Now in his late fifties, Ṭwīrī had trained at Belaṣfar's workshop since he was eleven, after school and during summer holidays. He has worked as a professional luthier since 1984. From 1997 to 2002, he owned an atelier in *Manouba*, then moved to *Bardo* where he now lives and works. For three years since 2008, he taught at the ISM of Tunis, teaching master students and supervising doctorates in musical instrument artisanship, taking up the position held by the Iraqi maker Yaroub Fadel for two years. Among Twirī's students, who have continued working in the field are: Ṭahār Sussī, Imen and Rouib Ghailen.

Ṭwīrī's research for a finer sound suggests that, historically, raw materials and inaccuracy of details were used by 20th century makers, then abandoned or improved by local people, eventually by those who began apprenticeship with these same masters. The first time I came across an *'ūd 'arbī* made by Ṭwīrī was in 2015. At that time, only the Bēlaṣfar family seemed worth investigating in terms of *'ūd 'arbī* luthiery. After a while, the look of Ṭwīrī's *'ūd*-s became very attractive to me, clearly identifiable as *tūnsī*, with all their features highlighted: the elegant baklawa shape of the *raqama*, the longer neck and smaller body, the bowtie bridge. But its look was different from both the 19th century museum models (Horniman museum and MIM) and the Bēlaṣfar ones. It was reinterpreted, the features perfectly reproduced but finer, something more modern, a little more contemporary I thought. This *'ūd 'arbī* soon no longer appeared an old-fashioned style of instrument, a tribute to the tradition. Its overall appearance changed my perception of the entire instrument: lighter in weight, the face thickness is 1.8 mm, but also without the emphasis on representing a former past. In 2017, I assisted Faīsal Ṭwīrī in his workshop next to the archeological museum of Bardo, to make a Tunisian *'ūd* together and to discover that he is an atypical Tunisian luthier.

I was immediately drawn to his fine craftsmanship of *'ūd 'arbī* making. The exotic beauty of the sound holes, the deceptive fascination of the instrument with an ancient history and the unusual nature of the work enchanted me. Gradually, I gathered more information about his making and continued to work busily. It was an exciting work of discovering other *'ūd*-s *'arbī* of different luthiers,

which are based on practical diversifications prompted by personal circumstances. For Twirī, who also makes oriental and Turkish *ūd*, the Tunisian one is made up of two main elements: "a neck of 24 cm and three rosettes. Whatever else you do, it's all for an *ūd 'arbī*, and it cannot be changed". Despite this affirmation, I point out a hybrid element in Ṭwirī's *ūd 'arbī* - out of an annual average of 45 instruments (Oriental, Turkish, Iraqi types), he makes six Tunisian *ūd* per year. Twirī's models are in constant evolution, he adds or removes decorations, markers of identity are transformed or reproduced faithfully at the request of the client. His *ūd-s 'arbī* are in Paris at the *Mālouf Tunisien* association, at the ISM of Tunis, in the hands of students such as Safwen Ghasmī and Rayan Nefzi or very recently of professionals like Sofīān Zaidī (2018).

Much of *ūd 'arbī* crafting pivots on the responsive relationship between the maker and tradition. It is a result of ways of imagining the process of *ūd 'arbī* making in terms of variation and flexibility. The thickness of the neck, for instance, is an organological feature pointing to a basic distinction between the North African family and the other *ūd* types. Both Jandoubī and Ṭwirī's *ūd 'arbī* necks are a crucial variant drawn from other *ūd* neck types. Such surprises demand that makers are willing to experiment or adjust and do not cling too firmly to fixed principles. Many players, including the well-known master Zīād Gharsa, have commented how slim the neck of Ṭwirī's *ūd-s 'arbī* is compared to the thicker Bēlašfar ones. As we have seen for Jandoubī, this makes the instrument more playable from the point of view of *ūd sharqī* players. The performance of the two instruments (*sharqī* and *'arbī*) in the same concert for 'Abīr 'Ayādī, for example, is facilitated by this slimmer neck. The last time I visited Ṭwirī's workshop briefly in March 2018, when commenting on how slim his *ūd 'arbī*'s neck had become, he answered, "*kabīr 'unouq? C'est fini!*" (Big neck? That's over!). The player Zīēd Mehdī was with me and later in the car he admitted that he felt hurt by Ṭwirī's assertion. "The *ūd 'arbī* must have a thick neck and longer neck, as we have to come to know it", Mehdī added. These transformations are implicitly reiterated by Stross's consideration of "hybridity cycle," in which a hybrid form transforms to helping generate another hybrid (1999: 255). Ṭwirī's instruments have aspects that are old in that they come from well-established forms of *ūd 'arbī*. They are "hybrid" in that new instruments have been produced as a result of local and global cultural flow of *ūd* making.



Figure 25. 'ŪD 'ARBĪ'S MAKING IN ṬWĪRĪ'S ATELIER (NECKS). PHOTO: SALVATORE MORRA.

Although the stages of the Ṭwīrī's making process are more or less the standard for 'ūd, on the smallest scale, each of his 'ūd 'arbī is imagined as the unique product of the collaborative relationship between a particular innovation and a particular rule. The 'ūd we made together focuses on the thickness of all the materials we used and crafted. The neck, for example, without bones decoration is 1cm thinner than necks of other 'ūd types. It reaches the same thickness by then adding the decorations, which are carefully balanced. "If you change the neck, my technique and touch has to change too", Gharsa told me discussing Ṭwīrī's neck form. Less material makes the instrument weigh less, but the uniqueness of the 'ūd 'arbī is tied to the neck's form/length and the markers of identity. Lightening the instrument pushes it towards other overall dimensions, which result in a change of identity. Ṭwīrī reaches 3mm for the ribs, 1ml for the *filetto*, 2cm for the neck, 1.8cm for the soundboard, which is however thicker than 'ūd of other traditions. Other examples shift our focus to the removed elements and to new technologies. The reinforcement attached to the soundboard in the area of the rosettes is finally removed, as well as even the leather edge in many models, Ṭwīrī told me. It is all done to further lighten the instrument. The sound board is made only of two pieces. Individual uniqueness, well-known controversies and non-standard forms all have aesthetic consequences. While there is significant consensus among makers that instruments should be well crafted, there is considerable aesthetic variation outside these basic requirements. Nevertheless, Ṭwīrī does not carve the rosettes with the mechanical *takhshīsh*, instead, for roughly 15 years, his soundboards are crafted by a laser machine in the shop of Beshīr Bijī in *bēb al-Khaḍra*.

Beyond these, several well-known "controversies" play a part in confounding the idea of a "standard" 'ūd 'arbī morphology. These debates centre on whether, or to what degree, an 'ūd's craftsmanship is determined by its constituent materials or its new forms, its internal case dimensions; the difference(s) or otherwise between *sharqī* and 'arbī instruments; and the value or otherwise of applying laser techniques to the face of the instrument. These topics fuel heated debates among players too, and are frequently mentioned by makers, signaling wider anxieties about the

quality of certain materials and the appropriateness of human interventions in them. Other challenges to the singular identity of the Tunisian *'ūd* derive from the range of non-standard *'ūd 'arbī*-like instruments that change, substitute or discard various elements of the 'traditional' form.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I hope to have demonstrated how craftsmanship of the Tunisian *'ūd* variously coincide with heritage and new directions, which are typically constructed as identities of the instrument. In this context, on one hand, making an *'ūd 'arbī* requires cultural knowledge, on the other, carpentry experience, involving artisan-like traits, such as skill in working with the hands, real practice and thinking. This develops practices that can become unique to one person or family circuit through years of work, and it involves other things such as the society as well as the organic matter (Sennett, 2009). I have sought to contextualise such practice by involving intercultural dialogues in crafting musical instruments during the Tunisian protectorate, which provides an alternative frame for analysing *'ūd 'arbī* identity in multicultural Tunisia. In some instances, those required skills derive from copying and observing existing instruments and help to reinforce certain arguments, such as the kind of craftsmanship deriving or overlapping with furniture making. In this respect, the Italian artisan influence is critical here.

This reading offers a way of interpreting the correlation between the *'ūd 'arbī*'s Arab identity and its local Medina-city space of development and transmission. I suggest this was a space of exchanges for the *'ūd 'arbī* and other instruments, which helped encapsulate traits and features that formed a "standard" *'ūd 'arbī* construction. Thus, while the cultural significance of musical instruments and their agency in the lives of musicians is well established in ethnomusicology (Dawe 2010: 156), the ideas surrounding *'ūd 'arbī* making highlight a relatively unexplored topic: how instruments make that agency felt culturally as part of a space, a community, a corporation. The Medina and the Tunisian *'ūd* are both *'arbī*. This idea of a Medina luthier "community", from artisan woodworker to professional luthiery, has shown how *'ūd 'arbī* makers outside this social milieu use various materials and processes and produce instruments with diverse finished and hybrid forms. Likewise, the standard methods of making the *'ūd 'arbī* help it cohere as it moves into and responds to new social contexts.

FOUR

The Sound of the *‘ūd ‘arbī*: Evocations through Senses

In this chapter, I discuss ways in which the *‘ūd ‘arbī* relate to its sound, because the instrument's sound establishes social meaning among groups and individuals in particular discourses on Tunisian culture and identity. The first section sets out a history of *‘ūd ‘arbī* recordings and I consider how these enable us rethink the broadly held notion that the instrument was rarely played in the 20th century. During my fieldwork interviews, there was a constant debate on existing recordings, and I oriented my research towards discovering recordings of *‘ūd ‘arbī* other than those by the legendary player Khamaīs Tarnān. I had hoped to be able to find earlier styles and sounds to compare with those of Tarnān but regrettably, as we will see, this was not possible. Nevertheless, I was able to examine some field recordings and live concert recordings of the Tunisian *‘ūd* and will argue here that recordings from the start of the 20th century reshape our perspectives on the instrument and *mālūf*. My main interest is in clarifying what recordings we have, how these recordings changed the appeal of the instrument after independence and, after Tarnān's death, who was playing the instrument publically.

In the second section, I explore the reflexive dynamic by which intersensorial experience (Connor, 2004) of *‘ūd ‘arbī* roots the instrument's sound in Tunisian society. Particular qualities– its four courses of strings with their octave tuning for instance generate a *timbre* to enact its "Tunisianness", becoming distinct and defining a territory; there are also effects of the plectrum's special position and touches; also its tuning is set up with particular resonance and production of microtones; such features help define the "Tunisian sound". In the third section, I report players' accounts and interweave data from my own research and interviews with people who recounted memories of particular sounds, or who described how they perceived the legacies of the instrument and its "sounding Tunisian". Considering the notion of Deleuze and Guattari that "sound is a means of territorialization [...] to organise a limited space" (quoted in Sterne, 2012: 92), I explore the role that the Tunisian *‘ūd*'s sound and musical responses to it play in creating evocations that are mediated through a shared vocabulary of "distinctive features". This vocabulary situates the instrument in a metaphorical "territory", which evokes specific Tunisian social qualities. I claim that the very sound of the *‘ūd ‘arbī* is iconic in the same way that a song in dialect is heard each time in Tunisia, and that it is invested with culturally constructed meanings (see Qureshi, 1997: 7; 2000).

A Brief History of 'Ūd 'Arbī Recordings

In 1997, Ruth Davis published an article in the journal *Asian Music* entitled "Traditional Arab Music Ensembles in Tunis: Modernizing al-Turath in the Shadow of Egypt", which described the influence of Egyptian models on Tunisian music at the turn of the twentieth century. At that time, Tunisians blamed this increasing influence, imported by visiting artists and spread further by the commercial record market, for the abandonment of their heritage music and traditional instruments. However, the invention and commercialisation of phonographic recording towards the end of the nineteenth century helped set the stage for the earliest recordings of Tunisian traditional music too. In a pattern repeated with other music around the world, recordings of 'ūd 'arbī were made by westerners working for occidental recording companies. From the 1930s, for instance, the legendary player Khamaīs Tarnān had been releasing music for solo 'ūd and in ensembles for several labels: Pathé, Ennagham, Soka and Baidaphone (Hachlef A. and M. Hachlef, 1993:167). Furthermore, the 'ūd 'arbī, played by other less renowned musicians, features on wax cylinder recordings made since the 1900s in Tunisia and in Europe by Erich von Hornbostel, who was employed by the Berlin Phonogramm-Archiv, and possibly between 1926 and 1929 by Robert Lachmann, held today at the National Sound Archive in Jerusalem. These collections form a unique "archetype" for the Tunisian 'ūd, its timbre, style, techniques and identity.

In the journal article *Phonographierte Tunesische Melodien* (1906) (Tunisian Melodies Recorded on the Phonograph), the Austrian comparative music scholar, Von Hornbostel describes and analyses recordings made with the phonograph for the first time on African soil, and specifically in Tunisia. The recorded material forming the basis of his article was collected, for the most part, by Paul Träger in Tunis during the autumn of 1903. The remaining part of the collection was made by Hornbostel in Berlin during a performance by a visiting Tunisian group in March 1904. These field recordings are not only the earliest music examples of Tunisian music, even before Lachmann's (1922) field studies and the Cairo Congress in 1932, but they also contain important examples of Arab musical forms performed on musical instruments that were neglected during successive decades of the 20th century (see chapter 1). My interest in these musical collections is the possibility of constructing a hypothetical archetype of 'ūd 'arbī sound in Tunisia as the historical basis for those discourses focusing on sound, listening and reception, thus engaging with existing known recordings of the instrument in contemporary Tunisia.

On the basis of my findings so far, it seems that the first known 'ūd 'arbī recording was made in Germany. In the catalogue *Die Wachsylinder des Berliner Phonogramm-Archivs* of the Berlin archive, edited and compiled by Susanne Ziegler (2006: 41), it is stated that Träger recorded an 'ūd player by the name of Daidou Messika (Msīka). According to Hornbostel's description, the 'ūd Messika played resembled the Tunisian type. I first came to learn of this during the presentation of Mehdi Trabelsi's

paper "Vers les premières sources sonores de la musique tunisienne - L'apport de l'école de Berlin" at the conference of "North African Music Tradition" in Sidi Bou Said in Tunisia in December 2014. Whatever recording it is, it bears considerable importance in terms of sound as it is the first recording we have of this instrument. Those recordings were never re-explored or re-edited at any time in the second half of the century. Although Hornbostel had little information regarding this musical tradition, often characterising the performers as amateur or dilettantish, this is what he reported on the instrument:

"Messika's *'ūd* had four courses, with an octave between the lower two. This means that the melodies were usually played on the upper octave and that the lowest chord rather served as a resonance of the next" (Hornbostel, 1906: 11[Translation by Katz, 1975: 328]).

In this description, Hornbostel points out one of the main characteristic of the playing style of the Tunisian *'ūd 'arbī*, which forms specific sound effects that are rooted in the instrument's identity. The plucking of these combinations of strings establishes a certain *timbre* that is recognised as "sounding Tunisian" by many players.

During my visit to the Berlin *Phonogramm-Archiv*, part of the ethnomusicology department of the Museum of Ethnology in Berlin (formerly the *Museum für Volkerkunde*), I verified that the Tunisian recordings of 1903 made by Paul Träger (wax cylinder) did not include any performances with the *ūd*. Instead, the *'ūd 'arbī* player Msīka was recorded by Hornbostel, the director of the archive (1905 to 1933), in Berlin a year later, in 1904. According to Hornbostel's list, published by Ziegler and at the archive, he made 13 recordings, which included the solo piece sung and played with the *'ūd* by Msīka titled by Hornbostel *Schlafmusik des Bey* (Lully for the Bey), but the tracks 1 to 12 including this piece are lost today. In my interview with Ricarda Kopal, currently in charge of the archive, the archive changed its location and institutional affiliation several times. After the reunification of East and West Germany, the historical collections were returned to the *Museum für Volkerkunde* in 1991, a journey during which those pieces could unfortunately have been lost. In this respect, according to Ziegler, a review of the number and status of the cylinders in 1993, showed that about 95% of the wax cylinder collections of the former *Phonogramm-Archiv* survived, whereas 40% of the collection of shellac records was missing (Lars-Christian Koch, Albrecht Wiedmann and Susanne Ziegler, 2004: 228).

So what recordings do we have and that we can listen to? An important place to look is the Tunisian National Sound Archive at the Baron d'Erlanger palace in Sidi Bou Said, as inaugurated by the Minister of Culture as the "Center for Arab and Mediterranean Music" in October 1994. This Sound Archive collects Tunisian and Arab musical heritage for the purpose of conserving, disseminating and making it available. The sound material varies widely from recordings made during field collection campaigns and archiving of concerts during international festivals in Tunisia, to commercial recordings stored within the legal framework of depositing phonographic works, as well as sound documents transferred from both national and foreign collections. After the revolution of 2011 and

under the guidance of the director and musicologist Anas Ghrāb, the National Sound Archive's vocation is to publish a national discography and make it entirely available on line. Concerning the Tunisian *'ūd*, the archive holds all Khamaīs Tarnān's 78/80/33/45 rpm records, the oldest recording dating to around 1926. It is the complete corpus of recordings by this artist of 59 items from Baidaphone, Pathé and Ennagham records.

In the early 20th century, Khamaīs Tarnān dominated the recording world in Tunisia, and it was his *'ūd* that could be heard anywhere there was a record of Tunisian *mālūf*. It was like a "sound archetype" for this genre and therefore the instrument too. The disc "Disque Smarda", for example, was recorded in Paris between March-July of 1935, the year of founding the Rashīdīa institute, whose inaugural concert was on Wednesday 5th June, exactly during the sessions of *Smarda* in France. This recording, titled *Malouf, Répertoire de Musique Andalouse et Chansons Anciennes*, was made with the patronage of the general director of public education and the arts of the Tunisian government. The activity of Smarda el-Olgia³¹ for the revival of Tunisian music has been neglected during 20th century musicological literature. The first published information about this recording is mentioned in Mostaīsir's book about the Rashīdīa "The told and untold of the Rashīdīa" in 2014, with a section entitled: "Who was Smerda el-Olgia?" (Mostaīsir, 2014: 134).

I came across Smarda el-Olgia's activity by chance while searching in the national archive of Tunis during my 2016 fieldwork. A document named *'De la conservation de la musique tunisienne'*, addressed to the general secretary of the Tunisian government by Emile Gau (Dean of the *Académie, directeur général de l'instruction publique et des beaux-arts*), speaks of this musical recording, asking to support its diffusion and playing in cafes of the capital: "à renover dans le publique le goût et la tradition de la belle musique arabe classique". The same dossier contains the document of the Association named *de la conservation de la musique tunisienne*, registered with the *Inspecteur général des contôles civils* for its foundation on the 2nd February 1935, a few months after the foundation of the Rashīdīa and some months before the Rashīdīa's inaugural concert on the 5th of June 1935. However, both musical associations had the same goals to safeguard the tradition and heritage and both identified them with *mālūf*, although Smarda did not receive much national support (see also chapter 1). Today, the recordings are held at the CMAM, including a three-sided booklet with the program (most pieces from *nūba dhīl*) of the records. On listening carefully to some of the recordings during the performances and before a solo part, one can hear the name of players literally being shouted into the microphone as was common to do. In the recording sessions of March, Khamaīs Tarnān was at the *'ūd 'arbī*, his name pronounced for several songs.

Concerning unpublished recordings of the *'ūd 'arbī*, the CMAM sound archive contains recordings made in other contexts, later in the 20th century, but no less important for the Tunisian *'ūd*.

³¹ Also: Zmerda el-'Aljia

There is, for example, the track named "Mālūf, musique Arabo-Andalouse, musique Orientale", recorded on the 28th of May 1962, which features an elderly Khamaīs Tarnān, just two years before passing away, recorded by al-Mahdī. Tarnān improvised an *istikhbār* (prelude improvisation) in several Tunisian modes and sung a *qaṣīda* on the *ūd 'arbī*. The recording is part of a project of heritage collection set up after independence. Apart from the Cairo Congress ones, no solo *ūd 'arbī* recordings were produced in Tunisia throughout the first half of the 20th century. To find widely published recordings of Khamaīs Tarnān, which include a solo improvisation, we had to wait until 1992 for the *Antologie du Malouf*, recorded by the Tunisian radio in 1959 the *Nūba al-dhīl*, Cd track number 4. Then the *Nūba al-ramal* was recorded in 1960 and published in 1992, and finally *Nūba al-aṣbahān*, recorded in 1962 but not published until 1993. These examples, along with black market recordings (originally cassette, today digital sound files) by other later major figures such as Ṭahār Gharsa, certainly helped inspire many of the subsequent generations of musicians who decided to study and play the *ūd 'arbī*.

My research became increasingly bound up with the CMAM sound archive, especially after listening for the first time to the Wolfgang Laade collection of Tunisian recordings (1960), entitled "The Classical Arab-Andalusian Music of Tunis" volume 1 and published by Folk Records FW8861. This collection includes an *istikhabār* on the *ūd 'arbī* in mode *raṣd dhīl* performed at the Rashīdīa by a young Ṭahār Gharsa, track 3. The entire Laade collection is made up of field-recordings, and this example of Gharsa's playing style is of great value for those wanting to learn the *ūd 'arbī*. Gharsa's unpublished improvisations on the *ūd 'arbī*, instead, are contained in the recording of the Rashīdīa Institute's archive made between the 1968 to 1989. Other field recordings of this type reveal interesting information about the players' names, instrumental set up of the orchestras and their geographical areas. In this respect, the "Mālūf Festival of Testour", held every year since 1967, enables to ascertain the presence of the instrument and listen to a huge number of selected musicians. The following vivid account of the Testour festival by Davis during her fieldwork in the 1980s, shows the key importance of this music festival for *mālūf*, the country and therefore the *ūd 'arbī*:

In its efforts both to encourage and monitor the new ensembles, the government established an annual cycle of competitions and festivals; these culminate in the annual International Festival of the Ma'lif held each summer in Testour, a small orchard town in the Mejerda river valley, founded by Andalusian refugees. Throughout the week of the Festival, the garden of the main hotel of Testour is transformed into a competitive concert arena as prize-winning regional ensembles perform their chosen pieces on a brightly lit, colorfully decorated dais, to an audience of local townspeople and adjudicators from the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, the National Conservatory and the Rashīd iyya. The Tunisian performances are interspersed with presentations by ensembles from other countries in the Maghreb and Spain, culminating in a concert by the Rashīdiyya (Davis, 1997: 86).

Ḥabīb Errais, for example, today a renowned oriental *ūd* teacher based in Tunis, features in the recording of *nūba sikāh* of the *Ensemble de Musique Traditionnelle de Tunis* conducted by Fethi Zaghonda in September 1994, and in the earlier *nūba dhīl* in 1984 of the ensemble of the *Centre National de Musique et des Arts Populaires* directed by Rashīd Sellamī, recorded in France. In an interview with me in November 2016, he admitted having played the Tunisian *ūd arbī* only occasionally before doing those recording sessions. The Testour festival "was a significant place to experience the tradition", he continued. A place to encounter the music and people who were committed to tradition and heritage, of whom Errais especially mentioned the support and diffusion for traditional instruments by al-Mahdī. It was he that convinced Errais to take up the Tunisian *ūd* and develop his own style. As others told me, and as noted in chapter one, al-Mahdī was obsessed by the nation and national music. Errais received a sort of training at the festival of Testour and attended it for several years. At that time, he played an *ūd arbī* made by Bēlaṣfar's father in Tunis. The norm is that the instrument appears in recordings of *mālūf* repertory. If it is not always present in ensembles of such genre, it is soon provided by the regular oriental *ūd* player.

The available live recordings of the Testour Festival begin with the 1978 festival edition catalogued as *Collection du Comité National*. Most of the digitised ones have recently been labeled by Tunisian scholars such as: Fethi Zaghonda, Anas Ghrāb, etc. who assist the CMAM in providing information about the recordings, but some others include performances by unknown players. We can listen to a Tunisian *ūd* in the recordings, but unfortunately do not know who was playing it. This is a point made by many players and scholars interviewed throughout my research. The recordings I explored comprise heterogeneous ensembles performing at the festival, with completely unknown or forgotten players. The ensemble of the club Khamaīs Tarnān, for example, conducted by ‘Abd al-Dayem Ben Salha (violin), with Jalloul Tarnān (cousin of Khamaīs Tarnān) and Yūsef Lazzam (violin), participated regularly at the festival with an *ūd arbī* player in the ensemble. A recording of the 21st session of June 26th 1987, has a *qaṣīda* accompanied with the *ūd* in mode *raṣd dhīl* featuring a short *istikhbār*. Another example, in the 30th session of July 23rd 1996, the orchestra of the club presented a *zajal* from the Tunisian heritage in mode *raṣd dhīl*, which included an *istikhbār* on the Tunisian *ūd* in the same mode. Another one, the ensemble "Troupe des jeunes de Testour", conducted by Hamādī Mongī Guerouachi, performed on the 3rd of July 1986, with a player unknown to all my interviewers named Muḥammad Azhar at the *ūd arbī*. Moreover, both the "Troupe Régionale de Sidi Bouzid", conducted by Wardī ‘Abdoulī and "Troupe de Sousse" by Muḥammad Daga, in the 21st session, respectively on the 27th and 29th of June 1987, included an *ūd arbī* in their ensembles.

Since the 19th century, an expanding and cosmopolitan cultural artistic scene in Tunisia probably limited the *ūd arbī* just to Tarnāns' solo playing, giving precedence to other genres, such as song forms and Beycal military marches. The *ūd arbī* remained relegated to the *mālūf* and popular Tunisian song contexts until the end of the 1990s, mainly due to its organological suitability to

accompany voice rather than playing solo performances. The most important published *'ūd 'arbī* recording of the second half of the 20th century was made by the player Ṭahār Gharsa. In 1996, Mourad Saklī was the director of the CMAM and requested Ṭahār Gharsa to play the first *'ūd 'arbī* recital ever for the opening of the international *'ūd* festival "The *'ūd* encounters the lute", in which several players of different *'ūd* traditions participated. Gharsa performed *istikhbārāt* for the entire concert, exploring the Tunisian *ṭbu'a* extensively, something he would never have thought of doing before. The recording of that concert was finally published by the CMAM label in 2012, establishing a second sound of the *'ūd 'arbī* some hundred years after Tarnān's archetype. The concept of a solo recital is first of all truly western and it was adapted to Arab music only in the twentieth century. Through Egyptian players, solistic practice reached *'ūd sharqī* Tunisian players, but always remained unrelated to musicians practising solely *mālūf*. Zīād Gharsa has never played an *'ūd 'arbī* recital in the Rashīdīa or anywhere else, but solo concert practice is continued and extended by the Sfaxian player 'Abīr 'Ayādī. The digital sphere reveals a different world: many performers, including 'Ayādī, have made substantial home recordings of *istikhbārāt*, and many internet platforms also allow amateur players to produce recordings and make them available online with relative ease.

Gharsa appeared with the Rashīdīa orchestra several times on TV and radio programs between 1965 and the 1990s, both in Tunisia and abroad, in which it is possible to discern preludes and improvisation on a substantial number of occasions. These two media helped diffuse the instrument's sound to a wider and less expert audience, making it more popular. The majority of *mālūf* aficionados, especially younger generations, interviewed on the question where they heard the Tunisian *'ūd* for the first time, answered "by listening to Ṭahār Gharsa" and eventually his son Zīād. Those television programs, sometimes including recordings with just sound, are now available online on platforms such as YouTube. An internet "*'ūd* video culture" (see Cook, 2013), a network of creative practices, a cultural system, collectively co-created by users, through uploading and viewing, emerged only a few years ago - after the 2011 Revolution - when YouTube, the foremost way to broadcast the videos, was finally unbanned. More recently, Facebook has also become a platform, a network environment of new opportunities to juxtapose sound and images. The videos, public concerts but also many of them clearly home produced, lend a new materiality to the instrument through which social interaction and group formation can take place. This video culture is very much constructed around the instrument and the music it makes, its sound and image. To listen to *'ūd 'arbī* on line, I started by typing the words *'ūd tūnsī*, spelt *oud tunsi*, and *Tunisia* into the search engine, which produced 5.150 results, and then working through them page by page. Among the top results, "Ziad Gharsa: sama'i mēzmun et istikhbar oud arbi and Star Tunisie, Ziad Gharsa - Malouf", a channel run by a Tunisian music agency *Troupe Boudinar* and one of the main online hubs for the Tunisian music scene. A few clicks take you to the next videos titled: "Le malouf Tunisien: Nuba raml al-meya", and "Le malouf

Tunisien: la nuba asba'ayn", both of them showing a particular image of the musical instrument, and to YouTube channels or Zīād Gharsa's official channel that opened in September 2016.

In conclusion, and thinking back to the earliest Hornbostel project, although historically it is not possible to reconstruct a pre-Tarnān sound because of the loss of earlier recordings, just the fact that other recordings did exist should encourage us to keep an open mind on the instrument and on *mālūf* in North Africa at the end of 19th century. Borrowing from Labelle (2010: xvii), sound opens up a field of interaction, "it exists as a network that teaches us how to belong, to find a place". Hornbostel's recordings support the idea that the Tunisian *'ūd* was a commonly used instrument that could, along with other instruments, represent a Tunisian sound in Europe. More importantly, it shows that the instrument was not only used for what then became the *mālūf* standard repertory, the *nūba*-s, but rather for any dialect songs in any urban ensemble like that Msīka's song *Schlafmusik des Bey*.

In the later period, published recordings have been dominated by Ṭahār and Zīād Gharsa, except for a few other players who are relegated to the ephemeral and somewhat brief recording session on an evening during a festival. While the unpublished Testour festival recordings reveal a substantial number of players and other *'ūd 'arbī*'s "sounds", popularity remains in the two male figures and sounds of Ṭahār and Zīād Gharsa, today widely online. Nevertheless, as we shall see in the next chapter, this dominance – notably male – is challenged by new figures who are part of a modern, soloist culture around the instrument in Tunisia.

Hearing and Touching the Instrument, Experiences of *'Ūd 'Arbī*'s Sound

Steven Connor and others have highlighted the idea that the senses are inseparable from one another (Connor, 2004: 153). This intersensoriality opens a field of cultural possibilities, a range of forms, images and dreams in relation to wood, strings and plectrum of the *'ūd 'arbī*, that I explore not only through sound, but also through sight and touch. How do we experience sound through the senses? Connor's "intersensoriality" recognises sound on a same level as sight and touch. The sound of the Tunisian *'ūd 'arbī*, for instance, is enhanced by the material from which the instrument is made, its compensatory substances, which are accessories to the main wooden materials, such as the bones/ebony inlays, the thick wooden pick guard (also inlaid), the textile material, the plectrum's organic composition and so on. I claim that the *'ūd 'arbī*'s identity is also shaped by the ways of experiencing the sound through the interaction of other senses.

Concerning sight, for Connor "with sight we achieve balance and understanding", instead, "touch performs sound" and it is directly related to the material of the object (Connor, 2004: 154). He further argues that "we hear the event of the thing not the thing itself" (2004: 157), and to think of a sound as the "voice" of what sounds is to think of the sound as emanating from its material source.

Many players, including myself, believe that those organic materials, unique to this type of *'ūd*, contribute to the sound of the instrument as "Tunisian" and are also experienced through the sight of it. For example, when I asked Yasin, a Mehdi's student of *'ūd 'arbī*, what was the first approach he had with the instrument, he replied:

The first approach was visual (to the *'ūd 'arbī*). The template and the decorations on it are peculiar and have something medieval and hypnotic about them. At the sight of the instrument we are already projected into Andalusia or to Andalusian Tunisia. It is therefore the testimony to an era. (Interview, Yasin, email, 24-11-2017).

The *'ūd 'arbī* decorative materials, as we are going to see, sometimes intersect sight with sound, thereby shaping images and ideas about the instrument's identity.

In November 2016, I decided to move to Sfax in search of other *'ūd 'arbī* players, who would help me explore issue of sounds not through the medium of recordings but rather through sight, by touching and playing. At dusk one Saturday that month, I had an appointment made through Facebook with Muḥammad Dammāk, who had continuously posted photos of himself with his Tunisian *'ūd* in earlier months. Muḥammad is a Sfax-based *'ūd* player, teacher and doctoral student at the ISM of Sfax. Although that evening Muḥammad was a little wary of me, a foreigner looking so hard to find an instrument, he brought his *'ūd* to show me and played an *istikhbār* in mode *dhīl*, going on to tell me about his idea of the sound of this Tunisian instrument.

Muḥammad's involvement with *'ūd 'arbī* began with research work for his master studies, which as I point out throughout the thesis, is common to many *'ūd 'arbī* players. Muḥammad's approach to the *'ūd 'arbī* had mainly been technical and from a player's point of view. His master's degree ended with a recital in the Institute in 2009 when he performed an instrumental form, a *bashraf*, as a presentation of the instrument and demonstration of its sound and potential. According to Muḥammad, the instrument has to be found in *mālūf* ensembles, complementing violins, percussions and *'ūd*-in esembles. The sound, its different nuances from other *'ūd*-s, are also one reason why Muḥammad focused on this instrument in his career.

Muḥammad owns a fine *'ūd* made by Jandoubī in the same year of his examination recital. The Iraqi Muḥammad Ḥassān Najmī, *'ūd* teacher of the ISM of Sfax, encouraged Muḥammad to take up this traditional Tunisian instrument and do some research on it. It is peculiar and significant that a foreigner from Iraq should point out the need for Tunisians to re-appropriate their local instruments and eventually to revive them. But this instrument, he says, "has something different, it sounds different". After playing an improvisation, Muḥammad focused on the difference between the two Oriental and Tunisian instruments, though he did not have the first one with him, as if the standard starting point must be the former without which the latter could not have existed or at least be understood. For him, this Oriental *'ūd* use also explains why the instrument has never been an

obligation or at least a specific choice instrument at the ISM of Sfax or other official institutions, forcing aficionados to learn mostly by listening and nowadays watching online videos. By whom? The Gharsa Family, needless to say. Muḥammad places the power of his experience with this instrument in the listening to sound and sonority it produces, in contrast with the everyday Oriental, Iraqi and Turkish ones:

"The timbre (*ṭab'*, *saūt*) of the Tunisian *'ūd* is special, what's beautiful is that its register is very high due to its smaller body. Sol *yakāh* and do *raṣd*, for example, played on the fifth string, important for every player who ends a phrase in the lower register, do not exist. This is what is difficult and at the same time interesting and fascinating. The fact that in the mode *raṣd dhīl*, or *dhīl*, when playing the tetrachord *mḥair 'irāq* on the note sol *yakāh* you have to go higher playing sol *nawā* instead, because you don't have that string, it forces you to constantly transpose your phrasing. An odd practice initially, which seems unnatural to the ear." (Interview Muḥammad Dammāk, 20-11-2016, Sfax)

The resulting sound from this higher pitch phrasing, the continuous combinations and apparently sudden shifts from one register to another, is what attracted him most, especially the fact that it is very different from what we are used to with other *'ūd*-s styles. Dammāk introduced me to the idea of timbre as interchangeable with sound for the *'ūd 'arbī*. The sound of the *'ūd* is perceived as two plucked strings stroked by a plectrum through resonating woods, the timbre is effected by tunings, combinations of materials and ways of production, all of which characterise the sound. In *al-Aghānī al-Tūnisiyya*, in describing the Tunisian *'ūd*, Rezgui specifies that it is different in *timbre* from the Oriental *'ūd* (1989, [1968]: 58). In defining timbre, Dammāk uses variously the word *ṭab'a* (sing.), which also refers to the mode of the Tunisian modal system, and to the expression *saūt*, which means sound. As mentioned in the Introduction of this thesis, the North Africa modes system *ṭubū'a* (plur.) defines Tunisian as "Maghrebian". Guettat interprets it as the recalling of identity, a modal system, and a form of improvisation (Guettat, 1980: 278). This term, *ṭab'a*, is traditionally also used for timbre by players, or when indicating a special sound effect. Therefore, timbre is one aspect of the *'ūd 'arbī*'s sound as being identifiably Tunisian - soon recognised as specific to a culture and a territory - and it is obtained through certain hand movements governed by the instrument's tuning.

The constant transposing of phrasing and shifts of registers that Muḥammad Dammāk highlights characterise the right hand strokes, up and down along the octave strings, as well as the left hand movements along the neck to give a high pitch sound to the phrasing line. Those gestures generate the sound that is enhanced by the sense of "sight" in musical performance. Dammāk affirms that those awkward gestures "seem unnatural to the ear", therefore the relation between hearing and sight correspond in a unique sound result. The octave tuning of the *'ūd 'arbī* (see chapter 2), in particular, forces the gesture that is in turn imprinted in the sound. Perhaps one of the most important features of the *'ūd 'arbī*'s sound is that it embodies the possibilities of two dimensions concerning right

and left hand movements: the manner of strokes production with the plectrum and the position of hands on the neck due to the inverse tuning. The former gives an image of an unusual timbre effect; the latter is an image of the sound almost compressed into set gestures. Therefore, the *'ūd 'arbī* can be also defined by its sounding gesture of the hands.

Similarly, when I met Muḥammad Bouzguenda, the *'ūd* player of the Rashīdīa of Monastir, he also underlined the importance of the *timbre* in understanding the Tunisian *'ūd 'arbī* sound. He introduced me to the term that is a metaphor for *timbre*, namely *lahja*, which is rendered by the resonating octave tuning, and is mostly limited to a Tunisian repertory, indicating its rhythmical African beating strokes. *Lahja* is a linguistic term which denotes the nuances of dialects pronunciations. To obtain the *lahja* on the *'ūd 'arbī* is what often makes this instrument difficult to play for players of a standard *'ūd*. "To achieve the *lahja*, if we play a Tunisian song, we do it directly with the Tunisian *'ūd*", its "dialectic sound" already exists in the tuning, but the left hand shifts and right hand strokes you make are also crucial, Bouzguenda told me after playing an improvisation with his *'ūd 'arbī* made in Sfax by the maker Reqīq. To distinguish the *lahja* you need careful listening and the player must pay attention to the relation between phrase listening and view fingering. As Bouzguenda showed me, the most common fingering mistake of *'ūd sharqī* players playing the *'ūd 'arbī*, is playing the note D first position on the string C *kerdēn*, instead of using the open D third string. In this way, he explained, the octaves tuning loses its effect and the *lahja* is lost.

How something sounds also depends upon what touches or comes into contact with it to generate the sound (Connor, 2004). The *rīsha* presents a particularly complex and fascinating "tactile landscape" (see Connor, 2004: 165) in terms of the different shapes, material and texture that combine to produce sound. There are *rīsha*-s made of tortoise shell, bull-horn and original eagle feathers. The ones used to play the *'ūd 'arbī* both in Tunisia and Algeria, are usually longer than standard Oriental *'ūd* plectra. The reason is that right hand up and down strokes are different in terms of plectrum position and tremolo techniques. The role of notions such as traditional and authentic types of plectrum are also particularly striking. Plastic *rīsha*-s seem alien among *'ūd 'arbī* players, and the example below of the player Gargourī can be seen as an exception. The hardness of the bull-horn plectrum, for instance, its durability and the more sensitive final portion of these long *rīsha*-s, make them seem older and closer to authentic "sound" and *lahja*. Zīād Gharsa, for instance, is always seen (in videos) playing official concerts with an original long eagle feather.

The choice of *rīsha*-s for *'ūd 'arbī* players is connected to understanding its elasticity in relation to the length and hand position. The *rīsha* dramatises the contrast between the robust materiality of the *'ūd 'arbī* (see chapter 3) and the hard touch to stroke the strings. The hard stroke of *'ūd 'arbī* players has often been associated with the materiality and weight of the instrument, the heavy body and rural "voice" adapting well to open-air performance (Guettat, 2000). There is also a crafting dimension, too: the hardened "voice" is intrinsic to the material, whereas the form and length of the

rīsha are shaped by the player. According to 'Ayādī, Mehdī and Gharsa, *rīsha*-s should be rounded on the playing edge and two and half times longer than the palm of one's hand. The *rīsha* is not involved in producing all the timbre and nuances, but the stopping and stroking of all courses together and the hard rhythmical accents up and down along the strings always seems to involve what many players define as the "joyful, harmonious" touch, that is a quality of *'ūd 'arbī*'s sound. For many players, this is obtained by a long *rīsha* held between the index and middle finger, which is positioned to face the strings. Importantly, this style of touch of the strings is not lateral or smoothly done, but rather it is frontal to them and therefore heavy, earthy. In this case, there is much more material of the *rīsha* to pass on to the next stroked string.

In terms of cultural meanings rather than the object's quality, Ḥassen Gargourī, a Sfaxian amateur *'ūd 'arbī* player, is not particularly concerned about the instrument he plays, and Gharsa's authentic touch does not interest him at all. Ḥassen uses a long piece of plastic as *rīsha*, a sort of elastic strip. This strip is unique in its genre, and no one else that I know plays any *'ūd*-s with such an object in Tunisia. It is a compromise of having a long thin piece, which imitates the form of the traditional bone/feather *rīsha* used everywhere by Constantine players, but at the same time less expensive and readily available. However, Ḥassen is adamant about the right hand movement he has to make with such a plectrum, not the actual sound the object makes or helps to make. The technical concern about the *rīsha*, analysed so far, its length, for example, tends to become something more abstract, sometimes for aesthetic reasons. While the material of the plectrum lies within the sound-touch relation highlighted by Connor (2004: 154), a long *rīsha* and hearing a good *'ūd 'arbī* sound are central to the sound-sight relation instead, where the evidence of sight in this case acts to fix, characterise and complete the evidence of sound. These applications of the *rīsha* may be seen both as a primary way to the medium of touch in *'ūd 'arbī* sound identification - because the most proximate, medium of sensory contact between the instrument and players' hands - and as a refining of the body's hearing-touching circuitry that distinguish the *'ūd 'arbī*'s sound to that of other *'ūd*-s.

In this respect, it seems that the knowledge *'ūd 'arbī* players have of other *'ūd* types becomes crucial to understanding the instrument's sound. Whether aesthetic or more useful, playing the oriental *'ūd* before approaching the Tunisian one can help improve a player's skill, but it is clear that apart from strictly technical motivations other qualities are also important. The question here can be rephrased as: for a Tunisian *'ūd sharqī* player, how is the "sound" of the *'ūd 'arbī* understood? When I asked Basēm 'Affēs, a young *'ūd* virtuoso and teacher based in the town of Soussa, about playing Tunisian music on the oriental *'ūd*, he explained "it is possible to play the notes of the Tunisian mode *mazmūm* on the oriental *'ūd*, but to get the Tunisian sound you have to imitate the *'ūd 'arbī* technique of playing as close as possible". The emphasis on the technique of playing is at stake here. While hearing the note F of the mode *mazmūm* provides intensity of the sound rather than its specificity, the hearing seems incomplete and questionable without the determination of the sense of touch (Connor,

2004). As we have seen, the "touch" is a consequence of many elements - body form, neck size, spaces among the strings, use of the plectrum - that coalesce into a specific *'ūd 'arbī's* timbre-sound.

This sense of touch came out in a conference paper titled "The struggle of teaching Tunisian music with the *'ūd sharqī*", which Basēm presented at the music conference "La Musique du Maghreb entre apprentissage et transmission" held at the ISM of Soussa in March 2017. He was asking two main questions: can we apply *'ūd 'arbī* techniques to the *'ūd sharqī*? How can we use the *'ūd sharqī* to play Tunisian music in the *'ūd 'arbī* style? During the session, Basēm played some examples with his oriental *'ūd*. He compared the two instruments, playing *'ūd 'arbī* right hand techniques with the oriental *'ūd*. He gave the example of playing the different stroke types of the plectrum, and the effects of moving between high and low registers considering the octave tuning of the Tunisian *'ūd*. Although I felt a change in the sonority of the instrument, he concluded the performance playing similar sound effects that can be obtained on the oriental *'ūd*. Those effects imitate the *lahja*, that special dialect linguistically or a sound effect musically of Tunisian styles. Basēm discussed in an interview with me some days after the conference what most Tunisian oriental *'ūd* players agree about the *'ūd 'arbī*, namely, the *'ūd sharqī* has greater technical potential than the *'ūd 'arbī*, but different sound effects. Hence, "you can play all that is performed on the *'ūd 'arbī* with it, but not the other way around", he concluded at the conference. The obvious question was why use the *'ūd 'arbī*? "Because the sound is different", he answered. Basēm admitted that applying *'ūd 'arbī* techniques is not a definitive solution, that in truth the oriental *'ūd* cannot really equal the sound of the Tunisian but that it is rather a mere "imitation" of it.

Considering Connor's idea (2004: 153) of the "predominating sense", whose close inspection reveals that this predominating sense is in fact being shadowed and interpreted by other, what he defines "dormant senses", like touch and sight in this case, it is possible to argue that experiencing *'ūd 'arbī's* sound consists of multiple intersensorial actions and that it establishes strong bonds of identity with those senses and associated organs. The more we concentrate on hearing its sound, the more it will implicate other senses and their complexity. As we have seen, hearing the *'ūd 'arbī* sound becomes less and less "pure", where touching the instrument also accompanies, doubles and performs the sound of it (2004: 154). To look intently at the instrument is to grasp the timbre of an era, or the *lahja* of a language. To be surrounded by its sound, is to be moved by its *rīsha-s'* touches; to hear the stroke is to see the long plectrums. To conclude, the *'ūd 'arbī* is an object whose apparatus (decorations, strings, plectrums, weights), implicate a complex sense introspection to support and supply a notion of sound where each sense threads through all the other modes of sensory apprehension.

"Sounding Tunisian", What does the 'ūd 'arbī's Sound Mean?

When listening to the numerous recordings at the CMAM sound archive in search of the 'ūd-s 'arbī presence in the ensembles, I concentrated on the special resonating effects its timbre produces to distinguish the instrument. I focused on the high pitch the instrument can reach to discern the *lahja*, *rīsha* timbre, and the sounds players have described to me. Building on notions analysed in the previous section, I began asking what their purposes were and what they mean to players and aficionados. As Regula Qureshi has demonstrated, instruments can *mean* (1997: 2). Their sound can immediately evoke specific experiences, and the instrument may turn out to be a potent icon of both social practice and personal experience. Cornelia Fales goes further in proposing the notion of "timbre" as a "double medium", "a place holder for some absent entity" (Fales, 2002: 91): as in other contexts it may represent a sound of the ancestor, a sound of nature (see Browning)³² etc. The 'ūd 'arbī's sound, for instance, is an expression of "Tunisian/African sound", its identity, which makes sense of the relationship between the instrument and society. According to Labelle, "sounds open up a field of interaction, to become a channel a fluid, a flux of voice" (Labelle, 2010: xvii). As I go on to explore, for Tunisians, the 'ūd 'arbī's sound opens up particular intimate feelings. With this, I entered a distinct sound world ranging from the metaphors of "moments of family conviviality", to childhood memories, smells of places, or the sound that conveys "harmony" and "joy", to sounds that account for the illusion of hearing a diva's "voice", a sound that is intimately connected to the object of the instrument itself.

For Muḥammad Dammāk, for instance, the reference to a "Tunisian sound", namely the sound of the Tunisian *lahja*, is constant, as it helps make sense of the varied characteristics of the Tunisian 'ūd, so highlighting its specificity. Muḥammad holds a course in singing and playing at the ISM of Sfax in which he uses the oriental 'ūd to show examples and accompany the voices. He practices the Tunisian 'ūd a couple of hours every week to keep up for this course when needed. In fact, when he has to demonstrate which is a Tunisian rather than Egyptian song, for example, he teaches that song on the Tunisian 'ūd to fascinate and stimulate students to its sound, a Tunisian sound for a Tunisian song, sung in Tunisian dialect. Their reaction? Apart from agreeing that the instrument seems difficult to play, Muḥammad mentioned that "it is one of astonishment, as if they already had its sound and meaning conserved inside themselves", a sound of memory. A similar reaction was noted by the player Zīēd Mehdī in some of his 'ūd courses in several Tunisian private conservatoires of the capital during summer 2017 and in Paris. Considering Boym's idea that "shared everyday frameworks of collective or cultural memory offer us signposts for individual reminiscences that could suggest multiple

³² Browning J. *Cosmopolitan natures: Music, Materiality and Place in the Global Shakuhachi Scene*. PhD. Thesis, SOAS University of London, 2014.

narratives" (Boym, 2001: 53), I am interested here in narratives that help understand the meaning of the *'ūd 'arbī's* sound as a "Tunisian sound".

So what are these meanings that people refer to, or the identity that they feel through the sound of the instrument? I have explored this question among musicians, *mālūf* aficionados and amateurs of the Tunisian community in Paris, particularly within the music association called "Mālouf Tunisien". I have decided to focus on this association in Paris because they give an overview on the instrument's identity both from within and outside as it is made up of people that travel continuously to and fro from Paris to their homelands. They seemed able to deal with both perspectives, as native insiders, as well as taking a distance from their culture. Faraḥ, for instance, one of the *'ūd 'arbī* players of the group, is a medical science researcher at the University of Paris, highly intellectual. She has her grandparents back in Tunisia whom she visits regularly. She plays a modern *'ūd 'arbī* made by the maker Ṭwīrī, which belongs to the association, and attended Mehdī's first Tunisian *'ūd* course (2017-2018) in Paris. For Faraḥ, the *'ūd 'arbī's* timbre is particular in its relation between high pitch and sentiments of joy:

"I am not able to describe it in one word: a sound at once fine, acute, and harmonious. The potentialities are limited in notes but enriched in chords possibilities. The strings are metallic so the sound is refined. In a troupe, the sound comes out very easily, piercing and pleasant by the harmonics of the tuning. It is in this particularity that I see a Tunisian side, finely disclosed in its harmonious and joyful aspects". (Interview Faraḥ Oueshtati, 3-2-2017, Paris).

In her description, she explains both the intimate feelings the timbre's high pitch induces to her ears such as finesse and acuteness, and what it can mean on the Tunisians' side - harmony and joyful sound- which, as I explained in the introduction, are ways and sentiments by which people experience *mālūf* in Tunisia. Today, the "Mālouf Tunisien" is the landmark group in Paris among the other three Tunisian associations: *ṭārab*, *Fundou*, and *Club of Malouf* of Sīrīne Ben Mūsā. The first two ensembles do not perform *nūba-s* but popular songs, and Ben Mūsā's association is only a school of *mālūf*, which does not perform publically. Particularly within the Parisian-Tunisian community, sound mainly acts as a powerful imaginary that provides ways of engaging with a distant musical tradition.

This association gathered spontaneously for the first time in 2009 to share the passion for Tunisian music among a group of a few aficionados. A general assembly on the 29th September of 2012 made it official and to date the association has more than thirty musicians, all living in Paris, both professionals and amateurs, whose aim is to preserve and promote the Tunisian musical heritage. In their words, they want: "to participate in the renaissance of a forgotten cultural domain which contributes to our identity" (Aḥmad Ridhā 'Abbēs - founder and director, 26-04-2014). *Mālūf*, especially the thirteen *nūba-s*, are their main interest within Tunisian music repertory. Other musical forms such as: *Foundous*, *Azjāl*, *Mouachchahāt*, *Bachāref*, *Samā'iyāt*, old songs interpreted by Ṭahār Gharsa, Shubeīla, 'Ulaīa, are also considered important. Through varied activities of teaching *mālūf*

music in regular meetings, performing and recording, what they pursue is along the lines of other similar, older or even more recent groups working in Tunisia, such as: Rashīdīa of Tunis, Soussa, Monastir, (*Les Jeunes du Maluf Tunisien*), and *Association Carthage de Malouf et Musique Tunisienne* of Zīād Gharsa.

I met the founder Aḥmad Ridhā ‘Abbēs at his place in Paris a few days after some rehearsals at the *Maison de Tunisie* for a concert in 2015. Ridhā's apartment number 10 at *place Pierre Mendès-France* was actually the home of the association. As I entered, I soon felt that the place was the link holding the people together, even through long periods of separation, making them accept each other's stories, feelings and beliefs. Ridhā, the ‘ūd player (oriental), the driving force of the group, does not play the ‘ūd ‘arbī at all, but an ‘ūd ‘arbī was there for the association with all its potent symbolic meanings, surrounded by small Tunisian flags stuck on a window cupboard. It was that kind of inexpensive ‘ūd ‘arbī sold in shops of the Sfax's Medina. Ridhā was checking the recordings of the group on his laptop he had prepared for me to listen, and he sat on the chair around a table on which there were photos and booklets of concerts. He put on their interpretation of the song *Nā‘ūra Ṭubū‘a*, a voyage among the Tunisia modes, which is a medley of bits and sections from the circle of *nūba*-s. Perhaps Ridhā wanted to introduce me to that world of sound, descriptive of all Tunisian modal nuances, or he aimed at highlighting its highly symbolic meaning for Tunisians. "We perform it in every concert we do", he interrupted. "With it we enter Tunisia", he continued. I felt that for Ridhā that "Tunisian sound" we were listening to acted as a sentiment of loss and nostalgia. In Boym's view (2001), nostalgia remains an intermediary between collective and individual memory.

However, an instrument's sound is intrinsic to the music and the repertory performed. Tunisian ‘ūd ‘arbī announces itself by its inescapable, rhythmical style. In *mālūf* music, which consists of several set rhythmical metres such as: *tawq* 3/4, *khatm* 6/8, *m'ṣaddar* 6/4, etc., the ‘ūd ‘arbī's role is to keep the compounded rhythms going robustly. Once, I heard the historical recording of *Nā‘ūra Ṭubū‘a* made by the orchestra and choir of the Tunisian radio. The ‘ūd was played by Khamaīs Tārnan. But each time I listened to it anew, I grew increasingly aware of something close to Ridhā's enjoyment. I began paying attention in order to pinpoint it. Finally, I figured out what it was that jarred my ear. It was the various effects of contrast and symmetry among each modal phrase and each rhythmic section of the song, the continuous shift from the slow tempo parts in 4/2, for example, to the ending section in rapid 2/4 tempo throughout the entire performance. The ‘ūd ‘arbī of Tarnān, as a plucked instrument, struck heavily, had such a prominent role in this recording, highlighting an iconic sound of Tunisian music.

Aḥmad Ridhā ‘Abbēs migrated from the city of Monastir to Paris in the 1970s, where he worked in hotels. Ridhā was not typical: his family was back in Tunisia, his interest went beyond merely working, he was passionate about art and especially about music. In Monastir, he had left an ensemble of Tunisian music called *fırqa Shabēb*, which participated at the prestigious Testour Festival

back in the early 1970s. As some photos showed, his first notable musical activity in Paris came about in the context of early music revival in 1976. French, in this case, and Arab musicians gathering together to perform any kinds of music from medieval sources, were trying to find common features between Western and Oriental music. After a period of illness and pause from music until the 1990s, "I felt the need to do something again" Ridhā told me. He continued slowly: "it was nostalgic and strong, and that's when I looked back to my early music paths with *mālūf*"; "initially my house was the place for spontaneous musical evenings of singing and eating together, then it became the headquarters of the association".

I have encountered this practice elsewhere in Tunisia, which I suggest demonstrates the distinctive, personal ways in which a collective discourse is elaborated by individuals. According to Boym, collective memory is understood as the common landmarks of everyday life (Boym, 2001: 53), it constitutes a shared social framework of individual recollections that are different from national memory, even when they share images and contents, and it allows one to describe the phenomenology of human experience. I argue that Ridhā's musical practice, situated in domestic intimate spaces (without costumes), provokes and enacts the "Tunisian sound". It sustains strongly felt sentiments and anxieties about one's homeland, but without involving a somehow bizarre juxtaposition of past and future, images of pre-modern and modern concerned with the loss of an enchanted world, with the Arab Andalusian medieval culture, and with issues of nationalism.

In search of other narratives of sound, after that initial occasion, I visited the association in Paris several times for special events and performances, although the members meet regularly every Sunday afternoon. Since 2014, they have recorded (DVD) and performed three *nūba*-s (*dhīl* and *ramal*) from the Tunisian musical heritage, and they are currently learning *Nūba Ḥasīn*. I attended Gharsa's visits to the association in February 2017, and that rehearsal somehow seemed to throw a light on everything around this aspect of my research and into my thinking. The three days of class and the final concert were a special experience for 'Abbēs and his group. Everyone attended, and being taught *mālūf* by Zīād Gharsa was of considerable importance considering the goals of the association. When performing abroad, Zīād brings his *'ūd 'arbī* with him. Even for me, that meeting was highly significant as it was one of the few times during my doctorate that I listened to Gharsa again playing his *'ūd*, singing and teaching on it. As Labelle emphasises, "sounds route the making of the identity by creating a greater and more suggestive wave between self and surrounding" (Labelle, 2010: xxi). It felt like the instrument increases its symbolic power, when it appears abroad. The last evening of the final concert the *'ūd* sounded powerful to me, and many of those I interviewed, including Ridhā, told me that, in the hands of Gharsa, it recalled the "motherland Tunisia".

After that event, I interviewed Dhikra, a member of the association, several times during 2017, when she began the *'ūd 'arbī* course in Paris. She told me that the first time Zīād presented this instrument, she found it exceptional. What intrigued her most was the number of strings were less

than that of the oriental *'ūd*. The different playing techniques and ornamentations made her realise that it is a different instrument. She continued:

"I came to know the *oud tounsi* when I started taking Oriental *oud* classes two years ago. We played Arabian-Andalusian and Tunisian songs but the sound we were making was different from the original pieces I knew. At that time, I thought it was because of the old types of recordings, the quality etc. I used to listen to. Only after a few times did I realise that it was the *oud tounsi* that changes the overall sound of the songs and that a melody played with the *oud tounsi* sounded more Tunisian to me". (Interview, Dhikra, e-mail, 25-05-2017)

She particularly recalled, Dhikra told me, a historical recording made by the orchestra and choir of the Tunisian radio titled "The Tunisian *mā'lūf*" (1959), *nūba* in the mode *dhīl* - the *'ūd* played by the legendary musician Khamaīs Tarnān - and she added that any song sung in Tunisian has the same effect. "Take for example *Yā marḥāban bi-aūlēd sīdī* by Ṭahār Gharsa, there is not a wedding or party in Tunisia that doesn't begin with this song". It is a remarkable way in which recordings create an intimate territory for a sound to be internalised and recognised each time it is heard again. According to Labelle, the dynamic of auditory knowledge creates shared spaces that belong to no single individual and yet which impart a feeling for intimacy. In Labelle's words, "sound is always already mine and not mine" (Labelle, 2010: xvii). Dhikra further explained to me what that sound means to her personally:

"To me, it evokes convivial moments in Tunisia. The singularity of the sound transports me to emotional moments related to Tunisia or life in Tunisia. You can imagine the *oud tounsi*'s sound accompanying a family reunion at their grandparents' house, a Medina festival of Ramadan, concerts of the Rashīdīa, of *mālūf* events at the municipal theater, or an evening of oral poetry at the *Bir Lahjar (Lahjār)* cultural center etc. All moments that can only be experienced in Tunisia."

Similarly, Ḥafedh (Ḥafaz), another student of Mehdī's course in Paris, provides insights into his experience with the instrument when recounting his childhood memories of the *'ūd 'arbi*'s sound:

"What pushed me to discover the world of *oud tounsi* is its sound. Since the beginning, I felt it was very familiar to me, since I often heard it when I was little, but without really knowing the instrument. I have scattered memories of music evenings in Sidi Bou Said and La Marsa with my parents or at the Festival of Carthage with my uncle when I was ten. At some point as a teenager, I thought it was the oriental *oud* tuned differently. When I hear it today, I get transported to Tunisia. Personally the sound reminds me of my childhood, where I grew up, lots of beautiful memories. So for me it's not just a beautiful musical instrument but more, it's part of the Tunisian musical identity." (Interview, messenger, Ḥafedh, 24-11-2017).

Not only does the *'ūd 'arbi*'s sound evoke a Tunisian identity, but it enriches its complexity through narratives of places, sites and itineraries. It recalls Labelle's notion of "acoustic territories" in which sound creates a relational geography that is most often emotional, fluid and "that moves in and out the

body providing intimacy" (Labelle, 2010: xxv). "Today, it happens to me every time I listen to an old song in Tunisian", Ḥafedh concluded.

Within the Mālouf Tunisien Paris, Zīēd Mehdī is another example who goes beyond the stereotypical player. Zīēd was born in 1991, he is qualified in economy and management, and a passionate and prolific *ūd* player. When a student at the ESCP Europe Business school of Paris, he regularly spent his holidays in Tunisia, passing most of the time at *mālūf* festivals, among *ūd* makers and practicing his technical skills. Zīēd gave his first concert at the Rashīdīa Institute with the *ūd 'arbī* during the Tarnimāt Ramadan festival in 2017, performing a repertory centered on the instrument. Today, he works in Paris, where he also regularly attends the association and teaches the *ūd 'arbī*. Zīēd's class has up to ten students, all Tunisians-Parisians, most of them beginners or amateurs, who have commissioned new *ūd*-s from the makers in Tunisia: Bēlaṣfar, Ṭwīrī and Meher. Significant here it is not just the substantial number of participants which outdoes that of any music institutes in Tunisia for this instrument, but the fact that many of those students are a unique example of players who have approached the *ūd 'arbī* - its tuning, the *rīsha* gestures, touch and left hand movements - without having any prior knowledge of the oriental *ūd*. Their approach to the instrument sound is therefore not biased by other *ūd*-s experiences.

Zīēd owns four *ūd*-s *'arbī*, two original Muḥammad Bēlaṣfar *ūd*-s of 1964 and 1974 and two Hedī Bēlaṣfar's *ūd*-s *'arbī* of 2009 and 2015. This last is the third copy (the other two are held by CMAM and Gharsa) of the *ūd* Bēlaṣfar made on the basis of Rashīd Sellamī's measurements of the Ibnū Ṭaḥan manuscript. Of the four, Zīēd does not have a chosen one, and he is always in search of historical *ūd*-s *'arbī* to try out and to compare their sound to the modern models. He is obsessed by the sound this instrument makes, talking about it as "sounding Tunisian", about the way its sound evokes and identifies his culture. The first time Zīēd talked about sound to me, it was in Tunis at his house in the summer 2015. He played a chord on the *ūd 'arbī* and said, "listen to how it sounds Tunisian". That night I did not fully grasp what he meant, I was focused on the music and staring at his hands on the instrument. But I have spent as much time in Paris as in Tunisia with Zīēd that clearly sound appears to me as an overt theme in Zīēd's attitude to music with the *ūd*. For Zīēd:

"Listening to the *oud arbi's* sound you feel an amazing commotion that carries you away to another time and place. You feel like you are traveling back in time and space, strolling far away in the old medina of Tunis and Sidi Bou Said, probably because for me they are my favorite places in Tunisia and they are a kind of anchorage to where I want to be, and they make me feel a sensation of freshness and joy". (Interview Zīēd Mehdī. Tunis, 18-6- 2017).

The interpretation of the *khatam ramal*, incipit *Yā 'Ashiqīn dhāka al-sh'ar*, for instance, that he performed for me in his apartment in Paris, points to a specific intimacy. Like many of his feelings, it was richly embedded in homeland memories, incorporating sounds that seemed moods in the timbre

and expressed in structural intervals of the melodic line of the song. It all suggests that Zīēd proves that playing the *ūd* *arbī* causes mutable forms of evocating Tunisian culture.

We went to his place after a rehearsal session of the group at the Tunisian cultural centre of Paris in winter 2015 because I wanted to learn some pieces. So I made a video as a tutorial for me. But when back home and starting to learn the song, something in Zīēd's interpretation sounded different on comparing it with other recordings. The song in question is the fast and last section *khatam* of the *nūba* in mode *raṣd dhīl*. The conclusion of the suite is always lively and cheerful, here the lyrics speak of love and poetry, with an accelerating tempo that reaches the very end of the suite. The first time I listened to this piece was the first ever recorded interpretation of it at the Cairo Congress of 1932, the *ūd* player was Tarnān and the melodious high pitch singing was by Muḥammad Ghanem. That evening, Zīēd's attitude towards sound matched the musical structure inherent in the piece well. He played it slowly, in a more melancholy manner, discerning its nuances of sound carefully. His sound functioned as a central cross-sensory metaphor for connecting words, sound and practices, yielding insights into the *ūd*'s felt relationship with its Tunisianness.

I asked Zīēd why he played that piece such a way and in *ramal mēya* mode instead of the Cairo congress recording in *raṣd dhīl* mode. For him, to perform a phrase common to several *nūba*-s and to change some intervals is common practice among musicians in *mālūf*, concluding that "it sounds different and more Tunisian to me". Yet the sentiment of belonging to a place, becomes more intimate in this example, seemingly independent from historical recordings. The sound assumes emotions in which Zīēd recalls his native land in his mind. More broadly, it brings us to reflect on sound in relation to "mental habitus" (*mentaliy*) defined as "what is conceived and felt, the field of emotion" (Boym, 2001: 54).

I was not entirely convinced so that evening I asked what he really meant by "sounding Tunisian". He played the chord I'd heard for the first time the previous summer in Tunis again, an odd interval combination (D, d, b half-flat, c), which I had never seen in Arab music before. Zīēd said, "the sound of the Tunisian *ūd* is round, bewitching and sparkling", highlighting the third string pitch of note d. He played all the four courses together as a guitar chord type of effect, positioning the third finger on the note b half-flat on the second string. "You see, when Gharsa takes a Tunisian *ūd*, this is the first thing he plays, I have seen him doing it many times." Then Zīēd showed me that from that chord you can develop phrasing to many musical motifs and modulations throughout the *ṭubū'a*. You can take directions to the Tunisian *raṣd dhīl*, for instance, from the note G (*nawā*), or focus on the modes that are based on the *mḥaīr* (D high) and *dūka* (D lower) notes such as: *aṣba'in*, *ḥasīn*, *ramal mēya*, *aṣbahān*, *mḥaīr sikāh*.

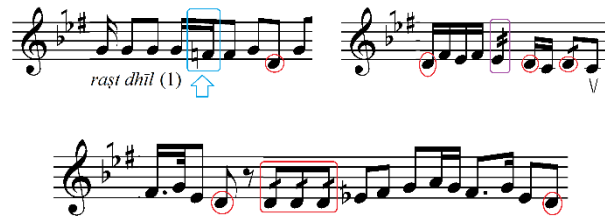


Figure 26. NOTES FROM WHICH TO MODULATE.

As I continued with my research, meeting other players and comparing information with Gharsa's opinion of the *ūd 'arbī* sound, I realised that to obtain a "pure" sound in order to evoke absent and intimate feelings of Tunisian life means that you have to be able to command these Tunisian musical phrasings. This means being able to apply what Gharsa calls "*tubū'a-cliché*" or rather I would say "timbre-cliché". They are slurs, false notes, pivotal intervals embedded in the modal structure but rendered "Tunisian" by the sound result which only the *ūd 'arbī* can give. As As'ad Zūarī (2006) and others have shown (Maknī, 1998; Plenckers, 2002; Zūarī M., 2014), in the *tubū'a* the "scale" is not essential to their definition but rather to the musical motifs and their specific formulas based on notes to rest on and from which to modulate. The following incipit of a prelude improvisation in *raşd dhīl* recorded by Ṭahār Gharsa³³, also performed similarly to me by his son Zīād in his *mālūf* club, and discussed with Mehdī in another of our meetings, is an example of these clichés.



Figure 27. INCIPIIT OF THE PRELUDE IMPROVISATION IN RAŞD DHĪL RECORDED BY ṬAHĀR GHARSA.

In this famous incipit, the embellished notes played fast with slurs and the combination of the open strings G and E, second and fourth strings, concluding on the lower string D octave, sounds Tunisian, Mehdī once told me. The open strings, generally, create a "bright" sound effect, what Mehdī indicates as the "sparkling" sound. "This is the sound of *sheykh* Ṭahār Gharsa's voice, which is the "voice" of *mālūf*." Further, a particular plectrum touch, for example, which consists of a long light tremolo *ferdēsh* in standard *ūd* practices, is rendered instead on the *ūd 'arbī* by energetic, fast triplet (down-up-down) strokes interrupted by a pause between each of them. It is often used as descending cadential formula, as in the following example from the Gharsa's prelude.



Figure 28. TREMOLOS EXAMPLES.

³³ *Istikhbār*, Ṭahār Gharsa, 2000 (CMAM editions)

This type of *ferdēsh* is unique to the *ūd 'arbī* and "it works well with its robust strings action and accentuated rhythmical style of Tunisian music," Zīēd explained. Furthermore, "with the *rīsha*, literally, you have to rotate between high and low pitches," he added. This means that often you must change register to complete a melodic line, because the absence of the lower C note (*raşd*).



Figure 29. LONG TREMOLO EXAMPLE.

Therefore, the "real" note played when descending to lower C is instead C *kerdēn*.



Figure 30. C - RAŞD, C - KERDĒN.

What is important is both the movement of the plectrum and the phrasing between the registers. "The movements must be harmonious so the sound is pure," he said. "By pure I mean that the sound has to recreate Tunisian situations, for me it evokes smell, *rāiḥa* - the smell of the Tunis Medina, of *shīsha*-s and jasmine," he concluded.

Within this sound world of the Tunisian *ūd 'arbī*, evocation is mediated through these iconic clichés which are invested with culturally and intimate constructed meanings. They are embedded in the Tunisian mode system and the way they are rendered on the *ūd 'arbī* endows its sound with an association of longing and nostalgia, lost memories, various aspects of Tunisian life: from joyful sentiments to a harmonious state of mind. The same sound permeates the rich and different intimate worlds of everyone who encounters it, deeply anchored in places that are the very medium of Tunisian-Arab identity.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored the notion of Tunisian sound in relation to intimate feelings of *ūd 'arbī* players and the meanings they construct. While recordings have provided most forms of listening to the *ūd 'arbī*, the experience of senses reveal interlinked sonic qualities which further disclose meanings of Tunisian identity. In the first section, given that *ūd 'arbī* published recordings are rare at the beginning of the 20th century, I have focused on searching for field recordings in order to

find out about players. The recordings discussed here support the idea that since the era of the phonograph, the Tunisian *'ūd* was a commonly used instrument. In particular, some of them support the fact that it was representing a Tunisian sound along with other instruments also in Europe. It raises debate on the scant number of players for this instrument, opening up a broader perspective on the problem, and supporting my sense that there may be a more intimate world of multiple-player activities, somewhat in the shadows, that is distinct from the official national discourse and performance world (of this, more in chapter 5).

In the second section, I explored how the application of a multiple intersensorial analysis of touch, sight and hearing (Connor, 2004) to the *'ūd 'arbī*, enhance the idea of its sound. Whereas some decorative materials evoke the sound of an ancient time, others deploy heavy and robust feelings, mainly in connection to touch and sight. Such experiences of senses, I have suggested, are contingent upon how apparatuses of the instrument (decorations, strings, plectrums, weights) support a notion of a "Tunisian sound". I have explored further the associative process of this Tunisian sound in configuring the relation with local identity and auditory memories, contributing to its meanings. From a certain perspective, *'ūd 'arbī*'s sound dominates Tunisian songs to an extent of becoming an icon of it. In this regard, it appears to coincide with aspects of stereotypes of Tunisian life and attain a particular kind of agency that is achieved, to a large degree, through musical cliché in performance. Thus, in connection to the relation between sound and identity, I have argued that in spite of certain exceptions and variations, it is one way in which the sound of the *'ūd 'arbī* enacts its "Tunisianness", becoming distinct and defining a limited metaphorical territory of Tunisian society.

FIVE

Tunisian 'Ūd 'Arbī Players: Intimacy and New Directions

In this chapter, I am specifically concerned with two main themes: the notion of *sheykh*, which has guided the 'ūd 'arbī's oral transmission; and contemporary private individuals, who are slowly freeing the instrument, on a more private and personal basis, from its position between this *sheykh* tradition and a national symbolic function (chapter 1). These accounts are based on musicians who formed a lineage of the instrument throughout the 20th century. The stories I tell about Khamaīs Tarnān, Ṭahār Gharsa and his son Zīād, create the basis to reveal the socio-cultural contexts involved in the contemporary 'ūd 'arbī scene, ranging from historical players and forgotten ones to current young self-taught students and the amateur world. In the first section, I analyse how the instrument was historically integrated in the oral music transmission, grounded in the *sheykh*'s role and give examples of this. I then analyse the case of Gharsa's family, and argue that the *sheykh* oral tradition has closed the transmission to a small circuit favouring non- institutional integration. My discussion here is framed by two key questions. First, just how is the 'ūd 'arbī outside of "official" music education? Second, how can the knowledge and practice of this Tunisian instrument be transmitted without a solid structured teaching, either in national institutions or privately?

In the second part of the chapter, I am particularly concerned with analysing how contemporary 'ūd 'arbī players, outside the instrument's public life/*sheykh* tradition, perform an "'ūd 'arbī role" encouraging the use of the instrument around the country. Here, the use and interest of the instrument take place across multiple localities and regions, from Tunis to Sfax, although in highly uneven ways. I question who plays the instrument other than Gharsa today? In what way and for what purposes? What is the relationship between the *sheykh* world and the activities of new players? How can their activities be understood in relation to the historical ones? And finally, what does this say about the identity of the instrument?

The Notion of *sheykh*, Filial Kinship and Transmission

Anīs Meddeb, professor at the Higher Institute of Music of Tunis, during one of our evening meetings at the *café de Paris* during Ramadan 2015, told me: "*Sheykh* is a master while *murīd* is a student, who learns and obeys the *sheykh* until he becomes a *sheykh* himself to transform and transfer a knowledge". We were discussing landmark figures in the world of Tunisian music. Among the most famous Tunisian musician *sheykhs*, we reeled off the names Aḥmad al-Wāfī, Aḥmad Twilī and certainly Khamaīs Tarnān. "In oral traditions that go back to pre-Islamic culture, the place of learning is the heart (*‘an dhahri qalb*), where through *al-tābit* (the 'constant') and *mutaḥawil* ('changing') exists "freedom of change within continuity", Anīs concluded. But I was soon distracted from any thoughts of knowledge and importance by a sentence that came to mind that I'd read many years earlier:

"As an oral musical tradition, the *mālūf* depended for its survival on the memories of the *sheykhs*" (Davis, 2004: 93).

In my first meetings with Dr. Ruth Davis to discuss Tunisian music during my master in 2013 at the University of Cambridge, she noted that assuming the *mālūf* is conceived as an anonymous repertoire, then the importance given to anonymity is extremely high, a prerequisite for a song to be identified with its legendary Andalusian past to be transmitted orally from the *sheykh* to the disciple. In Islamic culture the term denotes etymologically "someone whose age appears advanced and whose hair has gone white", used for a man over fifty years old (*L'A*, Beirut 1988, vii, 254; *T'A*, Cairo 1869-89, ii, 267-8). Quoting from the encyclopaedia of Islam:

"From pre-Islamic times onwards, the idea of authority and prestige has accordingly been attached to the term, so that *shaykh* is used for the chief of any human group, whether the family (al-Zabīdī states that a woman's *shaykh* is her husband, *T'A*, ii, 268), a tribe, a trade guild, etc." (Geoffroy, 2012: 397).

More recently, Glasser highlights the figure of the "hoarding *sheykh*" who carries the repertoire to his grave as an important part of the discursive project of rescuing Andalusian music in Algeria (Glasser, 2016: 10). Glasser points out the genealogical authority embodied in this authenticated master, which is part of the Andalusian musical ethos and gives value to this hoard's role (2016: 55). Further, gender issue is another important thread in the notion of *sheykh* who indisputably is gendered as male. While the concept of the *sheykh* in Glasser's sense persists today also in Tunisia, particularly in Sufi practices and carrying with it the residue of earlier formations, it seems to me that the *ūd 'arbī* currently "lives" a moment of absence of a *sheykh* figure. It brings me back to one of the initial questions of this thesis, namely whether the Tunisian *ūd* scene is truly experiencing a "cultural loss"?

The *sheykh* as an undisputable guide and honorific title to the world of *ūd 'arbī* raises questions of transmission, since historically only one master figure at the time has formally existed, and been recognised as such in official discourses. In the 20th century, the two *sheykhs* Khamaīs Tarnān

and Ṭahār Gharsa were concerned strictly with the *'ūd 'arbī*. The case of Zīād Gharsa today is distinct. His *mālūf* knowledge, his musical skills, and huge popularity, have recently afforded him a kind of agency and a *mālūf* aura of heritage largely independently of the presence and practice of the instrument. This aura, making him the "reference person" for *mālūf*, endows him with both honorific and professional titles, enhancing his cultural capital (see Glasser, 2016: 64-71). But whereas the *sheykh* role for the *'ūd 'arbī* in Tunisia was passed down in a master - apprentice relationship, as we are going to see for the case of Tarnān -Gharsa dyad, Zīād Gharsa does not develop teacher-pupil relationships in the style that did Tarnān and Gharsa, particularly regarding players outside the circle of his filial kinship. His actions affect modes and possibilities of transmission of the *'ūd 'arbī*, which would seemingly challenge the dominant discourse about the instrument's iconic power and its apparent marginalisation.

To understand the changing world of transmission, we can turn first to the landmark figures Khamaīs Tarnān and Ṭahār Gharsa, this latter perceived to have been "the last *sheykh*" of the *'ūd 'arbī*. Tarnān is the most documented Tunisian musician since the protectorate era (1881). Guettat (2005) refers to him as the leading figure and a model Tunisian musician whose fruitful artistic life has paved the way for a new and exciting Tunisian school. In 1995 at the CMAM, Tunisia paid homage to Tarnān on his centennial anniversary with a concert titled *Yā Zahraten* (Oh flower), after the name of a landmark *qaṣīda* by Tarnān (text by Muḥammad Sa'īd Khalsī) presented for the first time at the Cairo congress in 1932. An ensemble conducted by Muḥammad Sa'ada performed a *sama'ī* in mode *mazmūm* composed on occasion of his remembrance along with most other known Tarnān compositions (see booklet of the event). Tarnān came from a family of Andalusian origin in Binzert, adepts of the Sufi *'Īsāwiyya* brotherhood; he later also studied at the Islamic school (Mahdī, 1981b:14). In Tarnān's biography, al-Mahdī attests that he studied with Aḥmad al-Ṭwīlī and Muḥammad Darwīsh. He could play several instruments such as the mandolin, *qānūn* and the *'ūd sharqī*, which he then abandoned for the *'ūd 'arbī* when he moved to the capital in 1915 and became inspired by players such as Lalū Bishishi and Muḥammad al-Maghīrbī (Mahdī, 1981b:16, 17).

As we have seen in chapters one and two, Tarnān was living a music culture context centred on the Rashīdīa Institute whose aim was to consciously preserve the Tunisian music heritage. We learn from Davis of a close professional relationship between d'Erlanger and Tarnān. For her, Tarnān's image is based on the idea that during the 1930s and 1940s, artists conceived their work as a self-conscious attempt to modernise a tradition in order to continue and preserve its identity (Davis, 2004). However, music teaching was still a spontaneous activity among professionals or semi-professionals, and how and where you could become a master of *'ūd 'arbī* was not entirely clear or straightforward. People who could join in the playing following orchestral rehearsals had the chance to learn in a process of self-understanding and eventually decide to focus specifically on *mālūf* or Sufi *'Īsāwiyya* or both. As mentioned before, it is also important to note that Tarnān came from a family that

had connections with the Sufi *ʿĪsāwīyya* brotherhood. According to Myriem Akhoua, who clearly noted in her recent conference paper on the Rashīdīa Institute, this was a period of a still strong master/student relationship based entirely on oral transmission (2015). As I am going to explore, precisely this method of oral transmission of instrument practice on the *ʿūd ʿarbī* has neglected but also saved the instrument at the same time.

Tarnān's image overshadowed that of any other *ʿūd ʿarbī* players of the past, in terms of sources and documents. From my interview with the Tunisian musicologist Zūarī, current director of the ISM of Sfax, it transpires that Tarnān was immersed in the era of growing technological recordings that played an important part in his achieving stardom compared to the forgotten players mentioned above. Crucial for Tarnān was also the key role of the manager Bashīr Rasāysī, who was committed to creating a Tunisian tradition of phonographic editions. Baidaphone for example, whose task was to select the best musicians across Arab countries from East to West. Rasāysī was one of those representing the company in Tunis since 1928 and later involved in setting up labels such as Um al-Ḥsan and Rasāysī, commissioned respectively by the Pathè and Cristal companies (Louati, 2012:144). During the 1920s, while working with d'Erlanger, Tarnān was already a source for the transcriptions of the Tunisian music systems of modes made by d'Erlanger and his team of translators and musicians. As we know, Tarnān would slowly embody an image of the heritage that d'Erlanger was struggling to preserve, becoming an important consideration during the interwar period and it is possible to attest to such until today (Davis, 2004).

If the figure of Tarnān is celebrated throughout Tunisia, Ṭahār Gharsa (1933-2003), his student can be recognised as the "last" *sheykh*. As you enter the "Ṭahār Gharsa" club in the *Manzah 7* quarter of Tunis, you can see a photo poster of *Sheykh Ṭahār Gharsa* on the wall, suggesting that it is an "authentic" place and a "heritage". According to the Arab dictionary, *sheykh* is a master while *mu'allimun* is a teacher. How Ṭahār Gharsa, born on the 16th of March 1933 in the area Tourbet el-bey in the Tunis Medina, became a master of Tunisian *ʿūd* is difficult to say. The well-known story sees Gharsa studying the instrument with *sheykh* Khamaīs Tarnān and joining the Rashīdīa very young. Sketches of biographies from concert programs, academic writing (Davis, 2004) and ethnographic accounts, tell that he belonged to an important and musically influential family of the Tunis Medina. In 1956, he obtained a diploma in Arab music from the city conservatoire but he is better known as the pupil of Khamaīs Tarnān. Like many musicians of the time, he participated in Sufi brotherhood music gatherings and debuted at the Rashīdīa in 1958. During the 1960s, he formed his own ensemble based in al-Marsa and only in the 1990s did he rejoin the Rashīdīa orchestra with the purpose of renewing it. Davis reports that in the 1980s she attended Gharsa's rehearsals in his rather "private" music club (Davis, 2004:110). Eventually, it happened that only Ṭahār Gharsa's son, Zīād, had or rather was given according to many interviewers, the opportunity to learn the instrument through the master/disciple lineage Tarnān/Gharsa in that club. For Ṭahār Gharsa, it was certainly a choice to embrace the *ʿūd ʿarbī*

and continue Tarnān's traditional style almost as if he felt it a mission to preserve it and pass it on to his son.

Within this father and son musical relationship, the ways of producing and reproducing Andalusian music based on patronage, apprenticeship and discipleship, are all encompassed (see also Glasser, 2016: 79). For Zīād, his father was the co-animator of the musical discourse, procuring the paying clients for both of them. In turn, he was Zīād's master, in an artisanal apprenticeship and as a *murīd*, raising his musicianship from amateur to professionalism. Zīād often says: "No one taught me anything, I learned observing my father and the musicians around him". Players such as Zīād today and Tarnān before became known throughout the country, though they employed a range of specific Tunisian Andalusian repertoires and their fan bases relied on significant national support. As we have seen for Tarnān in chapter two, this nationalism was manifested musically, too. Tarnān appeared in portraits and performed on the *'ūd 'arbī* extensively throughout his life, and so did Ṭahār Gharsa, whereas initially Zīād Gharsa performed with *ney*, *rebēb* and *'ūd* variously beside his father, in a style closely associated with both *sheykh* Tarnān and *sheykh* Gharsa. Zīād finally established himself as the most prominent *'ūd 'arbī* player, especially after *sheykh* Ṭahār Gharsa's death in 2003.

What is actually being transmitted? For Nettl, at a simple level one may think of songs, compositions and music in general but also smaller units such as melodic or rhythmic motifs, cadence formulas, chord sequences and ornaments (Nettl, 2005:295). In Tunisian *mālūf*, most if not all, of the *istikhbār* structure is based on melodic cliché. These units shape a style, which is a general conception of music governing aesthetic values, and results in two main musical components: technique and repertoire (Nettl, 2005:295). Further and more importantly for the case of oral music traditions, transmission of music can be seen as a function of a close interpersonal relationship, where instrumental and theoretical instructions are delivered simultaneously during the encounter with the teacher. As Silver says: "the teaching of music is the creation of a complete understanding between the two [master and disciple]" (Silver, 1976:38 [quoted in Kippen, 2008:131]). In other Arab music traditions, scholars like Chabrier (2000), Poché (2001) and Ḥassān (2001), use the expression "school" as well as the term "conception" of performance to denote the existence of a common performance style of playing shared by musicians.

In my music analysis of Gharsa's versus Tarnān's practice, I found Gharsa's *'ūd* style to be in many ways more structured, almost as if it was premeditated with longer phrasing motifs, whereas Tarnān's is more subjected to an unstable extemporaneity towards unconscious basic pattern motifs (Morra, 2013). In my interviews with Zīād Gharsa, he describes Khamaīs Tarnān and Ṭahār Gharsa playing in two styles of *'ūd 'arbī* within a unique lineage: "Tarnān has created the basis for this instrument in terms of cliché phrases; his playing style was highly spontaneous and sometimes even imprecise" Zīād said to me. "He did not develop the instrumental technique much, which instead Ṭahār Gharsa did in terms of right hand stroke and left hand precision," he continued. For most researchers,

Tarnān is regarded as a fine composer, in contrast to Ṭahār Gharsa who did not “compose” new motifs within an improvised *istikhbār* but rather relied on Tarnān's ones. Zīād adds that his father's style was more logically structured and organised according to the modes theory, in his own words, “wise”. While playing he used to ponder on the motifs, segments and ornamentations at greater length, resulting in a calm and reflective style of playing. In short, as many people attested, Gharsa “polished” Tarnān's *ūd arbī* style. Within this master/pupil relationship, style is formed, maintained and eventually modified; in the case of a “primitive” Tarnān performance style, it may be claimed that his disciple Gharsa “refined” it. As a result, this discipleship helped maintain the traditional music content of the transmission largely intact; it had to be firmly kept the “same” so that the *ūd arbī* represented a national identity (Morra, 2013). Ṭahār Gharsa, the last *ūd arbī sheykh*, disappeared from the public eye at the turn of the 21st century, passing on this path to his son Zīād, a young virtuoso in his forties today.

In 1980s, the movie titled *Khémaies Ternan* by Monşif al-Kāteb, concerning the musician's life and career, text and dialogues by al-Mahdī, based on his biography of the musician, publically sanctified this lineage. Tarnān's early life at the Koran school in Binzert was interpreted by a young Zīād Gharsa. In one notable scene, he plays a melody with the *ney* that highlights their common music talent. Over the course of the meetings with the renowned *ūd arbī* player Zīād Gharsa, I learned that this “understanding between the two” in Tunisia exists widely among family members - Zīād repeatedly affirmed “no one has taught me anything, but I have always observed and listened to my father working.” It is inevitable that Zīād absorbed the repertory through living with his father, making this Gharsa *mālūf* legacy and its national implications: a family affair in the 21st century. In Arab Islamic culture, the *sheykh*, who denotes a “master” figure becomes the role model for the disciple in terms of moral and ethical integrity. In order to perpetuate the tradition, the *sheykh* embodies a music “identity” which his disciples will adopt and pass on to their disciples. The identity of his teacher, in turn, is created by the identity of his teacher back through the line. What is at stake here for the Tunisian *ūd* is that this legacy has belonged to a single family passed down orally from Khamaīs Tarnān to Ṭahār Gharsa. This knowledge, which was then (1960s) assured as a musical national identity, created recognition for the Gharsa family and an aura of crucial authenticity, respect and admiration for *sheykh* Gharsa and his son Zīād. One question that emerges is whether the family structure and its modern collapse has something to do with it.

The first time I met Gharsa in May 2013, he was reorganising his music life and about to play a concert with the famous player and singer Lutfi Bushnak in which his appearance with the *ūd* was of considerable importance. Today, Zīād Gharsa runs two private singing weekly clubs in Tunis and in La Marsa, accompanying the chorus on the electric keyboard. They perform once a year at the closing of the course on typical Tunisian historical venues such as *Ennejma Ezzahra*, *Qasr al-baladī* of Marsa. His main ensemble *Associasion Chartage de Maluf* is the largest he runs with his friends and many of his

father's faithful friends and musicians such as: 'Abd al-Bāṣṭ al-Mutshal, Ṣlaḥeddine Mana'a, the young 'ūd player Nahda, his *factotum* and singer 'Abd al-Setār al-Sedīrī etc. The full orchestra performs for important concert events in Tunisia and abroad, as well with a smaller version of it made up of eight musicians. An even smaller section with violin, piano percussions or just himself regularly appears at weddings around the country. This is a practice Gharsa increased after leaving the Rashīdīa, and marks a return to the past of his father as well as to a genuine popular function of *mālūf* recalling the Tarnān years when *mālūf* had a regular place in wedding parties, but is the most we find Gharsa on the keyboard rather than the 'ūd.

Initially, after Gharsa finished conducting the Rashīdīa orchestra in the 2012, it seemed that this leading figure left an enormous void in Tunisian music. He had been gently set aside from the institution, because he was not giving the practical support, especially in teaching, for which he was paid. The 'ūd 'arbī then was excluded from the only institution in which it was offered. Historically, Zīād's case can be seen as a dramatic cultural transformation of the aftermath of the 2011 revolution. It is a continuity of isolation for the instrument in the context of the rise of institutionalised music education after independence.

Zīād Gharsa and his aura of authenticity seem to occupy an ambivalent cultural space, somewhere between popular culture and folklore/tradition, where signs and discourses of the local and national become juxtaposed in an often striking manner. Although Zīād and his associated musical aesthetics drawn from *mālūf* often fall victim to traditional discourses and stereotypes in dominant media channels as well as in close-knit expert circuits, his visual, vocal and more importantly 'ūd 'arbī instrumental presence pervades much of everyday life in Tunisian's *mālūf* urban spaces, where its unique star is widely celebrated and often idolised. Zīād Ghara, more so than his father, seems to embody the aura of the legendary Khamaīs Tarnān, both for the mastery of 'ūd 'arbī and for the knowledge of *mālūf* repertory, although more recently the instrument seems to have been set aside. The answer has to be sought in the instrument's transmission methods and the close *sheykh* - family context. I have attended Gharsa's *mālūf* club in Tunis every week during various parts of the year: in Ramadan 2015, in November 2016, at the end of the club course in June 2017 - when each week journalists, aficionados, experts, politicians, foreign musicians passing through Tunis have come to visit the club, greeting him or just listening to his artistry in a small private/domestic space. For this same reason, at the beginning of my research I saw many young enthusiastic players asking him for lessons, master classes etc. but unfortunately with negative responses: "I am sorry, I do not give lessons," he repeated a little brusquely. Instead, Gharsa teaches the repertory through singing and more recently on the electric piano, a reason why the 'ūd 'arbī practice is transmitted with some difficulty.

I followed Gharsa in concerts from the start of my doctorate onwards, and on the 3rd of March 2017, I attended his concert at the Sfax *mālūf* festival specifically to see whether he was going to play with the 'ūd. Although the festival had fallen during the working week, several hundred people made it

out for an evening of music, listening to *mālūf* at the Jamussi theatre in Sfax. Surely because the headline act was *mālūf*'s most eminent artist, Zīād Gharsa. Zīād sat on stage with his complete orchestra. As he sang and played with his new electric keyboard, he was clad in an enormous embroidered black cloak, rather distinct from the *jūbbas* and *shēshīas* that are powerful symbols of Tunisian manhood. I thought he would not bring his *'ūd* this time, he had hinted at me as such during the rehearsals beforehand. Indeed Gharsa proceeded to play his *mālūf* repertoire accompanying himself on the keyboard.

There was another absent *'ūd* on the same evening. "I am going to play an Algerian song by the master Ṭahār Fergani," Zīād announced, offering it as a tribute to Fergani who passed away a few months earlier. The great Algerian *'ūd 'arbī* player, Salīm Fergani, his son, stood up and greeted the public in excitement. "Ah! *Maujud?* Is he here?" Zīād said with the hand-held microphone still hovering over his lips. Zīād asks "But come and let's *sing* it together!?" lifting his head up. Somebody quickly organised the stage, but Salīm did not have his *'ūd* with him at the time. They sang in an emotional symbolic embrace between Tunisia and Algeria – without any *'ūd*-s.

During the last four years, Gharsa has mostly performed on an electric keyboard, which he also uses regularly at the Ṭahār Gharsa *mālūf* club. He recorded a compact disc of *istikhbārāt* on the solo piano in 2009, which circulated among friends. Why was this, I asked once at the club, and he replied: "piano/harmonium was an instrument of *mālūf* too"³⁴. Musically too, contemporary ensembles follow a new sound aesthetic, increasingly dominated by a distinctive keyboard sound deriving from early 20th century fashion. Davis (2014) attributes the change to Jewish-Tunisian musical families activity at the turn of the 20th century³⁵. The use of the piano, called *al-'urghun* (organ, harmonium), is also documented by Rezgui (1989, [1968]: 61), who does not connect its use to specific ethnic groups. In the book *Musical Encounters at the 1889 Paris World's Fair* (Fauser, 2005: 237), in talking about an Arab sound exhibited in the fair, the musical expert Julien Tiersot, comments negatively on Tunisian groups of *La Bella Fatma* and the Tunisian café at the *Espalnades des Invalides*, which included a piano: "Could it be that Tunisians have the ambition to make us believe that the piano is one of their national instruments?" (237). The piano was probably by then an instrument already absorbed in Arab countries, mainly by Jewish communities and Arab society elites, as Rezgui attests (61), and quickly became fashionable at the turn of the 20th century. This could have made the piano perceived by Tunisians as an instrument of the tradition, certainly a tradition in the course of change.

³⁴ This shift, manifested in many areas including the use of electric keyboards replacing the *'ūd* in weddings - what Gharsa's entourage calls "gala evenings" - may be understood as part of a broader aesthetic change, manifested in stage design and clothing. Contemporary ensembles of *mālūf* typically wear similar outfits to each other that symbolise Tunisian national identity but the new sartorial style adopted by most *wedding* singers, including Gharsa's performing in those places, is influenced by western clothes: suits and ties replace *jūbbas* and *shēshīas* in these specific music contexts.

³⁵ Davis showed this derivation in a paper conference at the CMAM titled "Remembering popular songs of the colonial past in contemporary Tunisia". Symposium on "Musical Traditions in North Africa", 2014.

On the one hand, the lineage of *mālūf* repertory and practices transmitted jealously within the unique Gharsa family after independence fills Zīād with an inevitable aura of authenticity, cultural capital and *ūd* mastery, which is often identified with the nation, as the national tradition of music and national music identity. On the other hand, the transmission of this instrument practice only in the close family circuit is counterproductive for the instrument itself, its appeal and diffusion. *Mālūf* here seems a private, family affair, and the spread and transmission of its typical instruments suffer somewhat from this blurred line. I have come to realise that in Tunisia the cultural capital of private families may coincide with the cultural affairs of the nation and idioms of identity creating frictional spaces. I borrow Glasser's application (2016: 70) of Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital to Zīād Gharsa's *ūd 'arbī* transmission and practice, which constitutes a form of capital that may be converted into money for a professional. Gharsa's knowledge has to remain in the close circuit of his filial kinship as his father did. In doing so, the capital power is kept within the family.

Finally, we have to note that this knowledge of *mālūf* and the chain of authorities through Tarnān and Ṭahār Gharsa's lineage ensure Zīād's aura for *ūd 'arbī*, but that in reality the instrument is left aside. It is curious that in a world where *mālūf* is taught in institutions such as the Rashīdīa and the ISMs around the country, that the primary authority is held by someone outside them. Arguably this maintains the iconic and somewhat mystified national power of the instrument, while the chain of transmission has been broken. But as we are going to explore in the subsequent sections, Gharsa's iconic power dissolves when dealing with life on the ground, other individuals and their intimacy.

'Ūd-s 'Arbī in Solitary Spaces

In the 21st century, the *ūd 'arbī* players appear to have "migrated" beyond this rather narrow "*sheykh*" space towards broader notions of Tunisian musicians' intimacy and locality. Among the most visible *ūd* players in the *mālūf* sphere are the ones associated with Rashīdīa orchestras around the country: Monastir, Soussa and Kairouan among the largest centers. They are not celebrities like Gharsa, but they are known for being somehow "unique" in their regional contexts, for playing and singing traditionally, employing the *ūd 'arbī* Tunisian sound and engaging in private performances. In the following section, I explore a range of stories focused specifically on the ways in which they are intimated in incognito, with intimacy by a minority of local practitioners.

The role of these players' self- presentation in the local *mālūf* music circles is a process framed in a self - conscious traditionalism (Herzfeld, 2005: 204). These players are relatively close to what Glasser identifies as *mūlū'* in the context of Maghribian music, someone who is a music lover, aficionado or amateur (2016: 57). While for Glasser the *sheykh* is a music authority and the *mūlū'* a devotee of the repertory or a person interpellated by music as a listener (2016: 57), the *ūd 'arbī* "hidden" players may stand on the same level of the *sheykh* reducing this unbalanced dimension. There

is not a longstanding musical dyad between the Tunisian *sheykh* and the intimate player (2016: 66), or a competition for cultural capital, because they do not relate to each other. Importantly, their performances are not necessarily to make a living, rather they perform in solitary spaces. Therefore, they play for themselves and are separated from the *sheykh* tradition and its economic interest in preserving the exclusivity. Some approach the instrument from the interest in the repertory, others from the instrument to the music, and these directions develop in uneven ways. The class-relation between the two highlighted by Glasser, in which the *sheykh* is the professional (lower artisan class) and the *mūlū'* is necessarily the patron from the elite class, cannot be applied to them. In Tunisia, and for the *'ūd 'arbī*, either you are part of the filial kinship or you are not able to relate to the *sheykh* in the way of acquiring a potentiality of becoming a *sheykh* yourself. Rather, I suggest that the players's aim is not to be recognised as a *sheykh*, neither in its honorific title nor in its occupational - professionalism sense.

My numerous encounters with players and amateurs in the cities of Sfax, Monastir, Soussa amongst others, simultaneously reveal forms of folklore and a local *'ūd 'arbī* activity. The task of defining who is and who isn't an *'ūd 'arbī* player is all the more difficult in the capital of Tunis and suburbs because, generally speaking, the *'ūd 'arbī* identity has been one ascribed to the *sheykh* world rather than one with which others have identified themselves. They admit that "they play the instrument for themselves". They simply love the instrument beyond any emphasis on nostalgia or national identity. This tension between official self-presentation and what goes on in private, challenges the notion of nationalism predicated on resemblance (see Herzfeld, 1997). Gharsa's aura, in particular, and the artistic-musical life of the capital in general, potentially hinder players from declaring themselves, attending public performances or giving interviews. Ben Salama of Zaghūān did not believe his experience would be informative concerning the *'ūd 'arbī* for example, whereas in Sfax, as Ḥassen Gargourī told me, he feels free to express himself on the instrument to the point that he enrolled in the ISM of the Sfax to learn the instrument with a teacher, a unique experience as we are going to see below.

I met 'Alī Ghassena during Professor Farīd Ben Amour's course on modality. 'Alī is a *qānūn* student, and plays the Tunisian *'ūd* "for himself". 'Alī is rather new to this Tunisian instrument. Since he joined a *mālūf* ensemble three years ago, for which however he plays his principle instrument the *qanun*, he became interested in instruments of Tunisian musical tradition. 'Alī is not especially informed about the instrument itself, about the new repertories and trends, but enjoys improvising preludes on Tunisian modes with it and sometimes more demanding pieces such as *bashrafs* from the Tunisian musical heritage. For 'Alī, the Tunisian instruments, particularly the *rebēb* and the *'ūd 'arbī*, in general are closely bound up with Tunisian music and perceived as only suitable to its limited repertory.

"I play it for myself!" he began the interview as if wanting to make clear that he does not play it publically. What is important here is not the embarrassing excuse for not playing it, but rather what lies behind it. This notion is framed in Berlant's public and private categorisation (1998: 283, 284). This "playing for oneself" is a space produced relationally, between institutions and people, between the public and the domestic. The borderline between playing publically or not marks the profoundly intimate nature of the instrument. In chapter one, the investigation focused on the relation of people with *mālūf*, here my discourse is framed along the lines of Herzfeld's questioning the naturalisation of culture "by which we can begin to understand how sensitive actors can negotiate the tensions of social identity and daily life within the turbulent context of the modern nation-state" (2005: 91). Nevertheless, these individuals continue to serve their national entities.

On a sentimental level, 'Alī belongs to a category of users of this instrument that is strictly bound up with this aspect of domesticity. They are happy enough to play for themselves, sharing the same attachment and feeling towards the instrument, as non-professional players. When I take up the Tunisian *'ūd*, "It is a moment of historical sentiment in which I play and listen to *our* music," he told me when I asked him about his attitude to this instrument. In 'Alī's words, it is keeping alive the entire heritage, history and national identity that the instrument carries within itself, which tend to justify its use. Intimacy seen in this domestic domain does generate an aesthetic of attachment (Berlant, 1998: 285), where normative ideology comes in through certain expressive relations such as patriotism, heritage, national sentiments.

Similarly, Ridhā Gourbel's attachment to the instrument is embedded in cultural feelings. Although in that meeting with Ridhā, held at the al-Ḥashīsha's club, he performed for me a Tunisian *sama'ī* in the mode *raṣd dhīl*, he argued that for him this instrument "is made for accompanying the voice". There is no handbook of technique or specific instrumental repertory for it, "all we play with it is the general *mālūf* repertory such as the *nūba*-s, the national repertory". He recalled his first solo performance with the *'ūd 'arbī* at the *'ūd* festival in Sfax in 2013, held at the cultural center *Muḥammad Jammūsī*, where he performed an *istikhbār* and *bashraf* in the mode *sikāh*. He told me that this solo performance was an important occasion for him. Something he would never have imagined doing when he joined al-Ḥashīsha's *mālūf* ensemble in the 1980s. Gourbel learned to play the instrument by himself, as he did with the oriental *'ūd* and the *qānūn*, instruments that were often booked for weddings. Perhaps most telling are Ridhā's closing remarks:

"I do play the *'ūd 'arbī* for cultural merit rather than as a job from which to make a living. I have always had an idea of forming a *thakkt* ensemble made of four *'ūd*-s *'arbī* together to play innovative repertories. Then, after the revolution things got more difficult and I put the project aside." (Interview, Ridhā Gourbel. 29-11-2016, Sfax)

Ridhā Gourbel shows a frictional space that lies in several common factors. Playing the *'ūd 'arbī* in ensemble encourages the player to focus on a *mālūf* national repertory, but this must also be his limit,

not responding to the need for expanding the music repertoire to perform. Similarly, the problem associated with playing other instruments too, mainly to earn a living, does not encourage the spread and perseverance regarding the *'ūd 'arbī*. Related to this, playing the *'ūd 'arbī* from time to time only for specific occasions is also something to be considered valuable as a kind of opportunity to get used to its social importance. As Berlant highlights, "contradictory desires mark the intimacy of daily life" (Berlant, 1998: 285); people want to both play something nationally recognised and minoritised, both known and incognito.

Another example is Ḥassen Gargourī, a Sfaxian amateur *'ūd 'arbī* player, who, like Gourbel and Ghassena and others like Ben Salama, Khalīl Ouenzerfī, has considerable "intimate" experience with the instrument, as well as emotional involvement; he also has officially attended the course of *'ūd 'arbī* organised at the ISM of Sfax with the player 'Abīr 'Ayādī. He is a professional lawyer, one particular example of the way in which *'ūd 'arbī* players often have multiple roles in Tunisian society. I first met Ḥassen at his home in Sfax in 2016. He was willing to show me his instrument and moreover his playing techniques, and I have taken and filmed lessons with him during my various stays in Sfax. Along with the continual encounters at such places, my fieldwork also included email and messenger/facebook correspondence with Ḥassen concerning the online upload of our *'ūd 'arbī* lessons.

Let me first explain in more detail how Ḥassen relates to the *'ūd 'arbī* differently from the *sheykh* tradition. In our first interview in a café in 2016, without the instrument with us, Ḥassen showed a profound knowledge and interesting perspective on facts concerning the recent national history of the *'ūd 'arbī*. Moreover, he showed a recognition of the high *sheykh* culture as against an ungrounded one concerning the instrument. His comments about a general condition of the *'ūd 'arbī* in Tunisia and its recent history, focus on Ṭahār Gharsa's contribution to the instrument. With Ṭahār, the Tunisian identity of this *'ūd*, expressed in Tarnān's image, and established from the Cairo congress onward (1930s), was preserved. "Ṭahār Gharsa is the last *sheykh*," Ḥassen commented. After Tarnān's death, there were no rivals in playing the *'ūd 'arbī* in Tunisia, so Ṭahār was not encouraged to develop the instrument further or innovate it. Innovations in style developed with his son Zīād later on, who looked towards other traditions from Morocco to Turkey to enrich the instrument's range of styles. For Ḥassen, the problem of transmitting the practice of the instrument is directly linked to the change in music practices from the ear to the score, as well as the general Egyptian political influence on Tunisian music (Davis, 1997, 2004), and the desire for Tunisia to become attached to the dominant part of the general Arab culture. Ḥassen's attitude to the instrument is traditional, in an authentic sense, as well as in the search for a modern solution to its scarce appeal in the country. But what is striking is that he sees himself detached from some Tunisian issues of the instrument. He looks towards Algerian *'ūd 'arbī* practices, particularly of the master Salīm Fergani.

Today, Ḥassen plays a professional *ūd* made by Ridhā Jandoubī, which he acquired during his studies with the teacher 'Ayādī. Before this, Ḥassen approached the Tunisian instrument on an experimental model made by the Sfaxian luthier 'Abd al-Laṭīf Malej, son of the instrument maker Šālah Malej. Malej never made such an instrument before nor even possessed the *qalb* for it. So the case was made out of a 3/4 measure Oriental *ūd*, with an *ūd 'arbī* neck's length. He was initially interested in the Maghrebian mode system through the available recordings, particularly Algerian music from Constantine, and subsequently began approaching the *ūd 'arbī*. In this respect, Ḥassen is the only *ūd 'arbī* player, apart from a few exceptions, who plays the Tunisian *ūd* directly without passing from the oriental *ūd* first. This latter is another instrument entirely he declared, one cannot transfer one's technical skills from one to the other. To the question of what fascinated him most about the Tunisian *ūd*, he answered "it's the tuning." Ḥassen is obsessed by the tuning of the north African *ūd* types.

In terms of ornamentation, phrasing and modes, starting from the importance he gives to the tuning of the instrument, Ḥassen always looks for changes in left hand fingering. Three strings stroked together and the first *kerdēn* used as open string passages are the norms in the Tunisian *ūd* right hand technique. Two to three strings stroked constantly the same time is the norm for him. Instead, Ḥassen uses regular fingering with the left hand on the first string, doubling the melody or playing in accordance with a melody on the third and highest pitch string. He plays a phrase that would normally be on the third string instead of on the first, and often concluding it on the second string to give a different tone colour. These choices result in having the third string open, on which the melody is normally played, rather than the first, regenerating the possible bourdon effect. Ḥassen plays tremolo *ferdēsh* very few times in an *istikhbār*, as he sees it a less accurate technique applied by Tarnān from the oriental *ūd*, in fact never used by Algerian players. Moreover, Ḥassen tends to change the fingering by adding the fourth finger of the left hand, without shifting the left hand in further positions.

Ḥassen is very much an example of private *ūd 'arbī* player partly because of his close domestic space and strong commitment for the instrument beyond its public life, which interested me most. His passion for the *ūd 'arbī* is most visible in his ethic for the *mālūf* music system, modes and the way of rendering them, rather than as a pure leisure activity, which rivals that of any public figures. Those aspects on which he focuses on, as a player performing privately, in simple terms shift the attention from the instrument's iconic dimension to more urgent practical needs. In fact, *mālūf* as a golden music tradition does not seem such an overt theme in Ḥassen's attitude towards the *ūd 'arbī*, and so my interest in studying with him was in how identities about Tunisianness pervade the discourse on the instrument, even when it is not a self-conscious concern.

On the whole, self-taught players, as amateurs often are, have been forced into a largely solitary experience owing to the absence of institutional and educational support for the instrument. This is a gap on the level of everyday national recognition, which is distant from weighty scholarly ideals of an unspoiled past, eternal truth and Arab-Andalusian tradition. I argue that the hidden

activities of such players speak of the primacy of the *'ūd 'arbī* identity in Tunisian society. They are the central figures of the *'ūd 'arbī* world, the driving force of *'ūd 'arbī* music life precisely because the very opposite of the *sheykh* tradition and hence free to develop in many diverse ways and directions. Cultural loss melts away and regenerates in other individuals who likewise become repositories of new *'ūd 'arbī* identities. As I am going to explore in the second part of this chapter, one particular player is grounding new directions for the instrument in its challenging of the *sheykh* mode of transmission.

Institutionalising the *'Ūd 'Arbī*: the Case of 'Abīr 'Ayādī in the Higher Institute of Music in Sfax

A new figure made an appearance in the Tunisian *'ūd* life in the mid-2000s: a woman from the urban scene of Sfax: 'Abīr 'Ayādī (also known as 'Abīr 'Ayādī Dammāk). A few years ago, 'Abīr performed a recital of several *'ūd* repertoires including the *'ūd 'arbī* during Ramadan nights festival at the Arab Centre for Research & Policy Studies in Tunis, affirming her prominent role as an *'ūd 'arbī* player in Tunisia. Although this and other recitals in the country and abroad, 'Abīr has a local attitude for the Tunisian *'ūd*, which is clear in her institutional commitments concerning the instrument. She presented the instrument to me as a "traditional Tunisian musical instrument", but never succeeded in explaining why when asked, the answer being taken for granted by many *'ūd 'arbī* players. 'Abīr feels the instrument familiar, close to her North African-Arab origins, looking at the instrument sometimes with incredulity for its "absence", its appearance and disappearance. In an online interview she remarked that: "it became important for me to play a traditional Tunisian instrument, particularly because there are few players"³⁶. That first encounter left me with the feeling that 'Abīr looks at this instrument with a degree of nostalgia, reinforced by the fact that she sees herself alone in her commitment to a struggling musical revival. On that occasion, 'Abīr was the only *'ūd 'arbī* player of the festival, and I had turned up exceptionally early to talk to her. I quickly discovered that she wasn't sure about the future of the instrument and surprisingly had not much to add to what is already known of its history. At that moment, 'Abīr recalled and reinforced Amamū's anxiety about a "lost tradition" discussed above. But at the same time, I was sure, 'Abīr was to be distinguished from the other two public figures Gharsa and Zaidī, and could be seen as a member of the rising generation of popular *'ūd* virtuosos, indeed a leading *'ūd 'arbī* soloist.

'Ayādī's practice endows the Tunisian *'ūd* with the same importance of the other *'ūd*-s, and the instrument's solisitic possibilities are her main focus. She is also now the only "official" *'ūd 'arbī*

³⁶ <https://oudmigrations.com/2017/08/14/the-oud-of-tunisia/>

teacher in the country's institutions. Her position in a music national institution, her solo recitals, and roots in Sfax make her an emerging figure of the instrument distinct from both the *sheykh* tradition and the private world of male players I uncovered.

'Ayādī was born in 1984 in Sfax. At an early age, she started playing the oriental *'ūd*, a custom for music students who had to choose among common and readily available instruments. Since 2004, 'Abīr has performed extensively within ensembles of traditional north African music, both with the oriental and Tunisian *'ūd*-s, in her city and abroad such as: *Nedi el-assil, awtār el medina, Rachidia*, the *Istekhbar* trio in Morocco, at the International festival of Carthage in 2007 and 2011, the festival de Paimpol and Fimu in 2007, in Algeria in 2007, in Rome for the Tunisian embassy in 2009. 'Abīr made a remarkable *'ūd* recital in 2008 at the CMAM for the "young Tunisian virtuosos concert series", in which she performed the piece *Bashraf dhīl* composed by Zīād Gharsa on the *'ūd 'arbī*. The soundtrack of this piece was uploaded on YouTube platform in 2013 by 'Alī Sayarī and the picture accompanying the video is a photo shot of that concert showing a young (unveiled) 'Abīr, in her twenties, holding Jandoubī's made *'ūd 'arbī*. The modern casual clothes, black trousers and shirt, as well as the hairstyle, suggest an objective decency but without any pretention of traditional-Andalusian recall. This "normal" outfit in contrast with stereotyped iconography points to connotations of a certain familiarity and to the player's effort to be modern. This was my first "encounter", although virtual, with 'Abīr, but I have known her in a variety of ways.

During one of my visits to the institute in 2016, she described the educational steps of her diplomas, having been awarded the certificate of principal instrument *'ūd* in 2006, followed by a Master's in music interpretation in 2008 at the Higher Institute of Music of Sfax. She recounted that she never thought of succeeding in being employed as teacher at the very same high institute where she had been a student. Today, 'Abīr is also a doctorate candidate in musicology, at the same institute where she teaches both oriental and Tunisian *'ūd*, with a thesis on the *'ūd 'arbī*, concerning its historical, sociological and artistic meanings with the title: "The status of the Tunisian *'ūd* in traditional music and in the educational curricula". In an interview with 'Abīr at the beginning of my doctorate in the summer of 2015, following a concert she gave in the capital, I made a similar point about the need for such a scholarly study about the instrument.

This first encounter with 'Abīr, somewhat expected, sticks in my mind for two particular reasons. The first concerns a new style of presentation I observed from my initial view of 'Abīr, constructed on the basis of her photos and videos. She appeared to me as a veiled grown-up (married) woman, and my prejudices led me to imagine conservatism and provincialism. The second one, in contradiction, concerned the presentation of the *'ūd 'arbī* as a soloistic instrument, which demonstrate 'Abīr's innovative ideas for this instrument and her modern approach. Ṭahār Gharsa's solo recital in CMAM in 1996, was an event with different meanings from recitals by 'Abīr. It was a commission from the director of the centre, in which Gharsa performed *istikhbārāt* for the entire concert, exploring the

Tunisian *tubu'a* extensively, which he would not usually do. 'Abīr, on the other hand, develops this solo practice on an everyday basis. She has focused on solo 'ūd 'arbī concert practices which are common to other 'ūd traditions.

A remarkable example of this new soloist course was the 'ūd 'arbī recital she gave in summer 2015. During those days of Ramadan 2015, the Arab Center for Culture and Policy hosted and sponsored an 'ūd music festival during the holy month. Major upcoming Tunisian 'ūd players such as: Beshīr Gharbī, Ḥamdī Makhlūf, Nada Maḥmūd and 'Abīr 'Ayādī would give a "solo" concert on their instrument. 'Abīr's solo recital, half of it on the Tunisian 'ūd, seemed such a distinct world of 'ūd 'arbī to me, firstly because it was a solo recital, secondly because it was scheduled in a weekly festival centered on the 'ūd featuring several players and comparing 'ūd styles. But also because I felt, even if we were in Tunisia, that people looked at her like a strange creature holding that instrument. The instrument had never been prominent in such musical spaces, aside from that similarly exceptional recital by Gharsa in 1996.

Thinking back about the players invited to that festival, however, it reminds me that they were all from the capital city Tunis, 'Abīr being the only one from Sfax. Although Sfax is the second largest industrial city on the southern coast, a de-centralisation of the music culture as well as a local figures from the "periphery" contribute to fuel 'ūd 'arbī's development, particularly its reinvention. This contemporary musical activity in Sfax, that sees 'Abīr as prominent concerning the Tunisian 'ūd, also reveals historical interests for *mālūf* in the past decades which developed somehow in the shadow of the well-known activities of the capital. Nevertheless, Sfax has its own music history. The first recording of *mālūf* music was made there in 1955, and documented by 'Alī al-Ḥashīsha (1995, [2000]), who I met in 2016 at his club called *Club des Musiciens*. Al-Ḥashīsha was the conductor of the ensemble *Tahkt al-Turāth al-madina Sfax*, very much active during the 1980s in the Arab world and in Europe. This orchestra gathered every time there was an occasion for traditional *mālūf* music events regionally, and in national and international festivals, for example the one held in Testour. Today, al-Ḥashīsha is the director of the club and works for the local music registry office that issues the so-called *carte professionnelle* for musicians who need it legally to work. The *Club des Musiciens*, a large room for rehearsals, walls with wooden panels covered with black and white photos of musicians and concerts, all very well-documented in al-Ḥashīsha's book, is a valid source for the historical music activities around *mālūf* in Sfax. According to al-Ḥashīsha, the oriental 'ūd appearance in Sfax is documented around 1931 when the chief of the Tunisian army and renowned musician Aḥmad Zouari, brought it from Syria. Interestingly, Aḥmad (violin player 1905) was the son of Sa'īd Zouari who was an 'ūd 'arbī player in 1890 according to documents in al-Ḥashīsha's book (2000: 130). A more recent ensemble, active in the 1960s, was the orchestra *firqa Budīa* conducted by Budīa himself, of which a musician called Muḥammad Ben Amour was the 'ūd 'arbī player portrayed in a photo in 1964 (2000: 114). No traces of Ben Amour's 'ūd activities can be found today, including lessons, students, concerts

and so on in Sfax. The locally known musical family Ben Amour, father Muḥammad and the son Farīd, both professors at the ISM of Sfax, attested that it was not even a branch of their relatives, and further suggested that Ben Amour could have been a migrant from the capital.

Since 2007, 'Abīr has tended to combine the Tunisian and the Iraqi *'ūd*-s in one recital, as if the public is not yet ready to experience the unique sonic timbre of the *'ūd 'arbī* entirely in one performance. As well as developing this new role of the instrument, which I go on to explore in more detail in the next section, that is detached from the strict *mālūf* events happening around the country but especially in the capital, 'Abīr has created a method to learn the *'ūd 'arbī*. This development of a new canon for the instrument happens within the official national education domain, but it is only really present in the Higher Institute of Music in Sfax, where 'Abīr works. In 2013, 'Abīr began presenting her two-year course of *'ūd 'arbī* at the Higher Music Institute of Sfax, having been appointed after an invitation from the director As'ad Zūarī. 'Abīr's teaching is not so much traditional, which is hard to transmit for this instrument, as rich in individual innovations. For someone who saw the Tunisian *'ūd* for the first time when assisting Zīād Gharsa in rehearsals without ever receiving a master class whatsoever on the instrument in the Rashīdīa, and then being fascinated by the figure of Khamaīs Tarnān, a written method to rely on is essential for a revival process. It is important as a starting point to contextualise the public opinion on the instrument to then create one's own canons of repertory. A path that 'Abīr feels free to undertake, to challenge the irregular transmission of the instrument. In 'Abīr's words:

"The Tunisian music institutions have lacked a musical curriculum to teach Tunisian *'ūd*, which is the main obstacle that prevented learning this instrument. In the Tunisian ISMs there are many approaches and studies concerning the *'ūd*. Nevertheless, the Tunisian *'ūd* had been absent and did not receive any attention from specialists." (Interview, 'Abīr 'Ayadī, 29-11-2016, Sfax)

'Abīr's own *'ūd 'arbī* handbook, the first for the instrument, which has developed out of her doctorate research, is codifying a repertory and sanctioning the styles. Using models of exercises on every mode for the first level (see *mḥair sikāh*, *mazmūm* etc.), it points out the importance of the traditional conception of the prelude *istikhbār* phrasing as a disclosing of the repertory. Then it includes some collected pieces from the *turath* heritage, particularly of Khamaīs Tarnān's compositions (*Sama'ī ḥasīn*), which offer a range of Tunisian folk music. And finally considerable importance is given to her various new compositions for the instrument such as *Amal* and many others. 'Abīr explained, "it looks as if people are ashamed of Tunisian music, the authentic music, the way it is rendered on the *'ūd 'arbī*, by this we hope the *'ūd 'arbī* will be recognised as a self-sufficient school with its independent style like other *'ūd* traditions. And at least," she continued, "so we can say there is a method from which to learn it now!"

From a metropolitan capital perspective, and considering the absence of a local Sfaxian Rashīdīa institute, Sfax may well be a provincial city for *mālūf*, but it is also in its own way a thriving,

traditional place for Tunisian musical identities. Today, major parts of its music life grow in the ISM, through syllabus, wide repertoires and practical skills. This fact, one that not everybody in Tunisia knows, is worth stressing here. To me, 'Abīr's roots, education, search for modernity and institutionalisation of the instrument, mean that she may reinvent the *'ūd 'arbī* while distancing herself from the male *sheykh* stereotype and the culture of oral transmission emanating from Tunis the capital.

Solo Recital and New Directions

I am especially interested in 'Abīr's contribution to the instrument as performer and composer, an approach that synthesises elements from a variety of traditional forms to create a separate music aesthetic of the *'ūd 'arbī*, something I grasped at our initial meeting. Critical commentators on 'Abīr's playing the Tunisian *'ūd* have begun questioning her modernist approach and scarce authenticity that normally sustain the life of the instrument within *mālūf* contexts. 'Abīr's activity reveals an inner Orient (east-Arab-Turkish) in the African- Maghrebian *'ūd 'arbī*, and a reinvention of unsuppressed "Turkish *'ūd*" influences that flourishes in her compositions. I am going to explore those aspects of 'Abīr's *'ūd 'arbī* performance through a concert with the Tunisian *'ūd* she gave in Naples in summer 2016. When I invited 'Abīr to give a full recital of Tunisian *'ūd* at the ICTM - Mediterranean Music Studies conference "Musicians in the Mediterranean: Narratives of Movement" in Naples (2016), co-organised with Ruth Davis, before accepting to do her first only *'ūd 'arbī* recital, 'Abīr suggested performing with a trio ensemble (*'ūd, qanūn, ṭār*) or at least with one percussionist. I pointed out the significant social message this instrument could have conveyed on its own on that occasion. Not only another North African instrument (Meddeb, 2016), affirming its identity and role internationally and for the attention of scholars, but it could also have transformed the idea of the *'ūd 'arbī* as an instrument not only of *mālūf* (Davis, 2004). In fact, following my proposal, for much of the time we discussed extensively the pieces to perform. The balance of instrumental interpretation of *mālūf* songs and *istikhbār* improvisations did not seem sufficient to demonstrate the instrument's countless nuances of timbre and that 'Abīr's modernist approach I'd glimpsed initially. "I will play my new compositions for the *'ūd 'arbī* which are part of my doctorate methodology," 'Abīr came up with enthusiastically. One of her questions in the doctoral thesis is how to help spread the instrument's appeal. 'Abīr is not a singer like Zaidī or Gharsa, she is a pure instrumentalist and a unique case among professional players of the Tunisian *'ūd*.

The detailed analysis of the following pages draws attention to two different aspect of 'Abīr's approach to the *'ūd 'arbī*. The first concerns the relationship between Tunisian traditional musical forms (*istikhbār, bachraf*) and their players' use in identifying themselves with that musical tradition.

The second concerns the dialogue between the instrument's identity and innovative practical elements deriving from hand movements (See Baily, 1997, 2006). I want to show how what 'Abīr considers appealing and modern for the instrument, might also be considered in terms of a new identity, transversally distant from the male *sheykh* tradition.

First, there is a relationship between the instrument, its repertory and the need for self-identifying with the Tunisian musical heritage. The 'ūd 'arbī's proper repertory figures the instrument attached to *mālūf* and its mythical past. 'Abīr opened the recital in Naples with an *istikhbār* followed by a *bachraf*, both in the Tunisian mode *ḥasīn*. The *istikhbār* was the obvious opening of a recital by a Tunisian player. As is known, the first data of an *istikhbār* is provided by the French musicologist J. Rouanet in 1922, describing it both as a construction of a series of periods separated by sustained "final points", and as a piece characterised by free improvisation (1922b: 2863). Although scholars agree that it serves to demonstrate the major tonal relations of a given mode in a series of free phrases (Guettat, 1980, d'Erlanger, 1949), normally the number, order and basic melodic cliché lines are very much fixed as shown in the earlier discussion on Tarnān and Gharsa. 'Abīr is aligned with those fixed constraints in this traditional musical form. She is part of a given tradition in which her *istikhbār* can be regarded as a group of improvised phrases of a rather more concrete musical structure. The opening passages with the motifs in mode *ḥasīn* suggest a clear Tunisian *ṭbu'a* idiom. It tugs the listener towards that sonic world, and the respected set of modulations to *muḥaīr 'irāq* and *ḥasīn ṣabah* demonstrate that 'Abīr acts in that "Tunisian tonal context" in which the instrument traditionally operates.

Like other pieces of hers, "*bashraf ḥasīn*" was composed, as 'Abīr puts it, "for that event in Naples", specifically inspired by the possibility to demonstrate this instrument to an international audience. In this case, she composed in a Tunisian version of a traditional oriental musical form, the *bashraf*. This form is widely considered a classic of the repertory. Today, most concerts held by the Rashīdīa orchestras begin with a *bashraf*, a custom established since al-Mahdī's score publications (1960s). From an academic point of view, several who were present (D. Reynolds, J. Shannon) commented on this introductory piece as a moment of authenticity, although the only Tunisian present Ikbāl Hamzaoui pointed out that it was the sole "traditional" moment throughout the recital. Hamzaoui lamented the scant number of pieces from the national repertory, an ubiquitous expectation of insiders seeing their instruments presented abroad. However, the *bashraf* performed at that international conference marked the identity of the 'ūd 'arbī, its historical background. 'Abīr's comments afterward could be condensed in one sentence: "this is the music the instrument was made for." Other non-academics and Mediterranean music scholars evoked its rhythmical character and heavy-strokes style passionately in conversations with me, also often in reference to the tone, to the modal mood.

The piece is also instrument specific, being composed in a particular Tunisian mode *ḥasīn*, which gives a unique sonic reference to Tunisianness like many famous songs of the heritage in this mode of which the phrasing immediately recalls a local Tunisian world. I think of songs ranging from *Sūda Qatāla*, and *Yā Lasmar* in their several versions of Gharsa, Zaidī and many others such as *Shoushana*, to the several *nūba ḥasīn* sections *fī kullī Ghourūb* etc. *Ḥasīn* is also the name of the second *‘ūd ‘arbī*'s string (G) from the bottom up (*dhīl, ḥasīn, mēya, ramal*), ‘Abīr pointed out at dinner after the recital. This came back to memory two years later, when this *ḥasīn* mode, marked my first experience of *mālūf* practice outside Tunisia. I had been invited by a Tunisian musician Marzūk Mejrī, a resident of Naples having migrated to Italy twenty years before, to play some *mālūf* together. The first piece he suggested was the *dkhūl barwal* "Yā Nās Jaratlī Gharāīb" in the same *ḥasīn ṣaba* mode.

The improvised *istikhbār* is very much reliant on fixed phrases and uses some standard timbre effect. But perhaps the most significant cliché of the *ḥasīn* mode conventions relates to ‘Abīr's resolution of the incipit interval D-A, since this is as important as the sound effects obtained with the two open strings octaves D-d. While the *istikhbār* rely on a combination of learnt conventions and individual playing styles to determine the modal structure, ‘Abīr not only discloses the scale degree carefully, but extends the modulations to unusual proportions for the instrument, resulting in a kind of reworking of the aesthetic principles of the *ṭbū‘a*. Beyond this structured nature, the piece includes several elements that, more or less overtly, blur the boundaries between special Tunisian technique and authentic *mālūfejī* (someone who masters *mālūf*) phrasing. The unique sonic timbre of the instrument is provided by a constant C *kerdēn* (first string) open as a bourdon in the middle section, and by the combination of two types of tremolo *ferdēsh*: continuous and interrupted, both techniques reminding us of Tarnān and Gharsa styles (see chapter 4).

The following Tunisian *bashraf* in the same *ḥasīn* mode is an adaptation of the Turkish form, different in its second part that is normally outlined in four sections. The Tunisian version "does not make it a rule to take up the second stage of the Turkish *Bashraf*. Moreover, the first stage differs in that the rhythm is not unified. In fact, all the Tunisian *Bashrafs* end in rapid rhythm called *harbi*" (al-Mahdī, 1960: 6). Its rhythmical section is, in some ways, perfectly rendered by the unique rhythmic *‘ūd ‘arbī* strokes and clearly related to the *mālūf* Tunisian repertoire according to its rhythms: *barwal, darej, khatam*, etc. Such musical form regularly opens the *nūba*, a custom especially revived by al-Mahdī, Trīkī and their team when reorganising and publishing the corpus of *nūba*-s in the 1960s. The first volume of the *Patrimoine Musicale Tunisien*, for example, is dedicated to a collection of *Bashraf*, selected and used as concert overture by the Rashīdīa. In technical terms, the typical profound and face-touch plectrum strokes for the *bashraf* rhythmical sections, highlight one of the main characteristics of this instrument: its rustic, earthy and heavy touch (see chapter 4).

However, ‘Abīr's reworking of the tradition lies in other qualities too. ‘Abīr sought to connect what she describes as "two different styles of *‘ūd ‘arbī* performance and music", one oriented towards

the past, its revival and a sense of a Tunisian *'ūd 'arbī* school embedded in the *sheykh* tradition, the other towards art and transforming tradition. An example of the latter is the last composition she performed at that concert: "*Amal*", in English as "hope". *Amal* is unlike musical forms such as *bashraf* or *sama'ī*. Talking to 'Abīr, and later learning to play "*Amal*" with her by sending some videos of me performing it, I began to understand her innovations in more detail. In conversation with me 'Abīr introduced *Amal* in a slightly different way from the pieces opening the concert, one that might be defined as new and as body-instrumental centered. In 'Abīr's words:

I composed *Amal* in 2012 in the mode *aṣba'īn* which I love very much. With this piece my aim was to show special techniques of the Tunisian *'ūd*. I have composed this piece literally with the help of the instrument, though playing on it. (Interview: 'Abīr 'Ayādī, Sfax, 29-11-2016)

Receiving "help" from the instrument to compose a piece is a striking point to understand the changes in the Tunisian *'ūd* practice furthered by 'Abīr. The most conspicuous feature of this piece is that it does not go deep into the mode modulations and the modal clichés are not the guide anymore. The first part can be defined as a repeated scale semi-quavers passage which ends in descending trills towards the tonic D (*dūka*) on the lower string (4th).

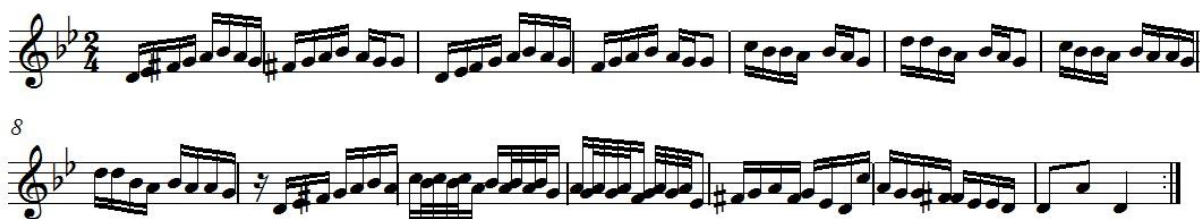


Figure 31. AMAL, PART ONE.

Then the refrain (*taslīm*) opens from that string and is based on the three open strings D *dūka*, d *mḥaīr* octaves and G *nawā* (2nd string) (see bar 15-16).



Figure 32. AMAL, PART TWO.

Here and elsewhere, the linear movement of the up and down right hand strokes recalls other *'ūd* styles, which is supported by a long scale-passage as in the following example.



Figure 33. AMAL, PART THREE.

The second and third *khana*-s are melodic variations of the initial part, mostly consisting of trills and 4-5 notes scale passages.



Figure 34. AMAL, KHANA 2.



Figure 35. AMAL, KHANA 3.

Here, there are somewhat external notes to the mode which create an abstract nature effect to *aṣbaʿīn*.



Figure 36. MODE AṢBAʿĪN AND PASSAGE NOTES IN AMAL.

What is important is not the mode, but the melodies which generate from technical left hand passages. As a result, the Tunisian modal cliché and the shifts of registers have disappeared (see chapter 4). 'Abīr seems to have found new ways to move on the instrument, and to respond to it, and these changes in music structure have taken place in connection with human movement and performance technique, what Baily defines as the "man/instrument interface" (see Baily, 1995: 13; 1997; 2001).

For one thing, the composition is remarkably quick, in *accelerando* towards the end, a rule for the *khatam*, which is the last piece of the Tunisian *nūba*. For another, 'Abīr incorporates fast trills fingers 1, 2 and 3 to create "passage sounds", mainly embellishments heard by Turkish players. However, the piece was written, and is rooted, in the capacity of the instrument to facilitate the player in its typical rhythmic stroke, which is continuous and very much articulated in the fingering. Having spent most of her studies on the Iraqi 'ūd and Turkish styles, 'Abīr describes being able, partly also through her work with varied musical genres, "to transpose my fingering experiences on other 'ūd-s types to the Tunisian one." So she moves closer to a kind of musical transformation, a kind of reinvention of the tradition. 'Abīr's revival music cultural event, which she put together by creating her own canons of repertoire is modeled on identifying her as part of a unique tradition.

This looking back and forth between the past and present of the instrument somehow creates a juxtaposition of nostalgia and melancholic attitudes, which interfere greatly with players perception of this instrument. Those connections between tradition and transformation extend into a variety of musical features, a sort of creative editing of the piece. It starts on a soft, alternative fingering for the note B flat, A, open G resonating D bass, a similar tonal and timbral structure reiterated through the entire piece. This alternative fingering exploits the unusual sonic effect along with ornaments such as pitch bends and repeated slur notes of the octave interval D, d of the third and fourth courses. The piece is not, however, without loud, dynamic passages. In particular, it is punctuated by the loud theme on the scale *aṣba'īn* generating on the note D, which 'Abīr repeats in *accelerando* for a speeded up *grand final*. Other dramatic moments include several moments when she plays the open strings octaves simultaneously. For 'Abīr, these movements derive from a supposed unselfconsciousness of common movements in her strokes, and in keeping with her description of the instrument as "primordial". Something I interpret as ancient, rooted in the origin, imagined in a sublimated past. Again elements which tend to facilitate nostalgic sentiments. While *Amal*, melancholic in the title, relies on the generic rhythmic conventions of 'ūd 'arbī (metered continuous strokes), 'Abīr also consciously inserts exceptionally fast vibrato, unusual melodic movement, uncommon phrasing, so that the piece is "in the spirit of innovation" yet "mostly a new Tunisian style" to "fascinate younger generations", as she attested.

In this respect, the player adapts the instrument to other 'ūd styles and hybrid solutions aiming at reworking its identity. But this identity is not completely transplanted into a new musical context, but rather still uses idioms that belong to the Tunisian musical world, for a Tunisian musical taste and

appeal. In both these two examples, the identity of the instrument is recreated in a scheme of binary oppositions: African-Tunisian nature versus modern *'ūd* Eastern-style. As 'Abīr put it to me in conversation: "it is for showing the possibilities of this *'ūd*, at the same time to show the techniques of the instrument with a modern style of composition". This explanation neglects a significant musical fact: that structured traditional elements form the basis only of the *bashraf's* construction. In *Amal*, the opposition is unstable and the dominant identity can suddenly relocate into one of the other at the same time. For other Tunisian players and aficionados with whom I discussed 'Abīr's approach to the *'ūd 'arbī*, this identity shift may be right, but only partially and up to a point. Among the small circle of *'ūd 'arbī* connoisseurs of the capital, 'Abīr's style is often undervalued, mainly because, although consistent, has not yet been publically settled. Put simply, the creation of a new repertory for the instrument and its place in the broader debate about orality and transmission surrounding *mālūf* continues to pose questions.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined how players reflect and shape ideas about the instrument itself in contemporary Tunisia. In the first and second sections, I explored the transmission of the instrument through the Tarnān -Gharsa *sheykh* lineage. I highlighted that this transmission became a close family affair, which is the key problem I locate in the problem of the *'ūd 'arbī* in Tunisia: namely its uneven diffusion since the second half of the 20th century. This *sheykh* tradition is derived from oral methods of music transmission and helps to legitimise and reinforce certain ideas of authenticity and power around the contemporary figure of Zīād Gharsa. The instrument itself was not independent from this situation because it had not yet fully entered other ways of transmission.

The life of players outside the *sheykh* circle outlined in the second section, is a deep-seated part of the cultural values and practices surrounding *mālūf* music and the *'ūd 'arbī* and serves as a reminder of the limits of the *sheykh* tradition. The world of those players is of profound study, genuine entertainment and self-promotion in equal measure. They do what in Herzfeld's words the social poetic does (2005: 190), namely negotiate the identity of the instrument through deployment, deformation and transformation. I have argued in this chapter that such players are the central figures of the *'ūd 'arbī* world, indexing its orientation toward both non-expert, expert players and audiences. They are the driving force behind *'ūd 'arbī* music life, much more so than the national power and the *sheykh* tradition.

Of several musicians dedicated to the Tunisian *'ūd* I met around the country, 'Abīr's approach and experience of this instrument differs most widely from the public activity of Gharsa and Zaidī. First, the city of Sfax situates the *'ūd 'arbī* in a contrasting space versus the *sheykh* tradition of the

capital. Second, she relates to the role of *'ūd 'arbī* player mainly as a (female) soloist. Yet, to highlight the intimate nature of 'Abīr's melancholic role is not to take away from the immediacy and authenticity with which she impacts on social interactions with the instrument. In the fourth section of this chapter, I have sought to show how the instrument is slowly entering the practice of solo recital and the world of music institution.

Further, through 'Abīr's work, I focused on themes related to *'ūd 'arbī* as composer and interpreter that the music itself helps to explore. Importantly, this process also creates a new canon. The instrument is transported from the private gathering of amateurs without passing through Tarnān's national image or Gharsa's contemporary and public one to the urban stage of *'ūd* festivals and similar specific musical events, as if the instrument is finding a new dimension. So far, the instrument has existed as a national symbol, with many unsolved questions, and existed in variant forms. If this new canon were seeking to be called a revival terrain, it depends on the identification of a tradition for the *'ūd 'arbī*, in which players in general place themselves in relationship to it, inside it. A prerequisite for someone who transforms this tradition then is a shared sense of the tradition as well as a notion of how participants relate to that tradition. Because the Tunisian *'ūd* is always a second choice instrument, ironically every oriental *'ūd* player in Tunisia is potentially an *'ūd 'arbī* player too, and like 'Abīr, one can transpose new practices to it. However, 'Abīr encourages continuity with the past, but at the same time she recasts the music and culture she refers to. As a player, she achieves her own momentum through the solo performance, with its own standard and new repertoire, style, and its own selective view of the past.

Conclusions

In this thesis, I have investigated how the Tunisian *'ūd 'arbī* shapes and reflects the social and cultural contexts in which it circulates. I have argued that the *'ūd 'arbī* - and musical instruments in general - are at once means by which to form identities as well as objects of many sentimental practices. In these spaces between intimate and collective realities, the *'ūd 'arbī* is engaged in processes of national music construction, but it also gives voice to intimate stories about categories of players, makers, aficionados, objects, places and sentiments. Tunisian society, in turn, intersects with this world of objects. It appears to us in relation to these categories of experiences in which the objects are rendered immaterial. The identity of the instrument, then, is constructed, transformed, hidden from different subject positions, which carry uneven qualities and factors. Each musical instrument explored, I have suggested, is involved in practices of "constitutive social interaction" (Bates, 2012: 372); they provide experiences, evaluations, feelings and actions in relation to cultural codes.

The identities enacted by the Tunisian *'ūd 'arbī* range from the interrupted legacies and iconic power of a national Tunisian project to the absorption of a nostalgic Andalusian heritage, to mysterious African local influences, to multicultural colonial exchanges, to morphological symbolic aspects, to the traditional and transformed craftsmanship and urban artisan communities, to the evocative sound of memories and places. The *'ūd 'arbī* in the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries is a constituent force of intimacy in the vibrancy of a living musical genre (*mālūf*) and musicians as much as it is in the vibrant life of its materiality. Despite the presence of numerous other instruments, the *'ūd 'arbī* continues to transform its identities, especially now it has also entered public educational institutions and more private conservatories in Tunisia and abroad, perhaps to an even greater extent than just a few years before.

In Chapter One, I examined definitions of *mālūf*, Arab Andalusian music and *nūba*, in relation to some growing literature based on tropes of nostalgia and memory in the Mediterranean. National identity formation (1930s) and relationships with public and private music making, have enabled the formation of new social imaginaries about *mālūf* as an elitist genre. I showed that these imaginaries carry an "Andalusian identity" that is nationally constructed, and that its mythical roots are founded on nostalgic sentiments. The application of new sources, *Safān al-mālūf al-tūnisī*, *Leïla*, and other musical associations during the protectorate, offer new readings of music making during colonial time, which create both an opposite sense of revival - as if there was nothing before - and rethink the notion of *classical* music that *mālūf* carries. In this chapter, I mentioned a number of places where *mālūf* is played and enjoyed outside the elitist milieu and away from the nostalgic trope, as well as *mālūf*'s only star figure: Zīād Gharsa. Gharsa's club introduces a series of practices and *mālūf* traits that help

illustrate some of the public-private dichotomies in this music and their implications of Tunisian identity. In reality, today, while many older musicians are nostalgic for a time (1930s) when the state took a more active role in recognising and safeguarding musical 'authenticity' (see Melligi, 2016), younger generations have become used to a private-sector model of cultural production. In conclusion, I suggested that, unlike in Morocco and Algeria (Shannon, 2015a; Glasser, 2016), nostalgia for an Andalusian heritage in Tunisia is a matter of conjecture.

Chapter One also provided an ethnographic account of contemporary *mālūf* events, which, I suggested, generate both intimacy and national consciousness. Whereas musical practices in non-institutional or private spaces (Gharsa's club) and intimate collective ones featured various aspects of Tunisianness rather than Andalusian, contemporary public Rashīdīa *ḥaflēt*, I argued, are social events embedded in national identities, where musicians dress up like Andalusians and interpret a distant heritage. These performance events are richly codified, with the potential to impose and alienate but they are also embedded in deep-seated Tunisian cultural practices, relations of intimacy and modes of sociality. While players may maintain their distances once the event is over (see Amamū's case of the Introduction), the musical instrument (see Tarnān's *'ūd-s*) is drawn into a more emphatic encounter with the past through images, becoming fetishist memorabilia and remaining a powerful object of national identity.

In Chapter Two, my focus shifted to the actual instrument and its form. I examined the kind of morphology of the *'ūd 'arbī*; that is, how features and aesthetic aspects of the instrument are ordered, given meaning and ascribed identity and value. I highlighted how certain markers of identity and local factors are part of a long continuity of construction dating back at least to 19th century pre-colonial times. However, I also charted these morphological references, along with the instruments' overall dimensions, and design patterns on other collected North African-Tunisian *'ūd 'arbī* in 20th century and over recent decades, to recreate the heritage for this instrument in Tunisia. The references to classify dimensions and variants, as well as their metaphoric shapes associated with cultural Tunisian identities of flowers, food and textiles, are crucial to situate the instrument morphology in its cultural meanings. In this respect, a typological classification (Kartomi, 2001, 2005), helped consider local influences, string nomenclature, the note intervals combination as well as understanding the instrument's tuning in broader perspectives. Furthermore, whereas the "string nomenclature" tends to be connected to Maghrebian qualities, the tuning pattern, what I called the "ethnic" variant, is more likely to be ascribed in an African identity, namely, a site of influence from sub-Saharan referents. I suggested that this aspect is one neglected identity of the instrument, which is neither Arab nor Tunisian, but it is in contrast to the official Arab- Andalusian identity of the instrument (chapter 1).

In Chapter Three, I explored the materiality of the *'ūd 'arbī*, focusing exclusively on the human side of human-instrument interactions, the relationship between the maker and the instrument in

connection to social subject formations. I considered how the markers of identity described previously (chapter 2) are obtained in practice and how the makers who forge them respond to their symbolism and interpret their meaning. I argued that making the *'ūd 'arbī* in Tunisia is part of a network of historical artisan workshops of the urban Medina spaces, which grounds the instrument in its Arab/Tunisian identity. It is there that this *'ūd* becomes *'arbī* as well as *tūnsī* acquiring the identity of the space it is crafted in. This idea surrounding *'ūd 'arbī* making highlighted how instruments make that agency felt culturally as part of a space, a community, a corporation, or what Martin Stokes calls the construction of place (Stokes, 1994). The *'ūd 'arbī* in this account is a central actor in the social relations between the community, instrument makers, and the local identity. Sennett's concept of craft of experience by which "crafts provide insight into the technique of experience that can shape our dealing with others from the organic to the society" (2009: 290), helped to argue how crafting the Tunisian *'ūd 'arbī* is about other things that shape the instrument's identity too. Tools, uses, hand movements and terminology all have their place in interpreting the identity of the *'ūd 'arbī*, but the values of the "place" reflect the social life of the instrument (Bates, 2012), encompassing its nature, evoking the instrument's musical attitude connected with Arab/Tunisian sources.

Moreover, the work of craftsmanship provided valuable models for suggesting that luthiers' activity is oriented towards a standard way of making the instrument. I suggested the *'ūd 'arbī* is also a mediator in relations between the inside and outside of such spaces. Dawe's work on the global guitarscape engages an organology that is much more globally dominant, but shares a similar outlook, not just through the hybridity of instruments, but their circulation within global markets (Dawe, 2010: 174). Much is shared in the way that hybrid elements can prompt inventive mixing and reworking of instrumental components from disparate *'ūd* geographies. But in the *'ūd 'arbī* case, it is circumscribed to the Arab Muslim world rather than a global phenomenon. These values of how the instrument is made also touched upon the *'ūd 'arbī* sounding investigated in the subsequent chapter, where resonances and timbre effects are exclusively intertwined with the materiality and craftsmanship of the instrument.

In Chapter Four, I examined the notion of "Tunisian sound" in relation to intimate feelings of *'ūd 'arbī* players and the meanings they construct. As we have seen, in the previous chapter developments in the social sciences argue for the recognition of craftsmanship as the interaction between human and raw matter (Sennett, 2009). I developed this idea by exploring particular kinds of agency of the *'ūd 'arbī* "Tunisian" sound in configuring the relation with local identity and auditory memories, contributing to its culturally constructed meanings. I demonstrated through experiences of senses (Connor, 2004) that the very sound of the *'ūd 'arbī* is iconic of the same Tunisianness its crafting is invested, which has its roots in a shared metaphorical space that draws from life experience in real urban places. The Tunisian *'ūd 'arbī*, therefore, is entangled in a web of complex relationships

and situations between human, socio-historical and cultural contexts (see Bates, 2012: 364). Further, in this chapter, investigating sources such as field recordings and recorded live concerts of the Tunisian *ūd*, I also argued that recordings from the start of the 20th century enable us to rethink the notion that the instrument was rarely played and reshape our perspectives on *mālūf* in general.

In Chapter Five, I demonstrated how the *ūd 'arbī* experienced at the end of the 20th century and is still experiencing today different musical changes and positions in Tunisian society. Within the last fifty- seventy years, its transmission has moved back and forth from national institution to private association, from *sheykh* oral tradition to a more modern structured one, recreating its identity, appeal and diffusion in many diverse situations. In raising debate on the scant number of players for this instrument, I opened up a broader perspective on the problem, which, I suggested, has roots in the construction of *mālūf* as a national, elitist and classical music of Tunisia explored at the beginning of this thesis. This debate also supported my argument for more intimate, multiple player activities around the instrument as opposed to the official national discourse.

On the one hand, in the case of Gharsa's family, borrowing Glasser's application of Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital (2016: 64-71), I argued that the *sheykh* oral tradition has narrowed the transmission of the instrument to a small circuit favouring its non-institutional integration. On the other hand, I argued that contemporary *ūd 'arbī*'s musical activities of "hidden individuals" are slowly freeing the instrument from this stuck and ambivalent position between Gharsa's aura and a national symbolic function, what Herzfeld identifies as official self-presentation and privacy of collective introspection (1997: 14), as well as offering new cultural and institutional directions, challenging the ideas of loss and marginalisation of the instrument.

My thesis contributes to a number of areas of scholarship. First, it adds to the literature on Arab music in general (d'Erlanger, 1917; Rounet, 1922b; Ḥassan, 2002) and Arab music in Tunisia (Rezgui, 1968; Lachmann, 1923; al-Mahdī, 1981a; Guettat, 1980, 2002; Jones, 2002a; Davis, 2004). Whereas substantial literature has been written about traditional musical instruments in other countries, scholars of the Middle East and Maghreb have more broadly often tended to favour alternative theoretical and topical frames. Here, my central contribution is to the literature of music and identity, patrimonialisation and revival, through the study of musical-material objects. I hope my thesis has shown that musical instruments and identity within the Arab world is a ripe terrain for further research. Moreover, concerning the scholarship of the region, my thesis contributes to the literature on Arab-Andalusian music in colonial and post-colonial time. A growing number of scholars are turning their attention to the relation between past encounters, historical roots and modern idioms of loss and nostalgia across music of North Africa and Spain (Reynolds, 2015b; Shannon, 2015b; Davis, 2015; Glasser, 2016). However, I hope the arguments presented in this thesis help to

make the case for examining how these metaphorical forces are variously reinforced, obstructed and modified by alternative social and cultural logics.

Second, while my thesis contributes to the ethnomusicology of musical instrument, history and traditions in the region (Farmer, 1928, 1931a), on the *ūd* in particular (Neubauer, 1993; Chabrier, 2000; Poché, 2001; Ḥassan, 2001; Guettat, 2006), as well as on other similar North African *ūd* traditions (Loopuyt and Rault, 1999; Saidani, 2006; Elsner, 2002; Houssay and Früh, 2012), it mainly adds to the growing ethnomusicology scholarship on musical instruments as material culture (Bates, 2012; Dawe, 2001; Qureshi, 1997; Senay, 2014). Given many of ethnomusicology's default paradigms of identity and culture, perhaps the discipline has been a little slow to recognise and analyse the agency of musical instruments and their roles in shaping musical, social and cultural values and practices. In this respect, my thesis also intersects with sound studies (Feld and Brenneis, 2004) (in Chapter 4 in particular), contributing to new methods of experiencing sound and what lies behind its mere listening. Third, my thesis (and Chapter 2 in particular) contributes to scholarship on organology of musical instruments, including musical instrument classification (Sachs, 1914 [1961]; Mahillon, 1893; Hornbostel, 1906; Kartomi, 2005). Because of the methodological challenges of researching musical instrument as culture, scholars of organology and museum studies have often tended to settle for 'armchair' readings of instrument measurements. Perhaps, then, ethnomusicology could learn something from organology's attention to the measure, X-rays scanning and history of instruments, while organologists could benefit from ethnomusicology's ethnographic approach and its ability to analyse design meanings as the result of social and cultural practice. Finally, this thesis has contributed to the study of music and intimacy in public culture (Stokes, 2010; Yano, 2002), about which I hope to have much more to say in my future research and publications.

Final Reflections and Future Directions

As I write this, in March 2018, the Minister of Cultural Affairs' exhibition "A Tunisian Modernity 1830-1930" is about to take place in the newly built *Madina at-Taqafa* (City of Culture) of Tunis. The aim of this exhibition, which coincides with the launching of the various activities of the City of Culture, is to re-conceptualise the history of the evolution of Tunisian society during the modern era (19th-20st century). It is an indication of the remarkable ways in which discourses concerning national identity and many of its pivotal topics operate in the current society. Some of the documents, materials and images displayed at the exhibition are: the text of the decree of Aḥmad Bey abolishing the slave trade and ordering the end of slavery in 1846, documents of the functioning of the Turkish military school of Bardo founded in March 1840 based on the European model, the texts of the reform of the Zeitounian education (1861), the maps of the Atlas of Tunisia, the manuscripts of the

Turkish artillery, the text of the fundamental pact of 1860, images of the Tunisian post office and telecommunications (1888), and a music display with the original songs of Ṣālīḥa and Tarnān (1930s). Those highlighted moments of Tunisian modernity can be framed in what Makdisi defines as "Ottoman Orientalism", in which the 19th century saw a fundamental shift from an earlier Turkish Empire paradigm into an imperial view suffused with nationalist modernisation rooted in a discourse of progress (Makdisi, 2002: 769).

That week I had been invited to Tunis for a few days to participate at a round table on the Tunisian *ūd* with Myriem Akhoua, Zīēd Mehdī and Hedī Bēlaṣfar in a festival of Tunisian culture in Sidi Bou Said organised by the Turki family. I visited the exhibition as soon as I arrived. Particularly interesting in one showcase was a set-up of four musical pieces: a *rebēb*, two phonographs for discs and cylinders (1910) and ultimately an *ūd* *arbī*. This display inevitably highlighted the instruments iconic power. But these instruments were not historical pieces, they were very recently made. They came from the atelier of Hedī Bēlaṣfar in the Centre of Arab and Mediterranean Music of Sidi Bou Said, the *ūd* *arbī*, specifically, had been made in 2017 on commission by the centre, as I may testify.



Figure 37. "A TUNISIAN MODERNITY 1830-1930", PHOTO: SALVATORE MORRA (2018)

This event raises some important issues that help me reflect on the research presented in this thesis and sketch out questions for future research. Why display contemporary made instruments that do not have an "historical" value alongside the old phonographs and cylinders? Apart from a certain irony, can we read anything in this odd display of artifacts beyond an aesthetic meaning? How do we distinguish between identity and the strategic adjustment to the demands of the historical moment? In other words, might shifting identities point to shifting cultural transformations? These questions take us beyond the scope of this thesis, but they do present a series of challenges that merit some consideration here. First, they remind us that the ethnomusicologist's focus is always a moving target; musical and social worlds are continually changing. If I had done my fieldwork even five years earlier, I may have settled on interviewing Gharsa still in the official national institution of the Rashīdīa rather than in his private club. But how do shifting identities affect the public life of the instrument? The irony, somewhat embarrassing, of having an original 1910 Naracci's phonograph blended "*La Voix de son Maitre*" next to a 2017 (playable) Tunisian *ūd*, is crucial to how people perceive the instrument in its public life. If I had started my research even five years

later, I may have described the abandonment of the *'ūd 'arbī* in terms of "death", or even extinction, in an exhibition showcase. As Johnson put it: "It might be said that the harpsichord has had three lives and one (impermanent) death" (Johnson, 2013: 181). I wondered (and am still wondering) whether there might be parallels here with Johnson's argument about the harpsichord's nineteenth-century existence as an evocative emblem of a vanished past and then as an ultimately heavily reengineered and reconfigured instrument. While such an argument would seem to fit with my discussion of *'ūd 'arbī* as an instrument, in truth, that never quite disappeared; my analysis of the discourses and practices surrounding the instrument and its identities suggests that it is certainly not the whole story.

In spite of these continual shifts and changes, however, there remain some striking historical connections and continuities. In many encounters with Algerian musicians (conferences and festivals) during my doctorate years, in Constantine, Soussa, Sfax etc. it was clear to me that on one hand, in Algeria the *'ūd 'arbī* is an instrument that is still difficult to put aside in comparison to its use in Tunisia, and on the other, although various Tunisian instruments such as this are very much established as symbols of *mālūf*, their repertoire is often appreciated through the lyrics and the voice, whatever instrumental setting is accompanying. In neighbouring Algeria, Maya Saidani similarly notes how in the orchestras of Constantine the instrument and its players are widely recognised compared to their *sharqī* counterparts in other regions of the country (2010: 181). In an interview during the *mālūf* festival in Sfax in 2016 with the master Salīm Fergani, he highlighted this *'arbī/sharqī* dichotomy, saying that the Oriental *'ūd* had been banned in the region of Constantine at the turn of 20th century. Constantine's *'ūd 'arbī* players tend to be more ethnically marked than *sharqī* ones from Algiers. For example, Saidani notes how they are perceived to be more "native", and therefore more "authentic", than their oriental counterparts. An analysis that seeks to shed light on the *'ūd-s 'arbī* of North Africa, Tunisian versus Algerian and vice versa, must attend to these various influences and I am convinced that a future research on the Algerian *'ūd 'arbī* will also help to understand the Tunisian one in more depth.

Finally, a further challenge concerns finding earlier recordings than I offered in this research. Just as Hornbostel's work provides an important source for the *'ūd 'arbī* at the start of the 20th century, Robert Lachmann's field researches in Tunisia in the 1920s are of equal importance. Although there are no traces of *'ūd 'arbī* in Lachmann's recording in the island of Jerba, he probably recorded urban ensembles which included *'ūd 'arbī* as early as his doctorate research of 1922, and in his later visits in 1926, 1927 and 1929³⁷. Those recordings are still unexplored, but they may indicate ways forward for this exploration into sound, bringing contemporary players new experiences of sound connected to unknown *'ūd 'arbī* players other than the legendary Khamaīs Tarnān.

³⁷ See online letters exchanged between Lachmann and his parents in the National Sound Archive of Jerusalem, and *The "Oriental Music" Broadcasts, 1936-1937*, edited by Ruth Davis, A-R editions, Inc., Middleton, Wisconsin (2013).

List of Interviews (all conducted in Arabic and French by Salvatore Morra)

‘Alī, Sayarī. Tunis, Tunisia. 20 June 2015.

Anīs, Meddeb. Tunis, Tunisia. 30 June 2015.

Anīs, Qlibī. Tunis, Tunisia. 6 July 2015.

Muḥammad, Bennani. Tunis, Tunisia. 23 June, 27 July 2015, 24 November 2016.

Faiṣal, Ṭwīrī. Tunis, Tunisia. 23 July 2015, 18 November 2016, 28 March, 17 April, 23 June 2017.

Maḥmūd, Guettat. Sidi Bou Said, Tunisia. 21 July 2015, 26 June 2017.

Imed, Nsiri. Tunis, Tunisia. 20 July 2015.

Jellāl, Ben ‘Abdallah. Sidi Bou Said, Tunisia. 10 July 2015.

Mokhtār, Mostaīsir. Tunis, Tunisia. 6 July and 21 July 2015.

Muḥammad, Bēlaṣfar. Sidi Bou Said, Tunisia. 22 June 2015

Hedī, Bēlaṣfar. Sidi Bou Said, Tunisia. 15 June 2015, 17 November 2016, 28 March 2017.

Nour, Bouhri. Tunis, Tunisia. 1 July 2015.

Sofīan, Negra. Tunis, Tunisia. 11 July 2015.

Aḥmad Ridhā, ‘Abbēs. Paris, France. 7 December 2015, 5 February 2017.

Wolfgang, Frhü. Paris, France. 5 December 2015.

‘Abīr, ‘Ayādī. Sfax, Tunisia. 29 November 2016.

‘Alī, Ghassena. Sfax, Tunisia. 20 November 2016.

‘Alī, al-Ḥashīsha. Sfax, Tunisia. 29 November 2016.

Beshīr, Bouhri. Tunis, Tunisia. 18 November 2016.

Bilēl, Aboudī. Tunis, Tunisia. 23 November 2016, 10 March 2017.

Sherif, Meher. Tunis, Tunisia. 15 November 2016, 19 June 2017.

Ridhā, Amamū. Soussa, Tunisia. 12, 13, 16 November 2016.

Muḥammad, Dammāk. Sfax, Tunisia. 20 November 2016.

Ferīd, Ben Amour. Sfax, Tunisia. 21 November 2016.

Fethi, Zaghonda. Sidi Bou Said, Tunisia. 17 November 2016.

Ziād, Gharsa. Tunis, Tunisia. 17, 24 November 2016, 28 February, 9 March 2017, 5 February 2017 (Paris, France).

Ḥabīb, Errais. Tunis, Tunisia. 21 November 2016.

Ḥabīb, Reqīq. Sfax, Tunisia. 21 November 2016.

Ḥamdī, Makhlūf. Tunis, Tunisia. 9 November 2016.

Ḥamīda, Hiloua. Kairouan, Tunisia. 15 November 2016.

Ḥassen, Ghargourī. Sfax, Tunisia. 29 November 2016, 5 March 2017.

Hathem, Derbel. Kairouan, Tunisia. 20 November 2016.

Jalēl, Benna. Tunis, Tunisia. 5 November 2016.

Ridhā, Jandoubī. Menzel Temīn, Tunisia. 9 November 2016, 1 March 2017.

Khāled, Slēma. Soussa, Tunisia. 14 November 2016.

Leīla, Ben Gacem. Tunis, Tunisia. 10 November 2016.

‘Abd al-Laṭīf, Bēlaṣfar. Tunis, Tunisia. 22 November 2016.

Myriem, Akhoua. Tunis, Tunisia. 10 November 2016.

Muḥammad, Bouzguenda. Monastir, Tunisia. 14 November 2016.

Raḥma, Ben Hadj Yaḥia. Tunis, Tunisia. 23 November 2016.

Rashīd, Sellamī. Tunis, Tunisia. 28 November 2016.

Ridhā Gourbel. Sfax, Tunisia. 29 November 2016, 5 March 2017.

Ṣāḥbī, Muṣṭafa. Tunis, Tunisia. 27 November 2016.

Saifallah, Ben Abderrazzak. Tunis, Tunisia. 17 November 2016.

Ṭahār, Soussī. Tunis, Tunisia. 10 November 2016.

Taūfiq, Ben Khlīfa. Tunis, Tunisia. 30 November 2016.

Zouair, Gouja. Tunis, Tunisia. 5, 25 November 2016.

Ziēd, Mehdī. Tunis, Tunisia. 18 June 2017.

Yūsef, Lazem. Binzert, Tunisia. 6 March 2017.

Kalthoum, Jemāil. Paris, France. 5 February 2017.

Salīm Fergani, Sfax, Tunisia. 2 March 2017.

Badreddine, Guettaf. Tunis, Tunisia. 18 June 2017.

Salīm Dada. Constantine, Algeria. 23 November 2015.

Basēm, 'Affēs. Soussa, Tunisia. 2 March 2017.

Yasin, V. Basilic. e-mail. 24 November 2017.

Farah, Oueshtati. Paris, France. 5 February 2017.

Dhikra, Dhikra. e-mail. 25 May 2017.

Ḥafedh, Mrh. Skype-Messenger. 24 November 2017.

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