



Palestinian Music and Song: Expression and Resistance Since 1900

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Palestinian Music and Song: Expression and Resistance Since 1900 is a compilation of essays and interviews addressing the evolution of Palestinian music from 1900 to the present and its role in political development.

Music transcends time, space, and societal gaps, making it the ideal tool for cultural and

political development. Both colonizers and the colonized utilize music, albeit in different ways – the colonizers celebrate their triumphs, while the colonized express hope and retain identity. This is particularly true in the Palestinian context, as Palestinians continue to express hope for future generations

Prior to the Nakba, the cultural scene was vibrant and music was an important means of entertainment. Mothers sang lullabies to their babies, children sang songs in play, and adults sang while working. Competitions and festivals were held in cities and rural areas alike, and major artists, including Um Kulthoum and Mohammad Abd al-Wahab, performed in Palestine. Following the Nakba, and again after 1967, music evolved from being primarily entertainment to acting as an outlet for healing, expressing identity, and reaffirming patriotic ideals.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, musicians navigated politics, folk material, and the increasing influence of the West when composing and performing. The blending of Western music styles with traditional poetry and instruments essentially created a new genre to reinforce identity and celebrate Palestinian roots. Hip-hop infiltrated the Palestinian music scene beginning in the 1990s, allowing collaboration between Palestinians and Palestinian-Americans, and providing a connection for young diaspora Palestinians with their home. More recent music addresses the occupation and, more importantly, social issues within the Palestinian community.

The book concludes with a discussion of the use of music in Palestinian political movements. Prior to the First Intifada, the PLO used the arts as propaganda, attempting to foster unity within the competing factions under the banner of self-determination rather than religion or politics. The formation of Islamic political movements, specifically Hamas, led to the creation of music within an Islamic context. While the inherently religious messages of such parties differ greatly from those of secular Palestinian artists, the aspirations of spreading a political message and reinforcing identity remain the same.

Readers of this book will walk away with a greater understanding of Palestinian music and the role of the arts in reinforcing and expressing self. The editors' decision to include essays that focus on the watersheds in Palestinian history allows readers to track the evolution of music while taking into account the catalysts affecting change.



Wassim Razzouk

Tattooing is an art the Razzouk family introduced to Palestine more than a century ago, bringing it with them from Egypt when my great-grandfather moved here for trade. Starting in Egypt, this art has been practiced in the family for 700 years. Our ancestors used tattoos to mark Coptic Christians with a small cross on the inside of the wrist to grant them access to churches. As those without it would have difficulty entering the church, Christians tattooed their children, identifying them as Copts, at a very young age (sometimes even a few months old). Today, we continue this family tradition by offering tattoos to Christian pilgrims and to visitors to the Old City of Jerusalem.

My grandfather, Yacoub Razzouk (known also as *hagop*, Arabic for the tattooist),

was the first tattoo artist in this country to use an electric tattoo machine (which was powered by a car battery) and the first to use color as well. Many artists have learned from him, and he has been mentioned in books and magazines that discuss the history of tattooing (especially religious and Christian tattoos).

He learned the art from his father, who had learned it from his father and other ancestors. They brought with them hand-carved wooden stamps that act as stencils for the designs of religious motifs inspired from the bible such as the crucifixion, ascension, Virgin Mary and Baby Jesus, St. George fighting the dragon, and more. Pilgrims would line up, waiting for their turn to be tattooed with either a cross or another design of their choice, the date being included as certification to their pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Many pilgrims who visited another time asked for the date of that year to be added to the tattoo. Today, we continue the tradition in exactly the same way.

My father (Anton Razzouk) taught me as his father had taught him, and I have decided to carry over the tradition and am now teaching this heritage to my sons. We are considered the custodians of this great tradition.

Another great passion in my life is motorcycling. I am among the founding members of the first motorcycle club in Jerusalem, Holy Land Bikers MC Jerusalem. I own a couple of Harley Davidson motorcycles and enjoy riding the country with my brothers, exploring its beauty and sharing it with the world through pictures and short videos.

Our shop is located inside Jerusalem's Old City, near Jaffa Gate, on St. Georges Street.

