

## **Reconsidering North African lutes: ‘ūd̄s and kwītras in *La Musique Arabe dans le Maghreb***

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**Published:** 31/12/2023

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**Citation:**

MORRA, S. (2023).  
Reconsidering North  
African lutes: ‘ūd̄s and  
kwītras in *La Musique  
Arabe dans le  
Maghreb*. *Turath*, 1(2),  
84-94.

**ABSTRACT:** *This article explores North African lutes in Jules Rouanet’s *La musique arabe dans le Maghreb* (Rouanet, 1922, p. 2829, 2920, 2927). In particular, it draws attention to the fuzzy boundaries between Tunisian ‘ūd̄, ‘ūd̄ ‘arbī, and Algerian kwītra. In combining techniques such as analysis of texts and artefacts in the Musical Instrument Museums of Brussels (MIM), I consider the diverse ways in which the instruments are constructed, transmitted, and designed. While I chart aspects of the instrument and local factors that help make a cultural classification of it, I underline the Africanness of certain Maghribi instruments that are typically thought about as part of the ‘ūd̄ family. Finally, a close reading of those instruments shows a way of approaching North African organology that is distinct from the post-Cairo Congress consensus (1932).*

**KEYWORDS:** ‘ūd̄, North Africa, Organology, Museum, Material Culture.

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by the Centre of Research in  
Social and Cultural  
Anthropology (CRASC),  
Algeria.



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## La Reconsidération des luths nord-africains : 'ūds et kwītras dans *La Musique Arabe dans le Maghreb*

**RÉSUMÉ :** Cet article s'intéresse aux luths nord-africains dans « *La musique arabe dans le Maghreb* » de Jules Rouanet (Rouanet, 1922, p. 2829, 2920, 2927), car il attire l'attention, en particulier, sur les frontières floues entre le 'ūd tunisien, le 'ūd 'arbī et la kwītra algérienne. En combinant des techniques telles que l'analyse de textes et d'objets des Musées d'instruments de musique de Bruxelles (MIM), les diverses manières dont les instruments sont transmis et conçus sont considérées, tout en décrivant les aspects de l'instrument et les facteurs locaux qui aident à en faire une classification culturelle. Il est mis en évidence le caractère africain de certains instruments maghrébins qui sont généralement considérés comme faisant partie de la famille du 'ūd. Enfin, une lecture attentive de ces instruments montre une manière d'aborder l'organologie maghrébine qui se distingue du consensus post-Congrès du Caire (1932).

**MOTS-CLÉS :** 'ūd, Afrique du Nord, Organologie, Musée, Culture matérielle.

### إعادة النظر في الأعواد والكويترات في شمال إفريقيا: العود والكويتر في كتاب "الموسيقى العربية في المنطقة المغاربية"

الملخص : يستكشف هذا البحث آلات العود الشمال إفريقية في مقال "الموسيقى العربية في المنطقة المغاربية" لجول روانيه (روانيه، 1922، ص 2829، 2920، 2927). حيث يلفت الانتباه، على وجه الخصوص، إلى الحدود الغامضة بين العود التونسي، والعود العربي، والكويتر الجزائرية. فمن خلال الجمع بين تقنيات، مثل تحليل النصوص والمصنوعات اليدوية في متاحف الآلات الموسيقية في بروكسل (MIM)، يتم إبراز تلك الطرق المتنوعة في صناعة الآلات ونقلها وتصميمها، مع رسم جوانبها وتحديد العوامل المحلية التي تساعد في تصنيفها ثقافياً. ومما يؤكد هذا الطابع الإفريقي لبعض الآلات في المنطقة المغاربية والتي تصنف عادةً على أنها جزء من عائلة العود. حيث تظهر لنا القراءة الدقيقة لتلك الآلات طريقة للتعامل مع علم الآلات الموسيقية في المنطقة المغاربية والتي تختلف عن ما تمّ عليه إجماع ما بعد مؤتمر القاهرة (1932).

الكلمات المفتاحية : العود، شمال أفريقيا، علم الآلات الموسيقية، المتحف، الثقافة المادية.

### Introduction

This chapter explores North African lutes in Jules Rouanet's *La musique arabe dans le Maghreb* (Rouanet, 1922, p. 2829, 2920, 2927). A close reading of Rouanet shows a way of approaching North African organology that is distinct from the post-Cairo Congress consensus. In particular, it draws attention to the fuzzy boundaries between 'ūds, 'ūd 'arbī, and kwītra. These fuzzy boundaries are visible in the pre-Cairo Congress literature, and in fact these fuzzy boundaries are still visible in the everyday language of musicians in the Maghrib today. The way I am going to do this is through examination of a particular instrument in the Brussels Museum; in essence, I am going to "read" this instrument alongside Rouanet's writing and those of some of his predecessors. Not only does this allow me to draw attention to fuzzy boundaries, but it also allows me to underline the Africanness of certain Maghribi instruments that are typically thought about as part of the 'ūd family. In the following pages, my argument

is also illustrated through the tuning features of North African *'uds*, of which their specific combinations of intervals are crucial to local African use.

North African *'uds* were collected in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in London (1867), Paris (1873), Berlin (1894) and Brussels (1878, 1896) (Morra, 2021). Much earlier, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Thomas Shaw, attests the presence of *'uds* in the “Barbary states”: «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, p. 203). Some years earlier than Rouanet’s publication, a significant event concerning the instrument was documented at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Erich 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 Msīka resembles the Tunisian model: “*Die Darbouka, die Msīka Laute begleitete, war auf Fis gestimmt, also eine Oktave unter der tiefsten Lautensaite*”. The Darbouka, which accompanied Msīqa's lute, was tuned on F-sharp<sup>1</sup>, i.e., an octave below the lowest string of the lute (Hornbostel, 1906, p. 4; Katz, 1975, p. 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 kind of *'ūd* that Rouanet described? Or one of those that are preserved in museums?

To make things more complicated, at the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, there was widespread confusion in terms of nomenclature for these types of musical instruments. In Kashf al-qinā‘ ‘an alāt al-samā‘, Ghouti Bouali reports that the instrument called *kwittra* in Algeria (1904, p. 102) is instead called *'ūd* in Morocco and in Egypt. Bouali also gives the tuning of the *kwittra* (C, A, D, G), which oddly correspond to today’s tuning of the *'uds* in Algeria. In *The Music and Musical Instruments of the Arabs*, Francisco Salvador-Daniel (1914) 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, p. 61). A *kouitra*, which is not present in Tunisia – as far as we know – from the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, named a “Tunisian guitar”? 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, quoted in Daniel, 1914, p. 239). Farmer agrees with Shaw in distinguishing North African lutes as being smaller than “oriental” ones. In this context, eight years later, Rouanet describes in detail, as we will see, an instrument named *kwittra* as being the favourite plucked instrument among musicians of North Africa (Rouanet, 1922, p. 2926). Rouanet’s taxonomy of North African lutes is akin to their earlier classification by Mahillon (1841–1924) and Engel (1874). Since Carl Engels’ studies and especially Victor-Charles Mahillon’s (1880) first systematic scheme of instrument classification, later expanded by Hornbostel and Sachs, the *'ūd* has been classified among stringed instruments of the Middle East. Similarly, Rouanet groups lutes (*kwittra* and *oud*, including *qanun*) under the description of «plucked instruments (with a plectrum) » (*instruments à plectre*) (1922, p. 2926). In terms of general classification, according to Rouanet: «the *kwittra* has a Maghrebian origin»: «il paraît d’ailleurs avoir une origine maghrébine ou hispano mauresque » (1922, p. 2926), and the *'ūd* was described as an instrument of the Arabs (1922, p. 2927).

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, p. 411). The connections and exchanges between naming the instruments according to their

geographical provenience and forms are common for organological classification. What is at stake here is that, in examining various cultural and identity interrelations between the North African plucked instruments of *'ūd* types, both *'ūd* and *kwītra* raise ambiguity when it comes to definitions, since they draw attention to a seemingly unapproachable morass of historical facts, cultural identity formation and intertwined relationships involving both public and private music making.

A shift to modern nomenclature concerning the North African lutes began at the Cairo Congress of 1932, when the instrument was played for the Tunisian and Algerian delegations, respectively by Khamaīs Tarnane and Omar Bekhchi, to represent a typical musical instrument of the North African *mālūf* ensembles (Guettat, 1992, p. 71; Bouzar-Kasabdjī, 1992, p. 92). Thereafter, the distinction between the *kwītra* and the *'ūd 'arbī* was to become sharper, although a certain ambiguity remains: Jurgen Elsner identifies the four-stringed *kwītra* or *'ūd 'arbī* as being characteristic of the 20th century Algerian ensemble (Elsner, 1992, p. 193). During the same period, Rezgui couples the instrument name with the adjective "Tunisian": *'ūd tūnsī* (Rezgui, 1989, p. 58). Later, both Scheherazade Hassan and Maya Saidani report that the *'ūd 'arbī* is mainly used in the Algerian the city of Constantine (Saidani, 2006, p. 182), and in Tunisia, where it is also known as *'ūd tūnsī* (Hassan, 2002, p. 406). For them, the *kwītra* is another regional shortnecked lute used only in Arab Andalusian urban ensembles in Morocco and Algeria (Hassan, 2002, p. 407; Saidani, 2006, p. 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 *kwītra* (pl. *kyātīr*) 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 contexts. The instruments tend to figure in historical terms, although the present-day Tunisian *'ūd* and Algerian *kwītra* are relatively stable and uniform objects.

Today, the *'ūd* (often spelt oud, sometimes named in museum classification also *kouitra*, *kwītra*, *quwaytara*), a plucked instrument, is the most prominent musical instrument of the Arab-Islamic world. 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 North Africa, several practices and styles of *'ūd* co-exist, namely Tunisian, Algerian, and Moroccan. The *'ūd 'arbī* and the *kwītra* are four double-course necked instruments. It consists of a sound chest made of a series of ribs, linked to a flat front surface of wood, and pierced by 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 does the tuning according to different regional traditions.

### Comparison between Rouanet's and Mahillon's *Kwītras*

The section about musical instruments of *La musique arabe dans le Maghreb* follows the part about melodic forms of instrumental music (1922, p. 2894), and the musical examples of the repertoires. Rouanet mentions the *kwītra* among the musical instruments of profane music in public spaces, but there is no reference to the *'ūd* (1922, p. 2829). It appears rather strange that the *kwītra* is not used in private music gatherings, feasts, weddings etc. In the 1920s, according to Rouanet, the *kwītra* was the "preferred" musical instrument for North African musicians, and presumably I might say, it was spread across Algeria rather than Tunisia. Today,

the *kwītra* is indeed a typically Algerian traditional instrument. It is mostly played in the regions of Algiers and Tlemcen. In the region of Constantine, it is replaced by the *'ūd 'arbī* (a point to which we will return), and is typically part of the ensemble which performs the *nūba*.

The idea and imagery of the *kwītra* being a guitar is very much present in Rouanet's writing too. «The *kwītra* is a guitar» (p. 2926) is a peculiar statement by Rouanet, which differentiates its form from the *'ūd*. From the instrument description and the drawing, the contrary is apparent since the *kwītra* is an instrument akin to the *'ūd*, as we see from Rouanet's successive description. The *kwītra* is made, in principle, of nine or ten ribs, as Rouanet attests. Each rib is cut to a mould, and the wood used, according to Rouanet, namely pear, walnut, chestnut and maple, coincide with today's practice. The body of the *kwītra* is much smaller and shallower than that of the eastern *'ūd*. The *kwītra*'s rosette, which differentiates it from the North African *'ūds* and the oriental *'ūd*, is shaped like an ace of spades or a «tree of life»; for Rouanet it is a flower vase, a particularly Hispano-Mauresque style (1922, p. 2926). The rosette is cut directly from the table and is not attached to the other piece of wood. According to Rouanet, the soundboard is made up of parts, it is not one solid piece, and this is the case for all North African lute construction. Around the soundboard, on the ribs, a strip of leather is attached, glued to strengthen the body with the face, against shocks to the ribs of the instrument which risk cracking and weakening the corners. The leather band is also explained by Rouanet for its practical use: the *kwītra* does not have a protection plate (*raqma*) as the *'ūds* have.

The strings go from the peg to the bridge which is glued to the soundboard. This bridge has a special form in the *kwītra* and in the Maghrebian *'ūd* in general: the form of a moustache. Rouanet emphasises this peculiar moustache shape in a detailed drawing that highlights his deep knowledge of the parts of the instrument. However, Rouanet misses the most important organology feature that distinguishes the North African lute from the eastern oud, namely the length of the neck. North African lutes have a longer neck than eastern ones - for the *kwītra*, as for the *'ūd 'arbī*, the note produced at the intersection of the body and the neck should be, at an interval of sixth major ( $5/3$  ratio) in relation to the note emitted by the open string. By comparison, in the eastern *'ūd*, the intersection is at the perfect fifth ( $3/2$ ). At the end of this handle, we find the peg, which does not have a right angle as for the eastern *'ūd*, but a much less accentuated angle noted by Rouanet.

Very much importance is given by Rouanet to the plectrum to strike the strings, through a figure and a detailed description (1922, p. 2926). As musicians reported, the plectrum used for *kwītra* is an eagle feather. This feather is stripped of its horny tip and beards. The spine is then cut longitudinally in half from a certain length, and only one of the resulting parts is kept. The feather is pre-soaked for about 48 hours in oil to make it more supple. The part of the spine thus softened is very delicately folded back into a pin. Finally, the two ends are tied with thread and allowed to dry, as is drawn on the page. The plectrum and other detailed drawings in Rouanet's pages resemble the instrument and objects used nowadays.

In historical terms, the instruments I wish to compare with Rouanet's description arrived at the Musée Instrumental of the Conservatoire Royal de Musique de Bruxelles in the 19<sup>th</sup> century - among other instruments - all of which were labelled *kouitara* by the curator and collector Victor- Charles Mahillon (1841-1924). These instruments have common features with the *kwītra* of Rouanet, but also nomenclature issues. Mahillon was appointed curator of the Musical Instruments Museum at the Brussels Conservatory on February 1<sup>st</sup>, 1877 (De Keyser, 2006, p. 5). These African *'ūds* possibly came to Europe 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 between 1879 and 1880. Further, Vermandele donated a further 27 African instruments (De Keyser, 2006, p. 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 *kouīṭāra* from Tunisia 0395 (De Keyser, 2006, p. 69). Mahillon noted that two instruments were from Tunisia 0395 (1878), 0877 (1896), one from Morocco 0392 (1878), and two from Algeria 0393, 0394 (Mahillon, 1978, p. 298). These instruments have a number of features connecting them specifically to North African *ūd*, only two of which are recognised today as being *kouītras* (0393, 0394). The remainder can be defined as Tunisian *ūd 'arbī* (0395, 0877), and Moroccan *ūd ramal* (0392), maintaining their geographical provenance attributed by Mahillon. Mahillon corresponded with his colleagues, curators such as Carl Engel in London, 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 *kouitaras* (1978, p. 3). The name *kouitara* instead must have been used widely in North Africa in the 19<sup>th</sup> century during exchanges with collectors and musicians, although its affiliation to a particular instrument might have occurred in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and specifically from Rouanet onwards (1922).

In this respect, in the second edition catalogue (1893), on the *kouitara* 0392's accompanying notes with pictures, its tuning is written in G clef notation. Information is given on how the strings are stroked and what material they are made of ([1978, p. 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 an *ūd*:

The King has just given new proof of the high protection with which he honours 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. (*Écho musical*, 1878, p. 7-12)

In the same periodical, the *kouitara* 0395 from Tunisia was confirmed as such: «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» (*Écho musical*, 1878, p. 7-12).

The names and the description of the instruments raise intriguing questions about their use and provenance. It is plausible that Mahillon either bought it from a display or directly from the musicians present there. However, the presence of small, plucked instruments is attested also by Rouanet. Besides the *kwītra*, he describes smaller ones as such: *el-qrineda* or *el-qrin'a*, being present especially in urban Moorish spaces in North Africa (1922, p. 2927).

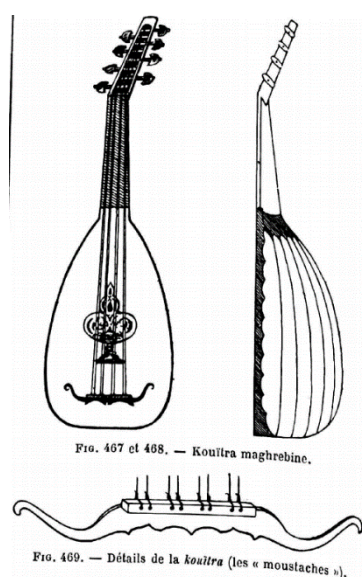


Figure 1 Rouanet's Kwitra



Figure 2 Kwitra 0349

Among those instruments preserved in the MIM museum, the *kwītra* 0349 reveals important information about Rouanet's text (see figure 1 and 2). It has a face over which a floral designed rosette is engraved directly into the wood and onto which a moustache shaped bridge is attached, and it has a leather edge cover. In terms of its design, the instrument 0349 does not differ from the model in *La Musique Arabe* by Rouanet, indeed, its close resemblance is the issue here. The proportions of the body (length 417mm), the neck (260mm) and diapason (598mm) make a standard form. Nine ribs, about 43mm wide, make the shell with a depth of 155mm. A strip of wood around the edge of the body is also present as in Rouanet's drawing. A flower-shaped rosette is carved directly out of the soundboard, with a diameter of 150mm (not really a diameter but widest points). The rosette pattern is the one named *el bernous* as for the Rouanet's *kwītra*. The bridge, measuring 180mm in length, is moustache shaped, glued directly onto the face, and only made of wood. This moustache design is the most common trend in North African lutes, especially Algerian ones (Christianowitsch, 1863). The style is characteristic of Algerian *kwītra* acquired by the Cité de la Musique in Paris (1873) in 1995 (Houssay and Früh, 2012). There is no pickguard to protect the surface from plectrum strokes. 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. It is 200mm long on the top side and 210mm on the back. The pegbox houses eight simple bone pegs. The pegs are probably made of rosewood. A similar peg design is identified in Rouanet's image. This comparison 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.

### The 'ūd according to Rouanet

The entry after the *kwītra* in the dictionary by Rouanet is the term: '*oud*, «the *kwītra* deriving from it (especially in terms of dimensions)» (1922, p. 2927). According to Rouanet, the *kwītra* resembles the *oud*, the Arab lute, which is not used anymore and is therefore replaced by it: «*ou trouve quelques luths au Maroc, dans l'Algérie orientale et à Tunis; mais on ne trouve presque plus de luthistes*». Although Rouanet points out material and structural features such as the

headstock angle and the shorter neck – the instrument more closely resembling ‘*uds* today - the clear-cut division between oriental (Egyptian ‘*uds*) and ‘*uds* ‘*arbī* which will be presented a few years later at the Cairo Congress 1932 is not evident. In the 20th century, Algeria had a prolific ‘*ūd* and *kwītra* making scene and the ‘*ūd* had experienced a significant use and development throughout North Africa. In an interview during the *mālūf* festival of Sfax in 2017, Cheikh Salim Fergani recalled several names of makers belonging to that period such as: Ben Cheikh Lefgoune, Raḥmin Guenassia and, Benelbedjaoui. Today, as indicated by the Algerian players Salim Dada, Salim Fergani and Badreddine Guettaf who I interviewed,<sup>1</sup> Algerians buy ‘*uds* ‘*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 doctoral research (2015-2017) attests to a mutual exchange of music culture between the two related musical traditions. Several times, the Tunisian scholar Mahmoud Guettat has analysed the relations of tuning systems between the North African and the eastern ones (Guettat, 1980, 2006, 2014), treating the Algerian tuning pattern as a variant of the others (Guettat, 2014, p. 14).

In the preceding essay, *La Musique Arabe*, which is focused on medieval sources, Rouanet explores questions of tuning, string names (*bamm*, *mathlath*, *mathna*, *zir*, *ḥādd*), fingering on the neck of the instrument, recognising the importance of incorporating the instrument into a broader Arab ‘*ūd* milieu, comparing features with other models in medieval manuscripts. He usefully details the importance, since roughly the 14<sup>th</sup> century, of historical evidence concerning music intervals and instrument making. Rouanet gives an overview of the existing theories of mathematical calculation of tetrachords and ‘*ūd* fingering from *Kitab al-aghani*, the Zalzal’s index to al-Farabi, providing analysis and descriptions of fret distances (*Zalzal*, *Persane* and *diatonique*) in detail (Rouanet, p. 2712-2715).

Similarly, the section about the plucked instruments (Rouanet, p. 2785-2786) explores in more detail the many types of existing ‘*ūd* in the Arab world. Quoting Kāmil al-Khula‘ī,<sup>2</sup> Rouanet questions, in terms of organology, how and in what ways the Egyptian ‘*ūd* differs from the other models through its modern tuning and measurements. Despite its generality, this work provides useful tables of comparisons of measurements of a substantial number of tetrachords, modal variations and tunings, which correspond to modern practice in the *Mashreq*.

### **Tuning as a crucial feature**

The tuning of the North African ‘*uds* consists of a fourth interval between the first and second strings, and a fifth, between the third and fourth strings. This combination of intervals places the highest pitch string (*cantino*) in the middle of the other three, often described as an “embraced” string position. Practically, the *cantino* is the third string rather than the first string, making it an internal tuning. It has raised questions for many musicologists regarding its provenance. The *kwītra* has a much lower tone than the other North African ‘*uds*. Rouanet opts for the most common convention, which consists in designating the highest string as the first string. Thus, for the *kwītra*: D is the first string, A is the second string, E is the third string, G is the fourth string, and it corresponds exactly to the instrument’s modern tuning. Rouanet does

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<sup>1</sup> Salīm Fergani, personal communication, 2 March 2017. Badreddine, Guettaf, personal communication, 18 June 2017.180 Salīm Dada, personal communication, 23 November 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Kāmil al-Khula‘ī (1870-1931) was a distinguished Egyptian musician, singer (with the theatrical ensemble of sheikh Salāmah Hijāzi), writer and composer (*muwashahat* and operettas).



not mention the Arabic name of the strings, rather the actual notes. The "Maghrebian 'ūd" tuning is an embraced tuning with a ratio of seconds between the fourth *dhīl* string and the second *māya* string, and between the third *hsīn* string and the first *ramal* string. The intervals are an upper sixth major ratio between the fourth string *dhīl* and the third string *hsīn*, a lower perfect fifth ratio between the third string *hsīn* and the second string *māya*, and a fourth ratio between the second *māya* string and the first *ramal* string. Rouanet highlights this peculiar tuning, its difficulties with regard to the fingering on the neck and the 5<sup>th</sup> interval. In this respect, he details the fingering on the instrument's neck, and gives information about the function of the tuning of the 4<sup>th</sup> string. In describing the 'ūd, a variety of tunings of six double courses of strings from Tlemcen, Morocco and Tunis are given (from the first to the sixth string): A, E, B, D, A, G, and A, E, C, G, D, A. Some tunings are ambiguous in terms of intervals among the open strings, and they are not attested anywhere else and neither do we know where they come from in terms of musical practices and genres.

What was known at the time of Rouanet about the tuning of the North African 'ūds is that it 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, p. 334). Several Algerian players such as Guettaf and Righī have confirmed to me that the note C is often tuned into A, forming an octave between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> strings, which is a constant and uniquely Tunisian feature (d 3<sup>rd</sup>, D 4<sup>th</sup>) among those Maghrebian tuning patterns. This octave interval is central to my argument here, which touches on other local factors embedded in its African context.

The intersecting relation between the West African lutes and North African 'ūds has been argued by the Tunisian scholar Zouheir Gouja (2014, p. 73-75), who compared several instruments' tunings across North African plucked instruments, such as *gumbrī*, '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. 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, already attested by Rouanet for the *kwītra*, 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 this peculiar aspect of the instrument.

As I have illustrated elsewhere (Morra, 2020), the North African 'ūds are an "African phenomenon" with respect to the "internal"- inward tuning. By this term, I mean that it points towards a sub-Saharan origin or relationship through its 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, 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, including Black African cultures that were disparaged by Rouanet (see Turner this volume). 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 practices in black communities known as the *Dīwān* in Algeria, the *gnāwa* of Morocco, and Tunisian *štambēlī* (see Turner). 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.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has ended with identifying how local ethnic factors are ordered, given meaning and ascribed function in the instruments themselves. In line with Rouanet's instrument classification, the North African lutes ('*ūd* and *kwītra*) are 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, nomenclature), and types (African and Maghrebian) 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 Algerian, Tunisian, Maghrebian, and for others African and Eastern.

I have concentrated on analysing an historical instrument, a *kwītra*, in the MIM museum in Brussels, whose aspects, shapes and measurements appear to be similar to the *kwītra* described in Rouanet's text. I have argued that the way the instruments were described is intricately related to questions about heritage construction and lineage of culture transmission for North African lutes passage from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I have demonstrated that the *kwītra* can be evaluated according to its designs, which are based on symbolic analogies, for example the rosette and the bridge shapes. These markers are the key to defining the instrument through intimate expressions held today by makers and players. Concerning exchanges between different communities in North Africa, I suggest that practices of certain tuning patterns evoke an encounter between Maghribis and sub-Saharan people and their fusion into a unique African version of the lute. I have also suggested that the tuning pattern shifts the *kwītra*'s context to a "non-Arab"/"non-Algerian" one which links it to sub-Saharan Africa. Equally important in accounting for the cultural significance of the North African '*ūds* has been an understanding of the interchange of Arab Andalusian - African cultures in which the instrument itself participates.

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