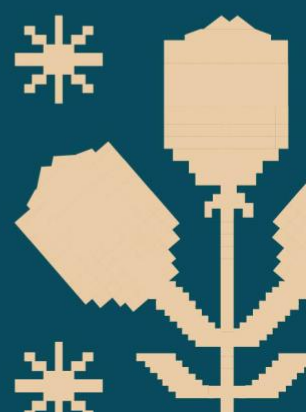


Action for Hope  
العمل للأمل

# ON THE TRACKS OF MUSIC

An Action for Hope Publication  
January 2025



## About Action for Hope

Action for Hope was established in 2015 with the aim of delivering cultural development and cultural relief programmes that respond to the cultural, social, and psychosocial needs of crisis-affected, marginalised, and displaced communities. The organisation is grounded in a strong belief in the role of arts and culture in supporting individuals and communities, particularly those living under difficult conditions and communities emerging from prolonged crises and conflicts.

Since its establishment and to date, Action for Hope has implemented a wide range of cultural and community-based interventions primarily targeting marginalised communities and displaced populations across the Arab region. Through its work, the organisation has sought to provide these communities with access to culture and with the tools necessary for creative expression, enabling them to enrich their lives, amplify their voices, preserve their cultural heritage, and contribute to the cultural landscape of both their own communities and host communities. In parallel with its field-based programming, the organisation has developed a research track that documents the relationship between conflict and its impacts on cultural production, including a study examining the effects of armed conflict on music in Mosul.



## On the Tracks of Music

On the Tracks of Music is a project led by Action for Hope, with its initial phase launched in 2022. The project aims to explore the arts of folk musical instrument making and deeply rooted traditional musical practices that continue to shape cultural identity across eleven communities in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Jordan. Through this project, Action for Hope has been able to identify and document dozens of artists, instrument makers, musical forms, folk instruments, dialects, and melodies within these eleven communities.

The research phase of the project was followed by hands-on training programmes targeting young musicians in each of the four countries, with the aim of introducing them to this artistic heritage. This was subsequently complemented by musical performances and exhibitions of folk instruments designed to bring this heritage to wider audiences. In addition, a dedicated website was launched, bringing together all collected and documented materials in both visual and written formats. Collectively, these activities create opportunities to safeguard the unique knowledge embedded within these communities, to reinterpret and revitalise it, and to share it with broader publics.

Supported by  
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In partnership with



This research was prepared on behalf of Action for Hope by:

Farah Kaddour

Inherit

Aphrodite Sorotou

## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>The Project .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Research Methodology .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Traditional Music Heritage .....</b>	<b>9</b>
Key actors on the preservation of music heritage .....	10
<b>A. Lebanon .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>A1. Hermel, Lebanon .....</b>	<b>11</b>
Community characteristics .....	11
Music Traditions .....	12
Artists.....	13
Instrument Makers .....	14
<b>A2. Akkar (El-Ghajar), Lebanon.....</b>	<b>15</b>
Community characteristics .....	15
Music Tradition.....	16
Artists .....	16
Instrument makers.....	20
<b>A3. Syrian Refugees in Bar Elias, Lebanon .....</b>	<b>21</b>
Community Characteristics .....	21
Music Traditions .....	23
Artists .....	23
.....	23
Instrument Makers .....	27
<b>B. Syria .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>B1. Hama Countryside and the city of Salamiyah .....</b>	<b>29</b>
Community Characteristics .....	29
Music Traditions .....	30
Artists .....	31
Instrument Makers .....	33
<b>B2. Tebke Village, Qamishli.....</b>	<b>33</b>
Community Characteristics .....	34
Music Traditions .....	35
Artists .....	36
Instrument Makers .....	41
<b>B3. Raqqa's Al Mishlab Neighborhood.....</b>	<b>43</b>
Community Characteristics .....	44
Music Traditions .....	45
Artists .....	45
Instrument Makers .....	49
<b>C. Iraq.....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>C1. Ba'ashiqah and Bahzani .....</b>	<b>50</b>
Community Characteristics .....	50
Music Traditions .....	51

Artists .....	51
Instrument Makers .....	55
<b>C2. Nimrud, Al-Tawfiqia Village .....</b>	<b>57</b>
.....	57
Community Characteristics .....	57
Music Traditions .....	58
Artists .....	58
Instrument Makers .....	61
<b>C3. Basra, Jaykur Village .....</b>	<b>62</b>
Community Characteristics .....	62
Music Traditions .....	63
Artists .....	63
Jabbar Kadhum Jabbar - Singer and Oud Player .....	63
Adnan Al-Saher - Multi-Instrumentalist .....	63
Adnan Al-Saher is a 57 years old singer, Ney and Mutbeg player from Jaykur, Abu Al-Khaseeb. He is the founder of a folk arts school in Basra. He is also a part of a Khashaba group that mainly performs in Basra and around. Adnan makes his own Ney and Mutbeg by himself, since Abu Al-Khaseeb is well known for its reeds. Like many of Basra's folk artists, Adnan seeks to preserve the heritage and authentic instruments and music of his land.....	63
Instrument Makers .....	64
Nathim Kathim Abboud - Kassour maker.....	65
<b>D. Jordan.....</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>D1. Al Taybah .....</b>	<b>66</b>
Community Characteristics: .....	66
Music Tradition.....	67
Artists .....	67
Instrument Makers .....	70
<b>D2. Jaber Border Crossing.....</b>	<b>72</b>
Community Characteristics .....	73
Music Tradition.....	73
Artists .....	74
Instrument Makers .....	74
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>Bibliography: .....</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>Contributors:.....</b>	<b>77</b>

## Introduction

### The Project

The Levant and Mesopotamia are renowned for their rich historical and artistic heritage, encompassing diverse fields such as music, sculpture, architecture, and literature, which have thrived through the region's ancient civilizations.

The destructive impact of armed violence is obvious on all aspects of life, including cultural expressions and practices, but it is particularly evident in the field of folk music. The armed conflict in Syria and the years of violent conflicts in Iraq have led to the forced displacement of many rural, Bedouin and Roma communities internally inside the two countries. On the other hand, the Levant and Mesopotamia regions have been experiencing the consequences of climate change since the end of the 20th century. Too many of these impacts have affected cultural life, due to the disappearance of different agricultural and social activities.

The countries of Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon are home to a rich landscape of traditional music that reflects the diverse cultural heritage of the region. Within these countries, various communities, such as the Bedouin, Dom, Roma, and refugees from different nationalities such as Syrian, Palestinian and Iraqi, have contributed to the vibrant musical landscape, preserving their cultural identities through their unique musical expressions. This article explores the traditional music heritage of these countries and communities, shedding light on their cultural significance and the ways in which they have shaped the musical traditions of the region.

Action for Hope focused on the rarely documented folk music of the Levant and Mesopotamia, particularly on eleven marginalized communities such as small villages, Bedouin and Roma communities, and refugee settlements in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq, through research, documentation, as well as developing the capacity of musicians from these communities by learning and performing folk music and songs, making the instruments associated with this music to protect them from extinction, and developing their capacity in the self-production and marketing to better promote themselves and their music.

Safeguarding the music heritage of Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon requires international collaboration and support. The international community, including organizations such as UNESCO, can play a crucial role in providing technical expertise, funding, and resources to aid in the preservation efforts. Partnerships with universities, cultural institutions, and NGOs can also facilitate knowledge exchange and capacity building, empowering local communities to take an active role in safeguarding their music heritage.

Thus, safeguarding the music heritage of the Levant and Mesopotamia is not only a matter of preserving cultural identity but also a means to foster resilience and sustainable development in times of conflict. By protecting their rich musical legacy, these countries can promote healing, revitalize local economies, preserve intangible cultural heritage, and promote dialogue and understanding. International collaboration and support are essential in ensuring the success of these efforts. Through the preservation of their music heritage, these nations can build a brighter future, rooted in their cultural traditions and resilient spirit

### The Rationale of the Project

In times of conflict, cultural heritage often becomes vulnerable to destruction and loss. The music heritage of Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon is no exception. However, safeguarding this rich musical legacy is crucial not only for preserving cultural identity but also for fostering resilience and sustainable development in these war-torn regions. We identify 5 reasons for the importance of protecting the music heritage of these countries and we highlight the potential benefits it can bring to their societies.

### *1- Preserving Cultural Identity:*

As we have stated above music is an integral part of the cultural identity of Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon. It reflects the diverse traditions, histories, and values of these nations. By safeguarding their music heritage, these countries can ensure that future generations have a connection to their roots, fostering a sense of pride and belonging. This preservation also serves as a powerful tool for cultural diplomacy, promoting understanding and dialogue between different communities.

### *2- Promoting Healing and Resilience:*

In times of conflict, music has the power to heal and provide solace to individuals and communities. It serves as a form of therapy, helping people cope with trauma and loss. By preserving and promoting their music heritage, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon can harness the healing power of music to aid in the recovery and resilience-building processes. Music can bring people together, bridging divides and fostering a sense of unity and hope amidst adversity.

### *3- Revitalizing Local Economies:*

The music heritage of these countries has the potential to contribute to sustainable development by revitalizing local economies. Cultural tourism, centred around music festivals, concerts, and heritage sites, can attract visitors from around the world, generating revenue and creating employment opportunities for local communities. This economic boost can help rebuild war-torn regions and provide a source of income for musicians and artisans, preserving their traditional crafts and skills.

## **Project Collective:**

This project has been implemented during 25 months in four countries which is Iraq, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, in partnership with three local partners who are MedeArts in Jordan, the Book Forum Foundation for Culture and Education in Mosul-Iraq, and Sumer Foundation for artistic talents development from Basra-Iraq, Basmah Baghdadiah from Baghdad-Iraq, Qisetna-Syria. In addition to the local partners, Action for Hope is partnering with INHERIT and Smart History in the United Kingdom, in the research and promoting field.

Action for Hope team:

- Basma ElHusseiny - Director
- Sara Zein - Project Manager
- Ihsan Al M'ani - Project Officer
- Rana Al Mardoud - Project Coordinator
- Zahra Dahous - Project Coordinator

## Research Methodology

The art and the knowledge of the eleven documented communities were the main basis of this project. Therefore, the process of establishing the methodology was highly precise to ensure the accurate documentation, recording, and analysis of the collected information.

The research methodology involved a combination of desk research, field visits, researcher selection, researcher training, and data collection.

The initial phase of the research involved desk research and field visits that happened between January and May 2023, conducted by the Action for Hope team. This helped in selecting the communities and assessing the feasibility of implementing the research and future activities in each community. An online call for researchers was made, with a focus on applicants from the selected communities. After online or physical interviews, the final researchers were selected. Eleven researchers from eleven communities, with either artistic or sociological academic background.

Selected researchers underwent a four-day online training led by Action for Hope and Inherit. The training covered an introduction to the project, an in-depth explanation of the research methodology, an introduction to the communities they would be working in, and technical and musical training on filming and recording.

The material collected during the research was divided into two sections: written and recorded. The written material was gathered through four questionnaires, which were filled out by the researchers in the communities they were working in. These questionnaires included the community questionnaire, which provided general information about the community socially, historically, geographically, and musically. The artists questionnaire focused on the music background and knowledge of each artist, while the instruments makers questionnaire focused on the backgrounds and knowledge of folk instrument makers. Finally, the tracks questionnaire described each music track that the researchers recorded.

Community	Community Questionnaire	Artists Questionnaires	Instrument Makers Questionnaires	Tracks Questionnaires
Hermel, Lebanon	1	11	1	11
Akkar, Lebanon	1	10	1	11
Syrian Refugees Camps, Lebanon	1	21	4	13
Hama countryside, Syria	1	13	2	18

<b>Tebke, Syria</b>	1	8	3	28
<b>Ar-Raqqah, Syria</b>	1	14	0	17
<b>Ba'ashiqah and Bahzani, Iraq</b>	1	10	3	10
<b>Al-Tawfiqia, Iraq</b>	1	9	2	7
<b>Jaykur, Iraq</b>	1	7	1	7
<b>Al-Taybah, Jordan</b>	1	13	4	13
<b>Jaber Border Crossing, Jordan</b>	1	6	4	11

After receiving the completed questionnaires, the AFH team reviewed them alongside the researchers to ensure that all aspects were thoroughly covered. The team supervised the translation in order to start the analysis and writing phase by Inherit.

Meanwhile, the musical material was in the post-production phase, where an artistic team reviewed all the recorded and filmed tracks and all their related information.

Several challenges showed up throughout the research and study, such as logistical, social, geographical and linguistic difficulties. Since obtaining accurate information about folk music is not easy, AFH team tried hard to overcome all obstacles by collaborating with experts and experienced artists.

Overall, this research methodology allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the selected communities, their musical traditions, and the individuals involved in preserving and creating music within these communities.

### Traditional Music Heritage of Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon

The countries of Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon are home to a rich landscape of traditional music that reflects the diverse cultural heritage of the region. Within these countries, various communities, such as the Bedouin, Dom, Gypsies, and refugees from different nationalities such as Syrian, Palestinian and Iraqi, have contributed to the vibrant musical landscape, preserving their cultural identities through their unique musical expressions. This article explores the traditional music heritage of these countries and communities, shedding light on their cultural significance and the ways in which they have shaped the musical traditions of the region.

#### Traditional Music Heritage

The traditional music heritage of Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon is a testament to the cultural diversity and resilience of the region. These countries have been influenced by a multitude of communities, each with their own distinct musical traditions.

The Bedouin, nomadic tribes inhabiting the desert regions, have a rich musical heritage characterized by rhythmic percussion, melodic chants, and the use of traditional instruments such as the Rababah and Mijwiz, as we will see in the communities of Hama countryside, Syria and Hermel, Lebanon. Their music reflects their close connection to the desert environment and their way of life, often celebrating themes of love, honour, and bravery.

The Dom community, also known as the Nawar / Ruhhal, represented in this research by the Turki Tribe in Akkar, Lebanon, and Jaber borders crossing, Jordan, has made significant contributions to the traditional music of the region. The Dom people, of Indian origin, have a distinct musical style characterized by lively rhythms, intricate melodies, and expressive vocals. Their music often accompanies traditional dances and celebrations, serving as a means of cultural expression and identity. The Gypsies, also known as the Romani people, have played a significant role in shaping the musical traditions of the region. The Gypsy music reflects their nomadic lifestyle and cultural heritage, incorporating elements from various regions they have traversed (Al-Taee, 2019).

The refugee communities residing in these countries have also contributed to the traditional music heritage. For example, Palestinian refugees have preserved their traditional music, which serves as a reminder of their cultural heritage and a means of resilience in the face of displacement. The refugee community is represented here by the Bar Elias Refugees camps, Lebanon, who brought a great mixture of their diverse cultures into one place.

The rural communities, such as Al-Tawfiqia, Ba'ashiqah, Bahzani and Jaykur Iraq, Al-Taybah, Jordan, Ar-Raqqah and Tebke, Syria, have a great treasure of folk tunes. By looking at the relation between these communities and their lands, one can understand the deep presence of music in their daily life, accompanying them with all the activities they do.

#### Key actors on the preservation of music heritage

In the context of cultural preservation in the communities we worked with in Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon there are several key figures who play a significant role in upholding and promoting cultural heritage. These individuals include:

1. **Artisans and craftsmen:** The specialized artisans and craftsmen who excel in traditional crafts such as instrument making are key figures in preserving cultural traditions. They pass down their skills and knowledge to future generations, ensuring the continuity of these traditional practices.
2. **Educators and community leaders:** Teachers and educators in the public schools as well as community leaders and elders, play a crucial role in promoting cultural preservation. They emphasize the importance of knowledge and encourage the appreciation and understanding of cultural heritage among the younger generation.
3. **Local organizations:** Organizations that are instrumental in supporting educational initiatives and cultural preservation efforts. They provide resources, guidance, and platforms for showcasing and celebrating cultural traditions.
4. **Musicians and artists:** Musicians and artists who perform traditional music, participate in cultural events, and create artwork inspired by folklore contribute to the preservation of their cultural heritage. Their artistic expressions serve as a means of storytelling and keeping traditions alive.

5. Community members: The residents themselves are key figures in cultural preservation. Their active participation in religious and social events, their commitment to passing down traditions within their families, and their embrace of diversity contribute to the preservation and celebration of cultural heritage.

These key figures, through their collective efforts, ensure that cultural traditions are upheld, celebrated, and passed onto future generations in the communities we approached.

## A. Lebanon

### A1. Hermel, Lebanon

#### Community characteristics

Nestled in the northeastern region of Lebanon, Hermel stands as a beacon of cultural richness and tradition. With an elevation reaching 780 metres above sea level, with a dry and arid climate, and a population of approximately 50,000, Hermel serves as a vibrant city steeped in history and heritage. Situated 143 km away from the capital city of Beirut, its closest urban center is Baalbek.

One of the intriguing aspects of Hermel is its demographic makeup. With 27,597 male and 29,132 female inhabitants, the community boasts an interesting balance in terms of gender representation. This balance is reflective of the inclusive nature of the community.

Agriculture has long been the backbone of Hermel's economy. However, as the economic landscape evolved, the community has transitioned to include crafts and services as well. This evolution has allowed Hermel to adapt to the changing times and ensure the survival and prosperity of its residents.

The major tribes and families in Hermel, such as Saqr, Taha, Nasreddine, Allaw, Hamadah, Sahili, and Mismar, contribute to the rich cultural landscape of the community. These families have passed down their traditions and customs through generations, ensuring that the heritage of Hermel remains intact.

Despite facing challenges like sporadic electricity and limited internet access, in addition to the ongoing climate change consequences, the community of Hermel thrives on its traditions. Religious and national celebrations are observed with fervour, accompanied by unique



customs and rituals. These celebrations serve as a reminder of the community's deep-rooted values and beliefs.

One such celebration is the commemoration of Ashura, a special Shiite religious occasion. During this event, sorrowful music fills the air as the community pays homage to their religious history. The distinct rituals associated with Ashura are passed down through generations and help to connect the community to its past.

Communication with neighbouring communities, such as the Bedouin, Roma, Dom, and rural communities, is based on necessity. The relationship with these communities is particularly important when it comes to agricultural activities. The dry and somewhat arid climate of the region shapes the lifestyle and practices of the community, making cooperation with neighbouring communities crucial.

In conclusion, the history of Hermel is marked by a shift from an agricultural-based economy to one focused on crafts and services. This transformation has had a profound impact on the community's economic landscape. Wedding customs, particularly the traditional "Henna" ceremony and the exchange of dowry, are essential components that foster social unity within the community. The municipality plays a critical role in facilitating cultural activities and providing training opportunities. Their endeavors contribute to the conservation and enhancement of the community's cultural heritage embodying the spirit of tradition and resilience. Despite challenges, the community remains steadfast in preserving its rich cultural heritage. With its diverse demographics, strong ties to agriculture, and deep appreciation for music and traditions, Hermel stands as a thriving and vibrant community in Lebanon.

### Music Traditions

In the town of Hermel, the music scene is a beautiful combination of old folk tunes and modern melodies. Traditional instruments such as the Rababa, Minjaira / Shabbabah, Ney, oud, and Tabel are still very much a part of the local music scene, resonating the echoes of ancient folk tunes. However, the town's musical landscape has also embraced modern instruments like the guitar, and keyboard piano, bringing a contemporary twist to the music.

Musicians in Hermel do not primarily rely on their craft for income. They participate in regular training sessions organized by the municipality, where they are taught both modern and traditional musical skills. This shows the community's dedication to preserving their rich musical heritage and passing it down to the younger generations.

Music is celebrated on various social and religious occasions in Hermel, and it is notable how music is performed in joyous occasions such as weddings, Henna, family gatherings, as well as in sad occasions like mourning, where specific genres like "Furaqiyat" are performed.

While Hermel has a rich musical tradition, the town primarily imports musical instruments, including the Rababa, from craftsmen in cities like Tripoli and others. This focus on importing rather than crafting instruments locally reflects the reality of folk music and the challenges it faces, particularly from an economic perspective, as the demand for these instruments is relatively low.



Overall, Hermel's musical landscape is a harmonious blend of the old and the new, where ancient folk tunes intersect with modern melodies. The community's dedication to preserving their musical heritage is evident in the regular training sessions and celebrations that take place throughout the year.

### Artists

From soulful folk melodies to captivating performances, Hermel's musical landscape reflects the deep-rooted traditions and unique artistic expressions of its talented performers. This section delves into the lives and artistry of four remarkable performers who embody the spirit of Hermel's musical heritage.

#### Farah Samer Bleibel

Farah Samer Bleibel brings a fresh perspective to Hermel's musical landscape. As a 23-year-old Occupational Therapy Specialist, Farah's passion for music transcends boundaries, blending oriental and occidental styles with finesse. With instruments like the Oud and Guitar at her disposal, Farah infuses her performances with a contemporary flair, often accompanied by a band featuring Piano, Tabla, Clarinet, and Violin. Her innovative approach to music composition and performance reflects the evolving cultural dynamics of Hermel, bridging tradition with modernity.

#### Mohammad Ali Iskandar

Mohammad Ali Iskandar, a seasoned folk singer at 50 years old, epitomizes the essence of Hermel's musical heritage. Specializing in 'Ataba and the folk Jabali (rural) music genre, Mohammad's performances exude authenticity and emotional depth. Rooted in family traditions and childhood experiences, his soulful renditions of separation, romance, and love resonate deeply with audiences at weddings, sad occasions, and family gatherings. Mohammad's dedication to preserving Hermel's musical legacy ensures that the region's cultural heritage continues to thrive for generations to come.

#### Suleiman Ali Allaw

Suleiman Ali Allaw, aged 56, is a multifaceted artist, excelling as a singer and proficient player of the Rababa, Ney, and Oud. His repertoire spans Lebanese folklore, with a particular emphasis on Furaqiyat (separation songs), Shuruqi, and 'Ataba. Suleiman's versatile voice allows him to traverse various music genres, captivating audiences with his performances at joyous and sombre occasions alike. With a rich musical background rooted in childhood

experiences and formal training under master Chakib Hamada, Suleiman's contributions to Hermel's musical legacy are profound and enduring.

#### Rizk Ahmad Iskandar

At 66 years old, Rizk Ahmad Iskandar is a seasoned folk artist renowned for his mastery of Zajal, 'Ataba, and poetry. What sets him apart is his unique integration of monologue with folklore, seamlessly blending critical poetry with traditional melodies. From religious poems on Mawlid of the Prophet Muhammad to Ashura poetry, Rizk's performances resonate deeply with audiences at [weddings](#), henna ceremonies, and funerals. While he plays various instruments like the Tabla, oud, and Rababa, Rizk's distinctive use of a wooden table as a percussion instrument adds a personal touch to his compositions.

#### Instrument Makers

This section delves into the craftsmanship and traditions of instrument makers in Hermel, Lebanon. From the melodic strains of the Rababa to the intricate details of crafting the beloved instrument, this artisan preserves a cultural legacy that transcends generations.

#### Suleiman Ali Allaw

Suleiman Ali Allaw, a 56-year-old Rababa player, stands as a guardian of tradition and master craftsman of this musical instrument. Born into a lineage of individuals deeply intertwined with the musical heritage of Hermel, Suleiman's journey with the Rababa began in his formative years, where its melodic strains became the soundtrack of his upbringing.

The Rababa carries with it a rich legacy, likely crafted by Bedouins and passed down through generations. Suleiman's expertise lies not only in playing this ancient instrument but also in the intricate art of its creation. With meticulous attention to detail, he selects the finest materials for its construction, including curved bows, strings, alfun (Rosin), gazal (bridges), and the neck, which can be crafted from anvil wood, goatskin, sheep skin, or plastic.



Crafting a Rababa is a labour of love, requiring precise measurements and skilled hands. Suleiman's process involves manufacturing the wood in a lathe, ensuring each component meets the instrument's exact specifications. He sources horsehair for the bow from a friend in Beirut, while other elements like the bow and rosin / colophony are acquired from local suppliers. While he occasionally uses ready-made moulds, Suleiman's craftsmanship shines as he adds his own touches and accessories to each instrument.

Despite the economic challenges and shifting landscape of the art world, Suleiman remains steadfast in his dedication to preserving Rababa's legacy. He views the instrument not as a mere commodity but as a cherished inheritance to be safeguarded for future generations.

While he seldom sells his creations, when he does, it is to individuals who share his passion for music and reverence for tradition. For Suleiman, the true value of the Rababa lies not in its price tag but in its ability to convey the message of art and connect communities across time and space.

## A2. Akkar (El-Ghajar), Lebanon

### Community characteristics

Situated between Halba and Qobayat in Kouachrah, Akkar, Al-Ghajar or Al-Ruhhal as they prefer to be called, presents an inviting tableau of distinct traditions. A community consisting of approximately 120 to 150 residents, along with approximately 350 descendants belonging to the same tribe “Al-Turki ”which also exist in Syria, maintains a near perfect equilibrium



between male and female inhabitants. The illiteracy in this community is very high, as the percentage of those who can read and write is almost 5%. No educational institutions within the camp, and due to the high poverty rate, people cannot enroll their children in nearby schools. Notably, the profession spectra within this society underscores a

significant interest in artistry. Male members are proficient at constructing harmonious scenery using traditional musical instruments such as Tabel, Buzuqs, and Mizmars; whereas women sustain their contributions through agricultural activities and attending household affairs.

Notwithstanding the endeavour for preservation of traditionality within the community framework, education lies dormant due to fiscal limitations experienced by inhabitants. Al-Ruhhal wrestles with an array of tribulations including unsystematic electricity supply, constricted water accessibility and sporadic internet coverage - factors that rendered majority of its populace unregistered yet brimming pride on their ancestral linkage to Bani Murra tribe.

Celebrations marking Islamic festivals garner significant acclaim in El-Ghajar, offering local artists valuable opportunities for creative expression. Music is an integral part of daily life among the populace, with folk tunes receiving substantial patronage. These are often accompanied by the resonant sounds of instruments such as the Tabel, Mizmar, Buzuq, and Minjaira/Shabbabah, which are central to the region's performance traditions. For many who are living here music forms not only recreational pastime but also provides sustenance contributing significantly towards catalysing local economy despite craftsmanship associated with said musical instruments remaining restricted locally.

A dive into cultural backdrop backing Akkar's existence brings forward Machta Hammoud originating close-knit ties around Wadi Khaled region accentuating rich historical intricately with musically enriched narrative was seen singing across ages.

Although external relationships remained hampered by commutation-difficulty sprung impediments plaguing communications further hamstringing interactions outside region inter-weaved closely knit families like Abu Turki sharing common love for musical compositions traversing ages.

### Music Tradition

For Al-Ruhhal, in Akkar, folk music isn't just art but a way of life, providing income for many and representing deep-rooted family traditions. The Abu Turki family exemplifies this heritage, with their notable artistic skills involving both genders, reflecting the community's inclusive stance towards women in the arts. Songs often reference the area's agricultural past, showcasing the enduring link to the land.

Locals prefer instruments like the Tabel, Mizmar, Buzuq, and Minjair / Shabbabah, often sourced from Syria, indicating a shared musical heritage. Instrument repair, particularly Tabel, offers further economic opportunities.



### Artists

#### Jamal Khaled Turki - Tabel Player

Jamal Khaled Turki, a 26-year-old percussionist, specializes in playing the Tabel. Located in Kouachrah, Jamal embodies the rhythmic heartbeat of Syria's musical landscape. Although specific genre information is not provided, Jamal's insights shed light on the widespread presence of the Tabel in regions such as rural Homs, Tartus, Akkar, Baalbek, and Hermel.

The Tabel, deeply rooted in Bedouin and rural cultural traditions, is frequently performed during social gatherings, encompassing both celebratory and mournful occasions, thereby transcending the boundaries between joy and sorrow. Whether performed solo or as part of an ensemble, the Tabel's presence is indispensable, complementing instruments like the Buzuq and Minjair / Shabbabah. Jamal's familial lineage serves as his musical foundation, with knowledge passed down from grandparents to parents and grandchildren, ensuring the continuity of the Tabel's rhythmic tradition.

Although Jamal does not currently engage in formal teaching, his willingness to share his expertise reflects a commitment to preserving the Levant's musical legacy. Playing the Tabel

by ear, Jamal infuses each performance with spontaneity and authenticity, showcasing his keen ear and innate talent. Jamal's mastery lies in his ability to express rhythmic patterns through oral articulation, such as "dom es" and "dom tak." These rhythmic motifs, though unnamed, resonate across various musical genres, highlighting the Tabel's versatility and adaptability.

In Jamal Khaled Turki, we encounter a steward of the Levant's rhythmic heritage, whose Tabel performances echo across landscapes of celebration and reflection, weaving a narrative of cultural resilience and musical vitality.

#### Khaled Rabih Turki - Tabel Player

Khaled Rabih Turki, a 25-year-old Tabel player, resides in Kouachrah, overlooking the serene waters of its lake. Specializing in playing the Tabel, Khaled's musical journey is deeply rooted in Bedouin culture, resonating with the rhythms of social gatherings and both joyous and sorrowful occasions.

Khaled's Tabel playing is a cherished tradition passed down through generations of his family. With a humble demeanour, Khaled expresses his willingness to teach others and has a keen interest in learning the craft of instrument crafting himself.

In terms of instrumentation, Khaled primarily plays the Tabel, a traditional percussion instrument prevalent in the region of the Levant. His instrument was purchased in Syria, with an average price of 150 USD, from specialized craftspeople in Talkalakh, southern Homs.

While Khaled's repertoire encompasses themes of romance and *furaqiyat*, his performances are characterized by Arabic lyrics delivered in the distinct Bedouin dialect. With a commitment to preserving traditional music, Khaled adds depth and authenticity to his performances, infusing each rendition with the emotions of the occasion.

#### Khaled Abdallah Turki - Mizmar Player

Khaled Abdallah Turki, aged 47, is a versatile musician residing in Kouachrah, with a repertoire spanning genres like 'Ataba, Dabke, and *furaqiyat*. His mastery of the Mizmar, a traditional wind instrument, adds a unique flair to his performances, evoking the cultural richness of regions like rural Homs, Tartus, Akkar, Baalbak, and Hermel.

Despite his proficiency in playing the Mizmar, Khaled's musical journey extends to teaching his children and exploring the intricacies of instrument crafting. His commitment to preserving traditional music is evident, as he endeavours to pass down his knowledge to future generations. Through his performances, Khaled brings to life the timeless themes of romance and [furaqiyat](#), uniting communities with the universal language of music.

Khaled's instrument, the Mizmar, is a staple in the regions of the Turkmen and the Kurds, as well as in other regions of the Levant.. While the specifics of his instrument's purchase location and craftsmanship remain undisclosed, Khaled's dedication to his craft and heritage shines through in each melodic rendition, enriching the cultural tapestry of his surroundings.

### Khodor Rabih Turki - Tabel Player

Khodor Rabih Turki, a 25-year-old Tabel player, resides in Kouachrah, Specializing in playing the Tabel, Khodor's performances are deeply ingrained in Bedouin culture, often accompanying social gatherings and both joyous and sorrowful occasions.

Khodor's Tabel playing is a cherished tradition passed down through generations of his family. With a commitment to preserving traditional music, Khodor's performances resonate with the emotions of the occasion, adding depth and authenticity to each rendition.

In terms of instrumentation, Khodor primarily plays the Tabel, a traditional percussion instrument prevalent in the region of the Levant. His instrument was purchased in Syria, with an average price of 150 USD, from specialized craftspeople in Talkalakh, southern Homs.

While specifics regarding maqamat and rhythmic patterns remain undisclosed, Khodor's performances often feature themes of romance and furaqiyat, with lyrics delivered in the distinct Bedouin dialect. With a passion for his craft, Khodor continues to enrich the cultural tapestry of his surroundings through the universal language of music.

### Mohamad Turki - Tabel Player and Singer

Mohamad Turki, 27 years old, is a multifaceted artist proficient in Tabel playing and singing. Residing in Kouachrah, Mohamad's musical repertoire includes genres like Dabke and Mawwal, deeply rooted in the cultural traditions of the region.

Similar to Waed, Mohamad's performances resonate with the emotions of social gatherings and both joyous and sorrowful occasions. Whether performing solo or as part of a band, he showcases his talents on instruments like the Tabel, Mizmar, Buzuq, and Minjaira / Shabbabah.

Mohamad's commitment to preserving traditional music is evident in his craftsmanship, as he personally crafts his Minjaira / Shabbabah by hand. His Tabel, purchased in Syria for 150 USD, was acquired from specialized craftspeople in rural Homs.

### Nadima Turki - Singer

Nadima Turki, a 50-year old housewife, brings the rich tapestry of Bedouin music to life through her soulful renditions of Mawwal, and her performances are deeply rooted in social gatherings and both joyous and sorrowful occasions.

With a heritage passed down through generations, Nadima's singing style is characterized by its authenticity and emotional depth. Often accompanying instruments like the Buzuq and Minjaira / Shabbabah, her [performances](#) resonate with the cultural traditions of her community.

While details about Nadima's musical education and repertoire remain scarce, her dedication to preserving traditional music is evident. Through her timeless melodies and poignant lyrics, Nadima captivates audiences, preserving the essence of Bedouin culture for generations to come.

### Omar Mohamad Turk – Buzuq player

Omar Mohamad Turki is a 20-year-old Buzuq player. His musical style/genre is Dabke and 'Aataba, which are traditional genres found in Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon and Palestine. These genres are commonly associated with Bedouin and Rural culture and are characterized by social gatherings, joyous and sorrowful occasions.

Omar can perform either solo or [with a band](#). In the case of a band, the Buzuq is considered the main instrument, accompanied by the Tabel and Mizmar. He learned to play the Buzuq from his relative, Najah Shaarani, who is a renowned player and the husband of Omar's aunt.

Although Omar does not currently offer formal teaching, he expresses willingness to teach the Buzuq to others. He mainly plays the electric Buzuq for work necessities, but in the region, this instrument is also played by the Turkmen and the Kurds, especially in areas like rural Homs, Tartus, and Akkar.

If someone is interested in purchasing a Buzuq, Omar suggests buying it in Syria for an average price of \$150. He recommends purchasing from craftspeople who are skilled in tuning Greek and Turkish instruments, mentioning Najah Shaarani in Syria. While Omar has not attempted to self-craft a Buzuq, he is open to learning the craft in the future.

According to Omar, Bayati is the most commonly performed Maqam, and the most known rhythmic patterns are Wahda, Arab, Maqsum, Laff, and Ayubi, which are commonly found in Arabic music.

The themes of their songs often revolve around romance and furaqiyat (separations). All the lyrics in their songs are in Arabic and are sung in the Bedouin dialect. The performers add lyrics and parts to their songs based on the occasion and dedicate them to specific individuals.

### Rabih Abdallah Turki - Tabel Player

Rabih Abdallah Turki, aged 45, is a seasoned Tabel player residing in Kouachrah, with a repertoire spanning genres like 'Ataba, Dabke, furaqiyat, and Shaabi folklore. His mastery of the Tabel adds a unique flair to his performances, evoking the cultural richness of regions like rural Homs, Tartus, Akkar, Baalbak, and Hermel.

In addition to his musical prowess, Rabih is dedicated to passing down his knowledge to future generations, teaching his children the art of playing the Tabel. His commitment to preserving traditional music is evident, as he continues to explore the intricacies of instrument maintenance and craftsmanship.

### Waed Turki - Tabel Player and Singer

Waed Turki is a talented Tabel player and singer residing in Kouachrah. His musical repertoire encompasses genres like Dabke and Mawwal, deeply rooted in Bedouin culture and tradition.

Despite the absence of specific information regarding his musical genre and regional characteristics, Waed's performances resonate with the emotions of social gatherings and both joyous and sorrowful occasions. With a versatile skill set, he is adept at performing solo

or as part of a band, often accompanied by instruments like the Tabel, Mizmar, Buzuq, and Minjaira / Shabbabah.

Waed's performances often feature themes of romance, delivered in the distinct Bedouin dialect. Through his music, Waed enriches the cultural landscape of his community, bridging generations with the timeless melodies of tradition.

### Instrument makers

Instrument making in Akkar, is a cherished tradition that has been passed down through generations. The region is known for its skilled artisans who meticulously craft musical instruments, preserving the cultural heritage of the area.

### Muhammad Turki - Tabel Maker

One such artisan is Muhammad Turki, a former Tabel player and expert in Tabel tightening. Residing in Kouachra, Muhammad's craftsmanship and dedication to preserving the ancient art of Tabel making are commendable.

Muhammad Turki, is a highly skilled Tabel maker who currently does not have regular work. Having previously been a Tabel player himself, Muhammad possesses a deep understanding of the instrument and its intricacies. He resides in the picturesque village of El Kouachra, which offers a serene backdrop of the beautiful lake of Machta Hammoud.

The Tabel, an ancient instrument, holds significant historical importance in several regions and cultures. Muhammad's expertise lies in the various components of the Tabel, including the shell, pads, rings, leather, and tension ropes.

For the shell, Muhammad utilizes walnut wood, known for its durability and resonance. As for the pads and rings, he sources readymade ones from Syria. The choice of material for the pads and rings includes goatskin or plastic rolls, catering to different preferences and budgets. The leathers used in the Tabel are purchased from local livestock slaughterhouses.

The Tabel is played with beaters, and Muhammad crafts these beaters manually. Using laurel or lemon wood, he creates beaters known as Toshkan for the Dom (Bassy sound) beater and Tayrak for the Tak (high pitched sound) beater. While the shell, pads, and rings are readymade, Muhammad's craftsmanship shines through in the creation of the beaters, adding a personal touch to each instrument.

Muhammad's dedication to preserving the art of Tabel making is evident in his commitment to [passing down the knowledge to future generations](#). He inherited the craft from his father and has taught his children how to install the leather. However, due to the increasing demand for plastic materials, the focus has shifted away from leather processing.



When it comes to pricing, Muhammad offers Tabel tightening services for players and amateurs. The cost varies based on the materials used, with goatskin costing \$60, plastic costing \$30, and Tabel beaters priced at \$15. The craftsmanship itself also influences the final price, as intricate detailing and expertise are valued.

Despite his current lack of regular work, Muhammad remains passionate about his craft. He laments the decreasing demand for genuine leather, which has been gradually replaced by the rising popularity of plastic materials. However, his dedication to preserving the art of Tabel making remains unwavering.

Muhammad Turki's expertise and commitment to Tabel making contribute to the rich cultural heritage of Akkar. His craftsmanship ensures that the ancient tradition of Tabel playing continues to thrive, allowing future generations to appreciate and embrace this musical legacy.

### A3. Syrian Refugees in Bar Elias, Lebanon

#### Community Characteristics

The Syrian refugee camps in Bar Elias, near Zahle in Lebanon, are a thriving and resilient community. The camps benefit from its close proximity to urban resources in Zahle. With a population of approximately 55,000 refugees, each individual brings their unique contributions to the community. It is important to



note that 60% of the refugees in the camps are engaged in various professions, including agriculture and manual labor.

Within the camps, there are specialized craftsmen who excel in crafting Tannur ovens, as well as individuals skilled in construction trades such as carpenters, concrete workers, painters, gypsum workers, and electricians. Education is also valued in Bar Elias, with public schools offering primary and secondary education, along with a vocational school. Local organizations like Hand-Sawa-Alphabet play a crucial role in expanding educational opportunities within the camps.

While water resources are relatively available in the camps, there are challenges with electricity and internet connection due to high bills. Essential services are a vital part of the daily lives of the camp's residents. Bar Elias is a diverse community, with both Lebanese hosts and Syrian refugees coexisting and blending cultures. Syrians from various governorates and clans, such as Tay, Bakara, Na'im, and others, contribute their unique perspectives from

places like Idlib, Raqqa, Deir Ezzor, Al Hasakah, and Homs. Families from Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, Hama, and Idlib further enrich the cultural mosaic of the camps.

Bar Elias, with its rich cultural and religious celebrations, is a vibrant and diverse community. Religious events such as Eid Al-Fitr, Eid Al-Adha, and Al-Mawlid Al-Nabawi hold great significance for the residents. Weddings and circumcisions for boys also mark important social occasions.

Music and cultural practices play a central role in Bar Elias, serving as expressions of identity. Music festivals, Arab mansaf banquets, Eastern Dabke dancing, and performances featuring instruments like the Mizmar and Tabel bring the community together. Nasheeds, or religious chants, are heard during harvests, mourning, Hajj journeys, and Al-Mawled Al-Nabawi.

Weddings in Bar Elias are notable for their regional music showcases. Cities tend to favor Arab performances, while the countryside resonates with folk songs and dabke, a traditional dance. Memorial services accompany sorrows and funerals, adding to the musical weave that binds the community together.

Language, particularly Arabic, serves as a unifying force in Bar Elias. Despite the presence of diverse dialects from various Syrian governorates, historical connections and intermarriage facilitate seamless communication among residents.

The historical roots of Bar Elias can be traced back to ancient Syrian kingdoms and civilizations like Aramaic, Assyrian, Chaldean, and Ugarit. The community has also been influenced by Romans, Muslims, and Ottomans, which have all shaped its cultural landscape. Music, in particular, has thrived in Bar Elias through the ages, notably during the Abbasid era and in Andalusia.

Situated within the confines of a relatively temperate climate, Bar Elias enjoys enduring historical ties and intermarriages among Syrian communities - a testament to its rich cultural heritage. The unified Arabic language fuels unimpeded communication across all community boundaries, forming an inclusive linguistic bridge that extends even to the Dom community. Despite their unique customs, this shared language binds them together in commonality.

Peeling away at Bar Elias' surface reveals a narrative threaded with resilience, enriching cultural diversity and unwavering communal spirit amidst the harsh realities of displacement. Moreover, the camps symbolizes more than just a geographical entity; it stands as an enduring monument to the grit, vigor and strength demonstrated by Lebanon's displaced Syrian populace.

Such strength is borne out of interwoven histories, diverse cultures and above all else- an indomitable sense of unity amongst its population. This encapsulates not only their alarming survival journey but also brings forth potent tales of human resilience demonstrating how through shared history and culture one can find solidarity in adversity.

## Music Traditions

In the Syrian refugee camps near Bar Elias, music serves as a means of livelihood for many residents. The community's musical tradition is rooted in the Oriental-Turkmen genre. The method of teaching music is passed down from generation to generation, preserving cultural continuity. What's striking is the acceptance and integration of music into their daily lives, emphasizing its cultural significance. Women play an active role, performing specific songs, especially during events like the Henna ceremony. A variety of instruments, including Oud, buzuq, Mazhar, Tabla, Tabel, Ney, Mizmar, Minjairia / Shabbabah, and Rababa, are utilized. Notably, these instruments are crafted within the village and the camps, using materials such as reeds, leather, lace, wood, silver, and plastic. The unique use of the Mihbaj as a percussion instrument that is originally used for preparing Arabic coffee, accompanied by singing and music, underscores the intertwining of music with everyday activities. The community expresses a keen interest in learning and preserving their musical heritage, with adults aspiring to acquire craftsmanship skills and passing them down to the younger generation.



## Artists

In the heart of the Syrian refugee camps in Bar Elias, amidst the trials of adversity, a community of artists, poets, musicians, and custodians of tradition breathe life into the rich legacy of Syrian folklore. From the ancient melodies of Zajal and Furaqiyat to the rhythmic beats of Tabel and Mizmar, these artists, spanning different generations, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, serve as torchbearers of their cultural heritage. Within this community, each artist's story is a testament to the enduring spirit of the Syrian people amidst displacement. Despite the challenges they face, these artists continue to create, inspire, and share their cultural heritage with the world. Through their music, poetry, and artistic expressions, they provide a sense of identity and belonging for themselves and their fellow refugees. Their performances are a reminder of the rich cultural heritage that exists beyond the confines of the refugee camps. Their stories are a testament to the resilience and strength of the human spirit, as they navigate the challenges of displacement with grace and creativity.

### Ahmad Turkmani - Mizmar Player

Ahmad Turkmani, a Mizmar player and traditional Damascus "Arada" dancer, originally from Damascus countryside, Syria, residing in Bar Elias, epitomizes the enduring legacy of oriental music traditions. Ahmad's musical journey reflects the rich tapestry of Damascus's dialect folklore. His [performances](#), characterized by the vibrant tunes of Mizmar, Oud, Tabel, Rababa, and Tabla, captivate audiences at weddings and other social ceremonies. Ahmad's dedication to craftsmanship is evident in his desire to learn and preserve the nuances of traditional instruments, ensuring the continuity of musical heritage for generations to come.

#### Ahmad Salman Sheikh Naassan - Percussionist

Ahmad Salman Sheikh Naassan, a freelancer from Idlib, Syria, residing in Bar Elias, assumes the role of ambassador of Levantine percussion, weaving a melodic tapestry with Zajal, Hajini, and Furaqiyat. Ahmad's rhythmic performances, punctuated by the beats of Tabla and Tabel, enliven weddings and social gatherings across the region. Inherited from his family and pursued as a hobby, Ahmad's mastery of percussion instruments serves as a testament to Syria's rich musical heritage, resonating with audiences far beyond geographical confines.

#### Abed Ahmad Turkmani - Percussionist

Abed Ahmad Turkmani, a young percussionist hailing from Damascus countryside, Syria, residing in Bar Elias, embraces the rhythmic traditions of his heritage with fervor. Abed's mastery extends to Shaabi, Zajal, Hajini, and Furaqiyat, enriching the cultural fabric of his community. With an inherited talent for Tabel, Mizmar, Katem, and Tabla, Abed's performances resonate with the spirit of celebration at weddings and religious gatherings. His dedication to craftsmanship underscores his commitment to preserving the essence of folk music, transcending linguistic and cultural boundaries across the Levant.

#### Adham Hussein Al-Brej - Rababa Player

Adham Hussein Al-Brej, a young artist, Rababa player and poet, originally from Homs, Syria, residing in Bar Elias, epitomizes the multi-faceted creativity of Syrian folk artistry. Adham's repertoire of Furaqiyat, infused with the soulful melodies of the Rababa, echoes the sentiments of separation and longing. His craftsmanship extends beyond music to include [poetry](#), enriching the cultural landscape of his community. Adham's dedication to preserving traditional instruments ensures the continuity of Syria's musical heritage, serving as a beacon of inspiration for aspiring artisans.

#### Firas Mahmoud - Percussionist

Firas Mahmoud, a young percussionist residing in Bar Elias, originally from Idlib, Syria, embodies the rhythmic heartbeat of folk music traditions. Firas specializes in Shaabi, Zajal, Hajini, and Furaqiyat, contributing to the dynamic musical landscape of his region. With a repertoire tailored for weddings and religious festivities, Firas showcases his inherited talent through the mesmerizing beats of Tabel, Mizmar, Katem, and Tabla. Despite challenges, Firas remains steadfast in his dedication to craftsmanship, crafting instruments with meticulous care. His commitment to musical heritage transcends borders, echoing through the diverse melodies of Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine.

#### Fatimah Mohamad Taha - Singer

Fatimah Mohamad Taha, a tricenarian housewife from Deir Ez-Zor, Syria, residing in Bar Elias, stands as a custodian of Eastern Syrian Zajal tradition. Fatimah's performances, rooted in the cultural ethos of Raqqa, Al-Hasakah, and Deir Ezzor, evoke the rhythms of harvest, weddings, and lamentation. Inherited from her ancestors, Fatimah's verses serve as a testament to the enduring legacy of Shawi dialect poetry, preserving its linguistic and cultural nuances for posterity.

#### Ghazia Iyad Abdallah - Singer

Ghazia Iyad Abdallah, a middle-aged housewife from Deir Ez-Zor, Syria, residing in Bar Elias, stands as a sentinel of Zajal and folk songs heritage in the eastern region. Ghazia's performances, steeped in the traditions of harvest, weddings, and lamentation, reflect the timeless allure of folk poetry. Inherited from her forebears, Ghazia's verses serve as a poignant reminder of the Shawi dialect's rich linguistic heritage, transcending temporal boundaries with their enduring relevance.

#### Hamoud Turki Al-Mahmoud - Mizmar Player

Hamoud Turki Al-Mahmoud, a Mizmar player originally from Idlib, Syria, residing in Bar Elias, stands as a custodian of folk tunes in the Levant region. With over 50 years of experience, Hamoud's expertise in crafting Tabel and Mizmar reflects a lifelong dedication to preserving musical heritage. His performances, steeped in the rhythms of weddings and religious festivities, resonate with audiences across Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine. Despite challenges, Hamoud's commitment to craftsmanship remains unwavering, ensuring the continuity of folk music traditions for generations to come.

#### Hayla Khodor Khalaf - Singer

Hayla Khodor Khalaf, a tricenarian housewife from Deir Ez-Zor, Syria, residing in Bar Elias, stands as a custodian of Eastern Syrian folk tradition, emblematic of the region's cultural heritage. Hayla's lyrical performances, steeped in the rhythms of harvest, weddings, and sorrowful occasions, resonate with the collective experiences of her community. Despite the encroachment of modern genres, Hayla remains resolute in her commitment to preserving her ancestral legacy, passing down the art of Zajal to future generations. Rooted in the Euphrates dialect, her verses serve as a testament to the enduring spirit of Bedouin culture in the face of change.

#### Mohamad Ahmad Mardati - Singer

Mohamad Ahmad Mardati, an unemployed resident of Bar Elias, originally from Idlib, Syria, assumes the mantle of guardian of Levantine folklore, encapsulated in the haunting melodies of Furaqiyat. Aged over 50 years old, Mohamad's lyrical performances, enriched by the nuances of the Syrian dialect, resonate with the rhythms of weddings and religious celebrations. Inherited from his predecessors, Mohamad's verses serve as a poignant reminder of Syria's rich cultural heritage, transcending temporal boundaries with their timeless appeal.

#### Murad Mahmoud - Percussionist

Murad Mahmoud, a percussionist from Idlib, Syria, residing in Bar Elias, embodies the rhythmic soul of Shaabi traditions. Murad's passion for percussion instruments is evident in his mastery in Tabla, Katem and Tabe. His commitment to craftsmanship extends to the meticulous crafting of instruments, ensuring their quality and authenticity. Murad's

performances, characterized by dynamic rhythms and melodic nuances, resonate with audiences across the Levant, reaffirming the timeless allure of folk music heritage.

#### [Najah Hassan Al-Hamad - Singer](#)

Najah Hassan Al-Hamad, a housewife from Deir Ez-Zor, Syria, residing in Bar Elias, stands as a guardian of Bedouin heritage, enshrined in the melodic cadences of Hajini, and Furaqiyat. Najah's lyrical performances, rooted in the Shawi and Euphrates dialects, reflect the timeless allure of romance, harvest, and separation. Inherited from her ancestors and passed down through generations, Najah's verses serve as a poignant reminder of Deir Ezzor's rich cultural tapestry, preserving its linguistic nuances for posterity.

#### [Onoud Fadel Mahmoud - Singer](#)

Onoud Fadel Mahmoud, a middle-aged housewife originally from Deir Ez-Zor, Syria, residing in Bar Elias, stands as a guardian of Eastern Syrian Zajal tradition, rooted in the cultural tapestry of Raqqa, Al-Hasakah, and Deir Ezzor. Onoud's lyrical performances, centered around themes of harvest, weddings, and melancholy, embody the essence of communal expression. Inherited from her ancestors, Onoud's verses serve as a bridge to the past, preserving the linguistic and cultural nuances of the Shawi dialect for future generations.

#### [Oday Sobhi Shaker - Singer](#)

Oday Sobhi Shaker, a young Shaabi (folk) artist resident in Bar Elias, originally from Idlib, Syria, emerges as a vocal advocate of Levantine folklore, enriched by the vibrant traditions of Zajal, Hajini, and Tarab. Oday's performances, characterized by the distinctive Idlib Syrian dialect, evoke the celebratory spirit of weddings and social gatherings. Inherited from his family and nurtured as a hobby, Oday's musical pursuits serve as a bridge to his cultural roots, transcending linguistic and geographical boundaries. Through his artistry, Oday preserves the timeless allure of Syrian folklore, ensuring its resonance for future generations.

#### [Qassem Mohamad Ali - Singer](#)

Qassem Mohamad Ali, a middle-aged daily worker from Deir Ez-Zor, Syria, residing in Bar Elias, assumes the mantle of guardian of Euphrates folk traditions, steeped in the rich tapestry of Zajal, Furaqiyat, and Euphrates 'Ataba. Qassem's lyrical performances, adorned with the nuances of the Euphrates dialect, encapsulate the essence of communal celebrations and cultural expressions. Inherited from his forebears and honed through participation in local festivities, Qassem's commitment to preserving traditional folk forms ensures the continuity of Deir Ezzor's cultural legacy for generations to come.

#### [Sumaya Hamad Al-Hussein - Singer](#)

Sumaya Hamad Al-Hussein, a tricenarian housewife residing in Bar Elias, Camp 028, originally from Deir Ezzor, Syria, represents the vibrant tapestry of folk music heritage in the eastern

region of Syria. Sumaya's expertise lies in the enchanting melodies of Furaqiyat, Zajal, and Hajini, deeply rooted in the cultural fabric of her homeland. These traditional songs, specific to regions like Raqqa, Al-Hasakah, and Deir Ezzor, narrate tales of harvest, weddings, and somber occasions, serving as a poignant reflection of communal joys and sorrows. Sumaya, having inherited her musical prowess from her parents and grandparents, passionately preserves these melodies, imparting them to friends and family. Her commitment to tradition extends to the preservation of the Euphrates dialect, enriching the cultural legacy of her community amidst the challenges of displacement.

#### Rifaat Mahmoud - Ney Player

Rifaat Mahmoud, a young Ney player originally from Idlib, Syria, residing in Bar Elias, breathes life into the enchanting melodies of Shaabi, Zajal, Hajini, and Furaqiyat. Rifaat's musical journey embodies the rich tapestry of folk traditions, resonating with the rhythms of weddings and religious ceremonies. His craftsmanship extends to crafting Tabla, Ney, Mizmar, Katem, and Tabel, ensuring the continuity of musical heritage for future generations. Rifaat's passion for preserving his cultural legacy is palpable, as he endeavors to keep the melodies of Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine alive through his performances.

#### Rudya Bachir Al-Sheikh - Singer

Rudya Bachir Al-Sheikh, an agricultural worker in her thirties, originally from Deir Ez-Zor, Syria, residing in Bar Elias, carries the torch of Zajal tradition, emblematic of the eastern region's cultural heritage. Rudya's lyrical performances resonate with the rhythms of harvest, weddings, and solemn occasions, encapsulating the joys and sorrows of communal life. Despite challenges posed by modern influences, Rudya remains steadfast in preserving her ancestral legacy, imparting the art of Zajal to future generations. Rooted in the Euphrates dialect, her verses serve as a testament to the enduring spirit of Bedouin culture in the face of change.

#### Zahia Darak Al-Mohamad - Singer

Zahia Darak Al-Mohamad, a middle-aged housewife from Deir Ez-Zor, Syria, residing in Bar Elias, stands as a keeper of Shawi Zajal tradition, rooted in the cultural heritage of the eastern region. Zahia's lyrical performances, intertwined with themes of harvest, weddings, and separation, epitomize the enduring allure of folk poetry. Inherited from her elders, Zahia's verses resonate with the linguistic richness of the Shawi and Bedouin dialects, embodying the essence of cultural continuity across generations.

#### Instrument Makers

In the Syrian refugee camps of Lebanon, a remarkable legacy of craftsmanship endures despite the challenges of displacement. Within the makeshift community of Bar Elias, artisans like Hamoud Al-Mahmoud, Rifaat Al-Mahmoud, Firas Al-Mahmoud, and Ahmed Da'as Faraj persist in their traditional crafts, keeping alive the art of instrument making. Their dedication to their craft serves as a testament to the resilience of the human spirit amidst adversity,

echoing ancient traditions and providing a semblance of continuity in a world marked by upheaval.

#### Ahmed Da'as Faraj - Rababa and Tabel Maker

Ahmed Da'as Faraj, a versatile artisan hailing from Damascus Countryside, Syria, residing in Bar Elias, embodies the rich tradition of Rababa and Tabel craftsmanship. With a lineage steeped in familial legacy, inherited from generations past, Ahmed's expertise in both instruments reflects his profound understanding of their historical significance. Meticulously crafting each Rababa and Tabel from scratch, Ahmed sources materials like wood, goatskin, and plastic from local carpentry and thread stores, ensuring authenticity and quality.

Despite the challenges posed by displacement and evolving market dynamics, Ahmed remains steadfast in his commitment to preserving this ancient tradition. He imparts his knowledge to family members and aspiring craftsmen, ensuring that the art of Rababa and Tabel making continues to thrive. Ahmed's resilience shines through as he navigates the backdrop of declining sales, serving as a testament to the enduring spirit of craftsmanship in the face of adversity. His dedication to preserving these instruments and passing on his skills is a vital contribution to the cultural heritage of his community and beyond.

#### Firas Al-Mahmoud - Tabel Maker

Firas Al-Mahmoud, a skilled Tabel craftsperson from Idlib, Syria, residing in Bar Elias, embodies the resilience of the human spirit amidst adversity. With a passion for his craft and a dedication to preserving tradition, Firas carries forth a legacy passed down through generations, inherited from his family and shared with loved ones. Despite the challenges posed by displacement in the Syrian refugee camps of Lebanon, Firas diligently crafts each Tabel, sourcing materials like wood, goat and sheepskin, and plastic. His commitment to innovation is evident as he incorporates readymade molds into his craftsmanship, ensuring efficiency without compromising quality.

However, Firas faces the harsh reality of diminishing sales, a poignant reminder of the fragility of traditional craftsmanship in an ever-changing world. Despite this, his unwavering commitment to his [craft](#) and the preservation of the art of Tabel making shines through. Firas's resilience serves as a testament to the enduring spirit of craftsmanship, as he continues to create these beautiful instruments amidst adversity, keeping the tradition alive.

#### Hamoud Al-Mahmoud - Rababa Maker

Hamoud Al-Mahmoud, a seasoned Rababa craftsperson from Idlib, Syria, residing in Bar Elias, embodies a tradition that spans generations. With over 50 years of experience, Hamoud's mastery of the Rababa is deeply rooted in familial heritage, passed down from his father and shared with family members and friends. Despite the challenges faced in the Syrian refugee camps of Lebanon, Hamoud remains steadfast in his dedication to his craft. He meticulously crafts each Rababa from scratch, locally sourcing materials like wood, horsehair, and Leather. However, he laments the decreasing demand for his instruments, a consequence of changing market dynamics. Yet, amidst these challenges, Hamoud's resilience shines through, showcasing the enduring spirit of craftsmanship in the face of adversity.

### Rifaat Al-Mahmoud - Ney Maker

In the bustling community of Bar Elias camps, Rifaat Al-Mahmoud breathes life into the ancient tradition of Ney crafting. Rifaat's journey as a Ney craftsperson is steeped in familial legacy, inherited from his father and passed on to his kin and acquaintances. With a keen eye for detail, Rifaat meticulously fashions each Ney using riverbed reeds, sourced from the local landscape. Despite the challenges posed by displacement and market fluctuations, Rifaat's dedication to preserving this timeless tradition remains unwavering. However, like many artisans in the region, Rifaat faces the sobering reality of declining sales, reflecting the changing landscape of traditional craftsmanship in a rapidly evolving world.



## B. Syria

### B1. Hama Countryside and the city of Salamiyah

#### Community Characteristics

The region of Hama Countryside in Syria is characterized by its geographic and demographic richness. The city of Salamiyah is located 30 km east of Hama city and serves as a prominent centre in the region. Barri Sharqi, a central town in the Barri Sharqi Subdistrict, is situated 15 km east of Salamiyah.

According to the 2004 census, Salamiyah had a population of 116,000, which had increased to 130,000 by 2017. This growth was due to the influx of approximately 100,000 displaced persons seeking refuge in the city. Barri Sharqi had a population of around 7,700 in 2011, but that number has since risen to around 14,000 in 2022, although local estimates may vary.

The economy of Hama Countryside is diverse, with both government and private sector employees engaged in various professions. Industrial activities such as onion dehydration, cotton ginning, and a government-owned carpet factory are present in the region. Agriculture, including both irrigated and rainfed farming, is also prominent, with crops like cotton, grains, potatoes, grapes, apricots, apples, and olives being cultivated. Livestock rearing, trade, and daily labour further contribute to the region's economy, highlighting the resilience of the local community in the face of challenges.

Education is valued in Salamiyah, which hosts primary, middle, and secondary schools. Additionally, Hama Public University has two faculties, namely Agriculture Engineering and



Architecture. Before the war, the region boasted a low illiteracy rate, which was a source of local pride.

Overall, Hama Countryside in Syria is a region with a rich tapestry of geography, demographics, economic activities, and educational opportunities. However, following the conflict, Salamiyah has faced several challenges in basic services. These include high levels of poverty, school dropouts, and child labour, which have contributed to an illiteracy rate of between 80% and 90%, in line with the national trend. The region also grapples with power outages, experiencing only two hours of electricity per day, leading many residents to rely on solar panels. Internet connectivity is available but of poor quality, reflecting wider issues in Syria. Additionally, scarce water resources, aggravated by drought, mean that residents of Salamiyah only receive water once a week, and often rely on large tanks for storage.

The cultural fabric of Salamiyah is enriched by its diverse clans, which include Al-Jundi, Al-Mir, Al-Maghout, and more. Religious and social celebrations are an integral part of the community's calendar, reflecting broader Syrian traditions. With a history rooted in ancient times, Salamiyah in Hama Countryside, Syria, has been shaped by Aramaic, Assyrian, Chaldean, and Ugarit civilizations. The city bears the legacy of Romans, Muslims, and Ottomans, who have contributed to its unique blend of traditions. Roman ruins denote their architectural influence, while mosques reflect Muslim imprints, and Ottoman styles are seen in both administration and architecture, all woven into local customs for a diverse cultural mix.

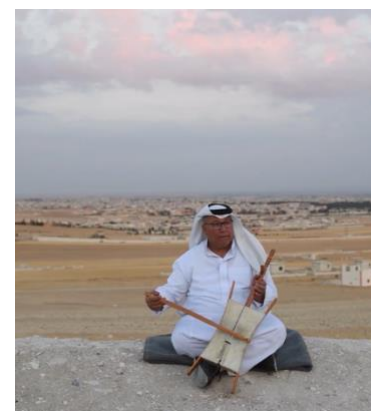
Salamiyah enjoys a mild climate that supports agriculture, fostering bonds through trade among communities, with intermarriage reinforcing social ties. Despite conflicts, the people's resilience is evident in their commitment to preserve culture and heritage. Education is vital in keeping history alive, instilling pride, and uniting citizens. This determination has helped Salamiyah to keep its ancient and modern traditions alive, embodying a vibrant, unified community.

### Music Traditions

In Salamiyah music epitomizes cultural fusion, blending Bedouin dialects and traditions with diverse song types such as religious hymns and the philosophically rich 'Ataba. Famed families like Hadid, Othman, and Shatian are renowned for their 'Ataba performances.

Here, music isn't just an artistic outlet but a daily practice and livelihood, featuring traditional instruments like the Oud, Buzuq, and Rababa that trace back to ancient rhythms. Local artisans from Salamiyah and Barri Sharqi create these instruments with exceptional skill from various materials such as wood, reeds, and animal skins.

Despite their craftsmanship, those looking to make a living from this art face challenges, as demand for such niche instruments remains limited.



## Artists

In this section, we embark on a captivating journey into the lives and works of the exceptionally talented musicians of Salamiyah, who breathe life into the region's vibrant folklore and Tarab music. Each artist brings a distinct perspective, drawing inspiration from the rhythmic cadence of daily life and the profound tapestry of Salamiyah's history. Through their mesmerizing performances and masterful craftsmanship, these artists serve as the guardians of Salamiyah's musical legacy, ensuring that its melodies continue to resonate through the ages.

### [Ammar Ali Jammoul - Percussionist](#)

Ammar Ali Jammoul, is a young student at the Faculty of Music and a musician residing in Salamiyah. He specializes in Arabic Tarab songs and Salamiyah folk songs, often performed at private gatherings and celebrations. Ammar learned music at a music institute and predominantly plays the Tabla, accompanied by Oud or Keyboard. His performances feature various themes and lyrics predominantly in the Salamiyah dialect, showcasing a blend of old and new compositions.

### [Amin Mohammad Othman Maghrebiya - Singer](#)

Amin Mohammad Othman Maghrebiy is a middle-aged singer and Rababa player. He presents folk-style music specific to the region, often performed at weddings, private gatherings, and celebrations. Amin inherited his musical talents from his family, particularly his father, and plays the Rababa, an instrument prevalent in Salamiyah. While the Rababa is played in other regions and countries, Amin's renditions incorporate unique Maqamat such as Hijaz, Saba, Bayati, and Segah, accompanied by dialect-specific lyrics. His songs explore various themes, predominantly featuring old lyrics.

### [Ayman Ahmed Kohail - Rababa Player](#)

Ayman Ahmed Kohail, is a musician, specializing in Oriental-style music. His performances are characterized by the region's dialect and are tailored to private gatherings and celebrations. Ayman learned music through personal effort and by accompanying the late Mohamad Sadeq Hadid. He predominantly plays the Rababa, sourced from Salamiyah, and his [performances](#) incorporate Maqamat like Bayat, Saba, Segah, and sometimes the Iraqi Al-Lami. His songs touch upon themes of romance, separation, joy, sadness, and harvest, often featuring a blend of old and new lyrics.

### [Hussein Mohammad Maghrebiya - Oud Player](#)

Hussein Mohammad Maghrebiya, is an employee and singer. He specializes in Oriental folk music specific to the region, performed at weddings, holidays, and private gatherings. Hussein inherited his musical talents from his father and predominantly plays the Oud, often accompanied by Keyboard and Tabel.

### Morhaf Mahmoud - Singer

Morhaf Mahmoud Hadid, is a tricenarian government employee, musician, and folk singer. Morhaf performs at popular gatherings and weddings, sometimes requiring a band with instruments like Rababa, Keyboard, or Oud. He learned music from his family, particularly his late uncle, Mohamad Sadeq Hadid, but hasn't undertaken teaching so far. Morhaf plays the Rababa and is a beginner in Oud, instruments that he can purchase from an antique shop. While he hasn't attempted crafting instruments himself, Morhaf expresses interest in learning. The themes addressed in his songs include romance, melancholy, abandonment, and separation, with lyrics predominantly in Arabic, mostly of old age.

### Nayef Morra - Percussion and Oud player

Nayef Morra, a young musician and singer. He mainly performs folk music from Salamiyah and other regions of the Levant and Iraq. Nayef performs at celebrations, occasionally with a band consisting of Oud, percussion, or Keyboard. He learned music during childhood and developed his knowledge academically later on, but hasn't engaged in teaching. Nayef plays percussion and Oud, instruments purchased from shops in Salamiyah. His songs address themes of romance, joyous celebrations, and melancholy, predominantly in Arabic with mostly old lyrics.

### Mohammad Al-Din Mohammad Darwish - Oud Player

Mohammad Al-Din Mohammad Darwish, is a retired teacher. He specializes in Salamiyah folklore and Tarab music, with the folk genre specific to the region. Mohammad learned music through personal effort and colleagues who are music teachers. He predominantly plays the Oud, an instrument played in other regions and countries as well. His performances feature dialect-specific lyrics and explore themes of romance, love, and joyous celebrations, mostly comprising old lyrics.

### Naqed Youssef Rahme - Rababa Player

Naqed Youssef Rahme, is a folk instrument maker in his thirties, musician, and singer. He specializes in Salamiyah folklore, particularly known for crafting instruments like the Rababa and Mijwiz. Naqed learned music from his family and crafts instruments himself, ensuring quality and authenticity. His [performances](#) incorporate themes of love, romance, and human experiences.

### Nada Mostafa Al-Haraka - Oud Player

Nada Mostafa Al-Haraka, is a young anesthesia graduate. She specializes in Salamiyah folklore and Tarab music, appreciating its cultural significance. Nada learned to play the oud and piano as a child and further developed her skills in school and through joining the Salamiyah band for heritage revival. Her favorite themes in songs are romance, love, and joyous celebrations.

### Nazih Issa - Rababa Player

Nazih Issa, is a music teacher, musician, and instrument maker. He specializes in folk and Tarab music, with Salamiyah's folk music such as Nayel, 'Ataba, Souehli. Nazih crafts instruments like the Rababa and Oud himself, ensuring quality and authenticity. His

performances incorporate themes that vary according to the song, featuring mostly old lyrics in the Salamiyah dialect for folk music

#### Rahim Ghazwan Sheikh Ibrahim - Percussionist

Rahim Ghazwan Sheikh Ibrahim, is a young petroleum institute student and percussionist. He plays Oriental-style music specific to the region, performed at celebrations upon request. Rahim learned music through personal effort and plays the Tabla, an instrument inherited from his father. His performances incorporate rhythmic patterns found in Laff and Baladi, featuring a mix of old and new lyrics in Salamiyah dialect.

#### Instrument Makers

In the Syrian city of Hama, a unique legacy of craftsmanship perseveres despite various socioeconomic challenges. Artisans like Naqid Youssef Rahma, who hail from the countryside of Hama, embody the spirit of tradition and resilience through their mastery of crafting traditional musical instruments. Despite the disruptions caused by war and migration, these craftsmen persist in preserving ancient techniques, ensuring the continuity of Syria's rich cultural heritage. Let us delve into the stories of these artisans, who, through their dedication and artistry, keep the soulful melodies of their homeland alive.

#### Naqid Youssef Rahma - Rababa Maker

Naqid Youssef Rahma, represents the lineage of traditional musical instrument craftsmen from the countryside of Hama in Syria. His expertise lies in crafting the Rababa, an instrument deeply rooted in Syrian folklore. With a profound understanding of its construction, Naqid meticulously fashions each Rababa from scratch, using locally sourced materials such as beech wood, goatskin, and horsetail hair from Hama city. Despite facing challenges in sales, Naqid remains steadfast in his commitment to preserving this ancient tradition. He imparts his knowledge to aspiring craftsmen, ensuring that the legacy of the Rababa endures for generations to come.

Naqid Youssef Rahma is also renowned for his mastery of the Mizmar, or Mijwiz, and carries forth the tradition of his craft with unwavering dedication. Originating from the countryside of Hama in Syria, Naqid's craftsmanship encompasses the intricate construction of the Mizmar, incorporating elements such as the body, pirouette, and staple/reed. Reeds sourced from Tripoli and silk threads from Hama city form the foundation of this instrument, reflecting the artisan's meticulous attention to detail. Despite facing dwindling sales, Naqid's passion for his craft remains undiminished as he continues to share the soul-stirring melodies of the Mizmar with audiences across the globe.

## B2. Tebke Village, Qamishli

### Community Characteristics

Situated within the confines of Tebke village in Qamishli, the Kochar society in Syria symbolises a reflection of their travelling ancestral lineage as Nomadic Kurds. Initially rooted in the historic land of Bohtan Emirate that existed in the 19th century in Kurdistan, a historical and cultural Kurdish region, spanned across



Iraq, Turkiye, Iran and Syria. After the failure of Sheikh Said Prian's revolution against the newly established republic of Turkiye (1925), the Kochars settled in numerous Syrian hamlets, including Tebke village.

The economic spectrum within the Kochar community has experienced continuous transformation. Their initial livelihood as shepherds underwent diversification due to clan dispersion into distinct territories resulting with increased focus on agriculture, livestock farming and gradual adaptation towards pastoral living – crafting a unique socio-economic mosaic. Presently various clansmen have branched out into sectors including medical sciences, academic research, engineering amongst others; while some have pioneered commercial endeavours or contributed towards institutions such as the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria validating their progress over time.

Casting light on educational advancements within Kochar society indicates noteworthy modifications. Prior to variances prompted by escalating conflict situations Arab-focused instruction endorsed by Syrian governance was prevalent which then transitioned toward Kurdish language-based learning methods inciting growth in illiteracy rates approximated at nearly 80%. This predicament posed significant challenges for community members desiring promotion of Kurdish linguistics juxtaposed against Arabic's prominence particularly amidst official discourse.

Straightforward amenities encompassing utilities like water supply networks, uninterrupted electricity access combined with stable internet connection are accessible throughout Tebke village albeit regional population density has observed declining trend triggered predominantly by drought conditions during 2004 followed by consequential events transpiring since 2011 causing noticeable displacement specifically among younger male populace thereby impacting gender-ratio equilibrium underlining overall demographic alterations encountered within integrated stretches inhabited collectively forming social tapestry that is uniquely known as – the Kochars.

In the Tebke village of Syria, cultural ceremonies hold a paramount place within the Kochar community. Key festivities such as Eid Al-Adha and Eid Al-Fitr are not only deeply symbolic to this village, but also mirror wider Syrian traditions. Celebration highlights consist of dynamic dabke dances and traditional melodies which contribute to an atmosphere of joy underscoring their vibrant culture that emanates vibrancy and tenacity.

In the past, there was a tribe called “Al-Mutribeen”, who were musically active in the community. They performed folk music using the Dohol and Zurna in exchange for wheat or money. However, their behavior was not widely accepted by the rest of society. This led to the idea of societal restraint, with families preventing their children from learning music out of fear of resembling “Al-Mutribeen”. Later, the tribe dissolved, and its members integrated into society.

Despite facing considerable external adversities, incredible resilience permeates throughout the Kochar community who find comfort in various forms including festive assemblies, spontaneous gatherings and exulting in life's ordinary joys; portraying an indomitable spirit ingrained with adaptive capacities, capable of discovering happiness even under difficult conditions.

The historical origins of the Kochar people bear traces from multiple influences including Zoroastrianism, Yazidis faiths, along with migratory shifts caused by geopolitical changes like Sykes-Picot Treaty. This grand heritage is reflected through their distinct dialect mingled with well-known traits for hospitality and unpretentiousness that symbolize them uniquely. The shared lessons from history have been woven into their society over time making it resiliently adaptive while remaining true to its underlying cultural identity.

The regional climate distinguished by marked seasonal variations provides a natural setting fostering foundational customs for the nomadic lifestyle led by Kochar community amid Syrian sceneries; encapsulating symbiotic interactions between man-made traditions evolving parallel alongside perennial cycles noticeable in nature herself.

### Music Traditions

In the Kurdish folklore of Tebke village, music is intertwined with the daily life of its inhabitants. Dohol, which is the same instrument as Tabel, and Zurna(Mizmar) are instruments that echo the traditions of the Kochar community. In the past, playing Dohol and Zurna was a primary livelihood, but modern times have seen a shift. Musicians engage in various jobs to sustain themselves. The profession is often inherited, passed down from fathers to sons, guarded by societal shame and prohibitions.



Acceptance has grown over time, shedding religious taboos, though remnants persist. The Kochar’s connection with the land and seasons is mirrored in their songs, ranging from harvest tunes to rituals like Kerāfat and Ziwa. Traditional instruments, including Dohol, Zurna, and Kamancheh, played a central role in celebrations, which have evolved to include modern instruments like the Keyboard and guitar. Crafting these instruments locally faces challenges, leading to imports from Turkey. Zurna, crafted from apricot or walnut wood, reflects the rich tradition of the Kochar community.

## Artists

The artists below exemplify a profound dedication to the preservation and promotion of Kurdish culture through their music. Each artist's journey reflects a deep-rooted connection to their homeland's traditions, accompanied by a commitment to showcasing the richness of Kurdish heritage to a global audience.

Their collective endeavours extend across generations, as they transmit their knowledge and skills to aspiring artists, ensuring the enduring presence of Kurdish music for years to come. Through performances at weddings, cultural events, and gatherings, they infuse vitality into traditional songs and melodies, captivating audiences with their expressive interpretations and dynamic storytelling.

Furthermore, their active involvement in the production and revitalization of traditional songs underscores their unwavering commitment to safeguarding Kurdish folklore. As guardians of their cultural legacy, these artists play a pivotal role in shaping the narrative of Kurdish identity through music, fostering a sense of pride and belonging among Kurds worldwide.

### Saradar Barjas Musaylikh - Singer

Saradar Barjas Musaylikh, known by his stage name Saradar Barouji, is a middle-aged artist and member of the artists' union in Rojava (South of Kurdistan). Hailing from the Karjokh region, Saradar is deeply rooted in the cultural traditions of his homeland. In Kurdistan, there are variations in musical practices across different religions, with some instruments and words being exclusive to certain religious groups. Saradar reminisces about the existence of bands in the past, particularly during the Prophet's Mawlid (birthday), where they would sing praises to the Prophet Mohammad. During Nowruz, the Kurdish New Year, Saradar and his fellow musicians would accompany dance groups with their music. The Kochars, a specific community within Kurdistan, have their own unique dance style.

Saradar's musical journey began under the guidance of his father and grandfather, both of whom were singers. His father played a pivotal role in teaching him the nuances of singing, while Saradar taught himself to play various instruments such as Tanbur, Bağlama, Cumbuş, and Oud. Over the years, he has shared his knowledge and expertise by teaching singing, Keyboard, and Zurna to numerous individuals, many of whom have gone on to graduate and become successful artists. Originally from Qamishli, Saradar's musical services are priced between \$200 and \$300. He is proficient in both instrument repairs and crafting. Saradar's musical style encompasses various maqams, including Bayati, Hijaz, Ajam, and Kurd. Kurdish folk songs are predominantly sung in Kurdish, although some songs incorporate Turkish, Persian, and Arabic lyrics.

### Shafan Shukri Mikael - Singer

Shafan Shukri Mikael, known by his stage name Shafan Juzayri, is a middle-aged musician, composer, lyricist, and radio host based in Dayrik, Afrin, within the Sham region of Iraqi Kurdistan. Shafan's musical journey has evolved over time, transitioning from singing various genres to focusing on a musical genre specific to Kurdish culture. He believes that the Kurdish genre relies heavily on throat techniques and pronunciation, setting it apart from other cultures. Shafan recognizes the richness of Kurdish culture and heritage, which serves as a constant source of inspiration for his musical endeavors.

Shafan specializes in singing the genre of the Botan region, which can also be found in Sarhad. The uniqueness of Shafan's style lies in his acapella singing and storytelling through songs, allowing him to captivate audiences with his expressive performances.

Shafan acknowledges the vastness of Kurdish culture, which encompasses songs for every occasion. Nevertheless, there are still numerous occasions where Kurdish folklore thrives, such as before holidays, before and during Ramadan, and various cultural events. In recent times, certain instruments like the keyboard and tanbur have been incorporated into Kurdish folklore performances.

Shafan's musical journey began in 1988 when his father, a Tanbur player in music bands. Shafan started playing the Tabla, a percussion instrument, to accompany his father's performances. Through careful observation and academic learning, he taught himself to play the tanbur. In 1995, Shafan embarked on his professional singing career, showcasing his [vocal prowess](#) and passion for Kurdish music.

As an experienced musician, Shafan shares his knowledge and skills by teaching musical instruments, singing, and vocalization at Koma Alef Teria and Koma Ava Sin. His expertise extends to playing instruments such as the oud, Tanbur, various percussion instruments, Dohol, and Kamancheh, with the Tanbur being his primary instrument. While the Tanbur is not exclusive to Shafan's region, it is widely found wherever Kurds reside, with slight variations in body size and neck design.

Shafan sources most of his instruments from Turkey, followed by Iraq, and more recently, from within the Kurdish regions. Although Shafan possesses the skills to repair musical instruments. He acknowledges various maqams, such as Bayati, Ajam, Hijaz, and Kurd. However, the rhythmic voice remains consistent, particularly in the Nafrenji/Georgina style. Shafan highlights the significance of rhythm in Kurdish folklore, with Bruta being a rhythm that can be danced to solely based on the singers' voices.

#### [Saadia Mohamad Salim Mostafa \(Yadi Souad\) - Singer](#)

known by her stage name Yadi Souad or Mother Souad, is a talented artist and member of the Martyrs' Families' Council in Dayrik. With over 50 years of experience, she has dedicated her life to preserving and promoting Kurdish heritage and culture. Born and raised in Ain Diwar, Dayrik, she has been an integral part of the community for half a century.

Yadi Souad specializes in Dank Biji music, which encompasses various types of songs that are sung according to different occasions. This traditional music can be found in all Kurdish regions, but the dialect and pronunciation vary depending on the specific region. In Botan, the focus is on the words and pronunciation, creating a unique musical experience.

Throughout her career, Yadi Souad has witnessed changes in musical genres, especially in the Botan region, where the songs would adapt to the seasons or herding activities. Unfortunately, some traditional occasions like weddings, henna sessions, and wheat grinding have disappeared over time. However, Yadi Souad and other artists strive to recreate these occasions occasionally to preserve their cultural significance.

While Yadi Souad is capable of solo singing, she believes that the beauty of Dank Biji music is best showcased through duets or groups singing in turn, creating a harmonious and dynamic

performance. Her journey as an artist began in 1984 when she joined the Kurdistan Workers' Party and experienced personal loss with the martyrdom of her siblings. During this time, she would volunteer for harvests and sing together with her comrades, which became a significant part of her musical education.

Yadi Souad's dedication to heritage preservation extends beyond her artistic endeavors. Although she does not actively teach others, she shares traditional songs with students at Rojava University to foster a stronger connection to their cultural heritage. Yadi Souad's repertoire covers a wide range of themes, including war, children sleeping, wheat grinding, and various joyous and sorrowful occasions such as weddings, henna sessions, and wakes. Her music serves as a powerful reminder of the rich Kurdish heritage and the resilience of its people.

### Haji Ali Moussa - Singer

Haji Ali Moussa is a talented artist hailing from Zuharyiah, Dayrik. With a career spanning over two decades, he has dedicated his life to the art of music. Haji Ali Moussa, who is 45 years old, has worked in various professions, including cotton harvesting and driving. However, in 2002, he transitioned into becoming a full-time artist, focusing primarily on performing at weddings.

Haji Ali Moussa's musical style encompasses a wide range, including folklore, modern and Jabali (rural) styles. The Botan region, where he originates from, is known for its mountainous nature, and all singers possess the ability to perform Kurdish genres. However, Botan stands out for its unique variations of high and low vocal ranges, which require extensive practice to master. The diversity of Kurdish art and culture is a source of pride for Haji Ali Moussa, as each region has its own distinct form of artistic expression.

One of the signature songs in the Botan region is the Danji Biji, which is sung by all Kurds but holds a special place in the hearts of the Kochar community. The Kochars singers are known for their simultaneous use of low and high voices, creating a captivating and harmonious performance. Additionally, the Kochar pronunciation of certain letters, such as the word "zozan" (prairies), differs from other regions, adding a unique touch to their music.

Haji Ali Moussa reminisces about the old songs that were once sung at weddings but have now faded away. However, he and other artists come together to revive these traditional songs in their original form. The Parken association for Kochar and Danj Biji songs plays a crucial role in preserving these songs and ensuring their cultural significance endures.

Weddings and funerals are significant occasions where Haji Ali Moussa's music finds its place. Sad songs for wakes, often sung by women for their children and parents, hold a special place in these events. Men also contribute to the singing, albeit to a lesser extent. Harvest gatherings in the Kuj (diwan, gathering room) are another setting where Haji Ali Moussa's music enlivens the ambiance. Singers form two rows, with the first row starting the song and the second row replying, creating a lively and engaging atmosphere.

In the past, musical performances in the diwan and Danj Biji gatherings did not require musical instruments. However, if a Daf (a circular shape of wood covered by a goat or sheep skin) was present, singers would gently accompany their voices with its rhythm. The power of the singer's voice alone was enough to create captivating music, eliminating the need for a

band or additional instruments. Due to the complexity of Botan songs, multiple singers would take turns to prevent exhaustion.

Haji Ali Moussa's journey as an artist began as a childhood gift, although some family members initially opposed it. Over time, they came to appreciate the beauty of his voice, leading to acceptance and support. He has also passed on his musical knowledge to his two children, Mohamad and Nojdar, who excel in performing this genre. Haji Ali Moussa did not receive formal education or training in any school or institute but developed his skills through his passion and dedication.

When it comes to maqamat (musical modes), Haji Ali Moussa feels most comfortable singing in the maqam of Hijaz and Ajam, as they suit his voice and allow him to deliver exceptional [performances](#). While he sings other maqamat as well, they are not as frequent in his repertoire. Pronunciation may differ across regions, but the maqam remains the same, showcasing the diversity within Kurdish music.

#### [Khalid Ali Hadi - Multi-instrumentalist](#)

Mohamad Ali Hadi, stage name Khalid Ali Hadi, is a 38-year-old artist originally from Silopi, Turkey. He is a Syrian Turkish citizen with German residency. Khalid is widely recognized for his contribution to the preservation and promotion of traditional Botan music.


Khalid Ali Hadi, belonging to the Judi group, emphasizes the importance of knowing one's history and culture. He has listened to numerous artists and introduced many old traditional songs to his group, which has gained widespread fame and admiration. Khalid's passion for music began with singing in his car, gradually learning and honing his skills over time. He has also passed down his knowledge to his daughters, ensuring the preservation of the musical traditions.

As an artist, Khalid possesses a collection of 5-6 instruments, including the Tanbur, Arbana (which is the same as Daf), Guitar, and Baglama. He acquired these instruments from various places such as Turkey, Iraq, Qamishli, and Dayrik.

When it comes to acquiring instruments, Khalid mentions purchasing a Tanbur from Turkey, which cost him around \$250-\$300. In Dayrik, the price for a Tanbur can reach \$400, although it is possible to find them for as low as \$100. Typically, instruments are obtained from stores.

Khalid's interest in music and instruments dates back to his childhood, where he would attempt to create instruments using simple materials. For Khaled, the Kochar clan predominantly uses the Ajam and Bayati maqam. However, some individuals sing in Ajam, Bayati, Hijaz, Rast, and Kurd maqams. He also notes the cultural similarities between the Kurds and Persians, especially when it comes to Maqams..

Regarding rhythm, Khalid mentions that Hayranok lacks a specific rhythm, while Perweta follows a challenging rhythm of 8/10 and 6/8. The Kochar clan utilizes the Georgina rhythm, as heard in the song 'Az Khalfam.' The Shikhani rhythm features certain broken rhythms, although Khalid is not familiar with their specific names. While he admits to having limited knowledge about rhythm, he acknowledges its importance in the music.



The songs performed by Khalid Ali Hadi are predominantly in the authentic Kochari dialect of Kurdish, characterized by the unique pronunciation of swallowing the letter 'r.' This dialect remains authentic due to its location in the heart of Kurdistan, away from the influence of Arab and Turkish languages.

While all songs are in Kochari Kurdish, they may feature different dialects such as Bati, Tay, Kaja, Msearsha, and Khlika. These dialects are closely related to one another, maintaining the overall authenticity of the Kochari Kurdish language.

#### Ali Haji Yusuf - Singer

Ali Haji Yusuf, known as Abu Adel, is a seasoned veteran in Qamishli's cultural landscape, balancing his role as a cultural institution employee with his pastoral duties of buying livestock. His roots trace back to Qassan village in Dayrik, and his expertise shines in the realm of Kafna Chobi music. Specializing in genres like Dankabiji Kurani/Bruta and Hayranok/Avendari, Abu Adel is a custodian of the rich musical heritage found in the Botan region.

His dedication to preserving this heritage is evident in his multifaceted approach. Abu Adel not only performs at weddings and gatherings but also endeavors to educate the younger generation about their musical legacy. Through his involvement in youth groups and cultural events, he ensures that traditional songs and singing methods are passed down to future generations.

#### Hazim Darwich - Singer

Hazim Darwich, a retired fisherman and former radio station employee, embodies the spirit of Merkamira through his deep connection to Koceri and Dimani music. Rooted in the Van and Botan regions of Turkey, Hazim's singing style emphasizes the resonance of the throat and lips, echoing the traditional melodies of his heritage. Despite his retirement, Hazim's passion for music remains undimmed. Whether singing at weddings or gatherings with friends, he infuses each performance with the authenticity and warmth of his Kochari Kurdish dialect. With a steadfast commitment to preserving the original lyrics and melodies of his songs, Hazim ensures that the essence of Merkamira endures for generations to come.

#### Aysha Saradar Ahmad - Singer

Aysha Saradar Ahmad, a young music teacher from Dayrik, epitomizes the vibrant spirit of Payizok, Heyranok, and Srili music. Grounded in the Barima Botan region between Syria, Turkey, and Iraq, Aysha's voice carries the essence of her cultural heritage. From singing at weddings to commemorating martyrs, Aysha's [repertoire](#) reflects the diverse tapestry of emotions woven into her community's songs.

As a music educator, Aysha is dedicated to passing on her knowledge to the next generation. Despite facing challenges in the educational landscape, she remains committed to teaching the nuances of Bayat, Ajam, and Hijaz maqamat. Through her efforts, Aysha ensures that the legacy of Payizok and Srili music continues to thrive, resonating with audiences across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

## Instrument Makers

In the city of Qamishli, Syria, a rich tradition of exquisite craftsmanship in musical instruments perseveres despite the complexities of modern times. Among the talented artisans who embody the spirit of dedication and passion for preserving ancient musical traditions are Abdulqader Khalil Hanoush, Moaz Muhammad Khalil Ahmad, and Safwan Ahmad Younis. Their mastery goes beyond mere craftsmanship; it serves as a profound testament to the region's cultural identity and heritage. Join us as we delve into the inspiring stories of these artisans, whose exceptional skills and unwavering commitment breathe life into the soulful melodies of their homeland.

### Abdulqader Khalil Hanoush - Kamancheh Maker

Abdulqader Khalil Hanoush, is a 46-year-old carpenter and musical instrument craftsperson. He currently specializes in crafting Kamancheh instruments, but he previously worked on Qanuns. He resides in the Al-Mustafa neighborhood of Qamishli, Syria, and he is operating his workshop in Kador Beik. Abdulqader [is knowledgeable about the Kamancheh](#), an ancient musical instrument that has been widely used in the region for centuries. It is commonly played at weddings and various parties.

The Kamancheh has a wooden cylindrical arm with three medium-sized pegs made of the same wood. The body, shaped like a bowl, is also made of wood. In the past, it was covered with young goat and deer leather, but nowadays, it is covered with tightened fish skin. The arm and the bowl used to be connected by a rod, but now they are connected by a wooden piece. The instrument has three strings, one made of resin and two regular ones, typically made of metal, often chrome. The bow is composed of a piece of wood, a piece of leather for the handle, and horsetail hair. However, due to the scarcity of good horsetail hair, artificial plastic bristles are used instead.



Abdulqader primarily uses beech wood for crafting the Kamancheh, but in the past, apricot, walnut, and mulberry woods were also used. The instrument's strings are made of chrome steel, and the wood is colored with walnut dye. To ensure a smooth finish, a sealer is applied, followed by three or five layers of lacquer. The bow is made of beech wood, with a piece of leather for the handle, and artificial plastic strings instead of horsetail hair.

Abdulqader sources his materials from the Qamishli Market, which is located inside Syria, specifically from Latakia. As part of the region's heritage, he adds woolen decorations called Khalal, Rebshel, and Kolk to the Kamancheh.

When it comes to molds for crafting the instrument, Abdulqader does not have access to them. However, he can acquire them at high prices if needed. Crafting five pieces of Kamancheh takes him a full week.

All the instruments Abdulqader makes are sold, and he inherited the craft from his father. He does not find it difficult to sell his instruments, as there is demand for them. He sells them to stores for \$100, and they are then sold in the market for \$175. All his instruments are sold at the same price, as he uses the same materials for all of them.

Abdulqader sells his instruments directly to players. They either come to him and purchase the instruments directly or indirectly through owners of music instrument shops. He also sells his instruments to Germany, receiving orders from abroad, including Turkish Kurdistan and Germany.

Unfortunately, sales of Kamanche have been decreasing, mainly due to the lack of players and the preference for modern instruments.

#### [Moaz Muhammad Khalil Ahmad \(Yassim Moaz Yalorvan\) - Ney Maker](#)

Moaz Muhammad Khalil Ahmad, also known as Yassim Moaz Yalorvan, is a well-known figure in the artistic community. He is born in 1979, and works as a music teacher at the Mem Ū Zīn Institute in Dirik. At the institute, they provide music education to individuals of all age groups. Moaz also teaches at the Tigris Center and will soon start training Christians at the Dirik Church. He resides in Hawler, Sulaimaniyah, and his village is called Hajji Harun, situated between the Kochar region and Beravê. It's important to note that Moaz clarifies that they are not Kohars but rather belong to the Hasni community.

The Blūr, known as the Nay in Arabic, is an instrument originally crafted using reeds. It is referred to as Ney by Persians, Turks, and Arabs. When the Blūr is made from wood, it is called Qawal or Qaval. Moaz explains that through his studies and interactions with Kurds in Iran, as well as his visits to Kurdistan, Sulaymaniyah, and Hewler regions, he discovered that the instrument was first found between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers by shepherds. When sheep fed on the reeds, they broke in half, creating a distance between the holes. When the wind entered, it produced a sound, leading to the discovery of the instrument. The Blūr was also found in Egypt along the Nile River.

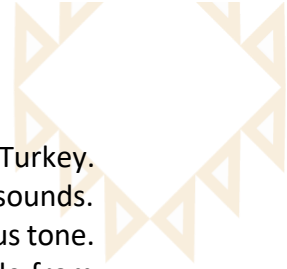
#### [Safwan Ahmad Younis - Saz Maker](#)

Safwan Ahmad Younis is a 37-year-old musical instrument craftsperson based in Qamishli, Al-Hilaliyya. He specializes in crafting and maintaining instruments such as the Oud, Buzuq, and Bağlama. Safwan is also a skilled Kurdish Buzuq player, often performing at parties and events.

Originally from Kalash village on the Tal Barak road in Al-Hasakah, Safwan and his family moved to Qamishli in 2009. His expertise lies in crafting the Tanbūr, also known as "Saz" in Turkish. The Tanbūr is an ancient instrument believed to have been crafted by Turks, although further research is needed to determine whether it was the Kurds in Turkey or the Turks themselves who created it.

The Tanbūr consists of three main parts: the bowl, soundboard, and arm. The arm includes the pegs, while the frets are represented by cords. The instrument features a small bridge on top and a larger one on the soundboard.

Safwan [crafts the Tanbūr](#) / Kurdish Buzuq using wood, a traditional material for instrument making. In the past, instruments were hand-carved from wood, but now Safwan utilizes tools such as saws for wood cutting. He primarily uses tree trunks from mulberry, beech, and walnut trees. After cutting the trunks with a saw and soaking them in water, Safwan shapes the wood into a concave form using the Saj stove. Once dried, the wood retains its shape. Safwan also uses molds for crafting instruments like the Buzuq and Tanbur.



While mulberry trees are locally available in Qamishli, walnut trees are imported from Turkey. Mulberry and walnut are highly sought-after for their ability to produce beautiful sounds. Mulberry wood creates a loud sound, while walnut wood produces a soft and melodious tone. Safwan prefers using mulberry wood due to its desirable qualities. The pegs are made from ebony trees imported from Turkey, and other accessories such as strings, plectrums, bridges, frets, bags, and electric equalizers are also imported from Turkey.

Safwan crafts instruments from scratch, using both ready-made molds and creating his own molds on the Saj stove to heat and fold the wood. He sources materials from stores in Qamishli, although most of the materials are imported from Turkey.

Under ideal conditions with equipment and electricity available, Safwan can craft 20 instruments in a month. However, currently, due to limited resources and assistance, he can only produce 2 instruments per month.

While Safwan does not currently craft pegs, he can do so if provided with the necessary machines and equipment. In the past, he used to craft pegs manually. Safwan's passion for instrument making started at a young age when he crafted a Tanbur using a molasses tin and the wires of a bicycle frame. He taught himself the craft by repairing his uncle's broken Buzuq and eventually crafting one for him using a knife. Safwan's resourcefulness even led him to create his own electric sander. Although he has not taught anyone how to craft instruments, he expresses a desire to teach others and believes that a workshop where individuals can learn different parts of instrument crafting would be beneficial.

In addition to his craftsmanship, Safwan is also a skilled musician, playing the Buzuq, Tanbur, and Bağlama. His love for the instruments inspired him to learn how to craft them.

Safwan takes pride in helping others and offers his instruments at affordable prices. While instruments of similar quality may cost \$250 in the market, Safwan sells them for \$200 or less, depending on the quality and time spent crafting each instrument. He ensures that only high-quality raw materials, such as good wood, are used in his creations.

He receives orders from artists, acquaintances, and strangers, but he does not craft instruments for stores. He is open to crafting instruments for anyone who contacts him, including customers from Kurdistan and Europe upon request.

However, Safwan notes that the demand for his instruments has decreased considerably in recent years, particularly due to the dollar crisis. Despite this decline, he remains committed to his craft and recalls an incident where a young boy cried while asking his mother for a Tanbur. The mother inquired about the price, and when Safwan mentioned it was \$30, she responded, "We can live off of this amount."

### B3. Raqqa's Al Mishlab Neighborhood

## Community Characteristics

Located in eastern Raqqa, the Al Mishlab neighborhood unfolds gracefully along the banks of the Euphrates River, seamlessly blending the realms of urbanization and agricultural lands. With a population ranging from 30,000 to 50,000 individuals, with females comprising 55% of the community.



Economic strokes and educational threads intricately weave themselves into the fabric of Al Mishlab. Agricultural pursuits dominate the occupational landscape, harmoniously complemented by thriving commerce and the noble profession of teaching. The community takes great pride in its educational institutions, which include esteemed primary and secondary schools, as well as the esteemed Al Sharq University.

Gender dynamics and economic diversity are key facets that define the essence of Al Mishlab. The economy shows us a picture of a community that has witnessed a gradual shift from traditional pastoral occupations to a more diverse array of livelihoods, ranging from farming to flourishing commerce. However, this transformation has not come without its challenges, as the reduction in available land for cattle rearing has contributed to an evolving economic landscape.

Cultural celebrations and community bonds form an integral part of the tapestry that is Al Mishlab. The community comes alive during religious holidays, such as the joyous Al-Mawlid Al-Nabawi, where vibrant celebrations featuring traditional and soulful singing sessions take center stage. Additionally, weddings and agricultural harvests become cherished occasions for joyous gatherings, reflecting the community's rich cultural heritage and deep-rooted traditions.

Social resilience and creative expressions are hallmarks of the Al Mishlab community. Collective celebrations and spontaneous literary forums serve as powerful platforms for fostering community bonds and showcasing the indomitable spirit of a community that remains steadfast in the face of challenges. Youth evenings, engagement parties, and recovery celebrations further exemplify the community's commitment to nurturing strong social ties, echoing the timeless spirit of the Levantine Zajal.

Historical ties and the ever-changing climate palette add depth and richness to the narrative of Al Mishlab. With a history spanning approximately 300 years, this neighborhood stands as a melting pot of diverse social components from the Levant, Syrian Jazira region, and f. The moderate climate, characterized by long summers and winters, serves as a canvas upon which the community's historical roots and evolving traditions are beautifully painted.

As we delve deeper into the vibrant mosaic that is Al Mishlab, we uncover a captivating narrative of diverse occupations, cultural celebrations, and a community that remains resilient in the face of change. This neighborhood embodies the spirit of Raqqa's unique

tapestry, where tradition and progress coexist harmoniously, creating a truly remarkable and dynamic community.

### Music Traditions

In the diverse musical landscape of Raqqa, Syria, 'Ataba, Mulaya, Nayel, Sweihili, Tashatif, and Euphrates Sajuri tunes resonate. This region breathes life into its folk music through weddings, youth parties, and the passing down of talent through listening rather than formal teaching. The community not only accepts but embraces the practice of playing music and singing, treating musicians with equality. Various occasions, from academic success to recovery from illness, are celebrated with dances set to the tunes of traditional instruments like Rababa, Daf, and Zummara (Ney in their dialect). These instruments, a blend of local craftsmanship and imports, use materials such as goatskin, wood, horsetail hair, and sugarcane. However, despite the vibrant musical traditions, specific places for formal teaching of folk music are lacking in this district. The interest in crafting and playing these instruments remains high, but the community faces challenges, including the lack of instrument craftspeople and the import of instruments from abroad.



### Artists

This section introduces a diverse group of musicians who contribute to the rich cultural tapestry of Raqqa, Syria, through their mastery of traditional music. From skilled Rababa and Daf players like Khaled Hussein Al-Hassan and Kamal Mohammad Al-Moussa, to versatile singers like Hammoud Mohammad Al-Hassan and Qusay Abdul Jalil Al-Hammoud, each artist embodies the essence of their region's musical heritage. Their performances, often featured at weddings and social gatherings, serve as a testament to the enduring tradition of collective music-making in Raqqa. Through their artistry, they weave stories of love, celebration, and nostalgia, offering a timeless exploration of the Euphrates dialect and its profound connection to the community.

#### Khaled Hussein Al-Hassan - Rababa and Daf Player

Khaled Hussein Al-Hassan, a skilled musician around 35 years old proficient in the Rababa and Daf, hails from the vibrant district of Al-Mashlab in Raqqa, Syria. He specializes in various traditional musical genres such as Nayel, Mulaya, 'Ataba, and Sajuri, which are deeply ingrained in the cultural fabric of the region.

While the music he plays may vary across different regions, Khaled ensures its preservation by adhering to its ancient heritage. Often performed at weddings, his music brings joy and festivity to social gatherings, enchanting audiences with its rhythmic beats and melodic tunes.

Guided by instruments like the Rababa and Daf, Khaled's [performances](#) captivate listeners, transporting them to a world steeped in tradition and cultural richness. Through his artistry,

he keeps alive the age-old musical traditions of Raqqa, fostering a sense of pride and identity among its people.

#### [Kamal Mohammad Al-Moussa - Singer, Rababa and Daf Player](#)

Kamal Mohammad Al-Moussa, a versatile middle-aged artist skilled in singing, Rababa, and Daf playing, hails from the district of Al-Mashlab in Raqqa, Syria. With expertise in traditional genres like Mulaya, 'Ataba, Nayel, Sweihili, and Sajuri, Kamal's music resonates with the cultural heritage of his region.

Kamal ensures the preservation of the music he plays by incorporating traditional instruments like the Rababa and Daf. Often performed at weddings and social events, his music brings communities together, fostering unity and joy among its members.

Kamal imparts his knowledge to the younger generation, teaching them to sing and play traditional instruments at the Raqqa Centre for Arts and Culture. Through his artistry, he keeps alive the rich musical traditions of Raqqa, enriching the lives of its people.

#### [Hammoud Mohammad Al-Hassan - Singer and Daf Player](#)

Hammoud Mohammad Al-Hassan, a talented singer and Daf player, hails from the vibrant Al-Mashlab district in Raqqa, Syria. Specializing in Furaqiyat, songs about separation, Hammoud's music reflects the emotional depth and cultural richness of his region.

While his music may be found in other regions, Hammoud ensures its authenticity by adhering to the unique characteristics of the genre. Often performed at weddings and social events, his music evokes a sense of nostalgia and longing, touching the hearts of listeners.

Guided by his upbringing and exposure to folk singers in his neighborhood, Hammoud shares his passion for music with friends and family. Through his artistry, he preserves the cultural legacy of Raqqa, keeping alive its age-old musical traditions for future generations to cherish.

#### [Qusay Abdul Jalil Al-Hammoud - Singer](#)

Qusay Abdul Jalil Al-Hammoud, a young and talented singer, hails from the vibrant Al-Mashlab district in Raqqa, Syria. Proficient in singing traditional genres like Mulaya, Qusay's music reflects the cultural diversity and richness of his region.

While his music may not be specific to the region, Qusay ensures its authenticity by staying true to its unique characteristics. Often performed at weddings and social gatherings, his music brings joy and festivity to communities, uniting them in celebration.

Through his music, Qusay shares his talent with friends and family, enriching their lives with the timeless melodies of tradition. Through his artistry, he keeps alive the cultural heritage of Raqqa, inspiring others to embrace their roots and identity.

### Ahmed Hassan Al-Salem - Singer

Ahmed Hassan Al-Salem, a middle-aged singer proficient in all music genres, hails from Al-Mashlab district in Raqqa, Syria. With a versatile repertoire, Ahmed's music reflects the cultural diversity and vibrancy of his region.

Ahmed ensures the preservation of the music genres he performs by incorporating traditional instruments like the Daf, Rababa, and Zummara / Ney. Often performed at weddings and social events, his music brings communities together, fostering unity and joy among its members.

Guided by his passion for music and cultural heritage, Ahmed imparts his knowledge to the younger generation, teaching them to appreciate and embrace their musical roots. Through his artistry, he keeps alive the rich musical traditions of Raqqa, inspiring others to cherish their heritage

### Ahmed Saleh Al-Hamidi - Singer and Daf Player

Ahmed Saleh Al-Hamidi, an experienced singer and Daf player, originates from the Al-Mashlab district in Raqqa, Syria. Specializing in the Mulaya genre, Ahmed's music is not confined to the region but resonates with audiences across various areas. He acknowledges the unique styles found in each region, ensuring the authenticity of his performances.

His music, often featured at weddings, engagement parties, and social events, serves as a unifying force within the community. Ahmed's expertise lies in both individual and collective performances, requiring collaboration with other traditional instrument players such as the Daf, Rababa, and Zummara / Ney.

Having honed his skills through participation in local festivities and singing parties, Ahmed continues to uphold the ancient heritage of Raqqa's musical traditions. His dedication to preserving these customs reflects in his teachings at the Raqqa Centre for Arts and Culture, where he imparts knowledge to aspiring artists.

Ahmed Saleh Al-Hamidi's songs often touch upon themes of romance, harvest, separation, and community gatherings. His music reflects the joys and struggles of life in rural Syria, capturing the essence of everyday experiences and emotions.

### Mohammad Jassem Al-Thalji - Singer and Rababa Player

Mohammad Jassem Al-Thalji, a young and talented artist, specializes in the Furaqiyat genre, known for its songs about separation and grief. While not exclusive to the region, Mohammad infuses his performances with the unique characteristics of Raqqa's musical style.

His music finds a place in various settings, from weddings to youth gatherings and outings, where it can be enjoyed both individually and collectively. Mohammad draws inspiration from his environment, learning to sing and play the Rababa from local sources.

With a commitment to authenticity, Mohammad ensures that his performances reflect the essence of Raqqa's cultural heritage. Through his music, he explores themes of romance and separation, capturing the hearts of listeners and preserving the old lyrics of the Euphrates dialect.

### Mohammad Abdel-Jalil Al-Hamoud - Singer and Daf Player

Mohammad Abdel-Jalil Al-Hamoud, a young versatile artist proficient in singing and Daf playing, brings his unique style to the diverse musical landscape of Raqqa, Syria. While Mulaya is not exclusive to the region, Mohammad incorporates elements of local genres like Tawah, which is a genre close to Sweihili, into his performances, enriching the cultural tapestry of his community.

His music, often featured at weddings and similar festivities, showcases the rich tradition of collective performances, requiring collaboration with other traditional instrument players. Mohammad's journey as a musician began with a childhood gift, leading him to master the art of the Daf through irregular practice sessions with friends and family.

With a keen understanding of the nuances of Bayat and Sikah, Mohammad crafts melodies that resonate with audiences across regions. Through his [music](#), he explores themes of romance and separation, offering a glimpse into the timeless beauty of the Euphrates dialect.

### Abdul Razzaq Shawakh Mahmoud - Singer, Daf Player, and Rababa Player

Abdul Razzaq Shawakh Mahmoud, a multifaceted artist proficient in singing, Daf playing, and Rababa playing, embodies the rich musical tradition of Raqqa, Syria. Specializing in genres like Mulaya, 'Ataba, Tashatif, Sweihili, and Sajuri, Abdul Razzaq preserves the ancient heritage of his region through his performances at weddings and social events.

Having learned from seasoned artists, Abdul Razzaq imparts his knowledge to the younger generation at the Raqqa Centre for Arts and Culture, ensuring the continuity of musical traditions. With a commitment to authenticity, he sources his instruments from local markets, emphasizing the importance of craftsmanship in maintaining cultural identity.

Abdul Razzaq's music reflects the diverse influences of Bayat, Sikah, Al-Rubh, and Al-Baladi, offering a nuanced exploration of the Euphrates dialect. Through his artistry, he celebrates the timeless beauty of old lyrics, weaving stories of love and longing into the fabric of Raqqa's cultural heritage.

### Fahed Ibrahim Al-Mukhtar - Singer and Daf Player

Fahed Ibrahim Al-Mukhtar, a young and talented artist, channels the spirit of Mulaya through his performances in Raqqa, Syria. While not specific to the region, Fahed's music reflects the universal themes of love and celebration, enriching the cultural landscape of his community.

His music, often featured at weddings, showcases the collaborative nature of traditional performances, requiring the participation of Daf, Rababa, and Zummara / Ney players. Fahed's journey as a musician began with guidance from older folk artists in his neighborhood, instilling in him a deep appreciation for tradition.

With a keen understanding of Bayat and Sikah, Fahed crafts melodies that resonate with audiences across regions, offering a timeless exploration of the Euphrates dialect. Through his artistry, he honors the old lyrics while infusing them with new interpretations, reflecting the dynamic nature of cultural expression.

### Ibrahim Khamis Hamada - Zummara / Ney Player

Ibrahim Khamis Hamada, a skilled Zummara / Ney player, contributes to the rich tapestry of traditional music in Raqqa, Syria. Specializing in Nayel, Ibrahim's music embodies the unique styles of the region, drawing inspiration from the Khamsa, Qusar, Asmar, and Walda genres.

His performances, often featured at weddings and similar festivities, highlight the collaborative nature of traditional music, requiring the participation of Daf, Rababa, and Zummara / Ney players. Ibrahim's journey as a musician began under the guidance of seasoned folk artists, shaping his distinctive style and approach to performance.

With a commitment to craftsmanship, Ibrahim personally crafts his instruments, ensuring their authenticity and quality. Through his music, he celebrates the exclusive nature of traditional genres, offering a vibrant exploration of the Euphrates dialect and its timeless lyrics.

### Hamad Ali Al Mohal - Zummara / Ney Player

Hamad Ali Al Mohal, a proficient Zummara / Ney player, enriches the cultural landscape of Raqqa, Syria, with his versatile performances. Specializing in popular Dabke music, including Khamsa, Qusar, Julaqiya, Asmar, and Walda, Hamad's music reflects the unique styles and traditions of the region.

While certain genres like Julaqiya may be found in other countries, Hamad ensures the preservation of Raqqa's musical heritage through his mastery of specific regional styles. His performances, often featured at weddings and youth gatherings, showcase the collaborative nature of traditional music, requiring the participation of various instrument players.

With a commitment to craftsmanship, Hamad personally crafts his Zummara / Ney, emphasizing its exclusive nature within the musical genre. Through his music, he celebrates the richness of the Euphrates dialect, offering a blend of old and new lyrics that resonate with audiences across regions.

### Instrument Makers

In the realm of instrument making in Raqqa, Syria, a notable absence of traditional craftspeople is observed in the Al-Mashlab neighborhood. Musicians are compelled to purchase instruments from local markets or seek them from other regions outside of Raqqa, despite the presence of all the necessary tools for crafting these instruments, such as wood, leather, and reed. However, amidst this scarcity, we encountered a solitary craftsman from outside the Al-Mashlab neighbourhood who specializes in crafting the oud and the violin. Regrettably, most folk instrument craftspeople were forced to leave after being targeted by ISIS, leaving a void in this once vibrant craft.

## C.Iraq

### C1. Ba'ashiqah and Bahzani

#### Community Characteristics

The Ba'ashiqah subdistrict, that includes both Ba'ashiqah and Bahzani villages, located in the northeastern part of Mosul District in Nineveh Governorate, is a captivating mosaic of diversity. With an estimated population of 150,000, the subdistrict's center is home to approximately 40,000 individuals. The demographic palette paints a picture of balance, with 52% males and 48% females contributing to the vibrant population.

The occupational tapestry of Ba'ashiqah and Bahzani reveals a harmonious blend of ancient and modern professions. Government jobs take precedence, interwoven with cattle rearing, farming, woolen textiles manufacturing, and the local Arak industry, all of which resonate with the region's rich historical roots. The symphony of the local economy also includes the melodious notes of traditional music.

The educational landscape in Ba'ashiqah is diverse, with a range of institutions from primary to preparatory schools, as well as a vocational middle school for industry and commerce. However, disparities in education persist, with a 10% illiteracy rate and a 35% poverty rate, highlighting the challenges faced by the district center and its suburbs.

The cultural tapestry of Ba'ashiqah is a vibrant one, woven from the threads of diverse religions and ethnicities. Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen, Syrians, Assyrians, and Shabaks coexist harmoniously, sharing the land with Yazidis, Christians, and Muslims. Religious holidays, such as Yazidi New Year, Christmas, and Eid celebrations, infuse the cultural narrative with vibrancy and joy.

Celebrations in Ba'ashiqah are marked by the essence of tradition, with gatherings featuring traditional food, lively dabka dances, and enchanting music. The unique requirement for religious music during Yazidi celebrations add layers of depth to the cultural symphony.

The linguistic weave in Ba'ashiqah encompasses Arabic and Kurdish, with dialects like Maju and Guran adding nuanced flavors to the linguistic landscape. The subdistrict, akin to a miniature Iraq, holds historical ties dating back to the Mithraic sun-worship religion and the Assyrian Empire. Ancient sites and monuments stand as testaments to the rich historical tapestry that is woven into the fabric of Ba'ashiqah.

The climate in Ba'ashiqah, characterized by hot and dry summers, cold and rainy winters, and moderate falls and springs, serves as a backdrop for the region's resilience. Modern challenges, such as disparities and illiteracy, are interwoven with the historical fabric, requiring a delicate balance for the community to thrive.



In Ba'ashiqah, we find a community that embraces diversity, harmonizes religious and cultural threads, and faces modern challenges with resilience. The tapestry of Ba'ashiqah tells a captivating story of a rich and interconnected history, where the past and present coexist in harmony.

### Music Traditions

In the cultural tapestry of Ba'ashiqah and Bahzani, Iraq, folk music is a vibrant expression, woven with instruments like Daf, Shabbabah (same of Ney), Tabel, Zurna / Mizmar, Mutbeg (Mijwiz), Rababa, and Tanbur. Families, inheriting this art, have specialized in its mastery. Direct teaching or participation in musical events ensures the art is passed down through generations. Music is not merely an accompaniment; it's integral to Yazidi religious identity. No celebration, joyous or somber, is complete without the resonance of folk music. In the past, harvesting and agricultural activities were marked by specific songs, though mechanization has altered this tradition. The community embraces a diverse range of dances and religious celebrations with distinct musical instruments. Local craftsmanship, especially for the daf, still endures, while other instruments are imported. The materials needed for crafting include woods and special leathers. Local production of instruments could alleviate the challenges of importing.



### Artists

In the heartlands of Mosul, Ba'ashiqah, and Bahzani, the timeless melodies of traditional Iraqi music reverberate through the ages, carried by the skilled hands and passionate souls of musicians like Hayawi Qassem Abdullah, Irian Hassan Koji, Khudaida Jomaa Abdo, Mukhlaf Abdo Khalaf, and Falah Haidar Khudr. With instruments such as the Tabel, Shabbabah / Ney, and Daf at their fingertips, these artists skillfully weave a vibrant tapestry of sound that celebrates the cultural richness and heritage of their homeland.

### Hayawi Qassem Abdullah - Tabel Player

Hayawi Qassem Abdullah, a seasoned musician and Tabel player, comes from the vibrant cultural hubs of Mosul, Ba'ashiqah, and Bahzani in Iraq. With a repertoire rooted in Shaabi folklore, Hayawi's musical expressions evoke the spirit of traditional Iraqi music.

Despite its regional specificity, Shaabi folklore finds resonance beyond borders, with similar musical traditions observed in Turkey and Syria. While the music is akin to other regions, Bahzani village boasts unique variations, enriching the cultural fabric of the community.

Hayawi's performances grace various social and religious occasions, from engagements and weddings to religious rituals like Tawaf (circumambulation) for Yazidis. His musical journey, nurtured by artists like Khairy Issa in his childhood, reflects a deep commitment to preserving tradition.

Armed with instruments like the Tabel, Zurna / Mizmar, Daf, and Ney, Hayawi's music transcends generations, echoing the timeless melodies of his heritage. Through his artistry, he embodies the cultural richness of his homeland, fostering unity and celebration among communities.

#### Irian Hassan Koji - Singer

Irian Hassan Koji, a Yazidi cleric and skilled Qawwal, comes from the ancient lands of Nineveh, Ba'ashiqah, and Bahzani in Iraq. As a custodian of religious music, Irian's performances encompass sacred Yazidi hymns and melodies, deeply entrenched in the cultural fabric of his community.

Exclusively rooted in Yazidi tradition, Irian's music finds resonance within the confines of Ba'ashiqah and Bahzani, serving as a spiritual beacon for his people. With instruments like the Shabbabah /Ney and percussion, his music accompanies various religious rituals and ceremonies, enriching the spiritual tapestry of Yazidi culture.

Irian's musical lineage, passed down through generations, reflects a profound commitment to preserving Yazidi heritage. Through his teachings at a religious school and personal mentorship, he ensures the continuity of sacred traditions, imparting the art of the Shabbabah / Ney to future generations.


Guided by the rhythms of Maqamat like Saba, Hijaz, and Rast, Irian's music transcends language barriers, speaking to the soul with its timeless melodies. Through his [artistry](#), he embodies the spiritual essence of Yazidi culture, fostering reverence and devotion among his community.

#### Khudaida Jomaa Abdo - Multi-Instrumentalist

Khudaida Jomaa Abdo, a middle aged folk artist, comes from the historic lands of Nineveh, Mosul, and Ba'ashiqah in Iraq. With a mastery of the violin and percussion, Khudaida's performances breathe life into traditional songs, resonating with the cultural vibrancy of his homeland.

Embracing genres like Hajini, Khudaida's music embodies the essence of Ba'ashiqah and Bahzani, celebrating the rich Iraqi folklore. While the music finds resonance in neighboring regions like Syria, Turkey, Iran, and northern Iraq, its distinct melodies reflect the unique heritage of the community.

Khudaida's performances grace various social gatherings and ceremonies, from agricultural festivities to wedding celebrations, uniting communities in joyous revelry. With instruments like the Tanbur, Zurna / Mizmar, Keyboard, and Tabel, his music weaves a tapestry of sound that transcends borders.



Guided by the rhythms and Maqamat like Saba and Georgina, Khudaida's music evokes a sense of nostalgia and belonging, resonating with audiences across generations. Through his [artistry](#), he preserves the cultural legacy of his homeland, enriching lives with the timeless melodies of tradition.

#### Mukhlaf Abdo Khalaf - Singer

Mukhlaf Abdo Khalaf, a middle aged, revered Yazidi cleric and musician, comes from the ancient lands of Mosul, Ba'ashiqah, and Bahzani in Iraq. As a custodian of Yazidi religious Muwashahat and hymns, Mukhlaf's performances embody the spiritual essence of his community, steeped in centuries-old traditions.

Common to Turkey, Syria, Armenia, and Georgia, Yazidi music transcends geographical boundaries, serving as a spiritual beacon for Yazidis worldwide. Rooted in sacred rituals like the Yazidi tawaf (circumambulation), olive picking, and temple ceremonies, Mukhlaf's music accompanies religious observances with reverence and devotion.

With instruments like the Tanbur and Shabbabah / Ney, Mukhlaf's performances resonate with the soul-stirring rhythms of Maqamat like Saba, Hijaz, and Rast. Despite the absence of lyrics, his melodies evoke a profound sense of spiritual connection, uniting communities in prayer and contemplation.

Guided by the Kurmanji dialect of the Kurdish language, Mukhlaf's music embodies the timeless heritage of Yazidi culture, preserving ancient hymns dating back over a millennium. Through his artistry, he honors the sacred traditions of his people, fostering unity and reverence among Yazidis worldwide.

#### Falah Haidar Khadar - Singer

Falah Haidar Khadar, a revered Yazidi cleric and Qawwal, comes from the historic lands of Nineveh, Mosul, Ba'ashiqah, and Bahzani in Iraq. With a specialization in religious music specific to the Yazidi religion, Falah's performances embody the spiritual essence of his community.

Exclusive to the regions of Ba'ashiqah and Bahzani, Falah's music finds resonance within the confines of sacred Yazidi rituals and ceremonies. Rooted in ancient traditions, his melodies accompany various religious occasions, offering solace and devotion to his community.

Guided by instruments like the large Daf, crafted with care by Falah himself, his music transcends generations, fostering reverence and unity among Yazidis worldwide. Through his artistry, he honours the sacred traditions of his people, preserving their spiritual heritage for generations to come.

#### Khairy Issa Hamo - Zurna Player

Khairy Issa Hamo, a distinguished folk artist and Zurna player, comes from the ancient lands of Nineveh, Mosul, Ba'ashiqah, and Bahzani in Iraq. With a repertoire steeped in the rich tapestry of Iraqi folklore, Khairy's performances celebrate the cultural vibrancy of his homeland.

While his music is found in other regions, Khairy's melodies bear unique nuances reflective of the Ba'ashiqah and Bahzani regions. Accompanying various social gatherings and ceremonies, from weddings to circumcision parties, his music resonates with audiences across generations.

Guided by instruments like the Zurna, his music evokes a sense of nostalgia and joy, uniting communities in celebration and revelry. Through his [artistry](#), Khairy preserves the cultural legacy of his homeland, enriching lives with the timeless melodies of tradition.

#### [Raad Eido Elias - Multi-Instrumentalist](#)

Raad Eido Elias, a renowned folk artist, comes from Ba'ashiqah, and Bahzani in Iraq. With a repertoire spanning melancholic and love songs, Raad's performances capture the essence of Ba'ashiqah's cultural heritage.

While his music finds echoes in neighbouring regions like Turkey and Iran, Raad's melodies bear subtle differences reflective of his homeland's unique identity. Accompanying various social occasions, from weddings to holiday celebrations, his music resonates with audiences across generations.

Guided by instruments like the Tanbur and Tabel, Raad's music evokes a sense of nostalgia and longing, touching hearts with its timeless melodies. Through his artistry, he preserves the cultural richness of his homeland, fostering unity and joy among communities.

#### [Marwan Hussein Ali - Singer](#)

Marwan Hussein Ali, a revered religious singer and instrument player, comes from the historic lands of Nineveh, Mosul, and Ba'ashiqah in Iraq. With a repertoire rooted in Sir Maqam and Payizok, Marwan's performances embody the spiritual essence of his community.

While his music shares commonalities with neighbouring regions like Syria, Turkey, Armenia, and Georgia, Marwan's melodies bear unique dialectical nuances reflective of his homeland's cultural heritage. Accompanying various religious occasions, his music evokes reverence and devotion among listeners.

Guided by instruments like the Tanbur and Daf, Marwan's music transcends language barriers, speaking to the soul with its timeless melodies. Through his artistry, he preserves the sacred traditions of his people, fostering unity and spirituality among communities.

#### [Waad Darwish Barakat - Singer](#)

Waad Darwish Barakat, a distinguished folk artist, coming from Ba'ashiqah in Iraq. With a repertoire steeped in the popular folklore of the region, Waad's performances celebrate the cultural vibrancy of Ba'ashiqah, Bahzani, and Sinjar.

While his music shares similarities with songs from Mosul and regions in Turkey and Syria, Waad's melodies bear unique dialectical nuances reflective of his homeland's rich heritage. Accompanying various social gatherings and ceremonies, his [music](#) resonates with audiences across generations.

## Instrument Makers

For generations, the cities of Mosul, Ba'ashiqah, and Bahzani have been renowned for their rich tradition of craftsmanship and musical heritage. Within these vibrant communities, artisans like Maher Khalil Qadir, Karam Khairy Issa, and Mal Allah Khadar Hamawi have emerged as true custodians of their craft.

Maher Khalil Qadir, with his unwavering dedication to the art of crafting Ney instruments, stands as a shining example of tradition in the community. Similarly, Karam Khairy Issa's passion lies in preserving ancestral traditions through his craftsmanship of Mutbeg (Mijwiz), Zurna, and Ney instruments. Meanwhile, Mal Allah Khadar Hamawi's expertise lies in the art of crafting the traditional Iraqi Daf.

Collectively, these artisans exemplify the enduring spirit of Nineveh's artisanal heritage. Their craftsmanship and dedication ensure that the echoes of tradition resonate for generations to come, keeping alive the cultural richness and artistic legacy of their communities.

### Maher Khalil Qadir - Ney Maker

Maher Khalil Qadir, a skilled craftsperson hailing from Mosul, Ba'ashiqah, Bahzani, is a dedicated maker of religious musical instruments, specializing in the Ney. Maher possesses a deep passion for his craft and a profound understanding of the instrument's history and significance.

As the Yazidis believe, the Ney has been present in the Levant region for approximately 1,100 years, tracing its roots back to the arrival of Sheikh Uday Ibn Musafir in the Levant. Maher meticulously crafts each Ney by hand, using apricot wood sourced from the Duhok Governorate in the Zakho District. The instrument features a wooden structure, complemented by a leather membrane and a woolen belt.

With a commitment to preserving the authenticity of the Ney, Maher ensures that each instrument is created from scratch, paying meticulous attention to detail. The crafting process takes approximately 72 hours, reflecting his dedication to producing high-quality instruments.

For Maher, crafting the Ney is not only a hobby but also a necessity. Following the passing of the last craftsperson of this instrument, the community was forced to rely on imports from Turkey. Driven by a desire to teach and create, Maher took it upon himself to fill this void and continue the legacy of Ney craftsmanship.

Maher's instruments are available for purchase, with a price of \$100 per Ney. He primarily sells them to players who appreciate the instrument's cultural and religious significance. Despite the challenges and changes in the craft, Maher's commitment to his art remains unwavering, ensuring that the tradition of Ney making in Mosul, Ba'ashiqah, Bahzani continues to thrive.

### Karam Khairy Issa - Zurna and Mutbeg Maker

Karam Khairy Issa, a middle-aged talented musician and craftsperson from Nineveh, Mosul, Ba'ashiqah, Bahzani, is a Zurna and Mutbeg (Mijwiz) player. Karam possesses a deep passion for these traditional instruments and is dedicated to their preservation.

Karam specializes in crafting and playing the Mutbeg, Zurna, and Ney. While the exact history of these instruments is not known to him, he recognizes their ancient origins. The Mutbeg is made with a mouthpiece from reed, while the body is crafted from reed wood or eagle bone, secured with threads and wax. The Zurna and Ney also utilize similar materials, including wood (reed) or eagle bone, wax, and threads.



To gather the necessary materials, Karam explores the wilderness and mountains, as well as sourcing some from the capital city of Baghdad and southern Iraq. He crafts each instrument from scratch, dedicating one to one and a half hours to complete the process. The wax used in the instruments is obtained from honeybees.

Karam's expertise in crafting these instruments is self-taught, starting from a young age without any external guidance. He has passed down his knowledge and skills to his son, considering it a special tradition within his family.

While Karam has not sold his instruments, he does offer them for purchase. The Mutbeg made of bone is priced at approximately \$400, while those made of wood are priced around \$50. His craftsmanship reflects the dedication and skill he has honed over the years.

Karam's commitment to preserving these traditional instruments and [passing down his craft to the next generation](#) showcases his deep appreciation for the cultural heritage of Nineveh, Mosul, Ba'ashiqah, Bahzani.

### Mal Allah Khadar Hamawi - Daf Maker

Mal Allah Khodr Hamawi is an experienced instrument maker hailing from Ba'ashiqah and Bahzani in Iraq. With over 50 years of expertise, he specializes in crafting the traditional Iraqi musical instrument known as the Daf. Located in Nineveh, Mosul, Ba'ashiqah, and Bahzani, Mal Allah Khodr Hamawi is deeply rooted in the rich cultural heritage of his region.

The Daf is an ancient instrument that dates back to the time of the honorable Sheikh Uday Ibn Mufafer. It consists of a wooden frame, covered with sheepskin leather, and adorned with copper ringlets. To create this instrument, Mal Allah Khodr Hamawi skillfully combines wood, leather, copper, and even wheat (Jareesh) sourced from the local market.

While the Daf itself does not come with any accessories, Mal Allah Khodr Hamawi takes pride in his craftsmanship. He personally purchases the wooden frame from a skilled carpenter, but the rest of the instrument is meticulously crafted by his own hands.

Mal Allah Khodr Hamawi's passion for the Daf stems from his father, who passed down his knowledge and skills to him. In honor of his father's memory, he continues to teach his own children and others at home, ensuring that the art of Daf making is preserved for future generations.

While Mal Allah Khodr Hamawi is dedicated to [sharing his expertise](#), he does not sell his Dafs. Instead, he views his craft as a labor of love and a way to connect with his cultural heritage. His focus lies in the artistry and tradition rather than commercial gain.



## C2. Nimrud, Al-Tawfiqia Village

### Community Characteristics

Al-Tawfiqia village, located in the Nimrud Subdistrict of Nineveh Governorate in Iraq, is a testament to the passage of time. Its historical roots may date back to the era of Prophet Abraham and



Nimrud, adding to its significance. Despite its age, the village is home to approximately 900 people who carry the weight of its historical legacy.

Agriculture plays a central role in the village's occupational landscape, with farming being the dominant profession. Many individuals also work in the Ministries of Defense and Interior, contributing to the economic fabric of the village. The simplicity of village life intertwines with the complexities of the modern world.

The educational landscape in Al-Tawfiqia is shaped by a single primary school, which means that students have to travel to nearby villages for secondary education. Unfortunately, the village faces challenges in education, with a 10% illiteracy rate and a staggering 70% poverty rate. These challenges cast a shadow on the village, alongside its historical echoes.

Basic services such as water, electricity, and internet connection are available in Al-Tawfiqia, connecting the village to the modern world. However, the village remains primarily inhabited by Iraqis, with the Jubur tribe being the largest clan. Celebrations in the village echo national

and religious festivals, creating moments of unity amidst the challenges faced by the community.

Traditional music, played with instruments like the Rababa and Mutbeg (Mijwiz), becomes the soundtrack for celebrations in Al-Tawfiqia. Harvest chants also fill the air during special occasions, weaving a tapestry of sound that resonates with the village's agricultural roots.

The Arabic language dominates the linguistic landscape of Al-Tawfiqia, leaving no room for other linguistic hues. The village's age, lost in the sands of time, adds to its charm and creates an atmosphere where the past and present dance together.

The climate in Al-Tawfiqia is moderate, with proximity to the Tigris River, providing a favorable environment for agricultural pursuits. Gypsies and Doms and Bedouins are absent from the village.

### Music Traditions

In Nimrud, Iraq, the sounds of Rababa, which is uniquely made of iron instead of wood mainly because of the cheaper cost, and Mutbeg (Mijwiz) echo through the village. Musicians, despite limited income from their craft, often supplement their earnings through farming and agriculture. Teaching methods are traditional, with musicians passing down their skills to the younger generation. Acceptance within the community is substantial, with many poets contributing lyrics. The village cherishes harvest songs, maintaining a connection to its agrarian roots. Joyous occasions like circumcisions and graduations are marked by the rhythmic beats of the Rababa, Mutbeg, and Tabel, with the Keyboard making its presence felt recently. Local craftsmanship thrives for the Rababa, using materials like poplar wood and horsehair. Harvest songs and traditional instruments are deeply embedded in the village's identity. A learning opportunity for instrument crafting would be welcomed, especially given the region's economic challenges.



### Artists

Nimrud stands as a cultural hub adorned with a rich tapestry of artistic traditions. Within this vibrant community, talented artisans and poets thrive, carrying forward the legacy of their ancestors through the enchanting mediums of music and verse. From the ethereal melodies of Furaqiyat to the rhythmic cadence of 'Ataba, these gifted artists infuse ancient traditions with vitality, their performances resonating through the narrow streets and bustling markets of the region. United by a deep-rooted passion for preserving their cultural heritage, these individuals, bound by their unwavering love for music and poetry, continue to inspire and captivate audiences both near and far.

### Ahmad Abdel Salam Saleh - Singer

Ahmad Abdel Salam Saleh, a young freelance artist hailing from Nimrud's Zaybaniah village. Specializing in 'Ataba, Lahaj, and Zaalán (sad) genres, Ahmad's musical repertoire finds resonance across regions and in certain Arab countries like Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon. He notes the differences in dialect and production within these genres, which have historically graced special occasions, including weddings and circumcisions. While some performances necessitate a band with instruments like Rababa, Mutbeg, Tabel, and Zurna (Mizmar), others can be performed solo. Ahmad's journey into singing began as a hobby, learning irregularly from friends and acquaintances. Although he doesn't own any musical instruments, he expresses interest in learning how to use or make them. His preferred maqam is Saba, and his lyrical themes often revolve around separation and love, all in Arabic.

### Hussein Al-Mulla Al-Juhaishi - Singer and Rababa Player

Hussein Ahmad Hussein, a poet residing in Nimrud's Tawfiqiyah village, Hussein specializes in genres like 'Ataba, Sweihili, Nayel, and Lahaj. These genres, distinguished by their melancholic nature, are found not only in Nimrud but also in other regions. Often accompanied by the Rababa, these poetic renditions are featured in weddings, happy occasions, and circumcisions. Hussein's interest in the Rababa led him to teach it in nearby villages, striving to introduce it to other cities and governorates. Crafting the Rababa himself, Hussein sells these instruments for \$20 to \$30, showcasing his commitment to preserving traditional craftsmanship. His preferred maqam and rhythm, Saba and Georgina, are commonly found in his lyrical [performances](#), which often touch upon themes of wealth and romance, primarily in Arabic.

### Raad Saadi Ismael Ahmad - Singer

Raad Saadi Ismael Ahmad, a worker from Nimrud's Zaybaniah village residing in Hamam Al-Alil's Hay Al-Mishraq. Specializing in genres like 'Ataba, Lahaj, and Zaalán, Raad's musical expertise extends across regions and certain Arab countries like Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon. Noting variations in dialect, production, and voice tone within these genres, Raad highlights the ongoing use of Darja (a fast-tempo circle dance) on special occasions. His performances, often requiring a band, feature instruments like Rababa, Mutbeg, Tabel, and Zurna, occasionally accompanied by a singer. Raad's journey into singing began as a hobby at the age of 18, learning irregularly from acquaintances. While he doesn't own any instruments, Raad expresses a desire to learn how to use or make them. His lyrical [themes](#) predominantly explore separation and love, conveyed exclusively in Arabic.

### Abdel Razaq Mahdi Saleh - Singer

Abdel Razaq Mahdi Saleh, a young worker from Nimrud's Zaybaniah village. Abdel Razaq specializes mostly in Furaqiyat genres. These genres, found in other countries like Nineveh plains, southern Mosul, Syria, and Lebanon, grace religious and social occasions such as funerals. Abdel Razaq, who considers poetry a talent and hobby, actively teaches this art to others. While he doesn't own any musical instruments, he expresses a willingness to learn how to use or make them.

#### [Ammar Abdel Salam Saleh - Singer](#)

Ammar Abdel Salam Saleh, a middle-aged worker residing in Mosul, Nimrud. Ammar specializes in Furaqiyat and zajal genres. These genres, distinguished by their rural dialect and melancholic character, are featured in happy and sad occasions, circumcisions, engagement parties, and gatherings. Although Ammar doesn't play any musical instruments, he considers poetry a hobby that he passes on to others. His lyrical performances, predominantly in Arabic, often incorporate old lyrics due to their perceived beauty.

#### [Ammar Ibrahim Ahmad](#)

Ammar Ibrahim Ahmad, a middle-aged worker residing in Mosul, Nimrud. Ammar specializes in Furaqiyat genres, with the only difference lying in dialect. The melancholic character distinctive of the region marks his musical expressions. Featured in religious and social occasions, Ammar's performances can be executed either solo or with a band. Although he doesn't play any instruments himself, he has passed on his poetry as a hobby to others.

#### [Mohamad Hassan Mostafa Hassan Maamari - Rabab Player](#)

Mohamad Hassan Mostafa Hassan Maamari, a middle-aged freelancer from Nimrud's Kani Harami village. Mohamad specializes in genres like 'Ataba, Sweihili, Nayel, and Zaaan. Found not only in surrounding regions but also in various Arab countries, these genres exhibit slight differences in performance and lyrics. Mohamad notes the use of Darja (a fast-tempo circle dance), performed at weddings and happy occasions, often accompanied by instruments like Mutbeg and Zurna. While he learned his craft from radio and television, Mohamad also teaches the art to the younger generation. Crafting Rababas himself, Mohamad sells these instruments for \$22 to \$25, reflecting his commitment to preserving traditional craftsmanship.

#### [Mohamad Saadi Saleh - Singer](#)

Mohamad Saadi Saleh, a young worker from Nimrud's Zaybaniah village. He specializes mostly in Furaqiyat genres. These genres, found not only in Nimrud but also in other regions like Nineveh plains, southern Mosul, Syria, and Lebanon, are distinguished by their rural dialect. Featured in religious and social occasions such as funerals, Mohamad's performances can be accompanied by instruments or music. Although he doesn't play any instruments himself, he actively teaches this art to others.

#### [Hiam Jassem Mohamad Jabbouri \(Qatr An-Nada\) - Singer](#)

Hiam Jassem Mohamad Jabbouri, a housewife from Nimrud, residing in Erbil. At 49 years old, Hiam, also known by her stage name Qatr An-Nada, specializes in genres like 'Ataba, Sweihili, Nayel, harvest music, and Lahaj. These genres, found in Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestine are distinguished by their melancholic character and tone of voice. Featured in various occasions like happy occasions and private gatherings, Hiam's performances can involve instruments like Rababa and Mutbeg. Although she doesn't play any instruments herself, Hiam engages in writing. Her lyrical [performances](#), primarily in Arabic, explore themes of sadness and reproach, often with a rural dialect.

## Instrument Makers

This section features two talented artists, Hussein Ahmed Hussein Hassani and Muhammad Hassan Mustafa Hassan Al-Ma'amari. While Hussein is a renowned poet and expert in playing the traditional musical instrument, the Rababa, Muhammad is a freelance artist with a passion for crafting and playing the same instrument. In this section, we will delve into their backgrounds, their craftsmanship, and their experiences in the world of art. Join us as we explore the fascinating world of these two artists and their contributions to the cultural landscape of Nimrud.

### Hussein Ahmed Hussein Hassani - Rababa Maker

Hussein Ahmed Hussein Hassani is a 50-year-old poet from Nimrud, Al-Tawfiqiya village. He is known for his expertise in playing the Rababa, a traditional musical instrument. The Rababa has its origins in Persia and has been transmitted through tribal sheikhs, Arab nomads, and gypsies. Hussein crafts the Rababa using materials such as a tin can, palm tree leaves, wood, iron rod, water gum, and a tree branch. He manually recycles these materials to create the instrument. The neck of the Rababa is made from poplar wood, while the bow is preferably made from tamarisk plant sticks. The strings and bow are made from horsehair, preferably from a purebred horse. Hussein takes great care in preparing the horsehair by soaking it in water and salt for 24 hours. He then installs the strings evenly on the Rababa and applies water gum, an important step for playing the instrument. Hussein crafts the bow himself, which is an essential item for playing the Rababa. He has been involved in making and selling the Rababa for many years, and he has seen an increase in demand recently. He sells the instrument to individuals upon request and has sold it in Egypt and Jordan.

### Muhammad Hassan Mustafa Hassan Al-Ma'amari - Rababa Maker

Muhammad Hassan Mustafa Hassan Al-Ma'amari is a freelance artist from the Nimrud subdistrict, specifically from Kani Harami village. He is also skilled in playing the Rababa. Like Hussein, Muhammad believes that the Rababa originated from Persia and has been transmitted through invasions, cultures, and nomads. He crafts the Rababa using materials such as a tin can, a wooden stick, an iron rod, horsetail hair, a bow, ghazal (bridge), and water gum. Muhammad sources these materials from the local market and sometimes recycles empty oil tins. [He crafts](#) the Rababa from scratch without using ready-made materials. The bow is made from wood, and the string is made from horsetail hair. Muhammad has been involved in making and selling the Rababa for many years. He has taught others how to play the instrument and has plans to learn to play it himself in the future. Muhammad sells the Rababa upon request and has sold it in Saudi Arabia and surrounding Arab countries. He has seen an increase in demand for



the instrument compared to previous years. The prices for the Rababa vary between \$22 and \$25, depending on the quality.

### C3. Basra, Jaykur Village

#### Community Characteristics

Jaykur Village, located within the Abu Al-Khaseeb District in Basrah, Iraq, is a vibrant tapestry of hospitality and tradition. With a population ranging from 55,000 to 62,000, the village showcases a mosaic of diversity in the Basrah governorate, with a gender balance of 45% males and 55% females.



The economic symphony of Jaykur Village is composed of agriculture, trade, fishing, and independent pursuits, reflecting the region's reliance on the land. The village's strength lies in its tribal fabric, where social relations and communication are highly valued, fostering a sense of unity among the community.

Educational institutions offering various levels of education form the educational weave of Jaykur Village. However, challenges persist, with an illiteracy rate ranging from 15% to 18% and a significant 32% poverty rate. Access to water, electricity, and internet connectivity serves as lifelines amidst these challenges.

Cultural hues are woven into the fabric of Jaykur Village, with religious holidays, national festivals, weddings, circumcisions, and weekly celebrations like Taalila punctuating the cultural calendar. Singing sessions, religious Muwashahat, and Quranic recitations become soulful expressions during joyous and somber occasions.

The linguistic palette of Jaykur Village is painted with the Basrah dialect, a colloquial Arabic that fosters communication among community members. The village's historical roots and traditions are preserved, with Jaykur Village gaining prominence through the renowned poet Badr Shakir al-Sayyab.

The climate in Jaykur Village is characterized by a hot and humid climate, typical of Basrah, which sets the stage for agricultural pursuits. Social bonds and hospitality remain integral to the village's dynamics, creating an atmosphere where customs inherited from ancestors thrive.

While Gypsies and Doms are absent from Jaykur Village, Bedouins make a modest appearance, coexisting within the fabric of the community. Interaction with Bedouins adds diversity to the social dynamics of the village.

Jaykur Village, in the heart of Basrah, stands as a living testament to hospitality, tradition, and the enduring strength of a community woven together by agricultural way of life and strong social bonds.

### Music Traditions

In the rhythmic heart of Basrah, Iraq, Khashaba music takes center stage. Oud and Kassour players, along with singers, contribute to the vibrant musical landscape. While music isn't tied to specific seasons, the community, despite its tribal nature, welcomes the tunes of celebration and joy during weddings and other festivities. Once, there were specific songs for cultivation and harvest, but now the music transcends seasonal boundaries. Birthdays, circumcisions, and receptions are marked by the melodic tones of oud, tombak, percussion, ney, and the keyboard piano. Craftsmanship in Basrah is limited, and certain instruments are made upon request. Raw materials like pottery, wood, glue, and plastic contribute to the crafting process. Despite economic challenges, the community expresses a strong desire to learn music and instrument crafting if the necessary resources are made available.



### Artists

In Jaykur village, and in Basra in general, most of the artists revolve around the genre of Khashaba, forming several music groups that present this art on various occasions. From Yassin Saleh Al-Abboud to Jabbar Kadhum Jabbar and many others, the sounds of Oud and Kassour show a deep-rooted passion for preserving their cultural heritage.

#### Jabbar Kadhum Jabbar - Singer and Oud Player

Jabbar Kadhum Jabbar, is a middle-aged singer and Oud player, from Jaykur, Abu Al-Khaseeb, Basra. He specializes in the genre of Khashaba, by leading a folk music band that specifically [presents](#) this genre. For Jabbar, the most known maqams in Basra are the Hakimi and Bahirzawi, however, the most known rhythm is the Khashaba (mainly played by the Kassour). Jabbar did not attempt to make Oud, he usually buys it from the local market in Basra.

#### Adnan Al-Saheer - Multi-Instrumentalist

Adnan Al-Saheer is a 57 years old singer, Ney and Mutbeg player from Jaykur, Abu Al-Khaseeb. He is the founder of a folk arts school in Basra. He is also a part of a Khashaba group that mainly performs in Basra and around. Adnan makes his own Ney and Mutbeg by himself, since Abu Al-Khaseeb is well known for its reeds. Like many of Basra's folk artists, Adnan seeks to preserve the heritage and authentic instruments and music of his land.

### Aqil Khudair - Oud Player

Aqil Khudair is a 43 Oud player from Jaykur, Abu Al-Khaseeb, Basra. He started to learn and to develop his skills at an advanced age, because of his passion about music, and specifically traditional and folk music. According to Aqil, Al-Bahirzawim, Al-Hakimi, and Al-Mathni are the most known maqams in Basra. When it comes to rhythms, Khashaba, Georgina and Saout are the most used cycles.

### Nasser Badan - Singer

Nasser Badan, an artist and a lecturer in the faculty of Fine Arts in Basra, from Jaykur, Abu Al-Khaseeb, Basra. Nasser focuses on the influence of Gulf and other Arab countries' arts on Basra's folk art, due to its geographical location, highlighting styles such as Al-Hewa, Al-Nakazi, and Al-Samri, as well as rhythm cycles and maqams. These music genres are usually performed in social and familial occasions.

### Hussein Abd Al-Abbas - Multi-Instrumentalist

Hussein Abd Al-Abbas is a young violin and viola player, and a music teacher, from Jaykur, Abu Al-Khaseeb, Basra. Hussein explains the differences in the music genres used in southern Iraq depending on the occasion, whether religious or social. For example, among the Shia community, the "Radoud Hussaini" is used along with "Latem," which involves rhythmically striking the chest with the hand. Meanwhile, among the Sunni community, Sufi music is used. On social occasions, genres such as Khashaba and Hiwah are performed.

### Yassin Saleh Al-Abboud - composer

Ending Jaykur's artists' testimonies with a special one. Yassin Saleh Al-Abboud, born in 1927, and considered as the first music teacher and music composer in Abu Al-Khaseeb, by starting to teach music in Basra's schools in 1947. He developed his music skills and knowledge by himself, and formed a music group that included the instruments: violin, Oud, Ney and percussion, where each member of this group played the four instruments. During his journey, Yassin composed 14 Operettas, and they were performed by his students. He is considered as a historical and musical reference in Abu Al-Khaseeb and in Basra in general.

### Instrument Makers

This section is dedicated to the talented instrument makers of Abu Al-Khaseeb, Iraq. In this vibrant community, where the sea meets the artistry of music, we delve into the craftsmanship of Nazim Kazem Abboud.

### Nathim Kathim Abboud - Kassour maker

Nathim Kathim Abboud is a skilled sailor and instrument maker hailing from Abu Al-Khaseeb, Iraq. With a deep connection to the sea and a passion for music, Nathim specializes in crafting the Kassour instrument, also known as Khashaba. Originally used by sailors, the Kassour was created by fixing an upper leather onto a readymade base using glue. Nathim's craftsmanship involves using pottery clay molds, leather, and glue to assemble the instrument. The Kassour requires no additional accessories and is commonly used by folk bands during their travels. Nathim, who plays the Kassour professionally alongside the Tar in his folk band, takes pride in maintaining and replacing the instrument's leather as needed. While he doesn't sell the Kassour instrument, Nathim crafts it exclusively for use by his band. The price of the instrument varies depending on the materials used, with imported materials costing \$35 and crafted materials costing only \$3.5. As the freedom granted to folk bands to practice their activities has increased in recent years, there has been a noticeable rise in shops selling musical instruments, further supporting the vibrant music scene in the region.



## D. Jordan

### D1. Al Taybah



#### Community Characteristics:

Al Taybah is a picturesque village located in the Irbid Governorate of Jordan. Situated 18 km west of Irbid and 80 km from Amman, it offers breath-taking views of Jordan's mountains. Al Taybah creates a truly picturesque setting at an elevation of 385 m above sea level. Administratively, it serves as the core of Al Taybah District within the Irbid Governorate and falls within the boundaries of the Al Taybah municipality.

As of 2022, Al Taybah has a population of 60,970, with a balanced gender distribution of 51% females and 49% males. The village thrives on a diverse economic landscape, encompassing farming, commerce, and industrial activities. This harmonious blend of tradition and natural beauty makes Al Taybah a truly unique destination in the Jordan Valley.

Al Taybah District boasts a robust educational system, with a total of 41 schools. Of these, 29 are under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, while 12 are privately owned institutions. The district offers a variety of schools, including 27 mixed-gender schools, 10 all-boys schools, and 4 all-girls schools. However, despite these educational efforts, the illiteracy rate remains at 1%, and poverty affects 10% of the population.

The cultural richness of Al Taybah is evident in the prominent clans within the community, such as Al-Quraan, Al-Alawneh, Hayajneh, and others. Religious holidays, including Eid Al-Adha, Eid Al-Fitr, Isra' and Mi'raj, and Al-Mawlid Al-Nabawi, are celebrated with Khutbahs (sermons), Takbir (recitation of Allah's greatness), sweet distribution, and communal visits. Weddings in Al Taybah are deeply rooted in tradition and are accompanied by traditional music featuring instruments such as the Mijwiz, Shabbabah / Minjaira, Oud, Tabel, and Mihbaj. These melodic tunes not only add to the festive atmosphere but also reflect the cultural heritage of the region. Weddings are not just events for the bride and groom but are occasions that bring the entire community together.

Language plays a significant role in these celebrations, with colloquial Arabic, including a peasant dialect, commonly spoken. This linguistic unity fosters communication and strengthens the sense of community among the residents of Al Taybah.

Al Taybah has a rich history, having been established as a district in 1986 and expanded in 1996 to connect different areas within the Irbid Governorate. The district's moderate climate adds to its geographical charm, with pleasant weather experienced throughout the year, both in winter and summer. Al Taybah also shares similarities with the nearby Nomadic Bedouin communities, emphasizing the importance of shared occasions and strong bonds with neighboring communities.

### Music Tradition

In the cultural enclave of Al Taybah, Jordan, the music tradition is led by instruments such as Arghul and Mihbaj, and music genres such as Hajini, creating a vibrant music tradition. While music may not be the primary source of income for many, it is a cherished art form that has been passed down through generations. The community wholeheartedly embraces music, valuing and preserving ancient customs and traditions. The enchanting sounds of Shabbabah, Mijwiz, Tabel, Oud, Arghul, and Mihbaj reverberate through the cultural landscape. While instruments are often sourced from major cities, the crafting of the Mihbaj remains a local art, showcasing the community's dedication to their heritage. Despite the challenges posed by the lack of raw materials, there is an unwavering desire among the people to learn and perpetuate this cherished craft.



### Artists

In Al Taybah, a vibrant tapestry of musical traditions thrives, reflecting the soulful essence of its community. From seasoned performers to blossoming talents, the residents of Al Taybah are deeply rooted in a rich musical heritage that spans generations. Inspired by themes of romance, harvest, separation, and joy, these musicians weave captivating melodies that resonate with audiences across weddings, youth gatherings, and traditional celebrations. Whether playing the Mihbaj, Shabbabah, Arghul, or crafting their own instruments, each artist brings a unique perspective and passion to the vibrant musical landscape of Al Taybah, enriching the cultural fabric of this place.

### Raed Hamed Musa Al-Anouz - Singer

Raed Hamed Musa Al-Anouz is a 46-year-old electrician residing in Samma, Al-Taybah. He specializes in the Hajini musical style, which is popular in various regions of the Levant. In addition to Hajini, Raed also performs 'Ataba, Dal'una, Zajal, and folk music. His performances are frequently seen at weddings, youth parties, Taalila celebrations (an outdoor evening gathering), and social events. Raed is skilled in playing multiple instruments, including the keyboard, Mijwiz, Arghul, Shabbabah, Oud, and Rababa. He is a self-taught musician who

occasionally shares his knowledge with friends. His lyrics often revolve around themes of romance, harvest, separation, rain, praise, and criticism, all written in Arabic. His [performances](#) are characterized by the coastal languages and dialects prevalent in Aqaba Governorate, and he predominantly uses old lyrics.

#### [Sheikha Nahar Youssef Al-Qammaj - Singer](#)

Sheikha Nahar Youssef Al-Qammaj, aged 67, resides in Mandah, Al-Taybah and is not professionally employed. She specializes in the Hajini musical style, which is popular across the country and other regions of the Levant. Sheikha performs the Hajini style, primarily at weddings, youth parties, and Taalila celebrations. Sheikha is a talented singer who inherited her musical skills from her brother Mahmoud. She prefers to use the Mihbaj instrument. Her lyrics often revolve around themes of reproach, separation, joy, rain, and harvest. Sheikha's performances are characterized by the use of the rural dialect and feature old lyrics.

#### [Abdallah Duweikat - Shabbabah Player](#)

Abdallah Duweikat, aged 35, resides in Samma, Al-Taybah, and works as a folk artist. He specializes in folk music from all regions of the country, including Hajini, 'Ataba, Dal'una, and Zajal genres. Abdallah frequently performs at weddings, youth parties, and Taalila celebrations. Music has been a hobby for him since childhood, and he occasionally shares his skills with friends. Abdallah is proficient in playing the Shabbabah instrument and focuses on themes of separation, romance, and harvest in his performances. He utilizes the rural dialect and incorporates old lyrics into his music.

#### [Abdallah Faisal Ahmed Al-Khatib - Multi-Instrumentalist](#)

Abdallah Faisal Ahmed Al-Khatib, aged 19, resides in Al Taybah and is not professionally employed. He specializes in folk music from all regions of the country, particularly Hajini, 'Ataba. Abdallah performs at weddings, youth parties, and Taalila celebrations, using instruments such as the Mijwiz, Arghul, and Tabla. He crafts his own instruments and focuses on themes of separation, romance, and harvest in his performances. Abdallah utilizes Maqam Saba and Maqam Bayat and acknowledges the variation in Maqamat degrees.

#### [Ali Al-Dhib Youssef Ghoneim - Singer and Mihbaj Player](#)

Ali Al-Dhib Youssef Ghoneim, aged 77, is a retired truck driver residing in Al Taybah. He specializes in the Hajini style of music, which is popular across the country. Ali performs at weddings, Taalila celebrations, and youth parties. He prefers the Mihbaj instrument, which he inherited from his late brother. Ali's performances often revolve around themes of romance, harvest, hunting, rain, and separation. He incorporates the rural dialect and features old lyrics in his [music](#).

#### [Omar Ahmad Mohammad Al-Jadaiya - Mijwiz Player](#)

Omar Ahmad Mohammad Al-Jadaiya, aged 43, is a farmer residing in Samm, Al-Taybah. He specializes in Hajini and Dabke music. He learned to play the Mijwiz instrument from his brother Mohamad. Omar's performances often explore themes of separation, romance, and reproach. He incorporates the rural dialect and incorporates old lyrics into his music.

#### [Omar Taha Ahmed Al-Jadaiya - Mijwiz Player](#)

Omar Taha Ahmed Al-Jadaiya, aged 28, is an accomplished artist residing in Samma, Al-Taybah. He specializes in the rich folk music traditions found throughout the country, with a particular focus on 'Ataba, Dal'una, and Hajini genres. Omar captivates audiences at weddings and youth parties with his mesmerizing performances on the Mijwiz instrument, which he skillfully crafts himself. His musical repertoire is enriched by his deep understanding of Maqams, allowing him to explore the nuances of these melodic scales. Omar's performances are further enhanced by his use of the rural dialect and incorporation of old lyrics, creating a nostalgic and authentic experience for his listeners.

#### [Omar Mahmoud Marwan - Singer](#)

Omar Mahmoud Marwan, aged 50, is a talented folk musician based in Mandah, Al-Taybah. Omar is a sought-after performer at weddings, youth parties, and Taalila celebrations. His exceptional vocal abilities have been honed through years of learning from his father, and he favors the soulful melodies produced by the Arghul instrument. By incorporating the rural dialect and drawing from old lyrics, Omar creates a captivating and nostalgic atmosphere during his musical renditions.

#### [Mohammad Mahmoud Dweikat - Mihbaj Player](#)

Mohammad Mahmoud Dweikat, aged 64, is retired from the Jordanian Armed Forces, and resides in Samma, Al-Taybah. His mastery lies in playing the Mihbaj instrument, which holds a significant place in various folk genres. Mohammad is a familiar face at weddings, youth parties, and Taalila celebrations, where his musical skills have been passed down through generations, tracing back to his grandfather and father. With his inherited talent and deep understanding of the instrument, Mohammad effortlessly conveys the themes of praise, lamentation, and reproach through his performances. His use of the rural dialect adds an authentic touch to his music, creating a profound connection with his audience. While the age of the lyrics he performs may vary, Mohammad's expertise in navigating the intricacies of Maqamat degrees is evident in his captivating performances.

#### [Mahmoud Nahar Youssef Al-Qammaj - Singer and Mihbaj Player](#)

Mahmoud Nahar Youssef Al-Qammaj, aged 70, is retired from the Jordanian Armed Forces who currently leads a fulfilling life as a farmer and shepherd in Al Taybah. Specializing in the enchanting Hajini style, captivating audiences at weddings, youth evenings, Taalila celebrations, and feasts. His musical skills were nurtured through gatherings and bonfires, where he learned from friends and family, and he proudly carries on the legacy of his ancestors by playing the Mihbaj instrument. Mahmoud's profound understanding of themes such as separation, romance, and reproach allows him to evoke deep emotions in his listeners. By incorporating the rural dialect and drawing from old lyrics, Mahmoud creates an immersive experience that transports his audience to a bygone era. Additionally, his craftsmanship in creating musical instruments further showcases his dedication to preserving the rich musical traditions of the region.

#### Moatasem Jabr Mohammad Dweikat - Shabbabah Player

Moatasem Jabr Mohammad Dweikat is a talented folk artist, aged 30, residing in Samma, Al-Taybah. He specializes in a wide range of genres, including 'Ataba, Daluna, Zajal, and Hajini, and his performances are often seen at weddings, youth parties, and Taalila celebrations. Moatasem is a self-taught musician who finds joy in playing the Shabbabah instrument. He sources his instruments from a skilled craftsman in the region and has a deep understanding of the variations in Maqamat degrees. Moatasem's performances are known for their authenticity, traditional rural dialect, and incorporation of old lyrics.

#### Noha Fawzi Kayed Alawneh - Singer and Mihbaj Player

Noha Fawzi Kayed Alawneh, aged 39, is a housewife residing in Al Taybah. She is a specialist in the Hajini style of music, particularly skilled in playing the Mihbaj instrument. Noha often performs at weddings, henna ceremonies, and women's evening parties. Her inspiration for playing the Mihbaj came from the rhythmic sounds produced by the pestle and mortar, which she observed her aunt using. Noha inherited the Mihbaj from her ancestors, with her grandfather being the one who used to craft it. In addition to her musical talents, Noha is skilled in crafting musical instruments and incorporates themes of romance, hunting, and separation into her performances. She embraces the rural dialect and prefers using old lyrics in her music.

#### Yamen Ahmed Mohammad Al-Alawneh - Multi-instrumentalist

Yamen Ahmed Mohammad Al-Alawneh, aged 13, is a young individual residing in Al Taybah. Although he doesn't have a specific profession, Yamen actively participates in music and enjoys being part of various cultural events. He specializes in playing a diverse range of musical instruments, including the singer, Mijwiz, Arghul, and Tabla. Yamen is well-known for his performances in genres such as 'Ataba, Daluna, Zajal, and Hajini, which are popular throughout the country. He learned the art of crafting musical instruments from his friend Abdallah and occasionally creates his own instruments. Yamen's preference for crafting stems from his enjoyment of the process and his belief in his ability to create high-quality instruments. His performances are characterized by their authenticity, skill, and preference for using old lyrics. While Yamen is familiar with the common themes found in traditional Jordanian music, he does not possess detailed knowledge about Maqamat degrees.

#### Instrument Makers

In Al Taybah, a community of skilled craftsmen preserves the art of traditional musical instrument making. These craftsmen, each with their unique approach and dedication to their craft, represent the rich heritage and artistry of traditional musical instrument making in Al Taybah. While their motivations may differ, their commitment to preserving and passing on this cultural tradition remains unwavering.

### Abdullah Faisal Ahmad Al-Khatib - Shabbabah Maker

Abdullah Faisal Ahmad Al-Khatib is a 19-year-old resident of Al Taybah who specializes in crafting the Shabbabah, a traditional musical instrument. The Shabbabah is a single, straight reed stick with five or six holes and open ends, and Abdullah has honed his expertise in crafting it. He sources materials such as copper, plastic, aluminum, and reed from construction supplies stores and Wadi Al-Taybah, where reed is readily available.

Abdullah's efficiency and skill in the craft are evident as he can craft a Shabbabah from scratch in just 10 to 15 minutes. He learned the art of instrument making from his cousins and occasionally shares his knowledge with friends. While he is proficient, Abdullah prefers to keep the craft within his social circle and does not sell his instruments. He has no interest in exporting or commercializing his craft, indicating a personal and non-commercial approach to instrument making.

### Omar Muhammad Ahmad Al-Jadaiya - Arghul Maker

Omar Muhammad Ahmad Al-Jadaiya, a 43-year-old farmer from Sama, specializes in crafting the Arghul, another traditional musical instrument. The Arghul consists of three pipes (two pipes with holes, responsible for the melodies, and third is a one note pipe responsible for the long notes) and an inserted reed stick called Azabat, requiring expertise in its construction. Omar sources materials such as reed, beeswax, and thread from specialized shops in Irbid.



Crafting an Arghul takes Omar approximately one to two hours due to the instrument's intricate nature. He learned the craft from his brother and is skilled in both crafting and playing the Arghul. Instead of commercializing his craft, Omar prefers to sell his instruments directly to players. He has no interest in exporting his instruments, indicating a localized approach to instrument making.

#### [Mahmoud Nahar Youssef Al-Qamaj - Mihbaj Maker](#)

Mahmoud Nahar Youssef Al-Qamaj, a 70-year-old retiree, formerly in the armed forces, from Al Taybah, specializes in crafting the Mihbaj, a traditional percussion instrument. The Mihbaj features a pestle, crater, and body, requiring meticulous craftsmanship. Mahmoud uses materials such as pistacia, oak, mulberry, and hawthorn, which are cut from trees and dried for a year before use.

Crafting a Mihbaj takes Mahmoud approximately one to two days, highlighting the detailed work involved. He learned the craft from his father and expresses a desire to teach others in the future. Mahmoud does not commercialize his craft and does not sell his instruments. He has no interest in exporting his instruments, indicating a personal and non-commercial approach to instrument making.

#### [Yamen Ahmad Muhammad Alawneh - Shabbabah Maker](#)

Yamen Ahmad Muhammad Alawneh, a 13-year-old resident of Al Taybah, is already showing great promise in crafting the Shabbabah, a traditional musical instrument. The Shabbabah, which resembles a single reed pipe with holes, has become Yamen's instrument of choice to craft. He easily sources materials such as copper, plastic, and aluminum from construction supplies stores in his local area.

Impressively, Yamen can craft a Shabbabah in just 10 minutes, highlighting his natural talent and skill in the craft. He learned the art of instrument making from his friend, Abdullah, and has aspirations to pass on his knowledge to others in the future. Despite his talent, Yamen prefers to keep his craft within his social circle and does not seek to commercialize it. He has no interest in exporting his instruments, demonstrating a personal and non-commercial approach to his instrument making.



## [D2. Jaber Border Crossing](#)

### Community Characteristics

Approximately 18 km north of Al-Mafraq city, Jaber Border Crossing serves as a vital link along the Jordan-Syria demarcation line. While exact population figures are unknown, estimates from the 2015 census suggest a population of 2,510. The crossing acts as a gateway to regional interactions and reflects a diverse tapestry of cultures.

The economic tableau of Jaber Border Crossing includes farming, carpentry, street vending, and a musical inclination. While educational institutions exist, there is no specific information available about the illiteracy rate, indicating that the community grapples with educational challenges. High poverty rates underscore the socio-economic struggles faced by the population.

Basic services are accessible at Jaber Border Crossing, ensuring a semblance of infrastructure. The population is primarily Syrian, adding to the cross-cultural dynamics of the area. The community actively participates in religious celebrations, emphasizing the importance of Muslim holidays such as Eid Al-Fitr and Eid Al-Adha.

Celebrations at Jaber Border Crossing are marked by singing, music, and dances like dabke, which take place in residential complexes or wedding halls. Wedding ceremonies showcase the richness of customs and traditions. The linguistic fabric of the community is Arabic, with a dialect used for internal communication.

The climate in the area is characterized by high temperatures, mirroring the arid surroundings. Despite the challenges, the community perseveres and celebrates life's moments with music, dance, and shared traditions.

In Jaber Border Crossing, a cultural crossroad, the population weaves stories of resilience, shared celebrations, and the challenges of a borderland existence, forming a unique tapestry along the Jordan-Syria line.

### Music Tradition

Jaber Border Crossing, Jordan, resonates with a diverse musical landscape, encompassing Hajini, Samer, poetry, and region-specific tunes like Julani and Darazi. Music, once a primary livelihood, now coexists with various income sources. The transmission of this musical tradition occurs through family ties and relatives who play or craft instruments. Widely accepted and deeply embedded in the culture, music thrives in weddings, farming, and harvest seasons. Instruments like Rababa, Mijwiz, Arghul, and Shabbabah, are integral to these musical expressions. Crafting happens in the village, in homes or tents, utilizing simple



tools and materials like reeds, aluminum, beeswax, threads, and wood. The Mihbaj stands as a unique instrument, and the community, learning through familial ties, remains deeply connected to its musical heritage.

### Artists

In Jaber Border Crossing in Jordan, a community of skilled artisans and musicians thrives, preserving and enriching the region's rich musical heritage. From crafting traditional instruments like the Mijwiz and Arghul, these individuals are the guardians of time-honored traditions, ensuring their continuation for generations to come. United by a deep-rooted passion for music and craftsmanship, they infuse the vibrant cultural tapestry of the region with melodies that resonate through the streets and gatherings, captivating audiences with their soulful performances. Impressively, most of the Jaber Borders folk artists are also instrument makers.



### Ali Rached Nahian - Singer

Ali Rached Nahian, a 48-year-old Shaabi folk singer from Jaber Border Crossing in Syria's Daraa region, is renowned for his soulful renditions of traditional songs. With a repertoire including Dal'una, Jafra, and Zarif Toul, Ali's [performances](#) evoke the spirit of Hauran plains and Palestine. His dedication to preserving cultural heritage is evident in his commitment to singing traditional songs, both old and new, ensuring their continuity for future generations.

### Instrument Makers

Introducing skilled artists and instrument crafts persons who contribute to the rich musical heritage of the Middle East. Awad, Khalil, and Ala'a specialize in crafting the Bunayyat (mouth piece) of the Mijwiz and the tubes of the Arghul, showcasing his meticulous construction techniques and dedication to preserving traditional instruments. On the other hand, Muhannad's expertise lies in crafting both plastic and reed Shabbabah, paying close attention to durability and musical resonance. With their commitment to craftsmanship and passion for music, Awad and Muhannad contribute to the vibrant musical landscape of Jordan, Syria, and beyond.

### Khalil Ibrahim Hoshan - Mijwiz and Arghul Maker

Khalil Ibrahim Hoshan is a middle-aged musician residing in Ar-Ramtha, near the Jaber Border Crossing in Daraa, Syria. His expertise lies in crafting traditional instruments like the Mijwiz and Arghul, essential to the local music scene. Khalil's dedication to preserving musical heritage is evident in his meticulous craftsmanship, focusing on the Bunayyat of the Mijwiz and the plectrums of the Arghul. He sources high-quality reeds, beeswax, and thread, ensuring the authenticity and longevity of his creations. With a family legacy in instrument making, Khalil takes pride in passing on his skills to family and friends, contributing to the continuity of traditional music in the region.

Through meticulous attention to detail and craftsmanship, Khalil ensures the highest quality for each instrument he creates. With a process taking approximately 15 to 20 minutes per instrument, Khalil's dedication to preserving musical heritage shines through his creations, catering to musicians and enthusiasts alike.

#### [Alaa Nawaf Jamil Musalli - Mijwiz maker](#)

Alaa Nawaf Jamil Musalli, a 40-year-old instrument maker based in Ar-Ramtha, near the Jaber Border Crossing in Daraa, Syria, specializes in crafting traditional instruments like the Mijwiz. His craftsmanship extends to sourcing materials, crafting, and tuning these instruments to perfection. Alaa's dedication to preserving musical heritage is evident in his commitment to crafting high-quality Mijwiz, ensuring their availability for future generations of musicians.

#### [Awad Khudr Al-Mousili - Mizwiz Maker](#)

Awad Khudr Al-Mousili, a 30-year-old artist and instrument craftsperson, is based in Jordan, specifically in Irbid, Mugheer Al-Sarhan, and Jaber Border Crossing. His craftsmanship extends into Syria, particularly in Daraa and Al-Muzayrib. Specialising in crafting the Bunayyat (Mouth Piece) of the Mijwiz and the tubes of the Arghul, Awad's expertise lies in the meticulous construction of these traditional instruments. He sources reeds, beeswax, and thread for his creations, ensuring structural integrity and musical resonance. With reeds classified as male (inner tube) or female (outer tube), Awad handpicks them for optimal performance. His dedication to preserving musical heritage is evident [in his commitment to crafting instruments](#) that resonate with authenticity.

#### [Muhannad Yasser Al-Homsi - Shabbah Maker](#)

Muhannad Yasser Al-Homsi, a 37-year-old artist and instrument craftsperson, operates within Jordan, with a presence in Irbid, Mugheer Al-Sarhan, and Jaber Border Crossing. He also extends his craftsmanship to Syria's Daraa region. Specialising in crafting both plastic and reed Shabbaba., Muhannad demonstrates his expertise in instrument making. Utilising plastic or reed materials, he meticulously constructs each Shabbabah, ensuring durability and musical resonance. With a process taking approximately 10 to 15 minutes per instrument, Muhannad's dedication to [craftsmanship](#) is evident in the quality of his creations.

## Conclusion

The traditional music heritage of Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon is deeply ingrained in the cultural fabric of the region, showcasing a tapestry of diverse traditions and histories. From the nomadic rhythms of the Bedouin tribes to the vibrant tunes of the Gypsy musicians, each note and beat tells a story of resilience and cultural richness. In the face of challenges such as conflicts and displacement, the dedication of artisans, educators, musicians, and community leaders to preserving and promoting this heritage is truly commendable.

Looking to the future, it is imperative to recognize the importance of safeguarding this musical legacy for the benefit of future generations. Not only does it help maintain cultural identity and foster pride and solidarity, but it also offers a source of healing and optimism during difficult times.

To safeguard the music heritage of Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon, concrete actions can be taken to ensure its preservation and promotion.

- Continue to support artisans and musicians: Provide financial and technical support to artisans and musicians who are dedicated to preserving traditional music. This can include grants, scholarships, and mentorship programs to encourage their continued practice and innovation.
- Encourage cultural exchange programs: Facilitate cultural exchange programs between musicians and artists from different regions and countries. This will foster cross-cultural understanding and collaboration, leading to the enrichment and evolution of traditional music forms
- Encourage preservation of historic venues: Identify and protect historic venues that have played a significant role in the development and performance of traditional music. Provide funding for their restoration and maintenance, ensuring that they continue to serve as important cultural spaces.
- To include the folk music in the schools' curriculums, by introducing its authenticity and diversity through teaching folk songs with their original dialects, as well as by introducing the folk music instruments and making them available in the schools.
- Invest digital platforms and online presence: Create digital platforms and online archives to make traditional music accessible to a wider audience. This can include streaming platforms, websites, and social media channels dedicated to promoting and sharing traditional music recordings, performances, and information.
- Explore the possibility for cultural tourism initiatives: develop cultural tourism plans that highlight the music heritage of the region. This can include organizing music festivals, concerts, and cultural tours that showcase traditional music performances and provide opportunities for visitors to engage with local musicians and artisans.
- Continue to invest in collaboration and networking: Foster collaboration and networking among musicians, educators, researchers, and cultural organizations within the region and internationally. This can be achieved through conferences, workshops, and forums that facilitate knowledge exchange and joint initiatives for the preservation and promotion of traditional music.
- Lobby for policy and legal frameworks: Advocate for the development and implementation of policies and legal frameworks that protect and support traditional music heritage. This can include measures to prevent the unauthorized use and appropriation of traditional music, as well as the recognition and support of traditional musicians as cultural ambassadors
- Develop public awareness campaigns: Launch public awareness campaigns to educate the general public about the importance of traditional music heritage and its role in cultural identity and social cohesion. This can include media campaigns, exhibitions, and public performances that celebrate and promote traditional music.
- By implementing these concrete actions, the music heritage of these communities can be safeguarded, ensuring its preservation, promotion, and continued contribution to the cultural richness and diversity of the region.

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## Contributors:

- Partners:
  - The Book Forum for Culture and Education In Mosul, Iraq.
  - The Sumer Talents Development Foundation in Basra, Iraq.
  - Basmah Baghdadiah in Baghdad, Iraq.
  - MedeArts in Irbid, Jordan.
  - Qisetna in Ar-Raqqah, Syria
- Researchers:
  - Iraq:
    - Ahmad Fakhreddine - Al-Tawfiqia village, Nimrud.
    - Nasr Hajji Khadr - Ba'ashiqaa and Bahzani villages.
    - Safaa Al-Dhahi - Jaykur village, Abu Al-Khaseeb , Al-Basra.
  - Jordan:
    - Rahaf Al-Quraan - Al-Taybah village, Irbid.
    - Ahmad Al-Selawy - The Roma camp, Jaber borders.
  - Lebanon:
    - Khuzama Jawhari - city of Hermel.
    - Georges Cheikh - The Roma Camp – Akkar.
    - Sakr Al-Ali - Bar Elias Refugees Camps.
  - Syria:
    - Zeina Shahla - Hamah countryside region.
    - Ibrahim Al-Matroud - Al-Mishlab neighborhood, Ar-Raqqah.
    - Rêzan Mišo - Kochar villages, Qamishli.



Glossary  
Musical Instruments

1. The Arghoul/Yarghoul:



2. The Buzuq:



3. The Daff:



4. The Kamancheh:



5. The Kassoor:





6. The Metal Rababa:



7. The Mihbaj/Mihbash:



8. The Mejbwiz/Metbeg:



9. The Mizmar:



10. The Ney:



11. The Rababa/Rubab:



12. The Shabbabeh/Minjaira:



13. The Tabel:



**14. The Saz/Tanbur:**



15. The Yazidi Daff:



## Summary

The Levant and Mesopotamia are renowned by their rich historical and artistic heritage, which have thrived through the region's ancient civilisations.

Armed conflicts in Syria and Iraq have disrupted the countries' old folk music traditions by displacing rural, Bedouin, and Roma communities.

Through "On the Tracks of Music", Action for Hope focused on documenting and reviving folk music in eleven communities in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan. In partnership with local and international organizations and institutes, Action for Hope has implemented this project throughout 25 months, and here is one of its stages: the research.

This research combined desk research, field visits, researcher training, and data collection. It covered eleven communities, focusing on the folk artists and the folk instrument makers.

From the Bedouin and Rural heritage in Hermel, to the Roma / Ruhhal community in Akkar, passing by the Syrian refugee camps in Bar Elias, we discovered the rich folk heritage that Lebanon carries.

In Syria, an Impressive diversity showed up through the Bedouin community in Hamah, the Nomadic journey of the Bedouin Kurds "the Kochars", and finally with the traditions of Euphrates's people in Ar-Raqqah.

An ethnic mosaic in Iraq, started in Nimrud in Northern Iraq and its rural traditions, continued with the breathtaking Yazidis heritage, and ended in Southern Iraq in Abu Al-Khaseeb, by covering its unique "Khashabah" genre.

Roma / Ruhhal and Rural communities were documented in Jordan, spotting the light on their folk instruments and music genres in Al-Taybah village, and Jobar Border camp.

Dozens of artists, instrument makers, music genres, folk instruments, dialects, melodies were discovered and documented in these eleven communities. For each community its uniqueness, yet they intersect in so many things, such as the folk instruments, although they can have different names, the music forms, and sometimes the melodies and lyrics.

The traditional music heritage of Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon is deeply ingrained in the cultural fabric of the region, showcasing a tapestry of diverse traditions and histories.

Looking to the future, it is imperative to recognize the importance of safeguarding this musical legacy for the benefit of future generations. Not only does it help maintain cultural identity and foster pride and solidarity, but it also offers a source of healing and optimism during difficult times.