

Melodic Structures and Modal Development of *Malhūn* Sung Poetry in Morocco

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Many across Morocco love *malhūn*, a genre of accompanied sung poetry, irrespective of educational background or economic stature. The poorest Moroccans memorize long segments of their favorite texts, ready to sing upon request, while the wealthiest gather in hotel ballrooms to celebrate *malhūn* as national cultural heritage. In this paper, I draw upon ethnographic research, an analysis of over 75 common melodies from both old and new recordings, and my performance experience with an ensemble in Fez, Morocco, to create the first musical analysis of a large body the genre's melodies. I analyze the relationship between pitch collections and motivic movement to question the nature of musical development by cataloging and analyzing modulations between the genre's repetitive melodic figures. In doing so, I outline large-scale structural motion within these sung poems. Throughout many of the country's primarily domestic musical genres, modality is understood melodically: "shape" or "contour" (*qiāṣ*) takes precedence over pitch content and tonal center, widening a literal and figurative range of possibility for performers. This work contributes to my larger argument that *malhūn* artists maintain a high degree of flexibility for musical creativity and expressions of performed ideologies, including nuanced relationships with local Islamic public piety.