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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Role of the Harp (simsimiyya) Instrument in the Jordanian Folk Song in Aqaba

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ABSTRACT

The paper aims to reveal the role of the simsimiyya (harp) instrument in the popular song in the Gulf of Aqaba region in Jordan. This is done by identifying this instrument, its history and the method of its manufacture. The paper also aims to identify the most famous players on it and the most important and famous traditional songs sung using it in Agaba, in addition to get acquainted with the musical bands that contributed to the dissemination of traditional songs through the use of this instrument. As this instrument has met with amazing success among the Arab audience in several Arab locales, notably the Gulf of Aqaba in Jordan, it is also possible to document and record songs musically and scientifically. This instrument helped spread the Arabic traditional song, which was played with a clear interest by those involved in order to create new contexts for Arab musical performance, mostly on Arabic instruments and on Arab scales and genres tailored to the particular instrument and in novel ways. This study came to focus on what some musicians have made of distinguished artistic performance aesthetics on this instrument. It also examines what musicians have contributed to the Jordanian Arab Music Library by presenting Arab heritage music in the vocabulary of artistic work of all kinds for the next generation to benefit from it and learn about the changes that took place in art Music in keeping with this era.

1. INTRODUCTION

With all the different definitions of beauty, art is an attempt to create something new. It is also an embodiment and a direct or indirect transmission of nature. The artist's capacity to communicate his or her thoughts and feelings to the audience also involves the transfer of human feelings and sensations. Thus, art is regarded as a language of communication, and one must master its symbolism. so that one might comprehend the meanings it is trying to express.

One of the most notable human traits is the capacity to communicate what is going on in his or her head, including hopes and concerns, in accordance with his or her innate condition, which everyone possesses. Each person is also prepared to communicate other people's sentiments. This natural reaction is seen as a fundamental component in the development of human societies and as an unavoidable outcome of human traits, aptitudes, emotions, and feelings in the variety of facets of his artistic and expressive activity. He now generally expresses himself artistically to satisfy his social, emotional, and spiritual demands. Art does not need explanation or interpretation. In its concept, it gives a vivid picture of the lives of peoples and expresses their traditions, beliefs and customs. It is the true mirror in which the renaissance of nations, their civilizations and their progress is reflected.

As a language that quickly reaches conscience and emotions, a form of expression that reaches the depths of the soul, and an effect that is not comparable to that of other forms of art, music plays a significant part in the psychological and social influence process. Music is the one language that

everyone can comprehend without translation, and many philosophers, academics, and researchers have studied this magnificent art for a long time, doing research and studies that have produced numerous findings in the various domains of music (Al-Nabulsi, 2000).

Problem of the study

By identifying the most significant Jordanian bands and musicians who contributed to playing and singing on this instrument, the problem of the study is to reveal the role of the harp (simsimiyya) instrument in the widely popular song in the Gulf of Aqaba region of Jordan. This requires a study of the change that occurred according to the development process taking place at this time on this instrument. The musical instrument and its role in spreading the Arabic traditional song are both examples of how well the musical expression was used.

Importance of the study

This study is one of the few that focused on the harp instrument, particularly in Jordan. This study, which focused on the most significant Jordanian composers in this sector, is likewise regarded as one of the first of its sort. In addition to its direct focus on traditional Arabic songs and how they are performed, and how they are played by the musicians for the process of employing Arabic music and embodying it in all of its forms, the significance of the study also lies in its comprehensiveness of the most significant lyrical works and methods of playing this instrument, as well as its development.

Objectives of the study

The study aims to identify and reveal the role of the harp (simsimiyya) instrument in the popular song in the Gulf of Aqaba region in Jordan through knowing the most important Jordanian composers and their musical compositions of the most important Jordanian and Arab heritage songs to demonstrate the Jordanian experience in this field in order to preserve and transfer it to future generations. To achieve this goal, this study will answer the following questions:

Study Approach

Instead of using survey tools based on self-report, which are predicted to have a significant impact on the accuracy of the information obtained through personal bias and occasionally be difficult to obtain, the research adopted a descriptive analytical approach based on the personal interview as the basis for all information.

Due to its suitability for the study's objectives, the researchers will also use the content analysis approach as a tool. The information that can be found about the research problem and even disciplines relevant to it is considered to be a part of this study. in addition to consulting those with expertise and those interested in the subject to get acquainted with their opinions and ideas that may not be available in the printed matter.

Study tools

During this study, the researchers will use the following tools:

- Blogs and audio recordings of traditional songs that were played through the harp instrument in the city of Aqaba, these songs represent the study sample.
- Books and scientific references.
- Websites.
- Scientific research and studies, published and unpublished, related to the subject of the study.

Study population

Folk songs that were performed by bands by using the harp instrument by some Jordanian musicians and players.

The study sample

A selected sample of (6) Jordanian folk songs.

Theoretical framework

The civilizational and cultural dimension of the city of Aqaba

The only seaside city in Jordan is Aqaba, which is situated about 350 kilometers from Amman, the country's capital, on the Red Sea coast in southern Jordan. The city of Aqaba, which is situated at the head of the Gulf of Aqaba that branches off from the Red Sea, is notable for being the only seaport for Jordan. The city has a population of over 150,000 and is home to numerous significant industrial facilities and free trade zones. Because it is regarded as a significant meeting place for ancient civilizations in the area, including the civilizations of the Canaanites and the Phoenicians in the Sham region, the Arab civilization from the Arabian Peninsula, and the civilization of the Pharaohs in Egypt, and the civilization of the Edomite, this city stands out from a cultural perspective. Hence, we see that Aqaba, with its spatial capabilities, has been throughout its history an international cultural, commercial and civilizational window that began more than six thousand years ago (Ministry of Culture, 2016).

The folk artistic and lyrical heritage in the city of Aqaba

Among the features that set Aqaba apart are its well-known songs. Despite the fact that songs in Aqaba are sung in a variety of colors, including Egyptian, Hijazi, and Bedouin hues, they take on a unique quality that sets Aqaba apart from other Jordanian cities. Folk dance also comes in a variety of hues and styles, but Al-*Rafihi* and Al-*Ardah* are the two most significant and well-known dances that the people of Aqaba are renowned for (Al-Darass and Hattar, 2006).

1- Al-*Ardah*: Its origin is Hejazi, and it is said that it came with the nobles (Sheriffs) upon their arrival to Aqaba in the year (1917).

The *Ardah* parade of Aqaba begins with the men lining up in a row in the form of an arc, then in the middle of them is a man holding the sword in his right hand and the scabbard in his left, and two men stand on either side of the arc, each carrying the *tambourine*. The dance begins with a signal from the sword bearer, who is considered the leader of the band, as he points the sword at the men, so they intertwine their hands and move them in a circular manner similar to rowing, and they raise the legs regularly by 20 cm off the ground. In the meantime, the right wing of the row starts chanting the beginning of the verse, and the left wing completes the verse, and so on until the enthusiasm intensifies, so the leader approaches the row with his sword and hits the ground three times with his foot, while the three opposite him strike with the same blows. Thus, the leader continues to dance in front of the row waving his sword and scabbard until the end.

From the poems of *Ardah* are the following verses:

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ياالله اليوم وجه جاهنا واكفينا شر ولدات النحوس yaallah alyawm wajah jahina wakifina shara walidat alnuhus ياالله اليوم نطلبك الستيره وان بلينا عوايدك الجميل yaallah alyawm notlubuk alsatirah wan bilina eawayidik aljamil
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The *Ardah* is usually held to receive the pilgrims or visitors, and in weddings and joyful occasions.... etc.

2- Al-*Rafihi*: The men line up in two rows, with the sword-bearer standing in the centre of each row. The *tambourine* -bearer is seated on each row's side. The dance is signaled to commence by the leader pointing with his sword and handclapping, and singing then starts. Among Al-*Rafihi*'s poems:

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جيناك يا عويد بزفه بين البنادق والرماح بين البنادق والرماح jinak ya Owayyed bizifih bayn albanadiq walrimahi الصقر ما يلطم بكفه ما يلطم إلا بجناح alsaqr ma yultum bikafih ma yultum 'ilaa bijnahi سلامي مني والسلام على الربوع الوفية salami miniy walsalam 'alaa alrubue alwafiya
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The Aqaba dance is accompanied by movements and rituals based on the *simsimiyya* (harp) and the rhythms of the tar (*tambourine*,) which is a percussion instrument, and the murwas (which is similar to a drum) and the sea *saqfa*, influenced by the nature of life associated with the sea and fishing.

These dances, which are called "Al-Ardah" and "Al-Rafihi", are performed by the members of the band by lining them up in the form of an arc. The players of the tar (tambourine) and the murwas stand at both ends of the arc, while the leader of the dance stands in the middle holding his sword. the right wing of the row starts chanting the beginning of the verse, and the left wing completes the verse, accompanied by circular movements with the hands of the men intertwined with movements of the feet that rise and fall regularly.

The Harp (simsimiyya):

Historical background

According to Al-Darras (2010), the *simsimiyya* (harp) instrument is an Egyptian stringed instrument that is played to mark special occasions throughout the governorates of Egypt and the area around the Suez Canal. Thin steel wires are drawn tightly across a wooden box to form the instrument's strings, which are played by striking the wires.

The origin of the *simsimiyya* (harp) instrument is the Pharaonic instrument of the *kanara*. The Pharaonic *kanara* was very similar to the current harp instrument, except that it is smaller in size and had seven strings made of animal intestines.

The *simsimiyya* (harp) instrument reached the cities of the canal through the Nubian people of Upper Egypt who worked in the digging of the Suez Canal, and it developed into the current Nubian *tanbur* instrument, which is a box of wood, a bowl, or a plate of sheet metal stretched over a thin skin, and it has two spaced arms called an (*medad*) that are connected by a third arm in the shape of the base of the triangle called (*carrier*), and the parts are connected with strong threads from the nerves of the *tour* and decorated with beads, inscriptions and pendants. It is frequently used in the *zar* and follows the seven-fold scale, then the development was to the current traditional *simsimiyya* (harp) instrument, which indicates that it is a pure Egyptian instrument.

And the first to use the *simsimiyya* (harp) instrument from the people of Suez is the *Suisi* artist (*Kabarber*), then it moved to the city of *Ismailia*, and the first to use it in *Ismailia* was the artist (Ahmed Faraj), then it moved to *Port Said* and the first to use it was the artist (*Ahmed Al-Sawahili*).

Parts of *simsimiyya* (harp) instrument: (Al-Shuaibi, 1995)

It consists of the following parts:

- the face.
- the loader (Mahmal).
- The cushion is the place where the instrument is placed on the thigh of the musician.
- Key base.
- keys or Malawi.
- Two arms, the support, or the outrigger (*medad*).
- The gazelleh.
- Tendon cleat.
- Umbrella, also called *talaqyat*, and also called the sound outlet window.
- disk.
- Musawwit box, plate, or mug.
- A fiber rope.
- Strings or wire, which are of several types taken from the strings of the oud, guitar, mandolin, and bicycle wires.
- mare or horse.
- The closure, which is the back side of the *simsimiyya* .
- Tendon complex.

Some of the names of its parts may differ, so we find that some call the *firman* the name of the *banja*, and the *ragamah* instead of the umbrella.... etc.

String tuning

The *simsimiyya* (harp) strings are tuned in a gradual manner, i.e. in succession of the degrees of the scale to be played, and the tuning of the strings is made gradually from the thick sound at the top of the strings down to the thin sound at the bottom. The strings are often tuned to the succession of the degrees of the *rast* maqam or the *rast musawwar*, and this tuning enables the player to deal with the *maqam Rast* and *Bayati* directly within their six or five degrees without any difficulties.

When playing, the *simsimiyya* (harp) player plays the piece or the song according to one position, and he cannot move to another position within the work. Rather, before starting to play, he adjusts the *simsimiyya* (harp) strings according to the maqam that will be played, and if the *maqam* changes, the *simsimiyya* player stops playing to re-tune (Hornbostel, 1914).

The musical scales are commonly used for simsimiyya

(Rast - Kurd - Bayati - Ajam - Nahawand - Hazam - Hijaz)

Description of simsimiyya instrument in Aqaba

It is a well-known five-string instrument with the quintet scale. The Agaba population's conscience, which was drawn to this instrument to the point of worship, leading to its use as the primary instrument for all social, religious, and even political occasions. it is one of the earliest musical instruments known to mankind, according to historical sources, is a stringed instrument that is struck with a bat to make sound. It was known as the "Sumerian harp," the "king's harp," or the "Kanara" during the Sumerian era. Simsimiyya also arrived from the Arabian Peninsula at the turn of the century via a Hijazi named Eid al-Juhani, and it spread once Aqaba residents learned playing its strings. Simsimiyya allegedly became the primary instrument for all Aqaba sailors when Talab Saleh became the city's first maker of it, according to Agaba heritage. Cities in the Mediterranean and Red Sea basins have different numbers of strings and plate shapes. Due to the uniformity in length and thickness of its strings, this instrument lacks a written scale or arranged magam. The intensity or softness of the string affects the string's sound and tone, and the player's talent and experience, which are essential to playing the simsimiyya, determine the rhythm and melody. Stretching the strings, sliding fingers over them, and striking them with a plectrum allow the musician to adjust the instrument's rhythm and tone. According to the researcher Abdullah Al-Manzlawi, simsimiyya is still constructed by the musician in Agaba by hand; its shape hasn't altered all that much from the previous one, and it relies on the player's preferences and craftsmanship. It comprises of a plate with a trapezoidal, oval, or square shape and a wooden frame with leather covering on both sides. similar fashion to the rababa, made of goat or camel leather. Al-Manzlawi writes that the "hanaba," or simsimiyya bowl, was formerly formed of hollow tree trunks and coated in the skin of "hadhrum" fish. He continues, "The skin gives simsimiyya a resonant sound, although some musicians substitute the skin with thin wood on one side." or both" (Al-Manzalawi, 1993).

Singing and folklore in Aqaba were distinguished by the characteristics of the coastal singing in its melody, words and instruments, so the melody was so close that the *simsimiyya* entered it to become the main instrument for all sailors and to revive the occasions and joys of the Aqaba. *Simsimiyya* spread on the coasts of the Red Sea and the White Sea, and its tunes and shapes are similar in these areas, with some slight variation in the number of strings and the shape of the dish.

The *simsimiyya* is handcrafted in Aqaba and has largely retained its prior shape. It depends on the musician's preferences and creative abilities. It comprises of (the plate), some of which are oval or square and have a common shape of trapezoid. Similar to the *Rababa*, it has a timber frame that is clad in goat or camel skin on both sides. Some players substitute thin wood on one or both sides for the skin of the *simsimiyya*, which results in a more resonant sound. Previously, the plate was known as (*hanaba*), was fashioned from hollow tree trunks, and was covered with fish skin (al-*hadrum*).

How simsimiyya is played

The player begins by striking each string with the bat. Next, he lifts a finger from the string he wants to hear while holding the other strings steady with his other fingers. This causes the free string to

vibrate and produce sound, and the player continues to lift his fingers off the strings in a series of movements that correspond to the melody of the song he wants to play. In addition to the beat of the original song, the player frequently adds additional rhythmic activations to the tune that create rhythmic motifs, giving the *simsimiyya* a distinctive color from other percussive instruments.

As for how to play this instrument, the *simsimiyya* plate is placed on the end of the player's thigh, close to his midsection. The porter leg is placed on the inside of the left arm, and the support leg is placed on the player's thigh. The left-hand plays the strings with its fingers, and the right hand taps the strings with its fingers. The *simsimiyya* strings are said to be protective, thus only that thick piece of leather can be used with them. It contains a piece of cowhide (most commonly made of natural leather from which the sole of the shoe is manufactured) and got wet in the water before playing with it, because as they say, the *simsimiyya* strings are protective, so only that thick piece of leather works with them.

And unlike all stringed musical instruments in the *afq* (the *afq* is to put the finger on the string to bring out the required degree of melody).

In the *simsimiyya* instrument, the fingers are placed on the strings that are not intended to produce the tune (i.e. the musician suppresses them) and the string is left to show its tone, unlike the oud and the violin, where the string to be played is played on the mirror of the oud, violin, or guitar to bring out the required tone. This is the difference between playing the *simsimiyya* and its sisters from other stringed instruments.

Before reviewing the traditional songs accompanying the *simsimiyya* instrument, we can say, according to historical evidence, that the simsimiyya instrument came to Aqaba from Egypt or from the Arabian Peninsula. In fact, it is difficult to determine the period of its arrival, so we can say that the simsimiyya instrument may have entered Aqaba since the beginning of the nineteenth century, which is the date of the establishment of the modern city of Aqaba, either through the Aqaba fishermen who established strong friendship relations with the Egyptian and Hijazi fishermen, or through the lineage that linked the people of Aqaba with the Egyptians and Hijazi, or through merchants who exchanged trade in and outside Aqaba. It should be noted that the man of Aqaba imposed his personal or acquired musical sense on this environment. His popular musical arts of instrumentals, songs and dances, in addition to those traditional Arab musical arts, reflect his ability to interact and creatively create the aesthetic of this art and create an expressive and distinctive model from it.

The *simsimiyya* in the rich Aqaba heritage has a major function, and it is rare to reach purely mechanical musical forms for this instrument, except for those traditionally known (classically) in Arabic music, such as the (three-way) dials and divisions that are used in the beginnings of songs or *mawawil* to arouse the imagination of the performer and listener alike.

As for singing, the *simsimiyya* instrument in the musical culture of the people of Aqaba is mainly associated with those songs that reflect the geographical reality of the city. Given that Aqaba is a maritime city, the deep-rooted traditions leave no doubt that some of these traditions are related to work songs at sea. Singing in Aqaba includes the songs of the sea "Al-Mawawil", the singing that accompanies the dances of Al-*Rafihi*, Al-Ardah, Al-Sahja Al-Aqbawiyyah, and religious singing.

Folk songs and their musical notation

The first model: the song *yalkhayziranh*, which is from the Arab heritage, but the people of Aqaba modified the melody to suit the playing of this instrument. *Rast maqam* depicted on the degree of *jaharkah*



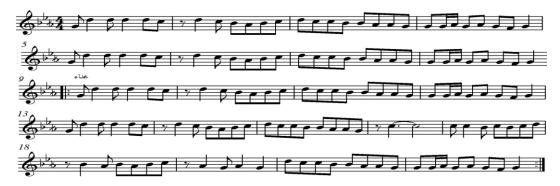
The Second Model: the song of (*Lansob Shera'I al'aali*), I will get my sailboat ready. *Maqam al-Bayat is depicted on the degree of al-Nawa*

yalila dana ya ladan yalila dani

wallah alzaman alzaman alzaman khilly ramani

Lansob Shera'I al'aali ya aini brasak ya alfirmany

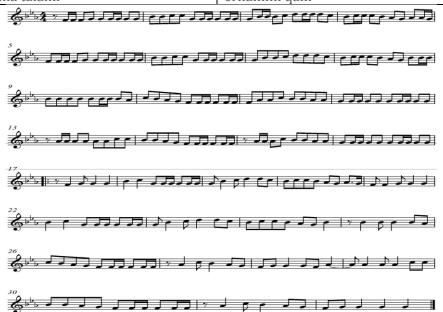
wamshi biwasat albah ya aini wamsik alsukkaany



The Third Model: the song of *Bilmasa Bel* S7aimi, which is an Arab heritage. This song was developed by musicians from the people of Aqaba.

Maqam al-Bayat is depicted on the degree of al-Nawa

شفت هذا الجميل	بالمسا بالسحيمي
ebalmasa bilsuhaymi	shofet hadha aljamil
وبغرامة عليل	صرت هایم بحبه
sirt hayim bihoboh	webgharamoh 3alil
بالسحيم رمتني	ياعيون سبتني
yaoyoun sabatni	balsahim ramatni
ار حميني قليل	بالدوا ما طالتني
bidduwa ma talaini	erhamini qalil



The Fourth Model: the song (*Ya al-Aqaba*, the bride of the sea)

Magam al-Bayat is depicted on the degree of al-Nawa

يا العقبة ياعروس البحر يامكللة باكليل أخضر

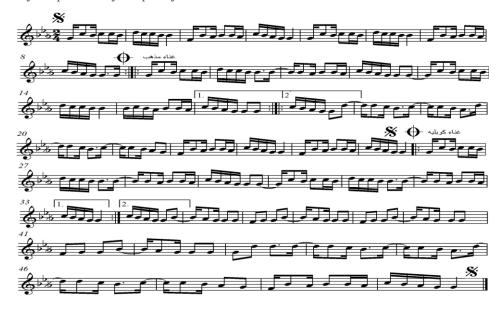
yalaqaba ya 3aros albahr yamkalala baklil 'akhdar

يا مزوقة بنخيل وزهر لعريسك البحر الأحمر

ya muzawaqa inakhil wazahr liarisik albahr al'ahmar

يالعقبة ياعروس البحر

yalaqaba yalaqaba ya 3aros albahr



The Fifth Form: the drop song (*AlQatrah* song):

Ajam Maqm on the degree of Nawa

ياجربا لاتجربي يسلط عليك ربي

yajarba latjarribi ysallit 3alayky Rabiy

ياجربا ياجربونه لاطليكي بالصابونه

yajarba yajarbunah latliki bilsaabunih



The Sixth Model: A song from the poems of Al-Ardah and Al-Rifahi

Magam Rast

يالله اليوم وجه جاهنا واكفينا شر ولدات النحوس

yaallah alyawm wajah jahina wakifina shara walidat alnuhus

ياالله اليوم نطلبك الستيره وان بلينا عوايدك الجميل

yaallah alyawm notlubuk alsatirah wan bilina eawayidik aljamil



The Seventh Model: Maqam Ajam

سبب عيني من عيونك سببها أنت ماغيرك سببها

Sharqawi, S.A.

sabab eayni min euyunak sababha 'anta maghirak sababha

وأنا حطني في جوف نونك عسى العين يكسيها هدبها

wa'ana hutni fi jawf nunik asaa alaiyn yeksiha hadabaha



The Eighth Model: Alyadi Alyadi song: Maqam Bayati

عاليادي اليادي اليادي ياما أحلى الصبحية

A'lyadi elyadi yama 'ahlaa alsubhieh

على شطك يالعقبة ياعروسه بحرية

A'laa shattik yaleaqaba yaa;ruseh bihuriya

يابسمة ثغر بلادي يانسمة حنية

yabasamat thagher bladi yansimah henniya

همسة بحرك للنخله بنغمة سمسمية

hamset baharek lilnakhlih binaghamaeh simsimia



Bands and performers on this instrument.

First: **The Aqaba Navy Folklore Troupe**, "*Keeper of al-Simsimiyah Heritage*", was established at an initiative by the city's youth, it was founded in 2000, among its most prominent members are Abdul Wahid Abu Abdullah and Imad al-Kabariti, who is the head of the band.

The band participated in all city and kingdom festivals and events, and a number of international celebrations. Mahmoud Al-Gharabli, one of the officials in the band and the vice president, enumerates its objectives "to preserve, develop and upgrade the local folk arts in line with the development witnessed by the private region, in addition to informing others about the folk marine art of the people of Aqaba, their culture and arts, and highlighting the distinctive marine heritage and sea craft, it also aims to encourage and develop the talents young people of Aqaba. One of the best players on the *simsimiyah* instrument in this band is Sufyan Jasir."

Second: The Aqaba Youth Club Band which was founded in 1981 by Abdul Wahid Abu Abdullah.

Third: The Aqaba Association for Culture, Arts and Heritage Band established in 1994, its founder was Muhammad Attia Al-Osaily.

Fourth: The Agaba Municipality Band founded in 1992 by Abdul Wahid Abu Abdullah.

Fifth: The Agaba Youth Center Troupe founded in 1989 by Ibrahim Al-Furun.

Sixth: The *Simsimyya* Lovers Band. This band is affiliated with the Sufyan Al-Eid Foundation, which was founded by Sufyan Jasir in 2012. This band is still continuing its artistic activities until now in cooperation the **Navy Band.**

According to the narration of Mr. Abdul Wahid Abu Abdullah through a personal interview, and as mentioned by the study, since the 1920s until now, Aqaba has known a group of musicians on the *simsimiya* instrument, and they are:

First: **the first generation**, which includes:

1- Hasan (Muhammad) Al-Sharqawi, who is considered the first simsimiya player in Aqaba.

- 2- Ali Hassan Al-Sharqawi, who inherited this profession from his father.
- 3- Abdul Hamid Abu Al-Douh, who did not settle in Agaba except for a short period.
- 4- Eid Al-Juhani, a fisherman from Hijaz.

Second: **The second generation**, which includes:

- 1- Taleb Abbas, a skilled musician, maker of the instrument, and a great singer.
- 2- Hassan Darawsheh, known as Hassan Tabtab.
- 3- Abbas Al-Fakhiri
- 4- Salman Al-Hijazi
- 5- Goma'a Shehata

Third: **The third generation**, represented by Abdul Wahid (Abu Abdullah).

Fourth: The fourth generation, which includes:

- 1- Muhammad Azmy
- 2- Hamdi Madi
- 3- Abdullah Abu Awali
- 4- Ahmed Hamza
- 5- Hussein Al-Nabulsi
- 6- Muhammad Ghobashi
- 7- Sufyan Jasem, a musician who developed the *simsimiyya* instrument from six strings to nineteen strings, and he is the only one who could play 19 strings (two octaves and five notes) *du-du-du-soul*

In order to gather the data, the researchers turned to theoretical writings, earlier studies, and research, as well as conducting in-person interviews and fieldwork with a variety of musicians, singers, and the *simsimivya* bands' founders, such as:

- 1- Abdul Wahid Muhammad Abu Abdullah.
- 2- Sufyan Jasem, an artist.
- 3- Ismail Abu Awali, and
- 4- Ghazi Abu Hilal.

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