



## ARABIC FOLK MUSIC IN IRAQ

Iraqi Folk Vocal Form Called *nail*

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The following treatise on the Arabic folk music in Iraq is primarily concerned with the Iraqi folk vocal form "*nail*" and with the problems connected with this form. At the same time it deals with the melodic formulae in the folk music of Iraq and their importance for the creation of *maqāmāt* /sing. *maqām*/ as melody-types.

The general and basic problems of Arabic music are not discussed and their knowledge is supposed.

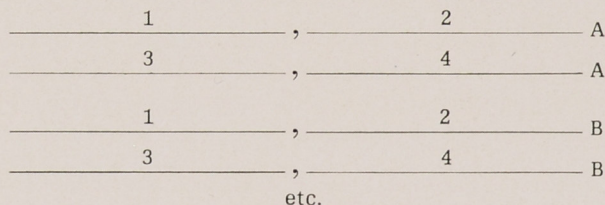
Common practice in the Arabic world is used for the musical transcriptions. The following mark:  $\text{♩}$  is used for the decreased intervals of different values.

All the musical transcriptions concerning the *nail* are written in M. M.  $\text{♩}$  = 120.

The Structure of a *nail*

## The Arrangement of its Text

The *nail* is a kind of Iraqi folk poetry in colloquial language. The basis of a *nail* is a distich in which the two hemistichs have a common rhyme. The number of distichs in one *nail* could be quite considerable. The structure of a *nail* defined schematically is as follows:



Each hemistich is divided in two parts, as marked in the schema. The division of each distich in four parts is very important for the arrangement of the text and to the setting of the poetry of a *nail* to music. I marked the individual parts with the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4. This numbering, concerning the structure of a distich, will be used in the whole treatise.

Classic Arabic poetry usually creates a firm musical form for its firm structure. It is rather different in the folk poetry of Iraq. Each distich of a *nail* is musically a whole, but inside of this whole, within a distich of a *nail*, the individual singers progress quite freely. Still it could seem, that the above-mentioned structure of a distich would be a logical basis for the construction of a melody and its formal arrangement. That is, the *nail* would be musically composed of two phrases with conclusions at the end of each. In reality it is quite different. Sometimes the whole distich of a *nail* is set in one larger musical phrase. Another time the distich of a *nail* is divided musically into two or three different parts. Each one is musically closed and separated by an instrumental interlude. In this case, the distich as a whole represents a much stronger musical unit than its eventual parts.

On the basis of its musical expression, the *nail* is in syllabic style. There are certain exceptions from this principle in certain places of the musical setting of a *nail*, but these exceptions are quite regular and represent a characteristic of a *nail*.

The singer hardly ever uses the text exactly as it is given originally in a distich. Some of its parts are usually repeated or transposed. By the transpositions and accumulations of the four parts of a distich, the singer creates a new text as the basis for his singing. This conflict between the text and the melody is not an exceptional characteristic of only Iraqi folk vocal forms. On the contrary, the conflict of this relation represents in the history of all Arabic music a moving force for the creation and development of different vocal forms.

This basic problem always existed, consisting of some discordance between certain restrictions set by the text, the limits of which were difficult to overcome, and the creative imagination necessary to the development of a melody.

“Born with the prosody, the Arabic singing was always under

its influence. When music became for the Arabs an independent art, cultivated for the musical art itself, with its rules and its own theory, the singing remained always subdued, connected with the prosody and its forms<sup>1</sup>. When independent musical rhythm became usual, after being adopted by the composers, the musicians freed their singing from the shackles of the classic prosody. Henceforward, free in the division of the syllables, in their free connection on a long maintained note, or in their succession on the new row of several notes, or in the multiple repetition of one word, based every time on another melodic formula, nothing could stop their inspiration, except their artistic knowledge."<sup>2</sup>

The struggle between the text as the basis for the singing and the swell of musical inspiration of a singer characterized the whole history of vocal forms in Arabic music.

This struggle exists in some measure in the musical setting of a *nail*, too. It is as if there existed in this form, condensed into a small cube, the ancient development of the problematical relation between the text and the music. The decisive element controlling this relation in a *nail* are the two hemistichs of a distich and their four parts although the singer can also repeat the single words. By repeating and transposing the four parts of a distich, the singer follows the only aim: to gain, in the syllabic style of a *nail*, greater space for his musical imagination for the development of a musical melodic phrase.

If the whole distich of a *nail* is set to music in one melodic phrase, it would seem that there is enough textual material for the development of a larger musical unit. The Iraqi folk artist has another opinion. Also in this case he repeats and transposes the four parts of a distich. To demonstrate the method of arrangement of the four parts of a distich I chose two typical examples. In them the distich of a *nail* is set to music in one, two, and finally in three parts.

The first of them was sung by a folk singer from Salman Pak near Baghdad, known under the name Abū Shākir.

	1	2
1.	Asmar simāra ḥelw	u libas 'inōb ziētūnī

3—4  
u gūlu l-ajdhib 'alēk il-wannāt yā 'uyūnī

- |    |   |     |                       |
|----|---|-----|-----------------------|
|    | 1   |     | 2                     |
| 2. | Min hāmteh li-j-jidam   |     | māleh shabah ba-r-rīm |
|    |   | 3—4 |                       |
|    | allādh mār/r/ il-baten wu-l-'ēn fa-/t/-targīm <sup>3</sup> ). |     |                       |

Rough contents<sup>4</sup>):

Her dark complexion is beautiful, she put on a dress  
of olive colour

May I not draw lamentations upon you, o my dearest

From head to root she resembles an antelope

The passer-by will fulfil every wish he sees in the bottom  
of her eye

The first distich is divided into two musical phrases, the second distich is set in one musical section. This text is, by omitting all the interposed words and syllables, in setting to music the following:

- |       |  |                    |               |         |   |
|-------|--|--------------------|---------------|---------|---|
|       | 1  |                    | 1             |         | 2 |
| 1. a. | Asmar simāra helw,   | asmār simāra helw, | u libas 'inōb | ziētūnī |   |
|       |  | 2                  |               | 3—4     |   |
| b.    | u libas 'inōb ziētūnī, u gūlu l-ajdhib 'alēk il-wannāt yā 'uyūnī |                    |               |         |   |

The arrangement of the four parts of this distich based on two melodic phrases is as follows:

1. a. 1, 1, 2,  
 b. 2, 3, 4.

- |    |   |                        |              |           |   |
|----|---|------------------------|--------------|-----------|---|
|    | 1   |                        | 1            |           | 2 |
| 2. | Min hāmteh li-j-jidam,  | min hāmteh li-j-jidam, | māleh shabah | ba-r-rīm, |   |
|    |   | 2                      |              | 3—4       |   |
|    | māleh shabah ba-r-rīm, allādh mār/r/ il-baten wu-l-'ēn fa-/t/-targīm. |                        |              |           |   |

In the second distich with one musical phrase the arrangement is as follows:

2. 1, 1, 2, 2, 3, 4.

The next example of a nail was sung by a folk singer Jabbar Aggar, now living in Baghdad, but coming from the Tayāwī tribe.

- |    |                           |   |                         |
|----|---------------------------|---|-------------------------|
|    | 1                         |   | 2                       |
| 1. | Arid awassi sh-shem/e/s   |   | kilmā t/e/rīd/e/ taghīb |
|    |                           | 3 | 4                       |
|    | u min gāl jarhak yā galbī |   | yigbal duwā wu yatīb    |



A great number of possibilities of arranging the four parts of a distich of a *nail* in musical phrases could be demonstrated. Some singers create a somewhat individual style, which is more or less repeated. Others arrange the text quite freely.

It would seem that in the case of an arrangement of a distich into two musical phrases the relation of the text and music would be quite uniform; that is, the rhyme would be at the end of the musical phrase, underlined by some musical cadence. This manner is used in the musical setting of a *nail* very often. At the same time, it sometimes happens that the rhyme runs on within a melody so that it is almost hidden in the melodic phrase. The fact remains that although the singer treats the text quite freely, the structure of a distich and its four parts guides his musical feeling. Later I shall speak about the fact that the melodies of a distich in a *nail* will have several different conclusions. These conclusions are seldom used outside of the limits of the four parts of a distich. Although the text in singing could be quite complicated, the whole structure of the melody of a distich is guided by the idea of two hemistichs and their four parts.

Basically, however, the structure of a distich and its four parts is not an absolute determining factor for the construction of musical phrases. The rhyme must neither correspond with the conclusions of a melody nor be underlined by music. It can be hidden in the musical phrase in such a way that in listening there seems to be no rhyme at all.

On the other hand the four parts of a distich could be musically expressly separated, by using special syllables, by enlargement of the last syllable, or with an expressive start of the succeeding melody.

From the examples it is also clear that the four parts of a distich are transposed as a whole.

The *nail* and the *maqām* on Which a *nail* is Musically Based.

The Problem of Iraqi *maqāmāt* and Iraqi Vocal Forms.

The Relationship Between Folk Vocal Forms and a Certain *maqām*.

Before discussing the musical side of a *nail*, it is necessary to underline a short definition of a *maqām*. A *maqām* is first

of all determined by certain intervals of the notes used in it. It means by a "given key". At the same time the melody developed on those intervals must follow a certain movement, a characteristic progression, respect some notes as important, and the whole melodic structure must be based on a collection of melodic formulae that are for a certain *maqām* in a given style or tradition. Hāshim al-Rajab says that this "collection of harmonious tunes must be developed within the stamped harmony".<sup>5)</sup> Henceforward, the use of the term *maqām* will be based on this definition.

The *nail*, as well as some other folk vocal forms in Iraq, is based on its own musical material, on its own "*maqām*". This fact is from one point easily clarified. Iraq, as a matter of fact, is one of the Arabic countries where some geographic or ethnic groups are still strongly characterized by their own typical melody-types. This fact is the heritage of ancient times and the proof of a powerful folk musical feeling. The simple ditties and songs of Bedouins of one tribe or its sections are based on one melodic formula. We could simply say that each tribe has or had its own typical "*maqām*". It need not always be based on different intervals, but the use of given musical material is different. These melodic formulae sometimes have their own name and musically characterize a certain tribe.

"If a certain melodic formula of division of a fourth or a fifth pleased a singer, he engraved it in his memory and promoted it to his favourite tune. The melody growing from that formula later got the name of its singer, sometimes the name of his tribe or the region in which he lived."<sup>6)</sup>

"The singing of each tribe or its sections has a special character growing also from the dialect or the phonetics, which are for a certain tribe proper. Each ethnic group is pleased by a certain melody-type, in which the singer recites the verses of a poem that inspires him. These melody-types usually have a certain grandeur and magnificence. The singer re-creates them in his own way, introducing in them the variants, modulations and vocal grace notes, to underline certain words or syllables."<sup>7)</sup>

If a certain vocal folk form was created inside of a geographic or ethnic group which had at that time its own melody-type, then this new form was inseparably connected with it.

By its eventual strong efficiency it maintained this connection for ever.

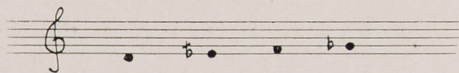
As proof of this theory, it is possible to show an example of another vocal folk form existing in Iraq, called *'atāba*. This form was created, according to confirmed statements of Iraqi authors, inside of a tribe called Jubūr. The melodic formulae of this form are based on a "*maqām*" that has the same name as the tribe: Jubūrī *maqām*. It is difficult to imagine the great musical power this form must have had at its creation in order to maintain its original character even after its extension to different regions.

If, therefore, the origin of a certain musical form is geographic or ethnic, then usually this form will maintain the melody-type of the milieu of its origin. On the other hand if a certain vocal folk form is connected with a certain "*maqām*" then there will be a relationship with its creator, may it be an individual or a geographic or ethnic group.

In the case of the above-mentioned form, *'atāba*, the pattern is quite clear. This form was created by the Jubūr tribe, which has imparted to it its own musical character, later called Jubūrī *maqām*.

How is it in the case of the *nail* form? Hamūdī al-Wardī<sup>6)</sup> says that this form was created in the regions of the cities Sāmarrā', Fallūja, Tikrīt and others. Later it was extended to the northern tribes Al-Azze, Al-'Ubaid, Al-Jubūr and Al-Ghrībāwī. The folk singer Jabbār 'Aggar contradicts this information with the statement that *nail* was created solely by the tribe Al-'Ubaid.

At the same time, the folk vocal form "*nail*" in Iraq is supposedly musically connected with *maqām* Ṣabā. The basic tetra-chord of this *maqām* is as follows:



The *maqām* Ṣabā, however, cannot be specified as a local Iraqi *maqām*. It is used generally in the countries of the Arabic Orient. Can we therefore, according to the above-mentioned theory, say that this *maqām* originated in those regions and was extended to other places? Or did the above-mentioned regions accept the melodic formulae of this *maqām* as the basis of their musical expression?

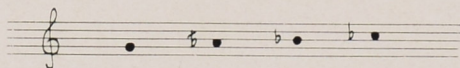


Until now there is no conclusive answer to this question. Nevertheless, it is certain that the form “*nail*” got its characteristic musical seal at the time and in the place of its origin. The problem of the relation between the vocal form “*nail*” and the *Ṣabā maqām* will be treated in detail after the musical analysis of this form.

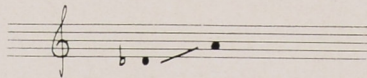
The melody of a *nail* is limited by the range of a fourth or a fifth.

As for the musical transcription of *maqāmāt* and for all the musical examples in general, there is one fact to be underlined. Each *maqām* has its own tonic, the final key-note, which is its basic tone. This tonic is theoretically connected with a certain tone of the Arabic scale. Practically speaking, however, the absolute pitch of a tonic of a *maqām* is far from being so important, even though at the present time the Arabic musicians try to maintain exactly the same pitch for the key-note of a *maqām*. The absolute pitch has not basically any profound influence on the character of a *maqām*. There are only the right intervals that have to be respected.

If, for example, a key-note is written in tone D, it is not important whether in reality the singer uses D sharp or D flat, as often happens. But sometimes the real transpositions of a *maqām* are used. Then, in principle, such degrees of the Arabic scale are used for the new key-note of a *maqām* after which the following notes will need the least possible chromatic alterations. In the case of *maqām Ṣabā* the transposed key-note could be G, with the following notes:



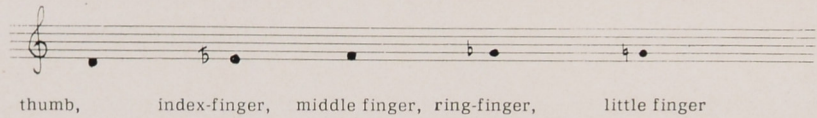
In my records I had the key-notes of a *nail* going practically from D flat to A:



I transposed them therefore every time to the next convenient note.

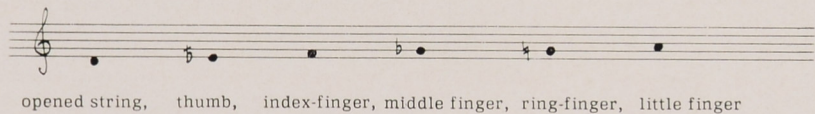
*Nail* and its Instrument of Accompaniment.  
*Rebāb* — *rebāba*.

The original musical instrument for the accompaniment of the singing of a *nail* is a simple Iraqi folk bowed instrument, the *rebāba*. The technical possibilities of this instrument are closely related to the vocal structure of a *nail*. They influence and explain each other. The *rebāba* is, in Iraq, a simple instrument with one string. On this string various ways of fingering by the left hand are used. One of them, used by the folk singer Abū Shākir from Salman Pak near Baghdad, is as follows:



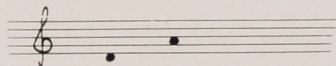
The thumb does not move at all. It lies on the string as a fixed basic tone. The advantage of this system of playing consists for a singer in the fact that he can change the pitch whenever he wishes without tuning the string in order to accommodate the pitch to the momentary disposition of his voice. He simply changes the position of the left hand. By maintaining exactly the same fingering, the intervals are naturally changed a little bit. For a folk artist such a "trifle" is not decisive. The general character of the intervals and their relations will be maintained. Otherwise all of the intervals in the fingering of Abū Shākir are always somewhat decreased. This is clearly shown by the fourth D — G, which is very far from the perfect fourth.

Another way of fingering on the *rebāba* is used by the folk artist Jabbār 'Aggar from Baghdad:

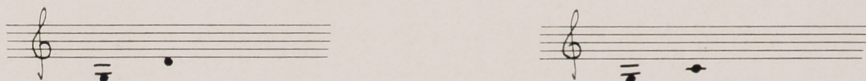


By this fingering the player has at his disposal the same intervals enlarged for one degree, with the fifth of the key-note. It seems clear that the first fingering, limited to the range of a fourth, is much older than the other one. The use of the thumb is technically much more complicated. That the technique of the play on this instrument has been developing for a long time, is proved by the existence of different kinds of *rebābas* nowadays.

Under the name *rebāb* — *rebāba* there are, in the Arabic music, bowed instruments of different shapes, with different numbers of strings and with different tuning. The *rebāba*, for example, which is currently used in Maghreb has two strings tuned usually as follows:



The structure of this instrument entirely excludes the use of the thumb. Another kind of *rebāba*, also with two strings, used to be tuned in the following manner:



At the first glance at this group of instruments, it is clear that the Iraqi *rebāba* with one string is the oldest and simplest kind. Rouanet<sup>9)</sup> called this instrument quite correctly the “*rebāba* of Bedouins”. In Iraq this instrument is one of the most typical representatives of the simple folk music and the basic instrument of accompaniment for such forms as *nail*.

It is rather difficult to ascertain the origin of the *rebāba*, that certainly was one of the oldest folk Arabic instruments. Chottin<sup>10)</sup> says that the *rebāba* was introduced to Spain by the Arabs in the 8th century, i. e. shortly after the Arab conquest of the world. Another proof of existence of this instrument was given by the famous Arabic scholar Al-Fārābī (865—950).<sup>11)</sup> He spoke of the *rebāba* as of an instrument currently used and existing long ago. He said also that already in his time there were *rebābas* with different numbers of strings, one, two, and even four, tuned in couples. He was especially concerned with the tuning of the *rebāba* with two strings, on which he developed his mathematical calculations. But Rouanet<sup>12)</sup> says quite correctly: “We find there (in the treatise of Al-Fārābī) the Arabic tendency towards mathematical calculations and it seems that players on the *rebāba* ignored those calculations and that they relied more on their ear in finding the right positions of notes that inspired their feeling or that corresponded with the notes of a traditional melody.” There is no difference in the present practice.

Further it is interesting to note that, for example, such a folk musician as Abū Shākir from Salman Pak is capable of tuning

one string of his *rebāba* and using the thumb in such a way that consequently his key-note is always near to the tone D. As to the fingering, Al-Fārābī said clearly that only four fingers excluding the thumb were used.

Unfortunately, we did not get from Al-Fārābī the proof that the intervals produced by the contemporary technique of play on the *rebāba* agree with those of the time of Al-Fārābī. But one thing is certain, namely that the *rebāba* with one string was prior to Al-Fārābī's time. And most probably the simplest technique of play on the *rebāba*, as it exists in Iraq, is one of the oldest.

#### The Musical Close of a Distich in a *nail*.

As stated before the distich in a *nail* is always a musical whole, but it could be divided inside of this whole into different musical phrases. The musical close of one distich in a *nail* is created by the singer by the use of a characteristic melody, quite different from the preceding melodic movement. For its expressive character and its repetition at the end of each distich, I will call this melody the refrain-close.

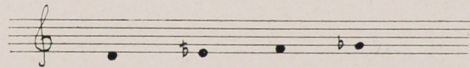
These melodies are typical not only of one singer in one *nail*, but generally for his whole creation in this field. Besides that, these typical melodic formulae are used in *nails* by different singers. This fact itself is not very surprising. I spoke already about the importance of the "collection of harmonious tunes" in a *maqām* and in the folk music generally. The importance of these tunes arises especially in the close of a melody, in which it should underline the character of a *maqām*. In the *nail* itself the situation is a little bit more complicated. The distich is very often divided into different melodic phrases, each one also with the melodic close at the end. But the characteristic refrain-close is used only after the exhaustion of the text of the whole distich.

If each distich of a *nail* is set to music in one phrase repeatedly throughout the whole *nail*, then this refrain-close is usually directly connected with the preceding melody. If the singer divides each distich of a *nail* in a different way, then, if there is only one melodic phrase, the refrain-close is added as a separate melody. There are, therefore, two musical phrases representing one distich. If a distich is divided into two musical phrases, then there are two possibilities. The refrain-close is used as a separate musical phrase, in which case there are three

musical phrases in one distich. Or the refrain-close is added directly to the second musical phrase, resulting in two melodies in one distich. There could be even other secondary combinations according to the taste of the singer. But in any case this refrain-close has its own character, different from the other musical phrases. At the same time it is shorter than the preceding parts and it also has fewer syllables.

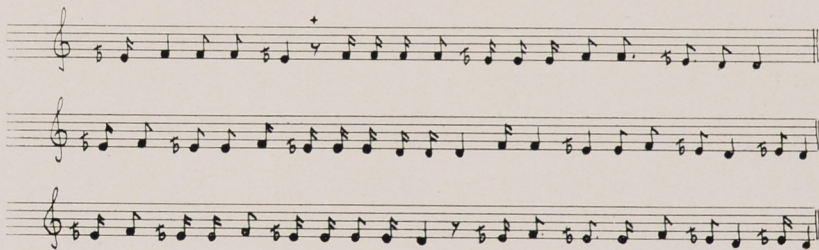
The use of this refrain-close, its conformable character, not only by one singer, but in the *nail* generally, represents the most characteristic feature of this form.

Let us now consider the musical structure of different refrain-closes. The first example was sung by the folk singer Abū Shākir from Salman Pak. According to his fingering on the *rebāba* he has at his disposal the following notes:



It must be emphasized that Abū Shākir's melody in a *nail* moves always only in the range of this diminished fourth. The range of his singing corresponds with the possibilities of the *rebāba*. The melodies of the singing and the *rebāba* are developed by Abū Shākir in perfect unison. His musical imagination governs simultaneously his voice and his fingers on the *rebāba*.

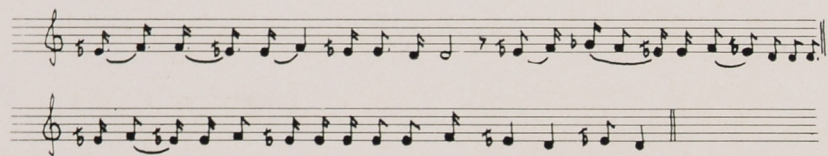
The refrain-closes in the *nail* from the poem I cited and that begins with the words *Asmar smara hīlu*, are used by Abū Shākir as follows:



+ In the singing there is no final D, but in the accompaniment Abū Shākir plays shortly the trill decreased E - D.

The mutual relationship of these three refrain-closes is evident at a glance.

In another *nail* of Abū Shākir there are the following refrain-closes:

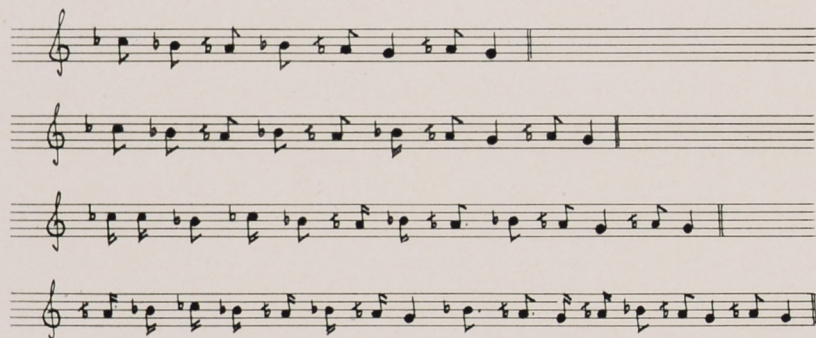


Except for the short appearance of the G flat, we are in the related sphere again.

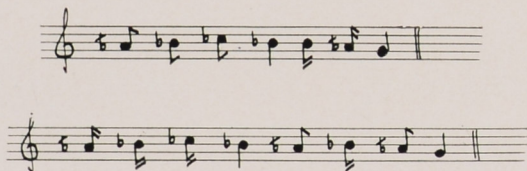
The key-note of a melody, in our case the tone D, is usually not used within the preceding melodies. But in the refrain-closes of individual distichs, this key-note is used in an expressive manner even many times.

Another singer, Haderi Abū'Azīz, used to set the whole distich always into one musical phrase only. To its melody he used to add immediately the refrain-close. In one of his *nail* the refrain-closes were as follows:

(This time the key-note is G)

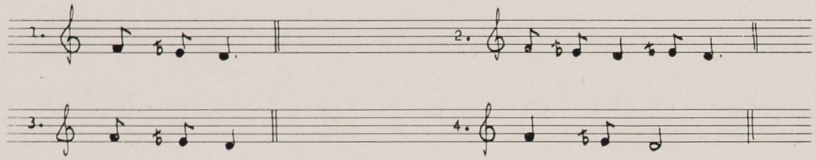


With Haderi Abū'Azīz the refrain-close is usually preceded by a short melody, before which he uses the key-note for the first time in his whole melodic phrase. These short melodies have the following character:

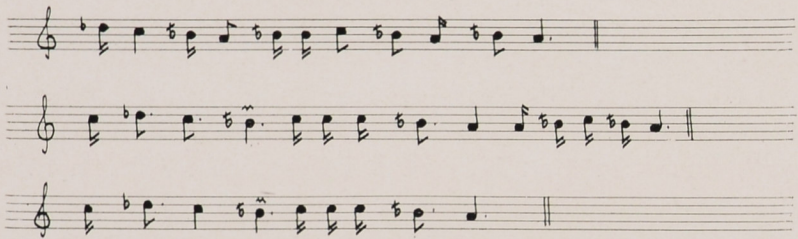


With the refrain-close they represent a certain musical whole. In another *nail* of the same singer the following closing passage is used:

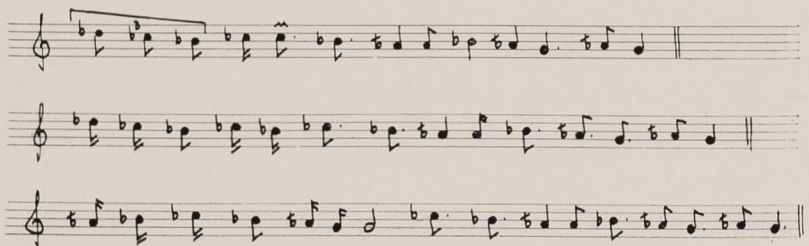




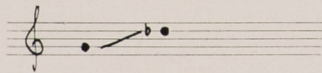
Another singer of this form, Muhammed Qāsim al-Asmar, sets the whole distich into one musical phrase. After using up the whole text, he immediately joins a characteristic close to the preceding melody. This refrain-close with the key-note A, has the following character:



The lady-singer Wahīda Khalīl also sets the whole distich into one musical phrase. After the first appearance of the key-note (this time G) she joins the following refrain-close to the main melody:

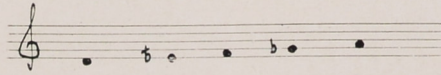


In these examples the range of a fifth is used for the first time in the construction of the melody. It is a diminished fifth of the key-note G — D flat.

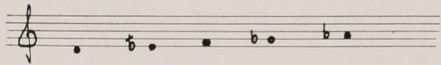


This diminished fifth does not agree with the usual structure of the *Ṣabā maqām*, that should be, according to Erlanger<sup>13)</sup> like that:





All the Iraḡi musicians also agree with this form. Still, nearly in all the records I had at my disposal, when the melody was enlarged to a range of a fifth, the diminished fifth and not the perfect one was used. The only exception was the melodic structure of the singer Muṭlaḡ al-Farhān, but his intonation was bad, fluctuating and sometimes unintelligible. His fifth goes from the perfect fifth through the different decreases of this interval to the diminished fifth. All other singers when they reach the fifth of the key-note, use the diminished fifth. The melody is then built on the following intervals:



Such a basis for a *maqām*, according to both Erlanger and Iraḡi musicians, does not exist. What, then, about the connection between *nail* and Ṣabā *maqām*? In order to answer this question, the chapter about the refrain-close must be concluded first.

In connection with the refrain-closes there are some facts to be summed up. A distich of a *nail*, whether set in one or several musical phrases, is always closed with a characteristic melody which is different from the preceding melodic movement. This closing melody may be joined immediately to the preceding one, or used as a separate phrase. Each singer has his individual style for the structure of these closes, representing musically the close of a distich in a *nail*.

Now, a possible relationship of those melodies of different singers is to be considered.

For a clear summary there are now all still mentioned refrain-closes transposed to the common key-note D.

This page contains 12 staves of musical notation, all in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. The notation is as follows:

- Staff 1: Treble clef, 3/4 time. Notes: G4, A4, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. A fermata is placed over the final G4.
- Staff 2: Treble clef, 3/4 time. Notes: G4, A4, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. A fermata is placed over the final G4.
- Staff 3: Treble clef, 3/4 time. Notes: G4, A4, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. A fermata is placed over the final G4.
- Staff 4: Treble clef, 3/4 time. Notes: G4, A4, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. A fermata is placed over the final G4.
- Staff 5: Treble clef, 3/4 time. Notes: G4, A4, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. A fermata is placed over the final G4.
- Staff 6: Treble clef, 3/4 time. Notes: G4, A4, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. A fermata is placed over the final G4.
- Staff 7: Treble clef, 3/4 time. Notes: G4, A4, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. A fermata is placed over the final G4.
- Staff 8: Treble clef, 3/4 time. Notes: G4, A4, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. A fermata is placed over the final G4.
- Staff 9: Treble clef, 3/4 time. Notes: G4, A4, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. A fermata is placed over the final G4.
- Staff 10: Treble clef, 3/4 time. Notes: G4, A4, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. A fermata is placed over the final G4.
- Staff 11: Treble clef, 3/4 time. Notes: G4, A4, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. A fermata is placed over the final G4.
- Staff 12: Treble clef, 3/4 time. Notes: G4, A4, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. A fermata is placed over the final G4.

The image displays ten musical staves. The first three staves contain simple melodic lines with a few notes and a double bar line. The fourth through tenth staves contain more complex melodic lines with various rhythmic values, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and a triplet. The system ends with three empty staves.

By comparing the mutual relationships of all these melodies, created by singers of different ages and from different places of Iraq, we can see that all of them are connected with one of the three basic melodic formulae:

The image shows three numbered musical staves, each representing a basic melodic formula. Each staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. Formula 1 consists of four notes: a quarter note, a quarter note, a quarter note, and a quarter note. Formula 2 consists of five notes: a quarter note, a quarter note, a quarter note, a quarter note, and a quarter note. Formula 3 consists of six notes: a quarter note, a quarter note, a quarter note, a quarter note, a quarter note, and a quarter note.

In consideration of their distinct relationship it could be said that they are all growing out of one common kernel.

To these three basic tunes musical prefixes are attached which are often used as a basis for another prefix.

The scheme will throw light upon this idea:

Second Prefix	First Prefix	Basic Melodic Formula I
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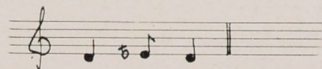
Third Prefix	Second Prefix	First Prefix	Basic Melodic Formula II
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Second Prefix	First Prefix	Basic Melodic Formula III
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There is no example that does not correspond with this scheme.

Generally, the character of the used refrain-closes is completed by a short movement from the key-note to its decreased second after the end of the permanent conclusion:



From the above-mentioned scheme it is quite clear, that all these refrain-closes are closely related; they are growing from the same feeling of the melody, from one melodic kernel. The use and the development of this melodic formula is characteristic of the *nail* form, especially in its use as the musical close of each distich.

Melody-Types in Folk Music and the *maqām*.  
*Nail* and the *Ṣabā maqām*.

The General Importance of Melodic Formulae  
and Melody-Types.

The folk vocal form "*nail*" arose within a certain geographic or ethnic unit and hence it got a special character of melody that was connected with this unit, a character that arose from a certain sum of melodic formulae. These formulae are the product of the folk music feeling and nowadays they characterize reflectively its creator. When did these melodic formulae arise and how old are they?

"In the basis of the melodic system of the modern Arabic music, this artistic edifice more than one thousand years old, there is certainly a musical basis, a national kernel as old as the history of the Arabic people, that relates to the oldest Semitic civilisations in antiquity."<sup>14)</sup>

The character of this national musical kernel was "most probably the same that is known from the singing of Arabic tribes of today".<sup>15)</sup>

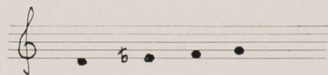
The melodic range of these melodic formulae was, and still is, limited in its development to the interval of a fourth or a fifth. In this form these melodic formulae were originally sufficient as the melodic basis for the simple tunes and songs of Bedouins and finally even for the musical structure of such a form as, for example, the *nail*.

These melodic formulae, as they are, existed long ago before the beginning of the creation of the complicated and scientifically formed edifice of the *maqām*-system. If there is nowadays a certain identification of these melodic formulae of folk music with the classic or contemporary Arabic music in general, then it is quite certain that this relationship originated from the transition from the field of the folk music to higher forms of Arabic music and not vice versa.

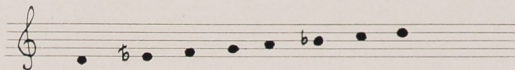
In the folk music, therefore, originally the basis of melody-types arose, moving in the range of a fourth or a fifth. It was fixed in a certain place or by an ethnic group and repeatedly used. The following development was characterized not only by the tendency to enlarge the short tunes and songs, but also to increase the original compass. Then this original kernel began to be increased by other intervals and transformed until it reached the contemporary scientifically elaborated system of *maqāmāt*. Different strange influences penetrated this development. It is known that Arabic music, in this development, drew and transformed ideas from many foreign examples. The folk basis, the original Arabic folk music feeling, however, remained uppermost in importance, even if the influences of Turkish, Persian, Indian, Kurdish and other music interfered with the development of Arabic music.

During the historical development of Arabic music, the original kernel was therefore increased with other intervals and together with them it created a characteristic ladder of intervals of a certain *maqām*. When did it happen? This process ran surely throughout the whole known history of Arabic music. On the other hand, Hāshim al-Rajab says that the Iraqi *maqāmāt* are not more than three or four hundred years old<sup>16</sup>). Did it come approximately in the 16th century to a new revival which was stronger than the former development? Perhaps further research will give answer to this question. In any case, the Arabic scale of any *maqām* is transferable to several parts that are joined together or interposed. The basic part of a *maqām* is called *jins* as it was called by the theoreticians of Arabic music.

The development of *maqāmāt* flows nowadays into two different ways. For a pattern example the Bayātī *jins* could be used.



This is no doubt the result of Arabic musical feeling. On its intervals the melodic formulae of various ethnic and geographic groups as well as individuals were based, but on the basis of their own feelings, that differed one from another. When the Bayātī *jins* was increased to a ladder of Bayātī *maqām*

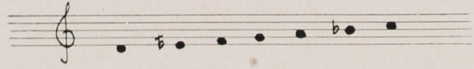


it resulted in the creation of the whole series of *maqāmāt* that had entirely the same ladder of intervals but a different sum of melodic formulae. The originality of the old folk melodic formulae remained preserved and the *maqām* that was created on their basis got its own name although its ladder of intervals corresponds with another *maqām*. This example is especially valid for Iraq, where beside the Bayātī there exist a lot of *maqāmāt* with the same ladder of intervals but with different names. These *maqāmāt* differ only in their melodic formulae with the different characteristic progression of melody. The original folk feeling has the decisive importance in them. There are, for example, the *maqāmāt* Ihrāhīmī, Jubūrī Mahmūdī, Nārī, Hlelāwī, 'Areybun 'Arab, Koriyāt, Mesjīn, Sharkī Doka, Bahrezāwī, Bājlān, Mukābal and others.<sup>17)</sup> In some of them the connection of the sum of the melodic formulae to its folk origin can easily be proved. For example, in the Jubūrī *maqām* which means the *maqām* of the tribe Jubūr, the melodic formulae are the same as the melodic formulae of the folk tunes of this tribe. To distinguish these local Iraqi *maqāmāt* from *maqāmāt* generally used in the Arabic world, different terms are sometimes used. The Bayātī *maqām* is denoted as *nagham*, the Jubūrī as *maqām*.

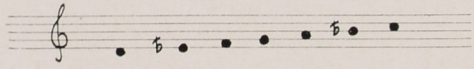
The richness of melodic formulae of different ethnic or geographic groups need not always be based on a different ladder of intervals, but on the contrary it could be based on the same intervals.

There was another situation if the basic *jins* was connected with several different rows of intervals. From the Bayātī *jins*, for example, several different *maqāmāt* were created.

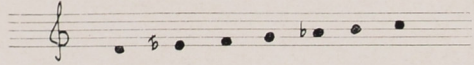
1. Bayātī *maqām*



2. Hawzi *maqām*



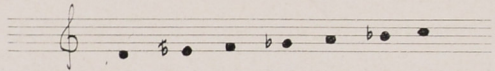
3. Karjīkar *maqām*



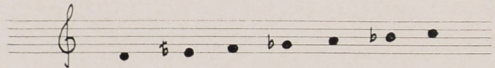
In this case a sum of melodic formulae of a basis of a *maqām*, in our case the Bayātī *jins*, ceased to be the determinant factor, and in its place came the *maqām* as a whole. The *maqāmāt* with the eventually equal bases but with a different structure as a whole were represented by different melodic formulae, that differed more or less with their original basis. Sometimes they were more closely connected with it, sometimes less.

The intervals which are the basis of the melodic character of the *nail* are also the basis, for example, of these three *maqāmāt*:

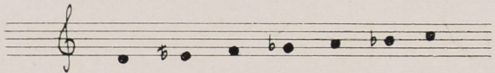
1. Sīpahīr *maqām*



2. Dukah *maqām*

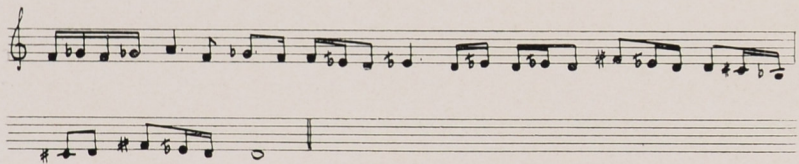


3. Şabā *maqām*



The typical melodic formulae of their conclusions could be compared with the scheme of the refrain-closes in *nail*.

1. Dukah *maqām*



The conclusion of the melody in this *maqām* that is characterized especially with the use of the notes C sharp and B flat does not exist in musical close of a *nail*.

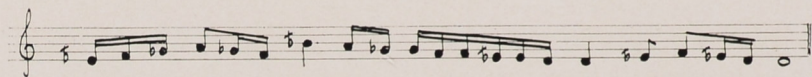
2. Sīpahīr *maqām*





This conclusion of a melody is much nearer to the close of a *nail*, but the major second under the key-note is not used in the *nail*.

### 3. Şabā maqām

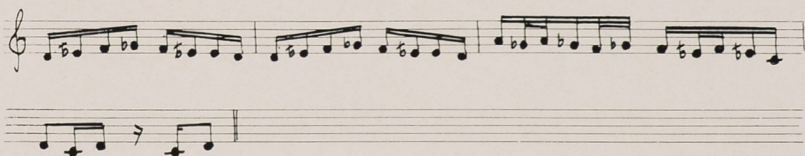


This conclusion is nearly the same as that of a *nail* except the fifth A.

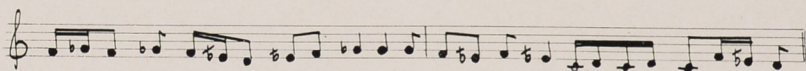
These three examples demonstrate that *maqāmāt* with the same ladder of intervals, but with different names, base their melodic movement on different melodic formulae.

If we consider the possibilities of a melodic movement of Şabā *maqām* more closely, we see that even this *maqām* could have the melodic formulae that are somewhat strange to the melodic movement in a *nail*.

The Şabā *maqām* could have, for example, the following conclusion:



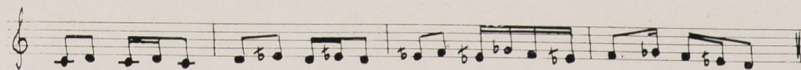
or another:



the tone C could be used in the middle of a melody:

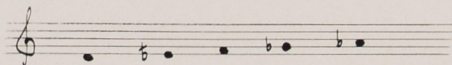


or even at the beginning of a melody:



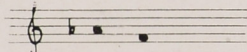
The major second under the key-note cannot be found in the melodic movement of a *nail* at all. This is quite understandable and natural. The singer has not such a tone at his disposal in the instrument of the accompaniment in an original form of a *nail*.

In the Iraqi *nail*, moreover, the interval of a diminished fifth of the key-note is used. The ladder of intervals for a *nail* should be, in this case, as follows:

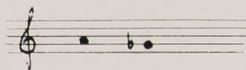


According to the confirmed statement of prominent Iraqi musicians, there is no such *maqām* or *jins* at all. Also we cannot find such a *maqām* in the collection of *maqāmāt* of Erlanger<sup>16)</sup>, yet all the prominent singers of the *nail* in Iraq use the diminished fifth in the melody. In any case, we cannot consider the use of this diminished fifth as a modulation to another *maqām* through the development of a melody. As this interval is used, for example in a characteristic melodic conclusion, this possibility is out of the question.

Otherwise the appearance of this interval in a *nail* is usually connected with another factor: the third of the key-note is used after the diminished fifth:



It is true that sometimes the diminished fifth is followed with the diminished fourth, but even the appearance of the motion in minor third almost exclusively after the diminished fifth is very characteristic, considering the fact that the melody in a *nail* moves largely along the degrees of its ladder. Perhaps the use of the interval A flat — F (with the key-note D) is the result of some unconscious effort to substitute the same quality of the interval A — G flat.



Although there is some relationship between the character of melody in a *nail* and the *Şabā maqām*, it could be said that the characteristic melodic formulae of the *nail* and the *Şabā maqām* are not exactly the same. Moreover, in the *nail* the diminished fifth of the key-note is commonly used, whereas in *Şabā maqām* it is the perfect fifth.

Is it possible to say that the *nail* is melodically connected with another *maqām*? Is it possible to speak about the melodic formulae of the 'Ubaid tribe or of the place of origin of the *nail*? What about a melody-type that is not commonly known? Is it only a special Iraqi use of Ṣabā *maqām* in *nail*? There is still no definite answer to these questions.

One fact is certain, however, namely that the *nail* has its own rich melodic formulae closely related to the melodic formulae of Ṣabā *maqām*. The special character of the use of the diminished fifth of its key-note is in high probability the musical seal of its creator. It is not right to say, as some musicians in Iraq used to do, that the melody of a *nail* is based on Ṣabā *maqām* and that the use of the diminished fifth is a mistake. If an interval is used — even by mistake — in a form regularly, systematically and with a special character, then it becomes a rule.

Finally, another fact is to be pointed out. It might seem that the melodies of a certain *maqām*, a certain melody-type, arising from the same melodic formulae would be monotonous and that the composition or improvisation within a *maqām* is an easy and simple task. Just the opposite is the truth. The large quantity of melodic formulae in one *maqām*, the different possibilities of their connections and arrangements and lastly of their transformations, all this offers great possibilities to the Arab composer for his imagination.

The Arab musician usually does not know anything about this theory and its rules. He is guided only by his feeling, by experience that passed down to him through many centuries from generation to generation. Moreover, an Arab musician uses his creative power to find new melodic movements inside of the old tradition. The feeling of Arab musicians for the use of these melodic formulae that represent a *maqām* and for their arrangement and connection is wonderful and appreciable.

Therefore it is not possible to use the intervals of a certain *maqām* and to compose on them a melody and to suppose that this melody is composed in a certain *maqām*. This melody would be composed only on the intervals of a *maqām*. Without the use of characteristic melodic formulae of a *maqām* the spirit of a *maqām* will disappear.

On the melodic formulae the fact is also based that in Arabic music it is not wrong to use an already existing melody in an-

other composition once more. This practice is commonly used. For example, the instrumental overtures and interludes for certain vocal forms are used again in other compositions without any criticism. On the contrary, if it is known that a certain instrumental overture characterized a certain *maqām* well it is quite right to use it again for another composition.

The existence of melodic formulae in *maqāmāt* is also very important to the appreciation of Arabic music. The listener hearing a new composition or improvisation for the first time can find something known which agrees with his musical feeling and which helps him to appreciate the new composition at once.

#### Vocalizations — Vocal Decorations — Special Syllables in the *nail*.

The Beginning of the Melodic Movement in a *nail*.

The Time Proportion of the *nail*.

The *nail* Form as an Introduction to a Song.

It was said that the *nail* is a form in syllabic style. Sometimes, according to the cadence of the text, we could say that it has a narrative declamatory character, if the singer would not care so little for the understanding of his singing, changing repeatedly the text in a distich.

But the syllabic style is regularly changed at two places of the *nail*. One of these places is the above-mentioned refrain-close of a distich, as if the use of a characteristic melody of a conclusion were not, for a singer, sufficient to close musically a distich. He underlines the musical conclusion also by the use of a special text. The preceding text passes very quickly, one syllable after the other. In the refrain-close this progress is suddenly stopped. The characteristic examples are the three long notes in the musical close of a distich by Mutlaq al-Farhān, sung on the syllables A A A.

In the refrain-close the various vocalizations appear, the special syllables of which are repeated many times. Even in the case where the singer uses one or two words from the preceding text the vowels are prolonged, though the singer would like to have absolute freedom, absolute independence from the text, to create a perfect musical conclusion. Another place in which

the syllabic style of a *nail* is changed, is the beginning of the vocal melody. This is another characteristic feature of a *nail*.

It was already said that the last note of a permanent conclusion and the key-note of a *maqām* are the same. There is only one note to be chosen. The choice of an initial note of a melody is much more free, but here also some notes are more preferable than others for the start of a melody. For example, in the *Ṣabā maqām* when the key-note is D, then for the beginning of the melody the most preferable note is F, sometimes preceded by the decreased E.

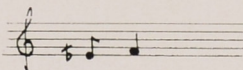
The vocal entrances in the above-mentioned *nails*, transposed again to the key-note D, were as follows:

The image displays ten rows of musical notation, each consisting of two staves. The notation is written in a style characteristic of Arabic music, featuring various note values, rests, and ornaments. The first staff of each row shows a sequence of notes, often with a fermata over the final note. The second staff of each row shows a more complex melodic line, frequently including a series of sixteenth notes or a similar fast-moving passage. The notation is transposed to the key-note D.

It is clear that the introductory F, or the movement decreased E—F, is used in the majority of examples. The secondary possibility is G flat. The best note for the beginning of the melody in the *nail* is the third of the key-note, eventually preceded with the decreased second. The key-note as the beginning of the melody is used in no example. At the present time some singers, in the effort to use something new in the melody of a *maqām*, use some non-traditional tone for the beginning of a melody, against the approval of the players of the accompaniment and to the harm of the whole problem.

The beginning of the development of the vocal melody in a *nail* usually starts on long values. This again separates the introductory melody from the character of the following one. In the text these introductory melodies are characterized by the use of the vocalizations and melismata. Some vocalizations are just characteristic for a certain singer. As, for example, for the singer Haderi Abū 'Azīz, the vocalization AFA, which is otherwise the most characteristic special syllable of all. Already the use of this syllable on some long values will indicate to the Iraqi listener that the music belongs to the *nail*. For some singer a characteristic vocalization is even connected with a certain melodic and rhythmic movement.

The characteristic vocalization HAYI used by Abū Shākir is, for example, always connected with the following melodic and rhythmic movement:



It is interesting that, although the singer could prolong the text according to his musical need, he also uses the vocalizations.

Vocalizations of the beginning of the melodic movement are separated from the following melody not only by their own character, but very often also by a momentary conclusion. It means, as we shall see later, that the melody stops on the second of the key-note. Then the introductory vocalization represents an individual musical unit quite different and separated from the following melody. Sometimes, however, the vocalization and its melody could be immediately connected with the other part, but the clear separation of the introductory vocalization, especially AFA, is characteristic for the *nail*. The use of the vocalization

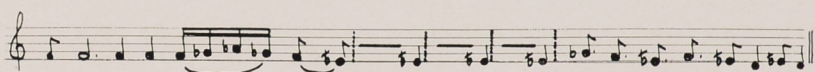
in this case does not serve for the prolongation of the melodic space for the singer. It underlines first of all the character of the entrance melody, as of the melodic phrase of a *nail* would be closed by the following schema:

Vocalization-melisma                      Text-syllabic style                      Vocalization-melisma

This schema can be called classic.

The melody in the development of the main parts could have several conclusions as well, especially if a distich is set to one musical phrase. In this case the individual melodic conclusions almost always correspond with the four parts of a distich, but these are not permanent conclusions finishing on the key-note, but only the places of the momentary stop. These momentary conclusions are realized by the *nail* on the decreased second of the key-note.

In the case of the singer Haderi Abū 'Azīz, who uses regularly very characteristic entrance melodies and refrain-closes, we could write the following melodic scheme:



A fā fāfā fā-----a the main text                      melisma-vocalizations

This scheme is, by the above-mentioned singer, more or less repeated. Musically there are no conclusions on other parts of the text except on one of four parts of a distich. It is noticeable that the singer treats the text of a distich quite freely, but that at the same time he respects its four parts.

In the quite complicated musical structure of a *nail* every singer observes a noticeable balance of all the parts, vocal or instrumental.

I will show now a time-division of different parts of a *nail* sung by Abū Shākir, a folk singer from Salman Pak near Baghdad.

	Instrumental prelude of <i>rebāba</i>	14''
First distich	a. First vocal part . . . . .	10''
	Interlude . . . . .	5''
	b. Second vocal part . . . . .	13''
	Interlude . . . . .	9''
	c. Refrain-close . . . . .	8''
	Prelude . . . . .	18''

Second distich	a. First vocal part . . . . .	16"
	Interlude . . . . .	19"
	b. Second vocal part . . . . .	15"
	Interlude . . . . .	7"
Third distich	c. Refrain-close . . . . .	11"
	Prelude . . . . .	21"
	a. First vocal part . . . . .	15"
	Interlude . . . . .	5"
	b. Refrain-close . . . . .	9"

It is necessary to underline that in the case where the distich is divided into several musical phrases, there is a considerable difference between the instrumental preludes and interludes. The length of an interlude has again to underline the individual distich, especially if the singer accompanies himself on the *rebāba*.

In the above-mentioned schema there is only one exception. The interlude between the parts a. and b. of the second distich has an extraordinary length of 19 seconds. This fact can be easily explained. In the refrain-close of the first distich Abū Shākir used the vocalization and some words from the following distich. In the first part of the other distich he settled this problem and used a longer interlude to balance the whole structure.

In principle there is always a possibility that the balance of a *nail* could be disturbed with some nonmusical influences. If the singer is tired or if he cannot remember the following words, then he can change the length of the different instrumental parts. But, generally, the individual parts of a *nail* are in an exact relation.

The *nail* exists in Iraq as an independent vocal form that is usually, in its pure form, accompanied on the *rebāba*. As the instruments of accompaniment, played naturally by other musicians, the violin or the *nay* flute can be used.

The *nail*, a typical folk music form, enters also into the other contemporary forms of Iraqi musical life. To explain the other function of a *nail* it will be necessary to consider the special style of the reproduction of songs. Songs of any kind, in strict rhythm, are very often introduced by a vocal introduction in free rhythm. The form most used for this vocal introduction is another Iraqi folk music form called *abūdiya*. Sometimes instead of an



*abūdīya* a combination of two other forms, *nail* and *swahli*, can be used. Nevertheless, even the *nail* itself can be used as an introduction of a song.

The habit of introducing a song with a vocal introduction in free rhythm originated most probably from another typical musical form of Iraq that could be called the "Singing of a *maqām*". This means a special form in which the singer, after a short instrumental prelude, sings a long improvisation, using up all of the melodic possibilities based on the melodic formulae of a *maqām*. The instruments of accompaniment play a long pedal tone and from time to time a very short interlude. To this big and weighty vocal improvisation another part, called *peste*, is added. This is a kind of a song in strict rhythm, a certain addition based on the same *maqām* as the preceding improvisation. This *peste* was used for two reasons. It had to give the soloist the opportunity to rest, for it was sung by all of the players of the instrumental group. (Today by a chorus.) Furthermore it gave a certain variety to the whole performance and offered the audience a musical part of lighter character, in which it could eventually participate by singing. The formal progression — vocal improvisation in free rhythm followed by a song in strict rhythm — was fixed. The singing of a *maqām* as a form requires a high musical education and ability for the soloist as well as for the listener. For that reason the singing of a *maqām* as a vocal improvisation was replaced by some folk vocal form, as for example *abūdīya*, which is easier for the singer and listeners as well. Now, however, the relationship of the two parts was changed. In the "Singing of a *maqām*" the most important part was the vocal improvisation and *peste* was only an addition. In the new connection, the *abūdīya* is just the vocal introduction and the most important part is the following song. Also the character of the introductory part is changed. The singing of a *maqām* was in melismatic style, the folk form is in syllabic style.

The use of a *nail* as a vocal introduction to a song is not quite usual, because of its certain simplicity and especially of its connection with only one *maqām*. As a matter of fact, the introduction and the following song must be based on the same *maqām*, or on the two *maqāmāt* but with good relationship for a modulation.

But even the fact that this form, really of genuine folk origin, could assert itself side by side with other songs, accompanied by orchestra, is significant.

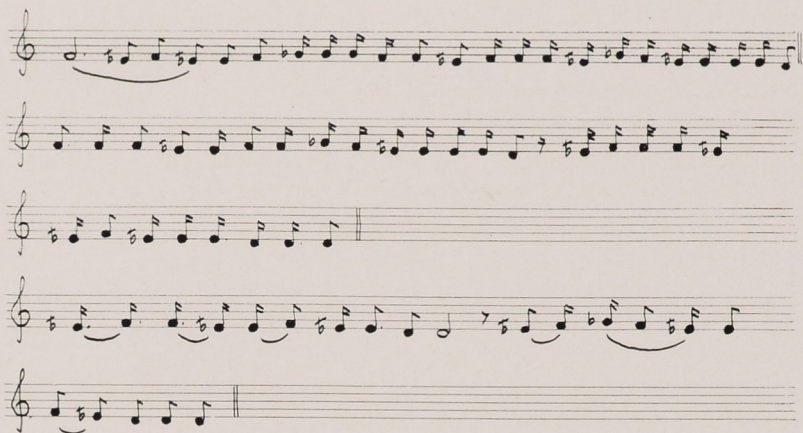
In conclusion I would like to explain the reasons that led me to the study of the Iraqi folk music forms. At the present time the interest in these traditional forms of folk music incurs general contempt. Beside the popularity of contemporary singers, composers and their music, the significance of these witnesses of the ancient history of Arabic music and its traditions are retreating into background. The time is not far off when all the singers of these forms and the musical folk forms themselves will be dead.

I wanted to show that the musical folk forms are ruled by a certain musical logic, common to the singers of different ages and from different places of Iraq. At the same time I wanted to underline the importance of the melody-types in the folk music to the structure of the great edifice of the *maqāmāt* in the classic and contemporary Arabic music. The richness of melodic formulae in *maqāmāt* did not arise in the heads of some scholars through mathematical calculations or by transition from foreign examples, but from the ancient musical feeling of Arabic people.

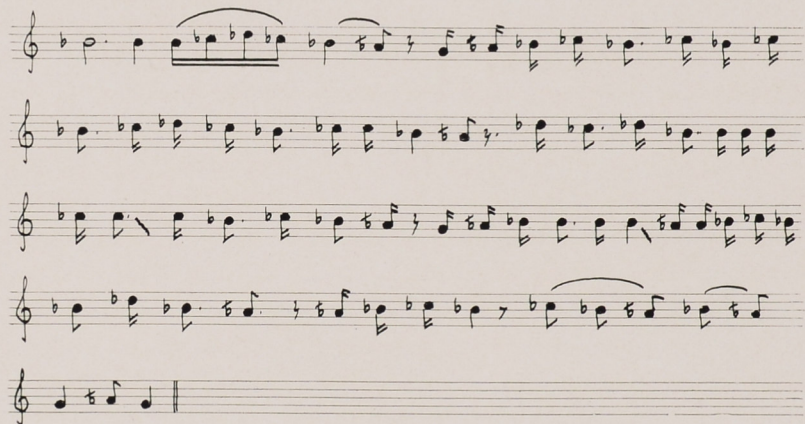
The development of Arabic music will not stop. This is clear and right. But we must not forget the ancient basis that led to the contemporary music and to its development.

Finally I shall introduce the transcription of two complete distichs. One is set to music by the folk singer Abū Shākir from Salman Pak near Baghdad. The distich is divided into three vocal parts. The singer accompanies himself on the *rebāba*.

The other is sung by the singer Haderi Abū 'Azīz. The distich is set to music in one musical phrase. The singer is accompanied by the *nay* flute.



Musical score system 1, consisting of five staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). It contains a melodic line with a long slur over the first few notes. The second staff continues the melodic line. The third staff contains a few notes followed by a double bar line. The fourth staff continues the melodic line with some slurs. The fifth staff contains a few notes followed by a double bar line.



Musical score system 2, consisting of five staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). It contains a melodic line with a long slur over the first few notes. The second staff continues the melodic line. The third staff continues the melodic line with some slurs. The fourth staff continues the melodic line with some slurs. The fifth staff contains a few notes followed by a double bar line.

## Notes

- 1) R. d'Erlanger, *La Musique Arabe*, VI, 155.
- 2) R. d'Erlanger, *La Musique Arabe*, VI, 160.
- 3) The transcription was made from my own records by Prof. Karel Petráček, Charles University.
- 4) The poetry was translated by Prof. Karel Petráček, Charles University.
- 5) Hāshim al-Rajab, Lecture on the International Conference for Arab Music, Baghdad 1964. English version, 7.
- 6) R. d'Erlanger, *La Musique Arabe*, V, 59.
- 7) R. d'Erlanger, *La Musique Arabe*, V, 64.
- 8) Hamūdī al-Wardī, *Al-Ghina al-Iraqi*, 61.
- 9) J. Rouanet, *La Musique Arabe*, *Encyclopédie de la Musique* (Lavignac) 2791.
- 10) A. Chottin, *La Musique Marocaine*, 139.
- 11) J. Rouanet, *La Musique Arabe*, 2685.
- 12) J. Rouanet, *La Musique Arabe*, 2709.
- 13) R. d'Erlanger, *La Musique Arabe*, V, 282.
- 14) R. d'Erlanger, *La Musique Arabe*, V, 57.
- 15) R. d'Erlanger, *La Musique Arabe*, V, 57.
- 16) Hāshim al-Rajab, *Iraqi Maqam*, 7.
- 17) 'Abdelkarīm Allāf, *Al-Mawwāl al-Baghdādī*, 21.
- 18) R. d'Erlanger, *La Musique Arabe*, V.



Folk-singer Abū-Shākir accompanying himself on the *rebāba*.