

## MUSIC IN ISLAMIC CULTURE

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Islamic music is distinct from that of other cultures throughout human history because it is the quintessence of the music of all the peoples and countries which espoused Islam, a religion which has always been receptive to other cultures and arts, provided that they are not linked in any way to paganism and that they are not contrary to any of the pillars of Islam, especially belief in the Unity of God.

As we are told in the Qur'ān, Islam approves good taste and beauty of voice and condemns ugly voices. This is also confirmed by the Imām al-Bukhāri, who cites 'Umar ibn al-Khattāb as saying that, one night he was in the company of the Prophet Muhammad and Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, when they came upon 'Abdullah bin Mas'ūd, a man renowned for his voice, praying in a mosque. Listening to his beautiful recitation of the Qur'ān, the Prophet commented: "If anyone wishes to recite the Qur'ān just as it was revealed, then let him recite after the fashion of Ibn Umm 'Abd". Having said his prayers, the man then sat making his supplications to God, at which point the Prophet said: "Ask and it will be given!" 'Umar then vowed to be the first to give the man the news of what the Prophet had said. However, when he went there the following day, he found that Abu Bakr had preceded him. Complimenting Abu Bakr, 'Umar had this to say: "Every time I vied with this man in performing a good deed, he would be ahead of me".

Abdullah bin Mas'ūd relates that, on another occasion, the Prophet Muhammad asked him to recite the Qur'ān. Surprised, Bin Mas'ūd inquired: "Am I to recite for the one to whom the Qur'ān itself was revealed?". The Prophet answered "Yes". Bin Mas'ūd then recited from the Sura of the Women and when he reached the verse (4.1):

How then if We brought  
From each People a witness,  
And We brought thee  
As a witness against  
These People

the Prophet said "That is enough". Bin Mas'ūd turned his head only to find the Prophet with tears in his eyes.

Abu Mūsa al-Ash'ari was another of the Companions of the Prophet who was famous for the beauty of his recitation of the Qur'ān. According to Imām al-Bukhāri, the Prophet once praised his voice, saying that he had been "gifted with the pipes of David", an allusion to the pipes whose music would miraculously awaken the Prophet David for the dawn prayers.

We know that the Prophet Muhammad approved of singing and music on festive occasions. His wife, A'isha, relates that her father, Abu Bakr, once came to visit them on a feastday. At that moment, two slave girls were drumming and playing the tambourine and the Prophet hid his head in his clothes so as not to see or hear. When Abu Bakr scolded the girls, the Prophet revealed his face and said: "Leave them be, Abu Bakr. This is a feastday."

From this review, we can see that music and singing enjoyed a prominent place in Islam from the very beginning. The one condition, of course, was that engaging in such activity did not divert anyone from worship, from earning a living or from fighting in the cause of God.

Islam emerged in the Arabian Peninsula, an area steeped in ancient traditions of song, the home of al-Khansā', the elegiac poetess and of al-A'sha Maymūn bin Qays, whose poems celebrated his love of Hurayra, a woman singer of al-Hira in the days of al-Nu'man. In the Sura of the Quraysh, the Qur'ān also refers to the rhythmic chanting on the winter and summer caravans, which made the camels forget their heavy burden.

Prominent Islamic figures took special care of singers. For example, Arwa, mother of the Caliph Uthmān bin 'Affān was the patron of the singer Aba 'Abdulmun'im bin 'Abdullah al-Dhā'ib, known as "Tuways". The first singer to emerge in Islamic times, he was also the first to marry Arab singing with the Persian tunes he had heard from the migrant labourers who took part in the re-construction of the Ka'ba.

Sakīna bint al-Husayn held a reception in Medina to honour the venerable singer, Hanīn al-Hīri, despite the fact that he remained a Christian. The throng of artists, men of letters and dignitaries attending the occasion was so great that the roof from which they were watching collapsed, killing the celebrated singer, who was then aged more than one hundred years.

Upon listening to the singing of Abi Ja'far Sā'ib bin Yasir, known as "Sā'ib Khāthir", 'Abdullah bin Ja'far bin Abi Tālib was so moved that he engaged the singer in his service. The compendium "al-Aghāni", by Abu al-Faraj al-Isfahāni, cites him as the first singer to sing to the accompaniment of the lute, the first to introduce Persian rhythm in Arabic poetry and the first to use the rhythm known as "al-thaqil al-awwal", thus starting the tradition of artistic musical composition. As singers were held in low esteem in this age, Abdullah bin Ja'far introduced Sā'ib Khāthir to the Caliph Mu'āwiya ibn Abi Sufyān as a talented poet and the Caliph rewarded him generously for his performance.

Bin Ja'far extended his patronage to 'Azzat al-Milā', a woman who is regarded as having carried on the tradition started by the great female singers Rā'iqā, Khawla and Sīrīn. Al-Muḡawqūs, the governor of Egypt, presented her to the Prophet Muhammad, who in turn betrothed her to Hassan bin Thābit. 'Azzat al-Milā' was famous for the weekly concerts held at her house, in which the taste for listening to good music was truly cultivated. Tuways described the audiences on these occasions as being so attentive that they were literally on their toes. As with the assemblies that listened to Plato, there was an usher armed with a stick to silence anyone creating a disturbance.

Hassān bin Thābit vouched for the excellence of 'Azza's singing, saying that it reminded him of the Ghasanites in the days before Islam. A similar tribute came from Tuways, who described 'Azza as the greatest of female singers.

When prudish opponents sought to bring 'Azza into disrepute with Sa'id bin al-'As, the governor of the city, 'Abdullah bin Ja'far defended her staunchly. He convinced the governor that she was a paragon of virtue who, through her innocent art, was doing no more than nurturing a refined taste among the generations who came to listen to her.

Among those who helped to bring about the marriage between Persian and Arab music was Abu 'Uthmān Sa'id bin Musajah. The story goes that bin Musajah's master heard him one day singing a poem by Ibn al-Riqā' which ends with the verse:

But for shame of the grey which has invaded my hair  
I would surely have gone to visit Umm al-Qāsim

As the song sounded unfamiliar, bin Musajah's master asked him where it came from. He explained that he had first heard it from the Persian labourers constructing the Mosque of the Prophet in Mecca and had then reworked the song to make it compatible with Arabic poetry. As a reward for this artistic endeavour, his master set him free.

In the "Kitāb al-Aghāni", it is related that, when information came to the ears of the Umayyad Caliph that the young men of the Quraysh were infatuated with the singing of Ibn Musajah and were giving him their money, the Caliph ordered his governor Dahmān al-Ashqar to confiscate the singer's money and send him into exile. Ibn Musajah then moved to Syria, where he managed to gain access to the Caliph by impressing one of the Syrian dignitaries with his voice. The Caliph asked him whether he could sing al-Rukban (the 'escort') and he did so. The Caliph then asked if he could sing al-Mutqin (the 'perfect') and this too he did. When the Caliph in amazement asked who he was, Ibn Musajah pleaded that he was a man who had been wronged, who had had his money confiscated and who had been exiled from his homeland: he was Sa'id bin Musajah. The Caliph smiled and said to him: "Now I know why the young men of the Quraysh would spend their money on you." Ibn Shujah was now pardoned, his money was returned and he was showered with gifts. He went on to live in luxury until his death

in 96 AH (715 AD) during the Caliphate of al-Walīd bin Abdul Malik.

Another famous singer was Musallam bin Mihriz. A student of both 'Azzat al-Mīlā' and Ibn Musajah, he travelled to Persia and then to Syria to study singing. Combining the Persian and Byzantine modes with that of his own original school, he invented the "al-Raml" style of singing. The Persian singer, Salmak, would later put these songs to Farsi words and perform them in his own country.

Ibn Mihriz argued that "the single line cannot carry the melody to its end" and so became the first to sing couplets, a practice that would be emulated throughout the Muslim world by all the singers who came after him. The new form gave rise variously to the "dubayt" of the Arab East, to the "baytan" of Morocco and to the "nawba" (alternate lines) of Tunisia.

The second year of the Hijra calendar saw the birth of Yahya 'Abīd Allah bin Surayj, an excellent Turkish singer who learned music in Medina at the feet of Tuways and Ibn Musajah. He attended the concerts of 'Azzat al-Mīlā' and rose to fame by the age of 40. He specialized in a kind of singing known as "al-Nawah" (bemoaning) and was privileged to be part of the circle of Sakina, the daughter of Hussain. He eventually became one of the greatest of musicians and would be remembered in the proverb: "Of proper singers, there are but two from Mecca, Ibn Surayj and bin Mihriz, and two from Madina, Ma'bad and Malik".

In the Umayyad period, the lives of the singers, their methods of singing and their poetry were all chronicled by Yūnus bin Sulaymān bin Kurd bin Shahrāyār, known as Yānus al-Kātib. Though not an Arab, he was renowned for his beautiful voice, acute memory and excellent poetry. His book of songs was the first of its kind and has remained an authority ever since. Al-Kātib was a wealthy merchant by profession and singing was only a pastime. When in Syria on business with a number of his colleagues, the news of his arrival reached the heir-apparent, al-Walīd bin Yazīd, who invited him to stay, kept him for three days and, at the end, made him a gift of 3000 dinars. When al-Walīd became Caliph, he again invited al-Kātib to stay with him and this time he remained until his death.

When power passed to the Abbassids, music and singing began to occupy an increasingly prominent position, receiving the patronage of caliphs and princes. Scholarly research into these artistic activities developed and new inventions were made. Great singers, composers and scholars of music now appeared, including the Caliph Ibrahim bin al-Mahdi, brother of Harūn al-Rashīd. The Caliph broke away from traditional restrictions and allowed himself the liberty of using forms and "maqāmāt" which he himself had invented, building on what he learnt from his mother, Shakla, daughter of the King of Tabaristan. Defending his new music, he would say: "I am a king and the son of a king. I sing as I please and as the fancy takes me". Thus, a school of innovators was to emerge.

The musician, 'Ali bin Nāfi', known as "Ziryāb", contributed a great deal to Islamic culture. As well as laying down the basic principles of musical composition and arrangement, Ziryāb developed the lute as an instrument, adding its fifth string and introducing the use of an eagle-feather plectrum. Westerners adopted this method to make the harpsichord, an instrument which remains in use to this day. Ziryāb was also the first to introduce methods of testing singers and training them in proper enunciation. As if this were not enough, he was also accomplished in blending perfumes and inventing new recipes for food and sweetmeats, not to mention the development of seasonal variations in young people's fashions. A complete artist, he left behind a rich heritage which is still with us.

It is a well-known historical fact that Ibrahim bin al-Mahdi exploited the differences between the followers of his nephews, the sons of Harūn al-Rashīd (al-Amīn and al-Ma'mūn) to claim the caliphate, which he managed to hold for only two years (202-204 AH / 817- 819 AD). During this period, he was the butt of virulent attacks by satirical poets such as Du'bul, who wrote about the Caliph thus:

If, by Ibrahim, the Caliphate should be won,  
Then why not, after him, by any mother's son.

Like mathematics, medicine, veterinary science, philosophy and astronomy, the sciences of music occupied a prominent place in Islamic culture and attracted the attention of many scholars. Among those who contributed most to the study of music were the following:

a. The Arab philosopher, Abu Yūsuf Ya'qūb bin Ishāq al-Kindi (185-252 AH / 801-866 AD), the author of a number of works. Some of these have recently been edited by scholars from Baghdad, Damascus and Cairo, including Zakariya' Yūsuf, Majdi al-'Aqīli, Mahmūd Ahmad al-Hafni and Yūsuf Shawqi. The editions of al-Kindi's works include the following:

1. al-Risāla al-Kubra fi al-Ta'lif
2. Risāla fi Tartīb al-Nagham al-Dālla 'ala Tabā'i' al-Ashkhās al-'Aliya wa Tashābuh al-Ta'lif
3. Risāla fi Madkhal ila Sinā'at al-Mūsīqa
4. Risāla fi al-Iqā'
5. Risāla fi Khabar Sinā'at al-Ta'lif
6. Risāla fi Sinā'a al-Shi'r
7. Risāla fi Akhbār 'ala Sinā'at al-Mūsīqa
8. Kitāb Tartīb al-Nagham
9. Mukhtasar al-Mūsīqa fi Ta'lif al-Nagham wa Sinā'at al-'Ud
10. Risāla fi Ajzā' Khabariyya fi 'l-Mūsīqa

The contents of these works are documented in a book by the present author, "al-Mūsīqa al-'Arabiyya, Tārikhuha wa Adabuha", published by al-Dār al-Tūnisiyya.

B. Abu Ahmad Yahya bin 'Ali bin Mansūr, known as bin al-Munajjim (241-300 AH / 855-912 AD), whose most famous work is his "Kitāb al-Nagham".

c. Abu Nasr bin Tarkhān, known as al-Farābi (257-339 AH / 870-950 AD), born in the town of Farab in Uzbekistan. His most famous works include:

1. al-Mūsīqi al-Kabīr, edited by Professor Ghattas Khashba, Cairo
2. Ihsā' al-Iqā'
3. Kitāb al-Naqra

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## 4. al-Kalām fi al-Mūsīqa

As well as being a reputed scholar, al-Farābi was an accomplished lutenist and several of his books provide an introduction to the playing of the instrument.

- d. Abu 'Ali al-Hasan bin 'Abdullah bin Sīna (370-438 AH / 980-1037 AD), who was born in the town of Afshna near Bukhara in Uzbekistan. His books on the sciences of music include:
1. Kitāb al-Shifa' (the present author has seen the manuscript, annotated by Ibn Sīna himself, in the Sulaymaniyya Library, Istanbul)
  2. Kitāb al-Najāh (has a chapter on music)
  3. Danish Nameh (written in Farsi while resident in Isfahan)
  4. Risāla fi Taqāsīm al-Hikma (has a chapter on music)
- e. Abu Mansūr al-Hasan bin Muhammad bin Zīla al-Isfahāni, the best-known of his works being "al-Kāfi fi al-Mūsīqa", edited and published by Zakariya' Yūsuf, Baghdad, 1964.
- f. Abdul Mu'min bin Yūsuf bin Fākhir al-Armāwi, known as Safi al-Din al-Armāwi (213-293 AD / 1216-1284 AD), who sang for the last of the Abbasid Caliphs, al-Musta'sim Billah, and witnessed the fall of Baghdad in 606 AH / 1258 AD. He then sang for the new ruler, Hulagu. Al-Armāwi's best-known books include:
1. Kitāb al-Adwār (translated into Turkish, Farsi, French and English and drawn upon by most subsequent works. The book has recently been edited and published by Hajj Hāshim al-Rajab in Baghdad)
  2. al-Risāla al-Sharafiyya (written for his pupil, Sharaf al-Dīn al-Juwayni and his brother Baha' al-Dīn)
- g. Abu Ja'far Nasr al-Dīn bin Muhammad al-Tusi (597-672 AH / 1201-1273 AD). The remainder of the author's treatise on the science of music has been published by Zakariya' Yūsuf.
- h. Abu al-Fadā'il Kamāl al-Dīn Abdul Qadir al-Marāghi (754-838 AH / 1353-1434 AD), who was born in Azerbaijan. His famous books include:
1. Jāmi' al-Alhān (in Farsi)
  2. Kitāb al-Mūsīqa
  3. Zubdat al-Adwār
  4. Sharh li Kitāb al-Adwār li-'l-Armāwi



## 5. Kanz al-Alhān fi 'Ilm al-Adwār

The tune of a famous "muwashshah" still to be heard in most Arab countries is attributed to al-Marāghī. It begins:

Ahissu Shawqan ila Diyārin / Ra'aytu fiha Jamāla Salma  
(I yearn for that place in which once I saw fair Salma)

Abd al-'Azīz al-Marāghī, a grandchild of the author, was also a skilful musician and the author of a treatise on music entitled "Naqāwat al-Adwār", written for the Ottoman Sultan, Sulaymān the Magnificent (926-974 AH / 1520-1566 AD).

Apart from the authors referred to above, many scholars, poets and men of letters wrote on the subject of music. For example, al-Sāfi al-Hilli (677-750 AH / 1278-1349 AD) wrote a treatise entitled "Fā'ida fi Tawallud al-Anghām ba'duha 'an ba'd wa Tartībiha 'ala 'l-Burūj". The manuscript of this treatise is kept in the Fine Arts section (no. 50) at the Dār al-Kutub al-Misriyya (Egyptian Library).

As far as artistic practice was concerned, Islamic culture established ties between the various countries whose peoples wholly or partially adopted Islam or which, like the Balkan states and Central Europe, came under the caliphate at some period in their history.

These ties are evident in the words of songs, in tones, rhythms and forms and even in the instruments which are used to play the music or accompany the singing.

The Sufi orders also played a role in preserving the heritage of song, as a part of an Islamic culture capable of unifying peoples despite differences in language.

Thus, in the lyrics of various "muwashshahāt" and "azjāl" we find a mixture of Arabic, Turkish and Persian words. For example, in the last line of a "muwashshah" famous in Egypt, Syria and Tunisia:

ghamazak yijrahni / khabbi hunjarak  
'azatlu sultanim / allah yinsirak

Another "muwashshah" famous in Tunisia and Libya has:

Ya ghazalan bi lisanin 'arabi / wa lisan al-furs aya dostamin

To keep in harmony with the music, lyrics are punctuated by Arabic words such as "ya layl" with all its derived forms, "yalli", "bāli", (from "bala" or verily, yes); Turkish, such as "afandim", "janim", "aman"; or Persian, such as "yadust", "firyadamin".

The "maqāmāt", meanwhile, are distinguished by full, half, quarter and even smaller intervals on the musical scale, showing the precise acoustic discrimination of the practitioners. Tones were studied by a number of Muslim scholars, some of them cited above, who gave them the Arabic, Persian or Turkish names which are still preserved in the countries privileged to have had links with Islamic civilization (Greece, which has moved out of the orbit of the Islamic world is an exception).

The maqāmāt include:

'Irāq, Hijāz, Hussain, Raml and Dhayl	(Arabic)
Isfahan, Busta Nakar, Jaharka, Sika and Shahnaz	(Persian)
Boslak, Kardan and Qarjaghar	(Turkish)

In all these countries, including the Arab states, the points on the scale still bear Persian names: yakah, dukah, sakah, jaharkah, banjakah, shashkah and haftakah.

Rhythm was another topic which attracted scholarly interest, beginning with al-Khalīl bin Ahmad al-Farāhīdī, who linked musical rhythm with the metre of Arabic poetry. This was also the subject of Abu Yūsuf Ya'qūb Ibn Ishāq al-Kindī in his treatise "Ajzā' Khabariyya fi 'l-Mūsīqa" (manuscript 5503 in the Berlin Public Library).

Details of the rhythms covered in al-Kindī's treatise are presented in the Chapter "Usūl al-Iqā'āt wa-'l-Maqāmāt al-'Arabiyya" in the book by the present author entitled "al-Mūsīqa al-'Arabiyya, Tārikhuha wa Adabuha".

In "al-Mūsīqi al-Kabīr", Abu Nasr al-Farābī deals with the subject of rhythm, defining it as the transition from note to note in intervals of determined quantity and ratio.

In a work entitled "al-Najāh", Ibn Sīna also considers the subject of rhythm, saying: "Rhythm is any beat from which a move is made to another beat, such a move being either in a duration in which the second beat does not erase the memory of the first one so that both remain symbiotically intact, or otherwise. Rhythm emanates from beats whose intervals are of the first kind."

A later scholar, Sāfi al-Dīn al-Armāwī (7th century AH / 13th century AD) defined rhythm thus: "Rhythm is a succession of beats separated by intervals that are qualitatively measured performing musical compositions that are quantitatively equal to suit specific situations."

In tunes current today we find a connection with such feet from Arabic poetry as the mufā'altun from al-Wāfir which corresponds to the 7-unit Nukht practised in Turkey and the Arab countries. Also, fā'ilatun from al-Raml corresponding to al-Dūr Hindi also practised in Turkey and the Arab countries. Both metres have also been adopted in the Balkans. A major contribution to our present knowledge of classical metres is the result of practice, research and experimentation mostly carried out in Turkey during the reign of the Ottoman Sultan Sālim the Third (1761-1808). The Sultan was a musician who composed several works which are known to this today. He played a vital role in developing music in Turkey and the countries of the Ottoman Empire by encouraging the production of new maqāmāt and iqā'āt.

Interest in the field continued to expand and 1932 saw the holding in Cairo of the first Conference on Arabic Music, which was attended by distinguished scholars from Muslim and other countries. This resulted in the presentation of various rhythms: the "darb fath", presented by Baron [Dirlangi]; a scale of 176 temporal units presented by Sheikh Ali al-Darwish from Syria; and the "shanbar" scale of 84 temporal units presented by the Egyptian delegation.\*

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\* An anecdote: At one time, I was engaged on research into the source of every kind of rhythm and that included the "Turkish" rhythm of seven minor units used throughout the Islamic world under the name of "aqsās". In 1964, I took part in a Mediterranean Music Conference held in Istanbul, organised by our friend, Adnan Saygun. On this occasion, while visiting the town of Izmir, I woke up one morning to hear a bird happily chirping away in this same "aqsas" rhythm.

## EXPRESSING THE VOWELS AND CONSONANTS IN RHYTHM

Al-Kindi characterised the various rhythms in terms of the number of beats and measures. For example, he describes al-Mākhūri's rhythm as follows: two consecutive beats and one single beat. While Abu Nasr al-Farābi followed al-Kindi, Sāfi al-Dīn al-Armāwi was at variance. He identified the heavy as "tana" with two vowels and the light as "tann" with one vowel and a sukun. The "awtad" are expressed as "tanana" with each consonant followed by a vowel.

The Tunisian scholar Mahmūd Sayyāla used "l" instead of "t" to give "lana" and the awtad "lanana".

Since the last century, the following terms have been used to describe types of beats: "dumm" for strong, "takk" for light and "kah" for lighter. With the development of music and the instruments used, we have added the terms "daff", "taqq" and "tarq" for the large drum, "dajj" for the tightly drawn and "tish" for the ordinary tambourine and "sunūj" for the cymbals.

Arabic music and song went through a number of stages: the chant of the camel drivers on the summer and winter caravans referred to in the Qur'ān in the Sura of the Quraysh; the songs classified by Abi Faraj al-Isfahāni in his book "al-Aghāni"; the popular songs which are wide-spread throughout the Muslim world; improvised songs and musical instruments. The earliest work of reference for the rules of traditional composition was produced by Ziriyāb of Cordoba (3rd century AH / 9th century AD) who devised a method of his own. This opened with "nashīd" singing, followed by "basit" metre and finally with vowels, in accordance with the "Nafh al-Tib" of al-Maqāri. This method was the basis for all musical arrangements in the various Muslim countries: "nawba" in the Maghrib and Andalusia; "wasla" in the Arab east; "fāsil" in Turkey; "shish maqām" in the republics of Central Asia as far as Sindyān, the Turkic area of China. They included the "muwashshahāt", "azjāl" and other compositions, whether "bashārīf", "samā'iyat" or "lanaqāt" from Turkey or "tawshiyyāt" and "musaddarāt" from Andalusia and the Maghrib.

The Ziriyāb method was also introduced to the west by the troubadours of Provence and was incorporated in various forms of classical music.

Sufi orders played an important role in the preservation of the musical heritage of Islamic civilization, much of which would have disappeared in the face of blinkered opposition during a number of puritanical periods in our history. The Sufis succeeded in keeping alive the heritage of the muwashshahāt, for example, by giving them new lyrics which extolled the unity of God, praised the Prophet and hailed the deeds of their masters among the saints and the righteous. They include Baba Tāhir in

Iran, who had a "maqām" named after him, which was famous elsewhere as "al-Muhayyir". Another example was Mawlāna Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmi, a driving force behind the development of the Turkish music which would spread to many other Muslim countries. Next to his burial place, there now stands the most important collection of wind instruments in the Muslim world. Among other such Sufis, we can list: from Baghdad, Abdul Qādir al-Jīli (al-Kaylani); in the Maghrib and Egypt, Abu al-Hasan al-Shādhli; in Libya and Tunisia, Sheikh Abdul Salām al-Asmār, whose order combined with the al-'Arusiyya order of Sheikh Ahmad bin 'Arūs; in Algeria, Abdul Rahman al-Tha'ālibi; and in Morocco, Sheikh Muhammad bin 'Isa. With all of them, chanting was used as a means to attract young Muslims to join groups for the study of the Qur'ān and Islamic law.

The Sufi orders of the Maghrib were particularly influential in bringing Islam to black Africa. Followers of these orders used to travel deep into the African jungle to buy children and bring them back to Sufi schools, where they were taught the Qur'ān and the basic principles of Islam, together with reading and writing in Arabic. They would then be freed and returned to their families.

Modern history bears witness to the fact that most Sufi orders took part in the struggle against colonialism. If a handful were used by the colonial powers, this was inevitable, since there is good and bad in every community.

#### MUSICAL NOTATION

The earliest musical notation is to be found in the "al-Aghāni" of Abu al-Faraj al-Isfahāni. This took the form of a number of symbols to indicate the position of the fingers of the left hand on the four strings of the lute (low, third, second, highest). These are as follows:

1. mutlaq on the course of the middle finger
2. mutlaq on the course of the ring finger
3. Index finger on the course of the middle finger
4. Index finger on the course of the ring finger
5. The middle finger on its own course
6. The ring finger on its own course
7. The little finger on the course of the middle finger
8. The little finger on the course of the ring finger

Following in the footsteps of Hāshim al-Rajab from Baghdad and Yūsuf Shawqi from Cairo, the author has deciphered these symbols, which turn out to be no more than a statement of the "maqām" scale.

Musical notation evolved with Sāfi al-Dīn al-Armāwi (7th century AH /13th century AD), who introduced the subject in his book "al-Adwār". A manuscript copy of this work, in the hand of 'Ali Fathallah al-Ma'ādini al-Isfahāni, known as "Sā'ir", was obtained by the author from the library of Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan.

In al-Armāwi's method, the first ten letters of the old Semitic alphabet (a, b, j, d, h, w, z, H, T, y) are assigned to the positions of the fingers on the strings. For higher notes, the tenth letter is placed before the others in sequence, e.g. ya, yb, yj, yd, yh, yz, yH, yT. Even higher on the scale, the eleventh letter (k) replaces the y, thus: ka, kb, kj, kd, kh, kz, kH, kT. Higher still, the twelfth letter (l) would be added and so on.

Though more complete than that of Abu al-Faraj al-Isfahāni, this method was still unsatisfactory and the Ottoman sultans exhorted musicians to devise better notations. In the 17th century, a Byzantine prince, Qantamir, appeared to fulfil this role but would desert his Ottoman benefactors and join the Russian army. In the 18th century, Hambarsom, an Ottoman musician devised a new notation which was used in Turkey until the end of the 19th century, when present western conventions were adopted. To this system, musicians from Turkey, Iran and the Arab countries have made additions, enabling them to express the music of Islamic civilization in the finest detail.