



IQĀ'

IQĀ' (pl. *iqā'āt*), an Arabic term used in texts on music to denote rhythmic mode (or cycle) or rhythmic pattern.

The theory of *iqā'* was created by the Arabs and introduced in the singing of graceful music (*ḡenā'-al-raḡiq*) or artistic music (*ḡenā'-al-motqan*) as a new device of rhythmical symmetry independent of poetic meter. According to Abu'l-Faraj of Isfahan (apud Farmer, 1929, p. 51) "the first in Al-Medina to sing the music introducing in it the *iqā'* (rhythm) was [Abu 'Abd-al-Mon'em 'Isā] Ṭuwais," who sang melodies he had learned from Persian captives (Farmer and Neubauer, p. 758). Prior to the introduction of *iqā'*, the musical measure was apparently determined by the verse meter and obviously was not independent of the 'aruzū (q.v.) system.

The theory of *iqā'* itself, however, is based on the same principle as the 'aruz system, a versification system based on the quantity of syllables, in which a long syllable equals two short syllables. A rhythmic mode is formed by adding long and short beats (in terms of note-value) in various combinations. Therefore, *iqā'* is a kind of "additive" rhythm, and stands in contrast to the "divisive" or "multiplicative" rhythm of Western classical music. The primary importance of *iqā'* lies in quantitative measurement. It is not a strange coincidence that the first book on the theory of *iqā'* known to us in the history of Islamic music, *Ketāb al-iqā'*, was written by Ḳalil b. Aḡmad (d. 791), the alleged inventor of the 'aruz (Farmer, 1965, p. 1).

The notation of *iqā'* was built on the common mnemonics of the 'aruz, which



were based on forms of the verb *fa'ala*. For example, the measure of *sabab-e kafif* (light *sabab*, or a long syllable) was notated in terms of a mnemonic *fa'*; and that of *sabab-e taqil* (heavy *sabab*, or two successive short syllables) was notated by the mnemonic of *fa'a*; that of *watad-e majmu'* (united *watad*, or a combination of a short syllable and a long syllable) was represented by *fa'u*; and that of *fāşela-ye şoğrā* (small stay, or a combination of two short syllables and a long syllable) was represented by *fa'alon*.

Musicians, however, produced their own onomatopoeia, such as *tan* (–), *tana* (∪ ∪), *tanān* (∪ –) and *tanānan* (∪ ∪ –), which were recorded for the first time by Abu Naşr Fārābi (d. ca. 950, q.v.) in his *Ketāb al-musiqi al-kabir*. Ebn Sinā (d. 1037) says that he saw musicians notating rhythm as fast as they could write it (Farmer, 1943, p. 72). This must have been a similar system of onomatopoeia.

In the modern practice of *iqā'*, the character of a given rhythmic mode is emphasized by elaborate playing techniques of drums such as the *darabukka* (a vase-shaped drum), *naqqāra* (a kind of kettledrum), *ṭabl* (drum), and *daff* (q.v., or *ṭār*). Actually the beats within a rhythmic mode are articulated on three levels: (1) distance from each other (or duration), (2) stress accent, and (3) timbre. These features are recited in the teaching process using special onomatopoetic syllables such as *dum* (*düm* in Turkish) for a heavy and mellow stroke, *tak* (*tek*) for a light and dry stroke, and *tak kah* (*teke*). (See an example in Yekta, p. 3043.)

Historical survey. The first *iqā'* introduced by Ṭoways was *hazaj*, which was “the light [rhythm]” (Farmer, 1929, p. 51). By the beginning of the Omayyad period (661-750), *iqā'* had already been systematized. At least six rhythmic modes (*iqā'āt*) were known. The *taqil awwal*, *taqil tāni*, *kafif taqil*, *hazaj*, *ramal*, and *ramal ṭonburi* are mentioned by Abu'l-Faraj of Isfahan (I, p. 152, apud Farmer, 1929, p. 71).

Abu Yusof Ya'qub Kendi (d. ca. 874) described eight kinds of rhythmic modes during the 'Abbasid period in his treatise in his *Resāla fi ajzā' kabariya musiqi: al-taqil al-awwal*, *al-taqil al-tāni*, *al-mākuri*, *kafif al-taqil*, *ramal*, *kafif-al-ramal*, *kafif-al-kafif*, and *hazaj* (apud Farmer, 1943, pp. 19-22; see examples, Farmer, 1943, pp. 78-87).

Fārābi described the following seven rhythmic modes (*iqā'āt*): *hazaj*, *kafif-al-ramal*, *ramal* (or *al-taqil al-ramal*), *al-taqil al-tāni*, *mākuri* (or *al-kafif al-taqil al-tāni*), *al-taqil al-awwal*, and *al-kafif al-taqil al-awwal* (tr., in d'Erlanger, pp.



40-48).

Şafi-al-Din of Urmia (d. 1294) records the following eight rhythmic modes in his *Resālat al-šarafiya: al-ṭaqil al-awwal, al-ṭaqil al-tāni, kafif al-ṭaqil, ramal, kafif al-ramal, hazaj, moẓā'af al-ramal*, and *al-fāketa* (tr., pp. 159-78). In his *Ketāb al-adwār*, Şafi-al-Din gives a name of *ṭaqil al-ramal* in place of *moẓā'af al-ramal* and states that Persian musicians call this rhythm *čahār żarb* (tr., in d'Erlanger, p. 503).

‘Abd-al-Qāder of Marāğa (d. 1435) records the following fourteen rhythmic modes, which he calls *dawr* “cycle”: *ṭaqil-e awwal, ṭaqil-e tāni, ramal, ṭaqil-e ramal, kafif-e ṭaqil, hazaj, moḳammas, far'-e torķi-e aṣl, fāḳeti, żarb-al-faḥ, šāhi, qomriya żarb-al-jadid*, and *me'atayan* (‘Abd-al-Qāder, 1965, pp. 89-96; *qomayria* for *qomriya* in idem, 1987, p. 227).

From the descriptions of *iqā's* by the noted theorists, we can tell approximately what kind of rhythmic modes were practiced in the medieval Islamic world. At the same time, we find that descriptions of an identical *iqā'* by different theorists do not always agree in rhythmic reality. This diversity of *iqā's* in practice may be due to regional variations as well as historical changes. It must, however, be borne in our mind that those recorded by theorists under the eight names were genres (*ajnās*) of rhythmic modes, from which certain secondary modes (called *anwā'* “species”) were derived. The diversity of the *iqā's* may also be due to the preservation of species rather than the genre itself (Farmer, 1943, p. 81). When we examine the rhythmic modes of Şafi-al-Din of Urmia and those of ‘Abd-al-Qāder of Marāğa, we learn that considerable changes had occurred during the time lapse of five centuries since the time of Fārābi. The Persian contributed significantly to these changes by adding new rhythmic modes.

The Persian contribution. We are informed by Abu'l-Faraj of Isfahan (d. 967) that Persians adopted the rhythmic modes of the Arabs during the time of the caliph Hārūn al-Rašid (r. 786-809). The mode *ramal* was introduced by a musician named Salmak (Abu'l-Faraj, I, p. 151, apud Farmer, 1929, p. 106). Persian taste, however, differed from that of the Arabs concerning rhythmic modes. The Persian preference for certain types of rhythm was recorded by Ebn Sinā in his *Ketāb al-šefā'*: “All the old melodies of Khorasan and Fārs are composed in the conjunct rhythm, because this rhythm is equal and because it regulates the state of the soul” (tr., in d'Erlanger, p. 185).



Şafi-al-Din says that Persians have numerous melodies composed in the rhythmic mode of *możā'af-al-ramal*. He also indicates that Persians had characteristic rhythms of their own by saying that Persians have some kinds of rhythm that Arabs are unaware of, and that, on the other hand, there are certain rhythms which many Persians ignore (tr., in d'Erlanger, pp. 172-73). Among the *iqā'*s recorded by Şafi-al-Din and 'Abd al-Qāder, several suggest Persian origin or preference, such as *al-fāketi*, *čahār żarb*, *dawr-e šāhi*, *żarb-al-jadid*. *Moķammas*, and *far'-e torki-ye aşl* are Turkish. 'Abd-al-Qāder includes *żarb-al-fath* and *dawr-e šāhi* among the rhythmic modes devised by himself ('Abd-al-Qāder, 1965, p. 95; idem, 1987, p. 227).

Much later Moħammad b. 'Abd-al-Ĥamid Lādeqi (d. 1494) mentioned in his treatise concerning a variety of the rhythmic modes of *al-hazaj* that "Persians say that this is the *čanbar oşul* and the majority of their melodies are based on this rhythm" (tr., in d'Erlanger, p. 477).

The varieties of *iqā'*s continuously proliferated. By the middle of the 15th century there were no fewer than twenty-one rhythmic modes (Şarvāni, tr. in d'Erlanger, pp. 183-232). This may be interpreted as a result of the craze for novelty in *iqā'*s, since Turkic people began to be actively involved in composing music in western Asia. This tendency ran to an extreme among the Ottoman Turks during the 16th-19th centuries.

In fact, the theory of *iqā'* was most highly developed and elaborated in the classical music of Ottoman Turkey. The rhythmic modes, however, were actually designated *oşul* (principles or principal modes) in Turkish rather than *iqā'āt*. The term and concept of *oşul* were also adopted by the court traditions of the Transoxanian *maqām* in Central Asia. In Ottoman Turkey, the varieties of rhythmic modes were increased to over one hundred. Rodolphe D'Erlanger (with the co-operation of Shaikh 'Ali Darviş of Aleppo) listed as many as 110 kinds of *iqā'*s that were generally known to Turkish and Arab musicians in the 1930s (d'Erlanger, VI, pp. 26-140).

In modern Persia, however, the concept of *iqā'* or rhythmic mode has disappeared completely, at least from the theory, although, according to Mehdi Barkechli, a Persian scholar and musicologist, "almost all the principal rhythms described by Şafi-al-Din are still used in Persian music today" (Barkechli, p. 62). This could be due to the nature of *āvāz* (q.v.), the classical music of modern Persia, in which the unique, non-metric rubato rhythm is predominant, and the measured sections in definite meters are rather



subsidiary. The term *iqā'* (rhythm) has fallen out of use and has been replaced entirely by *wazn* (weight, measure, meter), and another new term, *ritm*, which was borrowed from the French word *rythme* (Tsuge, pp. 4-5).

Thus, Persian music today has little to do with the theory of *iqā'*, but is rather connected directly with the *'aruž* system, which was once the basis of the *iqā'*.

For a music sample, see [Pišrow in Bayāte Tork](#).

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