The “Arabian Influence” Thesis Revisited

By Shai Burstyn

The Eastern influence on medieval European music was a hotly debated topic in the musicological literature from the early 1920s through the 1940s. Interest in the “Arabian Influence” thesis has reawakened in recent years and appears to be slowly but surely gathering momentum again. Firmly convinced that the origins of Western chant were rooted in Eastern sources (Byzantine, Syriac, and ultimately Jewish), chant specialists made efforts to uncover East-West links in the first Christian centuries—efforts

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that were usually deemed legitimate. Far less acceptable to many music scholars was the proposition of a second wave of Eastern influence on medieval European music, based on eight centuries of Arabic presence on the continent and on the close contact with the East during the Crusades. Still echoing the eighteenth-century contempt for non-European music, a marked Euro-centrist musicological penchant reacted to the “Arabian Influence” thesis in a variety of ways, ranging from vehement rejection of any influence whatsoever to disregard of the topic as if the question itself were not legitimate. These reactions form an interesting chapter in the recent historiography of Western music.

There is little question that the most knowledgeable and effective advocate of the “Arabian Influence” thesis was Henry George Farmer. For some fifty years, from 1915 until he died in 1965, Farmer flooded the musicological literature with studies of Arabic music and its contribution to Western music. His most cogent arguments are found in the book Historical Facts for the Arabian Musical Influence. He amassed a wealth of information which he presented as facts “proving” the Arabic influence on medieval European music. He drew up an impressively long list of musical instruments of Eastern origin which found their way to Europe, followed by an even longer list of Latin, French, Spanish, and English words relating to music, of Arabic origin.

Many of Farmer’s interpretations make good sense. Others are open to question. From a distance of six decades, Farmer still impresses with his powerful, often insightful advocacy of the “Arabian Influence” thesis. Obvious strengths of his writings are their grounding in medieval Arabic written sources of music theory, and their coverage of pertinent Latin


3 Hucke rejects Idelsohn’s view that Gregorian chant derives from Jewish tradition (Abraham Z. Idelsohn, “Parallelen zwischen gregorianischen und hebräisch-orientalischen Gesangweisen,” Zeitschrift für Musikwissenschaft 4 [1921/2], 515–24) and claims that “The forms of Western chant were developed in the West, even if they were sometimes stimulated from the Orient” (Helmut Hucke, “Toward a New Historical View of Gregorian Chant,” Journal of the American Musicological Society 33 [1981]: 439).

4 The book grew out of an extended scholarly argument between Farmer and Kathleen Schlesinger, who in her “Is European Music Theory Indebted to the Arabs?” sought to rebut Farmer’s “Clues for the Arabian Influence.”
sources. But, for all his usual caution, his strong convictions sometimes led him to read more into the evidence than was warranted. Indeed, some of his less credible "facts" seem to result from excessive zeal to show derivations at all cost. Despite his diligent spade-work and sharp intuition, Farmer's writings remain the work of a maverick who failed to leave an indelible mark on medieval musical scholarship. In order to have argued his thesis more convincingly, Farmer would have had to construct his arguments on information and methodology which were not fully available to him. In my opinion they are not available even today. Reviewing the voluminous literature on the thesis leads one to the conclusion that most attempts to assess Eastern influences on medieval European music—however interesting and ingenious they may be—stumble over one or more obstacles. The following are the most troublesome issues that must be sorted out prior to meaningful investigation of the topic:

1) The lack of sufficient knowledge about non-learned music traditions. This aspect of medieval music is of crucial importance to our subject, as it was very likely a meeting ground for oriental and occidental musicians in the Middle Ages. The concept of medieval European music as part of an essentially oral culture is largely undefined, and many questions remain unanswered, including the nature and role of improvisation in medieval musical practice, the applicability of the modal system in that musical culture, and the relationship between music theory and practice.

2) The lack of sufficient understanding about important aspects of Arabic music in general and its medieval theoretical and practical features in particular. A prime example is the concept of maqâm, which, for all its centrality in Arabic music, remains a controversial topic even among specialists.

3) The methodological difficulty of dealing with oral musical practices, Eastern and European, which took place a millennium ago. To what extent can the extant written medieval musical repertory, cultivated by the Church and the upper classes, be taken to reflect non-learned oral practices? How much similarity can be conjectured between contemporary Eastern musics and their medieval predecessors? Without means to overcome these methodological obstacles, the "Arabian Influence" question remains largely moot.
4) The absence of a comprehensive theory of the musical influence of one culture on another. For all the progress made in recent years in acculturation studies, they fail to provide firm guidelines for understanding what happens when two cultures come into contact. Ethnomusicologists have studied many isolated cases of music acculturation, mostly relating to specific situations in well-defined non-European and non-Western locales. Historians of Western music, however, have rarely availed themselves of either general tentative theories of acculturation, or specific ethnomusicological findings as tools for understanding musical European processes. Thus, no attempt has been made to date to approach the "Arabian Influence" thesis from the standpoint of musical acculturation, although this approach offers a sorely lacking conceptual tool.

Even though definitive answers to these and related questions are presently unavailable, I shall address some of them as a necessary preamble to re-evaluating the "Arabian Influence" thesis.

The starting point for any investigation of the "Arabian Influence" thesis must be the recognition that Eastern music was in the Middle Ages, and still is today, an oral phenomenon. While one could never guess it from reading current textbooks on medieval music, this is also the salient feature of monophonic European music of the same period. As Pirrotta aptly put it, "The music from which we make history, the written tradition of music, may be likened to the visible tip of an iceberg, most of which is submerged and invisible. The visible tip certainly merits our attention, because it is all that remains of the past and because it represents the most consciously elaborated portion, but in our assessments we should always keep in mind the seven-eighths of the iceberg that remain submerged: the music of the unwritten tradition."

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6 Charles Seeger chastised "the majority of musicologists [who] are not primarily interested in music, but in the literature of the European fine art of music, its grammar and syntax (harmony and counterpoint), and have dug neither deeply nor broadly enough even in that rich field to find either oral tradition or folk music, except in some rather superficial aspects" (Charles Seeger, "Oral Tradition in Music," Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend [New York, 1950], 825).

It stands to reason that the submerged seven-eighths of oral musical tradition in medieval Europe is fertile ground for examining possible Eastern influences. Because our only remaining link with it is through the extant manuscripts, we must recognize the strong oral residue in those written documents, and see them as potentially reflecting oral musical practices. Nevertheless, for all its instructiveness and ingenuity, the act of forcing medieval written musical documents to yield information pertinent to vanished oral practices is a research technique of at best limited prospects.

The only other course open to the medieval historian is to study contemporary oral musical practices. This approach rests, of course, on the assumption that the changes in musical practices of the contemporary oral cultures have been small enough to allow meaningful comparisons with the European Middle Ages. This is indeed the course of action advocated, or at least implied, by Schneider, Bukofzer, Anglès, Wiora, Sachs, Harrison, and Apfel, to mention only a few. Justifying this method is the apparent need of oral cultures to preserve their conceptualized knowledge through frequent repetition, which establishes, according to Walter Ong, "a highly traditionalist or conservative set of mind that with good reason inhibits intellectual experimentation." Corroborating this view is Bruno Nettl’s observation that oral cultures, due to their special nature, must depend on certain mnemonic devices such as repetition of melodic and rhythmic units, melodic sequence, predominance of a single tone, drone and parallel polyphony. Alex Lomax agrees and finds that

“musical style appears to be one of the most conservative of cultural traits.”

There are no set criteria for determining the relevance of various contemporary oral cultures to the problem at hand, although geographic proximity and historical links are the more obvious possibilities. Some scholars draw the line for relevant “control groups” within Europe, while others extend the scope to non-European cultures. As for using contemporary Arabic music as a reliable model for medieval Arabic musical practices, several studies indicate sufficient grounds for comparison, provided caution is exercised. Beyond the slow rate of change generally assumed for the musical practices of oral cultures, the tonal materials used in contemporary Arabic music are thought to conform largely to those of medieval Arabic music. Moreover, the writings of medieval Arabic theorists contain important points of contact with contemporary Arabic practices. Al-Farabi (d. 950) and al-Isfahâni (d. 967?), among others, are important theoretical sources for establishing continuity in customs relating to the social functions of music, and even more significantly, for particular improvisatory and ornamental techniques. This is the raison d'être behind experiments such as the “Woche der Begegnung—Musik des Mittelmeerraumes und Musik des Mittelalters,” in which the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis brought together Moroccan professional musicians with Western colleagues specializing in research and performance of me-

14 Such comparative approaches are at least tacitly gaining legitimacy in medieval musical research, as evidenced by, for example, the Round Table “Eastern and Western Concepts of Mode” which took place at the 1977 IMS congress (International Musicological Society: Report of the Twelfth Congress, Berkeley 1977, ed. Daniel Heartz and Bonnie Wade [Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1981], 501–49).
dieval music. At the same time we are cautioned that Arabic music has continuously changed as a result of contact with other cultures, and that the interpretation of medieval Arabic theoretical sources is fraught with difficulties.

Assuming that enough information about medieval Arabic musical practices can be gleaned from the theoretical sources, the researcher must then devise a methodological framework for dealing with the “Arabian Influence” thesis in the context of music acculturation. But there is no universally accepted definition of acculturation, because anthropologists and sociologists constantly shift the emphasis and therefore the meaning of the term. We may start with the 1936 definition put forth in the so-called “Memorandum for the Study of Acculturation”: “Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups.” There is disagreement about the nature of the cultural contact implied in this definition: does it have to be continuous? does it have to be first-hand? In any case, acculturation clearly comprises phenomena such as cultural borrowing, diffusion, assimilation, and rejection. Moreover, the study of acculturation examines the process of change that cultural elements undergo as they are integrated into their new setting. Here we can consult the ethnomusicologists who have studied cases of music acculturation and attempted theoretical summations of this complex question.

Bruno Nettl, in his recent book on the Western impact on world music, enumerates the following factors relevant to the study of the response of the borrowing culture: “general character of a culture, its complexity, geographic proximity to Europe or North America, relative similarity to that of the West; relative complexity and similarity of a musical style and of its system of musical conceptualization, institutions, behavior, transmission processes in relation to the Western [style]; a society’s attitude towards music, towards change and cultural homogeneity; type and length of exposure to Western music.” Mutatis mutandis, these factors are applicable to the “Arabian Influence” thesis.

If there is any one singularly weak area in the voluminous literature on the "Arabian Influence" thesis, it is the treatment of the subject from the standpoint of acculturation—general, or musical, or both. In fact, most writers have not even identified the problems to be addressed. Farmer, for example, assumed that musical influence was proven by establishing etymological links between Arabic and European terms and names, and by tracing the migration of musical instruments from point A to point B. Current ethnomusicological studies show, however, that various reactions to the transplantation of a foreign musical instrument are possible. For example, Persian classical music adopted the Western violin to such an extent that it became its most popular instrument. With the violin came the tuning, playing and bowing styles, pizzicato, vibrato, and other typically Western playing techniques. Nettl observes that "more than his colleagues playing traditional instruments, [the Persian violin player] tends to alter the traditional scales, with their 3/4 and 5/4 tones, in the direction of the closest Western equivalents." In south India, on the other hand, the violin was also taken over, but stripped of its Western techniques. It was made to fit Indian style in playing position, sound production, and all other essential performing aspects. George List cites the adoption of a crude version of the Western fiddle by the Jibaro Indians of the Ecuadorian and Peruvian Amazon as an example of a type of hybridization "which parallels neither indigenous nor European forms."

Even assuming that the physical transfer of Eastern musical instruments to medieval Europe is a proven fact—as indeed it is in many cases—questions arise which Farmer never dealt with. When Europe adopted the Eastern musical instruments, did it also adopt stylistic traits of their indigenous music? and if so, to what degree? How much did European musicians accommodate the Arabic instruments to their own stylistic preferences? Relevant here is Jack Westrup's rebuttal of the claim that the European presence of Eastern instruments shows their influence in the songs of the troubadours and trouvères: "It is not conclusive in itself any more than the French origin of the saxophone has determined the character of the music written for it."

Studying the contact between African and New World Negro musics, Richard Waterman attributed the resultant high degree of syncretism to

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21 Ibid., 47–48.
several musical features of the two cultures. Alan Merriam generalized from this and other case studies and hypothesized that "when two human groups which are in sustained contact have a number of characteristics in common in a particular aspect of culture, exchange of ideas therein will be much more frequent than if the characteristics of those aspects differ markedly from one another." Nearly all subsequent ethnomusicological writings on acculturation have taken this statement as their point of departure. Nettl refined the notion of basic stylistic compatibility as a plausible explanation of musical syncretism by differentiating between the transfer of actual compositions and stylistic features, and speculated that one could possibly be transmitted without the other.

The amount and type of material adopted by a borrowing culture are factors relevant to students of the "Arabian Influence" thesis. Margaret Kartomi argued that "transculturation occurs only when a group of people select for adoption whole new organizing and conceptual or ideological principles—musical and extramusical—as opposed to small, discrete alien traits." But however modest the status and potential cumulative influence of the latter, it should not be neglected, as "the borrowing of single elements is much more frequent than that of trait complexes."

The adoption of a borrowed alien element always entails some degree of change, for that element must be integrated into the borrowing culture. Some scholars argue that the mutation acculturated elements undergo could make their identification more problematic if they belong to the aesthetic rather than the technological sphere. A borrowed technology is "culture transferable" in the sense that the adopting culture tends to change its uses, not the technology itself. On the other hand, "no structural aesthetic element can be effectively transferred to another culture

27 Margaret J. Kartomi, "The Processes and Results of Musical Culture Contact: A Discussion of Terminology and Concepts," *Ethnomusicology* 25 (1981): 244. Kartomi distinguishes between the processes and results of culture contact and advocates the employment of the term transculturation to describe the former.
unless in the process of transference it is adapted to the aesthetic tastes and requirements of the recipients.”

This suggests that even if European medieval music were influenced by Eastern elements, the direct search for the latter in cantigas, troubadour chansons, and other medieval compositions would probably be unproductive. By the same token, the failure to demonstrate specific Eastern motives, melodies, or stylistic features in medieval music may not necessarily stem from their absence, but rather from inadequate methodology.

Analyzing the influence of Islamic culture on medieval Europe, Gibb drew “a fairly clear distinction...between ‘neutral’ borrowings from the Arabic-Islamic culture and the ‘shaded’ influences or adaptations. In the neutral sphere of science and technology, the medieval Catholic world took over everything that it could use. In the intellectual and aesthetic spheres, it is very remarkable that all the elements taken over into western culture prove to be either elements of European origin adopted into the Arabic-Islamic culture, or elements with very close relations in western culture.”

While Gibb’s view is essentially correct, it may be too restrictive in view of the tremendous medieval enthusiasm and sensitivity to color, shape, and texture. According to Schapiro, “there is in western art from the seventh to the thirteenth century an immense receptivity matched in few cultures before that time or even later; early Christian, Byzantine, Sassanian, Coptic, Syrian, Roman, Moslem, Celtic, and pagan Germanic forms were borrowed then, often without regard to their context and meaning.” Schapiro’s telling examples of European adaptations of Arabic objets d’art squarely place this aesthetic preference at the center of medieval mentality. It affirms the “amazing openness of the medieval European mind to borrowings from alien cultures” that Lynn White observed mainly, but not exclusively, in the field of technology. “Europe’s capacity to exploit and elaborate such borrowings far beyond the level achieved in the lands that generated them” is highly suggestive to musicologists contemplating European adaptations of Arabic musical instruments, and even more so of coloristic drone effects turned in the West to structural purposes.

The aesthetic borrowing of medieval Europe from other cultures was not indiscriminate. Europe was oblivious to origin and context of those items whose aesthetic flavor it found compatible with its own. Compatibility in general, and aesthetic compatibility in particular, significantly influ-

31 Ibid., 166–67.
ence the extent of acculturation. It seems to me that a well-made case for the basic compatibility between Western and Eastern musics in the Middle Ages could prove useful to investigators of the "Arabian Influence" thesis.

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Middle Eastern musical tradition was recently delineated by the following characteristics, common to all regional dialects: "The vocal component predominates over the instrumental; the musician is both a composer and a performer; there are no time limits and no fixed program in the performance; rather the performance is a display of soloist virtuosity and the performer is permitted, and indeed encouraged, to improvise spontaneously; in this he is helped by the continuous interplay between himself and a limited, often intimate audience, which confronts him directly, without any formal barriers; the music is orally transmitted."34

All these points describe central features of medieval music, Eastern as well as Western. Apart from possible historical influences, the striking similarity in basic musical attitudes of these musics stems above all from their orality. A comparison of passages from al-Fārābī and al-İsfahānī with the socio-musical behavior of contemporary Middle Eastern audiences points to a continuity of customs, such as shouting words of praise and requests for popular songs.35 No comparable theoretical evidence exists for medieval Europe before the thirteenth century, due to the inferior status of low class music and its itinerant performers. But the musical treatises of Johannes de Grocheo and Hieronymous de Moravia document a dramatic change in attitude towards secular music and dancing. Grocheo’s novel “sociological” division of musical genres and Moravia’s detailed viella tunings intended for playing secular music reflect the newly acquired prestige of low class genres, which seem to have newly enjoyed great popularity. Henri Bate’s musical reminiscences of his student days in Paris (ca. 1266–70) provide but one example of numerous literary references attesting to the great predilection for popular music, and the distinctly informal nature of performer-audience rapport.36

36 For information on informal music making in medieval Europe, see Walter Salmen, Der fahrende Musiker im europäischen Mittelalter (Kassel: Hinnenthal, 1960). The relevant passage from Bate’s treatise Nativitas magistri Henrici Mechliniensis appears in Christopher Page, Voices and Instruments of the Middle Ages: Instrumental Practice and Songs in France 1100–1300 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986), 59–60.
ers tailor their renditions to the specific audience they confront by improvising verbally and musically pertinent changes. Capturing the attention and participation of the audience is essential. According to Ong, "in oral cultures an audience must be brought to respond, often vigorously."\(^{37}\)

As to the orality of musical contents, the fact that medieval monophony was written down does not necessarily make it a product of literate culture. Rather, numerous written-out chants and secular songs have the earmarks of documented performances. The constraints oral culture imposed on the performer in the musical traditions under discussion here may be elucidated by assessing the role of melodic formulas in medieval Western and contemporaneous Eastern musics.

It has long been recognized that melodic formulas are found in a great deal of medieval monophony. But the formulaic phenomenon is not generally viewed from the performer’s side, and its importance as an aid to a unified composition-performance act, as well as its function in a given piece, may therefore be missed. The positioning of formulas is most often syntactically oriented. Analyzing the nearly 300 extant troubadour melodies, Halperin isolated 130 recurrent formulas: 56 are employed at the openings of 60 percent of all phrases, 41 final formulas are found in almost 70 percent of the phrases, and 33 internal formulas appear in 39 percent of the phrases.\(^{38}\)

These initial, internal and final formulas are often linked together by ascending or descending seconds. A typical pattern of phrase structure in a troubadour chanson is constructed from an initial formula, one or two internal formulas, and a cadential formula. Nevertheless, the resulting music is far from being a mechanical stringing together of formulaic clichés, and at their best troubadour melodies display great flexibility and variety in their formulaic application.

The formulaic phenomenon has been studied extensively in the realm of plainchant, especially by Peter Wagner, Paolo Ferretti, and Willi Apel.\(^{39}\)

All three scholars interpreted the phenomenon according to a theory of centonization. As in the Jewish Té’amim, practiced to this day, from which centonization technique in Christian chant is possibly derived, the formulaic phenomenon makes great sense from a practical point of view:

\(^{37}\) Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 42.


the purpose of centonization is “to facilitate the task of the singer by reducing the melodies to a limited fund of formulae that can be memo-
rized and applied according to the requirements of the texts.” The tracts
of the eighth mode are “a perfect example of centonization, a unified
aggregate of eight elements variously selected and combined.”

Faulting centonization theory for its static approach, Treitler urged an
alternate view, taking as his starting point the dynamic, “inexorable forward
movement of the process” of oral composition. The idea of a fixed “fro-
zen” collection of pitches and durations that the literate mind is in the
habit of identifying as a specific “piece” is foreign to the musical conception
of the oral mind. Rather than reproducing a totally preconceived opus
committed whole to memory, a singer in oral tradition literally constructs
the song, creating it as he performs. He is guided in this creative process
by a “formulaic system,” a pattern of the general direction the melody is
to follow, with strategic points outlined along the way. Formulas, on the
other hand, are stereotyped melodic figures which gradually crystallized
through repeated performances guided by a formulaic system. As already
observed in the case of troubadour melodies, formulas tend to be context-
bound and are especially expedient at strategically important melodic
points, above all at beginnings and endings of phrases.

Once the general melodic configuration of a chant, outlined and
signposted by structural tones (initium, flexa, mediatio, terminatio), is known
to the singer, he can proceed to pad out the melodic skeleton with
formulas whose last (i.e., central) tones fit those of the melodic outline.
That this is a realistic description of the process of musical reproduction
under the constraints of oral music making may be seen not only by
analysis of plainchant, but, more instructively, by observing living Middle
Eastern traditions. The musical practice of the Christian Arabs is of par-
ticular interest here because it comprises stylistic traits of both the Byzan-
tine Church and Arabic music based on the maqāmāt. Analysis of recorded

40 Apel, Gregorian Chant, 316.
41 Leo Treitler, “Centonate’ Chant: Übres Flickwerk or E pluribus unus?” Journal of the
42 For a detailed exposition, see Leo Treitler “Homer and Gregory: The Transmission
about several stages in a process leading from a formulaic system to a relatively stable
song. These would include the gradual formation of stereotyped melodic formulaic families,
and later of specific formulas; the association of certain formulas with particular syntactical
melodic functions; the growing tendency of some formulas to become contiguous and
appear together in pairs or even in larger aggregates; and finally, the “settling down” of
these elements together with the brief intervallic links connecting them into a permanent
shape, a song having a specific musical identity. Variants among different renditions of
the song will depend on the stylistic latitude permitted in the musical culture in question.
performances of Christian-Arab music reveals not only the centrality of melodic formulas, but also their largely fixed position in the melody. Some formulas are "mobile," however, and can be employed in different contextual positions. Of special interest is the "Resurrection Hymn" in the third lahan (i.e., mode-maqâm) as rendered by nineteen different singers. While no two performers position all ten formulas of this melody in the same way, the differences do not seriously affect the melodic contour. This is because the variations involve mainly formulas ending on the same tones, making them capable of fulfilling identical functions. Even more telling is the finding that in repeated performance some informants interchange the position of several formulas. Here, too, mostly formulas ending on the same tone are interchanged, indicating that what is important is not the formula per se, but the function it fulfills in the melodic pattern.

Melodic pattern, then, is the key concept in the three oral repertories surveyed. This conclusion fully agrees with Lord's account of the training of oral epic singers in twentieth-century Yugoslavia:

Although it may seem that the more important part of the singer's training is the learning of formulas from other singers, I believe that the really significant element in the process is rather the setting up of various patterns that make adjustment of phrase and creation of phrases by analogy possible. This will be the whole basis of his art. Were he merely to learn the phrases and lines from his predecessors, acquiring thus a stock of them, which he would then shuffle about and mechanically put together in juxtaposition as inviolable, fixed units, he would, I am convinced, never become a singer. He must make his feeling for the patterning of lines, which he has absorbed earlier, specific with actual phrases and lines, and by the necessity of performance learn to adjust what he hears and what he wants to say to these patterns. If he does not learn to do this, no matter how many phrases he may know from his elders, he cannot sing. 44

44 Lord, The Singer of Tales, 37.
The overriding importance of pattern over detail partially explains variants among concordances in the medieval monophonic repertory. It also provides a bridge with the compatible attitudes towards the composition, performance, and transmission of Eastern music. The skeletal tones of which melodic patterns are created reflect the infrastructures that organize the tonal material available to the performer. These infrastructures, in our case, are the modes and the maqāmāt, two systems that have long resisted satisfactory explanation, let alone definition. Difficulties compound when mode and maqām are approached from a performance-oriented rather than from a purely theoretical viewpoint. The general Western tendency to interpret modes as scales was adopted by Middle Eastern music theorists as a model for classifying the bewildering assortment of maqāmāt. This, however, has had the unfortunate result of slighting, and even disregarding, central maqām features other than scalar construction. It is ironic that the contemporary Eastern movement away from its real nature towards a scalar interpretation of the maqāmāt, coincided with the growing Western tendency to interpret the medieval modes as melodic types rather than mere scale formations. Harold Powers’s suggestion to locate modal phenomena on a continuum spanning the poles of “particularized scale” and “generalized tune” may profitably be applied to an analysis of medieval modal conception and its compatibility with essential traits of the maqām phenomenon.

In his mid-ninth-century Musica disciplina, Aurelian of Réôme discusses the various modes in terms of their melodic formulas. The syllables attached to these formulas (ANNANO, NOEANE, NONANNOEANE, etc.) are derived from the enēchemata, the Byzantine intonation formulas of the oktōchos. They also appear in the same context in other medieval treatises, among them the De harmonia institutione of Regino of Prūm and the later, probably tenth-century Comemoratio brevis whose author writes that “NOANE are not words signifying anything but syllables suitable for study-

45 Although I am concerned in this article mainly with medieval monophony, the tenaciousness of orality in written and even literate culture (Ong, Orality and Literacy, 115) should explain the pertinence of musical traits observed here in monophonic genres to the polyphonic repertory. In addition to melodic formulas, rhythmic modes, various isorhythmic constructions and formes fixes are obvious manifestations of the central position of schemata in medieval music. The drawings of Villard de Honnecourt (ca. 1240), among others, should remind us that schema is a pervasive phenomenon, indeed an ingrained habit, of medieval mentality.

46 For a report on the 1932 Cairo Congress on Arabic music, see Recueil des Travaux du Congrès de Musique Arabe (Cairo, 1934).


ing melody (investigandam melodiam)."49

The seemingly meaningless NOEANE syllables bear striking resemblance to the "nonsense" syllables employed by Samaritans in their singing to this day.50 The Samaritans' jealous guarding of their ancient traditions makes this link with the formative oral stage of Western chant all the more plausible and intriguing.

Hucbald also mentions the NOEANE syllables in his De harmonica institutione and applies Greek letters to the neumes in an attempt to fix their pitches. He intends the neumes and the letter-named pitches to remain joined, apparently "because then the subtle instructions to the performer embodied in neumes, intimating duration, tempo, tremulant or normal voice, grouping or separations of notes, and certain intonation of cadences are preserved."51 Hucbald's position reflects a crucial turning point. His desire to preserve the neumes and all they signify reflects strong ties with Eastern, especially Byzantine origins. His efforts to establish clear tetrachordal structures and to determine their intervallic makeup clearly indicate a move away from the melody-type pole of the modal continuum towards a scalar system with its rational classification of chant melodies. The developing notational system allowed new chants to be composed that were less dependent on the Eastern formulaic procedures and more keyed to the tonal selection of the diatonic modes.

It must be remembered that the modal system emerged amidst attempts to impose a theoretical framework upon an existing repertory of chants formed according to melodic principles at variance with those of the new theory. For all the theorists' ingenious strategies, the resultant chant theory never managed to cover all cases. The persistent efforts of Carolingian theorists to modify problematic chants—especially through transposition—significantly narrowed the gap between practice and theory; but many inconsistencies and modal ambiguities remained, mainly in conflicting modal assignments of the same chants.52

The struggle to accommodate ex post facto the existing plainchant melodies to the forming Western theory, which was itself replete with


51 Palisca, Hucbald, Guido, and John, 10.

52 Apel, Gregorian Chant, 166–78; Powers, "Mode," 382–84.
Byzantine elements, is a fascinating case study in music acculturation. It is also an index of the increasing severance from Eastern roots of the developing theoretical framework which was to inform Western music for centuries to come.

If the modal system fails to explain plainchant practice comprehensively, its application to the troubadour and trouvére repertories further exposes its inadequacy. Attempting to account for the plethora of discrepancies between concordant trouvére melodies, Hendrik Van der Werf posited the crucial position of the interval of the third, using it as a common denominator for grouping the Mixolydian, Lydian, and Ionian modes under "medieval major" scale types, and the Dorian, Phrygian and Aeolian modes under "medieval minor" scale types. Halperin's analysis of the entire trouvére repertory showed a distinct preference for the major mode; Ernest Sanders repeatedly emphasized the strong English predilection for the interval of the third in general, and for the major mode in particular; and Curt Sachs long ago urged us "to get rid of our modal obsession" and pointed to "The Road to Major." In addition to locating many major melodies, a recent modal analysis of the Cantigas de Santa Maria came up against melodies that resisted rational explanation in terms of contemporary modal theory. These studies strongly corroborate Johannes de Grocheo's statement that secular music does not follow the rules of the ecclesiastical modes. Nor is Grocheo the only medieval theorist to insist that secular music does not obey the strictures of the modal system. At the end of his Tractatus de musica, Jerome of Moravia describes three alternate tunings for the viella. While the first "encompasses the material of all the modes," the second "is necessary for secular and all other kinds of songs, especially irregular ones, which frequently wish to run through the whole [Guidonian] hand." It is not surprising that no medieval instrumental music spanning the range of two octaves and a

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55 Gerardo V. Huseby, "The 'Cantigas de Santa Maria' and the Medieval Theory of Mode" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1983), 270–89.

56 "Non enim per tonum cognoscimus cantum vulgarem, puta cantilenam ductiam, stantipedem.... Dico etiam cantum ecclesiasticum, ut excludantur cantus publicus et praeceps mensuratus, qui tonis non subiciuntur" (Ernst Rohloff, Der Musiktraktat des Johannes de Croceho [Leipzig: Reinecke, 1943], 60).

57 "vim modorum omnium comprehendit" (trans. Page, Voices and Instruments, 64).

58 "necessarius est propter laycos et omnes alios cantus, maxime irregulares, qui frequenter per totam manum discurrere volunt" (ibid., 64–65).
sixth has been preserved, since that repertory was most likely improvisatory in nature and drew on oral musical idioms. While Jerome's secular genres are irregular because of their excessive range, an anonymous fourteenth-century treatise speaks of "irregular music [which] is called rustic or layman's music...in that it observes neither modes nor rules."\(^{59}\)

It stands to reason that medieval secular monophony would exhibit considerable deviation from the theoretical mainstream, not being nearly as tightly grounded in modal theory as plainchant and by nature more receptive to external influences. Numerous discrepancies between concordant troubadour and trouboue melodies involve $B$ versus $B\flat$, $F$ versus $F\#$, and $C$ versus $C\#$. Could these possibly be the only notational solutions the diatonic system afforded the scribes who, in fact, attempted to record tones located between these intervals? In other words, "did the scales used for the melodies of the troubadours and trouvères contain some intervals that were larger than a minor second but smaller than a major second?"\(^{60}\)

The theorists clearly document that microtonal intervals were an integral part of the tonal materials used in the early stages of plainchant. Early neumatic notation, intended as a mnemonic aid outlining melodic direction rather than discrete pitches, was ideally suited to the Eastern-derived portamento performance of chant. The diastematic neumes, developed in the quest to fix the notation of individual pitches, contradict in principle the *in campo aperto* nature of earlier notation. Looked at from the angle of future Western development, they certainly represent an important breakthrough. But the ability to notate well-defined pitches was gained at the expense of the ability to notate the very melodic qualities cherished in the East. Guido d'Arrezzo teaches us that the new notational developments reflected changing aesthetic preferences. He writes at the end of chapter 15 of his *Micrologus*: "At many points notes 'liquesce,' like the liquid letters, so that the interval from one note to another is begun with a smooth glide and does not appear to have a stopping place en route.... If you wish to perform the note more fully and not make it liquesce, no harm is done; indeed, it is often more pleasing."\(^{61}\)

In the interim period when liquescence and other ornaments were still practiced but had to be notated diastematically, scribes faced a "notational crisis" typical of periods of stylistic change, but in reverse. The new


\(^{60}\) Van der Werf, *Chansons of the Troubadours and Trouvères*, 57.

\(^{61}\) Palisca, *Hucbald, Guido, and John*, 72–73.
notational system was inappropriate for certain melodic turns previously covered by neumes such as the salicus, oriscus, trigon, and quilisma. The notational decisions scribes were forced to make compromised musical reality, whether they wrote down E or F, for what they lacked was a means to notate the indeterminate pitches they heard in between. Numerous variants among concordant chant sources can be shown to stem from such notational constraints. The eleventh-century tonary of Mass chants from Dijon (MS Montpellier H 159) is particularly revealing. A comparison between its nondiastematic neumes and the letter notation inserted directly under them show how special signs had to be used in the latter to indicate microtonal situations in the former.

The eight estampies and the saltarello from Lo (London, British Library, Additional 29987) differ markedly in their melodic style and phrase structure from all other known fourteenth-century music, and at the same time show a strong affinity to certain Middle Eastern genres. McGee finds a close resemblance between the tonal structure of Ghaetta and Chominciamento di Gioia and that of the Turkish ritornello form peşrev. The manner and order in which these medieval pieces gradually unveil their structural pitches show their close association with the Turkish maqamât rast and uzzal, respectively. Other elements in the two pieces bear striking resemblance to Middle Eastern idioms, including the unusually long (for Western music) and asymmetrical phrase structure, and a particular kind of pervading sequential patterning typical of Middle Eastern taqsim improvisations on the ād (example 1).

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64 Timothy McGee, “Eastern Influences in Medieval European Dances,” in Falck and Rice, eds., *Cross Cultural Perspectives on Music*, 79–100. The area comprising modern Turkey participated in regional political developments long before the fall of Constantinople in 1453. Likewise, Turkey partook in Middle Eastern culture from the time of its conversion to Islam in the tenth century and throughout the rule of Seljuk and Ottoman dynasties. During these centuries, linguistic, poetic, and literary influences of Arabic and Persian origin found their way into Turkish culture, as have the musical components of what was referred to above as the Great Tradition. The still dominant instrumental form peşrev is considered to be “especially old” and is ascribed to Sultan Veled (1226–1312). See Kurt Reinhard, “Turkey,” *New Grove Dictionary of Music* (1980) 19:268.
65 The equivalent Arabic maqamât are mutlaq fi majra al-wusta and khinsir fi majra al-binsir.
66 For the music see McGee, “Eastern Influences,” 81–88. The taqsim from which the musical examples are taken was performed in Tel-Aviv on 17 July 1988 by Mr. Taşsır Elias. I would like to take this opportunity to thank him for his kind assistance. For additional
Example 1. A comparison of melodic sequences from the medieval European Ghaetta and Chominciamento di gioia with sequences from a contemporary Eastern Taqsim.

These nine instrumental pieces of Lo can in no way be explained as indigenous European music. Their distinctly Eastern character is easily discernible. If these estampies are indeed of Eastern origin, it is likely that their Italian scribe—in his attempt to write them down—introduced examples of similar sequences in taqsim see Bruno Nettl and Ronald Riddle, “Taqsim Nahawand: A Study of Sixteen Performances by Jihad Racy,” Yearbook of the International Music Council 5 (1973): 31–33, 37–89. For similar sequences in a peşrev, see Karl L. Signell, Makam: Modal Practice in Turkish Music (Seattle: Asian Music Publications, 1977), 93–94 et passim.

67 Criticizing the “modern Arab manner” of some recorded performances of these estampies, Frederick Crane rates the probability of their fourteenth-century performance in that style “near zero” (“On Performing the Lo estampies,” Early Music 7 [1979]: 31).
some formal modification better to mold them to the formal require-
ments of the estampie. In addition, he probably changed some notes for
the closest substitutes he could find in the notational system at his dis-
posal.68 Alternately, these instrumental pieces could be original Western
imitations of Eastern models, but this seems less likely on stylistic grounds.
We may note that the estampie is among the secular forms Grocheo
specifically cites as not following the modal system. In either case, we are
afforded a rare glimpse of a case of fourteenth-century musical accultura-
tion involving the transfer of entire pieces, or of salient stylistic traits.

The foregoing discussion of indeterminate intervals in both sacred
and secular repertories of medieval monophony suggests that intervals
smaller than a minor second, and intervals lying between a minor and
major second, were part of the European soundscape throughout the
Middle Ages. It is difficult to assess how widespread the microtonal phe-
nomenon was, partly because it could not have been recorded in conven-
tional notation, and was probably confined to popular genres which were
almost never written down.69 The partial coverage by the modal system of
extant medieval monophony, the strong tendency to formulaic construc-
tion, and the evidence of microtonal intervals add up to a stylistic stance
that has important compatibility with Eastern music, especially as revealed
in the maqām phenomenon. I shall restrict the following discussion to
points amplifying the maqām’s compatibility with genres of medieval
monophony.

Microtonality has been one of the most striking and constant charac-
teristics of maqāmāt throughout the centuries. Medieval Arabic theorists
may present the scalar formations of various maqāmāt in different, even
conflicting ways, but they all agree about their microtonality.70 For ex-
ample, Safi-al-Dīn (d. 1292), the founder of the so-called Systematist school
of music theory, divides the 9:8 whole tone of 204 cents into two equal

68 Interestingly, this very solution can be observed even today in Rumanian music,
where surviving Turkish influences calling for microtonal performance are compromised
when performed on European instruments tuned to the tempered scale. See Robert Grafias,
“Survivals of Turkish Characteristics in Romanian Musica Lautareasca,” Yearbook for Tradi-

69 Although it occurs in the context of discussing polyphonic music, Marchettus de
Padua’s curious argument in his Lucidarium for dividing the whole tone into five parts
gives some indication that the idea was conceivable to him in the realm of musical
practice. See Jan W. Herlirger, ed., The Lucidarium of Marchetto of Padua (Chicago: Univer-

70 For the theoretical systems developed by Arabic medieval theorists, see Liberty
limmas of ninety cents and a comma of twenty-four cents. His normal
division of the octave is into two conjunct tetrachords and a whole tone,
or into one tetrachord and a conjunct pentachord. The two-tetrachord
method, with its resultant seventeen-tone division, is schematized in figure
1.71

Figure 1.

G A♭ A♯ A♭♭ B♭ B♯ B c d♭ d♯ d e♭ e♯ e f f♯ g

Since musical practice and not abstract theory concerns us here, we
must note that the degree to which Safi-al-Din’s three theoretical treatises
reflect musical practice is uncertain, “since they result from passing the
raw material of practice through a filter of theoretical presuppositions
about the nature of consonance.”72 The exact relationship between theory
and practice has been scantily explored in contemporary Arabic music as
well, but comparisons of medieval Arabic theory and current practices
indicate that “most of the tones used by the contemporary musicians are
identical or accord very closely with those of the classical theorists.”73

Contemporary Arabic theory divides the octave into twenty-four equal
parts, out of which the actual intervals in the various maqām scales are
formed. We will focus on the combinations of two quarter tones (minor
second), and four quarter tones (major second). The tetrachord (jins) has
been the basic scalar formation of Arabic theory from its earliest stages to
the present.74 Figure 2 shows the identity of the tetrachords of medieval
modes and the tetrachords of maqāmāt that use only major and minor sec-

Figure 2.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ajam} & \quad = \quad 1 - 1 - \frac{1}{2} = \text{Mixolydian} \\
\text{Nahawand} & \quad = \quad 1 - \frac{1}{2} - 1 = \text{Dorian} \\
\text{Kurd} & \quad = \quad \frac{1}{2} - 1 - 1 = \text{Phrygian}
\end{align*}
\]

72 Ibid., 2.
73 al-Faruqi, “Musical Art of Islamic Culture,” 77.
While the intervallic demonstration of basic diatonic alliance between elements of medieval modes and maqāmāt is revealing, the compatibility of the two systems can be shown to be more profound yet. Earlier, we discussed the functioning of the modal system in the context of oral musical culture, and the roles played by composition-performance patterns, formulaic systems, and melodic formulas. We now need to apply this approach to the maqām system.

The term maqām variously refers to a particular scale, to that scale plus its central tones, or according to some, to the latter and characteristic melodic formulas. The precise relationship between a maqām and the taqsim based on it is more troublesome yet. The perennial argument over the alleged presence of melodic motives or formulas, either typifying specific maqāmāt or changeable among them, tends to confound the subject even more and to steer it away from what I take to be its central issues.

In addition to its ambitus and tetrachordal arrangement, the maqām is further defined by a tonic (qarār), a “dominant” (ghammāz, often, but not always, a fifth above the tonic), a starting tone (mabdā), a “leading tone” (zahir), and tones of secondary importance (marakiz). The strong functional nature of these tonal degrees attenuates the scalar notion of the maqām and underlines its essence as a structural model to be realized. Linking the various tonal stations of the maqām during its musical realization, the performer follows the uslūb (“method”), a procedure for melodic progression through its structure. The term sayr al amal (“progress of the work”), and indeed the very term tariqah (way, road), synonymous with maqām, clearly indicate the prescriptive nature intended: in order to create a taqsim (an instrumental improvisation-composition), the performer follows a musical plan for actualizing the structural tonal ingredients latent in the maqām. (There are no equivalent durational requirements; the rhythmic-temporal aspect of the taqsim is entirely free and may be shaped according to the wishes of the performer.)

The elements to be realized in a taqsim can be summarized as follows: (1) A taqsim is made up of several segments clearly marked off by silences (Waqfāt). (2) A segment is a melodic passage controlled by one of the tones central to the maqām on which the taqsim is based. (3) A central tone has “satellite” tones of secondary importance to which the performer may temporarily digress. (4) The taqsim player usually presents the segments

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75 al-Faruqi, “Musical Art of Islamic Culture,” 100.
76 For an interesting attempt to shed light on the enigmatic “borrowed notes” in ancient Greek theory (i.e., notes that digress from their assigned tonos) by correlating them with the living practices of Turkish and Persian music, see Nancy Sultan, “New Light on the Function of ‘Borrowed Notes’ in Ancient Greek Music: A Look at Islamic Parallels,” Journal of Musicology 7 (1988): 387-98.
in a gradually ascending order, reaches a peak, and descends to the main tonal center. (5) This gradual exposition of central maqâm tones is worked out within the framework of the ajnâs in a way designed to bring out their typical tetrachordal structure.\(^{77}\)

This scheme suffices to demonstrate a major point: under the constraints of oral performance-composition, the Arabic musician playing a taqsim certainly does not “freely improvise”; nor does he improvise on the basis of some vague procedures. On the contrary, he is following a tightly structured pattern, binding in its general plan. The instrumentalist enjoys considerable flexibility within the overall indispensable framework. For example, he may decide the number, length, and complexity of segments, whether to modulate temporarily to another maqâm, and if so, to which one and for how long.

Nettl and Riddle studied sixteen taqsim on maqâm Nahawand and posited “the existence of certain principles that are characteristic in the macrocosm and the microcosm of performances, and at points between these extremes. In certain parameters or elements of music, the performer carries out the same kind of musical thinking in bits of melody hardly more than a second in length, in longer segments of melody, in sections, and in entire taqsim. The structural integrity of these improvisations is thus considerable, and we again learn that in those cultures in which improvisation plays a major role, it provides freedom for the musician to invent only within a rigorous and tightly-knit system of structural principles.”\(^ {78}\)

In order to be able to play a taqsim, a young performer must acquire the skill of breathing musical life into the overall formal pattern. He applies to that pattern his familiarity with the structural tones of the maqâmât and their tetrachordal arrangements, initially creating short, relatively simple taqsim that satisfy the minimum requirements of the general pattern. Gradually he tries more daring performances, weaving a complex net of subsidiary tonal relations, venturing farther from the main route but never losing sight of its structural signposts. His musical predilections will eventually stabilize into an individual style. It is likely

\(^{77}\) Touma minutely analyzed taqsim on maqâm Bayati and graphed them second by second. According to him, the various phases are organized in larger sections he called anfâs. A nafas may contain one or more phases. His analysis stresses the central tones of the maqâm scale and disregards tetrachordal structures. Habib Hassan Touma, Maqam Bayati in the Arabian Taqsim: A Study in the Phenomenology of the Maqam (International Monograph Publishers, 1975).

\(^{78}\) Nettl and Riddle, “Taqsim Nahawand,” 29.
that certain melodic turns and short motives heard elsewhere, or origi­
nated with him, will become part of his personal vocabulary and appear
from time to time in his performances of taqāsim. Some of these melodic
formulas probably originate in the idiomatic language of the performer’s
instrument: for example, the figures shown in example 2 are melodic
clichés associated with ād and qānūn, but not with nāy performances.79
Other melodic, rhythmic, or melodic-rhythmic motives may occur and
contribute to the typically repetitive nature (takarrur) of the taqāsim. Their
individual profile is usually rather low as they are not intended to tran­
scend their cliché quality. It is their very nondescript profile which renders
them so useful to the performer-improviser by providing him with the
handy, tiny flexible tonal aggregates he needs at his fingertips to propel
the performance forward. Despite the definite presence of these formu­
las, the taqāsim cannot be explained as a process of centonization. Idelsohn’s
interpretation, as well as its numerous echoes, correctly identified the
presence of formulas in taqāsim, but misinterpreted their role.80 Formulas
of various kinds may indeed be part of a taqāsim; their raison d’être is ex­
plained by the improvisatory nature of the performance. As far as the
structural pattern of the taqāsim is concerned, formulas fulfill an inciden­tal and not a salient function.

79 Interestingly, example 2b appears in al-Fārābī’s Kitāb al Mūsiqī al Kabīr (ed. Ghattas
Abd-el-Malek Khashaba and Mahmoud Ahmed el Hefny [Cairo, 1967], 972) in his discus­
sion of various melodic patterns. Translated in al-Faruqi, “Musical Art of Islamic Culture,”
430. This figure also appears in the taqāsim notated in Nettl and Riddle, “Taqāsim Nahawand,”
41.
80 Abraham Z. Idelsohn, Jewish Music in Its Historical Development (New York: H. Holt &
The instrumental improvisation-performance of the *taqsim* has an exact vocal counterpart in the popular *layāli*. The *qasidah* is another related vocal type based on classical Arabic poetry. The centrality of pattern in these essentially improvisational genres, and the operational procedures followed in their realization, must have been of great interest to European oral performers who were working with similar techniques. Moreover, Western musicians found a broad aesthetic common denominator with Eastern music; after all, meandering, unpredictable melodies often made up of loosely defined motivic cells are eminently present in both plainchant and secular monophony. This melismatic, essentially nondirectional, nondevelopmental style has been often traced back to Eastern origins. Like so much Eastern music, ornamentation in this medieval style is the very essence of melody and not an optional feature. Alongside these prominent Eastern tendencies, European musicians gradually evolved a different melodic style marked by clear tonal teleology. Goal-directed melodies exhibiting this trend evince symmetrical, often antecedent-consequent phrase construction, and utilize the tetrachord-pentachord division of the modal octave to their structural advantage. Ernest Sanders clearly demonstrated the carefully planned and well balanced phrase structure of cantilenas and early motets. Moreover, it was his particular achievement to have defined and set in historical perspective the special concern for tonal unity which marks thirteenth- and fourteenth-century English polyphony.

When combined in a centonate fashion, predetermined melodic aggregates yield brief transitory directionality, but this procedure limits the options for tonal combinations that would enhance overall organization. Thus, the development of long-range tonal articulation required breaking precompositional units into discrete components. Syllabic melodic passages, especially when further delineated by measured rhythm, better define individual tones and enhance tonal directionality more effectively than melismatic unmeasured passages. Viewed from this angle, texting the upper voices of discant clausulae contributed to a better tonal defini-

81 Leo Treitler, "Musical Syntax in the Middle Ages: Background to an Aesthetic Problem," *Perspectives of New Music* 4 (1965): 75–85.
83 Dalia Cohen, "‘Separation’ and ‘Directivity’ as Guiding Principles in the Comparison between Eastern and Western Music," *Proceedings of the World Congress on Jewish Music* (Tel-Aviv, 1982), 147.
tion of the incipient motet. Likewise, Garlandia's description of copula as falling "between discant and organum"\(^8^4\) underlines the gradual shift from the unmeasured, essentially nondirectional organum, through the symmetrical, antecedent-consequent structure of the copula, with its modally rhythmic upper voice and unmeasured lower voice, to the discant where both voices are modally rhythmicized. Compositions mixing organal, copula, and discant styles are therefore transitional pieces, combining old and new tendencies within the same work.\(^8^5\) A good deal of thirteenth-century theoretical activity can be seen as efforts to define and regulate the implications inherent in the new tendencies. Franco of Cologne, for example, in his *Ars cantus mensurabilis*, attempted to wrest individual durations from their context-bound rhythmic modes by assigning them individual notational symbols.

At this juncture in the evolution of Western musical styles, melodic and rhythmic formulas, melismatic delivery, and improvisational approaches must have become stylistic liabilities rather than assets. The further European music proceeded along the path of long-range tonal planning, the less it needed those Eastern stylistic traits that had served it for centuries. The stylistic transition was neither quick nor straightforward. Old and new tendencies lived side by side for centuries. They are found in the same genres, mixed in the same manuscripts, even within the same pieces. Goal-directed motion is present in Alleluia melismas,\(^8^6\) in the ouvert-clos structure of many a troubadour and trouvère chanson, and very clearly in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*. On the other hand, strong residues of Eastern practices are not hard to detect even in fourteenth-century polyphony. The main reason why thirteenth-century theorists were apparently not interested in translating al-Farabi's *Kitāb al-Mūsīqī al Kaβrwas* that they no longer found its practical stylistic discussion expedient for their

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85 Ernest Sanders noted that "even the three sources of the *Magnus liber* available to us all still contain passages whose notation is so unpatterned, so truly organal, as to make it inadvisable—indeed, virtually impossible—to transcribe them with unequivocal indication of durational values or of any definite time frame for the constituent phrases. To a limited extent variant transcriptions could be equally legitimate" ("Consonance and Rhythm in the Organum of the 12th and 13th Centuries," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 33 [1980]: 274). For the process of syllabication of melismatic organum, see Sanders, "*Sine Littera* and *Cum Littera* in Medieval Polyphony," *Music and Civilization: Essays in Honor of Paul Henry Lang*, ed. Edmond Strainchamps and Maria R. Maniates (New York: Norton, 1984), 215–31.

purposes. Farmer calls this treatise "the greatest contribution to the theory of music up to his time." But, in actual fact, theorists limited their borrowing from al-Fārābī to the methodological remarks in his De scientiis (Ihsā' al-ulūm [Classification of the Sciences]). This is not, however, as Randel suggests, because "much of what al-Fārābī had written about music did not bear on their personal experience." For it is clear that a great deal of thirteenth-century European music exhibits strong stylistic affinities with Eastern techniques and contents. Rather, they might have sensed that the theoretical interests of the emerging tonal teleology were taking a different direction.

In the previous pages I have revisited the "Arabian Influence" thesis mainly from the viewpoint of music acculturation and confined the discussion of compatible traits to Western monophony. Other topics that could not be covered here certainly deserve study, including the extent to which stylistic findings in the monophonic literature are relevant to contemporary polyphony, the function drone techniques played in organum and later polyphony, the position of Spain as the hub of medieval Eastern influences, and the actual process of transmitting and disseminating Eastern musical characteristics in the medieval West. That the future development of Western music lay away from Eastern traits does not belittle the latter's centrality in Europe's early music history. Rather, it hones the perspective for future study.

88 Randel, "Al-Fārābī and the Role of Arabic Music Theory," 188.
89 Ernest Sanders reminded us that "certainly in the first several centuries of Western Mehrstimmigkeit an 'organized' melody, whether it was a chant or a paraliturgical versus, was not thought of as a musical opus of distinct stylistic specificity, but as an elaborated version of that melody" ("Consonance and Rhythm," 264).