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THE LINGUISTIC CONTENT OF IRAQI POPULAR SONGS

1. Introduction

Iraqi music is to a large extent vocal, consisting of classical monorhyming odes, qaSheYidhas, set to music, or popular stanzaic songs, aGaanii ʃa¿bixya, or a combination of the two. According to D’ERLANGER (1959: 154) the voice has, throughout the ages, been the favoured »instrument» of the Arabs. Yet to date there has been very little interest shown in the vocal content of Iraqi music.

The well-known Iraqi maqaam song cycle, for example, which consists of both odes and short popular pieces, has nearly always been studied from a musical perspective, with hardly any attention given to its rich poetic content. The language of Iraqi popular songs also has rarely been analysed. All that is usually known about Iraqi vocal music is that the odes are sung or recited in classical Arabic, while the popular songs are sung in colloquial Arabic. The present article, which focuses on eight popular Iraqi songs, presents an analysis of their linguistic content.

Iraqi popular songs are generally divided into two broad groups: urban and rural/Bedouin. These in turn can be divided into various subgroups, according to whether they are from the Tigris or Euphrates regions, or from south, west or central Iraq. It is a well-known fact that some of the best loved songs originated in small towns and villages on the Euphrates, among them Hilla and Musayyab. In fact two of the songs in this survey refer to Musayyab. Many songs from western Iraq found their way to urban centres where they were adapted to the local dialects. Urban singers frequently introduce into a song some Bedouin features of language. These features include the phonemes g and ʃ instead of their urban allophones q and k respectively; the -an element suffixed to the first person singular of an imperfect verb, as in ajuzuṣan for ajuṣ 'I give up'; and some typically Bedouin lexical items. It should be pointed out, however, that introducing Bedouin elements into a song is of common occurrence in other Arab countries. In the Lebanon, for example, some folk songs, like the ʃruwi, are sung in keeping with Bedouin pronunciation norms (ABU-HAIDAR 1979). Similarly, Algerian urban songs often contain Bedouin Arabic hallmarks, notably g for q, and words referring to nomadic experience (Nadya Bouzar-Kasbadji, personal communication).
2. Transcription system

2.1. Consonants
The consonants which do not have an English equivalent are transcribed below:

- f: interdental fricative as in mittil 'like'
- d: interdental fricative as in adīyya 'harm'
- D: pharyngealised interdental fricative as in Dammeeta 'I hid it'
- ē: alveolar affricate as in ḥinī 'chin'
- z: alveolar fricative as in ṣājīr 'turquoise'
- H: pharyngeal fricative as in maḥbūlī 'my beloved'
- ¡: interdental fricative as in nālī 'like'
- gl: interdental fricative as in aliyya 'harm'
- D: pharyngealised interdental fricative as in Damneeta 'I hid it'
- ẕ: pharyngeal fricative as in ḍammī 'my beloved'
- è: alveolar affricate as in ḥinī 'chin'
- ẓ: pharyngeal fricative as in ḍammī 'my beloved'
- H: pharyngeal fricative as in maḥbūlī 'my beloved'
- x: uvular fricative as in raayi 'disappointed'
- G: uvular fricative as in Gaab 'to disappear'
- Q: glottal stop as in 'alla 'God'
- ʔ: uvular fricative as in raayi 'disappointed'
- C: uvular plosive as in Gaab 'to disappear'
- ’: pharyngeal fricative as in maḥbūlī 'my beloved'
- j: uvular plosive as in qaš 'mind'
- S: pharyngealised alveolar fricative as in 'Soo(la) 'going out (f.s.)'
- 7: pharyngealised alveolar plosive as in 'Soo(la) 'going out (f.s.)'

2.2. Vowels
2.2.1. Short vowels:
a: ranges from [e] to [æ], depending on the environment in which it occurs.
i: in non-final position is realised as [ə]
    in final position it is realised as [i]
u: occurs in all positions

2.2.2. Long vowels
aa, ee, ii, oo, uu

ie, a glide vowel, typical of women's speech, is the allophone of ee.

2.2.3. Diphthongs
aw: occurs invariably in final position denoting a third person plural pronominal suffix, as in
    ḥigaw 'they found'
aww: as in the term of address mawwad 'oh you!'
aay: as in ḥayya 'on me'
tyy: as in adīyya 'harm'

3. The songs
The following eight stanzaic songs, which are still sung today, are transcribed from recordings made in Baghdad between 1959 and 1966. As a great deal of improvisation usually takes place during a performance, the language of the songs sometimes appears to be of a composite nature where urban, rural/Bedouin and classical Arabic elements are freely blended. The opening verses constitute the refrain, sung initially by the principal singer. The refrain is then repeated by the chorus at the end of each stanza. Where the song is of the murabbā’ variety, or composed of quatrains with the rhyme scheme

aaab, the fourth hemistich rhymes with the last hemistich of the refrain. Where it is of the muzdawij variety, or made up of two consecutive rhyming hemistichs, aa, bb, cc, dd, etc., the refrain, consisting also of two rhyming hemistichs, need not rhyme with any part of the song.1

Among songs of the murabbā’ variety is the ataaba where the fourth hemistich

1 According to D’ERLANGER (1959: 161-162) “les trois premiers vers (du murabbā’) ont une rime propre changeant avec les stances, et le quatrième une rime constante toujours la même tout le long du poème”. ‘(Dans le) muzdawadj ... la rime change de deux vers en deux vers’.
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of each stanza ends in -aaba to rhyme with ¿ataaba. D’ERLANGER (1959: 167) states that in a ¿ataaba type song a word ending in -ba is added to the fourth hemistich to mark the end of the quatrain. This word, or even the whole hemistich in which it occurs, need not be semantically related to the rest of the quatrain. Variations of -aaba seem to be permissible, and in Song I below, the final words of the refrain and quatrain occur as -ibi and -abi respectively. Another type of song which is popular and widespread in Iraq is the abuuQiyya. Like the ¿ataaba, its rhyme scheme is aaab, the last word of the fourth hemistich ending in -iyya to rhyme with abuuQiyya. And like the ¿ataaba also, the last hemistich of each stanza is often simply added on, and need not make any sense at all. AL-HADITHI (1981) says that the abuuQiyya originated in south-western Iraq. There are other more recent songs of urban provenance which have stanzas with individual rhyme schemes. These are usually of the aabb or abab patterns.

Song I
(refrain)
jawaad, jawaad, musayyabi  inta sibeet ahl il-hawa
šma¿na inta ma tinsibi

(song)
xalli lalam w il-wanna  winsa l-muDa withanna
baGidaad Saarat jonna  biilha l-Hawaari win-nabi
la thuumin w la luumak  muu akgar minni hmuumak
rabbi ysalmak w yduumak  laji il-mawaaTin yaa Sabi
min yaa balad jawaadi  mseebaawi loo baGdaadi
jaawib la tSiir i¿naadi  walla ma yirDa w in-nabi

Translation I
Jawad, Jawad, (oh you who are) from Musayyab,
You have left behind people who are madly in love (with you),
How is it you have never become a prey to love?

Leave behind (all) pain and moaning.
And forget all that is past, and be happy.
Baghdad has become like Paradise,
With beautiful maidens, (I swear) by the Prophet.

Don't blame me and don't let me blame you,
Your problems are not greater than mine.
May God protect and keep you
For the sake of our country, young man.

What town are you from, my dear Jawad?
Are you from Musayyab or Baghdad?
Answer, don't be obstinate.
It is not right (lit. God will not accept that) by the Prophet.

**Song II**  
**(refrain)**

\[m¿awwad ya baaba ya baaba\]
\[halak rabbook il-galbi ¿a¿aaba\]

**(song)**

\[¿ala jisr il-imsayyib sayyibooni\]
\[ahli w iHbaab galbi sayyibooni\]
\[mitil Teer il-imgaSgaS sayyibooni\]
\[w la xaaaw ¿alayya mnl-¿a¿aaba\]

\[¿ala jisr il-imsayyib šiftit lamma\]
\[giSaayib suud ¿ala čitif lamma\]
\[illi yigHam Habiibi y¿uuf damma\]
\[ymuut w yinHtrim šamm il-habaaba\]

\[bh¿aak iS-Soob laaganni fazaati\]
\[ax¿a ga ¿aqlí w nassanni ¿abaati\]
\[loo jaaé il-moot lafdiic xawaati\]
\[waaxuey Lli b¿izz šabaaba\]

**Translation II**

Oh you, you my dear, your people brought you up to torment me (lit. to be a torment to my heart).

They abandoned me on Musayyab bridge,
My relatives and my loved ones abandoned me,
Like a bird whose wings have been clipped, they abandoned me,
And they did not worry in case I'd suffer.

On Musayyab bridge I saw a gathering,
Black plaits gathered on a shoulder.
He who harms my loved one will be deprived of his blood,
He will die and be deprived of breathing any air.

On the other bank (of the river) I was met by (a group of) young women,
They dazzled me (lit. they took my mind), and they made me forget my cloak.
If death should come (anywhere) near you, I would make my sisters a ransom for you,
And my brother (also) who is in his prime.
Song III

(refrain)
gulli yaa Hilu mneen 'alla jaabak
xazzan jariH galbi min qaDaabak
jarh il-galib min fargaak xazzan
mahhad miiti b maHabba tmaHHan

(song)
ham haaga naSiibi wanjibir bii
laani atuub w laa 'alla yihdii
gulli š-šifit minni adiyya
galbak min Saxar maa Hann ḥalayya

(gulli šbidat minni jinaaya
xalleet il-xalag tibči waraaya
gulli yaa Hilu šjaabak ḥalayya
waani r-ribaTT naSiibak biidayya

Translation III
Tell me, you handsome one, where did you come from?
The wounds of my heart have festered because of your cruelty.
The wounds of my heart have festered because (of the pain) of my parting from you.
No one like me was subjected to (the trials of) love.

And this is my fate which I have to face.
I do not repent, nor will God guide him to better ways (lit. nor will God make him behave differently).
Tell me, what ill treatment have you received (lit. seen) from me?
Your heart is made of stone and has no compassion for me.

Tell me, what crime has been committed by me?
I left behind me people crying.
Tell me, oh you handsome one, what brought you my way?
And I decided your fate myself (lit. I tied your fate with my own hands).

Song IV

(refrain)
ssaayib yaa galbi ssaayib

 songwriter

(song)
šloon Haali w šloon
w әasa maa siboona
darib baGdaad imʃeeta
w il-miil ma xalleeta

Translation IV
Tell me, what crime has been committed by me?
I left behind me people crying.
Tell me, oh you handsome one, what brought you my way?
And I decided your fate myself (lit. I tied your fate with my own hands).
wanneet gaalaw farHaan
Salleet gaalaw taayib
min yoom ¿ilmi w ¿ilmak
w lamman gaalaw mitzawwij

Translation IV
My heart is forlorn because of the absence of my loved ones.

Woe is me!
I'd rather take poison than be separated from them.
I hope they haven't abandoned us,
How does one's heart abandon them?

I walked all the way to Baghdad.
It is all orange groves.
I did not use the kohl pencil,
Nor did I put any kohl on my eyes.

(When) you moaned they said you were happy,
(When) you complained they said you were sad.
(When) you prayed they said you had repented
Because of being separated from the loved ones.

From that day which you and I know of,
I did not handle the kohl pencil.
And when they told me you were married,
I hid all the eye kohl.

Song V
(refrain)
yammul ¿iyuum is-suud ma juuzzan ana
w xaddi¢ il-geemar ana trayyag mina

(song)
Til¿at ib fisTaanha l-wardi j-jamiil
w inziwat Hiina SbiGat ¡ams il-aStil
GuSun xadha mintili b nasma yimiiil
Hilwa ma©yatha tinHini b ra¨dana

waagfa bil-baab tiSrux yaa laTiif
laani majnuuna wa laa ¾aqli xafiiif
min wara t-tamnuur innaawi¢i r-riGiif
yaa riGiif il-Hilwa yikfiini sana
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yaa waliifat galbi ma yfiid iS-Sabur
min ba2ad hajriic wa laa yiswa l-2umur
lool haiciic yirDaun aana l-beetiic amurr
aknis il-mawgid wa2uuf iS-Sa2Tana

Translation V
Oh you with the black eyes that I will not give up
Your cheek is like the cream which I have for breakfast.

She went out in her beautiful pink dress,
And she went inside when the late afternoon sun became strong.
The branch that is her cheek is full and inclines at the (slightest) breeze.
She walks gracefully and bends with ease.

Standing in the doorway, she cries out: »Oh merciful Lord,
I am neither mad nor unintelligent«
From behind the oven she hands me the loaf of bread.
Oh you loaf of bread (made by) the beautiful one, you will last me a year.

Oh you companion of my heart, patience is of no use
After you abandoned me, and life is of no value.
If your people accept, I would pass by your house
And sweep the fireplace, and give up all comforts.

Song VI
(refrain)
malyaan kull galbi Hizin
mayinfa2 igleebi n-nadam

(idmun aruuH a2itiki
mayinfa2 i2yuuni l-baci

(song)
malyaan galbi mniil-wilif
ilman a2aatib yaa xalag
nadmaan 2ala 2umr il giDa
xallaani wib Geeri HiDa
farHaan maHbuubi w ziha
nisaani wib Geeri liiha
Hayraana w daayra biiskil
xallaani bamri w antiDir

Translation VI
My heart is full of sadness,
To whom shall I go to complain?
Regret is not going to make me feel better,
Weeping will not do my eyes any good.

My heart is full of longing,
Oh you people, it is full of reproof.
Who do I reprove, friends,
When my loved one has left me?

I regret the lifetime that I spent
With my loved one, oh friends.
He left me and found someone else,
And my hope of having him back vanished.

I am bewildered and perplexed to such an extent
At being abandoned for no reason.
He left me alone, (while) I (go on) waiting
For the one who is absent, in case he comes back.

Song VII
(refrain)
Ta'al ꯉa min beet abuha
faat ma sallam ʕalayya
w raayHa l-beet ʕaʕjiraan
yimkin il-Hulu zaglaan

(song)
gittilha yaa Hilwa rwiini
gaatlati ruH yaa maskiini
gittilha yaa Hilwa rwiini
gaatlati ruH yaa maskiini
gittilha yaa Hilwa rwiini
gaatlati ruH yaa maskiini
¿aTʕaʕan mayya sgiini
mayna maa tirwi l-¿aTʕaʕan
w ¿ala Tuuliʕ farjiini
ya Tuuli nabiʕat riiHaan
w ¿ala ¿yuuniʕ farjiini
¿yuuni ¿yuun il-Gizlaan

Translation VII
She is going out of her father's house
And going to the neighbours'.
He passed by me without greeting me,
Perhaps the handsome one is angry.

I said to her: »Oh, you beautiful one, quench my thirst,
I am thirsty, give me water to drink.»
She said to me: »Go away, you poor soul,
Our water does not revive a thirsty man.»

I said to her: »Oh, you beautiful one, quench my thirst,
Let me look at your (beautiful) stature.»
She said to me: »Go away, you poor soul,
I have the (tall, erect) stature of a basil stem."

I said to her: »Oh, you beautiful one, quench my thirst, Let me look at your eyes.»
She said to me: »Go away, you poor soul, My eyes are like the eyes of gazelles.»

**Song VIII**

*(refrain)*

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{xaayif} & \quad \text{talfaan biilha} \\
\text{šaama w dagga bit-Hinič} & \quad \text{min yištiriilha}
\end{align*}
\]

*(song)*

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{waama štiri bir-ruuH} & \quad \text{šaama lib-xaddič} \\
\text{warDa bikull išruuT} & \quad \text{xalliini ṭindič} \\
\text{w dagga šaďir ya naas} & \quad \text{w iš-šaama ṭambar} \\
\text{wil-wijih mab ěat nuur} & \quad \text{w ir-rugba marmar} \\
\text{šamrat Hisin w il-šeen} & \quad \text{tisbi b hawaaaha} \\
\text{w jalla llađi sawwa} & \quad \text{b Suura Sawwarha}
\end{align*}
\]

Translation VIII

I am worried about her,
I am dying (of love for) her.
(She has) a mole and a tattoo on her chin,
Who would buy them?

I would buy with my life
The mole that is on your cheek,
And I accept all (your) conditions,
(Just) let met be with you.

The tattoo is turquoise, you people,
And the mole is amber,
And her face is the source of light,
And her neck is (white like) marble.

She has the coquetishness of extreme beauty,
(while) her eye
Makes me a captive of her love.
Praise be to Him who made her
The beauty that she is.
4. Phonological features

4.1. Use of phonemes

In most songs the use of forms with interdental ɹ is rare, except in miţiil 'like', or in classical borrowings, as, for example, mab̥aʕat 'source' and akʕar 'more than'. The term akʕar, however, is often replaced by its colloquial equivalent ayyad.

The uvular plosive q is usually avoided unless it occurs in a classical borrowing like ʔaqli 'my mind' which has no colloquial equivalent.

The pharyngeals H and ʕ occur frequently in songs since they are evocative of words like Hubbi 'my love'; maHbuubi 'my loved one'; ʔumur 'life'; ʔaʕaab 'suffering'; ʔataaba. It is not unusual to come across a verse or a hemistich where either H or ʕ is repeated, as, for example,

maHHad miši b maHabba tmaHHan 'No one like me was subjected to (the trials of) love'

w la xaafaw ʔalayya mni-l-ʔaʕaaba 'And they did not worry in case I'd suffer'.

4.2. Elision and loss of vowel length

4.2.1. Elision of the glottal stop

The glottal stop ' in initial position is invariably elided, except in the form 'alla 'God'. Thus, l-ʔalam 'pain', l-ʔal 'for the sake of', laa 'aani 'I am not', baIa 'ayya 'without any', b 'amri 'alone' are realised as lalam, lajI, laani, balayya, bamri respectively.

4.2.2. Elision of a-

In word junction a- of the first person singular imperfect verb is often elided if it is preceded by a word ending in -a, as, for example,

V ana atrayyag minna > ana trayyag mina

'I have it for breakfast' (lit. 'I have breakfast from it')

4.3. Loss of gemination

Loss of gemination takes place when the metre and rhyme scheme have to be adhered to, as in the final word of the above example where minna 'from it' is realised as mina.

4.4. Vowel quality and quantity

4.4.1. The long vowel of the negative and vocative particles is usually shortened when it precedes or follows a syllable with a long vowel. Thus, laa xaafaw ʔalayya 'they did not worry about me', il-miität maXalleeta 'I did not use the kohl pencil', yaa naas 'oh, people; oh, friends' become la xaafaw ʔalayya, il-miität maXalleeta and ya naas respectively.

In VII, however, the long vowel of the vocative particle yaa is retained, while the vowel of the preceding syllable is shortened. Thus:

gaalatli ruuH yaa maskiini > gaalatli ruH yaa maskiini 'She said to me: "Go away, you poor soul"'
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The 1st pers. sing. independent pronoun occurs as aani (Baghdadi) and aana (south-western Iraqi) according to the metre. Occasionally the long vowel of aana is shortened to give ana. The long vowel of aani, however, is never shortened.

4.4.2. In the refrains of III and VIII the long vowel of mneen and sæaleeha is in both cases realised as a long vowel ee by the male singer and as a glide vowel ie by the female chorus, as, for example,

III
gulli yaa Hilu mneen 'alla jaabak (male lead singer)
gilli yaa Hilu mnien 'alla jaabak (all female chorus)
'Tell me, you handsome one, where did you come from?'

VIII:
xaayif sæaleeha (male lead singer)
xaayif sæaleeha (all female chorus)
'I am worried about her'

In the refrain of III, the vowel of the initial syllable of gulli/gilli 'tell me!' can be both u (urban) and i (rural/Bedouin).

4.5. Anaptyxis
Anaptyxis occurs frequently to maintain the syllabic balance. In I, for example, an anaptyctic vowel i is inserted between the first and second syllables of baGidaad to maintain the heptasyllabic pattern of the quatrain, giving baGidaad. Similarly in the third hemistich of the opening stanza of V, ymiil > yimiil 'it inclines' to give eleven syllables instead of ten.

In VI anaptyxis occurs between the antepenultimate and penultimate words of the refrain to retain the pharyngeal fricative ı in the two words mayinfa ı and iıyuni. In conversation the anaptyctic vowel sometimes occurs after the second pharyngeal fricative ı, resulting in the elision of the first ı, as, for example, mayinfa ııyuni 'it is of no use to my eyes'.

4.6. Initial stress
In most Iraqi stanzaic songs the initial syllable of each hemistich is stressed, often going against stress assignment rules where stress is ordinarily determined by vowel length. Thus contrast:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>opening word</th>
<th>non-opening word</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I jawaab</td>
<td>I jawaad musayábi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I lát luuamini</td>
<td>I w la láumak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI mályaan</td>
<td>VII zá láan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI nisaani</td>
<td>VI maHbáubi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II giSaayib</td>
<td>III ıágáabak</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Grammatical features

5.1. Syllable structure

Words of more than three syllables are rare in Iraqi songs which consist mostly of di- and trisyllabic forms. The few quadrisyllabic words to be found are compound forms, like sayyibooni 'they abandoned me' and musayyabi 'from Musayyab'.

5.1.1. Word-final -a

In a ḥātaaba type song -a is added to the final word of the quatrain in order to make it rhyme with the word ḥātaaba, thus making the disyllabic CaCaaC form into a trisyllabic one of the pattern CaCaaCa, as, for example,

III. ḥaqaaba + -a > ḥaqaaba 'torment; suffering'
    ḥabaaba + -a > ḥabaaba 'wind; air'

5.1.1.1. -a is sometimes elided to maintain the metre, as, for example,

VI. nadmaa 'regretting (f.s.)' < nadmaana

However, the -a in Ḥayraana 'perplexed' which qualifies the same feminine subject is not elided.

5.1.2. Bedouin loanwords

Words of Bedouin provenance have different patterns from those of their urban equivalents. Thus compare:

Bedouin | urban
---|---
CCvCat | CvCCat
V  SbihGat | SibGat 'to become hot (sun)'
    CvCak/CvCič | vCCak/vCCič
II  halak | ahlak 'your (m.s.) people'
    halič | ahlīč 'your (f.s.) people'
    CCvvCi | CvCCi
VI  gleebi | galbi 'my heart'

Other Bedouin/urban contrasting features are the addition of the suffix -an to the first person of the verb jaazz 'to give up' (the refrain of V), and the third person plural feminine marker (the last stanza of II). Thus compare:

Bedouin | urban
---|---
V  (a)juuzan | ajuuz 'I give up'
II  laaganni | laagooni 'they (f.p.) met me'
    axağna | axağaw 'they (f.p.) took'
    nassanni | nassooni 'they (f.p.) made me forget'

5.2. Homophonic words

Each of the following forms belongs to a different category and has no semantic relationship with its homonym(s):

(i) l- 'the'   (i) l- 'to; for'   l- 'he who; that which'
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>l½q 'or'</td>
<td>loo 'if; if only'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yaa 'which; what'</td>
<td>yaa (vocative particle)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus compare:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IV</th>
<th>l-Habaayib 'the loved ones'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>l-baçi 'the weeping'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>l-galbi 'for my heart; to my heart'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII</td>
<td>l-beet ij-jiïraan 'to the neighbours' house'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>l-muDa 'that which is past'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>il-giDa 'that which is spent'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the above six examples, -l in the first two examples is the definite marker; in the next two examples it is a preposition, while in the final two it is the relative particle.

In the following two examples lloo in the first sentence is a conjunction meaning 'or', and in the second it is a particle introducing a conditional clause:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I</th>
<th>mseebaawi loo baDaada l 'are you from Musayyab or Baghdad?'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>loo haliï yirDuun 'if only your people would accept'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the following two sentences yaa occurs as a vocative particle in the first example, and as an interrogative particle in the second:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I</th>
<th>yaa Sabi 'young man!'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>min yaa balad 'what town are you from?'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3. Verbal forms

The time referred to in the songs is frequently the present or the immediate future, expressed by the use of the active participle and the imperative respectively. The active participle "usually refers to a present situation which has come about as a result of some previous action" (Erwin 1963: 338). In IV saayib 'forlorn (m.s.)', in V waagfa 'standing (f.s.)' and in VIII xaayij 'afraid (m.s.)', for example, refer to a present state resulting from a past event or action. The active participle of verbs of motion often expresses an imminent action. In the refrain of VII, Taal¿a 'going out (f.s.)' and raayHa 'going (f.s.)' refer to someone who has just come out and is actually in the process of going somewhere. The hemistich, therefore, conveys an idea of actions taking place in the present and continuing into the immediate future.

The imperative is another important verbal feature of Iraqi songs which occurs more frequently than the perfect or imperfect. Palva (1977, 1984) attributes a great deal of importance to the use of "the descriptive imperative" in narratives where it conveys an idea of imminent immediacy. The imperative occurs in songs where the singer is addressing the friend, or the loved one, either directly or in reported speech, as, for example:

- **directly**
  - I winxa l-muDa w ithanna 'And forget all that is past and be happy'
  - I jaawib la tsii r iïnaadi 'Answer, don't be obstinate!'
  - III gulli ï-ïifi minni adjïyya 'Tell me, what ill treatment have you received (lit. seen) from me?'

- **reported**
  - VII gittilha yaa Hilwa rwiini 'I said to her: oh you beautiful one, quench my thirst'
  - speech
5.4. Conditional sentences

Conditional sentences introduced by the particle *ləo* occur frequently in Iraqi songs and usually refer to unreal or hypothetical conditions. The verb of the protasis, or *ləo*‐clause, is in the imperfect, unless it is a verb of motion when it is in the perfect. The verb of the apodosis or main clause is invariably in the imperfect. In folk poetry the *ləo*‐clause is sometimes linked to the apodosis by a conjunction. However, a conjunction or a link-word is frequently omitted in poetry, but "rarely in prose" (cf. Wright II, 1951: 346). In the two examples below, the particle *ləa* is used to introduce the apodosis of the first sentence, while in the second example no link-word occurs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>II <em>ləo jaač il-moot ləfdič xawaati</em></td>
<td>'If death should come anywhere near you, I would make my sisters a ransom for you'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This sentence can also occur without a link-word as: <em>ləo jaač il-moot afdič xawaati</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V <em>ləo halič yirDun aana l-beetiič amurr</em></td>
<td>'If your people accept I would pass by your house'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.5. The relative particle

The relative particle (*i*l/i/i/)* presents an idea of definiteness or indefiniteness, depending on whether it refers to a specific noun or not. If the relative particle denotes definiteness it generally means 'the one who' or 'that which'. If, on the other hand, it denotes indefiniteness, then the meaning implied is 'he who' or 'anyone who', as, for example,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I <em>winsa l-muDa</em></td>
<td>'And forget all that is past'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI <em>nadmaan zaala zumr il giDa</em></td>
<td>'I regret the lifetime that we spent'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI <em>balkit yiji ili Gaab</em></td>
<td>'Perhaps the one who is absent will come back'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II <em>illi yigHam Habiibi y¿uuf damma</em></td>
<td>'He who harms my loved one will be deprived of his blood'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.6. Post-stated object

In each of the following three examples the pronominal suffix occurs as a post-stated object:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IV <em>darib baGdaad imšeeta</em></td>
<td>'I walked all the way to Baghdad (lit. I walked the road to Baghdad)'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV <em>w il-miil ma xalleeta</em></td>
<td>'I did not handle (lit. put) the kohl pencil'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III <em>ham haaça naSibi wanjibir bii</em></td>
<td>'And this is my fate which I have to face'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the first two sentences the pronoun is suffixed to the verb. In the third sentence it is attached to the preposition. A pronominal suffix acting as a post-stated object ordinarily "implies a greater degree of emphasis than does a noun" (Erwin 1963: 332). In songs, apart from adding emphasis, the post-stated object provides the additional syllable needed to maintain the metre.
6. Glossary

The following are some typically Iraqi terms used in the songs:

\(\text{\textbackslash e\textbackslash a\textbackslash f}\) 'to leave; to abandon'.

balkit 'perhaps' < Turkish belkide 'as likely as not'.

g\(\text{\textbackslash a\textbackslash k}\) is-S\(\text{\textbackslash o\textbackslash b}\) 'the other river bank'. This is how people in Baghdad refer to the west bank of the Tigris (AL-SHALCHY 1983(2): 272).

dagga 'tattoo'.

fuxaati (f.p.) 'young women'. This is a Baghdad term which usually occurs in the plural. The singular fuxtaa (lit. 'young pigeon; fledgling') is rarely used (cf. AL-SHALCHY 1983(2): 407).

geemar 'clotted cream'. Made of buffalo milk, geemar, together with date syrup or jam, is eaten for breakfast throughout Iraq. Although it is widely available, geemar is considered to be a delicacy.

giSaayib (f.p.) 'plaits'. The singular is giSidåå.

kaHHal i\(\text{\textbackslash i\textbackslash y\textbackslash u\textbackslash m}\) 'to apply kohl to the eyes'. This form, however, is frequently used idiomatically to mean 'to put someone in their place'.

m\(\text{\textbackslash a\textbackslash w\textbackslash w\textbackslash a\textbackslash d}\) (f.s. m\(\text{\textbackslash a\textbackslash w\textbackslash d}\); c.p. m\(\text{\textbackslash a\textbackslash w\textbackslash d\textbackslash i\textbackslash n}\)) is used as a vocative when someone is imploring the person he/she is addressing.

naawa\(\text{\textbackslash x}\) 'to hand over; to pass; to give'.

rahdana 'calm; ease'.

S\(\text{\textbackslash a\textbackslash t\textbackslash t\textbackslash a\textbackslash n\textbackslash a}\) 'a life of ease' (cf. AL-SHALCHY 1983(2): 170).

Teer ingaS\(\text{\textbackslash a\textbackslash g}\) 'a bird with clipped wings'.

xalag 'people'.

xazzan 'to store; to accumulate'. In songs where the subject is 'wounds', xazzan acquires the meaning of 'to fester'.

* 

REFERENCES


