Cluster-Syllabic Verse

Rhythmical Units of Syllabic Verse

If rhythm in metrics is still somewhat conceivable and explicable as an alternation of long and short syllables being rhythmical units of different length measured in a metrical grid of moras or matras, in syllabics, with the metrical unit being a syllable and long and short thus being metrically equal, alternation of what and what do we have?

Whereas some still do not give up attempts to measure syllabic meters in moras however fruitless they were, the question had been answered long ago by the theorists of Arabic verse. Arabs called them *sabab*, *watid*, *fasila* and *big fasila,* they being 1, 2, 3 and 4 syllables' long respectfully and resulting from segmentation of syllabic continuum by consonant clusters[1]. Arabic notation, which we use here from left to right, represents such a continuum of syllables and clusters, dividing syllables into groups, as a row of circles separated by vertical bars, which quite visually represents the pattern of rhythmical units measured in a syllabic grid:

O|O|OO|O|OOO|OO|OO|
taMtaMtataMtaMtatataMtataMtataM

Variations of four-syllable foot of *radjaz* in this notation will look as follows:

O|O|O O| (basic form)	<>	| ½ ¼ ¼ [2]
O O|O O|	<>	| ½ ½
O|O O O|	<>	| ¾ ¼
O O O O| (only in radjaz)	<>	| 1

Further we use this notation in a modified form, marking positions where such a cluster is permissible by a single vertical bar and by a double bar where the cluster is obligatory, so that we could possibly represent different variations of a meter in one scheme, which for three-feet *radjaz* makes:

O|O|OO||O|O|OO||O|O|OO||
ta(M)ta(M)tataM-ta(M)ta(M)tataM-ta(M)ta(M)tataM

The phonetic notation we give along for those wanting not just to see the rhythm but to get a feeling of it by scanning the scheme, in a way, follows the Arabic one too.

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1 Arabs represented what we call with them “a long vowel” as a compound of vocalic and less vocalic elements, the latter creating «a position» before a consonant, which is only logic. Bearing in mind that Greek and Indian prosody similarly equals syllables with long vowels and diphthong and those closed (C)VC, we do not discern further the consonant clusters proper and the “prosodic” clusters. Cf. W. P. Lehmann on Proto-Indo-European Phonology: “With the current phonemic analysis of PIE, the rules of prosody are a series of unrelated formulae. When, however, we assume that PIE ‘diphthongs’ and ‘long vowels’ were clusters of vowel and resonants or laryngeals, the general principle of IE metrics becomes obvious. CLOSED SYLLABLES WERE METRICALLY LONG, OPEN SYLLABLES WERE METRICALLY SHORT. Examples of metrically long syllables in PIE would then be /tet-t . . . tey-t . . . teX-t . . . tet|/; types of metrically short syllables would be /te-t . . . te-y . . . te-X . . . /.

2 Here we give normal rhythmical variations of musical tact to show that those of Arabic foot are no less logic.

Foot, Rhythm and Syncopation in Arud

Before we move forward to the verse of Greeks and Indians, we will dwell for a while upon Arabic classical verse for it is here that the cluster-syllabic verse seems to find such a consistent and clear presentation.

The borders of a foot are easily detectable in Arabic verse for it is within them that rhythmical units are always placed. The basic foot of four syllables (meters of Circle 3 of Al-Khalil) shows the rhythm of aggregation in its basic form O|O|OO| (opposite to the rhythm of division within the tact), which alternates with OO|OO| similarly to the iambic dipodia of Greeks. Disappearance of a cluster normally expected after the second syllable of the foot O|OOO| (call it the inner syncope) in Arabic verse is an acceptable deviation from its even rhythm, which only contributes to integration of its two halves into a single four-syllable unit, which may be also represented by one solid block OOOO|. Such an integrity of the foot affords to derive not only meters of “iambic” and “trochaic” rhythm, but that of *hadjaz*:

O|O|OO||O|O|OO|...	*radjaz*	cf.	*iambus*	O|O||OO||...
O|OO||O|O|OO|...	*ramal*	cf.	*trochee*	|O||OO||O|...
|OO||O|O|OO|...	*hazadj*	cf.	-	

A left shift of the cluster normally expected after the fourth syllable with its return to the right place in the next foot:

O|O|OO||O|O|OO||	>	O|O|O||OO|O|OO||
ta(M)ta(M)tataM-ta(M)ta(M)tataM		ta(M)ta(M)taM-tata(M)ta(M)tataM

- produces another sort of syncope (call it the outer syncope), that feature meters of Circle 4 of Al-Khalil.

	Three-feet meters		Two-feet meters	
Metres of Circle 3	O|O|OO||O|O|OO||O|O|OO|| O|OO||O|O|OO||O|O|OO||O| - -	Rajaz Ramal - -	O|O|OO||O|O|OO|| O|OO||O|O|OO||O| OO||O|O|OO||O|O| -	Radjaz Ramal Hazadj -
Metres of Circle 4 with syncopated end foot (except those in brackets)	O|O|OO||O|O|OO||O|O|O||**O** O|OO||O|O|OO||O|O|O||**O**O| - -	(Sari) (Madid) - -	O|O|OO||O|O|O||**O** O|OO||O|O|O||**O**O| OO||O|O|O||**O**O|O| -	Munsarih Hafif Mudari -
Metres of Circle 4 with syncopated penultimate foot	O|O|OO||O|O|O||**O**O|OOO|| O|OO||O|O|O||**O**O|O|OO||O| - -	Munsarih Hafif - -	O|O|O||**O**O|OOO|| O|O||**O**O|O|OO||O| - -	Mukdatab Mudjtatt - -

There are also meters based on alternation of tree- and four-syllable feet (Circle 1), consisting of only three-syllable feet (Circle 5), and those similar to *radjaz* and *hazadj*, but allowing UU- at the place of the first two syllable of a foot (circle 2). A similar local violation of the syllabic principle is well known at the beginning of Indian syllabic ślōka