

Analysis of emotional expressions in Arabic folk songs

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تحليل التعبيرات الانفعالية في الأغاني الشعبية العربية

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DOI 10.58564/MABDAA.66.2.2024.1042

Abstract

Folklore songs in the Levant are considered part of the Arab culture in this region. This study aimed to analyze the emotional expressions in Arab folkloric song by studying a sample of folklore songs prevalent in the Levant, which numbered ten songs. The results of the analysis revealed that Arabic folklore songs are rich in emotional expressions, and are characterized by the diversity of these expressions in a single song, as they reflect multiple feelings with different meanings. The most common emotional expressions were love, confusion, and the desire to meet the beloved. This result confirms the richness of Arabic folk song with emotional expressions.

Key words: Emotional expressions – Folklore. songs.

خلاصة:

وتعتبر الأغاني الشعبية جزءاً من الثقافة العربية في هذه المنطقة. هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل التعبيرات العاطفية في الأغنية الفلكلورية العربية من خلال دراسة عينة من الأغاني الفلكلورية السائدة في بلاد الشام والتي بلغ عددها عشر أغنيات. وأظهرت نتائج التحليل أن الأغاني الشعبية العربية غنية بالتعبيرات الوجدانية، وتتميز بتنوع هذه التعبيرات في الأغنية الواحدة، فهي تعكس مشاعر متعددة ذات معاني مختلفة. وكانت أكثر التعبيرات العاطفية شيوعاً هي الحب والارتباك والرغبة في لقاء الحبيب. وتؤكد هذه النتيجة غنى الأغنية الشعبية العربية بالتعبيرات العاطفية. الكلمات المفتاحية: التعبيرات العاطفية، التراث الشعبي، الأغاني.

I. Introduction:

Music, in terms of both creation and reception, is widely recognized as an art form that deeply resonates with human emotions. The realm of emotions and feelings forms the essence of our inner world. Within this realm, music seeks out its counterparts, extending its reach to encompass the expression of personal emotions and sentiments. It becomes a medium for conveying various forms of amusement, delight, humor, caprice, and the uplifting of the spirit, along with the accompanying rewards. Simultaneously, it encompasses all shades of unease, melancholy, sorrow, and lamentation. These diverse emotional experiences can be aptly described as the "inner moans" of the self, as eloquently articulated by Hegel (1980).

Folk songs bear a striking resemblance to contemporary Arab poetry, as they share key attributes such as musicality, rhythmic elegance, precise phrasing, vivid imagery, straightforward thinking, and accurate portrayal. These elements are also present in modern poetry, where Arab poets strive to incorporate them into their works. Modernist poets are particularly concerned with fostering creativity and innovation, introducing fresh imaginative metaphors, and developing new poetic forms and techniques. They seek

liberation from established models and embark on a constant quest for originality in both form and content, as this lies at the heart of Modernism. Folk songs have thus emerged as a captivating and significant resource for Arab poets due to their diverse forms, flexibility, and abundance of unique and expressive metaphorical imagery. These elements can be seamlessly incorporated into canonical poetry, revitalizing its structures and expanding its expressive possibilities (Khoury, 2021).

In the aftermath of World War II, there was a notable surge in interest towards folk literature, with some critics regarding it as a reflection of reality. It was seen as a voice representing the collective sentiments of the people, prompting scholars to undertake a serious examination of its content and style. Folk literature was recognized as a valuable medium for popular expression, possessing distinct aesthetic qualities and intellectual orientations. This resulted in a thorough exploration of its various forms, treasures, and vitality. As a consequence, it transitioned from the periphery to the center, gaining recognition as an important and independent literary genre with its own resources and advocates. Presently, poets and writers actively incorporate and connect with folk literature in relation to their contemporary experiences. They perceive that the formation of the Arab intellectual, emotional, and psychological character cannot be adequately expressed without a return to, understanding, and assimilation of its cultural heritage. Thus, folk literature serves as a crucial source of inspiration and a means of connecting with the rich tapestry of Arab culture (Asaqli & Masalha, 2020).

The folkloric traditions engaged in the customs, beliefs and ancient local environment of the Badia, more broadly than the musical traditions of villages and tribes, played an important role in shaping the musical image.. Al-musiqā al-turathīya, also known as heritage music, is deeply influenced by the connections that span across the lands, stretching from Iran to Spain. . This fabric, which is considered rich in cultural influences, also contributed to the blending of external and internal elements in many current Arabic musical genres, and this is what led to the emergence of a distinct and vibrant musical culture. It should be noted that folk and Bedouin traditions in the Arab world have been classified primarily orally from generation to generation. Folklore arose as a result of the accumulation of daily experiences, social and cultural realities, and material necessities. In the world of traditional Arabic music, several main categories can be identified, including wedding songs, peasant melodies, religious songs, shepherd melodies, Bedouin pieces, and military songs.

Among the diverse genres that are classified from the Arab musical tradition, there are many prominent examples such as the hourani, which served as a musical embodiment for social occasions and village gatherings. In addition, the Arda type resonated widely with the fighting spirit of many war campaigns that extended across the Middle East. In previous eras, ancient Bedouin incantations were extended into both religious recitations and folk music, creating a close relationship between these two forms of artistic expression. However, over time folk music gradually moved away from the spiritual nature of chanting, developing into a distinct and separate genre (Shilwah, 1995).

Analyzing emotional expressions in popular Arabic songs is a fascinating field of study that expands on the complex world of cultural and musical expressions. Lyrical content of Arabic popular songs. By studying the complex interplay between rhythm, melody, poetic images and tones, researchers seek to uncover the emotions expressed in these songs and gain insight into the social and cultural contexts that shape their creativity.

By studying emotional expressions in Arabic folk songs, researchers can shed light on cultural identities, collective experiences, and social narratives in the Arab world. In addition, this analysis contributes to increasing appreciation and preservation of the rich musical heritage, allowing for cross-cultural dialogue and understanding of human feelings and their artistic expressions.

From the above, this study attempts to achieve its goal by answering the following question: " What are the emotional expressions conveyed in Arabic folk songs, and how do they reflect the cultural and social contexts of the Arab world?"

II. Background and Literature Review:

1. Concept of the Folk Song

The folk song, as defined by The Century Dictionary, refers to a song that emerges from the common people and is rooted in either legendary or historical events, or everyday occurrences. The words and often the music of these songs originate among the common people and are widely embraced by them. Similarly, The

Dictionary of the English Language defines a folk song as a song that belongs to the folk music of a specific people or region, often existing in multiple versions or with regional variations. According to Macmillan Dictionary, a folk song is a traditional song originating from a particular community or region, particularly one that has been developed by individuals who are not professional musicians (Wordnik, 2019; Macmillan Dictionary, 2019).

According to Fawzī Al-Aantīl, the folk song is an anonymous and lyrical composition that originated among the general public in the past and has endured over time. Some scholars emphasize the need to differentiate between folk songs and popular songs. Frank Kid Son defines the folk song as a song that emerged organically among the people, becoming part of their cultural fabric before being documented by experts or adopted by professional singers. Alexander Haggerty Krappe describes it as an anonymous lyrical song that originated in the past but continues to exist in the present. Lev Polykavsky argues that folk songs are created by individuals to express their pain and suffering. He disagrees with the notion that these songs have spread widely enough among the populace to be classified as folk songs, asserting that they are born out of the people's creativity rather than being songs that merely exist within a folk atmosphere (Asaqli & Masalha, 2020).

Richard Weiss challenges Polykavsky's perspective and presents a contrasting view, stating that the folk song is not exclusively defined by its origin from people's creation, but rather by the song that people actually sing and that serves the functions required by the community (Dakwom, 2021).

The folk song is a form of expression that is accessible to both men and women, as it exists on an equal level for both genders. It is characterized by its simplicity, making it easy to be memorized by individuals. Additionally, it possesses a distinct musical quality. As the folk song circulates among the people, it becomes associated with the collective, thus leading to the anonymity of its creator. Moreover, it serves as a reflection of the emotions and sentiments of the community. According to George Hertzog, the folk song holds a prominent position within society, representing the poetic and musical traditions of various groups. These traditions are primarily transmitted orally, without the need for written or printed documentation (Morrison, 2003).

The folk song serves as a means of public expression and provides an outlet for individuals to navigate through various psychological experiences. It offers a platform for people to express both joy and sadness, while also serving as a form of entertainment. The term "folk song" was introduced into the Arabic language as a translation of the German term "volkid" and the English term "folk song" following its conceptualization by European scholars. The adoption of this term in Europe came after the publication of Johann Gottfried Herder's book "Stimmen der Völker in Liedern" in 1804, in which he collected German folk songs and provided the first characterization of the features of folk songs (Asaqli & Masalha, 2020).

Folk songs encompass the poetry and music of various groups, with their heritage being preserved not through written or printed means, but rather through the oral transmission (Herzog, 1950).

Hence, the folk song is intricately connected to the collective life of the group in which it thrives. Its forms, styles, functions, and performance techniques exhibit variations that ultimately render it a potent instrument among the individual members of the community. It accompanies people throughout various stages of their lives and circumstances. What sets the folk song apart from other literary and folk genres is its reliance on melodies and music, as well as its primary focus on words and structures (Dakwom, 2021).

2. Characteristics of the Folk Song

The folk song encompasses the use of music, and the musical traditions associated with it exhibit significant variations across different regions. In certain areas, the lyrics of songs hold little significance and appear to primarily serve as a means of supporting the music. Frequently, one may encounter nonsensical monosyllables and extensive repetition accompanying the vocals or musical instrument. Many cultures around the world utilize drums, rattles, hand or foot beats, or the gentle strumming of a harp to create a pronounced rhythmic effect in folk singing. In other regions, flute-like wind instruments or various types of bowed fiddles contribute to shaping the characteristics of folk song compositions. Folk songs hold great importance in numerous places, serving as a source of excitement for events like war or love, or as an integral part of religious or secular rituals. Through these songs, the community expresses shared emotions and finds solace in the midst of communal labor. In some preliterate societies and occasionally elsewhere, folk songs are employed for magical purposes, such as overcoming adversaries, attracting potential partners, or seeking

the favor of supernatural powers. The enchanting effects of these songs are often highly esteemed, leading to the careful preservation and exclusive ownership of specific songs. These songs may be received by individuals through dreams or as a result of fasting or other forms of self-discipline (Thompson, 2017).

Folk songs actively participate in the daily social life of both men and women, addressing and capturing the experiences of diverse groups of people with varied aspirations and orientations. They serve as vehicles for expressing the concerns, sorrows, ambitions, hopes, and joys of human beings. Consequently, we come to comprehend that the folk song emerges as a response to mankind's psychological needs and moods. During times of crisis, the folk song acts as a safety valve, offering solace and release. It serves as a source of entertainment and delight, assisting individuals in overcoming challenging tasks while enabling them to articulate their emotions and sentiments (Asaqli & Masalha, 2020).

The origins of the folk song can be traced back to the earliest periods of human existence. It serves as a nourishing source of spiritual sustenance for individuals, offering a genuine reflection of human emotions. The folk song explores a wide range of social phenomena, and its authenticity surpasses that of poetry written in classical or standard Arabic. This is because the folk song maintains a close connection with the community and directly relates to various personal, social, and religious occasions (Brooker, 1989; Oring, 1989).

Due to the extensive distribution and deep connection of the folk song with memory and life, it proves challenging to establish definitive general characteristics. Folk songs exhibit a wide range of forms and serve various purposes, reflecting their diversity (Khoury, 2021). However, scholars generally agree on the following characteristics as common features of folk songs (Asaqli & Masalha, 2020).

1) *Subjectivity*

The folk song is characterized by its subjective nature, as it emerges from the spirit and conscience of individuals. Once composed, it is transmitted by people and inherently becomes a collective creation, even though its lyrics are seen as individual and subject to alteration, modification, and additions by the community (Krappe, 1967, p. 133). The folk song is edited and shaped by the people according to their preferences and ownership (Mursi, 1970, p. 10).

2) *Lyrical*

The essence of the folk song lies in its connection to the melody it is sung to, the instruments accompanying its performance, and the manner in which it is presented by the singer. These characteristics necessitate a simple language that allows people to engage with the song effortlessly. Its music is devoid of complexity and carries an inherent charm without artificiality.

3) *Collective*

The folk song is deeply rooted in collective performance. It not only expresses the sentiments of the singers but also reflects the emotions of the wider public. Often, the folk song is the result of a collective effort and possesses a timeless quality that transcends specific times and places, thus ensuring its enduring significance.

4) *Rhythmical*

The musical scales employed in traditional folk songs extend from the musical scales known to Arabs in the past, incorporating their distinctive rhythmic patterns.

5) *Artistic*

Considered the most artistically rich form of folk expression, the folk song demonstrates a high level of artistic quality and meticulous attention to presentation. At times, it can even exhibit complexity comparable to formal poetry, encompassing many rhetorical devices utilized in more conventional poetic forms.

3. Emotional expressions

Philosophers often make a distinction between three categories of emotional expressions. Natural expressions, also known as "causal expressions," refer to the spontaneous physical behaviors that occur as integral parts of emotional experiences (Bar-On, 2004). These expressions encompass a range of manifestations, including facial expressions (such as smiles, pouts, and scowls), gestures (such as waving hands, covering the face, or clenching fists), postures (such as a puffed chest, slumped shoulders, or a hunched back), vocalizations (such as hoots, sobs, or snarls), and variations in tone of voice (such as high-pitched, brittle, or stentorian). For instance, if an individual experiences joy and spontaneously smiles, their smile would be an expression of their joy.

When a person deliberately pouts, they are engaging in a speaker expression of sadness, regardless of whether or not they genuinely feel sad. This distinguishes speaker expressions from natural expressions, as speaker expressions have the potential to be insincere. It is crucial to differentiate speaker expressions from two other types of intentional behaviors that are closely related (Glazer, 2016).

To begin with, there exists a distinction between expressing an emotion and reporting it, which aligns with the dichotomy of showing versus telling (Green, 2007). For instance, when an individual calmly and devoid of emotion states, "I am angry," they are reporting their anger, whether it is genuine or not. However, they have not expressed their anger. To truly express anger, they would need to display physical manifestations such as scowling, snarling, fuming, or other visible signs of anger (Glazer, 2016).

Additionally, there exists a distinction between expressing an emotion and coping with it. Coping with emotions involves intentionally engaging in behaviors aimed at fueling, extinguishing, or altering our feelings. For example, an individual may cope with disgust by pinching their nose, cope with anger by closing their eyes and counting to ten, or cope with grief by clutching a picture of a recently deceased loved one.

The third type of emotional expression, known as artistic expression, encompasses all forms of artifacts that convey emotions to observers (Green, 2007). It is important to note that I am not referring to artworks that depict natural or speaker expressions of emotion, such as Auguste Rodin's "Shame (Absolution)" or Edvard Munch's "The Scream."

III. Methods & Materials:

The researcher has chosen the corpus-based approach as a method for collecting and analyzing the necessary data due to its widespread popularity. This approach, known as corpus linguistics, involves studying language through the collection and examination of texts or text excerpts. The goal is to compile corpora that provide authentic data, enhancing the description and analysis of language structures in natural contexts. The internet is considered a valuable and abundant resource for gathering corpus data.

When it comes to determining the size of the corpus, there are no fixed rules or ideal guidelines for achieving study objectives. However, a general principle is that a larger corpus tends to be more reliable, while a smaller corpus may be less reliable (Abdulrazaq, 2011). To ensure the representativeness of the corpus, the researcher has selected 10 song lyrics from the folk tradition of the Levant. These songs, passed down through generations as folklore, encapsulate a range of emotions such as love, longing, and sadness.

These songs are:

١. بالي معاك
٢. هالأسمر اللون
٣. من الشباك لارميك حالي
٤. يا مسافرة في البحر
٥. شباكك مطفي
٦. يا ظريف الطول
٧. على دلعونا
٨. هلا لا ليا
٩. عالروزانا
١٠. يا مال الشام

1. Bali maeak
2. Hal'asmar allawn
3. Min alshibak larmilik haliun
4. Ya musafaratan fi albahr
5. Shibakuk mutfiun
6. Ya zarif altuwl
7. Ealaa dileuna
8. Halaa la lian

9. Ealrwzana '
10. ya mal al sham

IV. RESULTS:

To accomplish the objectives of this study, 10 songs from the folk of the Levant; 175 emotional expressions were located and categorized based on their types as illustrated in the following Table 1.

Table 1: Content analysis of emotional expressions in folk Arabic songs

Emotional	Number	Percentage
1. love	44	25.14%
2. Longing for the lover	12	6.86%
3. The like	8	4.57%
4. Longing for the homeland	6	3.43%
5. Sorrow	12	6.86%
6. Confusion	28	16.00%
7. The desire to meet the beloved	21	12.00%
8. The desire to return home	11	6.29%
9. Fear of separation	14	8.00%
10. Goodbye	19	10.86%

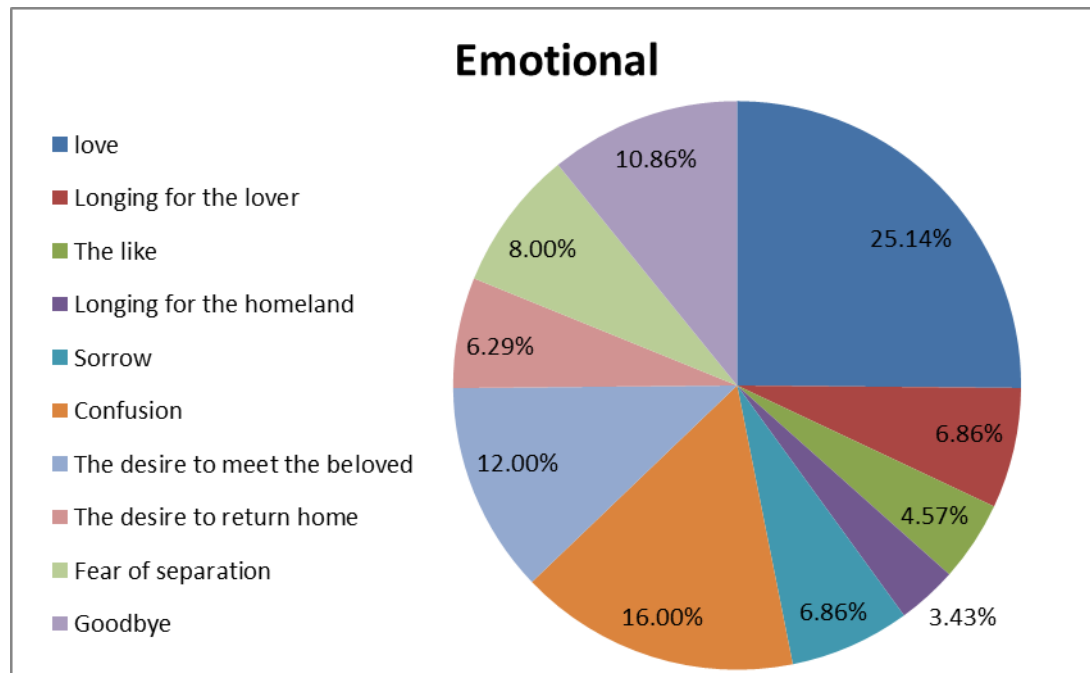


Fig. 1: The percentage of the emotions

The results presented in Table 1 provide an overview of the emotional expressions found in a study focused on folk Arabic songs from the Levant region. The study aimed to analyze these songs and categorize the emotional themes conveyed within them.

Love was the most prevalent emotional expression, with 44 instances, accounting for 25.14% of the total emotional expressions analyzed in the study. Longing for the beloved appeared 12 times, representing 6.86% of the total emotional expressions.

Fear of separation appeared 14 times, accounting for 8.00% of the total emotional expressions. Finally, Goodbye was found 11 times, making up 6.29% of the total emotional expressions.

V. Discussions:

The following emotional expressions appeared in the songs sampled in the study according to the following meanings:

1. love:

Love is a prominent and deeply cherished emotional expression found in folk Arabic songs. These songs beautifully capture the multifaceted nature of love and explore its various dimensions. Love, in the context of these songs, encompasses a wide range of emotions and experiences, reflecting the complexities of human relationships and the depth of affection individuals feel towards one another.

To cite examples:

غيرك ما يحلالي (بالي معاك)
هواك رمانى (هالأسمر اللون)
قلبي بروحي يوصلك ويرجعك (يا مسافرة)
فكري معاك نور يا حبيبي (بالي معاك)

2. Longing for the lover:

Longing for the lover is a recurring theme in folk Arabic songs, capturing the profound yearning and desire for a beloved individual. These songs beautifully convey the emotions and sentiments associated with longing, evoking a sense of intense longing, anticipation, and emotional attachment.

يا ربي نسبة هوا ترد الحلو ليا (عالروزانا)
طال المطال يا حلوة تعالى (يا مال الشام)
يا ربي يرجع زمن الأول (يا مال الشام)
قاعد ناظرك تترجعي (يا مسافرة)
خلاني حبك (على دلعونا)

3. The like:

"The like" for the lover is a sentiment often expressed in folk Arabic songs, showcasing a positive and affectionate emotional connection between the singer and their beloved. This expression reflects a deep fondness and admiration for the person they love, emphasizing the beauty, charm, and qualities that captivate the singer's heart.

يا ظريف الطول
يا حلوة تعالى (يا مال الشام)
عيني يا البنينة (هلا لا ليا)
يا حلو يا شاغل بالي (من الشباك لارميك حالي)

4. Longing for the homeland:

Popular Arabic songs evoke a deep sense of nostalgia and longing for home. These songs express a strong and deep emotional connection to the land, traditions and culture that have shaped the singer's identity. They represent pain, nostalgia, and longing for familiar experiences and sounds associated with home.

نسم هوا بلادي (هلا لا ليا)
هوا الشمال هب ورماني (على دلعونا)

4. Sorrow:

The emotion often conveyed by popular Arabic songs is sadness. This emotion also reflects the difficulties and challenges of public life. The lyrics and melodies of these songs convey the intensity of grief, which allows listeners to relate to and empathize with their shared experience of grief.

تعبان يا قلب (هالأسمر اللون)
وقليبي مطفي (شباكك مطفي)
في قلبي وجاع (هالأسمر اللون)

5. Confusion:

Popular Arabic songs also delve to some extent into the world of confusion, and speak largely about the doubts and complexities of human existence. These songs often express inner turmoil, hesitation, or confusion. The lyrics and melodies often speak of confusion and search for transparency and clarity, inviting listeners to reflect on their own experiences.

على أيش هالبغضة (هالأسمر اللون)
شو عملت الروزانا (عالروزانا)
وشلون أبين بالعم (شباكك مطفي)

6. The desire to meet the beloved:

We often find the connection between the feeling of love and the feeling of longing in popular Arabic songs, which express the intense desire to be close to the beloved. These songs convey to the listener the feeling of longing to see, touch, and be close to the person we love. These words and melodies arouse this desire when listening, and carry him to reach a state of anticipation and longing to meet his beloved.

على بالي هواكي (يا مال الشام)
عالم فوق الشط قاعد ناطرك (يا مسافرة)
وأقعد وانطر ليلية (شباكك مطفي)
ردي الولف ليا (عالروزانا)

7. The desire to return home:

popular arabic songs widely express the longing to return to the homeland, especially when the person lives far from his homeland or faces many problems in his life. these songs convey to the listener the close connection and great longing to meet loved ones, return to their familiar environment, and a sense of national belonging as well.

وأقول يا مرحبا .. نسّم هوا بلادي (هلا لا ليا)
بلادك أحسنلك (يا ظريف الطول)
ميتنا عاصي حماه (عالروزانا)

8. Fear of separation:

The fear and anxiety associated with separation from loved ones are often explored and addressed in popular songs. These songs express the strong emotional connection between individuals and the pain they feel when facing the possibility of separation or separation. The lyrics and melodies convey a sense of vulnerability and fear, inviting listeners to empathize with the universal experience of fear of separation.

وتعاشر الغير وتتساني أنا (يا ظريف الطول)
على ايش هالبغضة (هالأسمر اللون)
حبي معاكم راح (عالروزانا)

9. Goodbye:

Farewell is difficult moments that raise many emotions in popular Arabic songs. These songs express the sadness, longing, and nostalgia that we feel when parting with loved ones or bidding farewell to a specific place. The lyrics and melodies touch upon the depth of emotions that arise during farewell moments, allowing listeners to reflect on their own experiences in these moments.

جاي ودعك (يا مسافرة)
رايح عالغربة (يا ظريف الطول)

From what we discussed previously, we conclude that popular Arabic songs are rich in emotional expressions and touch upon many of our life experiences, and are characterized by the diversity of these expressions in one song of this genre .

They reflect multiple feelings with different meanings, and this is what helped them remain and continue in the list of Arabic songs to this day.

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