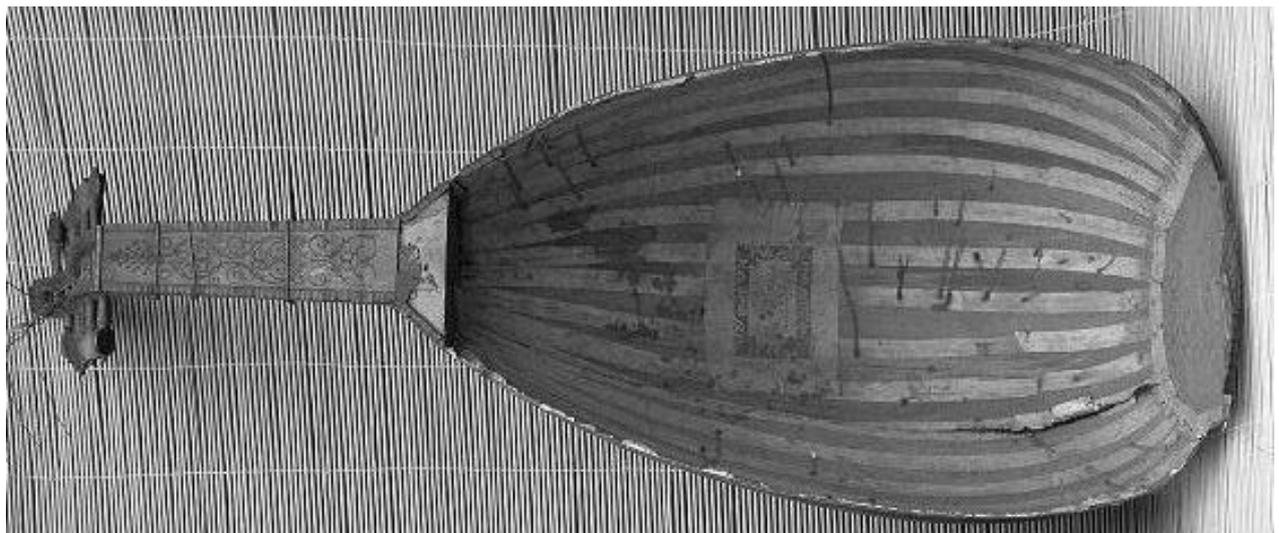


**An Unusual Late 19th C. Syrian Oud – a Link to the 16<sup>th</sup> C Laux Maler Lutes?**

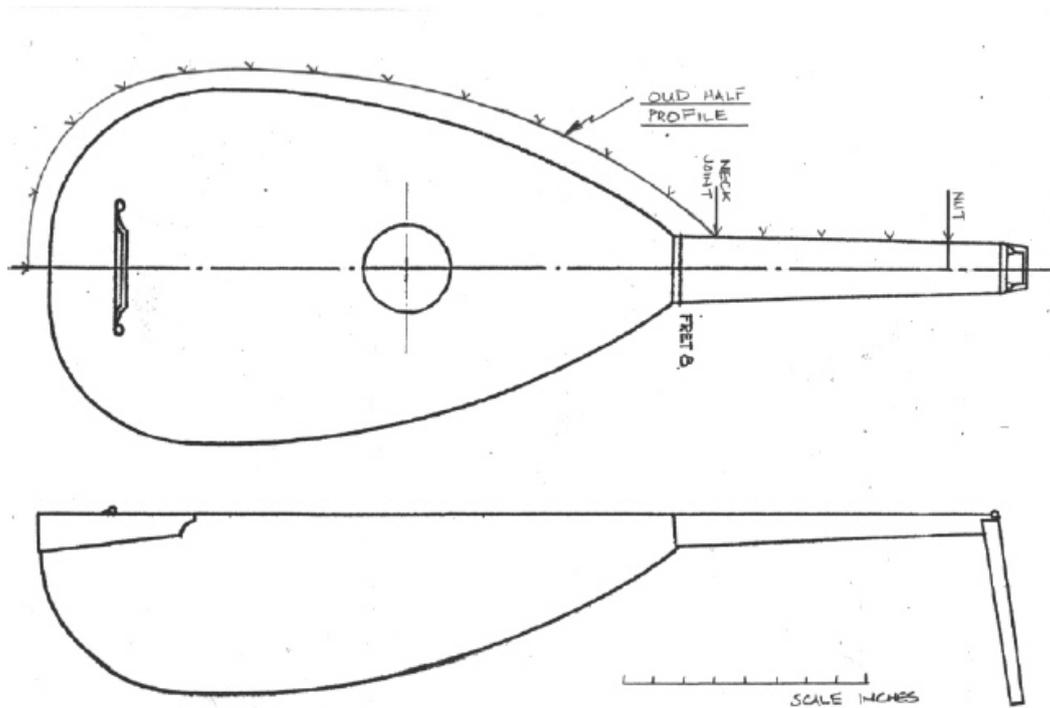
This large oud by Baseel al- Tounjy is dated 1889 and was made in Aleppo (Halab), Syria. It survives in rather poor condition, missing its sound board and outer ribs of the bowl, awaiting restoration (Note 1). The original sound board is thought to have been made from cedar wood – possibly Cedar of Lebanon. There are remnants of old tied gut frets on the neck.



The label reads "The work of Basil al-Tounjy, Carpenter, in Halab"

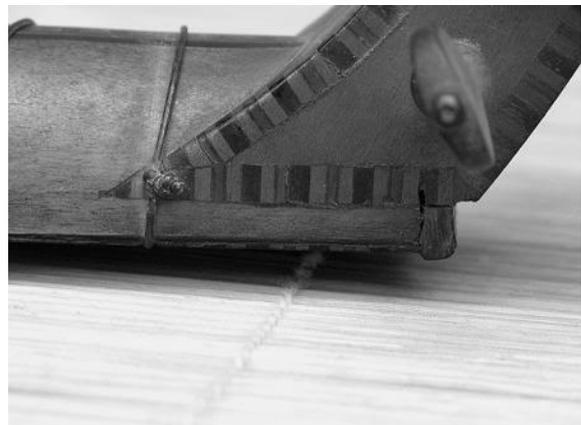


Although the exact profile of the oud body is difficult to assess due to the loss of the outer ribs, there appears to be a similarity between the geometry of this oud and those of the Laux Maler lutes of the 16<sup>th</sup> C.



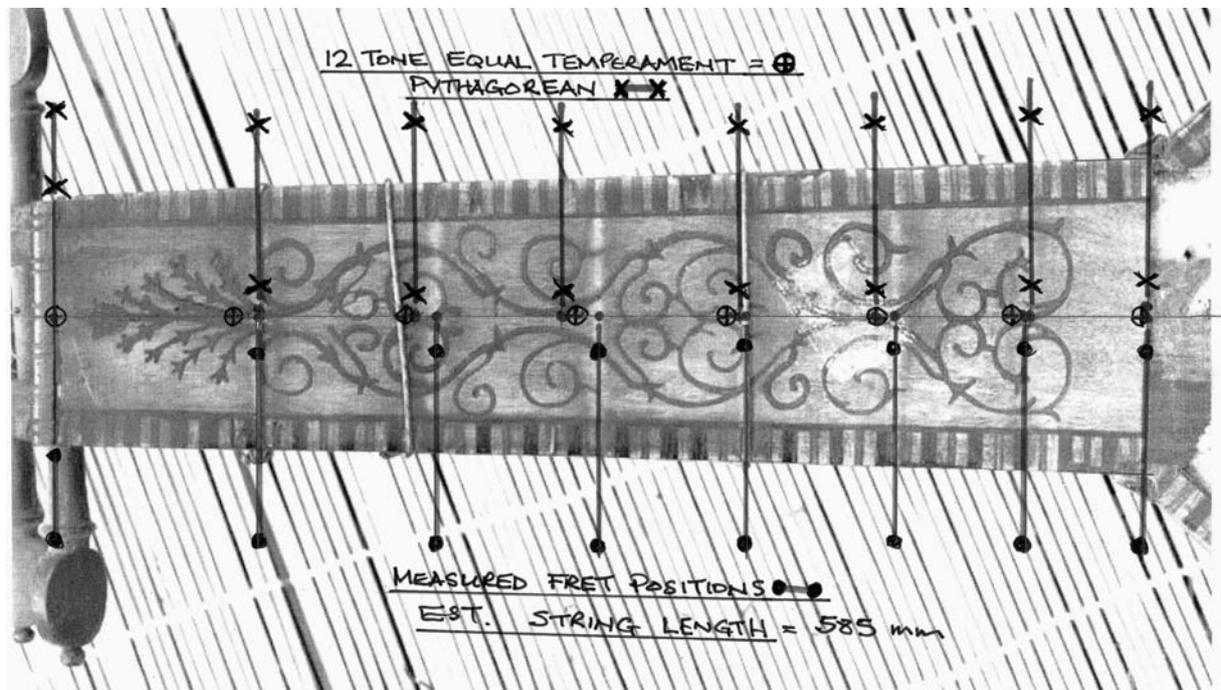
Here the oud profile is superimposed for comparison over a reconstruction of the Maler lute based upon the surviving Maler sound board # M154 in the Germanisches Nationalmuseum. (See Comm.128).

The elongated profile, overall length of the oud and relatively short neck length is unusual compared to a modern oud and other surviving ouds of the late 19<sup>th</sup> C. Also, 19<sup>th</sup> C ouds were not fretted.



The body of the oud measures about 568 mm in length, 323 mm maximum width and 203 mm deep. The neck (or finger board including the depth of the nut?) is 195 mm in length – just over ¼ the overall length of the oud. This is the proportion of the fingerboard length for an oud given by the Ikhwan al-Safa (10<sup>th</sup> C) and in the Kanz al-Tuhaf (14<sup>th</sup>C). There is no evidence to suggest that the neck has ever been shortened.

The oud had been fitted with tied on gut frets at some time past with seven frets to the neck joint - judging by the marks left by the frets on the fingerboard surface. From this evidence it can be concluded that the string length of the oud when fretted was about 585 mm. (which happens to be the string length of the modern Turkish oud). However, this string length gives a bridge position higher than the widest part of the sound board (See Fig 1) so, proportionally, is unlikely to be the original bridge location. Furthermore, the fret spacing appears to be close to 12 tone equal temperament which suggests that the oud may have been modified from its original state to serve as a lute – perhaps by a pioneering 20<sup>th</sup> C. European early music enthusiast?



Given the approximate dimensions measured from the oud in its present damaged condition, Fig. 1 is the best guess for a proposed geometry. See also Comms. 1935 and 1936. The approximate (single) soundhole location is assumed to be above the maker's label.

#### Notes

- 1) The oud is now in the possession of luthier Richard Hankey - <http://www.droud.com>. Thanks to former owner Ronny Andersson for permission to publish these images of the oud.

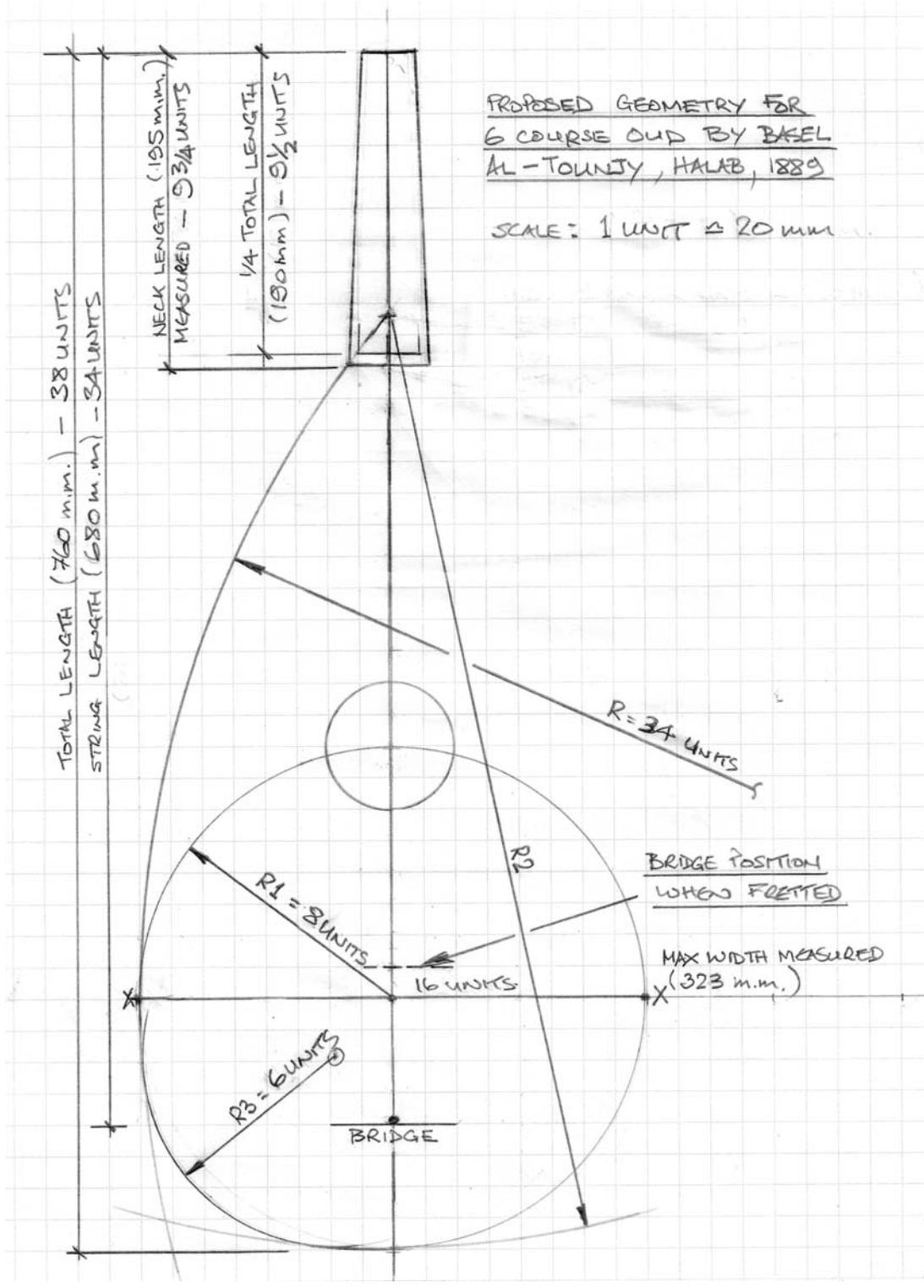


Fig 1