



**Cultural Parameters
of
Iranian Musical Expression**

Edited by Margaret Caton & Neil Siegel

انجمن موسیقی ملی

The Institute of Persian Performing Arts

Cultural Parameters of Iranian Musical Expression

Presented at the 1986 meetings of
The Middle East Studies Association
November, 1986

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Table of Contents

1. Performer-Audience Relationships in the <i>Bazm</i> . Mortezâ Varzi; assisted by Margaret Caton, Robyn C. Friend, and Neil Siegel	1
2. Contemporary Contexts for Iranian Professional Musical Performance. Robyn C. Friend and Neil G. Siegel	8
3. Melodic Contour in Persian Music, and its Connection to Poetic Form and Meaning. Margaret Caton	15
4. The Role of Religious Chant in the Definition of the Iranian Aesthetic. Thomas Reckord	23
5. Emotion and Trance: Musical Exorcism in Baluchistan. Jean During	31

Performer-Audience Relationships in the Bazm

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Abstract: The bazm is an intimate party at which refreshment and musical entertainment are provided. The role of the musical performer at the bazm is to establish a rapport that provides the proper environment for musical performance by means of an emotional and spiritual connection with the audience. The success of a bazm is largely dependent upon the ability of the performer to create a sense of unity among the participants.

This paper describes the traditional dynamics of the bazm, the establishment of communication between the performer and the audience, the relationship of poetry and mysticism to music, and the function and effects of music at a bazm.

A. Introduction

One of the most significant characteristics of Persian traditional music is its emphasis upon the relationship between the performer and the listener. This relationship has developed both because of the spiritual nature of the music, and the spiritual needs of the Persian listeners. In this paper, I examine the origins of the spirituality of Persian traditional music, and show how this influenced the performer-listener relationship in one of the most traditional musical settings, the bazm.

B. Origins and Development of Persian Classical Music

Iranian traditional music and poetry have their roots in religion. The oldest form of Persian poetry, sorud, began as Zoroastrian hymn singing. Throughout classical times, urban musical performance developed in two distinct settings: (1) at the court of the Šâh, his princes, and the parties (bazm) of the nobility, and (2) at performances of passion shows and religious gatherings, ceremonies,

and mourning periods. These latter could be either public or private events.

Music in the first category included the use of a wide range of musical instruments, and featured both group and solo performances, rhythmic and non-rhythmic pieces, and reng (dance music). The music of the second category employed a narrower range of musical instruments, usually limited to drums, ney, qarâneý (a kind of clarinet), bugle, horn, and chains at the mourning processions. Music and poetry in this category were mainly based on the stories related to the martyrdom of the descendants of Ali, the fourth Caliph, who was also the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law.

Perhaps as a result of Iran's turbulent history, two apparently parallel, but in fact opposing sets of religious beliefs have developed in Iran; namely, Shiism and Sufism. Music and poetry played a great role in both. Mosques and Sufi temples, called Khânagâh, grew in number through competition. Religious and Sufi ceremonies and rituals gradually took the shape of social and musical events, one in the open, the other behind closed doors. The music of the Khânagâh made use of more traditional musical instruments to the extent that some of them, like çoghor and to some extent ney, became exclusively associated with spiritual music.

Most of the classical singers performed both religious and secular music, but generally received their training from and started their singing in religious music. Symbolism in poetry helped the singer use more or less the same lines of poetry for both types of performance. Secular poets sang of carnal love; when a Sufi poet talked of the "beloved", he meant God.

C. Persian Perspective on Persian Classical Music

For Persians, music is not exclusively an entertainment; it is spiritual as well as social. That is why even during those periods when music was banned by Islamic authority, it was still easy for music to find a secure home in religion itself.

Persians consider the spiritual content of their music very important. They point to the moderate climate, the clear and starry nights, the fragrant floral scenes in the traditional rose gardens, and the enchanting love songs of the nightingale, and like to think that these have combined to make the Persian people very emotional, poetic, and passionately in love with music. They also like to view themselves as being dreamers, somewhat impractical, always eager to shed tears, and not so firmly down-to-earth. They speak of Persians being

"in love with love"; if they have no human love to shed tears for, they will shed tears for love of God. Perhaps as an example of this character are the distinctly Persian "passion shows", called *ta'ziye*. In any case, while these claims are difficult to assess, such themes are rampant in the poems and song lyrics that the Persians cherish.

It is certainly clear that many Persian musicians viewed playing music as an important, perhaps even sacred, activity. They speak of music being the language of God. Some performers always performed the Muslim prayer ablution before playing music (this practice persists today among Persian and Turkish Sufi musicians). It is a Persian belief that when God created Adam out of clay, He whispered love musically into his ears and thereby gave him life. Hâfeẓ, the immortal Persian poet, says in one of his *ghazals*:

"The message of your love was whispered to me yesterday, my breast is still full of music."

Persians do not think that appreciating and understanding their music comes easy, or without effort; they feel that one must achieve a certain state of preparation before one can participate and contribute to the proper atmosphere of a *bazm*. This attitude has resulted in a fairly high level of knowledge about Persian music; a much higher level of knowledge, say, than the average American would have about Western classical music. They speak of seven conditions or steps necessary in order to understand the poetry of Hâfeẓ; while they may not explicitly define an analogous set of conditions for understanding and appreciating Persian music, there is wide consensus that an unspoken such set must exist.

D. *Hâl*

Before proceeding to a description of a traditional *bazm*, I would like to describe the Persian concept of *hâl*. This is originally an Arabic word which means "state" or "condition". In the context of Persian music, *hâl* has acquired a mystical connotation. It refers to the spiritual mood of the audience and the performer. As I discuss later, one of the primary responsibilities of the performer is to comprehend and facilitate the *hâl* of an audience and the total performing situation.

Persians believe that there are certain mystical needs of the body; these needs can be filled both by meditation and by music. Music can change the listener,

and take him out of himself, and in a mystical sense, join him with God. Hâl is the state where one is taken away from oneself. When one is conscious of oneself, the environment, the furniture, other people, and so forth, that is not hâl.

In addition to affecting the audience, music can also change the performer. In a state of hâl, the musician does things that are not necessarily planned, but just "come out" because he is not himself.

Hâl is not the goal, but the vehicle. The goal is a kind of understanding or reunion. There are two processes involved: one is to take the listener out of himself, and the other is to do things to him while he is there. Such an experience gives spiritual rest and relief; as though you've had a spiritual purgative and gotten rid of everything, and thereby become pure and simple. After the music the listener feels a great weight lifted from his shoulders. It purifies the listener by taking the soul out of the body, and lets the music do the work on the body.

E. Preparing for Music at the Bazm

I now describe the bazm, a traditional setting for listening to Persian classical music.

The bazm is an intimate party at which refreshment and musical entertainment were provided; traditionally, this is considered one of the best settings for enjoying Persian music. The use of concert hall settings for Persian classical music is a modern, Western-oriented phenomenon, whose history extends back only about seventy to eighty years. In Iran, such concerts were generally attended by only a small minority of mostly Western-educated people.

Persian intellectuals have always looked down on religious ceremonies as something barbaric and reactionary; but since they also acknowledge the spiritual need for music, even they would attend a weekly evening bazm. The spirituality of the bazm was respected by both the audience and the performer.

The bazm always started on a very cold and formal basis. The only informal aspect of the beginning of the party was that the guests did not arrive at the scheduled time. It was as if the beginning of the evening were not of any significance. If one were to arrive on time, the hosts would be shocked and taken by surprise, simply because they would not be prepared on time either. It was the end of the bazm that no one would dare to miss.

The guests would start arriving individually, in couples, or in groups. Each related group would retire to a special corner of the guest room, minding their own business and carrying on with conversations that had been started before their arrival. The hosts also would largely leave their guests alone, running back and forth between the kitchen and the guest room, supervising or getting personally involved in carrying trays of tea, beverages, and snacks.

By that time, the party would look like the members of the Security Council at a break. Most of the faces during this time would be serious.

When the performer arrived, the seriousness would be swept away, and the heretofore divided group would form into a single communal assembly.

There might be some new faces in the crowd; for example, because of a new marriage in the family. Formal introductions would be carried out by the host, and the performer would usually keep a conversation with the newcomers in the hope of finding a previous link with them, which might take the form of a mutual friend, a distant relative, or even a mutual neighbor at one time or another. They had to make sure that they were not total strangers to one another.

Traditionally, the role of the performer was to communicate with the guests at a bazm both personally and musically in order to establish a rapport. This rapport was considered necessary in order to provide the proper environment for musical performance, through an emotional and spiritual connection with the audience. The success of a bazm was largely dependent upon the ability of the performer to create a sense of unity among the participants.

The connection was expedited by a common cultural background. Both listener and performer in a bazm were steeped in a poetic and philosophical tradition which bound together their expression and experience of the music. The performer's communication with the audience and their common experience would provide the environment for potential inspiration, and a creative performer-listener relationship.

According to his awareness of the mood and needs of the audience at any one moment, the performer would draw from his storehouse of melodies, each of which have their associated moods; he would literally play on the emotions and spirit of the audience, drawing out of them sadness, remembrance, healing, or joy as the inspiration moved him. A prerequisite to this was improvisation, the

creative ability of the performer.

An example of a traditional performer known for his exceptional ability to communicate with the audience was the late singer, Banân. He was noted for his ability to put across exactly the same feeling the poet had in mind. He did this by carefully choosing the right piece (*guše*), the right ornamentation (*tahrir*), and the right amount of rest in between. Before performing, he would analyze the lines of the poetry so that when he sang a line, he knew exactly what it meant at various levels of interpretation.

This, then, was the essence of the traditional Persian musical performance. A Persian performer could not do a satisfactory job unless some kind of communication had already been established between him and his listeners. He had to mix with the crowd, acting as if he had a secret that he could share only with those with whom he has established some kind of emotional link. As soon as he had established this link with his audience, he would be ready to perform.

Before the music would begin, the guest room would gradually take on a different atmosphere. Furniture would be pushed aside, and lights reduced. Everybody would try to find a place on the floor as close as possible to the performer. With the candles burning in absolute silence, the performer would prepare himself to take his flight into the skies of divinity, making sure he felt secure about every individual in the audience. This was the most important moment in a performer's life, his union with his God.

The musical selections would be meditative and transcendental; much of it would not employ cyclic musical rhythms. The performance would continue in this vein until the performer felt the listeners were fully satiated, some having shed their tears, lost in their thoughts and memories.

At the end of the musical performance, a dance piece would be played to bring the audience back to the present reality and to "break the spell". Persians are very poetical and one can hardly find a person who does not know some lines of poetry by heart, which is used regularly as a part of daily conversations. They love dance and song. But, although some of them are very good at these performing arts, customarily they deny their skill, or even their knowledge of these things. They must be pushed into performance. But soon, they would get carried away with the dance music, and it would become difficult to stop them. At this stage everybody, skillful or clumsy, would be dragged into the dancing. This dancing would help them to release the emotional tension built

up by the music, and would prepare them for the main meal, which was always the end of the entertainment, usually some time in the morning.

At the end of the party, the host would be apologetic to the guests, expressing his concern that their evening had been spoiled, that there had not been enough food, and that they had been deprived of their own meal at home.

F. Conclusions

The traditional performance of Persian classical music involved many elements other than the correct production of notes and lyrics. The religious and spiritual roots of Persian classical music are reflected in the serious and spiritual intent of the *bazm*. Persians feel that one must achieve a certain state of preparation before one can participate and contribute to the proper *hâl* of a *bazm*. The performer plays a key role in assessing the emotional and spiritual state of the audience; he leads them to an emotional catharsis through his selection of appropriate *dastgâh*-s, *guše*-s, *tâhrir*, and lyrics.

It is clear from the preceding description of the *bazm* why concert performing situations and nightclubs would not be considered suitable replacements for the traditional *bazm*. Although traditional performers today do not eschew the concert hall (they usually do avoid the nightclub), they do not expect to create the same effect as at the *bazm*.

Fairchild wrote in 1904: ". . . one needs the setting of the orient to realize what these songs are: the warm, clear Persian night; the lamps and lanterns shining on the glowing colors of native dresses; the surrounding darkness where dusky shadows hover; the strange sound of music; voices, sometimes so beautiful, rising and falling in persistent monotony -- all this is untranslatable, but the impression left on one is so vivid and so full of enchantment that one longs to preserve it in some form."

Reference:

Fairchild, Blair. *Twelve Persian Folk Songs*. London; Novello and Company, Ltd., 1904, page 2.

Contemporary Contexts for Iranian Professional Musical Performance

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Abstract: The presence of a sizable population of Iranian immigrants in Los Angeles has provided an opportunity to observe at first hand the degree of retention of traditional Iranian cultural phenomena. This study focuses on the cultural phenomena related to Iranian professional musical entertainment, comparing contemporary practice in Los Angeles to that of other temporal and cultural settings. The purposes of such a comparison are to assess the continuity and adaptability of Iranian culture in another cultural setting, to determine the antecedents of current performance practice, and to assess the degree of retention of the traditional culture.

A. **Introduction**

Our performance and study activities have brought us into regular social contact with the Iranian community of Los Angeles. We have therefore been able to learn something of their attitudes towards music, dance, and performance. The question naturally arises of how these attitudes have been changed by the fact of their exile from their homeland. In this paper we discuss this topic using examples from our observations in Los Angeles, from 1981 to the present time.

B. **The Iranian Community in Los Angeles**

The Iranian community in Los Angeles is quite large. Some estimates place the number as high as 300,000 to 400,000; more modest estimates place the number around 100,000. This population has arrived largely during the last 35 years, in two major waves: first, a mostly Jewish migration in the 1950's and 1960's, and second, a more broadly-based migration concentrated around the

time of the 1979 revolution. The Los Angeles Iranian community now includes all of the religious faiths traditionally (i.e., before the 1979 revolution) present in Iran: Muslims, Bahá'í-s, Jews, Armenian and Nestorian (Assyrian) Christians, Zoroastrians, and various Sufi orders.

The occupations pursued by the members of this community are as eclectic as the surrounding American society, and include medicine, engineering, and all types of businesses, including everything from banking and clothing boutiques to frozen yoghurt. Other less Westernized professions include both kosher and *hallâl* (Islamic version of kosher) butcher shops, marriage solemnizing, calligraphy, and astrology. Los Angeles can also boast of locally-produced Iranian television and radio shows, and an Iranian "yellow pages" directory.

This community has undergone a great deal of assimilation, especially in dress and fashion. In accordance with American tastes, a slim figure is now preferred to the traditional well-fed look. Current American fashion is preferred for women, and suits for men. Still, Iranian style and taste remain evident in many ways, and this veneer of assimilation is not always apparent to Americans: one American complained to us that the Iranian men she knew just wouldn't assimilate, and insisted on wearing their native costumes. By this she meant beige or white silk three-piece suits.

There are a number of musicians and singers now living in Los Angeles who were well-known in Iran, including Bijan Samandar, Mehdi Takestâni, Aqili, and Alâhe. There are also a few very traditional musicians such as Morteżâ Varzi and Zolfonum. In addition, there are many musicians and singers who perform Westernized popular-style Persian music, such as Ebi, Hâyde, and Vigen.

C. Current Contexts and Attitudes for Traditional Iranian Music

Our studies have concentrated primarily on the more traditional music, and the degree to which Iranian elements are preferred over westernized elements at traditional-style musical events. We have examined several elements of the traditional *bazm* in order to determine the extent to which they have undergone some form of Westernization.

In accordance with tradition, a great deal of social status is still to be gained from having musicians -- especially traditional musicians -- at one's parties, and in treating them well. The musicians are amongst the earliest to arrive, and are immediately attended to with pillows, drinks, and food. This feature is

especially important for the Iranian community in exile: many of these people were formerly quite wealthy, and lived a life-style that is impossible for them to maintain in this country. Status accrues from the projection of an image, even to the extent of giving a false impression of one's true financial circumstances. In this situation, high social status is especially important, where high financial status is not possible.

People most definitely wish to appear to be interested in and knowledgeable about Iranian traditional music, and in general, the over-all level of knowledge is fairly high: most are familiar with the dastgâh concept, and can usually recognize some of the more common dastgâh-s and guše-s. (The terms dastgâh and guše are described in the following paper by Margaret Caton.) This is particularly interesting in light of the very small number of Iranians in Los Angeles who are systematically studying Persian music. We shall return to this point later in this paper.

The order of events found today at a bazm includes both traditional elements, plus elements altered to suit new circumstances. In accordance with tradition, guests do not arrive on time. Drinks are served as guests chat with one another. However, only light snacks are served, rather than the traditional complete mezze (consisting of kebabs, cheese, bread, etc.), and the main meal comes in the middle of the party (i.e., around 10:00 or 11:00 p.m.), rather than at the very end, as was formerly the case. There are various plausible reasons put forth for the change in the order and type of food served:

- Traditionally, there were many servings of mezze more or less continuously up until the meal. Now, to conform to western standards of beauty, many people eat less than traditionally was the case.
- In traditional Iran, there would be many servants available to assist the hosts in preparing and serving the mezze and the meal. Now, a hostess must do without servants; this leads to a consolidation of the food into one meal, served earlier so that the hostess can be free to enjoy the guests and the music.

Still, the meal usually consists solely of Persian traditional food, served in great quantities, and personally prepared by the hostess, together with her daughters, daughters-in-law, and other female members of the household.

Sometime after the meal, the lights are dimmed and the musical performance begins. This performance to a great extent still conforms to traditional

practice: the order of musical events (*piš-darâmad*, *darâmad*, vocal and instrumental *âvâz*, rhythmic pieces, dance pieces) is identical to that introduced around the turn of the century. Traditional modes and tunings are used.

Hâl, one of the most important traditional elements of the *bazm*, still plays a central role. Great emphasis is placed upon pleasing the musicians, as it is understood that in order for them to play well, they must feel relaxed and satisfied, and they must feel comfortable, and must feel that they are "in communion" with their audience. A great show is made of providing comfortable cushions, drinks, snacks, and subdued lighting.

The artist will still select a *dastgâh* on the spot, based on the current mood of the audience. The ability to make an appropriate selection is considered one of the signs of the sensitive performing artist. The selection is based on the audience's perceived current state, and the performer's judgment about how they will react to various musical stimuli. Persians still associate specific emotions with each *dastgâh* and *guše*. Catharsis through the shedding of tears is also still highly desirable.

Dancing is perhaps more common today at the *bazm* than was formerly the case. However, the traditional attitudes that music is to be preferred over dance, and that "nice girls don't dance", persist. A girl or woman still must be given considerable urging before she will dance, even if she truly wants to do so. In any case, this is social dancing, not a professional entertainment. Traditionally, a professional dancer might be hired to perform for the guests. We know of no professional traditional Persian dancers in Los Angeles, so if a host wishes to have a professional dancer at his party, he must resort to an American-style belly-dancer. This does not happen very often, as many Iranians do not seem to care for belly-dancing.

Other events of a strictly traditional nature still do occur at a *bazm*; these include recitation of poetry (which might be composed extemporaneously by the speaker); guest performances of singing, or less frequently, on an instrument; and *fâl-e Hâfeẓ* (a traditional form of fortune-telling).

In former times, the music went on until as late as 6 a.m.; this is no longer possible in the close living situations of apartment life. These days, the music must end earlier in order to accommodate neighbors. However, it is still not unheard of for the party to continue quietly until 5 or 6 in the morning.

D. Trends

There is evidence of increasing Westernization of Iranian traditional music in Los Angeles; this could possibly lead to almost total Westernization. Various causes and effects can be cited:

- It is common for modern Persian popular-style music in the form of audio cassettes to be played at a bazm prior to the beginning of the live performances. Presumably, many parties are held at which this is the only source of music.
- Many Iranians in Los Angeles find it easier or more suitable to go to nightclubs at which Westernized popular-style Persian music is played, and turn less to the bazm for their musical fulfillment.
- The popularity and commercial success of musicians who play only Westernized popular-style Persian music on modern Western-style musical instruments has been increasing. The following should be noted in connection with this phenomena:
 - Traditional musicians are currently relatively unavailable. There are few of them, and most have occupations other than music. This limits the time they can make available for performance. Many traditional musicians explicitly avoid performing in nightclubs, an act perceived as having a deleterious effect on the spirituality of their music.
 - It is difficult to obtain and maintain traditional Persian musical instruments. The result is that musicians tend to use the instruments that are available, such as the piano, violin, electric guitar, and electric bass. Except for the violin, these instruments are completely unsuitable for playing traditional musical modes, or for playing in an intimate, contemplative setting. Such instruments do not usually appear at the bazm.
- Even when traditional Persian musical instruments are used, they might be played in non-traditional ways, such as playing parallel harmonies on setâr and târ, playing highly-arranged orchestrations of traditional

pieces, playing new compositions which do not follow traditional patterns, and so forth.

- Despite the fact that Iranians in Los Angeles appear to be knowledgeable about and interested in their traditional music, there are few students studying with the traditional masters. Efforts in the recent past to develop schools for teaching traditional music have not been completely successful, notably the *Honar Kade* experiment of a couple of years ago.
- Most of the available musicians and teachers are conservatory-trained. Rather than having studied "at the feet of a master", they have learned a Westernized form of Iranian traditional music, using sheet music and Western-style "scientifically"-organized teaching methods. The training received by these musicians placed less emphasis than did the traditional methods upon the art of improvisation, which in the past was considered a vital element of Iranian traditional music; instead, many of these musicians play mostly composed pieces, often using sheet music rather than playing from memory.
- It is nearly impossible to obtain traditional instruments from Iran; it is also difficult to repair and maintain them. This makes it very difficult to pursue studies of this type of music.

Still, there are currently efforts underway in Los Angeles, by both Iranians and interested Americans, to arrest the growing Westernization of Iranian traditional music, and to preserve as much as possible of the traditional music in its traditional form. For example, both Iranian and American instrument-makers are starting to learn to reproduce traditional instruments using local materials. There is a growing interest among Iranians (as well as some Americans) to study with the available traditional masters. Organizations have been established to preserve and perform traditional music: these include the *Bahâri* Ensemble, *Oššâq*, members of one of the local Sufi groups, and The Institute of Persian Performing Arts (*Anjoman-e Musiqi-ye Melli*).

E. Conclusion

The pressures of living in exile in the United States have certainly had an effect on the social and cultural life of the Iranians in Los Angeles. However,

regardless of the individual attitudes towards contemporary events in Iran, Iranians in Los Angeles deem it important to retain contact with traditional aspects of their culture. This is true even for those whose musical sophistication is not great, or for those who actually prefer Westernized Persian music to traditional Persian music. In exile, having traditional musicians perform at one's home continues to have high social value, and provides status to the host. While Westernization certainly is a factor in the cultural life of Iranian immigrants, it is clear that many of the most significant of their cultural traditions are still cherished and preserved. It is to be hoped that, despite the upheavals in Iran and Iranian society, the traditional art music of Iran can continue to flourish even in exile.

Melodic Contour in Persian Music, and its Connection to Poetic Form and Meaning

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Abstract: In the classical *dastgâh* system, melodic contour is generally arch-shaped, moving from low to high to low pitch, both within musical phrases and over the *dastgâh* structure as a whole. This formal structure serves an emotional and spiritual function connected with the structure and content of Persian poetry and associated philosophically with Persian mysticism.

In Persian language and music, pitch is often associated with stress or accent. Musical phrases progress from a sense of relaxation to that of tension and again to relaxation. Over several phrases the high-pitch area tends to occur on the non-rhymed first hemistich of a couplet of poetry, which often contains emotional expressions as well. Each subsequent couplet raises the pitch level slightly until the climax of the *dastgâh* is reached, at which point a series of phrases returns the piece to the original pitch level.

Formal and cognitive elements combine to create an overall effect of a gradual stress-and-release pattern, which takes the listener from a state of relaxation to one of tension where the crux of the emotional message is given, whereupon he is released and returned to his original state. In result, form is used as a device to increase the impression and impact of the poetic message upon the listener. An analogy might be made to the *Mevlevî* dervish *samâ'* (spiritual concert), where each person is gradually taken by a prescribed set of steps from a motionless earth-bound state to a spiritually heightened awareness during the dance and then is returned again to his original condition.

Music, then, acts as a method of deepening the impact of poetry upon the

listener and of gradually inducing a state of receptivity and inspiration.

A. Introduction

Persian classical music is associated with Persian mysticism. It is considered an ethereal or intangible art, closely connected to the spiritual realm. Many Sufis (Islamic mystics) have considered it as a door to the world of spirit and a means of bringing about a sense of unity with all things. Along with other spiritual practices, it is considered one of the means of attaining the mystical experience. Sufis elevated listening to certain spiritual music to a form of worship and called it samâ'. Today, Persian classical music is considered by many as being similar in form and purpose to this samâ'.

Poetry is considered as the major vehicle for conveying the concepts of Persian mysticism (Rypka: 229). Music is seen as a means of heightening and bringing out the meaning and emotion latent within this poetry. The primary poetic forms for this music are the classical ghazal, masnavi, and robâ'i; particularly the poems of Hâfeẓ, Sa'di, and Rumi. They contain mystical symbols that portray the desirability of reunion, describing the state one attains as intoxication.

B. Musical Concepts

Traditional classical Persian music is based on the dastgâh system, which organizes small melodic and motivic units into 12 different groups based upon the concept of modal progression. The concept of mode in Persian music includes both use of particular tones and arrangements of these tones, and also extra-musical associations such as mood and characteristic meaning, particularly on a mystical level. Each of these dastgâh-s have their own state they would ideally evoke; such as majesty, melancholic wisdom, or desire for reunion.

The ghazal, a form of lyric poetry, is the main poetic form used in the body of the vocal performance (âvâz) of the dastgâh. It unifies the music thematically and rhythmically. The major portion of the âvâz has no musical meter, but instead is organized rhythmically by the poetic meter of the ghazal. The poetic meter is based on syllable length, which is condensed or expanded according to musical interpretation.

The musical form is also organized around the poetic form. The ghazal

consists of five to seventeen couplets, some of which are chosen by the singer for his performance. The musical phrase follows the poetic phrase, and is organized into distich (*beyt*), hemistiches (*mesrâ'*), and internal phrases. The phrasing is usually symmetrical and according to poetic feet. These phrases are defined by pauses in the music (see Example 1). The poetic line itself is usually preceded and followed by wordless vocalization.

The *ghazal* uses monorhyme, with the second *mesrâ'* of each couplet rhyming: aa / ba / ca / da. Musically, there is often a cadence at the end of the rhyming *mesrâ'*, a return to a consistent reference pitch. Each non-rhymed portion often initiates a new pitch level. These new pitch levels are usually associated with different pieces (*guše*) within the *dastgâh*, and each is usually in a different mode. Thus, for each couplet or two there is a different musical piece used to express it. These pieces follow each other in a specified order designed to create the desired effect on the listener.

The following example from the opening of *Dastgâh-e Mâhur* illustrates the basic structure of one of these pieces (see Example 2 and Illustration 1).

C. Stress Patterns

Language scholars have analyzed the intonation patterns of Persian sentences. Lambton describes two types of intonation groups -- the suspensive and the final (260-262). The suspensive group begins low, and progresses to one pitch-level higher. The final group proceeds immediately to the high pitch level, and returns gradually to the lower pitch level. Khânlâri, in doing research on stress patterns in Persian poetry, found that accent is primarily tonal, stress being associated with slightly raised pitch, accompanied by some dynamic emphasis (151).

A suspensive followed by a final intonation group may be characterized as slightly arched in melodic contour (see Example 3). Persian music follows this same melodic or intonation pattern, starting from a low pitch and proceeding stepwise to the next pitch and then returning to the original. Once a new pitch is established, a higher pitch is introduced in the next piece. Each higher-pitched area returns to the original reference pitch at the end of the couplet (see Example 4).

Illustration 2 shows a piece in the *Dastgâh-e Šur (Kerešme)*. The poetic couplet is divided into four phrases. Phrase 1 establishes the reference pitch, phrases 2 and 3 proceed to progressively higher pitch areas and phrase 4

returns to the original pitch. Within each phrase and over the four phrases as a whole there is an ascending-descending pattern, or arch-shaped melodic contour. The first, second, and fourth phrases conclude on the reference pitch (see Example 5).

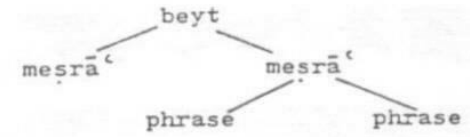
The same reference pitch (*ist*) is maintained through several pieces, while the stress pitch (*šâhed*) is often raised by one for each subsequent piece or series of pieces. The music advances by pitch level (*maqâm*), going progressively higher to the climax (*owj*), which is the highest pitch level. This occurs somewhere between one-half and three-quarters of the way through a performance. Once the stress pitch (*šâhed*) has reached a sufficient distance from the reference pitch, usually a fourth or fifth step away, a new reference pitch is established and the stress pitches are contrasted with this new pitch area (see Example 6). After the *owj* is reached, the musical line descends to the original reference pitch. This descent from the *owj* is more rapid than the ascent to it. The overall pattern is one of alternating tension and relaxation, allowing gradual adaptation to higher and higher pitch areas.

This process may be compared to the *samâ'*, where through a set of prescribed procedures the listeners are gradually led into a state of trance through music and dance. In the case of Persian classical music, it is not done by means of repetitive rhythm or body movements, but primarily by means of the dynamic tension between stress and reference pitches.

Formal and cognitive elements combine to create an overall effect of a gradual stress-and-release pattern, which takes the listener from a state of relaxation to one of tension where the crux of the emotional message is given, whereupon he is released and returned to his original state. In result, form is used as a device to increase the impression and impact of the poetic message upon the listener.

It is the belief in the ability and desirability of surrendering to the poetry and music that predisposes the listener to go into what is referred to as *hâl*, a type of meditative trance or altered state. This is the mystical experience of reunion. It is there that music enhances and interprets the poetic meaning, primarily by means of this stress-release pattern.

Ex. 1:

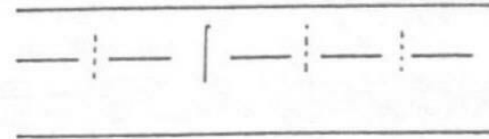


Ex. 2:

vocalization

poetry

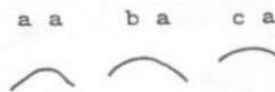
ornamented
vocalization



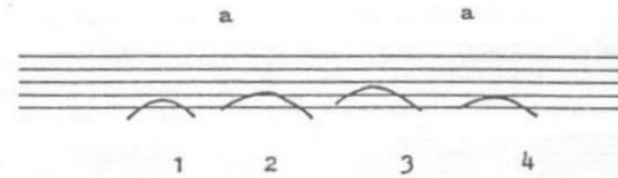
Ex. 3:



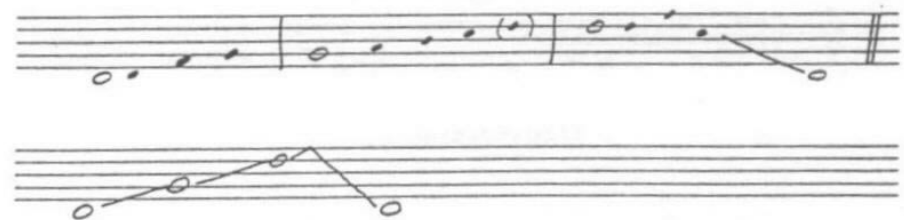
Ex. 4:



Ex. 5:



Ex. 6:



DASTGĀH-E-MĀHŪR دستگاه ماهور

1 - Darāmad درآمد

♩ = ca 80

ā nān ke hā - āk rā - be na zar

kī miyā - ko riā and ā yā - bā wad

ke gū - ze - mi be mā ko nan and

peca rīf

dardam nahofte beh ze ta bi bā - nemo'adai

bā - sad - ke az ha zā ne ye gey ba3

da wā ko nan and

Illustration 1.

2 - Kercime

۲ - کرشمه



کهن شود بکس را بر دگر کار دارد
مگر مرا که همان مهر آدل است در یاد

سعدی

Illustration 2.

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The Role of Religious Chant in the Definition of the Iranian Aesthetic

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Abstract: This paper on the religious chant in the *rowže*, the most frequent and widespread of Iranian mourning ceremonies, will detail some of the musical techniques structuring this chant, and will move toward a clarification of its relationship to other genres of music in Iran by explicating three key terms used by the performers to describe their art.

In the spectrum of Iranian musics, religious chant occupies a unique and important position as the most frequently heard and sung by the masses. In particular, the chant associated with the *rowže* -- the ceremony of mourning performed on the commemorations of the deaths of the Imams, loved ones, and throughout *Moharram* and *Safar* -- and the related chant of the *nowhe* have been the genres with the most widespread popular participation. They contain musical, poetic, and dramatic elements that are integral to any definition of Iranian music.

The three terms are *sabk* (style), the term used in discussions of the art of chanting vis-a-vis the classical musical system; *monâsebh* (appropriate), describing the combination of contextual and musical elements which results in the desired effect of bringing the audience to tears; and *hozn* (sadness or pathos), the distinctive emotional complex which characterizes this religious chant tradition.

These genres of religious chant and their contexts are an essential component in the presentation of any balanced overview of Iranian musical and artistic traditions.

Introduction.

In this paper, I present some key terms used by performers of religious chant to describe their art. These terms signify cultural complexes that play an essential role in understanding the nature of aesthetic judgments and artistic techniques in Iranian musical expression, and in Iranian artistic expression as a whole.

The three terms used most frequently by chanters in discussions of their performances are sabk, individual style or way; monâsebh, suitable or appropriate; and hozn, sadness or pathos. These terms were used in discussions of chanting for the rowže, the most frequent and widespread religious ceremony in Iran, during my fieldwork (1974-1977). It consists of presentations by preachers and several types of professional, semi-professional, and amateur chanters, and may even include hymns sung by the audience. The rowže is a ceremony of mourning performed for commemorations of the deaths of the Imams, loved ones, and throughout the months of Moharram and Safar.

It is this body of chant that I believe, as a result of its frequency and influence, forms the core of knowledge and experience of music and defines aesthetic standards of musical expression for the majority of the Iranian population.

A. Sabk

Sabk is a term used by those performers who attempt to clarify the relationship of their art vis-a-vis the classical music system of Iran (the radif). Many are reluctant to discuss the radif directly (for reasons presented later), but insist that each person defines their own musical system for "reading" poetry in their own distinctive way. Thus, the listener should not attempt to hear relationships to the classical system of mode; rather, each performer should be accepted within the boundaries he sets. Their art is not a "defective" version of the radif, but rather a distinctive art.

Despite this approach, many chanters do speak directly of the modes of the radif in their discussions of religious chant, and many authors see this chant tradition as the basis of many pieces and traditions in the classical repertory (Mashshun, Musiqi-ye mazhabi-ye Irân, pages 13-14, 1972).

In order to understand better this complex situation, I have separated out the elements of mode (see Table 1), and compared the presentations of four styles of masnavi: two sung by different artists in different contexts (Morteza Zabihi

of Mašhad, and his more famous brother, Javad Zabihi of Tehrân); and two written for instruments (Ma'rufi and Sabâ). The *masnavi* as a poetic form and as a meter is one of the most popular in the Iranian tradition, and therefore is the vehicle for a variety of subjects. As a form and meter it may be introduced into the *rowže*, but the subject matter would be different than the examples given here.

The table shows that modal characteristics of the chant styles or classical styles are not confined to one area of the line. The boundaries of acceptable practice for a particular characteristic vary according to the context, purpose, audience, and technique available. Thus Javad Zabihi's frequent cross-overs into the far right of the table are acceptable in some situations. As an artist who received some of his training from Sabâ, an important master of the classical tradition, he much more freely adds elements of the classical tradition to his presentations of chant.

Particular elements are often varied in their mix to create a unique sound and individual style. In general, however, the chanter who identifies himself most closely with the religious tradition stays on the left side of the table in a simpler, more direct approach to the musical elements of his art.

A frequent technique related to creating individual style is the use of centonization -- the continual recombining of motives, themes, and their components to move the music forward. This is part of a tendency to miniaturize and create the mosaic quality frequently mentioned as characteristic of Persian art. This can be found in all elements of mode illustrated in this table.

This technique is, however, not uniformly praised. It is related to the tendency of much of Sufi, and hence classical, poetry to be founded ". . . partly on the too subtle variations on a few basic and perpetually repeated themes . . . and partly on such an abstract treatment of the same thoughts as to banish from lyrical poetry all reality, clarity and unequivocalness." (Jan Rypka, *The History of Iranian Literature*, page 233).

The definition of *sabk*, therefore, must include very flexible boundaries among styles and genres based on context and individual skill. A concern with micro-structural detail in all elements of mode and artistic technique is an essential component in the definition of *sabk*.

B. Monâsehb

The techniques for structuring these flexible boundaries among genres are summed up in the term monâsehb (appropriate). The selection, variation, and synthesis of texts and their suitability to the audience occasion, time of year, time frame, performance specialty, and placement in the overall progression of subjects and performers are all included in this term. Also included is the particular complementary relationship between music and poetry. The musical aspects of the chant must be directly complementary to the text and the occasion -- simplicity or complexity of musical style must match the audience make-up and mood. How well the performer fulfills these requirements while making his message clear and direct, and bringing the audience to tears, is the basis for the group's evaluation of the performer.

These techniques have direct parallels in the emphasis placed on improvisation in classical music. The performance is judged on how well it complements the context. The musical material (the many modes of the radif) and the variety of techniques are, however, much more extensive than those of chant.

Judgement of the styles of chant appropriate in various circumstances is partly based upon concepts underlying the tajvid, the science of chanting the Qor'ân. The focus of the science of tajvid is enhancing the message of the Qor'ân in the most "appropriate" manner. The range of presentation style is from florid to simple according to the parameters imposed on the performer by context. Although the popular performers in the rowze rarely use the exact technical terms of the science of tajvid, the terms underlie the formal instruction of Qor'ân-ic chant in religious schools, and are also part of the informal training more widely available.

The categories used to discuss the technical details of this art are tajvid, fasâhat, and tartil -- referring to the correct presentation of the word in order to ensure that its meaning is properly understood, and lahn and sowt -- describing more precisely the acceptable musical boundaries for the presentation of the words. (This type of performance art associated with the Qor'ân is, of course, never referred to as "singing", but rather as "reading", or more formally, as qarâ'at-e Qor'ân or tartil-e Qor'ân.)

C. Hozn

Of all the terms used to describe the special characteristics of religious chant, by far the most culturally complex is hozn -- sorrow, or pathos. This is used as

the quality that distinguishes religious chant from all other types of chant in Iran. Common related descriptors of the quality of religious chant are *ghamangiz* -- doleful or sad; *mohzan* -- sad; *hoznangiz* -- sorrowful, sad; *delsuz* -- heart rending; and *jansuz* -- doleful, soul-burning.

However, the emotion expressed is something much more profound and complex than mere "sadness". The sadness is related to the whole state of man's existence in the world. It is found throughout the texts for the chant which are focused on the culturally complex symbol of Imam Husayn bound up in injustice, sacrifice, and atonement.

Functionally, the realization of this state induces degrees of emotion from the crowd that often have a role in transforming the *rowže* into an ecstatic ritual. This transformation, so often a part of religious chant and ritual, has many parallels to the altered emotional states that, in the more learned circles of Sufi thought, are referred to as various types of "*hâl*".

The intensity of the experience of this pathos/sadness, this need and propensity to mourn, and the degree to which it permeates the culture can best be realized when the number of mourning days is compared to the number of festival days. Two months of mourning, death-days of the eleven Imams and the Prophet, and the various cycles of commemoration of the death-days of relatives and friends far outweigh in number and intensity the two weeks of *Now Ruz*, the birthdays of the Imams and the Prophet, the death-day of Omar, and personal days of celebration.

Other expressions of this quality in Iranian culture are noted by authors such as Rypka and von Grunebaum. In discussing the influence of Sufism on Iranian poetry, Rypka sees much of it tinged by "a pessimism arising from the inconstancy of this life and of the world." (Jan Rypka, *The History of Iranian Literature*, page 232, 1962). While discussing the "nervous" psychological climate of Shi'ism, von Grunebaum describes a related quality (*Muhammadian Festivals*, page 58, 1951).

No discussion of *hozn* would be complete without a mention of ornamentation. Although performers did not speak of ornamentation directly, it is another characteristic common to all forms of Persian art. In classical music, ornamentation is often one of the grand achievements of the performers. According to Gerson-Kiwi, it is one of the central techniques for developing the motif and the line.

In religious contexts, ornamentation must be approached very carefully depending on the audience and their standards. Thus a religious chanter may present some highly ornamented versions of a poem for an audience less critical of the freedom he takes. In other circumstances, he would use very restrained forms of ornamentation. The ornaments identified most clearly as producing *hōzn* in religious chant are the modified *tāhrir* and the single *tāhrir*, or *takye* along with the constricting of the sound, the "sob release" in chant, and the many microtonal inflections of voice which give the line and phrase much of its intricacy and intimacy.

D. General Aesthetic Standards

I would like to make several generalizations from this information regarding the approaches to creating music which are shared by both the classical tradition, so much defined by Sufi thought, and the religious tradition. I believe that the shared approaches to the creation of these different genres of music point toward the definition of the Iranian aesthetic.

1. An important characteristic that is shared is that of "sadness" or "pathos". This is created by the voice quality, the ornaments, and of course, the poetry. When identified by performers as *hōzn*, this quality is a distinctive feature of religious chant and characterizes the emotional complex integral to this chant tradition. The music and the poetry in the classical tradition combine to create a similar quality arising from a related, but distinctive, cultural history.
2. Another characteristic of artistic expression which is an integral part of the Iranian aesthetic is improvisation. In religious chant, this is encompassed by the term *monâseb*, which means tailoring the performance to the exact audience, time, place, and occasion appropriate. The performer must have a tremendous vocabulary of poetry, prose, and various theatrical techniques at his command to engage his audience fully and bring them to tears. In classical traditions, this has its expressions in tailoring the selection of the mode to the mood of the occasion, and the development of the mode in the most affecting way.
3. A third important characteristic of religious chant is the concentration on the individual and his unique way of presenting (*sabk*). The appreciation of the individual approach to expression is reflected by the concentration on detail and miniaturization found on all levels of

formal modal analysis.

I hope that, together with the other papers on this panel, this discussion will help clarify further some of the concepts of Persian music, and that the audience will be left with some truly effective means of understanding the complex phenomena underlying Iranian musical expression.

TABLE Modal Characteristics in Four Styles of Mathnawī Presentation

Variable Elements	M. <i>Dhabihī</i>	Di. <i>Dhabihī</i>	Ma'rūfī	Sabā
Pitch Precision				
limited				exact
Hierarchy, Structural Pitches				
emphasized				obscured
Stereotyped Motives				
repeated				varied
Number of Pitch Areas Exploited				
one				numerous
Furūds				
for effect				theoretically accurate
Range				
modal third				multi-octave
Ornamentation (takiya or taḥrīr)				
restrained				florid
Sikhs				
varied and paced				regular, less prominent
Envelope of Pitch (Releases)				
sob releases				clean releases
Timbre				
unfocused				focused

* Not recorded, but performance practice dictates

Emotion & Trance: Musical Exorcism in Baluchestan

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The Middle East Studies Association

November, 1986

Abstract: This paper discusses musical exorcism in Iranian Baluchestan as an example of the cultural dimensions of the concept of *hâl* in Iranian music.

Trance-like states, or other altered states of consciousness, are of utmost importance in Iranian music. Baluchestan offers an interesting field of study for the role of trance in folk religious music. The Baluchis have a tradition of musical healing which shows connections with animism, exorcism, and popular Sufism. This ritual, called *le' b guâti*, aims to relieve a person possessed by an evil or ambivalent spirit (a *guât* or *pari*) by triggering and conducting a kinetic trance with the help of appropriate melodies and/or songs. In this setting, music and trance are intimately linked. The state experienced by *guâti* subjects for whom the *le' b* is intended is generally described as an authentic possession and trance induced by a *guât*.

A. Background: *Hâl*

In the expression of Iranian music, it is the concept of *hâl* (state, condition) which is of utmost importance. The common view in Iran is that the essential function of music is to provide *hâl*, which implies that the performer has first to be in the appropriate *hâl*. Only highly-trained musicians pay more attention to form and good taste than to *hâl*.

This concept of *hâl* is Sufi in origin. To the Sufis, *hâl* means a kind of ecstatic state. This state may vary in duration, from very short (like a *vaqt*, a flash) to longer; it may also vary in intensity, from very deep to only light. References to *hâl* are found in all of the classical writings on *samâ'* (Sufi spiritual concert), where the *hâl* corresponds to a state of ecstasy. *Hâl* is the term currently in use to describe this state; the term *tarab* has a more secular connotation. Besides

these, other words are sometimes used to express the effect of music: *lezzat bordan* ("to savor") and *keyf kardan* ("to enjoy") suggest a high pleasure; but *khalse*, used for entertainment music, connotes a state of trance. In the Sufi writings on *samâ*, a clear distinction is made between the audition of Sufis and that of common people (*'avvâm*). There are many sources suggesting the existence of secular *samâ*, open to those who could experience states of trance or enthusiasm outwardly similar to the *hâl*, or *vajd* of the Sufis, but empty of any spiritual content. The contrast between that type of musical manifestation and the true *samâ* is not commonly found today, since *samâ* itself has undergone deep transformation, where it still exists. However, there is contrast between authentic *hâl* and the artificial *hâl* which may appear in light music (*motrebi*; see Safvat, 1984, page 103s).

In my view, one of the most fundamental functions of music in any culture is to induce altered states of consciousness related to trance. Now, during the process that certain kinds of societies call "progress" and "civilization," these types of states have been gradually rejected as being primitive or archaic. The behaviors typically associated with trance or catharsis are no longer found in Western art music, and there remain only traces of it in terminology and in some attitudes. On the other hand, states of trance are still found in specific musical contexts, such as Sufism, the Shi'i celebration of Ashura, and animist (but Islamized) cults.

If "civilization" is the influence that causes people to tend to avoid these kinds of states, it is in more traditional and archaic societies that one would expect to find more retention of these features; in my view, these traditional societies are retaining those distinct features of music that express music's fundamental meaning and purpose.

In that respect, Baluchestan offers an interesting field of study. There are many different kinds of music still extant, including Sufi music. One of the most interesting and original of the types of Sufi music found in Baluchestan is a tradition of musical healing which shows connections with animism, exorcism, and popular Sufism. This ritual, called *le'b guâti*, aims to relieve a person possessed by an evil or ambivalent spirit (a *guât* or *pari*) by triggering and conducting a kinetic trance with the help of appropriate melodies and/or songs.

B. The Le'b Guâti Ritual

I shall now provide a short account of this ritual. To help clarify the discussion, I will use the word "drunkenness" for *masti* (which carries the

connotation of "state of trance"), and the word "ritual" for *le' b* ("game", which carries the connotation of "the performance of the *guâti* ritual"). By "*guât*" -- a noun that also means "wind", I mean a spirit; by "*guâti*", I intend the adjectival form; i.e., possessed by a spirit. The *le' b guâti* ritual is characterized generally by the following:

- There is no ritual without trance: if the ritual is given, but no trance is forthcoming, it simply indicates that the diagnosis was not correct.
- There is no ritual without music: This is because the particular spirits involved in the process can be conjured only by specific music. It is said that music is "offered to them", sometimes with a bloody sacrifice.

Therefore, it is clear that in this setting, music and trance are intimately linked.

The trance is assumed to be induced by spirit possession of the patient (*guâti*); this type of spirit is inevitably attracted by music, and thereby forced to manifest itself. Its manifestation is usually obvious, starting with shivering, (a state called *por šod*; "to be full up"), then intensifying with movements, stirring, a kind of informal dance, jerks, cries, shouts, tears, and so forth. The manifestation may also be quieter. The state of crisis lasts around one to three hours, during which music stops only two or three times for a few minutes, and only in order to enable the musicians to have a short rest. They used to say: "when *le' b guâti* starts, there is no more break". The *le' b* ends only when the patient is sated (*sir šod*) with trance. Such a ritual is repeated several evenings consecutively and generally ends with a sacrifice. On these conditions, the spirit will consent to leave the patient in peace for a year, or several years, after which the play, the sacrifice, the bargain and the making of pacts will have to be renewed. The entire process is conducted by an *ostâ*, *khalife*, or maestro; who, at least in the end, puts himself into trance in order to bind the spirit (*baste kardan*). The *ostâ* may sometimes himself be the musical performer.

In order to give an acoustic illustration of this ritual, I'll give a short description of the music that is played. It must be underlined that although repetitive, this music is of a highly elaborated form with subtle ornamentation, and can only be performed by professionals. The main instruments are the *sorud*, a type of viol, or the *doneli*, a double flute. Drums and singing are required only for heavy exorcisms (*kopâr-e le' b*, *khun-e le' b*).

The state experienced by *guâti* subjects for whom the *le' b* is intended is generally described as an authentic possession and trance induced by a *guât*.

This state is authenticated by the subject's total unawareness, and later of forgetfulness, of what is (or was) going on. Glossolalia is also considered a sign, since it is supposed to be the voice of the spirit speaking a foreign language like Arabic, Urdu, or Hindi. If he is speaking Baluchi, it is with an odd voice not belonging to the subject. Finally, the eccentric behavior of the subject, with his dance and frenzy, is in itself the sign of a genuine trance.

C. Relationship to Sufism

This common way of relating things, as I have done so far, is a mere simplification of a much more complex and controversial reality. A lot of people doubt (and provide arguments to deny the authenticity, if not the reality) of the whole affair. Their different positions, objections and arguments, provide interesting insight concerning the meaning of music with its specific effects, from common pleasure to mystical ecstasy. I'll now examine these different approaches.

In a way, the *guâti* ritual can be compared to a kind of popular *samâ* ' according to the following arguments:

- 90 percent of the songs of the specific repertoire are religious songs, most of them being kinds of melodic *zêkr*, and in fact are sometimes called *zêkr*. The majority of them are devoted to La'l Šahbâz Qalandar, patron of the Sind.
- The term *khalife* used for the shaman is borrowed from the Sufi hierarchy.
- The music played in the *le'b guâti* is also called *sâz-e qalandari* (*qalandar* means "dervish"). The *guâti* himself after several years of therapy is called *malang* (a local term for dervish). This shows an analogy between the state of a *guâti* subject and the state of a dervish.
- Some tunes are borrowed from the Sufi repertory of the Cheshti order settled in Makran. Other features show connections with Zikriyya, a kind of marginal or heterodox Sufi movement from Baluchestan about which we know very little.

When asked about the *guâti* ritual, Sufis of Baluchestan claim that the *le'b guâti* has nothing to do with Sufi *samâ* ' and the spiritual states involved in it.

Their main argument is that a Sufi who has been initiated is protected from evil spirits and is endowed with a spiritual power so that with a simple prayer or amulet he could achieve the same result as is obtained after the long *guâti* process. They say that all the troubles endured by *guâti* subjects have their origin in two things: '*ešq va gham*', which I would translate as "desire and frustration" rather than "love and sadness". The Sufi also may suffer from '*ešq*' and '*gham*', but only spiritually, that is, love and longing for God. That is called '*ešq-e haqiqi*', true love as opposed to '*ešq-e majâzi*', illusory love. Being Sufis and thus detached from this world, they are preserved from those types of feelings.

I asked *guâti* musicians and *khalife* about the possible confusion between possession trance due to a spirit, and other states of trance which may appear to be similar. After all, the behavior of dervishes listening to *samâ* or *zeker* is not too far from that of the *guâti*. Their answer was very clear: by no means is it possible to confuse *guâti* and Sufi trance. I remember a *guâti* musician talking with enthusiasm about the coming of a group of *qalandar*-s from Pakistan, giving public *zeker*. His enthusiasm indicates that he was not seeing them at all as being possessed. One of his arguments was that possession could never fall upon a person who has a good life and performs his Islamic religious duties, which is also the case with dervishes. One theory about possession states that it happens in a culture where there remains a latent conflict between a recently established religion (here, Islam) and some remnants of an older one (here probably animism). Actually the *guât* is not an "Islamic" being like the *jinn* who can be conjured by invocations; he is an old Iranian spirit closely connected with the *pari* or even confused with *ferešte*, (a kind of ambivalent angel). So the strong "Islamic cure" provide by *le'b* ritual may act as a means of re-inserting the *guâti* subject within the core of Islamic culture, and thus within society.

D. Induction into the Trance State

But let us go back to music and its relationship to psychological states. It must first be said that *guâti* music is a very specific genre, distinct from secular music like wedding songs and such. Although both types share certain common features (structure, modes, rhythms), *guâti* or *qalandari* tunes have their own style that is easy to identify. During the first performance of *le'b*, the musicians must try all the tunes one after another to see which one is able to trigger off the trance. Some patients get "drunk" with only one tune or song, others with two, three, or four. When the *guâti* reacts to one song only, it is a boring task for the musicians, since they must repeat it all night long. It is

probably through this repetition that *qalandari* tunes have reached such perfection, with such variety in their interpretation.

In one particular example, during a *le'b* where about four melodies were repeated, a *guâti* teenager was sitting among other people; although he showed enthusiasm and clapped his hands to mark the rhythm, he was not at all in a state of trance, since his specific tunes were not being performed. It, however, seems that some *guâti*, although they need a specific tune to get into the trance state, are able to maintain their state with other tunes -- I think that it is more a matter of rhythm and tempo. So when people say that the spirit must recognize his own melody, it is only a simplification of reality and a way of expressing the strange or supernatural aspect of the phenomena. It would be more realistic to say that *guâti*-s get drunk when they listen to music, particularly music which shows certain peculiarities that would be too detailed to discuss here. It is difficult, however, to find out how they distinguish between "non-efficient" and "efficient" music. I remember an experienced *guâti* getting profoundly drunk for one hour, and then after being spoken to and a taking short break, getting up in perfect condition and starting to sing wedding songs without being affected at all. On the other hand, it is recommended for relieved *guâti* subjects to abstain from attending wedding festivals where music is performed, in order to avoid getting into trance in the middle of the meeting. An informant told me that his mother, who he said was a genuine *guâti*, got ill or fainted when she listened to some religious Baluchi songs on the radio.

E. Definition of Behaviors found in *Le'b Guâti*

Confusion is common concerning the states induced by music. The central concept is drunkenness, *masti*. People say that the dervish is *mast* as well as the *guâti* or the snake who dances to the sound of the double reed pipe. Actually there are musical and symbolic connections between snake-charming and *guâti*.

We see that the relation between music and the trance experience of the *guâti* is not very clear or precise. It becomes even less so if we go further and try to know more about the condition of the *guâti*. Many people would say that the *guâti* affair is just trickery or theater built up to provide common people with a means of "letting off steam," or better said, a catharsis. Some talk about low unconscious pulsations that show up during the ritual, instead of attributing the manifestation to an external force like a *guât*. Actually, *khalife* are also well aware of the dimension of the subconscious and the diagnosis of our Sufi informant talking about desire and frustration is perfectly relevant to

psychology. But in spite of the arguments of the skeptics, you will never find any Baluchi totally denying the reality of guât and/or possession. Frequently they say "all this is just superstition and trickery . . . but I know somebody who is **really** a guâti, and this and that thing happened."

First of all, it is very easy to behave in such a way that people think you are possessed; after all isn't it amusing to dance, jerk and shout as if you were being possessed? Women are more liable to do so, since in Baluchestan they have a lot of reasons to feel oppressed by society and culture. A man who denies most of the guâti-s and khalifes except for his mother, told me how he had seen several women in trance at the same time (that is quite uncommon). He found out that they were just simulating when one of them addressed her neighbor, and said: "go and see if my baby is okay" and then resumed the trance. According to him, that kind of behavior would never occur in a state of real trance. However, I have seen a guâti in a state of profound stirring, suddenly become quiet and walk around. I clearly understood he was still in trance only when I saw him shaking hands with the musicians whose performance he interrupted, saying "salâm 'aleykum!'" He did that several times during the ritual. Another convincing argument for that man was that several women were simulating the crisis when suddenly his mother went into ecstasy and shouted a powerful "Huuu!" like dervishes do during the zêkr. On the spot all the women became afraid, and sat down quietly in the corner.

After one guâti ritual, I was told by an informant that the whole thing was just simulation. But at the same time, there was no doubt that the guâti was a real guâti (or former guâti). In my view, this type of ritual is a kind of theatrical trance that may be forced at the beginning, but becomes real after a moment. Indeed, I can hardly believe that anyone could simulate a trance state like this man did for one hour. In that case, the interpretation of trickery was caused by the lack of ritual circumstances. It was only a possession for fun, so to speak.

In the same way, I met a young man who claimed, half-kidding, to be a guâti. He said that when he listened to music in festivals, he happened to fall into a strange state and forgot himself in the dance, enjoying that state. I had no doubt that in a guâti ritual, where music and conditions are more appropriate, he would certainly have behaved like a guâti. Some people told me that in every village there are dozens of people ready to attempt a guâti play if invited (since it costs a lot).

Thus, secular music can also be taken as a means of relieving people of sorrows, pressures and pains. The joy it provides has cathartic and therapeutic

effects. I'll quote the words of a *khalife* who was one of the best *guâti* musicians in the province:

"Those who have a pain are regenerated by music; their soul becomes fresh, they forget their pain. In the past, thanks to festivals, dances, and music, people were not affected by pains and sorrows, but nowadays they are so affected, because they are hearing music only once or twice a year at weddings. Their sorrow is to have too much money or to have debts. Then little by little, the sickness comes..."

He meant the dark shadow of a *guât* upon him ...

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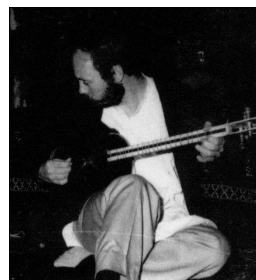
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Morteza Varzi