

A Practical Analysis of Iranian Traditional Music

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Abstract: The analysis of Radif as the essence of Iranian (Persian) traditional music paves the way to composition based on the elements of this music. Among the various analysis methods, the formalistic one which identifies the elements forming the structure of an art work in details and generalities is preferred. The principles of such an analysis method can be clearly taught while are helpful for learning composition. However, some analysts believe in the formalistic analysis except Western art movements, is incompatible with the other arts especially the traditional ones such as Radif. since its final result only is the extraction of the elements and neglecting the inside themes about cultural beliefs which are very important in traditional arts. In this article, after introducing the important thoughts about the analysis of Radif and reviewing their results, through the practical analysis of Gusheh Avaz in Dastgah Mahour, the principles of an acceptable formalistic analysis in Iranian traditional music will be drawn.

Keywords: Formalistic Analysis, Analysis of Form, Iranian (Persian) Traditional Music, Radif.

INTRODUCTION

About the quiddity of analysis of Radif as the essence of Iranian traditional music, two views can be mentioned; On one hand, this music as a traditional art is not the result of an artist fantasy and acts as the apparent truth of the sensible world so only the seekers of the truth way have ability to understand it. This art never is reviewable according to today's critical principles such as formalism and structuralism because of they divide the surface and the meaning of an art work. The analysis of Radif based on these principles - causes the cheapest aspects of this art [1]. In fact, the aesthetic environment of a traditional human as Radif's musician presents a situation for knowing the truth so that a traditional artist expresses the beauty as the splendor of the truth [2]. In this view, the nature of art work exists outside the territory that theoretical analysis can achieve, and finding a method to express and teach it if not impossible, is very problematic.

On the other hand is a contrary view about the quiddity of analysis of Radif which says the artistic creativity in many art works can be seen in the techniques of meaning expression not merely in the nature of their subjects [3]; For example, in music due to the lack of a clear narration or the nature of narration-escaping, the techniques of meaning expression such as the forms sonata, rondo sonata, and fugue in Western classical music or Chaharmezrab and Reng in Iranian traditional music, find more importance than the subjects such as title of music or feelings arising from it. In art music, form of meaning

expression is the representative point of musician to audience and its entity can make beauty of music work [3]. Accordingly, the formalistic analysis of a music work such as a Gusheh of Radif can address the audience about the quiddity of composition and construction of the sounds to clear intellectual foundation behind that work.

It seems the principles of any analysis method of an art work are extracted from the form and structure of that work, even if it contains ethical, revolutionary, humanistic, or religious meanings due to the fact that meanings of an art work are produced through its form and structure. In this medium, it should be remembered that the Russian formalists who founded the formalistic analysis do not negate the existence of meaning. They believed in meaning of an art work as an entity derived from its outside is unacceptable [4].

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This article is based on an interpretive method to consider the outstanding analysis of Radif. Here the important opinions about the quiddity of analysis of Radif will be shown and after reviewing them and introducing the new issues, through the practical analysis of Gusheh Avaz in Dastgah Mahour, the principles of an acceptable formalistic analysis in Iranian traditional music will be drawn.

RESEARCH HISTORY

The quiddity of shaping Radif has an especial position in the study literature of the Iranian

traditional music; Accordingly, the concept of Radif had been probably known in the educational methods of the Iranian musicians shortly before the middle of thirteenth Hijri century (around 1870), when Radif in today's order was shaped. So that each of the Iranian musicians had memorized a set of melodies in an order (Radif) to teach or perform them in concert [5]. On the other hands, the existence of several modes in this order made the musicians able to play in a suitable duration for a concert performance [6], which shows they had designed a modal structure for Radif. Although, some researchers do not accept this idea [5], to some extent that according to them there are no rigid principles in this music and always exceptions can be found [7], but the fact is Radif has a fixable framework and character while its details and contents are flexible[8].

Also researches about the structure of Radif are in the study literature. Each version (narration) of Radif contains the short pieces which each of them is called Gusheh and they are ordered according to a unique criterion of the tones move. The progression of Gusheh-s occurs in a gradual move from lowest pitches toward highest ones, so that Daramad in the beginning of a Dastgah generally has the lowest pitches and the last Gusheh-s of a Dastgah generally have the highest ones. The framework of Radif is based on balance and symmetry [9] and the variation is its main quality [8].

On the one hands, some musicians of Iranian traditional music believe in the structure of this music is based on the scales. This view identifies the tones Shahed (dominant-like), Moteghayer (changeable), and Ist (tonic-like) as the important ones at every scale of Iranian traditional music. This theory firstly is introduced by Vaziri¹ and has continued to now by his followers [5].² Based on this view, each Dastgah has a main scale and Radif contains 12 scales, each one for each Dastgah. The tones of the scales from lowest toward highest gradually became Shahed of one or some Gusheh-s [9] which two Dastgah-s mahour and Chahargah demonstrate such a trait very well [9]. Nevertheless, in the Reng-s of the end of some Dastgah-s, almost all register of a Dastgah with different tones as Shahed can be heard.

¹ Ali Naqi Vaziri (1887 - 9 September 1979)

² It is noticeable that the word scale is mistakenly applied in this medium. The correct word is mode. In fact, according to Vaziri and his followers the word scale has the same concept of the word mode while they have tried to superficially make the theoretical basics of Iranian traditional music similar to Western classical music one.

According to the theory of scales in Radif, it is clear that the Homayoun scale compared with the Shour one is similar to the major scale compared with the minor one [8]. In this theory, the Gusheh-s without modal stability named Tekeh are interesting also. Such these Gusheh-s by positioning in a Dastgah adopt the mode of that Dastgah or a particular Gusheh of it. Many of them have a stable metric structure such as Kereshmeh and Bastehnegar while a few of them as Hazin and Do Beyti are without such a stable structure [7].

Nevertheless, although putting together different modes as three-tone or four-tone ones used in Gusheh-s of each Dastgah can shape the Dastgah scale, but the sound structure of each Dastgah is not based on the concept of scale including equality of homonymous tones in different octaves. In Iranian traditional music as a modal music there is an especial hierarchy in which each tone exactly at a particular octave (register) is specified as Shahed or Ist while homonymous tones in different octaves have equal structural value in the concept of scale.

Foroud (cadence-like) is another structural issue in the study literature of Iranian traditional music. This especial cadence has a few aspects; For example, it can be heard in the form of the phrases which occasionally happen in the end of some Gusheh-s and gradually stabilize a finishing quality. Foroud also can be identified in the form of an especial Gusheh such as the one of Dastgah Rast Panjgah as well as it can just be in the form of a tone as the one of Avaz Afshari [8]. Foroud in its varieties is related to the original mode introduced at the beginning of a Dastgah and makes a connection between the Gusheh-s with different modes which have been heard during that Dastgah [7].

The macro and microstructures of Radif have also been considered in its study literature. The microstructure refers to any set of a Dastgah or Avaz which is integrated in different aspects especially rhythmic and intervallic ones; For example, the sequence of the three Gusheh-s Hodi, Pahlavi, and Rajaz in Dastgah Chahargah is compared to an A-B-A - [7] or A1 B A2 form [8]. This similarity makes a microstructure from these three Gusheh-s. On the other hand, some Dastgah-s or Avaz-es can be a perfect macrostructure because of having the especial traits compared with the others; For example, the intervallic structure of Homayoun makes the move toward Owj (climax) requires a broader register than instrument or singer's one [7]. Also the content of Shour compared with Mahour and Chahargah or the other Dastgah-s or Avaz-es has an especial integration because of the lack of Mod Gardan (modulating) Gusheh-s [10]. Hence, this Dastgah has a primary position in Radif and is

similar to an archaic musical shape producing Iranian traditional music [8].

In considering the macro and microstructures of Radif, Farhat uses the term Dastgah for Avaz [7] while Nettl believes in an Avaz is not the same a Dastgah is and each of them has its especial features. According to him some Gusheh-s as Shoushtari in Dastgah Homayoun due to their structure can be separated from a Dastgah and even shape a new Dastgah [8]. In this medium, some musicians claim Hejaz in Avaz Abuata has the independent features as a Dastgah has; For example, it contains a broad melodic range (minor tenth) which to some extent is unusual in Radif [7]. Nevertheless, Hejaz cannot be a Dastgah only according to its range because of some other Gusheh-s - have a broad melodic range.

Another structural issue of Radif is the concept of tonic core which is discussed by Nettl in respect to the modal construction in Dastgah Segah. He refers to the two tones in tritone interval which function as tonic in the major and minor scales [8]. On the other hands, the structure of the intervals and modes [5, 11] the rhythm [12], the techniques of development musical ideas [13], as well as the concept of climax [13] have been studied in Iranian traditional music which directly are not the issue of this article. As a result, Radif contains the features which create its unity in the scale of macro and microstructures; For example, on one hand there is the principle of gradually move from lowest pitches toward highest ones and on the other hands, the exceptions of this principle alongside the other ones can be heard. These all show different aspects of Radif aesthetic.

A SAMPLE OF THE PRACTICAL ANALYSIS

In the following, an example of the formalistic analysis in Iranian traditional music is presented. This analysis is based on the identification of mode, rhythm, and articulation of Gusheh Avaz³ in Dastgah Mahour which can be seen in the three divided parts as the figures 1, 2, and 4. Before the analysis a few noteworthy points have to be noticed; Iranian traditional music in practice can have a different aspect than the notation; For example, some of the ornaments of this - music is not notated or the rhythmic construction might approximately be notated. On the other hands, some concerns of a formalistic analysis, such as dynamics (sound intensity), and nuances of timber usually are not notated in the notations of Iranian traditional music while exist in practice. So in these

cases cannot be presented any analysis only according to the notation.

Accordingly, there is not exact compatibility between the practice of Iranian traditional music and its common notation, also despite detailed notation methods in ethnomusicology which are introduced in Farsi (Persian) [14], many of Iranian musicians do not benefit from them to notate more accurate. Hence, the main items of a formalistic analysis in Iranian traditional music are characteristics of the modes based on low and high pitches in every Gusheh, rhythms of the tones and the quiddity of its development, as well as rhythm of repetition of the similar or dissimilar musical ideas, and finally the articulation.

آواز
Āvāz

Fig-1: Gusheh Avaz in Dastgah Mahour, Part I [14]

The foursquare shows repetition of a motif or phrase in times of the numbers and the other unfamiliar signs compared to the standard notation show some especial ornaments of Iranian traditional music

Although it seems each line of this Gusheh is a separate phrase or structural unity but a phrase is constructed of two or some musical sentences identified by rhythmic tension or height of the first and final tones, so that the practical concept of phrase in Western classical music based on the function of tones in tonality is not applicable here. Accordingly, the first phrase contains the lines 1, 2, and 3 and begins from the F and after emphasis on the E in the line 2, ends on the D while moving down. The second phrase with emphasis on and turning around the D which is the ending tone of the first phrase, begins at the line 4 and ends on the C at the line 5. This C is Ist of

³ The word Avaz in the title of this Gusheh is not related to the two main categories of Dastgah and Avaz in Iranian traditional music and is happened.

Dastgah Mahour, thus the Gusheh can be finished here. However, in the flowing a development around the C and the D can be heard which is like a variation of the first phrase. The line 6 can be a phrase backing music to the D. The lines 7 and 8 are a development of the line 6 around the C and the E until the phrase of the line 9 ends on the D. the line 10 also continues the emphasis on the D.



Fig-2: Gusheh Avaz in Dastgah Mahour, Part II [14]

From the line 1 to 7 in the part II, a long phrase can be heard which backs music to the C. This tone as Ist shows the long phrase is a developer one in order to achieve the line 8 as a cadence. this cadence or Foroud has been heard before in the beginning of the Dastgah or the same Gusheh Daramad (Figure 3) and more emphasizes on the C at the end of the long phrase.



Fig-3: Gusheh Daramad in Dastgah Mahour [15]

With regard to the function of Foroud as a formal reminder of the main mode, it can be said here Gusheh Avaz is finished and the continuum (Part III) even can be assumed as another Gusheh.



Fig-4: Gusheh Avaz in Dastgah Mahour, Part III [14]

The beginning of the part III shows a sequential phrase in which the opening tone of each repeat is the same closing one. This phrase moves the melody range to the low tone G where the music using a variation similar to the three last lines of Gusheh Daramad, backs to the C. Since the half of this part is previously presented in Daramad, so it functions as a formal repetition while starting from the B as an unstable tone in the mode of Dastgah Mahour, causes the Part III cannot be an independent Gusheh.

Finally, the structure of rhythm in Gusheh Avaz is noticeable from the aspect of expanding very short duration to long one. Also compared to the previous Gusheh of Dastgah, the motifs including eighth and sixteenth notes are more used in this Gusheh and have made more dynamic atmosphere. On the other hand, the articulation and fractionalizing of Gusheh Avaz can better be done in order to clearly show the phrases discussed above.

CONCLUSION

Among the various analysis methods, the formalistic one is preferred for considering Radif as the essence of Iranian traditional music. This method by identifying the elements forming the structure of Radif in details and generalities can be helpful for learning composition using them. Among the important thoughts about such an analysis, one of them by identifying the tones Shahed, Moteghayer, and Ist claims the structure of this music is based on the scales while the sound structure of each Dastgah is not based on the concept

of scale including equality of homonymous tones in different octaves. Another thought clears Foroud as an especial cadence which is related to the original mode introduced at the beginning of a Dastgah. Also the thoughts about macro and microstructures of Radif have been expressed. The microstructure refers to any set of a Dastgah or Avaz which is integrated in different aspects especially rhythmic and intervallic ones while some Dastgah-s or Avaz-es can be a perfect macrostructure because of having the especial traits compared with the others. Finally, the main items of a formalistic analysis in Iranian traditional music based on its common notation are characteristics of the modes, rhythms of the tones as well as rhythm of repetition of the similar or dissimilar musical ideas, and the articulation.

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