



The Exoticism Concept in Iranian Culture and its Aspects in Iranian Traditional Music

Mansoor Habibdoost

Faculty Member of Music Department, University of Guilan; habibdoost.muse@guilan.ac.ir

Abstract

Exoticism can be considered under any cultural unfamiliarity in an art work. However, this concept is adopted to Western definition of similarity, here in Iranian (Persian) traditional music what the exotic elements are and how they are extracted can be considered under various musical reflections of Iranian cultural beliefs about the exoticism concept; backgrounds such as the viewpoint of Iranian culture to Western world, some of the verbal language strangeness in names and expressions of Radif, the differences of sound texture in this music, also attitudes to female as another one to male. Although a different approach contains the

Introduction

The concept of unfamiliarity in art is more expressed under the word exoticism. It can be referred to places, people, and different traits of an especial culture which have found unfamiliar aspects or exotic elements in an art work. These aspects and elements can be traceable at different musical cultures such as Iranian traditional music. However, unfamiliarity concept goes beyond artistic reviews and is practical at philosophy and sociology fields too. In these studies, the quiddity and quality of unfamiliar identity and its differences with own one are paid attention.

Discussions about exotic elements in Iranian traditional music can fall in superficiality; So that this concept exists beyond the external appearances especially names and expressions applied in it; For example, it can be said that names Rast Kouk (right tuning) and Chap Kouk (left tuning) in respect to male and female singing, leave an exotic aspect on female singers because of in Iranian culture, the word Rast (right) is equivalent to the correct way and the word Chap (left), incorrect one. The truth is such names and expressions are not raised from the content, structure, and even practice of Iranian traditional music and are related to the instrument Kamancheh (fiddle-like) and Saba¹ explains them according to the turn direction of tuning pegs of this instrument [1].

observation of outstanding unfamiliar elements in the four main traits of music (pitch, rhythm, timbre, and dynamic). Therefore, the issue of this article is consideration the exotic elements in the content, structure, and practice of Iranian traditional music according to the exoticism concept in Iranian culture, so that the topic can be started in this music, and the medium prepared for more related researches in the future.

Keywords: Exotic Elements, Exoticism, Iranian Culture, Iranian (Persian) Traditional Music, Radif

Nevertheless, the exoticism concept is not unfamiliar to the practical nature of Iranian traditional music; For example, in its performance by some non-Iranians or Iranians stayed away from the homeland, some unfamiliar elements compared to the samples of inside Iran can be heard; The elements such as vocal ornaments (Tahrir-e Avaz-i) with regular and slow rhythm or unfollow accent and dialect of Farsi (Persian) poems sung by the singers of these vocal ornaments. Also the articulations of Iranian traditional music when are influenced especially by Western pop music can be considered the exotic elements.

The impressions based on the content interpretation and totality of Iranian traditional music also can show some other unfamiliarity in it; For example, Nettl by division Radif to two main categories of the Shour-like Dastgah-s and Chahargah-like ones explains the category of Shour is generally similar to Arabic Maqams and the one of Chahargah, similar to Maqams of Iraqi music or generally to Western music. He also believes in composing music before performance or the contrary point of improvisation is a process affected by Western classical music and so is an exotic element in Iranian traditional music [2].

On the other hand, the exoticism concept has its definite position in philosophy; For example, at philosophy of feminist criticism, female finds an

¹ Abol Hasan Saba (15 April 1902 - 19 December 1957)