FOLKSONGS AND DANCES
OF IRAN

NOTES ON PERSIAN MUSIC BY
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Iran has the oldest existing culture in the Middle East today. The far-reaching influence of Persian music is felt in Europe, the Soviet Union, Africa, and the Far East.

The Persians have always maintained a sedentary and insidious culture and for this reason were able to develop all forms of fine arts to great heights in Iran.

Persian music is the basis for nearly all other Middle Eastern and North African music; this includes Spanish flamenco which employs a sobbing effect akin to, but not as versatile as, the Persian classical style.

Persian music, like Western music, may be divided into classical, popular, and folk. All real Persian music is cast into one of the dastgahs, which comes close to being similar to the Indian ragas. The dastgah is very difficult to explain, but for Persian folk music it is not necessary to have more than a basic idea of the musical forms. A dastgah contains many guises which are, again roughly, comparable to modes. Not only do the dastgah and guise determine the tonality of a composition but also the character and emotional content of the music. An extensive knowledge of the dastgah is necessary in order to know or perform classical music.

That these dastgah are Persian and ethnic is attested to by the fact that all Persian folk songs are cast in one or more of these dastgah. Many of the dastgah contain place names and purely Persian words that are used by the Turks, Arabs, and many of the Soviet groups. Some of the dastgah are more native to particular areas.

Although war and heroic songs do occur in Persian folk music, if it were to be compared to Jugoslavia, Greece, or Turkey, all of whom are influenced heavily by Persian music, nearly all of the folk poetry of Iran is steeped with love. Unrequited love fills the greatest portion of both classical and folk lyrics.

The various colorful national and ethnic groups which populate Iran are all to little known. It is from these groups that the folk-music comes.

It is well to mention here that the influence of Islam has a direct bearing on the quantity and type of music found in present day Iran. Music and dance flourish in areas where the influence of Islam is least felt.

When Islam was brought to Iran and the peoples of Iran were forcibly converted, music and dancing were forbidden. However, the Arabs concentrated their conversions on the urban populations on the great Iranian plateau, and due to Iran's rugged terrain, largely neglected the outlying populations. Today ethnic folk music is not found for the most part in the Central Plateau. That is not to say classical music did not remain. However, among the peasantry (sedentary) around the cities in Central Iran such as Tabriz, Isfahan, Yazd, and Qom, which are located in the very center of Iran, folk music and dancing are extinct.

The other areas of Iran, however, are full to bursting with untapped folklore which is the culture of real Iran.

Here in this album, due to lack of space, are included only a few of the most well-known of Iranian folk songs. This collection can only begin to hint at the beauty and variety of folk music found in Iran.
Anthony Bijan Shay, Born in Los Angeles, California, October 31, 1936. A graduate of U.C. L.A. in International Relations with a minor in Middle Eastern Studies, B.A. Started learning Persian from friends in 1955. Learned some Persian folk songs and in 1958 was sent by the Iranian Students Association to represent Iran in a series of programs to acquaint Americans with Persian folk music. He took part in the music and dance programs, which were given in several Eastern cities.

When the Shah came to the United States in early 1958, he directed a program of Iranian folk arts and was sent that same month to Iran to study in the University of Tehran.

While in Iran he appeared many times as a featured folk singer with the Iranian National Radio Orchestras in the Iranian Radio in Tehran, as well, as gave programs in outlying provincial radio stations. He also appeared in many concerts with noted Persian performers.

In addition to Persian, he also speaks Spanish, Serbian, Portuguese, Italian, French and has a reading knowledge of Arabic.

I would like to dedicate this to the people of Iran, whom I dearly love. In my collection I was aided a great deal by Mr. Ahmad AshROUPOUR and Mr. Manouchehr Javid, both of whom checked my translations.

Also I would like to thank Dr. Ali Amini, former Ambassador to the United States, who was instrumental in having me sent to Iran and who was a constant friend and guide to me during my stay there.

PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

- as in the a in father
  a as in fat
  b same as in English
d as in the et in ballet
  e as in the e in set
  f same as in English
g as in g in garden, not gem
h more aspirated than h in English
  i as in ee in feet
  j as in the j in Jack
  k as in the k in kite
  l as in English
  m as in "m"
  n as in o in rope
  o as in the ou in could
  p as in English
  q as the rolled, single r in Spanish
  s as in English
t as "t"
  u as in ou in you
  v as in English
  w (only in Kurdish)
  y as in y in you
  z as in English
  ch as in ch in church
  gh as sound not found in English. It is a guttural by closing the palate and the tongue together sharply, as in swallowing.
  kh another guttural pronounced as ch in Bavarian German or ch in the Scottish dialect as in Loch Lomond
  gh as in English
  gh as in z in azure

SIDE I

Band 1

VARSAZHI OR NUMZE JUN

"Numze Jun" (Dear Betrothed) is a song which is known throughout the region of Mazanderan and the province which joins it to the east, Khorasan.

Mazanderan is the province which extends over the southeast shore of the Caspian Sea and forested by a myriad variety of fruits and nuts, which includes the only wild pomegranate forest in the world. The People, a good portion of them fair, are like their neighbors to the west, the Gilakis, more ethnically pure Persian than those inhabiting the great Iranian Plateau because the towering Elbors mountains protected them from the countless savage invasions inflicted on the Iranian nation at the hands of mauring Arabs, Mongols, and other invaders.

This song is one of the most typical and well-known of this region and is sung in the Mazendarani Dialect.

1. doste, doste, mene numze jin e ne
   nagh negh h
   bcheshma siah  
   nokone negah

2. sad bar gohan, hamehmin mahon
   zoli siah por chin maken
   ay ranan, ay delkhah, ay zibah jan

3. sare rash gol berisam
   khanar barad, bhar naldhah
   ay ranan, ay delkhah, ay zibah jan

Group by group they come after my betrothed
Her hand is like silver
With black eyes she comes
My betrothed does not look at me

One hundred times I have said don't do this
Don't curl your black hair
Oh graceful, oh heart's desire, oh beautiful dear

I strew roses in your path
If it rains daggers, I will not leave
Oh graceful, oh heart's desire, oh beautiful dear

Band 2

DAMKOL

"Damkol" is a folksong from the city of Kermanshah in the Iranian province of Kurdistan, which borders Iraq. The Kurds are an Iranian ethnic group, even those residing in Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. The Kurdish language is actually a dialect of Persian, the official language of Iran and that spoken by the inhabitants of the Iranian Plateau.

Kurdistan is a mountainous area and the people, many of them tribesmen, are a fiercely loyal group. They belong to the Sunni (Orthodox) sect of Islam which differs from the rest of the Iranians, who are adherents to the Shi'ite sect of Islam, which is the state religion. Until the Shi'ite sect, the Sunnis have never been particularly violently opposed to music and therefore Kurdistan is today a treasury of folk music and dance. The Kurds still wear their very unique native costumes.

The reference to fire in the song dates back to pre-Islamic Iran when under the Zoroastrian faith fire was revered as a symbol of sacredness.

1. tanem bemiram, nakonam kamran
   har ah beksham, peyeh no javani
chorus: damkolt o damkolt, damkolt
         damkolt, damkolt chaw siah

2. se dasam begir bezah to dijam
   bachwa monajat bakharm namtram
chorus:

3. dayeke pte kam tanla man darwa
   agar man bemiram, agar mawarwa
   (i) fear (i) shall die and never attain happiness
   Always I sigh for a fresh youth

Damkol of the black eyes
Take hold of my hand and put it over my heart
Go pray for me and perhaps I will no die

My old mother has only me
If I die, fire will rain.
Band 3

RAGHHE CHÜHNI

"Raghhe Chühni" (stick dance) is a dance of the rugged Rakhthari tribe. This tribe received international attention after the film "Grass", which depicts the tribe's annual migration to the mountains, was released.

Prior to these migrations the tribes gather together and this is one of the many dances performed. It is a men's dance in which the dancers, armed with sticks attempt to crack the shins of their fellow dancers.

Band 4

GÖLÉ GHUCHACHI

"Gole Ghuchachi" (Flower of Ghuchan) is a dance done with handkerchiefs and comes from the region of Ghuchan in the northeastern province of Khorasan. Also known as "Rashid Khan", this dance is also a famous song which tells of Rashid Khan, a legendary Robin Hood. If you listen closely, you can hear the sound of nightingales, for which Iran is famous.

Band 5

DANÉ NAR

"Dane Nar" (a pomegranate seed) is a folk song from Khorasan, near the town of Gorgan, and is particularly melodic. The reference to the pomegranate is to the bosom of the beloved. It is common in Persian lyrics to compare a youth to the moon and in this song this comparison is a play on words.

1. shahb mahsah bëbë mahsah bëbë
   shahb mahsah ë o mëssëdë dëgë këbë
   këbë dëgë dëgë ë dëgë këbë
   dëgë këbë, mëh ë dëgë dëgë këbë
   a moonlit night and the moon (girl) is shining
   Having a betrothed on a moonlit night is nice
   O God send the darkness and the moon
   that the darkness, the moon, and being in love is nice
   (My) lover I will not come
   "pomegranate seed I will not come
   Until I kiss the rose-like lips of my loved one
   My heart will not be at peace
   I observe a star at the edge of the steppe
   I observe your hair in the moonlight
   I frame your hair in beautiful silver
   your love balances my sanity (of being in love)

SIDAN II

Band 1

BAMÉ BOLAND

"Bamé Boland" (the High rooftop) is a famous folk song from the very charming and famous city of wine, roses, and poets, Shiraz. Shiraz is the capital of Fars, the center of Persian Culture and Empires. Not far from this city of enchanting gardens and turquoise domes lie the fabulous ruins of Persepolis, mighty evidence of Persia’s glorious past.

The people of Shiraz are famous for their hospitality and sense of humor. Their kindness and tenderness are reflected in the three songs which follow.

1. An bämë boland ke mihini, bämë mëye bësîdi çen qëdëtë sefiid ke mihini, yëre mëye hë la la ja'në ke nakon ho la la, ja'në ke nakon

2. az bâmë boland nayëfët, ëvëre ëhav shuyat bëmirë, bëgham gërejëf shavi ja'në ke nakon ho la la, ja'në ke nakon

3. aë bâmë bolandë darakehë na'al bëshëf
   ëhëgë bëshëf leqëf saigëf
   ja'në ke nakon ho la la, ja'në ke nakon

That roof in which you see if my roof
(here roof means an ivory tower)
That white veil which you see is my lover
Don't do that dear, Don't do that
Don't fall from the high roof (ivory tower)
or you will become a vagabond
Your husband will die and you will be overcome by grief
That roof is near the tree where they shoe horses
My love is wandering in the lane

Band 2a, 2b

AY SAR KÔTAL

"Ay sar Kotal" (at the top of the hill) and "Massom, Massom" (I'm drunk, I'm drunk with love) are from the Massamí tribe, part of the larger tribal grouping the Khâmë (five), live near Shiraz. Massom, Massom is perhaps the most popular Persian folk song and has been made into a popular song in Arabic, Turkish, Urdu and English, which was used in the film "Zarak Khan" and called "Climb the Wall".

a 1. ay sar kotal, pëndë kotal
cëv dëfë orbë diëfë
   ay na'ëfë fi, fi na'ëfë fi
   cëv dëfë nëwëdëm miëndëm
   At the top of the hill, at the bottom of the hill
   Oh the girl is at the campsite
   Oh my flower, my flower
   Oh the girl didn't come and I died
   Oh the flower blossomed and left
   She made us unhappy and left
   She became accustomed elsewhere
   She left us and passed and went away

b 1. yek gölë sëyë kamar, sëyë kamar
   çëcë cherëfë, çëcë cherëfë
   na dañëbëm beñ miëse, beñ miëse
   na këppë miëfë, na këppë miëfë
   chorus: massom, massom, massom
   tighat boriëf ësham

2. bëbërim sëyë cherëfë, sëyë cherëfë
   ahëfë bebasket, ahëfë bebasket
   har këdëbëm aë bëshëf, aë bëshëf
   kamar nëbakëdëm, kamar nëbakëdëm

chorus:

3. bëbërim gëzëgë këtë, gëzëgë këtë
   gëzë gëzëfëlë eats, gëzë gëzëfëlë eats
   mangalee por tashë, mangalee por tashë

A flower in the shade of a mountain
freshly blossomed
My hand cannot reach it
Nor can it bend down to me
I'm drunk
Your thumb pierces my thumb
Come let us go to Shaye Cheragh
and make an oath
Whoever breaks the vow first
Will break his back

Come let us go to Ghehli Korti
—and spread the rugs
Red and white teapos
The stove is full of fire

Band 3

"PACHE LELI" (Little Lily)

The emerald of Iran is the province of Gilan. Gilan is beheld with pride by all Iranians as being the stronghold of real Iran. Set in the green forests of the Elborz, it sets down in shimmering greenery into the Caspian Sea. Here is the area which abounds in beautiful songs and dances and colorful, unique costumes.

These songs are sung by my dear friend, Ahmad Ashourpoor, in the Gilaki dialect. Mr. Ashourpoor is one of the foremost performers in music of this region. He is a native of Ghazi district of Bandar Pahlavi on the Caspian Sea and his voice is well known by all of the Gilaks, who call him the "Nightingale of Gilan". He is an agricultural engineer currently residing in Tehran with his wife and two daughters.

1. amī dōshnār bāmōtnī ti bār denē ō jān, jān
   ashīftī gīth bārīmī ti gārdūnē ō jān, jān
   fīshā bāmōtnī ti var jā nachēnē ō, päche LELI
   ti kārār kāhī bāmōtnē kārēhēnē ō, päche LELI

2. tu bālāye tālī man dar zaminān jān, jān
   tu mērejī jast kūndī man dar kaminān jān, jān
   agar dāshētē bērē tu bāvānī, päche LELI
   ti var bāmōtnē ta awāl tu bātī, päche LELI

3. Kāhehī kōrī ki man dīghīmē az tu jān, jān
   bī fīkram ki dī vīgānām az tu jān, jān
   hezhēr afīsī kī man gharādē nadīnī, päche LELI
   háth tāmā mār mí in nātāhī, päche LELI

(Girl) cōntsn I have come to take you, dear, dear I throw a garland of calendulas around your neck; dear, dear Tonight I sit by your side, Little Lily I would kill myself for you, Little Lily

You are up on the balcony, I am on the ground, dear, dear You peel an orange and I await in hiding, dear, dear If I had known you would be unfaithful to me, Little Lily, I always come to your side first, Little Lily,

Go away girl, I am hurt by you, dear, dear I am thinking of a way to escape from you, dear, dear A thousand regrets that you do not know my worth, Little Lily, I would have not let you ever see me, Little Lily.

Band 4

"KORASHIM"

"Korashim" (Where shall we go) is a song from Bandare Pahlavi on the Caspian Sea.

1. tit dīlā be tāyēd behshīm bērēhānā
   ānī kōrī nībē ti mār bēdānā
   agar ti mār terāy bīdīnē ti amārā
   terā bīrānī kūnē az bēdānē bērēnā

chorus: arashīm, urashīm, korashīm
azī, korashīm, kījāy kōrashīm
ti amārā bēl bebah darāi yēnārashīm

2. kōjī kōrī man ti nāmā mādānān
   agar ti nāmā dānān terā dūshānān
   kōjī kōrī man ti nāmā bērēnīm
   ti jāhārēz nātānām dī vīgānām

3. kōjī kōrī terā bēdānī fūkāshān
   bēnārē sēfīd ēfīd sāmān kūnām sīmān
   bēnārē sēfīd ēfīd mūrāvām bēfārē
   fīrā kōrā ūrī middī dōshārē

Band 5

"LELI" (Lily)

1. ti gham o gharātā bānū bāmī ghamān jān
   naukārū mān hārē gham mi jāmā kām bē jān
   tu mi dārā dāndī dāmānām hāmān jān

   mi jānā dīlārā jān
   az hārē behnā hānī
   bēhe bē mi var jān
   așgāh būbom LELI, LELI šēdā būbom khēlī

2. Kōjī kōrī mi pā ni var bērēsē jān
   ti mār mārē pāyē bē kām âlā ē jān
   kāhēm hār kās tēsā as man bērēsē jān

   mi jānā dīlār, (etc.)

3. chere bīrūm aya mānā bīdīnām jān
   ti kānā man jāyāmān bīdīnām jān

   sēgās būbom man jān
   rōjērē
   bēpārē

   ay LELI, LELI, LELI, šēdā būbom khēlī

Your sorrows and troubles are my sorrows and troubles, dear
All that sorrow took away my life, dear;
You know of my illness and its cure, dear,

My beloved dear, dear
Better than all
"Always at your side"

I am the lover of Lily, madly in love,
This little girl wont sit still by my side, dear
By what name does your mother call me, dear?
I will kill anyone who tries to take you from me, dear.

My beloved dear, dear (etc.,)

Why don't you come outside so I may see you, dear
I will watch your house till I see you, dear
I will follow you everywhere to see you, dear

I am madly in love dear
I am discovered"
I am on my feet"

Oh my Lily, I am madly in love.