

Historical Background of the Dastgāh Concept in Persian Musical Manuscripts*

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Abstract

The historical background of the *dastgāh* concept, and the process through which it replaced the *maqām* system, still remains a major question in the history of Persian music. It is usually vaguely assumed that both concepts of the *dastgāh* and the *radīf* were introduced to Persian music during the Qajar era. The present paper is a first attempt to shed light on the issue through a historical musicological study as well as a number of hitherto neglected Persian musical manuscripts. This paper discusses the gradual historical evolution of the *dastgāh* concept from its earliest manifestations as an entity within the *maqām* system up to the formation of the idea of the *radīf*, as the main core and the model repertory of contemporary Persian classical music, in terms of several stages that began in the Safavid period and got its final accomplishment formulation in the Qajar epoch.

Keywords: *Dastgāh, Maqām, Radīf, History of Persian Music, Persian Musical Treatises and Manuscripts.*

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Introduction

This paper tries to examine the process of transition from the *maqām* to the *dastgāh* system and formation of the idea of the *radīf* in Persian classical music. It is usually vaguely assumed that both the *dastgāh* concept and the *radīf* phenomenon were introduced to Persian music in the Qajar epoch (1787-1925). Literature review on the subject (for instance, Kīānī 1998: 12; Bīnesh 1995: 139-141; Farhat 1990: 19-20; Mashhūn 1994: 366-367; Ṭalā'ī 1993: 12) suggests that (1) it is often taken for granted that the formation of the *dastgāh* and the *radīf* have taken place in the same period; (2) little attention has been paid to the primary musicological sources, Persian musical manuscripts; (3) most of the ideas presented so far are mainly of a speculative nature. Keeping all into consideration, this paper tries to follow the process of formation of the *dastgāh* concept through some hitherto less-known musical manuscripts. It will be argued that we should distinguish several stages in the process of evolution of this new musical system in Persia. This process began with the appearance of the *dastgāh* concept as an entity within the *maqām* system in the mid-Safavid period and reached its final formulation in the late Qajar epoch as manifested in the *radīf* repertory. Henceforward, a number of hitherto neglected manuscripts in which the term *dastgāh* has been mentioned, will be introduced and textually analysed.

1. The Dastgāh Introduced

It seems that the term *dastgāh*, as a musical concept within the *maqām* system, was introduced

to Persian music in certain manuscripts belonging to the mid-Safavid period. In at least two musical manuscripts seemingly belonging to the 17th century, the term *dastgāh* has been cited in a rather different sense from what it means today.

(A) There is a musical treatise in a collection of manuscripts in the form of Microfilm 2214 of the Central Library of the University of Tehran in which the term *dastgāh* is mentioned.¹ However its content reveals that the musical system was based on the 12 traditional *maqāms*, and related modal entities the term occurs only once in this treatise in the following sense:

Now it should be known that there are six *maqāms*, each of which is half-*parde*, and there cannot be composed any *ṣawt* or *naqsh* in them, because they do not have the *dastgāh*.² (f. 337)

(B) There is a collection of musical treatises in the manuscript collection 2591 of the Central Library of the University of Tehran, which is dated 17th century. The sixth treatise in this collection, falsely known as the Rāwhānī manuscript (MS 2591/6), also begins with a description of the usual modal system, in terms of the traditional twelve *maqāms* and other related entities. It has referred several times to the term in the following sense:

[...] *Neyrīz* is a *naghma* having *dastgāh* and *namūd* [...] '*Arāq* is the fourth *maqām* and its *shu'bas* are *rūy-e 'arāq* and *maghlūb*, both of these *naghmas* are *namūds* without

1. Although we lack exact information about when, where and by whom this treatise was written, its style suggests that it belongs to the mid-Safavid period.

2. For a discussion of the technical terms appearing in this fragment, as well as another possible reading and interpretation of this sentence, consult Asadi 1999.

the *dastgāh* [...] *Bozorg* is the eighth *maqām*, which has two *maḥds* [*maḥaṭṭs*? (=cadences)] and is devoid of the *dastgāh* [...] (ff. 793-794)

The meaning of the term *dastgāh* in such manuscripts implies a potential component probably related to a cyclic formal structure. The word *dastgāh* per se, etymologically speaking, signifies a coherent collection, hence it is comparable to the concept of the “cyclic form” in ethnomusicological literature (cf. Feldman 1996: 509; Asadi 2000: 10, 17-18). It is quite noteworthy that the term, in this sense is often used in phrases like “having [the] *dastgāh*” or “devoid of [the] *dastgāh*,” which points out to its potentiality. Henceforth, it may be concluded that in the mid-Safavid period this concept usually signified a potential factor to distinguish certain *maqāms* from the others. It seems that such a distinction was made on the basis of the cyclic or compound structure of some *maqāms* in a formal, practice-oriented, sense. Another interesting point is the usage of the term *namūd*, which seems to have been in a way related to some sort of melodic or modal transformation. The term *namūd* currently, in the Uzbek-Tajik *Shashmaqām*, signifies the appearance of the melodic or modal structure of a *maqām* or *shu'ba* in another *maqām* or *shu'ba*, which is usually regarded as a climactic point (Karomatov 1981: 102).

2. Formulation of the Four Principal Dastgāhs

In another musical treatise, which probably belonged to the late 17th century, or even a later period, the term *dastgāh* is mentioned in rather the

same sense as in the above-mentioned manuscripts (A and B). This treatise sheds some new light on the issue by indicating “the four principal *dastgāhs*”. It is an anonymous manuscript entitled *Treatise on the Science of Music* that is included in the manuscript collection number 3536 of the Malek National Library and Museum in Tehran (C).

Amongst the four principal *dastgāhs* one is *čahārgāh* [...] at first the *darāmad* is presented from *zangūleh*, which is also called *zangūle-ye jaras*, then it presents the simple *segāh*, then it enters *čahārgāh* [...] ¹ (f. 141v)

The term *dastgāh* in this manuscript also implies a cyclic form, in which modulation to different modes takes place. One of the most important ideas cited in this treatise, lies in its reference to the “four principal *dastgāhs*,” which may be interpreted as a newly introduced criterion for categorizing aspects of the musical system in that period. It may be inferred that in this stage the cyclic structure, in terms of the *dastgāh*, gained more importance in musical practice, due to the categorization made on its basis. Moreover, the four principal *dastgāhs*, with regard to their presumably cyclic structure, signify a possible relation between the concepts of the *dastgāh* and the *shadd*. Although the term *shadd* in musical literature during the 13th and 15th centuries was mainly synonymous with the *maqām* and *parda*, and in some treatises of 16th century it is used in

1. In this treatise the term *namūdār* is also cited, which is related to *namūd*. The *namūd* may have been a short form of the *namūdār*.

rather the same sense as the *dastgāh* in the 17th century. For instance, musical treatises like *Behjat al-Rūḥ*, pseudo-*Rawḥānī*, *Ma'refat-e 'Elm-e Mūsīqī* or *Karāmiye* refer to the four *shodūd* (plural of *shadd*) in relation to musical practice. Each *shadd* in such manuscripts comprises several modes. A clue, which suggests the possible relation between the concepts of the *shadd* and *dastgāh*, lies in their cyclic structure that begins and ends in the same mode while modulating to some other modes. In another manuscript (*Kulliyāt-e Yūsufī*, f. 22) both terms, the *dastgāh* and the *shadd*, are cited together as:

[...] When the instrumentalist or the vocalist wants to go on to the *dastgāh*, first he [or she] should start with *shadd-e dogāh*, then moves to *ḥeṣār*... [and so on and finally] returns to *dogāh*.

3. Formation of the Twelve Dastgāhs

The concept of the *dastgāh* as the main basis of the musical system was possibly introduced in the early Qajar era by a musician named Āqā Bābā Makḥmūr, as mentioned in a unique musical manuscript entitled *Kulliyāt-e Yūsufī* by Ḍiā' al-Dīn Yūsuf (cf. Massoudieh 1997: 39). According to this treatise, in the reign of Fath'Alī Shāh (1797-1835), Āqā Bābā Makḥmūr introduced the basis of the musical system into twelve *dastgāhs*, i.e. *rāstpandīgāh*, *navā-neyshābūr*, *homāyūn*, *māhūr*, *rohāb*, *shul-o-shahnāz* [*shūr-o-shahnāz*], *čahārgāh-mokḥālef*, *segāh*, *dogāh*, *zābol*, *'ashīrān* and *neyrīz* (f. 37). Therefore, it may be inferred that the previous four-*dastgāh* system changed into a newly formulated twelve-*dastgāh* system around

late 18th or the early 19th century. The information provided in this manuscript is quite noteworthy in some respects, for instance it says:

[...] You should know that the [musical] terminology is quite different between the performers and the scholars. Because the instrumentalists [or musicians] have named each of the *āvāzes* by their own terminology, also the musicians themselves greatly vary in their terminology with regard to the names of the *maqāms* and *shu'bas*. (f. 17)

According to Ḍiā' al-Dīn Yūsuf, difference in terminology among instrumentalists is partly due to the differences in their particular instruments. For example, he adds, certain *āvāzes* should be performed in high registers on one instrument and in low registers on another, hence resulting in a difference in terminology (ff. 17-18). This issue has even been reflected in his own treatise, since in folio 16 he refers to *dastgāh-e salmak*, which is not mentioned among the twelve *dastgāhs* cited at the end of this manuscript on folio 37. Likewise, the names of the four *shadds* mentioned in this manuscript are different from those cited elsewhere (cf. *Behjat al-Rūḥ*, among others.). Thereupon, the strong possibility of the existence of various synchronic styles in the classification and even in the number of the *dastgāhs* should also be taken into consideration.

4. Reformulation: Primary and Secondary Dastgāhs

It seems that the twelve-*dastgāh* system went through reformulation in the late Qajar epoch. Having briefly mentioned the old *maqām* theories,

Forṣat al-Dawla Shīrāzī (1855-1920) in his work, *Boḥūr al-Alḥān*, points out to some noteworthy information. He says in that period the *dastgāh* system changed: some *dastgāhs* were added, left or changed their names (Shīrāzī 1988: 18-19). He adds that the music scholars that time made some changes to the old *dastgāhs* and based the new system on seven *dastgāhs* (Ibid.). He refers to “the twelve old *dastgāhs*” and says that “the old *dastgāhs* have been changed into seven *dastgāhs*” (Ibid.). Therefore, it may be said that, contrary to the common belief (e.g. Kīānī 1998), before that time the *dastgāh* concept had already been in use and indeed went through an internal reformulation in that period, around 1914.

Moḥammad-Taqī Dāneshpazhūh (1976: 225) refers to another musical treatise in his catalogue of manuscripts, which may help us get a better understanding of this process of reformulation. Although, all efforts of the present author to find a copy of this manuscript, which has once been kept in a private library, have been in vain, yet its title as mentioned by Dāneshpazhūh yields valuable information. It is entitled [A Musical Treatise] “On the Six Primary and Six Secondary *Dastgāhs* along with two Cycles and some Poems about the *Maqāms*”. The title, per se, suggests that there has been a tradition of categorizing the cycles, or *dastgāhs*, into primary and secondary ones, a tradition that is still being used in the contemporary Persian classical music. Currently, there are seven primary *dastgāhs*, the names of which concord with those cited in *Boḥūr al-Alḥān*, and five [or even more in practice] secondary ones referred to as the *āvāzes*.

In connection with the tradition of the six *dastgāhs*, Azerbaijani treatise on the Science of Music entitled *Voḏūḥ al-Arqām* can be referred to which bears the date of 1884 (Navvāb 1913). This treatise, which is published in Baku in 1913, cites the concept of the *dastgāh*, in terms of its cyclic structure. The author points to six *dastgāhs* and provides us with descriptions of their constituent parts. This raises an important question, as how can the close affinity of the concept of the *dastgāh* in Persian and Azerbaijani musical traditions be justified? The fact that Moẓaffar al-Dīn Shāh (1896-1906), as a Qajar prince, had lived in Tabriz might be worthy of notice in finding a possible answer to such a question.

5. The Idea of the Radīf

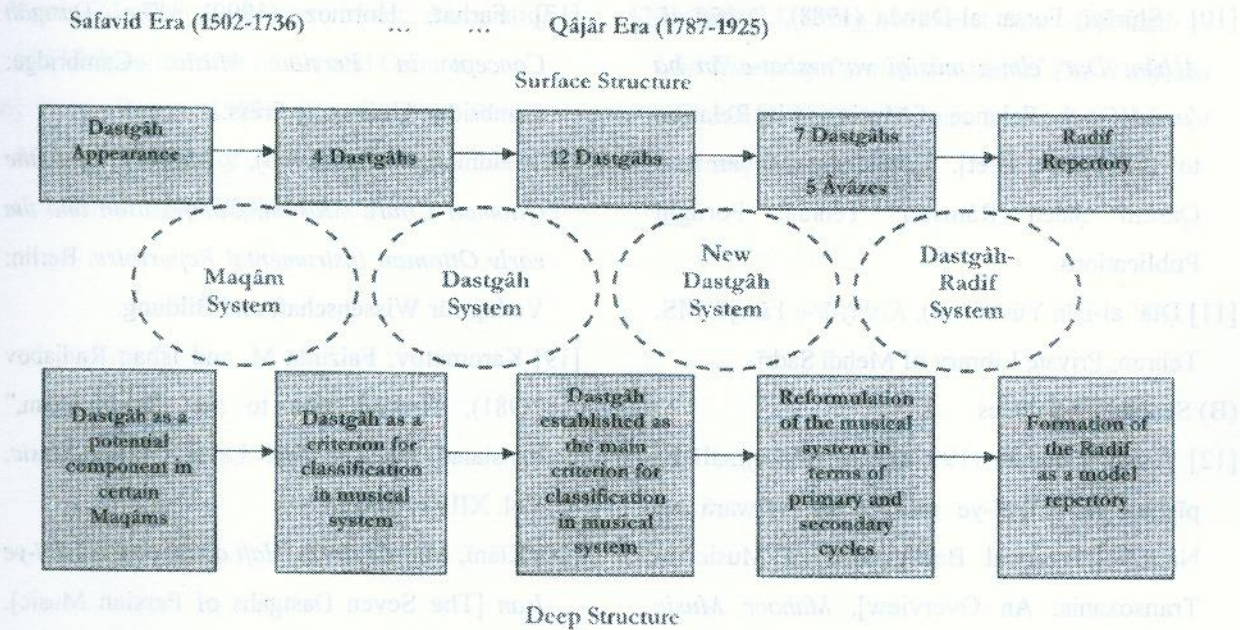
The formation of the *radīf*, as a fixed collection of traditional model melodies, is of a later origin. This term has not been mentioned in the known musical literature prior to the 20th century. It might be possible that, as Nettl (1992: 4) and Ṭalā’ī (1993: 8) suggest, the idea of the *radīf*, as a model repertory for traditional music education, has been formulated after the Western repertories in the early 20th century. The codification and compilation of the traditional repertory of Persian classical music is usually attributed to the Farāhānī family of musicians in the late Qajar era (Talā’ī 1993: 8). The earliest versions of the *radīf* were arranged for the long-necked lutes, the *setār* and the *tār*, by such great masters as Mīrzā ‘Abdollāh (1843-1918) and Āqā ḤoseīnQolī (d. 1913) at the Qajar court. Thus, it can be called as direct outcome of Qajar period. In connection with the

contemporary structure of the *dastgāhs*, as constituent cycles of the *radīf*, another manuscript seems to yield brief, but interesting, information. In a musical manuscript, entitled *The Food of Soul Lies in the Science of Music*, by Mo'ayyed al-Tojjār, written in the reign of Moẓaffar al-Dīn Shāh (1896-1906), the term *dastgāh* is also used. Moreover, it refers to some parts of the structure of a few *dastgāhs* such as *māhūr* and *homāyūn*, and gives instructions with regard to the appropriate poetic feet (*boḥūr*). It is noteworthy that, his descriptions of [*dastgāh-e*] *māhūr* as comprising the '*arāq* and *sāqīnāma* and of [*dastgāh-e*] *homāyūn* as including *bīdād* and *shūshtar* [*shūshtarī*] (ff. 164-166) coincide with the contemporary repertory of the *radīf*. In the contemporary repertory of Persian classical music, the *radīf*, '*arāq* and *sāqīnāma* are among the *gūshes* of *dastgāh-e māhūr*; likewise *bīdād* and *shūshtarī* are both among the main *gūshes* of *dastgāh-e homāyūn*.

Conclusion

The evolution of Persian classical musical system, from the *maqām* to the *dastgāh* and formation of the idea of the *radīf*, seems to have gradually taken place through five stages. Moreover, contrary to the common belief, the concepts of the *dastgāh* and the *radīf* were introduced to Persian music in different periods. This process begins in the mid-17th century with the appearance of the term *dastgāh* in musicological literature as a potential factor within the *maqām* system. The *dastgāh*, thus,

seems to have been associated with the cyclic structure of certain *maqāms*. In the second stage, presumably later 17th century, the *dastgāh* concept gains more importance as a criterion to organize aspects of the musical system. In this period, the four principal *dastgāhs*, in terms of cycles accommodating several modes or *maqāms*, seem to have been introduced to musical practice. In its third stage, during late 18th or the early 19th century, the four-*dastgāh* system was replaced by a new system of the twelve *dastgāhs*. In this period the *dastgāh* concept as the main criterion for organizing the musical system seems to have been established. In the fourth stage, presumably in the late 19th century, the newly introduced twelve-*dastgāh* system went through an internal reformulation leading to the distinction of primary and secondary *dastgāhs*. There seem to have been at least two main trends in this process of reformulation, i.e. two groups of either six primary and six secondary cycles or seven primary and five secondary cycles. In the fifth stage, in the early 20th century, the idea of the *radīf*, as a prescribed sequence of melodic modes and the collection of a series of the *gūshes* into seven *dastgāhs* and five *āvāzes*, was formulated. Currently, the *radīf*, as the model repertory of Persian classical music, serves as the main pedagogical repertory as well as the point of departure in improvisatory performances, and the main source through the musicological analysis of which the canonical syntax of Persian classical music can be revealed.



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پیشینه تاریخی مفهوم دستگاه در رسالات موسیقی ایرانی*

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پیشینه تاریخی مفهوم دستگاه و چگونگی روند تغییر نظام مقامی به دستگاهی یکی از پرسشهای بنیادین در تاریخ موسیقی ایران محسوب می‌شود. اما، علی‌رغم اهمیت این موضوع، تاکنون پژوهش مستقل و روشمندی در این زمینه انجام نشده است. معمولاً به گونه‌ای مبهم چنین پنداشته می‌شود که مفاهیم دستگاه و ردیف، پس از دوره‌ای فترت و بی‌خبری، در دوران قاجار تکوین یافته‌اند. مقاله حاضر می‌کوشد از طریق مطالعه تعدادی از نسخ خطی فارسی در زمینه موسیقی، که تاکنون مورد توجه قرار نگرفته‌اند، از منظر موسیقی‌شناسی تاریخی پاسخی برای این پرسش ارائه کند. در این مقاله روند تدریجی تکوین و تثبیت مفهوم دستگاه در قالب چند مرحله، از نخستین تجلیات آن به‌عنوان جزئی از نظام مقامی در دوران صفوی تا تکوین ایده ردیف در دوران قاجار، بررسی شده است.

واژگان کلیدی: دستگاه، مقام، ردیف، تاریخ موسیقی ایران، رسالات و نسخ خطی موسیقی ایرانی

* این مقاله مستخرج از رساله دکتری پژوهش هنر هومان اسعدی در دانشکده هنر دانشگاه تربیت مدرس با عنوان «مفهوم و ساختار دستگاه در موسیقی کلامیک ایران: بررسی

تطبیقی ردیف» است که با راهنمایی دکتر داریوش صفوت و مشاوره دکتر استیون بلام و استاد حسین علیزاده انجام پذیرفته است.

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