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## **A SURVEY ON GOL-ESENUBAR OPUS BELONGING TO NORTHERN KHORÂSÂN MUSIC (CASE STUDY)**

Ahmadreza ESMAEILI<sup>1\*</sup>, Parichehr KHAJEH<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> M.A in Music, School of Performance Art and Music, College of Fine Art, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran.

<sup>2</sup> M.A in Music, Faculty of Music, Tehran University of Art, Tehran, Iran.

**\*Corresponding Author**

**Email:** Esmaeili.ahmadreza@gmail.com

### **ABSTRACT**

*The local music of each land is a valuable legacy which narrates its history in a different language. Since ancient times, the mentalities and beliefs of nation were manifested in their art. Art is an efficient medium which has particular roles in the society. Music, together with all its special functions, is considered as a part of oral lore of each nation or tribe. Extant paper explores Gol-e Senubar, an opus from the music of Northern Khorâsân-Iran, by taking it as a case study. This review is based on dotâr sound sample and Hâj Qorbân Solyimâni's song, a musician and Ashik from Northern Khorâsân. Khorâsân's Ashiks are the Turkish-speaking population of this area. Music of these emigrants flourished within the context of Khorâsân and Turkish cultures.*

**Keywords:** *Gol-e Senubar, Persian music, Khorâsân music, Dotâr, Ashik,*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Regional, *Radif* and *Dastgahi* music of Iran is a comprehensive and diverse repertoire, but there is also a particular unity among them all. The present paper considers *Gol-e Senubar*, an opus which belongs to the Northern *Khorâsân* province of Iran.

In the scientific approaches of ethnomusicology, the social features and musical notions are both considered. This attitude in ethnomusicology confirms the existence of national features in local music. In the present research, anthropology was considered within the context of musical analysis. In comparison with the western culture, music has a different function for non-western nations. In western culture, music is considered as more abstract. The concept of musical aesthetics is totally different in Western and non-Western cultures (Masudie, 1980). For example, the regional music of Iran is an important part of Iran's oral literature. Performers of this music are keepers of a part of local culture which includes a summary of local history. In different types and styles of regional music of Iran, the vocals and the instrumentals are inseparable. In this culture, the lyrics and the vocals are integrated with the music. The contents of the lyrics are love, religion or myths. Music adds a particular tone and quality to the contents which never happens in normal conversational speech. Mystical and religious beliefs also have great impacts on this musical tradition. (Joneydi, 1993).

In ethnomusicology, human attitudes, descriptive facts and the implications of the music are considered vital. In this paper the musical functions and its latent implications were observed.

The aim was to consider and analyze the melodic and rhythmic components of *Gol-esenubar* opus. The analysis of its performance by *Hâj QorbânSolyimâni*, a musician from Northern *Khorâsân*, was also part of the objective.

### *Music of Khorâsân*

*Khorâsân* province is a vast territory characterized by many cultures because of its location of being adjacent to neighboring countries and different domestic areas. The music of *Khorâsân* has benefited greatly from this variety and diversity. Yet, by comparing and contrasting the music of this area with other regions in Iran, similar musical elements are observed.

In different parts of *Khorâsân*, songs are performed in various dialects and accents. The lyrics are usually narrative or eulogy poems. The contents of the songs differ from one another in different parts of *Khorâsân*. Generally, in the music of *Khorâsân*, similar to many other regions of Iran, the vocal has a more crucial role than the instrumental part. However, the performances and musical techniques of this region are remarkable and noteworthy. *Dotâr* is one of the local instruments being considered as important. It is a plucked string and pear-shaped instrument. In the deepest part, it contains a hole which has an impact on the resonance and the quality of the music. Apart from *Khorâsân*, also in some Northern regions of Iran, the *dotân* is a common instrument. But its physical structure and method of play differs in these areas.

*Dotân* is played without a pick, using various types of movements performed by the fingers of the right hand. The number and intervals of the frets located on the fingerboard varies among different eras, areas and musicians. *Dotâr* players from Eastern *Khorâsân* believe that the number of frets is dependent on the musicians' ability and range of repertoire. In Eastern *Khorâsân*, some musicians add more frets in order to play melodies which are not common in their area.

*Dotâr* has two strings which are tuned in fourths and fifths, or sometimes unison. It seems that having two strings originated from the ancient mentality of Dualism. Various songs and melodies of *Khorâsân* are classified based on the types of their tune. Each song is performed on a particular occasion. *Sarhadî, Jamshidî, Oshtorkhâju, Nardaneh, Gol-e senubar* and *Navâyi* are some well-known songs of the land. (Darvishi, 2002)

The *dotân* is a qualified instrument which is either played solo or accompanied by a singer. The tone and the style of *dotâr* are distinct in Northern *Khorâsân* and Eastern *Khorâsân*. The musical tradition of the Eastern parts, particularly *Torbat-e-Jâm*, is very similar to its counterpart in Herat-Afghanistan. The reason for this similarity is the presence of *Timurid* dynasty in these two zones of Iran and Afghanistan. With regards to meter, the songs of this region are classified into two different groups: songs with specific meter and songs with free meter. In the areas of Eastern *Khorâsân*, like *Torbat-e-Jâm, Khaf* and *Bakherz*, the playing of *Sornâ* and *Ney* are also popular. In the areas of Northern *Khorâsân*, like *Quchân, Shirvan, Bojnord* and *Dargâz*, a distinct form of music has been developed due to the immigration and presence of Turkish and Kurdish nations. This form of music differs from the music of the Eastern and Southern areas. Two groups of musicians known as *Ashik* and *Bakhshy* emerged due to the prevalence of Turkish and Kurdish music in this area. *Ashiks* are usually Kurdish people from *Kormanj*, and they play the *Sornâ, Qoshmah, Kamanchah, Ney, Dohol* and *Dâyereh*. *Ashiks* play musical instruments and also dance (Darvishi, 1997).

*Bakhshys* play the *dotâr*, sing and narrate stories and legends just like the minstrels. The impact of Turkmen music is heard in most of the songs of the Northern *Khorâsân*, especially the ones



made by Turkish speaking people. They also narrate the same stories like *Kör-oghli*, *Tâhere* and *Karam*. Even the physical structure of the *dotâr* of Northern *Khorâsân* is similar to the *dotâr* of the *Turkmen* people. Storytelling is the most important element of the northern parts of *Khorâsân*. (Darvishi, 2001)

In *Torbât-e-Jâm*, the term *Maqâm* is used in place of song. *Maqâm*s technically more comprehensive than song. *Maqams* are classified into different divisions. Sometimes, a specific pattern is considered while synthesizing the vocal and the instrumental. For example, when the poem is a couplet, the *dotâr* plays independently of the singer's song, that is, it is played after each verse. (Masudie, 1980)

The resonator of the dotar of Northern *Khorâsân* is smaller than its counterpart in Eastern *Khorâsân*. The former has also a narrower fingerboard. *Hâj Qorbân Solyimâni* and *Mohammed Yegâne* are well-known musicians of Northern *Khorâsân* (Figure. 1).



Fig. 1: *Hâj Qorbân Solyimâni*

## DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

*Gol-e Senubar* opus is played by *Hâj Qorbân Solyimâni*, a musician from *Qüchan* located in Northern *Khorâsân*. *Gol-e Senubar* can be considered both in regards to its vocal and instrumental parts. Distinctive features of its song are the Turkish tone and dialect, the impact of Turkmen music and the tone of the music of Northern *Khorâsân*. The melodic motion of the vocal can also be observed in the prelude melody of the instrumentals. The first picks on the open strings have an announcing attitude. The rhythmic motif and figure of the first time has great influence on the form of the whole opus. With regards to the meter, an irregular and specific pulse continues till the end of the opus. The opus comprises a quintuple meter and is performed with a 2+3 rhythmic arrangement. The 2+3, 2+2, 3+2 rhythmic patterns are different forms of the ancient *Fâkhteh* rhythm. In many old books on music, like book *al-Musiqa al-Kabir*, The book of Healing by *Avicenna*, *al-Adwar* by *Safi al-Din Urmawi* and *Jami al-Alhan* by *Abd al-Qadir Maraghi*, the *Fâkhteh* rhythm was mentioned. (Majd, 1999).

Each Time begins with a scraping like movement of three fingers. Dynamics-wise, it is more powerful than the other techniques performed with the right hand. Most techniques and sound effects performed with the right and the left hands are heard in this opus. For instance, continuous tremolos are used in some parts. This tremolo is known as screw tremolo. The other technique used frequently by the right hand is known as screw tremolo by right hand. Among the



other techniques performed with the left hand include the passage appoggiatura back note pointing and vibration.

With regards to the performance techniques, *dotâr* of Northern *Khorâsân* is similar to *Turkomandotâr* (Fig. 2). However, there is more unity in the performance of *Turkoman dotâr*. In Northern *Khorâsân*, some *Bakhshys* play Kurdish and Turkish *dotâr* songs using various techniques. All five fingers of the right hand are used when playing the instrument. The thumb and the index finger perform greater roles, and the picks of the other three fingers are used for more voluminous sounds.

The structure of this musical system requires space-tonal item and temporal (rhythmic) component. The structure of *Gol-eSenubar* opus, like many other Iranian regional and *Dastgahi* opuses, is cyclic (Ex. 1). Melodic sections follow one another and with a particular pattern (Asadi, 1999).

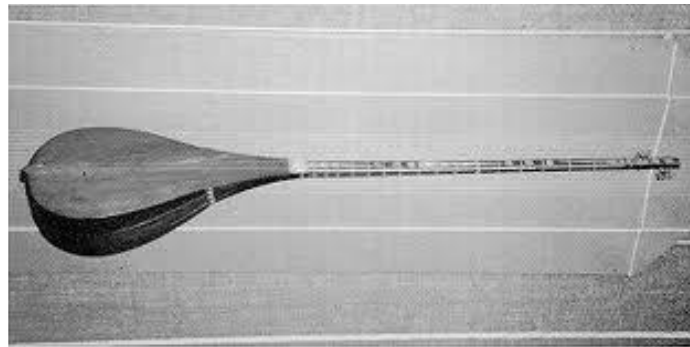


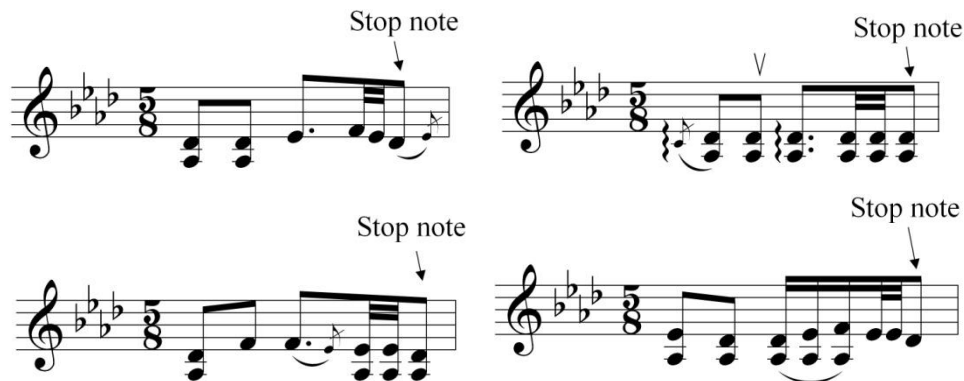
Fig. 2: *Dotâr* of Northern *Khorâsân*

This opus starts like this:

minus sign      plus sign

Example 1. Regional Music of Iran CD's No. 22, Music of *Northern Khorâsân*, Track No. 8, Pub. Mahoor institute of culture and Art, 1993. (Transcribed music by first Author)

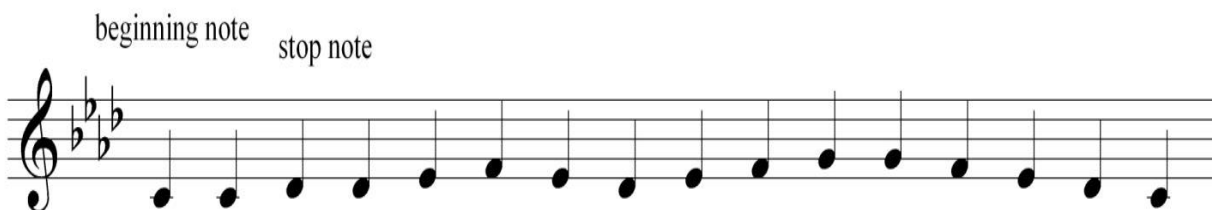
With regards to the modal, there exists a particular interval pattern in this opus. The tune of the two strings of *dotâr* has an impact on the quality of harmonics. In the first section, melodic changes occur smoothly because of the continuous motion of the notes. The biggest discontinuous interval is the interval from D to F. The melodic motion does not go beyond the fifth interval. Two-way melodic motion are organized in the form of early rhythmic. F note is the stop note and central mode of this opus, which ends the melodic motifs at the end of each Time (Ex. 2).



**Example 2. Regional Music of Iran CD's No. 22, Music of *Northern Khorâsân*, Track No. 8, Pub. *Mahoor* institute of culture and Art, 1993. (Transcribed music by first author)**

This opus, just like many other model melodies of regional music of Iran, is originated from an abstract model which is concealed in the mind of its performer. Structure-wise, the components of the opus belong to a single melody type in the Northern *Khorâsân*. This model melody differs in each performance based on various internal and environmental parameters. Repetition of motifs, the order of phrases and the performing delicacies, are distinct in each performance (Ex. 3). However, the main structure and the nature of the elements of the opus are kept the same in all performances.

At the beginning of the opus the melodic motion has such a contour:





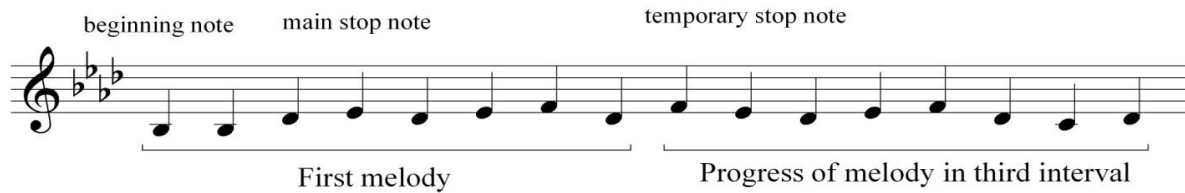
Example 4. Regional Music of Iran CD's No. 22, Music of *Northern Khorâsân*, Track No. 8, Pub. *Mahoor* institute of culture and Art, 1993. (Transcribed music by first author)

In the first part of the song, the third leap has an addressing attitude which resulted from the narrative nature of Turkish speaking *Ashiks* of this land. Performing the accented notes at the end of most of the Times resulted in a syncope mood. The amplitude of the melodic motion is within the fourth interval, so in this regard it is similar to *Dastgahi Radif*. Similar to the prelude section of the instrumental, the melodic motion is continuous. The accented note is the same as stop note, which is D. In the following part, the melody of the vocal and its instrumental response can be observed (Ex. 5).



Example 5. Regional Music of Iran CD's No. 22, Music of *Northern Khorâsân*, Track No. 8, Pub. *Mahoor* institute of culture and Art, 1993. (Transcribed music by first author)

The melody of the vocal and the instrumental borrow on another's prelude (Ex. 6). The content of the melodic and functional motion of the first vocal sound degree is as follows:



**Example 6.** Regional Music of Iran CD's No. 22, Music of *Northern Khorâsân*, Track No. 8, Pub. *Mahoor* institute of culture and Art, 1993. (Transcribed music by first author)

Turning point of the melody of the beginning of the vocal together with a nuance in the beginning of the prelude of the instrumental as follows: (Ex. 7).



**Example 7.** Regional Music of Iran CD's No. 22, Music of *Northern Khorâsân*, Track No. 8, Pub. *Mahoor* institute of culture and Art, 1993. (Transcribed music by first author)

In contrast to the first two turning points, the pattern of the melody approaches the stop note (Ex. 8). The accent is also located on this note.



**Example 8.** Regional Music of Iran CD's No. 22, Music of *Northern Khorâsân*, Track No. 8, Pub. *Mahoor* institute of culture and Art, 1993. (Transcribed music by first author)

A comparison of the melodic figures of the prelude of the part played with the instrument and the song that follows it: (Ex. 9).

## Instrumental



## Vocal



Example 9. Regional Music of Iran CD's No. 22, Music of *Northern Khorâsân*, Track No. 8, Pub. *Mahoor* institute of culture and Art, 1993. (Transcribed music by first author)

## CONCLUSION

*Gol-e Senubar* opus, like many other regional opuses and *Dastgahi Radif* melodies, has a climax point which is in the upper register of the instrumental or the vocal. Changing the intervals in the climax melody, modification of the intervals and returning to the first interval is observed in the landing phrase. In these songs, the climax points are usually in the fourth, fifth or octave intervals. In the *Gol-e Senubar* opus, the climax point is located in the octave interval (Ex. 10). In the climax melodies of the opus, changes like these happen:

## climax melody



## landing



Example 10. Regional Music of Iran CD's No. 22, Music of *Northern Khorâsân*, Track No. 8, Pub. *Mahoor* institute of culture and Art, 1993. (Transcribed music by first author)

The variable note in the climax melody is A, which in the ascending form of the melody is considered as half step higher, and in the descending melody, it is considered half step lower. As earlier said, these changes in the landing phrase occur frequently in *Radif* and regional music

of Iran. In the descending section, motifs are played in a sequence-like way (Ex. 11). This descending melody is also observed in other items of *Khorâsân* music.



**Example 11. Regional Music of Iran CD's No. 22, Music of Northern Khorâsân, Track No. 8, Pub. Mahoor institute of culture and Art, 1993. (Transcribed music by first author)**

Throughout this performance, different melodic forms mentioned in this paper are repeated. The main structure of this opus is the expansion of the initial and climax melody. The metric pattern is the same throughout the entire opus. Free meter is just observed only in a vocal phrase.

Locating the latent contents of this type of music does not rely solely on the study of musical elements. While trying to understand the nature and the function of this music, many elements, beyond the musical ones, should be considered. In order to grasp the aesthetic mystery of this opus, one should live with this people and know their faiths.

The elements of location and time, mythological features and the faiths and beliefs are the indivisible aspects of this music. Music is regarded as a unifying factor in this small society.



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