

Contemporary *Tombak* Playing in Iran
An Ethnographic Experience of Practice, Interaction
and Music Making

by

Alexandra Balandina

Music Department
Goldsmiths' College
University of London



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**THESIS
CONTAINS
CD**

Abstract

The aim of this work is to highlight the growth and establishment of *tombak* playing within the domain of Iranian music over the last century, a period which stimulated *tombak* players to advance and elaborate their playing techniques, to enrich their rhythmic patterns, to formulate, expand and diffuse the notation for the *tombak*, and to originate new types and genres of *tombak* playing: the *tombak* solo, duet and group *tombak*. I emphasize the role of *tombak* players, equally important to other musicians and yet neglected, in the history and the aesthetic development of Iranian music.

I examine the traditional role of the *tombak* as an accompaniment instrument from the late Qajar period until the present day, and explore how the new genres fit in contemporary Iranian music, and in particular, the dynamic development of the *tombak* solo, as a genre in search for its own “independent” identity. Developing this theme, my intention is to relate the dual nature of the *tombak*, as both an accompaniment and a solo instrument, to the identity of the contemporary *tombak* player. In this frame of reference I analyse the music profile of the urban professional *tombak* player, who is depicted as interacting in a wide web of socio-musical relationships which have professional, personal and intimate aspects. In addition, I investigate how the socio-cultural context affected musical creativity and the status of musicians in general, and the *tombak* player in particular, before and after the Revolution.

This ethnography is based on reflexive experience and interpersonal interactions in the course of ethnomusicological field research in Tehrān, where the multiple voices of living individuals have ultimate significance in understanding the music culture of the contemporary *tombak* players in Iran.

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| 1. | A Fantasia for <i>Tombak</i> Ensemble and Orchestra | National Music Orchestra, Composer and music director: Hossein Dehlavi <i>Tombak</i> soloist: Mohammad Esmā'ili | 8:08 |
| 2. | <i>Lokomotiv</i> [Locomotive] | Hossein Tehrāni (<i>tombak</i>) | 2:06 |
| 3. | <i>Hayāt</i> [Life] | Navid Afgah (<i>tombak</i>) | 11:02 |
| 4. | <i>Sarāqāz</i> [Beginning] | Peymān Khosrow Sāmāni (<i>divān</i>) Navid Afgah (<i>tombak</i>) | 2:30 |
| 5. | <i>Zarbi, Shur</i> | Rokneddin Mokhtāri (violin), Nur 'Ali Borumand (<i>tombak</i>). | |
| 6. | <i>Zarbi-hāye Torkibi-ye</i> <i>Gunāgun va Ritm-hāye</i> <i>Zurkhāne-i</i> [Combination of Various Rhythms and <i>Zurkhāne</i> rhythms] | Nāser Farhangfar (solo <i>zarb zurkhāne</i> and <i>zarbikhuni</i>) | 10:31 |
| 7. | <i>Āvāz-e Abu 'Atā</i> | Majid Kiāni (<i>santur</i>) Not stated (<i>tombak</i>) | 17:30 |
| 8. | <i>Sāvāran-e Dasht-e Omid</i> [Riders in the Field of Hope] | Hossein 'Alizāde (<i>tār</i>) Bahman Rajabi (<i>tombak</i>) Arzhang Kāmkār (<i>tombak</i>) | 7:21 |
| 9. | <i>Hejrān (Dastgāh Segāh)</i> | Hossein 'Alizāde (<i>tār</i>) Arshad Tahmāsebi (<i>tār</i>) Dāriush Zārgeri (<i>tombak</i>) | 3:27 |

¹ The Compact Discs I, II are attached at the last page of the thesis.

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|--------------|--|--|------|
| 10. | <i>Be Yād-e Rajabi</i> [A tribute to Rajabi] | Pedrām Khāvarzamini (composition, arrangements, <i>tombak</i>) | 8:55 |
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| 1 | <i>Rastākhiz</i> [Resurrection] | <i>Dālāhu Daf</i> group and Mas'ud Habibi | 4:54 |
| 2. | <i>Ejrā-ye Ritmhā-ye Sāde va Torkibi</i> [A Performance of Simple and Compound Rhythms] | Hossein Tehrāni (<i>tombak</i>) | 5:46 |
| 3. | Solo <i>tombak</i> in 5/8 | Dāriush Zārgeri | 6:09 |
| 4. | <i>Do zarbi dar qerā-ye 2/4</i> [<i>Do zarbi</i> in 2/4]. | Jālil Shahnāz (<i>tār</i>) Homāyun Khorm (violin) Amir Nāser Eftetāh (<i>tombak</i>) | 6:26 |
| 5. | <i>Zarbi, Chahārmezrāb</i> | Hossein 'Alizāde (<i>tār</i>) Majid Khalaj (<i>tombak</i>) | 5:14 |
| 6. | <i>Qet'e-ye berāye Santur va Tonbak</i> 2/4 [A piece for <i>santur</i> and <i>tombak</i> in 2/4] | Farāmarz Pāyvar (<i>santur</i>) Mohammad Esmā'ili (<i>tombak</i>) | 4:21 |
| 7. | <i>Reng-e Māhur</i> | Dāriush Zārgeri (<i>tombak</i>) Arshad Tahmāsebi (<i>tār</i>) | 1:48 |
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| 10. | <i>Āmān</i> | Mas'ud Jāhed (<i>ney</i>) Bizhan Kāmkār (<i>daf</i>) Mahmud Farahmand Bafi (<i>tombak</i>) | 4:43 |
| 11. | <i>Biā Sāqi</i> [Come Wine-pourer] <i>Dastgāh Shur</i> | Sheydā and 'Aref Ensemble Hossein 'Alizāde (composition, music director) Shahrām Nāzeri (<i>āvāz</i>) | 6:55 |
| 12. | Improvisation in <i>Segāh</i> , <i>Chahārmezrāb</i> | Hamid Khabbāzi (<i>tār</i>) Pedrām Khāvarzamini (<i>tombak</i>) | 5:14 |
| 13. | <i>Qet'e-ye 2/4 dar Segāh</i> | Farāmarz Pāyvar (<i>santur</i>) | 3:14 |

| | | | |
|-----|--|---|------|
| | [A piece in 2/4 in <i>Segāh</i>] | Mohammad Esmā'ili (<i>tombak</i>) | |
| 14. | Untitled. (A piece for <i>tambur and daf</i>) | 'Ali Akbar Morādi (<i>tambur</i>) Pezhmān Hadādi (<i>tombak</i>) | 5:51 |

List of Contents on the Data/Video Disk I ²

DVD I

| | | | |
|----|---|---|-------|
| 1. | 16 Types of <i>Riz</i> | Bahman Rajabi | 6:34 |
| 2. | A piece in 6/8, first performed with the <i>eshāre</i> ornamentation and then by using seven different <i>riz</i> . | Bahman Rajabi | 3:17 |
| 3. | Duet <i>Tombak</i> | Bahman Rajabi Pedrām Khāvarzamini | 18:04 |
| 4. | <i>Raks-e Do Angoshti</i> [Two Fingers Dance] | Bahman Rajabi | 2:12 |
| 5. | <i>Pishdarāmad</i> in 6/4 | Bahman Rajabi (<i>tombak</i>) Siāmak Āqāi (<i>santur</i>) Hamid Khabbāzi (<i>tār</i>) | 2:03 |

Note on Transliteration and Translation

I have chosen to use the transliteration system revised by Wheeler M. Thackston (1993) considering it comprehensive in its description of the phonology of the Persian language. For reasons of easy flow, some times Persian words have been altered when transliterated in English language, like in the cases of the Persian suffix “hā”, denoting plural forms, which has been often substituted with the English suffix “s”.

This transliteration, as any other, has also its problems.³ For example I have used two texts by Talā'i, one English and one Persian. When I refer to the Persian text

² Dates and sources of the visual examples are provided in the text.

³ For example, in the Persian script there are no capital letters.

and to our interviews I write his name transliterated (Talā'i), while when I refer to the English text, I write his name as he did in Talai 2002. I have also decided to keep the names of Iranian politician and Iranian regions, as they are most often written in the text in English scholarly books, without exact transliteration.

| | | |
|----------|---|----|
| Alef | ا | - |
| Be | ب | b |
| Pe | پ | p |
| Te | ت | t |
| Se | س | s |
| Jim | ج | j |
| Che | چ | ch |
| He-jimi | ح | h |
| Khe | خ | kh |
| Dāl | د | d |
| Zāl | ذ | z |
| Re | ر | r |
| Ze | ز | z |
| Zhe | ژ | zh |
| Sin | س | s |
| Shin | ش | sh |
| Sād | ص | s |
| Zād | ض | z |
| Tā, tayn | ط | t |
| Zā | ظ | z |
| Ayn | ع | ' |
| Qayn | ق | q |
| Fe | ف | f |
| Qāf | ق | q |
| Kāf | ک | k |
| Gāf | گ | g |
| Lām | ل | l |
| Mim | م | m |
| Nun | ن | n |

| | | |
|-----|---|---|
| Vāv | و | v |
| He | ه | h |
| Ye | ی | y |

Additional signs:

| | | |
|--------------|---|------------|
| Alef-maddale | آ | ā |
| Te-tammat | ة | -atan |
| Alef-tanvin | أ | -an |
| Hamze | ء | ' |
| Tashdid | ّ | (doubling) |

The vowels:

Ā ā is written:

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|------|------|
| 1. word initially with alef-maddale | أن | nā |
| 2. elsewhere with alef | بابا | ābāb |

i is written:

| | | |
|---------------------------------|------|------|
| 1. word- initially with alef-ye | اين | in |
| 2. elsewhere with ye | بينى | bini |

u is written:

| | | |
|---------------------------------|-------|--------|
| 1. word-initially with alef-vāv | اوت | ut |
| 2. elsewhere with vāv | روپوش | rupush |

ay is written:

| | | |
|--------------------------------|-------|-------|
| 1. word initially with alef-ye | ايوان | ayvān |
| 2. elsewhere with ye | سيل | sayl |

aw is written:

| | | |
|---------------------------------|-------|-------|
| 1. word initially with alef-vāv | اولاد | awlād |
| 2. elsewhere with vāv | جو | jaw |

Phonology

Vowels:

- i is a high front open vowel [i], like the “ea” in please
- e is a middle front open vowel [ɛ], like the “e” in bet
- a is a low front open vowel [æ], like the “a” in “cat” but slightly lower
- ā is low back open vowel between the “a” of “father” and “bald”
- o like in “coped”
- u is a high back rounded vowel [u], like the “oo” of “moon”
- ay is a glide very close to the “a” in “wade”
- aw is a “w”-glide like the “o” in “bone”

Consonants:

- q is pronounced similarly to k but farther back in throat
- ' is a glottal stop, this sound occurs in English in dialect pronunciations of “bottle” and “little” as “bo'l” and “li'l”
- sh is like the “sh” in “shine”
- zh is like the “g” in “beige”
- kh is like the Scottish “*loch*”
- ch is like the “ch” in “church”
- j is like the “j” in “judge”
- y is like the “y” in “yes”

Acknowledgments

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Chapter one: Introduction

As an undergraduate of Social Anthropology, at the Panteion University of Athens, I was fascinated with the idea of doing fieldwork in a remote culture, far away from my university and my home. At those days I felt that I had many choices regarding the geographical area that I could do a research due to my adept knowledge of several languages (Serbo-Croatian, Macedonian, Bulgarian, Russian, Greek, English), but I did not have a clear idea about any particular subject. At the same time I took lessons by Ross Daly in performing the *bendir*, a frame drum that is popular in Greece and Turkey. Shortly afterwards I started performing with Daly in various concerts in Greece and Cyprus.

While doing my undergraduate studies I decided to follow a course in Anthropology in a British University with the Erasmus project. I received a scholarship and enrolled for one semester at the Brunel University, where I attended the compelling lectures of Prof. Adam Kuper. At the same time I attended an introductory course in Ethnomusicology in a London University, though unofficially. Being away from Daly and his music ensemble *Labyrinth* and as I did not want to interrupt my music activities, I decided to continue my lessons on the frame drum. Daly gave me a reference in London and I started learning the *daf*, an Iranian frame drum, with Fariborz Kiāni, an Iranian London-based performer. He was also teaching the *tombak* which I already had heard from Ross Daly, who had many years of intimate collaboration with Jamshid Shemirāni, a well known Iranian *tombak* player living in France. Soon I decided to take both *tombak* and *daf* lessons from Fariborz Kiāni, who ordered for me my first *tombak* from Iran. The *tombak* instantly captured my interest, but as soon as the Anthropology course finished I had to return to Greece and there was nobody who knew how to play the *tombak*, so I could not find a teacher. In 1998 Shemirāni came to Greece with his two sons, Keyvān and Bizhan, and I received a few *tombak* lessons with Keyvān, but shortly afterwards he left for France and I was again unable to pursue my interest systematically.

As soon as I finished my first degree in 1998, I felt that doing a MMus in Ethnomusicology in London came naturally as a choice; it combined both anthropology, music, and the prospect to continue my *tombak* lessons. Professor John Baily showed interest in my case and accepted me as a MMus student in Ethnomusicology at Goldsmiths College. He introduced me to Narges Torshizi, an Iranian, London based

tombak player, who became my *tombak* teacher. I understood that the MMus was my opportunity to experience the state of “being in the field”, a dream that I was pursuing for many years. Iran came up as a matter of course: it was the *tombak* drawing me there, and John encouraged my intentions of doing field research.

In October in 2000 I went to Tehrān, where I studied the *tombak* with Bahman Rajabi for three months, with a partial support by the British Council for Persian Studies.⁴ Before this, several Iranian musicians in London suggested his name, citing him as one of the best *tombak* teachers, warning me though that he is considered to be *divune* (mad). It was during this trip that I met Pedrām Khāvarzamini and his *tombak* group; and my friend Roxana, who helped me going through the Iranian bureaucracy and obtaining residence in Iran for my MPhil field research.

From the time of the MMus I already had experienced the richness of *tombak* (both in its country of origin, as well as outside of it) which induced my interest in Iranian music; I was acquainted with the fundamental playing techniques on the *tombak*; I had conducted a short term field research in Iran where I was struck by the hospitality of the Iranians and amazed by the outstanding performance techniques of the *tombak* players; and most importantly I had formed a network of relationships in the field.

Prof. John Baily supported once more my objectives to commence an MPhil and try to better understand many unanswered questions regarding the socio-cultural context of the *tombak* and the *tombak* player, questions that I could not resolve by reading the existing literature, and whose answers were to be found among living individuals who create this music, through a long-term immersion in the field. A fees-only scholarship from AHRC, provided me the basic conditions to embark on my new venture and I found myself in Iran on the 31st of January in 2002.

Delineating the Research Study

The single-headed goblet-shaped drum that is called *tombak* is the principal percussion instrument used in Iranian music since the 19th century. It is currently used in various classically-derived and urban popular genres, but also performed in regional music.⁵ The *tombak* has become an instrument of high virtuosity especially in the last sixty

⁴ A short biography for most *tombak* players appearing in this study is given in Appendix 2. There is a section on Rajabi in chapter six. In the last chapter I also describe my music lessons with him.

⁵ See Darvishi (2005:356-372) for the use of *tombak* in regional music.

years and this development is associated with Hossein Tehrāni (see his biography in Appendix 2), who is considered to be the first to realize and promote its potential as a solo instrument. Before his time, *tombak* playing was considered simple and unsophisticated in terms of the playing technique.

Today, the performance techniques are very demanding in terms of accuracy, diversity, complexity, coordination and velocity of motor movements. There is an impressive variety of unique, elaborate and vigorous finger techniques that are used while playing. The articulation of complex finger stroke combination, the articulation of diverse movement combination, the ability to perform at great speed and the clarity of sound are the main characteristics of the performing technique today. As a result, multifarious stroke combinations and fingering patterns produce ample sound impressions.

Nowadays, the *tombak* constitutes one of the most popular Iranian instruments with many young people attending music lessons, male and female, from various religious and social backgrounds. The other side of the instrument's popularity is associated with its capacity to be used in popular, urban entertainment genres (that are denounced by many musicians performing Iranian music). On an international level, the *tombak* has gained a wide recognition, especially among musicians, as an instrument requiring great technical and musical mastery, often being compared to that of the Indian *tabla*. This aspect has to be seen in the context of world music and the growing interest in percussion instruments in the last few decades, but also as a consequence of the international presence of Iranian musicians who have moved abroad - for various historical, political and personal reasons - and have contributed to the popularization of the instrument. However, among the general public its standing has not reached yet the degree of reputation of the *tabla*, or other widely known percussion instruments such as the *darabukka* (associated with the Middle East), the Afro-Cuban *bongos*, the Latin American *conga* drum, or the *djembe* from Senegal.

This ethnography considers *tombak* playing in the context of Iranian music, as it flourished primarily in the capital city of Iran, Tehrān, because, as I shall argue, within this music tradition *tombak* players advanced their instrumental technique, became practically indispensable with regards to their role as accompanists, acquired the title of *ostād* (master musician), and left their trademark upon the history and aesthetics of Iranian music, and more specifically its rhythm-related styles. My objectives are to bring to the fore recent developments in musical life in Iran in relation to *tombak* playing, and to show that *tombak* players have an important role in enriching the Iranian

music culture. That is, I consider the work and lives of the professional *tombak* players as an integral part of Iranian music: as individuals interacting in a wide web of personal and professional relations, and with their contribution in the creative processes of this music tradition, an aspect largely neglected in the scholarly writings devoted to Iranian music.

Towards this aim, I take into account the wider socio-cultural context of the urban professional *tombak* players in Iranian music, in a diachronic perspective, starting from the late Qajar period, but with particular reference to contemporary music practices.⁶

The terms used to describe the various music genres in Iran, and in particular the art/classical music genres, are often ambiguous, both in the way they are employed in Iran, by musicians and scholars, and in the ethnomusicology literature in the west.⁷ For this reason the term “Iranian music” and its use in this ethnography needs to be explained. This task becomes more complicated not only because of the diversity of opinions and usages of various terms, but also because most of the terms that designate the classical music genres have multiple meanings, thus they can be, ambiguous.

In this work I use predominantly the generic term “Iranian music” as a translation of the Persian expression *Musiqi-ye Irāni* to refer to the art/classical music, and the contemporary genres that derive from it, but can not be always easily classified as “Iranian classical music” (*Musiqi-ye Kelāsik-e Irāni*).

Generally, the meaning of the term *Musiqi-ye Irāni* (Iranian Music) is considered highly context-sensitive, a fact that makes it malleable and flexible (Asa’di, personal communication, March 2007). Nevertheless, four different applications can be identified in contemporary Iran. First, it is an umbrella-term encompassing a variety of musics (classical, folk, popular) that are considered to be Iranian, in the sense that they originate in Iran. Second, the term *Musiqi-ye Irāni* is used as synonymous with the polysemous term *Musiqi-ye Melli* (National Music).⁸ Third, it is used as a synonym or

⁶ The Qajar period spreads from 1799 to 1925. When I refer to the late Qajar period I mean the period from the mid-19th century till 1925.

⁷ Other scholars have also pointed out this ambiguity of terms. See, for example, During (2002:853-854), During, in During and Mirabdolbaghi (1991:19-20), and Youssefzadeh (2005:419-420). A summary of the classification of music-genres in Iran is provided by During (1984a: 37-56). For a discussion on the ambiguity of these terms by Persian scholars see two interviews by Shahrnāzdār published in *Māhur Music Quarterly* journal, in 1998 (1) and 1999 (4). Talā’i, Darvishi, Kiāni, and Fakhreddini in the first article and ‘Alizāde, Ganjei and Farhat in the second, define many of the aforementioned music genres. See also Ja’farzādeh for the overlap between the terms *Radif* and *Dastgāh* (2001).

⁸ *Musiqi-ye Melli* is used predominantly in two ways. First, it refers to all Iranian music genres (including Iranian classical music). Second, it denotes a western-type classical music, usually based on Iranian themes, and performed by large orchestras using both Iranian and western music instruments.

an abbreviation of the polysemous term *Musiqi-ye Kelāsik-e Irāni*.⁹ Fourth, it is used in a context where one music style crosses the traditional boundaries of the music tradition of the *radif* and the *dastgāh/āvāz* system, but derives and originates in the music context of the classical music tradition. Such is the case of the *tombak* solo, duet or group *tombak*, that can not be readily classified as *musiqi-ye kelāsik-e Irāni* (Iranian classical music), because in the classical tradition the *tombak* has always been regarded as an accompanying instrument.

The art/classical/scholarly music in Iran has been designated with the following, often, ambiguous terms:

Musiqi-ye Asil-e Irāni (original/pure/authentic Iranian Music)

Musiqi-ye Kelāsik-e Irāni (Iranian Classical Music)

Musiqi-ye Sonnati-ye Irāni (Iranian Traditional Music)¹⁰

Musiqi-ye Radif (*Radif* Music)

Musiqi-ye Dastgāh-i (*Dastgāh* Music) and

Musiqi-ye Radif-e Dastgāhi-ye Iran (Iranian *Radif Dastgāh* Music).

From the above designations, the term *Musiqi-ye Sonnati* has predominance in colloquial language; the term *Musiqi-ye Kelāsik-e Irāni* is becoming gradually more popular; while the last three terms – that is, *Musiqi-ye Radif* (*Radif* Music), *Musiqi-ye Dastgāhi* (*Dastgāh* Music) and *Musiqi-ye Radif-e Dastgāhi-ye Irān* (Iranian *Radif Dastgāh* Music) - have more scholarly applications.¹¹

Each of these terms derives from a particular musical, historical and ideological frame of reference. It appears that there is some inconsistency in their application, as they have been defined by Iranian scholars and musicians sometimes in similar and at other times in divergent ways. For example, Talā'i considers that the *Dastgāh* Music is based on the *Radif* of Iranian music, and because it does not belong to any particular region or people of Iran it can be considered to be National Music or Classical Iranian

⁹ *Musiqi-ye Kelāsik-e Irāni* refers mainly to two music genres. First, it is used to designate the orchestral music performing western classical music, but retaining its Persian roots. Second, in recent years, it is used as an alternative to *Musiqi-ye Sonnati* (Iranian Traditional) or *Musiqi-ye Asil* (Authentic Music). According to Asa'di, Iranian Classical Music should not be restricted to the *radif*, although it heavily relies on the *dastgāh/āvāz* system (personal communication, March 2007).

¹⁰ The ideological implications of the terms *Musiqi-ye Asil-e Irān* and *Musiqi-ye Sonnati-ye Irān*, and *Musiqi-ye Melli-ye Irān* are also discussed in chapter two.

¹¹ These last three set of terms were coined by Kiāni. According to some scholars, the terms *dastgāh* and *āvāz* should not be used to denote music genre, as they constitute the modal and melodic system of Iranian Classical Music (Asa'di, personal communication, March 2007).

(1998:155).¹² He asserts that he understands the term National Music to include also the “Iranian melodies that are performed by large orchestras like the symphonic orchestra” (ibid. 1998:154). For Darvishi on the other hand, National Music includes not only the *Dastgāh* and *Radif*, but also *Musiqi-ye Navāhi* (Regional Music), *Musiqi-ye Mazhabi* (Religious Music), *Eslāmi* (Islamic), *‘Āyini* (Ritual), Zoroastrian music and Sufi music, among others (1998: 150-151). The term *Musiqi-ye Sonnati* (Traditional Music) also seems to be ambiguous. Kiāni for instance, renounces the application of this term (1998a:157,158). Fakhreddini (1998:156) on the other hand, believes that *Musiqi-ye Sonnati* relates to ritual practices such as the *naqqārekhāne*, *zurkhāne*, and *ta'zie*;¹³ while Darvishi (1998:151), acknowledging that it is a recent term, accepts it to describe not only the *Radif* and *Dastgāh* music, but also Regional Music.

Designating “Iranian music” becomes even more complicated if we take into consideration the scholarly and ideological differences among ethnomusicologists in the English-speaking and French-speaking world, as well as the works of Iranian scholars when translated into English. At this stage I will not delve thoroughly in this matter and will again consider the term “Iranian music” to be inclusive of the closely related terms that have been used until now in western works: Persian Music, Persian Classical/Art/Traditional Music, Iranian Contemporary/Classical/Art/ Traditional/*Radif* Music.¹⁴ Obviously, western ethnomusicologists also disagree regarding the designation of the music they study, even when they refer to the same music genre. Farhat, for example, when referring to Persian traditional music, he denotes the rural folk music and the urban art music (1990:1). Nettl, on the other hand, uses the term Persian traditional/classical music - in most of his works, see for example Nettl (1970, 1972b, 1978, 1992) - when he refers to the music of the *radif*.

Additionally, as music practices show that the boundaries of Iranian music are broadening and are flexible – in the sense that it is a dynamic music culture - I also include under the label “Iranian music” a variety of contemporary music styles and genres that are performed by many musicians (including *tombak* players) who would consider their music to originate from “Iranian classical music”, but not to fully coincide with the latter; for example, *Musiqi-ye Tajrobi* (Experimental Music), *Musiqi-*

¹² Asa'di, on the contrary, believes that the *radif* is based on the *dastgāh* system and not vice versa. According to him the *dastgāh* concept appeared in mid-Safavid period (16th century), while the *radif* was a product of the late Qajar era (mid-19th century-early twentieth century) (personal communication, March 2007).

¹³ See Appendix 1 for explanation of these terms.

¹⁴ Iran was called Persia for centuries by the outside world until 1935. The adjective Persian refers to the language/people/culture in Iran, while the term Iranian designates nationality.

ye No'āvar-i (New/Innovative Music), *Musiqi-ye Jadid* (New/Modern Music), '*Asil-e Novin* (New-Style Authentic) and *Musiqi-ye Talfiqi* (Fusion Music). These music genres are seen as derivative from the classical music tradition and are often considered to depart from the "authentic" configuration of the *radif*. For example many works by 'Alizāde, such as *Konsert-e Homāyun* [*Homāyun* Concert], *Konsert-e Navā* [*Navā* Concert], *Hamnavā'i*,¹⁵ while they are founded on the *dastgāhs* of the *radif*, introduce more innovative styles of performance and are classified by the Ministry of Culture as *Musiqi-ye Jadid*, or by 'Alizāde and Iranian scholars as "Neo-Classical Persian Music".¹⁶ In addition, as already referred, works of solo, duet or group *tombak* would not easily fit under the label "Iranian classical music", as some consider that they transgress the conventional boundaries of the "classical" or "traditional" music. However, it should be emphasized that, for most soloist or accompanists *tombak* players, as I realised during my fieldwork, the point of reference remains Iranian classical music.¹⁷

To conclude, the applicability of the term "Iranian music" (*Musiqi-ye Irāni*) is vast and significantly inconsistent, even when there appears to be an agreement among the various scholars who treat it as a subject of study. Nonetheless, some definitions must be attempted, even if imprecise: as in all academic disciplines there is ambivalence over clarifying terminologies, since scholarly disputes are always grounded partly on personal interpretation and experience.

To define the urban professional *tombak* player is equally equivocal. But, first I would like to specify that in this study I use interchangeably, for convenience in expression, the terms *tombak* player/performer/musician, as translation of the Persian term *navāzande-ye tombak*, whose literal translation in English would be "player" and "performer". I mention this because there appears to be a linguistic discrepancy if we try to translate the English word "musician" into Persian, where there is no precisely equivalent word. According to the English-Persian Dictionary *Farhang Moaser*, "musician" has several different meanings in Persian and is translated as 1. *navāzande* (player/performer), 2. *ejrākonande* (player/performer), 3. *musiqishenās* (musicologist), 4. *musiqidān* (music expert), and 5. *radifdān* (*radif* expert).

¹⁵ There is no equivalent translation of the Persian term *Hamnavā'i*. According to 'Alizāde the term means "becoming one in musical expression" and it implies "a special emotional relationship among the ...performers" ('Alizāde 1993:5).

¹⁶ The latter term is found originally in English in the sleeve notes of the compact disk *Hamnavā'i* (no author is mentioned).

¹⁷ Most *tombak* players are essentially pursuing accompaniment. However, a few have the inclination to promote and practise principally solo *tombak*. This conceptual distinction between soloist and accompanist *tombak* players is explained in the last chapter.

I have chosen, for convenience, to use the male gender when referring to the *tombak* player in general, because professional *tombak* playing in Iran is a male dominated activity and my research is concentrated mainly on the urban male professional *tombak* players. However, I also take into consideration female *tombak* playing and in the sixth chapter a section is devoted to female *tombak* players.

I use “urban” to refer to the *tombak* players active in the metropolis of Tehrān. Most studies of Iranian music (with exceptions of Regional musics) were carried out by ethnomusicologists in the capital city, as it constitutes the crossroads of major developments and is the primary setting and focal point for most distinguished professional musicians practicing Iranian music. This is not to imply that other musicians from the provinces or other large urban centres in Iran do not contribute to the dominant musical scene. My own field research was conducted mostly in Tehrān, with short field trips to Shirāz and Esfahān, large cities presenting notable *tombak* players that influence music changes in the capital city. Additionally, the distinction between urban and rural musician is not always clear, particularly when it comes to *tombak* players commencing their careers in small cities, and carrying their influences from regional music to Iranian music.

The concept of the “professional” musician has occupied the attention of many ethnomusicologists (Baily 1979 and 1988b, Blum 2002, Cottrell 2004, During and Mirabdolbaghi 1991, Finnegan 1989, Merriam 1964, Nettl 1992, Sakata 1983, Slobin 1976) who have examined the term in relation to the concept of its polar opposite, the “amateur musician”. According to their ruminations both terms remain fluid, even when interpreted in the same cultural context, and both terms are malleable in the flow of the history and in the course of a person’s life.

The term “professional” remains malleable also when defined by the *tombak* players. For Pedrām, “professional” is someone who spends all day rehearsing or playing music. For Navid Afgah, “it is the quality of sound that differentiates the professional from the rest.” In the present ethnographic account, the profile of the contemporary urban professional *tombak* player is outlined as it has evolved from the late Qajar period until the present day, and is approached as an outcome of social and cultural processes closely related to the ethos of Iranian music and the general state of music in Iran. As the *tombak* player moves from the patronage of the court, crossing through government patronage, to attain today a self-employed footing, his music

profile is also transformed from *zarbgir*¹⁸ to *navāzande-ye tombak*,¹⁹ from the rank of the accompanist, to that of the soloist, finally to reach the level of “instrumental specialist”. The social status of the *tombak* player, also outlined in a process of transition, is the *shāhed*²⁰ of this ethnography, that is, it is a topic that regularly emerges when dealing with a broad range of issues and concepts, such as patronage, self-employment, payment, teaching, musical proficiency, virtuosity, master musicianship, public performance, music instruments, instruction manuals, *motrebi*, *radif* and *honar* (art).²¹

While this study revolves around the *tombak* players, it could not be confined to them. Throughout this work I scrutinize general musical and cultural aspects of words and concepts such as the *ostād* and *ta'ārof*;²² I explore the dialectics between technical proficiency and virtuosity; I consider the boundaries between the public and private spheres and how they affect music creativity, with particular reference to female *tombak* players; I investigate how Iranian music is viewed by the audience; while in several chapters there are also sections on the multidimensional relations between musical instruments (as commodities, art objects, or sound-producing devices) and the people involved in the musical milieu: musicians, scholars, governmental agents, instrument makers and the manufacturing industry.

Where necessary, insights into the dynamics of the social, economic and political conditions that affect Iranian music are provided, in order to expound on the music culture that embraces *tombak* players. For this reason the third chapter refers to the general state of music and the standing of musicians before the Iranian Revolution (1979) and the fifth chapter examines the post-Revolutionary period and its effects on Iranian music, and consequently on the works and lives of *tombak* players and musicians in general, with particular reference to private teaching practices and the issue of public performance.

As social interactions are essential in creative processes, *tombak* players are also represented (in chapter six) to interact in a wide net of personal and professional relationships with other musicians. They are depicted from the standpoints of the teacher, the student, the colleague, the intimate friend, the soloist and the accompanist.

¹⁸ *Zarbgir* was the term for the *tombak* player during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The *zarbgirs* were also vocalists performing *tasnif* (vocal composed metric pieces) and *zarbi* (instrumental and vocal metric pieces) songs.

¹⁹ A contemporary Persian term to denote the *tombak* player.

²⁰ *Shāhed* or witness note, is the central and one of the most prominent notes of a given *māye* (mode).

²¹ See Appendix 1, for explanation of these terms.

²² See Glossary of Terms in Appendix 1.

These socio-musical interactions shed light on the status and lives of *tombak* players as musicians and as individuals.

Particular sections are devoted to several individual *tombak* players that have fashioned the history of *tombak* playing, such as Rajabi, Amir Nāser Eftetāh and Tehrāni. Certainly, many other *tombak* players are equally significant in promoting and enriching the art of this instrument, and many have provided me with great help during my field research to understand their music; and they are also given particular attention and voice in this ethnography, such as Nāser Farhangfar, Mortezā A'yān, Mohammad Esmā'ili, Arzhang Kāmkār, Jamshid Shemirāni, Dāriush Zargerī, Pezhmān Hadādi, Kāmbiz Ganjei, Narges Torshizi, Siāmak Banāi, Pezhhām Akhavāss, Navid Afgah and Pedrām Khāvarzamini.

The last chapter binds together and complements previous chapters, where I explain, largely drawing on my personal experience, the spread and diffusion of notation, its role in contemporary teaching practices, the processes of music training for the *tombak*, the acquisition of technical proficiency, and the flourishing of the playing techniques. I also explore the development and repertoire of solo, group and duo *tombak*, and consider the aesthetics in terms of solo and accompaniment.

Literature Review

Five seminal books have been a great inspiration for writing this ethnography: Baily's (1988b) *Music of Afghanistan: Professional Musicians in the City of Herat*, Kippen's (1988) *The Tabla of Lucknow: A Cultural Analysis of a Musical Tradition*, Neuman's (1990 [first publication 1980]) *The Life of Music in Northern India: The Organization of an Artistic Tradition*, Merriam's (1964) *The Anthropology of Music*, and a recently published book on "western" music by Cottrell (2004) *Professional Music-Making in London. Ethnography and Experience*.

One common characteristic in these five anthropological-ethnomusicological studies is the focus on the professional musician. Merriam offers valuable insights on the links between professionalism, specialization, role, status, social behaviour and deviance of the musician, making a comparative and cross-cultural survey, using many examples from sub-Saharan Africa, Oceania and North America, including American jazz musicians, by drawing on the findings of eminent scholars, among whom are Blacking, Nettl, Herzog, Nketia, Malinowski, and on his own fieldwork among the

Flathead Indians and the Basongye from Lupupa Ngye (Zaire). The ethnographies of Baily, Neuman, Kippen and Cottrell (the only “native” ethnomusicologist), based on long-term field research, provide studies on local perspectives, and are largely focused on relatively clearly defined urban groups of professional musicians. Parenthetically, Kippen is the only one who does not attempt to elucidate the concept of the “professional” player (of the *tabla* player, in this case). Nevertheless, his comprehensive illustrations of the *tabla gharānā*’s in Lucknow compensate for this omission, and he gives the reader a clear view of the “professional” life of the *tabla* players by expounding on their opportunities of employment, participation in public concerts, and teaching practices.

These five studies investigate a number of interconnected areas which are pertinent to any anthropological and ethnomusicological study and their influence was great in the process of conducting and writing this ethnography. In particular, Baily’s discussion on the social organization of musicians in Herat and their performance context, their ranking and the associated behaviour, and their musical training; Kippen’s description of the social ranks of musicians, their social relations and the “politics” of those relations; and Merriam’s analysis of musicians’ low status, high importance and socially deviant behavior. All these are studies that have significantly broaden my horizons in relation to the Iranian musicians and are discussed in the course of this thesis. Also, Neuman’s exploration on the social organization of musicians, with particular reference to the distinction between the soloists and the accompanists, and the interrelationship between music role, social identity, rank and status; and Cottrell’s study of professional, classically-trained musicians in London, considered “within a matrix of personal and professional relationships” and “the strategies and negotiations they employ to sustain it” (2004:7, 8). These are issues that I also explore in this ethnography, in relation to *tombak* playing.

Moreover, Baily’s, Kippen’s and Neuman’s ethnographies (among other equally valuable studies such as Sakata’s (1983) and Slobin’s (1976)) bear additional interest with respect to my own subject of study: they all investigate the work and lives of musicians in closely related cultural/geographical areas that share certain common musical and cultural traits and values. They all have dealt with art music, offering both the historic and synchronic perspectives, where singing has a central role (as it also has in the art music genres of the Middle East region); where instrumental music traditionally finds its force in the accompaniment of the voice; where the distinction between vocal and instrumental genres is important and generates a ranking distinction

between soloists and accompanists; and where primary rhythmic percussion has subservient role to vocal forms and instrumental music. Moreover, they have explored music in Muslim culture, where the various music jargons have many linguistic similarities (among which are the many Persian idioms in Urdu), as well as common concepts and attitudes such as the *ostād-shāgerd* relationship (or *ustād-shāgird* in Urdu of Lucknow, and *ustād-shāgerd* in Herat) meaning the relationship between a music master/teacher and his student/apprentice, and the *s'oāl-o javāb* (or *sawāl-jawāb* in Urdu, literally question-answer) style of performance.

From the above studies, I feel that Kippen's ethnography pertains more straightforwardly to the subject of this study. We both focus on the works and lives of the principal rhythmic accompanists, reaching the level of soloists, and high artistic excellence in art music traditions. I have found many musical and cultural parallels between the *tombak* player in Tehrān and the Lucknow *tabla* performer, parallels that I do not extensively compare in this work, except perhaps in the second chapter where I discuss the status of the rhythmic accompanists in a cross-cultural perspective. Kippen's illustration of the sentiments of mistrust, jealousy and animosity among musicians, generated in part by difference in social rank, is relevant to my own ruminations regarding the problematic relations among *tombak* players, cultivated to a degree by their ambiguous social status, an issue discussed in chapter five. His emphasis on the individual approach to teaching and the processes to acquaint technical dexterity, based in part on his own experience in learning to perform on the *tabla*, bear some strong resemblance to the illustration provided in the last chapter where I also discuss the teaching procedures and individual practices of *tombak* players in advancing their playing techniques, drawing from my own experience in learning to play on the *tombak* with Rajabi, Khāvarzamini and Afgah. Many other issues that he examines with regards to the *tabla* I also expound in the cultural context of *tombak* playing: body posture, speed of articulation, technical dexterity, repertoire, styles of accompaniment, sound production, "character-training" (Kippen 1988: 131), virtuosity and being a "show-off", and some others.

As far as the literature on *tombak* playing is concerned, there are no comprehensive accounts representing the *tombak* player as the focal point. The documentation on *tombak* playing is not methodical, but rather scarce, occasional and dispersed in a wide range of ethnomusicological works on Iranian music that have risen especially since the 1960s. The *tombak*, and rarely the *tombak* player who is hardly ever cited, is more often mentioned in a compressed or incidental manner, and the

instrument's depiction ranges from origins, classification and morphology, to general enumeration of rhythmic patterns and playing techniques.

Initially, the interest of the western, or western-educated scholars, studying Iranian music was an attempt to understand, systematize and disseminate their knowledge of the music system and the *radif*, the art of *āvāz*, and its improvisational character (Caron and Safvate 1966, Caton 1983, During 1984a, During and Mirabdolbaghi 1991, Farhat 1990, Nettle 1992, Nooshin 1996a and 1996b, Tsuge 1974, Zonis 1973). Many of these studies have also provided an analysis of the social, cultural, historical and political contexts under which Iranian music flourished. All these works were valuable for the study at hand as they have provided information applicable to the musical and socio-cultural background of the Iranian musicians, including the *tombak* players.

The picture Iranian scholarly literature gives of *tombak* playing does not differ much from the western one, and studies on this topic have revealed very few relevant writings. Besides the numerous instruction books for *tombak*, some of which provide interesting information in their introduction, and Rajabi's (1999) *Tombak va Negaresh-i be Ritm az Zavāyā-ye Mokhtalef* [*Tombak and the Study of Rhythm from Different Perspectives*] I have not seen another work dedicated exclusively to this instrument, or its practitioners. Several books that deal with musical history [Khāleqi (1999a and 1999b)²³ and Masshun (1969 and 2001)] present valuable information about *tombak* playing and perceptions towards *tombak* players in the late Qajar period and the cultural context of the lives and works of many prominent musicians.

Recently, several interesting articles have been published in *Māhur Music Quarterly* journal,²⁴ written mainly by *tombak* players who either praise and exhibit general fragments of the work of their teachers or discuss matters relating to the playing technique of the instrument (Banāi 1999a and 2000, Zageri 2000, Nāsehpur 2001, Khorāshāddi 1999).

In sum, in both Iranian and western scholarly works, *tombak* players are largely neglected, and in consequence, one could get the false impression that their participation in Iranian music is rather limited and inactive.

²³ The first publication of Khāleqi's books was in 1954 and 1956 respectively.

²⁴ *Māhur Music Quarterly* is the leading Iranian journal on music scholarship that enjoys contributions by prominent Iranian scholars reflecting current issues in Iranian musical life. *Māhur Music Quarterly* journal is issued by Māhur Institute of Art and Culture, founded in 1987, which produces and promotes Iranian classical and folk music. Māhur Institute of Art and Culture produces major publication in a variety of fields such as contemporary Iranian music, film music, children music and pedagogical books. The website of the institute can be accessed on the following address: <http://www.mahoor.ir/About.asp> [accessed 22/01/2007].

On The Concepts of Social Status and Social Liminality

As explained in the first section of this chapter, the concept of status is the *shāhed* of this ethnography and thus requires close examination. In this section I will first review how Merriam, Neuman, Baily, Kippen and Cottrell – whose work has been a model for this ethnography - have influenced each other in the usage and definitions of the concepts of status and social rank, and then I will describe why the term “status” is preferred in the present work, as well as how it is defined.²⁵ At the end of this section I will discuss in brief the intricacies of Merriam’s – classical by now - pattern of low status, high importance, license to deviate and the capitalization upon it and link it with the concept of liminality as introduced by Turner.

While the concepts of “status” and “social rank” have been used extensively by most of the scholars mentioned above, either they have been taken for granted, or they have not been defined satisfactorily, or they have been interpreted in a way to suit the particularities of the music cultures with which these ethnomusicologists deal. Merriam, while making a distinction between role and status, he sometimes uses these two terms interchangeably and does not provide a clear definitions for neither of them. However, from his many cross-cultural ethnographic examples one can infer that the status of a musician can be measured against the values and attitudes a society holds towards a person with a particular profession/specialization.²⁶

Neuman, Baily, Kippen and Cottrell coincide in using the same terms - predominantly the term “social rank” and less the word “status” – but they define it in somewhat different ways. Neuman, who is among the most explicit in his definitions, notes the important link in Indian society between individual’s occupation on the one hand and his “social identity”, “role”, “status” and “social rank”, on the other, each of which he defines separately. He defines “role”, in the context of music, as “the musical behaviour of given categories of musicians” (1990:90). For him, “status” refers to the “rights and obligations associated with a given social identity”, while “social rank” denotes the position of the social identity within the social hierarchy, where “social

²⁵ Many other music related studies refer to the concept of musician’s status or social rank, but since the work of these five scholars has been a model for this study, and they are representative of the way these terms have been used in ethnomusicology, I decided to concentrate on how these five scholars elaborate upon them. For an illustration of the concept of musician’s status in other works the reader can refer to Sawa (1985), Salmen (1983), Sakata (1985) and Lobeck (2003).

²⁶ See Brown (2007:17) who makes similar observations. She notes that when Merriam refers to status he refers to the honour and respect (or dishonour and disrespect) that society accords an individual, group or profession.

identity” refers to a “tag” given to an individual or particular group of individuals. For example, he says: “the conceptions about being a *tabla* player constitute the social identity and *tabliya* is the tag” (Neuman 1990:90). In addition to these definitions, Neuman also incorporates the term “socio-musical identity” to refer to the social identity based on musical heritage, that is, the *gharānā* or the stylistic school (Neuman 1990: 44, 90).

Kippen’s and Baily’s usage of the terms “role”, “status”, “social rank”, and “social identity” and “socio-musical identity” - which they do not explicitly define, although their ethnographies revolve around these concepts - coincide, by and large, with Neuman’s definitions. The difference between Kippen, Baily, and Neuman is that Kippen uses interchangeably the terms “social rank” and “status”, in accordance with the definition of “social rank” given by Neuman, while Baily equates the term “status” with “social identity” (the latter as defined by Neuman (1990:90)). In addition, Baily does not use the term “socio-musical identity”, while Kippen uses the terms “social identity” and “socio-musical identity” interchangeably.

The usage of these terms in the domain of ethnomusicology becomes even more inconsistent when one takes into account and attempts to understand how and why Cottrell uses some of them in his work on professional musicians in London. He, unlike Merriam, but following Neuman, states that he reserves the word “status” “to indicate a more general class of social positions: married, uninitiated and so on” and has used instead “a mixture of “social rank”, “prestige” and “stature” according to context, to express ideas based on some form of social or cultural hierarchy” (2004:30). Cottrell also notes, without delving into the subject, that he did not feel necessary to pursue a distinction between “status” and “social identity” like Neuman (2004:31).

In this work I use predominantly the term status when referring to a musician’s social standing in the overall social hierarchy, as it is applied today in sociology. I find the definition of Ridgeway and Walker (1995) comprehensible and adequate to represent the social position of the Iranian musician in general, and the *tombak* player in particular. According to them, status structures are

Rank-ordered relationships among actors describing the interactional inequalities formed from actors’ implicit valuations of themselves and one another according to some shared standard of value. Status refers to one’s standing in a social hierarchy as determined by respect, deference and social influence (Ridgeway and Walker 1995:281).

This definition of status is, very close to the definition of “social rank”, as given by Neuman and followed by Baily, Kippen and Cottrell who refer to it as the hierarchical position (of a musician) in a society, but also discuss it in terms of social values, where the question of respect is included.

However, the term “social rank” appears to be more appropriate for the highly stratified Hindu society, where the position of a musician in the general social and musical hierarchy is identified by cultural (religious affiliation, caste, age, area of residence, gender, education) and musical variables (instrumental specialty, the particular form of music one performs, musical expertise). Nevertheless, even in the Indian case, social hierarchy is relative, hierarchy of musicians is subjective and social rank is extremely complex to define (See Kippen 1988:49-53). In the Afghan case, on the other hand, the term “social rank” appears to be suitable as well, as musicians are identified according to their amateur or hereditary professional attribute (the “*shauqi* and *kesbi* status”) and ethnic origins (as in the case of the barber- musicians) (see Baily 1988 114-121, 102-103, 162).

I have however avoided the use of the term “social rank” because in modern usage the term is associated with classification/scale systems, for example civil service ranking, and because of its previous use in ethnomusicology in association with the highly stratified Indian caste system. In addition, the term “social rank” and “social identity” would not be suitable for the contemporary *tombak* players, and Iranian musicians, who come from middle class background and are generally not identified today according to their religious affiliations or amateur/professional music identity.²⁷

Another common occurrence among these five studies that have influenced the present ethnography, is their exploration of the musician’s status/social rank in relation to his/her license to deviate.²⁸ In his influential chapter “Social Behaviour: the Musician” in *Anthropology of Music*, Merriam was among the first to point out, that musicians across different cultures, where they are considered to be “professionals/specialists” are characterized by the pattern of low status, high importance, the licence to deviate and the capitalization of it (1964:123-163). While Merriam’s distinction of low status and high importance can not be over-generalized or considered a straightforward condition,²⁹ it is nevertheless useful to investigate the

²⁷ Obviously, status-criteria are determined culturally, and in the course of this ethnography musical and cultural values are scrutinized that affect the status of the *tombak* player.

²⁸ See for example Kippen (1988:87-90), Neuman (1990:85-144), Baily (1988: 103,162) and Cottrell (2004: 29-30, 137, 143,181,193,196,199).

²⁹ Nettl, for example, when examining the social status of musicians in Iran, he introduces the concept of “status relationship” and examines it in a contextualized setting (Nettl 1992:192). Parenthetically, the

liminal space that musicians in general attain in Iranian society, because of the long-standing ambiguous position of the musician in Muslim societies.³⁰

For example, in the sixth chapter of this ethnography, I weave Rajabi's personality and music career, on the one hand and the status of *tombak* player in Iran and the state of music in post-Revolutionary Iran on the other, by drawing on the concept of liminality as developed by Victor Turner (who borrowed it from van Genep's *The Rites of Passage* (1960)) (1979).³¹ According to Turner, the term liminality describes a time/place/space of transition, ambiguity and status-less state. In his own word, liminality means

Literally "being-on-a-threshold," [...] a state or process which is betwixt-and-between the normal, day-to-day cultural and social states and processes of getting and spending, preserving law and order, and registering structural status (1979:465).³²

I find that this theoretical concept of liminality forms a backdrop for understanding the ambiguous status of the *tombak* player who is epitomized by Rajabi. The latter will be shown to attain a liminal space and to take advantage of the cultural sanction that is granted in order to cross culturally permitted boundaries, that is, to express his subversive ideas, to indulge in deviant behaviour (to use Merriam's terminology) and to subsequently capitalize upon it.³³

term "status relationship" is also used by Kippen to describe conflict among musicians (1988:52). Netti presents his status and the status of a *kamānche* player in relative terms by examining them in two different situations. In the first, if the two men would meet in a bazaar, without having musical bond, Netti would be the one with higher status – being a university professor, having high income for Iranian standards, wearing a new suit – while the musician would hold a lower status, because musicians are generally looked down on in Iran, because of his poor clothes, and because he was known as an opium user. But if these two men, Netti and the *kamānche* player, would meet in a musical context then their status would reverse. In this case, the musician attains a higher status for being a musical authority and a master of the *radif*, while Netti has relatively lower status as a student of the *radif*.

³⁰ See Brown who argues that "professional musicians in most, if not all, societies process institutionally liminal status" (2007:13).

³¹ Liminality is the second of the three stages of what van Genep called a "Rite of Passage", which are rites that symbolize transitions from one sociocultural state and status to another. The first liminal stage is separation from an established social role, order or status, the second stage is a transitional space/time between roles and orders, and the third stage denotes reincorporation into an established role and normally a higher status level (van Genep 1960:21).

³² Turner, followed by other scholars, extended the concept of liminality from ritual to theatre. See, for example, Turner (1982) and Schechner (2002).

³³ The concept of liminality finds a particular relevance in the contemporary ethnomusicological literature. See for example the *Twentieth-Century Music Journal* 2007, vol.3 (1), where various scholars use the term liminality to analyse the musicians' social location.

Experiencing Ethnography

It is not uncommon that many students performing their first doctoral thesis leave the writing of the introduction chapter to the end, which typically introduces discussions of methodology, theoretical issues and the process of data collection (whose traditional distinction has been challenged by reflexive ethnomusicology). This is certainly true for me. Now that I have finished writing the main chapters of my thesis, I consider that I am a more “enriched” person, or even an altogether different one, after doing the fieldwork and writing this ethnography, and thus perhaps more able to theorize about my experience of the whole ethnographic process.

Regarding my fieldwork experience, I can easily identify myself with Titon who offers a phenomenological and reflexive epistemology for ethnomusicology and conceptualizes a “new fieldwork” in terms of “experiencing and understanding music”, and “knowing people making music” (Titon 1997:87, 95). He suggests that musical knowledge derives from our “musical way of “being-in-the-world””, in common, intersubjective, dialogic and experiential terms (ibid. 94).

My experience of fieldwork showed me that both my Persian and my understanding of playing the *tombak* came through a shared lived experience in the “here and now”. In particular, by learning to perform on the *tombak* with Rajabi, Pedrām, and Afgah, by accompanying the *tār* (long-neck lute) of Sepide, accompanying Narges’s singing and practicing together with Pedrām. This interactive experience was my musical way of being-in-the-world: an understanding of music which was mediated by “knowing people making music” (Titon 1997:95).³⁴

³⁴ In this ethnography, I intentionally use the first name, rather than the surname, of those musicians and people with whom I shared friendly relationship during my field research, as in the case of Pedrām and Hamid (a relationship which I expound in the course of this chapter), and their friend Siāmak. Titon argues that “knowledge is experiential and the intersubjective product of our social interactions” and that, what we know arises of the quality of our relationship with others (1997:97). He believes that fieldwork relationships have an “ineluctably personal aspect to them”, and that experiences that arise of such relationships should be also included in ethnographic representation (ibid.). Taking this into account, I follow at places, narrative ethnography – which Titon also suggests among others (interactive multimedia and film) - in order to show how I come to understand the music-culture through experience. For the above reasons, I consider essential to depict the friendly and intimate character of my relationship with Hamid and Pedrām, and the insights into the music culture that emerge from it and I think the most suitable way, depending on the context, is to use their first name. I also use the first name of close friends who appear few times in this work, like Roxana Mehrafzun, Sepide Afshār, Narges Khoshfekar and Kamrān Montāzeri. Such representational strategies are not new in ethnomusicology. See Rice (1994) for example, who experiences and represents in writing the history of Bulgarian music through the music making and lives of Kostandin and Todora Veremezovi with whom he became friends, and whom he depicts in the text by using their small names, delivering in this way the nature of their intimate relationship and the experiential knowledge that arises from it.

The quality of the field research and the interpretation of the field experience largely depend on the nature of the relationship that the researcher acquires, and there is the inevitable involvement of both parties' identities and personalities, an issue that has been tackled by the scholars proposing a "new fieldwork" in *Shadows in the Field: New Perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology*. Beaudry for instance, due to her inadequate language skills had to rely on interpreters not only for translation but also for introduction to the "right" people and for various advices regarding cultural etiquette. She describes how the quality of her fieldwork was many times hindered because of the identities, personalities but also the personal/collegial relationship with her interpreters/friends. Babiracki's perceptions of Nāgpuri music culture were coloured by the interpretations of her close, romantic friendship with one of the star musicians of the Nāgpuri stage, and she describes how this relation gave her both a unique insight into the music culture and determined further her relationships with other musicians. Titon, on the other, generalizes on the types and qualities of field relationships, describing the contractual, student-teacher and friendly relations that bring on the surface a variety of identities and roles.

During my fieldwork, I demonstrated at my encounters (as obviously the people opposite to me did), multiple, concurrent and thus not always clearly bounded identities whose depth and breadth varied, depending on the different situations and the different people involved. To mention the identities that were coming to the surface most often: the ethnomusicologist, the *tombak* student/teacher, the researcher, the language student/teacher,³⁵ the performer, the interviewer; a female to male or a female to female friend, a Greek, a foreigner, a young person, an exotic person, a guest. Some of these identities, and the respective roles and relations, made me feel more or less close or distant, free or dependent, in reciprocal or in unresponsive terms, and therefore more or less "comfortable". On this basis, it could be argued that no fieldwork relation is free of asymmetries of power, and therefore that it does never release the fieldworker from his/her authority.

Most of the musicians I encountered in the field were very open, helpful and generous in sharing their knowledge with me. The pleasure I got from our conversations and interaction was immense, but more intellectual than sentimental, and very often less reciprocal on my part: I was the one who wanted to learn what they know and I do not

³⁵ Several times I offered *tombak* lessons to my vocalist friend Narges Khoshfekar, or would exchange English with Persian lessons.

think that I returned them the assistance they provided me. I was also somehow embarrassed to use the video recorder or the photo camera; there were moments that I felt as a tourist and “collector” who will show to his audience: here is the evidence of “my” accumulated knowledge, of my penetration to the most important musicians, here are the proofs of me experiencing them. On the contrary, in friendly relations I would use video much more easily, especially when I felt I was actively participating in the setting that I recorded. Sometimes though, I would feel that the role of the cameraman did not allow me to actively participate in the “real thing”.

With most friendly relations that I experienced in the field, I felt that there was an “equal” effort from both parties to know one another, to socially interpenetrate each other, to share our present, past and future experiences and thoughts, dreams and general observations.³⁶ Friendly relationships endured more intensely because of the particular personalities of both parties, rather than because of our identities as scholars and musicians, although the latter also played an important part. In other words, in friendly relations the personal and professional of both parties were inextricably linked. I was actually once asked by Pedrām if I would still regard him as a friend if he was not a *tombak* player. My response to him was that I could not really separate these two identities, and I then asked him if he could envision himself not being a *tombak* player. He never again doubted my intentions of our friendship, or envisioned himself in my eyes the “split” between the *tombak* player and Pedrām.

But also the insights into the music culture that I received from such relations were different in quantity, essence, and inspiration. I especially found very creative the triangular friendship that I, Hamid and Pedrām had. Hamid Khabbāzi and Pedrām Khāvarzamini were intimate friends, before my arrival in the field, and were performing together for more than ten years. They had many common friends, colleagues, memories, they knew each other’s families and they were practicing together almost on a daily basis. I spent with them most of my days during the first six months of my fieldwork. Our common age-group and our shared interest in music were cohesive factors. I learned from them not only in a question-answer or observatory manner; we set up a realm where the three of us intertwined and created on an everyday basis and in a spontaneous mode. They opened to me their world and I offered them mine. During the *tombak* lessons Pedrām gave me, if I complained (in the student’s mode), Hamid would suggest another approach and we would all get into a conversation to find the most appropriate teaching method; when Pedrām practiced on the *tombak*, Hamid and I

³⁶ See also Cooley (2003) about his rumination on human equality in the friendship model.

would praise him on his innovations and would give him suggestions of other techniques, sounds and rhythmic patterns; when Hamid and Pedrām played (for most of the time they would improvise) I gave them feedback, I recorded them and we all listened and discussed their ad-libbing; Hamid would often bring tapes of his favorite *tār* players (for some months he was infatuated with Darvish Khān) and we would all sit and listen with amazement. However, they shared more things with each other than with me. Many times they would recall stories, music events and rumors, and this provided me with an insightful view into their lives, in their language, and music culture, that I could not get by simply conducting an interview, no matter how willing and open would be the person above the microphone. Sharing with them our daily life I learned a lot about them, as well as learning with them and through them. They also started seeing aspects of their lives and music in broader terms. Hamid would at times remark that I opened his horizons with regards to his music culture with the questions and issues I put forth, which he had not thought of before.

The friendly relation that I experienced with Hamid and Pedrām was creative, pleasurable, comfortable, emotional, exciting, rewarding and “natural”, but also more demanding and reciprocal in both personal and professional engagement. As in any intimate and close relationship we endured each other’s whims, and melancholies, but also encouraged and stood by one another.

I also thought that I could assist them professionally. In August 2002 I planned to go to Greece for a summer vacation. I thought that this would be a good opportunity for them to come with me and meet Ross Daly. They were both very enthusiastic; this would be Hamid’s second and Pedrām’s third trip to Europe. Keyhān Kalhor and his wife, who were my and Pedrām’s acquaintances, also decided to visit Greece. I helped them, through the Greek Embassy to get Schengen visas, which sometimes can be a very bureaucratic and cumbersome procedure. The five of us visited Ross in Crete, and also traveled to Hydra, another beautiful Greek island. After this trip, Kalhor, Pedrām, Siāmak³⁷ and Hamid performed together in a tour in the USA, while Hamid and Pedrām visited Greece a few more times (I was still in Tehrān conducting my research) where they gave several concerts and recorded *Iris* [Rainbow] with Daly. Hamid is today married with Khātere, living in Tehrān and often performing abroad. We even met in London once. Pedrām recently got married to Peggy from France, and has been living for the last three years giving *tombak* lessons in Crete near Daly’s *Musical Workshop*

³⁷ Siāmak Āqāi is very close friend to Hamid and Pedrām. The three of them practiced regularly for ten years, until Pedrām’s departure to Greece. Siāmak was the first from the three of them who collaborated with Keyhān Kalhor (Silk Road Project).

Labyrinth with whom he regularly performs. I still feel that they will stand by me, and that I would do for them anything I could. Our encounter was a life-changing experience.

Besides Hamid and Pedrām I acquired a few female friends in the field, some of whom were not musicians. They were also a whole new world of experiencing and understanding Iranian culture, but also the help they provided me in various stages of my fieldwork was immense.

For me, friendly relations in the field were the domain where I felt I was most reciprocal on both a non-material and a pragmatic level. I think this is a very private and subjective stance. One could remark for example that I remunerated Rajabi for his *tombak* lessons, or reciprocated with Hamid and Pedrām for sharing with me their time and friendship. However, my personal feeling is that I am continually in debt, regardless of whether I can reciprocate in any way, to all those who passed me their knowledge, and shared with me their time and experience, including intimate friends.

Fieldwork relations of the kind I described above were largely absent from the ethnographic texts, as well as the author and their personal voice were, on the surface, absent, until the late seventies and eighties when major critiques in anthropology (influenced by postmodernism, feminism, postcolonialism), had a powerful effect in ethnomusicology. This was glossed as the “reflexive turn”, whereby the “epistemological, methodological, psychological, ethical and political implications of fieldwork” were put to interrogation (Stocking 1983:9).³⁸ The response of anthropologists and ethnomusicologists was to accept the central role, and to reflect on the nature, of the human relations and their implication in the process of fieldwork, and the understanding of the culture they study.³⁹ Several scholars have ruminated over friendship as a strategy (Pelto and Pelto 1973) or a model of research (Titon 1992a, Cooley 2003, Hellier-Tinoco 2003). No matter though, whether the relations that ethnographers originate and develop in the field are intimate and friendly, contractual and collaborative, the fact remains that fieldworkers put themselves under a microscope and consider their own part and their own responsibility in such relations. This emerges not only because they are the ones who are most interested in acquiring relationships, but rather because of the long-wearing shadow (guilt perhaps) that follows the ethnographer (who has been very inventive, self-reflexive, and self-critical in order to

³⁸ Several anthropological publications had a dominant role in this discourse, among which are: Clifford and Marcus (1986), Marcus and Fischer (1986), Myerhoff and Ruby (1982), Stocking (1983), Fabian (1983).

³⁹ Among the most discussed works are included Rabinow (1977), Dumont (1978), Dwyer (1982), Crapanzano (1980), Kulick and Willson (1995), Berliner (1978), Rice (1994), and Shelemay (1991).

diminish it), as the one who perpetuates asymmetries of power in the context of the fieldwork as well as in the ensuing ethnographic representations. Some scholars believe that friendly relations displace and not resolve the problem. Cooley, for example, is critical with regards to the “innocent” friendship developed in the field and he wonders whether friendship is the new legitimate, but not yet “fully articulated” form for “global re-colonialization [...] and for re-appropriating the other” in order to extract ethnographic data (Cooley 2003:12). Ethnographers have not yet suggested an alternative solution to friendship, perhaps because friendships in the field arise, after all, “naturally” from the human essence of the ethnomusicologists and the people s/he works with. Ethnographers though, have become more and more sensitive towards ethical considerations of such relationships.

However, once the new fieldwork paradigm included understanding based on interpersonal relationship, several authors have pondered on the responsibilities of the fieldworker in such relationships and have proposed: politeness and consideration (as implied by Myers 1992), “ethical responsibility to “pay back”” (Sheehy 1992:323), reciprocity and connectedness (Titon 1997:99), grounded actions and interaction (Shelemay 1997:189, 197), acknowledgment and commitment (Hellier-Tinoco 2003: 27, 28), impact awareness (Cooley 2003), and ethical responsibility and legal obligation (Rees 2003).

In this context, using today the word “informant” in brackets (and until recently without brackets) is somehow inapposite to “the new fieldwork” presented by the scholars of *Shadows in the Field: New Perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology*, where it is stressed that the researcher is not simply a “participant observer”, but that ethnographic experience is the process of interactive and mutually participatory relations where “we get to know people by making *ourselves* known to *them*” (Kisluik 1997). The term is, in my opinion, a polished and “outdated” way of disguising relations of asymmetrical power and enhancing the ethnographer’s authority, it does not respond to recognition of reciprocity, and it can be associated with the practice of *simply* “collecting information”. Here also fits the question posed by Hellier-Tinoco (2003:30) - has not the fieldwork paradigm “shifted from receiving information or hard data to receiving experiences?” – stressing the importance of understanding through experience, rather than simply understanding through data collection. The designation “informant” could be paralleled with the attitude when the term “primitive” was put in parenthesis before being abolished from the text. However, as Baily argues, while other names are also being used - co-workers, collaborators, helpers - no generally accepted label has

emerged to describe relations in the field (1998:154). This situation indicates, once again, that the ethnographic text remains problematic as long as the issue of human relationships in fieldwork context is not resolved. In other words, encountering the “other in relation to itself” and re-examining “itself as other” (Clifford 1986:23), anthropologists and ethnomusicologists are faced with the predicament of representing anew this dialectic relation in the writing of ethnography.

Doing Ethnography

With the publication of *Writing Cultures* (1986) contributors were seen to broach the issue of a “crisis of representation”. By looking critically at particular modes of writing in ethnographic accounts they brought to the fore issues of power inequalities and issues of ideological and cultural constraints inscribed in representational accounts; they questioned the neutral, scientific point of the ethnographer to speak for “the others”, and challenged the ethnographer’s authority and his legitimacy in the interpretation of events. The criticism was based upon the principle that the fieldworker’s position was in no way neutral or objective, but that instead the fieldworkers’ motives and products were based upon asymmetrical relationships of power. Other critiques have also expressed that “ethnographical descriptions are homemade” (Geertz 1988:144-145), that ethnographies are “hierarchical arrangements of discourses” (Clifford 1986:17), that the fieldworker has no legitimate right to represent his “informants” because the real “authors” of the text are “they”. Who can or should speak for the “other” is therefore tenuous because members of the same, say, musical culture can produce quite different interpretations of “their” culture (Noll 1997:164). It has become clear not only that representation of others through holistic perspectives is not viable, but that “ethnographic truths are inherently *partial*” (Clifford 1986:7).

Recent approaches to methodology and styles of representation in ethnomusicological studies, drawing largely upon anthropologists, and the “new ethnography” they propose, seek to “bridge the chasm between field experience and writing about field experience” (Cooley 1997:15).⁴⁰ The bifurcation between fieldwork

⁴⁰ There are voices though who consider that the turn towards empiricism and experience do not actually propose a solution to the problems of representation and theory, see Moore (1999).

and deskwork was distinct at the time when ethnomusicologists rarely went to the field, and produced their analysis in a “laboratory” relying on the materials gathered and brought to them from far and remote places by professional anthropologists, missionaries or travelers. This separation went hand in hand with a dominant rhetorical stance and brought the formulation of “*one* scientific method, *one* systematic methodology, *one* standard procedure, because there is *one* science” (Gourlay 1978:7).

Since then it appears that ethnomusicologists experiment in order to bring these two together. The term ethnography also witnesses this disposition: today it refers both to the particular process of field research and to its eventually written product.

To allay the dichotomy between “us” and “them” and to diminish the legacy of the authority of the fieldworker and writer, the ethnographer entered into the field himself or herself, but remained a “missing” author in the text (Gourlay 1978). S/he then inscribed into the text the “I-witnessing author” (Geertz 1988) aiming to reveal the process of gaining her/his understanding through the intertwined relationship between the ethnographer and the people in the field; second, s/he actively engaged in music making “at home”, bridging thus the geographical distance between here and there. S/he also recognized the “indigenous ethnographer” (Clifford 1986:9), acknowledged the feminist perspectives, and also accepted the “inter-confusion of object and audience” (Geertz 1988:133).

These changes went hand in hand with a unanimous re-evaluation of assertions so far taken for granted, namely: realigning the emic/etic and insider/outsider (Herndon 1993), subjective/objective, us/them dichotomies (Grenier and Guilbault 1990); also by challenging the “western” and “non-western” music binary division (Shelemay 2001:4); by rejecting the distinction between theory and method, and accepting their interconnectedness.

Various forms of representation have been explored to diminish the ethnographer’s authority, to empower the “others” and to allay the “relationship between experience and its expressions” (Bruner 1986:6): polyphonic, experiential, dialogic, interpretive and heteroglossic modes of writing (Clifford 1983), poetics and allegory (see Clifford 1986), narrative (Pratt 1986), evocation (Tyler 1986), ethnic autobiographies (Fischer 1986), ventriloquism, text positivism, confessionality (Geertz 1988), performative ethnography (Schechner and Appel 1990, Turner and Bruner 1986), multi-sensory experience and representation (Ong 1967, 1977, Howes 1991), narrative musical ethnography, ethnographic film and hypertext/multimedia (Titon 1997:95-98).

Nevertheless, there is still a unanimous agreement that even if acknowledged, “the burden of authorship cannot be evaded” (Geertz 1988:140).

In addition, despite the recent “crisis of representation” many fieldworkers, anthropologists and ethnomusicologists still experience a degree of temporal and spatial separation between fieldwork and writing, a fact acknowledged also by the “new fieldworkers”. Baily argues that the integration of the two, fieldwork and homework, is bewildered especially when both domains entail different kinds of activities, for example processing audio and video recordings (1998:154). Watson although accepts that there is no clear break in the temporal flux in terms of intentionality and intellectual endeavour, considers that the period of fieldwork is characterized by “particularly heightened intensity” (Watson 1999:2).

Nevertheless, the defenders of the “new fieldwork” claim to weave “experience and representation into the same fabric” (Barz 1997:209). Barbiracki came to realize this separation because she left out of her writings her roles and identities as female, musician and dancer. Kisluik suggests experiential ethnography as a conversation, literal and metaphorical, between the field researcher, the material of performance and the people among whom s/he works, within which “learning is located, both during research and while writing” (1997:33). She further suggest “a re-presentation and evocation” of these conversations (ibid. 41). Barz explores ways of “introducing fieldnotes into the dialogue between experience and writing” (1997: 46).

For me the field and the writing were, on the first level, two separate entities. This ethnography was written in a time span of more than one year, after I returned from Iran with all the material, tangible or inward⁴¹ that I “accumulated” in the field. I spent several thousands of *solitary* hours sitting and writing in front of my computer, as opposed to the fieldwork time which was, by nature of the project, spent in collaboration with others. However, as Kisluik comments, “we write when we are doing research, and we research while we write” (1997:41). Accordingly, I came to understand many things “through” the writing of this ethnography.⁴² At the same time, after the fieldwork in Iran, and returning “home”⁴³ I continued my research, though not so intensely or systematically: I met a few times several of the close friends from the field, I conducted some interviews, as well as shared music experiences, with new

⁴¹ By inward, I mean both the practical knowledge I gained (Persian language, learning to perform on the *tombak*) and the experiential awareness.

⁴² Cottrell makes similar observations and has put the word “through” in italics (2004:28).

⁴³ Returning from the field, “home” was quite different from the time I left it, and I also was different. The cultural shock upon returning back was as intense as the cultural shock when entering the field. I was seeing myself, my friends, and my culture through the lenses of my experience living in Iran.

friends, as a member (*tombak* player) of the *Persepolis* ensemble with Kurdish, Iranian and Greek musicians, extending somehow and re-enacting the experience of the researcher and the *tombak* player.⁴⁴

On another level, I never felt *lonely* in writing this work. During the whole process I would converse (and play) with my past self, with my experienced self, with my fieldnotes, with the musicians that I met in the field, with Tehrāni, Farhangfar and their *tombak* playing. And while this conversation proved to be creative and born out of interaction, nevertheless it was after all my own construction, without a *real time* feedback on the total material produced by the musicians I am referring to.

The following chapters are for me an experiment in terms of writing, in my attempt to find the balance between analytical and descriptive writings and “true” moments of self-reflexive accounts. I have tried, and I think I could not do otherwise, to create great parts of the text out of my experience, to encompass dialogic writing and polyvocality, verbatim transcripts of interviews and conversations, showing how I came to understand from the experience of living with and among Iranian people and musicians; to separate my observations, interpretations and assertions from theirs; to show the limits of my own comprehension of Iranian culture; to evoke the relations in the field; to diminish the “unconsciously” dominant perspective of the authorial voice by allowing the author to come to the fore; and to point at the diversities and homogeneities of the perspectives and experiences of individual *tombak* players.

Learning to Perform as an “Innocent” Research Technique

As an MMus student at the Ethnomusicology programme at Goldsmiths College I had to go through a practical examination in performance of music (or dance) from “a repertory outside the candidate’s primary music (or dance) culture”. Prof. John Baily wanted to introduce us to “learning to perform as a research technique” where we should be able to demonstrate how learning to perform is used as a way of conducting research.

As already mentioned, during my MMus I went to Iran to learn to perform on the *tombak* with Rajabi. As I had finished the first two (out of four) instruction books

⁴⁴ This ensemble was created on the initiative of Omid Tahmāsepur, an Iranian *santur* (trapezoid shaped hammered dulcimer) player living in Athens.

for the *tombak*, I decided to complete the cycle of lessons with Rajabi during my MPhil field research. Learning the *tombak* was not a means to an end, and I have to admit that at times I would be more absorbed with developing my music skill, rather than doing research. Having, though, the “bug” of the ethnomusicologists who seeks to understand through experiencing music, learning to perform and doing research became synonymous activities.

In a recent article, defending the virtues of “learning to perform” as a research technique in Ethnomusicology, Baily cites seven advantages of this approach (in press). First, the ethnomusicologist-performer learns the structures of music operationally: “in terms of what you *do*, and by implication, what you have to *know*” (ibid.). Second, s/he discovers the music theory and terminology. Third, s/he acquires experiential understanding of the relationship between the human sensori-motor system and the instrument's morphology. Fourth, it provides essential understanding about musical enculturation. Fifth, what he calls as the “cognition of performance”, which he defines as “how the performer mentally represents the task performed, and how that representation is utilized in the process of performance” (ibid). Sixth, performance gives “potential social advantages” to the researcher, related to his identity and status in the music community. And seventh, it gives the researcher-performer the opportunity to participate in music events, in the *actualité* of performance (ibid.).

Baily's account is, on the whole, pertinent to my own experience in Tehrān. Not being affiliated to any official institution, my status as a researcher was better comprehended as the *tombak* student of the music master Rajabi. It also engaged me in student-teacher (and friendly) affiliations, understanding the particular aspects of such human relationship in the context of Iranian culture. Through my teacher-student relationship I discovered about my teachers' bond with their *ostāds*, which provided me with a generational insight on teaching practices and the nature of such relations (described in chapter six).

Above all, “learning to perform” on the *tombak* was a good research *orientation* through the whole fieldwork process, adding practical dimensions to my study. Besides taking lessons from Rajabi, I also pursued *tombak* lessons with Pedrām Khāvarzamini and Afgah, two highly competent players of the young generation. I was thus able to enter their music world and, naturally, understand and compare the teaching methods,

performance techniques, repertoires, aesthetics and styles of playing of three generations.⁴⁵

In addition to providing good insight on these matters, learning to perform proved to be of unique value as an experiential mode of discovering how *tombak* players learn and develop their skills, how and why specific performance techniques have to be executed, which body posture is the most acceptable, what is the current terminology, what are the particularities of the notational system and why it continues developing, and many other musical and extra-musical aspects. Keeping an extensive performance diary, which proved from the MMus field research to be a useful experience of gathering and processing music knowledge, was also a good tool of learning and understanding *tombak* playing. When my playing technique was good enough I began to practice with other instruments, and this gave me not only the stimulus to consider the various styles of accompaniment and *tombak* duet, but afforded me a direct entry into performance events. I would also sometimes engage with other *tombak* students and discuss with them our learning experiences.

Learning to perform is much more than a field research technique. It is a process of learning by first-hand experience. The music experience and understanding that the ethnomusicologist acquires becomes an embodied knowledge, as the ethnomusicologist often becomes a performer, a teacher, a mediator, and a transmitter of the music tradition s/he has learned. John Baily and his wife Veronica Doubleday have been active performers playing Afghan music for more than twenty years. Baily describes that whenever the Afghan community wanted “traditional Afghan music” he and his wife would often be called to perform. Taking also into account the strict music censorship in Afghanistan after 1992 during the Rabbani coalition government, but also during the Taliban era (1996-2001) Baily comments:⁴⁶

...the researcher becomes a resource, the archive of field recordings invaluable remnants of a cultural heritage, the fieldwork part of the informants’ own music history. Learning to perform someone else’s music becomes part of the wider acculturative process of “transfer and retransfer” of music and music theory from one socio-cultural environment to another (Günter 1987:74). At the end of the day, the researcher becomes the researched (Baily 1995b:345).

⁴⁵ Afgah is only 5 years older than Pedrām, but he started playing the *tombak* at an earlier age than Pedrām, and was musically active several years before him. For these reasons Pedrām considers Afgah to be a generation (*nasl*) ahead in *tombak* playing.

⁴⁶ See Baily 2001 and 2004 on music censorship in Afghanistan.

The implications of “learning to perform” in the post-fieldwork period are sometimes, in exceptional situations like the one that Baily describes: unpredictable and mediated largely by historical and political constraints.

Following the steps of Professor Baily, but also for my own interest, I continue to be active as a *tombak* performer and as a teacher since returning from the field, not only maintaining, but further developing my performance and teaching skills. As already mentioned, I was part of the *Persepolis* ensemble project, and we gave several concerts in Athens, performing compositions (while some of us would also improvise) of the Iranian music repertoire.⁴⁷ Moreover, I have two *tombak* students in Greece, one from Afghanistan and one from Iran. Also, during a seminar at the Technological Educational Institute of Epirus (Greece), I gave a one day workshop on group *tombak*.

These music activities after the fieldwork period were valuable in terms of “how research informs performance” and teaching practices, to use Baily’s expression (Baily, in press). As a performer in Greece, I came to realize the vast amount of musical and extra-musical knowledge that I had accumulated during my research in Iran, but also the limitations of my music skills. On the other side, while my teaching is largely based on the methods of Rajabi (using his instruction books), I also incorporate other teaching strategies (either adopted from other *tombak* players or discovered by myself) considering their usefulness for the student: rhythmic solfege, phrase by phrase oral repetition, memorization, and duo *tombak* among others.⁴⁸

While my own participation in a music ensemble and my *tombak* teaching are not yet institutionalized, nevertheless many ethnomusicologists have combined the professional (academic) and personal in the transmission or the recreation of the music tradition where they have conducted research. In a recently published work *Performing Ethnomusicology: Teaching and Representation in the World Music Ensembles* (Solís ed. 2004), where many ethnomusicologists discuss about music ensembles in the academic environment, they describe and raise a series of questions that are relevant to what happens after the “learning to perform” in the field, when the ethnomusicologist returns to the academia and becomes (or not) an established performer. The range of the concepts and concerns that the contributors pose varies. Trimillos ruminates on the relationship between the ethnomusicologists and the culture they study and whether it changes after they begin to teach performance. He also questions the legitimacy of the

⁴⁷ Unfortunately the ensemble has now split up, which is why I use both past and present tense, for reasons that would extend greatly this thesis if they were to be enumerated and explained fully.

⁴⁸ As the two students are still beginners it is early to assess their music potentials and pathways.

ethnomusicologist to perform or teach the music tradition, if his/her performance skills are limited. For Kisluik, performing addresses many “levels of boundary breaking” between performance and scholarship, formal and informal presentations, the demarcated roles of teacher and student (Kisluik and Gross 2004:258). Averill considers that the responsibilities of the ethnomusicologists are not simply ethical – that is, philosophical or moral - but also politically sensitive, arguing that “ethnomusicologists can no longer avoid confronting political implications of their own performance of cultural difference” (2004:108). He considers that the performance of ensembles in which many ethnomusicologists participate should be explored in the discourse of cultural representation and relations of power, examining the authority and role of the ethnomusicologists in transmitting and representing a musical culture in public performances, as well as their role in practical problems related to teaching and learning methods.

Mantle Hood’s notion of “bi-musicality” or “learning to perform” cannot be considered any longer as an innocent technique of field research. Its power-relations implications in the long-term post-fieldwork period should be critically examined within and beyond the practice of representation in narrative genres. Ethnomusicologist not only build their careers by representing the people among whom they make research in the text, but also by representing their music on stage and on other sound-transferring media, thereby elevating further their own expertise, status and authority. With “learning to perform”, ethnomusicologists extend their identities and roles, as researchers, authors, lecturers, mediators and transmitters (see Shelemay 1997:199-202), and become music teachers, performers, heads of ensembles, music experts and so on.

Thus, so long as ethnomusicologists assume the authority to represent others, they should re-examine their responsibilities according to their new identities and roles. As music teachers and heads of ensembles, they should examine their goals and question how they practically transmit their individual experiences of music encounters and musical knowledge to their students. As performers and music experts, they should consider how they mediate music sounds and experiences, and how they represent the other and the self in staged performances and on audio-visual media. As researchers/performers they should look critically on how their research techniques, as in the case of “learning to perform” are implicated in investigating others’ understanding of their musical worlds.

With “learning to perform” in the field, ethnomusicologists are once again indebted for accepting the “gift” of musical knowledge to the people with whom they

have studied the particular music tradition. These notions certainly have further implications for fieldwork practices and in particular the relationships that we establish with our music teachers in the field and our responsibility towards them, but also later, when we pursue our careers in the academia or music and film industry.⁴⁹

Khāreji (Foreigner)

I have found that the reasons for my doing an ethnomusicological research in Iranian music were not always well understood by many individuals, musicians and non-musicians, and cultural institutions in Iran. This was not only because ethnomusicology is not widely disseminated, but also because after the Revolution in Iran (1979) the atmosphere in the universities towards social sciences and humanities became politically sensitive (Fazeli 2003:201). Moreover, in the years after the Revolution the Iranian government would regard with distrust any western foreigners and scholars, identifying them with the “exploitative and corruptive forces” of the West (Loeffler 2004:635). Friedl and Hegland also mention that “various intelligence agencies often monitor foreigners’ activities in Iran for better or for worse” (2004:569). In this climate many ethnographers face difficulties with obtaining visas and research permits, as also there are not yet standard procedures for ethnographers, or have experienced various forms of governmental control when working close to state institutions.⁵⁰

On my two visits to Iran I entered the country by obtaining a one -month tourist visa. The first time I had to travel with my mother, because, as the officials at the Iranian Embassy in Greece informed me, a single woman, less than 40 years old, has to be accompanied by a member of her family. The second time my friend Roxana from Iran sent me an invitation and I got an entry permit. Both times I notified the University of Tehrān (and the second time all relevant ministries) of my aims to study the *tombak* and to do research. The first time I extended my one month visa for two more months, as a student at the Dekhoda Institute of Persian Language in Tehrān; while the second time I had to go through a lengthy bureaucratic procedure. It would take me at least

⁴⁹ See Zemp (1990) and Titon (1992b) who discuss the ethical implications of representing the others in ethnographic films.

⁵⁰ *Iranian Studies* journal published in 2004 a volume (number 4) on ethnographic fieldwork in contemporary Iran. Some of the contributors describe their hardship on obtaining or extending their visas and research permits and the ethical implications of supervision and interference by government authorities (see for example Loeffler, Hegland, Kalinock).



three pages (or if I were Proust a whole book) to describe the comings and goings from one office to another and from one ministry to another, the way I obtained various references letters, and the frustration and despair I felt going through the whole process.⁵¹ Eventually, I got a residence permit for one year and then three more months (with the possibility to extend it again).

Rajabi was a well known and respected figure as an art musician, who had striven for many years to develop *tombak* playing in the context of Iranian music. Taking music lessons from him justified my sincere motives to do research and was also a good reference for the Ministry of Culture, upon which depended largely the issue of my visa.

The fact that I had Greek citizenship, also seems to have helped. The Greek-Iranian relations were good at that time,⁵² and generally Iranians view Greeks with sympathy because they both have ancient history and civilization, that intersected during the Greek-Persian wars, in the 4th century B.C.⁵³

Living in Iran was not without tribulations either. I am still not ready to write about the various forms of sexual harassment in the field, both by state officials and scholars, and the impact these situations left on my well-being. Everyday transport was not easy either; being a young woman and blond I was easily distinguished as a foreigner and could not avoid various comments in the streets.⁵⁴ And, I would be always very cautious when taking my recording equipment with me, as I was warned about street robberies.

Living alone was not simple either. During the first three months of my fieldwork I was given hospitality by my friend Roxana and her family. While this was a safe environment, it was nevertheless not private. I shared with Roxana one room and when I was alone I never felt comfortable to close the door and write my fieldnotes, play on the *tombak* or just contemplate. Renting a house also had its own lengthy procedures and difficulties and involved issues such as finding a place where I could

⁵¹ I would like to thank Humān Asa'di, an ethnomusicologist teaching at Tehrān University, who provided me the initial reference letter for this institution. Also, I feel indebted to my friend Roxana for her immense support and accompaniment through the whole procedure.

⁵² In 1999 the then Greek President of the Republic, Kostas Stefanopoulos formally visited Iran, while in 2002 Khatami responded by visiting Greece. Also, Giorgos Papandreou visited Iran in 1999 and 2001 as the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Some of the state officials at the various ministries would actually recall these mutual visits as important for establishing good relations among the two countries.

⁵³ The history of Alexander the Great is well known in Iran. It is not uncommon for Iranians to give his name (Eskendār) to their children, and also the name of his "wife" Roxana. See also Mottahedeh (2004: 311-314), who remarks that after the 1930s and with the Shah's emphasis on the history of pre-Islamic Iranians, who were called "Persians" by the Greeks, the middle and upper class of Iranians would give non-Muslim names to their children, names that were also found in the classical Greek literature.

⁵⁴ I would not recommend a visit to the Tājirish Bazaar in the Northern suburbs of Tehrān to any young woman, Iranian or not, if she is not accompanied by a male.

rehearse on the *tombak* and accept visitors without annoying or offending the neighbours, finding a safe neighbourhood, payment matters and so on. When I finally rented a single flat in Ekbatān, a large area with huge apartment blocks, I decided to install a burglar alarm after three months of living alone. Perhaps I exaggerated in this situation, because I never heard about a housebreaking in this area and we had a watchman in the entrance.⁵⁵ I also experienced various minor health problems in the field that constrained at times my research, but perhaps it would be considered as self-indulgence to describe them.

Doing fieldwork in urban places, where there is an abundance of music and musicians, certainly has its advantages. I had the opportunity to visit numerous music rehearsals (formal and private), teaching sessions (in private and in public music schools), concerts, and to conduct interviews with many musicians, related or not to each other. What I considered as the most convenient in doing research in an urban city like Tehrān was the fact that I had the opportunity to avoid those musicians with whom collaborating would be, for my part, difficult. For instance, I met a *tombak* player who would call me several times a day at home and would make absurd questions or propositions, such as: “Why hasn’t your Prof. John Baily heard of me? You should say to other musicians that I give you *tombak* lessons and that you pay me for that”, or “If people ask you, tell them that I did the editing of your MMus thesis!,” which I submitted to Goldsmiths College before I ever met him. Fortunately this *tombak* player was not very active musically and I assessed that I could continue my research without his assistance, being though careful not to offend him. Fieldwork is about human relations and our understanding arrives from our common experiences with the people we are working in the field. However, the process of field research is also intensely personal and idiosyncratic, and I believe that ethnographers as active participants can estimate the requirements of the research, and prefer those musicians with whom they can best collaborate, if the circumstances afford it.

Fieldnotes October 2002

I feel that my identity as a foreigner has a greater weight here than that of being a woman (this can only be bad for my vanity). ... Up to now, very few *tombak* players haven’t asked me to arrange for them concerts abroad.

⁵⁵ However, my room was at the top floor of the building, neighbouring with the terrace that had stairs right till the ground floor, and anyone who would like to use them, could do it easily.

Fieldnotes January 2003

I now realize that, in order to have a good relationship with X it is important to be well-dressed and more presentable. In those cases he always treats me more politely.

X was experimenting on his instrument with western harmonies. When he asked me my opinion on his music, my reply was polite, but negative. He said to his friend in front of me: "You know how these foreigners like us to play traditional music (*musiqi sonnati*) and when we play something else they do not like it."

Yesterday at the wedding everyone was staring at me, they all wanted to see how a foreigner dances the Iranian female dance with *Los-Angelesi* pop music. For me, it was a really awkward situation.

Fieldnotes 22 March 2002

If a single word has been following me since the day I was born, it is the word *khāreji*. Everywhere I go I am a foreigner.⁵⁶ But in this country it seems that being a foreigner is the first and foremost attribute that other people see in me. And of course they can easily discern this because of my appearance and language. I find it somewhat disturbing that the focus is constantly on the fact that I am a foreigner. I am many other things and here they become secondary. Although, I must admit that Iranian people are very hospitable towards foreigners.

Note on Translation (and Language Learning)

Most of the quotations of musicians are used from transcription of personal interviews conducted during my field research in Iran (Jan. 2002 – April. 2003), and were recorded on a mini-disc writer. All interviews were conducted only in Persian language, and translated by me into English.

When I entered the field in 2002 my Persian was very poor, but I grasped the language very quickly and started speaking only Farsi after the first three months of being in the field.⁵⁷ After eight lessons of Persian language I woke up one morning and

⁵⁶ I was born in the former Soviet Union (Uzbekistan), raised in former Yugoslavia (FYROM), educated in FYROM, Greece and the U.K.

⁵⁷ I would describe myself as having an aptitude for speaking foreign languages. This is due to my personal background. At the age of three I spoke my mother's (Greek) and my father's (Russian)

decided that I would not use English anymore. Since that morning, I persistently resisted communicating in English and I would not even reply to my Iranian friends if they tried to talk to me in English, my friend Roxana being the only exception to this rule. I was strongly influenced in my decision by my Persian language teacher and friend, Nāzi Akbari, who would always tell me “Do you want your Persian to improve or you prefer the English of your friends to get better?” Subsequently, my Persian progressed with remarkable swiftness (and the English of my close friends Hamid and Pedrām were suspended). They were the first ones from whom I learned Persian, who shared with me with amusement the new words that I would make up in Persian, and which eventually became our private slang, and who patiently endured my awkward Persian.⁵⁸ My demand to speak only Persian and thus impose my poor Persian on others made me feel that I use a form of symbolic violence (or domination), a state that other anthropologists have also admitted to experience during the course of their fieldwork (Rabinow 1977, Dwyer 1982) and which seems to be “inherent in the structure of the situation” (Rabinow 1977: 129-130). My Persian improved for one more reason. All Iranian people that I met, without exception, when hearing me trying to speak in their language, would encourage me immensely and would praise me, and I would like to thank them all. This built up my confidence and urged me to articulate better my thoughts in an atmosphere of comfort and safety. Thus, my knowledge of Persian was moulded through a lived experience, and, as Titon would remark, it is the experiential and interpenetrating product of social interaction.

Three months after uttering my first Persian words I began conducting formal interviews with musicians. As my Persian was initially basic and colloquial, and then more versed, but obviously with “foreign” accent, most of the musicians would try to transmit their opinion to me in simple language so that I understand better. This of course affected the quality of the language, but, I believe, not the meaning of information. Thus, if at some point the reader gets the impression that some of the passages quoted by musicians sound simplistic in terms of expression, I would be the one to blame. Moreover, I tried to stand as close as possible to verbatim transcripts of interview and conversations, and decided to preserve, as much as the written form allowed, the tone and the pace of the speaker, and where possible to translate catchwords.

languages and the language of the Republic we lived (“Macedonian”). Later in school I was also taught “Serbo-Croatian” and English.

⁵⁸ For example I would say *zemzele*, instead of *zelzele* (earthquake), or *bāzkonak*, instead of *darbāzkon* (opener), and *tup-e krem* (cream ball), instead of *nun-e khāme-i* (a kind of rounded candy filled with cream).

Some of the translations of the article titles from *Māhur Music Quarterly* into English are mine, although *Māhur* provides translation in English language, which I do not find always satisfactory. All cassette and song titles are my own translation, where I have tried to convey the style and general meaning rather than giving a word for word interpretation.

Chapter two: Cultural Study of the Instrument

Introduction

The foreground of this chapter is dedicated more to the music instrument than to the player, although the latter also emerges because of his inherent relation to the instrument. I attempt to give an approach that embraces the different aspects of the instrument, while being conscious of the “partial truths” embodied in the nature of ethnography. The instrument is placed in its historical and socio-cultural background showing its dynamic position in a web of relationship between players, instrument makers, merchants and scholars. It is also represented as a material object and an aesthetic object having personal, commercial, artistic, symbolic and national value.

In the beginning of the chapter, the history of the instrument is outlined: the *tombak* became a part of the Iranian classical music from the middle of the nineteenth century, replacing the *daf* and *dāyere* (frame drums).⁴³ Prior to this period the *tombak* was used mainly in entertainment music, and the name of the instrument can be found in the Persian poetry of Sa’di, Rumi and Nezāmi. From the 19th century until today the instrument is called both *zarb* and *tombak*, both in the vernacular and literary forms, each term bearing different connotations. I consider the ongoing debate among scholars and *tombak* players regarding the appropriateness and symbolic weight of these terms. In relation to this issue, particular attention is given to the publication of the first teaching manual for the *tombak* in 1971.

I also outline the historical course of the current music theory (based on western principles) used in *tombak* playing.⁴⁴ The *tombak* is also examined as an instrument belonging to the music that derives from the *radif* and the *dastgāh/āvāz* system, where I illustrate the relation of the *tombak* player and the practice of *radif* learning. In the same section I discuss the academic status of the instrument in contemporary Iran.

The section on the structure and the morphology of the *tombak* describes how the instrument is being continually refined, as a result of dynamic processes in which both instrument makers and *tombak* players are involved. Moreover, the issue of *tombak*-decoration is taken into account in the context of the instrument’s status: while a rich decoration on the *tombak* would seem to add a greater prestige to the player, it is

⁴³ The *dāyere* has been transliterated by During as *dāyera*, and by Caton as *dayre*. In the main text I will follow the transliteration system as explained at the beginning of the thesis.

⁴⁴ More details regarding the taught music theory to *tombak* students are given in the last chapter.

actually considered to have the opposite effect. Throughout the chapter, the properties of the instrument are delineated through the preferences and experiences of the *tombak* players. In addition, it will be shown that the question of the status of the *tombak* player is an all-pervasive aspect in the study of the instrument, even when it comes to its purely structural properties. This question of status continuously arises due to the particular position of artistic activity in the framework of Iranian society, where art can be defined according to musical, political, religious and cultural norms.

Historical Background

Before the 17th century the *tombak* is referred to in treatises predominantly by name. Western scholars were among the first to discover historical indications in treatises of the Sassanian period (224-651 CE). Dr. J. M. Unvalla has, as early as 1921, come across the word *dumbalak* (in Pahlavi)⁴⁵ or *dunbalāk* (in Persian) mentioned in the treatise *Khosrow Kovātān va Ridak* [King Khosrow and his Boy] dating from the Sassanian period (Farmer 1978:73, 83). The instrument was described there as a small drum with cylindrical body (ibid. 83). Farmer mentions that Professor A. Christensen has also come across this word in Sassanian treatises, published in his study in 1936 (1978:73, 83).⁴⁶

The history of the *tombak* only attracted the interest of Iranian scholars in the late 20th century, and it appears that they re-discovered the origins of this instrument in the Sassanian period by referring largely to the works of western scholars.⁴⁷ Masshun for example, in his book *Nazari be Musiqi-ye Zarbi-ye Irān* [An Overview of Rhythmic Music in Iran] states that he has not come across the word *tombak* or *donbak* in the literature before the Safavid period (1501-1722), and that this instrument is mentioned

⁴⁵ During the Sassanian era most of the historical writings on music were written in the Pahlavi language. After the invasion of the Arabs in 642 CE, treatises are available in Persian and Arabic languages (Lawergren 1980:521-530).

⁴⁶ Two ethnomusicologists from the late twentieth century should be also mentioned. Zonis, who claims that the *tombak* is of recent origins because it is absent from “all iconographic sources” before the Qajar period (1973:175), and During who writes that a small drum of this type, made of horn, has been found in Kurgan II at Pazyryk, the 4th century B.C.E. site, but this type has rarely been represented in wall paintings (During 1996b: 563). Later, in 1991, During, cites the original Sassanian treatise, transliterated as *Khosrow Qobādān va Ridak* where “the shape of the *dombak* is attested” (1991:147).

⁴⁷ Regarding iconographic sources before the Qajar period, the only source I have encountered from the available Persian literature, is that of ‘Ali Sāmi who detected an instrument similar to the *tombak* among the Elamites in Khuzestān, in a wall-relief at the British museum (Torshizi 1993:27-28). This relief, dating from the 650 BCE, is depicted in Lawergren (1980:527, picture 7b). See also the previous footnote in this chapter.

for the first time by these names in writings of the Safavid era (1969:25). Later, in 2001, Masshun discovered the Pahlavi word *dumbalak*, referring to the source that Christensen studied in the thirties (2001:71, 72).⁴⁸

Another Iranian scholar, Rezā Torshizi, finds the studies of Iranian scholars on the origins of the *tombak* rather incomplete and sketchy.⁴⁹ Eager to find more details, he turned for help in 1992 to Ostād Zabihallah Safā (living at that time in Los Angeles) (Torshizi 1993:25, 26). Ostād Safā turned his attention to the work of Benveniste written in 1932 where he found the word *tumbak* in Pahlavi language in the work of Zarir (the brother of Vishtāsab Hajāmonshi, Ayātakār Zarirān), dating from the first Christian century.⁵⁰ Torshizi speculates that the *tumbak* mentioned in this text was percussion instrument accompanying the *nāy* (reed-flute) and another woodwind instrument called *gāvdom* (1993:26, 27).

On the other side, Iranian scholars have found a great variety of derivations of the word *tombak* in Persian poetry. Masshun for example, cites poems by Nezāmi (12th century) who uses the words *tonbak* and *khombak*, and Rumi (13th century) who uses the word *khombak* (Masshun 2001:635).⁵¹ Also in Tehrāni's book *Āmuzesh-e Tombak* [*Tombak Training*], published in 1971, two articles explore in depth Persian poetry of Ferdowsi, Nezāmi, Sharvāni, Rumi, Hāfez among others, and cite the derivatives of the word *tombak* (Sajjādi 1971 and Mojared 1971).

Masshun's observations regarding the *tombak* during the Safavid period are somewhat obscure.⁵² He mentions that that the contemporary *tombak* has developed (i.e. decreased in size) from the *tombak* used (with this name) by soldiers in the *naqqārekhāne*⁵³ and in battles (2001:305).

⁴⁸ Masshun does not refer to Unvalla. He cites Christensen's source, that is, the treatise *Khosrow va Parviz*. Dr. Sassan Sepanta also came across the word *dumbalak*, in 1990, in the Pahlavi text *Khosrow Pesar-e Qobād va Qolām* dating from the Sassanian era (Torshizi 1993:24). Other Iranian scholars have also cited Christensen and Unvalla as their sources, namely Rashid Yāsemi and Torshizi (Torshizi 1993:28).

⁴⁹ For example, he is critical of the writers of Tehrāni's *Āmuzesh-e Tombak* [*Tombak Training*], who do not provide any historical information regarding the *tombak*, apart from definitions cited in Persian dictionaries and poetry of the 12th and 13th century, where the *tombak* is found only by name. An example of how the *tombak* has been defined in Persian dictionaries is in the *Farhang Jahāngiri* dictionary, where the *tombak* "is a small *dohol* owned by jesters who play and dance with it" (Torshizi 1993:23).

⁵⁰ In 2001 Masshun also mentions this original source, though in a footnote (2001:635 f.16).

⁵¹ Masshun explains that the designation *khombak* was used in jest. He also believes that the *tonbak* mentioned by Nezāmi is the father of the *tombak* used today.

⁵² For example, he often uses the expression "in the ancient times", without specifying the period he refers to.

⁵³ Lit. "drumhouse". *Naqqārekhāne* were ensembles of kettle-drums, shawms, and long brass trumpets that had a customary role in timekeeping in many cities of Central and South Asia. They used to perform from the top of towers (*naqqarekhāne*) to mark the hours of sunrise and sunset (Blum 1980:539).

From the 17th century European first-hand observations become available.⁵⁴ Engelbert Kaempfer in the *Amoenitates Exoticae* mentions names of several Persian instruments from the seventeenth century, accompanied also by his drawings.⁵⁵ According to these drawings a goblet-shaped drum, similar to the *tombak*, but smaller than the one we use today, is represented with the name *donbèk* (Harrison 1973:139). He also gives some useful information about the instrument:

The drums *donbak* seems to be an essential element is the rustic sung-dance; they are light in construction, made of baked potter's clay in the shape and size of earthenware pots, except that the bottom is prolonged into a short appendage by which they are carried under the arm of the player, the opening of the mouth being covered with a bladder or starched small skin. With this, or with the only kind which is like the one common among peasants, the palm tree cultivators celebrate their festivals, with united cheering and hand-clapping, in which the company joins to stimulate the energetic rhythm of the parading dancers. (translation of original text cited in Harrison 1973:148).

These comments give a clear picture of the musical context in which the *tombak* was used; it was played during festivities by peasants, for entertainment purposes, and there are no indications that the *tombak* was performed by musicians of the court during the 17th century. Other names used for a drum with cylindrical body during the 17th century were *dunbal* or *danbāl* (Pers.) (Benveniste, cited in Farmer 1978: 83).

Regarding individual *tombak* players, Mashhun states that until the middle of the nineteenth century, there is no reliable information (2001:640). However, Iranian contemporary scholarly work does provide us some information about *tombak* players and their status during the late Qajar period, which can be found mainly in the works of Masshun and Khāleqi.

The Late Qajar Period and Beyond

The aim of this section is to provide a brief overview of the use of *tombak* and the image of the *tombak* player in relation to three different contexts, all of which are

⁵⁴ During the Safavid dynasty (1501-1722) attitudes towards music were more prescriptive by the Shi'a orthodox Muslims. Musical activity suffered a gradual decline, with an essential decrease in the number of musicians and music scholarship. However, during the 17th century testimonies and comments on Iranian music of become available by western travelers.

⁵⁵ Kaempfer also describes other drums like the *denbaal*, *dohùl* and *theblebaas*, larger in size than the *donbèk*, and also the frame drums known as *def* and *daireh*. Among the drums he describes only the *kus* and the *nagharèh* were played with sticks (Harrison 1973:139-150).

associated with the contemporary *tombak* player. First, I discuss the participation of the *tombak* player in the court ensembles performing art music in late Qajar period (mid-19th century till 1925) and his status in this setting. Then, I refer to the status of the *tombak* player, as associated with the tradition of the *motreb* musicians. Last, I present a brief overview of the *zurkhāne* institution from the late Qajar period to the present day and discuss the way in which it relates to contemporary *tombak* playing.

Most importantly, in this section I attempt to show that the trajectories of the *zurkhāne* tradition (that continued to develop in the 20th century) and the music of the *motrebs* (that significantly declined in the 20th century) are distinct from the trajectories of *tombak* playing as developed within the classical music tradition in the second part of the 20th century.⁵⁶

From the 19th century the *tombak* was introduced in “Persian Classical music”, and gradually replaced the *daf* and *dāyere* used until then (During 1993:561). In the late Qajar period the *tombak* was used in several music contexts. It was performed by the court ensembles performing art music, by *motreb* musicians for royals and aristocrats, and in the *zurkhāne*.⁵⁷

Musicians performing the *radif* at the court ensembles⁵⁸ were called “*amale-ye tarab-e khāss*”, the so called “musicians of the elite” (During 2002:861). The typical court orchestra would consist of one *santur*, one or two *tārs*, one or two *kamānche* (spike fiddle with a round soundbox), and a *tombak*, though possibly a *dāyere* would have been present also (Caton 1983:56). Here the *tasnif* singer (*tasnifkhān*) was usually also the *tombak* performer (*zarbgir*).⁵⁹ *Zarbgirs*⁶⁰ during the Qajar period were musicians who performed both *tasnif* and *zarbi*⁶¹ songs, and accompanied themselves

⁵⁶ The fact that *tombak* players have borrowed playing techniques or rhythmic patterns from the *zurkhāne* tradition or *motrebs* is not congruent with the statement made above.

⁵⁷ To be more precise, an instrument similar to the *tombak* is performed in the *zurkhāne*: larger in shape, made of pottery, and called *zarb-e zurkhāne*. Mashhun mentions that the *zarb* was used in the *zurkhāne* during the Safavid period (2001:639).

⁵⁸ There were two types of music in the court of Nasser-e Din Shah; first was the music of the military band, performing wind instruments at holidays and official occasions. And there were also the “elite” musicians called “*amale-ye tarab-e khāss*”, performing the music of the *radif* (Khāleqi 1999a:46).

⁵⁹ *Tasnif* is vocal composed metric song, in slow or moderate tempo.

⁶⁰ From now on whenever the term *zarbgir* is going to be used, it will be in this sense, that is, to denote the *tombak* players of the late Qajar period who would also sing *tasnif* and *zarbi* songs (as defined in the next footnote).

⁶¹ While the term *zarbi* is generic (lit. rhythmic) and applied to all the metric pieces, in general scholars do not always agree upon the classification of the *zarbi* pieces (see for example the classification of Tsuge 1974: 30-36, Caron and Safvate 1966:156-158, During 1984a:158-161, Zonis 1973:135-136). In this work, the term *zarbi* is diminutive (or synonym, as suggested by During 1984a:160, Caron and Safvate 1966:157, Caton 1983:27-29) of the term *āvāz-e zarbi* (rhythmic singing), and refers to the rhythmic pieces, performed by the *zarbgirs* or *tasnifkhān* (*tasnif* singers) of the nineteenth century, whose main characteristics are: they are essentially improvised (Caron and Safvate 1966:156; During 1984a:160); they use classical poetry based on ‘*aruz*’ meters; they are *gushes* of the *radif*, with relatively fixed melodic

on the *tombak* whilst singing. Both Khāleqi (1999a) and Masshun (1969, 2001) speak of a number of players of the *zarb* during the reign of Nasser-e Din Shah (1848-1896), who usually performed well both the *tasnif* and *zarbi* songs.⁶² In this context neither the instrument nor the performer were considered to be of “high artistic value” ((Khāleqi 1999a:399). According to Khāleqi, the *tasnif* and *zarbi* rhythmic genres were not an art as highly esteemed as the art of singing the *āvāz*, the non-rhythmic improvisatory vocal portion of the *radif* (Khāleqi 1999a:399).⁶³ During the late Qajar period those who sang *āvāz* considered the singing of *tasnif* (*tasnikhāndan*) and performing rhythmic songs (*āhangha-ye zarbi*) to be unsophisticated and simple. However, sometimes a famous vocalist would perform the *āvāz* on one side of the record and *tasnif* on the other, so that they would not be accused for not being able to perform *tasnif*. It appears that this is an indication that knowledge of metric singing was not of insignificant value. This practice can be considered as the beginning of the recognition that the *tasnif* genre and *tasnif* singers were going to have in the 20th century. According to Khāleqi, a skill and aptitude (*takhasos va moherāt*) is required in performing both *āvāz* and *zarbi* songs, but additional skill is required from the *zarbi* and *tasnif* performer, who must be able to sing in a rhythmically correct manner (ibid.).

During the Qajar period the *tombak* was played by both female and male *motreb* groups. According to Fatemi, before the Qajar period all musicians were called *motreb* irrespective of their differences (2005:399). But from the Qajar period, musicians specializing in art music distinguished themselves, in qualitative terms, from those professional musicians who played for entertainment for royal festivities (ibid.). Thus, the art musicians called “*amale-ye tarab-e khāss-e*”, would call the ordinary musicians the “*amale-ye tarab*”, *motreb* (Khāleqi 1999a:23). According to Talai:

The *radif* players used the term *motreb* - someone whose musical goal is solely entertainment - to describe the others, who for their part considered the music of the *radif* players scholarly, *khoshk* “dry”, and lacking in artistic substance (Talai 2002: 868).

framework, in slow or regular rhythm, and performed for the aristocracy (Caton 1983: 29-30). Today, five different forms of *zarbi* pieces are recognized: *āvāz-e zarbi*, *tasnif*, *pishdaramād*, *reng* and *chahārmezrāb* (During, in During and Mirabdolbaghi 1991:82-83), but only the *āvāz-e zarbi* and the *tasnif* are vocal pieces.

⁶² Famous *zargirs* of this period are Habib Somā Hozur, who later became a famous *santur* player. He had three distinguished students: Āqa Jān (the first) who was competent in playing the *zarb* and singing *zarbi* songs, Taqi Khān or Taqi Nasagchi, and Hāji Khān. Other famous *zargirs* were Āqa Jān (the second), a son of the well-known *tār* player Dāvud Shirāzi; and Bālā Jān (pupil of Āqa Jān the second), the father of Morteżā Ney Dāvud. (Khāleqi 1999a:404-410).

⁶³ *Āvāz* is also used to denote a derived modal system. The five *āvāz-hā* (*Abu’ātā*, *Afshāri*, *Bayāt-e Tork*, *Dashti* and *Esfahān*) of the *radif* are considered to be a “modal complex” (Powers 1980:426-427) and derivative from related *dastgāh* (for example, *Āvāz-e Abu’Atā* and *Āvāz-e Dashti* are derivative of *Dastgāh-e Shur*).

Thus, *motrebs* during the Qajar were “ordinary” musicians who would perform for royal dinner parties, evening entertainments, bachelor parties, picnics and other special occasions. Although they were not acknowledged as skilled performers by musicians specializing in art music, as referred above, Khāleqi mentions that they were accomplished in performing *tasnif* songs, in playing the *zarb*, and particularly in dancing (1999a:470).⁶⁴ There were two kinds of *motrebs*, all-male and all-female groups.⁶⁵ The male ensembles were composed of several instrument-players (*tār*, *kamānche*, *santur* and *zarb*), one singer, and a number of performers who would stage a show, among them beautiful dancing boys clad in female dress (ibid. 29, 472). During their performances, revelries, drunken fights and insults were common (Fatemi 2005:404). The female groups, playing the same instruments as the male ones, would perform both at male and female gatherings (Khāleqi 1999a:29, 470-472). Female *motrebs* were often regarded as disreputable and promiscuous (Fatemi 2005:403). The association of the *tombak* with *motrebs* and *lutis*⁶⁶ was an additional stigma for the instrument and its performer.

From the Qajar period till the present day the *motrebs* declined significantly. According to Fatemi, during the Qajar period their activities became restricted due to the expansion and development of art music; in the Pahlavi era they were bounded to traditional social classes, while after the Revolution they were viewed with contempt and, as he says, “it seemed as if they would vanish forever” (Fatemi 2005:399).

Generally, the negative image and low status of the contemporary *tombak* player who performs in the context of classical music is closely linked with the tradition of the *motrebs*. In the popular conscience, the *tombak* player is identified with the 6/8 rhythmic dance pattern as performed for entertainment by *motreb* musicians. Today, the term “motreb” is attributed to professional musicians who perform at festivities, and it is also used as derogatory label for “second-rate” musicians performing art music, and selling their “artistic ethos” for remuneration.

In the 19th century and earlier a type of instrument that is similar to the *tombak* was used also in the *zurkhāne*, the gymnasium, or, “Men’s House of Strength”

⁶⁴ By contrast, *motreb* (*muḥrib*) in the Arab world is the professional singer who is held in high esteem. *Muḥrib* literally means “one who enchants” and it derives from the word *ḥarab*, literally “enchantment” or “entertainment”. See Racy (1986, 2003).

⁶⁵ Regarding female and male *motreb* groups from the Qajar period to the early Pahlavi period see Fatemi (2005).

⁶⁶ *Lutis* were itinerant *motrebs*, and held the lowest rank among the *motreb* groups. See Fatemi (2005:408) and Shay (2000).

(Masshun 2001:637).⁶⁷ This instrument, called *zarb-e zurkhāne* is earthenware, its skin is from a sheep or gazelle, and it is much bigger in size than the *tombak*. The person who played the drum and recited religious poems at the *zurkhāne*, to give the gymnasts the rhythm, was called *morshed*. Some of the *morsheds* who were also competent in singing *tasnif* and *zarbi* songs, would recite poetry for the gymnasts especially in *Dastgāh Chahārgāh* (2001:637-640). The poetry that the *morshed* recited was either based on the *Shāhnāme* [The Book of King] by Ferdowsi and had a patriotic content, or it had a religious orientation and was specifically written to praise the Prophet Imam ‘Ali, and his son Imam Hossein (Bashiri 2003).

Masshun writes that about one hundred years ago in Esfahān, the religious authorities considered the *zarb* to be a musical instrument and thus sinful, and a religious canon forbade its use in the *zurkhāne* (2001:638). The *morshed* would then put a tin instead of a skin on the instrument in order to perform.⁶⁸ Thus, although the *zurkhāne* was interwoven with Shi’a rituals and beliefs, the *zarb-e zurkhāne* had also ambiguous status because it was imbued with a musical essence.

Picture 1: Zurkhāne “Jamārān” in Niāvarān, Tehrān (the *morshed* is on the top right).

Photograph taken by the author.



⁶⁷ Masshun uses both the name *tombak* and *zarb* to describe this drum. Today, the name *zarb-e zurkhane* is more common.

⁶⁸ Mashhun does not mention if part of the problem was related with the use of animal skin in Islam. Generally though, if the animal is slaughtered according to Islamic specifications then the use of the animal skin should not be considered the reason for regarding the musical instrument to be sinful.

Picture 2: *Morshed* Rāmin Golestāni at the *Zurkhāne* “Jamārān” in Niāvarān, Tehrān.

Photograph taken by the author.



While *zurkhāne* practices have been revived after the Revolution (Nooshin, personal communication), today many *zurkhāne* have disappeared, or have been turned into sports centres (Adelkhah 1999:141). *Zurkhāne* practices have also become a popular attraction performed both in concert halls and traditional Iranian restaurants to attract tourists. During my field research, I visited one *zurkhane* and met coincidentally several *morsheds* who performed Iranian music in coffee shops and restaurants.

Picture 3: *Morshed* playing the *zurb-e zurkhāne* in a tourist restaurant in contemporary Tehrān. Snapshot taken by the author.⁶⁹



⁶⁹ Snapshots are Power DVD captures of digital video disc images. All snapshots in this thesis are captured from DVDs taken by the author.

Today many *morsheds* try to encompass in their playing, techniques of the *tombak* as performed in Iranian music. On the other hand, several *tombak* players have performed either the *zarb-e zurkhāne* or adopted the techniques and rhythms of the *zarb-e zurkhāne* on the *tombak*.⁷⁰ This exchange of rhythms and techniques is not surprising: both instruments bear the same name, they are both goblet-shaped drums, held in similar ways and are thus susceptible to similar movement patterns.⁷¹

To summarize, the negative image of the contemporary *tombak* player is, by and large, related to his association with the image of the *motreb* musicians, although the *tombak* player performing in the context of the classical music genres has not exhibited any significant relation to the music of the *motrebs* in the 20th century. On the other hand, there are no ethnographic or scholarly references that associate the *zurkhāne* tradition with the status of the contemporary *tombak* player. Generally, these two domains – that is, the tradition of the *tombak* playing as developed within the context of classical music, on the one hand, and the institution of *zurkhāne*, on the other hand - do not intersect very much, and performers of one tradition rarely cross the boundaries and perform in the other.

The Name of Instrument as an Indication of its Status

Musical instruments in Persian are called *sāz-hāye musiqi*, *adavāt-e musiqi* and *ālat-e musiqi*. The nouns *adavāt* and *ālat* are of Arabic origin.⁷² All the three nouns, *sāz*, *adavāt* and *ālat*, without the adjective *musiqi* (music), are also used for non-musical instruments, standing for instruments and tools in general. The term *sāz* is more frequently used in colloquial conversations, denoting musical instruments, then the term *ālat*, and less frequently *adavāt*. The word *sāz* is the only one used for musical instruments, without necessarily adding the noun *musiqi*. Moreover, the word for an instrument-maker takes the prefix *sāz* and is predominantly called *sāzande*. The terms

⁷⁰ Well known *tombak* players who have experimented with techniques and rhythmic patterns from the *zurkhāne* tradition are Nāser Farhangfar, Rajabi, Kāmkār and Akhavāss, a player of the younger generation.

⁷¹ *Tombak* players are generally open to experiment and adopt new playing techniques and rhythms from other percussion instruments and music traditions, an issue that will be discussed in later chapters.

⁷² See Qassim Hassan (2002:401-402) who outlines terms used to designate music instruments in the Arab World.

vasile (or *vasāil*) and *abzār* can be also found in scholarly writings, expressions used for a musical instrument as devices, mediums, instruments, and tools.⁷³

The *tombak* belongs to the group of percussion instruments. In modern Persian two terms are used for percussion, *sāz-hāye kubei* and *sāz-hāye zarbi*, out of which the first one has become quite fashionable in recent years. The noun *kube* in Persian means a knocker, a hammer, while the verb *kubidan* means to knock at, to pound, to grind or to mash. *Zarbe-i* is originating from *zarb*, a word of Arabic origins, which means “beat”, in the sense of striking, or a rhythmic cycle. In Persian, the *tombak* is both written as *tombak* and *tonbak*, but is always pronounced *tombak* with an “m” and this it is why it is often written like that.⁷⁴

As already mentioned in the previous section, the word *tombak* was pronounced differently throughout the history of Persian music.⁷⁵ Nonetheless the different words used indicate the same root: *tombak*, *tombalak*, *dombak*, and so on. Today many believe that the word *tombak* is an onomatopoeia from the words *tom* and *bak*. *Tom* is the bass sound of the instrument, produced while beating towards the middle of the skin with the hand closed in a semi-circle, while *bak* is a high-pitched sound produced on the edge of the skin of the instrument. These two sounds *tom* and *bak* are basic sounds in *tombak* playing and are the first ones that a student of the instrument learns to play.⁷⁶

The *tombak* from the nineteenth century until today is also called *zarb*. *Zarb* is a word derived from the Arabic *darb* (singular) meaning a beat. According to Farmer a *darb* used to be a composition in which two rhythmic modes were used at the same time (cited in Tsuge 1970:224). However, in the ‘*aruz* system, according to Tsuge, the term was used to name the last foot of a *beyt* (poetic verse).⁷⁷ The word *zarb* is also found in the poems of Sa’di (d.1292) and Rumi (1273) referring both to song (*āhang*) and music (*naqmeḥ*) (Sajjādi 1971:36). According to Sajjādi, Rumi in one of his poems also indicates that the *zarb* was a percussion instrument used to keep the rhythm in a melody (1971:35).

⁷³ The terms *sāz* and *ālat-e musiqi* are also used in Afghanistan to denote music instruments and their usage is similar to the Iranian case. According to Sakata, the term *sāz* is colloquial, while the term *ālat-e musiqi* is used in more formal situations (1983:49). She also notes that *sāz* has always musical connotations, while *ālat* requires the modifier *musiqi* (ibid. 50).

⁷⁴ In Persian, when the letter *nun* is written before the letter *be* it is always pronounced as “m”. For this reason I always transliterate the Persian word *tombak*, when verbal, as *tombak*, that is, with the letter “m”.

⁷⁵ See Darvishi (2005:365) for the terms used in regional music to denote the *tombak*.

⁷⁶ See also Appendix 3, where the playing technique of *tom* and *bak* are explained.

⁷⁷ ‘*Aruz* is the versification system upon which classical Persian poetry is grounded on syllable-length (short and long) and to some extent upon stress accent (Khānlari, cited in Caton 1983:187). The ‘*aruz* system is attributed to Al-Khalil, while writings in Persian on the ‘*aruz* system begun in the 10th century (Tsuge 1974:112, 126). According to Tsuge, the rhythmic organization of the *āvāz* is based upon the poetic meter of the ‘*aruz* system (Tsuge 1974:175).

During states that the older term *naqra* (beat) has been substituted by the vague term *zarb*, that sometimes means beat, in the sense of striking, and at other times a rhythmic cycle, in the treatise *Bahjat al-ruh* dating probably from the early seventeenth century (1996a:155).⁷⁸ Today *zarb* designates a beat in the sense of striking, a rhythmic cycle, as well as a time value and the drum itself. The time value of one *zarb* depends on the meter. For example, in a time of 2/4 or 3/4 one *zarb* has the value of a quarter note. In a meter of 6/8 one *zarb* would be equal to a dotted quarter note.

Khāleqi, whenever mentioning the *tombak* in *Sargozasht-e Musiqi-ye Irān* [A History of Iranian Music], refers predominantly to it as *zarb*, and he uses less often the word *tombak*. The player of the instrument is predominantly written as *zarbgir* in singular and *zarbgir-ān* in the plural, but also sometimes *navāzande-ye zarb* (pl. *navāzandegān-e zarb*), and *tombakzan* (pl. *tombakzanān*) or *navāzande-ye tombak* (pl. *navāzandegān-e tombak*). The verb he predominantly uses is *zarb gereftan*, but also *navākhtan-e zarb* or *navāhtan-e tombak*, where the transitive verb *gereftan* has many applications and it means to catch, to receive, to obtain, to take, to arrest, to capture, to conquer, to recruit, to extract, to marry or take, to use, to occupy, to cover or veil, to admit, to suppose, to become close, to catch on. The suffix *gir* is the present stem of the verb *gereftan* and here it means to hold, to grasp, to grip. Thus, *zarbgir* was he who would hold/grasp/grip the *zarb* or the one who “holds the beat” or “makes the beat” (Nooshin, personal communication, January 2007).

The verb *navākhtan*, which is used also for the other musical instruments, means to play, to strike, to beat.⁷⁹ The root of this verb is the noun *navā* which means “a tune”, “a melody”, “an air”.⁸⁰ Khāleqi also makes occasional use of the expression *navāzandegi kardan*, again to denote playing. The players of the other instruments are also called by him *navāzandegān* (pl.) or take the suffix *zan* (like *tombakzan*), for example *santurzan* (the *navāzande-ye santur*), *neyzan* (the *navāzande-ye ney*). The suffix *zan* is the present-tense stem of the verb *zadan* that means: to play on, to strike, to beat, to hit, to blow. But the *kamānche* player is called *kamānchekesh* or *navāzande-ye kamānche*. For the *kamānche*, a short neck bowed lute, Khāleqi uses also the verb *keshidan* that means to draw, to drag, to bow, to pull.⁸¹ The agent participle *navāzande*,

⁷⁸ The author of *Bahjat al-ruh*, as During explains, describes the rhythms not as a series of *naqra* (beats), but rather as a rhythmic cycle composed of a specific number of *zarbs* (beats) in *bam* (bass) and *zir* (high) sounds (1996a:155). For example, one particular rhythmic cycle would be composed from seven *zarbs*, five of them *bam* and the other two *zir*.

⁷⁹ In Persian the verb that is used for playing a game is *bāzi kardan*.

⁸⁰ One of the Iranian *dastgāhs* is also called *Navā*.

⁸¹ Khāleqi (1999a:62) explains that both terms *kamānche zadan* and *kamānche keshidan* were in use at the time of writing his book in the mid-1950s.

used both adjectivally and substantively as a noun, is formed by the past-tense stem *navāz* of the verb *navākhtan*, and the agent participle *ande*, and it literally means the one who plays melody.

At present, two verbs are commonly used for playing, *navākhtan* and *zadan*, both also found in Khāleqi's work. Common expressions today are: *navākhtan-e tombak* (playing the *tombak*), *tombak navāzi* (*tombak* playing) or *zadan-e kamānche* (playing the *kamānche*). In addition, the first-person singular form in the present indicative tense, that answers to both the English simple present and present progressive, is the term *tombak mizanam*, a term commonly used today. More formal expression is the compound term *tombak minavāzam*. On comparing these two terms one can recognize that the past stem *zan* of the verb *zadan* has been substituted by the past stem *navāz* of the verb *navākhtan*. In both cases, in the expressions used for player and the expression used for playing, there is a tendency to substitute the verb *zadan* with the verb *navākhtan* in formal contexts. In general, the term *zadan* has been considered inappropriate to be used in official circumstances and in scholarly jargon (because of the connotations with the other meanings that it conveys, i.e. "to hit", "to beat", "to strike"). Musicians, though, in daily conversations use more the term *zadan* than *navākhtan*.⁸² Additionally, the imperative form of the verb, both in the affirmative and negative imperative, *bezan* and *nazan*, is deeply rooted in daily music practice and is unlikely to be changed with the *benavāz* or *nanavāz*, which both sound somewhat awkward in Persian. Similarly, the compound expressions *tombakzan*, *neyzan*, or *santurzan*, are widely used in the vernacular. While terms, enfolding the present stem of *navākhtan*, such as *tombaknavāz*, *navāzande-ye tombak* (or *neynavāz* and *navāzande-ye ney*), are in use in formal situations.

Generally in Iran, a factual distinction is applied between formal/literary (*adabi*) or written and demotic or spoken (*bumi*) language.⁸³ There is a kind of analogy between public ethics and codes of behavior and formal language, on the one hand, and colloquial language employed in the private setting and informal situations, on the other hand.⁸⁴ This pragmatic distinction in language usage manifests the private/public

⁸² These two terms are also used in Afghanistan in a similar way and the term *nawākhtan* (as transliterated by Sakata) is more formal than the term *zadan*. Interestingly, in Afghanistan, the term *zadan* is used for every instrument, while the verb *nawākhtan* is used for stringed instruments only (Sakata 1983:51). According to her, the latter distinction is a matter of formality (ibid.).

⁸³ See for example Thackston (1993: 206-213) where he discusses the phonological transformations, the abbreviation of the copulas, and the verbal inflections of spoken Persian.

⁸⁴ Another facet of the vernacular language is the contemporary slang (*zabān-e makhfi*) generated and used by Tehrāni youngsters and the streetwise, that reflects, among others, the tendency to camouflage the precise meanings of the words. See for example Samā'i's recent publication *Dictionary of Slang Words* (2003).

dichotomy in contemporary Iranian life, a subject that will reappear in the course of this thesis.

Reading Khāleqi's work I realized that the language he uses is natural, simple, yet penetrating, with no pretensions to formality. This made me realize that, not only the information he is giving on musicians and the music culture are important in terms of validity, but that also his phraseology constitutes a valuable chronicle of a language with idioms and expressions commonly used during his time. Nowadays, some of the expressions that Khāleqi employs have fallen into disuse in ordinary speech by the music community. For example, the expressions that he commonly applies, such as *zarbgir* and *kamānchekesh* (words where the second term of the compound noun is explaining the specific action of playing upon the instrument, as already described), today seem to be completely abandoned. With regards to the *tombak* players, forsaking the term *zarbgir* coincides with the metamorphosis of the *tombak* player from *zarbgir* (that is *tasnif* and *zarbi* player who would also play the *zarb*) to an "instrumental specialists", whose main pursuit is to accompany the musicians, to play the *tombak* as a primary instrument, leaving behind his vocal role.⁸⁵

It is true that language is a living system and is subject to change. The changes in a language are possible indicators of other cultural changes. Moreover, changes in a language could be sometimes deliberately forged, by the academic community, for example, or by individuals, as in the case of Rajabi, which will be both discussed later in the text. Obviously, how and to what degree the changes of language are accepted, used, expressed and dispersed over ordinary, habitual and conventional language and everyday practice is a complicated subject and, inter alia, has to do with changes in cultural practices, ideas and beliefs.

Rajabi advocates, both at his solo recitals, where he gives speeches as well, and at his classes, that the *tombak* player should be called *tombaknavāz*, a designation which he considers to be most suitable. He often records such public lectures and distributes the tapes to his students, and to anyone who visits him during his classes. In a public lecture given in 1990, which is circulated in tapes under the name *Zibāyishenās-i va Ertebāt-e ān bā Ritm* [Aesthetics and its Relation to Rhythm], he recites a short verse to underline his preference of the word *tombaknavāz* and generally the use of the suffix *navāz*, even when referring to other instruments:

⁸⁵ I deal with this issue again in the fourth chapter.

tār player, not *tār*

piano player, not piano

and after all

tombak player, not *tombak*

tārnavāz, na *tār*

pianonavāz, na piano

va *belakhare*

tombaknavāz, na *tombak*

The way the name of instrument is used, suggests that it was habitually passed down from teacher to student. I say habitually, because it was not methodically doubted or disputed until Rajabi's diligence. Shemirāni for example, one of Tehrāni's students, still calls the instrument *zarb* and says that at the time, in the mid fifties, this is how the instrument was principally called. Banāi, on the other hand, uses both terms. When I asked him why he calls the *tombak* *zarb*, he confessed, a bit timidly, that he uses it habitually because his teacher, Esmā'ili, a student of Tehrāni, also calls it *zarb*. Still, none of Rajabi students would ever call the *tombak* a *zarb*.

Although the instrument was called both *tombak* and *zarb*, since the 19th century, during Tehrāni's time and even today, Rajabi is considered the greatest public promoter and defender of the word *tombak*. He asserts with zeal and ardour that the word *zarb* should be discarded, because of its Arabic roots, but also because the word *tombak* and its derivatives have been used from ancient times and are also found in the classical Persian poetry.⁸⁶ Moreover, he says that "the *tombak* is an instrument that with the

⁸⁶ There is a historical antipathy - involving ethnic, religious, geopolitical and economic factors - between Iranians and Arabs, which is still very prominent, especially on the part of the Iranians, and is revealed also in the music world, and in particular in the tendency to "sanitize" the Persian language from Arab "word-intrusions". The anti-Arab feelings began with the Arab invasion and the introduction of Islam in Persia (second quarter of the 7th century A.D). According to Graham, Iranians, who always wanted to distinguish themselves from the Arabs, opted for the branch Shi'ism - which regarded Mohammed's son-in-law, Ali, as the first true Imam - distinguishing thus in this way themselves from the Arabs (Graham 1979:193). Animosity against Arabs can be also traced back to the Shu'ubiya movement of early Islam, which was an attempt to distinguish, again, between Arabism and Islam and revealed an antagonism between Persians and Arabs (Paul 1999:201). These anti-Arab feelings survived until the 20th century and were at times prominent in the political scene as well. For example, the Pahlavi state (1941-1979) propagated that the many centuries of Arab domination over Iran was the "main historical obstacle to the continuity of the glorious Persian empire" (Mojab and Hassanpour (1995:231)). These pre-Islamic elements can be still found in Iranian music and culture, such as the *zurkhāne* tradition (Nettl 1975:75). But, also, anti-Arab feelings are expressed by Iranians when they deny or denigrate the close relationship of their classical music tradition with the Arabic modes (ibid. 85). Anti-Arab sentiments became even more pronounced after the great human and material losses during the war of Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988). Myhill explains that in this war "Iranians were attempting to orient the area along a Shiite versus Sunni axis", while Iraq was "emphasizing distinction between Arab and Persians, in accordance with the ideology of Arab nationalism" (2006:174). The war with Iraq intensified the Iranian anti-Arab feelings, also because most Arab states, the majority of which are Sunni, gave financial or military support to Iraq. This antipathy was cultivated in the minds and hearts of the Iranian people by an affluent production of war films produced by the public-government sector (for war film production in post-Revolutionary Iran, see Naficy 1992:200-201). With regards to the language, there has always been a tension between Persian and Arabic language. Persians adopted the Arabic script after the Arab conquest and relied extensively on Arabic word-loans. It was during the Samanid era (874-997) that Persian language experienced its first renaissance, in literature and historical writings, after the Arab invasion (see Meisami 1993). In post-Revolutionary Iran - while Arabic language was held in high esteem from the beginning - this tension between Persian and Arabic culture was expressed by Khamene'i, who emphasized the importance of

action of *zarb* (beat, strike) is being performed, piano too is an instrument performed by striking". Besides the objectives of his belief, he strongly thinks that it is his success, his triumph and his distinctive mark to call the instrument a *tombak*. Rajabi also insists on calling the *zarb-e zurkhāne tombak-e zurkhāne*, but such utterances are not widespread, and the *zarb-e zurkhāne* is still the standard term.

It is true that the terms *tombak* and *zarb* were both used during the late Qajar period, but it appears that the term *tombak* was more frequent in colloquial language. Although *zarb* is still used by *tombak* players, especially of the older generation, the term *tombak* is preferred, and particularly the younger generation employs it practically exclusively. In 1966, Caron and Safvate (1966:180) asserted that the term *dombak* (with a "d") should be considered as a vulgar term and, because the word *tombak* is very similar to *dombak*, it also has negative connotations.⁸⁷ Khāleqi also states that, in mid-20th century "when we say *donbakzan* [*tombak* player] is as though we are swearing at someone" (1999a:400). This is perhaps why Safvate and Caron considered the term *zarb* much more distinguished.

Nowadays, the reverse seems to hold. A few years after Caron's and Safvate's (1966) publication, in 1971, the first book with exercises for *tombak* teaching was published, *Āmuzesh-e Tombak* [*Tombak Training*], containing Tehrāni's rhythms, where the use of the word *tombak* is dominant. Nonetheless, nowhere in the book it is justified why its writers preferred this name instead of *zarb*. Most of the subsequent manuals for the *tombak*, coming from different parts of Iran, like Shirāz, Esfahān or Karaj, followed this path, and use mostly the word *tombak*. Esmā'ili, for example, in his books uses the word *tombak*, whereas, according to his student Siāmak Banāi, he uses frequently the word *zarb* in spoken language.⁸⁸

Judging from the book *Āmuzesh-e Tombak*, one realizes that scholars were also promoting such changes. The initial idea to write a teaching manual for *tombak* in order to preserve Tehrāni's rhythmic patterns and to give an "academic status" to the

national language in determining the cultural identity of any nation (Paul 1999:210-211). He compared the expressive capacity of Persian to Arabic language by using a metaphor and saying: "I don't know if Hāfez could be translated into Arabic" (Khamene'i, cited in Paul 1999:211). Thus, the tendency to "sterilize" the music language from Arab words can be understood in the context of linguistic tension and the long history of anti-Arab sentiments among Iranian people, but also in the strong Iranian nationalism. This language "sanitation" is also prominent with other instruments and music expressions. For example, the 'ud in Iran, while is being called both 'ud and *barbat*, the latter term, which is of Persian and pre-Islamic origins, is being preferred. In addition, while percussion instruments are called both *zarbei* (a term of Arabic origin) and *kubei* (a word of Persian origin), the latter gains ground to a great extent.

⁸⁷ It appears that Caron and Safvate consider the term *dombak* (with a "d") vulgar, rather than the term *tombak*. Their distinction between *dombak* and *tombak* with regards to the image of the instrument seems to be overemphasized.

⁸⁸ I have seen only one teaching manual using both the terms *zarb* and *tombak*, written by Khosrowbeyk 2001.

instrument by devising an appropriate teaching method was Hossein Dehlavi's (Interview, January 2003). Tehrani's book was the first and only teaching manual for *tombak* that involved so many scholars and musicians in its writing. The manual provided not only scores for *tombak* playing, but also information on the historical background of the instrument, morphology of the instrument, basic introduction to rhythmic theory, and Tehrani's biography. To name some the people who were involved in this important publication: Esmā'ili, Hushang Zarif, Farāmarz Pāyvar, Ebrāhim Qanbari, Siāmak Banāi, Ruhollāh Khāleqi, Mostafā Purtorāb, Farhād Fakhreddini, and Dehlavi. Some of these scholars and musicians, such as Khāleqi, Purtorāb, Dehlavi, Zarif, Fakhreddini and Tehrani himself, formed a committee which was responsible for devising a notation system for the *tombak* (discussed in the last chapter). They agreed, during numerous meetings, to use three-line stave and also invented some signs that are used to indicate specific strokes. Esmā'ili was the person who first taught *tombak* by using three-line stave, by "testing" the applicability of the three-line stave and of the sign that was devised by the committee (Dehlavi 1971:12). Zarif was the person who actually transcribed the rhythms that Tehrani performed (Interview, January 2007). Others, such as Ziā'ddin Sajjādi and Mohammad Irāni Mojared, contributed by writing articles on the origins of the words *tombak* and *zarb* and their derivatives in Persian literature, and contributed in the research of the terminology used to designate the various parts of the instrument. Dehlavi wrote the preface to the edition as well as Tehrani's biography. Fakhreddini was involved in the process of the publication of the manual. Writing this book was a serious and ambitious project and it took nine years in total. The time had come for the *tombak* to acquire recognition as an instrument, or as the Iranians would say gain a "scientific" (*'elmi*) status.^{89,90}

⁸⁹ "Scientific" (*'elmi*) usually refers to the theoretical aspects of western music that have been adopted in Iranian music and give the latter an important theoretical ground, as in the case of the adoption of written notation, and thus a high status. Nooshin refers often to this scientific (*'elmi*) aspect of Persian music, see for example Nooshin (1996a:80, 121). Baily has also a section on the concept of *ilm-e musiqi* (as spelled in Afghanistan), lit. "the science of music", among the *sāzande* musicians (urban male professional musicians) and women musicians in Herat (1988b:55-59, 162). According to Baily, Afghan musicians have a high-ranking social identity when they possess the *'ilm-e musiqi*, which in the Afghan case is the music theory and terminology of Hindustani music (ibid.). On the "science of music" in the Arabic world see Shiloah (1995:45-67).

⁹⁰ Other instruments used in the *radif* had their notated teaching manuals written in the 1920s. For example, Vaziri published the first teaching manual for the *tār* in 1923.

Picture 4: The cover page of *Āmuzesh-e Tombak* [Tombak Training] (published in 1971).



As already mentioned, Tehrāni's book was the first published notated *tombak* manual. In it the term *tombak* was principally utilized. This manual had great influence both on the contemporary and the following generations (it still constitutes an important teaching manual), and must have had a role in establishing the name of the instrument as *tombak*.⁹¹ But why did all these scholars preferred *tombak* to *zarb*, since the latter term was frequently employed by them both in writings (Khāleqi for example) and also in everyday speech? Was it because the term *zarb* had negative connotations? Tehrāni says that when he first started playing the *zarb* (he uses both terms *tombak* and *zarb*), people used to associate *zarbgirs* with the (rather disreputable) *motrebs* (Tehrāni, cited in Dehlavi 1971:18). But the same holds for the term *tombak* or *dombak*, given that the instrument and its player were socially and musically undervalued, as Khāleqi and also Caron and Safvate have stated. Therefore it seems that the choice of the name *tombak* or *zarb* cannot be explained only on the grounds of propriety.

At the time Tehrāni was writing his book, the *tombak* (regardless of its name) had secured its role in the performance of Iranian music. Most importantly it had acquired recognition as a national instrument (*sāz-e melli*) among the other national instruments of the *radif*, a fact that Dehlavi mentions twice in the preface of the book

⁹¹ By 2002 the manual had been reprinted thirteen times.

(Dehlavi 1971:7). Under those circumstances, the *tombak* holding now officially the status of a national instrument, one gets the impression that it could not and should not bear any longer a name that means simply a beat (*zarb*) and moreover a word not of Persian origin, but with Arabic roots. Parenthetically, could it be that by stressing its national identity, there is an aspiration to deflect its popular (*motrebi*) association?

The discourse that unravels around the name of the instrument bears traces of cultural nationalist appeal. However, these interpretations are not forged, as described by now, by some coherent group with a strategy to construct or point at the direction of a national identity for the instrument. Musicians, scholars, music amateurs, instrument makers, meet up on such interpretations almost as a matter of course. The national identity of the *tombak* emerges practically by definition: the *tombak* belongs to the instruments performing the *radif* (see next section), that have become in effect synonymous with Iranian music, which, in turn, is also in quest of identity, especially dominant in the last several decades (discussed in chapter three).

Here it should be mentioned that this vindication of the *tombak* as a national instrument has not been yet fully recognized by *tombak* players and it has not been yet specified as *sāz-e melli* (national instrument). On the other hand, many *tombak* players have a latent view of their instrument as being a “national instrument”, although they do not express a consistent, systematic, or well-developed ideological stance on this matter. The sense of a national identity of the instrument is not expressed explicitly. It appears though, to be generated in comparison with hypothetical, and never actual, or named percussive instruments from the rest of the world, and it is evoked in declarations concerning factual capacities of the *tombak*, such as: “it is the most perfect instrument in the world” or “it is the only percussion instrument in the world that is played by using all ten fingers”. Such statements obviously disclose and forge concepts of *local* possession, uniqueness, hierarchy, exclusiveness, and magnitude, which, in this context, are derivative of a nationalistic ethos. In other words, *tombak* players express a latent nationalism that takes the form of exaggeration and boastfulness.

Rajabi was amongst the first to praise the instrument in public lectures, in his classes among his students, and in his books. In his book *Tombak va Negaresh-i be Ritm az Zavāyā-ye Mokhtalef* [*Tombak and the Study of Rhythm from Different Perspectives*] he states that “the *tombak* is the most perfect/complete [*kāmel*] instrument in the world” (Rajabi 1999:55). He makes clear though that he does not mean the structure of *tombak*, which is considered rather simple, but instead he underlines “the vast possibilities it gives the players to create diverse sounds with it” (ibid.). In addition, he affirms that the

tombak is the only percussion instrument in the world that the player uses all ten fingers to play it.⁹² This daring conviction is by now widespread, not only among the musicians and especially among the *tombak* players, who consider this factor as one of the most important characteristics of *tombak* playing, worthy of great appreciation, but also in the academic community.⁹³

In the available recorded history relating to the *tombak*, the first person who questioned the adequacy of the name (*zarb*) for this instrument, (though he did it from another point of view) was not an Iranian. It was a famous Soviet composer, Leni Kenniper, who came to Iran in 1944, and whose considerations were based on the discrepancy between the dexterity of performance required for this instrument and its simple name. He actually proposed to rename the instrument, and instead of simply calling it “beat” (*zarb*) to call it “an instrument” (*sāz*). It was as though he was granting the *tombak* the status of a music instrument. When in Iran, Kenniper saw the National Music Orchestra in concert, where ‘Ali Naqi Vaziri played solo *tār*, Habib Somā’i played solo *santur* and Tehrāni played the *tombak*. Although he expressed his admiration for these great artists (Vaziri and Somā’i) he said that his attention was captured by the person who played the *tombak*, who was Tehrāni. The next day he asked Tehrāni to play a solo *tombak* for him and he was all ears. Then Kenniper said:

You have unreasonably called this instrument *zarb*, I call it an instrument [*sāz*], because, although so simple, it is the most perfect percussion instrument that was made till now. And do you know why I call it an instrument? Because other percussion instruments are played with sticks, but this one is played with both hands and fingers, and therefore, the feelings and emotions of the player leave their imprint onto the sound... I consider Hossein Tehrāni as one of the greatest *ostāds* in your music tradition, deserving great artistic recognition (Khāleqi 1999a:401-402).⁹⁴

Lastly, it is worth mentioning under which name the instrument is popularized abroad. In the last few years *tombak* gained gradual popularity in the world music scene through its practitioners. *Tombak* players live in the United States, in Germany, in the United Kingdom, in France and in other countries as well. I cannot assess with certainty

⁹² The *darabukka* is another goblet-shaped drum where performers use all ten fingers, but perhaps not in so many combinations of stroke patterns as in the case of the *tombak*.

⁹³ See for example Kiāni (1992: 104-105) who cites Mashhun (1369:24).

⁹⁴ This anecdote has become very popular today and all young players know it by heart and repeat it with great enthusiasm.

under which name the instrument is best known abroad, but judging from different websites, concerts, mailing lists, the word *tombak* is gaining ground.

It might be interesting at this point to briefly look at two cases, the first one in France and the other in Greece. In France for many years now there are two known “parties” of *tombak* players. The one is the Shemirāni family, the father (Jamshid) with his two sons (Keyvān and Bizhan), and the other is Majid Khalaj. The Shemirāni’s use the word *zarb*, while Khalaj the term *tombak*. It looks as though, by using different names for the same instrument they can make, purposely or not, their distinctive mark, they can differentiate themselves from each other for the audience, and possibly demonstrate different aspects in performance.⁹⁵

In Greece, the name *zarb* is still prevalent. The Shemirāni family performing for many years with Daly, who lives in Greece, became widely known amongst Greek audience and popularized the instrument under the name they use themselves, that is *zarb*. Now that I am playing the *tombak* and the *daf* in the *Persepolis* ensemble and we perform Iranian music I use the name *tombak* and always explain about the two names of the instrument. However, musicians in particular are already used to identifying the instrument with the name *zarb*, and continue calling it like that. That is why whenever Pedrām performs with Daly in Greece, Daly also tends to present both names to the general public. I believe that in Greek, the word *zarb* sounds more euphonious than the word *tombak*.

Rhythmic Theory

The author of the first Arabic book on rhythms was Al-Khalil (d. 786 C.E) (Sawa 2002:387). In the 10th century Al-Fārābi (d. 950) made great contributions to the Arab music theory and worked extensively on the subject of *iqā’* “rhythm”. It has been deemed that he spoke particularly about rhythms used by the Arabs (Wright 1978:8,

⁹⁵ Shemirāni inherited the word *zarb* from his teacher Tehrāni in the late 1950s and he applies this term “routinely” and habitually from the early days of his music career (Interview, November 2002). His two sons inherited the term *zarb* from their father. Khalaj, on the other hand, is a *tombak* player of a younger generation than Jamshid Shemirāni, a generation that most often uses the term *tombak*. The Shemirāni family does not distinguish itself from Khalaj in terms of the different names they use for the instrument, however they consider that their technique and playing style differentiates from his own.

ft.8), and that in practice, during his own time, the rhythms were much simplified (Farmer 1943:76).⁹⁶

From the late thirteen century Arabs and Persians shared a high degree of congruence between their modal as well their rhythmic systems (Wright 1978:3).⁹⁷ The founder of the Systematist School,⁹⁸ Safi al-Din, in his book *Kitāb al-adwār*, written in 1252, presented a framework within which the major music thinkers of the subsequent two centuries were operating (ibid. p.1). Safi al-Din, together with the theory of modal scales, also presented a theory of rhythmic cycles (*advār-e iqā'i*) by elaborating the works of Al-Kindi⁹⁹ (d. 870), Al-Fārābi, and Ibn Sinā (d. 1037).

According to Wright, the two musical systems (Arab and Persian) began to develop with greater autonomy from one another during the 16th century (1978:5). One of the reasons was that, from the beginning of the 16th century and under the rule of the Safavid dynasty (1501-1722), Persia became increasingly isolated from the rest of the Middle East that was under the Ottoman Empire (ibid.). The 17th century was a turning point in Persian music, after which the actual practice of the Systematist theory in Persia was rather simplified (Farmer 1964:2801). The 18th century was also a time of cultural confusion and artistic decline: musicians decreased in numbers, there was no interest in musical theory and many modes and melodies were forgotten (During, in During and Mirabdolbaghi 1991:33). Generally, a decrease in scholarship can be observed to begin from the 16th century and last until the 19th century. That decrease can be also attributed to the proscriptive attitudes towards music maintained by the Shi'a leaders under the Safavid dynasty (see Farhat 1980:531).

The beginning of decline of the theory of the rhythmic cycles, including the science of intervals, can be traced back in three treatises written during the Safavid dynasty: in *Bahjat al-ruh*,¹⁰⁰ *Resāla-ye musiqi*,¹⁰¹ and the anonymous *Ma'arefat-e 'elm-e musiqi* dating from the 17th century (see During 1996a). For example, the author of

⁹⁶ For an interpretation of the theory of rhythmic modes (*advār-e iqā'i*) in the Medieval Middle East see Farmer (1943), During (1996a) and Sawa 2002 (387-393).

⁹⁷ Wright mentions that certain rhythmic cycles differ in popularity than others (1978:3). For information on the interchange between the Persian and Arab music before the 13th century see Farmer (1964).

⁹⁸ Safi al-Din and his followers (among which the most prominent were Shirāzi (d.1312) and Marāghi (d.1435)) have been designated as "the Systematist school" by the Arab scholars. They have provided a framework of analytical theoretical music writing which became the foundation of the science in the Near and Middle East. Major aspects of the Systematists' theory of music were: classification and analysis of modal scales, analysis of intervals and scalar sequences of intervals, classification and analysis of rhythmic modes, and elucidation of terminology (See Farmer (1940, 1964), Wright (1978), Farhat (1980)).

⁹⁹ Al-Kindi copied Greek theories of rhythm, some of which did not apply to the Middle East (Sawa 2002:387).

¹⁰⁰ The time of writing and the author of *Bahjat al-ruh* have been questioned. For more detail on the subject see Caton (1983:41), Farmer (1964:2795) and Zonis (1973:34n). It has been estimated, however, that this treatise belongs to the late 16th – early 17th century.

¹⁰¹ This work was written by the last great master of the Safavid court, Gorji.

Bahjat al-ruh notes only the number of the beats of the rhythmic cycles, without describing the relationship among them, while in *Ma'arefat-e 'elm-e musiqi*, the basic rhythms mentioned were not those inherited from the classical writers or those mentioned by Marāgi (d.1435),¹⁰² and the author simply lists the names of the rhythmic cycles without any description (ibid. 158-159). Also, the methods of analysis and the accompanying terminologies that were used to describe rhythm (*wazn*) in earlier sources were not used in Persia after the late work *Bahjat al-ruh* (ibid.155).

Ārianpur, in addition, asserts that after the Safavid period, '*aruz* and *iqā*' were no longer used as a rhythmic basis for *tasnif* composition (practiced largely by the *zarbgir* during the Qajar period), and that poetic syllables became the foundation of rhythm, which means that rhythm would be based on the number of syllables in a verse without taking into account the length of the syllable (cited in Caton 1983:19, 318).¹⁰³ According to Caton, while the poetry of *tansif*, *zarbi* and *āvāz* pieces are based on the '*aruz* system, the extent to which the meter of the first two is reflected in the overall rhythm varies from minimal to complete (ibid. 211-221). She further notes that in the *tasnif* and *zarbi* pieces the rhythm is more prone to musical constraints than the *āvāz*, due to the use of time-measure (Caton 1983:221).

By the 19th century Persian rhythmic structure was thoroughly simplified: long periods had disappeared; asymmetrical and halting rhythms (*aqsak* and *lang*) were no longer in use; the blending of diverse rhythmic formulae in a single composition was not practiced; and the identification of each formula by a distinctive name was lost (During 1996a:158). The rhythmic theory that is used today in *tombak* playing is based on western principles, while the concept of rhythm has been borrowed from the French (During 1996a:155).¹⁰⁴ Finally, as already mentioned, the first teaching-manual for *tombak* was published in 1971, while the *tombak* begun gradually to be taught with the help of modified western notation after the middle of the 1960s.¹⁰⁵ As During says,

¹⁰² Marāghi followed by and large the work of Safi al-Din

¹⁰³ Similar observations are made by Tsuge, who asserts that this system is considered to be a less complicated and easier versification system than the classical '*aruz* system (Tsuge 1974: 140,191). See Caton (1983:20,187-221) who presents her findings and the view of other Iranian scholars regarding the rhythmic organization of the *tasnif*.

¹⁰⁴ In the last chapter I discuss in detail the rhythmic theory used for the *tombak*.

¹⁰⁵ In *Āmuzesh-e Tombak* [*Tombak Training*], the first teaching manual for *tombak*, the writer (not specified) of the article "Osul Kolli Dar Bāre-ye Vazn" [General Principles of *Vazn* (Rhythm)] makes a general comment in a footnote, stating that in the past the rhythm was called *iqā*' (Tehrāni et al. 1971:43). Khāleqi, when mentioning the *iqā*' rhythmic modes, he refers to them as the "old" music of Iran (Tsuge 1974:4).

what the *tombak* players perform today “it is no longer really about Iranian music, but rather pure rhythm” (During 1984a:168).¹⁰⁶

Tombak and Radif

The *tombak* is considered nowadays as an instrument belonging to the tradition of the *radif*.¹⁰⁷ The *radif* constitutes the basic repertoire of Iranian music, comprised of hundreds of short melodies and motifs known as *gushe-hā*, which are arranged in twelve modal systems: seven *dastgāh-hā* and five *āvāz-hā*. The *radif* can be vocal (*radif-e āvāzi*) or instrumental (*radif-e sāzi*), both though applicable to musical instruments (Nooshin 1996a:90). However, learning the *radif* has never been part of the formal training of a *tombak* player, although it is generally recommended that the *tombak* player should be acquainted with it, and good knowledge of the *radif* and generally the *dastgāh* system is considered a merit.

Kiāni (1992:97-105) for example, includes the *tombak* in the list of the *radif* instruments (*sāz-hāye musiqi-ye radif*), together with the *setār*, *tār*, *santur*, *kamānche* and *ney*.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, while he mentions the *daf* to be one of the instruments used in *radif* music, he is not giving any description of it, while he gives a full portrayal of the *tombak*. Kiāni acknowledges thus the firm position of the *tombak* in the *radif*, because it is considered to have gained its position by participating in the performances of the *radif* for more than 150 years, whereas the *daf* was recently reintegrated in the classical music-tradition about 30 years ago.

On the other hand, the *tombak* has never been taught in the universities as a primary (*takhasos*) instrument. Currently, there are four music departments at Iranian universities offering courses both in western and Iranian music: University of Tehrān; University of Arts; Islamic Āzād University, Tehrān Central Branch; Sureh University. A student following the programme of Iranian music has normally to concentrate on one of the melodic instruments used in the *radif*, and acquire proficiency on one western

¹⁰⁶ *Tombak* players today are being taught “pure” rhythm. One of the last *tombak* players who would occasionally create particular rhythmic patterns based on a poetic meter was Tehrāni.

¹⁰⁷ For the classification of percussion instruments in Iran according to their structure and function see During 1996b.

¹⁰⁸ He is not including in the *radif* instruments such as the *chang* (harp), the *‘ud* (short-neck plucked lute with pear-shaped body), the *rabāb* (short-neck plucked lute) and the *qanun* (trapezoid-shaped plucked zither) (Kiāni 1992:27).

instrument, usually the piano. *Tombak* is not taught as a primary instrument in any of these universities, although courses in *tombak* playing are in some cases available, for example at the University of Arts.¹⁰⁹ The academic justification for this position is that, while the *tombak* is participating in the performance of the *radif*, it does not actually perform it. It is also believed that, although the *tombak* has a technique of its own, one does not really need to spend four years in the university to learn to play it.

In the past some *ostāds* expressed the belief that the *radif* of Iranian music is principally non-metric; for instance Nur ‘Ali Borumand claimed that the original *radif* did not include metric pieces (Caton 1983:30). Safvate also holds the view that the rhythmic sections were originally dance - music or folk songs that were at some point included in the *radif* (Safvate and Caron 1966:22). Zonis suggests that many *tasnifs* written after the 1950s do not bear a close relationship to the *radif* (Zonis 1973:141). Whatever the case may be, it is true that the *radif* is made up from pieces which for the most part are in free - rhythm, but which serve as frameworks for the improvisation and the creation of new compositions, which in the last decades are largely measured compositions (During, in During and Mirabdolbaghi 1991:67).

Interestingly, before the Revolution, Alizāde recalls that the *tombak* was taught at the *Honarestān-e Musiqi-ye Melli*¹¹⁰ (Conservatory of National Music) as a compulsory instrument for all music students, who had to learn to play the *tombak* in order to become competent in rhythm (Interview, February 2003). Moreover, those students who wanted to proceed in composing had two compulsory instruments, the *tombak* and the piano. The first *tombak* teacher at the *Honarestān-e Musiqi-ye Melli* [Conservatory of National Music] was Tehrāni and from 1964 was Esmā’ili.

The *tombak* was also taught in other music institutions. Tehrāni taught the *tombak* from 1941 in the High Conservatory of Music [*Honarestān-e ‘Ali-ye Musiqi*].¹¹¹ Farhangfar taught the *tombak* in the Centre for Preservation and Propagation of Iranian Music [*Markaz-e Hefz va Eshā’e-ye Musiqi-ye Irāni*] from 1971. With this background of *tombak* tuition in the pre-eminent conservatoires of music in Iran, one would expect

¹⁰⁹ There has never been a taught course on *tombak* at the Tehrān University. Only after the Revolution, in the early 1990s, Farhād Fakhreddini (one of the editors of *Āmuzesh-e Tombak* [*Tombak Training*]) would perform *tombak* and rhythms based on Tehrāni’s book (1971), during his lectures on “Rhythm/Meter in Iranian Music” [*Vazn dar Musiqi-ye Irāni*] (Asa’di, personal communication, February 2007). Today, out of the four university music department in Tehrān, only at the University of Arts there is an optional taught course on the *tombak* for undergraduate students, that was introduced in the late 1990s (Sharif Lotfī, interview, January 2003).

¹¹⁰ It was established under the Pahlavi’s and founded in 1949 under Ruhollāh Khāleqi .

¹¹¹ It was inaugurated under the directorship of ‘Ali Naqi Vaziri in 1923.

it would also be established in other music institution. But its academic establishment was halted by political developments in Iran and the Revolution of 1979.

Following the Islamic Revolution, the music department at Tehrān University was shut in 1980, together with all universities in the country, in the name of the Cultural Revolution and with the aspiration to commence again under an Islamic curriculum. This was the beginning of the crisis that Iranian musicians were going to experience. Speaking about music institutions, 'Alizāde remarked, "In Iran nothing lasts, that is, continuity (*tadāvom*) does not have a meaning. That is, everything exists for a while and then it ends. That is, it cannot find any continuity." (Interview, February 2003).

Why is the *tombak* under-represented, and its role underestimated, in comparison to other music instruments? Why has it not been included in the music institutions as a legitimate instrument? One of the reasons has been mentioned already. The *tombak* is not actually performing the *radif* and only recently it has acquired a "scientific" status with the "official" formulation of notation in 1971. Moreover, the *tombak* had been associated with entertainment - music and *motrebi* music, which were censored shortly after the Revolution. Particular rhythms after 1979 were also banned, especially those that were regarded as sensual and arousing (Youssefzadeh 2000:39). Finally, its role as an accompanying instrument is considered subordinate in comparison to the more leading roles of the other instruments.¹¹²

In the years of such turbulence there was little place left for the *tombak* to be preserved, promoted, pursued or studied as an official instrument of the *radif*. And under such conditions there were few people in positions of influence to "defend" it.¹¹³ Some *tombak* players were associated with drug use, some had retired, some left the country, and other were considered as "insolent" elements. While, judging from the status of the *tombak* in Iranian higher education today, academia was also keeping its distance.

It is true however that today there is rarely a performance of Iranian music without the participation of the *tombak*, especially if a percussion instrument is required. As Torshizi says, "in any group, in any concert you can omit or replace any of the instruments, but never the *tombak*, the *tombak* is always there." (Interview, February 2005).

¹¹² The situation is similar in the West, where percussion instruments are under-represented in scholarly research, with the exception of teaching manuals. Also, in most western classical works, percussion instruments usually follow the melodic instruments, and seldom undertake a leading role.

¹¹³ Khāleqi, Torshizi, Masshun and Rajabi should be particularly mentioned as "guardians" of the *tombak* and the *tombak* player in their scholarly writings.

Organology and the Role of *Tombak* Makers and *Tombak* Players

Nowadays in Iran there are many *tombak* makers in the large cities, like Tehrān, Shirāz, Esfahān, Kermānshāh and Hamadān. My main information on the procedure of *tombak* production comes from interviews with two *tombak* makers located in Tehrān, Amir Hemmati and Fereydun Helmi, and from discussions with *tombak* players. I have not been able to see Hemmati's workshop; it was outside of Tehrān and he did not schedule a visit at that time. But I have seen a video tape where Helmi and his co-workers demonstrate and explain the different stages of the whole process, and I have also visited his workshop in Tehrān where the final stage of manufacture takes place.

Helmi started making *tombak* instruments professionally in the early 1990s. Today, he is one of the most well-known *tombak* makers. Helmi is also renowned as one of the biggest *tombak* retailers, although sells other musical instruments as well. Some *tombak* players do not consider him as a *tombak* maker because he is not involved in the whole process of *tombak* manufacture, only its final stages. He is often accused of producing "serial *tombaks*", for making *tombaks* "mechanically", not really taking individual care about each and every *tombak*. By 2001 he had manufactured more than 75,000 *tombaks*, which is considered as a large number for a single maker/retailer and suggests a growing interest in *tombak* playing.

Hemmati, on the other hand, who has another profession besides *tombak* making, has a production on a much smaller scale. Estimating roughly, he says that from 1977, when he started making *tombaks*, he has not produced in total more than one thousand, and in a period of ten years, from 1992-2002, he has made and sold about four hundred. According to him, it is not rare for a *tombak* player to wait for more than a year to get a fine instrument.

The prices of the *tombak* vary. Hemmati, during the time I was in Iran, especially in late 2002, was selling his *tombaks* for around 180,000 *tumāns* each, which at that time was about 180 euros, which was considered fairly expensive by the *tombak* players.¹¹⁴ At Helmi's shop one can find *tombak* starting from 20,000 *tumāns* or even less. Generally, the price of a *tombak* is considered as reasonable, though it would not be inconsiderable to some people.

¹¹⁴ Now that the euro currency is stronger than in 2003, this price is much lower in euros. The official currency of Iran is the *riāl*, while the word *tumān* is also used in the colloquial. Ten thousand *riāls* is equivalent to one thousand *tumāns*.

As far as its material properties are concerned, the *tombak* is a single-headed, goblet-shaped drum, consisting of two kinds of material, skin and wood.¹¹⁵ The skin is stretched around the large rim of a single piece of wood hollowed out on a lathe. Most *tombaks* bear a stamp with the name of the maker.

Both skin and wood are resources that can be found in different geographical areas in Iran. Several different types of wood are used for the *tombak*. Helmi, who believes that there is no connection between the type of the wood and the quality of sound, and frequently uses *tombaks* that have been dried artificially, uses many kinds of wood, such as walnut, mulberry tree, oak, *chub-e siyah* (black wood), *chub-e jangali* (forest wood), raspberry tree, and pear tree. Hemmati works only with walnut, because of its long life-span, its strength, its color and its beautiful grain.

In terms of the type of skin used we can identify several kinds, commonly goat, sheep, calf, lamb, horse, and camel. The most common skin-type used today are camel and calf. Important factors for the quality of the skin are the method by which the hair is removed, the origin of the skin, its weight, the part of the body of the animal, the color, and the age of the skin, which is valued higher the older the skin. It is also important that the skin be attached to the *tombak* with the appropriate tension to give the desired sound.¹¹⁶ While Helmi uses several different skin types, Hemmati prefers the skin of the calf, although is more expensive (he says). He prefers this skin type because it is stronger, it does not become damp under humid conditions as quickly as camel skin, it does not produce the shrill sound of the goat, and it gives the desired sound for a *tombak*.

The production of a *tombak* involves many different stages: cutting the wood, carving the wooden chunks from the outside, hollowing out the wood, drying the wooden chunks and doing *montaj* (lit. "montage"), which requires meticulous work. Obviously, each stage has its own lengthy procedures, whose descriptions are beyond the scope of this thesis.

The process of *tombak*-manufacturing is lengthy, lasting up to two or three years, mainly because of the time needed for the wood to dry out naturally. There are also artificial means for drying the wood and speed up the manufacturing process. It is believed that artificial drying is often implemented, but is generally considered to affect negatively the quality of the wood and thus the sound.

¹¹⁵ In regional music, earthenware and metallic *tombaks* are also used. See Darvishi (2005: 365-372).

¹¹⁶ Most young *tombak* players change themselves the skin on the *tombak*, hoping to achieve the desired sound (though not pitch).

The last stages in *tombak* making, known as *montaj*, involves final details in scraping the wood, painting the instrument, scraping the big mouth, putting a ring (*toq*) inside the rim of the large opening, forming the ridges on the body and neck of the *tombak* and attaching the skin.¹¹⁷ Regarding the painting, it is usually done in a way to mark out the grain on the wood, that is, to make clearly visible the pattern of lines on the surface of the wood.

Picture 5: Craftsman forming the ridges on the *tombak* at Helmi's workshop in Tehrān. Snapshot taken by the author.



Picture 6: A craftsman at Helmi's workshop, putting the *toq* inside the perimeter of the *tombak*. Snapshot taken by the author.



Picture 7: Craftsmen working on the large and small opening of the *tombak*, at Helmi's workshop. Snapshot taken by the author.



¹¹⁷ See figure 1, page 87, where the various parts of the *tombak* are shown.

The *tombak* is basically manufactured by hand. The length of the neck and the trunk, and the diameter of the big and small mouth are measured, but other proportions are often estimated “by eye”, as for example the roundness of the trunk, or the ridges on the trunk and the neck. Nowadays there is a standard *tombak* size that professional players prefer, but in the shops one can find a great variety of different sizes.¹¹⁸

The process of *tombak* making is lengthy, with different phases, involving many people who are specialized at each stage. It is rare for a *tombak* maker to be involved in all the stages from the beginning to the end. Generally, *tombak* makers are considered to fall into two broad categories. First, the ones who hollow out the wooden chunks and, second, the ones who buy the carved *tombaks* from them and work the *montaj* (details). Normally, those who carve the wood live in the province, while those who do the *montaj* are frequently retailers and live in the big cities. Big workshops, belonging to the first category, with ten to fifteen workers employed in each, can be found in Kermānshāh and Hamadān. But there are also individual wood-carvers in Esfahān and other cities in Iran. Finally, there are also artists working for some retailers, who embellish the *tombak* with engravings, calligraphy and *khātām* (inlaid work).

Concerning *tombak* making in the past, not many things are known. Generally, until the mid-twentieth century, instrument making was mainly a Jewish trade and according to Loeb, in the 1970s, approximately 30 music shops in Tehrān were owned by Jewish musicians (Loeb 1972:12).¹¹⁹ Both Hemmati and Helmi say that they are self-taught in *tombak* making. They affirm that, in the past, *tombak*-makers were predominantly Gypsies living in the province of Shirāz. Helmi, who had visited a few of them, claims that he has not learned many things from them regarding the construction of the *tombak*. After years of experience and experimentation in different sizes and shapes, he started to standardize the *tombak* from 1994. Hemmati, on the other hand, considers that the best advisors regarding aspects of the structure of *tombak* are the *tombak* players themselves, who can express their ideas about how a *tombak* should sound.

Tombak making is a chain procedure, with penultimate receiver the retailer, and final recipient the *tombak* player. However, the refinement of the *tombak* structure is often based on a dialogue between *tombak* makers and *tombak* players. Helmi explains

¹¹⁸ Standard size, when it comes to the *tombak*, means that the different parts of a specific *tombak* are in relevantly proportional sizes.

¹¹⁹ It should be also mentioned that Armenians in Iran were also much involved in instrument making towards the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century (During 1991:35).

that, although the *tombak* has become standardized, meaning that the different sizes of *tombaks* have parts of respectively proportional sizes, there could be some minor modifications in the structure of the *tombak*, which would improve the quality of the sound produced.

The cooperation between instrument maker and musician, although it has been very beneficial for the recent development of the *tombak*, regarding its morphology and sound quality, seems to be less fruitful in the present, at least in the cases I encountered. For example, Pedrām says that in the past (1994-5) he used to have a “good relationship” with Helmi, which encouraged cooperation between them as manufacturer and instrument player. He said that, “at that time Helmi was not so famous and rich, and he would listen other people’s advices regarding how to make the *tombak* sound better.” Pedrām says that he suggested to Helmi two modifications regarding the *tombak*. The first one concerned the big mouth of the *tombak*. Pedrām suggested making the *toq* (the wooden ring inside the perimeter of the wood) thinner and at an angle of about 45° from the skin, in order to reduce any muffling of the sound of the *tombak*. His second recommendation was to make the whole of the neck of the *tombak* wider, in order to improve the resonance of the instrument. In addition, Pedrām used to be eager to make recommendations for the correction of what he considered as mistakes in the structure of *tombaks*. He told me, for example that, “Helmi went and made the hole on every *tombak* wider,” and that again he told him that, “listen, you should enlarge the hole according to the size of each *tombak*.”¹²⁰ Pedrām says that, “now that Helmi has gained in reputation he has become very proud and does not listen any more, but at that time he was very polite and would bend his head down and listen whatever others had to say.”

From his side, Helmi affirmed that in the past he used to take advice from *tombak* players on how to improve the sound quality of the *tombak*. Once, he said with exasperation that “*tombak* players should do their job and let me do my job.” He mentioned with delight that Rajabi never told him how to make a *tombak*.

Although there are similarities between *tombaks* in size and shape, as well as in the method of production, there are no two identical *tombaks*. According to the *tombak* maker Hemmati, this is a fact that actually enhances the value of the instrument as an art-object:

¹²⁰ According to Helmi, the various parts of the *tombak* should be proportional to the size of the instrument..Thus, regarding the size of the hole of the neck of the *tombak*, Pedrām appears to be correct when he stresses that the hole of the neck of the *tombak* should be proportional to the size of the *tombak*. However, each *tombak* maker and each *tombak* player has his own preference with regards to the sound of the instrument. The latter is also being affected by the size of the hole.

The work of art is valued because there are no two [*tombak*] that are exactly the same. In works of art, if two items are exactly the same, they do not have any artistic value.

Alexandra: The *tombaks* that you make now, do they differ from each other?

Hemmati: Yes, for example the three *tombaks* that you see now, they have differences from each other, and if I make ten more [*tombaks*], each will be different. A machine, for example, is not like this: a machine did a specific job ten years ago, and ten years later the same machine does again the same job. Well, yes, we could say that there are some standards in *tombak* sizes, but we can never say that two *tombaks* can produce the same sound; this would not have any artistic value (Interview, February 2003).

Therefore it is generally accepted that no two *tombaks* are completely the same. Even practically speaking, one cannot find two *tombaks* that produce exactly the same sound, even if they look very much alike, having same shape and being made of the same materials. Therefore, the way in which a *tombak* player chooses an instrument, and the criteria for his selection are an important aspect of *tombak* playing, a point to which I shall return later.

Morphology of the Instrument

One of the first detailed written records on the morphology of the *tombak* that identified the component parts of the *tombak* and the exact proportions of the instrument was given in Tehrāni's book *Āmuzesh-e Tombak* [*Tombak Training*] in 1971. In the third chapter five separate parts of the *tombak* are identified and each part is given a specific name (see fig.1, next page). The *pust* (skin), which is stretched across the rim of the open end of the drum is called *dahāne-ye bozorg* (large orifice/mouth). The third part is the *tane* (body) which is normally smoothly curved. Then is the *nafir* (neck), which is also called *galu* (throat) and has a cone-like shape. Finally, the small opening is called the *dahāne-ye kuchik* (small orifice/mouth).

Interestingly, Masshun (1969:24) in describing the morphology of the *tombak* does not mention in such a precise and methodical way these five parts of the *tombak* with their distinctive names, but instead he speaks of two parts. The first is the "neck", for which he uses the same two terms *nafir* and *galu*, but also uses the term *gardan* that again signifies neck. But when he speaks of the body (*tane*), the second part of the

tombak, he names it *shekam* that means “belly” or “tummy”. As far as the big and small mouth is concerned, he simply names them *dahane*¹²¹ (mouth/orifice), and the skin *pust*, and he does not identify these two components as distinctive parts of the *tombak*, although he mentions them.

Figure 1: Distinctive parts of the *tombak* and their names.

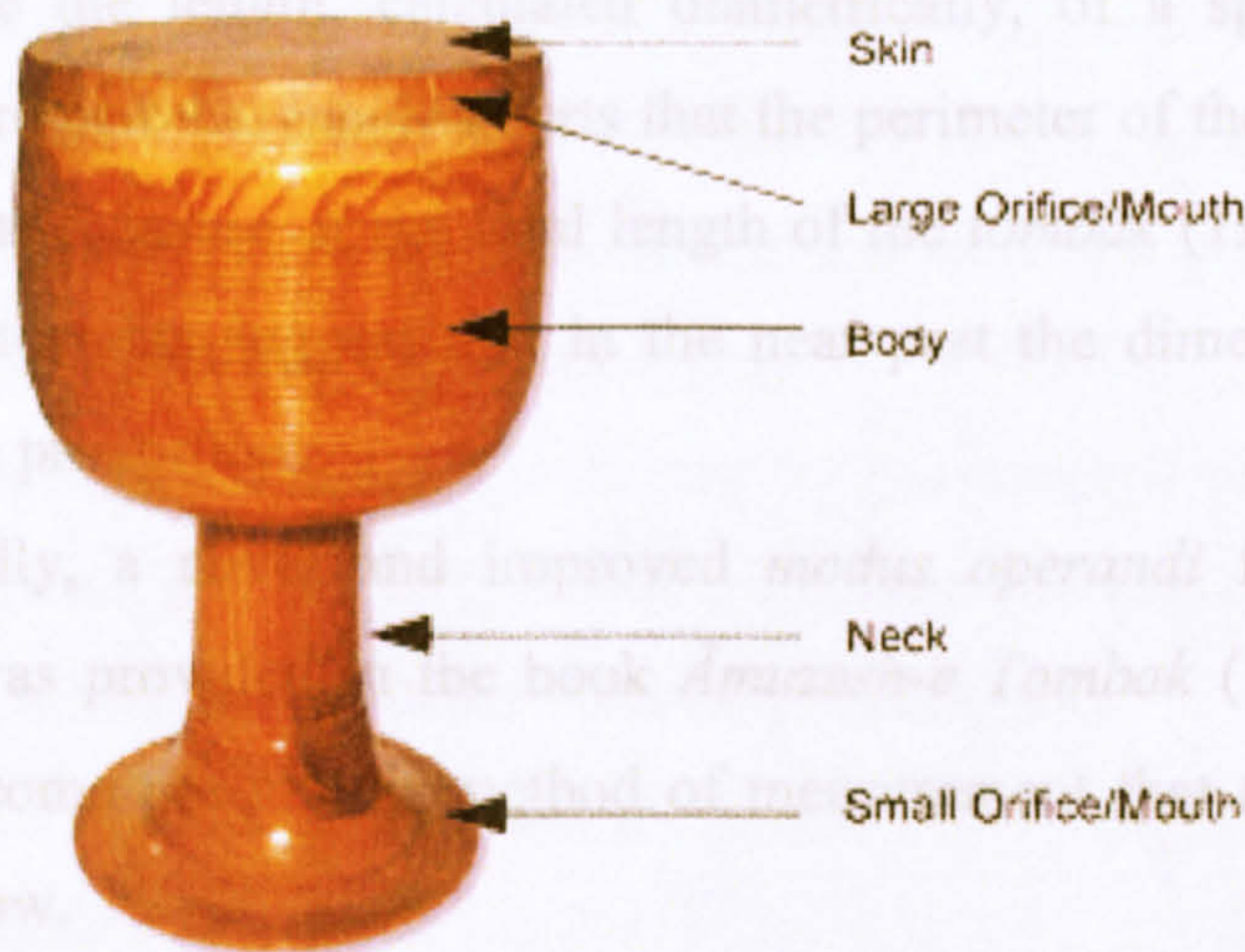


Figure 2. *Modus operandi* for measurement of the *tombak*.

Reading both Masshun (1969) and *Āmuzesh-e Tombak* (1971), which have a mere two-year difference in time of publication, one speculates, for a second time, that the writers of the book *Āmuzesh-e Tombak* considered it appropriate to *rationalize* in a systematic and “scientific” way the morphology of the *tombak*, that is, to calculate and identify by name all those parts that seem to be distinctive. Nevertheless, they omit one important - constructive - part of the *tombak* and that is the *toq*, the wooden ring inside the rim of the large opening whose role is to protect the big mouth from deformation. Moreover, while they also name another part of the *tombak* as *labe-ye chub* (lit. “lips of the wood”), that is, the part of the edge of the rim where the skin meets the wood, they do not include this part in the component parts of the *tombak* as depicted in figure one.

Masshun also mentions briefly the size of the *tombak*. He says that an “original *tombak* of average size” is 40cm long, with the neck and the large mouth having equal length of 20cm. He measures the big mouth according to the perimeter of the circumference, giving it 90cm, whereas in the *Āmuzesh-e Tombak* the big mouth is

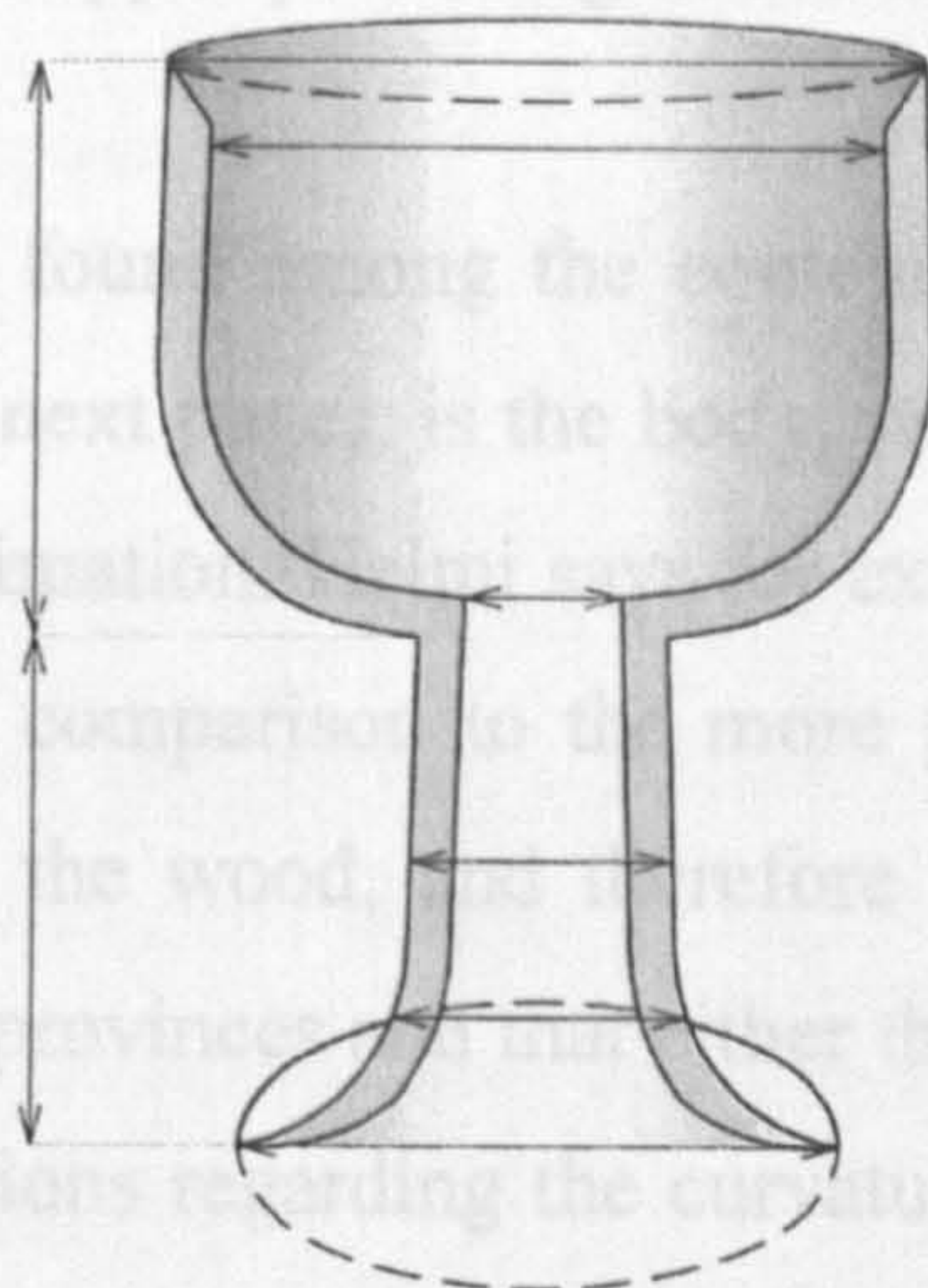
¹²¹ The Persian dictionary *Farhang Feshorde’ Sokhan* accepts both *dahane* and *dahāne* as valid.

measured according to its diameter. Moreover, he gives the measurement of the external upper part of the neck according to its girth, 30cm, while in *Āmuzesh-e Tombak* it is measured according to the length of the profile (side view).

These dissimilarities in the manner of measurement could be regarded as indicative of the negligible importance of numerically calculated parts, but it also can be taken as a suggestion that the calculation of the different parts was based on other principles. Indeed, this was the case. Helmi says that in the past the size of the *tombak* was measured according to the hand of the specific player. The big mouth of the *tombak* had to have the length, calculated diametrically, of a span and two fingers more. Masshun, on the other hand, asserts that the perimeter of the big mouth had to be equal to half of the measure of the total length of the *tombak* (1969:24-25). Masshun's and Helmi's statements suggest that in the near past the dimensions of the *tombak* were measured in proportions.

Finally, a novel and improved *modus operandi* for measurement, skillfully designed, was provided in the book *Āmuzesh-e Tombak* (1971:91-98).¹²² Nowadays, this has become the routine-method of measurement that *tombak* players and *tombak* makers follow.

Figure 2. *Modus operandi* for measurement of the *tombak*.



¹²² In the book *Āmuzesh-e Tombak* are given the proportions of the *tombak* in figures, which are also explained in the text (Tehrāni et al. 1971:91-98). The writer of the text is not specified, but in the beginning of the relevant chapter (number five, pages 91-97) it is mentioned that the information provided in this chapter was given by Tehrāni, based on his knowledge and experience. Both figures and text refer to the proportions of a solo *tombak* and to the proportions of a *tombak* used in accompaniment. Figure two depicts the parts of the *tombak* - both the solo *tombak* and the *tombak* used in accompaniment - that are measured in the book.

A *modus operandi* refers usually to a particular way of doing something. Here, I use the term *modus operandi* to refer to the way of measuring the *tombak*, that is, I refer to the measuring of the specific component parts of the *tombak* as depicted in figure 2.

Regarding the various sizes of the *tombak*, it was in the fifth chapter of the book *Āmuzesh-e Tombak* that the precise proportions of the instrument were given for the first time. The writers (not specified) accepted that there is a variety of sizes, but they drew a distinction, in terms of sound quality, between the *tombak* used in accompanying a big orchestra, which is called *tombak-e orkestr* (sic), and the *tombak* used for solo playing, which can be also used in accompanying a smaller orchestra or a music group. The latter was named *tombak-e taknavāz*, which literary means “solo *tombak*”. However, in practice such distinctions were not actually applied.¹²³

At present, *tombak* players do not make this distinction between the two kinds of *tombak*, one for playing solo and the other for playing in an orchestra. It is customary for *tombak* players to use the same instrument during a performance, whether it is for solo, accompaniment or in a *tombak* group.

The size of the *tombak* used now by professional players is rather standardized (see figure 3, next page).¹²⁴ At present, a common and fine *tombak* would have:

- a big mouth of 28cm diameter (approximately).
- an equivalent ratio between the length of the main body and the neck of around 22.5 cm.
- a small mouth of a 25cm diameter, while at the middle part of the neck the outside diameter would be about 9.5 cm long. The size of the diameter of the inside part vary, the upper part being about 7cm long while the lower is from 8 to 9cm.

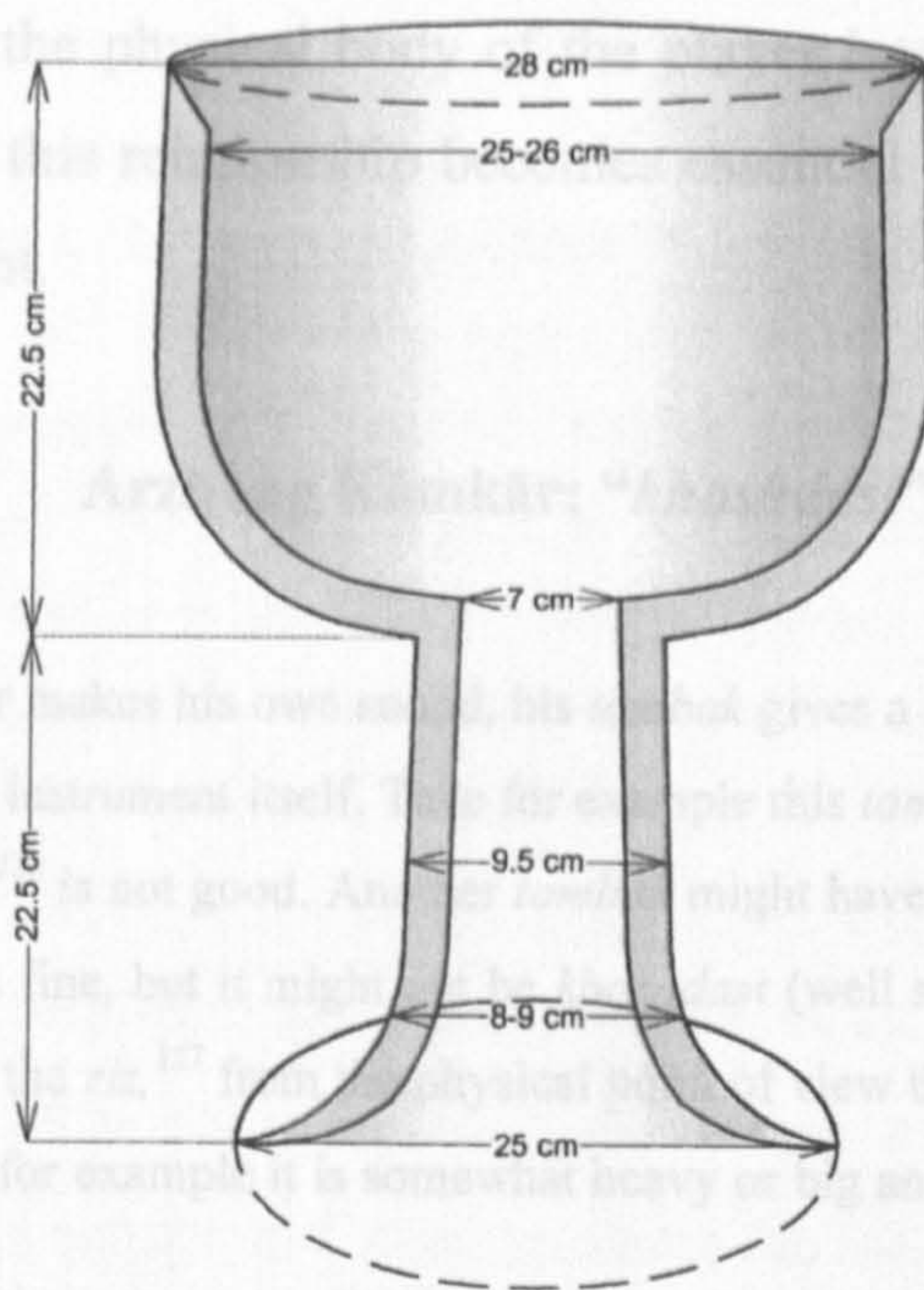
A lesser difference found among the contemporary *tombaks* of these standard proportions as in figure 3 (next page), is the body, which can be more or less globular, brought about by rough estimation. Helmi says for example that the body of the *tombak* in the past was squarer in comparison to the more globular shape it has now. As he explains, those who carve the wood, and therefore determine the basic shape of the *tombak*, usually live in the provinces and that either they do not comprehend or they fail to follow his recommendations regarding the curvature of the instrument, which is not always standard. On this issue, Pedrām commented that perhaps from the point of view

¹²³ Rajabi asserts that this distinction was not used by the *tombak* players. Esmā'ili also confirms this. Hushang Zarif who was participating in writing the book *Āmuzesh-e Tombak*, explains that in a *tombak* group there were *tombaks* of different sizes in order to add a chromatic range.

¹²⁴ However, in the market many different sizes are available. Professional *tombak* players sometime might use small sizes of *tombak* but mainly in *tombak* groups, so as to add different flavor to the sound. It is rare for a *tombak* player to choose a *tombak* according to their own bodily size, however such cases might exist. Torshizi, for example, prefers smaller *tombak* (than the one with diameter of the “big mouth” 28cm) because she considers to be more suitable for her size. Finally, small children play very often on average-sized *tombaks*.

of manufacturing it is easier to make it rounder. While the body of the *tombak* today is globular, the shape of the curvature is a matter of personal preference and will be discussed again in the next section.

Figure 3. Dimensions of a typical *tombak* used today.



The Instrumentalist Behind the Instrument: How Does a *Tombak* Player Choose an Instrument?

The structure, morphology and proportions of the *tombak* have become more or less standardized. No matter how similar two *tombaks* might be, they will have a different sound. General principles about the quality of the *tombak* and its sound do apply, but each *tombak* player has developed his own evaluative criteria according to his abilities, aesthetic approach and experience.

Young *tombak* players, for example, usually buy the finished product and take their new *tombak* to their teacher, hoping for their approval and appraisal of the instrument. On the other hand, many mature *tombak* players are able to distinguish empirically the type of the wood, the quality of grains and colors of the wood and the quality of the skin. Pedrām has mentioned many times that his friends have learned many things from him on this matter, for example, how to distinguish different kinds of

wood or skin. He, like many other young *tombak* players, changes the skin of the *tombak* himself.¹²⁵ In general, the more a musician is dedicated to this instrument, the more knowledge he will want to acquire on the technical aspects of what makes a fine *tombak*.

Moreover, *tombak* players have abundant experience and thus they refine and enrich continually the criteria for selecting a *tombak*. In the following passage Arzhang Kāmkār describes how the physical body of the player interacts with the instrument's spatial layout, and how this relationship becomes essential in the way a *tombak* player feels about his instrument.

Arzhang Kāmkār: “*khoshdast*”

Every *tombak* player makes his own sound, his *tombak* gives a specific sound. However, an important fact is the instrument itself. Take for example this *tombak* here, its *tom* is not very good, but its *pelang*¹²⁶ is not good. Another *tombak* might have a good *tom*, a good *pelang*, so that everything is fine, but it might not be *khoshdast* (well suited for the hand). That is, when I want to play the *riz*,¹²⁷ from the physical point of view this *tombak*, its “physicality” has something to it, for example it is somewhat heavy or big and I am not comfortable with it.

When I play the instrument without a great effort, if the sound that I want simply comes out beautifully, I call this instrument *khoshdast* [beautifully suited for the hands].

Yes, this is from the point of view of its morphology, from the shape of the body, if it is like this or like that, if its lips are sharp or not, if the whole part of the skin is raw or tender, or if it is thin,some skins can be elastic, while on others the *tom* is very stiff. All these factors are important so that one instrument can be considered to be *khoshdast* or not. An instrument has to be *khoshdast*, and it has to be *khoshsedā* (fine sound), this is an important fact.

Some of my students say, and they say correctly: “when we play at home, we are very satisfied. We come here and play with this [other *tombak*] and we feel that we play very badly.” I tell them: “Yes, you are used to playing with your own instrument. For you that one is *khoshdast*.” (Interview, February 2003).

In the above example Kāmkār underlines the compatibility between the human body and the morphology of the *tombak*. To experience the instrument as *khoshdast* requires interaction and much practice. One gains familiarity and comfort in relation to

¹²⁵ Rajabi usually entrusts changing of his *tombak* skin to one of his students. However, there are also craftsmen who change the skin for a fee.

¹²⁶ A particular technique on the *tombak*.

¹²⁷ A type of roll.

a particular instrument with one's body, through a tactile and kinaesthetic experience. Moreover, the body becomes a medium capable of memorizing and recalling the relation between itself and the specific instrument.

Moving on to the subject of sound qualities, it is generally often said that *tombak* players prefer either a bass or a high sound. More specifically on this issue Hemmati explains:

...It depends again on what type of sound they like, if they like a high pitched sound or if they like a bass sound. For example, Jahāngir Malek preferred the sound to be high pitched...then again, Mr. Esmā'ili likes bass sound. Their taste on sound will be also transferred to their students. Some, like Mr. Kāmbiz Ganjei, [they prefer] a mixture of Farhangfar and Bahman Rajabi; and Eftetāh, he made use of their methods, he made a mixture of them and, well, in accordance with his own taste and knowledge, he likes his own specific sound of the instrument, and whatever he orders we try to make and give it to him (Interview, March 2003).

Many *tombak* players have gone further than what Hemmati describes. In the following example again Kāmkār describes a connection between the sound-quality of the *tombak* and the spatial setting, the location where the instrument is played.

Arzhang Kāmkār: the importance of the place of performance

The place where we play an instrument is also very important. For example, if it is in a room or in the kitchen, in a hall, on the stage, in the street, the sound is different. It happens sometimes that I play a *tombak* at some place and I feel disgusted from the way it sounds. Then at some point I play the instrument in another room and I say "what a good instrument is this."

It was some time ago, I tapped a *tombak* and I said: "bah, bah this *tombak* is great, its *tom* is very good, its *pelang* are very good, its *riz* is very good, its sound is very good". We had a concert, we took it [the *tombak*] to Rudaki hall, there I set up a microphone, I played and I realized "what a strange sound this *tombak* has" [we laugh]. The place where a person plays is important as well. Perhaps if someone plays a trombone the sound does not change with the place, but, the sound of the *tombak* changes (Interview, February 2003).

In this case, Kāmkār does not simply refer to the resonance of the space of performance, or the quality of the amplification system as being able to radically impinge on the sound of the *tombak*. According to his personal experience, it appears as though the *tombak* "behaves" in a specific way depending upon the location. This

“behaviour”, according to him, must be related to the acoustic properties of the particular *tombak* which interact with the acoustics of the space in which the instrument is being played.

Afgah also attributes special qualities to his favorite *tombak*. From the attitude of these musicians toward their instrument it follows that the distinction between subject and object is not clear-cut. The way they approach it, quality has to do both with the proficiency of the player and the attributes of the specific *tombak*. The relationship between the player and the specific instrument is personal, deep and unique. Creativity lies at the centre of this bond.

Navid Afgah: “my favourite *tombak*”

Alexandra: Which *tombak* you like more than others?

Afgah: I like all of them. (we laugh)

Alexandra: All of them, ok. But there must be one you like more than the others! (we laugh)

Afgah: This one. (He points discreetly at one of the *tombaks* in the room)

Alexandra: Why?

Afgah: Well, because of its sound....anything I want to play on it, it replies back, it gives me an answer...(Interview, March 2002).

My impression from the way Afgah talked about his favourite *tombak* was that he was disclosing personal information for which he was quite emotional, his expression indicating a mixture of pride and embarrassment.

While most professional *tombak* players have an instrument upon which they can express themselves, as in Afgah’s case, sometimes the instrumental capacity of the *tombak* is being challenged, especially by young *tombak* players who are exposed to the music and sounds of other cultures and ready to transgress the fetters of “conventional” *tombak* playing and launch new approaches in performance.

Pezhhām Akhavāss: The sound of the *tombak*

Alexandra: I noticed at the concert with Sho’āri that when you played on the *tombak*, you played on the *dammām*¹²⁸ [and you played upon it] only the *tom* sound.¹²⁹ Weren’t you satisfied from the *tom* sound of the *tombak*?

Akhavāss: Well, the bass sound that the *dammām* has, that is something else! [he laughs].

Alexandra: That is something else! [I laugh].

¹²⁸ The *dammām* is a barrel wooden drum played usually with two stick or one stick and one hand. It is used primarily in the regional music of Khuzestān. See Darvishi (2005:208-211).

¹²⁹ During the concert, Akhavāss while playing on the *tombak*, would occasionally play on the *dammām* only the bass sound, with one of his hands.

Akhavāss: Well, the bass that I played was only at two bars that began with *tom*. The bass of the *tombak* is a little bit “deaf” in comparison with the bass of the *dammām*, the volume that I wanted in that specific way at that specific time but, no, the *tombak* does not have any problems with its bass.

Alexandra: Then are you satisfied with the sound of the *tombak*, or with its shape?

Akhavāss: Its shape is fine, everything is fine, only sometimes the lack of *tannin* gets to my nerves.

Alexandra: What is “*tannin*”? [*tannin* = resonance, decay]

Akhavāss: For example, in the Indian instruments that you have seen, the sound has a certain volume. Have you noticed that bass [he sings the bass of the *tabla* with resonance] duuuuumb, that stretching of sound. For example in the *tombak* the sound of the *tom* can suddenly wane (*hafe mishe*) [he plays the *tom* on the *tombak*]. You know in the instruments of...that...Indian [instruments], this difficulty is overcome....(Interview, November 2002).

Many *tombak* players complain about this particular physical aspect of the *tombak*, the length of the decay of the *tom*. They would prefer a more resonating sound of *tom* which has not been achieved by developing a specific technique, but it has been improved in recent years because of changes in the morphology of the *tombak*.

To summarize, the criteria that *tombak* players employ to choose an instrument are based both on visual and acoustic properties, as well as on tactile and kinesthetic perceptions. *Tombak* players at times afford the *tombak* with extra qualities and a very personal and intimate sense and sentiment. On the other hand, the instrumental capacity of the *tombak* is often challenged and *tombak* players are not always satisfied with its volume.

Tuned *Tombak*

The pitch of the *tombak* depends largely on its size and structure, the type and the tightness of the skin, the angle of the *toq* in relation to the skin, and the weather conditions that affect the skin's tightness. Thus, a *tombak* has the potentials to be “naturally” tuned, or even tuned by chance, ranging roughly from *la* to *sol*.

Tehrāni was among the first to express the need for a *tombak* that will be in tune with a particular instrument or with an ensemble. He used to dampen the skin by

rubbing it with a wet cloth to lower its tension and control the pitch. Recently, some *tombak* players have started using an electrical blanket, especially in humid conditions. In the cases I have seen, they adjust the tightness of the skin to achieve a desired sound, rather than tuning up to a specific pitch in accordance to the instrument they accompany.

Although the first tuned *tombaks* were produced in the mid 1990s, professional *tombak* players seldom use them for playing. This is evident in the number of the tuned *tombak* that Helmi produced until 2001, which were around 630, compared to the plain *tombaks* that were more than 75.000.

I have not been able to understand the criteria on which a *tombak* should be tuned. Some musicians say that it has to be tuned according to the *ist* note of one *dastgāh* or *āvāz*, while others say that it has to be tuned according to the *shāhed* note.¹³⁰ Other musicians affirm that the tuning of the *tombak* is in fact impossible because the *shāhed* note, according to which the *tombak* could be tuned, is not stable during one *dastgāh* or *āvāz*, but it changes from one *gushe* to another. A notable *tombak* player claimed that he is able to regulate the pitch of the *tombak* according to the pressure he puts while playing, which I find rather improbable. Banāi has also expressed the concern that a *tombak* cannot be adequately tuned because some of the instruments it accompanies, such as the *tār*, are prone to get out of tune due to weather conditions and their particular structure (Banāi 2000:52).

In his article on the tuning aspects of the *tombak*: *Kuk-e Tombak – Tombak-e Kuki* [The Tuning of the *Tombak* – Tuned *Tombak*], Siāmak Banāi, a *tombak* player himself, comments with disappointment that the tuning of the *tombak* is an issue that has received very little attention on the part of *tombak* players (2000:52). He remarks that most *tombak* players choose their instruments according to an abstract idea of sound, based mainly on the distinction between bass and high pitches, without paying much attention to the tuning of the instrument (ibid.). Banāi suggests that the *tombak* should be tuned according to the principal note of a *gām*, but he does not provide a relevant example (ibid. 54).¹³¹ Interestingly, Banāi also feels the need to explain that a percussion instrument, unlike a melodic instrument, does not have the capacity to perform a melodic piece (2000:54)

One of the reasons that *tombak* players today do not use tuned *tombaks* is that no tuned *tombak* has been yet constructed to produce the desirable sound quality. Most

¹³⁰ The *ist* note serves as the ending note for phrases other than the final cadences (See Farhat 1990:24).

¹³¹ The word *gām* has been adopted from the French word *gamme* (Farhat 1990:23). The word *gām* in Persian is used as synonymous for a music scale. It appears that in the past the concept of the music scale in Iran was unknown (see Farhat 1990:23), which is not the case today (Nooshin, personal communication).

players consider the sound of the tuned *tombak* unsatisfactory and inferior to the standard *tombaks*. The tuned *tombaks* that Helmi or Hossein Omumi¹³² produced have the *toq* made of metal and this alters the sound, especially that produced on the rim of the instrument. But even the sound produced by the *tom* is altered. One reason for this is that in tuned *tombaks* a metal implement is attached inside the body of the *tombak*, whose functional role is to stretch the skin, and this mechanism obstructs the sound from coming out freely from the neck. Moreover, the tuned *tombaks* produced so far are much heavier than the standard ones, because the mechanism used is also made of metal and adds to the weight of the instrument. Generally, no satisfactory solution with regards to construction of *tuned tombak* has been found so far. For this reason *tombak* players tend to overlook the tuning aspects and use the *tombak* of their preference, according to its sound quality and regardless of the tuning of the instruments they accompany.

Treatment of the Instrument as a Material Object

The *tombak* is not always treated merely as an instrument with musical capacities. For most *tombak* players it is first and foremost a percussive instrument.¹³³ But, the *tombak* also constitutes a physical object. Sometimes these two natures are being confused, and the material object is abstracted from its musical essence.

I have witnessed very contradictory behaviour towards the *tombak*, as it is often used as a material object in ways other than its original, music making function implies, undertaking the function of utensil object, such as a chair, a table or a supporting implement of some kind or other. That is, being a sturdy and firm object, it can often have a practical or domestic use, which does not necessarily imply a sort of “disrespect” towards the instrument.¹³⁴ Although it is somewhat astonishing when responsible for this disposition are the musicians themselves, given that in this music culture artists, *tombak* players included, tend to treat their instruments with reverence. For example, a very uncharacteristic case was that of a *santur* player who used his deceased father’s

¹³² A well known *ney* player living in the U.S.A, who also makes tuned *tombaks*.

¹³³ In the next chapter I present Afgah’s perceptions on the essence of the *tombak*. In brief, he considers it to be firstly a sound-producing device, and secondly a percussive instrument. His playing style is very different from the other *tombak* players because of this conceptualization.

¹³⁴ A similar treatment of music instruments in the West is the case of the piano, often used as a prop for books and photographs or a vase with flowers.

tombak as a table with a vase of flowers on top of it, or as a prop for his *santur*, although he even attributed sentimental value to the particular *tombak*.

Here perhaps it should be also stated that the *tombak* used in Iranian music does not have a spiritual or mystical association as an instrument, as for example the *daf* or the *ney* that are associated with Sufi rituals and philosophy; a connection that is imposing, in a way, on Sufi followers or aficionados, a particular treatment of veneration towards these instruments. The *tombak*, as a musical instrument, is deprived of such extra-musical and mystical connotations and this could be for certain people an indication of its “lower” value and could bring about a rather “casual” treatment if compared to other instruments. For instance, a certain professional *daf* and *tombak* player, very skillful at both these instruments, treated his *tombaks* and his *dafs* in very different ways. This person started playing the *tombak* at the age of six, under a very famous *tombak* player and an excellent teacher, while he started the *daf* at an older age. Whenever he was about to play the *daf*, he used to take it affectionately out of its case, where it was usually wrapped up in a cloth; he would kiss the rim of the drum with devotion, as usually Sufi musicians do, and then he would start playing it. While on the other hand, not only was he careless with the way he treated the *tombak*, but sometimes it seemed as though he was testing how much hardship the instrument could afford, as if he was taking revenge on it. He used to put his lit cigarettes on the edge, the cigarette holder on the skin of the *tombak*, or tie his shoes using the *tombak* as a prop. Such an inconsistency in the treatment of two musical instruments by the same person can only imply that the instruments have a considerable difference in terms of respect for the *tombak* player. Furthermore, the musician made a point of demonstrating this difference. Again, this could be attributed to the historical and religious “discrimination” of musical instruments that is characteristic of this cultural tradition.

However, a case that struck me as very unusual was that of a famous *tombak* player, of no apparent religious convictions, who has devoted all of his life to *tombak* playing, makes a living out of it and has performed all over the world with it, and yet his treatment of the instrument was so nonchalant as to put his foot on the instrument while teaching and speaking to his students. His students seemed not to take heed of his behaviour, a fact that made me think that perhaps I was being too sensitive, rather than it really mattered among *tombak* players themselves.¹³⁵

¹³⁵ The students, though, even if they disagreed with their teacher, they would not dare to reprimand their *ostād*'s behaviour.

I spoke about this incident to other *tombak* players, without disclosing the identity of the person who treated his *tombak* in such a way. They also seemed to be astonished with his/her treatment of the instrument, a fact which spurred the conversation on this subject further. Afgah, for example, considered this treatment disrespectful. He said, "If some of my students did this, then I would take them by the ear and I would throw them out of the classroom" (Interview, March 2002). He then added that, although the *tombak* is a tangible object, a solid piece of wood, that he could not imagine how someone could subtract the musical nature from the instrument itself. In his words: "I know that this is wood, that this is skin and that this is its shape, but for me as an artist this [instrument] is alive. I live with this instrument and I cannot tolerate such impudence." (ibid.)

Rajabi is one of the greatest public defenders of the *tombak* as a music instrument. For Rajabi the function of the instrument lies in its musical utilization. He considers that any other use of the instrument is an insult towards the instrument and the player. For him the status of the instruments - and thus the way it is treated - equates with the status of the *tombak* player. In other words, for Rajabi, an insult towards the instruments is an insult towards its player. Moreover, for him, a degree of disrespect towards the instrument can be detected in the manner of playing, which will be discussed in the last chapter.

A well-known incident today concerns a famous musician who took a picture and published it on a cassette cover, while sitting on a *tombak*, which was turned upside down. The other musicians of the picture were either standing or sitting on chairs. When Rajabi saw the photo he was incensed and took it as both a personal affront and an insult towards the instrument. Since that time and until the present day he is regularly accusing and even swearing at this musician for treating the instrument disrespectfully, for taking a picture and moreover for publishing it, thereby making his impertinence public. Rajabi is extremely scornful of this player and even uses insulting language against him, often saying, openly: "why does not he sit on the bow of a *kamānche* but instead is using the *tombak* as a chair".¹³⁶

The incidents of treatment towards the instrument described above appear to be contradictory. Many *tombak* players show sensitivity towards the treatment of the instrument and defend its stature with great zeal, as in the case of Rajabi. Other *tombak* players do not appear to be bothered how they or others treat the instrument, as in the

¹³⁶ This musician was also insulted by Rajabi's reaction and highly offensive language, but has not undertaken any actions to sue Rajabi. Regarding Rajabi's often "eccentric" attitude, more details will be provided in chapter five.

case of the *tombak* player who puts his foot on the *tombak*. While other *tombak* players show openly their disrespect towards the *tombak*, as in the case of the *daf* and *tombak* player.

The first and the last category of *tombak* players are the ones who demonstrate that there is a relationship between the status of the instrument, its treatment, the ambiguous status of the *tombak* player and the way *tombak* players feel about these issues. In addition, the relationship between the status of the *tombak* and the treatment of the instrument is even stronger, if taking into account how musical instruments became objects of physical attack by the religious authorities and the Iranian family in the years after the Revolution, an issue that will be discussed in chapter five.

It is essential to note that recommendations on proper treatment and protection of the *tombak* were published for the first time in 1971, in the teaching manual *Āmuzesh-e Tombak* [*Tombak Training*]. Among others, *tombak* players are advised to keep the *tombak* protected in a box covered with wool or fur, so that the wood and skin are protected from damage, and to avoid playing the instrument with greasy and dirty hands because it could damage the skin. Many *tombak* players, especially of the young generations, follow these recommendations and treat the *tombak* with great care. This demonstrates that the way music instruments are treated is not only a result of cultural perception and bias, not only a coincidental mistreatment, but a learned behaviour that can be cultivated among musicians and people in general.

The *Tombak* as an Art Object: Aesthetic Value

Due to its formal properties, as both a material object and a music instrument, the *tombak* is also an object that has been associated with artwork. *Khātam kāri* (inlaid with mosaic) is a traditional craft that has been used as decorative art for the *tombak*, as well as for other Iranian instruments. Tehrāni, for example, owned a *tombak* with *khātam* work on it (see chapter three, page 124, picture 13), and Esmā'ili is still using a *khātam tombak*. However, nowadays such *tombaks* are rarely used by professional players. First, because the aesthetic of the *khātam* on the *tombak* is on the wane; second, because it raises the cost of the instrument, and third because there are nowadays few craftsmen who can decorate the *tombak* with *khātam* without affecting negatively its sonority.

Picture 8: An example of *tombak khātam kāri*, from During and Mirabdolbaghi (1991:146).



Helmi is among the first *tombak* makers who recently, from about 1997, started to manufacture *tombaks* with another type of decorative artwork besides *khātam kāri*. He produced *tombaks* decorated with calligraphy (*khatāti*), fretwork *tombaks* (*monbat*), embossed *tombaks* (*barhaste kāri*), *tombak* with wood-burning (or etched *tombaks*) (*sukhte kāri*) and *tombak mo'araq*, painted with colorful designs.

Picture 9: Decorated *tombaks* produced by Helmi.¹³⁷



Sukhte kāri decoration



Barhaste kāri decoration



Monbat decoration

¹³⁷ All the decorated *tombaks* in pictures 9, 10, 11 and 12 were found on the website <http://www.parsmusicbazar.com/dalahotombak.htm> (Accessed 26/02/2006).

The *Dālāhu* music-instruments manufacture industry also produced a type of gilded *tombak* (*tozhib*).¹³⁸ Moreover, they have produced *tamburs* and *setārs* decorated with wooden type of *mo'araq* work. These types of decorated *tombaks* are rarely used for playing in Iran, and are promoted to western music markets as instruments of traditional craftsmanship.¹³⁹ Obviously, the instrument dealers foster these particular *tombaks* as “exotic” and “authentic” items for trade (see below the Islam *tombak*). The commercial potentials of the *tombak* as a national product, imprinted with domestic cultural heritage, are more profound on a global level than in the country of its origin.¹⁴⁰ In practice, *tombak* makers have assigned to the *tombak* additional values, of aesthetic and symbolic nature - that of a national product, a traditional art object, or an “exotic” instrument - for commercial reasons that further hamper the musical capacity of the particular instruments. In this case the *tombak* again becomes divided into two non-compatible natures, as a music instrument and as an art object of “hybrid” aesthetic and commercial value. This time the poles of the divergence are the instrument traders and the instrument players.



The Islam *tombak*



Gilded *tombak* (*tozhib*)



Tombak khātam kāri

Picture 10: Decorated *tombaks* manufactured by *Dālāhu* company and promoted by *Pars Music Bazar* on the internet.

¹³⁸ *Dālāhu* is one of the biggest in Iran factories for manufacturing music instruments and was inaugurated in 2002.

¹³⁹ On the internet pages <<http://www.pars-bazar.com>> one can see the different types of decorated *tombaks* among other instruments, which are promoted by *Pars Music Bazar* for sale in the western markets.

¹⁴⁰ See also Dawe (2001) who discusses how music instruments are imported and exported as material culture, as “ethnic” goods by transnational industries.

Professional *tombak* players do not accept this facet of the *tombak*, and have not adopted and incorporated these types of *tombak* in their music practice. In general, most *tombak* players performing Iranian music use plain, unadorned *tombaks*, which have however aesthetic value (for example, the colour and the grain of the wood). Moreover, I have not seen a professional *tombak* player to possess these embellished *tombaks* for decoration or collection purposes. Other instruments, too, particularly those played by professional players in the *radif*, are usually unadorned apart from the decoration of the natural patterns of the wood and the decorative ridges.¹⁴¹



Picture 11: Plain *tombaks* produced by Helmi.



Picture 12: Plain *tombaks* produced by *Dālāhu* company.

Again, the issue here seems to overlap with the question of the *tombak*'s status as an instrument in this cultural tradition. This seems to be implied by the musician's attitude toward the decorated *tombak*, as is evident in Pedrām's views below. I asked him what he thought of Helmi's artistically hand-made *tombaks* and he replied he did not like

¹⁴¹ These ridges function today as decoration. In the past, *tombak* players would use them to create some sounds by scratching it with their finger-nails or ring. At present, Esmā'ili and some of his students are among the last to use these effects.

them. He seemed to be very offended and even infuriated, and said that no other Iranian instrument is endowed with such embellishments, so why should the *tombak* be an exception, why should it bear marks on it. It was as if he said, “isn’t the instrument marked enough, why should it attract people’s eyes, why should it look peculiar and distinguish itself from other Iranian instrument, why should the *tombak* player be pointed at, why should the *tombak* player get exceptional attention? The *tombak* has a character of its own and we do not need any kind of decorative work to prove this.” For Pedrām, as I understood, the decoration is not just a matter of aesthetics but it also bears an ideological aspect and becomes a matter of principle as it marks negatively the social status of the *tombak* player, who represents the instrument not merely as an “national” instrument in its own right, but as an instrument that has deserved its place in Iranian music because of the technique and proficiency of the *tombak*-playing tradition. The *tombak* thus becomes embodied with the expertise and aptitude of the *tombak* player: it is a product of a complex interaction, inter alia, between the *tombak* player and the music object.

Thus, on the one hand, the *tombak* possesses symbolic aspects of national and ethnic identity, which is fostered by instrument makers and traders and is proclaimed in declarations such as: “it is the most perfect/complete instrument in the world”; yet on the other hand, its factual value among *tombak* players derives from their own music aptitude, disclosed in the assurance that it is not the most perfect instrument just because of its structure, but “because of the vast possibilities it gives *the players* [my italics] to create diverse sounds with it” (Rajabi 1999:55).

Chapter three: Between Court and Government Patronage: The Rise of the *Tombak* Player

Introduction

This chapter seeks to explain the music environment in socio-cultural and politico-economic terms, which allowed Tehrāni to distinguish himself and vindicate the instrument. I attempt to elucidate the myth associated with Tehrāni, whose life mirrors the transitions of the socio-cultural context in which Iranian music flourished.

First, I briefly mention aspects of the development of playing technique, which I explore in more detail in the last chapter of this thesis. Second, I investigate in more detail, than in the first chapter, the status of the *tombak* player in Iran and examine the status of the rhythmic accompanists in a cross-cultural perspective. Then, I give a short historical account of the shifts in socio-economic and political structure from the late Qajar period until the Revolution, explaining socio-cultural and artistic changes and the influence of modern media and entertainment on music life and the status of the musicians, and in particular *tombak* players, in Iranian music.

Finally, I close the chapter by deliberating on Tehrāni's solo piece for *tombak* – *Lokomotiv* [sic] - which I consider to be seminal as one of the first autonomous solo pieces for *tombak* that presents the potentialities of the instrument to disentangle itself from the limited role of being only an accompanying instrument.

The Development of the Playing Technique

Although the *tombak* has been the main percussion instrument of Iranian music from mid-19th century, the playing technique has only started developing at very fast pace in the last sixty years, beginning with Tehrāni (1911-1973) who is considered to be the pioneer who showed the instrument's potential for more complex and refined playing techniques. These techniques were developed to a great extent by many others important *tombak* players during and after Tehrāni's time. The elaboration of the *tombak* technique is still on the increase, with young players trying to advance their skills in the process of discovering new, ground-breaking techniques of playing.

The development of the playing technique on the *tombak* during this time period by far surpasses the advances of playing techniques of the other instruments used in the *radif*, like the *tār*, *setār*, *kamānche*, *santur*, *ney* and the *daf*.¹⁴² At first it seems peculiar that an instrument with such a history of socio-culturally ambiguous and downgraded position, compared with the other more “legitimate” instruments, has been the object of so much creativity, distinction and growing respect. However, these developments should be situated in the context of a general expansion of the playing techniques for many instruments used in Iranian music. These changes are related to the growth of instrumental music as such and its disassociation from the dominant influence of the vocal form; at the same time, they are related to western concepts of technical dexterity and virtuosity, issues that will be discussed in the next chapter.

The Status of the *Tombak* Player in the late Qajar period

Since the 19th century the *tombak* player was, and to a degree still is, stigmatized in several ways. On the one hand, he is stigmatized socially, and has a relatively low status as a musician. During the Qajar period, the status of the professional musicians in general, who were under the patronage of the court and the aristocrats, was considered to be generally low, and musicians besides their musical training, did not receive much education (Nettl 1978:152). In part this was because professional musicians were coming from “low” social classes, such as different religious minorities, or different ethnic groups (Jewish, Armenians, Gypsies), members of different tribes and *lutis* (Caton 1983:64). Then there was the ambiguous status of music in Islam, and particularly the disapprobation of secular music by the orthodox Shi’a Muslims. But in addition to these difficulties, working under the patronage of the court or the elite had its restrictions. The musicians were dependent on the patronage of the nobles, they were part of the patrons retinue, had little freedom to perform for others without his permission and musicians were often treated by their patrons “a little better than household servants” (Caton 2002:139).

¹⁴² The *daf* has also shown a substantial development in the refinement of playing technique, especially in the last thirty five years, when it was re-introduced in Iranian music by the Kāmākār family and by Mohammad Rezā Lotfi. But the advance of the playing techniques on the *tombak* is far more sizable and refined. Moreover, the sophistication of the technique of the *daf* has been influenced by the technique of the *tombak*, and not the other way around, as During and Mirabdolbaghi (1991:147) assert.

For the general public, *tombak* was associated more with light entertainment music and dance, than with classical music, practiced by *motrebs* and *lutis*, which bore negative connotations and ascribed low status to the player.

On the other hand, the *tombak* player's status has been stigmatized in the music world too, among the musicians themselves. As Banāi states, "Besides the ordinary people, the point of view of the players of the other instruments was not so kind towards the *zarbgirs*, and they did not give much attention neither to the work of the *zarbgir*, nor to [the *zarbgir*] himself" (1999b:7). One reason for this difference in ranking could be that the *zarbgirs* were neither expected to know nor were traditionally taught the *radif* (as mentioned in previous chapters), whose knowledge was considered to be an important measure of a musician's rank (see Nettl 1980:138), an idea that is, incidentally, still prevailing. In Iranian music the art of *āvāz*, the non-rhythmic improvisatory vocal section of the *radif*, was the art form more appreciated than the rhythmic forms of classical music, especially the pre-composed pieces, such as the *zarbi* and *tasnif* songs that *tombak* players traditionally performed. Also, the *āvāz* was, and continues to be, considered to a large degree the pillar of Iranian music because of its close relation to poetry, which holds a high place not only in music but amongst all the arts in Iran and generally in the Middle East. These standards inevitably restricted the length of participation of the *tombak* in the performance of the *radif*. Therefore, seen in musical terms, the balance among musicians in the ensemble would be unequal, with the *tombak* performer occupying the lowest rank.

The stigma of a *tombak* player during the Qajar was so great that even amateur musicians did not dare to perform the instrument in public. Khāleqi describes an incident where he shows that sometimes those who knew to play the *tombak* would keep this skill in secret because it did not receive much recognition and appreciation. He depicts a situation where an adept calligrapher who played the *tombak* as well, denied the fact that he plays the *tombak* in an intimate gathering of about 7-8 people, among whom was also the great *tār* player and court musician Āqā 'Ali Akbar Farāhāni (Khāleqi 1999a:102-103).

Thus, during the late 19th century *tombak* players performing art music were at triple disadvantage. First, they suffered low status as musicians; second, among the musicians of the court the *tombak* player occupied the "bottom" position in the ensemble, and third, according to public opinion *tombak* players were associated more with entertainment and *motrebs*, rather than art music, which stigmatized them once again.

In the middle of the 20th century, the status of the *tombak* player was still ambiguous, inheriting the perceptions of the 19th century. In 1954 Khāleqi writes that: “there are even now some people who would not mention it among the musical instruments, and when the name of *tombak* is referred to, neither the instrument itself, nor the player has quality and value”(1991a:400). Moreover, the *tombak* during the Pahlavi period was also associated with light entertainment and dance music, and for this reason it is sometimes being described as a *majlesi* instrument, because of its participation in private parties (*majles*). Again, during the 1960s and the 1970s its involvement in various styles of Iranian popular music left an imprint of a “light” rather than a “serious” instrument.

However, this status of the *tombak* within Iranian music somehow seems to be changing in the last sixty years, with Tehrāni marking the end of a period and being a pioneer of a new era for the *tombak*.

The Status of the Rhythmic Accompanists in a Cross-Cultural Perspective

A strong resemblance, with regards to the social status and the musician’s role occurs between the *tombak* player in Iranian music, the *zirbagali*¹⁴³ player in Afghan folk music, and the *tabla* player of North Indian classical music. The Iranian *tombak* player shares several characteristics with these rhythmic accompanists in the music of North India and Afghanistan, who have a subordinate role in relation to the instrumentalists or vocalists (and dancers in the Indian case) in their respective music cultures.

The first common characteristic in the three cases is that there is traditionally qualitative distinction between vocal and instrumental music, giving primacy to the first. This distinction has introduced a social ranking among musicians, with the vocalists holding higher prestige. In the hierarchy of instruments, percussion instruments are at the bottom place, possibly because, being the less melodic, they have been perceived as the most distant instruments from the human voice. As Neuman remarks (1990:138-140)

¹⁴³ The *zirbagali*, a single headed goblet-shaped drum used in the folk music across all of Afghanistan, is very much similar in form and playing position to the *tombak*. The *zirbagali* is earthenware, but there are also wooden types, which are considered more valuable. In the city of Herat the *zirbagali* accompanies the *dutār*, and in Northern Afghanistan the *dambura* (two types of long neck lute).

for the Indian case, the rights of the instrumental soloists - especially with regards to the decision of the rhythmic cycle, the regulation of the tempo, the allocation for the accompanist's solo section, the determination of the beginning and the end of a performance - define in part his superior status, a situation that is quite similar to the ones found in Afghanistan and Iran.

Second, these values seem to have generated the subordinate music role of the rhythmic accompaniment in relation to the musical role of other melodic instruments. In other words, the ranking among musicians is also relevant to their instrument roles. Until mid-20th century, the role of the *tombak* player was to merely support the instrument (rather than interact with it), by keeping a simple and basic rhythm "just like a metronome" (Khāleqi 1999a:399-410).¹⁴⁴ Similarly, the role of the *tabla* player in North Indian classical music, as Neuman remarks, was "quite elementary", with the main function to provide the basic rhythmic cycle (*theke*) repeatedly (1990:136-137).¹⁴⁵ In practice though, *tabla* players are expected to do much more than this, especially when required by the soloists (ibid. 1990: 123, 137).¹⁴⁶ According to Neuman:

It appears that the musical role of the accompanist, at least as it was traditionally conceived, implied no necessary creative component or particular grading of talent and consequently was largely interchangeable between people (1990:144).

Similar accounts can be found for the *zirbagali* player in the art music of Afghanistan. Slobin in a short passage remarks that, due to its role and its playing technique, the *zirbagali* is not highly valued in Afghanistan:

The *zirbagali* is not considered to be an instrument that requires specialization on the part of the performer, and it is felt that anyone can play it. Related to this attitude is the lack of a highly developed technique for the drum. No one makes a serious effort to become a virtuoso performer on the *zirbagali*, and conversely virtuoso performance is not required in the situations in which the instrument is used (Slobin 1976:264).

¹⁴⁴Khāleqi mentions that the famous *tār* player Darvish Khān would name in appraising manner the *tombak* player Hāji Khān as the "metronome" of the orchestra(1999a:408). This phrase is a metaphor employed to denote in an appraising manner the role of the *tombak* player who observes the tempo with precision. Today this metaphor is used in a negative sense by the Iranian musicians, to indicate a simple accompaniment of the *tombak* player before the 20th century, that is, an accompaniment without many ornamentation notes and without an elaborate playing technique.

¹⁴⁵ Here, Neuman refers, although not explicitly, to a historical period from the eighteenth century until the present day. Kippen, on the other hand, refers to two types of *tabla* accompaniment in the past, without defining the time period of this "past". The first one is a plain, unembellished accompaniment, and the second is the *larant* (fighting) style of accompaniment, where the *tabla* player would play set compositions or would improvise simultaneously (1988:102).

¹⁴⁶ See also Clayton (2000:111-112) for a brief enumeration and description of styles or rhythmic accompaniment provided by the drum pair *tabla* in modern North Indian music.

If the standard view is that *zirbagali* accompaniment does not require great skills, it seems that rhythmic accompaniment has a subordinate role in relation to the melodic instruments. The question one could look at, though, is why no one makes any serious efforts to become a virtuoso performer in the *zirbagali*. This situation somehow resembles the Iranian case of the *tombak*, when before Tehrāni's time musicians were at large reluctant to play professionally on this instrument because it was considered inferior. It appears though that in mid-1970s Afghanistan there was one virtuoso *zirbagali* player. His name was Malang Nejraui, and his playing style was largely influenced by the Indian *tabla*, an instrument that was widely used in the urban art music ensembles of North Afghanistan (John Baily, personal communication). However, Malang's influence was not as great as that of Tehrāni, at least in the long-term; partly because of the many years of destructive war that began in the late 1970s.¹⁴⁷

A third common aspect shared by these three percussion instruments is their "deviant" taint and their association with entertainment and dance, which brings negative connotations in all three cultures. *Tabla* players in North Indian music are branded with a stigma because of their historical association with *tawā'ifs* (the courtesans who entertained the social elite with songs, dances and company), even if today few actually perform or are in contact with *tawā'ifs* (Kippen 1988:87). This association has further attributed them the reputation for "deviant behavior, drunkenness and debauchery" (ibid.) Baily states that the *zirbagali* was used for performances by dancing boys, who were considered *kuni*, catamites, in the popular stereotypes of Herat (1988b:140). He further remarks that "When people in Herat condemned music for exciting sexual thoughts and appetites, they were usually thinking of such performances" (ibid.).¹⁴⁸ The *tombak*, similarly, during the 19th century was performed by "disreputable" *motrebs*, who were also consisted of dancing boys.¹⁴⁹

A fourth common aspect of the three kinds of percussionists is that they were coming, as a rule, from marginalised ethnic, religious or professional groups. Many *tombak* players were recruited, from the late 19th century, from ethnic minorities such

¹⁴⁷ See Baily (2004) on the music censorship in Afghanistan before and after the Taliban period.

¹⁴⁸ However, while other instruments are also involved in playing for dancing boys, such as the *rubāb* and *dutār*, it is not clear to what extent this stigmatizes the other instrumentalists and whether such stigma follows primarily the image of the *zirbagali* player. In Indian music for example, it is made clear that the accompanists – the *sarangi* and *tabla* players, recruited from the *Mirasis* hereditary families of accompanists – were the ones who were primarily stigmatized because they were closest to *tawā'ifs*, who relied primarily on them for most of their work (Kippen 1988:87).

¹⁴⁹ A good description of male and female *motreb* groups from the Qajar to the early Pahlavi period is given by Fatemi (2004).

as Jews, Armenians and Gypsies. Indian *tabla* players were traditionally recruited from a “low” caste, the *mirasis*, while *zirbagali* players were, according to Sakata (1980:30), mainly *shauqi* musicians, that are amateur, non-hereditary, musicians; as Baily explains, “non-hereditary musicians usually had a low rank amongst the social group of professional musicians”, but a better status in society in general (1988b:119, 101-102).¹⁵⁰

A fifth common feature among all three types of accompanists is their comparatively inadequate knowledge of their respective music genres and their norms, which puts them again in a subordinate role with respect to other musicians. Many professional *tombak* players, even today are not considered to be adept on the *radif*, while in the 19th century the *tasnif* songs, which were performed by *tombak* players, were not considered to belong to the *radif* at all. In Afghanistan, as Baily asserts, the knowledge of “*ilm-e musiqi*” (the “science of music”) renders respectability and high rank to the *sāzandeh*, the hereditary professional musicians, who possess this knowledge (1988b:37-59, 162). On the other hand, the *shauqi* musicians, among which were also *zirbagali* players, were dismissed by professional musicians “as *shenidigi* (“hearers”) who knew nothing about music” (ibid. 119). Indian *tabla* players of the older generation were generally considered to be illiterate, and often their deviant behavior was assumed to derive from their illiteracy (Kippen 1988:87-88). Musically, as Neuman points, *tabla* players are not always certain which *rāg* (mode) they perform (1990:123).¹⁵¹

However, the status and the role of the rhythmic accompanists are gradually changing in the last few decades and again it seems that the grounds for these changes are to a degree common, especially in India and Iran.¹⁵² Education is one essential factor in elevating their status (and musicians status in general); the development of technical dexterity and intricate rhythmic patterns is another factor; also the rise of instrumental music, its separation from vocal music, and the increasingly rhythm-oriented music that

¹⁵⁰ Ethnomusicologists do not use a clear distinction between soloist and accompanists, as in India, when referring to the status of the rhythmic accompanists in Afghanistan. Generally, when describing the status of the musician, they use primarily the concepts of amateur and professional musicians, and the concept of hereditary musician, distinctions which do not differentiate soloist from accompanists, and are pertinent to both. In addition, Sakata considers that the social status of a musician is also dependent on religious background, ethnicity and regional affiliation, which again do not separate instrumentalists from rhythmic accompanists (1985). Unlike India, soloists and accompanists in Afghanistan come from the same families (Baily 1988b).

¹⁵¹ According to Baily, some *tabla* players in Afghanistan, like Ustād Asif Mahmud, had a good knowledge of “*ilm-e musiqi*” (personal communication). On the music literacy of *tabla* players in Afghanistan see Baily (1988b:50-57).

¹⁵² It is rather difficult to estimate the contemporary status of the rhythmic accompanists in Afghanistan which has experienced 22 years of destructive war that has damaged the cultural heritage and interrupted many art related activities.

gives an important role to the *tombak* and *tabla* player; giving concerts abroad is one more influence that made accompanists more aware of their important music role due to the positive reactions of western audiences (see Neuman 1977:241).

To summarise, according to the above examination, there is a strong relationship between the status of the accompanist and the role of rhythmic accompaniment. Important factors in determining the role and status of the rhythmic accompanist include: the particular music values in a music system and its related notions regarding the art of accompaniment in general and rhythmic accompaniment in particular; the socio-cultural values of the culture in question; the socio-cultural or professional background of the player; the level of dexterity in playing the instrument; and the consequences of reception.

Some of these factors that influence the status of rhythmic accompanist seem to reappear in other countries of the Middle East, on specific cultural and musical variables. For example, while the *darabukka* is considered to lie at the heart of *arabesk* in Turkey (in part because of the dexterity of the player), *darabukka* players are labelled as Gypsies (which they find offensive); many well-known players come from shabby districts of Istanbul; and they are associated with the “economic niche on the periphery of urban nightlife, as musicians, *işkembeci*, pimps, and prostitutes” (Stokes 1992:194).

Once viewed in this cross-cultural perspective, the question of the status and the role of the rhythmic accompanists is a very broad subject. An adequate discussion of all its aspects would have to take into account religious and historical analyses, as well as culture-specific values and music values, and it would constitute a treatise on its own.

However, the brief account that has been offered here could be extended by exploring the status of the rhythmic accompanist in the art music of neighbouring to Iran countries, the Middle East and Central Asia. The latter becomes very difficult by the fact that the status and role of the rhythmic accompanist in the art music of these regions has not deserved the attention it merits, and it occurs only sporadically in the various related studies that I have come across (Signell (1986); Shiloah (1995), Touma (1996), Spinetti (2006), Levin (1996)).

Between Court and Government Patronage: The Political and Cultural Milieu

The socio-economic and political situation in Iran during the entire 20th century has gone through changes which directly affected the cultural and musical life. Examples of early modernization and nationalism and an attempt to reduce the influence of the Islamic clergy were apparent from the 19th century.¹⁵³ The other face of the coin, however, was the foreign involvement which generated protests against the influence of western imperialism.

Printing, photography, newspapers and the phonograph manifested the outcome of modernization and marked an opening to the West. Under the reign of Nasser-e Din Shah western music was formally introduced in Iran, with the French band master Alfred Lemaire engaged to train the military band of the court. In 1889, the first governmental institution, named *Madrese-ye Musiqi-ye Nezāmi* (Military Music School) was established (Zonis 1973:39).

The move towards modernization, nationalism and secularization became more intense during the Pahlavi regime (1925-1979).¹⁵⁴ Under the first Pahlavi monarch, Reza Shah (1925-1941), politico-economical reforms that contributed to the urbanization of Tehrān aimed at modernizing the country, establishing central government, and limiting the power of the religious authority.¹⁵⁵ The educational reforms he established by the creation of a uniform school curriculum and, in 1935, the establishment of Tehrān University based on western models of education, weakened the clergy's role in education. Moreover, the first Pahlavi monarch encouraged cultural revitalization, with the founding of the Fine Arts society in the 1930s (Zonis 1973:192). According to Keddie, with the centralization in education "Official nationalism propagated an emphasis on Iranian history and literature, with stress on the pre-Islamic empires and de-emphasis of Islam" (2003:99).

In addition, Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammadi note that under Reza Shah, the first Pahlavi monarch, two contradictory cultural tendencies were prominent (1994:50). The first was the propagation and revival of the ancient Persian cultural

¹⁵³ See Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammadi (1994) and Keddie (2003).

¹⁵⁴ According to Banani (Banani, cited in Fazeli 2003:60) Reza Shah's policies were based on the three ideologies of nationalism, modernization and secularism.

¹⁵⁵ For a more detailed account on a number of political and economical reforms pursued by Reza Shah see Keddie (2003: 88-104).

heritage by promoting a revived consciousness of pre-Islamic culture and the ancient “Achaemenian glory”, particularly through architectural symbolism. The second tendency was the move towards modernization, particularly in the sense of progress and its association with the contemporary West - for example the chador was banned for women in 1935 and western clothing styles were imposed, schools were opened for women, who also came to the labor force (ibid.).¹⁵⁶

These politico-economic and socio-cultural reforms brought about a chain of events which had a strong effect upon the musician’s life and status. In particular, in the beginning of the 20th century, towards the end of the Qajar dynasty, changes occurred in the patronage system as well in the performance context of Iranian music. Darvish Khān, a court musician, is considered a “transitional figure” in these shifts (Caton 1983:66). He broke the existing patronage system by performing without the prince’s permission at another private gathering. When the prince threatened to cut off Darvish Khān’s fingers, he took refuge in the British Embassy, after whose intervention he was no longer under the prince’s “possession” (During 2002:861). His “rebellion” towards the existing system was contemporary with the decline in power of court and the prevailing political atmosphere against the Qajar rulers which climaxed with the Constitutional Revolution (1906-1911).^{157,158} This incident marks a turning point for the relation between the musician and the audience (During 2002:861). Now that musicians had gained their autonomy and independence the context of the performing musician also changed. An essentially courtly tradition, Iranian music opened up to the outside world and let the world penetrate within with the first public concert held in 1906, organized by Darvish Khān.

Another incident that Khāleqi (1999b:28-32) describes in his enchanting book *Sargozasht-e Musiqi-ye Irān* [A History of Iranian Music], under the apt and appropriate title *Shakhsiat-e Honarmand* [The Personality of an Artist], is particularly revealing about the transitional state of music from the court to the public, the prevailing perceptions of an elite social stratum towards music and musician, the awareness of the musician of his stature, and also his self management and self-

¹⁵⁶ Fazeli, on the other side, believes that Reza Shah’s discourse on nationalism, although based on pre-Islamic Iranian culture, was compatible with modernization and the monarchic system (2003:60).

¹⁵⁷ Khāleqi (1999a: 303-306) who also describes this incident does not state the precise date. However, it can be deduced that the episode took place before the Constitutional Revolution. Two occurrences indicate that Darvish Khān gained his independence and that he was free from the prince’s possession after 1906. First, he organized in the first public concert in 1906. Second, from 1906 to WWII he traveled to Europe with other musicians and recorded music for His Master’s Voice (see Zonis 1973:192, and Caton 1986:66).

¹⁵⁸ On the Constitutional Revolution see Keddie (2003: 67-71 and 179-181).

promotion to a “new type” of musician, to use During’s expression (2002:861), as an artist who is serious, autonomous, appreciates his work and is not at the disposal of everyone’s amusement.

The story is situated in the 1920s and it concerns Colonel ‘Ali Naqi Vaziri, who was, and still is, considered to be an agent of radical change in Iranian music; to this date his ideology and influence on Iranian music remain controversial (During 2002:861).

The Colonel [Vaziri] did not like to be invited at any social gathering as a player. He was born in a time when people, especially the elite, did not value the arts... The Colonel had really serious appearance and his manner toward unfamiliar people was really rough...but the thing is that in this attitude, himself was a little bit wittingly exaggerating, he would never take a taxi so that he was not invited as a player to a social gathering...In any case the Colonel was not going anywhere [was not accepting any party invitations] (Khāleqi 1999b:28).

However, he was once invited to a social gathering by a very close friend and he could not refuse. His friend, the host, ordered somebody to go and bring Vaziri’s *tār* and he then put it in front of him to play. Vaziri was very upset by this attitude; he refused to play and left the party. The host became also very upset and ashamed because he had organised this gathering of the “elite” especially for them to listen to Vaziri’s music. Vaziri was thereafter considered arrogant and supercilious. After recounting the story, Khāleqi gives his own comment on the situation, by explaining the usual attitude of a host towards the musicians, treating them as subservient. “The player whom they called *motreb*...was not equal with the rest [of the guests] and sometimes *motreb-hā* would play in a different room, and only if they were esteemed they would play in the room with the guests” (Khāleqi 1999b:29). Only when the last guest had left, would the musicians get paid and were free to go. “However, [Khāleqi says] *motreb-hā* had the same attitude, they were uneducated” and “although the atmosphere became a little bit better, they [the people] would generally treat musicians with this accustomed behavior” (ibid. 29, 30).

Khāleqi also mentions that some players would not accept money for playing and the elite would attribute to them a higher status than that of the “ordinary” musicians.¹⁵⁹ However, musicians such as Mirzā ‘Abdollah and Darvish Khān, although

¹⁵⁹ In this context, the “ordinary” musician is the professional musician who accepts remuneration, while the “amateur” musicians do not accept payment for public entertainment. On the distinction between an amateur and professional musicians in Iran see Blum (2002:829); During, in During and Mirabdolbaghi

they would never be treated as *motreb*, would never go to such parties if they considered that their status was not held in esteem or their playing was not appreciated, and they would earn their living mainly from teaching. “Maybe that is why they were more respected”, Khāleqi comments (1999b:30).

Vaziri’s refusal to play at the party was summarized in his words: “Today in this circle, tomorrow at that party, the day after tomorrow at someone’s ministry, the next night at the castle of that prince (...) I should leave my job and go and play music for them (...) Once I said no for the first time, I shattered the image of the *motreb* [that I was associated with]” (cited in Khāleqi 1999b:32).

This anecdote is quite informative about the transitional status of musicians, and particularly the role of the individual in changing perceptions as they literally enforced a more respectful attitude towards themselves and their profession, even at the cost of jeopardizing their professional prospects and personal relations. However, as seen in Vaziri’s case, the musician now had the opportunity, speaking in terms of working relations and different prospects of income (as opposed to the musician of the Qajar period working for the court), to accept or deny how, where and for whom to play. This ability permits, or even necessitates a new stance on the musician’s part, by which he was called to mould, defend, and endorse a set of values and an ethic that in time also influenced the attitudes and perceptions of others towards the musician.

Vaziri’s “philosophy” was not merely a matter of personal preference but an indication of a new phase in the position of musicians in Iran.¹⁶⁰ Many other musicians who considered themselves as serious artists wanted to disengage themselves from the designation of *motreb*, so they would avoid any activities that could associate them with it. For example, Nur ‘Ali Borumand and Mahmud Karimi did not perform even in a concert, from the fear of being called *motrebs*, “café musicians” or “radio musicians” (During, in During and Mirabdolbaghi 1991:28).

Today, this stance is still somehow apparent among professional *tombak* players who have developed a “modern” ethic which distinguishes them from second-grade, artisan musicians, and in a way serves as a defence of their status as artists-musicians. They do not play in coffee-shops or restaurants where drinks or food is being served and many are reluctant to play for people to dance in private parties, even if these parties are

(1991:26-29); and Nettle (1978:152-153). See Baily (1988b:114-123), Sakata (1983:76-105) and Slobin (1976:29-44) for this distinction in Afghanistan.

¹⁶⁰ Some scholars would argue though that Vaziri’s reaction was not usual, but rather “strange” taking into account that amateur gatherings were common during his time when friends played for one another (Nooshin, personal communication, January 2007). See also Vaziri et al. (1986) who describes *bazm*, an intimate party, as the best setting for performing Iranian classical music.

in closed family circles. Performing, in private gatherings, in front of a knowledgeable audience which appreciates Iranian music, is considered acceptable, as it is not incompatible with the purely artistic identity they wish to maintain.¹⁶¹

It becomes apparent that, as musicians found themselves in a more liberal atmosphere and, being sensitive and aware of their social standing, they could take advantage of the socio-economic conditions of the time to introduce, establish and enforce a set of principles and values, promote themselves and their work according to these standards and become, in their turn, agents of social and cultural change.

The Cultural Milieu during Mohammad Reza Shah (1941-1970)

The tendencies of the government to invest in the native arts and crafts became more profound under the reign of the second Pahlavi monarch (1941-1979). After the Second World War, and now under Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, Iran was going through modernization and rapid urbanization. Tehrān was a city changing rapidly, the population growing from a half million, in the 1940s, to three million within the span of two decades. Modernization, however, was pursued largely through westernization, as was also the case during the first Pahlavi ruler.¹⁶² In this sense it was to be achieved by the importation of modern industry and institutions, as well as symbols of western ideals, diffused through the modern media with the inauguration of Tehrān Radio in 1940.¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ I have never seen Pedrām and Hamid play for dance music even in a close family setting. But they would often perform in private places where the audience would carefully listen to their playing. Once during Pedrām's birthday at his house with visitors the members of his *tombak* group, Hamid, Siāmak and his parents, I suggested that we all take our *tombaks* and play. His mother said that this was the first time that Pedrām played for "light" entertainment. However, no one played longer than five minutes.

¹⁶² This perspective is shared by Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammadi (1994:70, 71) who believe that modernization became synonymous with westernization. Nettl also suggests that adopting western cultural symbols is in a sense becoming modern (1978:171-178). Here it seems useful to distinguish the concepts of westernization and modernization as Nettl suggests. For him "the term *Westernization* refers to influences from Western culture that are accepted into a non-Western tradition and tend to make that tradition, in its own eyes, a part of the Western cultural system" (1978:171). He defines modernization as referring to a "process in which Western elements are introduced into a non-Western society, but these elements are viewed in the culture as ways of continuing the tradition rather than changing it" (ibid).

¹⁶³ See Chelkowsi (1991:808-810) for the rapid outreach of the radio network in Iran, and its foreign and Iranian broadcast programmes.

From the early 1960s until the mid-1970s an impressive economic growth and relative political stability help one to understand the relative lack of serious political unrest. After the nationalization of oil resources and the country's economic prosperity,¹⁶⁴ investments in culture are even more profound: the government undertook the role of the patronage of artists and musicians.

An event that marked the cultural scene in this period was the Shahs' third marriage to Farah Pahlavi, in 1959. She became very much interested in the domain of culture, and took an active role in promoting developments in the fields of the arts, architecture (restoration of old monuments), education, social welfare and health. In her memoirs Farah Pahlavi mentions that with the economic growth of the mid-1960s, investments in culture were pursued as an essential aspect of modernization (Pahlavi 2004:251). The ideological basis on which this was formed was to give support to artists, to make them famous in Iran and abroad, and to build cultural bridges between Iran and the rest of the world. According to her memoirs, she was very actively involved in the concept and realization of the Shirāz Arts Festival (inaugurated in 1967), and other cultural and social institutions.

Her cousin Rezā Qotbi, became Director of the National Iranian Radio and Television (NIRT) which was to be the most significant source of support for the development of music and the main patron for musicians, offering also opportunities for serious public performances of Iranian music (Beeman 1975:12). It also founded and supported many art and culture-festivals and research institutes among which are the Shirāz Arts Festival and the Centre for Preservation and Propagation of Iranian Music (established in 1968).¹⁶⁵

In the same period the Ministry of Art and Culture made a serious effort to foster and promote art and folk music (Zonis 1973:192). It administered two conservatoires, *Honarestān-e 'Ali-ye Musiqi* (The High Conservatory of Music) and *Honarestān-e Musiqi-ye Melli* (Conservatory of National Music), it also sponsored many orchestras, including the Tehrān Symphony Orchestra and a professional ballet company, it issued major music magazines and publications, and sponsored research in Iranian classical and folk music (ibid. 192-193). The Rudaki Hall was also built under its auspices, in 1967, named after the 10th century poet Rudaki. In that period the Ministry of Art and

¹⁶⁴ See Keddie (2003:149-169) regarding the economic boom in Iran after the nationalization of oil resources in 1963.

¹⁶⁵ Chelkowski (1991:813) provides an extended list of music and cultural centres, including art and music festivals, that the NIRT funded or supported. Miller (1999:44-46) also describes the activities of The Society for Preservation and Propagation of Eastern Arts, which was set up outside of Iran under the auspices of NIRT.

Culture also acted as a patron for musicians, by funding music studies and performances both at home and abroad (ibid. 193).

Thus, the Iranian government became the chief patron of music, replacing the court and the aristocrats of the Qajar period, through its Ministry of Art and Culture, the NIRT, and their numerous subordinate institutions. Iranian cultural life, including publishing, cinema, theaters, concert halls and mass media, was under the control of the Ministry of Information and the Ministry of Art and Culture (Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammadi 1994:72). According to Zonis it was difficult for a musician to make a living without being affiliated either to the Ministry of Art and Culture or to the Ministry of Information that administrated the NIRT (Zonis 1973:198).

With government support, musical activities in Iran flourished and with the growth of the mass media they became wide-spread. Propagation of new means of communication, modern media, shifts in socio-economic and political structure, all had an impact on entertainment and were reflected in the daily life style, especially in the urban centres (Chelkowski 1991:765,768). The music which was once reserved for the elite now become available to the greater public, and not only did it reach a greater percentages of population than ever before, but also Tehrān was a city where one could hear a large variety of musics. As Zonis states:

Music was never so widely performed and so well thought of as it is now. This is a period of abundant musical activity, probably a more musical time than ever before it. Even though if all this activity is not devoted solely to Persian music (1973:200-201).

Another renowned ethnomusicologist conducting field work in Tehrān in the late 1960s will make similar observations:

The resident of Tehran is surrounded by a large variety of musics. On the radio, on television in concert halls, music halls, and discotheques, on the streets, at private gatherings and weddings, and on records he is exposed to a universe of sound. He can hear Western music ranging from Beethoven, Vivaldi, and electronic music, on the one hand, to popular music of the 1950s and 1960s including American rock, Latin American dances, and European chansons, on the other. He can hear Persian classical music (most frequently in a style developed during the 20th century) as well as folk and popular music from various regions of Iran...Popular music that mixes traditional Persian and Western elements is presented to him. And in various situations he can find available the music of India and

Pakistan and the Arabic countries. He can hear the traditional musical shouts of street vendors and the tunes of blind or maimed street musicians (Nettl 1970:183).¹⁶⁶

Thus, two decades before the Revolution there was an abundance of musical activity in Tehrān. Tehrān was a city with a profuse and diverse music-culture, ranging from western music, both classical and popular, a variety of popular music combining elements of Iranian and western music, and a rich variety of folk musics.¹⁶⁷ However, western popular and, especially, Iranian popular music were the music styles with the greatest public appeal in pre-Revolutionary urban Iran.¹⁶⁸ Before the Revolution performers as well as listeners of Iranian music were small in number (if compared to today), and the influence of Iranian music on the general audience was minor if compared to the impact of domestic popular music (Nettl 1978:50).¹⁶⁹ In contrast, the diffusion of popular music was voluminous through the mass media, including record companies, the Iranian film industry, music halls, and Iranian-style nightclubs (whose attractions often included belly dancing).¹⁷⁰

In such a climate, the changes experienced in society and in everyday life corresponded to changes within the musical scenes of Tehrān. In particular, as Nettl describes, “In Tehran we can see the force of westernization, modernization, and (to a smaller degree) urbanization all converging on the musical culture” (1978:179).

Nooshin observes that Iranian classical music was generally viewed as incompatible with the rapid process of modernizing the state, and newly available forms of western music or westernized Iranian music were favored above Iranian classical music (1996a:107). Iranian music was affected by western ideals, an influence that began in the late 19th century under the Qajars. Western notation adapted to Iranian music was introduced from the early 1920s with Vaziri being a leading pioneer; teaching practices were also changed with the introduction of notation; and western

¹⁶⁶ Some could argue, however, that such statements by U.S. scholars may have been an uncritical support of the politico-economic interest of the USA in Mohammad Reza Shah's Iran. On the USA economic policy in Iran, and its political support of Mohammad Reza Shah in the 1960s and early 1970s, see Keddie (2003:163-166, 320-321).

¹⁶⁷ During this period a substantial local record industry was growing (Nettl 1985:135).

¹⁶⁸ On the difference between western and Iranian popular music, and the various styles of the latter see Nettl (1972a).

¹⁶⁹ Nettl estimates, probably exaggerating, that the number of musicians who played Iranian music in Tehrān did not exceed one hundred (1975:84). It is not clear how Nettl made these estimations. It is known though that the number of professional musicians and the number of music students today is much greater than before the Revolution. For popular music styles of Iranian music before the Revolution refer to Nettl (1975:81-84 and 1972a).

¹⁷⁰ Nowadays, a common view shared by most Iranian musicians classically trained or performing Iranian art music, is that Iranian pop music is again gaining prominence, at the expense of Iranian music (as defined in the introduction).

style music schools, teaching western musical instrument (such as the violin, the piano, the flute, the clarinet) were introduced in Iranian music, while the performance context - that of the large public concert hall - indicates also the influence of the western-style concert. The same is the case with the rise of large ensembles, the composition and orchestration of Iranian music, and the growth of metric pieces, all suggestive of western influences. Moreover, in the 1960s we can also discern a “new attitude for musicians involved in art music” (Nettl 1992:151). Nettle again affirms that by the late 1960s “most musicians considered themselves as professionals in essentially the western sense, teaching students for fees, performing on radio and stage for honoraria, or receiving salaries from government agencies in return for regular or ad hoc performances” (ibid).

All these influences - modernization, westernization and urbanization - that have affected everyday life, especially in Tehrān, aspects of which were also apparent in Iranian music from the middle of 19th century, became more profound during the 20th century. Artistic activity, especially in music, was leading the way in these changes that Iranian society was undergoing. That is, the changes in music were not simply following the changes in society, but were at the centre of the developments and an important part of the whole process. It was a case of music as an agent of musical change rather than merely the reflector of such changes.

At the same time, there were opposing tendencies of disapproval for these influences, especially westernization, in socio-cultural, political and musical life, which became more intense in the 1970s, an issue that will be considered further in this chapter.

The Rise of the *Tombak* Player: Hossein Tehrāni

In this climate of transition a seminal *tombak* player emerged, Tehrāni (1912-1973), who came to be considered, in his own life-time and today, as the first figure of great influence in the development of the instrument's future. In his own words, about the position of the *tombak* in Iranian society, he said:

The time when I started to play the *tombak*, this instrument was thumped and all the people would consider the *tombak* player [*zarbgir*] as an inferior *motreb*, and because they would disparage it, no one had the courage to go towards this instrument. Under such circumstances, to take a *tombak* in your hands was to give up honor and respect. These were

the terms under which I started to play the *tombak*. From that very beginning, because I had love for this instrument, I would tolerate all the accusations and denigrations.... At that time I said to myself, under any circumstances I have to get this instrument out of this calamity and unfortune. In order to accomplish this aim I started to practice very much, so that I was preoccupied with practicing and playing the *tombak* for more than half a day [each day]" (Tehrāni, cited in Dehlavi 1971:18, translated by the author).

Indeed, Tehrāni would practice the *tombak* in the most unlikely place, in a graveyard, far away from his father's presence, who considered it as an embarrassment that his son played the *tombak* (Banāi 1999b:5). There is no doubt that due to his love, effort and talent he achieved the ambition to develop his musical skills and his technique on the *tombak*. Tehrāni did not achieve this in a vacuum, even by his own admission, so when interviewed on a radio programme, he proclaimed that, "Whatever I have gained it is from my own understanding," but went on to add (referring to the *tombak* players before and during his time), "However, they played the *zarb* well, really if they didn't exist, I couldn't become anything. I took inspiration from them, God bless them." (Radio programme in memory of Tehrāni broadcasted on Radio Iran in 1974, series *Golchin-e Hafte* [Anthology of the Week]).

In the same radio program, he again made a counter-argument to the importance of his *tombak* predecessors influence and stresses that of his individual effort, saying, "But really, if we consider this [as strictly as] according to mathematical principles, the *zarb* did not exist."¹⁷¹ This brings to mind the importance of "intentionality" and "decision made by individuals about music-making and music on the basis of their experience of music and attitudes to it in different social contexts" (Blacking 1995:160), a process much stressed by Blacking which is apparent in Tehrāni's determination and achievement in raising the status of the instrument. But then again, Toynbee argues that:

...creativity in music needs to be conceived as a cultural process rather than a heroic act. New music - in other words significantly different music - is made by social authors who work in networks, collaborating (and sometimes fighting) with coworkers, critics, industry and audience (2003:110).

¹⁷¹ Here, Tehrāni's declaration can be interpreted to mean that the playing technique of the *zarb* was not that much developed by his predecessors, which, as explained in the above paragraph, is a counter-argument to his previous statement that he has been inspired by his predecessors, who according to Tehrāni's words, played well on the *zarb*, to show his own effort in elevating the playing technique on the instrument.

Toynbee's argument applies also in Tehrāni's case. Tehrāni was not alone in his "personal" task to elevate the instrument to a higher rank. His personality and music skills were appreciated by his contemporary musicians, who were in addition socially acknowledged and respected, and with whom he had close professional and personal relations. They were the ones to offer him their friendship, professionalism, knowledge and experience, as well as opportunity and support in order to develop further his music skills and promote this instrument in Iranian music.

He started *tombak* lessons in 1928 with the famous *kamānche* player Hossein Khān Esmā'ilzāde. His musical experience was filled with long-lasting collaborations with the best musicians of his time that added further to his status: Abolhasan Sabā, Farāmarz Pāyvar and his orchestra, Habib Somā'i, Javād Ma'rufi and Jālil Shahnāz. In 1938 he got acquainted with Sabā. This was a momentous event in his music career. These two men gradually became friends and life-long music partners and their friendship/partnership continued till the last moment on Sabā's life (1957). Tehrāni considers Sabā to be his principal music teacher. After Sabā's death he started performing with Pāyvar (a student of Sabā) and his ensemble, and he and Pāyvar became close associates for many years.

Tehrāni was perhaps the first *tombak* player who was treated by other musicians with respect and was acknowledged and promoted as a great *ostād* in playing the *tombak*. According to a story that I heard from musicians of the younger generation, Pāyvar would carry Tehrāni's *tombak* to the concert hall in order to show his appreciation of Tehrāni's musicianship. However, this was doubted and refuted by Dāriush Talā'i in one interview with him. In any case this anecdote, perhaps tells us more about how "legends create their myths" and how these "myths" are disseminated.

A further development in Tehrān, a product of modernization and urbanization, was the systematic expansion of both public and private education, which had an impact on teaching practices, relations between teacher and student, the status of musicians, and the diffusion of music to a wider audience. With the establishment of these educational institutions for music, new possibilities for *tombak* teaching in a more official and legitimate environment were also created. For instance, in 1941 Tehrāni started teaching the *tombak* at the High Conservatory of Music, whose director at that time was Vaziri.¹⁷² This was the first time that the *tombak* was taught in an institutional

¹⁷² Few years later, when this establishment changed director, *tombak* lessons were cancelled and his teaching was discontinued (Dehlavi 1971:19). Vaziri was directing this establishment from 1940 to 1946; he was replaced by Parviz Mahmud who directed the High Conservatory of Music from 1946 to 1949 (Akbarzāde 2001:12).

setting. Tehrāni also taught the *tombak* at the Conservatory of National Music from 1949, upon Khāleqi's invitation (who was the Director). Many other prominent *tombak* players carried on teaching or opened their own schools. For instance, Esmā'ili, one of Tehrāni's most accomplished students substituted his teacher and began teaching in 1964 at the Conservatory of National Music. Eftetāh opened his own music school *Gām* [Gamut, Scale or Footfall] in the mid-1950s.

Thus, with the establishment of music schools, the *tombak* was brought to a wider audience. For the first time it constituted officially an instrument at its own right, being taught formally together with other instruments that belonged to the classical tradition of Iranian music. In this respect, with the institutionalization of music education, the status of the musician in general and thus the *tombak* player too, started gradually to improve. Another point worth noting is that in the beginning of the 1960s and 1970s Iran had high rate of illiterate population.¹⁷³ Musicians working as teachers in these music institutions had received music education and were acquainted with western notation that confirmed the "scientific" (*'elmi*) aspect of Iranian music, and thus validated music training and those who practiced it. While at the same time teachers, belonging to the growing modern middle class, had acquired a certain amount of respectability (Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammadi 1994:74).

Today, Tehrāni is idolized for improving the image of the player and essentially for developing the playing techniques on the *tombak*. He is considered revolutionary with regards to his approach to the playing technique on the *tombak*, which he developed by working on the articulation of speed, by introducing dense playing (which can be accomplished with the inclusion of rolls and grace notes), by including various grace notes and elaborating existing ones - such as the *eshāre* (discussed in the last chapter) – and generally by performing on the *tombak* in a more sophisticated manner. For example the *riz-e por*, a type of roll, was performed in a "rough" manner before Tehrāni's time. He was the first to perform it more gently and smoothly (Shemirāni, Interview, November 2002).

At the same time, he is considered to be a trailblazer in originating the *tombak* solo (*taknavāzi-ye tombak*), duet *tombak* (*donavāzi-ye tombak*) and group *tombak* playing (*gruhnavāzi-ye tombak*). He was the first to perform long passages of *tombak* solo during the early 1940s. Many young *tombak* players still play some of his famous solos, among which the *Lokomotiv* is a good example. Tehrāni was also the first to

¹⁷³ For statistical data on illiteracy rate by sex, age groups and spatial distribution before and after the Revolution see Mehran (1992, 2003).

perform duet *tombak* in Shirāz Arts Festival in 1969, with his student Shemirāni. This form was later developed by Rajabi. In addition, in 1947 he formed the first *tombak* group in Iran, The *Tombak* Players Ensemble (*Gruh Tombak Navāzān*). Duet and group *tombak* are practiced today, and the *tombak* solo has become a music form in its own right, fascinating especially younger players.

Picture 13: Front and back of the record sleeve of Tehrāni's LP *Taknavāz-e Tombak* [*Tombak Soloist*].¹⁷⁴



During his lifetime he was in the limelight, received great publicity, and was promoted well, given that he had the opportunity to perform regularly on the most powerful media, TV and radio. The social circumstances of his time allowed this. Tehrān Radio gained even more fame with the spread of television that began in 1959 and especially in the 1970s when radio was joined with the television in the organization called National Iranian Radio and Television (NIRT) in 1971. According to Banāi, television was the medium through which Tehrāni could exhibit, and be admired for, his virtuosity by ordinary people (1999b:6).¹⁷⁵ He notices that:

¹⁷⁴ It is not specified when it was published, but it was in the late 1960s, and before 1971. Tehrāni was always wearing dark glasses because he had a lazy eye; he was not completely blind. There are not many ethnographic sources indicating that Tehrāni's partial sightedness played an important role in his image or music career. One amusing, and possibly fictional anecdote referring to the fact that he wore sunglasses depicts him as a teasing person who would often make jokes. According to Purqanād, Tehrāni who wore sunglasses to hide his sight-defect looked like 'Abdolhossein Hazhir, Iranian politician holding several ministerial positions during the 1940s, who also wore sunglasses (2006). According to the story, Hazhir who was afraid that someone wanted to kill him, asked Tehrāni to replace him in the official assemblies of the government. Tehrāni asked him "How much will you give me to replace you?" He replied "fifty *toman* [Iranian currency] for each assembly" (ibid.). Tehrāni replied to him "I will give you hundred *toman* for each session (*jelase*) if you replace me" (ibid.). While it is not clear from the above story if Tehrāni refers to a music session, the anecdote nevertheless shows that Tehrāni was a musician with a sense of humour and that he did not approach his partial sightedness in a morose manner.

¹⁷⁵ Banāi's statement appears to apply more for the late 1960s and early 1970s. According to Rajabi, not many people in the 1960s Iran possessed television sets and Tehrāni's reputation could reach only a limited audience through this medium (Interview, November 2002). For the dissemination of television in Iran see Chelkowski (1991).

This allowed the audience who had only heard his *tombak* playing on the radio to witness for the first time the bewitching movements of the maestro's hands which would hit the instrument with utmost force at times or touch it delicately and smoothly at others (original in English, Banāi 1999b:6).^{176, 177}

The NIRT and the Ministry of Art and Culture also affected greatly the status of the musician in Iran. Beeman's observations reflect the power of television and its role in fostering a higher status for the musician:

Performances over radio and television reduces the stigma that public performances once carried, and the most modest performers can demonstrate their art without feeling that they are compromising their reputations (Beeman 1975:12).¹⁷⁸

Thus, public concerts not only became common at home, fostering a more reputable standing for the musician in the Iranian society, but also the musicians acquired respectability by being employed and sponsored through state agencies. They became salaried professionals and thus moved into the middle and upper middle classes (Beeman 1975:13).¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ This is a significant statement that points at a contrasting situation today, where musicians do not have the opportunity of exhibiting their virtuosity on the screen, as the display of music instruments on television is prohibited. Music instruments though, can be seen in concerts (Nooshin, personal communication, January 2007).

¹⁷⁷ It is interesting to note that Tehrāni performed in the first sound film that was made in Iran, in 1948, called *The Storm of Life (Tufān-e Zendegi)*, by 'Ali Daryabeygi (Purqanād 2006). Tehrāni performed with the famous singer Qolām Hossein Banān and the Society of National Music (*Anjoman-e Musiqi-ye Mellī*) conducted by Khāleqi. The film had no success at the box office and received no praise from critics (Parhami 1999).

Generally, from the ethnographic research it becomes apparent that today Tehrāni is mostly remembered through his audio recordings and his teaching manual *Āmuzesh-e Tombak*, which are still being reproduced, rather than through his participation in television programmes or films. Obviously, this situation is a result of the scarcity of music documentaries from the pre-Revolutionary era, partly because many private collections were destroyed in the post-Revolutionary period, and partly because the contemporary Iranian radio and television *Sedā-o-Simā* have not published any music documentary from the pre-Revolutionary era.

¹⁷⁸ The NIRT, as mentioned, became the main patron for musicians and many other *tombak* players also performed regularly for the radio and the television. To mention a few of them: Eftetāh (who was working from the age of 16 at the radio that would be in 1951 with the *Golhā* Orchestra (The Flowers Orchestra) among other groups); Jahāngir Malek worked for the radio orchestra from 1959 with *Vizhe* and *Golhā* Orchestras; Farhangfar at the television from 1971 and from 1975 performed regularly for the NIRT (with Lotfi and the ensemble Sheydā), Farhmand from 1970 at the NIRT with 'Alizāde, Kiāninejād, Dāvud Ganjei, and Parisā); Esmā'ili also regularly performed with the Pāyvar Orchestra.

¹⁷⁹ Beeman's quotation, that the performance on radio/TV reduced the stigma before the Revolution appears to be ironic, if we take into account that today the situation in Iran is almost the reverse than the one that Beeman describes for the period before the Revolution. For example, the display of music instruments on television is stigmatized, but it is not very problematic in concerts (Nooshin, personal communication, January 2007).

The Shirāz Arts Festival was also an important centre for domestic and international theatre and music performance, held for many years every September, with most Iranian music concerts held at the tomb of the mystic poet Hāfez. The Shirāz Arts Festival not only promoted Iranian performances, but it became also a bridge with world-famous musicians and artists, hosting the most prominent artists from the international art scene. At the first Festival, September 1967, Tehrāni participated with his *tombak* group and Farāmarz Pāyvar. The majority of the distinguished *tombak* players of the period performed there.

In 1969 the Shirāz Arts Festival gained an international recognition due to the music subject of that year, namely “Percussion Instruments from Around the World”. Among other percussion instruments were the Indian *mridangam*, the *gamelan* of Bali and the *tympana* of Rwanda. Western percussionists were also invited, among whom was the famous drummer Max Roach, who astonished by Tehrāni’s virtuosity, said: “Those things that I play with several percussive pieces, he creates with a single instrument and sometimes in a really more subtle way than I do!” (Dehlavi 1971:23). The recognition by foreigners, which was spread later by great Iranian music personalities, added further to Tehrāni’s status. Khāleqi (1999a:401-402), Dehlavi (1971:23) and Mashhun (1969:28 and 2001:649) wrote about the incident with Max Roach and Leni Kenniper, and these anecdotes remain today an important aspect of the image of Tehrāni.

The Centre for Preservation and Propagation of Iranian Music (*Markaz-e Hefz va Eshā’e-ye Musiqi-ye Irāni*) (the Centre, from now on) founded in 1968 under the leadership of Dāriush Safvat, became, as its name implies, the centre for preserving and collecting audio and written materials, and promoting and disseminating Iranian music.¹⁸⁰ The Centre was also a patron for musicians, offering them monthly wages, and become also a pool out of which musicians were drawn to perform at the Shirāz Arts Festival and other music events, including performances outside Iran. The Centre’s vocation complied with Safvat’s ideas, according to which, “Traditional music does not exist except in the person of the traditional musician. It is the musician therefore, who must be protected and encouraged” (Safvat, cited in Miller 1999:30).

This Centre assembled the most eminent musicians of the time. Safvat mentions that about 20 musicians and 180 students were banded together (Miller 1999:31). The

¹⁸⁰ Miller (1999) devotes a whole chapter of his book to this Centre and describes its foundation as an answer to the endangering situation of Iranian traditional music, threatened by “innovators and westernizers” (ibid. 29), performers of dubious quality, and the policy of the Ministry of Culture, which during the 1970s was one of “Laissez-faire (of) Westernization” (ibid.34). See also Mossayyebzāde (2003) who gives the historical background of the Centre before and after the Revolution.

musicians associated with it were, roughly speaking, the great *ostāds* of the recent past, offering lessons to young promising musicians.¹⁸¹ Many *tombak* players were affiliated to the Centre, including Farhangfar, my own teacher Rajabi, Mahmud Farahmand, A'yān and Jamshid Mohebbi.¹⁸²

A significant benefit of this Centre was its role as a place where musicians could meet and interact, offering them a location to practice and develop their music skills next to great masters, and to communicate and collaborate with other musicians in a fruitful musical environment. A'yān, a *tombak* player, testifies, in a very affectionate narration, about his own experience as a *tombak* player and the rehearsals held at the Centre:

Regarding the rehearsals that we had at that time in the Centre for Preservation and Propagation of Iranian Music, because of what I said, that enthusiasm and delight [*shur o hāl*] that we had...for example when we had group rehearsals at three or four o'clock, the guys would come one hour ahead because of the rapture and elation [*shur o hāl*] they had to work with that music group that they wanted to play, they would come there to practice for one hour in advance. At that time, because of that vigor and gaiety, a person when he is fond of the job he wants to do, what is he preparing for ahead? Not to deliver less than the rest, he wants to be ready when the playing starts, and not even to warm-up during the practice, not to warm up his hands [at the practice]. With the group rehearsals everyone was doing this: they would play the instrument softly and would smoothly come and sit among the group. This one would exceed that one, the other one would outdo this one, and everyone doing his own work according to his own mood.

Several groups were there at the Centre for Preservation and Propagation of Iranian Music, and at that time Āqā-ye 'Alizāde would do the orchestration for the group for some time, then Āqā-ye Meshāktiān, then Āqā-ye Zolfonun, so in this way there was collaboration. Anyone could bring a work, and on the work that had brought, they would themselves do the orchestration, and the rest would also accompany them.

No guy was lesser to another in doing composition or in playing the instrument, according to my view...at that time... For example, they were all good, they were not different from one another.... It was a good time, at that time. According to my view the music atmosphere was the best atmosphere when compared to that of today (Interview, October 2002).

A'yān's testimony, representing the personal experience of a *tombak* player from what was considered to be the "best of times" of the Centre, describes a creative musical atmosphere with musician in a state of high enthusiasm and competence, and

¹⁸¹ See Miller (1999:37-43) who names the music masters and students of this Centre.

¹⁸² Besides public performances and music lessons, the other activities of the Centre included: various research projects, literature lessons and instrument making. For more details on the activities of the Centre for the period 1968-1979, see Mossayyebzāde (2003:82-86).

also depicts the collaboration among the musicians, the outcome of which were some of the best music works in the years just before the Revolution.

In these circumstances of musical liberation, stemming from the deep political and socio-cultural changes, it was only natural that a formerly undervalued instrument like the *tombak* found recognition; and these were the circumstances in which the gifted representative of the instrument, Tehrāni, found his place of prominence among musicians and public alike.

The Seventies, a Momentous Era in Political, Socio-Cultural and Musical life in Iran

This intermediate section may depart from the discussion on Tehrāni's music career, nevertheless it helps to understand the next passage where I discuss issues in relation to the criticisms applied to Iranian music and Tehrāni's innovations in *tombak* playing. In addition, this section provides a grounding to the comprehension of the situation of Iranian music in the period after the Revolution and especially the discourse related to the crisis of the Iranian identity in the 1970s, and the role of Iranian music in reaffirming Iranian identity after the Revolution (discussed in chapter five).

The innovations in Iranian music into the 1970s were accepted with enthusiasm, but voices expressing the "wrongdoings" in relation to music began to be heard in the 1960s, becoming more pronounced in the next decade.¹⁸³ The problem that now emerged had to do with another qualitative separation of music - familiar in other parts of the world: the distinction between artistically valued music and the kind of commercial, less artistic work that skilled artists tend to regard as low-brow. This time the distinction between "high" and "low" art was not dictated from outside the musical sphere, but it came from within, from the milieu of the musicians themselves (after the issue came to the surface, courtesy of western ethnomusicologists) and from the music institutions that surrounded them. Again, the debate was far from new or unusual, but it is especially interesting here in the way it developed in this particular environment. It can be compared to the case of Egypt, where in the 1932 Cairo Congress of Arab Music it was the European delegation that defended the preservation of musical tradition and not the other way around (Racy 1990:68-91).

¹⁸³ See Fayāz (1988), Nooshin (2005a) and Miller (1999).

The Centre took a leading role in this debate. According to Miller's descriptions (loyal both to the Centre and to its administer Dāriush Safvat),¹⁸⁴ there was a friction between the Centre and the Ministry of Art and Culture, the radio, and Conservatory of National Music (Conservatory, hereafter) (1999:29-36). The central point of the controversy prevailing among the most prodigious music establishments in the 1970s appears to have unraveled on two axes.¹⁸⁵ The first relates to westernization and thus the jeopardy of Iranian music, while the second was concerned with the proliferation and circulation of music by inept and unskilled musicians. These issues made ideas about originality, authenticity and preservation - as the name of the Centre implies - very popular among Iranian musicians, who saw themselves as maintaining the integrity of Iranian art music.

According to Rezā Fayāz, a similar stance of the "traditional" musicians, preoccupied with issues of originality, authenticity and purity, was evident from the 1960s and 1970s (1998).¹⁸⁶ Borumand appears as the dominant figure to promote these concepts, as he considered himself to be descended from a lineage of teachers with "pure" blood (Fayāz 1998:95, 96).¹⁸⁷ Talā'i describes how once, in a conference at the Shirāz Arts Festival, Borumand made a comparison between a pure-bred horse and music in relation to authenticity. Talā'i: "He said that, "When we say an original/pure [*asil*] horse, we refer to a horse that has pure blood, his geneology and race are clear" and in this way he defended authentic music and the word "pure" [*'asil*]" (Talā'i 1998:155). Moreover, Iranian music has, among its many names (see introduction chapter) the labels *musiqi-ye asil* (pure, authentic music), *musiqi-ye sonnati* (traditional music) and *musiqi-ye melli* (national music).

According to Fayāz the quest for origins in Iranian music was "imported" in the 1960s and 1970s (Fayāz 1998:94). He has shown that in relation to the "identity" of Iranian music, it was not the music experts, the music critics, the listeners or the heads of different music institutions in Iran that brought this subject to the surface. These people, speaking from various points of view, as he says, were rather "translating the

¹⁸⁴ Safvat's zeal with "pure" *radif*, "authentic" music tradition, spiritual values, purity of body and mind of the musician, the division between traditionalism as opposed to modernism, technique as opposed to the essence of *hāl*, prevails in his theory and actions, and although is very sincere, it seem to be rather absolute. For Safvat point of view on Iranian music see During and Mirabdolbaghi (1991:231-249), Miller (1999:13-46), Safvate and Caron (1964).

¹⁸⁵ For the tension between these two oppositions good quotations from musicians and officials are provided by Miller (1999:29-36, 41-42).

¹⁸⁶ Many contemporary Iranian scholars are being critical of the concepts of authenticity and purity, see for example Darvishi (1998), Talā'i (1998) and Fayāz (1998).

¹⁸⁷ See Nettl (1992:173-176) who provides Borumand's biography and depicts the latter's ideology with regards to the authenticity of the *radif*. See also Fayāz (1998) who discusses Borumand's noble family lineage.

works of western scholars”, who were the first to underline the need to “preserve the authenticity of Iranian music” (Fayāz 1998:96).¹⁸⁸ Talā’i believes that the term *sonnati* (traditional) was introduced to Iranian music in the 1970s by western musicologists and by Iranian musicologists that had studied abroad, as translation of the French word *Traditionnelle* (1998:154). He states: “This term was introduced to us by Europeans and, for example, they said this is your “traditional” [*sonatti*] music” (ibid.). Kiāni also believes that the term *melli* (national) when applied in relation to music is a translation from the imported word *nāsiōnāl* (national) (1998a:158).¹⁸⁹ It seems that all these terms that were applied to Iranian music and became readily accepted by Iranian musicians, indicate not only the development of Iranian music, but also the quest to define Iranian identity.

Music revivals, imbued with concepts of authenticity and preservation, offered an alternative to western hegemony, but at the same time they were the result of this hegemony (Nooshin, personal communication, January 2007).¹⁹⁰ For instance, “core revivalists” (to use the term proposed by Livingston) believed that the *iqā’* rhythmic mode was in danger of disappearing, because of the introduction of western rhythmic theory. They had re-discovered the lost, authentic, rhythmic mode of Iranian music (the *iqā’*) and attempted to re-create it and to disseminate their ideas through pedagogical methods, and continued their work in the years after the Revolution.¹⁹¹

In any case, the 1960s and 1970s were in general a period of crisis for the Iranian identity.¹⁹² The critical discourse on westernization that arose with regards to music was also expressed in other socio-cultural domains. The term “Westoxication” (*qarbzādegi*), introduced in the 1960s Jalal Al-e Ahmad, was expressing a powerful criticism of the cultural westernized ideals promoted by the Pahlavi’s that were considered to put in peril the Iranian consciousness and identity (see Mottahedeh 2004:296-330). The policies of modernization and westernization were seen as a mere imitation of the West and as symbols incompatible with Iranian cultural values and identity (ibid.).

¹⁸⁸ Even the formation of the Centre for Preservation and Propagation of Iranian music could be considered a western phenomenon, similar to the model of “nationalism and antiquarianism” found in western institution of folk festivals and archives (Nettl 1978:179).

¹⁸⁹ See Fazeli (2003:177-179) who discusses that in the 1980s, “nationalism” was viewed as an ideology imported from Europe and was seen as contrary to Islam and the Revolution. This view was not shared by the majority of Iranians, but was in accordance with Khomeini and a minority of government supporters. Still, the term *musiqi-ye melli* remains in use to this day.

¹⁹⁰ For a comprehensive study and model for music revivals, see Livingston (1999).

¹⁹¹ A leading figure in reviving and the theory of the *iqā* rhythmic modes is Majid Kiāni, who believes that the *iqā*’ disappeared about 70/80 years ago due to the import of western aesthetics, concepts and notation. For his view on this subject see Kiāni (1998b:117-142).

¹⁹² See Nooshin (2005a:231-235), Keddie (2003:189-190) and Mottahedeh (2004:296-299, 307-316).

By the late 1976 and early 1977, when it became apparent that the Iranian economy was in recession, public dissatisfaction grew and became increasingly critical of the conspicuous western-style consumption practiced by the elite (Keddie 2003:168-69). As Keddie notes, the Shahs' inclination toward western culture and commodities brought a "traditionalists reaction", which often took an "Islamic form", even among those who considered themselves to be at one time "Westernizers" (ibid. 169).

Moreover, although during the period of the Pahlavi regime (1925-1979) the attempts to reduce the power of the Shi'a clergy and to secularize the state were included in the policies of both Shah's, Islam still played an important role in Iranian politics, as it did in society and culture, including music. Religious restrictions on music, as well as theological dictates regarding its legitimacy, were always present in Iranian culture and society and were rooted deeply in the history of the Iranian people. According to Nettl:

The proscription of music is still felt. On certain Muslim holidays, only the music department at the University of Tehran is closed, while other departments continue their work. On such days, musicians on the way to work or rehearsal dare not appear on certain streets with instrument cases (Nettl 1978:153).

In conclusion, during the period of Reza Shah, major and often divergent tendencies emerged in the Iranian society: economic growth followed by crisis, imitation and also renunciation of Western ideals, a turn to "an idealized Islamic past" (Keddie 1003:178), and a disempowerment of the clergy, together with the gradual consolidation of the Islamic political movement. This situation brought about ideological multi-polarity within the Iranian society, prominent also within the domain of Iranian music.

Still, Iranian music was not a mere reflection of its own cultural context, isolated from the Iranian political discourse. Rather, it embodied the tensions expressed in other socio-political domains (Nooshin 2005a:237). The discourse generated in the political life with regards to the Iranian identity, was also engendered in the music milieu by the music intelligentsia. And, as Nooshin points out, in the 1970s music "provided a forum" for expression of "contesting visions of what it means to be Iranian" (2005a:237). This shows the dynamics of a living music culture and the central position that Iranian music held, directly or indirectly, in the quest for the redefinition of Iranian identity.

Criticisms of Tehrāni's Playing?

Given their strong western orientation, Pāyvar¹⁹³, Sabā, Dehlavi¹⁹⁴, and Khāleqi¹⁹⁵ - Vaziri's¹⁹⁶ faithful adherents - were "on the opposite side" of the Centre.¹⁹⁷ Many scholars and musicians have reported the innovations (often perceived as "wrongdoings") that these personalities brought to Iranian music, among which is westernization.¹⁹⁸ These musicians are also the ones with whom Tehrāni had frequently collaborated and performed, as described in the previous section. However, I have not encountered any extended criticism of his accompaniment or innovations in solo *tombak* or group *tombak*.¹⁹⁹

On the contrary, group *tombak*, playing together with an orchestra, had left a great impression upon many musicians at that time. According to Talā'i, one of the students at the Centre:

It was something very interesting. At that time I was very young...Dehlavi had composed a concertino for *tombak*. Hossein Tehrāni performed it together with his students and with Esmā'ili. We also played, and we liked it very much... we thought that Karajan had come to Iran. It was the National Orchestra performing, with instruments such as violin, violoncello, oboe, flute, *santur*, *tār* and 10, 12 *tombaks*. It was a large orchestra (Interview, July 2005).

An important "*tombak* piece" of the late 1950s was *Fāntazi Barāye Gruh Tombak va Orkestr* [A Fantasia for *Tombak* Group and Orchestra]. The percussive part of the piece was composed for group *tombak* by Tehrāni, over which Dehlavi composed the melody. Perhaps it is the only melody created for a pre-composed piece for group *tombak*. It was performed for the first time in December 1958 in Farhang Concert Hall by the Philharmonic Association of Tehrān. Since then it has been performed many times, both on the television and in various concert halls. [Listen CD I #1]. This

¹⁹³ Pāyvar begun teaching at the Conservatory in 1959, and was a music Director of the Ministry of Culture in the early 1970s.

¹⁹⁴ Dehlavi was a director of National Conservatory of Music from 1962 until 1971.

¹⁹⁵ Khāleqi, the director at the National Conservatory of Music from 1949-1959, also worked for the music department of Radio Iran from 1940 until his death in 1965. Khāleqi was the music director of the radio orchestra *Golhā*.

¹⁹⁶ Vaziri too had performed the duties of administrator at the music section of Radio Iran.

¹⁹⁷ Their traditional music education and their high esteem of Iranian music should not be underestimated.

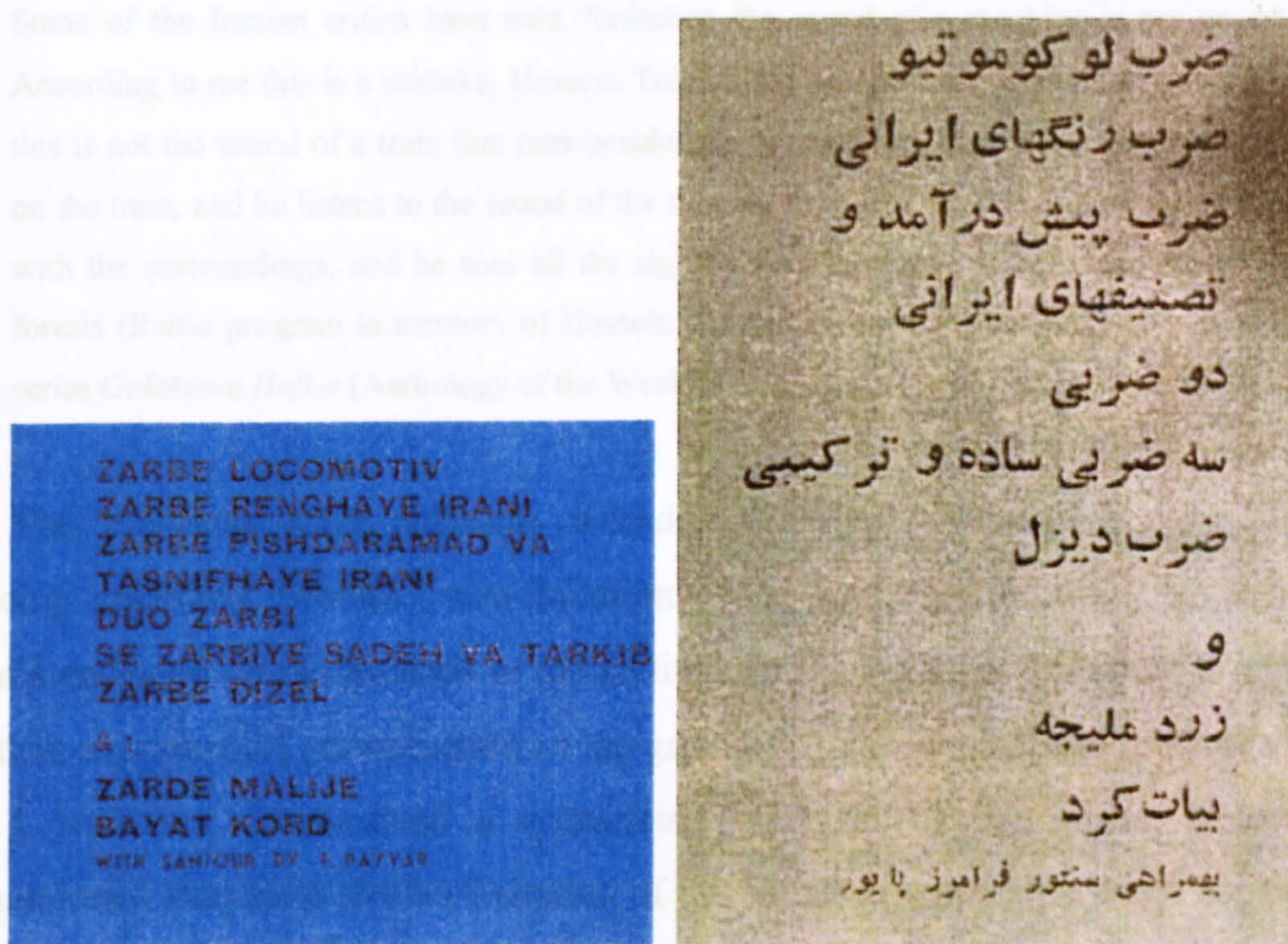
¹⁹⁸ Among the scholars reporting this are: Zonis (1973:185-201), Khāleqi (1999b), During (2002:861), Nooshin (1996a:127), Miller (1992:35-37).

¹⁹⁹ Except perhaps Kiāni's general remark regarding rhythmic accompaniment in Iranian music, that has been westernized and has substituted the *iqā'* rhythms.

particular performance was recorded in 2001, with Dehlavi conducting the National Music Orchestra (*Orkestr Musiqi-ye Melli*), and Esmā'ili playing with his *tombak* ensemble. The piece belongs to the genre of “National Music” and its western influences are very prominent. In the compact disc notes, Dehlavi states that “beside classical and folk music we need orchestral pieces to overcome the difficulties arisen by monotonous repetitions of older forms” (original in English, Dehlavi 2001).

I have heard many times Rajabi criticizing Tehrāni, as well as acknowledging his contribution to *tombak* playing. During our *tombak* lessons he would sometimes recall his negative judgments of Tehrāni for playing his *riz-e por* wrongly.²⁰⁰ Rajabi was at that time ten years old. I have also heard him criticizing often Tehrāni’s solo *tombak* piece known as *Lokomotiv*. [Listen CD I #2].²⁰¹

Picture 14: The contents of the Hossein’s Tehrāni’s *Taknavāz-e Tombak [Tombak Soloist]*, as written on the back and front cover in English and Persian.



²⁰⁰ A type of roll.

²⁰¹ The *Lokomotiv* (also known as *Qatār* which means “a train”) was published for the first time in Tehrāni’s LP *Taknavāz-e Tombak [Tombak Soloist]*, in the series *Taknavāzan Musiqi-ye Sonnatī-ye Irān [Master Performers of Persian Traditional Music]* in the late 1960s. On the one side of the LP, there are solo pieces for *tombak* and one *tasnif* sung by Tehrāni himself accompanied on his *tombak*. On the other side it is written that he is being accompanied by the *santur* of Pāyvar. This is the only example I have encountered in which a *tombak* player is accompanied by a melodic instrumentalist.

According to Rajabi's ideas, imitating the sound of the train is not an art. He remarks that, if a few bars are removed or even displaced in the composition it will not really change the piece, therefore this lack of structure is not an art form or a creation deserving any artistic value.

It should also be noted about Tehrāni's *Lokomotiv* that, while it is played by many young *tombak* players, who learn the piece from the recording, it has not, to my knowledge, ever been notated. I believe that this is a sign which indicates the lack of strict rhythmic structure, that is to say, that there is no gradual distinctive rhythmic sequence from one bar to another. One could say that *Lomotiv* is an "open" piece: when performing it, young players are not at all bothered about bar sequence; they often omit or add more than a few bars as well as other playing techniques, according to their mood and dexterity.

Similar concerns with regards to "imitation" were admitted in a radio program devoted to Tehrāni's life in 1974, where the presenter (not specified) noted that:

Some of the Iranian critics have said "imitating the sound of a machine is not an art." According to me this is a mistake. Hossein Tehrāni did not imitate the sound of a machine, this is not the sound of a train that runs besides us, because the listener feels himself being on the train, and he listens to the sound of the running train like a radar coming into contact with the surroundings, and he sees all the sights outside, bridges, tunnels, mountains and forests (Radio program in memory of Hossein Tehrāni broadcasted on Radio Iran in 1974, series *Golchin-e Haft-e* [Anthology of the Week]).

The presenter here, although defending Tehrāni's innovative piece, is not convincing regarding Tehrāni's non-imitation of the sound of the train. He validates Tehrāni's endeavor on the grounds of the feelings and images that this piece brings out, rather than as acoustical phenomenon on the grounds of its technical and musical virtues.

I have not encountered a convincing criticism of this piece, except the aforementioned statement that an imitation of the sound of a machine is not considered by some to be an art.²⁰² It is interesting that the key words in this criticism are "imitation" (*taqlid*) and "art" (*honar*). Regarding imitation in Iranian music, a number of things could be mentioned. First, imitation is a valid musical form which may be found in the accompaniment; second, imitation is used as an instructing method for instrumental learning; third, naturalist imitation of external natural sounds is a practice often followed by musicians in Central Asia and the Middle East. John Baily, for

²⁰² A view which would be considered obsolete by most contemporary art theorists.

example, has shown that human imitation of birdsongs is a common feature in the Herati music performance, and that sounds of nature are often a source of inspiration (Baily 1996:172). Similarly, Habil Aliyev from Azerbaijan is also known to play on his *kamānche* a representation of the cry of the cock.

It may be that the critique against *Lokomotiv* is a “hidden” criticism against Tehrāni’s innovations in music. Perhaps then, it would be a legitimate argument to say that he was accused for “non-imitating” his predecessors, for crossing the boundaries of “traditional” *tombak* playing.

The word *honar* (art) is also a term quite broad, complex, diachronic and perhaps idiosyncratic, especially in Islamic cultures. It seems that the critics of Tehrāni chose “on purpose” such a grandiose term, not easily to be dealt with. As mentioned, music in Iran has been an object of disapproval on the part of conservative Shi’a clergy, while in Sufism it is considered to be a link in communion with God. The term is also connected, not only with perceptions of what music is, how should it sound, in what context should it be performed, how an art tradition should be passed down, but also with ideas of what does it mean to be an artist (*honarmand*) and how should a true artist behave.²⁰³ Moreover, other related concepts to that of the *honarmand* (artist), like *ostād* and *musiqidān* (music erudite/knower) are again a complex area of discussion and will be dealt with in another section.

In conclusion, Tehrāni’s *Lokomotiv* was not criticized as a unique acoustical phenomenon, but rather as an aesthetic form that was judged according to the degree it trespasses conceptualization about art, music and the tradition of his times.

In this context, the *Lokomotiv* can be considered as the first autonomous solo piece for *tombak* that provoked a discourse regarding the “position” of the *tombak* in Iranian music, whose role was considered to be almost exclusively accompaniment, and marked a new direction for *tombak* playing - the *tombak* solo - as a more autonomous and independent genre in Iranian music.²⁰⁴ Beginning with the *Lokomotiv*, and proceeding with other clearly delineated solo pieces for *tombak*, this instrument acquired a more autonomous state from its previously submissive role of mere accompaniment of the voice and the other melodic instruments.²⁰⁵

²⁰³ See for example notion of “art music” and “traditional artist” as expressed by Kiāni and Safvate (During 2002:857).

²⁰⁴ Tehrāni had another solo *tombak* piece, the *Dizel*, which represents an imitation of the sound of an electric sewing machine. Today, the *Dizel* is not as popular as the *Lokomotiv*.

²⁰⁵ In the next chapter I will show how the *tombak* players separated themselves from the domination of the vocal form, in the context of the tendency of the music instruments to disassociate from the practice that wanted them subservient to the vocal music.

A rather notable fact is that some well-known Indian and Pakistani *tabla* players have also represented the sound of the train on their instruments.²⁰⁶ They use the *relā* genre to play train sounds in their solo pieces. Interestingly, in India, *relā* also means “rail” of a train (John Baily, personal communication). *Relā* also denotes “a torrent” or “a rushing stream” and Kippen describes it, in its most general sense, as “theme-and-variation compositions played at great speed” (Kippen 1988:178).²⁰⁷

According to Lybarger, the association of *relā* with trains is quite recent, and appears to be connected with the recent changes in *tabla* solo performance practice within the past thirty years, but also with the descend of traditional genres in order to appeal to and communicate with non-specialist audiences (Lybarger 2000/2001).

Concerning the *tabla*, Walker notes that the sonic characteristics of the *relā* appear to relate with fluid sounds in nature, such as a rushing wind, falling rain or flooding water, a moving train or a running horse, and she remarks:

Why a train and not a helicopter? Why not a river or a flood? Why not an earthquake? From an infinite number of opportunities for sonic mimicry, these musicians have chosen to talk about trains? (Walker 2001).

I would not be able to answer her question in relation to the *tabla*, but with regards to the *tombak* I would say that the spatial and acoustical properties of the instrument, but also the particular playing techniques of Tehrāni, which enables a variety of sounds, are preconditions for such creative work. For example, his playing techniques demonstrate a variety of strokes such as *tom*, *bak*, *jaru*, *riz-e por* and a variety of slapping strokes with the palm of the hand on the skin of the *tombak* in a rigorous and composite manner.²⁰⁸

One could also say that these musicians who choose to imitate the sound of trains, selected signs of their times that represent progress, modernization, novelty and inventiveness, but also new modes of production and transportation, issues that are relevant ultimately with the daily life of the people.

After Tehrāni, while *tombak* players continued their experimentation in duet and group *tombak*, and particularly in solo *tombak*, no *tombak* player has made public experimentations, “continuing” Tehrāni’s *Lokomtiv*, until recently.

²⁰⁶ Lybarger (2000/2001) has recorded three live concerts with well known *tabla* players of our era, to play the sounds of the train: Yogesh Samsi from Bombay, Tari Khan, a Pakistani *tabla* player and a duet of Zakir Hussein and his father Allah Rakha. See <<http://www.discourses.ca/v2n2a1.html>> [Accessed 06/08/2005].

²⁰⁷ Other definitions for *relā* from the Delhi and Lucknow tradition are available in Kippen (1988:178).

²⁰⁸ Refer to Appendix 3, for explanation of these strokes.

Afgah has produced in 2003 a work called *Peydāyesh* [Genesis], where he has mixed the sounds of 18 *tombaks* of various sizes.²⁰⁹ All the sounds generated on the *tombak* are performed by him. He created four pieces, in which one could hear sounds of war and sounds of a jungle, such as waterfalls, thunder, cries of birds, animal sounds, bombing and gunfire. [Listen CD I #3, piece *Hayāt* [Life]]. Perhaps for the *tabla* it is also a matter of time in relation to individuals' interests to find representations of sounds other than that of the train.²¹⁰

While for most *tombak* players the *tombak* is principally a percussion instrument, Afgah considers it to be first of all a "sound producing device". These thoughts were the platform which enabled him to develop the so called "effective playing" (*efectiv budan* or *kārhā-ye efectiv*) (performed both in metric and non-metric structures). According to Afgah the characteristics of his style can be found in: his dynamics/nuance, the technique itself, his physical ability, speed and endurance in speed, his use of rhythmic counterpoint and a rich variety of sound colours. The variety of sound colours is enabled both by the structure and the material of the instrument, as well as by physical movement: changing finger techniques, speed, contact point with the instrument; strength of movement execution and so on. In addition to these qualities one could list clarity of sound, sonority, rhythmic precision, fluency in motor-execution. The following dialogue illuminates important aspects of Afgah's "effective playing" in his own words:

Alexandra: Your playing style is very different from that of the other *tombak* players, could you explain a little bit about that?

Afgah: Your question is very difficult to answer.²¹¹

Alexandra: For example, what are the characteristics of your playing?

Afgah: One of the characteristics of my work lies in the sphere of the effects produced on the instrument. I use many sound colours [*rāngomizi sedāi*]. The most important factor in music is the melody. In *tombak* playing, we have no melody, we have no harmony, but we have sound

²⁰⁹ During our conversations and interviews Afgah would never boast about his recording accomplishments, however it is important to mention that his work *Peydāyesh* [Genesis] was published by *Hermes Records*, a growing Iranian record label formed in 2000 whose credo is to promote modern Iranian music and young talented artists in Iran and abroad. For reference, visit the website of the company at <<http://www.hermesrecords.com>> [accessed on 17/03/2007].

²¹⁰ Baily though mentions that recently in Afghanistan there has developed a new style of *tabla* playing imitating the sound of gunfire (2004:25).

²¹¹ Here the question is "difficult" not so much because he has to explain his playing technique, but because, out of modesty, he is reluctant to compare himself to other *tombak* players. Afgah's behaviour in this matter is contrary to what Nettl describes in his chapter "I Am the Greatest: Ordinary and Exceptional Musicians" in *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Thirty-one Issues and Concept* (2005), who asserts that many Iranian musicians describe themselves as experts which is "in contrast to their otherwise deferential manner, modesty, and ceremonial politeness" (2005:178).

colour and rhythmic counterpoint. I have been always thinking - and saying - that whatever sounds this instrument can bring out I ought to bring it out. I would say to myself: "whatever you *think* this instrument can play, you have to be able to play it."

Then there is the technique: it differs from most players not only in terms of speed [the ability to play fast], but also in terms of endurance in speed [the ability to play fast for long time]. I am always in search of an enduring technique [a technique that can allow him to play fast for long periods of time]. You know, speed is not a simple matter; it is very difficult, very complex. Perhaps someone can play fast. But it is one thing to play fast for two bars and another thing to play fast for fifteen minutes (Interview, July 2002).

Another important aspect of his playing-style is that Afgah places a great importance on accentuation and he controls the volume of the sound of the *tombak* very efficiently. For him, *nuans* (nuance) is one of the most important factors, and to a degree synonymous to musicality (*muzikalite*).²¹² The use of the "echo" sound effect is one of Afgah's emblems in his playing style and exhibits his control of the volume of the sound.

Afgah: The effect of an echo [*pezhvāk*] is in all my works.

Alexandra: Why?

Afgah: I like it very much, it has an atmosphere ofFor its time it is very progressive. When I first performed *pezhvāk* in 1372-1373 [1994], every *tombak* player was performing 4/4, 2/4, 6/4.

Alexandra: How did you discover *pezhvāk*?

Afgah: There is a very old well in the south of Shirāz, in the old part of the city. The sound there reverberates. Or in our mosques, the sound reverberates. But, the *pezhvāk* is not only for the *tombak*, it can be performed on the *tār* as well (Interview, July 2002).

Afgah's work is an innovation that exceeds the current practice of *tombak* playing, thus being ahead of its time, and at the same time it is a work characteristic of his particular times. Besides its merits, his work has also been criticized. Some *tombak* players say that "he does not [really] play *the tombak*," while others believe that he has yet to find a way to fit his innovation in Iranian music. Afgah also utilizes this playing style in solo and in accompaniment of experimental forms of music, called "mystic music" ('*Erfani*). [Listen CD I #4].²¹³ However, this style of playing has not been yet fully developed within the accompaniment modes of the more traditional genres of Iranian music.

²¹² For Afgah, *muzikalite* (musicality) depends on many factors, among which are nuance, rhythm and playing technique.

²¹³ The piece is called *Sarāqāz* [Beginning], from the cassette *Zoq-e Masti* [Scarred Drunkenness].

Afgah on Tradition

From the depths of my tradition I looked towards the modern...it is not that I have made an electronic *tombak*, but the sounds that I perform are more modern than the instrument itself, the themes [that I play] are more modern, but my instrument is completely elementary, my eyes and my ears are directed towards modern sounds, i.e. sounds that are not from the culture of this instrument. Today I listen to music from all around the world, what did Tehrani listen during his time? (Interview, February 2003).

Afgah's playing style is becoming gradually very popular in Iran. And while he works and lives predominantly in Shirāz he frequently travels to work in Tehrān, the center of music activities. His influence is great especially among the young Tehrani *tombak* players who employ more and more this playing style, predominantly in their solo playing.

To conclude, according to my knowledge, there are no other available descriptive accounts or criticisms against Tehrani's work. This is one more indication of the limited interest of scholars and musicians with regards to the role and importance of the instrument and its player in Iranian music. In general, though, it should be stressed that some of the criticisms applied to Iranian music before the Revolution were pertinent to *tombak* playing, given that it already was an indispensable part of the Iranian music milieu.²¹⁴

²¹⁴ For example, Kiāni's criticism with regards to the application of western rhythmic theory in Iranian music and the abandonment of the *iqā'* rhythms is an indication of a criticism applied to Iranian music, but pertinent also to *tombak* playing. See Kiāni (1998b:117-142) for his interpretation of the *iqā'* rhythmic mode in Iranian music.

Chapter four: Towards the Independence and Autonomy of Instruments: The Rise of the “Instrumental Specialist”²¹⁵

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to give an account of all the different manifestations of instrumental music - presented in performance practice, recordings, teaching manuals - as they flourished in the 20th century in order to show the dynamics that influenced the development of *tombak* playing in new directions whereby its participation in Iranian music was strengthened, together with its aesthetic contributions, its playing technique, and its repertoire, as well as the birth of new forms of *tombak* playing, such as solo *tombak* and group *tombak*.

The disassociation of musical instruments from the practice that wanted them subservient to vocal music, and the development of their own potential outside the powerful domination of vocal forms are characteristic of the history of Iranian music in the 20th century and this analysis is founded on Nooshin’s speculations (1996a:163-167). In the beginning of the chapter I show the strong association of poetry with music as well as with other arts. I then discuss the proliferation of instrumental music in the Pahlavi regime, under more liberal conditions, in relative freedom from religious restriction.

In addition, I investigate the development of instrumental *radif* in the 20th century, which represents the propensity of the performers to immerse themselves in the practices of enriching and disseminating the instrumental repertoire rather than the vocal one. Performance practices are also reflective of a turn in Iranian music; they are characterized by the growth of instrumental music, and at the same time by the reduction of the vocal sections of *āvāz*.

I discuss the gradual independence and autonomy that the instruments and their performers gain from former hegemony of the vocal form, developing their own technical potentialities and a particular music repertoire, which brings new trajectories in instrumental creativity. In this music context, *tombak* playing flourished with the *tombak* players discovering and stretching the potentialities of their music instrument by emancipating the *tombak* from its accompanying role to that of a solo instrument.

²¹⁵ The term “instrumental specialists” is borrowed from Nooshin (1996a:112).

Particular attention is given to the first teaching manuals that introduced western concepts and methods of acquiring technical skills and physical dexterity. The concept of virtuosity is also considered, both theoretically, and in relation to Iranian music and the *tombak*. It is approached as an additional driving force to expand the technical proficiency of the players, and thus the potential of each particular instrument. The concept and practice of virtuosity will be also connected with the status of the Iranian musician as such.

The disentanglement of music instruments in general from their subservient role to vocal forms has affected also *tombak* players and *tombak* playing. While in the late Qajar period the *tombak* players (*zarbgirs*) were at the same time *tasnif* and *zarbi* singers, on the one hand, and *tombak* performers, on the other hand, in the course of the 20th century these two identities came to be separated. I examine the reasons for this separation, in the context of a broader view of the development of instrumental music. I then outline the music profile of the *tombak* player today, showing that this separation has empowered and introduced a clearer identity for the *tombak* player, as an “instrumental specialist”.

Poetry and Music

Art, poetry and music are closely linked in the Middle East, and as During observes, for many centuries the separate arts were not clearly distinguished, while many artists practiced poetry together with calligraphy, music, and painting (During, in During and Mirabdolbaghi 1991:153). It seems though that poetry is the all-pervasive art, as it is revealed in numerous works of painters, calligraphers and musicians (*ibid.*). There is also a close affinity between poetry and music evident not only in scholarly works but also generally in music practice, an affinity whose aspects vary from the “purely” musical and historical to the spiritual and philosophical.²¹⁶

Mas’udieh has shown three connections between music and poetry in Iranian music (cited in Miller 1999:112). First, there is a link between poetic meter and melodic

²¹⁶ On the close relation between art, poetry and music see During, in During and Mirabdolbaghi (1991:152-175).

rhyme.²¹⁷ Second, there is a link between linguistic intonation and melodic profile. Third, the musical expression is influenced by the poetic content (ibid.).

With respect to Iranian music, statements about the interdependence of music and poetry are sometimes contradictory. According to Borumand, “there is definitely no separation between them” (cited in Miller 1999:112). On the other hand, Khāleqi, while accepting the close relationship between poetry and music and the need for poetry in music in order for the latter to express itself, he admits that “the more the science of music develops, the less it necessitates poetry” (Khāleqi 1999a:366-367). The music practice from the early 20th century shows that the close affinity between poetry and music is fragile and that there is a strong inclination to instrumental rather than vocal music practice.

The Influence of Religion

The proliferation of instrumental music should be attributed, at least partly, to the more liberal music atmosphere during the Pahlavi regime, and the relatively restricted power of the religious authorities. As mentioned earlier, music in Iran has suffered from repressive policies especially by the Shi’a clergy who drew a distinction between cantillation, an unaccompanied vocal form of the Quran, on the one hand, and music, which is associated with musical instruments, on the other hand. As Caton remarks, “according to this definition, music could not be performed on certain Muslim holy days” and in general the music of the *radif* was performed in private and well protected locations, such as aristocratic homes and the court (2002:132). Iranian music was influenced by religion not only in terms of its performance-context, but also in its formal properties (ibid.131), which is most evident in vocal music.²¹⁸

Under the Pahlavi regime, music, extricated somewhat from religious constrictions, was performed much more openly than ever before, giving the musicians greater opportunity for expression and innovation. And although music and musicians

²¹⁷ “Melodic Rhyme” is not a suitable term in this context. A more precise expression would be “melodic structure”.

²¹⁸ Many scholars (During, in During and Mirabdolbaghi 1991:171, Blum 1980:539, Tsuge 1974:29, and Khāleqi 1991a:92, 93) have suggested that the vocal music of the *radif* was influenced by *ta’zieh* religious recitation and singing during the late Qajar period. However, the performance of the *ta’zieh*, belonging to the *Muharram* tradition, was viewed as antithetical with the ideas of modernization and was forbidden by Reza Shah, until its resurgence in the mid 1960s. For more information on *ta’zieh* drama see Chelkowski (1991) and Benjamin (1982).

were largely under government patronage, under which music institutions and festivals influenced the practice of teaching, the performance-context and the repertoire, music was nevertheless emancipated to a degree from religious constraints. In its turn, the proliferation of music activities contributed to the spreading and the development of instrumental music with all its innovations, as well as helping the expansion of other music genres.²¹⁹

***Radif* and Performance: Expressions of Instrumental Autonomy**

A number of western scholars have reported the increase of instrumental music in Iran, but have rather different approaches.²²⁰ Nooshin, for example, although accepts the “shift from a vocal to an instrumental-based tradition” states unambiguously:

Whilst instrumentalists may have felt freer to explore the potential of their instruments independently of the voice, however, this has not necessarily implied greater creative freedom in relation to the *radif*, but simply different ways of moving on and creating with the instrument (Nooshin 1996a:167).

Jean During gives us the concept of “autonomy”. He notes that “it was in the modern era that musical forms developed separately from poetic and metric forms”, adding that “The *radif*, though it is also a vocal form (used in the *ghazal*), finds its powers in instrumentation and gradually gains its autonomy from the word” (During 2002:862). Whereas for Nooshin instrumental creativity *per se* does not necessarily presuppose creativity with reference to the *radif*,²²¹ During makes direct connections between instrumentation and the *radif*, stating that the former empowers the latter, progressively attaining freedom from vocal forms. In general, the concept of autonomy, which one

²¹⁹ Caton also remarks that, those musicians who have moved to Europe and North America, “freed from the constraints of government, religion, and the older musical tradition have introduced innovations in form, rhythm, and performance style” (2002:131,132).

²²⁰ The disassociation of instrumental from vocal music, and the rise of the first during the 20th century, is not pertinent only to Iranian art music. Neuman describes the separation of instrumental from vocal music and the dominance of instrumental music, starting with the devalorization of Hindu texts in Muslim performances (1985:106-107). Again for North Indian music see discussion provided by Clayton (2000:137-152). For the Arab world see Qassim Hassan (2002). For a “taste” of individual musicians who disentangled themselves from the domination of the voice and developed an instrumental genre for their instruments see O’Connell (2002) for Turkey and During (2002:907-908) for Uzbekistan.

²²¹ See Nooshin (1996a:139-143) for more detailed explanation generally about “creativity within the *radif*”.

can often encounter in the literature, seems to emerge, almost as a matter of course, from the study of the musical developments in this particular context.

I first began to think about the autonomy hypothesis of the *tombak*, taking into consideration the development of solo, duet and group *tombak*. However, after an interview with Mohammad Rezā Fayāz²²² while conducting my fieldwork in Iran, I became more aware that the autonomy hypothesis was pertinent to many Iranian music instruments, and not only the *tombak*.²²³ During our interview he spoke straightforwardly about the independence/autonomy (*esteqlāl*) of the Iranian music instruments from the great influence/dependence of poetry. Fayāz gave his own analysis of autonomy, which I consider particularly interesting. A summary of his ruminations is given below: He believes that Iranian music was under the shadow of Iranian poetry until 70/80 years ago, which coincides with the time when Colonel Vaziri returned from Europe to Iran, and from that time on he sees music separating itself from poetry but still remaining greatly influenced by it. Influenced by revivalist theories promoted by Kiāni, he concludes that up to that time the *iqā'* rhythmic modes were used, surviving from the time of Al-Fārābi (10th century). In his own words: “looking at rhythm was looking at *iqā'*” (*negāh-e be ritm negāh-e iqā'-i bud*) (Interview, January 2003). But he also considers that the *iqā'* system which was used in *tombak* playing was also influenced by the *'aruz* system that existed in poetry. For him, “Hossein Tehrāni was positioned between two cultures,” on the one hand influenced by the *iqā'* system and on the other by modern developments in music, where rhythm was shaped according to western conceptions (*ibid.*).²²⁴ He further notes:

This emancipation of the *tombak* from the influential shadow of literature began with Hossein Tehrāni, but [regarding] those who could [realize] completely the potential of the instrument itself with a kind of independence – that is, as music in its own right, we could refer to two persons; one is Esmā'ili, who [is] very restricted, and again he is feeble as far as the technique goes; then Rajabi, who is very powerful and developed further the potential [of the *tombak*]...(Interview, January 2003).

²²² Rezā Fayāz is a *santur* player, composer, and intellectual with several publications on Iranian music in *Māhur Music Quarterly*. He composed the music for *Dar Gozar* [Transition] and *Dar Khāne-ye Āftāb* [In the Sun of Sunshine] in which Hamid Khabbāzi, Pedrām Khāvarzamini, Siāmak Āqāi, and Sa'id Kāmju among other participated.

²²³ The “autonomy” of the instruments emerges also in other regions of the Middle East and India. See for example Poché who speaks about the rise of the *'ud* as a solo instrument in Iraq (2002). See also footnote 220.

²²⁴ I disagree with Rezā Fayāz on the issue of *iqā'* rhythmic modes, as it has been already shown in the second chapter it is doubtful that the *iqā'* system was used in Iranian music in the late Qajar period. However, I would concur with the idea that Tehrāni was in the middle of a transitional period.

According to Fayāz the separation of *tombak* playing from poetry and the independence/autonomy of the *tombak* occurred much later than for other Iranian instruments:

Tombak started its independence later than all [the instruments], that is, the development that we see [in the other music instruments], it starts for example with Mirzā ‘Abdollah, or even it starts with ‘Ali Akbar [Farāhāni], who wanted to probe the potential of the instrument itself and not those potentialities that want the instrument to be only answer [*javāb-guye*] to the poetry, an answer to the singer, a thing which exists in the *radif* (Interview, January 2003).

While the role of the melodic instruments was intertwined with the melodic line of the vocalists, and to a great degree still is, with the rise of instrumental music, and with many performances taking place without necessarily a singer, musical instruments gained more independence and autonomy, with the instrumentalists being free to express themselves and develop the potentialities of their instruments in ways independently of the vocal form. Fayāz sees this movement toward independence in a chain of generations for each instrument, with each musician developing his personal style. For example with regard to the *santur* he says:

When the *santur* for example is imitating the [music] sentence that the singer has sung, we call this *javāb-e āvāz* [an answer to the *āvāz*]. But from the time when the *santur* wanted to separate [itself from poetry], it wanted to see the techniques and the potential that the *santur* itself could have. Āqā-ye Pāyvar, for example, wanted to see how the *santur* itself speaks [*khode santur che juri dāre harf mizane*]. Then one generation later Pāyvar’s work reached Meshkātiān for example, then it went one generation further and it reached Ardevān Kāmkā, who because he has found another autonomy, perhaps one forgets that this was the *santur* that Somā’ Hozur played, whose aims were to play the *santur* only by imitating the expression of the poems of Hāfez (Interview, January 2003).

Elaborating on Fayāz’s ideas, while it is beyond the scope of this study to investigate his hypothesis, according to which the division between poetry and music, on the one hand, and movement towards autonomy of the music instruments, on the other, begins with ‘Ali Akbar Farāhāni or in the beginning of the twentieth century with Vaziri, it may be useful to return first to the *radif* of Iranian music, in order to consider his concepts of “division”, “independence” and “autonomy”.

The *radif* is the repertoire of Iranian art music, consisting of different melodies, *gushe-hā*, classified in seven *dastgāh-hā* and five *āvāz-hā* in the mid-19th century.²²⁵ It is not clear why the *radif* was formulated in this particular way and at this particular time, but it is certain that the musicians prior to the development of the *radif* had their repertoire, with improvised sections and composed material, both for teaching and performance purposes (Nooshin 1996a:77, Talai 2002:865).²²⁶

The first *radif-hā* created in the 19th century were created for music instruments, the *tār* and *setār*.²²⁷ In the 20th century, the masters of Iranian music created their versions of the *radif* and have added new *gushe-hā* to the repertoire (Talā'i 2002:865). Therefore, the process of the formation of the *radif* is not static but a dynamic and ongoing process (ibid.). Moreover, we cannot speak of one *radif* but of versions of the *radif* of Mirzā 'Abdollāh, each belonging to a particular *ostād*, for example the *radif* of Ostād Karimi, or the *radif* of Ostād Ma'rufi.²²⁸

As mentioned in the previous chapter, there is a distinction between the instrumental *radif* (*radif-e sāzi*) and the vocal *radif* (*radif-e āvāzi*), which differ in some respects, but have also many similarities in their repertoire (Nooshin 1996a:90).²²⁹ The instrumental *radif* has substantial precedence in terms of quantity over the vocal *radif*, and especially the *radifs* for the *tār* and the *setār* are numerous in relation to other instruments. At least thirteen versions of the instrumental *radif* have been recorded to this day.²³⁰ However, only two complete vocal *radifs* exist, one sung by 'Adbollāh

²²⁵ Farhat prefers to classify all twelve as *dastgāh* where *dastgāh* signifies both "the title of a grouping of modes" and "the initial mode presented in each group". Thus, for him it is wrong to say that Persian music has twelve modes. He believes that, "there are twelve groupings of modes, the totality of which represents some sixty modes" (1990:19).

²²⁶ For an extensive historical account on the formulation of the *radif* as a repertoire of melodies during the mid-19th century, and its influence by western music, see Nooshin (1996a:76-80). In addition, see Farhat's ideas who speculates that the present system of putting together different modes in one *dastgāh* is a result of a general decline of musical scholarship from the 16th to the 20th century (1990:19-20).

²²⁷ Farāhāni (1810-1855), whom Fayāz recalls as the person with whom perhaps begins the division of music and poetry, is believed to have organized his repertoire into twelve *dastgāhs*, formalizing to a great extent the *radif* that his sons Mirzā 'Abdollāh (1843-1918) and Hossein Qoli (1851-1915) were going to transmit. It is, however, Mirzā 'Abdollāh who is best known for the completion of the organization of the *radif* (Nooshin 1996a:79). 'Farāhāni was a court musician and a distinguished *tār* player, and the *radif* of Mirzā 'Abdollāh, who played both the *tār* and the *setār*, is intended for these instruments.

²²⁸ Nooshin (1996a:81-92) and Nettle (1992:13-15) give an extensive description of the concept of many closely related *radifs*. They note that all *radif-hā* derive from the *radif* of Mirzā 'Abdollāh. See also Lotfi (2005) who discusses the different versions of the *radif* according to the musical instruments they are aimed for.

²²⁹ Nettle and Foltin also refer to the difference between instrumental and vocal *radifs* and instrumental and vocal performances, especially in the *Dastgāh Chahārgāh* (1992: 41-63)

²³⁰ The *radif* for *tār* and *setār* of Mirzā 'Abdollāh as interpreted Nur 'Ali Borumand (performed on the *tār*), Dāriush Talā'i (*setār*), Hossein 'Alizāde (*setār*) and Jamshid 'Andalibi (*ney*); the *radif* of Mussā Ma'rufi interpreted by Soleymān Ruhafzā (*tār*); the *radif* of Āqā Hossein Qoli as performed by his son, 'Ali Ākbar Shahnāzi (*tār*) and by Fakhāmoddoleh Bahzādi; the *radif* of Darvish Khān as interpreted by Mortezā Ney Davud (*tār*); the *radif* for *setār* by Ostād Sa'id Hormozi; the *radif* of Yusef Forutān (*setār*)

Davāmi and the other by his student Mahmud Karimi.²³¹ It is interesting to note that the *radif* of Davāmi was inspired by the *radif* for *tār* and *setār* by Mirzā ‘Abdollah and Hossein Qoli, and on their basis he created the vocal versions of the *dastgāh Rāst-Panjgāh* for his *radif* (Talāi 2002:866).^{232 233} Moreover, in terms of the number of *gushes* in each *dastgāh* the instrumental *radif* is wealthier than the vocal *radif*. Talā’i explains this variation by noting that the instrumental *radif* encompasses all the vocal melodies, but also measured pieces that are intended for the instruments alone, such as the *chahārmezrāb* and the *reng* (2002:866).

In sum, we could observe that the increase of the different versions of the instrumental *radif* in the twentieth century is reflective of the proclivity of its practitioners to concentrate their creativity more on enriching and disseminating the instrumental repertoire rather than the vocal.²³⁴

With the proliferation of the instrumental *radif*, there is also a tendency to include more metric pieces which are gradually being encompassed in its repertoire. Such metric forms are the *pishdarāmad*, the *reng*, the *chahārmezrāb*, which are instrumental pieces, and the *tasnif* that is a vocal form. These pieces, Farhat explains (1990:113), were added in the classical repertoire of the *radif* in the late 19th century and differ from the traditional *radif* in three ways. They are rhythmically stable; they are composed pieces of relatively defined form; and for the most part, those created in the 20th century are composed by well-known contemporary musicians (ibid.).

based on the *radif* of Mirzā ‘Abdollah and Āqā Hossein Qoli. See in the Discography section the details of the published versions of the instrumental *radifs*.

²³¹ The vocal *radifs* recorded to date are the *radif* of ‘Abdollah Davāmi as sung by him; the *radif* of ‘Abdollah Davāmi as interpreted by Mahmud Karimi and Nasrollāh Nasehpur (the latter is only in *dastgāh Shur*); the vocal *radif* interpreted by Mohsen Karamāti, based on the instrumental *radif* of Mirzā ‘Abdollah. See in the Discography section details on the publications of these vocal *radifs*.

²³² According to Lotfi, ‘Abdollah Davāmi who was a friend of Mirzā ‘Abdollah and Hossein Qoli, developed the vocal *radif* with help from Hossein Qoli, but his *radif* is also based on the vocal *radif* of his teacher ‘Ali Khān Nayeb al-Saltāneh (Lotfi 2005:2).

²³³ However, there is no particular *radif* for the *kamānche* and the *ney*. Normally these two instruments learn vocal *radif* since the sound quality of these instruments is more closely associated with the human voice. However, some musicians influenced by the teaching of Borumand started to adopt the *radif* for *tār* of Mirzā ‘Abdollah for the *kamānche* and the *ney* (Asa’di, personal communication, February 2007). The reader can also find in the Discography section (Instrumental *Radifs*) two *radifs*, one for the *ney* by Jamshid ‘Andalibi and one for the *kamānche* by Asqar Bahāri. However, most Iranian scholars do not accept these last two publications to constitute *radif*, but consider them a series of performances in various *dastgāh-hā/āvāz-hā* that have been unreasonably compiled under the label *radif* (Asa’di, personal communication, February 2007).

²³⁴ It is also important to note a “stir” in the domain of the vocal *radif*, prompted by the work of Mohsen Karamāti, a classical singer, who recorded recently a vocal *radif* based on the instrumental *radif* of Mirzā ‘Abdollah. This recording has provoked a great debate among musicians and scholars with regards to its acceptability as a vocal *radif* (Asa’di, personal communication, February 2007). See the details of this recording in the Discography section: Vocal *Radifs* based on Instrumental *Radifs*.

With the rise of instrumental music, the growth of pre-composed pieces with fixed rhythmic form was necessitated by the emergence of group performance in order for the whole ensemble to play in unison. A characteristic paradigm is the invention of the *pishdarāmad* - attributed to Darvish Khān - in the early 20th century, a rhythmic composition for instruments that serves as a prelude to the *dastgāh* performance.

The proliferation of instrumental music is not only evident in the domain of the *radif* - taught and recorded - but also in performance practices. First, with the “break” of the traditional relationship between the instrument and the voice;²³⁵ and then, with the development of the instrumental *tasnif* (Zonis 1973:143). Also, there was the rise of large orchestras and the incorporation of more instrumental pieces, including solos, in one performance.

Farhat notes that, while 19th century masters composed limited numbers of *chahārmezrābs*, contemporary instrumentalists tend to include an ever-increasing number of *chahārmezrābs* in the course of a performance (Farhat 1990:23, 119). Along these lines, Zonis notes: “As the sections of the *pishdarāmad*, *tasnif*, *chahārmezrāb*, and so forth increase in length, so the sections of *āvāz* between them get correspondingly shorter” (1973:148). She continues to say that “this type of performance is a response to more popular taste of the new Iranian audiences, for it favors the increase in familiarity produced by composed pieces, the interest in virtuoso display pieces such as *chahārmezrāb*, and, finally, a desire for a simpler melodic style” (ibid).

Recording practices of the late 1960s and early 1970s, especially having in mind the series *Master Performers of Persian Traditional Music*, again show a propensity to avoid vocal performance and include solo instrumental pieces accompanied often by the *tombak* (more on this subject see Nettl 1985:135).

In such a musical atmosphere, with the growing number of instrumental rhythmic pieces designed both for ensemble and solo, the participation of *tombak* in the performance practices and recordings was also increasing (including also the time length of a performance). In addition, in solo instrumental pieces the *tombak* was given more time during the course of a piece to improvise solo (discussed at length in the final chapter). And group *tombak* performed as part of a large orchestra, mainly pre-

²³⁵ An early example of such tendencies was noted in the beginning of 20th century. Until then, it was conventional in the traditional *tasnifs* to repeat each phrase (*jomle*) twice. After every verse sung by the vocalist, the instrumentalists would repeat the same melody as an answer (*javāb*) to the vocalist. Vaziri transgressed this practice by entitling the orchestra to play another melody after the end of each vocal verse (Khāleqi 1999b:92-93). He also added an instrument introduction, the *darāmad*, to the *tasnif*, which was not conventional during his time, but later it became common (ibid.).

composed pieces with short passages of *tombak* solo exhibited by the most distinguished players.

We could also observe that the *tombak* was gradually acquiring a more prominent position in terms of its growing participation in accompaniment, but also a gradual independence from the vocal domination of music. New forms of *tombak*-playing verify the tendency to discover the potentialities of the *tombak* as an “autonomous” music instrument: the rise of the *tombak* solo, *tombak* duet and group *tombak* (all three forms are discussed at length in the last chapter).

These changes, ethnomusicologists have reported, were influenced by exposure to western music from the middle of the 19th century. According to Nooshin, for example, “The development of musical styles specific to instrumental music as opposed to vocal may to some extent have been influenced by the introduction of both western instruments and western concepts of virtuosity” (1996a:165). Nettl also writes that “the increasing prominence of composed pieces in the classical music sector is partly at least the result of Westernization, in the form of influence from the general principles of composed music in Western culture” (1992:156). He supports this statement by referring to the Iranian composers of western-style music who were combining western techniques and the *radif* (ibid. 156), as well as accepting western instruments and their playing technique in Iranian music (Nettl 1975:78), or the introduction of western notation and western music instructions even in the Music Department of Tehrān University (ibid. 86), the experimentation with harmony (1972a:225-6), the dissemination of western classical music through the mass media, that had also an impact on the performance style (1975:86).²³⁶ In any case, even though these changes are influenced by westernization and trends of modernization, mentioned also in the previous chapter, nevertheless the proneness towards measured and composed pieces shows an important “style shift” in Iranian music (Zonis 1973:148) and an increased role of the *tombak* in performance practices, particularly in accompaniment.

A last point to be made in this section is the changing situation in Iran towards the role and identity of the vocalists: although the prevalent predilection for vocalists seems to dominate the preferences of the audiences, there are also tendencies in the opposite direction, whereby the predominance of the vocal over the instrumental is challenged. Narges Khoshfekar, a female friend of mine from the field and a competent vocal singer studying for many years with Parisā, Karamāti and other distinguished vocal teachers, complained to me many times that today “every one who plays some

²³⁶ See also Zonis’s comments on the westernization of Iranian music (1973:185-211).

instrument thinks he can sing”. This seems to occur quite often especially among the male young players and their ensembles. As Narges mentions many male instrumentalists sing in public concerts without having gone through the process of acquiring the skills of a singer, that is, without taking singing lessons and without studying seriously the vocal *radif*. For Narges, this was a sign of the propensity to degrade the role and the status of the singer, especially the female singer, who is not always given the right or the opportunity to perform freely, because female singers were banned from performing solo in front of mixed-gender audiences, soon after the Revolution.²³⁷ She many times refused to sing with such singers and their music groups saying that “why should I put my voice under his voice”, expressing both the frustration of not being free to perform as a female alone, but also the annoyance of singing with someone who is unqualified and who thus hampers further her music expression. As she told me, this is a recent phenomenon that became more intense especially after ‘Alizāde’s public statement that the voice is not more important than the instrument, which became subject to different interpretations.²³⁸

While this situation is indicative of the changing socio-musical relations between instrumentalists and vocalists, three further questions seem to arise. First, whether this situation reconfirms the higher status of the vocalists in Iranian music which musicians desire to gain; Second, if the vocal category constitutes one more music site where instrumentalists challenge their potentials as musicians; Or, lastly, whether it is a repercussion of socio-political and music conditions – such as the ban of solo female singing in front of mixed-gender audiences, the prohibition of recording female solo voice, the establishment of female music festivals (see chapter six) – that often force mixed gender ensembles to find other solutions, like for example the instrumentalists singing together with a female voice or alone.

Teaching Manuals and Instrumental Practice

The introduction of teaching manuals for Iranian instruments has not only changed teaching practices, by introducing western terminology, concepts and methods, but it

²³⁷ Women’s solo-singing in front of male audiences was banned soon after the Revolution. Female solo-singing in front of female audience and women’s choral singing in front of mixed-gender audiences is permissible. These issues are discussed in more detail in chapter six.

²³⁸ See also Nooshin (1996a:164, 165) who cites ‘Alizāde’s statement.

has also affected the “mentality” of the instrumentalists who put a great effort in developing their technical skills in somewhat different manner than before, when practicing and performing was considered as one activity. While the emphasis now lies on technical dexterity and virtuosity, new teaching methods often create a “gap” in the teaching process which separates instrumental from vocal music.

Under Nāsser al-Din Shāh, a French band Master named Alfred Lemier established in 1868 a music military school in Tehrān. This was the first time that students would learn both western theory and instrumental practice. But also when Vaziri became Director (from 1928-1934) at the *Honārestan-e ‘Ali-ye Musiqi* [High Conservatory of Music] both Iranian and western music theory was offered.²³⁹ Later, other official music schools would also offer Iranian instrumentation practice and western theory.

The introduction of western theory and notation influenced Iranian scholars who adapted and discovered a wide application of western notation by modifying it to Iranian music. Notation was used in transcriptions of the *radif*, in writing compositions for new music pieces, in teaching practices and in writing teaching manuals for Iranian musical instruments.

Vaziri was the first to publish an instruction manual for the *tār*, *Dastur-e Tār* in 1913 in Berlin, and this was the first instruction book on Iranian music using western notation. Apart from the portion of Mirzā ‘Abdollāh’s and Hossein Qoli’s *radif*, it included also technical exercises for the *tār* composed by Vaziri himself, and also pieces by famous western composers. Later publications of Vaziri (*Dastur-e Tār* 1936, *Dastur-e Violin* 1933) and of his students Sabā and Khāleqi were aimed as instruction manuals to be used in teaching other instruments, including the *tār*, the violin, the *setār* and the *santur*.²⁴⁰

Masshun (1969:87) appears to be critical of such teaching manuals - he calls them *metod*, literally meaning “method” - as inappropriate for teaching Iranian music.²⁴¹ Before these publications there were no exercises to develop physical technique; it is believed that the *radif* contains “all that musicians needed to know in order to play the music” (Nooshin 1996a:166). Masshun observes that the methods in this kind of

²³⁹ See Akbarzāde (2001:12-13) for the various names of this High Conservatory of Music from the date of its foundation (1928), and for the names and time periods of the people that directed it.

²⁴⁰ For more information on the first publications of teaching manuals and for publication of the *radif* see Nooshin (1996a:87-92)

²⁴¹ Although Mashhun does not indicate specific name, it is possible that he refers to Vaziri and his follower as the initiators of European imitations, or in any case, he refers to instrumental teaching manuals with western practices that give importance to technical exercises.

instruction manuals are structured to begin with easier exercises and proceed with a progressively higher degree of difficulty.²⁴² He maintains that with such methods, “students have to exercise for years so that only to learn notation and work out their hands without having learned anything of the authentic [*asil*] Iranian music” (Masshun 1969:87). He describes that only after some years does the student start to learn as a beginner the *radif* of Iranian music, mentioning again that not everybody would make such efforts. Another argument Masshun uses against these teaching methods is that, whereas with the teaching of the *radif* there is no distance between “practicing music” (*musiqi-ye tamrin*) and “performing music” (*musiqi-ye majles*), in the other case, by practicing exercises for years, these two activities are separated (ibid.). His criticism depicts the situation clearly. With the introduction of European teaching methods, notation, teaching manuals and mere technical exercises, the process of learning the playing technique of the instrument becomes a *raison d’etre*. Further refinement of playing techniques and the rise of the virtuoso is the next step, an issue that will be considered in the following section.

A teaching practice that links together the instruments with the poetry, and that seems today to decline or to put it more precisely to be rather a responsibility lying in the hands of the willing students, is the *javāb-e āvāz*. *Javāb-e āvāz*, literary meaning “answering the voice”; is customarily used in the performance of Iranian music, according to which the instrumentalist should be able to improvise a response to the singer’s melodic line. Nooshin notes that *javāb-e āvāz* is rarely mentioned in the literature after Caron and Safvat, who do not mention the Persian name, but a translated French expression (Nooshin 1996a:164). For her this is, “an indication of the recognition that instruments have gained” (ibid. 164). From an interview I had with Talā’i I discovered that in one of the most credible and legitimate music institutions before the Revolution, the National Conservatory of Music (*Honarestān Musiqi-ye Melli*),²⁴³ *javāb-e āvāz* was not a customary teaching practice.²⁴⁴ The interview with Talā’i is very illuminating and I will present the whole conversation with regards to this subject.

²⁴² This also may remind one of the different levels of complexity of the *radif* as being taught today, mentioned by Nooshin (1996a:115), among which the *radif* of Sabā is considered simpler.

²⁴³ *Honarestān Musiqi-ye Melli* was at high school level, but its standing, its credibility and its high reputation were widely acknowledged, as was the acceptability of the Music Department at Tehrān University, because of the master musicians who taught Iranian music there. It was the *Honarestān Musiqi-ye Melli*, rather than the Music Department of Tehrān University, that was “producing” good musicians. See ‘Alizāde (2005:204-205).

²⁴⁴ Nooshin states though that in the 1970s this technique was taught at the University of Tehran (Nooshin 1996a:164).

Alexandra: If today a *tār* student wants to learn *javāb-e āvāz* where should s/he go?

Talā'i: Your question is difficult, because you want me to name a specific teacher. But, if you ask me what should they do...

Alexandra: What should s/he do?

Talā'i: S/he should find a singer, a singer who should know somewhat the *radif* (*yek meqdār radifdān boshe*), that is, the thing that s/he sings to be able to repeat it again, not every time to sing something similar., well s/he should work with a singer..

However, the learning of the *radif* itself is mimesis by ear learning. This by itself is the beginning of learning *javāb-e āvāz*. That is, first you learn a piece of work and immediately you imitate it, you remember how it went, well then you become more rigorous, stronger, mature, so you can also imitate the *āvāz*.

Alexandra: When you were a student in the *Honarestān*, did you have lessons in *javāb-e āvāz*?

Talā'i: We didn't have lessons, but I remember that Āqā-ye Karimi who was teaching there, he wanted from me to go and help, that is to go and play with the singers. It was not like a lesson, but it was only to me that this opportunity appeared, to have this fortune.

Alexandra: Could we than say that in general in the music institutions in giving *tār* lessons, there was never a lesson *javāb-e āvāz*?

Talā'i: No [there was not], because *āvāz* was non-existent, *āvāz* was not taken seriously. As I said before, in the period of the *Honarestān* and Vaziri many things in Iranian music were abandoned, were not worked upon, one of them was *āvāz*, in this sense (Interview, July 2005).

Generally, *javāb-e āvāz* was never a widely disseminated, institutionalized teaching practice, and only some instrumentalists studied the *radif* using this particular technique.²⁴⁵ Today, students wishing to become professional and competent in their art will often study with several teachers, in order to learn different versions of the *radif* or specific instrumental techniques. However, if for example a *tār* player wants to practice *javāb-e āvāz*, it is his/her task to go and find a specific vocal teacher in order to get this training.

Therefore, in the contemporary teaching practices of the last few decades one could note a “gap” in the teaching process, a gap that divides the acquiring of instrumental skill from acquainting oneself with the technique of responding to the

²⁴⁵ There has never been a course on *javāb-e āvāz* taught at Tehrān University. There has been a course at the University of Tehrān, after the Revolution, called *Gruh Navāzi* (Ensemble Performance) in which some instructors, according to their judgment, devoted parts of the course to *javāb-e āvāz* (Asa'di, personal communication, February 2007). It appears that before the Revolution *javāb-e āvāz* was a necessary practice mostly for those students who studied with the traditional masters like Davāmi and Karimi (ibid.).

vocal music, a gap that indicates once again the separation of instrumental and vocal music.

In relation to the *tombak*, this break has created a new profile for the *tombak* player, uninitiated in singing *tasnif* and *zarbi* songs, but particularly skilled with regards to technical dexterity on the instrument.

Technical Proficiency and Virtuosity

Virtuosity is a term most often associated with the performing arts, and it finds wide application particularly in the field of music. And while the ethnomusicological literature on Iran reveals examples of virtuosity, the concept has attracted relatively little theoretical attention. In this section I consider how the concept of virtuosity and its application in Iranian music are intertwined and concurrent with the movement towards the autonomy of music instruments.

Virtuosity in its general sense is closely linked with technical proficiency on an instrument.²⁴⁶ Other relative and explanatory terms, often used as substitutes or descriptive, having often either positive or negative sense, or both, are “show-off”, “display”, “mastery”, “virtue”, “outstanding skills” and “exceptional technique”. In Iran, the English terms “virtuosity” and “show-off” are both used, while the second term has more colloquial applications. The Persian terms to explain this phenomenon are *namāyesh dādan* or *namāyesh kardan* which means to show off, to exhibit and to present.

Virtuosity is often perceived both visually and audibly, that is, it can be both heard and seen. It discloses some of the qualities of the performer that can be perceived and evaluated by the audience. Therefore it is subject to aesthetic evaluation in a diachronic prospect.

Virtuosity should be easily recognizable. A skillful *tār* player, for example, will be acknowledged for his virtuosity even by a non-specialists audience. It presupposes that it can be grasped by the audience. It can be said, therefore that it is audience-orientated and audience-relative. It is a rather generic term, which describes adequately the qualities of the performer. It is not specific about the capabilities of the performer to improvise, to perform a score correctly, or to reproduce the *radif* genuinely. It defines

²⁴⁶ In this section I refer in particular to instrumental virtuosity, rather than vocal.

technical mastery, revealing both the performers' technical skills and the potentialities of the instrument. Moreover, the popularity of some instruments grew in the 20th century because of their potentials for displays of virtuosity, as in the case of the *santur* (Nooshin 1996b:451). Thus, virtuosity is also instrument orientated.

Virtuosity manifests the technical skills obtained by an individual. However, while technical achievement implies motor movements and physical act, it is also a result of mental and emotional reflections. It is an accomplishment and a result of deliberate individual exertion. It is self-centred, and thus performer-centred.

Virtuosity appears to be instrument-specific. Some instruments, while requiring skillful playing, are less demonstrative than others. For instance, the *ney*, the jew's harp and the *mbira* appear to be less demonstrative instruments than the violin, the *santur*, the *tombak* or the *daf*. This suggests that the spatial properties of the instrument indicate specific movement patterns, whose demonstrative potentialities are limited. On the other hand, instruments capable of virtuosic display, like the *'ud*, did not reach that state in Iran. Zonis, for example, observes that during her fieldwork in Tehran there were no virtuoso players on the *'ud* (Zonis 1973:179). This was perhaps because the instruments' participation in Iranian music was marginal.

Virtuosity is also ambiguous in evaluative terms. On the one hand its display is able to enhance the stature of the musician as a technical master; on the other hand, sometimes extravagant exhibition of technical dexterity is disapproved of.

Virtuosity is a concept, an abstraction. Therefore, historical considerations are also necessary here. In the 19th century Iran music practice virtuosity was on no account absent, but in the 20th century its development was impelled by contact with western music (Nettl 1978:158).²⁴⁷ Virtuosity was imported to Iranian music together with western music instruments, performance techniques, theory and notation and with the idea of a systematic and methodical way to study music. It flourished with the establishment of music schools that applied western methods, with the publication of instruction manuals for instrumental playing, with the rise of public performance, and with the dissemination of music through radio and television. Farhat also remarks that virtuosity, or in other words the "growing interest in display pieces" seems to be a by-product of westernization (1990:119). Vaziri was among the first to emphasise technical virtuosity, which as Farhat explains was "never considered as an end in itself" before Vaziri's time (ibid. 9). Moreover, while the solo in traditional music had a more

²⁴⁷ It is not clear in which sense Nettl uses the term virtuosity for 19th century musicians.

contemplative role (ibid. 119), the solo in the 20th century often has a more demonstrative or even pompous, character.

It appears that, in the discourse on virtuosity, a distinction is drawn in the Iranian case between what I would call the “internalized” and the “extrovert” virtuosity. In the light of this observed distinction and the evaluative weight it bears, it is possible to understand the connotations of the term “showing-off”, which obviously has a derogatory tint to it as a term for “virtuosity”, a fact that does not hold in the respective terms used for “virtuosity” in the western languages. Nooshin has observed that, “western concepts of virtuosity [are] alien to traditional concepts of musicality in which musicians are judged less by their manual dexterity”, but rather according to their ability to create in accordance with the essence of *hāl* (Nooshin 1996a:165-166). During also describes virtuosity as an extroverted expression in order to appeal to a large public (During, in During and Mirabdolbaghi 1991:52). In another passage he says that, “it is impossible to surpass them [the master musicians of the past] in finesse and in virtuosity” (ibid.253). I believe that he makes his judgments exactly in the way Nooshin has described, not according to the technical skills of the great masters, although also very potent, but rather “connected to quality, specific taste, and *keyfiyyat* - a term referring to an intimate indescribable experience of the *hāl*” (During 2002:858).

However, it seems that virtuosity in Iranian music is diversified and practiced in a variety of styles by its practitioners.²⁴⁸ On the *tombak* we could witness different manners or aesthetics approaches in virtuosity. To be more precise, among Iranians the discourse regarding virtuosity, especially regarding the *tombak*, is synonymous with the discourse regarding technique and display. For example, although Tehrāni was considered to have developed during his time the technique of playing, he has never been accused for showing off. He rather focused on both technique and the “musicality” of *tombak* playing both in accompaniment and solo. Esmā’ili, on the other hand, is more spectacular and demonstrative while playing. Rajabi, although having an eccentric behavior both in private and on stage, is not considered pompous or boastful in his playing, but concentrated rather on technique, precision, detail, clarity of sound, and structure. Today, the younger generation of *tombak* players is often accused of sterile technical expertise, which is not perceived as a genuine ability to satisfactorily accompany music, but rather as a practice aiming at distinguishing themselves and the *tombak* from the rest of the group. In this sense technical display is negatively judged

²⁴⁸ See Nooshin (1996b:452) who discusses the aesthetic quality of virtuosity among various *santur* players.

when it is perceived as an end in itself. Moreover, very often virtuosity is closely associated and even confused with speed, considered flamboyant, although difficult *per se*, and pursued especially by young *tombak* players. Speed in playing is generally treated as an intrinsic value by many young players and in many music cultures, and for this reason often denounced by more mature musicians. The line though between technical display on the one hand and speed and virtuosity, on the other, as ends in themselves, and as a means of expression is blurred, both by their practitioners as well as by connoisseurs and critics.

The Music Identity of the *Tombak* Player: the separation between the *tasnif* singer and the *tombak* player

During the course of the twentieth century the identity of the *tombak* player and the identity of the *tasnif* and *zarbi* singer, which overlapped in the 19th century (under the name *zarbgir*), became gradually separated, with the *tombak* players constituting today a distinguished type of musicians, with a specific music role in the ensembles of Iranian music, that of accompaniment. The bifurcation appears to begin in the late Qajar period with the composition of *tasnifs* by known artists (who were not *tombak* players),²⁴⁹ and during the 20th century when famous *āvāz* singers would perform *tasnif* and *zarbi* songs. This separation gave birth to a new type of *tombak* player, who put a serious effort to become an instrument specialist.

According to Davāmi, the performance of the *tasnifs* during the late Qajar period were in the hands of one family, that of Somā' Hozur (cited in Caton 1983:69). These *tasnifs* were not performed for the general public, but only for the aristocracy (Caton 1983:69). According to Khāleqi's descriptions, Habib Somā' Hozur performed *tasnif* and *zarbi* songs, and accompanied with his *tombak* the *santur* player and head of the

²⁴⁹ Margaret Caton calls this form "classical *tasnif*" in which words and music were usually composed by professional musicians of the court between 1875 and 1925 (Caton 1983:22). She places this genre as a "flexible category between popular and classical" forms (Caton 1983:32). The *tasnifs* performed before the emergence of the newly composed forms are referred to by Khāleqi as old *tasnifs* (*tasnifhā-ye qadim*) (Khāleqi 1999a:409). Farhat also refers to this category of *tasnif* as "old *tasnifs*" stating that a limited number of these old *tasnifs*, composed by unknown artists, have remained today (Farhat 1990:117). For the *tasnif* before the Qajar period see Caton (1983:35-48).

court musicians Mohammad Sādeqkhān (Khāleqi 1999a:163- 168, 404). Later, he became competent in playing the *santur*.²⁵⁰

Mashhun also states that the most prominent *zarbgirs* of this period were students of Somā' Hozur.²⁵¹ However, both Khāleqi and Mashhun mention other prominent *zarbgirs* of the Qajar period who do not appear to have a direct linkage to Somā' Hozur, but have links with other court musicians, such as Mirzā 'Abdollāh, Hossein Qoli, and Darvish Khān.²⁵² In any case, these old *tasnifs*, performed for the court and for the aristocracy, most of them composed by anonymous artists, appear to have been a closely guarded tradition as was also the music of the *radif*. It was the "classical *tasnif*" composed by 'Aref that was first brought to public attention (Lotfi, cited in Caton 1983:69).

'Aref (1882-1934), together with Sheydā (1843-1906) are the representatives of the "classical *tasnif*" of the late Qajar period, and although both performed their own compositions only, 'Aref gained public recognition as a performer (Caton 1983: 89). These two composers had a different background from that of the traditional *zarbgirs*, and there are no references stating that they played on the *tombak*. Sheydā, for example, had no formal training in music with a particular master, but became acquainted with the style of the court musicians by attending their gatherings. 'Aref, on the other hand, had a background in *rowzekhuni*²⁵³ religious singing. It seems that from the late 19th century the singing of *tasnif* songs was to some extent undertaken by *ta'zie* and *rowzekhuni* singers (*rowzekhān*).

In the 20th century the picture of the role distribution among *tasnif* singers and *tombak* players becomes gradually clearer. Davāmi (1889-1983) was one of the first performers of 'Aref compositions. He had also studied the old *tasnifs*, the *zarbi* songs, and the *tombak* with Hāji Khān, student of Somā' Hozur (Khāleqi 1999a: 409-410), though he never aspired to become a *tombak* player.²⁵⁴ Nur 'Ali Borumand (1905-1978), who had studied a range of instruments with old masters, such as *tār* with

²⁵⁰ It appears that during the late Qajar period some instrumentalists knew to play the *tombak* and to sing *tasnif* songs (Esmā'ilzāde the *kamānche* player and Sa'id Hassan, a *setār* player), but few of them (like Somā' Hozur) performed in public. Likewise, a few *zarbgirs* also knew how to perform on other musical instruments (see Mashhun 2001:640-650).

²⁵¹ He had three *tombak* students Āqā Jān (the first), Taqi Khān and Hāji Khān (Khāleqi 1999a: 404).

²⁵² Moreover, there are some inconsistencies in the information they give. For example while Khāleqi states that Āqā Jān (the first), was the student of Somā' Hozur, Mashhun assumes that he might have been the teacher of the latter.

²⁵³ *Rowze* or *rowzekhuni* is a poetic narrative about the martyred *Imāms*, performed by the *rowzekhān* in devotional gatherings (Blum 1980:539)

²⁵⁴ His *āvāz* teacher was Nāyeb al-Soltāneh, who according to Khāleqi, was also competent in singing *tasnifs* (Khāleqi 1999a: 400). As mentioned elsewhere, Davāmi also recorded one of the most masterly and charming vocal *radifs* in which he also includes *tasnif* songs.

Darvish Khān, *santur* with Somā' Hozur, *āvāz* with Tāherzāde, and who, although, he was not a singer, has performed and recorded several of Sheydā's *tasnifs*. He was also competent in playing the *tombak*, but he did not practice it professionally. *Māhur* published in 2003 a compact disc, *Violon. Rokneddin Mokhtāri* [Violin. Rokneddin Mokhtāri, where Borumand accompanies with the *tombak* the violin of Rokneddin Mokhtāri (1887-1971). [Listen to a *zarbi* piece in *Dastgāh Shur*, CD I #5].²⁵⁵

With the establishment of the radio in 1940 and especially with the *Golhā* music programs in 1955, a number of singers started reviving and reintroducing the *tasnifs* of 'Aref and Sheydā among which were Qamar ol-Moluk (1905-1959), a *rowzehuni* singer who later studied *āvāz* with NeyDāvud (1900-1990), with whom she performed for many years; Ruhangiz, Moluk Zarābi, and Banān (1911-1986), also having a background in religious singing (Caton 1983:68-94). The younger generation of the *tasnif* performers, among whom Marziye, Parisā, Banān and Shajariān could be numbered, learned the *tasnif* mainly from Davāmi (Caton 1983:90), who was considered an authority in *tasnif* and *zarbi* songs (Khāleqi 1999a: 409). None of these *tasnif* singers performed on the *tombak*.

In conclusion, while Khāleqi has mentioned that the *āvāz* singers in the late 19th century were reluctant to sing metric songs (although they would occasionally record them), from the time of Sheydā and 'Aref (second half of the 19th century) this practice grew to a great extent. Then, from the middle of the 20th century, and earlier, most *āvāz* singers undertook the task of performing *tasnif* and *zarbi* songs, a role that once belonged to the *zarbgirs*.

On the other hand, Tehrāni is the first known *tombak* player who has been recorded to pursue a career exclusively in playing the *tombak*.²⁵⁶ According to Pāyvar, he also had a very broad knowledge of Iranian music. Pāyvar says:

Tehrāni knew by heart almost all the old *tasnif-hā*, all the beautiful melodies, and all the *zarbi-hā* that were common before his time, and he himself could sing by using the poems of the past that he had memorized and he could improvise by playing them on the *zarb*

²⁵⁵ This is a good example of a *zarbi* piece, where the *tombak* performer is playing “emptily” when compared to the contemporary dense and highly ornamented style. It also presents a “non-imitative” accompaniment on the part of the *tombak* player (discussed in the last chapter). The piece is from the recording *Violon. Rokneddin Mokhtāri* [Violin. Rokneddin Mokhtāri].

²⁵⁶ According to Pāyvar, Tehrāni could also play the *santur* and at some point he played the drum kit and performed also on *zarb-e zurkhāne* (Dehlavi 1971:27).

(from introductory notes of cassette *Āvā-ye Hossein Tehrāni, Shenākht-e Ritm* [The Sound of Hossein Tehrāni, Rhythmic Enlightenment/Aesthetics]).²⁵⁷

It appears that Tehrāni was self-taught in the *tasnif* and *zarbi* songs. Oral and written sources indicate that he had learned to sing the old *tasnifs* from Sabā.²⁵⁸ I have neither heard nor read about Tehrāni performing *tasnif* songs in public concerts, but he recorded several ones, with Sabā on the violin, and himself singing and playing on the *tombak*.

While Tehrāni was competent in both the *tasnif* and *zarbi* singing as well as *tombak* playing, in the music schools where he taught (from the early 1940s) he was teaching mainly the technique of playing the *tombak*. Teaching the vocal part was not included in the curriculum and the duties of the *tombak* teacher. The link between *tombak* players and *tasnif* or *zarbi* singers was broken once again with the establishment of music schools and formal *tombak* lessons. The introduction of notation for the *tombak* does not appear to be an important factor in Tehrāni's case; he taught principally orally. This break perhaps goes back before Tehrāni's time, when the *tombak* was taught with the help of mnemonic syllables.²⁵⁹

Tehrāni had many prominent students, amongst them: Jahāngir Malek, Esmā'ili, Zarif, Hushang Mehrvarzān, Shemirāni, who continued teaching principally the techniques and rhythms on the *tombak*, as did their students and the students of their students, without incorporating the singing of the *tasnif* in their teaching practices.²⁶⁰ Other prominent *tombak* players continued Tehrāni's tradition in *tombak* teaching, among which are Eftetāh (a student of Mehrvarzān, one of Tehrāni's students); and his students amid whom the most eminent are Rajabi, Farahmand, and A'yān.²⁶¹ The tradition of *tombak* playing combined with singing was thus broken.

²⁵⁷ This cassette a compilation of famous *tombak* solo pieces performed (among which is also the *Lokomotiv*) and *tasnifs* sung and played on the *tombak* by Tehrāni.

²⁵⁸ Tehrāni also collaborated closely with Habib Somā'i, the son of Somā Hozur, who, as mentioned above, knew many old *tasnifs*, but I have not found any reference stating that Tehrāni learned the *tasnifs* from him. Sabā, on the other hand, although he was not a singer, learned a range of instruments and their repertoires from distinguished masters of the late Qajar period. According to Tehrāni, "besides notation that Ruhollāh Khāleqi taught me, everything I understand, scientific and practical [*'elmi va 'amali*], I learned it from Sabā" (Tehrāni, cited in Dehlavi 1971:18).

²⁵⁹ I explain in detail in the last chapter of this thesis the use of mnemonic syllables in *tombak* teaching.

²⁶⁰ It should be noted though that even today there are *tombak* teachers that help their students to play on the *tombak* by accompanying recorded *tasnif* songs.

²⁶¹ See figure 4, page 161, depicting the student-teacher relations among most prominent *tombak* players from Tehrāni's time till today.

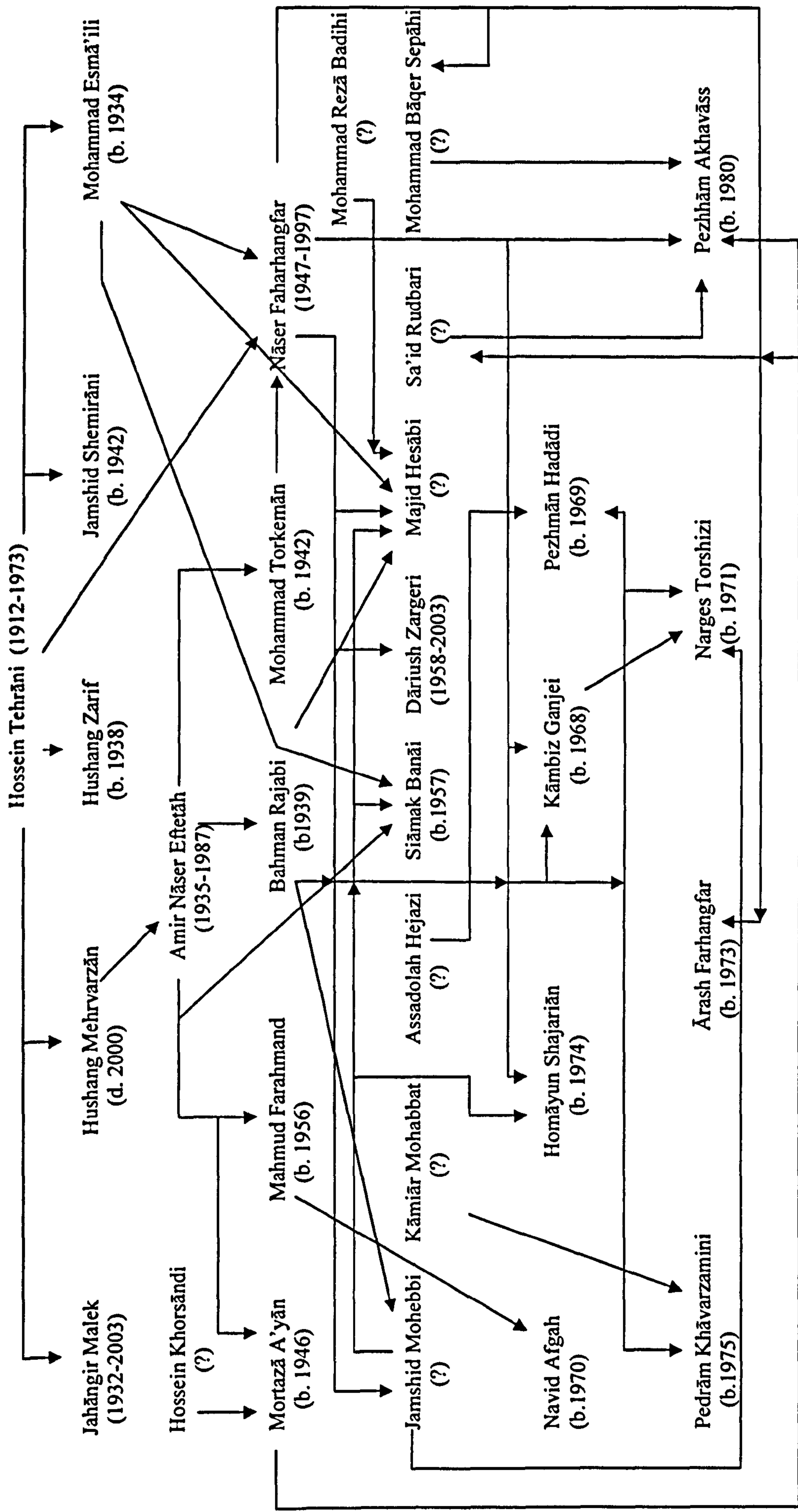


Figure 4: A genealogy of student-teacher relationships among *tombak* players.

The last renowned *tombak* player who sung *tasnif* and *zarbi* songs was Nāser Farhangfar (1947-1997). He studied the *tombak* with Mohammad Torkemān, a student of Eftetāh, and he also had a few lessons with Esmā'ili, a student of Tehrāni, in order to learn notation. Later, in the early 1970s, he began learning the old *tasnif* and *zarbi* songs from Davāmi and Borumand at the Centre for Preservation and Propagation of Iranian Music, where he taught and played the *tombak* (Farhangfar and Mehrāni 2002:8). However, it was seldom that he performed singing for the public. During his lifetime, only a few tapes were published of him singing *zarbi* songs and playing *zarb-e zurkhāne* (*zarbikhuni zadan*).²⁶² He would usually sing and play the *tombak* at private gatherings accompanied often by Mohammad Rezā Lotfi on the *setār*.²⁶³ For some time he also had practiced *setār* playing. With Borumand's encouragement, he was probably among the first *tombak* players to study music at the University. However, neither Farhangfar passed on his knowledge of the vocal repertoire and did not give singing lessons to his students.

In sum, Tehrāni and Farhangfar, veritable legends in *tombak* playing, were among the last that combined the singing of *tasnif* and *zarbi* songs and playing the *tombak*.²⁶⁴ However, they seldom performed them in formal public performances. And as mentioned, they combined these two activities later in their life, when they had learned the vocal repertoire. They both acquired some knowledge of playing other instruments, too, but they both pursued a career principally as *tombak* players and did not pass on their knowledge of the *tasnif* to their students.

Closing this passage, I want to mention from my experience in the field that both Farhangfar and Tehrāni are remembered nowadays mainly as *tombak* players rather than as *tasnif* singers. And although their *tasnif* and *zarbi* singing might still be a point of reference for those *tombak* players who want to experiment in singing, in music terms, it is mainly their *tombak* playing that it is meticulously studied, and the sound of the *tombak* they have produced and recorded that is remembered, their technique that is

²⁶² A famous tape where he does *zarbikhuni* (singing *zarbi* songs and playing on the *tombak* or *zarb-e zurkhāne*) recorded in 1983 is *Khalvat Gozide* [Choosing Solitude]. In the introductory notes, Shajariān praises the art of *tombak* and *zarb-e zurkhāne* playing, the *tombak* and *zarb-e zurkhāne* players (*morsheds*) and Farhangfar. However, although Farhangfar sings, it is not mentioned in the introductory notes, nor in the contents of the tape. Instead, it is written that Farhangfar plays solo *tombak* [while he plays on the *zarb-e zurkhāne*], and a combination of various rhythms and *zurkhāne* rhythms. In this piece [CD I #6] he improvises on the *zarb-e zurkhāne* and sings *zarbi* song. It is also a good example of one solo where the performer mixes various meters during a piece.

²⁶³ His son Ārash Farhangfar has a rich collection of tapes with his father singing and playing the *tombak* which were recorded at various informal gatherings and during his rehearsals at the Centre for Preservation and Propagation of Iranian Music.

²⁶⁴ This was also an outcome from the influence and knowledge of the great masters of Iranian music - Tehrāni from Sabā, and Farhangfar from Davāmi and Borumand - that had direct links with the most prominent musicians of the late Qajar period, when the *tombak* player was a *zargir*.

being imitated, their rhythmic variations that are admired and followed, and it is mainly their *tombak* solos and accompaniments that are remembered and valued.

The Music Profile and the Music Identity of the Contemporary *Tombak* Player

The profile of the professional *tombak* players from Tehrāni's time until today is not consistent, as appears to have been in the late Qajar period. While some perform only on the *tombak*, many perform on other percussion instruments, several perform on melodic instruments and a few sing. Some teach only on the *tombak*, others teach also *daf* or another music instrument.

In the choices and practices of *tombak* players there are several congruent criteria that could be detected. Those who perform only on the *tombak* believe that a player should become proficient on one instrument. Rajabi, devoted solely to playing the *tombak*, believes that "rhythm is an ocean" needing a lifetime to be explored on the *tombak*. His student, Pedrām, would always say that, "I do not have enough time to practice on the *tombak*, not to mention other instruments." This view is consistent with the ideas of stretching one's skills and developing the rhythmic repertoire and the playing techniques as far as possible. In addition, there is a strong belief about the link between the instrument and its particular playing techniques and rhythms. It also relates to the notion of technical proficiency and instrument specialty, without, however, diminishing the value of developing musical sense and intelligence which is gained through practice with other musicians. Moreover, the *tombak* is considered a difficult and very demanding instrument in terms of its playing techniques. Pedrām would often practice just to sustain or recover (after several days without playing) his technical dexterity. An alternative approach associated with the view of the instrumental specialists is closely related to the concept of the *ostād*, who is usually identified as an expert in one music instrument.

Another criterion, congruent somewhat to the one described above, which is considered of great importance, especially among instrumentalists and musicians of the older generation, is that a musician should be acquainted with one additional instrument, but especially that a percussionist should be acquainted with a melodic instrument in order to familiarize himself with the *radif*. This view is compatible with the development of a broader sense of gaining music ability and with familiarizing oneself

with the tradition of Iranian music culture and the *dastgāh* system. Torshizi, for example, started *setār* lessons one year after starting *tombak* lessons. She took this decision because as she says, “I wanted to play one melodic instrument too, in order to become acquainted with the *radif* of Iranian music.” There are also cases of *tombak* players who, wishing to be admitted to a Music Department of any Iranian university, are obliged by the entry exams and the curriculum to learn a melodic instrument in order to perform the *radif*. Moreover, being able to play on two instruments is an additional asset for those who make their living mainly from music tuition.

The learning of a second instrument (melodic or percussion) may sometimes be pursued concurrently with learning or professionally performing on the *tombak*. Usually, though, a public performance in playing this second instrument comes much later than public performance on the *tombak*.

Contradictory also to the first concept, according to which a *tombak* player should pursue to be proficient only in his instrument, is the idea that it is “natural” for a *tombak* player to be able to perform other percussion instruments, especially the *zarb-e zurkhāne*, whose structure, playing techniques and rhythmic variations are to some degree similar to those of the *tombak*.

In my first interview with Arzhang Kāmākār, who performs also on the *zarb-e zurkhāne*, I asked him about the reasons for this preference.

Alexandra: Why *tombak-e zurkhāne*?²⁶⁵

Kāmākār: Because of the quality of its sound.

Alexandra: What about the technique?

Kāmākār: The technique is a little bit different.

Alexandra: I mean how did you play?

Kāmākār: Look, saying so, every instrument has one family. Usually someone who plays the *tār*, he also plays the *setār*. He could find the same frets. If he also takes a *divān* [long necked lute] he again could play it. For example if someone plays the *daf*, is it possible for him not to be able to play on the *dāyere*? No, he can play. Well now, regarding the technique perhaps they have two or three differences. The technique of the *tombak* for example is more compact [*jam’e jur*], the technique on the *zarb-e zurkhāne* is very *shalāqi* (Interview, February 2003).²⁶⁶

²⁶⁵ Actually the most widely applied term is *zarb-e zurkhāne*. I used the term *tombak-e zurkhāne* influenced by my teacher Rajabi who insists on calling the *zarb* and *zarb-e zurkhāne* *tombak* and *tombak-e zurkhāne*.

²⁶⁶ *Shalāqi* is a playing technique in *zarb-e zurkhāne*, which has been adopted in *tombak*. However, because this technique reflects more the playing technique of *zarb-e zurkhāne* it is not usually performed in *tombak* while accompanying Iranian music, but rather in more soloistic performances.

Several *tombak* players have also performed on the *zarb-e zurkhane*, such as Tehrāni, Nāser Farhangfar and Akhavāss, while a few have occasionally performed several percussion instruments besides the *tombak*. Mohammad Qavihelm has played on the *dohol* (double headed barrel drum), *daf* (frame drum) and the *naqqāre* (kettle drum pair) with ‘Alizāde. Zārgeri has performed on the *naqqāre* accompanying ‘Alizāde. Akhavāss has performed on the *dammām* (barrel wooden drum).

The playing of a second percussion instrument can also be for reasons of experimentation and sometimes in order to enhance the *tombak* playing itself. It happens also that some techniques are borrowed from other instruments and are applied on the *tombak*. Pezhmān Hadādi is a good example, having incorporated some *tabla* techniques on the *tombak*; many young Iranians have imitated him, in either using the same techniques or in starting *tabla* lessons with an aspiration to generate new ground-breaking techniques or rhythms on the *tombak* by getting an inspiration from the Indian *tabla*.

However, most *tombak* players have shown systematic use, in terms of concert performance and recording practices, especially of the *daf*. Hadādi, for example, regularly performs on the *tombak* and the *daf* with the *Dastān* ensemble and with ‘Ali Akbar Morādi. Qavihelm, on the other hand, regularly accompanies Lotfi playing both the *daf* and the *tombak*. This is because these two instruments (the *tombak* and the *daf*) have become practically indispensable to the performance of Iranian music. Moreover, such choices increase the music employability of the *tombak* and *daf* players.²⁶⁷

On the whole, while many *tombak* players are skilful on other percussion instruments, the *tombak* is the principal instrument they work on, and in most cases the playing of melodic instruments is occasional and sporadic, a fact that does not necessarily lessen the quality of performance on the latter.

While the music profile of the *tombak* player appears to be diversified, several common traits can be found. First, nowadays most *tombak* players have received a higher education. Systematic expansion of both public and private education is a 20th century development in Iran, and it is a product of modernization within the urban centres and especially within the capital city. Moreover, higher education accelerated the process of urbanization (Sakurai 2004:388).

In Iran, higher education is generally considered to provide a professional occupation and it is regarded as a vehicle for upward social and economic mobility. It

²⁶⁷ Many *daf* players also perform and teach the *tombak*.

enhances one's social status and is regarded in a sense as prestigious.²⁶⁸ Moreover, it empowers women, whose representation in higher education has grown since the Revolution.²⁶⁹ Besides these socio-economic factors related to the status of the person, higher education in general is accepted also as something that has an intrinsic value, by expanding the knowledge and perception of the person, and it is considered as a vehicle to maturity. It also provides a different experience for the young student; the university is the first educational institution where the mixing of the two sexes is permitted. After the Islamic Revolution a gradual public segregation between the two sexes was enforced, which was also implemented in the educational sector, utilized up to the university level. One important factor for men entering university is related to their military service. Today a university student can avoid going into the military, buying off his service obligations by paying money. I have met very few young *tombak* players, or other Tehrān musicians, aspiring to become professional, that have served in the military forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Regarding the selection of the profession, some professional *tombak* players study the performing arts. Most of those who have studied music or other arts have a strong family background in such arts. Such are the cases of Arzhang Kāmkār, the *tombak* player of the Kāmkār music family, who has studied painting and is still practicing this vocation; Akhavāss, whose father is a calligrapher, is enrolled at the Music Department of Tehrān University; Farhangfar, whose father played the *tār* and who had also an uncle playing the *zarb*, studied for two years at the Department of Fine Arts at the Tehrān University, and was also a calligrapher. However, there are exceptions of this convention. Torshizi, whose family was against her playing on the *tombak*, was so determined to study music that she finally managed to enroll at the music department of Tehrān University.

On the other hand there are also *tombak* players who have decided to study another profession not connected with music. Very often the suggestion or even pressure to gain some university qualification and thus another profession comes from inside the family. Khāvarzamini, for example, has an agriculture degree, influenced by his father who also practiced the same profession, but he never followed this occupation. Afgah also obtained an agriculture degree. When he was young, about eleven years old,

²⁶⁸ Only one out of ten candidates are accepted each year in the government universities. In 2002 about 800,000 students were enrolled in various levels of higher education, and approximately the same number of students in the various campuses of the non-government Islamic Āzād University (Sakurai 2004: 385-387)

²⁶⁹ For statistical numbers refer to Sakurai (2004). At the University of Tehrān today there are more female music students than male (Nooshin, personal communication, January 2007).

it was his parents' suggestion to start playing a musical instrument. However, when the question of profession arose, they advised him to obtain professional qualifications other than musical ones.

Afgah: I did not have any motive, my brother was playing the *santur*, my family said "he should go to some class instead of going in the alley and playing". So I went to *tombak* classes.

Alexandra: Your family told you that, how nice! Did they ever say "don't play"?

Afgah: Well, no, but when between studying and *tombak* I wanted to choose the *tombak*, they said with a grim mood "study your lessons". I studied agriculture in the university, but I don't practice it (Interview, March 2002).

The profession of the musician is very often considered not to offer professional security and stability. Perhaps parents, as in the case of Khāvarzamini and Afgah, are at some stage against their children following the path of music as primary profession, and feel more secure if they would have in their hands some university degree that in the "difficult days" could be used as an alternative and ensure a livelihood. However, when both Khāvarzamini and Afgāh had already enrolled in the university and at the same time showed determination, inclination, talent as well as prospects to earn a living from music, their parents did not oppose it anymore. This situation is a common experience among many young musicians.

Another characteristic of *tombak* players is that they are recruited from middle-class families, as are most Iranian musicians, without necessarily having a hereditary musical background.²⁷⁰ However, few *tombak* players collaborate with other musicians with whom they have family ties, an issue discussed in a later chapter.

The third common trait that many *tombak* players share is that, if they can play two instruments, the *tombak* is the first instrument that they are acquainted with. Inevitably, though, the stories of how *tombak* players start playing the instrument vary. Sometimes it is the talent "calling" them, at other times someone else decides for them and at times it happens by chance. I have heard many stories and all of them are very picturesque. Rajabi for example, says that:

²⁷⁰ There are no indications that *tombak* players performing Iranian music in 19th century were recruited from hereditary music families. Regarding other music specialists from the 19th century, family ties, especially father-son, which are in most cases also teacher-pupil relations, are important especially in the transmission of the *radif* (see Nooshin 1996a:78-79). However, as Nooshin remarks, the "genealogies" of Iranian musicians do not exhibit clear lines of transmission as in the case of *gharānās* of professional classical musicians in North Indian classical music (ibid. 125, 126). The lack of a clear line of transmission can be partly explained by the fact that Iranian musicians study with more than one music teachers during their lifetime (see Nooshin 1996a:125-128).

I was three and a half years old and my father had died, I did not understand the philosophy of death, I played on a trunk [he plays in the air], because I had seen my mother who is Kurdish playing on the pot and singing (Interview, October 2002).

Kāmkār, on the other hand, to my question how he choose the *tombak*, replied:

Firstly, I did not choose the *tombak*, it was my father who chose the *tombak* for me, about 40 years ago...I chose the *tombak*, that is, they chose the *tombak* for me, they put it in my hands, I played it and, all in all, the reasons were very simple to me.. One of my brothers was playing the *santur*, the other was playing the *tār*, the other *setār*, *kamānche*, all Iranian instruments. No one was left to play the *tombak*, so they put it in my hands. Perhaps, for example, they could have put the *setār* in my hands. Later, when I worked on the *tombak*, I saw that the soul of the rhythm was something that I had inside me (Interview, February 2003).

Torshizi remembers how she was overwhelmed when she first heard and saw a *tombak* player:

When I was 15 years old and I lived in Kāshmar, I went once to Neshābur and there were several performers in one gathering. There was a young boy who played the *tombak*. I was very attracted by the *tombak* from the movement of the hands of the *tombak* player, from the fast movements of his hands and from the sound of the *tombak* and at that time it became my wish [to play the instrument], I thought: “if only one day I could play like him...”

Alexandra: Perhaps now you can play better than him [we laugh].

Torshizi: Well yes, later, when I started and continued and played a lot, I could play better, but at the time I thought that I could never manage to play like him (Interview, February 2005).

A fourth common trait among professional *tombak* players is their gender: the *tombak* is being practiced predominantly by males at professional level. It will be shown in the following section why not so many women practise on the *tombak*, and are considered less competent than men.

A fifth common characteristic of the *tombak* players is that today only a few of them sing professionally, except if singing in unison is required in ensemble concert performances. Afgah has for the last few years been experimenting with singing, and not necessarily with the traditional style in Iranian music, while Homāyun Shajariān has also recently begun singing following the steps of his father. However, singing in these

two cases as also in the case of Tehrāni and Farhangfar is learned or practised in public after years of playing the *tombak*. And while some *tombak* players experiment with singing, it is not necessarily that they combine singing and *tombak* playing, as the *zarbgirs* did.

Another fact worth mentioning in this section is that *tombak* players rarely pursue to gain other music knowledge (with the exception of those studying music at university level, or learning another instrument). Afgah is among the few players I met who took systematic music lessons in western harmony, counterpoint and orchestration.

Moreover, one of the main sources of income for most *tombak* players is teaching, but this will be discussed in the next chapter. Lastly, as I refer to the professional *tombak* player, the *tombak* is the principal instrument which they practice and are strongly identified with.

From the examples mentioned above it appears that, if the music profile of the *tombak* player is admittedly not clearly delineated, but rather blurred, in most cases being a *tombak* player appears to be stronger than any other music identity. This is largely affected by the structure of a common Iranian ensemble, where musicians have their own position and role. As there is a *tār* player, a *kamānche* player, or a *santur* player, there is a position for a *tombak* player and for a *daf* player too, which in most cases is a role usually distinguished from that of *tombak* player.

The identity of the *tombak* player is clearly defined and even “protected” by some *tombak* players. Rajabi, for example, all these years performing on the *tombak* has identified himself with the particular name of the instrument which he promotes. While there are *tombak* players using interchangeably *tombak* or *zarb*, Rajabi has identified himself as specifically a *tombak* player (*tombak navāz*) rather than as a *zarb* player.

Another case shows that some *tombak* players have a more intense self-awareness as being specifically *tombak* players rather than more generally as percussionists. I witnessed one rehearsal taking place in Pedrām’s *zirzamini*²⁷¹ with Pedrām on the *tombak*, Hamid on the *tār* and Siāmak on the *santur*, where they were practicing by improvising new music material.

Here are some excerpts from my fieldnotes illustrating what happened during the rehearsal, and how Pedrām conceptualized and expressed explicitly his identity as a *tombak* player:

²⁷¹ *Zir-e zamin* means “basement”, “underground”. Pedrām, his friends and myself always pronounced it as *zirzamini* and this is how I spell the word in this ethnography. Pedrām’s *zirzamini* was initially the parking place for his father’s car and it was later converted into a practice room for Pedrām. Pedrām usually refers to this place as *zirzamini* instead of “practice room”, but with affection.

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Siāmak was looking for a sound that he had in mind from the *tombak* and he couldn't hear it with the *tombak* that Pedrām was playing. Siāmak was trying out the sounds of several different *tombaks* that were in the *zirzamini* and couldn't find the sound he was searching for. Then Pedrām picked up the *dohol*. When he started playing Siāmak told him to play it like *tombak*, he said: "Play it as though you play on the *tombak*, make use of those *eshāre*.²⁷² I would like you to play with it like *tombak* [referring now to *zarb-e zurkhāne*] and make of it the sound of *tombak*, play it *tombakishly*" (*Man dustdāram bā in tombak bezani, mesle sedā-ye tomba, tombaki bezanesh*).

Thus Siāmak, as I understand, believes that *tombak* playing can be brought to another percussion instrument. Actually, according to his words it was obvious that the techniques and the sounds are what make the *tombak* a *tombak*. He also added that listening to *zarb-e zurkhāne* it is closer to his ears to the "natural" and the "original" sound of the *tombak*, and he then asked from Pedrām to play *zarb-e zurkhāne*. Pedrām replied to him that "it is in your ears that it sounds original."

Pedrām was offended and said furiously, but straightforwardly and clearly: "I am not a percussionist. I am a *tombak* player" (*Man perkasionist nistam. Man tombak navāz hastam*). He said that there are still many things that he has to learn on the *tombak*. However, he confusedly added that he might play another percussion instrument for a concert or recording.²⁷³

Pedrām then turned to Hamid and told him that: "Everything you do, you do it with your *tār*, you don't change your instrument, why should I change mine?"

Reading again my fieldnotes and this particular incident, made me think of the distinction that Cottrell made in *Professional Music-Making in London* between self-conception and individual identity, not ignoring the fact that these two ideas might be interrelated, and the self-conception being or not at variance with individual identity (Cottrell 2004:33). Cottrell defines self-conception as "essentially our view of ourselves, of how we see our own particular abilities, preferences and characteristics: a cognitive space where we decide who we really are and how we think we appear to others" (ibid.). He describes individual identity as "how we *do* appear to others, our individual attributes and our position in the larger social whole as it is conceived by those around us" (ibid.). In addition, he says that, the individual identity other people ascribe to us

²⁷² A specific playing technique on the *tombak*.

²⁷³ It is relevant to mention here that in one recording of the group *Āstāb* [Sunshine], labeled *Dar Gozar* [Transition], in which Siāmak, Hamid and Pedrām were playing together with other musicians, Pedrām played only on the *tombak*, while Siāmak played both on the *santur* and the *daf*, and 'Ali Samadpur played on the *naqqāre*.

“may or may not be at variance with our own conception” of ourselves and “may cause us to reflect on our view of ourselves” (Cottrell 2004:33-34).

Bearing this distinction in mind, a discrepancy between the music identity as perceived by Pedrām, and the music identity as ascribed to him by Siāmak and Hamid is brought to light. It seems that because of his skills in playing the *tombak*, Pedrām is expected and prompted to play, and in addition is deemed skillful to play, another percussion instrument. Pedrām, although sometimes has played on the *dohol*, at that particular scene his musical essence was embedded with the feeling of being an essentially *tombak navāz* (*tombak* player), he identified himself with the *tombak* as a specific entity, rather than with the *tombak* as a percussive instrument whose particular techniques of playing can be transferred to other instruments. For Pedrām the technique, the sound, and the rhythm are intertwined in a particular manner with the instrument itself, which makes it unique: irreplaceable by and irreducible to any other instrument. In this particular case, his self-perceived identity comes into conflict with the identity attributed to him by Siāmak and Hamid - a *tombak* player competent to play other percussive instruments too, a general percussionist, as it were. Moreover, this “clash of identities” magnifies even more in Pedrām’s eyes, since, not only did he not accept the individual identity ascribed to him, but he also considered it an impudence. In other words, if a *tombak* player is expected to be more than a *tombak* player, if he is anticipated to be a percussionist, that is, to perform several percussion instruments, then his status as a *tombak* player is put into question. This should be understood within the cultural context of Iranian music and generally the music of the neighbouring to Iran countries, where musicians are expected to specialize in one instrument, and are usually associated with that particular instrument (even if they perform other instruments later in their lives).²⁷⁴

Another similar case which took a much broader dimension, rather than taking place in a *zirzamini* as in the above case, unfolded on air, on a television program broadcasted by *Sedā o Simā*, the Iranian government television network. And although usually musical instruments are not shown on television, this was an exception due to the Fajr annual music festival, shown very late at night. However, melodic instruments were absent from the ensemble, consisting only of *zarb-e zurkhāne* and *daf* to accompany the voice of Shahrām Nāzeri.

²⁷⁴ An interesting analogy in the west would be the drummer (who plays a drum kit) of any music genre (rock, pop, jazz), who would not be expected to perform on another kind of drum. On the contrary, percussionists are generally expected to play several percussions, but most of them consider this to add to their music status.

After the performance, Akhavāss, who had been playing on the *zarb-e zurkhāne*, declared that he was a *tombak* player and not a *zurkhāne* player and asked in a way from the *zarb-e zurkhāne* players to be excused for playing this instrument. After seeing by chance this concert program on the television I asked Akhavāss during an interview what he meant by saying this. He replied:

Well, you see, *tombak-e zurkhāne* [has] another form of playing, that is, its playing differentiates from that of the *tombak*. It is true that rhythm is rhythm, but well, when you change an instrument, the technique is being changed, the form of playing, and also the rhythm. It is possible for some [musicians] to think that I play on the *tombak* like that. But, well, my technique... I tried to play there [on the television program] *tombak zurkhāne*, that is I did not try to play the *tombak*, that's why I wanted to be excused by those who play the *tombak-e zurkhāne*, so they don't [say] "he plays the *tombak*, and he plays the *tombak zurkhāne*, he also plays the *daf*, he plays all the instruments." (Interview, November 2002).

In Akhavāss's case, we could see him "manipulating" his skills in playing the *zarb-e zurkhāne*, and at the same time negotiating and re-negotiating his identity as essentially a *tombak* player.

Comparing Pedrām's and Akhavāss's cases, one could say that although they have strong self-conceptions of being *tombak* players, their music actions in general (Pedrām has sporadically performed on the *dohol*, and Akhavāss on other percussion instruments) afford this discrepancy between their identity as conceived by them and as viewed by others.

When illustrating the music skills and practices of *tombak* players, in most cases we witness a blurred music profile (many *tombak* players perform at some point in their career on a second instrument to a professional level, or generally practice (and teach) a second and even third instrument), but they have a strong, I would say, sense of an identity as essentially *tombak* players.

The clash between self perception and individual identity, when it is experienced as such by some *tombak* players (as it was shown in the cases of Akhavāss and Pedrām), can be perhaps attributed to the blurred music profile of the *tombak* players, and the way they negotiate their music identities.

This perspective could be validated also from another point of view. Rajabi's identity as a *tombak* player was never in doubt, as always defined, emphasized and manifested by him firmly and precisely through the course of his life. A last remark on the subject of the music identity could be to the co-existence of other identities, related

with the music identity or not, that of teacher, writer, researcher and so on (a view that Rajabi often expresses, as discussed in the next chapter).

In his influential paper “The Challenge of Bi-Musicality”, Hood argues that the best way for the student of non-western music to understand another music culture is to focus in practical studies and learn to perform (1960). He advocated the notion of “bi-musicality”, but also challenged it, by proposing the terms “tri-musicality” and “quadric-musicality”, to refer to the practice of those musicians who acquire musicianship in one (or several) music cultures other than their own. Hood’s concept of bi-musicality has generated a rich literature in ethnomusicology,²⁷⁵ but it is not particularly helpful in order to understand the music practices of musicians performing several music instruments (especially within the same music genre).

The notion of “multi-instrumentality”, which has not yet received particular attention within ethnomusicology, would be useful to understand the phenomenon of musicians who play a number of different instruments, but usually concentrate and identify themselves with one instrument. This phenomenon is widespread in western music, especially in the popular, rock and jazz genres.²⁷⁶ In Iran, the practice of performing more than one instrument can be traced back to the 19th century, when well known musicians would play two musically compatible instruments, in terms of different motor structures, such as the *tār* and the *setār*.

The phenomenon of multi-instrumentality can be illuminated, in-part, by Baily’s ruminations where he states that, “different motor structures show varying degrees of adaptability to the instruments for which they are employed” and that “once the player’s motor structure has been established and a set of skilled movements acquired, it can function in a generative manner” (1977:329). Baily’s argument, while it applies to those musicians who are switching between instruments whose morphology dictates similar movement patterns, such as the *dutār* and *rubāb*, or the *tombak* and the *zarb-e zurkhāne*, is not particularly helpful to understand the category of musicians who play two or more instruments that require a quite different execution of motor skills (as in the cases of Sabā and Borumand, who play a wide range of music instruments that are not always compatible in terms of motor movement).

While in the west the phenomenon of multi-instrumentality seems to be related with the further development of performance skills, in Iran this practice has a different conceptual background. Many Iranian musicians in the past, such as Borumand, were

²⁷⁵ See, for example, Baily (1995b, [in press]), Titon (1995) and Davis (1994).

²⁷⁶ See the following website, which provides a long list of multi-instrumentalists in the west <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Multi-instrumentalist>> [accessed on 05/03/2007].

not interested so much in acquiring playing skills as performers (see Nettl 2005:181); they were rather interested in becoming *radifdān* (*radif* experts), and in order to achieve this aim they were studying several *radifs* with several teachers, whose music instruments were not always the same. Today, this situation applies in particular to the *tār* and *setār* players who also study several *radifs* that are suitable for these two instruments, with several teachers. With regards to *tombak* players, in the past they were performing *zarbi* and *tasnif* songs and were accompanying themselves on the *tombak*, and there is no evidence suggesting that they were expected to perform on another instrument.

In summation, contemporary Iranian musicians and *tombak* players do practice the playing of other instruments, usually performing within the same music genres; that this is not a novel practice in Iranian music; that many instrumentalists identify themselves with one instrument; that most contemporary professional *tombak* players (even if they play another instrument) identify themselves as primarily *tombak* players; and that this has eventually led to the rise of the “instrumental specialists” who strive to improve his status, to expand his playing technique, and to develop a repertoire for the solo, duet or group *tombak*.

Chapter five: The Iranian Revolution and its After-effects

Introduction

I found it extremely difficult to discuss with musicians about the post-Revolutionary period. As I still find it a somewhat delicate issue, now that I am writing, to decide how much to disclose, who to evoke, and in what way. In such a context, Geertz's "burden of authorship", is relevant to my endeavour too, and it is not an inconsiderable burden (1988:138).

Before going to the field, I had read so many things about the "atrocities" following the Revolution that I was at first afraid for my own safety. The feeling of being a foreigner and alone (though not lonely) in Iran, never left me completely: this was manifested as a strong sense of being far away from the comfort and especially the safety of the proximity with family, home and "my countries". And naturally the feeling of the foreigner emerged also when I attempted to understand how to move around, to judge situations, to estimate people, to comprehend the permitted boundaries of mobility, behaviour and speech. In a new, for me, country, with an unfamiliar culture, language and people, I felt culturally distant, and it was difficult, especially in the beginning to estimate when I crossed the boundaries, and with whom I could openly discuss sensitive political and social issues. Sometimes, even putting a "simple" question to *tombak* players, like for example "did you have more students before or after the Revolution?", or "why did you abandon *tombak* playing after the Revolution?", I could understand that the speaker was not willing to uncover his personal experience and thoughts. Rajabi would often answer such questions half-jokingly, half-seriously: "This is a political question and I am not answering political questions."

I was also conscious of the responsibility that I have first as a human being, and then by the ethics of research, not to expose or put into danger other people. Always while recording an interview, when I would sense that the grounds we were discussing were politically sensitive, I would be the first to propose to turn off the mini-disc. I had many reactions, and I have learned a lot from them. Many, who were willing to talk to me about delicate matters, did not mind recording our conversation. In the beginning I think they trusted the foreigner and the researcher in me, and as our relation evolved my personality. For some, my role as a researcher with an interest in their music, led them to evaluate and trust me eventually, but not immediately. Others, when they wanted to

discuss with me about the post-Revolutionary period would accept my suggestion to turn off the recorder and I would take notes; they were willing to discuss, to make me understand the general state of affairs, but they were fearful. And others would say, “write this down”, “you have to write this down”, and although allowing me to record them, my undertaking and my promise was not to expose them. In the cases when I recorded hazardous dialogues, after getting permission of my speakers, I felt again accountable. I was always afraid that someone might steal my research material and that in this case I could put perhaps someone in a difficult position. On the other hand, I had to rely on the judgement of my interviewee’s: they were the insiders, and they knew when we crossed boundaries or how much was permissible to talk privately or publicly, as public dissatisfaction is being often expressed in one situation or another, and among people who confide in each other. They were the ones who could better estimate if the degree of dissatisfaction and the ideas they expressed was “permissible” or not.²⁷⁷ However, once it happened that I videotaped a person who made a blasphemous comment on the current regime in a semi-public space. In this case s/he had crossed the permissible boundaries of political and social commentary, and I was put in a difficult position possessing such material, which caused me to feel trapped personally, professionally, and ethically. But, I did not erase it.

Continuing the account of the *tombak*’s development in Iranian music, this chapter will examine the period after the Revolution of 1979, with all the changes that the new theocratic regime brought to cultural activity and, by implication, to the musical tradition to which the *tombak* belongs. On the surface, we can observe that in the decades after the Revolution, the *tombak* became more popular, more accepted, and more widely used, and *tombak* players today have many more creative opportunities than their predecessors.

However, these developments are far from straight-forward. In fact, there is a series of different phases and a number of different aspects we would have to take into account, in order to explain how these positive developments took place: the effects of the new regime of “populist theocracy” on musical activity, which include a period of severe restriction and successive phases of gradual easing of censorship; the people’s response to the restrictions, and the opposition to the regime which found expression

²⁷⁷ However, Iranians are often at peril for their intellectual writings and discussions. For example Tukā Maleki was no longer allowed to publish and her editor was fined and fired for the publication of her book *Zanān-e Musiqi-ye Irān: Az Osture tā Emruz*. [Women and Music in Iran: From Mythological Times to Today] (2002), which contained a chapter describing how the Prophet himself enjoyed music being performed by singing girls, an opinion that the authorities considered to be blasphemous (Youssefzadeh 2004:133).

through music, by virtue of the latter being a “forbidden art”; the questions of national identity and tradition, in the light of the war against Iraq which the country faced for almost a decade; the anti-western sentiments, relevant to all the above; the dominance of traditional music until it was put aside by the emergence of popular music; and the particular status of the *tombak*, given its current state as part of an especially creative music atmosphere.

In order to appreciate all the above aspects of the *tombak*'s development in these decades of political, social and cultural ferment, it is necessary to look at the impact of the post-1979 regime and its chain-reaction of effects on Iranian music as a whole. This has to include a brief account of the people's response to these changes, from the standpoint of the audience as well as those of the musicians and the scholars. I will venture to offer such an account in the first section of the chapter. The second and third sections will deal with the activities of *tombak* players in particular in the period after the Revolution, by concentrating on its two main manifestations: private lessons and public concerts. The last section shows that the attitudes of the official state towards musical instruments are reflective of the political position towards music in general.

The Effects of the Revolution on Iranian Music: Official Restrictions and Popular Appeal

Soon after the Revolution, broadly speaking, as people call it Revolution, I don't call it a “Revolution”...After the 22nd of *Bahman*,²⁷⁸ Iranian people were hopeful, within the atmosphere of the Revolution [*tu hālat-e Engelābi*] social activities became larger, and everyone was happy by the fact that there was freedom, there was democracy, girls and boys were walking in the streets holding each other's hands. It was freedom under the Islamic Republic! Boys and girls would take each other's hand, would go to the cinema, to the theatre, would listen to music together. There was one *shur* [enthusiasm, rapture, vigour] in the year 58, 59 [that is 1979-1980], but after that, the atmosphere was spoiled [*kharāb shode*]. That *shur* [joy] that was in those years has disappeared, but music has not.

These are the words of a *tombak* player, but could be the words of almost any musician remembering nostalgically the general atmosphere, reflected in music too, of the first

²⁷⁸ 22nd of *Bahman* (the last month in the Iranian calendar) symbolically represents the first day of the Islamic Revolution.

days of the Revolution. Scholars report, as well, that the first year of the Revolution was full of artistic creativity and “unusually rich and creative” (Chelkowski 1991:769). But very soon the Revolution reversed, gradually and steadily, such ““progressive” trends” (ibid. 769). The main reason this revolution has a special historical significance, in the light of what was to follow in the Islamic world, was that it was inspired, mobilised and sustained not by a movement of radical politics, but, for the first time, by a movement of radical religion (Hobsbawm 1995:453-5).²⁷⁹ The effects of this revolution on cultural and artistic activity could be nothing but enormous, which, as revolutions go, is not perhaps so much of a novelty in itself, but the difference here is that the regime that was established from this revolution was not even going to have any pretences of cultural liberalism and freedom of expression. Indeed, the most conservative faction of the government gradually managed to suppress the various daily cultural expressions that pointed to an imported Western ideology, in terms of education, clothing, entertainment, art and a wide range of musical activities. This anti-western attitude was compatible with Khomeini’s view who saw Western ideology as a corruptive force of the “Islamic, national and moral identity of Iranians” (Khomeini, cited in Fazeli 2003:201). With regards to music, he compared it to “opium” to which one gets addicted and can no longer dedicate himself to other important activities. In Khomeini’s words, “we must eliminate music because it corrupts our country and our youth” (Khomeini, cited in Youssefzadeh 2005:431), a doctrine which was to be implemented, over the years, according to its various interpretations by the state policy-makers. As a result, in the name of the Cultural Revolution, all universities in the country were shut, including Tehrān University and its music department. Most of the departments in the Universities reopened in 1983, with a reformed programme compatible with the Islamic religion, but not the music department in Tehrān University which remained shut for a total of ten years, with the first students graduating three years later, in 1992.²⁸⁰

By 1983²⁸¹, as During describes, the practice of public concerts that was permitted during the first years of the Revolution was practically forbidden, as was also the public sale of music tapes, with the exception of those that were permitted by the official authorities (During 1984b:13). Moreover, radio and television transmitted

²⁷⁹ See also Keddie, who describes not only the “religious opposition” against the Shah’s policy, but also secular and guerrilla opposition forces (2003:214-222).

²⁸⁰ The faculty continued to be paid, but there were no students and no teaching.

²⁸¹ 1983 seems to be a very crucial year in the period following the Revolution, for establishing and practicing strict and harsh measures not only related to music, but also other arts and especially literature. Moreover, it seems that political expressions were also severely oppressed. For more details on musical life in 1983 in Iran see During’s (1984b) *La Musique Traditionnelle Iranienne en 1983*.

Iranian music only as background music or interludes (ibid.). Even today one can rarely see music instruments or musicians on television - with the exception of the singer - as they are subtly hidden behind flowers, burning candles, images of landscapes and other kinds of cover.

While religious restrictions in relation to music, as well as theocratic concepts regarding the legitimacy of music, were always present in the history of Persia, existing to a degree during the Pahlavi regime too, with the Islamic Revolution, music in 20th century Iran experienced its greatest suffocation. The Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988) provided further a legitimate reason to halt public entertainment, for reasons of mourning and honouring the martyrs and victims of war. As a matter of fact, During believes that restraints on music were implied in a period of austerity resulting from the war and the Revolution, rather than an “*implementation of religious law*” (my italics) (2005:376). As a matter of fact, during the Khomeini era there were no specific guidelines or laws regarding the cultural policies of the regime; the termination of the war marked a course of events that addressed the sociocultural issues in the country and led to a progressive easing of restrictions upon music and art in general.²⁸²

Thus the Iranian Revolution, and the ensuing Iran-Iraq war, brought extensive and multifarious forms of censorship: various musical manifestations and activities were halted, from entire music genres (pop and rock) to music styles (instrumental solo pieces)²⁸³ and expressions (dance), and from public concerts to music classes. In practice this anti-musical attitude was essentially discriminative: some music genres were promoted while others were completely banned. Female musicians experienced greater restrictions, especially in their vocal musical expressions and practice, than their male counterparts. The music types that were especially promoted through official channels at the outset of the Revolution and the subsequent Iran-Iraq war were the ones that propagated those religious and political beliefs that pertained to and legitimized the “continuity” of the ideologies of the Revolution, the war and martyrdom: religious music, and a genre of hybrid music called at the time revolutionary music (*sorudhā-ye engelābi*, literally revolutionary hymns). The transmission of western classical music was also an acceptable music form and a clear preference for the radio and television. It was a genre that was considered rather “serious” and not really able to arouse great emotions, and thus to influence Iranian people (During 1984b:13).

²⁸² See Moslem (2002:166-175, 213-224) on the socio-cultural policies during the post-Khomeini era.

²⁸³ See During (1984b:12), who asserts that in practice the instrumental solo and lively pieces such as the *chahārmezrābs* and *rengs* were considered to be illicit.

On the other hand, soon after the Revolution, western popular music and Iranian pop, which dominated the music life of the country before 1979, were completely banned. Nooshin explains this official stance: “pop music took on the symbolic burden of Western Cultural Imperialism”, and was, in any case, associated with the previous government (2005a:239). This music, named *mobtazal* (vulgar, cheap), was lumped together with western lifestyle and entertainment, including the cabaret, alcohol consumption and female “illicit” dancing, that were in opposition to Islamic values, and soon after the Revolution were also banned.

The state of regional music was also ambivalent. Youssefzadeh describes how in the first post-Revolutionary years the Revolutionary guards (*Pāsdārān*) would organize raids to collect and destroy music instruments in Khorasān (Youssefzadeh 2005: 432 and 2000:39).

Iranian classical music was permitted, but various restrictions were also applied to it.²⁸⁴ For example, female solo singing in front of male audiences was forbidden.²⁸⁵ Carrying or possessing musical instruments was often considered controversial, an issue that will be discussed further. During explains that musical expression that pointed to “lighter” music, that were more “exciting” or did not coordinate with the “seriousness” that music ought to have, were considered illicit. In particular he states that instrumental solos, the vocal *tahrir* and the vigorous rhythmic pieces *chahārmezrāb* and *reng* were considered improper and were characterized as “light” and less “serious” forms of music (1984b:12).²⁸⁶ He explains that music should not excite and arouse, especially through its rhythm (*ibid.*) Nevertheless, with the gradual relaxation on music after 1989, instrumental solo pieces and rhythmic forms of the *radif*, including the *chahārmezrāb* and the *reng*, were regularly performed in public.

Given that public concerts were practically banned until 1988, it is not easy to assess to what degree the prohibitions affected the dissemination and production of solo or group *tombak* records, considering at the same time both the ability of *tombak* players to record such material and the appeal to the audience that such productions

²⁸⁴ Various forms of censorship imbued after the Revolution are well reported by the ethnomusicologists. For more details refer to During especially for the first ten years after the Revolution (1984b, 1992, 2005), Nooshin (2005a and 2005b) for the situation of pop and rock music in Iran, Youssefzadeh for regional music and the stance of the official organization towards music (2000 and 2005), DeBano (2005) with regards to gender and music (2005).

²⁸⁵ Today female solo singing in front of male audiences is still officially forbidden. However musicians “appropriate” these restrictions according to a situational “know how”, which means that who, where, how, and under what circumstance some things can be done is a negotiable. For example, I attended several concerts in Tehrān where not only was the female voice distinguishable from the male, contrary to the prohibitions applied, but the male voice appeared to remain completely in the background.

²⁸⁶ It should be noted, though, that *chahārmezrāb* and *reng* are integral parts of the *radif*, and the vocal ornament *tahrir* is a primary vocal expression used in Iranian music.

might have. Thus, while the first two records of *tombak* solo after the Revolution, were produced in the middle of the 1990s, quite some time after the ban was lifted, today there are still very few productions on *tombak* solo and group *tombak* available on the market.²⁸⁷ Many well-known *tombak* players have not produced solo recordings, which in some cases is a matter of personal preference and an inclination for accompaniment rather than *tombak* solo, while with others it is for reasons of personal judgment (inadequacy of material).

It should be also noted that until 1998 very few teaching manuals for the *tombak* were published, while after that year the publications grew rapidly. One of the reasons for this situation is that only a few known *tombak* players, who were active before the Revolution, were teaching, particularly in the early 1980s. Several had actually abandoned *tombak* playing and practiced other professions unrelated to music. The other reason is that, from the late 1980s and early 1990s a new generation of *tombak* players, the post-Revolutionary generation, started learning the instrument, whose first fruits became apparent in the late nineties. They developed further the potentialities of the playing technique and are the new generation to legitimize and establish the professional identity of the *tombak* player. Generally though, during the 1980s *tombak* playing and music making were largely confined to being educational and “indoor” activities rather than performative and public.

As already mentioned above, the years after the Revolution are in no way consistent and homogenous: various forms of censorship are still pertinent, others have been toned down (for example the restriction on popular music was reduced after 1998), while some others have ambiguous and debatable application (such as the status of music lessons and practice during the months of *Moharram* and *Safar*), a feature that affects music making and music dissemination, but also the power of music.

Youssefzadeh refers to several important junctures of such changes, after which restrictions become gradually moderated, slacken, withdrawn or abandoned (2000 and 2005). First she mentions the years 1988 and 1989. After the Iran-Iraq war, which ended in 1988, Khomeini issued a *fatwā* (religious decree) in 1989 according to which the sale and purchase of music instruments was allowed (Youssefzadeh 2000:39). She describes

²⁸⁷ They are: *Sāz-e Tanhā. Bedāhe Navāzi-ye Tombak* [Instrument Alone. Improvisation on *Tombak*] (1996) by Dāriush Zargeri; *Taknavāzi-ye tombak* [Solo *tombak*] (1993) by Majid Khalaj; *Āvā-ye Khiāl. Taknavāzi-ye Tombak* [The Sound of Dream. Solo *Tombak*] (2000) and *Peydāyesh* [Genesis] (2003) by Navid Afgah; *Kutāh. Tarhi-ye Berāye Sāzhā-ye Kube-i* [Short/Concise/Momentary. A Venture for Percussion Instruments] (2004) by Pedrām Khāvarzamini; *Goftegu-ye Chap va Rāst* [Dialogue between Two Hands] (2006) by Bahman Rajabi and Farbod Yadollāhi. In this list I do not mention the works published abroad by *tombak* players, the CDs that are published in Iran for teaching purposes, and the works of other percussion groups in Iran.

that “little by little, here and there, music slowly crept back...” (ibid. 432). Then, after Khomeini’s death in 1989, several changes, especially apparent in relation with international and cultural policies, affected musical life too. She also notes that Iranian classical music reclaimed a new degree of legitimacy after 1992, when Ayatollah Khamene’i, launched a campaign against “the cultural aggression of the West” (Youssefzadeh 2005:432 and 2000:39).²⁸⁸ Lastly, she refers to the year 1997 as a turning point, the year of Khatami’s election, when a number of reforms were implemented, especially in the cultural domain, and were soon reflected in the most important music festival of Iran in 1999 whose name was modified to “Fajr International Music Festival” (*Jashnavāvar-e Beynalmellali-ye Musiqi-ye Fajr*),²⁸⁹ a designation that indicated an opening to the world and a willingness to acquire a more cosmopolitan character.

Iranian music was at a high point, for the first time in post-Revolutionary years, and had an overwhelming appeal to the masses. Oral testimonies and statistics can verify this. During the 1988-1997 periods, the production of Iranian music reached its peak. Youssefzadeh informs us about the numbers of the permits (*mojavvez*) issued for cassettes by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance (*Vezārat-e Farhang va Ershād Eslāmi*): in 1988 the number was 81, in 1997 it had risen to 253 (Youssefzadeh 2000:46).²⁹⁰ In addition, musicians attest to the acceleration of the interest of Iranian people in their music: more and more students were learning to play the instruments of Iranian music, concerts halls were filled in with people and music makers could hardly anticipate the demands for instrument production. The *tombak*, like other Iranian instruments, became widely diffused and practiced by the middle-class young post-Revolutionary generation. Many of the best *tombak* players of the young generation started learning the instrument during the early 1990s.

²⁸⁸ Regarding the year 1992 several congruent sociocultural factors emerged in the framework of wider factional disputes. On the one hand, Rafsanjani introduced the “Cultural Principles of the Islamic Republic” in August 1992, to espouse freedom in expression for the arts and the artists in general (Moslem 2002:166-175). On the other hand, his appointed minister ‘Ali Larijani, who replaced Khatami as the head of the Ministry of Culture and Guidance in July 1992, backed rather conservative sociocultural policies (ibid. 213-217). According to Moslem, combating the cultural onslaught turned “back the clock of cultural life in Iran” by the end of 1993 (ibid. 220), while according to Youssefzadeh it had a positive outcome for Iranian music. These two statements are not necessarily conflicting regarding Iranian music. Indeed, Larijani disapproved of light popular music and was by accord with the Khamene’i doctrine according to which the “arts must be in line with Islamic principles”, a vision that Iranian music was able to meet (Khamene’i, cited in Moslem 2002:218).

²⁸⁹ Youssefzadeh mentions that this festival, which marks the anniversary of the Revolution and is held annually each February, was inaugurated in 1986 under the name “Hymns and Revolutionary Music” (*Jashnavār-e Sorud va Āhang-hāye Engelābi*) (2000:49). In 1989 the festival changed its name to become the Fajr Festival of Music. Again, the titles indicate the willingness for change.

²⁹⁰ Youssefzadeh does not clarify if this number is relevant to Iranian music only, or to all domestic and foreign music genres.

These developments amplified musical interest towards Iranian music - whether it also increased true taste and aesthetic appreciation is seriously questioned by many musicians and scholars. While the audience for Iranian music in pre-Revolutionary Iran was “almost entirely composed of well-to-do and educated individuals” (Nettl 1975:85), Iranian music in post-Revolutionary Iran became the music of the people and was practiced in everyday life. This fact was tautological with what Nooshin lucidly describes as “an expression of active resistance” towards government restrictions (2005a:244).²⁹¹ Other scholars note that the turn towards visual art classes, and attendance at universities, was partly due to the lack of recreational facilities for young people (Keddie 2003:291).

The 1970s were a period of crisis for the Iranian identity, and Iranian music was reflective of these tendencies. After 1979, as the Revolution was itself an “assertion of national identity” (Nooshin 2005a:235), Iranian music dynamically responded to this quest of identity by providing the link with national and cultural heritage, by becoming a symbol of historical continuity, and thus reaffirming Iranian identity.²⁹² In addition, for some teenage musicians, practicing music under such circumstances was a kind of *rite de passage*, a part of discovering and establishing their individual identity. According to Pedrām “Playing the *tombak* was the only thing in my life that I was certain that I wanted to do. And I was prepared to defend it and not let anyone take this one thing away from me.”

The seemingly inexorable rise of interest in Iranian music was also in one sense a “requisite”. During argues that from the moment that there was a clear withdrawal from the government to support Iranian music, amateurs and professional musicians undertook to “rescue” their national heritage (1984b:17-18). In another sense it was also “unavoidable” and “destined” (ibid.). That is to say, the restrictive policy of the regime promoted certain types of music, such as Iranian music or Revolutionary songs, by censoring other types of music. The increasing immersion in Iranian music could be also described as a “contagious fever”. As there was almost no creation of pop music in Iran (which today flourishes) most of the young people who wanted to study music would turn to learning traditional Iranian music. When I asked Hamid Qanbari (a

²⁹¹ A role, as she says, that was not undertaken by the contemporary popular music not even during the 1960s and the 1970s, partly because its production was centrally controlled and partly because it was unable to provide “social comment” (Nooshin 2005a:244). Elsewhere, she states that during the first decade after the Revolution when there was hardly any production of popular music in Iran, it was “the *consumption* of pop [that] became a way of symbolically defying official restrictions” (2005b: 469).

²⁹² Also a fresh interest in the music of the different regions of Iran emerged after the 1990s, concordant with what During (2005:380) describes as slogans of the Revolution “returning to one’s own roots” or “withdrawing into oneself”.

member of Pedrām's *tombak* group) why he had chosen to play the *tombak* in *musiqi-ye sonnati* and not any other music genre, he replied that when he started playing the *tombak* in the late 1980s, he would practice with musical instruments that his friends were playing, and "at that time everyone was playing *musiqi-ye sonnati*."

Moreover, there are indications that this turn towards Iranian music, besides carrying the symbolic meaning of resistance to government restrictions and oppressions experienced in everyday life, was also, to put it in a figurative sense, a kind of "reaction", a "rejection", a "denunciation" or a "retaliation" with regard to social control, rather than a true interest in the essence of the music itself.

This reactive attitude of the Iranian people against social control makes itself evident in situations when people systematically transgress "politically correct" boundaries of the established moral and social behaviour: putting on the *rusari* (head scarf) too loosely, putting on make-up conspicuously, unmarried couples holding publicly each other's hands, listening to loud music in the car, each year lighting bigger fires in the streets of Tehrān during the night of *Chahārshanbe Suri*.²⁹³ According to some scholars,²⁹⁴ these *petites revolutions* as I call them, are essentially a safety valve, which allows the public dissatisfaction to discharge to the degree that can be in one way or another controlled by the relevant authorities.²⁹⁵

Although scholars and musicians describe the warmest reception of Iranian music as occurring during the 1980s, some claim that the strength of Iranian music with respect to its dissemination and its subversive power declined after 1997 and consequently people lost their enthusiasm for it. And while many musicians from the classical music scene "put the blame" on pop music, at the same time they express their argument in relation to the essence of Iranian music. In such context, A. T. [anonymous thinker] accepts that:

²⁹³ *Chahārshanbe Suri*, a pre-Islamic tradition, is a festivity taking place on the last Wednesday of the year. On the night of *Chahārshanbe Suri* it is customary to light fires and jump over them. Traditionally, fires are also set up at courtyards of houses. The practice of lighting fires also takes place in the streets of Tehrān and street-fires have become larger after the Revolution. During such nights the streets of Tehrān are literally on fire, and the whole atmosphere is riotous and tumultuous. This custom of lighting a fire and jumping over it transmutes steadily and literally to "playing with fire" (*āteshbāzi*). It should be also mentioned that organized demonstrations in various cities of Iran also take place. A large protest occurred in 1999; the protestors, among them many students, demanded freedom of press and democracy (Keddie 2003:276-277).

²⁹⁴ I consider it best not to reveal their identity.

²⁹⁵ Such *petites revolutions* manifested in public spaces are not a phenomenon exclusive to Iran. For example, Tina Ramnarine has shown that during the Indian-Caribbean *chutney* public performances, sensual female dancing is an expression of opposition to the traditional male control over the sexuality of the Hindu female (1998/1999).

Musiqi-ye sonnati is not music for entertainment, thus it is not a music that it can become popular, it has become satiated [*delzadegi shod*], so it went through a metamorphosis, something between semi-classical and classical, also there was no other way than for pop music to become free.

Recognizing that popular music was officially banned in Iran till 1998, the consumption of pop was largely practised, in spite of its problematic status with regards to obtaining and consuming it in the private domain.²⁹⁶ In recent articles Nooshin (2005a, 2005b) describes that during the time of its prohibition, listening to “pop music had become a symbol of resistance, by virtue of being banned” (2005a:243).

Another point that needs to be mentioned is that Iranian music is not able to represent alone the music tastes of such a multi-ethnic state, or to accompany all entertainment modes, particularly those of the middle class. Moreover, it appears that the restrictions on popular music, which was favoured a great deal in the pre-Revolutionary period, did not change very much the listening habits in private space, especially during domestic celebrations.

Musicians of the classical Iranian scene have various responses to this tension between their genre and pop. The following is an account of the *tombak* player Kāmkār, who works with the most progressive and creative musicians in Iranian music, and comments on the proliferation of popular music today. He expresses the typical standpoint of the artist-musician, who is resentful of the domination of the “cruder”, commercial forms of pop at the expense of other forms of music:

I am not opposed to pop music, I say again that in the weddings no one can listen to Beethoven or to *musiqi-ye sonnati*, we should have a music particular for weddings, what I say is that this music shouldn't impose itself everywhere.

The years before the Revolution the difficulties that we musicians had were that a series of people would impose their pop music, their *bāzāri* [commercial, vulgar] music. All the musicians [that played] *musiqi-ye sonnati* or in classical orchestras, everyone was at the corner of their house, and had no value, people believed that this [music] had no value at all. When the Revolution began, this value came into being; everybody turned towards *musiqi-ye Irāni, sonnati*, towards Iranian instruments. But now, every week, in every alley, in every street, pop music or guitar playing, again impose themselves, everywhere, on the radio, on

²⁹⁶ Nooshin makes this poignant distinction between producing and consuming popular music between 1979 and 1998 (2005b:469). Another point to make is that the main sources to obtain popular music were, and still are, the black-market, the internet, or satellite channels, whose legitimacy was (and remains) also ambiguous. Moreover, as private spaces are also violated by the Revolutionary Guards, musical materials, including music instruments, tapes, and journals become often confiscated, and people are often being arrested, treated with suspicion, interrogated, mistreated, and finally released, usually the next day, after being fined.

the television, on *Sedā o Simā*²⁹⁷ ...So we came back, we made one circle, we returned to that [which existed] before the Revolution. Now, again, that [pop music] is valued. And I think if this continues it is very bad, because all the good artists performing *musiqi-ye sonnati*, not only *sonnati*, all non commercial performers [*geyre bāzārī*], all *qeyre mobtazal* performers [not cheap, vulgar], they will have to go and sit in a corner of their house, or they will have to put on rock costumes, to play in the streets rock music, to play shouting [*dād-i bezanand*], or nothing....²⁹⁸ (Interview, March 2003).

By hearing and recalling his point of view, I discern expressions of disappointment (the spread of *musiqi-ye sonnati* does not endure for a long time), discouragement (everyone is turning towards popular music), apprehension (about the place of traditional musicians in the future), and also reflections of permissiveness (popular music has also a place in this society), aesthetic judgement (popular music is a rather “low” art) and social commentary (why are governmental organizations promoting the music that they were forbidding a few years ago?). Commentators like Arzhang Kāmkār, reveal also the other side of the coin, when he expresses his concerns not only regarding the music taste of the public, his aesthetic objections, and the role of *Sedā o Simā* in dissemination of such music, but regarding the place of the “serious” musicians in Iranian society and the opportunities to perform, to thrive and make a living out of *musiqi-ye Irāni*, *musiqi-ye asil*, *musiqi-ye sonnati*.

And while musicians, usually those performing Iranian music or western classical music, both before and after the Revolution, use derogatory terms in relation to popular music, after the Revolution a “new pop” has emerged, promoted largely by *Sedā o Simā*, acquiring a more artistic and sophisticated designation: *pop-e jadid* (new pop),²⁹⁹ which in a sense aspires to disentangle itself from the *musiqi-ye pāp* (pop music) used in pre-Revolutionary Iran.

Regarding this distinction between artistic and popular music, the *tombak* has a peculiar status that stems from its flexibility. That is to say, it is one of the instruments

²⁹⁷ The Iranian Radio and Television.

²⁹⁸ All the terms used by Kāmkār to denote popular music - except the literal term *musiqi-ye pāp*, *mobtazal* and *bāzārī*, including other terms commonly applied in order to indicate or imply popular music genres, such as *musiqi-ye āmiyāne* and *motrebi*, entail a derogatory comment and literary mean commercial (*bāzārī*) in the sense of cheap; vulgar, trivial, filthy, trashy (*mobtazal*); and illiterate and vulgar (*āmiyāne*).

²⁹⁹ I am not sure how “official” this term is, and neither is Nooshin (2005a) when referring to *pop-e jadid*. Youssefzadeh describes the official stance of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, enumerating the musical genres according to which all sound productions are classified and coded with letters by this ministry. In this classification system, there is a separate category for pop music and a separate category for new music (*jadid*) (2000:44-45). However, in Iran, generally speaking, one might assume that a term becomes in a sense official when it is used by the official media, in this case, *Sedā o Simā*. As Nooshin reports, “by virtue of being broadcast, this music became permissible again in the public domain” (2005a:46, footnote:46)

that can be used, and has been used in both genres, so that *tombak* players have experienced no decrease in their demand, particularly as teachers, due to the rise of popular music at the expense of the more classical styles. Moreover, the decline of interest in Iranian music has hardly been felt in *tombak* playing and teaching; taking in account the substantial rise in publications of instruction books for *tombak* especially after 1998 one could say that the dissemination of *tombak* playing was never so popular in the past.

To this situation few professional Iranian musicians have remained passive or repetitive in terms of creativity.³⁰⁰ Some musicians have turned to experiment with fusion music,³⁰¹ others have turned towards recreating the music of the Qajar period or reviving the *iqā'* rhythms in Iranian music;³⁰² others experiment with inventing new instruments or novel orchestrations;³⁰³ many have turned towards regional music as a source of inspiration. This profound creativity, often labelled as "*musiqi-ye tajrobi*" (experimental music), is an emerging genre representing all those musicians who are transgressing the "conventional" boundaries of Iranian music and experimenting with new music forms. *Tombak* players are also dynamic as part of this creative atmosphere. Some of the examples already mentioned include: experimentation with novel configurations of *tombak* percussion groups;³⁰⁴ modifying the structure of the *tombak*; formulating new music styles for the *tombak*,³⁰⁵ participating in music genres other than Iranian ones,³⁰⁶ being involved in the creation of new music styles,³⁰⁷ publishing

³⁰⁰ See also Nooshin (2005a:245-246) who indicates "dramatic" activities in other areas of Iranian music (festivals, competitions, publications of musical anthologies). In relation to creativity in pop and rock see Nooshin (2005b), in regional music Youssefzadeh (2005).

³⁰¹ Indo/Iranian by Mas'ud Sho'āri on the *setār* with tabla accompaniment; Pontic (Greek)/Iranian by Ardeshir Kāmkār (*kamānche*) and Mathaios Tsahouridis (Pontic lyra); Armenian/Azeri/Iranian by 'Alizāde (*tār*) and Djivan Gasparyan (*duduk*, voice); Western Classical/Iranian by the Dāstān Ensemble and BBC Symphony Orchestra.

³⁰² For instance, *Sobhgāhi* [Morn] by Alizāde and *Zarbi-hāye Habib Somā'i* [Rhythmic Pieces of Habib Soma'i] by Kiāni.

³⁰³ Siāmāk Āqāi, for example, has recently founded an ensemble comprised of six *santurs*; also the *Chelo Daf* [Fourty Daf] Ensemble. 'Alizāde has produced in 2003 a new record *Salāne* [*Salāne*] improvising upon the various Iranian *dastgāh* on a newly created instrument, a long-necked lute that was named *Salāne*. Another music instrument that 'Alizāde created recently is called the *shurangiz* (Nooshin, personal communication, January 2007).

³⁰⁴ Pedrām's *tombak* ensemble *Varashān*; Kāmkārs work *Samā' Zarbihā. Kāmkār hā* [Chant of Drums, The Kāmkārs] that is composed for percussion instruments performing spiritual religious ceremonies.

³⁰⁵ Such as the "effective" style of playing inaugurated by Afgah.

³⁰⁶ Here perhaps it should be noted that this is practiced more often by those who have connections with musicians outside Iran, like Pedrām for example.

³⁰⁷ Afgah's latest work *Ma'bad Peykare-hāye Chubi. Navid Afgah* [The Temple of the Wooden Figures. Navid Afgah].

audio-visual material for teaching purposes,³⁰⁸ taking part in devising new teaching methods,³⁰⁹ and so on.

The domain in which *tombak* players have been hardly innovative relates to the *iqā'* rhythmic modes. Even those who are willing to accept theories maintaining that *iqā'* existed eighty years ago in Iranian music are scarcely experimenting. According to a well-known young *tombak* player studying at the Tehrān University (who also gives lectures to his fellow students on the theory of *iqā'*):

The *tombak* didn't flourish until fifty years ago exactly because [the player] was following the rhythmic modes [*iqā'*]. But now playing like this is of no use. Maybe in a symbolic way it could be nice, but as something to be played always no... It is like trying to succeed a [Mercedes] Benz with a [horse-drawn] carriage.³¹⁰

While many contemporary professional *tombak* players are not strictly attached in practicing and disseminating the traditional repertoire of the *radif*, they mediate and innovate within the classical forms and genres of Iranian music.

Teaching and Private Lessons

While before the Revolution the greatest patron of music were governmental agencies, with the outbreak of the Revolution the role of the government patronage changed, with many of the institutions transforming, reducing or ceasing their support and sponsorship activities.³¹¹ With the various restrictions towards music and musicians, and the general negative atmosphere of the Revolution and the war, many found it difficult to sustain themselves financially from their music, and while some musicians changed their professions, and others left the country, many turned towards teaching.

³⁰⁸ I refer to Esmā'ili, who during my research in Iran was commencing such a project.

³⁰⁹ Dāriush Zārgeri was involved in a project of writing a teaching manual intended for children.

³¹⁰ The *tombak* has developed to an instrument demanding high technical dexterity. In the contemporary recordings attempting to revive the *iqā'* rhythms, *tombak* playing appears to be very simple in terms of rhythmic configuration and particularly technique. Listen to [CD I #7], a *tombak* player (not stated) re-creating an *iqā'* mode while accompanying the *santur* of Majid Kiāni. The piece, as its name implies, is in *āvāz-e abu 'atā* from the recording *Zarbi-hāye Habib Somā'i* [Rhythmic Pieces of Habib Somā'i] recorded in 1978 and published in 1997.

³¹¹ For the position of official government institutions towards music and musicians after the Revolution see During (1984b:15-17, 1992) and Youssefzadeh 2000.

Today many *tombak* players depend largely upon teaching for their economic support. With the outbreak of the Revolution, as music departments were shut down, and many institutionalized and private music schools closed down or held back their music activities,³¹² teaching became a secret and private affair, and a major, if not the sole source of income, quite profitable, “tax-free”, relatively regular and to a degree secure, especially after the government’s relaxation of music in 1988.

Nowadays, most young and middle-aged *tombak* players offer private tuition, while teaching in music schools is an intermittent activity. A very few *tombak* players, as in the cases of Arzhang Kāmkār and Kāmbiz Ganjei, teach in family music schools.³¹³

The two *tombak* players of the older generation that I visited, Rajabi and Esmā’ili, give lessons privately and are not associated with music schools. They are self-reliant: they are well-known musicians and they do not need mediators to attract students; they are self-governing and self-contained: they are not employed by others, and thus in a sense they are not beholden to others; they are independent and free of agreements and commitments towards a third body; they are self-supporting: they are paid directly by the students and agree the amount of payment individually with each student. In this context, teaching in private for the master musicians is also a declaration of high status.

Esmā’ili offers teaching lessons at his private house, Rajabi rents premises (used primarily for his *tombak* classes), and Mohammad Akhavān, another *tombak* player of the older generation that I visited, is perhaps one of the few *tombak* players who runs a music school nowadays.

Other locations that are used for private lessons, are situated in the most “unusual” settings: in the garage or basement of apartment blocks and houses transformed (or not) to a more comfortable teaching place, in a music shop run by a *tombak* player, in a modern office building, or in the back room of a kindergarten. My first teaching lessons with Rajabi in 2001, were held in south-east Tehrān (*Pich-e Shemrān*), a quite central part of the city, but in a rather “shady” district.³¹⁴ The lessons

³¹² Soon after the Revolution, the National Conservatoire for example, kept secondary level music classes, but did not accept new enrolment (During 1984b:15). On the other hand, one of the most important private music schools, *Chāvosh*, ceased to function in 1983.

³¹³ According to the statistics of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, in the beginning of 2006 Tehrān (with a population of about 17 million people) had 208 official music schools, while the total number of official music schools in Iran was 458 (Sa’idi 2007).

³¹⁴ Northern Tehrān is considered to be a region of the modern middle and upper class, while south Tehrān is inhabited by lower economic and social classes with a relatively conservative religious background. Social and economic differences are perceptible in the architecture and also in dress code on

were situated in a small low-ceiling place. The teaching room had its windows sealed, without proper air circulation, and with a ventilator in the middle of the room. Moreover, the flat was adjacent to a printing-press, its loud noise hiding the sound of the *tombak*. This is not irrelevant to the fact that private lessons, although widely diffused, are still practiced secretly, to avoid attracting too much attention. The choice of the specific location would otherwise seem difficult to understand, considering that Rajabi is a master musician and could afford a more “appropriate” place. On the other hand, taking into account that he projects himself as a rather “rebellious”, “liminal” and “nihilist” figure, this place is also a liminal space, on the threshold of the private and the public, legitimate as well as covert. As such, it is in a sense compatible with Rajabi’s often eccentric behaviour and further corroborates and reinforces his standing as a liminal figure.³¹⁵ In general, teaching locations often reveal the social and economic status of the musicians. Private teaching locations of well-known masters of music are also called “offices” (*edāre*), projecting in a sense a more respectable impression. Teaching locations are also characteristic of the life style of their owners. For example, Pedrām’s teaching place was the garage of his parental house, remodeled into a teaching and rehearsal room, suitable, as it was a basement and to a point secluded, for practice in any time of the year and nearly any hour of the day. I often attended rehearsals with Pedrām and Hamid playing until late at night, sometimes until the early morning. In other words, such a private place was fulfilling Pedrām’s and Hamid’s needs: both young, without family obligations, without a specific time schedule, they could enjoy and work on their music, and eventually also rest and sleep in the same room, without disturbing the neighbours.

Teaching locations also depict the ambiguous state of music after the Revolution. Thus, garages, built in the 1960s in apartment block and representing the modern face of Iran, and thousands of basements built in the 1980s mainly for the purpose to provide shelter from the air raids above Tehrān during the Iran-Iraq war, are often used nowadays for teaching and rehearsals, as they offer unofficial, and to a degree cloistered and secluded environments suitable for musical activities.³¹⁶

the streets of the passer-by. For example, in the northern parts, modern high-streets, apartments and houses loom, while the southern district, where the main Tehrān bazaar is situated, exhibits neighbourhoods with small alleys, and more traditional and time-worn structures. Moreover, while in northern Tehrān people appear in the street with a more modern and westernized dress code (females with colourful headscarves, vivid make-up, shorter trousers and rain coats shorter than the permitted length), in the southern part the chador dominates the scene.

³¹⁵ In the next chapter I describe aspects of Rajabi’s eccentric behaviour in detail.

³¹⁶ Nooshin also refers to basements (*zir-e zamin*) used by rock musicians as they offer privacy to rehearse. Moreover she remarks that this music is also defined according to the space that it is being

However, teaching places are between and betwixt public and private spheres. On one hand, they are personal properties, private and isolated spaces. On the other hand, they are in many cases, practically open to any student. Rajabi's classes, for example, would very often be visited by former students with their companions, new students would drop in with their friends, or students would come by with their parents. In general, even if he was notified in advance and if he was giving his consent to such visits, nevertheless new persons and unfamiliar guests often appeared. I met other *tombak* players who are not so open to such visits, especially in cases when they offered lessons in their dwelling place.

Thus the degree to which a teaching place is a public or a private space often depends on the conventions put forth by the teacher, and the boundaries he permits to be crossed. The positioning of private lessons between the public and private domain is depicted, for instance, in the dress code, especially of the female students. I saw some teachers encouraging them to take off the *rusari* and feel at the same time confidential and clandestine, as though "at home".³¹⁷ In this case the teacher would consider his space as private and exclusive, where rules can be set up in opposition to public conventions, and where secular and counter-Islamic modes of behaviour are not uncharacteristic. By contrast, I have encountered a number of teachers who never suggested to me or any other female student to take off the *rusari*, but it often seemed that this was not out of a genuine religious principle, but rather to observe political and social etiquette.

Teaching is to a degree a seasonal vocation, with high and low teaching periods. Pedrām remarked that during the exams period at school and universities many students do not have the time to practice music and attend lessons. Moreover, there are also many cases of students who abandon their music activities for longer periods while preparing for the university entry examination (*konkur*). I had a music-associate, Sepide, who plays the *tār*; we practised regularly in duet. When I left Iran she was preparing to give the university entry exams and she regretfully abandoned her *tār* lessons and her practice for about two years. When she was finally accepted in the university she was happy to continue her music activities. It seems that such cases are not peculiar to the Iranian, or even Western, cultures. However, situations like this are often distressing for

practised. Thus, rock is also known as "underground rock" (*rock-e zir-e zamini*), implying both the metaphorical and the physical aspect of the musical activities (2005b:263-465).

³¹⁷ Strict limits, like the prohibition of alcohol and dress rules, are widely flouted in private homes. In the public sphere although there is an increasing tendency to question and push the boundaries, often in opposition to Islamic modes of behaviour, people are more cautious in observing the social etiquette of proper conduct.

music teachers, because underneath the action there is a hint of value judgment towards music. On this Pedrām exclaimed: “Lessons! You are devoting yourself to one student who is talented, the next week his father comes and says: No, this kid has to read for school, these things [*in kār-hā*] are never things with a purpose, music is a sin [*gonāh dāre*].”

According to Otterbeck, one of the central arguments against music in Islam is its uselessness (2004). And while the hardliners usually regard time spent on music as wasted time that could be devoted to the contemplation of Allah, the liberals also often consider musical activity a waste of time, but in a more practical and utilitarian sense: it is a time that should be invested in acquiring professional education leading to a secure and “respectable” occupation. In addition, the “sinful living” that popular opinion associates with music and its performance, involves other “forbidden pleasures” as well, such as drinking alcohol, taking drugs and an illicit sex life (ibid. 14-15).³¹⁸

The seasonal aspect of teaching is also reflected in the practices and in the moods of the teachers themselves. One *tombak* player would sometimes mutter that “in the month of *Ramazān*, when you are fasting you are not in the mood for teaching.” However, I have not witnessed many musicians fasting during *Ramazān*. Perhaps it is because musicians in general do not align themselves with religious practices, as it is usually because of “them” [*ānhā*, is a noun used to refer to religious or state authorities] that music has been for so long in a state of a peculiar predicament.

Teaching during the months of *Moharram* and *Safar* (the months of mourning) is also a matter of controversy and private lessons have to be performed with cautiousness, without attracting much attention, low-keyed and quiet. During the mourning days of *Tāsu’ā* and *Ashurā* (the ninth and the tenth day of *Moharram*, which is also a public holiday), the time that marks the death of Imām Hossein, music classes cease.³¹⁹ Overall, musical activity retains many aspects of its ambiguous character and is subject to restrictions, at least for reasons of propriety and conformity with conservative religious etiquette.

³¹⁸ Merriam discusses similar views held in other cultures (1964:123-144). For example, the Congo Basongye consider musicians to be “lazy, heavy drinkers, debtors...hemp smokers... adulterers” and believe that “musicians exist only for music and that other aspects of life are not important to them” (ibid. 136).

³¹⁹ While in Iran, observing of the religious commemorations is in a sense a lever imposed upon musicians who are in many cases unwillingly restrained from giving lessons, in Afghanistan to be a pious Muslim added to the respectable image of the musicians. In this context, Baily describes Amir Jan Khushnavaz proclaiming publicly his religious sensibility during the months of *Moharram* and *Safar*, by appearing unshaven and with old clothes in the bazaar, and by not allowing music to be played in his house (1988b:115-116).

While music lessons are generally a profitable and regular vocation, compared to giving concerts, it is not always a profession that musicians prefer. Many, especially young professional *tombak* players, often express their dissatisfaction, considering teaching to be wearisome, taking away from their time to practice and develop further their own music skills. Teaching, among some *tombak* players, is in a sense regarded as a defeat and compromise. M.K. once remarked, “Look how backwards we are, we teach from morning till evening.” M.K. was complaining, as many *tombak* players do, that he does not have as many opportunities as he would wish to perform, and that because of circumstances he is compelled to give lessons. And although he is a well-known player he remarked, “it is difficult for a *tombak* player to work, there are too few groups. If one group has a *tombak* player, they don’t take another one.” On the same occasion he added that it is not enough to be a good musician, one has to be lucky, naming different *tombak* players who have the “proper” connections and are thus able to perform regularly abroad.

It is thus economic expediency that compels many *tombak* players to turn towards teaching, rather than their preference for the occupation, as it happens with many musicians in the west. In my fieldnotes I quoted A.P. saying, “If I had a lot of money I would teach only the very good students and I wouldn’t take money from them.” Teaching demands time, strength and a lot of patience, and in order to be rewarding it requires devoted and talented students.³²⁰

During my field research I attended countless teaching sessions given by many *tombak* players and I could see that few would not even hide the boredom they felt by giving lessons. On one such occasion I had the chance to observe A.P. giving *tombak* lessons to a fairly young female *tombak* player. During the whole lesson he would yawn and on various instances he would instruct his student rather abruptly, “listen to me when I am playing, you are out of rhythm, you play very fast.” As I had good relationship with the *tombak* teacher, and we belonged to the same age-group, and thus I felt comfortable disclosing my private thoughts, when everyone left I told him that I had the impression he was *bādākhloq* (bad-tempered) during the lesson. He did not deny and replied that “my students, they know me, they don’t misunderstand me.” In the end he said: “You know, teaching is not really a music work” (*Tadris kār-e musiqi nist*).

Teaching needs commitment, and in order to achieve it, one probably has to be fulfilled in one’s own work and willing to spread to the next generation one’s

³²⁰ This situation is not unique to Iran. Many musicians in the West have similar experiences (Nooshin, personal communication, January 2007).

knowledge. I am not implying that young *tombak* players are not willing to forward to the next generation what they know, but I say that they would perhaps prefer to develop and distribute their work performing rather than teaching. Generally, part of the *ostāds* role in Iran, Afghanistan, India, and neighboring countries is considered to be teaching, and the word *ostād* itself is generally ascribed, in the music context, to highly regarded teachers (Baily 2005). In Iran there is a tendency to apply the title *ostād*, to highly skilled musicians, even if it is not ones' own teacher who is being referred to. In this sense, *ostād* is also a guide/leader/paragon, because of his high vocal or instrumental specialty, and achieving the title of *ostād* is what most young *tombak* players aspire to. Moreover, the application of the term nowadays is much wider, detached somehow from its original meaning, especially among the young generation of *tombak* players (and other musicians) who very often apply the word among themselves in friendly and often teasing manner.

On the other hand, observing Rajabi to instruct a whole generation of *tombak* players, I realized that teaching is also a path to “immortality”, and in this sense important on a personal level. Rajabi is one of the few *tombak* players who see it as their “mission” to train hundreds of students in his technique, his way of correctly putting the hands on the *tombak*, his aesthetics of playing, his symbols for notation, his rhythmic patterns and his *riz* patterns. In addition to his teaching classes and lectures he uses other resources to propagate and disseminate his *tombak* playing, such as video tapes and cassettes that he personally gives to every student. And I will dare to say that while he reveres his own teacher Eftetāh, he has himself achieved “immortality” through his own students.

On Payment: Personal Reflections

The duration of *tombak* lessons depends mainly on the teacher. While Rajabi's lessons lasted about 20 minutes, the lessons offered by younger *tombak* players, or in organized settings such as music schools, lasted between 30 minutes and one hour.

Payment for lessons varied, again depending on the status of the teacher, the financial circumstances of the student, and the prestige of the music school. In private, depending on the factors aforementioned, an average monthly payment, for one lesson per week, varied between 120,000 and 150,000 *Riāls*, which at that time was about 12

to 15 dollars.³²¹ In music schools, an average monthly payment was little bit less than in private.

Negotiating the amount of money for my *tombak* lessons with Rajabi (during my first visit) I came to understand the symbolic functions of money in our financial agreements, and at the same time the transformation of our relationship from distant to familiar. In other words, I experienced the double significance of the exchange imbued in private lessons. On the one hand, private lessons constitute a business trade that enhances the status of the teacher. On the other, once I started to appreciate Rajabi's mastery, not as a customer, but as an integrated student in his musical milieu, the issue of money became secondary.

During my second visit, Rajabi's repeated that "money is not important." However, I now believe that his initial reaction (i.e. that he is not concerned about money) in both visits, could be described in terms of *ta'ārof*. "Doing *ta'ārof*" [*ta'ārof kardan*] is a kind of performative persistence of courtesy and politeness, and is expressed in almost any exchange among people regardless of their social status. Nonetheless, depending on the people's rank and the relations they have, expressing and persisting on "doing *ta'ārof*" depends upon the circumstances and is different in degree.³²² Thus, among people with relatively equal social standing, the *ta'ārof* from both parties is somehow similar in degree and intensity, and at times it could lead to an excessive politeness, to a kind of competitive *ta'ārof*.³²³ On the other hand, among people with different ranking, while *ta'ārof* is initially expressed by both, it is nevertheless anticipated that the individual who has lower status, in that specific context, relinquishes.³²⁴

During the second visit my financial situation did not allow me to do *ta'ārof*, for example, to insist on paying Rajabi more than I could, so I did *ta'ārof* in another way: by telling him, in that specific situation, how good a teacher he was and how fond of him I was, and thus by flattering him I professed publicly his musical authority.

³²¹ The prices in 2005 have slowly risen, with the best teachers charging from 20,000 to 25,000 thousand *Riāls*, which is about 20 to 25 Euros.

³²² It is interesting to add that only by observing *ta'ārof* among people can one understand the difference in their social rank.

³²³ I remember trying to cross the door with my friend Roxana. She insisted that I should pass first through the door, but I did not accept it and I claimed that she should be the one to pass first from the door. We would dispute giggling for more than five minutes standing in front of the door, and neither of us would make the concession. As we had to pass through the door eventually and none of us would give in, I took her hand and we passed the door shoulder to shoulder laughing.

³²⁴ Netti (1992:192-193) gives a relevant example of a personal *ta'ārof* scene [he writes it *turf*] while crossing the door with a master musician in Tehrān.

Moreover, on my second visit I was more confident about arranging the payment issue from the very beginning. I had already created a bond with him from my previous trip, and I knew that I could show and communicate to him my appreciation and my affection in various ways. For example, I would cook sometimes and would carry the food to his classes and we would eat together, I would buy him sweets, I would bring him medicines that he asked for from Greece (as I did also after I first left Iran). In the end when I left Tehrān he said that he did not want the money for the last lesson, which was a symbolic gesture: he announced and reconfirmed the bond we had created.³²⁵

In all cases money is embellished with a social and symbolic meaning more than anything else. On my first visit Rajabi had to “defend” and certify his prestige, reputation and eminence: a foreigner had come to him for *tombak* lessons from thousands of miles away, and even if he felt honoured about that, nevertheless the foreigner had to pay and thus show his respect and acknowledgment towards the musical authority. By receiving this money he declared, affirmed and “amplified” his musical status. In the second visit the foreigner was still a foreigner, but no longer a stranger. I was no longer a newcomer, and as I was confident of my bond with Rajabi, I did not believe that financial matters would come in between us. Since I had only a fee-scholarship, and was supported financially by my parents I did not have the luxury of offering my teacher according to his needs.³²⁶ As a matter of fact, from the time that I had come upon an agreement with regards to the payment for my *tombak* lessons with Rajabi (that is, when the non-financial implications that the money represented had been settled), the amount did not affect in any way our further teacher-student relation.³²⁷

Generally, however, exchange is imbued in the teacher-student relations. In former times, exchange involved payment, but was based on an intimate relationship between the student and the teacher, while nowadays more often impersonal relations occur between these two parties, with financial transactions marking by large the nature of relationship.

³²⁵ Moreover, through my encounters with Rajabi I began looking reflexively on my various identities in the field, beginning from the “naïve student” in ethnomusicology, the newcomer and the foreigner, to become a more confident and settled student and researcher.

³²⁶ Research grants are decisive in the financial exchanges one develops in the field. Kippen (1988:40-41), for example, describes how because of a research grant and thus a “relatively large income” he was willing and able to offer his teacher according to the latter’s needs.

³²⁷ Still, the amount of fee I was paying him affected my tuitions with other musicians who offered me *tombak* lessons because it functioned as a standard of comparison, a measure of other musicians’ status with respect to that of Rajabi.

Teaching Quality: “*Tombak* in Ten Lessons, Guaranteed!”

As teaching after the Revolution became largely a private affair and as the music department in Tehrān University did not have any new student graduates until about 1992, the teaching quality offered both in private, but also later in organized institutions, was affected enormously. For example, the teaching level at various cultural centres (*farhangsarā*) inaugurated by the Mayor of Tehrān offered a poor quality of teaching by mobilizing volunteers to teach (‘Alizāde 1998:81).³²⁸ As ‘Alizāde remarks, as soon as the universities opened and as there were insufficient music teachers, many non-qualified teachers were used and this affected negatively the teaching level (*ibid.*).³²⁹ And until recently, or even today, university graduates were employed to teach at universities. Nowadays, students who possess master’s degrees are qualified to offer music tuition at university level. The government has made several attempts to raise the level of teaching and the music classes offered: government organizations established music centres to train students at intermediate and higher levels (*ibid.*), and the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance (MCIG) individually took the initiative in 1994-5 to offer free music courses for traditional instruments at the *Vahdat* Hall (Unity Hall) (Youssefzadeh 2000:48). Moreover, in order to control the teaching quality of music classes offered, or to control musical courses, as Youssefzadeh remarks, the MCIG had formulated the issue of permits (*mojavvez*) for teaching music. And while any official music school is obliged to obtain such permits in order to function lawfully, they are free to employ any music teachers they see fit. On the other hand, the MCIG also started granting music qualification to teachers who wished to legally exercise their profession and to establish their own music schools.

However, lessons in private, still common in Tehrān, are hard to control, and thus the quality of the teachers and the standard of classes offered are often defective. Pedrām told me the story of a person who put an advertisement saying that he could teach the *tombak* in ten lessons. When Rajabi heard about this, he wanted himself to see who this person was, and they went together with Pedrām to visit him. Pedrām

³²⁸ Youssefzadeh remarks that the instrumental classes offered at these centres were initially unauthorized (2000:48). She mentions that because of the omission of official authorization of the musical activities at such centres, Ayatollah Khamene’i banned music classes for few months in 1995, a decree which applied to all music institutions including the University of Tehrān (*ibid.*).

³²⁹ As Keddie remarks, the Cultural Revolution (1980-1983) was by and large a setback for intellectual and cultural development, which brought not only an interruption of education and professional livelihood, but also encouraged further immigration by teachers and other professionals (2003:250).

described this man to me as, “an old and pitiful man who was trying to attract a few students in order to gain a little money. He didn’t recognized Rajabi, and when Rajabi presented himself the poor man started to apologize.” The title of the advertisement was “*Zarb* tuition! In 10 Lessons! Guaranteed!” which was also put as a title in an interview with Rajabi in which he criticized both the poor level of teaching in the private as well as public sector (Rāmshager 1998). In the same interview Rajabi ridicules the teaching level of *tombak* at the Centre for Preservation and Propagation of Iranian music. He characteristically said, “those who teach *tombak* from my book *Āmuzesh-e Tonbak* [*Tonbak* Training], are not competent to do it and they only know simply the duration of the notes and the value of the quaver and the semiquaver, and hence think that because of this they are perfect for the job” (ibid).

Another personal experience from music establishments and the quality of the teachers came from my visit to the department of music in the Art University of Tehrān (*Dāneshkade-ye Musiqi, Dāneshgāh-e Honar*). I briefly attended the *tombak* lessons offered that day and I had the chance to speak to the *tombak* teacher, who maintained that he was Zargeri’s and Farhangfar’s student. He was teaching from Tehrāni’s and Rajabi’s book. He professed that the *tombak* which he uses to teach and that now is a property of the Art University was Tehrāni’s *tombak*. To convince me he showed me the picture from Tehrāni’s book where it depicts one of the *tombaks* he played on. Both *tombaks*, the one on the picture and the one he was using were the same size and shape, and they both had the same decorative artwork *khātam kāri*. I asked how the *tombak* got into the hands of the Art University, and he told me different fragments of the story that he knew on how this *tombak* came to light. I was so happy that I could see and especially touch and play on Tehrāni’s *tombak*. However, it crossed my mind at some point why the *tombak* was not in a museum, for example it could be displayed in Sabā’s museum in Tehrān, next to the *tombak* that Sabā himself had made, or beside the violin of Sabā. But then, I thought that anything could be expected if there was no proper coordination. When I left the building, after having interviews with Dehlavi and Zarif who were both close associates of Tehrāni, I felt that I reached somehow very close to Tehrāni. I left extremely thrilled and went straight to Hamid and Pedrām who were practicing at the *zirzamini* to describe the whole incident and to boast that it was I, and not them, who had discovered the whereabouts of Tehrāni’s *tombak*. During my narration, they listened almost indifferently to “my eureka” and replied that probably no one knows where Tehrāni’s *tombak* was, but I did not want to believe them. Hamid and Pedrām asked me the name of the *tombak* teacher, and when I told them, they said that

he is known for devising different stories and not really noted for his *tombak* expertise, and then they unaffectedly continued playing. It was really disappointing. I felt like a tourist in the bazaar who has bought forged antiques.

The last point I would like to make in relation to teaching is with regards to the various published instruction manuals for *tombak* that can be obtained in almost any central music store. Many of these manuals are written by young or unknown *tombak* players, many offer simple exercises or repeat what has been already published by others, and others aspire to create new styles of *tombak* playing and distort the existing names of different techniques by devising “ground-breaking” designations and notation symbols.³³⁰ Undoubtedly, everyone has the right, talented or mediocre, skillful or not, young or old, to publicize their work.

It is notable that many experienced and renowned *tombak* players avoid undertaking such ventures. When I asked Banāi why he still has not published any instruction manual for *tombak*, he replied, criticizing the abundance and questioning the usefulness of such manuals, that it was too early for him to publish and he added that his teacher Esmā’ili started writing in 1951 and he published his first book only in 1991, “after 40 years of writing, playing, and performing around the world.”³³¹ Afgah was also very clear regarding his unwillingness to publish such manuals, considering that performing and recording should be among the first aims of the *tombak* player. In his words: “a musician first has to prove that he is a musician, and then publish scores.” (Interview, July 2002). Another *tombak* player, Kāmākār, has published only recently, in 2004, an instruction manual with sixty short pieces for *tombak*, after a few decades of playing with master musicians of Iranian music. However, many professional *tombak* players who have not published a teaching manual, regularly distribute their personal pieces, notated beforehand or during the teaching session.

In conclusion, it appears that the underlying concept of publishing teaching manuals among mature and professional musicians is that the stature of the musician, her/his experience in performing and teaching, is what grants importance to the published book, and not the other way around as attempted by many inexperienced *tombak* players, that is, to publish a book in order to raise their own standing.

³³⁰ See for example Zamāny’s (2002) teaching manual *Rostākhiz-e Tombak* [Resurrection by *Tombak*] (sic), where he changes the common names used to describe various techniques on *tombak* with new ones. For example, one of the basic techniques *pelang* he calls them “soprano”, borrowing the designation describing the range of the human voice, or the commonly known technique *jāru* (brush), he has renamed with “inhale”. Moreover, he has devised new signs for each technique according to the new designations. Some *tombak* players laughed when they saw this book, and even bought it as something unusual, hilarious and entertaining.

³³¹ Banāi started his first *tombak* lessons in 1982.

Public Concerts in Contemporary Iran

Before the Revolution many cultural locations and organized musical activities would bring professional musicians, students, scholars, masters and aficionados into communication, by offering them the opportunity to collaborate, to exchange views, to participate together in concerts and music festivals or in radio and television programmes.

After the Revolution public concerts in Iran were virtually banned for many years. One of the most prestigious concert halls in Tehrān, *Tālār-e Rudaki* (Rudaki Hall), renamed into *Tālār-e Vahdat* (Unity Hall), did not organize any music events until 1988 (During 1992:142). In addition to the ban on public concerts, with the closing down of music departments and most music schools, and generally with the reduction and cessation of governmental patronage to sponsor and promote musical activities, the communal context of music making was fragmented, the assembly and collectivity of musicians was interrupted, and this brought inevitably a degree of isolation among many performers who came to be largely secluded in the private domain. Under such circumstances, music making grew into an “indoor” activity, or *darvāri* as Iranian musicians say, and to a great extent it became educational rather than performative. New expressions came to describe this situation, such as the *āmuzesh-e musiqi-ye khānegi* (teaching of music at home) or *konsert-hāye khānegi* (concerts at home). In this context, the cassette trade flourished, not only as a creative product, but as During remarks, as an essential “product for dissemination of music ideas and communication” among musicians and also music aficionados (1984b:18).

In the following passage, ‘Alizāde refers to the physical and intellectual segregation among musicians today, juxtaposing the role of *Chāvosh* in bringing musicians and their work together in the first years of the Revolution:

...In a country where crowd-gathering is forbidden, unavoidably disunion (*jodā’i*) appears. In art, everyone who brings a piece of work, the work they are doing, it has to be commented on, it has to be reviewed... I don’t know... to be performed at some place, to be talked about, to be discussed. This, in our country, didn’t work out, and in the particular political situation, crowd gathering and group meetings were forbidden. For example... I mentioned *Chāvosh*, *Chāvosh* was a place like that. Every week we would organize that someone from the skilled [students] of *Chāvosh* would perform, someone would sit and give a performance and a hundred people would listen. After the concert [those] hundred

people would give their own views, for example how it was performed, if it had some problems, if they wanted they would praise, [in sum] they would comment on it (*enteqād mikardand*). And this [commentary] would become a motive for the person who was scrutinized to go and work further, so that, for example, the next year he came he gave a much better concert (Interview, February 2003).

During our discussion 'Alizāde also spoke about the current absence of professional and qualified music critics and thus the lack of "healthy" (*sālem*) opinions and reviews published in journals or magazines, a situation which does not help much to bridge the growing distance between musicians. With the closing down of *Chāvosh* in 1983 not many music places in Iran offered such a communal atmosphere to musicians.

This distance among musicians is somehow pertinent today too, as there is no sense of community and no distinctive common configuration of reference and belonging. Various cultural institutions and the musical activities they organize, as they provide at least the sight of musicians' assembly, appear to function more as fragments, rather than an "umbrella", that potentially could bring musicians together. On the other hand, the same governmental cultural organizations perpetuate this distancing among musicians as they employ favoritism, especially in the system of concert production, and many musicians feel nowadays that they have limited opportunities to perform regularly in Iran. Moreover, in the immediate aftermath of the Revolution, as the image of the woman became to signify the symbolic terrain against *gharbzadegi* (westoxication),³³² as gender segregation and discrimination was imposed in most public spheres, and as female solo singing in front of male audience was (and remains) prohibited, music collaborations among male and female artists became problematic, as well as women-only performed music remains at issue.³³³ This physical segregation and musicians' isolation in the private sphere inevitably affected their relations and their work, as discussed in the next chapter.

The ban on public concerts also delayed the emergence of some musical professions. Khabbāzi mentioned only a few people who recently started to work professionally as music entrepreneurs. All of the people mentioned were involved in musical activities, either as musicians or as sound engineers in well-known music studios of Tehrān. Commonly, it was the leader of the group who usually organizes

³³² Najmabadi discusses how the concept of "*gharbzadeh* woman", female modesty and female moral behaviour became symbolic tools concerned with social control (Najmabadi 1991).

³³³ DeBano (2005) discusses in detail the state of women only groups and their participation in various festivals.

concerts. But these “new” entrepreneurs were people who were interested in setting up concerts, without having any other involvement in the ensemble.

The Kāmkār family is very often referred by musicians in discussion about entrepreneurship. The Kāmkār ensemble (founded about 25 years ago and comprised of seven brothers and one sister) is considered as one of the few music groups in which one of its members, Hushang Kāmkār (a musician and composer) has undertaken entirely the administrative and managerial responsibility of the group (as well as their music school in Tehrān). And many musicians in Iran consider that this contributed to the great success and celebrity of the group, not to underestimate though in any way their musical competence.

The current growth of public concerts brought to the fore issues of sponsorship and financial guarantees of musical performances. A recent policy of the MCIG is concerned with revenue: for concerts with an audience of over 500 people an underwriter is necessary for the permission to be granted. As the emergence of these new policies, activities and professions is very recent, it remains to be seen in the future the legal and practical consequences of revenue on musical performances.³³⁴

***Tombak* Players and Public Concerts**

Difficulties in performing concerts specific to *tombak* players are pertinent to their role as accompanists. Their employability is greatly contingent on the network of relations with other musicians. In ensembles, it is usually the head of the group (*sarparast-e gruh* or *modir-e gruh*, who is hardly ever the *tombak* player) who undertakes the initiative for organizing music performances. In practice, *tombak* players, even the acknowledged ones, are largely dependent upon the invitation of other musicians as their accompanists or members of their group. Economically, *tombak* players also depend on other musicians, because the latter are paid by the music organizers. *Tombak* players in most cases follow the instrumentalists or the group in public performances, rather than taking the initiative to organize concerts. This situation is also applicable to many musicians

³³⁴ For example, the Niāvarān Palace can host from 1000 to 2,500 people for a performance. But, nowadays, with the new policy of the MCIG, many organizers and sponsors refuse to underwrite the expenses of musical performances. For more information on this topic, see Samad Taleghani's article “The Future of Performances: A Musical Steeplechase” in <<http://www.tehranavenue.com/article.php?id=458>> (accessed 18/10/2005).

who “prefer” to belong to one ensemble rather than founding their own. However, those who perform a melodic instrument or sing are more in a position to found their own music ensemble and organise concert performances than *tombak* players – who are primarily accompanists. *Tombak* players who have their own groups, and take the leadership to give public concerts, are usually those who have established percussion groups, and such percussion ensembles in Tehrān today are very few. An exception to this rule is Rajabi, who regularly organizes solo performances (recitals), which are more like seminars and lectures with various examples of *tombak* solo that he performs.³³⁵ On the other hand, *tombak* players, exactly because of their role as accompanists, are more rarely directly involved with bureaucratic issues and official authorities when seeking permission for concerts is concerned.

With regards to obtaining permits from the MCIG for issuing cassettes, again *tombak* players, due to their role as accompanists, are not involved actively in such issues. In the cases of *tombak* solo or group *tombak*, to obtain a permit for the production of a recording is to a degree easier than for music that includes poetry, since in most cases solo and group *tombak* are not accompanied by lyrics that also need to get through the Council for the authorization of texts.³³⁶ I remember that when Pedrām wanted to get permission for his record containing pieces for both solo and group *tombak* it was the music producer, rather than Pedrām himself, who communicated with the relevant authorities.

Recordings, however in most cases are largely self-financed, and the final product is then shown to a potential producer. Thus, the initial cost, which is fairly large for individuals, is a heavy load for those who wish to attain a more professional standing. Lastly, royalties from record sales are a sporadic source of income for most *tombak* players.

Today, for many professional *tombak* players, teaching and rehearsing, without aiming at participating in specific concerts, are more central activities to their daily lives rather than stage performance, a situation that does not help them much to expand their network of relations, and further inhibits their potential concert activities. Khāvarzamini and Afgah, are considered to be among the most talented young *tombak* players in Iran. And, even compared with senior *tombak* players, they do not lack skills, technique, speed or musicality, in both solo and accompaniment. However, during my stay in Iran,

³³⁵ And perhaps another exception is the *tombak* players who live and perform abroad and have the opportunity to organize concerts and invite musicians from Iran.

³³⁶ Youssefzadeh describes the difficulties of the procedure for granting authorization for poems that are used with music (2000:46-47).

between February 2002 and April 2003, each of them gave less than three concerts per year in Iran. And this applies to many other *tombak* players. This is somewhat peculiar, bearing in mind that in Tehrān there are many music halls and apparently many performance events. However, according to the view of some Iranian musicians, the quality of many performances given today is questionable. On this situation one *tombak* player remarked:

Tehrān has now a population of about 15 million and has thousands of musicians. Imagine that nowadays in Tehrān weekly there are about ten concerts. I am not against this, concerts should exist, but imagine that everyone, think that, an instrument seller comes and plays, then an office clerk comes and plays, who is left to listen then? Nowadays Iran has become like this, because of the resentment towards the Islamic Republic, because “they” [*ānhā*] are opposed to music, everyone is campaigning against them; everyone out of stubbornness is playing music. No one has left to listen to music.

It appears that in Iran it is easier for many second-rate *tombak* players to perform regularly, with various music groups, than for eminent professional musicians: while many performers are satisfied to perform in any venue, for the elite professional musicians, it is a matter of standing and self-respect, where and under what conditions they perform. On this subject Pedrām during one discussion exclaimed:

First, there is the difficulty regarding the financial situation, money. My greatest luck is that I didn't get married. One performer if he gets married, his life becomes much more difficult, house, if he has; rent, if he pays, 150 *hezār*³³⁷ is the rent of a house, then he is forced to do works that....If he is a performer ha, not if he is *haltur*³³⁸, who goes to a *sofre khune*³³⁹ and plays, goes to *Sedā o Simā* and plays, goes and works for anyone, goes and gives any concert. If he is a performer for whom it is important with whom he works, and what he works for, here he cannot make a living [*nemitune zendegi kone*], because he will never make money so that he could....even sustain somehow himself (Interview, January 2003).³⁴⁰

In addition, some musicians often referred to the issue of state-interference, remarking that in order to be able to regularly perform in prestigious concert halls or

³³⁷ 150 *hezār* (thousand) *tumān* at the time was roughly 150 dollars.

³³⁸ *Haltur* generally means someone whose work is opportunist, substandard, slack, careless and slapdash. *Haltur* also means an opportunistic job, easy money, side money. The term is also used in the expression “*musiqi-ye halturi*” to denote “low” quality music.

³³⁹ A type of restaurant with live music.

³⁴⁰ While Pedrām does not refer here to the employment opportunities in the west, one can discern in his argument that he has a romanticised view of life in the West, like many other Iranians, including musicians (Nooshin, personal communication, January 2007).

music festivals, it is not enough to be a good musician, or famous, or to perform with an eminent group: one has to have the relevant social, economic and political relationships with “important” people inside the various governmental cultural organizations. This state of affairs not only causes disappointment and frustration among many musicians, as they are also deprived of the “share-out”, but more importantly, they view negatively those colleagues who have ties with governmental institutions, as they accept and perpetuate the “wrongdoings” of the system by “flirting” with government officials and making compromises for their own gain.

When describing this state of affairs, Iranians often refer to the concept of *parti-bāzi*, literally meaning “group play”.³⁴¹ This expression is used not only in music, but in those cases when there is a reciprocal relationship between individuals or groups, based on exchange of personal profit.³⁴² In Foucault’s terms, while power relations are endemic to institutions, and while unequal and hierarchical relations are involved in power relations, power “is a machine “in which everyone is caught, those who exercise this power as much as those over whom it is exercised” (Foucault, cited in Gordon 1980:156). In this case, both groups (individuals who work for such institutions and make decisions about specific policies, on the one hand, and musicians, who use their web of relations to get permissions to perform, to reserve concert venues) are involved in power relations and both use the related advantages to their own ends.

One of the most notable *tombak* players, performing with a very popular group remarked:

We want for example to give concerts every month, we would like that, but we see that one month is like this, another month is like that, another month is... Any month that is not the “martyrdom”, it is not *Moharram*, or it is not *Ramazān*, the groups that perform are *theirs*. That is, there are months, that to give concerts is freely allowed, but *they* themselves have so many groups, that for themselves, for their own people that come, *they* perform. There is no place left for us, sometimes the opportunity comes up once a year that we can do that, once a year we can give a concert.

This favouritism that governmental agencies seem to often employ, is a manifestation of acute power relations, and inhibits rather than enables musicians to

³⁴¹ A free translation/interpretation of the term is “favouritism” with possible overtones/implications of “corruption”.

³⁴² Such power relations are not a new phenomenon or specific to Iranian music culture. Kippen also mentions the expression “*grūp bāzī*” used in Indian music, meaning again “group-play”. He has defined this expression as “politics” to describe “any act aimed at influencing the beliefs or decisions of other people unfairly with a view to advancing one party’s interests to the detriment of another party or parties. It can be an act of one person or a group of people with common interests” (Kippen 1988:54).

cross the gap that separates them from functioning in a coherent artistic milieu. In addition, favouritism seems to be an indirect form of censorship, especially since it appears to be widely applied for long periods, with the governmental agencies hampering musicians and limiting their performance activities, practices that often seem not to be based on the demands of the market.³⁴³

As the socio-musical identity of the musician in general and the *tombak* player in particular is still ambiguous many *tombak* players (and other musicians) are sensitive of their social standing and very careful with regards to their musical collaborations. And many *tombak* players are concerned not simply with the musical competence and skills of their counterparts, but also with the propriety of such associations. There are *tombak* players who do not want to relate with persons of controversial socio-political standing, that is, with those aligned with state agencies for their personal benefit. Because of this, some *tombak* players have chosen a solo career.

Musicians not only complain about their ambiguous status in Iran, but often about the ill-coordinated cluster of relations when they have to deal with too much bureaucracy and the “mischievous” conduct by those in positions of control, both in terms of payment and in relation to the help they provide in terms of offering help to musicians to gain access to the various venues.

On the subject of payment Torshizi revealed to me that:

Many times we wouldn't know how much we were going to be paid for a concert and if the money we would get would be fair money or not. Many times we would go to perform; invited by an organization... they wouldn't pay us anything. They would say “we give you that amount of money”, but after the concert they wouldn't give us anything, and we couldn't do anything, that is, we didn't do anything about that (Interview, February 2005).

On the other hand, the reluctance and negative attitude of the key personnel, and the bureaucracy involved in obtaining a venue often stifle personal initiatives. Pedrām, for example, explained why he is unwilling to go through the procedure to get a venue for a concert:

No I don't give [concerts], and why? It's because of the situation here that I don't give concerts. If you want to get a concert hall they will drive you crazy before they give you the hall. Why, tell me why under such conditions should we give concerts? (Interview, January 2003).

³⁴³ Various levels and sorts of censorship are discussed by Cloonan (2004:3-5) who introduces the concept of “systematic censorship” and “market censorship”.

In such a situation, the reluctance of musicians to go through the mechanisms of bureaucracy and especially through the inimical conditions generated widely by individuals working within cultural organizations can be described as a form of self-censorship. In conclusion, when some among the best musicians of the country do not perform regularly, it appears that the system of concert production is seriously malfunctioning.

Moreover, because of government bureaucracy, the ambiguous state of music in Iran and the often personal experience of ill-treatment and disrespect by key personnel of some cultural agencies, there are several musicians who have the opportunity and prefer to perform abroad rather than “at home”. But, this again is another symptom of segregating oneself from others.³⁴⁴ In any case, many Iranian musicians not only experience disappointment with regards to their restricted opportunities to perform in Iran, but they also often feel they are secluded inside the borders of their country, and have no opportunities to perform abroad.

Regarding music before the Revolution, various government-supported cultural organizations were promoting concerts abroad, but after the Revolution such examples became very rare. Today, well known Iranian musicians are the ones who have the opportunity to regularly perform abroad. Khatami’s efforts to develop diplomatic relations and promote cultural and intellectual exchange with the international community opened the cultural perimeter of Iran with the result of encouraging the young post-Revolutionary generation to create ties that could give them opportunities to perform outside the borders of own country. However, although young *tombak* players increasingly endeavour to participate in concerts and festivals abroad, the “export” of Iranian musicians is still largely a private enterprise, rather than supported by the official cultural policy of the government.³⁴⁵

³⁴⁴ However, prospects for better remuneration outside Iran should be also acknowledged.

³⁴⁵ Normally, musicians do not need a permit from the MCIG in order to perform or record and issue tapes abroad. Regarding other art works, especially film and video, export and submission on international film festivals and markets needs a permit from the MCIG. While there are several examples of Iranian films being banned by the Iranian authorities from entering film festivals (see Farahmand 2004), musicians on the whole rarely experience forms of censorship on their art work when performing abroad is concerned.

***Tombak* Players and Income from Concerts**

With regard to earnings from stage appearances, I heard many times, although never actually witnessed, that *tombak* players are some times discriminated against by being paid less than the rest of the musicians just because of the “nature” of their instrument. The only personal narrative I heard about this issue was in a discussion with Torshizi, who mentioned that on one occasion she was performing with a group, and after the concert had finished she was given less money than the rest of its members. She was told (after the concert) that the main reason was because she appeared less often at rehearsals than the other musicians. The reason she divined though was that “the standing of the *tombak* is viewed as lesser than that of the other instruments” (*tombak naqāshe kamtar dāre*) (Interview, February 2005). In this situation, Torshizi protested and she never worked with the same group again. She also remarked that, if she had known from the beginning that she was going to be paid less, she would never have agreed to perform in this concert.³⁴⁶ It is very usual that professional *tombak* players, who respect themselves and their own work, defend in a sense their status and the standing of their instrument by refusing to conform to such downgrading conditions.³⁴⁷

Speaking with Hamid about a hypothetical situation in which a *tombak* player might be paid less than the rest of the group just because of the “nature” of his instrument, he noted that “you should see who is the *tombak* player who receives less money than the rest,” implying that perhaps it is novices that are treated like this. In answer to his comment I remarked that if in one group there are both a young *tār* player and a young *tombak* player it is more probable that if someone is going to be discriminated against in term of earnings, it is going to be the *tombak* player. He agreed.

In general, though, in an ensemble with master musicians, less experienced *tombak* players and musicians do not feel downgraded if they are remunerated less than the *ostāds* for each performance, and the issue of money becomes subordinate. In other words, musicians feel not only compensated, but gratified for being given the prospect of performing with great musicians, an experience from which not only do they learn,

³⁴⁶ In many cases payment is not discussed before the concert, especially among novice musicians, and the earnings are handed over after the performance. Discussing about money is somehow related to the ritualized behaviour patterns of the *ta'ārof* culture.

³⁴⁷ Similar attitude was described in the third chapter where it was mentioned that *tombak* players “defend” their status and the image of their instrument, by objecting for example to play for entertainment.

but which also adds to their professional status.³⁴⁸ On the other hand in a group where all the musicians have analogous musical status, dexterity, experience and reputation are usually equally rewarded for each stage appearance.

However, it does not seem feasible for many professional *tombak* players to rely for their living upon income from concerts. The reasons, as mentioned also in the previous section, are multiple and vary each time. Many musicians complain about the limited opportunities they have to perform, because of their restricted access to venues, because of the limited network of relationships they have, because of there not being many available music groups that meet their musical range. Other reasons are based on the size of the group. If the group is large, then everyone's share is less. In the case of very famous groups, even if the income from the concerts is considerable, the number of concerts the group gives per year is not likely to cover living expenses. Then there is the issue of the practicalities of organizing consecutive concerts: as private music entrepreneurship is a quite recent phenomenon, setting up regular and well organized tours inside the country is not very usual. Moreover, when mixed-gender ensembles are in question, male and female travelling together becomes problematic.³⁴⁹

Sometimes, when a *tombak* player is not attached to one group but performs with several ensembles, and thus has to rehearse many times with these different groups, the earnings he gets do not really compensate the amount of effort and time given for the rehearsals. On this issue Torshizi remarked:

Generally from concerts we don't get enough money comparing to the effort we put and the time we spend. For example, for one concert we rehearsed for about six months, and I spent a lot of money on taxis for coming and going to the rehearsals, you know taxi is expensive in Iran, and well, all this time spent, all these hours spent for practice and at the end we didn't get anything [she refers to money].

³⁴⁸ One musician friend went to the United States on a tour for a month with a well known Iranian artist. For several concerts per week, and one studio recording he was paid 1000 dollars and all travel expenses. Although he accepted that the money he was given were petty considering the number of performances, nevertheless he was willing to continue collaborating with this well-known musician.

³⁴⁹ In general female travel inside Iran is problematic. Usually females have to be accompanied by male relatives if they want to sojourn for one night in a hotel. Also, women-only travel and overstay for one night in a hotel involves a degree of frustration and bureaucracy: they have to report to the police station of the region and explain the reasons of their travel. I remember when I and my female friends travelled inside Iran for four days, we would organize our trip so that we would travel and sleep at night at the same time, either in buses or trains, in order to avoid this "reporting" procedure. Moreover, besides the legal and practical aspects of women travelling, which can be overcome under the auspices of an organized music festival, there is the issue of impropriety of women travelling alone or accompanied by non-kin male colleagues.

To be honest, I never really counted on the incomes from concerts, I would rely more on the money from teaching. The income from a concert was something that if would come it was better, but if it didn't come... you can't really depend on it (Interview, February 2005).

On the same subject Pedrām said:

The amount of money for one concert is petty. I never gave a concert in order to get paid, I swear in my soul, never. I only gave concerts so that I and my friends play together and so that we have rehearsals, so that we enjoy it [*hāl konim*] when we are together (Interview, January 2003).

As already mentioned in the previous section, income from teaching is more regular and many *tombak* players rarely depend on the earnings from concerts. Moreover, as discussed, in the daily lives of many musicians performing is an activity that occupies less space than teaching and rehearsing. In Pedrām's case performing in public, although a desirable expectation, is more an incentive for him to rehearse and in reality a rather small constituent part of his profession as a *tombak* player. This is one of the reasons that made Pedrām decide to live near Daly in Greece with whom he has ample performance opportunities in Greece and Europe.

About the Relationship between the State of Music and the Attitude towards Musical Instruments after the Revolution

Music instruments and the human body are important sound-producing mediums used to create music. When music becomes a target upon which sociocultural policies and politics are to be implemented, musical instruments too, as tangible physical entities, become objectified and subject to analogous kinds of treatment. Conversely, the policies about any particular treatment of music instruments, either official and clearly stated, or "unofficial" but practised by those in position of power and control, are also an indicator of the state of music and the degree of its legitimacy. The relation between music practice and musical instruments seem to be intertwined, the degree of legitimizations of the one is reflected in the status of the other. The Iranian case exemplifies how both music practice and musical instruments became manipulation-targets of the various factions of Iranian polity, the dominant religious authorities, the

various vigilant groups, and also by another important institution in Iranian culture, the family.

With the advent of the Islamic Revolution in 1979, after a declaration of Ayatollah Khomeini about his intention of eliminating music,³⁵⁰ was open to various interpretations in a country where not only there is “a large gap between what is officially forbidden and what is actually allowed”, as Youssefzadeh remarks (2004:132), but its applications should be also examined in the sphere of factional politics that also embraces sociocultural issues. Various members of revolutionary organizations and vigilant groups, such as *Basiji*,³⁵¹ *Hezbollah*,³⁵² *Pāsdārān*,³⁵³ The Committee of the Islamic Revolution (*Komite-ye Engelāb-e Eslam-i*), which were headed by the clergy, often acted independently of the central government and implemented the law autonomously within the Iranian polity.³⁵⁴ With the pretext of the Iran-Iraq war Khomeinists (who led the *Basiji* and *Pāsdārān*) seized the opportunity to increase repression, which in turn strengthened their position (Keddie 2003:251) The *Hezbollah* attacked and disrupted public gatherings of opponents and forced the closure of opposition newspapers (ibid. 23). The *Pāsdārān* and *Basiji* often raided newspaper offices and attacked demonstrators (ibid. 275).

Many members of these organizations enforced what they believed to be the correct revolutionary-Islamic values, proper Islamic behavior and cultural norms in Iran. The *Basiji*, for example, often arrested young “cultural and moral offenders” for “cultural unfetteredness” (Moslem 2002: 218). Harsh measures were taken by targeting musical concerts and music instruments became objects of physical attack. Musical instruments were systematically collected and destroyed by the *Pāsdārān* in organized raids, such as the one that Youssefzadeh describes in Khorasān (2000:38).

Musicians, whose experience is a testimony to these assaults, suffered personal insults, were often interrogated, imprisoned overnight and released after their pledge not to play music again. One *tombak* player described that he was systematically interrogated and harassed for a period of many years after the Revolutionary guards invaded his party in the early 1980s and confiscated all his music materials, until even

³⁵⁰ His statement was that: “...music is like a drug, whoever acquires the habit can no longer devote himself to important activities. It changes people to the point of yielding to vice or to preoccupations pertaining to the world of music alone. We must eliminate music because it means betraying our country and our youth. We must completely eliminate it.” (“Radio and Television must strengthen the young”, *Keyhān*, 1 mordad 1358/1979, cited in Youssefzadeh 2000:38).

³⁵¹ Religious war veterans and religious young war volunteers.

³⁵² “Party of God”.

³⁵³ The Corps of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards.

³⁵⁴ See Moslem (2002) for the numerous organizations which exercise political power and interfere, often independently, directly or indirectly in the operations of the central government.

his own health was affected. But musicians experienced also an extensive problem of confiscation and destruction of their musical instruments, particularly at the time of Iran-Iraq war (1980-88), but also to the present day. A *tombak* player reveals:

They broke my instrument twice... Soon after the Revolution my uncle, with his own salary and for his classes at a music school, he bought a violin, he bought musical instruments, he bought a piano (he loved his students very much), but then *they* came there, these “brothers”³⁵⁵ came there, they threw the piano down from the stairs, they shattered it into little pieces, they broke the *tār*, they smashed the *santur*, and so many other things [here s/he makes an imitation of the other person] “Go away, don’t you have a profession? Go and do your job!” [they would say] words like these.... That period was a great burden for us, that is, we were enduring a lot. Nowadays it is the same, today it is the same, nothing has changed. Now it is perhaps a little bit better, but the situation is not yet liberal.

Another musician recalls that:

Music after the Revolution became itself a political issue (*‘amel-e siāsi*). After the Revolution it was under great pressure, that is, performing concerts was forbidden, that is when we gave our first concert ... the police came, the *Pāsdārān* came and made a mess and smashed everything.[..] In those years if you had an instrument, if for example they would come just like that to search for anything political; to find an instrument in your house, it would be considered as a reason for your political persecution.³⁵⁶

Iran is not the only country where physical assault is enforced against musicians and musical instruments when the regime is opposed to music. Baily reports one of the most extreme examples of censorship on music instruments in Afghanistan, where the Taliban imposed a ban on all forms of music (2004:19). He notes that since the concept of music is “intimately bound up with musical instruments; the ban on music meant a ban on instruments and the sounds they produce” (ibid.). He further describes, “musical instruments were destroyed; they were hung from trees in mock executions or burned in public in sports stadia, where public executions, amputations and floggings were also carried out” (ibid.). Moreover, musicians were not spared severe beatings and imprisonment for playing music.

On August the 10th 1988 Khomeini declared publicly in an interview published in a daily national newspaper that the purchase and sale of musical instruments is

³⁵⁵ S/he refers to the *Pāsdārān* here.

³⁵⁶ The two above excerpts have been changed to some degree from the original ones in order to protect the people revealing them.

permissible as long as it is serving “religious sanctioned purposes” (Moslem 2002:76).³⁵⁷ This statement followed only a few weeks after the termination of war in Iraq. It should be emphasized here, that although his declaration concerned music in general, it was not explicitly related with musical practice as such, but rather with the exchange of musical instruments. Again, his decree caused great uproar. The conservatives questioned the views of the Imam, who in turn responded with harsh criticism against them (Moslem 2002:76-77). Nevertheless, after this statement, and the cessation of the Iran-Iraq war, some concerts were authorized and restrictions were gradually lifted on musical activities, as described in the first section of this chapter (Youssefzadeh 2000:39).

However, music instruments are still not shown on the television, walking in the streets with a musical instrument during the months of *Ramazān*, *Moharram*, and *Safar* is still perilous, and public music performance during these months is not much practiced.

Musical instruments, persecuted and condemned as they are, in this religious and political framework, also become objects of assault inside the family circles that oppose music making. A highly skillful *tombak* player remembers:

My mother bought me my first *tombak*, but my father was opposed to me playing it. He took the *tombak* and threw it furiously out of the balcony. But I was very determined and insisted in playing it. He finally accepted it.

The trade of music instruments, the number of music workshops and music shops, are also an indication of the growing acceptance of music. Youssefzadeh reports that as soon as music became controlled and confined after the Revolution, there was an increase of music practice among the younger generation in the families of all social classes (2000:38). The instrument makers could hardly keep up with the demand for music instruments (ibid.39). Regarding some *tombak* makers, stories circulate that they have become “so rich that they spend their summer holidays in the Canary Islands.”

Recently, in September 2002, probably the biggest factory in Iran for manufacturing music instruments was inaugurated, with the approval and support of the cultural and state authorities and officials, including the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance. The *Dālāhu* music-instruments manufacture industry is a very modern and fully equipped building, with specialist workshops for each instrument, such as *tombak*,

³⁵⁷ His proclamation was published again in the *Keyhān* newspaper in September 1988 [19-6-1368].

santur, tār, tambur, setār and also with a workshop for musical cases. Moreover, a workshop-complex for processing wood has been equipped with different kinds of tools and machines, operated by trained personnel. The manufacture of western instruments is also under development. According to the advertising booklet of the company, all instruments have an identity card and are given a guarantee for a period of one and a half years. Moreover, the company will also provide service for five years after selling the product.

The inauguration of such a big business is an indication of the prospects for sizeable profits of the musical instrument manufacturing industry. This in turn shows the close relationship between supply and demand. Clearly the demand for music instruments reveals the rise of music practice in Iran today.

Picture 15: Pictures of the *Dālāhu* company and its *tombak* workshop, found on <http://www.parsmusicbazar.com/dalahotombak.htm> (Accessed 26/02/2005).



problematic relations between many *tombak* players as I experienced them during my fieldwork. I discuss about the disparagement, tension, rivalry, and alienation that is shared by many today.

In the fourth section, I refer to the student-teacher relation and give an example of four consecutive generations of *tombak* players who express their personal experiences both from the teacher and the student standpoint. The subtitle of this section is chosen as a tribute to Ehsāh, who was the teacher of my teacher Rajabi, and who is always recalled with affection by *tombak* players for his calibre as a *tombak* teacher.

¹⁰ In order to avoid any ambiguity or misinterpretation in my use of the terms related to the concepts of individualism, individualization, etc., I will borrow the terms "individualism" and "individualization" as Marschall (2004) defines them. According to him, "individualism is always a mixed descriptive-evaluative term" and "there is no agreement about either its descriptive or its evaluative content. Individualism refers to certain changes in society and their conceivable consequences for sites in behavioural patterns, attitudes and values" (ibid. 2). The behavioural patterns of individualism, as the author observes, can have positive, neutral or negative value, as they may refer to concepts of "self-determination, self-development, empowerment of the individual", or "alienation from the social group, de-localization, de-traditionalization", or "disorientation towards responsible individuality" (ibid. 4-5). The author proposes named other terms, that also overlap and complement with what, distinguished as follows: individualization as "the creative process of social change" and individualism as the "development of personal identity" (ibid. 2).

Chapter six: Social Relations Among Musicians

Introduction

This chapter comprises of five interrelated sections. First I investigate the image of the contemporary *tombak* player, who is perceived to be closely linked to ideas and behaviour-patterns of individuation.³⁵⁸ For this reason I have chosen to present Rajabi, my *tombak* teacher, as a character who builds up his personality upon his differentiation (his “personal mark”) and eminence (which I consider as one form of individuation). I also link Rajabi’s status as a master soloist to the liminal space he occupies among Iranian musicians.

In the second section I refer to the interaction between *tombak* players and other musicians. In particular, I am showing the inter-connections between friendly and long-term collaboration among musicians, on the one hand, and the process of creativity and improvisation, on the other. I also refer to other forms of professional interaction among *tombak* players and musicians, and try to describe the processes of recruitment of *tombak* performers.

In the third section I describe and explain the other side of the coin, the problematic relations between many *tombak* players as I experienced them during my fieldwork. I discuss about the disparagement, tension, rivalry, and alienation that is shared by many today.

In the fourth section, I refer to the student-teacher relation and give an example of four consecutive generations of *tombak* players who express their personal experiences both from the teacher and the student standpoint. The subtitle of this section is chosen as a tribute to Eftetāh, who was the teacher of my teacher Rajabi, and who is always recalled with affection by *tombak* players for his calibre as a *tombak* teacher.

³⁵⁸ In order to avoid any ambiguity or equivocation in my use of the terms related to the concepts of individualism, individualisation, etc., I will borrow the terms “individuation” and “individualisation” as Musschenga (2001) defines them. According to him, “individualism is always a mixed descriptive-evaluative term” and “there is no agreement about either its descriptive or its evaluative content. Individualism refers to certain changes in society and their undesirable consequences but also to behavioural patterns, attitudes and values” (ibid. 5). The behavioural patterns of individualism, as the author observes, can have positive, neutral or negative value, as they can relate to concepts of “self-determination, self development, uniqueness of the individual”, or “differentiation from the social group, de-localisation, de-traditionalisation”, or “atomistic and socially irresponsible tendencies” (ibid. 4-9). The author proposes instead other terms, that often overlap and compliment each other, distinguished as follows: *individualisation* is “an objective process of social change” and *individuation* as the “development of personal identity” (ibid. 5).

The fifth and last passage inquires into the position of professional female *tombak* players in post-Revolutionary Iran. I discuss both their artistic creativity as *tombak* players, and examine women's standing and participation in Iranian music, particularly in the context of female-only music ensembles.

Bahman Rajabi: the Epitome of Individuation

Although Rajabi is a unique individual, and as an individual he can hardly represent the total reality of all *tombak* players, nevertheless his personal history, attitude and ideas are reflective of many issues that are pertinent to the contemporary *tombak* player in Iranian music.³⁵⁹ Rajabi was born in Rasht, in north-west Iran, in 1939 in a poor family. After the death of his father, in 1942, his family moved to Tehrān. He acquired an interest in *tombak* playing as a child by imitating his mother who would play on a pot and sing. He took his first formal *tombak* lessons at the age of 24 (in 1963) from Eftetāh and studied with him intensively for a period of three months.³⁶⁰ Rajabi is an agronomy-graduate and worked in the Agriculture Bank from 1964 until 1969.

His music career began in the early 1970s when he performed his first public concert with Rezā Shafi'yān (*santur*), at the age of 31. Around 1972 he joined the Centre for Preservation and Propagation of Iranian music, where he performed regularly with many contemporary and well-known musicians. His music activities ceased abruptly after the Revolution, when public music-making became a problematical activity. His first public performance after the Revolution was in 1997, after 18 years of "silence".³⁶¹ Since then he regularly gives recitals, which usually include solo (and sometimes duet) *tombak* and which he accompanies by speeches on various aspects of

³⁵⁹ Ethnomusicologists have shown how musical experiences of individuals can shed light on important aspects of the culture they fall into. See for example Rice (1994) who focused on the work and lives of two individuals to describe how Bulgarian music may be identified and understood. According to Rice, "the individual can properly enter the domain of social science, not as a self or ego independent of history, society and class, but as an agent living in a world of actions and symbols whose meanings can be interpreted from a variety of different social and historical positions" (1994:33). Several other scholars have presented musicians' biographies, relating individual experiences to their socio-cultural milieu and have provided an understanding of music cultures as a whole. See, for instance, Danielson (1997) who provides a picture of Egyptian social and cultural life by interweaving it with the biography of the great Arab classical singer, Umm Kulthum.

³⁶⁰ See the *Ostād- Shāgerd* Relationship section, page 236, where he describes his relationship with Eftetāh.

³⁶¹ Actually Rajabi has performed in Rudaki Hall a duet with his son in 1993, but he claims that his first concert after the Revolution was in 1998. This emphasis on the absence from performance activities for 18 consecutive years adds further to his eccentric character and uncompromising character.

music and art in general. Rajabi started teaching the *tombak* for the first time in 1990.³⁶² He has published two *tombak* manuals which include his solo repertoire and are considered to be among the most authoritative in the field of *tombak* (1999a and 2002).

Rajabi is the epitome of individuation: he has built up his personality through differentiation, uniqueness and expertise. However, he is often considered to have a nervous temperament and an eccentric idiosyncrasy. He expresses his unconventional, for Iranian social norms, conduct and non-conformist ideas in public and semi-public places. His behaviour, thus, is not located only within his close social relations, but also revealed in front of a general audience. For example, at a concert in Vahdat Hall in 1997, after playing a solo of about 45 minutes, and after being greeted with applause by the audience, he sat again and played on the *tombak* poorly, on purpose, for 2 more minutes.³⁶³ He employed techniques which he normally does not use in his *tombak* playing, but that are used by certain *tombak* players whom he considers to be less competent performers. The techniques that he used in that moment (hitting the body of the *tombak* with the palms of his two hands in simple rhythmic patterns of 4/4, scratching the ridges on the body of the *tombak* with his ring) are considered by Rajabi to be simple, rough, lacking in aesthetic qualities and technical dexterity. In less prestigious concert halls than Vahdat Hall, and often during his classes, he is even more expressive and critical of other *tombak* players, to the extent of denouncing some of them. Besides mocking their technique and style of playing he sometimes adopts their body posture and facial expressions, so that the insiders recognize the *tombak* players he alludes to. In this way he wants to “educate” his audience in the aesthetics of *tombak* playing, and at the same time to show the difference between his artistic achievements and those of other *tombak* players, whose skills he might consider inferior.

During his classes and public lectures he often refers to himself as *divune*³⁶⁴ or mentions that others consider him to be *divune*.³⁶⁵ The free translation of this term in

³⁶² Private teaching is one of the few regular incomes for most musicians after the Revolution.

³⁶³ This concert in Vahdat Hall was filmed, but not published. Rajabi distributes copies of the unpublished videotape to his students. I have seen him in other concerts as well to perform poorly, on purpose, in order to mock other musicians, but I choose to write about this concert because it conveys well the formal and public aspect of this performance, as it takes place in one of the most prestigious concert halls in Tehrān, a fact that does not seem to prevent Rajabi from behaving in the way he does.

³⁶⁴ The literal transliteration of the word is *divāne*, however I choose to write the colloquial expression *divune*.

³⁶⁵ The reader is suggested to read the related article “Amin-e Diwaneh: The Musician as a Madman” by Baily (1988a) in which he describes a musician’s character as eccentric and erratic in terms of Afghan norms of behaviour. Baily also makes a useful connection with Western popular music, where musicians, especially jazz musicians, are surrounded with the myth of rebellious, anti-social and eccentric behaviour. In western classical music there is also a strong link between music and madness, where the latter is often seen as an attribute of genius. Several romantic composers indeed became mentally ill, such as Donizetti, Paganini, Schumann and Smetana (Erfurth and Hoff 2000). See Frosch (1990) who talks about Handel’s

English would accord to a person who behaves crazily, foolishly, madly or is in a state of frenzy, but it is also a term of endearment.³⁶⁶ Rajabi employs and accepts the *divune* character in several ways. First, he is aware that sometimes he might exaggerate in stating his personal opinions to others, and in such cases he accepts the term *divune* and in a way utilizes and exploits this designation to justify further the crossing of socially acceptable boundaries. In this case he capitalizes upon this behaviour, as Merriam would say, in order to indulge in certain kinds of “deviant” conduct that is not socially permissible for others, even musicians (Merriam 1964:133-144).³⁶⁷ Second, he employs and accentuates this attribute, in a more affectionate manner, in order to distinguish himself from the norm and to be accredited with exceptional qualities. Along these lines, Rajabi boasts that he was six years in jail before the Revolution because of his political stance and proudly proclaims that he has not been associated with any political governmental or non-governmental organization during his lifetime. In this way he again reinforces his standing as a rebellious and prodigious figure. Emphasizing the *divune* label is a suitable condition to express further his subversive ideas. In this sense he invests in this character, in order to stamp and empower his stature. Moreover, it could be argued that by promoting this character, he attracts audiences, he is sought after, and in this way he enhances his economic status. For example, many of his students marvel at his audacity and boldness and find his manners diverting. From another point of view, the same audience anticipates from him to step forth and express his subversive ideas, which they possibly share.

Rajabi’s principles of individuation translate also into his work. Although he is not the first, nor the only one to pursue the rebirth of the *tombak* as a solo instrument, he has been perhaps the most active individual to propagate and develop with passion the

insanity, and Brussel (1963) who writes about Schumann’s madness or see Erfurth and Hoff (2000) who show how *bel canto* composers represent mental disorders. The relationship between music and madness has been also explored in literature. See for example Dostoyevski’s famous novel *Netochka Nezvanova* where Nietochka, the central character of the novel, is a daughter of a mad musician who considers himself a genius, drinks to excess and strangles his wife (Dostoyevski 1985).

³⁶⁶ Baily’s translation of the term would be “madman”. Moreover, he associates the term *divune* (*diwaneh*) with the Majnun type, from the famous tale of Leyli and Majnun written by Hakim Nezāmi. According to this interpretation *divune* can be considered also as someone who is frenzied with love. For Baily such people are described as “having complexes about life, sadness, dissatisfactions - who rejected the world of material things..” (1988a:133).

³⁶⁷ Merriam discusses musicians’ licence to deviate in the *Anthropology of Music* (1964:133-144) and develops this concept in more detailed analysis in “Basongye Musicians and Institutionalized Social Deviance” (1979). For him, “the behaviour of musicians is deviant behaviour, for it breaks the norms established by other members of society” (ibid. 3). While I use this deviant term according to Merriam’s definition I also recognize that there exists a broad approach by sociologists in relation to it, but I will renounce, in this case, related concepts and behaviour to “deviance” such as lawbreaking, or corrupt, sinful, dysfunctional, and pathological conduct.

tombak as an autonomous instrument.³⁶⁸ He has worked with zeal to establish the *tombak* as a solo instrument, and towards this aim he has given numerous speeches and recitals, he has published one of the most important manuals with short pieces for solo *tombak*, and has advanced further the *tombak* duet. His recording list is not very extensive, due to his restricted collaborations with other musicians after the Revolution. However, he has a repository of audio and video material of privately recorded recitals that he disseminates to his students.

Rajabi's ideas, often subversive and non-conformist, are juxtaposed to the given socio-cultural norms of the music world. He often attacks commonly applied and downtrodden terms in Iranian music. One such concept is that of the *ostād*. In most cases, *ostād*, has been translated by ethnomusicologists to mean both a "teacher" and a "master". The first translation is successful especially in the *ostād-shāgerd* relation, that is, the teacher-student relations. In addition, the *ostād-shāgerd* (master-apprentice) relationship is not only used in relation to music, but also in the arts, crafts and science.³⁶⁹ The term *ostād* is also employed outside the context of the *ostād-shāgerd* relationship to acknowledge the expertise and mastery of a musician (and a teacher), and to show respect and denote musicians of high ranking. In this case the English term "music master" seems to be more appropriate. According to the *Farhang Feshorde' Sokhan* [Concise Dictionary of Words] *ostād* is the wise, sagacious (*dānā*) and talented person in a science, technique or art. The other meaning of *ostād* relevant here is someone who trains, teaches and instructs; while at an university level it is applied to those who have reached a high scientific status. According to Baily the term *ustād* "is a honorific title (derived from Arabic *ustādh*: "master") for a Muslim master musician in India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran and neighbouring regions" (<<http://www.grovemusic.com>> (Accessed 10/12/2005)).³⁷⁰

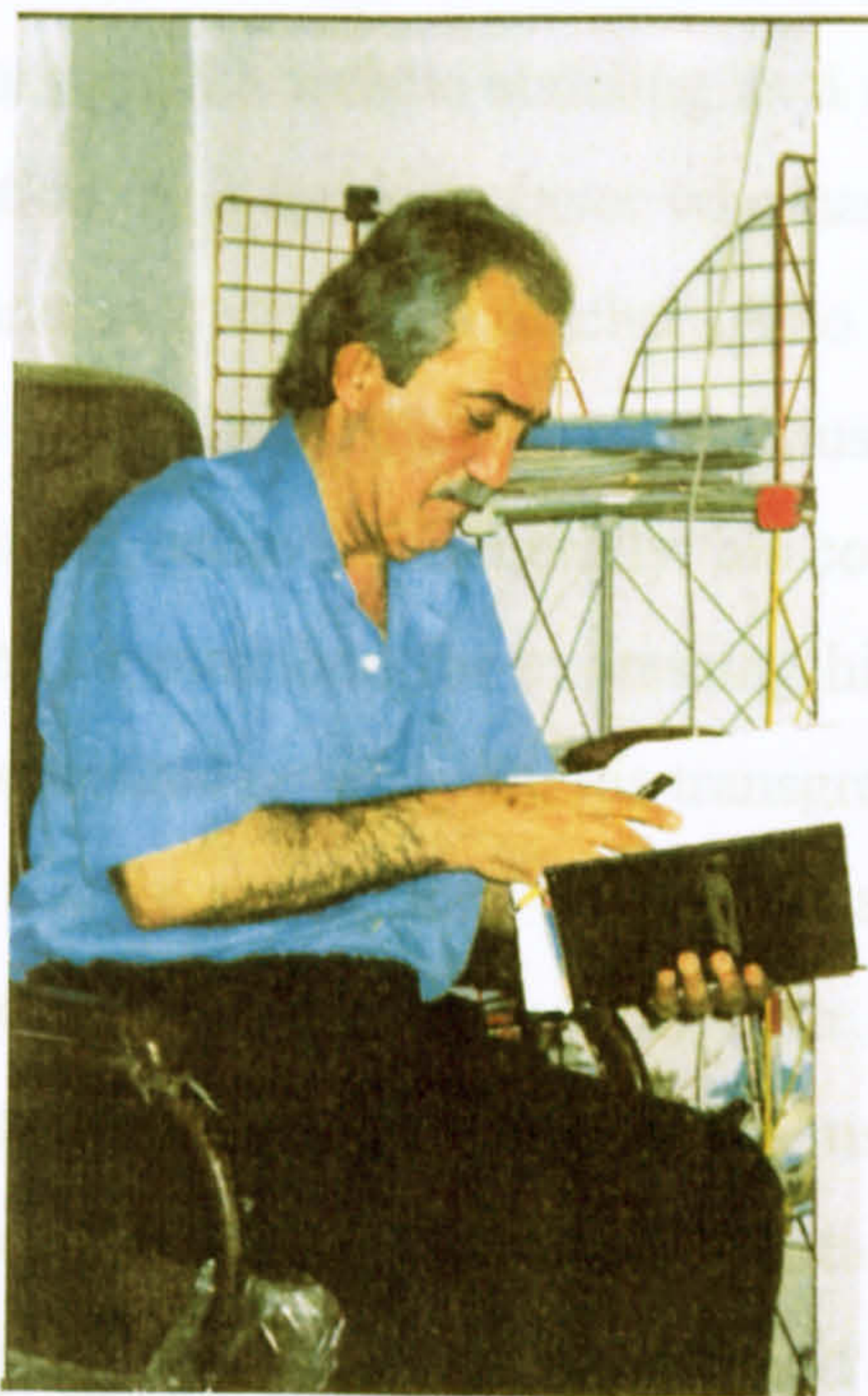
³⁶⁸ If one would wish to compare Tehrani's and Rajabi's work in the promotion of *tombak* playing, one could perhaps discern that Rajabi pursues it a lot from the standing of individuation, that he relies on his own identity, reinforcing the stature of the soloist, rather than co-performance. Tehrani, on the other side, worked in a more communal music atmosphere.

³⁶⁹ Baily also denotes that the term is applied in this sense in Afghanistan (1988b:112).

³⁷⁰ In these regions, Baily (<<http://www.grovemusic.com>> (Accessed 10/12/2005)) elucidates that the term is applied only to males and implies that one has studied over long periods of time. In Afghanistan and India the *ostād* is transliterated as *ustād*. In Afghanistan, as Baily explains, *ustād* is a master musician who understands music "scientifically" and could play all the instruments (1988b:112). For Sakata "*ustād* means "teacher"" and "*ustād* is a title reserved for those musicians who are polished performers and who have a number of students" (1976:7). In Indian music Silver has translated the term *ustād* as "master musician" (1975/76:27). He speculates that in Urdu this term has gained a distinctly music-related sense from the mid-19th century, and he maintains that it "parallels the origin, growth, and development of the *gharānās*" (ibid. 28). In Beirut the terms *isṭā* and *m'allim*, are honorifics that apply to musicians of high standing or members of other traditional professions, and mean "master craftsman" (Racy 1986:422-423).

Rajabi denounces this term because, as he says, “it is a term loaded and plethoric (*porbāri*) and has to be used with circumspection and forethought” (Interview, October 2002). He says that to be considered an *ostād* one has to have a great wisdom/sagacity (*dānā*) and to have his art (*honar*) exalted. Employing the rhetoric of *ta’ārof* he sometimes would say, “An illiterate like me cannot be said to be an *ostād*, I am a teacher (*mo’alem*), I am a writer, I am a researcher, and I am an orator (*sokhanvar*).”³⁷¹

Picture 16: Bahman Rajabi during his classes. Photograph taken by the author.



With his statement and attitude upon this matter, Rajabi touches delicate and complex issues that have been taken for granted and have been used conventionally, broadly, almost without discrimination. One could say that the term *ostād* has become a relatively democratic term. However, as I understand it, Rajabi does not attack the social hierarchy born out of the use of the term, instead for him the difference rests in the utilization of the term and the degree to which the perception, attitudes and social forms it creates are taken to be deserved and warranted. For Rajabi, to employ the term *ostād* in many instances of social encounters is to exercise *ta’ārof*, that is, flattery and courtesy, without discrimination. In other words, in such cases, the application of this

³⁷¹ Self-depreciation of this kind is not uncommon in Iran and it is often associated with humbleness. Iranian people often employ such “humble” phrases for the sake of politeness and formality, even if there is no actual humbleness behind their words. According to some scholars (Giddens, Beck, Luckmann) one of the key concepts in individualisation is “role-distance” according to which an individual can no longer make complete identification with one role, and becomes a “role player” (see Musschenga 2001:5-8).

label could be considered as a kind of hypocrisy and false treatment. Discussing in general with musicians the concept of *ostād*, although used commonly, seems to be indeed quite sensitive and complex. Ideally, *ostād* is a person who has reached maturity in his personality, character and work of art. And although sometimes some musicians and some of his students look at Rajabi's ideas with amusement, in actuality he expresses concerns that exist in Iranian society that are shared among many musicians but are concealed under the rubric of *ta'ārof* behaviour.

The theoretical concept of liminality, developed by Turner, is quite useful to understand the various identities, social and musical, that Rajabi attains. Rajabi, on the one hand, has been assigned a unique standing as a senior musician active both before and after the Revolution, as a *tombak* player who has developed and distributed the art of *tombak* playing, and as a strenuous teacher. Also his students are enchanted by him and his personality. On the other hand, many musicians are often cautious towards Rajabi's uncompromising behavior. Generally, his conduct is being tolerated and he has never been sanctioned or punished for expressing his audacious value-judgments, and he has been rarely confronted severely for his transgressions and bold statements.

In particular, Rajabi can be best understood as a socially liminal figure: he has attained a well-built individuality based on both his high musical status and his idiosyncratic, often exaggerated, behaviour. It seems that, because of his status, he is permitted to cross socially defined boundaries. Many times I have heard musicians indulging him and saying that "Rajabi is Rajabi" and others saying "he is *divune*, do not pay attention to what he says." Under this light, his liminal standing is a potential source of strength and creativity, as his social liminality is often the alibi for his eccentricities, but also a social safety valve for him to express his subversive ideas. Nonetheless, his liminal state has also a considerable cost for his art, as his controversial figure often hampers his collaboration with other musicians.

In the concept of liminality the status ambiguity of the *tombak* player, whose primary role is still considered to be an accompaniment, is an important component. It could be argued that Rajabi, as someone who pursues a career as a *tombak* soloist is literally "being-on-a-threshold", to borrow Turner's phrase (1979:465). In addition, in order to pursue a higher status as a master soloist, he has segregated himself, by rarely performing with others. Viewed under this light, his liminality isolates him further from many musicians with whom he could potentially perform.

It is germane to note that while Rajabi was always considered to be rather uncompromising, his degree of individualisation seems to have increased after the

Revolution.³⁷² As stated in the previous chapter, the Revolution brought a degree of segregation among the musicians, restricting their communal musical activities, and Rajabi, I believe, adapting himself to the new socio-cultural circumstances, reinforced his separation and individuation (and his individualisation), though without becoming an actual outsider among musicians. In other words, he brought to the fore his idiosyncratic personality, on the one hand and his non-subordination to “the group” on the other. His main goal after the Revolution has been the spreading of *tombak* solo.

In this context, according to Schur, the applied term “deviance” reflects behavior which is not simply a result of “discrete acts of wrongdoing, or departure from norms; they also reflect patterns and processes of social definition” (Schur, cited in Merriam 1979:9). Schur maintains that “deviance is viewed not as a static entity, but rather as a continuously shaped and reshaped *outcome* of dynamic processes of social interactions” (ibid.). As the concept of deviance is not static, the social norms that define deviance are not static either. The concept of “strategy” that Merriam borrows from Turner is also supplementary to the above stated ruminations. Merriam asserts that musicians’ behavior “constitutes a strategy for coping with a recurrent type of situation, that situation being the making of music” (1979:10).

Merton’s ideas also apply in this case. He explains in terms of social strain that “man will deviate from the expectations of his fellow men only if he experiences some major disjunction between his *goals* and the legitimate *means* of attending them, or if the rules themselves become contradictory or meaningless” (Merton, cited in Merriam (1979:14). This explanation elucidates to a degree the behavior not only of an individual alone, as Merton suggests and Merriam maintains (ibid.), but I would assert, of individuals experiencing the forces of social strains such as those employed in Iran after the Revolution. Such major disjunctions after the Revolution concern the precarious status of music and musicians following the concepts regarding the legitimacy of music and the multifarious restrictions applied to music activities, discussed in the previous chapters.

However, one should not assume that Rajabi’s attitude characterizes simply the majority of *tombak* players, or other types of Iranian musician: individuation and

³⁷² As with most definitions in the social sciences and humanities, individualisation has been interpreted in various ways that can be considered complimentary to one another, that can shed light on other aspects of this phenomenon and thus can illuminate further this concept. For example, Van der Loo and Van Reijen have defined individualisation as “the process in which the individual breaks away from the bonds of close and proximate groups and becomes dependent on more distant and anonymous social forces” (Musschenga 2001:5). This interpretation is relevant to Rajabi whose musical collaborations after the Revolution are particularly scarce.

individualisation are characteristics not only of musicians performing Iranian music, but individualizing processes are a complex phenomenon that needs further examination.³⁷³

Musicians and scholars have detected that musicians in general are going through individualizing processes. During has identified a general decline of musicians' conviviality, and a rise of individualism which has been accentuated by urbanization and commercialization of the music (2005:378-379). Pessimists are often critical towards such processes in Iranian music. They note that Iranian music has become too soloistic and that solo music has risen due to the fact of alienation and estrangement amongst musicians. Optimists, on the other hand, consider that these two processes bring a degree of autonomy to the instrumentalists and new trajectories in instrumental creativity. *Tombak* players, perhaps more than other musicians, are attached to the "stigma" of distinguishing themselves and hence they epitomize both individuation and individualisation, partly due to the fact that the *tombak* solo is a recent phenomenon, and partly due to the ambiguous position of the *tombak* player in Iranian music. In a sense, these two processes have often pejorative connotations in Iranian culture, and *tombak* players are the scapegoats in the discourse of individuation and their propensity to mark themselves out among musicians.

Socio-Musical Relations among *Tombak* Players and Other Musicians

In the 20th century, the history of Iranian music relations among many eminent musicians is characterized by long term collaborations. Many of the prominent *tombak* players not only had lengthy partnerships with other musicians, but also their music relations were complemented by strong friendly association. Many such collaborations produced excellent music works that have left their imprint in the history of Iranian music. These musical partnerships, which evolved either by performing in large ensembles, small groups, or duos, eventually produced famous long-term partnerships (and often friendships), such as: Tehrāni and Sabā, after Sabā's death Tehrāni and Pāyvar (Sabā's student), after Tehrāni's death Esmā'ili (Tehrāni's student) and Pāyvar

³⁷³ See for example Adelhah who discusses the individualising process within the Iranian family (1999: 156-174), and Nettl who links individualism with hierarchical social structures (1992:189-192).

(after Pāyvar's severe illness, Esmā'ili has performed with his student Sābet).³⁷⁴ Another famous duo was Lotfi and Farhangfar, after Farhangfar's death Lotfi and Gavihelm, Shahnāz and Eftetāh. Other recent long term collaborations include: 'Alizāde and Zageri, 'Alizāde and Khalaj, Kalhor and Hadādi, Morādi and Hadādi, Khāvarzamini and Khabbāzi.

Long term collaboration seems to be essential to achieve high artistic level in an Iranian music that is based largely on improvisation.³⁷⁵ Conversely, how improvisation is shaped should be investigated also as an outcome of the socio-musical, personal and professional interaction between two or more players. 'Alizāde, a *tār* and *setār* player who has been performing for many years with Khalaj and Zageri, believes that it is not only essential to cultivate a good relationship but "every musician who sits besides another musician has to feel love for him," for the reason that:

Improvisation in Iranian music is very important: in that very moment you express yourself with music, you express your feelings. When I do this [i.e. improvisation] with another player, this feeling of together-ness [*dotai*], this [music] dialogue is affirmed, and it also becomes affirmed by the listener, and this feeling [is transferred] to the relation between the player and the listener. If [the music they make] lacks this, then it is all based only on a contract, that is, their relationship is also based on a contract (Interview, February 2003).

For 'Alizāde, after many years of collaboration "the *tombak* player becomes familiar with the spirit, the taste and *zowq* [correct taste] of the player and the player himself."

Kāmkār expresses his own experience on the same issue from the standpoint of the *tombak* player:

Performers should know each other well. When I play with performers that I know well, like 'Alizāde, Lotfi, Meshkātiān, I can guess what they will play next. For example, with Lotfi, we play simultaneously crescendo, decrescendo, or when we play together in private gatherings when he finishes, I finish at the same time. It is a matter of feeling/sensation [*chizi hessi-e*]. The players, they have to be friends. If they don't know each other, the

³⁷⁴ In this chain of relationships it appears that the student inherits the music network and career of his master.

³⁷⁵ Close sociomusical relationships and long-term collaborations among musicians are important factors during the process of improvisation, and generally during ensemble performances, and are evident in many other music genres, such as Indian, popular and jazz music or string quartets. See, for example, Green (2002:34-36, 112-117) on popular music, Goodman (2002) and Cottrell (2004:83-94) on Western music, or Murnighan and Conlon (1991) on string quartets.

tombak [player] plays one thing and the instrument[alist] plays another (Interview, March 2003).

For Pedrām though, being friends alone is not enough. During a long interview, he once remarked that breadth and depth of mutual experiences are essential:

Musicians should live together; I don't say that they should merely be good friends. They should sleep together, they should eat together, play together, go here and there together. This is very important. If you see an old player, you will see that he has been always working only with one *tombak* player. For example Sabā was like this with Tehrāni. Then, look at Pāyvar, he was playing for 50 years with Esmā'ili only, and I can tell you than no one else except Esmā'ili can play an instrument like that [with Pāyvar]. And this is very beautiful for the music itself, because, in this way, musicians can understand each other better (Interview, January 2003).

When I asked Esmā'ili about his relationship with Pāyvar he told me:

He [Pāyvar] would tell me: *Esi*³⁷⁶ "You are my artistic wife". When I played with him I would go into his existence [*vojud*], I was his *hāl*, I would not let him rest. The answers that you are seeking from me about our relationship, you will find them in our music (Interview, January 2003).

Talā'i also confirms the importance of long term collaboration for Iranian music. He believes that Iranian music has flourished in an atmosphere when close friendly relations among musicians exists, be it between singers and instrumentalists, or instrumentalists and *tombak* players. The reason for this, he explained during an interview, is that in such ambience of cooperation a feeling of generosity occurs between musicians, who do not feel the need to distinguish themselves, to indulge in their own playing, but rather to assist each other in order to develop a common musical work. On the contrary, when relations among musicians are not characterized by friendship, he believes in general that they cannot find the matrix to collaborate communally and that this is apparent in the sound they produce. With regards to *tombak* players he believes in general that because they suffer from an "inferiority complex" (*komplekse zir-dasti*) due to historical reasons, they have the tendency to over-perform in order to distinguish themselves in terms of dexterity, which results in hampering the music itself. As he says: "the *tombak* players were the instrument carriers of the

³⁷⁶ Short name for Esmā'ili.

instrumentalists during the time of Tehrāni, for example the *tombak* player would carry the instrument of Habib Somā'i, or Sabā or anyone else." (Interview, July 2005). However, Talā'i believes that when close friendship exists between the *tombak* player and the instrumentalist, they can both convey effectively the feeling of the music (*ehsās-e musiqi*) they make.

Friendly relation among musicians contributes to more egalitarian social relations among musicians and leads to a sense of continuity between off-stage and on-stage relations. One could venture to say that the feeling of the seeming inequality in the soloist-accompanist relation - that is, the subservient musical role of the accompanist to the soloist - and the "syndrome" this often creates, to distinguish oneself musically, becomes outweighed by a strong bond of friendship which appears to be fundamental in transforming the musically distinctive and dissimilar roles into a shared and complimentary role at the moment of musical performance. Such personal relations dissolve the "role tension" inherent in the "nature" of the musical structure and thus musicians achieve the ultimate goal, to create musical work with a sentiment of a more balanced communal participation.

Another aspect that may be perceived in the relationships of collaborating musicians could be put under the umbrella-term "male bonding". I use the term "bonding" to denote all the elements of camaraderie, affection, dutiful loyalty and lack of personal distance which are normally expected to occur between people who interact in confined social groups where special rules or restrictions apply (such as the army, or a boarding school) and in situations of crisis, or situations that are very significant to the people involved (such as war, or the process of growing up). Iranian male professional musicians seem to have many of these elements that make them "bond": they are a relatively restricted group of people (most of them male), who have been subjected to persecution and discrimination and share a common interest, music. Furthermore, their cultural tradition seems to promote close and loyal links for people connected by friendship or, as we shall see, by a student-teacher relationship. Despite this remarkable tendency for affection between musicians (or, some would argue, because of it), there is also a strong element of animosity in the Iranian musical circles, which is the subject of a following section.

Recruitment of *Tombak* Players³⁷⁷

Besides strong personal relations, other criteria are also involved in music collaborations. *Tombak* players are not always recruited by musicians according to the degree of their musical expertise, or according to the stature of the musician. Shahrām Nāzeri, while has performed with many distinguished *tombak* players in the past, like Kām-kār, Farhangfar, Hadādi and Mohebbi, chose for his group in 2002 a “novice” accompanist. While it is definitely positive for young promising players to have such opportunities, such working relations are characterized by inequalities in musicianship, reputation and social rank, and thus create a more rigid hierarchy within the ensemble. Reasons for such choices might include economic issues and hierarchy issues – an instrumentalist chooses an accompanist whom he can “keep in control”- an idea that is also expressed by Neuman with regards to the *tabla* players in North Indian music (1977:241). Also, it is easier for a prestigious group to keep for a longer period a “novice” player who is more readily available than someone who is more mature musician and thus more in demand. Finally, “novice” *tombak* players are usually paid less than the renowned ones, and this is perhaps a further reason for their recruitment by more experienced musicians.

In addition, young players are often considered to tolerate the capricious manners of some renowned musicians. On the collaboration between an instrumentalist of international fame and a *tombak* player, another *tombak* player remarked, “It is understandable why this *tombak* players plays with that musician: the latter is beating him on his head” - meaning that no one else, except a young player, would endure the wayward behaviour of the reputable musician.

Generally speaking, talent is not always the ticket for musical collaboration. It often happens that some distinguished musicians perform abroad with not so competent players who are capable of arranging concerts for them. In my case, although a novice *tombak* player, I was few times requested by Iranian musicians, both acclaimed and less well known, to accompany them if I could arrange concerts abroad. On the other hand *tombak* players with great skill, like Khāvarzamini or Afgah for example, do not perform with musicians of questionable music calibre. The stature of the musician, in

³⁷⁷ The term “recruitment” is often used in ethnomusicology to describe the process of how a person initially becomes a musician. Here I use the term to describe processes of professional selection of skilled *tombak* players.

terms of music competence, has to be on the level of their skill. This also minimizes their potential for musical collaborations.

Other relations between musicians and *tombak* players exhibit inequalities in musicianship. Sometimes, especially young *tombak* players might perform consciously with musicians of lower calibre, especially when concerts abroad (and thus better payment) are concerned. In such cases the *tombak* player is again in some respect submissive to the instrumentalist's expertise. For example, a *tombak* player told me that, while performing with a certain instrumentalist in a concert abroad he had to endure the musician's poor sense of rhythm. The *tombak* player felt exploited musically, and exposed socially, but tolerated the situation because of the opportunity to travel abroad and to receive good payment.

Performing abroad is a dream of almost every musician, and many would grab such an opportunity even if it meant playing with a second-rate musician. Generally, in the years after the Revolution, especially before Khatami's elections in 1997, it was difficult for many Iranians to get visas to travel abroad, especially in European countries and the United States. Even well-known musicians who have been visiting USA several times were later refused at other times an entry visa. Many Iranians recall the years under the Shah when "you could go anywhere in the world with an Iranian passport."

Other musical collaborations between well known professional *tombak* players and musicians are based on kinship, or affinity relations. Kinship relations apply in the cases of Shajariān and his father Mohammad Rezā Shajariān, and Arzhang Kāmkār with his brothers and sisters who form the Kāmkār ensemble. Relations based on affinity ties are realized when marriage between musicians or musician families occur,³⁷⁸ Ganjei - whose sister is married to one of the Kāmkārs - has performed regularly with members of the Kāmkār ensemble; Lotfi who was married to Ghashang Kāmkār has a long collaboration with the Kāmkār ensemble; Torshizi, whose sister is married to the *tār* player Keyvān Sāket has performed with him for many years.

In summation, many professional relations among *tombak* players and musicians are characterized by unequal and unbalanced relations, not only in terms of musical roles, but also in terms of status, musicianship and experience. Such relationships, which are not necessarily short-term collaborations, contribute to reproduce more effectively a hierarchization among musicians, and often to announce publicly (in the

³⁷⁸ In Iran intermarriage among musicians of music families does not apply as a rule. Marriage among musicians occurs, so to say, out of love. However, families of "hereditary" musicians are common in regional Iranian music and especially among *sornā* (shawm) and *dohol* players (Baily, personal communication). See also Baily (1988b) and Slobin (1983) on *dohol* and *sornā* hereditary professional musicians in Afghanistan.

context of the concert) the traditionally submissive role of the *tombak* player to the instrumentalist.

When musicians cultivate friendly relations, and such examples in Iranian music are also evident, they experience a more “egalitarian” sentiment which is in some ways transferred into the sound of music. In such a context, during the musical performance, the antagonistic and rival feelings among musicians is minimized, the musicians’ private experiences are expressed and manifested on stage, and their personal ties translate into musical cohesion.

Problematic Relations Among *Tombak* Players

After having described the relationships of profound friendship, affection and devotion that occur between musicians, this section deals with an aspect of their interaction that seems to be the exact opposite: the phenomenon of rivalry and animosity that is also evident among musicians, which seems to be particularly intense among *tombak* players. It is perhaps significant that, while most cases of friendship can be found among musicians of different instruments, most cases of animosity occur within the circles of the same instrument.

During the whole period of my field research I have witnessed much disparagement, rivalry, antagonism and suspicion expressed between many *tombak* players and widely known in music circles. By being active in the field, by conversing and socializing most of my time with *tombak* players and other musicians, not only did I hear many stories of confrontation, but also I experienced them “first hand”. Having personal and professional bonds with musicians whose relations were cold-hearted I was also put in a difficult position. My research in this delicate issue was facilitated by the fact that several *tombak* players recognized and appreciated that I never repeated what others would tell me. Now I put my self again in a difficult position, trying to describe this situation, without naming the *tombak* players involved. I do not feel that by reporting it I “betray” or “expose” *tombak* players; if they read these lines many would certainly admit this state of affairs.

The disparagement that many *tombak* players express for each other takes many forms. It can be one-sided or mutual, expressed in more intimate settings or in semi-

public circles, for example expressed by a *tombak* teacher in front of his students, expressed by a *tombak* player in front of his ensemble, or shared by two *tombak* players against others. The disparagement is often directed both towards the personality and the musical expertise of the performer. When *tombak* players are judged for their musical abilities they are criticized (even the prominent ones) for things such as the following: being good technicians but not having the “feel” for music; being good soloists and not good accompanists; being able to play only contemporary classical music and not the more traditional forms; having a good sound but poor rhythmic patterns; lacking a personal style and imitating other players’ styles; playing the *tombak* really badly and not having a good sense of rhythm; having *motrebi* style; playing someone else’s rhythmic patterns; being a show off; being good player but bad teacher, and so on. When a player’s music weaknesses are put into question, it is almost certain that critique and gossip will also tackle his personality and personal life: he is self-centred and self-absorbed; he is arrogant and snobbish (*maqrur*); he thinks he is Beethoven; he has too high an opinion of himself; he uses excessive amounts of alcohol and is an opium addict; he is “sexually active” (although I have heard this statement rarely); he is suspicious; he is nosey (*fuzul*); he is not honest; his teacher was not the one he claims to have been taught by; he quarrels with everyone; he talks too much; he does not respect his elders; he is not reliable; he talks badly about other *tombak* players.

I would like to stress, at this point, that the kind of criticism I am referring to (and for which *tombak* players rightly complain when they are at the receiving end) has nothing to do with constructive criticism, which would be expressed to assess, for example, the music abilities of a player or the aesthetic preferences of the speaker, as a way to understand music and to interact productively within the musical environment. This kind of constructive criticism, whenever it occurs, appears to be welcome by most musicians. On the contrary, I am referring here to the phenomenon of purely malicious and competitive criticism that I have personally witnessed.

It is inevitable that conflict, competition and rivalry should produce negative outcomes. At the very least, they create an “ill-feeling” among musicians. Pedrām once said, in exasperation:

These words people say, they often make me feel uncomfortable. You don’t feel free here either [he says this by pointing at his head]. You want to give a concert and you worry that the student of this or that teacher will come out after the concerts and start saying various things... I say: “alright, it doesn’t matter; I will not pay attention to these comments”. But why should I not pay attention to such comments, if this situation is something that

distresses me? For whom do I give concerts? For someone who comes to see me, says malicious things and doesn't recognize that I put an effort in my work! (Interview, January 2003).

Then, musicians are often suspicious of other players in general. When I contacted Afgah for the first time, over the phone, I introduced myself, and gave the name of the respected person who gave me his number (Mohammad Rezā Darvishi). Afgah thought in the beginning that someone wanted to mock him. Nevertheless, he accepted to see me and only after several hours of discussion did he believe my intentions in doing research on the *tombak*.

There is also an atmosphere of mistrust among *tombak* players, which makes them suspicious of each other, encloses them in a more private world, and hampers their socialization with other *tombak* performers. In one case, I went to visit a *tombak* player (I will call him "X") with another *tombak* player who offered to help me in contacting other players. After the first visit to his music class, X asked me over the phone to visit him next time unaccompanied. While he understood my reasons for visiting him and my research goals, he could not understand why the other *tombak* player wanted to come. He said:

If this person does not want to become my student then why does he want to see me? He is nose-y; he wants to come and see what is going on during my classes and then he wants to gossip around and to spread my words here and there.³⁷⁹

These elements of disparagement, mistrust, suspicion, tension and rivalry that exist in the relationships of *tombak* players create a degree of alienation and separation which is noticeable in their music practices. For instance, during the 1980s and 1990s there were already two published notational systems (one line stave and three line stave) for *tombak* which had some differences in the signs and the designations for each movement. Nowadays many *tombak* players invent new signs in order to replace the existing ones and sometimes change the names of specific playing techniques. In many cases, this is another indication of the separation and disagreement among *tombak* players, and their efforts to further distinguish themselves from others.

It appears that tension and problematic relations are not exclusive to *tombak* players, but apply to many other musicians. When Iranians themselves try to explain this phenomenon, they refer to the history of rivalry and competitive relations that

³⁷⁹ This mistrust does not appear to be related to having music "secrets".

characterizes the musical milieu since the 19th century. To mention a quite telling example: Mirzā ‘Abdollāh learned the *radif* from his uncle, Āqā Qolāmhossein, in secret. When the latter refused to teach him Mirzā ‘Abdollāh would listen behind the door his playing and then would go and practice by himself.

In 1998 in *Māhur Music Quarterly* journal, Jamāli expressed in public his despair regarding the “ill-feelings” that exist among many Iranian musicians, in an article titled “Why can’t we sit next to each other?” (or “Why can’t we get together”) (*Cherā digar-e kenār-e ham nemishinim?*). He expressed his bitterness in a series of questions, some of which I translate below:

- Why can’t a “colleague” enjoy a work of art like an ordinary member of an audience?
- Did we endure all those difficult years of learning science and art just to indulge in private and public purposeless conversations and speak negatively about each other?
- How long should we be witnessing the distressing conditions of those innocent students who are afraid of naming other artists in front of their own *ostāds* and who hesitate to do this out of fear for causing offence? (1998:162).

When musicians and *tombak* players try to interpret for themselves the “ill-feeling” and rivalry that exists among them, the first thing they say is that in general “no one accepts the others, everyone thinks he is the best” [*Hich kas qabul nadāre yeki digar-o, hame fek mikonand behtarin-and*]. The aesthetic differences thus acquire the face of personal incompatibility, which often translates into mutual disparagement. In other words, different music styles are often perceived in qualitative rather than differential terms. The other side of the same coin is the utilization of *contradistinction*: often musicians promote themselves and their own art, and build up their own value, by rejecting and disapproving the works of others (like in Rajabi’s case).

Many musicians justify their discrepancies on the basis of the generation gap. The central ideas that unfold concern “respect” and “proper behaviour” required towards an *ostād*. Not surprisingly, musicians of the older generation often blame the younger generation for their impudent conduct. A young musician who wished to show his expertise and distinguish himself as a *tombak* player during one ensemble rehearsal was described to me by an older *tombak* player in the following words “he hasn’t become a prophet yet, and he thinks he is god.” I would often hear young musicians being criticized for their self-assurance and boldness: “they have all become *ostāds*.”

In contrast, some *tombak* teachers complain that when they accept students who have been previously attending lessons with other *ostāds*, these students may criticize their former teachers. Kām-kār, for example, has expressed that:

Sometime students come to me and they say my teacher was like this and like that, and I become upset. I tell them that perhaps it is your own fault, perhaps you have not studied enough; your *ostād* is a good *ostād*. But if they come to me and they simply want to learn, well, I like that (Interview, February 2003).

The other side of the coin is that young *tombak* players and musicians, especially the talented ones, are also eager to be acknowledged as skillful players by the master musicians. However, the designation of an *ostād* is by large reserved for matured - in art and in age - musicians. Several have expressed their disappointment from the eminent masters, *tombak* players and musicians, who hold a pose of “an *ostād*”: formal, distant and reserved, a standing they often perceive as unapproachable and unfriendly, and at times antagonistic. In the next example a *tombak* player who is nowadays considered to be a prodigious performer, reports a symbolic form of violence implemented on him by one of the *tombak* masters. He recalls when at the age of 17, in 1989, he went to one *ostād* with whom he studied only four lessons. He became aware that the teacher was extremely hard on him, and would provoke him and torment him physically and mentally:

He would tell me: “play faster faster, stronger, stronger, harder.” Well this requires a supreme talent, I am not a computer, I am not a machine. He was exhausting me. Then, when I would return home, I would seriously practice, I would practice very much. And what he would tell me to play I could play it, but he himself he could not play it. He would only yell: “faster, stronger, harder.” He never played like that himself.

Antagonistic relations among *tombak* players are not a recent phenomenon and it appears that at the centre of such relations emerge often the same names of well known music masters. Certain *ostāds* who have experienced personal frictions perpetuate their rivalry to a considerable degree toward their students. A certain *tombak ostād* has accused another *tombak ostād* of stealing and publishing his exercises for *tombak*. The students of these two masters mock the techniques of one another. Another *ostād* disparages other *tombak* players. In turn, others feel towards him and towards his close students, who are considered to take part in this “commentary”, bitterness and irritation.

During my field research I had a good relationship with two young prominent *tombak* players. When they were teenagers they had a personal conflict. One of them (A) says that he was affected by his *ostād*'s negative view towards another *tombak* player (B), which caused him to insult B at some point when they were both young. Compelled by his teacher, A showed B the door out from the class of his *ostād* by talking to him rudely. The latter *tombak* player, on the other hand, has a different memory of that day. He accuses A of having appropriated a piece that was B's own and to have even played this material in B's presence, claiming that it was his own creation.³⁸⁰ Since I had good relations with both of them, I had the opportunity to try and reconcile them. I also felt uneasy having contacts with both of them, and the truth is that at the very beginning I did not tell to either of them that I had contacts with the other, out of fear that they might think at some point that I would repeat their words to their rival, or even worse, would expose the work of one to the other. I spoke with both of them several times and suggested that they should not perpetuate what they themselves disapproved of, namely the antagonistic relations among *tombak* players. I advised B to forgive A for his "immaturity", and A to try and make peace with B. At some point A took the initiative to call B and asked him "to forgive his childish ignorance." I was present at that moment, which was emotionally intense for all parties. For me it was also rewarding to feel that I had a small part in this reconciliation, a fact which made me transcend for a while my position as the stranger, the foreigner, and gave an additional aspect to my role as an ethnomusicologist.

Relations of rivalry are also sustained by the market rules of producing the "best musicians" in a generally competitive society. Adelkhah's findings make the same point: she notices that "Iranian society is going through a real fever of competition, described daily in the media which can themselves provide a setting for it" (1999:147). She provides many examples with regard to various competitions organized by cultural and educational centres, banks, the army, and religious establishments; to find the fastest note counter, the best shepherd, the best office worker, the best pupil, and the best reciter of the Koran. The awards are usually given by the Mayor of Tehrān, the President, and other officials and include prizes such as golden coins, household electrical equipment, Walkman stereos, tickets for the Big Wheel or the Ghost Train, journeys to Mecca, and so on (ibid. 139-156). Adelkhah considers that such competitions contribute to the rationalization of society (they provide the grounds to

³⁸⁰ I imagine that both these incidents happened. However, A did not want to confess in front of me that he has indeed appropriated the rhythmic phrases of B, while B felt probably uncomfortable to disclose that he was treated impolitely.

raise discussions), they are intrinsically bound up with the processes of commercialization and form a part of the general movement towards individualisation that Iranian society is going through (ibid. 147-149).

The young generation of musicians, and also musicians in general, are also imbued with this “cultural competition and the culture of competition”, to use an expression that Adelkhah spotted in the *Keyhān* newspaper (1999:139). Many Festivals (The Youth Music Festival, the Fajr Festival, The Festival of Regional Music) organized by state institutions acquire the form of competitions and attract many contestants from every part of Iran. Youssefzadeh describes how in the beginning the participant of these festivals were housed and fed, without receiving fees, but later musicians complained about this situation and they started receiving similar prizes as described above: a TV set, a camera, a pilgrimage to Mecca and so on (Youssefzadeh 2000:52).

Many professional *tombak* players are involved directly or indirectly in such competitions, either as members of the jury or as teachers of *tombak* disciples who participate in such festivals.³⁸¹ One can usually discern the “lineage” of teachers of the young *tombak* players who participate in such festivals. For example, during the Fourth Youth Music Festival I could recognize those students who were playing the rhythmic patterns from Rajabi’s book, possibly taught by Rajabi’s students. *Tombak* makers are also involved in similar competitions that announce the best instrument maker, and in this case commercialization is a quite obvious factor. Institutionalizing competitions not only fosters the idea of “the best musician”, but also at times brings to the foreground alliances and favouritism for some parties while for other parties they bring alienation and discontent. Thus, competitive practices can also become incentives for personal and professional disputes among *tombak* players, and musicians in general, while the favouritism that many governmental institutions employ with regards to permission-granting for concerts also creates feelings of rivalry or mistrust.

Another possible explanation could be that problematic relations among musicians in general and *tombak* players in particular are developed and sustained because of the ambiguous identity of musicians in Iranian society. Nettl explains that musicians label themselves as stars, or as being “the best”, in self-defence, in order to be respected in a society where music has been proscribed for centuries by the orthodox Shi’a and where musicians are not highly respected (2005:177-181).

³⁸¹ Rajabi, Banāi, Esmā’ili and Nāser Farhangfar are among the most prominent *tombak* players that have participated one by one as members of a jury.

As for *tombak* players, their problematic relations are more pronounced, as their status is relatively low even within musical circles. *Tombak* players generally have a sense of belonging to an undervalued group. This puts them in the position of constantly having to defend their art against the negative preconceptions, not simply of the Iranian society as a whole but also of other musicians. Regardless of how justified their sense of inferiority may be today, when there is also a great deal of recognition for the *tombak*, the fact remains that *tombak* players often demonstrate a defensive behaviour that further hinders the cultivation of friendly relations. In general, it seems that an ambiguous social identity can produce ambiguous conduct and problematic personal and professional relations, and this seems to be the case of *tombak* artists in Iran.³⁸²

Under the complexities of urban life, and the ambiguous status of music and musicians, sociomusical interaction and systematic collaboration through musical practices among *tombak* players in the public domain is limited and enveloped in the asymmetrical student-teacher relation, while reciprocal interactions between professional *tombak* players is found in the cases when they form a percussion group, and more rarely in the cases when more than one *tombak* players are needed for an ensemble. Thus, the isolation in the private domain of the musicians in the years after the Revolution (as explained in the previous chapter), and the limited interaction among *tombak* players perpetuates feelings of antagonism, rivalry and suspicion. On the other hand, disparagement, criticism and gossip, when expressed among *tombak* players in the private, semi-public or public domain, could be perceived as individualized modes of communication. It can be considered - and perhaps further analyzed - as a dynamic expression that exhibits the active participation of *tombak* players in their socio-musical milieu.

The *Ostād* - *Shāgerd* Relationship

While there are no detailed references about the particular character of the student-teacher relationship of *tombak* players prior the time of Tehrāni, it has been showed that in general musicians from the late Qajar period until the present day studied with several teachers during their lifetime. Specifically, Nooshin has traced the connections

³⁸² See also Kippen's rumination on how difference in social rank acts as a barrier to friendly social relations among musicians (1988:46-62). Note that the concept of "social rank" is not applicable to *tombak* players, who come from middle class families as most Iranian musicians. See the argument on the distinction between "social rank" and "status" as discussed in the introductory chapter.

of the *ostād-shāgerd* relationship and has presented a “genealogy” of prominent teachers and pupils from Farāhāni’s time until today (1996a:125, 126). She shows that there is no clear line of transmission and that a student would usually study an instrument or vocals with more than one master. The study with several teachers is even considered to be necessary, especially for improvising, which is based on a musician’s knowledge of the *radif*, acquired through many years of practice (see Nooshin 1998). This is true for the post-Revolutionary generation of students as well. Nowadays, students of all Iranian instruments (including vocals) are not confined to one master, and usually after they finish her/his cycle of lessons, or sometimes even before that, they study with other teachers as well. For example, Hamid has studied the *tār* successively, and sometimes simultaneously with many musicians, such as Dāriush Piriniakān, Zarif, ‘Alizāde, Talā’i, and Lotfi. I asked him why he felt the need to continue his studies with other teachers and he replied that while he was advised by his friends who studied with other teachers to go and see them, he also felt the urge by himself:

When I listened to someone’s tape, I could realize that they play much better on the *tār* than me. I would hear some things that I wouldn’t know how to play, sounds that I couldn’t understand how they were produced by the other person. So I would go and become his student (Interview, November 2002).

Tombak players also usually study with more than one teacher during their lifetime as students. (See figure 4, page 161 that depicts the student-teacher relationship of the most prominent *tombak* players from Tehrāni’s time till the present day). The reason is that each master has developed some particular movement patterns, has his own set of rhythmic compositions, and has an individualized sound and musical mentality that students want to learn. Normally, students choose their *tombak* masters on the basis of the master’s reputation and expertise. For example, if one student is interested in playing professionally the *tombak* and he has studied with one of Rajabi students, eventually he will attend Rajabi’s lessons.

I have also encountered a few cases of *tombak* players who claim publicly to have been students of prominent masters, and at the same time hiding the names of their true teachers. At first sight, this shows that there is some kind of importance to be a student of a well known master, especially for novice players who make their first steps in their musical career: it means that, at least, they have managed to grasp his playing

technique. But, most importantly, “hiding” oneself underneath the name of a master or parading to be a student of a prominent *ostād* it is a credential that grants one a higher status and thus gives the young teacher the chance to obtain more students.

The close relation of a student to a music teacher is well illustrated in a sequence of four generations: Tehrāni with Esmā’ili, Esmā’ili with his disciple Banāi, and Banāi with his students. The relationship of Tehrāni with Esmā’ili is perhaps the longest and strongest bond among a *shāgerd* and an *ostād* in *tombak* playing in the 20th century Iranian music. When I asked Esmā’ili about his affinity to Tehrāni he replied:

I went to him as a servant (*nokar*), and not as a student (*shāgerd*)....I would buy for him bread, I would buy for him cheese...I would do any other work for him...forty years...thirty years...until he left this world (Interview, February 2003).

Then I asked him if he tried to reenact the relationship he had with Tehrāni with any of his students. To this he replied with a fierce denial:

Esmā’ili: My *ostād* was my God. What are you talking about? You don’t understand what it means the relationship *ostād-shāgerd*....I had a wife, a child, but I was serving my *ostād*. You can’t understand what I am talking about. It is an honour for me to say that I was his servant. I didn’t go to him only to learn the *zarb*, I learned many things from him. If he would not see me for one day he would become upset. Now a student doesn’t visit his teachers for ten years....

Alexandra: What did you learn from him?

Esmā’ili: The rhythm of life, and not playing the *zarb* or playing rhythms. He was my father. If Tehrāni didn’t exist you wouldn’t be here now. He was a great man, he was mature in life, he was a virtuoso (Interview, February 2003).

Esmā’ili not only learned from Tehrāni the “rhythm of life”, but he “inherited” most of Tehrāni’s music activities and his music network. Tehrāni health state in the late 1960s was not very good due to excessive use of opium and heroin.³⁸³ Esmā’ili

³⁸³ Several great professional *tombak* players of the recent past were making extensive use of alcohol and drugs, such as heroin and opium. The excessive consumption of such substances has often affected their performance, and even cost the most extensive users their lives. However, it is not only *tombak* players who use opium and heroin, but also musicians playing other instruments. However, opium addiction is not related necessary to the profession of the musician. Opium consuming should be seen in its particular historical and cultural context. It has been used historically as medicine to relieve pain and considered to contribute in such cases to a state of well being. The usage of opium in controllable dosage by elderly people was socially tolerable, but the excessive consuming of opium and its consumption from a young age is socially condemned. On the relationship between music making and intoxication in the Arab world see Racy (2003:47-51).

would gradually replace him and would give lessons in his place from 1964 at the Conservatory of National Music; in 1966 he became the head of Tehrāni's *tombak* ensemble, and from 1966 his collaboration with Pāyvar (with whom Tehrāni performed) became quite regular. He also performed well known pieces that made Tehrāni famous such as the "Fantasia for *Tombak* Ensemble and Orchestra", with Dehlavi as conductor. In 1999, he recorded all the piece's from Tehrāni's instruction book *Āmuzesh-e Tombak*, and planned to release audio-visual material for this work. Perhaps no other *tombak* student was faithful for such a long time to his teacher, and no other student "inherited" so much from his *ostād*.

And while Esmā'ili believes that the bond he had with his teacher cannot be re-enacted with the same qualities, he nevertheless tries to have a close connection with his students. He depicted the closeness of this relation as a bond between a husband and a wife, while some decades ago his teacher Tehrāni also depicted his relation with his student in kinship terms. Tehrāni said, "My students are my children" (Dehlavi 1971:29). Among the many students that Esmā'ili had, one relationship was particularly prolonged and had firm bonds. One could say that it was reflecting in a way his relationship with his teacher Tehrāni. Banāi became his "model" student and played with Esmā'ili's *tombak* group for many years. Banāi describes his closeness to his *ostād*:

I was always doing things for him.... For example I would buy him socks, I would buy him a belt, things that we do in Iran. When [people] come close to each other, they do such things. I would find some good tea and bring it to him; these are things particular to our culture. Maybe in Europe the student does something else for his teacher, but here no, it's these things [that we do]. For example, consider that, sometimes when he was worried [*delesh gerefte bud*], I was going to him and we were sitting and talking, or we were sitting together to play a bit. But alright, these things were helpful from the teaching point of view, I learned many things there (Interview, February 2003).

Banāi also spoke with great admiration about Esmā'ili's devotion to Tehrāni:

Āqā-ye Esmā'ili was by Hossein Tehrāni's side until the doors of the cemetery. Also once, when Āqā-ye Tehrāni was ill, he [Esmā'ili] gave to him about 800ml of his own blood, and then he became sick himself. No one else would do such a thing. He gave blood from his own vein to his teacher, only so that Tehrāni could stay in life 4 to 5 months longer (Interview, February 2003).

The bond between the student and the teacher seems to have changed since Tehrāni's time. Nowadays very few interrelations among musicians exhibit the

perennial character and closeness that Esmā'ili had with his teacher Tehrāni in the middle of the 20th century, and with his student Banāi after the Revolution. And while after the Revolution teaching became a secret and private affair, the factors of urbanization, remoteness and alienation in the capital city, the commodification of teaching, and the growing numbers of students per teacher constricted the intimate quality of the *ostād-shāgerd* bond.

However, students are still very fond of their teachers and feel great affection towards them. For instance, I have seen certain cases of students kissing the hands of Rajabi as a demonstration of respect and admiration; many students would regularly bring him sweets; some would help him or accompany him in his everyday activities. Some of these relationships are also reciprocal from the teacher's side. Rajabi, for example, distributes his poems, tapes and videos to his students; he acknowledges some of them in his books; he writes prologues when they publish books with exercises for *tombak*, and he performs with them in concerts, promoting their career opportunities. However, most of such relations among many other masters and students are short-lived. While some students might still visit from time to time their teachers, the strong, continual, reciprocal and long-lasting bond is rarely achieved. Today, most of the relationships of one master with his students are "formal": students come to his classes, have their lessons and leave as soon as the lesson finishes.

Many teachers, especially of the older generation, are somehow resistant to these changes. This mentality is prevailing among those teachers who believe that the role of an *ostād* is not only to train their students in music, but also to educate them in life, to mould their character (*akhlāq yād dādan*), an attitude that, musicians say, was widespread until the beginning of the 20th century. For example, Esmā'ili is dictating aphorisms to his students during his lessons, which they write in their notebooks. One of his students, 'Alirezā, told me that he teaches them the "ethics of life". Rajabi, on the other hand, also disseminates his credo to his students through writing and distributing his poems.

Very often some *ostāds* behave in a manner which shows their "interference" in the students' private and professional lives. For example, Banāi says that the teacher "can influence and should influence" his student in daily matters. He brought an example of one of his students who was always dressing very shabbily. After few lessons he reprimanded him and told him to go home and put on a nice and clean dress.

The boy's father called later and thanked him for making his son "look more like a human" (Interview, February 2003).

Other teachers react towards the professional choices of their students. I have heard many times among musicians that some *ostād* did not allow his students to perform with someone else. Occasionally, the reasons are due to a personal conflict, at other times, to protect the student from wrong choices, and sometimes to safeguard the music tradition, as in the following anecdote.

Talā'i only once objected to the choices of two of his students who were preparing to give a concert in Europe with a musician, who according to Talā'i was, of dubious quality and personality:

Talā'i: He was playing the *tār*... he was a charlatan. He was not playing music, he was showing off all the time...then...you know how it is abroad in particular...

Alexandra: Yes, few understand, one could play anything.

Talā'i: Exactly, and this person was only a show-off, a shrewd and loquacious person (Interview, July 2005).

He put an ultimatum to his students: "I told them, if you go and play with him, do not come any more to attend my classes" (Interview, July 2005). I was astonished with Talā'i's frankness and openness to me. I could not understand his position. He said:

Talā'i: It is a matter of principle.

Alexandra: Yes, but it is also a kind of dictatorship.³⁸⁴

Talā'i: No, I don't agree with you. You cannot say that a teacher is a dictator. He is teaching you something, he is instructing you. It is like for example when you exercise and [the trainer] is telling you do this movement...perhaps you will get tired, but you cannot say that he is a dictator.

Alexandra: But the student has the right to make mistakes. This is how it is in life, why not in music?

Talā'i: Well, yes he is making a mistake, but it is not a matter of making a mistake. It is a matter of... that you put a choice in front of someone. He cannot have it both ways. He cannot go this road and that road at the same time. "If you want to take that way, don't

³⁸⁴ I uttered this word in English, I could not find at that moment the equivalent Persian or more "polite" word. At the time when I articulated this word and now that I am transcribing on the page I feel at least uneasy. Thinking in retrospect perhaps "despotism" or "absolutism" would have sounded more appropriate. In any case, this dialogue shows well not only the limits of my comprehension, but also my cultural diversity.

come this way any longer!” Well, after all, we are dictators. [He laughs, I laugh uncomfortably].

Alexandra: I am sorry for my boldness. After all I am a foreigner.

Talā'i: We are also foreigners.

Alexandra: Well, today yes, you are. [the interview is taking place at the Eleytherios Venizelos airport in Athens]

Talā'i: No, [I mean] we are foreigners for you (Interview, July 2005).

While some teachers react to the individualisation of their close students, the latter also complain about the demanding and imposing stance of their *ostāds*. One *tombak* player who had many years of close connection with his *tombak* teacher withdrew from this relationship because he felt he could not meet anymore his *ostād* demands, for example, to visit him on a daily basis. Another *tombak* player who worshiped his teacher said that, “Up to the time that I listened to whatever he said our relationship was always good.” However, while these two students have gained their independence from their *ostāds*, today they are also teachers and they exercise their new role in similar manner: they try to reenact, from the stand of the *ostād* now, the authority that their teachers had over them.

It is interesting to juxtapose the Indian master-disciple relationship among *tabla* players with that of the *tombak* players in Iran. First, the *ustād-shāgird* relationship in India is characterized by dedication, commitment and loyalty, qualities that in the Iranian case seem to be disappearing. Second, in the Indian case, as also in the Iranian, the *ostād-shāgerd* bond is often depicted in kinship terms (see Kippen 1988:108,114). In Iran this model appears today to be losing its force, although sentiments of affection are still evident. Third, “character-training” of the disciple by his teacher is found both in India and Iran, however in Iran this practice also appears to be waning (on “character-training” see Kippen 1988:131-135). Fourth, in India the *ustād-shāgird* bond becomes consolidated with a rite of passage ceremony known as *gandā bandham*. After this initiation ceremony the commitment and the intimacy between the two parties, and especially that of the *ustād*, become more prominent. This ceremony indicates the exclusiveness of the *ustād-shāgird* relationship: the loyalty of the student towards his music master and the primary role the *ostād* has in the music career of his student (Kippen 1988:115, 135-136).³⁸⁵

³⁸⁵ Kippen mentions that this ceremony is no longer performed among many *ustāds*, but he does not explain how its absence influences the *ustād-shāgird* relationship (ibid. 113). See also Baily (1988b:121-

The absence of similar ceremonies in Iran further suggests that such principles of exclusive commitment and loyalty of both parties are scant. It has been shown that students of Iranian music have been always studying with a number of teachers to deepen their musical knowledge (see Nooshin 1996a:125-128). In addition, promoting the music career of their students is not the primary endeavour of the contemporary *tombak* teachers, a situation that has been obviously affected by the restricted opportunities that musicians have in practicing their profession after the Islamic Revolution.

Amir Nāser Eftetāh

Amir Nāser Eftetāh (1935-1987) is a *tombak* player who has not received in written sources the attention he merits, and who should be mentioned for his particular importance as a *tombak* teacher. He is also a very important figure as a musician and his work became disseminated to generations of *tombak* players through his students (see figure 4, page 161). Among the most prominent, who continued their professional career as *tombak* players, are Farahmand, A'yān, my teacher Rajabi, and the two *tombak* makers Helmi and Hemmati. Although he was among the first *tombak* players, if not the first one, to teach the *tombak* with notation, his notation was published only recently, in 2001. Pedrām Khāvarzamini and Hamid Qanbari, both students of Rajabi, were for years in pursuit to find the notations of Eftetāh, which they discovered and gradually gathered from some of his former students, and finally published them, with the help of Helmi. However, the “mentality” of Eftetāh’s exercises for *tombak*, was disseminated by large through Rajabi who was very much affected by him, an influence that is apparent in his exercises for *tombak*, especially the first volume *Āmuzesh-e Tonbak. Ketāb-e Aval. Dorehā-ye Ebtedāyi va Motevassete* [Tonbak Training. Book One. Course for Beginners and Intermediates], published in 1981.

Eftetāh could be also considered a transitional figure as a *tombak* teacher for implementing new teaching methods. He approached each student as an individual and autonomous personality, and would write for every student, according to his potential, distinct exercises during each lesson. He was also very fond of punctuality, and insisted

123) who describes this ceremony, called *gorabandi*, among *tabla* players in Herat and presents one case where such commitment was eventually revoked.

that the students should arrive on time for their classes. Although he is rarely depicted as authoritarian figure, he was very demanding from his students in terms of their practice: if they had not prepared well for the lesson, he would tell them to stay and rehearse in the music school and then he would give them a lesson (Akbari 2001).

Picture 17: Amir Nāser Eftetāh. Photograph provided by Fereydun Helmi.



Banāi recalls how much he wanted to study the *tombak* with Esmā'ili whom he liked enormously, but who did not give *tombak* lesson for a few years after the Revolution. Banāi had no other choice and he went to study with several *tombak* teachers, among who was also Eftetāh, with whom he studied for three months. About Eftetāh, Banāi says:

He was a very good [teacher], but he told me: “Since you like Esmā'ili so much, go to him and beg him so much, plead him so much until he agrees, because next to me you won't become anything, believe me.”

Alexandra: He was a great teacher!

Banāi: Yes, he was a great teacher, and this was the lesson he gave me. When he spoke to me like that, I went to Esmā'ili and stormed him. I went and spoke to him so much, so much, that after three and a half years he finally accepted [to teach me the *tombak*] (Interview, February 2003).

Hemmati, the distinguished *tombak* maker, remembers Eftetāh's guidance for him becoming a *tombak* maker:

After having lessons with him for some time, I made for him one or two miniature *tombaks*. When he looked upon the small instruments he liked them very much and he said: “Whose work is this?” I replied: “It is my own work”, he said: “From this day I want you to become

an instrument maker, that is, not to become a player.” I said “Why?” He said: “The psychological purpose is to encourage you to become a good instrument maker.”

Well, when I made my first instrument it broke down, I couldn't present a good instrument to Āqā-ye Eftetāh, but the second instrument I took to him and, although it had some drawbacks, Āqā-ye Eftetāh appraised my work and he wanted me to continue (Interview, March 2003).

Eftetāh was also an important figure in raising the teaching of *tombak* to an institutional level. He taught at several music schools during his teaching career, was disinclined to give private lessons and insisted seriously upon young students attending *tombak* lessons in music schools, that is, in a more formal and communal environment. Mortezā A'yān, a child of a wealthy family, remembered how his father had lengthy arguments for a long time with the reluctant *tombak* teacher Eftetāh in order to persuade him to visit their house and give private *tombak* lesson to A'yān, because as a child of ten years old he could not visit Eftetāh's music school that was far away. A'yān said, “My father was so persisting that he really couldn't refuse any more.” After a few years of having lessons with Eftetāh, A'yān remembers his teacher telling him:

A'yān: He [Eftetāh] said: “Mortezā” -that is how he called me, by my first name, because I was young- “Mortezā I will not be coming here any more, you [should] come to my class every 15 days, every 10 days, once a week, as often as you can come.” Āqā-ye Eftetāh at that time had his classes in Amiri-ye, he said: “Come to the class to play the instrument with the other kids.” I said alright, then I asked “Why won't you come here anymore?” and he said “Well, now you should come there, to play the instrument with the other kids , to acquire a relationship with the other kids, it will be much better for you to get this experience.” I think I was the only student to take lessons at home from Eftetāh, he didn't go to others to give lessons (Interview, October 2002).

Rajabi was also Eftetāh's student and he also regularly recalls him as a great teacher. He has Eftetāh's picture in his classroom, above his head and whenever he speaks about his teacher it is always with great appreciation and respect. His first encounter with Eftetāh was in 1963, when Rajabi was 24 years old. Rajabi described during an interview this experience as rather tumultuous:

My behaviour was very impolite, although it was not that I was really a rude person.... money was scarce at the time.... nobody knew me and I would say for example, "If Rezāzāde³⁸⁶ can lift 300kg, I can lift 500kg." So I would praise myself and sometimes it was impolite to do so. So I went to Eftetāh's classes very impolitely.

He said: "Āqā, what can you play?" I said: "Look at what I can play." [he imitates himself on the *tombak* as he played in front of Eftetāh 30 years ago, pompously and sturdily]. It was correct in what I said, but I said it impolitely. At that moment he could have said: "Get out of the classroom," but he went red and he didn't say anything. I went outside and I said to myself: "What have I done, what I said was correct, but it was very rude." His magnificence, Khānum-e³⁸⁷ Alexandra, was greater even than that of Hossein Tehrāni, much greater. He was performing at the *Golhā* Radio programme, which all Iran listened to, nobody had a television to see Hossein Tehrāni ...A few days later I went again to his classes and I was on the balcony watching him coming by foot. He saw me and he probably thought: "Ah, what a misfortune, this rude fellow came back to bite me."

He then came upstairs and I went down on my knees (*zamu zadan*) in front of him.³⁸⁸ Usually, it was servants that would kneel that way. He raised me and wanted to go on his way. Then I stood in front of him and I said: "My words were correct, but I said them impolitely." He raised me up and we became friends. Everything he knew he taught me in three months. He would write, I would play, he would write, I would play...My hands were wild, I didn't know any notation, whenever I played with an orchestra I always wanted to display myself.

He gave me the door keys to my hands. Well, before,, I did have the garden, there were flowers everywhere, but I didn't know how to get to the garden, to my own garden [here he pouted at his chest, as to demonstrate the feeling that the garden was there]. I had flowers in my own garden, I had fruit, but I didn't have the keys to go into the garden, I would go always with the use of force [here he clenched his fist in an angry gesture to illustrate this]. He gave me the keys to enter my own garden, do you get it? That was a teacher! (Interview, October 2002).

Female *Tombak* Players

Alexandra: Why do you think that a woman cannot play the *tombak* equally as well as a man?

Silence

Hamid: [He laughs awkwardly]. How do you know that I think like that?

Alexandra: [I laugh too]. Why do you laugh? ...Well, me too, I think a little bit like that.

³⁸⁶ Hossein Rezāzāde, contemporary weightlifter; two time Olympic gold medallist and three time world champion. His world record was 472.5 kg (1,042 pounds).

³⁸⁷ *Khānum* is "Miss" or "Mrs".

³⁸⁸ Rajabi at this point is recreating the whole scene and is very moving and expressive. He kneels and has his hands in front of him with the palm of the hand watching up.

Hamid: Well, because until today I haven't seen a woman playing well the *tombak*, but I have seen a woman who plays well on the *tār*. I saw a girl who played well [on the *tār*]. First I thought she didn't play that well, but then I listened to her and she plays approximately equally as well as a man (Interview, May 2005).

Throughout this study I have made very few references to female *tombak* players and their specific variations as professional musicians, and whenever I have used the voice of Torshizi to represent her experience as *tombak* player I did not really adopt a feminist or gender-oriented stance.

From the very beginning of my research, my first confrontations in Iran were with male professional *tombak* players, and also later during the research period I would associate more with male *tombak* players and musicians rather than females. I would rarely encounter female professional *tombak* players in the field. Most of the time, I really had to make an effort to find a professional female *tombak* player. This was partly a personal choice, it was partly due to the way my field research evolved, and partly due to the situation of music making in Iran, and particularly of *tombak* playing, which is male-dominated activity.

In this section I will describe my few encounters with female *tombak* players in Iran, refer to the socio-cultural factors that affect women's participation in musical and public life, discuss the consequences of gender segregation in music, present the male and female musicians' discourses that interpret female *tombak* playing in contemporary Iran, and lastly show the transitional state that female singers and female-only groups are experiencing over the last twenty five years.

From the very beginning, when I was looking for a *tombak* teacher before going to Iran - and I wanted to study with one of the best - I would be always recommended male *tombak* players, both by male and female Iranian *tombak* players and musicians.³⁸⁹ The first *tombak* teacher I met was Rajabi. Then, from Rajabi's classes I met again a male *tombak* player, Dāriush Zarbofiān, who introduced me to Pedrām and his all male *tombak* group. From Pedrām I met Kamrān Montāzeri and his male musicians' friends, and Kamrān assisted me to approach several eminent *tombak* players, all of them male. Thus my first encounters in the field were with male *tombak* players and this worked as a knock-on effect with the result that I met mostly male *tombak* players and musicians.

Then, although I had visited several concerts and private rehearsals of women-only groups, I was not interested much in this area of research. I was more interested in

³⁸⁹ For example, Torshizi, my *tombak* teacher in London, recommended a few male *tombak* players in Tehrān when I first planned to conduct my MMus research in Iran.

the creative aspect of *tombak* playing and never heard the name of a female musician mentioned in this context. Most, if not all, renowned *tombak* players are male, and *tombak* creativity, dissemination and performance in Iran is a principally male-dominated field. Women *tombak* players are also to a great extent absent from the influential recordings of Iranian music, which are available on the market today. Also, in the first years after the Revolution there were very few professional *tombak* players in Tehrān performing or teaching the instrument. Torshizi, a professional female *tombak* player, recalls that when she first came to Tehrān and started teaching the *tombak* in 1991, there were only three female *tombak* players teaching this instrument. And according to her, at that time they were not very proficient players. Women were also largely absent from publishing instruction manuals for *tombak*. I have seen only one such manual presented by a woman, which also constitutes the first one in its kind: it is intended for young children.³⁹⁰ Its writer, Hakimālahi (2002), who is not herself a *tombak* player, collaborated with the *tombak* player Zageri, who wrote the notations.³⁹¹ She wrote children's poems upon his notation, elaborated it further, and simplified it according to the needs of the poetry and according to her own judgement on how easy it was for children to memorize the rhythm and the poetry.

Most of the female *tombak* players that I met during my field research were young, studying at the university, at the same time still studying *tombak* with a teacher, and trying to promote their *tombak* playing as a more systematic activity. Generally, most of the female students that I would meet during various visits to music schools were teenagers, making their first steps in learning the *tombak*. The majority of Rajabi's students were male, and most male *tombak* teachers that I visited had very few female students. On the contrary, I found that women *tombak* teachers have more female than male students.

After the Revolution, official courses offered at the Conservatoire of Music and at the Centre for the Preservation and Propagation of Iranian Music, but also lessons conducted in private music schools that had to obtain official permission of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, segregated male and female students, and female students had to be taught by a woman (Torshizi 2003:14, 15). Although this was enforced only for a period of about eight years (until 1997) it had, to a degree, indirect long-term implications for female students. Many are still sent to female teachers for

³⁹⁰ *Lotf-e Tombak. Āmuzesh-e Ritm be Kudakān be komak-e She'r* [The Grace Of Tombak. Teaching Rhythm to Infants with the help of Poetry], by Hakimālahi (2002).

³⁹¹ Interestingly, while the name of the illustrator is mentioned in the front page, Zageri's name is not recorded as a co-writer, or composer, but his contribution is recognized only in the introductory notes.

their music lessons, even to music classes that are preformed in private and are free from regulations of sex segregation. One might wish to argue that this is in part an imprint of the policy of gender segregation that was introduced after the Revolution in the public sphere (schools, universities,³⁹² public transport, sport grounds, beaches). This policy maintained that female students and children should be taught by female teachers (Khiabany and Sreberny 2004:24). Gender segregation in Iran is a complex issue, with deep historical, political and socio-cultural roots manifest in the private and public spheres - at home, in the labour market, in the press, in the cinema and television - and cannot be separated from the discourses about the role and rights of women in Iran.³⁹³ It should be stated though, that gender segregation in Iran has many faces, consequently it should not be oversimplified and interpreted in a monolithic way, and that some women appreciate the fact that there are all-female spaces (Nooshin, personal communication, January 2007).

Nevertheless, with regards to music, it can be argued that this segregation had to a degree a positive effect on families with strong religious background wishing to send their children to learn music. Torshizi says that during the period 1990-1997, when she was teaching in Tehrān, she had many female students from religious families, because the parents would trust her for being both female and a “serious” (*jedi*) musician (Interview, February 2005). While the “homosocial female-bounded world”, to use Najmabadi’s (1993:489) expression, claims a socio-cultural space that does not threaten the Islamic moral values of decency and propriety appropriate to female integrity, this segregation hampers female artists from fully developing their musical potential, as they are deprived from interacting with male *tombak* players who are generally more competent than women. In other words, sexual segregation in music lessons perpetuates a qualitative distinction against women in *tombak* playing, and music making in general. Today, female *tombak* players who wish to achieve a competent level in performing the *tombak* inevitably study this instrument with male musicians at some point during their career. Before and after the Revolution, female *tombak* players and professional female

³⁹² The separation of women and male in the universities which lasted only for a short time appears to be self-imposed by the university authorities, and not a rule of law.

³⁹³ Many writers have referred to this multilayered issue of gender segregation in Iran, positioning it in a historical continuum from the late 19th century to the present date. Najmabadi (1993) investigates the female voice entering into the male public space in a body of writings (poetry, travelogue, novels) from the late 19th and the beginning of 20th century. Milani (2001) analyses both the segregation of the sexes in the mid-19th century, and desegregation in the 1940s and 1950s, and its impact on gender relations and woman’s access to the public domain. Moghadam (1994) discusses the occupational segregation and other forms of discrimination against women in the labour market in Iran during 1960-1990. Naficy refers to the sex segregation in post-Revolutionary Iranian cinema (1994). Khiabany and Sreberny (2004) explore the women’s press from the Constitutional Revolution (1906-1910) until the present, and women’s role in public life under the Islamic Republic.

musicians, who have studied the *tombak* as a second instrument, have studied it with male musicians.³⁹⁴

During my field research in Iran I met only one female *tombak* player, called Matin Akram, who fully depended upon teaching for her living, and for whom *tombak* playing constituted her only professional vocation. Matin Akram is a middle-aged woman who is very active as a musician. She is performing in women-only groups, working in three different private music schools, and most of her students are female teenagers. She admits that female *tombak* players are significantly fewer than male for the following reasons. Women are worried that their fingers are going to be deformed from playing the *tombak*. This sounded somewhat strange to my ears. From my personal experience I have noticed that, by playing regularly on the *tombak*, the shape of my fingers would become well defined and better-looking, because playing on the *tombak* keeps all the finger muscles strong and toned up, without the fingers losing their feminine look or gentleness. Conversely, when I stop playing the *tombak* for a few weeks I discern that my fingers lose their firmness, and become more fleshy, plump, and rotund. Now that I think of her remark again, I realize that the face and hands (from the wrist down) are the only parts of the female body that are on common view in Iran. And these parts of the female body are treated with much care and finesse in order to keep them attractive.³⁹⁵ However, when such notions are being circulated, that is, that playing the *tombak* disfigures the fingers, this rather denotes that there is a lack of general information, a misinterpretation and a prejudice against female *tombak* playing.

Discourses based on the natural differences between men and women are often evoked by male musicians. I heard many times male musicians and *tombak* players saying that “*tombak* is a man’s instrument” (*tombak sāz-e mardun-ast*) and that playing the *tombak* needs physical strength and stamina. For many musicians it appears that in the range of Iranian instruments some are regarded more suitable for female players, while others to male ones.³⁹⁶ Torshizi, mentioned that, when she wanted to become a *tombak* player, she would hear many times people saying to her:

³⁹⁴ For example, Simin Āqārezi (Manuchehri) studied the *tombak* with Tehrāni; Malihe Sa’idi and Mrs. Rahbari studied with Esmā’ili and performed in his *tombak* group before the Revolution; Akram has studied the *tombak* with Farahmand, and Torshizi studied the *tombak* with Rajabi, Ganjei, and Mohebbi.

³⁹⁵ For example, the rate of plastic nose surgery in Iran has been among the highest in the world. See Tam (2005) and Tait (2005).

³⁹⁶ The *daf*, for example, is strongly associated with women. Generally, the link between frame drums and women has a long history in the Middle East, the Arab World and Islamic-influenced regions, such as North Africa and the Balkans. See Doubleday’s article on frame drums in the Middle East (1999).

People would say: "*Tombak* is not appropriate for a lady, *tombak* is a man's instrument, it is suitable for a man's hands. A lady should better not play this instrument and she cannot play it, the hands of a lady are not apposite." Even my sister's husband who was a musician would say: "You don't need to become a *tombak* player. Learn to play the *tombak* so that later you can play the *setār* which is a female's instrument." No one believed that I would become a *tombak* player and that I would continue working professionally on this instrument (Interview, February 2005).

Biological differences between men and women are not only evoked in relation to music, but also as Moghadam asserts form the basis for legal discrimination against women that is evoked by the Islamic regime (1994:92, 93). And according to Najmabadi, it seems that "the new regime wanted women pushed back to the domestic sphere" (1991:69). Again, such discrimination against women derives from the notion of socially appropriate roles and the primary role of woman as a wife and a mother.

This issue was one of the reasons that Akram mentioned to explain the small number of female *tombak* players, because of women's' role in contemporary Tehrān: "Although women have started working, their greater responsibility is to be mothers and housewives. So even if they start playing the *tombak* most of them drop it as soon as they get married." (Interview, January 2003). She continued saying that, although she was married and she had two children she was able to continue because her husband gave her a lot of support: "Instead of asking me like other husbands what is for dinner, he was asking me if I had practiced." (Interview, January 2003). Indeed, even if well educated and professional women combine a career with marriage, motherhood and household responsibilities, for many families the traditional roles are deemed more important. Under this light, in many cases when music making is not their primary vocation, further strenuous efforts are made so that they can continue their practice on a proficient level or achieve the degree of musical mastery of their male counterparts.

Although in post-Revolutionary Iran an increasing number of women pursue careers as musicians, many are discouraged by their families and prescriptive government policies to follow this profession as a main occupation. While there are many girls who start learning to play an instrument, a very small proportion is aiming to study it to a competent level, and for most, learning the *tombak* is a passing hobby, lasting until they enter university or get married. The negative attitude towards female

musicians is pertinent to the generally ambiguous status of music in Iran, and is integrally tied with the “woman question” from the late 19th century.³⁹⁷

Since 1979 strict music censorship has been applied to women singing in front of a male audience. While female solo singing in front of mixed audience is still forbidden, female chorus singing for mixed audience has started by ‘Alizāde in 1997 and soon many other ensembles performed in public with a women’s chorus singing (Tuka 2001:373). Before that year, there was a period of so called “underground activities” (*fa’āliyat-e zirzamini*), in which female singers would secretly organize and perform concerts in private locations (ibid. 372). In 1989 and 1990, as Torshizi asserts, some female singers, among whom are Hengāme Akhavān, Parisā, Pari Maleki and Simā Binā, started organizing private concerts, for female-only audiences and musicians, without having obtained any official permission from the authorities (Torshizi 2003:16). As such music ensembles were female-only, these underground activities are also relevant to female *tombak* players as their members. Torshizi recounts her own experience in participating in such “underground activities” as a female *tombak* player. She describes in her MMus dissertation *Women and Music in Iran since the Islamic Revolution* that in one such concert the Revolutionary guards arrested the singer of the group, Akhavān, a very well-known singer. On the day of the concert the Revolutionary guards arrived at the private venue where the concert was supposed to take place, and announced that the concert was illegal and unauthorized and ordered the participants to leave the premises (2003:17). After this incident, as Torshizi says, other female ensembles who aimed at organising such concerts, decided to cancel them. Torshizi further explains that after this incident female singers tried to get official permission from the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance (MCIG) to perform concerts in private. However, the authorization process from the MCIG often impeded the performances of female ensembles. According to Torshizi:

After much discussion with Morād Khāni³⁹⁸ and others, Hengāme was able to obtain verbal permission - not written authorisation, which would have been preferable.

³⁹⁷ The question of women in Iran is related to gender-relations and the position of women, women’s rights, their role and responsibilities (in education, employment, mobility) in public and domestic life. On a more detailed analysis of the “woman question” in modern Iran, from late 19th century to the present day see Najmabadi (1991). See Najmabadi (1998) who discusses the controversies surrounding women’s role and status both during the Pahlavi regime and the post Revolutionary period. Also see in this section footnote number 393. See Moghadam (2003:79-112) who discusses how gender relations and the question of women were among the central components of the political and ideological discourse of the Islamic Republic of Iran. DeBano (2005) and Youssefzadeh (2004) present in more detail the position of female musicians and vocalist in contemporary Iran. See also Doubleday (1990, 1993) for professional female musicians in Afghanistan.

Very strict rules applied. The venue could not be a formal concert hall; it still had to be a private space, vetted by the authorities to make sure that no sound would carry outside. Poems, lyrics and pieces of music to be performed had to be scrutinised prior to the performance. Music would be pre-recorded on cassettes, but without the female singing voice because it would be vetted by men. No permission was granted to advertise the concert in public, or to use photography, video recording and sound recording during the concert. The audiences had to be female only. The sound check could be done by a man but he had to leave the building before the concert began. During the sound check all musicians played their instruments but the singer had to speak instead of singing, so that the male engineer would not be able to hear the sound of a woman singing. Furthermore, female revolutionary guards would be sent from Ershād³⁹⁹ to control the situation inside the venue building while male guards would control outside the building (Torshizi 2003:17, 18).

Torshizi also describes another tribulation that Akhavān and her group experienced during a concert for an all-female audience, taking place in 1998, this time in a prestigious concert hall and with an official authorization from the MCIG. Suddenly just before the concert, the electricity went off. According to Torshizi “It was a clear case of sabotage because the performers were women” (ibid. 22). In present-day Iran, as my friends from the field assert, there is again an underground activity with mixed gender groups and female solo singing in front of male audiences.⁴⁰⁰

There have been, therefore, the following stages in the performance opportunities of women-only ensembles: from being absent from public life, to secretly organized private concerts, then to private concerts with oral permission from the MCIG, then again to women-only authorized and state sponsored concerts, until today, secretly performed concerts embracing solo singing by mixed music groups for mixed gender audiences.⁴⁰¹ These transitions mark an inherently liminal time/place/space left for women ensembles in Iran after the Revolution, as the legitimacy of these ensembles is ambiguous and often indeterminate, as well as being in a *prolonged* impermanent state. In other words, women-only ensembles in post-Revolutionary Iran, to use Turner’s phrase, are “betwixt and between”, “neither here nor there” (Turner 1969:95). In this liminal phase, female musicians, and especially female singers, move between blurred boundaries between what is officially allowed and how that is put to actual practice, in ways that often transgress the former.

³⁹⁸ Musical Director of the MCIG. Normally spelled and transliterated as Morādkhāni.

³⁹⁹ The MCIG.

⁴⁰⁰ This information was conveyed to me in early 2005, before Ahmadinezhad’s presidency.

⁴⁰¹ Clandestine rehearsals and private performance are not pertinent only to female ensembles, but also to pop and rock ensembles. See Nooshin (2005b).

Women's standing and participation in Iranian music is a continuous and dynamic process, as discussed by DeBano in relation to the social dynamics of the women's state-endorsed music festivals in contemporary Iran (2005). These women-only music festivals, functioning under a protocol of "respectable" and "national" events, give a "stamp of propriety" and ensure a professional etiquette, thus improving gradually the status of female musicians, including *tombak* players. Although this situation is a recent phenomenon, a few further considerations can be suggested.⁴⁰²

First, I would like to underline DeBano's observation that these festivals institute strict gender segregation, both for artists and for audiences. Female musicians in this context – especially those who never or seldom perform in mixed gender ensembles - are deprived of further developing their musical potential by collaborating with male musicians - who are held to be among the most musically competent - in two important aspects of music making, music rehearsals that target staged performances and public concerts. More importantly, although DeBano remarks that these festivals "feature elite artists" (2005:461), female participation in women-only festivals, and here I refer in particular to female *tombak* players, does neither validate, nor grant, nor ensure, nor endorse high-ranking music proficiency: female *tombak* players are still regarded by their male counterpart colleagues as "average performers" (*navāzandegān-e ma'muli*).

I will end this section on a positive tone and an aspiration regarding female *tombak* players. In 2002 Sept 6-13 (1381 *Mehr* 15-22) the Fourth Youth Music Festival took place in Tehran. This festival commenced in 1999, as part of the Fajr Music Festival. The Fourth Youth Music Festival was organized and sponsored by the Music Centre of the Ministry of Culture, *Khāne-ye Honarmandān-e Irān* (House of Iranian Artists) and *Anjoman-e Musiqi-ye Irān* (Society of Iranian Music). This festival assumed the form of a competition and a specialized jury assessed the participants. Among the jury in 2002 were the *tombak* players Esmā'ili and Banāi. The participants, boys and girls, aged between 4 and 18, were competing either on an Iranian instrument, or a regional instrument, or a western instrument. The competitors in *tombak* were participating in the section of Iranian instrument, and among them were 51 boys and 21 girls, coming from different cities of Iran, such as Esfahān, Shirāz, Qom, Mashhad, Karaj and Dehshāhr. The winner of the festival in 2002 was a young girl from Karaj.

⁴⁰² It should be noted here that state women music festival is a relatively recent phenomenon. DeBano mentions that the Fajr Festival begun featuring women's section in 1998 (the festival itself began in 1986) (2005:441, ft.2, 3). The Yasmine festival (*Gol-e Yas*) was commenced in 1998 (Tuka 2001:372).

Hopefully in the future, female musicians will rise and female, along with male, talents will emerge and promote further the art of *tombak* playing in Iran and the world.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, fragmented into five separate but interrelated sections, I referred mainly to the social relations among musicians, which are largely asymmetrical, especially when *tombak* players are concerned. Essentially I tried to illustrate through ethnographic examples the social status of the *tombak* player through the relationships of friendship and competition he builds with other musicians, through the quotidian and loyal relationships he builds with his students and teachers, in a musical and cultural milieu that appears to undergo processes of individualisation.

I argued that an absence of professional socialization among female and male musicians may hamper the development of the musical skills of female performers, as the art, knowledge and dexterity of *tombak* playing is by and large in the hands of male musicians. I have showed that *tombak* is still considered a male instrument, that professional *tombak* playing is pursued primarily by men, and that in terms of competence female *tombak* players have yet to prove that they can challenge men musically, a fact that is especially prominent in the domain of the record industry where very few female *tombak* players have partaken. This situation appears to be changing as more and more women are becoming professional musicians, participating full-time in music making, and particularly with the growing tendency in Iran to engage in music – through formal education or private lessons, participation in competitions, and school performances - from an early age.

I have also discussed the changing nature of the apprentice-master relationship. Today, two opposite tendencies with regards to the apprentice-master relationship are prominent in Iran. On the one hand, private lessons, still a very important institution in music education, have become quite formal, affecting the close and intimate bonds among the *shāgerd-ostād*. On the other hand, master musicians are at the same time prone to guide their students personally and professionally, which often implies their aspiration to exercise the authoritative standing of an *ostād*, but, at the same time, it is an indication of their will to pass down what they believe is the ethos of their music tradition.

The relationship between *tombak* players and other musicians is particularly important for the quality of the final outcome, that is, the music itself. It has been argued that the *tombak* player's experience of low status and "inferiority complex" in relation to other musicians can be overridden when relationships of friendship and affection occur among musicians. Such relations not only promote a more egalitarian participation in music making which translates into a coherent music sound, but, in addition, are considered by most musicians to be a prerequisite for a flourishing musical creativity.

Problematic relationships among Iranian musicians and especially *tombak* players were shown to relate to the ambiguous status of the Iranian musician that has been elucidated in socio-historical terms throughout this ethnography. I have presented many ethnographic examples of feelings of rivalry and animosity that characterise this music milieu and are today sustained by the market rules of producing "the best" musicians and by the favouritism that many cultural institutions in Iran employ. There are numerous ethnographic examples indicating that *tombak* players have to endure this difficult situation: there is an atmosphere of mistrust and suspicion which hampers their well-being, their socialization, and further perpetuates unhealthy (*nasālem*) criticism and gossip.

In such a socio-cultural atmosphere of asymmetrical music relationships that accentuate even more the ambiguous status of Iranian musicians, women-only ensembles were shown to occupy an indeterminate time/place/space in post-Revolutionary Iran.

Lastly, Rajabi was portrayed to attain a well-built individuality based on both his high musical status and his idiosyncratic, often exaggerated, behaviour. I have showed that the liminal space that Rajabi occupies is inherently paradoxical. On the one hand, he takes advantage of his liminality, which functions as a safety valve for him to express his subversive ideas. On the other hand, this liminality often hinders his collaborations with other musicians.

Chapter seven: Contemporary *Tombak* Playing

Introduction

This chapter is an attempt to compliment and bind together all the issues discussed in this study. In the beginning I explore the development of the three-line and one-line notation for the *tombak* (both in use at the present time) by investigating the first printed manuals. In these manuals we witness the first written compositions for solo *tombak* and group *tombak*, as well as short rhythmic exercises, which prevail today in most publications. I also explain the lack of standardization in both one-line and three-line stave with regards to terminology and symbol application, by comparing various current teaching manuals.

Then, drawing on my experience in taking lessons with Rajabi and Pedrām, I deliberate on the role of notation in current teaching practices, as well as the absence of verbalized and systematic teaching methods in improvisation and composition. Through my lessons with Rajabi I came to realize the significance of a precise and correct playing technique; the aesthetics of the movement itself; and the relation of technique to sound quality. In the same section, I also delve into aspects of the physiology of playing, while at the same time I describe the practice of learning to perform through imitating his physical movements. I also consider solitary learning practices of *tombak* players and describe, in particular, how they develop their motor skills. In addition, I discuss the question of boundaries between practice, improvisation and composition in relation to the spatio-motor mode of music thought, which can be used to show how these three categories may overlap. The development of ornamentation in *tombak* playing is also accounted for, as it represents fragments of the complexity and refinement of the playing techniques, and the sound quality attained by the contemporary performers.

In continuation I describe the flourishing of the repertoire in solo, duet and group *tombak*, and the forms and aesthetics of *tombak* solo and accompaniment. In this section I describe Rajabi's repertoire and aesthetic considerations, with which I am well acquainted, while at the same time I refer to the music practices of other *tombak* players. Finally, I provide audio and video examples that convey via audio-visual representation the particularities of *tombak* playing. In addition to this, I include notated

examples which are accompanied by a brief explanation of the physiology of playing and the terminology.⁴⁰³

The Spread of Notation

Tehrāni, during a radio program *Golchin-e Hafte* [Anthology of the Week] describes his lessons on the *tombak* that began in 1928 with Esmā'ilzāde, who was a great performer in the *kamānche*, but who also knew how to perform on the *tombak*:

I went to him, then there, he would say: Whatever *chahārmezrāb* and *reng* we have you should learn this. In your mind say: *balevo balevo bale dige, balevo balevo bale dige* [yes and yes and yes again, yes and yes and yes again].

Then Tehrāni demonstrated this by playing on his *tombak* and singing at the same time:

ba le vo ba le vo ba le di ge

Example 1. Tehrāni singing mnemonic syllables and playing on the *tombak*.⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰³ All signs, that are used in one-line stave notation - which is the notation I was taught by Rajabi - and terms are explained the first time they appear in the text.

⁴⁰⁴ In one line stave *tom*, performed by the lower hand, is usually symbolized with the sign ς above the note. *Tom* is performed with the fingers joined loosely and cupped in a semi-circle, and the wrist is twisted downwards to an angle of about 30 degrees. The movement is brought about by the wrist, while the rest of the hand is stable. Usually it is the middle part of the skin which is struck. *Tom* can be performed also on other parts of the skin and this depends on the techniques used before and after it. *Tom* can be performed as both a principal note and a note of ornamentation.

Bak or *hasht* ^ (lit. eight) of the lower hand is performed with the ring finger. The movement is again brought about by the wrist and the hand moves towards the drum in a rotating movement. The second joint of the ring finger strikes the rim of the "large mouth". *Bak* can be performed either as a principal note, or as an ornamentation note.

Pelang v̇ can be performed with the small, ring, middle or index finger of either hand. When the *pelang* sign takes a number, the number indicates the finger, with the small finger taking the number one, the ring finger the number 2, the middle finger the number 3, and the index finger number 4. If there is no number above the sign it is usually performed with the ring finger. *Pelang* is performed on the rim of the drum, and made by a flick of the thumb. *Pelang* can be performed either as a principal note, or as an ornamentation note. See visual representation in Appendix 3.

Tehrāni: “He said [referring to Esmā’ilzāde]: Every *chahārmezrāb* play it with this: this is *chahārmezrāb*.”⁴⁰⁵

[Tehrāni sings and plays]:

ba le vo ba le vo ba a le di ge ba le vo ba le vo ba a le di ge

Example 2: Tehrāni singing and playing *chahārmezrāb* with mnemonic syllables.

Tehrāni: “He would say: Play the *do zarbi* as *yek-sad-o-bist-o-panj*.”

[Tehrāni sings and plays]:

yek sad o bist o panj yek sad o bist o panj

Example 3: Tehrāni singing and playing *do zarbi* with mnemonic syllables.

Caron and Safvat (1966:133-139) also refer to the fact that the *zarbists* were labeling some rhythms *yek-sad-o-bist-o-chahār* (one hundred and twenty four) and *bale-o bale-o bale dige* (yes yes yes again), and they rightly observed that these syllables are not like the onomatopoeic syllables used in Indian music for studying rhythm, because they do not indicate specific strokes.⁴⁰⁶ They also stated that the rhythms that the *zarbists* were naming in this particular way were independent of poetry and derived from popular and “old” music (*ibid*). They did not mention however, that in the beginning of the 20th century, these syllabic formulae were used in teaching by distinguished musicians like Esmā’ilzāde, and that a more developed theoretical teaching approach did not exist at that time.

⁴⁰⁵ Today also some musicians refer to pieces with 6/8 and 6/16 time signatures as *chahārmezrāb*, but this is not accurate since many *chahārmezrābs* are also performed in simple duple and simple triple time.

⁴⁰⁶ These syllables actually reflect more the practices of West African drum ensembles that often use word phrases, sometimes meaningless, as mnemonic aids (Koetting 1970:119).

According to Esmā'ili, one of Tehrāni's students, the latter taught the *tombak* without notation, using instead mnemonics such as *yek-sad-o-bist-o-panj*.⁴⁰⁷ Esmā'ili also confirms that Tehrāni seldom used notation.⁴⁰⁸ On the other hand, there is one photograph in *Āmuzesh-e Tombak* (page 30) which depicts Tehrāni in front of a black board watching a young student writing notes with the caption "Hossein Tehrāni during his classes". In the same book another picture depicts Tehrāni's *tombak* group in a concert in 1958, where some of the *tombak* players have music stands in front of them, apparently the scores of Dehlavi's composition, rather than scores just for *tombak* (see below). In general, musical literacy was a sign of scholarship and modernity that bestowed prestige, an important factor for the *tombak* players in their struggle to acquire a more scientific ('*elmi*) and respectable status for the instrument.⁴⁰⁹

The first person to experiment with written notation for the *tombak* was Sabā. He used western notation and wrote some examples in one-line stave which were published in 1958 in *Majalle-ye Musiqi-ye Irān* [Iran Music Magazine] (Khāvarzamini and Qanbari 2001). According to Farhat, Sabā had many handwritten *tombak* notations, but did not manage to publish them (*ibid.*). Sabā had studied western notation with Vaziri, who employed it widely and made efforts to diffuse western staff notation from the 1920s, for prescriptive and descriptive use in Iranian music. Vaziri learned western music notation initially from military music teachers in Iran, but he also studied abroad. Western staff notation was introduced and disseminated in Iran by the Frenchman Alfred Lemaire who served as a military bandmaster for the Qajar rulers in the late 19th century. He transcribed many Iranian melodies and arranged some for piano.

The first *tombak* player known to have used western notation for the *tombak* was Eftetāh. He employed notation mainly for teaching purposes. He used to write *ad hoc* rhythmic exercises for each student in one-line stave. These exercises can be regarded as the first written compositions for *tombak* as they had the "mentality" of short compositions, rather than being simply technical exercises or short rhythmic phrases. These compositions are not generally played in public, but they are used by young *tombak* players in teaching and as a source for improvisation and composition.

Eftetāh's rhythmic compositions were published in 2001 with the co-operation of Khāvarzamini and Hamid Qanbari, who spent many years collecting Eftetāh's scores

⁴⁰⁷ Esmā'ili also mentioned that any number could be used in this phrase, such as *si-sad-o chelo-do* (three hundred forty two).

⁴⁰⁸ However, another student, Shemirāni asserts that, although Tehrāni knew notation he did not use it in teaching and he allowed his students to use it as a memory aid.

⁴⁰⁹ However, the introduction of notation was not without controversy, particularly in the teaching of the *radif* (see Nettl 1992: 150-151, Nooshin 1996:120-122).

from his students. Khāvarzamini and Qanbari suggest that Eftetāh's notation reflects substantially that of Sabā's examples, but is more complete in terms of the symbols used to denote each stroke (Khāvarzamini and Qanbari 2001). They do not clarify when Eftetāh began teaching with notation, but presumably it was not before Sabā's publication of 1958. It is clear though that in 1963, when Rajabi went to study the *tombak* with Eftetāh, the latter was already systematically using notation in teaching.

Three-line stave was first practiced by Esmā'ili, who taught it from the middle sixties at the *Honarestān-e Musiqi-ye Melli* [Conservatory of National Music]. Three-line stave was invented by a committee of western educated musicians (chapter 2) in the early 1960s when Dehlavi, the Dean of the Conservatory (1962-1971) advocated that Tehrāni's rhythms should be notated (Interview, January 2003). This project lasted nearly a decade: Tehrāni would play while others notated the rhythms. Contrary to Eftetāh's scores, Tehrāni's scores for solo *tombak* contained only short rhythmic exercises and the first compositions (transcribed by Dehlavi) for group *tombak*.

Tehrāni's book was arranged in two parts (Tehrāni et al. 1971). The Persian text starts at the "back" side of the book and is a basic introduction to music theory; it provides historical and organological information about the *tombak* and details of Tehrāni's biography. The scores themselves begin at the "front" of the book, according to Western principles.⁴¹⁰ The Persian text provides an introduction to the basics of rhythmic notation including time values, time signatures, rests, ties and dots, triplets and compound time, note and rest groupings in simple and compound time, duplets, irregular time divisions, tempo, dynamics, reiterations and repeats. While the music theory is western, most of the terminology is translated into equivalent Persian, with the exception of Italian phrases for tempo and dynamics.⁴¹¹ Most of the books published after this one follow the structure of Tehrāni's publication with regards to the introduction to the basic rhythmic theory.

The next instruction book for *tombak* was published more than a decade later, in 1985, by his student Esmā'ili. He used three-line stave and included mainly short rhythmic exercises (as most of his following books, with the exception of the

⁴¹⁰ This inconsistency in writing and *tombak* notation did not seem to cause problems such as the one that emerged when western notation was applied for instrument and singing. In this case, the score was written from left to right and the poems of the song from right to left according to the rules of the Arabo-Persian script (Tsuge 1974:47). However, in a recent teaching manual (see Hakimālahi 2002) with *tombak* exercises for children, which is the only instruction manual for *tombak* in which scores are accompanied by poems, the Persian text is written in Latin alphabet below each note (from left to right), while the adjoining page has the poem written in Persian script.

⁴¹¹ Parenthetically, while this manual introduced since the 1970s the Persian equivalent of "meter", which is *mizān*, musicians today use its colloquial equivalent which is *ritm* (lit. rhythm).

compositions for group *tombak*)(see an example of Esmā'ilis short rhythmic exercises, page 254). The third was published in 1990 by Akhavān, claiming to be a self-taught *tombak* player, using one-line stave.⁴¹² This book, as well as all his subsequent ones, included both short rhythmic exercises and “pre-composed” scores.⁴¹³

A few unpublished instruction books were also circulating, among which was A'yān's (still unpublished) and Rajabi's (written by 1981, but not published till 1999). Both were Eftetāh's students and used one-line stave. Other *tombak* teachers would either teach orally, or write *ad hoc* exercises for their students, or use the available publications, frequently Tehrāni's.

To summarise, the first teaching manuals, written both in one-line and three-line stave, presented short rhythmic exercises, *ad hoc* compositions and pre-composed pieces. Today, though, only certain teaching manuals present compositions for solo *tombak*, namely those by Eftetāh, Rajabi, A'yān, Hesābi, Akhavān and Kāmkār, while the bulk of the instruction manuals contain short rhythmic exercises.⁴¹⁴ To my knowledge, only Rajabi's *tombak* manuals contain the compositions that comprise his solo repertoire.⁴¹⁵

Thus today, the instruction books for *tombak* are written both in one-line and three-line stave. The apparent difference between them is that three-line notation indicates successively from the bottom to the top the three parts of the *tombak* skin, the centre, the middle, and the edge, making the music “look the way it sounds”. In one-line staff this iconic element of high and low pitch is lost, but some *tombak* players claim one-line stave is easier to read, while others prefer three-line stave. In one-line stave each note has a sign and often a number above it to denote a particular finger stroke, while three-line stave has fewer signs above each note to indicate the strokes.

⁴¹² When I first visited Rajabi he asked me to perform something on the *tombak*. I played for him a piece from Akhavān's book (1991) that Fariborz Kiāni in London taught me. Rajabi was very distressed and claimed that the scores that Akhavān published actually belonged to him.

⁴¹³ An interesting distinction begins to emerge here between the “raw” and *ad hoc* compositions of Eftetāh and the pre-composed pieces with a final form for solo *tombak* of Akhavān.

⁴¹⁴ The published manuals for duet and group *tombak* are discussed in a following section.


⁴¹⁵ By contrast, most of the compositions for the *tabla* were not notated in the past, but were retained in the memory of the performers and were passed down orally from generation to generation. In *tabla* playing, the use of written notation in teaching and for preservation purposes is a recent phenomenon, but memorizing still remains an important process in learning, improvising and composing (Kippen 1988:121-127). Memorization is also an important aspect in learning, improvising and composing within the *radif* (Nooshin, personal communication, January 2007).






Example 4: Example of one-line stave, from Rajabi (2000:51).⁴¹⁶






Example 5: Example of three-line stave, from Esmā'ili (2004:29).

⁴¹⁶ *Dast Bāz*  (lit. "open hand") is performed by the ring and middle finger of the upper hand that rests on the *tombak*. These two fingers, slightly bended and separated from the small and index finger, hit the drum skin near the rim in order to produce a deep-toned, soft sound. The movement is brought about by the wrist.

To'āmān  (lit. "both", "together") is a double stroke performed simultaneously by *bak* (ring finger, lower hand) and *pelang* (ring finger, upper hand). The sound is sharp and resonant.

Riz-e pelang, symbolized as  or , is performed by rapid alternations of the *bak* (lower hand) and *pelang* (second finger, upper hand). The first strike is the *bak* and the final strike is the *pelang*. The sound should be continuous and flowing.

The lower hand *eshāre*  is performed by a gentle consecutive strike of the five fingers (commencing with the small finger) in the middle of the drum skin, the movement is brought about by the wrist. *Eshāre* performed with the upper hand (which rests on the *tombak*), symbolized as , is also brought about by the wrist and the four fingers (from the small finger to the index finger) strike gently the skin in rapid succession. *Eshāre* can be performed either as a principal note, or as an ornamentation note. *Eshāre* is the name for both the one hand stroke and the two hands stroke. When the latter denotes a grace note it is

symbolized as .

Neither the one-line stave nor the three-line stave is standardised in terms of terminology, fingering and symbol application. The first inconsistency concerns the naming of two hands as “left” and “right”. It was first in Tehrāni’s book (who was a right handed player and had the left hand resting on the top of the *tombak*) that the hand that was resting on top of the *tombak* was denoted as the “left hand”. Several instruction books (Esmā’ili’s, Rajabi’s, Kāmkār’s) followed this convention. This brings confusion especially to those who have their right hand on top of the *tombak*.⁴¹⁷ *Tombak* players of the young generation (usually the left handed or those who put their right hand on top of the *tombak*) are more sensitive about this issue and name the hand that rests on the *tombak* as the “upper hand” (*dast-e bālā*) or the “fixed hand” (*dast-e sābet*), and they call the other hand the “lower hand” (*daste pāiin*) or “free hand” (*dast-e āzād*). However, this discrepancy does not affect students reading the scores properly where usually various strokes of the upper hand take particular signs (such as the V sign) while specific movement of the lower hand entail reversed signs (such as the Λ sign).⁴¹⁸

The second discrepancy relates to the numbering of the fingers (often one sign takes a number above or below it to denote the use of a specific finger). For instance, Tehrāni, Esmā’ili, and Kāmkār (all using three-line stave) enumerate only four fingers of each hand, starting with number 1 of the index finger; Ārash Farhangfar (using three-line stave) numbers the four fingers beginning with the little finger; while Rajabi, and Akhavān (both using one-line stave) include the thumb, numbering the fingers beginning with the little finger, which takes the digit 1. This discrepancy is often a problem in books where the numbering of the fingers is not explained in the introduction. But also these various ways in numbering the fingers confuse the students reading properly a score which is in a different numbering system.

The third discrepancy concerns terminology; sometimes the same movement bears different names by different players. For example, Eftethāh and Rajabi use the

⁴¹⁷ Some *tombak* players of the younger generation are actually left handed (like Khāvarzamini and Afgah) and put their left hand on top of the *tombak*, while others, left handed or right handed (like Rajabi), prefer to put their right hand on top of the *tombak*. *Tombak* players also specify on which thigh they put the *tombak* while playing, which automatically denotes the hand resting on the *tombak*. Thus, if someone puts the *tombak* on his left thigh, then the left hand is the upper hand, while when someone puts the *tombak* on his right thigh, his right hand is on top of the *tombak*.

⁴¹⁸ These two signs can take various other symbols above them, like dots, diagonals or parallel lines, the “plus” sign and so on. Moreover, V and Λ signs for the numbers “seven” and “eight” and often some of the stroke names entail the words “seven” and “eight”. Farhangfar (2002) avoids naming the two hands, but instead depicts them with the V and Λ signs which are being read as seven and eight. They are also used, and probably adopted from, melodic instruments where they denote the downstroke and the upstroke, respectively.

term *riz-e timpani*⁴¹⁹ or *riz-e do angoshti-ye sāde* (simple two-finger *riz*), while Tehrāni and Esmā'ili use the term *riz-e angosht-e sevom* (*riz* with the third [ring] finger). Then, the *eshāre* stroke, used widely under this name by many players, and which is also an ornamentation note (*not-e zinat*), is named by Kāmkār as *pish riz* or *not-e zinat*.

A fourth inconsistency concerns the signs (sing. '*alamat*') used above each note to specify particular strokes. A particular stroke may take different signs, depending on the teacher, and the same sign can be used by different teachers to denote different strokes (irrespective of whether they use one-line or three-line notation). Numerous examples could be mentioned: the signs that Rajabi uses for the movement *jāru* – a type of brushing technique – is \wedge while Kāmkār uses III; the signs that Ārash Farhangfar uses for the *timpani* stroke – a ring finger stroke on the rim or on the drum skin near the

rim of the *tombak* – are $\overset{y}{\underset{\text{---}}{\text{f}}}$ and $\overset{\text{---}}{\underset{\text{---}}{\text{f}}}$ (for the upper and lower hand respectively), while the

ones that Kāmkār uses are $\overset{3}{\underset{\text{---}}{\text{f}}}$ and $\overset{3}{\underset{\text{---}}{\text{f}}}$. Rajabi has changed several signs used by his teacher Eftetāh, which has brought confusion, especially since 2000, when Eftetāh's scores were published with their original signs. In addition, some *tombak* players invent and use more signs than others, which indicates a wider range in their playing techniques. Some players have changed their use of signs over time. For example, Akhavān has changed the symbols of his book, printed in 1991, in his later publications in 1994 and 2000. Today, in one-line stave the *tom* is predominantly symbolized as ζ (that was also the symbol in Akhavān edition of 1991), which was changed to \mathcal{Q} in his 1994 and 2000 publications. Also, in these two manuals he uses the signs 4 and 5 for the commonly used signs V and \wedge , which denote the stroke *eshāre* in one-line stave. Other *tombak* players have invented new names and symbols for each movement (see also page 199, footnote 330).

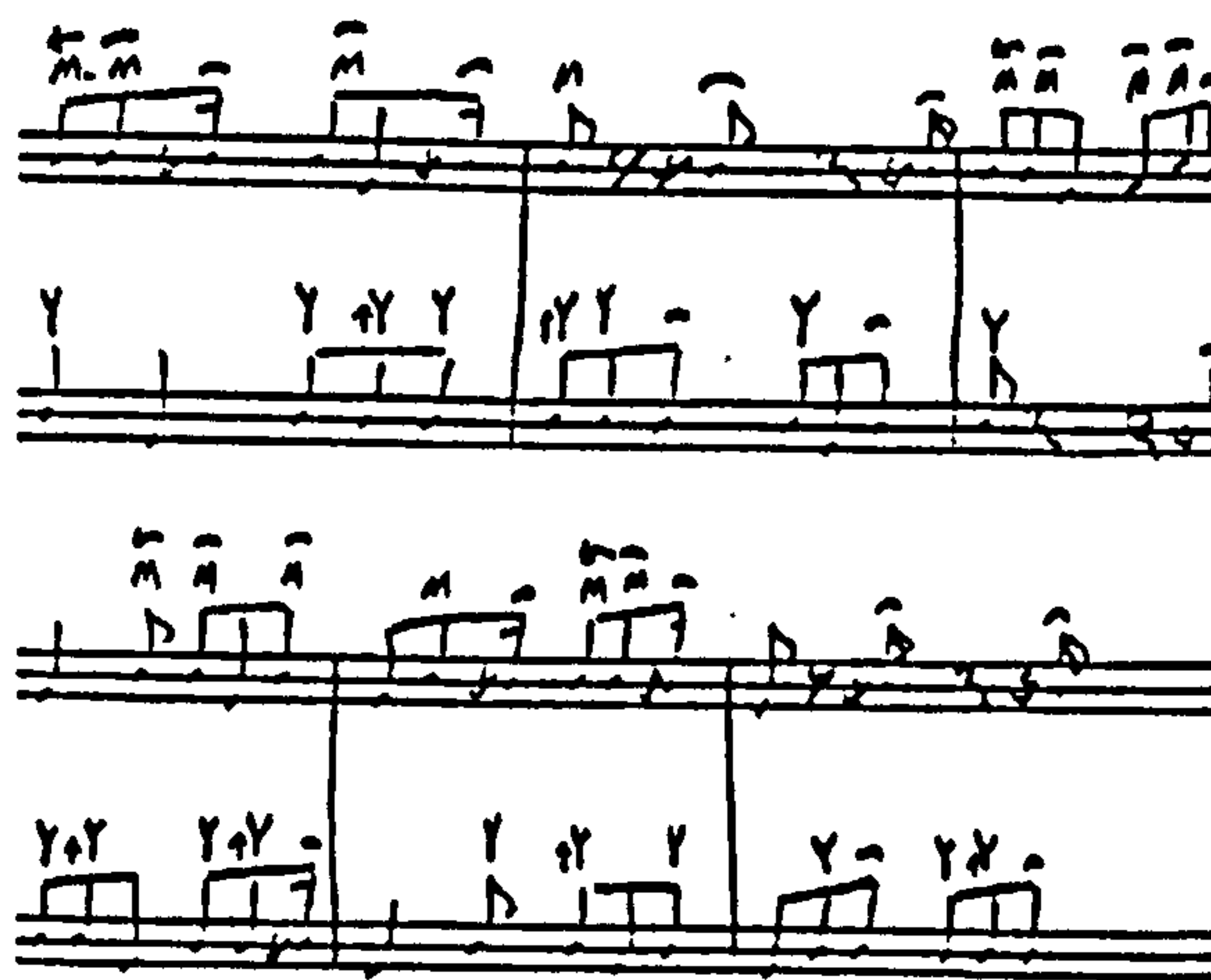
The different notation systems for the *tombak* arise, naturally, from the instruments history and its present situation as described in previous chapters. An interpretation of the discrepancies in notation would have to take into account the fact that the *tombak* has still not been academically accepted. In addition, the rivalry between the *tombak* players, combined with the ongoing struggle to validate the

⁴¹⁹ *Riz* is a type of roll. All three types of *riz* (*riz-e por*, *riz-e timpani* and *riz-e pelang*) that are used in the music examples of this chapter are explained in Appendix 3.

instrument's status, makes it likely that the leading figures will assert their importance and their individuality by using their own notation, rather than adopting someone else's.

The problems generated by these discrepancies are recognized by *tombak* players. They cause difficulties to the students who wish to learn from manuals without attending the lessons of the particular *tombak* player. In effect, this may be seen as a practice that secures more income from teaching. Some players believe that a more standardised and official system of symbols should be used so that the *tombak* becomes academically respectable, but given the general negative atmosphere that exists among many *tombak* players such an outcome seems unlikely.

Afgah has adopted recently the three-line stave in a two-stave arrangement: the upper stave for the fixed hand and the lower three-line stave for the free hand.



Example 6: Example of Navid Afgah's three-line stave in a two-stave arrangement. Scores written by Navid Afgah.

This type of notation is suitable for the playing style that he has developed, the so-called "effective playing", where each hand has much independence of movement in terms of the rhythmic structures and the playing techniques. However, some players who apply this playing style use the one-line stave notation, although the score becomes very condensed in terms of signs.

It appears that the development of the notation system went hand in hand with the development of the *tombak* performance techniques. Specifically, *tombak* notation developed in response to the particular requirements of the instrument by people who studied it for many years. Thus the developments in *tombak* techniques influenced changes in the notational system. As Mantle Hood comments:

Changes in a given music are not brought so much by cultivation - that is, a conscious striving to improve the system for the sake of the system - as by change and innovation in

the tradition of music making. In other words, a system on notations develops in direct response to the developments in musical expression. (Hood 1971:63)

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This statement raises several questions?. Is the form that the *tombak* notation takes serving its purpose? What are the applications of *tombak* notation? Can all the specifications that are required to produce the sound be written on paper? How does the performance relate to the notation? Does the music sound the way it looks?

These questions are not specific to *tombak* playing, but relate to a classical debate in musicology. Scholars have been especially productive demonstrating the advantages and limitations of written representations in music, while their theoretical approaches often follow Seeger's dichotomy- acknowledging its malleability - between prescriptive (notation) and descriptive (transcription) music-writing.⁴²⁰ Scholars agree that no notation is complete in itself, that conventional notation gives no more than general direction of how music should be *performed* (Seeger 1977:192), and that "correct translation of the symbol into musical sound depends on a familiarity with the oral tradition that supports them" (Hood 1971:73-76).

Both one-line and three-line stave notation for the *tombak* give basic information with regards to time values and ornamentation and movement pattern represented by particular signs. Each sign above each note is an abstraction of the movement pattern that is specific to the finger techniques used by an individual performer; and several years of training with a master-musician are required in order to become confident in using correctly the movement patterns. In practice, both notational systems give minimal directions that western conventional notation roughly indicates such as tempo,

⁴²⁰ For discussion on notation and transcription see Hood (1971:61-85), Ellingson (1992), Bent (<<http://www.grovemusic.com>> (Accessed 5/05/2006)), Nettle (1983:65-81), Widdess (1994), Hopkins (1966), List (1963, 1974), Jairazbhoy (1977), Howard (1989), Stobart and Cross (2000).

dynamics, accent marks, mood, or phrasing.⁴²¹ As western conventional notation, neither the one-line stave nor the three-line stave give thorough information about sound-quality, sound-colour, point of contact, hand placement, and movement patterns.⁴²² However, *tombak* notation has not been designed to be used for transcription purposes, but it is being used primarily in teaching and in composing. It is a notation of generally prescriptive character; it represents a model for the performance of a piece and not a specific rendition of it. On the whole, *tombak* notation is efficient for the purpose it has been designed for and for the reasons it is used. It enables the teacher to transfer his knowledge, technique and repertoire through the use of notation. It assists the student's memory, who is already acquainted with the aural tradition and the particular symbols used in the notation. It permits the musicians to note down their musical ideas during the composing processes.

The inconsistencies in *tombak* notation are not pertinent to the *tombak* only, but also to many other Iranian instruments. For example, a *santur* player who was trained with Pāyvar's manuals admits to have experienced difficulties in performing Meshkātīān's scores that employ different signs and terminology. This situation reveals again the shortcomings of the introduction and appropriation of western notation in Iranian music.

Contemporary Teaching Practices and the Role of Notation

When I first visited Rajabi he asked me to play for him. He then asked about my education, my origins and the reasons I wanted to learn to play the *tombak*. On the second visit he gave me my first lesson. He told me that I should forget everything I had learned before, and although he said my technique was not wrong (I think out of politeness), he would teach me from the beginning the correct playing techniques.

The first thing that Rajabi showed me was the proper body posture for holding the *tombak*. He was sitting on a chair; his right foot was on a foot stool⁴²³ while his left foot was slightly lower and stretched a little bit forward. He took the *tombak* from the ground, put the neck on his right thigh in a diagonal position, with the skin orientated

⁴²¹ While most scores for solo *tombak* give tempo by means of a metronome mark, in practice few use metronome in teaching or practice.

⁴²² For other approaches to drum notation see Serwadda and Panteleoni (1968), Woodson (1974), Koetting (1970) and Kubik (1972, 1977).

⁴²³ Rajabi is right handed, but contrary to a typical right handed player, he puts his right hand on top of the *tombak* and thus rests the instrument on his right thigh.

vertically, and the large orifice/mouth of the *tombak* resting on the left thigh, thus the *tombak* was balanced between the two thighs without the support of the hands. He put the right hand on top of the *tombak* and with his “free hand” (left hand) he showed me in the air how I should properly bend my fingers in a semi-circle. He then positioned his “free hand” on the skin of the *tombak*, with the second joint of the thumb touching the rim of the “large mouth”. Then he would move only his wrist, with the rest of the hand being steady, to produce the sound *tom*. He explained to me all of the basic movements on the *tombak* in this manner, meticulously and precisely. And he expected me, and any other student, to reproduce the movements exactly. If I made a mistake, often unnoticed by me, he would correct me and I would realize the small differences between my wrong movements and his correct movement patterns.

The structure of Rajabi’s lessons had the following format. I would play for him the previous lesson and then he would give me new material. New material followed the sequence of his book. Rajabi would play the new piece once or twice, depending on its difficulty. He would also demonstrate any new techniques in slow motion. I usually videoed his lessons in two tempos, one slow and one normal, the latter being usually too fast for my understanding. Few students would record their lessons and he expected them to come again and perform the piece as well as they could. I never saw a student try to play in front of him, or with him, the newly given material. We had to master it on our own, at home. If a student played the previous lesson incorrectly, Rajabi would take the *tombak* (there was only one *tombak* during the lessons) and play again the lesson for the student, and if the student failed for the second time to play it correctly, usually he would have to go home and practice the piece again. He never taught me, or any other student of his, a rhythmic pattern not in his two books. I once asked him to teach me a rhythm in five beat time but he told me that he would teach me in due course, when that came up in the book. Thus Rajabi’s lessons had little by way of interaction; teaching and practicing were separate domains. Even his compositions for two *tombaks* he teaches each line separately and not as part of a duet. He rehearses the *tombak* duets only with those students with whom he wishes to perform in concert. Rajabi’s books, though, do not have actual technical exercises for *tombak* playing: mastering the technique and learning his solo repertoire is a part of the same learning process.⁴²⁴ And

⁴²⁴ The same applies in learning the *radif*, that is, mastering the technique and learning the repertoire is part of the same process (Nooshin, personal communication, January 2007). Similar is the case of *tabla* learning. There are no particular exercises (except for individual strokes) given to the *tabla* students and the repertoire itself is being used as a means for exercise (Kippen 1988:119).

this is the great difference of Rajabi's teaching manual from the majority of contemporary *tombak* manuals.

For me one of the most valuable experiences during the classes was to observe his other students playing and to watch Rajabi approving or correcting their playing. Rajabi was teaching three days a week and his students could visit him at any time of the day without necessarily arranging a specific hour. All of the students would sit in one room (often the room would be full) waiting their turn for a lesson.

Rajabi demanded from his students three things: correct and beautifully performed playing technique, rhythmic precision and soft playing. While there is a strong connection between technique and the quality of sound produced, Rajabi would pay more attention to the first while teaching. All of my *tombak* teachers insisted on correct hand and finger movement, but Rajabi was the most stringent. For him, correct playing technique was synonymous with specific positioning and movement of the hands on the *tombak*.

Baily's ruminations (1995a:16) on "what people had to say about movement and movement structure", "which movements are "good" and which are "bad"" prompted me to give careful attention to what *tombak* musicians believe about specific finger and hand movements and to notice the specific motor techniques they employed. Every time I had a lesson I would stay for many hours watching Rajabi closely and giving my full attention to all the delicate movements he made on the *tombak*. Every time I would discover some new detail in his finger movement that I thought I had mastered. I would quite often move around him inquisitively to see from all possible angles his fingering patterns. I could feel and see from his expressions that he was very pleased that I paid so much attention to his hands. Once, during my first visit to Iran, I was carried away with my thoughts and he told me, smiling, in the few words he knew in English, "Miss Aleksandra, please look carefully at my fingers, my fingers Miss Aleksandra." Learning by imitating Rajabi's playing technique proved to be essential in learning to perform the *tombak*. In fact, not only Rajabi, but all of my *tombak* teachers instruct imitation of their physical movements and include it in the teaching process.⁴²⁵

Not every student of his understood the importance of studying and imitating his finger movements. When they made mistakes, even if their playing was rhythmically correct, he would become angry. One student, who had studied *tombak* in the past with

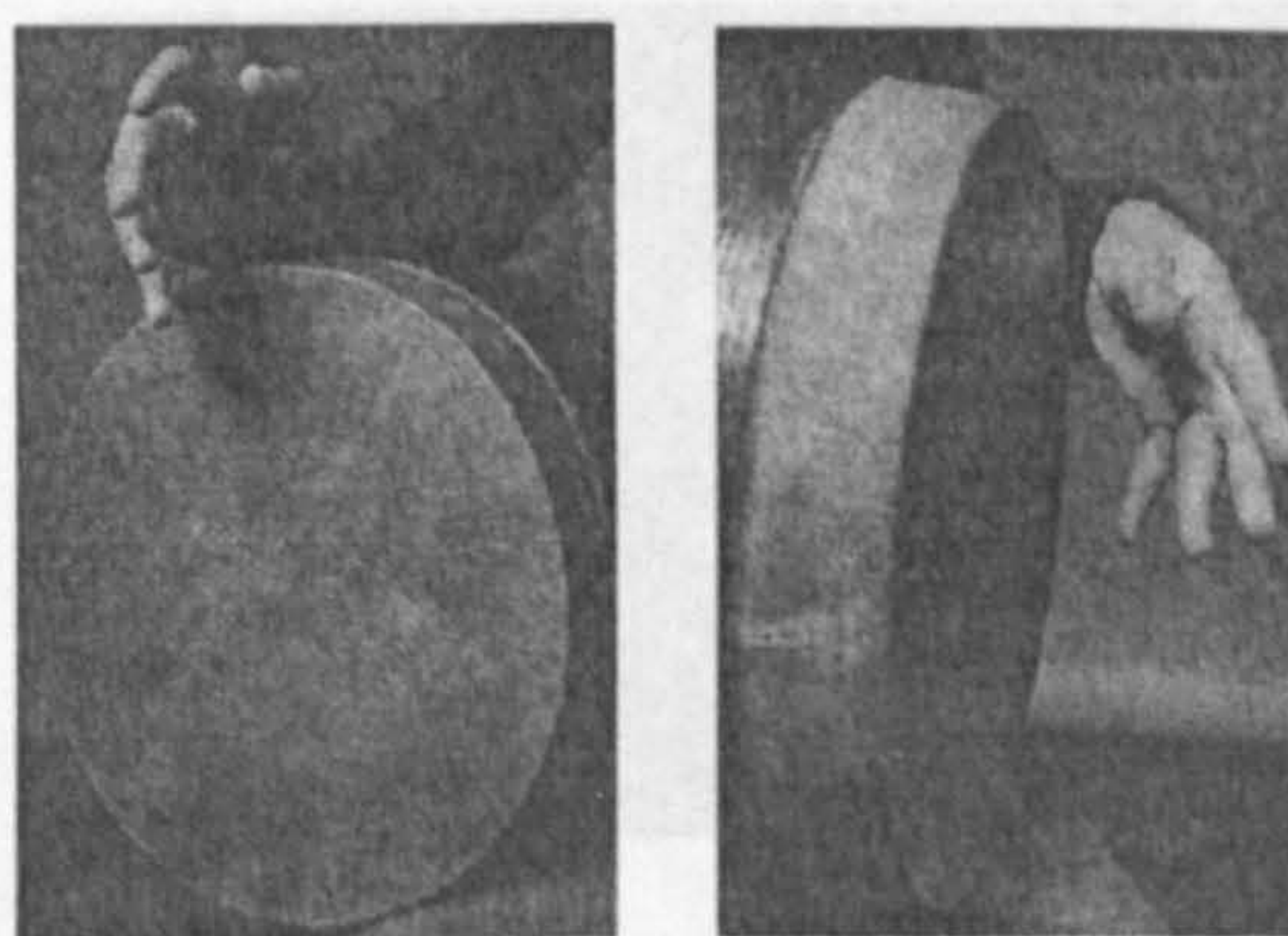
⁴²⁵ While in the case of *tombak* teaching, learning by imitation, involves directed instruction, Doubleday and Baily (1995) define imitation as a lack of directed instruction by adults, with no overt reward and feedback, although these factors may be present. They argue, by drawing on their research in Afghanistan, that imitation is the main process of music enculturation in most societies.

another teacher, could not produce the basic movements for *tom* and *bak* the way Rajabi was teaching them, even after three lessons. He was used to performing these strokes with the technique that the other teacher had taught him. Rajabi became angry and he began criticizing those “bad” movements. During his lessons, Rajabi would often illustrate a point of technique by exaggerating and criticizing other *tombak* players and their “bad” finger and hand techniques. Hardly a lesson passed without him disparaging the way other *tombak* players performed. I am now becoming more aware that he taught me not only how I should play, but also the aesthetics of “correct” and “wrong” performance techniques.

However, a “correct” technique does not always produce the desired sonic quality. I realised this when practicing with Pedrām some passages I had learned from Rajabi. While I was playing with Pedrām a particular piece in the manner of Rajabi, he remarked that my accents were not distinct, although my technique was correct.

During the lessons Rajabi insisted very much on the “beauty” (*zibā*) of the movement itself. For him, proper hand and finger movements have a visual and kinaesthetic quality. Picture number 18 illustrates the position that the upper and lower hand should have before playing the stroke *eshāre*.

Picture 18. Rajabi’s hands and fingers position in performing the *eshāre*, from Rajabi (1999a:23, 24, picture 14, 16).



Before the stroke the fingers are bent in an open semi-circle, with fingers having sequential (vertical and horizontal) equidistance so that when they touch the skin, by a movement of the wrist, they touch it softly in succession (from the small finger to the

index finger of the upper hand and from the small finger to the thumb of the lower hand). Then the hand and fingers return to their initial position as shown in the same picture. In this case it appears there is a strong connection between the movement and the sound (one can hear all the fingers in succession). However, it is difficult to assess to what degree the sound quality depends only on the movement pattern.⁴²⁶ While most of his students reproduce the “same” finger movement, each one has his own particular sound.

In addition, some “beautiful” positioning of the fingers does not seem to affect the speed or quality of the sound. For example, when playing the stroke *bak* (with the upper joint (dip joint) of the ring finger of the lower hand touching the rim of the *tombak*, produced by a movement of the wrist), Rajabi insists that the thumb should be slightly bent as in picture 19 because it is visually beautiful. It was interesting to watch Pedrām play the *bak*. When he would rehearse Rajabi’s scores, he would bend his thumb, while in all other cases he would not. He told me that Rajabi insisted so much on this that he had to play like this in front of him and eventually his hand had memorized this movement for Rajabi’s pieces.⁴²⁷ Pedrām considers that the bending of the thumb does not affect the speed or sound quality and that is why he abandoned it when playing alone.

Picture19. Rajabi performing the *bak* with the thumb bent, from Rajabi (1999a:30, picture 22).



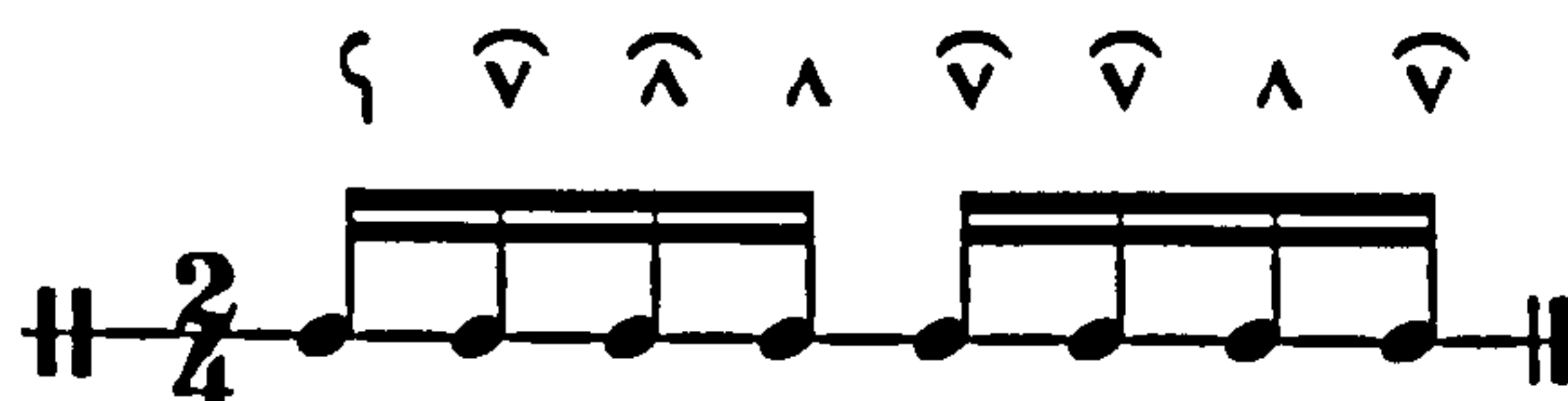
My experience of the *bak* was the following. When I would bend my thumb my index finger would also bend, perhaps because the muscles of the thumb pulled back the

⁴²⁶ Many *tombak* players believe that their sound quality largely depends on the physical shape of their hands.

⁴²⁷ From this example it becomes obvious, once again, that Rajabi anticipates and insists on the students imitating his playing technique.

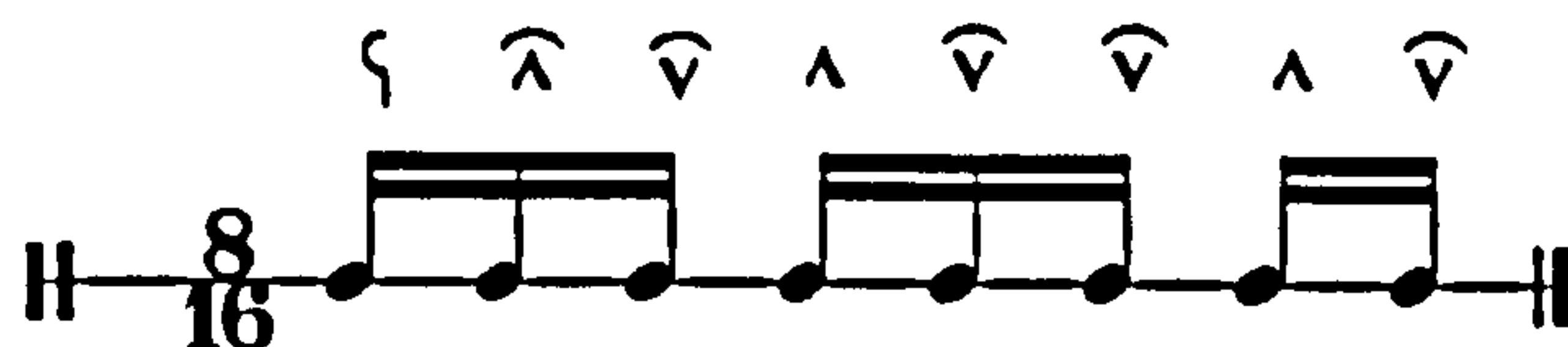
muscles of the index finger. Rajabi did not reprimand me, even if the overall posture of the fingers was not correct, and he did not tell me either not to bend my thumb. Overall, it seemed to me that Rajabi insistence on some finger movements was rather pedantic.

Rajabi’s second requisite was to play with rhythmic precision. He would always advise his students to rehearse at slow tempo, rather than in fast, saying that it was much more difficult to play slowly and correctly. However, some of the scores in his book cause confusion, mainly in terms of grouping. For example, on page 5 there is a rhythmic pattern written as:



Example 7: Example of note-grouping by Rajabi, from Rajabi (1999a:6).

But it is played, both during lessons and in concerts, by Rajabi as:



Example 8: Actual performance of previous example by Rajabi.

With regards to sound quality, Rajabi’s main advice was to play *narm* (soft) and *tamiz* (clean), so that each stroke could be heard clearly and flawlessly. He always makes fun of other *tombak* players who hit the *tombak* with all their power. “This is not *tombak* playing!!!” Some of my teachers in the past taught me to strike the *tombak* as hard as I could in order to make my fingers stronger. With Rajabi I realized that it is not about having strong fingers, it is about having flexible fingers and a clean sound.

As Rajabi’s lessons lacked *ad hoc* rehearsals and improvisation instructions, and as I wanted to better understand these processes through a personal experience, I suggested to Pedrām to experiment with different styles of teaching (I was the one to insist on experimentation), which would encompass teaching and practicing, memorizing and improvising.


One of the first teaching methods, whose emphasis lay in memorizing scores, was playing A’yān’s book, passage by passage: Pedrām was playing and I was trying to

reproduce it. In this way I thought I could develop my aural abilities, memorize a great amount of material and better grasp the “mentality” of A’yān’s scores. In the beginning it was difficult to find a proper way of doing this. Hamid, who was taught the *radif* with the method of *sine be sine*,⁴²⁸ suggested that Pedrām should play the first line and that I should play it by memory, then Pedrām should play the first and the second line, both of which I should try to reproduce, and so on. This appeared to be a good method which we practiced a few more times. After several lessons I could hear things to which I never paid attention before. For example, I realized that Pedrām was playing two consecutive *riz-e por* (full *riz*) in different manners.⁴²⁹ When he played them in the same bar, he made a very short pause between them, whereas, when the first *riz* was at the end of a bar and the next at the beginning of the following bar, he did not make any pause but he stressed the first *eshāre* of the second *riz*.

We repeated this type of lesson several times, but we did not give this method further tries. I believe the reason was that it was very exhausting, especially for Pedrām, who had to show a lot of patience and devote a great deal of time and energy in it. Moreover, although he did not admit it, I think it was boring for him: it did not allow for any creative playing, as he was just repeatedly reproducing A’yān’s rhythmic patterns.

The second type of experimentation with Pedrām was more successful. I suggested that we should work without the use of notation. He accepted it, agreeing that it would be good for my ear. He went on to improvise some rhythmic phrases and I tried playing them. In the beginning Pedrām did not notate his improvisations, but from the second lesson he decided to write down the improvised rhythms he was teaching me. He preferred to do this so that he could use later this material for his solos or his compositions for group *tombak*. I asked Pedrām if these types of lesson were boring for him. He replied that they were not, and said that he also learned while teaching. I am not sure whether this reply was a case of *ta’ārof*, however, neither this method lasted. I could not follow Pedrām’s playing speed and excitement. As soon as he played an interesting rhythm he was trying to extend it, to improvise upon it and then to notate it.

⁴²⁸ Literary “chest to chest”, meaning learning by rote.

⁴²⁹ *Riz-e por*  is performed by rapid alternation of *eshāre*-type strokes of both hands, with the lower hand commencing and the upper hand ending. However, depending on the grace note that precedes any type of *riz*, *riz* can commence with the upper hand. For example, when a *pelang* appoggiatura of the upper hand precedes *riz-e por*, *pelang* is actually performed on the principal note, and *riz* continues with *eshāre* of the lower hand, and it ends with *eshāre* of the upper hand. This *riz* is called “full” (*por*) because of its compact density. The sound of *riz-e por* should be smooth, uninterrupted and flawless. The quality of the sound of *riz-e por* is often paralleled with that of rain.

He was becoming more absorbed in his playing, improvising and composing than in our lesson.

The third type of practice was suggested by Pedrām; we would play together Rajabi's book starting from the second page until the end very slowly, softly and patiently. This suggestion usually came up when Pedrām had not practiced for several days and when he felt that his fingers were out of shape. He said that slow playing was very good practice and important for correct playing, as well as warming up the hands. When we played Rajabi's book several times in this way, I could feel my fingers much more flexible than before, and I realized that eventually I had memorized many of Rajabi's passages. I also noticed that playing slowly and softly caused my body to relax more than usual; I could play for a longer time; I did not feel tired, and my concentration was very good.

Even if this practice did not entail much spontaneity or creativity, it was important because I had the opportunity to observe Pedrām practicing Rajabi's book, and I had also learned to practice correctly when alone. That is, to play with patience, by paying attention to certain details at a time, with regards to correct technique, speed or the quality of sound.

When at some point I practiced the *tombak* with the *tār*, I noticed that I could use some of the rhythms that I had memorised from Rajabi's book, but in a different sequence, with another technique, with different nuance and feeling. These were my first steps in improvising while accompanying, by using the material that I had absorbed and memorized.

Just as there is neither a single standard notation for the *tombak*, nor a standard playing technique, there is no standard teaching method. Each *tombak* player follows the method he finds most suitable for him and his students. Perhaps the only common teaching practice is that *tombak* lessons are given individually, but students are also given the opportunity to observe the lessons of other students. The *tombak* players who have published their instruction books tend to teach from their own material.

Younger *tombak* players try to adopt much broader teaching methods, combining notation-based and oral-based teaching practices, where teaching and practicing are interwoven. Afgah, for instance, teaches from the books of Tehrāni (1971), Esmā'ili (1999a), and Eftetāh (2000) introducing the student both to three-line and one-line stave. He also shares with his students his own rhythmic notated rhythmic compositions and technical exercises in order to improve the student's playing

technique. With his advanced students he also works orally, inducing creative thinking by giving them one pattern which they try to reproduce and further develop.

Pedrām, on the other hand, appears to be more attached to the use of notation and prefers Rajabi's (1999a and 2002), A'yān's and Eftetāh's books (2000) for teaching. However, he encourages his students to memorize rhythmic passages from the teaching manuals and to play always with music; sometimes they would bring a cassette with a song that they liked and Pedrām would work with them on styles of accompaniment. In Pedrām's case I also noticed that he felt much more comfortable to go beyond notation with his male students (normally the advanced ones): he would spend more time with them playing and practicing together. In sum, while today notation is used as the primary method for teaching, many *tombak* players of the young generation are prone to apply a wide range of oral teaching practices, especially with their advanced students.⁴³⁰

The expansion of notation for teaching purposes has affected the close student-teacher relation, transforming it into a more formal relationship, especially in the cases when practicing and teaching become two separate activities.⁴³¹ Notation substantially reduces the time of a teaching session. Rajabi's *tombak* lessons did not last more than half an hour per student, and in many cases much less. The students would rarely stay after their lesson to observe him teaching others. However, the introduction of notation in a music system cannot by itself bring changes to the relations among students and teacher. In general, relations have to be examined in their particular socio-cultural context, and in Iran the relationships among people are characterized as being much "warmer" than in Western European countries. In Iranian culture, students feel attached to a great degree to their teachers, and such relations depend by and large on the personality and the music capabilities of both student and teacher.

A more serious disadvantage of the notation usage in Iran is that the students are not always encouraged to memorise.⁴³² It is the student's choice to memorise or not the notated music. During my first sessions I asked Rajabi if I should try to memorise the scores, but he did not encourage me to do so. Also, he never went further than the book, and I never got the opportunity to try and improvise even a short passage in front of

⁴³⁰ Shemirāni, a student of Tehrāni, and his two sons, living nowadays in France, are the only *tombak* players I have met and heard of, who do not use notation at all in teaching the *tombak*.

⁴³¹ See also Miller's (1992) similar observation on the effect of the introduction of notation in Thai musical practice on the student-teacher relationship.

⁴³² Although in the past Tehrāni would encourage his students to memorize, and although the *radif* is taught orally and students learn it by rote.

him. On the contrary, those *tombak* players who employ rote-learning activate the processes of memorisation.

With regards to improvisation, many musicians in Iran believe that improvisation is not something that can be taught, but it is something that can be learned from experience (*bedāhe yād dādani nist, vali yād gereftan hast*). I believe that Pedrām's words represent many others:

Pedrām: According to me [improvisation] is not something that can be taught, you can learn the technique, but the rhythm....Did Rajabi taught me to improvise? Did Farahmand taught Afgah to improvise?

Alexandra: No.

Pedrām: I have that same book that you play now, Mas'ud played from the same book, Hamid played from the same book, a hundred more people played from the same book, you know! But now, I am speaking for myself, I am speaking for Pedrām, look...it is possible that at some point I will play some of those rhythms [from the book] with another technique, but from the hundred rhythms I play, only the five percent are like this [from the book], the other ninety five what are they? Rhythm is like this, you can see it yourself. So nobody taught me [to improvise], I did not go to any class, I did not take any composition lessons. I think that it is something in your blood, it is something inward (*daruni*) (Interview, October 2002).

This situation is somehow resembling the teaching practices of the *ostāds* of the *radif*, who are more concentrated on transmitting the repertoire, considering that improvisation is not a “transferable” skill (Meshkātiān, cited in Nooshin 1996a:116), but have recently begun applying improvisational techniques in their teaching (see Nooshin 1998:73-75).⁴³³

With regards to compositions, as well as with improvisation, there is little, if any, verbalization, and no specific training. I have not encountered a *tombak* master to have particular methods in teaching compositions.⁴³⁴ There are however a few teachers who instruct their students to notate the rhythmic patterns while they are playing them, thus encouraging them to compose, but again this is not a systematically developed practice.

⁴³³ See also Nooshin (1996a: 115-120) who explains the lack of specific terminology in relation to improvisational processes.

⁴³⁴ Afgah, for example, is among the few *tombak* players who studied privately composition, although not with a *tombak* teacher, but with a musician trained in western classical music.

Solitary Learning Practices: How *Tombak* Players Develop Their Motor Skills?

In the previous section I exemplified the role of notation in teaching practices, as well as my own understanding of the importance of imitating Rajabi's playing technique as an initial stage in developing my own motor skills. In this section I will describe solitary learning practices that the young generation of *tombak* players utilize and the importance of the spatio-motor mode of music thought in improvisation and composing processes. Solitary learning practices that *tombak* players employ include: acquiring, sustaining and developing motor skills, either by implementation of mere technical exercises, or through aural learning practices, sight-reading, and individual creative practices (composing and improvising).

Improvisation and composition appear to be a continuation of deliberate practice.⁴³⁵ According to Nooshin, there are no clear-cut boundaries between improvisation and composition, as all music-making entail processes of improvisation and creativity (1996a:32-42). Young *tombak* players, eager to develop their own repertoire, often notate the various rhythmic patterns they discover while playing, as in Pedrām's case, an activity that can be considered to be an "early" composition.

The same applies to the *tombak* players of the older generation. They improvise and compose while playing. However, when they want to produce teaching manuals, in many cases it is their students transcribing their rhythmic structures at the very moment of creation, and not themselves.

Thus composition is rarely just a mental activity conceived in auditory terms, instead the spatio-motor mode of music thought has also to be taken into account. Baily's studies of the Herati *dutār* and Afghan *rubāb* show that the spatio-motor mode of music thought can be:

regarded as a legitimate and commonly used mode of musical thought, used to instigate and to control musical performance, and just as creative as the auditory mode, for creativity in music often consist of deliberately finding new ways to move on the instrument, which are then assessed, and further creative acts, guided by the aesthetic evaluation of the resulting novel sonic patterns (Baily 1985:257, 258).

⁴³⁵ I use the term here as defined by Krampe and Ericsson (1995). For them deliberate practice is a "highly structured activity with the explicit goal of improving some aspect of performance" (ibid. 86).

Baily and Driver also suggest that the way the human body moves on the instrument indicates that,⁴³⁶

The morphology of an instrument imposes certain constraints on the way it is played, favouring movement patterns that are, for ergonomic reasons, easily organised on the spatial layout. The interaction between the human body, which brings with it certain intrinsic modes of operation, and the morphology of the instrument may shape the structure of music, channeling human creativity in predictable directions (Baily and Driver 1992:57, 58).

Baily's ruminations apply also to *tombak* playing. As in the case of the Afghan *dutār*, creativity in *tombak* playing involves kinaesthetic, tactile and visual information. The spatial layout of the *tombak* indicates a specific position of the hands (discovered through generations of practice) that allows faster and accurate movement of the hands and fingers and complex finger activity, and thus a plurality of rhythmic structures.⁴³⁷ Then, the variety of sound colours are enabled both by the structure and the material of the instrument (wood and skin) but also through physical movement: changing finger techniques, speed, contact point with the instrument, strength of movement execution and so on.

In their solitary learning practices, young *tombak* players put a particularly great effort in developing their motor skills and the physical condition of each finger, which is vital for performing complex rhythmic structures that require multifarious finger movements. They are very inventive in finding numerous finger exercises, of which I could cite infinite examples: one would play with gloves in order to make his fingers stronger, another would devise various configurations of stroke patterns to improve the speed of his *riz-e pelang*, someone else would move his hand from its proper place in order to experiment with the sound produced.

Generally, young *tombak* players, in their solitary learning practices, spend great amount of time practising; and concentrating upon technical exercises appears to be essential. The amount of time spent on solitary learning practices appears to depend on the generation and on the interest of the *tombak* player. Kām-kār, a *tombak* player of the pre-Revolutionary generation, said that sometimes he does not touch the *tombak* for

⁴³⁶ Other ethnomusicologists who have shown interest in the relationship of human body to music are Kubik (1972, 1977, 1979) and Blacking (1977, 1992).

⁴³⁷ In contrast, the hand movements upon the *daf* are more restricted, because the player needs to hold the weight of the instrument in one hand while playing it.

several months, although he admitted that he somehow keeps in shape because he plays during his teaching lessons. On the other side, *tombak* players of the post-Revolutionary generations spend a lot of time on practising during the early phases of the learning process, but also later, when they acquire expertise.

Torshizi I practised a lot when I first begun to learn to play. During my summer vacation I would practise 8-10 hours everyday. When I attended school I practised 3 hours a day (Interview, February 2005).

Khavarzamini Now, I need to practise about four hours a day and this is only for the hands [the fitness of hands and finger technique] (Interview, January 2003).

Afgah Practising your fingers is like body building (Interview, July 2002).

Akhavāss But it is really very difficult, if I don't play 4-5 hours a day, two-three days later it becomes obvious. All these sixteen years that I have played will be gone away. We [*tombak* players] really have to practise a lot, because if we don't practise, our fingers become dry and this becomes evident [when playing] on the instrument. If you see a *tombak* player, whose skills suddenly weaken, it is because he is tired of practising for 10-15 years for eight hours a day. Then, age also takes away many things: all that effort that we put. If we grow a bit old, our fingers don't have anymore that playing ability [*tavānā ejrā-i*] of the technique as when they were young (Interview, November 2002).

Today the young generation of *tombak* players seems to be particularly infatuated with speed and technique, which have become, especially for novices, *raison d'être*. Speed seems to have acquired particular attention after the Revolution when a whole new generation of young *tombak* players began to learn the instrument with vigour. Perhaps speed is after all a “youngsters” issue; the young people are the ones who have the verve, vitality, physical strength and endurance to develop and pursue it.

Alexandra: Was speed so important in *tombak* playing 25 years ago as it is today among the young *tombak* players?

Arzhang Kāmkār: No, it was not. In fact, 25 years ago, *tombak* was not practiced among youngsters, not many played it (Interview, January 2003).

Later during the same interview he adds:

But the thing that you said about speed, is that speed itself is part of the youngsters. An old person does not like speed very much, or something technical or whatever. He likes more calmness, he likes heaviness [*sangin*], he likes precision. Youngsters, indeed, they like speed, they want to learn fast, they like to play fast, they like to create fast [*bā sorat haloqiat anjam bedand*] (Interview, January 2003).

Some *tombak* players achieve high speed by using specific motor movements that facilitate speed and ease of articulation. For instance, when playing fast, the *eshāre* is normally performed only by the upper hand (rather than both hands). Other *tombak* players achieve speed by engaging those fingers that are faster and stronger. Afgah, for example, has particularly swift and agile ring and middle fingers when performing *pelang* strokes. Thus, while *pelang* strokes are more often performed by most players with the upper hand, Afgah performs the *pelang* strokes by the ring and middle finger of the lower hand as well. This, in fact, constitutes one important aspect of his playing technique, that is, the use of specific fingers in specific playing techniques that he knows he can play fast (Interview, July 2003).

Afgah is very conscious with regards to movement patterns, and he considers movement not only in terms of striking the instrument, but also in terms of releasing the hand from the instruments and he has introduced specific exercises taking into account both of these aspects.

Afgah When I perform the *eshāre* I am not only paying attention to the movement as my hand approaches the drum skin, I also think of the movement when my hand pulls back from the skin. In other words I think about the whole movement: both as the hand approaches the skin and retreats from the skin. When I tell you that your hand needs to move away far from the *tombak*, I don't say this only for your hand to attain the correct movement [for your movement to attain the correct shape], but also so that you can move your speed up a bit more (Interview, July 2003).

Afgah has introduced to his students a number of efficient technical exercises in order to attain speed, agility and strength/endurance. He has introduced playing techniques to strengthen specific fingers, such as *pelang*-type strokes in order to mobilize the index finger that is generally considered under-exercised in relation to other fingers. Afgah advises beginners to practice softly and not to put too much strength in their movement. In this way, he believes, judging from his own experience, that the hand will gradually acquire both speed and strength. When he was trying to

advance his speed and strength he would perform teaching manuals fast and quite or slow and loud.

While many *tombak* players experiment greatly with finger exercises and put a lot of effort to strengthen their technique, Afgah appears to have developed a conscious and systematic approach with regards to improving speed, technique and strength. This is because, he explains, as he has consciously strived for many years to develop an enduring technique, he has spent a lot of time on thinking what types of movements can be performed by his hand, to the extent that he has even researched into anatomy books to understand how particular muscles of the hand and finger work.

Learning from manuals is a widespread activity and it has several functions among which: the player gets acquainted with the repertoire and “mentality” of the originator;⁴³⁸ and it serves as a “companion” in sustaining, acquiring and developing physical skills and thus improving the playing technique.⁴³⁹ Teaching manuals, even when they contain mere technical exercises, provide the material for practising a sequence of movements, rather than isolated physical movement. This means, that while *tombak* players put great effort into developing their motor skills, they do this by performing rhythmic patterns/phrases rather than isolated strokes.⁴⁴⁰ *Tombak* manuals are not studied passively and *tombak* players interact inventively with the music material, using it as a source for further creation. Once again, the boundaries between practice, improvisation and composition can be found to blur.

For many *tombak* players, purposive and attentive listening⁴⁴¹ and deliberate practice with records of Iranian music⁴⁴² is a prime method of learning which has several outcomes: it develops aural skills; it assists memory; it familiarizes the student with the *dastgāh* system and the stylistic differences of the *tombak* players and other musicians; it creates historical awareness; and it also serves as a footing for improvisational and compositional use.⁴⁴³ Afgah considers learning through records an essential stage in developing one’s own quality of sound. He would always advise me

⁴³⁸ In my case, after finishing a quarter of Rajabi’s books, I could detect print mistakes and would play it correctly. On the “errors in reading” see Sloboda (1985:74-81).

⁴³⁹ Afgah’s approach to the scores was very inventive; he would perform scores in several distinctive manners: he would play them slowly and loudly, or fast and quietly or by reversing the roles of the two hands.

⁴⁴⁰ During my lessons with Rajabi only in the very beginning he would give me exercises to advance my nine fingers *eshāre*. But even these very specific exercises consisted of short rhythmic phrases, rather than only of *eshāre* movements. However, contrary practices also exist: many novices tend to practice especially the various *riz* in isolation, and not within a rhythmic phrase.

⁴⁴¹ See Green (2002:23-24) who defines purposive, attentive and distracted listening.

⁴⁴² Available on the market (legitimate or black) or by hand circulation.

⁴⁴³ See Poulos (2006) who describes how young Turkish musicians are transformed into “self-teachers” by studying *taksim* performances from gramophone records, and how the music product becomes transformed into “teaching material” for improvisation (ibid. 149-150).

during our lessons: “You have to know how a good sound sounds. It has to be in your ear so you can play it well.” In addition, records of Iranian music serve - as in the case of teaching manuals – as companion to sustaining and developing physical skills.

Finally, how much *tombak* players practice and what they actually do when practicing, is an individual issue, often discernible in their playing, and these questions are pertinent to many musicians and music instruments.⁴⁴⁴ According to Mantel “practicing without an accurate idea of what needs to be practised is a waste of time” and “if a central idea is lacking in his practice the player will make no progress” (1995:xiv). This point was also accentuated by Afgah who would tell me: “you won’t learn anything on the *tombak* even if you play for the next hundred years.” Proficient *tombak* players develop experientially their own “central idea” of what and how the instrument needs to be practised and I believe that gradually more systematic and well explained instructions will become available for the next generations of *tombak* players, with regards to practice, improvisation and composition, but also in relation to enhancing their playing technique.

Ornamentation

In western classical music performers are often inclined to embellish the notes of the score. This embellishment is often regarded as an important feature of a solo performer’s skill and has been equated with improvisation or semi-improvisation. In Iranian music ornamentations are an integral aesthetic feature of the music and as Caton suggests “they are not ornamental in the sense of being added” (1983:249). The *tombak* as an instrument developed within Iranian music includes a wide variety of ornamentation notes. Ornamentation in *tombak* has developed together with the performance technique and today there are many different types of ornamentation, whose degree and quality varies among performers.

The role of ornamentated notes in *tombak* is:⁴⁴⁵

1. To increase the density of the rhythmic activity.
2. To connect and fill the “gap” between two beats and provide a sense of continuity.

⁴⁴⁴ See Green (2002: 91-97), Mantel (1995), Sloboda (1985), Krampe and Ericsson (1995).



⁴⁴⁵ See Caton’s comments on the general role of ornaments in Persian music (1983:249-273).

3. To provide a rich sonority.
4. To affect the colour, dynamic and articulation of a rhythmic piece.
5. To exhibit the technique and virtuosity of the performer.

The *Eshāre*

Eshāre is the most common grace note used in *tombak* playing. The technique of *eshāre* has developed over the last sixty years. Before Tehrāni the *eshāre* was performed simultaneously with the principal note: the four fingers of the upper hand touching the skin at the same time with the *tom* or *bak* stroke of the right hand (Zargeri 2000:65).

Tehrāni developed his own *eshāre* according to the grace notes (*sar mezhāb-hā*) that Pāyvar and Sabā used on the *santur*, the *setār* and the violin (Banāi 1999a:95). Tehrāni's style of *eshāre* which is today followed also by his student Esmā'ili (and many of Esmā'ili's students, among who is Banāi) is performed by the rapid succession of the middle finger and index finger of the upper hand on the skin of the *tombak* before the beat.⁴⁴⁶ This *eshāre* is symbolized in the three-line stave notation in the middle

stave, as , while in the one stave notation, the note takes the  sign.

Other *tombak* players have also developed further this *eshāre* by introducing a four finger flow on the skin with the upper hand. However, both this *eshāre* and Tehrāni's *eshāre* have become outdated as they produce a rather rigid and hollow sound in relation to the *eshāre* that is primarily used today by *tombak* players and which was probably introduced by Eftetāh. Eftetāh's *eshāre*, or "nine fingers *eshāre*", is performed with the five fingers of the lower hand touching in succession the skin followed by a rapid un-delayed consecutive movement of the four fingers of the lower hand. The beat after the *eshāre* is usually the *tom* or the *bak*, and its sound is dense and smooth. Although nine fingers are used in producing this *eshāre*, only two symbols are used to denote it, because it is performed in two movements directed by the wrists of the hands.

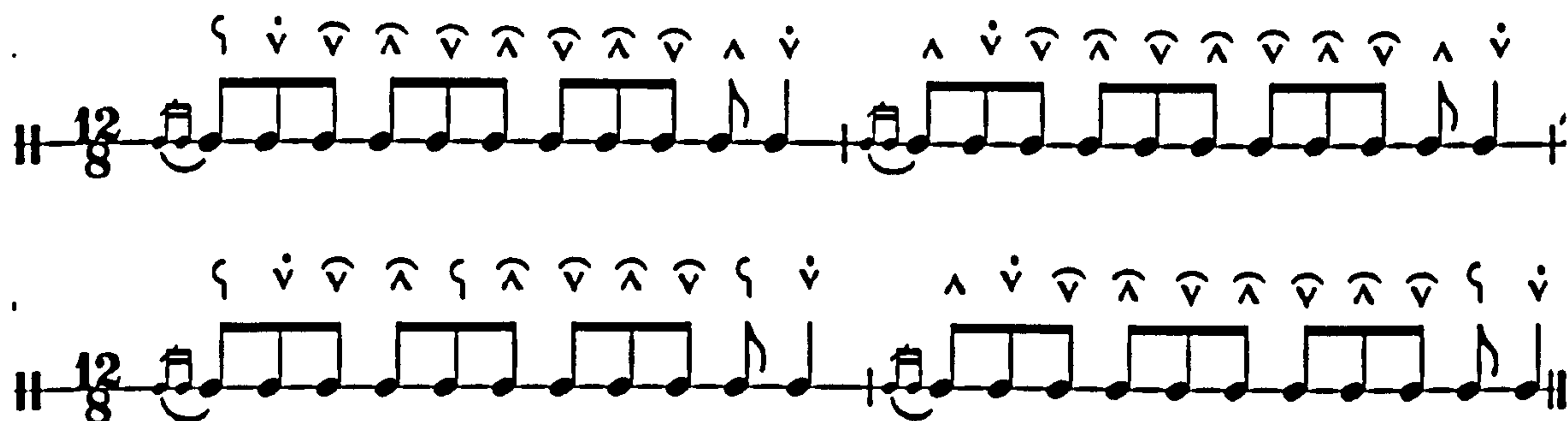
⁴⁴⁶ Shemirāni, in France, has developed this type of *eshāre* by adding the strokes of the middle and index finger of the lower hand on the skin, preceded by the stroke of the middle and index finger of the upper hand.

The following sign for the “nine finger *eshāre*” or simply *eshāre* is commonly used on

one-line stave .

Due to the sound quality of the nine-finger *eshāre* (characterised by density, cohesion, continuity, smoothness, and softness) many *tombak* players teach initially this movement for the upper hand and then integrate the two hands. Rajabi taught me the proper *eshāre* in our third lesson.

Nāser Farhangfar was the first to use the *eshāre* as an independent stroke for each hand, and since the 1970s it has also become a principal note. This in turn gave birth to new ways of moving on the *tombak*. For example, by moving the hands on the rim of the *tombak* and executing this stroke, instead of executing it from a specific position on the *tombak*. One of the most famous rhythmic patterns of Farhangfar using the *eshāre* as an independent stroke is:

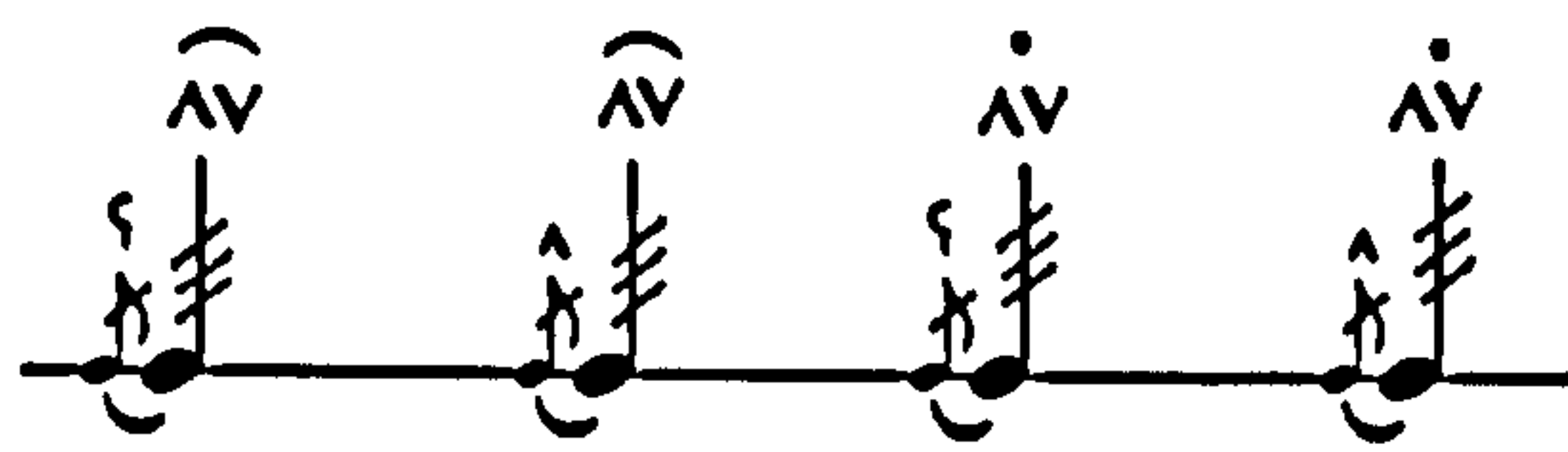


Example 9: Rhythmic phrase by Nāser Farhangfar using the *eshāre* as an independent stroke (principal note). Cited in Nāsehpur (2000:62).

The *eshāre* today is not only the most common grace note used in *tombak* playing, but it is also an indispensable one. There are very few *tombak* players who could play on the *tombak* for five minutes without using the *eshāre* grace note.

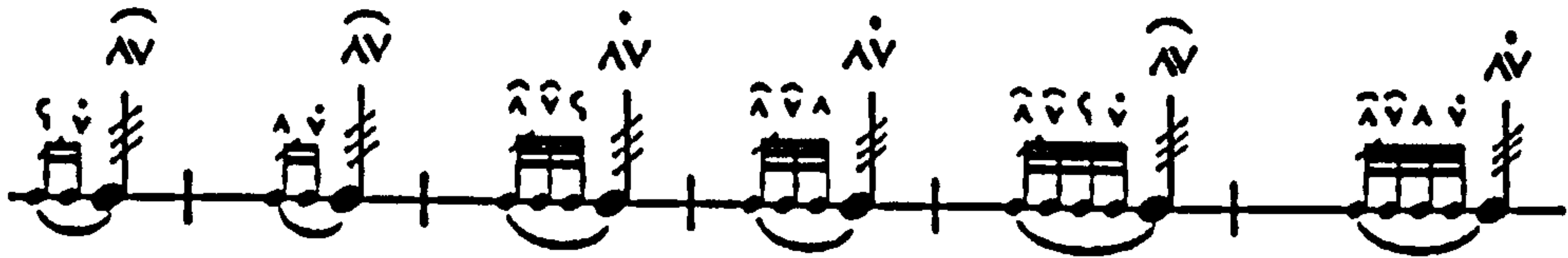
***Not-e zinat* (grace note)**

Besides the *eshāre* there is a great variety of grace notes used before or on the beat, most of which are not individually named but simply called *not-e zinat* (grace note). The most common grace notes are the *tom* and the *bak* usually performed before one of the three main *riz* (roll) (see next section), on the principal note:



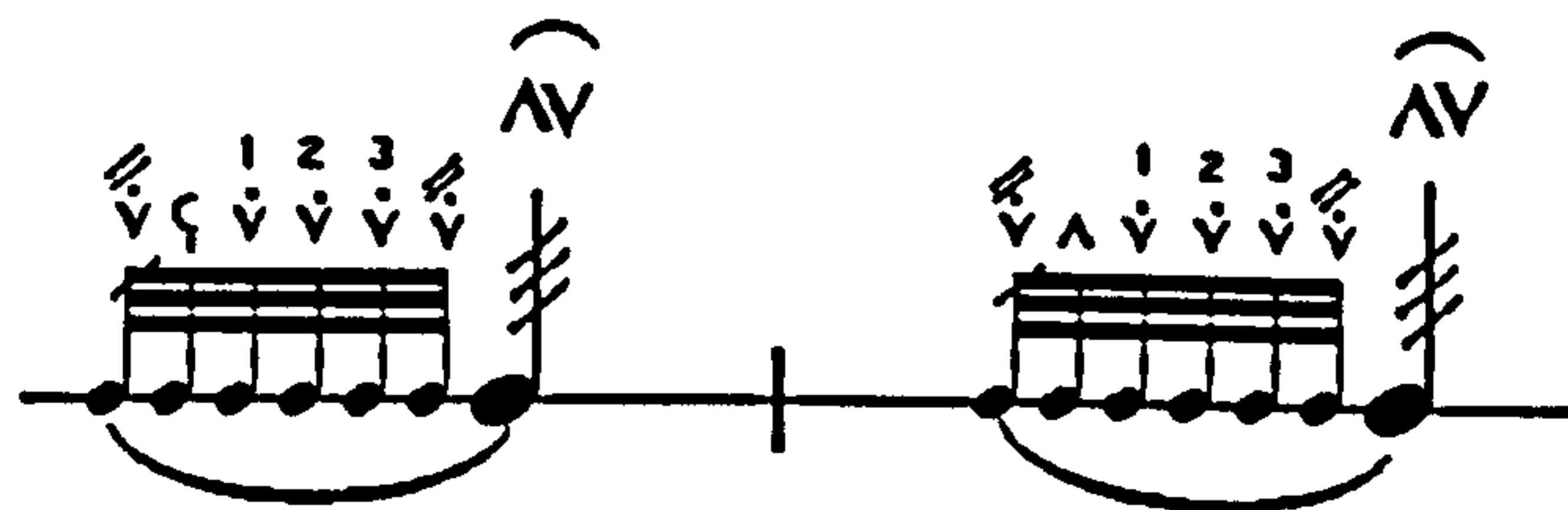
Example 10: Example of most common grace notes.

The following grace notes are also used, and also performed on the beat:



Example 11: Example of grace notes.

The lengthiest groups of grace notes that I have encountered in Rajabi's repertoire are a group of six demisemiquavers beamed together. Although there are six written notes in the following example, there are eight sounds.⁴⁴⁷ In this case, the *tom* or the *bak* is performed on the principal note:



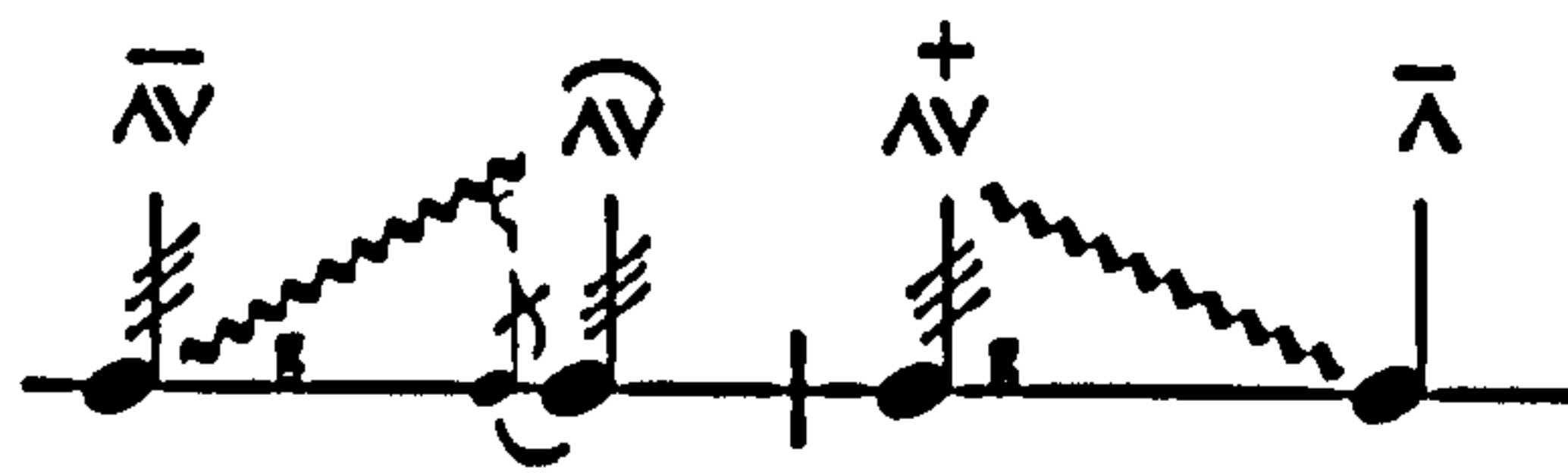
Example 12: The lengthiest group of grace notes in Rajabi's repertoire (Rajabi 2002:85).

The *Glissando*

Rajabi has introduced a glissando technique on the *tombak* which has become very popular today. The glissando is performed with the two index fingers in a *riz* (roll) manner. The upper hand is relatively steady, with the index finger sliding up and down

⁴⁴⁷ The first (and last) grace note in example 12 is actually comprised of two strokes and not one. The ζ sign is normally used as a grace note and it is performed by the index finger. When it follows a *pelang* stroke of the middle finger, it is stimulated by a flick of the index finger on the middle finger and it is then released on the rim of the drum. When sign ζ is the initial grace note (as in example 12) then it is used to indicate Tehrani's *eshāre*: first the middle finger and then the index finger strike the middle part of the skin. The latter is stimulated by a flick on the middle finger.

the skin; the index finger of the lower hand sweeps rapidly across the surface of the skin. The glissando is symbolized as:



Example 13: Example of glissando.⁴⁴⁸

The Riz

Rajabi has defined *riz* as “an orderly consecutive movement performed by a rapid movement of the fingers of the two hands” (1999a:27).⁴⁴⁹ Rajabi is today performing 16 different types of *riz*:⁴⁵⁰

1. *Riz-e do angoshti-ye sāde* or *riz-e timpani* (Two-finger simple *riz* or *riz-e timpani*).

Symbolized as:

2. *Riz-e do angoshti-ye beshkani* (Two-finger snapping *riz*).⁴⁵¹

3. *Riz-e noh angoshti-ye* or *riz-e por* (Nine-finger *riz* or full *riz*).

4. *Riz-e dah angoshti-ye* or *riz-e portar* (Ten-finger *riz* or fuller *riz*).


⁴⁴⁸ *Riz-e timpani* or *riz-e do angoshti sāde* (two-fingers simple *riz*), symbolized as , is performed by a rapid alteration of *bak* and *haft* (seven), the latter striking the middle part of the drum skin. *Riz-e timpani* begins with *bak* and ends with *haft*. The latter rule is subject to change depending on the grace note preceding *riz*. When the *haft* hits the rim of the drum and moves downwards towards the middle part of the drum skin, *riz-e timpani* is symbolized as (as in example 13). When *haft* strikes the middle part of the drum skin and moves upwards, ending at the rim of the drum, *riz-e timpani* is symbolized as (example 13).

⁴⁴⁹ Not all *tombak* players believe that rapid movement is a prerequisite in all *riz* types. Afgah tried to teach me to play the *riz-e por* at “ordinary” speed.


⁴⁵⁰ I am using here Rajabi’s terminology and signs as published in his two books (Rajabi 1999a and 2002).

⁴⁵¹ Pedrām believes that Eftetāh originated this *riz*. It is commonly known as *riz-e pelang*.

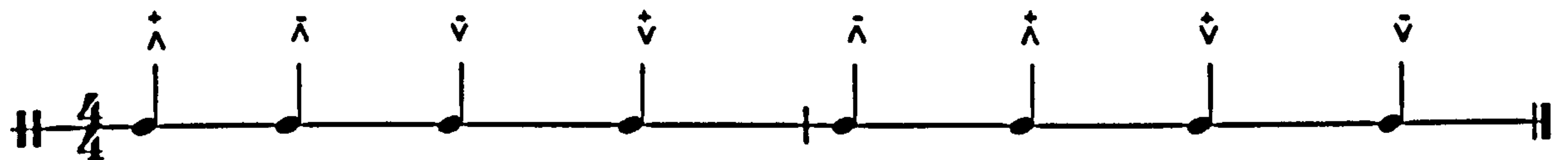
This *riz* is performed as *riz-e por*, only the upper hand does not rest on the *tombak*, but it “hangs” in the air horizontally, parallel to the drum skin. The movement of the upper hand is brought about by the wrist. As in *riz-e por*, the sound should be continuous and flowing.

5. *Riz-e do angoshti-ye sāde-ye ‘aks ya bargardān* (Two-finger simple *riz*, reverse or invert). Symbolized as: 

This *riz* is performed by rapid alternations of *haft* \bar{v} and *bak* $\bar{\wedge}$, and it commences with the upper hand.

6. *Riz-e do angoshti-ye mozā’ef* (Two-finger binary *riz*). 

This *riz* is performed by the following sequence of strokes in a rapid succession:



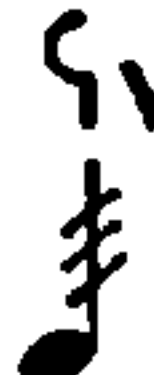
Example 14: Sequence of strokes in *riz-e do angoshti-ye mozā’ef* (two-finger binary *riz*) (Rajabi 2002:3).

Sign $\bar{\wedge}^+$ denotes a lower hand ring finger stroke on the drum skin of the *tombak*.

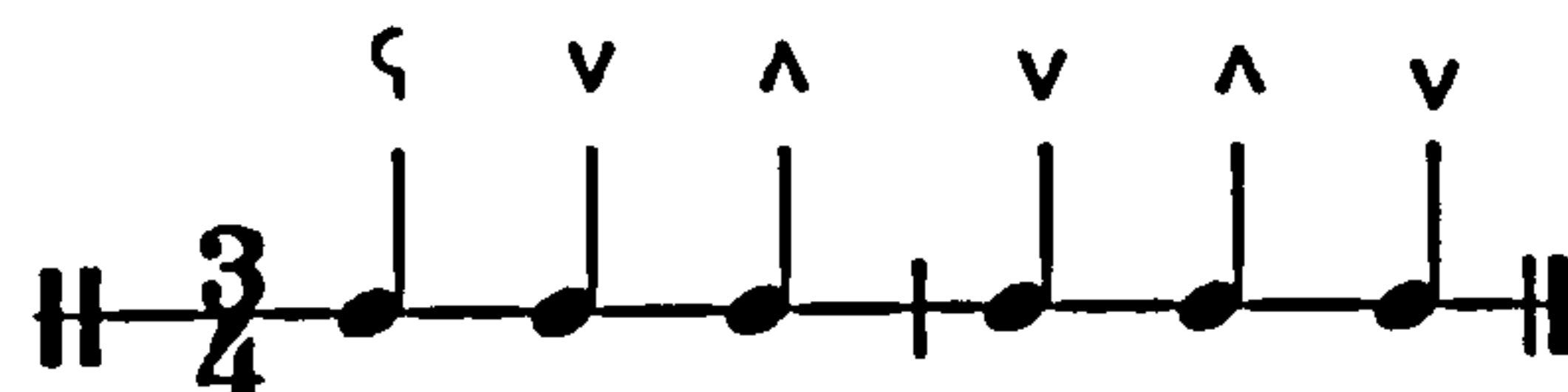
Sign $\bar{\wedge}$ denotes a lower hand ring finger stroke on the rim of the *tombak*.

Sign \bar{v} denotes a lower hand ring finger stroke on the rim of the *tombak*.


Sign \bar{v}^+ denotes a lower hand ring finger stroke on the drum skin of the *tombak*.

7. *Riz-e do bar yek* (Two-over-one *riz*). 

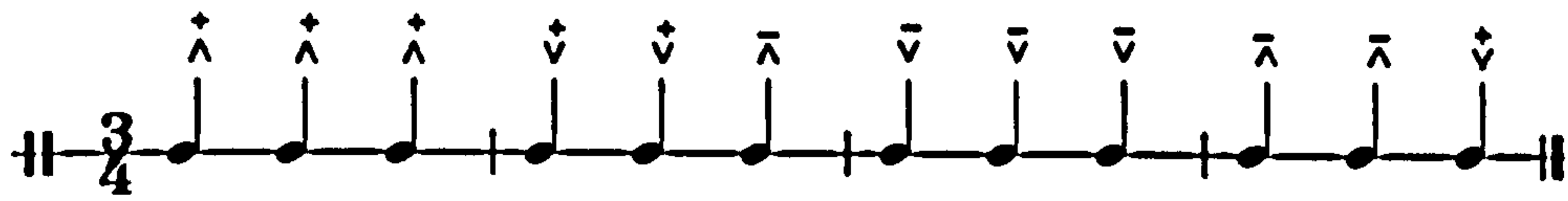
This *riz* is performed by the following sequence of strokes in rapid succession:




Example 15: Sequence of strokes in *riz-e do bar yek* (two-over-one *riz*) (Rajabi 2002:4).

8. *Riz-e se bar do* (Three-over-two *riz*). 

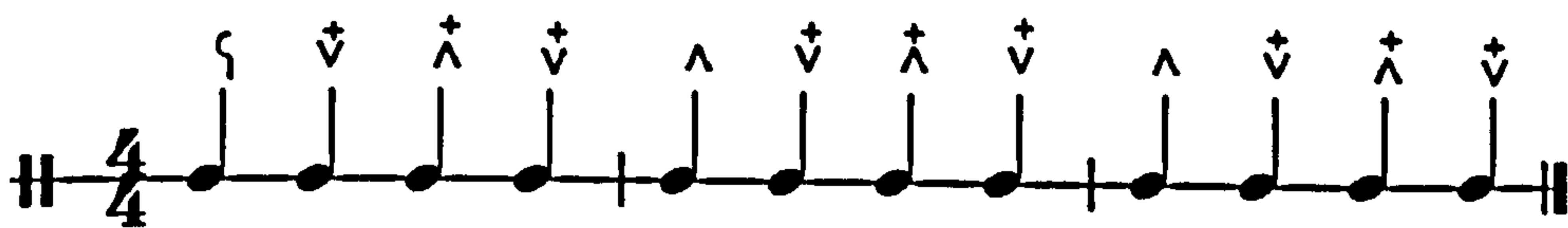
This *riz* is performed by the following sequence of strokes in rapid succession:




Example 16: Sequence of strokes in *riz-e se bar do* (three-over-two *riz*) (Rajabi 2002:4).

9. *Riz-e do bar do* (Two-over-two *riz*). 

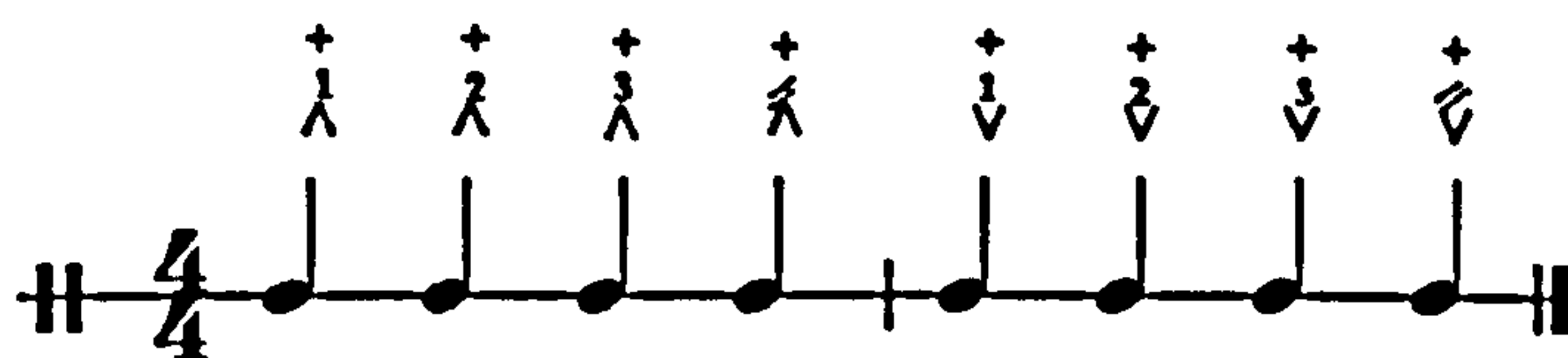
This *riz* is performed by the following sequence of strokes in rapid succession:



Example 17: Sequence of strokes in *riz-e do bar do* (two-over-two *riz*) (Rajabi 2002:5).


10. *Riz-e hasht angoshti-ye ruye pust* (Eight-finger *riz* on the skin). 

This *riz* is performed with the small ($\overset{+}{\lambda}$ and $\overset{+}{\nu}$), ring ($\overset{+}{\lambda}$ and $\overset{+}{\nu}$), middle ($\overset{+}{\lambda}$ and $\overset{+}{\nu}$) and index finger ($\overset{+}{\lambda}$ and $\overset{+}{\nu}$) of the lower and upper hand, in succession, as in the following example:

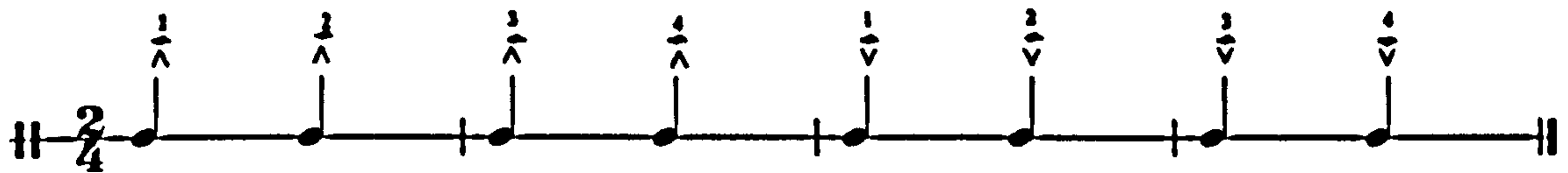


Example 18: Sequence of strokes in *riz-e hasht angoshti-ye ruye pust* (eight-finger *riz* on the skin) (Rajabi 2002:6, 7).

The action comes from the downward striking motion of the fingers themselves. Each finger strikes the middle part of the drum skin. The index finger “lands” on the drum skin, stimulated by a flick on the middle finger (as in the case of Tehrāni’s *eshāre*). All movements are stimulated by the fingers (and not the wrist).

11. *Riz-e hasht angoshti-ye ruye chub* (Eight-finger *riz* on the wood). 

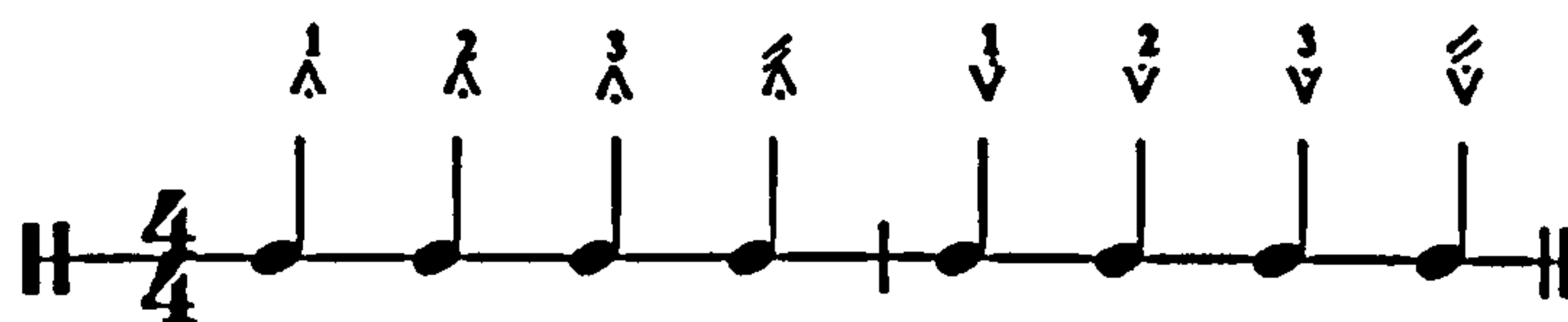
The fingernail of the small, ring, middle and index finger “land” on the wooden part of the rim of the *tombak* stimulated by a flick of the thumb. This *riz* is performed by the following sequence of strokes:





Example 19: Sequence of strokes in *riz-e hasht angoshti-ye ruye chub* (eight-finger *riz* on the wood) (Rajabi 2002:67).

12. *Riz-e hasht angoshti-ye tarkibi ya mokhatelat* (Eight-finger *riz*, combined or mixed).

Symbolized as: 

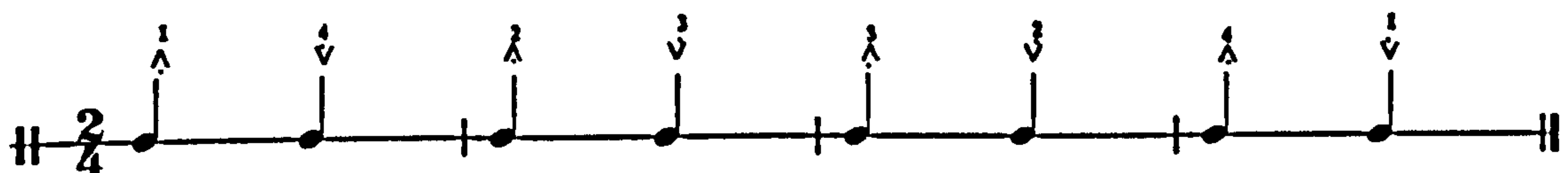


Example 20: Sequence of strokes in *riz-e hasht angoshti-ye tarkibi ya mokhatelat* (eight-finger *riz*, combined or mixed) (Rajabi 2002:8).

This *riz* is a succession of *pelang* strokes of the small, ring, and middle finger, which hit the drum skin. The signs  and , indicate a release of the index finger on the drum skin, following a flick on the middle finger.

13. *Riz-e hasht angoshti-ye beshkani* (Eight-finger snapping *riz*). 

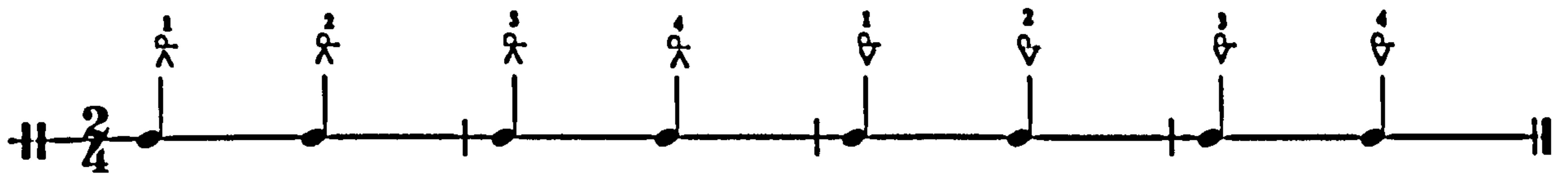
This *riz* is a combination of *pelang* strokes performed on the rim of the *tombak* by the small, ring, middle and index finger in the following order:



Example 21: Sequence of strokes in *riz-e hasht angoshti-ye beshkani* (eight-finger snapping *riz*) (Rajabi 2002:9).

14. *Riz-e hasht angoshti-ye nākhoni ruye pust* (Nine-fingernail *riz* on the skin). 

This *riz* is performed by the following sequence of strokes in rapid succession:



Example 22: Sequence of strokes in *riz-e hasht angoshti-ye nākhoni ruye pust* (nine-fingernail *riz* on the skin) (Rajabi 2002:10).

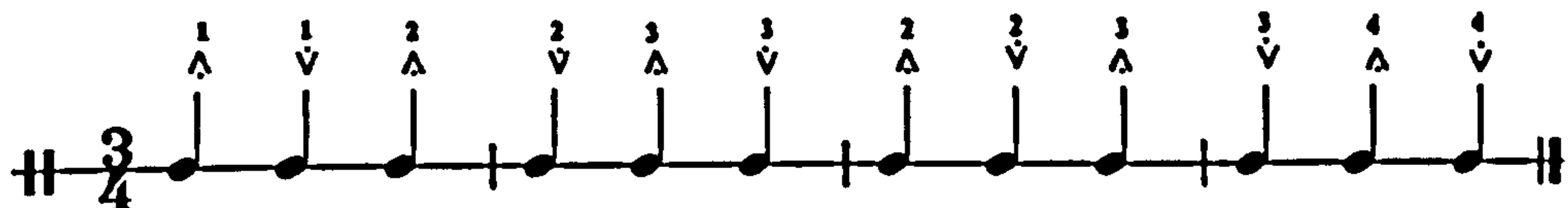
The finger technique of this *riz* is similar to *riz* number 11. The difference is that the fingernails strike the drum skin of the *tombak* (and not the rim like in example 11). Rajabi performs this *riz* by putting the *tombak* on the ground in horizontal position between his legs.

15. *Riz-e shalāqi* or *riz-e zurkhāne-i* (Striking *riz* or *zurkhāne riz*). 

This *riz* is performed by the ring and middle finger, which strike the rim of the drum skin while being united. *Riz-e shalāqi* is performed by a rapid succession of both hands, and normally begins with the lower hand. The movement is brought about by the wrist.

16. *Riz-e hasht angoshti-ye beshkani dar ham* (Eight-finger mixed snapping *riz*).⁴⁵² 

This *riz* is a combination of *pelang* strokes performed on the rim of the *tombak* by the small, ring, middle and index finger in the following order:



Example 23: Sequence of strokes in *riz-e hasht angoshti-ye beshkani dar ham* (eight-finger mixed snapping *riz*) (Rajabi 2002:12).

⁴⁵² See them [DVD I #1] in sequence 3, 4, 2, 1, 5, 6, 9, 8, 7, 12, 13, 16, 10, 15, 11, 14. The DVD is from a concert in Vahdat Hall performed in December 1997 (16 Āzar 1376).

Riz numbers 1, 2, 3, 14, and 15 existed before Rajabi, while the rest are his own inventions. From the five existing ones *riz* numbers 1, 2 and 3 are the most commonly used among performers today, and are indispensable in accompaniment. The characteristic of these three *riz* are the following:

1. Usually it is the lower hand that commences the *riz*.
2. They can be performed in any time value.
3. They can take grace notes.
4. Other notes may be inserted within the *riz*.
5. The sound produced is continuous and uninterrupted (i.e. without accents).
6. They can be used as a variation in the performance of one rhythmic composition.

Rajabi's eleven *riz* do not always follow these prescriptions. First, from the 11 *riz* that Rajabi has composed only four can be used to perform rhythmic pieces in the manner described above; these are *riz* numbers 4, 5, 10 and 14. Second, several of his *riz* have accents (not because of the style of performance, but because of the specific strokes used), like *riz* number 6, 7, 8, and 9. These *riz* (6, 7, 8 and 9) cannot incorporate grace notes. If in these *riz* one stroke would be substituted by another, then the particular order of the strokes (which constitutes the particular *riz*) would disintegrate. Third, *riz* number 7 and 8 can be performed only in 3 beat time. Some *tombak* players actually do not accept the above *riz* to be *riz*, as they say, "anything played fast should be then termed as *riz*".

Many of these *riz* are modifications of the three main *riz*: number 4 is a modification of number 3; and number 5 is a modification of number 1. Not all of his *riz* are suitable for use in accompaniment, such are *riz* numbers 11 and 14. Rajabi admits not having used the three (number 11, 13, and 16) out of 16 *riz* in any solo composition and are performed by him on stage simply as *riz*.

Another novelty with regards to his *riz* is that in *riz* numbers 10, 11, 12, 13 and 16 he uses all eight fingers individually, while it was only in the pre-existing *riz* number 14 that eight fingers were used to directly produce the sound.⁴⁵³

Most pieces can be performed by using seven different *riz*, which provide chromatic range and density to one piece. See [DVD I #2] Rajabi performing one piece

⁴⁵³ In *riz-e por*, nine fingers are used but the movement comes from the wrist, while in *riz* numbers 10, 11, 12, 13 and 16 the movement is activated by each finger.

in 6/8, first by using the ornament *eshāre* and then using the seven *riz*, in sequence 2, 1, 3, 5, 4, 10 and 14.⁴⁵⁴

Most *tombak* players are preoccupied with the sound quality of their *riz* and work for years to improve it, working in particular on the three main *riz*. Nāser Farhangfar was among the first *tombak* players who was “glorified” for the quality of sound produced on the *tombak* and especially for his *riz-e por* (full *riz*). The sound of which resembles that of a gentle waterfall or rain shower, as many *tombak* players assert.⁴⁵⁵

Repertoire

Solo

Rajabi today declares confidently that he can perform on stage solo *tombak* for about 45 minutes, which indeed he does. Most of the pieces that he performs in concerts, if not all, are compositions from his two books (Rajabi 1999a, 2002), which he performs usually as they are written. Each composition lasts no longer than three minutes.⁴⁵⁶ I have never seen or heard that he improvises in *tombak* solo or duet *tombak*.⁴⁵⁷ He is perhaps among the first to introduce the idea of *tombak* composition as a stable, unchanged and rigid entity,⁴⁵⁸ and the first one to give names to several of his rhythmic compositions.⁴⁵⁹

Rajabi has used a wide range of material to compose these pieces. In his books he always refers to the source of inspiration and the year of composition, and the date when the piece was performed in a prestigious concert hall. He has borrowed, for example, a few rhythmic sentences of 2-4 bars length from other *tombak* players, such as Tehrāni, Farhangfar, Jahāngiri Malek and Eftetāh and he has further developed them. He has developed rhythmic compositions by using specific playing techniques of Tehrāni (Tehrāni’s style of *eshāre*, which normally he does not perform) or Farhangfar

⁴⁵⁴ Recorded on a video camera during our lessons, winter 2002.

⁴⁵⁵ Metaphors referring to the sound of the *tombak* are generally absent in *tombak* playing.

⁴⁵⁶ A set of pieces performed by Rajabi, known as the *ruhozi* (defined in footnote 465, page 295) pieces, lasts about ten minutes.

⁴⁵⁷ In accompaniment he prefers to have practised the piece many times before performing it on stage.

⁴⁵⁸ The idea of a fixed, stable composition is of course not introduced to Iranian music by Rajabi, but it is a well-established practice in Iranian art music (Nooshin, personal communication, January 2007). See, for example, Zonis (1973:139-148) and Farhat (1990:113-120).

⁴⁵⁹ Perhaps the only exceptions of rhythmic solo compositions that have titles are Tehrāni’s *Lokomotiv* and *Diesel*.

(his *eshāre* as a principal note). In *Zibāyishenāsi va Ertebāt-e ān bā Ritm* [Aesthetics and Its Relation to Rhythm], a cassette recorded in 1990, he says, “I have used [elements] from every *tombak* player, from *ostāds*, from super *ostāds* (*super āsatid*), from the Professor,⁴⁶⁰ from Gomrok square,⁴⁶¹ from the radio, from every dead and living performer.”⁴⁶²

Rajabi has also transcribed pieces that he has performed in the past with the *santur* of Rezā Shafi’yān, such as *Tajassom-e ritmik yek melodi* [Rhythmic incarnation of one melody]. He has also used short rhythmic phrases that are usually played by the *tempo* (a percussion instrument similar to the *darabukka*), which he has further developed. Rajabi has also written rhythmic compositions upon existing folk, children’s and religious melodies, such as *Sinezanān Haram-e Kerbalā* [Breast-Beating in the Shrine of Kerbalā],⁴⁶³ and *Atal, Matal, Tutule*.⁴⁶⁴ He has written a series of rhythmic compositions inspired by the rhythmic patterns played by *motrebi*, *ruhozi* and *takhte hozi* performers.⁴⁶⁵

Until the early 1970s the most common rhythmic patterns performed in *tombak* solo were in the meters used in Iranian music: such as 2/4, 3/4, 3/8, and 4/4 simple time. The 6/8, 6/16 and 6/4 were the most prevalent, if not sole, meters in compound time. From discussions with Mortezā A’yān, one of Eftetāh’s students, it seems the latter did not teach asymmetric meters in mid-1950s.⁴⁶⁶ However, such meters were commonly performed in regional musics and many of the *tombak* players living in the provinces were accustomed to them.⁴⁶⁷ Generally, many musicians of Kurdish background have introduced uneven meters in Iranian classical music (Nooshin, personal communication, January 2007). On the other hand, most of the urban *tombak* players in Tehrān performing Iranian music were still not very much familiarized with uneven time and compound time (other than in six beats).

⁴⁶⁰ He is referring in sarcastic manner to a particular well-known *tombak* player.

⁴⁶¹ He is referring to the *motrebi* musicians that were performing at the Gomrok square in Tehrān.

⁴⁶² He feels the need to define this stance, so he adds: “Beethoven was not a student of Beethoven, and the student of Beethoven did not become Beethoven. If Eftetāh did not exist, I would again become Rajabi”. But then he acknowledges his teacher Eftetāh.

⁴⁶³ *Sinezani* (lit. breast-beating) is a mourning procession commemorating the martyred Imams, with the leader of the group singing metrical verses that are repeated by the group performing breast-beating.

⁴⁶⁴ In *Atal, Matal, Tutule* (a popular children’s song) and *Sinezanān Haram-e Kerbalā* Rajabi’s note values do not follow strictly the syllable length of the words.

⁴⁶⁵ *Ruhozi* and *takhte hozi* are forms of traditional comic improvisatory theatre, usually performed outdoors by traveling companies, employing mime, acrobatics, dance and song. See Chelkowski (1991).

⁴⁶⁶ Rajabi does not recall Eftetāh teaching him uneven rhythm in mid-1960s. In addition, Eftetāh’s rhythmic notation, published in 2000 does not entail asymmetric rhythms.

⁴⁶⁷ Arzhang Kāmkar for example, brought up in Sanandāj in Kurdistan, always taught that 7/8 is a metre of Kurdish origins, until he heard a Greek group performing 7/8 in the late 1990s, in a concert in Austria.

Rajabi was also among the first *tombak* players to compose and perform solo asymmetric rhythmic compositions. He began to perform uneven meters (*lang*) accompanying the *santur* of Rezā Shafi'yān in the early seventies. He performed solo *tombak* in 5/4 for the first time in 1972 for the radio program "Golchin-e Haft-e". And in 1975 he composed and performed duet *tombak* with Mortezā A'yān in 7/8. Also in 1975 he wrote a solo piece in 12/8 compound time as combination of two and three beats: 3+3+3+3 and 2+2+2+3+3.⁴⁶⁸

Many other *tombak* players have been experimenting since the early 1970s with uneven and compound meters. Farhangfar for example began working on uneven meters in the 1970s (Farhangfar and Mehrāni 2002:9), while in Tehrāni's book, printed in 1971 there are several rhythmic exercises in 5/4 and 7/4. However, in his two solo tapes he performs only in 2, 3, 4 and 6 time.

Thus, from the early 1970s Iranian musicians began experimenting more frequently with such metric configurations and sometimes the *tombak* players would be pioneering such works. Mortezā A'yān, a *tombak* player at the Centre for Preservation and Propagation of Iranian Music suggested Kiāni Nezhād they perform the *tasnif Nahoft* (in *Dastgāh Navā*) in 5/4 during the rehearsals for a performance in the Shirāz Arts Festival in 1977 with the then young musicians and students of the Centre such as Parisā, Kiāni Nezhād, 'Alizāde and Meshkātiān. At the time the *tasnif* were performed usually in 6/4. According to A'yān this *tasnif* was one of the first to be performed in uneven meters (Interview, October 2002).

The trend to experiment with the rhythmic structure of Iranian metric music was amplified with the introduction of modern poetry, with the growth of instrumental music disentangled from poetic meter, and especially with the popularization of regional music (rich with compound and asymmetric meters) that was also used in performances of Iranian music (for example by the Kāmkār ensemble or by Shahrām Nāzeri). 'Alizāde is one of the pioneers and developers of such experiments. In 1977 he recorded the *Sāvāran-e Dasht-e Omid* [Riders in the Field of Hope] in 7/8 time, which today remains very popular and is considered a "classical piece" in terms of rhythmic structure and the particular rhythmic patterns performed on the *tombak* [CD I #8].⁴⁶⁹ In

⁴⁶⁸ Compound time structures were also published in Tehrāni's book in 1971 in 9 and 12 beats, both featuring a symmetrical division in groupings of triple time only. In this case, when the 12/8 is performed as a combination or repetition of two 6/8, or four 3/8, it lessens in a sense the concept of "long" period.

⁴⁶⁹ This is one of the few pieces where a musician/composer has composed the rhythmic patterns for the *tombak*. *Sāvāran-e Dasht-e Omid* was recorded in 1977. Three *tombaks* were used, performed by Rajabi, one of his students and Kāmkār. The piece, *Sāvāran-e Dasht-e Omid*, is from the recording *Neynavā Āvā-ye Mehr* [Neynavā. The sound of Affection] produced in 1991.

1993 'Alizāde recorded a piece for the *tār* (accompanied by the *tombak* of Dāriush Zārgeri) in various meters [CD I #9].⁴⁷⁰ The piece begins in 22/16, then changes to 20/16, it returns again to 22/16, then it moves to 14/16, and before the end there are variations in several other long metric periods (12/16, 15/16, 16/16). While such plurality in expression is welcomed by many *tombak* players, others are more sceptical. In this context Arzhang Kāmkar remarked that,

We could play any piece in a convoluted way (*pichide*), for example, in 50/8 I could play like [and he plays and counts at the same time on his *tombak*] 1234, 12345678910, 123456, 1234 and so on, but a rhythm has to have feeling (*hess*), has to be beautiful (*zibā*), not only complex (Interview, February 2003).

The genres of solo, duet and group *tombak* are relatively new (about sixty years old) and the body of the repertoire is not a fixed entity, but is still in the process of constant development and enrichment. Novice *tombak* players today often perform the material of their teachers, while mature *tombak* players build up their own repertoire. As already mentioned, there is an abundance of printed manuals for the *tombak*, but most *tombak* players only recently begun to publish solo pieces (most of the manual contain short rhythmic exercises). A good example is that of Ārash Farhangfar, who has transcribed and published works of his father Nāser Farhangfar playing solo or accompaniment, drawing on the latter's unpublished private audio collection.

Except for the many recording of Iranian music that include passages of short solo *tombak*, the recorded repertoire exclusively for solo *tombak* in Iran is fairly small: *Hossein Tehrāni. Taknavāz-e Tombak* [Hossein Tehrāni. *Tombak* Soloist] by Hossein Tehrāni (late 1960s); *Sāz-e Tanhā. Bedāhe Navāzi-ye Tombak* [Instrument Alone. Improvisation on *Tombak*] by Dāriush Zargerī (1996); *Taknavāzi-ye Tombak* [Solo *Tombak*] by Majid Khalaj (1993); *Āvā-ye Khiāl. Taknavāzi-ye Tombak* [The Sound of Dream. Solo *Tombak*] (2000) and *Peydāyesh* [Genesis] (2003) by Navid Afgah; and *Goftegu-ye Chap va Rāst* [Dialogue between Two Hands] by Bahman Rajabi and Farbod Yadollāhi (2006).⁴⁷¹ In addition, Rajabi has many audio and video tapes of his live performances, but he has not published them; instead he distributes them among his students. In these works *tombak* players have performed the established meters in

⁴⁷⁰ The piece *Hejrān* (*Dastgāh Segāh*) is from the recording *Hamnavā'i*.

⁴⁷¹ The *Shemirāni Trio* have recorded in France several works for three *tombak*, Khalaj has several recordings for solo *tombak*, also published in France; while the percussion group *Zarbang* has recorded works for Iranian percussion in Germany. However, these works are largely unknown in Iran. For example, Afgah and Pedrām heard from me for the first time about the *Shemirāni Trio*.

Iranian music, such as 6/8, 6/4, 3/4, 3/8, 2/4, 4/4, but also (with the exception of Tehrāni) meters such as 5/8, 7/8 and 12/8.

Many *tombak* players today perform uneven, compound and “long” rhythmic configurations, but with the exception of the most talented ones, most *tombak* players and musicians feel more confident in performing the “traditional” Iranian rhythms.

A last note regarding the repertoire is that it is being further enriched with the introduction of novel playing styles, such as Afgah’s “effective playing”, where the player uses a wide variety of sound colours and playing techniques.

Duet Tombak

Duet *tombak* as a form has been largely developed by and has become an important emblem of Rajabi’s status. While the first duet *tombak* was performed by Shemirāni and Tehrāni in Shirāz Arts Festival in 1969, when the music theme was “Percussion Instruments from Around the World”,⁴⁷² all later well known duet *tombak* were performed by Rajabi. For example, the second *tombak* duet was performed by Rajabi and Farhangfar in 1971 in *Anjoman-e Farhangi-ye Irān* (The Iranian Cultural Society) and in the United States. Since then Rajabi has developed further this duet and has performed it several more times.⁴⁷³ His last performances with Pedrām and with Yadollāhi (except for the solo parts of the *tombak* players) do not differ very much from Rajabi’s duet *tombak* published in 2002 in his second instruction book *Āmuzesh-e Tonbak. Ketāb- e dovom. Dorehā-ye ‘Ali va Foq-e ‘Ali* [Tonbak Training. Book Two. Course for High and Advanced (students)].⁴⁷⁴ Rajabi teaches this composition to all of his students who finish the two books. I was not taught this duet, although I had completed the two books. Knowing that Rajabi teaches only by notation from his books, implying thus an expiry date for my music lessons with him, I did not want to finish my

⁴⁷² According to Shemirāni, a film of this festival probably exists in France, recorded by a French crew (Interview, November 2002).

⁴⁷³ He performed with Morteżā A’yān in 1977 in *Tālār-e Darvish* (Darvish Concert Hall) at the Centre for Preservation and Propagation of Persian Music; in 1990 with Mahmud Farahmand in the Rudaki Concert Hall; in 1993 with his son Mazdak Rajabi in the Rudaki Concert Hall. Rajabi modified again this duet and performed it in 1997 with his student Pedrām Khāvarzamini at the Vahdat Concert Hall; and then in February in 2002 with Farbod Yadāllahi in Fārābi Concert Hall at the Art University of Tehrān (which I saw). Most of these duets were privately recorded and are now distributed in the form of audio cassettes or video tapes by Rajabi.

⁴⁷⁴ See this *tombak* duet with Rajabi and Pedrām [DVD I #3] performed in Vahdat Hall in December 1997 (16 Āzar 1376).

classes with him. In the back of my mind I was hoping to return at some point and continue my lessons. I was also disappointed when I realized that he teaches separately each line of the two *tombaks* to most of his students and he actually does not practice or play with them as a duet.

Rajabi teaches the compositions for duet *tombak* usually to his most loyal and talented students. It appears as though he reinforces the master-disciple relationship and the mutual commitment and loyalty, qualities that appear to be disappearing in the Iranian *ostād-shāgerd* bond (as described in chapter six). Normally, he performs this duet in a concert with his most devoted students, acknowledging them publicly as good students/musicians and giving them thus the opportunity for a musical career. A further reason that he teaches the duet *tombak* only to his loyal students is that the duet *tombak* is not simply a taught lesson that Rajabi conducts, but it is a form where both sides need to practise extensively together, so that the final result is impeccable. Thus, it is almost natural that Rajabi chooses his best student to perform with. The composition and performance of the duet *tombak* is the culmination of the playing technique that the student has learned from Rajabi, and it is the consolidation of the student's effort, talent and his bond with Rajabi.

I have not heard of other formal concerts of known *tombak* players performing duet *tombak*, however in various concerts one can sometimes witness a short passage of *tombak* duet. Lastly, young *tombak* players when gathering together often practice/improvise duet *tombak*, but I have not been able to discern a particular music structure behind their playing.

Group *Tombak*

The first *tombak* group was formed in 1947 by Tehrāni. Its formation was encouraged by Khāleqi. From 1966 Esmā'ili, Tehrāni's student, became the leader of the group. Initially it had four members and by the end of the 1960s, it had 12 members, among whom two women. The name of the group was essentially its description, namely *Gruhe Navāzān-e Tombak* (The *Tombak* Players Ensemble) (Banāi, Interview, February 2003). This group performed a repertoire composed in the beginning by Tehrāni and

later by Esmā'ili.⁴⁷⁵ Tehrāni's compositions were written in two-stave arrangement, each stave for half of the group members; while the times were in 2/4, 6/8 and 4/4. Esmā'ili's pieces were written in 4/4, 3/4, 3/8, 6/4 and 6/8, in three-stave arrangement, the two staves for two *tombak* groups, and the third for a *dāyere zengi* (a frame drum with metal rings).⁴⁷⁶ During its lifetime (until the beginning of the Revolution) this ensemble gave many concerts, either separately or accompanying large orchestras, such as the Ensemble of Farāmorz Pāyvar and the *Orkestr Shomāre-ye Yek Honarhā-ye Zibā* (Fine Arts Orchestra Number One) (see chapter 3).

The second *tombak* group was formed in 1986, with the same name as the first, by Esmā'ili, which gave its first concert in 1989. Three pieces from its repertoire (except for the solo part usually improvised by Esmā'ili) were published in his book *Qet'eāti Berāye Gruh Tombak. Āsār-e Mohammad Esmā'ili* [Pieces for Tombak Ensemble. Works by Mohammad Esmā'ili] (1999a). Here, the scores are written in four-stave arrangement. The first three staves for the three *tombak* sections and the fourth for *dāyere zengi*. The meters are now more rich and include rhythmic patterns written in 5/4, 12/8 and 13/8

The third *tombak* group was formed in 1996 by Pedrām Khāvarzamini; its work was recorded in 1999 and released in 2003. It was named *Varashān*, a term drawn from the theory of *Iqā'* rhythms. This group differs from the previous two essentially in its formation: the members of this group are friends (some of them also Rajabi's students like Pedrām), while the members of the previous two groups were and are (Esmā'ili's *tombak* group still exists) students of the leaders of the group Tehrāni and Esmā'ili. This formation makes the group unique: the relations among the *tombak* players are more egalitarian and there is no "authoritative" figure to lead the group. However, a charismatic figure, as a matter of course, often undertakes the leading of the group.

Although there are not many percussion groups in Iran, their vitality depends by and large on the aesthetics of the audience and the prospect they have to perform regularly in Iran:

Pedrām: We had several concerts from the time we started, three nights in the Rudaki Concert Hall in 1997, two nights concert again in Rudaki in 1998, two nights in the opening

⁴⁷⁵ Four of Tehrāni's compositions for group *tombak* were transcribed by Dehlavi and published in Tehrāni's *Āmuzesh-e Tombak* in 1971. Esmā'ili has also published a manual with compositions for group *tombak* in 1993, while in 1999 he published one piece for group *tombak* that was composed in the 1970.

⁴⁷⁶ In several parts, the score is written for three *tombak* groups and one *dāyere*. The rhythmic structures of the *tombak* groups are today considered simple.

ceremonies of the Film Festival, once with Rajabi⁴⁷⁷ and one with Zarbofiān. Perhaps, we performed for two or three years, but this year less than others, we had only one performance [the one in Fārābi Concert Hall].

Alexandra: Why you don't perform so often now?

Pedrām: Well it is my fault, but also the fault of the guys. They don't come regularly to rehearse because this work doesn't remunerate.

Alexandra: Why did you form this group?

Pedrām: Because I had some ideas in my mind, to have a concert for percussion instruments. Then I realized that people here, they don't have the mood to come and listen for one and a half hour to a percussion work. Because what I had in my mind differed from the rest of percussion groups that possibly can play for two hours and the people won't get tired. And why is that so? Because what they play is very simple or the group they have is very big, for example 50 *dafs*. So the people just look at the instruments, you know, they look at the big orchestra and they all [say] ah...ah...[he makes face expression of amazement] they say for example *this is very interesting stuff*, but no one listens to the music. Our groups is small, and I realized that if I wanted to play in a concert, we either had to water down our work, that is to play nonsense, to make it longer, so that it fits the taste of the people, or if we don't want to do this, we had to play shorter time. So that's why during our first concerts we played for about 20 minutes and together with the solo about 30 minutes. And this work left a lot of influence.

Alexandra: In what your ensemble differs from the rest?

Pedrām: It differs very much. First the material/theme (*matlab*) differs very much, then the style of playing, mine and the rest of the guys....our form is essentially different from the form of the other *tombak* groups. In other *tombak* ensembles they have two or three groups of *tombak* players ...the first group would play for example dim-ra-ta-dim da-ra-ra-di-dam [♪♪♪♪ ♪♪♪♪] the other group would play di-ra-ra-dim-dim ra-da-da-dim-ta [♪♪♪♪ ♪♪♪♪].⁴⁷⁸ The rest would play bum bum bum bum tam tam tam tam. I am not saying anything [bad] about their work, but rather about their form of playing, which is different from ours in that we all start at some point and say something, then we separate at some places, then we meet again, then we move on again, we have used this shapes (*hālat*) a lot (Interview, September 2002).

Most of the pieces performed by the group were composed by Pedrām. He has used a wide range of time meters 5/8, 5/16, 9/8, 8/8, 10/8, but also more common Iranian meters such as 6/8, 6/16 and 2/4. He has used *tombaks* of different sizes in order to achieve a plurality of sounds, and other Iranian percussion instruments such as the *dammam*, the *naqqāre*, the *daf*, and the *dohol*. The material he has used is drawn from the tradition of *tombak* playing, from regional music (Sistān) and of course it is from

⁴⁷⁷ In this concert (February 2002 in the in Fārābi Concert Hall at the Art University of Tehrān) Pedrām performed with his *tombak* group, while Rajabi performed his duet with Yadāllahi.

⁴⁷⁸ I have underlined the semiqavers so that the reader can follow the relationship between the syllables and the notation. The syllable name is not equivalent to a specific time value.

his own inspiration. The beginning of the piece [CD I #10], is composed for solo *tombak* by Tehrāni, the extension was made by Rajabi for solo *tombak*, and then the development was composed for four *tombaks* by Khāvarzamini.⁴⁷⁹ In this piece are shown most of the traditional rhythms in 6 beat time.

Until my departure there were no other professional *tombak* groups in Iran. However, such formations were often practiced by *tombak* players on a smaller level, for example with the students of their music schools. Moreover, today there is a growing number of percussion ensembles which appear to be in vogue either as distinctive ensembles or as part of music groups. There is also a proclivity to use the more modern expression for percussion instruments such as *sāz-hāye kubei* rather than its synonymous *sāz-hāye zarbi*.⁴⁸⁰

After my departure a new percussion group was formed, including many young musicians playing predominantly *dafs* and *tombaks*. Also, there was already a big *daf* ensemble named *Dālāhu* and established by Mas'ud Habibi.⁴⁸¹ These developments show the interest of the Iranian audience towards large percussion ensembles that present an energetic and lively atmosphere, that departures from the melancholic (as it has been often characterized) tone of Iranian music.⁴⁸²



Picture 21: A leaflet from a concert of the *Dālāhu* and *Āfāq daf* ensembles.

While such tendencies appear to be domestic products, there are parallel activities abroad by Iranian musicians performing in various percussion ensembles that are gradually becoming known in Iran. A good example is the *Zarbang* group based in

⁴⁷⁹ The piece *Be Yād-e Rajabi* [A Tribute to Rajabi] is from the recording *Kutāh* [Short/Concise/Momentary], published in 2004.

⁴⁸⁰ Both terms mean percussion instruments, however the term *kube-i* is the Iranian term for the Arabic assimilated word *zarbi*.

⁴⁸¹ Hear the piece *Rastākhiz* [Resurrection] [CD II #1], from the recording *Hemāse-ye Irān Zamin* [Epics of Iranian Land].

⁴⁸² Many percussions groups, particularly the ones with large number of *dafs*, have Sufi associations (Nooshin, personal communication, January 2007).

Germany that was initially formed in 1995 with the participation of Morteżā A'yān, while it now collaborates with two well known *tombak* player in Iran, Pezhmān Hadādi and Pedrām Khāvarzamini.

***Tombak* Solo and Accompaniment**

Soloists and Accompanists

Today many *tombak* players divide (and evaluate) their fellow *tombak* players into two categories: soloists and accompanists. Most *tombak* players in fact practice both styles. However, this distinction shows their preference and aptitude in one of the two playing forms, their musical background and their current music activities.

Alexandra: Do you think that, if someone plays good solo, then he is also a good accompanist and vice versa, if someone is a good accompanist then he is a good soloist?

Pedrām: No, these two things are not connected to one another. For example, I don't play very good solo [he is doing *ta'ārof*], well I play some things, but in accompaniment I know that I play well, because I like accompaniment (Interview, September 2002).

According to Pedrām, the preference for one of the two shows the personality of the player.

P: Look, it has to do with the psychology of a person. You know that I don't like at all to be alone, there is always someone next to me; I always try to be with someone. The instrument of a person, his solo, his accompaniment....everything that it is in your instrument are those things that you were brought up with them, you live with it, do you understand? Your instrument is showing who you are (Interview, September 2002).

Rajabi on the one hand, particularly since the Revolution, has collaborated only a few times with other music groups or musicians; he aspires to promoting mainly the solo *tombak*; and believes that all great *tombak* players are soloists. Another example comes from Arzhang Kāmkar, who is nowadays esteemed by musicians and *tombak* players alike for his accompaniment, and has performed with the most prominent groups in Iran, like *Sheydā*, *Āref*, and the Kāmkar ensemble. He prefers accompaniment more than solo playing. During his music career he has performed only one lengthy solo

in a concert in Australia. Usually, he plays short solos, in between the songs, for one or half a minute.

Other *tombak* players aspire to exhibit more their virtuosity by introducing solo rhythmic passages in the middle of one melodic piece. This style was particularly developed by Pāyvar and Esmā'ili, who begun introducing in the middle of a piece longer passages of solo *tombak* than before, when solo *tombak* was compressed in few bars. Today the length of a *tombak* solo passage in the course of a melodic piece is not standardized and depends much on the mentality of the *tombak* player and the other musicians.

Finally, the dissemination of *tombak* solo depends greatly on the “taste” of the audience. During a concert of a big *daf* ensemble that I visited during my fieldwork,⁴⁸³ Afgah, who is today the most admired *tombak* player among the young generation, was given time to perform solo *tombak*. After seven and a half minutes the audience begun to clap in order to show its “boredom” with his solo.⁴⁸⁴

The Solo Genre: Form and Aesthetics

Alexandra: Do you think that at the centre of a solo is the musician or the instrument?

Pedrām: It is the musician.

Alexandra: What does a solo signify, the things you can play on the *tombak* or the things that can be played on the *tombak*?

Pedrām: None of these.

Alexandra: Eh?

Pedrām: The point is not to show what we know to play or what the instrument can do, the point is [to play] whatever is in our head with regards to rhythm, not technique, technique is completely another issue, if you want to exhibit your own technique or the technique of the instrument this is not solo anymore (Interview, January 2003).

There are no strict rules in solo performance, just as there are no distinctive parts in a *tombak* solo, such as those described for the *tabla* by Kippen: “introductory composition”, “theme and variation compositions” or “set compositions” (Kippen 1988:98). However, as the solo piece is a delineated piece, with a beginning, a middle

⁴⁸³ The concert took place at the Exhibition and Conference Hall, at the International Exhibition Building (*Namāyeshgāh Beynalmellali, Salon Namāyesh va Hamāyesh Milād*) on the 13th Esfand 1381, that is, March 2002.

⁴⁸⁴ See also Kippen (1988:39-40) who describes how audience clapping forced a *thumri* singer to curtail her performance.

and an end, each *tombak* player has his own style of performance that has been influenced by previous *tombak* players.

The first pieces of *tombak* solo were not performed in one meter. For example, in some pieces performed by Farhangfar [CD I #6]⁴⁸⁵ and by Tehrāni [CD II #2]⁴⁸⁶ we witness that these two great masters mix several meters during one performance.

This practice is followed today by novice *tombak* players, who tend to mix in one rhythmic composition various metres, most often because they do not have enough material (*matlab*) in order to develop a solo piece in one meter. For instance they begin with 6/4, then they play 2/4 for few minutes, then 3/4 and finally they play 6/8 or 6/16.⁴⁸⁷

Looking back to the past, one realizes that it is almost natural that the first *tombak* players who experimented with the solo tended to blend various meters together. The solo did not exist as a well developed improvisational or compositional section within one performance. They were among the first one to experiment with its structure, content, length and aesthetics.

Today, the practice of mixing various meters in one solo has shifted. It is common that experienced *tombak* players develop a rhythmic pattern in one meter during a solo piece.⁴⁸⁸ This is a result of half a century of experimentation with *tombak* solo and an indication that the repertoire of the solo is steadily widening, and its aesthetics are changing. It is also an example of the way in which the solo develops with the succession of generations.

Al: What characteristics would have a good piece of *tombak* solo?

Pedrām: First is the rhythm. Look according to me a solo, the way I think, it is like talking. You cannot suddenly start and play fast, fast, fast, fast, fast, fast, you have to talk in sequence; or you cannot drag and stretch your talking, or say nonsense (*chert-o-pert*) with beautiful words. ..

You have to choose a theme (*mozu*) for your solo, or one motif (*motiv*), or one phrase (*jomle*) and you work on it. Now this phrase can be long or short, you can change it, you can do whatever you like with it. But with this specific phrase what do you do? You speak, you play! You can not suddenly go on to another place. For me the characteristic that a solo

⁴⁸⁵ From the cassette *Khalvat Gozide* [Choosing Solitude].

⁴⁸⁶ Piece *Ejrā-ye Ritmhā-ye Sāde va Tarkibi* [A Performance of Simple and Compound Rhythms] from the cassette *Āvā-ye Hossein Tehrāni. Shenākht-e Ritm* [The Sound of Hossein Tehrāni. Rhythmic Enlightenment/Aesthetics].

⁴⁸⁷ Often this interchange of meters in one composition is named “polyrhythm” by novice *tombak* players.

⁴⁸⁸ Listen to *tombak* solo in 5/8 performed by Zārgeri [CD II #3] from the recording *Sāz-e Tanhā. Bedāhe Navāzi-ye Tombak* [Instrument Alone. Improvisation on *Tombak*].

should have is to be rigid (*moshakhās*), to have a concept (*mafhum*), that is to have something in it. As well it should not be only technical (Interview, January 2003).

While young performers like Pedrām are able to articulate a clear idea on how a solo should be structured, Rajabi who is perhaps the first person to have theorized regarding the structure of *tombak* solo, rarely does this by using music terminology. Instead he often uses poetry as a parable, and juxtaposes examples of “good” and “bad” compositions to explain the aesthetics of the structures of a *tombak* solo.

In *Zibāyishenāsi va Ertebāt-e ān bā Ritm* [Aesthetics and Its Relation to Rhythm, *Zibāyishenāsi* from now on], an unpublished cassette from a concert/speech recorded of 1990 in Rudaki Hall, he says that a rhythmic piece is beautiful (*zibā*) when it is concordant (*hamāhangī*), and he adds that we have “millions of *hamāhangī* and thus millions of *zibāi*.” He continues saying that “in classical poetry three things have important roles: *vazn* (rhythm), *radif* (row, series), *qāfie* (rhyme).” Then he recites two poems, one poem that has all these three qualities, as he says, but he adds that it is “meaningless and foolish” (*mozakhrāf*), and a classical poem by Nezāmi which is “serious” (*jedi*).

He then tells to his audience that he is going to play two pieces. He parallels the first rhythmic piece with the first poem and he says that it has rhythm, sequence and rhyme, but it is not structured/concordant (*hamāhangī*) and that is why it is not beautiful. In the first piece he satirizes the playing of another *tombak* player (whom he does not mention, but all of his students can guess his identity), both in the way he plays – by his facial expressions⁴⁸⁹ and the exaggerated and rough motor techniques - and the simple rhythmic patterns he uses. He then plays a variation of the same piece but this time “like Rajabi”, with more delicate and subtle motor technique or as he says “with taste [*chāshni*], delicacy [*zerāfat*] and potency/vigour [*qodrat*]”. Still, he again criticizes it by saying that this piece has a little bit of everything: a little bit of *zurkhāne* rhythms, a little bit of *motreb* playing and he compares it to a meal that is made up of many different dishes.⁴⁹⁰ He also compares this piece with a face of a beautiful woman, which becomes distorted if we put her eye on her elbow, or her nose on her eyebrow.⁴⁹¹ Then he plays the same piece by changing the order of the different bars and concludes that the piece hasn’t really changed. He also remarks that this style of playing is *shirin kāri*

⁴⁸⁹ I have seen Rajabi both in concert halls and during his lessons exhibiting the same examples.

⁴⁹⁰ He compares it with *abgusht*, that has in it *fesenjun*, *qorme sabzi*, and *baqāli polow*. These four meals are distinct and usually are not consumed on the same occasion.

⁴⁹¹ See Baily (1988:40-44) who describes how Afghan musicians explain various music terms as an abstraction from performance practice and not as a part of a verbalised model.

(sweet playing) in the sense that it is an exhibitionist's style which he characterises as charlatanism.⁴⁹²

He then performs a series of his own compositions, most of which are taken from his book, and he implies that these pieces resemble in ethos the seriousness of Nezāmi's poem. He adds that the solo pieces played by performers before him in between the songs did not differ much in their rhythmic phrases from the rhythms that the *tombak* player was using in accompaniment. This point is often emphasized by Rajabi during his recitals who claims that most of the rhythmic compositions for *tombak* solo that he has performed are essentially different from the rhythmic forms he has used while performing with other instruments or an ensemble. His most interesting remark regarding the solo pieces of his own repertoire is the following. He identifies them with miniatures, where if you take one piece away, the whole miniature will be destroyed. He then concludes that *zibāi* (beauty) lies in *hamāhangi* (concordance, structure, order).

I will examine here two of the pieces that he often performs. The first one is called *Goftegu-ye Chap va Rāst* (A Dialogue among the Left and the Right [hand/fingers]) which is also known as *Raks-e Do Angoshti* (A Two-Finger Dance)⁴⁹³, and is usually the last solo piece that Rajabi performs in concerts, and was also the last solo piece performed in *Zibāyishenāsi* [DVD I # 4].⁴⁹⁴

This piece is a "mirror" piece. The first of the four sections of the piece commences with the ring finger of the upper hand, which is the only finger of the upper hand performing. It has also a leading role in the rhythmic configuration, and is supported by the ring finger of the lower hand and occasionally (at specific places) by the *tom* stroke of the lower hand. The second part of the piece is the inversion of the first. Now the ring finger of the lower hand is the only finger (of the lower hand) performing and leading, while the ring finger of the upper hand participates at specific points mostly in producing the *riz* (roll), or in *tom* (a bass stroke) strokes. The rhythmic patterns of these two quarters are exactly the same.

The transition from the first part to the second part, that is, from the ring finger of the upper hand to the ring finger of the lower hand is executed with a two-ring finger diagonal glissando on the skin of the *tombak*. Throughout the piece, it is only during the

⁴⁹² The term "*shirin kāri*" should not be confused with "*shirin navāzi*" that has been defined for Iranian music by Kiāni as the style of light music (*musiqi-ye 'amepasand*) characterised for being the performance of rhythmic, lively, and "sweetened" pieces, in contrast to the *radif* that is more serious (*jedi*) and heavy (*sangin*) (Kiāni 1992: 133).

⁴⁹³ This piece was composed in 1975.

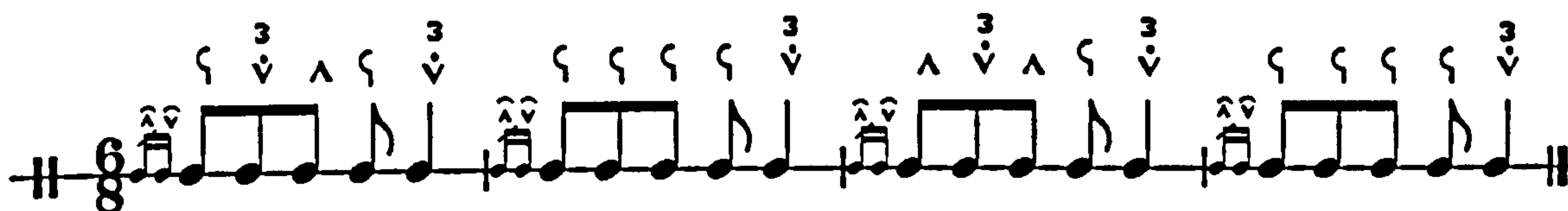
⁴⁹⁴ From a concert in Vahdat Hall (December 1997).

glissando that the two fingers have almost equal concurrent weight in the “glamour” of participation.

In the third quarter of the piece, the ring finger of the upper hand (it is the only finger of the upper hand used) again has the leading role, although this section begins with the lower hand. The fourth part is again an inversion of the third. The fingers of the two hands are in exchanging roles, performing exactly the same rhythmic patterns. In the accompanying DVD you can see Rajabi performing this piece in a concert in Vahdat Hall in December 1997.

This piece is thoroughly “calculated”. Rajabi’s sayings are correct; this piece can be performed only in this order, if someone displaces one note or substitutes one stroke with another, than the piece loses its coherence, symmetry and perfection. In sum, most of Rajabi’s solo pieces are meticulously calculated and structured; they also demonstrate a great sense of symmetry either in terms of motor movements or in terms of acoustics.

This symmetry is also apparent in the *s’oāl o javāb* (lit. question and answer) form of playing. The question and answer is not, as it were, a formal term used in solo playing (and I have not seen it in Rajabi’s instruction books for *tombak*). As it refers to a “dialogue”, it is more often used in duet and accompaniment with another instrument. However, some *tombak* players also use this term in solo *tombak*. In the next music example the question can be the first and the third bar of the rhythmic phrase, while the answer the second and the fourth bar, respectively. For other *tombak* players the question is the first two bars and the answer is the next two bars.



Example 24. Example of *s’oāl-o javāb*. From Rajabi (2002:76).

Another novel feature in Rajabi’s solo pieces, commented on by Pedrām, is that Rajabi was the first to introduce in his solo a distinct cadence with a particularly “final” feeling.⁴⁹⁵ In Rajabi’s compositions these types of cadences are extending the regular

⁴⁹⁵ Pedrām brought to my attention Eftetāh’s rhythmic patterns where one could note an “absence” of cadence, as most of his pieces end when the succession of the regular phrases is completed.

phrase, making, in effect, a prominent growth in volume, usually with the last note of the final bar being particularly accentuated.

Example 25: Cadences with a sudden sense of ending.⁴⁹⁶ These cadences are, in order of appearance, from Rajabi (1999a:36), Rajabi (1999a:42), Rajabi (2002:26,32), Rajabi (2002:45) and Rajabi (2002:53).

The image displays five musical staves, each representing a different cadence. The first two staves are in 2/4 time, the third and fourth are in 6/8 time, and the fifth is in 6/8 time. The notation includes notes, rests, and various musical symbols such as accents (^), sordin signs (s), and sordin signs with a cross (s with a cross). The staves are arranged vertically, showing the progression of the cadences.

These types of cadence are characteristic in Rajabi's compositions, but there are others: cadences following the end of a rhythmic phrase with a more subtle sense of ending, and cadences ending with the last phrase of a rhythmic paragraph.

⁴⁹⁶ The last cadence of this example, uses the *sordin* sign $\begin{matrix} s \\ + \\ \times \end{matrix}$ above the note, which is performed by the thumb and the ring finger of the lower hand that press smoothly the skin so as to dampen the sound of the *tombak*, while simultaneously the upper hand performs *pelang*.

Accompaniment: Forms and Aesthetics

During the late Qajar period the *tombak* player was appreciated when fulfilling the role of the metronome, keeping the rhythm simple and precise (see chapter 3, page 104 and footnote 4). According to Khāleqi,

Some *zarb* players neglect the fact that they are supporting the instrument (*sāz rā poshtibāni mikonand*), and that unnecessary showing-off ruins the melody of the instrument, because when I listen to old records, I am getting really so distressed when I want to listen to the melody of the instrument, and the sound of *zarb*, especially the many *talangor-hā*⁴⁹⁷ that the *zarbgir* is playing on the edge of the *tombak* or at the time that he wishes to exactly imitate the melody, it is really disturbing, [my italics] and I wonder why the players did not reject this style and did not make the *zarbgir* familiar with his duty, and especially the listeners who want to grasp the melody, but the duty of the *zarb* is to support the instrument and not to cover its sound (Khāleqi 1999a:403-404)

In the above citation Khāleqi is giving much information regarding his preference for *tombak* accompaniment. He states that the role of the *tombak* is to follow the melody, but not in an imitative way. It should not distort the melody, making it unpleasant. Other musicians should indicate to the *tombak* players how they should accompany.

During writes in 1984 that a traditional piece requires a traditional accompaniment and a modern piece a modern accompaniment. He states that the traditional accompaniment has more ornaments of the *riz* type, while modern accompaniment is played “emptily” because the *riz* is not so frequently used and ornaments are less abundant (During 1984a:168). During wrote this last comment about 20 years ago, and I question his remarks regarding the diminishing of the ornamentation notes and the *riz*. It is almost unattainable for the *tombak* player to accompany music without using *riz* (especially the *riz-e por* or full *riz*) and other ornamentation notes. The reason is that the *riz* and other ornaments are integral parts of the playing technique of the *tombak*. Listen to traditional accompaniment performed by Eftatāh [CD II #4],⁴⁹⁸

⁴⁹⁷ A specific stroke played on the wood or on the rim of the *tombak*.

⁴⁹⁸ Piece *Do zarbi dar qerā-ye 2/4* [*Do-zarbi* in 2/4], from the recording *Entezār (Afshāri)* [Expectation. *Afshāri*].

and listen to modern accompaniment by Khalaj [CD II #5]⁴⁹⁹ where *riz* and other ornaments are never absent.

In later writings on the subject of accompaniment During remarks that the style of the *tombak* accompaniment is a matter of personal taste, with metre being the only constraint (During, in During and Mirabdolbaghi 1991:86). He continues,

The zarbist, therefore, has roughly two alternatives: he either imitates the rhythm of the melody, or he doesn't imitate it. In some cases or at certain times it is preferable to be in perfect accord with the melody; at other times, it is more interesting to produce different formulas. If the zarbist is in accord with the melody all the time, he will not add anything interesting to it. But if he does not take into account all of the changes in the melody, there will be no harmony between the parts. A good accompanist will find the balance between the two (During, in During and Mirabdolbaghi 1991:86, 87).

Indeed, one dominant style of accompaniment that is pursued by *tombak* players is to imitate the rhythmic line of the melody. As the technique of the *tombak* has been developed, this can be achieved to a satisfactory level. A characteristic catch-phrase commonly used among *tombak* players exemplifies better this style of *tombak* accompaniment: “*eyne melodi rā mizane*” (he plays like a melody). For example, Siāmak Banāi believes that the sound of the *tombak* has to be the same as the melody (*sedā-ye tombak hamsedā melody boshe*).⁵⁰⁰ He remarked that:

Mr. Esmā'ili's playing is exactly like the melody. All the sounds that come out of the *tombak* are the melody itself. It is correct that the *tombak* does not have do-re-mi's but it can have a melody (*mitune melody dashte boshe*), it can play the melody (*mitune mesle melody bezane*) (Interview, February 2003).

Listen to imitative accompaniment by Esmāili [CD II #6]⁵⁰¹, by Zārgeri [CD II #7]⁵⁰² and by Rajabi [DVD I #5]⁵⁰³ where the *tombak* player imitates the melodic line of the instruments (the accents, the intervals, the ornamentation, the sound quality). This

⁴⁹⁹ Piece *Zarbi, Chahārmezrāb*, from the recording *Homāyun*.

⁵⁰⁰ From my teacher Rajabi I heard another catch-phrase frequently used in the past for Tehrāni (possibly for the first time) that “he plays like an orchestra” (*eyne orkestr mizane*). After narrating this story Rajabi would often say that, “Rajabi did not exist then for them to hear what it really means to play like an orchestra.” Here Rajabi means that the sound of the *tombak* is so eloquent, rich and dense, that one player equals the sound produced of a whole orchestra.

⁵⁰¹ Piece *Qet'e-ye berāye Santur va Tombak 2/4* [A piece for *santur* and *tombak* in 2/4], from the recording *Dar Zir-e Bārān* [Under the Rain].

⁵⁰² Piece *Reng-e Māhur*, from the recording *Sad Rang Reng* [A Hundred Reng in Persian Music].

⁵⁰³ From a live concert in Vahdat Hall (December, 1997).

style of accompaniment was promoted much by Rajabi during the 1970s when he would accompany the *santur* of Shafi'iān. Rajabi explains why the *tombak* should imitate the melody in these terms:

Well, when two people are climbing the mountain, is it possible that you remain here and I continue climbing? We are climbing the mountain together.... Football is a group game, you don't see only one football player, you see all of them. In music likewise it is beautiful when the two sounds match so that [the listener] hears one sound, not two sounds (Interview, October 2002).

Rajabi is the person who has classified the various types of *tombak* playing and has distinguished three forms:

1. *Tombak* playing with an ensemble. The ensemble can be of two types: ensemble with melodic instruments and ensemble with percussion instruments.
2. *Tombak* playing with one instrument: *tār*, *setār*, *santur*, *ney*. Rajabi asserts that his accompaniment-style differs according to the instrument. While it is somehow apparent that some techniques in *tombak* accompaniment are more suitable for one instrument than for another (for example the *riz-e beshkani* is pleasing when played with a *tār*), Rajabi has not actually presented a distinctive form of playing with each instrument.
3. Solo *tombak*. Rajabi considers that most of the rhythmic compositions that he performs in *tombak* solo cannot be played in accompaniment (ensemble or with one instrument).

However not all musicians agree with the imitative style of accompaniment. Talā'i remarked that,

Talā'i: For the *tombak* to play the exact melody of the instrument is not very interesting, perhaps in one piece it would be interesting, but the whole concert to be performed like this, no, it is not interesting at all. [The *tombak*] should not play the melody.

Alexandra: When the *tombak* imitates the melody do you think that it "covers" the sound of the melodic instrument?

Talā'i: In some pieces yes. When the instrument is doing a lot of detailed work (*riz-e kāri*), the *tombak* should not play very ornamentative/detailed (*riz*), it ruins the work of the instrumentalists (Interview, July 2005).

There are, of course, many examples of non-imitative accompaniment [CD II #8 and CD #9].⁵⁰⁴ The issue of imitative accompaniment needs further investigation taking into consideration a set of related factors such as shifts in aesthetic consideration of both the instrumentalist and the accompanist, familiarity between the two players, the particular sound properties of the melodic instrument and the degree to which it allows imitative accompaniment.

It is also important to note a distinction of accompaniment in improvised and composed music pieces. In a composed piece, either performed by large ensembles or by single instruments, we will rarely see the *tombak* player performing by reading or memorizing the scores, as composers usually do not write notations for the *tombak*. Thus, accompaniment in composed pieces entails degrees of improvisation, or what Green calls a “changeable improvisation” (2002:42), where the *tombak* player has the opportunity to elaborate on the melody before the performance, and thus to provide a more imitative accompaniment, if he wishes.

It is interesting to note that in India a similar situation to the Iranian occurs when imitative accompaniment takes place. In Indian music when the *tabla* player follows the same rhythmic patterns as the instrumentalist, this means that he aims to “shadow” the instrumentalist, while the *pakhāwaj* accompaniment in *dhrupad* singing would have exactly the opposite effect, because by “shadowing” the soloist, it would reinforce and enhance the music of the latter (Kippen 1988:102). Kippen notes that many *tabla* players indulge in this imitative style of accompaniment, especially when the status of the accompanists is eminent.

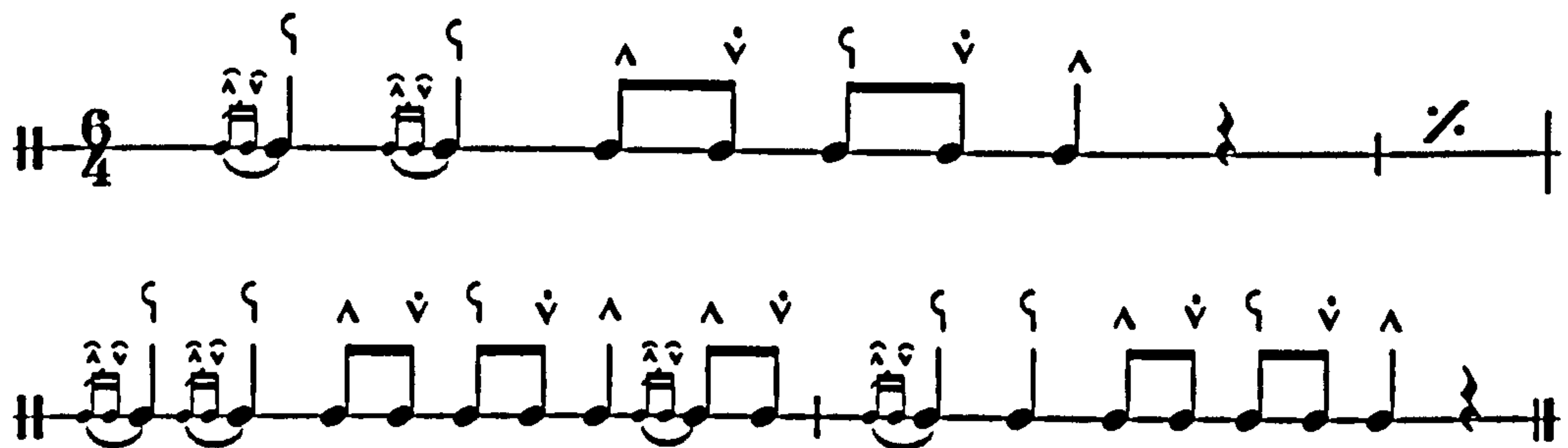
The style of accompaniment in an ensemble depends by and large on the existence of other percussion instruments. When there are two *tombaks* they usually have to decide who is going to keep the basic rhythmic pattern and who is going to play more elaborately. Or in the case where there is a *daf* in the ensemble, unavoidably the experienced *tombak* player will not pay attention so much to the ornamentations, as they will be shadowed by the loud sound of the *daf*. For cases like this Arzhang Kāmkār explains,

The *daf*, because its sound is much stronger than the sound of the *tombak*, the *tombak* player has to pound (*bekube*), to play very strongly. Because they do not fit well together, they have to allocate what they will play and what they won't play...here the *daf*, there the

⁵⁰⁴ Piece number 8, *Bedahe Navāzi dar Bayāt-e Tork* [Improvisation in *Bayāt-e Tork*], is from the recording *Āvā-ye Jān* [The Sound of the Beloved] performed by Asqar Bahāri (*kamānche*), Jalil Shahnāz (*tār*) and Amir Nāser Eftetāh (*tombak*). Piece number 9, *Chahārmazrāb Māhur*, is from the recording *Darvish Khān*, performed by Mohammad Rezā Lotfi (*tār*) and Nāser Farhangfar (*tombak*).

tombak. They have to do something so both the instruments are heard. But this difficulty comes about in concerts. The *tombak* will have to acquire one, two microphones, while the *daf* none. The *daf* covers the sound of all the instruments, not only that of the *tombak*. But if they distribute [their playing]... at some points so that the *tombak* plays, while the *daf* remains silent; at other points the *daf* plays, and the *tombak* is silent.... However, when the *daf* plays the *tombak* can be silent or not, the combination is interesting. If the *tombak* plays “emptily” (*khalvat*) the combination is [again] interesting. Because, if for example when the *daf* is [playing], the *tombak* wants to introduce various ornaments, so to speak playing the small notes [*khord bokone*], to break the rhythm, then it won't be heard. It will be much better if the *tombak* plays the downbeats, the accents, to mix with the movements that the *daf* entails, then [the result] will be beautiful.

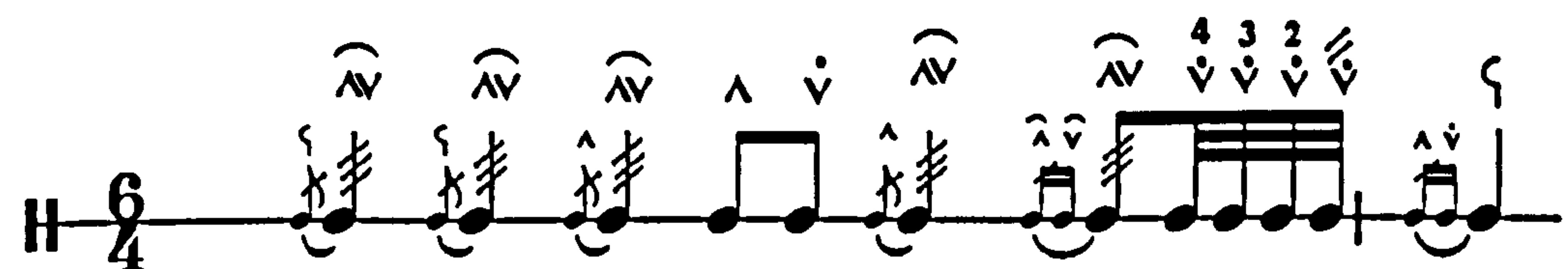
For example, there is an old song “Gārbe to oftadam nazār” that we performed at the Shirāz Arts Festival with the *Sheydā* ensemble. I played the *tombak*, my brother Bizhan played on the *daf*. Because the rhythm was very simple, we did not do a lot of ornamentation work (*shirin kāri*) or complex stuff. We played the following [he plays it on the *tombak*]:



Example 26: Arzhang Kāmkar exhibiting a rhythmic pattern with simple ornamentations suitable for the *tombak* when playing in ensemble together with a *daf*.

Kāmkar

The *daf* concurrently would play this same rhythm. The mixing of this sound [of the *tombak*] with that sound [of the *daf*] had a beautiful result. But if I would like, for example, to play together with the *daf* [he plays the following pattern on the *tombak*]:



Example 27: Arzhang Kāmkar exhibiting a more complex rhythmic pattern for the *tombak* unsuitable for playing in ensemble with a *daf*.

Kāmkār: If I would like to play like this, it wouldn't be heard, I would tire myself out
(Interview, March 2003).

During this conversation Kāmkār also remembered when the *daf* was brought for the first time in Iranian art music in the 20th century:

Kāmkār: The first time the *daf* came, when they brought it to the group, in that same Shirāz Arts Festival when we played with the *Sheydā* ensemble.⁵⁰⁵

Alexandra: Which year?

Kāmkār: It was in 1975, 1974, that is before the Revolution. At that time I did not like it at all, because the sound of the *tombak* was not interesting and there was no harmony. We worked so much, worked so much, that we, ourselves, couldn't believe that the mixture was interesting.

The *daf* cannot play quietly, because if it does, then it is not the sound of the *daf*. [The *daf* player] has to play comfortably (Interview, March 2003).

It becomes apparent that the various styles of accompaniment become even more complicated if in one ensemble there are more than two *tombaks* or more than one *daf* [Listen CD II #10 and CD II #11].⁵⁰⁶

In improvisation with one musical instrument the degree to which the *tombak* player accompanies successfully the melody (or imitates it, if he prefers) depends on the familiarity between the soloist and the accompanist. Pedrām for example would remark that after ten years of playing with Hamid he could guess what Hamid was going to play next and he could thus improvise accordingly with Hamid, rather than simply keeping the basic rhythmic pattern. Hamid on the other hand, would also be intrigued and inspired by Pedrām's rhythmic patterns and he would assimilate them *ad hoc* in the rhythmic line of the melody. In such cases, especially in improvisation, the degree of mutual influence becomes much greater and the interaction among the soloist and accompanist is much more prominent. In other words, *tombak* accompaniment in

⁵⁰⁵ It was an idea of Lotfi to re-introduce the *daf* in Iranian art music. Parenthetically, the *daf* was used in Iranian art music until the middle of the 19th century when the *tombak* replaced it (see During and Mirabdolbaghi 1991:143, 145).

⁵⁰⁶ Piece number 10, *Āmān*, is from the recording '*Aref va Ney* ['Aref and *Ney*] performed by Mas'ud Jāhed (*ney*), Bizhan Kāmkār (*daf*), and Mahmud Farahmand Bafī (*tombak*). Piece number 11, *Biā Sāqi* [Come Wine-pourer], is from the recording *Shurāngiz* [Joyful], performed by the *Sheydā and 'Aref Ensemble*.

improvisation is more reciprocal when performers know each other's style and feel comfortable in expressing themselves through the interaction with one another [Listen CD II #12].⁵⁰⁷

In accompaniment there is a conventional form that exhibits this dialogue between the soloists and the accompanist which is called *s'oāl-o javāb* (lit. question and answer). Here, the instrument plays one melodic line (it is as though the instrument puts forward a question) and the *tombak* player answers it, imitating the rhythmic patterns of the melody; this question-and-answer play continues several times with playing shorter phrases each time, until finally both instruments unite. It would be interesting to explore when and how this term emerged in Iranian music. As a form of accompaniment, among the first to particularly exercise it were Pāyvar and Esmā'ili. In Indian music the "question-answer" (*sawāl-jawāb* in Urdu, a term of Persian origin) was Ravi Shankar's innovation, as Kippen informs us (1988:104). And while in Indian music this form is usually performed at the end of a piece giving a sense of culmination, in Iranian music Pāyvar and Esmā'ili, for example, would rarely perform the question-and-answer towards the end of a piece. Most often they would perform it at the beginning (after a short introduction) or in the middle of a piece; there are also examples where they play the question-and-answer through most of a piece [CD II #13].⁵⁰⁸

Accompaniment also depends on the music genre. For instance, when Pedrām was accompanying the *tambur* of Morādi, he would experiment with some playing techniques and sound colours that are normally not used in more classical forms of Iranian music [Listen Pezhmān Hadādi (*tombak*) accompanying the *tambur* of 'Ali Akbar Morādi, CD II #14].⁵⁰⁹ This exhibits, not only the adaptability of the *tombak* in other music genres, but also the ability and inclination of *tombak* players to experiment with other music styles as well.

In sum, there are no specific instructions in the course of training of a *tombak* player on how he should accompany a particular instrument. Moreover, although young talented musicians develop their own style of playing and aesthetics of accompaniment through mutual interaction, they would not know how to answer my question (like Hamid and Pedrām for example) if the *tombak* should or should not imitate the rhythmic line of the melody. The style of *tombak* accompaniment depends by and large

⁵⁰⁷ Recorded by the author in November 2002 on mini disk, performed by Hamid Khabbāzi (*tār*) and Pedrām Khāvarzamini (*tombak*).

⁵⁰⁸ Piece *Qet'e-ye 2/4 dar Segāh* [A piece in 2/4 in *Segāh*], from the recording *Dar Zir-e Bārān* [Under the Rain].

⁵⁰⁹ The piece (untitled) is for *tambur* and *daf* from the recording *Mehr va Māh* [Affection and Moon].

on the talent of a musician, the aesthetics he develops through creative listening to existing recordings or live concerts, the particular music genre he performs, and it becomes developed and crystallized through the actual practice of playing with other musicians.

Finally, *tombak* players tend to re-create their music heritage according to their aesthetic interpretation, and eventually they classify (and rank) stylistic differences into distinctive playing styles. For example Pedrām, a player of the post-Revolutionary generation, classifies the elderly *tombak* players who perform Iranian music into different playing styles (*sabk-e/shive-ye navākhtan*), according to his perceptions of sonority, playing techniques, rhythmic structure, repertoire and so on. He, as many of his contemporary *tombak* players, also accepts that the playing style – of both soloists and accompanists - is today blurred, and that nowadays everyone mixes music elements from past and contemporary *ostāds*. By contrast, Kām-kār, a *tombak* player musically active both before and after the Revolution, distinguishes five (roughly) distinct playing styles: the one that began developing with Tehrāni, the one that was performed in the late Qajar period, the so called *motrebi* style, the *bāzāri* (commercial) style and a number of “folklore” styles performed in various regions of Iran.

Conclusion Remarks

Tombak playing is an art form that has been developed substantially in the last sixty years within the domain of Iranian music. This is apparent when taking into account all the facets of *tombak* playing, and in particular: the formulation and development of one line stave and three lines stave notation; the proliferation of teaching manuals; the development of the playing technique and the sophistication of the sound quality; the rise of solo, duet and group *tombak* playing; the growth of the repertoire in solo playing in particular, but also in duet and group *tombak*; and the sophistication of various accompaniment styles.

In the domain of teaching, there is no single teaching method, but the use of notation seems to be the common denominator in teaching practices. Proficient and mature *tombak* teachers hand down to their student their repertoire and the playing technique, which is further developed. The playing technique is initially acquired by imitation of the actual physical movements and is part of the teaching process itself. Improvisation and composition is generally thought to be acquired and learned, rather

than taught, a situation that is similar to the teaching practices in the domain of the *radif*. Solitary learning practices are central in acquiring, sustaining and developing motor skills and *tombak* players put particular effort in strengthening the physical condition of their fingers and hands.

Looking into the creative aspects of *tombak* playing one can observe that musical traditions of Iran, rich and varied, rather than music from abroad, is the most important source of inspiration for many Iranian *tombak* players. This situation is not surprising, given the fact that there has always been a close affinity between Iranian classical music and regional traditions (Youssefzadeh, 2005:419), and the fact that many musicians performing Iranian music have strong backgrounds in regional music. Rajabi, for example, has incorporated into his solo repertoire many rhythmic compositions based upon existing folk, children's and religious melodies or rhythmic compositions inspired by rhythmic patterns played by *motrebi*, *ruhozi* and *takhte hozi* performers. His student Khāvarzamini has been also influenced by rhythmic structures performed in Iranian regional music and has included in his *tombak* group percussion instrument from Iranian regional music, such as the *dammam*, the *naqqāre*, and the *dohol*. In addition, as shown, many *tombak* players have experimented with *zurkhāne* rhythms.

Generally, during my research in Iran the work of percussion or *tombak* groups active in Europe or the U.S.A. were not known in Iran.⁵¹⁰ However, the work of few well-known *tombak* players who live abroad, but perform with Iranian musicians and have produced records in Iran, such as Hadādi and Khalaj, is known among *tombak* players. There are very few *tombak* players who have shown interest in Indian music, but this interest has not been yet integrated into their performance, with the exception of some movement patterns introduced by Hadādi, such as various slapping strokes on the body of the *tombak* made with the help of the index finger. Generally, novice *tombak* players do not differ much from their young counterparts, fans of heavy metal music, for example, in other places in the world. They also tend to idolize their favourite *tombak* players and often imitate not only some of their playing techniques, but also their clothing style and behaviour.⁵¹¹

Finally, the domain that *tombak* players are less inventive, due to the limited opportunities given to musicians to perform, is in the context of public performance

⁵¹⁰ For example, most *tombak* players heard about the Shemirāni trio from me.

⁵¹¹ I had a close friend, a young *tombak* player, who was infatuated with anything Afgah did or played on his *tombak*. He would dress like Afgah, he would grow his beard and hair like Afgah, and he would wear ring of the same type and on the same finger like Afgah did.

practices. Many *tombak* players are not confident about the reception of their work among the audience, about the nature of their interaction with the audience, and about the expectations of the audience.⁵¹²

The playing technique on the *tombak* it is perhaps more developed than the repertoire of the instrument, if these two things can be compared. Even though the playing technique appears to the outside observer to be made effortlessly, due to the fact that *tombak* players are not making any gesture to show their effort, in reality it is very demanding in terms of accuracy, diversity, complexity, agility and speed of motor movements. The use of all ten fingers in an impressive variety and combination of fingering patterns enable a refined sound quality and a clarity of sound which is characteristic of the performing technique. In sum, *tombak* playing has become an instrument of high virtuosity and an art that demands many years of diligent training and literally painstaking devotion.

⁵¹² One well-known *tombak* player expressed once to me his idea to go and play in the streets in order to interact and relate more directly with the audience.

Conclusion

If “learning to perform” as a research technique in ethnomusicology helps the researcher to enter smoothly in the field then, undoubtedly, a shared music performance would be an appropriate ritual to bring down the curtains.

Most of my understanding of *tombak* playing and of the works and lives of *tombak* players came as a result of my personal and professional involvement in their musical practices. This involvement became crystallized through “learning to perform”, a research approach that not only gave me the opportunity to experience personally the music structures and to participate in the playing culture, but also to develop friendly and formal relationships on the basis of a shared musical experience. These relationships were, in their turn, valuable experiences in my goal to perceive and share the concerns of the *tombak* players, and to comprehend other important aspects of *tombak* playing and Iranian music culture.

“Learning to perform” proved to be an effective research technique in discovering the ongoing developments of *tombak* playing in terms of the playing technique; the contemporary teaching practices; the development and spread of the notational systems, their differences and the reasons - historical, practical and individual - of these differences.⁵¹³ Through this *modus operandi* I came to realize the essence of ornamentation and the aesthetics of playing in terms of movement and the sound produced. Moreover, I became acquainted with the history and the repertoire of solo, duet and group *tombak*, as well as the forms and aesthetics of *tombak* solo. My understanding of the various styles of accompaniment emerged as a natural outcome of learning to perform this instrument: eager to understand what and how other *tombak* musicians played, I was trying to accompany other instruments in order to further develop my playing skills and my experiential understanding of *tombak* accompaniment.

The structures and aesthetics of duet and group *tombak* certainly deserve further investigation. In this thesis I did not expound these aspects of *tombak* playing, as my personal experience was limited, and I did not want to completely rely on aural and visual sources. In addition, while I learned physically and experientially the playing

⁵¹³ I studied the *tombak* from the manuals of Hossein Tehrāni, Amir Nāser Eftetāh, Morteżā A’yān, Mohammad Akhavān and Bahman Rajabi. I also studied Navid Afgah’s and Perdām Khāvarzamini’s handwritten scores.

techniques of the *tombak* I could not give them the full attention they merit, considering that a detailed analysis would extend significantly the present work and would depart from my primary aim: to show the growth and establishment of *tombak* playing within the musical and socio-cultural context in which *tombak* players develop their art, and to examine the music profile of the contemporary, professional, urban *tombak* player.

Many other aspects of *tombak* playing that were discussed in this thesis came also as a result of interactive and reflexive experiences in learning to perform. In particular, matters such as the state of private tuition and the relationship between the student and the master musician were understood from my standpoint as an apprentice. Also, the issues discussed in the second chapter – morphology and organology, the *tombak* as an art-object and a material object, the name of the instrument as an indication of its status – were the outcome of learning to play on the instrument and sharing this interest with other musicians.

Undoubtedly, in this ethnography “learning to perform” proved to be a powerful experiential research technique that assisted me to acquire knowledge through the experience of music making.

The willingness of the *tombak* players and musicians in general to assist my research, and my close friendship with some of them, further broadened by horizons. It was the formal and informal sharing of their personal experience (rather than their offer of a “systematic explanation”, see Titon (1997:98)) and our social interactions that assisted the development of several ideas in this study: the socio-musical relationship between *tombak* players and other musicians; the problematic relations between individual *tombak* players; the opportunities for accessing concert performances; and the relationship between the state of music and the attitude towards musical instruments after the Revolution of 1979.

As a contemporary ethnographer, I naturally relied on other resources, besides the experiential mode of gaining knowledge – the literature, interviews, private and published recordings, or other written sources - which I believe, were distinct as a mode of research and explanation in the course of this work.

In sum, the aim of this study is to offer a comprehensive ethnography of *tombak* playing a classical, and at the same time contemporary, instrumental tradition, among the urban professional male musicians in Iran, and particularly Tehrān.

In a more general sense, this ethnography was also an attempt for a contribution to the regional studies in ethnomusicology and social anthropology, that is, to scholarly research of the music in the Middle East in general, and Iran in particular. These aims

were pursued in view of the fact that research in Iranian music is particularly relevant today, when field research in Iran by western ethnomusicologists is by and large limited, due to the turbulent after-effects following the years of the Islamic Revolution.

Another essential aim of this ethnography was to make a contribution to organology, in terms of the study of the instrument as social and cultural phenomenon.⁵¹⁴ This approach, described as “holistic” (see Dournon 1992:249), is considered complimentary to the study of the material structure of the instrument and offers a panoramic range of discourses that emerge in this ethnography, such as: historical data and terminology; the study of the aesthetics of the instrument, both as a material object and a sound producing device; the significance of the instrument as socio-cultural phenomena; the role and status of the music practitioners; the inter-relationship between the treatment of music instruments and government-policies towards music, to name just a few of them.

Finally, an important aspect of this ethnography was the application of performance practice as a research method and important tool of investigation of a music culture. Performance enhances the understanding of a music tradition, through reflexive, practical and embodied engagement in music-making, and provides a counterbalance to the purely intellectual processes of conceptualization and analysis. In addition, the study of music culture through performance provides a healthy balance between the musicological and the anthropological approaches to ethnomusicological research, which was exhibited especially in the last chapter concerning motor aspects of performance, the development of ornamentation, repertoire of solo, duet and group *tombak* and forms and aesthetics in solo playing and in accompaniment.

In this thesis I have been arguing that *tombak* playing in western and Iranian scholarly work is largely neglected, and that this stance fails to do justice to the art of playing and its practitioners. This situation is reflective of the history of ethnomusicology itself: in the late 1960s, ethnomusicology was a young discipline with

⁵¹⁴ In the domain of ethnomusicology, the confusion of what exactly constitutes “organology” has been adequately addressed. DeVale (1990:1-6), for example, writes that some consider the scope of organology to be the classification of music instruments, while others emphasise the physical properties of music instruments - to which Hood (1971) has proposed the term “organography”. Today, more and more ethnomusicologists have adopted a wide range of approaches with regards to what constitutes organology, most of which agree that the cultural study of music instruments is of vast importance. See for example Qureshi (1997), whose study of the Indian sarangi includes the musical, physical and metaphorical aspects built around a music instrument. See also Dawe, who argues - providing examples of music in Crete, Greece - how musical instruments are entangled in a wide web of relationships; how they are seen as material and social constructions and how they constitute a “microcosm of the greater musical world at large” (2003a, 2003b:281). For a cultural study of a music instrument with global reception offering a wide range of theoretical perspectives grounded in disciplines including ethnography, folklore, cultural studies, and anthropology among other, see Bennet and Dawe’s edition *Guitar Cultures* (2001).

a small number of scholars interested in a “single “area””, whose research was of “enormously sweeping nature” (see Wade 2006:193, 194). Some discovered a vast new terrain of research, “Persian Classical Music”, which was waiting to be explored, documented and interpreted as a whole. But their studies were influenced by the musical values of Iranian scholars and musicians, who historically viewed *tombak* playing in the shadow of *radif*. Another reason for this neglect is that, after the outbreak of the Revolution, for nearly two decades, and especially during the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988), foreign scholars experienced great difficulties in their attempts to conduct research in Iran, and ethnomusicological studies were to a great extent limited.

I was fortunate to be able to conduct fieldwork in Iran in the beginning of the “third millennium” (as During (2005) would say) due to the moderate foreign policy and greater freedom in the area of academic research - welcoming international contributions to the study of Iran - advocated by Khatami (see Keddie 2003:302-311). In addition, as the field of ethnomusicology is changing, I, as a contemporary ethnomusicologist, influenced by these changes, am in a historical moment to direct my study to a more focused yet wide-ranging aspect of Iranian music, drawing largely on previous ethnomusicological studies.

In this ethnography the *tombak* player was depicted as an interactive musician who shapes his music universe in a web of personal and professional relationships, and whose status, identity, and achievements are shaped by the social, political, and musical aspects of his particular time.

In the process of establishing himself as an instrumental specialist, the *tombak* player lost his skills in singing the *tasnif* and *zarbi* songs, but he gained a particular role and music specialization: that of the rhythmic accompanist and soloist. Although he has shown an interest in performing other instruments and in learning the *radif*, he remains devoted to his instrument, while learning the *radif* has not yet become an essential part of his training. I have argued that this point continues to be critical for his acceptance as a musician equal to the instrumentalist who is a *radif* expert. Nevertheless, the contemporary urban professional *tombak* player has attained the rank of *ostād*.

The present study has also illustrated an important change in the primary role of the instrument, its “essence”, so to speak: until the 1940s it was essentially an accompaniment instrument, then it gradually attained an independent status, performing in solo, duet, and group *tombak*; while in the last several years it has also acquired the role of a sound-producing device. The morphology of the instrument has gone through significant changes, and although it has become standardized, is an area in which

tombak players deposit their creativity. Recently, Navid Afgah has made a two-headed *tombak* in order to explore the sound potentialities of the new instrument and experiment further with playing techniques. These developments have not become public yet, and their influences on the practice of *tombak* playing are to be seen in the future. However, these are signs of the creative ferment in *tombak* playing.

This study has also focused on the last decade, when there has been an increasing activity of percussion groups in Iran, a tendency that is home-grown, but can also be found to fit in the general vogue for percussion instruments and ensembles in world music. Besides, there is a growing interest in Iranian music and *tombak* playing outside Iran, and the international reputation gained by Iranian musicians seems to affect the mentality towards music inside Iran as well, in the direction of raising the *tombak* player's respectability.

I have also argued that the post-Revolutionary generation of *tombak* players are in an advantageous position, compared to those of thirty years ago, given that there is now a much larger body of material to draw on and a much wider range of playing techniques and a plurality of performing styles that they can practise, stemming from the experimentations of the great *tombak ostāds* of the last few decades.

In the 1970s Iranian music was in search of its identity which led to experimentation and the emergence of new music styles, often labelled as "*musiqi-ye tajrobi*" (experimental music). In the production of new music in Iran melodic instruments seem to be pre-eminent. The *tombak* player, as an accompanist, appears to follow rather than lead in these developments. This is not to say that *tombak* players have no direct participation in the production of new music, on the contrary they are in the spirit of the general creative commotion and they make a substantial aesthetic contribution. However, as the present research suggests, *tombak* players are pioneers in the cases of solo, duet and group *tombak* where they find the locus to make innovations independently of other instruments.

The status of the *tombak* player has been a central focus of this thesis. From the late Qajar period to the present day, it has gone through significant changes. During the late Qajar period the *tombak* player was stigmatized musically and socially, as a musician, as a *tombak* player, and as a *motreb*. From the middle of the 20th century this stigma faded. Musicians gained more respectable social standing with the proliferation of musical activities, with the growth of public performances and by acquiring professional positions under the patronage of the government. The status of the *tombak* player as musician greatly improved with the development of the playing technique, as

a response to the growth of instrumental music, and especially metrical pieces. With the gradual decrease of the *motrebs* during the Pahlavi period, the *tombak* player performing Iranian music became eventually disassociated from this downgrading label.

Although the musical and social status of the *tombak* player has been improved, the present study suggested that it still remains an open issue. The negative images of *tombak* playing seem to continue following the instrument and its player. In a recent publication of the *Māhur* label company *Violon. Rokneddin Mokhtāri* [Violin. Rokneddin Mokhtari] only the name of the violinist appears on the front-page of the compact disc, while the name of the *tombak* player, Nur ‘Ali Borumand, who is a distinguished figure in Iranian music, is written with small letters on the back-page. As discussed throughout this work, *tombak* players have fought to raise their status as performers and have achieved this to some extent, but if they want to eradicate this stigma completely, they will have to continue defending their image and promote the works of this extremely demanding instrument. This situation, in fact, has compelled *tombak* players to develop further the art of *tombak* playing.

With the outburst of the Revolution, musicians found themselves again in a precarious state. They and their instruments were the subject of distrust and mistreatment; their works were censored; they were largely deprived from the potentialities in promoting publicly their work and the prospect of making a livelihood out of music. In this atmosphere *tombak* players found themselves in a similar situation to the other musicians, except perhaps for female singers, whose work was even more severely censored, and for the female musicians whose “musical” propriety was acutely judged according to Islamic moral values.

In the years following the Revolution freedom of artistic expression was particularly prominent during the presidency of Khatami (1997-2005). However, his progressive socio-cultural policies were challenged by the various political factions in Iran and became the forum of conservative onslaught (Moslem 2002:257). Numbers are perhaps more telling than words to illustrate this situation: in the last four years of Khatami’s presidency, a period representing the greatest artistic creativity in Iran after the Revolution, 2,633 permits in total were issued by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance (MCIG) for public concerts, including all music genres performed by Iranian and foreign musicians (Sa’idi 2007).⁵¹⁵ The number of permits issued from

⁵¹⁵ The number of the concert-performances cannot be estimated, since many have been cancelled before the performance. These statistical data were provided by Hamid Sa’idi, a professional *santur* player, composer and student at the Music Department of Āzād University, Tehrān. He obtained these data from

MCIG for audio recordings (Iranian and imported, all music genres) was 1,449, which amounts to less than one record per day (ibid.). From late 1358 (early 1980) till 1384 (March 2005), that is, in a time span of 25 years, the MCIG has issued only 3,740 permits for audio recordings, Iranian and imported (ibid.).⁵¹⁶

These numbers are indicative, not only of the austere and conservative socio-cultural practices of the regimes after the Revolution and the limited opportunities given to musicians to exhibit their work in public, but are also of a economic crisis for all the institutions and the people involved in the music industry: music companies, concert halls, recording studios, entrepreneurs and so on.

Iran is today a centre of political ferment on a global scale. As international attention is directed to Iran, and possibly at the regime's effort to reaffirm its identity, the state's internal politics seem to return to the conservative atmosphere of the first years after the Revolution (when music making was largely an indoor activity). Naturally this has direct effects on cultural activities: the latest restriction imposed on music, as was reported in the western media, was the President Ahmadinezhad's ban on Western popular music from state-run TV and radio stations in December 2005.⁵¹⁷ Regarding Iranian music, the government proclaims that musical activities continue without restriction. In fact, only a few concerts per year are performed in the largest concert halls of Tehrān and the MCIG gives a very limited number of permits for the publication of audio recordings.

Musicians in Iran seem to be in a state of confusion, as they are experiencing once again the sentiments of disappointment, repression and disparagement. I have come across various oral testimonies from the field, that indicate this climate of dejection. One musician said:

What is the point of being a musician if you cannot make your work known to others? We cannot be musicians sitting at home and playing in isolation. We need an audience. 98% of the musicians are today depressed; they sit at home and watch television all day long.

the MCIG. This information is going to be included in his thesis (Sa'idi 2007) which will be submitted to the university in 2007.

⁵¹⁶ One of the most important labels of Iranian music, *Mo'assese-ye Farhangi-ye Honari-ye Māhur* [Māhur Institute of Art and Culture] has published around 200 CD titles from the day of its formation (1987). See their website: <<http://www.mahoor.ir/About.asp>>. See also Youssefzadeh (2005:46) for the number of permits issued before 1997.

⁵¹⁷ See <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4543720.stm> (accessed 16/03/2006). As I was not in Iran during that period, and as sensitive issues are not easy to discuss on the internet or on the telephone with the people in the field, I can not asses with certainty to what degree, and for what period of time, this form of censorship actually took place in the state-media in Iran.

The same musician, later during our conversation said: “I know about 20-25 people at this moment who have ready musical projects. They are all *waiting* [my italics] for the right moment in order to present their work.”

Tombak playing has been significantly reinvigorated by the first post-Revolutionary generation, by those who in the late 1980s and early 1990s began learning this instrument during their teenage years, at the time when Iranian music had an overwhelming appeal to the masses. Today, as subsequent generations of musicians are entering the music field at a much younger age than those in the 1980s and 1990s, the future of *tombak* playing appears brighter than ever, provided that musicians are allowed to defend their indisputable right to freely create, express and disseminate their artworks.

Appendix 1

Glossary of Terms

Āqā, sir, gentleman, mister.⁵¹⁸

Āvāz, (plur. *āvāz-hā*, lit. “song”, “singing”, “chant”, “voice”, “vocal”) has several meanings. Most often *āvāz* is called the vocal improvisatory form of the *radif* which is based on classical poetry and performed in non-metric style. It also means a “song” of any kind (Tsuge 1974:23). In addition, *āvāz* amounts to the interpretation of a *gushe* in unmeasured form by one or two instruments, or more commonly, by a singer and an instrumentalist (During, in During and Mirabdolbaghi 1991:82). Last, the five *āvāz-hā* (*Abu'ātā*, *Afshāri*, *Bayāt-e Tork*, *Dashti* and *Esfahān*) of the *radif* are considered to be a “modal complex” (Powers 1980:426-427) and derivative from related *dastgāh* (for example, *Āvāz-e Abu 'Atā* and *Āvāz-e Dashti* are derivative of *Dastgāh-e Shur*). As the *dastgāh* concept, the *āvāz* has been also equated with *māye* (mode) when refers to the *darāmad* (introduction).

Āvāz-e zarbi, (lit. “metric song”) is a composition or an improvisation in regular metric pattern which is based on classical poetry (During, in During and Mirabdolbaghi 1991:82).

Advār-e iqā'-i, rhythmic modes or cycles.

Asil, authentic, pure.

'Aruz, is the versification system upon which the classical Persian poetry is grounded on syllable-length (short and long) and to some extent upon stress accent (Khānlari, cited in Caton 1983:187).

Barbat (or *'ud*), short-neck plucked lute with pear shaped body. Today, both terms are in use.

Bam, bass sound.

Bak, a specific stroke on the *tombak* which has a high-pitched sound (see Appendix 3).

Basiji, religious war veterans and religious young war volunteers.

Bedāhe navāzi, improvisation.

Chahārmezrāb (lit. “four plectrum”), a solo instrumental piece, composed or improvised, usually accompanied by the *tombak* in fast tempo, offering potentialities for virtuosic display. Most often it is performed in compound duple time (6/8 or 6/16), but simple duple and triple meters are also used.

Dāyere, a single-headed frame drum with or without metal rings inside the wooden frame. It is used in regional, rather than Iranian art music.

⁵¹⁸ All of the indigenous terms are explained in the thesis when they first appear. This list includes the terms that are mentioned regularly throughout the text.

Dāyere zengi, a single-headed frame drum with jiggling metal discs. It is used in regional, rather than Iranian art music.

Daf, a large single-headed frame drum, with sets of small chains inside the frame. It has been used in the performances of Iranian art music in the last twenty five years. It has been equated with Kurdish music and it is also a sacred instrument among Sufi orders, used in their rituals.

Dammām, barrel wooden drum played usually with two sticks or one stick and one hand. It is used primarily in the regional music of Khuzestān. See Darvishi (2005: 208-211).

Darabukka, a single-headed goblet drum, made of pottery, wood or metal; found in the Middle East, Northern Africa and the Balkans.

Darāmad, an introductory section which identifies the *dastgāh*.

Dastgāh (plural *dastgāh-hā*, lit. “system”, “organization”). The *dastgāh* has been represented as a large “modal complex” used to denote whole collections of modally-related *gushe* arranged in a fixed order (Powers 1980: 426-427). However, each artist is relatively free to render the order of the *gushe-hā*. It has been also equated with *māye* (During, in During and Mirabdolbaghi 1991:63) or the principal “modal nucleus” (Powers 1980: 426-427) when one refers to its *dāramad* (introduction). In sum, *dastgāh* refers to the “organization of modal and melodic material in a system” (During, in During and Mirabdolbaghi 1991:63). There are seven *dastgāhs* in the *radif Shur, Navā, Segāh, Chahārgāh, Homāyun, Māhur* and *Rāst Panjgāh*.

Divān, long-necked plucked lute with pear shaped body.

Dohol, double headed barrel drum made of wood and played usually with two wooden beaters. It is commonly played together with *sornā* (shawm) in outdoor settings, on occasions such as weddings and celebrations, mostly in the provinces.

Dotār, (lit. “two strings”) long-necked lute played in Khorasān, Mazandarān, Turkmen and Afghan classical music. For Afghanistan see Baily (1977 and 1988b), for Iran see Darvishi (2001).

Engelāb, Revolution.

Eshāre, a type of stroke on the *tombak*. See Appendix 3.

Gushe (plur. *gushe-hā*, lit. “corner”, “fragment”, “angle”). *Gushe-hā* are the individual pieces comprising each *dastgāh*. Each *gushe* has a particular name and a distinct character (Talai 2002:866). They can differ in length, modal role, importance,

form, rhythmic characteristics, and the order in which they are performed. The number of *gushe-hā* varies in the *radif* of each *ostād*.

Gruhnāvāzi, group playing.

Hāl, spiritual state. See During (2002:857). In vernacular it means pleasure. See Samā'i ((2003: 47).

Hezbollah, “Party of God”. See Moslem (2002:94).

Honar, lit. “art”, “skill”.

Honarmand, lit. “artist”.

Iqā', (plur. *iqā'āt*), see *advār-e iqā'i*.

Qeichak, short-necked, double-chested fiddle played vertically, without frets. It is used in the regional music of Sistān and Baluchestān, but also found in Afghanistan and Pakistan. See Darvishi (2001) and Zonis (1973).

Qanun, trapezoid-shaped plucked zither. Today, it is rarely used in Iranian music.

Kamānche, a four stringed spike fiddle played vertically, it has a long rounded neck without frets and a small spherical sound box.

Khātam kāri, (lit. “inlaid with mosaic”) is a traditional craft that has been used as a decorative art for the *tombak*, as well as for other Iranian instruments used in the *radif*.

Khānum, lit. “miss”, “lady”, “madam”.

Lang (lit. “limp”, “uneaven”). *Ritm-hāye lang* refers to asymmetrical rhythms.

Luti During the late Qajar period *lutis* were itinerary *motrebs* and they held the lowest rank among the *motreb* groups (Fatemi 2005:408).

Māye (pl. *māye-hā*), is used by scholars in the sense of “mode” or “modal scale” (During, in During and Mirabdolbaghi 1991:60), “mode” or “*maqām*” Talai 2002:871), and “melodic character” or “melodic contour” and “melodic model” (Farhat 1980: 532-533). It appears to be a vague concept, since the term does not exist in the *radif* system (Talai 2002:871). According to Talai several distinctive features define each *māye*: 1. type of bitetrachord (two conjunct tetrachords); 2. *shāhed* (witness) note; 3. *ist* (stop) note; 4. *motaqayyer* (variable) note, but also two secondary elements 5. melodic curve and 6. melodic types peculiar to each *gushe* (ibid.).

Matlab, lit. “theme”, “subject”.

Moharram and ***Safar*** are the first two months of the Islamic lunar calendar. These are mourning months for the martyrdom of the third Imam of Shi'ism, Imam Hossein and his followers.

Motreb. During the Qajar period *motrebs* were musician-entertainers and dancers playing at weddings and other gatherings. They were competent especially in performing *zarbi* and *tasnif* songs and playing the *tombak*. Today the word *motreb* is used to denote second-rate musicians who play for light entertainment in coffee shops and restaurants.

Morshed, is the person in the *zurkhane* who plays the *zarb-e zurkhāne* and recites poetry. According to the rhythm he plays, the “gymnasts” (*varzeshgār-ān*) perform particular exercises.

Musiqidān, music erudite, musicologist.

Naqqāre, kettle drum pair, played with two sticks or hands.

Naqqārekhāne, (lit. “drumhouse”). *Naqqārekhāne* were ensembles of kettle-drums, shawms, long brass trumpets that had a prominent role in timekeeping in many cities of Central and South Asia. They would perform from a tower (*naqqarekhāne*) to mark the sunrise and sunset (Blum 1980:539).

Navāzande, player/performer.

Ney, end-blown flute. Various Sufi orders consider it a sacred instrument.

Not-e zinat, ornamentation note.

Ostād, master musician.

Pāsdārān, (lit. “Guardians”), The Corps of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards.

Pishdarāmad, measured instrumental piece. Functions as an introduction to the performance of a *dastgāh* or *āvāz* and precedes the *darāmad* section.

Pelang, a specific stroke on the *tombak* (see Appendix 3).

Radif (lit. “row”, “line”, “series”) is the repertoire of Iranian art music, consisting of different melodies, i.e. *gushe-hā*, which were classified in seven *dastgāh-hā* and five *āvāz-hā* in the mid-nineteenth century. The *radif* is used for performances, as a basis for improvisation, and as a didactic tool. ‘Ali Akbar Farāhāni (1810-1855), is believed to have organized his repertoire into twelve *dastgāh*, formalizing to a great extent the *radif* that his sons Mirzā ‘Abdollāh (1843-1918) and Hossein Qoli (1851-1915) later transmitted. It is, however, Mirzā ‘Abdollāh who is best known for the completion of the organization of the *radif* (Nooshin 1996a:79). Moreover, we cannot speak of one *radif* but of versions of the *radif* of Mirzā ‘Abdollāh, each belonging to a particular *ostād*, for example the *radif* of Ostād Karimi or the *radif* of Ostād Ma’rufi.

Radif-e āvāzi is the vocal *radif*.

Radif-e sāzi is the instrumental radif. It has substantial precedence in terms of quantity over the vocal *radif*, and especially the *radif* for the *tār* and the *setār* are numerous in relation to other instruments.

Ramazān (Ramadan), the ninth (and fasting) month of the Islamic lunar calendar. Muslims believe that God began revealing the Qur'an to the Prophet Muhammad during Ramadan. But also it is a mourning month for the death of Imam 'Ali.

Reng, instrumental solo or ensemble piece in a lively tempo, usually 6/8. It is commonly accompanied by *tombak*, and often placed towards the end of a performance.

Riz, (lit. "tiny") a kind of roll, tremolo. See Appendix 3.

Rabāb (rubāb in Afghanistan), short-neck lute, used in the music of Sistān and Baluchestān. See Darvishi (2001). It is also considered to be the "national instrument" of Afghanistan. See Baily (1976), Sakata (1977, 1983) and Slobin (1976).

Rowze, or *rowzekhuni* is a poetic narrative about the martyred *Imāms* performed by the *rowzekhān* at devotional gatherings (Blum 1980:539).

Santur, seventy-two-string hammered dulcimer, struck with two light wooden sticks (*mezrāb*).

Sāz, is a noun meaning "an instrument". It is also a name applied for long necked lutes found in Iran, the Caucasus and the Middle East.

Setār (lit. "three strings"), is a four-string long-neck lute, plucked with the nail of the index finger or a metal nail-piece affixed to the index finger.

Shāhed or witness note, is the central and one of the most prominent note of a given *māye* (mode). (See Farhat 1990:24).

Shur, lit. "joy", "enthusiasm", "passion" and "salty". *Shur* is also the name of one of the seven *dastgāh* of the *radif*.

Tālār, lit. "hall". For example *Tālār-e Rudaki*, the Rudaki Hall.

Tār, long neck lute with three double strings, plucked with a metal plectrum; the sound-box is covered with skin.

Ta'ārof, social etiquette, sometimes intense overt politeness, and persisting courtesy.

Tambur, (or *tanbur*) long neck lute. It is played in regional music (Kurdistan, Northern Azerbaijan, Kermanshāhan) and considered a sacred instrument among the Sufi orders. See Darvishi (2001: 286-338).

Taknavāz, (plur. *taknavāzān*), soloist.

Taknavāzi, solo playing.

Tahrir, a kind of glottal vibration and one of the most characteristic vocal techniques of the *āvāz* singers.

Tasnif, vocally composed metric song, in slow or moderate tempo. In ensemble performances it is usually the last piece.

Ta'zie, drama performances depicting events surrounding the martyrdom of Imām Hossein and members of his family. See Chalkowski (1991), Blum (1980:539), Caron and Safvate (1964:204-206).

Tom, is a bass stroke and the deepest sound on the *tombak* (for more details see Appendix 3).

S'oāl o javāb, (lit. "question and answer"). A term used to denote the repetition of the vocal phrase by the instrument, or a "dialogue" between two instruments.

Toq, a wooden ring inside the rim of the large opening of the *tombak*, whose role is to protect the "big mouth" from deformation. Depending on the angle at which it touches the skin it affects greatly the sound of the *tombak*.

'Ud, see *barbat*.

Zarb, an Arabic word used in Persian language, designating a beat (in the sense of striking), a rhythm, a meter, a tempo and also a time value. It is also a word used interchangeably for *tombak*.

Zarb-e zurkhāne, earthenware goblet shaped drum played by the *morshed* in the *zurkhāne*.

Zarbi is a generic term referring both to instrumental and vocal, composed or improvised, rhythmic pieces. There are five distinct forms of *zarbi* pieces: *āvāz-e zarbi*, *tasnif*, *pishdarāmad*, *reng* and *chahārmezrāb* (During 1991:82-83, Caron and Safvate 1964: 141-158). *Zarbi* is also the name for pieces with relatively stable melodic and rhythmic structure, that have no modal stability, which means that their modes change according to the *dastgāh* they are placed in. Such rhythmic pieces are *kereshme*, *bastenegār*, *naqme*, *zangule*, *dotāyeki* (Farhat 1965: 109-111)

Zarbgirs were the musicians of the *radif* ensembles in the late Qajar period, who would play on the *tombak* and accompany their singing of *tasnif* and *zarbi* songs.

Zir, high pitched sound.

Zirbagali, is a single headed goblet shaped drum used in the art and folk music of Northern Afghanistan, which is very much similar in form and playing position to the *tombak*. The *zirbagali* is made of pottery, but there are found sporadically wooden types which are quite widespread geographically. In the city of Herat the

zirbagali accompanies the *dutār*, while in the Northern Afghanistan the *dambura* (two types of long neck lute).

Zirzamini, underground.

Zurkhāne (lit. “house of force or strength”), traditional Iranian sports centre.

Appendix 2

Short Biographies of *Tombak* Players

Hossein Tehrāni (1912-1973, b. Tehrān)⁵¹⁹

Hossein Tehrāni is considered the father of contemporary *tombak* playing in Iranian music. He is deemed to have elevated, to a substantial degree, the status of the instrument from its underestimated standing since the late Qajar period. He was also the first to introduce *tombak* solo and *tombak* group playing. Tehrāni has performed with the most eminent musicians of his time, traditionalists and modernists. During his lifetime he performed in many foreign countries.

He started *tombak* lessons in 1928 with the *kamānche* player Hossein Khān Esmā'ilzāde. In 1938 he met Abolhasan Sabā, with whom he performed until the latter's death. These two men shared a deep friendship, and Tehrāni considers Sabā as his principal music teacher.

In 1941 Tehrāni started teaching the *tombak* at the High Conservatory of Music (*Honarestān-e 'Ali-ye Musiqi*). He also taught at the National Conservatory of Music from 1949. He performed with the Orchestra of National Music (*Orkestr Musiqi-ye Melli*) and with the Society of National Music (*Anjoman-e Musiqi-ye Melli*).

He performed regularly for Tehran Radio, which was inaugurated in 1940, and gained even more fame with the spread of television, that was introduced in Iran in 1959, and especially in the 1970s when radio was joined with the television (in 1971) in the institution called National Iranian Radio and Television (NIRT).

In 1947 he formed the first *tombak* group in Iran, The *Tombak* Players Ensemble (*Gruh Tombak Navāzān*) which was under the patronage of the Ministry of Culture and Art. In 1958 he performed the famous piece *Fāntazi Barāye Gruh Tombak va Orkestr* [A Fantasia for *Tombak* Group and Orchestra] on the Iranian television with his *tombak* group and the *Orkestr Shomāre-ye Yek Honarhā-ye Zibā* (Fine Arts Orchestra Number One) under the conductor Hossein Dehlavi (who composed the melody of the piece using the rhythmic layout as a basis). From 1958 he started performing with Farāmarz Pāyvar and his ensemble. He and Pāyvar (a student of Sabā) were close music associates for many years. They performed at the first Arts Festival in Shirāz in 1967.

The first instruction book for *tombak*, *Āmuzesh-e Tombak* [*Tombak* Training], was published in 1971 with Tehrāni's rhythmic exercises on three-line stave. Tehrāni's book was the first and only teaching manual for *tombak* that involved many scholars and musicians in its writing. To name just a few of them: Mohammad Esmā'ili,

⁵¹⁹ Biographies are arranged by date of birth.

Hushang Zarif, Farāmarz Pāyvar, Ebrāhim Qanbari, Siāmak Banāi, Ruhollah Khāleqi, Mostafa Purtorāb, and Hossein Dehlavi. Some of these people were involved in devising a notation system for *tombak*, some provided information on Tehrāni's life and his musical activities, and others have written articles about the origins of *tombak* and the historical background of the instrument in general.

Most contemporary *tombak* players are students of Tehrāni's students.

Sources: Dehlavi, Hossein (1971:17-30).

Publications: Tehrāni, Hossein et al. 1971.

Discography: *Santur. Farāmarz Pāyvar* [*Santur. Farāmarz Pāyvar*]; "*Iran: Musique Persane*". *Māhur* [Iran: Persian Music. *Māhur*]; *Violon. Ostād Abolhasan Sabā* [Violin. *Ostād Abolhasan Sabā*]; *Hossein Tehrāni. Taknavāz-e Tombak* [Hossein Tehrāni, *Tombak* Soloist]; *Āvā-ye Hossein Tehrāni. Shenākht-e Ritm.* [The Sound of Hossein Tehrāni. Rhythmic Enlightenment/Aesthetics].

Amir Nāser Eftetāh (1925-1987 Tehrān)

Amir Nāser Eftetāh was a student of Hushang Mehrvarzān, who was Hossein Tehrāni's student. Today he is remembered particularly for his teaching calibre. Among the most prominent of Eftetāh's students who continued their professional career as *tombak* players are Farahmand, A'yān, Rajabi, and two *tombak* makers, Fereydun Helmi and Amir Hemmati.

Eftetāh could be considered as a transitional figure, being a *tombak* teacher who implemented new teaching methods. He was among the first *tombak* players to teach *tombak* by using notation. He was opposed to the practice of private lessons and insisted seriously upon discipline, that is, punctuality, systematic practice and students attending *tombak* lessons in music schools, in order to learn in a more formal and communal environment.

His career as *tombak* player began early; at the age of 16 (in 1941) he was performing with *Orkestr Gol-hā* (The Flower's Orchestra) at the Iranian national radio. Eftetāh taught at several music schools (*Rajai* and *Māndānā*) and he also established his own music school, *Gām*, in the mid-1950s.

He gave many concerts during his lifetime and also performed at the Shirāz Arts Festival. He collaborated with many eminent musicians such as Jalil Shahnāz, Mahmud Khavānsāri, Asqar Bahāri, Parviz Yāgahi, and Qolāmhossein Banān.

Eftetāh's exercises for *tombak* were published in 2002, thanks to the efforts of Pedrām Khāvarzamini, Hamid Qanbari and Fereyduun Helmi. Eftetāh was approaching the needs of each student individually and during each lesson he was writing rhythmic exercises for his *tombak* student. The book is a compilation (put together by Pedrām and Hamid) of such exercises collected from some of his advanced students.

Sources: Akbari, Pedrām (2001); Akbarzāde, Pezhmān (2002:88); Khāvarzamini, Pedrām and Qanbari Hamid (2001).

Publications: Khāvarzamini, Qanbari and Halmi (eds.) (2001).

Discography: *Āvā-ye Jān* [The Sound of the Beloved]; *Elhām (Chahārgāh)* [Inspiration (Chahārgāh)]; *Entezār (Afshari)* [Expectations. *Afshari*]; *Mohabbat (Homāyun)* [Kindness. *Homāyn*]; *Zabān-e Tār. Bedāhe Navāzi: Ostād Jalil Shahnāz* [The Language of Tār. Improvisation by Ostād Jalil Shahnāz].

Mohammad Esmā'ili (b.1934 Tehrān)

He started *tombak* lessons in 1951 with Hossein Tehrāni. He is considered to be his most devoted student. He continued his work by developing further *tombak* solo, group *tombak* and *tombak* accompaniment.

He began teaching in 1964 at the *Honarestān Musiqi-ye Melli* (Conservatory of National Music). He was a member of *The Tombak Players Ensemble*, created by Hossein Tehrāni. And from 1966 (until 1978) he was the conductor of that ensemble. From 1966 until 1979 he performed with the Farāmarz Pāyvar and his ensemble. He and Pāyvar became an inseparable duo and they recorded and performed at many concerts, either alone or with their ensembles.

From 1979 until 1989 he did not give any public concerts, and he ceased teaching the *tombak* from 1979 until 1985, when he started again with Siāmak Banāi, who had been pleading with him for several years to give him *tombak* lessons (from then on Banāi became his faithful student). From 1986 he gradually formed a new *tombak* group with the participation of his best students.

Nowadays he gives private lessons to a limited circle of close students, most of whom form his *tombak* group. He occasionally performs with his *tombak* group with one of Pāyvar's student, Mr. Sābet. Until the present day he draws largely upon the work of Tehrāni and disseminates his art, in publications, recordings and performances.

Sources: Mohammad Esmā'ili (1999b: 5-6); Siāmak Banāi. (1993:11-18); Siāmak Banāi. (1999b:7-9).

Publications: Esmā'ili, Mohammad (1993, 1999, 2004).

Discography: *Rahā Vard* [Memento]; *Gonbad-e Minā* [Dome with Enamel]; *Dar Zir-e Bārān* [Under the Rain]; *Khalvat Gozide* [Choosing Solitude]; *Hossein Tehrāni. Āmuzesh-e Tombak* [Hossein Tehrāni. *Tombak* Training].

Bahman Rajabi (b. 1939 Rasht)

Bahman Rajabi is one of the most influential living *tombak* players of the older generation. He is particularly interested in developing *tombak* solo and duet *tombak*, as well as the aesthetics of *tombak* playing. He describes himself as a writer, a researcher, a speaker and *tombak* performer. He gives numerous recitals every year to disseminate and make publicly known the art of *tombak* playing.

Rajabi's interest in *tombak* playing manifested itself from his early childhood. At the age of 16 (or 18, he doesn't remember clearly) he played for the first time the *tombak* at the wedding party of a friend. He began taking formal *tombak* lessons at the age of 24 (in 1963) with Amir Nāser Eftetāh, from whom he learned notation. Although he studied with him for no longer than three months, he considers Eftetāh to have been a great influence on him. He is an agronomy-graduate and worked in the Agriculture Bank from 1964 until 1969. He performed in public for the first time in 1970 with Rezā Shafi'yān (*santur*), at the age of 31.

In about 1972 he joined the Centre for Preservation and Propagation of Iranian music. He has performed (particularly before the Revolution) with many musicians, including: Parviz Meshkātīān, Hossein 'Alizāde, Dāriush Talā'i, 'Ali Akbar Shekārchi, Mohammad Mossavi, Mortezā A'yān, by participating in several concerts and at the Shirāz Arts Festival.

From 1979 until 1997 he did not give any public concerts. In 1997, after 18 years of “silence” he performed in *Tālār-e Vahdat* in memory of Farhangfar with three young talented musicians: Pedrām Khāvaramini (one of Rajabi’s best students) and his friends Hamid Khabbāzi and Siāmak Āqāi.

Rajabi published his first teaching manual for *tombak* in 1999 (it was reprinted for the fifth time in 2005). This book, together with its second volume published in 2002 (reprinted in 2005), is considered until the present day to be one of the best instruction manuals for *tombak* students, as it introduces the student gradually, through a series of rhythmic compositions, to the various playing techniques, rhythmic structures, and ornamentations.

Rajabi has substantially developed and systematized the techniques on the *tombak*. He has introduced 11 new *riz* (rolls), adding to the five pre-existing ones. He started teaching the *tombak* in 1990 and has trained hundreds of students who continue disseminating his work.

Publications: Rajabi, Bahman (1999, 2000, 2002).

Discography: *Savārān-e Dasht-e Omid* [Riders in the Fields of Hope] in *Neynavā. Āvā-ye Mehr* [*Neynavā. The Sound of Affection*]; *Takāmol* [Perfection]; *Zibāyishenās-i va Ertebāt-e ān bā Ritm* [Aesthetics and Its Relation to Rhythm]; *Taknavāzi-ye Santur (Abu ‘Atā)* [Solo *Santur (Abu ‘Atā)*]; *Goftegu-ye Chap va Rāst* [Dialogue between Two Hands].

Mortezā A’yān (b. 1946 Tehrān)

Mortezā A’yān is considered to be one of the most “noble” *tombak* players and comes from a wealthy family. At the age of ten he studied the *tombak* with Hossein Khorsandi, in order to accompany his brother (aged twelve) who studied the violin. At the age of twelve he was (perhaps the only student) taking private lessons at home from Amir Nāser Eftetāh, for a period of two years. He continued his lessons in Amiri-ye (a neighbourhood of Tehrān) where Eftetāh gave lessons in a music school.

At the age of fifteen or sixteen he abandoned *tombak* playing after experiencing a negative atmosphere in a café, where the musicians on the scene would continue playing regardless of what was going on in the audience (drinking, fights, noise). He

could not understand and accept why the musicians should play while the audience would heedlessly “entertain” themselves.

In 1971, at the age of 25, Dāriush Safvat, who appreciated his stance regarding the “downgrading” of Iranian music in such cafés, invited him to join the Centre for Preservation and Propagation of Iranian music. There he played for the first time with Sa’id Hormozi (and later with another music master, Yusuf Forutan) and gradually his involvement became very serious. He started performing with the various music groups that were formed by the most promising young musicians at the Centre: Hossein ‘Alizāde, Dāriush Talāi, Parisā, Parviz Meshkātīān, Kiāni Nejād. At the Centre he also practiced *do navāzi* (duet *tombak*) with Rajabi, which was recoded by CBS. He performed for four years with the *Dastān* ensemble (1991-1995) and was one of the founding members of *Zarbang* percussion group, based in Germany.

A’yān’s teaching manual for *tombak* has never been published, but it circulates widely among *tombak* players and students. It is a compilation of rhythmic compositions that he wrote during his lessons for his students. This book is especially favoured by *tombak* players because its compositions are “melodious”, with various unique combinations of time values which adhere to complex movement patterns.

A’yān has not performed for nearly 10 years; he lives partly in Germany and partly in Iran.

Discography: *Rang-e Farah* [The Colour of Joy]; *Shab, Sukut, Kavir* [Night, Silence, Desert].

Nāser Farhangfar (1947-1997, b. Kohan)

Nāser Farhangfar studied the *tombak* with Mohammad Torkemān, a student of Amir Nāser Eftetāh. He also received a few *tombak* lessons from Hossein Tehrāni and studied *tombak* notation for one year with Mohammad Esmā’ili. He studied calligraphy at the *Anjoman-e Khoshnevisān* (The Calligraphers Association) and practiced calligraphy until the end of his life. In 1972, with the encouragement of Nur ‘Ali Borumand, he studied for two years the *setār* at the Department of Fine Arts at the Tehrān University.

He joined the Centre for Preservation and Propagation of Iranian music in 1970. In 1975 he joined the *Sheydā* ensemble and in 1977 the ‘*Aref* ensemble. He also

collaborated with the *Chāvosh* music centre from 1980-1983. Nāser Farhangfar performed with the most prominent musicians of his time: Yusuf Forutan, Asqar Bahāri, Jalil Shahnāz, Mohammad Mossavi, Mohammad Rezā Lotfi, Mohammad Rezā Shajariān, Hossein ‘Alizāde, Parviz Meshkātiān, Farāmarz Pāyvar, Dāriush Talā’i, Shahrām Nāzeri and Parisā. During his lifetime he performed at the Shirāz Arts Festival, for the NIRT and in many concerts in Iran and abroad.

Today he is particularly adored for his *tombak* accompaniment, both by *tombak* players and by other musicians. Many *tombak* students try to imitate his *tombak* playing, characteristic for its sonority, specific movement patterns, and rhythmic interpretation.

Due to health problems his music activities were diminished for several years before his death. His son, Ārash Farhangfar, an active *tombak* player, is today disseminating the work of his father. He has a rich collection of his father’s private recordings, and he aspires to transcribe them all and publish them as teaching manuals. The first manual was published in 2002.

Sources: Farhangfar, Ārash (2002: 7-17).

Discography: *Darvish Khān*; *Āstān-e Jānān* [The Threshold of the Beloved]; *Khalvat Gozide* [Choosing Solitude]; *Bidād* [Injustice]; *Rāst Panjgāh*.

Arzhang Kāmkar (b. 1956 Sanandāj)

He was born in a music family where all the children (seven brothers and one sister) were trained in music by their father, Hassan Kāmkar, who was in charge of the music division of the military in Sanandāj. Arzhang Kāmkar played publicly at the Art and Culture Orchestra of Sanandāj.

Regarding his technique on the *tombak*, Arzhang considers himself to be self-taught. However, he recognizes that the musical environment in which he was brought up was decisive in introducing him to the essence of music, and he accepts that he has learned a lot about music and *tombak* accompaniment by experience, from the musicians he has collaborated with and especially from Mohammad Rezā Lotfi (who married his sister Qashang Kāmkar).

In 1975 he came to Tehrān and studied art at the Faculty of Fine arts in Tehrān University. He performed with *Sheydā* and *Āref* ensembles from 1977 until 1985. He is

a member of the *Kāmkār* ensemble (which hosted several times Shahrām Nāzeri in concerts), which performs both Kurdish and Iranian music. The *Kāmkār* ensemble is one of the most popular Kurdish-Iranian groups in Iran and overseas.

Today he is teaching the *tombak* at the *Kāmkār* music school in Tehrān. He is considered to be one of the most accomplished contemporary *tombak* players in group accompaniment.

Publications: *Kāmkār*, Arzhang (2004).

Discography: *Samā' Zarbihā. Kāmkār hā* [Chant of Drums, The *Kāmkārs*]; *Shurāngiz* [Joyfull]; *Rāz o Niāz* [Mystery and Need]; *Be Yāde 'Aref* [In Memory of 'Aref].

Mahmud Farahmand Bāfi (b. 1956 Tehrān)

He began *tombak* playing at the age of ten. From 1968 he studied the *tombak* for three years with Āmir Nāser Eftetāh. From 1970 he worked on the radio and television, and from 1975 he performed at the Centre for Preservation and Propagation of Iranian music. He also performed at the Shirāz Arts Festival (1974, 1975, 1976). He has collaborated with many prominent musicians: Jalil 'Andalibi, Rezā Shafi'iān, Mohammad Mossavi, Parviz Meshkātiān, Hossein 'Alizāde, Mohammad 'Ali Kiāninezhād, Dāvud Ganjei, 'Ali Akbar Shekārchi, and Parisā. After the Revolution he taught the *tombak* at the Centre for Preservation and Propagation of Iranian music and at the Rudaki Hall. Today, he offers *tombak* lessons in a private music school.

Sources: Akbarzāde, Pezhmān (2002: 110).

Discography: *Maqām-e Sabr* [*Maqām Sabr*]; *Kish-e Mehr. Tasnif-hāye Irāni* [Affectionate Faith. Iranian *Tasnifs*]; *'Aref va Ney* ['Aref and Ney].

Siāmak Banāi (b. 1957 Tehrān)

He studied political economy in the USA (1972-1977) and returned to Iran two years before the Revolution. In 1982 he decided to learn the *tombak*. He studied the *tombak*

for a few months with Jamshid Mohebbi and Āmir Nāser Eftetāh. His great wish was to study the *tombak* with Mohammad Esmā'ili who did not give at the time any music lessons because of the negative atmosphere after the Revolution. Siāmak Banāi pleaded with him for three years (1982-1985) to receive *tombak* lessons, and he finally convinced Esmā'ili who begun teaching him in 1985. From 1988 he collaborated with the *Navā Ensemble*, with *Pāyvar Ensemble*, with Asqar Bahāri, Shahrām Nāzeri, Hossein Dehlavi. From 1986 he is performing with Esmā'ili's *tombak* ensemble. Today he is teaching the *tombak* in private music schools.

Publications: Banāi, Siāmak (1993, 1999a, 1999b, 2000).

Discography: *Tār. Hushang Zarif* [*Tār. Hushang Zarif*]; *Rāz-e Bāq* [The Mystery of the Garden]; *Bāq be Bāq* [From Garden to Garden].

Dāriush Zargeri (1958- 2002, b. Hamedān)

Dāriush Zargeri started playing the *tombak* in his childhood. He moved to Tehrān in 1979 and commenced *tombak* lessons with Nāser Farhangfar, who influenced greatly his style of playing. At the same time he studied the *tār* with Hossein 'Alizāde and Mohammad Rezā Lotfi. His career as a *tombak* player flourished after his collaboration with 'Alizāde, a collaboration that became very close in terms of friendship, and very systematic. He also performed regularly with Arshad Tahmāsebi and his group *Nowruz*. Dāriush Zargeri taught the *tombak* in private, but also taught the *setār* and the *tombak* at the Tehrān Conservatory (*Honarestān-e Musiqi*).

Sources: Akbarzāde, Pezhmān (2002: 116).

Publications: Zargeri, Dāriush (2000).

Discography: *Sāz-e Tanhā. Bedāhe Navāzi-ye Tombak* [Instrument Alone. Improvisation on *Tombak*]; *Sad Rang Reng* [A Hundred Reng in Persian Music]; *'Eshq Mānd* [Love Remained]; *Sobhgāhi* [Morn]; *Paykūbi. Bedāhe Navāzi Chahārgāh*. [Dance. Improvisation in *Chahārgāh*].

Pezhmān Hadādi (b. 1969 Tehrān)

Pezhmān Hadādi lives in the United States since 1990. He became widely known in Iran after his five years collaboration with Keyhān Kalhor and with the renowned group *Dastān*, starting in 1995. His work with ‘Ali Akbar Morādi gave him further prominence in Iran as a *tombak* player. He has also collaborated with Hossein ‘Alizāde, Parisā, Hossein Omumi, and Ardeshir Kāmkar.

Today, he is particularly admired by young *tombak* players because of his “fresh” performance style of *tombak* playing in solo and accompaniment which includes distinctive dynamics and accentuations, unique rhythmic patterns, diversified sonorities and the incorporation of several new playing techniques on the *tombak* (some inspired by the Indian *tabla*) which are today widely performed by young players especially in solo performances.

He is also known in Iran for transgressing the “traditional” style of *tombak* playing by performing regional music with ‘Ali Akbar Morādi and progressive Iranian music with *Axiom of Choice*, a U. S. ensemble renowned among young people in Iran. Besides Iranian musicians, he has collaborated with musicians with diverse music backgrounds. He has performed with percussionists such as Adam Rudolph, Greg Ellis and Brad Dutz; He has recorded with Shujaat Husain Khan; he has performed with masters of Turkish music including Nejati Chelik and Halil Karaduman; and has collaborated with the Arab-Israeli ‘*ud* player Yair Dalal in the US.

Hadādi is the *tombak* player of the young generation, pursuing a wide range of music activities. He has written and performed compositions for the U.S based dance group *Namah* Ensemble. In 2002 he joined the *Zarbang* percussion ensemble. Pezhmān Hadādi is the founder of the *Neyreez World Music Academy* with two locations, in Sherman Oaks and Newport Beach, where he teaches the *tombak* and the *daf*. He is the recipient of the 2001-2002 Durfee Foundation Master Musician Award.

Sources: <<http://www.namah.net/Pejman.html>> [accessed 15/03/2006].

Discography: *Mehr va Māh* [Affection and Moon]; *Beyond Denial*; *Safar be Digar-e Su* [A Trip Towards Another Direction]; *Scattering Stars like Dust*; *Tale of Love I -Esfahan*.

Majid Khalaj (b. 1962 Gazvin)

Majid Khalaj is very active *tombak* player outside Iran and has been living in France since 1984. However, he has been collaborating with many eminent Iranian musicians based in Iran (Dāriush Talā’i, Hossein ‘Alizāde, Mohammad Rezā Shajariān) and

abroad (Hossein Omumi, Mohammad Rezā Lotfi, Simā Binā, Majid Derakshāni). He became well-known in Iran especially because of his long collaboration with Hossein ‘Alizāde. He pursues a career both as a soloist and an accompanist. In addition, he frequently organizes would-tour seminars where he teaches the *tombak* and the *daf*. In 1984 he has been invited to teach the *tombak* at the *Centre l'Etudes de Musiques Orientales, Institute de Musicologie, Paris-Sorbonne*. In 1996 he founded a music school in Paris, where he teaches Iranian percussion instruments. Besides the *tombak* and the *daf*, he also plays *dāyere zangi* (frame drum with metal rings) and *zarb-e zurkāne*. The majority of his recordings have been published outside Iran.

Sources: <<http://www.madjidkhaladj.com>> [accessed 14/04/2006].

<<http://members.aol.com/madjidkhaladj/cv.htm>> [accessed 14/04/2006].

Discography: *Konsert-e Navā* [*Navā Concert*]; *Konsert-e Homāyun* [*Homāyun Concert*]; *Taknavāzi-ye Tombak* [*Solo Tombak*]; *Sāye Roshan: Dāriush Talā’i* [*Bright Shadow: Dāriush Talā’i*]; *Cheshme Nush* [*Drunken Eyes*].

Navid Afgah (b. 1970 Shirāz)

He began *tombak* lessons at the age of thirteen and studied with Mahmud Farahmand Bāfi for one year at the Centre for Preservation and Propagation of Iranian music. Since 1984 he has lived in Shirāz, but he regularly visits Tehrān for his music activities. At the age of 17 he had two lessons with Farhangfar, during which he could play whatever Farhangfar played,, so Farhangfar told him that he doesn’t need to take more lessons. He also had four lessons with Mohammad Esmā’ili at the age of 18.

Besides the *tombak*, he plays and teaches the *tār* and the *setār*, both in private and in music school in Shirāz. He is also experimenting with singing. He studied orchestration, counterpoint, harmony and stylistics with Kāmbiz Roshanravān.

In 2000 he produced his first solo work *Āvāye Khiāl*, by which he introduced to the public new styles of playing the *tombak* solo, which he calls “effective playing”, characteristic for a variety of highly elaborate playing techniques, dynamics, nuance, and sound colours (the most popular of which has become the *pezhvāk* (echo)). This work was highly influential on the younger generation of *tombak* players who imitate and further experiment with this playing style.

Navid has collaborated with the *Sorush* ensemble, the *Pāyvar Ensemble*, the *Dālāhu* ensemble, the *Ayeneh* and *Massihā* ensembles, and the *Azersinā* ensemble. His last music collaboration was with Shahrām Nāzeri.

Discography: *Āvā-ye Khiāl. Taknavāzi-ye Tombak* [The Sound of Dream. Solo *Tombak*]; *Peydāyesh* [Genesis]; *Ma'bad Peykare-hāye Chubi. Navid Afgah* [The Temple of the Wooden Figures. Navid Afgah]; *Zoq-e Masti* [Scarred Drunkenness].

Narges Torshizi (b. 1971 Kashmār)

She began *tombak* lessons at the age of fifteen in Mashhād. One year later she started *setār* lessons with Keyvan Sāket, her sister's husband. After finishing high school (*dabirestān*) in 1992, she enrolled at the Music Department of Tehrān University. She continued her *tombak* lessons in Tehrān with Rajabi, Mohebbi and Kāmbiz Ganjei. At the same time she was giving private lessons to both male and female students. She was also teaching the *tombak* to female students at the Centre for Preservation and Propagation of Iranian music from 1991 to 1995, and other private music schools and state cultural centres. In 1991 she was one of the only three female *tombak* teachers in Tehrān. She regularly performed with Keyvan Sāket and with many female-only ensembles such as: *Khonya*, *Neyriz*, *Naqme*, *Golbang*, *Nakisā* (a Europe-based group). She has performed in Iran and abroad. Narges lives in London since 1998 and holds a master degree in Ethnomusicology from Goldsmiths College.

Works: Torshizi, Narges (2003).

Pedrām Khāvarzamini (b. 1975 Tehrān)

Pedrām is considered to be one of the most talented young *tombak* players in Iran. He is interested in solo, duet and group *tombak* playing, and also in accompaniment. Pedram started his *tombak* lessons at the age of sixteen (1991) with Kāmiār Mohabbat, with whom he studied for nine months. In 1992 he continued his *tombak* lessons with Rajabi

for two years. During his first lesson with Rajabi, Pedrām performed for him one of Rajabi’s works that he had learned from a recording. Rajabi was very touched and soon Pedrām became one of his best and dearest students. Pedrām was Rajabi’s “right hand” for several years.

Since 1994 he started practicing regularly on the *tombak* (for a period of ten years) with Siāmak Āqāi and Hamid Khabbāzi (two members of the group *Āftāb*). Pedrām considers that his *tombak* playing has substantially improved by practicing with them and that everything he has learned about Iranian music he owes to Siāmak and Hamid. From 1994 he joined the *Āftāb* ensemble which gave a series of concerts in Iran. With *Āftāb* they recorded two works composed by Mohammad Rezā Fayāz: *Dar Gozar* [Transition] and *Dar Khāne-ye Āftāb* [In the House of Sunshine]

In 1997 he, Siāmak Āqāi (*santur*) and Hamid Khabbāzi (*tār*) performed with Rajabi in Vahdat Hall. In this concert, besides accompanying, Pedrām performed with Rajabi *tombak* duet.

In 1997, at the age of 22 he formed the *tombak* group *Varashān*. Initially, the main members of this group, besides Pedrām, were Mass’ud Barāre and Hamid Qanbari (two students of Rajabi), and ‘Ali Rahimi. Pedrām considers Hamid Khabbāzi, Siāmak Āqāi, and Shahrām Aslāni as guest members of this group. While the first work of this group was composed by Pedrām and recorded in 1999, it was released in 2003 under the name *Kutāh* [Short/Concise/Momentary].

In 2002 he met Keyhān Kalhor with whom he performs regularly. With Keyhān, Siāmak and Hamid they toured in the United States in summer 2003.

In 2002 he met Ross Daly. In 2003 he and Hamid Khabbāzi performed in Ross Daly work *Iris* [Rainbow]. Since 2003 he lives in Crete Island, Greece, near Ross, with whom he performs regularly. *Kutāh* was republished in Greece in 2004.

Pedrām has also performed with Mohammad Rezā Ebrāhimi and ‘Ali Akbar Morādi, but also with many other musicians who regularly visit Ross Daly in Crete such as: Habil Aliev, Mohamad Rahim Khushnawaz, Dāriush Talā’i, Ballake Sissoko, Ellika Frissell, Khaled et Hossein Arman, Dhruba Gosh, and Mitsos Stavrakakis. In 2005 he performed with Pezhmān Hadādi and the *Zarbang* percussion group in Cologne, Germany.

Pedrām has performed in many prestigious concert halls around the world such as Theatre de la Ville in Paris, Lincoln Center Hall in New York, Cleveland Museum of Art in Cleveland, Thomas Jefferson Theatre in Washington and Chicago Cultural Center in Chicago.

Publications: Khāvarzamini and Qanbari (2001); Khāvarzamini, Qanbari and Helmi (eds.) (2001).

Discography: *Dar Gozar* [Transition]; *Dar Khāne-ye Āstāb* [In the House of Sunshine]; *Iris* [Rainbow]; *Persian Zikr*; *Kutāh. Tarhi-ye Berāye Sāzhā-ye Kube-i* [Short/Concise/Momentary. A Venture for Percussion Instruments].

Pezhhām Akhavāss (b. 1359/1980 Shirāz)

He started *tombak* lessons at the age of five with Nāser Farhangfar. He was also a student of Mohammad Bāqer Sepāhi, Sa'id Rudbari and Morteżā A'yān. He is a graduate student of the Music Department of Tehrān University. His primary (*takhasos*) instruments at the university were the *setār* and the *barbat*. He is also experimenting with other percussion instruments such as the *dammam*, the *kuze*, the *zarb-e zurkhāne* but also the Indian *tabla*. In concerts he performs mainly on the *tombak*, but when necessary also on the *daf*, and occasionally on other percussion instruments. He gives private lessons on *tombak* and *daf*. From 2002 he is regularly performing with Shahrām Nāzeri and his group, and with the *setār* group *Navā dar Navā* with Mass'ud Sho'āri, a young talented *setār* player conducting the group. He has also performed with Dāvud Āzād and with 'Ali Akbar Morādi.

Pezhhām is perhaps the youngest post-Revolutionary *tombak* player who has performed, at very early stage of his career, with many celebrated and accomplished Iranian musicians.

Discography: *Rehā* [Liberated]; *Kamānche Navāzi. Barāsās-e Melodi-hāye Kordi* [*Kamānche* Playing. Based on Kurdish Melodies].

Appendix 3

An Explanation of the Notation System used for the Different Strokes in *Tombak* Playing

Tom ζ

In one line stave *tom*, performed by the lower hand, is usually symbolized with the sign ζ above the note.⁵²⁰ *Tom* is performed with the fingers joined loosely and cupped in a semi-circle, and the wrist is twisted downwards to an angle of about 30 degrees. The movement is brought about by the wrist, while the rest of the hand is stable. Usually it is the middle part of the skin which is struck [see picture 21]. *Tom* can be performed also on other parts of the skin and this depends on the techniques used before and after it. *Tom* can be performed as both a principal note and a note of ornamentation.

Picture 21. *Tom* (lower hand).⁵²¹



Bak or *Hasht* Λ

Bak or *hasht* (lit. eight) of the lower hand is performed with the ring finger. The movement is again brought about by the wrist and the hand moves towards the drum in a rotating movement. The second joint⁵²² of the ring finger strikes the rim of the “large mouth” [see picture 22]. *Bak* can be performed either as a principal note, or as an ornamentation note.



Picture 22. *Bak* Λ (lower hand).

⁵²⁰ The *tom* is also performed with the upper hand and is symbolized as ζ .

⁵²¹ All photographs in this appendix were taken by George Balandin.

⁵²² The joint that connects the metacarpal bone with the proximal phalanx bone.

When *bak* is performed as in picture 23, with the thumb resting on the rim of the *tombak* and the ring finger striking the rim of the *tombak*, but with the palm of the hand looking downwards and being parallel to the skin, *bak* is symbolized as $\bar{\Lambda}$ (used in example 13).

Picture 23. *Bak* $\bar{\Lambda}$ (lower hand).



Picture 26. *Pelang* (small finger).

Haft V

The V sign, commonly known as *haft* (lit. seven), is used to denote a stroke with the ring finger of the upper hand, and the movement is made by the wrist. When the ring finger strikes the rim of the drum, the \bar{V} sign is used (picture 24). If the ring finger strikes closer to the middle part of the drum skin, that is symbolized either as \bar{V}^+ or as V (picture 25).

Picture 24. *Haft* \bar{V} (upper hand).



Picture 25. *Haft* \bar{V}^+ and V (upper hand).



***Pelang* or *Beshkan* \dot{V} (upper hand)**

Pelang can be performed with the small, ring, middle or index finger of either hand. When the sign \dot{V} takes a number, the number indicates the finger, with the small finger taking the number one (picture 26), the ring finger the number 2 (picture 27), the middle finger the number 3 (picture 28), and the index finger number 4. If there is no number above the sign it is usually performed with the ring finger. *Pelang* is performed on the rim of the drum, and made by a flick of the thumb. *Pelang* can be performed either as a principal note, or as an ornamentation note.

Picture 26. *Pelang* (small finger).



Picture 27. *Pelang* (ring finger).



Picture 28. *Pelang* (middle finger).



The \checkmark sign is normally used as a grace note and it is performed by the index finger. When it follows a *pelang* stroke of the middle finger, it is stimulated by a flick of the index finger on the middle finger and it is then released on the rim of the drum (used in example 12 and 17) (see picture 29).

Picture 29. Grace note \checkmark used after *pelang* performed by the third finger.



When sign \checkmark is the initial grace note (as in example 12) then it is used to indicate Tehrāni's *eshāre*: first the middle finger and then the index finger strike the middle part of the skin. The latter is stimulated by a flick on the middle finger (picture 30).


Picture 30. Grace note \checkmark performed alone (Tehrāni's *eshāre*).



Eshāre $\hat{\wedge}$ (lower hand) $\hat{\vee}$ (upper hand)

The lower hand *eshāre* is performed by a gentle consecutive strike of the five fingers (commencing with the small finger) in the middle of the drum skin, the movement is brought about by the wrist. *Eshāre* performed with the upper hand (which rests on the *tombak*) is also brought about by the wrist and the four fingers (from the small finger to the index finger) strike gently the skin in rapid succession. *Eshāre* can be performed either as a principal note, or as an ornamentation note. *Eshāre* is the name for

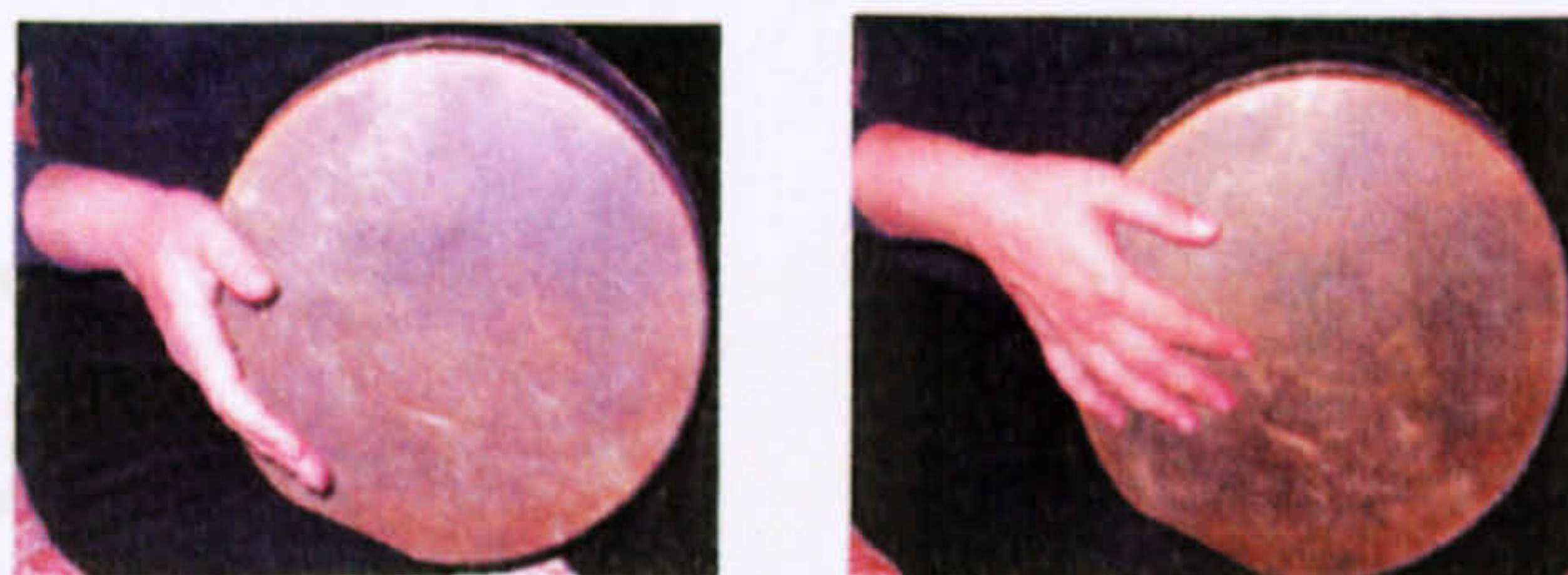
both the one hand stroke and the two hands stroke. When the latter denotes a grace note hand, and it ends with a grace note of the upper hand.

it is symbolized as  "full" (*por*) because of its compact density. The sound of *riz-e por* should be smooth, uninterrupted and flawless. The quality of the sound of *riz-e por* is often

Picture 31. *Eshāre* (upper hand).



Picture 32. *Eshāre* (lower hand).



Riz-e Pelang

Riz-e por is performed by rapid alternation of *eshāre*-type strokes of both hands, with the lower hand commencing and the upper hand ending. However, depending on the grace note that precedes any type of *riz*, *riz* can commence with the upper hand. For example, when a *pelang* appoggiatura of the upper hand precedes *riz-e por*, *pelang* is

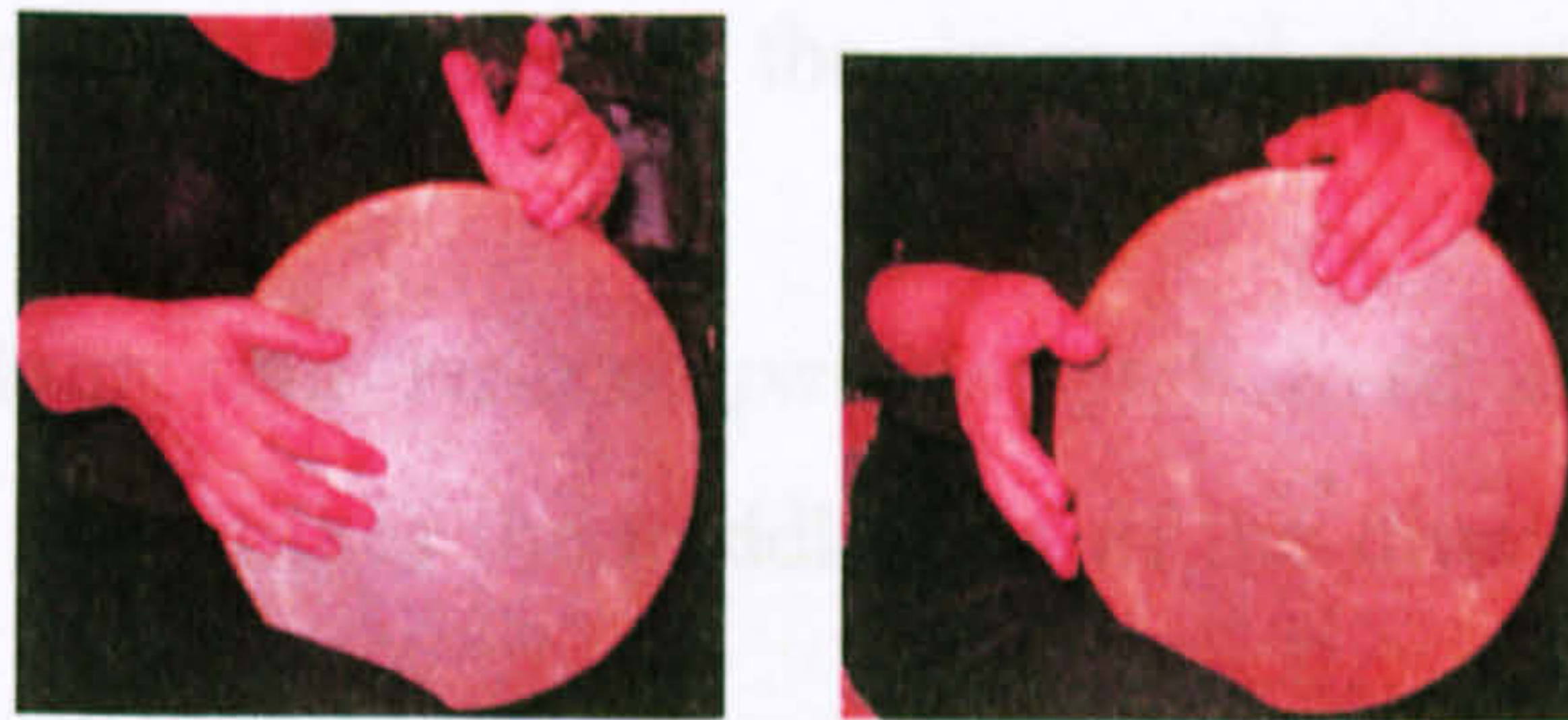
In most teaching manuals for the *tombak*, *riz* is symbolized with three strokes through a stem (or three strokes above a whole note). These strokes do not indicate subdivisions of notes. The number of strokes in one *riz* depends on the tempo of the piece and the time value of the note. A quaver is usually performed by four strokes, and a crotchet can be performed either by four or eight strokes.

Riz-e por is performed by rapid alternation of *eshāre*-type strokes of both hands, with the lower hand commencing and the upper hand ending. However, depending on the grace note that precedes any type of *riz*, *riz* can commence with the upper hand. For example, when a *pelang* appoggiatura of the upper hand precedes *riz-e por*, *pelang* is

actually performed on the principal note, and *riz* continues with *eshāre* of the lower hand, and it ends with *eshāre* of the upper hand.

This *riz* is called “full” (*por*) because of its compact density. The sound of *riz-e por* should be smooth, uninterrupted and flawless. The quality of the sound of *riz-e por* is often paralleled with that of rain.

Picture 33. *Riz-e Por*.



Picture 33. *Riz-e Por*.

Riz-e Pelang  

Riz-e pelang or *riz-e do angoshti-ye beshkani* (two fingers *riz beshkani*) is performed by rapid alternations of the *bak* (lower hand) and *pelang* (second finger, upper hand). The first strike is the *bak* and the final strike is the *pelang*. However, as in *riz-e por*, depending on the appoggiatura, the upper hand can begin with *riz*. Again the sound should be continuous and flowing.

Picture 34. *Riz-e Pelang*.





Picture 34. *Riz-e Pelang*.

²² Sign  is also used for *riz-e do angoshti-ye beshkani* (two fingers *riz beshkani*) or *invert*), but it has not been used in the present study. The movement is consistent with the sign .

Riz-e Timpani 

Riz-e timpani or *riz-e do angoshti sāde* (two-fingers simple *riz*) is performed by a rapid alteration of *bak* and *haft* (seven), the latter striking the middle part of the drum skin. *Riz-e timpani* begins with *bak* and ends with *haft*. The latter rule is subject to change depending on the grace note preceding *riz*.


When the *haft* hits the rim of the drum and moves downwards towards the middle part of the drum skin, *riz-e timpani* is symbolized as  (which is the case in example 13). When *haft* strikes the middle part of the drum skin and moves upwards,

ending at the rim of the drum, *riz-e timpani* is symbolized as  (example 13).⁵²³

Picture 35. *Riz-e Timpani*.

Picture 37. *Dasht Baz*.




Sordin 

The thumb and the ring finger of the lower hand press smoothly the skin so as to dampen the sound of the *tombak*, while simultaneously the upper hand performs *pelang*.

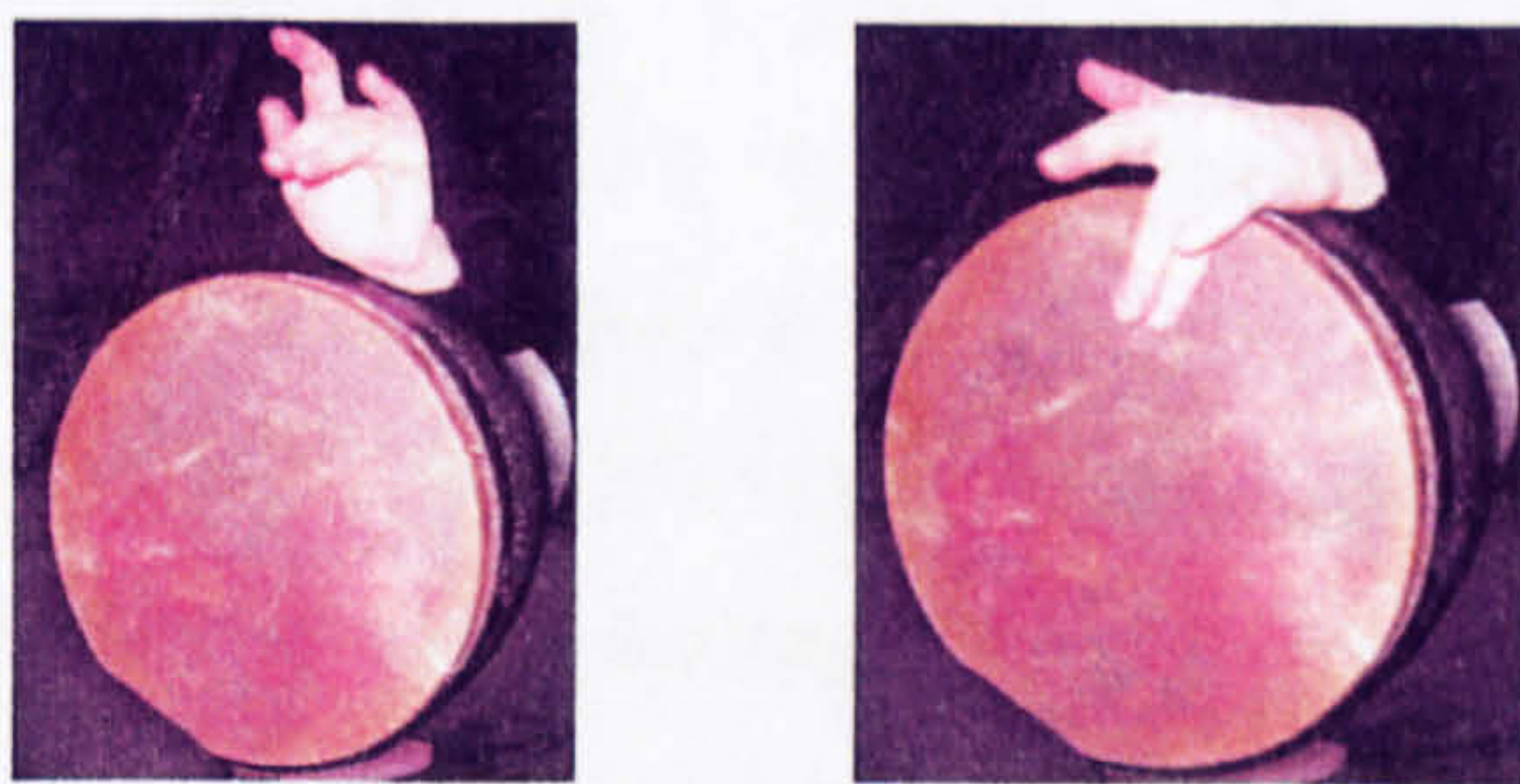


Picture 36. *Sordin*.

⁵²³ Sign  is also used for *Riz-e do angoshti-ye sāde 'aks ya bargardān* (two-finger simple *riz*, reverse or invert), but it has not been used in the music examples. It is similar to *riz-e timpani*, only the movement is commenced with the upper hand.

Dast Bāz 

Dast Bāz (lit. “open hand”) is performed by the ring and middle finger of the upper hand that rests on the *tombak*. These two fingers, bended and separated from the small and index finger, hit the drum skin near the rim in order to produce a deep-toned, soft sound. The movement is brought about by the wrist.



Picture 37. *Dast Bāz*.

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⁵²⁴ In this list I include most of the published manuals for *tombak* that have been published in Iran until 2003, not all of which are cited in the main text of the thesis.

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- Taknavāzi-ye Tombak* [*Tombak Solo*]. Majid Khalaj (*tombak*). Tehrān: Kārgāh Musiqi
[cassette, 1372/1993].
- Taknavāzi-ye Santur (Abu 'Atā)* [Solo *Santur (Abu 'Atā)*]. Rezā Shafi'yān (*santur*),
Bahman Rajabi (*tombak*). Performed in Shirāz in Hāfez-ie in 1975 [unpublished
cassette].
- Tale of Love I - Esfahan*. Parisā (*āvāz*), Hossein Omumi (composition, *ney* and *āvāz*),
Pezhman Hadadi (*tombak*), Saam (*daf*). Quarter Tone QTCD-1005 [CD, 1998].
- Violon. Ostād Abolhasan Sabā* [Violin. Ostād Abolhasan Sabā]. Abolhasan Sabā
(violin), Hossein Tehrāni (*tombak* and *āvāz*). Tehrān: Mo'assese-ye Farhangi-ye
Honari-ye Māhur (Māhur Institute of Art and Culture) 3399v [cassette,
1381/2002].
- Violon. Rokneddin Mokhtāri* [Violin. Rokneddin Mokhtāri], Rokneddin Mokhtāri
(violin), Nur 'Ali Borumand (*tombak*). Tehrān: Mo'assese-ye Farhangi-ye
Honari-ye Māhur (Māhur Institute of Art and Culture) M.CD-158 [CD,
1382/2003].
- Zabān-e Tār. Bedāhe Navāzi: Ostād Jalil Shahnāz* [The Language of *Tār*. Improvisation
by *Ostād Jalil Shahnāz*]. Jalil Shahnāz (*tār*), Amir Nāser Eftetāh (*tombak*).
Tehrān: Chahārbāq [cassette, n.d.].

- Zarbi-hāye Habib Somā'i* [Rhythmic Pieces of Habib Soma'i]. Majid Kiāni (*santur*).
Tehrān: Irān Sedā CD 002 [recorded 1978, published 1997].
- Zibāyishenāsi va Ertebāt-e ān bā Ritm* [Aesthetics and its Relation to Rhythm], Solo *tombak* and speech by Bahman Rajabi performed in *Tālār Rudaki*, duct *tombak*: Bahman Rajabi and Mahmud Farahmand. Performed in Rudaki Hall 1369/1990 [2 unpublished cassettes].
- Zoq-e Masti* [Scarred Drunkenness]. *Masihi* Ensemble. 'Alirezā Shāhmedi (*āvāz*), Peymān Khosrow Sāmāni (*divān*), Navid Afgah (*tombak*). Tehrān: Chahārbāq [cassette, n.d.].

Instrumental Radifs:

- Bahsh-hāye Az Radif-e Mirzā Hossein Qoli. Be Revāyat va Ejrā-ye Ostād Fakhāmoddole Behzādi* [Parts from the *Radif* of Mirzā Hossein Qoli. Interpreted and Performed by *Ostād Fakhāmoddole Behzādi*] Tehrān: Mo'assese-ye Farhangi-ye Honari-ye Māhur (Māhur Institute of Art and Culture) [2 CD, 2003].
- Radif-e Āqā Hossein Qoli. Be Revāyat va Ejrā-ye Ostād 'Ali Ākbar Shahnāzi (tār)*. [The *Radif* of Āqā Hossein Qoli. According to the version of *Ostād 'Ali Ākbar Shahnāzi*]. Tehrān: Mo'assese-ye Farhangi-ye Honari-ye Māhur (Māhur Institute of Art and Culture) [M.CD- 108,109, 3 CD, n.d.].
- Radif Dore-ye 'Ali. Tār: Ostād 'Ali Akbar Shahnāzi* [*Radif*: Advanced Repertory of *Ostād 'Ali Akbar Shahnāzi*] Tehrān: Mo'assese-ye Farhangi-ye Honari-ye Māhur (Māhur Institute of Art and Culture) [3 CD, n.d.].
- Radif-e Mirzā 'Abdollāh barāye Tār va Setār. Be Revāyat va Ejrā-ye Ostād Nur 'Ali Borumand* [The *Radif* of Mirzā 'Abdollāh for the *tār* and *setār*. Interpreted and performed by *Ostād Nur 'Ali Borumand*]. Tehrān: Mo'assese-ye Farhangi-ye Honari-ye Māhur (Māhur Institute of Art and Culture) [SITC-201, 6 CD, n.d.].
- Radif Moqaddamati-ye Tār va Setār (ketāb sevom). Gardavārande: Mussā Ma'rufi. Be kushesh: Hossein 'Alizāde* [An Elementary *Radif* for the *Tār* and *Setār*, 3rd book, compiled by Mussā Ma'rufi. Hossein 'Alizāde, *setār*]. Tehrān: Mo'assese-ye Farhangi-ye Honari-ye Māhur (Māhur Institute of Art and Culture) [2 CD, n.d.].
- Radif-e Mussā Ma'rufi. Ejra: Soleymān Ruhafzā (tār)* [The *Radif* of Mussā Ma'rufi. Performed by Soleymān Ruhafzā (*tār*)]. Tehrān: Chahārbāq [CD, n.d.].
- Radif-e Navāzi. Be Revāyat Nur 'Ali Khān Borumand. Setār: Hossein 'Alizāde* [Instrumental *Radif* [of Mirzā 'Abdollāh]. According to the Version of Nur 'Ali

Borumand. *Setār*: Hossein ‘Alizāde] Tehrān: Mo’assese-ye Farhangi-ye Honari-ye Māhur (Māhur Institute of Art and Culture) [5 CD: M.CD-93, M.CD-94, M.CD- 95, M.CD- 96, M.CD-97, n.d.].

Radif-e Navāzi va Bedāhe Navāzi. Kamānche: Ostād Asqar Bahāri [Instrumental *Radif* and Improvisation. *Kamānche: Ostād Asqar Bahāri*]. Tehrān: Chahārbāq [6 CD, n.d.].

Radif-e Setār. Revāyat va Ejrā-ye Ostād Sa’id Hormozi [The *Radif* of Persian Music on the *Setār*. Interpreted and performed by Sa’id Hormozi] Tehrān: Mo’assese-ye Farhangi-ye Honari-ye Māhur (Māhur Institute of Art and Culture) [2 CD, n.d.].

Radif-e Setār. Be Revāyat va Ejrā-ye Ostād Yusef Forutān [*Radif* for *Setār*. Interpreted and Performed by Ostād Yusef Forutān]. Tehrān: Mo’assese-ye Farhangi-ye Honari-ye Māhur (Māhur Institute of Art and Culture) [M.CD-171, 3 CD, n.d.].

Radif-e Tār. Be Revāyat va Ejrā-ye Ostād Morteżā Ney Dāvud [The *Radif* of Persian Music on *Tār*. Interpreted and Performed by Ostād Morteżā Ney Dāvud]. Tehrān: Mo’assese-ye Farhangi-ye Honari-ye Māhur (Māhur Institute of Art and Culture) [4 CD, n.d.]. *Radif-e Mirzā ‘Abdollāh. Ejrā bā ney: Jamshid ‘Andalibi. Dastgāh-e Shur, Āvāz-e Bayāt-e Esfahān, Āvāz-e Abu ‘Atā* [The *Radif* Mirzā ‘Abdollāh. Performed on the ney by Jamshid ‘Andalibi. *Dastgāh: Shur, Āvāz: Bayāt-e Esfahān, Āvāz: Abu ‘Atā*]. Tehrān: Sherkāt-e Farhangi-ye Honari-ye Rastgāh (Rastgāh Institue of Art and Culture) [3 cassettes, 2003].

Traditional Persian Art Music: The *Radif* of Mirzā ‘Abdollāh. Performed by Dāriush Talā’i (*setār*). Costa Mesa, Calif.: Mazda Publlishers. [5 CD, recorded in 1992, published in1999].

Vocal Radifs:

Radif-e Āvāzi Musiqi-ye Sonnatī-ye Irān. Āvāz: Mahmud Karimi [The Vocal *Radif* of Persian Classical Music. *Āvāz: Mahmud Karimi*] Tehrān: Anjoman-e Musiqi-ye Irān (The Society for Iranian Music) [6 cassettes, 1995/1374].

Radif-e Āvāzi va Tasnif-hāye Qadimi. Be Revāyat va Ejrā-ye Ostād ‘Abdollāh Davāmi Mohammad Rezā Lotfi: Tār [Vocal *Radif* and Old *Tasnifs*. Interpreted and Performed by Ostād ‘Abdollāh Davāmi. Mohammad Rezā Lotfi: *Tār*]. Tehrān: Mo’assese-ye Farhangi-ye Honari-ye Māhur (Māhur Institute of Art and Culture) [3 CD: M.CD- 111, M.CD-112, M.CD-113, 1282/2003.].

Radif-e Ostād ‘Abdollāh Davāmi. Dastgāh-e Shur. Khānande: Nasrollāh Nāsehpur. Navāzande: Mohammad Rezā Lotfi [The *Radif* of Ostād ‘Abdollāh Davāmi. *Dastgāh: Shur*. Nasrollāh Nāsehpur: vocals; Mohammad Rezā Lotfi: tār]. *Āhang-e Ruz* [SEP-1090, SEP-1091, disc, 1975].

Vocal Radifs based on instrumental radifs:

Javāb-e Sāz: Radif-e Mirzā ‘Abdollāh be Āvāz. Radif-e Āvāzi-ye Irān. Dastgāh: Navā-Rāstpanjgāh. Tanzim va Ejrā: Mohsen Karāmati [An Answer to the Instrument: Vocal *Radif* According to the [instrumental] *Radif* of Mirzā ‘Abdollāh. Iranian Vocal *Radif*. *Dastgāh: Navā, Rāstpanjgāh*. Interpreted and performed by Mohsen Karāmati]. Tehrān: Mo’assese-ye Farhangi-ye Honari-ye Māhur (Māhur Institute of Art and Culture) [CD, 1384/2005].

Javāb-e Sāz: Radif-e Mirzā Abdollāh be Āvāz. Radif-e Āvāzi-ye Irān. Dastgāh-e Shur, Āvāz-e Dashti. Tanzim va Ejrā: Mohsen Karāmati [An Answer to the Instrument: Vocal *Radif* According to the [instrumental] *Radif* of Mirzā ‘Abdollāh. Iranian Vocal *Radif*. *Dastgāh: Shur, Āvāz: Dashti*. Interpreted and performed by Mohsen Karāmati]. Tehrān: Mo’assese-ye Farhangi-ye Honari-ye Māhur (Māhur Institute of Art and Culture) [CD, 1384/2005].

Filmography

“Untitled”. Concert in Vahdat Hall, Tehrān. December 1997 (16 Āzar 1376). Performers: Bahman Rajabi (*tombak*), Hamid Khabbāzi (*tār*), Siāmak Āqai (*santur*) and Pedrām Khāvarzamini (*tombak*). Unpublished.

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