



GUŠA

GUŠA (lit., corner or part), a term in Persian music designating a unit of melody of variable importance, which occupies a special place in the development of one of the twelve modal systems (*dastgāh* or *āvāz*, qq.v.). This term came into use during the Safavid era, when the modal system was organized in six *āvāzes*, twelve *maqāms*, twenty-four *šo'bas*, and forty-eight *gušas*, such that each element generated two other elements. It has no equivalence in other traditions of *maqām*, except in the Azeri *maqām*, where it has the same sense and the same function as in Persian music, and in the old *maqām* of Kashmir based on the Persian theory.

In Persian music some *gušas* are specific to a given *dastgāh* and others belong to two or three *dastgāhs*, with possible adaptations affecting the melodic and rhythmic forms or even the modal substance. The names of some of the *gušas* refer to forms and not to a specific melody (*darāmad*, *kerešma*, *čahār-mežrāb*, *maṭnawī*, etc.).

From the point of view of their importance and their function, three types of *gušas* may be distinguished: 1) the great *gušas* (*šāh guša*), which contain an introduction (*darāmad*), several sections (*guša*) and even modulations (in the Azeri *maqām* they are designated by the term *šo'ba*); 2) the *gušas* of middle extent; and 3) the small *gušas* reduced to a simple motif. Only the great *gušas* may serve as a model for composition of measured pieces (such as *tašnif* in Zābol, 'Erāq, etc.). Usually the performer has some liberty to modify the melodic substance of the *gušas* of each *dastgāh*, to somewhat rearrange their distribution and to leave out some sequences or put in others, borrowed from

another *dastgāh* or otherwise composed. The introductory *gušas* (*darāmad*) have a particular importance in that they define the mode of reference, and because of this they cannot be left out.

The *dastgāhs* are composed of between 20 and 60 *gušas* according to the repertoire, and the *āvāz* between 5 or 6 and some 20. The integral canonical repertoires (*radifs*) of Mirzā ‘Abd-Allāh (transmitted by Nur-‘Ali Borumand, q.v.) adds up to 250 *gušas*, that of Montāẓam-al-Ḥokamā’ 392 (Şafwat, p. 84), and that of Ḥo-sayn Aşğari Farāhāni (oral sources) more than 800. The Azeri *maqām* contains about 150 *gušas* and *şoʻbas*, but has no redundancies, which is not the case with Persian *radifs*. If we do not take into account the redundancies, the Persian repertoire would also contain the names of about 150 *gušas*.

The majority of *gušas* have a non-measured rhythm; they are, nevertheless, modeled on a metric texture coming from the couplet (*bayt*) usually sung in the *guša*. A typical *guša* of average importance usually includes a short introduction (*darāmad*) without text (sung on vowels), a motif sung on a couplet (*āvāz*, *şe’r*), a short vocalized section (*taḥrīr*), and a conclusion (*forud*). This structure is generally also preserved in the instrumental *radifs*.

On the whole, with the gradual development of the *dastgāh*, the ambitus of its *gušas* is progressively enlarged, and the register in which they evolve rises, before rapidly descending to the low-pitched register (concluding *guša*, *forud*).

Some *gušas* are first and foremost melodic types defining a modal structure, with its intervals, its ambitus, its initial and concluding notes, its stops, etc. This is notably the case with *darāmads*. Others emphasize the melodic profile, typical little motifs and sometimes a real rhythm, without which one would mix some *gušas* with others. In some cases, this kind of *guša* may be played in different intervals: for instance, the *guša* ‘Oşşāq is played, with various adaptations, in Homāyun, Rāst-Panjgāh, and Navā. Although many *gušas* are considered as melodic types, some are rather “typical melodies” with a very narrow margin for variations. This is notably true of the *gušas* with a measured rhythm (e.g., *reng-e šahrāşub*, *sāqi-nāma*, *gerāyeli*).

Denomination of the *gušas* varies according to the repertoire, whereas the same name may sometime designate different realities, independent of possible variants. Some old *gušas* have been forgotten, or subsist as an integral part of another *guša*. Other *gušas*, previously mentioned as great *maqāms* (e.g.,



Bozorg, Zirafkand, and Busalik), are but, in present *radif*, little secondary fragments. Most of the names of the *gušas* indicate their specifically Iranian origin and could not be found in the Turkish and Arabic traditions; some are supposed to belong to the pre-Islamic period (cf. Şafwat, pp. 16-18), like Jāmadarān, Mehrabāni, Muya, etc., but we have no way of ascertaining that their contents is the same as in the past.

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