



KĀŠĪ, MUSĀ KHAN

KĀŠĪ, MUSĀ KHAN (also known as “Kāšāni”; b. Kashan, 1856; d. Kashan, 1939), Jewish master of Persian classical music, teacher, and innovative *kamānča* player also known for his mellow singing voice. He received the honorific title of khan from Mas‘ud Mirzā Žell-al-Soltān (1850-1919), son of Nāṣer-al-Din Shah Qājār (r. 1848-96) and governor of Isfahan, in whose court he served as a musician for nearly twenty years.

The most notable pupil of Musā Khan was Bāqer Khan Rāmešgar, who studied with him in Isfahan and became one of the 20th century’s master *kamānča* players and the earliest recorded musician of that instrument in Persia (Sepantā, pp. 102-3). A *taṣnif* in the Māhur mode (*dastgāh*), known only to Rāmešgar in his days, reportedly dated back to the Safavid era and was taught to him by Musā Khan. Yusof Khan and Solaymān Kāšāni were two other acclaimed students of Musā Khan (Mašḥun, pp. 451, 540-41; During, 1984, p. 81). Subsequent to his stay in Isfahan, Musā Khan moved to the court of Jalāl-al-Dawla Qājār, the governor of Yazd (Levi, III, p. 437). Soon after his arrival, he used his close connection with the governor to help abolish the required wearing of the Jewish patch (*yahudāna* or *vāla-ye juhudi* [*johudi*]) in Yazd. After Yazd, Musā Khan went to Tehran at the invitation of Nāṣer-al-Din Shah to perform in his court (Sarshar, p. 144, figs. 671, 672).

Musā Khan was famous for his innovative introduction of the six-stringed *kamānča*, a traditionally three-stringed instrument that took on its now requisite fourth string in the mid-19th century. Musā Khan’s six-stringed *kamānča* did not prove a lasting tradition among later *kamānča* players, but



Bāqer Khan was known to use one (Kāleqi, I, pp. 66, 69-71, 318; Chaouli, 2002, pp. 138-40; During, p. 77; Setāyešgar, II, pp. 279-80). Photographs of Bāqer Khan during his London tour with Darviš Khan and others in 1909 show that Bāqer Khan was playing a six-stringed *kamānča* in recordings during this trip (Kinnear, pp. 10-11, 14).

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