

1. Persian or Iranian?

Iran and Persia sometimes are used interchangeably in the West, so is Iranian and Persian. The term Persian, meaning “from Persia”, derives from the Latin word, Persia, the root of which is the Greek word, *Persís* (Περσίς) (Liddell & Scott). Persis (Persia) was initially only one of the provinces of ancient Iran; however, later, the word was used as an exonym for the entire Persian Empire for many years (Planhol, 2012).

Furthermore, the country was formed over the centre of the ancient Persian empire. Since most of the original citizens populated the land, today’s “Persia” refers to Iran. Especially in the West, Persia and Persian came to refer to all of Iran and its people (Axworthy, 2017). Yet, some people distinguish Persian and Iranian and associate the former to a particular ethnicity, and the latter, to a certain nationality in Iran constituting around 61% of the population of the country (United States. Central Intelligence, 2020). World Factbook no longer provides percentage breakdowns of Iran’s ethnic groups.

Throughout history, Persians have significantly contributed to art and science. In this thesis, I have used Persian as opposed to Iranian, which is used in some articles and dissertations to signify the ancient link between pre-Islamic Iran’s music, culture, and language.

Bridget Johnson explains: “Iranian is a nationality while Persian is considered an ethnicity. Iran is used in political context while both Persia and Iran are used in cultural context” (Johnson, 2020). A similar association of Iranian and political contexts exists and many of the people from Iran who live outside the country, prefer using Persian to avoid any connections with political matters.

2. Middle East’

The controversial term Middle East is widely presumed to have been coined in 1902 by the 19th century American naval officer and historian, Alfred Thayer Mahan, although T.E. Gordon had used it several years prior to Mahan (Koppes, 1976, pp. 95-96) This is an Anglocentric title which is decided outside this region and is defined by geopolitical strategists (Pass, 2013, p. 4). Hence, it is unintelligible if one views the world from a non-Western angle. Kaveh Farrokh states: “The term Middle East when examined in cultural, anthropological and cultural terms makes very little sense. The construct ‘Middle East’ is a geopolitical invention—void of any scientific basis” (Farrokh, 2018).

The term Middle East, however, appears extensively in art- and particularly music-related publications. According to New Grove: “The Middle East comprises four historically interlinked art music systems: Arab, Persian, Turkish and Maghribi, or North African.”(Lawergren, Farhat, & Blum, 2001).

3. Persian classical or traditional music?

Different terms are used to describe the mainstream *dastgāh*-based music in Iran, including classical, authentic or *asīl*, traditional or *dastgāh-ī*. However, according to many researchers and musicologists, for example, Mohammad-Reza Fayaz, Sassan Fatemi and Houman Asadi, ‘classical’ is the best word to describe the music, for a number of reasons (Fayaz, Asadi, & Fatemi, 2009).

Dastgāh-ī is not appropriate because it is not easily conveyable and communicable for someone who is not familiar with the musical system (Fayaz et al., 2009). Persian traditional music, although being widely used after Iran’s revolution since 1978, is not a precise definition. According to Asadi, despite the *dastgāh*-based Iranian music rooted in the Persian traditions, it has gone through various stages of internal and external transformation. There are usually two extremes in this regard, one group try to put a ‘traditional’ label and make a music sanctuary to prevent even internal changes; on the other hand, there are some who try to infuse radical ideas that are incompatible with the cultural aesthetics of the Iranian music. Transformations are inevitable and a natural process in any musical culture that rooted in traditions. However, it is deemed that only compatible transformations will be persevered and merged into a traditional musical culture and thus, there is no need for ‘traditional warriors’ (Hooman Asadi, 2004, pp. 1-2).

‘Authentic’ (*asīl*) is also widely used. However, it raises the question that if this music is authentic, what is inauthentic Iranian music? There are many concerns with how to evaluate the authenticity of a piece of music according to its compatibility with the traditional norms (Benson, 2003, pp. 88-89, 96). Hence, the label authentic was not deemed appropriate for this study.

Lastly, according to definitions, classical music is a philosophical type of music that adheres to long-established principles, in contrast with folk and popular styles. Persian music has a complex theory expounded in ancient treatises such as *Kitab al-Musiqa al-Kabir*, which

translates in English as *Great Book of Music*. This is by the Medieval Persian philosopher al-Farabi (1960, pp. 872-950, 951). The term Persian classical music has long been used by both Iranian (and Western) ethnomusicologists including Ella Zonis, Houshang Sharif and Hormoz Farhat. For all the above reasons, Persian classical music is the preferred term used in this dissertation.