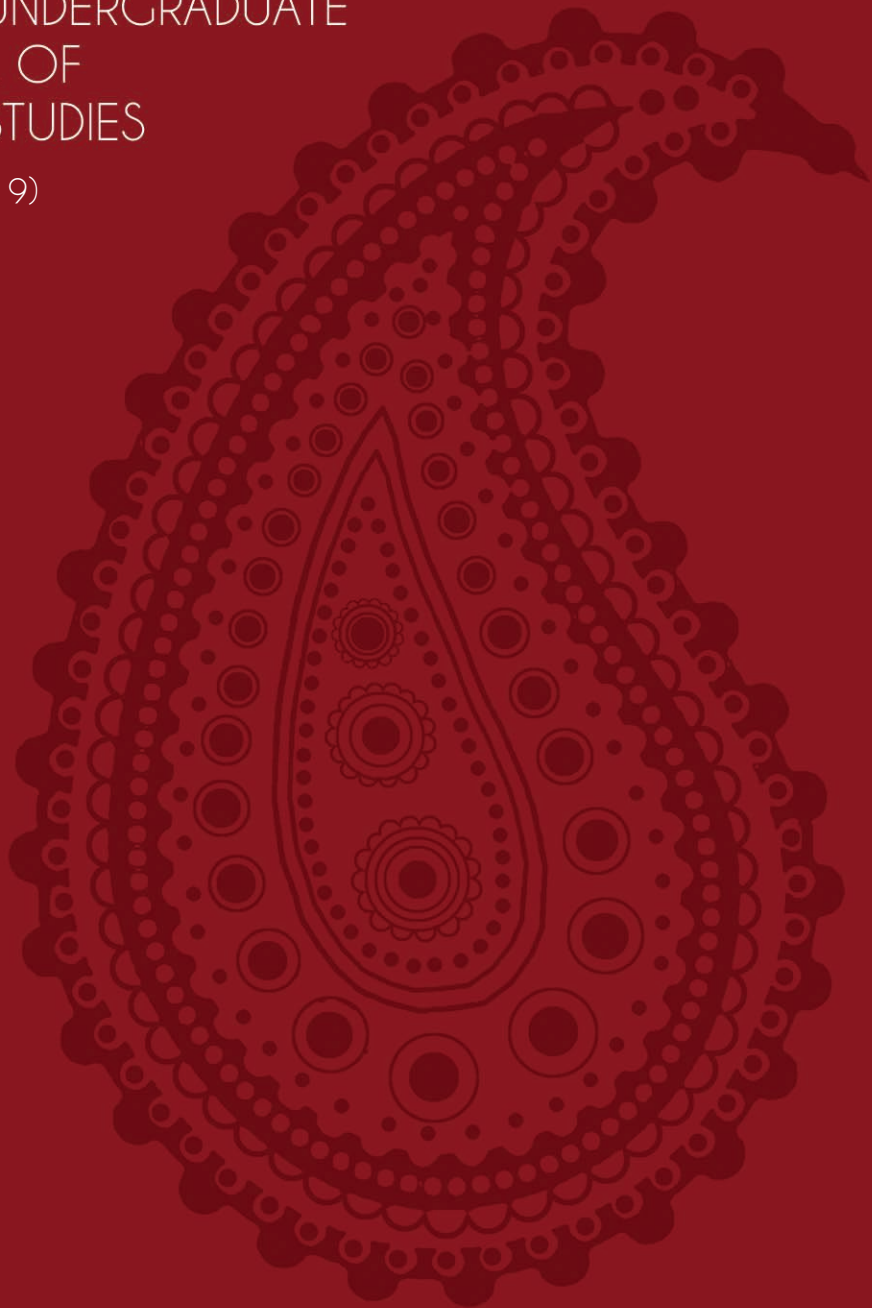


DĀNESH

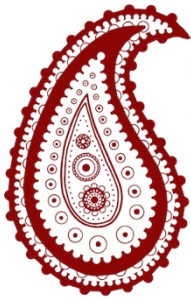
THE OU UNDERGRADUATE
JOURNAL OF
IRANIAN STUDIES

Volume 4 (2019)



COLLEGE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA





The UNIVERSITY *of* OKLAHOMA
College of International Studies
FARZANEH FAMILY CENTER
for IRANIAN and PERSIAN GULF STUDIES

DĀNESH: The OU Undergraduate Journal of Iranian Studies

Published under the auspices of:
The OU Farzaneh Family Center for Iranian and Persian Gulf Studies,
the Department of International and Area Studies, and
the Boren College of International Studies at
the University of Oklahoma

Volume 4 (2019)

Editors-in-Chief:
Kayleigh Kuyon
Corey Standley

Associate Editors:
Adam Oberlitner
Jessamine Nazari
Chris Progler
Emma Albrecht
Sarah Kayali
Bailey Ashbaker
Joni Keaton

Faculty Advisors:
Afshin Marashi
Manata Hashemi

© 2019, University of Oklahoma. *Dānesh* is a peer-reviewed undergraduate journal published by students at the University of Oklahoma's College of International Studies. Correspondence should be addressed to OU Iranian Studies Program, Department of International and Area Studies, 729 Elm Ave, Farzaneh Hall, Room 304, Norman, OK 73019.

Email: amarashi@ou.edu.

Weblink: <https://commons.shareok.org/handle/11244.46/57>

DĀNESH: The OU Undergraduate Journal of Iranian Studies

Volume 4 (2019)

From the Faculty Advisors	iv
From the Editors-in-Chief	v
 <i>Articles</i>	
The Alternating Allegiances of the <i>Ulama</i> : Clerical Participation in the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1905-11 Mathew Bray	1
Clericalism, Constitutionalism, and Cautiousness: Iran’s 1905 Revolution Through the Eyes of Shaikh Fazollah Nuri Jake Waugh	15
Tur and Iraj: Azeri Turks and ‘Persian’ Iran Daniel McAbee	27
Queer Theology: Theological, Theocratic, and Secular Influences on Iran’s Relationship with Transgender Bodies Adam Oberlitner	43
Lingering Effects: U.S. Media and the Case for Nationalism in the Iranian Hostage Crisis Lindsey T. Eisenmann	53
Fatwas and Feminism: How Iran’s Religious Leadership Obstructs Feminist Reforms Anu S. Asokan	65
Reworking Westoxification: Al-e Ahmad’s Original Conception of Westoxification and its Post-Revolutionary Reinvention Aubrey Crynes	81
Post-Revolutionary Iranian Cinema: Unveiling the Reality of Iranian Women under the Islamic Republic Jocelyn Viviani	95
Beneath the Surface: How Censorship in Iranian Music Creates Identity Kristen Pierri	107

From the Faculty Advisors

Since its founding in 2016, *DĀNESH* has sought to provide a forum to showcase the original research produced by undergraduate students at the University of Oklahoma's Iranian Studies program. This fourth volume of the journal was produced through the able editorial leadership of **Corey Standley** (BA, 2019) and **Kayleigh Kuyon** (BA, 2019). As with their work on volume three, Corey and Kayleigh have ensured that *DĀNESH* has continued to thrive as a forum for the study of all aspects of the history, culture, society, and politics of Iran and the Persianate world.

The name of the journal, *DĀNESH*, comes from the Persian word meaning *knowledge, learning, and wisdom*. We believe this is a fitting name for a journal that seeks to foster deep and compassionate understanding of one of the world's most culturally rich and historically complex civilizations. It is with this in mind that we present this volume of *DĀNESH*.

Afshin Marashi

Farzaneh Family Chair in Modern Iranian History

Director, Farzaneh Family Center for Iranian and Persian Gulf Studies

Manata Hashemi

Farzaneh Family Professor in the Sociology of Contemporary Iran

From the Editors-in-Chief

We are proud to present to you the fourth volume of the University of Oklahoma's Undergraduate Journal of Iranian Studies, *DĀNESH*. Through the past three editions of the journal we have seen wonderful presentations on varying regional topics, spanning the breadths of history and social strata. In the tradition of the meaning of *DĀNESH*, or knowledge, we present these articles as an offering to expand the collective dialogue on the understanding of the Iranian and Persian state. We are pleased to have worked on this edition with a group of driven authors to present an edition comprising of submissions focusing on both historical issues and events as well as contemporary issues that Iranians are currently facing.

This work is a collective effort among our undergraduate authors and editors. We would like to extend a humble thanks to our Associate Editors, without whom we would not be able to produce such a successful and professional journal. It would also be remiss of us to not extend a heartfelt thank you to the Farzaneh Family, for without their continued support of the Iranian Studies program none of this would be possible. The University of Oklahoma's Libraries and Printing Services are the unsung heroes of this endeavor, as without their support we would not have the ability to make *DĀNESH* so accessible, both our print and digital versions. Thank you to the tireless, diligent work of our authors, who have crafted these amazing works that we are proudly sharing with you.

And finally, we are wholly indebted to the continued and unwavering support of Dr. Afshin Marashi, whose guidance and advice was invaluable in this journal's creation and continuance. This work, and so much of the growth of the Iranian Studies program as a whole, would not be possible without your faith in us, and our institution. Your academic guidance, advice, and friendship have been invaluable to us.

Corey Standley (BA, 2019), Editor-in-Chief

Kayleigh Kuyon (BA, 2019), Editor-in-Chief

Beneath the Surface: How Censorship in Iranian Music Cultivates Identity

Kristen Pierri*

© University of Oklahoma

When listening to music, Iranian's do not tap their feet or dance; they do not smile or wave or give any indication that they are enjoying the music they are listening to because they are not allowed to. Ayatollah Khomeini, founder of the Islamic Republic, compared music to drugs that ruin the realm of seriousness that comes with Islamic culture.¹ He neglected music's cultural significance outside of the realm of religion, and banned the citizens of Iran from listening to music that provided them excitement. Controlling such personal reactions and behaviors required strict enforcement by the Cultural Revolution Headquarters established in 1981.² On top of that, the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance was established to control cultural production, making it very difficult to get music produced that did not fit the criteria established by the Islamic Republic.

Over the years, the Islamic Republic eased up on the restrictions imposed on music, but only with some genres of music like pop. This has created some ambiguity on what music is allowed, and what music is not, and it has generated discussion on why some music gets passed by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, and why other music does not. In recent years with growing technological advancements, Iranians' have a new platform to share their music: the Internet. With this new platform, Iranian underground rock music was born. Rock musicians have an especially difficult time getting their music published because they often create discussion through the lyrics of their songs.³ Some of this

* **Author's Bio:** Kristen Pierri will graduate in the spring of 2019 with a major in Musical Arts and a minor in Psychology.

¹ Nahid Siamdoust, *Soundtrack of the Revolution: The Politics of Music in Iran* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017), 6-7.

² *Ibid.*, 4.

³ Laudan Nooshin, "Underground, Overground: Rock music and Youth Discourses in Iran," *Iranian Studies* 38, no. 3 (2005): 464.

discussion conflicts with the censorship imposed on Iranian cultural, as it calls for more cultural freedom. Other aspects of the discussion highlight Western views of Iranians, focusing on topics like terrorism. In order to get published by the Ministry of Culture, Iranian rock musicians, and Iranian musicians in general, must make a choice: either keep lyrics that create discussion and maintain a small audience underground and online, or adapt their music to the criteria of the Ministry and gain a larger audience in Iran.⁴ This is a difficult decision for many Iranians and most decide to leave Iran to produce their music freely in Los Angeles, California.

The Islamic Republic approves music that relays the state ideologies they want to embody. For example, they give opportunities for women to take part in cultural discussion, but deny them the real opportunity of true freedom with their music. Female performers are neglected in that they have a strict dress code that sometimes impedes their performance with other people, they do not have venues to rehearse, and, mostly importantly, the female solo voice is banned.⁵ The state sponsors all female festivals, but uses these festivals to further impose state ideology. In recent years, females have taken advantage of these festivals to generate discussion themselves, and create a unique identity.⁶

Music was not the only form of expression that was suppressed after the Iranian Revolution. Multiple aspects of public freedom were suppressed in the form of newspaper closures, censorship of political ideas that conflicted with the Islamic Republic, denial of equal juridical rights to women, and the impeachment of the first-ever elected president of the Islamic Republic.⁷ These suppressions were a response to Reza Shah's reform policies before the Revolution, as he implemented several reform policies, often against the will of the Iranian citizens, to modernize the state. When the Islamic Republic was founded, Khomeini aimed to create a unique Iranian identity that went against the Shah's prior modernization reforms. This is why the Islamic Republic suppressed multiple aspects of public freedom and aimed to create a homogenous Iranian culture.

However, all the restrictions imposed by the Islamic Republic have failed to create a homogenous cultural identity, especially regarding music, in Iran. Iranians enjoy different music that is not always approved by the Ministry of Culture, and this music brings together likeminded people that create their own unique identity

⁴ Ibid., 494.

⁵ Wendy S. Debano, "Enveloping music in gender, nation, and Islam: Women's Music Festivals in Post-Revolutionary Iran," *Iranian Studies* 38, no. 3 (2005): 457-58.

⁶ Ibid., 462.

⁷ Roxanne D. Marcotte, "Religion and Freedom: Typology of an Iranian Discussion," *Critique*, no. 16 (2000): 49.

based on the sonic atmosphere of the music they all enjoy. The emergence of the Internet has allowed this heterogeneity to flourish in the world of Iranian music, and it facilitates discussion that cannot occur in other spaces.

Music Censorship in Recent Iranian History

The music censorship of post-revolutionary Iran stems from the Pahlavi dynasty's use of music to westernize the nation and distract its audience from the political unrest felt throughout Iran. A particular genre of music known as *musiqi-ye pap* was considered quite popular in pre-revolution Iran.⁸ This genre of music reflected the Pahlavi government's efforts to develop and westernize the country. Even before the Revolution, music was controlled with a specific agenda in mind, which is why *musiqi-ye pap* consumed Iran's sonic space. In a way, music was censored then to only reflect the ideologies of the state and not what the general public wanted to hear. Because of this, musicians developed creative strategies to get their dissenting messages across through their music using *musiqi-ye pap*. Iranians created ambiguous songs that implied dissent.⁹ In this sense, *musiqi-ye pap* played a role in aurally disseminating oppositional political perspectives, conveying the widespread political dissatisfaction plaguing the nation.

After the Iranian Revolution of 1979, music was one of the first casualties because the Islamic Republic understood the power of music.¹⁰ Ayatollah Khomeini, founder of the Islamic Republic, declared music as a moral corruption for the youth.¹¹ Women's voices were deemed un-Islamic, leading to the banning of the solo female voice.¹² Music for idle entertainment and fun was discouraged, and the outward display of excitement and play from music was banned.¹³ The goal of the Islamic Republic was to undo the Westernization that occurred under the Pahlavi dynasty and create an Islamic identity within Iranian culture that disengaged from the other global spheres of influence. For nearly two decades following the Iranian Revolution, popular music was banned for its immoral associations to the deposed monarchical regime. All of these restrictions were enforced by the Cultural Revolution Headquarters, and musicians were not allowed to publicly publish their

⁸ Farzaneh Hemmasi, "Intimating Dissent: Popular Song, Poetry, and Politics in Pre-Revolutionary Iran," *Ethnomusicology* 57, no. 1 (2013): 57.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹¹ Full quote from Ayatollah Khomeini on music states, "One of the things that intoxicate the brains of our youth is music... it takes the human being out of the realm of seriousness and draws him toward uselessness and futility..." Siamdoust, *Soundtrack of the Revolution*, 6-7.

¹² *Ibid.*, 3.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 8.

music unless they received a performance permit from the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. To gain one of these permits, musicians must go through a long, arduous, and critical process with rather vague criteria. According to the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, music should not have an association with pleasure and debauchery, not inspire atheism, not criticize the Islamic order and religious authorities, the content of the music and words should have solidity, the music and lyrics should reinforce the spirit of national unity, and it should guide the youth and the whole society to a bright future and an atmosphere of hope.¹⁴

Not only were these regulations strictly enforced, but the government shut down all music institutions and education programs.¹⁵ This, ironically, led to an increase in music making within family circles by all generations and sexes of all social classes. Since Khomeini imposed such strict regulations on music, he emphasized the power of music and the importance of controlling it. When President Mohammad Khatami was elected in 1997, a lot of things changed within the realm of Iranian culture. Under his rule, the ban on pop music was lifted and the Islamic Republic was more permissible with its selection of music.¹⁶ There was a higher tolerance for social, demographic, and economic change in Iran, and the youth of Iran began to hope that they might live in a more tolerant and open society. However, there was an obvious difference of opinion between President Khatami and Ayatollah Khomeini, stemming from the divide within the government itself between reformists and conservatives. In the Islamic Republic there are deep fissures and internal power struggles that contribute to a discrepancy in what is allowed and what is not. This culture of ambiguity was also present during Khomeini's rule, but it became more pronounced with the cultural developments that occurred under Khatami.

With the emergence of the newly legalized pop music, grassroots movements in music emerged that reached their audience through underground networks. These grassroots movements highlighted two important trends rising in Iran's social and political life: pluralism and diversity.¹⁷ Grassroots music did so by cultivating a more diverse, inclusive social domain that highlighted group ethos and eclecticism. Among these grassroots groups was the genre of Iranian rock music. This

¹⁴ Patrician Hall, *The Oxford Handbook of Music Censorship* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018), 663.

¹⁵ Nasim Niknasf, "The Story of a Man Without Lips: Representational Politics in Iranian Music Education," *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, no. 210-211 (2017): 121.

¹⁶ Laudan Nooshin, *Music and the Play of Power in the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2016), 246-47.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 264.

underground rock scene exemplifies music that distinctly emphasizes dissenting points of view with the Islamic Republic, and it critically analyzes Iran's role in the global world. Through this rock scene, a youth culture has formed that is not only aware of Iran's global presence and stigma, but actively engages in discussion that criticizes the censorship imposed and regulated by the Islamic Republic.¹⁸ The youth are wary and uncertain about centrally organized events, even in regard to government sponsored music festivals. They are concerned over losing control of their expression, and they have a reluctance to be associated with officialdom. This increasingly conscious youth culture in Iran, in conjunction with globalized technologies, has made it more difficult for the Islamic Republic to enforce music standards.

In 2005 Iran saw yet another change in leadership under President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. He was more conservative than President Khatami, and he wanted to clamp down on manifestations of Western culture that had grown in Iran.¹⁹ However, this task proved difficult and he was ultimately unsuccessful in his endeavor because the government could not completely regulate the underground music scenes or the internet, where Iranians listen to most of their music. There was a certain point during Khatami's presidency where Iran could not return to the austerity of the 1980s, as the country had developed too much and became too cosmopolitan for anti-Western agendas like those of Ahmadinejad.

In more recent years, President Hassan Rouhani has eased up significantly on the restrictions imposed on music, and has even encouraged musician growth in Iran. The national orchestra has resumed its work, and more people are earning degrees in music. Classical music, as well as popular music, is permitted more under Rouhani's authority. The songs and videos of underground rock musicians are even presented in an official context. With Rouhani's recent reelection, citizens are hopeful to see progressive action taken in Iranian culture, specifically regarding the ban on female solo singers.

Youth Culture in Iran's Underground Music Scene

In the early 2000s, Iranians between the ages 15 and 29 represented the majority of the Iranian population. Most of this generation did not experience the context of the Iranian Revolution and they do not remember pre-revolutionary Iran. Youth in Iran

¹⁸ Nooshin, "Underground, Overground," 487-89. Page 489 gives an example of an Iranian song that addresses the concerns of Iranian Youth. The title of the song is "My Sweet Little Terrorist Song," addressing western perceptions of Iranians during the critical time after the Iran-Iraq war.

¹⁹ Nooshin, *Music and the Play of Power*, 263.

also have a wider lens because of the Internet.²⁰ They can access and understand more information than what was readily available in pre-revolutionary Iran, and they can see Iran in the context of a global network. This increased access has shown them the stereotypes the West has of Iran and its people, and it has also exposed them to Western cultural standards and practices. Iranian youth enjoy, and often prefer, these Western practices, so they employ those same practices in their music.

Western views of Iran particularly shape Iranian youth culture and underground music. Two important events in particular affected the lives and world views of the youth generation in Iran: the terrorist attacks of 9/11, a few months into President Khatami's second term, and the ensuing proclamation by George W. Bush that said, "either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists."²¹ Over the following years, the United States invaded Afghanistan and Iraq, and anti-Islamic and anti-Iranian sentiments were prevalent in Western politics and media. Due to the large use of the Internet in Iran, Iranian youth were not oblivious to this fact. This discourse put Iran in a vulnerable position, and Iranian youths were forced to define their position in this new world order. During this time, Iranians were less focused on cultural productions attacking the state, and more focused on patriotism and highlighting their own distinct identities, identities that went against Western stereotypes of Iran.

This generation of Iranian youths are referred to as the "Third Generation," in reference to the Iranian Revolution. As they came of age in an atmosphere of confusion and dissent, they developed attitudes of defiance as well as openness.²² They were defiant against the West's attacks on their culture, but they were also open and enthusiastic about Iranian inclusion in the global network. Throughout this generation, music became a vehicle for youth affiliations and a tool for reworking local identities.

Not only was Iran more aware of its global presence and stigma, but it was also susceptible to the commodification and commercialization of globally marketed music stars. These typically included Western music stars and Western music practices. Musicians coming of age during President Khatami's time had greater openness and access to global cultural currents. They used this new realm to create an alternative space for themselves and the creation, production, and exchange of their musical ingenuity. Pink Floyd is an example of a popular Western band in Iran, as it highlighted the surrealism of human existence and rebelled against authority, constrictions, and homogeneity— notions that deeply resonated with the youth in Iran.²³ After Iran confronted Western stigmatization through their cultural

²⁰ Nooshin, "Underground, Overground," 472.

²¹ Siamdoust, *Soundtrack of the Revolution*, 212.

²² *Ibid.*, 212-13.

²³ *Ibid.*, 218.

production, a change in leadership emerged and cultural production was once again constrained. Under President Ahmadinejad, censorship in music again became more prevalent, and the rhetoric of “cultural invasion” was re-established in hopes of eradicating Western cultural practices.²⁴ This was very difficult to do as Iranian youth and musicians were globally conscious and were connected to these practices through the Internet. Therefore, despite the increased censorship, underground music blossomed. Websites were created for bands, Iranians were connected through social media, and it did not seem to matter if the music was published through the Ministry of Culture or not as the bands had already established an audience through the Internet. Ahmadinejad, concerned with guarding freedom and cultural invasion, set out to arrest the most popular underground musicians, broadcasting their arrests and warning other musicians against following in their footsteps. These actions changed the rhetoric in Iranian underground music, shifting it from defying Western stigma to defying internal suppression of expressive freedom.

Underground musicians can only operate below the radar, so it is very hard for them to rehearse and circulate their music. They also lack access to feedback from their audience, which is difficult when the music is designed to generate discussion. Most underground musicians define rock as an alternative space for youth experience, and the youth of Iran hold a sense of ownership over this creative space.²⁵ Music mediates notions of place, belonging, and nationhood in a nation that seems to reject the cultural freedom Iranians desire. This underground network that attracts likeminded, urban, progressive people serves as a distinct place and identity that directly contrasts the “overground” Islamic Republic and all the music passed by the Ministry of Culture. For this reason, many musicians capitalize on their underground status, enhancing their “outsider capital,” but it is still difficult to balance this and the demands and risks of remaining underground.²⁶

The media plays a large role in influencing youth culture in Iran. Young Iranians have gained a better understanding of their global position and Western practices, and they also have more access to internal news. Most young Iranians attending college show an interest in political news but, more importantly, they show a higher interest in scientific, artistic, and cultural news. They watch television to receive most of their information, but more and more Iranians are noting the Internet as their favored source of information. They are developing more trust in the Internet than in Persian speaking TV channels, which has led to a diminishing

²⁴ Ibid., 211-12.

²⁵ Nooshin, “Underground, Overground,” 475-76.

²⁶ Ibid., 494.

interest in political news. This may also explain the higher interest in scientific, artistic, and cultural news.²⁷

This Third Generation holds no inhibitions toward the Iranian Revolution or the country's cultural officials, so they are more comfortable expressing their criticisms. They prefer straightforward language that facilitates criticism, which can be found in the underground music scene. This generation is a political force that advocates for cultural freedom and expression.²⁸ Because of this, the Islamic Republic has criminalized the underground music scene, its musicians, and its audience members. The music of the Third Generation contains words of protest, so the Islamic Republic is doing everything in its power to suppress this movement.

Gender Issues in Iran's Music

With the founding of the Islamic Republic and the rule of Ayatollah Khomeini, the solo female voice was banned in music. This absence of the female voice in the public realm, as well as the higher social and political risks for women in the music field, has contributed to the low number of female musicians in the underground music scene. Female musicians often make an appearance in bands as background singers or musicians. The female voice is almost always accompanied by other singers, and very few bands have attempted to feature the solo female voice.

The reason for the ban on the female voice stems back before the Revolution, and includes different Qur'anic interpretations. According to some interpretations of the Qur'an, a woman's voice is considered part of her intimate sphere. Therefore, it was not the woman singing that was seen as a problem, but rather men listening to the singing of woman.²⁹ Islamic jurisprudence in general is very suspicious of music and singing, so many Qur'anic verses have been interpreted as signifying a prohibition on music. This is why Ayatollah Khomeini does not allow the celebration of music and sees music as strictly a religious tool that should reflect the serenity and seriousness of the Islam religion.³⁰ Female singers have not received as much recognition for their work as male singers in pre-20th century Iran. This problem was slightly relieved under the new modernization policies enforced

²⁷ Mehdi Semati, *Media Culture and Society in Iran: Living with Globalization and the Islamic State* (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2008), 60-65.

²⁸ Siamdoust, *Soundtrack of the Revolution*, 223-24.

²⁹ Houchang Chehabi, "Voices Unveiled: Women Singers in Iran," in *Iran and Beyond: Essays in Honor of Nikki R. Keddie*, eds. Rudi Matthee and Beth Baron (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Press, 2000), 152.

³⁰ Siamdoust, *Soundtrack of the Revolution*, 6-7.

by Reza Shah, but were later overturned by Ayatollah Khomeini, who placed the ban on the female voice using the aforementioned Qur'anic interpretations.³¹

Females in Iranian society are constantly under the eyes of the state. The state controls social behavior and cultural expression, therefore controlling all media outlets that convey perceptions about how things should look in an ideal society. The people in power are Iranian men. They dominate the media scene, and they dominate the posters on the streets. These male symbols are often referred to as the "male gaze."³² Throughout post-revolutionary Iran, women have not had the same opportunities as men, and carving an identity for themselves has proven difficult under all of these circumstances. However, women have the unique opportunity to convene with other women in a moderately private space during all-female music festivals.³³

To compensate for the ban on the solo female voice, the Islamic Republic has sponsored women-only music festivals featuring all-female musicians with an all-female audience. An example of an all-female music festival sponsored by the government is the Jasmine Festival held at *Talar Vahdat* (Unity Hall). This performance hall is visually punctuated by nationalistic and Islamic images, and the Festival itself is scheduled in conjunction with national holidays celebrating Fatima. Fatima, in post-revolutionary Iran, represents the ideal Iranian woman according to government standards. She represents both the obedient daughter and the obedient wife, as well as a sacrificing, benevolent mother.³⁴ These two aspects of the music festival, the performance hall and the national holiday, emphasize women's role in an Islamic Iranian society. While it is true the government sponsors the Jasmine Festival, it also supports traditional gender roles through the Jasmine Festival. Women in Iranian society are conservative in behavior and represent the physical embodiment of state ideology.³⁵ Some women even present this behavior at the Jasmine Festival by not dancing and by emphasizing the spiritual, intellectual, and national aspects of music, either inadvertently or intentionally.

Despite nationalistic symbols still presiding over these festivals, women have started an ideological discussion at the Jasmine Festival. While these festivals appear to externally support state gender roles, the internal discussion that occurs negotiates identity with respect to gender, nation, and Islam. Music serves as a conduit to express and formulate these ideals, and it shows how different

³¹ Chehabi, "Voices Unveiled," 154-58.

³² Debaro, "Enveloping music," 442-43.

³³ *Ibid.*, 441.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 446-47.

³⁵ Ann Lucas, "Understanding Iran Through Music: A new Approach," *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin* 40, no. 1 (2006): 89.

interpretations can coexist in a pluralistic society. The exclusivity of these festivals to only females, and the price of the tickets, creates a sort of “high culture.”³⁶ This amplifies the discussion generated.

Ironically, the state holds these festivals to honor women and their family roles, yet men are not allowed to attend to also celebrate these family roles. At the conclusion of the Jasmine Festival, men are seen waiting outside for their wives in their cars. The festivals are set at a time that accommodates the familial role of a wife, ending before dinner time, yet husbands and sons cannot engage in the celebration of all the hard work their wife or mother pours into the family. On top of this, men continue to dominate all aspects of life in Iran, including the music scene.

It is difficult for females to improve their skill as musicians. Not only do they have to deal with the ban on the solo female voice, but they have to deal with the stigma of impropriety and immorality associated with their performance. They also have a strict dress code that makes it difficult to coordinate with fellow musicians and they lack space to rehearse their music. Therefore, even in underground music, women must rely on men to provide them an opportunity to express themselves through music.³⁷ With the increasing access to music education under the more liberal leaders in Iran, people are allowed to pursue and use music as a form of cultural protest. However, musicians are still socially and economically marginalized, and it does not help that the restrictions on publication are still strict. This increase in music education also means an increase in music education for women, which helps lend them a voice to generate discussion at the Jasmine Festival.³⁸ It also allows them to learn musical instruments to participate in mixed-sex bands.

Conclusion

The internal political battles between reformists and conservatives in the Islamic Republic has contributed to ambiguity regarding cultural restrictions.³⁹ A general pattern of conservative-liberal-conservative-liberal has been observed in recent history, which has taken a toll on the music industry due to everchanging policies. However, under heavy censorship, Iranians have cultivated a private space for themselves to experiment with their identity through music. This private space, the underground music scene, generates discussion about Iran’s place in the global network as well as the internal suppression of cultural expression in Iran. The youth

³⁶ Debano, “Enveloping music,” 453.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 461.

³⁸ Hall, *The Oxford Handbook*, 665.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 668.

of Iran particularly enjoy this scene because they are not tied to the Iranian Revolution, and are more comfortable criticizing and analyzing authority. They enjoy open, straightforward discussion through the lyrics that the underground music scene provides.

With increasing globalization, and with the Internet at their fingertips, Iranian musicians have bypassed the critical process of earning a performance permit, and have created likeminded audiences. However, Iranians are limited to releasing music underground and through the Internet, as opposed to going through the Ministry of Culture to perform their music “overground.”⁴⁰ Performing underground also poses serious risks if caught by the Islamic Republic, and this is particularly dangerous for popular underground musicians. Therefore, musicians must make the choice to sacrifice part of their musical discussion (the lyrics that openly generate discussion) to perform overground, or to remain underground with the limited audience and risks.

In the Iran of 2018, Iranians are hopeful for progressive action in the field of music production. Above all, they hope for the eradication of the ban on the female solo voice, a restriction that has impeded female musicians since the 1980s. Despite all the changes that have occurred since the Iranian Revolution, Iran has cultivated an underground music scene to discuss and explore their identity as an Iranian nation. While the goal of the imposed censorship was to expunge other cultures and create a homogenous Iranian culture, the censorship laws instead had the opposite effect on music. Through music, Iranians will continue to carve distinct identities that emphasize pluralism, diversity, and inclusiveness, regardless of what the future holds.

⁴⁰ Nooshin, “Underground, Overground,” 494.