

The Golden Era of Radio Iran (1940-1978): A Modernist Aural Culture

Khatereh Sheibani

اگر می شد صدا را دید
چه گل هایی ... چه گل هایی!
که از باغ صدای تو
به هر آواز می شد چید!
اگر می شد صدا را دید

محمد رضا شفیعی کدکنی

If voice could be seen!
gorgeous flowers ... gorgeous flowers!
could be picked,
from the sonic garden of your voice
If voice could be seen!

Mohamadreza Shafi'ei Kadkani¹

¹Poem “Ārāyish-i Khūrshīd [The Sun’s Makeup],” in *Hazārah-i duvum-i āhū-yi kūhī* [*The Second Millennium of the Mountain Deer*] (Tehran: Sukhan Press, 1997), 201.

Khatereh Sheibani, PhD, is a scholar of Middle Eastern and Iranian cinemas and cultures. She is a lecturer and convener of Persian Studies at York University. Her book titled *The Poetics of Iranian Cinema: Aesthetics, Modernity, and Film after the Revolution* was published in November 2011 by I.B.Tauris, UK. She has co-edited a special issue of *Iran Namag: A Quarterly of Iranian Studies* on Abbas Kiarostami (Winter 2018) and is guest editor of the journal’s present issue on Radio Iran (Spring 2024). She has written two novels (in Persian) titled “Hotel Iran” (in press) and *Blue Bird Café* (Pegah Press, Toronto, 2022). She is working on a monograph on gender in Iranian cinema and Persian literature.”

Introduction

Radio is the first broadcasting medium in the world and the first electronic entertainment medium that found its place in the domestic space of homes. Radio in Iran has a prolific history as an entertaining, informative, and educational form of media. As a domestic medium for more than eight decades, it has left an indisputable mark on Iranian culture and society. The articles in this issue each testify to radio's impact on Iranian society from different perspectives. Yet, radio studies, within the larger domains of historical communication studies and Iranian studies is not a substantial field when compared to other areas such as cinema studies, journalism, and literary studies. The insufficiency of literature on radio may suggest that a sonic and oral media, despite its crucial position in culture, society, and politics, was not perceived as noteworthy as written media (such as journalism and literary studies) or visual media (such as cinema studies). In media studies, in general, there appears to be a certain hierarchical relation between visual and auditory cultures;² as it is also the case in Iranian media and cultural studies. Considering the long history of radio and its significance in Iranians' lives (as depicted in the existing scholarly works), I believe there is a need to conduct more interdisciplinary research on the medium as a modern aural and oral institution. This issue of *Iran Namag* is dedicated to radio in Iran, as a response to such a need.

The diverse sonic palette of Radio Iran has entertained Persian audiences for more than eighty years. Officially established on April 24, 1940 (Ordibehesht 4, 1319 in the Jalali/Iranian calendar), Radio Iran, the first radio station of the country, was also the first wide-ranging and all-encompassing form of mass communication, and a major lead in the modernization endeavors in Iran. Radio content is acoustic, not written; hence by nature it is "fragmentary" and "ephemeral."³ Radio Iran's content is not entirely available as audio recordings. In the early years, many radio programs were performed

²Kate Lacey, "Towards a Periodization of Listening: Radio and Modern Life," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 3 (2000), 280.

³Lacey, "Towards a Periodization of Listening," 279.

live and not taped. Gradually, some of the programs were recorded, especially since Radio Iran hired professional sound producers in 1954.⁴ Nonetheless, many recorded and unrecorded programs, musical pieces and sounds are chronicled, restored, remembered, or documented either in Radio Iran's periodical (published as *Radio Iran* magazine, and edited by Touraj Farazmand) or in the oral history (including listeners' accounts, as well as the existing recollections of radio songs and tales in memoirs and in oral/street culture).



An image of the Radio Iran archives.

Radio culture is a compelling part of the auditory culture of Iranians. It has contributed to the oral heritage, and as my study illuminates, it continues to live on in aural and oral cultural depository of the nation, bound by a common language and shared sociocultural values and experiences. Radio is a 'modern' form of mass communication. It was consciously established in Iran by the Pahlavi state as a 'modernizing medium,' with an outlook to the future. It formed a taste for music among Iranian audiences, prudently employed a refined

⁴Shahrokh Naderi, *Shuma vā rādiyū* [You and Radio] (Tehran: Nashr-i Namak : Intishārāt-i Badraqah-i Jāvidān, 2015), 95.

Persian language, and diversified and modernized Iran's aural culture, and by extension, the oral culture of Iran.

By investigating radio policies and radio programs, especially the news, social and cultural programs that were produced in the period from 1940 to 1977, this article depicts the ways in which Iranian aural/oral culture was influenced by radio and how these converged modernism in Iran. My study of Iranian radio and its novel domain of soundscape,⁵ concentrates on radio as an aural emblem of a modernist Iran. It investigates the way radio, for the first time, mass mediated Iranian society by emitting a modern anthroponic soundscape that evolved the public gendered sonic culture.

Radio: An Aural Emblem of A Modernist Iran

The launching of radio in Iran was aligned with other modernizing efforts during Reza Shah's reign (1925-1941). After "consolidating his power, Reza Shah was able to embark upon an ambitious program of social, cultural, and economic reforms."⁶ The shah succeeded in restructuring the army, promoting health and hygiene practices, and reforming legal structures and national education to "integrate women, ethnic minorities, Sunni Muslims, and non-Muslims into the state."⁷ "The educational reforms were the most impressive of the civilian reforms. Between 1925 to 1941 the annual allocations for education increased in real terms by as much as twelvefold."⁸ In 1934, six colleges in Tehran were consolidated to form the University of Tehran, a modern higher education institution.⁹ Print media such as

⁵"Several disciplines have used the term 'soundscape.' The etymology of the term '-scape' is a reference to an "area, scene, space or view." *Changing Landscape: An Ecological Perspective*, ed. I.S. Zonneveld and R.T.T. Forman (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1990). "'Soundscape' is thus 'sounds occurring over an area.'" Bryan C. Pijanowski, et al. "What Is Soundscape Ecology? An Introduction and Overview of an Emerging New Science: Soundscape Ecology," *Landscape Ecology* 26, no. 9 (2011): 1214.

⁶Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1983), 136.

⁷Janet Afary, *Sexual Politics in Modern Iran* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 145.

⁸Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, 144.

⁹Before the establishment of the University of Tehran, a modern polytechnic college, known as Dar ul-Funun, was opened in 1851, during the Qajar era.

Iṭilā'āt, *Kayhān*, *Mard-i imrūz*, and the satirical magazine *Tūfīq* were also vehicles in enlightening the public, and when tolerated, criticizing governments. Iranian cinema, through the screening of foreign films (since 1900s) and a handful of national productions (since 1930s), refashioned a modern visual culture. Radio, with a far greater outreach and impact, modernized the aural culture of the country. The ensuing discussion provides historical examples of radio policies and radio shows that promoted a modernizing culture and transformed Iran's aural sensibilities.

The task of establishing radio in Iran was insightfully assigned to two institutions, the Ministry of Post and Telegraph, administered by a seasoned politician, and the Radio Commission, a sub-branch of the Intellectual Development Institute (*Sāzmān-i Parvarish Afkār*), operated by a number of intellectuals, authors, and professors. Together, the two institutions (one well-versed in politics and technology, and the other in culture) managed to overcome the economic, political, and technical complications that were protracted to the Middle East due to the pre-World War II conflict and Russo-European competitions in the region.

The minister of Post and Telegraph, Mohamad Ebrahim Alam, known as Shokat al-Molk (1938–1941), was an eminent modernist figure of Iran's history during and after the constitutional revolution. Shokat al-Molk had worked with the Anglo-Russian forces as the governor of Southern Khorasan, Sistan, and Baluchestan after Iran's division to the two spheres of Anglo-Russian influence in 1907. Benefitting from the rivalry between the British and Russians, Alam had already accomplished reforming projects in his hometown of Birjand.¹⁰ He was conscious of the proximity of war in Europe; as a result, he decided to order radio equipment from three different countries: the United States

¹⁰Alam's modernizing projects in Birjand included financing and opening a military college, establishing a "well-organized local army" (Hormoz Davarpanah, "'ALAM, Moḥammad Ebrāhīm,'" *Encyclopædia Iranica*, online edition, 2012, www.iranicaonline.org/articles/alam-mohammad-ebrahim-amir-sawkat-al-molk [accessed 16 October 2012]), opening the third modern school in Birjand after Dar ul-Funun and the Roshdieh school in Tabriz, and providing piped water for his hometown, making Birjand the first city in Iran with sanitary hydro facility.

of America, Britain, and Germany, so that in case of the breaking out of war, Iranians could obtain spare parts from at least one of these countries.

Compared to some other countries in the region, radio came relatively late to Iran. Radio in Turkey was initiated in 1927 through a government supported private enterprise.¹¹ “In Egypt private radio broadcasting was initiated in 1925 by the Marconi company [although it] reflected the British colonial interests. ... In Lebanon, radio was introduced in 1938 by the French colonial power.”¹² “[M]odeled on the BBC and run as colonial or imperial stations”, “[f]rom 1934 to 1941, three major British-governed radios stations were established in the Middle East: the Egyptian State Broadcasting (ESB) service, which began broadcasting from Cairo in 1934, the Palestine Broadcasting Service (PBS), which began broadcasting from Jerusalem in 1936, and the Near East Broadcasting Service (NEBS), which began broadcasting from Jaffa in 1941.”¹³ Although EBS, PBS, and NEBS were colonial radio stations, they were also acting as national radios with “overlapping and sometimes conflicting [colonialist and nationalist] mandates.”¹⁴ Radio broadcasting in the neighboring country of Afghanistan initially emerged as promising when inducted in 1925. However, the Afghan radio station was destroyed during an uprising against Amanullah Khan in 1929. Later in the 1930s, there was a new station set up through technical aid from Germany. Eventually, radio was officially launched in Afghanistan in 1940.¹⁵

The Western powers facilitated the introduction of radio in their colonial territories (such as Egypt) for propagandist reasons. Ostensibly, providing an apparatus and facilitating radio broadcasting in Iran was

¹¹Hale Yaylali, “Radio Broadcasting in Turkey from 1927 to Multi-Party Period,” *İstanbul Aydın Üniversitesi Dergisi* 10 (2018): 34.

¹²Khatereh Sheibani, “Film and Media in the Middle East,” in *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World*, 2nd ed., ed. Richard C. Martin (Farmington Hills: Macmillan Reference, 2015), 377.

¹³Andrea Stanton, “Part of Imperial Communications: British-Governed Radio in the Middle East, 1934-1949,” *Media History* 19 (2013): 421.

¹⁴Stanton, “Part of Imperial Communications,” 421.

¹⁵John Baily, *War, Exile and the Music of Afghanistan: The Ethnographer's Tale* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2016), 25.

not a priority. The delivery of radio generators and transmission equipment from the Standard company (in the United Kingdom) was delayed for at least two years (1937–1939).¹⁶ Ultimately, it was Germany’s Telefunken company that sent the first radio frequency generators and transmissions in 1939.¹⁷ The ministry of Post and Telegraph oversaw other technical aspects of radio including the training of engineers and technicians. The cultural, linguistic, and artistic affairs of radio were supervised by cultural figures such as Malek o-Sho’ara Bahar, Saeed Nafissi, Zabih ul-Allah Safa, and “a number of (unspecified) intellectual women”¹⁸ in the Radio Commission. In her monograph *Iranian Women from Constitutional Revolution to The White Revolution*, Badr ol-Moluk Bamdad, one of the first female graduates of the University of Tehran, indicated that she was the only woman ‘officially’ assigned to work in the Radio Commission.¹⁹ As of 1941, the Office of Publications and Propaganda, under the supervision of Dr. Isa Sedigh took over the cultural affairs of radio.²⁰

It is worth noting that Persian broadcasting services outside of the country preceded Radio Iran. In April 1939, Radio Berlin’s Persian language started broadcasting its pro-German, anti-Allied news, with antisemitic, and at times anti-Pahlavi sensibilities.²¹ Radio Berlin’s Persian broadcasting did not stand unrivalled for long. BBC Persian language broadcasting was initiated on December 29, 1940. The propagandist foreign broadcasting services became an additional stimulus for the Ministry of Post and Telegraph to expedite the launching of a national, state-controlled radio station. Radio Iran, Iran’s national radio operated

¹⁶*Asnādī az tārikhchah-i rādiyū dar Iran, 1318-1345* [Documents on the History of Radio in Iran (1939-1966)], ed. Alireza Esmaili and Ali Ashuri (Tehran: Ershah Eslami, 2000), 3-4, document 2.

¹⁷Ahmad Mo’tamedi, quoted in Naderi, *Shumā va rādiyū*, 75-6.

¹⁸Ebrahim Khalili Sepehri’s account, quoted in Reza Mokhtari Esfehani, “History of Radio,” *Voice of Islamic Republic of Iran Professional Journal* 63 (2012): 37.

¹⁹Badr ul-Moluk Bamdad, *Zan-i irānī az inqilāb-i mashrūṭiyat tā inqilāb-i safid* [Iranian Women from the Constitutional Revolution to the White Revolution] (Tehran: Ibn Sina, 1968), 87.

²⁰*Asnādī az tārikhchah-i rādiyū dar Iran*, 15, document 51.

²¹Hamid Shokat, “Persian Program in Radio Berlin during the WWII,” *Iran Namag* 28 (2013): 102-117.

and financed by the Iranian government, was officially launched four months after BBC Persian Radio, following four years of technical, architectural, and intellectual preparations and one year of experimental airing of programs (1939–1940). The launching of radio was another statement of Reza Shah's modernizing efforts, in line with his efforts to develop Iran's social, cultural, and economic infrastructure.

On March 9, 1940, before the official inauguration of Radio Iran, radio receivers were ordered to be installed in Tehran and major cities in popular places such as city squares, and cafés for public consumption.²² Initially, only the more privileged families owned radio receivers at home. People would gather around a radio set, with their extended family and friends to listen to radio programs.²³ Soon after, more families purchased radio sets. All radio receivers had to be registered in the constabulary office (*Shahrbānī*) of the respective city.²⁴ The presence of radio receivers at home opened an unprecedented door of mass communication to the domestic space. Now, individuals were able to enjoy music, radio stories, the national and global news in the comfort of their homes. The electronic entertainment media made its way to Iranian households.

Radio Iran was deliberately contending with the Persian departments of Radio Berlin (and its famous, provocative radio host Bahram Shahrokh) and the BBC Radio for the dissemination of news based on Iran's interests and policies. As it was mandated by Reza Shah, the body of Radio Iran news was gathered from Iranian sources as follow: Pars Press (*Khabar-guzārī Pars*),²⁵ as well as respected ministries and national institutions.²⁶ Radio Iran news was revised by a committee of experts comprised of Hejazi, Shafagh, and Nafissi to reflect

²²*Asnādī az tārikhchah-i rādiyū dar Iran*, vi-vii, 8, document 4; *Kārnamah-i az rādiyū va Tilivīzūn Milī Iran tā Pāyān 2535* [A Chronicle of Radio and Television in Iran up to 1977], ed. Jila Sazgar (Tehran: Sorūsh, 1978), 11.

²³*Kārnamah-i az Rādiūn va Tilivīzūn Milī Iran*, 11.

²⁴Naderi, *Shumā va rādiyū*, 90-1.

²⁵*Asnādī az tārikhchah-i rādiyū dar Iran*, 17, document 8.

²⁶*Asnādī az tārikhchah-i rādiyū dar Iran*, 70, document 23, 81, document 28.

governmental reforms and modernizing developments of the country.²⁷ The first Radio Iran news correspondent, Mohsen Farzaneh recalled how radio as a dynamic and wide-reaching media provided a unique opportunity for radio reporters to gain non-stop access to the news at the ministerial level, a privilege not offered to print media reporters of the time.²⁸ Radio news continued to be regulated, state-controlled and centralized by the governments in Mohamad Reza Shah's reign to inspire optimism, patriotism, and a sense of loyalty to the shah and nation. Proficient radio correspondents such as Taghi Rohani (who joined Radio Iran in 1944 and continued his collaboration until 1978) had a vital part in representing the governmental policies through radio.²⁹ Iranian-based news remained the major source of news for the majority of Iranians until the revolutionary upheavals in 1978 when many radio listeners tuned to foreign-based broadcasters such as BBC Persian to learn about revolutionary developments from a non-governmental point of view. It is worth noting that although during Mohamad Reza Shah's time radio was financed and regulated by the state, a number of leftist political activists were allowed to produce content for radio. Houshang Ebtehaj as the head of *Gulhā* program was one of the dissidents who found a prominent position in radio programming.

Radio was a source of entertaining and educational content. The wealth of Radio Iran's programming, including its pioneering position in introducing and progressing Iranian music made it the most popular mass communication platform for Iranian listeners since the early years of its arrival. As the program guides in *Radio Iran* magazine depict, radio offered programs related to Iran's geography, history, archeology, agriculture, as well as topics on global and regional affairs. There were also health and hygiene, social (such as Dr. Rezazadeh Shafagh's program), legal, economic, athletic (such as "*Varzish Bāstāni* [Traditional Martial Arts]" performed by Shir-i Khoda), and religious

²⁷Asnādī az tārikhchah-i rādiyū dar Iran, 70, document 23.

²⁸Mohsen Farzaneh, "Khabarguzāri dar khidmat Reza Shah Kabir az Rādiyū Tehran tā Shabkah-i sarāsari" [Journalism in Reza Shah the Great's Service, from Radio Tehran to the National Network] *Khātirāt-i Vahid* 29 (1973): 42.

²⁹Naderi, *Shumā va rādiyū*, 186-187.

talk shows (by Mr. Rashed and then Mr. Falsafi). Persian and world literature (as in *Qiṣah zuhr Jum 'ah* [Friday Noon Story],³⁰ *Qiṣah Shab* [Evening Story], and *Johnny Dollar*), and musical performances (as in *Gulhā* and *Shumā va rādiyū* [Radio and You]) were popular programs of Radio Iran. Based on the program guides of Radio Iran and local radios, it is evident that the radio content was structured based on preserving and enhancing national, cultural, and social values of Iran, in harmony with modern values of the global culture. Each program was prepared by experts in the field and presented by the producers or professional broadcasters.

The collection of radio talks by Dr. Rezazadeh Shafagh, delivered in 1960 and 1961 (later published as a book) could be taken as an example. In his talks, Rezazadeh Shafagh recognized Iranians as one nation regardless of their religious, ethnic, or linguistic differences. He glorified Iran's pre-Islamic past yet identified the post-Islamic literary traditions of Persia and the Islamic wisdom in line with Zoroaster's teachings and Cyrus the Great's humanitarian deeds.³¹ Generally speaking, Rezazadeh Shafagh's program promoted patriotism, and reminded the audiences of their responsibilities towards their country, society, and fellow citizens.³² His talk show was rich with historical, literary, and cultural details about Iran and the world. As a university professor, a former Majlis deputy, and a member of the Senate, he shared his wealth of knowledge on a variety of topics such as democracy, constitutional governance, the government's plans on economic growth,³³ and obstacles constraining the country from following such goals. In his talks, he offered instructive criticism of Majlis deputies and the ministers, reminding all citizens to strive for Iran's progress and sovereignty. Although at times his tone was critical, he remained optimist and faithful to the modernization plans of the government. Rezazadeh

³⁰"Friday Noon Story" is the oldest radio program. It started with Sobhi Mohtadi's stories in 1940 and still airs from Radio Iran. The prerevolutionary stories were less ideologically biased and more literary.

³¹Sadeq Rezazadeh Shafagh, *Chand baḥs-i ijtimā'ī sukhanrānīhā-yi Rīzāzādah Shafaq dar Rādiyū Īrān* [Social Issues: Radio Talks by Dr. Rezazadeh Shafagh] (Tehran: Zavar, 1961), 131-36.

³²Rezazadeh Shafagh, *Chand baḥs-i ijtimā'ī*, 34-65.

³³Rezazadeh Shafagh, *Chand baḥs-i ijtimā'ī*, 112-29.

Shafagh's talks were delivered for average audiences. His talk show was meant to offer historical, literary, and political lessons for the masses. Similarly, numerous radio shows provided entertaining and informative content for average audiences. *Gulchīn-i Haftah* (Selection of the Week), produced by Houshang Ebtehaj provided information about old Persian musical instruments and musicians. Hosseinali Rashed was producing a religious program on Friday nights. *Marz'hā-i Dānish* (Borders of Science) by Mohit Tabatabai offered scientific information to listeners. Other examples of informative and entertaining radio shows from the 1950s to 1978 include, *Bah Man Javāb Bidah* (Answer My Question), hosted by Iraj Gorgin, and *Chah Mī'dānīd?* (What Do You Know?), hosted by Mohamad Soltani. As evident, radio, alongside educational institutions such as colleges and schools, had a significant role in modernizing Iranian society in the years spanning 1940 to 1978. While education in school was limited to the literate and those who had access to educational institutions, education through an all-inclusive media such as radio was for everyone, regardless of their level of literacy or economic status.



An episode of *Marz'hā-i Dānish* (Borders of Science), authored by Touran Mirhadi, and transcribed in *Radio Iran* magazine.

Radio: A Modern Anthroponic Soundscape

Radio in Iran was a major source of changing Iran's cultural soundscape in the 1940s and onward. Soundscape is defined as "the collection of biological, geophysical and anthropogenic sounds that emanate from a landscape and which vary over space and time reflecting important ecosystem processes and human activities."³⁴ Bernie Krause identified three separate sound sources: geophony (sounds of weather), biophony (sounds of living things), and anthrophony (human generated sounds). The anthroponic sounds are divided into the sub-categories of controlled sounds (as in speech, music, and theatrical dialogue) and chaotic sounds or noise.³⁵

Considering Krause's categorization of acoustic ecology, the soundscape an average Iranian was experiencing in the premodern era mainly consisted of domestic and community sounds belonging to the anthroponic subsection, as well as environmental sounds (biophonetic and geophonetic sounds). Examples of such aural experiences (with more emphasis on anthroponic sounds) are domestic sounds (of family members, relatives and associates communicating with each other, the sound of household-related activities and so forth), sounds of shopkeepers, street vendors and their animals retailing products in residential areas, the bustling sound of crowded places such as bazars, workshops, and city centers, the sound of transportation vehicles, and the natural sound of pets and birds. As for the controlled anthroponic sounds of the pre-modern to early modern era, there were also heritage and cultural sounds of religious rituals and hymns in spiritual establishments (such as the call to prayers, *Azan*), the occasional sounds of *qavvals* and *naqāls* in town centers, singing or reciting stories of *Shahnameh* or other works of classical literature, the seasonal sound of *ta'ziyah* players, and Nowruz/New Year lyricists on the streets. In the modern era and only for those limited urban dwellers who had the privilege of listening to gramophone records, or going to the movies and theatres, or hosting or getting invited to modern musical

³⁴Pijanowski, et al. "What Is Soundscape Ecology?," 1214.

³⁵As cited in Pijanowski, et al., "What is Soundscape Ecology?," 1214.

performances of singers such as Qamar ul-Moluk Vaziri, the experienced anthrophonic soundscape was enriched with the modernized aural culture, as well.

Against this backdrop, radio during the 1940s introduced an arrayed anthrophonic soundscape the likes of which was never experienced by the majority of Iranians. Western (Czechoslovakian) and Iranian orchestras were hired to perform music in the radio studios at the Arg Square building.³⁶ In the first four nights after the inauguration of radio (and the days and nights after), four orchestral ensembles were created, consisting of male singers (Adib Khansari, Banan, and Badi' Zadeh), female singers (Qamar, Rouhangiz), and musicians such as Rouhollah Khaleghi and Saba.³⁷ Four hours out of the six-hour evening program were dedicated to music. The rest of the evening program was reserved for news (seventy-five minutes) and talk shows. The foreign service broadcast the news in five languages (Arabic, English, German, French, Russian). Later, Turkish news was added, and the German program eliminated from the foreign service. Other radio programs in 1940 were health, agriculture, history, and geography features, as well as news in Persian.³⁸ A children's program, "talk shows, soap operas, and dramatic readings of Shahnameh" were also included in radio programming.³⁹

As Pijanowsky, et al. have cited, "Soundscapes provide ecosystem services to humans in the form of many life-fulfilling functions."⁴⁰ Many soundscapes also have cultural, historical, recreational, aesthetic, and therapeutic values. "Unique and natural soundscapes can be subtle or powerful links for humans to their environment."⁴¹ Although Radio's soundscape in Iran created a modern anthrophonic domain, it was a reflection of the national depository of culture, history, and *pahlavānī* (roughly translated as heroic) rituals, hence, it had sentimental and

³⁶Mo'tamedi quoted in Naderi, *Shumā va rādiyū*, 76, 77.

³⁷Naderi, *Shumā va rādiyū*, 50.

³⁸Esmaili, *Asnadi az tarikhchah-i radiyu dar Iran*, viii; Naderi, *Shumā va rādiyū*, 78.

³⁹Bigan Kimiachi, "History and Development of Broadcasting in Iran" (PhD diss., Bowling Green State University, 1978), 83, ProQuest (302880754).

⁴⁰Pijanowski, et al. "What Is Soundscape Ecology,?"

⁴¹Pijanowski, et al. "What Is Soundscape Ecology,?" 1227.

cultural value. In other words, the modern soundscape of Radio Iran has had close ties with Iran's cultural foundations and its heritage soundscape.

The impact of radio in modernizing Iranians' anthroponic soundscape was far greater than cinema because of its wider consumption and daily stretch of exposure. Having access to music on a daily basis made the audience's ears better acquainted with rhymes and patterns of Persian and international music. Informative and educational audio programs were added to their daily soundscape regimen, and literary and cultural programs became a day-to-day segment of their aural consumption. Mixed-gender musical voices were also normalized in the aural culture of Iranians. The sonic palette accessible to Iranians became more divergent, colorful, and multifaceted. The acoustic ecosystem of sounds in towns and villages, homes and streets embraced more than the local anthroponic sounds. Radio made the acoustic ecosystem of the nation modernized and diversified.

The wide consumption of radio made Iran a widely interconnected, modern mediated society. A mediated society that collectively experienced a new aural culture in tune with a modern era in the middle of the twentieth century. This topic is further explored in the next subsection.

Radio in Iran: Initiating a Modern Mass Mediated Society

A mediated society "has a specific regime of communication that expresses a certain regional or local angle on culture."⁴² A mass mediated society could be comprised of multiple heterogenous communities, yet they all attach importance to common cultural reproductions. Certain topics, programs, and shows are produced, distributed, widely consumed, and valued in a mass mediated society. Institutional channels, technological procedures, cultural arrangements, and political organisations collaborate (either purposefully or coincidentally) to form

⁴²John Jackson, Greg Nelsen, and Yon Hsu, *A Mediated Society: A Critical Sociology of Media* (Don Mills, Canada: Oxford University Press, 2011), 2.

a mass mediated society. Living in the digital era and having access to cyberspace, consumers of mass media are constantly connected to the internet, social media, and the traditional media (Radio, TV, and so forth) that are now modified into digital platforms. In other words, no matter where we live, we could receive or even produce information on digital platforms. Global citizens in the digital era are now connected through mass mediated networks, based on their (linguistic, cultural, audiovisual) model of media consumption. Social mass mediation predates the digital era; it starts with radio. How did it happen in the Iranian context? This section answers the above-mentioned question by exploring the way radio transformed Iranian society into a mass mediated society for the first time.

Among modern forms of mass communication, print media, journalism, and telegraphy were predecessors to radio, all of which had a crucial role in modernizing and enlightening the public, and especially in the progress of the Constitutional Revolution (1905-1911).⁴³ Although telegraphy and journalism have a significantly longer history in Iran, they were exclusive forms of mass communication targeting the literate/elite audiences—those who read, summarized, interpreted, and analyzed the news and stories for the illiterate or those who had no access to the printed media. Also, as written forms of media, journals and telegraphs had limited chances of exposure compared to a radio that was audible with eight-and-a-half hours of airtime at the commencement of Radio Iran, and with an increasing number of hours and radio stations thereafter.⁴⁴

On June 29, 1960, Radio Tehran⁴⁵, a new elitist radio station, started broadcasting programs. In the same year, Radio Iran's airtime was increased to 24 hours a day. Radio Iran programs were mostly targeted for average audiences with a diverse array of programs, while Radio Tehran, with its emphasis on arts and culture, was targeted for a more

⁴³Reza Mokhtari Esfahani, "Tārikh-i rādiyū [History of Radio]," *Māhnāmāh-i 'ilmi-i takhāṣṣuṣī sada-yi Jumhuri-i Islami-i Iran* 63, 10 (2012), 35-6.

⁴⁴Giti Kaveh, "Ijmāli bar tārikhchah rādiyū dar Iran [A Short History of Radio in Iran]," *Kitāb-i māh 'Ulūm-i ijtimā'ī* 8 (2008): 66.

⁴⁵As indicated here, Radio Tehran was an elitist radio station that was established years after Radio Iran. However, in some sources, the initial Radio Iran is also called Radio Tehran.

educated, intellectual audience. The frequency modulation transmission, shortened and better known as FM broadcasting was initiated on October 30, 1967. Following the success of Radio Iran in attracting audiences, community radio stations started initially in Tabriz (1947), followed by other local stations in Mashhad, Isfahan, Shiraz, Rasht, and many other cities. By 1961, Iran had twelve active community radio stations broadcasting programs both in Persian and in local languages such as Azeri, Kurdish, Arabic, Gilaki and so forth.⁴⁶ All radio channels up until 1978 had both entertainment and information-based content. In other words, they followed the melding model that is known as “infotainment” in media studies.⁴⁷

The following pages show the monthly radio schedule dated Azar 1344 (December 1965):



Radio Iran Programs

⁴⁶Kārnāmāh-yi az Rādiyū va Tilivīziūn Milī Iran, 12-22.

⁴⁷John Vivian and Peter Maurin, *The Media of Mass Communication* (Toronto: Pearson, 2011), 3.

بقیه برنامه رادیو ایران

۲۲-۴۰ ساعت
آواز دلکن
آواز بان بکهنه در میان آذربایجان
آواز پروین او ساعت ۴۵-۲۲

۲۲ ساعت
آواز فرح و درویش
آواز شمس - تکلمه در میان تاج و شمس
انتخاب آخرین ساعت جهان
موسیقی کلاسیک

۲۳-۴۰ ساعت
انتخاب
ساعت ۲۴
ساعت ۲۵
ساعت ۲۶
ساعت ۲۷
ساعت ۲۸
ساعت ۲۹
ساعت ۳۰
ساعت ۳۱
ساعت ۳۲
ساعت ۳۳
ساعت ۳۴
ساعت ۳۵
ساعت ۳۶
ساعت ۳۷
ساعت ۳۸
ساعت ۳۹
ساعت ۴۰

۲۱-۳۰ ساعت
مشاره
تکلمت و تمنا
زر آسمان کبود
احسان و اندیشه
جان دالر
سخنرانی دانشمند محترم آقای راشد
موسیقی ایرانی
آواز یوران - ایرج
د دلکن
د مرثیه
د پروین و شمس
د آله و یاسین
د قالی سخنرانی دانشمند محترم آقای راشد
آهنگ های تجاری (روزهای پنجشنبه بخش نیپور)
انتخاب
۲۱ ساعت
انتخاب از خبرگزاری فارس در دو قسمت
قسمت اول: گزارشهای مختلفه مملکت
قسمت دوم: خبرهایی که تا آخرین ساعت از قضاوت
متخلف دنیا بپهر این بخانه شده است و تفسیر
وقایع ایران از ساعت ۲۱ به نامه های ایران و ایران
روی موج متوسط در ۱۶۶۵ و امواج کوتاه
روی ۴۲ متر و ۷۵ متر بخش نیپور

۲۱-۳۰ ساعت
برنامه کلهها
آخبار جاویدان ادبیات جهان
برنامه کلهها
برنامه کلهها
یک شاه گل
برگ سبز

۲۲ ساعت
یکی بود یکی نبود
یکی بود یکی نبود
برنامه کلهها (یکی بود یکی نبود ساعت
۱۵-۲۲ دقیقه بخش میشود)

۲۳ ساعت
یکی بود یکی نبود
یکی بود یکی نبود
یکی بود یکی نبود

۲۲-۴۰ ساعت
آواز دلکن
آواز بان بکهنه در میان آذربایجان
آواز پروین او ساعت ۴۵-۲۲

۲۲ ساعت
آواز فرح و درویش
آواز شمس - تکلمه در میان تاج و شمس
انتخاب آخرین ساعت جهان
موسیقی کلاسیک

۲۳-۴۰ ساعت
انتخاب
ساعت ۲۴
ساعت ۲۵
ساعت ۲۶
ساعت ۲۷
ساعت ۲۸
ساعت ۲۹
ساعت ۳۰
ساعت ۳۱
ساعت ۳۲
ساعت ۳۳
ساعت ۳۴
ساعت ۳۵
ساعت ۳۶
ساعت ۳۷
ساعت ۳۸
ساعت ۳۹
ساعت ۴۰

۲۱-۳۰ ساعت
مشاره
تکلمت و تمنا
زر آسمان کبود
احسان و اندیشه
جان دالر
سخنرانی دانشمند محترم آقای راشد
موسیقی ایرانی
آواز یوران - ایرج
د دلکن
د مرثیه
د پروین و شمس
د آله و یاسین
د قالی سخنرانی دانشمند محترم آقای راشد
آهنگ های تجاری (روزهای پنجشنبه بخش نیپور)
انتخاب
۲۱ ساعت
انتخاب از خبرگزاری فارس در دو قسمت
قسمت اول: گزارشهای مختلفه مملکت
قسمت دوم: خبرهایی که تا آخرین ساعت از قضاوت
متخلف دنیا بپهر این بخانه شده است و تفسیر
وقایع ایران از ساعت ۲۱ به نامه های ایران و ایران
روی موج متوسط در ۱۶۶۵ و امواج کوتاه
روی ۴۲ متر و ۷۵ متر بخش نیپور

۲۱-۳۰ ساعت
برنامه کلهها
آخبار جاویدان ادبیات جهان
برنامه کلهها
برنامه کلهها
یک شاه گل
برگ سبز

۲۲ ساعت
یکی بود یکی نبود
یکی بود یکی نبود
برنامه کلهها (یکی بود یکی نبود ساعت
۱۵-۲۲ دقیقه بخش میشود)

۲۳ ساعت
یکی بود یکی نبود
یکی بود یکی نبود
یکی بود یکی نبود

برنامه ماهانه رادیو تهران

د برنامه دوم
روی موج متوسط در ۳۳۵ متر برای یا
۸۹۵ کیلو سیکل با فرستنده بقدرت ۵
کیلووات بخش میشود

Radio Iran Programs

بقیه برنامه رادیو تهران

بخش اول

۶-۲۵ بر رادیو تهران اعلام برنامه سلام شانهایی-
 ۶-۲۷ موسیقی سبک
 ۶-۳۰ رادیو در خدمت آموزش
 ۷-۳۰ موسیقی سبک
 ۸- اعلام نرخ کوزه بار
 ۸-۰۰ پایان بخش اول برنامه

بخش دوم

۹-۵۵ بر رادیو اعلام برنامه
 ۹-۵۷ سرود ایران - اعلام برنامه
 ۱۰ آهنگهای تازه های درخواستی شنوندگان
 ۱۱ کاروانی از شعر و موسیقی
 ۱۱-۳۰ آثار کوتاه از آهنگسازان بر سر
 ۱۲ موسیقی ایرانی

آواز با سیمین و بیرو
 * مرثیه
 * الهه و سیما یینا
 * برون و وهشه
 * ایران و شهیندخت
 * دلکش
 ۱۲-۳۰ تدریس انگلیسی
 ۱۲-۴۵ ساز تنها
 ۱۳ پایان برنامه بخش دوم

بخش سوم

۱۷-۲۵ بر رادیو تهران
 ۱۷-۲۷ سرود رادیو - اعلام برنامه
 ۱۷-۳۰ موسیقی لیم
 ۱۸ رادیو در خدمت آموزش
 ۱۸-۳۰ تهرانسان

۱۹

شعریهای جهان درون
 صدای شاعر
 کنسرت ایرانی
 الهامه و نغمه ها
 سیما و سرگذشت
 بدایال آفتاب
 ۱۹-۳۰ موسیقی کلاسیک

۲۰-۳۰ ادبیات ایران و جهان
 علوم انسانی
 دانستن و زندگی
 جهان اندیشه
 جهان هنر
 میزگرد

۲۱ بهترین آهنگهای روز
 ۲۱-۳۰ موسیقی رقص
 ۲۲-۳۰ پایان برنامه

نامه روزهای جمعه رادیو تهران

۱۲۰
 ۱۲-۳۰ آثار کوتاه از آهنگسازان بزرگ
 ۱۲۰ از همه رنگ
 ۱۲-۳۵ ناک شانه گل
 ۱۲۰ آهنگهای درخواستی رقص
 ۱۲-۳۰ پایان بخش دوم برنامه

بخش سوم

۱۷-۳۰ موسیقی فولک
 ۱۸ تهرانسان

نامه های خارجی رادیو ایران

۲۰-۵۵ ناساتنک با مدام بروی امواج
 و بقدرت صد کیلوات و طول موجهای ۱۹۲۵ و
 ۱۱۷۳۰ با آنتن توجیبی بطرف اروپا برای بازتاب ۱۱۷۳۰ و
 ۱ کیلو سیکل شننا از ساعت ۲۳ تا یک با مدام علاوه
 چ فولک با فرستنده موج متوسط بقدرت ۵۰ کیلو وات
 ۲۳۵ متر برای بازتاب ۸۹۵ کیلو سیکل بخش میهن

۲۰-۵۵
 ۲۰-۵۸ سلام شانهایی - اعلام برنامه
 ۲۱ برنامه بر زبان روسی
 ۲۱-۳۰ برنامه بر زبان ترکی
 ۲۲ برنامه بر زبان عربی
 ۲۲-۳۰ برنامه بر زبان فرانسه
 ۲۳-۳۰ برنامه بر زبان انگلیسی
 ۲۴ برنامه مخصوص ایرانان مقیم
 خارج از کشور
 ۲۴ مدام سلام شانهایی - پایان برنامه

برنامه ماهانه رادیو پرش

روی موج متوسط ۴۳۹ متر
برای بازتاب ۸ کیلو سیکل

بخش اول

۶-۳۵ بر رادیو سلام شانهایی - اعلام برنامه
 ۱۰ ترانه های محلی
 ۱۰-۳۰ موسیقی از مفرق زمین
 ۱۱ از هر خواننده ترانه های
 ۱۱-۳۰

گفتنی ها

سیری در فرهنگ و تمدن ایران
 گفتنی ها
 ایران در آینه زمان
 گفتنی ها
 آنتن فروزان

۱۱-۳۵ موسیقی آذربایجانی
 ۱۲ اخبار
 ۱۲-۱۰ اذان ظهر
 ۱۲-۱۵ موسیقی ایرانی
 ۱۲-۳۰ تدریس

بخش دوم

۱۶-۱۵ بر سرود ایران - اعلام برنامه
 ۱۶-۳۰ موسیقی محلی
 ۱۶-۳۵ دهقان
 ۱۷ اذان مغرب (وقت تقریبی)
 ۱۷-۳۰ معرفی شعرای گیلان و نغمه و سخن
 ۱۸

ادبیات و هنر
 مرزهای قانون
 میری در جهان دانش
 در ترم سخنان
 بدایال آفتاب
 بانوی امروز

۱۸-۳۰ یک شانه گل (پنجشنبه مذهبی)
 ۱۸-۳۵ سیاهیان انقلاب
 ۱۹-۵۵ آنچه دیده ایم و شنیده ایم

Radio Tehran Programs

برنامه ماهانه رادیو رشت

روی موج متوسط ۴۴۱ متر برابر با ۶۸۰ کیلو سیکل

بخش اول

ساعت ۵ صبح برادری - سلام شاهنشاهی - اعلام برنامه
ساعت ۹ برنامه های محلی
ساعت ۹-۱۰ موسیقی از مشرق زمین
ساعت ۱۰-۱۱ از هر خواننده برنامه ای
ساعت ۱۱-۱۲ موسیقی آذربایجانی
ساعت ۱۱-۱۲ موسیقی ایرانی

شهر سخن

در مکتب استاد فردا روشن است ایران در آئینه زمان در پنشگاه عدالت آتش فروزان

ساعت ۱۱-۱۲ موسیقی رقص
ساعت ۱۲ اخبار
ساعت ۱۲-۱۳ آذان نظیر
ساعت ۱۳-۱۴ پایان برنامه بخش اول
ساعت ۱۴-۱۵ رله اخبار رادیو ایران

بخش دوم

ساعت ۱۵-۱۶ بخش سرودای ایران اعلام برنامه
ساعت ۱۶-۱۷ معرفی شعرای کمال (پکشتینه - سه ختنه و پنج شبه کاروانی از شعر و موسیقی)

ادبیات هنر

جهان هنر صدای شاعر در بزم سخنوران با ما شهرهای کمال بیاید برنامه با توان

ساعت ۱۷-۱۸ ساز سلو
ساعت ۱۸-۱۹ برنامه دهقان بلهجه محلی
ساعت ۱۹-۲۰ اخبار
ساعت ۲۰-۲۱ موسیقی ایرانی
ساعت ۲۱-۲۲ ته دانسان (روز های ه شنبه برنامه مذهبی
ساعت ۲۲-۲۳ آنچه دیده ایم و شنیده ایم (هشتمه ها لشکر)
ساعت ۲۳-۲۴ موسیقی محلی
ساعت ۲۴-۲۵ داستان شب
ساعت ۲۵-۲۶ سلام شاهنشاهی پایان برنامه

برنامه ماهانه رادیو تبریز

امواج کوتاه ردیف ۴۸۹ متر برابر با ۶۱۵۵ کیلو سیکل و موج متوسط ۵۱۵ متر برابر با ۶۵۰ کیلو سیکل (برنامه بخش اول)

ساعت ۵-۶ بر سلام شاهنشاهی - اعلام برنامه
ساعت ۶ برنامه باهداد

۱۵

بقیه برنامه رادیو ایران

ساعت ۱۹-۲۰ برنامه ارتش
ساعت ۲۰ اخبار آخرین ساعت جهان
روزهای پنجشنبه تلاوت آباتی
از کلام الله مجید

ساعت ۲۰-۲۱

مشاعره

شهری در دل شهر ما
زیر آسمان کی بود
سیما و سرگذشت
جان دالر
سخنرانی دانشمند محترم آقای راشد

ساعت ۲۰-۲۱ موسیقی ایرانی

آواز پوران - آشنا

« دلکش
« مرضیه
« پروین و شمس
« الهه و یاسمین
دنباله سخنرانی دانشمند محترم آقای راشد

ساعت ۲۰-۲۱ (آهنگی های تجارتي روزهای پنجشنبه بخش نمیشود)

اخبار ۲۱

اخبار از خبرگزاریهای پارس در ۲ قسمت
قسمت اول: گزارشهای مختلف مملکتی
قسمت دوم: خبرهایی که تا آخرین ساعت از نقاط مختلف دنیا بتهران مخابره شده است (از ساعت ۲۱ برنامه های رادیو ایران روی موج متوسط ردیف ۲۶۶۵ و امواج کوتاه ردیف ۴۲ متر و ۷۵ متر بخش میشود)

ساعت ۲۱-۲۲

برنامه گلها

آثار جاویدان ادبیات جهان
برنامه گلها
برنامه گلها
برنامه گلها
یک شاخه گل
برگ سبز

ساعت ۲۲

Radio Rasht and Radio Tabriz Programs

بیان برنامه

برنامه ماهانه رادیو شیراز

روی موج متوسط ۳۶۰ متر برابر با ۱۰۶۰ کیلو سیکل موج کوتاه ۶۶۲۶ متر برابر با ۵۱۵۰ کیلو سیکل

بخش اول	ساعت
پژ-سلام شاهنشاهی-اعلام برنامه	۹-۵۵
موسیقی محلی رادیو شیراز	۱۰-۳۰
درس زندگی	۱۱
موسیقی ایرانی	۱۱-۳۰
نغمه‌های محلی	۱۲
خلاصه اخبار استان	۱۲-۵
اذان ظهر	۱۲-۲۰
بیان بخش اول برنامه	
بخش دوم	ساعت
رادیو و شنوندگان	۱۶
سپاهیان انقلاب	۱۶-۳۰
برنامه دهقان	۱۶-۴۵
موسیقی بدون آواز	۱۷
اذان مغرب (وقت تقریبی)	۱۷-۱۰
موسیقی ایرانی	۱۷-۳۰
	۱۷-۴۵
تفتنیها	
تفتنیها	
ایران در آئینه زمان	
تفتنیها	
تفتنیها	
برنامه بهداشت	
گلچینی از شعر و موسیقی	۱۸
تدریس	۱۸-۳۰
موسیقی محلی	۱۹
	۱۹-۱۵
آتش فروزان	
نوباوگان	
کتاب روح بشر	
نوباوگان	
سیری در فرهنگ و تمدن	
نوباوگان	

۲۹

Radio Shiraz Programs

Radio was the first mass broadcasting medium and the most widespread one that reached the literate and illiterate, men (with more social mobility and interactions), women, and children (who were more domestic bound). Radio was the only medium that crossed the impeding boundaries of geographic and social space, age, gender, and economic status, hence the most accessible medium for the masses.

Before the launching of Radio Iran, the first Iranian made radio set was crafted by Dr. Mahmoud Hesabi and his students in Dar al-Mo'alimīn (Teachers College).⁴⁸ The first audible tune on their radio was from Radio Baku, broadcasting from Azerbaijan in the Soviet Union.⁴⁹ In February 1941, the Iranian government ordered affordable radio receivers to radio companies such as MEND, I.C.I, Telefunken, and Luxor and distributed them among government and municipal employees. The price of these radios averaged 200 to 300 tomans, to be paid in equal monthly payments. With the inauguration of Radio Iran, advertising and retailing different brands of radio sets in electronic stores became a profitable business in Iran.⁵⁰ Ahmad Mo'tamedi, a veteran radio engineer, recalls that a merchant by the name of Amin Ghanieh at Istanbul Avenue in Tehran managed to sell 1000 small Lincoln radios sets in a month or two after the launching of Radio Iran.⁵¹ The number of radio sets "in 1966 was estimated at 6,800,000,"⁵² while Iran's population was 25,500,000. Therefore, there was one radio set for almost every four persons. The number of radio sets "increased to 10,000,000 in 1974,"⁵³ as the population rose to 31,500,000. So, during the mid-1970s, for almost every three persons, there was one radio in Iran. Distribution of radio sets continued as part of a governmental project

⁴⁸Naderi, *Shumā va rādiyū*, 89.

⁴⁹The story of the first Iranian made radio is also recollected in an article in *Dunyā-yi iqtiṣād* magazine (accessed 1 July 2022):

[The Story of the First Radio Made in Iran]

“حکایت ساخت نخستین رادیو در ایران”

<https://donya-e-eqtasad.com/بخش-اقتصاد-۳۶۳۴۴۵۴۵۵-حکایت-ساخت-نخستین-رادیو-در-ایران/>

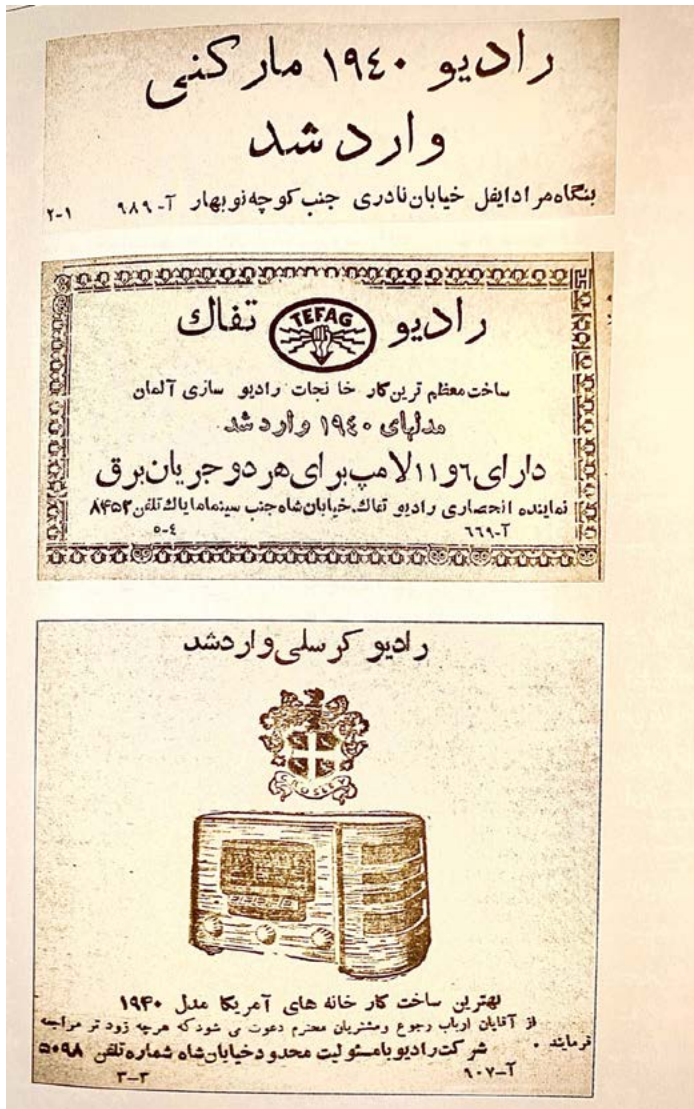
⁵⁰Naderi, *Shumā va rādiyū*, 89.

⁵¹Quoted in Naderi, *Shumā va rādiyū*, 77.

⁵²Kimiachi, "History and Development of Broadcasting in Iran," 85.

⁵³Kimiachi, "History and Development of Broadcasting in Iran," 85.

devised to connect less privileged people in cities, villages, and remote places to radio content.



Radio advertisements from 1940s Iranian periodicals.⁵⁴

⁵⁴In Naderi, *Shumā va rādiyū*, 90.



Old radio advertisements.⁵⁵

⁵⁵<https://vieuxpapier.wordpress.com/category/ایران ناما-فون-و-گرامافون/>, accessed June 10, 2022.

The geographical and economic boundaries as well as gender-based restrictions of the early 1940s obstructed many Iranian women, children, and even men (in smaller rural and urban communities) from enjoying a live play, a musical show, or a movie screening in city venues such as the Lalehzar district (the entertainment district of Tehran). Radio, on the other hand, became a medium of mass communication that entered homes. The domestic and easy-reaching nature of radio, compared to other forms of media, made it the most effective medium of mass communication in the 1940s and 1950s until a few years after the advent of television in the country. The rise of radio receivers at home was a major gamechanger for female and young audiences who were traditionally barred from the gendered space of theatre houses, since such public entertainment spaces were more welcoming and accommodating to adult male audiences. With the advent of radio, women and children were able to enjoy a radio show in a more relaxing domestic space. In the 1940s, radio programs (including music) were an integral part of the public and private soundscape. Although gender reforms of Reza Shah were underway during this period, many women still did not enter the workforce, nor could they partake widely in social activities. Similarly, many male citizens who already integrated into the work force did not have a chance to receive formal education. Yet, radio entered the feminine sphere of homes in the daytime, as well as the masculine space of the labor market and its adjacent cafés. As a result, modern ideas, lectures on science, agriculture, history, geography, politics, news, and music reached out to popular audiences. Indeed, Radio Iran as the most popular radio station targeting average audiences, became an efficient tool to mediatize⁵⁶ scientific, cultural, and social discourses. In the next three decades, listening to radio became a natural daily activity among most Iranians regardless of gender or social class.

The idea of targeting various social groups of all ages and genders as radio listeners was part of the Radio Commission mandate. In December 1939, a few months before the official launch of radio, the Radio Commission expedited its plan to produce sufficient radio programs

⁵⁶To “mediatize” means to “convey [the message] to” [the] recipients via media.” Ingrid Åkesson, “Oral/Aural Culture in Late Modern Society?: Traditional Singing as Professionalized Genre and Oral-Derived Expression,” *Oral Tradition* 27, no. 1 (2012): 70..

for the first few months. In his records, Ebrahim Khalili Sepehri, the administrative chair of the Radio Commission, stated that a variety of radio programs on subjects such as literature, geography, history, and homemaking/home improvement were prepared to be aired on Radio Iran.⁵⁷ Women were further identified as important radio audiences, through specialized programs such as *Zan va zindigī* (Women and Life) and *Zanān-i Shahrīstān'hā-yi Iran* (Women of Iranian Provinces). Women were also among ardent radio listeners of radio dramas, poetry reading programs, and *Gulhā* programs—a music show produced by accomplished songwriters, musicians, and singers.⁵⁸



Report for the *Zan va Zindigī* (Women and Life) program in *Radio Iran magazine*.

The first children's radio program, *Bachah'hā Salam* (Hello Children), was aired on April 26, 1940, by a well-versed broadcaster, literary scholar, and school teacher, Fazlollah Sobhi Mohtadi. Mr. Sobhi took the initiative to include children in the broadcast studio during the show

⁵⁷Quoted in Mokhtari Esfahani, "Tārikh-i rādiyū," 37.

⁵⁸Women who were in their twenties in the 1940s (such as my grandmother, Iran-dokht Farhang and her two sisters Iran-saheb and Farangis) fondly recalled radio dramas and musical pieces that were broadcast on Radio Iran and then later on Radio Tehran.

to participate and interact with him during storytime. He adapted stories from oral literature (folk and fairy tales), mythological tales, classical Persian literature, and world literature. Upon narrating a story in simple language during his program, Sobhi would sometimes read from the original source (Rumi's *Mathnavi*, for instance) to make young listeners familiar with the language of classical literature. Sobhi later published his stories for children and adults in multiple volumes.⁵⁹ His initiative became an incentive to produce modern works of children's literature in Iran. Children's arts and fiction were revived in the 1950s and especially during the 1960s, through the colorful animated production of children's books, paintings, posters, videos, films, and plays. *Kayhān Bachahhā*, the oldest periodical for children and youth, was founded in 1956. A major producer and distributor of children's literature, films and dramatic performances was *Kānūn Parvarish Fikrī Kūdakān va Nūjavānān* (The Institute for the Intellectual Development of the Child and the Adolescent, also known in English as Kanun), established in 1961.

It is worth noting that Persian-speaking children were acknowledged as radio audiences only two days after the official launch of radio. Recognizing children as media consumers also became a precursor for the 'Children's Movies' genre in Iranian cinema and for children's programs on national television.

A list of radio programs dated April 1940 shows that specialized programs for certain vocations were also incorporated into Radio Iran's airtime. For instance, a special agriculture program was regularly aired, hence including farmers as radio listeners.⁶⁰ On both private and social levels, Iranian men, women, and children had the opportunity to connect with radio and its aural array of programs and features.

A particular characteristic of radio that differentiates it from visual-based media is its user-friendliness as a "flexible,"⁶¹ "secondary

⁵⁹The generation who was born in the 1940s and 1950s Iran (such as my parents) have nostalgic memories of Mr. Sobhi's children's program. A number of his audio shows have become available on websites such as www.aparat.com/v/mhgMf (accessed 1 July 2022)

⁶⁰See the list in Naderi, *Shumā va rādiyū*, 78.

⁶¹Andrew Crisell, *Understanding Radio*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1994).

medium,⁶² since it is viable to listen to radio, and yet be engaged in other activities (such as gardening, cooking, office work, shopkeeping, and so forth). In the early years of radio, when radio sets were larger and more expensive, most families had to gather around one radio to listen to a favorite program. The group style of radio listening required more attention. It was still viable to eat or knit while listening to the radio. In that sense, even in the early years, radio was a more flexible medium compared to, for instance, newspapers. But as radio sets became smaller and less expensive, listening habits changed to a more private practice. The popularity of small, battery operated, low-priced and portable transistor radios in the 1960s was a breakthrough. The Japanese technology company Sony mass-produced transistor radios that became available in Iran. Radio in the 1960s turned out to be the most flexible mass medium that could be enjoyed anywhere anytime, in public and in private.



Advertisement featured in *Hamshahrī* newspaper.⁶³

⁶²Nicholas Abercrombie and Brian Longhurst, *The Penguin Dictionary of Media Studies* (London: Penguin Books, 2007), 295.

⁶³<https://newspaper.hamshahrionline.ir/id/123101/صدا-تصویر-خاطره> (accessed 1 June 2022).

Radio, as Marshal McLuhan has stated, is theoretically a “hot medium” because of its “high definition” or the wealth of sensory data given to its audience.⁶⁴ In practice, some radio content could be categorized as cool, if it does not provide an abundance of information, thus demanding more participation or completion on the part of the audience (such as radio contests).

As indicated before, Radio Iran and other Iranian radio stations prior to 1978 were operated as regulated and centralized media promoting a secular, modernized, Perso-centric, and unified Iran. Non-Persian programs (such as French, English, Arabic, Russian, German programs, and other programs in ethnic languages), as well as religious, cultural, community-based, athletic, and scientific programs, provided a diverse aural space suitable for diverse urban and rural audiences. Since 1940, Radio Iran was audible across the country and in some other countries.⁶⁵ As it was announced in the *Radio Iran* magazine (image below), boosting radio transmitters made Radio Iran a worldwide network in the 1950s and 1960s, targeting audiences outside of its national borders (in the USA, Africa, Europe, and neighboring countries).⁶⁶ *šidā-yi Iran* (Voice of Iran), later renamed *šidā-yi Āshinā* (Familiar Voice), was broadcasting programs in foreign languages including English, French, Turkish, Russian, and Arabic. Families inside the country would send messages to their loved ones abroad through the program. This program and some other radio shows were popular among listeners outside of the country. The Afghan listeners who shared a common language with Iranians were among ardent audiences of Radio Iran. As recounted by Naderi, in the early 1970s, when a team of Radio Iran’s performers and musicians arrived at Kabul airport to take part in Mohammed Davoud Khan’s anniversary of presidency, they were greeted by a group of female students. It turned out that the girls were hoping to see Googoosh, the famous Iranian singer, who was a regular singer of Radio Iran and was also co-hosting a popular radio show called *Shumā va Rādiyū*

⁶⁴Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995), 22.

⁶⁵Kaveh, “Ijmāli bar tārikhchah rādiyu dar Iran,” 66.

⁶⁶Kimiachi, “History and Development of Broadcasting in Iran,” 85-7.

(Radio and You). Apparently, Googoosh was flying from Paris to Kabul and did not accompany the radio team on that particular airplane. Realizing how much the girls were disappointed, Naderi invited them to their hotel to visit their favorite singer. In his memoir, Naderi added that at that time, Afghanistan did not have television, but Afghan people were familiar with Iranian radio shows and personalities such as Fakhri Nikzad and Googoosh.⁶⁷



sidā-yi Āshinā (Familiar Voice) program.

With Radio Iran, the Iranian nation and Persianate communities outside of the country were widely connected by broadcasting media. Through radio, a new model of communication and a modern aural culture were created, stressing on nationalist values and the Persian language as unifying elements among all Persian speakers. As the discussion in this section depicts, with its wide-reaching content, Radio Iran mass-mediated audiences through popular radio programming. The three examples here further represent the depth of engagement with radio programs:

One of the most attractive radio shows in the 1960s and early 1970s was the detective drama *Johnny Dollar*. It was a free adaptation of the original CBS radio drama titled *Yours Truly Johnny Dollar*. The Iranian Johnny Dollar was played by the director of the show, Heidar Saremi. Interestingly, Saremi’s day job was in Tehran’s police service.

⁶⁷Naderi, *Shumā va rādiyū*, 247-8.

After starring in the show, he became a radio celebrity of sorts. The show was an interactive mystery quiz. At the end of each episode, the listeners were asked if they could figure out how detective Dollar found the perpetrators. Those who guessed correctly would enter a raffle for a prize. Its most popular episodes were written by Jalal Nematollahi;⁶⁸ other episodes were written by radio scriptwriters, such as Assadollah Shahryari. Notable radio performers like Hamid Ameli, Farhang Merhparvar, Manijeh Zarrin, and Hamid Manoucheri were playing in the show. The series aired on Wednesday nights at 8:30 p.m. and was widely received by radio listeners, so much so that town streets would be deserted during *Johnny Dollar's* airtime. The series is now republished in cyberspace via multiple platforms (Facebook, Instagram) and in contemporary literary podcasts (Audio Theatre).

Qiṣah zuhr Jum'ah (Friday Noon Story) is the oldest radio show and, at certain times, one of the most popular programs of Radio Iran. Sobhi Mohtadi was the producer and the distinguished storyteller of the program for twenty-four years, starting the series a month after launching Radio Iran in 1940. After Sobhi's illness and death, his voice recordings continued to be replayed in the program for another ten years, making him the longest running broadcaster of Radio Iran.⁶⁹ Other narrators, such as Hamid Ameli, Iraj Golsorkhi, and Mousavi Garmaroudi, performed on the show. The popularity of *Qiṣah zuhr Jum'ah* was partially owed to its rehearsing of storytelling techniques found in the tradition of *Naqālī* (Persian story telling for the public) and *Shahnameh Khānī*/reading. After the 1979 Revolution, the program lost its authentic literary nuance and embodied the ideological and theocratic perspective of the revolutionary government. As a result of this conceptual change, the previous narrator and producer, Hamid Ameli, discontinued his collaboration with the program.⁷⁰ The post-revolutionary stories in the 1980s and 1990s, narrated by Mohamadreza Sarshar for twenty-four years, were the glamorized and

⁶⁸Naderi, *Shumā va rādiyū*, 230.

⁶⁹Mohamad Hanif, *Qiṣṣah'gūyī dar rādiyū va tilivīzyūn* [*Storytelling in Radio and Television*] (Tehran: Soroush Press, 2005), 154..

⁷⁰Refer to "Sonnat-i Qiṣah Gū'yī dar Rādiyū [The Storytelling Tradition in Radio]" for Ameli's account (accessed 20 June 20 2022):

www.bbc.com/persian/arts/story/2006/09/060920_fb_mgh_radio

romanticized stories of religious saints or war veterans of the Iran-Iraq war, and so forth. *Qiṣāh zuhr Jum 'ah* lost its aesthetic impact and public appeal after 1979 but it continues to air on Radio Iran.

The last example of an extremely popular radio show that created a sense of communal binding among massive listeners and an interactive relation with the show was the *Ṣobḥ-i Jum 'ah* (Friday Morning) show (also known as *Shumā va rādiyū* (You and Radio)). As one of the most elaborated radio shows of the 1950s, 60s, and early- to mid-70s, *Ṣobḥ-i Jum 'ah*—produced by Shahrokh Naderi—recruited a team of 150 performers, authors, poets, singers, musicians, and producers. *Ṣobḥ-i Jum 'ah* created memorable satirical dramas, radio contests, interviews, and musical pieces performed by outstanding broadcasters, actors, and singers such as Forouzandeh Arbabi, Manouchehr Nozari, Saremi, Ali Zarandi (who played the comical Shabaji Khanoum character), Mehri Vedadian, Ali Tabesh, Mahin Bozorgi, Ahmad Ghadakhian, Fardin, Googoosh, Vigen, and Pouran. Many actors and radio personalities of Radio Iran, especially those in the *Ṣobḥ-i Jum 'ah* program gained stardom status in Iran and were invited to play, write, produce, or sing in movies or in television series. Radio created a solid star system in Iran and mass-mediated Persian-speaking audiences. Although Radio Iran was financed by the Iranian government, its cultural and entertainment programs were made independently by professional radio producers.



Ms. Arbabi and Mr. Mostajabodaveh broadcasting *Shumā va rādiyū*.

Basil Cheesman Bunting, a scholar of classical Persian literature and culture, an MI6 intelligence officer, and a modernist poet who lived, loved, and spied in Iran, showed his tribute to Radio Iran's inspirational programs in a section of his long illustrious poem "Al-Anfālullah [The Spoils] [Spoils]," published in 1951:

From Hajji Mosavvor's trembling wrist
grace of tree and beast
shines on ivory
in eloquent line.
Flute,
shade dimples under chenars
breath of Naystani chases and traces
as a pair of gods might dodge and tag between stars.
Taj is to sing, Taj,
when tar and drum
come to their silence, slow,
clear, rich, as though

he had cadence and phrase from Hafez.
Nothing that was is,
but Moluk-I Zarrabi
draws her voice from a well
deeper than history.
Shir-i Khoda's note
on a dawn-cold radio
forestalls, outlasts the beat.
Friday, Sobhi's tales
keeping boys from their meat.⁷¹

In his previous poems (such as "Let Them Remember Samangan"), Basil Bunting paid homage to classical Persian poetry, especially to the *Shahnamah*. In this lengthy, multitopic poem, Bunting partly illustrates his passion for Iran's modern aural culture as he discovered it in Radio

⁷¹Basil Bunting, *Complete Poems* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 2000), 53-4.

Iran. He talks about different radio musicians, singers, and performers, including Naystani's *ney*/flute, the rhythmic singing of Taj, Moluk Zarabi's deep voice, Shir-i Khoda's performance of *Varizish-i Bāstānī* on radio, and Sobhi's tales. The sonic palette of Radio Iran is perfectly represented in this excerpt, and it might have influenced the melodious sonic quality of the poem. Bunting was so inspired by Sobhi that he recalled him as "the most perfect teller of tales."⁷² The renowned British poet found the modern oral and aural culture of Iran as interesting as its written literature of the past. Bunting, like many other radio listeners, was mediated to Radio Iran, which turned out to become a new site of cultural production with widespread accessibility.



Shumā va rādiyū

⁷²Bunting, *Complete Poems*, 58.

Radio: Unveiling The Female Voice In The Public Sphere

In the pre-modern era, the exterior urban spaces in Iran were male-dominated. As a result, the city soundscape in social arenas was a dominant masculine soundscape. Radio enriched aural culture by integrating women's voice within Iran's social sonic oeuvre. Prior to the official launching of Radio Iran, General Amir-Khosrawi, the head of Radio Commission arranged a competition in the Officers' Club (*Bāshgāh Afsarān*) to select radio broadcasters among the 160 contestants. Three women, including Ghodsi Rahbari (a seventeen-year-old girl, ranked top among both the male and female groups), Dr. Tousi Haeiri, and Taj ul-Moluk Nakhaei, as well as five men were hired for Persian broadcasting. Ten broadcasters were also selected for the international branch of radio.⁷³ It was the voice of Ms. Rahbari, Radio's top-ranked broadcaster that officially inaugurated Radio Iran, at 7:15 pm on April 24, 1940: "This is Tehran, voice of (Radio) Iran."⁷⁴ The inclusion of female voice in Radio Iran was a breakthrough in Iran's male-dominated anthroponic social soundscape. Audiences of radio were listening to a modern medium through a female voice that was not typically heard in social settings.

Thanks to the supervision of the Radio Commission, and, later on, the Institute of Publication and Propaganda (under Dr. Isa Sedigh's management), professionalism in aural performance, aptitude for speaking Persian eloquently, and mastery over the topic of discussion were essential qualities of broadcasting in radio. The existing excerpts of Ghodsi Rahbari's performance is a testimony to the high standards to which female broadcasters adhered in the 1940s and 1950s. Her presentations were enunciated in a clear, warm, and seamless style. She had mastery over Persian language and literature and articulated Persian poems impeccably. In the following years, other great female broadcasters, such as Forouzandeh Arbabi (host of the famous music

⁷³Mokhtari, "History of Radio," 38; *Kārnāmah-yi az Rādiyū va Tilivīzūn Milī Iran*, 11; Naderi, *Shumā va rādiyū*, 74.

⁷⁴Quoted in Balatarin: www.balatarin.com/permlink/2022/4/24/5794948; Naderi, *Shumā va rādiyū*, 47, and Sam Givrad quoted in Balatarin).

program *Gulhā* and many other shows such as *Ṣobḥ-i Jum'ah*), Azar Pajouhesh (host of *Gulhā* and Radio Darya), and Moloud Atefi (news broadcaster and storyteller for children's program) joined Radio Iran. Listening to female broadcasters of the golden era of Iranian radio shows that even by the broadcasting standards of the twenty-first century, they are positioned among the greatest professional performers.

Gender integration and the audibility of female voice on Radio Iran were in accordance with the gender-reforming endeavors of Reza Shah Pahlavi's era. In fact, in the new modernization model that was formulized by the state and progressive intellectuals, creating a modern nationalist state, could not be materialized in the absence of female participation in public life. The nationalist state demanded all its citizens to partake in reforming and developing the country. Women and men were expected to be socially active in order to build a powerful sovereign nation. The Pahlavi policy of social modernization envisaged the proliferation of female participation in social life as an essential component of a modernized Iran.⁷⁵ In the 1930s, women created more social clubs, and gained rights and visibility in educational and civil domains. Women's education in schools and at the University of Tehran (since 1935, a year after its establishment) were encouraged by the government.⁷⁶ The public unveiling of female teachers and students was even encouraged before the formal declaration of unveiling, respectively in 1933 and 1935.⁷⁷ Eventually, Reza Shah implemented and enforced the banning of Islamic veils for women on January 8, 1936. The unveiling project took place four years before the official inauguration of radio.

Before the introduction of modernist ideas in Iran, the female voice was socially and religiously permitted to be heard in either the domestic spaces or homosocial spaces dedicated to female groups. The first

⁷⁵Refer to Abrahamian's account in *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, 144, and Afary's account in *Sexual Politics in Modern Iran*, 142-58.

⁷⁶Bamdad, *Zan-i Iranī*, 98.

⁷⁷Lois Beck and Guity Nashat, *Women in Iran: From 1800 to the Islamic Republic* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 22.

introduction of female voice in a large mixed public venue took place in movie houses. Iran was the first country in the Middle East to produce short motion pictures, known as actualités in 1900.⁷⁸ In the actualités that are left from the Qajar era, we see both men and women of the royal haram represented in motion pictures. Those short films were not meant to be seen by public audiences. In 1900, Iranians also opened private showing venues (in Tehran) and public cinemas (in Tabriz).⁷⁹ The advent of silent cinema in Iran initially introduced the female body (but not voice) to public screens, to be consumed (mostly) by men, and limited women spectators. In the 1900s, only silent films were available, all made outside of the country. The first Iranian-made, feature-length, silent film, *Abi and Rabi*, was made in 1930 starring Madame Siranush, an Armenian-Iranian actress.

In 1933, the introduction of sound to the first Persian speaking talkie initiated a new era in Iranian cinema. *The Lor Girl* (1933), the first Persian talkie by Abdolhossein Sepanta and Ardeshir Irani, became an instant hit at the movie houses. “[...]. *The Lor Girl* was the first film in which actors were speaking Persian. Iranian filmgoers were as thrilled to ‘listen’ to the film as they were to watch it.”⁸⁰ Another factor that contributed to the success of the film was representing a lead female figure, Sedigheh (Rouhangiz) Saminejad, as the Lor girl. The exposure of an Iranian woman’s ‘body and voice’ in the film made the film an exceptional experience for Iranian filmgoers. Comparing the unparalleled success of the first Persian talkie to an Iranian silent film (*Haji Agha, The Movie Actor*), both screened simultaneously, reveals that the addition of Persian enunciation made the film more successful at the box-office. The character of Golnar, played by Saminejad became a popular cultural icon, almost a prototypical model of female cinematic character, comparable to female literary icons such as Shirin (from *Khusraw va Shirin*), and the *Shahnamah* women (Tahmineh, Rudabeh, Manijeh, and so forth). Saminejad did not

⁷⁸Khatereh Sheibani, “Film and Aesthetic Value in Iranian Context,” in *A Companion to Motion Pictures and Public Value*, eds. Mette Hjort and Ted Nannicelli (Wiley-Blackwell, 2022), 48.

⁷⁹Sheibani, “Film and Aesthetic Value in Iranian Context,” 48-49.

⁸⁰Sheibani, “Film and Aesthetic Value in Iranian Context,” 49-50.

enjoy the celebrated status that her fictive/cinematic character relished. During the screening of the film in India and then after her return from India, she was shunned by Iranian-Indian Muslim filmgoers and the people of her hometown in Bam and Kerman. Saminejad did not pursue her cinematic career after playing in three films in India, came back to Iran, and stayed away from the cinema community.

Two or three years after the screening of Saminejad's films, the Iranian female broadcasters of radio were not antagonized and did not experience similar public disapproval. Unlike movie actresses who had to protect their family "reputation" by playing in films (mostly) under a pseudonym, women broadcasters were known by their real names. One of the reasons behind the overall approval of the female presence in radio is that radio, by its nature, is a "blind" medium, as Andrew Crissell, a cultural theorist defines the medium.⁸¹ For listeners of radio, the presence of radio broadcasters is reduced to their voice. They are not 'portrayed' as bodies; they are only 'audible,' hence female participation in the social act of broadcasting was not offensive or threatening to patriarchy in the same way that the actress' body was. In the traditional and patriarchal setting, a female broadcaster had an advantageous position over an actress. She was able to exert her social agency through broadcasting her voice, in a blind medium. She was partaking in a social domain while her presence was not visible as much. As a result, the blindness of the medium became a source of advantage for women. An acoustic-base medium such as radio, primarily exists in time, rather than space.⁸² Actresses on the silver screen were engaging spectators both in space (screen) and in time (narrative line). Thus, the prominent actresses experienced social intolerance unlike their broadcasting counterparts.

Another important factor regarding the public acceptance of women in radio was that radio programs of the early years were more inclined to be informative, educational, and cultural compared to the leisurely-paced early Iranian films. The broadcasters were also chosen based on their

⁸¹Andrew Crissell, *Understanding Radio*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1994), 6.

⁸²Crissell, *Understanding Radio*, 6.

intellectual merits, educational background, and their quality of voice and clarity of speech. Tusi Haeri and Ms. Nakhai were both university graduates. Equally, the next generation of female radio personalities in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s were known as professional women in the broadcasting industry. There were not seen by the public as entertainers. Hence, radio became an agent of gender modernization. The inclusion of female voice to the early aural repertoire of Iranian radio and its endorsement by society contributed to female visibility and agency in the wake of modernization in Iran. Four years after the unveiling of women of Iran, their voice was also unveiled, and included in a nation-wide public service. In the following years, female broadcasters were firmly established as an integral part of national radio and television. After the 1979 Revolution, women were excluded from many professional sectors. The revolutionary forces, however, could not erase women from the broadcasting industry. It might be due to women's plentiful and strong presence in radio since 1940. However, it should be noted that the revolutionaries managed to eradicate certain figures, male and female, who had gained a stardom status, or were known as Pahlavi regime supporters.

The acoustic modernism that was introduced by radio had a formative impact on other forthcoming media of mass communication. Radio culture became a backbone to Iran's national television (established in 1958). Radio talk shows, musical programs, dramatic series, and the scripting model of news were rehearsed on Iranian television. Prominent radio broadcasters, producers, vocalists, musicians, and storytellers were invited to national television studios. The modern aural culture shaped and developed the modern televisual culture of Iran. The golden era of radio continued even after the birth of television, because of its niche programs such as *Şobh-i Jum'ah*, or Shir-i Khoda's *Varzish-i Bāstānī*, with no equivalent in television programs. The golden era of radio ended with the upheavals of the Revolution in 1978. Strikes and political disruptions discontinued most of the quality programs on the radio after September of that year.⁸³ After the

⁸³Naderi, *Shumā va rādiyū*, 337-38.

Revolution, prominent radio personalities such as Iraj Gorgin, Reza Qotbi, and Touraj Farazmand left the country. Those who stayed were either fired (as in the case of Shahrokh Naderi), imprisoned (including many singers), or even assassinated (as in the case of the famous broadcaster Taghi Rohani, and a religious performer, Seyed Javad Zabihi, the first singer of *Rabbanāa* prayer/*du'ā*).

The Islamized radio milieu of 1979 and onward was inclined to a more converged, propagandist, and tightly regulated programming; but the aural legacy of the 1940s to late 1970s media environment did not vanish altogether. Since the late 1990s, the decentralized and rhizomatic structure of the digital media setting provided radio audiences with alternative radio content that is not theocratic-oriented. Globally, radio adapted and adopted new platforms in the twenty-first century that were also utilized by the Persian/Iranian radio producers. The producers of radio content (who are now citizen broadcasters, not necessarily hired by state-controlled media incorporation) indulge the previous culture-oriented oeuvre of Radio Iran and Radio Tehran in their poetic, literary, cinematic, theatrical, and musical radio podcasts, and streaming audio. Some of these podcasts (such as Radio Tragedy, Radionist) are produced inside the country, and some others (such as Roqe Media, Ferdowsi-khani, and Chia with Banafsheh), are produced outside of Iran. There are also podcasts that feature and republish radio content of the golden era of Iranian radio. These radio podcasts are made in Persian or a non-Persian language, depending on their audiences and the host country. But there is one element that is common in the majority of these podcasts. The non-governmental, citizen-produced digital radio, podcast, and streaming audio content strive to maintain the progressive, cultural-oriented, infotainment soundscape that informed Radio Iran since 1940.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ I would like to thank Professor Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi for sharing his insights on radio culture with me. Our productive conversation about radio and its impact on Iranian culture shaped my ideas as presented in this article. I also had the privilege of using Professor Tavaoli's archival material for this article.



Announcement for Episode 12, Radio Nist podcast.