Soundscape, Sonic Experience, and Sonic memory in Iran: Jewish and Muslim Cultural Identity in Udlajan, Tehran

by

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the impact of everyday soundscape on cultural identity formation by considering the experiences of one neighborhood of Tehran, Iran before and after the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Being home to a majority of Jews before the Revolution, Udlajan is one of the oldest neighborhoods in Tehran. Through interviews with a select group of its current and past Jewish and Muslim residents, this research considers changes to the everyday soundscape of the neighborhood in order to examine the role of sounds and silences in the social construction of space. This dissertation proposes that sonic experiences are closely related to the ways people make sense of their cultural identity. By narrating sound memories along with other ones, people express their understanding of space, communications with other residents, sense of identity, self and otherness, norms of inclusion and exclusion. Their narratives as well as the sound observations made in the neighborhood help to create a sonic map and the sonic changes Udlajan has gone through in the past several decades. This thesis argues that through the sonic memories, the residents are able to share their thoughts and feelings about their Jewish and Muslim neighbors and manage to express their sense of identity as members of a religious community or citizens of Udlajan.

Preface

In the dissertation, I have italicized all Persian words and transliterated them phonetically except when they are commonly used words in English such as the words Shia and when they are song titles. Also, I represent the letter "آ ا" with "a" and do not use the macron over the "a" because it is not common in the English spelling of the Persian words which also contain this letter. For instance, words such as Tehran, Dastgah, Azan, and Iran do not contain the macron over the "a." Depending on the context, the letter "و" becomes either "u," "ow," or "o" and "ی" becomes "i" or "y." The letter "خ" becomes "kh," "ش" becomes "sh," "ق" and "غ" become "q." Reflecting their pronunciation in Persian, the letter "ث," "س," and "ص" are represented as "s" and "ض," "ز," "ذ," and "ظ" as "z." I have left individuals' names, article and book titles according to individuals' and authors' own spelling preference. I hope that this method of transliteration can give non-Persian speakers a somewhat accurate idea of the phonetic sound of words while preserving some aspects of their spelling for Persian speakers.

To the memory of Maryam Kian

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Chapter 1- Introduction

Udlajan, an old neighborhood in Tehran, Iran was home to a majority of Jews in Tehran before the Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979. Following the Revolution, the dominance of the political and religious doctrine of Ayatollah Khomeini shaped the post-revolutionary policies. Such state-sponsored policies suppressed the possibility of plural and co-existent cultural identities for most religious minorities. This situation led to the emigration of a large number of Iranian citizens from minority religious groups, including the Jews. Emigration of the majority of Udlajan Jews, closure of Jewish shops, baths, synagogues, and music shops (*Bongah-haye shadi* or *Bongah-haye Shademani* literally meaning "Happiness Institutions") following the Revolution brought about a recognizable transformation in the lifestyle of the area, and ultimately changed the everyday soundscape of this neighborhood. *Bongah-haye shadi* not only sent music bands to ceremonies such as weddings and birthday parties, but they also served as musicians' offices; these musicians, known as *motreb*s, mainly played dance music and performed across the neighborhood, in both Jewish and Muslim events.[1]

In everyday soundscapes, all acoustic fields, including street noise, the sound of people trading, and a call for prayer can be considered a part of the cultural frame within which people experience their daily life. This study considers identity as an aspect of everyday life and an always in-process construction (Frith 1996; Hall 1996). In the context of Iranian culture and history, Iran's pre-Islamic culture, Islamic heritage, and

[1] For more information see Chapter Five.

relations with the West form the main markers of national identity (Holliday 2011). Based on my interviews and observations of everyday life in the neighborhood, I argue that a combination of elements from Judaism, nationalism, and Shiism worked historically to shape the Jewish residents' sense of identity in Udlajan. As Jews, they practiced certain cultural activities and took part in rituals, but this did not stop them from participating also in national ceremonies and events (including Nowruz). They may also have attended events in the neighborhood that were specifically related to Shiism (such as *Moharram* rituals). The Muslim residents had similar experiences when it came to public events and occasions. Of course the Jewish and Muslim residents did not agree on all the values expressed in all Iranian-Shia rituals, nor did they share similar feelings towards them, but they came to know themselves as groups and identified as residents of the neighborhood through a combination of similarities and differences reflected in their various cultural activities.

This dissertation studies how the sonic experiences and sonic memories of Jewish and Muslim residents of Udlajan convey certain cultural implications that brought meaning to their environment during the Mohammad Reza Shah's era (1941-1979) and after the Islamic Revolution, and how individuals' sonic memories reveal their sense of identity as residents of the neighborhood. The research explores the impact of the everyday soundscape on cultural identity design by considering the connection between Udlajan residents' experiences before and after the Iranian Islamic revolution of 1979. Through interviews with a select group of current and past residents, this research considers changes to the everyday soundscape of Udlajan in order to examine the role of

sounds and silences in the social construction of space. Music and everyday life have been highlighted in works of scholars such as DeNora (2000), Small (1998), and Frith (1996). They consider music as a cultural system, social process, or an experience for a better understanding of people's everyday life interactions and relations. In contrast, my study is about sonic experiences at large, not only musical ones and proposes that sonic experiences are closely related to the ways people make sense of their cultural identity and by narrating sound memories people express their understanding of space, re-construct their space, and communicate it with others by accessing the nexus of memory and emotion.

1.1. An Overview

The history of soundscape studies, as a multidisciplinary research domain, is relatively brief. In the late 1960s, R. Murray Schafer began the World Soundscape Project and proposed an understanding of the symbolic role of sound and its interactive relationship with the society that produces it.[2] Experiencing soundscape requires active participation, as individuals cannot explore all aspects of a soundscape only by thinking or reading about it. Although Schafer's interest was to propose practical ways to ameliorate diversity of our everyday sound environment (acoustic ecology), my study instead has less to do with this active application. I focus instead on individuals' daily

[2] This Project has produced various field recordings made across Canada and Europe and the publication of many documents and recordings. *The Book of Noise* (1970), *The Music of the Environment* (1973) and *The Tuning of the World* (1977) are a few examples of them. For more information see: http://www.sfu.ca/~truax/wsp.html

experiences of a sonic environment, as I suggest these sonic experiences are in direct connection with their cultural identity. In addition to the study of Udlajan's current soundscape, this dissertation examines how the sonic experiences of individuals reveal their sense of identity as residents of the neighborhood and how the meaning of the environment for them is influenced by sonic memories.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

This multi-disciplinary research is about current everyday sonic experiences and sonic recollections and aims to shed light on a sense of identity that provides room to accommodate differences and to emphasize cultural commonalities. This dissertation interweaves perspectives from ethnomusicology, historical musicology, social anthropology, human geography, sociology, and urban studies, as it addresses key study areas such as everyday life, built environment, religious community, soundscape, memory, and cultural identity. By studying Muslim and Jewish day-to-day sonic interactions and sonic memories, this study represents the complexity of changes in the soundscape, while it examines the dynamics of people's social interactions within diverse sonic environments.

Centered on daily lives of a select group of Udlajan residents,[3] this study does not claim to offer a comprehensive study of Iranian identity and the complex dynamics of identity formation. Rather, it examines the day-to-day realities of the people who constitute the nation to better understand the cultural elements that shape the individuals'

[3] See the Research Methodology for more information about the selection of informants.

sense of identity. Two major elements forming the cultural representation of Iranian identity are *Iraniyat* (Iran's pre-Islamic culture and heritage) and *Islamiyat* (Iran's Islamic culture and heritage), although the cultural identity of Iranian Jews has also strong ties to Jewish customs and rituals. This research studies whether the development of identities based on cultural characteristics rather than religious difference acts inclusively for the residents of the neighborhood. In other words, the dissertation examines if talking about daily life practices, behaviors, rituals, and customs can help Muslim and Jewish informants to better understand their Iranian cultural identity.

1.3. Why Udlajan?

I chose the Udlajan neighborhood as the focus of my research for several reasons. First, Udlajan is one of the five old neighborhoods of Tehran and the only one that was an important cultural centre for both Muslim and Jewish residents. This neighborhood witnessed the daily life and interactions of Jewish and Muslim inhabitants in one location (Takmil Homayoun, 2014; Tsadik 2011; Sarshar 2002).[4] Udlajan underwent a series of changes including the emigration of Jewish residents and closure of music shops, which impacted the daily soundscape of the neighborhood. For instance, in today's soundscape of Udlajan one could barely hear the Jewish accent, while the call to prayers could still be heard there.

Located close to the Grand Bazar of Tehran, Udlajan has been a suitable

[4] See Figures 1 and 2 for historical photographs of shops and celebrations in the neighborhood. A sonic map that includes brief contemporary soundscapes is included with this document, and will be discussed later.

destination for job hunters coming to Tehran from different provinces of Iran and even Afghan immigrants seeking work. This diversity speaks directly to one of the main concerns of my research: the exploration of identity as it is articulated at the interstices of cultural differences and commonalities. Although Udlajan has not been the only neighborhood in Tehran with a mixed population of Muslim and religious minority groups, it was the only home to the *Bongah-haye shadi* (or *Bongah-haye Shademani*). The main role of these shops was to provide music performances for different occasions and events such as weddings and birthday parties. *Bongah-haye shadi* were small shops and did not have enough space to host public performances; therefore, they sent musicians, both Muslim and Jewish, to private gatherings and celebrations. Based on the availability of the performers and not their religion, they performed in different gatherings. The existence of *Bongah-haye shadi* created a musical atmosphere in the neighborhood, as musicians gathered in these shops to tune their musical instruments or rehearse with the band. As these music shops are not around today, in my interviews with the former residents of the neighborhood I asked the respondents to elaborate on their memories of these spaces and to explain the music shops' soundscapes.

Figure 1 - Small shops in Udlajan selling various items such as musical instruments, fruits and vegetables, meat, live chicken, bread, fabrics, 1960s. (Photo from 7dorim website. Used with permission.)

Figure 2 - Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year celebration) in one of the Udlajan's synagogues, 1920s. (Photo from 7dorim website. Used with permission.)

1.4. The significance of research

Religion is important in Iran; it is present in the most ordinary aspects of people's daily experiences. Various aspects of Iranians' lives are filled with the symbolic presence

of Islam, such as calls to prayers echoing through the cities' streets. However, in neighborhoods like Udlajan, one could recognize intermingling of Islamic and Jewish sounds before the Revolution. The importance of these everyday sounds is rarely addressed in analyses of Iranian identity. This study presents findings that deepen our understanding of certain aspects of cultural identity based on minority experiences and suggests directions for furthering national identity studies based on differences rather than similarities. This research makes explicit the potential problems of unifying people with diverse socio-cultural backgrounds under the umbrella of exactly the same national identity and reminds us that peoples' lived experiences are more complex than can be described through a homogenous perception of national identity.

Udlajan, a primarily residential neighborhood, had various small shops such as kosher butcher shops, bakeries, public baths for Muslims and Jews, and barbershops scattered around the district. Following the Revolution and the emigration of Udlajan Jews,[5] their shops, baths, and synagogues lost their importance and closed down, consequently the sound of Jewish daily experiences and rituals faded from the everyday life of Udlajan. In the last two decades, construction of new commercial buildings and the increasing number of cars and motorcycles have shifted this mainly residential neighborhood into a mixed-use residential and commercial area. The residential premises mostly changed to the living spaces of two or three families or sometimes a group of young men leaving their families back home and coming to Tehran for work. These happenings caused a gradual change in the social class and life style of the neighborhood.

[5] The Jewish population immigration to Israel started a few years after the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 (Amanat 2011, 208).

The literature on Udlajan can be divided into three main categories. First, there are a few resources concerning the life of the Iranian Jewish population in different provinces of Iran, but these do not deal much with music and sound in the Jewish community (Sarshar 2011; Sarshar 2002; Baer 2009). Second, there is some research from architectural perspectives concerning the preservation and renovation of historic buildings in the quarter (Derakhshani 2015; Adibzadeh, Asgari-Tafreshi, and Hosseini 2010; Karampour and Fadaeinejad 2006). Third is online information about the quarter, published by the Cultural Centre of Udlajan, some Jewish cultural organizations, and Jewish individuals.[6] The changes to the Udlajan soundscape and its residents' everyday sonic experiences are rarely addressed in these resources. Scarcely any research offers insight into the daily sonic experiences of individuals in Iranian society, as the majority of Iranian socio-musicological scholarship concentrates on avenues of musicians' biographies, music structures, transcription, and analysis of the Iranian classical and regional music repertoires.

As this research is based on experiences that are unique to the individuals and to their surroundings, generalizations need to be treated with caution. The present study provides valuable models for how other minority groups such as the Zoroastrians or Armenians may be studied. It might be reasonably expected that this research leads to a consideration of Jewish studies in particular or religious studies in general. In this dissertation these disciplines are occasionally touched upon, but they are intentionally not addressed in an explicit and systematic way. The value of addressing such disciplines can

[6] See Chapter Five for more information.

hardly be doubted, but this study is mainly concerned with the role of sound in everyday practices of Udlajan residents and not necessarily their religious beliefs and thoughts. Here, the context of cultural identity is particularly linked with the idea of religious identity, as religious identity correlates with residents' lived experiences and carries associations of inclusion/exclusion and self/other. In this way, I consider religion as an aspect of cultural identity for a better understanding of communities' relationships as well as issues of inclusion and exclusions.

Furthermore, this research has the potential to be either devoted exclusively to musical or linguistic structures or acoustic studies. However, in this dissertation the sound environment is being considered from the perspective of listeners. The current study does not aim to measure and evaluate sound in the surroundings, as it considers sound, sonic experiences, and sound recordings as a means for the explorations of an individual sense of cultural identity. Accordingly, the data collected in this research is analyzed in a socio-cultural context with no attention to acoustic studies and sound measurements. Here, the main focus is on sound recordings, individual perceptions of diverse soundscapes, and their interactions in sonic environments and not on the physical quality of sound or the level of noise pollution in an environment. Although there is not any single work that deals directly with my topic, the existing body of literature forms a suitable framework to investigate the cultural identity formation, and re-formation in Udlajan.

1.5. Research Methodology

Consisting of historical and ethnographic research, this dissertation takes an integrated approach employed by different disciplines namely ethnomusicology, historical musicology, social anthropology, human geography, sociology, and urban studies. It also uses discourse analysis in its close readings of the conversations and interactions with the residents throughout the fieldwork.

Historical research is necessary for this dissertation because the current soundscape of Udlajan is the result of social, cultural, and political changes that this neighborhood experienced through its history. Moreover, every aspect of the interviewees' reminiscences is in direct connection with everyday life history. Yet historical research can have certain limitations when it comes to the study of soundscape. As we mainly do not have direct access to the sonic past, our knowledge depends primarily on historical texts in which people provide descriptions of their surrounding soundscapes.[7]Although the study of history broadens our perspective on the past soundscape, it represents only a very small portion of what actually occurred in people's everyday life. Moreover, the complex issue of representation of past soundscapes deals with different factors such as historians' language limitations, dishonesty, or accidental misinterpretations.

In my historical review, I study two types of secondary sources including articles, books, and dissertations written in Farsi and English. First, I focus on Farsi and English

[7] For instance, see *Soundscapes of the Urban Past Staged Sound as Mediated Cultural Heritage* edited by Karin Bijsterveld.

publications written about the history of Tehran, the Iranian Jewish community, and construction of Iranian national identity to confirm and contextualize my findings in the neighborhood. Second, I review English resources especially those written about the construction of Iranian national identity, soundscape, sound studies, space, and the meaning of built environment to create my theoretical framework.

Examining the social and cultural practices of the residents and their stories about the way they define themselves as citizens, I make use of discourse analysis as an effective tool for a deeper understanding of the conversations and other semiotic events resulting from my fieldwork. Discourse analysis studies social life through the analysis of language in its broadest sense from face-to-face conversations to non-verbal interaction (Shaw and Bailey 2009, 413). For a better understanding of the social world and the meaning it has for the people in it, discourse analysis seeks "to remind readers that in using language, producing texts, and drawing on discourses, researchers and the research community are part and parcel of the constructive effects of discourse" (Phillips and Hardy 2002, 2).

Moreover, I also consider existing photographs of Udlajan residents in personal and public archives. As there are rarely any sonic resources available related to pre-revolution Udlajan, these primary sources including personal photographs of different gatherings and performances provided by my informants can communicate significant aspects about the quarter's sonic life in the past. According to Mitchell (1996) pictures "speak to us, sometimes literally, sometimes figuratively" (72), and sometimes sonically, I suggest. Although there are differences between looking at a picture and listening to

sounds, some pictures are worth a thousand sounds.[8] I aim to extend the understanding of photographs beyond the visual itself. As Edwards (2009) argues, in a multi-sensory approach, photographs find a space to be heard. We first encounter photos through our eyes, as we take note of some particular details such as colors and shapes. By looking at photographs of different events and gatherings, we can observe events that photographers imprinted. We are able to associate particular sounds to familiar events that have been captured in the photo.

When we encounter photos representing unfamiliar spaces or events, we might not be able to make an exact guess about the events' soundscape, but we still can extract some sonic information from the visual signs of photographs. For example, a photo showing the massive crowd in an unspecified context could resemble loud noise of people talking or laughing. This process of association forms the basis of the idea that photographs are capable of expressing and revealing more than mere visional static objects. By combining visual and aural sensual modes we can become more certain of our understanding of the past. We discover a new understanding of photos as we look at photos and imagine hearing their sounds in our heads.

I conducted part of my archival research in Tehran at the National library of Iran and Malek National Library and Museum Institution, which have outstanding collections of materials relating to Tehran history and the Iranian Jewish community. Furthermore, I engaged in ethnographic research through interviews and direct observation of the neighborhood's social life. I interviewed three current residents of Udlajan, as it was hard

[8] As the English expression says a picture is worth a thousand words.

to get access to the individuals who have lived in the neighborhood for at least five years. The majority of current residents were individuals who have resided in Udlajan for a short period of time (about a year or so). I was looking for informants who had experienced the most rapid urban planning changes of the neighborhood that mainly happened in the last five decades.[9] Additionally, I conducted interviews with ten former residents of the neighborhood (five Muslims and five Jews). By interviewing the former residents of the neighborhood, my ethnography engaged with memories of Udlajan residents who were mainly in their fifties and sixties. Memory is the primary source in my research to access past sonic experiences and is complementary to the participant observation approach. I conducted semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions to allow both the interviewees and myself the flexibility to go into details when needed and to provide the opportunity for two-way communication.[10]

When conducting interviews, I asked my informants about their daily sonic experiences as residents of Udlajan: How has the soundscape changed and why?; What could they remember about the neighborhood's sonic environment?; What was their first sonic-recall from their childhood?; What was their favorite sound?; What was the most annoying sound? What did either Muslims or Jewish residents think about sounds of each other's communities? As the nature of the questions was informal and the conversation guided the topics, my informants could elaborate on the themes that they found more interesting. As a result, some of the responses that I received are not directly related to

[9] For more information see: http://www.irna.ir/fa/NewsPrint.aspx?ID=80958025

[10] See Appendix I for an outline of the interview questions.

sound. I allowed the conversations to guide follow-up questions that further investigated previous ones. I conducted all my interviews in Farsi (Persian), as most of my informants did not speak English. Being a Farsi native speaker, I decided to transcribe the interviews in Farsi, then translate them to English. In organizing the interview materials, I had the challenge of whether I should consider all the responses that I received or only include the sound memories. I decided to be more faithful to the first approach and included non-sound-related responses that could help to contextualize the sound memories more easily and would provide a more comprehensive image of the neighborhood. However, on account of ethical considerations such as my informants' concerns about their position in the society, I did not include names, connections, or stories they recounted that might breach their privacy and anonymity.

During my fieldwork in Udlajan, I engaged in several informal conversations with current shopkeepers and customers from diverse backgrounds, even some who were not residents of Udlajan, to understand if they could add anything to the explanations of the current residents or the sound memories of the former residents of the neighborhood. Although I enjoyed the more focused approach of a scheduled sit-down interview, the amount of information I gathered from living in Tehran and partaking in informal conversations was invaluable. In addition to conducting interviews and asking the interviewees about the changes that have happened in the neighborhood, I recorded the soundscape of today's Udlajan to better understand the sonic changes the neighborhood has witnessed throughout these years. The former residents described to me the common

sounds of the past, including music, children playing in the alleys, and women's informal chats in the evening.

By comparing former and current residents' descriptions of the most pleasant, most meaningful, most common, most annoying, and most frustrating sounds of the neighborhood, I was able to draw a more vivid image of the sonic changes the neighborhood has gone through since the Revolution. The collection of my recordings from the neighborhood on different days of the week and at various times of the day presented a variety of soundwalks, themes, keynotes, signals, and ambiences: more specifically, certain themes such as sounds of motorbikes, calls to prayer, local dialects, and the radio and television. Finally, using ethnographic and archival approaches, I was able to interpret and synthesize the collected data notably with the use of qualitative criteria in a way to represent the overall sonic qualities of the neighborhood, which constitute the distinctive cultural identity of its residents.

1.6. Fieldwork: An Ethnography Through Observation, Sonic Recollection, and Forgetting

My field research was composed of two distinct phases. Phase one, titled the "Ethnography of Soundscape" focuses on the soundscape of today's Udlajan through sound recordings, interviews, informal conversations, and direct observations, and is reflected in Chapter Three of this dissertation. For this phase, which is based on sounds and photos collected from the neighborhood and archives, I also created a sonic-visual

map in order to provide a picture of Udlajan's current soundscape.[11] To provide a more focused approach for my direct observations, I chose two coffeehouses in the neighborhood as the focal points for my ethnographic study of soundscape in Udlajan. One of the coffeehouses is known as *Sofrehkhuneh-e Tehrun-e Qadim* (Old Tehran coffeehouse), while the other coffeehouse was unnamed and was located a few blocks a way.

By exploring the soundscapes of these coffeehouses and the auditory environment created by their customers, I examine the ways individuals in these spaces experience the realm of sound. Each coffeehouse has some unique features in terms of soundscape and the type of customers it attracts. The differences between the soundscapes in these coffeehouses as well as the social and cultural interactions that form there work to create two distinct social places that reflect different aspects of culture and cultural identity. The combination of sonic, spatial, and social elements in these two coffeehouses provide a suitable context to examine markers of cultural identity among their customers, including the locals and the non-locals. Here, cultural identity is understood as referring primarily to "Iranian culture" and "Islamic culture," and their relationships; in other words, it is a dimension of identity perception in which "national identity" and "religious identity" intersect. In this phase, I explore how spatial arrangements and sonic phenomena play into the dynamics of social interactions within these locales and the surrounding urban space, and how the dynamics of interactions among individuals are in close connection with their cultural identity.

[11] This dissertation is accompanied by a CD including the sonic-visual map of Udlajan. For a description of this map see also Appendix II.

Phase two, reflected in Chapter Five of the dissertation, focuses on interviewees' diverse expressions of cultural identity as articulated in their sound memory narratives. This phase of the fieldwork, which I call the "Ethnography of Sonic Recollections," is neither strictly ethnography, nor memory and narrative analysis, but rather a combination of both. This section is ethnographic as it involves observations as well as interviews with former residents of Udlajan in the United States of America and in Iran**.** However, at the same time it is a memory analysis, as it focuses on stories lived and narrated by former residents of Udlajan.

The majority of the Jewish population of Udlajan immigrated to the United States of America and Israel after 1979; thus, searching for former Jewish residents of the neighborhood in Iran was challenging. As holding an Iranian passport prevented me from traveling to Israel, and restricted my ability to contact individuals there, I decided to conduct interviews with former Jewish residents of Udlajan who now live in the United States of America. I was able to interview three Jews in Iran and two in the United States.

By exploring Udlajan's current soundscape in phase one of my research and understanding the neighborhood's past sonic environment in phase two, I aim to facilitate a dialogue between individuals' reminiscences and the changes in the soundscape of Udlajan. Accordingly, I analyze the individuals' stories as I contextualize the changes of the neighborhood soundscape by comparing the past and present soundscapes. I have also collected information about the context of these stories in order to situate the stories within the interviewees' personal experiences and cultural backgrounds. Moreover, I am able to reframe individuals' stories in order to investigate the ways they make sense of

their cultural identity. In sum, given the two phases of my fieldwork, I portray today's soundscape of Udlajan, its changes following the Islamic Revolution, and I analyze individuals' stories to develop a deeper contextual understanding of their everyday lives through story telling and sound memory recounting.

1.7. My Position in the Field

It is important to address my position in the field as, depending upon with whom a person is interacting, the interviewee's answers and demeanor may change. This proved to be particularly relevant for me as a young, female, non-resident of the neighborhood. In order to develop rapport with my research participants, I deemed it essential to actively engage in the community as well as share my background and history. The fact that I am Iranian and can speak Farsi helped me connect with my informants more easily. However, in most of my visits in Udlajan, I was also fortunate to have one of my contacts with me, a middle aged man who was a well-known employee of Dr. Sapir hospital.[12] He began helping me by introducing me to his Jewish colleagues, while he also helped a great deal with the cultural barriers that I experienced. For instance, when I described my unsuccessful attempt to attend the synagogue on a Saturday morning, he kindly asked one of his Jewish colleagues to take me to the Saturday service.

Although my contact was not, himself, from the Jewish community, his several years of experience in the hospital and working within the community made Jewish

[12] Dr. Sapir hospital is a Jewish charity hospital in Tehran that is located in Udlajan area.

individuals feel more comfortable with him. He also assisted in diffusing any awkwardness that might ensue from my being a female who was spending time in a male dominated neighborhood and interviewing individuals whom I did not know at first meeting. At the beginning of my fieldwork, he told me that an important part of my research would be spending a long enough period of time with the Jewish informants. I was also warned that the Jewish community would not easily open up to an "outsider," a non-Jewish woman. From my very first interviews I realized he was trying to explain to me that developing personal relationships with my Jewish informants would be crucial to having the kinds of conversations that would aid my research goals. After this initial period, I assumed I would have enough context to ask my interview questions.

In the development of these relationships, one of the first things that I became aware of was my status as a non-Jewish researcher who lives outside Iran. In the first place, I found that my Muslim informants were not very comfortable knowing that I reside outside Iran and that non-Iranians would read my research. They seemed to censure parts of their reminiscences because they wanted to represent a "respectable" image of Iranian identity to foreigners. Similarly, I recognized that although my Jewish informants showed an interest in my research and responded to my questions kindly, they also seemed to hold back. For example, they generally replied with short answers and showed no interest in elaborating their responses. When I traveled to Tehran the second time and met my Jewish informants to give them small gifts and not to conduct any interviews, I realized they did not expect this and were surprised when they knew I was not there for the sake of my research. It was during these meetings that I felt more

connected with them and they started to talk more about their life experiences in the neighborhood.

However, at first I found both these situations to be limiting. I could not understand why Muslim interviewees were more concerned with the representation of their identity when it came to non-Iranians. I also was not certain why my Jewish informants were less sensitive in this regard. I came to realize that both Muslim and Jewish interviewees found their social authority and identity placement based on the roles that each one played not only in their community but also in relation with other's community members. They often asked me what similar social interactions between different religious followers would be like in Canada. I replied, that, in my experience, there was not as much focus on religious beliefs and lot more opportunity to define one's self based on individual preferences for community. For instance, when I described individual citizens are free to bring their religious conviction into the public arena and wear *hejab* in public places, they tried to find similarities between the situation that I described and the Mohamad Reza Shah's era. They told me that before the Revolution *hejab* was not compulsory and one had a choice to wear what she liked.

As a secular researcher with a Shia Muslim background studying in Canada, I was in a complex position in interviewing both Muslim and Jewish informants. Although I attempted to maintain a neutral position and not influence my informants' responses, I found that my hybrid position in return resulted in meetings and interviews that were multi-layered and that did not provide a concise point of analysis. For example, when I

asked one of my Jewish informants, Ms. K,[13] about her feelings when she heard *azan* from the neighborhood's mosques, I recognized that she closed her eyes and paused for a few seconds and then replied that she felt a spiritual energy.[14] I wondered if she was honest or simply trying to be polite and wishing to show her respect to the Muslim community's soundmark. For this reason, I shared my feelings with her in this regard to make her feel more comfortable. I told her that I felt stressed out whenever I heard *azan* because it reminded me of my elementary school days in which I had to go to school at noon, the exact time that one could hear the noon *azan*. I explained that it was the time that I had to give up playing or watching cartoons to pack and to go to school. I added that because of this experience I still felt stressed out when I heard *azan*, particularly noon *azan*. She was surprised, but it did not change her feelings at all. My contact told me that Ms. K also made vows and prayed for Imam Reza's intercession.[15] I came to realize that she felt connected with a number of Muslim rituals.

Now that I have finished my fieldwork, I wonder if I would have received different answers from my informants if I were male or Jewish. I think for cultural reasons my gender might have imposed certain restrictions on my interactions with my male informants. I suppose if I were male, my male informants might have felt more comfortable with me and willing to raise some topics including love stories and sexual scandals that are more likely to be discussed within male homo-social settings in Iranian culture. I sensed that it took my female informants less time to feel secure, open up, and

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[13] To maintain my interviewees confidentiality while presenting detailed accounts of their social life, I introduce them in my research with the first letter in their family names.
[14] Unless otherwise indicated all translations are my own.
[15] The eight Imam of Twelver Shiites.

share family stories with me. Probably they would have been more reserved if I were male. Likewise, my religious background might have influenced the quality of my interactions: if I were Jewish it is probable that my Jewish informants would have known my family since the Jewish community is small with strong ties among the members. In that case, they might have recollected memories about my family either within or outside the neighborhood. In this way, I might have become more of an insider to my Jewish informants and an outsider to my Muslim informants. As a result, I can only conclude that my Muslim informants would have been more careful in sharing their views of their Jewish neighbors, trying not to insult me or hurt my emotions.

1.8. Research Questions

This study focuses on the current and former soundscape of Udlajan as well as the relationship between spatial arrangements and individual sonic experiences in order to investigate the nature of socio-cultural interactions in the neighborhood. By focusing on the auditory culture of Jews and Shia Muslims in the neighborhood, this study suggests how sound and sound memories contribute to a sense of affiliation by reconstructing a collective past and the ways it is different from the present. Answering the following central research question is the primary goal of this dissertation: What can the analysis of soundscape and sonic memories reveal about the construction of cultural identity in Iranian society during the Pahlavi era and after the Islamic Revolution of 1979?

Following the Islamic Revolution and the mass emigration of the Iranian Jews, the changes in the sonic environment of the neighborhood reveals the absence of certain

sounds that had to do with the Jewish residents. After most of the Jewish residents left the neighborhood, some everyday sounds disappeared from the sonic environment of Udlajan. By looking at the spaces of sonic absences and examining the importance of these changes in the neighborhood and the way they affect Udlajan residents' everyday experience, I hope to add new layers of meaning to scholarship in the area of cultural identity in Iran. Interviewing both Jewish and Muslim residents of Udlajan, the theme of inter-religious relations features in my second research question: How does the relationship between Jews and Shia Muslims in a specific urban site, as played out through sonic and spatial interactions, experiences and recollections, reveal facets of the dynamics of cultural differences and similarities, of inclusion and exclusion, in the inner, on-the-ground workings of Iranian national discourse? In a broader perspective, this dissertation investigates the discontinuities in soundscape before and after the Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979 and what they might mean.

1.9. Scholarly context

This research on soundscape, sound experiences, and sound memories mostly contributes to the four scholarly domains: soundscape and sound studies including aural architecture and auditory culture studies, anthropology of architecture and the built environment, ethnomusicology particularly with reference to the issue of identity construction, and cultural memory studies. As my research studies diverse soundscapes and the dynamic relationship between individuals and their sonic environment, it primarily contributes to the scholarship on soundscape and sound studies. Barry Truax

(2001) describes soundscape as a system of organized acoustic communication that emphasizes "the way in which the sonic environment is understood" (50). Giving prominence to an exploration of sonic sensibilities with a focus on sound as a means for understanding the environment is suggested in Steven Feld's concept of "acoustemology" (1996). Moreover, for a better understanding and re-connecting with the soundscape, R. Murray Schafer (1977) recommends two main exercises: "ear cleaning" and "soundwalks." These exercises as well as statistical analysis of sound measurements provide us with a sonic picture of an environment, although this sonic image does not include everyday experiences of people and their perceptions of the soundscape and spatial relations. This dissertation's emphasis on people's day-to-day interactions as well as their perception of spatial relations redresses the sound focused approach of scholars such as Schafer, Truax, and Feld.

According to Blesser and Salter (2007), the acoustic features of different spaces affect listeners' perceptions and experiences of their surroundings. People modify their behavior in reaction to cues in their environment and respond to the environment in terms of the meaning this has for them. By means of auditory spatial awareness one not only can detect changes of sound in a space, but also can explore the emotional and behavioral experiences of the space. By giving prominence to the sound-space nexus, this research contributes to the anthropology of the built environment and architecture. Not simply a physical construction, architecture is a social and symbolic space that mirrors and shapes the views of its creators and inhabitants (Rapoport 1982; Waterson 1990; Parker Pearson and Richards 1994; Psarra 2009). When the soundscape is studied under the lens of the

anthropology of architecture, the emphasis shifts from the sonic environment per se to the social interactions taking place in the environment and the way they are experienced by individuals.

A study of people's responses to their surrounding environment and the meaning the environment has for them contributes to an understanding of their sense of identity. By investigating the day-to-day realities of the people who constitute the nation of Iran, this dissertation tries to bridge the gap between top-down and the bottom-up approaches to the formation of Iranian identity. Frith (1996) argues that identity is a process, not a thing, and the study of a particular kind of experience such as an individual's daily life is equal to the study of identity. He suggests that discussions about identity are the same as discussing different types of experiences or ways of dealing with these experiences (110). Accordingly, daily experiences of a neighborhood's residents can provide a suitable context to explore and compare the dynamics of self-identification. Identification is formed based on the recognition of some shared characteristics with another individual or a group, an always in-process construction (Hall 1996, 2). According to Clark (2008), it is an amalgam of social construction and psychodynamic processes. Individuals construct the self and persuade others that they are who they seem to be (510).

My study broadens the field of investigation onto sound, rather than just focusing on music, and it contributes to ethnomusicological scholarship with reference to the issues of identity, sound, and music. Additionally, my research contributes to minority studies particularly from an ethnomusicological angle. This approach expands the typical ethnomusicological perspective on the study of music, as it considers a highly subjective

side to hearing. Referring to Bijsterveld (2008), sounds that bother some people can be music to the ears of others (2). For instance, by focusing on music compositions based on everyday noise of machines, she illustrates the positive connotations of mechanical sound in the avant-garde music of the interwar period (4).

Several musicological and ethnomusicological studies focus on the active role of music in the process of national identity formation. The construction of the European musical canon provided a model for a considerable number of non-European countries to attempt to forge standardized music repertoires in their cultural policies, most of the time with a view to musically representing the nation (Bohman 2011; Weber 2001; Harris 2008; Turino 2000; Slobin 1996; Stokes 1994). In the process of musical canonization a recurring pattern is that certain musical repertoires and expressive forms are selected and given prominence, and these frequently function as the basis of developing musical heritage in a given culture. Noticeably, at times in this process specific music genres are marginalized, along with musicians who because of their social class, ethnic background, or religious affiliation become the targets of cultural or political discrimination (Harris 2008; Degirmenci 2006; Djumaev 2005; Turino 2000; Wanner 1996; Lausevic 1996; Stokes 1994; Levin 1993).

This research on sonic memories and people's stories of the past contributes to the scholarship on narrative and cultural memory studies. However, this study also complements studies of music and memory. Drawing on the argument of Philip V. Bohlman (2000) that music "functions powerfully to facilitate both remembering and forgetting," Allufie (2011) argues that music has the ability to activate people's memory

because of its transportability, repeatability, and its associations with various times and places. Individuals convey their memories through narrating the lived historical, social, and political context, as narratives highlight the active and self-shaping quality of their thoughts (Labov and Waletsky 1967; Elliot 2005; Squire 2013). Diverse cultural backgrounds create different ways of perceiving the world and "culture operates as a lens that directs attention and filters the processing of the environment into memory" (Gutchess and Indeck 2009, 137). Remembering past events of daily life cannot be understood apart from concepts such as religion, class, and family affiliations. Memory synthesizes time and identity, while identity supports human beings in adjusting individually and collectively to the future, the past, or both (Assmann 2006, 15-18).

As Bruner (2001) reminds us, "a sense of commitment to a set of beliefs and values" is what remains relatively stable about the self over time (35). People's stories and narratives are a product of culture that can also be considered as their "building-blocks of identity, their way of understanding who they are and what they are in relation to the rest of existence" (DeVereaux and Griffin 2013, 1). My ethnographic research and interview transcriptions thus are seen to provide not only my informants' memories of the past, but also their emotions, feelings, subtle nuances of how each of them responded to their surrounding environment, and how they narrated and interpreted their life experiences. Based on Hofman (2008), the biographical and narrative study methods support "polyvocality," as researcher and informants participate actively in the field research, create reality together, and become co-authors (97-98). The interviewees choose to include or to exclude certain things in certain ways; thus, information in their

narratives is not raw data but cautiously chosen and presented. In this study, I see myself as a narrator and I often share stories of my own experiences in Udlajan, typically in relation to the study's participants.

1.10. Dissertation Roadmap

This dissertation consists of six chapters. Chapter One (Introduction) provides an opening and presents the purpose of this ethnomusicological research. Chapter Two, entitled "The Significance of Soundscape in Cultural Analysis," focuses on different approaches and concepts in the study of sound and silence to provide methodological and analytical tools to cover specific dimensions of the sonic environment. Chapter Three, "Sensing Udlajan a Sounding Neighborhood," includes the first phase of my ethnographic research and references the sonic-visual map created based on my sound recordings from the neighborhood. Focusing on the soundscapes of two coffeehouses in Udlajan and exploring the sonic experiences of the customers of these spaces, this ethnography investigates how individuals interact within these locales and how they make sense of their cultural identity.

Chapter Four, entitled "Nationalism, National Identity, and the Question of Cultural Identity in Iran," studies the evolution of Iranian national identity and the close relation of "Iranian-ness" to those defined as Shia Persian speakers. This chapter explores how the construction of Jewish residents' sense of identity as residents of the neighborhood not only has borrowed features from their Jewish background, but also has some levels of connection with both the Iranian and Shia cultures. Chapter Five,

"Ethnographic Field Research, Narratives, and, Memories," explores how the interviewees' sonic memories and narratives of the past reveal their sense of identity as residents of Udlajan and how their sonic experiences of the neighborhood bring meaning to their environment. Consequently, this chapter focuses mainly on sonic aspects of Udlajan everyday life in order to direct the understanding toward broader characteristics of daily experiences in the quarter. Chapter Six (Conclusion) provides a review of the research findings, reaffirms the thesis statement, and seeks to answer the questions raised in the research. It also suggests ideas for further research.

Chapter 2. The significance of soundscape in cultural analysis

2.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on effective listening and the basic concepts in the study of sound from a socio-cultural point of view. It also raises questions about the importance of sound studies and acknowledges the recent attention given to the field of sound and novel ways of representing sound in a variety of forms and media.[16] In addition, this chapter studies soundscape and its elements, the relation of sound to built environment, individual perceptions of background noise, the absence of sound, and the possible meanings of silence in different communicative contexts. It studies how people's different understandings of silence can be acknowledged based on their living conditions and socio-cultural norms. Additionally, this chapter studies the impact of electroacoustic devices on urban areas and citizens' social behaviors. In sum, Chapter Two focuses on different approaches and concepts in the study of sounds and silences to provide methodological and analytical tools to cover specific dimensions of the sonic environment.

[16] See the newly established journal of *Sound Studies* edited by Veit Erlmann and Michael Bull.

2.2. Soundscape and Its Elements

Surrounded by sounds and silences, people interact with their sonic environment differently. Sonic environment, also known as "soundscape," a term coined by R. Murray Schafer (1977), is the auditory equivalent of a landscape. Schafer's concept of soundscape is lined with an ideological and ecological agenda including a concern about which sounds matter and how people should listen to their sonic environment. The sonic environment includes events heard, not objects seen, and it could be applied to any acoustic field of study such as a musical composition, a neighborhood, or a radio program. As Schafer and his colleagues suggest, people are mainly aware of details in their visual environment and they may not recognize exposure to frequently heard sounds. The key issue in communication via sound, they concluded, is listening. Listening is a pathway to trade information between the individual and the environment. The meaning that is created in this path is not only related to what produces sound, but it is also related to the context in which it is heard (Truax 2001, xviii).

The study of soundscape can be an invitation to draw more attention to one's surroundings. One can gain insights into "social organization, power relations and interactions with urban space" by focusing on the sonic environment, deep listening, and consideration of the unique characteristics of sound (Birdsall 2012, 12). Sounds are not raw materials but are embedded in cultural and personal meanings. In this way, fear, nostalgia, happiness, and beliefs associated with the sounds are present in our daily routine.

According to Schafer (1977) there are three main elements of the soundscape:

sound signals, keynote sounds, and soundmarks. Sound signals are foreground sounds, which are listened to consciously; examples would be warning devices, bells, whistles, horns, and sirens. In our daily routine we establish a familiarity with those devices that give us basic information through such signals: alarm clocks, telephone ring tones, and other sounds in our homes such as footsteps, the sound of particular doors opening or closing. Schafer (1978) suggests two different categories of sound signals: "centripetal sounds" that attempt to unify the community by drawing people to specific meeting points such as school and church bells and "centrifugal sounds" such as fire and police sirens that disperse the community away from danger areas (41).

In contrast, keynote sounds do not have to be listened to consciously. They are overheard and lose their immediate significance due to repetition. Keynote sounds have a deep influence on people's behavior and moods. They are mostly created by nature and include the sound of wind, water, forests, and birds, for example. However, in many urban areas, traffic has become the keynote. By studying traffic and considering the changes in a community's emergency sounds such as the intensity of newer sirens, one can verify the degree to which the ambient of the community's noise rises (Schafer 1978, 36).

If a sound signal is evocative and culturally meaningful within a community, it is named a soundmark and defined as something unique that acquires qualities making it specially regarded by the members in that community (Schafer 1977, 10-11). For example, the Muslim call to prayer, the *azan*, is a culturally meaningful sonic production in Muslim communities that one can consider as a soundmark. As mosques in countries

with a Muslim majority population mainly use outdoor loudspeakers for call to prayers, individuals can easily hear the *azan* even outside the mosques.

To describe the quality of an environment, Schafer employs the notions of "hi-fi" and "lo-fi," two terms borrowed from the field of sound recording. The hi-fi soundscape is one in which distinct sounds can be heard noticeably because of the low ambient level. For instance, rural towns are more hi-fi than cities. By contrast, in the lo-fi soundscape, individual acoustic signals are masked in an over-dense population of sounds. In the lo-fi soundscape it is not possible to know what, if anything, is to be listened to (Schafer 1977, 43). It is worth mentioning that one cannot draw a clear dividing line between "hi-fi" and "lo-fi" soundscapes, as in some situations one may distinguish all acoustic signals in an urban environment or do not recognize distinct sounds in a rural area. Consequently, the level of fidelity is not fixed and it is a relative measure that helps in comparing environments and assessing their characteristics.

The ability to recognize particular sounds in a sonic environment implies a communicational feature of the soundscape. Foreground sounds convey information to the inhabitants of a specific environment. A gradual masking of these sounds therefore implies a loss of connection with the environment, and demands a slow raising of the level of sound signals so that they remain audible. The sound signals of a soundscape are these specific sounds which are foregrounded, and which actively attract our attention as opposed to keynote sounds. According to Schafer "keynote sounds do not have to be listened to consciously" (Schafer 1977, 9). Keynote sounds become individuals' "listening habits," which deeply influence their behavior and moods. Focusing on the

changes of keynote sounds informs us about their move from natural and human-made sounds to technological ones (9-10).

Furthermore, the study of an acoustic environment involves sonic and cultural issues. Based on Schafer, for a better understanding of a soundscape we need to exercise "Ear Cleaning" that teaches us how to respect silence. "Listening walks" and "Soundwalks" are two exercises for Schafer's concept of Ear Cleaning. A listening walk is "simply a walk with a concentration on listening" (Schafer 1977, 212),[17] which can be achieved anywhere, and is often essential in finding features such as keynotes. On the other hand, Soundwalks are an exploration and examination of the soundscape of a particular area, often using a graphic score or other documentation as a map (213). Soundwalks are planned tours, designed to raise the awareness of participants to the sonic components of their surroundings.

Sonic components of our surroundings are changing all the time, as some sounds are vanishing and some are added to our sonic environment. Consequently, scholars such as Schafer and Truax decided to record sounds that were at risk of extinction (Schafer 1978, 65). A sonic picture of an environment could be produced through statistical analysis of sound measurements. One should be aware that such analysis would fail to take into account the everyday social and cultural experience of the sound environment, its performance, and shaping through people's behaviors and perceptions. Studying the cultural meaning of sound and soundscape in different societies is instead a central

[17] Although Schafer' focus is on a careful listening while walking, one may choose to sit somewhere, listen carefully, and find various sonic features.

feature in works of scholars such as Feld (1982), Bull and Black (2003), Bijsterved (2003), Rath (2003), and Birdsall (2012). My emphasis on subjectivity and my focus on ethnographic research are meant to complement Schafer's approach, as it enables such a perceptual and cultural analysis.

2.3. Why Is the Study of Soundscape Important?

People's everyday experience of speaking and listening illustrates the dynamic relationship of sound and space. Spaces change the quality of a sound by absorbing its frequencies and adding reverberation or echo. Giving prominence to the sound-space nexus in a way that redresses the original sound-focused approach of seminal scholars such as Schafer, I suggest that spaces not only influence the creation of sounds by their materiality but they also impact the meaning of sounds for individuals. For instance, listening to the sound of the *nay* (a wind instrument) while walking through the streets of an old neighborhood may create a different feeling compared to listening to the same sound in a concert hall. However, the playback of the *nay* from a recording or in other words detaching sound and space can cause different meanings for an audience.[18] Furthermore, focusing on the sound-space relationship brings in sharp focus how sound at all times exists in more than one place and that it takes place in the presence of others. Sound moves with and through space, as "it navigates geographically, reverberates acoustically, and structures socially" (Labelle 2008, xi).

[18] For more information about Schafer's and Feld's discussions on the splitting of sound and its source ("schizophonia" and "schismogenesis") see Ari Y. Kelman (2010), "Rethinking the Soundscape A Critical Genealogy of a Key Term in Sound Studies."

People mainly assume that sensing spaces by listening is unique to animals with extraordinary abilities such as bats. Classen, Howes, and Synnott (1994) criticize the visual paradigm of Western culture[19] and explain how other sensorial experiences played significant roles in different times and cultures. Hierarchies of the senses have not been the same in all societies and their order of importance may change based on a society's needs and people's lifestyles. For example, as opposed to the superiority of the sense of sight in the West (Schmidt 2003, 43), in Little Andaman Island in the Bay of Bengal, smell is the fundamental cosmetic principle and odor is the basis of personal identity (Howes 2002, 71).

According to Howes (2002), the hierarchies of the senses are constantly linked with social rankings and employed to order society. He argues that, in Western culture the top-ranked sense of sight as opposed to the low-ranked sense of touch has been linked with the highly-appreciated faculty of reason that emerged in the Enlightenment period.[20] Consequently, the dominant group in a society, whether conceptualized in terms of gender, class or race is associated with the supposedly higher senses of sight and hearing, while subordinate groups like non-Westerners, workers, or women will be associated with less appreciated or denigrated senses such as smell and touch. However, one should be aware that these generalizations need to be critiqued, as for instance, "West" is not one and does not uniformly privilege sight.

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[19] Although "Western culture" and "Eastern culture" are terms used by some recognized scholars, the questions remain open as to whether these definitions are still useful in socio-cultural and even political studies. For more information see page 47.

[20] For more information see:
http://www.centreforsensorystudies.org/occasional-papers/the-craft-of-the-senses/

The discourse on race and speech such as sociolects are more associated with visual factors such as skin color and these discriminations and often offensive associations can go further to the extent that "racialized logic confines some sounds to particular color-coded bodies" (Bull and Back 2003, 14-15). This is where exploration of our thinking with sound and music may suggest an opportunity to think about issues such as inclusion and coexistence and let us consider what a multicultural setting may sound like. By exploring different spaces and their sonic environments as well as individuals' everyday soundscapes, one can seek for dissimilar voices and narratives in history.

People experience sound in different spaces as they listen to their surroundings and listening informs them about the space characteristics and also the presence of others. Thus, listening acts as a reminder of the presence of self. Truax (2001) suggests three levels of listening attention. The first level is called "listening-in-search", which refers to the ability of people to search for a particular sound in a noisy soundscape. The second one is known as "listening-in-readiness," which "depends on associations being built up over time, so that the sounds are familiar and can be readily identified even by background processing in the brain" (22). The third level of attention is recognized as "background listening" since the sound rests in the background of our attention (24).

Sounds can be present in more than one place. They are produced and influenced not only by the materiality of space, but also by the presence of other people. As Feld argues, "one hears oneself in the act of voicing, and one resonates the physicality of voicing in acts of hearing" (Feld 2003, 226). The constant dialogue of self with self, and self with other represents "an embodied sense of presence and memory" (226). These

interactions educate us how to belong, not to belong, and to drift. Hearing directs our visual focus, and lets us know where to look. Hearing is an associative act and what we hear is not always what we see: “Sounds are associated with their original source, while also becoming their own thing” (Labelle 2010 xix).

Hearing a sound in different settings or environments may result in different meanings for individuals. The qualities of a space impact how one perceives a sound and those of a sound affect how one understands a space (Ripley 2007, 2). Individuals may interpret a soundscape differently for various reasons such as different life experiences, backgrounds, and social status. Moreover, characteristics of sounds such as pitch and loudness can have an impact on people’s perception of a soundscape. For instance, loudness may be read as a performative index of class and ethnicity. Sonic differences matter socially, Schwarz (2015) suggests: in addition to its visual signs like broken windows, a “bad” neighborhood may be characterized by sonic cues, such as shouts from windows. Bijsterveld (2013) explains further that people mainly consider the noise-makers as lower class residents. She describes how in 1930s a local noise abatement committee in the Netherlands city of Groningen asked residents to provide information on the sounds they regarded as frustrating and annoying. Residents responded by describing “the noise-makers as people of a lesser kind (boys, lower-class youths, or pimps)” than other citizens (13).

Sounds identify social categorization, evaluation, and stigmatization of people, as one can find associations between sonic styles and social identities and the meanings they ascribe to sounds and sonic practices (Bijsterveld 2013, 205- 206). Thus, the study of

sound contributes to the sociological and cultural study of space. Considering spaces as cultural settings, my research will draw attention to the ways people experience spaces in their everyday life and make sense of their cultural identity while recounting stories about their personal experiences of a soundscape.

2.4. Voice and Silence: Power or Weakness

People's voices are usually their main communicative tool and, according to Truax, each individual's voice reflects the entire person and represents the concept of self, and its relationships with others and with the environment (34- 39). People's interaction with space through the sounds they make in an environment is called "soundmarking"[21] and one of the most direct ways of making sound is typically with the voice and through speaking. Although a significant portion of data for this dissertation was collected through interviews and sound recordings, this research not only focuses on the presence of sounds but also studies the absence of sounds and silence in the neighborhood. This work draws attention to the voices that have been silenced as well as paralinguistic content that refers to the features of each voice. Things such as the accents, intonation patterns, stress patterns, timbre, and pauses in an individual's utterances provide information about the origin, mood, and current attitude of the person.

Vocal qualities such as volume (weakness or loudness) deliver diverse meanings. The volume one chooses may depend on factors such as the venue, the size of audience

[21] The common use of this term could be followed in work of Hildegard Westerkamp (1988).

and the content of the conversation. For instance, during my interviews in the neighborhood, I encountered situations in which the interviewees decided to choose a lower volume when they were judgmental or when they expressed particular thoughts that could be offensive to the other community members or even to their own community. However, people are not always able to freely choose the volume of their conversations and in some situations the political climate may limit, directly or indirectly, certain topics and opinions.

Glenn (2004) reminds us that the meaning of silence, similar to speech, is related to "a power differential that exists in every rhetorical situation: who can speak, who must remain silent, who listens, and what those listeners can do" (9). Moreover, she argues that people who are forced to be silent are not necessarily "people with nothing to say but are people without a public voice and space in which to say it" (10). The choice to use silence is related to context, situation, and intended purpose and meaning. Scott (1972) views the concept of silence and utterance from a different angle. He argues that one's choice of saying something is based on a judgment of not saying something else; in other words, we remain silent in speaking and in remaining silent we speak (146). Silence has a complicated and vague nature and can act as a response; it may represent both a positive or negative meaning.

Different disciplines understand silence differently. For example, in music scholarship, the common opinion is that silence is the absence of sound, while musicians such as John Cage argue that there is never a complete absence of sound. We can never experience environmental silence because something including our own bodies always

makes a sound. Residents of highly populated cities cannot commonly perceive silence free of noise from electrical devices and background sounds such as traffic, barking dogs, and chirping birds (Saville-Troike 1985, 7).[22] Although in our daily life we experience the concept of silence, we do not encounter absolute silence. The ability to be silent is a helpful talent mostly subordinate groups have been compelled to develop, while dominant groups have frequently had little practice with (Keating 2013, 28).

In my field research I experienced different aspects of the notion of silence and being silent. In some cases, individuals actively preferred to remain silent and did not reply to an interview question because they were concerned with the probable troubles that their responses might cause for them in both their own community or in society. For instance, one of my Jewish informants preferred to remain silent about the Jewish community's possible prejudices against the Muslim community's religious beliefs. However, in another situation, he narrated a story of his silence. He recounted how when he was about seven years old and playing in the neighborhood, upper grade Muslim students bullied him. He indicated in his story that he was so scared to complain about these students to his parents that he remained silent.

As opposed to speaking, the form of silence (its delivery) is always the same (Glenn, xii). Silence and silencing deliver different meanings and different people[23] from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds may interpret them in various ways. For instance, if

[22] Saville-Troike made this comment about the USA. However, I think it could be true about almost all of the residents of highly populated cities.
[23] Male and female delivery of silence in one similar social situation may also be different (Glenn 2004, xii).

silence is the choice of a group of people, the meaning of the silence will be closer to mutuality or commonality (Truax, 43).[24] By focusing on a sonic environment, one recognizes how dominant groups silence marginalized people or how marginalized ones can band together and speak out. In other words one can learn who has the power and controls (Glenn, xi-xii).

Nakan (2007) indicates four headings for classifying the functions of silence. She asserts that silence in intercultural communication can perform cognitive, discursive, social, and affective functions. Each of these functions is context-driven. For instance, "silence phenomena such as pauses and hesitations have been considered to have the function of earning cognitive processing time in communication" (8). Similarly, each function is represented, or interpreted according to social and cultural norms that are geographically or class based (8-13). Silence and absence may overlap at times and easily be confused, as "[t]he articulation between silence and powerlessness is almost common sense within Western culture" (Keating, 25). One might argue that using such terms as Western and Eastern can be reductive and lead to generalizations, and, although it is perhaps inescapable to use these terms for the sake of brevity, it is equally necessary that scholars contextualize the terms and explain exactly what they mean by them.

Consider Schafer's argument that silence in a Western society could be oppressive, and understood as a "rejection of the human personality" (Schafer 1994, 256), while in "Eastern cultures" it could be perceived as almost sacred (256-259). Schafer's statement is problematic because of its reductive and generalizing nature. I

[24] For an ethnomusicological example see Turino 1993.

suggest instead that the concept of silence does not have a fixed and unchanging meaning that can be associated with the East and the West. Rather the connotations of the term depend on the situation and location. For instance, consider the soldiers' silence in military morning routines which connotes conformity and obedience in both Eastern and Western cultures and that the mourners' expected silence in a funeral is also a sign of respect in the East and the West.

Being silent may have various meanings from being suppressed or scared to the representation of a high respect. Silencing by authority is mainly recognized as silences related to space or situation, or silence as rhetorical control (Bruneau 1973, 42). Keating suggests three kinds of engaged and oppositional silences: silent refusal, silent witness, and deliberative silence. She argues that these forms of silent engagement are significant means for political struggle, and focuses on the ways "these modes of silence might be useful for those occupying positions of hegemonic power, privilege, and dominance to challenge or reject such positions" (25). In addition she argues that voice can also be enforced as speech often plays a prominent role in backing up or supporting hegemonic power. However, being silent may mean refusing to accept the threats to speak in the service of power (25-26). Nakan (2007) distinguishes untold expressions as a "hidden silence" that are the result of censorship (6-7). The lack of access to freedom of expression mainly affects already marginalized people, namely, minorities facing discrimination.

2.5. Sound and Built Environment

Buildings speak to us through different sounds. Floors creak, roofs create popping and cracking noises, and furnaces groan. We are surrounded by different sounds, and by listening rather than merely seeing, we can perceive, experience and understand space, a process that Blesser and Salter have labeled "aural architecture." Aural architecture can have social meanings and create emotional, behavioral, and visceral responses in individuals. Sounds from various sources interact with a variety of spatial fundamentals, and when we hear them, we assign a particular personality to them. For instance, we may perceive the acoustic attributes of a living room or a lobby as warm or cold, independent of its real temperature. Bare marble floors of a lobby or thick carpeting of a living room reflect sounds differently and create distinctive feelings in individuals (Blesser and Salter 2007, 2). During my fieldwork, I experienced a situation in which one of the informants preferred to have our second meeting in *Sofrehkhuneh-e Tehrun-e Qadim* (Old Tehran coffeehouse) and not in her workplace. She described the coffeehouse as having a warm friendly atmosphere, pointing out some physical characteristics of the coffeehouse such as the colorful windows, the dome (*Gonbad*), and wooden seats.

Different sonic attributes represent a wide range of emotions. For instance, low-pitched sounds are associated with power and authority and high-pitched voices are associated with weakness or indecisiveness (Pramaggiore and Waillis 2011; Crozier and Chapman 1984). However, one may question this generalization by recognizing the power of a soprano or centrality of a tenor voice in certain types of music. Being aware of

our auditory space is not only about the ability to detect the changes of sound within a space, but it also includes our emotional and behavioral experiences within that space (Blesser and Salter, 11). An investigation of the primacy of sound as a modality of knowing and being in the world is described in Feld's concept of "acoustemology." With this term, Feld suggests a union of acoustics and epistemology in order to investigate the reflexive and historical relationships between hearing and speaking as well as listening and sounding (Feld 2003, 226).

One listens to a sonic environment, and the "auditory cortex converts the [environments'] physical attributes into perceptual cues, which [are] then use[d] to synthesize an experience of the external world" (Blesser and Salter, 1-2). Socio-cultural, geographical, and economic situations impact the development of aural architecture, which in turn both expresses and supports culture. The aural architecture of a town may arise from its geographical location and the organization of the streets (5); focusing on general acoustic environments, therefore, can inform us about the evolution that it produces.

Continuous use of an acoustic space for a particular purpose allows people to associate the aural personality with that purpose. People's reactions to the environment are different because of the diverse meanings associated with the sounds heard within it. Musical, religious, and political spaces have aural traditions that are bound to other traditions in the culture. Acoustic spaces and their social function develop together and influence one another to the extent that radical changes in different parts of a cultural community will ultimately cause changes in its aural architecture (Blesser and Salter,

363). Meanings that are articulated and associated with sounds are not fixed and can change over time. Sonic experiences of individuals impact their social behavior and also inspire various feelings and emotional expressions such as nervousness, loneliness, terror, and aesthetic satisfaction. During my fieldwork, I came across individuals who showed different emotional expressions about one particular space. For instance, in one conversation one of my Jewish informants explained how scared he was while passing through Hakim Alley[25] at noon, because all the shops were closed. However, in a different situation while we were walking in Hakim Alley he mentioned the alley has not changed a lot and remained the most intimate location of the neighborhood and his favorite place.

Sound can invite people to re-think the meaning of their social experiences, relationship to community, and affiliation to power (Bull and Back 2003, 4). Signals and soundmarks further outline the acoustic spaces of a community (Schafer 1978, 41). An acoustic community can be defined "as any soundscape in which acoustic information plays a pervasive role in the lives of the inhabitants (no matter how the commonality of such people is understood)" (66). As an acoustic community could be any system within which acoustic information is exchanged, different broadcasting means such as a radio or loud speakers extended the size of the acoustic community (41). For instance, one can argue that regardless of the Jewish community population in Udlajan the size of the Jewish acoustic community was smaller than the Muslim one, as Jews were not permitted to use loud speakers outside synagogues.

[25] An alley in Udlajan.

Schafer argues that before the invention of electroacoustic devices every sound was original and no one could reproduce, store, or amplify a sound.[26] In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, sounds have often been separated from their makers resulting in the possibility to be dislocated in time and in space. The emergence of electronic devices of sound transmission and storage has had a deep impact on the modern soundscape[27] and on citizens' behaviors. To talk about this precise form of sound diffusion, Schafer coined the term "schizophonia" to refer to " the split between an original sound and its electroacoustical transmission and reproduction" (Schafer 1994, 91). As a result, any soundscape can become any other soundscape and elicit feelings such as nervousness, excitement, or some levels of confusion. Although original soundscapes may also convey feelings such as nervousness and fear, Schafer's argument is about the dislocation of sound and its consequences. Sometimes these confusions may happen in connection with visual contexts such as when a ventriloquist speaks (without moving his lips), or as one localizes the sounds of the speakers at the back of the cinema theater to the lip movement of the actors (Nanda 2007, 38).

Truax restates the consequences of schizophonic experiences and the ways in which electroacoustic sounds impose on a setting because of their abilities to dominate acoustically and psychologically. He also describes how the schizophonic experiences quickly became accepted as something "normal." In most urban areas, public space turns into a commercial space that is fragmented and privately owned. In this situation one

[26] Although a musical score has been used as a storage device, one should be aware that Schafer's main focus is on storing with electroacoustic devices.
[27] Here, I refer to modern soundscape as a soundscape that includes new kind of sounds that were produced by electroacoustic devices.

recognizes the transformation of the acoustic community into a market community in which corporations control not only the space itself but also all significant sound signals. Consequently, listeners transform into consumers (134-136).

Changes in listeners' social behaviors and personal feelings mainly happen when they move among and between spatial boundaries (particularly those perceived by listening), as the boundaries of an aural space gain meaning(s) from social context. However, in my daily visits to Udlajan I realized that going beyond the space boundaries did not impact the individuals' social behaviors at all times. The lo-fi soundscape of the neighborhood created a similar auditory space inside and outside of the majority of shops, and I could not distinguish any differences in the shopkeepers' vocal interactions inside and outside of their shops. For instance, because of the noise in the neighborhood they spoke loudly (with the same volume) regardless of being indoors talking to a customer or being outside of the shop hanging out with a friend. We make sense of the size of a physical space such as its length, width, and height with the help of our vision, while hearing assists us to interpret "size as the global metric of volume" (Blesser and Salter, 21). I believe the lo-fi soundscape of the neighborhood makes the spatial boarders blurry and consequently causes the interchangeability of public and private or indoor and outdoor spaces.

In addition, our distance from a source of sound or the level of weakness or loudness of a sound create the experiential boundaries that demarcate not only which sonic events are included or excluded, but also which listeners are part of the community: those who share the ability to hear a sonic event in a specific space (Blesser and Salter,

22). Individuals are able to decide if they wish to be part of a community by getting closer to the sound source or by leaving a space. One may remain physically in a space, while consciously or unconsciously lose attention to the surrounding and become secluded.

The use of personal stereos can separate people from the outside world and create a feeling of security as they construct sonic boundaries. Personal stereos isolate individuals in a private acoustic space, and what they listen to becomes their private property. The message being heard in one's headspace is something that no one can get access to, although sometimes the body movements or the rhythm of footsteps of a personal stereo user reveal what the ears tend to hide (Thibaud 2003, 329). Although personal stereo users are not entirely cut off from their surroundings, the use of personal stereos restricts physical space and locates the individuals in a space of their own by closing their ears. Switching off becomes the same as "killing off" the private world and going back to the outside world (Bull 2000, 34, 36, 54). Personal stereo users create their own personalized sonic world and carry their favorite sound wherever they wish. As a result, sound is used to control their moods and feelings as well as their sense of time and place (9).

Some drivers have similar experience in their automobiles when listening to their favorite selection of music (Bull 2003). Accordingly, scholars such as Bijsterveld, Cleophas, Krebs, and Mom (2014) argue that "[q]uietness is not a necessary condition for finding peace in cars, however, as long as drivers *feel* themselves to be in control of their acoustic environment" (6). For instance, the music selection allows drivers to control

their thoughts and match their moods to the music. Drivers listening to fast-paced songs tend to drive faster, as they feel that time passes quickly in their daily journey. Moreover, listening to a favorite music selection or any random radio stations with a loud volume masks both the noise of a car's engine and the background noise of the street (Brodsky 2001, 366-367). It worth mentioning that engine sounds can be informative for drivers and emit essential feedback on its functioning. Drivers should be familiar with the acoustic sounds of their automobile and be able to interpret the acoustic signals for maximal driving safety (Stockfelt 1994, 31). However, I recognized drivers in Udlajan seem to take a different approach and be actively involved in sound making in the neighborhood. Getting stuck in traffic, drivers left car windows completely down while they played their favorite music at a high volume and communicated with another drivers next to them.

2.6. Unwanted Sound, Noise, and People's Sensitivity

People's appreciation of sounds is the result of their listening habits. They identify some sounds as annoying or interrupting and they learn how to ignore those (Schafer 1994, 4). Interestingly, what may be unwanted sound and annoying to the ears of an individual might be music for someone else. In a subject-oriented definition, which is based on a value judgment created during perception, unwanted sounds are called noise (Thompson 2014, 20). This definition refers to noise as unwanted and unpleasant sound that one mainly face in an urban soundscape. The constitution of noise needs a listener who can perceive sound and judge it as "bad" and unpleasant. Based on Hegarty (2008)

"noise is a status that is added onto sound in perception, rather than an inherent property of the sound itself" (Hegarty 2008 cited in Thompson 2014, 22).

In this understanding, noise impacts some forms of behavior. For instance, the physical and mental stress of individuals living in a crowded neighborhood may be the result of lack of sleep caused by noise pollution (Truax, xix). However, arguments from noisy neighbors, those who create sounds that cross the boundaries of other neighbors' private domestic space, clarifies the difference between individual judgments of what counts as unpleasant sound or noise (Thompson, 23). Although noises impact health and environmental well being, they may represent a precise liveliness within the culture and the expression of freedom in social sphere (Labelle 2010, xiii). In several informal discussions with current residents of Udlajan, I realized how the younger generation showed an interest in residing or working in noisy neighborhoods. Mr. M, a twenty-six year old shopkeeper, explained how he prefers to work in "lively crowded neighborhoods" as opposed to "calm and boring living areas." He said:

> I was born in Torbat-e Jam and grew up there. I like my hometown, but there is not much life there … it is so quiet. Most of the young people left the town. You cannot see kids playing outside or youth hanging out. All you may hear is the loud sound of radio broadcasting the news … it was hard to get used to the noisy environment for a while, but it does not bother me any more. There are so many things going on here and you never get bored.

The perception of specific sounds as "bad" can also be acknowledged based on

socio-cultural norms and one can find the notion of noise as loudness. In this definition, noise is perceived as opposed to silence and as synonymous with loud sound. As a result, it can travel further and become audible in places where they are unwelcome and unpermitted (Thompson, 38). Unwelcome and unpermitted sounds frequently create our background noise. Unpleasant sounds of traffic that can be heard in one's office are an example of unwelcome background noise. However, soothing sounds of water flowing through rocks near one's home may be an example of a pleasant background noise. Moreover, one may create a background noise purposefully by keeping the TV on and not watching it to respond to the feelings of loneliness. As Attali (1985) argues, a background noise is necessary to provide a sense of security for people (3). Individuals' understandings of background noise are not fixed and elicit diverse feelings such as security, nervousness or social deafness.

Individuals' living conditions have a direct impact on their perception of background noise. For example, living in a crowded neighborhood such as Udlajan reduces residents' sensitivity to noise and causes social deafness. Social deafness offers a kind of urban freedom, in which knowing that nobody is listening, and no one is likely to speak may feel liberating (Tonkiss 2003, 304). In my fieldwork, I experienced how losing sensitivity to noise impacted even the language style, tone, and word choice of individuals in the neighborhood. I noticed how some shopkeepers use vulgar language and shout when communicating in the noisy soundscape of Udlajan. In contrast, I observed how they spoke respectfully in different contexts such as a restaurant or in their homes. Despite noisy crowded soundscapes, other factors such as working in a male

dominant work place can be effective on individuals' language style, tone, and word choice.

Sensitivity to noise often has cultural roots and is related to individuals' social class. For instance, within a bourgeois ethic, making noise is often understood as uncivilized. Cultures that have strong views of private space as a form of entitlement are more prone to criticize noise (Bull and Back 2003, 9). Schafer (1977) suggests a particular category of noise known as "Sacred Noise" for a group of sounds that evoke fear and respect. He discusses how the sources of Sacred Noises have shifted from natural sounds such as sounds of thunder and erupting volcano to those of church bells and pipe organs. Despite this shift, there has always been an association between noise and power in the human imagination. The relationship of noise and power is not only about making the biggest noise, but also it is a matter of having the authority to make noise without censure (51-52; 114-115). For instance, echoing *azan* three times each day from an outdoor loudspeaker system can be a revealing example of Sacred Noise in everyday life of a religiously heterogeneous neighborhood such as Udlajan.

2.7. Summary

In this chapter I have introduced a literature review on soundscape and auditory culture as it gives prominence to the sound-space nexus and different ways that listening can inform people about the characteristics of a space. My discussions across the chapter draw attention to the vocal qualities such as loudness and weakness and remind us of

different possible meanings of silence in diverse socio-cultural contexts. Accordingly, by focusing on the problematic and fuzzy nature of silence, I propose that silence can represent a positive or a negative meaning: being silent can be a sign of being censored or scared, or it can represent respect.

Following the argument that meanings associated with sounds and spaces are not fixed and can change over time, I suggest further that people's perception of sounds as bad and unpleasant is related to their social class and societies' cultural norms. For example, living in a crowded neighborhood reduces the residents' sensitivity to noise that can cause social deafness. As a result, knowing that no one is listening provides a kind of liberating urban freedom and impacts the residents' social behaviors, including their vocal interactions. Focusing on the dynamics of individuals' sonic interactions, in the next chapter I will study the soundscapes of two different coffeehouses in Udlajan, the sonic and spatial relations of these locals, and their connections within the surrounding sonic spaces.

Chapter 3: Sensing Udlajan, the Sounding Neighborhood

3.1. Introduction

This Chapter includes the first phase of my fieldwork constituting the current soundscape of Udlajan. In this phase I particularly explore the soundscape of two different coffeehouses in the neighborhood and focus on sonic-spatial relations as well as the dynamics of socio-cultural interactions among individuals within these coffeehouses and the surrounding urban space. Through a case study of the Udlajan neighborhood, I examine how sounds and silences can act as social markers of space. Accordingly, in this chapter, I study how the sonic experiences of people bring meaning to the built environment. Distinguishing between different sonic-spatial experiences, the chapter provides the opportunity to better understand the individual's cultural characteristics such as listening habits and preferences

Disappearance and emergence of different sounds in a neighborhood affect its residents' sense of time. As Truax argues, sound exists in time and it constructs and affects our sense of time. Thus, "it is not surprising that our sense of the character or coherence of an environment is closely tied to the temporal relationships exhibited by sound" (73). For instance, the existence of soothing sounds of water flowing though rocks in an industrial neighborhood may be an example of a pleasant background noise

that creates a nostalgic feeling about good old days for some individuals. Chapter Three through representative audio recordings and photos of the neighborhood creates a sonic-visual map of locations of interest. A CD including this sonic-visual map accompanies the dissertation. [28]

3.2. Udlajan: a Historical Overview

Figure 3 - Udlajan Alley Sign (Photo from 7dorim website. Used with permission.)

In their long history of residing in Iran, Jews lived in their own separated streets or quarters. Although the arrival of Islam in Iran is mainly known as the only reason for the separation of Jewish neighborhoods, Sarshar (2002) argues that the very nature of Jewish life (requiring observance of the precepts, the necessity to maintain a quorum of

[28] See Appendix II.

pares, a cemetery, and miqveh) required the existence of Jewish quarters. The Jewish neighborhood has been mainly known as *mahalla* (*mahalleh*, *mahallah*) or *mahalla-ye yahoudi* (the Jewish quarter). Although *mahalleh* is the closest equivalent for the European ghetto,[29] Iranian Jews were never required by law to live in any designated section of the city (Sarshar 2002, 104, 105). As opposed to the European ghettos, the Iranian Jewish quarters were not surrounded by walls and did not have gates (Sarshar 2002, 105; Elahi 1997, 133).

Living in the Jewish neighborhoods would guarantee the cohesiveness and identity of the Jewish community, and in times of anti-Jewish harassment this lifestyle assisted Jews in protecting their lives. On the one hand, the government found it possible to rule the Jews more easily when they were gathered in one area. On the other hand, the Muslim society that wished to secure its own identity by being distinguished from religious minorities could live separately (Sarshar 2011, 48). The Jewish community started to leave these segregated Jewish neighborhoods during the Reza Shah era (1925-1941), although a recognizable number of Jews stayed in the quarters during the Mohamad Reza Shah's reign (1941- 1979). Moreover, Jewish people also gained the right to hold government jobs and to open their personal businesses outside the *mahalleh* (Rahimyian 2011, 61). The Tehran Jewish quarter was called *Sar-e Chal* or *Sarchal* (by the pit) due to the garbage pit located in its midst. *Sar-e Chal* was part of a bigger neighborhood known as Udlajan. Tsadik (2011) describes *Sar-e Chal* as follows:

[29] In a number of European cities Jews had to live in particular parts of the city known as ghettos. Ghettos were surrounded by walls that were closed during different occasions such as Easter week to prevent Jews from leaving the neighborhood.

> The Tehran quarter was forming a tangled maze; the sometimes covered, sometime open streets are so narrow that you instinctively expect each one to come to a dead end when walking through them. These twisting corridors border homes made of stones and brick or of clay baked in the sun; they have never seen plaster. These homes appear to have become resigned to having the rain wash away their walls little by little and to letting them fall in clumps on the heads of the passerby. The negligence of the property owners finally destroy the rest … the rooms are built around a narrow courtyard, which is hardly as wide as a handkerchief and they are stacked one upon the other, without opening dark and bare (47-48).[30]

Sar-e Chal faced isolation not only because of the neighborhood's built structure but also because of its minority population. From 1950 to 1951, after the establishment of the state of Israel, Jews from different provinces of Iran – namely Saghez, Baneh, and Bookan as well as neighboring countries such as Iraq – came to Tehran to stay in the Jewish neighborhood before their emigration to Israel (Banayan 1996, 233). A large

[30] Tsadik description of *Sar-e Chal* reminds me of the words of Dzevad Karahasan (1994) in *Sarajevo Exodus of a City*. Karahasan explains Sarajevo as:

> … isolated and enclosed from the world, so to speak, cut off from everything external [it] turned wholly toward itself … a place where different faces of the world gather at one point, in the way that scattered rays of light gather in a prism" (Karahasan 1994, 3).

number of Jewish refugees also were temporarily accommodated in the Jewish cemetery of Tehran (Yazdani 1996, 113-136). [31]

Figure 4 - A narrow alley in Udlajan (Photo from 7dorim website. Used with permission.)

Figure 5 - Half- covered alley in Udlajan (Photo from 7dorim website. Used with permission.)

One of the first police services of Tehran was established in Udlajan and I was able to access information about the neighborhood history through the Udlajan police

[31] Figures 4 and 5 show current scenes of Udlajan.

(*Nazmiya*) reports. Although these reports are related to the late Naseri period (1890s),[32] they serve as a valuable source of information about the neighborhood everyday life. Focusing on these reports highlights the soundscape of Udlajan in the late Naseri time and provides a resource to compare the neighborhood today and past sonic environment.

The topics of these reports are mainly about neighborhood events such as Muslim and Jewish birthday and circumcision parties, as well as the wedding ceremonies and all-women gatherings such as post partum parties that mostly hosted both Jewish and Muslim *motreb*s (musicians) (Shaykh Rezaei and Azari 1999, 474). Furthermore, information about the Muslims and Jewish residents' conflicts and fights are some other topics of the reports.[33] Commemoration of the martyrs of Karbala was another common topic in the reports and these commemoration gatherings were held in the neighborhood's houses, mosques, and *Tekkiehs* (Shaykh Rezaei and Azari, 215, 570, 578, 725). [34]

3.3. Udlajan Today's Soundscape

Udlajan is located close to the Grand Bazar of Tehran and its surrounding streets are roads of heavy traffic that cause noise pollution. The narrow alleys of Udlajan are not suitable for cars, so motorbikes are the main traffic in the neighborhood. The loud

[32] Naseri period refers to the Naser al-Din Shah Qajar era (1831–1896).
[33] For instance, one of the reports describes a fight between Morad Ali (a Muslim resident) and Agh baba Yahoudi (a Jewish resident). Agh baba had a butcher shop and sold a sheep to Morad Ali but did not pay Morad Ali's change back. Morad Ali became angry and they started to fight. The Jewish residents joined to support Agh baba and to beat Morad Ali (Shaykh Rezaei and Azari 1999, 551).
[34] *Tekkieh* is a building particularly designed to serve as venues for *Moḥaram* rituals. For more information see http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/hosayniya

crowds, noisy industrial swing machines, printing offices, construction, and the sound of the ambulance sirens of Dr. Sapir hospital are considerable factors of the neighborhood's soundscape. [35] Focusing on today's Udlajan soundscape in addition to its former residents' narratives of the past describes the historical changes of the neighborhood and the gradual transition from a mostly "hi-fi" soundscape to a relatively "lo-fi" one. In today's lo-fi soundscape of the neighborhood's individual acoustic signals are masked in a dense population of sounds.

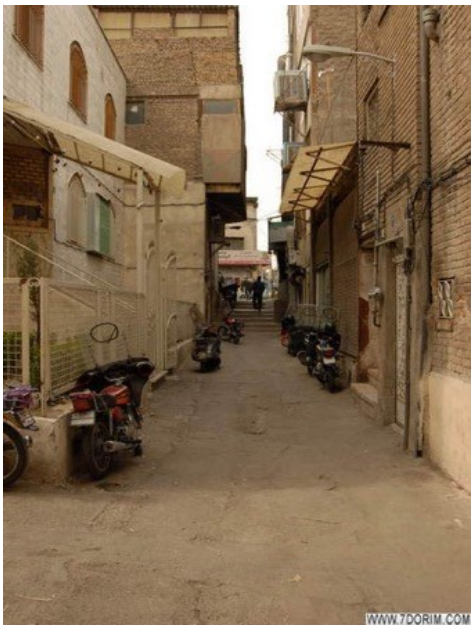

Figure 6 - Motorbikes in a narrow alley in Udlajan (Photo from 7dorim website. Used with permission.)

[35] See Figures 6, 7, 8, and 9.

Figure 7 - Afghan immigrants in a workshop in Udlajan. They produce different types of bags. (Photo by the author). See the sonic visual map for a better understanding of this location's soundscape.

Figure 8 - A dead-end alley in Udlajan, which includes different workshops such as a saw sharpening shop and a printing house press (Photo by the author). See the sonic visual map for a better understanding of this location's soundscape.

The neighborhood's immigrants were one of the main reasons that changed Udlajan's social class and led to a recognizable transformation in its lifestyle. Young men

who left their families back home and came to Tehran for work mainly rent rooms in old big houses of the neighborhood. These new residents, who are mainly non-Tehrani workers as well as Afghan immigrants, do not have a deep sense of belonging to the neighborhood. As a result, they do not care much about the neighborhood's past and its cultural and architectural changes (Shahbazzadegan 2011, 1-4).

Figure 9 - Construction in Parvareshgah Alley, one of the oldest locations in the neighborhood (Photo by the author). See the sonic visual map for a better understanding of this location's soundscape.

Construction of new buildings, changing the function of residential spaces to commercial ones, making major changes to old buildings such as building an extension, and closure of various shops are examples of the neighborhood's lifestyle transformations. In addition most of the old houses that were not suitable as workspaces were used for storage. [36] Transformations of residential spaces to industrial storages caused significant changes in the soundscape of Udlajan. According to my observations

[36] See Figure 10.

and interview materials, the sound of everyday happenings such as family gatherings, children playing, laughs, cries, and fights had disappeared from a vast part of the neighborhood's daily scene. The sonic visual map that accompanies this dissertation provides a better understanding of Udlajan's current soundscape.

Figure 10 - The ruins of Udlajan houses (Photo from 7dorim website. Used with permission.)

Udlajan represents an urban acoustic community, since it presents a complex set of sound signals that have been audible and meaningful for its inhabitants. Truax uses the notion of complexity "to refer simultaneously to aspects of the sounds of an environment and to the information processing they undergo in the mind" (79). Consequently, a complex system implies not only the presence of a rich soundscape, but also an active interpretation by listeners who can decode and interpret the diverse signals of their surroundings (Paquette 2002, 119). Acoustic cues and signals keep the community in touch with what is going on within it from day to day. Such a rich sonic system of information plays a significant role "in defining the community spatiality, temporally in

terms of daily and seasonal cycles, as well as socially and culturally in terms of shared activities, rituals, and dominant institutions" (Truax, 66).

Focusing on Udlajan's past, the community orientation of the neighborhood relied deeply on the primacy of vocal interactions. According to former residents of the neighborhood, sound making was mostly based on vocal interactions at diverse spaces such as houses, coffeehouses, shops, and street corners. The presence of peddlers, street musicians, children, housewives (sitting on sidewalks and chatting with their neighbors) as well as the significance of social events such as *Moharram* rituals reveals the importance of vocal interactions in the soundscape of the neighborhood. My informants mentioned that Udlajan Jews spoke Farsi with a particular accent known as *Sarchali* accent.[37] By their emigration from the neighborhood and disappearance of the *Sarchali* accent, Udlajan lost not only the sound signature of the Jewish community but it also lost at least a part of what could make the neighborhood distinctive.

For a better understanding of today's Udlajan soundscape, I focus on the first ethnographic research I conducted in the neighborhood in summer 2013. At this time I studied the soundscape of two different coffeehouses to examine how spatial arrangements and sonic phenomena play into the dynamics of social interactions within these locales and the surrounding urban space. I also studied the contrasting socio-political and experiential significance of these two coffeehouses. Moreover, to provide a sonic portrait of the neighborhood, I marked the location of potential sites of interest and

[37] It worth mentioning that Udlajan hosted a population of Jews from diverse provinces of Iran and the Jewish community in each province speak Farsi with different accents.

inhabitants' appreciation of the various sonic features of their neighborhood on a map. I then inserted photos from different locations of Udlajan to the map, as I linked photo(s) of each location with an audio file I recorded in that location.

3.4. Phase One. Soundscape Ethnography: Two Coffeehouses in Udlajan

3.4.1. An Overview

During their four-century history, coffeehouses in Iran have been home to different social groups' community gatherings (Blook bashi 1996; Mathee, 1996; Samadi, Soleimani and Mostafaye, 2013). In today's Tehran one comes across two main different types of coffeehouses: *Sonnati* (traditional), and *Sonnati-e Jadid*, (modern-traditional). Traditional coffeehouses are mainly male-dominated spaces typically located in the older parts of the city, while modern-traditional ones welcome both male and female customers. The soundscape of these coffeehouses, a complex combination of people's conversations, poetry recitation, sound of waterpipe smoking, glassy click of teacups and saucers, music, and radio or television programs can be read as a dynamic framework that contains sociocultural meanings.

The story of the popularity of tea and coffee and the appearance of the first coffeehouses in Iran goes back to the Safavid dynasty (1501-1722). In their four-century history, coffeehouses played "various roles and functions within public, news exchange, cultural and social aspects consistent with social circumstances" (Samadi, Soleimani, and Mostafaye, 56). Initially tea was popular in northern parts of the country and after a while

through the whole country, people continued to name these spaces "coffeehouses" rather than "teahouses." Coffeehouses were not only places for serving drinks and food, but they also had sleeping areas for travelers who needed night accommodations. Coffeehouses, sometimes resembling the *zurkhanehs* (houses of strength), were homes for community gatherings of social groups, such as the *pahlavans* (champions of high morals).[38] In both spaces, there were highly respected poetry reciters and storytellers whose performances played significant roles in strengthening attendants' moral principles and national identity (Blook bashi, 9).

Following the downfall of the Safavids and the chaos of the eighteenth century, social critics, religious authorities including Muslim Shia clergy, and government officials viewed coffeehouses suspiciously. A related cause for concern was the leisure activities that used to take place at the Safavid coffeehouses, which included dancing and singing by young males. In addition, the state paid attention to religious calls to suppress coffeehouses because of their role as gathering places for Sufis, or Muslim mystics, who used them for recitals of revolutionary poetry and epic narrations that undermined the legitimacy of the state (Mathee, 201-210). Therefore, one can argue that coffeehouses in Iran were not only places for eating and drinking, but also places for socio-political gatherings, socializing, reciting poetry, and telling stories. After the birth of Radio Tehran in 1940,[39] people gathered in coffeehouses to listen to the news or music, and later radio

[38] The *Zurkhaneh* is the Iranian traditional gymnasium in which *Varzesh-e Bastani* (ancient exercises) are performed (Ridgeon 2007, 243).
[39] For more information see: Amin, Camron Michael. 2015. "The Press and Public Diplomacy in Iran, 1820–1940." *Iranian Studies: Journal of the International Society for Iranian Studies* 48 (2): 269-287.

affordability led to a decline in the popularity of coffeehouses (Motakefi, Alaeechehrehbargh, and Miralinaghi 2014; Mirhashemzadeh 1963).

3.4.2. Traditional and modern-traditional coffeehouses in Tehran

Based on my observations, both traditional and modern-traditional coffeehouses serve tea, coffee, waterpipe, and some Persian dishes. Although the traditional coffeehouses mostly resemble male-dominated spaces that are typically located in the older parts of the city, particularly in the central and southern parts of Tehran, one can also find a number of traditional coffeehouses in northern parts of Tehran near the mountains. The coffeehouses in the mountains (north), as opposed to the southern traditional coffeehouses, have small gardens that allow for less "Islamic" restrictions and provide more freedom to their customers to enjoy fresh air while chatting, drinking tea or smoking. These coffeehouses are also a perfect place for dating. Young men and women are the main customers of these northern coffeehouses. Consequently, these spaces commonly play pop music very loudly that can be heard from a long distance. The loud pop music, including the work of Iranian diaspora musicians, acts as a warm welcome for the people, mostly youth, who are seeking a space with less strict Islamic rules.

I was involved in several conversations with six customers of these coffeehouses: they described that they decided where to drink or eat generally based on the sonic environment of a coffeehouse, and particularly based on the music that was being played at the coffeehouse. On the other hand, the male customers of southern coffeehouses are

usually among the low-income working class, who are in their 50s and 60s, and gather at the coffeehouse to spend their free time. The customers of these coffeehouses mostly know each other, and share a semi-public space that usually separates them from the outside world with a glass wall. Although the doors of these coffeehouses remain open to let pedestrians observe what is going on inside, these spaces are not very welcoming for the newcomers.

Based on my fieldwork findings, nowadays one cannot find any "traditional" symbols in the physical structure or decoration of these spaces. The older customers of the traditional coffeehouse (those in their sixties and seventies) explained that there were some religious or epic paintings on walls of these coffeehouses about four decades ago. However, they mentioned that at present less effort is put into the coffeehouses interior designs, and they represent a space with barely any decoration. The paintings that illustrate famous scenes of popular Persian old stories such as those of *Shahnameh* or religious events such as battle of Karbala were used for story-telling tradition, also known as *Naqali*, *Pardeh-dari*, *Pardeh-khani*, and *Qavali* (Blook bashi 1996). The storyteller (also known as *Naqal, Pardeh-dar*, *Pardeh-khan*, and *Qaval*) stands mainly in the middle of the coffeehouse and narrates a well-known story while walking, moving a wand, and pointing to a paintings hanging on the wall and illustrating a famous scene of the story.

To attract and keep an audience's attention, the storyteller uses some vocal techniques such as increasing and decreasing the voice, repeating some sentences, and applying some pauses (Jahandideh and Khaefi 2013, 80-81). *Nagali* performances, which could also be considered as soundmarks of the coffeehouses, played a significant role in

the acoustic life of these locals' customers. Gradually radio and then television displaced *naqali*; as a result of this change, storytellers no longer perform at coffeehouses and thus the paintings are no longer on the walls. Customers of these traditional coffeehouses, mainly men, listen to the music only if it is played in intermissions of radio and television programs. The customers smoke waterpipes, drink tea, and the click of the teacups and saucers against each other create a glassy sound that intermingles with the bubbling of waterpipes.

It is worth mentioning that despite the typical use of the saucer as a cup holder, it is common among the Iranian older generation to pour tea into the saucer and drink from it rather than the cup. In these coffeehouses costumers communicate with a loud voice not only with the people who are sitting next to them, but also exchange a few words, sometimes in a vulgar language, with persons who are sitting further away. The customers of traditional coffeehouses mostly sit in particular seats that create their personal space, and remind others that it is not acceptable for someone else to take these specific seats even when they are vacant. The customers' feelings and interactions reflect how each enjoys a level of ownership in the coffeehouse. Moreover, the absence of women creates a male-dominated soundscape in these coffeehouses.

In the second group of coffeehouses that I title as modern-traditional, the level of place attachment is not as strong as it is in traditional coffeehouses. I label these coffeehouses modern-traditional since these spaces promote a "modern" culture in a "traditional" context. By modern culture in today's Tehran, I point to new interests and customs that were not common in the last four or five decades and influenced by factors

called *tahajom-e farhangi* (cultural onslaught). This refers to the impact of certain products of Western culture on Iranian life in general and on young Iranians in particular.

Thanks to the emergence of the Internet and satellite TVs, Iranians could experience directly what is going on in the rest of the world, which is a result of what is known as globalization (Pedersen 2005, 156). By including the word 'traditional' in this context, I point to the particular visual and sonic elements that induce some levels of authenticity and that have been impacted by pre-Islamic Persian heritage and romanticized mysticism of Sufism and Zoroastrianism (Khosravi and Stoller 2008, 148). In these coffeehouses, representations of modern culture can be observed in social behaviors and even the appearance of their customers who have profound interests in combining aspects of Western culture and pre-Islamic Persian heritage. For instance, based on the religious beliefs and traditional customs in Iranian society, the presence of women in male dominated public spaces, such as coffeehouses, was not common. Welcoming the presence of women in modern-traditional coffeehouses therefore impacted communication styles that existed within the coffeehouses such as loud male voices and vulgar language.

An interest has been growing among the privileged middle-class population, particularly among women to practice what they assume to be ancient Persian culture: by wearing fashionable clothes with motifs of "traditional" Persian arts, gathering in fancy restaurants representing "traditional" culture by use of things such as copper or clay

cookware, *Zurkhaneh* objects,[40] and dervishes' *Kashkul* for decoration, sitting not on chairs but crossed-legged on beds, smoking waterpipes, eating "traditional" foods such as *Abgusht*[41] that were only common in traditional coffeehouses before, and listening to a fusion of pop and Iranian classical music. These recordings focus on the production of a so-called mystic atmosphere while using instruments such as the *daff* and the *tanbour*, which were mainly common in Iranian regional musical traditions. However, some customers, not engaged with the social environment of the coffeehouse, create a private listening zone by using personal stereos and listening to their own, favorite music, or playing games and sending text messages with their mobile phones while dining and drinking.

In my conversations with customers of modern-traditional coffeehouses (mainly the middle and upper class clients), I discovered that they were largely dissatisfied with the Iranian Islamic regime's socio-cultural policies and restrictions. Consequently, these clients were not interested in the national television and radio programs and preferred to only listen to music. These coffeehouses are mostly located in the northern and western parts of the city, where the middle-class citizens live. However, there are some exceptions that one can find in the modern coffeehouses in the central, eastern or southern parts of Tehran. For example, the new customers in modern-traditional coffeehouses do not deal with the same power issues as those in traditional coffeehouses. Customers of modern-traditional coffeehouses, unlike the customers of traditional

[40] Some of *zurkhaneh* athletic tools and musical instruments are used as decorative objects in coffeehouses such as *zang* (bell) and *meel* (heavy-weight Indian club).
[41] Literally translated as "water-meat", which is also called *Dizi*.

coffeehouses, are mainly youth interested in trying different foods and drinks, and have the option to choose between the Iranian coffeehouse and other dining and drinking spaces such as Turkish or Indian ones.

Customers of modern-traditional coffeehouses usually do not know each other, and do not live in the same neighborhood in which the coffeehouse is located. Only a few customers find the chance to feel some level of attachment to a particular coffeehouse. The majority of them have their own personal cars that allow them to travel easily within different parts of the city and discover new dining spaces. They mainly park their vehicle close to the coffeehouse or in the customers' parking lot of the coffeehouse, and therefore, they do not find the opportunity to explore the sidewalk life. While "[s]idewalk life acts as a key to understanding the interactions between social norms, as public language, and their upsetting through diverse appropriation or use, marking the sidewalk as a space for expression, argument, and fighting" (Labelle 2010, 109), these customers unconsciously disregard experiencing the neighboring pedestrian life that is overwhelmed with different sonic activities.

As opposed to the customers of modern-traditional coffeehouses, those of traditional coffeehouses are mostly among the older generation who have lived in one quarter, and are familiar with each other. They belong to the period in which dining outside was not as common as today, and each quarter had only one or two restaurants or coffeehouses. These clients did not have many options for their gatherings and ended up getting together in one of their few possible choices. The narrow alleys and streets of these quarters were not suitable for cars and because the customers were mainly from the

same neighborhood they walked from their house to the coffeehouse and "[left] behind one place for another"(Labelle, 123). On their way to the coffeehouse, walking allowed them to communicate with other neighbors and shopkeepers.

As a result, client turnover was infrequent in traditional coffeehouses. Customers of traditional coffeehouses were usually from the same quarter and knew each other, so they had to deal with relatively similar power relations that existed in their neighborhood. For example, people who lived for a longer period of time in the quarter, or those who were wealthy, or with particular religious affiliation, such as descendants from Prophet Muhammad's family, would have been perceived to be higher in honor and status, and would receive more social respect in the neighborhood as well as at the coffeehouse.

3.4.3. Two Coffeehouses in Udlajan

I focused my research on two different coffeehouses in the Udlajan neighborhood of Tehran. The modern-traditional coffeehouse that I visited was known as *Sofrehkhuneh-e Tehrun-e Qadim* (Old Tehran coffeehouse), while the traditional coffeehouse was unnamed and was located a few blocks away. I explored their physical and cultural characteristics, their soundscape, and their sonic environment in relation to the urban and architectural design of the quarter. I visited both coffeehouses four times. My first three visits were around noon and my last visit happened in the evening around five. During my visits I decided to walk around in the old bazaar of Udlajan.

The majority of Jews who were merchants in the old bazaar of Udlajan left their shops following the Iranian Islamic Revolution and the Jewish sector of the bazaar

became vacant. The first Iranian mortgage bank, now 200 years old, was located in the same section and operated under the direction of a Jewish resident of Udlajan, Davoud Kalimi, until the Islamic Revolution of 1979. Two businessmen, Mr. Vahedi and Mr. Hashemi, bought the bank and renovated it under the supervision of Ustad Asghar Sherbaf in 2003. As I talked to these individuals, they explained that primarily they planned to built a centre for trade of iron and metal, but they were impressed by the attempts of architecture students who were visiting the bank and informed them of the great value of this building. Consequently, the owners decided to renovate this sector of the bazaar and to change the functionality of the building to a coffeehouse and they named it *Sofrehkhuneh-e Tehrun-e Qadim.* The differences between a coffeehouse and a bank soundscapes are clear and these sonic differences assist people in a better understanding of their everyday experiences of who they are.

This space was located in Hakim Alley. The narrow width of the alley did not provide enough space for cars; therefore, motorbikes, bicycles, and carts that were pulled and pushed by one or two people remained the most suitable vehicles for transport. *Sofrehkhuneh-e Tehrun-e Qadim* was decorated with a significant historic door.[42] The door acted like a border that detached customers from the present time, and reminded them of the starting point of an imaginary-historical journey. This journey was historical because customers entered a building more than 200 years old, and it was imaginary because they faced a coffeehouse that did not exist before.

The interior design of the building represents an attempt to create a "traditional"

[42] See Figure 11.

atmosphere by making use of certain elements of Persian architecture such as brick walls, a dome (*gonbad*), skylights, colorful windows, and a small pond in the middle.[43] Coming toward the inside of this building and hearing a unique sound signal such as the unexpected sound of water fountains, one could envisage the tranquility of Persian gardens, a little paradise in the middle of the narrow crowded alleys of Udlajan in the southern parts of Tehran.

Figure 11 - *Sofrehkhuneh-e Tehrun-e Qadim* entrance door (Photo by the author). See the sonic visual map for a better understanding of this location's soundscape.

[43] See Figures 12 and 13.

Figure 12 - *Sofrehkhuneh-e Tehrun-e Qadim* interior space (Photo by the author). See the sonic visual map for a better understanding of this location's soundscape.

Figure 13 - *Sofrehkhuneh-e Tehrun-e Qadim* dome (*Gonbad*) (Photo by the author). See the sonic visual map for a better understanding of this location's soundscape.

In an informal conversation with a couple, I asked the woman, who was around thirty years old, what she liked and disliked about the soundscape of the coffeehouse and she replied:

> This building is very old and I like traditional spaces very much.
>
> I should say the interior design of the coffeehouse is not that great … I do not like these plastic chairs… I like the friendly atmosphere of the coffeehouse. Eating or drinking here is very relaxing … they do not have a good selection of music though …

As she was not really focusing on sonic elements, I asked her what her favorite sound in the coffeehouse is and she answered that she likes the sound of water fountains the best.

The physical space of this coffeehouse has two stories that are divided into a semi-public space and small separated semi-private rooms. The semi-public space, resembling a garden, has a pond with three fountains in its middle and a small table in a corner that holds the samovar, teapots, and teacups. [44] Although this table was situated in the public area of the coffeehouse, I did not observe anyone who poured tea for him/herself and this table mainly seems to act as a decorative item. The use of artificial green leaves and string ornamental lights embellishes the semi-public space of this coffeehouse. In the semi-private rooms, customers remove their shoes and sit on beds covered with Persian rugs, while food and drink are served on these beds for them.

[44] See Figure 14.

'igure 14 - Samovar and teapot, *Sofrehkhuneh-e Tehrun-e Qadim* (Photo by the author). See the sonic visual map for a better understanding of this location's soundscape.

In my second visit at *Sofrehkhuneh-e Tehrun-e Qadim*, I talked to a middle-aged man who expected a guest. I asked him why he decided to invite his guest to this coffeehouse and he replied:

> You probably know that this building is very old … it was the first Iranian bank. It is a nice building and has a calm atmosphere. You are comfortable and can have some privacy while talking.

At *Sofrehkhuneh-e Tehrun-e Qadim*, a modern-traditional space as opposed to the unnamed traditional coffeehouse I visited, outsiders could not observe the indoor happenings, and customers did not witness outside happenings nor hear the outdoor noise noticeably. At this modern-traditional coffeehouse a great effort was made to prepare a cozy quiet space that would set up some levels of privacy for its customers. In the semi

private rooms of the coffeehouse customers find the opportunity to have gentle personal conversations without being worried about their discussions being overheard by strangers. These gentle voices, their content hardly recognizable mingled in the space with the sound of the fountains and the samovar's boiling water. I asked Mr. S, a forty five year old customer of the traditional coffeehouse, if he liked to eat in a very quiet space or if he preferred to listen to the music or watch television while dining and he replied:

> I like to listen to something while eating. I do not like it, when it is very quiet in a restaurant or coffeehouse … It is not fun listening to the sound of forks and spoons clicking … plates … or listening to someone chewing his food … I like to have some privacy … If it is so quiet, everybody can listen to what you are talking about …

At *Sofrehkhuneh-e Tehrun-e Qadim*, the dome-shaped roofs (*gonbadi* form) in addition to the octagonal plan of the coffeehouse produce a high-pitched echo. In this modern-traditional coffeehouse, located in the mysterious half-damaged bazaar of Udlajan, the visual aspects of architecture seemed to be faithful to the elements of traditional Persian architecture. For instance, the idea of a Persian garden and creation of an earthly heaven for relaxation, as well as the construction of domes with skylights all conduct the mind to a peaceful and relaxing sonic environment that are congruent with the sound of water fountains and generally the aural architecture of the coffeehouse.

My experience of the visual and sonic environment of the unnamed traditional

coffeehouse, located in a narrow crowded street, was different. The owner of this coffeehouse, a man in his late 50s, was not satisfied with his job and told me that as his coffeehouse did not have many customers, he was going to change his business in the next few months. His customers were mainly addicts and drug dealers. He explained their commuting caused troubles such as fighting in the coffeehouse that most of the time required a police reaction. The coffeehouse had only four tables that were located very close to one another. Moreover, a note that was stuck on the entrance attracted my attention: "Addicts are not permitted to enter this space."[45]

Although I did not have enough evidence, I speculated on how clients or passersby might interpret this note differently to the extent that it could be decoded as a secret notice for drug dealers to be aware of addicts who may eat or drink at this space! The small disorganized and undecorated setting of the coffeehouse emphasizes the idea that not only there is not any motivation to attract new customers, but also there is no hope for doing so. When I arrived there the weather was getting dark and a very loud Arabic prayer as an interlude to *azan* could be heard from the television that hung on the wall. The keynote sound in the coffeehouse was the street noise. As the coffeehouse was overwhelmed with the traffic noise, it seemed to be part of the street public space and not a separate space. For a few seconds, I could not recognize whether the Arabic prayer was coming from inside or outside the coffeehouse.

[45] This is my English translation of the note, which was originally written in Persian (*Voroud-e Motadan Mamnou*).

The presence of television and radio in different public spaces acts as a place in which key questions about the relationship between culture and political power could be explored (Grindstaff and Turow 2006, 105). In Iran the ownership and management of radio and television is with the government. Their programs embody a certain relationship with the political and cultural authorities and consequently their productions could not be oppositional (Dehghan 2009). The presence of radio and television at traditional coffeehouses should not simply be interpreted as the level of customers' affiliation with the Islamic regime. The owners of traditional coffee houses are mainly middle-aged men who are not familiar with technologies such as computers and audio players to provide a pleasing sonic atmosphere for their customers. They simply prefer to have a TV or radio to kill the silence in the coffeehouse. However, a coffeehouse owner explained that the existence of a fancy TV could also show off the economic power of the coffeehouse's owner. Based on my observations and the informal discussions with customers, I realized that only a few customers felt connected with the content of the national television and radio programs. Most of clients did not pay serious attention to the television and radio's socio-cultural and political programs and they only watched sport matches or listened to the news. As I asked the customers what they would do if they had the chance to turn off the television or radio in the coffeehouse, they mainly replied that they preferred to keep it on with a low volume as the background noise. For instance,

Mr. A, a middle-aged man, explained:

> It is good to watch the news or something. You should know what is going on in the world … I like to listen to the news while I am hanging out with my friends.

When I asked him how he could listen to the news with a low volume in such a crowded setting he replied while laughing:

> I do not need to listen carefully … They repeat the news and everything several times …

Besides the television sounds, the loud street noise caused by motor vehicles and pedestrians' loud voices creates the keynote sound of the traditional coffeehouses. The florescent light in the coffeehouse coupled with its old rusty disorganized furniture represented a gloomy and depressing feeling that the accompaniment of loud TV voice made more discouraging. The coffeehouse owner was not motivated by the idea of attracting more customers from different social classes and from other neighborhoods of the city, as a result he did not aim to make changes to the interior design and soundscape of the coffeehouse. He did not plan to create an "ideal peaceful space" to eat or drink and was looking for a place that was appealing to the working class customers seeking affordable quick food and drink. Although the chaotic noisy condition of the traditional coffeehouse did not create a suitable space for calm dining, it provided a proper space for other activities such as the illegal drug trade as I noticed in one of my visits.

3.4.4. A Comparative glance at Two Coffeehouses

In the study of these two dissimilar coffeehouses I observed how individuals with diverse socio-cultural backgrounds, including myself, react differently toward the sonic and visual elements of these two spaces. For instance, my characterization of traditional

coffeehouse as “depressing” or “discouraging” relates to habits of perception and evaluation embedded in my socio-cultural background. Also, the presence and absence of certain sounds in an environment provide helpful information about the context and type of place. For instance, the dominant sounds one hears in the traditional coffeehouse – in other words the coffeehouse’s keynote sounds – informs us about the coffeehouse’s location in the social and built environment of the city.

Production of a particular sonic environment and sometimes use of objects such as television and radio, or playing of specific musical styles at coffeehouses come to symbolize particular socio-cultural and even political significances. The existence of a high number of youths in the population, and the absence of a considerable religious character in them could be taken as a cause for rejection of Islamic national radio and television (Rouhani 2001; Bahonar 2009). The absence of television and radio in most of modern-traditional coffeehouses and use of modern audio technologies provides the opportunity for the owners to play different music genres and impact youth significantly.

Having the least degree of affiliation with the Islamic state and its national radio and television, watching satellite televisions, and listening to particular music genres, as well as being familiar with Persian heritage and at the same time Western culture, has been associated with signs of prestige more often among the middle and upper class citizens in Iranian society (Rouhani 2001). At *Sofrehkhuneh-e Tehrun-e Qadim*, despite its proximity to the Udlajan working area, an effort that has been made to be faithful to the visual and aural elements of Persian architecture and seems to produce a combination that encourages middleclass citizens to enter the coffeehouse and spend some relaxing

time there. The customers of *Sofrehkhuneh-e Tehrun-e Qadim* based on my fieldwork findings are mainly Tehrani citizens. They were mainly from the northern parts of the city and feel more connected with non-Iranian tourists, who eat or drink there, than with the noisy, crowded working class environment of the quarter.

The modern-traditional coffeehouse, as opposed to the small unnamed traditional coffeehouse, appears to construct a visual and an aural architecture that monumentalizes Udlajan's past: a historical past that based on my conversions with *Sofrehkhuneh-e Tehrun-e Qadim'*s customers mostly matters to non-Udlajan residents. As the majority of current residents of the neighborhood are Afghan immigrants and young male workers from different provinces of Iran who did not share any historical past with Udlajan. The physical and sonic environment of the small traditional coffeehouse that does not offer a calm space for dining or drinking represents a more realistic scene of the neighborhood's daily life. This coffeehouse seems to be a suitable choice for a quick lunch while shopping, for the working class people who look for affordable food and drink close to their workspace, or for some activities that require secrecy.

3.5. Summary

In this chapter I have introduced a literature review on history of Udlajan with an ethnographic case study of two different coffeehouses in the neighborhood. By presenting the soundscape of these two coffeehouses and focusing on sound and the presence of silence, I drew attention to possible meanings in different communicative contexts. I have

illustrated the relationship between spatial arrangements and sonic environment, as I explored the dynamics of social interactions within these coffeehouses and their surrounding urban space. Moreover, I have explained how customers of these spaces possibly feel intimately rooted and connected to places and how they embody the memory of spaces despite some undesirable changes made to them. According to Ms. R one of my interviewees in *Sofrehkhuneh-e Tehrun-e Qadim*, "dining in a historic space creates a feeling of authenticity."[46]She believed it really does not matter if those who dine there share a similar experience of the space in the past. Eating and drinking in an old building with a pond, water fountains, and *gonbad* can create a shared feeling of good old days and togetherness.

Based on my observations in the coffeehouses and the conversations I had with the customers, I found soundscape as an essential element in the place attachment process and I recognized how it impacts individuals' choices in these coffeehouses. For instance, in a conversation with Mr. E, one of the customers of *Sofrehkhuneh-e Tehrun-e Qadim*, he pointed out how the calm relaxing atmosphere of the coffeehouse that is in direct connection with sonic elements such as the sound of water fountains was one of the main reasons in his frequent visits of this coffeehouse. In a different situation at the traditional coffeehouse, Mr. A mentioned:

> I feel comfortable here … I know almost all of the customers … I can do whatever I like. I can shout (laughing)… watch the news or a soccer match … this coffeehouse has a friendly atmosphere. Ya, it is not perfect or fancy … but it is

[46] "Authenticity" is my translation of the word *esalat* in Farsi.

very intimate.

This ethnographic exploration, and the ideas presented in the chapter can be used as a model when studying soundscape of many other spaces in the neighborhood. Before looking at the soundscape of other places and people's interactions within them, however, we should consider that this neighborhood was home to a diverse population. For a better understanding of Udlajan residents' interaction and sense of identity as members of Muslim or Jewish community, in the next chapter I explore the struggle for hegemony that took place in Iranian society in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Ansari, 36–37). Chapter Four provides a brief history of national identity formation and its challenges in Iran, while it questions the concept of Iranian-ness, and the position of religious minorities within Iranian national identity spectrum.

Chapter 4: Nationalism, National Identity, and the Question of Cultural Identity in Iran

4.1. Introduction

Heterogeneous populations from religious, linguistic, ethnic, and tribal communities have lived in Iran for centuries. A collective sense of identity had existed between the diverse communities of this region even before the rise of nationalistic movements. From 1935 on, in diplomatic relations with other countries,[47] this region was officially named Iran (Yarshater 1989, 62). Although the term "Iran" was used for a geographical designation of a region between India and the Arab lands from the third century A. D., it should not be considered as evidence that a "homogeneous Iranian nation and people existed in that region" (Vaziri 1993, 65). The main factors that constructed Iranian national identity (*Huwiat-e Melli)* are Iran's pre-Islamic culture, Islam, and relations with the West, all of which have been cause for contestation with regard to what is considered to be authentic and legitimate Iranian national identity (Holliday 2011, 1-2).

Iranian nationalism as a constructed ideological basis of the modern nation-state emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century (Ansari 2012, 36–37). The political

[47] Before 1935 this region was known as Persia.

powers in this region tried to impose some measures of centralization or political unity. For instance, the Safavid dynasty (1502–1736) struggled to unify its domains through the institutionalization of Shia theology as a helpful tool to encourage devotion when faced with expansionist neighbors with clear differences in either ethnic or religion identity (or both) (Saleh and Worrall 2015,79). The sociopolitical circumstances of the Qajar and the Pahlavi period, the influence of the European notion of nationalism, and the secular movements toward modernization[48] marked "the transition from a traditional parochial system of identity, historical interpretation, and self-conceptualization to a state-sponsored identity" (Vaziri 1993, 6).

Figure 15 - Iran and its neighbors

The state's ruling elites, intelligentsia, and clerics made an effort in homogenizing

[48] "Modernization" and "Westernization" both refer to policy changes instituted by Reza Shah and Mohamad Reza Shah and may be used interchangeably. Western culture and technology are usually perceived as those of western European countries and the United States of America.

the population by leading them toward nationhood, and using the state territorial unit of Iran to create a common feeling and identity among all the people. Consequently, people from religious, linguistic, and tribal communities such as the Armenians, Jews, Turks, Arabs, Balouchs, and Gilaks who lived within the administrative boundary marking out the Iranian plateau were all termed "Iranian" (Vaziri, 6-7). The demarcation of accurate borders similar to those of the present day Iran is a relatively new phenomenon and it meant that modern Iran is a state with Persian ethnic majority. Iran also contains other ethnic groups comprising over 40% of the whole population (Saleh and Worrall, 79).

With the demarcation of Iranian boundaries, land and borders became the key criteria for Iranian nationality. Accordingly, individuals of different ethnic groups "for the first time found themselves within a centralized sovereign state which was rapidly eroding their traditional autonomy and loose notions of fealty and alliance" (Saleh and Worrall, 79-80). During Iranian history, different "legal, educational, social, military, and economic programs [aimed] to inculcate within the country's variegated population a sense of identification with and loyalty to the nation of Iran" (Yaghoubian 2014, xxiii). However, construction of an "authentic" Iranian national identity has been challenged by Iran being a multi-religious and multi-ethnic state.

4.2. Historical overview

Although more than 95% of Iranian citizens are Muslims, religious, linguistic, and tribal communities have lived in this country for centuries. As the discourse of

nationalism appeared in Iran, minority groups, specifically religious minorities seemed to be "nonnational" which means they had "terminal loyalty to a unit, [their religious community] other than the nation" (Cottam 1964, 8). Moreover, individuals may have different levels of loyalty to their community and to the nation.

A discourse of Iranian nationalism emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century between elites who wished to find a cure for Iran's socio-political decline in the late Qajar period (from 1906) (Ansari, 36-37). Iranian nationalism became the central part of a Constitutionalist Project during the 1906 to 1911. A pioneer of progressive political changes in the Middle East, Iran was the birthplace of the first Constitutional Revolution, *Enghelab-e Mashruteh*.[49] Focusing on the Iranian Constitutional Revolution (1906) and its aftermaths clarifies how the first discussions about the construction of one people became significant in Iranian society.

The central part of the Constitutionalist Project was a nationalist narrative that was influenced by an idealized European model of development and sympathized with European intellectuals' theory of "Persian decadence." This theory considered "oriental despotism" as the basis of Iran's underdevelopment (Ansari, 9-13). The ideology of Iranian nationalists consists of several arguments derived from European oriental studies, the historical consciousness of Iran's pre-Islamic past, and the destructive role of Arabs in Iran's development during the period after Arab's conquest of Iran. Iranian nationalists

[49] Moreover, the first nationalist and parliamentary democratic movement in the post–World War II period (1950–53) as well as the first "antidespotic revolutionary change" (1977–79) happened in this country. Iran was also home to the Green Movement (2009–present), the first civic social movement in the Middle East (Mahdavi 2011, 94).

regarded Arabs and Islam as the main cause of Iran's decadence and backwardness, while Arab conquest of Iran in the seventh century put an end to the Sasanians as the last empire (27, 30).

The Constitutional Revolution projected the question of ethno-nationalism in Iran to the forefront of politics (Saleh and Worrall, 80) and the success of the Revolution was due to the participation of various ethnic actors such as the Azeris, the Bakhtiaris, the Jews, and the Armenians. Following the Revolution the reformist leaders argued that to become a modern nation, the government should acknowledge the rights of non-Muslims by law (Baer 2009, 35). As a result, in the process of Constitutional Revolution, religious minorities such as the Jewish community played an effective role hoping to achieve full citizenship and be considered as "true" Iranians (Pirnazar 2000; Tsadik 2007, 191). In quest of equal rights, the Jewish community became the supporter of Reza Shah's oppositional movement.

They found Reza Shah's nationalistic attitudes such as the suppression of clerics' power and admiration of the pre-Islamic Iran to be promising for the improvement of the Jewish community' socio-cultural status (Nikbakht 1996, 75). Although Reza Shah was not particularly interested in the life of religious minorities (except Zoroastrian), all minority groups took advantage of his reform policies. Reza Shah believed in a modern united Iran with a powerful military, which did not depend on foreign countries. He was a secular leader and was against "a nation of tribal groups and wanted one people; a people with well-developed historical and national consciousness founded on a culture whose sources lay mainly in pre-Islamic Iran" (Rahimyian 2011, 60).

4.2.1. Pahlavi era

During the Pahlavi time (1925-1979), Iranian nationalism embraced an anti-Islamic stance suggesting "the Persian language, Zoroastrian cultural heritage, and the imperial history of Persia and its civilization" as the key principles of Iranian identity (Saleh 2013, 58). In the Pahlavi era national identity relied on "territorial integrity and national sovereignty as well as shared memories" (Amanat and Vejdani 2012, 3). The emphasis on the greatness of the pre-Islamic past implied Iran's decline during the Islamic era and particularly the Qajar period. Moreover, European Orientalists' racial distinction[50] between Indo-Europeans and Arab Semites influenced nationalist intellectuals who idealized the pre-Islamic Iran as a period of glory and prosperity (Kashani-Sabet 2002).

Reza Shah intended to create a unified nation state, as he imposed various changes in the sociocultural life of people such as abolition of titles (for example, *Miraza*, *Khan*, *shaykh*), forcing new dress codes, and changing cities and provinces' names. He forced ethnic groups to move to other areas to destroy ethnic cohesion and sometimes one family's land was given to another family in the same ethnic group to cause intra-ethnic hostility (Sanasarian 2000, 15). Reza Shah attempted to reconstruct a progressive Iran through his leading efforts such as building roads, providing public education (only in Farsi), importing Western technology, and establishing social and economic institutions.

[50] Such as Ernst Herzfeld and Arthur Christensen.

He aimed to introduce Western culture to Iranians and develop the ideas of nationalism, national history, and heritage to characterize a strong basis for future generations in order to represent themselves in a state approved national uniformity (Devos and Werner 2014, 1-7). Reza Shah's government propagated two thoughts; first, transforming Iran through modernization to create a national relationship, and second, dissemination of Aryanism in order to maintain the unity of Iran under his rule (Vaziri, 193). In addition to Aryanism, the belief in Iranians' racial superiority also derived from Europeans' archaeological explorations namely the discovery of the Cyrus cylinder in Mesopotamia in 1879, which approved the image of Cyrus narrated in the Old Testament. Accordingly, Iranian nationalists obtained a historical figure who was also admired by non-Iranians and particularly by Europeans (Ansari, 17).

Mohammad Reza Shah, similar to his father, was an "Aryanist-nationalist" and believed in the magnificence of ancient Iranian history (Katouzian, 262). He called his nationalistic policies a "positive nationalism," as opposed to Musaddiq's discourse of "freedom and independence" that was called a "negative nationalism." By nationalizing the oil industry, Musaddiq, who was the prime minister until 1953, planned to reduce the British influence in Iran. However, Mohammad Reza Shah did not perceived Musaddiq's nationalist movement as legitimate. In his book, *Mission for My Country* (1961), Mohammad Reza Shah reflects his thoughts on nationalism and how he differentiates between himself and Mosaddeq as "good" and "evil" and considers his nationalism as "the true patriot" (Pahlavi 1961).

For the Shah, Westernization was a dialogue that led to the reinvention of an Iranian nation in terms of the "great civilization" (Holliday 2011, 37). Mohamad Reza Shah believed Iranians inherited the oldest civilization that has also been the origin of the Western culture. He believed Western countries can civilize Iranians, or in other ways Iran can possibly civilize Western countries (Pahlavi 1961, 13). Shah's perception of civilization and the glory of pre-Islamic Iran, particularly his deep appreciation for the Achaemenids and Cyrus the Great, played a crucial role in prioritization of *Iraniyat* (Iran's pre-Islamic culture and heritage) at the expense of *Islamiyat* (Iran's Islamic culture and heritage) (Holliday, 38).

In accordance with Reza Shah and Mohamad-Reza Shah's great interest in pre-Islamic Iran, the Iranian Jewish community also respected the ancient Iranian history and culture. The Iranian Jewish community believed in Judaism as being one of the oldest religions practiced in Iran and they were proud of this long history of residence in the Iranian territory for more than 2700 years since the Assyrian exile (722 BCE) (Rahimyian, 61-62). In construction of Iranian nationalism and ideological adherence, the tension between *Iraniyat* and *Islamiyat* has been a key issue both during the Pahlavi era and following the Iranian Islamic Revolution. In all different manifestations of nationalism, all opposing ideologies have eventually "had to adhere, and within which [nationalism] most have been subsumed" (Ansari, 1). The challenges between the *Islamiyat* and the *Iraniyat* discourse of national identity were expressed in works of a

number of Iranian scholars; for example, in Al-i Ahmad's discourse of *Westernization*,[51] in Shariati's discourse of *return to the self*, and in Khomeini's discourse of *Islamic Government*. The combination of these three discourses[52] was one of the main reasons in the establishment of the Islamic Republic (Holliday, 73).[53]

4.2.2. Islamic revolution

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini who had been in exile because of his anti-government political activities since 1964 returned to Iran in February 1979. His return was the starting point to create an Islamic government. A Provisional Government from February to November 1979 headed by Mehdi Bazargan was responsible for revising the constitution and to get its approval. Regardless of claims of Islam's universalism by Ayatollah Khomeini as well as theologians and scholars, the Iranian constitution in Article 12 identified Iran as a Twelver Shii Ithna'e Ashari state (Sanasarian, 17). Moreover, Article 13 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran acknowledged Zoroastrian, Jewish, and Christian Iranians as the only recognized religious minorities in the country.

[51] The influence of the Westernization (*gharbzadegi*) discourse is a clear illustration of the common and dominant anti-Western discourse in Iran at the time (Holliday 2011, 60).
[52] One should be aware that the above mentioned were not the only causes of Islamic Revolution, as there were other forces such as United States foreign policies and British interests in the region that impacted the formation of the 1979 Revolution.
[53] For more information on these discourses see Holliday (2011) and Mahdavi (2011).

Among the two hundred and ninety members of the unicameral *majles* or Islamic Consultative Assembly (parliament) in the legislative branch of Iran's government, Zoroastrians and Jews are allowed to elect one national legislator each, and Christians are granted to elect three[54] parliamentarians for four-year terms of office. However, members of the three religious minorities are banned from seeking high public office in the executive or presidential and judicial or legal branches of government as those offices are reserved for Muslims (Choksy 2012, 273-274).

The Islamic Revolution of 1979 brought a series of intended and unintended changes for the country. "Post-Islamism" is an example of one of the unintended results of the Islamic revolution. The post-Islamic discourse implies that Islam is not the problem and is not the answer (Mahdavi 2011). Based on Mahdavi, Post-Islamism in Iran is not monolithic and can be divided into three main intellectual trends: quasi/semi post-Islamism, liberal post-Islamism, and neo-Shariati post-Islamist discourse. Although these three trends have certain differences, individuals within each trend share some level of disappointment with the Islamic state and have articulated a self basically in contradiction with what is approved by the government.

There are two distinct arguments about the Islamic government's nationalistic approaches. First, the Islamic government did not welcome signs of secular Iranian nationalism, as it aimed to posit Islam as being an authentic identity for Iranians. Scholars such as Saleh (2013) describe nationalism and Islamism as having opposite arguments: nationalism is an ideology that recognizes the identity of certain people within a

[54] One for Assyrians-Chaldaeans and two for Armenians.

particular territory under a given political entity, while Islamism believes in the doctrine of *Umma* and the unity of all Muslims despite their nationality, geography and political affiliations. Second, in opposition, scholars such as Fozi (2000) and Ram (2009) address the Islamic regime linkage of nationalism to the glory of pre-Islamic Iran. They argue that the Islamic Republic of Iran remained committed to the Pahlavi dynasty's conception of the immemorial Iranian nation, or the Aryan hypothesis, articulated by European scholars in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Ram (2009) explains that although the Islamic Republic's noticeable shift from "Iran Time" to "Islam Time" reaches far beyond Iranian borders, it remains faithful to and rooted in "the European/Pahlavi master narrative" of Iranian history. Hence, the religious elites modified their political approach to religion and take note of the pre-Islamic era, which they once rejected entirely (Vaziri 1993). I believe that the second argument offers an inclusive approach to scholarship and provides a more detailed and realistic picture of the existing contradictions within Iranian national identity.

Similar to other modern nationalisms, the principal concept of Iranian nationalism has claimed assimilation of differences such as religion, language, and ethnicity into a unitary notion of "Iranian-ness." The close bond of Iranian identity with Islam and particularly Shia faith raises critical questions about how religious minorities identify as members of the Iranian society in order to adapt to the expectations of the Islamic government and the majority population. Iranian Citizenship seems to require crossing out of differences, as those who took the privilege of being a Muslim for granted could speak confidently of their inclusivity. For instance, a religious minority person had to

assimilate into instances such as “Islamicized non-Muslims” (Najmabadi 2007, 177). However, one should be aware that the levels of inclusivity among Iranian Muslims namely Shia Persian speakers as well as Shia non-Persian speakers, and Sunni Muslims have not been the same.

4.3. Religious minorities: Iranian Jewish community

Individuals of religious minorities have reconstituted nationalism and national identity in the process of their daily lives. During their long history of residence in Iran (more than 2700 years), the Jewish community assimilated more easily in Iranian society in the historical periods in which the emphasis was on secular-nationalist discourses and the glorification of Iran’s pre-Islamic past (Rahimyian, 61). Secular Iranian nationalism provided the Jews a sense of their historic connection to the land in which they resided. The Jewish community argues that there are no contradictions between Judaism and secular Iranian nationalism, as Jews believed that the Bible and the Talmud had a positive view of ancient Iran and Cyrus the Great, the founder of the ancient Persian Empire. Cyrus was known as “the redeemer of the Jewish people and the messiah of God” (Netzer 1996, 251-252).

Both Muslim and non-Muslim Iranians have known Iranians Jews as Kalimian-e Iran. Following the establishment of the General Registry Office in 1924, Iranian Jews required to register their religious affiliation in their ID cards as *Kalimi* (Netzer 2011, 376). The word referring to the Jews of Iran derives from an Arabic root meaning “to

address" and "to speak." The designation in this context has derived from the particular "epithet given to the prophet Moses as *Kalim-Allah*, that indicated in the Koran: And to Moses God spoke directly" (Netzer 2011, 376). *Kalimian-e Iran* (Iranian Jews) had an ongoing cultural exchange with various aspects of Iranian and the larger Muslim community cultures, such as literature, philosophy, music, and material culture namely miniature paintings, wood works, and metal works (Gindin 2011; Carmeli 2014). For instance, in the field of material culture, the Jewish community borrowed different artistic instructions and models from Iranian culture and adapted them to Jewish culture through some modifications such as the addition of Hebrew inscriptions to an object (Carmeli, 168).

Moreover, in Judeo-Persian literature one can find two main approaches in works of Iranian Jewish poets. The first one is a focus on the idea of monotheism in the Jewish faith and the close connection of Jewish believers with their God. This approach can be found in works of Molana Shahin (13th and 14th Century), Emrani (15th and 16th Century), Elisha ben Shemouel (17th Century), and Benyamin ben Mishael (17th and 18th Century) (Yeroushalmi 1997,151,163). The second approach focuses on a mixture of the Jewish myths with those of Iranians to create "Jewish Iranianized" or "Iranian Judaized" stories (157-159). For instance, in the *Ardsir-name*, a Judeo-Persian epic in the *mathnawi* form by Shahin, Cyrus the Great has been represented as a Jewish king born of Queen Esther. The Jewish poets narrated this story and stories similar to this to possibly represent their community's close connection to Cyrus the Great and consequently to Iran's glorious past (Rahimiyian, 62; Yeroushalmi, 158).

The works of great Persian classical poets such as Ferdowsi, Nezami, Sadi, Attar, Rumi, and Hafez influenced not only the word choice and diction of Jewish poets, but also on their approach to literary devices and techniques (Yeroushalmi, 151,163). Jews of Iran speak a form of Persian that is distinguishable only by a peculiar accent and they use Hebrew script to write.[55] Moreover, their historical and cultural oneness with Iran mostly results in expressions of affection for and loyalty to Iran (Cottman 1979, 83) to the extent that one may consider Jews of this region to be "more Iranian" than most of their fellow citizen.

Even though there is some proof of Jewish discrimination in pre-Islamic Iran, the official adoption of Shia theology as state religion in the Safavid Dynasty (1501-1722) has been historically considered as the beginning of the worst era in Persian-Jewish relations (Sanasarian, 45). For example, during the Safavid era the Jewish community had to pay special taxes through appointees to local authorities. Moreover, "the law of apostasy rewarded those non-Muslim who converted to Islam by making them the sole inheritors of the property and possessions of all relatives, even distant ones" (45).

During the Muzaffar al-Din Shah rule (1896-1907), two happenings brought about essential changes in the history of Iranian Jewry. First was the Constitutional Revolution and the second was the foundation of the first schools of the Alliance in Iran (1898). The Jewish community played an active role in the Constitutional Movement, "for which they received the official thanks from the new parliament in 1906" (Fischel

[55] Some nineteenth and twentieth Jedeo-Persian dialects employ an Arabic, Roman, or Cyrillic alphabet (Gindin 2011, 188).

1950, 141-142). During the Constitutional era (1906-11), Jews were allowed to take part in the political and economic life of the country (Tsadik 2011, 47, 50) and the Jewish community found the chance to have a Jewish representative,[56] Azizollah Soleimani, for a short period of time in the first parliament. However, the oppositional pressures forced Soleimani to resign and Seyyed Abdollah Behbahani (a Muslim representative) became the new representative of the Jewish community (Netzer 1996, 35; Afary 1997: 43; Baer 2009, 35). The success of the Constitutional Movement brought about "the elimination of the dualism in legislation between the religious law, the *Sharia*, and the civil law, *Urf*, and the abolition of the discriminatory and humiliating medieval restrictions against the Jews" (Fischel 1950, 142). The legal status of the Jewish community improved during this era, though it was still far from the social status of Shia Muslims.

Following the death of Muzaffar al-Din Shah, under his successor Muhammad Ali Shah, the Constitutional Movement did not satisfy the high expectations of the Muslim and Jewish liberals (142). Opposing the new ideology of nationalism and insistence on maintaining the *dhimmah (zimma)* prescriptions for religious minorities was one of the reasons for liberal dissatisfaction (Tsadik 2007, 191). This meant that the status of religious minorities in a Shia society should be that of *dhimmis* (*ahl-e zimma*), "the people of the book who lived under Islam." Consequently, minority protection in the society was guaranteed as long as they accepted the supremacy of the Muslims and respected the following rules: pay the *jazya* tax on an annual basis, not to contradict the protection articles, not to harm Muslims, not to display objects objectionable to Muslims,

[56] In the second Majlis convened in 1909, Jews found the chance to be represented by their own delegate, Dr. Luqman Nihuray (Baer 2009, 36).

not to build houses of worship, not to sound bells, not to establish tall buildings or buildings taller than that of Muslims, and to accept the regulations imposed on them by the Muslims (Tsadik 2011, 51; Baer, 13- 14).

The Constitutional Revolution did not create an ideal situation for Iranian Jews; Jews of Shiraz, Isfahan, Kermanshah,[57] and Hamedan faced severe discrimination, despoliation and incursion of their quarters from 1906 to 1914. During the Mohamad Ali Shah's era because of his enmity with Constitutional Revolution, the Jewish community in Tehran was forced and sometimes beaten to participate in compulsory rallies against the Constitutional Revolution, while they had to repeat the slogan "we are followers of Moses and do not want the Constitutional Revolution" (Netzer 1996, 37-39; Nikbakht 1996, 71-72).

In spite of the above-mentioned challenges, the Constitutional Movement caused recognizable changes in the everyday life of Jewish community. For example, during the Constitutional era the Jewish community published their first newspaper *Shalom* (Netzer 1996, 32), established a society for the Promotion of the Hebrew Language in 1917, and formed a Judeo-Persian and Hebrew printing press in Teheran (Fischel, 1950, 158). In addition to the Constitutional Revolution, the birth of Zionism in Iran and involvement of

[57] In 1909 in Kermanshah there was "a noticeable feature characteristic of the new spirit of toleration and sense of common humanity. Numerous Muslim citizens made serious efforts to save the lives of their Jewish neighbors and protect them from violence. The officials were much astonished by the practical sympathy shown by the Muslims in sending food and clothing to the Jews" (Fischel 1950, 142-143).

outside Jewish organizations such as the American Joint Distribution Committee influenced the life of the Iranian Jewish community (Menashri 2002, 383-384).

Reza Shah's sociopolitical and cultural policies, which were inspired by those of Ataturk in Turkey, guaranteed equal rights to members of the religious minorities (Nikbakht 1996, 75). Reza Shah did not tolerate any political interest or ideology associated with a foreign country or group outside of Iran. As a result, Zionist activities and the Jewish migration to Israel were prohibited in his era. Reza Shah ordered the arrest of Shemuel Haim, the head of the Iranian Zionist organization, who strongly encouraged Iranian Jews to migrate to the state of Israel (Rahimyian, 60). However, the Jewish community's migration to Israel never came to a complete end and continued illegally.

Pahlavi rulers' policy on religious minorities was formed by the purpose to create a homogenized society, to limit the diversity, and to make every individual in a religious minority into an "Iranian" (Sanasarian, 5). During Reza Shah's time in power, the state brought relief to the life of Jewish community for a short period of time. However, in the late 1920s Jewish schools were closed[58] and in the 1930s the Shah's pro-Nazi considerations endangered Iranian Jewry. Although there was no physical abuse or persecutions of Jews in this period, anti-Jewish proclamations and articles were published in the Iranian public media (Cottman, 84; Sanasarian, 46; Menashri, 386). For instance, a Persian talk-radio program broadcasting from Berlin contained anti-Jewish threats and created a frightening atmosphere for the Iranian Jewish community (Pirnazar 1996, 103).

[58] Reza Shah In the 1920s subjected the Jewish schools to the general education system, to have governmental license and an Iranian name.

There were members of the Jewish community who were scared and felt insecure to go to work or to send their children to school. However, in this frightening situation a number of Muslim families supported their Jewish neighbors. These Muslim families guaranteed that in case of any attack, they would shelter their Jewish neighbors in their houses or any other safe spaces (102-103).

In Mohamad Reza Shah's era (1941-79), Iran experienced a dynamic sociopolitical period that caused an open cultural environment. The number of newspapers and weeklies increased, Jewish organizations and synagogues could work freely, and the Jewish community found the chance to renew its Zionist activities (Rahimiyan, 62). Moreover, the economic status of the Jewish community improved to the extent that by the time of the Islamic Revolution the majority of Jews were middle class citizens (Sanasarian, 47). One-third of the Jewish population migrated to Israel during the first few years of its establishment in 1948 (Amanat 2011, 208). Israelis of Iranian descent spoke a variety of Hebrew-Farsi dialects (Gindin 2011, 197) and from the early decades of their immigration to Israel they made a great effort to preserve their Iranian cultural background (Yazdani1996, 72). The Iranian Jewish community in Israel has managed to produce Persian radio programs and maintain a close connection with their motherland in spite of the existing political tensions between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the state of Israel. For instance, Iranian Jews who reside in Israel are deeply interested in sponsoring the repair of the tomb of Esther and Mordechai located in Hamadan and tomb of Daniel in Susa (Yazdani 1996, 62-63).

As the majority of low-income Jewish population migrated to Israel, the

remaining Jews improved the socio-economic level of their community (Menashri, 389). Furthermore, Jewish residents of larger cities with access to trade networks and Western-style education began to leave their cities to come to Tehran (Amanat 2011, 208). However, following the Islamic Revolution and the domination of Shiism, the Islamic government left hardly any alternative secular voices and sped up the emigration of the Jewish community (Amanat 2011, 209; Menashri 402). In spite of this, a number of Iranian Jews decided to stay in Iran rather than abandoning "their traditions, relationships, and possessions for a foreign land and language where they would have to begin a new life" (Baer, 58). They made an effort to follow "proper" behavior patterns in Islamic Iran.

4.4. National Identity, Everyday life, and the Question of Cultural Identity

Nationalism and Islamism, also expressed as *Iraniyat* and *Islamiyat*,[59] have been two crucial components of Iranian national identity. These two identity markers have been at the heart of tensions, as one questions the place of religious minorities in the mainstream discourse of Iranian national identity, which is Farsi-speaking Shia Muslim. Although the relation with each of these identity markers is not the same even between the Farsi-speaking Shias, it is more debatable between religious minorities. The dichotomy between *Iraniyat* and *Islamiyat* can be questioned in the understanding of Iranian identity and "Iranian-ness" among the religious minorities. Members of religious minority communities, namely the Jewish community, identify as Iranians, even though

[59] The binary of *Iranyiat* and *Islamyiat* conceals different schools, trends, and practices, although these diversities are not the focus of this dissertation.

they have not necessarily shared the exact identity markers with their Shia fellow citizens.

Although the presentation of Iranian Jews' sense of identity is based on the dichotomy between *Iraniyat* and *Islamiyat*, it involved ties to Jewish customs and rituals. They identify as residents of a neighborhood, city, and a country as they acknowledge their cultural characteristics such as religious attitudes, rituals and behavioral patterns as a means to transmit culture from generation to generation. Objects and rituals represent significant non-verbal means through which a person may convey identity. For instance, in Mohammad Reza Shah's era in addition to a picture of Shah, "Muslim shopkeepers displayed a picture of the Imam Ali wearing a green turban, while Jewish households and businesses displayed a picture of Moses, [60]sometimes with Aaron," which was replaced by Ayatollah Khomeini's picture after the Revolution (Baer, 64). This action can be an effort to follow "appropriate" behavior pattern or as Frith (1996) argues, "what we would like to be, not what we are" (123).

[60] See Figure 16.

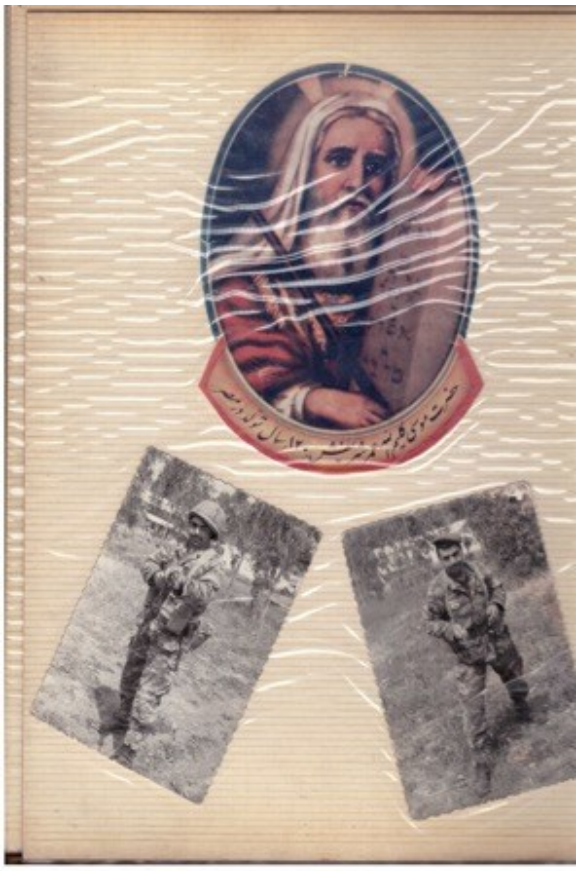

Figure 16 - Image of Moses in one of my informants' personal family album. Also, there are two photos showing Jewish soldiers in the Iranian army.

The ways in which people are expected to behave in a community touch all aspects of their daily experiences such as customs, beliefs, morals, and rituals of society. Individuals behave differently as residents of a neighborhood or as members of a group; in other words, they represent their culture and identity in the practice of everyday life. In daily life experiences, people define themselves in relation to others as they explore ethno-national boundaries, and learn how they belong, or do not, in different communities. Figure 16 reveals the complexity of the Jewish-Iranian cultural identity and

symbolizes the sense of belonging to one nation despite being a member of a religious minority. The page layout includes an image of Moses at the top and the photos of two Jewish soldiers in the Iranian army at the bottom. As required of all Iranian male citizens, the Jewish-Iranian residents have to serve in the Iranian army and fulfill their military obligation. Locating soldiers' pictures close to the image of Moses points to the highly respected position of the soldiers and the significance of serving the country regardless of one's religious faith.

4.5. Summary

In this chapter I have provided a brief history of national identity formation and its challenges in Iran, as I focused on the position of the Jewish community within the Iranian national identity spectrum. I have explained how the Jewish community attempted to establish a historical continuity between pre-Islamic Iranian culture and contemporary Iranian Jewish traditions. I emphasized the Jewish community's unique cultural characteristics such as their great interest in the Persian language. The Jewish community dwelling in Iran for hundreds of years resulted in the distinctive characteristics of Jewish-Iranian daily routines and facilitated the connection between Iranian Jews and Iranian-Shia culture. For instance, *Nowruz* (the new year celebration) has been one of the most significant celebrations of the Iranian Jewish community. Moreover, some Iranian Jews participated in Shia rituals such as mourning during the month of *Moharram* and scarifying animals to fulfill their vows or possibly to make a

pretentious display of their respect for their Shia neighbors' beliefs.[61]

In Iranian society, Jewish identity reflected the perspective of the dominant culture, while embracing the limiting restrictions imposed upon minority communities. As a result, the construction of Jewish residents' sense of identity not only has borrowed features from their Jewish background but also has some connections with both the Iranian and Shia cultures. What I want to suggest is not that Jewish and Muslim residents agreed on values that were expressed in all Iranian-Shia rituals or shared similar feelings regarding them. Jewish and Muslim residents came to identify as distinct resident groups of the neighborhood through different cultural activities.

My ethnographic case studies in the next chapter illustrate socio-cultural changes in Udlajan during Mohamad Reza Shah's period, while uncovering a broader range of personal and communal experiences than Iranian modern history often describes. The following chapter studies Udlajan residents' perceptions of "self" and "other" through their narratives of the past and their sound memories. Chapter Five attempts to answer questions such as the following: Does the formation of identity, based on cultural characteristics, act inclusively for the residents of Udlajan? Does the Jewish residents' participation in Jewish or Islamic rituals help them develop a strong sense of belonging at the communal and national levels?

[61] For more information see Chapter Five.

Chapter 5: Ethnographic Field Research, Narratives, and Memories

5.1. Introduction

Throughout Udlajan's history, sound and silence enabled people to socially construct space, whether using *Moharram Nowhe*[62] to help create a community space in a local *Tekkieh*, claiming a street corner as a sonic territory for street sellers, or abandoning a Jewish ritual. Residents use sound and silence in ways that help them understand their neighborhood experience and use space in meaningful ways. The neighborhood's soundscape, a subjective experience, makes every individual in this area responsible for creation of a portion of aural culture. My ethnographic case studies explore sound and silence in Udlajan during the Mohamad Reza Shah's period (1941-1979). Ethnographic research provides the chance to uncover a broader range of personal experiences than historiographic recounts.

For instance, residents of a neighborhood experience what city planners designed and organized, and they use and experience spaces in ways that may not always fall in line with the larger structures of the design and production of that space. In this chapter I focus on Udlajan residents' memories and narratives of the past to address their lived experiences and the ways they make sense of built environments. Udlajan had a musical

[62] *Nowhe* or *Nohe* (*Noha*) is an elegy depicting mournful subjects such as martyrdom of holy Imams.

atmosphere and music was as integral to the local soundscape as the streetcars and motorbikes blowing their horns in the streets are today. The sounds from live musical performances and musicians' practices spilled out into the streets. However, a few active street callers selling vegetables and fruits or second-hand furniture serve as the remaining vestiges of the once popular method of personalized musical advertising. After spending time in the neighborhood over six months, I have become accustomed to its soundscape. However, there are still situations in which I am completely overcome with the immensity of sound in Udlajan. For example, it was so commonplace for me to hear the sound of the cars, motorbikes, and taxi drivers' loud voices while calling for passengers – I heard it while I was walking in the neighborhoods' streets and narrow alleys, and I heard it when I was in Dr. Sapir Hospital or shops in the neighborhood – that I began to tune it out of my conscious thought.

On one occasion while I was walking in Udlajan alleys on a Friday morning,[63] I heard a remixed version of an old Afghan song called "Bia Ke Borem Ba Mazar." [64] The sound waves reverberated and echoed in the streets, bouncing off walls that date to the Pahlavi era. The sounds disoriented me by tricking my ears into thinking that I was in my grandparents' house in Mashhad[65] listening to an Afghan piece playing on my grandfather's old cassette player. The source of the sound was indiscernible; it seemed as if an Afghan man was singing with it. What was otherwise commonplace to me suddenly

[63] The official weekend holiday in Iran is Friday.
[64] "Let's leave for Mazar".
[65] Mashhad, the second most populous city in Iran, is the capital of Razavi Khorasan Province. It is located in the northeast of the country, close to the borders of Turkmenistan and Afghanistan.

became very strange. In this moment, a spatial phenomenon was created through an unusual juxtaposition of place and music. It was a personal, visceral experience, yet it was created through the space around me as the music interacted with the built form. This experience was a unique example of sound intersecting with the built environment to create an unusual soundscape, as my reaction to the sound was a product of my own musical upbringing and interest in Afghan songs and what they convey to me. My disorientation was a result of expectations about where such music should be coming from, combined with an overactive imagination that transfigured the days at my grandparents' house as a nostalgic place. What might at first seem to be an example of a passive actor being subjected to a piece of music is in fact illustrative of the complexity and interpretive nature of an experience at the intersection of space and music.

The components of memory, perception, and expectation are essential in understanding how space and sound coincide. These sorts of deeper levels of spatial understandings through sound are what I explore in this chapter. Here, I focus on the narratives of former residents of Udlajan to convey more than just the historical facts, and to convey feelings and personal tones that help develop a deep contextual understanding of people's lives through the telling of a story or the recounting of a sound memory. As indicated in Chapter One, the methodology used in this study is a layered approach. It is neither strictly ethnographic nor a memory and narrative analysis, but rather a combination of the two, which I call an "Ethnography of Sonic Recollection." The focus is on the narrated experiences of former residents of Udlajan during the Mohamad Reza Shah's period (1941-1979).

In this chapter, I consider recollection as an expressive indication of the interests of individuals or groups doing the remembering in the present. Moreover, I examine how memory shapes contemporary realities, and because I am concerned with not just the study of sound and the recovery of the past but with living communities, it is important that the current relationship between Muslim and Jewish community is acknowledged. This research focuses on the process of remembering as an active process of creation and sharing of experiences about Udlajan, a common space. The ethnographic method links the process of listening to the soundscape with the process of remembering the soundscape.

5.2. Phase 2: Ethnography of Sonic Recollection

This Ethnography of Sonic Recollection has been designed to explore Udlajan soundscape through individual sonic memories. The method used can be described as an ethnography focused on soundscape and the relationships that people establish with the neighborhood in their practice of everyday life. It involves narratives of ten former residents of Udlajan (five Muslims and five Jews) who are mainly in their 50s and 60s. I interviewed five former Jewish residents of the neighborhood, three in Iran and two in the United States. I conducted semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions to help my informants elaborate on the topics that they found more exciting. The nature of the questions (see Appendix I) was informal and the conversation guided the topics.

5.2.1. Interviews in the United States of America and Iran

In Fall 2014 I contacted Mr. Yousef Setarehshenas and Mr. Eshagh Shaoul. I conducted an interview over the phone with Mr. Setarehshenas, the editor in chief of 7dorim, a website focusing on Iranian-Jewish history and culture. He created the website in 2007 with a group of his friends and in 2009 he added the content of his previous publications such as "History and history makers" to this website. In April 2014 I traveled to Los Angeles to meet him. He was in his early sixties and spent his childhood in Udlajan. I conducted another interview via Skype with Dr. Eshagh Shaoul, the founder of Sarechal website, [66] who spent his childhood in the neighborhood. He launched this website in 2003 and he is now in his seventies.

7dorim.com is a website that includes topics related to Iranian-Jewish culture and rituals. The website contains information about the Jewish calendar, Jewish institutions, and well-known Iranian-Jews' biographies. Moreover, there are descriptions about different Jewish neighborhoods in Tehran and other provinces of Iran. The section related to the Tehran Jewish neighborhood has detailed information and valuable pictures from the neighborhood. The website aims to portrait Iranian-Jewish community and describe their significant role in the history of Iran.

Sarchal.com is a website that focuses on memories of Mr. Shaoul in general, and those who resided in the Tehran Jewish quarter in particular. In the website home page Mr. Shaoul writes that he launched this site to help keep the memories of Sarechal alive

[66] Sarechal (Sarchal) was part of Udlajan neighborhood.

both for its former residents and for their children and grandchildren. The website's goal explained as the followings:

> "1. To tell our children and grandchildren our stories so that they can know us better, can understand and better appreciate the hopelessness and hope, the fight for survival and for human harmony that we experienced and, as a result, find ways to make a better world with peace, human harmony and tolerance wherever they are.
>
> 2. To collect personal memories of our lives in Iran and Sarechal.
>
> 3. To start an Alumni Association of Sarechalis, providing information on the whereabouts of those who want to associate themselves with Sarechal and to record where we have been and where we are today and how we got here."

From Los Angeles I went to Tehran to continue my fieldwork in the Udlajan neighborhood. I was attempting to capture the sonic memories of the former residents of Udlajan before the Islamic revolution of 1979. I had a small sample of people in the community with whom I had regular social contacts. I participated in Jewish public religious services on Saturdays, particularly those that happened in two synagogues in *mahalleh*. Once the data collection was completed in terms of my personal observations, sound recordings, and interviews, I grouped such materials according to two main themes: the politics of public and private spaces, and the definition of Self and Other.

5.2.2. Interview themes

Drawing on examples from my ethnographic research, I provide an understanding of two general themes. First, I focus on the concept of public and private spaces and their relation to sound, soundscape, and sonic memory in my interviewees' reminiscences. In my interviews, I recognized that sonic memories of Muslim and Jewish residents contain descriptions about different levels of inclusion and exclusion in the day-to-day life of the neighborhood. As I followed the sonic clues of the interviewees' discussions, I found out that my informants make clear distinctions between public and private spaces including indoors and outdoors, homes, shops, mosques, and synagogues. I am aware that the borders between public and private spaces can be blurred and one can turn to the other under certain circumstances. Also, the rules of admission into places are not fixed and can be changed. For instance, as I explain later, houses mainly known as private spaces can turn into public spaces during certain events such as wedding ceremonies and they can be open to both Muslim and Jewish neighbors.

Second, I concentrate on the concepts of self and other. I propose that one can provide a more accurate image of oneself and others while speaking indirectly, for instance, recounting sonic memories. I found out that the interviewees when asked to share their memories about the past soundscape of the neighborhood were less guarded and more willing to open up about sensitive topics such as 'selfhood' and 'otherness'. Through their descriptions of sound images, they tended to talk about their personal experiences and their interactions with their fellow Muslim and Jewish neighbors. Reviewing the Muslim and Jewish residents' descriptions, I consider stereotypes of Jews

and Jewishness evident in Muslim's and Jewish residents' perceptions. I adopt a viewpoint that defines stereotypes as beliefs about the characteristics, attributes, and behaviors of members of the Jewish community in Udlajan.

5.2.2.1. Theme 1- Public and private spaces

In our everyday life we pass through different spaces that we may define as public or private. The concepts of public and private in Iranian culture also known as *omumi* and *khosusi* connote different levels of inclusion and exclusion in the society. According to Farzaneh Milani (1992), "the indoors, the domestic, the "private," the "personal," the world of women is trivialized. And out-of-doors, the "public," the world of masculine politics and money is affirmed, elevated" (5). The values expressed by *omumi* and *khosusi*, I propose, are not always related to gender segregation. However, the public and private relationships have overlapping economic, political, cultural, and social dimensions that have visible physical manifestations.

Based on Madanipour (2003), "In cultural and social terms, the distinction between the public and private determines the routines of daily life and is crucial in the relations between self and other, individual and society" (2). My interviews indicate that the defining lines between public and private in each community are closely linked to people's understanding of selfhood and otherness and markers such as religion, ethnicity, and gender are influential in defining self and other. These factors reveal themselves in the interviewees' descriptions of sound and the sonic space of the neighborhood.

We occasionally find ourselves in transition spaces, spaces that are neither private nor public. As a result, we experience the loss of a clear distinction between public and private spaces (Nissen 2008) that one may call semi-public or semi-private. As Akkar (2005) argues, public or private spaces do not exist absolutely in urban areas (76), which can also suggest that, as opposed to common belief, a public space is not always open to all or accessible by all members of a community. Different people may have diverse understandings of one particular public or private space. People react to their surroundings based on particular circumstances and their understanding of these environments. The relationship between public and private subdivisions of spaces is an indicator of the ways a society organizes itself. The subdivision of society into public and private not only impacts individuals' mental states but also "regulates their behaviors and superimposes a long lasting structure onto human societies and spaces they inhabit" (Madanipour, 1). Drawing on examples from my fieldwork in Udlajan, I analyze how the sonic experiences of Udlajan residents reveal the subdivisions of *omumi* and *khosusi* spaces and differential levels of inclusion and exclusion within a religiously- segregated neighborhood.

The role of the Jewish community in Iranian society has been the subject of extensive research (Sarshar 2014; Sarshar 2011; Amanat 2011; Baer 2009). Much of these writings have implicitly or explicitly focused on the subordinate status of Jews in a rigidly segregated social system in the Jewish neighborhoods. Udlajan was an example in which Iranian-Jewish life took place. Its Jewish residents came from different provinces of Iran namely Kashan, Hamedan, and Kermanshah. In this neighborhood, Jews and Muslims

lived side by side, while each community had its own particular understanding and experience of the concepts of *omumi* and *khosusi*.

In the work of scholars such as Amanat (2011) and Baer (2009), the public world of Muslims is associated with power status and the private world of Jews is associated with relative powerlessness. They mainly portray Jews as helpless, passive victims, whose very identity, status, and existence are dependent on their Muslim fellows. However, scholars such as Sarshar (2014) have rejected this narrow, monolithic view of the Jewish community, and have argued that despite limitations, they play significant roles in their family, community, and society. Looking at Udlajan from inside the private sphere of its residents, one perceives the sense and the necessity of protecting a part of residents' private life from the disturbance of others. Looking at the neighborhood from outside, from the public sphere, we understand it is crucial "to have a common ground where all can come out of their protected zones and communicate with each other" (Madanipour, 3).

I illustrate how Jewish residents, despite aspects of their everyday lives being circumscribed, are not mute victims but exercise agency in appropriating, negotiating, and using public space. I call for a re-examination of general notions of public and private spaces as well as a renewed focus on religion as a way to facilitate a better understanding and conceptualization of Jewish residents' interaction with public space in the neighborhood. For instance, Muslim residents might perceive a mosque as an all-inclusive public space, while their fellow Jewish neighbors are aware of the challenges they might face in entering a mosque. Focusing on my interviewees' sonic memories of daily life and

the ways they distinguish the "publicness" and "privateness" of their surrounding spaces can inform us about the power and social relations in the neighborhood. Moreover, it clarifies how, why, and where these individuals draw the boundaries of their communities, and if members of the Jewish or Muslim community could ever pass through each other's boundaries.

Most of my Muslim informants reminisced about entering the houses of their Jewish neighbors on Shabbat.[67] My Muslim interviewees explained how their Jewish neighbors would ask them to turn on or off their lights, stoves, or some electrical devices on Saturdays. I will describe my experience with three Muslim informants who recounted memories about Shabbat. My Muslim interviewees felt privileged to have the opportunity to enter the Jewish residents' houses. As they were talking about the *khosusi* spaces of the Jewish neighbors, their descriptions revealed the soundscape of the Jewish houses as well as different understandings of the concept of self and other.

First, I will focus on my interview with Mr. F, a former Muslim resident of Udlajan in Tehran. He is in his fifties and has a machine shop in *mahalleh*. He recounted:

> When I was a child, my Jewish neighbors were asking me to go to their houses and turn off their lights. They were cooking their food with a primus stove and

[67] In the Jewish faith Shabbat is the Jewish day of rest that starts from Friday night until Saturday evening

> because based on their tradition they did not turn the stove on and off on Saturdays, they were paying me one *Rial* to do so.[68]

I asked him if he could remember anything about the soundscape of his Jewish neighbors' houses. He replied that he could not mention anything in particular, and the only sound he remembered was the sound of the kitchen; the sound of plates against table, pot covers, a kettle hissing, and water running. He also explained that he sometimes heard their Jewish neighbors praying with a low voice. However, he could not remember anything about the prayer. For instance, I asked him if men and women recited together or if he heard the voice of a woman singing, but he was not certain about the details of what he remembered. He emphasized that the sounds of the kitchen during the lunch or dinnertime were foreground sounds in Udlajan. He recounted sounds such as cutlery scraping and tapping against a china plate or a cooking pot as well as the sounds of people's communications. Mr. F added that as most of the residents worked in the neighborhood, they could easily go back home from their work place to eat with their family, rest for a short time, say their prayers, and then go back to work. I realized since the shopkeepers are not the residents of the neighborhoods they no longer close their shops at noon to have lunch with the family. If in the past the sound of family conversations and kitchen created a unique mixture of *khosusi* and *omumi* sounds that were dominant during the lunch hour, they have disappeared from the daily soundscape of neighborhood. Moreover, he mentioned:

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[68] *Rial* is the currency of Iran, although Iranians mainly express amounts of money in *Toman*

> The Muslims mainly thought that the Jews' houses were not clean and that was why they did not have the courage to enter their private places…

I asked him what he currently thinks about their Jewish neighbors and he replied in a low voice:

> In my opinion Jews are better than Muslims because they do not lie and practice their religion better than Muslims. They are real Muslims.

As he started talking in a low voice, for the first few seconds I thought somebody entered the room. However, I realized that choosing a lower volume was his personal preference and the way he replied to some parts of the questions in a low voice can inform us about his cultural upbringing and sense of identity as a Muslim resident in the neighborhood. As a result, I asked him some questions about his parents' interaction with the Jewish neighbors.

He explained that when he was a little child his parents told him that Jews would cut off the heads of Muslim children. According to Mr. F, he was told this because his parents wanted to make sure he kept a distance from their Jewish neighbors. I asked him if he has any Jewish friends and he replied no. He assumed that Jewish parents might tell a similar story to their children to keep them away from Muslims. By emphasizing the idea that the more religious the better person you would be, he was making an effort to appear less biased than the neighborhood's Muslim residents, including his own parents, who had offensive attitudes toward their Jewish neighbors. Mr. F explained that he was impacted by these false beliefs when he was younger, and that he was therefore not comfortable

hanging out with Jews. For instance, once when he was invited to a Jewish wedding, he was not willing to eat or drink with them, although he found the Jewish weddings quite similar to the Muslim weddings. He added the songs that Jews played in their weddings were similar to the songs that he had heard in Muslim weddings. He mentioned that the famous Persian song "Ey yar mobarak bad," meaning "happy wedding sweetheart," was one of these songs.

A few seconds later, he recounted another memory. His memory involved Mr. Nejatverdi, a Jewish *motreb* (musician), who often played in the back of Mr. F's shop. Mr. Nejatverdi played the violin and his son accompanied him with the *tombak*, a Persian percussion instrument. Mr. F explained that because of his interest in music he asked these musicians to come to his shop to play there and to have lunch together. This reminiscence made me wonder if he was more comfortable to host a Jew as opposed to being a Jew's guest. I also wondered if he would prefer to host a Jew in his work place and not his house or private space. I assumed Mr. F was referring to the years before the Islamic Revolution; however, he pointed out that these musicians played in his shop even a few years after the Revolution. I was surprised by how musicians could play freely in his shop and did not receive any oppositional reactions from other neighbors, as following the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979, Ayatollah Khomeini condemned almost all forms of music.

Ms. K, one of my Jewish interviewees who resides in Tehran, recounted a different experience. She narrated how in her daughter's birthday party in 1980,[69] one of her neighbors gave her notice about the loud music and told her it was sinful to listen to music and if she did not turn the volume down they would inform the police. She also recounted that once she was listening to a popular Persian song called "Baba Heidar" at a loud volume, as was her usual habit two years after the Revolution, and her neighbor shouted at her to turn the volume down. I asked her if her neighbor gave notice to Muslim neighbors as well and she replied:

> Well … he was very religious at time and did not like to listen to music at all. He gave notice to every one … like he was a police or something (laughing) … but when it comes to the Jews he became more serious.

It is possible that being a Jew and also female caused this double standard and placed her Muslim neighbors in a situation to threaten her and interfere in her personal life and private space. Although Mr. F's reminiscence was taking place in his shop, a public space as opposed to his house, it seemed that the Muslim neighbors were not really motivated to warn him about the "sinful" action they were observing. Different power relation structures between Muslims and Jews gave Muslim neighbors the moral authority to restrict Jewish residents' daily routine and affect their everyday sounds.

[69] For more information see Figure 17 which contains snapshots from different birthday parties for children.

Figure 17 - In the first and second photos from the top, a Jewish *motreb* plays the *tombak* as he accompanies a puppet theater in a birthday party. The third picture displays a group of *motreb*s playing in a birthday party. The musician on the right plays the accordion and two others play the *tombak* (From Ms. K's private family album).

Although based on our conversation I did not find Mr. F a religious person, he seemed to be very involved in Muslim religious practices such as the *Moharram* rituals.[70] He mentioned that he had been the cook in the *Tekkieh* Rezagholi Khan and provided lunch for the group of mourners in the month of *Moharram* during the last decade of the Pahlavi era. He and his friends set up a tent in *Tekkieh's* yard to do the cooking. He narrated that mostly men were responsible for the cooking. They communicated with a loud voice and when any of them required something, they had no other choice except shouting and asking for a favor. They made a loud noise while preparing the ingredients or washing the pots and sometimes reciting funeral dirges to Imam Hossein while working. I asked him if the Jewish neighbors were allowed to enter the *Tekkieh* and he replied:

> They were not interested in coming to *Tekkieh*. This ritual was not really part of their beliefs.

I continued, asking him if a member of the Jewish community could participate, and he responded:

> It is not possible. They only pay attention to their own religious rituals. Why should a Jewish resident want to participate in the Muslim ritual?

[70] *Moharram* is the first month of the Islamic calendar. It is a month of remembrance and is often considered synonymous with *Ashura*. It refers to the tenth day of *Moharram.* It is well-known because of mourning for the martyrdom of Imam Hossein, the third Shia Imam.

Although I understood his point, I wondered how sacred sounds produced in *Moharram* impacted Jewish and Muslim's interactions in the neighborhood. I asked another Muslim interviewees, Mr. K, what he could remember about his Jewish neighbors in *Moharram*. He said that the Jewish community had a great respect for Muslim rituals and felt connected to them to the extent that in *Moharram* some of the Jewish residents became very emotional and cried during the rituals. I asked him about the Jews and Muslim interactions during the *Moharram* ritual and he replied:

> Most of the rituals were happening outside the *Tekkiheh*. You know how loud these are. Big drums and … All the neighbors, men, women … I don't know … kids … everyone stood in the sidewalks to watch the group of mourners, while some of them were chest beating or singing along with the *nowhe*. This ritual affected the spiritual atmosphere of the neighborhood. Jewish neighbors were out too and, similar to the Muslims, donated money to the group of mourners of *mahalleh* to cover part of the ritual's costs. They also sacrificed animals such as sheep or roosters to fulfill their vows in this month.

Although the Jewish community's donations or sacrifices must have shown their respect for the Muslim rituals, they might also have been the result of some unwritten rules that would guarantee a peaceful circumstance for them in *mahalleh* in return. Referring to Bakhtin's carnival concept, I suggest that *Moharram* ritual created a "second life" for the Jewish residents. During the ritual, the hierarchical primacy was suspended to some extent and the Jewish residents found the chance to enter "the utopian realm of the community freedom [and] equality" (Bakhtin 2009, 9). Sound could create the sacred space that

brought more openness to the neighborhood and would eliminate the limitations of Muslim and Jewish interactions. The openness was not consistent, as once the sound ended the space probably became more restricted and limited.

It seemed that neighbors' interactions played a significant role in this ritual. When I asked Mr. F if he still takes part in the neighborhood's *Moharram* rituals, he talked about the changes that happened in the *Moharram* rituals after the Revolution. The *Moharram* rituals seemed not to be held in the neighborhood in the same way as they had before the Revolution. Mr. F complained about the changes in the social class of the neighborhood because the majority of former residents were not around anymore. He recounted how friendly the atmosphere of their neighborhood had been until the past two decades, and how they enjoyed themselves during the month of *Moharram* while getting together with their old friends and classmates. Mr. F mentioned:

> I can still hear the loud sound of drums inside my head … Our singer had a great voice … today no one cares about the good voice or so … they just use recorded *nowhe*s. We were one of the best groups of mourners in Tehran. Everybody came to the neighborhood to watch our group …

Mr. B, a former resident of Udlajan who is in his late sixties and has a paint shop in *mahalleh*, narrated a different experience about the Jews and Muslims relationship and its manifestations in sound. While I was talking to him, I felt that he made a great effort to impress me with his perspective on the friendly relationship of Muslims and Jews before the Islamic Revolution. He criticized how some people by narrating sad and offensive

stories of the past destroy the good image of the neighborhood. He denied the happening of any conflicts and misbehaviors in the neighborhood. For this reason, he seemed to be trying to change his memory in order to create a better image of the neighborhood's past. He recounted how Muslim children went to the houses of their Jewish neighbors on Saturdays to turn on or off their lights on Shabbat. I asked him if his communication with his Jewish neighbors was something more than turning on or off their lights, and he replied:

> Yes. We were real friends. We were playing football and volleyball together. We were going to each other's houses.

Although he mentioned that he visited his Jewish neighbor's houses to spend some leisure time with them, he did not add any further details in this regard. Most of his memories about relationships between Muslims and Jews seemed to have happened in *mahalleh*'s *omumi* spaces such as streets and alleys. He described how residents of the neighborhood were all familiar with each other and the shops of Jews and Muslims were located side by side. The shopkeepers were mainly from the same neighborhood and they were living close by their work place. Most of the time one could find one or two peddlers sat in a corner or walked through the narrow alleys, while singing in a loud voice to inform the residents about their presence. Mr. F recounted:

> In the past winters were not like this. It was very cold and it snowed all the time. Snow shovelers came to the neighborhood and shouted, "*barf paru mikonim … barf paru mikonim … barf paru mikonim*."[71]

He explained they shoveled the snow off the houses' roofs and the sound of piles of snow landing on the streets made him excited, as he knew that he would have so much fun playing with his friends.

A number of Jews worked as peddlers mostly outside the neighborhood. According to Mr. K (one of my Muslim informants), sometimes they dressed up as Arabs, repeating a few simple Arabic phrases such as "*enShallah*" and "*mashallah*" to sound authentic, and pretended to come from long distances to sell their goods at a more expensive price. He recounted how different the soundscape of the neighborhood was then compared to today. In the past, based on my interviewees's recollections, there were a variety of stores in the neighborhood such as bakeries, grocery shops, butcher shops, shoe shops, music shops, coffeehouse, textile stores, and liquor stores where Udlajan's residents were able to purchase their daily requirements and groceries closer to home; neighborhood residents were the primary customers of these shops.

Mr. K recounted that there were several Jewish shops that sold live chickens and the sound of chickens was heard everywhere. I asked him if Muslims bought chicken from these shops and he replied:

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[71] We shovel snow.

> No. These shops were very messy. I am not saying this because I am religious or something … you could see chicken's feathers scattered all around the shop … I hated the smell of chicken and did not like to go near these shops.

The sound of chickens worked as an indicator of a public place that was mainly used by Jewish residents. He added how this sound acted like a warning for him to change direction and to go to the other side of the street. Jewish residents were the only customers of these shops. He reminisced that whenever the Jewish shops were busy and you could hear the Jewish accent everywhere, it meant that a Jewish ritual was going to happen. Jews bought some of their daily necessities (such as bread) from the Muslim shops. However, they always bought meat from the Jewish stores.

The variety of shops in Udlajan created a soundscape representing the daily life of a local community. The dominant sound of traffic was counterbalanced by a recognizable pedestrian flow and a very lively street life extending throughout the days and evenings. As Ms. S, one of my Jewish interviewees explained, walking in the main streets of Udlajan revealed the continuous presence of residents' vocal communications and clarified there were more pedestrians than cars back then. The existence of Jewish and Muslim shops in the public space of Udlajan caused another subdivision of *omumi* and *khosusi* that I call *nimeh-omumi* (semi-public) and *nimeh- khosusi* (semi-private). Although a Jewish butcher shop was open to both Muslims and Jews, it played the role of a *nimeh- khosusi* space for Jewish residents. The shopkeepers and customers were Jewish and spoke in Judeo-Persian. They exercised their agency as they communicated with their

fellow Jews and discussed things such as the Jewish community's upcoming events while waiting for their meat to be prepared.

In today's Udlajan, one can mainly find shops that produce or sell different types of bags, namely handbags and backpacks. These stores sell their bags to the shopkeepers of other neighborhoods and sometimes other provinces. Their customers are mostly men who buy large quantities of product each visit. As a result, the former soundscape of the neighborhood including the sound of residents' greetings, housewives buying groceries as bargaining with the shopkeepers, or a peddler singing have disappeared from today's Udlajan. Disappearance of the former soundscape of Udlajan not only represents the neighborhood's changes from a mainly residential area to a mainly commercial one, but also it reveals the loss of a local community daily life and its soundmarks ranging from the residents' accent to the music shops' sound or the live chicken markets' sound.

Most of the former residents of Udlajan were disappointed with the changes that have taken place in the neighborhood. The emigration of the Jewish residents and the closure of music shops were the two main issues that were raised by them. Mr. B described there were great musicians in *mahalleh* who were mainly Jewish. He also added that these musicians were playing for both weddings and religious mourning rituals. Unable to hide my surprise, I asked him if the Jewish musicians really were allowed to perform in Muslim religious rituals. He paused for a few seconds and corrected his story to say that the Jews could only perform in Muslim weddings. In addition, he started to talk about the wedding ceremonies.

He explained that weddings mostly occurred in people's houses where they made use of their yards.[72] Yards usually had a big pond that they covered with a wooden platform to provide a stage for performances. Most of the time a beautiful Persian carpet was placed on the top of the wooden surface. These performances were called *Takht-e hozi* or *Ru hozi*, which literally means "on the pond". Men and women danced together as opposed to most of today's weddings in which men and women are expected to be separated. Although the house is perceived as a private space, during wedding ceremonies it was open to all neighbors and even strangers who passed by. Moreover, sitting on their roof, a number of the neighbors were able to watch what was going on in the wedding. I asked Mr. Bazdar if he have ever participated in a Jewish weddings and he replied:

> Several times … their weddings were similar to ours … hmm … but they sometimes sang a few songs in their own language … but the songs were *Irani* (Iranian) …

I asked him what he meant by *Irani* and he explained "the music, melody, and everything was Irani …" [73]

Another anecdote reveals the sonic boundaries in public and private spaces in the neighborhood. I asked Mr. B if he ever entered a synagogue and he replied no. He explained while the Jewish residents were praying in a synagogue, it was not appropriate to disturb them. If he wanted to meet one of his Jewish friends who was in the synagogue, he would ask a Jewish neighbor, sitting by the synagogue door, to call him on his behalf. I

[72] See Figure 19.
[73] For more information see http://www.7dorim.com/gooyesh/gooyesh_.asp

wondered if the sacred sound of the prayers created a sacred space limited to Jews and excluded the Muslims. Mr. B's anecdote could reveal some information about the strategies of the Jewish community for coping with the presence of strangers in their religious spaces.

My own experience reveals the Jewish community's strategies about the presence of strangers in their religious spaces. Once I entered the Azra Yaghoub synagogue on a Saturday morning and a gentleman came to me and angrily said that if I did not have a reference letter from Tehran Jewish Committee, I should leave the synagogue immediately. I was shocked for a few seconds and when I tried to introduce myself and describe my research project, he interrupted me and added there were many people who wanted to take advantage of the Jewish community's position in the society. I think the socio-political changes after the Islamic Revolution could be a significant reason that caused his pessimistic view of strangers. Although the context of my experience was different from that of Mr. B's, it seemed that the Jewish community was concerned about strangers who wished to enter their community's religious spaces even before the Revolution.

According to my Muslim interviewees' responses, I realized that their experiences of synagogues' soundscape were limited to the vague Hebrew religious recitations that they heard outside the synagogues. For instance, Mr. B emphasized that one could hear the Jewish prayers from Azra Yaghub synagogue whenever it was crowded and people gathered in the synagogue's yard. Azra Yaghub had a yard separating worship rooms from the street. During the times that people could not fit in the rooms they gathered in the yard

and consequently the sound of their prayers could be heard outside the synagogue. Other than those special ceremonies, the doors of synagogues are always open on Saturdays but passers-by do not hear the prayers. Since my Muslim informants did not enter the synagogue, their sonic memories of the interior space were not detailed or elaborate.

Mr. B narrated that the Jewish residents never caused any trouble in the neighborhood and they were mostly very polite and calm. I asked him if he ever heard the sound of the Jewish prayers or if he recognized any sound in the Jewish culture comparable to the call to prayer. His answer was no. Then I asked him what the reasons for that could be and he replied, "Jews were mainly practicing their religion in their private spaces because Muslims were a bit sensitive about them. I think that was why Muslims did not let them raise their voices or use loudspeakers." I noticed that the absence of the Jewish sonic practices from the shared public space reflects the unbalanced power relations among the Jewish and Muslim neighbors.

This anecdote reminded me of a conversation that I had with Mr. N, a Jewish former resident of the neighborhood who is in his seventies. He narrated a memory about a Jewish tradition in which the Torah was carried from a synagogue in *mahalleh* to another synagogue in Yousefabad Street.[74] The Jewish residents and a number of musicians accompanied the lead musician while singing and playing music. According to him, Mohamad Reza Shah prohibited the Jewish community from performing this tradition. One can question the publicness of the city's streets based on this narrative.

[74] It is a neighborhood in northwest Tehran.

However, despite the existence of this restriction, Mr. N did not seem annoyed or disappointed and told me:

> The majority were Muslims, so these restrictions made sense. During Mohammad Reza Shah period we had a wonderful life in *mahalleh*. *Mahalleh* had a very calm atmosphere and you could not see so many cars and motorbikes. I really missed those days.

It is possible that feeling nostalgic weakened his sense of annoyance about the prohibition of this tradition, or other probable challenging situations that Jews faced in the neighborhood. When I asked him if his Muslim neighbors had ever bothered him or his family members, he simply replied "Not too much." I could not keep back my laughter and just asked "Not at all, or not too much?" He answered while laughing:

> Well, there were a few neighbors who were drawing lines between Muslims and Jews. They were jealous of Jews because they were very rich. However, I am not rich … (Laughing) I don't know why but Muslims really like me. It might be because as opposed to other Jewish residents, I am very patient and an easygoing person.

Moreover, he pointed out that he has a Muslim uncle from his mother's side. This made me wonder if this relationship could better explain his friendly bond with the Muslim residents. I asked him about his Muslim friends and if he has ever entered their mosques. He replied that he had about twelve Muslim friends who mostly teased him when they were teenagers. Once they had a terrible fight and he beat them hard. After that the teen-

age boys learnt their lessons and understood how strong he was. They did not tease him anymore, and because of his physical strength they asked him to become a member of their group. He added that he went to a few mosques only for funeral ceremonies.

Mr. N's mother and father both were *motreb*s. However, he did not use the term *motreb* while talking about them and he only mentioned that they had an *orkestr* (orchestra). I came across the same expression in memories of Ms. K, another Jewish informant of mine. She is in her sixties and her husband was a *motreb*. She also did not use the term *motreb* in her conversations, and mentioned that her husband had an *orkestr*. She described him as famous in Tehran and he had weekly shows on the national television. The former residents of the neighborhood used the term *motreb* to label a group of musicians who played in weddings and parties, although the *motrebs*' family members avoid using this term.[75]

Mr. N recounted memories from his childhood where his mother, a well-known musician, was asked at least five or six days a week to play at different events. His grandfather on his mother's side was also a musician and he trained his daughter. I asked Mr. N if any of his siblings were musicians and he said no. He explained that his mother was very busy and passed away when they were young, so they had not had enough time to learn music from her. Mr. N described how his parents decided how many musicians they could include in their band based on the importance of the occasion and their budget. It did not really matter to them if a musician was Muslim or Jewish and their selection depended on the availability of musicians at specific times. In most of their performances, a dancer

[75] For more information about the stigma of this term see Fatemi 2014.

who was a Muslim woman accompanied them. I shared my information with him about the Muslim dancer Pari Solati whose daughter and son are famous pop singers in Los Angles. I asked him if his parents have ever performed with her. He got excited when he recognized I knew Pari Solati and replied:

> Pari Solati was living close by. My mother and she had several performances in the Shah's palace in Noshahr.[76]

He recounted that his parents were performing in Muslim and Jewish weddings, and Muslim musicians came to their house to practice. It occurred to me that this close relationship of the Muslim and Jewish musicians might be because of their similar social status in the society. I brought this issue to his attention and told him that being a *motreb* was not highly appreciated and respected among the majority of Muslim families; then I asked him about the social status of the Jewish *motrebs*. He replied:

> Well … you know … I do not like to talk behind their [Muslim musicians'] back … but the Muslim *motrebs* were a bit immoral. For example, when they were in a party they sometimes went to the owners' dresser and stole some money or jewelries. They had a bad economic situation, and some of them were opium addicts. I think they really had no other choices.

He added that Jewish *motrebs* were different and recounted that his father was very gentle and caring. Whenever his band was supposed to play at a wedding, he would pay the musicians in advance. He did not talk directly about the social status of the Jewish *motrebs*

[76] Noshahr is a port city in north of Iran.

and particularly his parents; it seemed to me that it was not very different from that of Muslim *motrebs*.

According to Mr. Shauel, one of my Jewish informants who lives in the United States of America, the Jewish *motrebs* were not highly respected in the Jewish community. Mr. Shauel, a well-educated person who is in his seventies, was a student of Ustad Abolhassan Saba, the great Iranian violinist and composer.[77] He recounted that his parents encouraged him to practice violin and play in the family gatherings, but they were against being a professional musician. When I asked him about the reason, he replied:

> *Motreb*s' life style was not appreciated because they mostly had to stay out late, so their sleeping patterns were strange. Moreover, they were going to the Muslim weddings and were eating every different kinds of food. They did not care if a dish was kosher or not.

Mr. P, the youngest of my Muslim informants (he is about forty-five), was my only Muslim informant who recounted a memory about his family socializing with Jewish neighbors:

> Although my mother is very religious and is for fifty years that she held religious ceremonies at our home, I can remember very well that she was hanging out with our Jewish neighbors frequently. They were very nice people and they never meddled in other neighbors' personal lives.

[77] Mr. Shauel has a number of musical compositions for violin and piano about his life in Sarechal.

He also narrated an anecdote about Shabbat:

> As you may know, Jews do not turn on or off any light and also do not strike matches on Saturdays. They were asking my brother and me kindly to turn their lights on. Sometimes they were giving us sweets but most of the time they were offering us a small amount of money.

This repeated story in all of my Muslim informants' reminiscences made me wonder if this relationship was only based on friendship and emotional connections of Jews and Muslims or whether there were other reasons. Was it out of necessity or was it a temptation to receive money or sweets from the Jewish families? Moreover, I asked myself about the possible un-narrated part of the story and wondered if the Jewish children were allowed to enter the houses of their Muslim neighbors.

Among my Jewish interviewees, interestingly, only one informant reiterated a story about Shabbat. Ms. K recounted that she had a very religious Muslim neighbor who was called *haji*[78] and was from Yazd.[79] I really liked her sense of humor while she was trying to explain her close friendship with *haji* and his family. She imitated *haji*'s Yazdi accent when recounting her memory.

> Whenever I was asking *haji*'s wife to send one of their children to turn on my heater, *haji* was calling me little rascal! "*Why are you coming all the way here? Just call me, I myself will come and turn your lights on*." After he was coming to

[78] A respected title given to a man who has made a pilgrimage to Mecca.
[79] Yazd is a city in central Iran and people from this city speak Persian with an accent known as *Yazdi*.

my house and turning all my lights on, he was making sure that I did not need anything else. He passed away while ago. God bless him.

The above-mentioned reminiscence reveals how a religious Muslim man felt comfortable entering the house of his Jewish female neighbor. Although it shows some levels of intimacy and friendship, one may also question if *haji*'s attitude was the same with his Muslim female neighbors. If he felt comfortable enough to enter the private space of a Muslim friend's wife or daughter, or whether the fact that Ms. K was Jewish gave *haji* less concern about the social norms and restrictions and allowed him to be more easygoing in his communication with the opposite sex.

Moreover, this memory characterizes two different accents in Udlajan: Ms. K's Jewish accent[80] and *haji*'s *Yazdi* accent. The presence of different accents in the neighborhood's daily life could be qualified as a soundmark of the neighborhood, in the sense that it is "a prominent feature of the soundscape, possessing properties of uniqueness, symbolic power or other qualities which make it conspicuous or affectionately regarded" (Schafer, 1978, 37).[81] The diverse nature of the neighborhood that was the result of the presence of Jewish residents as well as movements of various populations from other provinces to Udlajan was expressed sonically through a continuous mix of accents, intonations, and sometimes languages (such as Azeri and

[80] I would like to emphasize that Ms. K similar to the majority of Iranian Jews spoke Persian with a particular accent. Iranian Jews of different cities of Iran have their own dialects such as Judeo-Kashani and Judeo-Hamedani (Burjiyān 2012; Sahim 1994; Yar-Shater 1989).

[81] Although Schafer used this argument to point to different languages that were spoken in a neighborhood, in this study I applied this argument to point to Persian language that was spoken in different accents.

Arabic). Urbanization in the neighborhood gathered together different accents, some indexing place, others religion, ethnicity, or a combination of all.

Although this anecdote reveals Ms. K's friendly relationship with one of her neighbors, in another conversation she described her relationship with her neighbors on a totally different level. She recounted that whenever she opened her kitchen window to get some fresh air, her Muslim neighbors stole the spoons or ladles that she put on the windowsill. She said she was certain that her neighbors did not use her belongings but only wanted to bother her. In another reminiscence, she explained how once she found her son crying because Muslim children in the alley had beat him while they were playing. Although this could simply be interpreted as a children's fight, it may also show how a Jewish child could be bullied in the neighborhood.

She pointed out how in the first few years after the Islamic Revolution Muslim residents of the neighborhood were very intolerant and emotional about religious matters. But now that many Jews have left the neighborhood and people from different cities with family backgrounds that are not known to the old residents have replaced them, she believes that Muslim residents have more respect for the former structure and remember their Jewish neighbors with nostalgic feelings. One of her neighbors gave her notice about the loud music and told her it is sinful to listen to music. She also added that later on this neighbor's sons became clergy. She explained that although they are still very religious, they do not react aggressively about loud music anymore. Things have changed and Muslims became more open-minded about the concept of religion. Even though my

interviewees recounted different experiences about listening to music and music performances, they pointed out the common perception about *bongah-e Shadi*.

In my study, these spaces are mentioned and appreciated by most long-term inhabitants. Mr. K said their presence brought liveliness and colors to the neighborhood. Ms. F also commented that when you saw those musicians playing, even though they were not good, the fact that they were just out there playing music created a great feeling. Accordingly, most of my informants who still work or reside in Udlajan explained that they hated the noise and crowdedness of the neighborhood public space and they really missed Udlajan's sonic past.

However, they described that they got used to Udlajan's noisy sonic environment. Based on Truax, people at first recognize an intruding sound, most likely perceive it frustrating "but too much trouble to do anything about, and before long they grow accustomed to it and accept its presence" (Truax 2001, 99). In some cases, noise and crowdedness even became valued, as it comes to represent the liveliness of the neighborhood. A young male shopkeeper in the neighborhood appreciated Udlajan's existing soundscape and dynamism.

I selected several interview excerpts to illustrate a mix of public and private communities in the neighborhood. Of particular interest is the actual relationship between these two types of spaces, the way they interact, communicate and together create an overall acoustic community in which the boundaries are often blurred. My interviewees' reminiscences illustrate a public space is not always open to all or accessible by all

members of a community. Spaces such as a mosques and a synagogue that may seem public for Muslims and Jews do not always welcome individuals from different faiths. Based on my interviewees' memories, in the very first years after the revolution Muslim residents were more concerned about the private spaces of their Jewish neighbors. These Muslim residents were intolerant of what they perceived as non-Islamic and anti-revolutionary in the houses of their Jewish neighbors.

5.2.2.2. Theme 2- Describing the Self, Describing the Other: Muslim-Jewish Cultural Identity.

Focusing on Udlajan residents' reminiscences of everyday life, this section explores the stereotypes of Jews and Jewishness evident in Muslim and Jewish residents' perceptions and imaginings of their cultural identity. Stereotypes have been defined in different ways and are more likely to have negative connotations. A stereotype is defined as stored beliefs about the characteristics of a group of people (Gardner 1994; Hamilton and Sherman 1994). Although some stereotypes may include an element of truth, they often unfairly and imprecisely label a whole culture or people. In other words, they make our complicated environment simple (Woodburry 1998, 100). In this section, I adopt a viewpoint that defines stereotypes as beliefs about the characteristics, attributes, and behaviors of members of the Jewish community in Udlajan. However, in focusing on residents' sonic memories, I came across stereotypes about the Muslim community as well. Also, interview materials include the non-sound-related responses that could help to provide a more comprehensive image of the residents' interactions in the neighborhood.

In Udlajan, Muslim residents who were concerned about not mixing with their Jewish neighbors drew symbolic boundaries around an established set of stigmatized sounds. Differences in sonic styles represent different attitudes toward residents. The way that some interviewees with a Muslim background identify their Jewish neighbors demonstrates how different sonic perceptions may be used for representing others. For instance, Mr. F recounted that Jewish women had high-pitched voices and shouted all the time.[82] Such cultural differences may play even greater importance in creating boundaries between Jews and Muslims, allowing privileged groups to deem others unworthy not for their religious identities but rather for embodying what they believe to be lower class cultural habits such as shouting. Sonic experiences legitimize social hierarchies and situate the Jewish women in a lower social position than Muslim women. I recognized he used "loudness" and "high-pitched" interchangeably. However, I think he was using loud sound as a metaphor for "lower class."

In this part, I do not give full attention to the questions of "how" and "when" stereotypic thinking emerges in the Iranian society; I do not wish, however, to diminish the importance of these questions. My case studies have approached stereotypic thinking in a more limited way, as I focus on the examples that my informants made through the interviews. My case studies indicate that there are four stereotypes that Jewish residents pointed out in their reminiscences. The first two examples generally describe this common expression that Jews have mostly been stereotyped as showing an excessive

[82] Bijsterveld (2013) describes how people usually consider "lower-class lads and girls" as those who scream and yell (13).

desire to acquire money and also being stubborn and not accepting any changes. The third one refers to a belief that Jews use human blood in cooking the Passover bread, [83] which one of my informants recounts in the stereotype of Jews using little children's blood in cooking. The fourth one refers to a belief that Jews are in league with demons and have magical powers (Johnson 1997; Lewis 2005; Ramsay 2010).

The one overarching and summarizing statement that I feel comfortable making is that in some cases individuals use stereotypes to increase their social status, particularly in Jewish residents narratives. For instance, there is this common expression that Jews have mostly been stereotyped as showing an excessive desire to acquire money. However, in one of my Jewish informants' discussions, I found out that he was not only admitting that Jews have often been stereotyped as rich and greedy, but he also made use of this expression to improve his community's social status. In several conversations, Mr. N confirmed the higher economic position of the Jewish residents as opposed to their Muslim neighbors, though he did not recognize himself as a wealthy Jew. Although he seemed to be critical about the Jewish community's interest in collecting money, he gave a great value to the Jewish community's economic power when he recounted memories about the Muslim *motreb*s. He explained:

> There were opium addicts among Jewish and Muslim *motreb*s, but because the Jewish musicians had a better economic situation and had wealthy relatives, they never stole money to buy drugs.

[83] Although this belief might not fit well in a stereotype definition, I decided to address it in this section as it attributed a false belief to the Jewish community.

Furthermore, he explained that the Jewish community's economic situation provided the opportunity for them to have higher education by traveling to Europe to study. He was so proud of this and gave me several examples of famous Jewish doctors and engineers. Mr. B, one of my Muslim informants, raised the same subject and recounted a memory about one of his relatives who was cured after visiting an expert Jewish doctor. In another conversation Mr. N pointed out the belief about the Jewish community as very stubborn people, but as opposed to them, he was an easygoing person. He supposed that because of this characteristic, Muslims had a friendly relationship with him. He added that he inherited his high moral principles from his father, as he was very gentle and caring. Whenever his father's band was supposed to play at a wedding and the wedding was cancelled for any reasons he would pay his band members.[84]

In different discussions with my informants, I realized that sound is so evocative that it stirs memories and helps the interviewees to elaborate freely on topics that seemed to be sensitive. For example, once I asked Ms. K if she listens to music or any religious recordings while she is preparing the Passover bread. She replied she mainly sings something when she is cooking and then unexpectedly started giving examples from her

[84] Mr. P, a Muslim informant, explained how this common expression that Jews have mostly been stereotyped as showing an excessive desire to acquire money was not true. He described how the Jewish people support each other in different situations. He recounted that an old Jewish man who had not been in a good economic situation had lived in the neighborhood for several years. The Jewish community assisted him with his living costs such as health care and grocery expenses. He murmured in a low voice: "Shame on us! Are we really Muslims?" and explained that the majority of Jews are wealthy, and they are supportive of their community members. Although he recognized Jews as wealthy, he valued the way they use their money to help out their community members as he criticized Muslim individuals for not being supportive of each other.

personal life experiences and interactions with Muslims. Ms. K pointed out how Muslim residents of Udlajan accused her and other Jewish neighbors of using children's blood to bake the Passover bread. She tried to prove how simpleminded one should be to believe such a thing. She explained that Jews are prohibited from eating the blood of any mammal or birds; therefore, they need to drain the blood from the meat before it is eaten and that is why they remove certain veins in different parts of the meat. In addition to that a very important part of processing Kosher meat is the soaking and salting the meat for a period of time and then rinsing it thoroughly. They soaked the meat long enough to lose all its blood. I also came across this story among my Muslim informants. Mr. F told me that his parents scared him away from Jewish families by telling him that they used children's blood to make bread. I asked him if he believed in it and he replied while laughing " Oh, no! Poor Jews! I am sure that they were more scared of us." I also asked him if he had any Jewish friends and his answer was no. He suggested that Jewish parents told a similar story to their children to keep them away from Muslim families.

While the interviewees were recounting their memories of the past soundscape, they unavoidably talked about their interactions with others and described the image of the other in their community. For example, once I was walking in the neighborhood with Ms. K and talking about the location of *Bongah-hay-e shadi* when she pointed out a house and mentioned that it was a Jewish fortuneteller's house. Ms. K also explained how some Muslims had false beliefs about the supernatural powers of a number of Jewish residents in *mahalleh*. She told me how these so-called Jewish fortunetellers (mainly known as *doanevis*) fooled their clients who sometimes even came from other neighborhoods. She

believed their works fell under superstition and had nothing to do with magical powers. When I told her that I had gone to visit a lady, known as Ezi, who seemed to be a *doanevis*, she was surprised.

One of the current residents of *mahalleh*, a disheveled and poorly dressed opium addict took me to Ezi's door and quickly ran away.[85] He seemed to be afraid of Ezi and explained that once he had heard strange sounds of prayers and incantation in an unfamiliar language from inside the house. The idea of the unfamiliar recitations made him nervous. His emphasis on the unfamiliarity of the language made me wonder how his reactions would have been different if the phrases had been recited in Farsi or even Arabic. I suggest that part of the myths about Jews' magical power and their relation with the supernatural has to do with language that sounds uncanny to the Muslim fellows.

When I knocked, Ezi opened the door and asked who I was and who had sent me there. I introduced myself and told her that I heard about her when I was in Los Angles. She wanted to know if I was there to have my palm read. I said no and explained that I was interested in her stories about the neighborhood's past. When she realized that I was not a customer she asked me to leave. I could not convince her to answer my questions about the neighborhood.

[85] See figure 18.

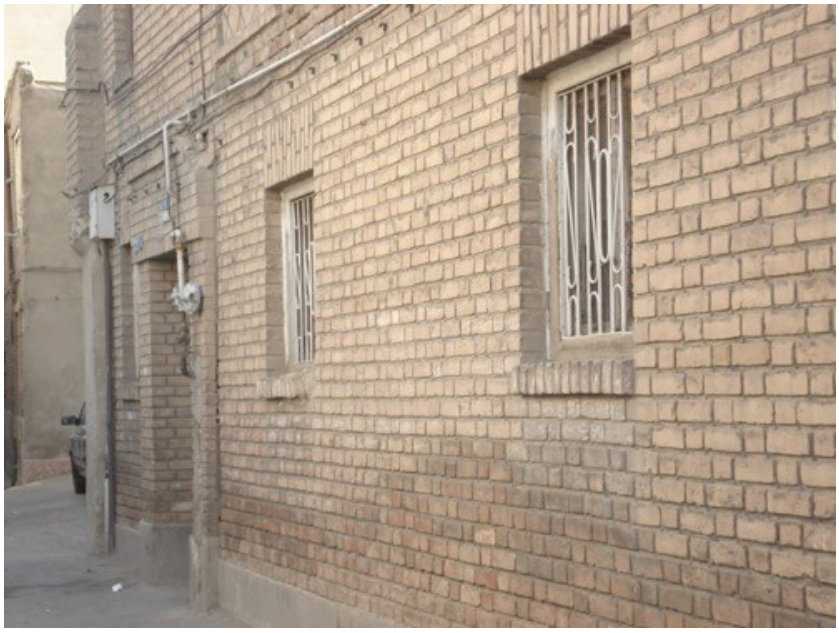

Figure 18 - Ezi's house, one of the oldest houses in the neighborhood (photo by the author)

After I shared this experience with Ms. K, she was impressed and understood how passionate I was to learn more about the *mahalleh*'s past. I think that was why she decided to open up and give me some more information about the *mahalleh*'s daily life. She asked me if I saw the man who resides with Ezi. I told her no, so she started talking to me about him. She mentioned that Ezi had a brother who was known as a doctor in the neighborhood because it was believed that he was an expert in fortune telling. After his death, Ezi was robbed and threatened a few times. She was so scared that, according to Ms. K, she rented out a room in her house to a Muslim man. After a while, the man had grown a long beard and now works as a Jewish *doanevis* with Ezi. Ms. K tried to be fair

about her Muslim neighbors, as she provided examples from the families with different behaviors.

In different conversations, I encountered situations in which my informants criticized what they believed to be inappropriate in their own and the other's community behavior. Based on the interviews, I learned that Jewish and Muslim residents did not only use stereotypes in negative ways. In several situations they used stereotypes to improve the social status of themselves and their fellow neighbors. In most of my interviews, Jewish and Muslim informants acknowledged the higher economic power of the Jewish community in comparison to that of the Muslim residents. The interviewees explained that the Jewish community's reasonable economic situation provided the opportunity for them to study in the world's top universities and consequently became experts in various fields such as medicine. Moreover, the wealthy Jewish residents were pictured as loyal to their community and supportive of the low-income Jewish residents. In some situations the Jewish residents acknowledged particular stereotypes to criticize Muslims' thoughts. For instance, a Jewish resident explained one should be really naive to accept that Jews used human blood in cooking.

5.3. *Motreb*s (Musicians) and *Bongah-haye Shadi* (Music institutions)

Udlajan Jewish residents were famous in the music business and they mainly owned their personal music shops.[86] They performed music at weddings and birthday parties, and also sold and repaired musical instruments. In Udlajan there were a number of music shops known as *Bongah-e Shadi*[87] (literally meaning "happiness institution"), which mainly provided services for ceremonies such as weddings and birthday parties. *Bongah-haye Shadi* (plural form of *Bongah-e Shadi*) also function as musicians' offices and they were mainly located along the Sirous Street.[88] Musicians gathered in these shops to meet clients, practice music, and hang out together (Fatemi 2014, 26).[89] These musicians were essentially known as *motreb*s,[90] a term with an Arabic root (*tarab*). In Tehrani culture *motreb* was perceived as synonymous with illiterate musicians with low moral principals who did not play serious or sophisticated music (19-25). *Motreb*s, whether Muslim or Jew, had a low social status.[91]

Figures 19 and 20 show three groups of *motreb*s playing in different occasions. In Figure 19 musicians are performing in a family gathering inside the house and a little girl is dancing. However, in Figure 20 on the bottom, *motreb*s are performing in a house yard. Musicians in this image are playing both Iranian and non-Iranian musical

[86] Alen (Khosrou) Shaueli names the following as Jewish Musicians: Musa Khan Kashi, Rostam Shirazi, Baba Khan, Davoud Shirazi, and Ghanouni (Shaueli 1997, 180).
[87] These shops were also known as *Bongah-e Shademani*.
[88] After the Islamic Revolution the name of Sirous Street changed to Mostafa Khomeini.
[89] My translation.
[90] As Loeb argues, "in Shiraz, until the 1950s, the term *motreb* was colloquially synonymous with Jewish professional musician" (Loeb 1972, 6).
[91] On the Jewish occupational prestige index, musicians did not rank high and only the butcher, beggar and the body- washer ranked below them (Loeb 1972, 8-9).

instruments such as *tar*, *tombak*, violin, and clarinet. The number of musicians and their musical instruments are not the same in all pictures. In Figure 19, musicians on the left side of the photo play percussion instruments namely *tombak* and *dayereh* (frame drum), while they sing together. On the right side of the picture, the lead musician plays the *tar*. In Figure 20 on the top, one can see an indoor performance showing a *tar* player, a *kamancheh* player, and two percussionists. Loeb (1972) argues that Jewish *motreb*s' low social status was because of their peculiar working hours, eating non-kosher foods in Muslim ceremonies, having friendly relationships with dancers who were typically assumed to be prostitutes, and performing on Shabbats (9).

Figure 19 - Images of a group of *motreb*s performing in a family gathering and a little girl dancing (From a personal family album)

Figure 20 – *motreb*s performing in two wedding parties. One party is held in an interior space (top) and the other (bottom) in an exterior location (From a personal family album)

The controversial situation of music in traditional Iranian society, which was partly impacted by Islamic law, made performing music an indecent profession that people from middle and upper-middle classes were reluctant to take. As a result, the musicians including Muslims and Jews mainly were from the lower-middle class. Fatemi (2014) argues that, in a Muslim society similar to other societies, economic situation and social class play as significant a role in the marginalization of different groups. Consequently, Muslims having lower social status and less economic security lived on the margins of society, and like their fellow Jews were not afraid of being rejected or ignored by becoming *motreb*s. Fatemi also adds that the ban of music or consumption of alcoholic drinks in Muslim societies did not mean that all Muslims respected these rules; obviously there were members of the Muslim community who crossed the boundaries (32). I propose that it was easier for Jews to except the profession because of their already existing marginalized status.

However, not all *motreb*s had the same social status and enjoyed different levels of hierarchical authority and importance. Based on Fatemi, there were two main categories of *motreb*s, *chekidehkar* and *chasbidehkar*. The first group included musicians who had a musician background, while the second group did not. A *chekidehkar motreb* inherited the *motrebi* tradition from his father, but a *chasbidehkar motreb* was new to the *motrebi* tradition and attached (*chasbide*) himself to *motreb*s. The first group had a higher social level and they were mostly inhabitants of Sirous Street. These *chekidehkar motreb*s were known as the pioneers of *motrebi* tradition (Fatemi, 29-30). In my interviews with the former residents of Udlajan, all the respondents remembered the presence of music

shops and the *motrebi* tradition in the neighborhood. Although they did not use the terms *chekidehkar* and *chasbidehkar* to describe different *motrebi* groups, they highly admired musicians who came from *motreb* families and considered them as central to the soundscape of the neighborhood.

5.4. Summary

In this research the acoustic information was gathered through the recorded interviews based on former inhabitants' daily experiences. These recorded interviews provided information about the community's perception and understanding of the various signals and keynotes that would be barely available to a passerby spending only a few hours in the neighborhood. My ethnographic research represents the active role of informants in the shaping of an acoustic community as opposed to emphasis only on the soundscape itself. According to my interviewees, vocal interactions heard in the neighborhood included people selling and buying a wide variety of items, music emanating from stores (particularly *bongah-haye shadi*) and coffeehouses as well as loud discussions across the street between shopkeepers, children playing, birds singing, chicken clucking, and sounds heard through open doors and windows.

Former residents of the neighborhood pointed out specific moments of the year by important sonic manifestations. For instance, a significant number of residents mentioned the *Moharram* ritual as one of the neighborhood's greatest events. Ms. M heard in this event people expressing grief, chest beating, drumming, and loud voices of the crowd. Long-term inhabitants such as Mr. B also remembered *Taziyeh* performances in this

month. These events not only expressed a temporary reunion for the community but they also, as Mr. K mentioned, created the real soul of Udlajan. Mr. F, for instance, expressed a strong nostalgia about the *Moharram* ritual and established a certain connection between the social changes that took place in the last few years and the disappearance of *Moharram* rituals in Udlajan.

Furthermore, the way in which many of the shops extended onto the sidewalks, both physically and acoustically, are described as something unique to the neighborhood. For instance, Ms. M described while walking in the narrow alleys one could experience at the same time radio sounds coming out of a shop, street sellers, and conversations of men standing outside of shops to smoke. However, shops were not ever totally isolated from the outdoors. For instance, Mr. F explained, pedestrians' voices and footsteps were easy to hear when doors or windows were open.[92] For some inhabitants such as Mr. B, the blurring sonic borders implies the establishment of an intimate relationship between the private space and the public space, a repeated interruption that re-confirms the existence and position of each public and private soundscape. Moreover, all residents experienced being involved in someone else's process of shopping at least once while they walked through the neighborhood. The size of the alleys and sidewalks caused them to be in the sonic environment of shops for at least a few seconds while they were moving past.

As a result, acoustic blurring of the various public and private spaces as well as informants' different stereotypic thoughts contributed in making the neighborhood a space much more communally experienced as a whole, rather than a set of separated,

[92] Based on my own experience in a small traditional coffeehouse in Udlajan, the soundscape of the coffeehouse was indistinguishable from the one of the street itself.

closed spaces. However, some of the stereotypic thoughts implied the establishment of an intimate relationship between the members of Jewish community and even created admiration for Jewish residents. As Mr. P, described, the Jewish people supported each other in different situations and they used their money to help out their community members.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1. Chapter Overviews and Research Findings

By taking into account my informants' perception of their soundscape and their everyday social and cultural experiences, this research is meant to complement Schafer's approach through perceptual and cultural analysis. Even though this research principally deals with the current soundscape of the neighborhood and the sonic memories of its residents, it also addresses social structures and power relations in Udlajan through an examination of the sonic presence and absence of the Jewish minority in the neighborhood. This dissertation aims to provide a detailed picture of Udlajan's daily life including its day-to-day soundscape during the Mohammad Reza Shah's era and following the Islamic Revolution of 1979.

Using the auditory experiences as the main focus, this study reveals that sound is highly evocative of, and sonic experiences are closely related to, the ways people make sense of their cultural identity. Also, sound has the potential to represent and be interpreted differently by different residents at different times. Auditory senses, which are triggered by reference to cues such as loudness, provide a means for the interviewees to readily compare the past and the present. By narrating sound memories people express their understanding of space, re-construct their space, and communicate it to others by accessing the nexus of memory and emotion. This dissertation reveals the significance of sonic interactions and sonic memories as essential sites for the production of culture and

cultural identity. The completion of two phases of fieldwork, involving various methodologies and analytical concepts, provides us not only with current and past sonic portraits of Udlajan and the ways it is heard and understood by its inhabitants, but also represents the residents' daily socio-cultural interactions and their senses of identity.

In addition to the description of research methodology, road map, and limitations, in Chapter One (Introduction) I related how I was initially attracted to studying Udlajan's current and past soundscape. I was drawn by the ways in which residents of the neighborhood, through recollection and narration, restructure their past lives to fit present needs and concerns. I observed how the Jewish residents have managed to create a balance between their ethnic/religious identity and their role as citizens of the neighborhood interacting with their Muslim fellows and claiming their own space. In Chapter Two, I provided a historical and contextual background of sound, silence, and noise to provide the methodological and analytical tools for covering specific dimensions of the sonic environment.

In the third chapter by presenting the soundscape of two coffeehouses, detailed examination of the various sound recordings, and having informal conversations with customers, I drew attention to possible meanings of sound in different communicative contexts. Different soundscapes of these coffeehouses clarify that customers' dissimilar responses to these sounding environments are usually in direct connection with their social classes, cultural backgrounds, and senses of place. Soundscape is an essential element in the place attachment process, as it impacts customers' choices in selection of these coffeehouses. Another issue revealed by data analysis in this phase of my fieldwork

is that the synergies between sonic, visual and spatial features influence customers' perceptions about the coffeehouses' personality and social character. For example, indoor lighting, floor coverings, furniture, sound of water fountains, and music contribute to the experiences of the people who dine and drink there. Synesthetic association can occur in combination of customers' senses of sight, hearing, and touch. According to one of the informants, the warm friendly atmosphere of *Sofrehkhuneh-e Tehrun-e Qadim*is is the result of sound of water fountains, colorful windows, the dome (*Gonad*), and wooden seats. Additionally Chapter Three offers a sonic-visual map of locations of interest through audio recordings and photos of the neighborhood. The audio recordings and related visual materials provide a representative sample of the neighborhood captured at various times of a day and days of a week in order to present an image of Udlajan's current soundscape. [93]

For a better understanding of Udlajan residents' daily interactions, sonic memories, and senses of identity as members of Muslim or Jewish communities, in Chapter Four I provided a brief history of national identity formation and its challenges in Iran. Jewish identity reflects the perspective of the dominant culture, while it also embraces the limitations imposed upon minority communities. Jewish residents' sense of identity not only has borrowed features from their Jewish cultural background but also has some connections with both the Iranian and Shia cultures. For instance, taking part in different mainstream cultural activities such as *Moharram* rituals in Udlajan reinforces

[93] I intentionally did not use the Google Maps, as I aimed to provide a map that can be used without Internet connection. This collection can continue to expand over the coming years in order to present temporal and seasonal changes of the neighborhood soundscape.

cultural distinctions, while it also provides Jewish and Muslim residents with the chance to practice sameness in order to identify as residents of the neighborhood.

My ethnographic research in Chapter Five represented the day-to-day realities of the people who constitute the nation to better understand the cultural elements that shape their senses of identity. Jewish and Muslim residents' conversations about sound and space explain their understandings of concepts such as self and other as well as being included and excluded. The degree of inclusion and exclusion in a space or the "privateness" and "publicness" of a particular location are not the same for all the residents. The "publicness" or "privateness" of spaces is determined based on the type, content, and level of loudness of sonic exchanges encouraged and tolerated by different spaces. I sometimes encountered contradictory explanations of the same space, although a number of my interviewees believed that these contradictory views only existed with respect to minute details. There were also contradictory explanations about the stereotypes of Jews and Jewishness evident in Muslim and Jewish residents' perceptions. In some situations Jewish and Muslim residents embrace stereotypes to improve the social status of their community. For instance, by admitting that Jews are stereotyped as rich and greedy, one of my Jewish informants tried to explain how hard working and innovative his community members were.

The common thread in my interviews is sentimentality for the past. Even though the interviewees sometimes narrated unpleasant stories about the past, they felt nostalgic. In the beginning of almost all interviews, interviewees mentioned that they could not think of anything unique about the neighborhood's everyday life. They were certain that

they could not remember any particular details about the past, and as they tried to focus on something specific it fogged out of reach. However, when I asked them to think about the former soundscape of Udlajan and its sonic atmosphere they could focus more easily and recall the changes that happened in the neighborhood. The relationship established by interviewees between the processes of thinking and remembering determines the basis for multiple connections in which the Jewish and Muslim residents develop simultaneously the acoustic community of Udlajan. A communal acoustic space not only represents diverse sonic experiences of Jewish and Muslim residents but also provides a suitable context for a better understanding of their cultural characteristics and values by focusing on their sound expression and sound tolerance.

6.2. Further Paths of Research

This dissertation inscribes itself within endeavors to seek for dissimilar voices and narratives in the study of Iranian cultural identity and, on a broader theoretical level, is especially indebted to recent studies of sound and culture. Considering the socio-political situation of diverse religious or ethnic minority groups, as well as their role in crafting a non-Shia Iranian identity, narrative is one of the main areas to which the current research contributes. To provide a more focused approach for the research, a single location with diverse population has been investigated. As Udlajan is not the only neighborhood with a Jewish minority population in Tehran, the current work could be extended to look at other neighborhoods in Tehran or other cities in Iran. It is also possible to conduct a comparative study of soundscape in different neighborhoods that have residents from different religious or ethnic minorities.

A historical study of the sonic changes and their relations to political, social, and cultural transformations could possibly extend the present work to include an understanding of temporal modifications of the soundscape and the reactions of different inhabitants. The present study could be used as a model for exploring sonic experiences of diverse Iranian minority communities in public and private spaces (or semi-public and semi-private spaces) as a way to understand the levels of their inclusion or exclusion in the mainstream Iranian culture. Focusing on the auditory culture of different Iranian religious and ethnic minority groups as well as Afghan immigrants will broaden the horizons of this research to comprehend various ways that minority communities in Iran connect or disconnect to the Iranian national identity in their everyday practices.

The study of the perception of sound could expand the current research to include not only philosophical approaches to the understanding of different, unfixed, and contradictory meanings of sounds or soundscapes, but also it could possibly be involved with the relationship between sound and emotional states. The study of the perception of sound could also be involved with the study of noise sensitivity, people's psychological responses to different sounds, and the physiological impacts of sound on the human nervous system.

The methodological inquiry could also benefit from various other techniques that have not been used in the current research such as creation of sonic mind maps.[94] Also, an exploration of residents' diaries could help in further analyzing the way listeners perceive their surrounding soundscape. Moreover, for visualization of the residents'

[94] For more information see Paquette 2004.

narratives about the structural and cultural changes of the neighborhood, one may use PPGIS (Public Participation Geographic Information System). PPGIS lets residents' voices be heard through visual maps, while helping to define their communities' boundary in the quarters. In this way, current and former residents of the neighborhood could position the locations on the map that they remember as the most or the least preferred places and compare their choices with others to see how different or similar they find these locations. Overlaying audio samples of informants' narratives onto the map (for example, audio samples of narratives of a minority member and a Shia Muslim's about one particular location) could link visual, geographical, and urban sound memories together and provide an easy means for comparison of residents' memories.

6.3. Post-Script

The current work provides a detailed portray of everyday life experiences in an Iranian city with Muslim and Jewish residents, and offers a representation of ordinary peoples' lives that is very different from the usual negative image of the Jewish and Muslim relations found in Western media. To avoid romanticizing the daily experiences of the Jewish and Muslim neighbors in Udlajan, this research includes personal stories of diverse individuals revealing their concerns, frustration, or disappointment, as well as admiration, respect, and appreciation for each other.

Narrating the story of one particular situation in the neighborhood vividly pictures a few moments of the Muslim and Jewish relations in the neighborhood. It was a hot summer day and I was in a shop selling cleaning and janitorial supplies in Udlajan. The shop owner, Mr. S, was one of my Muslim informants who kindly invited me to his

shop and arranged a meeting with Mr. N, his Jewish friend. It was the beginning of the month of *Ramezan* [95] and Mr. S was fasting; all the same, he offered Mr. N and me cold drinks and candies. While Mr. N talked about his mother who was a *motreb* and narrated the story of her death, I saw tears in Mr. S's eyes. He explained Mr. N's mother was a great musician and a very kind person. He added that she had high moral standards. "God bless her!" Mr. N was silent, but not passive, not un-communicative. As I watched him holding Mr. S's hand, it became clear to me how powerfully people create meaning through sounds and silences.

Recollecting this story and looking back at that day, I see two middle aged men hanging out and telling stories of good old days on a hot summer afternoon regardless of issues such as their religious backgrounds, ethnicities, and cultural differences. My observations of that situation, in which a Jewish resident created silence within a touching moment while delivering his comforting words, validated my initial perspective about remaining silent as a form of speaking. My observation of sounds and silences, the space between a Jewish and a Muslim friend, and the memories of their past indicated to me that this inquiry is not finished, but has only just started.

[95] Ramezan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. In this month, Muslims do not eat and drink during.

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Appendix I - Interview questions

General Questions:

- Please introduce yourself, and tell me how old are you?
- How often do you visit the Udlajan neighborhood? Do you work or live around?
- What do you like and dislike about this neighborhood? Do you have any information about the history of Udlajan?
- How do you explain the neighborhood's soundscape?
- What is the most common sound in this area? What is the most annoying sound in the neighborhood?
- Where is your favorite space in this neighborhood? How do you explain the relation between public and private spaces in this area?
- Where do you eat usually? Have you ever been in any of the coffeehouses in the neighborhood?

Questions For Former Residents:

- How long did you live in Udlajan? Have you had relatives in the neighborhood?
- How has the soundscape of Udlajan changed, and why?
- What can you remember from the everyday life of this neighborhood? What was the most important characteristic of the district in your opinion?
- What is your first sonic memory from the neighborhood? What was the most common sound in Udlajan back then?
- How was the relation between public and private spaces? (Your house and streets) For instance, could you wear the same cloth inside and outside of your house? Could you have the same conversations inside and outside of your house?
- Have you ever entered a mosque and/or a synagogue?

- Can you remember what kind of shops existed in Udlajan before? What did they sell? Any shop for selling musical instruments?
- Were there any restaurants or coffeehouses with live music performances?
- Could you please talk about the cultural activities of the district? Were there any street musicians or poetry reciter? Any dervishes?
- What were the activities during the month of *Moharram* and *Ramezan*?
- I heard that several musicians (*Motreb*) lived in this area. Do you know anything about them and their practices? Were there Muslim or Jews? How could somebody get hold of these musicians? Did they have an office or shop in Udlajan?
- Did you hear anything about the existence of particular policies for construction of Jewish neighborhood? For instance, their houses should not be taller than Muslim houses.
- What was the role of the Jewish residents in district's soundscape? How many Jewish shops existed in the neighborhood?
- How could you differentiate between Muslim or Jewish residents? Did Jews of Udlajan speak with the same accent as other Iranian Jews?

Appendix II - Documentation of the Sonic-Visual Map of the Udlajan Neighborhood

Chapter Three offers a sonic-visual map of eight locations of interest in Udlajan:

- Tekkieh Reza Gholi Khan
- Dr. Sapir Hospital and Charity Center
- Molla Hanina Synagogue
- Orphanage and Iranian Jewish Women Oganization
- Printing Press
- Tehroon-e Qadim Modern-Traditional Coffeehouse
- Udlajan Bazar

I captured all the audio recordings of this map on weekdays between 9 and 11 in the morning. The map aims to demonstrate, share, and exchange field recordings made in Udlajan. Consequently, at these location map users will find several sound recordings and images that provide additional information about the different sonic realities of the neighborhood. Through audio recordings and photos, this off-line map presents a sense of Udlajan's current soundscape and creates an archive of contemporary snapshots – of moments-in-time. The map helps to place soundscape collections and research in a public and interactive space.

Map icons mark where sounds have been recorded at a particular geographical location. Clicking on the icons allows users to listen to the sound and to watch different photos of Udlajan. Please note that there are a few map icons that are not clickable that are included primarily to represent specific geographic locations (landmarks, if you will) in the Udlajan neighborhood. My intention is that this map will continue to expand over the coming years in order to present the temporal and seasonal changes of the soundscape.