

The Anthropological Aspects of Bakhtiari Music

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ABSTRACT Music has not only been considered as a means of creating joy and happiness, it also unites different people and establishes close friendship among the members. It has established itself as a means of bringing together the members of *Bakhtiari* people located in the southern part of Iran. The purpose of this article is to study the role music plays in uniting the members of *Bakhtiari* people. It not only arouses the feelings of people, but is also used as a means of establishing long lasting friendships among this people. The researcher has chosen the *Bakhtiari* people located in the southern part of Iran. He has used anthropological methodology, and collected the necessary data based on interviews and observation. In this article the researcher has made a functional and semantical approach to the *Bakhtiari* music. The results show that the *Bakhtiari* music is meant to be used as a media for showing motivated excitement of the audience, in the form of either happiness or sadness, and semantically each song is considered a sign for sadness or happiness. The result of this article points out to the aforementioned function of music.

INTRODUCTION

In every nation, music forms a part of its cultural awareness and foundation. Iran is a country with a musical history. Through the functional use of music in different events of life, the large parts of ceremonies have been shaped. Iranian races not only use music in functional way, but also by using typology which establishes a relationship between tools and tone of music, try to transfer the meaning and intention of music to the audience. The study of music does not only help us recognize the intellectuality of a nation, but also it helps us know the past and history of the people. The anthropologists keep focusing on music without considering technical problems, because we hardly find a society without music. This practical function of music necessitates a deeper attention, by the researchers, on the importance of music and its role in the development of a society.

Music plays a major role in the daily functions such as tales, the rituals, and games and so on. This shows the value of art in a culture. An important aspect of music is that it is a part of social behavior because it is related to the feelings and experiences of people. This relationship might manifest itself in singing. The function of music and its effect has been observed in the general culture of Iranian nation in the past (Kazemi et al. 2012). Iranian music has made an approach to the mechanism of ethnic music and the way it is formed (Hajariyan 2011).

The *Bakhtiari* Tribe resides in the central Plateau and near the central *Zagros* Mountains among the high mountains in Iran. These areas include *Khoozestan*, *Chahar Mahal Bakhtiari*, *Isfahan* and *Lorestan* provinces. This tribe enjoys music and its effects on life. Music is considered as an important element in the life rituals of these people. It is so important that it has become a part of their lives and happiness.

Theoretical Framework

The research is done based on the theories and viewpoints offered by some known anthropologists. With an increase in the anthropological researches done on the culture of tribes and nations at the end of the 19th century, making a systematic progress, the phenomenon of music was considered as the focus of attention by the anthropologists. Music contains an essential part of the culture of each tribe and nation. Therefore the study of music does not only help us recognize our culture within the context of a tribe or nation, but also it shows the past and history of a people.

Of all the 19th century anthropologists, Frantz Boas, the American anthropologist, was the one who considered the study of music as an important task of the anthropology. He has done researches which need to be studied.

A new form of musicology as that of tribe appeared in 1950s. This kind of musicology focused on the music of different cultures, espe-

cially those belonging to the East. These groups of tribal and cultural musicologists were curious to know about the way music covered different aspects of life among tribes and culture, such aspects like: wars, games, activities and so on.

It was Alan Parkhurst Merriam, the tribal musicologist who, for the first time, offered the theory of the function of music in society. He started his research during the second half of 20th century. In the book entitled *The Anthropology of Music*, he promoted the aspects of ethnology, and in the following studies, changed the concept of "Music in Arts" to "music as culture". He believed: "Human beings are involved with music in order to achieve different goals in their lives, without paying attention to society and culture." Therefore he offers objectives and functions for music in the social systems; these are as follows: 1- expression of feelings, 2- pleased with beauty, 3- entertainment, 4- symbolic representation, 5- objective response, 6- strengthening normality, 7- supporting social institutions and religious rites, 9- promoting the integrity of society (Merriam 1964).

METHODOLOGY

This research is a field research and the researcher has made use of direct observations, questionings and interviews; the views of acknowledged theoreticians are used in the section pertaining to library research, but the materials presented in the result section are based on the field research.

RESULTS

Music and Lyrics among the *Bakhtiari* Tribe in the Southern Part of Iran

Music and lyric are two inseparable parts of the *Bakhtiari* tribe, which makes it impossible to imagine the tribe without the sound of music during their happiness and sorrows. On one hand, the respect the tribe offers to the dead and, on the other hand, the importance of festivals for them forces them to acknowledge the importance of music. In most of their rituals, the presence of music provides the best atmosphere for establishing relationship between the tribe and what causes the performance of such music. The most important instruments used effectively in the creation of such rhythms are those which are made in association with the native music of the tribe.

The Musical Instruments in the *Bakhtiari* Tribe

*Duhol*²

It is a kind of instrument which has been used by the *Bakhtiari* people for many centuries. "It is cylindrical in shape, the lateral side of which is made of wood and its height is almost 20 and its diameter 50 cm. The two other sides are made of animal skin. The upper skin is thick and endures harder beatings. A stick like wooden piece named *cu*³ is used to beat on the *Duhol*" (Poureh 2003). The upper skin is that of goat and it is more rigid than the lower skin which is that of lamb. The lower skin has a softer sound and is supported by another piece of wood named *Terke*⁴, which is made of mulberry wood. *Duhol* is carried over the shoulder while being played.

*Korena – Sorna - Niyshit*⁵

Korena

It is a kind of windpipe. "It is made of three parts. The first part is called *Niymil*, with a height of 3 cm. There is a pipe attached to it which is widened; this pipe is inserted almost 3cm into mouth and the sound is produced by blowing through it. The second part is a wooden pipe with the height of 33cm. There are seven holes in the upper section and one in the lower section. The sound is made by covering different holes with one finger" (Poureh 2002). The part of *Korena* which is in touch with both hands is called *Das Karena*. The last part is *Sar Karena* which has a horny shape and is made of brass. Its height is 45cm, which helps strengthening of the sound.

Sorena

It looks like *Korena* but a little smaller and, compared with *Korena*, it is thinner. The main parts of *Sorena* is made of wood, except for the *Neymil*. It is 45cm high.

Neyshit

It is made of a 45cm metal piece and like *korena* and *sorena*, it consists of 7 holes in the upper section and one hole in the lower section. It is played in the form of *Kerelov*⁶ at the corner of lip.

Toshmal⁷

He is the singer of the tribe, who accompanies the tribe in happy and sad events. There are two singer participating in singing. “*Toshmals* live in the tribe as families and consider themselves responsible for sharing the happiness and sorrows of the other families in the tribe. One plays *Korena*; he is called *Mishkal*⁸. The other plays *Duhol* and he is called *Duholi*⁹ “ (Khosravi 1993).

Music is Divided into Two Groups in Bakhtiari Tribe**1- Rast Music¹⁰**

Women and girls play major roles in the pleasant music in the culture of *Bakhtiari* tribe. Like playing musical instruments, singing does not need skill and exercise either. Singing is quite a common ability in *Bakhtiari* tribe and is not limited to a particular group. Therefore those who are able to sing, use every opportunity to attend jubilant ceremonies and sing. Singing is not considered as a profession in this tribe. Another point about lyric singing which needs emphasis is that collective participation of women and girls. In these performances, one or more persons start singing and consequently the others follow by responding to each stanza and go on singing.

“In the *Bakhtiari* tribe the joyous songs are considered a feminine music, and this is different from what we know to be modern feminine music. Although dancing and music is not limited to a particular sex among Iranian tribes, but as far as its place and performance is concerned, it can be limited to a particular sex” (Sarлак 2006).

For example, *Choobbazi*¹¹ is a masculine game in *Bakhtiari* tribe where women only watch the game and perform *Kel*¹²; it makes the games more exciting. Contrary to this is the songs sung by women inside the brides’ rooms where men don’t play any role and they only watch the event. Therefore the question of feminine or masculine music among the *Bakhtiari* tribe is merely based on the role they play in performing a particular kind of music. As a result, it is believed that the music which produces happiness is merely feminine because it is organized by women only.

Another important point is the use of the word “*Gol*” (means flower in Persian). This word is repeated in their songs this means that people of

the tribe are interested in flowers. This word is also used to represent the beloved (Abdollahi 2006). Some of the related songs are as follows:

Ahay Goly¹³

It is one of the purest *Bakhtiari* poems which is sung and favored at almost all of the *Bakhtiari* residential areas. An important characteristic of this poem is the way it is performed in form of questions and answers. In the form of a song, it runs between an individual singer and the group. But once it is performed along with an instrument, the instrument usually plays the first part and the group of people, mostly women, answers with the word “*Ahay Gol*”.

The themes of the poems mostly praise brides and their grooms whose names, along with the names of their relatives, are included in the poems. If the conductor of the song is a relative of the bride, then he mentions more of the names of the bride’s relatives, and if he is a relative of the groom, he includes in his songs the names of the groom’s relatives. “*Ahay gol*” appears in different forms like ‘*Ahay Gol*’, ‘*Yaram ay Gol*’, ‘*Goli Goli*’, ‘*Golam ay Gol*’ which have a common rhythm of 6/8 and they only differ in their melodies, depending upon the areas (Poureh 2002).

The songs are improvising and sung by women who are known as “couplet singers”. There are many such women in every tribe; they take turn singing songs in every marriage festival. The audience too participates in the singing in response to the singer; they repeat the phrase “*Ahay Gol*” at the end of each canto:

Vay asbana zin bekonin ahay gol, ahay gol
(Saddle the horses, ahay gol, ahay gol!)

Vay khom berim jast-e-aroos, ahay gol
(We want to go in search of the bride)

Badeh-Badeh¹⁴

It is considered as one of the main happy songs of *Bakhtiari* tribes. The theme of this song is concerned with marriage ceremony and the luck it brings for the bride. It is believed that those unmarried girls who wish to be married, gather around the bride and sing this song together. While singing these girls wish that they could be married in the following years.

Dayni Nay¹⁵

It is one the most original happy songs which are sung by unmarried girls who envy other girls

and boys who are married. This song is quite old and performed collectively while the singers keep on clapping. This song is sung at some occasions like circumcision, child birth (particularly, a boy) and whenever a good news is received.

*Dey Gol*¹⁶

It is an old and famous song performed almost in all of the *Bakhtyari* areas. It is sung mainly by women, without music. Today, it is also sung by men. It runs like this:

Hay golami dey gol have delami ay gol
(You are my flower. Oh darling you are the one I need most.)

Gorboone raradanet roro gatara golemi di gol have delami ey gol

(I love the way you walk, as the movement of a train /

You are my flower, Oh darling; you are the one I need most.)

*Dovolali*¹⁷

A kind of song used to show the feelings of mothers for their daughters who are on the verge of marriage and are going to be taken away by their grooms:

In fact this song represents the condition of bride's mother who is going to have her daughter married away on the night of the marriage. It can be said that the mother bids farewell to her dear daughter who is going to leave her. Sometimes the singer of *Sorena* and *Korena*, or *Toshmal* sings this song without the use of *Duhol*, in order to make the bride's family happy. This occurs exactly when the bride is ready to be taken away by the groom" (Poure 2002). The song runs like this:

Kore tata dovare tata radene cam cam ro.
(The cousins walked along the river banks together.

Dovare tata gol becine kore tata bene bo
(The boy picks up flowers for the girl to smell.)

Shirinom Ley Lanah

It is always performed in the form of a song. It is sung by both women and men.

*Siyah Chavanom*¹⁸

It is performed only in the form of song, sung by both men and women.

2- *Capi*¹⁹

"This kind of song is sad and contains sad melody due to the loss of a dear one. Unlike the other songs, this kind of song has a heavy beating and slow rhythm" (Ahmady Oorak Bakhtyari 1998), which is accompanied by such songs like *Soogineh khanaan*²⁰ or *Sarv Khanaan*²¹. *Alun alun*²² is an example of such *Bakhtyari* songs used for mourning. It runs like this:

Ay vavaila sad vavaila si shire zardom ay vavaila

(Alas! For the one who was like a strong lion to me!)

Beravin xavar konin male bavume / Bi yurin balasarum duta gavuma

(Go and inform my family of my death / and bring my two brothers to my tomb)

There are other *Bakhtiari* songs and music performed at different ceremonies; these songs are as follows:

Epic Music

This is used when a game or a drama is performed.

Love Music

It is performed in praise of lovers.

Lullaby Music

This kind of music is performed by mothers while making their children go to sleep.

Sare koh boland digom va bare
(My pot is on the fire on the top of a high mountain.)

Bernj gol eizane del bi garare

(Rice is boiling impatiently.)

Berenj gol izaneh ba shire mishon

(Rice is boiling with the milk of lambs.)

Delom josh eizane si gomo xishon

(I am longing to see my dear ones.)

DISCUSSION

The songs and poems play major roles in the *Bakhtiari* tribe. It does not necessarily mean that the local music is not important there anymore, but the native and local poems and songs are of greater importance. The local musicians represent the narrators of the unwritten history of these people; they use their musical instruments and songs in order to let the later generation

know about their history. The *Toshmal* songs are quite encouraging for these people and are not performed as mere entertainment. The music played by the *Bakhtiari* women resembles the ones played in churches. This creates a relationship between the *Bakhtiari* local music and Armenian choral songs, although the *Bakhtiari* areas are not connected to the other parts because they are positioned on the mountainous areas. One should be familiar with the *Bakhtiari* accent in order to understand the concepts of these songs.

Music, in the *Bakhtiari* tribe, is the emotional language of the tribe and it expresses memories, sorrows, happiness and hero-ship of these people, and finally music is an inseparable part of the tribe.

The songs of the tribe which are endowed sometimes with pleasure and sometimes with sorrow, are the images created by the men and women of the tribe and motivate these people in their physical strength in the cold and hot weather. Men and women respond to their own spiritual needs by repeating and singing these songs which are created out of their own minds.

CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that music forms an important part of man's life. It has been an inseparable part of every nation's culture and has been considered as a means of expressing man's spiritual existence, sorrows and happiness. It has been with human being since the beginning of the creation of the world.

Almost all of the *Bakhtiari* music has its root in the nature, rationality and feelings of the tribe. Music plays an important role in bringing peace to the people of the tribe when they come together, whether on a happy or a sad occasion, or when they wish for something in their lives.

Lullabies in the *Bakhtiari* tribe are associated with culture. They are used not only as a means of making children go to sleep, but introduce a kind of culture which is innovative in this area and made distinct from other cultures.

The *Bakhtiari* people do not only create entertainment with the help of songs and music, but also they symbolically transfer their culture from one generation to another, so that they keep this form of culture alive in their rituals and bring integrity and unity into the tribe.

Music has an important role to play among *Bakhtiari* people. It is not only used as entertainment but also as a means of communication

among members of nation; it tries to change feelings, and in this way calmness occurs. Music and its instrument have found meanings in *Bakhtiari* people's mind and helps developing their spiritual beliefs.

NOTES

1. The Bakhtiari Tribe is one of the big Iranian tribes which are located near the Zagros mountains in Iran
2. A kind of musical instrument used in the wedding and mourning ceremonies.
3. A kind of wooden stick used to beat on the duhol.
4. A small piece of wood used to beat the lower part of duhol
5. The musical instruments used in the weddings and mourning ceremonies. One should blow through it in order to make a sound.
6. It means corner of the lip.
7. It is the name of the Bakhtiari singer.
8. It is the name of the Bakhtiari singer.
9. Duhol player
10. A kind of music used in festivals.
11. A game played by two men who carry a long and short stick in order to defend and attack each other.
12. A kind of sound made by women in festivals by rotating their tongues in their mouths.
13. A happy song meaning "you are like a flower".
14. A kind of song used to express congratulation.
15. A happy song expressing one's uttermost need.
16. A song meaning "you are like a flower".
17. A kind of happy song used to show happiness for a girl who is to be married.
18. A kind of happy song meaning black and dear.
19. A kind of song performed in the mourning ceremony.
20. Those women who sing in the memory of the dead ones.
21. The singers of mourning songs.
22. A sad song meaning perplexed.

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