

A Study of Local Work Songs in Lorestan

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Abstract. Work songs are of the oldest local songs in Lorestan and can be classified in two groups. Firstly, songs which are created under the influence of the surrounding environment, the traditional ways of production and tribal life and are related to the physical condition of Lorestan's society. The other group contains songs which express the hopes, desires and beliefs of people. The significance of themes like migration, hunting, plowing, milking, threshing, as well as concepts such as love, religion, people's desires and beliefs is indicative of the physical and spiritual aspects of the work songs in Lorestan. The frequency of the physical aspect, however, is more conspicuous.

Keywords: Local songs, Folklore, The physical aspect of culture, Ways of production

1. Introduction

Oral literature is an important part of culture which like a full-length mirror reflects the social and cultural developments, people's ways of life, and their beliefs and desires. In the oral literature of Iran, local songs enjoy a special position, because "songs are the creation of the minds of the masses, they have taken shape and reached perfection among them, and according to culture, language and social conditions have undergone changes" [1].

Despite the tribal and lingual variety of local songs, it must be admitted that "the common characteristics of folksongs are plain expression and smooth flow of words so much so that they are easy to understand without any contemplation. Perhaps, the simplicity and briefness of songs are in a way relevant to the value of time in rural society [...] and, of course, realism is another characteristic of folksongs" [2].

Lorestan's local songs are among the most original and oldest local songs in Iran. Songs that as a result of the tribal life, ways of production, and the longstanding oral tradition of this region are very old and can be classified in two groups. First, songs which are created under the influence of the surrounding environment, the traditional ways of production and the tribal life, and are related to the physical condition of Lorestan's society. The other group are songs which express the hopes, desires and beliefs of people. These aspects, however, should not be considered two discrete ones in that culture has two related material and spiritual aspects. And "anthropology confers equal importance to the influences of physical and spiritual aspects of culture in folksongs. And perhaps, the necessity of the research in this field, which studies people, nature and means of production, necessitates that in studying folksongs the physical aspect of culture be more emphasized [3].

The significance of themes like migration, hunting, plowing, milking, threshing, etc. along concepts such as love, desires and beliefs, despite their relation, reveals that the physical aspect of culture has a greater frequency in Lorestan's local songs, a fact that holds true about all Iranian songs. The traces of work songs in Lorestan can be found in songs about collective harvesting /Galdero/ threshing /Hula, / migration, water-drawing, milking, plowing, and some of the songs created about the relation of man and animal. But many of the famous local songs in Lorestan are about other things such as songs for sorrow, eulogy, /Mur, Hure/, or the mystery-like Cel Seru songs, epic songs, etc.

2. Current Dialects in Lorestan

The Lorsi who live across several provinces in western and south-western Iran, speak different dialects. "Three major dialects, Lori, Laki, and Bakhtiari are the current dialects in Lorestan province which are

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offshoots of the Farsi language, and have their roots in Pahlavi language and many of their words are Farsi, which either have in some ways changed or are pronounced differently. Of course, there are words which are particular to this people” [4]. In this article, only songs from Lori and Laki dialects have been studied which are mostly compiled from the central, northern and western parts of Lorestan province.

3. Theoretical Bases

The starting point of symbolic and interpretive anthropologies can be understood from their definition of culture. They define culture as a collection of meanings understood and interpreted from among symbols and signs. Clifford Geertz, an eminent theoretician in this field, believes: man is an animal entangled in the fabrics of meaning he himself has weaved, and these fabrics are culture. And on this basis, he introduces his own methodology as interpretive anthropology—an approach which studies cultural phenomena by means of analyzing meaning and symbol from a local viewpoint. In other words, he adopts Emic approach in his semantics and tries to interpret the observable reality like a text [5].

Therefore, the researcher should seek to understand and explain culture, and this understanding is a process in which the researcher finds the meanings produced by the agents. In fact, it must be admitted that Geertz’s method for the study of culture is focused on cultural phenomena as text and it is the same text that should be interpreted by the researcher [6]. In this respect, Girtz emphasized understanding the meaning. In this article, it has been attempted by using this approach to find the meaning of the elements in Lorestan’s songs.

4. Work Songs in Lorestan

In Lorestan’s local songs, which reflect the feelings of their singers and their surrounding environment, a full range of work songs can be observed which are beautiful, simple and completely tangible. Songs which are plain reflections of the pleasant stages of their work, and in the traditional ways of production dependent on animal husbandry and agriculture make their repetitive and tiresome work more pleasant. Songs about milking, dairy production, *gâw yâri*, Ploughing, water-drawing, threshing, etc. are some of the songs of the people of Lorestan which express their dreams and desires and are replete with energy and spirit verging on the epic and are sung during the work. The interdependence of man and farm animals has found an emotional manifestation in beautiful songs of Lorestan’s farmers and ranchers and indicates the relation between man and animals in the culture of people in Lorestan. Long threshing songs in Lori and Laki dialects are among the most original work songs in Lorestan which is indicative of the long procedure of work and its different stages. Mentioning tools such as plow, water-skin, sickle, thresher, and constant presence of animals like ewe and ox in the fabrics of these songs show people’s ways of life and their interaction with the surrounding world [7]. many instances of such songs exist, of which Hula song is among the best.

Turn around constantly,
Bless you, who are like a golden lion,
You who amid the harvest are the best ox,
Stay beside; it is my turn to go to the center.
You, the ox who are beside the harvest,
Who have hooves of silver and shoes of gold?
Turn around and around,
Thresh it and go for drinking water,
Disperse on the earth calmly,
Thresh it and go home.
You, my brown ox, are my life.
Thresh it and go home.
Constantly turn around on the harvest.

As it is evident, apart from showing the long and difficult stages of threshing, this song is a long ode to animals, which with the farmer attempt to prepare the harvest, as if without them the work were impossible. The dependence of ways of production in agriculture on animals like ox has given a special position to this animal. So much so that it is regarded as a valuable property and its possession can be a sign of high social prestige in Lorestan's social structure. That is why in songs such as that mentioned above much attention has been paid to this animal. Another instance of songs about threshing in Laki dialect exists that has fewer verses and is very much similar to the previous song and its verses are constantly repeated during threshing, as though there is a correspondence between repeating these verses and the repetition of the stages of the work.

Thresh it, thresh it and turn around,
 Soften that which is hard,
 Thresh it and thresh it,
 O you unique black, o you single black,
 Both thresh it and turn around
 Soften it, since it is hard.

Gâw Yâri and *Gal Dero* songs are other instances of famous work songs in Lorestan which can be divided into three discrete groups. First, songs which refer clearly and directly to a certain work. Second, songs which are about an animal and stroking it such as threshing and plowing songs. And third, a kind of love song that is reflected in work songs as though "in rural songs, love is closely tied with work" [8]. The importance of the first group of some of these songs is in recording and retaining the way of doing of some of the jobs, which as a part of our spiritual heritage, are on the brink of oblivion.

4.1. *Gâw Yâri* songs

Friends, who has seen a girl plowing the soil?
 The blade of her plow is of gold and its beam of pearl.
 Her dress reaches beneath her knees and is trimmed with silver ornaments.
 The person who takes the pair of oxen to plow the soil,
 Scatters the seeds by fistfuls.

Poems and songs of ranchers are another part of local songs in Lorestan which, with regards to traditional ways of production, reflect different aspects of the physical and spiritual culture of the people of Lorestan. Songs about dairy production, which is called *Mašga*—along with milking songs, which are a kind of intimate whisper to the animal—are instances of local songs of the ranchers of Lorestan within which they express their desires, dreams, sorrows, complaints and hopes. And there also exist parenthetical verses which express ranchers' concern to dispel others' jealousy and, sometimes, their prayer for the animal's health.

4.2. Milking Songs

The yellow ox has brought with itself light and blessing.
 A bowlful of milk, in which milk is gauged, it has brought.
 The black-and-white colored cow, whose breast is crystal-like,
 Give a lot of milk like the pot, from which tea constantly flows.
 Thanks to God,
 It has no fat and is pure milk.
 My lactating cow is producing milk.
 It has produced a breastful of milk.
 May the name of God protect your health?
 May you, black-and-white lactating cow, bring with you goodness and blessing,
 Black-and-white lactating cow, you have brought light and blessing with you.

Your breasts are full of milk.

5. Conclusion

The work songs of Lorestan can be classified in many ways according to traditional ways of production in agriculture and animal husbandry. These songs express, on the one hand, the nature of work and its stages, and on the other, some of the beliefs, desires and dreams of the people of this province. Songs which by creating appropriate rhythm make the different stages of the work more pleasant and enhance the efficiency of the traditional ways of production. The interesting point in these songs is that they generate excitement and vitality during the work and, moreover, they reflect the emotional and social relationship among people, work and animals. Expressing hopes, desire and cultural and social values is one of the important characteristics of the local songs in Lorestan, which is also well reflected in the work songs.

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