

The Style of “Praise Poetry” (Mawwal) and its Place in Khuzestan’s Folklore

Dr. Rasool Balawi¹

**Assistant Professor in Arabic Language and Literature, Persian Gulf University,
Bushehr, Bushehr, Iran**

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Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

Khuzestan province, as the gate way for the entrance of Shia faith into Iran, in addition to boasting indigenous people and sub-cultures, has been a huge embodiment of the unity, sympathy and patriotism of various people, languages and dialects. In this respect, Arabic poetry of Khuzestan is among the original forms of poetry among Arab people in Iran and has always played an important role in creation of social streams, specifically in the expression of love and devotion to Islamic culture, Ahlul Bayt, country and the province among Arabs of Khuzestan. Folklore constitutes the most important part and the majority of oral literature among the Arabs of Khuzestan and its value and credibility lies in its closeness to the local dialect, leading to its enjoyment of a special status. Among the characteristics of Khuzestan folklore elegant interpretations, poetic language and appealing themes can be named. “Praise poetry” is among the most frequently used types of poetry in Khuzestani poet’s oeuvre. The majority of applied words in praise poetry stems from the eloquent Arabic language and deals with such varied themes as praising and exalting Ahlul Bayt.

2. Theoretical Framework

The oldest Khuzestani Folklore dates back to 17th century, that is to the time that it was reigned by the Musha'sha'iyyah. The poets of this era, known as the golden era of Arabic literature in Khuzestan, in addition to eloquent poetry, have paid a special attention to folklore as well. “Praise poetry” is a type of folklore which, from ancient times, has been enjoying a remarkable spread, engaging folklore and eloquent poets. It seems that “praise poetry” can be situated somewhere in the middle of the spectrum whose two extremes are folklore and eloquent poetry. There exists some disagreement as to the creation of folklore poetry. Some believe that it was created in the city of “Wasit” and refined in Baghdad. Others, however, impute it to Barama kids era, asserting that after the massacre of Barmakids, their followers continued praising them, repeating “Ya Mavalialia” at the end of each

¹ Corresponding Author: r.ballawy@gmail.com

stanza in the poem. Although nowadays the majority of folklore poems do not adhere to Frahidi prosody, praise poetry, the most famous type of which is known as Na'mani, conforms to Basit meter. It comprises of seven lines, with each line having a pun (same words but different meanings) and the one in the seventh line the same as the first three lines. In other words, the first three lines have the same pun as the seventh line and lines four, five and six create another pun. Ever since its advent, "praise poetry" has dealt with such themes as praise, exalt, satire, sonnet and description and Khuzestani poets have utilized this type of poems to express their feelings and thoughts, to praise and exalt Ahul Bayt, religious scholars, martyrs' sacrifices, national occasions, to defend Palestine and etc.

3. Methodology

The method used in this research is field study, based on the research done throughout Khuzestan province, during which poems written in the local dialect of Arab people of the region were studied. This study tries to focus on the most ancient type of folklore poetry, "praise poetry", critiquing and analyzing it using a descriptive-analytical approach.

4. Results and Discussion

"Praise poetry", in terms of music, is a very melancholic and mournful and, more than the tone of the instruments is based on the singer's voice. It follows Basit prosody (مستفعلن فاعلن مستفعلن فاعلن) and has various types such as "Al-robai", "Al-Eraj", and "Al-Namani". Usually, the most important themes of "praise poetry" include praising and exalting Ahul Bayt, boasting, sonnets, instruction and advice, worldly desires, ephemeral nature of the world, and people's disloyalty. Among the more experienced and skillful poets of "praise poetry" Habib Amouri, Ibrhim Deyravi, Fazil Sakrani, Seyyed Hassan Sharifi, and Abbas Hezbavi can be named.

5. Conclusion

Folklore reflects a major section of each nation's cultural and literary heritage and can never be separated from literature for it boasts numerous linguistic, literary and cultural treasures. Nowadays, scholars in most countries, for the purpose of learning more and gaining a deeper understanding of a nation's culture and literature, study and investigate the contents of folklore, an undertaking which has laid bare important issues to researches. Khuzestan folklore, and "praise poetry" in particular, has the potential to be studied from a myriad of aspects. This type of poetry forms the most important and the majority of the oral literature among the Arabs of Khuzestan. The majority of the words applied in this type of poetry stem from the eloquent language of Arabic. "Praise poetry" is the oldest type of folklore and can play an important role in the continuation and protection of Arabic language, and the transfer of socio-political concepts in Khuzestan. This type of

poetry, in terms of quality and theme, is very rich and proliferous and due to its incorporation of everyday language is easily comprehensible and captures hearts effortlessly. "Praise poetry", due to its closeness to the dialect of the local people along with its close association of rhymes, as an ancient tradition, is highly prevalent among Arab poets and in spite of adhering to traditional poetry, has experienced some changes and innovation in its poetic forms, poetic intentions together with its style and method.

Keywords: Dialect, Folklore, Khuzestan, Mawwal.

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