

Anthropological Study of Symbols and Stone Lion Signs in Traditional-Native Rituals of Bakhtiari Tribe Lali City, Iran

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Abstract – This paper intends to evaluate any symbols, signs and meanings in Lion tombstones (Stone lion) at cemeteries of Lali city – Khuzestan province of Iran. The most important ways to know better people in each time are deep study of traditions, rituals, national/religious feasts, believes, stories, myths, music, lullabies and cultural signs. Lali city is one of the major areas in the field of artistic ethnology. The most important attractions of Lali nomads are residing places, life styles, language, music, local foods, handicrafts, dances and local clothes along with various ceremonies in weddings and death of local heroes. According to the findings, Lali native people have various traditional and deep rituals in relation with human being and nature, human being and religion, human being and habits and tributes to heroes and future. Also they had specific playing symbols for their dead heroes at various places and times. The present research has been regulated with library and field method (Observation, participative visits and interview).

Keywords – Art, Culture, Anthropology, Lali City, Traditional Native Rituals.

I. INTRODUCTION

People could satisfy their materialistic and spiritual needs by performing various rituals and traditions in different ways. Iran is also included in the group of civilized countries including various tribes with special traditions and local rituals. What is important in this research is to recognize and study any native symbols and traditions related to stone line in culture of an Old Iranian tribe named as Bakhtiari tribe at Lali city. Some of the most important attractions of Lali tribes are residing places, life styles, language and music, local foods, handicrafts, dances and local clothes along with various rituals in their weddings as well. There is a long-term history for the language, songs, dances, music and remained traditions in the mentioned district of Iran. Therefore tribal life and specific traditions are always the interests of tourists and domestic/foreign visitors. Then it is important to have a filed study about symbolic anthropology and public culture of Lali people as well. (Amanollahi Baharvand, 1981: 21). Lali city is one of the non-touched places located at south-west of Iran. Although it has little facilities of industry and modernism but their culture is included in the list of Old Iranian cultures.

II. DISCUSSION

Symbols and cultural signs are the important and considerable elements in the field of anthropology. Therefore inscriptions and highlighted images from the past are considerable in the field of recognition. As a result it may include special elements like language, art, music, traditions, marriage, habits, conducts, family, relativeness, religion, economy, rights, clothing and techniques.

According to the findings, Iranian nomads (as the most important immigration group) were travelling from mountains and plains from the past up to now just with a population of %2 (1 million and 400 thousand persons). Any ability of Lali people in compliance with environment and relevant life style show the traditional life and its compliance with industry and further needs to deep anthropological studies. What is important is a wide scope of studies about population, social, political and cultural aspects of Lali nomads. Although first-hand studies may cause further difficulties in the way of studies, but hereby we try to find suitable answer to the following questions in order to find out real meaning and applications of symbols and signs on stone lions at cemeteries of Lali city.

III. GOALS OF RESEARCH

- 1- Evaluation of rituals and traditional /native ceremonies in Bakhtiari tribe about stone lions
- 2- Evaluation of any effects out of relevant rituals to stone lion on life style of Bakhtiari nomads at Lali city
- 3- Comparative study of symbols and current signs on stone lion at Lali with other stone lions.
- 4- Evaluation of current situation of stone lions in culture of Bakhtiari nomads of Lali city

IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1- What are the traditional rituals and ceremonies in Bakhtiari nomads of Lali city?
- 2- What are the effects of rituals, traditions and symbols of stone lions on life style of people in Bakhtiari tribe at Lali city?
- 3- What are the differences and similarities of traditional rituals of Bakhtiari nomads at Lali city with other tribes of country?
- 4- What is the current situation of symbols and traditional rituals with Bakhtiari nomads at Lali city?

V. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper is based upon functionalism theory of Branislav Malinowski and also Diffusionism theory of Clark Wissler. Like diffusionism, Functionalism is one of the famous theories in reaction to evolutionism. Naturally it proposes concurrent study of subjects against historical method of evolutionism. With a parallel attitude about art position in field studies of anthropology, Asghar Izadi Jirani has studied the idea of four thinkers of 2nd generation of anthropology of art including William Faulkner (A study among Yuroba – Western Africa), Nancy Mann (A study among Walbiri- Central Australia), Antony Furgison (Among Ablams –New Guinea) and Denil Biboik among Lega- (Central Africa). He has considered the role of art among all their findings with some clear / hidden applications and various attitudes like making any relationship, creation, holiness, structuralism and meaningfulness. (Jirani, 2012: 9-30)

VI. RESEARCH METHOD

The present study is based upon field and library and documentary research methods and has been analyzed in accordance with content analysis method.

VII. DISCUSSION

When humans started to make stone items and tools, gradually found out that it was possible to construct all their ideas and beliefs on stones for a long term. On the other hand, he learned that tree or stone or star and animals are the symbols of any good or bad characteristics. Meanwhile, lion was recognized as the symbol of brave, knowledge, patience and kingdom. Due to its rare properties, it found a special position in imagery and oral culture of various tribes. Stone lions in cemeteries of Bakhtiari tribe bear an old origin. Of course due to a long-term of residence of Bakhtiari tribes at Zagros Mountains, it is decided to say that all those stone arts have symbolic meaning and similar to humanity, victory, power, decency, brave and ultra-humanistic force.

By focusing on their realistic and simple attitudes, nomads of Lali at Khoozestan province considered lion as a symbol of brave and chivalry. Lion character is obvious on all glasses, inscriptions and hunting carpets and also on highlighted pictures of Persepolis as a sign of chivalry of men and soldiers and kings. By relying upon their active mentality about old stories and myths, Bakhtiari nomads created beautiful pictures of lion by the help of masonry tools and put them on the cemeteries of these beloved brave and powerful persons. In his logbook, Henry Layard has pointed out that nomads install the image of lion on the cemeteries of great and famous people in order to survive their chivalry memories. (Bordio, 2002: 88). Some of the current stone lions at cemeteries of Lali have been decorated by swords, horses, gun, praise and something else. The characteristics of dead person have been inscribed on the body of stone lions. The mentioned images were based upon characteristics of dead person.

Sculptors recreated lion body from hard stones and rocks in order to survive the memories of dead heroes according to their mental patterns. (Remained stone lions on cemeteries of Lali heroes- Farzaneh Kiani). If dead man was mostly involved with praying in his life, the sculptors carved the image of praying tools on tombstone. If he was a brave and rich man, the image of stone lion was appointed for him along with the image of a gun or sword as well.

According to the findings, it is obvious that most of the stone lions are illustrating bravery and horsemanship. Usually the size of stone lions depends upon the position of dead man. It is common to put the end of hands and legs of lion on a stone place in order to make it standing. The hands are drawn to the forward for more security. Of course, there are some differences in sculptors of different Bakhtiari tribes. There are lots of stone lions in culture of Middle Zagros tribes (Great Lor). Also it is obvious in most of parts of Iran including Hamedan, Isfahan, Kermanshah, Chahar Mahal Bakhtiari and Khoozestan. (Khoozestan, Lali City, Pabdeh cave). Meanwhile Khoozestan is named as an open museum of stone lions in Iranian history. There are considerable amounts of stone lions at various cities like Izeh, Baghmalek, Masjid Suleiman and surrounding places. (Stone lion of Lali- Photographer: Farzaneh Kiani, Anbar Sefid village-Shasavar district). Shasavar district is one of the places with lots of stone lions (Kahbad & Torshak cemeteries) at Izeh city from both attitudes of variety and oldness. There are more than 200 stone lions in that area which is located on km 3 East of Izeh. It is a village with a highlighting stone belonging to ancient times of Ilam and a cemetery with stone lions.

English politician and explorer, Sir Henry Layard, lived for sometimes among Iranian Lor Nomads. He has written in his log book that historical cemetery of Shasavar is one of the oldest cemeteries of Bakhtiari tribe. (Layard, 1993: 29). Bart has also written something about stone lions and belonging to Safavid time. (Bart, 1965: 45). The number of stone lions of Susan plains on km 35 of Northwest of Izeh and south Zagros Mountains than Shasavar cemetery. In addition the form of the mentioned lions are so much different and modern with softer cuts. Due to the lack of suitable maintenance, some of the stone lions of Susan plains are under destroying at Pian road after Rasvand Village and the territory of Izeh and Masjid Suleiman close to Saleh Shrine. Only three parts of them are still standing. (Bagheri, 1999: 24). Stone lions of Susan plains and Saleh Shrine are somehow greater with more decorations along with some poems of Shahnameh and with a record of last 100 to 150 years. It is a common rule among nomads to transfer stone lions to the cemetery one year after the death of dead person. (Remained rock paintings at Lali- Photographer Farzaneh Kiani). There is a stone lion located at Ahmad Balad Village (Ahmad Shrine) besides Arpanah Fall after Pabdeh Cave near to Lali. Also there are some stone lions among Arpanah Village near to residing place of residents with lots of paintings of goat, horse and horseman and curve sculptors. (Bart, 1965, 76). In addition there are some stone lions

besides the grave of Jafar Gholi Khan, the last officer of Bakhtiari tribe related to the same decades. From among the mentioned stone lions, one real lion is visible with greater dimensions as a sign of forgetting such a simple and Old Iranian art. There are also some other stone lions at that area named as Boori valley. They are also old but with modern sculptors and no more handy arts. Also there are some stone lions near to the grave of Jafar Gholi Khan which are so much small.

Stone lion of winter area of Anbar Sefid of Lali. There are 5 stone lions from which two lions have modern cuts and remained three ones have old cuts.

According to the records, these stone lions are the greatest stone lions of Khoozestan. The special point of the mentioned lions is a woven from women hair which is commonly belonging to the sister, daughter and/or mother of dead person. (Bagheri, 1999: 35). Stone lions are not common in any other places of Iran like Khoozestan and Chahar Mahal Bakhtiari. But it seems that such a frequency and diffusion make it normal to be destroyed and have little value for people and persons in charge. Stone lions are transferrable and subject to destruction. Most of them have been stolen and /or broken and used for building structures as well. (Amanollahi Baharvand, 1981: 65). As a result, it is decided to say that most of hidden and obvious applications of Lali Stone Lions would be forgotten in near future forever.

VIII. CONCLUSION

According to the results, there are some artistic, cultural, social and even political realities in the content of symbolic beliefs and/or habits of Lali people. Therefore it is possible to say that findings of this paper are based upon field studies of writer and also cooperative visits and interview and note taking.

1- There are some Bakhtiari roots for rituals, symbols and traditional factors of stone lions in culture of Lali people which belong to pre-Islam period. Current symbols have so much effective applications as well.

2- Stone lions play a great role in culture of Lali people and could be considered as the major principles of their lives.

3- The rituals and symbols of Lali stone lions have rooted in pre-Christian time. Some of them have been Islamized upon the entrance of Islam. Of course they are available in all south and southwest areas of Iran. Therefore they are native at different provinces such as Fars, Booshehr and Chahar Mahal Bakhtiari and Khoozestan, Kohkiloyeh and Hormozgan. This is because all mentioned provinces have different cultures and meanings.

4- Since Zagros culture includes Kurdistan up to Yasouj and even Firooz Abad of Fars, it is natural to find some differences and varieties. According to the findings, it is obvious that most of traditional rituals of Lali people are related to stone lions with various cultural, economic, political, social and even family applications. As a result, there are two obvious forms of applications in compliance with the ideas of Branislav and Malinowski.

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