

The Tradition of Reading Ruba'i among Iranians

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Introduction

In books on rhetoric, Ruba'is are mostly considered as formal, and by its name account, a foreign type of poetry, while it is one of the oldest forms of Farsi poetry. Ruba'i is a descendent of Pahlavi language in Iran's pre-Islamic era, the dialectical versions of which could be observed in some texts. Besides the theoretical debates on the form and content of Ruba'i, it is important to study its function and style of reading among people. This study is to investigate the idea that Ruba'i was common among people and should not be considered as a classic form. No evidence except Pahlavi texts are given to suppose this idea. This study, however, performed a field study on 14 types of Ruba'is with their customary functions in different areas of Iran. The results indicate that Ruba'is were common among people of Iran, singing it in their happy and sad ceremonies.

Reading Ruba'is has been prevalent in different areas of Iran which is different from the formal and classic Ruba'is. Public Ruba'i has tremolo and additions; it is compatible with the language and dialect of the area; it is sometimes accompanied with music; it is often performed customarily in wedding or mourning ceremonies. Reading Ruba'is is sometimes performed through dance and games; the poems often do not

have the title of Ruba'i and they do not have any particular poet. In fact, they take a title in each area. These titles are mostly the changed and manipulated versions of Ruba'is such as Rabayi, Ravayi, and Rabahi, meaning that they follow the content. The poems are simple and without much literary devices, carrying themes of daily life, while the classic Ruba'i often has a mystic and philosophical meaning.

Review of the literature, aims, and research method

There have been many studies on Ruba'is in classic literature. However, few have attempted to investigate reading Ruba'is and their function among people. To show the prevalence of this literary form among people, Zolfaqari (2015) conducted a field study on 600 types of folk poems which were considered Ruba'i. The comparison and analysis of their structure revealed the following results.

The tradition of reading Ruba'i in Iran

Reading Ruba'i and couplet is the basic of musical songs of southern and central Khorasan. The common songs in Khorasan and Tajikistan in the form of Ruba'i are known as Gharibi which shows the sorrows of a Tajik. Gharibis were also sung in Iran and Afqanistan. They were sometimes known as quatrain in the Northern Khorasan (Yousefzadeh, 2009, p. 143), differentiating between their own quatrains and those of the other areas, considering them regional or foreign. Reading Falak (heaven) is a complaint poem about the destructive events of the world in Khorasan. In the Ruba'is of Falak, Falak is the destiny of the human, thus, the poet complains about the unkind behavior of Falak. Ravayi or Ruba'i is a type of happy poetry in Dameghan which were

sung by ladies in wedding ceremonies. They are not accompanied by music, and their content is about the bride and groom. In Sistan, the feminine mourning ceremonies are known as Ravayi, or Ardeh (shouting). They are sung in group or individually without any musical instrument.

In the desert area of Dameghan, the epic and heroic poems are sometimes sung as Ruba'i, and ladies read Ruba'i in wedding and groom (Damad Sadkani) ceremonies. Marvegi is a type of happy songs and musical instrument in Marv city which is sung in wedding and happy ceremonies. It is actually a public Ruba'i taken from Bukhara. In the north of Iran, Ruba'i or Tabari Khaun/Tabari Khan is a type of poem in Mazandarani dialect which is sung in Tirgan or Tirmasinzeh ceremonies. In the south of Iran, particularly in Abadeh city, when families take the bride to the groom's house, they sing some poems which are known as Rabahi. Reading Khayam, or Khayami or Shaki is a type of music in Bushehr city which is performed in the wedding, circumcising, and other happy ceremonies.

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