

The Analysis of the Social Functions of Rituals and Celebrations in *Shahnameh*

Mahmoud Aghakhanibizhani¹
Mohsen Mohammadi fesharaki²

Extended abstract

1. Introduction

In Iran's culture, there are symbolic and conventionalised rituals and celebrations that are held in various forms and times with different objectives. Some of these rituals and their related festivals are widely reflected in the *Shahnameh*. These festivals are the expressive of the mass regulations and the frequency of these practices that provide a framework for the Iranian society and culture to reproduces itself in it. In this paper, we shall be concerned with social functions of guest-accepting, mourning, festivals like Barkhahi, Sade, Norouz and Mehrگان based on the theory of Emile Durkheim along with analysing their mythical themes. The research questions include:

What are the underlying rationales lying behind holding and preserving festivals in the Iranian culture and their reflection in *Shahnameh*? What are the social functions of these festivals? Do these functions still continue to exist in today's society?

2. Literature Review:

There is a huge burden of various scholarly works on *Shahnameh*. Some of these works, in one way or another, are related to the present problem as it follows:

1. Fazeli, M. T and Pourbakhtiyar, G. (2016). Analysing the Mourning Rituals in the *Shahnameh* and its Comparison with the very Rituals amongst Bakhtiyari Lor and Kokhak Lor Tribes. *Quarterly Journal of*

1. Epic literature and humanities Ph.D. at the Faculty of Literature, University of Isfahan.

Email: aghakhani46@yahoo.com

2. Associate Professor Department of Persian Language and Literature Faculty of Literature and Humanities University of Isfahan.

Email: fesharaki311@yahoo.com

Received: November 29, 2019

Accepted: December 26, 2020

- Social Sciences*, 10 (13), 121-144. In this paper, the authors concluded that there is quite a number of commonalities between the mourning rituals in the Shahnameh and the Luri-speaking people such as cutting hair, besprinkling dust on the head, tearing off the collar, and etc.
2. Modaberri, M. and Alinejad, M. (2013). Guest-Accepting Rituals in the Shahnameh. *Journal of Letters and Language*, 16 (34), 283-309. It is concluded that accepting ritual amongst the Iranian is reflected in the Shahnameh and includes the processes such as greeting the passenger and etc.
 3. Aghakhani, B., Toghyani, I., Mohammadi-Fesharaki, M. (2018). Sacrificing Ritual in the Shahnameh (the Tale of Rostam, Esfandiyar and Siyavash). *Journal of Culture and Folk Literature*, 6(20), 1-21. In this study, the authors concluded that there are no indications denoting sacrificing and the mentioned points refer to nullifying the calamity with blood.
 4. Ishragi, H. (1376). the Shahnameh from the Perspective of National Solidarity. *Art and People*, 153-154, pp. 74-85. The author argues that the Shahnameh has always been a unitising factor amongst the Iranian people due to its attempts to preserve the Persian language and culture and represent national myths.

These studies have concentrated upon cultural elements in the Shahnameh but they have not dealt with the social functions of rituals and festivals based on Durkheim's theory. The present study seeks to identify and investigate the social functions of rituals and festivals in the Shahnameh according to Emile Durkheim's theory.

3. Method

Concerning the objectives, the present study is a fundamental-theoretic one. As far as data collection is concerned, the data are grounded upon library resources that are analysed based on qualitative content analysis. The researcher has collected the required data about the analysis of social functions of certain rituals and festivals based on Durkheim's theory along with the analysis of mythical themes from different library resources. The data collection tools include note-taking and wave-like reading (see Sadegi-Fasayi and Irfan-manesh, (2016) in regard to the social functions of rituals and festivals in the Shahnameh. In the research methodology, the qualitative content can be considered as a research method to interpret the data in terms

of the subjective-content method using systematic categorising procedures and designing well-known patterns (Iman, 2009, p. 172).

4. Findings and Discussion

The *Shahnameh* is a document that reveals the ways to preserve and reproduce cultural and religious elements using the representation of rituals and festivals. Of the most important represented rituals and festivals one can refer to accepting guests, Barkhahi, Norouz, Sade and Mehregan festivals. All these festivals enjoy sanctimonious and religious features.

Ritualistic practices refer to vow renewal by the people in which the group matters far more than each of its individual members. Therefore, it is always necessary to preserve these festivals. These rituals, as a matter of fact, are the real source of social integration and are regarded as real links tying people together. Durkheim believes that rituals are necessary for the real ethical life to function. This is mainly because it is only through the rituals that a group proves and preserves itself.

In ancient societies, too, there was an extensive and powerful "mass consciences" which imposed a monotonous agreement on what is right and what is wrong. In consequence, the ethical unity would be guaranteed insofar as the social members would have relied upon a series of symbolic realisations and common presumptions about the world around them.

5. Conclusion

In mourning ritual, the people get close together through particular procedures. The public feature of such ceremonies leaves deep and strong influence upon the participants. On the other hand, it provides harmony and deep sympathy amongst the represented agony of the people in life. In its covert function, this constitutes solidarity and unity. As a matter of fact, people obtain their cultural self, that is their social self in one sense, as well as their religious self by simply taking part in these ceremonies. Barkhahi ritual refers to the problem of the king and legitimacy and consequently the relations between the king and the people. This ritual makes people come together in particular events such as Norouz and Mehrgan; therefore, it contributes to increasing the solidarity and unity between the people and the king. Undoubtedly, it adds to social stability.

Concerning the guest/passenger-accepting ritual, playing music, rejoicing parties, attribution and etc. accentuate certain customs that denote solidarity-making function. Instigating emotional reactions followed by music, clapping, dancing, giving presents and happiness, serves to tighten the unity. The other function is to put emphasis upon an orderly network of links that tie an individual with the society; not only does it reproduce the social identity of an individual, but also finds a social realisation. In all the Sade, Norouz and Mehrگان festivals we witness accepting ritual which is along with emotional reactions such as music, clapping, dancing, giving presents and rejoicing. The people have quite active participation in festivals and the shred feature in all these festivals is peoples' collaboration and corporation. Therefore, it clear that festivals motivate the people to gather together (the overt function of unitising) and, in consequence, leads to forgive animosity (an evil symbol) and develop happiness and kindness (the covert function of unitising). Also, these rituals in the ceremonies and festivals create inner ties, social unity and ethical reconstruction of individuals. All these covertly refer to their social functions on the unitising affair.

References (in Persian)

- Abkhezr, Asghar and Motafker, Hussein (2015). The analysis of the effect of national ceremonies in reinforcing solidarity and national unity with an emphasis upon social treatment of the youth (بررسی تأثیر مراسم و مناسبت‌های ملی (در تقویت همبستگی و وحدت ملی با تأکید بر تربیت اجتماعی جوانان). *Two Quarterly Journal of the Islamic Revolution Culture Protection*. Year 4. No. 9. Spring and summer. Pp. 139-168.
- Aidenloo, Sajjad (2006). Toranj Boya and Beh Zarin (ترنج بویا و به زرین). *Journal of Persian Language and Literature Education*. Volume 18. Number 73. Spring. Pp. 58-61.
- Asadi Tusi, Abu Nasr Ali Ibn Ahmad (2015). *Garshasbnameh* (گرشاسب‌نامه). Corrected by Habib Yaghmaei. Third edition. Tehran: Book World.
- Avesta, (2013). *Jalildostkhah Report and Research*, 17th Edition, Tehran: Morvarid.
- Iman, Mohammadtaqi (2010). *Paradigmatic principals of qualitative and quantative research methods in the Humanity* (مبانی پارادایمی روش‌های (تحقیق کمی و کیفی در علوم انسانی). Qom: Research Center and University.

- Khaleghimotlagh, Jalal (2010). The flower of ancient griefs and agonies (گل (رنج‌های کهن). To Ali Dehbashi. Tehran: Thales.
- Dehkhoda, Aliakbar (1999). Dictionary (لغت‌نامه). Volume 4. Second Edition. Tehran: University of Tehran.
- Durkheim, Emile (2018). The primordial form of religious life (صور ابتدایی حیات). Translated by Baqer Parham. Sixth edition. Tehran: markaz.
- Rezaei Dashtarjaneh, Mahmood and Golizadeh, Parvin (2012). The analytical-comparative study of Siyavash, Ozeiris and Atis - (بررسی تحلیلی - Quarterly Journal of Mystical Literature - Mythology. Year 7. No. 22. Spring. Pp. 57-83.
- Razi, Hashem (2014). Chronometry of the Iranian ancient festivals (گاه‌شماری). Fourth edition. Tehran: Behjat.
- Ruholamini, Mahmood (2017). The old rituals and festivals in Today's Iran (آیین‌ها و جشن‌های کهن در ایران امروز). Fifth Edition. Tehran: Agah.
- Siyasi, Mohammad (2011). Medical affairs in the Shahnameh (پزشکی در (شاهنامه). First Edition. Tehran: Mirmah.
- Sadeghifasaei, Soheila and Erfanmanesh, Iman (2016). The methodological principals of documentary research in Iran (مبانی روش‌شناختی پژوهش اسنادی در (علوم اجتماعی). Culture strategy. No. 29. Spring. Pp. 61-91.
- Toghyani, Ishaq and Ghorbani, Rahman (2012). The study and analysis of mythical representations of Water in Ferdowsi's Shahnameh (بررسی و تحلیل (بازتاب اساطیری آب در شاهنامه فردوسی). Ancient Persian Literature. Year 2. Issue 1. Spring and summer. Pp. 69-86.
- Ferdowsi, Abolghasem (2008). Shahnameh (شاهنامه). Corrected by Jalal Khaleghimotlagh. 8 office. Tehran: Center of the Great Islamic Encyclopedia.
- _____ (2012). Shahnameh (شاهنامه) (Moscow edition). By Saeed Hamidian. Eighteenth edition. Tehran: Qatre.
- _____ (2015). Shahnameh (شاهنامه). Volume 1-2. Trimming the glory of the Absolute Creator. First Edition. Tehran: Sokhan.

- Fraser, James George (2010). Golden branch (شاخه زرین). Translated by Kazem Firoozmand. Sixth edition. Tehran: Agah.
- Fayyaz, Ibrahim and Rahmani, Jabbar (2008). The mourning ritual and mass consciences in the Iranian Shi'ism (مناسک عزاداری و وجدان جمعی در تشیع ایرانی). Honest letter. Year 14. No. 2. Autumn and winter. Pp. 101-111.
- Modbari, Mahmoud and Alinejad, Masoumeh (2013). Guest-accepting rituals in the Shahnameh (آیین‌های پذیره مسافران در شاهنامه). Journal of Literature and Language. Year 16. No. 34. Autumn and winter. Pp. 283-309.
- Musafa, Abolfazl (1972). Attribution custom (رسم تثار). Journal of Tabriz Faculty of Literature and Humanities. No. 97. pp. 290-294.
- Maghsoudi, Mojtaba and Alipour, Jafar (2012). The analysis of the symbols and legitimising rituals in the programmes of the national broadcasting based on emphasising the religious rituals (بررسی نمادها و آیین‌های مشروعیت بخش (در برنامه‌های صداوسیما با تأکید بر مناسک مذهبی). Quarterly Journal of International Relations Studies. Volume 4. Number 14 (15 in a row). Spring. Pp. 77-116.
- Narshakhi, Muhammad ibn Ja'far (1973). History of Bukhara (تاریخ بخارا). By Modarres Razavi. Tehran: bonyad farhang Iran.
- Hinels, Jan Russell (2015). Recognising the Iranian myths (شناخت اساطیر ایران). Translated by Mohammadhussein Bajlanfarrokhi. Fourth edition. Tehran: asatir.
- Vaheddoost, Mahvash (2009). The institutionalised affairs in the Shahnameh (نهادینه‌های اساطیری در شاهنامه). Second edition. Tehran: Soroush.
- Vermazern, Martin (2015). Mitra custom (آیین میترا). Translation by bezorg Naderzad. Eighth edition. Tehran: Cheshmeh.
- Wiedengren, Geo (1999). The Iranian religions (دین‌های ایرانی). Translated by Manouchehr Farhang. Tehran: Agahan edeh.
- _____ (2015). A research on the cloak of the dervishes and the heart of the Sufis (پژوهشی در خرقة درویشان و دلچ صوفیان). Translation and research: Bahar Mokhtarian. First Edition. Tehran: Agah.