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MUSIC AND MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS IN “SHAHNAMEH”

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OPINION

“Shahnameh” is an epic long poem written by Abu 'l-Qasim Ferdowsi Tusi. It contains 50.000 quatrain poetical verses, and its rhythm has octagon convergent form: this is a special rhythm in metrics. It is one of the prevailing epic works in the world and has been written for thirty years. This literary masterpiece consists of myths, legends and history of Iran which includes the formation of world up to the foundation of Islam in Iran in the 7th century. “Shahnameh” is the cultural identity of Iran and is more than poetical masterpiece. Ferdowsi's “Shahnameh” is one of the world's masterpieces and the treasure of the Persian language. “Shahnameh” is a heritage that refers to the culture and myths of ancient Iran and an epos, which tells about the generosity and strength of the Iranians.

“Shahnameh” is the greatest work of the Persian literature and is one of the world's most famous literary works. The amount of the versified lines of the poem is nearly twice bigger than that of “Iliad” and “Odyssey” by Homer and twenty times more than that of German “The Song of Nibelungs”. “Shahnameh” is a valuable collection that can be used not only in reference to the Persian literature but also of other spheres as, for instance, music.

Through his magic words Ferdowsi actually depicts scenes which condition the complexity of musical narration “Shahnameh's” versified lines. Music as an abstract art can transmit concepts like love, hatred and envy, but the objective of depicting a scene through music is a difficult phenomenon. If a musician can transmit the concept of envy by using peculiar instruments then the musical narration of the same scene is considered to be impossible.

Ferdowsi eloquently describes the materials out of which the musical instruments are made, as well as, points out the way they may be played on and states their usage. When one reads his epic works it seems that the sounds of all musical instruments are heard. In his poems the drums and snare drums are tied on the elephants' backs and are played in front of the armies: at Khosrov's celebration tambourine and harp are heard and lute was played by Barbad. It is impressive that in future after Khosrov's death the lute is burnt.

In “Shahnameh” the parts where no music plays are scarcely met. The musical narration is present even in Siavash's grief. There is no music in the poem that hasn't any connection with the melodies that were well - known during Ferdowsi's lifetime as he had reasonably depicted the music of the ancient Iran and Sassanid era. In ancient Iran two types of music, that is

of “pahlevans” (equilibrists) and “mazandars” was widespread. The words of Rustam are expressed through the play of lute and flute that were typical for the “pahlevans” music .

Ferdowsi’s “Shahnameh” can be observed by various viewpoints. One of the noteworthy ways of studying it is the differentiation of musical instruments that were used there and were widespread at Ferdowsi’s lifetime.

The musical discussion of “Shahnameh” can be carried out by taking into consideration the following factors:

Musicians

Musical instruments

Songs

Musical terms

In Ferdowsi’s poetry music is considered to be the main element that is connected with it. While studying the tragedy “Rustam and Sohrab” it is necessary to pay great attention to the rhymes. In “Shahnameh” rhyme is not merely a meaningless repetition of harmonious vowels and consonants. In fact Ferdowsi uses the rhymes in order to strengthen the epic form of the poetry and to transmit the poetic essence. In “Shahnameh” rhyme is a necessary element of music and poetry and its frequent repetition is the evidence of “Shahnameh’s” perfection.

Another feature of Ferdowsi’s eloquence is the rhyming of words to which he wants to prescribe more importance. Music and the structure of rhyming usually affect the reader and listener in different way. The sound of the latter strengthens the epic effect of the poetry.

The choice of rhymes that have long syllables rather than short ones gives “Shahnameh” epic musicality. Through the usage of adequate metrical rhyme, powerful rhythm, puns and other verbal means in his poetry Ferdowsi provides the musical effect. In “Shahnameh” the musicality of words is not limited by rhythms or rhymes. Sometimes the harmony of similar sounds or letters creates an atmosphere that helps the poet to transmit to audience the desirable emotion. The repetition of words in the poems of “Shahnameh” not only provides the effect of the music but also transmits the utmost meaning.

Another feature of Ferdowsi’s poems is the delightful exaggerations, meaningful comparisons and dramatic equations of nature and life: for example, in both armies the sounds of trumpets and drums are heard, the sky becomes blue, the soil is black, just like the clouds, fire erupts from the swords and knives, the sky becomes crimson, red and black because of flags and spires that have emerged in the clouds, the soil cracks because of the sounds of drums, horses and the shouts of devil: no one has ever seen such war: the earth was covered with blood, and the spires and swords were everywhere.

Though “Shahnameh” is a long epic poem, the songs of war and music, love and hatred, sorrow and happiness, praise and curse are heard there. “Shahnameh” is not just a description of wars and combatants: it depicts all human emotions with their peculiar melody and musicality which is the evidence of Ferdowsi’s great art of expressing sensibility in one unique rhythm. Let us listen to the musicality of Shah’s anger when he is in rage because of Rustam’s disloyalty:

First he shouted, and then he put aside the embarrassment:

He shouted: “Who is Rustam that can disobey to my order: he must be captured and killed, and I don’t want to hear of him”, p 199.

Rustam reproaches the Shah and praises himself. Reproach and evaluation are expressed in versified lines the meaning of which is intertwined. The perfect harmony of the word is expressed in combination of inner musicality of vowels and consonants, emphasis and rhymes. It seems that all brass and stringed instruments have gathered in one place to create a great symphony.

Tahamta was full of rage against the king and urged him not to make mistakes: "All your deeds are incorrect and you don't deserve the kingdom, you must kill Sohrab and despise the wicked people", p 200.

While depicting the war Ferdowsi uses his utmost abilities: for creating the impressive excitement of battle the author makes the best use of musicality of the words, short syllables, vowels and consonants, as well as, various matrixes. The scene of battle between Rustam and Sohrab Ferdowsi transmits in the following exciting way:

They descended from the camps with pride and wise look
tied the horses to the rocks and walked towards each other to fight
they were fighting, and their bodies were covered with blood and perspiration, p 223.

The musical elements of "Shahnameh" actually depend on the latter's rhythm, rhyme and on the phonetic harmony like intonation, intensity, continuity and so forth. Here, it is noteworthy that as Ferdowsi was a talented poet he naturally used all musical elements in accordance with the themes of the poems and expressed human thoughts and emotions in the form of compact structured verse. Therefore before discussing Ferdowsi's poetical art it is necessary to state that poetry is an art the essence of which is the words much like the music the essence of which is the sounds, like painting, the essence of which is the colours, like sculpture, the essence of which is the rough materials. In other words poetry is verbal music. Consequently poetry is the art of choosing and forming words and rhythm and rhyme are the first components which the poet takes into account while creating his poetry. The thing which is technically called rhythm is the constant word order of the oral form. This definition has twofold meaning: in fact, it contains various types of the rhythm.

In Persian language the rhythm is based on the number and length of syllables. The musicality of the poem is not restricted by rhythm and rhyme. Sometimes the combination of sounds which is done by the repetition of similar sounds creates a music which is called the music of letters. In this case the poet can use one rhythm and by relying on his own taste in poetry create different inner meanings. In other words the poet can make the music fast or slow while leaving the rhythm in the same way. For creating a meaningful rhythm he can make use of various music depending on his own standpoint. Henceforth the existing numerous short syllables of the rhythm makes the reading of the rhythm faster and gives it emotionality but in contrast to this the great number of long syllables makes the reader sad, feel pity and deliberate on some things.

Ferdowsi was greatly familiar to such poetic realities and therefore for creating various effects in the mind of the audience from the verbal standpoint he depicts various events based on one rhythm. For transmitting his peculiar music Ferdowsi actually uses emotions like sorrow and happiness, war and peace, love and hatred.

Music and musical instruments constantly transmit cultural thoughts and values of the society. The introduction to instruments helps to perceive the importance of musical heritage, belief and lifestyle of the traditional societies. Musical instruments not only create pleasant sounds and accompany the dances but also express the oral traditions, myths, epopees, recovering and simplistic ceremonies. Moreover, they are used to encourage the youth on the battlefield. Musical instruments play significant role in religious and non-religious ceremonies like celebrations and battles. If prominent people like Ferdowsi wouldn't have preserved the Persian culture and language then it would have been impossible to find its trace. Persian poems bridge the historical memory and glorious past of the Iranian people.

Ferdowsi's "Shahnameh" is a collection of Iranian traditional instruments. The author mentions those instruments that were played at celebrations and battles. The musical instruments include snare drums, horn, trumpet, lyre, flute, cymbals that were widespread in Iran before Islam emerged in Persia. Ferdowsi pays attention to music of the Sassanid era that was based on seven or eight Khosroviaan principals, as well as, to differences existing in the music of the Islam period. Moreover, his

contemporaries like Fahrrokhi and Manuchehri also in their poems mentioned general musical terms. By the way, some instruments like lute, trumpet and tambourine are used in Iran up to now. Unfortunately some of the others do not exist anymore.

Any musical instrument pointed out a celebration, funeral or battle. "Shahnameh" is overloaded with the usage of musical terms which denote the familiarity of Ferdowsi with the music of his time. He presents the peculiar music of celebrations, funerals and battles with such cultivation that the reader immediately acknowledges Ferdowsi's knowledge on the usage of special musical instrument for each event. Consequently in "Shahnameh" the usage of every musical instrument is studied alongside with the versified sample. By the help of musical terms Ferdowsi depicts historical, national and religious rituals. The myths of the Persian people like that of the Greek, Indians and Chinese are deeply linked with music but that observation needs another scientific research.

In "Shahnameh" Ferdowsi prescribes the usage of some Iranian musical instruments to the ancient kings but that prescription is not scientific as the society recognizes that any musical instrument is actually created through centuries due to reason and art of numerous people. Probably Ferdowsi wanted to point out that kings and combatants were valuing the music. Bahram Gur was one of those kings who paid great attention to music and musicians and highly praised them. In "Shahnameh" it is stated that Bahram Gur brought ten thousand musicians from India to Iran in order to give joy to his people.

In "Shahnameh" kings, for example, Artashir and Bahram Gur, constantly support the musicians. Barbad, Sarkash and Nagisa are the famous musicians of the Sassanid era. Barbad is the symbol of music and the creator of notes that became the basis of Iranian music. Barbad was the most master player of lute who for his pleasant voice and masterful playing was sent as a musician (Rameshgar) to Khosrov Parvez's palace. And Artashir was paying attention to wisdom and liked music. We built a castle that was called "Sadeh" and gathered the musicians there.

In "Shahnameh" the following examples are present:

Huasheng plays drum, the king Jamshid is interested in sorna (ancient Iranian musical instrument), Manuchehri and Afrasiab are playing white coloured flute. Ibn-E-Khordabe in his book entitled "Allah and Al mallah" prescribed the usage of the white flute to the Kurds and the use of the black one – to the Iranian people. The usage of musical instrument named "dona" which is probably the same as the Kurdish "dozleh" or "doshman" was widespread among the people living in the north of Khorasan and the musical instrument named "donli" is peculiar to the Beluga people. Donli consists of two instruments which are called "korna-e-tahmuresi" and is mentioned in the stories about Zahhak.

There were numerous flags and great noise that was caused by korna-e- tahmuresi .

In "Shahnameh" all musicians, harpists, Gudruz, Giv, Tus and Khosrov are familiar to trumpet, harp, tambourine and other musical instruments. They sometimes take the readers to the scenes of celebrations and battles. Harp which is the most national instrument of Iran is present everywhere in "Shahnameh". In wall-paintings and sketch images of the Sassanid era there are pictures depicting the harp. In the poem harp chiefly sounds during celebrations and the players are mostly women. In the story of Bijan and Manijeh there are three hundred worshipers, harpists and ud players, as well as, women who have come from Iran and Turan.

In the scenes of hunting, at the time of punishing or praising someone, at farewell parties, in description of death, revenge, defeat, war, army regulations and so forth special musical instruments having joyous or sad sense were used. In the majority of the scenes of "Shahnameh" the military music is played which declares the army's attack, the entrance of any new character or the move of any combatant. Such music depicts the scenes of terror for the reader. In the parts referring to battlefield Ferdowsi for the purpose of depicting the combats mentions the names of musical instruments that cause fear and penetration. The musical instruments that depict combats include wind, percussion and leather instruments which effectively describes the

scenes of fighting. Among the instruments that depict the fighting is the snare drum (a leather instrument), trumpet (wind instrument), horn (wind instrument), Indian daraj (percussion instrument), flute (wind instrument), tambourine (percussion instrument) and tabireh (leather instrument): all of them are old musical instruments that are not used today. However, the musical instrument trumpet is still in use.

The sound of snare drum and Indian daraj was heard

The sound of tabireh was heard from the king's palace

And the army was getting ready for the fight

They were in the battlefield armed with swords.

Here is an example of military song that transfers some message. During his first combat with Rustam Afrasiab escapes and Rustam defeats the army that had come from Turin. The music tells him and the king of Iran named Zal about the latter's victory.

By the sound of instruments that were heard from afar the king learned that Rustam had won.

The musical instruments depicting the fight like the snare drum, trumpet, horn and Indian daraj bring about the sounds of fear and therefore are used to initiate the beginning of the war or to declare the entrance of a big character.

Percussion instruments like snare drum and tambireh have various usages. Tabireh is a kind of drum made of tanned skin which middle part is thin and both edges are large. Its smaller type is still used in villages for stirring the domestic animals. The large part of this instrument is cylindrical and its edges are covered with leather. It is put on the backs of the elephants and is played by two sticks. These instruments were used when food was brought to town or to the palace and when the army won or was defeated.

Percussion instruments were, in fact, the symbols of king's power: therefore when the drum of tabireh was damaged it was commented as a defeat of the king and his nation.

In "Shahnameh" sometimes the structure of the musical instruments is taken into consideration. In the story about Alexander Ferdowsi describes the snare drum that was made of lion's skin.

The snare drum is played to express the hatred towards cruelty.

In "Shahnameh" the precise time of the musical instrument's sounding is indicated. It means that in Iranian culture and music time has significant meaning.

Cock-crow which is the symbol of wakening, trumpet, which is the symbol of some declaration, as well as, the fearful sounds of the snare drum create the musical image of "readiness". In ancient Iran there was a special group that had to play drum at sunrise and sunset. Moreover musical instruments like harp, lyre and flute sound in "Shahnameh" during celebrations.

In "Shahnameh" the lute is used as an instrument that has sad and impressive sound. In Ferdowsi's opinion people who made lutes were also the ones who masterfully played them. In story about Siavash lute and flute are played simultaneously. In story about Sohrab the lute is played. In meeting house Zohrab is happy because of the sounds of the lute.

In "Shahname" stringed instruments, the harp, ud, tabure (small drum) and lute were played during celebrations, while percussion instruments, the tambourine, or wind instruments, the flute sound rarely. The Iranians played flute, lute, tambourine, violin, ud and sorna during celebrations.

Thus, the musical instruments used by Ferdowsi in "Shahname" are divided into two classes:

Stringed instruments – lute, harp, tabor, ud

Wind instruments – flute...

Tambourine is a percussion instrument which is used at celebrations.

Key words: *Ferdowsi, "Shahnameh", music, musical instruments*

SUMMERY

The article is devoted to the study of the meaning of music and musical instruments in the epic poem "Shahnameh" by Ferdowsi. The author concludes that the musical instruments used by Ferdowsi in "Shahnameh" are divided into two classes-stringed instruments (lute, harp, tabor, ud) and wind instruments (flute). The percussion instrument tambourine was used during celebrations.