



پښتونستان د علوم انساني او مطالعاتو فریښی  
پرتال جامع علوم انساني

### Religious beliefs:

As evident in the songs, wherever a Sistāny feels helpless, he/she resorts to the religious notables and magnates like Mohammed, Imam Reza or Ali. He always wishes to make a pilgrimage to the tomb of Imam Reza. He seeks the remedy for his pains from Mohammed and as a Shi'ite Muslim is faithful and loyal to his religious beliefs.

### Song Usages:

Folk songs in Sistān are popular and liked by all. A townsman or a villager, an educated person or a commoner, a man, a woman or a child, all know a few of them and on occasions sing them, in joy or in sorrow. Children have grown accustomed to delightful Sistany songs from their cradles as they always accompanied the mother's lullabies.

The people of Sistān sing their folk songs at weddings, national celebrations and other feasts and local musicians accompany them with genuine Iranian tunes. In the long winter nights, Sistānies gather around and engage in 'Seytak'songs, a type of play on verses (poetical contest). Whoever wins, is encouraged. Usually girls remember more songs. There is no prohibition or sense of

indecency in women and girls singing in Sistāny society.

Shepherds in the tranquil and serene loneliness of the wilderness, lovers deep in their enamour chatting with each other, and farmers while engaged in the intolerable work of harvesting, sing songs in loud voices and in this way, with the everlasting effects of these songs, make the pains and harshness of their work and environment easy on themselves.

The school youths of Zabol, in the context of their urban society, (thievishly) write songs in their love-letters. This perhaps is the only occasion when Sistāny folk songs are not sung but appear in written forms. In Sistān, urban society has not yet torn apart its ties with rural society, it still has common characteristics and a variety of interactions with it. Thus the folk songs of Sistān continue to speak of the material and spiritual life of both rural and urban Sistān. In the article, references are made in places to the Sistāny songs themselves in their genuine dialect. These songs have been selected from a collection of songs gathered by the author in a book entitled "Songs of MIDDAY" published by the Iranian Anthropology Centre.

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and consistent with the climate of that area. Dresses, hats, and footwear suitable for Sistân's burning heat are often made of materials like cotton. There again the songs contain the names of different Sistâny clothes in their differing themes.

#### Migration:

Because animal husbandry is a major occupation in Sistân, migration becomes a necessity. In some Sistâny songs there can be found mention of migration. Lovers get to know and let their hearts be won by one another ... - but as soon as they separate because of the necessities of the migration they groan and cry. In the Sistâny folk songs, we are introduced to these scenes of separation that are the results of migration love affairs.

#### Means of Transport:

Folk songs also talk of various traditional means of travelling and transportation. Those appropriate to the climatic conditions of Sistân, are camel, horse, and a kind of boat known as "tuten". In addition to traditional means, in recent Sistâny songs, mentions of bicycles and cars are also found. Today, both old and new means are used side by side.

#### Poverty and hardship of livelihood:

The land of Sistân has experienced many invasions and raids; the most important ones being those of the Mongols and of Teymur. During Teymur's invasion, the great dam of the "Hirman" River that used to make Sistân habitable, was totally destroyed and ever since, because of the water shortage, conditions in Sistân have been deteriorating and thus increasing the misery and insecurity of the area. Raids of invading tribes also used to add to the difficulties and poverty prevailing. Invaders used to take women and girls as slaves. These themes have remained in the folk songs as the depressing shadows of the past.

#### Love:

The concept of love is the most used and recurrent concept in the songs. However, love in Sistâny folk songs is not celestial but terrestrial and it never leaves the real and simple life of the people. The Sistâny lover is from the people, she borrows her colour, looks and beauty from nature, benefits from nature and sometimes struggles with it. Lovers, like other people of Sistân, are tied to their class, tribal customs and type of livelihood and to the struggle with social problems and difficulties. They are loyal to their society's basic need, which is production. They are hard-working and painstaking people whose love and work are inseparable. Love, like other aspects of rural life, has ferment and perpetuity. This poignant love when confronted with problems like poverty, oppression and class discrepancies, suddenly transforms Sistâny tolerance and patience into rebellion, calmour and outcry. These are the general concepts of love and the ways they are expressed in the folk songs of Sistân. Apart from these general themes, different facts of love such as separation, union, longing, sacrifice for the loved one, revenge, and dignity in love have also been much sung about.

#### Women:

In Sistâny folk songs, woman is not the tender lover of the famous poet's works. She is not created for revelling feasts. But rather she is present on the painful stage of life and she walks with men. She carries important responsibilities in productive activities; in the field she harvests and in the hut she milks and makes butter and oil. The Sistâny woman is a hard-working industrious woman. Thus even when she appears as a lover in the folk songs, she preserves her active and strong image. Apart from these concepts, the songs contain many descriptions about the beauty of Sistâny women and in keeping with traditional beliefs there are mentions too of her unfaithfulness, and of her promise-breaking nature.

# Some Features of the Material and Spiritual Life of the People of Sistân in their Folk Songs.\*

by: IASA NIKOUKAR

Sistân is situated in the south-east of Khorâsân and is surrounded on the north by Afghanistan and Ghaniat; on the east by Afghanistan, on the west by the Lute Desert and Kermân; and on the south by Kermân and Baluchestân; and according to the national divisions, it is included in the province of "Sistân and Baluchestân". Sistân has an immensely rich culture which is the product of a very ancient civilization. Folk songs comprise an important part of this cultural treasury. These folk songs, which prevail throughout the rural and urban communities, reflect the material and spiritual life of the people of this land like a clear and transparent mirror. The topic of this article (presented here in a summary form), concerns these particular cultural splendours.

Sistânie call a song or a couplet, a "seytak". These songs are in the Sistâny Farsi dialect that is usually comprehensible to every Farsi-speaking person.

Important subjects that have penetrated the folk songs of Sistân are as follow:

## Sistân's Geographic and Natural Characteristics:

Streams, hills, towns and villages that are situated in Sistân or in its neighbouring areas, or those places that the people of Sistân in one way or another have contact with, have a special place in Sistâny songs. These references are so well assimilated that the songs, besides describing Sistân's geographical conditions to us, also show us nicely how the people of today and yesterday of this land have related to other places.

## Productive Activities:

Because folk songs have poetic, folk and "realistic" structures, they have thus developed close associations with the actual life of the people of Sistân. The most important and current productive activities of the Sistânie, which form the basis of their livelihood, have made their imprint in the songs; so that there are repeated references to various kinds of activities such as farming, poultry and animal husbandry; or different stages of ploughing, cultivation and harvest grazing of animals and even references to various tools used in these activities.

## Food and Clothes:

The major purpose of the rural families of Sistân in their productive activities is often the preparation of their most basic requirements, namely food and clothes. Therefore in many places, songs contain a mention of them. The food of the rural people of Sistân is bread, which in some homes accounts for the only daily and regular meal. Every day or every week, the bread-oven is heated in the homes and women engage in baking the bread. The names of different varieties of bread are mentioned in the songs.

The clothes of the people of Sistân are simple

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\* Further information on the "Life and Customs" of the people of Sistân is provided by the author in his introduction to the "Folk songs of Nimruz" and in the Persian version of this article.