



BALUCHISTAN IV. MUSIC OF BALUCHISTAN

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Melodies in the music of Baluchistan are usually connected with particular ceremonies (*marāsem*), usually religious rites, festivals, or holidays. The principal religious rites are exorcism (*gwātī*), ecstasy (*māled-e pīr-e patar*), and mourning (*majāles-e tarḥīm*); the most important festivals and holidays are weddings, childbirth, circumcision, date harvesting (*hāmīn*), and wheat harvesting. The relationships between melodies and particular ceremonies are reflected in their names.

Likō and Zahīrōk. These are vocal forms (*āvāzī*) and are sung when one is away from close relatives, friends, a beloved, and even from one's country. In the beginning *Zahīrōk* was only sung by two groups of women, who in the course of their daily work would exchange melodies. This method of performance is not common today; in practice *Zahīrōk* is sung by male singers accompanied by a short-necked fiddle (*sorūd*, also *surōz*, or *kēčak*, Pers. *qeyčak*).

The *Likō* and *Zahīrōk*, which contain similar texts, differ in that each is common to a particular area of Baluchistan and that each has different melodic characteristics. *Likō* is most common in Sarḥadd-zamīn and *Zahīrōk*



in Mokrān (Makurān). Among the characteristics of the Sarḥaddi style is the repetition of hemistichs which are performed in one period, usually composed of two sentences or two melodic figures. The first sentence or figure of the period has an unfinished quality, while the second sentence or figure evokes a feeling of completion.

Kordī (Kurdī). The text of *Kordī*, like *Līkō* and *Zahīrōk*, evokes the suffering arising from distance and separation, but in *Līkō* and *Zahīrōk* the suffering is real, while in *Kordī* there is only remembrance of separation. The text is usually in the dialect of Rūdbār and the region between Īrānšahr and Bampūr. *Kordī* was also initially sung by women when working with stone handmills used for making wheat flour; however, this is no longer the custom. *Kordī*, like *Līkō* and *Zahīrōk*, has free meter. The name *Kordī* may suggest that this *āvāz* was associated with a branch of the Kurds in Baluchistan.

Mōtk or Mowtk. These are for the ceremonies of *tarḥīm*, the assembly convened for the blessing of the dead and mourning. The text of this *āvāz* describes the virtues of the deceased and the sorrow of mourning. On this basis *Mōtk* can be counted as a type of elegy (*marṭīa*). *Mōtk* is usually performed by a group of women without instrumental accompaniment. The verses (*bayt*) and refrains (*tarjībānd*) are sung alternately by two groups of singers or by soloist and group. This way of performing appears to be no longer customary. *Mōtk*, like *Līkō*, *Zahīrōk*, and *Kordī*, is not strictly metrical.

Šayr (Še'ṛ). This is an *āvāz* with poetic text consisting of epic stories, romance, historical events, social narrative, advice, etc. The poet (*šā'er*), also called *pālavān* (*pahlavān*), performs *Šayr* with instrument and voice. Baluchi *pālavāns* sing of historical events, thereby preserving the history of Baluchistan orally. *Šayr* is usually sung in gatherings of important people or khans; on rare occasions it can also be performed at wedding ceremonies. The instruments accompanying the performance are the plucked, long-necked lute (Bal. *dambūra*, Pers. *tanbīra*) providing a rhythmic drone, and the *sorūd* (*qeyčak*). The most important and well-known *Šayrs* current in Baluchistan are epic *Šayr*, including *Mīr Qabar*, *Čākur wa Gwaharām*, *Ḥažrat Adham*, and *Moḥammad Ḥanīfa*; historical *Šayr*, including *Jīhand Khan* and *Dādšāh*; love *Šayr*, including *'Ezzat wa Mehrōk*, and *Še (Šayk) Morīd wa Hānī*; social narrative, including *Mīr Pasond Khan* and *Morād Khan* (see also on Baluchi literature above).

Gwātī. This term, literally “windy” or “windiness,” is also used to designate



depression believed to be caused by an evil spirit disturbing the psychosomatic equilibrium, for which another term is *jenn-zadagī* (spirit possession). The use of *gwātī* as a musical term arises from the belief that only music is able to rid the possessed body of unclean spirits and restore it to health by means of a trance. Belief in unclean spirits is found both in Baluchistan, in particular in its coastal regions, and on most of the Persian Gulf coast. The most important types of evil spirits are the *zārs* (for the names of which see Rīāhī, pp. 4-5), *dīvs*, *gwāts*, and *jenns*, further distinguished by gender and creed (Muslim or non-Muslim). Different instruments are used to exorcise different spirits, e.g., for a *zār* only drums (*lēvā*) are used, but *gwātī* ceremonies (*le'eb*) use all of the instruments current in Baluchistan, mainly *sorūd* and double flute *dōnelī* performing a specific repertory of songs and instrumental pieces. The word *mūkām* (*maqām*: mode) in Baluchistan is attributed to instruments that participate in the customs of *gwātī*. A kind of dance, or stirring, not unlike that of the dervishes, is an indispensable part of the *gwātī* ritual. When the participants are men, the dance is called *damāl* and the leader is always a man, called *kalīfa*. Female *gwātī* dance may be led by a man or a woman. The generic term for the leader of the ceremonies is *gwātīe māt* (lit. the mother of *gwātī*), whether a man or a woman (today most often a man). The most famous *gwātīe māt* was a woman from Mesqaṭ by the name of Zaynab. In deference to her, the *kalīfa* and the instrumentalists sing the following line at the beginning of each *gwātī*: *Zaynab gwātīe māt-int, ḥalwā na wārta Zaynabā* (Zaynab is the mother of *gwātī*, Zaynab has not eaten *ḥalwā*). The *gwātīe māt* first diagnoses the existence of *gwāt* and then fixes the precise stages of the patient's convalescence (*daraja-ye kopār*), choosing the music used in the ceremonies. The ritual is performed every night from three to seven or even fourteen nights, depending on the type and severity of the disease, and ends with a sacrifice. The text of the *āvāz* of the *Gwātī* includes praises (*madḥ*) dedicated to the mystics La'ī Šahbāz Qalandar, buried in Sehwan (Sind), and 'Abd-al-Qader Jēlānī (Jeylānī, Gilānī; qq.v.)

Māled (*Mawlūd*) *pīr-e patar*. The ceremonies of *māled*, which last only two to three hours, are most common in the coastal regions of Baluchistan, but are now gradually being forgotten. In *māled* the *āvāz* is accompanied only by the drums called *ṭabl* and *daf* (single skin frame drum, called *samā'* or *māled*); only in exceptional cases is the oboe (*sūrṇā*) also used. The leader of the *māled* ceremony, who sometimes plays the *samā'* himself, is called *kalīfa*. The ceremonies of *māled* are in one sense parallel to those performed at the Qāderī meetings of Kurdistan. Reaching ecstatic states during the *dekr*, some



participants of *māled* (called *mastān* “the drunk ones”) insert swords, knives, and daggers into their bodies.

The following *āvāz* are used in marriage and childbirth ceremonies:

Nāzēnk. This term means “worship” or “praise” (verb *nāzēnag*) and in the first place designates praise of the bride, groom, and newborn baby, but also of God. *Nāzēnk* is sung at the following times: when the groom is taken to the bath, after returning from the bath, when the bride and groom are seated on the “throne,” and during the first six nights after childbirth.

Lāḏō and Hālō. Like *Nāzēnk*, *Lāḏō* (*Laylō*, *Layiarī*) and *Hālō* are particular to marriage ceremonies. Both *Lāḏō* and *Hālō* are performed before and during the groom’s bath, but in addition *Hālō* is used during the *ḥanā-bandān* ceremony on the eve of the wedding day. *Lāḏō* is named after its refrain: *lāḏō lī lāḏō*.

Šaptākī (also *Sepat*). This is an unaccompanied *āvāz* with poetry praising God, his Prophet, and the great religious figures recited by relatives and friends gathering in the room of the mother during the night after childbirth. The ceremony lasts from six to forty nights, depending upon the family’s finances. The *āvāz* is usually performed by two groups of singers who alternate singing verses and refrains.

Sepat, Wazbat, and Nāt (Na’t). *Sepat* is also sung during childbirth ceremonies in honor of the mother. The text of *Sepat* or *Wazbat* is also devoted to the praise of God, saints, and great religious figures. *Nāt* is performed chorally during *Šaptākī* ceremonies and like *Šaptākī* is an *āvāz* with lyrics that extol and eulogize the Prophet, his descendants, and the other prominent figures of Islam.

Sawt (šawt). This term is applied to many melodies in the music of Baluchistan, accompanied by any of the instruments current there. Its lyrics are about love or joy and are called *šayyānī sawt*. The performers of *Sawt*, called *sawtī*, perform in engagement, marriage, and circumcision ceremonies and other celebrations and holidays. (The term is also applied to short poems, not necessarily intended for singing.)

For a music sample, see [Simorġ](#).

For a music sample, see [Baluchistan Dekr](#).



For a music sample, see [Mirqambar](#).

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