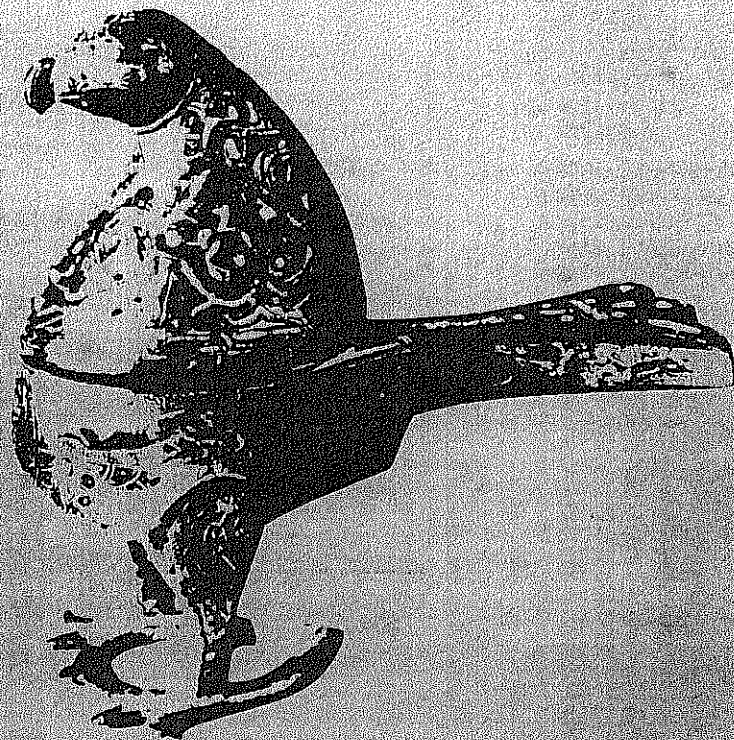


*Best woman,
Mark*

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- not defined or represented.
17. Donald Wilber, Contemporary Iran (New York: Praeger, 1963), pp. 68, 77.
 18. For the best available accounts of the various parties in this period see: L.P. Ellwell-Sutton, "Political Parties in Iran: 1941-1948," The Middle East Journal, vol. 3 (1949), pp. 45-61; Richard W. Cottam, Nationalism in Iran (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1964), and "Political Party Development in Iran," Iranian Studies, vol. 1 (1968), pp. 82-94; Binder, op. cit.; Lenczowski, op. cit.; Avery, op. cit.; Wilber, op. cit.; and Zabih, op. cit.
 19. Lenczowski, op. cit.; and Zabih, op. cit.
 20. Ellwell-Sutton, op. cit.
 21. Binder, op. cit., pp. 216-221; Cottam, Nationalism in Iran, pp. 267-281.
 22. For the best account of the Toilers and the Third Force see: Binder, op. cit., pp. 212-215; Cottam, "Political Party Development in Iran," pp. 89-91, and Nationalism in Iran, pp. 264-265, 293-294; and Wilber, op. cit., pp. 93, 148.
 23. See G.H. Razi, "The Press and Political Institutions of Iran: A Content Analysis of Ettelā'āt and Keyhān", The Middle East Journal, Vol. 22 (1968), pp. 471-474.
 24. Ettelā'āt, January 30, 1963.
 25. Ibid., July 30, 1963.
 26. Cf., Samuel P. Huntington, Political Order in Changing Societies (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), pp. 417-419.
 27. Ibid.
 28. Op. cit., p. xxvii.
 29. Political Parties and Political Development (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 22-24.
 30. The importance of the electoral process for political parties was first expounded extensively by Hermens, op. cit. See also Duverger, op. cit., pp. 216-228; and Schlesinger and Eckstein, op. cit., pp. 438-439.

PERSIAN FOLKSONG TEXTS FROM AFGHAN BADAKHSHAN

MARK SLOBIN

This study is based on fieldwork undertaken in Badakhshān province of Afghanistan in 1968 for the purpose of collecting musical data. A summary of the basic musical styles and instruments current in the area can be found in the author's Instrumental Music in Northern Afghanistan.¹

The focus of the present article is the type of Persian verse set to music by the folk singers of Badakhshān. Principally, this includes a description of the texts of the most common folksong form of the region, the felak, drawn from singers of the Faizābād (central), Darwāz (northern), Shughnān (northeastern),

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Wākhān (eastern) and Keshm (western) regions of Badakhshān province. Reference will be made to current Persian and Uzbek folksong texts of other areas of northern Afghanistan and the Tajik SSR. The task of linking the contemporary quatrains of Afghan (and Soviet) Badakhshān to the Iranian historical tradition of four-line folksong texts lies in the province of a specialist in Persian poetry; the present author, whose main concern is the music of the rubā'i, is content to bring to the attention of literary specialists the existence of a still vigorous tradition of semi-improvised folksong texts in Badakhshān today.²

Badakhshān is a mountainous zone, lying at the northeasternmost point of the Hindu Kush, at the headwaters of the Oxus. It is linked to the rest of Afghanistan by unreliable road and air traffic, and is thus often cut off due to poor road and weather conditions. Hence the traditional isolation of the region has been maintained despite technological change. Badakhshān is principally populated by an old Iranian population generally termed Mountain Tajiks in the literature. At the Soviet-Afghan border along the Panj river live a number of secluded Iranian peoples known collectively as Pamir Tajiks, speaking archaic Iranian languages which are unintelligible to the Persian-speaking Mountain Tajiks. Both Mountain and Pamir Tajiks of the same extraction live in the Tajik SSR (Tajikistan); movement of populations across the border stopped in ca. 1940.

Songs (bait, rubā'i, chārbaiti) play an important role in the life of Mountain Tajiks. They may serve as 1) a means of sā'at-tiri ("time-passing," "diversion") for shepherds and itinerant workers, 2) accompaniment to dance in villages and towns, 3) entertainment in the urban center of the province, Faizābād, especially at festival times, e.g. the annual Independence Festival (Jeshn) held late in August.

The most common type of up-country song, which differs considerably from the standard urban style, is the felak (lit. "fate," "universe"). Felaks form an important component of the repertoire of purely instrumental music in Badakhshān when performed without words; few other modifications are made beyond the mere absence of text. When sung, felaks may be performed solo or with the accompaniment of three indigenous Badakhshāni musical instruments: the dambura (a two-stringed fretless lute), the ghichak (a two-stringed spike fiddle) and the tulā (a type of recorder).³

Felaks are sung to melodies of extremely limited melodic compass with the musical structure depending on the verse form, e.g. important lines (usually the last) are marked off by caesuras, etc. The songs are set syllabically for the most part, with rarely more than two notes allotted to a syllable. Final syllables are invariably lengthened, with vowels or consonants transformed into long vowels like ā or i that may be prolonged for several measures.

Bearing this background in mind, let us turn to analysis of the songs themselves. Ten representative felaks have been chosen for discussion, with a total of forty-four verses, yielding an average of 4.4 verses per song. Of these, thirty-eight verses are in quatrain form, leaving only six anomalous verses; three three-line stanzas and one each of two, five and seven lines. We are dealing, then, with a repertoire that falls into the old Iranian tradition of quatrain folksong texts.

Aside from this high degree of uniformity in one feature, other traits of the felaks under study display a remarkable heterogeneity of structure in terms of type of rhyme scheme, number of syllables per line and shared vocabulary of stock words or phrases, features to be discussed below.

In regard to rhyme scheme, a significant percentage of the felak verses in quatrain form deviate from the AABA pattern considered standard for the rubā'i.⁴ Of the thirty-eight quatrain verses, twenty-five follow this norm, but thirteen, representing six variant rhyme-schemes, deviate from the AABA pattern. These break down into the following patterns: Five verses with AAAA rhyme scheme, three with AABB, two with AABC and one each with AAAB, ABCA and ABCD patterns. Among the six non-quatrain verses, those with three lines follow either an AAA or AAB pattern, the two-liner is an AB, the five-liner an AABBB and the single seven-line verse (of which more below) contains no apparent rhyme scheme. These findings do not tally with Ji'ī Cejpek's statement regarding Persian quatrains for folksongs: "So-called singing quatrains (rubā-i tarāna with rhyme pattern aaaa) do not occur very often, but the rhyme formula aabb appears fairly frequently."⁵

However, Cejpek's remarks as to the metric structure of folksong quatrains bears quite closely on the Badakhshāni case:

Among the various genres of rhythmic poetry the quatrain (rubā'i) genuinely has its roots among the people. Each verse is usually made up of eleven syllables, though occasionally one finds twelve or fourteen. Not until later was the metric system of polite literature imposed upon the folk-quatrains (most common is the incomplete eleven-syllable hazaj).⁶

The present writer, though not a specialist in Persian metrics, is inclined to agree with Cejpek in his view that folksong quatrains are only loosely associated with the classical āruz system of Persian verse, and can more properly be analyzed according to number of syllables per line. It is certainly awkward to scan most of the felak texts under study the way

one would scan a verse of polite literature.

Cejpek's estimate of eleven and twelve-syllable predominance is borne out by the Badakhshāni material, although fourteen-syllable lines are not as common as he indicates. Singers clearly prefer eleven- and twelve-syllable lines; next come lines of ten and thirteen syllables. Fourteen-syllable structures, however, are definitely less favored in Badakhshān.

Less homogeneous than the overall distribution of syllable-number is the patterning of lines within a given verse. Only four of the forty-four quatrains are isosyllabic, and overall there are thirty-one different combinations of syllable-numbers in the sample, only three of which occur more than once. Lopsided quatrains such as one with the pattern 11,11,11,6 syllables are common.

The heterogeneity of patterning in rhyme scheme, number of syllables per line and combination of syllable-number in lines of a given verse delineated above bespeaks the semi-improvisatory nature of felak song-texts as well as a generally nonchalant attitude towards fixed form among folk singers. Looking over the entire body of texts, one finds a continuum of precision in verse structure which can be roughly correlated in certain cases with the degree of professionalism and/or cosmopolitanism of the singer. At one end, an amateur backwoods singer may prefer a style which is almost narrative in approach, frequently with autobiographical content, while at the other extreme of the poetic range a much-traveled professional singer may employ subject-matter and verse structures reminiscent of polite literature. We will examine these features of the Badakhshāni song texts as we look at sample poems.

Our first example is of the extreme amateur variety cited above. This is a felak sung by Ghulām Husayn of the Shughnān region, where Mountain and Pamir Tajiks

live side by side; Ghulām Husayn is of the former group. His song illustrates a blend of tightly and loosely-structured verses. The verses are transcribed according to Badakhshāni pronunciation from the recorded performance. The author was assisted in the translation of song texts by Mr. E. Yaftali (Kabul University), a native of Badakhshān. Passages considered obscure by the present writer and/or Mr. Yaftali are enclosed in parentheses.

Example 1: Ghulām Husayn's Felak

Verse 1: Az xāneie padar, ei mardom, digar raftam
 Bā sad ālam du didei geryān raftam.
 Yārān o barādarān salāmat bāshid.
 Shughnān be shomā, man dar badaxshān megardum.

Verse 2: Xābe didam, az in xāb elāhi didam dust.
 Xud ma wa turā xubtar be bolin didam.
 Az xābe labe dar shodam wa xābe didam.
 Dar dashte bad or margi namad z pase rum
 Man kiyam, man begiram be xāne resam.
 Be xāne resam ke mādarān darrā wāz sāzad.
 Girad labe dandān barāyad nafasam.

Verse 3: Nozuk badane (mushqe xotan) miyāye.
 Az rāhe ghariba watan miyāye.
 Yaqub pesare gum shodarā (ki shenid)
 Ku yusufi nāzanin be watan miyāye.

Verse 4: Be mulqake shughnān fitadam gharīb.
 Bimār shodam bā sar nayāftam tabib.
 Ku xohar ku mādar ku yāram aziz
 Girad xabare ma.

Verse 1: I left my father's house, o people.
 With a hundred sorrows and two tearful eyes.
 Friends and brothers, be well!
 Shughnan is for you; I'm going to travel in
 Badakhshan.

Verse 2: I had a dream, oh God, and saw my friend.
 I saw you and myself better in sleep
 I slept near the door and dreamed.
 Anyone who goes to the desert of Evil and
 Death doesn't return.
 Who am I, that I can reach home
 So that when I reach my home my mother will
 open the door
 So that she kisses me and my soul escapes.

Verse 3: The delicate body (with musk of Khotan) is
 coming.
 He is coming home from afar.
 Jacob, who lost his son (who has heard of
 him)
 Yusuf the beautiful is coming home.

Verse 4: I live poorly in the land of Shughnān.
 I became ill but didn't find a doctor.
 Where is my sister, my mother, my friend
 To find out how I am.

Readily apparent is the variety of verse-types in Ghulām Husayn's felak. Verse 2 stands out, in its rambling form, from the other, four-line stanzas. Verses 1 and 3 offer examples of the more standard, AABA-rhymed quatrain of Badakhshān, while Verse 4 takes a middle ground. The thread running throughout the song is the autobiographical account of wandering and longing for home, which characterizes many felaks. It is interesting to note that Shughnān is treated as being a different country than Badakhshān proper, emphasizing the isolated nature of sub-regions of Badakhshān.

Even Ghulām Husayn's felak is not free from a certain number of quasi-literary clichés: note the Biblical references in Verse 3 and the possible phrase "mushqe xotan" ("musk of Khotan"). Felaks are partly memorized verses, solidified by the singer's or an audience's approbation, and partly improvised to suit

the mood or occasion. Verse 3 is probably one of Ghulām Husayn's fixed quatrains that he fits into many felaks; Verse 2, on the other hand, bears an improvisatory mark, and was strung together without a break in the sung performance.

Some of Ghulām Husayn's clichés are those found in numerous felaks, though there are remarkably few such recurring phrases in Badakhshāni folksongs. One which appears in Verse 1 is quite popular: "Yārān o barādarān" ("lovers and brothers") as parties being addressed. More common than the use of stereotyped phrases and similes in felaks is the recurrence of a given locale, allusions to agricultural work, etc. In short, singers rely on homespun material relating to the daily life of the non-professional musician.

At the other end of the creative continuum stands the work of performers such as Bāz Gul Badakhshī, a professional musician who has made a regional reputation across the North and has even been broadcast by Radio Afghanistan, a rare distinction for a Badakhshāni singer. Bāz Gul hails from the Keshm (western) region, which is the least isolated area of the province. Here is one of his well-known songs:

Example 2: Bāz Gul Badakhshī's Felak

- Verse 1: Seibarga beguft dar zamin sabza manam.
Benafsha beguft jawāni āzāda manam.
Sadbarga beguft lāfi behuda nazan;
Yak daste guli jawāni pur maza manam.
- Verse 2: Ashuq shodarā tēgh be sar bāyad xord.
Gar zahr bedish mesle shakar bāyad xord.
Ruze be gonāhi āsheqi koshte shawam.
Daryā daryā xune jigar bāyad xord.

- Verse 1: Clover said: I am the only greenery on earth.
Violet said: I am the perfect youth.
The centifolious rose said: don't boast in vain;
I am a wreath of young joyous flowers.

- Verse 2: The lover must be ready to be pierced with a blade.
If you give him poison, he must eat it like sugar.
Someday I may be killed for the sin of love.
He should drink rivers of liver's blood.

Here we have two tightly structured, unrelated verses which stand in sharp contrast to Ghulām Husayn's rambling but thematically connected stanzas. Bāz Gul's quatrains follow the standard AABA pattern, down to recurrence of as long a closing phrase as "bāyad xord". Further, both stanzas have a central theme carried out strictly. In the first, the "beguft" motive and allegorical use of flowers clearly bespeaks a close connection to the clichés of polite Persian verse, while in the second the dangers of love are stated in the traditional style. Significantly, Bāz Gul's quatrains also seem metrically related to standard rubā'i meters of classical Persian verse, though a fair amount of metric "compensation" is required to make the lines fit the patterns. The meters are: $\underline{u} - \underline{uu} - \underline{u} - \underline{u} | - \underline{uu}$ for Verse 1 and $--- \underline{uu} | - - \underline{uu} - - - \underline{u}$ for Verse 2, based necessarily on a classical Persian reading of the text. This is the extent of metric formalization in Badakhshāni folksong texts, though one cannot precisely say that other quatrains do not admit to metric scansion. As Masse has noted, "No Persian metre admits to so many variants as the rubai."⁸

Between the extremes of Ghulām Husayn's and Bāz

Gul's style lies the large middle ground of felak verse. Perhaps the most interesting feature of this extensive body of material is the insight it affords into Badakhshāni life through the references to the daily round of activities and the continuing problems of subsistence and love encountered by Mountain Tajiks. Here, for example, are two verses of a felak by Bābā Naim, a Badakhshāni musician who has become a Radio Afghanistan performer of non-Badakhshāni music in Kabul, but who still recalls many of the tunes of his native province. The tight structure of the verses may be a result of Bābā Naim's professional stature and his wide travel and residence in various areas of Afghanistan.

Example 3: Bābā Naim's Felak

Verse 1: Charxe felak marā be charx āwordi.
Kulāb budim marā dar balx āwordi
Jānam dar Kulāb budim u mixurdim ābe shirin
Az ābe shirin bar ābe talx āwordi.

Verse 2: Dar kotāle ruberu bastam shudgar
Gowhāye harāmzāda nemikard noxshar
Sange bezadim o beshekast yugh or sepār
Gowhā be cherār raft, ma didane yār.

Verse 1: O wheel of fortune, you spun me around.
I was in Kulāb, you brought me to Balx.
Dear, I drank sweet water in Kulāb;
You brought me from sweet water to bitter.

Verse 2: I was plowing straight down the pass.
The damn cows weren't chewing their cuds.
I threw a stone and broke the yoke and plow.
The cows fled and I ran to my lover.

Verse 1 displays the common reference to "felak" or "charkh-i felak" in Badakhshāni songs, and explains

how the term felak was given to the entire genre of songs. Here the singer describes the plight of refugees from Soviet Tajikistan (specifically the Kulāb region) to the Afghan side, probably during the Basmachi uprisings of the 1920's and 1930's. Balx, in Afghan Turkestan, is here made to stand for the whole of northern Afghanistan. Verse 2, on the other hand, is a rather bitter rustic scene with some elements of pastoral comedy. Both verses of Bābā Naim's felak typify the concerns of felak singers. The stressing of a given locale, as in Verse 1, is found in four of the ten songs under discussion, and specific reference to agricultural or pastoral occupation appear in five of the felaks. The third motive mentioned earlier, Biblical references, occurs in five texts, and the fourth common topic, travel and separation, comes out in three of the sample songs.

Among other folk poetry genres of Afghanistan, the felak of Badakhshān is most like the Uzbek quatrain of Afghan Turkestan. Though the language (and language family) obviously differ, the semi-improvised functional nature of the Uzbek songs is quite close to the Tajik quatrain.⁹ The Uzbek songs are generally heard among professional musicians in teahouses across the North, and have the same immediacy of content and lack of formal metric structure that characterize many felak texts. Folksong texts in Persian heard in the same teahouse context tend to follow the ghazal, rather than rubā'i, form, and are usually composed by semi-professional urban poets who produce texts specifically for musicians, to be set to stock melodies. In these verses, the clichés and concerns of polite Persian literature predominate, down to mere parody of classic poetic style. Rarely, however, are classic poems themselves (e.g. works of Sa'adi and Hāfez) used as song texts. Classically-oriented town ghazals are also composed in Uzbek in certain towns of Afghan Turkestan, notably Andkhoi, and are analogous to Persian verses of the same urban variety.

The closest relatives of the Badakhshāni felak are to be found across the border in southern Tajikistan, where the other half of the Mountain Tajik population lives. In Dansker's valuable study of the music culture of the Tajiks of the Karategin and Darwāz regions (adjacent to Afghan Badakhshān) one finds the word gharibi ("poor" songs) used much the way Afghan Badakhshānis use felak, i.e., as a generic term for types of song.¹⁰ These songs, both in terms of their function, manner of performance, accompanying instruments and melody types, correspond closely to the felak described in the present study. The most convincing proof of the "blood-relationship" between these two repertoires is the appearance of identical motives and lines in the texts of songs in Soviet and Afghan Badakhshān. Below is a Soviet Tajik quatrain quoted by Dansker¹¹; the Afghan version can be found as Verse 4 of Ghulām Husayn's felak (Example 1).

Kulāb gharib o mulke Kulāb gharib.
 Bimār shodam o be sar nayoftam tabib.
 Ku mādar or ku padar biyārand tabib?
 O bigonā hamin guft o kujā mord gharib.

Kulāb is poor and the land of Kulāb is poor.
 I fell ill and couldn't find a doctor.
 Where are my mother and father, to bring a doctor?
 O thus spoke the unfortunate one and where did the poor fellow die.

Clearly, the coincidence of lines is not accidental, and demonstrates the continued closeness of repertoire among the Mountain Tajiks despite the closing of the Afghan-Soviet border over the last thirty-odd years. The term felak, though not cited in Dansker's study, is still in use in Tajikistan, as the present author was informed by Nizam Nurdžanov, specialist in Tajik folklore of the Tajik Academy of Sciences, in Dushanbe.

In summary, while Browne has so aptly stated that the rubā'i is "almost certainly the oldest product of the poetical genius of Persia,"¹² the present study has attempted to indicate that this does not mean that the rubā'i has vanished; on the contrary, it is flourishing in the eastern areas of the Iranian world.

NOTES

1. Slobin, M., Instrumental Music in Northern Afghanistan, Ph.D. dissertation (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1969).
2. For a recent regional study of the Persian folk quatrain, see Mardom-i Khorāsān by Ibrāhim Shukurzāde (Tehran: Nihad-i Farhang, 1967). Pashto folk poetry has its classic presentation in Darmsteter's Chants Populaires des Afghans (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1888-90); one important Pashto genre, the lunda'i has recently been described by a Pashtoon poet, Saduddin Shpoon ("Paxto Folklore and the Landey," in Afghanistan XX, No. 4 1968, 40-49).
3. Illustrations in Slobin, 1969.
4. Cejpek, Jiri, "Iranian Folk-Literature," in J. Rypka, ed., History of Iranian Literature (Dordrecht: Reiden, 1968), 607-710.
5. Ibid., 695.
6. Ibid., 694.
7. I am indebted to Prof. G. Windfuhr, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Literatures, University of Michigan, for the metric analysis of Bāz Gul's felak.
8. Masse, H., "Rubai" in The Encyclopedia of Islam (Leiden: Brill, 1936), 1167.
9. Slobin, M., Notes from the record album "Afghanistan Vol. I: Music of the Uzbeks," Anthology of the World's Music Series, 1969.
10. Dansker, O., "Muzykal'naia kul'tura tadžikov Karategina i Darvaza" in Iskusstvo tadžikskogo naroda Vol. 3 (Dushanbe: Donish, 1965, 236).
11. Ibid.
12. Quoted in Masse, 1936, 1167.