

Popular Songs in Palestine: Place & Identity

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The identity of vocal heritage in Palestine has been characterized by its deep rooting, and dating the strong relationship between Palestinians and their place, in addition to its historical and demographical specialty since the residence of the Palestinian nation in the land of Palestine. In fact, the density of vocal expression, which is accompanied with dancing and music, and is intervening in all Palestinians' social life occasions, demonstrates the deep-rooting of cultural Palestinian Identity which was formalized through centuries of human's life.

The popular Palestinian song inspired its philosophy and characteristics from the surrounding social environment; therefore, it includes all peoples' experiments in addition to its vision of various human relations. In fact, the popular Palestinian song was capable of expressing Palestinians' emotions and sentiment, in addition to their style of life, habits, beliefs and ethics, so the Palestinians make use of the popular song to express their social, economic daily life conditions. Accordingly, they were capable to use the popular song for expressing their emotions, opinions, ambitions, and aspirations toward future.

In fact, the variant forms of popular Palestinian song, and its melodic patterns, in addition to its ancestral performance style reveal its deep connection with history, place and mankind. Therefore, the forms of popular singing in Palestine include deep-rooted artistic and heritage values which show the characteristics of a very important dimension of popular creativity in Palestine in its performance context and within a frame of traditions, habits related to the area of its dissemination.

So, the current paper is investigating this issue within two cores:

First: Palestinian popular song and the concept of identity.

Second: Palestinian popular song and the concept of place.

First: Palestinian popular song and the concept of identity.

The concept of identity is considered as one of the important concepts that are related to existence, ego, and place. It is a combination of a number of elements which were formalized through ages and were pollinated by experiments and challenges in addition to individual and group reactions toward it.

Accordingly, we can say that identity is fed by two sources which are:

1. Heritage, which is the fixed source that formalizes the thinking underlying the emergence of identity.
2. Community, which is considered as the second variable source of identity.

So, we can say that any group, social class, tribe or nation is considered as a lost community and has no existence without the identity that characterizes it, and provides it with the elements of unity, survival and continuity. And we can say that the most important elements of affiliation are land and place followed by other elements such as, race, religion and language.

Indeed, the identity is a collective ego, in which I'm part of it or a complementary, and through it I can recognize myself and my identity, so the identity becomes a melting of egos in one pot which is the group.

Thus, the identity is a mean of a group defense, rather than individual, naturally moves to work in cases of inability to work or deal with others, or when it is afflicted by depression and regression in which it became powerless to make a balance between the ego and the other, especially in times of crucial changes, wars and cultural crises.

This was what exactly happened with the Palestinian community who make use of his identity as a mean to defense his existence and continuity to live on his land.

And since heritage in all its branches has been considered as the fixed source which formalizes the thinking underlying the emergence of identity, we notice the wide range of influence of the popular Palestinian song as a part of heritage in cultivating the identity of the Palestinians and in directing their behaviors, thoughts and beliefs.

Indeed, the Palestinian community, is like other nations in the world, inserted the popular songs in all their daily activities which included all their cultural experiences, beliefs and behaviors. So, the relationship between popular Palestinian song and the Palestinian individual is very strong because those songs are a real reflection of environment, the social, domestic and life reality for Palestinians who expressed themselves, their emotions, and expectations through their songs.

Such vocal expression includes the essence of knowledge that underlies the behavior of the individual in many of his life aspects, because the functions that are included in the popular song formalize the cultural and social approach that the community lives under.

In fact, the popular songs accompanied the Palestinians in all life stages, and so they were affected by their variant psychological, intellectual and perceptual factors. And concerning the psychological factor, it confirmed the tragic and psychological suffering, and the state of fear that the Palestinians lived and are still living as a result of the British mandate and the Israeli occupation, and the state of continuous war for more than one century.

Furthermore, we notice that the popular Palestinian song did not stop at sorrow and weeping, but it started to abandon lamentation and agony toward the formation of a new attitude that expresses steadfastness and challenge.

Actually, the popular song changed the reality with all its tragic scenes into vocal forms that are used for reflection and interaction by all the community, and this in turn corresponds with Jung theory concerning the Projection Theory which is defined as: “The psychological process that is used by the artist to change strange scenes into external issues that could be reflected by others”.

Second: Palestinian popular song and the concept of place.

A deep study for the history of music and singing in ancient Palestine demonstrates the deep-rooting of this art in this land and place. It also reveals the range of correlation between Palestinians and music and singing in view of the fact that the history of music in ancient Palestine stretches from the Stone Age, passing through the Bronze and Iron Ages whereas

Palestine was considered as a gathering place for many nations, and this interaction between nations had an influence on the formation of civilization. Through the archeological discoveries of those ages which were found in various areas in Palestine, we recognize the pattern of life in ancient Palestine which in no doubt strongly affected the cultural and musical life within that period.

Actually, I have a research entitled Musical Instruments in Palestine: History & Reality. Through this research, I conducted a deep study for musical instruments in ancient Palestine, and you can refer to it in order to recognize the musical life in ancient Palestine.

Therefore, we can say that popular arts in general are considered as a distinctive identity for every nation as they represent its roots, emotions, thoughts and affiliation. And the most important thing is that popular arts are considered as the land ownership document for the Palestinians who lived on this land through history. So, as an important part of Palestinian heritage, the song has its position among other artistic forms and it is a very important part of the Palestinian's land ownership document.

In the case of the Palestinian nation, the interest in heritage has a combative dimension that seeks to strengthen the Palestinians' rights in the land of Palestine since Palestinians have believed that the popular song is part of their heritage, memory and identity which confirms the range of affiliation to their land. So, popular arts in general, and the popular song in particular are the Palestinians' roots in the land of Palestine.

In fact, the Palestinian song accompanied the reality of Palestinians' life since the beginning of the 20th century until the beginning of the 21st century in which it recorded the Palestinians' attitudes and positions concerning their rights in defending their land in order to protect their land and live in it in freedom, dignity and independence.

Indeed, the successive wars in Palestine reinforced the state of Palestinians' hatred toward occupiers in the one hand, and deepen the Palestinians' affiliation to their land on the other, starting from the war in 1948, passing through the war in 1967, and the Intifada in 1988, then the Intifada in 2000, reaching the war in Gaza few months ago. Such successive wars led to the dispersion of Palestinians and the migration of thousands to other surrounding countries to live there as refugees.

Therefore, the state of Palestinians' hatred toward the occupier, and their state of love toward their land Palestine created a state of creativity in which their creativity and psychological behavior came together. Such atmospheres fraught with fear from losing identity and place pave and clear the way for popular vocal creativities which were a real response for the calling of reality that the Palestinians live which is represented by force, tyranny and fear.

This is confirmed by the sociologist Jung who states that: "The real cause of perfect artistic creativity is the instability of group unconsciousness within periods of social crises which decreases the balance in the artist's psychological life and obliged him/her to obtain a good balance".

As an inevitable result for all of those accumulative social, political and economic hard conditions, vocal and music creativity became as a breather for the Palestinian community in which they can express the state of fear from the unknown. Concerning this issue, the sociologist Juan Kordai confirms that: "Literature and arts are two important sources in the study of the culture of fear, and they are indicators of the changes that happen with those who live under fear".

Actually, the popular Palestinian song reflected Palestinians' state of fear concerning their lands, homes and families which took root in Palestinians' thinking and emotions, and this is what is called by Jung as the Psychological Art which is: "The art that deals with reality of humans' sensation".

Finally, although the affliction that the Palestinian nation suffered since the beginning of the 20th century did affect their culture and songs as part of this culture, this affliction did not prevent this nation from composing songs that express their variant conditions including weddings, occasions, and even during work and trade.

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