



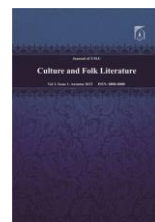
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## The Characteristics of Camel in the Folk Literature of Semnan Province

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### Abstract

Camel breeding has been one of the main occupation of desert dwellers since the ancient times. The climatic, economic, and cultural conditions have fascinated tribes and desert dwellers with camel breeding. Camel is an important source of their economy; therefore, they have a longstanding emotional relationship with the animal. Camels are widely reflected in the culture and literature of the people in Semnan. The purpose of this study is to collect and analyze the characteristics of camels in two dimensions of formal and transverse attributes in Semnan folk literature, particularly among camel owners. The data were collected through field study and interview. Moreover, the expert's knowledge has been used in the data analysis. The results show that camels play an important role in the folk literature such as songs, proverbs, myths, sounds and beliefs, in the desert territory of Semnan province, the review of which is presented in the study.

**Keywords:** Camel breeding; oral literature; folk beliefs; cameleer; Semnan province.

### Introduction

Understanding the cultural significance of camel breeding requires an investigation of the traditional animal husbandry, not only because of the tremendous variety of camel names, but also because of the plethora of songs, proverbs, stories, beliefs, Sarbani's knowledge and techniques,



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indigenous veterinary knowledge, botany, and the behavior of the camels (Farhadi, 1998, p. 206). Besides the economic value, camel breeding shows a deep emotional love and affection between human and animals. This is why a person is convinced and interested to choose such a difficult job.

The special and exceptional capability of camels throughout history has made human beings think that they can employ the various capabilities of this animal, including meat, milk, wool, and bearing. On this basis, and especially in desert areas where the talent and capacity of camel breeding is higher, the camel breeding profession has a long history. According to some field studies, in the past, camel breeding was very prosperous and common in more than 130 villages of the Semnan province, but now it has decreased to 35 villages. The purpose of this article is to analyze the role of camels in the folk literature of the people in Semnan province.

### **Methodology**

The data collection was conducted through field study and interview. The expert's knowledge has also been used through the interpretive method in the process of data analysis.

### **Results**

The traits and characteristics of camels in the folk literature are reflected in five sections as follows.

#### **-Formal attributes**

The formal characteristics of this animal such as ears, eyes, neck, hump, tail, skin, masculinity, head, lips, knees and its height have been reflected in the oral literature.

The height of the hump indicates the fatness of the animal. This is why camel hump shrinks in dry seasons. In the following riddle, camel herders ask the animal hump:

The camel died of thinness, because it had a lot of tallow (hump), near dawn, neither on the ground nor in the air.

Answer: A thin camel with a load of hump (a saddle of tallow on its back) was moving over the bridge in Sham (Syria).

One of the beautiful songs of the Chudari tribe is the description of camel's body parts. In this song, the eyes, ears, head, hump, lips, feet, tail, nose, forehead, neck, horseshoe, knees, tongue, chest, abdomen, and



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eyebrows of the animal are interestingly focused in the song. This song is composed through poetry.

### **-Different species of camels**

Different species of camels such as Louk (male camel), Arvaneh (female camel) and Hashi (baby camel) also are significant in the folk literature. Of the various species of camels, "Louk" has a special place in the oral literature and has the highest frequency in proverbs, songs, etc.

"Louk must be proud of himself," says a Torud proverb.

It means that "Louk must roar himself." It is said to people who must be self-sufficient.

### **-Camel equipment**

Camel equipment such as harness, bridle, and golafsar are reflected in the oral literature. In the nomadic culture, the child is the ornament of the parents. This is also the case in the proverbs.

Like this proverb in the Elikaei tribe: "Eshter Bijahaz Bumenin.", which is translated as follows: You came with a camel without equipment.

This is called a parable if a parent goes to a party or to see an adult without children.

### **-Transverse characteristics of the camels**

There are many anecdotes, legends, proverbs and songs about the transcendental traits of camels such as being emotional, resentful, intelligent, zealous, etc., which is also indicated as "Oshtor Khajow", the coldness of the old woman, the helpless young man, and the story of the camel the owner of which had entrusted to his neighbor.

### **- Products and uses of the camels**

Like meat, milk, and wool, bearing and riding are also reflected in the oral literature of the people.

An example is the following song about loading camels:

Unload camels, Unload camels at every alley of pomegranate

At the end of each alley, make a sweet pomegranate for sick syrup.

### **Conclusion**

Oral literature, as an important part of the literary production of any nation, deserves to be preserved and scientifically studied. Collecting, documenting,



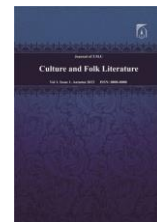
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and presenting local literature, especially in the modern world, are so essential tasks, because the indigenous folk phenomena of Iran constitute the ancient structures of the culture of the Iranian tribes. On the other hand, the national culture is in great need of these isolated parts, and basically, the validity, value, and the depth of the national culture are realized within these subcultures. None of the efforts made to narrate the true history and culture of any nation will be complete without considering the phenomena and creations of folklore.

Some unique rituals, such as mourning for the death of a camel, are very important and worthy of anthropological study. There is a great deal of oral literature on the rich themes of camels that requires further study as well.

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