

Chupi The male dance expresses part of Bakhtiari experience only- a crucial part, but is especially concerned with the mode of operation in the world. The chupi dance with its different rhythms is yet more fundamental. The chupi dance is concerned with the elements out of which knowledge itself, the world itself is constructed. Here the motif, the mode is quite different from the noisy aggressive social conflict and physical conflict of the Stcik dance. The Chupi dance consists of three rhythms, the first two are called Chupi and the third and final rhythm is called Aqab Bazi.

The chupi is a circular dance, and is done by both men and women. Strangers, foreigners and lower class outside groups such as gypsies can and do dance this long repetitive dance. Whereas the stick dance is danced on many social and festive occasions the chupi dances are primarily done at weddings festive- celebrations. This circular dance is found again amongst many of the tribal groups in the Zagors mountains, with many variations. There have been no reports of the final dance as far as I am aware of, but this possibly is a fault of the literature.

The chupi is a slow, repetitive dance done by a variable number of people depending on those present on the occasion. It is ~~primarily-done-by-wome~~ danced for hours at a time. The dancers, very slowly move in a circle as wide as is necessary to accommodate the numbers. The circle may consist of a mixture of men and women, or of two sections made up of women separated from the men - half

and half. The women may form a separate circle within the circle of men - thus forming concentric circles. The dancers face inwards, with their backs to the outside. The movement of the whole circle is rhythmic and slow moving in a counterclockwise direction. It can take as much as twenty minutes to half an hour to describe a complete circle. The dance consists of three circles at the first slow rhythm, and four circles at a faster rhythm - I think, though on the several occasions I witnessed the dance I was usually dancing. Individual dancers may come in or drop out during the dance at any time without affecting the group. Dancers dance as ~~individuals~~ a group of individuals dancing separately from but in conjunction with each other. There is very little room for individual styles, with every dancer doing exactly the same series of movements. The effect is a highly stylised, repeated pattern, with each dancer replicating every other dancer, whether male or female, or from whatever social category. This insistent replication is highly ritualised and through the medium of constant repetition, the basic message is learned, and profoundly experienced. To dance this dance is to learn the way in which this tribal world is built, and how it ideally works.

The dance consists of the rigidly symmetrical manipulation of the body, where in perfect synchrony and harmony the legs, arms and whole body moves in balance. ^{opposite} The leg movements consist of gentle hopping or lifting movements, where the whole circle and each individual dancer's body is divided into inside and outside.

This division or separation between INSIDE and OUTSIDE is the major symbolic structure of the Bakhtiari. In this dance, all the dancers are oriented towards the inside of the circle, analogous to the private self. ~~ah~~ Here the participants are facing not the outside natural or social world but the world of the inner self. the dance is hypnotic in its persistent and repetitive rhythms and movements and the dancers are explicitly led by the musicians who use their instruments, pointing the horns directly at the dancers, envelopping them in the round waves of the music. The effect is quite explicitly visible - the dancers tighten up the movements of their body, expressions are fixed if not glazed and the dance continues on and on, building up the mode of understanding and knowing - the necessity of balance and harmony which comes from the self. Watching this dance is not sufficient. It is quite different from actually participating, subjecting oneself to the rigorous rules of the dance, being taken over by the structure of the dance itself.

The body movements are a succession of quarter turns to right and left and then a half ^f turn towards the left which advances the dancer in a counterclockwise direction. Simultaneous with this slow side ways ~~MOVEMENT~~ IS A MOVEMENT INTO the circle described by the body of the dancers. This motion is a gentle backward and forward motion. When the right foot descends to tap the ground inside the circle, the opposite movement is described by the left hand, lifting up to the left shoulder, outside the circle. Likewise when the right leg is raised the left hand

is lowered. Right and left legs are alternated and left and right arms are alternated. The dancers hold different coloured handkerchiefs one each hand. The total continuous movement of hands and feet, of arms and legs is one of balanced opposition. There is a sequence of movements the pattern of which is constantly repeated finishing with the slight advance counterclockwise, and therefore to the right, as the dancers face inwards. The sequence begins with both hands holding the handkerchiefs, being brought up to the level of the top of the head, then the right arm is lowered in front of the body, describing a circle with the palm of the hand held inwards towards the centre of the circle. As it does so the left foot is raised, and the alternating sequence continues. When either hand is raised the palm always faces inwards and the handkerchief hangs down covering the back of the hand which is exposed to the outside of the circle of dancers. The movement round the circle is accomplished by a quarter turn to the right, then back to the left then a half advancing turn to the right, which completes the sequence. After

After three turns of the circle the rhythm increases to a faster tempo. The movements change slightly with more pronounced bouncing and tapping of the feet. There is in this repetitive sequence a moment in each sequence where the foot is held immobile on the ground for a full beat. So the body is kept momentarily totally still for one beat out of every sequence. This is strikingly analogous to the moment of silence among the Mehlevis whirling Darvishes, who also dance in concentric circles in their ecstatic journey to the soul.

The dancers are very much into the rhythm at this stage, they all probably have been dancing at least an hour at this stage and have been almost totally taken over by the music.

entre ~~-With-start-~~ There are a number of variations in what occupies the centre of this dancing circle of Bakhtiari, but all of them are analogous to each other and are symbolically structured in the same way. There may be nothing at all in the centre, and no one is allowed to move into the centre of the unclosed circle. If anyone does, particularly if it is a man, he is quickly pushed away with murmurs of disapproval. There are only two categories of people allowed into the centre. The musicians themselves may be placed there, the source of the rhythm, the structurers of the dance themselves. There are always two musicians, the drummer and the ^{also} horn player.

Alternatively a child will be allowed or sometimes made to stand in the centre, and on the several occasions this was witnessed the child was urged to weep. The picture of innocence, an unknowing child, weeping tears is again strikingly analogous to Rumi's symbolic use of the reed, which is torn from its river bed, and through the action of a human being breathing down its hollow centre makes a sound, music, ^{which} that Rumi said was the soul of the reed crying for its home by the river bed. Symbolically Rumi was referring to the conditions of knowledge. Weeping for a past innocence which is no longer recoverable. The weeping child can be seen as expressing the same idea - the as yet unlearned' innocent child crying not for the past but for the future, the condition of being human which is to know and participate.

When the dance is made up of two concentric circles, then the outside circle is male, the inside circle is female and the centre may be the musicians. The musicians, like the innocent child are outsiders. The child because have not yet been inducted into the inside -are not *balanced & ordered* yet social beings or active members of the community. The musicians are true outsiders, regarded as inferior and are never intermarried with. They provide the service for the tribesmen but are actively excluded from the Bakhtiari community. These social outcasts provide the music which expressed the very central tenets of this culture. They are kept rigidly separated. The logical structuring of the dance begins to be apparent. The whole is structured identically to the structuring of its individual parts - each with an inside and with an outside. of profound symbolic meaning. This boundary between inside and outside is everywhere invested with powerful significance in the culture.

On occasions a power lamp, a light source will be placed on the ground in the centre, or may be placed on top of a small cairn of white stones. This is clearly symbolic of the inner light, illuminating the soul - a motif found everywhere in Persian culture, symbolising the fount of knowledge, the centre of the self, the source of life. A fire of sticks may be lit, or a smoking mangal - a brazier of coals, on which wild esfahd Or rue is thrown giving off an aromatic smoke. A woman may wander round inside the circle with the smoking rue wafting the smoke into the faces of the dancers. Rue has magical properties effective against the evil eye and also enabling the dancers to SEE

Smoke is of course ephemeral and fluid rising up to the heavens, dissipating gradually in the atmosphere.

Alternatively a bowl of water may be placed in the centre. This is a reflecting surface, here reflecting the heavens, the sky, in a sense uniting heaven and earth as reflections of each other.

Each of those people or objects put in the centre of the dance in different ways are consonant with each other and with the symbolism of the centre - the inside, the source of light, life, and knowledge round which the harmonic balanced dance of life is danced out.

Aqab The final dance is the culmination of nomadic experience. The REVELATION OF THE SOURCE OF ENERGY AND CREATIVITY, of continuity itself. And it is profoundly expressive of the mobility, the fluidity which is so central to nomadic existence. The tempo of the drums changes to a dramatic syncopated rhythm. All the men and outsiders drop out leaving the stage to the women only, the circle and balanced harmony so carefully and constantly constructed is smashed as the women spiral ^{frantically} ecstatically to the centre of the circle, where with jerky less controlled movements they revolve on the ball of their left foot, in a clockwise direction - the opposite direction. They reverse the process and the direction as it were. They destroy in their movement the order danced out previously, reverse the direction and whirl rather than circle packed tightly together. So that the centre is now filled with women moving ecstatically, though still rhythmically, revolving

on the centre itself. Significantly at this point, the climax of the dance, when the centre is actually made explicit, the fount of energy in human form, the women raise their arms, place their hands on the centre of their heads, on the top of their heads, and the handkerchiefs hang over their heads and faces, hiding, veiling their faces. The revealed centre is hidden, or veiled. *at the precise moment of revelation*

[This is symbolic of revealing^a the ultimate source of the continuity of life, or energy itself, and the image so evocatively used is that of the women, dancing in an uncontrolled fashion. The female principle explicitly exposed, revealed in a culture that relegates women to the hidden recesses of the private world, beneath the veil, in the home, protected by the male world.

Here in the nomadic context where women go unveiled, but not unprotected by the male dominated cultural values we find the statement in powerful symbolic form that women, the female is to be found always inside, within rather than excluded, *containedly, not* and separated from the male world.

On an explicit level the worlds of the Male and Female are rigidly separated into two apparently self contained divisions. Just as has been seen is the real structure of camp groups, - agnates who are related to each other and therefore cooperate through their links through women. It is women that bring together, rather than divide. This crucial function is explicitly denied on a conscious level.