



The Investigation of Psychological Motives of Creative Abilities in The Omani Musical Intelligence

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Abstract

The Sultanate of Oman is characterized by a huge and creative musical heritage that remains mostly preserved. One hundred forty-two different traditional musical genres and styles (*funun*) have been registered in the Sultanate. This study aimed to investigate the Omanis' musical creative achievements and the psychological motives behind Omani musical creative achievements. The present qualitative study adopted ethnographic research. The two study's questions were answered in two stages: firstly, by analysis of relevant documents of Omani genres, and secondly stage based on analysis of documentary films and direct observations. The study showed that the Omanis created such musical achievements, including many genres, rhythms, instruments, and ways of performing. Furthermore, research has shown psychological motives that motivated Omani people to create these various genres, such as provocation of enthusiasm, meditation, religious motivations, poetic competition, and emotional motivation. For each motive, musical genres have been presented.

Keywords: folk music, creativity, musical intelligence, Sultanate of Oman

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INTRODUCTION

The Sultanate of Oman is located in the far southeast of the Arabian Peninsula with three interconnected seas: the Arabian Sea, the Oman Sea, and the Arabian Gulf. The length of its coast is about 3165 km. These three seas are open to the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic Ocean. Furthermore, Oman is bounded on the west by a sea of sand which is called the empty quarter. From this position, the Sultanate of Oman controls the world's oldest and most important maritime trade route. Moreover, The topography of the Sultanate is widely varied; there are plains in Albatinah and Dhofar which constitute 3% of the total

area, mountains on the other hand, constitute 15% of the land, and the remaining area is a vast desert (Alhatroshi, 2014).

The important strategic location of the Sultanate of Oman, in addition to the active monsoon winds, helped it to be an open corner for many countries since ancient times and establish active ports on its coasts. The people of Oman took advantage of their country's natural resources and its geographical location; they have been the most famous people in the region in trade and commercial exchange. They formed commercial relations with ancient world civilizations, the findings of Sumerian antiquities in Iraq indicated that the Omanis traded copper and timber with

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the civilizations of ancient Iraq, such as the Sumerians and Akkadians. Furthermore, Omanis exported frankincense to the temples of Hatshepsut in ancient Egypt (Jones & Ridout, 2015). The oldest Arab trader to reach China was Abu Ubaidah bin Muslim in the year 133 AH (Zaytoon, 2020). As a result of the Omani intelligence and capabilities, in addition to the geographical location, it is not surprising that the Sultanate was an empire that extended from southeast Africa to western Asia and continued until the end of the nineteenth century (Jones & Ridout, 2015).

The topography of the Sultanate and its links with other nations and civilizations contributed to a distinctive cultural and social richness.

The Omanis opened up to other ethnicities and were influenced by their cultures. Such exposure has contributed to the production of various cultural forms of art, the most important of which is music. However, the geographical aspect was not the only factor that led the way in the production of Oman's traditional music, other factors such as socio-political, religious, economic, and technology had an impact at different levels on producing and varying such genres of traditional Omani music (El Mallah, 1998).

Genres of Omani music

The Sultanate of Oman contains a huge musical heritage represented in the diversity of Omani traditional musical genres which we call "funun". These genres vary in origin, melodies, rhythms, lyrics, dance movements, and occasions of performing (Oman Center of traditional music, 2020). El Mellah (1998) listed 142 traditional musical genres in the Sultanate, and he categorized them into different categories such as instruments, rhythm, melodic system, dance movements, and performing occasions.

Due to the ethnic diversity in the Sultanate, for the reasons mentioned earlier, some of these genres are not authentic. Alketheri (2005) differentiated between the origins of these genres and the results sho-

wed that six of them have Asian origins, the most famous of them being Alnairuz. There are 12 genres with an African origin, most of them linked to the sailing activities in the coastal cities such as Sur and Salalah, the most notable of the genres being Mdaimah and Shobani.

The Sultanate's musical richness is a phenomenon that cannot be seen in any other country. The most distinguishing feature of these genres is the occasions of performance, which are mainly related to the type of economic activity practiced by the people in a specific location. In Oman, any economic activity has its unique musical genre/genres, even though the activity is very simple like collecting dates from palm trees by the children (Alshidi, 2008). Omani music is characterized by using sound in many arts without using a melodic instrument. Rhythm also plays an essential role in building traditional Omani music, and most Omani music is accompanied by dances and supported by more percussive than melodic instruments (Alketheri, 2015).

These genres' variety led to a similarly diverse range of rhythms. Each genre has its own rhythm, even the genres that go back to African or Asian origins. Omanis provided a distinctive rhythm that mixed with Arabic words to make it seem like a genre different from its origin. The method of performing these genres is also different. Each genre has its style of performance; individual performances, group performances, performances by men only, performances by men and women combined, and performances by women solely (Al-Harthi, 2010).

Omani music was not affected by the theoretical rules followed in Arabic music. Instead, Omanis inherited the musical genres through live practice, and this gave Omanis the advantage of innovation in these genres. Individual freedom of practicing led to raising their self-perception and making some improvements. The Omanis were able to memorize the rhythms of these genres and infer them just from the hearing because of the continuous practice of

these genres (Hazel, 1994). As for practical applications, Omani music has three classifications: chanting, singing, and playing.

Musical rhythmic performance is not just successive strong and weak clicks but an integrated expression in which several musical and non-musical elements overlap. In practice, the rhythmic compositions are determined by the function of each instrument within the group. This function relies on the principle of biophony, similar to sounds in nature, which gave Omani musicians a special uniqueness (Jargy, 2002).

Although music is a historical industry that came as a result of the diverse movement of society; However, because of the Asian and African influence on Omani music due to the mixing of races, much overlap affected these genres so that many did not differentiate between what is purely Arab Omani and what is ethnic geography and history. (Al-Naabi, 2019). Therefore, this study comes to identify the arts created by the Omanis and the psychological motives behind them.

Study's Purpose

The aim of this study is to investigate the musical achievements created by the Omanis, and the psychological motives that led them to produce this large number of musical genres that differ in origins, rhythm, melody, dance movements, and of course, poetic verses.

METHOD

This qualitative study adopted ethnographic research to study the research problem. Both questions are the study of the cultural patterns (Omani musical creative achievements), and perspectives of participants in their natural settings (The musical creative motives of Omanis). From this perspective, ethnographic research is a method that enables us to gain a detailed description of the research questions to illuminate a new insight into the extent of Omani creative contributions to music and what psychological motives triggered

Omanis to those creative musical achievements (Gay et al., (2011). Ethnographic research enables to discern patterns and regularities of Omani music and the creative mind of Omanis in folk music. The study of Omani's relationship with folk music and comparing its genres, rhythms, and instruments in different areas enables us to investigate the creative achievements in this folk music.

Data Analysis

Due ethnographic research embraces the application of multiple data collection techniques; therefore, three techniques were used to collect valid and reliable data: the analysis of documents related to the performance of the Omani genres, the recordings of these performances, and the direct observation of the performance of those musical genres. These techniques provided cognitive contrasting and incompatible data, which provided opportunities to deepen understanding of the content of the two study questions.

Due to the importance of deep investigation and comparisons between these sources (written, visual and observational), a criterion sample was utilized in which a sufficient number of evidences (documents) served some criteria or subjects of the study and contributed to its success and achieving the goals. By comparing the evidence of those documents, the researcher first relied on the written documents and then compared them to the documentary films and Direct observations to deduce the creative achievements and driving motives for producing those genres.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

First question

The first question is: what are the Omanis' creative musical achievements? The answers to this question are shown separately for each achievement as follows.

Size of genres. Through the El Mellah (1998) survey, followed by Alkethiri (2014) for the Omani genres, they found that some of the traditional Omani genres have

an African influence, numbering 12, such as Mekwara, Midan, Lanzih, Tanburah, etc. Moreover, some genres with an Asian influence, numbering seven gengres, such as Bakit, Bastaki, Nairooz, etc. These 19 genres are considered a limited number in relation to the number of Omani traditional genres which is 142. Some genres were even affected by African and Asian words, and people started repeating them without knowing their meaning. Genres with an African or Asian influence have spread on the Omani coasts, while the genres that are practiced in areas far from the coasts are Omani genres produced by the Omani mentality. This large number of genres (142) is a unique phenomenon in the world, and they are different from others in styles, origins, rhythms, melodies, poetry, dance movements, etc. Examples of original Omani genres are: Al-Razha, Al-Azi, Altagrood, Habbotmm Malid, Tahlula, al-zajirah, and many others.

Instruments. Omani music is characterized by the completeness of the following well-known musical elements a) There are 28 percussion Omani instruments, b) 7 Omani melodic instruments including the strings: such as the Tanbura and the Rababa, c) wind instruments such as Al-Srnai and Jam, and d) polyphony which differs by each location in the country. Despite the similarity of many Omani musical instruments with the instruments of other countries, the Omani identity is apparent in them. For example, the types of oysters and seashells that were discovered in Ras al-Hadd (east of Oman), as well as the al-Jum al-Bahri. Some instruments are made of antlers, such as Bergum and the al-Habban, a wind instrument made of sheep or goat skin, in addition to the al-Kasir and al-Rahmani drums (Alkhathe-ri, 2014). Furthermore, there are less used Omani instruments such as Tasat, Cosha, Raboub, Bato, Hongo, and many others [Alkhathe-ri, 2015].

Nature of Omani folk music. Omani music fulfills all the elements of world music in its genres which are: a) Mechanical music, the instrument plays a role in pro-

ducing the sound, for example, the Aljazirah, Almahouka, the Kasir, and Rahmani, b) Lyrical music which is based on individual, duet, and group singing such as Almaryahana, children's Dance, and Dan Dan, c) Lyrical and instrumental music that is based on signing and instruments, for example, Al-Tshasha, and d) Singing, instrumental and dance music, such as Bozalaf, Alhamboura (Alfajria, 2021).

Rhythm. Omani music is performed by instinct and the Omani rhythm's dominance in Omani traditional music genres is a unique feature. Furthermore, due to the vast exposure of the Omani empire, the people of Oman brought different musical genres and appropriated them to serve in producing new genres. Says A.D. Magda Ezz, Dean of the Egyptian Ballet Institute about this feature: "What distinguishes Omani kinetic arts is the inner rhythm." The Kuwaiti composer Abdullah Al-Rumaithan says: "The sound of the Omani percussion, such as drums and others, is distinguished from other percussions in the rest of the Gulf countries and the world, the Omani rhythm is an identity". Likewise, the musician Ammar Al-Sharei says "They taught us that the most difficult work in Musical writing is the harmony, which occurs when an instrument is joined by another to create a melody and the matter turns into a kind of crossword puzzle, Omanis do this in order, simply, and with uninterrupted ease." (El-Mallah, 2017).

Singing. The creativity of Omani music is not only evident in its diversity, but also in the structure of this music. Most of the Omani genres work to raise the performers' enthusiasm until they reach a certain level of manifestation and immersion, body and spirit, in the lyrical performance. Although the Omani musical performance depends on the voice, it uses percussive, string, and wind instruments, and it is distinguished by the combination of melodic, rhythmic, and poetic forms. For example, the singing that takes while doing work is distinguished by its melodic sentences and short and fast-paced poetic verses. Correspondingly, most Omani singing gives

special importance to the poetic text, such as Abu Al-Zulf and Al-Lal. Such care made the performance of specific genres improvisational, which calls for the strength of memory and the capacity of imagination with attention. (Alrahbi, 2020). Improvising poetic verses during the performance is a unique phenomenon in Omani genres, and this ability reflects the Omanis' musical intelligence. Bedouin singing is characterized by its gill character and limited areas that do not exceed the middle vocal region. As for Coastal singing, it is characterized by the chest or head voice. The vocal tide and the height of the vocal pitch characterize mountain singing.

Second question

The second question is: what are the psychological motives behind the Omani musical creative achievements? Based on the analysis of the performance of these genres and related documents, the psychological motives were categorized as follows:

Provocation of enthusiasm

The Omanis were involved in wars since ancient times, especially against their occupiers, the most important of which were the Persians and the Portuguese. Music accompanied the call for war or victory, equipping armies, urging people to war, and arousing their zeal to expel the colonists. The contemplative in the genres of Al-Razha and Al-Azi, two of the most famous and widely practiced Omani genres, finds that most of its words are directed towards arousing enthusiasm for war, pride in heroism, and perpetuating memory (M. Alkiyumi, personal communication, December 14, 2021). Their performance has a fast pace, which inflames enthusiasm and raises the level of motivation to prepare for combat; accompanying the performance of these arts is a display of manual skills in swordsmanship and fencing. In addition, these two arts depend on the strength of language and poetry, the soundness of pronunciation, and their strength in performance. In the performance of these two

genres, there's important to show masculinity and the solid traits of a man to the performer in the art of Al-Azi and Al-Razha. The artists in these two genres are incompatible with softness or soft performance; this is essential to be in harmony with the intensity and hardness of the war. Accordingly, these genres are not performed by females. In the Governorate of Dhofar, a genre called 'Habbot' is performed for similar aims (Almarzoqi, 2017; Firqat Alshaba, 2019).

Religious motives

The religious aspect profoundly impacts various aspects of life in the Omani society, including the musical aspect. Omanis created various genres to commemorate religious events, such as the genre of 'Malid' to celebrate the birth of the prophet Muhammad (M. Alkiyumi, personal communication, September 27, 2021), the genre of 'Timina' to celebrate children's memorization of the Holy Quran, and the genre of 'Tahlula' to celebrate the first tenth of Dhu'jah (Alkaetheri, 2005). For example, people who live in Sur and Salalah practice field genres like Mekwara, an African origin, on sacrificial occasions (Alketheri, 2015). These genres exist because of the importance and greatness of these religious occasions, to cultivate souls to cleanse them of sins, seek forgiveness from God Almighty, and touch blessings on those days. This genre brings people to a state of religious sublime and ecstasy, as if performing this art is a way of guiding people towards good behavior, in addition to calming oneself and reaching complete reassurance.

Emotional stimulation

Omanis in the past carried out harsh activities with a lot of risks that required constant physical effort. Their continuity demanded reinforcement to intensify determination and avoid failure to perform. These activities such as navigation of sailing vessels, agriculture, and grazing all took place under difficult climatic conditions where the temperature sometimes

reached 50 degrees Celsius. In order to motivate workers to maintain performance at work with the same effort and effectiveness, musical genres were created to entertain themselves by reaching a level of manifestation and immersion in the body and spirit of singing performance. These include: "Altasief" used when harvesting wheat or spelt, and "Alzajirah" which performance is associated with ruminating water from wells using a bull. The singing performed also agitates the bull and becomes more vibrant and active. Likewise, the singing of "Gadad, alharth, Alraei, Alrawah, Alsaie, Alshobani and Almadima" is employed for a similar purpose (Alketheri, 2005; Ambosaedi, 2021).

Competitiveness

The Omani people are distinguished by their linguistic intelligence, which helped them produce great poetry and music. Some Omani musical genres are performed improvisationally, that is, without preparation. This is represented in poetry interlocution on a particular subject between two or more poets, including the genres of the 'Musaba', the 'Maidan', (M. Alkiyumi, personal communication, January 15, 2022). and even the art of 'Rezha' and 'Qasafi'. This poetry is performed without prejudice but at the same moment. These styles encourage poets to compete among themselves and provide lyrically stronger responses to other poets who may provoke or challenge them to respond on the subject. The performance of this art is accompanied by the codification of the meaning of poetic verses and symbolism that the other poet must understand in order to respond. Symbolism in Omani poetry is a special phenomenon that accompanies the performance of the genres referred to previously. The symbolic poetry is called the 'Arjjeez' or the 'Alghato', which means encrypting poetic messages. Examples of this style include 'Arjuzat al-Darsai' where each letter of the alphabet used in a poem corresponds to another letter. The poet must memorize letters and their corresponding. Another style in this genre is

'Arjuzat al-Rihani', where each letter of the alphabet is coded in a specific word. Each poem's lyric has a corresponding related word that starts with a specific letter, then that letter and the next lyric's letter are taken to understand the poet's symbolism. Solving these mysteries and responding to the other poet provokes the competitiveness of poets to decipher those symbols and provide a sounder response to the other, ensuring these poetic records a lot of excitement and enthusiasm among poets and audiences (Almowaiti, 2020).

Meditation

Some traditional Omani arts are performed for meditation, the expulsion of savagery, and amusement. These arts are usually found in mountainous and nomadic areas, where simple professional activities such as grazing, collecting firewood, or walking are practiced. The art of 'Alta'uib., for example, is practiced while grazing or gathering firewood at a simple rhythm and in a brutal, prolonged, and somewhat sad voice to spread meditation and provoke imprisonment and disturbance. Also, the art of 'Altariq' and 'Altagroud' in Bedouin areas possess the same formulation when a social or psychological issue is raised, or when retrieving memories in a brave and sad voice for a long time (Ford, 2018). This is characterized by the elongation of the vowels in a beautiful singing voice that inspires people to reflect on a particular subject. It also stimulates the eviction of monstrosity and boredom, especially while walking in the vast desert at night.

CONCLUSION

Omani is characterized by a distinctive musical intelligence that expresses that rich musical production. Omani musical arts need intensive studies especially with regard to the innovation of these genres. The most exciting interest is the reasons for this huge and diverse musical production. Despite the determinants of this study, the most important of which is the lack of direct attendance at the performance of these

arts, it has been able to conclude some of the psychological motivations for the productivity of these arts in general. These results are very important because they will provoke a lot of researchers to investigate each motive on their own and link it to the art type directed at them. The psychological motivations of performing these arts do not shy away from the social and psychological needs to which the musical performance is generally directed such as self-entertainment and high feelings but are characterized by some motivations, especially for the Omani environment and human nature.

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