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Using Primitive Cultural Data for Interpretation: A Look at Birdwatching Tours

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Abstract

The pristine nature of Iran has always been respected by ancient Persians. The nature that dominated urban life several decades ago, these days are not like the old flourishing days. Urban life and the destruction of natural life destroyed various animal and plant species. Ecotourism, which is one of the most popular types of tourism, attracted tourists in recent years. Observing birds without bothering them is called Birdwatching, which is one of the ecotourism subcategories. Bird, as an important part of the animal life of Iran's nature, is an expression of beauty and meaning. This creature has a foot on the ground and wings in the sky and always captivates the minds and eyes of the tourists. However, are the explanation and identification of the appearance and behavior of the birds sufficient data for birdwatchers? The question of this research is that how to present interpretative layers from the public viewpoint, literature, poetry, myth, and the relationship between man and the bird. This study has been conducted using library studies to understand the basic concepts and interviews with experts to introduce the interpretation method. The results show that the confrontation between the public view of the facts and the movement of partial data into general concepts will make it possible to achieve a particular type of interpretation.

Keywords

Birdwatching, Tourism, Interpretation, Commentary.

Introduction

Nature is a creative process, production and reproduction of life using living and non-living components. In public view, nature refers to geological and wildlife concepts. While it is a phenomenon associated with a variety of living and

non-living organisms. Nature is considered to be the first home of mankind, which, after moving to the shelter, had been gradually abandoned. According to Quran verses, nature is a systematic and purposeful phenomenon that is a continuous creation of God. Therefore, it is a rich source of attributes and

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divine qualities. Nature is so fascinating that has been considered as a window for understanding the greatness of God (Beheshti & Shukrinia, 2011). The effects of nature on human life can be seen in many studies. The impact of natural elements such as plants and animals on the poems of prominent poets (Foladi & Ebrahimi, 2010), or the study of the effects of nature on Iranian music (Majedi & Shamloukia, 2011) showed that human handmade elements have been directly and indirectly affected by nature.

For a long time, nature has been considered as a special attraction. The man has always enjoyed the watching of nature and described the journey to pristine and untouched lands so attractive because returning to nature is virtually a return to his own identity. The journey to nature is a movement towards a system of meanings and communications. A system that will provide a spiritual platform for a travel plan (Shafia & Sabaghpour Azarian, 2016). The food chain between living organisms is one of the most attractive natural systems. Plants grow and are eaten by vegetarians. Vegetarians are hunted by carnivores and carnivores are hunted by others. The cycle of returning corpses and the survival of creatures to the soil and its reestablishment in new plants describes this system. Over the course of millions of years, this food relationship has been formed in every corner of the ecological zone. Looking at each section of this interaction will reveal a range of concepts and reasons. In order to find the right understanding of nature, it is necessary to have two holistic and detailed views simultaneously. Each phenomenon has a special position in relation to the whole while nature itself has a different essence. One of the most attractive and noteworthy phenomena in ecotourism is birdwatching. The Cambridge dictionary considers birdwatching a recreational activity that some people can see, study and explore wild birds in open and natural environments (Cambridge Advanced

Learner's Dictionary, 2017). Maintaining the habitat and living space of the birds is a prerequisite for the life of the local community because tourists spend on bird watching and the presence of these birds in the nature of the area leads to the continuous flow of tourists; a kind of tourism which is based on sustainable development. A study found that Columbia, which has about 20 percent of the world's bird species, has a high income; that is to say, the focus on birdwatching has shaped the tourism of a country (Maldonado et al., 2018). Another study found that children's exposure to birds was a reason to gather family members together and experience of birdwatching an excuse for a family gathering (Mao-Ying, et al., 2019). Raw and primary data is not sufficient to create a consistent and lasting experience in birdwatching. These programs should be directed toward secondary interpretations and analyze; interpretations that provide a framework for a holistic view beside the detailed view. Therefore, in this study, the type of relationship between humans and birds, literature, art, myth and business were studied which introduces a look at the bird as a holographic look. What the bird implies, as an ecosystem sign or indicator, will multiply the durability and worthiness of the implications of a birdwatching program. That is, moving from data to the commentary, which will make the program more attractive. therefore, birdwatching programs needs research as much as other cultural programs.

Research question

What method(s) can be used to generate an interpretation of preliminary data related to the bird?

Methodology

This study was designed to introduce native interpretive patterns from primitive cultural data related to the bird. The primitive cultural data

were collected using library studies, poetry, literature, art works, myths, and the interaction system between human and birds. Then, texts were collected using interviews with expert guides who are famous in interpretations on birdwatching tours. The combination of talks of experts together and the combination of the most similar views, the extraction of the pattern of interpretation has been identified.

Theoretical Foundations

Preliminary cultural data

• Literature and poetry

Having feather and flying from the ground to the sky is one of the reasons why the bird has been introduced as a mythical creature. Since the light and the sky are considered as movement towards the spirituality and God, birds are known as spiritual and divine symbols. The singing and good sound of these beings have had profound effects on literary and artistic works. Hafez, for example, knew the bird as the sign of spring and vegetation, and it is considered a sign of love for the creator and creature in some of the writings, or Sohrab, resembles his loneliness to a lonely chicken, a sound like a sadness tune (Alawi, 2007). Therefore, looking at the bird is a practical interpretation of the behaviors of the bird in daily life. In one of his poems, Mansour Hallajj refers to the true position of man and his approach to God in the form of recognizing the status of man. Referring to the story of Imam Abraham and four dead chickens, Jalal al-Din Muhammad Rumi said, after asking God to see the resurrection of the dead, he said that each of these birds is a symbol of human soul traits (Sabaghpour arani & Shayestehfar, 2010). In this regard, although the psychological states of the poets and the political situation of society (Alawi, 2007) and the poets' attitude toward birds affects this issue (Hasanli & Akbari, 2007), the bird's multiple application in these texts indicates

the multidimensionality and influence of this in the minds of celebrities. Thus, the bird in literature has been a symbol of heavenly communication and a concept for describing the present and psychological position of poets and writers.

• Artwork

The motifs and shapes that remained of the birds, except in some cases, are generally close to nature. The routine of developing these motifs shows that the development of available tools and technologies has increased the complexity of illustration and conceptualization of works (Khosravi, 2012). The works of art remained of the birds, date back to the Sassanid era and have undergone many changes in the course of the aesthetic developments. Birds like the double-headed eagle and the peacock have been seen in the symbolic forms with mystical and philosophical texts. Religious texts and forms related to the eagle in the tomb of ancients make the relationship of this bird deeper with concepts such as the need for divine mercy, life after death and immortality (Fathi & Farbod, 2009). Research shows that since the era of Buyids, the former traditions had been affected, and elegance, regular geometric combinations, and more precise forms had been also introduced to the artistic expression of mythical birds (Ibid). This transformation, with the development of technology and artistic instruments, has led to the creation of more outstanding and complex works (Fig. 1).

Birds have been observed in the design of carpets with religious themes, and the intensity of the presence of different species is related to their presence in Iranian wildlife (Sabaghpour arani & Shayestehfar, 2010). Climatic conditions, cultural and social demands have been effective even in the coarseness, prominence, size, and extent of use of birds such as peacocks (Sheikhi Narani, 2010). Therefore, the bird in art is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that has been used along with the amount of presence in nature, according to the

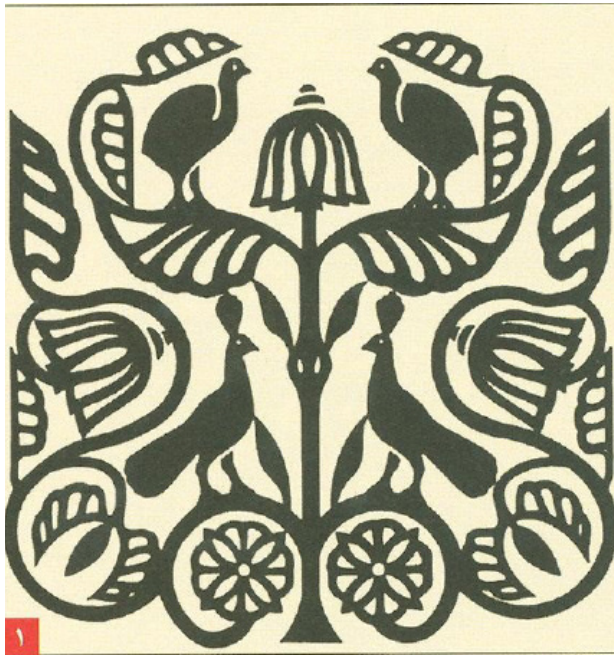


Fig. 1. The motif of the peacock and the tree of life in the Sassanid era artwork, Source: Metropolitan Museum of New York.

mentality from which it was produced. Also, the used tools to visualize the artistic and visual aspects of each period has played a role in the shapes of the remains of the birds. However, the public were not ineffective about the bird and the religious/local themes of highlighting and differentiating some birds.

• Myths and superstitions

Myths, fantasies, and thoughts are unrealistic and so far, no one could prove their truth or falsehood. What matters in myths is not the truth of the story but the importance of transferring the concept from generation to generation. In the historical memory of humans, birds were actors of mythical roles or special characters. The feather and wing of the birds, at first sight, are symbols of a myth of freedom and liberation (Sabaghpour arani & Shayestehfar, 2010). Birds that mythically have played an undeniable role in Iranian thought in terms of popular or religious beliefs, can be categorized as follows:

Eagle is the epitome of wisdom, the god of heaven

or the angel who is the chicken mediator. The bird lives in the most regions of Iran, leaving a world-class and minivan impression. Crow as a messenger of the soul, the judgment of the spirits of the dead, has a worldly and heavenly nature, which is the messenger of the good and the smartest bird. The cock, as the symbol of the sun, is the enemy of the divine and eternal, which has a worldly and heavenly position and has sacrificed the fire of Bahram. Peacock is the symbol of decorating, luxury, arrogance, glory and splendor, selfishness, life with love, beauty, and monarchy, which is merely worldly. Phoenix (Simurgh) is the symbol of fire, the merciful and eternal, guardian, and the representative of the god of the gods, which is from heaven (Khosravi, 2012).

The individual and group behavior of the bird, the amount of presence in nature, the way of activity and nutrition in nature, and how to interact with humans is the root of these mental differences between birds. For example, an eagle with the flight above all birds and a look from top to bottom has made to be known as the king, while the peacock is known as beauty and wealth for its beauty, scarcity, and color of its feathers. However, religious stories and references were effective on highlighting some birds than others. For example, Hoopoe or Ababil, have been distinguished by a religious and historical narrative.

The undeniable effects of birds on human life can be investigated in the superstition section. The root of superstition is based on delusive hopes and ignorance that has been transferred from a generation to another for some reasons. In the formation of superstition, the role of the power of man's imagination plays an important role. Power between the less relevant phenomena creates strong and solid mental connections (Foroughi & Asgari Moghadam, 2009).

• Human-bird interaction

Business is a path to economic survival and

continuity of life. Bird hunting for providing foods and the use of feathers are amongst business with a long history. But since the supply of the product in these markets is highly dependent on the lives of birds, it can play a role as a damaging factor. Therefore, poultry businesses are subject to statutory oversight and guidelines, as the ordinance for the wild bird hunting act of 2016. The purpose of these guidelines is to classify and manage hunters' hunting behavior in interaction with the bird's community. Since Iran is in a position where there are very few native and highly migratory birds, the management of the hunting of these birds during migration will have a significant impact on the population and survival of different species. According to the law, those who intend to hunt wild birds, within certain limits, are allowed to hunt four categories of birds. One of the reasons for organizing hunting is the existence of a lot of recreational incentives for hunters to catch birds. This issue has expanded the context for the development of criminal behavior in the northern regions of Iran with a lack of officers and the weakness of the complementary support (Ghasemi & Kelteh, 2014).

For example, a stew called Nardon, which is considered as a luxury meal in Mazandaran, is made of a wild goose called Khodteka. This migratory bird is hunted during periods of passing Iran to respond to the requests from the northern restaurants. This long tradition of making stew using a migratory bird dates back to the time when the population of the area was far less than Today's. But growing demand and increase in the region's population more than the immigrant population of Khodteka will endanger the bird. Only legislation and enforcement of surveillance programs will not make it possible to change behavior. Educational programs, providing instructive interpretations and stories in nature tours, and creating a sense of respect for nature and living organisms, are the vital requirements for managing sustainable

relationships between humans and birds.

Findings

It is true that early raw data is one of the prerequisites for cognition. But interpretation is a fundamental requirement for deepening experience and reaching meaning. Interpretation means the link between the inner layer and the layer-to-layer between the data to create new and valuable concepts. What a bird's effect on art, literature, myth, superstition, and business, and actually make it appear is a preliminary raw data. Combining and integrating data to achieve newer information and foundations increase the chances of achieving excellence.

The confrontation between public view and the facts

One of the methods to create an interpretation is to use public opinion. What happens in the public as narration and vision is rooted in their beliefs, facts and collective memories. Readout of the historical background of these beliefs and understanding the reason for such concepts, referring to literature and art, reviewing written and authentic stories are required along with the popular opinion. What makes it certain is that the difference between the truths and public narratives will provide an interpretive and analytical gap. In other words, placing popular beliefs against the facts will lead to more interesting interpretations and concepts. Therefore, the first proposed pattern for interpretation is the interaction between the public view and the facts that can be considered in the case

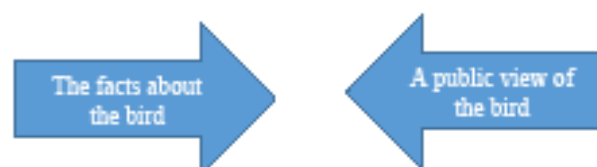


Fig. 2. Creating interpretation using the viewpoints of conflict between public opinion and facts, Source: Author.

of a Homa bird (Fig.2).

Homa is one of the Iranian hunting birds known

as Iran's mythical bird. This bird is a scavenger and due to the black beard, it is known as bearded



Fig. 3. Homa, an Iranian Scavenger Bird, Photo: Richard Bartz, 2007.

vulture (Fig.3).

The bird's main food is the bone marrow of the dead animal, which has been removed from the bone due to the repeated thrown from the heights on the boulders. The remains of the Persepolis, Achaemenid capital, including the capitals and entrance doors, are amongst the remains of this mythical bird. Also, the impact of this bird on the Iran National Airline brand is undeniable. The Homa brand is a reference to this bird that is featured in the minds of Iranians. There are conflicting statements in the public. These quotes were evaluated in the form of Table 1 as follows:

Moving from partial data to holistic notions

The general and complex concepts do not necessarily equal to their partial and initial data.

Understanding the components will only move towards interpretation when it ends with drawing of a large schema of communication and concepts. Birds are living in a specific ecosystem and in the defined food chain. The proper description of each bird in terms of the structure of food required, along with the definition of the food for this bird in terms of ecological status, will allow the possibility of converting partial data into holistic concepts. This transformation can cause a superficial formation of interpretation and create insight. In the following, Table 2 will examine two birds of pheasant and crow from a partial perspective and then combine the data for a holistic look so that the method of extracting the interpretation to be described.

The two birds have different meanings in terms of shape and appearance, but an interpretive look will

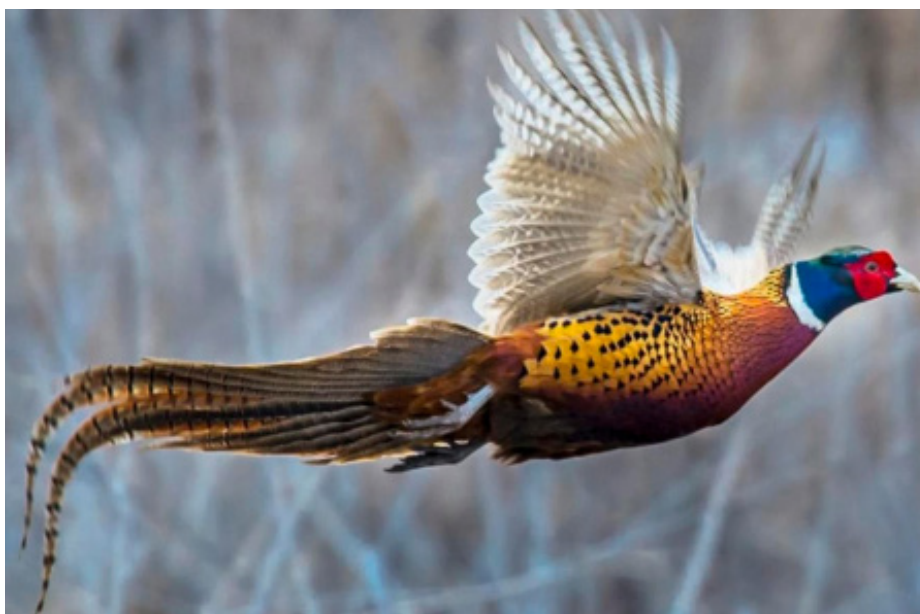


Fig. 4. Pheasant, an indicator of ecosystem health, source: https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Ring-necked_Pheasant/id.

Table 1. Using the contrast between public view and facts to get an interpretation of the Homa, Source: Author.

Public look	Facts	Data axis	Viewing Angle	Interpretation
Flying or sitting above a person's shoulders is a sign of glory and success in the future.	It came to pass in the Avesta that the kings have glory, so they consider them the shadow of God on earth. It has always been a factor in the transfer of this magnificence, which Homa has been introduced as the agent of the transfer of this concept (Shafagh & Zarei, 2012)	Literature, myth	Subjective	Homa is a symbol of communication with God through mythical stories and flight to light and life in the mountains. So landing on someone's shoulders like the light connection to that person. That is the divine essence for the kingdom. While the bird is inherently unwilling to sit on anyone's shoulders. Therefore, divine glory was not something that could be easily accessible to anyone, and addressing Homa as the agent of divine glory was also for this reason.
	Because of being a bone eater bird, Homa sits on someone's shoulder when the person is dead and there is nothing left beside the bone. Therefore, flying or sitting on someone's shoulders will not be a good sign and goodness.		Objective	
Because you are Homa, be honest, eat low, talk less, and do not hurt (Nezami)	Homa is a bone-eater bird.	Poetry	Subjective-objective	Is a bone-eater bird expected to stand in a line to eat a body and asks for more? The feeding pattern of this bird requires quiet and calm waiting for the bones to arrive. Therefore, the ancestors are looking for the facial narrative of a bird that displays a particular behavior unwittingly but can be a pattern of behavior.

Table 2. Interpretation by moving from partial data to holistic concepts, Source: Author.

Bird Examined	Specification	Description	Interpretation	Consequences
Pheasant	Pheasants live in the plains, mountains and forests; this family of birds exists in most of the habitats in Iran. These species of birds have a long tail, short wings and long legs that run in dangerous situations instead of flying (Mobser, 2017). This bird usually eats fruit (Bakhtiari, 2016).	It is possible to introduce the food produced in nature in different degrees, for example, extra foods and residues, ordinary foods and special foods, which the last meal will not be produced anywhere. Special and distinctive foods are the result of a very regular, orderly, and healthy relationship between the components of nature. For example, the fruit of the tree occurs where the tree, the climate, fertility, sunshine, and environmental health are guaranteed. On the other hand, there is a garbage or carcasses of other beings as food. Garbage is the result of a fault or weakness in the environmental cycle that absorbs specific species of scavengers.	The presence and growth of pheasant population in a region indicate the ecosystem improvement and a good environmental situation because the food cycle has gone well and fruit is available as the best product of nature. While the growth of the crow's population in a specific area indicates the production of waste and the creation of an environmental flaw. Therefore, the growth of specific species of birds in nature can be considered as a symbol of health or lack of environmental health.	Although the subject of human-bird interaction and the definition of rules for hunting has a specific basis, for example, as being at risk or not. But if the plan for defining the health and vitality of an ecological zone is defined, protecting these two birds is necessary to have a good environmental analysis.
Crow	This species is of medium height, black feathers in the head, wing, and tail and neck. While the crow's high and strong beak is one of the most prominent features of this creature. (Mobser, 2017) therefore, crew eats everything and can be found anywhere. (bakhtiari, 2016)			

make a new look at the accumulation of birds in a geographic area.

Conclusion

The environment and the interaction of its elements after billions of years have gained its current form. There is a lot of data on the interaction and exchange of existing phenomena in ecology that needs to be interpreted. Whether a bird lives in the mountains or wilderness is not accidental, it is also a sign of versatility in these environments. The cycle between the elements of a climate, while guaranteeing the survival of the habitat, can be verified.

This article did not intend to investigate bird

importance in birdwatching tours, because this importance has already been understood and described. In this study, what have been considered are different layers that can relate a phenomenon like a bird to other phenomena? Culture, art, superstition, myths, and even business and its laws are components in which the interaction of humans and birds is clear. An interactive is one that can be identified in parts of the one-way relationship and in other parts of the two-way relationship. But communication and interactions between these functions are needed.

Bird in dramatic literature and poetry indicates the connection of the sky and the mental and psychological effects of poets and writers to these

creatures. Artwork remained from birds are an indication of the public's view and the extent of its presence in nature. But the myths left by the bird depend on the behaviors, modes, manners, and perceptions of the ancients towards the old and the religious stories. The stable relationship between humans and birds in the form of the hunter has led to making the rules and regulations set. This regulation can have an impact on the food culture and the pattern of life of the hunter societies. The bird in Iranian culture is an objective, subjective, and objective-subjective element, so the ability to form more complex and interpretive concepts will be provided.

After reviewing the raw data of culture and art and its interaction with birds and reviewing the comments and interviews of experts on how to make simple and attractive interpretations, the first method, called interaction between public opinion and facts, and the second method, called moving from partial data to colloidal concepts, were recommended. Both methods provide the possibility of extracting the interpretation, which in the first method, explores the underlying causes and the second method will allow a new look at the details. Tourism is a meaningful system that requires the presence of semantic guides and opportunists. Instead of repeating data-driven trips, the emphasis is on an interpretive and rich journey and the path to business competitiveness in the booming tourism industry. Additional studies can provide different methods for different types of tourism.

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