

## **Dezfuli Dances: Regional Cultural Contexts of Ceremonies in Khuzestan, Iran**

Understudied movement forms of Iran result in labels such as Middle Eastern or Central Asian being used to group together numerous movement forms rooted in unique languages, music, and customs. Since ancient times, Khuzestan has been a multicultural region home to Dezfuli and Shushtari peoples as well as Bakhtiāri and other Zagros dwelling tribes whose ancestors were mobile pastoralists summering in the Zagros highlands and wintering in eastern Khuzestan lowlands for thousands of years. Several Arab tribes migrated to parts of western Khuzestan during the seventh century. Khuzestan is still home to multiple spoken and movement languages. Although dances from some linguistic groups have been studied and described, movement patterns in the Khuzi speech islands of Dezful and Shushtar remain undocumented.

By analyzing my experiences of Dezfuli dances as an essential part of wedding-related ceremonies, I argue that *das razun*, *ruze sobhi*, *re goshun* and Dezfuli weddings serve as examples of regional contexts resulting in specific movement techniques and patterns (Chatterjea 2020). Dezfuli music, songs, and food are likewise at the heart of Dezfuli celebrations which continue to connect people at community gatherings (Smith 1999) even though modern lifestyles and possibilities have shortened the time dedicated to ceremonies.

From 2013 - 2020, I took fieldnotes, photos and videos during participant-observer experiences of Dezfuli dances in Khuzestan. Interviews complemented my research on Khuzi history, music and customs.

Keywords: Dezful, Khuzestan, Iran, ceremony, regional contexts, technique, movement patterns, community gatherings, participant, observer.