

The Transformation of the Mental Landscape of the Paddy Field

Cultivation of rice is the main agricultural activity in the northern provinces of Iran, including Mazandaran and Gilan, and the livelihood of most of the residents of these two provinces is tied to this crop. Not so long ago, all rice cultivation activities were done manually and due to the low working speed and the one-time opportunity to plant, it had created certain culturally related activities; including singing local songs while working and the tradition of *Kayir*¹. In some occasions, even by passers took a few minutes to help the owner of the land. These customs would create a good opportunity for agritourism. Agritourism, a combination of the two words Agri and Tourism, includes the agricultural activities that invite tourists. Agritourism makes it possible for tourists to get to know the native culture and customs of that land, in addition to experiencing the desired activity. Besides creating objective landscapes such as diversity in size, shape and color, rice cultivation is a retelling of the common culture of the land in a time frame of less than six months, and watching any landscape through the said time frame creates a subjective landscape and an accurate understanding of time in people. *Shalizar*² provides a good opportunity for tourists to see customs and traditions, and to experience all kinds of scenery along with doing all kinds of activities. The subjective landscape of the paddy field includes all the customs and traditions related to the activities of the rice farmers during the stages of land preparation, planting, sowing and harvesting, which happen in a time interval of less than six months. In addition, seeing each of the sights would have given the viewer a precise understanding of time because each activity represented a specific point of time in this six-month period:

Land preparation with a view of vast fields full of water in late March and early April;

The green landscape of the planted land before the clustering from the end of April to the middle of July;

The landscape of green spikes from mid-July to mid-August;

A golden landscape with hanging spikes until the middle of September (*Paiezeh-maah*)³;

And the landscape of the remaining stalks after harvesting the crop after September.

But what is happening today, with the increase of the speed of carrying out different steps, using precocious varieties of rice and benefiting from new machinery, has caused a high percentage of farmers to switch to second cultivation and the cycle of activities related to paddy fields happens twice. The mechanization of activities, the presence of less manpower and the acceleration of time have caused the disappearance of the culture and customs related to rice farming, and have also distorted the subjective landscape in understanding time. For example, golden spikes of rice are seen in some fields next to newly planted fields, confounding the traditional understanding of time. Another damage caused by the replanting of rice is the burning of the stalk residue, which causes environmental pollution in the time frame between the two crops and destroys the attraction of tourism in the space. Fortunately, in some areas where it is difficult for agricultural machinery to enter due to various reasons, including the slope of the land, the same old habits are still going on, and it is hoped that by reviving the ancient culture of paddy fields, agritourism in those areas can be boosted.

1. In Mazandarani language, it is said to someone who helps others in carrying out activities without getting paid.

2. Paddy fields.

3. Harvest time in Mazandarani culture.

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