

## National Inventory of ICH Pakistan

### Name of the element: Narh Sur

#### Short Description:

*Nar Sūr* in Balochi and *Nar Stúnaj* in Pashto, also spelled as Narh Sur, is a traditional musical form prevalent in parts of Pakistan, particularly in Eastern Balochistan. It combines two elements: "*Nar*," a type of flute, and "*Sūr*," throat singing synchronized with the rhythm of the *Nar* or flute. This art form is celebrated for its unique blend of poetic lyrics, rhythmic beats, and accompanying music. In this cultural tradition, the flute or *Nar* is played by a musician called a *Nare* in both Balochi and Pashto while the throat singing or *sūr* is performed by a throat singer known as a *sūri* in Balochi or *stúnchaé* in Pashto.

The region of *Koh-i-Sulaiman*, also known as Solomon Mountain, encompasses parts of Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Punjab. Inhabitants of this mountainous expanse, primarily Balochi and Pashto-speaking tribes, lead a semi-nomadic lifestyle, relying on animal husbandry, predominantly sheep and goats, for their modest sustenance economy.

*Nar Sūr* performances are commonly found in districts of Eastern Baluchistan such as Sibi, Quetta, Killa Saifullah, Zhob, Loralai, Musakhel Barkhan, Kohlu, Dera Bugti, and tribal areas of Punjab such as Taunsa Sharif. Among the tribes inhabiting these areas, *Nar Sūr* is prevalent among Balochi and Pashto-speaking tribes, as well as smaller language groups including *Khetrani*, *Jafferki*, *Waneci*, and *Brahvi*. These performances are central to social gatherings and wedding ceremonies, where *Nar Sūr* masters present "*Dastanghs* in Balochi," short poems meant to be sung alongside the flute or *Nar*. The poetry of *Nar Sūr* often includes love ballads, histories and stories of brave heroes of tribal war feuds and later resistance against colonial and postcolonial states. The difference in poetry between Pashto and Balochi *Nar Sūr* and *Nar stúnaj* is significant, with Pashto folklore relying on *Kakaré Ghary* in *Nar stúnaj* and Balochi relies on epic in *Nar Sūr* performances.

The popularity of *Naṛ Sūr* and *stúnaj* among the people of *Koh-e-Suleman* can be attributed to both geographical and cultural factors. The vast, open landscape provides an ideal environment for the sounds of throat singing to carry over great distances. The animistic worldview prevalent in this region emphasizes the spirituality inherent in natural objects, including their sounds. Thus, human imitation of nature's sounds is considered the foundation of throat singing.

Considering Koh-e-Sulaiman as a unique cultural area, its inhabitants have historically found themselves surrounded by invaders seeking to interfere in tribal affairs. However, this isolation has also served as a means for them to preserve and safeguard their intangible culture from the oppressive and homogenizing effects of colonial modernity.

*Naṛ Sūr*, primarily a pastoralist and nomadic tradition, thrives in districts where animal husbandry and nomadic culture are prevalent. However, in areas experiencing a shift towards agriculture and modern market-based instruments, the folk music culture, including *Naṛ Sūr*, has declined among certain tribes. This decline is attributed to accessibility issues and changes in economic activities, which have altered traditional livelihoods and cultural practices.

The popularity of *Naṛ Sūr* and *stúnaj* was further fueled during the cassette player era when recording and duplicating became accessible to local music shops in Loralai, Zhob, Kohlu, Taunsa Sharif, and other areas. The second phase of reemergence in popularity is attributed to the rise of digital media, particularly on platforms like Facebook and YouTube.