

THE HISTORY OF THE MUNSHAOT GENRE

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Abstract. This article is dedicated to the history of the literary connections of Tajik-Persian literature with other countries of the East. It analyzes the influence of Persian and Tajik literary works on the literary environments of Central Asia, India, Turkey, and other Eastern countries, as well as the traditions of translation, imitation, and cultural exchange. The authors aim to demonstrate the intellectual and aesthetic impacts among Eastern peoples through these literary connections. The study highlights the significance of Tajik-Persian literature in Eastern literary processes and its value as a part of cultural heritage.

Keywords: Tajik literature, Persian literature, the East, literary connections, translation and imitation, cultural exchange.

Аннотация. Статья посвящена истории литературных связей таджикско-персидской литературы с другими странами Востока. В ней анализируется влияние произведений персидской и таджикской литературы на литературные среды Центральной Азии, Индии, Турции и других восточных стран, а также традиции перевода, подражания и культурного обмена. Авторы стремятся показать интеллектуальное и эстетическое воздействие среди народов Востока через эти литературные связи. Исследование подчеркивает значение таджикско-персидской литературы в восточных литературных процессах и её ценность как части культурного наследия.

Ключевые слова: таджикская литература, персидская литература, Восток, литературные связи, перевод и подражание, культурный обмен.

Introduction. Tajik-Persian literature is one of the oldest and richest literary heritages of the East. It has had a significant influence not only within its own region but also on the literary processes of other Eastern countries. Through translation, imitation, cultural exchange, and literary traditions, these connections have played an important role in strengthening aesthetic and intellectual interactions among Eastern peoples. The aim of this study is to analyze the links of Tajik-Persian literature with other countries of the East and to highlight its cultural and literary significance. In Eastern culture, letters and correspondence are considered a fundamental part of the art of composition. For this reason, special attention in the *munshaot* genre is given to the perfection of letters and the appropriate use of poetic devices. If we examine the content of the *munshaot* works created up to this time, we see that their primary purpose was not merely to convey information, but to showcase the author's skill at the textual level. For example, letters often employ artistic devices such as simile, metaphor, allegory, hyperbole, and *saj'* (rhymed prose). Additionally, almost every correspondence includes Qur'anic verses, hadiths, and poetic excerpts. The main

purpose of using these methods was to express the author’s ideas more clearly and effectively.

In general, the *munshaot* genre is one of the literary genres in Eastern poetry, consisting of collections of letters written by an author in verse or prose. Such collections comprise letters written by one or several authors. These letters are not merely written messages but emerge as a unique form of literary art—the art of composition—with deep content and beautiful artistic expression. The *munshaot* has also been referred to as “ruq‘aot” (Arabic for letters) or “maktubot.” (O‘zbekiston milliy ensiklopediyasi, 2000, p. 821). In Eastern poetry, the tradition of *nomanavislik* (letter-writing) is one of the most beautiful and rich traditions of Persian-Tajik and Turkic literatures. Its scholarly study has a fairly long history and can be conditionally divided into two parts:

1. The study of scientific problems related to the tradition of *nomanavislik*.

2. The publication of literary sources and issues of textual scholarship. (Ўзбек эпик поэзияси тарихидан, 1974, p. 8-20). In the history of Eastern literature, works featuring the term “noma” are extremely numerous, and their comprehensive description and classification are provided in academic B. Valikhojaev’s monograph *From the History of Uzbek Epic Poetry*. In this study, such works are classified according to their form of composition (prose, poetry, and mixed form), content and essence (artistic, historical, scientific, memoir), and subject matter (travel details, autobiographical, love letters, music, social issues, etc.). Specifically, *nomas* written in verse are classified as follows:

1. *Noma* – in the sense of epic poems (dastans) and cycles (series) of poetic stories.

2. *Noma* – in the sense of a *masnavi* poem (dastan). (Ўзбек эпик поэзияси тарихидан, 1974, p. 8-20).

Noma – refers to a work written in the form of a poetic letter. As scholars have noted, these works are diverse in both form and content, making it “difficult to measure them by a single standard or to establish a universal rule for all of them” from a genre perspective. Accordingly, the term “noma” as a literary genre is applied specifically to works mentioned in the third category of the classification above.*

Alisher Navoi, in his work *Mezon ul-avzon*, writes about the genre of “Muhabbatnoma” as follows: “And in the Turkish nation, there is a type of song, which they call ‘Muhabbatnoma,’ and its meter is musaddas maqsur and it is complete; here is a couplet: ...”

Meni og‘zing uchun shaydo qilibsen,

Manga yo‘q qayg‘uni paydo qilibsən (Алишер Навоий, МАТ, 2000, p. 93). It should be noted that Navoi’s *Muhabbatnoma*, which he recognized as a surud (a type of song), is poetically aligned with the *noma* genre. Therefore, Alisher Navoi can be considered the first researcher of this literary genre.

In literary studies, the term “noma” also refers to the exchange of written messages between characters within major works. According to literary scholar N. Rahmonov, one of the earliest examples of this can be found in the Uzbek heroic epic *Alpomish*. The scholar also cites examples such as in the epic *O‘g‘uznoma*, where the Oghuz khan sends *bildirguluk* (letters) to the rulers of all nations, and in *Qutadg‘u bilig*, where Oyto‘ldin writes a *nasihatnoma* (advisory letter) to the Elik, among others (Ўзбек мумтоз адабиёти намуналари, 2007, p. 94).

The oldest examples of such *nomalar* can be found in the epics of Fakhriddin Gurgani’s *Vis and Ramin*, Nizami Ganjavi’s *Khosrow and Shirin*, and Khosrow Dehlavi’s *Shirin and Khosrow*. These works have been widely studied, and numerous scholars of world literature have expressed their observations and analyses regarding them (*O‘zbek adabiyoti tarixi*, 2017, p. 321).

In the second chapter, titled “The Roots and Formation of the Tradition of *Nomanavislik*,” the development and evolution of *noma* as a literary genre in Persian-Tajik literature are examined based on scholarly sources. The term *noma* is explained in dictionaries as “a written text, ruq‘a, letter, or epistle.” *Nomalar* were written on various subjects and later used in the form and content of poetic letters exchanged between lovers.

Within classical Persian-Tajik literature, the *noma* genre produced literary monuments from the 10th to the 15th centuries. These works can be categorized into two types based on their characteristics: *Noma* included in large epic works. Examples include Fakhriddin Gurgani’s *Vis and Ramin*, Nizami’s *Khosrow and Shirin*, and Khosrow Dehlavi’s *Shirin and Khosrow*.

Works written in the *masnavi* style, composed specifically on the theme of love and romance. Examples of these include Avhadiy’s *Dahnama*, Khoja Imomiddin Faqih Kirmoni’s *Muhabbatnoma*, and Ibn Imod’s *Dahnama* (Ўзбек адабиётида нома жанри, 1992, p. 8).

In the 12th–14th centuries, the content, essence, and form of *nomalar* created in the Persian-Tajik language served as a source for subsequent literary masterpieces. In particular, based on the demands of the period, *nomalar* began to emerge from the structure of general literary works and enter the stage of formation as a distinct genre.

The *noma* genre primarily focused on love and romance, giving rise to numerous

artistic works on the theme of love. Among these, Avhadiy's, Khoja Imomiddin Faqih Kirmoni's, and Ibn Imod's *Dahnama* are especially significant as exemplary works of the *noma* genre created in the language (Persian) and thematic context (love-romance) of that era. G. Begdeli, reflecting on Avhadiy's *Dahnama*, written in 1306–1307 (Hijri 706), noted: “The work is a new and original piece in the *noma* genre in terms of its structure, characters, and artistic qualities.”

According to the textbook *History of Azerbaijani Literature*, Davlatshoh Samarqandiy reports that Avhadiy had a divan consisting of fifteen thousand couplets. Some tazkirahs contain excerpts from this divan, including ghazals and qasidas. By the end of the 14th century, the works of another nomanavis poet emerged. This was the *Dahnama* by Ibn Imod, the son of Khoja Imomiddin Faqih Kirmoni. With this work, the poet elevated the *noma* to the level of a distinct literary genre. This development occurred directly under the influence of Avhadiy's work.

3eDuring this period, three successive Dahnamas were created in the Persian-Tajik language. As a result, the *noma* was established as a separate literary and artistic genre. The third chapter of the first section is titled “The Development of Nomalar in the Literature of Turkic Peoples.” In this chapter, key information and scholarly reflections are briefly presented regarding early examples of the *noma* genre in Uzbek literary history, including Khorezmiy's *Muhabbatnoma*, its derivative *Latofatnoma* by Khojandi, Sayid Ahmad ibn Mironshoh's *Taashshuqnoma*, and Yusuf Amiriy's *Dahnama* (Азарбайджанская литература (с древнейших времен до начале XIX в.), 1943, с. 338). In this context, each *noma* reflects both common and distinctive features in its architecture and composition, including statistical information about the types and order of the lyrical genres used within them. Khorezmiy, while adhering to the traditions of *nomanavis* in Persian-Tajik literature—such as prefaces, reasons for writing the work, nomalar, and conclusions—created a completely original literary work in terms of structure.

The work contains, in addition to the traditional preface, *noma*, ghazal, qasida, fard, qit'a, munajat, *masnavi*, episode, and story. Khorezmiy's *Muhabbatnoma* begins, according to tradition, with praise of Allah. Then the poet describes meeting Muhammad Khojabek and presents two Turkic and one Persian ghazal. Additionally, the work includes sections in *masnavi*, “Praise of Muhammad Khojabek,” and “Description of the State.” The core of the work is formed by the nomalar. Initially, the poet planned to write ten nomalar, but later added one more, making a total of eleven. The work states: “Here seven words were delayed, previously I said ten, now it became eleven.”

Khojandi, in writing *Latofatnoma*, was directly inspired by Khorezmiy's *Muhabbatnoma*. The following lines from *Latofatnoma* illustrate this inspiration: "If you drink from the cup of love, it is a reply to 'Muhabbatnoma'... Words in my tongue, unripe in the scholar, *Latofatnoma* also became ten nomalar." Khojandi's work is a response to the ten nomalar in Khorezmiy's *Muhabbatnoma*. As in Khorezmiy's work, the author's presence is actively felt in *Latofatnoma*. While Khojandi was creatively inspired by Khorezmiy, he achieved originality in composition, character interpretation, and the depiction of nature. Another contributor to the development of this genre was Sayid Ahmad ibn Mironshoh. His *Taashshuqnoma* consists of sections such as praise of Allah, na't to the Prophet, munajat, the reason for writing the book, praise of Shahruh Sultan, ten nomalar, the book's conclusion, and requests. Sayid Ahmad's innovation lies in structuring each *noma* into three parts—*noma*, ghazal, and a summary of the words—which is consistently maintained throughout the work. These three parts in each *noma* are meaningfully interconnected, forming a unified whole.

Like the Persian-Tajik poet Ibn Imod, Yusuf Amiriy, in the *noma* genre, enhanced the narrative element by framing the love letters between the lovers within a particular story. Amiriy's *Dahnama*, written in 1420 (Hijri 823), is divided into 46 large and small chapters. In addition to ten nomalar written in *masnavi*, it contains ghazals, fards, and stories. The *Dahnama* differs sharply from other nomalar in its structure and the planned arrangement of its chapters. The nomalar consist of 30 couplets, ghazals have 7 couplets, and the reading of a *noma* takes 25 couplets (Ўзбек адабиётида нома жанри, 1992, p. 33).

In the fourth chapter of the book, entitled "The Role of Nomalars in the Study of Lyric Genres," the extent to which scientific sources on individual lyric genres, as well as general manuals on classical poetic genres, refer to examples of the *noma* genre is examined. It is known that in the second half of the 20th century and the early decades of the 21st century, a number of studies were carried out on classical lyric genres, and in them, to varying degrees, the tradition of *nomavis* was also addressed.

In Professor R. Orzibekov's monographs, *Ghazal and Musammat in Uzbek Classical Poetry* and *Minor Genres in Lyric Poetry*, attention is paid to examples of ghazals, qit'as, and fard genres included in *Muhabbatnoma*. Within the nomalar, there are also *masnavis* with the theme of *soqiynoma* (the wine-pourer motif). This topic has been discussed in Odiljon Avaznazarov's dissertation "The Image of the Soqi in Alisher Navoi's Works" and several articles, as well as in some articles by Maqsud Asadov. In particular, in Maqsud Asadov's article "Noma and Soqiynoma," published in issue 5 of the *Sharq Yulduzi* journal in 2012, the following conclusion is made:

“...In the nomalar, the soqi (cupbearer), wine-drinking, wine parties, customs, participants of the gathering, and wine vessels are interpreted in a unique way. Through this, the author’s experiences of love, his social and life reflections, and his profound philosophical observations on nature and human destiny are expressed. This allows the soqiynoma presented in the nomalar to be fully recognized as an early form of this genre.”

Conclusion. It is evident that Tajik-Persian literature has had deep and multifaceted connections with other countries of the East. These connections, formed through translation, imitation, cultural exchange, and literary traditions, have contributed to strengthening aesthetic and intellectual interactions among Eastern peoples. The study’s findings demonstrate that Tajik-Persian literature has significantly influenced the development of literary processes not only within its own region but also in other Eastern countries. Moreover, it continues to hold an important place as a part of cultural heritage in contemporary literary and cultural studies.

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