



Extended Abstract

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Origins of Persian Romantic Narrative Poems Up to the Eighth Century A.H.

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Introduction

The creation of any literary work has a motivation or a reason to which the writer often refers or which can be deduced from extra textual situations. The importance of mentioning the cause of composition is such that in most epic poems, a part of the preface is dedicated to this. This article is conducted through a descriptive-analytical method, aiming to explore the reasons for composing Persian romantic narrative masnavis up to the eighth century A.H. It seeks to show what motivations poets had for composing their works and whether what the poet states as the cause of composition is always acceptable or should be treated as a fictional subject and an artistic motif.

This article, by analyzing the reasons for composition in nineteen lyrical poems until the eighth century A.H., shows that these works fall into two categories: author-centered and audience-centered. In the first type, the poet has personal and individual benefits in mind, such as gaining of a good name, demonstrating his/her ability and skill, or receiving rewards from patrons. In the second type, the poet composes the poem at the request of others. The most common reason for composition is the commission by others, including those in power and courtiers, which is referenced in twelve works. Popular appeal and the public attraction to romantic stories are also considered the second motivation for composition, both of which are audience-centered. Among the authors of the poems examined, Nezami gives special attention to recording this

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reason and has dedicated a separate section to it. This article aims to explore the motivations and reasons that poets have considered in composing lyrical poems.

Methodology and Literature Review

This study follows a descriptive-analytical approach, with data collected through library research. A total of nineteen romantic narrative poems written up to the eighth century A.H. were examined. As far as the authors have investigated, no independent research has been conducted on the reasons behind the composition of romantic poems.

Discussion

The reason for composition reflects both the forces that inspire the poets to create their works and the objectives they aim to achieve through them. Generally, the reasons for composition can be categorized into two types: author-centered and audience-centered.

A. Author-Centered Reasons

These reasons pertain to the poet's personal, material, and spiritual benefits.

Material motivation and receiving rewards: One of the most significant and frequent motivations for poets throughout different periods has been the hope of receiving financial rewards and valuable gifts. Among the earliest lyrical works in which the poet explicitly mentions this motivation is Gorgani's *Veis and Ramin*. Other examples include Nizami's *Leyli and Majnun* and *Haft Peykar*, Asadi Tusi's *Garshasbnameh*, as well as *Eshq-nameh* and *Homay and Homayun*.

Immortalizing one's name: The desire for immortality is a concept that humans have long pursued. Poets, too, have composed lyrical works to achieve this goal, ensuring that their names and memories endure through their poetry. Nizami refers to this motivation in *Khosrow and Shirin* (Nizami, 1934: 445), as do Khaju in *Homay and Homayon* and Assar Tabrizi in *Mehr and Moshtari*.

Imitation and influence from other works: In Persian literature, many lyrical poems have been composed under the influence of successful works by great poets. Nizami's works serve as a prime example of literary influence. Amir Khosrow, for instance, composed many of his poems in imitation of Nizami.

Expression of the poet's beliefs and disposition: A poet's worldview, beliefs, and personal disposition can significantly influence their choice of subject matter. They use narrative poetry as a medium to express these perspectives. Those with nationalist sentiments lean toward epic poetry; those inclined toward asceticism and moral teachings gravitate toward didactic poetry; while romantic poets are drawn to lyrical poetry. Examples include Nezari's *Azhar and Mazhar* (Nezari, 2015: 9) and Nizami's *Khosrow and Shirin* (Nizami, 1934: 430).

B. Audience-Centered Motivations

In these cases, the poet's primary goal is not personal or direct benefit. Instead, the composition of the poem aims to provide advantages or serve others. A significant portion of Persian lyrical poetry consists of

commissioned works, written upon request. Examples include *Veis and Ramin* by Gorgani (Gorgani, 1970: 29), *Leyli and Majnun* by Nizami (Nizami, 1934: 25), *Homay and Homayun* by Khaju (Khaju, 1969: 22-23), and *Feraqnameh* by Salman Savaji (Savaji, 1997: 540-541). All these works are composed at the request of court patrons. Sometimes, a friend or acquaintance asks the poet to compose a poem. For instance, Amir Khosrow wrote *Hasht Behesht* (Eight Paradises) upon a friend's request (Amir Khosrow, 1972: 31-32).

Conclusion

A poet's decision to compose a long lyrical poem requires motivations and reasons strong enough to persuade them to endure the challenges of poetic composition and artistic refinement. These motivations can be classified into two main categories: author-centered and audience-centered, with the former displaying greater diversity.

Among the nineteen works analyzed, the most frequent motivation for composition was external commission, particularly by figures of power, courtiers, and the poet's acquaintances, which was mentioned in twelve of the works. In this regard, commissioned poetry represents the most common form of lyrical composition. These works should not be regarded as insignificant, as many masterpieces of Persian literature owe their existence to the poet's patrons and supporters. Another prevalent motivation is the popularity of lyrical stories among the public. Poets composed their works in response to societal needs and interests. Regarding author-centered motivations, the most frequent is the poets' desire to showcase their artistic skill. Many poets composed works primarily to demonstrate their eloquence and mastery of poetic expression. Another significant motivation in this category is the hope of receiving financial rewards, as poets often crafted their works with the expectation of presenting them to kings or patrons in exchange for patronage.

Keywords: cause of composition, Persian narrative poems, lyrical literature, preface

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