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Extended Abstract

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Examining the Influence of the Works of Nezami Ganjavi, with an Emphasis on *Haft Peykar* and *Khosrow and Shirin*, on the Folk-tale *Koroğlu*

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Introduction

Nezami Ganjavi, one of the most distinguished narrative poets of the Persian literature in the 6th century AH, immortalized profound themes such as the conflict between good and evil, love and fidelity, and the motif of journey through works like *Khosrow and Shirin* and *Haft Peykar*. The impact of Nezami's narrative poems extends far beyond Persian literature and has influenced the literary traditions of both Persian-speaking and non-Persian-speaking regions, including Azerbaijani and Turkic literature. The folk tale *Koroğlu* is one of the most significant popular epic-lyrical narratives within the cultural domain of Azerbaijan. It recounts the life of a justice-seeking hero who fights against feudal oppression, and it holds an esteemed status in the oral literature of the Azerbaijani region.

In classical Persian literature, shared themes and mutual influences play a pivotal role in forming stories and shaping narratives. Given the striking thematic similarities between this tale and Nezami's works, the present study begins with the hypothesis that the themes and narrative elements in *Koroğlu* have been shaped under the influence of Nezami's works, especially the two poems *Khosrow and Shirin* and *Haft Peykar*. Investigating this influence can reveal aspects of cultural and literary interactions between Persian literature and Azerbaijani folk literature and offer a deeper understanding of the intertextual network connecting these works. With a comparative approach, this study aims to uncover the hidden connections between these texts and fill an existing gap in comparative literary studies.

Method, Background, and Purpose

Considering that Nezami Ganjavi was a Persian-speaking poet who composed his poems in Persian, while the tale of *Koroğlu* is composed in Azerbaijani Turkish, this research employs a descriptive-analytical method within the framework of "comparative study" based on the principles of the French School of Comparative Literature. This school emphasizes linguistic differences, influence, and historical-cultural relations between two works. Given Nezami's influential role in Iranian culture and literature, his historical connection with the Azerbaijani region, and the linguistic differences, this

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comparative inquiry follows the French model and assumes that the folk poem *Koroğlu* was influenced by Nezami's works.

A review of previous research shows that although separate studies exist on Nezami's works and the tale of *Koroğlu*, no direct and systematic comparative study between them has been conducted; thus, this research addresses a novel topic.

The primary aim of this study is to identify, analyze, and explain the shared themes and narrative elements between the *Koroğlu* poem and selected works of Nezami, and to examine the role of these elements in shaping the epic-lyrical structure of this folk narrative.

Discussion

Findings show that the tale of *Koroğlu*, in its various layers, owes much to the themes and narrative patterns found in Nezami's works. The most significant points of similarity and influence include:

Good and Evil: The scene of Ali-Kishi being blinded by Hasan Pasha—which marks the beginning of the *Koroğlu* narrative—clearly draws inspiration from the symbolic tale of "Good and Evil" in the sixth dome of Nezami's *Haft Peykar*. In both narratives, two opposing forces confront each other, and the characters representing these forces appear symbolically. The benevolent character, due to his commitment to honesty, is punished by being blinded. Ultimately, the forces of good triumph, while evil meets defeat and destruction.

Mythical Horse Breeds: The legendary horses of *Koroğlu* (Qirat and Dürat), who are born from the sea, have deep mythological parallels with Nezami's sacred and miraculous horses, "Shabdiz"—born from stone—and "Gulgun" in *Khosrow and Shirin*. Both share roots in ancient archetypes of birth from natural elements in Iranian mythology.

Love: Love serves as a central, motivating force that drives characters and determines their destinies. The formation of love in *Koroğlu*, such as Negar Khanum's love for the hero prior to meeting him, as well as direct references to the story of Farhad and Shirin—including Farhad carving through Mount Bisotun as an emblem of devotion—creates an intertextual bond and reveals the influence of Nezami's romantic narrative structures.

Sacred Numbers: The symbolic use of sacred numbers such as seven (e.g, "seven years of Deli Hasan's rule") and forty (e.g., "forty gates and forty maidens") in *Koroğlu* reflects the extensive symbolic use of these numbers in *Haft Peykar* (e.g, "seven pavilions" and Bahram's disappearance in the cave). Numbers seven and forty function as deep symbols of physical and spiritual perfection.

Journey: A foundational archetype of epic narratives, the journey serves as a path of transformation, maturation, and revenge for the hero in *Koroğlu*, paralleling the central role of journey in Nezami's works, such as Bahram's journeys in *Haft Peykar* and those of *Khosrow and Shirin*.

Dreams: Dreams function as a tool for inspiration, foresight, and guidance in *Koroğlu*—such as Koroğlu's dream about his loosening tooth—similar to prophetic dreams in *Khosrow and Shirin*, such as "Khosrow's dream".

Water of Life: The magical spring "Qoshabulaq" in *Koroğlu*, which empowers the hero, is structurally and mythologically comparable to the spring of the "Water of Life" in the *Eskandar-nāmeh*. In both narratives, reaching these springs is difficult and symbolizes an ideal goal for heroes and champions.

Conclusion

Based on the comparative reading conducted, the folk tale *Koroğlu* demonstrates profound influence from Nezami's *Khosrow and Shirin* and *Haft Peykar* in its fundamental themes and structural elements. This influence is clearly traceable in the dual theme of good and evil and the blinding scene, in the mythology of supernatural horses such as Qirat and Shabdiz, the sacred symbolism of numbers like seven and forty, the transformative journey motif, motivating love, the prophetic function of dreams, and the presence of a life-giving magical spring (Qoshabulaq). These similarities—going far beyond accidental resemblance—indicate an intertextual relationship and deliberate influence of Persian literature on Azerbaijani folk literature. Findings suggest that *Koroğlu* not only draws on ancient themes but also adopts narrative style and symbolic construction from Nezami. This study attests to the longstanding cultural dynamism and interaction within the Iranian civilizational sphere and highlights the potential of comparative literature in revealing the hidden dialogues between texts. By demonstrating

this extensive influence, the present research offers a deeper understanding of the cultural origins and artistic richness of the *Koroğlu* epic.

Keywords: *Koroğlu*, Nezami, *Khosrow and Shirin*, *Haft Peykar*, *Panj Ganj* (The Five Treasures).

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