

Literary Chronicles of the Qajars' Epoch

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Abstract

Following a historical appraisal and the progress of literature and poetry during the Qajar era, this article focuses on the specific literary environment in nineteenth century. As literature has effect in all areas such as cultural, social and other affairs, it is important to remember that Qajars' rulers Fathali Shah and Nasiraddin Shah had an influential role in the comprehensive evolution of the literary environment in this period. Literary chronicles covered the works written during Qajar dynasty can be considered the most important sources for researching literary processes. Circle of poets inside and outside of the court led the new founded literary movement "bazgasht" ("Return"), turning to the their predecessors for the inspiration in this period. The most important and wealthy genre of literature were tazkiras (biographical books of anthology), based on the original source materials in Arabian, Persian, and sometimes in Turkish, especially written about poets and poetry.

Keywords: the Qajar dynasty, literature, poetry, literary chronicles

Introduction

The nineteenth century was one of the most complicated periods in the history of Iran and Azerbaijan. For the majority of Iranian and Azerbaijani people this period was the division of Azerbaijan into two parts, in consequence of the war (1804-13 and 1818-28) between Iran and Russia Empires. This political change had influenced on the cultural life of the North Azerbaijan, by the leading the superiority of European culture. In addition, the major cultural improvements in the South Azerbaijan had taken place during the reign of Fathali Shah (1797-1834), the second ruler of Qajar dynasty. Furthermore, the Western civilization and European culture was introduced to Iran, including Azerbaijan during the Safavids reign (1501-1736), had a dominant role in the Qajar period. [2; p.270] The monarchs of Qajar dynasty focused their attention on European culture by opening European-style schools in Tehran and Tabriz, translating and publishing of books and newspapers. With the establishment of the Qajar dynasty, the kings showed the great interest in the recording their literary works in the historical-chronological books named " tazkire".

The names and creations of the immortal representatives of the ancient and mysterious Eastern poetry have come to the present day in the form of tazkiras and collected works, literary chronicles and selections as far as they have been for centuries. In the study of classical Oriental poetry tazkiras are considered as the most reliable source of research and a description of the poetic environment. While looking through the authors' life and their creativity, we witness the fact that each of them was a scientist, a man of sense and most of them were also poets. Tazkire originated from the Arabic word "zikir" which means "remembrance", "memoir". Tazkires are works that provide information about the biographies and creativity of famous writers and poets and had mainly been written in Arabic, Persian and Azeri-Turkish languages and the information about birth and death dates of poets, the important moments of their life, the short stories and small samples of their works were given in those books. Having encyclopedic character oriental tazkires can be considered as the oldest forms of modern history of literature. [5; pp. 38, 39, 70]

Discussion

The starting date of tazkire- writing is unknown. There is no indication about the existence of pre-Islamic tazkires in literature history. The book "Yetimet addakhr", written by the Arabic historian Saalabi in the 5th century, is considered the first source about poets from Hijaz, Sham, Diyarbakir, Iraq, Rey, Isfahan, Kerman, Gorgan, Astarabad, Kharazm, Khorasan and Azerbaijan and their works. The information about the poets can be found after the spreading of Islamic religion, along some of the books written by Arabic historians (Mesudi, Tabari, Ibn al-Azhari and etc.). Researchers believe that Nizami Aruzi's "Chahar maghale" (Four article) written in 12th century is still the oldest tazkire in Persian. The history of Azerbaijani tazkires begins with "Tohfeyi-Sami" which was written by Sam Mirza (1517-1567) the son of Shah Ismayil I. He wrote this work in Persian and gave information about 714 poets living in the second half of the 15th and the first half of the 16th centuries. Ahdi Baghdadi's "Gulsheni-Shuara" (16th century) is considered the first tazkire written in Azerbaijani Turkish.

The studies indicate that even if the tradition of the literary chronicles in the East originated in the Middle Ages, they were thriven so far during the Safavids' period and from the 16th century, samples of famous poets' works were collected and written by the palace secretaries. Among the popular tazkires which play an important role in studying the classical Eastern literature, including the Azerbaijani literature, we can mention the name of the following books: Dowlatshakh Samarkandi's "Tazkiratush-shuara", Mohammed Owfi's "Lubabul-albab", Sam Mirza's "Tohfeyi-Sami", Ahdi Baghdadi's "Gulsheni-Shuara" Alisher Navai's "Majalisul-nafayis", Lutfali Bey Azer's "Ateshkadeye-Azer", Rzaqulu Khan Hidayat's "Majmaul-Fusaha", Sadiq bey Afshar's "Majmaul-khawas", Aziz Dowlatabadi's "Sokhvanvarani-Azerbaijan", Mir Mohsun Navvab's "Tazkireyi-Navvab", Mahammadali Tarbiyat's "Danişmandani-Azerbaijan" and other works are considered as important sources for the study of the Eastern literary environment.

The tadhkiras are sometimes general, sometimes regional in content, now and then again confined to contemporary poets; the arrangement is either chronological, alphabetical, geographical, according to class or otherwise. [10; 316] Investigations of the history of tazkires show that up to fifty works had been written by Azerbaijani authors so far, the writing date of about half of them belong to the years of the Qajars dynasty. If we look through the literary environment of the 19th century, we can realize an important revival and a significant leap in the art of poetry. Thus, the stages of development of poetry have found their refinement in the tazkires. Two powerful rulers of the Qajar dynasty - Fatali Shah and later Nasiraddin Shah Qajar's care and supporting was a cause of regeneration of the poetic art traditions in the palace. Iranian literary critic Ahmed Gulchin Maani, having researches around the history of Persian tazkires, mentioned the names of 22 tazkires in his book "The history of the Persian tazkires", which had been compiled by Azerbaijani authors in the 19th century. The majority of these writers were princes of the Qajar dynasty.

There are a long series of tazkiras, collections of biographies and anthologies of poems written by court secretaries and princes of Qajar dynasty. Abdurrazzak bey Dunbuli, Mohammad Fazil Khan Gorusi, Bahman Mirza Qajar, Hulaku Mirza Qajar, Khudaverdi Khan Qajar, Mohammad Baghir Khan Qajar, Mahammad Hasan Khan Etimadussaltane, Mahmud Mirza Qajar, Heydargulu Mirza, Seyfuddoule Sultan Mohammed Taghi and others enriched the history of Persian literature with their valuable works. "Tazkireyi-Golshani-Mahmud" and "Safinat al-Mahmud" written by the Prince Mahmud Mirza Qajar, "Tazkireyi-salatin" written by the Prince Mohammad Mirza Seyfaddowle, "Tazkireyi-Anjumani-Nasiri" by the Prince Bahman Mirza Qajar were the worthwhile works and played a significantly role in studying literary process in this period. [1; p.193] As the scope of this article is scant, we only have to list some of these works.

Abdurrazag Bey Dunbuli Azerbaijani (1762-1827) was born in the city of Khoy of Southern Azerbaijan and grew up under the patronage of scientists and educated men since early ages and acquired a high level with his knowledge and talent. For a while he had been working at the service of Prince Abbas Mirza, who was Fatali Shah Qajar's successor. Possessing deep intelligence and mighty pen Abdurrazzak Bey also wrote poems by literary pseudonym "Maftun". There are three tazkiras written by him:

1. "Nigaristani-Dara" (The place of meeting beauties of Dara)
2. "Tacrubatul-ahrar va tasliyatul-abrar"
3. "Hadayiqul-udaba" (The garden of litterateurs)

Abdurrazzak wrote the book "Nigaristani-Dara" in 1825, when he was in Tabriz, because of the order of Prince Abbas Mirza. This book consists of four nigarKhanas (chapters) which were dedicated to Fatali Shah Qajar, the princes of the Qajars, masters of poetry close to the palace and poets from different provinces. [3; p.42]

Another court secretary during the reigns of Fathali Shah Qajar was Mohammed Fazil Khan Garrusi (1783-1837), who was author of the valuable inscription named "Tazkire-yi Anjumani-Khaqan". His family belonged to the Turkish Bayandur tribe and he was born in Garrus district of Hamedan province. After the death of his father, Fazil Khan left Garrus to pursue his education. In Tehran his talent and especially, his retentive memory attracted the attention of Saba Kashani, who was the court poet laureate (malik ash-shuara). He was presented to the palace by Saba Kashani, and he was appointed the official reciter of panegyrics written by him and others. The story about his meeting with Alexander Pushkin, the great Russian poet is interesting. In summer 1829 Fazil Khan was sent in the entourage of Prince Kosrow Qajar's mission to Russia for the purpose of offering official apologies for the murder of Alexander Griboyedov (1829), Russian ambassador at Tehran. During this trip he met Alexander Pushkin, who accompanied the Russian army under general Paskevich in the Caucasus on its way to war with the Ottomans. Pushkin, who had requested to meet the Persian poet, recorded in his travelogue the account of his encounter with Fazil Khan and composed a poem in the memory of their meeting. [1; pp.54-55]

Fazil Khan Garrusi was a poet, writer and litterateur, and his style in prose was distinguished in his period and had a lot of admirers. His extant works include the collection of his letters and 'Tazkireyi-Anjumani-Khaqan'. This literary chronicle written in 1818-19 and compiled in five months. The work consists of introduction, four anjumans (chapters) and final part. The book of essays is about the same named poetic assembly organized by Fathali Shah Qajar in Isfahan palace and about the poets gathering here. As stated in the preface of the book, Mohammed Fazil Khan was continued the earlier and unfinished version of the book "Ancumanara", written by Ahmed bey Akhtar and his brother Mohammad bey Bagir Nishati, because of the death of the authors. The first chapter covers the history of the Qajar's tribe, Fathali Shah's coming to the throne, his country governance and the examples selected from his poetic heritage. The second chapter is about the princes and dignitaries of the Qajar's dynasty. The third chapter is dedicated to the masters of poetry related to the palace and the fourth chapter is about the provincial poets. The khateme (final part) is about the author's own life and creativity. This work is considered a valuable source for studying the dynamics of development of poetry outside and inside of the palace during the reign of Fathali Shah Qajar. [4; p.17]

Likewise, Mahmud Mirza Qajar (1799-1858), fifteenth son of Fathali Shah, was the poet and court chronicler as known for his valuable works like "Tarikhi-Sahibqirani" (The history of royalty), "Tazkireyi-Golshani-Mahmud" and "Safinat al-Mahmud", were about poets living during reign of Fathali Shah and Mohammad Sah Qajar. [11; p. 101]

Rzaqulu Khan Hidayat (1800-1871), a prominent intellectual and scientist of that period, was an outstanding statesman, poet, writer and historian of the Qajars period. He was born in Mazandaran province and after the completion of his education he entered the service of Prince Hosseynali Mirza, son of Fathali Shah Qajar and governor of Shiraz. He was given the title of "Amir-ash-shuara" in 1830, when Fathali Shah visited Shiraz. In 1838 he came back to Tehran and worked in various positions during his lifetime, including as a rector of Tehran Darulfunun, the first European-type high school. His literary heritage consists of fifty thousand couplets of poetry, including "Gulistani-Iram" and six other masnavies (poems), three compiled books and several historical chronicles. The tazkires written by Rzaqulu Khan are the following:

1. "Riyazul-arifin" ("The garden of Mystics")
2. "Rovzatus-safayi-Nasiri" ("The lecture of pleasure of Nasiri")
3. "Majmaul-fusaha" ("The collection of eloquents")

His work "Majmaul-fusaha" is written in Nasiraddin Shah Qajar's epoch and is the last perfect tazkire about of poets who wrote in Persian. In the early period of his creative activity Rzaqulu Khan, wrote poems under the pseudonym "Chakar" as a master of high talent and became the Chief court poet of Fathali Shah Qajar's palace. [7; p. 49] "Majmaul-Fusaha", the product of Rzaqulu Khan Hidayat's thirty-year' work, also is of great importance in the study of the creativity of Persian-speaking Azerbaijani poets.

Conclusion:

The most important result of this research is the great attention and supporting in the culture, especially in the poetry of the Qajar's dynasty, which ruled Iran from 1794 to 1925. Fathali Shah Qajar (1769-1834), the second ruler of the Qajar throne, in contrast to the austerity of his uncle Agha Mohammed Shah Qajar, was accustomed to legendary and honorable palaces. Early in his reign, Fathali Shah Qajar established a court known by its writers and poets. He wrote poems himself, under the pen-name "Khaqan" had Divan (collected poems). The first facility of this progress was honoring the ancient traditions from classical Persian literature. The literary movement of this period led by poets, who were known for reviving the style

of classical masters of poetry such as Motamaddowle Nishat Isfahani, Saba Kashani, Mijmar Isfahani, Vusal Shirazi and others. The patronage of Fathali Shah Qajar had a great influence in the cultural life of the court and beyond the court. The assembly of poets ("Anjumani-Khaqan") established in the court was the main factor of the cultural development. The favourable cultural environment during the reign of Qajars had caused creation of heterogenous literature in this period. Abdurrazzaq Bey Dunbuli, Mohammed Fazil Khan Garrusi, Mahmud Mirza Qajar, Rzaqulu Khan Hidayat and others were the court chroniclers, which were famous for their valuable works named tazkiras. The reign of Fathali Shah should be considered as the golden ages of Persian poetry and it is crucial importance for today to research on the foundation history of this literary movement.

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