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GEOGRAPHY OF THE STORY "SHEIKH SANAN"

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Annotation: This article examines the inter-regional distribution and interpretation of “Sheikh Sanan”'s story.

Keywords: Oriental literature, planetary plot, Sheikh San'an, short story, dream, event, murid, way, Christian, tarso, condition, action, fine, mad, identity, return, acceptance.

“ШАЙХ САНЪОН ҚИССАСИ”НИНГ ЖУҒРОФИЯСИ

Annotatsiya: Mazkur maqolada “Shayx San'on” qissasining mintaqalararo tarqalishi va talqini tadqiq qilingan.

Kalit so'zlar: Шарқ адабиёти, сайёр сюжет, Шайх Санъон, қисса, туш, тадбир, мурид, йўл, насоро, тарсо, шарт, амал, жарима, девона, ўзлик, қайтиш, қабул.

ГЕОГРАФИЯ ПОВЕСТИ "ШЕЙХ САНАН"

Аннотация: В статье исследуется межрегиональное распространение и интерпретация истории “Шейха Санана”.

Ключевые слова: восточная литература, планетарный сюжет, Шейх Санан, рассказ, сон, событие, мюрид, путь, христианин, тарсо, состояние, действие, штраф, безумный, личность, возвращение, принятие.

The Tale of Sheikh San'an occupies a significant place in the classical literature of the East and has spread across a remarkably wide geographical area. Regarding this famous narrative, the German orientalist Anna Maria Schimmel once wrote:

«“There are numerous legends about a person becoming completely overwhelmed and driven to madness by immense love. Among them, the most famous is the story of Sheikh San'an. The Sheikh suddenly falls in love with a Christian girl, and in order to win her affection, he obeys her commands: he drinks wine and even tends her pigs. At the end of the story, however, it is the very girl who had led the Sheikh astray that embraces the path of God, accepts Islam, and the Sheikh returns to his disciples. After Mawlana Farid al-Din Attar narrated this legend as a masterpiece in his Mantiq al-Tayr (The Conference of the Birds), it became widely known throughout the Islamic East. Versions of this story also exist in Kashmiri and Malaysian literature. During my visit to Bukhara in 1994, a young interpreter respectfully recounted to me the Chagatai Turkish version attributed to Mir Alisher Navoi, which greatly impressed me. Indeed, the adventures of Sheikh San'an reveal the immense and unparalleled power of love for a woman.”»

Indeed, for centuries this tale has remained one of the most cherished works in the oral and written literary traditions of many nations, continuously read and studied by scholars. A comparative examination of the versions of the story interpreted by Farid al-Din Attar and Alisher Navoi confirms the validity of these observations. Furthermore, the murabbaʿ epic composed by the Kurdish poet Faqir Tayran, as well as the drama of the same title by the Azerbaijani playwright Huseyn Javid, both based on the story of Sheikh San'an, provide compelling evidence of the tale's widespread circulation and enduring influence across different regions of the East.

From the history of literary art, it is evident that narratives belonging to the "Tayr" (Bird) tradition—where birds serve as symbolic and allegorical figures—are abundant in the classical literature of the East and occupy a distinctive place in Sufi literary heritage. It is well established that these narratives embody both mystical (divine) and allegorical meanings. Moreover, the stories and episodes incorporated into these works artistically reflect the philosophical concepts and ethical principles that emerged during the periods in which their authors lived.

In this regard, the overall plot structures of Farid al-Din Attar's Mantiq al-Tayr (The Conference of the Birds) and Alisher Navoi's Lisan al-Tayr (The Language of the Birds), together with the stories and narratives they contain, demonstrate a remarkable degree of thematic and structural similarity. Likewise, the content of Faqir Tayran's epic Sheikh San'an closely corresponds to the tale included in these classical works. Although Huseyn Javid's drama of the same title shares the same fundamental narrative and thematic framework, it also exhibits several notable differences. These variations primarily stem from the requirements of dramatic composition, as well as from the influence of the historical period, social environment, and prevailing worldview of the people of Javid's time.

Alisher Navoi's Lisan al-Tayr (The Language of the Birds) is generally regarded as a poetic response (javobiya) to Farid al-Din Attar's Mantiq al-Tayr (The Conference of the Birds). Above all, Navoi's work should be appreciated as a unique masterpiece of exceptional literary talent. In many sources, however, Lisan al-Tayr has been described as a translation of Attar's poem. In our view, this characterization is inaccurate. Rather than being a translation, the work belongs to the Eastern literary tradition of tatabbuʿ—the creative reinterpretation and artistic emulation of a distinguished predecessor's work.

The prominent scholar E. E. Bertels also observed that Navoi's poem, particularly the episode of "The Tale of Sheikh San'an," contains numerous scenes absent from Attar's original, including detailed descriptions of the castle where the Christian maiden lived and the monastery. This difference reflects the distinct artistic objectives of the two poets. While Attar primarily focused on conveying the spiritual message of the narrative, Navoi enriched the story with vivid poetic imagery and artistic interpretation. As Navoi himself states in the introduction to his epic Layli and Majnun, his intention was not merely to retell a legend:

«My purpose was not simply
To recount this eternal love as a tale.
Its profound meaning drew my soul,
The story itself was only its vehicle.
When that meaning took poetic form,
The legend became its fitting garment (Navoi, Layli and Majnun, p. 271).»

It is precisely these artistic objectives that explain why Navoi's extraordinary poetic talent is fully manifested in this narrative. His mastery is evident not only in the overall structure and thematic conception of the epic but also in the construction of its embedded stories, particularly "The Tale of Sheikh San'an." This artistic excellence is reflected in the plot development, the system of characters, their actions, dialogues, and the rich variety of literary devices and descriptive techniques employed throughout the narrative.

A closer examination further suggests that although "The Tale of Sheikh San'an" originated in Arabic folklore, it entered the written literary tradition with significant modifications and for a distinct artistic and spiritual purpose. More specifically, both Farid al-Din Attar and Alisher Navoi employed this narrative as a means of revealing the essence of divine love (ishq-i ilahi).

Had the birds in the epic not become acquainted with the events narrated in this tale, and had they failed to understand Sheikh San'an's willingness to sacrifice everything for the sake of love, they might never have reached their ultimate destination in the spiritual journey. Thus, the first conclusion that emerges from a typological analysis of the Sheikh San'an narratives is that both Attar and Navoi used this story to elucidate the nature of divine love while simultaneously addressing the ethical relationship between the spiritual master (pir) and the disciple (murid).

Faqir Tayran's version of the tale bears a closer affinity to oral folk tradition and, within this framework, engages with the same spiritual and ethical themes explored by Attar and Navoi. By contrast, Huseyn Javid's drama Sheikh San'an presents a considerably different interpretation. Javid relocates the concept of divine love into the sphere of real human life, thereby endowing it with a new semantic dimension. More precisely, his work harmoniously combines elements of Romanticism and Realism, bringing the narrative closer to the realities of human experience while preserving its philosophical depth.

The philosophical perspectives of Farid al-Din Attar, Alisher Navoi, Faqir Tayran, and Huseyn Javid reveal a considerable degree of commonality across several key themes. One of the clearest manifestations of this shared outlook is Sheikh San'an's acceptance of the Christian maiden's conditions in the land of the Christians, his willingness to fulfill them, and his subsequent process of continuous spiritual purification. At the same time, despite these common philosophical foundations, the four works differ in their interpretations of the historical context, social environment, and the actions and motivations of their protagonists.

Although Alisher Navoi's version closely follows Attar's narrative, it is distinguished by the poet's unique artistic vision and interpretative approach. This originality is particularly evident in the depiction of the dream episode and in the characterization of the Christian maiden, both of which demonstrate Navoi's exceptional poetic craftsmanship. The differences become even more pronounced in Faqir Tayran's version of the tale and Huseyn Javid's drama. These distinctions arise primarily from the fact that Tayran's work remains closely connected with the tradition of oral literature, whereas Javid's dramatic interpretation is firmly rooted in the realities of human life while simultaneously incorporating imaginative and romantic elements.

It cannot be denied that the narrative structures of these works exhibit both significant similarities and notable differences. The stories of Farid al-Din Attar and Alisher Navoi, together with Faqir Tayran's epic, demonstrate a close resemblance in terms of plot development, whereas Huseyn Javid's drama differs considerably in its representation of events. The presence of several

new characters and a distinctly different social setting in Javid's play, absent from the earlier narratives, further illustrates these divergences.

In the works of Attar and Navoi, the artistic interpretation conforms to the conventions of the masnavi genre, allowing each poet's literary mastery to be expressed through elaborate imagery and symbolic narration. In contrast, Faqir Tayran's choice of the murabbaʿ poetic form reflects the influence of oral folk tradition and deserves particular attention. In Javid's drama, however, the conventions of dramatic literature take precedence. Accordingly, the dialogues and dramatic exchanges serve as the primary means of revealing the psychological states and inner worlds of the characters, while simultaneously portraying their external actions and relationships.

The similarities and differences in the ideological content and artistic expression of Farid al-Din Attar's, Alisher Navoi's, and Huseyn Javid's versions of The Tale of Sheikh San'an can readily be understood as the result of the authors' individual worldviews and literary craftsmanship. Each writer integrates the form and content of the work with his own interpretation of divine love, making this concept the central philosophical core of the narrative. Despite their stylistic and structural differences, all three works ultimately converge on the same fundamental understanding of divine love. Their principal distinctions lie not in the essence of the message, but rather in the authors' intellectual perspectives, artistic intentions, narrative styles, and modes of literary representation.

The central ideological orientation that underlies Farid al-Din Attar's The Tale of Sheikh San'an is consistently preserved in Alisher Navoi's interpretation. While remaining faithful to Attar's conceptual framework, Navoi succeeds in presenting both the principal and subsidiary themes with greater artistic depth, enriching them through more elaborate poetic imagery and literary expression. His superiority is particularly evident in the treatment of time and space, the portrayal of characters, the psychological motivation of their actions, and the meticulous attention devoted to narrative detail. In each of these aspects, Navoi expands and refines Attar's original artistic vision.

By contrast, Huseyn Javid transforms the traditional narrative inherited from Attar and Navoi by distancing it from the predominantly romantic and mystical mode of interpretation and bringing it closer to the realities of human life. As a result, elements of realism become especially prominent in his drama. This realism is reflected in the development of the plot, the lifelike characterization of the protagonists, the naturalness and vitality of their dialogues, and the dramatist's skillful depiction of human experience. Likewise, the expressive use of literary devices, the emotional intensity of the characters and events, and the dynamic dramatic conflict further demonstrate Javid's artistic achievement.

In summary, the tales discussed above, together with Javid's drama, present a profound Sufi interpretation of love while artistically exploring the relationship between outward appearance and inner essence, as well as the tension between ignorance and enlightenment. Although the primary meaning of these works lies in their interpretation of divine love, it is equally possible to discern the rich allegorical meanings embedded within them. It is precisely this multilayered symbolism that endows these literary works with enduring educational, moral, and philosophical value.

In conclusion, all four works possess profound educational, moral, and spiritual significance. Through these literary masterpieces, readers are encouraged to reflect on spiritual growth, moral

perfection, and the cultivation of virtues such as kindness, compassion, and humanity. The authors of the present study have sought to emphasize these dimensions, and the interpretations and conclusions presented herein are intended to guide readers toward a deeper appreciation of the ethical and philosophical values embodied in these texts.

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