
Charkhiyt

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Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

One of the most significant tokens for distinguishing the literary genres is the ancestors' attempt for nomenclature of their own opuses or others. Some of these terms have been explicitly applied in chronicles, memoirs, and Divans, implying the author's awareness of this literary genre that functions as a continuous or discrete criterion for the modern scholars' discernment. Although "Charkhiyt" or "Falakiyt" is not well-known literary genre, it can be defined as a genre used in composition of the literary Persian works by some poets whose names are cited in the chronicles and memoirs synchronically and diachronically. Hence, the purpose of this article is to introduce "Charkhiyt" as an independent literary genre in the history of Persian poetry.

2. Discussion

The poet's ultimate goal in creating Charkhiyt is encomium and description. The Charkhiyt has not only composed when the sunset and stars rise concurrently, but also this genre is created by an opening stanza on rising of the sun although the stars have no manifestation as the sun rise. The poets have usually described the stars, the signs of the zodiac, and the constellations. Typically, the target addressee is the "praised" individuals, often authorities and politicians of that time. From the 8th century onwards, concerning the popularity of religious poetry, Ali ibn abi Talib (P.B.U.H) along with some Shi'ite Imams are the "praised" ones. Concisely speaking, all the Charkhiyt can be subsumed under three structures:

1) The poet commences his poem by describing the night (sometimes morning), the moon, the stars, the signs of the zodiac, and the constellations, then he proceeds to eulogy. In this structure, the poet is sometimes detached by a couplet of lyricism, which indicates that he has consciously passed

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through the antecedent in describing the heavens and the stars (to epitomize) and paid homage to the “praised”.

2) In this structure, the poet’s description of the heaven, the moon, the stars, the signs of the zodiac, and constellations are not led to lyricism, like panegyric odes. Therefore, no distinction is made between lyricism, epitome, the main body of the ode, and the prayer of confirmation and conditional proposition as it was usual; however, the poet ascends the heaven with his imagination. The poet’s description of the constellations, firmament and what he quotes from the parlance of the stars in the eulogy of the “praised” is extended throughout the ode, and the independent literary type manifests better its Charkhiyt in this structure, namely, the totality of the opus entails the description of the firmament and the poet’s imaginary ascension.

3) The poet, with the power of fancy, solely ascends the heaven within confines of the lyricism of the ode, and traverses the signs of the zodiac one by one. At times, there is no explicit mention of ascension to the heavens, but it describes the signs of the zodiac, the stars. Likewise, its purpose, like the previous structure, is to describe the heaven, the spheres, the stars and the signs of the zodiac, expressing the encomium of the “praised” usual in common parlance till reaching the culmination in the heavens, then rendering the stanza of epitome and getting access to the eulogy which constitutes the main body of the ode. Since the 8th century, poets have employed the constellations to describe the status of Ali (P.B.U.H) and the Shi’ite Imams. What leads to the creation of such content in Charkhiyt is the dual connection that the poets found between Ali bin Abi Talib (P.B.U.H) and his ascension generalized to all Shi’ite Imams: 1) Mentioning Ali ibn Abi Talib’s ascension has paved the ground for creation of such content; 2) Ali’s mounting the Holy Prophet’s shoulders (P.B.U.H) to demolish the idols along with the conquest of Mecca were interpreted as Ali’s ascension by the poets who have heard or read such narrations.

3. Results

Chronologically, Charkhiyt is just a description of firmament, the signs of the zodiac, and stars depicted in the lyricism of odes. Then, from the 5th century in another structure, the poet with the power of thought and fancy ascends the heaven in the lyricism of ode, sometimes the ascension encompasses the entire ode, representing Charkhiyt as an independent literary genre. Accuracy in the texts that clearly favored the name of Charkhiyt between the 9th and the 11th century indicates that the predecessors made no distinction in nomenclature between the structures

developed in parallel mode, especially since the 7th century onwards, because they were all called by the name of Charkhiyt. From the 8th century, the poets of eulogy have had an opportunity to express their views in Shi'ite circles in various cities, leading to the selection of Charkhiyt to publicize their ideas and beliefs so that the greatest number of Charkhiyt composed are about Ali bin Abi Talib (P.B.U.H) and the Shi'ite Imams. Let it remain unsaid that Nizam Astrabadi has composed the most of Charkhiyt among all Persian poets. The particular attention to the poetry of Abu al-Mafakhr Razi in the eulogy of Ali bin Musa al-Reza (P.B.U.H) is also one of the manifestations of the extension of religious poetry welcomed by the poets during eight centuries.

Keywords: Literary genre, Charkhiyt, Falakiyt, Imaginary ascension of the Heaven, Nizam Astarabadi

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