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The Narrative of Historical Epics from the Conquest of Baghdad: Iranian-oriented or Religious-oriented?

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Abstract

The fall of Baghdad and the destruction of the Abbasid caliphate by Hulagu Khan provided a fertile ground for Iran's independence and the re-emergence of Iranshahri political thought. *Changizi Shahnameh*, Mostufi's *Zafarnameh* and Tabrizi's *Shahanshahnameh* are the most important historical epics composed in the court of the Ilkhanate. The main purpose of this study is to examine the approach of the poets of these historical poems to the event of the conquest of Baghdad and how this event and the historical figures were described in these works to determine the extent to which the poets had an Iranian or religious view in interpreting this event. Examination of these poems shows that despite the similarity of the narrative, two different approaches are seen in these works: Kashani and Tabrizi have a more triumphant and Iranian-oriented approach to this event. Instead of considering the annihilation of the Abbasids as a historical tragedy, they consider it a fateful and natural thing in order to fulfill the Iranians' long-held desire for independence. Mostufi has a religious view of the conquest of Baghdad and has repeatedly expressed his grief and sorrow over the fall of the Abbasids. Of course, all three poets in the narration of the conquest of Baghdad paid attention to the political thought of Iranshahri and tried

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to introduce Hulagu Khan as a king in the thought of Iranshahri by attributing the outstanding attributes of the ideal Iranian king to him. On the other hand, by highlighting traits such as irrationality and stinginess in the Abbasid caliph, they show that he is not worthy of ruling.

Keywords: *Conquest of Baghdad, Thought of Iranshahri, Ilkhanate, Changizi Shahnameh, Mostufi's Zafarnameh, Tabrizi's Shahanshahnameh.*

Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

The manner of narration of Ilkhanid historians in describing the event of the conquest of Baghdad are different; This difference is mostly seen between historians outside the Mongol sphere of influence and historians living in Iran during the Ilkhanate rule. *Changizi Shahnameh*, Mostufi's *Zafarnameh* and Tabrizi's *Shahanshahnameh* are the most significant historical epics composed in the Ilkhanid court. These epics are very important from various aspects. The poets' views on various issues, including the event of the conquest of Baghdad, show accurate and valuable points, but so far no book or article has dealt with these works from this perspective.

The main issue in this research is to examine the causes of the defeat and destruction of the Abbasid Caliphate from the perspective of the poets of these prominent historical epics and how to describe the Mongol caliph and khan in these works to determine how much the poets had an Iranian-oriented view in interpreting this event and paid attention to the independence of Iran and Iranshahri thought and how much they described this event with a religious view. As a result, the general approach of these poets to the event of the conquest of Baghdad is better explained.

2. Literature Review

Historical poems, especially historical epics, play an important role in interpreting historical events. In a historical epic, the poet on the one hand seeks to create a literary work and on the other hand describes

historical events. Historian individual emotions and prejudices, political and social constraints, and the dominance of the power discourse are factors that affect the objectivity of historical events and the interpretation of them. In three important historical epics of the Ilkhanid era, *Changizi Shahnameh*, Mostufi's *Zafarnameh* and Tabrizi's *Shahanshahnameh*, historical events, including the conquest of Baghdad, have been narrated under the influence of the mentioned factors, with a literary approach and sometimes very purposeful.

In this research, the use of various linguistic, literary and rhetorical tools in the verses of these three poems has been carefully studied: How to choose words, adjectives and titles, purposeful use of metaphor, simile, allegory and exaggeration in illustrations, meaningful praises, trying to create impressive and painful images, especially in the death of characters, how to describe the important characters of this event (especially Hulagu Khan and the Abbasid Caliph) and so on.

Thus, it can be seen that poets, by taking advantage of the capabilities and features of Persian poetry and using linguistic and rhetorical tools, literary arrays, imaginations and special narrative methods, express their views more clearly and effectively than prose histories.

3. Methodology

The present study is based on Qualitative Content Analysis. In describing and analyzing the content of these works, stylistic methods, rhetoric, etc. have been used. Also, how to use literary, linguistic and rhetorical tools, how to choose words and adjectives, metaphorical system and illustration of poets and the method of quoting the discourse of religion in these works have been studied. In addition, in order to better interpret and explain the issue, a comparative study was conducted between these historical epics and *Jame-al-Tavarikh*.

Results

In three important and prominent historical epics of the Ilkhanid era, namely *Changizi Shahnameh*, Mostufi's *Zafarnameh* and Tabrizi's *Shahanshahnameh*, the story of the conquest of Baghdad is narrated to a large extent similar to *Jame-al-Tavarikh*; The difference is that Rashid-al-Din Hamadani only described the events and has avoided

personal judgment. Rashid al-Din Fazlullah has neither a religious nor an ethnic or racial approach to this incident.

Given that these poems were written at the center of the power of the Ilkhanate, and since *Jame-al-Tavarikh* has been one of the main sources of these works, it seems that these poems have a triumphant view of the conquest of Baghdad. But despite the similarity of the narrative between these three poems, each of the poets sometimes expressed different views according to personal views. Two different approaches are seen in these works:

Kashani and Tabrizi did not interpret this event with a religious approach. Kashani has a more negative view to the Abbasid caliphate and did not express grief over the conquest of Baghdad and the destruction of the Abbasid dynasty. Tabrizi narrated the incident without having a religious or ethnic point of view and only used a few negative attributes about the caliph. Therefore, it seems that Tabrizi and Kashani tried with a triumphant approach to legitimize this battle of the Mongol khan and acquit him of the guilt of killing the Muslim leader. They tried to show the annihilation of the Abbasids as normal and destined, not a historical catastrophe, and perhaps because they considered this event to be the fulfillment of the Iranians' aspirations, they expressed their satisfaction with this event with an Iranianist approach.

Although Mostufi did not explicitly call the overthrow of the Abbasids a tragedy, but from a religious point of view, he has repeatedly expressed his resentment over the fall of the Abbasids in various ways and has legitimized them by attributing the Abbasids to the Prophet of Islam. Finally, it should be noted that all three poets expressed their Iranianist views more prominently than prose histories such as *Jame-al-Tavarikh*. In describing the incident and historical figures, they paid attention to the Iranshahri political thought and by attributing the prominent traits of the ideal Iranian king to Hulagu Khan and calling him a king, they considered Hulagu Khan worthy of a monarchy in the thought of Iranshahri.

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