



The Citation of Arabic Poetry in Persian Literature in Historical Works of the 6th to 8th Centuries AH

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Recived: 6/8/2025 Review: 26/11/2025 Accepted: 14/2/2026

Abstract

The influence of the Arabic language and literature on Persian literature extends far beyond vocabulary and isolated morphological or syntactic features; it manifests vividly in the form of Arabic poetic citations embedded within Persian prose. This phenomenon frequently takes the shape of a “citation annexation” (*idāfa-yi istishhādiyya*), wherein the Arabic verse functions as a grammatical constituent of the Persian sentence. A survey of Persian historical texts reveals that verses by certain Arab poets are cited with remarkably high frequency—a pattern that is far from coincidental. In this study, we examine historical works from the 6th to 8th centuries AH through the lenses of the sociology of citing Arabic poetry in Persian literature, the recontextualization and repurposing of the poems’ original compositional settings, recurring poetic themes and repeated verses, and textual variants between the original Arabic lines and their Persian citations. The findings show that Iranian authors predominantly cited poets who were either of Iranian origin (Abu’l-Fath al-Busti, Abu Bakr al-Khwarizmi, and al-Tughra’i al-Isfahani) or deeply connected with Iranians (al-Mutanabbi, Abu Tammam, and al-Buhturi). Moreover, Iranian writers sometimes detached an Arabic poem from its original occasion of composition and deployed it in a new context of their own making, thereby altering its intended function. A specific set of Arabic verses and themes recurs throughout Persian texts, which can be considered a distinctive stylistic trait. Finally, it is highly probable that Iranian

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authors, when citing poetry, drew upon earlier Persian writings rather than consulting the original Arabic *diwāns* or reference works—in effect, copying from their predecessors.

Keywords: *Persian historical works, Arabic language and literature, citation and quotation of Arabic poetry, citation annexation.*

1. Introduction

The influence of the Arabic language on Persian literature began as early as the first century AH. Initially, this influence was limited to religious and administrative terms that had no Persian equivalents (e.g., *zakāt*, *jihād*, *shayṭān*, *mīzān*). During the Samanid period, due to Khorasan's distance from the Arab heartlands, the rulers' promotion of Dari Persian, and the literati's attachment to pre-Islamic literary traditions, Arabic had only a superficial impact on Persian. Over time, however, the penetration deepened. By the 4th century AH, Arabic poetry began to appear in Persian texts in the form of citations and illustrative quotations, as seen in the Persian translation of al-Ṭabarī's *History*. The Ghaznavid era further accelerated this trend due to increased contact with Baghdad and the Turkic rulers' desire to gain Abbasid approval. The second half of the 6th century and the early 7th century marked a peak in Arabic linguistic influence: in some prose works of this period, nearly all compounds and more than half of the simple words are Arabic. This is especially evident in the ornate prose of the great secretaries (e.g., Bahā' al-Dīn al-Baghdādī, Muntajab al-Dīn Badī' al-Juwaynī, and al-Zaydarī al-Nasawī), though even simpler prose texts were far from immune.

2. Literature Review

The present study aims to analyze the citation and quotation of Arabic poetry in Persian historical works of the 6th to 8th centuries AH. The presence of Arabic poetry in Persian texts must be examined from multiple perspectives: the selection of poets was never random, and sociological factors as well as Iranian authors' attachment to poets connected with Iran played a significant role. While numerous works have dealt with the translation of Arabic poetry in Persian texts, no previous study has addressed the reasons behind the selection of specific poets, the prominence of certain names, the recurring poetic themes, the transformation of the original compositional context within

the Persian text, and related issues. This research constitutes the first attempt in this direction.

3. Methodology and Conclusion

In this article, the subject has been examined and analyzed from the following perspectives:

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Citation Annexation: We have coined the term “citation annexation” for a construction in which a Persian phrase is joined to an Arabic verse by means of the Persian *ezāfe* (-e). Typically, the Arabic verse appended to a Persian sentence fulfills grammatical roles such as the annexed term (*muḍāf ilayh*), object, or adjective.

Sociology of Citation: Statistical analysis of the frequency of citations from Arab poets in Persian literary texts reveals the widespread presence of six poets. These are, significantly, either Iranian (Abu'l-Fath al-Busti, Abu Bakr al-Khwarizmi, and al-Tughra'i) or possessed deep connections with Iranians (al-Mutanabbi, Abu Tammam, and al-Buhturi). This indicates that Iranian writers deliberately preferred poets with strong ties to Iran.

Recontextualization of Poetry: The study of works from these three centuries shows that writers sometimes altered the original context of a cited poem. Committed to the Persian text's own narrative or rhetorical purpose, they detached the verse from the occasion for which it was composed and, occasionally with slight verbal modifications, repurposed it to suit their own intent.

Recurring Themes and Verses: Analysis reveals that certain poetic themes and specific Arabic verses recur in Persian works. These include expressions of seriousness in affairs, warnings against negligence, elegies for the deceased, laments of solitude among the lowly, declarations of noble lineage, the desire for a good reputation after death, and mourning for great figures. This repetition is entirely deliberate and can be regarded as a stylistic feature.

Reliance on Persian Predecessors: An important finding of this research is that, based on multiple pieces of evidence, Iranian authors often used the works of earlier Persian writers rather than referring to the poet's *dīwān* or the original Arabic source. This practice gave rise to the textual variants observed between the Arabic original and its Persian citation.

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