

SECTION 21.

CULTURE AND ART

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ABOUT THE BEGINNING OF FOLK NARRATIVES (BASED ON UZBEK AND TURKISH STORIES ABOUT HAZRAT ALI)

***Abstract.** The article analyzes the beginnings and endings that play a significant role in the plot structure of folk narratives within oral folklore. Their importance in defining the genre and their distinctive features are examined through examples of Uzbek and Turkish folk stories.*

***Keywords:** folk narratives, Hazrat Ali, Uzbek and Turkish versions, plot, tradition, beginning, ending.*

The plot, which is considered one of the most important elements of artistic form, represents a system of events that are organically interconnected within a work and formed through the actions of its characters. It is a key component of an epic work and serves as a means for the author to realize their artistic intention [1:288]. In literary studies, it is precisely through the analysis of plot elements and composition that a deeper understanding of a work is achieved. Indeed, plot composition reflects the creator's ability to harmonize different parts of a work around a central idea in the most effective way and to establish a coherent relationship among them. It is through composition that a work transforms into an artistic system [6:60]. In this article, we present our observations on the beginnings of Uzbek and Turkish folk narratives about Hazrat Ali.

It is well known that the beginning and the ending of literary works play a special role in revealing and understanding the essence of a work. This is particularly evident in works of oral folk literature. For example, the openings of folk epics often emphasize the importance of "knowing one's seven generations," while the conventional openings of folk tales suggest that the events described are either unverified or possess a fantastical nature.

In this regard, the beginnings of folk narratives (qissas) are distinctive. From the very outset, they differ from other genres of folk prose. For this reason, they can be regarded as a device that ensures the genre-specific characteristics of such works. In his study devoted to folk books, R. Jumaniyozov compares the oral and written

versions of the epic “*Yusuf and Ahmad*” (folk epic and folk book) and first draws attention to their beginnings: “...although both versions of the epic possess a number of distinctive features, no serious differences are observed between them in terms of plot, ideological-thematic content, or compositional structure. Their specificity initially appears in the traditional foundation common to both versions. As is known, like other epic genres of folklore, folk epics begin with the indication of place, time, and the name of the hero, and various events and adventures are narrated in a certain sequence within the framework of these three elements” [7:14].

This situation is somewhat different in folk narratives. Their beginnings “absorb the characteristics of our long-standing written literature and the traditions of book culture” [7:14]. In them, one can observe a convention that became established after the spread of Islam. That is, the narrative begins with the name of the one and only Allah, sometimes followed by prayers and salutations. In more elaborate forms, the openings appear in rhymed prose (*saj`*). Only after this does the narration proceed to the details of the events.

This phenomenon can also be observed in folk narratives about Hazrat Ali. These narratives possess a traditional introduction and conclusion. Each story begins with the phrase: “Ammo roviyoni axbor va noqiloni osor andog‘ rivoyat qilurlarki” (but the narrators and those who narrated from the ancients narrate in this way). The purpose of this opening is to indicate the historicity of the event, that is, to suggest that the plot is not fictional but based on a historical reality that was seen or heard. However, some narratives are purely artistic fabrications and are based on imaginative invention.

R. Jumaniyazov notes that the traditional opening in folk books was usually in the following form, and he provides an example taken from the folk-book version of the epic “*Yusuf and Ahmad*”:

Bismillohir-rahmonir-rohim. Ammo roviyoni axbor, noqiloni osor, muhaddisoni dostonu bo‘ston, kuhan xusha chinoni xirmanani suxan, harki suxanro besuxan zam kunad porai az xun jigar ham kunad sarravoni davlat hamuvvat darvari daftarro bayon mideham, ammo Isfahon shahrinda Bo‘zo‘g‘lon degan bir podshoh bor edi...” [7:15] (In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. However, the transmitters of reports, the narrators of traditions, the storytellers of tales and legends, the ancient gleaners of the harvest of words — whoever speaks words without words will also make a piece of his liver into blood — I begin to relate in the register of the chiefs of fortune and generosity: There was in the city of Isfahan a king named Bo‘zo‘g‘lon...)

Such an extended form of the opening was not encountered in the variants of

the folk tales belonging to the cycle under study. Only in some manuscripts are there slightly expanded passages. For example, the tale “Fath al-Islam”, preserved in the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan, begins with the following introduction:

“Ammo roviyoni axbor va noqiloni osor va muhaddisoni dostoni bo‘ston, mo‘tabar so‘z – so‘zi hazrati Muhammad Mustafu sallallohu alayhi vasallamdin eshiting. Hazrati risolatpanohi sallallohu alayhi vasallam bir kun masjidida Madinai munavvarada pusht ba mehrobi nubuvvat qilib, sahobalarg‘a oyat-hadisidini pand-nasihati qilib o‘lturub erdilar...” [8:1a] (However, the transmitters of reports, the narrators of traditions, and the storytellers of the garden of tales — listen to the trustworthy word, the word of the Prophet Muhammad Mustafa, peace and blessings be upon him. One day, the Protector of the Prophetic Mission, peace and blessings be upon him, was sitting in the mosque of Medina the Radiant, leaning against the mihrab of prophethood, giving advice and admonition from verses and hadiths to the Companions...)

Some manuscripts, however, have a traditional poetic opening:

Kel, ey roviy, rivoyat ayla doston,

Bu doston oxirini ayla bo‘ston.

Bu dostonda hamisha gul ochilsin,

O‘qusa o‘rtada gullar sochilsin [9:2a].

(Come, O narrator, tell the tale and recount the epic;

Make the conclusion of this epic like a garden.

May flowers always bloom within this story,

And as it is read, may flowers be strewn throughout)

In the tale “Zufunun” belonging to this cycle, however, there is a special introduction characteristic only of this work: “Bilinglar va ogoh bo‘linglar: bu qissa andog‘ qissadurki, ajoyib-u g‘aroyib qissalarning shirini va shirin so‘zlarning niginiturur. Bu qissani Abdulloh ibn Abbos naql qilibdurlar, toki olam tugaguncha yodgor bo‘lg‘ay...” [10:1] (Know and be aware: this is such a tale that it is the sweetest of wondrous and marvelous stories and the jewel of sweet words. This tale was narrated by Abdullah ibn Abbas so that it may remain a remembrance until the end of the world...)

Folklorist M. Boboyev also discusses in his research the “Jangnoma of Abu Muslim”, which possesses a non-traditional introduction. Although this work belongs to the category of folk tales, it begins with an introduction in poetic (masnavi) form, starting with praise to Allah (hamd) and an eulogy (na‘t) to the Prophet. It is then followed by a general description of the events to be narrated and by praise of Abu Muslim. After that, the traditional introduction characteristic of

other tales appears. The researcher explains this situation by two factors. First, Abu Muslim was one of the great figures who fought devotedly for the freedom and independence of the peoples of Khorasan and Transoxiana and sacrificed his life for this noble cause. Therefore, the people's affection and respect for him were exceptionally great, and naturally, in every chapter of the large epic work created about him, his name and the names of his companions were described and praised separately. Secondly, folk books were created as a result of the combination of folklore materials and historical facts. Therefore, the epic narration in them is carried out in a traditional style similar to the narration found in folk epic works. However, since they were written down by a prominent master of words, each work displays its own distinctiveness and signs of individuality characteristic of a particular author. From this point of view, the non-traditional introduction in this jangnoma is one of the pieces of evidence demonstrating the creative individuality of Abu Tahir Tarsusi, who is regarded as the author of the work [2:44]. However, in the Turkish versions of the tales belonging to the Hazrat Ali cycle, there are also works that do not begin directly with the traditional introduction as mentioned above. In them, first, a brief account of the general events of the jangnoma is given, and only then does the main introduction follow. For example, the tale "Muhammed Hanife Gâzasi" begins as follows: "Bu gazada; üç bîraderler Imam Hasan, Imam Hüseyin ve Imam Muhammed radiyallahu anhüm üç yol ağzına geldiklerinde her birisinin bir yolu tercih edip gitmeleri ve bu yolda vaki olan cenklerden Imamzade Muhammed Hanife'nin vukuatı beyan olunur" [4] (In this ghaza (expedition), it is narrated that the three brothers — Imam Hasan, Imam Husayn, and Imam Muhammad (may Allah be pleased with them) — upon arriving at a crossroads, each chose a different path and proceeded accordingly. The battles that occurred along these paths are recounted, with particular emphasis on the accounts concerning Imamzade Muhammad Hanifa). Only after this introduction does the main opening appear: "Hudavendân-ı ahbâr ve nâkılân-ı âsâr şöyle rivayet ederler ki..." (The masters of chronicles and the transmitters of traditions relate as follows). As can be seen, in some cases there are deviations from the permanent tradition in the openings of the tales. However, such openings are found only in the manuscript, lithographic, and modern printed versions of certain tales, whereas in the majority of folk tales the short form of the traditional opening is encountered. Researchers explain this by the need to "save the listener's time, as well as paper and ink" [7:15]. The distinctive openings discussed above, in turn, represent the performance style of particular storytellers (qissakhans) during the act of narration. These openings were recited in a specific manner, after which the performer proceeded to the main part of the work. On the one hand, this practice aroused the listener's interest and

encouraged them to attentively follow the text that was to be recited; on the other hand, these formulaic expressions acquired a distinctive character by serving as openings specific only to this type of work [7:15].

The traditional openings discussed above are also characteristic of the Turkish versions of the tales about Hazrat Ali. They usually begin with a short formulaic introduction: “Râviyân-ı ahvâr ve nâkilân-ı âsâr şöyle rivayet ederler” [3:15] (Those who recount events and transmit traditions relate as follows). As can be observed, the use of the short form of traditional openings is also evident in Turkish folk tales. This type of opening indicates that the creators of Turkic folk narratives were influenced by Persian-Tajik folklore, as it closely resembles the style of epics of the *Shahnameh* type.

S. Yuldosheva, who studied the poetics of artistic-biographical works, while discussing the openings in folk tales such as “Qissai Ibrahim Adham,” “Qissai Sayid Nasimi,” and “Qissai Mashrab,” writes that the formulaic expressions typical of narrative traditions — such as “rivoyat qilinishicha” (it is narrated that), “andog‘ rivoyat qilurlarkim” (thus they narrate that), and “aytishlaricha” (according to what is said) — were transferred into the openings of the *qissa* genre in the form of expanded sentences. However, considering that these openings are not characteristic only of biographical tales, it would not be entirely correct, in our opinion, to associate such openings solely with the narrative (*rivoyat*) genre. Rather, they are the result of a phenomenon that emerged as a product of the storytelling (*qissakhānlik*) tradition among the people.

The conclusions in folk tales also follow a traditional pattern. They usually end with the phrase, “Mo‘minlar shod bo‘lib, munofiqlar g‘amgin bo‘ldi” (The believers rejoiced, while the hypocrites were saddened). The purpose of such conclusions is to indicate that the believers inevitably achieve victory and ultimately rejoice, whereas the two-faced enemies — the hypocrites who silently observed the events from a corner, wondering “What will happen?” — remain sorrowful at their defeat. Comparative studies have shown that the traditional conclusions found in the Uzbek versions of Hazrat Ali tales do not appear in their Turkish counterparts. In the Turkish versions, conclusions are generally expressed through summarizing remarks, blessings, and prayers, for example: “Ömür fâni, yazı bakidir” (“Life is fleeting, but fate is eternal”) [3:234].

Ey dilekleri yerine getiren cümle dilekleri yerine getir! Âmin! Ya Muin. Bi-hürmeti seyyidi’l-mürselin!” (“O You who answer prayers, fulfill all our wishes. Amen!”) [3:278]. Among the tales we have examined as sources, only the conclusion of the tale “Berber Kalesi Cengi” contains expressions similar to the traditional endings of Uzbek folk tales: “Müminlerin sevinci alami gülen yüzlerle

tezyin ederken münafıkların hasedi de onların gece ve gündüzlerini gamla doldurdu” (While the joy of the believers adorned the world with smiling faces, the envy of the hypocrites filled their days and nights with sorrow). However, this tale does not end with this conclusion alone; it continues with prayers and blessings:

“Ey her şeye gücü yeten Allah’ım, kudretin hakkı için bu Şems-i Hâkî’yi habibin Muhammed Mustafa aşkına ve onun dört seçkin dostu ile cümle ehli beyti hürmetine rahmetinden mahrum eyleme! Âmin, ya Rabbe’l- âlamin!” [3:411] (O my Allah, all-powerful, for the sake of Your might, do not deprive this Shams-i Haqi of Your mercy for the love of Your Prophet Muhammad Mustafa, and in honor of his four distinguished companions and all the members of his household! Amen, O Lord of the Worlds!)

Thus, while the traditional openings of folk tales about Hazrat Ali are characteristic of both Uzbek and Turkish versions, traditional conclusions are specific only to the Uzbek versions. These observations indicate that the openings and conclusions of folk tales, like fairy tales and epics, possess textual traditions of their own.

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