TOURKHAN GANDJEI

Navā'ī on Rhyme in Turkish

The recent discovery of the *Kanz al-qāfiya* (Thesaurus of Rhyme)[1] composed by B a h r ā m ī, a contemporary of Mahmūd of Ghazna (d. 421/1030), shows that it is not a treatise on rhyme, as might be suggested by the fact that Niẓāmī-yi 'Arūżī recommends its perusal to all aspiring poets[2], but a simple rhyming dictionary. Although this work could be, and was, a source of reference for poets of the early period, it could not, because of its limitations, be of great use to poets in need of theoretical guidance. Indeed, when seen in retrospect, not a few poets of the pre-Mongol period were guilty of defective rhymes.

It was the great work of S h a m s   a l - d ī n   M u ḥ a m m a d   b.   Q a i s which first laid down the strict and detailed rules for rhyme[3], and these gained general acceptance among succeeding generations. The problem of Persian rhyme thus solved by the beginning of the seventh/thirteenth century, but the question of rhyme in Turkish poems composed on the model of Persian poetry, and in quantitative metre (*'arūż*), remained for a long time unsettled. Although N a v ā'ī and B a b u r composed treatises on *'arūż*, they did not attempt to discuss the problem of rhyme.

N a v ā'ī in the *Majālis al-nafā'is*[4] quotes the following opening verse (*maṭla'*) of A t a y ī:

ol ṣanam kim su qïragïda parī dik olturur
ġāyat-i nazuklügidin su bilä yutsa bolur

and states that the rhyme (*oltur-ur~bol-ur*) is defective, and adds, not without an air of contempt, that A t a y ī composed his poems in the Turkish style (*turkāna*), with scant concern for rhyme. He is probably alluding to the rhyme scheme found in Turkish popular poetry which by comparison with the rigidity of Persian rhyme is relatively loose. But curiously enough, N a v ā'ī, who always speaks with the utmost respect of L u ṭ f ī, considering him to be a "Lord of Speech"[5], and the

---

[1] R. L e v y, *Kanz al-qāfiyah* [or *al-qawāfī*] by 'Alī 'Izz al-Dīn Bahrāmī-yi Sa-rakhsī, in *A Locust's Leg. Studies in honour of S. H. Taqizadeh*, London 1962, p. 135.

[2] *Čahār maqāla*, ed. Muh. M o'ī n, Tehrān 1334, p. 57.

[3] *Kitāb al-Mu'jam fī ma'āyir aš'ār al-'ajam*, ed. Q a z v ī n ī - M u d a r r i s R a ż a v ī, Tehrān 1335, p. 188 seq.

[4] *Majālis an -nafā'is*, Tashkent 1961, p. 74.

[5] *Majālis*, p. 72.

only Turkish poet until his time comparable with the Persian masters[6], chooses to be silent about his use of rhyme. In fact L u ṭ f ī, in more than one of his poems, uses similar *turkāna* rhymes. In the poem with the opening verse:

haq ol kün kim ajunnï yaratïp-tur
jahān ḥusnïn barïn sizgä birip-tür

he uses the following rhyme words: *yarat-ïp-tur, bir-ip-tür, in-ip-tür, čïq-ïp-tur, kit-ip-tür, qïl-ïp-tur, al-ïp-tur* and *aš-ïb-tur*[7].

The reason for N a v ā'ï' s silence in this matter was, probably, the fact that L u ṭ f ī was also a recognised poet in Persian and hence well acquainted with the established rules of rhyme. N a v ā'ī in spite of his silence in this instance, could not possibly approve such defective rhymes, for in fact he himself makes no use of them. Unlike his predecessors he was well acquainted with the Turkish language and capable of the morphological analysis necessary to avoid such irregularities[8].

In the *Muḥākamat al-luġatain*, while discussing the possibilities of Turkish rhyming words in comparison with those of Persian, N a v ā'ī, taking into consideration the Turkish vowel-system, dwells on the facilities open to the Turkish poets, and enumerates the following additional possibilities[9]:

(a) The "known" *wāw* (*ū*, in Turkish *u, ü*) rhymes with the "unknown" *wāw* (*o*, in Turkish *o, ö*), e.g. *ot~öt~ut~üt; tor~tör~tur~tür*.

(b) The "known" *yā* (*ī*, in Turkish *i, ï*) rhymes with the "unknown" *yā* (*ē*, in Turkish *e̦*), e.g. *biz~bïz~be̦z; tir~tïr~te̦r*.

(c) *alif* rhymes with the "silent" *hā*, e.g. *ara~sarā~darā~ṣara(h)~dara(h); yada~sadā~bāda(h)*.

(d) *wāw* rhymes with *żamma*, e.g. *irür~ḥur~dur~ġurūr~żarūr*.

(e) *yā* rhymes with *kasra*, e.g. *aġïr~bagïr~ṣādir~qādir~ta'xïr~taġyïr*.

The above formulation of N a v ā'ī is an attempt to systematise and generalise an already existing tacit rhyming licence of which the Turkish poets, including N a v' ā ī himself, made but sporadic use. However the tone of the whole discussion is perfectly consonant with the general thesis of the *Muḥākamat al-luġatain*. It was N a v ā'ī' s enthusiasm for his subject that induced him to elaborate a conception of rhyme which was, and proved to be, of limited popularity, for it was, strictly speaking, neither "optic" nor "acoustic".

---

[6] *Muḥākamat al-luġatain*, ed. Q u a t r e m è r e, Paris 1841, p. 33.

[7] British Museum, Add. 7914, f. 172r; cf. also 176v seq., 178v seq.

[8] Nevertheless, N a v ā'ī in one of his poems uses the following rhyme words: *köydürgäli, olturgali, sürgäli, se̦vdürgäli, be̦lgürgäli, ye̦tgürgäli, tilmürmäli. Divān*, facsimile edition, Moscow 1964, p. 388. Here the repetition of *-tur-~-dür-* and *-gür-* as causative suffixes makes the rhyme scheme defective, and not very different from those used by A t a y ī and L u ṭ f ī. It seems that N a v ā'ī does not feel them to be causative suffixes. In fact the causative verbs, for him, as he explains with examples in the *Muḥākamat al-luġatain*, are those formed by *-t-*, such as: *yügürt-, qïldurt-, yašurt-* and *čïqart-*. (The last three verbs are obviously doubly causative).

[9] ed. Q u a t r e m è r e, p. 13.