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Navā'ī on Rhyme in Turkish

The recent discovery of the Kanz al-qāfiya (Thesaurus of Rhyme) composed by Bahrami, a contemporary of Mahmud of Ghazna (d. 421/1030), shows that it is not a treatise on rhyme, as might be suggested by the fact that Nizami-yi ‘Arūzi recommends its perusal to all aspiring poets, 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 Shams al-dīn Muhammad Qais which first laid down the strict and detailed rules for rhyme, 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 (‘arūz), remained for a long time unsettled. Although Navai and Babur composed treatises on ‘arūz, they did not attempt to discuss the problem of rhyme.

Navai in the Majalis al-nafais quotes the following opening verse (maṭla’) of Aṭayī:

ol şanam kim su qiragida parı dik olturur
ğiyyat-i nazuklugidin su bilä yutsa bohur

and states that the rhyme (oltur-ur~bol-ur) is defective, and adds, not without an air of contempt, that Aṭayī 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, Navai, who always speaks with the utmost respect of Luṭfî, considering him to be a “Lord of Speech”, and the

3 Kitāb al-Mu’jam fi ma’tayir aṣ’ār al-ajam, ed. Qazvinī-Mudarris Ra‘zavi, Tehran 1335, p. 188 seq.
4 Majalis an-nafāıs, Tashkent 1961, p. 74.
5 Majalis, p. 72.
only Turkish poet until his time comparable with the Persian masters, chooses to be silent about his use of rhyme. In fact Lutfi, in more than one of his poems, uses similar turkana rhymes. In the poem with the opening verse:

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\text{haq ol kinh kim ajunni yaratip-tur} \\
\text{jahan husnun barin sizgah birip-tur}
\]

he uses the following rhyme words: yarat-ip-tur, bir-ip-tur, in-ip-tur, ciciq-ip-tur, kit-ip-tur, qil-ip-tur, al-ip-tur and as-ih-tur.

The reason for Nava'i's silence in this matter was, probably, the fact that Lutfi was also a recognised poet in Persian and hence well acquainted with the established rules of rhyme. Nava'i 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.

In the Muhaamat al-luqatain, while discussing the possibilities of Turkish rhyming words in comparison with those of Persian, Nava'i, taking into consideration the Turkish vowel-system, dwells on the facilities open to the Turkish poets, and enumerates the following additional possibilities:

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

(b) The "known" yah (i, in Turkish i, ĩ) rhymes with the "unknown" yah (e, in Turkish e), e.g. bis~bis~beş; tir~tir~tär.

(c) alif rhymes with the "silent" hah, e.g. ara~sar~dar~şara(h)~dara(h); yada~sada~bada(h).

(d) waaw rhymes with żamma, e.g. irur~ür~dur~gurur~sarur.

(e) yah rhymes with kasra, e.g. aghir~bagir~şadir~gadir~ta'kir~ta'gyir.

The above formulation of Nava'i is an attempt to systematise and generalise an already existing tacit rhyming licence of which the Turkish poets, including Nava'i himself, made but sporadic use. However the tone of the whole discussion is perfectly consonant with the general thesis of the Muhaamat al-luqatain. It was Nava'i'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".

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7 British Museum, Add. 7914, f. 172r; cf. also 176v seq., 178v seq.
8 Nevertheless, Nava'i in one of his poems uses the following rhyme words: köydürgali, olturgali, sürgali, sedürgali, belgürgali, yetsürgali, tilmürmali. Divan, facsimile edition, Moscow 1964, p. 388. Here the repetition of -tur~-dör~ and -gör~ as causative suffixes makes the rhyme scheme defective, and not very different from those used by Atyi and Lutfi. It seems that Nava'i does not feel them to be causative suffixes. In fact the causative verbs, for him, as he explains with examples in the Muhaamat al-luqatain, are those formed by -t-, such as: yügürt-, qildurt-, yaşurt- and ciciqart-. (The last three verbs are obviously doubly causative).