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**AN EPISODE FROM THE HISTORY OF THE ORIGINS
OF IRANIAN DRAMATURGY
(MELKUM KHAN AND HAGOP BARONIAN)**

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The article refers to the role played by the Armenian intelligentsia of Istanbul in the modernizing cultural life of Iran and the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century. In those countries, the Persian literary tradition formed in the Middle Ages was gradually being modified by the French influence. The contribution of Melkum Khan, an Armenian who converted to Islam and claimed Iranian identity, was great in bringing the European Enlightenment ideas and literary and journalistic methods to Iran. In his homeland, he became the founder of Western-type dramaturgy, following the creative style of Hagop Baronian, an Armenian playwright and satirist who worked in Istanbul and had the best experience of localising French cultural values. Melkum Khan is considered the founder of a new schooling simplifying the Persian literary and publicist language, and many Iranian intellectuals of the time followed the simple style of the newspaper “Qanun” (Law) published by him. The application of the analytical and comparative, as well as descriptive methods of analysis reveals that Armenian intellectuals working in Istanbul in the nineteenth century acted as real cultural mediators between the West and the East.

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Introduction¹

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the cultural life of the Middle East countries, particularly Iran and Turkey, entered a phase of modernization. Istanbul, the capital of the Ottoman Empire, became one of the important centres for transferring European values to the region. Most of the progressive figures of both the Islamic and Christian peoples of the region were concentrated here, and the ideas of the European, particularly the French Enlightenment movement became a common basis for their creative pursuits and professed values.

Among the city's multi-ethnic intelligentsia, Armenians were particularly active in the process of culture renewal. Due to their closeness to European norms, Armenian literary works and periodicals published here in the 1860s and 70s become a source of replication for Muslim writers and publicists.

Mirza Melkum Khan (1843–1909), an Iranian Armenian enlightener, diplomat², playwright, who started his literary activity in this very city, was one of the figures who had the opportunity to be closely related to Armenian literature and press [Safarzayi 1394; Zarcone 1993, 277]. Although the latter acted with an Iranian identity, professed Shiism, and wrote in Persian, he followed Constantinople's famous Armenian satirist, playwright and publicist Hagop Baronian in the spheres of dramaturgy and journalism.

Following his example, Melkum wrote plays and became the founder of Western-style dramaturgy in Iran. In addition, following the example of the simple style of Baronian's Armenian newspaper "Tiyatro" published in Istanbul, he published the newspaper "Qanun" (Law) in the Persian language in London and founded a new literary school in the sphere of Persian journalism. His simple language, devoid of complex means of expressiveness, became a benchmark for many Iranian periodicals and literary figures of the time.

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² Melkum Khan was Iran's Ambassador to Great Britain, Germany, Italy, Consul to Turkey, Counselor of the Iranian Embassy in France.

Observing this chain of cultural movement, we notice that the Armenian intellectuals who worked in Istanbul played the role of a unique mediator in transferring the European cultural traditions to the peoples of the Middle East, particularly to the Iranian literary environment.

Melkum Khan's Life and the Armenian Community of Constantinople

Highlighting the connection between the Armenian intelligentsia of Istanbul and Melkum Khan's literary and public activities is extremely important in observing the shift of literary-cultural values from the West to the East. In order to clarify the issue in the most comprehensive way possible, we have applied the analytical and comparative, as well as the descriptive methods of analysis.

In their studies, Iranian researchers present Melkum Khan more as a diplomat, reformer and publicist than as a literary figure. This statesman, who received extremely controversial appraisals in his homeland [Taherimoghaddam 1394, 75–77; Rayin 1350, 2]³, about whom incredible stories were woven [Rayin 1350, 1–4], started his activity during the period of reforms of the Grand Vizier (Prime Minister) Amir Kabir⁴, reached his peak during the viziership of Sepahsalar⁵, and in his old age, he saw his dream, Constitutional Movement of Iran of 1907–1911, come true [Kalesar 1398, 124].

Our observations on the literary legacy of this semi-mysterious individual shed new light on the unlit corners of his private and public life, dodging between Iranian and Armenian identities.

Information about the connection between Melkum Khan and the Armenian community of the city is sparse, sometimes less credible, but the influence of Hagop Baronian's works on his plays speaks of something else.

³ Iranian social and political figures took controversial account of his activities, which were usually polar opposite – “either service to the motherland or treason”.

⁴ Amir Kabir (Mirza Taghi Khan Amir Nezam, 1807–1852) was the Grand Vizier (Prime Minister) of Iran in 1847–1851 during the reign of Naser al-Din Shah.

⁵ Mirza Hosein Khan Sepahsalar (1828–1881) was the Grand Vizier (Prime Minister) of Iran in 1862–1867 during the reign of Naser al-Din Shah.

He was born in 1833 to an Armenian family of Yaghub Khan converted to Islam, nevertheless received his initial education in Armenian, went to France in his youth, studied at the Armenian Muradian college, and then at the Faculty of Law of the University of Paris [Tabatabayi 1327, 1].

During his student years, he was influenced by the ideas of French Enlighteners. Returning to Tehran, he served as a translator both at the palace of Nasser ad-Din Shah and at the first secular school in the country, Dar ul-Funun⁶ (House of Sciences), founded by Amir Kabir⁷ [Adamiyar 1356, 89] translating the lectures of visiting European teachers from French into Persian for the students [Tabatabayi 1354, 186–187; Ordakani 1397, 257]. He also taught science in Persian [Ordakani 1397, 290; Nurayi 1352, 13; Algar 2023, 26]. One of the first practical applications of his knowledge in the field of physics was the establishment of a telegraphic connection between Dar ul-Funun school and the Shah's palace, which made him the founder of that field in Iran [Tabatabayi 1327, 297].

According to Iranian researcher Hossein Mahboubi Ordaqani:

The experiments carried out in the field of chemistry and physics at school were completely new for Iranians and brought him great prestige. Nasreddin Shah, still a young man, greatly impressed by Melkum's knowledge, became very close to him [Tabatabayi 1327, 297].

With a natural talent and energetic temperament, Melkum gained recognition in Iran, founded the company "Faramosh Khaneh" (House of Oblivion) and began to preach the ideas of the French Enlighteners. The provisional head of the organization was his father, Mirza Yaghub, and the members were mostly his former students and

⁶ The name of the school "Dar ul-Funun" (House of Sciences) was borrowed by Amir Kabir from the namesake school in Istanbul, which had been founded three years before.

⁷ During his time in Istanbul, Amir Kabir was impressed by the renovation projects of Mustafa Reşid Pasha, the chief architect of the Turkish "Tanzimat" and maintained regular correspondence with him. He was an ardent supporter of the idea of reforming the Iranian state structure, establishing constitutional order and spreading enlightenment in the country. Amir Kabir also discussed his goals with Melkum Khan's father, Mirza Yaghub, translator of the Russian Embassy in Tehran.

eminent persons dissatisfied with the poor state of the country. Even the members of the royal family participated in the gatherings of “Faramosh Khaneh” [Tabatabayi 1327, 297]. Some authors hold the view that the “Faramosh Khaneh” was an organization of a Masonic nature. For instance, Shahtatinsky, in discussing the establishment and activities of the “Faramosh Khaneh”, wrote: “Melkum Khan founded the first Masonic society in Tehran, where young Persians spoke about the necessity of introducing European civilization” [Shakhtatinsky 1887, 148–149].

Melkum wanted to see constitutional order and a modernised system of public administration in Iran, following the example of European countries, but at the insistence of the clergy, “Faramosh Khaneh” was declared a den of freemason, anti-state espionage, and Melkum and his father were deported from the country by order of the Shah.

First, he went to Baghdad, then to Constantinople, operating in this city for ten years (1861–1871). Through the mediation of the Iranian ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Mirza Hossein Khan (with whom they were like-minded), he restored the favour of Nasreddin Shah towards him and assumed the duties of Iran’s consul in the country. In order to draw the Shah’s attention to the reforms of the Turkish state, he wrote the commentary “Daftar-e Tanzimat” (Book on Tanzimat) or “Ketabcha-e Ghaibi” (Mysterious Book) [Abrahamyan 1384, 60]. During these years, he established close ties with Turkish progressive intellectuals and statesmen in Istanbul (Fuad Pasha, Ali Pasha, Midhat Pasha, Namik Kemal), and even debated with them in the press about the difficulties caused by the Arabic alphabet in the organization of education [Nurayi 1352, 20; Tabatabayi 1327, 297]. According to him, the Arabic script was one of the main obstacles to educating the younger generation and spreading enlightenment in Eastern countries.

In connection with the reform of the alphabet, he wrote the essays “Sheikh wa Vizier” (The Sheikh and the Vizier), “Namune-e khotut-e Melkum” (Sample of the Melkum alphabet), “Moayeb-e khat-e Melkom” (Defects of the Melkum alphabet), in which he showed the disadvantages of the Arabic alphabet. Melkum did not limit himself to fruitless criticism, but instead proposed an updated, “Melkumian” version of writing in which a separate letter would correspond to each sound [Afshar 1351, 32].

Coming back to his relationship with the Armenian world, we should mention that according to Iranian sources, Melkum Khan, despite being a Muslim, married Hanerit, the daughter of an Armenian clergyman named Arakel, in St. Stephen's Church of Constantinople in the Armenian tradition [Tabatabayi 1327, 297; Rayin 1350, 28]. His wife and three daughters remained faithful to the Christian faith until their death, while his son Fereydun followed his father's religion, Shiism [Tabatabayi 1327, 297].

The Armenian press of the time also referred to Melkum. In the newspaper "Mshak", H. Arakelian wrote:

Mirza Melkum Khan was always noticed by the Persians as an ardent Muslim, because every time he came to Persia, he changed his outfit, put on a Persian outfit, performed the regular Salah every day with all fervour, considered Armenians and Christians unholy, but as soon as he was outside of Persia, he pretended to be a European, an ardent Armenian, due to which he managed to take a wife from the Tatian family of Constantinople [Arakelian 1891, 2].

Regardless of the criticism, Melkum skillfully used the opportunities provided by the Armenian and Iranian identities and transferred the best achievements of the Armenian literary world of Constantinople to the Iranian environment. The central figure of the Turkish-Armenian literature and press of those times was Hagop Baronian, so it was no coincidence that Melkum would imitate him in terms of the style and genres of his works.

Being very familiar with the literary and publicist life of the Armenian community, Melkum, on the example of Turkish periodicals with Armenian script, tried to establish a Persian publishing house in Constantinople in the "Melkumian" Arabic alphabet he had reformed⁸. The Ministry of Education of the Ottoman Empire rejected this matter, and Melkum accused the Turks of discrimination giving the example of allowing Turkish periodicals with Armenian script.

Available evidence suggests that Melkum Khan closely followed Armenian-language periodicals published in the Ottoman Empire – such as *Manzume-e Efkyar* ("Series of Thoughts") and *Myunati Eri-chas* ("Munetic of Argios") – as well as Turkish-language periodicals printed in Armenian script, notably *Tiyatro*. His engagement with

⁸ With the alphabet he had created, he printed Saadi's "Gulistan".

these publications indicates a deliberate effort to absorb their journalistic practices and creative approaches, which he later integrated into his own work.

The spheres of Melkum's activities were extremely wide, which gives reason to assume that an individual of such stature could not have been limited to literary relations only. He was likely to have acted as a link between separate circles of Armenian and Iranian political ideologues.

According to Hamid Algar, professor emeritus of the University of California, Berkeley, Mirza Mohsen Khan, who replaced Melkum's friend and patron Mirza Hosein Khan as Iran's ambassador to Istanbul, was initially active in Constantinople's Armenian freemason lodge called "Urakhutyun" after arriving in Istanbul. However, since the sessions of the latter were conducted only in Armenian, after some time he moved to the Greek "Zargatsum" lodge with other members of the Iranian embassy, due to the fact that their working language was also Turkish [Algar 1969, 118].

It is hard to believe that Iranians participated in the gatherings of the Armenian Lodge, but even if the information is reliable, it must have been through the mediation of Melkum Khan.

What has been said comes to prove that Melkum Khan, while presenting an Iranian identity, realised the leading role of the Armenian intelligentsia in Istanbul in the matters of assimilation of European ideas and tried to use their experience.

Hagop Baronian and Melkum Khan

Melkum Khan was educated in Paris, he was related to both French and Armenian cultures and could freely read these languages in the original, so he was best acquainted with the works of Hagop Baronian, the most prolific playwright and satirist of the Armenian intelligentsia in Istanbul. The latter had the most successful experience in transferring French literary and publicity achievements to the East.

Hagop Baronian, born in the city of Adrianopolis, Turkey in 1843, besides Armenian also knew French, Turkish, Greek and Bulgarian. The writer expertly transferred the traditions of Western dramaturgy and satirical press to the Armenian world. He was also familiar with Eastern literary tradition and genres through Turkish literature. This

gave Baronian the opportunity to combine the eastern and the western in his works, which will be discussed below.

In 1874, just a few months after the French satirical newspaper “Polichinelle” came out, the intellectual, who had already successfully edited several Armenian magazines in Istanbul, founded the periodical “Tiyatro”. Initially, he translated the satirical articles of “Polichinelle” into Armenian, but after a short time, the behaviour of the city’s Armenian Council of Elders became the source for satire. It is on the pages of this newspaper that fragments of Baronian’s satirical work “Azkayin Chocher” (National Bigshots) were published.

The Armenian satirist followed the principle of “Polichinelle” not just regarding the content, but regarding the headline as well. Literary critic Albert Makaryan writes about this:

Baronian kept his finger on the pulse [...] While in the case of the French newspaper the satirical character exposing the reality appears within the range of the headline, in the case of the Armenian one, the scope is even wider, and the boundaries go from the mere polichinelle to the entire plan of action – the theatre [...] The title ‘Tiyatro’ gets wider opportunities under the pen of Hagop Baronian, and the author also used it for his Armenian Turkish ‘Tiyatro’ (1874–1875) and children’s periodical ‘Theatre – Children’s Friend’ (1876) [Makaryan 2018, 63–73].

Separate episodes and characters of Hagop Baronian’s plays, who localised the French satire in the best way, are replicated almost identically in the works of Melkum Khan. Both authors emphasised the struggle between the old and the new. Ashraf Khan, the main character of Melkum’s play “Adventures of the Governor of Arabia Ashraf Khan during his Stay in Tehran”, finds himself in the same comic situation as the central character of Baronian’s novel “Honorable Beggars”, Absalom Agha having arrived from Trabizon to Constantinople⁹. While the title of Baronian’s play is very creative, Melkum, unlike the former, gives the reader a hint of the play’s brief scenario. Both Baronian’s “Honourable Beggars” and Melkum’s “The Adventures of the Governor of Arabia Ashraf Khan during his Stay in Tehran” have the same plot: the main character is a backward landowner

⁹ Here, Melkum replicated the principle of Baronian’s selection of the title of “Tiyatro” similar to the French “Polichinelle”.

who has come from the province to the capital (in the case of Ashraf Khan, the governor-landowner), who with his provincial primitiveness falls prey to the “street-smarts” of the big city, finds himself in funny situations and is robbed.

Analysing the plays of Melkum Khan, A. Budaghyan writes, “[...] those heroes who act as defenders of old ideas and concepts that are a thing of the past often fall into comic situations” [Budaghyan 1970, 14]. Although these words were written in reference to Melkum’s works, they can also be applied to Baronian’s works with a slight reservation.

In a number of cases, Melkum’s Ashraf Khan repeats the actions and words of Baronian’s Absalom Agha almost verbatim:

And thus, Absalom Agha, robbed by the “intellectuals” of Constantinople, exclaims:

“Do they want to rob me leading me by the nose? After coming to this city, I have not stayed alone for a second. Hardly does one go, when the other comes by to ask for money [...] What intrusive people they are [...] Good Lord [...] I wish I hadn’t set foot in this city” [Baronian 1958, 50].

In another episode, the landowner from the Trebizond estate lost his ability to sleep peacefully due to anger:

Absalom Agha fell asleep on the couch for several hours. However, judging by the sounds he uttered in his sleep, it was clear that the editors, poets and teachers did not leave him alone in his sleep either, and he would shout time and again. “Go, get lost, I don’t have any money to give you [...] What a strange city it is! Good morning – give money [...] Oh God [...] One should run away from this city an hour earlier” [Baronian 1958, 53].

Melkum’s Ashraf Khan, finding himself trapped by the bureaucrats of the capital city of Tehran, turns to God out of helplessness: “Oh [...] God, save me from these bloodthirsty wolves” [Eighorn 1927, 107]; “Oh my God, what a country is this, what a country is this [...] A group of robbers have gathered, one is a minister, another is an overseer, the third is a village head, and they are robbing them all” [Eighorn 1927, 124].

The characters of the compared plays seem to be mirror images of each other, which is far from being a coincidence. In addition to this,

the identical purpose of the authors' satire is to highlight the unacceptable morals rooted in the Turkish Armenian community and Iranian society.

Parallels can also be drawn between the episodes dealing with women's love intrigues in Baronian's "Oriental Dentist", "Baghdasar Aghbar" and Melkum Khan's "Zaman Khan Berujerdi's Management Method and His Adventures". The immoral Kokeb Khanum depicted by Melkum is partly comparable to the characters of Baronian's heroines, Sophie and Anuysh, who, deceiving their husbands, flirt with their lovers.

The comparative analysis of the works of these authors shows that Melkum Khan, deeply influenced by the works of Hagop Baronian, became the mediated carrier of the French theatrical and satirical tradition to Iranian literature.

The Synthesis of Eastern and Western Literary Genres in the Works of Hagop Baronian and Melkum Khan

In the process of synthesizing individual elements of Eastern and Western literary genres, the use of the features of monazarre¹⁰ in the works of the authors under study is especially noticeable. In Baronian's satire, the principles of European dramaturgy and Eastern monazarre-debate dialogue are intertwined. This circumstance puzzled the Armenian experts in Baronian studies who were not familiar with this genre.

Baronian's satire "If the Mountain Won't Come to Muhammad, then Muhammad Must Go to the Mountain" was published in Armeno-Turkish in the issues of "Tiyatro" in 1875¹¹, in which features of the monazarre genre are depicted. Armenian literary critic Albert Mkrtchyan writes about this:

In fact, Hagop Baronian created a work that does not fit within the boundaries of any genre known to us [...], the author's narrative is

¹⁰ Monazarre – a genre of debating in the literature of the peoples of the Near East.

¹¹ "Tagh eyuryumese aptal eyuryusin", "Tiyatro", 1875, No. 88, from January 16 to No. 151, June 21. The poem was translated into Western Armenian by Garnik Stepanyan and in 1972 was published in the magazine "Garoun". See: "Garoun", 1972, Yerevan, No. 11, pp. 35–65. Then, in 1978, a separate book on satire was published by the Shirak Publishing House of Beirut.

missing [...], the narrator is completely absent [...], the dialogue that seems quite an ordinary one often turns into an image-dialogue. [...] “Khachik from the Old World, Gabik from the New World” created in the same period has a similar structure. The pages of the satirical magazines “Meghu” and “Tiyatro”, later also the “Laughter” edited by him for years, were filled with similar works [...]. Both the West and the East are close to the satirist’s soul, the problems related to the depiction of European and Asian manners, lifestyle and costumes are not neglected in his works [Makaryan 2018, 59–74].

Although Melkum Khan was not familiar with the monazarre genre, he followed Hagop Baronian in this matter as well. The Armenian satirist from Istanbul skillfully interwove the adjacent elements of Western dramaturgy and Eastern monazarre, the structure of dialogues, creating a much more original means of expression than each of the above mentioned taken separately¹².

The phenomenon also puts Iranian literary critics in doubt whether to consider Melkum’s works a play or a monazarre. Yaghub Azhandi confirms the fact that Melkum used the features of the monazarre genre and writes:

Melkum contrasted the characters of conservative and innovative heroes in his works, giving the work the features of monazarre. Such are: “Sheikh wa Wazir” (The Sheikh and the Vizier), “Majles-e Hom-ayun” (Royal Assembly) and other works [Mehrnush 1391].

Baronian, violating genre peculiarities, introduced this structure of debate-dialogue into the sphere of publicism, giving it the feature of dramaturgy. Melkum did not miss this phenomenon either.

In the article of Yaghub Azhandi, who was ignorant of Baronian’s transformation to the monazarre genre, as well as Baronian-Melkum connection, we read, “Melkum also continued the principle of presenting the material with dialogues in the newspaper ‘Qanun’, bringing it closer to the rules of dramaturgy” [Mehrnush 1391].

¹² Turkish medieval poet Taceddin Ahmedi (1329–1413) lived and wrote in Adrianople (Edirne), the birthplace of Hagop Baronian, whose work “Iskendername” (Book of Alexander) was written under the undisguised influence not only of the namesake poem by Nizami Ganjavi, a prominent representative of Persian literature, but also of Ferdowsi’s “Shahnameh”. This circumstance also speaks about the familiarity of the Armenian satirist with the Persian literary tradition through Turkish literature.

After the failed deal to hand over the Iranian tobacco monopoly to the British, Melkum, who had some contradictions with the royal palace, adopted an oppositional stance and satirically exposed the morals of the ruling class in the Iranian state apparatus in the newspaper “Qanun” [Arakelian 1891, 2]. Here, too, we see the echo of Baronian’s methodology of political satire.

Niayesh Purhasan, an Iranian researcher and dramatist, in his interview regarding the book “Seiridartariquihai-e namayeshwaadabiat-shenasi-e Iran darasr-e Ghajar” (A Glimpse to the Unknown Aspects of Iranian Literature and Dramaturgy of the Qajar period) mentions about Melkum Khan’s abundant application of the principle of dialogues:

[...] Melkum Khan was a controversial person with two identities (meaning Armenian and Iranian). Although his writings are structured on the principle of theatrical dialogue, they are not plays. Theatrical works contain descriptive-narrative components of the narrator. Melkum Khan tried come up with an idea with those dialogues, mostly acting as an enlightened. He was talking either about the alphabet, or about the reforms, or about civil laws. This principle of dialogue extension makes the work resemble a play [Niayesh, 1397].

The confusion of conflicting opinions and uncertainties expressed by literary critics regarding the works of the authors clears up only when we consider it in the context of revealing the chain of cultural movement from East to West. For most of the Armenian intellectuals of Istanbul who received Western education and worked in an Eastern environment, the boundaries of civilizational differences disappeared. For them, the combination of European and Asian was a routine, a daily way of life, which involuntarily made them cultural mediators between the two worlds.

Melkum Khan’s Role in Simplifying Persian New Prose and Press Language

Most of the Iranian literary critics who have discussed the creative style of Melkum Khan note that the author’s works are almost devoid of the obscure phrases characteristic of the Persian prose of the Qajar period. His language is simple, unadorned, clear, concise and to the point, which has become a source of imitation for many. Mohammad-Taqi Bahar, a well-known classic of Persian literature, reports in this

regard, “Melkum initiated a new style in prose which may be called the Melkumian school” [Rayin 1350, 4].

Of course, Mohammad-Taqi Bahar does not set a goal to discover the source of the simplicity of Melkum Khan’s style and only documents the innovation that Melkum made in the Persian prose of the time. And in general, the attention of Iranian researchers is mainly focused on the direct influence of European peoples’ culture on Iranians. Meanwhile, it is very important to find the initial link that became a bridge and support for further direct communication.

It is important for us not only to mention the opinions of Iranian researchers about the beneficial influence of Melkum Khan on Persian prose, but also to show under what conditions the aesthetic taste and style that this great individual transferred to the Iranian environment were formed.

Essay writer and publicist Masoud Borbor, in his article “Melkum Khan’s Role in the Transformation of Persian Prose”, comparing the styles of the newspapers “Akhtar” (Star) and Melkum’s “Qanun” (Law) both published in Istanbul, observes:

Although the “Akhtar’s” style is more refined compared to the style accepted in Iran, the sentences are still long-winded, complicated, and heavy, while in the “Qanun” (Law) they are shorter and there is no question of complexity [Borbor 1401].

Hossein Fakhri shares the same opinion, “Mirza Melkum Khan’s style is simple, neat and smooth. In it, there are no ornate and intricate expressions typical of the Qajar period” [Farokhi 1373].

Mohammad Tabatabayi, naturally unaware of Melkum’s relationship with the literary life of Armenians of Turkey, interpreted the simplicity of his style merely as a result of his translation activities in the Shah’s palace. According to him, in the “Dar ul-Funun” school and in the royal palace, Melkum gained a lot of experience in the field of translation from French to Persian, which later became the basis for the formation of his unique artistic and journalistic style. He wrote about this:

At the beginning of the constitutional movement, many writers imbued with these ideas began to follow Melkum’s style of articles in the newspaper “Qanun”, borrowing the principles of his writing. Sur-e Israfil (The Trumpet of the Angel Israfil), Hablol Matin (Unbreakable Bonds, the Qur’an), Taraghghi (Development), Tamaddonwa

Maaref (Civilization and Enlightenment) and other Persian periodicals directly or indirectly followed Melkum's style. Melkum's language, although not free from some spelling and structural errors, is clear, accessible, attractive and is considered the leader of simple Persian prose of the time. His style in Persian prose transformation is considered a separate literary school. All those who claim to be considered the founders of simple Persian prose have largely been nourished from Melkum's style of prose [Tabatabayi 1327, 290].

The series of similar opinions of Iranian literary critics can be continued. It comes to prove that Melkum Khan had his beneficent influence in shaping the new Persian prose and the simple style of the press. Although he had converted to Islam, had moved away from his national roots and wrote in Persian, he continued to think in his native Armenian, a language in which his compatriots from Istanbul had already developed a rich literary and journalistic tradition characterized by clarity and accessibility. It is for this reason that his language is free from the ornate expressions inherited from classical Persian literature. The aforementioned Iranian authors document the difference of his style, but do not address his language thinking, his ties he had with his compatriots creating in Istanbul.

Conclusion

In conclusion, by the second half of the nineteenth century, the Armenian intelligentsia of Constantinople had, perhaps unwittingly, assumed the role of a vital cultural intermediary between the Western and Eastern worlds. In the process of reforming the Persian literary and oratorical language – liberating it from the complex and ornate structures characteristic of traditional Eastern linguistic conventions – Melkum Khan drew not only from French models but also found a significant point of reference in the literary and publicist traditions developed by the Armenian intellectuals of Constantinople.

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ЕПІЗОД З ІСТОРІЇ

ВИНИКНЕННЯ ІРАНЬСЬКОЇ ДРАМАТУРГІЇ (МЕЛКУМ ХАН І АГОП БАРОНЯН)

Стаття присвячена ролі вірменської інтелігенції Стамбула в модернізації культурного життя Ірану та Османської імперії в XIX столітті. У цих країнах перська літературна традиція, що сформувалася в Середньовіччі, поступово змінювалася під впливом Франції. Великий внесок у поширення в Ірані ідей європейського Просвітництва, літературних та ораторських методів зробив Мелкум Хан, вірменин, який прийняв іслам і заявив про свою іранську ідентичність. На батьківщині він став засновником драматургії західного типу, наслідуючи творчий стиль азербайджанського драматурга і сатирика Агопа Бароняна, який творив у Стамбулі і мав найкращий досвід локалізації французьких культурних цінностей. Мелкум Хан вважається засновником нової школи спрощення перської літературної та публіцистичної мови, і багато іранських інтелектуалів того часу наслідували простий стиль газети “Канун” (“Закон”), яку він видавав. Застосування аналітичних і порівняльних, а також описових методів аналізу показує, що вірменські інтелектуали, які працювали в Стамбулі в XIX столітті, були справжніми культурними посередниками між Заходом і Сходом.

Ключові слова: Мелкум Хан, Агоп Баронян, культурні посередники, перська література, перська драматургія, Просвітництво, вірмени Стамбула

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