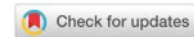


# A THEMATIC AND STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF TEKHAYYULĀT: THE PROMINENT PERSIAN POETRY COLLECTION BY NAIM FRASHERI

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**Abstract:** The spread of Islam in the Balkans under Ottoman rule along with the emergence of Sufi sects, including the Bektashi order, paved the way for the expansion of Persian literature as a source of Sufi literature in this region and especially in Albania. Over the centuries, the Persian language and literature have maintained their presence and function in the Balkans, and several Sufi figures and intellectuals have chosen Persian as the medium for the expression of their literary creations. Among them, The most well-known Albanian who wrote Persian poetry in the late 19th century is undoubtedly Naim Frasheri (1846-1900). He published his collections of Persian poems, entitled “Tekhayyulāt” in 1885 in Istanbul. In this paper, after an overview of the spread and development of the Persian language and literature in the Balkans and in Albania, Naim’s poems in “Tekhayyulāt” are presented and analysed. The study is grounded on the theory of formalism in literature and aims to apply structural analysis to Naim’s Persian poems. To this end, employing a qualitative approach as the research methodology, two types of analyses are conducted, thematic analysis which reviews the content and the themes of his poems, and then structural analysis which is based on Leech’s theory of linguistic deviation (1969), focuses on the application of three types of linguistic deviations, namely phonological, lexical and grammatical, to enable a structural analysis of the poems. The results of the analysis show that Naim’s Persian poems have limited ranges of themes, and the main theme in his poems is about ‘nature’ while the structural analysis of linguistic deviations in his poems indicates his mastery of the Persian language to express his thoughts in poetic form.

Keywords: Persian language in Albania, Naim Frasheri’s poems, structural analysis, linguistic deviations

Field: Humanities

## 1. INTRODUCTION

While the poem appears to possess a complex structure, due to the poet employing literary techniques and imagination to convey a concept, Shafii Kodkani (2015:3) argues, “Poetry is an event that unfolds in language. The poet enacts a linguistic performance in his poetry, creating a distinction between his poetic language and the everyday, ordinary language that the reader encounters.” Foregrounding, as a technique for creating a distinction in the language of poetry, involves using linguistic deviations which means intentionally deviating from the rules that govern standard language. Leech, English linguistics (1936-2014), believes that foregrounding in poetry is created through phonetic, lexical, syntactic, semantic, written, and stylistic deviations. However, using deviation techniques requires skill in both language and the art of poetry. This paper is outlined in three parts. Following this introduction, the first part provides an overview of the background of the Persian language and literature in the Balkans and Albania, introducing the works of Naim Frasheri. The second part introduces the theoretical background and research method. Finally, the third part involves the analysis of the Persian poems of Naim Frasheri.

## 2. PERSIAN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN THE BALKANS AND ALBANIA

The Persian language and literature were first introduced to Asia Minor by the Roman Seljuks and later by the Ottomans. Islam came to Asia Minor and Anatolia around the 11th century through the Seljuks under the command of Alp Arslan and with this conquest also brought the Persian language, and Iranian culture to these regions. Persian was the official language at the Seljuk court in Iran and was thus spread by the Roman Seljuks in the Anatolian region (Rajabi, et.al. 2014). Later, during Ottoman rule in the Balkans from the 14th to the 19th century, the spread of Islam in the region was accompanied by the rise of the Sufi sects. As a result, the Persian language and literature spread among Muslims in the Balkans

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and left a lasting impression. According to Rajab Agish (2003:104), similar to other countries of the Balkan Peninsula, Albanians became familiar with Persian literature through the emirs, servants of the Ottoman Turks, and Iranians who feared the rule of the Seljuk and fled from Khorasan to the Ottoman side. Most of the Iranians who immigrated to Anatolia due to political problems in Iran were Dervishes and Sufis who came along with soldiers during the advent of the Ottoman Army and promoted religion and Sufism in the Balkan region. All of them belonged to one of the Sufi schools of Khorasan. In fact, this was the same thing in the Balkans as Molavi and other Iranian mystics 2 -3 centuries ago in Anatolia (Rajabi & Rehepi, 2018). Kazmi et al. (2019) noted that during the golden ages of the Ottoman Empire in the 15th and 16th centuries, Persian language and literature flourished in regions under Ottoman rule, including the Balkans. It was a time when they established a great number of madrassas and tekkes in the region, including Albania, where Persian language and literature were part of the educational offerings. Renowned Persian works like Saadi's "Gulistan" and "Bustan," Nizami's "Khamsa," and Rumi's "Masnavi" were among the texts taught in these institutions (Ziaee, 2003:275). With the rise of spiritual influence and the growing popularity of Sufi sects like the Bektashi in Albania, there was a greater interest in Persian mystical literature. This literature, mainly centered around the works of Attar and Rumi, became a prominent focus during that period. According to Lezette (2004:139), the Bektashi order had considerable influence in several Albanian cities. Notably, Shkodër, Korçë, Berat, and Elbasan experienced the profound impact of this Sufi sect. Similarly, villages such as Frashër or the Skrapar District, alongside cities like Dibra, Krujë, and Fushë-Krujë, have become centers for Bektashi activity. These regions have been notably influenced by Persian Sufi literature within the Bektashi community. Based on Ziyæe (2003) the Khalwati, Rifa'i, and Bektashi Sufi orders were deeply influenced by Persian mystical literature. This influence not only led to the widespread adoption of the Persian language and literature among their followers but also resulted in the emergence of important figures within these sects. As supporting evidence, Rajabi et al. (2014:105 -109) introduced a list of Albanian intellectuals who were either familiar with the Persian language and Iranian culture or who wrote works in Persian between the 17th and 19th centuries, such as Nazim Faraghula (1680-1760), Asif Muhammad Pasha (1807-1758), Muhammad Eshkoudarai -Chakir (1858-1790 Naim Frasheri (1900-1846).

## 2.1 NAIM FRASHERI AND HIS PERSIAN COLLECTION POEMS "TEKHAYYULĀT"

Mehmet Naim Frasheri (1846-1900) was born in village Frashër in southern Albania. he was one of the most famous Muslim poets of Albania in the period of the Albanian literary-cultural revival in the second half of the nineteenth century (Rajabi & Rehepi, 2018). According to Pushtdar (2004), the village of Frasher and Teke Baba Nasib Frasheri played a crucial role in spreading the Persian language and literature in Albania. This village, considered part of Yanieh city in Albania, holds a special place in the history of Albanian, Turkish, and Persian literature, thanks to the Frasheri family. Among its members, Shams al-din Sami stands out as the translator of a part of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh into Turkish. Another notable figure is Naim Farashari, a poet who spoke Persian. Together with his brother, Abdullah Hasanu (Abdul Bey), they actively contributed to Albania's quest for independence (Ghasemzadeh, 2020). According to Skendo (1941: 9-10) "Naim lived his childhood in village Frashër; took Turkish, Persian and Arabic lectures from the teacher (khawaja) in the village; he listened to older pupils recite poems in Persian" and "Later, after coming to Ioannina and starting Persian lessons with Jacob effendi, Naim's interest on poems was further enhanced by the pursuit of Saadi, Hafez, and Ferdowsi" (Rexhepi, 2020). Naim Frasheri's dual works, one dedicated to the grammar and structure of the Persian language and the other comprising a collection of poems, made valuable contributions to Persian literature as a non-native Persian poet. According to Rexhepi (2020), "He wrote and published a Persian grammar called "Qawāid-e Fārsiye Ber Tarzi Novīn" (Rules of Persian Based on the New Method), which was published in Istanbul in 1871. This 168-page grammar is divided into two parts. The first part has 65 pages and contains information on the rules of the Persian language, especially the morphology, while the second part, which has 83 pages, consists of four exercises and a vocabulary in the end with some Persian-Ottoman words." His Persian poem collection is entitled "Tekhayyulāt" (Imaginations) published in 1885 in Istanbul.

## 3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS, THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative methodology in conducting descriptive analyses of Naim Frasheri's poems in the poetry collection "Tekhayyulāt" from two perspectives: thematic analysis and structural analysis. Consequently, it aims to answer two primary research questions: 1) What are the poet's main themes, conceptual framework, and thought process? and 2) Based on the structural analysis, how

has the poet used linguistic deviation in his poems? The research is mainly based on the theoretical framework of formalism. In this approach, the focus is mainly on the structural aspects of a particular text and emphasises the analysis of the text itself, independent of external factors. Advocates of this approach place the text at the center of literary criticism and disregard external literary influences. This approach is closely related to linguistics, as both fields analyse the language used in literary works. According to Eagleton (1996: 2-3), the formalist school, which emerged around 1920 in the former Soviet Union, "was essentially the application of linguistics to the study of literature; and because the linguistics in question were of a formal kind, concerned with the structures of language rather than with what one might actually say, the Formalists passed over the analysis of literary content (where one might always be tempted into psychology or sociology) for the study of literary form." Various ideas and well-known figures such as Jakobson, Shklovsky, Trubetskoy, Todorov, and Mukarovsky belong to this school. Another prominent theorist of formalism is Geoffrey Leech (1936-2014) who applied the concept of foregrounding to poetry analysis. He considers the foregrounded figure as "linguistic deviation", while the background is the language itself. "the foregrounded figure is the linguistic deviation, and the background is the language – the system taken for granted in any talk of deviation" (Leech, 1969: 57). According to Abadi (2021), "Deviation is an important formalism outcome which constitutes the basis of stylistic debates today. They introduced the language of art as deviating from the standard language and studied the styles based on this principle."

For Mansoor & Salman (2020), "the deviation is considered as a license or permission for poets and writers to say or write what people in normal situations of language use cannot. Writers, and poets in particular, exploit deviation at various linguistic levels to bring about specific artistic aims and effects by doing with words what normal use of language cannot do to convey the message they have in mind." As per Halimah et al. (2020) "the deviation element is an essential element in literary works: this is related to the author's freedom to express himself. and based on Leech classification, those deviation elements are lexical, grammatical, phonological, graphological, semantic, dialect, register and historical deviations". Considering the importance and role of linguistic deviations in creating a literary text, and here the form of a poem, this research uses a quantitative approach as a methodology based on the Leech theory of deviations (1969) to analyse Naim's poetry collection "Tekhayyulāt" and to identify the deviation elements in his poems.

#### 4. ANALYSIS OF NAIM FRASHERI'S POEMS IN TEKHAYYULĀT

"Tekhayyulāt" is the only remaining collection of Persian poems by Naim Frasheri. Rexhepi (2020) mentioned a few records that indicate a publication of another Persian poem collection "Sokhenān-e bergozide" (Selected Words), however "This collection of Naim has not been found yet and it is not known whether it consists of poetry or proverbs" (ibid). "Tekhayyulāt is written in Masnavi style, consisting of a total of 24 poems, each with its unique title and corresponding date of creation, the compilation spans 501 couplets (Ghasemzadeh, 2020)".

##### 4.1 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

In the analysis of the content of the poems, first, a general classification of the frequent and similar topics was made which resulted in the following four thematic contents:

1. Nature exploration: This theme contains the largest number of poems and of the twenty-four poems, the title and content of eleven poems refer to nature, which is about half of the poems in the collection (45.83%). The translation of titles for the poems about nature is "Sky", "Language of the Heart", "Spring", "Blossom", "Nightingale", "Moon", "Winter", "Sun", "Beside the Water Stream", "Earth and People", and "By the Sea". In all these poems, Naim tries to express mystical themes, paying attention, among other things, to the idea that everything in nature is connected to one unity, including the changing of the seasons and the movement of the stars and planets, all expressed in simple language.

2. Elegy and grief expression: The second most common theme and title in this collection of poems is the expression of elegies and mourning, which he wrote on various occasions, and the loss of his relatives (sister, brother-in-law and daughter). which accounts for about 25% of all the poems.

3. Philosophical and mystical insights: Although mystical themes appear in some form in all poems, a total of four poems can be categorised under this heading, both in terms of title and content, accounting for 16.67% of all poems.

4. Feelings and emotions: Three poems from this collection can be categorised under this heading.

The poems Orphant, Homeland, and Beloved Daughter can be categorised under this heading, which corresponds to 12.5% of the total number of poems.

In general, the main focus of Naim's thought in Tahayyuat is to pay attention to moral and mystical concepts that are undoubtedly derived from the Sufi teachings of the Bektashi. According to Ferman (2000), "the mystical theory of the unity of existence with the themes of European Romanticism also gave his poetry a human and philosophical dimension." Naim not only describes natural themes, which appear most frequently in his collection of poems, but also introduces moral and mystical messages. In the poem "Winter", for example, which begins with a question about the destruction of nature by the winter, he refers to the cycle of nature, death, and life and presents very attractive parables. In the poem "The Earth and the People", in which he describes the position of the Earth among the other planets, he refers to the position of man and calls on him to live on it wisely.

## 4.2 STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS

Based on Leech's categorization of linguistic deviations, the analysis is conducted on phonological, lexical, and syntactic deviations within Naim's poems. The analysis aims to show how the poet used language techniques, i.e. linguistic deviations in his poems, as explained below:

**Phonological Deviation:** This is the deviation in sounds or pronunciation which is done deliberately in regard to preserving the rhyme. Leech (1969:47) considers phonological deviation as "irregularities of pronunciation". The following samples show this type of phonological deviation in Naim's poems:

1) هرکلان و رستمان و آشلان زیر تیر و تیغ او دادند جان

Herkalān o rostmān o ašelān zir-e tir o tiq-e u dadand jān

'Hercules, Rostam, and Achilles died under his arrow and blade'

[Herkulān] > [Herkolān]

Phonological deviation: Substitution of vowels

long vowel /u/ in its correct form is substituted with short vowel /o/

2) بر کنارش سبز پوشان گرام ایستاده با کمال احترام

bar kenāraš sabzpušān-e gerām istāde bā kamāl-e ehterām

'Next to it, the esteemed green trees are standing respectfully'

[gerāmi] > [gerām]

Phonological deviation: Omission

The vowel /i/ is omitted from the word

3) دوستاره است آن مگر، چشمان نیست ماه دیگر هست آن پیشان نیست

do setāre ast ān magar, češmān nist māh-e digar hast, ān pišān nist

'They are not eyes, they are stars, and the forehead is like the moon'

[pišāni] > [pišān]

Phonological deviation: Omission

The vowel /i/ is omitted from the word

**Lexical Deviation:** when the poet invents new words. some compounds that represent a type of innovation can also be regarded as instances of lexical deviation. "Lexical deviation occurs when words depart from their normal standard, or when words are invented in a process called neologism or non-formation, to create deeper meaning and esthetic value, to achieve a certain (stylistic) effect, or to meet a lexical need for a single occasion (Mansoor & Salman, 2020)." The following samples show this type of lexical deviation in Naim's poems:

1) پرتوت چون می فتد بر خاکدان می شود مهمان جمله مردمان

partovat čon mifetad ba xākdān mišavd mehmān-e jomle mardomān

'When your light reaches the earth, it is the guest house of all people'

[zamin] > [xākdān]

Lexical deviation: invention of a new word

By combining the word "kāk (meaning soil) with the suffix "-dan" (meaning holder), the poet has coined a new term signifying "the earth".

2) گنبد بالای بی حد و کران آسمان سیم پاش و زرفشان

gonbad-e balāye bi had o karān āsemān-e simpāš o zarfešān  
'The sky is like a tall and boundless dome with silver and golden lights'

Lexical deviation: invention of a new word

[simpāš] > noun (sim: silver) + persent setem (pāšidan: to spread)

= compound adjective

āsemān-e simpāš: silver sky

This compound adjective is invented and expresses the metaphoric meaning.

Grammatical Deviation: Using this type of deviation, the poet disregards the rules of sentence or syntactic features. According to Mansoor & Salman (2020), "Syntactic deviation occurs when a writer deviates from the norms of syntax. It is a departure from the normal rules of grammar. It is a kind of deviation in which poets do not follow the rules of grammar and sentence formation."

Some examples found in Naim's collection of poems are as follows:

1) گرچه از تو می نیاید جز ز آه لیک آن آه است دل را شاهراه

garce az to minayāyad joz ze āh leyk ān āh as del rā šāhrah  
'Although you only leave me with regrets and sighs, this sigh is a way to the heart'

Grammatical deviation: the verb form

[mi.nayāyad] > negative simple present [ne.mi.āyad]

The negation suffix [ne], typically preceding the present suffix [mi], in this example, has been shifted and added to the main verb stem [āy] causing a deviation from the standard form.

2) می کند هر سو هوا شبنم نثار بر درختان، بر زمین، بر سبزه زار

mikonad har su havā šabnam nesār bar deraxtān, bar zamin, bar sabzezār  
'The (spring) air scatters the dew everywhere on the trees, the ground, and the lawn'

Grammatical deviation: changing word order

[mikonad ...nesar] > [...nesar mikonad]

The word order in Persian syntax places verbs at the end of sentences. In this particular example, however, the poet skilfully deviates from this norm by breaking down the compound verb. Through this deliberate deviation, the poem emphasises the verb and places it at the beginning of the sentence.

The above examples are only a part of the deviations used by the poet, which were selected for analysis to show that the poet used linguistic forms in his Persian poetry.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The influence and spread of the Persian language in the Balkans, which was formed during Ottoman rule, is primarily linked to Sufi literature, which was largely written in Persian and was one of the sources of education in many Sufi sects. Naim Frasheri's familiarity with the Persian language and literature can also be traced back to the teachings of the Bektashi order. His Persian grammar book, *Qawāid-e Fārsiye Ber Tarzi Novīn*, and the collection of poems, *Tekhayyulāt*, are among the most important contributions he made to Persian language and literature, considering that he never lived in a Persian-speaking community. In this paper, Naim's collection of poems *Tekhayyulāt* is analysed using a formalist approach in two specific parts: the content and the structure of poems. The results show that although the theme and content of his poems are not broad and are actually very limited, his main focus and the focal theme of his poems is 'nature' while repeating the Islamic and moral teachings of Bektashi in all his poems. Therefore, Naim can be regarded as a naturalistic poet who, inspired by the mysteries and beauty of the world around him, wrote poetic images with mystical and philosophical themes in Persian. On the other hand, the structural analysis of Naim's poems shows that, firstly, Naim wrote his collection of poems only in the style of Masnavi poetry, which is the most fluent and not complicated style of Persian poetry, and he did not use other classical and more technical styles of Persian poetry, such as Ghazal and Odes, and secondly, he skillfully employed the technique of linguistic features, especially different types of linguistic deviations, which shows the poet's mastery of Persian language and literature.

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