

The Abname as a Literary Genre in Turkish Classical Poetry

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Abstract

In order to be able to make a genre description among the works of Classical Turkish Literature like 'abname'ⁱ there are no enough sources within this scope. Even though 'abname' has been given descriptions in some encyclopedic sources like 'the poems on water', it is obvious that much more knowledge and literary work are needed to be explored regarding the above mentioned expression. The biggest difficulty in the terming of 'abname' as a genre is that the number of texts directly related to water among works of Classical Turkish Literature are little if any. The other problem is that the settled texts have not directly dealt with the case 'water', quite the contrary, the case 'water' has been used in these texts as a figurative component. In this article we investigated poems on water gotten from divans and we also traced terming problems of 'abname' as a genre. Also, the mesneviⁱⁱ called Yenişehirli Avni Bey's 'Abname' has been analyzed in terms of literary genres and styles.

Keywords: Abname, water, genres, styles

Nearly all of the literary sources giving encyclopedic information about abname have been defining it as a poetry associated with water. Mehmet Zeki Pekalın gives the information of abname as a concept used about the poems/poetry written on the occasion of water (Pekalın, 1983, p.7). In another resource making illustration about abname it is mentioned that the poets have written kasideⁱⁱⁱ directly addressing to the water. The water kaside of Fuzuli^{iv} is of this genre too. Thus kasides whose introductory parts starting with description of water can be also defined as abname (Tolasa, 1977, p.25). On the basis of the information given we are facing with definition of abname as a literary genre.

It is certain that it is necessary to have some criteria to be able to define an independent literary genre. To start with, these criteria should come into direct relationships in text with the subject of the mentioned genre, and must enable us to make a direct definition and description. It is seen that these criteria have not been utterly provided with the poems written in the form of verse of gazel^v and kaside extracted from divan in order to define abname as a genre. For instance although a gazel of Hayâlî Bey^{vi} has been written with water redif^{vii}, the real subject of gazel has shaped around love, beloved, and wine server. The concept of 'water' is in the condition of a figurative element or an illustrating means. In this regard, there is no difference of gazel in question from famous 'Kaside of Water' using water as a literary material. By implication, it does not seem possible to count this gazel written with water redif and the ones similar to this^{viii} as an example of abname.

*Âşıkâne gönlünü akıtmasaydı yâra su
Olmaz idi vâdi-i aşka düşüp âvâre su*

(Did water not pour its heart like a lover; it would not wander by falling into the valley of love.)

*Ka'be-i küyunda kıldım gözlerim yaşın sebîl
Teşne-diller çağrışup darken meded bir pare su*

(While thirsty hearts saying 'Some water, please!' I made my tears public fountain in Kaaba of your village in order to make the thirsty ones able to drink water.)

*Sâkiyâ bozsa aceb mi hâne-i zühdü şarab
Çün esasından yıkar erişse bir divâre su*

(Oh, wine server, it is not surprising if wine destroys the house of asceticism and godliness, for it is well known that if water reaches a wall, the water demolishes it.)

*Cânım aldın kayd-ı âlemden halâs ettin beni
Kanım içti gözlerin verdin iki bîmâra su
(Tarlan, 1992, p.274)*

(You have taken my life; you have released me from the difficulties of the world. As to your eyes, they have drunk my blood. And all in all, although you know that the patient mustn't be given water, you have given water to two patients and killed them.)

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The same situation is also valid for kaside verse written in the form of water redif or poems shaped around water topic. The ‘ab’ redif to Bayezid II^{ix} by Ahmet Paşa^x is a good illustration of this. The related kaside, though normally it was written with ‘ab’ redif, has no content devoted to water. As in the gazel given as an example above, the concept ‘water’ is in the position of being a literary material. In some couplets of the gazel, water has been used as supporting point in the sentences describing the beauty of a loved one and as an affirmation of these. As to some couplets in which the compliments are made to the praised one, water is a medium of illustration in order to make them more effective. Consequently, we cannot accept this kaside written in the form of ‘water’ redif as an example of ‘abname’, although it carries the title of “Der Sıfat-ı Âb”^{xi}. Below the sample couplets from the kasides in question have been given.

*Ruhsârın âbı âteşimi niçin artırır
Teskîn ederken âteşi ey gülizâr âb
(Tarlân, 1992, p.100)*

(Oh, my beloved one, although the water has to extinguish the fire, why does the water of your cheeks makes my fire grow?)

*Şeh Beyazîd ol ki anun tîğın anıcak
Olur derûn-ı Rüstem ü İsfendiyârâb
(Tarlân, 1992, p.99)*

(When the sword of Sultan Bayezid is remembered, İsfendiyer and Rüstem^{xii} become like water from within, as they get scared.)

The poets of divan had written a lot of history poems by using details of ebced^{xiii} calculation style for newly built or repaired fountains, religious buildings, palaces, and mansions or for some events they have assigned importance. Among those history poems, fountains constituted the subject of their poems just like any other domain. Accordingly, it can be said that as the subject of the above mentioned writings is water, history poems written for fountains must be treated in the frame of the abname problematic, too.

It is possible to come across with some praising descriptions and explanations associated with the concept of water in some historical poems written for newly built or mended fountains, especially by the rulers of the state. In those historical poems authors firstly praise the ones who ordered building of fountain and it is made in the style of methiye.

Later on, this methiye respectively is directed to fountain, then to the water of fountain itself and the water flowing from the fountain has been praised by the names as “Âb-ı hayât”^{xiv}, “Âb-ı Kevser”^{xv}, “ayn-ı zezem”^{xvi},

“ayn-ı ş-şifâ”^{xvii}, “ayn-ı cân-bahş”^{xviii}, “mâ-i saff.”^{xix} Consequently, normally it is seen that the concept of water has not been applied as a whole in the historical poems dedicated to fountain building or renovation, the texts directly related to the water in the scale of couplet or/and line can be evaluated as one apiece example of the abname genre. The historical poem written up by Aynî^{xx} from Antep for İbrâhim Ağa Fountain is a good pattern in which the benefactor of fountain, the fountain and the water of fountain are praised.

The first and second couplets consist of the kudos of İbrâhim Ağa, in the third couplet fountain and its water has been lauded. In this historical poem, the third couplet can be regarded as a sample of abname in the scale of couplet. In conclusion, it seems possible to evaluate the texts written about the concept of water as one apiece example to the genre of abname among the historical poems dedicated to the fountain building or renovation in the scale of couplet or line.^{xxi} To Fountain of Ibrahim Ağa:

*Memba’-ı ‘ayn-ı himem yenbû’-ı cûd u mekrûmet
Menhel-i mâ-i inâyet ehl-i hayrın mülhemi*

(İbrâhim Ağa is the one who is the source of favors, and the spring of beneficence and generosity. Benevolence is the abode of water and the inspiration of philanthropists.)

*Sadr-ı a’zam kapu bin başısı İbrâhim Ağa
Çeşme yaptı kıldı ihyâ bu mahal-i hurremi*

(Sadrazam İbrâhim Ağa, the major of Kapu, built a fountain and invigorated this joyful place.)

*Nûş ideydi Hızır bu ayn-ı cân-bahşın suyun
Âb-ı hayvân-çün temâşa etmez idi âlemi*

(Had Hızır^{xxii} drunk from this life offering water, he would not have travelled the whole world to find water of life.)

*Zâyi’ itme katresin ‘Aynî didim târîhini
Kıldı icrâ lutf-ı İbrâhîm bu Zemzemi
(Arslan, 2004, p.404)*

(Do not waste even one sip of it! This is me, Aynî. I have told a history for this fountain: the grace of Abraham has resulted in fulfillment of this Zamzam like water spring.)

After showing and examining sample texts written in the style of gazel and kaside verse showing Abname characteristics, it will be suitable to talk about Âbnâmesnevi paper by Avnî Bey from Yeni Şehir.

It has been a subject of polemics among the literature researchers in which literary genre to evaluate the mesnevi

written by Avnî Bey. Avnî Bey was a 19th century Divan poets, who wrote the above mentioned Mesnevi with the aim of asking for help from Abdulhamid II^{xxiii} in order to provide water supply to Bahariye Mevlevîhânesi.^{xxiv} Although Mehmet Zeki Pekalın estimates “Âbnâme” as an important example (Pekalın, 1983, p.7) of its genre, the ideas of Orhan Kemal Tavukçu on this subject are opposed to this definition. According to Tavukçu, in order to take a work into account as a sample of a genre, it must be at least containing the subject determining that genre. In his opinion, albeit in the first twenty couplets in the end of abname has been given some information related with water, this part of several couplets does not constitute a basis for the work to be named as a good example of a genre of abname. (Tavukçu,2001, p.61) While agreeing with this view, it will be true to say that it is impossible to write a literary text utterly around only a single genre since a literary genre or style has a changeable position in the flow of the text. In other words, in a literary text it is possible to make transitions amongst various genres or styles. As an illustration, it attracts attention that the work turns into methiye with the poet/writer’s recollection of goodness in the mersiye^{xxv} mattered texts.(Akkuş, 2007, p.18)

As a matter of fact, there is no such alteration of genre or style in the work of Avnî Bey from Yenişehir. It is possible to run into a lot of different literary genres firstly beginning with tevhid^{xxvi}, na’^{xxvii}, maktel^{xxviii} in abnamemesnevi. Eventually, instead of thinking that any text belongs to only one literary genre, it will be more accurate that there can be more than one literary genre and style in any literary text. In other words, the related mesnevi called as Âbnâme does not have to be completely related with the thematic of water. Just as it cannot be determined the genre by moving from the title, it will be a wrong approach to ignore the literary genre associated by the title and neglect the title of the work by moving from the ingredient as well. All the scales belonging to interior and exterior frame like title, content and redif must be used in order to define the genre.

It is possible to summarize the genres and styles in verse part of Âbnâmemesnevi. The content of the first 20 couplets in the second part being verse section of mesnevi is directly dedicated to the concept of water. In this section being a sample of Âbnâme physical peculiarities of water, the necessity of water for life, existence of some amount of water in the sky, and mixture of some with the sea had been discussed. After 20 couplets in which the concept of water has been treated, it has been passed to the compliment of Sultan Abdülhamid Han. This section proceeding from 20th couplet to 33rd has been written in the form of methiye. This couplet has been followed respectively by 33-4th couplets written in the genre of tevhid, 41-45th couplets in the genre of na’^t written with the style of methiye, and 46-52nd couplets praising çihârîyâr-ı güzîn^{xxix}. As for 52nd couplet, it is an example of maktel genre making ref-

erence to Hz. Hüseyin and the event of Karbala.

Following these sections, in the 53-64th couplets, the poet again begging succor of Sultan has described the pitiful condition of Bahariye Tekkesi. With this side, the couplets among 53 and 64 are examples of şikayet-name^{xxx} style. The mesnevi ends with the section consisting of 13 couplets in which plea and entreaty to Sultan is observed. Below is given example couplets of section directly related to the water from ÂbnâmeMesnevisi.

*Nedür ol cevher-i hayât-efzâ
Ana muhtâcdur bütün eşyâ*

(What is that essence that all the beings are in need of it?)

*Kimi mir’ât-veş münevverdür
Kimi mahzûn yatur mükedderdür*

(Some are shining like mirror. Some lie like an unhappy man; stable and doleful.)

*Düşmeni bir civân-ı ser-keşdür
Ki mu’annid yanar bir âteşdür*

(As for the enemy it is a rebellious youngster and this youngster is the onewho is burning in the fire contumaciously.)

*Bahr u sahrâda var cibâlde var
Bâg u bustânda var tilâlde var*

(It exists in the seas, in the deserts. In the mountains, in the vineyards and orchards.)

*Yerde var gökde var bi-hakk-ı hayât
Yok Bahâriyye Tekyesinde o zât
(Tavukçu,2001, p.73-74)*

(It exists in the sky and earth but it (water) cannot be found in BahariyeTekkesi.)

Conclusion

To sum up, it can be said that the necessary criteria have not been provided to evaluate abname as an autonomous literary genre; it has not been treated in sufficient density and frequency within the products of Classical Turkish Literature. Taken the above-mentioned into a consideration, it seems impossible to make the definition of a genre as abname and to talk about the characteristics of this genre, for abname is not a genre like other genres having completed their progress and given examples with numerous texts. On the contrary, it is a genre which has remained uncompleted and not demanded. Excluding some kaside

couplets and historical poems, the text in which abname genre has been distinctly observed is the first 20 couplets of *Âbnâme* by Avnî from Yenişehir. Eventually, it is regarded that *Âbnâme* by Avnî from Yenişehir is not an example of abname genre as a whole but twenty couplets of it are directly dedicated to the water and are the examples of the genre of abname that were not been able to develop as an autonomous genre.

Notes

ⁱAbname is a kind of poem on water.

ⁱⁱPoem made up of rhymed couplets, each couplet being of a different rhyme.

ⁱⁱⁱIt is a form of poetry in which the first couplet is rhymed in its own, and the second verses of the other couplets are rhymed with the first couplet.

^{iv}It is difficult to accept the water of kaside as an example of abname since there is no direct telling related with water in the kaside. Water is in the position of being a literary material in the kaside which is an example of 'na't to Hz. Prophet. In another word, the concept of 'water' does not form the subject of water kaside.

^vIt is a form of poetry in which the first couplet is rhymed in its own, and the second verses of the other couplets are rhymed with the first couplet. It differs from kaside with its being shorter and theme.

^{vi}He is one of the Classical Turkish Literature Poets of the 16th century.

^{vii}Redif is the repetition of the words having the same meanings or the affixes bearing the same task in the end of the verses.

^{viii}See for the texts written in the form of gazel verse in which water has been used as a literary equipment: Mine Mengi, *Mesihî Divanı*, AKM Pub, Ank, 1995, gazel 11, 3rd. couplet, gazel 199, 7th. couplet, gazel 1st couplet; Mehmet Arslan, *Mihri Hatun Divanı*, Uyum Ajans, Ank., 2007, p. 211, gazel 9, 8th couplet; Cahit Çabuk, *Divanı Muhibbî*, Kervan Kitapçılık, İst., 1980, p.375, gazel 660.

^{ix}The 8th Ottoman Sultan, the Son of the Conqueror Sultan Mehmed.

^xHe is one of the Classical Turkish Literature Poets of the 15th century.

^{xi}See for the texts written in the form of kaside verse in: Tahir Üzgör, *Fehîm-i Kadîm Divanı*, Hayatı, Sanatı, Divanı ve Metnin Bugünkü Türkçesi, AKM pub, Ank., 1991, p.122, kaside 5, 12th couplet ; Arslan, a.g.e., 2007, p.188, 23rd couplet; Ali Nihad Tarlan, *Necâti Beg Divanı*, Akçağ, Ank., 1992, p.57 5th (With *Âb* redif. It must be mentioned an exceptionalsituation within this kaside. The first couplet kaside is utterly about water. Consequently it is run into an example of abname with single couple: The couplet: "Saçdı zemine çün yine ebr-i bahâr âb / Kıldı cihân yüzünü yine sebzeâr âb." In the related couplet is

committed the life giving characteristic of water.)

^{xii}İsfendiyar and Rüstem are fomis Iranian Sovereigns.

^{xiii}The matter in calculation of ebced is to ascribe a value to each latter of the alphabet and to overlap the total numeric value of the letters composing any words with the date of any event to be needed expressing.

^{xiv}The water of immortality.

^{xv}The water of Kevser River which is believed to exist in the paradise.

^{xvi}The well locating in Harem-i Şerif in Mecca and this well's water being accepted as holy by the Muslims.

^{xvii}Curing water.

^{xviii}Water giving life.

^{xix}Pure and clean water.

^{xx}The poet of 19th century Classical Turkish Literature, from Antep City.

^{xxi}See for similar texts: MuhsinMâcit, NedimDivanı, Akçağ, Ank., 1997, 24th and 60th history poems.

^{xxii}A personage who is believed to be a prophet or a saint. He has been of topic for poetry because of his pursuit and finding of the water of immortality.

^{xxiii}34th Sultan of the Ottoman Empire.

^{xxiv}The tekke (dervish lodge) in which mevlevi dervishes being member s of the Mevlevi Sufi path which is founded by the influence of the views of Mevlana commit the ceremonies of zikir and devran.

^{xxv}The genre of a lyrical poetry telling about the favors and good deeds of a late person after his/her death.

^{xxvi}The genre of the poetry with bearing the themes of the existence and uniqueness/oneness of Allah.

^{xxvii}The genre of the poetry written about Muhammed, the Prophet of Islam.

^{xxviii}The name of the genre of poetry talking about the martyrdom of Hz. Husayn, the grandson of Muhammed.

^{xxix}The genre of poetry of praise ascribed to the Qaliphs, Bekir, Omar, Osman and Ali having ruled repectively after death of Islam Prophet.

^{xxx}A form of expression in which the poet complains about the conditions s/he is in.

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