



THE HISTORY AND GENRE CHARACTERISTICS OF “ONE THOUSAND AND ONE NIGHTS”

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Abstract. *This article examines the history of the formation of One Thousand and One Nights and its genre characteristics. Particular attention is paid to scholarly views concerning the origin of the work and its connections with Arabic, Persian, and Indian literary traditions. The study also analyzes the compositional structure of the work, its system of plots, the specific features of the fairy-tale genre, and its place in world literature. The findings demonstrate that One Thousand and One Nights possesses a multilayered structure and has played a significant role in the development of literary and cultural relations between the East and the West.*

Keywords: *One Thousand and One Nights, Arabic tales, fairy-tale genre, Eastern literature, folklore, plot, composition, literary tradition, translation studies, world literature.*

INTRODUCTION

One Thousand and One Nights is one of the most renowned monuments of world literature, distinguished by the diversity of its themes, the many-sidedness of its plots, and its artistic value. The work took shape in the confluence of the cultures, worldviews, and artistic thought of various peoples; over the centuries it has been translated into many languages and has won the attention of a broad readership.

The fairy tale is one of the most ancient and popular genres of folk oral creativity, reflecting the spiritual world, way of life, social views, and aesthetic thought of a people. It is considered one of the important constituent parts of folk creativity, alongside songs, laments, proverbs, and sayings. Fairy tales are significant not only as a specimen of

oral creativity but also as an important source that has influenced the development of written literature; their plots and images have served as the ground for the creation of many major literary works. They give expression to the way of life, social relations, aspirations, and struggles for existence of various peoples.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed historical-comparative, descriptive-analytical, and comparative methods. The history of the creation of One Thousand and One Nights and its genre characteristics were studied on the basis of scholarly sources, and the data obtained were analyzed by means of comparative analysis and generalization.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The services of the French Orientalist and translator Antoine Galland were of particular importance in making One Thousand and One Nights widely known in Europe. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, he produced a translation into French on the basis of a number of manuscript copies of the work, and this translation was published in 1704–1717. As a result, One Thousand and One Nights aroused great interest in the European literary milieu and became one of the most famous monuments of Eastern literature.

The first printed editions of the work in Arabic were produced in the nineteenth century, among which the Calcutta (1814–1818), Bulaq (1835), and Beirut (1888) editions occupy a special place (Irwin, 1994:43-58). In later periods, the work was reprinted many times on the basis of these editions and served as an important source for scholarly research.

The origin and history of the formation of One Thousand and One Nights are complex, and many manuscript copies of it, disseminated in various regions, exist. Researchers note that the mutual influence of Indian, Persian, and Arabic literary traditions played an important role in the formation of the text. For this reason, the question of determining the original source and earliest form of the work remains one of the pressing problems of Oriental studies even today.

Today, the manuscript copies preserved in various libraries and collections around the world are considered an important source for studying the historical development

of the text of One Thousand and One Nights. These manuscripts are of great scholarly importance in investigating the plot composition, linguistic features, and stages of the artistic formation of the work.

Regarded as one of the rare specimens of world literature, the tales of One Thousand and One Nights are distinguished by their depiction of the events of the distant past with lofty artistic mastery. Owing to the diversity of its themes, the many-sidedness of its plots, and the richness of its system of images, the work occupies a special place not only in Eastern but also in world literary heritage; for this reason, it has remained famous among many peoples for centuries.

The artistic structure of One Thousand and One Nights is also noteworthy. Although the work is written mainly in prose form, poetic fragments are also encountered in it. These poetic parts enrich the development of events, heighten the emotional effectiveness of the artistic depiction, and serve to disclose the content of the work still more fully. The poetic fragments are organically connected with the plot and perform an important artistic function in expressing the psychological state and emotional experiences of the characters.

“The place and time at which the tales of One Thousand and One Nights were composed are uncertain. The most reliable and authoritative source, Katib Çelebi, the author of *Kashf al-zunun*, confined himself merely to indicating the name ‘Alf layla wa-layla’” (Haji Khalifa, n.d., 1:139).

The services of Solih Mutallibov were of particular importance in acquainting Uzbek readers with this work. On the basis of the translation he carried out, the tales of One Thousand and One Nights were published in 1960 by the State Publishing House of Fiction of Uzbekistan in an eight-volume edition. Later, taking the readers’ needs into account, the work was reprinted and published in 2008 by the Yangi Asr Avlodi publishing house under the title “One Thousand and One Nights: Arabic Tales. Nights 1–27. Book One.” In this edition the text is given on the basis of Solih Mutallibov’s translation, while the poetic fragments were rendered into Uzbek by Sobir Abdulla (Ming bir kecha, 2008:2).

As researchers have noted, certain poetic fragments in the work have undergone a degree of change in various manuscripts and editions; in some copies they have been abridged or omitted altogether. Similar cases are also observed in certain Uzbek

translations of the work. This shows how important the question of preserving artistic content and stylistic features is in the process of translation.

There is no unanimous opinion in the scholarly literature concerning the place and period in which *One Thousand and One Nights* was created. The question of the work's origin has long been a cause of debate in Oriental and literary studies. Some researchers connect the roots of the work with ancient Persian literary traditions, while others emphasize that its system of events and images is closely linked with the Arab cultural milieu. For this reason, the question of the work's original source and earliest language remains one of the problems requiring further scholarly investigation.

The events depicted in the work reflect the social-political and cultural processes observed in the history of many Eastern peoples. The relations between rulers and the common people, the hard life of the laboring masses, the conflicts of court life, and the moral problems of society are given artistic interpretation in it. In this respect, *One Thousand and One Nights* is valuable not only as an artistic monument but also as an important historical-literary source reflecting the social-cultural picture of its time.

"The translation of the work into Uzbek is considered one of the important stages in the history of national translation studies. *One Thousand and One Nights* was first translated into Uzbek from Persian by Sidqiy Khondayliqiy, and later rendered from Arabic into Uzbek by Ahror Mahzum. Although both translations were important events for their time, certain abridgments and stylistic changes are encountered in them.

In the present research, the edition of *One Thousand and One Nights* translated from Arabic into Uzbek by Solih Mutallibov and published by the Yangi Asr Avlodi publishing house was used as the principal source. This translation was carried out on the basis of the complete text published in Egypt and is notable for striving to preserve as fully as possible the artistic features of the work, including its metaphorical units and system of images. For this reason, this edition serves as a reliable source for studying the degree to which the metaphors in the work are expressed in Uzbek" (Ming bir kecha, 2008:3-5).

CONCLUSION

One Thousand and One Nights is one of the rare specimens of the oral and written literary traditions of the Eastern peoples, formed over many centuries. The results of the

research show that the history of the work's origin and formation is a complex process in which the mutual influence of Indian, Persian, and Arabic cultural layers played an important role. The work's compositional structure, its plot construction based on the technique of a story within a story, and its inter-genre synthesis further enhance its artistic value.

Moreover, the tales of One Thousand and One Nights appear as an important literary source reflecting the social life, spiritual values, moral views, and aesthetic ideal of the people. The translation of the work into the languages of various peoples and its wide dissemination on a global scale confirm that it possesses universal human content and artistic potential. For this reason, One Thousand and One Nights acquires special scholarly and cultural significance as an inseparable part not only of Arabic literature but of the world literary heritage as well.

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