



Extended Abstract

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The Necessity of Revising Maktab Texts

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Introduction

Prior to the establishment of modern educational systems in Iran, the educational framework during the Qajar era was centered on maktab-khaneh or maktab (traditional schools). This system had its own distinct rituals, customs, and objectives. Children in maktab used specific educational resources for literacy, most of which were lithographed texts.

Mohammad Hadi Mohammadi and Zohreh Qayini in the third volume of *The History of Iranian Children's Literature* (covering the Constitutional era), have cited and analyzed some of these texts. Similarly, Hassan Zolfaghari and Mahboubeh Heydari, in their comprehensive three-volume work *Iranian Maktabkhaneh Literature*, have extensively explored maktab literature. Before presenting each text, they provide an introduction to the text, its manuscripts, and printed editions, followed by the complete text. Additionally, they have corrected numerous errors found in lithographed editions, noting the incorrect forms in footnotes with the phrase "as in the original."

Despite these efforts, many errors persist in maktab texts, necessitating further revision. In this article, the author addresses and corrects some of the errors in the first volume of *Iranian Maktabkhaneh Literature*, focusing specifically on poetic texts.

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Methodology, Background, and Objectives

While several studies have been conducted on Iranian maktab texts, none have specifically focused on correcting their errors. Thus, this article can be considered without precedent in this regard. The author's method for correcting errors in the poetic texts involves comparing the printed versions with images of lithographed editions included in the aforementioned works (Zolfaghari-Heydari and Mohammadi-Qayini). In cases where the correct form of a word is absent in the lithographed editions, a deductive correction method is employed.

The objective of this article is to underscore the necessity of revising these texts, as they remain entertaining, enjoyable, and educational for children and serve as primary sources for studying the history and evolution of children's literature in Iran.

Discussion

The first volume of *Iranian Maktabkhaneh Literature* includes 45 complete poetic texts, some of which also appear, with variations, in *The History of Iranian Children's Literature*. Few of these 45 texts are free of errors. Here, we selectively examine and correct errors in three texts.

1. Hadith-e Sharif-e Kisa: One of the poetic maktab texts, "Hadith-e Sharif-e Kisa", is attributed to a poet with the pen name Hemmat. This text contains errors that sometimes render verses incomprehensible or meaningless. For example, in the following couplet:

پنج نوری که بود نور خدا در ارضین مصطفی بود و علی، فاطمه و بدر حنین

"Five lights, the light of God on earth,

Mustafa, Ali, Fatemeh, and Badr-e Honayn"

Instead of referring to the five members of the Ahl al-Kisa, only four are mentioned, and the identity of "بدر حنین" is unclear. The author suggests that an error occurred in recording "و بدر حنین" in the second hemistich. Based on the content of the hadith and the first hemistich (مصطفی بود و علی), the correct form should be: "مصطفی بود و علی، فاطمه بود و حسنین" (Mustafa, Ali, Fatemeh and Hasanein [signifying Hassan and Hossein]).

2. The Tale of Aunt Frog: This well-known story, authored by a poet named Sheyda, is fully reproduced in *Iranian Maktabkhaneh Literature* and summarized in *The History of Iranian Children's Literature*.

While Zolfaghari and Heydari have corrected some errors in the lithographed editions, inaccuracies persist in both printed versions. For instance, in the following couplet:

کک معلّق می زدی در پیش رو هر دمی سوسکک بلند می کرد بو

“The cricket was somersaulting ahead,
Every moment the beetle raised a "boo".”

This couplet depicts animals dancing and celebrating at Aunt Frog’s wedding to the turtle. The word “بو” appears incorrect, and its correct form, as recorded in the 1929 lithographed edition (image no. 44 in *The History of Iranian Children’s Literature*) and the lithographed edition in *Iranian Maktabkhaneh Literature*, is “غو” or “قو,” meaning to shout or cry out.

3. Nasayeh al-Atfal (the tale of Bozboz Qandi or Shangul and Mangul): This is one of the most famous children’s stories, fully reproduced in both *Iranian Maktabkhaneh Literature* and *The History of Iranian Children’s Literature*, yet neither is free of errors. For example, in the following couplet:

شده با یکدگر هر دو مقابل به سان شیرمردان در مقابل

“Both stood facing each other,
Like brave warriors in opposition.”

This couplet describes the confrontation between the goat and the wolf. The word “مقابل” in the second hemistich is incorrect, disrupting the rhyme. The correct word, as seen in the 1908 lithographed edition, is “مقاتل” (battlefield).

Conclusion

The analysis reveals that the printed editions of maktab texts, which served as educational resources for children during the Constitutional era, contain various errors. Given that these texts are primary sources for studying the evolution of children’s literature in Iran and can be interpreted and analyzed from multiple perspectives, their revision is essential. It is hoped that critical editions of these works would be made available to scholars of Persian literature, particularly those researching children’s literature, in the future.

Keywords: revision, maktab literature, lithographed editions

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