

THE GENERIC INDEPENDENCE OF THE TAXMIS: RETHINKING THE "TWO-AUTHOR" CRITERION IN ADAPTATIONS OF ALISHER NAVOI'S GHAZALS

Sevara S. Fayzullayeva
PhD Researcher, Shahrisabz State Pedagogical Institute, Uzbekistan
e-mail: sevarafayzulayeva720@gmail.com
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Abstract. The taxmis — a five-line stanzaic form built upon a pre-existing ghazal — has long been treated in Uzbek literary scholarship as an internal variety of the muxammas rather than as an autonomous genre. This article argues that the conventional "two-author" criterion, which defines the taxmis as a poem combining the lines of two poets, is insufficient, since poets including Alisher Navoi (seven instances) and Muhammad Rizo Ogahiy (eleven instances) produced taxmis upon their own ghazals. Drawing on a corpus of 133 taxmis written on Navoi's ghazals by modern Uzbek poets, the study proposes that the genre-forming feature of the taxmis is not the number of authors but the binding of the text to a ready, completed and unalterable source. Four formal markers — the two-layer stanza, the delimitation of length by the base ghazal, the impossibility of the mutakarrir form, and the dialogic function — together with the criterion of the rhyme-source distinguish the taxmis from the independent muxammas, the tazmin and the tashtir. The findings support treating the taxmis as a distinct genre of intertextual poetics.

Keywords: taxmis, muxammas, tazmin, genre independence, Alisher Navoi, rhyme-source, intertextuality, Uzbek classical poetics.

1. Introduction

Among the classical forms of intertextual poetry in Uzbek literature, the taxmis occupies a singular position: it is a poem in which the three new lines of a later poet are joined, stanza by stanza, to the two lines of an existing ghazal, so that two poetic consciousnesses meet within a single work. Despite this distinctiveness, the taxmis has frequently been subsumed under the muxammas and described merely as one of its sub-types. The classificatory tradition running from Umar Roduyoniy and Shaykh Ahmad Tarozi through the modern studies of Y. Is'hoqov, A. Hojiahmedov, D. Yusupova and T. Ro'ziboyev has described the form in detail, yet the question of its own generic laws has rarely been posed as a measurable problem. The present study addresses that gap by asking what, precisely, constitutes the taxmis as a genre, and by testing the answer against a closed corpus of 133 taxmis composed on the ghazals of Alisher Navoi.

The appeal of Navoi's ghazal to later poets is not accidental. His lyric offers a formal perfection — the variety of aruz metres, the semantic weight of radif and rhyme, the relative self-sufficiency of each couplet — and a thematic openness that is not confined to any single epoch. As I. Haqqul observes, this poetry is an address "for the king and the beggar, the lover and the mystic" alike. A couplet that is complete in itself invites a poet to build three further lines around it; an open semantic field allows those lines to speak to a new age. The taxmis is the genre in which this invitation is accepted, and its persistence into the modern period makes it a privileged site for studying how a classical form reproduces itself under new conditions.

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2. Material and method

The corpus consists of 133 taxmis written on Navoi's ghazals by three modern Uzbek poets: 109 from Aziziy (Aziz Qayumov), "Navoiyga ta'zim" (Tashkent, 2021); 21 from Ochildi Qo'ysun, "Yuz taxmis" (Tashkent, 2023); and 3 from Erkin Vohidov, "Saylanma," volumes one and three. The base texts were verified against Navoi's "Khazoyin ul-maoniy." Each work was analysed at the level of the stanza: the boundary between the amplifier's three lines and Navoi's two lines was established, the metre was determined by scansion (taqti') first on Navoi's lines and then on the amplifier's, and the composition was compared with the identified base ghazal. The analysis proceeds from a single question — what makes a text a taxmis — and tests each proposed criterion against the whole corpus rather than against selected examples.

3. The inadequacy of the "two-author" criterion

The most widely accepted definition treats the taxmis as the meeting of two authors: a later poet amplifies the couplet of a predecessor. This criterion, however, does not withstand the evidence of the tradition itself. Within Uzbek classical poetry there exist taxmis in which a poet amplifies his own ghazal: seven such examples are attributed to Alisher Navoi and eleven to Muhammad Rizo Ogahiy. The phenomenon is not confined to Uzbek literature. In his survey of the classical Turkish divan tradition, A. Yakışır examined some 970 divans containing 2944 taxmis by more than 660 poets and found that only eighteen poets had amplified their own verse — the rare case termed "tahmis-i hod." The very existence of this category demonstrates that authorship is not the defining variable. If a single poet can produce a taxmis, then the number of authors cannot be the feature that makes the text a taxmis; the defining feature must lie elsewhere — in the relationship between the texts rather than in the count of their makers.

The debate is live in contemporary scholarship. T. Ro'ziboyev studies the taxmis as a phenomenon possessing its own generic properties, whereas G. Boltayeva objects that "the taxmis is not a genre but an internal variety of the muxammas." The disagreement cannot be settled by appeal to the labels in use, because those labels are themselves applied inconsistently — as the following section shows. It can, however, be settled by locating a single generative principle from which the observable regularities of the form follow.

4. The genre-forming feature: binding to a ready text

This study proposes that the genre-forming feature of the taxmis is its binding to a pre-existing, completed and unalterable text. Whether the source ghazal belongs to another poet or to the amplifier himself, the taxmis is constituted by the obligation to preserve that source intact and to build around it. From this single principle a system of formal consequences follows. First, the stanza is two-layered: three new lines produced by the amplifier precede two lines inherited, without change, from the base ghazal. Second, the length of the work is bounded by the base ghazal: the taxmis cannot exceed the number of couplets available in its source. Third, the mutakarrir — the refrain-stanza form possible in the independent muxammas — cannot arise, because the closing lines of each stanza are fixed by the source and cannot be freely repeated. Fourth, the form carries a dialogic function: the work is not a monologue but an exchange between two creative consciousnesses mediated by a single text.

The dialogic function deserves emphasis, since it is here that the taxmis differs most sharply from a merely mechanical expansion. The two inherited lines are not an ornament appended to the amplifier's verse; they are the semantic centre to which the new lines are subordinated. The amplifier characteristically prepares the ground for Navoi's couplet — supplying a situation, a condition, or a cause — while the final word is reserved for the base text. The relation is therefore not one of competition but

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of mediation: the later poet conducts the classical couplet to a new reader, and the measure of his mastery is the degree to which his three lines serve the inherited two rather than displace them.

5. Distinguishing the taxmis from neighbouring forms

Because the taxmis stands at the intersection of two classificatory labels — by method of composition it is a kind of tazmin, by stanza size it is a muxammas — its independence can only be established by showing that neither label captures its essence. The scope of these labels is itself unstable. Husayn Voiz Koshifiy, in his "Badoyi' ul-afkor fi sanoyi' ul-ash'or," includes the taxmis and the tasdis within the category of tazmin, whereas G. Boltayeva restricts tazmin to the borrowing of a single couplet, with the remaining stanzas composed independently. Under the latter, narrow definition a taxmis that encompasses an entire ghazal does not fit the ordinary shape of tazmin at all. The labels tazmin and muxammas, therefore, describe only the outward form of the taxmis, not its generative principle.

The decisive distinction is supplied by the source of the rhyme. In the taxmis the rhyme is inherited from the base ghazal; in the independent muxammas it is invented by the poet. This criterion separates the taxmis from the independent muxammas without appeal to the number of authors, and from the ordinary tazmin, which takes only a fragment of its source rather than its entire rhyme-bearing structure. The tashtir, in turn, inserts new lines within the two lines of a single couplet, whereas the taxmis always places its three new lines at the head of the stanza and incorporates the couplets of the base ghazal in their unchanged order. The four formal markers and the rhyme-source criterion thus converge on a single conclusion: the taxmis is not a species of the muxammas but a genre defined by its relation to a ready text.

Table 1. The taxmis among typologically adjacent forms

Feature	Taxmis	Indep. muxammas	Tazmin	Tashtir
Source text	Whole ghazal, obligatory	None	One couplet	One couplet
Rhyme source	From base ghazal	Invented by poet	Partial	From base couplet
New lines	Three, at stanza head	—	Free	Within the couplet
Length	Bounded by base ghazal	Free	Free	Within the couplet
Mutakarrir	Cannot arise	Possible	—	—

6. Empirical confirmation

The regularities predicted by the genre-forming principle are borne out across the corpus. For 132 of the 133 taxmis the base ghazal was identified in Navoi's divans; in a single case the source could not be traced. Across all 132 identified works the opening couplet (matla) of the base ghazal is preserved without exception, and in 124 the closing couplet (maqta) is retained as well. In no instance is the order of the couplets altered, and in no instance does the number of stanzas exceed the number of couplets in the base ghazal.

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The single admissible compositional operation is omission, and it is distributed in a telling way: it falls regularly on the middle of the ghazal, while the opening and the close are kept. The longest work in the corpus, Ochildi Qo'ysun's eleven-stanza taxmis on a ghazal from "Favoyid ul-kibar," confirms the rule rather than breaking it — its length is permitted precisely because the base ghazal is itself long. These patterns are not stylistic preferences of individual poets but the direct expression of the genre-forming principle: because the source is fixed and unalterable, the amplifier may shorten but may neither reorder nor expand it. Authorship, by contrast, varies freely across the same corpus without altering any of these regularities — a further confirmation that the number of authors is not the operative variable.

7. Conclusion

The generic nature of the taxmis is determined not by the number of its authors but by the relationship between texts — specifically, by the binding of the new lines to a pre-existing, completed and unalterable source. This principle yields four formal markers — the two-layer stanza, the delimitation of length by the base ghazal, the impossibility of the mutakarrir, and the dialogic function — and is confirmed by a criterion of substance, the source of the rhyme, which distinguishes the taxmis from both the independent muxammas and the ordinary tazmin. On this basis the taxmis is best regarded not as an internal variety of the muxammas but as an autonomous genre of classical intertextual poetics, and the modern Uzbek taxmis written on Navoi's ghazals as living evidence of the continuity of that genre.

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