



## ORIENTAL MOTIFS THAT INFLUENCED WESTERN LITERATURE

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### ABSTRACT

This article discusses the influence of Eastern ideas and teachings on Western literature representatives and their works. It examines views on how didactic Oriental motifs inspired European creators' thinking and how the synthesis of Western and Eastern literature is reflected in their works. Information is provided on universal ideas, the essence of Eastern teachings, and their impact on Western literature.

### KEYWORDS

Eastern literature, Western literature, motif, art, culture, novel, Sufism, tariqa.

### INTRODUCTION

"Light comes from the East," says an ancient Greek proverb. Indeed, the sun rises in the East. The sun of intellect and enlightenment was also born in the East and made its way to the West. As noted by the scholar N. Komilov, art and culture first emerged in countries such as China, India, Central Asia, Arabia, and Egypt. However, the thought that illuminated and ennobled the Eastern world did not remain in its birthplace but

reached the West over time as a common property of human consciousness and intellect. It gave new inspirations to the moderate and peaceful soil of the West. This "give and take" between East and West continues to this day. Today's most impartial renowned European scholars see the decisive influence of Zoroastrianism, which originated in the frontiers of Khorezm, in the emergence of ancient

classical culture. In turn, Western classical culture became an integral page in the history of human thought. Medieval Islamic science gave it new life. It reintroduced dozens of geniuses like Aristotle, Plato, Ptolemy, and Galen to Europe under the names of Arastu, Aflatun, Batlymus, and Jalinus. At the same time, it gave the world intellectual beacons such as Al-Khwarizmi, Ahmad al-Farghani, Al-Farabi, Beruni, and Ibn Sina. The West followed the East again. And this phenomenon, which obeys the law of continuity, continued until the 15th century.

Often, scholars ponder the question of where the most ancient culture appeared: in the East or the West. N. Komilov answers this question in his work "Caravans of Thought" as follows: "By the mid-19th century, comparative literature developed as a separate science in Europe. Special schools of comparativism (comparative literature) began to emerge in the West. Particularly French scholars such as Paul Hazard, Georg Brandes, and Paul Van Tieghem enriched literary studies with new discoveries."

However, these scholars who committed to creating a history of world literature recognized only the culture of one continent, namely Europe (and even then, only Western Europe). Spiritual wealth created by other peoples remained outside their research. The magnificent Eastern culture that had flourished many centuries ago was pushed out of the general flow. Comparative literary scholars considered it unworthy

of study. This was the influence of those who viewed European people as a superior race, pursuing colonialist and racist policies. According to the representatives of this trend, which expressed the ideology of colonialism, Eastern peoples have always been backward; they have no contribution to human progress. Regarding literary influence, they believed it was only possible to speak about Europe's influence on the East. For them, studying the East was merely about collecting ethnographic data and enjoying exotic ornamentations. This disdainful view of Eastern peoples' culture was widespread not only among literary scholars but also among European philosophers and historians. For instance, a historian named F. Schlosser writes: "Eastern states are built on the basis of despotism and hierarchy. Here, religion has influenced everything, and customs, literature, ideology, morality, the form of government, and even art have been considered permanent and unchanging... They have always wanted their cultures to remain so static and did not accept the influence of others." Such views remained the dominant doctrine in the West for a long time. They strongly denied that their culture originated from the East and explained that world history consists only of the history of European peoples.

Those who sowed discord among nations claimed that East and West have been enemies from time immemorial and cannot unite. These ideas were

quoted from an article titled "Europe, Russia, and Peter the Great" published in the first issue of the journal "Russkiy Vestnik" (Russian Herald) in 1841. This article was harshly criticized by V.G. Belinsky at the time.

However, not all European intellectuals and literary figures held such negative attitudes towards the East. Especially significant was the contribution of Western Orientalist scholars in proving the genius of the East. Thanks to their efforts, several masterpieces were translated into European languages. As European readers became acquainted with the works of Eastern peoples through these translations, they witnessed that a mature culture had been established in Asia thousands of years ago, and that a high literature had been created, singing of deep, subtle human feelings and great humanistic ideas. Moreover, the works of Eastern writers greatly appealed to Western tastes and sensibilities. European writers imitated and were inspired by the creations of Easterners. The great German poet Goethe, after reading Khwaja Hafez's Divan in von Hammer's translation, was so impressed that he declared himself a disciple of the Nightingale of Shiraz. Through Hafez, he developed a lifelong love for the entire East and wrote the "West-östlicher Diwan" (West-Eastern Divan).

In Goethe's view, Eastern poetry, the works of Ferdowsi, Saadi, Hafez, and Rumi were like the "Fountain of Khidr". It was always pure and flowing, emanating the breath of life. This was a source of spirit

and creativity, a realm of love and song... It's evident that Western writers have always been captivated by the East's elegance, beauty, mystery, and wonders. In the development of science, Western scholars studied the intellectual products of our encyclopedic scholars from the Eastern lands as primary textbooks for several centuries. Particularly, Ibn Sina's "Canon of Medicine" was translated into Latin and deeply studied in Spain until the 17th century.

The role of translation in the transfer of Eastern culture to Europe was undoubtedly significant. The translation of scientific literature from Arabic to Latin began to flourish from the 12th century. Later, the translation of these works into Spanish, French, and Castilian also intensified. The cities of Toledo and Bologna became major centers of translation during that period. Separate competing translation schools were formed in these cities, where groups of translators spent several years translating Arabic books into European languages. A special educational institution for training translators was even opened in the Toledo Cathedral. Arabic works on all sciences were systematically translated into European languages and distributed in multiple copies. Spanish Orientalist Menéndez Pidal said that the translations carried out in Toledo "shook Christian scholars." These translations constitute an entire era in the development of world culture. He divides the history of science into stages before and after the activities of the Toledo school. However, it

should be noted that not only the works of Eastern scholars, but also the pearls of ancient Greek science and knowledge, first entered Europe through translations from Arabic. The philosophy of Aristotle and his Eastern followers - Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, Ibn Rushd - struck at the root of the backward doctrines and religious superstitions of that time, initiating intellectual awakening and a new worldview. Indeed, as one of our era's major Dante scholars, I. Golenishchev-Kutuzov, says: "We would not be exaggerating if we said that by studying the translations of Aristotle's works into European languages in the 11th-13th centuries alone, one could create a history of the developed Middle Ages."

Even the great Hegel, despite being under the influence of "Eurocentrism," was compelled to acknowledge the mission of Eastern peoples: "After science fell into decline among Western Christians," he says, "the star of Aristotle shone with new radiance among Eastern peoples. Later, they (the Easterners) illuminated the West with Aristotle's philosophy."

Among Western translators, we encounter names of renowned philosophers and writers. For instance, Pedro Alfonso, the translator of "One Thousand and One Nights," "Kalila and Dimna," and "Sinbadnama," also authored a book in this vein. Gerard of Cremona, translator of over sixty philosophical and scientific works, was an ardent promoter of Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd's ideas. Another translator, Michael Scot, wrote

several commentaries on the books of Eastern scholars. At that time, in all European schools, works translated mainly from Arabic were taught.

Thus, merchants, Jews and Armenians who mediated between East and West, as well as Christians in Muslim countries played an important role in disseminating Eastern scientific and cultural achievements. In particular, participants of the Crusades, having assimilated much from the East, implemented these upon returning to their homelands. "In Europe, they also began to grow rice and watermelons, apricots and lemons. Europeans learned silk weaving, glass making, and fine metalworking from Eastern peoples. In the West, they also started washing hands before meals and bathing in hot baths." It's evident that Western peoples adopted important social aspects such as culture and morality specifically from the East.

Eastern literature and thought influenced many Western creators. In the Middle Ages, Eastern scientific research was primarily reflected in the works of Western creators. We clearly see the direct influence of Eastern philosophical worldviews and astronomy in the works of Dante Alighieri. Dante Alighieri was particularly inspired by our encyclopedic scholars like Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd. Additionally, there's an idea that the events in the "Divine Comedy," specifically the matter of transitioning to the afterlife, were written based on Balkhi's "Mi'rajnama" motif. As is known, our Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) ascended to

heaven on the night of Mi'raj to see the conditions in paradise and hell. This very motif, of going to the afterlife while alive and seeing the conditions of hell and heaven, is reflected in the Divine Comedy.

Dante Alighieri, the great poet of the Italian Renaissance, was an artist with an extremely wide range of knowledge and intellectual world. Like all his contemporaries, the great Dante eagerly assimilated the achievements of Eastern culture along with the science of ancient Greece and Rome. He skillfully infused his works with Eastern spirit and traditions.

Scientific observations from Eastern authors were gradually assimilated and Latinized; Arabic names and their original homeland were forgotten, and instances of making them "one's own" occurred. For example, the classification of sciences presented in Dante's "Banquet" corresponds to Abu Nasr al-Farabi's treatise "Ihsa al-Ulum". Naturally, the poet had no opportunity to note this. The poet derived information on natural sciences and astronomy from the works of Al-Farghani. The works on astronomy by the 9th-century scholar from Fergana served as the main guide for the Italian poet. The reflections presented in the "Banquet" and the and fine metalworking from Eastern peoples. In the West, they also started washing hands before meals and bathing in hot baths." It's evident that Western peoples adopted important social aspects such as culture and morality specifically from the East.

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"Ihsa al-Ulum". Naturally, the poet had no opportunity to note this. The poet derived information on natural sciences and astronomy from the works of Al-Farghani. The works on astronomy by the 9th-century scholar from Fergana served as the main guide for the Italian poet. The reflections presented in the "Banquet" and the In conclusion, since the world's creation, two poles have been living in creative collaboration and literary connection with each other. Besides the examples mentioned above, there are many works that our scholars are still researching on this topic. The incorporation of views akin to those of the great geniuses of the East, Navoi and Rumi, and the appearance of Ibn Sina's character in Giovanni Boccaccio's "Decameron," considered one of the pearls of world literature, is clear proof of our point.

We can list creators influenced by the East such as Dante, Goethe, Giovanni Boccaccio, Fitzgerald (inspired by Omar Khayyam and Hafez), Shakespeare, John Ruskin, Montesquieu, Alexandre Dumas, Victor Hugo, British Bernard Shaw, C. Marlowe, representatives of Russian literature like Chernyshevsky, Leo Tolstoy, Brazilian Paulo Coelho, and this list can go on.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we can say that Western scholars and writers were influenced by Eastern motifs including theoretical views in science, unique traditions in the

ghazals created in classical Eastern literature, extremely delicate themes and ideas, Sufi views, Islam and its mystical ideas, and moral thinking. The contribution of Eastern teachings to world civilization is incomparable.

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