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**THE REFLECTION OF TRADITIONAL GAMES (BACKGAMMON, POLO-  
MATCH AND CHESS PRIOR- TO THE RISE OF ISLAM IN SIXTH CENTURY**

**POETS' POEMS, NEZAMI, KHAGHANI AND ANVARI**

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**ABSTRACT**

Traditional games prior to the rise of Islam in Iran, play important roles in Persian poets' poems. Thus, this study aimed to investigate the reflection of traditional games such as Backgammon, polo-match and Chess in the sixth century poets' poems Nezamin, Khaghani and Anvari. This research was a library analytical type of study. The correspondents of the study included three Persian poets; Nezami, khaghani and Anvari who were more concerned with the use of these traditional games in their poems. The research instruments included these three poets' poems mentioning these traditional games. These poems were carefully read and analyzed. The frequent use of these traditional games by each of the poets were analyzed and compared with each other. The findings of the study showed that: All the three poets used the traditional games for the beauty of their poems but they were more concerned with Chess. The use of the Backgammon and polo-match varied in accordance with the types of poems. These are indicated in the discussion.

**Keywords: Traditional games, Backgammon, polo-match, Chess, Nezami, Khaghani,  
Anvari**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The use of cultural elements such as traditional games are the most important components in Persian poems.

Some of these games belong to the period of time prior to the rise of Islam in Iran. Backgammon, polo match and Chess are included in these games and somehow, are the most attractive ones. These games are widely reflected in poems after the rise of Islam. Hence, the researcher concentrates on specific period of sixth century and specific poets' poems Nezami, Khaghani and Anvari. These poets are more concerned with the of these traditional games in their poems, Farhangso Khan (2002)

Chess has been a palace game and mostly played by the royal family members and government officials.

Little by little this game entered the religious sectors and then the society. It is now a wide common game in Iran and plays an important role in children's mind development.

Backgammon has been known and played prior to the rise of Islam in Iran, but nowadays are less played. This game is played on a wooden plate. It includes fifteen (15) black and white taws and two dices.

The third game is polo-match and compared to Chess and backgammon is

less attended to. This game started six hundred years (600). B.B.C and has been so popular during Hakha maneshian monarchy. The time of great Cyrus and Darius in Iran.

All these three traditional games indicated a cultural symbol Chess and Backgammon were the symbols of great wisdom and War planning the winner of this game could prove that he possessed a higher wisdom and ability to make plans in order to win the wars. On the other hand polo match was the symbol of strength and fighting skills. The winners of this game proved that they were stronger than others and possessed a greater horse – riding skills. Due to the cultural importance of these traditional games the researcher attempted to investigate their reflections in Nezami, Khaghani and Anvari's.

## **METHODOLOGY AND STUDY TOOLS**

This research was a library analytical study. The correspondent of the study included three Persian poets: Nezami, Khaghani, and Anvari who were more concerned to use the three traditional games of Backgammon, polo-match and Chess in their poems. The study tools included three traditional games of Backgammon, polo-match and Chess the researcher carefully read and analyzed the said poets' poems in order to investigate

the reflection of these games in their poems. These reflections were analyzed and their frequents were measured.

### **DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS**

In order to investigate the reflection of traditional games in poets' poems the researcher formulated the following research objectives:

- 1) The introduction of three traditional games of Chess, Backgammon and polo-match to the readers.
- 2) The reflection analysis and purposes of these games in poets'.

Shatrang (Chess) is a Persian word. It is derived from the indian term "chatrang". Chat means four and rang means main help. Four indicates the Hourse, Tower, Bishop and pone that help the king and Queen Taw in the game,

Naghdi-Vand (2002). The analysis of few books in Chess, resulted that Chess has existed prior to the rise of Islam in Iran but after than it has well supported and sustained in Iran, Moori (1913). Some scientific terms from Chess have entered the Persian literature and they have been frequently used in poets' poems, Estelami(2008). King build means king rise after any war defeat. King mate (matt) refers to the situation where the king has been captured and has no place to move. King cheff (Kish) refers to the situation

where the king is notified and is in danger and has to move his position.

All three poets used Chess and tis taws in their poems. Khghani assimilates war zone as Chess plate. The king substitutes the king taw, queen represents the queen taw Elephant the biggest land – living animal is represented by bishop.

Nezami uses pone taw (Piadeh) in his poems as a fighting man in the war walking on feet and in front of the army, Dastgerdi (2007). Pone is the symbol of commitment and courage. The great kings are known to be great soldiers (pones) in war.

Anvari pays more attention to Rockhtaw (tower) as a place in the two corner of traditional king's place. A strang tower (Rokh) represents the strength of a king that cannot be easily conquered Anvari, (2010)

Backgammon is an exciting traditional game prior to the rise of Islam in Iran. Like Chess, it is also an intelligence game. In ancient Rome it was the game of noble families and empires played this game, Tafazoli (2003).

All three poets have used backgammon in their poems. Nezami compares this game as a match in man's life.

Khagani uses the six side dices frequently and each side unmbers have different concept.

Polo- match started six hundred (600) years B.C. in Iran

It was very popular during the Hakhmaneshian (Cyrus and Darius) great kingship. Polo-match was more developed during the safavian regime. In fact Abbas Safavi the first was a great polo-match player, Kasrawi (1999). In Iran literature, polo-Mach is a traditional and national game. The players use a wooden stick which is curved at the bottom. They use this stick to hit a ball while riding a horse, Saedi-poor (1985).

#### **FINDING OF THE STUDY**

Generally, three traditional games of Chess, Backgammon and polo- match have great role and reflection in Nezami, Khaghaninad Anvari's poems. In fact the reflection of these games in their poems has become a style for them. There are no verses that these poets have not used these games. The reflection of these games creates a special beauty in their poems. Furthermore it is well understood that these games have been part of Iranian culture and tradition. These games are also used to present the strength of the Persian empires, the great economical, Social and political developments of their time. In details, the reflection of these games is not the same or equal. In Nezami's poems Chess is ranked number one, polo-match number two and Backgammon number three. In

khaghani's poems Backgammon is ranked number one, Chess number two and polo-match number three. In Anvari's poems, Chess is ranked number one Backgammon number two and polo-match number three.

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