

Historical development of the qasidah in Eastern literature

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Annotation. Qasidah is a genre widely used in the literature of the peoples of the East, the emergence of which has a long historical period. Qasidah also originally appeared in Arabic poetry. This article highlights the historical development of qasidah and its importance in Oriental literature. Keywords: qasidah, Oriental literature, Arabic poetry, lyrics, qasidah forms.

Историческое развитие касыды в восточной литературе

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Аннотация. Касыда-широко используемый жанр в литературе народов Востока, возникновение которого имеет длительный исторический период. Касида также изначально появилась в арабской поэзии. В этой статье освещается историческое развитие касыды и ее значение в восточной литературе.

Ключевые слова: касида, Восточная литература, арабская поэзия, лирика, формы касиды.

Sharq adabiyotida qasidaning tarixiy rivojlanishi

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Annotatsiya. Qasida sharq xalqlari adabiyotida keng qoʻllangan janr boʻlib, uning paydo boʻlishi uzoq tarixiy davrga ega. Qasida ham dastlab arab she'riyatida paydo boʻlgan. Ushbu maqolada Sharq adabiyotida qasidaning tarixiy rivojlanishi va uning ahamiyati yoritib berilgan.

Kalit soʻzlar: qasida, sharq adabiyoti, arab she'riyati, lirika, qasida shakllari.

The qasidah (also spelled *qasida*) is considered a widely used genre in the literature of Eastern peoples. The emergence of this genre has passed through a long historical period. Like other classical Uzbek lyrical genres, the qasidah also first appeared in Arabic poetry.

The term "qasidah" belongs to the Arabic language and is derived from the Arabic word "qasd" (عَصِد), which means "purpose, intention, striving." The qasidah has a unique compositional structure. This genre consists of the following parts: *the nasib (or tashbih)*, which is the lyrical introduction; *the gurezgho(h)* (the place of escape; a line or lines that transition from the nasib to the main part – *the praise*); madh (praise); and a prayer for the praised person (mamduh), followed by a conclusion that includes the main message. It should be emphasized that these structural components of the qasidah are not always found in every qasidah. Therefore, qasidahs also differ from one another in terms of their compositional structure. If all the components mentioned above are present in the



qasidah, such qasidahs are called "qasidah-i tom." If the qasidah lacks the introduction and consists only of the "madh" part, it is called a "qasidah-i mujarrada" (incomplete or "bare" qasidah) or a limited qasidah.

The length of a qasidah is not strictly defined. "It must consist of no fewer than 12 couplets. However, there is no definitive or universally accepted limit on the maximum number of couplets in classical or modern literary studies. There are both short qasidas and medium-length as well as extremely long ones (comprising several hundred couplets)."

Qasidahs are dedicated to various themes. Consequently, they can be classified by subject matter. Initially, they can be divided into *Madh* (*panegyric*) and *Wasf* (*descriptive*) qasidas.

1. Examples of **Madh gasidas**:

Hamd Qasidahs: These qasidahs poetically interpret the oneness and uniqueness of Allah as the creator of the entire universe.

Munajat Qasidas: In these qasidahs, supplications and pleas are made to Allah, seeking forgiveness for sins.

Naat Qasidahs: Derived from the term meaning "praise" or "commendation," Naat Qasidas poetically portray the ethics and qualities of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and express love, respect, and longing for him.

Madhiyah Qasidahs: These are dedicated to a specific person and are characterized by a clear theme of praise, distinguishing them from other types.

Fakhriya Qasidahs: Poets take pride in their achievements and social standing in these qasidas. *Marsiya Qasidahs:* These qasidas glorify and praise the activities of deceased individuals.

Aarifana or Sufi Qasidahs: Philosophical reflections and mystical ideas are conveyed in these qasidas.

Hajviya Qasidahs: Satire is dominant in these gasidas, often critiquing societal issues.

Julusiya Qasidahs: These are written to celebrate a ruler's ascension to the throne.

2. Wasf Qasidahs:

Qasida-i Bahoriyah: These qasidas depict the arrival of spring and the emotions associated with it.

Qasida-i Khazoniya: They describe autumn landscapes vividly.

Qasida-i Haliya: These focus on the author's personal grievances and express them poetically.

Qasida-i Hamriyah: These qasidahs revolve around wine imagery.

Ramazoniva Qasidas: Celebrate the blessings and virtues of Ramadan.

Bayram Oasidas: Focus on various festivals.

The classification shows that qasidahs are a genre with specific purposes and directions. By the 11th and 12th centuries, the scope of qasida topics expanded to include philosophical, ethical, and social themes. Initially emerging in Arabic literature, the genre later entered Persian-Tajik and subsequently Turkic literature.

It is worth noting that qasidahs existed in pre-Islamic Arabic literature as well. The structure and content of these qasidahs were closely tied to the poets` lives and personal experiences. Early qasidahs often focused on love themes. Poets would begin by describing the tent of their nomadic beloved and reflecting on their sorrowful days. The qasida typically started with a depiction of the beloved`s abode.

According to I.M. Filshtinsky, pre-Islamic poets like Al-Asha (Abu al-Hasan al-Ash`ari), who died in 629, were well-known for their qasidahs. His qasidas included simple elements and descriptions of feasts and wine. In contrast, Al-Hutaya's qasidas were marked by sharp satire, evident even in the *nasib* (introductory) section. For instance, in one qasida, the suffering of a mother camel mourning her lost calf is vividly portrayed in the *nasib*.



Al-Hutay`ah (Abu al-Hutay`ah) was one of the prominent poets in Arabic literature, living in the 7th century. He is best known for his satirical qasidahs (poems), in which he critically addressed social and political shortcomings as well as people's behavior.

During the Islamic era, this genre underwent changes within the new religious and cultural context. Qasidahs began to encompass various aspects of life, including divine, social, and political themes. According to historical sources, the earliest examples of qasidahs in Arabic literature emerged in the middle of the 5th century among the Bakr and Taghlib tribes in Eastern Arabia.

According to the Arabist scholar I. M. Filshtinsky, the founder of the qasidah genre in Arabic literature is Imru` al-Qays. Imru` al-Qays`s qasidahs hold a significant place in Arabic literature due to their themes, imagery, and style, which have deeply influenced subsequent poets and laid the foundation for the development of the qasida genre.

In Islamic regional literature, the qasida genre evolved to prominently include divine themes. Poets began writing qasidahs to praise Allah and the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), extolling their virtues and promoting moral values and responsibilities for believers. This expansion enriched the thematic scope of qasidahs. **Hamd qasidahs**, for instance, emphasized Allah's blessings, greatness, and mercy, showcasing these attributes through poetic expression, often carrying spiritual, moral, and aesthetic messages. **Naat qasidahs** artistically depicted the life, virtues, character, and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), reflecting on his divine role and relationship with humanity. A prominent figure in composing naat qasidahs was Al-Busiri, whose works gained widespread recognition. His poem "*Qasidat al-Burdah*" (The Poem of the Mantle) particularly elevated his reputation, celebrating his deep devotion to the Prophet. Comprising 160 verses, this masterpiece was composed during a period of severe paralysis in Al-Busiri's life, showcasing his profound faith and poetic mastery. Al-Busiri's *Qasidat al-Burdah* is considered a classic example of naat qasidahs in Arabic literature.

It should be noted that many poets composed gasidas dedicated to the "Burdah" of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). One such poet was Ka'b ibn Zuhayr, who was also among the most famous poets in Arabic literature. Ka'b ibn Zuhayr's own qasida, titled "Qasida al-Burdah", gained significant fame. The term "burdah" in the title of the gasida refers to a mantle made from striped patterned cloth. According to historical accounts, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) healed a paralyzed person by placing his own burdah over them, inspiring poets to compose qasidas in honor of the Prophet and his mantle. Scholar I.M. Filshtinsky mentions that Muslims would carry parts of these gasidahs as talismans. Initially, Ka'b opposed the Prophet and his teachings, which led to conflict. However, after falling seriously ill and seeking reconciliation, Ka'b wrote the poem beginning with "Su'ad has departed me". When he presented it to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), the Prophet was pleased and rewarded Ka'b by gifting him his burdah. This qasidah subsequently became renowned in the Islamic world under the name "Qasidat al-Burdah" ("The Poem of the Cloak"). This poem holds significant importance in Islamic culture, inspiring numerous poets and scholars to write commentaries on it and event underneath served as a symbol of divine favor and mercy. According to the Syrian Arab scholar Abdul al Hammamisi in his work "Busiri The Greatest Poet to Praise the Prophet": "If we carefully examine hundreds of qasidahs written in praise of the Prophet, undoubtedly, the following three great qasidahs stand out. They are masterpieces of Arabic poetry, skillfully elevated to the level of art through immense love, devotion, and perfect faith in their style of praise:

The first is from the early Islamic period (7th century CE) by Ka'b ibn Zuhayr, recited in the presence of the Messenger of Allah, beginning with "Banat Su'ad," meaning "Su'ad Has Departed."

The second is from the medieval Islamic period (7th century AH or 13th century CE) by Al-Busiri, titled "Al-Kawakib ad-Durriyya fi Madhi Khayr al-Bariyya," meaning "The Celestial Stars in Praise of the Best of Creation."



The third is by the poet Ahmad Shawqi (1868–1932), titled "Nahj al-Burda," meaning "Following the Path of the Burda.""

Another prominent early Muslim poet was Hassan ibn Thabit. He was born in Medina and lived during the time of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Sources highlight that he had a very close relationship with the Prophet. This connection is vividly reflected in his poetry, which frequently expresses deep love and reverence for the Prophet.

In addition to personal reflections, Hassan ibn Thabit's qasidas also address various social and political issues of his time. "His compositions differ somewhat from the traditional structure of Bedouin poets. One distinctive feature of his qasidahs is the shortened nasib (introductory part), where he transitions quickly to the main subject with phrases as "let us leave this aside." This approach adds grandeur and logical coherence to his poems. Hassan's poetry is deeply influenced by Islamic teachings, particularly in its philosophical and ethical themes. Ideas such as purification, accountability for sins, and a renewed understanding of life's purpose frequently appear, showcasing the impact of Islamic thought on his work."

The period from the mid-8th century to the first quarter of the 9th century in Arab criticism is referred to as the "renewal" (Arabic: bade') era. During this time, poets abandoned the old traditions of classical Arabic poetry and enriched Arab literature with contemporary themes and content. This period saw the active cultural and political participation of various peoples within the Caliphate, particularly the Persians, who began influencing Arab culture and daily life. Literature, once exclusive to the Arab aristocracy, became accessible to the broader population of the Caliphate. For the growing urban populations in major cities like Baghdad and Basra, the traditional structures, imagery, and themes of classical Arabic qasidahs were increasingly irrelevant, prompting a shift in poetic style and focus to resonate with the evolving cultural and societal dynamics.

From the mid-8th century to the early 9th century, Bashshar ibn Burd and Abu Nuwas played significant roles in the development of Arabic literature. Born in Kufa, Iraq, but of Persian origin, Bashshar ibn Burd was active in Kufa and Baghdad. His poetry introduced new themes to Arabic literature, particularly revolving around love, nature, and humanity. His innovative works earned him widespread recognition among poets of the Islamic era.

Abu Nuwas (756–814) also of Persian origin, lived and worked in Baghdad. He brought new trends to Arabic poetry, focusing heavily on themes of joy and love. His famous poem "Qasidat al-Sharaab" celebrated themes of wine and revelry, a departure from traditional Arabic poetry.

The works of Bashshar ibn Burd and Abu Nuwas greatly influenced the evolution of Arabic poetry in subsequent centuries. Their creative approach served as a foundation for other poets, reshaping the literary environment. They shifted focus from traditional qasida themes to topics reflecting contemporary life and emotions. This period also marked the emergence of new poetic forms and simpler structures, alongside the rise of genres outside the qasida. These innovations contributed significantly to the literary diversity and vibrancy of Arabic literature.

It should be noted that literature, as an artistic medium, has always reflected socio-political life, serving as a powerful tool to interpret societal issues creatively. This phenomenon is evident in Arabic literature as well. During the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates, political systems were primarily geared toward maintaining power, resulting in widespread social injustices. In response, Sufism emerged in literature as a form of dissent against the prevailing political environment, advocating for spiritual transformation and justice within society. Sufi poets used poetry as a medium to spread their ideas. They promoted themes such as divine love, spiritual growth, and justice in their works. Often employing symbolism, these poets could express dissent and critique society indirectly, thus avoiding overt confrontation. This use of symbolic language allowed for nuanced critiques while safeguarding the poets from political repercussions.

In gatherings led by Sufi sheikhs, literary discussions gained prominence, where works from various genres were read and analyzed. "Qasidahs found a notable place in these sessions, especially



those with philosophical undertones. This focus significantly contributed to the development of philosophical qasidas, which later spread to regions such as Iran, Central Asia, Afghanistan, and India".

The emergence of philosophical-mystical qasidas in Arabic literature is associated with the name of Abul Atahiya (Abu al-Atahiya). "He was one of the most renowned poets of Arabic literature, living between 747 and 825. Distressed by the injustices prevailing in the Abbasid caliphal courts of Al-Mahdi and Harun al-Rashid, he withdrew into asceticism and wrote qasidahs criticizing court traditions. His qasidahs are free from any form of grandeur, pomposity, flattery, or artificiality. Despite the potential to provoke anger among other poets, he broke traditional poetic structures and considered himself superior to all such conventions."

Abu al-Ala Ahmad ibn Abdullah ibn Sulayman ibn Muhammad al-Qudai al-Tanukhi al-Ma`arri (known as Al-Ma`arri) (973–1057) was a renowned poet, thinker, linguist, and philosopher, considered one of the most prominent figures in Arabic literature. He was born in the city of Kufa, Iraq. Al-Ma`arri possessed advanced knowledge of his time and had an extensive mastery of Arabic language, literature, philosophy, and history.

Al-Ma`arri was born blind, but his inner vision – his intellect and insight – was exceptionally keen. Through this "vision of the heart," he perceived and understood the injustices, inequalities, and hypocrisies prevalent in society. As a result, his works are marked by uncompromising criticism of the significant issues of his time. "Abu'l-Ala, a contemporary of Beruni," wrote academician I. Y. Krachkovsky, "with his freedom of thought, independence of mind, and vitality in life, must have been on par with the great astronomer from Khiva. Of course, his worldview was somewhat narrower... He spent his long life, full of suffering, deeply reflecting on and contemplating the higher issues of human existence."

In Al-Ma`arri`s qasidas, philosophical themes such as the spiritual development of humans, the meaning of life, destiny and free will, and divine truths are explored with artistic depth. For example, in his qasida "Qasidat al-Nafs", the poet reflects on the struggle between the soul and desires, emphasizing human perfection and inner conflict.

"The evolution of urban culture also influenced society's perception of literature. Previously, poets at Arab rulers' courts often concealed the truth and focused solely on glorifying the king. However, as attitudes toward humans and the environment shifted, new critical literature emerged, challenging traditional norms and fostering a broader, more reflective literary approach."

The qasida genre, which originated in Arabic poetry, is also considered a traditional poetic form widely adopted in Persian-Tajik literature. "Qasida, one of the ancient forms of Arabic literature, took shape as an independent poetic genre during the Jahiliyyah period (pre-Islamic era) of Arab Bedouin literature. It later became integral to Islamic culture, spreading across various nations and influencing their literary traditions. Persian literature, in particular, embraced the qasida as a leading genre, refining and developing it further."

The academician A. Mirzoev, reflecting on the developmental period of the qasida genre in Persian-Tajik literature, notes that the 10th-11th centuries can be considered the "qasida era" within Persian-Tajik literature. [20] It is important to note that one of the primary factors contributing to the development of the qasida genre in Persian-Tajik literature was the socio-political context. In the 10th century, the Samanid dynasty was established, creating a centralized government that provided a conducive environment for poets and writers. The Samanids sought to reinforce their authority by promoting praise qasidas, which served as a significant tool for glorifying the ruling class due to their laudatory and elevated tone.

During the Samanid era, many renowned poets composed praise qasidas to extol the rulers, thereby contributing to the prestige of the state. These works were not only of literary and aesthetic value but also held political significance, supporting and legitimizing the authority of the ruling elite.



The evolution of the qasida genre in Persian-Tajik literature demonstrated that its traditional forms and structures served not just artistic purposes but also political objectives.

In the 10th-11th centuries, literature primarily developed around royal courts, with qasida emerging as the leading genre. Secular literary figures often directed their works—whether epics or qasidas—toward influential individuals in society, such as kings, ministers, or prominent landowners, hoping for recognition or rewards in return. Evidence suggests that the qasidas of the 11th century expanded in thematic scope, diversified in form, and became richer in content compared to those of the 10th century.

The lofty praises found in panegyric qasidas, particularly those directed at rulers, became an important tool for strengthening their authority. "Consequently, by the 10th-12th centuries, the qasida had solidified its position as the principal genre in Persian-Tajik literature, with the number of qasida poets steadily increasing. Abbas Marvazi is noted as the author of the first qasida in Persian literature".[22] If we look at the works of poets from this era, it becomes evident that the qasidah was the most active and prominent genre. A significant portion of the collected works (diwans) of renowned poets consisted of qasidas. For instance, Unsuri's diwan includes 64 qasidahs, Farrukhi's diwan contains 213, and Manuchehri's diwan features 57 qasidahs, confirming this observation.

Starting from the 12th century, similar to Arabic literature, Persian-Tajik poetry also began to develop philosophical and Sufi-themed qasidahs. An example of this is Sanai's qasidahs, which explore philosophical and mystical themes. According to scholar M.L. Reisner, Sanais symbolic-mystical qasida "*Tasbih al-Tuyur*" (The Glorification of Birds) is based on verse 41 of Surah An-Nur in the Quran:

"Do you not see that Allah is exalted by whomever is within the heavens and the earth and by the birds with wings spread (in flight)? Each (of them) knows its prayer and exaltation (of Allah), and Allah is Knowing of what they do." This divine verse served as inspiration for the qasida's themes and symbolism.[24] In the qasida, symbolic and metaphorical meanings are expressed through the depiction of birds and their songs. The philosophical and mystical themes initiated by Sanai were further developed and expanded upon in the 12th century by poets such as Anvari and Khaqani.

The literature of the Samanid period owes much to Abu Abdullah Jafar ibn Muhammad Rudaki, considered the founder of classical Persian-Tajik literature. He made significant contributions to the refinement of the qasida genre in Eastern literature. Some of his well-known qasidahs include "Shikayat az Pir" ("Complaint about old age"), "Buye Joye Moliyan" ("The Fragrance of the Moliyan Stream"), and "Modari May" ("Mother of Wine"). The qasida "Shikayat az Pir" belongs to the category of Holiya (reflective or descriptive qasidahs), while "Modari May" falls under the hamriya (odes dedicated to wine) genre.

The qasida "Shikayat az Pir" is written in the hasbi hal style, where the author describes his personal state and circumstances. Within the poem, Rudaki intertwines reflections on his own biography with his philosophical perspectives. The qasida conveys the poet's thoughts on the transience of human life, emphasizing the fleeting nature of existence and the importance of valuing life, making the most of it, and dedicating it to virtuous deeds. These moral and philosophical exhortations are skillfully woven into the fabric of the poem.

The development of the qasida genre in Persian-Tajik literature reached a significant point by the 13th century. It is noted in historical sources that Mawlana Rumi authored nearly 300 qasidas. These poems, primarily in the genres of tawhid (monotheistic praise) and munajat (intimate prayers or supplications), further illustrate the versatility and depth of the qasida tradition within Persian literature.

The development and refinement of the qasida genre in Persian-Tajik literature are directly associated with Nasir Khusraw. His extensive intellectual and poetic legacy includes works in Persian and Arabic, such as two diwans (poetry collections), "Safarnama", "Saodatnama", "Roshnoinama",



"Jame al-Hikmatayn", "Kushoish va Rahoish", "Vajh-i Din", "Zad al-Musafirin" and numerous qasidas.

Notably, prior to Nasir Khusraw, qasidas primarily focused on praise and panegyric themes. However, his qasidas shifted towards educational and enlightenment topics, emphasizing the significance of knowledge and wisdom in human life. He often criticized ignorance and highlighted its negative consequences. This thematic shift allowed his poetry to address and critique the social and cultural challenges of his time.

Nasir Khusraw`s qasidas can be categorized thematically into three groups:

- 1. Hasbi Hal (Personal Narratives and Complaints about Fate): These qasidahs reflect personal experiences, grievances, and life adventures.
- 2. Praise of Knowledge, words, and pen: These qasidahs promote Islamic teachings and emphasize the transformative power of learning and intellectual growth.
- 3. Social and Philosophical Critiques: These qasidas expose societal ills, condemn injustice and address philosophical reflections on morality and ethics.

Overall, Nasir Khusraw`s qasidahs are a significant part of his creative legacy, encompassing a wide range of religious, social, and philosophical themes.

During the 13th-14th centuries, notable changes occurred in the form and content of Persian qasidahs. These changes were not limited to themes but extended to the complexity of rhythm and rhyme. Salman Sawaji (1300-1368) exemplified this evolution through his creation of "masnu" qasidas" (artificial or highly stylized qasidas). In these works, poets showcased their skill by employing multiple artistic devices and complex expressions.

These "masnu' qasidas" often utilized ambiguous expressions with multiple interpretations, reflecting the sophistication of the genre. However, over time, the overly ornate style led to a shift where the genre became primarily "art for art's sake". The focus on artificial expressions, intricate wordplay, and obscure imagery made these qasidahs accessible only to a select elite audience, limiting their broader cultural relevance.

Overall, the qasidah, which first emerged as an early lyrical genre in Arabic poetry, laid the foundation for the development of other genres. This genre underwent a unique trajectory of evolution in Persian-Tajik literature, experiencing significant thematic expansion. In Persian-Tajik literature, qasidahs evolved from being primarily panegyrics to encompassing philosophical, educational, and mystical themes, reflecting the changing social, political, and cultural dynamics over centuries. This broadening of themes enriched the genre and made it a versatile medium for poets to address various aspects of human experience and intellectual thought.

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