

THE LIFE OF THE TEXT AND THE FATE OF TRADITION. II: “OLD AGE QASHĪDA” BY RŪDAKĪ (THE STANDARD AND ITS DEVIATION)

Qashīda, being one of the most popular forms of classical Persian poetry (3th—9th/9th—15th centuries), has traditionally been studied in the course of the literature history and specially, within the framework of heritage of this or that medieval author. In Persian poetry *qashīda* most rapidly developed in the 4th—6th/10th—12th centuries and it is the *qashīdas* that date to this period that have attracted keen interest of specialists. The well-known works by E. E. Bertels, who contributed a lot to the formation of the notion of the *qashīda* place in the history of Persian literature, are quite typical [1]. At the same time in the works by E. E. Bertels one can find elements of another approach that is to study *qashīda* as specific form of poetry with a stable structure and special poetics created in accordance with strict normative requirements. This approach most consecutively developed in the works dedicated to the early period of poetry development in the new Persian language [2].

Most scholars formed their conclusions about the character of *qashīda*'s existence in Persian literature basing on the earliest fully extant texts. That is why no study on the history of classical Persian poetry spares the mention of the *Old Age Qashīda* by Rūdakī (d. 329/940—1), which is one of the two extant *qashīdas* of the famous “Adam of Iranian Poets” (fig. 1).

Constant scholarly interest to the works of the father of Persian poetry resulted in numerous publications devoted to the study of the Rūdakī's work various aspects. However, due to the length of the research tradition, some evaluations and opinions on Rūdakī's life and poetry typical of the previous stages of Oriental literature studies have been “conserved”. Among such scholarly stereotypes we should point out an obvious actuality exaggeration or, to put it more precisely, the biographical nature of Rūdakī's *Old Age Qashīda* which is sometimes called *Elegy of Old Age*, as well as persistent attempts to disprove the legend about the poet's inborn blindness which appeared in Medieval times and is based on his own works [3].

The theory of canon, which has been intensively developing in the mediaeval studies of the latest decades and which displays the necessity to analyze the works of mediaeval literature basing upon normative rules, in accordance with which they were created, can help to overcome these stereotypes. Taking the idea of an author's individuality display specifics in canonical art as a starting point, we shall look at one of the aspects of *qashīda*'s poetics' study basing ourselves on the most famous work of early Persian

qashīda — Rūdakī's *Elegy of Old Age*. The present publication aims at defining the abovementioned poetic text relation to the preceding tradition of Arabic *qashīda* as precisely as possible, as well as to reveal its ties with the concepts of an “exemplary” *qashīda* which are outlined in Arabic mediaeval works on theoretical poetics and which were adopted by the Persians as part of the poetical theory and practice integral system. The key elements of the study are the “thematic composition” analysis (V. M. Zhirmuskii) of the *Old Age Qashīda* and the question of documentary (autobiographical) details in it. We believe that another important task of the present study is to give a clearer idea on the role of the concerned work in the process of *qashīda*'s development in the Persian language, i. e. about its relation to the subsequent poetic tradition.

A quick review of opinions about Rūdakī's *Elegy of Old Age* leads to the conclusion that some researchers, for various reasons, tend to mark it out the monorhymic works known as *qashīdas*. Thus, M.-N. O. Osmanov, insisting on the oneness of this work by Rūdakī writes: “Such narrative lyrical poem is not typical of Persian-Tajik poetry of the 3th—4th/9th—10th and the following centuries”. The same author notes that it “develops” as a simple “story about event with reproduction of life peripetias, with descriptions of trivial details (the teeth crumbled and fell out, he bought women slaves, beautiful maids dated him, etc.)”. Developing the idea about the originality of the *Old Age Qashīda*, M.-N. O. Osmanov notes: “this poem is only formally considered to be a *qashīda* — according to the number of *bayts*” [4].

I. S. Bragin'skii shares the opinion of the researchers who build up their reconstructions of the main events in the life of the “Adam of Poets” on the material of the *Old Age Qashīda* and who claim that the *Elegy of Old Age* is “autobiographical from beginning to end” [5]. Conveying a special mood, which emerges while reading Rūdakī's *qashīdas*, the researcher notes: “in the *qashīda The Mother of Wine* there is so much refined skill that it has become subject of study as a model of *qashīda* and can become a source of even more philological comments. But in the *Elegy of Old Age* as well as in *The Mother of Wine* the last thing one wants to do is to draw attention to formal analysis (a lot in this respect is so obvious that can be easily revealed)” [6].

The outer disparateness of the two opinions mentioned above nevertheless leads to the same result: charmed with the smooth flow of the lyrical plot and the *Elegy of Old Age* narration the researchers beforehand keep from analyzing