
TEXT AND ITS CULTURAL INTERPRETATION

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THE LIFE OF THE TEXT AND THE FATE OF TRADITION. VIII: CRITERIA OF LANGUAGE NORM IN THE ASSESSMENT OF MASTERS OF PERSIAN GHAZAL OF THE 11TH — EARLY 18TH CENTURIES

The study of a literary language of a former era can be conducted in several directions. As this involves linguistic facts of a certain era recorded in written monuments, it is possible to make a linguistic description of the information contained in them. A traditional philological and purely literary description of the same body of written texts will also be just as appropriate. In our case, the object of research is poetic texts in New Persian (*darī*, *fārsī-ye darī*), which began to form as a united literary language in the 9th—10th centuries, and the area of research can be characterized as philological in the wide sense of this word.

The process of the formation of New Persian as a language of refined literature has been studied in Iranian studies at all stages of its development, and so we can limit ourselves to references to authoritative studies of previous decades [1]. The task of the present work is much more modest and narrow: to trace the evolution of ideas about a normative (standard, modern) language in one of the most productive forms of Persian classical lyric — *ghazal* — on the material of statements by the masters of *ghazal* of the 11th—17th centuries themselves.

Any poetic tradition developing within a traditional type of artistic conscious forms a list of rules for dealing with language, which is a general guide for everyone who writes in the literary language. This kind of precept exists in the form of theoretical works addressed to the participants of the literary process and directed towards developing skills of poetical “development” of a common language. Besides theoretical and literary-critical means of reflecting ideas about the norm of the poetic language, the opinions of the poets themselves are strengthened in the tradition, as they express directly in the work with the use of figurative speech. We will restrict our investigations in this direction to *ghazal*, in which the corresponding motifs have quite strict localization and can be easily singled out in the text.

In the Persian classical *ghazal*, starting from the 11th century, the circle of motifs for describing modern poetic creation gradually forms. By the 13th century, the motifs of authorial self-awareness are fully established in the canon of *ghazal* and occupy a certain position in its structure, as they are connected with the signature of the poet (*takhalluṣ*), which traditionally marks the end of each poem of this form. Genetically in the *ghazal* these motifs, which are one of the components of the self-praise of the poet (*fakhr*) and grouped around the author's “signature”, come from the corresponding motifs of the panegyric *qaṣīda*, where they frequently overshadowed the request for reward for the poems, which was masterfully inserted into the text. The adaptation of motifs of self-praise to the standard structure of the *ghazal*, which was originally a form of love lyric and retained love themes for centuries, required their transformation in accordance with the new thematic and stylistic environment.

In court poetic culture, the *ghazal* was primarily a genre designed to delight, and so in the poetry itself and the theoretical judgements of *ghazal*, it is ascribed qualities which enable a harmonisation of human nature. The renowned poetry theorist of the 13th century *Shams-i Qays al-Rāzī* writes:

“As the aim of *ghazal* is to calm the thoughts and delight the soul, it should be supported by a pleasant, euphonious metre, sweet smooth words and transparent settled meanings. When composing it, one should avoid ugly words and discordant sounds” [2].

The performance of *ghazals* to the accompaniment of musical instruments, among which poets mention the *barbat*, *chang*, *rubāb*, *tanbūr*, *ūd* and others, was a stable tradition throughout the classical Middle Ages. This practice was also one of the reasons for a demand in musicality and smoothness in the poetic language of the