

GENESIS AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF BAYOZ

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Abstract: This article discusses the *bayozs* (literary anthologies) that were well-known and popular in Uzbek classical literature until the beginning of the 20th century. The genesis of *bayozs*, their development, and the factors contributing to this process are analyzed. Additionally, the study explores the reasons behind the spread of *bayozs* among the peoples of the East.

Keywords: *bayoz*, poem, poetry collection, *mu'allaqat*, *qasida*.

Bayozs serve as essential sources for preserving the works of poets who lived in different eras and regions up to the present day, and their genesis is closely linked to Arabic literature. According to experts, "the birthplace of Arabic poetry was Hijaz and Najd in northern Arabia. Initially, Arabs recited words with a certain rhythm, rhyme, and melody to call unruly camels. Through this, Arabic poetry gradually emerged." Later, as it developed and acquired a delightful, extraordinarily impactful character, the prestige of poets in society also grew.

For instance, among the ancient Quraysh tribes, there were special reciters (*rawis*) who memorized oral works—whether prose or poetry—upon hearing them once and passed them on to others orally. Examples include Mahrama ibn Nufal, Huwaytab ibn Abdu al-Uzza, and others. However, due to inter-tribal wars, changes in religion and beliefs, or the omission of certain poems, some of these genres gradually disappeared. This threat persisted until oral works were transcribed into written literature.

Amr al-Ulya, who lived in the 8th century, noted: "*Most of the literature created before Islam has not reached us, and if all of it had survived, you would have known many facets of science and numerous examples of poetry.*" Indeed, any piece of oral literature is subject to either evolution or oblivion. The gradual decline of oral performance heightened the necessity of recording it in written literature. According to Hanna al-Fakhuri, the earliest written sources in Arabic lands provided information about Arabic literature even before the advent of Islamic culture. This information consisted of biographies of poets and writers, excerpts from their works, and brief evaluations of their creative output, serving as an important object of study in Arabic literary research.

As Islamic enlightenment began to spread across Arabic lands and peoples, the challenge of preserving ancient Arabic poetry and transmitting it to future generations in

its original form increasingly preoccupied Arabic poets and scholars. Scholars of that era—such as Hammad ar-Rawi (d. 771), Khalaf al-Ahmar (d. 796), Abu Amr Ishaq ibn Mirar ash-Shaybani (d. 821), Al-Asma'i Abdu al-Malik ibn Quraib (d. 828), Abu Said al-Hasan as-Sukkari (d. 888), and Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn al-Qasim al-Anbari (d. 939)—strove to perform and preserve oral Arabic works in their authentic state. There were several reasons for this:

1. As human culture and lifestyle progressed, the nature and performance style of Arabic poetry also began to change, which inevitably impacted oral traditions.
2. The expansion of relations between Arab peoples and other nations under the influence of Islam created the risk of oral works merging with the literature of non-Arab (*Ajam*) peoples. That is, as populations outside Arabia converted to Islam, they listened to, were captivated by, and memorized the poems of desert poets. This increased the likelihood of Arabic poetry spreading globally and being absorbed into the literature of other nations.

To prevent such issues and fully transmit Arabic history and literature to future generations, dedicated scholars decided to commit these works to writing. Among the scholars who attempted to preserve pre-Islamic ancient Arabic poetry were Dr. Margoliouth and Dr. Taha Hussein. In addition to recording the poems, they noted the existence of genres such as *ghazal*, *fakhr*, *madh*, *ritha*, *hajw*, and *zuhd*, highlighting that *maqta'a* (poems not exceeding seven couplets) was particularly well-developed.

Starting from the second century AH, poems of poets who lived prior to Islam were written down and annotated. Some poets drew upon ancient Arabic poetry sources in their own work. K. Osipova, who researched the history of ancient Arabic poetry, recommended studying it in three distinct periods:

1. **Jahiliyyah Period Poetry:** Bishr ibn Abi Khazim (d. 533), Alqama ibn 'Abada al-Fahl (d. 588), Amr ibn Kulthum (d. 6th century), Al-Khadira (d. 6th century), etc.
2. **Umayyad Period Poetry:** Abu Zubayd al-Walid ibn Uqba (d. 670), Yazid ibn al-Mu'awiya (d. 684), Al-Walid ibn Yazid (707–744), etc.
3. **Abbasid Period Poetry:** Abu Tammam, Habib ibn Aws (805–845), Al-Buhturi, Ibn Duraid (837–933), Ibn Bassam (844–914), etc.

Although lyrical poetry flourished in all three periods, practical efforts to discover new poetic genres and develop their theoretical foundations intensified during the Abbasid era. Sources state that in 750, power shifted from the Umayyads to the Abbasids. During this period, science and scholarship advanced significantly across Arab lands and territories

under their control. Literary scholars, in particular, sought to enrich Arabic literature and create original poetic works by exploring new literary forms and genres.

As a result of these efforts, a trend initiated by Bashshar ibn Burd (d. 783) and Abu Nuwas (d. 810) emerged. They introduced new styles and poetic devices into poetry. Literature developed substantially during this era. While adopting these new styles and devices, poets also actively referenced pre-Islamic poetry and its aesthetic techniques. *"The most significant research conducted in philology was primarily linked directly to pre-Islamic Arabic poetry and language. Consequently, many Arabic poets continued their work while firmly binding it to this tradition."*

During their research, Hanna al-Fakhuri and H. A. R. Gibb listed the following works providing information about ancient Arabic poetry:

1. ***Al-Mu'allaqat Collection***: Compiled in the 8th century by Hammad ar-Rawi. It consists of seven *mu'allaqat* featuring poems by famous 6th-century poets.
2. ***Al-Mufaddaliyyat Anthology***: Compiled by Al-Mufaddal ad-Dabbi. It contains *qasidas* by approximately 128 pre-Islamic poets.
3. ***Diwan al-Hamasah ("Book of Courage" Anthology)***: A two-volume poetry collection compiled in the 9th century by the famous poet Abu Tammam. Divided into seven thematic sections, it features poems by numerous pre-Islamic poets.

During the compilation of this book, referencing ancient traditions and studying the rules of poetic science through the works of earlier poets intensified. Driven by this interest, Abu Tammam undertook a major endeavor that fulfilled the aspirations of poets in his era. He compiled the works of poets from the earliest times up to his day, categorizing them as follows:

1. *Kitab al-Ikhtiyar min Shi'r al-Qaba'il* (Selected Works of Tribal Poets)
2. *Kitab al-Ikhtiyarat min Shi'r ash-Shu'ara* (Selected Poetic Works of Poets)
3. *Kitab al-Fuhul* (Book of Great Poets)
4. *Kitab al-Hamasah* (Book of Valor)
5. *Ikhtiyar al-Muqatta'at* (Selected Poetic Excerpts)
6. *Mukhtarat min Shi'r al-Muhdasin* (Selected Poems of Contemporary Poets)
7. *Annaqa'id Jarir wa-l-Akhtal* (A collection of 20 satirical poems written by two poets against each other)

This structural organization is noteworthy because, starting with Abu Tammam's work, the output of poets was categorized into distinct sections based on their era, skill,

and poetic characteristics. Thus, Abu Tammam, as an enlightened figure of his time, established a novel approach distinct from previous works. Because this compilation served as a vital source for studying Arabic poetry, it was later translated into German by Friedrich Rückert.

Poets following Abu Tammam sought to develop this tradition further. His student, Al-Buhturi, aimed to compile his collection with a different character than his master's. The difference between them is evident in their thematic choices, material selection, and structural principles. Al-Buhturi's work consists of 174 chapters of varying lengths, featuring poetic excerpts from nearly 600 poets (from pre-Islamic and early Islamic eras). Gradually, the tradition of compiling poetry anthologies spread across Arab lands and surrounding regions.

4. ***Kitab al-Aghani* ("Book of Songs") by Abu al-Faraj al-Isfahani (d. 976)** and the collection ***Poetry and Poets* by Ibn Qutaybah** also contain works by numerous pre-Islamic poets.

The uniqueness of this 20-volume work on songs by Abu al-Faraj (897–967)—a renowned scholar, writer, and historian based in Baghdad—lies in its inclusion of information about songs, their composers, and poets from pre-Islamic times up to his day. *"When arranging the couplets, Abu al-Faraj al-Isfahani sometimes added poems with similar meanings when the context demanded it. The composers in this work were not ordered by era or rank."* He excluded poets already included in the collections of Abu Tammam and Al-Buhturi, focusing instead on poets, poems, and songs omitted by them. It also included intriguing historical events from the pre-Islamic and early Islamic periods.

5. **A collection of Arabic poems compiled by Ibn ash-Shajari and Abu Zayd al-Qurashi.**

Thus, while the effort to record Arabic poetry began in the 8th century with Hammad ar-Rawi, it reached its peak in the work of Abu Tammam. Subsequent poets continued this tradition, further refining its structure.

Overall, studying and researching *bayozs* provides valuable insights for various academic fields. Beyond national histories, the study of poetry anthologies offers precious information about the past, culture, lifestyle, and aesthetic taste of these peoples.

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