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The Creation and Composition of Sayyid Qasimiy's "Majma' ul-Axbor"

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Abstract: Classical Uzbek literature of the fifteenth century reflects the rich intellectual and cultural life of Central Asia, particularly through the continuation of the didactic and philosophical masnavi tradition. Sayyid Qasimiy's *Majma' ul-Axbor* represents an important contribution to this heritage, modeled on Haydar Khorazmi's *Makhzan ul-Asrar* and influenced by Nizami Ganjavi, yet enriched with distinctive features that reveal the poet's originality and social concerns. Despite its literary value, this epic has received relatively little scholarly attention, and its thematic, structural, and stylistic aspects remain insufficiently studied within the broader framework of Uzbek classical literature. This research seeks to examine the creation, composition, and significance of *Majma' ul-Axbor*, highlighting its moral-didactic themes, artistic features, and historical context. The findings show that Qasimiy's work combines traditional introductory sections such as *hamd*, *na't*, supplication, and eulogy with eighteen introductions (*sarsuxan*) and corresponding stories addressing issues of justice, generosity, patience, loyalty, and love. The poet's method of beginning each tale with a thematic introduction and linking the stories through recurring refrains provides cohesion and reflects his mastery of literary conventions. The study establishes *Majma' ul-Axbor* as both a continuation of the Khamsa tradition and an original response to earlier works, distinguished by Qasimiy's creativity, rhetorical skill, and moral vision. The analysis underscores the epic's cultural and historical significance, affirming its role in Uzbek literary heritage and emphasizing the need to further investigate underexplored figures like Qasimiy to enrich our understanding of the evolution of didactic poetry and national identity.

Keywords: Sayyid Qasimiy, "Majma Ul-Axbor", Traditional Introductions, Stories, The "Sare" Meter of Aruz, Nizami Ganjavi, Haydar Khorazmi, "Makhzan ul-Asrar"

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1. Introduction

The study of classical Uzbek literature provides essential insights into the cultural, intellectual, and social history of Central Asia, particularly in the fifteenth century, when literary traditions flourished under the influence of both Persian and Turkic models. Among the important but less explored figures of this period is Sayyid Qasimiy, whose epic *Majma' ul-Axbor* represents a significant contribution to the development of didactic poetry and the continuation of the "Khamsa" tradition [1]. Although this work has received occasional scholarly attention, its thematic richness and structural composition still require deeper examination to understand its literary and cultural value. *Majma' ul-Axbor* is modeled on and explicitly responds to Haydar Khorazmi's *Makhzan ul-Asrar*, itself an adaptation of Nizami Ganjavi's celebrated masnavi. Like its predecessors, Qasimiy's

work is philosophical and moral-didactic in nature, yet it bears distinctive features that reflect the author's personal circumstances, artistic talent, and the socio-political environment of his era [2]. The epic is dedicated to Sultan Abu Said Mirzo, a Timurid ruler, and integrates traditional elements such as *hamd*, *na't*, supplication, and eulogy with a sequence of introductions (*sarsuxan*) and corresponding stories. Each story addresses moral, ethical, and social issues through the voices of prophets, sheikhs, kings, and heroes, while recurring refrains bind the narratives together into a unified structure. In this way, Qasimiy enriches the didactic epic genre with his creativity, wordplay, and deep reflection on human values. Studying this work is significant not only for clarifying the role of Sayyid Qasimiy in Uzbek literary history but also for appreciating how classical literary forms were adapted to express the concerns and ideals of his time [3].

2. Materials and Methods

The methodology of this research is grounded in a descriptive, comparative, and historical-literary approach, aiming to provide a comprehensive analysis of Sayyid Qasimiy's epic *Majma' ul-Axbor*. The study is based on manuscript evidence preserved in the collection of H. Sulaymonov, which served as the primary source for textual and structural examination. Codicological analysis was employed to study the physical features of the manuscript, including script, layout, and stylistic devices, while textological methods were applied to examine the thematic unity of the epic and its relationship with earlier models such as Nizami Ganjavi's *Makhzan ul-Asrar* and Haydar Khorazmi's adaptation of it [4]. Comparative literary analysis allowed for identifying similarities and differences between these works, particularly in terms of structure, thematic focus, and narrative style. Attention was given to Qasimiy's use of traditional introductory sections, poetic devices, and his consistent reliance on the "sare" meter of *aruz*, which aligns his work with the *Khamsa* tradition while also highlighting his individual creative contributions. Furthermore, hermeneutic analysis was used to interpret the moral, didactic, and socio-political themes of the eighteen stories included in the epic, focusing on their symbolic and allegorical meanings. Secondary sources such as B. Kasimkhanov's works on Qasimiy's didactic epics and critical studies of *masnavi* traditions were consulted to situate the poet's work within the broader historical and literary context of the 15th century. This multi-layered methodological orientation ensures that *Majma' ul-Axbor* is examined both as a continuation of classical literary traditions and as an original work reflecting the socio-cultural realities of its time [5].

3. Results and Discussion

Sayyid Qasimiy's epic "*Majma ul-Axbor*" is the first work in the manuscript provided by H. Sulaymonov. It is located on pages 30b–66b, following the presumed lost pages 1–29. At the top left corner of page 30a, it is written: "*Masnavi Majma' ul-Axbor*, the first volume, written in the meter of Nizami's "*Makhzan ul-Asrar*" Below this is the seal of the Riza Library. The text is exquisitely written, with various colors and gold ink used in the headings, followed by a traditional eulogy. Sayyid Qasimiy himself describes the work as a free translation of Haydar Khorazmi's "*Makhzan ul-Asrar*" [6].

Haydar Khorazmi's "*Makhzan ul-Asrar*" closely resembles Nizami Ganjavi's *masnavi* in structure and genre. Both works are philosophical and didactic, written in the "sare" meter of *aruz*. Haydar Khorazmi's epic is smaller in volume, consisting of 639 verses divided into 23 chapters. The first seven chapters are traditional introductory sections. The main part of the epic includes 16 chapters containing sermons, aphorisms, and stories. Unlike Nizami, Haydar Khorazmi first presents a story and then draws conclusions from it. The themes of the aphorisms and stories are broad, with some being similar and others entirely new [7].

In contrast, Sayyid Qasimiy begins his stories with a "*Sarsuxan*" (introduction) followed by a corresponding story. His "*Majma ul-Axbor*" is dedicated to Sultan Abu Said

Mirzo (1451–1469) and includes traditional sections before the eulogy. This work is the first epic in Sayyid Qasimiy's legacy and is dedicated to Sultan Abu Said Mirzo, a descendant of Amir Timur. The epic consists of two introductions and a main part. The introduction includes five chapters: "*Hamd*" (praise of God), "*Na't*" (praise of the Prophet), the reason for writing the book, a eulogy to Sultan Abu Said Mirzo, and "*Tamsil*" (parable). The main part comprises eighteen "*Sarsuxan*" (introductions) and eighteen corresponding stories[8].

Sayyid Qasimiy is recognized as an outstanding poet of his time for several reasons. First, he adheres to the traditional style of "*Khamsa*" epics, writing in the "*sare*" meter of *aruz*. Second, he explicitly states that he wrote the work as a response to Haydar Khorazmi's "*Makhzan ul-Asrar*". The relevance of studying this work lies in the fact that, although it is written in a traditional or responsive style, the poet strengthens each story with a unique introduction, showcasing his high artistic talent through the use of literary devices and wordplay.

The work "*Majma ul-Axbor*" (The Collection of News) includes sections such as "*Hamd*", "*Na't*" the reason for writing the book, the poet's personal circumstances, a eulogy to Sultan Abu Said Mirzo, and "*Tamsil*". It contains eighteen stories and corresponding introductions, reflecting the social life of the 15th century, the poet's circumstances, and the events that inspired the work[9].

The study of Sayyid Qasimiy's work is primarily based on B. Kasimkhanov's "*Sayyid Qasimiy's Didactic Epics*" and "*Sayyid Qasimiy: A Collection of Masnavis*". Through these works, we understand how Sayyid Qasimiy portrayed the life of the people and his own spiritual and material conditions. One unique aspect is that the poet includes his pen name in the "*Og'oz* Kitob" section, which reflects his distinctive style.

In the section explaining the reason for writing the book and his personal circumstances, the poet describes his state as follows:

I am weak, helpless, and wandering,
My heart and eyes are filled with blood[10].
My companions are pain and cold sighs,
My liver's blood is my friend, my face pale.

The themes of the stories, while similar to those of other eras, have their own unique direction. The poet uses metaphors, proverbs, and poetic devices to convey his thoughts to the reader. To provide an overview of the work, we reference the table of contents of the stories:

1. Introduction about the heart, followed by "The Story of Prophet Ibrahim"[11].
2. Introduction about generosity, followed by "The Story of Sheikh Shibli".
3. Introduction about truth, followed by "The Story of Sheikh Junayd".
4. Introduction about patience, followed by "The Story of Sheikh Bahlul".
5. Introduction about poverty, followed by "The Story of the Ascetic and the Sinner".
6. Introduction about service, followed by "The Story of Sultan Muhammad Ghazi".
7. Introduction about the treachery of the world, followed by "The Story of King Jamshid".
8. Introduction about the impermanence of wealth, followed by "The Story of Faridun Farrukh"[12].
9. Introduction about justice, followed by "The Story of King Qubad".
10. Introduction about Sufis, followed by "The Story of the King Afflicted with Leprosy".
11. Introduction about contentment, followed by "The Story of the Lion and the Fox".
12. Introduction about loyalty, followed by "The Story of Khwaja Bozorgan".
13. Introduction about greed and envy, followed by "The Story of the Rich Man and the Beggar".
14. Introduction about generosity, followed by "The Story of the King of Yemen".
15. Introduction about ambition, followed by "The Story of Harun al-Rashid and Abrobiy".
16. Introduction about love, followed by "The Story of Layla and Majnun".

17. Introduction about charity, followed by “The Story of the Cobbler”.
18. Introduction about ambition, followed by “The Story of Iskandar”[13].

The poet often addresses great sheikhs, teachers, and famous heroes, which is a distinctive feature of his work. Another unique aspect of the composition is the repetition of a verse at the end of each introduction, linking the stories together:

If you seek, listen to this tale,
O listener of narrations and traditions.

This traditional technique, also seen in Sayyid Ahmad’s “Taashuqnoma”, demonstrates the poet’s awareness of literary conventions and his high talent[14].

The stories in the epic can be divided into socio-political and moral-didactic categories. Sayyid Qasimiy, while writing in the masnavi style, selected specific themes to address important social issues of his time. He criticized the negative aspects of society through characters such as kings, scholars, dervishes, and folk heroes.

“Majma ul-Axbor” follows the traditional structure of early epics in the “Khamisa” tradition, but Sayyid Qasimiy succeeded in creating a unique work inspired by Haydar Khorazmi’s “*Makhzan ul-Asrar*”. Through this work, we observe the poet’s focus on advice, folk life, didactics, and sermons, reflecting his deep engagement with the social realities of his time and his adherence to the traditions of his predecessors[15].

4. Conclusion

The study of Sayyid Qasimiy’s *Majma’ ul-Axbor* demonstrates the enduring significance of this epic within the literary and cultural heritage of fifteenth-century Central Asia. As a work written in response to Haydar Khorazmi’s *Makhzan ul-Asrar* and modeled on the tradition of Nizami Ganjavi, it not only continues the “Khamisa” style but also introduces unique features that mark Qasimiy’s individual creativity. Through its carefully structured introductions and stories, the epic reflects the poet’s engagement with pressing social, moral, and spiritual issues of his time. Themes such as justice, generosity, patience, contentment, loyalty, and love are explored through vivid narratives involving prophets, sheikhs, kings, and common people, making the work simultaneously didactic and socially relevant. By beginning each story with an introduction and linking them through repeated refrains, Qasimiy achieves a sense of cohesion while enriching the poetic and moral dimensions of the masnavi form.

Moreover, the dedication to Sultan Abu Said Mirzo situates the work within its historical context, reflecting both the cultural patronage of the Timurid court and the poet’s personal circumstances. The stylistic elements—use of the sare meter of aruz, rhetorical devices, and vivid imagery—highlight Qasimiy’s literary skill and his ability to adapt established traditions to new purposes. Ultimately, *Majma’ ul-Axbor* stands as both a continuation of classical literary conventions and an innovative contribution that reflects the intellectual climate of its era. Its analysis underscores the importance of examining lesser-studied poets like Sayyid Qasimiy in order to gain a fuller understanding of Uzbek literary history, cultural identity, and the dynamic evolution of the didactic epic tradition.

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