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EMBEDDED POETIC FORMS IN SAYQALI'S BAHROM AND GULANDOM: FUNCTIONS OF MUSADDAS, MUSTAZAD, AND QUATRAINS

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ABSTRACT
This study examines the compositional and narrative functions of three embedded poetic forms in Sayqali's eighteenth-century love epic Bahrom and Gulandom: musaddas, mustazad, and four-line stanzas (to'rtliklar). The epic is predominantly organized in masnavi couplets, yet these inserted forms alter the pace, voice, and psychological density of key scenes. Using qualitative close reading, structural-poetic analysis, and contextual interpretation of the 1960 printed edition, the study asks how formal change contributes to characterization and narrative development. The musaddas spoken by the vizier Dastur employs six-line stanzas and a recurring closing distich to transform astonishment into counsel, recollection, and the restoration of Bahrom's royal identity. The mustazad suspends plot progression during the meeting of Sarvoso, Ruhafzo, and Gulandom, using supplementary short lines and concentrated imagery to create a lyrical pause of visual and social harmony. The sustained sequence of quatrains in the first extended conversation between Bahrom and Gulandom functions differently: each stanza forms a compact speech act, while the alternating sequence gradually discloses identity, desire, resistance, humor, and mutual recognition. The findings show that Sayqali does not employ these forms as decorative insertions. Rather, formal shifts serve distinct compositional functions within the larger narrative and demonstrate a deliberate integration of lyric and stanzaic techniques into epic storytelling.

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Keywords: *Sayqali, Bahrom and Gulandom, musaddas, mustazad, quatrain, Uzbek classical poetry, masnavi.*

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Introduction

Sayqali's *Bahrom and Gulandom* occupies a distinctive place in Uzbek classical narrative poetry because its masnavi framework incorporates shorter lyric and stanzaic forms at moments of heightened emotion, recognition, description, and dialogue. Previous scholarship has emphasized the epic's folklore motifs and the poet's broader poetics, showing that the work combines written literary convention with structures and images associated with oral narrative traditions (Jumanov, 2023; Mamatqulov, 2021). What remains less clearly explained is how changes of poetic form operate inside the narrative itself. A form can be present without being functionally significant; the more important question is what happens to voice, pace, characterization, and meaning when the poem temporarily moves away from its dominant masnavi organization.

This article therefore narrows the broad problem of "genre characteristics" to three embedded forms for which the 1960 edition supplies complete and analyzable examples: musaddas, mustazad, and four-line stanzas (to'rtliklar). Muxammas is also present in the epic and appears frequently, but a full account of that

form requires a separate inventory and analysis and is not claimed here. The present study asks: How do musaddas, mustazad, and quatrain-like four-line stanzas perform different compositional and psychological functions within the masnavi narrative of *Bahrom and Gulandom*? The argument is that the three forms are differentiated by function. The musaddas organizes recognition, lament, counsel, and social restoration; the mustazad creates a descriptive and affective pause; and the four-line dialogue sequence becomes an engine of incremental revelation between Bahrom and Gulandom.

This approach treats poetic form as a compositional resource rather than as a label alone. Studies of medieval Persian and Perso-Turkic poetics have long shown that formal organization, rhetorical structure, repetition, and segmentation can contribute directly to coherence and meaning (Meisami, 2003). In *Bahrom and Gulandom*, the transition from couplet narrative to an embedded stanzaic or lyric form similarly changes the reader's experience of a scene. The significance of these insertions is therefore best understood through close attention to both their formal properties and their position in the plot.

Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

Traditional Uzbek scholarship describes musaddas, mustazad, musammat, and related forms primarily through stanza length, rhyme, and meter (Hojiahmedov, 2008; Homidiy et al., 1970; Hotamov & Sarimsoqov, 1983; Nosirov et al., 1979). In the broader Persianate tradition, musaddas belongs to the family of musammat stanzaic forms, which are classified according to the number of lines or hemistichs in a stanza. Van den Berg (2016) notes that musammat forms are defined by recurrent stanzaic organization and that musaddas is the six-part form. This terminology is more precise than translating musaddas as "hexameter," because hexameter ordinarily names a metrical line with six feet rather than a six-line stanza. The present study therefore uses "six-line stanza" and "musaddas" rather than "hexameter."

Mustazad also requires careful classification. Rather than a simple stanza type, it is a verse form in which a shorter supplementary phrase is attached to the principal line or hemistich. Van den Berg (2016) treats it as related to stanzaic poetry while also noting its distinct status. Classical descriptions often associate mustazad with particular aruz patterns, but the evidence does not justify the categorical claim that only one meter is possible. Accordingly, this article describes the meter and supplementary-line principle conservatively and concentrates on the form's compositional effect in Sayqali's text.

The terminology surrounding four-line poems is especially important. A four-line stanza is not automatically a rubai. Uzbek scholarship distinguishes metrically defined rubai from other four-line forms, including generic quatrains or to'rtliklar (Rakhmonova, 2019). Recent work on Ottoman and Turkish receptions of Persian quatrains likewise emphasizes the historical distinction between the Persian rubai and the broader Turkish dörtlük, a four-line stanza that may follow different rhyme and metrical patterns (Balıkçıoğlu, 2024). For that reason, this article refers to Sayqali's dialogue units as "quatrains," "four-line stanzas," or "to'rtliklar" unless the available evidence establishes rubai-specific metrical criteria.

Four-line organization nevertheless has deep roots in Turkic literary practice. Mamatqulov (2006) traces the use of compact four-line units in early Turkic written literature and argues that later authors inherited an established tradition of semantically concentrated strophic expression. That historical background helps explain why the quatrain can function as an independent unit of thought while still participating in a larger sequence. In Sayqali's epic, this dual capacity—local completeness and sequential linkage—is crucial to the dialogue between Bahrom and Gulandom.

Scholarship specifically on Sayqali provides the immediate context for the present study. Mamatqulov (2021) demonstrates the importance of folklore motifs in *Bahrom and Gulandom*, including childlessness, hunting, heroic combat, and love initiated through an image. Jumanov (2023) places the epic within a broader discussion of Sayqali's poetic craftsmanship and classical forms. These studies establish the poet's engagement with literary and folkloric traditions but do not systematically distinguish the narrative functions of musaddas, mustazad, and quatrain sequences within the same work. The present article addresses that narrower compositional problem.

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Method

Text and Scope

The primary text is the 1960 Tashkent edition of Sayqali's *Bahrom va Gulandom*, edited for publication by R. Aliyev (Sayqali, 1960). Page references in the analysis correspond to that edition. The study is interpretive rather than statistical: it examines the single musaddas discussed on pages 154-155, the single mustazad on pages 189-190, and the extended sequence of four-line exchanges between Bahrom and Gulandom on pages 130-134. The analysis does not collate manuscripts, reconstruct textual variants, or provide a complete metrical inventory of every lyric insertion in the epic. Claims are therefore limited to the printed text and the forms examined here.

Analytical Procedure

Three complementary procedures are used. First, structural-poetic analysis identifies stanza length, recurrence, rhyme behavior, supplementary lines, and speaker alternation. Second, close reading examines imagery, address, rhetorical questions, repetition, allusion, and semantic progression. Third, contextual analysis relates formal change to the surrounding narrative: what immediately precedes the insertion, what the inserted poem accomplishes, and how the narrative changes after it. These procedures are appropriate because the research question concerns function within a specific literary text rather than a general historical survey of Uzbek verse forms.

Terminology and Translation

The article standardizes the poet's name as Sayqali and the title as *Bahrom and Gulandom*. The terms musaddas, mustazad, muxammas, masnavi, and musammat are retained in commonly used Latin transliteration. Four-line dialogue units are called quatrains or to‘rtliklar rather than rubai unless formal evidence supports the narrower genre label. Uzbek quotations follow the 1960 edition. English renderings are sense translations supplied for analytical clarity; they preserve the principal semantic movement rather than attempting to reproduce the original meter and rhyme.

Analysis and Discussion

Musaddas: Recognition, Lament, and Restoration

The musaddas appears when Dastur, the wise vizier of Rum, finally encounters Prince Bahrom in China. The prince, formerly associated with royal splendor, is discovered in a degraded and grief-stricken condition near Gulandom's palace. This contrast between social identity and present appearance generates the emotional premise of the poem. Dastur does not simply report what he sees; he turns recognition into a sequence of questions, recollections, appeals, and reminders of kinship and duty.

Formally, the musaddas consists of nine six-line stanzas, or 54 lines. In the printed text, the first stanza establishes a six-line rhyme, while later stanzas introduce a new rhyme in their opening four lines and repeat the closing two lines of the first stanza. The resulting pattern can be represented schematically as AAAAAA / BBBBAA / CCCCAA and so forth. The recurring closing distich functions as a refrain and keeps Dastur's personal attachment to Bahrom present even as the content of the intervening lines changes (Sayqali, 1960, pp. 154-155).

The opening stanza makes astonishment inseparable from affectionate address:

Bu na holu bu na savdo sanga, ey mahi aqolim,
Bu na sho‘ru bu na g‘avg‘o, to‘lon oydek hilolim,
Na jafo ediki, soldi boshingo sipehri zolim,
Yuzi shamsi anvar o‘xshar, ko‘zi qotil g‘azolim,
Ey begim, jonim, azizim, ey amirim, e’tiborim,
Ey ko‘rar ko‘zim, afandim, o‘z elimda shahsuvorim.
(Sayqali, 1960, p. 154)

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Sense translation: What condition and affliction have come upon you, moon of my realm? What turmoil has the tyrannous sky cast upon you? O my lord, my soul, my dear one, my prince and honor; O light of my eyes, master and champion of our land.

The stanza works through accumulation. The first four lines are dominated by interrogation and visual shock; the final two lines reverse that instability by naming Bahrom through a stable series of relational identities: lord, beloved, prince, honor, light of the eyes, and champion. Because the refrain returns after each subsequent stanza, Dastur's recognition becomes the structural anchor of the whole poem. Whatever has happened to Bahrom's appearance, the repeated lines insist that his identity in relation to his people has not disappeared.

The middle stanzas enlarge the argument. Dastur asks why Bahrom has chosen beggary over sovereignty and who has taken possession of his mind. He recalls the prince's former majesty through allusions to Jamshid, Fereydun, Plato, Layli, and Majnun and then shifts from courtly memory to familial obligation. Bahrom is reminded that his parents remain in grief and that a child is the lasting light and continuation of the household. Thus the musaddas moves through a carefully staged sequence: astonishment, diagnosis, memory, comparison, homeland, parents, and counsel. Its stanzaic amplitude allows Dastur to accumulate reasons without losing the emotional refrain.

The narrative consequence confirms the form's function. Dastur's aim is not merely to lament Bahrom's condition but to restore him to social action. After the counsel, Bahrom returns to royal dress and proceeds toward the Chinese ruler's palace with his countrymen. The musaddas therefore occupies a hinge position in the plot. It transforms private suffering into remembered public identity. Rather than functioning as an ornamental interruption, the embedded poem mediates Bahrom's movement from the role of abject lover back toward the role of prince.

Mustazad: Lyrical Suspension and Collective Delight

The mustazad occurs in a different narrative environment. Dastur has requested Gulandom's hand for Bahrom, and after the Chinese ruler voices concern about his daughter's temperament, Sarvoso and Ruhafzo are sent to meet the princess. The three women gather in a scene of beauty, hospitality, conversation, and festivity. Unlike the musaddas, which responds to crisis, the mustazad responds to plenitude. Its dominant task is not to redirect a character but to intensify the atmosphere of the moment.

The defining feature of mustazad is the addition of a shorter supplementary phrase to the principal verse unit (van den Berg, 2016). In Sayqali's printed text, the short additions visually and rhythmically interrupt the longer lines, creating a pattern of extension and echo. The opening lines introduce Sarvoso, Ruhafzo, and Gulandom as three newly blossomed flowers who admire one another's beauty with delight (Sayqali, 1960, p. 189). The form's added phrases reinforce the sense that description itself is overflowing the bounds of the main line.

The poem develops through a dense chain of conventional but functionally coherent images. Faces radiate like the moon; lips are compared to red tulips; the women are associated with houris, the Tuba tree, and Kawsar; Zulaikha is imagined as unable to resist such a gathering; and solar, lunar, nocturnal, and stellar images are brought together to magnify the scene (Sayqali, 1960, pp. 189-190). These are not random ornaments. They convert a social encounter into an idealized visual field in which all three women appear mutually compatible and equally elevated.

The mustazad also differs from the musaddas in narrative temporality. Very little plot advances while the poem is being recited. Instead, the narrative pauses so that the reader can inhabit the emotional atmosphere of the gathering. This suspension is especially clear in the final self-address, where Sayqali turns toward himself and urges attention to the passing spectacle. The poet's self-reference foregrounds the act of witnessing: the scene is valuable precisely because it is transient and should be enjoyed while present.

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For that reason, it is more accurate to say that Sayqali adapts an established mustazad technique to the needs of a large narrative than to call him a "pioneer" without comparative historical evidence. The significance lies in placement and function. The form creates a lyrical chamber inside the epic—a temporary space in which description, shared pleasure, and aesthetic contemplation take precedence over forward motion.

Quatrains: Dialogue, Psychological Disclosure, and Narrative Delay

The four-line stanzas used in the first extended conversation between Bahrom and Gulandom perform the most explicitly dialogic function of the three forms. Their importance depends on a structural paradox: each stanza is compact enough to form a complete speech act, but the sequence remains open because each answer generates another question, objection, or response. The local completeness of the quatrain therefore supports, rather than prevents, a prolonged conversation.

Gulandom begins by asking the unknown young man to explain his condition:

Aydi Gulandom: – Ayo, jo‘lida ahvolim gapur,
Ey, falak urg‘on, alamlik malbusi sholim, gapur,
Ne sababdin san bu rasvolikda bo‘lding mubtalo?
Emdi izhor ayla ich dardingni abdolim, gapur.
(Sayqali, 1960, p. 130)

Sense translation: Gulandom says, "O wanderer, tell me your condition. O one struck by fate and clothed in sorrow, speak. Why have you fallen into such a wretched state? Now reveal the pain within you."

Bahrom answers in the same four-line scale but refuses full disclosure:

Aydi shahzoda: – Mani arzimni, ey mohim, eshit,
Holima ermas tonuqluq, nolau ohim eshit,
Sandin o‘zga hech kishi holimni so‘rg‘on yo‘q edi,
Aytayin dardimni kam-kam duxtari shohim eshit.
(Sayqali, 1960, p. 130)

Sense translation: The prince says, "Hear my plea, O my moon; hear my lament and sighs, witnesses to my state. No one but you has asked about my condition. Let me tell my sorrow little by little, daughter of the king—listen."

The phrase "little by little" describes the logic of the entire scene. Bahrom's communicative strategy is delay. He treats each question as an opportunity to remain near Gulandom and to turn biography into metaphor. When she asks about his home, parents, and army, he answers that the place where he lies is his home, that God has brought these trials upon him, that passion and longing are his parents, that madness is his army, and that Gulandom's threshold is his palace (Sayqali, 1960, p. 130). The answers are evasive in a factual sense but revealing in an emotional sense. They disclose the identity of a lover before disclosing the social identity of the prince.

Gulandom's role changes in response. Her questions move from concern to suspicion, teasing, rebuke, and increasingly personal engagement. She advises the apparent beggar to seek another girl; Bahrom answers that he is her devoted lover and has long waited at that very place. She calls his speech tasteless and shameless, but he recasts her criticism as another opportunity to name her as the only physician capable of curing him (Sayqali, 1960, pp. 130-131). The exchange is therefore competitive as well as intimate. Each speaker appropriates the other's language and turns it toward a new rhetorical purpose.

As the dialogue intensifies, humor becomes an important form of psychological negotiation. Bahrom imagines physical closeness; Gulandom responds with comic insults and tells him, in effect, to recognize his own condition. When she calls him a "murdasho‘" (corpse-washer), Bahrom pretends to take offense and reminds her that she first treated him as a confidant. Her harshness does not terminate the

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scene; instead, it becomes another stage in growing familiarity. The ability to sustain insult, joke, desire, and seriousness within successive four-line units gives the conversation a quasi-dramatic rhythm.

The later quatrains gradually move from metaphor toward identity. Gulandom begins to suspect that the beggar-like stranger must have some royal connection and even raises the possibility that he may be Prince Bahrom. The name itself creates a turning point. Bahrom then reveals that he is indeed a prince of Rum, while still postponing the final disclosure of his name (Sayqali, 1960, pp. 133-134). By the end of the encounter, only a small part of the mystery remains, and Gulandom leaves with the expectation that the conversation will continue.

The form is essential to this pacing. If Bahrom answered in a single extended speech, the scene would lose its oscillation between approach and resistance. The quatrain sequence divides revelation into manageable units and gives Gulandom equal verbal presence. Each stanza has closure, but the dialogue as a whole resists closure. This is why the four-line form is especially effective for characterization: Bahrom emerges as persistent, rhetorically agile, and strategically indirect, while Gulandom appears curious, verbally forceful, humorous, and increasingly receptive. Their relationship is not narrated from outside; it is built through alternating speech.

Comparative Function of the Three Forms

Viewed together, the three embedded forms reveal a coherent principle of compositional differentiation. The musaddas is expansive and repetitive. Its six-line stanzas and recurring refrain are suited to accumulation: Dastur can pile question upon question, memory upon memory, while the refrain continually returns Bahrom to a network of social bonds. The mustazad is supplementary and ornamental in a functional sense. Its shortened appended phrases make the description feel extended beyond the principal line, matching a scene in which beauty and delight exceed ordinary narrative statement. The quatrain is compact and alternating. Its brevity permits rapid changes of speaker while still giving each utterance a complete semantic contour.

These formal properties correspond to three different kinds of narrative time. The musaddas transforms a crisis by recalling the past and reorienting the future. The mustazad suspends time so that the present moment can be contemplated. The quatrain sequence stretches a single encounter through incremental revelation. In each case, the shift of form is therefore also a shift in temporal organization and focalization.

The comparison also clarifies why the embedded poems should not be treated as detachable lyrics. Their meanings depend on narrative placement. Dastur's refrain matters because Bahrom has lost contact with the identity it names. The mustazad's luxuriant imagery matters because it follows a tense marriage negotiation and temporarily replaces anxiety with conviviality. The quatrains matter because they occur at the threshold of mutual recognition. Remove the surrounding narrative, and each poem remains intelligible; restore the narrative, and its compositional function becomes much sharper.

Conclusion

The analysis demonstrates that musaddas, mustazad, and four-line stanzas occupy distinct but complementary roles in Sayqali's *Bahrom and Gulandom*. The musaddas is a form of recognition and restorative counsel. Through six-line accumulation and a recurring closing distich, Dastur converts shock at Bahrom's degraded appearance into remembrance of royal identity, family obligation, and return to social action. The mustazad performs almost the opposite temporal task: it pauses the plot and intensifies a scene of shared beauty and delight through supplementary short lines, dense imagery, and the poet's self-conscious act of witnessing. The quatrain sequence turns formal compactness into dramatic mobility. Alternating four-line speech acts allow Bahrom and Gulandom to negotiate curiosity, secrecy, love, resistance, humor, and identity step by step.

These findings support a more precise account of Sayqali's artistry than the general statement that the epic "contains several genres." The important feature is not simply coexistence but functional

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integration. Formal change reorganizes voice, time, and psychological access. The embedded forms therefore participate in the architecture of the narrative rather than decorating it from the outside.

The study also resolves several terminological problems that can obscure this architecture. Musaddas is treated as a six-line stanzaic form rather than "hexameter"; mustazad is described through its supplementary-line principle without claiming an exclusive meter; and four-line units are not automatically labeled rubai. These distinctions are necessary for placing Uzbek classical poetry within the wider Persianate and Turkic history of poetic form while remaining attentive to local terminology and practice.

The principal limitation is textual. The study relies on the 1960 printed edition and does not compare manuscript witnesses or scan every inserted poem metrically. Future research should examine the epic's muxammas passages systematically, compare printed and manuscript forms, and investigate whether different embedded forms cluster around particular character types or narrative situations. Even within the present scope, however, the evidence shows that Sayqali's movement between masnavi narrative and shorter poetic forms is deliberate, structurally meaningful, and central to the epic's representation of emotion and dialogue.

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