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LITERARY AFTERLIVES: MEDIAEVAL PERSIAN POETS AND STRATEGIES OF LEGITIMISATION IN THE ORAL POETRY OF THE ISMĀʿĪLĪS OF TAJIK BADAKHSHAN

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LITERARY AFTERLIVES: MEDIAEVAL PERSIAN POETS AND STRATEGIES OF LEGITIMISATION IN THE ORAL POETRY OF THE ISMĀʿĪLĪS OF TAJIK BADAKHSHAN

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When speaking of the afterlives of literary texts, one has in mind their continuation and actualisation, and how they were, in the course of time, received and reworked, canonised, criticised or used. In this paper, I would like to discuss the dynamics of Persian poetry and the representation and appropriation of mediaeval Persian poets in the oral poetry tradition of the Ismāʿīlīs of Tajik Badakhshan. I explore in how far the voices of poets such as Rūmī and Ḥāfiẓ have been reshaped and even reinvented in order to suit the context in which the poems ascribed to these poets are performed. I focus here on a specific genre of poetry, the *ghazal*, in the framework of two particular performance genres within the oral poetry tradition of the Ismāʿīlīs of Tajik Badakhshan, *maddāḥkhānī* (religious poetry performances) and *dafsāz* (non-religious performance genres).[1]

After a brief introduction into the particulars of the cultural background of the Ismāʿīlīs of Tajik Badakhshan, I will go into the tradition of *maddāḥkhānī* in relation to Nāṣir-i Khusrau, who is a pivotal figure in Badakhshani Ismaʿilism. I will then present an analysis of a corpus of *ghazal*s from recordings of *maddāḥkhānī* and *dafsāz* collected during fieldwork in 1992–1993.[2]

One of the defining features of the *ghazal* as a genre is the insertion of the *takhalluṣ*, or pen name, in the text. I will attempt to show here how the use of the *takhalluṣ* may be understood as a legitimising strategy in the

[1] This study is based on materials I collected during fieldwork research into the oral poetry tradition of Tajik Badakhshan in 1992–1993. The results of this fieldwork can be found in Van den Berg, *Minstrel poetry from the Pamir mountains*.

[2] The terminology used for genres is in accordance with the terminology used by the performers.

context of religious poetry performances and how this compares to non-religious performance genres (such as *dafsāz*).[3]

Language and religion in Tajik Badakhshan: A brief overview

Tajik Badakhshan is an autonomous region within the Central Asian republic of Tajikistan, situated in the Pamir Mountains, bordering Afghanistan and China. In 1895, the historical area known as Badakhshan was divided in two by British-Russian colonial politics. The river Panj, the upper part of Amu Darya, the ancient Oxus, became the frontier between British and Russian spheres of influence. One part became the Badakhshan province of Afghanistan, while the part that fell under Russian imperial rule became part of the Soviet Union after 1917, and in due course part of the Republic of Tajikistan.[4]

Within Tajikistan, Badakhshan holds a specific position in terms of language and religion.[5] In Badakhshan, Tajik (Tajik Persian or Tajiki) is a minority language: the majority of Badakhshanis speak Pamir languages, mostly Shughni or Wakhi. These languages have no official status. Tajik serves as the literary language, together with Russian (as part of the Soviet legacy).[6] Moreover, the vast majority of Badakhshanis are (Nizārī Ismāʿīlī) Shīʿīs, and differ in that respect from the predominantly Sunnī population of Tajikistan and Central Asia at large. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the ensuing civil war in Tajikistan led to an increased awareness of regional identity in Tajikistan, with both language and religion playing an important role in confirming a separate Pamiri or Badakhshani identity.

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[3] Compare Marie Maclean's description of pseudonyms as 'endlessly instructive, whether they represent an attempt to acquire *auctoritas* and *gravitas*, or an attempt to shed them'; Maclean, "Pretexts and paratexts," p. 276.

[4] On this division and on the status of Badakhshan, see, for example, Roy, *The new Central Asia*, pp. 61–68.

[5] I will use both 'Badakhshan' and 'Tajik Badakhshan' to refer to the autonomous region within the present-day Republic of Tajikistan.

[6] See Clifton, *Studies in languages of Tajikistan*.

Nāṣir-i Khusrau and *maddāḥkhānī*: Cultural expressions of ethno-religious identity

The Ismāʿīlī community of Badakhshan believe that they were converted from fire-worshipping to Ismaʿilism in the 5th/11th century by the famous poet, philosopher, and champion of Ismaʿilism, Nāṣir-i Khusrau, who hailed from the town of Qubādiyān in Khatlān, a region adjacent to Badakhshan.[7] After his visit to the Ismāʿīlī Fatimid caliph in Cairo, Nāṣir-i Khusrau converted to Ismaʿilism and returned to his homeland as a missionary (*ḥujjat*).[8] He was very active in Badakhshan, where he spent the last years of his life.[9]

Nowadays, Nāṣir-i Khusrau is considered the religious guide (*pīr*) of the Badakhshanis, who venerate his legacy in multiple manners. In the oral poetry tradition of Tajik Badakhshan for example, we find many poems that contain references to him.[10] His work *Vajh-i dīn* serves as a handbook used during religious ceremonies.[11] Trees and springs in Badakhshan which are

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[7] This conversion narrative has been contested by Wladimir Ivanow. In his biography of Nāṣir-i Khusrau, he argued that the Ismāʿīlīs of Badakhshan came to Badakhshan as refugees, fleeing from persecution; see Ivanow, *Problems in Nasir-i Khusraw's biography*, pp. 45–46. For a new evaluation of the role of Nāṣir-i Khusrau in the Islamisation of Badakhshan and Central Asia, see Beben, "Islamisation on the Iranian periphery."

[8] Nāṣir-i Khusrau's life and work, and his conversion to Ismaʿilism, have been studied by a number of scholars, notably Hunsberger, *Nasir Khusraw, The ruby of Badakhshan*; Corbin, "Nāṣir-i Khusrau and Iranian Ismāʿīlism," and most recently, Beben, "The legendary biographies of Nāṣir-i Khusraw"; see also of the same author "Islamisation on the Iranian periphery."

[9] For an extensive account on multiple aspects of Nāṣir-i Khusrau's shrine in Yumgān (in present-day Afghan Badakhshan), see the third chapter of Beben's ground-breaking work on Nāṣir-i Khusrau and Badakhshan, "The legendary biographies of Nāṣir-i Khusraw," pp. 173–231.

[10] On *ghazal*s praising Nāṣir-i Khusrau, see Van den Berg, *Minstrel poetry from the Pamir mountains*, pp. 102–104.

[11] Van den Berg, *Minstrel poetry from the Pamir mountains*, p. 28; information on *pīr* Nāṣir-i Khusrau and the use of his work by religious functionaries was given to us by *khalīfa* Tojidin Olimshoev from Vanqalʿa, and additional information was provided by Varqa Oxoniyozov and his family in Shivoz. It must be noted here that the organisation of religious ceremonies has changed in the period following our fieldwork in 1992–1993, when contacts with foreign representatives of the Ismāʿīlī faith sharply increased. In 1995, the Aga Khan visited Tajik Badakhshan for the first time, a huge step in reconnecting the Ismāʿīlīs of Tajik Badakhshan with the Ismāʿīlī community worldwide.

said to have been visited by Nāṣir-i Khusrau have become holy places where people come to find a blessing. In the post-Soviet period, the local public veneration of Nāṣir-i Khusrau was even elevated to a governmental level when great festivities for the millennium of Nāṣir-i Khusrau's birthday were organised with state patronage.[12] For this occasion, a statue was commissioned and erected near the spring of Nāṣir-i Khusrau in the village of Porshnev, not far from Badakhshan's capital city Khorugh.[13]

As the 'patron saint' of the Ismāʿīlīs of Badakhshan, Nāṣir-i Khusrau is naturally a pivotal figure in matters concerning religion, including the performance of religious poetry, known as *maddāḥkhānī*. An example of the connection between the poet and the performance of religious poetry in Badakhshan may be found in *Baḥr al-akhbār*, an important collection of stories about Nāṣir-i Khusrau in Badakhshan.[14] One of the stories in this collection deals with wealthy king Jahānshāh who was converted to Ismaʿilism by Nāṣir-i Khusrau and subsequently became a poet and a *maddāḥkhān*. The full title of the story is: 'On King Jahānshāh, who took leave from ruling and entered the service of the *pīr* [i.e., Nāṣir-i Khusrau], whereupon the holy *pīr* gave him the name of ʿUmar-i Yumgī and bestowed on him the position of Shaykh.'

Nāṣir-i Khusrau is presented in the story as a *pīr* who cured the sister of the king. When the king found her pregnant a few months later, he believed that Nāṣir-i Khusrau was to blame. He rode off in fury to take revenge. However, when he passed the bridge that led to the encampment of the *pīr*, the bridge suddenly turned upside down. The king hung from the bridge, with blood and bile flowing out of his nose and mouth, until he was clean inside. After his release, the king promised to abdicate and to enter the service of the *pīr* for the rest of his life. The *pīr* accepted this and ordered that the king's horse be eaten. A servant of the *pīr* broke the wooden part of the

[12] The papers delivered in this symposium were later published in Niyozov and Nazariev (eds.), *Nosiri Khusrav: Diruz, imruz, fardo / Nasir Khusraw: Yesterday, today, tomorrow*.

[13] Gross, "The motif of the cave," pp. 144–145.

[14] Accessible to me only in the Tajik edition: Saidjaloli Badakhshi, *Bahr ul-akhbor. Silsilai hikoyatho doir ba hayoti Nosiri Khusrav va sayohati ū dar Badaxshonzamin*. This edition is dedicated to the 990th birthday of Nāṣir-i Khusrau (*ba 990-solagii zodrūzi mutafakkiri buzurgi Sharq Nosiri Xusrav bakhshida meshavad*). The author's identification with Saidjaloli Munji has been discussed by Gross, "The motif of the cave," pp. 137–138.

horse's saddle in two — one part of it became a *rubāb* and the other part became a plane tree.

> And the *pīr* gave the *rubāb* to King Jahānshāh and said: "Sing praises." And the king started to sing with his eyes closed. He began: "My tongue sings the praise of ʿAlī, / my two lips do not stop singing Oh ʿAlī. // My head is bent down for the Beloved, / my thirty-two teeth sing ʿAlī." Dīvāna Aḥmad, the servant of the *pīr*, lighted up a fire from two other pieces of wood from the saddle and with one blow the meat was done. King Jahānshāh sang seventy praises with all his heart, and all the people came to see this and the meat was divided between them. And the holy *pīr* took the lamp and lit it and began to commemorate.[15]

The name King Jahānshāh took after his conversion, ʿUmar-i Yumgī, is one of the names that appears in the *maddāḥ* poetry sung today in Badakhshan; the poetry and the practice of singing praises with the accompaniment of a *rubāb*, referred to in the excerpt above, reflect contemporary *maddāḥkhānī*.[16]

Because of its religious dimension, *maddāḥkhānī* occupies a special position within the oral poetry tradition of Tajik Badakhshan.[17] Attending a session of *maddāḥkhānī* is considered a form of religious education, since the poetry sung during *maddāḥkhānī* serves both to elucidate and to express religious beliefs.

[15] Saidjaloli Badakhshi, *Bahr ul-akhbor*, p. 33; see also Van den Berg, "The Sura of the Gift."

[16] On ʿUmar-i Yumgī, see also Beben, "The legendary biographies of Nāṣir-i Khusraw," p. 373.

[17] As discussed by Van den Berg, *Minstrel poetry from the Pamir mountains*.

Maddāḥkhānī: Performance and text transmission

Maddāḥkhānī may be performed on a variety of occasions: as part of weekly celebrations; as part of the rituals surrounding the death of a community member; and as part of the annual celebrations at the many holy shrines in Badakhshan.[18] A typical example of such a shrine (*mazār*) is Sunb-i Duldul (lit., 'hoof of Duldul,' ʿAlī's famous horse) in the Wakhan valley (Figure 1).[19]

Figure 1. *Mazār* Sunb-i Duldul, Wakhan valley
(photo by Ivan Steblin-Kamenski)

In a performance of *maddāḥkhānī*, Persian poems are sung, usually by one to three men who accompany themselves by a fixed set of musical instruments, most commonly the *rubāb* (lute) and the *daf* (frame drum). The main singer is called *maddāḥkhān*. He often accompanies himself on the *rubāb*, more specifically the *rubāb-i pāmīrī*, the Pamir lute. Other string instruments, such as the *tanbūr*, are also used. Sometimes *maddāḥkhānī* is performed by two

[18] For a list of shrines in Tajik Badakhshan, see Oshurbekov, "Places, memories and religious identity," pp. 157–159.
[19] *Ibid*., p. 153.

*maddāḥkhān*s, but the combination of a *maddāḥkhān* playing the *rubāb* together with a *dafzan* (frame drum player) who performs back vocals is most common.[20]

The *maddāḥkhān*s who performed for our research team in the 1990s claimed to have learned to play and sing from their father, grandfather, or neighbour. Though transmission is mainly oral, references are made to written sources as well, such as so-called notebooks (*bayāḍ*), written anthologies of poetry in an oblong form (Figure 2). *Maddāḥ* poetry is said to be composed *az rūy-i bayāḍ*, 'from the notebook.' Notebooks written in Arabo-Persian script circulate amongst the *maddāḥkhān*s, but in practice most of them rely on modern notebooks with anthologies of Persian poetry in Cyrillic Tajik script.

Apart from notebooks, collected works of poets whose poetry is sung during *maddāḥkhānī* are sometimes kept in village communities or in the family circle, such as locally produced Persian manuscripts of the poet Ṣūfī Mubārakqadam in Yamg.

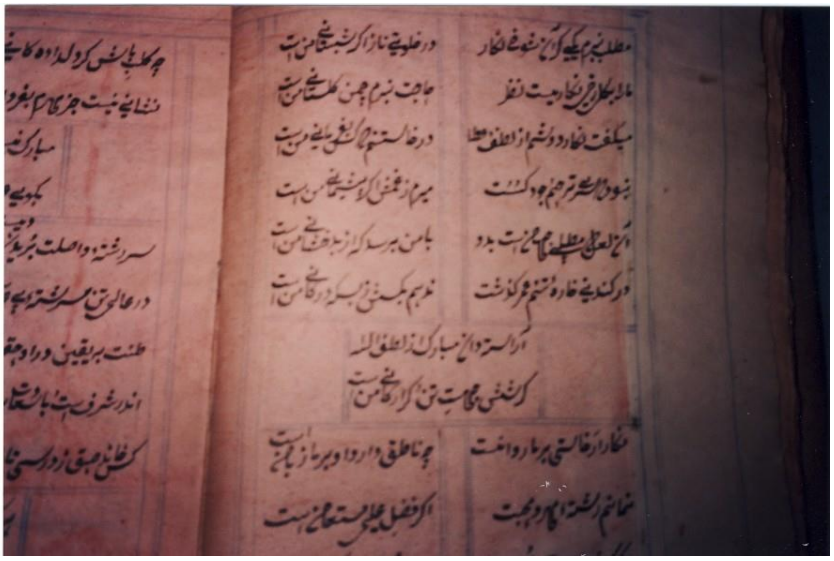

Figure 2. Part of a manuscript by Ṣūfī Mubārakqadam, kept in the museum dedicated to him by his relatives in Yamg

[20] On the instruments, see Van den Berg, *Minstrel poetry from the Pamir mountains*, pp. 37–38.

Ṣūfī Mubārakqadam was a nineteenth-century poet from Yamg, in the Wakhan valley bordering present-day Afghanistan, and is one of the few local poets about whom quite some information is available.[21] His grandson and other family members have built a museum in Yamg to honour him and to maintain a number of sites that were of special importance in his life, such as his lodge (*chilla-khāna*; Figure 3).

Figure 3. Muborakqadam, grandson of Ṣūfī Mubārakqadam, showing the lodge (photo by Jan van Belle)

[21] See Iloliev, *The Ismāʿīlī-Sufi sage of Pamir*.

Unlike other musical genres, *maddāḥkhānī* has remained outside Soviet policies regarding musical culture — as a religious genre, it was not acknowledged as an official or professional branch of Tajik music and therefore not subject to mechanisms of state patronage.[22] It appears that the tradition of *maddāḥkhānī* went more or less underground. The *maddāḥkhān*s we interviewed emphasised that *maddāḥkhānī* was regarded as a learned tradition separate from models of professional music. Performing *maddāḥ* was seen (and is continued to be seen) as an honourable service and a duty to fellow-believers and as an act of faith for the performer.

In post-Soviet Badakhshani society, *maddāḥkhānī* flourished: transcending its ritual and devotional function, it became a rallying point and a major vehicle for the cultural identity of the Ismāʿīlī Badakhshanis, especially during the period of heavy tribulations as a result of the Tajik civil war (1992–1997). From 1995 onwards, the Ismāʿīlī community of Badakhshan gradually reintegrated into the global Ismāʿīlī network, via numerous humanitarian aid and education programs directed by the Aga Khan Foundation. This new situation has had an impact on the way the Ismāʿīlīs of Badakhshan approach and practice their faith, including the tradition of *maddāḥkhānī*.[23]

The *ghazal* in two performance genres of oral poetry: *maddāḥkhānī* and *dafsāz*

Within the tradition of *maddāḥkhānī*, but also in other, non-religious performance contexts, such as *dafsāz*, the poetic genre of the *ghazal* is omnipresent. To explore the ways in which mediaeval classical Persian poets are represented in the specific, contemporary context of Badakhshan, as well

[22] Non-religious musical genres have found their way into the so-called 'national' tradition of Tajik art/folk music and have long been performed on stage with large ensembles in concert halls, and formed part of the curriculum of the state art schools (*instituti san'at*). On aspects of Soviet cultural policy and music, see Spinetti, "Music, politics and nation building in post-Soviet Tajikistan," pp. 119–123.

[23] For example, new repertoires have emerged and the use of Pamir languages as a vehicle for *maddāḥkhānī* has started to become accepted (personal communication with the brothers Ghayosov, *maddāḥkhān*s from Tusiyon).

as to investigate the extent to which the voice of the original author has been reshaped and reinvented, I propose to look at the *ghazal* in two different performance contexts: *maddāḥkhānī,* performed in a religious context, and *dafsāz*, performed in a secular context.

a) The corpus of *ghazal*s, their authors and the *ghazal*s in a cycle of *maddāḥ*

When asked about the identity of the poets whose poems they perform, musicians and singers in Badakshan usually replied *guftori...* ('speech of...' followed by the name of the poet) or *khalqī* (folk). Often the name of the poet also appears in the recorded poems themselves, in the form of a *takhalluṣ*. The inclusion of a *takhalluṣ* is a customary practice in the genre of the *ghazal* in classical Persian poetry. In the poetry performed in Badakhshan, a *takhalluṣ* often appears in other genres as well, such as in the longer narrative genres of *ḥikāyat* and *qaṣīda*.[24]

The corpus of *ghazal*s we recorded during our fieldwork consists of 105 *ghazal*s. More than half of the *ghazal*s in the corpus contain a *takhalluṣ* that can be connected to one of the poets belonging to the canon of classical Persian poetry (Table 1).[25]

Table 1

Poet	Number of *ghazal*s
Abū Shakūr (10th century)	1
Amīr Khusrau (1253–1325)	1
Ḥāfiẓ (1315–1390)	17
Hilālī (1470–1529)	3
Jāmī (1414–1492)	1
Nāṣir-i Khusrau (1004–after 1072)	5
Saʿdī (*ca.* 1210–1292)	2
Sanāʾī (1080–1131)	5
Shams-i Tabrīzī / Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (1207–1273)	31

[24] For a discussion of these genres in the context of Badakhshani oral performance, see Van den Berg, *Minstrel poetry from the Pamir mountains*.

[25] The notion 'canon of classical Persian poetry' may well be questioned. However, I believe that in the framework of the present paper, it serves the purpose of clarifying certain features of the corpus.

Table 1 shows that the majority of the *ghazal*s ascribed to mediaeval Persian poets have the *takhalluṣ* Shams or Shams-i Tabrīz(ī) (Taj., Shamsi Tabrēz(ī)), the pen name of the Ṣūfī poet Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī. To demonstrate the nature of the *ghazal*s ascribed to Shams-i Tabrīzī and other mediaeval poets, I would like to examine here some examples of *ghazal*s as they are performed in *maddāḥkhānī*.

A session of *maddāḥkhānī* usually consists of cycles of poetry and music (called *maddāḥ*): the beginning of a performance is often slow and solemn, and gradually the tempo rises, until the cycle reaches a climax in the conclusion, from which point a new cycle can be started, preceded by a short instrumental intermezzo. A cycle is built up by different forms of poetry, which are sung in succession.

The *ghazal* is by far the most frequent form of poetry in *maddāḥkhānī*. A cycle usually opens with a *ghazal* and ends with a *ghazal*; in between longer and shorter poems are inserted. Below is an outline of a cycle of *maddāḥ*, as performed by the *maddāḥkhān* Akbarsho Odinamamadov, who played the *rubāb* and sang; he was accompanied by his son Nusratsho Odinamamadov, who did the back vocals and played *tanbūr* (Figure 4).[26]

Figure 4. Akbarsho and Nusratsho Odinamamadov, Roshtqalʿa, Shohdara valley (photo by Jan van Belle)

[26] Recorded in Roshtqalʿa, Shohdara valley, 25 July 1993.

b) A cycle of *maddāḥ* performed by Akbarsho and Nusratsho Odinamamadov

1. *Ghazal: chi tadbīr ay musalmānān ki man khud-rā namīdānam,* attributed to Shams-i Tabrīzī (8 distichs)
2. *Ghazal: shab-ī dīdam ba-khᵛāb-i khᵛash jamāl-i sāqī-yi kauthar/ ʿalī ibn-i abū ṭālib ʿalī al-muʾminīn ḥaydar,* attributed to Ḥāfiẓ (14 distichs)
3. *Rubāʿī: sayyid ḥasan zi-bahr-i ḥaydar nālad* (4 hemistichs)
4. *Mukhammaṣ: alif yaktā-st ba-hamtā-st gūyam hūshdār*, refrain *lā fatā illā ʿalī lā sayf illā dhulfiqār / shāh-i mardān sirr-i yazdān qudrat-i parvardgār,* attributed to Muṭribī (8 stanzas of 6 hemistichs including refrain)
5. *Ghazal: tā ṣūrat-i payvand-i jahān būd ʿalī būd / tā naqsh-i zamīn būd, zamān būd, ʿalī būd*, attributed to Shams-i Tabrīzī (14 distichs)
6. *Duʿā: ʿalī-vu āl-i ʿalī ba-jān-u dil ṣalavāt / mukhālifān-i ʿalī mudām laʿnat bād* (one distich)
7. *Ghazal: ay ʿāshiqān ay ʿāshiqān man az kujā ʿishq az kujā / ay bīdilān ay bīdilān man az kujā ʿishq az kujā,* attributed to Shams-i Tabrīzī (9 distichs)

The first poem (1) in this cycle is a mystical *ghazal* attributed to Shams-i Tabrīzī, of which the first two verses are as follows:

چه تدبیر ای مسلمانان که من خود را نمی دانم
نه ترسا نه یهودم من نه گبرم نه مسلمانم
نه شرقی ام نه غربی ام نه بری ام نه بحری ام
نه از ملک طبیعیم من نه از افلاک گردانم

What is to be done, o Muslims? For I do not recognise myself.
I am neither Christian, nor Jew, nor Gabr, nor Muslim.
I am not of the East, nor of the West, nor of the land, nor of the sea;
I am not of Nature's mint, nor of the circling heavens.

The last verse of this *ghazal* contains Rūmī's *takhalluṣ*:

الا ای شمس تبریزی چه خوش مستی در این عالم
که جز مستی و سرمستی ره دیگر نمی دانم

O Shams-i Tabrīz, I am so drunken in this world,
That except of drunkenness and revelry I have no tale to tell.[27]

This opening *ghazal* (1) flows smoothly into a second *ghazal* (2) in praise of ʿAlī attributed to Ḥāfiẓ. As a kind of intermezzo, this intense *ghazal* is followed by a *rubāʿī* (3) on Ḥasan remembering ʿAlī. A longer part in this cycle is a *mukhammaṣ* or strophe poem attributed to Muṭribī (4) in which religious notions are presented in the order of the Arabic alphabet.[28] After this longer poem, a *ghazal* is sung in which ʿAlī is pictured as a divine figure (5). This *ghazal* is attributed to Shams-i Tabrīzī and is followed by a *duʿā*, a prayer poem, to bless ʿAlī and curse his adversaries (6). The last element of the cycle is an ecstatically performed *ghazal* attributed to Shams-i Tabrīzī about (mystical) love (7). As can be seen here, *ghazal*s with various themes, such as (mystical) love, praise of ʿAlī, lamentation of fate, and moral precepts, occur in different positions.

With their limited number of verses however, *ghazal*s never form the basis of a performance but circle around larger pieces of poetry: this is also the case in the cycle presented above. The way *ghazal*s are performed depends on their position in the cycle. Cycles usually start rather slowly and solemnly, and rhythms seem less fixed. The end of a cycle is characterised by a more pronounced performance and a strict rhythmical pattern; the poems chosen for this part of the cycle are very often in *rajaz* metre.[29]

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[27] Translation by Nicholson, *Selected poems from the Dīvāni Shamsi Tabrīz*, pp. 124–127 (with slight modifications).

[28] The mentioned Muṭribī can be identified as/with Sulṭān Muḥammad Muṭribī-yi Samarqandī (d. 1630), active in Transoxiana and an author of the *Tadhkirat al-shuʿarā* (compiled 1604); see Ökten, "Persian literature in Central Asia," pp. 251–255.

[29] The *rajaz* metre may be connected to internal rhyme, which very well fits the staccato manner in which the last part of a cycle of *maddāḥ* is performed.

This exemplary cycle shows that many *ghazal*s and other poems in *maddāḥkhānī* may be connected to classical Ṣūfī poetry, and are perhaps easier to identify as Ṣūfī poems. Though in the time of our fieldwork Badakhshani Ismāʿīlīs denied any relation with Sufism, there is no doubt that Sufism and Ismaʿilism are closely connected.[30] Sufism has served as a cloak for Ismāʿīlīs during the centuries of persecution following the fall of the Ismāʿīlī stronghold of Alamūt in 1256 at the hands of Chinggis Khan's grandson Hülegü.[31] Many notions of Ismaʿilism occur also in Ṣūfī thought, specifically the notion of *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin*, the inner and the outer dimension of all things, and the emphasis on the importance of attaining spiritual knowledge (*maʿrifat*).[32] Poets such as Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī and Ḥāfiẓ are seen by the Ismāʿīlīs of Badakhshan as spiritual guides (*pīr-i maʿrifat*) and as Ismāʿīlīs.

The first and last *ghazal*s of the cycle given here as an example were attributed to Shams-i Tabrīzī. The second and the third *ghazal*s, embedded by other poems, were attributed to Ḥāfiẓ and Shams-i Tabrīzī respectively. Let us take a closer look at possible connections between the poems and at the way the *takhalluṣ* is used.

The last verse (14) of the second *ghazal* and second piece of the cycle runs as follows:

بخوان حافظ تو این مداح در ایران و در توران
به مصر و شام و هند و چین نباشد زین سخن بهتر

Sing, Ḥāfiẓ, this praise (*maddāḥ*) in Iran and in Turan;
In Egypt, in Syria, in India and China no better words exist

The *takhalluṣ* of Ḥāfiẓ is connected here to the word *maddāḥ*, "praise," which seems to specifically point at the poem to which this verse is the conclusion, i.e., a poem in which ʿAlī is described as a divine being and which starts as follows:

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[30] This categorical denial may well be based on current perceptions of Sufism and experiences with Ṣūfīs in Central Asia. Sufism was mostly associated with Sunnī Ṣūfī orders predominant in Central Asia, such as the Naqshbandiyya.

[31] Madelung, "Ismāʿīliyya," p. 205. See also Daftary, *Ismailis in medieval Muslim societies*, pp. 183–203.

[32] See De Smet, "Au-delà de l'apparent."

شبی دیدم به خواب خوش جمال ساقی کوثر
علی ابن ابو طالب علی المومنین حیدر
به دستم داد یکی دفتر که در وی نام یزدان بود
سر دفتر گشودم شاه مردان بود سر دفتر
محمد خوی یوسف بوی عیسی دست موسی دم
سکندر قدر دارا راه اجم جام[33] و فریدون فر[34]

One night I saw in a sweet dream the beauty of the Cupbearer of the Stream of Paradise,
ʿAlī, son of Abū Ṭālib, ʿAlī al-muʾminīn Ḥaydar.
He gave me a book which contained the name of God.
I opened the book and first of all there was the King of Men (i.e., ʿAlī) -
[Possessing] the temperament of Muḥammad, scent of Joseph, hand of Jesus, breath of Moses,
power of Alexander, path of Dārā, cup of Jamshīd, the royal nimbus of Farīdūn.

The same idea is expressed in the third *ghazal*, the fifth poem in the cycle, ascribed to Shams-i Tabrīzī. In verse 13 of this *ghazal*, ʿAlī is described as the one who accompanied Muḥammad on the *miʿrāj*:

آن شاه سرافراز که اندر شب معراج
با احمد مختار یکی بود علی بود[35]

That noble king, who was on the night of ascension
united with Aḥmad the Chosen, was ʿAlī.

In other verses of this poem, ʿAlī is described in similar terms. The sixth verse of this *ghazal* seems to be a kind of incantation against those who may think of this poem as blasphemy:

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[33] The *maddāḥkhān* sings *ajam jām*, which may be interpreted, on the basis of the context, as 'Jamshīd's cup' (*jām-i jam*); the phrase عجم جام *('ajam jām*) 'Persian cup,' seems less logical.

[34] For the full text of this *ghazal*, see Van den Berg, *Minstrel poetry from the Pamir mountains*, pp. 483–484 (G64).

[35] For the full text of this *ghazal*, see *ibid*., pp. 488–489 (G70).

این کفر نباشد سخن کفر نه این است
تا هست علی باشد تا بود علی بود

This is no blasphemy; the words of blasphemy are not these.
As long as [the world] is, ʿAlī is, as long as [the world] was, ʿAlī was.

In the last verse (14) of this *ghazal*, the poet refers to the secret meaning of his words (*sirr*):

این سر بشنو باز ز شمس الحق تبریز
حقا که مراد من مقصود علی بود

Hear this secret again from Shams al-Ḥaqq-i Tabrīz:
Verily, my wish was the intention of ʿAlī.

This brings us back to the function of the *takhalluṣ* and to one of the possible reasons why *ghazal*s 'signed' by Shams-i Tabrīzī or Ḥāfiẓ occur so frequently in *maddāḥkhānī*. While the first and the last *ghazal*s of the cycle, both with the *takhalluṣ* of Shams, do not seem to be out of place in the *Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīzī*, the two middle *ghazal*s (2 and 5) seem almost certainly to be apocryphal texts ascribed to Ḥāfiẓ and Shams-i Tabrīzī, respectively.

*Ghazal*s 2 and 5 of the *maddāḥ* cycle may be perceived as rather obvious examples of apocryphal poetry; the focus of the position of ʿAlī in these poems does not seem to fit very well into the corpora of Ḥāfiẓ and Shams, whatever uncertainties there may be concerning their extant work.[36] From the Badakhshani Ismāʿīlī point of view, the remarkably divergent nature of some poems bearing the *takhalluṣ* of a well-known classical poet in combination with their absence in *dīvān*s of poetry is not an issue. The viewpoint of some of the *maddāḥkhān*s we interviewed was that poems with this rather specific Ismāʿīlī content belong to the corpus of the poets in question, such as Ḥāfiẓ and Shams-i Tabrīzī (Rūmī), and may have been preserved only in Badakhshan.

[36] Issues regarding authorship and origin of the *ghazal*s in the oral tradition of Tajik Badakhshan are discussed in Van den Berg, *Minstrel poetry from the Pamir mountains*, pp. 106–134.

We can understand the use of the *takhalluṣ*es of poets such as Ḥāfiẓ and Rūmī as legitimising strategies: to bestow *auctoritas* and *gravitas* on poetry in which ideas are expressed that may not be acceptable outside (Badakhshani) Ismāʿīlī circles. By attributing *ghazal*s and other poems to authoritative and revered poets such as Ḥāfiẓ and Rūmī, the poems become indubitable and unquestionable. The true author of poems such as these may have practised a kind of *taqiyya*: by remaining anonymous himself, he can avoid accusations of blasphemy. Moreover, by presenting the *ghazal*s as part of the corpus of Ḥāfiẓ and Shams-i Tabrīzī, the poems' chances of being transmitted, propagated, and preserved will certainly increase, and that is in the interest of the creator of this poetry. At the same time, even if perhaps in a slightly twisted manner, this strategy is also beneficial to Ḥāfiẓ or Shams-i Tabrīzī, or any well-known, long dead poet; his fame will be perpetuated by this practice, even if this is probably not in the way he would have wanted.

But how about the 'less problematic' poems 1 and 7, the first and the last of the exemplary cycle of *maddāḥkhānī* discussed here? The mystical content of these poems justifies their attribution to Rūmī. However, these poems do not form part of authoritative editions of the *Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīzī*, though many similar poems can be found in it.[37] Why would a *maddāḥkhān*, if he can choose from thousands of *ghazal*s in the *Dīvān*, many of which expressing the same sentiments and topics, be satisfied with a poem that may be characterised as an imitation, or a forgery?[38]

One of the reasons seems to be connected to the fact that the *maddāḥkhān* had to rely on the material available to him, via oral or written transmission: usually this material did not include printed (critical) text editions, which were often not available.[39] The first poem of the cycle

[37] Manuscripts of Rūmī's works have been subject to painstaking analysis; compare Furūzānfar (ed.), *Kulliyāt-i Maulānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī*. For a detailed discussion on the *ghazal*s with the *takhalluṣ* Shams-i Tabrēz, see Van den Berg, *Minstrel poetry from the Pamir mountains*, pp. 120–129; for a list of *ghazal*s that can be found in some form in editions of the *Dīvān*, see *ibid*., pp. 506–508.

[38] I am aware of the fact that this argumentation demonstrates a rather philologist perspective, which does not necessarily reflect the *maddāḥkhān*'s perspective. That said, the idea of authenticity in relation to the poetry performed was a topic frequently brought up in our conversations with *maddāḥkhān*s and their audiences.

[39] Indeed, being a religious poet, Rūmī's work was not available in Tajikistan until the post-Soviet period. One of the *maddāḥkhān*s, who apparently was looking for new material, even asked us to send a copy of the *Dīvān*. What became available in the early 2000s was a 59-page selection of his

discussed in some detail here (چه تدبیر ای مسلمانان که من خود را نمی دانم) can be found in non-critical editions of the *Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīzī*.[40] Apparently, this was a *ghazal* that was connected to the corpus of Shams-i Tabrīzī. This in itself is not at all exceptional: corpora of poetry, especially those by famous poets, are known to have grown over the centuries by the addition and interpolation of verses and entire poems.

What is remarkable, however, is that almost all of the poems with the *takhalluṣ* Shams or Shams-i Tabrīzī sung in Badakhshan are absent from what is now thought of as an approximate original collection of Rūmī's poetry, whether they are composed in what we think of as Rūmī's style or not. Table 2 shows this for Rūmī as well as for other mediaeval Persian poets whose names often occur in the sung poetry of Badakhshan.

Table 2

Poet	Number of *ghazal*s	Apocryphal/not available
Abu Shakūr	1	1
Amīr Khusrau	1	1
Ḥāfiẓ	17	4
Hilālī	3	-
Jāmī	1	1
Nāṣir-i Khusrau	5	5
Saʿdī	2	2
Sanāʾī	5	5
Shams-i Tabrīzī (Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī)	31	29

Table 2 shows that with the notable exception of Ḥāfiẓ and Hilālī, discussed below, the majority of the *ghazal*s ascribed to mediaeval Persian poets and performed in *maddāḥkhānī* can be considered apocryphal.

A possible explanation for this phenomenon — misattribution of poems — is offered by Jean During in connection with the Chishtī Ṣūfīs and

work (*Tulūʿi oftob*), which to some extent reflects the performance practice: a number of *ghazal*s sung in Badakhshan are present in this booklet, as are those that were sung by the popular Afghan singer Ahmad Zahir (1946–1979).

[40] Nicholson, *Selected poems from the Dīvāni Shamsi Tabrīz*, pp. 124–127.

the Ahl-i Ḥaqq.[41] In the oral poetry traditions of both of these groups, a number of poems occur that we also encounter in the *maddāḥkhānī* tradition of Badakhshan. According to During, the poetry sung by the Chishtī Ṣūfīs is mainly newly-composed poetry. The need to compose new poetic pieces, when so much classical poetry is readily available, comes from the requirements of a musical performance, where the poems must be simple, direct, and moving, couched in a simple language and using a religious or Ṣūfī vocabulary familiar to the audience. More importantly, the poems must be suitable for making musical arrangements. Although the existing corpus is vast, one finds only very few poems that can be adapted well to a particular melody. Therefore, it is worthwhile to compose one's own arrangements.[42]

During's view explains perfectly well the large percentage of apocryphal poems presented in Table 2 as far as Shams-i Tabrīzī/Rūmī is concerned, but it cannot account for the significant presence of *ghazal*s that were, to all intents and purposes, originally composed by Ḥāfiẓ or Hilālī. To explain this discrepancy, we should look at the most prominent performance context of these *ghazal*s, *dafsāz* — '*daf*-song.'

c) The performance context of *dafsāz*

Dafsāz, in contrast with *maddāḥkhānī*, is perceived today in Badakhshan as a secular performance genre, that can be part of a performance during a festive occasion such as a wedding. Thus it serves the purpose of entertainment rather than of religious education, as is the case of *maddāḥkhānī*.[43] It is considered the oldest way of performing poems in Badakhshan.[44]

Dafsāz consists of a number of *ghazal*s and songs, often strophic songs (*mukhammaṣ*), that have love as a topic. These *ghazal*s and songs are sung by a group of men seated together and holding a *daf*. The lead singer starts singing the first verse of a *ghazal* or another kind of poem *a cappella*, without any musical accompaniment. The group of men surrounding him,

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[41] During, *Musique et mystique dans les traditions de l'Iran*.

[42] *Ibid*., p. 196.

[43] It should be noted that this does not imply that the *ghazal*s performed in *dafsāz* cannot be performed in *maddāḥkhānī*.

[44] Van den Berg, *Minstrel poetry from the Pamir mountains*, p. 340.

called *dafzanān* ('players of the frame drum') or *qāshiqān* ('refrain singers'), repeat in loud voices this first verse or strophe and beat an appropriate rhythm on the *daf*. The lead singer also holds a *daf* and joins them. This first verse functions as a refrain. After each refrain, the lead singer continues with the consecutive verses of the *ghazal* (or another kind of poem) *a cappella*, while the others keep repeating the first verse or strophe, the refrain, after each new verse. As the performance proceeds, the tempo rises and the refrains tend to become shorter: no longer the entire verse is sung, but only a hemistich or a few words.[45] The number of singers and *dafzan*s may vary, though at least three persons seem to be necessary to make a performance.[46]

In all our recorded performances of *dafsāz*, Ḥāfiẓ, often in combination with the sixteenth-century poet Hilālī, took a prominent place. The performance presented here as an example consists of five different pieces. The last two poems are by Qudrat-i Shughnānī (1824–1914), described to us as a wandering poet who travelled through Badakhshan, making a living by begging and performing poetry. He composed different kinds of poetry, often based on his own experiences and his surroundings. Being an opium addict himself, he often refers to the use of opium in his poetry.[47]

This performance was led by Abdalhakim Khudoynazarov (vocals and *daf*); he was accompanied by the *qāshiqān/dafzanān* Muzofirsho Jorubov, Mavlonazar Khudoynazarov, Isosho Rahmatshoev, Faromurz Rahmatshoev and Jumʿa Khudoynazarov (Figure 5). All came from the village of Nimoz in the Shohdara valley.[48]

[45] Though *dafsāz* is not perceived as a religious genre, the performance of *dafsāz* is reminiscent of music performances in Ṣūfī contexts. See During, "What is Sufi music?", pp. 284–285 and Van den Berg, *Minstrel poetry from the Pamir mountains*, pp. 727–728 (n. 8).

[46] For more information on the musical aspects of *dafsāz* in particular, see Van Belle, "Dafsâz in Tajik Badaxshân."

[47] Van den Berg, *Minstrel poetry from the Pamir mountains*, pp. 136–137.

[48] This performance was recorded on 26 July, 1993.

Figure 5. Abdalhakim Khudoynazarov (in the middle) and his group playing *dafsāz*. Nimoz, Shohdara valley

An example of *dafsāz*, Abdalhakim Khudoynazarov and others

1. *Ghazal: sāqī ba-nūr-i bāda bar-afrūz jām-i mā*, Ḥāfiẓ, 10 distichs
2. *Ghazal: sāqiyā bar-khīz dar dih jām-rā*, Ḥāfiẓ, 7 distichs
3. *Ghazal: zāhid-i khalvat-nishīn dūsh ba-maykhāna shud*, Ḥāfiẓ, 6 distichs
4. *Mukhammaṣ*: *chihra gul-i nār kujā mīravī*, ascribed to Qudrat-i Shughnānī, 8 strophes
5. *Ghazal: rūz-ī khayāl kardam raftam basayl-i shughnān*, ascribed to Qudrat-i Shughnānī, 8 distichs

In this sequence of *dafsāz*, as well as in other performances of the same genre, we find no trace of apocryphal poems. The poems by Ḥāfiẓ are apparently not too difficult to adapt to the music necessary for *dafsāz*, so for this genre at least, the argument by Jean During seems invalid. Perhaps it should be noted here that printed (Cyrillic) editions of the poems of Ḥāfiẓ had been available for a long time, unlike the poetry of Rūmī, which became available

only in the course of the 1990s.[49] However, the performers did not refer to the use of any printed edition, though the verses follow almost exactly Ḥāfiẓ's *Dīvān* as available in Tajikistan.

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This brief investigation of *ghazal*s in two different performance contexts demonstrates that apocryphal *ghazal*s abound in the religious performance context of *maddāḥkhānī* and are not present in the non-religious context of *dafsāz*. The use of apocryphal *ghazal*s is, however, not restricted to *maddāḥkhānī* and it would be too rash to conclude that religion is the only factor in ascribing *ghazal*s to certain well-known mediaeval Persian poets, even though it certainly seems to be an important factor.

It is clear that certain notions of Sufism also feature prominently in Ismaʿilism, most notably the idea of *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin*. Therefore, Ṣūfī or Ṣūfī-inspired poetry fits well into an Ismāʿīlī context, and this 'Ṣūfī-Ismāʿīlī' poetry found its way into the *maddāḥkhānī* tradition. This poetry, mainly *ghazal* poetry, is ascribed to mediaeval Ṣūfī poets, but appears to be often apocryphal. In the *maddāḥkhānī* tradition, this Ṣūfī-Ismāʿīlī poetry is alternated with poetry of which the contents are potentially questionable, especially outside the community of Badakhshani Ismāʿīlīs. These compositions, again often *ghazal*s, are equally ascribed to mediaeval Ṣūfī poets.

This practice of ascribing poetry may be understood as a legitimising strategy, connected to *taqiyya*: when a poem touches upon a possibly controversial topic, such as the representation of ʿAlī as a divine figure, it might be safer to ascribe the poem to an established (Ṣūfī) poet, as a precaution against possible accusations of *kufr*. Additionally, this practice may be explained as a strategy of increasing the prestige of the poetry, and thereby its chances of transmission, dissemination, and preservation; a practice which reinforces not only the impact of a given poem, but also

[49] Such as Hofizi Sherozi, *Kulliyot* (Dushanbe, 1983). Compare Shamsi Tabrezi, *Tulūʿi oftob (gulchine az ghazaliyot)*, Dushanbe, n.d. (2000 or 2001).

guarantees the ongoing fame of the poets to which the apocryphal, possibly newly composed, poetry is ascribed. Thus one may see the practice of appropriating Shams-i Tabrīzī in the *maddāḥkhānī* tradition of Tajik Badakhshan as a useful strategy of preservation and guardianship of the authorial composition, in this case both for the authorial voice that remains concealed behind the adopted *takhalluṣ* and for the original 'owner' of this *takhalluṣ*, Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, whose voice is recreated in a flourishing literary afterlife.[50]

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