

# Ancient Written Sources of The Ode Genre

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**Abstract:** The article discusses one of the important issues of contemporary Karakalpak literary studies: the ode genre, its artistic oral and written sources, and the importance of written and oral sources in the development of ode genre. The article also discusses about the ancient origins of the ode genre through literary and artistic texts, plot structures, and descriptive narratives found in written heritage common to Turkic peoples, such as the "Orxon-Enisey" inscriptions, the epic of "Qorqit ata", and the "Muhabbatnama". It discusses the issues of considering these works as the earliest written sources in the formation of the Karakalpak ode genre.

**Keywords:** Description, ode, descriptive exposition, enthusiastic description, literary relations, praise song, written sources.

**Introduction:** Description is one of the oldest genres in the history of lyric poetry, and it has traditionally been aimed at praising kings, heroes, or exceptional acts of bravery. As an example of the earliest forms of description, one can cite the poems of Pindar in ancient Greece. "The festive odes (Dj.H: in our opinion, description) created by Pindar (518-442 BC), who glorified the winners of sports competitions, laid the foundation for the emergence of the term "ode" due to their widespread popularity" [1.251]. Examples of this genre can also be found in the heroic verses of the Greek poet Homer's "Iliad". By the time of the Western Renaissance, talented figures like Dante and F. Schiller had made significant contributions to the development of this genre. In Russian classical literature, M. Lomonosov and G.R. Derzhavin were masters of the ode genre. Examples from ancient Greek literature, such as the odes of Pindar and Horace, are considered the roots and ancient sources of the ode genre in Western literature. Which literary heritage can be cited as the ancient source and origin of the praise genre in the literature of Turkic peoples, including Karakalpak literature? We will discuss this issue in our article.

In Uzbek literary studies, this genre, known as ode, is considered to have taken shape during the medieval Renaissance period in Eastern literature. It primarily originated from the 7th century onwards, coinciding with the flourishing of Persian-Tajik literature and the beginning of Islamic culture's formation in the East.

"Ode" (Arabic - purpose, intention) is a genre in classical lyric poetry; a poem composed to praise a person (ruler, honored person, hero), significant event, nature, and similar subjects, expressing their high virtues and distinctive qualities. In Eastern classical literature, there are excellent examples of the ode genre in the works of poets such as Nasir Xisraw, Unsuriy, Anvari, Haqaniy, Daqiqiy, Rudakiy, Saqqaniy, Lutfiy, Jamiy, Gaday, and Navoiy [2.384].

In Karakalpak literary studies, it is crucial to define the objects of the genre's depiction, including which types of characters are depicted and described. The earliest specialized scholarly perspectives on this genre in Karakalpak literary studies belong to Q. Ayimbetov and Q. Jarimbetov. Q. Ayimbetov suggests that the origins of the ode genre in Karakalpak literature can be traced back to folklore: "The praise genre of literature is considered a staple repertoire of storytellers, fondly recited and read aloud. A distinctive feature of Karakalpak oral literature is the long-standing tradition of praising an eloquent speaker who excels among the people, a leader who governs the people, a swift runner who outpaces the flag, a wrestler who triumphs in combat, and a beauty who emerges from the community" [3.149]. After expressing this view, he proceeds to provide excerpts from folk songs and heroic epics containing praise songs. However, there is a difference between praise and descriptions in folklore works and descriptive poems in written literature, in

their portrayal and artistic language. Descriptions in folklore works depict heroes, beauties, heroes' horses, and places, and according to the requirements of folklore poetics, they only describe the state and appearance of the hero or related objects and actions. Unlike an ode or qasida with a specific purpose of celebrating a famous person of the time and glorifying events related to their history, folklore descriptions are not written by a poet with ceremonial intent. Even in folk songs, they are sung with general descriptions, narratives, and common characterizations. They do not display a creative stance. In the formation of Karakalpak praise poetry as a genre, folklore works serve to a certain extent as spiritual and moral nourishment. Although the influence of epics on people and poets through the performance of bards and storytellers is considered a rich source of praise poetry, it is more appropriate to rely on other heritage and the ancient written monuments of Turkic peoples as its reliable written sources.

Written heritage such as "Orxon-Enisey", "Qorqit Ata" "Muhabbatnama" and "Devani Lugat at-Turk", which are considered common monuments for all Turkic peoples, contains the shared literature of the common tribes of that era. As Academician M. Nurmammedov noted: "Along with other Turkic-speaking peoples, the Karakalpak people are considered the heirs of ancient common Turkic written monuments" [4.63]. In light of this, we can consider these literary legacies as ancient written sources of the panegyric genre in Karakalpak literature. The works of Eastern literary classics such as Hafiz, Saadiy, Jamiy, Navoiy, and Fizuliy had a particular influence on the formation of description as a genre in the creative works of 19th-century classical poets. However, while the genre qasida of Eastern classics were similar in content, they differed significantly from the Karakalpak "description" in form and structure. There are two types of qasida: a philosophical qasida free from excessive praise and ostentation, and a qasida with its own unique ornamentation. Additionally, qasida is sometimes categorized into types based on their content, such as "bahoriya", "madhiya", "faxriya", "xazoniya", "hajviya", "xoliya", "ishqiya", and "faxriya" [2.385]. Another major difference between the qasida and description is that the qasida is written in the aruz meter, which is foreign to the Karakalpak language. Due to these characteristics, we consider the qasida of Eastern classics not as a written source of description, but rather as an influential literary phenomenon.

The Orxon-Enisey inscriptions should be noted as the oldest written source in history. "The materials of the ancient Turkic script, or the Orxon-Enisey monuments, considered the oldest written records of Turkic

languages that have reached us, are valuable sources for studying the history of the Karakalpak language, as well as the history of the Karakalpak people themselves" [5.60]. These written monuments are dedicated to the ancient Turkic rulers Bilge, Qultegin, and their vizier Toni Kok, and they recount the activities, statesmanship, social roles, and heroic deeds of these figures. The writing style resembles an intermediate form of poetry (prose poetry). Similar to contemporary descriptions, there are lines consisting of elevated praise and accolades, where the personalities and actions of the main characters are described to a certain extent. For example:

Created with divine majesty

Turk Bilge Khagan.

I ascended the throne,

Listen to my words in full.

All my growing children,

My united horde, my people,

On my right are the glorious rulers,

On my left are the tarkhans and others.

The thirty-nine Oguz rulers and their people. [6.8].

Regarding the descriptive lines in the Orxon-Enisey written monuments, folklorist scholar K. Palimbetov, in his monograph "The Book of Qorqit Ata and Karakalpak Epics" compares the poetics of the "Alpamis" epic with the songs of Qorqit Ata, stating: "We understand that the sources of singing about the hero's courageous actions in battle with such an elevated spirit originate from the Orxon-Enisey inscriptions" [7.73]. He then provides the following example:

Qultegin, riding the Azman horse,

Set off for battle.

He pierced six warriors,

And struck down seven with his sword.

For the second time at Qushlagaq

We fought with the Ediz people.

Qultegin, riding Az Karaker,

Went into battle [8.19].

In the epic, the hero's actions and conduct in battle are depicted through artistic verses. It is possible to analyze other descriptive narratives related to the heroic deeds of Qultegin and Bilke Qagan, which praise the heroes' bravery, political acumen, and their role as key figures in statecraft. All of these narratives are valuable as they aim to portray and extol the heroes.

Another written monument containing elements of the descriptive genre is the songs of Qorqit Ata. These works, consisting of 12 epic poems, contain artistic

lines celebrating and praising the actions and heroism of heroes, similar to Karakalpak heroic epics. Regarding the connection of this literary monument to our folklore and literature, folklorist scholar S. Bakhadirova states: "Comparing the written monument "Kitabi dedem Qorqit" with the contemporary folklore of each nation will lead to significant discoveries in science. Firstly, this text is valuable because it was recorded in the 15th century and is the oldest monument in the Turkic language. By comparing this written monument with contemporary folklore, we witness common motifs and plots shared by all Turkic-speaking peoples of the Middle Ages" [9.4]. In these epics, although the descriptions of the heroes' actions and deeds are not identical to current descriptions, we can observe characteristics of the descriptive genre. For example, in the dialogue between Qazanbek and Orazbek in the fourth poem, there are the following lines:

I'll mount my black horse,  
I'll ride to and fro,  
The black-hearted infidels,  
No matter how many there are,  
With unyielding black steel,  
I'll strike their slender necks,  
I'll cut off their heads,  
Fighting while in motion,  
I'll wreak havoc on the infidels [7.75].

In the poem, the hero's actions and heroic deeds are narrated from the first-person perspective; typically, in a characterization, the person is described from the third-person perspective. However, due to the poem's descriptive method, its focus on praising the hero, and its performance by Qorqit Jiraw, it can be considered one of the earliest examples of characterization.

In the work "Muhabbatnama" by Xorezmiy, who lived at the end of the 13th and beginning of the 14th centuries, one can see remarkable examples of the descriptive genre. Although the work is about love, its first part is dedicated to praising King Mahmud Hojabek. For example:

Illuminating the night is a divine act,  
Muhammad Hojabek is fortune's bird.  
I said: composing poetry is a poet's throne,  
Dedicating it to a ruler like you is my blessing.  
Oh, mighty lion of Qonirat,  
I've acknowledged none but you.  
Your joy is the mountain of my heart,  
Muhammad Hojabek – life's foundation.  
One of the rulers who nourished the people,

The brother of the renowned ruler Janibek [10.122-123].

In terms of poetic structure and meter, it corresponds closely with the descriptions of our classical poets. Regarding artistic techniques, it evokes the descriptive style found in Karakalpak heroic epics. Considering the work's historical, cultural, and linguistic characteristics, it is appropriate to view it as a source for Karakalpak interpretation. The opening section of "Muhabbatnama" consists of remarkable lines of praise. The poet artfully portrays the ruler's character through both his socio-political activities and his vigor and strength.

In summary, we have discussed in this article which literary works can be considered as artistic written sources of the genre of description, which has developed as an independent genre since the second half of the 19th century. The "Orxon-Enisey" inscriptions, "Qorqit Ata" and "Muhabbatnama" which we have used as examples, are written monuments shared by Turkic peoples and are also considered a heritage for the Karakalpak people. This is because these written legacies are historically connected to our people's history and are linguistically harmonious with the Karakalpak language. Therefore, they can also serve as a source for our literature.

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