

Islamic Mystical Poetry 2

Session 1: Introduction to
Persian mystical poetry

Persia: historical setting

- Sasanid empire (224–651AD)
 - Arab invasion
- Abbasid caliphate (750–1258) and Saljuqs
- The Persian Princes: Samanids (819-999)

Persia: language

the earliest records: 6–4th centuries BCE

Middle Persian/Pahlavi

the impact of Islam – New Persian

poetic forms: *qasida*, *ghazal*, *ruba'i* (quatrain)
and *masnavi*

The classical ode and its offspring

the qaṣīda: the pre-Islamic ode of Arabia

“Four things there be that life impart
To soul, to body and to heart –
A running stream, a flowered glade,
A jar of wine, a lovely maid”

Abu Nuwas (d. ca. 810)

Islamic mystical poetry: the Persian classical period

Sana'i (d. 1131)

'Umar Khayyam (d. 1131)

Ruzbihan Baqli (d. 1209)

Ilyas Nizami Ganjavi (d. 1209)

Farid al-Din 'Attar (d. 1220)

Awhad al-Din Kirmani (d.1238)

Jalal al-Din Rumi (d. 1273)

Fakhr al-Din 'Iraqi (d. 1289)

Sa'di (d. 1294)

Mahmud Shabistari (d. 1320)

Hafiz (d. 1390)

Rudaki (d. 940)

Though my heart bleeds with the pain of parting
pain I endure for you is more joy than pain
each night I ponder, and I say "O God,
if such is parting from her, how will union
be?"

(Music from a Distant Drum, p. 94)