

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Reception of Alisher Navoi's Literary Heritage in The Cultural and Intellectual Milieu of The Bukhara Emirate

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Abstract

This article examines the reception, transmission, and scholarly appreciation of Alisher Navoi's literary heritage in the Bukhara Emirate from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century. Although Persian held a strong position in administration, historiography, and elite literary culture, manuscript evidence, tazkiras, courtly copying practices, poetic responses, private libraries, and lexicographical activity demonstrate the enduring prestige of Turkic literature and the exceptional authority of Navoi's oeuvre. The study argues that Navoi's works functioned not only as literary models but also as cultural criteria through which Turkic identity and intellectual continuity were maintained in Bukhara.

KEY WORDS

Alisher Navoi; Bukhara Emirate; Manghit dynasty; Turkic literature; Chagatai language; manuscript culture; Khamsa; tazkira; literary reception; Central Asian literary history.

INTRODUCTION

The study of the reception of classical authors across historical periods and cultural regions remains one of the central problems of comparative literary scholarship. In this respect, the creative heritage of Alisher Navoi occupies a distinctive place in the intellectual history of the Turkic peoples. His works shaped not only the development of Chagatai Turkic literature, but also the broader aesthetic, linguistic, and cultural norms of Central Asian literary production from the fifteenth century onward [12].

Within contemporary global humanities research, the influence of canonical poets beyond the regions of their immediate activity is increasingly studied through the lenses of manuscript circulation, court patronage, intertextuality, translation, commentary, and canon formation. Applying such approaches to the case of Alisher Navoi allows us to understand how his writings continued to function as

authoritative texts in later political and cultural contexts, including the Bukhara Emirate.

The Bukhara Emirate presents a particularly important case. From the late eighteenth century until the early twentieth century, Persian maintained a dominant role in administration, historiography, and elite literary culture. Nevertheless, Navoi's works were widely copied, read, cited, imitated, and preserved. This apparent tension between the Persianate cultural environment of Bukhara and the strong presence of Turkic literary heritage forms the main research problem of the present article [13].

The objective of this article is to examine the attitude toward Navoi's legacy in the Bukhara Emirate and to clarify the ways in which his works contributed to the preservation and development of Turkic literary culture under the Manghit

dynasty. The article also considers the role of scribes, poets, historians, and private collectors in maintaining the authority of Navoi's oeuvre.

METHOD

The connection between Alisher Navoi and the cultural world of Bukhara is not limited to later reception. During his own lifetime, Navoi repeatedly referred to the literary and spiritual environment of Bukhara. In *Nasayim al-Muhabbat*, he mentions a number of revered figures associated with the region, including Khoja Abdulkhaliq Gijduvani, Khoja Bahauddin Naqshband, Khoja Ali Rometani, Baba'i Samasi, and Khoja Mahmud Anjir Faghnavi. These references reveal Navoi's awareness of Bukhara as a major center of spirituality and learning [2].

In *Majalis un-Nafa'is*, Navoi also provides brief but valuable information about poets connected with Bukhara, such as Mawlana Sayfi, Mawlana Kawsari, Mawlana Khayali, and especially Khoja Ismatullah Bukhari. Navoi characterizes Khoja Ismatullah as one of the noble figures of Mawarannahr and notes the popularity of his *divan* and *qasidas*. The attention given to Bukhara poets in Navoi's biographical and literary writings later contributed to the formation of a reciprocal literary memory: Bukhara remembered Navoi not merely as a distant classical poet, but as an author whose own works had already incorporated the region into the map of Turkic-Persian literary culture [2].

After the decline of Timurid power, the linguistic situation in Central Asia underwent significant changes. Under the Shaybanids, Turkic initially retained a prominent position; however, after the political and cultural center shifted to Bukhara, Persian became increasingly dominant in literary production, administration, and historiography. This tendency continued during the Ashtarkhanid period and later under the Manghit dynasty [13].

At the same time, the dominance of Persian did not eliminate the demand for Turkic literature. On the contrary, the manuscript record indicates that Navoi's works continued to circulate actively among both the general reading public and court circles. The Turkic ethnic background of a considerable part of the population and ruling elite, as well as the prestige of Chagatai as a literary language, created a social and cultural environment in which Navoi's heritage remained indispensable.

The familiarity of Manghit-era historians and scholars with

Navoi's heritage is clearly visible in historical writing. Muhammadwafo Karminagi, in *Tuhfat al-Khani*, provides information on the early years of the emirate and cites a *rubai* from Navoi's *Hamsat al-Mutahayyirin*, originally addressed to Abdurrahman Jami. The presence of this verse in a historical chronicle demonstrates the wide circulation of Navoi's Persian and Turkic literary authority within the intellectual milieu of Bukhara [8; 2].

This same *rubai* also appears in the *Fahmi Tazkira*, compiled in 1860 during the reign of Amir Muzaffar. The *tazkira* contains information about sixty-three poets and includes a separate entry on Navoi. Although the author relied on earlier sources such as Mirza Muhammad Haydar Dughlat's *Tarikh-i Rashidi* and repeated the erroneous statement about Navoi's supposed Uyghur *bakhshi* origin, the very inclusion of Navoi among the recognized literary figures of the *tazkira* testifies to his canonical status in nineteenth-century Bukhara [3].

Manuscript evidence provides some of the strongest proof of the high esteem in which Navoi's works were held in Bukhara. A copy of *Hayrat al-Abrar* preserved among Navoi manuscripts in the Russian State Public Library, as noted by A. Semenov, contains a letter sent by Abulfayz Khan to Nader Shah Afshar. Such evidence indicates that Navoi manuscripts circulated within politically and intellectually significant environments [11].

Manuscripts copied in Bukhara in 1822–1823 and now preserved at the Institute of Oriental Studies named after Abu Rayhan Beruni include Navoi's *Khamsa*, *Tarikh al-Anbiya wa'l-Hukama*, *Tarikh-i Muluk-i Ajam*, parts of *Majalis un-Nafa'is*, *Mahbub al-Qulub*, and *Lisan al-Tayr*. The inclusion of works by Fariduddin Attar and anonymous epics in the same manuscript context further demonstrates the high literary level of the compilation and the central position of Navoi within it [4].

During the reign of Amir Nasrullo, a copy of Navoi's *Khamsa* was transcribed in 1845–1846 by the scribe Abdukarim. The inclusion of the emir's genealogy at the end of the manuscript suggests that the copy may have been produced by order of the ruler or dedicated to him. Thirty-five years later, another scribe, Maqsud, added information related to Amir Muzaffar. This continuity confirms that the Manghit court maintained a long-term interest in Navoi's works and regarded them as texts worthy of preservation in elite manuscript culture [4].

The promotion of Navoi's language and literary heritage was not limited to manuscript copying. During the reign of Amir

Nasrullo, efforts were made to introduce and explain Chagatai Turkic abroad. In 1847, the emir's envoy to the Ottoman court of Sultan Abdulmejid I, Shaykh Sulayman Afandi Bukhari, remained in Istanbul for an extended period and engaged in linguistic study [11].

While in the Ottoman capital, Shaykh Sulayman Afandi examined the similarities and differences between Old Uzbek and Ottoman Turkish and compiled *Lughat-i Chaghatay wa Turki-yi Uthmani*, a dictionary of Chagatai and Ottoman Turkish. Published in Istanbul in 1881, the dictionary presented Ottoman equivalents for 6,650 words used in Old Uzbek. Nearly four hundred of these words were drawn from the works of Alisher Navoi [12].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The analyzed materials demonstrate that Navoi's legacy in the Bukhara Emirate was not confined to passive preservation. It was actively reproduced, interpreted, imitated, and incorporated into the scholarly and literary life of the region. According to Aftandil Erkinov's research, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Navoi's *Khamsa* and its individual epics were copied fifty-one times in the Emirate of Bukhara. Of these, thirty-four manuscripts contained all five epics of the *Khamsa*. For comparison, thirty-seven copies were produced in the Kokand Khanate and forty-three in the Khiva Khanate during the same period [6].

The fact that more copies were produced in Bukhara, despite the stronger position of Persian in its literary environment, is highly significant. It suggests that Navoi's works helped fill the relative shortage of Turkic manuscripts and satisfied a persistent demand for authoritative Turkic literary texts. The main centers of copying within the emirate were Bukhara, Samarkand, and Shahrizabz.

The impact of Navoi's poetry can also be observed in the works of poets who lived during the period of the Bukhara Emirate. One notable example is Mulla Qurbon Joniy, who lived from the late eighteenth century to 1834. His surviving *divan* includes *ghazals*, *mukhammas*, *rubais*, *qit'as*, and poetic responses to the *ghazals* of Fuzuli and Alisher Navoi. These texts demonstrate the integration of Navoi's poetic models into the literary practice of later Bukhara poets [9].

Another vivid example appears in a copy of Navoi's *Khamsa* transcribed in Bukhara in 1882 during the reign of Amir Muzaffar. An unknown scribe added refined Turkic verses praising Navoi. In this poetic passage, the speaker describes

a state of spiritual confusion until a remarkable book comes into his hands. The book is identified as the *Khamsa* of Alisher Navoi, praised as a treasury of pure pearls and as the work of a spiritual guide who united hidden and manifest knowledge [1].

Navoi's works were also preserved in private scholarly libraries. The famous chief qadi of Bukhara, Sadri Ziyoy, compiled a catalogue of the books in his personal library and provided descriptions of individual works and authors. This catalogue shows that his library contained Navoi's *divan* as well as *Munshaot* [19].

Sadri Ziyoy's description of Navoi is important for understanding how Bukhara scholars evaluated his historical role. He portrays Navoi as a sovereign of the realm of words who fulfilled the duties of vizier with mastery, supported the education of the people, and created favorable conditions for scholars. He also emphasizes that Navoi's *Khamsa* became renowned among Turkic and Tajik peoples as well as among near and distant communities [19].

Another significant figure was Mir Siddiq Tora, the son of Amir Muzaffar, who wrote poetry under the pen name Hashmat. Sadriddin Ayni notes that Hashmat spent thirty-five years in confinement during the reigns of Amir Abdulahadkhan and Mir Alimkhan and devoted himself to scholarship and book collecting. His private library was among the most famous in Bukhara, and he wrote poetry in Persian, Turkic, and Arabic. Such examples confirm that the appreciation of Navoi's legacy continued among elite literary circles and private collectors until the final period of the emirate [5].

The influence of the Bukhara Emirate's literary environment extended into the modern study of Navoi. Scholars such as Abdurauf Fitrat and Sadriddin Ayni, who were educated in the intellectual atmosphere shaped during the late Manghit period, made substantial contributions to the study of Navoi's works. Their interest in Navoi was rooted in a cultural environment in which his works had long been copied, read, and discussed.

Many manuscripts copied during the Bukhara Emirate are now preserved in Uzbekistan and abroad. For example, according to A. Turdialiev, the Kokand Museum of Literature contains selected *divans* of Alisher Navoi that were copied within the territory of the Bukhara Emirate. One such selected *divan*, registered under number 518, was copied in Bukhara in 1289 AH/1872–1873 by Mulla Abduljalil ibn Mulla Muhammad

Karim, while its binding was completed by Mulla Yuldash Sahhof [14].

These manuscript traces, together with tazkiras, poetic responses, historical references, and private catalogues, demonstrate that Navoi's literary heritage served as a foundational criterion for sustaining and developing Turkic language and literature in the Bukhara Emirate. His authority helped Turkic literature remain resilient within a Persian-dominant cultural field.

CONCLUSION

The evidence examined in this article shows that the reception of Alisher Navoi's heritage in the Bukhara Emirate was deep, continuous, and multifaceted. Despite the strong role of Persian as the language of administration and elite literary production, the Manghit period did not represent a rupture in the history of Turkic literary culture. On the contrary, manuscripts, tazkiras, poetic imitations, lexicographical works, and private libraries confirm the sustained prestige of Navoi's writings [4; 6; 11; 14].

The exceptionally high number of Navoi manuscripts copied in Bukhara and related cities indicates not only respect for a classical author, but also an active cultural need for Turkic literary models. Navoi's *Khamsa*, *divans*, prose works, and ethical writings continued to shape literary taste, manuscript practice, and scholarly memory. His works functioned as both a poetic standard and a cultural symbol of Turkic intellectual continuity [6].

Therefore, the attitude toward Navoi's heritage in the Bukhara Emirate should be understood as a key component of Central Asian literary history. It reveals how a Persianate courtly and scholarly environment could simultaneously preserve, reproduce, and value the Turkic literary canon. This duality makes the Bukhara Emirate an important field for further research into manuscript culture, multilingualism, and the historical reception of Alisher Navoi.

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