

ACTIVITIES OF THE BARAK KHAN MADRASAH AND TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF VERSES, HADITHS, AND WISDOM INSCRIPTIONS ON IT**Abdullayev Alisher**Lecturer at Tashkent Islamic Institute,
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Abstract: This article provides information about the Barak Khan Madrasah, one of the historical madrasahs in Tashkent with a legacy spanning over five centuries. It explores the history of its construction, its educational activities, its condition during the Soviet era, and its restoration under the leadership of Ziyovuddin Khan ibn Eshon Bobokhon. The article also discusses the subjects taught there and its function as the headquarters of the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan. Furthermore, it analyzes the Quranic verses, hadiths, and poetic inscriptions written on the madrasah, their meanings, the types of calligraphy used, and the calligraphers who created them.

Key words: Muslim Religious Administration of Central Asia and Kazakhstan, aqidah (Islamic creed), usul al-fiqh (principles of Islamic jurisprudence), Bad'ul-A'mali, Kitabut-Tavzi, portal (peshtoq), thuluth script, kufic script.

Barak-Khan is one of the madrasahs that has witnessed to five centuries of Tashkent history. This madrasah is considered an ancient center of science and culture.¹ Its construction is connected with three rulers of Tashkent: Suyunch Khoja-Khan and his two sons, Keldi Muhammad Khan and Nawruz ibn Ahmad Khan.² In 1503, after conquering Tashkent, Shaybani Khan entrusted its governance to Janibek Sultan. From 1509 to 1524, Suyunch Khoja ruled as the governor of Tashkent. After his death, his son Sultan Muhammad ruled the city from 1525 to 1533, followed by his brother Nawruz Ahmad Khan, who became the khan of Tashkent in 1533. Nawruz Ahmad Khan was a master horseman and deeply passionate about physical training and although most of his life was spent in military campaigns, he was known as a benevolence to gentle, and kind.

For this reason, he was also referred to as “Barak Khan”. It is plausible to assume that the idea of establishing a dynastic mausoleum for the rulers of Tashkent and their relatives near the blessed tomb of the great Imam Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Ismail al-Qaffal al-Shashiy arose in the mind of Suyunch Khoja Khan. The initial, small mausoleum-khanaqah located in the southeastern corner of the madrasah also appears to have been constructed by his order Suyunch Khoja Khan. At that time, the newly established madrasah was named “Barak-Khan”.

The Barak Khan Madrasah was constructed gradually between 1509 and 1770, eventually forming a cohesive architectural complex. Historians identified that the construction took place in three main phases. According to archival documents, the Barak Khan madrasah consisted of 34 hujras, a mosque, and a classroom in 1868. During its educational process, nearly 100 textbooks and scholarly works were taught at the madrasah. Muhammad Solikh Khoja (1830-1889) wrote that the madrasah suffered severe damage during the 1886 earthquake,

¹ A. Abdullaev. *The History of the Barakhan Madrasah*. In: Proceedings of the Republican Scientific-Practical Conference “Islamic Education in Uzbekistan: Its History, Development, and Role in the Progress of Society”. – Tashkent: Renesans Press, 2023, P. 27.

² V. Bulatov. *The Barak Khan Madrasah*. – Tashkent, 1972, P. 6.

including the collapse of its 22-meter-high dome.³ Subsequently, the madrasah was left unattended and remained unused for a long time. By 1917, the madrasah had been converted into a dormitory. As a result, significant alterations were made to its historical appearance. From 1936 onward, the madrasah was used by the Society of the Blind and as a warehouse and due to a lack of maintenance, falling into a state of disrepair due to neglect. Despite having endured various tumultuous periods from its inception, the madrasah has served to our present day.

Due to the political circumstances of the 1940s, certain concessions were granted to religion in domestic policy regarding religion. In the 1950s, the Barak Khan Madrasah was transferred to the jurisdiction of the Religious Administration of Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan. It was restored under the leadership of Ziyovuddin Khan ibn Eshon Bobokhon. On October 10, 1945, through official letter No. 4808, the Religious Administration of Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan submitted a request to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union seeking permission to open two madrasahs.⁴

Based on the aforementioned appeal, on November 29, 1945, by Resolution No. 1879-212 of the Council of People's Commissars of the Uzbek SSR, permission was granted to the Religious Administration to open two religious institutions. According to this decision, the activities of the Barak Khan Madrasah in Tashkent and the Mir-i Arab Madrasah in Bukhara were officially authorized.⁵ The Mir-i Arab Madrasah resumed its operations in 1946. However, at that time, the Barak Khan Madrasah was being used as a dormitory for the society of the Blind. The responsibility of relocating them and providing housing fell upon the Religious Administration. Several residential units were constructed in the courtyard of Qori Ziyovuddinkhan's farmhouse, located on Qorasaroy Street, and were allocated to the displaced residents.⁶

Thanks to the efforts of Qori Ziyovuddin Khan, the Barak Khan Madrasah was restored and resumed its activities as a higher educational institution in 1956.⁷ Ismail Mahdum Sattiyev, deputy Chairman of the Religious Administration of Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan, was appointed as the director of the Barak Khan Madrasah, while Shakir Shaislamov was assigned as the academic director.⁸ Senior students from the Mir-i Arab Madrasah were transferred to the Barak Khan Madrasah to continue their studies.⁹ At the time, seven instructors taught fifteen subjects.¹⁰ During the 1960-1961 academic year, a total of 65 students were enrolled across both madrasahs.¹¹ Students received a monthly stipend of 25 soums,¹² which was later increased to 40 soums. The duration of one academic year was seven months. In the 1960/61 academic year, twelve subjects were taught to fifth-year students, including:

1. Arabic grammar (nahw), 2. Morphology (sarf), 3. writing an Arabic dictation (to practice spelling), 4. conversation (mukhovara), 5. hadith, 6. hadith terminology (Mustalah al-hadith), 7. fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), 8. Tafsir (Qur'anic exegesis), 9. Persian language, 10. Russian language, 11. history of the USSR, 12. economic geography.¹³

For sixth-year students, the subjects taught included balagha (Arabic rhetoric), Arabic literature, and aqidah (Islamic creed).

³ Muhammad Solikhkhoja domla Rahmatkhoja ogli (ca. 1830-1889) historian and geographer from Tashkent.

⁴ The National Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan. Fond 2456, Inventory 1, File 336, Folio 167.

⁵ The National Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan. Fond 2456, Inventory 1, File 336, Folio 167.

⁶ Amirsaidkhon Usmonkhojaev. *Devotees of Our Religion*. – Tashkent: "Tafakkur", 2021, P. 116..

⁷ The National Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan. Fond 2456, Inventory 1,2 File 68, Folio 85

⁸ The National Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan. Fond 2459, Inventory 1, File 268, Folio 35.

⁹ The National Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan. Fond 2456, Inventory 1, File 268, Folio 167.

¹⁰ The National Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan.. Fond 2456, Inventory 1, File 268, Folio 43.

¹¹ The National Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan.. Fond 2456, Inventory 1, File 268, Folio 56.

¹² The National Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan.. Fond 2456, Inventory 1, File 268, Folio 3.

¹³ The National Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan.. Fond 2456, Inventory 1, File 268, Folio 2.

Through the efforts of the religious supervisory leadership, an additional two hours per week of Qur'anic recitation classes were introduced at the madrasah, based on Decision No. 4 dated October 20, 1960.¹⁴ The teachers and students of the madrasah also actively participated in community activities. That same year, during the cotton-harvesting season, the teachers and students collectively contributed by picking 5 tons of cotton.¹⁵

An analysis of the curriculum and subjects taught at the madrasah indicates that it represented a post-secondary stage of religious education following the Mir-i Arab Madrasah. The primary objective behind establishing the Barak Khan Madrasah was to provide higher religious education beyond the intermediate level. This is evident from the subjects taught: in Arabic language studies, qafiyah (prosody); in Arabic literature, Adab al-Dunya wa al-Din; in aqidah (Islamic creed), Bad'ul-A'mali; and in usul al-fiqh (principles of Islamic jurisprudence), Kitabut-Tavzi. As public interest in religious education grew, and more than 13 pilgrimage sites¹⁶ previously under the financial administration of the religious board were transferred to state control, the Soviet government began focusing on merging the two madrasahs and increasing the number of secular subjects taught. Students were even provided with an additional monthly stipend of 30 soums¹⁷ for cultural and recreational activities such as attending cinemas, theaters, parks, and public baths. In 1961, as a result of the merger of the two madrasahs, the Barak Khan Madrasah was closed. That same year, the Religious Administration which had been operating since 1943 in the residence of Eshon Bobokhon-was relocated to the Barak Khan Madrasah building.

Despite negative attitudes toward Islam religion, although the Barak-Khan Madrasah operated for a short period, a number of students were sent abroad for study. Three individuals were nominated to pursue education in the city of Medina, Saudi Arabia:

1. Salohiddin Muhiddinov (Uzbekistan)
2. Ratbek Nisanbayev (Kazakhstan)
3. Abdusamad Umarov¹⁸ (Kyrgyzstan)

In addition, nine students¹⁹ were recommended for study in several Arab countries, including the Arab Republic of Egypt, Libya, Syria, Jordan, and others. At the initiative of the leadership of the Religious Administration of Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan, all expenses for students studying abroad-including family support and stipends-were fully covered by the Muslims of Religious Administration Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan.²⁰ Even travel expenses to and from Moscow were financed by the religious authority. Until the end of 2006, the building of the Barak-Khan Madrasah was used as the headquarters of the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan.

INSCRIPTIONS IN THE BARAK-KHAN MADRASAH

The main facade of the Barak Khan Madrasah faces east, and its central inscription is written in white thuluth script. This inscription features verse 104 from Surah Āl 'Imrān of the Holy Qur'an.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
وَلْتَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

¹⁴ The National Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan.. Fond 2456, Inventory1, File 268, Folio 110.

¹⁵ The National Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan.. Fond 2456, Inventory1, File 268, Folio 3.

¹⁶ The National Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan.. Fond 2456, Inventory 1, File 268, Folio 123.

¹⁷ The National Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan.. Fond 2456, Inventory 1, File 268, Folio 110.

¹⁸ The National Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan.. Fond 2456, Inventory 1, File 268, Folio 52.

¹⁹ The National Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan.. Fond 2456, Inventory 1, File 268, Folio 58.

²⁰ The National Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan.. Folio 2456, Inventory1, File 268, Folio 25.

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. “Let there be a group among you who call to goodness, enjoin what is right, and forbid what is wrong. It is they who will be successful”.²¹ This verse, from Surah Āl ‘Imrān (3:104), is inscribed in white thuluth script on the main facade of the Barak Khan Madrasah. Above it, in repeated yellow kufic script, appear the phrases: *Al-mulk lillāh, Al-baqā’ lillāh* -“Sovereignty belongs to Allah,” “Eternity is Allah’s alone.” This inscription was commissioned in 1978 by calligrapher Habibullah Salih, based on the recommendation of Shaykh Ziyovuddin ibn Eshon Bobokhon (1908–1982), then Chairman and Mufti of the Religious Administration of Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan.²²

On both the upper and lower sections of the sides of the madrasah’s main portal (peshtoq), the phrase *Allāhu Akbar* -“Allah is the Greatest”- is inscribed in turquoise kufic script. In the central part of both side panels, the supplication *Yā Rabbī* -“O my Lord”-is also written in the same turquoise kufic style.

On the right side of the western portal within the inner courtyard of the madrasah, verse 38 from Surah Ash-Shura of the Holy Qur’an was inscribed in thuluth script in 2007, based on a design by calligrapher Islam Mamatov.

Here is a scholarly and elegant English translation of the verse you've quoted, which is verse 38 from Surah Ash-Shura (42:38) in the Qur’an²³:

قال الله تعالى: وَالَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَى بَيْنَهُمْ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ

Allah the Exalted says: “And those who respond to their Lord, establish prayer, conduct their affairs by mutual consultation, and spend out of what We have provided them”

Above the verse, the phrase *Al-mulk lillāh* -“Sovereignty belongs to Allah”-is repeatedly inscribed in yellow kufic script.

On the left side of the western portal within the inner courtyard of the madrasah, a hadith is written in white thuluth script against a blue background.

The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said:

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: إن العلماء ورثة الأنبياء لم يورثوا ديناراً ولا درهما إنما ورثوا العلم فمن أخذه أخذ بحظ وافر

“The scholars are the inheritors of the prophets. The prophets do not leave behind dinars or dirhams (wealth) as inheritance. Rather, they leave knowledge, and whoever acquires it has indeed taken a great share”.²⁴

On pages 43-44 of the book “Hazrati Imam (Hastimom)”, authored by the late Mufti Usmonkhon Alimov, former Chairman of the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan, and published by Mavaraunnahr Publishing House in 2013, the following Persian verses are recorded as being inscribed on the right and left sides of the mihrab of the Barak-Khan Madrasah.

On pages 43–44 of the book “Hazrati Imam (Hastimom)”, authored by the late Mufti Usman Khan Alimov, former Chairman of the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan and (published by Mavaraunnahr Publishing House in 2013), the following Persian verses are cited as being inscribed on the right and left sides of the mihrab of the Barak Khan Madrasah.

برسولش درود دائم باد	حمد بر خالقی کریم و جواد
چند سالی تا آباد	بعد این گمبذ براق خانی
تاشود مسجدی برای عباد	حاجی داملا توجهی کردند
کردهند و خدا قبول کند	تاجران زمانه احسانها
صرف کردند تنگه های جیاد	ملاتوچی ملا فتاح بای
ایزد اور اجزای خیر دهاد	اهتمام نمود قاری غلام

Meaning:

²¹Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf. *Tafsir al-Hilal*. Vol. 1. - Tashkent: Hilol-Nashr, 2008. -P. 387..

²²Firdavs Abdukholiqov. *Inscriptions on the Monuments of Uzbekistan*. -Tashkent: Uzbekistan Today, 2016. - P. 52..

²³ Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf. *Tafsir al-Hilal*. Vol. 5. -Tashkent: Hilol-Nashr, 2008. - P. 353..

²⁴ Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf. *The Golden Chain*. Vol. 1.-Tashkent: Hilol-Nashr, 2013. -P. 175.

Praise be to the Generous and Noble Creator,
 And perpetual blessings upon His Messenger.
 Then: May this dome of Barak-Khan
 Remain prosperous for countless years.
 To serve as a mosque for the servants of God,
 Haji Domla devoted his attention.
 Merchants of that era gave in charity
 They gave humbly, saying: "May God accept it."
 Mulla Tuchii Fatkhulla
 Spent good and lawful coins.
 Qori(reciter) Ghulom gave his support
 May Allah reward him generously!

بود صاحب هنر بلتد نهاد	خواجه ابو القاسم است استاييس
خانقاهي عجب فرح ايجاد	مسجدي فيض ناك شد اكنون
دلگشا خانقه مبرك باد	اهل علمان مدرسه بشما
جهد كن نام نيك ماند ياد	از جهان ميروود چه نيك و چه زشت
گمبذی گو دو باره شد آباد	شده تاريخ دويمين تعمير
سخن المعبي برارد ياد	نيك بنگر كه گفت احرار

Meaning:

The master of this building was Khoja Abul Qasim ,
 A man of great skill and craftsmanship.
 A blessed mosque has now risen tall,
 And a khanaqah was built to delight the heart.
 The Muslims, in joy, greeted one another, saying sincerely:
 "May this khanaqah be blessed!"
 Both the good and the bad pass away from this world;
 O servant, strive so that only a good name remains after you.
 Its second renovation became a historical event:
 In the year 1333 AH, the dome was restored for the second time.
 If you examine carefully, as the elders have said,
 The chronogram can be derived from the word Almaiy.²⁵

These verses have not been preserved to the present day, and the fifth line of the second hemistich does not contain the Hijri year 1333 as indicated in the translation. The phrases "گمبذی گو دو باره شد آباد" and ("The dome was restored for the second time") and "المعبي" do not correspond to the year 1333 Hijri when calculated using the Abjad numerical system. On the dome of the madrasah's khanaqah, verses 256 to 258 from Surah Al-Baqarah of the Holy Qur'an are inscribed in white thuluth script against a blue background.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
 لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِن بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَى
 لَا انْفِصَامَ لَهَا وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ (256) اللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَوْلِيَاؤُهُمُ
 الطَّاغُوتُ يُخْرِجُونَهُم مِّنَ النُّورِ إِلَى الظُّلُمَاتِ أُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ (257) أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ حَاجَّ
 إِبْرَاهِيمَ فِي رَبِّهِ أَنْ آتَاهُ اللَّهُ الْمُلْكَ إِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّيَ الَّذِي يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ قَالَ أَنَا أَحْيِي وَأُمِيتُ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ
 يَأْتِي بِالشَّمْسِ مِنَ الْمَشْرِقِ فَأْتِ بِهَا مِنَ الْمَغْرِبِ فَبُهِتَ الَّذِي كَفَرَ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ (258)

256. In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. There is no compulsion in religion. Truly, the right path has become distinct from error. So whoever rejects false gods and

²⁵ U. Alimov. *Hazrat Imam (Hastimom)*. - Tashkent: Movarounnahr, 2013. - Pp. 43-44.

believes in Allah has grasped the firmest handhold that will never break. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

257. Allah is the Protector of those who believe. He brings them out of darkness into light. As for those who disbelieve, their allies are the false gods—they lead them from light into darkness. They are the companions of the Fire; they will abide therein.

258. Did you not consider the one who argued with Abraham about his Lord, because Allah had given him kingship?

When Abraham said, “My Lord is the One who gives life and causes death,” he replied, “I give life and cause death.” Abraham said, “Indeed, Allah brings the sun from the east, so bring it from the west.” Thus, the disbeliever was confounded. And Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people. Above these verses, the titles “Āyat al-Kursī” and “Asmā’ al-Ḥusnā” (The Beautiful Names of Allah) are partially inscribed in yellow kufic script. The calligraphy was executed by master calligrapher Islam Mamatov.

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَّةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَلَا يَئُودُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ

Allah—there is no deity except Him. He is the Ever-Living, the Sustainer of all existence. Neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. Who is it that can intercede with Him except by His permission? He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they encompass nothing of His knowledge except what He wills. His Kursi extends over the heavens and the earth, and their preservation does not tire Him. And He is the Most High, the Most Great.

The inscriptions on these architectural monuments are considered an invaluable heritage that provides valuable information about their time and serves to define the aspirations and path of our ancestors and our nation.

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