

"TARIHI MULUKI AJAM" AS A LITERARY WORK: POETIC INTERPOLATION AND ARTISTIC INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY

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Abstract: This study examines Alisher Navoi's historical work "Tarihi Muluki Ajam" ("The History of the Kings of Ajam") through the lens of its literary and artistic qualities. While traditionally categorized as a historical chronicle, the analysis posits that the work possesses a distinct literary character, structured by specific artistic principles. The research employs textual and comparative analysis to investigate the function of poetic interpolations (*kissa-dan hissa*), the use of the *masnavi* form, and Navoi's creative approach to historical and legendary narratives. The findings reveal that Navoi transcends mere historiography by employing techniques of artistic generalization, didactic commentary, and emotional evaluation, thereby transforming historical accounts into a coherent literary text with a unified ideological and aesthetic framework. The study concludes that "Tarihi Muluki Ajam" represents a unique synthesis of historical narrative and artistic creativity within Navoi's oeuvre.

Keywords: Alisher Navoi, "Tarihi Muluki Ajam", literary work, historiography, poetic interpolation, *masnavi*, artistic interpretation, didacticism.

Introduction

Alisher Navoi, in his treatise "Muhokamat-ul Lughatayn," mentions "Tarihi Muluki Ajam" alongside his four *devans* included in "Khamsa," indicating the significance he attached to this work within his creative system. He states: *"Having found respite from composing this Khamsa, my imagination galloped onto the vast plain of the history of kings... I compiled the essence of 'Zubdat-ut Tavarikh'... and revived the forgotten names of kings..."* (Navoiy, *Muhokamat-ul Lughatayn*, 1963, p. 144). He further notes his aspiration that his work would stand on par with the creations of Persian masters. Academician A. Kayumov argues that every work from Navoi's pen, be it lyrical, epic, or historical, should be considered a specimen of artistic creativity, a view supported by the presence of mythological elements, legendary interpretations, influences from oral folk art, and a creative approach to facts in "Tarihi Muluki Ajam" (Kayumov, 1965, p. 230). This research aims to analyze the artistic principles structuring "Tarihi Muluki Ajam," focusing on its poetic components and Navoi's method of interpreting historical material. The central hypothesis is that the work is a deliberately constructed literary text where historical narrative serves as a basis for artistic and philosophical generalization.

Methods

This study utilizes a structural-functional and comparative-historical methodology. The primary source is the critical text of "Tarihi Muluki Ajam" (Navoiy, 1991). The analysis focuses on:

1. The composition of the work, particularly the relationship between prose narrative and poetic epigram (*hissa*).
2. The form, content, and didactic function of the poetic interpolations, predominantly written in the *masnavi* (rhyming couplet) and quatrain forms.
3. Comparative analysis of the treatment of historical figures (e.g., Khisrav Parviz, Farhod, Shirin) in "Tarihi Muluki Ajam" and in Navoi's epic poem "Farhod va Shirin."

4. Examination of Navoi's stated and implicit artistic principles in selecting and evaluating historical events.

The research draws upon the works of literary scholars who have examined the intersection of history and literature in classical Eastern texts (Bertels, 1965; Hayitmetov, 1991).

Results

The analysis of "Tarihi Muluki Ajam" yields the following key findings regarding its artistic nature:

1. The work is structured around the consistent use of poetic conclusions (*hissa*) following prose historical accounts. These are not mere embellishments but serve as didactic and philosophical summations, guiding the reader's interpretation. For instance, after the story of the young king Ardashir ibn Sheruya, a quatrain emphasizes the tragedy of a child becoming a victim of political intrigue: *"That Ardashir was an unfortunate child, / Who attained the high station of the throne. / The heedless and malignant wheel of fate / Threw him down from the high throne, that child was destroyed"* (Navoiy, 1991, p. 112).

2. Over 50 poetic fragments in the work are composed in *masnavi* (aa, bb, cc rhyme scheme). Navoi considered *masnavi* the most capacious form for epic narration, capable of broadly and deeply depicting life, events, and human character. His preference for this form in a historical context underscores his intent to provide not just a chronicle but an artistically shaped narrative.

3. The poetic fragments perform the function of artistic generalization. They extract a moral lesson or a philosophical idea from the historical narrative, often contrasting the ephemerality of power with the inevitability of fate. For example, the verses about Jamshid: *"For a while, the world's dominion brought him joy, / His joy turned into arrogance (ghurur). / He considered the world's realm his own, / That assumption itself was a path to ruin..."* (Navoiy, 1991, p. 45).

4. Navoi demonstrates a critical and creative approach to earlier historical sources (e.g., "Guzida," Banokati). When sources contradict each other (as in the case of Ardashir ibn Hurmuz), he refrains from definitive judgment, presenting the discrepancy and focusing the poetic conclusion on the universal principle of cosmic retribution: *"Whatever he did, whether pleasing or not to the people of the world, / The lofty wheel delivered to him accordingly"* (Navoiy, 1991, p. 105).

5. A comparison reveals a significant difference in Navoi's approach to the same historical-legendary figures (Khisrav, Shirin, Farhod) in "Tarihi Muluki Ajam" and in the epic "Farhod va Shirin." In the historical work, he follows traditional chronicle accounts concisely. In the epic poem, he exercises artistic freedom, reinterpreting images and plots, and openly criticizes previous poets for their panegyric approach to Khisrav: *"But those who have traversed this path / All became entirely praise-singers of Khisrav"* (Navoiy, Khamsa, 1960, p. 187).

Discussion

The results confirm that "Tarihi Muluki Ajam" is a work of artistic design. Its literary character is defined by the systematic use of poetic commentary, which transforms historical narration into a medium for ethical and philosophical instruction. The choice of the *masnavi* form is not accidental but aligns with Navoi's view of it as the most suitable vehicle for expansive depiction and moral exposition.

Navoi's work operates at the intersection of historiography and *adab* (belles-lettres), a tradition known in Eastern literature. However, his approach is distinguished by a heightened emphasis on the didactic function and the conscious structuring of the text through the *kissa-hissa* (story-moral) device. This structure creates a rhythmic alternation between narrative and reflection, engaging the reader both intellectually and emotionally.

The observed dichotomy in the treatment of figures like Mani (criticized in the historical work but mentioned respectfully in "Sab'ai Sayyor") or the Khisrav-Shirin-Farhod triangle highlights Navoi's genre-consciousness. In the historical genre, he feels bound by the conventions of chronicle writing and prevailing religious-philosophical views of his time. In the epic genre, he allows himself creative reinterpretation and the expression of a personal critical position, as noted by **Hayitmetov (1991, p. 78)**. This does not diminish the artistic value of "Tarihi Muluki Ajam" but rather illustrates the multifaceted nature of Navoi's creativity and his ability to imbue even a historical compilation with literary depth and a consistent artistic vision aimed at the moral education of the reader.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Alisher Navoi's "Tarihi Muluki Ajam" transcends the boundaries of conventional historiography, emerging as a consciously crafted literary work. Its artistic status is substantiated by a coherent composition based on the interplay of prose narrative and poetic epigram, the strategic use of the capacious *masnavi* form for didactic commentary, and the author's application of techniques of artistic generalization and ethical evaluation to historical material. While adhering to the framework of historical chronicle, Navoi successfully integrates the tasks of moral philosophy and literary artistry. "Tarihi Muluki Ajam" thus occupies a unique place in Navoi's legacy as a work where historical scholarship serves as a foundation for profound literary and philosophical expression, aimed at conveying enduring truths about power, fate, justice, and the human condition.

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