

The Contribution of the Baburids to the Development of the Turkic Language and Literature

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the contribution of the representatives of the Baburid dynasty, which ruled India from 1526 to 1858, to the development of culture, the Turkic language, and literature in the Indian subcontinent. The study highlights the position of the Turkic language within the Baburid state and analyzes the measures undertaken by Baburid rulers to support and promote the development of Turkic language and literature. The article also provides information about prominent representatives of Turkic literature who created their works under Baburid patronage.

Keywords: India, Navoi, Babur, Baburids, Turkic language, literature, divan, literary milieu, nazira, tazkira, literary influence, poet, literary work.

INTRODUCTION

It is well known that even before Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur (1483-1530) conquered India, Turkic dynasties had already existed and ruled in this region. In particular, representatives of Turkic dynasties such as the Ghaznavis, Qutab Shahs, and the Delhi Sultans governed the Indian subcontinent for centuries. After Amir Timur's conquest of India in 1388, a significant part of this land became part of the Timurid Empire long before Babur's arrival.

Interest in India among Central Asian scholars dates back as early as the 11th century. As early as 1030, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni authored his famous work *Tahqiq ma li-l-Hind min maqula maqbulah fi-l-'aql aw mardhulah* (“A Critical Study of What India Says, Whether Accepted by Reason or Rejected”), also known as *India*.

Alisher Navoi regarded the great poet and thinker Khusraw Dehlavi (1253–1325), a master of the *khamasa* genre, as his spiritual mentor. Although Khusraw Dehlavi wrote primarily in Persian, he was of Turkic origin and took pride in his Turkic ancestry. With great confidence, he wrote: “I am a Turk of Hindustan, yet I speak Hindi like flowing water.” It is highly probable that he also knew the Turkic language well and composed poetry in it.

During the Timurid period, Khusraw Dehlavi’s works were highly esteemed in Transoxiana and Khorasan. By order of Baysunghur Mirza, twelve thousand couplets of Dehlavi’s poetry were compiled into a separate collection in Herat.

In the epilogue to his *Khamasa* and *Saddi Iskandari*, Navoi recounts a visionary scene in which a group of renowned poets welcome him in a vast garden, and Hasan Dehlavi accompanies him to their gathering and introduces him to them.

It is known that Navoi’s Persian *divan* consists of 4,704 couplets. Scholars studying this *divan* emphasize that Navoi’s Persian poetry is closely aligned with *sabk-i Hindi* (the Indian style), one of the major stylistic trends in Persian poetry.

Another poet from Turkestan who traveled to India and flourished there was Badriddin Chochi. Due to the scarcity of biographical sources, the exact year of his birth remains unknown. He lived mainly in Tashkent and is believed to have traveled to India around 1332, where he remained until his death in 1344. Political and social conditions of the time prompted his departure from Tashkent. While he initially composed works in Turkic, after arriving in India he continued his literary activity in Persian.

Thus, even before Babur founded a new state in India, several Turkic dynasties had ruled the region, and poets and scholars of Turkic origin had lived and created there. The

Baburid period, which lasted more than 330 years, marked a new and significant stage in the development of Turkic culture, language, and literature in India.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

During the reign of Babur and the Baburids, the status of the Turkic language within India's literary milieu increased considerably. Babur composed works in this language until the end of his life, producing his unique ghazals and the monumental Baburnama.

After Babur's forces defeated the much larger army of Ibrahim Lodi at the Battle of Panipat in 1526, Babur gained control over a large part of India. It is highly likely that he brought with him select manuscripts and books from Transoxiana and Khorasan. Moreover, the relocation of prominent figures such as Khwandamir, Bayram Khan, and Khoja Kalan statesmen, poets, and historians who had long served in the Timurid court to India played a crucial role in introducing Alisher Navoi's works and literary legacy to the region.

Following Babur, several of his sons and grandsons who ascended the throne also composed poetry in Turkic and consistently supported writers and poets working in this language.

Humayun Mirza (1508-1556), who succeeded Babur, was a poet by nature like his father. He authored treatises on jurisprudence, astronomy, geography, and music, compiled a divan, and composed refined ghazals and rubai. One of his rubai contains lines reminiscent of Navoi's famous verse "Let every night be Qadr and every day be Nowruz", clearly indicating Humayun's familiarity with and admiration for Navoi's poetry.

*Do'st yodi-la har tuningda xurram o'ltir,
Yor vasli-la har kuningni navro'z ayla...*

As previously noted, one of Navoi's prominent followers was Seydi Ali Reis, who wrote poetry under the pen name Katibi during the Ottoman period. While engaged in state service, he

spent a considerable time in India at the Baburid court, where he studied Chagatai Turkic literature, especially the works of Alisher Navoi. He himself composed elegant ghazals in Turkic following Navoi's tradition and became known in India as "Navoi-yi Sani" ("The Second Navoi"), a title that alone demonstrates the profound influence of Navoi's legacy in the Baburid court.

The Turkic poetic elegance and Navoi-inspired charm are also evident in the ghazals of Bayram Khan, a poet and statesman who served for many years at the courts of Babur and Humayun. Born between 1500 and 1505, Bayram Khan was of Turkmen origin and served as a military commander during Humayun's reign. Under Akbar, he became one of the most influential figures in the state before being removed from power due to internal conflicts and executed in 1561. Alongside his political career, Bayram Khan composed poetry in both Persian and Turkic and left *divans* in both languages.

His Turkic *divan* mainly consists of lyrical ghazals, and his works became part of the shared spiritual heritage of the Turkmen and Uzbek peoples. Although some scholars consider Bayram Khan a representative of Turkmen classical literature, his language and style are closely aligned with classical Uzbek literature. Many of his ghazals reveal direct inspiration from Lutfiy, Navoi, and Babur, particularly from Navoi, as demonstrated by close parallels in meter, refrain, rhyme, and even thematic content.

*Labikim, noz ila ikki labi vasfin ado qilg'ay,
Masiho bo'lsa ham jon bergay ul nozik adolarg'a*

Despite the dominance of Persian, Hindi, and Urdu in India's literary environment, Turkic-speaking poets consistently followed Navoi's example and composed poetry in Chagatai Turkic (Old Uzbek).

Manuscript evidence preserved in the Khudabakhsh Library in Rampur includes a *divan* of Babur's son Kamran Mirza, copied in 1556. It contains poems in Uzbek and Persian and bears the seals of more than twenty statesmen, including Jahangir

and Shah Jahan. Kamran Mirza's poetry reflects the spirit of Babur's lyricism and demonstrates deep respect for Navoi's artistic legacy.

Similarly, Askari Mirza, another son of Babur, was also a poet. His only known Turkic divan is preserved in the Süleymaniye Library in Istanbul. His poetry shows a clear fascination with Alisher Navoi's creative heritage.

*Oshiqi dilxastani gar dilbari shod aylagay,
Oncha bordurkim, buzug' olamni obod aylagay*

Among poets inspired by Babur's literary traditions was Mirza Ali Bakht Azfari, a scholar and accomplished translator. Drawing inspiration from Navoi and other great figures of Uzbek literature, Azfari authored more than fifteen works across various fields and played an important role in promoting Uzbek literature in India. He compiled three divans in Turkic, Persian, and Urdu and translated Navoi's *Mahbub ul-qulub* and Babur's *Treatise on Prosody* into Persian, demonstrating profound respect for Babur by naming the translation *Aruz-zada* ("The Son of Aruz").

Another Turkic-speaking poet of the Baburid period was Fariqi, whose manuscript divan is preserved in the Salar Jung Museum in Hyderabad. Writing in Uzbek and Persian, Fariqi was a disciple of Abdurrahim Khan-i-Khanan, a renowned statesman, patron of the arts, and son of Bayram Khan. Numerous naziras to Navoi's ghazals appear in Fariqi's poetry, clearly reflecting Navoi's influence in terms of imagery, rhyme, refrain, and overall poetic spirit.

In addition, dozens of poets, scholars, and thinkers from Central Asia lived and created in India during the Baburid period, including Qazi Ghazanfar Samarqandi, Mawlana Said Turkistani, Mirza Muffalim Samarqandi, Me'raj Tashkandi, Hafiz Kuhaki, Da'i Andijani, Sahmi, Saqo Chagatai, Chandu Bukhari, and Mir Abdullah Termizi. Through their Turkic and Persian works, they made significant contributions to the literary life of India.

The name of Alisher Navoi reached Indian soil long before Babur. Trade and diplomatic relations were established with the state of Husayn Bayqara and the states of the Lodi (1451-1526), East India (1394-1479), and Bahmani (1347-1527) in India.

In particular, one of the famous poets of the Lodi state, Mawlana Jamoliddin Jamoli, came to Herat in 1492, visited the Abdurahman Mosque and talked with a number of poets and saints from Herat. During this trip, Jamoli was also received by Alisher Navoi.

In particular, the manuscript "Tazkirai Husayniy" stored at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan under the name of Abu Rayhan Beruniy, records that Jamoliddin Jamoli had the good fortune to meet Alisher Navoi in Herat.

In the past, such creative meetings played a significant role in the rapprochement and influence of literary circles that were quite distant from each other.

One of the most sensitive poets of the Bahmani court, vizier Khoja Mahmud Govan (1466-1481), also corresponded with poets from Khorasan, in particular Abdurahman Jami. Through this, he became closely acquainted with the work and activities of Navoi.

Another poet who worked at the Bahmani court in India, Mir Hashimi Kirmani, who circulated under the name of Shah Jahangir, wrote the masnavi *Mazhar ul-asror* in response to Nizami's epic *Makhzan ul-asror*, in which he respectfully mentions the names of Huseyn Bayqaro and Alisher Navoi:

Possessed a thousand virtues and was an example for everyone.

The noble name of this man, who had a brave heart and a sword, was Mir Alisher.

He took up the pen in Turkish science and conveyed greetings to Arabs and non-Arabs.

The interesting thing is that despite all the worries of life, this famous person collected ghazals and composed divans, and completed "Khamsa" in the Turkish language.

He (Husayn Baykara) was a noble and rare person who

As a result of expeditions to India led by Hamid Sulayman in 1975-1977, it was revealed that manuscripts of a number of Turkic poets such as Hafiz Khorezmi, Said Qasimi, Farighi, Azfari are available in Indian collections. New copies of manuscripts of works by Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur, along

with other Turkic poets, have also been discovered in Indian manuscript collections. It was revealed that two new manuscript copies of the Babur complex, dating back to the 17th-18th centuries, are kept in the collection of the Salarjang Museum in Hyderabad. On the one hand, these manuscripts help to enrich Babur's poetic heritage, and on the other hand, they are useful in clarifying some textual differences in known copies and editions.

The first part of the book album *The Literary Heritage of Uzbekistan in the Collections of the Rampur Raza Library (India)*, published by the World Society for the Study, Preservation and Popularization of the Cultural Heritage of Uzbekistan, discusses a number of manuscripts related to the life and work of Alisher Navoi. One of them is the work *Tuhfai Murshidiy*, which is stored in the library under number 2265. The annotation mentions that this short treatise was written by Abdullah ibn Abdullah under the name Murshid ibn Asl al-Husaini at the request of Alisher Navoi. Later, the manuscript (No. 2266) was given the same analytical annotation, and it was called 'Tuhfat al-faqir ul-hakir ila hadr Amir ul-kabir.' The title of the work itself indicates that it was dedicated to the great emir. However, we were unable to find detailed information about the content and authorship of these manuscripts in the book-album.

In her work *Humayunnoma* (The Tale of Babur Mirza), Gulbadanbegum, the daughter of Babur Mirza, writes about the literary atmosphere at the court of her brother Humayun Mirza, and talks about the regular holding of poetry meetings and conferences with the participation of poets from Turkestan, Samarkand, and Bukhara. It can be assumed that such meetings also discussed works related to the literary heritage of Alisher Navoi.

During the Babur era, a number of divans related to Alisher Navoi were copied or miniatures were made on such manuscripts. It is known that, in addition to the seven divans of Alisher Navoi in the Turkic and Persian languages, compiled directly on his own initiative, there are dozens of divans compiled by scribes, poets, and scribes at different times, which are also preserved in different parts of the world as valuable sources of the great poet's heritage.

In particular, the Abu Raykhan Beruni Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan keeps a number of manuscripts from the Babur period. Some of them are now at the disposal of the Museum of the Center of Islamic Civilization in Uzbekistan. These manuscripts are currently part of the Second Renaissance Babur sector of the Central Museum. One of the manuscripts is called *Munshaot va Ruqaot*, which includes letters from Humayun, Shah Jahan and other historical figures. *Munshaot va Ruqaot* was considered a prestigious collection of letters of its time. This collection, consisting of letters in Persian and Turkic, was copied at the end of the 17th century, some parts of which were copied in Central Asia, and the rest in India. This manuscript, written in Nasta'liq script on oriental paper, is still kept at the Abu Rayhan Beruni Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences under the number 303. Among these letters are letters taken from Alisher Navoi's work "Munshaot". This shows that the tradition of writing letters was widespread during the Babur period, and Navoi's experience was also used in this.

Another rare manuscript of Alisher Navoi is kept in the Windsor Library. This *Terma Divan*, called the "Bukhara Manuscript", was copied by the calligrapher Sultan Ali Mashhadi in Herat in 897/1491-1492 and most likely fell under the poet's blessed gaze. Later, this manuscript, which reached the Babur palace in India, was painted by Indian artists Dharamdas, and another by Govardhan.

The second manuscript is a complete collection of "Khamsa", which was also copied by Sultan Ali Mashhadi and illustrated by Indian artists such as Lal, Manohar and Mukund. This unique manuscript was decorated in the palace library of Babur's grandson Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbarshah (1556-1605) and his great-grandson Nuriddin Muhammad Jahongir (1605-1627).

Examples of miniatures from these manuscripts, which are currently kept in the Royal Library at Windsor Castle in England, are included in the album *Illustrations on the Works of Alisher Navoi* published by H. Sulaymon and F. Sulaymonova in 1982.

Ten pages of the "Khamsa" are decorated, which include double-leaflets, the titles of four epics, and four miniatures.

Among them, a miniature depicting Alisher Navoi and Huseyn Boykaro occupies a special place. This miniature on the divan is made based on the traditions of Indian and Khorasan painting. In the center of the picture, Sultan Huseyn Boykaro sits on a throne, holding a cup in his hand. He is depicted in green clothes, in accordance with the miniatures painted by Sultan Behzod. Alisher Navoi humbly shows the book in his hands to the sultan. Navoi, like in other images, is also seen in yellow clothes. Around him, soldiers and officials are preparing for a solemn ceremony. Various delicacies are brought to a small table at the foot of the throne. Butchers are preparing to slaughter sheep. The servant is depicted in clothes similar to those in Indian miniatures. This is probably due to the fact that the artist was of Indian origin and did not have a clear idea of the dress of the Khorasan people. At the top of the page are the first verses of Chapter XVI from Navoi's epic poem "Khairatul-abror", which is in praise of Sultan Hussein Baykara.

The last words *Sultan Husayn* in this poetic passage are written in gold paint. This situation alone makes it possible to be sure once again that the Babur family had high respect for their ancestors, the Timurid rulers.

The words *shabihi sultan Husain Mirza, amali Dhanroj* are written in nastaq letter under the picture. Apparently, the artist depicted here the process of handing Navoi's "Khamsa" to Sultan Husayn Boygaro.

Also, in the picture dedicated to the 14th chapter 'Definition of Words' in the epic *Hayrat ul-Abror*, the conversation of seven pairs of young men and women in Indian costumes is depicted by the artist.

The story of two loyal friends, which is added to the 'Chapter of Loyalty' of this epic, also has a separate miniature. It is noteworthy that this story describes an event that occurred during the conquest of India by Amir Temur. After conquering the city, Amir Temur orders the death of one hundred thousand people. At this time, the executioner brings the two loyal lovers to their deathbed. However, both young lovers ask to kill themselves first in order to give their beloved a few minutes longer. This incident reaches Amir Temur, and he frees all the captives from death.

Perhaps this story is directly related to India, so they decided to create a separate miniature for it?

Also, in this manuscript, miniatures were created by Indian artists for the stories of Ibrahim Adham and Rabiya Adviya, Muhammad Khorezmshah, and Imam Fakhriddin Razi in *Khairatul-Abror*. These drawings, which were made for the manuscript of Navoi's "Khamsa", date back to the reign of Jahangir, i.e. 1605-1627. The second manuscript, 'Terma Divan,' also contains seven drawings drawn in the Babur palace, five of which bear the names Farrukhbek, Lal, Manohar, and Mukund.

The first of the pictures is dedicated to the ghazal with the radicle "sayed" (hunting) included in the second divan of the collection *Khazayin-ul Maoniy Navodir-ush shabab*, and three verses in Turkish are written on the top of the picture.

The painting depicts Prince Salim of the Baburi dynasty, wearing a blue robe, fighting and wounding a lion in the jungle. Above the painting, between the tables, the names of the artists Lal and Mukund are inscribed.

The second painting on the canvas is based on the text of ghazal 138 from the fourth canvas of the *Khazayinul-ma'ani* collection, *Fawayid-ul-kibar*. Below the painting, the text of the ghazal and two more Turkish verses are inscribed.

This painting depicts a scene from the epic poem 'Farhod and Shirin.' When Shirin's horse gets stuck in a swamp while she is visiting Farhod, who is digging a ditch, the hero lifts the beauty along with his horse and carries her through the mud. This scene is one of the most common plots in Eastern calligraphy. The artist's name, Farrukhbek, is inscribed at the bottom of the painting. The name Farrukhbek is found in another miniature in this divan. In the Nasta'lik script, Alisher Navoi's ghazal verse number 194 from his divan 'Favoyid ud-kibar' is inscribed in the margin, with the line 'Erur.' Another painting in 'Terma Divan' is directly attributed to Farrukhbek.

In this painting, we also find a young ruler enjoying himself in the royal palace, surrounded by musicians. According to A. Madrakhimov, the ruler in the center of the painting may be Shahzoda Salim (Jahongir).

The inscription on the right side of the painting shows that Farrukhbek painted it when he was seventy years old.

A. Madrakhimov notes that there is another symbolic image of Alisher Navoi in this divan. This image in the manuscript adorns the 230th ghazal in *Bada'i'-ul-wasat*.

It seems that it is not without reason that this ghazal, which contains Hindu and Indian words, was made into a miniature. In this painting, we see a musician, a hafiz, and a great old poet holding a book in his hand on the stage of the royal palace. The aiwan depicts a prince and a butler, and at the top of the aiwan are two beautiful women.

According to the information, Farrukhbek, originally from Transoxiana, arrived at Akbar's court in 1585 and found his place. Farrukhbek's name is also mentioned in the works of Abulfazl Allamiy, *Akbarnoma* and *Oyini Akbariy*, which are chronicles of the Baburid era, as well as in the work of Nuruddin Muhammad Jahangir, *Tuzuki Jahangiry*.

Farrukhbek became famous for his miniatures drawn on a number of manuscripts of the Baburid era. One of them is Alisher Navoi's *Majolis-un Nafais* tazkir, which is currently stored in one of the collections of the United States. On the page of the manuscript, where the verse about Kasim Anvar is written, there is an image of a young man reading a book, and in the margin it is written: *Shabihi Shah Tahmasb, Ruler of Iran*.

Usually, the name of the artist and the person depicted is written under the images in the manuscript, as well as the term *shabih* (similar image) is characteristic of the miniature art of the Babur period. Therefore, although the Safavid ruler is depicted in the manuscript, it can be assumed that it was painted during the Babur period. Most likely, this manuscript was made to be sent as a gift to Shah Tahmasp.

In the work *Akbarnama*, written by the historian Abulfazl Allami during the reign of Sultan Muhammad Akbar (1542-1605) in imitation of the *Baburnama*, the author mentions a servant named Sultan Muhammad Kusa, who fought alongside Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur, and states that "he was a very good-natured man, had a poetic nature, was one of the

companions of Mir Alisher, and lived in the honorable society of His Majesty."

This example shows that historical figures who lived during the time of Alisher Navoi and in the literary environment of Herat also held high positions during the Babur period.

CONCLUSION

Although the Baburids were formally successors of the Timurid dynasty, their rule is studied by world historians as a distinct historical era. While respecting local traditions and customs, the Baburids introduced a new cultural synthesis to India, clearly visible in the harmony between local and Timurid traditions in Baburid art.

Babur, Humayun, Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan, and Aurangzeb are considered great rulers not only for their political achievements but also for their contributions to science, culture, and the arts. During the Baburid period, rulers actively supported scholarship, established educational institutions, and created favorable conditions for intellectual life.

Babur's Baburnama alone remains an invaluable source for history, geography, political science, and other disciplines. Literature in Turkic, Persian, and Indian languages flourished during this period. Baburid rulers and princes created divans in Turkic, patronized poets and scholars from Transoxiana, Khorasan, and Iran, and facilitated the translation of major Eastern literary masterpieces, including works by Alisher Navoi and Babur.

The Baburids remained loyal to their cultural heritage and mother tongue. According to historical sources, Turkic (Old Uzbek) was used in private gatherings among rulers and their closest associates. Dictionaries of the Uzbek language were compiled during this era.

The British conquest of India in 1858 brought Baburid rule to an end, and most members of the dynasty were exterminated. However, the unique cultural and literary heritage created by the Baburids on Indian soil has endured and continues to be recognized as an invaluable contribution to world civilization.

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