

Creative Originality of Alisher Navoi

I. A. Ismoilov

Tashkent State University of Uzbek Language and Literature named after Alisher Navoi, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Keywords: Alisher Navoi, Iskander and the Pauper, Story, Genesis, Transformation, Artistic Interpretation, Creative Originality.

Abstract: This paper examines the literary tradition of writing about Iskander, drawing from both Western and Eastern sources. Within the Eastern tradition of khamsanavislik (khamsa writing), every poet, including Alisher Navoi, endeavoured to introduce originality into their dastan (epic) about Iskander. Navoi incorporated new and historical literary materials into his work, introducing the narrative "Iskandar va gado" (Iskander and the Pauper) into the khamsanavislik tradition. This story, integral to understanding the dastan "Saddi Iskandari" (Iskander's Wall), has undergone complex transformations. The paper explores the genesis, sources, and evolution of the story, its reception in the East, and Navoi's contribution to its development.

1 INTRODUCTION

If the essence of Alisher Navoi's work is analysed based solely on his own input, it becomes challenging to consider the conclusions as reliable. This is because the literature of the Navoi era was rooted in tradition, assimilating the achievements of previous literature, and utilising them as a foundation for new experiences. This characteristic of the era's literature makes it challenging to ascertain the novelty, individuality, and contribution of a specific creative individual within the existing tradition. In this situation, genetic analysis, which allows for the observation of the genesis and transformation of a particular artistic phenomenon, serves as the most effective way to determine an author's originality. This approach reveals how the matter arrived at the creative individual and what the individual added to it. Essentially, what a specific artist "added" to the existing tradition should be the primary focus in the research process, revealing their true potential and strength. Without this genetic approach in the research process, it is possible to wrongly attribute a traditional phenomenon, originally from a different tradition or writer, to another creative individual, potentially leading to one-sided conclusions. Therefore, we believe genetic analysis is the best way to determine Alisher Navoi's creative originality within the Timurid period's tradition-based literature,

as well as the innovations he introduced as a creative force.

Navoi's layered work can provide a rich source for genetic analysis. The thinker's works, especially those concerning historical subjects, are remarkable for their ancient origins and gradual refinement. A prime example of these ideas can be seen in Alisher Navoi's dastan "Iskander's Wall". In particular, the first story of this dastan, "Iskander and the Pauper", proves that every subject, motive, story and image described by Navoi has deep historical roots. By identifying and comparing the basis of Navoi's images, highlighting their common and differing aspects, we can better understand the essence of this brilliant artist's work and determine his creative originality.

2 MAIN PART

Creative individuality, as the driving force of the literary process and a vital feature of artistic creativity, is reflected in all levels of classic work. For instance, Navoi described many traditional stories in the dastan "Iskander's Wall", yet pursued a unique path in harmonising them with the artistic texture of the work and his creative concept. Navoi's artistic skill was similarly revealed in the correlation of form and content. The form side was manifested in the stories'

* Corresponding author

relation with epic architecture, while the content side emerged through the renewal of traditional ideas and interpretations.

The content-related aspect of Navoi's creative individuality is mirrored in the depiction of traditional stories. While Navoi's mastery in story-writing was explored in a few works, it was mostly studied against various formal and stylistic elements' backdrop. This is the first significant point in analysing Navoi's stories. A second important aspect in researching Navoi's story-writing prowess is the reflection of his creative individuality in the content of these stories. Most stories described by Navoi are traditional, thus, whether the writer readily accepted them or introduced innovations into the content is a complex issue in analysis. A.N. Veselovsky suggests that "the task of historical poetics, in my opinion, is to show the role and limits of traditions in the process of personal creativity" [Veselovsky, A.N. (1989)]. Thus, the primary goal of analysis should be to identify the creative initiative manifested within tradition. Evaluating traditional literary material without clarifying this leads to misinterpretations. An objective understanding of the author's creative personality and worldview is formed only if the specific author's unique "touches" or "additions" to the traditional literary text are determined. Assessments based on these considerations alone can provide genuine knowledge about the creative individual.

Specifically, the true essence of the story "Iskander and the Pauper" and the main artistic and philosophical interpretations reflected therein have been discussed [Tajibaeva Ozoda Takhirovna. (2020)]. However, how accurate is it to assess Navoi and substantiate his mastery relying solely on the text of this story, and on these remarkable ideas and interpretations? How much of the traditional story's interpretation, details and content belong to Navoi? Unquestionably, works devoted to researching Navoi's story-writing prowess and creative originality must answer these questions. Genetic and comparative analysis is the most reliable way to ascertain a specific creative individual's "share" of the traditional text and find answers to the above questions. Herein, we attempt to determine Navoi's creative initiative in the first and conceptually significant story, "Iskander and the Pauper" of the dastan "Iskander's Wall". Based on this research, we also aim to reveal Navoi's creative originality and his mastery of story-writing.

The story "Iskander and the Pauper" is essential in understanding the dastan; through it, Navoi's literary goal, ideals, and the spiritual image of the main

character can be distinctly seen. This story is the symbolic key to the "Iskander's Wall" dastan. The story initially splits into two significant parts, each composed of two internal parts. The turning points of events' development, the emergence of a new image, motives, and the results of genetic and comparative observation served as the basis for such a division.

The Roman and Arabic numerals shown in the table indicate parts of the story that can be separately distinguished. We believe that these parts and the addition of details and motives within them created Navoi's version of the story "Iskander and the Pauper", and each part of the story has its own origin story.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first part (I) of the story "Iskander and the Pauper", as described by Navoi, is grounded on a historical event, which was chronicled by the Roman historian Quintus Rufus (died 1st century AD) in his work [Rufus, Quintus Curtius. (1993)]. This event unfolds in Sidon after Alexander defeated Darius in their initial battle. Parallels can be drawn between the historical event documented by Rufus and the story as portrayed by Navoi.

As can be discerned from the table, the synopsis of the first part of the story "Iskander and the Pauper", described by Navoi, evolved in connection with the historical event recorded by Rufus. Both episodes share the same setting, historical place, and time. They are united by the figure of Alexander; however, in the process of transforming historical reality into literature, new interpretations were created under the influence of various factors such as religion and worldview. Despite the preservation of the connection between the original reality and the artistic transformation concerning the plot composition and the concept of "contentment", the purpose, interpretation, and conclusions of the event underwent significant changes.

The portion of Navoi's story preceding Iskandar's offer of the throne to the pauper is based on historical reality, due to the maintained parallelism between the historical event and the narrative. However, the continuation and ending of the story do not align with the historical reality recorded by Rufus. This comparison allows us to assert the following regarding the prototypes: Iskander in the story is Alexander; the "Maghreb land" that Navoi describes as the incident's location is the ancient city of Sidon; the king mentioned in the story as having died in battle is Stratio. In the story, Iskander wishes to honour the deceased king by placing a prince from his

lineage on the throne, so his country isn't usurped by foreigners – paralleling Alexander's desire to restore justice to Sidon by appointing a prince from the Sidonians. In the story, the populace mentions a representative of the kings' dynasty living in the cemetery – when the Sidonians learned of Alexander's wish, they told him about Abdalonim, a representative of this land's ancient dynasty, who was impoverished due to his honesty. This is the historical prototype of the pauper, whose name was not specified in Navoi's story, which is Abdalonim.

At this point in Navoi's story, a partial change in detail expression is evident. This doesn't exclude the potential existence of other, as yet unknown to us, sources in the chain of connections between Rufus and Navoi. Nevertheless, traces of the main logic are clearly preserved in both texts' expression: while in Navoi, the pauper astonishes Iskander by expounding the sages' wisdom, in Rufus, the poor man commands Alexander's admiration with his patience and lack of need. In both episodes, the king concedes to the poor man's contentment and offers him a kingdom. It is necessary at this point to elucidate how the bone motif, absent in the original historical reality but playing a significant role in Navoi's story, was added to the narrative.

So, in whose works does the detailed bone motif appear in Eastern literature before Navoi? Did the story of "Iskander and the Pauper" exist in the same form in Eastern literature before Navoi? Studies have shown that the story's composition, as described by Navoi, had already formed in Eastern literature before Navoi and it also contained the bone motif. The story of "Iskander and the Pauper" appears in this form in the works of Jami [5], Turtushi [6], and Fatik [7] prior to Navoi, but there were bone details in them, not exactly two bones. In Ghazali's work "Nasihah al-Muluk", the bone motif is substituted by two skulls [8]. This motif and the story assumed a wandering character until Navoi. Undoubtedly, the story's foundation was not created by Ghazali, Turtushi, or Fatik, but was passed onto them from earlier sources. The concurrent meeting of Jami and Navoi in one story can be explained by taworud [9].

In Rufus' account, the story concludes with the announcement that Alexander offered Abdalonim the leadership of the country and augmented his territories. Abdalonim assumes the throne and the story concludes there. In Navoi's narrative, the plot carries on, and the subsequent development of events is markedly different; the second part of the story stems from other historical sources.

Genesis of the second part. The second (II) part of the story, as depicted by Navoi, is split into two internal

parts: 1. The episode of the Pauper asking Alexander for four wishes (eternal life, ageless youth, limitless wealth, and joy without sorrow). 2. The episode of Iskandar acknowledging the Pauper's superior dignity, feeling remorse, and justifying himself by stating he is also subject to fate, culminating in the pauper declining the kingdom. Research has demonstrated that these parts of the story, as depicted by Navoi, are based on Alexander's historical meeting and conversations with Brahmins – the gymnosophists in India.

One of the ancient historians, Megasthenes (350 – 290 BC), writing about the lifestyle, morals, and views of the Brahmins [Ancient India as Described by Megasthenes and Arrian. (1877)], recounts an incident between Alexander and Mandanis: Alexander invited Mandanis to his presence, promising gifts should he come, or punishment should he refuse. Mandanis did not go because he didn't desire any gifts from someone incapable of satisfying his own lust. He replies that if he remains alive, the fruits of the Indian lands suffice for him, if he is killed, he will be freed from his burdensome companion, his old body, and attain a new life. Alexander admires these thoughts of the Indian sage and refrains from punishing him. Arrian also transcribed this dialogue similarly [Arrian, Flavius. (1962)]. However, neither Megasthenes nor Arrian recorded Alexander's ten questions to the Brahmins. The question-and-answer episode is found in Plutarch's work from historical sources [Plutarch. Selected works. Iskandar Makdunli. (2006)]. This episode was later adapted in Talmudic literature [Steinsaltz, Adin Even-Israel. (2019)], including the Syriac version of Pseudo-Callisthenes. The adaptation in Pseudo-Callisthenes occurs mainly at the end of the episode when, after the philosophers have answered the ten questions, Alexander says to them, "ask what you will, and I will give you" as an expression of gratitude. The Brahmins ask for immortality [Arrian, Flavius. (1962)]. The portion of the conversation beyond this point is not found in historical sources. In Megasthenes, Arrian, Plutarch, and the Talmud, the story concludes with Alexander either surprised by the Brahmin's thoughts or their response, and set free with gifts. We do not see in them precisely the ending recorded in Pseudo-Callisthenes. In Pseudo-Callisthenes, at the story's end, there is an attempt to explicitly express the motives of human weakness, death and eternity, when a king who purports to be great is defeated by a common man. This situation corroborates our hypothesis that the version of the conversation between Alexander and the Brahmins recorded in

Pseudo-Callisthenes was a transformation of the second part of the story "Iskander and the Pauper".

This episode holds significant importance for later Iskandarnamas and has undergone numerous changes in various sources in the East. The episode "Alexander and the Brahmins" was a transformation from the Pseudo-Callisthenes tradition to Eastern literature and was detailed in Firdawsi's Iskandarnama for the first time. In Firdawsi's version, the wishes to be asked from Iskandar were altered, and their number reached two (immortality and youth without old age); later, both wishes were preserved in Navoi's version.

The episode chronicled in the Syriac version shares several fundamental parallels with the versed story by Navoi:

- 1) the king encounters the sage(s);
- 2) a question-and-answer exchange occurs between the king and the sage(s);
- 3) the sage astonishes the king with his intelligence;
- 4) the king makes an offer to him or asks him what he desires;
- 5) the wise man makes a wish he cannot fulfil;
- 6) the king states that he cannot grant it;
- 7) the sage reproaches the king for this;
- 8) the king justifies his position and reign through fate.

These eight bases are reiterated in the episode in Pseudo-Callisthenes and in the story described by Navoi, substantiating their genetic linkage. This situation also indicates that this episode in Pseudo-Callisthenes can be directly or indirectly transformed (by Firdawsi) into Iskandar tales in the East, including 'Iskander's Wall'. The first four of the above eight general principles are related to the first part of the story "Iskander and the Pauper", and the remaining four are related to the second part of the story. "Conversation between Alexander and the Brahmins", in our view, formed the foundation for the second part of the story "Iskander and the Pauper".

Specifically, considering the subsequent four bases.

(5) In Pseudo-Callisthenes, the Brahmins ask Alexander solely for immortality (eternity), but in Navoi's dastan, the pauper tells Iskandar that he covets four things: eternal life, ageless youth, limitless wealth, and joy without sorrow. The wish for "eternal life" in Pseudo-Callisthenes is preserved exactly in Navoi, with only three new desires added to it.

At this juncture, it is natural to question the origin of these "new three wishes" added to the story described by Navoi. We postulate that during the meeting between Alexander and the Brahmins, the solitary wish expressed by the Brahmins, which later became

four wishes, underwent a distinct transformation process. For instance, in Firdawsi's dastan, the number of this "desire" reached two (immortality and ageless youth). The four wishes of the pauper in Navoi's story are also mentioned in Mukhtar al-Hikam as Aristotle's philosophical teachings: demand endless wealth, eternal life, unending dominance and immutable eternity. In the story "Iskander and the Pauper" detailed by Fatik, the number of wishes reached five: eternal life, youth without old age, wealth without poverty, happiness without anything unpleasant, and health without illness. It's noteworthy that in "Mukhtar ul-Hikam", one of the four goals of Aristotle's wisdom, "unfailing dominance", was replaced by "joy without sorrow" in Navoi's version. The detail "joy without sorrow", and in general, the four wishes in Navoi, are found in the same form solely in Turtushi and Jami. We believe that the single desire of the Brahmins, Aristotle's Four Wisdoms, was later morphed into Eastern wisdom literature and was reworked in the process, then incorporated into "Iskander and the Pauper" type narratives.

In Pseudo-Callisthenes, upon hearing the Brahmins' desire, Alexander replies, "I do not rule over immortality, for I am one of the mortals," thereby acknowledging that there are things beyond his control.

Phrases such as "zabun aylabon", "hayrat", "uyotdin" and "bosh nigun aylabon" in this verse are an expression of Iskander's acknowledgement of his weakness and the reality that he is an ordinary (mortal) individual, similar to a pauper.

In Pseudo-Callisthenes, when Alexander tells the Brahmins that he cannot grant their wishes, the Brahmins ask, "Why engage in these wars and battles, since you will die? Where would you take it when you took over the world? Since you are mortal, will it still remain with others?" They reproach him. In Navoi's version, the same reprimands as in Pseudo-Callisthenes are not presented, but the logic of events is to demonstrate that the ruler, who highly esteems himself, is a common man, even inferior to the pauper in terms of effort. In general, both works ask for "impossible" things to demonstrate the powerlessness of the ruler who claims to be omnipotent, thereby reminding him that he is an ordinary individual.

The justification of the reproached king is the same in both works. In Pseudo-Callisthenes, Alexander tells the Brahmins that he, too, is subject to fate, that the Creator has assigned him such a task, and that not everyone can be the same, and in the end, everyone will end up with nothing. In Navoi's version, Iskandar explains that his actions are determined by fate, and

he admits that the pauper is superior to Iskandar in terms of his dignity, which he says is also due to fate. And by stating that he has given me the kingdom, he highlights the fact that God created people in different ways, and this is the order of the world.

4 CONCLUSION

The theme of this story has become so significant in history that it is even plausible to discuss the transformation of content – views, interpretations. That is, in the story of "Iskander and the Pauper", the impact of conceptions about infinity, the futility of human interests, and the lack of need (contentment), which are repeatedly associated with Alexander in ancient sources, can be sensed. These motives later became the cause for the popularisation of stories and episodes of the type "Iskander and the Pauper" in Eastern Iskandarnamas. This point can be explained on the basis of Arrian's work, which is the most reliable historical source for the history of the subject. Arrian writes that when Alexander returned from his Indian journey to Persepolis, he wished to see the confluence of the Persian Sea with the other seas via the Euphrates and the Tigris. Some have written that Alexander had other plans, and these plans began to worry the Romans. Arrian concurs with the Indian sophists as well as the Romans: "Alexander found them in the open air in a meadow, where they usually spent their time." When they saw the king and his army, they began to stamp their feet. When Alexander asked through interpreters what this meant, they responded: "King Alexander, everyone owns as much land as there is under his feet. You are the same person as everyone else, only unhappy and proud; you have travelled to many places due to not being able to leave the house and not giving peace to others. Soon you will die and have only enough land to be buried" [Arrian, Flavius. (1962)]. A similar situation occurred with Diogenes on the Isthmus: "Diogenes was lying in the sun, Alexander and his men came to him, and Alexander asked, 'Do you need anything?' Diogenes answered that only one thing is needed: "Alexander and his companions should not go aside and block the sun". Arrian also recorded the incident between Alexander and Dandami, the leader of the Indian sophists.

Observe that at the heart of all three cases involving Alexander is the futility of the world's concerns and the issue of contentment. Three characters in three episodes: the sophist, Diogenes, and Dandami are united by one thing – contentment (lack of need). In their eyes, Alexander is a person who cares for the

world, who is eager for fame and fortune with vain deeds. It can be said that the same imagination and logic in ancient history were transferred to Eastern Iskandarnamas and underwent various artistic transformations. The image, detail, and composition have been changed in them, but the essence has remained. In particular, the prototypes of the image of the Pauper in Navoi's story can be called Indian sophists, Diogenes or Dandami. For the Indian sophists' saying that a person will eventually have only enough land for a grave, the great lack of need in Diogenes and his plea not to block the sunlight means that everything in the world is worthless, and Dandami's words that you are the mere mortal as everyone else, you must not rise above the aspirations of human existence. All this is encapsulated in the image of the poor man in the story described by Navoi. In these desires, harmony is embodied in the content: the great satisfaction arising from the realisation of the futility of worldly worries, the lack of need, and the desire to be worthy only of the Creator. Details were exchanged only according to Navoi's version. Not wanting "anything" from the mere mortal of the Brahmans is preserved in different expressions in Diogenes, Dandami, and Navoi's hero. On the contrary, both the Brahmans and the hero of Navoi are only heroes who ask God and strive for Him, and the same aspect summarises them.

The story "Iskander and the Pauper" described by Navoi is important in understanding this Dastan and the worldview of the author. Through this story, it is possible to comprehend Navoi's views on issues such as the relationship between the king and the pauper, dignity, and poverty. The story described by Navoi is divided into two large parts, which in turn are divided into two smaller parts. In our opinion, the addition of these parts and details created the version of the story "Iskander and the Pauper" described by Navoi, and each of these parts has its own genesis. According to the genesis of most of these stories and parts, they trace back to the works created in ancient times, in connection with Alexander the Great. However, Eastern creators played a more significant role in their formation as a single story, in the composition described by Navoi, and in the promotion of the ideas of Islamic teachings.

The plot of this story is almost repeated in the works of different creative personalities, but their expression, interpretation, and details are distinctive. It is these "characteristics" that should be considered as the basis for the manifestation of the aim, outlook, and mastery of each creative person, and the originality of a certain creative person should be measured based on this criterion. Then the categories of tradition and

originality will find their true value. Navoi's contribution to the genesis and improvement of the story "Iskander and the Pauper", the innovation in details when discussing Navoi's originality within the existing tradition of this story, the strength of artistic logic, the mystical interpretation of the story: the conflict between the king and the pauper, the image of the struggle of dignity and poverty should be in focus. Only if Navoi's creative originality is evaluated on this basis, it will be possible to arrive at objective and solid conclusions.

REFERENCES

- Veselovsky, A.N. (1989) Historical poetics. – Moscow: Higher School, – p. 300.
- Navoi, Alisher. (2006). Saddi Iskandariy / Iskander's Wall. – Tashkent: NMIU named after Gafur Gulam, – p. 72 – 75.
- Rufus, Quintus Curtius. (1993). History of Alexander the Great. With the application of the works of Diodor, Justin, Plutarch about Alexander / Executive Editor A. A. Vigin. – Moscow: MSU Press, – p. 47 – 48.
- Justin, Mark Yunian. (2005). Epitome of Pompeius Trogus' Historiae Philippicae / Translated from Latin by A. A. Dekonsky, M. I. Rijskiy; Ed. M. E. Grabar-Passek; Comments by K. V. Verzhbitsky, M. M. Kholod; Introductory article by K. Zelyin. – St. Petersburg: Publishing house of St. Petersburg University, – p. 99 – 109.
- Jami, Abdurrahman. (1988). Artifacts. In seven volumes. Volume 5. Laili and Majnun. The wisdom of Alexander. Published by A. Afsahzod. – Dushanbe: Adib, – p. 351 – 354.
- Bertels, E.E. (1965). Selected works. Volume 4. Navoi and Jami. – Moscow: Nauka, – p. 307.
- Fâtik, Mübeşşir ibn. (2013) Muhtaru'l-hikem and mehasinu'l-kelim. Translated by O.Guman. – Istanbul: Presidency of Manuscripts Institution, (2013). – p. 456 – 458.
- Ghazali, Muhammad. Nasihat-al-muluk / Exhortation to kings. – Tehran: Assembly, 1317(h.). – p. 37 – 39.
- Rajabova, B. (2019). Common literary events. – Tashkent: Muharrir publishing house, – p. 116 – 120.
- Ancient India as Described by Megasthenes and Arrian. (1877). A Translation of the Fragments of the Indika of Megasthenes Collected by Dr. Schwanbeck, and of the First Part of the Indika of Arrian, by J. W. McCrindle, M.A. – London: TRUBNER & Co., – p. 97 – 105.
- Arrian, Flavius. (1962) Alexander's March. Translation from Greek by M.E. Sergeenko. – Moscow – Leningrad: Publishing House of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, – p. 213.
- Plutarch. Selected works. Iskandar Makdunli. (2006) The translators are Zahir A'lam and Urfon Otajon. – Tashkent: "New Age Generation", – p. 80 – 81.
- Steinsaltz, Adin Even-Israel. (2019) Koren Talmud Bavli. The Noé Edition. Volume 9: Tractate Tamid (32a). – Jerusalem: Koren, – p. 453 – 454.
- The History of Alexander the Great, being the Syriac Version of the Pseudo-Callisthenes. Edited from five manuscripts, with an English translation and notes by Ernest A. Wallis Budge. – Cambridge: At the University press, (1889). – p. 92 – 94.
- Firdawsi, A. Shahnameh: Contains the IX volumes. Volume VII. Development of K. Aini, Z. Ahrori, B. Sirus. Editorial board: M. Osimi, K. Aini, Z. Ahrori, A. Maniyazov et al.: – Dushanbe: Adib, (1989). – p. 95 – 101.
- Tajibaeva Ozoda Takhirovna. (2020) About the translation and interpretation of the "Iskandarnama". Journal of critical reviews, Vol 7, Issue 7.