

# The Problem of Historical Fact and Interpretation in the Portrait of a Historical Person

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**Abstract:** In the wake of newfound independence, Uzbek authors have embraced a refreshing freedom to explore their literary and aesthetic ambitions, championing lofty ideals. This autonomy has unshackled their ability to authentically depict historical narratives and craft works centered around prominent historical figures. This transformation has rekindled an interest in historical authenticity and artistic interpretation, as well as the concept of the natural-aesthetic ideal. This article delves into the treatment of historical figures in Uzbek prose during the post-independence era, with a particular focus on the intricate task of characterizing figures like Navoi. It critically examines the interplay between historical accuracy and artistic portrayal in contemporary Uzbek literature. Ultimately, this exploration reveals that the artistic depiction of historical figures is a nuanced and multifaceted endeavor, emphasizing that there is no singular "correct" approach to representing them.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

In the context of Uzbek literature during the independence era, significant evolutionary processes emerge across all literary genres. This transition is particularly evident in the treatment of history and the aesthetic consideration of historical figures. Specifically, we witness a distinct transformation in the portrayal of Alisher Navoi, a historical figure, and the interpretation of his artistic representation. This evolution deviates from the perceptions that prevailed before independence, necessitating a comprehensive investigation into historical facts, interpretative issues, standards, and criteria related to the portrayal of Navoi, the historical era he lived in, the literary milieu of his time, and the genuine depiction of his thought, imagination, and spiritual world.

The era of independence has ushered in a broader and more audacious examination of issues and problems associated with the lives of numerous historical figures. Our writers and poets have redirected their attention towards studying the works of eminent thinkers such as Abu Ali ibn Sina, Abu Rayhan Beruni, Farabi, and Alisher Navoi, as well as statesmen and generals recognized worldwide,

including Jalaluddin Manguberdi, Amir Temur, and Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur, among others.

During this period, the life and work of the reflective poet Alisher Navoi have garnered significant attention. Navoi's personality, characterized by his advocacy of humanitarian ideas and proactive courage in implementing them, has made him a subject of historical and artistic exploration from early on. Independence has paved the way for the portrayal of historical figures in fiction with a genuinely poetic touch. Consequently, a multitude of stories, novels, poems, lyrical compositions, and dramatic works have emerged, all of which hold profound significance as they illuminate the character of this great poet and thinker through a factual and reality-grounded lens.

The contemporary literary process remains deeply rooted in tradition. Therefore, Navoi's understanding of folk poetic thought aligns with essential issues such as tradition, innovation, historical foundations of character depiction, poetic skill, and creative individuality.

It is worth noting that the name "Hazrat" Navoi is not only found in folklore and classical literature but is also prevalent across all types and genres of

contemporary Uzbek literature during the independence period.

When examining the history of Amir Temur's depiction in fiction, academician B. Nazarov aptly points out: "Up to now, hundreds, if not thousands, of historical writings, articles, studies, and artistic works in various genres have been written about this remarkable figure in dozens of languages. Many of these works were composed with an objective intention. However, some lacked reliable sources, exhibited bias, or were driven by ideological agendas, leading to one-sided, distorted, and misinterpreted portrayals. The examination of his works and related history often lacked depth and comprehensiveness due to skill deficiencies.

The era of independence has not only reintroduced Amir Temur to the Uzbek people but has also placed him firmly within the global community. This new era has created opportunities to sift through the information buried in the complex, dusty, and turbulent annals of history and unveil the truth. Consequently, historians, scientists, and writers face new tasks in presenting a more balanced and accurate narrative (Nazarov, 2019).

These observations are, in many respects, applicable to the depiction of Alisher Navoi in fiction. The ideology of the former Soviet period had a significant impact on how Navoi's personality and creativity were perceived, often subjecting his religious-mystical worldview and relationships to one-sided interpretations. Biased comments in academic circles found their way into fiction, as evidenced by Oybek's portrayal of the distorted relations between Navoi and Binoi in his novel 'Navoi' (Mirzoev A. Kamal, 1976). Similar phenomena can be observed in the works of Mirkarim Asim, Uygun, and Izzat Sultan.

Rather than delving into these points in detail, it is more fitting to provide an extract that illuminates their causes and consequences succinctly and truthfully. These comments belong to academician A. Mirzoev: "These biased claims also affected fiction, leading to Oybek's portrayal of the distorted relations between Navoi and Binoi in his novel 'Navoi' (Mirzoev A. Kamal, 1976). Similar phenomena can be observed in the works of Mirkarim Asim, Uygun, and Izzat Sultan."

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

It should be noted separately that the problem of artistic interpretation of historical figures is one of the most important scientific problems which is in the

center of attention of world literary studies. It is not easy to imagine the volume of scientific works dedicated only to writers and poets. Some of them can be noted. Such writer as Fitrat, Oybek, Uygun, Asqad Mukhtar, Adil Yaqubov, Boriboi Ahmedov, Pirimkul Kadyrov, Abdulla Oripov, Asror Samad, Nurali Qabul, Muhammad Ali, Khurshid Davron, Sirojiddin Sayyid, Iqbal Mirza, Isajon Sultan, Ghairat Majid, Muzaffar Mirza, Tora Mirza and many other creators have worked blessedly on creating the image of historical figures.

The feelings of devotion to the country and the nation take priority in description of the image of the figure Alisher Navoi. Even in the depiction of friendship relationship with Husayn Boygaro, the authors emphasize the unity and integrity of these feelings with the feelings of love for country and homeland. Natural harmony with high moral and spiritual requirements in this process makes the figure of Alisher Navoi more beautiful, dignified and pleasant. There are many secrets of artistic creation. It is always difficult to develop their true nature. How to write a work of art? Why is it written? Who is it written for? Such questions can go on and on. Of course, the answers received so far are not so few.

The main feature of the image of a historical figure is that the subject is clear and its boundaries are roughly defined. Nevertheless, this "certainty" and "marked boundaries" are so great that it is not easy to imagine the area of its existence.

When depicting and interpreting a historical figure, it is essential to "focus on the characteristics that hold significance and value for us today" in the artistic representation (Nazarov B. (2019)). It's worth noting that the interpretation of historical facts and the materials used for this purpose are characterised by a system of distinctive approaches. The critical aspect is that this choice should provide satisfaction and comfort to the engaged and curious reader of the work. We believe that the writer R. Haydarova was able to encapsulate this in a particularly concise and figurative manner: "To put it metaphorically, historical reality in a work penned on a historical topic serves merely as an aura and a lining. 'Meaning and form are the principal criteria for artistic work – artistry' (Nazarov B. (2019))."

The techniques employed to portray the psyche of the protagonist depend on the writer's experience and skill. Various tools such as portrait drawing, monologues and dialogues, nature scenes, commenting on the language of others, and comparing or contrasting one character with another are used to achieve this (Krupchanova (2009)).

Alisher Navoi had a profound understanding of the complete observance of Islamic beliefs and recognised the immense significance and status these traditions held in societal life. Notably, he understood that the ruling class's attitude towards these practices was a major factor in evaluating their reputation among the people. How is this facet conveyed in historical novels? The protagonist's dialogue helps describe and verify his historical context and standing in historical conditions. Simultaneously, it can assist in making the protagonist more relatable to contemporary times. The modernity of the historical work likely hinges on these factors as well. At this juncture, the protagonist's dialogue begins to resonate with modern challenges.

"The process of crafting an artistic image initially implies a rigorous selection of materials: the artist seizes the most characteristic elements of the depicted image, discards all incidental elements, and develops this or that aspect by intensifying or refining it to its utmost brilliance (Ganaplskoy, A.V.)." Any writer resorts to functional-logical types of speech during the formation of the image. These primarily manifest in the form of description, narration, and reasoning. Description is a verbal representation of a specific event, location, or moment in time, or of one or more individuals (Ermatov B.S. (2019)). A narrative is a chronicle of events. The text of the story serves to present various actions and events in a coherent fashion. Reasoning involves articulating, elucidating, and validating a certain idea through words (Ermatov B.S. (2019)). It is these forms that can make the literary protagonist and the images associated with him either complete or incomplete.

To substantiate this thesis, it appears fitting to draw attention to a fact that confirms the social and literary-aesthetic power of a single word used in Amir Temur's speech before analysing the works created about the thinker and writer, Alisher Navoi. This fact was brought to light by the scientist S. Ermatov, who studied Amir Temur's image in Western Literature. He stated: "History informs us that Rui Gonzalez de Clavijo, the ambassador of Castilian King Enrique (Henry) III, visited Samarkand in 1404 and was warmly welcomed by the great leader, Amir Temur. Claviho writes the following about this reception ceremony: "... Then Temur Bek enquired about His Majesty the king: 'How is my son, the king, faring? Is he in good health?' At first glance, it remains unclear to the reader why a man as great as Amir Temur would call the distant king of Castile 'my son'."

English author Hilda Hookham, who wrote the book "Sultans of Seven Climates/countries", suggests that the word "son" was a form of address for

subordinates. Uzbek scientist and candidate of historical sciences (now doctor of historical sciences - G.A.) A. Ziyoev also concurs, saying: "In the diplomatic language of that time, the word 'son' meant 'obedient to me'." However, we respectfully disagree with them. The reason for this, primarily, is that neither Eastern nor Western historians have expressed such an opinion, except for the English writer and A. Ziyoev. Secondly, Enrique III, King of Castile and Leon, was not subject to Amir. To understand why Great Amir Temur addressed Enrique III as "my son", we must delve into the life history of Enrique III and the relationships between Amir Temur and the King of Castile.

Enrique III was born into the royal family of Castile in Burgos in 1379. His father tragically fell from his horse and died in 1390, and Enrique III ascended the throne at the tender age of four in 1393. During Enrique III's brief reign, the country achieved peace and the economic situation also improved. He was recognised as a skilled diplomat in foreign policy. Enrique III, often referred to as 'el Dolente' due to his lifelong illness, learned about events transpiring in Small and Central Asia through Yildirim, who was well-informed about the happenings in those regions. He was deeply concerned about Bayezid's threat to Europe, so he dispatched his ambassadors Base Gomez de Sotomayor and Hernán Sánchez Palazuelos to Central Asia to gather more information about Amur Timur. They witnessed the Battle of Ankara on 28th July 1402 and celebrated Amir Timur's victory. As Spanish historian Gil Dávila González noted in his book "King Enrique III of Castile: Life and Activities", Amir Temur honoured the ambassadors with military weapons. Greatly impressed by Great Leader Amir Timur's warm reception, Sotomayor and Palazuelos praised him highly. The ambassadors returned to Castile in February 1403. Enrique III was deeply moved by Timur's respect and, hoping to develop friendly relations, he promptly sent his new Ambassador, Rui Gonzalez de Clavijo, to Samarkand.

Amir Temur had learned about the king's health from the previous ambassadors who came to Samarkand. When he asked Clavijo about the king's health, he was completely correct. After all, it is from the first Spanish ambassadors to Castile and from his ambassadors who returned to Samarkand that Amir Timur was informed of Enrique III's illness. With this, he demonstrated not only his status as a cultured and wise state leader but also displayed his fatherly care and concern for the king of Castile, who had established a friendly relationship between Amir Timur's State and his kingdom. The real proof of this

can be what Amir Timur said to the royal ambassadors: "I would be relieved and happy to learn about my son's health and would consider it a gift from the king if he had sent you merely with a (single) letter." (Nazarov B. (2019)) To prevent the distortion of Amir Temur's noble image in the history of Uzbek literature, it is necessary to conduct research, read history books, and to comprehend the great Statesman's inner feelings, to express the religious actions and deeds of the writers who need to adopt a broad worldview. Obtaining details about the reality of events and dates is not sufficient to resurrect history. Simple, ordinary information statements and texts can lead to student boredom. For the voice of the sage, silently resting in the bosom of the ages, to be heard, the truth and depth of the interpretation of historical facts must resonate like an enticing melody, as when a harp string is struck. Embodying history in language, "speaking", "clothing" historical figures, drawing reliable portraits, thinking in accordance with the current situation, listening to the heart and understanding pain - all this requires the writer to present historical truth based on historical fact and criteria. The example is a factor illustrating the importance of this aspect.

### 3 CONCLUSIONS

Based on the above interpretations, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The creation of artworks is influenced by a multitude of factors. In addition to these factors, the laws related to the "migration" of authentic socio-historical events into fiction are also applicable in works centred around historical subjects.
2. Historical facts and materials do not inherently constitute "literary material". Within this context, the principles of summarisation, categorisation, and selection hold a priority position in the profoundly complex creative thought process of the author.
3. In portraying and interpreting a historical figure, it is crucial to "concentrate on the characteristics that are valuable and significant for us today" within the artistic interpretation. It is worth mentioning that the interpretation of historical facts and materials used for this purpose is characterised by a system of distinct approaches. This selection process must

ensure that the work is vibrant, impactful, and generates curiosity and peace in the reader.

4. A narrative is a chronicle of events. The purpose of the story's text is to present various actions and events in a cohesive manner. Reasoning involves expressing, clarifying, elucidating, and substantiating a certain idea through words. In the Uzbek prose of the independence era, these same forms appear when addressing the problem of historical fact and interpretation, and the completeness or incompleteness of the literary hero and associated images.
5. In depicting and interpreting a historical figure, it is essential to "focus on the traits that are precious and relevant for us today" in the artistic interpretation. The interpretation of historical facts and materials used for this purpose formulates a unique system of approaches within the context of historicity.
6. In Uzbek literature, the issue of historical fact and interpretation in portraying a historical person, creating a historical work, and evaluating it is inseparably linked with the attitude towards historical figures in the Uzbek prose of the independence era, especially the portrayal of the figure of Navoi.

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