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CULTURAL AND LITERARY ENVIRONMENT IN THE KOKAND KHANATE DURING THE REIGN OF AMIR UMAR KHAN

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Abstract. This article scientifically analyzes the socio-cultural renaissance and its fundamental pillars in the Kokand Khanate during the reign of Amir Umar Khan in the first quarter of the 19th century. The research unveils the specific conceptual aspects of the Kokand literary and cultural environment, which arose from the synthesis of state power and artistic thought, and is scholarly conceptualized as a "late traditional renaissance." The development of science, book culture, the art of calligraphy, and the educational system within the khanate is comprehensively elucidated based on primary historical sources and archival documents. Furthermore, the factors behind the formation of the "Fergana architectural school" in monumental architecture, along with the women's literature led by Nodirabegim and Uvaysiy—which marked a revolutionary turning point in the history of regional civilization—are discussed through the prism of early enlightened feminism. The article concludes with systematic recommendations regarding the historical and practical significance of Umar Khan's spiritual and material heritage for today's intellectual society, enriching national textbooks, and advancing cultural tourism.

Keywords: Kokand Khanate, Amir Umar Khan, Kokand literary environment, Nodirabegim, Fergana architectural school, Majmuat ush-shuaro, enlightenment.

Introduction. The first quarter of the 19th century is inscribed in the history of the Kokand Khanate—one of the prominent states in Central Asia—not only as a period of political stability and territorial expansion but also as an era of unprecedented flourishing of culture, science, and art. The chief architect of this prolific epoch was undoubtedly Amir Umar Khan, who ruled from 1810 to 1822. It is no exaggeration to state that his years of reign initiated a unique "cultural renaissance" within the khanate.

Umar Khan emerged not merely as a powerful statesman but also as a refined poet and a patron of literary studies. The most progressive creators, scholars, calligraphers, and architects of the khanate gathered around him during this period. Consequently, a formidable creative school emerged, gaining renown in history as the "Kokand Literary Environment." The distinctiveness of this cultural era lies in the fact that, for the first time, court literature flourished alongside populist motifs, and women's creativity shone spectacularly under the leadership of Nodirabegim, Uvaysiy, and Mahzuna.

Literature Review. The cultural, literary, and socio-political life of the Kokand Khanate during the epoch of Amir Umar Khan has remained a focal point of attention for numerous historians and literary scholars, both during its own time and in subsequent centuries. The literature relevant to this topic can be analytically categorized into three primary groups:

1. Primary Historical and Literary Sources of the Period. In studying the culture of the Umar Khan era, the works of authors who lived and created directly within that environment serve as the most reliable foundation. The anthology "Majmuat ush-shuaro" (Collection of Poets), written by Fazliy Namangoniy in 1821, stands as one of the most vital sources of this period [1]. Compiled under

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the direct decree of the ruler Umar Khan himself, this work contains biographies and sample works of over 70 poets who created within the khanate, providing an overview to conceptualize the scale of literary life at that time. The works "Shahnomayi Umarxon" by Mirzo Qalandar Mushrif [2] and subsequently "Muntaxab ut-tavorix" written by Muhammad Hakim Khan Tura [3] offer crucial factological material in elucidating the political life of the khanate, alongside science, culture, and the enlightenment activities of Umar Khan and Nodirabegim.

2. Soviet Era Studies. In the 20th century, Uzbek literary criticism and historiography began to earnestly research this cultural milieu. Scholars such as Hodi Zarifov, Gafur Karimov, and Maqsud Shayxzoda [4] laid the groundwork for the systematic study of the heritage of the Kokand literary environment's prominent figures, including Muqimiy, Furqat, Nodira, and Uvaysiy. However, because Marxist-Leninist ideology dominated the research of this period, a one-sided and negative attitude prevailed toward Amir Umar Khan's activities, characterising him predominantly as a "feudal monarch" and the "leader of court literature." The religious-mystical (Sufi) dimensions of the period's cultural values were frequently marginalized or ignored.

3. The Independence Period and Contemporary Research. Following Uzbekistan's attainment of independence, opportunities emerged to restore historical justice and objectively examine the national heritage. Academician Aziz Kayumov's extensive, fundamental research on the "Kokand Literary Environment" [5] provided a deep analysis of the generic nature, ideological directions, and poetics of the literature of the Umar Khan era. Historians such as A. Erkinov, H. Bobobekov, and Sh. Vohidov [6] proved through archival documents Umar Khan's contributions as a statesman not only to literature but also to the development of calligraphic art, book culture, madrasas, and library networks in the Kokand Khanate. Furthermore, contemporary researchers are reinterpreting the issues of women's rights and social perspectives in the works of Nodirabegim and Uvaysiy through the prism of gender aspects [7].

Research Methodology. The primary objective of this study is to objectively assess the essence and distinctive features of the cultural environment, literature, art, and enlightenment movements during the reign of the Kokand Khanate's ruler, Amir Umar Khan. To achieve the set objective and ensure the scholarly objectivity of the research, a combination of the following scientific-methodological methods and principles was utilized:

- **Principle of Historicity:** The cultural ascension during the Umar Khan era was investigated in organic connection with the socio-political and economic processes in Central Asia during the early 19th century, based on the real criteria of that historical reality [6]. Evaluating the phenomena artificially from a contemporary standpoint was avoided.

- **Principle of Objectivity:** The Marxist and class-based approaches within Soviet literary studies and historiography, as well as one-sided (negative) perceptions of Umar Khan's persona, were critically filtered [4]. The ruler's role in cultural processes was analyzed objectively alongside historical documents, accounting for both positive and negative dimensions.

Research Methods. Historical-Comparative Analysis: The Kokand literary environment of the Umar Khan era was compared with the preceding period (e.g., the era of Norbutabey) and with the contemporaneous cultural and literary processes within the Emirate of Bukhara and the Khanate of Khiva [5]. This method assisted in identifying the uniquely unrepeatable facets of the Kokand cultural milieu.

Source Studies and Textual Analysis: The primary sources of the epoch, notably Fazliy Namangoniy’s tazkira "Majmuat ush-shuaro" [1], and the diwans (poetry collections) of Amiriy, Nodira, and Uvaysiy, including their poems, ghazals, and muhammas, were analyzed from ideological

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and artistic perspectives [5]. Through this approach, the interaction between courtly and populist literature was explored.

Systemic-Structural Approach: The cultural life of the Umar Khan era was investigated not as a collection of scattered phenomena, but on the basis of an organically interconnected, unified system encompassing literature, the Sufi milieu, the school of calligraphy, architecture, urban planning, and madrasa education [6].

Discussion. The years 1810–1822, during which Amir Umar Khan ruled, manifest as the evolutionary peak of the socio-cultural development of the Kokand Khanate [3]. The cultural and literary explosion observed during this epoch was not accidental; rather, it was the product of a legitimate integration of specific geopolitical stability, economic growth, and the ideological imperatives of state power [6]. The analysis of the obtained results and contemporary sources permits a conceptual discussion of several fundamental dimensions of cultural life during the Umar Khan era.

At the core of Umar Khan's cultural concept lay the establishment and state-level institutionalization of a professional literary school. Fazliy Namangoniy's "Majmuat ush-shuaro" served not merely as a compilation of poets, but as a distinct state document demonstrating the intellectual potential of the Kokand Khanate [1].

Analyses indicate that this environment possessed a syncretic character [5]. Within it, two leading tendencies developed in parallel:

Classical Court Literature: A formal direction shaped by the traditions of Eastern literature (the schools of Navoiy, Fuzuliy, and Bedil), relying on the intricate molds of the aruz metric system, and glorifying the monarch and his policies [5].

Populist-Democratic Approach: A secular direction developed outside the palace environment, closely aligned with folklore, simplified Turkic language, and real social issues [4].

The dialectical relationship between these two pathways ensured that the Kokand literary environment remained vital and dynamic. The fact that Umar Khan himself compiled a diwan under the pen name "Amiriy" and composed works in lyrical genres legitimized the synthesis of monarchical authority and artistic cognition [5].

The most revolutionary aspect of the culture of the Umar Khan era within the pan-Islamic and regional context of Central Asia was the emergence of a powerful women's literary school [7]. The activities of creators such as Mohlarim (Nodirabegim), Jahonotin Uvaysiy, and Mahzuna fundamentally altered perceptions regarding the female persona within traditional Eastern feudal society.

This process must be evaluated from two angles: First, through the persona of Nodirabegim, state administration and high aesthetics integrated. She participated as a chief manager in the political life of the khanate as well as in its cultural-enlightenment projects, including the construction of madrasas, the copying of manuscripts, and the management of endowment (waqf) properties [3, 6]. Second, behind the motifs of separation, longing, and mystical love in their poetry lay a distinctive intellectual defiance against the shackles of traditional society and a struggle for the right to freely express the inner experiences of the female individual [7]. It is scholarly justified to evaluate this phenomenon as the earliest seeds of "enlightened feminism" in the region. The cultural processes during the Umar Khan era were not confined solely to text and poetry; they found visual validation in material culture, particularly in monumental architecture. During this period, the "Fergana Architectural School"—distinguished by its elegance and unique decorative embellishments, separating it from the architectural schools of Bukhara or Khiva—was decisively formed [6].

In the architecture of the Juma Mosque, constructed under the initiative of Umar Khan and Nodirabegim, as well as various madrasas (such as the Madrasa of Chalpak) and the later-completed

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royal tombs (daxmas), the highest synthesis of ganch carving, woodcarving, and mosaic tilework was manifested [6]. Within the scope of this discussion, it is worth noting that this architectural dynamism served the strategic objective of demonstrating the khanate's power in material forms and transforming Kokand into one of the largest Islamic humanitarian hubs in the region [3]. The evaluations accorded to Umar Khan and the culture of his era have provoked intense debates in historiography. The Marxist methodology of the Soviet era attempted to artificially devalue the culture of the period by labeling Umar Khan merely as a "representative of the exploitative class" and the creators surrounding him as "palace panegyrists" [4].

However, when viewed through contemporary methodological principles, it becomes evident that Umar Khan's literary patronage was not merely a matter of personal whim, but a tool for reinforcing a centralized state ideology [6]. A robust literary center legitimized the cultural and political independence of Kokand in its rivalry with Bukhara and Khiva. Therefore, it is appropriate to re-evaluate this period not as an instance of feudal stagnation, but as a unique model of a "late traditional renaissance" [5].

In conclusion, the cultural life of Kokand during the Umar Khan era, characterized by its multifaceted nature (literature, calligraphy, architecture, women's enlightenment), served the intellectual evolution of not only the Fergana Valley but the entire Turkestan region [5, 6]. The spiritual ecosystem of the era preserved classical traditions while paving the way for new socio-aesthetic demands.

Conclusion. Investigating the Kokand cultural and literary environment formed under the leadership of Amir Umar Khan (Amiriy) in the first quarter of the 19th century leads to the following fundamental conclusions:

1. The cultural ascendancy of the Umar Khan era progressed in tandem with the economic growth of the khanate and the consolidation of centralized state power. The monarch's personal engagement as a creator secured a synthesis between state policy and spiritual-artistic thought, transforming culture into an ideological force at the state level.
2. The literary heritage, led by Fazliy Namangoniy's tazkira "Majmuat ush-shuaro", demonstrates that the Kokand literary environment was formed on a systemic and professional basis rather than by chance. This milieu successfully integrated classical Eastern poetics (court traditions) with simple, populist-democratic directions.
3. The emergence of "women's literature" led by Nodirabegim and Uvaysiy, along with their active involvement in state-enlightenment affairs, marked an intellectual turning point in the history of the region. This served as a distinctive educational foundation for raising the social status of women and securing their right to freely express their inner world within a traditional society.
4. The acquisition of an independent identity by the Fergana architectural and calligraphic schools transformed Kokand into one of the major intellectual and humanitarian centers of the region. The culture of this period occupies a deserving place in the history of Central Asian civilization as a model of a "late traditional renaissance".

In consideration of the vast potential of Umar Khan's cultural heritage, the following recommendations are put forward to address existing gaps in research and to apply this heritage within contemporary society:

1. **Digitization and Translation of Primary Sources:** It is essential to fully digitize the yet unexamined and unpublished anthologies, diwans, and historical works (such as waqf documents) from the Umar Khan era held in global and national manuscript repositories, and to present them to the wider public by transliterating them into Cyrillic and Latin scripts.

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2. **Deepening Research via Gender Aspects:** It is necessary to study women's creativity during the Umar Khan era as a distinct subject of monographic research through the prism of their socio-political views, philosophical-mystical reflections, and impact on societal transformation, rather than confining it purely to "romantic poetry".
3. **Developing Cultural Tourism:** Specialized international tourist and educational itineraries titled "In the Footsteps of the Kokand Literary Environment" should be designed around the architectural monuments of the Umar Khan and Nodirabegim era surviving in the Fergana Valley (such as the Modari Khan Daxma and the Juma Mosque in Kokand).
4. **Enriching Textbook Content:** Higher and secondary specialized educational textbooks for history and literature should approach the culture of the Umar Khan era through a new national concept free from Soviet ideology, integrating the calligraphic, book-making, and pedagogical traditions of that epoch more deeply into educational curricula.

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