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ALISHER NAVOIY “MAJOLIS UN-NAFOIS” AND ITS HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

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Abstract

This article examines Alisher Navoiy’s work *Majolis un-nafois* from historical-literary, theoretical, and source-study perspectives. It discusses the conditions of its creation, structure, genre features, its contribution to the development of literary criticism, and the role of the work in reflecting the cultural environment of the 15th century. The research results indicate that “Majolis un-nafois” is an important scholarly and literary source that established an independent school of Turkic (Chagatai) tazkirah.

Keywords: tazkirah, Chagatai literature, literary criticism, biographical genre, source studies, aesthetic criteria.

The 15th century in Central Asia occupies a special place in history as a period of political, economic, and cultural flourishing. During this era, under the rule of the Timurid dynasty, science, architecture, visual arts, and literature developed significantly. The regions of Khorasan and Transoxiana became major cultural centers of the East, with Herat particularly renowned as a hub for scholars and literary figures.

“Majolis un-nafois” was written in 1491–1492, during a unique period of literary prosperity in 15th-century Central Asia. Under the Timurid rule, arts, science, and literature thrived. Herat became an important scientific and cultural center, where many poets and scholars gathered at the court of Husayn Bayqara. Navoiy, as



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both a literary and state figure, was a direct witness to this vibrant cultural environment.

Several factors influenced the creation of the work. Firstly, although the tazkirah genre was widely popular in Eastern literature, it had mainly developed in Persian and lacked a systematic Turkic equivalent. Therefore, Navoiy aimed to create a complete tazkirah in Turkic to systematically document the poets of his time. Secondly, he sought to provide literary and critical evaluations for readers and poets, offering not only biographical information but also aesthetic assessments and creative analyses. Thirdly, the work was intended to enhance the scholarly and literary status of the Turkic language, demonstrating its expressive potential. Additionally, “Majolis un-nafois” had pedagogical and educational significance, as it introduced young generations to literary mastery, moral values, and aesthetic thinking by highlighting the creative work of poets and writers. In this sense, the work serves as a historical source reflecting the 15th-century literary environment, the relationships among poets, literary schools, and aesthetic standards.

In conclusion, the reasons and historical background for creating “Majolis un-nafois” include the development of Turkic tazkirah, the systematization of poets’ works, the enhancement of the scholarly and literary potential of the Turkic language, and the documentation of the cultural environment of the 15th century. This makes the work an important source that established a new independent school of tazkirah in Turkic literary history.

Living and writing in such a historical and cultural environment, Alisher Navoiy, as the founder of classical Uzbek literature, not only created high artistic works but also left a scientific legacy that illuminates literary theory and history. “Majolis un-nafois” is one of these works, holding a special place in Turkic literary history as the first comprehensive tazkirah.



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The work was composed in 1491–1492 at the court of Timurid ruler Husayn Bayqara, where literature and scholarship flourished, and many poets and scholars were present. As a direct participant in this literary environment, Navoiy aimed to systematically record his contemporaries and past literary figures.

Several factors contributed to its creation. First, although the tazkirah genre was widespread in Eastern literature, it primarily developed in Persian. Second, the works of Turkic poets had not been sufficiently documented. Third, Navoiy aimed to showcase the richness of the Turkic language and elevate its prestige. Thus, “Majolis un-nafois” emerged not only as a literary work but also as a product fulfilling moral and educational needs.

The work is composed of sections called “majlis,” providing information about over 450 poets and writers. Each majlis covers individuals belonging to a particular social or creative category. The author first provides a brief biography, followed by details of their literary contributions, including examples of poetry. Structurally, the work is coherent and logically organized. Each poet’s information is concise, precise, and clear, enhancing its value as a scholarly source. Navoiy emphasizes historical accuracy while preserving artistic elegance. “Majolis un-nafois” represents the highest example of the tazkirah genre in Turkic literature. While the genre generally describes the lives and works of poets and writers, Navoiy expands its scope, providing critical evaluations and aesthetic assessments. The author relies on criteria such as artistic skill, word choice, depth of meaning, and use of imagery, making the work a literary-critical scholarly source.

The work serves as a primary source for studying the literary processes of the 15th century, offering crucial information on the social background, education, and status of literary figures. It also reveals literary connections, teacher-student



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traditions, and creative schools, making it invaluable for history, literary studies, and cultural research.

Written in Chagatai, the work demonstrates the richness of the Turkic literary language. Navoiy successfully combined scholarly exposition with artistic expression, achieving unique stylistic excellence. The work also marks an important stage in the development and standardization of the Turkic literary language.

Conclusion

Majolis un-nafois* initiated a new stage in Turkic literary history, reinforced the tazkirah tradition, and laid the groundwork for literary criticism. It reflects the cultural environment, creative processes, and aesthetic views of the 15th century. Its scholarly, historical, and theoretical value makes it an invaluable source for both contemporary literary studies and historical research.

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