

# The Harmony of Historical Color and Artistic Interpretation in Ogahi's "Zubdat Ut-Tavorikh"

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**Abstract:** This article analyzes "Zubdat ut-Tavorikh", a work by Muhammad Riza Ogahi, a prominent figure in 19th-century Uzbek literature and historiography, through the prism of artistic historicity. The study explores the harmony between real historical reality and artistic interpretation in the work, as well as the author's approach to the concept of the "ideal ruler."

**Keywords:** Ogahi, "Zubdat ut-Tavorikh", historical-literary prose, historical color, artistic interpretation, saj (rhymed prose), memoir-story, Rahimqulikhan.

**Introduction:** Muhammad Rizo Ogahi was not only a continuator of Alisher Navoi's traditions in classical poetry, but also a creator who initiated a new stage in Uzbek memoir-writing and historiography. His work "Zubdat ut-Tavorikh" covers the events of the reign of the Khivan ruler Rahimqulikhan (1843–1846) and stands out for its unique artistic form and richness of factual material. As Academician V. V. Bartold noted, Ogahi's works surpass other historical sources concerning the histories of the Kokand and Bukhara khanates in their presentation of historical events.

"Zubdat ut-Tavorikh" is Ogahi's third major historical work after "Firdavs ul-Iqbol" and "Riyoziy ud-Davla." The work consists of two parts: the first describes the birth of Rahimqulikhan, his education, and his activities as the governor of Hazorasp; the second narrates the events from his accession to the throne until his death.

The uniqueness of the work lies in the fact that it is mainly written in saj'-style prose (rhymed prose). Poetic genres such as qasida, masnavi, ghazal, rubai, qit'a, and chronograms are organically intertwined with the prose text. This elevates the work from a dry historical chronicle to the level of a highly artistic literary composition. Scholars such as Q. Munirov, S. Rozimboyev, A. Ahmedov, N. Jabborov, N. Shodmonov,

A. O'rozboyev, Q. Sultonova, I. Ismailov, H. Nazirova, I. Bekchonov, N. Polvonov, A. Pirmqulov, and M. Matyoqubov have expressed their views on the lyrical heritage reflected in Ogahi's historical-literary works.

Ogahi's "Zubdat ut-Tavorikh" is not merely a dry chronicle, but a vivid epic depiction of life in the nineteenth-century Khiva Khanate. The work reflects historical color through realistic portrayals of the socio-political environment, military campaigns, and palace life of the period. However, Ogahi does not simply record these facts; he embellishes them artistically. A close examination of the source reveals that the harmony between historical color and artistic interpretation manifests itself in several fundamental aspects.

First, the mastery of portrait creation and the concept of the "perfect ruler." The image of Rahimqulikhan is portrayed as the ideal just king. According to the author, a ruler must possess three qualities: noble lineage, scholarship, and military skill. Rahimqulikhan's "complete mastery of all branches of knowledge" and the idea that "the age itself revealed its beauty before him" are depicted through hyperbolic and metaphorical expressions [1, pp. 40–41]. While portraying Rahimqulikhan, Ogahi does not limit

himself, as traditional historiography often did, to narrating only the ruler's birth and accession to the throne. Instead, he artistically enriches the khan's personality. In the text, Rahimqulikhan is interpreted not only as a statesman, but also as "a diver into the ocean of knowledge and craftsmanship" [1, p. 37].

His passion for learning and his conversations with scholars are described with such artistic coloring that the historical figure rises to the level of a literary image. Here, Ogahi's aim is to preserve historical fact while creating the portrait of an ideal ruler capable of giving aesthetic pleasure to the reader.

Second, the role of landscape and color in the depiction of military-political events. In describing the Khivan army's campaigns toward Marv and Charjuy, as well as clashes with Turkmen tribes such as the Solur and Soriq, Ogahi demonstrates his poetic mastery. While historical documents merely record victories or defeats, Ogahi presents these processes through dynamic imagery. For example, the departure of the army is described through images of "fluttering banners," "the thunder of horses' hooves," and "the dust clouds of the desert" [1, p. 44], enabling the reader to directly feel the military atmosphere of the period. Especially in the episodes of the siege of the Merv fortress and the exposure of the enemy's tricks, the artistic texture and historical truth are so inextricably linked that the work approaches the genre of memoir-story.

The work describes military conflicts (for example, the battles on the banks of Merv) in such a way that a vivid picture is created before the reader's eyes. Images such as "the blades of swords are red blood" and "the day of the aduvga is a disaster" increase the artistic emotional power of the historical event:

Bo'lub shamshirlar tig'i qizil qon,  
Ayon etdi hujumi shoxi marjon.  
Sochib qon nayzalar no'gi sarosar –  
Ki, o't sochg'ay damidin xayli ajdar.  
Bo'lub ul kun aduvga ro'zi ofat,  
Dema ofat, degil ro'zi qiyomat [1.170].

Third, the functional role of saj' (rhymed prose). The language of "Zubdat ut-Tavorikh" is highly sophisticated and attractive. By employing saj', Ogahi adds musicality to historical facts. For instance, when

speaking of the khan's generosity, he pairs words such as "karam" (generosity) and "diram" (money), "ehson" (charity) and "imkon" (possibility), thereby strengthening the expressive power of the text. While this style reflected the literary demands of the palace culture of the time, it also demonstrates Ogahi's individual artistic method of filtering reality through aesthetic expression.

Ogahi skillfully employs various forms of saj' (mutarraf, mutavozin, mutavoziy).

For example, in depictions of festivities, rhymed pairs such as "lavoziy – marosim" and "intiho – inqizo" enhance the musicality of the prose:

"The next morning, on Saturday, he descended to Ishma and sent loyal and courageous attendants to the exalted court of His Majesty, the Shadow of God, to report the news of the victorious and safe return of the servants." [1, p. 180]

"From the learned to the humble, all became intoxicated with the wine of joy in the garden of peace; from the noble to the common, all were united with the beloved of comfort beneath the canopy of prosperity, arranging gatherings according to the desires of their hearts." [1, p. 39]

"Rahimquli Muhammad Bahodirkhan, through the principles of kindness and benevolence, brought happiness and prosperity to both the elite and the common people." [1, p. 32]

Fourth, the depiction of popular life and social reality. The work portrays not only palace life but also the lives of ordinary people, the digging of canals (such as events connected with the Shovot canal), agriculture, and cultural construction projects. In these sections, Ogahi strives to preserve historical accuracy by specifying the years, regions, labor force involved, and the people's attitudes toward these reforms.

Yet even these realistic descriptions are adorned with poetic metaphors such as "to improve the people's hearts is to improve the world itself" [1, p. 48].

In conclusion, Ogahi appears in "Zubdat ut-Tavorikh" both as a historian and as a creative artist. Historical fact serves as the "skeleton" of the work, while artistic interpretation and the charm of language breathe "life" into it. This harmony allows the work to be recognized not merely as a historical source, but as one of the

rarest examples of historical-literary prose in the history of Uzbek literature.

Rahimqulikhon addressed Ogahi with the intention that “a person’s good name should remain as a noble memory” and ordered the writing of this book. The ruler’s command, “It is necessary for you to compose an eloquent work adorned with our glorious name” [1, p. 33], became the reason for the creation of “Zubdat ut-Tavorikh.”

“Zubdat ut-Tavorikh” represents a high example of the harmony between historical truth and artistic imagination (or interpretation) in Uzbek literary history. In portraying historical figures and events, Ogahi elevates them to the level of literary images, making the work valuable both scientifically-historically and artistically-aesthetically. Today, studying this heritage remains important for conveying our history to younger generations in an artistically engaging language

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