

PAPER

DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIO-CULTURAL LIFE AND PEDAGOGICAL THOUGHT IN THE BUKHARA KHANATE DURING THE FIRST HALF OF THE 16TH CENTURY

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Abstract

This article highlights the significant contributions of one of the prominent Shaybanid rulers, Abdullah Khan II, to the development of science, art, culture, education, and other fields during the 16th century in the Bukhara Khanate. It also discusses notable scholars, poets, artists, calligraphers, teachers (mudarris), and other representatives of science and culture from that era, along with their works and valuable insights into the socio-cultural environment of the time.

Key words: Abdullonoma, Mavarannahr, madrasa, mudarris, thought, Bukhara Khanate, culture, competence, worldview.

The socio-cultural life and educational system, as well as the development of pedagogical thought in the Bukhara Khanate during the 16th century, were greatly influenced by one of the prominent Shaybanid rulers, Abdullah ibn Iskandar Khan ibn Janibek Sultan ibn Khoja Muhammad ibn Abul Khayr Khan (1534–1598, known as Abdullah Khan II), who holds a special place in history. From a young age, Abdullah Khan II was known for his profound intellect, knowledge, courage, and bravery, earning him unique respect and admiration among many Uzbek tribes. He succeeded in uniting all tribes under a single banner, transforming Mavarannahr into a major empire reminiscent of its former glory.

He earned the support and patronage of the ten most respected Uzbek tribes—Shirin, Qoshchi, Otarchi, Kenagas, Yuz, Jala'ir, Mojar, Kipchak, Ming, and Bahrin—as well as the Jo'ibor Shaykhs and other influential and powerful representatives of the Muslim clergy. The work Abdullonoma by Hafiz Tanysh Bukhari, dedicated to Abdullah Khan II, describes the dire conditions of the common people due to feudal wars and instability, the proliferation of ignorant and tyrannical amirs and beks, and the resulting loss of societal peace. It notes that with Abdullah Khan II's ascent to the throne, this disorder and injustice were eradicated, and peace was established throughout the state. The text further highlights his swift reforms, undertaken with an

understanding of the people's grievances and concerns, which led to significant improvements in the socio-economic and cultural life of the country in a short time. The people regarded his arrival as the answer to their prayers, viewing him as a just and benevolent ruler.

Abdullah Khan II desired that the diverse peoples living across the country unite under a common goal and live in peace and tranquility. To this end, he actively engaged with the ideas of enlightened individuals and scholars, incorporating their thoughts into his governance policies and practices. For instance, Abdullonoma recounts an episode during one of his military campaigns when he halted a war to conquer the Shabirgan region. The local ruler, Dinmuhammad Sultan, sought forgiveness by sending envoys from the Kubrawiyya Sufi order, Muhammad Amin Zahid and Khoja Muhammad Habushani. After they conveyed Dinmuhammad Sultan's repentance and his resolve to serve his people and abandon selfish desires, Abdullah Khan II accepted their plea, stating:

“We came to this region only to warn, not to conquer. It is our established custom to accept the repentance of wrongdoers and forgive their actions when they seek pardon with sincere remorse.”

He even honored the reformed ruler by sending gifts and

greetings through the envoys, reflecting his commitment to humanity, justice, fairness, and forgiveness. At times, he extended kindness even to enemies, promoting the idea of unity. In short, Abdullah Khan II left a lasting legacy in history as a ruler who implemented significant reforms to enhance the cultural life of the Bukhara Khanate in the 16th century.

By the 16th century, several Shaybanid rulers, including Shaybanikhan, Ubaydullah Khan, Rustam Sultan, Abdulaziz Khan, and Jahangir Sultan, mastered various scientific disciplines and supported a scholarly and literary environment. These rulers, who wrote beautiful poetry in Uzbek and Persian under various pen names and compiled numerous *divans*, are remembered in history as poets. Abdulatif Khan and Abdullah Khan I engaged in astronomy, musicology, and instrument-making, while Abdullah Khan II distinguished himself by interpreting the Qur'an and analyzing hadiths and Sharia, earning the respect of scholars of both secular and religious sciences of his time. Many of them adhered to the Hanafi school of Islamic thought and followed the teachings of the Naqshbandi order throughout their lives, as noted in various historical sources.

During Abdullah Khan II's reign, the state's territory expanded significantly, reminiscent of the Mawarannahr Empire under Amir Temur. His governance was marked by an active foreign policy, with the Bukhara Khanate establishing extensive economic, trade, and diplomatic relations with Russia, Turkey, China, India, Iran, and other feudal states. For example, in 1583, his envoys brought back gunpowder, hunting birds, and fabrics from Moscow, with similar missions repeated in 1589 and 1595. His domestic policies strengthened the state administration, notably through currency reforms, the effects of which persisted in later periods. He oversaw the construction of numerous structures, many of which are still attributed to him or Amir Temur in popular memory.

During Abdullah Khan II's reign, significant construction projects were undertaken across the khanate. Near Bukhara, in the Sumitan (Jo'ibor) region, a madrasa, mosque, *khanaqah*, and *chorbog* (1558–66) were built around the tomb of Abu Bakr Sa'd (d. 970/971). In Bukhara, the Abdullah Khan Madrasa, a hammam, Govkashon, Fathullah Qushbegi, Mirakan, Khoja Muhammad Parsa, the new Chorsu (1569–70), and a *tim* (Abdullah Khan Tim) were constructed. A bridge over the Zarafshan River near Karmana (1582) and other facilities, including caravanserais, *sardobas*, *rabats*, canals, water reservoirs (Abdullah Khan Band), and bridges (e.g., the Ghisht Bridge over the Surkhandarya, known locally as Iskandar Bridge), were also built. Similar projects were carried out in Samarkand, Tashkent, Balkh, and other cities, such as the Kukaldosh Madrasa in Tashkent, built in honor of his influential amir Qulbobo Kukaldosh. Abdullah Khan II established a library considered one of the largest book treasuries of its time. Hasan Khoja Nisoriy's Muzakkiri Ahbob mentions the activities of artisans from Iran in this library, which was managed by three chief librarians:

Mir Husayn al-Husayni an-Nasafi, Mawlana Abdullah al-Munshi, and Sultan Miroq al-Munshi. Under their supervision, three illustrators and nine craftsmen worked, engaging in calligraphy and decorating books with gold leaf and miniature paintings. During Abdullah Khan II's reign, Bukhara and Samarkand, as centers of science and education, hosted madrasas where the Qur'an, *fiqh*, *tasawwuf*, *haftiyak*, Islamic history, geometry, astronomy, mathematics, theology, Arabic grammar, and other religious and secular sciences were deeply studied. Hafiz Tanysh Bukhari writes in *Abdullonoma*:

"(In the Abdullah Khan Madrasa), renowned scholars and virtuous individuals were appointed as teachers, imparting essential religious knowledge, fully supported by the madrasa's endowments. Students were well-provided for with good salaries, enabling them to study with peace of mind."

These *mudarrises* were not merely instructors but also

poets, orators, historians, and polymaths. Hasan Khoja Nisoriy's Muzakkiri Ahbob, dedicated to Abdullah Khan II, provides valuable information about over 250 prominent figures from Samarkand and Bukhara, praising skilled *mudarrises* like Kamaliddin Ibrahim Shirvani as a leader among the virtuous. It notes that Shirvani taught in Bukhara's madrasas, earned the respect of famous scholars in Samarkand, and guided his students to the rank of *mawlanas*. Shirvani was also celebrated for his unparalleled mastery in the art of eloquence and creative work.

During this period, poets, writers, and theologians such as Nisoriy, Mutribiy, Muhammad Darwish Okhund, Mushfiqiy, Nizom, Zaminiy, Mulla Amir, Muhammad Alti Zahid, and Qazi Payanda, as well as physicians like Hafiz Kamal Turbatiy, Mawlana Abul Hakim, and Mir Tabib, made significant contributions across various scientific fields. Abdullah Khan II's governance, military strategy, and construction efforts were continually inspired by the activities of Temurid rulers, particularly the great Amir Temur, as evident in numerous studies.

One notable episode during Abdullah Khan II's travels involved his visit to the Qaraganda region (present-day Kazakhstan), where he encountered an inscription on a minaret atop a hill:

"In the year 793 of the Hijri calendar, the Sheep Year, in the middle of spring, Turan's Sultan Temur Bek, with two hundred thousand companions, marched to take revenge on Tokhtamysh Khan. This minaret was built as a marker. May God grant victory, inshallah. May God have mercy on the people of the land. Remember us with prayers."

These words, carved into black stone, commemorated Amir Temur's campaign against Tokhtamysh. Inspired by this, Abdullah Khan II offered prayers for the great conqueror on the spot and ordered the construction of a similar minaret in the Qarshi region, inscribing:

"May whoever steps into this place remember us with a good prayer." According to historical accounts, many buildings, mausoleums, mosques, madrasas, *khanaqahs*, and residential structures begun by Amir Temur but left unfinished were completed or restored under Abdullah Khan II. For instance, the construction of the mausoleum of the Sufi master Ahmad Yassawi, initiated during Amir Temur's reign, was brought to completion under Abdullah Khan II. Numerous similar historical examples could be cited. Unlike other Shaybanid rulers, Abdullah Khan II's era saw remarkable advancements in literature, poetry, visual arts, calligraphy, oratory, and historiography. Hafiz Tanysh Bukhari praises this period, noting:

"In the time of His Majesty (Abdullah Khan), and in these days (i.e., the year 993 of the Hijri calendar), his prosperity increases day by day. As the proverb goes, 'People follow their ruler's religion,' and in accordance with the state's foundation, many grand structures—mosques, *rabats*, bridges, and pools—were built. Lands and developed properties were endowed to support the salaries of scholars, ascetics, pious, and devout individuals. Wherever you go in Bukhara, you will not find a desert or wilderness where a traveler can stay without a proper resting place."

The 16th-century *tazkira* writer Hasan Khoja Nisoriy describes the cultural life of the Bukhara Khanate, stating:

"Bukhara has become a city that evokes envy and a place more beautiful than the Garden of Eden, a qibla for religious leaders and a gathering place for the virtuous of the earth."

Based on the above observations, it becomes clear that understanding the highly developed scholarly and pedagogical environment of the Shaybanid state, as well as the lives and creative contributions of Shaybanid rulers who played a crucial role in the cultural progress of the 16th–17th centuries, holds significant importance. The influence of these rulers on the equal development of secular and religious sciences, literature, art, and architecture underscores the need for a comprehensive study of cultural patrons like Abdullah Khan II, whose legacy remains

indelible in the pages of history.

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