



## The Historical Development of Uzbek Literature in Afghanistan

**Murat AKYUZ**

Nile University of Nigeria, Nigeria

**Abstract:** Throughout history, Afghanistan has been a home to many nations. This land, which hosted Turks and Turkish Culture in the very early ages, is still home to many Turkish tribes. Today, this region, which is the cradle of the Chagatai literature, is considered a host to the vibrant literature of the Uzbeks of Afghanistan. The Afghan-Uzbek literature is a continuation of the Chagatai literature. Russian language has not been influential on the language and literature of the Uzbeks of Afghanistan who, for a long time, had not been under the Russian and Soviet rule; However, Persian language (Dari-Afghanistan Persian) has had a tremendous influence. Due to war and civil turmoil, sufficient work has not been done on the Afghan-Uzbek literature for many years. In our study, we seek to provide information on the Afghan-Uzbek literature from the period of late Chagatai literature to the present day.

**Keywords:** *Afghanistan; Afghan-Uzbek literature; Late Chagatai literature; Uzbek, Uzbek literature*

### Introduction

#### **A brief overview of the historical development of afghan-uzbek literature from the period of late chagatai literature to present**

Afghan-Uzbek literature is a continuation of Chagatai literature. The fact is that Afghanistan did not fall into the occupation and administration of the Russian Tsarist Empire, and despite being occupied by the Soviet Union, this occupation did not last long enough to have profound effects in the field of language and literature. This has prevented the Russian language from having any significant influence on the language and literature of the Uzbeks of Afghanistan. This led to the preservation of the linguistic similarities between the two kinds of literature. In addition, the close relationship and proximity of literary features of poetry and prose (such as sound, form, and motif) which the two kinds of literature shared were not affected (Akyuz, 2012).

As it is known, the nations of the Turkistan region under the rule of the Soviet Union were using Arabic letters in their writing system, but with the influence

of the Russians, they switched to Latin letters and subsequently to Cyrillic (Russian) letters. Significant changes occurred to the languages of the Turkistan people with the new letter and writing system, and the old language started to move away. This situation increased the number of Russian words entering the languages and literature of the peoples of the region, and literary movements, styles, and motives belonging to Russian and western literature began manifesting as well (Oguz, 2001).

It can be said that Afghanistan was almost unaffected by all these developments during this period. Although the influence of Russians and the Russian language is not felt in Afghanistan, the influence of the Persian language (Dari-Afghanistan Persian) was much stronger. (Saray, 1997) The long absence of Uzbek and Turkmen language education in the curriculum of schools, the inability to publish and broadcast in these dialects for a long time, and the use of Persian language in education, art, daily life, and all kinds of social environments, especially in big cities where Uzbeks and Turkmen lived, have further reinforced this influence (Öztürk, 2014).

In addition to the reasons explained above, another point that should be noted is the long years of war and civil unrest. Thus, the Afghan-Uzbek literature and the Chagatai literature still show great similarities in terms of motifs (Akyuz, 2017) Due to the fact that there has been an ongoing conflict and war in Afghanistan for more than thirty years, people in many parts of the country have been forced to live in isolation and far away from the outside world. Currently, 80% of the country does not have access to electricity and of this, 100% belong in rural areas (Akyuz, 2012) This situation causes people to lead a life similar to that lived almost a hundred years ago. Therefore, neighborly relations and verbal literature continue with all its vitality in villages and in the rural areas as in the past.

We can say that electricity and many other technological innovations are just beginning to change daily life in Afghanistan. However, this progress is usually seen in the urban areas and has not yet manifested itself in villages and rural areas. Therefore, people in the villages and countryside still sit at night using candles and oil lamps, fetch their water from wells far away from their homes using a fetcher, transport the water back home on their shoulders or with animals, clean everything with hand, build houses with mudbricks made by mixing straw and mud, and plough their fields with wooden plough. This situation causes the motifs used in literature to be almost the same as the motifs used in Chagatai literature (Akyuz, 2017).

Another strong reason why Afghan-Uzbek literature is strongly connected with Chagatai literature was the fact that some of the strongest representatives of Chagatai literature such as Ali-Shir Nava'i, Sultan

Husayn Bayqara, Zahir-ud-din Muhammad Babur, Muhammad Shaybani, Shah Gharib Mirza etc. lived in the region. The fact that these great personalities lived in this region means that their artifacts and memories are almost always encountered. (Yarqeen, 2009) The ruins of their palaces, the building they built are almost always in view, and their graves are seen as places of visit. This situation causes the Chagatai literature to always remain alive in the eyes of the public.

In addition, the Uzbeks of Afghanistan, especially during the difficult times of war and unrest, would always fondly remember the bright past days of the Timurids, Shaybanids, and Baburis. (Toplu & Akyuz, 2017) Thus, they consider the works of Chagatai literature as reference books. It can be said that the relationship between contemporary Afghan-Uzbek literature and Chagatai literature is inseparable (Akyuz, 2017).

Various circles in the field of language and literature have emerged among the Uzbeks of Afghanistan due to geographical, political and cultural reasons. Due to the conditions, we have explained above, the limited means of transportation, communication and technology of the people have caused these neighborhoods to be more distinct. *The Uzbek Literary Circle of Afghanistan* that emerged under these conditions are as follows. (Akyuz, 2012)

1. Qataghan Region Literary Circle: Includes Takhar, Kunduz, Badakhshan and Baghlan Provinces.
2. Faryab Region Literary Circle: Faryab Province, Maymana and Andkhoy cities and other cities connected to this province
3. Jowzjan Region Literary Circle: Includes Jowzjan and Sar-e Pol provinces (Amini, 2006a)

4. Balkh Region Literary Circle: Mazar-i Sharif and Samangan provinces.
5. Herat District Literary Circle: Includes Herat Province and its environs
6. Kabul Region Literary Circle: It includes Kabul and its surroundings. (This region's literary circle is mostly represented by litterateurs and poets who migrated from Turkistan after the 1917 revolution and settled in this region.) (Akyuz, 2017).

### **The historical development of the literature of uzbek in afghanistan**

In this section, we will briefly introduce some of the personalities who can be considered the representatives of late period Chagatai literature, starting from 17th century Uzbek poets to present day poets and writers. We shall clearly see the transition from Chagatai literature to Uzbek literature and the changes that Uzbeks in Afghanistan have undergone in both literary and social and political fields from these chronologies and examples from the stories of lives of the poets and their poems.

Uzbek literature in Afghanistan: We can classify them thus: 1747-1917 (Late Chagatai literature period), 1917-1964 studies, 1964-1978 studies, 1978-1992 studies, 1992-1998 studies, 1998-2001 studies and 2001- till-date studies. The above dates, which are also the political turning points in Afghanistan, point to the periods when literary works changed in subject, motif and form (Akyuz, 2012).

The Classical period of Chagatai literature continued until the 1730s. In the 1730s, the invasion of the Shah of Iran, Nader Shah Afshar, into the Khorasan and Transoxiana regions disturbed all the balances in this region. The Mughal Empire and other Turkish

Khanates in the region began to weaken in economic, military and other aspects. At the end of this process, the theatre of operation of the Russians and the British became easier and they had the opportunity to activate their plans on the region more easily. The loss of these regions by the dynasties that came from the Emir Timur generation caused a decline and decay in literary works of the Chagatai literature.

During the period of confusion that emerged with the murder of Nader Shah Afshar in 1747, Ahmad Shah Durrani, the governor of Khorasan at that time, declared independence and laid the foundations of today's Afghanistan.

In the first quarter of the 19th century, the colonization of India by the British was completed and they turned to Afghanistan and Turkistan. In the last quarter of the 19th century, Russians completed their settlement in Turkistan (with the fall of Geoktepe in Turkmenistan in 1881) and turned to Afghanistan and India. At this point, while the British supported the Afghan khans in order to stop the advance of the Russians, the Russians were concerned that an independent Afghanistan would be an example for the Muslim nations within their own lands. (Saray, 1997) For these reasons, the cultural ties between Turkistan Uzbeks and Afghanistan Uzbeks began to weaken.

This period, from the 1730s to 1917, can be called the "*Late Chagatai literature period in Afghanistan*". During this period, literary subjects were more influenced by mysticism and religious life and classical literature. Furthermore, it was during that period that the Maymana Khanate fell. Thus, except for a few people, there was no one engaged or concerned with national issues. From the literary

works of this period: one of Mirza Shavkat Buhari's poem "*Tamam Matla' Ghazel* (تمام مطلع غزل)" (Amini, 2006b, p. 46) can be given as an example. Mirza Shavkat Buhari work revolved around mystical principles and dimension. In this poem, which he wrote with a "Juda (جدا) Separately" rhyming scheme, he tells of the separation of a lover from his true beloved, how he burns with the fire of love and how he is worried about separation.

Another poet from this period, Tengri Birdy Ibrey, also wrote his "*Nalan Bulbul* (نالان بلبل) *Crying Nightingale*" poem (Amini, 2006b, p. 141) in a similar style and with a "Juda (جدا) Separately" rhyming scheme.

Another example of Sufi literature written in this period is Isan Chut Khalifa's poem "*Ghayb Esrari* (غیب اسراری) *The secret of Unconsciousness*" (Aminyar, 2009, p. 111). In this poem, the poet stated that the soul of man was created long before his body in a mystical style. Thus, there must not be any hostility or incapacity on the basis that the creature is tolerated by the creator. Further, by giving examples of events that happened in this world within a mystical framework, he emphasized that that everyone was created by a creator. At the end of the poem, he stated that it was not right for him to divulge the mystical secrets he had, and that he was a rose to his friends and a thorn to his enemies.

Although there was a spark and stir in Central Asia caused by the October Revolution that broke out in 1917, a new administration took over within a short time and that marked the beginning of a troubled time in Turkistan.

During this period, thousands of Turkistan citizens had to leave their homeland under very difficult conditions, many of them lost their lives on the roads and in wars, and immigrated to Afghanistan.

This wave of immigration caused a new surge for Afghan-Uzbek literature. Especially the intellectuals who migrated from the Soviet Union to Afghanistan for political reasons influenced the inclusion into the literature of the Uzbeks of Afghanistan of topics such as love of nation, nationalism, right, justice, struggle, etc. and have caused same to be studied. As an example, the poem "*Ezgu Niyet* (ازگو نیت) *Goodwill*" by one of the poets of this period, Ebulhayr Hayri, can be cited. (Amini, 2006b, p. 99) In his poetry, national feelings such as language and nationality are highlighted together with longing for the past, and suggestions and advice are given on what to do.

Another example is the poem "*Keskin A'zm* (کسکین عزم) *Sharp perseverance*" written by Muhammed Amin Uchqun in response to Nafir Faryabi's Ghazal. (Uchqun, 1979) This poem handles the topics that are knitted around the same emotions as "*Ezgu Niyet* (ازگو نیت) *Goodwill*" and the poet, on the one hand, while expressing his longing for the past, on the other hand, he draws attention to the importance of reading and with the verse: "*Jujklarny oqyshdan pul beryb airyb kylyb daim* (جو جو قلر نی او قیشدن پول بیریب ایریب کیلیب دایم)" (Amini, 2006b, p. 35), he draws attention to the people who took their children from the schools by giving money.

Ergesh Uchqun, one of the poets of this period, emphasizes the religious and national feelings in his poems and remembers the good days by saying "*Ketti Altay, ketti Ural, ketti Kafkaz eller, Ketti Batular*

کیتی آلتای، کیتی آرال، کیتی قفقاز) *diyari, karli Aral belleri* (Uchqun, 1979) In this poem, written in the form of muhammes (pentastich), the poet tried to reveal his feelings for these countries and the richness of the hands by remembering the bright and happy faces of the past.

Mejnun Qaysari, another poet of this period, talks about the longing for the past with the poem "*Yengi Davran Ile Gel* (تازه دوران ایله گیل) *Come with Fresh Life*" (Uchqun, 1979), and with the verse " "*Belh'ni mamur etib, mehd-i Horasan ile gel, Sunbul-u reyhan ekib, rashki gulistan ile gel* (بلخ نی معمر ایٹیپ، مهد خراسان) *Proud of Balkh, come with Mahd-i Khorasan, Sunbul-u reyhan ekib, come with the rashki rose garden.*", he advises the youth.

Due to Afghanistan's economic status at that time and in addition to other difficulties, many people who migrated from Central Asia to Afghanistan tried to make a living in the country and make it their homeland. Many others migrated to other countries like Turkey, Saudi Arabia, United States America and to some European countries. These poets and writers could not forget their homeland in the countries they went and wrote several works with homesickness and formed the First-Generation Immigrant Literature. (Arral, 2009) Ergesh Uchkun, Shehrani, Mehchuri, Chusti, Amin Uchkun, Sabak, Kamel Abdullah Tashqyn, Shahabeddin Yesevi, Abdurraheed Gavhariy, Sayhan, Sayed Mubasher Qasâne, Damulla Bidil etc. All of the poets had to leave their homeland once or twice and wrote poems expressing their longing for the homeland at every opportunity until their death. As an example, Damulla Bidil's poem "*Gulgun Yuz* (گولگون یوز) -*Smiling Face*" (Amini,

2006b, p. 119) can be shown. The poet was born in Tashkent and had to leave his homeland. For this reason, by saying "*Binevalik ziverim dur ashk-i gulgun gaze din, Pirlik devride ruhsarimni yash etmay, nitay? Sernegun itse lay-i şera'ni kufr-u fucur. "Andhoy" viranesin terjeh-i "Shash (Tashkent)" etmay nitay?* بینوالیک زیوریم دور اشک گلگون غازه دین، پیرلیک دوریده) رخساریمنی باش ایتمای، نیتای؟ سرنگون ایتسه لوی شرع نی کفر (فجور، <آندخوی >ویرانه سین ترجیح <شاش >ایتمای، نیتای؟" he was reproaching and sighing on one side and at the other side he demonstrates complete submission to destiny. With the verse "*Andhoy" viranesin tercih-i "Shash (Tashkent)" etmay nitay?* (آندخوی <ویرانه سین>) (ترجیح <شاش >ایتمای، نیتای؟" He reveals his status as an immigrant and his misery here. Although the subject of the poem is separation and longing - longing for the past days -, it is noteworthy that the name of the poem is "*Gulgun Yuz* (گولگون یوز)". (Akyuz, 2012) Constitutional monarchy was declared in 1964 as a result of the struggles and works that started especially in the 1960s. The struggles began to bear fruit when Daud Khan overthrew Zahir Shah and declared the Republic in Afghanistan in 1973, and since then publications, radio programs and broadcasting in Uzbek and other languages was allowed in Afghanistan. Also, from this period, many people of other nationalities living in Afghanistan like the Uzbeks and Turkmens, as well as many other nations, went to the Soviet Union for educational purposes (Oguz, 2001).

This period between 1917-1978 can be named as "*Early Afghan-Uzbek literature*" in terms of the topics covered. This period can further be divided and evaluated into two; the period between 1917-1964 and the period between 1964-1978. (Akyuz, 2017) As a result of the rising national movements in

Afghanistan, as in the whole world, there are considerable changes in the subject and content of the works written within these time period. In terms of literary matters, the most characterized feature of this period is the emphasis on nationalistic feelings such as homeland, love of the nation, mother tongue and motherland, and there is also emphasis on the issues unity and solidarity. With the increase of national motifs in poetry and literature, a relative decline is observed in the number of poems that contain religious motifs or that border on mysticism and Sufism.

In 1978, with the April Revolution, a communist government was established in Afghanistan, and the country entered a new period. Although there was a civil war in the country, schools giving education in Uzbek language were allowed to be opened. (Qarash, 2015) This period, which started with the 1978 revolution, continued until 1992. During this period, topics such as labor, worker, and the unity of peoples entered literature. As an example, El-haj Muhammed Nebi's son, Muhammed Iskhak Sena's poem "*Tang Yili* (تنگ ییلی)" (Amini, 2006b, p. 80) talks about workers and unity. In this poem, the poet heralds the coming of a new spring with the new government. He portrays this new era with great happiness. The verses of "*Sen "Sena" ghazal yazgil halk mehneting maktab, Vasfinge erur layiq ishchi birle dehqanler* (سن >ئتا غزل یازگیل، خلق محنتین مقته ب، وصفینگه ایرور لاییق، اشچی (بیرله دهقانلر)" (Amini, 2006b, p. 80) refer to people, workers, villagers and the concepts brought to the fore by the new order.

Despite the concepts brought forward by all these socialist and communist regimes, the main issues for many poets in this period are language and love for the motherland. Aysultan Hayri's poem "*Watan Wasfy*

(وطن وسفی)" (Amini, 2006b) describes the love of motherland with enthusiastic feelings. In this poem, he tried to describe the love for motherland with the strongest feelings (Aymak, 1980).

On the other hand, those who left their homeland due to the civil war also formed the 2nd Generation Immigrant Literature. Sayyid Serajeddin Qana's son, Sayyid Sherif's poem "*Mukhajeer-nama* (مهاجرنامه) *Letters of Immigrants*" (Amini, 2006b, p. 163) is an example of poems written in the land of the migration. Also written in this period, Tashqyn Behai's poem called "*Watan Topraghy* (وطن توپراغی) *Soil of Homeland*" (Uchqun, 1979) expresses the feelings of immigration in the best way.

During the civil war years between 1992-1998, a new page was opened for the Uzbeks in Afghanistan living in the territories under the control of the Northern Alliance. Many poems were written on freedom, national identity and mother tongue, as well as works in accordance with the political conditions of that day (Gedaz, Faryabi, Raheem, & Qazem, 1990).

In 1998, a new era when the whole of Afghanistan, with the exception Pansher region, came under the control of the Taliban. This brought an end to the period of hope and excitement felt between 1992-1998 and replaced it with pessimism. Muhammed Alim Qohken's poem "*O'zgacha*" (Amini, 2006b, p. 182) expresses the feelings of those days in the best way. Masume Sevinch's poem "*Atahan Shairimiz Hudaynazar Aber Toghilgeniginin 90 Yilligi Munasabeti Bilen, Onin Bir Gazeliga Ergeshib Yazilgen*" (Amini, 2006a) was also written in these difficult times. In this poem, the poet cannot accept the situation they are and makes an effort to do something.

In Tashqyn Behai's poem "*Gizli Unler* (گیزلی اونلر)" (Amini, 2006b, p. 64), the poet also expresses the discomfort with the current situation and suggested some ways out.

During this period, many people left their country for political reasons. (Arral, 2009) While the works of this period also included subjects and motifs expressing the demoralization and pessimism experienced, those who had to leave their country formed the 3rd Generation Immigrant Literature. Muhammed Qazem Amini 's poem "*Watanni Asleb* (وطن نی ایسلب) *Remember Homeland*" (Amini, 2006b, p. 21) was written during these days. In this poem, written in the muhammes (pentastich) style of poetry, homesickness, difficulties of being an immigrant, longing for the past, etc. were the feelings and emotions expressed by the poet.

In 2001, a new era was begun with the intervention of the United States of America and NATO Forces. The feeling of pessimism was replaced with a new ray of hope for the future, and in the works written in this period, mother tongue, unity, solidarity and national feelings were frequently mentioned. Sayyid Adilshah Shadman's poem "*Yengi Peyman* (ینگی پیمان) *New Period*" (Amini, 2008, p. 53) expresses the new period and the expectations from this period. Muhamed Qazem Yalghuz's poem "*Yengi Bahar* (ینگی بهار) *New Spring*" (Amini, 2008, p. 93) also describes the atmosphere of hope brought by the new era.

### Conclusion

Afghanistan is a geography that has hosted many civilizations throughout history, witnessed countless wars, invasions and coup d'état, welcomed immigrants as a destination to migration, as a shelter for immigrants, and became a cemetery of empires, as a

western journalist put it. There is a very rich Turkish history, literary and architectural heritage in this country, which has been flooded by Turks many times throughout history. It is easy to see and feel this heritage throughout the country.

Although the years of war have left this country backwards in many areas, two factors have caused this geographical area to remain virtually isolated and thus, preserved its characteristics; the fact that the country has never been invaded and colonized by the imperialist powers, and the fact that wars have not allowed the spread of popular culture in the country. Like all the peoples of this region, the Uzbeks of Afghanistan have managed to preserve their cultural characteristics in the best way possible and are one of the sensitive nations in this regard.

The literatures, which are the continuation of the Chagatai literature, almost always follow the Chagatai literature, at least in form and motif. In many works, nationalistic feelings and emotions, motherland, mother tongue, unity, solidarity, troubles, migration and travels, feeling of homesickness, and nostalgia were covered. Furthermore, subjects such as labor, populism, unity of peoples were covered in Soviet Literature specific to a particular era.

The names of historically great Turkish personalities such as Ali-Shir Nava'i, Sultan Husayn Bayqara, Zahir-ud-din Muhammad Babur, Muhammad Shaybani, Shah Gharib Mirza etc. were frequently used in the works.

Afghan-Uzbek literature has entered a new revival phase with the recently adopted Constitution of Afghanistan. In addition to many newspapers and

magazines broadcasting in the mother tongue, various programs are being broadcasted on both private and state television and radios. There is a vibrant literary and cultural life in the country. This situation gives hope for the Afghan-Uzbek literature. In particular, Faryab Province plays a pioneering role in this regard and is basically a center for Afghan-Uzbek literature.

Due to the limited study and research conditions, very little work has been done in the field of Contemporary

Turkish Dialects and Literatures, and the Afghan-Uzbek literature, being a virgin area, deserves more research done on it. Similar to how Rumi is the homeland of Sufi elders who prioritize tolerance and human love, I also desire to see that this geographical region, which deserves peace and security, soon attain lasting peace and security, and I hope that Afghanistan will become an island of peace in the near future.

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**Corresponding Author Contact Information:**

Author name: Murat Akyuz

University, Country: Nile University of Nigeria, Nigeria

Email: akyuz.murat@gmail.com

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