

## Modern Approaches to Reading “Majolis Un-Nafais” By Alisher Navai



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**ABSTRACT:** Alisher Navai is considered as a founder of modern Uzbek language and Literature. His miraculous creation have been at the center of secular research conducted by orientalists. Studying his research began in the East since his lifetime while the first research on Navai works started in XVI century in the West. If we look through the history of studying Navai works, in some orientalists research, we can face with subjective views influenced by political and social ideology. For example, 1950s-1980s of the 20th century some foreign scholars tried to prove that Navai was a "tendential creator" by socializing his literary and scientific heritage, especially his ghazals. However, political and social changes taking place in the World Wide new directions in the relations of the new era have created objective principles of approach to the study of Alisher Navai writings.

In this article analyzes the experience of new approach to "Majolis un-nafois" by Alisher Navai on the example of an Iranian scholar's research. Her analytical classifications and hypothesis on socio-political, cultural position of the poets in Temurid's period reflected in tezkire are critically reviewed.

### INTRODUCTION

Alisher Navai is considered as a founder of modern Uzbek language and Literature. His miraculous creation have been at the center of secular research conducted by orientalists. Studying his research began in the East since his lifetime while the first research started in XVI century in the West. If we look through the history of studying Navai works, in some orientalist's research, we can face with subjective views influenced by political and social ideology. For example, 1950s-1980s of the 20th century some foreign scholars tried to prove that Navai was a "tendential creator" by socializing his literary and scientific heritage, especially his ghazals. However, political and social changes taking place in the World Wide new directions in the relations of the new era have created objective principles of approach to the study of Alisher Navai writings. For example, after 1991, apart from old generation, modern scholars could access manuscripts written in Arabic and Persian, tries to study a specific issue based on primary sources in studying Navai works. Literary, political, social reality related to the life and work of Alisher Navai has become an object of research, important, relevant and desirable not only for Uzbek but also the World literature and literary studies.

Because of globalization, global thinking the scholars created new approaches to study Navai. "The Poets Condition of the Timurid Period in Majales-al Nafis" by Iranian scholar Fatemah Rostamian also be considered an example of a new approach to Navai's "Majolis un- nafais"

### LITERARY REVIEW

George Harrison (1894-1991), an English scholar who has done extensive research on the work of William Shakespeare, famous writer said as follow: "If every house in the English-speaking world does not have the Holy Bible and the works of William Shakespeare, then this household is not properly organized. These books may not be read every day, but they should be on the bookshelf as a great symbol of the religion, faith, and culture of a particular people and nation [1. Garrison, 1991, 11].

By presenting the idea above mentioned, we do not intend to put a sign of equality between the Holy Quran, the word of Allah, which was revealed to protect human rights and save them from misguidedance and Navai's works. However, George Harrison also didn't emphasize the same issue stated above: my goal is to show love and attitude towards Navai at the level of the world scholars, in the example of Shakespeare, leading writer in the world since Alisher Navai was a founder of modern Uzbek language and Literature, owner miraculous creation which have been studied for more over five hundred years.

Alisher Navai is a poet, writer, minister, philosopher and proud of Turkic Nation. His writings have been at the center of secular research conducted by orientalists. Studying his research began in the East since his lifetime while the first research on Navai works started in XVI century in the West. If we look through the history of studying Navai works, in some orientalist's research, we can face with subjective views influenced by political and social ideology. For example, 1950s-1980s of the 20th century some

## Modern Approaches to Reading “Majolis Un-Nafais” By Alisher Navai

foreign scholars tried to prove that Navai was a "tendential creator" by socializing his literary and scientific heritage, especially his ghazals. However, political and social changes taking place in the World Wide new directions in the relations of the new era have created objective principles of approach to the study of Alisher Navai writings. For example, after 1991, apart from old generation, modern scholars could access manuscripts written in Arabic and Persian, tries to study a specific issue based on primary sources in studding Navai works. Literary, political, social reality related to the life and work of Alisher Navai has become an object of research, important, relevant and desirable not only for Uzbek but also the World literature and literary studies.

Because of globalization, global thinking the scholars created new approaches to study Navai. "The Poets Condition of the Timurid Period in Majales-al Nafis" by Iranian scholar Fatemah Rostami can also be considered an example of a new approach to Navai's "Majolis un- nafais"

To date, Uzbek and foreign scholars have conducted extensive research on Iranian Navai studies, in particular, the study and translation of "Majolis un-nafois" [2. Vohidov, 1984]; [3. Izzatillayev, 2023].

Rostami emphasizes that "Majolis un-nafois" was created as a result of political and cultural harmony during the Timurid era, and explains the reason for this literary and cultural development with the person of Amir Timur and his transfer of the capital to Samarkand. He tries to prove through the commentary on "Majolis un-nafois" that Navai is an incomparable creator of the literature of the Turkic peoples, that there was no other creator who could compete with him in the Persian and Turkic world.

### DISCUSSION

As is known, the information about poets, writers and scholars who lived in Khorasan and neighboring countries in “Majolis un-nafois” arranged in 8 parts - “majlis- assembly” according to chronological, geographical and dynastic order. In the first and second assembly, Navai presents poets who were not alive at the time of writing the tazkira, in the 3rd assembly, poets who lived in the period of Navai, in the 5th-6th assembly he provides information about creators from Khorasan, Samarkand, Khorezm, Karshi and other places, in the 7th assembly he provides information about poets belonging to the Timurid dynasty, and in the 8th assembly he dedicates to Sultan Husayn Baykara. The tazkira separately shows the knowledge, personal qualities, worldview, and characteristics of the poets’ talent. The classification given to each poet is based on giving examples from their works.

The Iranian scholar's research provides information about the characteristics of the first Persian translations of "Majolis un-nafois" - "Latoyifname" (Fakhriy Hiravi, 1521-1522), "Sakkiz Jannat" (Eight Heaven) ("Hasht bihisht, Hakimshah Qazvini, 1522-1523), the translators' creative approach to translation, and similar and different aspects. Rostami is not satisfied with the fact that the “majilis” in Navai's tazkir and the information about the poets, writers, and scientists included in it are arranged according to their geographical and dynastic order. In her opinion, "Navai's personal attitude also played an important role in the distribution of poets and scholars into majilis" [4. Rostami, 2016]. Rostami tries re-analyses of Navai’s criteria related to distributing poets and divides them into the following groups, based on the 1984 edition of the tazkira, Hiravi, Qazvini translations, and other historical sources:

1. Agreeing group
2. Opposition group
- 3 Avarage group

This information is summarized in tables and diagrams as follows:

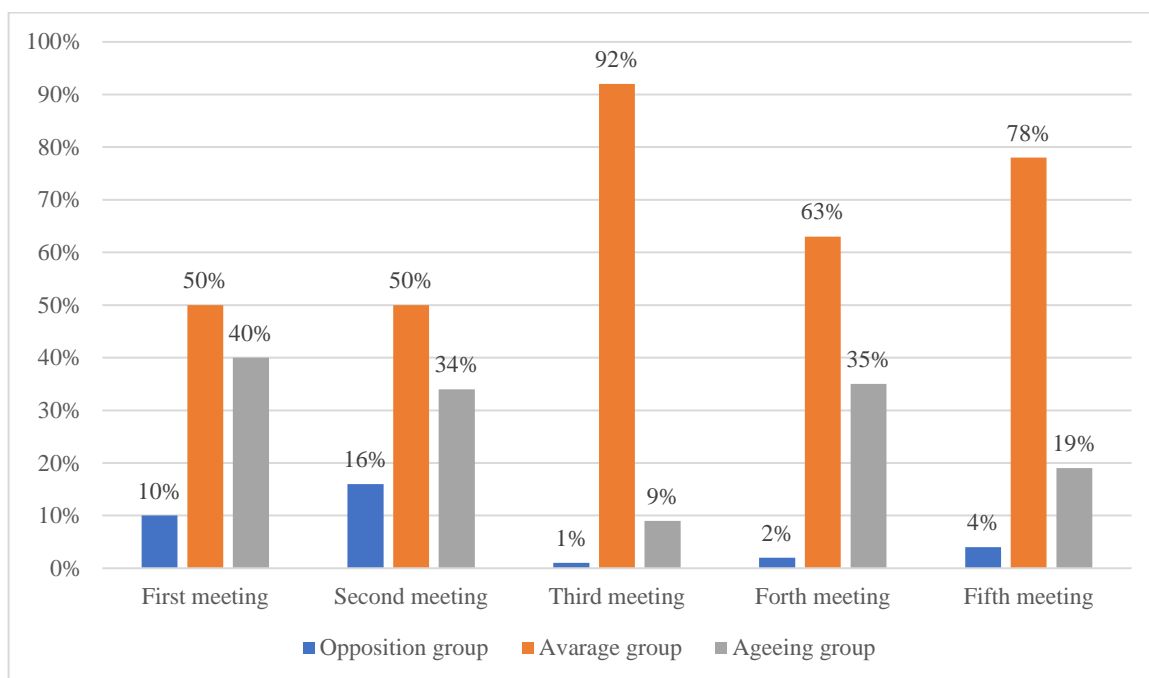
**Table 1:**

Meetings	Avarage group	Opposition group	Agreeing group	Total
First meeting	21	4	17	42
Second meeting	46	14	31	91
Third meeting	126	1	11	137
Forth meeting	33	1	18	52
Fifth meeting	21	1	5	25
Total	273	21	82	349

According to the table compiled by the Iranian scholar of Nawawi, out of 349 artists in the five assemblies of the Majlis un-nafais, 273 were average, 21 were opposition, and 82 were highly recognized poets. This proves that the average or low-level representatives of literature and art included in the tazkira constituted the majority compared to the other two groups.

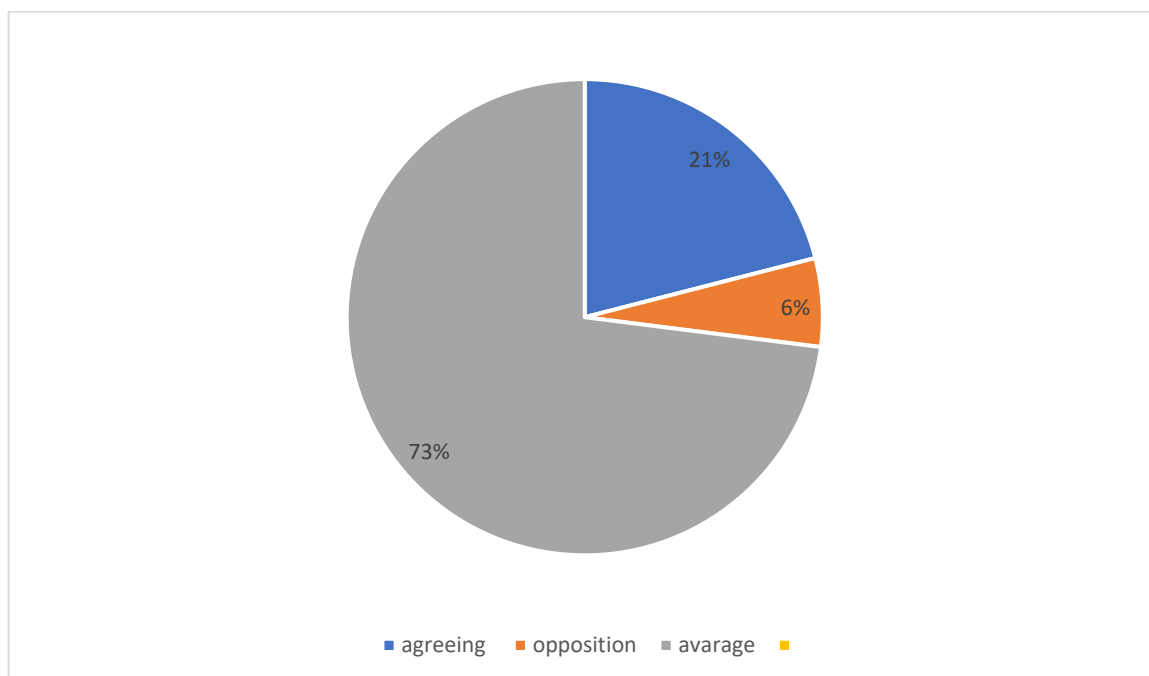
The scholar summarized this classification in terms of % as follows.

## Modern Approaches to Reading “Majolis Un-Nafais” By Alisher Navai



**Diagram 1**

Rostami’s next chart shows that “average poets” made up the largest proportion of all the sessions, followed by “highly acclaimed” and then “opposition poets.” Table 2 shows the percentage of poets in each of the three groups. The percentages of group representatives are shown at the top of each column. For example, in the first session, average poets made up 50%, highly acclaimed poets made up 40%, and opposition poets made up 10%. In the other sessions, average poets also made up a majority of the other groups.



**Diagram 2**

This classification is reflected in another form of pie chart: among the 349 poets in the five assemblies, 73% were average-level poets, 21% were highly recognized poets, and 6% were in the opposition. From these figures, it can be seen that average-level poets formed the basis of the “Majolis un-nafois”.

Based on the above statistical analysis, Rostami concludes that 21 (6%, i.e. very few) poets from the five assemblies in the “Majolis un-nafois” were subjected to political pressure during their time. However, the scholar assumes that there were also poets who were

## Modern Approaches to Reading “Majolis Un-Nafais” By Alisher Navai

subjected to pressure among the “highly recognized poets”, but Navai may not have provided complete information about all of them, and cites Kamoliddin Binai as an example” [Rostami, 2016].

The scholar’s commentary clearly shows that Navai had special respect for “**highly recognized poets**” over other groups. For example, “in the last three sessions, kings, rulers, ministers, and sayyids were discussed, and Navai showed them great attention and respect [Rostami 2016].

The group of **opposition poets**, on the other hand, consisted of artists of various levels, Sufis, and ministers who were considered to be in opposition to the authorities and were eventually expelled from their lands. However, Rostami emphasized in her research that Navai showed his great respect even when introducing representatives of the opposition group.

The group of average level poets is considered the most important group in the eyes of the Iranian scholar. He included in this group “the street poets who were not active in the political, social, literary and cultural life of the Timurid state, but who loved poetry from the heart and were far from the palace. “Navai introduces them as “abdolvash” (like eremite) The last three of the eight majlis arranged by Navai are dedicated to sultans, princes, ministers and those in power.

Iranian scholar thinks Navai already had the idea of poets’ classification in Timurid’s period. Furthermore, although the poets from Navai’s point were simple, average level, not important and individual, in reality, they were important for Timurids state and at the same time competitors to Navai [Rostami, 2016].

Rostami highly focuses on the poets faced with state opposition in her research. She gives Anvar Qasim as an opposition writer who confused the kings and scholars with his divine prophecies.

Navai in "Majolis un-nafois" gives the following opinion about Anvar Qasim:

“har necha alarning rutbasi shoirliq poyasidin yuqoriroqdur va valoyat ahli zumrasida vasfdin tosh-qariroq, ammo chun haqoyiq va maorif adosida nazm libosi diltazirroq uchun iltifot qilur ekandurlar, tayammun jihatidan bu muxtasarni alarning sharif ismlari bila ibtido qilildi” [5. Alisher Navai].

Translation

“Anvar Qasim's rank during the Timurid era was higher than his poetic stature”.

Although the information provided by Navai is not sufficient evidence to include Anvar Qasim among the artists who faced opposition, it serves to substantiate the hypotheses that he was a great figure of his time and that his reputation worried the Timurid princes, in particular Shahrukh Mirzo.

The Iranian scholar tries to prove his views on Anvar Qasim as a “poet from the opposition group” through the copies of Heravi and Qazvini. Let us pay attention to the following opinion of Rostami: “in his youth, he (meaning Anvar Qasim - Z.M) was a student of Sheikh Sadriddin Ardabili, possessed religious and mystical sciences and was a man of prophecy. He came to Khorasan on the instructions of the Sheikh (Ardabil - ZM). In a short time, many Khorasans became aware of the divine properties of Anvar Qasim. Shahrukh is worried that the poet’s prophecies would cause serious problems among the people so he sent him to Samarkand” [Rostami, 2016]. Rostami continues his thoughts about Anvar Qasim with information from Davlatshah Samarkandi. “According to Samarkandi, the scholars of Khorasan did not like Anvar Qasim and complained to Sohrukh about him”.

Shahrukh dismisses the poet from his position. Anvar Qasim tries to prove his innocence and refuses the king's demand. Baysunkur calmly explains to Anvar the situation, the he is forced to leave Khorasan for Samarkand and live there for a certain period. Anvar Qasim is accompanied by scholars and sayyids. He becomes one of the leading Sufis of his time [Rostami, 2016].

In the book “Stars of Spirituality” (Ma’naviyat yulduzlari) one can see the following thoughts about Anvar Qasim: “Anvar Qasim became a disciple of Sadriddin Ardabili from his youth and mastered the Sufi order perfectly. In 1426, a conspiracy was organized against Shahrukh in one of the mosques of Herat. A person named Ahmad Lur, who belonged to the Hurufi movement, stabbed Shahrukh and wounded him. Ahmad Lur was killed on the spot. Due to the above incident, Anvar was accused of having close ties with the Hurufis and being involved in the conspiracy and was exiled from Herat to Samarkand. Ulugbek, who was ruling Samarkand, welcomed him well [Stars of Spirituality, 1999].

The reasons for Anvar Qasim's exile from Herat can be summarized as follows based on available sources:

1) in fact, Anvar Qasim had no connection with the Hurufis, and Ahmad Lur's assassination of Shahrukh was just a pretext for the king and scholars to get rid of him. Because Shahrukh Mirza was worried that a number of followers of Anvar Qasim in Herat was increasing, including princes and dignitaries, and that this situation would cause serious uprisings in the future, so he decided to exile Qasim.

2) Anvar Qasim, for some reason, did not treat Shahrukh and his sons well, and at the same time, Anvar Qasim's growing authority in Herat was casting a shadow over the Shah's reign [The encyclopedia of Islam. 1997, 759]. Therefore, based on the above historical sources, Rostami includes Anvar Qasim among the poets who faced opposition.

Rostami considers Mavlana Binai (real name Kamoliddin Ali Muhammad Sabz) to be a "persecuted poet" based on his nomadic lifestyle. Based on the information about Binai's "league of poets who were famous in the art of calligraphy but did not succeed in poetry and literature, and only won competitions related to poetry and calligraphy techniques," the scholar sees him among the "average group of poets" [Rostami, 2016]. Binai was a Persian-speaking writer with his own style and path, sharply different from

## Modern Approaches to Reading "Majolis Un-Nafais" By Alisher Navai

the creative traditions of Navai. Despite the poet's cunning reputation in his time, Navai calls him "avstun-nasdindur" (middle class) in "Majolis-un nafaos". Rostami says "Binai, as a bilingual (zullisonayn) writer, could even have been a competitor to Navai, if he had not been influenced by arrogance. He also reacts to the disagreements and conflicts between Binai and Navai based on information from Persian sources. "Literary disputes between Binai and Navai made Alisher very unhappy. During the reign of Husayn Mirza, Binai, offended by Amir Alisher, went to Azerbaijan and served Yaqub Shah for some time, and after a while returned to Khorasan. However, the irreconcilable disagreements between Binai and Navai caused him to return to Samarkand [Rostami, 2016].

In the research on the history of the Timurid period, there is information that among the supporters of the Persian or Old Uzbek literary language were prominent figures, including Turkish rulers and Persian ministers. Thus, the historical sources mentioned by Rostami indicate that the conflicts between Navai and Binai were not just literary disputes or personal disagreements, but serious negotiations at the state level related to language and nationality<sup>1</sup>. However, at a time when the status of the Persian language was high and all major works were created mainly in Persian, it was clear that Navai's "Muhokamat ul-lug'atayn" (Discussion of two languages), his miraculous lyrics in old Uzbek Language (not Chag'atay-Z.M) and his great epic poem "Hamsa" would have been worried Persian-speaking poets like Binai, who had a great love for the Persian language. But undoubtedly, Navai considered Binai as a talented poet, and at the same time, he openly and regretfully noted the reasons for the poet's talent not to emerge in "Majolis un-nafaos":

"Mavlono Binaiy ... bag'oyat qobiliyati bor. Avval tahsilg'a mashg'ul bo'ldi, anda ko'p rushdi bor erdi, bot tark qildi. Xatg'a ishq paydo qildi. Oz fursatda obodon bitidi. Andin so'ng ilmi musiqiyg'a mayl ko'rguzdi. Advor ilmi bilan bot o'rganib, xili ishlar tasnif qilib advorda dag'i risola bitidi. Ammo mu'jib va mutasavvirlik'idin el ko'nglig'a maqbul bo'lmadi. Bu sifati salbi uchun faqr tariyqin ixtiyor qildi va riyozatlar ham tortti, chun piri va murshidi yo'q erdi, o'z boshicha qilg'on uchun hech foyda bermadi. El ta'nu tashniidin Hiriyda turolmay Iroqqa bordi. Andin dag'i ushbu rang ovozarlar yubordi. Ammo chun yigitdurur, qobil va ko'p gurbat va shikastaliklar tortti..[Navaiy, 1997].

### TRANSLATION

"Mavlana Binai ... has extraordinary abilities. First, he was engaged in study, then he had a lot of progress, but he left the field. He developed a love for writing. In a short time, he became a scholar. Then he showed an inclination towards music. He studied the field with the knowledge of the advar (advor-theory of music), classified various works, and wrote a treatise on the advar. But because of his arrogant and selfish he was not accepted by the people. Because of his negative character he chose the path of poverty and suffered, since he had no mentor or murshid (guide) it was of no use to him to do it on his own. Due to the people's discontent, he could not stay in Herat and went to Iraq. He didn't stop his negative character. But since he was a young man, capable, he suffered many hardships and injuries.

So, the reasons for Binai's failure in the literary and cultural front, his wanderings, are not Navai's attitude towards him or their personal disagreements, but rather the flaws in the poet's personality.

Alisher Navai's activities, his contribution to develop Timurid's cultural life his constant support for talented youth of his time, and in general, the characteristics of the thinker's personality were reflected in 15th-century sources and in the studies of Uzbek and foreign scholars. For example, Navai supported Sayfi as a talented poet and scholar in Herat, an author of a famous book "Sanoye' ul-badoye". In the third session of "Majolis un-nafaos", he recognized Sayfi as a "professional poet", but he was upset about his much drinking. So, the criterion for Navai towards poets in Timurid's era was not determined by their social status or which language they wrote poems, but by their talent and humanism. Navai's attitude towards to the other poets is also reflected in the description of "Majolis un-nafaos".

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Since "Majolis un-nafaos" by Alisher Navai was analyzed in relation to the historical social, political situation, in which Navai lived I used historical, historical-comparative, social, and in some places biographical methods. In order to prove relationships between Navai and Binai it was necessary to address biographical method to clarify Navai's remarkable features in evaluating poets in Timurid period. In addition, hermeneutic method is also placed the main role in studying the other private and secondary resources to clarify the problem in the current paper.

<sup>1</sup> See further research dedicated to language politics in Temurids' period. Devereux, Robert. Judgment of Two Language; Muhakemet Al Lugheteyn By Mir Ali Shir Nawai; Introduction., Translation and Notes (first Insallment), The Muslim World. October 1964, vol154, issue 4, p.270-287. Devereux, Robert. Judgment of Two Language; Muhakemet AlLugheteyn By Mir Ali Shir Nawai; Introduction., Translation and Notes (second Insallment), The Muslim World. January 1965, vol. 155, issue1, p.28-45. 79. Erkinov A. Persian-Chaghatay Bilingualism in the Intellectual Circles of Central Asia during the 15th-18th Centuries (the case of poetical anthologies, bayāz) International Journal of Central Asian studies. 2008, Vol. 12, pp.57-82



### CONCLUSION

Fatemah Rostami's new analytical approach to "Majolis un-nafois" provided us with unique thoughts, views, ideas, and interesting information. Since the application of new experiences to national literary, especially classical, works is important in developing non-traditional analytical skills, in forming the ability to see a particular text from different perspectives, and in creating important research for the development of science and society, we support such original research.

But at the same time, some thoughts and conclusions in the article “On the poets of Timurid’s period in the “Majolis un-nafois” by Alisher Navai raised the following questions:

first, does Rostami have sufficient factors to divide the 349 poets gathered in the five sessions of “Majolis un-nafois” into three groups such as highly recognized, in opposition, and average? However, in the article, the scientist only focused on three poets faced with “state opposition”;

second, Persian sources on “Majolis un-nafois” are not enough to ensure the objectivity of the above conclusions; making such strict outcomes require studying major studies on the history, politics, and culture of the Timurid era in a literary, historical, religious, and cultural context. For example, research on language policy during Navai’s time could have helped to clarify the relationship between Binai and Navai. However, in our opinion, the inclusion of Binai in the article among opposition poets is not sufficiently justified. Because Binai did not face opposition at the state or political level like Anvar Qosim. Even if this happened, the scholar were to prove with valuable facts.

Thirdly, Rostami’s article seems to be biased in its views on the relationship between Navai and Binai. In fact, such preconception is observed not only in this article, but also in the research of other scholars engaged in the study of English, American, German and other Uzbek literature [Mirzaeva 2011; 2016; 2017].

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