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A Non-Traditional Interpretation Of The Symbol Of National Pride In Omon Matjon's Narrative "The Savior Spirit"

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Abstract: This article discusses the role of Khoja Akhrar Vali, a great historical figure who was condemned as a reactionary representative of the Islamic world during the former Soviet regime and was, in fact, the national pride of the people, in the life of Khoja Akhrar Vali in the 15th century, and the poet Amon Matjon's unconventionally interpreted poetic story of his pilgrimage to the spiritual world of the sheikh, in recognition of his great services to the interests of the nation and the state. In this work, the poet instills in the reader the idea of glorifying national values and historical figures through understanding the spiritual world of Khoja Akhrar Vali.

Keywords: former soviet regime, national pride, Khoja Akhrar Vali, Khurasan, Maveroonnahr, pilgrimage, spiritual world, Ulugbek, national value, historical figure.

Introduction. The 20th century was one of the most harrowing periods in the life of our nation. During the era of the former Soviet regime, certain historical figures were evaluated through the lens of vulgar sociologism. Consequently, much of the valuable literary and educational heritage they created was destroyed, or its study was prohibited. As a result, certain figures who held a special place in the nation's history were alienated from the spiritual consciousness of the people. One such prominent historical figure is Khoja Ahrar Wali.

"Who was the great Sheikh Khoja Ahrar Wali—a man who commanded respect throughout Khorasan and Mawarannahr, earned the title "Protector of the World's Poor' across the seven climes, and became the spiritual and educational embodiment of an entire people and nation? He was the figure whom Sheikh Abdurrahman Jami revered as the "Kaaba of Aspiration' and whom Hazrat Alisher Navoi honored with humility, calling him the "Pole of the Spiritual Path". For nearly six hundred years, "legendary and divine tales and narratives" about this noble figure—who appeared in the dreams of Babur Mirza to show him the path of spiritual detachment—have been continuously recounted among the people".

These observations, expressed by the Hero of Uzbekistan and poet Abdulla Oripov in the foreword to the narrative "The Savior Spirit" by the People's Poet of Uzbekistan Omon Matjon, ring absolutely true. Disregarding the place in the nation's history held by this revered figure—a distinguished successor of the Naqshbandi Sufi order and a source of national pride—was the result of a biased attitude toward religious faith, prevalent both during Khoja Ahrar Wali's own lifetime and under the former Soviet regime. Following independence, however, the perspective on Khoja Ahrar Wali shifted. Scholarly research was conducted, books were published, and articles were released regarding his life, his contributions to the development of the Naqshbandi order, and his creative legacy, thereby bringing historical truths to light. Nevertheless, instances of prejudiced views regarding the figure of Khoja Ahrar Wali are still occasionally observed today.

Scholars from abroad are also studying the life and work of Khoja Akhrar Wali with great interest. At a scholarly seminar held on April 29, 2026, at the Imam Bukhari International Scientific Research Center—themed "Source Studies of Works Dedicated to the Life of Khoja Ahrar Wali"—Professor Arif Navshahi, a member of the Academy of Persian Language and Literature in Iran, delivered a lecture. He provided information on contemporary sources documenting Khoja Ahrar Wali's life, highlighted the Sheikh's

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unparalleled contribution to spreading the Naqshbandi Sufi order across vast regions, and substantiated with examples how his spiritual influence endures to this day in countries such as Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, and India." [2]

Literature reiw. Biographical accounts (tazkiras) and information found in various books—produced both during the lifetime of Khoja Ahrar Wali and in the period following his death—serve as valuable, reliable sources regarding the Sheikh. There are also several specific works dedicated to Wali by his contemporaries. These include Mir Abdul Awwal Nishapuri's "Masmuot", Muhammad Qazi's "Silsilat al-Arifin wa Tazkirat as-Siddiqin", and the work titled "Manaqib-i Khoja Ahrar", which records information provided by Mawlana Sheikh. Another important source is the renowned work on the lives of saints titled "Rashahat Ayn al-Hayat" ("Droplets from the Spring of Life") [3], authored by Fakhruddin Ali bin Husayn al-Waiz al-Kashifi, who is known as As-Safi. This work is dedicated to the lives, activities, miraculous deeds, and discourses of Sufi sheikhs—and, in particular, to the great spiritual guide Khoja Ubaydullah Ahrar Wali, who left an indelible mark on the spiritual life of Central Asia. The book comprises a foreword and introduction, three main chapters, and a conclusion. The work was originally written in Persian and translated into Old Uzbek (Turkic) in 1879 in Khorezm by Domla Khudoybergan ibn Bekmuhammad. Editions prepared in modern Uzbek by M. Hasaniy and B. Umrzoqov were published in 2003 and 2004. It was also translated into Arabic (1852, 1889) and Turkish (1888) and printed in large numbers in India and Turkey. Recently, a facsimile edition of the oldest manuscript—written by the author himself in 1530—was also published" [4].

Abdurahman Jami developed the ideas of the Naqshbandi Sufi order through his relationship with its prominent figure, Khoja Ahrar Wali, and also authored a treatise on the order. According to information provided in the writer's work "Nafahat al-Uns min Hadarat al-Quds" ("Breezes of Friendship Blowing from Sacred Heights"), he incorporated his own personal recollections while recounting the biographies of contemporary sheikhs with whom he had engaged in direct conversation (such as Khoja Muhammad Parsa, Fakhriddin Luristani, Khoja Ahrar Wali, and others)." [5]. Abdurahman Jami's relationship with Wali is also documented in sources from that era.

Information regarding Khoja Ahrar Wali appears in several works by the thinker and poet Alisher Navoi. Notably, the treatise "Walidiyya" is referenced in "Khamsat al-Mutahayyirin" with the following description: "Furthermore, there are the treatises written at the behest of the father of Hazrat Khoja Ubaydullah... reflecting the path of "faqr" (spiritual poverty) and "fana" (annihilation of the self); it was a rare privilege for a son to attain such a state, performing a service so worthy at his father's command and carrying out that directive in such an exemplary manner" [6].

The work "Holoti Sayid Hasan Ardasher" provides details about how Khoja Ubaydullah was regarded as the "Qutb" (spiritual axis) in Samarkand, and recounts how Sayid Hasan Ardasher visited the Sheikh, engaged in conversation with him for several days, earned his regard, and subsequently returned to Herat. In Alisher Navoi's biographical anthology "Majolis un-nafois", the relationship between Khoja Ahrar Wali and Fakhriddin as-Safiy—the author of the work "Rashahot aynul-hayot"—is described as follows: "Mavlono Safiy is the son of Mavlono Husayn Voiz. He is a young man of a deeply dervish-like nature, possessing a spirit of self-effacement and a heart filled with spiritual yearning. He traveled from Herat to Samarkand to be honored with the company of Hazrat Khoja Ubaydullah (may Allah have mercy on him); it is said that he was accepted there, attained the felicity of spiritual guidance, and subsequently returned to Khorasan" [7].

Alisher Navoi dedicated the twenty-first chapter—the third "hayrat" (section of spiritual wonder)—of his epic poem "Hayrat ul-abror" to the praise of Khoja Bahauddin Naqshband and Khoja Ubaydullah. In a 1989 edition published by the G'afur G'ulom Literature and Art Publishing House during the Soviet era, the book was presented in a mixed verse-and-prose format; the work began only at the twelfth chapter, omitting the traditional opening sections praising Allah and the Prophet Muhammad ("na't"), as well as the twenty-first chapter dedicated to Naqshband and Khoja [8]. This was a stark manifestation of the policy to sever the nation from its religion and thereby destroy it! This error was rectified in the 1991 edition. This fact regarding the works of the great poet Navoi during the Soviet regime... ...serves as evidence that he was subjected to repression and unjustly altered.

In Chapter XXI of the work, the poet extols the finest virtues of Bahauddin Naqshband and Khoja Ahrar Wali; highlighting the essence of the Naqshbandi order—such as treating kings and paupers as equals when speaking the truth, the fact that even monarchs paid them homage, and the role of each as a spiritual

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guide to humanity—he prays to Allah to make him "rich in the path of spiritual poverty and wealthy in faith".

Alisher Navoi's work "Nasoyim ul-muhabbat min shamoyim ul-futuvvat" ("Breezes of Love Diffusing the Fragrance of Greatness") is a biographical compendium ("tazkira") dedicated to the great figures of Sufism. In the section titled "460. Khoja Ubaydullah (may his secret be sanctified)," Navoi describes the saint's miraculous powers, lineage, the Sufi masters with whom he conversed, and his spiritual mentor; he notes that Khoja Ubaydullah was a man of immense wealth and held a position of high esteem extending far beyond Transoxiana—reaching Khorasan, Iraq, Azerbaijan, Rum, Egypt, China, and India. Regarding their correspondence, Navoi writes: "…as he showed me—this humble servant—great kindness, he would honor me with divinely inspired letters and entrust me with various tasks.

I have preserved those letters in a reverent manner, arranging them into an album, binding them, and adorning them with decorative borders and fine craftsmanship" [10; 243]. The bond connecting Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur and Khoja Ahrar Wali is not one of shared time—Babur was merely a seven-year-old child when Khoja Ahrar passed away—but rather the saving spirit of the miracle-working saint. It is evident from the poet's biography and the "Baburnama" that the Saint's miraculous interventions often occurred in the king-poet's dreams and subsequently manifested in reality.

Zayniddin ibn Abdujalil Wasifi, a distinguished poet and writer of the 16th century, speaks of the Saint with reverence in his work "Badayi' al-Waqayi" while describing events such as his own fitting reception in Samarkand and his appointment as imam of the mosque in the Attaron Bazaar—a mosque originally commissioned by the great Khoja Ubaydullah [11; 72–73].

The following excerpt illustrates how, during the Soviet era, Khoja Ahrar Wali was vilified as a reactionary cleric and held responsible for the murder of Ulugh Beg: "Amidst the feudal conditions dominated by ignorance, fanatical clerics led by Khoja Ahrar orchestrated provocations and conspiracies against enlightenment and the scholar-ruler Ulugh Beg. Manipulating Abdullatif—Ulugh Beg's power-hungry son—they issued a "fatwa" sanctioning Ulugh Beg's assassination. Consequently, in 1449, Ulugh Beg was brutally executed by the decree of his own patricidal son, Abdullatif" [12; 53].

Following independence, efforts began to provide a fair assessment of the figure of Khoja Ahrar Wali and to conduct in-depth research into his life and work. Scholars such as B.Valikhujayev, B.Umrzoqov, E.Karimov, M.Hasaniy, and M. Razzokova, along with other researchers, are carrying out productive work in this area.

Research methodology. Omon Matjon's narrative "The Savior Spirit" was analyzed using a historical-comparative method (considering genre characteristics), a socio-political analysis method (based on the work's socio-political nature), an artistic-creative analysis method (to examine its literary qualities), a biographical method (addressing aspects related to the authors' lives), and a structural-semantic method (based on the narrative's structure).

Discussion and Results. Since independence, the nation has held in even higher esteem those historical figures who served as spiritual pillars and sources of national pride—both in their own times and for the generations that followed. Theoretical and practical attention toward our sacred religion and its spiritual-ethical teachings has intensified.

Omon Matjon's narrative work "The Savior Spirit" consists of twenty-three short sections. Each serves as a vehicle for spiritual and moral education, embodying the saving spirit of Khoja Ahrar. The verses concluding each section help the reader grasp the essence of the text and the poet's intent. "A Strange Earthquake" is the section recounting the Sheikh's passing. Omon Matjon interprets this event thus: "An earthquake! In truth, it is a state of spiritual turmoil, a disarray of minds, a cry from the realm of thought—a moment when astonishment itself stands aghast". The unique, logical expression of this "pilgrimage" becomes evident in the final two lines.:

Ammo haqiqat-chi?O'lim bu gal jim,
Chek kimga tushganin bilgach uyaldi! [13; 4]

From his own lifetime up until the era of independence, Khoja Ahrar Wali was viewed with suspicion on socio-ideological grounds, and various hostile slanders were spread against him. In the sections of his narrative titled "The Man Who Killed So Many People" and "Khoja Ahrar Who Killed Ulugh Beg; Khoja Ahrar Who Had the Observatory Destroyed," Omon Matjon addresses this issue, recounting how the Sheikh would laughingly reply to such detractors: "Am I the executioner? Me?" The poet delivers a just verdict on

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behalf of the Wali—a figure who, despite possessing immense wealth and renown, earned the title "Protector of the World's Poor" through his compassion for the destitute and orphaned across vast regions, his efforts to relieve people of burdensome taxes, the schools and madrasas he commissioned, and his ceaseless acts of charity—regarding these ignorant, unenlightened individuals: "I cannot manage it all! ... My means are a thousandfold, yet I have but one life". [14; 6].

Omon Matjon substantiates the fabricated nature of the slander regarding Ulugh Beg and the observatory by citing historical sources. The ruler and scholar Ulugh Beg was assassinated by Abdulatif in 1449. Khoja Ahrar arrived in Samarkand in 1451, after Abu Sa'id had ascended the throne. Khoja Ahrar Wali passed away in 1490. In the "Baburnama", while recounting events from 1497–1498, Z.M.Babur provides the following information about Ulugh Beg's observatory: "Among the structures built by Ulugh Beg Mirza within the Samarkand citadel are a madrasa and a "khanqah"... Another of his magnificent structures is the observatory located at the foot of the Kuhak Hill; it is an instrument for compiling astronomical tables. It consists of three stories. Using this observatory, Ulugh Beg Mirza compiled the "Zij-i Gurkani" (Gurkani Astronomical Tables), a work that remains in use throughout the world to this day". Omon Matjon substantiates, through relevant data, that the observatory began to fall into ruin starting in the 18th century.

He provided both material and spiritual support to all the scholars and men of learning surrounding him. The section titled "Navoi's Supplicant" describes his correspondence with Alisher Navoi and notes that he remained in a ministerial post at the Khoja's request. Navoi himself witnessed the Sheikh's miraculous powers; for instance, it was upon Navoi's advice—informed by the Sheikh's insight—that Bayqara Mirza emerged victorious in the conflict against Yadgar Mirza. Omon Matjon discusses the events that would unfold following the killing of Mumin Mirza—foretold by Navoi—and mentions the disciple of Sheikh Kubra... He points out the view comparing it to the Khwarezm tragedy that followed the execution of Majdiddin Baghdadi.

In the sections of the work titled "The Savior Spirit", "Lineage", "Manifestations of the Savior Spirit", and "Why He Was Exalted as the King of Purity" the poet portrays the divine light and the qualities of sainthood and miraculous power within Khwaja Ahrar's soul as a heartfelt song.

The "Savior Spirit" is Khwaja Ubaydullah, whom Babur affectionately addressed as "Mulla Bobo". The revered name of Khwaja Ahrar—who appeared in Babur's dreams to summon him to victory time and again, and who bestowed physical and spiritual healing when Babur's health declined—is mentioned with deep respect across dozens of pages of the "Baburnama". Even after Shaybanikhan killed the Saint's son and grandsons, the Khwaja's close associates followed Babur to Kabul and Agra.

The "Lineage" section recounts the nobility of Khwaja Ahrar's ancestors—noting that among them were men of profound intellect and miraculous gifts—and mentions how his paternal great-grandfather, Khwaja Shahobiddin, prophesied the child's magnificent future. It was during his youth in Boghiston that the Saint attained the honor of "ilm-i ladunni"—divine, intuitive knowledge—and experienced the spiritual ecstasy derived from divine illumination [6; 25].

Sources recounting the life of Khoja Ubaydullah state that, in his youth, light radiated from the letters he was studying. Even at a very young age, he would visit cemeteries to pay his respects to the great figures of the past; the darkness of night did not frighten him. The saint sensed that this was a divine light, and thanks to this light within his heart, he was able to perceive what lay in the hearts of others. The work "Rashahot" presents numerous accounts regarding this matter. The idea that knowledge serves as a noble garment for humanity—and that yielding either spiritual or material benefit constitutes a supreme virtue—is expressed through the wisdom of the Saint ("Valiy"). As manifestations of the redeeming spirit, the poet enumerates concepts such as the awakened heart, the revitalization of the soul, divine power, the radiance of life, liberation from dependency, seeking the spirit from Allah, and the soul's journey in search of the Homeland.

In the sections titled "Tamg'a" (Seal) and "Sulh" (Peace) of this narrative, Khoja Ahrar emerges as a devoted representative of the Sufi order and a source of national pride, dedicated to the prosperity of the nation and the flourishing of the state. As recorded in historical sources, he is recognized as the Sufi master who—acting as a representative of the Naqshbandi order—introduced the practice of engaging in state political governance and passed this tradition on to future generations.

The section "At the Request of My Father" recounts how he wrote the work "Risola-yi Volidiya" at the behest of his father, Sheikh Mahmud; the text emphasizes the necessity of a powerful National Idea—an

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embodiment of Truth—for future generations. The pivotal point of the work is sincere obedience, which distinguishes truth from falsehood.

In the "White Horseman" section, Khoja Ahrar is depicted waging a spiritual battle, rallying the troops of the Turkish Sultan Mehmed II against the enemy and leading them to victory, while he himself—at that very moment in 1453... It is an interesting story about how, on May 29, he was on the road to Qarshi and refused the Sultan's gift.

The final section of the narrative, titled "The Letters of Khoja Ahrar Wali: To the Younger Generation!", discusses the "ruq'as"—or blessed letters—of Khoja Ubaydullah. Navoi compiled and organized the numerous letters sent to Sheikh Jami and himself. The Khoja closely monitored his disciples' objectives, whether they were traveling or pursuing their studies. He would send letters to his disciples—such as the one sent to a student who had chosen to travel to Bukhara—admonishing them not to lose their way by mingling with those of other faiths. The poet views this as a true act of mentorship—offering vital guidance and moral instruction for today's youth and the future of the nation—treating the lessons drawn from Navoi's teachings as a practical guide for young people.

In crafting this narrative, the poet sought to fully utilize the expressive potential of the genre; although the work is written in prose, it is rich in poetic expression and artistic literary devices.

Conclusion. The literary novella "The Savior Spirit" by the poet Omon Matjon is one of the first works of fiction dedicated to Khoja Ubaydullah Ahrar Wali, a renowned figure of the Naqshbandi Sufi order. Khoja Ahrar advanced the ideals of the Naqshbandi path, directing them toward preventing wars in state policy and ensuring the prosperity of the nation and the country. To improve the lives and well-being of the people, he incorporated the farmlands of residents struggling to pay taxes into his own "waqf" (endowment) holdings, designating them as hereditary property. He is a figure who repeatedly dissuaded Sultans Abu Said, Ahmad, and Mahmud, as well as Umar Shaykh Mirza, from fratricidal wars, and who set a personal example in fostering education, agriculture, and trade. Khoja Ahrar is regarded as a Sufi figure whose heart was illuminated by the light of Allah from childhood and who was revered as the "Kaaba of Aspiration" and the "Pole of the Sufi Path" ("Tariqat Qutbi"). During the Soviet era, however, this saintly figure was portrayed negatively—as a "reactionary cleric", the "murderer of Ulugh Beg" and a "feudal lord who oppressed the people".

In 2004, the poet Omon Matjon became one of the first to write about Khoja Ahrar, creating a narrative work titled "The Savior Spirit". He employed a genre rarely used in imaginative literature. This narrative consists of twenty-three sections covering various themes, all centered around the figure of Khoja Ahrar Vali. Each section analyzes a specific trait of the Sheikh—his attitude toward the nation and society, his interactions with people, the secrets of spiritual purification, and his contributions to the development of the Sufi path. Through each section, the poet helps the reader explore Khoja Ahrar's inner spiritual world.

It is no exaggeration to say that the work—shaped by the unique characteristics of its genre—is a masterpiece refined through the harmonious blend of the poet's own thought and spirituality. Indeed, Omon Matjon is a poet who has successfully explored and revealed the diverse beauties within the garden of literature.

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