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THE LIFE AND WORK OF BIBLIOGRAPHER ABDULLA NOSIROV (1899-1987)

Abstract. This article examines the scientific and creative activities of Uzbek bibliographer and orientalist scholar Abdulla Nosirov (1899-1987) from 1916 to 1940 using a chronological and analytical approach. Drawing on archival documents, notebooks, and periodical press materials, the author analyzes Nosirov's calligraphic work, which he began under the pseudonym "Nosihiy," his library work at the "Turon" library, his connections with prominent intellectuals, the political pressures he faced during the Soviet era, and his contributions to the formation of his bibliographic legacy. The article explores Nosirov's work from the perspectives of library science, source studies, and the history of the press, demonstrating the significance of his scholarly legacy for contemporary scholarship.

Keywords: Abdulla Nosirov, Nosihiy, bibliography, manuscripts, Nosirov's notebooks, oriental studies, State Public Library, Turon Library.

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ЖИЗНЬ И ТВОРЧЕСТВО БИБЛИОГРАФА АБДУЛЛЫ НОСИРОВА (1899-1987)

Аннотация. В данной статье на основе хронологического и аналитического подхода освещается научная и творческая деятельность узбекского библиографа и востоковеда Абдуллы Насирова (1899-1987) в период с 1916 по 1940 год. Автор на основе архивных документов, тетрадей и материалов периодической печати анализирует каллиграфическую деятельность Насирова, начатую под псевдонимом "Носихий," его библиотечную работу в библиотеке "Турон," его связи с известными представителями интеллигенции, политическое давление, с которым он столкнулся в советский период, и его заслуги в формировании библиографического наследия. В статье деятельность Насирова рассматривается с точки зрения истории библиотековедения, источниковедения и печати, и обосновывается значимость его научного наследия для современной науки.

Ключевые слова: Абдулла Насиров, Носихий, библиография, востоковедение, библиотека "Турон," Государственная публичная библиотека, рукописи, тетради Насирова.

Abdulla Nosirov (1899-1987) was one of the scholars who left a distinctive mark on the history of Uzbek bibliography and Oriental studies, dedicating his life to the study, organization, and introduction of manuscripts into academic discourse. His work played a significant role in the development of librarianship, calligraphy, and source studies in the 20th century. However, despite his contributions, Nosirov's life and scholarly legacy, particularly the handwritten notebooks he compiled ("Nosirov notebooks"), remain an area that has not yet been fully explored or subjected to comprehensive scientific analysis.

Several articles and pamphlets have been published to date that generally cover the life and work of Abdulla Nosirov. In particular, during his lifetime, M. Khakimov published an article titled

"Kitobdor" ("The Book Lover") [1, pp. 77], which provided information about Nosirov's contributions to the science of bibliography, his authored treatises, and the sources he collected and classified. Additionally, several articles about Abdulla Nosirov's activities appeared in former Soviet publications such as Oydin and Toshkent Oqshomi [2, pp. 2].

During the years of independence, scholars who had worked alongside Nosirov, including Q. Munirov and O. Jalilov, emphasized in their writings the scholarly heritage he amassed throughout his life and acknowledged him as an expert in ancient manuscript sources [3, pp. 181–187]. These articles primarily focus on Nosirov's life, his love for books, his profound knowledge of manuscripts, his assistance to many scholars by reading and interpreting sources, his role in locating information within manuscripts, and his skills as both a copyist and a master calligrapher.

However, these studies do not delve deeply into the scholarly legacy he compiled over his lifetime, known as the "Nosirov Notebooks." Specifically, there has been little discussion about why they were created, why they were written in the old Uzbek script, their classification, or their historiographical significance. Moreover, almost no information is available about the scholar's early life in the early 20th century.

Later, researcher U. Khodjayeva directed her attention to Abdulla Nosirov's role in studying the history of the Uzbek press [4, pp. 145–152]. In her study, the "Nosirov Notebooks" are shown to be an important source for exploring the Arabic-script period of Uzbek print media.

In the monograph "Istoriya i istoriki Uzbekistana v XX stoletii" ("History and Historians of Uzbekistan in the 20th Century"), published in 2014, an article by the researcher B. Babadjanov titled "'Ulama' in the Soviet Institute of Oriental Studies" was included [5, p. 347]. The article highlights the efforts of several scholars with religious education (ulama) who worked at the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts in the 20th century. Despite the prevailing political and ideological circumstances, these scholars made significant contributions to the formation of the institute's manuscript collection. In particular, the article notes Abdulla Nosirov's participation in compiling the index cards of Eastern manuscripts and his extensive annotations and descriptions of manuscript sources. This article presents Nosirov's contributions within a general context.

In our own research, however, we aim to present Abdulla Nosirov's life and scholarly activity in greater detail, with chronological structure and special attention to specific aspects. This study relies on archival documents, information provided by Nosirov himself in his personal notebooks, articles published about him in periodical press, as well as interviews with individuals who were in direct contact with him.

First and foremost, when studying Nosirov's life and work, we observe that it can be divided into two distinct periods:

1. The first period, during which the scholar wrote under the pen name "Nosihiy" (1916–1940).
2. The second period, during which he was active under the name Abdulla Nosirov, as he is commonly known (1941–1987).

There are several reasons for dividing Nosirov's career in this way. First of all, in his early calligraphic works (1916), he used the pen name "Nosihiy." His only known manuscript work Bilkat was written under this name (1920), and during the 1920s–1930s, articles published in the periodical press also cited the name and pseudonym "Nosihiy."

The second period includes archival records that document Nosirov's collaboration with several prominent Russian bibliographers. These include his work at the State Public Library (1941–1943) and later at the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts (1943–1987), where he was employed under the name Nosirov. In this article, we focus only on the first period of Abdulla Nosirov's life and scholarly activity, from his birth up to the year 1940.

Abdulla Nosirov – Nosihiy was born on December 6, 1899, in the Mahsidoz neighborhood of Tashkent, into the family of Muhammad Nosir. His father, Muhammad Nosir (Nosih) Alimuhammad (1868–1918), was a progressive intellectual who engaged in book trading – a profession known as sahhoflik. His grandfather, Ali Muhammad, worked as a teacher (mudarris) at the former Shukurkhon madrasah in Tashkent. Abdulla Nosirov was raised under the care of his

grandfather until the age of 18. His love for books was deeply influenced by both his father and grandfather. Recalling his childhood, Nosirov said:

"My father and grandfather owned thousands of books. I grew up among them, familiarizing myself with those books" [6, p. 16b].

Muhammad Nosih Alimuhammad (1868–1918) was one of the enlightened intellectuals of his time. After graduating from the Shukurkhon madrasah, he initially worked as a bookbinder at the Sahhof bazaar. Later, he opened a bookshop there and imported books from Arabia, India, Kashmir, Iran, Afghanistan, Turkey, Orenburg, Kazan, and Azerbaijan for trade [7]. A passionate admirer of fine literature himself, he was deeply interested in this profession [8, pp. 176–177].

Between 1896 and 1916, Abdulla Nosirov's father, Muhammad Nosih, published more than 15 books. Today, the books he published are preserved at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan. In 1908, he published a book he had compiled himself titled "Bayoz maa gulshani ash'or". This book is currently held in the manuscript collection of the Institute of Oriental Studies under catalog number 325. The work consists of two parts. The first part includes ghazals and poems by poets such as Nizami Ganjavi, Lutfiy, Fuzuli, Umar Khan, Gulkhani, Uvaysi, Mahzuna, Muqimi, Furqat, Akmal, and Kamiy. The second part of the Bayoz is dedicated to poems by Azerbaijani poets. In general, both Abdulla Nosirov and his father Muhammad Nosih played a significant role in the dissemination of Turkic literature and publications like Molla Nasriddin [9, p. 2], as well as many 20th-century periodicals throughout our country.

Abdulla Nosirov grew up in such an intellectually rich environment and pursued education at the Kokaldosh and Beklarbegi madrasahs in Tashkent. During his time at the madrasah (between the ages of 15 and 18), he diligently studied the intricate art of calligraphy under Sirojiddin Makhdum Sidqi Mirzohid ogli Khondayliqi (1884–1934), a teacher at the Kokaldosh madrasah.

Calligraphic Activity

Sidqi Khondayliqi [for detailed information about him, see sources 18 and 21] was a 20th-century intellectual, poet, calligrapher, seal-maker, and translator. Abdulla Nosirov was among his most outstanding students and learned Arabic and Persian, as well as the art of calligraphy, from him. Growing up in Khondayliqi's literary circle, Nosirov also developed a deep love for poetry. Sidqi Khondayliqi referred to him in his autobiography as "my student Abdullah Makhdum Nosihy", which clearly distinguishes him from his other disciples [10, p. 39a].

It is also important to note that Abdulla Nosirov played a major role in preserving Khondayliqi's scholarly legacy. After Khondayliqi's death, it was thanks to Nosirov's efforts that his teacher's manuscripts and books from the village of Parveztepa, where he had spent his final years, were brought to the Abu Rayhan Beruni Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan [11, p. 26].

From 1916 onward, Abdulla Nosirov began to apply the art of calligraphy that he had learned from his teacher. That same year, he copied the lithographed editions of Dilorom, Zayn ul-Arab, and Hurliqo—works printed by his father Muhammad Nosih Ali Muhammad—by hand.

Later, in 1925, at the request of Abdulla Qodiriy, Abdulla Nosirov transcribed the first print-ready version of the novel O'tgan kunlar (Bygone Days). This event is documented in his notebooks [6, 69b pp] and also in the memories he shared with many people:

"An event that happened while I was working at the 'Turon' Library has never left my memory," Abdulla Nosirov once recalled. "The beloved son of our nation, the famous writer Abdulla Qodiriy (Julqunboy), often came to the library and borrowed books from me. Through such meetings and sincere conversations, I became closely acquainted with him. Out of deep respect, he never addressed me by name, but rather called me 'Makhdum Janoblari'—meaning 'Honorable Scholar.'

One day he asked, 'Makhdum Janoblari, if you have time, could you look over my novel? I would like to keep the manuscript and prepare a copy for the publishing house.' I gladly accepted his

request and began working. The novel was O'tkan kunlar. With the payment I received from Abdulla Qodiriy for this service, I bought a radio at that time" [12, 27 pp].

Nosirov's later calligraphic work dates to around 1940, when he copied the Arabic-language manuscript of the famous Muslim traveler Ibn Battuta's *Tuhfat al-nuzzar*—specifically, the sections on the "Dasht-i Qipchoq" and "Movarounnahr and Khwarazm." Both sections are currently preserved in the Manuscript Collection of the Institute of Oriental Studies, Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

In the same year (1940), together with calligrapher Muhammad Hasan, Abdulla Nosirov copied the second volume of *Tarikh-i jadid-i Tashkand* by Muhammad Solih Qorakhoja og'li Toshkandi (d. 1889) in Persian.

Nosirov's mastery in the field of calligraphy did not end there. It should also be noted that in 1968, he participated in the restoration and reconstruction of ancient architectural monuments in Uzbekistan. For instance, he took part in the restoration work of several sites in Samarkand, such as Gur-e Amir and the Ulughbek Madrasah. He collaborated with the renowned calligrapher Abduqodir Murodov to reconstruct inscriptions that had faded over time or had become illegible due to damage.

As evidence of this, we can recall an event related to the Gur-e Amir mausoleum:

"During the restoration of the mausoleum, there were difficulties in restoring the main entrance inscriptions, as well as the inner and outer texts. No written documentation related to the construction of Gur-e Amir had survived, which posed a seemingly unsolvable problem. Yet the restoration of the inscriptions was essential.

In such a challenging situation, Abdulla ota did not lose hope. He constantly pondered over the task, day and night. One day, exhausted, he fell asleep and dreamt of the architect who had built the mausoleum. In the dream, the architect clearly recited all of the lost inscriptions to Abdulla ota. This vision was a perfect solution for the tireless Abdulla ota. Following this, the restoration progressed successfully, and the inscription was finally reconstructed: 'This building was constructed by the architect Muhammad ibn Mahmud al-Banno Isfahani.' Abdulla ota recounted this story to me about forty years ago," the writer recalls.

According to the "Personal Record of Nosirov" preserved in the Archive of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan, in a handwritten "Autobiography" by Nosirov himself, he writes that in 1921 he studied at a teacher training course and worked as a teacher [13, 31 pp]. Later, he tested himself in the field of calligraphy and, in 1921, was employed as a calligrapher at the Turkestan State Publishing House (he worked with Abduqodir Murodov) [6, 8b pp]. From 1922 onwards, Abdulla Nosirov began his career in librarianship.

His activity at the "Turon" Library (1922–1930)

In libraries of the Muslim world, the classification of books, their cataloging, and the creation of bibliographic works followed a historical-hierarchical classification principle. That is, books were classified according to the historical development of the sciences to which they were dedicated, and the prestige those sciences held in medieval society [14, 108 pp]. Later, by the 1820s, libraries and collections began organizing books according to a new system. Our research shows that Abdulla Nosirov began his initial bibliographic work independently by creating a card index of manuscripts and lithographic books in Arabic, Persian, and Turkic languages. As a result of this experience, in 1922, Nosirov was accepted as a librarian at the "Turon" Library [13, 31 pp], where he made a significant contribution to its development.

The "Turon" Library, established in 1913 in the Old City part of Tashkent, soon became a gathering place for many intellectuals of the country. Initially called "Asia," the library's collection was formed thanks to donations of personal book collections from prominent Uzbek enlighteners.

Although the newly established library initially did not possess many books, it managed to attract thousands of book lovers. Dozens of poets and writers such as Cho'lpon (1898–1938), Fitrat (1886–1938), Shokirjon Rahimiy (1898–1938), Elbek (1898–1939), Oybek (1905–1968), Otajon

Hoshim (1905–1938), as well as Russian historian V.V. Bartold (1869–1930) and Turkish scholar Cho‘ponzoda (1893–1937), enriched their knowledge at this institution [15, 11 pp].

In 1925, the renowned orientalist V.V. Bartold (1869–1930) visited the “Turon” Library to work with its collection. There, he became acquainted with the sharp-minded librarian Abdulla Nosirov. Impressed by Nosirov’s attentiveness and precise knowledge of which sources were found in which books, Bartold also benefited from his calligraphic skill. At Bartold’s request, Nosirov wrote the following words in Arabic on the first page of the book *Iqd al-Juman*: “*Iqd al-Juman*” – compiled by the friends and students of the virtuous master, historian of Turkestan, sayyid Bartold Kamil, in honor of him, among the scholars of Turkestan, 1345 AH. [6, 67a pp].

One of the senior members of the “Turon” Library and a veteran of labor, Qodir Norkhojaev, recalls in his memoirs:

“The ‘Turon’ Library was located in a building near the old Jo‘va square, and students from the Tashkent Pedagogical Technical School often visited it. One day, when I went to the library to borrow a book, I saw a cheerful and pleasant-looking man standing there. At that moment, Abdulla Nosirov (who later worked as a bibliographer and researcher at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan) came from inside with a book and handed it to that man. As he took the book and began to flip through it, my eyes caught the title *Sarvati Funun*. It was the first time I had seen a book with that name. After the man left, I asked Abdulla aka who he was, and he said, ‘That poet is Cho‘lpon. He just borrowed a journal published in Istanbul.’” [16, pp. 22–24].

Let us now turn our attention to Abdulla Nosirov’s efforts to promote and enrich the “Turon” Library. As mentioned earlier, Abdulla Nosirov began his professional activity at the “Turon” Library in 1922 as a librarian. Between 1928 and 1930, he served as the head of the library.

According to a testimonial given by former scientific staff members of the “Turon” Library, A.I. Ageev (1902–1975) and M.N. Latipova [6, p. 89b], Nosirov introduced several innovations upon assuming the role of director. At that time, the library required significant technical organization, including inventorying books and record-keeping, which were still being conducted using outdated methods, even for that era.

Thanks to Nosirov’s efforts, the library acquired a new face: new custom-built bookshelves and other equipment were installed, a re-inventory was carried out, catalogues were compiled, and copies of newspapers and journals from that period were bound and preserved. The library’s budget and staff numbers increased. In order to promote new books, Nosirov organized exhibitions and literary evenings.

In October 1930, Abdulla Nosirov was dismissed from his leadership position at the “Turon” Library. We also tried to find the reasons for this in newspapers and journals from that time. An article signed “A.U.” titled ‘The October Library Must Live’, published in the March 6, 1931 issue of *Qizil O‘zbekiston*, states:

“Due to the poverty of the local budget, the ‘October’ Library was transferred to the state budget by decision of the People’s Commissariat for Education in May 1930, and it was merged with the Central Asian Library. It was decided that the deputy director of the Central Asian Library would also serve as the head of the ‘October’ Library... The director who had brought the library up to the latest technical standard was dismissed under the pretext of ‘staff reduction.’” [11].

Nosirov’s tenure as director of the “Turon” Library came to an end after the library was incorporated into the Central Asian Library system, which is now known as the National Library of Uzbekistan named after Alisher Navoi.

Our research shows that Abdulla Nosirov operated under the pseudonyms *Nosihiy* and *Nosihov* from his youth until the closure of the “Turon” Library in 1940. It seems that his early years, especially those connected with the “Turon” Library, formed a distinct phase in his life. In one of his personal notebooks, Nosirov reflects on this period: “At that time I was known by the name *Nosihiy*; now I go by *Nosirov*.” [6, 74 a pp].

In his articles published in the press during the 1920s and 1930s, as well as in his first work “*Bilkat*”, dedicated to Central Asian scholars and written in 1920, Nosirov signed as *Nosihiy*. His

active participation in the early 20th-century press and his Bilkat manuscript will be addressed in detail in our forthcoming studies.

Due to the poor preservation of archival records related to the “Turon” Library, we were unable to make extensive use of them in this study. However, based on his published articles, his handwritten autobiography, and the notebooks preserved in the Oriental Studies Institute’s archive, we can draw reasonable conclusions about the years he spent working at the “Turon” Library and his significant contributions during that time.

Other Libraries (1931–1940)

Although Abdulla Nosirov was dismissed from his role as director of the “Turon” Library in 1930, he continued his work in the library system. From 1931 to 1932, he served as director of the Stalin District Library, and from 1932 to 1933, he held the same position at the Oktyabr District Library [17, 31 pp].

By the late 1930s, political repression in Uzbekistan intensified. The purges reached many of the country’s most prominent figures in science, culture, government, and public life. Abdulla Nosirov was not spared from this turmoil. In 1933, he was arrested on charges of “embezzlement” [18, 347 pp], as recorded in his autobiography preserved in the archives of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan.

According to the renowned Uzbek literary scholar, Academician Naim Karimov, Nosirov was imprisoned for allegedly selling a copy of the Arabic version of the novel “O‘tkan kunlar” (“Bygone Days”) in secret. While in prison, he shared a cell with Habibulla Qodiriy, the son of the writer Abdulla Qodiriy. This encounter led to a close friendship between them. As a result of their relationship, Nosirov later became actively involved in collecting, preserving, and studying the scholarly legacy of Abdulla Qodiriy [3, 141 pp].

Nevertheless, in 1936 Abdulla Nosirov was acquitted and resumed his work at the Oktyabr District Library. In 1938, when the “Turon” Library was granted the status of Tashkent Region, it began functioning as a scientific and methodological center for all libraries in the Tashkent Region [19, 14 pp]. From 1938 to 1940, Nosirov worked as a senior librarian at the Chinoz District Central Library, which was part of this methodological center.

In conclusion, Abdulla Nosirov’s early scholarly career from 1916 to 1940 marked his formative period as a bibliographer, calligrapher, and librarian. During this phase, he wrote under the pseudonym “Nosihiy,” worked at the “Turon” Library, and established methods for handling, copying, and cataloging manuscripts. His mentors, madrasa education, and connections with contemporary intellectuals played an important role in his professional development. Despite facing political pressures and imprisonment during this time, it was precisely in these years that Nosirov laid the foundation for his later bibliographic legacy.

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