

## Interpretation Of The History Of The Bukhara Emirate And The Manghit Dynasty In The Works Of The Jadid Historian Bo‘Lat Soliyev

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### Abstract

*This article analyzes the views of Jadid historian Bulat Saliev on the history of the Bukhara Emirate and the Manghit dynasty. The study examines his interpretations of the Manghit period as reflected in the works “Mang‘itlar saltanati davrida Buxoro o‘lkasi” and “History of Uzbekistan”, focusing on political processes, internal governance, and external relations. It also provides a comparative analysis of Saliev’s approach with the views of other Jadid historians. The results show that the author applied a critical and source-based approach to historical interpretation.*

**Keywords:** Bulat Saliev, Bukhara Emirate, Manghit dynasty, Jadid historians, historiography, political processes, internal administration, foreign relations, historical interpretation, source studies.

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### 1. Introduction

The study analyzes Bo‘lat Soliyev’s works “The Bukhara Region during the Reign of the Manghit Dynasty” and “History of Uzbekistan” as the principal sources. These works are significant because they examine the history of the Manghit dynasty through the prism of political and social developments. To investigate Soliyev’s views, the writings of Jadid intellectuals such as Ahmad Donish and Abdurauf Fitrat were also used as comparative sources. In addition, the works of Rashid al-Din, Shihabuddin Marjani, and Hakimkhan Tura were consulted to verify and compare information concerning the Manghit period. Overall, the source analysis demonstrates that Soliyev’s approach to historical processes reflects a synthesis of classical historical sources and the ideological influences of his own era.

The findings reveal that Bo‘lat Soliyev adopted a critical

and, to some extent, ideologically influenced approach in his interpretation of the history of the Manghit dynasty and the Bukhara Emirate. While the activities of certain rulers are subjected to sharp criticism in his works, some aspects are evaluated positively. The study also shows that Soliyev relied on medieval historical sources as well as the works of contemporary Jadid historians in his interpretation of historical developments.

This indicates that his scholarly research was grounded in source-based historical analysis, although in some cases his interpretations were shaped by the ideological context of his time. Overall, Soliyev’s works constitute an important scholarly source for the study of the history of the Manghit period.

The contribution of Jadid historians to the study of twentieth-century Uzbek history is of particular scholarly significance. In this regard, the historical studies of the

enlightened scholar Bo‘lat Soliyev occupy an important place, especially his analyses of the history of the Bukhara Emirate, its socio-political structure, economic life, and agricultural development.

Bo‘lat Soliyev’s works, including “The Bukhara Region during the Reign of the Manghit Dynasty”, “History of Uzbekistan”, as well as his articles published in periodicals, constitute valuable sources that deserve separate examination within Uzbek historiography [10: 5–6]. These works make it possible to trace the methodological approaches employed by Uzbek historians in the 1920s, the process of writing the history of the newly established Bukhara People’s Soviet Republic (BPSR) [6:103], and the evolution of historical interpretations during the subsequent formation of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic.

This article examines, from a historiographical perspective, Bo‘lat Soliyev’s assessments of the Manghit dynasty, particularly his evaluations of the last emirs of Bukhara. Such an approach makes it possible to identify how the history of the Bukhara Emirate was interpreted within Soviet-era scholarly thought and to assess the historical and methodological significance of these interpretations.

Among Soliyev’s studies devoted to the history of the Manghit dynasty, “The Bukhara Region during the Reign of the Manghit Dynasty”, published in 1925, is of special importance. A detailed analysis of this work reveals that the scholar approached the activities of each Manghit ruler individually when examining the history of the emirate. This provides valuable insight into his scholarly and methodological views concerning the historical processes of that period.

At the same time, an examination of Soliyev’s writings demonstrates that his interpretation of the Bukhara emirs was influenced, to a certain extent, by the ideological paradigm of his era. Consequently, elements of one-sided interpretation can occasionally be observed in his historical assessments.

## 2. Method

In the introduction to “The Bukhara Region during the Reign of the Manghit Dynasty,” the author expresses sharply critical views regarding the Manghit period. In particular, he writes:

“During the rule of the Manghits, Bukhara was deprived of cultural and political life. However, several centuries

earlier, the situation had been entirely different. Before the descendants of Amir Alim came to power, the Bukhara Khanate had not declined to such a level... It is difficult to find a darker and more miserable period in the history of Bukhara than the era of their rule. Throughout its history, Bukhara passed through many stages and was governed by various tribes and dynasties. From the Samanid period in the ninth century until the end of the Timurid era, many bright and prosperous days can be observed in Bukhara’s history. Yet when the fate and future of Bukhara passed into the hands of the Manghits, that is, the descendants of Amir Alim, all aspects of life in Bukhara began to fade. Gloomy and dark days overshadowed its condition and future” [1: 3–4].

This approach indicates the presence of certain elements of one-sided interpretation in the evaluation of historical events. Therefore, it is important to analyze the conceptual framework of the work while taking into account the socio-political and scholarly environment in which it was written.

An analysis of the above statement suggests that it is difficult to conclude that Bo‘lat Soliyev consistently adhered to a fully impartial position in interpreting historical processes. From the perspective of historiographical methodology, scholarly objectivity and impartiality should serve as the primary criteria in any historical study [7: 2]. However, considering the political and historical circumstances of the 1920s—particularly the ideological pressure and widespread repressive policies that characterized the Soviet period—it is also necessary to recognize that Soliyev may have approached certain issues with caution. Similar approaches to history can be observed in the writings of other Jadid intellectuals as well [3: 9]. This circumstance may have influenced him to adopt a relatively balanced, yet constrained, scholarly position in his interpretation of historical events.

In “The Bukhara Region during the Reign of the Manghit Dynasty,” Soliyev pays particular attention to the question of the origin of the Manghit tribe. While discussing their ethnic and political history, he analyzes several centuries of their historical development. According to Soliyev, the Manghits were among the nomadic tribes inhabiting present-day Mongolia at the beginning of the thirteenth century and later participated in the westward campaigns of the armies led by Genghis Khan [1: 5–6].

Based on an analysis of these observations, it may be

concluded that Soliyev relied extensively on medieval historical sources when examining the early history of the Manghits. In particular, his accounts concerning the origin of the Manghit tribe and the events of the thirteenth century closely correspond to information found in *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh* by Rashid al-Din. It is well known that Rashid al-Din provides a detailed description of Genghis Khan's subjugation of the Manghit tribes.

Therefore, it is highly probable that *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh* served as one of the principal sources influencing Soliyev's views on the history of the Manghits [7: 185]. This demonstrates that his research was based not only on contemporary literature but also on classical medieval historical sources.

Furthermore, in "The Bukhara Region during the Reign of the Manghit Dynasty," Soliyev begins his discussion of the Manghits' rise to power primarily with the activities of Daniyalbiy Ataliq [8: 109]. Historical sources, however, indicate that the dominant political position of the Manghits in Bukhara had begun to emerge even before Daniyalbiy's time. In particular, during the period of Muhammad Rahimbiy, the political influence of the Ashtarkhanid dynasty effectively came to an end, and the foundations of Manghit rule in the Bukhara state were established.

Subsequently, the scholar addressed this issue in another of his works as well [3: 87]. The accession of Muhammad Rahim Khan to the throne in 1756 is generally regarded as the beginning of the official rule of the Manghit dynasty. From this perspective, Soliyev's decision to commence the history of the Manghit period with the activities of Daniyalbiy Ataliq may be viewed as a distinctive feature of the author's historical approach.

According to Soliyev, although Muhammad Rahim Khan had effectively concentrated political power in his own hands, prevailing political traditions and tribal perceptions compelled him to legitimize his authority. To achieve this, he sought the support of religious scholars and ultimately formally assumed the title of khan. In describing this process, Soliyev sharply criticizes the ruler's political activities and characterizes his policy toward rival tribes as one marked by severe and ruthless measures.

It is noteworthy that the author bases his views not only on contemporary literature but also on historical sources. In particular, he evaluates the personality of Muhammad Rahim Khan by drawing upon information contained in

Mustafad al-Akhbar by Shihabuddin Marjani. Nevertheless, it should not be overlooked that Soliyev's interpretation of this issue was shaped, at least in part, by the tendency within Soviet historiography of the 1920s to criticize feudal institutions and monarchical forms of government [3: 87].

While discussing the period of Daniyalbiy Ataliq, Soliyev emphasizes that he had effectively concentrated political power in his own hands [1: 6]. According to the scholar, Daniyalbiy did not formally assume the title of khan because he did not belong to the Chinggisid lineage. Instead, he placed Abdulaziz, a descendant of Abdulfayz Khan, on the throne. However, Abdulaziz remained a ruler in name only and played little role in matters of state administration. As Soliyev notes, all political and administrative authority was effectively exercised by Daniyalbiy.

The author offers a sharply critical assessment of Daniyalbiy's rule. In his view, this period was characterized by increasing oppression, arbitrary actions by officials, and the deterioration of the population's living conditions. To support these arguments, Soliyev relies on information contained in Marjani's *Mustafad al-Akhbar*. This source likewise records instances of unlawful behavior by certain officials and growing public dissatisfaction during Daniyalbiy's administration.

At the same time, Soliyev's evaluation of Daniyalbiy is predominantly critical in tone, presenting the early period of Manghit rule largely from the perspective of political and social crisis [3: 88].

Bo'lat Soliyev's views on the Manghit emirs deserve particular attention. His assessment of Amir Shahmurad, in particular, differs significantly from portrayals found in many historical sources of the period. A similar approach can also be observed in the writings of the Jadid thinker Abdurauf Fitrat. Both authors sought to portray Amir Shahmurad not as the idealized ruler depicted in traditional historical literature, but rather as a statesman engaged in a complex and multifaceted political career [3: 7].

In Soliyev's works, Amir Shahmurad is portrayed as a ruler who utilized his religious prestige and ascetic lifestyle for political purposes. According to the author, Shahmurad sought to strengthen his political support by cultivating the image of a pious religious figure among the population. Consequently, Soliyev approaches his

activities critically and attempts to explain his political successes in relation to his religious authority [11].

When discussing the activities of Amir Shahmurad (Amir Ma'sum), Soliyev devotes particular attention to his military campaigns. Concerning this issue, he writes:

“In 1784, Amir Ma'sum Shahmurad took the throne from the Ashtarkhanids and was proclaimed amir. Thus, the Manghits formally assumed control of the administration of Bukhara. In the early years of his rule, Amir Ma'sum appeared as a dervish and ascetic. He spent much of his time in khanqahs engaged in worship. At a time when the people of Bukhara were deeply occupied with religious matters and regarded religion primarily as worship and asceticism, such an image closely corresponded to their mentality and outlook. Shahmurad skillfully benefited from this environment. He achieved what his father Daniyalbek had not dared to accomplish and took the amirate from the Ashtarkhanids. Once he became amir, however, he abandoned the dervish cloak and public displays of piety, and his first major action was an attack on the famous ‘King of Marv.’ Since a large portion of the population of Marv adhered to Shi'ism, while the people of Bukhara identified themselves as Sunnis and regarded Shi'ites as unbelievers, this campaign found support among many. At that time Marv was under Persian authority and governed by Bayram Ali Khan. Although the khan attempted to defend the city, Marv eventually surrendered. The ruler was killed, the dam of the Murghab River—which irrigated and sustained the fertile oasis of Marv—was destroyed, and the region was left in a state of devastation. Its inhabitants were taken to Bukhara as slaves. The number of captives became so great that in the markets of Bukhara ten slaves could scarcely be sold for two tangas” [1].

This passage clearly illustrates Soliyev's critical interpretation of Shahmurad's policies and demonstrates his effort to reassess the traditional image of the ruler through the lens of social and political consequences.

According to the author, after coming to power, Shahmurad devoted greater attention to military campaigns than to domestic affairs. Soliyev evaluates the campaign against Marv and its consequences negatively. He argues that Marv was a historically significant city and that its destruction, together with the enslavement of its population, inflicted considerable damage on the development of the region. Likewise, Shahmurad's campaigns in Khurasan and other territories are presented in a critical manner. The author interprets these

actions as manifestations of an expansionist policy. In general, Soliyev portrays Amir Shahmurad not merely as a religious figure but as a ruler driven by political and military ambitions [1: 6–10].

However, unlike many twentieth-century historians, several contemporary chroniclers who lived during Shahmurad's era left favorable assessments of his rule. For example, Ahmad Donish, one of the earliest promoters of Enlightenment ideas in Central Asia, expressed positive views regarding Amir Shahmurad. He emphasized that from his youth Shahmurad sought to abolish excessive taxes imposed on the population, establish justice, and promote social welfare [4: 25]. At the same time, Ahmad Donish sharply criticized other representatives of the Manghit dynasty, particularly Amir Muzaffar and Amir Haydar [5: 65]. The shortcomings of their administrative systems, instances of injustice, and weaknesses in governance were described critically in his writings.

This demonstrates that Ahmad Donish did not apply a uniform approach when evaluating historical figures; rather, he assessed them according to their specific political activities and reform efforts. Furthermore, the authors of *Tuhfat al-Zahirin* and *Muntakhab al-Tawarikh* also presented positive evaluations of Amir Shahmurad's rule.

Soliyev's views concerning Amir Nasrullah are even more explicit. He writes:

“Indeed, it is difficult to find a more bloodthirsty individual than this ruler. He eliminated nearly all of his close relatives. During his reign, the map of Transoxiana had already become an arena of competition between Russian and British commercial capital, each striving to dominate the markets of Central Asia. Nasrullah's campaigns in Fergana were marked by extreme brutality. During these events, the Bukharan forces not only plundered cities but also committed violence against women and massacred countless people. Numerous children, women, and innocent victims were slaughtered mercilessly. His chief qadi, Khoja Jon, reportedly issued a fatwa declaring that women could be treated as war booty, permitting their enslavement, sale, and treatment in the same manner as captives of war.

The Amir confiscated the property of those whom he disliked and transferred it to his treasury. With such confiscated wealth, he built gardens and guesthouses, only to demolish them after holding gatherings there. On

one occasion he visited the residence of a favored scholar, Mulla Khojiboy; upon leaving, he ordered the upper rooms of the house demolished and removed him from office. He also distributed, without documentation, many waqf books that had been accumulated in the libraries of Bukhara over many years, thereby causing their loss. The people of Bukhara reportedly said of him: ‘Among the birds of Bukhara only the kite remained, and among the four-legged creatures only the coffin remained.’” [2: 90–91]

This passage illustrates the exceptionally critical tone adopted by Soliyev in his assessment of Amir Nasrullah. The ruler is portrayed not only as a harsh and authoritarian monarch but also as a figure whose policies caused profound social, cultural, and moral damage. Such evaluations reflect Soliyev’s broader tendency to interpret the later Manghit period through the lens of political repression, social suffering, and administrative decline. At the same time, these interpretations should be examined within the intellectual and ideological context of the 1920s, when Soviet historiography generally viewed pre-modern dynasties and monarchical systems in a highly critical manner.

According to Soliyev, the reign of Amir Nasrullah was characterized by the implementation of a harsh political system. In his view, although the amir succeeded in strengthening central authority, this was achieved primarily through coercion and strict control. Soliyev portrays Nasrullah as a ruler who consolidated power by suppressing political rivals and concentrating authority in his own hands. In terms of foreign policy, he argues that relations with Russia and Britain lacked consistency and stability [1: 13–14]. Overall, Soliyev interprets this period as one marked by strong political centralization, accompanied by increasing internal tensions and growing external pressures.

Another noteworthy aspect of Soliyev’s research is the complete absence of information regarding the last emirs of Bukhara—Amir Abdulhad Khan and his son Amir Alim Khan. This omission suggests that the author may not have regarded these rulers as fully independent sovereigns, but rather as political figures operating under the substantial influence of the Russian Empire in Bukhara. Consequently, he may have considered a separate discussion of their activities unnecessary within the framework of his study.

### 3. Conclusion

An analysis of Bo‘lat Soliyev’s studies on the history of the Bukhara Emirate demonstrates that, although he was not entirely free from the ideological influences of the Soviet scholarly environment, he nevertheless sought to present historical realities as objectively as possible. On the one hand, his works appear to conform to the ideological requirements of the period; on the other, they reveal a genuine effort to reflect historical processes on a scholarly basis.

Through his research, Soliyev attempted to combine local traditions of historical writing with the methodological approaches of European historiography and to introduce this synthesis into the intellectual environment of Central Asia. For this reason, he may be regarded as one of the significant figures in the formation of modern historiography in the region.

Today, some foreign interpretations suggest that modern historiography in Central Asia emerged only during the Second World War as a result of the activities of historians relocated from the central and western regions of the former Soviet Union. However, such an approach cannot be considered fully convincing. Long before that period, Jadid intellectuals and reformers—including Bo‘lat Soliyev, Abdurauf Fitrat, G‘oziy Yunus, and Fayzulla Xo‘jayev—had already laid the foundations for a scholarly tradition of historical research in the region. Their intellectual contributions played a crucial role in the emergence and development of a modern historiographical school in Central Asia.

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