



THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE HISTORY OF AMIR TEMUR'S LIBRARY

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Abstract. *This article examines the history of the palace library founded by Amir Temur in Samarkand, the factors behind its formation, the composition of its collections, and its subsequent fate through source-critical and codicological analysis. The first part of the study reveals the factors of cultural transfer represented by the bookmaking traditions and institutional experience of the Ilkhanids, Jalayirids, and Muzaffarids, which contributed to the enrichment of the collections of the Samarkand library. Within this context, the codicological foundations of the genesis of the Timurid school of miniature painting and manuscript production are elucidated through the phenomenon of Samarkand paper and early manuscript monuments, particularly the Great Langar Qur'an, al-Tabari's Tafsir, and the poem Varqa and Gulshah. The second part of the article critically analyzes the efforts undertaken in the second half of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, reflected in the periodical press and in the works of Western and Russian Orientalists, to locate Amir Temur's library, as well as the scholarly hypotheses concerning its mysterious fate.*

Keywords: *Amir Temur; history of the library, codicology, Samarkand paper, Timurid Renaissance, Rab'-i Rashidi, Great Langar Qur'an, historiography, cultural transfer.*

INTRODUCTION

In the history of the Oriental book arts, the reign of Amir Temur (1336–1405) and the Timurid period (1370–1507) constitute the principal foundation of the Timurid Renaissance, the highest peak of cultural and intellectual development. The establishment of a powerful and centralized state in Central Asia during the late fourteenth and throughout the fifteenth century not only ensured internal and external political stability but also created favorable conditions for the flourishing of the transit economy, the secure restoration of caravan routes along the Great Silk Road, and the unprecedented growth of urban development and craftsmanship.

During this period, the production of manuscript books, their decoration with exquisite miniatures and gilded ornaments, and the establishment of major royal libraries in the principal cultural and administrative centers of Mawarannahr and Khurasan evolved beyond the sphere of ordinary craftsmanship and became strategic tasks of state importance. In this process, the library founded by Amir Temur in Samarkand, as well as the libraries that later emerged in cities such as Herat and Bukhara, served not only as repositories of rare manuscripts but also as leading centers of scholarship and cultural integration of their time.

In both international and national historiography, considerable attention has been devoted to the study of the manuscript culture of the Timurid period, the development of calligraphic schools, and, in particular, the history of the library established by Amir Temur and the manuscript heritage preserved therein. Significant fundamental studies, monographs, and scholarly articles on this period have been produced by specialists in source studies, textual criticism, and history. Nevertheless, existing research has yet to provide a comprehensive resolution of issues concerning the formation of library collections, their internal administrative organization, and their subsequent fate, which remain subjects of scholarly debate and require further conceptual analysis.

This article critically and systematically examines the historiography of the library history of this historical period, as well as the degree to which the traditions of the Oriental schools of book arts and the factors of cultural continuity in the formation of manuscript culture have been studied, drawing upon both existing historiographical sources and contemporary scholarly perspectives.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In the study of the processes of cultural transfer and paper production technology in the history of Islamic civilization, particularly the phenomenon of Samarkand paper, historical sources and rare manuscript monuments serve as primary codicological materials. In this regard, the records of the renowned calligrapher Ibn al-Bawwab, who was active in Baghdad during the tenth and eleventh centuries, are of particular importance. His notes concerning the restoration of folios of the Holy Qur'an written in the hand of his teacher Ibn Muqla provide valuable information on the art of manuscript production, the quality of paper, and restoration technologies of that period. In order to conduct a comparative analysis of material culture and the evolution of calligraphy, the

present study employs the Great Langar Qur'an, the manuscript of al-Tabari's Tafsir, and Ayyuqi's poem Varqa and Gulshah as codicological materials.

The period of the Mongol Empire and the Ilkhanids (Hulaguids) (1256–1335) marked a new stage in the processes of cultural transfer in the Islamic East. For the systematic analysis of the integration of book culture, scholarship, and the educational system during this period, particularly the activities of the Rab'-i Rashidi academic complex established in the city of Tabriz by the Grand Vizier and renowned historian Rashid al-Din, the original waqf document relating to this institution—Waqf-nāma-yi Rab'-i Rashidi, preserved in the National Library of Iran—serves as a primary historical source. This unique document constitutes not only the principal source for studying the economic and legal foundations of the complex but also the most reliable evidence for understanding how paper production, manuscript copying, translation, and the processes of cultural transfer were organized at the state level during that period.

Primary written sources dating from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries concerning Amir Timur's interest in the art of manuscript production include the works of Ibn Arabshah, Dust Muhammad, and Qazi Ahmad Qumi. In addition, for the study of the book arts of the Timurid period, the two-volume compilation containing the Shahnameh and the Garshaspnameh, copied under the patronage of Prince Pir Muhammad, as well as the folios of the Qur'an manuscript copied by Umar Aqta, were employed as historical sources.

In examining the history of the search for Amir Timur's library in Samarkand and its manuscript collections, the travel accounts, official reports, and scholarly publications of researchers such as E. Meyendorff, P. I. Demaison, P. S. Savelyev, Ármin Vámbéry, A. L. Kun, Eugene Schuyler, and Napoleon Paul Ney were utilized. Within the framework of the historiographical analysis of the library, archival materials including reports published in Petrogradskie Vedomosti and Beilage zur Allgemeinen Zeitung (1844), Turkestanskies Vedomosti (1870 and 1911), as well as articles by D. N. Logofet, were examined. Furthermore, in verifying hypotheses concerning the subsequent fate of the library, materials published in the 19 February 1966 issue of the newspaper Sovetskaya Kultura, together with the archaeological reports contained therein, were subjected to analysis.

In order to provide an objective evaluation of the available materials, elucidate their content, and formulate well-grounded scholarly conclusions, the study employed

a set of systematic research methods. The codicological and textual analysis method made it possible to conduct a comprehensive examination of the material and technical characteristics of manuscript monuments. In particular, the quality characteristics of Samarkand and Chinese paper, the specific features of the use of parchment, and the evolution of book formats (the vertical orientation of books in the tenth and eleventh centuries, title pages decorated with geometric ornaments, and leather bindings with wooden boards) were identified. Furthermore, the historical stages in the development of scripts such as Kufic, Hijazi, and Nasta'liq, together with their palaeographical characteristics, were analyzed using this method.

The influence of the intellectual heritage of the Ilkhanids (particularly the experience of Rab'-i Rashidi), the Jalayirids, and the Muzaffarids on the formation of the centralized manuscript production system and the administrative organization of royal libraries under Amir Temur and the Timurid state was comparatively analyzed through the methodological framework of cultural transfer and institutional continuity. This approach made it possible to conceptually substantiate that, following the collapse of the Muzaffarid dynasty (1393), its rich traditions of manuscript production and valuable manuscript collections were transferred to Samarkand, where they served as a ready-made intellectual and artistic resource base.

Within the framework of investigating the genesis and artistic language of the Timurid school of miniature painting, early illustrated manuscripts (for example, Varqa and Gulshah) and the spatial organization, compositional principles, and perspective techniques characteristic of Chinese pictorial art as reflected in Ilkhanid miniatures were comparatively examined. At the same time, the continuity of these artistic traditions with the pre-Islamic visual heritage of Central Asia, particularly the mural paintings of Sogdiana and Panjikent, was comprehensively analyzed using this methodological approach.

The various hypotheses advanced in the periodical press and historiography of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries concerning the subsequent fate of Amir Temur's library were critically evaluated through source-based analysis and compared with the results of the archaeological expedition organized by the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan in 1963, as well as with the scholarly investigations conducted by A.

Khatipov, Associate Professor of Samarkand State University, regarding the library's treasure.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The history of paper production technology, which constituted the material foundation of manuscript production during the Timurid period, has been studied as a distinct scholarly field within codicological and source-critical research. In demonstrating the exceptional quality of Samarkand paper and its role in the processes of cultural transfer throughout the Islamic world, the memoirs of the renowned calligrapher Ibn al-Bawwab (d. 1022) concerning the restoration of the folios of the Holy Qur'an written in the hand of the Baghdadi calligrapher Ibn Muqla (885–940) are of particular significance. This testimony indicates that Samarkand paper had already achieved global recognition in the early Middle Ages and was highly valued within the manuscript and library tradition of the Islamic East. Describing his search for original paper in libraries, Ibn al-Bawwab recorded:

“I searched through libraries for a paper similar to that of the Qur'an in my possession. Exquisitely fine and incomparable ancient papers from Samarkand and China were found in abundance in the libraries. I eventually found the paper I needed and completed the missing juz'.” (Lentz, T. W., & Lowry, G., 1989, p. 26.)

In historiography, this source testimony has served as a principal argument in the studies of such internationally recognized scholars as Jonathan Bloom (Bloom, J., 2001; Bloom, J., 2006), Helen Loveday (Loveday, H., 2001; Loveday, H., 2002), Geneviève Humbert (Humbert, G., 2001; Humbert, G., 2002; Humbert, G., & Vernay-Nouri, A., 2006), and J.-L. Estève (Estève, J.-L., 2001a; Estève, J.-L., 2001b; Estève, J.-L., 2003; Estève, J.-L., 2004). On the basis of this evidence, these scholars have demonstrated that as early as the tenth century, Samarkand paper was preserved and esteemed in the central libraries of the Abbasid Caliphate as the highest standard of quality and was used in the restoration of the rarest manuscript treasures.

From a historiographical perspective, the analysis of this codicological evidence demonstrates that when Amir Temur established the central library in Samarkand at the end of the fourteenth century, it was not merely a repository for completed books but also a highly developed institution dedicated to the revival and further advancement of the region's long-established traditions of high-quality paper production and manuscript

culture. The library of Amir Temur and the manuscripts assembled within it did not represent a phenomenon that emerged spontaneously; rather, they were the culmination of the evolution of the art of manuscript production and codicological development that had taken shape in the Islamic East between the eighth and thirteenth centuries.

It is well known that the Arabic script, one of the strongest bonds uniting all Muslims, has served not only as a means of transmitting information but also as a universal medium for artistic expression and ornamentation. The elevated status of this script is directly associated with Islamic doctrine, first and foremost because the Holy Qur'an was revealed and transmitted through this writing system.

Source-critical analysis demonstrates that the earliest surviving manuscript copies of the Holy Qur'an, dating from the eighth and ninth centuries, were written in the early forms of the Arabic script, namely Kufic and Hijazi, on specially prepared parchment. The Great Langar Qur'an, regarded as one of the most precious treasures of the history and culture of Uzbekistan, was likewise written on carefully prepared animal skin (parchment), and its folios measure 53 × 35 cm. The text preserves the archaic characteristics of the Kufic–Hijazi script (Rezvan E., 1998; Ishmatbekov, H., 2023). However, in discussing the monuments of this period (eighth–ninth centuries), it should be emphasized that they do not yet display distinct local or regional characteristics that would indicate the specific part of the Islamic East in which they were produced. During this period, a common Islamic manuscript tradition predominated. Начало формы

The conducted research demonstrates that it was precisely during the tenth and eleventh centuries that profound qualitative and codicological transformations took place in the manuscript tradition of the Islamic world. During this period, the vertical book format became firmly established, manuscripts acquired elaborately decorated title pages adorned with geometric designs and refined ornamental motifs, and folios began to be bound in leather covers reinforced with wooden boards. Among the finest and most aesthetically accomplished examples of manuscript production from this period are the manuscripts of the works of Ibn Sina (980–1037), particularly the copies of his medical and philosophical treatises transcribed in 1052.

In addition, the manuscript of Abu Ja'far Muhammad al-Tabari's (838–923) *Tafsir* (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des manuscrits, Supp. Pers. 1610), prepared between 1210 and 1225 for the personal library of Abu al-Qasim Harun ibn Ja'far Dindon, the vizier of Muzaffar al-Din Uzbek, ruler of the Eldiguzid State

(1136–1225) in Azerbaijan and Northern Iraq, and particularly its surviving twelfth volume, is regarded in modern source studies and codicology as one of the finest classical masterpieces of the Oriental manuscript tradition prior to the Mongol period (Mikhail B. Piotrovsky, & John Vrieze, 1999, p. 115). When Amir Temur established the central library in Samarkand, he brought together within a single center the rich manuscript traditions and collections of the major cultural centers of Iraq, Azerbaijan, Shiraz, and Khurasan.

In investigating the genesis of the manuscript production policy and the administrative system of royal libraries under Amir Temur and the Timurids, the processes of cultural transfer during the period of the Mongol Empire and the Ilkhanids (Hulaguids) (1256–1335) have been regarded as a principal methodological approach. Scholars such as Thomas W. Lentz, Glenn D. Lowry, Sheila S. Blair, and Thomas T. Allsen (Lentz, T. W., & Lowry, G., 1989; Blair, S., 1994; Allsen, T., 2001) emphasize that, although the Mongol invasions inflicted enormous political, social, and cultural devastation upon Central Asia and the Middle East, they also led, on the one hand, to the migration of craftsmen and calligraphers to different regions, thereby facilitating the wider dissemination of the art of manuscript production, and, on the other hand, to the strengthening of direct cultural and technological contacts between the Islamic world and China within the unified geopolitical space of the Mongol Empire.

The activities of Rashid al-Din (1247–1318), Grand Vizier, physician, and renowned historian under the Ilkhanid rulers Ghazan Khan (1271–1304) and Öljaitü Khan (1278–1316), are regarded as a turning point in the development of the art of the book. Source-critical analysis demonstrates that Rashid al-Din was profoundly influenced by the achievements of Chinese scholarship, writing, and pictorial art, which resulted in an increasing demand within the centers of the Mongol state for richly illustrated historical and literary manuscripts. Whereas, prior to this period, illustrations in the Islamic world had been employed primarily in scholarly works on astronomy, botany, and medicine following the traditions of Greek visual culture, from the Ilkhanid period onward a new tradition emerged of incorporating illustrations depicting dramatic narrative scenes directly into the text.

While Oriental scholarship of the mid-twentieth century observed that these early miniatures possessed limited vitality and relatively restrained artistic expression, twenty-first-century cognitive art-historical research has demonstrated that the integration of

large-scale epic narratives with the spatial organization and perspective techniques characteristic of Chinese pictorial art—including the simultaneous representation of scenes from elevated and lateral viewpoints—provided the direct artistic foundation for the miniature school of the Timurid Renaissance (Ettinghausen, R., 1977; Gray, B., 1977).

The activities of the major educational complex established by Rashid al-Din in Tabriz, widely known as Rab'-i Rashidi, are particularly emphasized in historiography as having served as the original institutional model for the organizational efforts of Amir Temur and the Timurid rulers in the sphere of manuscript production. In the comparative analysis of the Timurid royal library with the integrated structure of Rab'-i Rashidi, which included a manuscript production workshop, a library, a hospital, a Qur'an center, and residential quarters, the surviving waqf document of Rab'-i Rashidi (preserved as a manuscript in the National Library of Iran) constitutes an important primary source.

Studies (Blair, S., 1986; Allsen, T., 2001; Hillenbrand, R., 2002; Pfeiffer, J. (ed.), 2014) have analyzed the information contained in this document concerning the preparation of manuscripts in the Ilkhanid library according to a coordinated system, in compliance with a special state directive and on a planned basis. On this foundation, these scholars advance the theoretical conclusion that the legal and administrative organization of libraries and manuscript production centers in the Timurid state emerged as a result of the cultural transfer of this historical institutional experience.

In the studies of Thomas W. Lentz, David Roxburgh, B. V. Norik, and I. Sturkenboom devoted to Oriental studies and codicology (Lentz, T. W., & Lowry, G., 1989; Roxburgh, D., 2005; Norik, B., 2011; Sturkenboom, I., 2018), the influence of the manuscript heritage of the Jalayirids (1336–1432) and the Muzaffarids (1314–1393), which succeeded the Ilkhanids, on the formation of the centralized manuscript production system of the Timurid state has been examined. These scholars note that although the Rab'-i Rashidi complex ceased its activities and was plundered after the death of Rashid al-Din in 1336, the traditions of manuscript production continued consistently under Jalayirid patronage during the late fourteenth century. According to the conclusions of contemporary art-historical research, the development of Timurid manuscript production and miniature painting was directly founded upon the work

of Jalayirid artists, such as Abu'l-Hayy and Junayd al-Baghdadi, and their aesthetic achievements.

In the scholarly literature, the period following Rashid al-Din is regarded as a distinct field of research, demonstrating that during the reigns of the Jalayirid rulers Sultan Shaykh Uways Khan (1338–1374) and Ghiyath al-Din Sultan Ahmad Khan (1382–1420), the art of manuscript production developed intensively in the state capitals of Tabriz and Baghdad, as well as in the cultural centers of Shiraz, Yazd, and Kerman, which formed part of the Muzaffarid state. Historiographical analysis indicates that the masters working under the patronage of the Jalayirid and Muzaffarid dynasties made an unparalleled contribution to the development of subsequent traditions of manuscript production and calligraphy, particularly to the artistic codification of the Nasta'liq script. One of the most significant conceptual conclusions derived from these studies is that after the Muzaffarid state was conquered by Amir Temur during his campaign in southern Iran in 1393, its centuries-old manuscript heritage, valuable manuscript collections, and leading schools of master craftsmen passed into the possession of the Timurid state and served in Samarkand as a ready intellectual and artistic resource base for the flourishing of the culture of the Timurid Renaissance.

In the history of the Oriental book arts, the reign of Amir Temur (1336–1405) and the Timurid period (1370–1507) constitute a distinct stage. The emergence of a powerful centralized state in Central Asia during the late fourteenth and throughout the fifteenth century contributed to economic development, the restoration of caravan routes, the growth of craftsmanship, and the overall cultural and intellectual flourishing of the region. During this period, the production and decoration of manuscript books, together with the establishment of libraries, became matters of state importance within the cultural life of Mawarannahr and Khurasan. Начало формы

The contribution of the highly skilled craftsmen brought to Samarkand from the late fourteenth century onward was invaluable to the development of Amir Temur's library and its manuscript production. According to historical sources, during the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries the painters of the ruler's library were headed by the renowned master Abdulhay of Baghdad. In his accounts, the historian Dust Muhammad (d. 1560), who studied the lives of fourteenth-century painters, emphasizes that even after the death of Khwaja Abdulhay, many artists continued to imitate his school and artistic style (Kostygova G., 1965, p. 174).

From the perspective of source studies of the period, the work *Gulistan-i Hunar* by the historian Qazi Ahmad Qumi (b. 1546) is of particular importance. The author describes Amir Temur's interest in monumental manuscripts through the activities of the celebrated calligrapher Umar Aqta. The enormous copy of the Holy Qur'an produced by the calligrapher for the ruler, each of whose letters measured half a gaz (gaz—a unit of length equal to 0.71 meters), represents one of the highest achievements of the manuscript art of the Timurid period. From the middle of the eighteenth century onward, this remarkable manuscript became known in scholarly circles as the Baysunghur Qur'an (Polosin, V., 2008, pp. 34–51), and its surviving folios are today preserved in various prestigious collections around the world (James, D., 1992, p. 22).

The works of the contemporary historian Ibn Arabshah (1392–1450) are of exceptional value for the study of the manuscript culture of the Timurid period and the intellectual potential of Amir Temur's library. In describing the highly developed cultural environment of the ruler's court, the author specifically mentions the masters of manuscript production Ibn Bandgir, Abdulqadir, and Taj al-Din Salmani as among the most distinguished and accomplished calligraphers of the period (Ibn Arabshah, 1992, p. 86).Начало формы

During the same period, the distinguished calligrapher Khwaja Mir Ali Tabrizi (1330–1404) created a new script—Nasta'liq—based on the Naskh and Ta'liq scripts, bringing about a fundamental transformation in the art of manuscript production. This elegant style of writing, which was soon acclaimed by art historians and specialists as the “bride of the scripts,” subsequently became the principal script for copying poetic and historical manuscripts.

Among the earliest artistic and illuminated manuscripts that enriched the collection of Amir Temur's library during his reign (1370–1405) is the celebrated two-volume manuscript prepared under the patronage of his grandson, Prince Pir Muhammad (1374–1407). The first volume (Dublin, The Chester Beatty Library, Ms. 114) consists of Abu al-Qasim Firdawsi's world-renowned *Shahnameh*, copied in Shiraz by Muhammad Sa'id Hafiz al-Qari in AH 800 (AD 1397–1398) (James, D., 1981, p. 14). The second volume (London, The British Library) contains some of the finest masterpieces of medieval Persian literature, including Asadi Tusi's *Garshasnameh*, Ahmad Tabrizi's *Shahanshahnameh*, Hakim Azari Tusi's *Bahmannameh*, and Hakim Iranshah ibn Abu'l-Hay's *Qushnameh*, comprising historical and heroic epics (Rieu, C., 1894, No. 201).

This fact demonstrates the remarkable artistic and generic richness of the Timurid royal library.

During the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries, historiography witnessed the emergence of substantial scholarly research devoted to the manuscript culture of the Amir Temur period, particularly the history of the library established by the ruler and the manuscript heritage created during this era. The present section analyzes, from a historiographical perspective, the extent to which the history of these libraries and their manuscript collections has been investigated.

Amir Temur established a major royal library in the state capital, Samarkand, and paid particular attention to the formation of its collections. For this library, finely illuminated manuscripts by renowned authors were purchased from booksellers and private collectors throughout Mawarannahr. In addition, workshops attached to the library were organized on a permanent basis for the copying of manuscripts (calligraphy) and the binding of books. Furthermore, during his military campaigns, priceless manuscript treasures were brought to Samarkand from the ancient cultural centers of Iran, Asia Minor (Turkey), India, Iraq, and Syria, including the cities of Istanbul, Bursa, Isfahan, Hamadan, Shiraz, Baghdad, Basra, and Damascus. This unique collection was later inherited by Mirzo Ulugh Beg (1394–1449), the ruler and eminent astronomer, and served as the foundation for his scientific academy.

The powerful centralized empire founded by Amir Temur initiated not only an era of political and economic prosperity but also a period of remarkable cultural and intellectual advancement. One of the most significant components of this cultural development was the establishment of state-sponsored manuscript collections and libraries. The royal library founded by Amir Temur in Samarkand and the manuscript heritage preserved within it have become the subject of separate and systematic scholarly investigations in the historiography of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Orientalists who were already aware of the existence of a major manuscript collection formerly belonging to Amir Temur attempted to locate it. Among them were E. Meyendorff (1795–1863) (Meyendorff, G. K., 1824), P. I. Demaison (1807–1873) and I. V. Vitkevich (1808–1839) (Demaison, P. I., & Vitkevich, I. V., 1983), P. S. Savelyev (1814–1859) (Savelyev, P., 1836), Ármin Vámbéry (1832–1913) (Vámbéry, A., 2003), A. L. Kun (1840–1888) (Kun, A., 1874b), and the English traveler Eugene Schuyler

(Schuyler, E., 1873). They recorded their efforts to discover the library in their travel diaries, official reports, and scholarly publications.

One of the earliest examples demonstrating the interest of Tsarist Russia in Amir Temur's library was an article published in 1844 in the newspaper *Petrogradskie Vedomosti* (*Izvestie o drevnikh rukopisyakh v Samarkande*, 1844). The article reported that the French edition of the book *History of Armenia* contained information claiming that Amir Temur's library had been discovered in Samarkand, while emphasizing that this report should be approached with due scholarly caution.

According to the passage cited in the book, an Armenian from Isfahan named Katkadur, acting as a representative of the East India Company, first traveled to Afghanistan and subsequently to Samarkand. There, he succeeded in gaining the confidence of a prominent religious scholar, which enabled him to gain access to Amir Temur's library, where he reportedly saw numerous books of various sizes, including a copy of the *History of Armenia*.

The French edition of *History of Armenia* further relates that, after departing from Samarkand and arriving in Constantinople, Katkadur recounted his observations to his compatriot Ioann Dadian. It is stated that Dadian presented all the information in detail and emphasized the reliability of Katkadur's account. On the basis of Dadian's testimony, Katkadur's impressions of Amir Temur's library were also published in 1844 in the newspaper *Beilage zur Allgemeinen Zeitung*, issued in Augsburg (*Beilage zur Allgemeinen Zeitung*, 1844).

The article expresses skepticism regarding the reliability of Katkadur's account, arguing that the Orientalist G. Khanikov, who visited Samarkand in 1842, made no mention whatsoever of the library. The author further contends that the manuscript described by Katkadur as a book measuring two arshins was, in fact, the Uthmanic Mushaf. At the same time, the article calls upon travelers visiting Mawarannahr to pay particular attention to the ancient and rare books that might still have survived in the city. It encourages the search for such manuscripts with the following statement:

“The centuries have not destroyed everything. Shahrukh Mirza, the son of Amir Temur, patronized the art of manuscript production, and even the Sultans of Egypt sent envoys requesting books from him. The great library assembled by him and his father in Bukhara and Samarkand could hardly have disappeared entirely over the course of four centuries. Travelers prepared to investigate the country, such as Katkadur, are certain to

discover here an exceptionally rich historical, archaeological, and literary heritage for scholarship.”

These remarks were intended to encourage researchers engaged in the search for rare historical sources. Hermann Vámbéry traveled to Central Asia in 1863–1864 disguised as a dervish. He likewise devoted attention to the question of Amir Temur’s library. He wrote that, despite all his efforts, he was unable to discover any trace of the Greek and Armenian library that Amir Temur had allegedly brought to Samarkand, adding that his interest in this search had been inspired by the accounts of a cleric named Hajtador, who had traveled from Kabul to Samarkand (Vámbéry, A., 2003, p. 102).

As is well known, following the incorporation of Samarkand into the Russian Empire, the Zarafshan District was established in 1868, with Samarkand designated as its administrative center. The Tsarist authorities continued the search for Amir Temur’s long-lost library. Consequently, one of the distinctive directions of research during the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century may be regarded as the investigation of the traces of Amir Temur’s royal library.

Subsequently, according to reports and articles published in the newspaper *Turkestanskije Vedomosti*, Armenians residing in Turkey submitted a petition in 1868 through the Russian ambassador in Constantinople, General-Adjutant P. N. Ignatiev, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Governor-Generalship of Turkestan, requesting assistance in locating the Armenian manuscripts allegedly preserved in Amir Temur’s library in Samarkand. Following this appeal, a series of articles and reports devoted to the search for Amir Temur’s library were published in *Turkestanskije Vedomosti* (*Drevnie rukopisi v Samarkande. Biblioteka Tamerlana*, 1870; *Armjanskije predaniya o biblioteke Tamerlana*, 1870; Logofet, D., 1911).

When the Orientalist A. L. Kun (1840–1888) arrived in Turkestan in 1868, one of his principal assignments was to search for the lost library of Amir Temur. The article resulting from his investigations (Kun, A., 1874b, pp. 405–406) was written as a response to the inquiries made by Armenians residing in Turkey. In this publication, he states that, according to tradition, there had existed in Samarkand a rich library established by Amir Temur, containing Greek, Latin, Syriac, Chaldean, and Armenian manuscripts brought there by the conqueror. Although no trace of this library had survived by his own time, Kun nevertheless considered the tradition to have a historical

basis, explaining it by Amir Temur's repeated military campaigns into Armenia. He also refers to the petition submitted by Armenians living in Turkey through the Russian ambassador in Constantinople, General-Adjutant P. N. Ignatiev, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Governor-Generalship of Turkestan, requesting the discovery of the Armenian manuscripts preserved in Amir Temur's library in Samarkand. In this connection, he identifies the manuscript of particular interest to the Armenian petitioners as the chronicle written by Marabas Godin.

According to A. L. Kun, the renowned Armenian historian Movses Khorenatsi (410–490), in his work *History of Armenia*, relates that when the Persian prince Vagharshak ascended the Armenian throne, he instructed the Assyrian scholar Marabas Godin (Marabas Catina—a historian who is believed to have lived approximately during the second half of the second century or between the late third and early fourth centuries) to collect all Chaldean and Persian sources that could serve as the basis for writing the history of the Armenian people. The chronicles of Marabas subsequently became the principal source for Movses Khorenatsi's *History*. According to this tradition, during his campaign in Armenia, Amir Temur brought the manuscripts of Marabas, together with many other manuscripts, to Samarkand, where they were preserved in his library for a long period.

The investigations conducted by A. L. Kun did not produce the desired results. Nevertheless, he expressed the view that perhaps not everything from Amir Temur's library had disappeared, pointing out that manuscripts such as *Tarikh-i Narshakhi* and *Tarikh-i Mir Baraka* were still preserved among the local population. On this basis, he expressed hope that the Armenian manuscripts of Marabas Godin might one day also be discovered.

At the conclusion of his article, A. L. Kun emphasizes that the Armenian chronicles contain no reliable information concerning Armenian manuscripts preserved in Amir Temur's library. He further notes that Tovma Metsobetsi (1378–1448), who described Amir Temur's campaigns in Armenia, makes no reference to such manuscripts. According to Kun, only the Armenian historian Mikayel Chamchian (1738–1823) states in his work that Amir Temur gathered all Armenian and Persian books and transported them to Samarkand, where they were kept in a tower and could be consulted only with special permission. However, Kun points out that Chamchian provides no authoritative source to substantiate this claim.

In another article, A. L. Kun regarded the Uthmanic Qur'an as the finest ornament of Amir Temur's library (Kun, A., 1874a, pp. 401–404). He states that this copy of the Holy Qur'an had been concealed when the Russians captured Samarkand, was later discovered in the Khoja Ahrar Mosque, and presented to the Minister of Public Education. According to Kun, the imams of the Khoja Ahrar Mosque offered to purchase the manuscript for 125 rubles, but in 1869 it was acquired by the military officer Serov, acting on the orders of Major General Abramov, head of the Zarafshan District, and was first sent to Tashkent.

According to A. L. Kun, based on information he obtained from Mulla Abdujalil and Mufti Mulla Mu'ini at the Khoja Ahrar Mosque, Khoja Ahrar Vali had requested the manuscript from the son of the Caliph of Rum after curing him of a serious illness. Thereafter, Khoja Ahrar's prestige increased even further, and after residing in Tashkent for some time, he brought the manuscript with him when he moved to Samarkand.

When Konstantin Kaufman showed the manuscript to Yahyakhoja, the representative of the Emir of Bukhara, the latter confirmed that this Qur'an was the only surviving manuscript from Amir Temur's library. A. L. Kun further wrote that the remaining books of the library had perished as a result of the numerous bloody wars and conflicts that had taken place in the region.

The first American diplomat and journalist to visit Central Asia, Eugene Schuyler (1840–1890), likewise expressed his conviction that Amir Temur's library had survived. In his article on Central Asia, published in the British journal *The Athenaeum* in 1873, he wrote:

“I have reason to believe that the famous library of Timur still exists. There are many books in the Emir's treasury written in languages unfamiliar to the Bukharan mullahs; consequently, no attention is paid to them. Such books also exist in Qarshi.” (Schuyler, E., 1873:431).

These statements became the subject of discussion in publications of Tsarist Russia. Accordingly, issue No. 44 of the newspaper *Turkestanskije Vedomosti* in 1873 published a report reprinted from the newspaper *Birzha* (*Biblioteka Timura*, 1873). The report stated that the distinguished scholar Schuyler, who was then in Bukhara, had published an article in the London periodical *The Athenaeum*, in which he advanced the view that the famous library of Amir Temur still existed. It further noted that among the valuable books belonging to the Emir of Bukhara there were ancient manuscripts;

however, unfortunately, because the Emir had departed for Qarshi, Schuyler was unable to examine them. The Schuyler mentioned in the report is Eugene Schuyler.

In 1888, the grandson of Napoleon, the French officer, writer, and traveler Napoléon Paul Ney (1849–1900), published in Paris his three-volume work entitled *En chemin de fer dans l'Asie Centrale* (By Railway to Central Asia) (Napoléon N., 1888). Three chapters of this work are devoted to Samarkand. While describing the city's natural environment, daily life, and architectural monuments, the author devoted particular attention to its ancient library. He incorporated into his book all the written and oral information that he had collected during his journey.

Discussing Amir Temur's conquests of Persia and Armenia, Napoléon Paul Ney argues that the ruler of Central Asia was by no means a tyrant but rather a sovereign who appreciated the value of scholarship and culture. For this reason, he writes, Amir Temur instructed his soldiers to treat the material heritage of the conquered peoples with particular care. According to Ney, Amir Temur assembled thousands of manuscripts in Persian, Armenian, Georgian, Syriac, Greek, and even Latin, all of which were transported under reliable protection to Samarkand. The French traveler presents in considerable detail the information known to him regarding the fate of the legendary library. He further states that Amir Temur's library became even richer during the reign of Mirzo Ulugh Beg. The author recounts the story of an Armenian scholar, fluent in dozens of the languages of the peoples of the East, who, disguised as a Muslim shaykh, traveled from Isfahan to Samarkand during the reign of Mirzo Ulugh Beg and became acquainted with the multilingual manuscripts preserved in the library. Although Ney expresses doubts regarding the authenticity of this account, he nevertheless maintains that various scientific expeditions sent by the Russian government also confirmed this tradition (Napoléon N., 1888, pp. 407–409).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the history of Amir Temur's library became the subject of investigation by D. N. Logofet (Logofet, D., 1911). Relying on the information of the historian Kamal al-Din Abdurazzaq, he reported that Temurbek's library had suffered severe damage during the uprising of 1448. According to his account, the great royal library of Amir Temur in Samarkand contained rare manuscripts in Latin, Greek, Armenian, Arabic, Persian, and other languages. After Shaybani Khan conquered Samarkand, the books preserved there were transferred to Bukhara in 1580. Subsequently, in 1860, they were moved to the city of Qarshi. Referring to the opinions

of General Jurabek, D. N. Logofet, who had a particular interest in the life of Amir Temur, maintained that the library in Qarshi contained rare manuscripts in Chinese, Uyghur, Arabic, Pashto, and Persian, and suggested that these books might have belonged to Temurbek's library. He argued that this possibility should be verified without delay.

According to D. N. Logofet, in 1911 an unsigned article was published in the newspaper *Turkestanskije Vedomosti*. Drawing upon the conclusions of the Moscow feuilletonist P. Vovchenko, the article asserted that "Temurbek loved books immensely and therefore established the largest library in the world. Fearing that this cultural heritage might fall into the hands of unworthy heirs, he concealed it in an unknown cave. When goodness ultimately triumphs on earth, these books will be brought to light."

At the beginning of the 1960s, articles by historians and local historians widely circulated the view that Ulugh Beg's library had not been taken to Afghanistan, but had instead been hidden in the mountains of Qashqadarya. It was even claimed that its location was in Hazrat Bashir village, situated in the upper reaches of the Qashqadarya River, where the books had allegedly been preserved in a specially constructed underground chamber. In the spring of 1963, the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan dispatched a group of archaeologists from Samarkand to this region. The expedition included the scholars S. Kabanov, K. Shakhurin, A. Askarov, and the laboratory assistant A. Kobzev. In addition, A. Juvonmardiev and T. Negmatov, researchers from the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan, were sent to Hazrat Bashir village to examine any epigraphic monuments and historical books that might be discovered.

After investigating the local cemetery, which had been surrounded by pistachio groves for centuries, the researchers discovered several ancient graves. One belonged to the saint Hazrat Bashir, while another was identified as the tomb of Amir Sayyid al-Abtari, an influential shaykh of the region during the Timurid period. Several other gravestones could not be identified. The archaeologists also examined a chillakhona (a retreat intended for forty days of worship) and the ruins of an eighteenth-century mosque located within the village itself. However, the principal focus of their investigation was Niyaztepa Hill, beneath whose underground vaulted chambers the legendary library was believed to have been concealed.

These investigations were based on the accounts of local elders, Shomurod Sharipov, aged seventy, and Malik Tolibov. They recalled that in their childhood they had seen

a well covered by a large stone, from which an underground passage led to Niyaztepa Hill. It was also established that the amateur local historian A. Khatipov, an associate professor in the Department of Mathematics at Samarkand State University, had visited the site before the archaeologists. He carried out excavations extending approximately 150 meters, but succeeded in finding neither the well nor the underground passages.

This subject was subsequently addressed in the article “The Mystery of Ulugh Beg’s Library” (*Zagadka biblioteki Ulugbeka*) by Konstantin Runov, published in the newspaper *Sovetskaya Kultura* on 19 February 1966 (Runov, K., 1966). According to the article, the Library of Pergamon was exceptionally rich, and during Amir Temur’s campaign to Asia Minor in 1402, when he arrived in the city of Brusa (Bursa), situated near the ruins of ancient Pergamon, he loaded the library’s books onto camels and transported them to Samarkand. Scholars from the city of Brusa are said to have accompanied the books during their transfer. Thereafter, however, the manuscripts disappeared without a trace. According to the article, for three centuries scholars had been engaged in searching for these books.

The article further states that, during the 1930s, three elderly men wearing turbans in the city of Kitab claimed that Tilsimtepa had once been the site of an observatory belonging to one of Ulugh Beg’s disciples. Since numerous rare manuscripts had been discovered in the Kitab region, the article argues that the testimony of these elderly informants deserved careful investigation. At the same time, specialists from the Institute of History and archaeologists of the Academy of Sciences maintained that searching for manuscripts in Hazrat Bashir village was futile, considering the ruins of Niyaztepa to be Sogdian palaces dating to the fifth–sixth centuries. The article concludes by stating that the mystery of Ulugh Beg’s library still awaits its researchers.

The publication of this article generated considerable resonance within the scholarly community. In response to this conceptual initiative, the editorial board of the newspaper published an extensive discussion among specialists in the field together with the official opinions of prominent scholars (Bolshov, D. (ed.), 1966). A comparative analysis of these historical and journalistic sources demonstrates that, within Soviet historiography and Oriental studies of that period, scholarly debates concerning the fate of Ulugh Beg’s library and the subsequent destiny of its manuscripts gradually crystallized around two principal scientific hypotheses.

According to the first line of interpretation, the distinguished historian of mathematics and astronomy, Professor B. A. Rosenfeld, regarded the probability that

the library had survived as extremely high. He argued that even eight years before the official inauguration of Ulugh Beg's observatory, accomplished scholars had already been working there, copying manuscripts and preparing maps. In his view, during the period of political upheaval these scholars may have concealed the books within the underground structures of Samarkand. This hypothesis was actively supported by A. E. Khatipov, Associate Professor at Samarkand State University. He attributed the failure of more than thirty years of searches for the library to a methodological error: archaeological investigations had concentrated primarily on ancient settlements and the excavations at Panjakent, while insufficient attention had been devoted to Ulugh Beg's treasures. According to Khatipov's theory, Ali Qushchi managed to conceal the books in a secure underground location before leaving Samarkand.

According to the second line of interpretation, Dr. A. M. Belenitsky, head of the Panjakent Archaeological Expedition, approached the question from a considerably more skeptical and realistic perspective. He emphasized that Ulugh Beg was not only a distinguished scholar but also a ruler who had many determined opponents among the religious ulama. A. M. Belenitsky proposed that the search for the library should not be confined solely to Samarkand, but should also extend to other regions to which it might have been removed. In this regard, both he and the researcher D. G. Voronovsky advanced the hypothesis that the most valuable part of the library had been taken out of Samarkand by Ali Qushchi, Ulugh Beg's principal disciple, astronomer, and mathematician. They concluded that, following Ali Qushchi's migration to Istanbul, the scholarly heritage of Samarkand was gradually absorbed into the collections of libraries in other countries.

In the "Responses and Comments" (*Otvety i otkliki*) section of the newspaper, A. Grigoryan and G. Mamedbeyli, Doctors of Physical and Mathematical Sciences, synthesized Konstantin Runov's articles published on 19 February and 22 October 1966, together with the scholarly debate that followed, thereby placing the discussion within an academic framework (Grigoryan, A., Mamedbeyli, G., 1966). While confirming that reliable historical sources attest to the existence of extensive book collections in Samarkand during the periods of Amir Temur and Ulugh Beg, they emphasized that, at present, no single hypothesis could be regarded as definitive or given priority over the others.

CONCLUSION

The history of the royal library established by Amir Temur in Samarkand, which subsequently served as the foundation for Mirzo Ulugh Beg's Scientific Academy, together with the composition of its collections and its mysterious fate, constitutes one of the most significant conceptual problems in the history of Eastern civilization. Based on source-critical, codicological, and historiographical analyses, the present study advances a number of scholarly conclusions.

First, the enrichment of the collections of the Samarkand royal library was the direct result of the cultural transfer of the manuscript traditions and institutional experience developed under the Ilkhanids, Jalayirids, and Muzaffarids. In particular, following the collapse of the Muzaffarid dynasty in 1393, its rich manuscript traditions and unique collections of manuscripts became a ready intellectual and artistic resource that contributed to the flourishing of the culture of the Timurid Renaissance in Samarkand.

The masterpieces of Eastern manuscript culture—the Great Langar Qur'an, al-Tabari's Tafsir, and the epic poem Warqa and Gulshah—played a decisive role in shaping the genesis of the Timurid school of manuscript production and miniature painting. Likewise, the phenomenon of the ancient Samarkand paper, which from the early medieval period had been regarded in the central libraries of the Abbasid Caliphate as the highest standard of manuscript quality, reached a new technological and aesthetic stage of development within Amir Temur's Academy.

The search for the library during the period preceding throughout the era of Tsarist rule attracted the attention of international diplomatic and scholarly circles, including E. Meyendorff, Ármín Vámbéry, A. L. Kun, Eugene Schuyler, Napoléon Paul Ney, and D. N. Logofet. During this period, the first historical and mythological hypotheses emerged concerning the fate of the ancient Armenian chronicles allegedly preserved in the library (the manuscripts of Marabas Godin), together with the Greek and Latin sources and the Uthmanic Mushaf, regarded as the principal treasure of Amir Temur's collection.

At the beginning of the 1960s, hypotheses suggesting that the library had been concealed in the Qashqadarya Mountains or within the underground vaulted chambers of Niyaztepa led to the establishment of a special archaeological expedition by the Academy of Sciences in 1963. Although the excavations conducted by the scholars and Associate Professor A. Khatipov failed to uncover any physical evidence, these

investigations stimulated a broad scholarly debate following the publication of K. Runov's article in the newspaper *Sovetskaya Kultura* in 1966. As a result of these discussions, two principal scholarly interpretations concerning the fate of the library emerged: the autochthonous preservation hypothesis, advanced by B. A. Rosenfeld and A. E. Khatipov, and the migration–evacuation hypothesis, according to which the most valuable part of the library was removed to Istanbul by Ali Qushchi, as proposed by A. M. Belenitsky and D. G. Voronovsky.

The mystery of the libraries of Amir Temur and Mirzo Ulugh Beg should not be approached solely through local geo-archaeological investigations. As convincingly argued by A. Grigoryan and G. Mamedbeyli, this problem should move beyond isolated amateur initiatives and be transformed into a systematic institutional and state-level research project. At the present stage, under the leadership of institutions such as the Center of Islamic Civilization in Uzbekistan and the Academy of Sciences, the comprehensive codicological re-cataloguing of the heritage of the Samarkand school of manuscript production preserved in international collections (Turkey, Iran, and Europe), combined with the application of digital technologies, represents the most promising approach to uncovering the remaining mysteries of this legendary library.

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