

ON THE MANUSCRIPT COPIES AND PUBLICATION OF MIFTAḤ AL-ADL

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Annotation. This study explores the manuscript tradition and modern publication history of Miftaḥ al-Adl, a significant work in Islamic jurisprudence and theology. It examines the extant manuscript copies, their geographical distribution, paleographic features, and textual variations. The research also addresses the editorial practices applied in the preparation of printed editions, highlighting critical issues such as transcription accuracy, commentary inclusion, and the preservation of the author’s original intent. By analyzing the historical transmission of Miftaḥ al-Adl, the study contributes to the broader understanding of Islamic scholarly heritage, manuscript preservation, and the challenges of modern publication of classical Islamic texts.

Key Words: Miftaḥ al-‘Adl, islamic jurisprudence, manuscript tradition, paleography, textual transmission, critical edition, editorial practices, publication history.

INTRODUCTION.

In recent years, increasing attention has been devoted to the study of the invaluable heritage of eminent scholars who have made an outstanding contribution to the development of world science, including intellectuals who emerged from our homeland. Owing to independence, favorable conditions have been created for an objective and unbiased study of the works of our classical scholars. Consequently, efforts have intensified to conduct comprehensive research on the works authored by our ancestors and preserved in various manuscript repositories in Uzbekistan and around the world, to prepare them for publication, and to introduce them into scholarly circulation. In this regard, the Resolutions of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan—Resolution No. PQ-2995 dated May 24, 2017, *“On Measures to Further Improve the System of Preservation, Research, and Promotion of Ancient Written Sources”*; Resolution No. PQ-3074 dated June 20, 2017, *“On the Study of Cultural Heritage of Uzbekistan Located Abroad under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan”*; as well as Resolution No. PQ-4680 dated April 16, 2020, *“On Measures to Radically Improve the System of Training Specialists in Oriental Studies and to Enhance Scientific Potential”*—serve as clear and compelling evidence supporting this view.

MATERIAL AND METHODS.

The study of manuscript sources from the Islamic period in the East is considered one of the priority tasks of the field. During this period, numerous studies have been conducted on the authoritative works of scholars whose contributions were invaluable to the formation of sciences related to various aspects of socio-political and spiritual life. However, many medieval manuscript works remain unexplored and have not yet been introduced into scholarly circulation. Their comprehensive examination, analysis, and research constitute an urgent requirement of the present time. Accordingly, fulfilling state-level objectives such as preserving our rich historical, scientific, and spiritual–intellectual heritage; conducting its systematic scholarly analysis; expanding and deepening research on the legacy of scholars and

thinkers who lived and worked in the territory of present-day Central Asia during the Middle Ages in the fields of history, literature, philosophy, other social sciences, Islamic studies, and theology; and paying particular attention to scientific research aimed at uncovering numerous still-unexplored layers of our national cultural heritage in the areas of textual studies, literary source studies, linguistics, philosophy, and cultural history—falls within the scope of the most pressing and responsible tasks of Uzbek textual scholarship.

From this perspective, during the Timurid period, the fields of textual studies, calligraphy, miniature painting, and literature reached a high level of development. In particular, calligraphy and the writing and illumination of manuscript sources attained the status of a refined art. The Timurid prince Baysunghur Mirza established a school of calligraphy in Herat. Within this school, more than forty calligraphers were actively engaged on a permanent basis, producing manuscript copies of rare and valuable works of classical literature. Following the Timurid era, Uzbek literature is traditionally studied within the framework of the period of the khanates. One of the prominent representatives of the literary milieu of the Bukhara Khanate was ‘Ibadullah Sayyid Poshshokhoja ibn ‘Abdulvahhobkhoja. He was born in 1484 and composed his works under the pen name Khoja. Khoja held various official positions, including that of *sadr*—responsible for the administration, accounting, and supervision of waqf lands—and later served as *shaykh al-Islam*, the highest religious office of the time. He was regarded as one of the influential figures in state administration. Several works by Khoja have come down to us, including *Miftah al-‘Adl*, *Gulzar*, and a number of poetic compositions. For many years, the authorship of *Miftah al-‘Adl* remained unknown.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS.

The earliest information on the narratives of *Miftah al-‘Adl* was included in A. Fitrat’s anthology *Samples of Uzbek Literature*¹. In the anthology, Fitrat states that the authorship of *Miftah al-‘Adl* is unknown and tentatively dates its composition to the fourteenth century. In his collection, Fitrat includes eight narratives from the work, namely: *The King Who Intended to Perform the Hajj*, *Luqman the Wise*, *Mahmud of Ghazna and Ayaz the Courtier*, *Alexander the Two-Horned and the Sultan of the Maghrib*, *Mahmud of Ghazna and the Seeker of Knowledge*, as well as three narratives of a religious nature. According to the research of the scholar Marguba Mirzaahmedova, who studied Khoja’s literary legacy, Fitrat presented these narratives on the basis of his own distinctive principles of compiling a critical text. In the manuscript text used by Fitrat, sentences and words that appeared problematic—either considered incorrect by the compiler of the chrestomathy or transmitted inaccurately in the manuscript—were not identified through comparison with other manuscript copies; rather, the author limited himself to adding explanatory remarks in his text, stating that “this is probably how it should be”². The researcher clarifies that the texts of the samples presented by Fitrat were compiled on the basis of a single manuscript and correspond to manuscript no. 1791 preserved at the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts. The publication of these narratives contributed to an increased level of scholarly interest in Khoja’s literary legacy and in *Miftah al-‘Adl* in particular. In his scholarly study presented in 1950, the literary scholar Solih Qosimov, while examining examples of Uzbek oral folklore, also addressed *Miftah al-‘Adl*. He

¹ Fitrat, Abdurauf. *Samples of Uzbek Literature*. Tashkent, 1928.

² Mirzaahmedova, M. *Poshshokhoja and His Works “Miftah al-‘Adl” and “Gulzar”*. PhD (Candidate of Philological Sciences) dissertation. Tashkent, 1966, p. 5.

concluded that although the time of composition and the identity of the author remain unknown, the work was dedicated to a person named Prince Timur³.

Research conducted by the renowned philologist Vohidjon Zohidov marked the beginning of a new stage in the study of Khoja's literary legacy by resolving issues related to *Miftah al- 'Adl*, its period of composition, and its authorship. In his articles "On *Miftah al- 'Adl*" and "*Miftah al- 'Adl and Gulzar*", Professor V. Zohidov demonstrated that *Miftah al- 'Adl*, which had previously been regarded as an anonymous work dating to the fourteenth century, was in fact composed in the sixteenth century. He further clarified that the work was not dedicated to Amir Timur or Tughluq Timur of the fourteenth century, but rather to Muhammad Timur Sultan, the son of Shaybani Khan, who lived in the sixteenth century. Zohidov substantiated that among historical figures bearing the name Timur, only this individual could be considered a prince in the true sense of the word. As evidence for this conclusion, he pointed to the ideological and stylistic similarities between the narratives of *Miftah al- 'Adl* and *Gulzar*, the fact that in most manuscript copies the two works are bound together, and the presence of the phrase "end of the book" along with the author's name indicated in the second part, *Gulzar*⁴. V. Zohidov's scholarly conclusions were highly appreciated by the academic community. In 1962, a publication entitled "*Excerpts from Miftah al- 'Adl and Gulzar*" was released, providing more comprehensive information on Khoja and his works⁵. In the preface, the editors focus on *Miftah al- 'Adl* and present twenty narratives from the work. Initially, within Uzbek literary scholarship, *Miftah al- 'Adl* was regarded as an anonymous monument and considered a specimen of the fourteenth century. The evidence discussed above has, to a significant extent, clarified that the work is in fact a sixteenth-century monument and that its author is Posshokhoja ibn 'Abdulvahhobkhoja, who wrote under the pen name Khoja and was the father of Hasan Khoja Nisori. A substantial and significant part of Khoja's literary legacy consists of narratives. Khoja's stories are didactic in nature and predominantly depict events drawn from real life. Moral conduct, social justice, and patriotism constitute the main thematic concerns of these narratives. The author frequently resorts to stories associated with historical figures. Khoja's activity has also been the subject of serious research in contemporary literary scholarship. The candidate of philological sciences M. Mirzaahmedova has consolidated her research findings in a monograph entitled *Khoja*⁶. In this monograph, the author provides an in-depth analysis of the writer's collections of short narratives, *Gulzar* and *Miftah al- 'Adl*. In his article "*A Newly Discovered Work by Khoja*", A. Toxirjonov addresses Khoja's narrative poem, noting that Khoja was sixty years old at the time he composed *Gulzar*, which corresponds to the years 1538–1539. *Gulzar* does not follow a single unified plot; rather, it encompasses a wide range of themes. Structurally, the work resembles Sa'di's *Gulistan*. Although the narratives are relatively brief in length, they possess a complete and coherent

³ Qosimov, S. *The Creative Works of Khorezmi*. Unpublished PhD (Candidate of Sciences) dissertation (manuscript). Tashkent, 1950.

⁴ Zohidov, V. "On *Miftah al- 'Adl* and *Gulzar*." In: *From the History of Uzbek Literature*. Tashkent, 1961.

⁵ Posshokhoja. *Excerpts from "Miftah al- 'Adl" and "Gulzar"*. Edited by V. Zohidov and S. G'aniyeva. Tashkent, 1962.

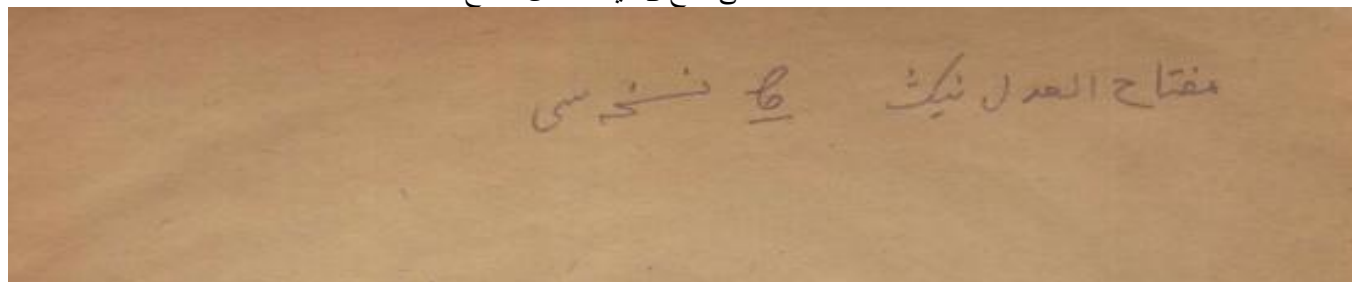
⁶ Mirzaahmedova, M. *Khoja*. Tashkent, 1975. Mirzaahmedova, M. *Posshokhoja and His Works "Miftah al- 'Adl" and "Gulzar"*. PhD (Candidate of Philological Sciences) dissertation. Tashkent, 1966.

composition. Each story is organized in the form of an authorial statement, the narrative itself, and a concluding moral, that is, a lesson drawn from the story⁷.

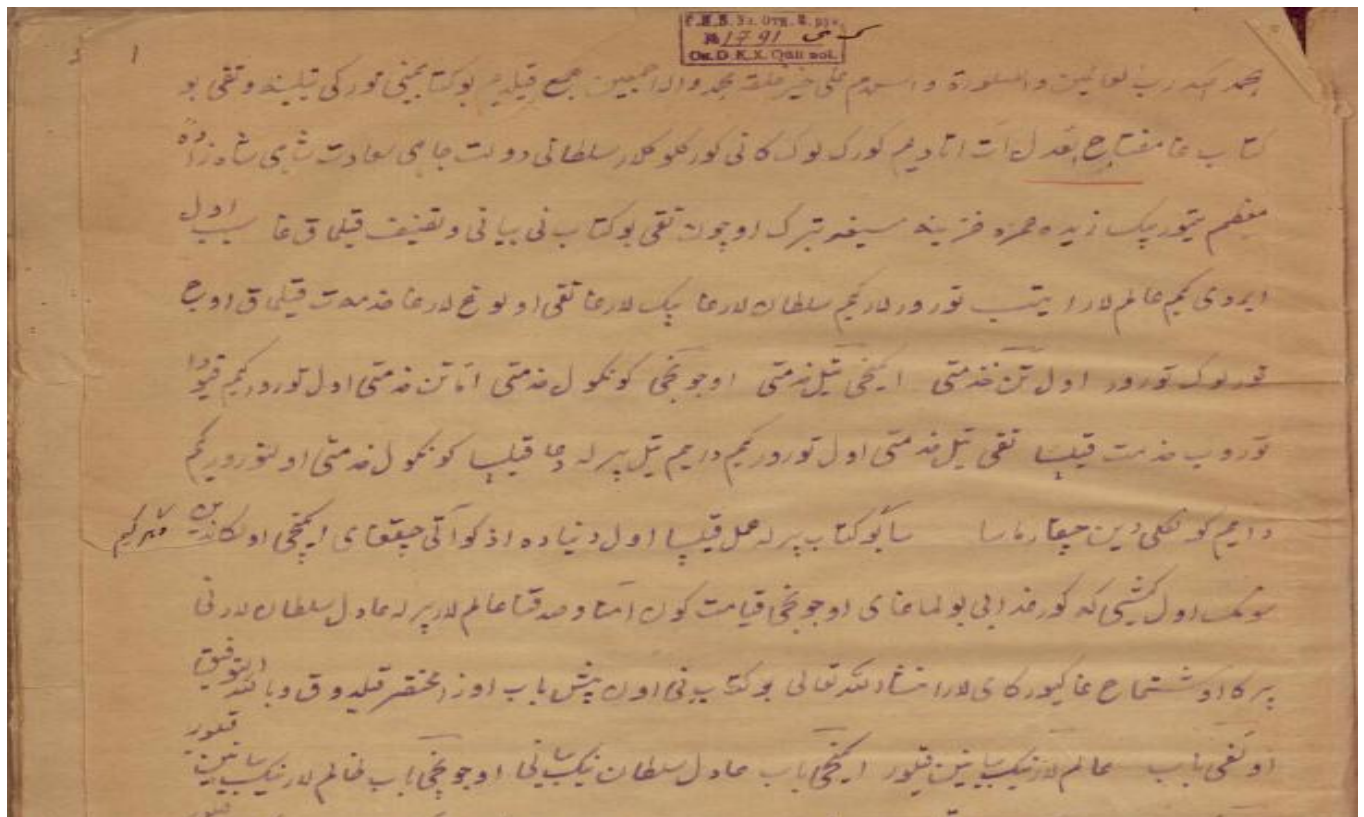
Manuscript no. 1791, preserved in the manuscript collection of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Republic of Uzbekistan, measures 13 × 21 cm. The manuscript consists of 87 folios: folios 1–47 contain *Miftah al-‘Adl*, while folios 48–87 are devoted to *Gulzar*. M. Mirzaahmedova provides descriptions of a total of nine manuscript copies of *Miftah al-‘Adl*, including one copy bound separately and four copies bound together with *Gulzar*. She examines five manuscripts—both independently bound and bound together with other works—preserved in the manuscript collection of the Abu Rayhan Beruni Institute of Oriental Studies under the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan, namely manuscripts with inventory numbers “A”-7796, “B”-885, “D”-4556, and no. 1791. Since each manuscript exhibits its own orthographic features and stylistic characteristics, it is difficult to determine with certainty which copy is closest to the authorial version. Therefore, it is methodologically appropriate to adopt manuscript “A” (inventory no. 7796)—which has a clearly identified scribe and date of copying, is considered the most accurate among the extant copies, and is well preserved—as the base manuscript for scholarly research.

Turning to manuscript no. 1791 of *Miftah al-‘Adl*, it is preserved in the manuscript collection of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences. The work begins as follows:

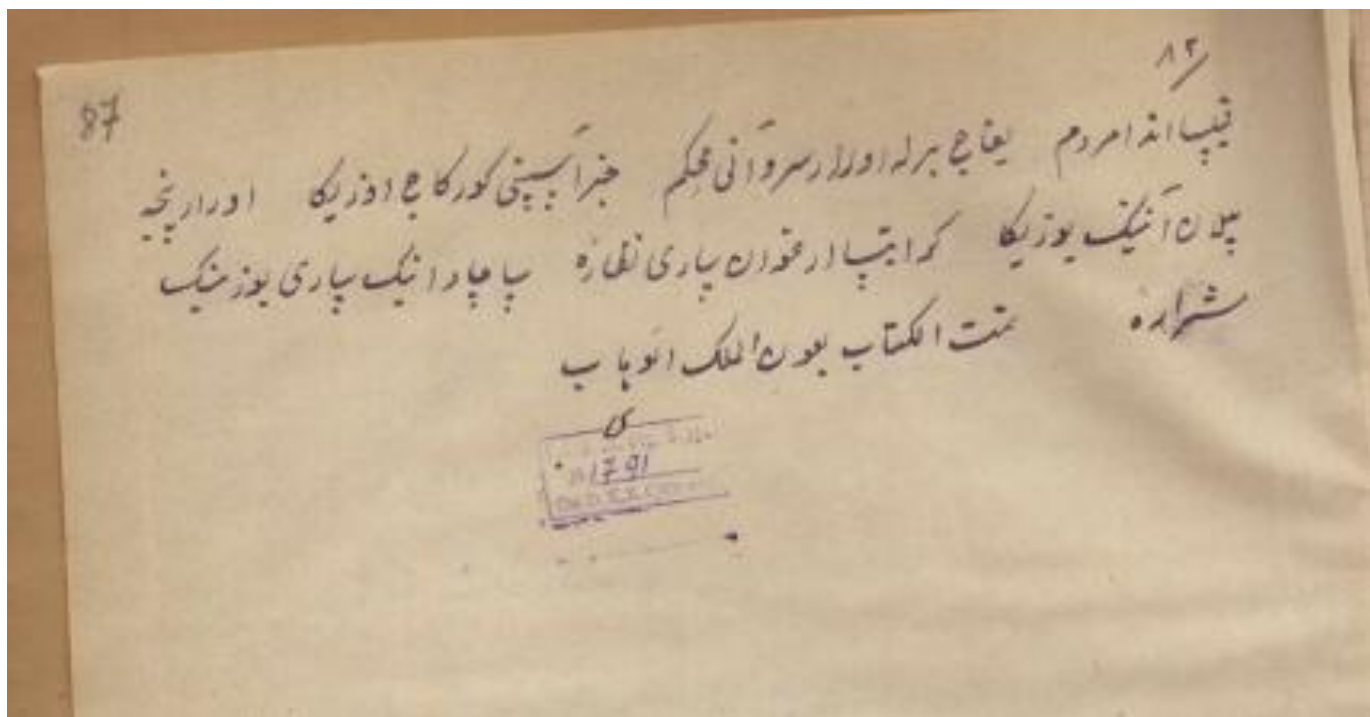
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⁷ Adizova, I. *History of Uzbek Classical Literature (16th–19th Centuries)*. Tashkent: Fan Publishing House, 2006, p. 71.



The work is written in *nasta'liq* script, with seventeen lines per page and, in some sections, twenty-one lines. The manuscript comprises a total of ninety folios. During the process of copying the text, the scribe did not observe *paygīr* (catchwords). The colophon section at the end of the manuscript is present and concludes with the phrase “*Tammat al-kitab bi-‘awn al-Malik al-Wahhab*” (“The book is completed with the help of the Sovereign, the Bestower”).



In 1962, *Miftah al-‘Adl* was published for the first time in the Cyrillic script. This edition was prepared by the dedicated textual scholars V. Zohidov and S. G‘aniyeva. The work was published together with *Gulzar*. As stated in the section devoted to the description of the work, *Miftah al-‘Adl* was composed in dedication to Temurbek, the son of Shaybani Khan. The first half of the sixteenth century represents one of the most complex and conflict-ridden periods in the history of Central Asia. The work vividly reflects the socio-political tensions and contradictions characteristic of that era.

“...I compiled this book in the Turkic language and gave it the title *Miftah al-‘Adl*. I composed and arranged this book as a blessed offering to the treasury of the noble prince Temurbek—the beautiful source, the beautiful sovereign of the state, the king of felicity—because scholars have stated that service to sultans, beys, and great men is of three kinds: first, service of the body; second, service of the tongue; and third, service of the heart. Service of the body consists in serving at the court; service of the tongue consists in constantly offering prayers by word; and service of the heart consists in acting in accordance with this book. Whoever acts upon this book shall gain a good name in both worlds; moreover, after death, such a person shall be spared the torment of the grave. Thirdly, on the Day of Judgment, he shall be admitted to the company of scholars and just sultans, God willing. Furthermore, we have concisely arranged this book into fifteen chapters.”

Chapter One — discusses scholars;

Chapter Two — discusses just rulers;

Chapter Three — discusses tyrants;

Chapter Four — discusses obedience to rulers;

Chapter Five — discusses rulers’ consultation with ministers;

Chapter Six — discusses the administration of judgment;

Chapter Seven — discusses litigation and legal claims;

Chapter Eight — discusses oath-taking;

Chapter Nine — discusses theft;

Chapter Ten — discusses the legal punishment (*hadd*) for adultery;

Chapter Eleven — discusses the legal punishment (*hadd*) for false accusation (*qadḡ*);

Chapter Twelve — discusses the legal punishment (*hadd*) for wine drinking;

Chapter Thirteen — discusses discretionary punishment (*ta'zīr*);

Chapter Fourteen — discusses warfare (*ghaza*);

Chapter Fifteen — discusses hunting⁸.

Throughout all chapters of the work, a certain theory devoted to socio-political and moral–didactic issues is presented in a systematic manner. In most cases, ḥadīths and verses from the Qur'an are cited, followed by the narration of exemplary stories (*nazīr* narratives) intended to explain them, and each section concludes with a didactic lesson. Khoja did not assign titles to his narratives. The conventional titles were later provided by V. Zohidov and M. Mirzaahmedova on the basis of the content of the stories. M. Mirzaahmedova, who conducted an in-depth study of Khoja's literary activity, emphasizes that particular attention should be paid to four principal features characteristic of his oeuvre. The narratives presented in *Miftah al-'Adl* made a significant contribution to the development and refinement of prose in sixteenth-century literature. From the very beginning of the work, the authorial persona remains present until the end, participating through his ideas, instructions, and moral admonitions, and offering solutions to a range of socio-political and moral–educational issues within the framework of his worldview.

CONCLUSION.

In his narratives, Khoja makes extensive and effective use of synonyms—lexical items that are close in meaning but differ in form. This enables the author to avoid repetition, stylistic awkwardness, and redundancy, thereby ensuring the artistic quality and linguistic refinement of the narrative language. For instance, in the stories, the concept of “the people” is expressed through synonymous variants such as *xalq*, *xaloyiq*, *ra'yyat*, *ulus*, and *el*; the word “gold” is conveyed through expressions such as *tillo*, *qizil tanga* (“red coin”), and *qizil tillo* (“red gold”); *mol* (“wealth”) appears as *davlat*, *ganj*, and *saodat*; *bisyor* (“many”) as *ziyod* and *ko'p*; and *faqir* (“poor”) as *maskin* and *bechora*. These examples illustrate the richness and flexibility of Khoja's narrative language.

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