



Article

The Depiction of Shayboniy Khan's Personality in the Epic "Shayboniynoma"

Yusupova Sadoqat*¹

1. PhD Candidate at Samarkand State University named after Sharof Rashidov

* Correspondence: sadokatyusupova1998@gmail.com

Abstract: This article analyzes the depiction of Shayboniy Khan in Muhammad Solih's epic "Shayboniynoma." The study explores how the author constructs the character of Shayboniy Khan through historical facts and literary interpretation. To provide a comprehensive understanding of Shayboniy Khan's personality, the analysis also refers to the portrayal of other historical figures of the same era. Furthermore, the research highlights the artistic techniques employed by Muhammad Solih to merge historical authenticity with creative narrative, emphasizing the role of the epic in shaping cultural memory and historical consciousness.

Keywords: Muhammad Solih, The Epic "Shayboniynoma", The Image of Shayboniy Khan, Historicity, Artistic Interpretation

1. Introduction

At the beginning of the 16th century, socio-political realities such as the decline of the Timurid dynasty and the establishment of Shaybanid rule began to find expression in both historiography and literary creativity. Muhammad Shaybanid Khan, who was interested in promoting his authority, started inviting poets, historians, and writers who had become disillusioned with the Timurids and harbored resentment toward them [1]. In return, he encouraged them to compose works reflecting the historical events of that era. One such figure was Muhammad Solih, the son of Mirsaibek, who, having failed to gain favor among the Timurids and bearing animosity toward them for his father's death, eventually sought refuge under Shaybanid Khan's patronage. Although he was initially raised in the Timurid courts, these circumstances led him to join Shaybanid Khan, where he emerged as a talented poet. His literary skill is vividly demonstrated in his historical-epic work *Shayboniynoma* [2].

"Shayboniynoma" is an epic dedicated to Muhammad Shaybanid Khan, portraying his campaigns against the Timurids. The epic consists of 76 chapters and 8,902 verses. Sixteen chapters form the traditional introduction, including praise to Allah, supplication, a eulogy to Prophet Muhammad (Chapters 1–3), definitions of speech (Chapter 4), and descriptions of Shaybanid Khan's intellect, knowledge, asceticism, humility, Qur'anic recitation, temperament, swordsmanship, attire, generosity, and skills (Chapters 5–14), followed by the reason for composing the book (Chapter 15) and a description of Mulla Abdyrahim (Chapter 16). The main events begin from Chapter 17, narrating Shaybanid Khan's march from Turkistan to Samarkand in 1499–1500, his initial failed attempts to capture the city, his retreat, the siege of Boqi Tarxon at Dobusiya fortress (near present-

Citation: Sadoqat Y. The Depiction of Shayboniy Khan's Personality in the Epic "Shayboniynoma". Central Asian Journal of Literature, Philosophy, and Culture 2026, 7(1), 164-169.

Received: 23rd Oct 2025

Revised: 15th Nov 2025

Accepted: 25th Nov 2025

Published: 06th Dec 2025



Copyright: © 2026 by the authors. Submitted for open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

day Ziyoviddin), and the conquest of Bukhara, culminating in his victorious return after capturing Khorezm in 1506. These events are artistically represented based on the principle of historicity [3].

2. Methodology

In depicting Shaybanid Khan, Muhammad Solih frequently employs passionate and hyperbolic descriptions. The portrayal often idealizes and glorifies the historical figure, referring to him as "God's shadow on earth" and "Caliph," thus blending historical reality with literary embellishment. After entering Shaybanid Khan's service, Muhammad Solih set himself the goal of writing this epic as a gesture of gratitude for the ruler's favor.

Keldi xotirg'aki topsam fursat,
 Tilobon hazrati xondin nusrat.
 Aylasam xon otig'a tasnife,
 Balki ulfat sababi ta'life...
 Aylagan ishlarini nazm qilay,
 Masnaviy shevasini dog'i bilay.
 Ul zamondinkim anga yo'l oldim,
 Ushbu xizmatni o'zimga oldim.
 Har ne ko'rdim cherikida bir-bir,
 Barchasin nazm ila qildim tahrir.

It is evident that Muhammad Solih's primary focus was on praising Shaybanid Khan. This idea is confirmed by the poet's statement:

G'oyatash xalq ani bilmalar,
 Jon bila xizmatiga kelmaslar, -

This verse also confirms the idea. Muhammad Solih sought not only to introduce Shaybanid Khan to the people but to glorify him not as an ordinary man, but as "God's shadow on earth." Furthermore, by writing lines such as "The Khan is a saint yet not everyone knows this," the poet aimed to portray him as both a sovereign and a spiritual figure.

Ko'p karomat ko'rubmen xondin,
 Ko'p maqolat eshitibmen xondinim
 Barchasin emdi bayon etgumdir,
 Tanimaslarg'a ayon etgumgur.

Muhammad Solih, like the great figures before him, emphasizes that a ruler must be just, care for the people, avoid oppressing them, restrain his desires, and refrain from indulging in luxury and pleasure. He even considers the moods of Shaybani and his court officials, striving to express his ideas in simple words and comparisons (such as king shepherd, subjects flock, country pasture, etc.).

Muhammad Solih artistically embodies this viewpoint in the image of Shaybani Khan and those around him, while portraying the opposing group, particularly the Timurids, with qualities such as injustice and incompetence. Looking at the history of that period, it is indeed true that the Timurid princes were indifferent to state affairs, and during times of intensified internal conflicts and struggles for the throne, their negligence became evident. Although the work is dedicated to depicting historical-real events and real people, it is not merely poetic history; rather, it is crafted according to the principles of artistic creativity. As a result, the work introduces two opposing ideals. The poet approaches each side based on a specific worldview, creating characters belonging to those poles and aligning historical facts and events accordingly, either to praise or to criticize them. Such an approach is natural from the author's perspective.

3. Results and Discussion

As we mentioned at the beginning, Shaybani Khan entered our literature bearing negative traits such as cruelty, immorality, and other unfavorable qualities (except in works dedicated specifically to him). We do not intend to completely absolve Shaybani Khan of these traits, but we aim to highlight that he also had a place on the historical stage and rendered certain services to the people [4]. Although Shaybani lacked qualities of perfection, “the Khan, as H. Vambery confirmed, was not inferior in education to most of the preceding Timurid princes. He showed great respect, even childlike obedience to the spiritual scholars of his time and carried a small, beautiful library with him on all military campaigns...” Such information suggests that Shaybani possessed some admirable human qualities, albeit few [5].

In his work, Muhammad Solih praises the Khan highly, exaggerating his virtues and concealing his shortcomings. It would not be an overstatement to say that the Khan’s knowledge of religion benefited the poet, as Solih often makes him speak on religious matters. The titles “Imam of the Age” and “Caliph of the Merciful” given to him are also connected to this [6]. Shaybani’s familiarity with Sufi literature, his knowledge of various orders, his membership in the Naqshbandi path, and his composition of some mystical ghazals are known to us. Muhammad Solih also touches upon these aspects of the Khan [7].

Xon so’zi ishq jahonidindur,
 Xon so’zi g’ayb lisonidindur.
 Xon o’zi oshiq erur, orif ham,
 Borchha so’z jonibidin voqif ham.
 Xon o’zi so’zni base xub aytur,
 Nazm ila nasrni marg’ub aytur.
 Qaysi xondur bu, muayyan bilgil,
 Aytayin men sango ravshan bilgil!
 Tengrining soyasi Shayboniyxon,
 Kim ani qo’ydi xalifa rahmon.
 G’aybdin oti Muhammad bo’ldi,
 Qobili davlati sarmad bo’ldi.
 Borchaning yaxshiliq oning qoshida,
 Borchaning davlati oning boshida.(25-b)

The author portrays the Khan as a person who has conquered his own desires and devoted himself to the path of faith.

The exact date of the poem’s composition is not indicated in the work. However, since the event of Shaybani Khan’s conquest of Herat and the sermon delivered in his name is not mentioned in Shayboniynoma, it can be assumed that the poem was written around 1506-1507 [8].

Muhammad Solih excessively glorifies Shaybani Khan, the main hero of the work, as a divine figure. In the fourth chapter of the poem, after describing the word as a divine blessing, the poet transitions to praising Shaybani Khan, whose speech is “the language of the unseen” and “love of the world,” and who himself is “a lover,” “a gnostic,” and “the shadow of God.” According to the poet, Shaybani Khan, whose name was given from the unseen as Muhammad, is unique in every respect [9]. He is a person who has triumphed over his own desires. This great Khan, who fights in the path of faith, intends to adorn the Sharia and strengthen the people of Islam. He listens to God’s command with the ear of his soul and manifests his justice through generosity. Furthermore, the author writes

passionate verses about Shaybani Khan's recitation of the Qur'an, his knowledge, and his forbearance [10].

Suyubin asrag'oni qu'ondur,
 Yugurub quvlag'oni shaytondur.
 Nafsini o'ziga dushman bildi,
 Dushman o'iturmokini fan bildi.
 – Nuktasi nuktai qur'oniyydur,
 – Majlisi – majlisi ruhoniyydur.
 Dardmandona chekibon ovoz,
 Qilsa qur'on o'qimoqni og'oz.
 Yig'latur tengrisevar qullarni,
 Bog'latur dev kelur yo'llarni.
 Ilm ahlini ajoyib istar,
 Jahl qilg'onni bag'oyat qistar.
 Ishi-yu kuchi bori hilm bila,
 So'zi-yu uni bori ilm bila (25-26-b.).

Muhammad Solih does not limit himself to expressing his ruler's qualities in the passionate verses mentioned above. He continues to exalt Shaybani Khan in numerous chapters such as: "Description of the intellect of His Excellency, the Imam of the Age, the Caliph of the Merciful Shaybani Khan," "Depiction of the knowledge granted to His Excellency by divine grace," "Explanation of His Excellency's poverty and the story of his spiritual path," "Narrative of His Excellency's forbearance," "Account of His Excellency's Qur'an recitation," "Praise of His Excellency's poetic talent," "Glorification of His Excellency's sword," "Description of his attire," and "Characterization of his skills."

Moreover, throughout the main part of the poem, the author frequently returns to praising the protagonist. His lofty statement about Shaybani Khan, "He is the king, and apart from him, nothing is visible in the universe" (p. 27), clearly demonstrates the author's intention to elevate the hero's personality to an unparalleled, supremely great level [11].

For this reason, Muhammad Solih strives to make Shaybani Khan speak more about religion and faith. For instance, after defeating Khonik Khan and Alacha Khan, Shaybani Khan gives them advice and admonitions. He compares the commanding self (nafs-i ammara) to a seven-headed serpent, explaining that its heads represent: "pride," "envy," "anger," "bad habits," "wrath," "lust for worldly pleasures," and "harshness toward the people." Furthermore, Shaybani Khan preaches to the Mongol khans that eliminating this serpent, the commanding self requires enduring great spiritual discipline [12]. This situation allows Muhammad Solih to depict the ruler of his dreams. Although the poet witnessed Shaybani Khan committing numerous acts of bloodshed, he still portrays him as a king with a dervish-like nature.

Bordur ul podshohi nekandesh,
 Toshtdin xon-u ichidin darvesh.
 Ichida bo'lmasa erdi bu hol,
 Qoydin o'lg'oy edi zohir bu maqol.
 Ko'p karomate ko'rubmen xondin,
 Ko'p maqolat eshitibmen xondin (207-b.).

"Outwardly a Khan, inwardly a dervish," this is the image of the ruler envisioned by medieval creators. Muhammad Solih dreams of seeing such a king in the figure of Shaybani Khan. Indeed, in the lofty verses he wrote about his ruler, it is evident that he allowed his imagination to roam freely, using exaggerated depictions to elevate Shaybani

Khan from a historical figure to the level of a literary hero. However, it should not be forgotten that this reflects one of the poet's narrative techniques in epic writing [13].

No matter how much the author indulges in imagination in *Shayboniynoma*, he does not completely detach from reality. It is clear that the creator strives to maintain as much impartiality as possible in depicting historical events. Although the poem is not free from bias and one-sidedness, in many places the light of historical truth shines through. This indicates that one of the poet's literary intentions was to versify what he had seen and experienced [14]. While praising Shaybani Khan, the poet at one point makes this purpose clear to the reader.

Har neki ko'rdum cherikida bir-bir,
Borchasin nazm ila qildim tahrir (39-b.).

When Muhammad Solih reflects on the Timurid rulers, he tends to humiliate and mock them. Through this, the poet seeks to ease the pain in his heart. His excessive glorification of Shaybani Khan and harsh criticism of the Timurids demonstrate his biased and one-sided attitude toward historical reality. However, it is impossible not to accept the poet's thoughts in certain passages where he explains the reasons for the Timurid decline with fairness [15].

Bul jamoatki, ko'rarsen holo,
Tana – tirno bilan boshlab g'avg'o.
Ichadurlar kecha – kunduz boda,
Din-u iymon soridin ozoda.
Bir - biri bila muxolif borchha,
Bir – biridin taqi xoyif borchha.
Atodin bordur o'g'ul noxushnud,
Atoni o'g'ul etay der nobud.
Ato ham bordur o'g'ul din bezor,
O'lturur o'g'lini yig'latib zor (34-b.).

The disunity among the Timurid rulers thwarted Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur's efforts and aspirations to establish a centralized state in Movarounnahr, leaving him isolated. Such fragmented actions and struggles for the throne between fathers and sons, brothers and uncles greatly benefited Shaybani Khan.

Overall, *Shayboniynoma*, with its simple and fluent style and distinctive artistry, stands out among the literary works created in 16th-century Uzbek classical literature. It is also significant as an important monument of the Uzbek literary language of its time. Despite the complexity of the author's worldview and the presence of bias and partiality in depicting historical events and figures, many passages of the work allow for the restoration of historical truth. These aspects contribute to the literary and historical value of the epic. Furthermore, *Shayboniynoma*, as the first example of a historical war epic in our classical literature, possesses great spiritual and artistic significance.

4. Conclusion

The epic "Shayboniynoma" by Muhammad Solih stands as a significant literary monument that intertwines historical reality with artistic imagination. Through the figure of Shayboniy Khan, the author constructs an idealized image of a ruler who embodies both political strength and spiritual devotion. While Solih's portrayal often employs hyperbolic and laudatory expressions, elevating Shayboniy Khan to a near-divine status, the narrative does not entirely detach from historical truth. Instead, it reflects the author's attempt to reconcile the realities of his time with the cultural ideal of a just and pious sovereign. The analysis reveals that Muhammad Solih's approach is inherently dual: on one hand, he glorifies Shayboniy Khan as a symbol of unity and religious commitment; on the other, he

critiques the disintegration and internal conflicts among the Timurid rulers, which facilitated Shayboniy Khan's rise to power. This literary strategy not only serves to legitimize the Shaybanid dynasty but also mirrors the socio-political aspirations of the era.

REFERENCES

- [1] H. Vambery, *Bukhara or the History of Transoxiana*. Tashkent, 1990.
- [2] Z. M. Babur, *Baburnama*, S. Hasanov, Ed. Tashkent: Sharq, 2002.
- [3] Encyclopedia of Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur. Tashkent: Sharq, 2014.
- [4] M. Solih, *Shayboniynoma*, p. 52.
- [5] Z. Muqimov, *Masters of Sword and Pen*. Tashkent, 2015, p. 126.
- [6] P. Qodirov, *Starry Nights*. Tashkent: Sharq Publishing and Printing JSC, 2013.
- [7] T. A. Shaymardonov, "Sayidahmadxo'ja Siddiqiy-Ajziyning qofiya qo'llash mahorati," *Yosh Olimlar Axborotnomasi – Vestnik Molodykh Uchenykh*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 147–152, 2024.
- [8] T. A. Shaymardonov, "The role of Siddiqi-Ajzi in Uzbek jadid literature," *American Journal of Social and Humanitarian Research*, vol. 1, no. 4, pp. 91–100, 2020.
- [9] (Duplicate of reference, kept here only if you need it separately.)
T. A. Shaymardonov, "Sayidahmadxo'ja Siddiqiy-Ajziyning qofiya qo'llash mahorati," *Yosh Olimlar Axborotnomasi – Vestnik Molodykh Uchenykh*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 147–152, 2024.
- [10] S. M. Rakhmonova, "Metrical Possibilities of 'Shayboniynoma' Epic," *Foreign Languages in Uzbekistan*, vol. 3, no. 44, pp. 144–154, Jun. 2022. doi: 10.36078/1587921781. [journal.fledu.uz]
- [11] D. Mashrabaliyeva, "Muhammad Solih's 'Shayboniynoma' as a Historical Source," *Eurasian Journal of Academic Research*, vol. 1, no. 8, pp. 18–20, Nov. 2021. doi: 10.5281/zenodo.5702864. [zenodo.org]
- [12] F. Panjiyeva, "Analysis of Social Terms in 'Shayboniynoma,'" *Tadqiqotlar Journal*, vol. 2, no. 9, pp. 327–331, Jan. 2025. [Online]. Available: <https://tadqiqotlar.uz/new/article/download/2383/2218/4417>. [tadqiqotlar.uz]
- [13] Z. I. Fayzraxmanova, "Analysis of Sources Related to the Shaybanid Era," *Eurasian Journal of Academic Research*, 2024. doi: 10.5281/zenodo.13269424. [cyberleninka.ru]
- [14] M. A. Artiqbayevna and A. Abdushukurova, "Cultural Life During the Shaybanid Period," *Journal of New Century Innovations*, vol. 67, no. 5, pp. 110–111, Dec. 2024. [Online]. Available: <https://scientific-jl.org/new/article/view/7662>. [scientific-jl.org]
- [15] F. Ro'ziyev, "The History of the Rise of the Shaybani Dynasty," *Educational Research in Universal Sciences*, vol. 2, no. 13, pp. 424–429, Nov. 2023. [Online]. Available: <http://erus.uz/index.php/er/article/view/4298>. [erus.uz]