



Article

# Manuscript Versions and Authorship Issues of Homidiy Balxiy's 'Yusuf and Zulaykha' Epic

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**Abstract:** In the history of literature, the abundance of poems belonging to the "Yusuf and Zulaykha" cycle, as well as the fact that the majority of them were created under literary influence or as a result of free translation, has given rise to a number of debates concerning their authorship. One of such issues is the question of the authorship of the poem "Yusuf and Zulaykha," attributed to Homidi Balkhi (Durbek). In literary scholarship, the existence of numerous manuscript copies of this poem, the variation in verses, lines, and textual units that may clarify the issue of authorship, as well as the absence of a colophon, hinder the establishment of a single, unified conclusion. Therefore, two groups of scholars—those attributing the work to Homidi Balkhi and those to Durbek—have attempted to substantiate their positions on the basis of available evidence. However, the existing evidence has not yet provided a definitive resolution to this problem. This article presents information on manuscript and lithographic copies of the Turkic "Yusuf and Zulaykha" poem preserved in various regions. Based on the formal and structural features of these copies, their chronological attribution is determined. In the discussion section, the still unresolved issue of authorship is examined through manuscript texts, the presence or absence of a colophon, and textual evidence found in verses and lines, as well as through the art of chronogram (ta'rikh). The study substantiates that the Turkic "Yusuf and Zulaykha" poem belongs not to Durbek, but to Homidi Balkhi.

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## 1. Introduction

In the history of literature, the "Yusuf and Zulaykha" cycle represents a major literary tradition that began to develop in the 13th century and is characterized by a system of conventional plots and images [1]. According to scholarly research, the earliest artistic work on this theme in Turkic literature is Qul Ali's "Qissasi Yusuf," created in 1212. The poems belonging to the "Yusuf and Zulaykha" cycle, produced in subsequent periods, can be chronologically classified as follows:

1. Poems of the 13th century
2. Poems of the 14th century
3. Poems of the 15th century
4. Poems of the 16th century
5. Poems of the 17th century
6. Poems of the 18th century
7. Poems of the 19th century

**Poems of the 13th century.** This group includes Qul Ali's "Qissayi Yusuf," Mahmud Kirimli's "Yusuf and Zulaykha," and Ali Khaliloglu's "Yusuf and Zulaykha." These works have been sufficiently studied in Turkic literary scholarship [2], [3].

**Poems of the 14th century.** By the 14th century, the theme of Yusuf and Zulaykha became widespread as a conventional plot and system of images, leading to the creation of numerous works and free translations. Among them are Sheyod Hamza's "Dostoni Yusuf," Faqih Sule's "Yusuf and Zulaykha," Darir Erzurumlu's "Qissayi Yusuf," Ahmad's "Yusuf and Zulaykha," and Gharib's "Yusuf and Zulaykha" [4].

**Poems of the 15th century.** The 15th century occupies a leading position in terms of the production of works within this cycle. During this period, the images of Yusuf and Zulaykha reached a high level of artistic development. Notable works include Tabrizi Ahmad's "Yusuf and Zulaykha," Mustafa Shayoğlu's "Qissasi Yusuf," Hamidullah Hamdi's "Yusuf and Zulaykha," as well as the poems by Chokariy, Abdulvahhab, Abdulmajid Kirimli ("Munis al-'Ushshaq"), Ahmadi, Khatai Tabrizi, and Bekoi [5].

**Poems of the 16th century.** In this period, the tradition continued as both independent works and free translations. Important sources include the poems by Kamal Poshazoda, Abdurahman Ghubori, Sharifi, Yusuf Ziyoi, Likoi, Karamanli Kami Sayyid Muhammad, Yahya Tojliali, Kadi Senan, Jalili, Ne'matullah, and Baghdadli Zihni Abdudalil.

**Poems of the 17th century.** The number of works produced during this period is relatively limited. Among them are Abdulhay Rif'at's "Yusuf and Zulaykha," Shaykh Umar Khalvati's "Yusuf and Zulaykha," and Bursali Havai Mustafa's "Yusuf and Zulaykha."

**Poems of the 18th century.** Important works of this period include Diyarbakirli Ahmadi's "Yusuf and Zulaykha," Bilal's "Qissayi Yusuf," Nurmuhhammad Andalib's "Yusuf and Zulaykha," Mulla Hasan's "Yusuf and Zulaykha," Mehmet Navruzi's "Yusuf and Zulaykha," Asad Pasha Kupruluzoda's "Yusuf and Zulaykha," and Abdurahman Afandi Havai's "Yusuf and Zulaykha."

**Poems of the 19th century.** The majority of works created during this period consist of free translations, primarily based on Abdurahman Jami's "Yusuf and Zulaykha," which served as a foundation for later versions. The poems by Mehmed Izzat Pasha and Rif'at occupy an important place in Turkic literature as translations of Jami's work [6].

## 2. Materials and Methods

This study uses a qualitative research design based on comparative textual analysis and manuscript studies. It aims to investigate the authorship and features of the Turkic 'Yusuf and Zulaykha' poem. The research is based on a systematic examination of multiple manuscript copies preserved in various international and local collections, including archival sources from Istanbul, Paris and Uzbekistan.

The methodological framework integrates several complementary approaches. Firstly, textual criticism is employed to identify variations in lexical units, orthographic forms, and poetic structures across different manuscript versions. This enables scribal interventions, omissions and later interpolations that may have influenced the transmission of the text to be detected.

Secondly, a comparative-historical analysis is employed to contextualise the manuscripts within their respective chronological and cultural settings. By comparing early and later copies, the study traces the text's evolution and evaluates the reliability of specific versions, particularly in relation to the presence or absence of authorial markers, such as colophons and pen names.

Thirdly, the research uses a codicological and paleographical approach to examine the physical and formal characteristics of the manuscripts, including script type (e.g. *nasta'liq*), layout, ornamentation, marginal notes and scribal annotations. These features provide important evidence regarding the manuscripts' origin, dating, and transmission history.

Additionally, elements of intertextual analysis are incorporated to evaluate the relationship between the Turkic poem and its presumed Persian prose sources. This enables the identification of translation strategies and adaptation processes, thereby furthering our understanding of the work's literary nature. Special attention is given to key textual elements such as the *muqaddima* (introduction), *chronogram* (*ta'rikh*), and specific verses where discrepancies in wording—such as the variation between “*dar silki*” and “*Durbek*”—play a crucial role in determining authorship. These elements are analyzed critically to distinguish between original authorial intent and later modifications introduced by copyists or scholars.

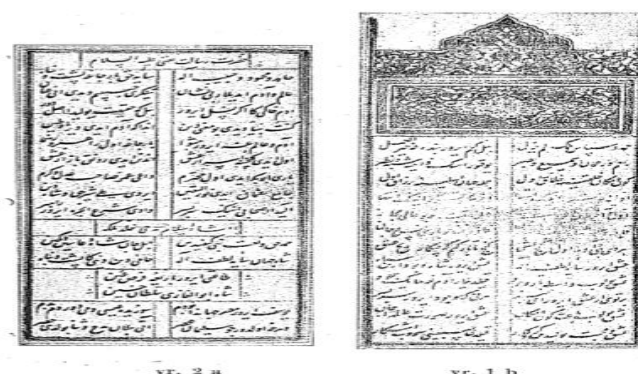
Overall, the integration of these methodological approaches ensures a comprehensive and reliable analysis, allowing the study to address the longstanding debate concerning the authorship of the “*Yusuf and Zulaykha*” poem and to propose a well-substantiated conclusion based on manuscript evidence.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### Classification of Manuscripts of the Turkic “*Yusuf and Zulaykha*” Poem

There are several manuscript copies of the “*Yusuf and Zulaykha*” poem attributed to Homidi Balkhi (*Durbek*). Among these, the oldest known manuscript is preserved in the collection of the Topkapi Palace Museum Library in Turkey under inventory number R.832 [7]. This copy was transcribed in Herat in 922 AH (1516 CE).

The first page of the manuscript bears the seal of the Ottoman state. The text of the manuscript is carefully written in *nasta'liq* script, demonstrating a high level of calligraphic precision. The heading (title) section of the manuscript is decorated with special ornamental designs. This copy consists of 80 folios, with each page containing 17 lines of verse [8].



**Figure 1.** Homidi Balkhi, “*Yusuf and Zulaykha*.” Topkapi Palace Museum Library (Turkey), MS No. R.832, fols. 1b–2a.

This manuscript represents the earliest known copy, in chronological terms, among the “*Yusuf and Zulaykha*” poems attributed to Homidi Balkhi. The Turkish scholar Khalide Cemil Dolu published an article in 1952 in Issue 4 of the *Journal of the Faculty of Letters of Istanbul University (Department of Turkish Language and Literature)* entitled “*A Few Words on the Story of Yusuf and Some Turkish Copies*.” In this study, she describes this

particular manuscript as a poetic Turkic (Chagatai) translation of a prose work originally written in Persian. The manuscript itself was copied in Herat in 1516 [9].

1. The next known manuscript of the poem was copied in 971 AH (1563 CE) and is currently preserved in the collection of the National Library of France under the inventory number Suppl. No. 1365.
2. Another manuscript of Homidi Balkhi's (Durbek's) "Yusuf and Zulaykha" is preserved in the Manuscript Fund of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan under inventory number No. 1433.



**Figure 2.** Homidi Balkhi, "Yusuf and Zulaykha." Manuscript Fund of the Institute of Oriental Studies, Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan, MS No. 1433, fols. 1a–1b.

The manuscript preserved in the Manuscript Fund has served as a primary source for subsequent copies over different periods. This particular manuscript contains only the text of the "Yusuf and Zulaykha" poem, with the opening section of the poem presented on the first page in a specially ornamented title panel. The title begins with the *Basmala* phrase [10]. On the following pages, the text is divided into two sections by specially designed tables, containing the verses of the poem. The headings within the poem are highlighted in red ink, and running titles are included. Unlike other copies, this manuscript, preserved under inventory number 1433 at the Manuscript Fund of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan, features an elaborately decorated first page. Stains on some pages have affected the quality of the text. The manuscript was copied in 1024 AH by Muhammad Sa'id ibn Mirzo Muhammad Bukhari and consists of 94 folios.

3. Another manuscript copy of the "Yusuf and Zulaykha" poem is preserved in the Manuscript Fund of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan [11]. This is the fourth manuscript copy, with the texts of the manuscripts being very similar to each other. The copy is cataloged under inventory number 7621/1 and has a cover made of floral fabric. The manuscript is written in *nasta'liq* script and consists of 87 folios. The scribe and exact date of transcription are unknown. The poem itself occupies 61 folios, but the beginning is missing. The text of the "Yusuf and Zulaykha" poem is preserved from folios 1a to 62a.
4. Another copy of the poem is cataloged under inventory number 7412 and is also preserved in the Manuscript Fund of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan. In this manuscript, the poem is part of a compilation and appears from folio 114 to folio 135. It was copied in 1238 AH by Rahimquli ibn Qodirquli. The text of the poem occupies 18 folios.



**Figure 3.** Homidi Balkhi, “*Yusuf and Zulaykha*.” Manuscript Fund of the Institute of Oriental Studies, Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan, MS No. 7412, fols. 1a–1b.

The text in this manuscript also follows the traditional opening format and is written in *nasta'liq* script. The first page of the manuscript is decorated with a special title panel and begins with the *Basmala* phrase. Similar to other copies, the text is divided into four columns, and the headings are highlighted in red ink [12].

A distinctive feature of this manuscript is that its margins contain additions, explanations, and glosses. The colophon of the manuscript provides the year in which the poem was copied.

5. Another manuscript of the “*Yusuf and Zulaykha*” poem is preserved in the Manuscript Fund of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan under inventory number 815.

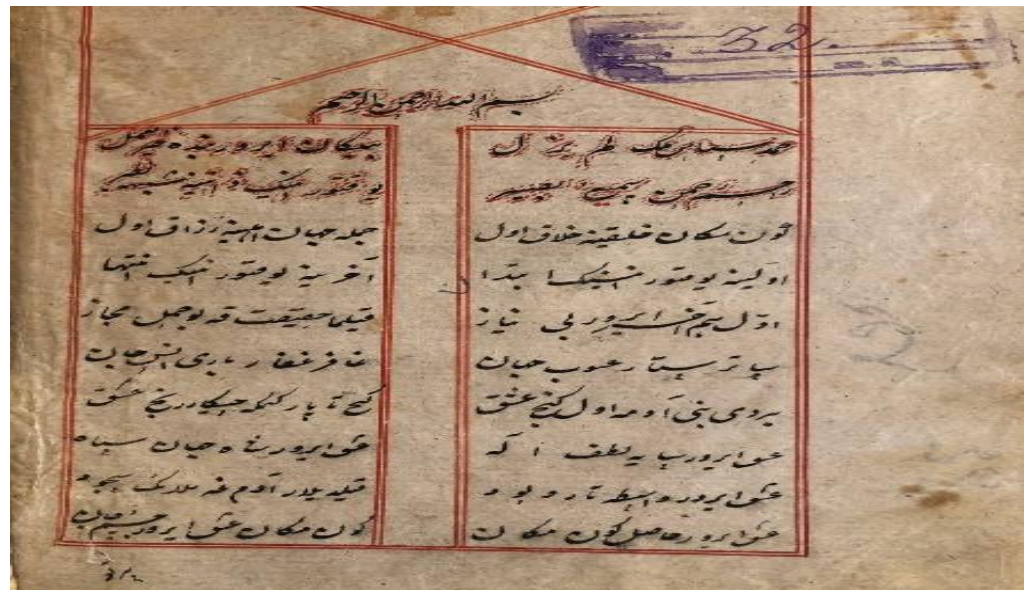


**Figure 4.** Homidi Balkhi, “*Yusuf and Zulaykha*.” Manuscript Fund of the Institute of Oriental Studies, Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan, MS No. 815, fols. 1a–1b.

The manuscript contains the text of the poem from folio 35 to folio 59. The poem is written in *nasta'liq* script [13]. A colophon in the manuscript records that it was copied in 1266 AH. This manuscript originally belonged to the library of Mir Siddiq ibn Muzaffar, a poet who wrote under the pen name Hashmat and was the son of the Bukhara emir Muzaffar.

The manuscript features a main title panel, which includes the *Basmala* phrase and is decorated with special ornaments. The headings within the poem are written in red ink and marked with distinctive symbols. The folios are divided into four sections, with certain sections highlighted using special tables in black and red ink. Running titles are included, and a gloss appears on one page. This manuscript is a compilation containing several works, with the “*Yusuf and Zulaykha*” poem beginning on folio 35 [14].

6. Another manuscript of the “*Yusuf and Zulaykha*” poem is preserved in the Bukhara Museum of Literature and Art under inventory number 28791/II. This manuscript consists of 149 folios and contains only the text of the “*Yusuf and Zulaykha*” poem. It is written in *nasta’liq* script, arranged in two columns. The headings of the poem are highlighted in red ink, and although the manuscript lacks a decorated title panel, it begins with the traditional *Basmala* phrase.



**Figure 5.** Homidi Balkhi, “*Yusuf and Zulaykha*.” Bukhara Museum of Literature and Art, MS No. 28791/II, fols. 1a–1b.

This manuscript is also written in *nasta’liq* script, and its pages are intact without any damaged sections. Margins and running titles contain notes and commentary. At the end of the manuscript, a colophon records that it was copied in 1249 AH. At the final part of the colophon, in ink of a different color, the words “*Yusuf and Zulaykha, Durbek*” are written. This addition appears to have been inserted by a later scholar who studied the manuscript [15].

7. Another manuscript of the “*Yusuf and Zulaykha*” poem is preserved at the Alisher Navoi Literature Museum under inventory number 128. Compared to other copies, this manuscript is significantly worn; its initial pages are missing, and it has undergone multiple restoration interventions.

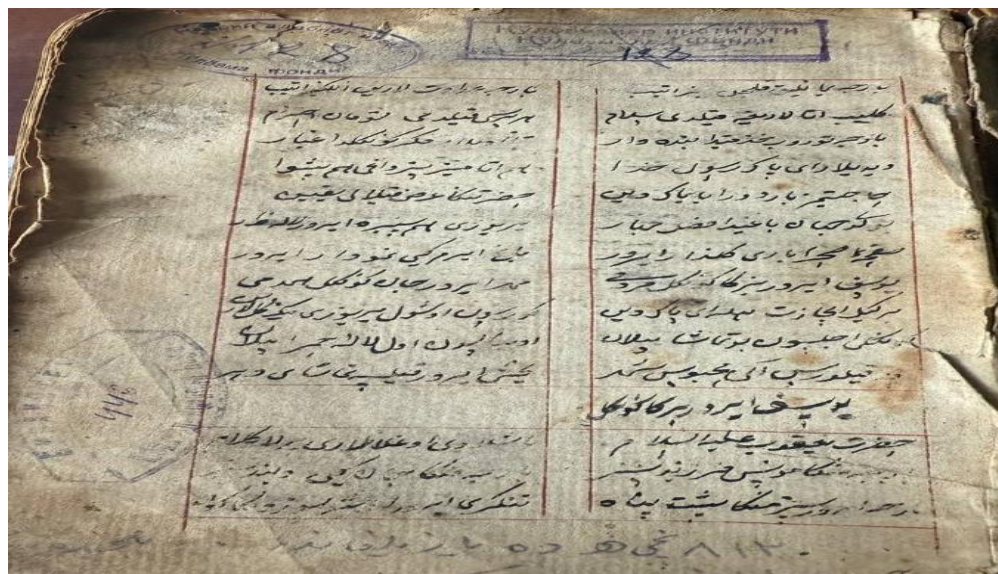


Figure 6. Homidi Balkhi, "Yusuf and Zulaykha." Alisher Navoi Literature Museum, MS No. 128, fols. 1a-1b.

At the end of the first page of this manuscript, the note "Written in 1218 AH" is inscribed in ink. Since the manuscript lacks a colophon, this annotation was added by the scholar who conducted research on the manuscript [16]. The text of the poem is written in two columns; headings are not specially highlighted. In some places, blank spaces are used to separate sections, while in other instances, this convention is not consistently followed. Margins and running titles contain a considerable number of glosses. The manuscript remains incomplete at its end.

8. A relatively later copy of the "Yusuf and Zulaykha" poem is preserved at the Alisher Navoi Literature Museum under inventory number 830. This copy was transcribed using the manuscripts numbered 1433 and 185 from the Manuscript Fund of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan. However, it is specifically noted that manuscript No. 1433 served as the primary source [17]. This manuscript was copied by the literary and textual scholar Abdulla Nosirov in 1941. Before presenting the poem's text, the scholar compiled a table highlighting differences found between the two source manuscripts.

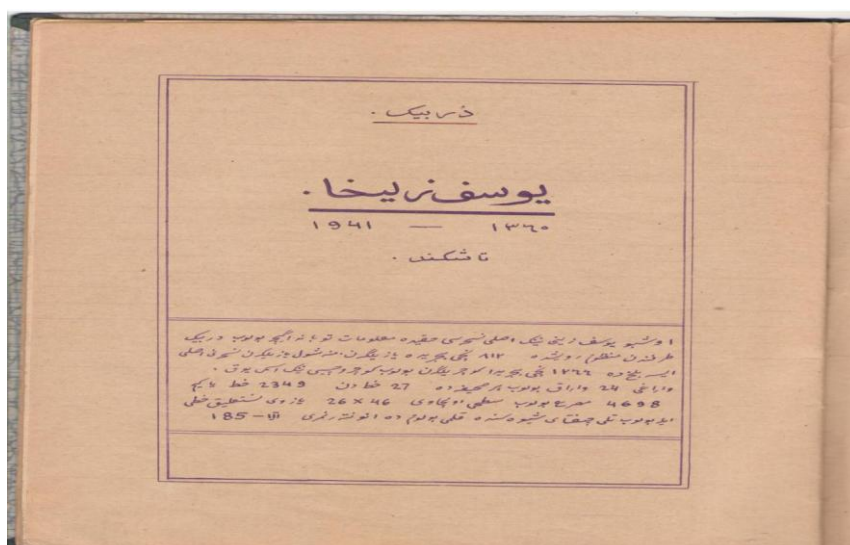


Figure 7. Homidi Balkhi, "Yusuf and Zulaykha." Alisher Navoi Literature Museum, MS No. 830, fols. 1a-1b.

Abdulla Nosirov notes that he copied this manuscript in accordance with the style of existing manuscripts, arranging the text in four columns, with the poem's headings highlighted in red ink [18]. The resulting manuscript consists of 93 folios. In the opening section, Nosirov provides information regarding the poem and its author, as well as the formal characteristics of the manuscript he used as a source:

"The original copy of this 'Yusuf and Zulaykha' is reported as follows: it was written in verse by Durbek in 812 AH. This text was copied from the original manuscript in Balkh in 1266 AH; the original scribe is unknown. The manuscript consists of 24 folios, with 27 lines per page, totaling 1349 lines or 4698 verses. Each line measures 26×46, written in *nasta'liq* script, and the language is Chagatai."

The colophon at the end of the manuscript is also presented according to traditional conventions.

### **Study of Homidi Balkhi's "Yusuf and Zulaykha" Poem and the Question of Authorship**

The initial research and debates on the authorship of the "Yusuf and Zulaykha" poem, as well as the study of its manuscript copies preserved in Uzbekistan, began in the early 20th century. In 1928, Abdurauuf Fitrat included an excerpt from the poem in the collection "Samples of Uzbek Literature", attributing the authorship of the poem to Durbek [19].

In subsequent periods, literary history anthologies continued to rely on the samples and information presented in Fitrat's collection, consistently listing Durbek as the author of the Turkic "Yusuf and Zulaykha" poem. In fact, in 1959, the poem was published as a separate book under Durbek's authorship. Although no manuscript copy explicitly indicates the author, after Fitrat's publication, Abdulla Nosirov recopied the poem and presented it to the academic Aziz Polatovich under Durbek's name.

Research over the following fifty years, coupled with the discovery of more than ten manuscript copies of the Turkic "Yusuf and Zulaykha" poem, created a need to re-examine the question of its authorship.

During the course of these studies, the issue of authorship for this poem—considered a Chagatai tran.

During the course of these studies, the issue of authorship for this poem—considered a Chagatai translation—was investigated with particular attention to the following aspects:

#### **1. Analysis of verses reflecting the Turkic translation**

In 1952, the Turkish scholar Khalide Cemil Dolu published an article in Issue 4 of the *Journal of the Faculty of Letters of Istanbul University (Department of Turkish Language and Literature)* titled "A Few Words on the Story of Yusuf and Some Turkish Copies." In this article, she discusses the manuscripts attributed to Hamidi Balkhi and Durbek under separate headings. When addressing the Turkic manuscripts of the "Yusuf and Zulaykha" poem, she identifies Homidi Balkhi's version as a third manuscript. Khalide Cemil Dolu emphasizes that this manuscript represents a Chagatai (Turkic) poetic translation of the original prose work *Qissayi Yusuf*, written in Persian.

For example, the following verses illustrate this translation:

Nasr edi, bu qissa dog'i porsl,

Erdl anga jon ko'zi nazzorasi.

Bor edi ko'ngulda burundin bu azm,

Turkiy tili birlamu qilsam bu nazm.

(This story was originally in prose and in Persian; it was a source of spiritual insight. I had long intended in my heart to render it into verse in the Turkic language.)

It should be noted that in all nine manuscript copies attributed either to Homidi Balkhi or Durbek, the *Muqaddima* section contains the above verses, indicating that the poem is a Turkic translation of a Persian prose text. Recognized as a poetic translation from Persian prose, literary scholar K. Mullafojeva notes that the poem's roots trace back to the Qur'an, while its plot closely follows the narrative of Khoja Abdullah Ansari's *Anis ul-Muridin va Shams ul-Majalis*.

## 2. Mention of the Author's Name in the Introduction

Khalide Cemil Dolu specifically analyzes the manuscript preserved in the Topkapi Palace Museum Library in Istanbul, in which the author's pen name is given as Homidi:

Qissayi Yusufni tamom ayla nazm,  
Bu ish ara(o) qil bari azmingni jazm.  
Sendin o'tub Homidiy bil ro'zigor,  
Qolg'ay uchun sahfasiyin yodigor.  
Banda o'shal holda qildim shuru'  
Tengri inoyatina ettim ruju'.

*(Bring the story of Yusuf to completion in verse; undertake this task with full resolve. O Homidi, though time may pass beyond you, a lasting remembrance will remain upon these pages. In such a state, I began, turning toward the grace of God.)*

In contrast, the same verses appear differently in the manuscript preserved under inventory number 1433 at the Manuscript Fund of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan:

Qissayi Yusufni tamom ayla nazm  
Turkiy til birla qilib azm-u jazm.  
Qolg'ay oxir sahfasiyin yodgor,  
Sendan o'shal qissa o'tub ro'zgor.  
Banda o'shal holda qildim shuru',  
Shukr qilib Tengriga aylab ruju'.

*(Complete the story of Yusuf in verse, undertaking it in the Turkic language with firm resolve. A remembrance will remain on its final pages, while the story will pass beyond you with time. In that state, I began, offering thanks to God and turning toward Him.)*

Here, the author's name is omitted, and minor changes in form and content are observed. Similarly, in other Uzbek manuscripts—Nos. 1433, 185/1, 7412 from the Manuscript Fund, and No. 28791/II preserved in the Bukhara State Museum—the author's name is not mentioned in this verse [20].

Scholar Vahid Juzjoni, in his article aiming to clarify the authorship of "*Yusuf and Zulaykha*", notes that in the copy preserved at the National Library of France (Paris), the pen name Homidi is replaced with Ahmadi. According to Juzjoni, since none of the manuscripts preserved in Uzbekistan explicitly mention the author, later scribes inserted Durbek's name into copies, thereby attributing authorship to Durbek.

## 3. Issues Related to the Reading of Words in the Introduction (Dar silki – Durbek)

The *Muqaddima* section of the poem consists of several titled subsections, including *Hamd*, *Na't*, and *Kitob Nazmining Ibtidosi*. These sections contain verses that clarify the essence of the work, the reason for its composition, and aspects related to authorship. Unfortunately, the variation in the spelling of certain words in these verses has created ambiguity and debate rather than clarity.

In particular, one verse in the "*Kitob Nazmining Ibtidosi*" subsection contains the words "*dar silki*" and "*durbek*". Differences in their spelling and reading provide evidence that the author of the poem is not Durbek:

Erdi chu xotir musammam bu azm,  
Ayladi bu qissani dar silki nazm.

(When this intention was firmly established in the mind, the story was set into the thread of verse.)

In the manuscripts of “*Yusuf and Zulaykha*” preserved in Istanbul and Paris, the word “*durbek*” does not appear. For example:

- In the Paris manuscript copied in 971 AH (1563 CE):

Ayladi bu qissani dar silki nazm

- In the Turkish manuscript copied in 922 AH (1516 CE):

Ayladi bu qissani turkiyga nazm

However, in most manuscript copies preserved in Uzbekistan, the word “*dar silki*” was rendered as “*Durbek*”, which led to the poem being attributed to Durbek. As noted, this practice began after Fitrat published excerpts in “*Samples of Uzbek Literature*.”

Scholar Vahid Juzjoniy, in his specialized article on the authorship of “*Yusuf and Zulaykha*”, analyzes this problem in detail. According to Juzjoniy, the word “*durbek*” in these verses originally reads “*dar silki*”; the scribe misread the toothless form of the letter *sin* (*s*) and wrote it as *Durbek*. Semantically, “*dar silki*”—meaning “threading into the system of verse”—matches the content of the verse.

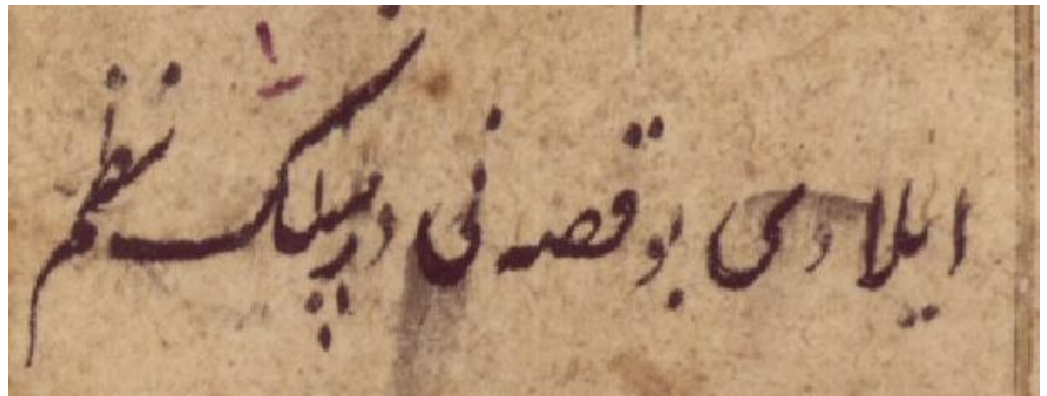
Navoi scholar Suyima G’aniyeva also describes the reading of the verse as it appears in these manuscripts and the subsequent attribution to Durbek as a “*widespread error*.” She concurs with Juzjoniy’s interpretation, emphasizing that the meaning of the verse aligns with “*dar silki nazm*”—i.e., “in the thread or system of the poem.”

If attention is paid to manuscript No. 1433 preserved in the Manuscript Fund of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan, it can be observed that the text has been corrected in accordance with the original reading.



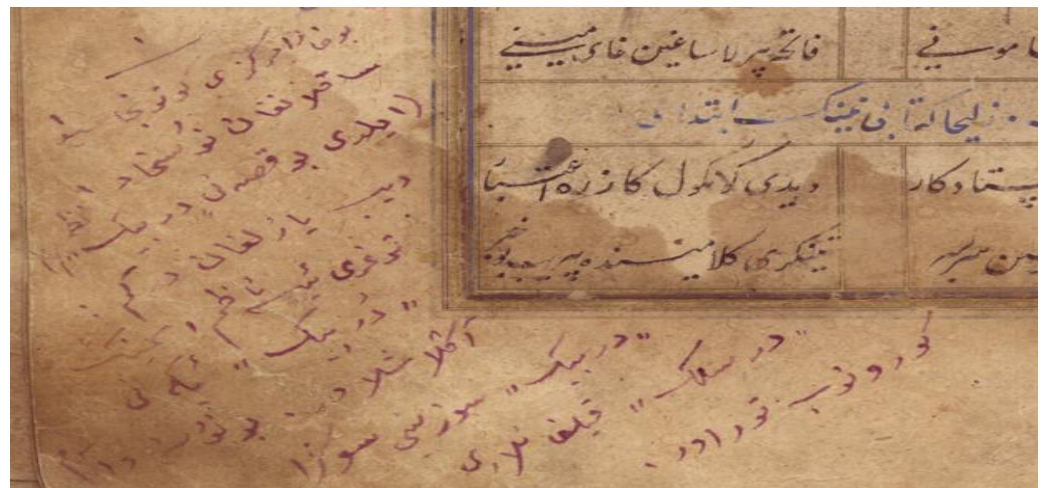
**Figure 8.** Homidi Balkhi, “*Yusuf and Zulaykha*.” Manuscript Fund of the Institute of Oriental Studies, Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan, MS No. 1433, fols. 3a–3b.

If attention is paid to the manuscript page, it can be observed that the word “*durbek*” has been altered to “*dar silki*,” or conversely, the word “*dar silki*” has been changed to “*durbek*.”



**Figure 9.** Homidi Balkhi, “Yusuf and Zulaykha.” Manuscript Fund of the Institute of Oriental Studies, Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan, MS No. 1433, fols. 3a–3b.

In our view, the original reading in the manuscript was “*dar silki*”; however, scholars who later studied this manuscript appear to have altered the word to “*durbek*,” as it was not possible to erase the letter *lam* in “*dar silki*.” At the end of this manuscript page, an opposing note is provided as follows: “In the copy preserved in the Bukhara Central Library, it is written as ‘Ayladi bu qissasi Durbek nazm,’ whereas in fact it should be understood in verse as ‘durbek’ in a broader sense. In this copy, it is evident that the word ‘durbek’ has been rendered as ‘dar silk.’”



**Figure 10.** Homidi Balkhi, “Yusuf and Zulaykha.” Manuscript Fund of the Institute of Oriental Studies, Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan, MS No. 1433, fols. 3a–3b.

Vohid Juzjoniy emphasizes the role of Gʻafur Gʻulom in the attribution of the poem’s authorship to Durbek. According to Juzjoniy, in the 1920s, a scribe—doubting the accuracy of the word—altered it in blue ink to “*dar silk*”. Later, Gʻafur Gʻulom, noting that in the manuscript copied in 1266 AH (1849 CE; MS No. 185) the word appeared as “*Durbek*,” took this as evidence to recognize Durbek as the author of the poem. Juzjoniy also points out that the marginal note in MS No. 1433 preserved in Uzbekistan belongs to Gʻafur Gʻulom.

However, the verses rendered as “*Durbek*” appear in later manuscript sources. The oldest manuscripts of the poem are those preserved in the Topkapi Palace Library in Istanbul and the Paris Library. Among the manuscripts held in Uzbekistan, the earliest—MS No. 1433—already shows that the word “*dar silk*” had been altered to “*Durbek*,” and this manuscript served as the model for other copies in Uzbekistan. Considering these

facts, it is clear that the poem does not belong to Durbek; rather, the author is Homidi Balkhi, as explicitly indicated in the manuscript copies.

Even the 1959 edition of *“Yusuf and Zulaykha”* prepared by Shamsiddin Sharafiddinov (Xurshid), although published under the title attributing it to Durbek, preserves the disputed word as *“dar silk”* in the *“Kitob Nazmining Ibtidosi”* section. This edition was based on MS No. 1433 from the Manuscript Fund of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Therefore, the word in the original manuscript was indeed *“dar silk”* and only later altered to *“Durbek.”*

#### 4. Analysis of Verses Depicting Balkh Fortress and Praising Husayn Boyqaro

The manuscript copies of *“Yusuf and Zulaykha”* can be classified into two groups based on the presence of verses describing Husayn Bayqara and the year of composition:

1. Manuscripts in which the praise of Sultan Husayn Mirzo Boyqaro is not included in the introduction, and the year of composition can only be determined through abjad calculation or historical dating. According to the abjad calculation:

*“د + ح + ض = 812”* (corresponding to 1409 CE in the Gregorian calendar)

This group includes the following manuscripts preserved in Uzbekistan:

- MS No. 1433,
  - MS No. 7412,
  - MS No. 185 from the Manuscript Fund of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan.
2. In the introduction, there is a praise for Sultan Husayn Mirzo, and the year of composition can be determined through abjad numerals and the tariḫh method: Abjad calculation: *“د + ح + ض = 874”* (874 Hijri / 1469 CE). This group of manuscripts includes the copies preserved in Istanbul (R.832), Paris (№1365), and the Uzbek Academy of Sciences, Institute of Oriental Studies Manuscripts Collection, inventory №7621.

One of the ancient manuscripts, preserved in the Topkapi Palace Library in Istanbul, contains special verses describing Sultan Husayn Mirzo and his accession to the throne:

Shohi jahon soyayi lutfi iloh,  
Homiyi din, dunyoga pushti panoh.

Toati eru bariga farz-u ayn.  
Shoh AbulG'oziy Sulton Husayn.

*(These verses explicitly mention Sultan Husayn Mirza, portraying him as a protector of religion and the world, and celebrating his accession to the throne.)*

In the Istanbul Topkapi Palace manuscript (R.832), in the *“Beginning of the Book's Poetry”* section, the origin and author of the work are presented as follows:

Balx erur dahrg'a ummul-bilod,  
Mazhari islom taqi adl-u dod.

Jumla akobirning edi manzili,  
Sokin erur anda nabiyu vali.

Bo'ldi falak gardishidin dori zulm,  
Xalqi aning bo'ldi giriftori zulm.

Muddati hijrardin o'tib mohu sol,  
“Zod” edi ta'rix dog'i “ayn”u “dol”.

Qal'ayi Balx o'ldi chu darvoza band,  
Poyayi zulm o'ldi bag'oyat baland...

Qo'yma talab yo'lida tab'ingni sust,  
Ayla bu azmingni tamomi durust...

Qissai Yusufni tamom ayla nazm,  
Bu ish aro qil bari azmingni jazm.

Sendin o'tub Homidiy bil ro'zgor,  
Qolg'ay ochun safhasida yodgor.

Banda o'shal holda qildim shuru',  
Shukr qilib tangriga aylab ruju'.

Erdi chu xotirga musammam bu azm,  
Ayladi bu qissani turkiyga nazm.

Kimki o'qusa dag'i bitisa muni,  
Fotihaye birla sog'ing'ay meni.

*(This section describes the history of Bactria, the social and moral context, and introduces the story of Yusuf, mentioning that the work is rendered in Turkic verse and attributed to Homidiy.)*

In the Paris manuscript copied in 971 Hijri / 1563 CE, the above verses appear in slightly different forms:

“zod/ض” was the date, dagh “ayn/ع” and “dol/د”

Muddati hijratdin o'tub moh-u sol ...

Bor edi ko'ngulga burundin bu azm,  
Turkiy tili birla ani qilsa nazm. ...

Qissai Yusufni tamom ila nazm,  
Turkiy tili birla qilib azm jazm. ...

Qolg'ay ochun safhasida yodgor,  
Sendin o'tub Ahmadiy bil ro'zgor. ...

Erdi chu xotirg'a musammim bu azm,  
Ayladi bu qissani dar silki nazm. ...

Kimki o'qusa-u bitisa oni,  
Fotihayi birla sog'insa meni.

*(In this copy, some verses are slightly altered; the term “dar silki” is used instead of “durbek,” reflecting the original phrasing.)*

In the manuscript copied in 1024 Hijri / 1615 CE, preserved in the Uzbek Academy of Sciences, Institute of Oriental Studies, inventory №1433, all the verses about Bactria are present. However, in this copy, the verses appear as follows:

“zod/ضاد” date taqi “he/حی”-u “dol/دال”

Muddati hijratdin o’tub moh-u sol ...

Qolg’ay zamon safhasida yodgor,

Sendan o’shal qissa o’tub ro’zgor. ...

Erdi chu xotirda musammin bu azm,

Aylodi bu qissani durbek nazm.

Kimki o’qusa-u bitisa muni,

Fotihaiy birla sog’ing’ay meni.

(In this manuscript, some words are written as “durbek,” but according to the older copies and textual analysis, the correct reading should be “dar silki.” The change to “durbek” reflects later alterations by copyists, not the original author.)

To clarify the question of the work’s authorship, attention must be given to the three-month siege described in the poem and the location where it took place, as deduced using the abjad numeral system. In particular, the line: “Zod edi tarix taqi he-u dol” corresponds to Hijri 812 / 1409 CE. However, no historical chronicles or works from that period provide any record of such an event. For example, neither *Matla’ al-sa’dayn*, *Ravzat us-safo*, nor *Habib us-siyar* mention this siege. Scholar Vohid Juzjoniy also emphasizes that no primary sources document this event.

Historical accounts from the Timurid period indicate that in Hijri 812 / 1409 CE, Shahrukh Mirza traveled from Herat to Balkh, Hisor, and Samarkand, assigning governance of these regions to his sons and trusted officials. Importantly, these journeys occurred without warfare or destruction.

In contrast, during the reign of Sultan Husayn Mirza (r. Hijri 873–876 / 1469–1471 CE), several uprisings occurred in the territories under his control, particularly in Hisor, Balkh, and Badakhshan. These rebellions were led by Sultan Husayn Mirza’s relatives, Sultan Mahmud Mirza and Sultan Ahmad Mirza, sons of Sultan Abu Sa’id, and occurred repeatedly over four to five years. During this period, cities in Khorasan, including Balkh, were besieged, and the local population suffered significant hardships.

The historian Khandamir, in his work *Habib us-siyar*, provides a detailed account of the siege of Balkh in Hijri 874 / 1469 CE, including its duration, the events surrounding the rebellion, and the impact on the city. This evidence indicates that the historical siege described in the poem aligns with Sultan Husayn Mirza’s reign, rather than the earlier date derived from the abjad calculation in the line “Zod edi tarix taqi he-u dol.”

Thus, the poem’s account of the siege, when cross-referenced with historical sources, supports the conclusion that the events described reflect the 1469–1471 CE period under Sultan Husayn Mirza, clarifying both the historical context and the potential chronological misattribution in the manuscript.

#### 4. Conclusion

In conclusion, historical evidence and supporting data provide a solid basis for asserting that the poem was composed during this specific period. The separate publication of this work in Turkey under Homidiy’s authorship further underscores that

“*Yusuf and Zulayxo*” is a Chagatai translation of a Persian narrative poem. Regarding the question of authorship, the manuscript preserved in the Topkapi Palace Library—considered the most ancient and reliable copy—should be taken as the primary reference, serving as the foundational source for scholarly study and evaluation of the poem’s origin and composition.

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