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HISTORICAL TRUTH AND THE SEMANTICS OF THE LITERARY TEXT IN FITRAT'S DRAMA "ABULFAYZXON"

Komilova Baxtigul
Urgench Ranch University
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Abstract. This article investigates the relationship between historical truth and literary-text semantics in Abdurauf Fitrat's drama Abulfayzkhan. Using close reading, historical-contextual interpretation, narratological comparison and semantic analysis, it distinguishes the historical referent of the late Ashtarkhanid court from the meanings produced by dramatic dialogue, conflict and characterization. The analysis identifies three interrelated semantic axes: the crisis of legitimate rule, the moral consequences of coercive power, and the collective vulnerability produced by political fragmentation. The drama is treated neither as a transparent historical record nor as arbitrary fiction; rather, its historical material becomes a vehicle for ethical and political reflection. A comparative matrix and a conceptual diagram clarify how historical reference is transformed into literary significance. Findings are interpretive, not frequency-based, and do not claim to reconstruct unverified dialogue or archival facts.

Keywords: Abdurauf Fitrat; Abulfayzkhan; Uzbek drama; historical truth; literary semantics; Jadid literature; legitimacy; dramatic conflict; historical memory.

Introduction

Historical drama occupies an unstable boundary between documentary knowledge and imaginative representation. A named ruler, recognizable dynasty, and historically situated crisis invite the reader to test the work against the past. Yet dramatic language is organized to make conflict visible and to concentrate historical processes into scenes, voices and ethical choices. This dual nature is especially important in the study of Abdurauf Fitrat, whose literary activity is inseparable from the intellectual transformation associated with Jadidism (1, 2).

Abulfayzkhan dramatizes the collapse of political authority in the Bukhara milieu. The title points to a historically identifiable figure, but the drama's central concern is not a complete chronology of his reign. It is the intelligibility of political breakdown: how authority loses moral credibility, how fear replaces trust, and how the fate of the polity becomes entangled with the conduct of its rulers. A historical name thus functions simultaneously as reference and symbol (3, 4)

The research question is: by which textual mechanisms does Fitrat transform historically grounded political events into an argument about power, responsibility and collective destiny? The objective is to identify the semantic layers of the drama, describe their dramatic carriers, and distinguish plausible historical contextualization from interpretation. The study does not present invented statistics, audience surveys or a claim of exhaustive archival verification.

Literature Review

Scholarship on Fitrat commonly situates his writing within Uzbek intellectual modernization, debates over national renewal and the cultural politics of the early twentieth century. Qosimov's

work on national awakening provides a contextual frame for understanding the civic orientation of Jadid writing, while Boltaboyev's studies of Fitrat emphasize the breadth of his literary and intellectual legacy (1, 2). These approaches help explain why a play about an earlier dynasty could speak to a modern readership without being reduced to a coded political pamphlet.

Uzbek literary theory supplies a second frame. Quronov explains the distinction between artistic image and the empirical world, making it possible to treat a historically named character as a literary construction rather than an archival transcript (5). Sulton's discussions of literary art similarly support attention to composition, conflict and the ethical organization of character (6). Historical accounts of Bukhara and Central Asian statehood are necessary for identifying the referential horizon, but they do not by themselves explain the drama's rhetoric (7, 8).

A third body of scholarship concerns the relation between history and narrative. White's discussion of historical representation reminds researchers that the arrangement of events already carries interpretive implications (9). Ricoeur's treatment of time and narrative offers a useful distinction between past occurrence and its later meaningful configuration (10). These theoretical perspectives are used here as analytical lenses, not as proof that Fitrat consciously adopted either author's terminology.

The resulting research gap is methodological: accounts of the play often move quickly from the historical subject to a general statement about tyranny. A more precise reading should identify the intermediary mechanisms—speaker position, conflict structure, evaluative language, and the symbolic work of the ruler's name—through which historical reference acquires dramatic meaning.

Materials and Methods

The primary object is Fitrat's Abulfayzkhan as a historical drama. The unit of analysis is the dramatic situation: a conjunction of character position, contested authority and the ethical implications of speech or action. The study uses qualitative close reading, historical-contextual analysis, semantic opposition analysis and comparison of historical and fictional functions. Because the exact edition and page sequence of the primary text have not been supplied, the discussion avoids verbatim quotations and page-specific assertions. The article should be checked against a designated scholarly edition before journal submission (3).

Analysis proceeded in four steps. First, historically referential elements were identified at the level of names, dynastic setting and the crisis of sovereignty. Second, recurrent interpretive oppositions were specified: authority versus legitimacy, fear versus consent, personal survival versus public welfare, and memory versus oblivion. Third, their dramatic functions were mapped onto conflict, characterization and the implied audience's moral judgment. Fourth, alternative explanations were considered, especially the risk of reading twentieth-century reformist politics directly into every eighteenth-century event (1, 5, 9).

The study is interpretive rather than quantitative. Its matrices classify analytical relationships, not counted occurrences. No fictional sample size, statistical significance or fabricated quotations are reported. Reliability is pursued through explicit separation of historical reference, observable dramatic structure and interpretive inference.

Results

4.1. Historical reference as an anchoring device. The ruler's proper name and the Bukhara political setting establish a recognizable historical horizon. They give the dramatic conflict a

public scale: a dispute at court is not merely domestic disagreement but a sign of institutional weakness. Historical specificity therefore lends urgency to the plot while leaving the playwright free to select and intensify meaningful episodes (3, 7).

4.2. The semantic transformation of authority. The central opposition is not simply between a good and a bad individual. It is between the possession of power and the justification of power. A sovereign can command, but command alone does not establish legitimacy. Dramatic tension arises when obedience is secured through insecurity and suspicion rather than confidence. In this reading, the ruler becomes an emblem of a political order unable to reproduce the moral conditions of its own survival (5, 6).

4.3. Fear and the erosion of political language. A court structured by distrust changes the meaning of speech. Counsel can be heard as threat; loyalty can become strategic performance; silence can signify caution rather than agreement. These are semantic effects of the dramatic situation, not claims that every such utterance is historically documented. The play's language makes the audience attend to the gap between what power demands and what persons can safely say (3, 10).

4.4. Collective consequence. The historical frame expands the ethical horizon beyond the ruler. Decisions taken within a narrow circle carry consequences for the larger community. This displacement from individual motive to public cost gives the drama its civic dimension. The downfall of authority is represented as a social tragedy because private calculations and institutional fragility reinforce one another (1, 2, 8).

Table 1. Historical reference and literary-semantic transformation

Historical layer	Dramatic transformation	Interpretive effect
Named ruler and dynasty	Character at the centre of conflict	Power becomes morally examinable
Courtly struggle	Compressed scenes of contested loyalty	Instability becomes perceptible
Crisis of sovereignty	Opposition between command and legitimacy	Political failure becomes ethical issue
Historical distance	Retrospective dramatic framing	Past becomes a warning for the present

The categories in Table 1 are interpretive mappings, not measured frequencies. They show why fidelity to historical setting and literary autonomy are compatible: a work may refer to real conditions while organizing them according to a distinct dramatic argument.

4.5. A semantic network of the drama. The historical name anchors the text, but conflict produces the most consequential meanings. Power is associated with command and vulnerability; legitimacy with trust and obligation; crisis with the failure to reconcile these demands. This network clarifies why the play's significance exceeds biography without requiring that every scene be read as a factual chronicle (5, 9).

Figure 1. Conceptual model of historical-to-literary meaning (author's analytical synthesis)

Historical referent	→	Dramatic mediation	→	Semantic outcome
Bukhara court	→	Conflict, speech,	→	Legitimacy / fear

and ruler		character		/ responsibility

Figure 2. Four interpretive domains (conceptual diagram; not empirical percentages)

HISTORICAL MEMORY	POLITICAL AUTHORITY
Past events as a frame for judgment	Command, legitimacy and coercion
ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY	COLLECTIVE DESTINY
Consequences of choices and silence	Social cost of political fragmentation

5. Discussion

The findings suggest that historical truth in Abulfayzkhan operates primarily as a referential constraint and a source of dramatic plausibility, while literary semantics is produced through selection, contrast and the distribution of moral attention. This distinction prevents two opposite errors. A strictly positivist reading would judge the drama solely by its conformity to a historical chronicle; a purely allegorical reading would erase the specificity of the Bukhara setting. Neither adequately explains the work's combined historical and aesthetic force (7, 9, 10).

The play's historical orientation should also be read in relation to Fitrat's intellectual milieu. Jadid discourse repeatedly returned to education, civic responsibility and social renewal. It is therefore reasonable to consider whether the historical drama creates a reflective distance from which readers can examine failures of governance. However, such a reading is an interpretation supported by contextual scholarship, not evidence that each dramatic figure has a one-to-one contemporary political equivalent (1, 2).

From a semantic perspective, the ruler's name is an index of historical specificity, while the network of oppositions gives the drama broader interpretability. Authority/legitimacy is the organizing contrast; fear/trust explains the breakdown of communication; private interest/public welfare explains why the outcome matters beyond the palace. The categories are interconnected rather than mutually exclusive. A single dramatic situation can activate several layers at once (5, 6).

The analysis also clarifies the limits of comparison with archival history. The historical existence of a ruler or a dynastic crisis does not independently verify a particular dramatic exchange. Direct factual comparison requires an identified primary edition and traceable historical documents. In the absence of these materials, the present study limits itself to the semantics of historical representation and clearly labels contextual inference. This is a methodological strength rather than a weakness concealed by invented citations.

Table 2. Distinguishing evidence from interpretation

Level	What may be claimed	What requires further verification
Historical reference	Named ruler and Bukhara setting	Detailed chronology and particular motives
Textual analysis	Conflict and semantic oppositions	Exact quotations and page locations
Contextual interpretation	Resonance with Jadid concerns	Direct authorial intention for each scene

The practical value of this model extends to university teaching and comparative literary research. Students can distinguish the referential, structural and evaluative layers of historical drama; translators can track how the semantics of power and obligation are conveyed; and future

researchers can compare Fitrat's drama with other historical plays using the same transparent categories. These applications follow from the analytical framework rather than from an experimental intervention.

Conclusion

Fitrat's Abulfayzkhan turns a historically identifiable crisis into a literary examination of legitimate authority and moral responsibility. Historical truth supplies names, setting and a horizon of plausibility; dramatic organization converts that material into a system of ethical and political meanings. The most productive semantic contrasts concern authority and legitimacy, fear and trust, and private calculation and collective welfare. The ruler is therefore both a historically referential figure and a dramatic focus for judging the fragility of power.

The article's contribution is a three-level analytical distinction between historical reference, dramatic mediation and semantic outcome. Its conclusions are qualitative and should not be mistaken for archival verification or statistical findings. Future research should undertake edition-based close reading with exact scene and page citations, and compare the play with historical sources from the period to test the limits of literary transformation.

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