



Article

Some Practical Issues Of Textology

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Abstract: The scientific description of literary manuscripts is a fundamental aspect of philological and cultural heritage studies worldwide. In Uzbekistan, significant efforts have been made since independence to collect, catalogue, and introduce manuscript monuments into scientific circulation, yet a large portion of collections remains undescribed. There is limited integration of modern international standards into the systematic description processes of manuscript funds in Uzbekistan, hindering global accessibility and scholarly utilization. This article aims to analyze the theoretical foundations, historical stages, and practical issues of describing manuscript literary sources, highlighting methodological principles, paleographic indicators, and cataloging standards. The study reviews cataloging approaches, from brief and full to monographic descriptions, examines symbols and terminologies used, and documents contributions by Uzbek and foreign scholars. It identifies current gaps, including incomplete cataloging in many manuscript funds and inconsistent adherence to global standards. The article synthesizes theoretical and practical dimensions of textual description with detailed analysis of paleographic features, language indicators, and historical scripts relevant for dating and authenticating manuscripts. Improving scientific description practices by adopting international standards will enhance the preservation, accessibility, and global recognition of Uzbekistan's manuscript heritage, transforming it into a valuable resource for world literary and historical scholarship.

Keywords: literary source, scientific description, manuscript, fund, catalog, source studies, paleography.

1. Introduction

The issue of scientific description of literary sources is currently one of the priority areas of philological and library research. This process is the main means of studying, preserving and introducing literary heritage into scientific circulation. Through scientific description, the origin of a manuscript or lithographic work, the state of the text, the issue of authorship, and its historical significance are determined. At the same time, description is also important for the recognition of national cultural heritage in the international arena[1]. Manuscripts are of great importance in studying the history and culture of each people. After independence, effective work has been carried out in our country to collect, compile, preserve, and scientifically study manuscript monuments. A number of manuscript catalogs have been published. Manuscript sources are being introduced into scientific circulation. As the textual scholar A. Habibullayev noted in his book "Textual Studies and Source Studies": "It would be extremely difficult to use the thousands of books stored in manuscript collections without a scientifically established, specially developed, and strictly regulated system of rules among specialists in the field[2]. It is impossible to find a necessary work among countless books or to become aware of what is contained in these treasures without the hard work of source scholars". Because the main task of source scholars is to collect, search for, organize and study the ways of scientific use of written sources.

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Any research begins, first of all, with the search for sources. Knowledge of the theory and practical methods of searching for, studying and using these sources guarantees the closest path to the source search. Therefore, the scientific recording, description and cataloging of manuscripts in the manuscript fund is of great importance for researchers in the field[3].

2. Materials and Methods

This study was conducted through a qualitative content analysis of existing literature, historical records, and cataloging methodologies related to the scientific description of manuscript sources. The researcher systematically reviewed Uzbek and foreign scholarly works, manuscript catalogs, and textual studies to analyze methodological principles in manuscript description. The research employed a historical-analytical approach to trace the development of manuscript cataloging from pre-independence descriptive efforts to modern standardized practices[4]. Key methods included analysis of paleographic features such as script type, paper, ink, calligraphy, and decorative styles to determine manuscript origin, authorship, and dating, following traditional orientalist approaches. Data were collected from published descriptive catalogs, including the catalogs of the Abu Raykhan Beruni Institute of Oriental Studies, and reference materials such as "Textual Studies and Source Studies" by A. Habibullayev. Comparative methods were used to evaluate different manuscript description forms, including brief, full, and monographic descriptions, and catalog organization types, such as alphabetical, subject-based, and inventory-ordered catalogs[5]. The study also incorporated practical observation of indexing systems for names, places, works, and authors, as well as descriptive symbols for language and script classification in manuscript cataloging. The methodological framework emphasized the integration of theoretical foundations with practical descriptive techniques to provide a comprehensive analysis of current practices and challenges in textual studies. Overall, the methods applied served to evaluate the effectiveness and limitations of existing manuscript description systems in Uzbekistan and to propose systematic improvements aligned with international standards[6].

3. Results and Discussion

When studying manuscript sources, it is worth mentioning that paleographic signs are important in determining the period to which they belong. The widest field of study of paleography is related to manuscripts. In this, first of all, the time and place of creation of the monument are determined, then the author. After that, the correct reading of the text is started. When determining these, the type of writing at the time of the monument's creation (including the existence of Runic, Sogdian, Uyghur, Khorezm, Tohar, and Arabic writings in Central Asia at different times), spelling, paper, ink type, calligraphy, painting, and page-making methods are taken into account[7]. Knowing which script began to appear in which period is necessary to determine the period to which manuscript sources belong. For example, it is enough to remember where and in which periods the Kufic (widespread until the 10th century, rare until the 15th century), Uyghur (widespread until the spread of Arabic script, less so until the 15th century), Naskh (widespread from the 10th century), Nasta'lik (widespread in the 15th century) pictorial scripts were used. In addition, it is observed that different scripts used at the same time had their own specific functions. For example, Naskh script was considered more necessary for scientific works in Arabic, and Nasta'lik script for literary and historical works in Persian. Naskh script was considered preferable for Arabic quotations in Persian and Turkish texts. The work of describing sources and creating catalogs in manuscript funds began to be carried out gradually after 1917. Planned, systematic and in-depth work on the manuscripts began only after this period. The main reason why such work has not been carried out until now is the lack of funds. The complete development and scientific description of the entire manuscript fund will require several years of hard work and a lot of work[8].

Initially, a group of I. Odilov, A. A. Molchanov, B. S. Sergeyev and A. E. Schmidt carried out the descriptive work. They carried out this work according to the following principle: in addition to the title of the work and the name of the author, a brief annotation, the date of writing the work, the name of the copyist are included. References are given to the catalogs of local and foreign collections available in the library, and, where appropriate, to other literary sources. The absence of chronological information in the description, for example, about the time of writing of the work or manuscript, indicates the impossibility of determining these dates[9].

These basic principles of manuscript description serve as a guide in the process of manuscript description today.

Later, the scope of description in the process of working with manuscripts was somewhat expanded: their annotations were made somewhat more detailed for rare manuscripts, and the provision of official information was expanded, especially for manuscripts of luxurious design or decorated with miniatures, autographs of famous people, etc[10].

Several catalogs have been created on the above principles. Effective work has been carried out and is being carried out by specialists in this area.

The following scientists also carried out descriptive work: I. Odilov, doctoral student (in Arabic literature) V. I. Belyaev, candidate of sciences E. K. Betger, candidate of sciences V. D. Zhukov, candidate of sciences A. N. Kononov, candidate of historical sciences N. D. Miklukho-Maclay, A. A. Molchanov, candidate of Arabic studies M. A. Salye, corresponding member of the Academy of Sciences, doctor of historical sciences prof. A. A. Semenov, candidate of sciences B. S. Sergeyev, candidate of philological sciences O. I. Simirnova, candidate of sciences K. B. Starkova, candidate of sciences A. S. Tveritina, candidate of sciences O. D. Chekhovich, corresponding member of the Academy of Sciences, Arabist and Islamic scholar prof. A.E. Schmidt and E.A. Schmidt[11].

As can be seen from the above list, all three major specialists in the literature of the medieval East - Arabic, Persian-Tajik and Turkic - worked on the description of the manuscripts. Moreover, when describing a particular manuscript, they were not content only with the information in the catalogs of foreign and Russian manuscripts, but often extracted information from other manuscripts or printed works that supplemented the existing indicators or clarified and corrected them[12].

During the many years of work on the manuscripts, many previously completely unknown works of Eastern authors were revealed, rare copies were found - their antiquity, belonging to historical figures, autographs of the authors, as well as magnificent copies in artistic execution created by the great masters of Eastern calligraphy and miniature.

The placement of descriptions of manuscript sources is accepted depending on the year of creation of the works, and if the work is anonymous, then the description of the oldest copy is placed first, and at least descriptions of commentaries, glosses, etc. on these works compiled by later authors are added here[13].

The following symbols are used when describing manuscripts:

1. The letter "b" in eastern names indicates the Arabic bin or ibn;
2. The small number in the dates indicates the Hijri year, the large number indicates the Gregorian year;
3. The format of the manuscripts is expressed by two numbers (small and large) connected by a multiplication sign and indicating the width and length of the volumes in centimeters;
4. The number on the left of the title is the serial number of the description of the work;
5. The number on the right of the title is the inventory number of the work;
6. The denominator of the inventory number indicates the serial number of the work in this source, which includes several works;
7. The italic letters a and u on the left side of the title indicate the language of the manuscript: a-Arabic, u-Uzbek. The absence of a letter indicates that the manuscript is written in Tajik (Persian). Two letters indicate that the manuscript is written in two languages; the letter t indicates that the work is written in Tajik (Persian)[14].

These signs are always used in the process of describing manuscripts. To see this, it is enough to look at the catalogs of manuscripts.

As a result of the work of specialists in the funds, two descriptive catalogs have been published so far, reflecting the funds of our Republic:

1. Collection of Oriental Manuscripts. – Tashkent, 1952–1975.
2. Catalogue of the Manuscript Fund of the Institute of Manuscripts, Academy of Sciences of the Uzbek SSR. – Tashkent, Fan, 1988–1989.
3. In addition, several private (single-author) descriptive catalogs have been published: Including,
4. Ibn Sinoning Sharqshunoslik institutida mavjud asarlari (bibliografiya), –T., O‘z FA nashriyoti, 1955;
5. Manuscripts of Abdurahman Jami’s Works in the Collection of the Institute of Oriental Studies, Academy of Sciences of the Uzbek SSR. – Tashkent, Nauka, 1965.
6. Alisher Navoiy qo‘lyozma asarlari katalogi. –T., Fan, 1970.
7. Alisher Navoiy asarlarining toshbosma nashrlari tavsifi (katalog). –T., 1988.

For each student studying manuscripts, it is important to know, first of all, what is in the catalog of a particular manuscript on the subject of interest to him, what is the chronological framework of the available sources in this field, and finally, in which oriental languages they are written. Therefore, the most important rule describing an oriental manuscript is the content. In all catalogs, descriptions of manuscript works are systematically divided into sections according to their content, regardless of their language and other features. If the same work is available in translations into other languages, all translations are placed in the same section and in the same order so that the reader or researcher can immediately see in which other languages this work is available. The sequence of descriptions within the sections is accepted chronologically, either by the time of the composition of this work or, if this is unknown, by the year of the author's death. The distribution by languages in which the works were written is given in the indexes (by the names of the works) at the end of the collection[15].

In all sections of the catalogs, along with the works, translations from Arabic, Persian-Tajik, and Turkish into Uzbek are also given, which indicates the extensive cultural exchange that has existed between the peoples of the East for many centuries.

There is also a second type of catalogs, which are collections published in book form. These catalogs, called descriptive catalogs, are distinguished by the classification of the manuscripts available in the fund and are very convenient to use. Such classification may be related to the period to which the works in the manuscripts belong or their form (spirit). For example: literature of the XIV-XV centuries, in the style of literature of the XVI century, etc. Or depending on the types of manuscripts: collections, bayozas, prose works, letters, tazkira, stories, history, etc.

Catalog collections are also convenient in that they contain the names of the works, the names of the authors, the names of the calligraphers, and other indicators attached to the publication.

Today, only 30% of the manuscripts have been described. Description work is being carried out quite intensively in the manuscript fund of the Abu Raykhan Beruni Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan. In other manuscript funds, only incomplete lists of existing manuscripts and index cards have been compiled.

Description of manuscripts should be carried out in accordance with world standards. In order to describe a manuscript, an attempt should be made to provide the required information about it as completely as possible, so that there is no room for questions for the researcher reading the description. To do this, the describer should indicate in the description those facts that he could not determine, as well as those that were not determined.

Description of manuscripts is carried out in the form of a brief description, a full description and a monographic description.

Catalogs in which descriptions of manuscripts are given are in the form of an alphabetical catalog, a subject catalog, a catalog based on the order of inventory numbers, and a catalog of the works of an author.

The approximate requirements for the description process are as follows:

1. Manuscripts are pre-processed, recorded in an inventory book and assigned a special number;
2. The name of the source, the time of writing and copying; the author of the work, the copyists are identified;
3. They are entered into index cards filled with the information that must be recorded;
4. The type of paper, type of letter, sheet size, number of lines per sheet, runners, cover and its decoration, and other paleographic features are indicated and recorded in the prescribed manner;
5. The scientific apparatus of catalogs (indices of persons, indices of place names, indices of works, indices of authors, etc.) is compiled for monographic descriptions.

An annotation is made on the external signs characteristic of written sources of different periods. The presence of facts on "abjad" and "dates", year calculation is determined. Approximate sources of finding additional information on a particular source are determined. When determining the date of copying of manuscripts copied without a colophon, it is necessary to conduct a comparative study of the type of paper, style of writing, format, decorative methods, etc. in accordance with the method used in science. The principles of describing manuscripts may differ somewhat from each other in different scientific groups and funds. This, of course, indicates that specialists in this field are in search, and the field itself is constantly developing.

4. Conclusion

Scientific description of literary sources is a complex activity in scientific, cultural and technological terms, and is the foundation for a deep and thorough study of the literary heritage. Although Uzbekistan has made significant progress in this area, the wider implementation of a systematic approach based on international standards remains an urgent issue. Through scientific description, literary sources can find their place not only as national, but also as world cultural heritage.

In conclusion, the scientific description of literary sources is essential for preserving and introducing the nation's manuscript heritage into scholarly circulation, enabling accurate determination of authorship, dating, and cultural significance. This process not only supports philological and historical research but also contributes to recognizing Uzbekistan's literary heritage as part of world culture. Despite considerable achievements, including systematic cataloging and paleographic analysis, only 30% of manuscripts have been described, indicating the need for further work using international standards. Continued improvement in methodological approaches and detailed documentation will enhance the accessibility and scholarly use of these invaluable literary and historical resources.

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