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# National Literary Tradition In Uzbek Novel Writing (On The Example Of Abdulla Qodiriy's Novel “O‘Tkan Kunlar” / “Days Gone By”)

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**Abstract:** This article is dedicated to studying the innovative literary contributions of Abdulla Qodiriy, who laid the foundation for Uzbek national novel-writing, through an exploration of folk oral traditions and the epic conventions of Alisher Navoi's Khamsa. The depiction of characters in Qodiriy's works reflects the achievements of 20th-century Uzbek literature, which, in essence, stem from the rich artistic experience embedded in folk oral creativity. The novel genre in Uzbek literature emerged by creatively adapting and utilizing these epic descriptive traditions. Qodiriy's novels also originated in this way. The reality portrayed in O'tkan kunlar (Days Gone By) reflects a significant period in Uzbek history—namely, the collapse and crisis of the khanates. Hence, the creation of this novel was supported by the artistic tools of both oral and written literary traditions. The article clarifies the significance of Qodiriy's literary experiments in establishing national artistic thought within Uzbek novel-writing.

**Keywords:** Tradition, literary tradition, epic tradition, literary influence, romanticism, realistic style, fantastic depiction, creative style.

**Introduction:** Masterpieces of literature and art emerge at specific stages of societal development, often thanks to the works of classical writers, reflecting the multifaceted aspects of their times. However, even as societies decline or enter new historical periods, genuine works of art do not lose their value; rather, they continue to live on, serving as a source of spiritual

wealth and aesthetic education for future generations. In the process of representing real life, literature and art constantly enrich and refine their methods, forms, and techniques of depiction. Accordingly, the concept of literary tradition refers to the accumulation of advanced literary experiences that have passed from generation to generation, born of societal needs. In essence, tradition is a vast treasure trove of various gems. From this trove, each individual can take what they need: mastery in plot construction, creating vivid characters, depicting the inner world of heroes, and so on. In this way, the use of tradition becomes, to a certain extent, an artistic study. Every artist who courageously and realistically portrays objective reality and senses modernity will undoubtedly continue the traditions of their predecessors with dignity. Writers often master artistic skills by following their literary mentors and studying their rich experiences.

Respectful yet critical views on mentors are even more clearly reflected in Alisher Navoi's *Khamsa*. Not a single poem in *Khamsa* exists in which Navoi does not mention the blessed names of Nizami Ganjavi, Khusraw Dehlavi, Ashraf, or Abdurahman Jami, offering them praise while also pointing out certain flaws.

Navoi treated the intellectual and literary treasures created across Greece, India, China, the Arab world, Iran, and beyond with great reverence. He thoroughly studied the works of luminaries such as Firdawsi, Ganjavi, Dehlavi, Jami, and Lutfi, and drew creative inspiration from them. In his treatise *Muhokamat al-lughatayn*, Navoi recounts how extensively he read the works of earlier masters:

"Among their divans, there are few that this humble one has not studied in detail," and wrote of his inspiration: "I have read many of their works multiple times, even memorized some, appreciated the beauty of their odes and ghazals, and even imitated their most refined and eloquent ones" [1,24].

Observation of Uzbek written literature reveals that the emergence of the novel in our classical literature is tied to three major developments: the appearance of poetic epics, the formation of prose, and the rise and historical evolution of realism. In some national literatures, the advent of realism is often associated with the emergence of satire. In this regard, the second half of the 19th century marked a significant stage in Uzbek educational literature, with the satirical works of writers such as Muqimi, Furqat, Mahmud, Zavqi, and Avaz O'tar playing a vital role in the establishment of realism in Uzbek literature. These developments also laid the groundwork for future Uzbek novels.

The classical examples of epic poems in our written

literature are the works included in Alisher Navoi's *Khamsa*. The emergence of realism is linked to the excellent prose work *Baburnama*, as well as the literary legacies of Muqimi, Furqat, Zavqi, and undoubtedly Fitrat, Cholpon, Qodiriy, and Hamza. Collectively, these literary efforts created a fertile environment for the rise of the Uzbek novel.

It is well known that Uzbek written literature boasts nearly a thousand years of history. Alisher Navoi's work represents the culmination of this long historical period and the pinnacle of literary development. His many works, especially the epic poems in *Khamsa*, attract attention as the synthesis, development, and refinement of earlier literary traditions and aspirations. In the past, when there were no novels in Uzbek literature, the epic works included in *Khamsa* essentially fulfilled the function of a novel. Given that Navoi's creative style is rooted in romanticism, and that romanticism preceded the emergence of realism in Uzbek literature, it becomes clear that, in a way, Navoi's poetic epics served as the equivalent of novels in verse [4, 50–51].

While analyzing the poem *Farhod and Shirin*, N. Mallaev emphasizes that Farhod has reached the level of a "perfect epic character" and justly notes: "As a result, the work resembles a poetic novel" [3,443].

It is natural for every literary work to draw nourishment from both oral and written literary traditions. In this sense, when discussing the literary connections between Alisher Navoi and Abdulla Qodiriy, the nature and path of this creative influence become apparent. Through inspiration and admiration for the great poet's work, we can observe the stages of development in Qodiriy's artistic mastery.

Typically, when comparing the works of two writers, aspects such as similarities in plot, methods of character creation, and the authors' modes of thinking are examined. Abdulla Qodiriy approached the accumulated experience and rich traditions in our literary history with great respect. At the same time, through his creative exploration, he elevated these traditions to a new qualitative level, setting a model of literary excellence. As a talented and innate artist, Qodiriy did not limit himself to the knowledge gained from his predecessors but progressed far beyond them.

When studying a particular work from the perspective of literary influence, comparing it only with works of the same genre would be one-sided. Indeed, literary influence is a broad and multifaceted concept: works from various genres can influence a single work, and this is natural. In this regard, in *O'tkan kunlar* (*Days Gone By*), we observe not only the influence of prose works or epically descriptive poems but also that of oral folk

literature and written works from diverse genres. Therefore, it is evident that Qodiriy was inspired not only by the art of epic description found in Navoi's poems but also by their lyrical beauty.

The very fact that Abdulla Qodiriy likens Otabek and Kumush to the Farhod and Shirin of the new era shows the immense popularity of Navoi's work among the people, its cherished status for the author, and, naturally, its direct and indirect influence on O'tkan kunlar. But that's not all. Both Farhod and Shirin and O'tkan kunlar occupy a special place in the literary legacies of Navoi and Qodiriy. Taking into account that through the characters of Farhod and Otabek, Shirin and Kumush, the authors created ideal representations of a young man and woman, we can conclude that these works shed light on Navoi's and Qodiriy's aesthetic views, their perception of the world and humanity, their intellectual scope, artistic standards, and many other issues related to their lives, creativity, personalities, and worldviews.

There are many shared traits between the images of Farhod and Otabek, Shirin and Kumush. Both authors depict their protagonists with particular affection and love. They embodied in these characters all the noble qualities they themselves possessed or admired in others, as well as the ideals they dreamed of. After all, a literary character never entirely mirrors a real person—they are somewhat idealized.

It becomes evident that Farhod and Shirin as well as Otabek and Kumush are, to a certain extent, idealized characters created by Navoi and Qodiriy. However, the authors employed two distinct creative methods in crafting their works: Navoi used a romantic method, while Qodiriy adopted a realistic approach. If Navoi, in composing Farhod and Shirin, drew upon the heroic romantic epics of oral and written literature, Abdulla Qodiriy not only relied on the traditions of oral folk art and classical Uzbek literature, but also benefitted from the artistic achievements of both modern Eastern and Western novel-writing.

In this regard, although there are commonalities between the protagonists of these two works, it is natural that there are also significant differences. For instance, Farhod is portrayed in an elevated romantic style, imbued with elements of exaggeration and fantastical imagery, whereas the image of Otabek is crafted in accordance with the principles of realism. In Navoi's interpretation, Farhod and Shirin are not merely divine symbols of love and loyalty. They are, first and foremost, vivid and unique embodiments of spiritual perfection and inner beauty.

"Just as Navoi did not separate spiritual beauty from physical beauty, he also believed that knowledge and

skill should be intertwined. In other words, if a spiritually mature person is also physically beautiful, that is considered complete perfection. Similarly, if a learned person is also skilled, or if a craftsman possesses knowledge and wisdom, this constitutes true completeness." All these qualities are embodied in Farhod: he possesses knowledge of all sciences and is familiar with all crafts. He is not only spiritually mature, but also physically strong and handsome, brave and resolute [5,39].

We can observe these very same qualities in Otabek. Though he may not have mastered every science of his time as Farhod had, he is nevertheless sufficiently educated. Through his engagement in trade, he has traveled not only within various regions of his own country but also to Russian cities. He has gained firsthand insights into the lives of the people and the workings of state governance, making him worldly, experienced, broad-minded, and deep in thought and reflection. He is composed, courteous, courageous, noble, brave and fearless, considerate, honorable, and dignified—in short, a true son of his era.

In Farhod and Shirin, the portrayal of romantic adventure takes the lead: setting out in search of Shirin, Farhod faces numerous adventures—he travels to Greece and meets Suhaylo, defeats a dragon, Ahriman, and an iron-bodied warrior, obtains Jamshid's goblet, speaks with the sage Socrates, and unlocks the secrets of Alexander the Great. This constitutes the first stage of events. The second stage begins when Farhod sees Shirin's reflection in a mirror and the trials he endures on his path to reach her.

Although Otabek, unlike his predecessor, comes to Margilan not in search of love but for trade, he nevertheless falls for a girl whose beauty is said to be "without equal." His fortunate and unfortunate adventures begin from that point. The temporary relegation of the love theme to second place in the narrative shows that the writer did not merely imitate folk epics but chose a creative path of his own. Thus, in mastering tradition, the author did not rely on imitation, but approached it with innovation.

While Farhod battles dragons, Ahriman, iron warriors, and rivals like Khisrav in legendary, fantastical encounters for the sake of his love, Otabek too overcomes his enemies—Homid, Mutal the wrestler, and Sodiq—in an uneven but heroic struggle. This, too, constitutes an epic, a great act of heroism. Farhod remains composed even when confronted with deception and imprisonment by his rival Khisrav, confidently responding to his challenges, countering his words with sharp retorts and layered wit that leave Khisrav speechless.

"The harsher Khisrav's accusations, the more calmly Farhod answered them. Khisrav saw such courage in him. His words sparkled like scattered pearls. Khisrav was dazed, feeling as if a fire had ignited within him. 'A wretch in chains dares to reply with such defiance to a king like me, even when the branches of his life's tree are broken? Such insolence deserves a death sentence, so that no beggar from the mountains or valleys dares speak so boldly before a sultan again!' he thought.

...They brought him to a place where a gallows was raised, with wood and fire prepared. 'Shall such an innocent die like this?!' cried the people, and a great uproar arose.

...Not only Khisrav's close confidants, but everyone was astonished by Farhod's knowledge, bravery, and fearlessness. The crowd wept, knowing he had no protector and did not deserve such a fate" [2, 516; 519–520]. Fearing both the uproar among the people and the divine light he perceived on Farhod's face, Khisrav cancels his death sentence and orders him imprisoned in Salosil instead.

Likewise, Otabek is falsely accused by Homid of rebelling against Khudoyorkhan and is arrested along with Mirzakarim Qutidor. They are brought for interrogation before the Margilan governor. "While Otabek showed nothing but confusion, Qutidor was visibly frightened, his face pale" [6,71]. Otabek's courage, bravery, and heroism are revealed in his dialogue with Musulmonqul—not through authorial narration, but through the awe and admiration of other characters. When master craftsman Alim hears that his friend fought alone against three enemies, he exclaims in astonishment: "Subhanallah! What a heart you have, Otabek!" [6, 253], calling this act "a heroism that defies belief" [6, 253]. Learning about the lion-hearted Otabek from master Alim, Qutidor finds himself both terrified and amazed at Otabek's daring spirit [6, 261]. He and his wife continue to praise Otabek's "extraordinary bravery" late into the night, offering prayers in his name.

Mihinbonu and Shirin are amazed by Farhod's angelic manners, profound knowledge, broad worldview, politeness, and elegance—despite his appearance in the rags of a beggar. They begin to realize that Farhod is no ordinary man. At the banquet held in honor of Mihinbonu, Farhod, emboldened by wine, engages in intellectual exchanges with the princess's learned and skilled maidens, demonstrating the depth of his knowledge and abilities, astonishing everyone once more.

Similarly, during a gathering at Ziyō Shohichi's house, Otabek earns the praise of all those present with his

intellect, broad outlook, deep and meaningful words, refined manners, humility, and the good education and upbringing he demonstrates. Another trait that links Farhod and Otabek is their devotion to the people. Although Farhod is a prince and Otabek the son of a high-ranking official from a prosperous family, both stand out for their patriotism, service to the nation, and compassion for the public.

From a young age, Farhod is portrayed as someone who:

- Cares about the people and tries to ease their suffering;
- Finds pain in the pain of others;
- Feels sorrow for the nation's sorrow;
- Despite being stronger than an elephant, does not harm even an ant;
- Takes upon himself the blows of fate.

These qualities indicate that Farhod belongs to a noble group of self-sacrificing individuals who live for their country and people. Otabek's concern for the Kipchak massacre, his reproach to his own father—an advisor to the governor of Tashkent—whom he also holds responsible for this tragedy, shows that he too is a person deeply invested in the people's pain and struggle.

Both Farhod and Otabek are brave, courageous, and noble. They possess the heroism to defeat enemies far stronger than themselves. Both friends and foes acknowledge their valor. However, both are powerless in the face of deceit and trickery—this stems from their deep trust in human nature. As a result, both fall into skillfully plotted traps of betrayal. Farhod is misled by the false news of Shirin's death, which ultimately leads to his own demise. Similarly, a forged divorce letter temporarily separates Otabek and Kumush.

The depiction of the two elderly women—Yosuman and the treacherous Jannat, whose name ironically contrasts her evil nature—evokes horror in the reader. These characters are not just traditional representations of wicked old women; one has enough cunning to deceive even wise men like Buqro Hakim and to cause Farhod's death. The second, Jannat, is likewise endlessly deceitful. These malicious elements in Navoi's epic serve specific artistic purposes—and the same roles are mirrored in O'tkan kunlar, illustrating Navoi's influence on Qodiriy.

There are also many similarities between Shirin and Kumush. Both are highly accomplished women of their time: intelligent, virtuous, uniquely beautiful, refined in manners, loyal in love, faithful in their vows, determined in affection, courageous, and dignified. In short, they embody all the finest qualities of the ideal woman. Shirin and Kumush are the kinds of women that any man

of any era might dream of.

Abdulla Qodiriy's literary success and authorial skill lie in the fact that he not only admired the creation of idealized heroes like Farhod and Shirin, who embody the dreams and hopes of the people, but he also succeeded in creating Otabek and Kumush—equally refined characters—crafted with such talent that they could stand as counterparts to these legendary figures. The fact that Otabek and Kumush became widely celebrated, inspiring poets and songs, shows that Qodiriy enriched the gallery of beloved and immortal characters like Farhod and Shirin, Layli and Majnun, Bahrom and Gulandom, Vomiq and Uzro, Ashiq Gharib and Shahsanam, Alpomysh and Barchin.

These character traits and narrative techniques, rooted in the oral and written literary tradition of the Uzbek people and integral to epic-style prose, were reworked by Qodiriy through the lens of realism. As he himself stated, he always kept the reading public in mind while writing. With this novel, he aimed to draw the people toward innovation, while also taking into account the taste and intellectual level of a readership still nourished by medieval epic and storytelling traditions. Thus, he consciously employed classical literary methods.

In short, *O'tkan kunlar*, in terms of language and expression, serves as a golden bridge between old prose and new realistic prose—between the classical literature of the past and the emerging Uzbek literature of the modern era.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Abdulla Qodiriy did not merely transfer Alisher Navoi's traditions into prose; rather, through a creative and innovative approach, he built upon them to produce a new and elevated example of the realistic novel genre grounded in epic imagery.

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