



THE HARMONY OF HISTORICAL TRUTH AND ARTISTIC FICTION

(Sultan Husayn Bayqara and Asad Ismatov)

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Abstract

This article discusses the creative activity of great actors who left a bright mark on the formation of Uzbek theater with their talent.

Keywords: A. Ismatov, R. Khamroyev, Charles-Antoine, Louis Lumière, Auguste Lumière, art, theater, performance, culture, national spirituality, national color, tradition, patriotism, national pride, troupe, theatrical performance, director, cinematograph.

Introduction

On February 13, 1895, the Lumière brothers patented their invention called the “Cinematograph”, and on March 22, the first public film screening was held in Paris. The official birthday of cinema, however, is considered to be December 28, when the first commercial screening of the Lumière films took place at the Grand Café in Paris.

The Lumière brothers are regarded as the legendary “fathers” of French cinema, the individuals who opened the doors of the film world to the entire globe. They shot the first motion pictures and projected them onto the screen. Approximately 1,800 reels filmed by the Lumières are preserved in the French Cinematheque. These reels represent the first steps and the historical development of cinematic art.

The Lumière brothers not only invented a device, but also carried out a true revolution in the field of art. The great responsibility of laying the foundation for both cinema as an art form and as an industry fell upon them. After this invention



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and the projection of moving images, tremendous global interest arose in this new artistic direction.

In 1908, the foundation stone of Uzbek cinema was laid. That year, the enlightened Khan of Khiva, Muhammad Rahimkhan II Feruz, his Prime Minister Islamkhoja, members of his entourage, and the young Khudoybergan Devanov traveled to Saint Petersburg. Khudoybergan purchased a film camera from a wealthy man named Pyotr Yakhum. Upon returning home, he established the first photo and film laboratory in Central Asia.

When cinema first emerged, films were often compared to theater and described as “a photographed performance” or “theater on film.” Although such definitions were inaccurate in essence, they correctly pointed out the close relationship between artistic film and theater.

If a performance is filmed, it remains a theatrical performance with all its inherent characteristics; it does not automatically become a film, because cinema is created according to different principles, laws, and expressive means. However, in creating a human image, feature films adopted the rich experience of theater through the art of acting. Therefore, the first film actors were selected from theater. Later, many national cinematographies continued to involve theater actors in films, and this tradition persists today¹.

Cinema developed by absorbing the experience of all previous arts. From each art form it sought qualities that would help develop its own expressive means. During the formative period of Uzbek feature cinema (in 1927), Fitrat wrote in his article “The Source (Origin) of Art” that cinema, like theater, originated from six magnificent arts: dance, music, literature, painting, sculpture, and architecture. In other words, cinema is the fruitful offspring of six ancient arts².

Many great film actors have worked in Uzbek cinema. Their creative activity is inscribed in golden letters in the history of Uzbek cinema, and the images they created have served as a great school for the formation of national cinema. R.Pirmukhamedov, N.G‘aniyev, O.Jalilov, K.Yormatov, S.Khojayev, L.Sarimsakova, R.Khamroyev, Sh.Burkhanov, and many others created unique

¹ H.Abulqosimova “History and Theory of Cinema, Television and Radio”

² X.Boltaboyev “Fitrat and Art Theory.” O‘zbekiston adabiyoti va san’ati (*Uzbekistan Literature and Art Newspaper*), 1998



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artistic works in cinema and contributed greatly to the development of Uzbek film art. The list of films - "*The Tower of Death*", "*The Qur'an Girl*", "*The Second Wife*", "*The Last Bek*", "*The Young Man*", "*The Oath*", "*Azamat*", "*Nasriddin in Bukhara*", "*Tahir Khan and Zuhra*", "*Alisher Navoi*" - can be continued at length.

Among these actors, there is another beloved artist whose name and creative activity deserve special attention.

It is unlikely that anyone has not seen the film "*Alisher Navoi*" or does not know whom it portrays. Nevertheless, let us briefly recall its content. As you correctly understand, the film is based on historical events and primarily depicts the life and creative activity of Sultan Husayn Bayqara and Alisher Navoi.

Husayn Bayqara was a Timurid ruler. Alisher Navoi was one of the most prominent poets and scholars of his time. Their friendship began in their youth: they studied at the same madrasa under the same teacher. Their friendship endured throughout their lives. Historically, Husayn Bayqara was also a well-educated and accomplished individual, yet destiny decreed for him the fate of a ruler and conqueror. He became one of the many rulers who fell victim to palace intrigues and the corruption of self-serving ministers and courtiers.

In the film, such tragic scenes were masterfully portrayed by film actor Asad Ismatov, though many may not know much about him.

Asad Ismatov, People's Artist of Uzbekistan, was born in 1907 in Andijan. From childhood he was interested in art. Together with his friend, the ghijak player Ghulom Rakhimov, he worked as a tea server in a teahouse at the grape market in Andijan. Their purpose was not merely to earn a living, but to satisfy their passion for art. At that time, teahouses served as cultural centers where merchants, guests, and enthusiasts of politics and art gathered for conversations, humor, and music.

Having lost his father early, Asad devoted himself to the teahouse environment, eagerly serving tea to singers, comedians, and musicians. At seventeen, upon hearing that a drama troupe had been established in Andijan, he joined without hesitation. Over ten years of hard work and dedication, he progressed from an ordinary troupe member to staging performances himself. He performed in plays such as K.Yashin's "*The Orphans*" and "*The Storm*", Schiller's "*Intrigue and*



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Love”, and Gogol’s *“The Government Inspector”*, playing roles such as Khlestakov and the Mayor. He also staged *“Farhod and Shirin”* and *“Two Rich Men and a Servant”* among others.

By this time, film studios such as “Uzbekgoskino” in Tashkent and “Bukhkino” in Bukhara had produced numerous films. Directors began seeking local actors for cinema and traveled to the regions. One such director, A. Usoltsev-Garf, invited Asad Ismatov to appear in the film *“The Oath”*. In 1934, Ismatov moved to Tashkent, where he continued his creative work at the Hamza State Drama Theater and the Muqimi State Musical Drama Theater under the leadership of academician Mamajon Rahmonov.

Over the years, gaining experience and mastery from film to film, Ismatov was invited in 1947 by director Komil Yormatov to play in *“Alisher Navoi”*. The screenplay was written by literary scholar Izzat Sultan and poet-dramatist Uyg‘un (Rahmatulla Otaquziev). Razzoq Khamroyev portrayed Alisher Navoi, while Asad Ismatov played Sultan Husayn Bayqara.

Tall, broad-shouldered, sharp-eyed, and thoughtful, Ismatov naturally embodied the image of a Timurid ruler. Yormatov did not err in choosing him for the role. In one particularly tragic scene-where Sultan Husayn Bayqara mourns his grandson Mo‘min Mirzo-Ismatov’s performance was so powerful that even those who did not understand Uzbek were moved to tears. As Yormatov recalled in his memoir *“My Past”* (1984), the emotional intensity of the scene only grew stronger with each take.

Watching the film, one lives together with the images created by these great artists. Their performances are so convincing that one forgets they are acting. The sorrows of the people, the responsibilities of intellectuals, and the burdens of rulers are revealed so vividly that they feel like one’s own experiences.

Even today, when the film is broadcast again, it reminds us that characters like the self-serving Najmiddins (played by Obid Jalilov), the devoted Navoi (Razzoq Khamroyev), and the conflicted Husayn Bayqara (Asad Ismatov) still symbolically exist among us.



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