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THE STAGES OF THE FORMATION OF LITERARY SCHOLAR MATYOQUB QO‘SHJONOV’S SCIENTIFIC CREATIVE ACTIVITY

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ABSTRACT
This article analyzes the factors that shaped the scientific creativity of Matyoqub Qo‘shjonov, his literary-aesthetic views, and the influence of Russian critical traditions on Uzbek literary studies. The study examines the scholar’s formative environment, intellectual development, and contribution to Uzbek literary criticism. Particular attention is paid to the role of family upbringing, historical circumstances, academic environment, and Eastern literary traditions in shaping his worldview and scientific thinking.
KEYWORDS: *Matyoqub Qo‘shjonov, literary criticism, Uzbek literary studies, Belinsky, journalism, scientific thinking.*

One of the scholars who left a profound mark on the history of Uzbek literary criticism and made a significant contribution to literary studies in the second half of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century was the distinguished critic and academician Matyoqub Qo‘shjonov. As noted by literary scholars: “Destiny granted us two great critics – Ozod Sharafiddinov and Matyoqub Qo‘shjonov. Both began their careers courageously and concluded them with the same intellectual courage. If an anthology of world literary criticism were ever published, including samples from the works of both scholars would be an entirely just decision. Indeed, M. Qo‘shjonov was a courageous critic who creatively assimilated the aesthetic principles of world and Russian criticism and developed them further on the basis of Uzbek literary materials under unique historical conditions” [1; p.192].

During his nearly half-century-long academic activity, M. Qo‘shjonov produced around fifty books and more than five hundred scholarly and journalistic articles. This fact alone demonstrates that the scholar succeeded in creating his own analytical and scientific school within the history of Uzbek literary criticism. From reviews to monographs, he expressed objective views on the most pressing issues of literary history, literary theory, criticism, and the literary process while proposing innovative literary-theoretical ideas. Particularly valuable are his views on the theoretical elements of literary works, creative methodology, literary-aesthetic categories, and the works of major writers such as Sadriddin Ayniy, Hamza, Abdulla Qodiriy, Oybek, Abdulla Qahhor, and Abdulla Oripov, as well as twentieth-century Uzbek prose.

Matyoqub Qo‘shjonov was born into a simple shepherd’s family in the Tashhovuz district of Turkmenistan. In 1946, he entered the Faculty of Philology at Central Asian State University and graduated with honors. Between 1957 and 1960, he worked as a lecturer at the Department of Uzbek Literature of Tashkent State University’s Faculty of Philology. In 1960, he began his career at the Alisher Navoi Institute of Language and Literature, where he advanced from junior researcher to senior researcher, department head, and eventually director. The stages of the formation of his scholarly-literary conception were largely shaped during the Soviet era, when several important factors played a leading role in shaping his worldview and intellectual style. These factors can be summarized as follows:

1. Family environment;
2. The hardships of World War II;
3. Education in Moscow;
4. Literary and scholarly environment.

1.Family Environment and the Formation of the Scholar’s Worldview. Matyoqub Qo‘shjonov was born in 1918 in ancient Khorezm, in the village of Xallang located in present-day Tashhovuz region of Turkmenistan. His parents named him Muhammad Yaqub – Matyoqub with the hope that he would become a pious and virtuous child. From an early age, he became closely attached to books. His childhood and the atmosphere of that period are vividly depicted in his autobiographical work *Dagish*. Undoubtedly, every individual is influenced by certain people and experiences in life. A person’s interest in reading, labor, and creativity is often shaped by these influences. In the case of Matyoqub Qo‘shjonov, his grandmother played a decisive role in introducing him to the world of books. The young boy who held a lamp while his grandmother read books eventually transformed his childhood admiration for literature into a lifelong intellectual devotion. In other words, the service he once rendered to books was later rewarded when books themselves illuminated his life and destiny.

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As scholars have observed: "Matyoqub's childhood coincided with the years of civil war and Stalinist repression brought about by Soviet rule. These tragedies, which brought suffering to countless families, also caused devastation in Khorezm. Matyoqub witnessed and remembered these events in his childhood… His extraordinarily sharp memory and his ability to describe events he had seen sixty years earlier as though they were unfolding before his eyes indicate that literary talent developed in him alongside scholarly ability" [2; p.14].

According to information provided in *Dagish*, Matyoqub Qo'shjonov's uncle Ismoil studied together with Sadriddin Ayniy in a Bukhara madrasa and conversed with Ahmad Donish. His grandmother O'g'iljon opa served at weddings and ceremonies, earning the title of *xalfa*. She read the works of So'fi Olloyor, Khoja Ahmad Yassaviy, Mashrab, and the collection *Qisas ul-anbiyo* during gatherings and received widespread praise for her performances. According to Matyoqub's recollections, O'g'iljon xalfa recited the works of these classical Uzbek authors, deeply infused with Islamic and Sufi enlightenment, with such emotion and distinctive intonation that she spread spiritual enlightenment among the villagers. Matyoqub personally witnessed elderly women and listeners weeping emotionally while listening to her recitations [3; pp.94–95].

Reflecting on the influence of his grandmother, the scholar later wrote: "For me, the primary source of ideology was my grandmother's books and stories. She had read dozens, even hundreds of books. Not only did she read them herself, but she was also capable of sharing their benefit with many others. She narrated meaningful legends and, in my opinion, sometimes even invented stories herself. Now I realize that if I had not been exposed to my grandmother's reading, the advice of Sufi uncles regarding faith and morality, and the exemplary lifestyles of my religious relatives, my literacy would have ended with the closure of the mosque" [3; pp.98–99].

Thus, Matyoqub Qo'shjonov's family lineage was connected with religious scholars and Sufi traditions. His father entrusted his early education to the imam of the village mosque, Mulla Tursun, whom the scholar later described as "a man with a Jadid-like appearance." Although his uncles Matvafo and Matsafo were not highly educated formally, they were respected in the community and referred to with the title "Sufi." One of them regularly called people to prayer in the mosque. Consequently, the scholar grew up in a family environment deeply rooted in both religious and secular educational traditions.

In reality, it was the legends, folk tales, heroic epics, and oral narratives he heard from his grandmother that guided M. Qo'shjonov toward the world of literature and artistic creativity. These epic traditions became a foundational source that shaped his literary consciousness. It can therefore be argued that this influence attached the scholar more strongly to epic literature than to poetry. Works based on meaningful events and encouraging readers to contemplate human life gradually directed him toward scholarly inquiry into issues such as сюжет, composition, form and content, and literary conflict in epic works.

2. The Hardships of World War II

The years of World War II became a decisive turning point in the life and creative formation of Matyoqub Qo'shjonov. His spiritual maturity, expansion of worldview, and deeper understanding of human existence and life philosophy were directly connected with this tragic historical period. The scholar's difficult wartime experiences were later reflected in his memoir-based works through realistic and documentary depictions, which significantly influenced the formation of his journalistic and artistic thinking.

It is known from biographical sources that on May 13, 1942, Matyoqub Qo'shjonov was released from his teaching position and mobilized into the Soviet Army. Consequently, he was forced to spend the most productive years of his youth on the battlefields. Between 1942 and 1945, he actively participated in military operations and served as a skilled sniper. This fact demonstrates not only his courage but also his remarkable psychological endurance and determination.

In his work *"Tepki bosildi…"* ("The Trigger Was Pulled…"), war scenes are portrayed in an extremely emotional and terrifying manner. War is interpreted not as an ordinary historical event, but as a catastrophic tragedy inflicted upon humanity. As the author himself wrote, "nothing can withstand the rain of bullets" [4; p.5]. The battles fought between earth and sky brought unimaginable suffering and destruction to mankind. These descriptions clearly reveal that M. Qo'shjonov experienced the horrors of war firsthand and deeply internalized its devastating consequences.

On the battlefield, he struggled not only with weapons but also with spiritual strength. Alongside fulfilling his military duties, M. Qo'shjonov never abandoned his habit of reading books, reflecting on ideas, and writing. The symbolic image that "bread and books, bullets and pens, paper and soul" coexisted in his military bag [5; p.3] demonstrates that even under wartime conditions he did not give up his intellectual and spiritual needs. This aspect of his personality later became one of the defining characteristics of his scholarly identity.

During the war, M. Qo'shjonov was seriously wounded several times and underwent treatment in military hospitals. His first injury resulted from inexperience, while the second was caused by an enemy sniper's bullet. These incidents illustrate the constant danger surrounding his life. In particular, the severe wound inflicted by a German sniper symbolized the cruelty and merciless nature of war itself.

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Life in the military hospital became not only a period of physical recovery for M. Qo‘shjonov but also a stage of spiritual and intellectual growth. There he met an experienced soldier named Ignatyev, who significantly strengthened the future scholar’s interest in books and science. Under Ignatyev’s influence and advice, Qo‘shjonov seriously began considering dedicating his future to scholarship and intellectual activity. Thus, war, despite its destructive nature, also functioned as a school of life that redirected human destiny toward new purposes and aspirations.

After the war ended, M. Qo‘shjonov did not immediately rush back home. Instead, his desire for education and scientific growth led him to Leningrad. This decision demonstrates that by that time he had already matured as an individual and clearly defined his life goals. Although his first attempts at higher education were unsuccessful, he did not abandon his aspirations and later achieved recognition as a prominent literary scholar and critic.

An important aspect of M. Qo‘shjonov’s wartime memoirs is that they are not merely recollections of personal experiences but generalized artistic-publicistic interpretations of historical truth. In works such as *“Tepki bosildi…”* and *“Alam”* (“Pain”), war is portrayed not only as a historical phenomenon but also as a social catastrophe that deeply wounded the human spirit and shook society as a whole. Through these works, the author succeeded in conveying the psychological trauma, moral suffering, and existential challenges brought about by war.

3. The Influence of Russian Literary Criticism and Literary Scholarship

Biographical information reveals that after returning from the war, M. Qo‘shjonov entered the Faculty of Philology at Central Asian State University. After graduating with honors, he worked in responsible positions at the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan between 1950 and 1953. The dream he nurtured while serving on the battlefront—to study in Moscow—eventually came true when he was recommended for postgraduate study at the Academy of Social Sciences in Moscow in 1953. During his studies, he distinguished himself among his peers through his broad intellectual outlook and exceptional talent. The books he had loved since childhood, the life experience he had accumulated, and the philosophical reflections hidden within reality gradually guided him toward the world of science and literary scholarship.

During his postgraduate studies at the Academy of Social Sciences, influential scholars such as Mikhail Khrapchenko played a crucial role in shaping M. Qo‘shjonov’s personality and scientific worldview. The scholar himself recalled: “First of all, I began to study deeply the works of V.G. Belinsky on Russian poets and writers. My method of study was such that I nearly memorized every work of the great critic and reread the literary works he analyzed again and again, comparing them with his conclusions. For me, the most important issue was which aspects of the literary work the critic focused on and what he considered important or unimportant” [6; p.37].

Through this process, M. Qo‘shjonov mastered Belinsky’s analytical style profoundly. Initially planning to write a dissertation devoted to Belinsky’s творчество, he was eventually motivated by national pride, love for his homeland, and devotion to Uzbek literature to dedicate his research to the works of Oybek. As he himself stated: “I knew that no critic had analyzed Oybek’s works at the level of Belinsky’s analytical style. Therefore, it seemed necessary to me that Uzbek literary studies should produce such a critical approach to Oybek” [6; p.38]. This research on Oybek’s creativity demonstrated the emergence of a unique critical voice and an original analytical style within Uzbek literary criticism.

Generally, literary theory textbooks before the twentieth century focused primarily on the laws of poetry. However, gradually it became clear that epic works also possessed their own aesthetic significance, artistic principles, and literary-theoretical patterns. In this regard, Russian literary scholarship played an important role in shaping Uzbek literary theory. Indeed, many theoretical principles found in modern Uzbek literary studies were initially developed on the basis of Russian literary criticism and later enriched through examples drawn from national literature.

Researchers note that “Russian critics had a strong influence on the formation of M. Qo‘shjonov’s critical views. When beginning literary analysis, he often followed Belinsky’s method by first introducing the literary work itself. This approach made his critical writings more engaging and accessible to readers” [1; p.194].

Indeed, the works of Belinsky, Chernyshevsky, and Dobrolyubov greatly influenced twentieth-century literary-critical thought and contributed to the improvement of scientific-theoretical analysis. Their traditions also encouraged Uzbek literary criticism to place greater emphasis on artistic mastery and aesthetic depth.

In the twentieth century, Uzbek literary criticism developed stronger individual styles and analytical sophistication. The influence of Belinsky, Chernyshevsky, and Dobrolyubov became especially visible in the works of Matyoqub Qo‘shjonov. When analyzing literary texts, he often followed Belinsky’s approach of retelling the plot briefly before proceeding to critical interpretation. This technique made literary criticism more understandable and appealing to a broad readership.

M. Qo‘shjonov himself explained this method as follows: “Our critics mastered the technique of reconstructing literary characters through critical interpretation. While the writer shares the artistic idea with the reader once, the critic, through analysis, allows the

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reader to participate in the aesthetic value and meaning of the work a second time. In this way, the critic strengthens the influence of literature itself" [1; p.194].

This method of "critical reconstruction" entered Uzbek literary criticism in the 1960s and 1970s largely through deep study of Belinsky's creative heritage. Qo'shjonov used concise and vivid retelling of literary events to revive artistic images in the reader's imagination after the writer had already done so.

The Uzbek writer Shukur Xolmirzayev once recalled: "We had heard that Matyoqub Qo'shjonov was called 'the Uzbek Belinsky.' After reading his review of Odil Yoqubov's novella *Muqaddas* in the newspaper *Qizil O'zbekiston*, we were astonished by his analytical mastery. Just as deeply as the novella impressed us, the review impressed us equally, because it seemed as though the literary work had been rediscovered through criticism" [7; p.153].

Following Belinsky's analytical traditions, M. Qo'shjonov intentionally avoided excessive academic dryness and instead preferred a more literary-publicistic style. As a result, his works became accessible to readers from different educational backgrounds. The compositional structure and expressive manner of his book *"Qalb va qiyofa"* ("Soul and Image") remind readers of Belinsky's famous articles on Pushkin and Lermontov.

Moreover, when discussing facts, details, and compositional harmony in literary works, M. Qo'shjonov relied heavily on the theoretical views of N.G. Chernyshevsky. Referring to Chernyshevsky's metaphorical statement that "even the most beautiful clothes hung on a peg may look unattractive; they become beautiful only when worn by a healthy and graceful living person" [8; pp.86–87], he emphasized the importance of harmony among literary components.

Thus, M. Qo'shjonov should not merely be viewed as a follower of Russian critics, but rather as a scholar who creatively adapted their traditions to the Uzbek literary environment. He introduced deep analytical thinking, emotional sincerity, and aesthetic objectivity into Uzbek literary criticism, thereby establishing himself as one of the most influential critics in twentieth-century Uzbek literary scholarship.

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