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Tradition, Essence, And Artistic Function In The Kokand Literary Milieu

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Abstract: This article analyzes the literary traditions that played a significant role in the formation and development of the Kokand literary milieu, examining their essence and functional characteristics within imaginative literature. It explores the contribution of the Kokand literary environment to the development of classical Uzbek literature, the literary and aesthetic connections among creators, the master-apprentice tradition, and the refinement of genres and stylistic features. Furthermore, the article highlights the role of these traditions in shaping artistic thought, systems of imagery, poetic expression, and the manifestation of individual creative identity. It also examines the relationship between traditionalism and creative innovation within the Kokand literary milieu from both literary-historical and artistic-aesthetic perspectives.

Keywords: Kokand literary milieu, literary tradition, classical literature, artistic thought, poetics, creative continuity, master-disciple tradition, artistic function, literary-aesthetic views.

Introduction. During this period, a literary school — known in modern Uzbek literary studies as the "Kokand literary milieu" — took shape; under the material and spiritual patronage of the gifted lyric poet Amir Umar Khan, a creative circle comprising nearly a hundred poets emerged. The era of Amiriy is remembered as the initial peak in the development of the Kokand literary milieu. According to Vadud Mahmud, the literature of the Amiriy era represents the second golden age of Chagatai literature. Abdurauf Fitrat, meanwhile, remarks of this period: "In the time of Umar Khan, literature experienced a resurgence" [1;59].

Literature review. Among the creative figures of this period were talented masters of the written word — such as Fazliy, Ado, Goziy, Hoziq, Mushrif, Fayziy, Akmal, Maxmur, Gulxaniy, Oshiq, Vazir, Nola, Ma'yus, Mujrim, Ramziy, Afsus, Miriy, Nodir-Uzlat, Ravnaq, Hotif, Xijlat, Xon, Nodira, Uvaysiy, and Dilshodi Barno — who wrote in both the Uzbek and Tajik languages. The development of "devon" (collected poetry) literature, historiography, and the "tazkira" (biographical anthologies of poets) served as the primary literary trends of this era. Fazliy's "tazkira", titled "Majmuai Shoiron" — an anthology of poems — represented a significant innovation within Uzbek literature.

Traditional forms from classical Eastern lyric poetry — such as "tatabbu'", "tavr", "taxmis", and "mushoira" — were employed to a high degree, fostering a spirit of healthy creative rivalry within the literary milieu. Poetic genres such as the "ghazal", "muxammas", "qasida", and "masnaviy" served as the primary lyrical forms and were widely practiced. Notable works in the "doston" (narrative poem) genre were also produced, including Nodir's seven-part "Haft Gulshan", Hozik's "Yusuf va Zulayho", and Uvaysiy's "Karbalonoma" and the historical "doston" "Voqeoti Mukhammadalixon" [2; 9-10].

Analysis and results. Satire — a branch of humorous literature — flourished through the works of sharp-witted writers such as Gulkhaniy and Makhmur. The fact that Makhmur — who authored nearly 70 satirical works across various genres — focused his satire on members of society's socio-politically influential classes can, to some extent, be seen as evidence of a degree of creative freedom during the era of Amiriy. By composing multiple works centered on the satire of a single individual, Makhmur pioneered the tradition of the "satirical cycle" in Uzbek literature (e.g., "Avsofi Kozi Mukhammadrajabi Avj" and "Gazali Qozi Mukhammadrajabi Avj dar borai xud"; "Avsofi Hoji Niyoz" and "Gazali Hoji Niyoz dar borai xud"; "Dar sifati Koziyi Xoja Sagbon" and "Gazali Koziyi Xoja Sagbon", among others). This tradition later appeared in the works of Muqimiy, another prominent figure in the literary milieu of Kokand (notably in "Hajvi Viktorboy", "Hajvi Viktor", and "Voqeai Viktor"). Meanwhile, Gulkhaniy's "Zarbulmasal"— created under the initiative and patronage of Amiriy — stands as a unique literary achievement; it incorporates nearly 400 folk proverbs and aphorisms into a cohesive, apologue-style narrative infused with satirical elements — a

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work with no direct parallel in either Uzbek or classical Eastern literature. Within the literature of this period in the Kokand literary milieu, there are many poets — such as Ado, Behjat, Nola, Xijlat, Mayus, and Hotif — who were recognized for their talent but whose literary legacies remain insufficiently studied; conducting an in-depth, scholarly investigation into their work is one of the tasks currently facing the field of Uzbek literary studies [2; 10].

Reflecting on the characteristics that distinguished the Kokand literary milieu from others in the region, Academician Aziz Kayumov emphasizes the leading position held by the Uzbek language within this environment: "...it was precisely in the Kokand literary milieu that the Uzbek language secured a leading role amidst the other official languages of the region — Arabic and Persian-Tajik. Many Uzbek poets flourished here, compiling "devans" (collected works) in their native Uzbek tongue — poets rightfully led by figures such as Amiriy and Nodira" [2; 11]. Although the Kokand Khanate was officially abolished and replaced by the Fergana Region by 1876 — following the era of conquest by Tsarist Russia (the last quarter of the 19th century and the early 20th century) — the literary life and creative collaborations that had taken shape within the Khanate's geographical and administrative boundaries persisted. Kokand continued to serve as a creative hub where numerous poets operated in a collective manner. The diversity of the literary life of the era was reflected in the work of the writers who emerged onto the creative scene during this period. During this period, many poets emerged, such as Muqimiy, Muhyi, Furqat, Nisbatiy, Zavqiy, Fansurulloh Xisrav, Haziniy, Gurbat, Yoriy, Nusrat, Muntazir, Pisandiy, Tahayyur, Zoriy, Qoriy, Rojiy, Muhayyir, Nayyiriy, Mirzoi Xuqandiy, Mahmud Hakim Yayfoniy, Muhsiniy, Shaydoi Huqandiy, and Mavlaviy Yuldosh [2; 12].

Muqimiy regarded Amiriy as his mentor in poetry and expressed with pride that he had become a master of the craft:

Nazar qilganda nazmingg'a Muqimiy,
Nazokatda Umarxondin qolishmas [3; 203].

The traditions of satire — a characteristic feature of classical literature from the era of Amiriy — were continued in the works of Muqimiy and Zavqiy. Muqimiy's satirical pieces include "Voqeai Viktor", "Saylov", "Tanobchilar", "Maskovchi boy ta'rifida", "To'yi Iqonbachcha", "Dar shikoyati Laxtin", and "Voqeai ko'r Ashurboy hoji", alongside his humorous works such as "Bezgak", "Pashshalar", "Aroba", and "Loy". Similarly, Zavqiy contributed to this genre with satires such as "Voqeai qozi saylov", "Talading baring", "Hajvi ahli rasta", and "Veksel".

Traditionality is a fundamental characteristic of imaginative literature, as tradition serves as a vital component of literary development. This is particularly evident in classical writing. It is clear that classical Eastern literature — including classical Uzbek literature, and specifically the literary milieu of Kokand — possesses deep roots and a rich, robust tradition. The literary milieu of Kokand is a significant center that breathed new life into classical Uzbek literature by continuing the traditions of Alisher Navoi while incorporating local characteristics — such as a folk spirit, realistic imagery, Islamic concepts, and the distinctive landscapes of the Fergana Valley — and fostering the enrichment of literary language and genres through poets like Amiriy, Nodira, and Uvaysiy. In Fazliy Namangoniy's biographical anthology "Majmuai Shoiron", the ghazals of Amiriy are identified as the primary source of inspiration and the main basis for "nazira" (poetic responses) and "tatabbu'" (imitative composition) within the Kokand literary circle. Amiriy drew inspiration from the works of illustrious thinkers and renowned figures of Persian literature, such as Malikulkalom Lutfiy, Mir Alisher Navoi, Mawlana Fuzuli, Khwaja Hafiz Shirazi, Sa'ib Tabrizi, and Mirza Bedil. He successfully assimilated their creative experiences and produced new works following in their footsteps. Although Amiriy acknowledged the influence of other poetic predecessors on his work, it must be emphasized that Alisher Navoi remained his principal mentor and spiritual guide in the realm of poetry. In his works, Abdurauf Fitrat describes not only Amiriy but also the other poets gathered around Umar Khan of Kokand, noting that "all of them remained devoted disciples of Navoi" [1; 112]. The poetess Dilshod, reflecting on the figures of the Kokand literary milieu in her work "Tarixi Mukhojiron" ("History of the Emigrants"), also observed that "on their creative path, most poets studied the ghazals of the great Emir and king of literature, Navoi" [4; 84].

When characterizing his own ghazals, Amiriy humbly expresses that they are merely rough drafts compared to those of Navoi, stating in a verse: "This ghazal is but a practice piece based on Navoi's collection" [5; 336].

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Examining the “mukhammas” poems — which were often created as “zermashq” (practice exercises based on an existing model) — we see that “takhmis” poems (five-line stanzas) based on Navoi’s ghazals occupy a prominent place in Amiriy’s “divan”. The fact that twenty-four of his Turkic “mukhammas” poems are based specifically on Navoi’s ghazals demonstrates Amiriy’s deep affection for the poetry of Navoi — a master who, without mobilizing an army, conquered the vast expanse from Khitai to Khorasan with his pen [6; 36].

Amiriy follows Navoi in matters of rhyme as well. For instance, in the third stanza of the “mukhammas” from Amiriy’s Turkic “divan” — which begins with the line “Upon seeing the down and the mole on your cheek, a tumult of longing befell me” — purely Turkic words such as “yosh”, “qosh”, and “bosh” serve as rhymes for the word “quyosh” (sun), whereas in the fifth stanza, the poet deemed it appropriate to employ an Arabic rhyming pattern for the word “takallum” (speech).

Moni’ o‘ldi yoshima, vasling tarahhum ayladi,
Shomi hijrondin quyoshdek raf’i anjum ayladi,
Gah itobu noz aylab, gah tabassum ayladi,
Nargising afsun, gulbarging takallum ayladi,
Aqli kul topti firib, ul makri oliyni ko‘rub.

Another poetess who was active during this period and followed in the footsteps of Navoi is Jahon Otin Uvaysiy. In Uvaysiy’s work, the traditions of Navoi, Fuzuli, and Mashrab are consistently upheld. “Tatabbu” (poetic responses) and “takhmis” (five-line stanzas based on another poet’s ghazals) composed in relation to Navoi’s ghazals occupy a significant place in her oeuvre. Uvaysiy’s “tatabbu” poems — such as “Isi”, “Kokuling”, “Gila” and “Tushdi ut” — are rooted in the ghazals of Navoi; in these pieces, she creatively develops Navoi’s traditions regarding both content and form. Overall, the motif of “may” (wine) in the poetry of both Navoi and Uvaysiy is an element of particular significance.

La’ling zakoti may tutub tirguzmasang, ey mug‘bacha,
Dayr ichra men bir hastani ranji xumor o‘lturgusi [7].

Just as the plea of the afflicted heart (the lyrical persona) to the cupbearer — “offer me wine” — is vividly reflected in this line by Navoi, the same scene appears in Uvaysiy’s ghazal as follows:

Uvaysiy tashnalig‘din etti jon beziga, ey soqiy,
Dag‘i mayxonani och, dayr piridan olib ruxsat [8; 79].

The protagonists in the works of both poets are Sufis who have realized that divine enlightenment is essential for viewing life with a clear, discerning eye. Thus, just as it is natural for them to call for “wine” to be poured, it is imperative that they surrender to the intoxication of drinking the “wine” — the wine of divine love — offered by a perfect spiritual guide (whether termed “mughbacha”, “saqi”, or “pir”). In this state of intoxication, they grasp truths that eluded them in their sober state, discovering fresh ideas and realities regarding love and spiritual insight through the benevolence and grace of the “Saqi”. This “wine” represents the light of enlightenment and the true “vintage” of divine love. One who loses their ordinary senses to this “wine” becomes a seeker of truth, capable of viewing the world with the utmost clarity and profound insight.

Huvaydo, a poet of the Kokand literary circle, drew deeply from the works of Alisher Navoi, learning the craft of poetry from him; inspired by Navoi’s “ghazals”, he composed numerous “tatabbus” (poems written in response or emulation), continuing the master’s imagery and metaphors while uncovering fresh, new dimensions within them. Huvaydo composed such responses to a number of Navoi’s “ghazals” — including those titled “Bulmasa”, “Aylab”, “Oqibat”, “Hanuz”, “Topmadim”, “Arz”, “Keldimu”, and “Qilg‘il” — yet these poems stand out for their distinctiveness and enduring freshness.

Verses and lines depicting the reflection of the Beloved shimmering within wine appear frequently throughout the works of Navoi. This is because, in mystical (irfani) poetry, the “Beloved” represents God, “wine” symbolizes love, and the “goblet” serves as a metaphor for the human heart. The purer the goblet, the clearer the wine appears; likewise, the light of the Divine (Haq) manifests within a heart cleansed of the impurities of this world. For this very reason, Alisher Navoi — as early as the very first ghazal of his “Khazoyin ul-Maoniy” (Treasury of Meanings) divan:

Ashraqat min aksi shamsil-ka’si anvorul-hudo,
“Yor aksin mayda ko’r!” – deb, jomdin chiqti sado [9; 10].

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In several couplets and lines by Huvaydo, we also witness an artistic interpretation of this very same mystical truth. In particular, these lines by the poet resonate in harmony with the opening couplet ("matla") of an early "ghazal" by his predecessor.

Bir sado chiqdi qadahdin: "Yorni ko'r mayda", – deb,
"Ko'ra olmassan, – dedi, – to etmaguncha mayni sof" [11; 116].

According to the literary scholar Y.Is'hoqov, the "mukhammas" is the "most frequently composed lyrical genre after the "ghazal" in classical Uzbek literature [12; 127]. Regardless of which poet's "divan" (collected works) from the 19th-century Kokand literary milieu one examines, one invariably encounters numerous "takhmis" — poems composed by expanding upon the "ghazals" of earlier or contemporary poets — that clearly resonated with and inspired the authors. Such evidence testifies to the advanced state of development of "mukhammas" composition.

The Kokand literary milieu stands as a significant literary and aesthetic phenomenon that played a crucial role in the formation and evolution of classical Uzbek literature. The literary traditions established within this environment not only ensured the continuity of classical poetic thought but also laid the groundwork for the emergence of new creative perspectives, modes of artistic expression, and individual approaches to composition. In particular, the master-apprentice relationship, active literary discourse, and the continuity of genres and styles emerge as key factors that define the unique characteristics of the Kokand literary milieu. The essence of the traditions within the Kokand literary milieu lies not merely in the repetition of existing artistic experience, but in its creative reinterpretation and development amidst new historical, social, and spiritual conditions. In this regard, the relationship between tradition and innovation defines the mechanism of artistic progress within this literary environment. The assimilation of classical literature's system of imagery, poetic forms, symbolic modes of expression, and aesthetic principles by writers — combined with their individual styles and artistic mastery — served to foster new content and interpretations.

Furthermore, the artistic function of literary traditions in the Kokand milieu manifests in the preservation of national spiritual values, the development of aesthetic thought, the artistic perception of the relationship between the individual and society, and the assurance of continuity in literary heritage across generations. In this process, tradition does not act as a constraint on creative activity; rather, it serves as a spiritual and aesthetic foundation for new artistic explorations.

Conclusion. Thus, studying the literary milieu of Kokand — based on the unity of tradition, essence, and artistic function — enables a deeper understanding of the developmental patterns of classical Uzbek literature. A systematic investigation into the literary and aesthetic experience of this milieu, including an analysis of the interplay between tradition and innovation through the lens of specific authors and their works, serves to enrich the theoretical foundations of the history of national literature.

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