

# Historical Truth and Artistic Interpretation

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**Abstract:** The novel “Yaldo kechasi” represents one of the initial stages of the renewal process in Uzbek literature. In the work, the author presents not only a distinctive artistic attitude toward the past and reality, but also a broad artistic interpretation of the transformations in national spirit on the threshold of the 21st century, the stages of change in the worldview of the people, and the boundaries of spiritual maturity, covering more than a century of history. The novel stands out for its epic scope of reality, its unique artistic language, the clarity of its depiction, and the carefully developed characters and images. For this reason, it will continue to serve as a subject for many future studies. The article discusses the novel “Yaldo kechasi” by the People’s Writer of Uzbekistan Xayriddin Sulton, emphasizing that with its plot structure, interpretation of motifs and characters, and high artistic quality, it can be regarded as one of the works comparable with examples of world literature.

**Keywords:** Historical novel, literary mystification, epic tradition, motif, plot, character, artistic interpretation.

**Introduction:** Works of fiction that become truly significant phenomena do not emerge on their own. They arise from historical necessity, aesthetic demand, and transformations in artistic thinking.

A century has passed since O’tkan kunlar. Up to the present day, many remarkable novels have been written. Undoubtedly, the influence of Abdulla Qodiriy can be felt in the creation of these works. Some of them may rightly be regarded as major contributions to the development of the genre. However, it must be stated frankly that no historical work has yet attained the level of fame achieved by Qodiriy’s novel.

This novel, which appeared at the beginning of the twentieth century as an initial experiment, established a universally recognized benchmark that no other work has so far surpassed.

Yaldo kechasi has changed these perceptions. Even before its publication, the fame of the novel had spread far and wide, arousing in many readers a strong desire to find and read it. Its publication by the “Khaybar”

publishing house became a long-awaited gift for readers [5].

What, then, is the secret and distinctive quality of this work? Why did it arouse such a strong interest among readers even before it was read? Is it because it is a continuation of O’tkan kunlar and belongs to the genre of the historical novel? Or is there some other underlying reason?

The answers to these questions can only be found after reading the book, and the reader becomes convinced that Yaldo kechasi fully meets the requirements of the historical novel and is written with exceptional artistic mastery.

The novel is presented as a continuation of O’tkan kunlar. Therefore, it demands a certain level of preparation from the reader. First of all, the reader must be thoroughly familiar with the original novel, its plot development, its central theme of national sorrow, as well as its characters and their traits. Otherwise, it may be difficult to fully comprehend the essence of the new work and the intellectual and emotional “burden”

it carries.

Yaldo kechasi consists of two parts and fifty-four chapters. The titles of its parts and chapters inevitably evoke memories of scenes from O'tkan kunlar. Like Abdulla Qodiriy, the author succeeds in loading each word of the novel with multiple layers of meaning. From the title of the work to every utterance, action, character, and depiction, all elements serve a single purpose—to emphasize the tragedy of Turkestan.

“Yaldo night” is the longest night of the year, the darkest period, when the harsh cold of winter prevails. The title of the work carries multilayered symbolic meanings. It signifies not only the longest night but also, as emphasized by Abdulla Qodiriy, the “darkest and most tragic days” in the history of our people—days turned into darkness first by Tsarist rule and later by Soviet policy. In the words of Cho'lpon, these were nights of bitter cold in which daylight never truly came. This dark night began with the conquest of Turkestan and continued like a terrifying nightmare until the period of independence. The intellectuals of the nation repeatedly attempted to awaken the people and to hasten the end of this darkness, yet their hopes were often shattered.

In his novel, Abdulla Qodiriy sought to reveal the essence of the tragic events occurring in society, portraying through the fate of a single family the fragmentation, pain, and suffering of an entire nation.

In Kecha va kunduz, Cho'lpon depicted the darkness of night while hoping for the arrival of day. However, his hopes turned into illusion. Yet one consoling belief remained: no matter how long and frightening the night of Yaldo may be, it inevitably comes to an end. After the longest night, the nights grow shorter and the days begin to lengthen. As emphasized in the preface of the book, this dark night ultimately concluded with the independence of our people.

Thus, Yaldo kechasi is not merely a title arbitrarily chosen. It reflects a profound artistic interpretation of historical reality, harmonizing with the content, characters, and overall meaning of the work. For this reason, the novel can be described as a multilayered, polyphonic historical narrative.

First and foremost, it must be noted that a literary work is, above all, an artistic reflection of the spiritual history of the people to which it belongs. In this sense, the

novel by Khayriddin Sultan fully meets the highest artistic standards. It represents a harmonious unity of epic scale and epic thinking. The roots of such continuity can be traced back to folklore, particularly to epic traditions—the crown of oral creativity. In epics such as Alpomish and Go'ro'g'li, we observe these manifestations of epic thinking and the continuity of tradition.

Although the term “literary mystification” appeared later in literary studies, representatives of epic performance—bakhshis—had long continued the epics they inherited from their masters, thereby contributing to the preservation and continuity of tradition.

For example, the birth of Go'ro'g'li might be narrated by one performer, while his growth, marriage, the founding of Chambil, and stories related to his adopted children would be continued by others. This required familiarity with the plot, motifs, characters, and methods of performance of earlier versions. This process was understood as the continuity of epic tradition. However, this continuity manifested itself differently in each performer, depending on their talent, improvisational skill, epic knowledge, and memory.

These traditions were consistently preserved in classical literature as well. The value of a writer was often assessed based on their contribution to the continuity and development of these traditions.

As the distinguished writer Abdulla Qodiriy once wrote: “Modomiki, biz yangi davrga oyoq qo'ydik, bas, biz har qanday yo'sinda ham shu yangi davrning yangiliklari ketidan ergashishimiz va shunga o'xshash dostonchilik, ro'monchilik va hikoyachiliklarda ham yangarishg'a, xalqimizni shu zamonning “Tohir va Zuhra”lari, “Chor darvesh”lari, “Farhod-Shirin” va “Bahromgo'r”lari bilan tanishdirishka o'zimizda majburiyat his etamiz”, – he wrote [1;9].

At first glance, the writer's words may seem like a modest claim. However, a look at the history of the novel as a genre reveals that his words reflect the truth. In other words, O'tkan kunlar acknowledges the traditions of folk epics and storytellers such as Alpomish, Go'ro'g'li, Tohir and Zuhra, and Bahromgo'r, which are deeply rooted in the books and collective memory of the people. These traditions reflect the mindset, origins, and values of the nation, as well as its

collective pain and spiritual experiences.

In *O'tkan kunlar*, the author relied on the long-standing Eastern epic storytelling tradition, while simultaneously synthesizing Eastern and Western literary aesthetics to create a new work that corresponded to the consciousness, emotions, and courage of a person living at the threshold of the 20th century. This was, in essence, an experiment. And even in this initial experiment, the author fully demonstrated his talent and artistic capacity.

*Yaldo kechasi* draws nourishment from the same source, continuing the traditions of classical literature, Abdulla Qodiriy's literary heritage, and the epic imagination of the people. In a full sense, the novel portrays the 150-year spiritual history of the peoples of Turkestan, as Ibrohim G'afurov noted:

"O'tkan kunlar" va uning mantiqiy davomi – kurash dostoni bo'lgan "Yaldo kechasi" har qanday og'ir sharoitda ham manqurtlashmagan shaxslar uchun haqiqiy tozarish ummoni vazifasini bajaradi[2;1-3]."

The author undertook long and careful preparation to write this work. He meticulously studied historical facts, traced the interconnections scattered across various sources, and, with masterful precision, breathed life into these historical truths and inert facts, transforming them into artistic reality.

In *Ra'no Gulining Suvi*, one immediately notices that the materials, facts, and approach to historical events collected by the writer do not remain confined within the boundaries of a mere story. One can sense that the author has thoroughly studied every detail of Qodiriy's life and legacy and that he possesses a profound, heartfelt admiration for him. It is this love that guided the author for years toward the creation of a monumental work. Indeed, a broader analysis of Xayriddin Sulton's oeuvre provides a comprehensive understanding of the overall panorama and principles of national prose over the following thirty to forty years. In his novellas, stories, and essays, one can observe a distinct harmonization of stylistic traditions—from Abdulla Qodiriy and Abdulla Qahhor to the generation of the 1980s—revealing the evolution of new literary methods.

*Yaldo kechasi* can be regarded as a continuation of the traditions of Uzbek folklore and literature while simultaneously demonstrating a completely new

approach through the creative assimilation of leading international literary styles, a modern interpretation of historical reality, and a novel aesthetic vision.

The language of the work is carefully adapted to the depicted events, the era, and the Qodiriy-style narrative, imbued with Xayriddin Sulton's distinctive artistic touch.

Reading *Yaldo kechasi* requires from the reader a familiarity with the nation's history over the past one and a half centuries, as the work begins from the point where *O'tkan kunlar* ends. First, the reader must be aware not only of every event in Qodiriy's novel but also have a general understanding of historical events in Turkestan from the late 19th century to the mid-20th century.

Although the novel is a literary work, it represents the artistic interpretation of historical processes and events. One of the factors ensuring its uniqueness and high artistic quality is its language. The author strives to preserve the living language of Qodiriy's time, including sentence constructions characteristic of Qodiriy, while simultaneously maintaining his own stylistic originality.

"Hijriy 1268 yil saroton, mohi ramozonning o'n oltinchi kuni.

Shahri Marg'ilonning mahallot va bog'lari yoz chillasining jazirama oftobida otash bo'lib yonadir. Yolg'izgina Marg'ilonsoy shaharga obi hayot va salqin bir epkin baxsh etkan kuyi sharqirab oqib yotadir" [1;15].

The novel opens with these lines.

In the novel "*Yaldo kechasi*", the writer's profound respect for Abdulla Qodiriy is one of the main factors ensuring the artistic excellence of the work. This respect manifests itself fully in the title of the novel, the narration of events, the interpretation of characters, its structure, language, and overall artistry.

While Abdulla Qodiriy introduced new methods characteristic of national novel-writing and laid the foundation for realistic novels in Uzbek literature in his time, "*Yaldo kechasi*" further develops this tradition. The novel demonstrates that these artistic principles remain a relevant and guiding tradition even for 21st-century novels.

The novel encompasses 130 years of our nation's history, telling the stories of thousands of individuals.

Although only a few characters are brought to the forefront, hundreds of figures are depicted throughout the narrative. Most of these characters are historical personalities, which attests to the writer's meticulous study of historical sources and facts.

The author identifies the common threads in facts scattered across thousands of pages in various sources and skillfully transforms them into a vivid artistic tapestry.

Although hundreds of characters participate in the narrative, the story primarily follows three generations: Otabek, his son Yodgorbek, and Yodgorbek's children Ozodbek and Odilbek, illustrating the nation's tragic historical "night." It would not be accurate to say it is merely "told"; rather, it is rendered with high artistic mastery. Each character is portrayed realistically while maintaining elevated artistic expression, and their inner pains, dreams, missteps, and discoveries resonate directly with the reader.

Letters play a special role in both "O'tkan kunlar" and "Yaldo kechasi." They do not merely report events; they also reveal the inner world and character of the heroes to the reader. The first letters are from Yusuf Qutidor, followed by letters from Otabek, Qanotshoh, Nusratxon To'ra, Ozodbek, and Odilbek. Each letter carries its own linguistic style, manner, and philosophical depth.

The descriptions of Otabek in "O'tkan kunlar" are further developed in "Yaldo kechasi", portraying him as someone who sacrifices his life for his homeland, becoming a national hero and a fighter for freedom, ultimately achieving martyrdom on this path.

The love story between Yodgor and Zumrabbibi is among the brightest and most sincerely depicted sections of the novel. The author skillfully presents their character, upbringing, and emotional experiences in scenes that align with the style of "O'tkan kunlar."

"Usta Sayfining qizi Zumrabbibi Xudo umr berib, bu yil o'n yettiga to'ldirib, savr oyida o'n sakkiz yosh ostonasiga qadam qo'yg'an edi. Albatta, bu yoshqa kirgan qiz zoti borki, barchasi beistisno go'zal bo'lur, ammo qashshoq bir bo'zchi yigit va xokisor nilchi ayolning muhabbat chamanida yashnab ochilg'an nafis chechak bo'lmish Zumrabbibi Marg'ilon suluvlari orasida eng suluvi, zebo sanamlari ichra eng sanama rastasi bo'lib tanilg'an bir mahliqo edi.

Agar Parvardigori olam bul sarvinozg'a husni malohat bilan birga aqlu fasohatni ham mo'l-ko'l qilib berganini inobatg'a oladiring'an bo'lsak, eski zamon shoirlari ushbu misralarni balki aynan Zumrabbibi ta'rifida aytkan chiqar. Ya'nikim:

Desa bo'lg'aykim, yana ham o'n sakiz yil husni bor,  
O'n sakiz yoshinda muncha fitnakim boshindadur.

Zumrabbibi mis barkash ustida turg'an nonning birini olib, to'yib to'yib hidladi, ko'zlariga surib tavob qilg'ach, bag'riga bosdi.... Onasi chiqib ketgach, Zumrabbibi likopchadagi bodom mag'izli Samarqand holvasidan bir bo'lak ushatib, og'ziga soldi. Holvaning lazzatli ta'mi unga juda ko'p narsalar haqida so'ylayotgandek, shirin bir istiqbolni va'da qilayotgandek tuyuldi..." [5;74-75].

The writer does not present history in a dry, factual manner; instead, he strives to illuminate the spirit of the era more deeply and vividly through lifelike events and everyday details.

Through the character of Yodgorbek, the image of the Jadid reformers comes to life before our eyes. The author, using Yodgor's portrayal, interprets the complex period in which the Jadids lived, the social and political challenges they faced, the societal disarray affecting their movement, the harsh policies of the Tsarist regime and later the Soviet government, as well as the internal conflicts among the Jadids themselves, all interwoven into the fabric of lived historical reality.

The spread of the Jadid movement, its driving factors, the contradictions it faced, and events connected with education and press history are presented in a manner that is both historically synchronized with the period and illuminated with a contemporary perspective.

At first glance, the materials collected for the novel—the historical works, excerpts from documents, and records—may seem unrelated. However, upon reading the work, one realizes that these documents, facts, excerpts, and dialogues have been skillfully integrated into the plot, serving to convey a unified overall meaning and elevate the artistic quality of the novel.

The central theme and main idea of the novel are formed by the ideals advanced by the Jadids. Unless the nation recognizes its shortcomings, remedies them, and abandons ignorance to embrace enlightenment, it cannot escape the confined pit of limitation, no matter which stage of progress it occupies. Through the

interpretation of historical events and issues raised in the novel, as well as the analysis of national consciousness, the author demonstrates his ability to transform the Jadids' ideas into literary themes, justifying his own claim to be "a follower of Qodiriy."

In the second part of the novel, the fate of two brothers, Ozodbek and Odilbek, who are separated at birth, unfolds tragically. After their father's death, they are forced to grow up in two different environments: Ozodbek in a children's home under the Soviet system, and Odilbek in a Jadid enlightened household. Though their paths and struggles are different, the brothers—carrying the blood of their ancestors—heroically perish for the same cause.

Through the fate of Ozodbek and Odilbek, the author alludes to the destiny of a nation torn apart by a brutal regime. While the news of Otabek and Yodgorbek's deaths saddens the reader, the deaths of Odil and Ozodbek strike an even more profound emotional chord.

"Odilbek egarda qiyrixon o'ltirg'an kuyi, Abdullaning bir necha bor so'rag'aniga qaramasdan, qo'lidagi bayroqni bermasdan, uni baland hilpiratib, otini yeldirib borar edi. Nogahon pistirmadan poylab turib ketma-ket uzilgan to'fangcha o'qi uning naq yuragiga tegdi. "Oh" dedi-yu, qo'lidagi bayroqqa uralib, yuztuban quladi..."

Qabr boshida tiz cho'kkan Haydar Burhon asta o'rnidan turdi, alam va iztirob bilan sheriklariga qarab so'zlandi:

—....Qo'mondon Odilbekni yerga berdik. Ammo, o'zingiz ayting, Odilbek o'ldimi? Aslo!.. Jon berar ekan, mendan: "Og'a bayroqni kim ko'taradi? deb so'radi. Ey, jafokash yurt lashkari! Ey qahramon o'g'lonlar! Iymonimiz, diyonatimiz sinov tarzda simobdek qalqib turgan mana shu lahzalarda men endi shu savolni sizlarga bermoqchiman: bayroqni kim ko'taradi? Kim?" [5;448].

Haydar Burxon's rhetorical question emphasizes, in contrast to the long-standing label of "bandit," the courage and bravery of the homeland defenders who fought for freedom.

The death of Ozodbek is even more tragic. He becomes an innocent victim of the oppressive Soviet regime, which, in its harsh policies, differed little from the Tsarist government under which he was raised.

"Ozodbek so'nggi bor ko'ksini muzdek havoga to'ldirib,

chuqur nafas oldi. Hayotga to'ymag'an ko'zlarini katta ochib to'rt tarafga boqdi.

...Askar kiprik qoqmay bexato o'q uzdi.

Miltiqning gumbirlagan tovushi barobar Ozodbekning bo'g'zidan so'nggi nido otilib chiqdi: Alvido, Turkiston!" [5;458].

This scene is familiar to all of us. It is not just the death of Ozodbek. It represents the final chapter in the lives of thousands of our compatriots and national intellectuals, including Abdulla Qodiriy and Cho'lpon. In the narrative of one family across three generations, the novel portrays the sorrowful and painful grief of the entire people of Mother Turkistan.

Through the fates of hundreds of characters, the fragmentation and destruction of a nation are depicted in vivid episodes and moving passages. The 130-year history of our people is analyzed and brought to life.

The destinies of Mirzakarim Qutidor, Yusufbek Hoji, Otabek, his son Yodgorbek, and his grandchildren Ozodbek and Odilbek, as well as Maqsud Ponsod, Nusratxon To'ra, Haydar Burxon, and female characters such as Oftob Oyim, Zumradbibi, and Oynisa, reflect the nation's finest qualities, distinctive characteristics, intellect, and sufferings.

Each character's speech, actions, and psychological state are individualized, demonstrating the author's mastery of psychological analysis.

In his time, Abdulla Qodiriy's novel initiated a process of renewal in Uzbek literature. A century later, this novel, which continues the "brilliant narrative line," sparks yet another wave of innovation, marking a new era in Uzbek historical fiction. Its form, style, language, and artistry indicate that the horizons of national prose are expanding further.

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