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Turkish Literary Traditions in the Development of Modern Uzbek Poetry

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Abstract: In this context, Ottoman Turkish literature, particularly the poetics of protest, patriotism, and social critique, emerged as an important point of reference for prominent Uzbek poets like Abdulhamid Cho'lpon and Abdurauf Fitrat, who engaged selectively with the form, meter, language, and ideological positioning of their Ottoman counterparts and rethought them, rather than imitated them. Although Turkic literary interconnections have been noted repeatedly, the specific processes by which Turkish literary traditions impacted the emergence of a modern Uzbek poetic consciousness have been rarely if ever systematized. The aim of this study is to locate and investigate the aesthetic, ideological, and poetic aspects of the Ottoman Turkish impact on modern Uzbek poetry based on a comparative text analysis. The analysis reveals how converging thematic tropes, symbolic strategies, and modes of protest representation shaped by shared historical experiences and a common hope for national liberation, as well as similar responses to social injustice resulted in both synchronicity and, dialectically, in the writerly intertext, as seen in Cho'lpon's creative and critical engagement with Tevfik Fikret. The article illustrates how Turkish literary traditions galvanized modest aesthetic assimilation, in a manner that supported the goals of poetic modernization without threatening the salience of national particularity. This discovery elucidates how the transnational Turkic literary interaction helped move Uzbek poetry to a new stage of development and deepens discussions of the wider comparative literature and the cultural transfer during the epochs of modernization.

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Keywords: Modern Uzbek poetry; Turkish literary traditions; Ottoman poetry; national awakening; comparative literature; poetic influence; patriotism; social criticism; literary interaction.

1. Introduction

Uzbek poetry has undergone a transformation that is recognized as the evolutionary aspects of the twentieth century. It was in this period that a modern national literature emerged with new aesthetic norms, new poetic discourses, and new poetic forms. The complex and contradictory process that has led to the emergence of modern Uzbek literature in the early decades of the century was marked, among other things, by the tensions between traditional literary conventions and modern artistic explorations [1].

Such a *nouvelle conscience poétique* first began to manifest itself in the 1920s. The challenge that this generation of writers faced was to regenerate national poetry both topically and structurally, and to incorporate it into the current literary processes. It was essentially due to the dissemination of artistic awareness and the emergence of new theoretical modes of writing rooted in new aesthetic ideals [2].

It is well known that new genres and stylistic trends, which initially emerged in European literature and later spread worldwide, began to manifest themselves in the works of Uzbek Enlightenment writers as early as the beginning of the twentieth century. As a result, there was a growing inclination to abandon traditional poetic patterns and to reinterpret the relationship between form and content in innovative ways. In this manner, the theoretical and practical foundations of modern Uzbek literature were gradually established [3].

One of the main engines of this process was the literary activities of Abdulhamid Cho'lpon and Abdurauf Fitrat at the beginning of the twentieth century. In addition to ideological and thematic issues, they also addressed those of language and style, prosody, and form. These writers were aware that poetry required more expressive tools, and so they tried these experimental early applications alongside their own work [4].

On the other hand, when it came to the matters of meter, rhyme and poetic form, instead of completely denying previous literary traditions, Cho'lpon and Fitrat strove to re-examine them in the context of their era. This perspective reveals a widening discontent with traditional stylistic expectations and a growing urgency to explore new modes of poetic creation. A key aspect in the evolution of this tendency was the writers' contact with world literature and the re-enforcement of artistic thought under the impact of different aesthetic schools and movements [5].

The ideas expressed in Cho'lpon's essay "Ulug' hindiy" further demonstrate his dissatisfaction with existing literary frameworks and his aspiration toward innovative artistic exploration. His reflections on classical literary models reveal a desire to renew national poetry both in content and in form, and to align it with the spirit of the age. This aspect provides a solid basis for evaluating the works of Cho'lpon and Fitrat as a significant phenomenon that inaugurated a new stage in the development of twentieth-century Uzbek poetry [6].

2. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, comparative literary analysis methodology geared towards discovering the mechanisms of the influence of Turkish literary tradition over the genesis of modern Uzbek poetry in the early twentieth century. The study moves from the assumption that literary influence is not a matter of linear borrowing but a selective ideologically mediated, and historically conditioned process. This is a hybrid approach of close reading and contextual reading. Close reading, in turn, is employed as a methodological tool to follow paths of related themes, symbology motifs, and poetics around patriotism, protest, historical memory, and social critique. Identifying similarities between these texts, contextual analysis describes their emergence in larger socio historical context national awakening, colonial pressure, and intellectual exchange in the Turkic world. The focus on metrical choices, rhetorical devices, and the adaptation of classical forms to modernist impulses provides a means of differentiating creative appropriation from direct imitation. Comparative poetics also figures in this work, exploring the ways in which common ideological concerns were expressed within the context of disparate national literary traditions with their own aesthetic particularities. Pragmatic interpretations by Uzbek and Russian scholars are subjected to scrutiny to expose unexamined assumptions and assess alternative claims against the evidence of the text. Consequently, this article seeks to produce a multifaceted interpretation of the phenomenon of Uzbek Turkish literary interaction as an active, intentional cultural

process, rather than as an uncritical diffusion of influence based on a layered methodological approach that integrates elements from varying methodologies, or making use of mixed methods.

3. Findings and Discussion

The idea of renewal articulated in the literary-critical views of Abdulhamid Cho'lpon indicates the intensification of aesthetic exploration in national poetry at the beginning of the twentieth century. These views were theoretically substantiated in Abdurauf Fitrat's work "Adabiyot qoidalari", where the necessity of liberating poetry from imitation and introducing new poetic criteria was emphasized [7]. As a result, increased attention was paid to the syllabic (barmaq) meter, which had not occupied a leading position in classical literature, and by the early twentieth century it began to develop as a new poetic system. Rhythmic units such as the line, syllable, and metrical segment were regarded as the fundamental structural components of this metrical system.

In his scholarly studies, the prominent Cho'lpon researcher N. Yo'ldoshev substantiates the view that Ottoman Turkish literature exerted a significant influence on the formation of Abdulhamid Cho'lpon's artistic thinking [8]. This conclusion is grounded in a comparative analysis of Cho'lpon's creative views with relevant literary sources and demonstrates the important role played by the Turkish literary milieu in shaping the poet's aesthetic worldview.

The validity of this conclusion is further confirmed by Cho'lpon's own literary-critical reflections. In particular, in his essay "Ulug' Hindi," the poet articulates his attitude toward Ottoman literature alongside the traditions of Eastern classical poetics, emphasizing its capacity to reflect the spirit of the age [9]. In this context, Cho'lpon evaluates the works of Ottoman literary figures from a critical perspective, paying special attention to the balance between traditional elements and innovative aesthetic pursuits. While noting that in the works of certain authors either Western-oriented novelty or Eastern tradition tends to dominate excessively, he underscores that only in a limited number of cases is formal innovation successfully harmonized with spiritual continuity.

The taking of this stand reveals that Cho'lpon did not view Ottoman Turkish literature as an object of uncritical imitation, but as a source of aesthetic experience that is to be assimilated selectively and critically. This essentially means that the impact of Ottoman literature in Cho'lpon's works is felt not in terms of mere borrowing, but as a process of artistic selection and aesthetic refinement, resting in turn on the modernist impulses embedded in his artistic thought.

In his study of Ottoman Turkish influence on Cho'lpon's works, the Cho'lpon scholar Normat Yo'ldoshev notes that although Abdulhamid Cho'lpon did not study in Istanbul, he was actively involved in the literary life of the 1920s and possessed a thorough knowledge of Turkish history and literature [10]. This, according to the researcher, suggests that the Ottoman literary milieu had an indirect yet significant impact on the formation of Cho'lpon's artistic and aesthetic outlook. Yo'ldoshev identifies Tevfik Fikret and Namik Kemal as the Turkish authors who most strongly influenced the poet.

Among them, Tevfik Fikret regarded as a philosopher-poet in Ottoman literature—served as an important aesthetic reference for Cho'lpon. His synthesis of formal innovation and intellectual depth is highlighted in Cho'lpon's literary-critical views, where Fikret is presented as a leading figure of modern Turkish literature. Cho'lpon's engagement with Fikret reflects not imitation, but a creative and critical appropriation, indicating that Ottoman Turkish literature functioned as a selective aesthetic source within his modernist poetic pursuits [11].

The Uzbek poet Abdulhamid Cho'lpon not only expressed his literary-critical interest in the works of the prominent Ottoman Turkish poet Tevfik Fikret but he also asserted his effort as a translator. Cho'lpon, for instance, took selected passages of

"Rubobi Shikasta" and translated them for publication in periodicals which, in effect, meant increasingly conscious importation of Fikret's poetry into the Uzbek literary space.

In his reflections, Cho'lpon stressed the quality of tarnished beauty of "Rubobi Shikasta", noting its broad impact on the followers of the audibility of the poetic style of language, and the perceiving "Tarixi Qadim" as more loudly social and philosophically filled due to its expressive moral and spiritual protest [12]. These assessments suggest that Cho'lpon was not only analyzing Fikret's works aesthetically, but also on an ideological level.

Cho'lpon's elegy "Fikratning qabrinda," written in Ottoman Turkish on the occasion of Fikret's death, further reflects his deep respect for the poet's personality and literary legacy. The poem reveals Cho'lpon's perception of Fikret not merely as a source of artistic influence, but as a spiritual and intellectual mentor [13].

Deydilarki, senga amal bog'layan
Qabringda diz cho'kub bir dam og'layon
Bir murod o'lurmish, banda bir zamon
Og'layub muroda ermaya keldim!

*(They say that whoever devotes their heart to you,
Who kneels at your grave and weeps for a moment,
Will attain their desire... I, too, came for a brief while,
Weeping, to ask for the fulfillment of my longing.)*

In these lines, the poet conveys a state of inner anguish and spiritual searching through the following poetic devices:

In the line "They say that whoever binds their faith to you," Abdulhamid Cho'lpon alludes to beliefs and perceptions formed within popular consciousness. Here, Tevfik Fikret is interpreted not merely as a literary figure but as a moral and socio-cultural leader, whose spiritual legacy is believed to offer guidance and support.

The motif of "kneeling at your grave and weeping for a moment" carries a symbolic meaning, expressing the poet's inner anguish and reverence. In both Eastern and Western poetic traditions, the act of kneeling signifies respect, devotion, and mourning, thereby indicating Cho'lpon's spiritual closeness to Fikret [14].

The term "murod" (desire) in the line "an one desire will be fulfilled" will determine the general idea of the poem. It communicates an archetypal nugget of wisdom that we humans can have what we want through pain and struggle. In the poem, the unrealized social and moral ideals in Fikret's life are reinterpreted by Cho'lpon and implicitly compared with the poet himself.

The climactic line, 'I came, weeping, seeking my desire,' expresses the possibility of pursuing your goal in grief. And this motif is the artistic generalization of the soft tragic romanticism inherent in the lyrics of Cho'lpon, and this inner state is revealed as a poem followed by an artistic generalization.

This elegy is, in its own way, an expression of admiration, a way of asserting that, whatever the historical and political situation, the Uzbek-Turkish literary relations in the post-colonial age have survived, having undergone modifications, of course, and this is emphasized by none other than Cho'lpon. Cho'lpon's works not only sustain the ideals of national and social freedom put forward by Fikret, but the poem also serves as a poetic manifestation of national and cultural awakening spirit.

Yoding o'lum kabi bir sir mubham
Nash'a shu dolli bu his ism.
Ruhimda na fusun aylading ilhom
Bu kun senga ko'ngul vermaya keldim!

*(Your memory, like death, is an obscure and enigmatic mystery...
Is this pain the ecstasy of love?..
What spell have you cast upon my soul, I do not know...
Today I have come, having given my heart to you.)*

The poem expresses Abdulhamid Cho'lpon's profound reverence for the personality and literary legacy of Tevfik Fikret, as well as the transformation of the poet's creative quest into a state of spiritual anguish. The underlying ideological framework of the lines is grounded in notions of an obscure mystery, poetic inspiration, and intense inner experience.

Within the framework of Turkic literary relations at the beginning of the twentieth century, poets of the period of national awakening sought to artistically represent the tragedy of a nation in decline through the creative appropriation of literary heritage, thereby advancing Uzbek poetry to a new stage of development. Abdulhamid Cho'lpon, like Tevfik Fikret, turned to historical events in order to depict national suffering and the problem of social injustice. In particular, in Fikret's poem "Tarixi Qadim", the prevalence of violence and the violation of principles of justice in human history are sharply criticized, and through an analysis of the past the social condition of contemporary society is elucidated. The atmosphere of anguish and moral protest expressed in this work likewise emerges in Cho'lpon's poetry as a shared artistic and aesthetic principle:

*Go'zal yulduz, nurli yulduz, tez so'yla,
Otalarning tarixdagi xatosin;
Shul xatodan osug'lanib yoqlarning,
El ko'ksida surgan ishrat, safosin.*

In fact, Tevfik Fikret elicits such clear ideological and poetic parallels in Cho'lpon's poetry, as to develop Fikret's echoes into a full-fledged concept of distant poetic friendship between Bosphorus and the Amu Darya. Through a critical re-evaluation of the mistakes of the past generations, Cho'lpon is providing a national tragedy, colonial oppression and social injustice that rather provide a link between the history and the realities of contemporaneous social life that is comparable to the method Fikret adopts.

Although Fikret unemotionally philosophizes within his poetry, similar themes of suffering, oppression, and injustice occupy the foreground of Cho'lpon's poetry. Both poets prefer a direct and passionate monologic mode that doubles the power of their social criticism. Cho'lpon opens the motif of the star in his poem in a way that sounds dramatically familiar to what you can find in Fikret's poetry.

In a wider sense, the star motif is a recurring metaphor for social truth and suffering in the early twentieth-century national awakening poetry. This tendency is also evident in Abdurauf Fitrat's poem "Mirrix Yulduziga", which exemplifies a shared aesthetic strategy aimed at exposing the causes of national decline:

*Bormi senda bir o'lkani yondirib,
O'z qozonin qaynatg'uchi xoqonlar.
Bormi senda qorin-qursoq yo'lida
Elin, yurtin, borin-yo'g'in sotqonlar?
(Are there among you rulers who burn their own land
Merely to boil their own cauldron?
Are there among you those who, for the sake of their appetite,
Sell their people, their homeland, and all they possess?)*

Like Abdulhamid Cho'lpon, Cho'lpon also seeks truth through the image of the star; however, unlike Abdurauf Fitrat, he does not rely on rhetorical questioning. Instead, Cho'lpon articulates historical truths directly and urges the "beautiful star" to reveal them openly affirming the nation's ancient strength, its glorious past, and the sacrifice of courageous individuals who gave their lives for the homeland [15].

So'zla, anglat o'tgandagi turmushning
 Butun qonlik, shonlik, jonlik yerlarin.
 Ko'z oldimda jilvalantir yurt uchun
 Jonlar berib, qonlar to'kkan erlarin.

*(Speak, and reveal the past way of life
 In all its sacrifice, glory, and vitality.
 Bring vividly before my eyes those who,
 For the homeland, gave their lives and shed their blood.)*

In conclusion, it may be stated that at the beginning of the twentieth century, the formation of modern Uzbek poetry was significantly influenced by the spirit of rebellion and patriotism characteristic of Ottoman Turkish poetry. Like the branches of a great tree nourished by a common root, intellectuals of the Turkic world dispersed across different regions were united around a shared goal and ideological vision. This goal was to liberate the nation, leading it out of the quagmire of ignorance and oppression toward freedom and self-determination.

4. Conclusion

Ultimately, the study finds that Turkish literary traditions have not merely served as models to be mechanically imitated but have played a formative role that is intellectually productive in the emergence of modern Uzbek poetry at the turn of the twentieth century through conscious, selective, and ideologically motivated appropriation. The chapters harvest material from the poetic texts themselves, critical writings, translation practices and demonstrate how figures like Abdulhamid Cho'lpon and Abdurauf Fitrat approached the Ottoman Turkish literature they engaged as a site of protest poetics, patriotic discourse, and new aesthetic thinking all of which infused and clothed in local historical realities and national desires. So one of the conclusions is that shared experiences of colonial pressure and cultural awakening across the Turkic world produced converging thematic concerns yet allowed for the retention of linguistic, symbolic, and stylistic uniqueness in Uzbek poetry. More generally, the wider examined implications of these findings for comparative literature indicate that networks of ideological solidarity and cultural exchange, rather than models of hierarchical influence, are a more relevant framework for studying transnational literary relations of the early twentieth century. This outlook can be further developed by broadening the corpus to cover lesser-studied poets, periodicals, and archival materials, as well as by applying interdisciplinary methodologies merging intellectual history and cultural sociology to more fully explore the institutions and social practices of Uzbek Turkish literary exchange.

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