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THE VIEWS OF LITERARY SCHOLAR NATAN MALLAYEV ON FOLKLORE IN THE WORKS OF ALISHER NAVOI

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Abstract. This article focuses on the paper entitled “Zalvorli Olim” (“A Great Scholar”) presented by the scholar Hamidjon Homidiy at a conference dedicated to the 90th anniversary of Natan Murodovich Mallayev, a wise scholar, prominent literary critic, Navoi scholar, source specialist, translator, distinguished expert in Oriental philology, Doctor of Philological Sciences, Honored Scientist of the Republic of Uzbekistan, and professor. The article also examines Natan Murodovich Mallayev’s work entitled *Alisher Navoi and Folk Oral Literature*. Through *Alisher Navoi and Folk Oral Literature*, Natan Murodovich Mallayev demonstrated that the history of Uzbek literature began with folklore, that folklore served as a rich spiritual and artistic source throughout its historical development, and that written literature also contributed to the development and advancement of folklore.

Keywords: Navoi studies, source studies, expert in literary history, literary scholar, tazkira writer, translator, folk oral creativity, monograph, treatise.

INTRODUCTION

In this ancient world, people who dedicate their lives to goodness and devote themselves to the prosperity of their nation always remain in the history of their country and in the hearts of people; they are never forgotten. They are always remembered as good and honorable people. One such person is the great scholar, prominent literary critic, Navoi scholar, source specialist, translator, distinguished expert in Oriental



philology, Doctor of Philological Sciences, Honored Scientist of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Professor Natan Murodovich Mallayev. Under the scientific supervision of Natan Mallayev, five doctoral and more than twenty candidate dissertations were defended [1:217]. At the initiative of Hamidjon Homidiy, a scholar specializing in source studies, literary history, literary criticism, tazkira studies, translation, and ethnographic sources, a scientific-theoretical conference entitled “Problems of Analysis and Interpretation of Literary Texts” was organized in 2012 at Tashkent State Pedagogical University named after Nizami, dedicated to the 90th anniversary of Natan Mallayev, a prominent scholar who made a significant contribution to the development of Uzbek literary studies and pedagogy [2]. In addition, through the dedicated efforts of H. Homidiy, several textbooks and works by Natan Mallayev devoted to the personality and creative legacy of Alisher Navoi were republished. These included *Alisher Navoi and Folk Oral Literature* in 2015 [3], *The Great Poet and Thinker* in 2019 [4], and the textbook *History of Uzbek Literature (From Ancient Times to the 17th Century)* in 2021 [5]. At the scientific-theoretical conference “Problems of Analysis and Interpretation of Literary Texts,” Professor Hamidjon Homidiy’s article “Zalvorli Olim” (“A Great Scholar”), co-authored with his beloved student H. Jo‘rayeva, was published in honor of Natan Mallayev. The article “Zalvorli Olim” begins with the following statement: “Among the scholars of our time, there are people who spend their entire lives continuously conducting research in the field of science they have chosen and presenting new achievements to their people. Such intellectuals are indifferent to positions, status, worldly desires, wealth, and material prosperity. Doctor of Philological Sciences, Professor, Honored Scientist of the Republic of Uzbekistan Natan Murodovich Mallayev, who would have reached the age of ninety if he were alive today, was one of such remarkable individuals” [6:3]. This article discusses the life and activities of the outstanding Navoi scholar Natan Mallayev, his life journey, scientific works, textbooks, and treatises. Regarding the scholar’s work *History of Uzbek Literature*, the article



provides the following information: “Most importantly, while analyzing a particular work, the author also reflects on the writer’s creative intention and pays special attention to determining the extent to which this intention has been artistically expressed. As a result, the scientific and literary-aesthetic analysis of lyrical and epic works provided an opportunity to draw significant spiritual, educational, and pedagogical conclusions” [7:9].

After Professor N. Mallayev, several manuals and textbooks on Uzbek classical literature were created. However, none of them could compete with Mallayev’s textbook in terms of scope, accuracy of evidence, introduction of previously unused materials, and comprehensive scientific analysis of the texts. The scientific, theoretical, and practical value of this book is exceptionally high. The work *Alisher Navoi and Folk Oral Literature* was republished by Hamidjon Homidiy and Husnigul Jo‘rayeva, who prepared the publication and wrote its preface. In this book, the prominent Navoi scholar Natan Mallayev examines the oral literature of the peoples of the East—including fairy tales, epics, legends, and myths—in connection with the creative legacy of the great Uzbek thinker Alisher Navoi. This work by the literary scholar was first published in 1974 as a monograph under the title *Alisher Navoi and Folk Oral Literature*. The monograph is a significant work in Uzbek literary studies in terms of its treatment of the relationship between Navoi and folk creativity. The book begins with an introduction entitled “Literature and Folk Creativity.” In this section, the author briefly discusses the fact that the history of Uzbek literature began with folklore, that folklore served as a rich spiritual and artistic source throughout its historical development, and that written literature, in turn, influenced the development of folklore.

N. Mallayev writes: “Uzbek classical literature is a rich treasure of the spiritual culture of the Uzbek people accumulated over many centuries. In the formation and development of Uzbek classical literature, folk oral creativity—folklore—served as an invaluable and inexhaustible source. From the earliest monuments of Uzbek classical literature through all stages of its development, the creative works of literary artists demonstrate this” [8:22].



As N. Mallayev correctly and appropriately points out, studying the relationship between written literature and folk oral creativity is one of the important problems of literary studies. Although some scholarly works have been created in this field and several important ideas have been expressed incidentally, these represent only the initial steps.

Studying the relationship between Uzbek classical literature and folklore, particularly addressing the problem of Alisher Navoi and folklore, can produce significant results.

In this regard, N. Mallayev particularly emphasizes: “Many aspects of the problem of Uzbek classical literature and folklore are embodied in the creative work of the great Uzbek poet and thinker Alisher Navoi. This is natural. Alisher Navoi was the founder of Uzbek classical literature and the Uzbek literary language. His activity represents a high and vivid example of love for the people, service to the people, respect for the treasures of folk art and its language, and creative use of the sources of folk culture. It is therefore natural that such a great personality should have a permanent place in the hearts of the people, earn their highest respect, and exert a fruitful influence on folk creativity” [9:23].

The book then provides information about the history of research into the relationship between Alisher Navoi and folk creativity. The literary scholar examines the state and level of scholarly literature devoted to the general and specific aspects of this debate from the late nineteenth century to the 1960s, as well as the important role played by these works in raising the issue and attracting the attention of scholars. The main part of the monograph consists of four chapters:

I. Attitude toward folk creativity.

II. Folklore traditions in the creative work of Alisher Navoi
(based on the epics of “Khamisa”).

III. Folk versions of Navoi’s epics.

The image of Alisher Navoi in bibliography and folk oral literature.
Through this monograph, the literary scholar succeeded in addressing a problem that had



not previously been sufficiently studied in literary scholarship. The wider scholarly community highly appreciated the scholar's abilities and contribution, and for this monograph he was awarded the academic degree of Doctor of Philological Sciences in 1978.

Professor N. M. Mallayev's research opened up a new direction in Uzbek literary studies—the study of the interaction between Uzbek classical literature and folk oral creativity. Following the publication of his work, his colleagues, students, and young scholars began to investigate various aspects of the relationship between oral creativity and literature. A number of works subsequently appeared, including *Lutfiy and Folklore*, *Babur and Folk Oral Creativity*, and *The Folklore Tradition in Contemporary Uzbek Literature* [8:9].

The scholar's monograph was also highly appreciated by the literary scholar Muhammadjon Hakimov. The following information is provided about the work: "N. Mallayev primarily aimed to identify and study the folklore sources of Navoi's epics, thereby revealing Navoi's artistic mastery and illuminating the profound influence of Navoi's works on the folklore of the peoples of Central Asia" [10:20]. According to Professor N. Mallayev, the monograph sought to broaden the scope of the discussion concerning Alisher Navoi and folk creativity and to illuminate this issue as far as possible. The debate concerning Alisher Navoi and folk creativity would continue for a long time, new studies would emerge, and these studies would also encompass new works created by the people with deep affection for their great ancestor poet. Future authors would continue to supplement and develop the work of their predecessors.

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